

HOW TO PLAN THE BEST FAMILY CHRISTMAS YOU'VE EVER HAD

*a uniquely devotional
printable holiday planner*





ABOUT LIFETREE

We're Lifetree, an interdenominational organization with a mission to connect people to Jesus and each other.

Our goal is to give you new ideas and reminders for how to find Jesus in the midst of your life today, including how to hear his creative wisdom for your family, your work, and your community.

We publish articles, videos, and podcasts on parenting, marriage, and daily faith, and we create resources to grow in all of the above.

Relationships matter. Jesus matters. Our greatest hope is for all of us to focus on what matters. Every day. Starting now.

Visit us online at MyLifetree.com



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THIS PARENT IS HAPPY. WHY?

Because rather than waiting until the last minute, she's started planning her **Best. Family. Christmas. Ever. NOW.**



Somewhere in the midst of fall sports, Halloween costume-making, and Thanksgiving turkey-shopping...

...the holiday season sneaks in on us whether we're ready for it or not. Before the frost is even on the pumpkins, stores are stocked with red and green, cards of friends and family start pouring into mailboxes, and *Time. Speeds. Up.*

But wait! This year we want to be ready. We have hopes for this season! This Christmas we crave more...

...simplicity

...reverence

...love

We crave ***those moments***. You know the ones I'm talking about. Moments like:

»»»»»»»» When you're driving and a certain Christmas carol comes on and suddenly you find yourself spontaneously transported into a deep feeling of nostalgia and peace.

»»»»»»»» When you're outside in the crisp, cold air and the light catches your eyes just so and suddenly your heart is full of gratitude.

»»»»»»»» When you're sitting in the family room with the lights of the tree casting a warm glow and your family is scattered about engaged in simple, everyday stuff and instantly your heart bursts with love and affection.

We want these moments BUT...

...when we are too busy, when we are stressed, when we are sick, when we are distracted by errands and gifts and family spats, we MISS THESE MOMENTS. And we will NEVER get them back.

Don't miss these moments.



Here's how you can make sure you won't miss moments: *start planning and preparing NOW.*

Not five days before Thanksgiving when you're trying to figure out how to seat 12 relatives in your living room.

Not in early December when your kids have 20-some parties, concerts, and events.

Not two weeks before Christmas when you're battling crowded stores and frantically trying to find the tape so you can wrap presents.

Not three days before Christmas when everyone in the family suddenly comes down with "snot face."



NOW. Do it now.



The series of worksheets, checklists, and printables in the following pages are designed to help you prepare your heart and schedule for this coming holiday season so that you won't miss these precious, divine moments.

We hope you enjoy!



Bonus devotional idea: Find more devotions to center your heart on Jesus during the Christmas season at JesusCenteredLife.com

FOCUS
ON WHAT
MATTERS
MOST



FOCUS ON WHAT MATTERS MOST

We've heard it said before: If we don't schedule the things that are important to us, they won't happen.

This adage applies to the Christmas season as much as it does to regular workouts and coffee dates with friends, which is why many of the activities and worksheets included in this planner invite you to schedule the things that really matter to you for your family Christmas ahead of time.

If you don't give these important priorities space, they'll get pushed out by the demands of the season.

You know what else will push aside what matters most to you? Holiday television advertising. Shopping mall mania. Those evil geniuses behind the white-chocolate-dipped holiday Oreo cookies. (Okay...maybe not them, but *still...*)

In other words, this world has A LOT of tactics to distract us from the true spirit of the season, which is love.

Love for God, and love for others.

The following pages include activities and ideas for tuning out these distractions and tuning in to love. Take the time to plan some space for them in your holiday schedule now.



*P.S. Did you know that your daily schedule can be one of the best opportunities to connect with Jesus? The **2020 Jesus-Centered Planner** includes one-of-a-kind ways to invite Jesus directly into your plans for the whole year.*

Learn more at MyLifetree.com

MAKE A PLAN TO TUNE OUT THE NOISE:

Turn off the TV for
(a day...a week...a month)

Take a break from
your social media

Power down your
tablets and phones
in the evenings

Avoid the stores

MAKE A PLAN TO TUNE IN TO WHAT MATTERS:

Play worshipful music and
Christmas carols

Connect with loved ones on
the phone or over
dinner/coffee

Create memories with
friends and family with
simple traditions and
activities

Get out into nature





write it out

Two simple ways my family is going to tune in to God and each other this holiday season:

1.

