

Do you have special memories about the Christmases of your childhood? I do. I remember simple things that made Christmas special when I was a child. I remember the yearly contest that my brother and I had to see who could find the biggest sock (not stocking) to hang on the mantel. I remember going to the “Christmas tree lot” with my dad. We could not go too early in the month or the tree would become dry before Christmas. I remember the life-sized Nativity scene in front of our church and Santa at church-wide parties. I remember helping decorate the tree that stood in front of the picture window.

In the many years since my childhood, Christmas has become so much “bigger.” Homes are decorated in every room and with more stuff. The outsides of houses are elaborate. There are more parties to attend. Stockings are beautiful and all the same large size. Because the trees are artificial, they can last forever. Santa is in every mall and on every corner. The season lasts two frenzied months.

It is no wonder that the majority of people find the holidays stressful. Christmas should not be a time of stress, but of joy. We are celebrating our Savior’s birthday! The only way that we can find joy in the miracle of Christmas is to back away from the commercialization of the season.

Although it is not easy, there are some ways to slow the frantic pace we have adopted. List all the activities you want to do in order of importance and eliminate the bottom third of the list. Shorten the season to two weeks. Get the whole family involved in the preparation. Downsize the food thereby eliminating the need for a January diet. Downsize the giving of Christmas gifts and upsize the giving of birthday gifts. Start some traditions that your family will remember. Build some special memories that your children can tell their grandchildren.

When my grandchildren are adults I want them to remember two things about the Christmases that they celebrated at my home. I want them to remember that we really did celebrate Christ’s birthday. And I want them to remember that we had fun and laughed until our sides hurt.

I do not care if they remember the food, the decorations or the gifts. Yes, there will be special food, decorations and gifts. However, it will be downplayed to the point that the important things are what my family will remember.