

Flourishing in the Busy Season

Choosing an Unhurried Christmas

When did hurry become part of our Christmas season? We are always in a rush to do something: Christmas shopping, partying, volunteering, decorating... the Christmas season has become a mad dash from one activity to the next, and if we aren't careful we can be so busy doing Christmas that we forget about being with Christ and celebrating His birth.

As I reread the Christmas story, it was interesting to note where the word "hurried" appeared. After Gabriel appears to Mary and tells the news she was going to have a baby, Luke 1:39 tells us she "hurries" off to visit her relative, Elisabeth, who is also expecting her own miracle baby. Verse 56 says Mary stayed with Elisabeth for 3 months. She was in a hurry to see Elisabeth, but slows down and stays for 3 months, connecting, sharing stories, and marveling in the miracle that God was doing in both of their lives.

She slows down enough to praise the Lord and to recount His faithfulness to her in v. 45-55. She spends her time in adoration and worship of God's character and His working in her life.

Later, in Luke 2, after the shepherds are told of the Savior's birth, verse 16 states that they hurried off and found Mary, Joseph and the Baby. They were in a hurry to get to Jesus, but I can assure you that when they arrived and saw Jesus, they didn't simply take a quick look and say what a cute baby he was. No, they would have lingered and oohed and awed over this baby. They knew it wasn't just any baby. The angel had declared, **"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."** (Luke 2:11-12). They hurried to see the Savior of the world.

In Matthew 2, when we see the wise men coming from the East, the passage implies that they were in a hurry to find the one who was born King of the Jews. They encounter Herod, and learn that the Micah prophesied that He would be born in Bethlehem, and then the star reappears. I can assure you that they didn't meander and take their time. No, they hurried to the place where Jesus was. Verse 11 tells us that they entered the house and fell to their knees and worship Him and offered Him gifts. They wouldn't have come all that way for one quick glance at Him and then leave. No, they would have spent time with Him.

In the busyness of the season, we have to consciously choose to not hurry through the season. We must choose to make spending time with Him a priority in our full, over-crowded, very busy schedules. Christian author, Tracie Miles, writes, **"We can choose to get bogged down with stress or we can choose to bow down in worship."** This Christmas, may we choose to hurry to worship Him and slow down and enjoy being in His presence.



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Flourishing in Relationships: Conversation Starters

Here are some great conversations starters as you gather with your friends and family to celebrate Christmas.

- ◆ How does your family celebrate the holidays?
- ◆ What was the best (or worst) gift you ever received?
- ◆ What's your favorite Christmas carol and why?
- ◆ What is your favorite ornament on the tree, and why?
- ◆ What do you consider the most stressful part of the holiday season?
- ◆ The wise men brought gifts to Jesus. What kind of gift can you offer Him?
- ◆ Have you ever had a dream that felt like a warning from God? How did it affect your actions?
- ◆ What can you do personally to help bring peace on Earth?
- ◆ What might you do to bring joy to the world (or at least to your neighbors) this year?
- ◆ Of all the figures around the nativity scene, whom do you most identify with?

“God gives God, and we only need to slow long enough to unwrap the greatest Gift with our time: time in His Word, time in His presence, time at His feet.”

Ann Voskamp, The Greatest Gift: Unwrapping the Full Love Story of Christmas

Additional Resources

Check out our website for more resources to help you flourish in the busy season:

<https://usw-womensministries.org/>

Bible Study: *Flourishing in the Busy Season* based on John 7:37-44.

Devotional: *Grace in the Grinding Season* based on 2 Corinthians 12:9

Craft Idea: *The Victorian Top Hat*. Great centerpiece idea.

Flourishing Story: Major Erica Yang shares her testimony and how she is flourishing in her life and ministry.

Flourishing in Prayer: Prayer Ideas

During the busyness of the season, it is easy to push things such as prayer and connection with our Heavenly Father to the side. Here are some ideas to incorporate prayer into the other activities of the Christmas season.

Christmas Card Prayer List. As you receive Christmas cards in the mail, take time to pray for the person who sent you the card. Write them a note, text or call them immediately and tell them that you prayed for them. As you display your Christmas cards throughout the month, every time you look at that card, lift that person up in prayer. In the New Year, take those Christmas cards—one each day, and again pray for the person who sent the card to you. Send them a note, text or email saying that you are praying for them in the New Year.

Christmas Countdown Prayers. It is always fun to countdown until Christmas. This year, as part of your daily prayer time, countdown the reasons you are thankful for Christmas and what Christ has done for you this year. By Christmas day you will have 25 reasons to be thankful.

