



STEWARDING *Christmas*

Restoring the Peace and Joy
of the Christmas Season



R. Scott Rodin &
Lindsay Kittleson





Introduction

Do any of these comments about Christmas sound familiar?

- I love Christmas but not the stress of trying to make everything perfect.
- We always seem to overspend and then regret it in January.
- I hope our family can just get along this Christmas.
- I hate the thought of walking through the malls trying to find the ‘perfect gift.’
- I’m already tired just thinking of all the cooking, baking and decorating.
- I used to love Christmas but lately the ‘magic’ seems to have disappeared.
- It’s getting harder to find Jesus at Christmas; it is becoming so secular.
- I sing the carols and go through the motions, but I’ve lost the joy of Christmas.
- We lost a loved one at Christmas and now the holiday is harder to celebrate.
- I am alone this Christmas and I don’t see how it will be very joyful.
- Christmas? I’ll just be glad when it’s over.

If you can relate to any of these, then this book is for you. This is a book about how to ‘steward Christmas.’ If you’re not sure what that term means, take heart, we are going to learn it together.

For the past 15 years I have been writing and speaking on the topic of the life of the faithful steward. I’ve tried to be comprehensive in my writing, looking at the steward’s journey from every possible perspective of life. That includes how we steward our relationship with God, with our self, with our neighbor and with the created world around us. I thought I had considered this call to be faithful stewards from about every possible perspective.

But I never considered what it meant to be a steward of Christmas.

Last year in the middle of the Christmas season I ran headlong into my own hypocrisy. I was finishing a major article on ‘the freedom and joy of a faithful steward.’ At the same time I was frantically rushing around trying to accomplish all of the things on my Christmas to-do list. I was humming "O tidings of comfort

and joy" while managing my blood pressure trying to find an elusive parking spot at the mall. I was listening to a stirring rendition of "Joy to the world! The Lord has come, let earth receive her King," while attempting to put up all of our outside lights in the one hour I had allotted for the four-hour task.

When Christmas finally arrived there was more relief than rejoicing. What happened? What had gotten me to the point of ushering in the birth of the Prince of Peace by engaging in a three-week process of chaos and turmoil?

Then I remembered all of the 'owner-steward' stuff I have been writing about. I've been preaching that, "owners want to control things and end up with stress and anxiety while stewards give up control, trust God and are blessed with freedom and joy." It works in every area of our life...

...but Christmas?

Could celebrating Christmas fit into this steward paradigm? And if so, what was there to be learned from it? I believe a great deal.

Our goal this year is to steward Christmas and this little booklet is our way of inviting you into that journey. My walking partner is my daughter Lindsay. This will be her first Christmas as a mother, which will add a new degree of challenge and stress to an already busy season. But Lindsay has been a champion of simple living and creation care. So she and I together are going to share with you what the journey might look like once the last Tupperware container of Thanksgiving stuffing has been consumed and thoughts turn to the Yuletide season.

Our prayer for you, and for us, is that this Christmas season might be different, even radically different than what we have experienced for a long time. This journey involves both a change of heart and a change of hands. We will propose a new attitude, a new view of this entire Christmas season that we pray will result in both freedom and joy. And we will share some ideas on how you can employ your hands in creating for yourself and, if appropriate, for your family a richer, deeper and more meaningful Christmas season.



Part One



Navigating the Christmas 'Mine' Field

So what's all this talk about being a steward? Here's a simple way to explain it. We live our lives from one of two viewpoints; as an owner or as a steward. We do this in every area of life.

We live life as an owner when we believe that the stuff around us really does belong to us. We live as if we own our material possessions, our time, our money, and even our relationships. As owners we naturally want to have control of our life and all the things that affect it. Ownership and control are two sides of the same coin. They are both based on the belief that the more we possess and the more power we have, the happier and more secure we will be. We call this our 'mine' field. This attitude has a powerful affect on the way we celebrate, and enjoy Christmas (or not).

Stewards have a radically different view. They believe that everything belongs to God, everything! They also believe that God has given us everything we need in the form of a gift. Because life in all its dimensions is a gift from a loving God and not a possession we can claim to own, we are freed to live as faithful stewards in service of the one true Owner. What we don't own we don't seek to control. Instead we surrender it all back to its rightful Owner.

Both viewpoints have consequences. The reward for a life of ownership and control is bondage. That includes stress, fear, anxiety, despair, discouragement and even depression. The more we seek to own things the more things own us. And that can include time, experiences, and even holidays.

For the steward, the reward for a life of surrender and trust is freedom and joy. The freedom comes from knowing that everything we have is in God's hands; it all belongs to him. And He is faithful, trustworthy, loving and sufficient. The joy comes from the opportunity to be in His service, faithfully stewarding all the wonderful blessings He gives us. And that should include the holidays.

Our conclusion is this, **we will either own or steward Christmas this year.** Which will you choose? Here's a quick comparison of attitudes and actions to help you decide.

Owners are in bondage to time. They never have enough of it, and they feel pressured to squeeze as much into it as possible.

Stewards see time as a gift and seek God's leading on how best to use it. Time serves them, not the other way around.

Owners are in bondage to the expectations of others. They fear letting people down so they spend their time and energy pleasing others.

Stewards seek first to please God and follow His leading. They love and serve their family and friends, but they do so in the freedom of having their first allegiance to God.

Owners are in bondage to stuff. They try to find happiness in accumulating things and they tie their self-image to what they own or accomplish.

Stewards have been set free to find their full satisfaction and joy in Christ, and in that freedom they reject the temptation of amassing stuff in search of happiness.

Owners are in bondage to the desire for control. They believe that if they can exercise power over the inputs of their life, they can control the outcomes for their own benefit.

Stewards surrender all control back to God (He has it anyway) and enjoy the freedom of trusting Him and following Him, knowing He wants the very best for them.

Owners are in bondage to the service of self. They may look like they are giving and caring, but in their heart they are 'curved in,' constantly seeking what is best for themselves. As owners they can't really approach life any other way.

Stewards are 'curved outward.' Because they trust God to be their provider they can give themselves away in serving others with joy. They don't need to be looking out for themselves, God is their full provision.

What does this look like when we prepare to celebrate Christmas?

