

Un-Grinching

Keeping Christmas Light-Hearted

December 7, 2025



Today we're learning how our **heart conditions affect our living conditions**. Cuz how we *feel* about what's *going on*, defines how we *see* the world we're *living in*. And since *that* means joy is a state of *mind* more than a *state of affairs* – we should *all* ask ourselves: **do I need an attitude adjustment?**



And there's no better *time* to ask, cuz **that's the moral of almost every Christmas movie**: Scrooge doesn't *change* his *past*, he *changes* his *heart* to *redeem* his *future*; Kevin doesn't get a new *family*, his heart gets a new *appreciation* for the one he *has*; George Bailey doesn't give up his *life*, he gives up his old, *misguided* heart; and the Grinch doesn't *steal* Christmas, he *gains* the *perspective* that grows his heart *two* sizes!



So why every movie? **Christmas is about Christ coming to heal hearts**; and try as we might, **we can't escape God's true meaning and message!** In fact, *that's* the Christmas story – God's Word came here on a rescue mission to *chase us down* after we went away. So, don't you dare *think* there's *any* part of *this world* or *your life* where He's *not* at work – cuz whether it's movie *watching*, cookie *baking*, or gift *shopping* – Jesus just *can't* be *removed* from Christmas – cuz for the record, **He's always been in charge of the secular world, too!** And regardless of how *hard* we try to *disguise*, *revise*, and *commercialize* Christmas, it *still* shares *more* than good *vibes*; it *spreads* the *Good News*! Say the word "Christmas" and you're helping *sneak* "Christ" and His *mission* into each conversation. Call it "X-mas" and you're *teaching* church *history* since "X" is just the *Greek shorthand* for Christ that *Christians* have used forever. And try to *reduce* to a *generic* "Happy Holidays," and you're *still* encouraging celebration of Christian "Holy-days" since *that's* where *that* word came from. But above *all* – all the *improved attitudes* raised by *earthly gifts* and *gratitude* – are just *shadows*, *hinting* at the *comfort* and *joy* in God's gift of loving *grace*.



[But even Christmas *shadows* point us *back to the light*! So,] Don't be *deceived*, my dear brothers and sisters. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down *from the Father* of the heavenly lights, who *does not change* like shifting shadows. – James 1:16-18 NIV

[Cuz, you see,] [Jesus] said, "*I am the light of the world.*" [And,] – John 8:12 NIV

Jesus Christ is the *same* yesterday and today and forever. – Hebrews 13:8 NIV

Which means, *so is Christmas*; even if we wrongly *think* we have the power to *change* what it means. Cuz **we can't change God's truth – we can only change how we feel about it**; our authority over *reality* is limited to our *heart*. And how we *feel* about something hinges on how we *see* it. So, when we focus on *any* one of the shifting *shadows* of Christmas – we're still getting a *sense* of the Light, but we're missing out on seeing the *source* of all the earthly things we *love*. And *that's* just a *shame*!

[Cuz settling for less than a *perfect* Christmas present means] This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light. – John 3:19 NIV

Why do we do that?! Why do we love the lesser message of Christmas movies but refuse to seek the higher meaning from the Source of all our Christmas satisfaction? Well, the truth is:

People loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light – John 3:19-21 NIV



You ever meet one of your heroes? It's *terrifying*! I've done it a couple of times with *comedians* who I loved – and while I *watch* their specials, I find myself *thinking*, “*Yeah, we get it. We’re the same – both hilarious and brilliant.*” But, when it comes time to *talk*, I sound more like, “*Me funny like you – smart too!*” and I’m suddenly *aware* of the difference between the *real deal* and a *wannabe*. It’s humbling.



And *that’s* why we like to *avoid* the *light* – **shadows let us see what we want to see**. But we become *vulnerable* to the truth the second we step into the *light*. And in the same way I can let myself *believe* I’m the funniest man alive as long as I *avoid* being around *funnier* people – **we can only believe our truth if we avoid the Truth**. So we *do*. And we stick to celebrating the *parts* of God’s truth that *don’t* challenge *our* truth – cuz whether it’s our *marriage*, our *money*, or this *Christmas*, the big humbling truth that we’re all *avoiding* is this: **I’m the problem**.