Christmas Shopping List. We all have lists of people we are going to buy Christmas gifts or send cards to. Add prayer to your list. As you search for the perfect gift for that special someone, spend some time praying for them. As you wrap the gift, perhaps write a prayer for them to be included in their gift. As you write out your Christmas cards, pray for them individually and tell them in your Christmas card that you have uplifted them in prayer.



Read the Christmas story during the busy season.

Flourishing in the Word

It is easy to allow the busyness of the season to push out the real reason for the season. Spend the month of December reading the Christmas story—including the prophecies of the Promised Messiah in the Old Testament.

Dec 1	Genesis 3:1-24	Dec 17	Luke 1:1-0
Dec 2	Genesis 12:1-3	Dec 18	Luke 1:11-25
Dec 3	Genesis 15:1-6	Dec 19	Luke 1:26-38
Dec 4	Genesis 26:1-6	Dec 20	Matthew 1:18-25
Dec 5	Genesis 28:10-22	Dec 21	Luke 1:39-45
Dec 6	Genesis 49:8-12	Dec 22	Luke 1:46-56
Dec 7	Psalms 72:1-14	Dec 23	Luke 1:57-66
Dec 8	Isaiah 7:1-14	Dec 24	Luke 1:67-80
Dec 9	Isaiah 9:1-7	Dec 25	Luke 2:1-7
Dec 10	Isaiah 11:1-10	Dec 26	Luke 2:8-20
Dec 11	Jeremiah 23:1-6	Dec 27	Luke 2:21-35
Dec 12	Micah 5:1-5	Dec 28	Luke 2:36-40
Dec 13	Malachi 3:1-3	Dec 29	Matthew 2:1-12
Dec 14	John 1:1-10	Dec 30	Matthew 2:13-23
Dec 15	John 1:11-18	Dec 31	Galatians 3:27-4:7
Dec 16	Matthew 1:1-17		

Flourishing Ideas from the Territory

Bakersfield, CA started a “5th Tuesday Craft Night.” Every time there is a 5th Tuesday in the month they will do a craft and have fellowship.

Hilo, HI started a new quarterly fellowship night to include the working women unable to attend the weekly WM program.

Homer, AK ladies have been busy serving by cleaning and maintaining the corps, as well as volunteering at the Food Pantry, and volunteering to cook for the VBS.

Medford, OR provided hygiene kits to the kids who went to camp as well as for people in their social services office.

Modesto, CA enjoyed some fellowship time over “Quilting Bingo.”

Sitka, AK played the card game, *SkipBo*, and there was so much laughter tears were rolling out of their eyes.

Reno, NV had a program led by Major Candi Frizzell all about Route 66.

Ridgecrest, CA started a Bible study featuring *The Chosen* video series.

Rita, M.I. have been busy and raised funds to visit their sister corps in Ebeye.

Roseburg, OR packed 30 hygiene bags to support homeless individuals. Each kit includes a resource guide to service and a Love Letter from God, encouraging engagement and activity.

Turlock, CA visited the new location of ‘Jessica’s House,’ an organization that provides compassionate help for those dealing with grief.

Ways to Slow Down This Christmas Season

Christmas is a busy time. If we aren't careful, we can rush right through Christmas and totally miss the reason for the season—the birth of our Savior, Jesus. Here are three ways to help you slow down this Christmas.

1. Schedule time daily for reading God's Word, prayer and worship. You fill your calendar with other to-do-items, make sure you put it in your calendar when you are going to have your daily quiet time with the Lord.
2. Plan your Christmas activities. There are lots of things happening this month, but you don't have to participate in all of them. Plan ahead of time what Christmas activities you will participate in this year, and which ones you will pass on.
3. Consciously slow down each day. Choose a time each day, where you will stop and be still. Perhaps it will be sitting in your living room simply staring at the Christmas tree lights as you slowly drink a cup of coffee or tea. Perhaps you will choose to listen to 1 or 2 of your favorite Christmas carols before getting out of your car. Schedule an hour for lunch and take the full hour to eat your food and enjoy the conversation.



“But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.” Galatians 4:4-5

Flourishing Fun in December

Here are ten fun ideas to help you flourish this December.

1. Attend a Christmas tree lighting.
2. Drive around and look at neighborhood Christmas lights.
3. Decorate Christmas cookies and organize a cookie exchange.
4. Decorate a gingerbread house.
5. Enjoy a winter nature walk.
6. Host a holiday game night.
7. Make an advent wreath and light a candle each Sunday in Advent.
8. Reflect on last year's resolutions.
9. Volunteer at The Salvation Army—stand kettles, help in the food bank, man an Angel Tree, help with Christmas distribution.
10. Watch holiday movies.