Owners will never have enough time to do everything they feel is demanded of them by others and by their own sense of what is needed for Christmas to be 'successful.' Therefore, they will try to control all they can to be sure things turn out the way they want. They will feel frustrated when things don't go as planned.

They will expect others to behave well and they will try to control relationships to be sure everyone is happy and gets along. They will have the very best of intentions but feel empty even when their efforts meet expectations. They will be left somewhat unsatisfied with the presents they bought and will dread the January bills. In the end, owners will sense a loss of the true meaning of Christmas and wonder how Jesus went missing in all the work of celebrating His birth.

Stewards will embrace Christmas by starting at the manger. They will surrender their time to God and seek His leading for how best to use it. They will define 'Christmas success' as a season of faithfulness. They will be driven by doing those things that glorify God even if it does not meet the expectations of others. They will value service over busyness and giving over buying. They will trust God to lead and provide at every level. That means seeking honesty in relationships rather than painting a veneer of 'getting along' over unstated issues. They are free to let God do the work and follow His lead regardless of where it takes them. In all these ways, stewards will keep Christ at the center and allow the messiness of human frailty to be part of a Christmas celebration that leads everyone to the manger.

Which approach to Christmas will you choose?



Part Two



Three Traps to Avoid

We will spend most of the rest of this book talking about the choice to steward Christmas, but we must first be clear what it looks like to own Christmas. Here are three traps we must avoid if we are to be stewards and not owners of Christmas. See if these don't look all too familiar.

Trap #1 - Pursuing of the Perfect Christmas

A Clark Griswold Christmas

Perhaps no one better typifies an owner of Christmas than Clark W. Griswold, the beleaguered suburbanite from the movie *Christmas Vacation*. All Clark wants is to create the perfect Christmas for his family. And so he takes the entire holiday on his shoulders and drives everyone crazy in his quest for yuletide perfection. Of course, everything goes terribly wrong. The more control he wields, the less he has. At the lowest point when the disaster is at full peak, Clark gives his famous (and a bit off-color, so I edited it for our use) speech to a family in full retreat,

Where do you think you're going? Nobody's leaving. Nobody's walking out on this fun, old-fashioned family Christmas. No, no. We're all in this together. This is a full-blown, four-alarm holiday emergency here. We're gonna press on, and we're gonna have the hap, hap, happiest Christmas since Bing Crosby tap-danced with Danny Kaye. And when Santa squeezes his fat self down that chimney tonight, he's gonna find the jolliest bunch of idiots this side of the nuthouse.

We laugh at the movie, but we can probably all relate to unfulfilled expectations and holiday disappointments. The point in the movie is that it is expectations, not reality that disappoints. When we paint a picture of the perfect Christmas in our minds, we set ourselves up for failure and frustration. If we are to be stewards of Christmas the first step is to manage our expectations and refuse to get caught up in the 'perfect, snow-globe Christmas' trap.

Stewarding Christmas means being set free from this pursuit of perfection. It means letting the imperfections be a natural part of your holiday. It means finding your source of joy in serving the King and letting nothing, and no one, steal it from you.

Trap #2 – Living Up to the Expectations of Others

My Pastor Hates Christmas

A former pastor of mine confessed, privately, that he really hated Christmas. His reason was simple – expectations. Everyone in the congregation held high expectations for the various Yuletide events, and the pastor was responsible to fulfill them all. 200 different views on how the tree should be trimmed, which carols should be sung, who should play Mary in the pageant and whether the poinsettias should be on the altar or in the narthex. In the end, no one is entirely happy except the pastor – when it is all over.

If setting our own expectations too high can relegate us to a season of frustration and stress, attempting to live up to the expectations of others can put us over the top. Think about what people expect of you this Christmas. Do they count on you to select the perfect gifts, cook the perfect meals, decorate the perfect house, or perform the perfect worship service? Are you the person people will look to for the tear-jerking prayer or the heart-warming children's story on Christmas eve? Are you expected to play the peacemaker between rivaling siblings or the creator of the unforgettable Christmas candy?

It can be fun to play traditional roles and strive to meet some expectations, but this can become a trap that instills in us more anxiety than joy. When we feel the mounting pressure of the expectations of others as the holiday approaches, we have fallen prey to this second trap.

Stewarding Christmas means embracing your traditions without becoming enslaved to them. It means laughing at your mistakes and not taking yourself, or the expectations of others too seriously. It means spending Christmas with the satisfaction that comes from the applause that is heard from two little, holy hands.

Trap #3 – Everyone Will be Different at Christmas

Norman Vincent Peale wrote, "Christmas waves a magic wand over this world, and behold, everything is softer and more beautiful." Okay, I like Norman Vincent Peale, but I have to disagree with him on this one. In fact, it is this kind of

expectation that can leave us feeling so empty. It happened to me when I was about 15 years old. It was the age when you start to see people in your family for who they really are rather than the persona you had built for them as you were growing up. I started to see the cracks in the family structure, and I became aware of a sub-plot of relational dysfunction that had gone unnoticed in the former magic of the ‘softer and more beautiful Christmas trance’ of childhood.

I still fight it every year. I still fall into the trap of believing that Christmas will create its own space, a yuletide safety zone where, at least for a few days or maybe weeks, the cares and dysfunctions of the world will magically be held at bay. I still hold out for the Christmas cocoon into which I can take shelter and celebrate without the intrusion of life’s realities. In my safe Christmas chrysalis family tensions never flare up, everyone loves the food and presents and the whole family gets along splendidly.

Of course, they don’t. While Christmas may bring out a certain level of improved behavior and a more generous spirit, in the end, people will be who they are, warts and all. Including me. When we hold each other to a higher, mostly unreachable standard just because it’s Christmas, we have fallen into this third trap. And anxiety, anger and disappointment will surely follow.

Stewarding Christmas means letting people be people and loving them for it. It means embracing your family’s dysfunction and releasing your desire to control it or change it or just keep it under the surface. It means the freedom to love others for who they are, cherishing relationships as gifts and letting Christmas be a celebration of the God who created us for relationships, warts and all.