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2.

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Now use the blank calendar pages at the back to write in five to eight dates and times for your family to DO these simple things.

FAMILY TRADITION IDEA LIST

There are so many wonderful and creative activities and simple traditions you can add to your holiday season. Take some time to read through these posts written by other families for ideas:

1. <http://www.the36thavenue.com/25-christmas-traditions/>
2. <http://mothersniche.com/fun-christmas-traditions-start-spouse/>
3. <http://www.thedatingdivas.com/family-fun/christmas-eve-box/>

Make a list of two to five traditions you'd like to try with your family this year:

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....
- 4.....
- 5.....

Now create space for them in your schedule by putting them on the calendar if they're not already scheduled.



Looking for more Christmas tradition ideas for kids, including craft and DIY gift projects? Check out **Made-by-Me Nativity!** Includes wooden figures to create your own nativity scene.

Find more at MyLifetree.com/shop/made-by-me-nativity/

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a cinnamon stick. The hand is positioned in the lower right, with the thumb and index finger gripping the stick. The cinnamon stick is light brown and textured. In the background, there is a piece of red woven fabric with a grid-like pattern, and several other cinnamon sticks are scattered around. The overall scene is set against a neutral, light-colored background.

GIVE
WITH A
FULL
HEART

GIVE WITH A FULL HEART

In his classic book, *Sit, Walk, Stand*, Watchman Nee writes that God's "chief delight is to give."* Generosity is part of his character, which means that it's part of ours, too. The holiday season is an ideal time to share this aspect of God with others.

Giving is one of the areas that benefits most from early planning. When we're down to the wire, we're so much more likely to miss the spirit of generosity and feel instead like giving is an obligation and a burden. But Paul writes that he wants all of us to be free to give with open and cheerful hearts (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Let's make this our goal for this year: to give ourselves an opportunity to experience cheerful giving by spending a few minutes reflecting on the following prayer prompts, Bible verses, and worksheets BEFORE we're in the rush of the shopping season.

Tip: Print the list on the next page or save it to your phone's photo library and be ready to pull it out for perspective and inspiration before you hit the store, place an order, or deliver a gift.

* Watchman Nee. *Sit, Walk, Stand* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 2009), 21 .

THE GIFT OF PERSPECTIVE

If giving this year makes you feel anxious, remember that Jesus wants us to release our worries about money to him.

[Luke 12:22-23](#)

If you're feeling pressure to give more than you can afford, remember that true gifts can't be bought, and love isn't measured by things. Consider gifts of time, care, prayer, food, or adventure.

[Acts 3:6](#)

If you're tempted to buy things for yourself ('cause let's be honest—this totally happens) or someone else but don't have the budget for it, remember that God has already given us everything we need in him.

[Ephesians 1:3; 1 Corinthians 1:7](#)

If you're stressed about the mayhem of gift buying, remember that God cares about everything you do, and that he wants to help you.

[Proverbs 16:3](#)

If you're disgruntled by grumpy shoppers, inept service people, and long lines, remember that you are a light in the world, and an ambassador for Jesus. Practice patience, kindness, and self-control.

[Matthew 5:14, Galatians 5:22-23](#)

If you're irritated at family members who seem overly fixated on gifts they want to receive, remember that we all have weaknesses and fall short of God's best. Speak the truth when it fits, and pray that generosity will fill the hearts of everyone.

[Romans 3:23](#)



Take the encouraging words of Jesus through the whole Christmas season and into the new year with the **Jesus-Centered Bible**. The Bible has first-ever blue lettering in the Old Testament that highlight more than 600 passages pointing to Jesus, plus a year-long reading plan that takes you through Jesus' story from Genesis through Revelation.

Learn more at JesusCenteredBible.com



HOLIDAY GIFT WISH LIST

Jesus, you are such a creative and thoughtful giver. Please help us this year as we make, buy, and give gifts to others. Give us ideas for meaningful gifts for each person on our list. We want to listen to your ideas about what gifts would be perfect for others, and pray that you will make your ideas clear to us, and then provide the means for us to give those gifts. Amen.

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Gift.....