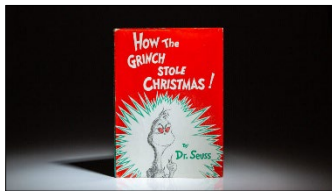


And **we’d much rather believe I’m the victim** – cuz that makes our *circumstances* the problem. And *then*, the *only* thing that needs to *change* – is everything else *except me*. So, we don’t *really* entertain the idea of an *attitude* adjustment like we *should*. Instead, we assume a lack of *comfort* and *joy* means a *lack* of *fun* and *games* – and we aim the *adjustments* at the material matters of our *circumstances*. We *relocate*, *redecorate*, *rehydrate*, and *re-medicate* till we feel *better*; cuz **focusing on shadows of problems lets us believe in shallow answers**.



For instance, I hope that this *does* come as a surprise to *most* of you – but I used to be a *cynical*, *angry*, and *condescending*, jerk. And it’s only since I met my wife that I became remotely *tolerable* or *nice*. *But* – aside from her calming *presence*, she brought *another* big *change* into my life. Size 13 shoes. Because up until *she* went shopping with me, I always bought size 10 or 11 – and just figured “***That’s shoes for you.***” So, when she made me actually *measure* and buy the *right* size – the *heavens* opened and a choir of angels *sang*! Which *allowed me* to *believe* that I was a much *better* person than I thought – cuz maybe my *bad attitude* was just a symptom of a *bad circumstances*! After all, I read a lot on behavioral *sciences* and they’re always connecting *complex outcomes* to staggeringly *simple origins*. For instance, did you know people holding a warm cup of coffee rate a *stranger* more “*warm and friendly*” than people holding *iced* coffee? So, maybe we’re all victims of circumstance! Cuz if *coffee* temperature can affect *relationships* – why *wouldn’t* tight shoes decide our *attitude*?

Well, cuz there's *more* to the story. I mean, if *earthly experience* really *did* affect us the *most* – why are there so many stories of *lotto winners cursing their millions*, *cancer survivors praising their suffering*, and good *Christians* somehow feeling *anxiety* and *harmony simultaneously*?!



At some point, **we have to admit the truth runs deeper**. But who knew it would be Dr. Seuss who diagnosed my delusion? **"The Grinch hated Christmas! The whole Christmas season! Now, please *don't* ask *why*. No one quite knows the *reason*. It could be his *head* wasn't screwed on just right. It could be, perhaps *his shoes were too tight*. But I think that the most *likely* reason of all – May have been that his *heart was two sizes too small*."** And that's *more* than one of Seuss's insightful blurbs – it's the source of *all* struggle, says the book of Proverbs:



Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.
– Proverbs 4:23 NIV



So **how's your heart?** Cuz *without* intervention, our *default* is to *settle* for *shallow* shadows – that's why we see so much **"Resting Grinch Face"** during the Christmas season we *claim* to enjoy. And the Bible actually has a *name* for that default setting *behind* RGF; it calls it our *old self*.



[And] You were taught ... to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its *deceitful* desires **[for shadows]**; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the *new self*, created to be like God in true *righteousness* and *holiness*. – Ephesians 4:22-24 NIV



And when *your heart* is having its *Christmas movie makeover* – you'll know, cuz you'll *hear* the *renewed* attitude in what your *new self* says,

For the *mouth* speaks what the *heart* is full of. – Matthew 12:34 NIV

And *that's* always our *favorite* part of the movie: Scrooge throws a coin at some kid and tells him to go buy a *fat goose*; Kevin wishes for his family *back*; George Bailey says, **"Isn't it wonderful?! I'm going to jail!"**; and the *Grinch* thought of something he *hadn't* before! **"Maybe Christmas,"** he thought, **"doesn't come from a store. Maybe Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more!"**

And yet, while we all love watching *their hearts* change right *in front of us* – the *real* question is: **do we actually expect that kind of change in us?** Cuz like we said a few weeks ago, there's a *battle* for *your heart* – and the enemy *doesn't* have to *destroy* you, he just has to *distract* you. And if he can keep your *heart* focused on your *situation* instead of your Savior – he can keep you in the shifting *shadows* and *out* of the Christmas *lights*.