The Core of the Problem - The Lure of Unattainable Control

The bait for these traps is the unrealistic assumption that we can determine outcomes by controlling inputs. If we just create the right Christmas setting we will generate Christmas joy. If we buy more expensive presents the kids will be happier and get along. If we put up a manger scene and go to church on Christmas Eve to hold our little candle and sing ‘Silent Night,’ our hearts – on queue – will be overwhelmed with the joy of celebrating the birth of Jesus.

If we...if we...if we...

And there you have it. Christmas becomes a process of manipulating inputs – what we can control – in order to assure outcomes – what we cannot control. When the reality hits and we learn the truth that there is no cause and effect, we begin the slow decline into holiday discouragement. We find that no matter how diligently and lovingly we manage inputs (think over-decorating, finding the ideal tree, cooking the best meals, baking everyone’s favorites, buying the perfect gifts, throwing the best parties, and creating the most accurate Norman Rockwell living room setting), we just cannot control and assure the outcomes we desire.

We can face this reality as an owner or as a steward. For too long I have let an ownership attitude create a growing frustration in my spirit. Clark Griswold and I have a lot in common. The more I wanted the perfect outcomes, the more I tried to manipulate the inputs. And every year the result was the same; exhaustion and disappointment. Have you been there?

Thank God there is a better way. We can, instead, look at this problem through the lens of a steward. What we see is simple but liberating! We lovingly undertake our preparations in ways that please and honor God. Then we trust Him and praise Him for the outcomes – all of them, always! That is the steward’s ‘secret sauce.’



How would Jesus have you celebrate His birthday? What kind of party would He like you to throw for Him? What would be its focus and how would He want everyone to feel both at the party and in the time of preparing for it? And in the end, what would He hope everyone would take away from the celebration?

That is our goal as stewards of Christmas – a celebration that honors Him. Have you strayed far away from a Christmas season that honors God in answer to these questions? It's time to return. It's time to steward Christmas.

To do so, we propose we start by 'rediscovering' three important parts of a truly Jesus-centered celebration. Consider these your first steps in preparing to celebrate this Christmas as a faithful, joyful steward.

Step #1 – Start at the End: Rediscover the Love of Christmas

As you can tell, I love Christmas. I always have. In my childhood, Christmas was the magical season every kid hopes it will be. Not because we were wealthy, we weren't. But there was just something about the season, the way my parents celebrated it and the way it made me feel that ensconced it in my heart as my favorite time of year.

I will also admit that there have been times in the last several years where I had to search hard to find that same magic. As a father and now a grandfather we still do all of the traditional things we love, but the cares of the world, the daily frustrations of life and the ever present challenges of strained relationships and unmet expectations have made some parts of Christmas more of a forced discipline than liberating celebration.

One moment last year jarred me deeply, and I plan for it to be my central driving image for this Christmas season. I was sitting in my chair in our Norman Rockwell decorated great room; stunning Christmas tree, eleven stockings hung over a crackling fire, Christmas cookies baking, hot cocoa in my hand and a dog at my feet. I was warm, cozy, full, pampered and content, well sort of. I had mindlessly found a TV channel showing the Radio City Music Hall Rockettes doing their annual Christmas show. The music was wonderful, but in all of the costumes, glitz and glamour I was trying to find a center, a reason and a purpose for it all.

In the midst of a rousing rendition of "Rocking Around the Christmas Tree," I heard the wind begin to howl. I looked outside our great room windows. To share with you what I saw let me take a moment and set the scene.

For the past several years one of my favorite activities in preparing for Christmas is setting up a large nativity scene on our property. Three Ponderosa pines provide the perfect backdrop where bales of straw are carefully stacked to provide the walls and sides of the little family's natal dwelling. Some two-by-fours and



cedar fencing create the look of a stable and straw is strewn around to create the full effect. And there in the middle is a large angel with outstretched wings standing next to a Bethlehem star lit up in small white lights. In front of her is all the usual cast of characters; three wise men, two shepherds, five sheep, and in the middle Mary, Joseph, and little baby Jesus in a straw-filled manger. A single floodlight illuminates the entire display perfectly. From anywhere in our great room or kitchen you can look out the window and see the scene so quiet and peaceful.

On this night, however, three inches of snow had preceded a gusty wind that took the temperatures down into single digits. With the wind chill it was 10 degrees below zero. For us that meant adding a heavier comforter and stoking the fire. But on this night, when I looked out to see my happy manger scene, the icy wind was causing little baby Jesus in the manger to wobble. I didn't want it to fall over so I got up and took a step out onto our deck. As much as I love cold weather, the chill was so biting I chose to stay inside. I went back to my chair and sat looking back-and-forth between Christmas at Radio City Music Hall and a little baby Jesus holding on for dear life in the icy wind of a dark Spokane winter night.

Something about that scene touched a place deep inside me, and to my surprise, I started to cry. I don't mean quiet little tears and a snuffle, I mean real crying, almost sobbing. I was moved deeply at the thought that out there in that snow and wind is my Lord and Savior. His first breath, first cry could not have come in a more humble, vulnerable and unpretentious way. How striking was the contrast between the glaring lights, gaudy costumes and lifeless songs of a New York stage and the little baby shivering in the cold, alone...and full of grace and truth. Even more striking is that Christmas is all about the latter and not at all about the former.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said it so powerfully,

Only the humble believe him and rejoice that God is so free and so marvelous that he does wonders where people despair, that he takes what is little and lowly and makes it marvelous. And that is the wonder of all wonders, that God loves the lowly... God is not ashamed of the lowliness of human beings. God marches right in. He chooses people as his instruments and performs his wonders where one would least expect them. God is near to lowliness; he loves the lost, the neglected, the unseemly, the excluded, the weak and broken. [God Is in the Manger: Reflections on Advent and Christmas]

Stewarding Christmas requires humility. So here is our first step on our journey; start at the end. I used to think of Christmas as a four-week journey to the manger. Now I believe that to steward Christmas in a God-pleasing way means starting at the manger and letting everything else find its place accordingly. When you begin at the side of that shivering child who came to earth for you, you have the right perspective to consider how best to honor him as a steward of Christmas.

Step #2 – Wonder: Rediscover the Incarnation

The word 'incarnation' may sound lofty and theological, but it defines the deepest expression of humility, love and mercy. It is a powerful and grace-filled word. If we are to steward Christmas we must not miss its significance.

