

1 St. Nicholas Nicked

- Has the Santa myth Gone Too Far?

2 Christmas

- Santa has Googled the Web, and found out who's been naughty . . . nice.
- Malls, shopping centers, and internet merchandisers have all been busy.
- Excited children everywhere are getting ready to rush out of their bedrooms and find out what Santa has left them. . . but
- Has the Santa myth gone too far?
- Have we lost touch with the roots of Saint Nicholas?

3 Trouble in Demre

- In the town of Demre, Turkey, a statue of Saint Nicholas has been replaced.
- It's is the city where Saint Nicholas was bishop—ancient Myra.

4 Trouble in Demre

- Russian pilgrimages.
- Offered to pay for new bronze statue.
- City Council voted unanimously not to erect a new statue of Saint Nicholas.
- Plaster-of-Paris statue of Santa Claus.
- Mayor, "This is the one everyone knows."
- Exchanged the glory of Saint Nicholas for the glory of Santa Claus.

5 Who is Saint Nicholas?

- Born in Asia Minor during the 3rd Century.
- As a Christian he was extremely generous with his wealth—supporting the needy, sick, and suffering.
- On account of his devotion to Christ, Nicholas was made Bishop of Myra as a young man.
- Defender of the faith but of the poor as well.

6 Who is Saint Nicholas?

- St. Nicholas, whose feast day is December 6, is the patron of seafarers, scholars, bankers, pawnbrokers, jurists, brewers, coopers, travelers, perfumers, unmarried girls, brides, and – robbers.
- But most of all, he is the very special saint of children.
- During his life he is credited with 21 miracles and ranks as the most popular saint among Roman Catholics.

7 Who is Saint Nicholas?

- Legend of the Impoverished Nobleman.
 - Couldn't provide dowries for his three unwed daughters.
 - Nicholas heard about this problem and would drop gold coins down the chimney.
 - It so happened that these coins fell in the girls stockings that were hanging by the fire to dry.

8 Christmas Stockings

9 Glory to God

- Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

(Luke 2:13-14 NIV)

10 Meaning of Glory

- In the eyes of the world, glory is often associated with a high point of human achievement.
 - glorious accomplishment
 - glorious vacations
 - glorious dream homes
- But according to the angles, glory was
 - the birth of a child in a barn
 - a baby destined to be Savior, Messiah, and Lord
- The values of God and men are not always the same.

11 Where's Your Glory?

12 Glory Check

- Christmas is a good time for us to do a glory-check.
- We need to ask ourselves, "where is the glory in our lives?".
 - Achievements?
 - Prosperity?
 - Pile of gifts under the tree?
 - Or like the real Saint Nicholas, is it in the helping of others who are in real need?

13 God's Values

- According to Myles Munroe, Applying the Kingdom, . . .
 - most people are out of alignment with God’s Kingdom.
 - pursuing things instead of God’s Kingdom.
 - live beyond our means and spend more than we make
 - spiritually dry and empty

14 Christmas Culture

- The greatest danger that the Christmas culture teaches us with Santa Claus at the head is that . . .
 - things make us happy
 - receiving what we want is more important than giving
 - benevolence is seasonal
 - secular Santa Claus is more worthy than the real person of Saint Nicholas.

15 Suggestions

- The reason we have cell groups is not that it become a “bless me” club.
- We don’t come together in small group merely to gain knowledge of the Bible or have meaningless fellowship.
- The reason we come together in small groups
 - To develop quality relationships
 - To help care for each others burdens
 - To fulfill the purpose of God in our lives

16 Conclusion

- All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. (Acts 4:32–33 NIV–G/K)
- Our glory is not in the abundance of our possessions.
- But in the activity of God in our midst as we do His will.
- It is God with us, Emmanuel.
- For it is the “Prayer of a righteous man that avails much.”