HOLIDAY BUDGET

Jesus, thank you for your abundant generosity toward us. We pray that we can share this generosity with one another this year through both material and non-material gifts. We thank you for the way you provide for us, and pray that we would be a blessing to you and to others this season. Amen.

Category	Budget
Gifts for our family.....	\$
Gifts for relatives.....	\$
Gifts for friends.....	\$
Miscellaneous gifts.....	\$
Holiday meal/celebration 1	\$
Holiday meal/celebration 2	\$
Holiday meal/celebration 3	\$
New holiday clothes/shoes	\$
Holiday travel	\$
Decorations/wrapping	\$
End-of-year charitable giving.....	\$

HOLIDAY DEAL TRACKER

Jesus, you want us to be faithful with what you've given us. We pray that you'll lead us to the best opportunities to find and give gifts this year. Draw our attention to special sales and promotions that fit our budget and our schedule. Thanks for helping us by preparing the way for us to be generous to others this year. Amen.

Deal.....

Date.....

Deal.....

Date.....

Deal.....

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SERVE
AND
MAKE
MERRY



SERVE AND MAKE MERRY

Often the times that are the ripest for capturing special holiday moments full of wonder are holiday meals, parties, and celebrations. Naturally, they are also among the easiest to get distracted, stressed, and burned-out over. All the planning, shopping, prepping, serving, and cleaning is A LOT of work.

Jesus reminds us through the story of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42) that in the midst of the bustle of hosting and serving there is room for relaxing and enjoying, too. The perfect celebration isn't the one with the best decorations and the tastiest food. It's the one you'll remember by the laughter, the stories, and the time with loved ones. This year make a plan to maximize those moments, and minimize any perfectionism or over-the-top tendencies you might be harboring for your holiday celebrations.

The following activities and worksheets will help you plan your holiday celebrations, and to invite other family members and friends to share the workload (because it really does stink to be the only Martha gettin' things done!). Maybe you can even start dropping hints and recruiting help now.



EIGHT WAYS TO BE MORE MARY THAN MARTHA:

MARTHA

MARY

Preparing a traditional holiday meal with all the fixings

Fancy holiday party with friends

Annual cookie baking extravaganza

Fully decked-out Christmas decorations

Brand-new LBD with the perfect new shoes for the Christmas party

Ten gifts per kid

Finding the perfect white elephant gift

Cleaning the house from top to bottom

Considering a potluck

Gift-wrapping party; serve pizza and wine

Annual 5k family walk/run

Candles and a simple tree or garland

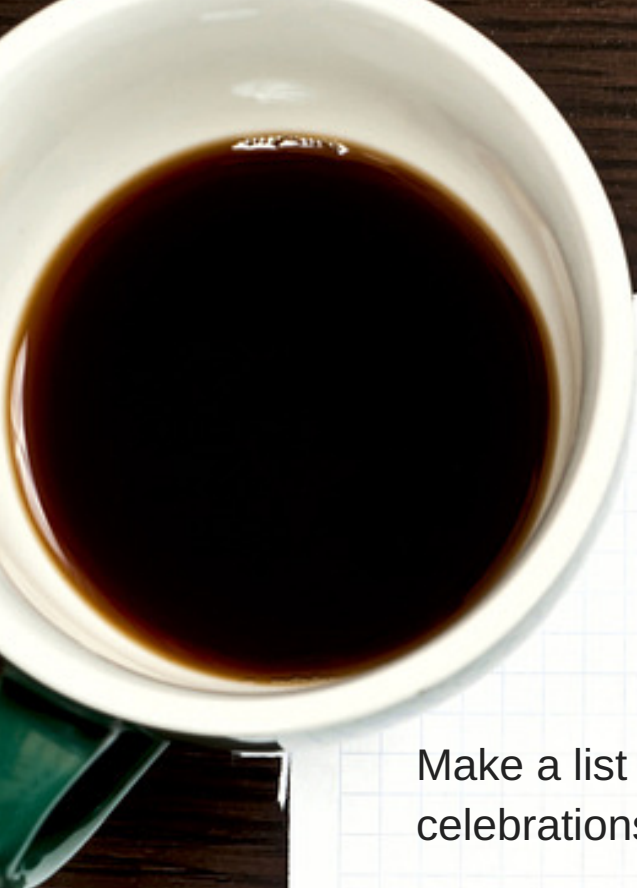
Last year's LBD with a new necklace or wrap

Four gifts (and maybe ditch that stocking because it's cute but MAN buying those small things can feel disproportionately stressful!)