Here is a short definition of 'incarnation' – God took on Himself everything that separated us from Him in order to destroy it and save us for Himself. Paul writes,

“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness.” (Colossians 2:9)

When God became one of us in the Bethlehem manger, a great exchange took place. Paul writes, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.” (2 Corinthians 8:9)

When God takes on our sin through this amazing cosmic act of love and grace, the doors to His throne room are thrown wide open. “[Jesus] has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” (Hebrews 4:15-16)

Here is the most important statement we will make in this little book: **the incarnation is the greatest event in the history of the human race!**

What could be greater than the selfless, loving act of becoming one with the world in order to save it from destruction? What greater act of love could be performed for us than the humble descent of the Creator of the universe into the diapers and dependence of a baby in a barn? What could be more awesome than the extraordinary act of love that united humanity with divinity and set the stage for the miracles, cross, resurrection and, ultimately, the victory of the final coming of Jesus Christ?

This Christmas we encourage you to set aside all that drives you to be an owner and journey through this season as a steward who embraces the wonder and joy of this simple name – Immanuel, which means ‘God with us’. In order to do so you will need to:

1. **Name Your Distractions** – when you know what they are God can help you overcome them.
2. **Confront Your Doubts** – pray away the nagging voice of the enemy and replace it with the assurances and promises of God.
3. **Release Your Fears** – lay everything at the manger and rise up to embrace Christmas with victory and freedom.
4. **Relinquish Your Pride** – make Christmas about God’s gift and set aside every temptation to let pride grab the spotlight.

5. **Revisit the Nativity** – stand afresh at the manger, look into the eyes of the humble King who came knowing the cross was his future...all for you!
6. **Claim Your Freedom** – in Jesus' name claim the freedom Christ won for you, freedom from the stress, anxiety and fears of the owner.
7. **Know His Peace** – if you will seek after Jesus with all your heart, your newfound freedom will well up in the peace we always sing about, "Peace on earth good will to men, Christ is born in Bethlehem."

Once a year all across the planet people stop to celebrate, honor, remember and worship that one amazing act of love we call the Incarnation. For that reason alone, Christmas should be the highest and holiest day of the year for all of us who follow Jesus. When we allow the Holy Spirit to overwhelm us with the wonder of the Incarnation, we are prepared to love, and steward, Christmas.

Step #3 – Traditions: Rediscover the Treasures in the Traditions

How often do we just go through the Christmas motions without stopping long enough to discover the purpose and treasures that they contain? We sing carols without listening to the words, buy presents without pondering their meaning, and hang stockings on our mantle somewhat mindless of how the tradition started and why it matters. To steward Christmas we must not miss what God wants to say to us in and through these deeply loved traditions. Here are three treasures that lie waiting to be recovered in our traditions.

The Treasures in the Carols

There is a joke in our family about how early various members start listening to Christmas carols. I try to discipline myself to wait for the Monday after Thanksgiving, but there are some in our clan who believe that once the calendar is turned to November 1, it is time to Deck the Halls.

We have a local radio station that plays Christmas music non-stop from December 1st to the end of Christmas Day. That's a lot of hours to fill. So they have reached deep into the 'holiday' songs archives and play, well, some pretty awful stuff. How about these classics;

Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer

It's a Funky, Funky Christmas

Christmas Conga

I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas
Have a Cheeky Christmas
Ragin, Cajun Redneck Christmas
Please Daddy, Don't Get Drunk This Christmas

And there's a LOT more. It gets hard to wade through the schlocky clutter to get to songs that inspire, enthrall and endear. But we must.

So many of our most beloved carols are filled with rich meaning and truth. Our challenge is to take time this Christmas to listen, really listen to those carols that point you to the manger, the Savior and the love of God. Even better, read the words and be sure to include all verses. Here are some examples of what treasures lie waiting for you in songs you have been singing for years.

From 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing'

Veil'd in flesh, the Godhead see;
Hail, th'incarnate Deity:
Pleased, as man, with men to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel!

Perhaps nowhere in all Christmas music are the themes of incarnation and the Great Exchange more beautifully expressed. The carol goes on:

Mild he lays his glory by,
Born that man no more may die:
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.

Salvation, resurrection, redemption, new birth, hope and joy...they are all here. And what makes this glad tiding possible is the previous verse where we 'hail the incarnate deity'. Charles Wesley got it right when he penned this fabulous carol. Sing it this year with a newfound joy.

From 'Joy to the World'

Let earth receive her King
Let every heart prepare Him room
And heaven and nature sing

Jesus came for the whole world...everyone. For the Christmas haters, God-deniers, and all those sinners just like us. He came for us, all of us. And at Christmas we look into the darkness of a world spinning out of control and sing with faith and conviction that in the manger of Bethlehem, the earth has received her king! That is a powerful proclamation and we should sing it as such.

But it goes on and calls 'every heart' to prepare room to receive Him. Every heart! Everyone! This is the ultimate evangelism proclamation. Sing it as such. And finally, both heaven and nature will sing. Not just people, not just angels and archangels, but nature sings! How amazing is that? In the second verse we sing that, 'rocks, hills and plains repeat the sounding joy.' When we sing this carol this Christmas we are proclaiming God's rule over all creation, and Jesus' work of redeeming all creation. Together we all sing, 'Joy to the World, the Lord is come!' Joy indeed!

From 'Silent Night'

Silent night, holy night
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace

Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth

Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth

Are you starting to see the riches that lie deep in these wonderful carols? Here's one more. The babe of Bethlehem is proclaimed as both 'Son of God' and as 'love's pure light.' Jesus is love in its most pure form, and we know that because of the incarnation, because of the manger, because of Christmas. But look further, for the last phrase sums up all of Christmas. Jesus was 'Lord at Thy birth.' Unbelievable and life-changing! While swaddled in a hay trough, this little, humble and very human child was already the King of Kings and Lord of Lords we sing about in the Hallelujah Chorus. If you can go to the manger and see there your Lord, your King, your Savior and your Redeemer, you will experience the wonder and meaning of Christmas.

Stewarding Christmas means not getting so lost in the busyness that you miss the simple, powerful reminders of the reason for it all. I encourage you to sit with your family, read through your favorite Christmas carols and talk about what

you hear. By taking the time to really listen to the words of ‘O, Holy Night’, ‘O Little Town of Bethlehem’ and ‘What Child is This?’ you will be blessed.

