

Happiness is not a once a year event.
Choose joy today!



MIRACLE ON 31ST STREET

CHRISTMAS CHEER EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR
GRINCH TO GRATITUDE IN 26 DAYS!

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WELCOME!

“Oh, Christmas isn't just a day. It's a frame of mind.”
—Kris Kringle, *Miracle on 34th Street*

Welcome, y'all! I'm so glad you are reading this sample chapter. First, let me give you a little overview of the book.

Miracle on 31st Street is about finding Christmas cheer every day of the year! Sadly, we tend to limit Christmas to the bleak mid-winter—to the twenty-four hours of Santa, packages, trees, and fruitcakes. Then, like good Puritan soldiers, we store our yuletide joy in the attic on December 26th and get back to “real” life. How sad, given that the Christmas spirit is something we desperately need all year long.

For 364 days a year, we are bombarded by stress, commitments, and demands. We face daily worries about our kids, our aging parents, our money, and our future. Every morning we wake up to news of tragedy, violence, and the inhumanity of the world. Yet on one day of the year—Christmas—we are reminded that as a people, we also carry a spark of hope and joy. These are gifts bestowed at birth but often forgotten as life attempts to beat them out of us. Christmas drops a hint of hope in our hearts. Even though it may get covered up or lost in the daily grind, it's ultimately a hint that stays with us, like the balsam tree needles we find six months later behind the couch.

The book is organized around the four themes of Advent: Hope, Peace, Love, and Joy. Each theme has six daily meditations. There are two additional reflections, one for Christmas Day and one for after Christmas. While the book is built upon a holiday motif, the lessons are universal and have year-round application.

All you have to do is declare that you need some Christmas spirit, designate a block of twenty-six days any time of the year, and spend a few moments each morning reading the meditations, answering the questions in your free journal workbook, and opening your Advent calendar surprise. Experts say you can form a new habit in twenty-one days; I've given you five extra just in case 😊 And what better habit to form than cultivating a pattern of self-care, gratitude, joy, and seeing the miracles in everyday life!

Okay, maybe hanging Christmas decorations and serving eggnog in July sounds a bit strange, but remembering and celebrating the spirit of Christmas in July, April, October, or December is not crazy at all. In fact, it's absolutely necessary!

Happiness is not a once-a-year event. Christmas is not just a twenty-four-hour holiday. It's a frame of mind. And to honor its gifts and blessings, we must attend to them with gratitude and choose joy all year long.

“I believe, I believe, I believe.” —Susan Walker, *Miracle on 34th Street*

SAMPLE CHAPTER

Am I Gonna Ride This Thing or Not?

“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” —Reinhold Niebuhr

“God give me the senility to forget the people I didn’t like anyway, the good fortune to run into the ones that I do, and the eyesight to tell the difference.” —The Senility Prayer

There are a lot of things that the Bible doesn’t tell us.

For instance, what did Jesus do between the ages of twelve and thirty?

Why did God create platypuses before people?

Or this question, with which I have struggled my entire adult life . . .

What did Mary say the split second after Joseph told her that at nine months pregnant, she had to ride a donkey ninety miles up a 2500-foot mountain from Nazareth to Bethlehem in order to answer questions for a census guy? (Luke 2:1-20)

While the Bible doesn’t tell us specifically, I don’t think God would mind if we read between the lines a little bit. In fact, in imagining what might have been said (and done), we may discover some important lessons of our own.

My best guess at what happened after Joseph’s shocking announcement? Mary turned, looked at the donkey, and thought to herself, “Am I gonna ride this thing or not?” In short, do I have a choice in this situation?

We should ask ourselves the same question when faced with difficult circumstances.

Sometimes the answers are crystal clear.

For example, do I need to go to IKEA and wait in line for three hours to buy a bookshelf that will take seventeen hours to put together because it will make my house look slightly more tidy when my relatives visit for thirty minutes?

Answer: No, I'm not riding this.

Do I need to get one more gift for cousin Lu Lu because her stocking looks slightly thinner than cousin Ned's?

Answer: No, I'm not riding this.

Do I need to respond to that personal slight from my work colleague, friend, or family member?

Answer: No, I'm not riding this. (FYI, not everything requires our response.)

These are the easy situations, the ones in which we have full power to say "no."

But sometimes the answers are not so easy. Sometimes we are faced with situations completely out of our control.

Do I have to face down this pandemic?

Answer: Yes, I have to ride this.

Do I have to deal with this grief after my loved one's death?

Answer: Yes, I have to ride this.

Or for Mary, do I have to ride this donkey 90 miles up a 2500-foot mountain?

Answer: Yes, I have to ride this.

Once she realized she had to ride, Mary probably said a second thing to herself: "Better find some padding." Maybe she put a blanket on the donkey, or perhaps she made Joseph shave a sheep to make her a fluffy pillow. Whatever it was, a little padding goes a long way toward easing a bumpy ride—for Mary and for us.

We can find padding in all sorts of places. One source is connecting with people. There's an Ethiopian saying, "When spiders unite, they can tie down a lion." We are all connected through the common web of our humanity. And there is a power in that connection—in feeling part of something. Leverage that power by reaching out to loved ones, friends, and neighbors. Make a phone call, send an email, write a letter. Remember, we are stronger together.

Another place to find padding is perspective. Ask yourself, what is the long view here? What truly matters to me? When I was learning to ride a bike for the first time, my Dad always said, "If you look down, you'll go down." It's also good advice in life. Fixing your gaze up on the goal and not down on the crisis will help you stay balanced and moving forward.

There is a third thing I'm sure happened on that journey (although again, scripture doesn't say it): Mary prayed constantly. I've often wondered if that trip to Bethlehem marked the invention of the rosary. For every step the donkey took, Mary was probably counting the hairs on his neck, praying each time, "Have mercy."

Sometimes we, too, may feel that way. We hope and pray that every difficult step we take will be the last. We may even think we can't go any further. But when we raise our voices in prayer like Mary did, every angel in heaven comes flying to our aid, and we access a power beyond our pain.

There are things in this life over which we have no control—things that we simply have to get on and ride. But there is a silver lining: if we are riding, we are climbing. And every step we take is a step closer to Bethlehem.

In the end, you never know what can come out of a difficult ride.

Renewed hope? New life? Maybe even a messiah.

Enjoy the chapter? Purchase the book [HERE!](#)

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