A simple gift card to the grocery store (the world will not end if you go this route, we promise)

Cleaning the guest bathroom (because truly this is the only place people really linger), clearing the kitchen counters and table, and closing the rest of the doors. Thank you and amen.





write it out

Make a list of two ways you can simplify your celebrations this year:

1.

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2.

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Take a minute to pray over your celebration schedule and ask God if there are any additions or subtractions that he'd like you to make this year. You might want to use your initial gut reaction as you think about these events as a prompt for his guidance. (Do you feel tension, excitement, or peace as you think of each event?) Add or remove parties and special mealtimes or events from your calendar based on how God leads you.



HOLIDAY MENU & SHOPPING LIST

Jesus, thank you for community and family and celebration. We pray that our home would be full of good food and laughter and merry-making this holiday season. Give us wisdom about how to balance celebration times with times of rest, and times of serving with times of talking and connecting. Amen.

Holiday Meal Menu:

Shopping List:

Appetizers:

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Entree:

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Sides:

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Desserts:

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Drinks:

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HOLIDAY CHORES LIST

Jesus, you're always teaching us how to serve by your example. We pray that you would give us hearts this season to come alongside one another to pitch in and help out with what needs to get done. Give us cheerful hearts when we're tempted to be cross, and peace when we feel frazzled. Help our home to be one of joy this Christmas. Amen.

Week of

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Print multiples as needed



LOVE AND FORGIVE



LOVE AND FORGIVE

While holiday time is generally regarded as wonderful, sadly one of the most challenging things during the season can be our very own family members or painful memories from holidays in the past that creep up during this time of mirth. Sometimes these relationships and experiences can taint the whole season for us, and cause feelings of depression, anger, anxiety, and conflict.

Rest assured, dear reader, that Jesus wants to heal your heart during this coming holiday season. He is actively paving the way for you to experience new peace and freedom this year. No, this doesn't guarantee that painful family dynamics will disappear or that conflicts won't arise, but it does guarantee that his love is powerful enough to flow to you and through you when you need it most.

Start the process of healing now by doing two things: praying for difficult relationships, and practicing forgiveness.

Use the following prompts on the next page as a way to help you prepare your heart for new peace and freedom in the weeks ahead.

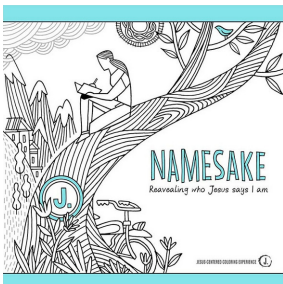
LOVE AND FORGIVE

Make a list, below, of common triggers, words, or actions that weigh on your heart during Christmas (for example: When my mother-in-law criticizes my kids; When my sister puts me down; When my father gets drunk and checks out; My memory from a particularly bad Christmas in the past.):

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....
- 4.....
- 5.....

Next to each list entry, write the name(s) of the person/people who hurt you. Make their names your prayer list for the next several weeks.

If you're finding it difficult or painful to pray for people who have hurt you, consider using a Bible verse as your guide. Picture your relatives and friends in your mind as you read the verse and let God's words gradually renew and refresh your heart for them over time.



The holiday season can be stressful! Plan ahead for some rest and relaxation with this stress-reducing adult coloring book and doodling devotional journal. Find both at MyLifetree.com/jesus-centered-resources/

LOVE AND FORGIVE

Helpful reminders from the Bible about forgiveness:

"If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins." —Matthew 6:14-15

"But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too." —Mark 11:25

"Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others." —Colossians 3:13

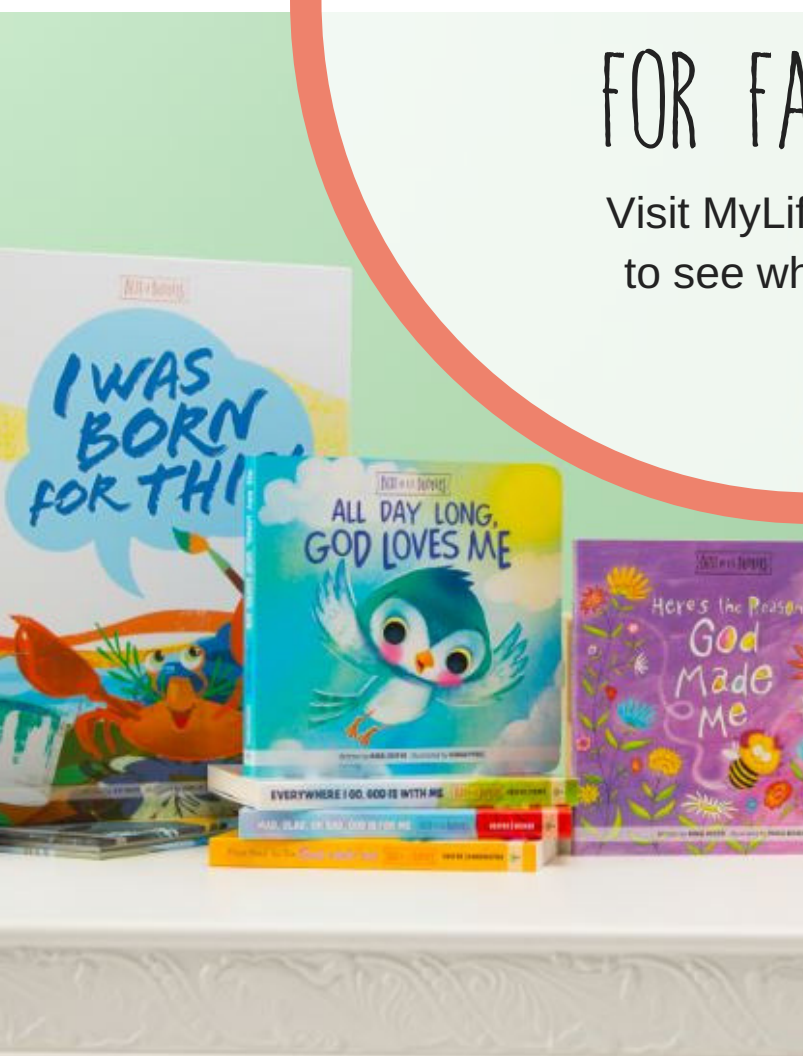
Jesus, thank you for your forgiveness. Please help me to forgive _____ for _____. They have wronged me but with your help, I release them from making it up to me or making it right. I lay the pain they have caused me at your feet and let you have it once and for all. When I try to pick it up again, please remind me that you have already taken care of it with your sacrifice. I don't need to carry it anymore. I am free. Give me wisdom for how to speak and act around this person, and shield me from the words and actions, both past and future, that may come against me through them. Fill me with your peace and healing, and thank you that this holiday season will be full of new and joyful surprises. Amen.



LIFETREE HAS FAITH-BASED GIFT IDEAS

FOR FAMILIES!

Visit MyLifetree.com
to see what's new!



NOVEMBER



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Jesus, we are so thankful for you this month. We pray that our hearts will be filled with gratitude for what you've done for us, and for the love we share with each other. Please open our eyes to the many ways you are blessing us. Help us to see the big and small things you're doing through and around us every day this month. Amen.

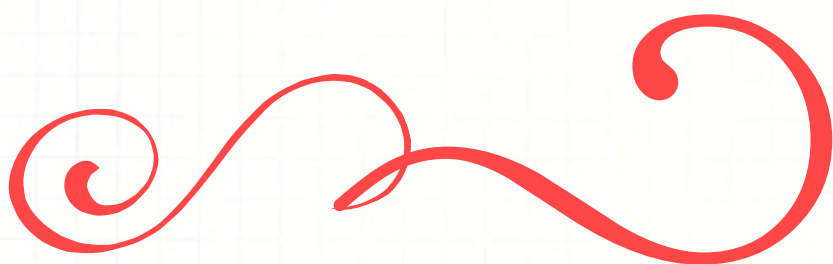
DECEMBER



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25			



Jesus, you are the light shining in the darkness. You make our hearts glad in both good and hard times. We pray for your peace and your joy this month. We don't want to miss ANY moments with you, so we pray that you would help us experience bursts of wonder and love in the midst of everything we have going on. We thank you for the wonderful memories we're going to make this month. Amen.



THE END.