The Treasures in the Gifts that Reflect the Giver

There is perhaps no greater stress producer at Christmas than the process of selecting, buying and wrapping presents. From Black Friday (and now even before) through the last minute super deals of December 24th, the entire holiday seems to be fixated on buying.

Traditionally Christians tie the giving of gifts to two sources. First, gifts reenact the giving of gifts by the Wise Men. These men of wealth and stature, bowing down at the sight of a baby born in humble surroundings, were so moved that they joyfully laid treasures at his feet. Their gifts were their way of showing adoration and honor. They gave them freely, joyfully and abundantly. How does their attitude and motivation impact our own practice of gift giving at Christmas?

Secondly, we give as a symbol of thanks and praise for the great gift of God’s only Son. We were created in the image of a God, “who so loved the world that He gave...” (John 3:16) How else would we celebrate this lavish gift of love to us than by giving to others in His name? Scripture says that, “we love Him because He first loved us.” (1 John 4:19) We can follow and say that we give joyfully and generously because He first gave to us from His abundance and joy.

We’ll share specific examples of how to give gifts in a way that worships God and reflects the gifts He’s given to us below in Part Four: Seven Ways to Steward Christmas.

The Treasure in the Meaning of Santa Claus

This is a big subject we will treat just briefly in the context of our desire to steward Christmas. Christians often struggle with the whole ‘Santa Claus’ issue. The jolly old guy has become our secular culture’s alternative to the manger. So should we integrate Old Saint Nick or try to extricate him from our celebrations – if that were even possible?

As stewards of Christmas we must be mindful of all the ways that God can speak to us through His birthday celebration. And here a little history can help.

The legend of Santa Claus can be traced back hundreds of years to a monk named St. Nicholas. It is believed that Nicholas was born sometime around 280 A.D. in Patara, near Myra in modern-day Turkey. Much admired for his piety and kindness, St. Nicholas became the subject of many legends. It is said that he gave away all of his inherited wealth and traveled the countryside helping the poor and sick. One of the best known of the St. Nicholas stories is that he saved three poor sisters from being sold into slavery or prostitution by their father by providing them with a dowry so that they could be married. Over the course of many years, Nicholas's popularity spread and he became known as the protector of children and sailors. His feast day is celebrated on the anniversary of his death, December 6. This was traditionally considered a lucky day to make large purchases or to get married. By the Renaissance, St. Nicholas was the most popular saint in Europe. Even after the Protestant Reformation, when the veneration of saints began to be discouraged, St. Nicholas maintained a positive reputation, especially in Holland.

The stockings we 'hang by the chimney with care' are symbols of the way poor children in Holland would put out a stocking or a shoe in hopes that St. Nicholas would pass by and leave them something. Often what was found would be their only meal of the day. Thoughts of Santa Claus should conjure up images of generosity, care for the poor, loving our neighbor, accepting gifts we do not deserve, humility, anticipation and joy.

Stewarding Christmas means taking the time to listen to the carols and sing them as never before. It means thanking God for the manger and returning to it again and again. It means embracing our traditions, finding joy and real meaning in their story and refusing to let the secularization of our culture rob you of it.

"A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.
Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices!
O night divine, O night when Christ was born;
O night divine, O night, O night Divine."



Part Four



*Seven Ways to
Steward Christmas*

We will conclude with a look at seven of the most important traditional parts of our Christmas celebrations and how we can live out this life as a steward of Christmas in each.

1. Stewarding Decorating

It's the same story every year in our house. The day after Thanksgiving is not only filled with leftover turkey, mashed potato sandwiches and pumpkin pie, but it also commences the annual 'decking of the halls' where every square inch of our home is adorned in garland, twinkly lights and little Christmas figurines. This process can take days of standing on ladders and meticulously stringing delicate ornamental strands throughout the house. And that's just the inside! Thankfully we don't live on a street where everyone tries to 'outdo' one another with their front yard Christmas light displays, but for those of you who do, you understand the stress that comes with having the best show.

Does this scenario sound familiar? By the second week of December you're so tired from making endless trips to your storage room to uncover every last ornament that you haven't even stopped to think about what this season is all about. So how do we steward this ever-important part of the Christmas season? How do we steward the 'decking of the halls?'

It begins with removing our pride from the process. Psalm 20:7 reminds us, "some boast in chariots and some in horses, but we will boast in the name of the Lord, our God."

We are not to boast, or take pride in our spectacular icicle lights or how many ornaments hang on our tree. We are to boast in the name of the one who sent His only Son to forgive us of our sins and love us unconditionally. When we remove our pride we allow ourselves to decorate as if we were decorating the barn where Jesus lay that one starry night. We hang garland and wreaths in preparation for the birth of our Savior as if He were going to be walking through the door with the rest of our loved ones to celebrate. We string lights on the eaves of our houses with a joyful heart, not for how others will look at it and feel jealous, but for how our Father in Heaven will look down on us with a smile of appreciation.

In the barn where Jesus was born there were no lights, no ornaments, no stockings, no snowmen. The Wise Men didn't show up to welcome Jesus because

of how brilliantly His place of birth was decorated, they showed up because of what His birth meant to each of them and the rest of the world. With that, we need to let go of the desire to add to our stockpile of decorations every year to the point where we need extra space to store it all. If Jesus were to walk into your home on Christmas Eve would He be admiring your wreaths and candles? Would He congratulate you on all of the time you spent and stress you felt to get your home to this immaculate state? No. He'd be looking into your heart in search of joy and thanksgiving for how His birth has forever changed your life.

This all isn't to say that you shouldn't enjoy the process of bringing the Christmas season alive in your home by hanging the stockings on the fireplace, but this year, we encourage you to do a little less. Less hanging, less stressing, less time spent on the ladder and more time in reflection and prayer.

So as you decorate your home this Christmas season, decorate for the coming of Jesus, keep it simple and celebrate each moment.