Cuz, unfortunately, **circumstances often override our heart**. And even when we *aim* our efforts at recognizing the *real* reason for the season, all the holiday *planning*, *parties*, and *pounds* start to weigh *us* and our *attitudes* down – and *out* of the light. So, what do we *do*? Well, the *obvious* answer is, **our heart needs to override our circumstances** – but *that's* a pretty *tall* order. It has to be *strong*, *steady*, and *situation-proof*. And luckily, Pauls got the *secret* to *that* kind of success:

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through Him who gives me strength. – Philippians 4:10-14 NIV

Y'see, Paul's plan is to be strong enough on the *inside* – that he can handle anything that happens on the *outside*. And he's saying **the secret to having a heart that can override your circumstances is having it filled with a truth that can overcome the world.** Which is where *Jesus* comes in!

[Cuz He said:] I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. – John 16:33 NIV

I mean, the *premise* of the *promise* couldn't be any *simpler*: **We can have peace in the world when we have Jesus in our heart.** And that's *not* just wishful *thinking*; that's what God actually did in us:



For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. – 2 Corinthians 4:6 NIV



In other words, God doesn't just send light *to us* – He lights something *in us*. Which is why **joy doesn't happen to you; it happens in you.**

[And it's why Paul also says:] For you were once *darkness*, but now you are *light* in the Lord. [So,] Live as children of light – Ephesians 5:8 NIV



Cuz children of *light* have taken the *humble* and *vulnerable* step *into* the light – and discovered how their *own heart* has held them *back*. And nowadays, *psychologists* have a *term* for the condition: **miswanting**. And it just means we're really *bad* at knowing what *will* make us *happy*. Cuz we write these little *mental* movies that *focus* on a set of *shallow circumstances* that we *make* ourselves *believe* will somehow *lead* to joy: **"This year, if the kids don't fight; and if we buy the right presents; and if the dinner is delicious, nobody drinks too much, the pictures look good, and the Seahawks win... then, it'll be the best Christmas ever!"** But the *real* story is, **"My circumstances are holding my heart hostage."**

And *that's* a recipe for going *full-Grinch* – cuz it *lets* all the noise, noise, **NOISE, NOISE** jeopardize all God's joys, joys, **JOYS, JOYS!** So, if you hear your *inner-Grinch* *grumbling* – use *Paul's* secret to adjust your *attitude*: **stop trying to change your circumstances and start changing your heart!** Stop where you are and step *away* from *that* shadow of the season and *reconnect* with the *real* Reason. Seriously, **let go.** buy one less *present*, cook one less *dish*, or attend one less *party* the *second* it feels more *stressing* than *blessing*. And then **ask the Lord to reveal what you're missing.**

That's *your* big *movie* moment where you get to adjust your attitude and un-Grinch your heart. And it's how you truly learn: **Christmas comes without ribbons and it comes without tags – and it comes without packages, boxes, or bags.** Rather, it comes the *same* way that it has from the *start* – with *Christ* on a mission to *rescue* our *heart*! So, step *back* from the *spending* and *stressing* and *fights* – and step *closer* to the *Father* of heavenly *lights*! Just *remember* our Lord's what each shadow's *about* – and your *light-heart* will lead *beyond* the *shadow of doubt*!

Father God, thank You for loving me in spite of my sin; forgive me and cleanse me by the sacrifice of Your Son, my Savior; and free me and lead me by Your Spirit and Word, as I seek to trust and follow Jesus Christ, as the Lord of my life. Amen.