Simple Decorations

Here are some great do it yourself decoration ideas to inspire you as you deck the halls:

- ✿ [Cereal Box Decorative Christmas Trees](#) (by Beautiful Matters)
- ✿ [Winter Woodland Sign](#) (by Blooming Homestead)
- ✿ [Painted Pinecone Garland](#) (by Simplicity in the South)
- ✿ [Popsicle Stick Snowflakes](#) (by Making Home Base)
- ✿ [Felt and Pinecone Elves](#) (by Lia Griffith)
- ✿ [Personalized Word Christmas Ornaments](#) (by Jenna Burger)

2. Stewarding Food

The onset of Christmas marks the season of some of my favorite foods as well as the end of dieting as we know it. Visions of brightly colored sugar cookies, rich, chocolatey fudge and buttery rolls dance through my head (there's no room for sugar plum fairies up there). I can feel my jeans tightening as I write this. Good food and a good Christmas seem to go hand-in-hand. There's no doubt in my mind that God's a foodie. Stories of milk and honey, delicious breads, skins of wine and sumptuous feasts are all throughout the Bible. However, preparing meals and baking goodies takes time and can cause much unneeded stress.

The story of Martha and Mary perfectly illustrates the difference between being a steward at Christmas, focused on the true meaning, and being an ‘owner’ that is stressed about making everything perfect. As the story goes, Jesus is traveling and enters a town where a woman named Martha and her sister Mary welcome Him into their home. Mary, recognizing the significance of Jesus, sits at his feet listening to Him speak. Martha on the other hand, is so focused on her preparations that she fails to take into account the fact that Jesus is sitting in her home. She says,

Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.” But the Lord answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things, but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” (Luke 10: 40-42)

So many of us are the Martha in this story, especially around Christmas. We’re so focused on preparing our home, cooking the food, baking the cookies and setting the table that it distracts us from remembering the miraculous birth of our Lord and Savior. So how do we still enjoy the food and prepare our home for family during Christmas without missing the opportunity to sit at Jesus’ feet? Here are a few practical ways we can be stewards of food at Christmas.

First of all, ask for help. As the old saying goes, many hands make light work. Remove your pride and desire to do it all on your own and allow your friends and family to lend a helping hand. Have them bring food and drinks to share with everyone, ask them to help clean up before they head home, assign people to do dishes, and so on. On the reverse side, if you’re not the one hosting, be mindful of who is and offer your help wherever you can. This will allow for more time of reflection and prayer, ensuring no one misses out on ‘the good part’ of sitting at the feet of Jesus.

Secondly, be mindful of cooking too much. Similar to presents, the holidays have been overtaken by a desire to eat, a lot. We stress about the quality of our food and worry about having ‘enough.’ In our home the main Christmas food must-haves are sugar cookies, homemade Chex mix (or ‘scrabble’ as we call it), biscotti, Russian tea cakes and seven layer bars. Not to mention the traditional Christmas feast of prime rib, creamed peas, rolls, roasted vegetables and hosts of red wine. I

could easily spend weeks in the kitchen baking and cooking and decorating cookies, which almost always results in dozens of Tupperware containers filled with leftovers that inevitably don't all get eaten. Can you relate? This Christmas we encourage you to be a steward of food by planning ahead and making a little less. The less food, the less waste and the less time you spend stressing over the 'perfect' meal.

Lastly, we encourage you to donate food and reach out to those who are alone this Christmas. One reason we all love food so much is that it brings people together at one table, allowing time for community without distractions. Can you imagine not having the opportunity to share the Christmas feast with the ones you love? Let this be a reminder of the millions of people who can't afford the Christmas ham and have no invitations to dine with anyone this season. We encourage you to invite those around you who might be alone to join you at your table. Likewise we encourage you to donate food to your local food bank so families in your community can bring the Christmas meal to their tables. By inviting others in and giving to those in need you are being a steward of what God has blessed you with and in return you will be blessed.

Simple Recipes

To help you as you seek to steward food at Christmas, here are some easy and delicious food ideas to keep you from wasting time in the kitchen:

- ❄️ [Slow Cooker Chex Mix](#) (by Gimme Some Oven)
- ❄️ [Kale Breakfast Strata](#) (by Tomato Boots)
- ❄️ [Crockpot Nutella Hot Cocoa](#) (by Buzzfeed)
- ❄️ [Easy Creamy Crockpot Roasted Garlic Mashed Potatoes](#) (by Lovely Little Kitchen)
- ❄️ [Maple Roasted Brussels Sprouts with Bacon](#) (by Lexi's Clean Kitchen)
- ❄️ [Slow Cooker Creamed Corn](#) (by Damn Delicious)

3. Stewarding Presents

Even more than the decorations and the food, the stress and emphasis of gift giving during Christmas is quite possibly the greatest distraction away from Jesus. Can you imagine a Christmas without presents? In all honesty, I can't either. There's nothing wrong with giving your loved ones gifts, but we've gotten to a point where we've lost the meaning of it all. If we get to the point where we give

because we feel we have to, we will give without joy. We will likely find ourselves standing in a long line at department stores, fighting people to grab the last gaming console off the shelf for our brother or sister who already has three anyway. We must guard against losing what it means to give and why we give in the first place.

One of many examples of giving in the Bible is the story of the Wise Men who followed the star east to meet and worship Jesus. Matthew 2: 10-11 reads,

When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

The Wise Men brought gifts as a sign of their adoration for this amazing miracle. They didn't bring Jesus gifts because they had to, they brought him gifts to show their immense love for their Savior. First they worshipped and gave thanks, then they presented their gifts of love. This is how we are to give!

We encourage you to give gifts to your loved ones that reflect your adoration for them; showing thanks for what they mean to you and for what they've done for you in your life. With this as your mindset, you'll find yourself avoiding the Black Friday rush and perhaps instead staying home to make something meaningful by hand. You'll think about who in your family might need help around the house, a date night, a helping hand with an overwhelming project or just someone who would rather have a good chat with you instead of a new shirt. You'll choose the gift of time by creating a much needed weekend getaway for you and your wife or a family camping trip to reconnect with one another instead of just giving more stuff. Can you even remember what you got last year for Christmas? I can't. Personally, I remember family game nights, backpacking trips and weekends at the beach more than any clothes or gadgets I've ever received. Stewarding presents at Christmas means giving with a joyful heart that reflects your thanksgiving and love for those around you.

If this is done well then the usual stresses of cost and the concern about going into debt, as well as the fear of not having enough gifts under the tree all fade

away and we find ourselves able to experience the same joy and wonder that the Wise Men must have felt kneeling at the manger.

Christmas Gift Ideas

For inspiration on handmade gifts, here are some simple ideas:

- ❄️ [25 Amazing DIY Gift Ideas People Will Actually Want](#) (by It's Always Autumn)
- ❄️ [27 Expensive Looking Inexpensive DIY Gifts](#) (by DIY Joy)
- ❄️ [100 Handmade Gifts Under \\$5](#) (by The 36th Avenue)

4. Stewarding Children and Grandchildren

Take a minute and think back to Christmas when you were a kid. Here's mine. On Christmas Eve my parents tucked us into bed as fluffy white snowflakes fell outside our window. I could hardly fall asleep with the anticipation and excitement of what was to come in the morning. The alarm would go off at 5 AM and we'd throw our sheets off the bed, wake up our siblings and run downstairs to see a twinkly Christmas tree surrounded by piles of presents that Santa dropped off while we were sleeping. Then we'd head back upstairs to wake mom and dad and then back down for a long morning of 'ripping and snorting' of wrapping paper that went on until the floor was covered in bows and torn ribbon, leaving us with the difficult choice of which of our new toys to play with first. Is this similar to your memories of Christmas? As magical as it all felt, when we look back on it the focus for us kids wasn't much on Jesus. It was more on how many presents under the tree had our name on it. So how do we, as the adults, steward our children and grandchildren at Christmas to help them grasp the significance of why it is we celebrate this day?

One incredibly powerful way to teach the little ones in our lives that it's not all about the gifts is to give them the chance to give to those in need. Jesus told us that, "it is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35) But how often do we really give ourselves the opportunity to do this? We've started a new tradition in our family where my dad dresses up as Santa Claus and on Christmas morning. Before a single present is opened, we as a family go out and hand out gift certificates to those in the hospitality industry that have to work on Christmas Day. The looks of genuine appreciation and tears of joy that are shed shift our focus from ourselves and our presents onto those in need. Helping our children and grandchildren experience these things with us opens their eyes to a whole

new world of meaning. Stewarding our children at Christmas means teaching them to be givers rather than receivers.

For a lot of families at Christmas, the only ‘God time’ they allow into their busy schedules is the traditional Christmas Eve service where everyone dresses up, listens to the Christmas story, sings a few carols, then heads home to open a present from crazy Aunt Mildred. If this is the only time spent hearing the story of Jesus’ birth, then what are we teaching our kids about priorities at Christmas? We spend hours opening gifts, but only 40 minutes reflecting on what the most important birth in human history means to us. As Matthew 19:14 reads, “but Jesus said, Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

As the caretakers of our children, we are responsible for teaching them about Jesus and His love for them, not letting other distractions hinder them from knowing Him. Stewarding our children at Christmas means reading to them and discussing the story of Jesus’ birth throughout the season, helping them understand the true meaning of why we celebrate Christmas. By creating traditions that connect our children to the manger at a young age, we are preparing the next generation to spend more time in reflection and prayer at Christmas, truly grasping the depth of its meaning.

5. Stewarding Time

It’s the week before Christmas and you find yourself staring at a seemingly never ending to-do list of wrapping, cooking, cleaning, scrubbing, decorating and traveling. Almost immediately the anxiety and stress over not having enough time washes over you, and you begin to panic. “Why is there never enough time?” If you find yourself in this situation, it’s a clear indicator that you’ve lost perspective. It means you’ve over-packed your schedule with the preparations of Christmas and you’ve failed to allow yourself time for reflection and worship.

I don’t know about you, but I’m a huge procrastinator. Every year on December 18th I find myself in shock that Christmas is only a week away and I don’t feel ready. I haven’t done all of my shopping, I haven’t packed, I haven’t found someone to come feed our cats while we’re away, I haven’t cleaned...and on and on the list goes. How can I possibly find time for Jesus when all of these ‘important’ things are left to do? We hope at this point you’re able to see what’s

clearly wrong here. The presents, the food, the decorating, the cleaning; none of it would mean anything without Jesus. God promises to always give us the time we need to accomplish what matters. If we find ourselves overcome by stress, perhaps that's God's way of telling us we've lost perspective.

Stewarding time at Christmas means asking God to show us how He wants us to use our time. I can almost guarantee His answer won't be to go do more shopping. Starting today, we encourage you to carve out time everyday for reflection, prayer and worship. If we've done our best at stewarding our presents, food and decorating as we mentioned above, then we'll find ourselves with the time we need to devote to God in prayer and worship.

6. Stewarding Worship

Of these seven areas this one may seem the oddest. Why would we need to 'steward worship?' Here's why. Like every area of our life, the enemy can convince us to take an ownership approach to worship. Own worship? Yes. It happens when we desire to control when and how worship happens. When we divide the sacred part of Christmas from the routine and confine worship to the times and places we choose, we are seeking to control worship. We play the owner when we ignore the message of Christmas in all of our preparations and traditions, and then hope to connect deeply with it in those select times when we are ready for God to speak to us and move in our hearts. This ownership approach keeps God in a box until His appointed time when we expect Him to meet us in meaningful ways.

The problem is that true worship isn't something we schedule. If we are stewards of our worship, we will prepare ourselves each day to experience worship in both anticipated and wholly unexpected ways. Most importantly, we will desire for worship to permeate everything we do this Christmas season.

Worship as a steward is both proactive and reactive. It is proactive when we purposefully seek to worship God in and through the activities of the season. Can we praise and worship God while we decorate the house, put up lights and hang ornaments on the tree? If these activities are meant to honor and glorify Him, then how can they be anything else but acts of worship? Can we worship Him in our baking and cooking, in our gift buying and wrapping? If this season is an

expression of our love for Jesus and our desire to honor Him, then we can turn even the most mundane tasks into moments of worship.

Reactive worship requires a true steward's heart. It means letting go of control and living each day open to the possibilities to glorify and worship God that He initiates. We do this in His timing, in His place and in His way. This worship comes to us through a process of keeping our hearts attuned to Him and our spirits ready to embrace every encounter He may bring our way. This worship happens when a song on the radio stirs our hearts and we respond with praise; when we get an unexpected call from a friend and praise God for them; when a Christmas tree ornament stirs up memories of a beloved family member; when the smell of baking reminds us of God's provision for us or when a chance to help someone in need brings to mind God's love for us and our call to love our neighbor. Opportunities for worship are everywhere at Christmas, if we will just be ready and open to embracing them as God leads.

To steward worship means rejecting the desire to control where and how God will meet you this Christmas, and surrendering your will to Him that He might surprise you everyday with moments that touch your heart with His love and bring you closer to Him.

7. Stewarding Self

We will end this little booklet with a few words of encouragement for you to be free to steward your self this Christmas. This is about more than self-care, but it certainly includes self-care. To be stewards of our self is not the same as being self-centered. In fact, it is the opposite. If we are centered on Christ this Christmas we will, in turn, be willing to let Him give shape to our self-image and live with confidence in His love and care for us. When we surrender our self to Him, He can in turn fill us with a sense of contentment with who we are and peace with how we live and celebrate with everyone around us. This freedom may be one of the greatest gifts you will receive this Christmas. It is freedom to focus solely on Him knowing that He is everything you need.

Here are three specific areas where you can live out that freedom this Christmas.

Reshape your expectations. Let every thought, word and deed this Christmas be dedicated to honoring and glorifying God. Set your expectations according to how

many ways you can find to bring Him glory and you will find a new level of meaning and joy in this holiday. Expect God to be present, to surprise you with moments of worship and peace where you least expect it. Expect nothing to go exactly like you planned and no one to behave exactly like you want them to, and be prepared for all of that to be okay because your purpose is to honor and glorify God. When your expectations are shaped by a vision for a Christ-centered Christmas, you can embrace this season with peace and contentment.

Redeem your time. Give your time back to God this Christmas, every second of every day. Look to Him to lead you and expect to be surprised. Some things you planned may never get done, some may get delayed and still others may need to be passed off to someone else. It is likely God will have a very different idea of how He would have you use your time. And it will always be redemptive, meaningful and rich. Stewarding your self means giving this most intimate gift of time back to God that He may fill your days with His peace and joy.

Refresh your spirit. Finally, Christmas should be a time of refreshment not exhaustion. We pray the journey we are taking together will equip you to experience that refreshment and keep you from the distractions and misplaced expectations that so often rob us of the richness of this season. Pray for this refreshment. Expect God to work refreshment in you in big and little ways. This is His birthday, His great act of love for you, His embracing you with human arms and His act of redeeming you and restoring you to wholeness and peace. In all these ways Christmas should be a time of refreshment. It starts at the manger, it is fueled by surrender and it culminates in a heart full of worship and praise.



Final Thoughts

Here is a final thought we want to share as together we steward Christmas and discover the peace and joy God has for us in this wonderful season. We pray this booklet has helped you refocus your Christmas celebration on Jesus. We have said that His coming as a human being is the greatest event in human history. We must end with a reminder that the reason the Incarnation is so meaningful is because of its connection with the cross of Good Friday and the empty tomb of Easter Sunday. These three events must remain interconnected, for any one without the other two is meaningless.

To remind us of that unbreakable bond, we encourage you to let the cross and the empty tomb have a place in your Christmas celebration. To do this we encourage you to be creative. I had a theology professor who placed a silk Easter lily among the display of poinsettias to keep this connection at the forefront of the holiday. An Advent wreath is a wonderful symbol to remind us of this connection. Each of the five candles – Candle of Prophecy, Candle of Preparation, Candle of Joy, Candle of Love and the Christ Candle – represent both a Christmas lesson and a larger, salvation message.

An angel on your tree can represent both the proclamation to the shepherds that the Prince of Peace has been born in Bethlehem, but also the announcement of the angel to the wondering disciples that, ‘He is not here, He is risen.’ An Easter egg ornament, Christmas cookies in the form of a dove and a careful, worshipful listen to Handel’s Messiah are just a few ways to acknowledge and celebrate this connection and make it an integral part of your holiday traditions.

Finally, consider that the connection can carry over to your commemoration of Good Friday and Easter. We use the trunk of our Christmas tree to make a cross to display for Holy Week. It stands in the same spot where the manger is placed in our nativity scene. On Easter Saturday night the wood is disassembled and prepared to be used for the fire that we light at sunrise on Easter Sunday. There is the connection: the wood of the Christmas tree becomes the beams of a cross, that in turn becomes the flames that warm the hands and faces of believers as they worship



the resurrection and watch the smoke trailing up to heaven as a reminder of Jesus' ascension, and ours.

These images and traditions can help children understand the whole salvation story in the simplest of terms; a tree, a cross and a fire. Bringing it back to Christmas, you will be reminded that the beauty of the Christmas tree will soon be transfigured into a crude cross. That ever-present symbolic reminder will deepen your worship and help transform the place of the manger into holy ground.

We pray you have been blessed and inspired by these words and that you are ready to walk the journey of stewarding Christmas. May the promise be lived out in you throughout this season and carry over into the New Year. We will let the Lord of Christmas have the final word through His servants.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it...The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1)

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end. (Isaiah 9)

Merry Christmas!



About the Authors



Scott Rodin has a passion for helping Christian ministry leaders take a biblical approach to leadership development, strategic planning, board development and raising kingdom resources. Over the past thirty years he has worked with hundreds of organizations in the U.S., Canada, Middle East, Great Britain, China, India, the Philippines and Australia.

Dr. Rodin is president of [The Steward's Journey](#) and [Kingdom Life Publishing](#). He also runs Rodin Consulting, Inc. He is a Senior Fellow of the Association of Biblical Higher Education and is past board chair of ChinaSource and the Evangelical Environmental Network.

Dr. Rodin's daughter and co-author, Lindsay Kittleson, is the Executive Assistant for The Steward's Journey and Kingdom Life Publishing, as well as the lead writer and creator of her personal food and simple living blog, [Tomato Boots](#). She resides in West Seattle with her husband and baby girl.

Scott and Lindsay co-wrote this ebook as a resource to help people step back from the stress and busyness that has become the Christmas season and refocus their gaze on the true meaning of why it is we celebrate this holiday. As their family begins to grow with new children and grandchildren, they hope to teach them how to be stewards of Christmas, starting at the manger.