

# Discover Christmas: Day 9


## When did outdoor Christmas lights become a popular?

Not long after Thomas Edison patented his light bulb, the first strings of lights began appearing on American Christmas trees. In 1882, Thomas' friend Edward Johnson came up with a simple electric motor that slowly rotated his Christmas tree and powered 80 lights in little glass bulbs. With each turn, the colors alternated red, white, and blue! From there, the Christmas tree light craze spread.



President Grover Cleveland lit up the first tree at the White House in 1895, and department stores began decorating with outdoor lights soon after. It wasn't until after World War II that most Americans could afford to light up their own houses, though.

Of course today at Christmas, you can see beautiful Christmas light displays in almost every neighborhood. They remind us that Jesus is the True Light, and that we should take His light and shine it to the world through our good examples. *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 5:16).

 **Write your testimony of Jesus on the next page.** Share your witness of Jesus with at least one person during the Christmas season. Let your light shine!



*Memory Verse: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 5:16).

## *My Testimony of Jesus*

Jesus is important to me because \_\_\_\_\_

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Because Jesus came to earth and atoned for my sins I can \_\_\_\_\_

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When I think about Jesus I feel \_\_\_\_\_

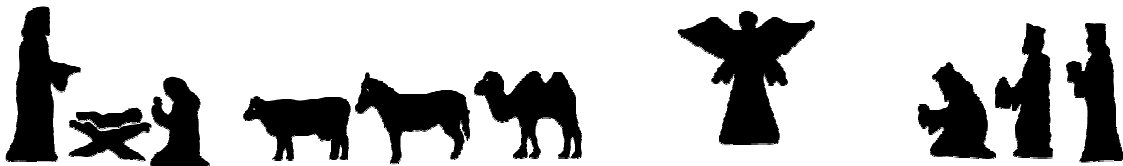
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To let my light shine I'm going to \_\_\_\_\_

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**This story from the life of President Harold B. Lee** shows how President Lee “let his light shine” by serving others. When he was only 31, he was serving as a stake president in the Pioneer Stake. It was during the Great Depression and many people were out of work. President Lee found out that there were 1,000 children in his stake who probably wouldn’t receive Christmas gifts because their parents were too poor.

President Lee thought about the children. He wanted to do something to help them. He organized a little “workshop” on the second floor of an old store. For several months, he and his team gathered old and broken toys, repaired them, and prepared them for Christmas. The Christmas spirit filled the little workshop. President Lee felt happy that the children in his stake would all have a happy Christmas.



The night before Christmas Eve, President Lee was out with some crews of men getting the streets cleared of snow. He saw a little boy by the side of the road who had no coat or gloves on, despite the cold weather. President Lee stopped. “Are you ready for Christmas, son?” he asked.

“No sir,” the little boy replied. “We aren’t going to have Christmas at our house. My dad died a few months ago and we don’t have much money.”

President Lee looked at the sad little boy. He had compassion on him. “Give me your address,” he told the boy. “I’ll make sure you won’t be forgotten on Christmas Eve!”

Later, the bishop’s in President Lee’s stake reported back on their Christmas Eve deliveries to needy families. They had taken the toys along with food for Christmas dinner to many families. When the last bishop came to report, President Lee asked him to please take something to the family of the little boy he had met on the street. The lives of many children were blessed that Christmas because of President Lee’s determination to show the true love of Christ!

# Discover Christmas: Day 10

## Why is the poinsettia popular at Christmas?

Many of our Christmas traditions come from Europe, but not the poinsettia! It comes from ... Mexico!

If it were not for Joel Roberts Poinsett's love of botany, we may have never even known about this beautiful and festive flower at all. In 1825, Mr. Poinsett was appointed as the United States Ambassador to Mexico. On one of his journeys to Mexico, he discovered the vibrantly red flower. The people of Mexico regarded the beautiful star-shaped plant as a reminder of the star of Bethlehem.



Mr. Poinsett, a practicing botanist, immediately fell in love with the plant, and shipped some of them back to his home in Greenville, South Carolina. After a short time of cultivating the flowers inside his hothouses, he began sending them to his friends and family as a Christmas gift.

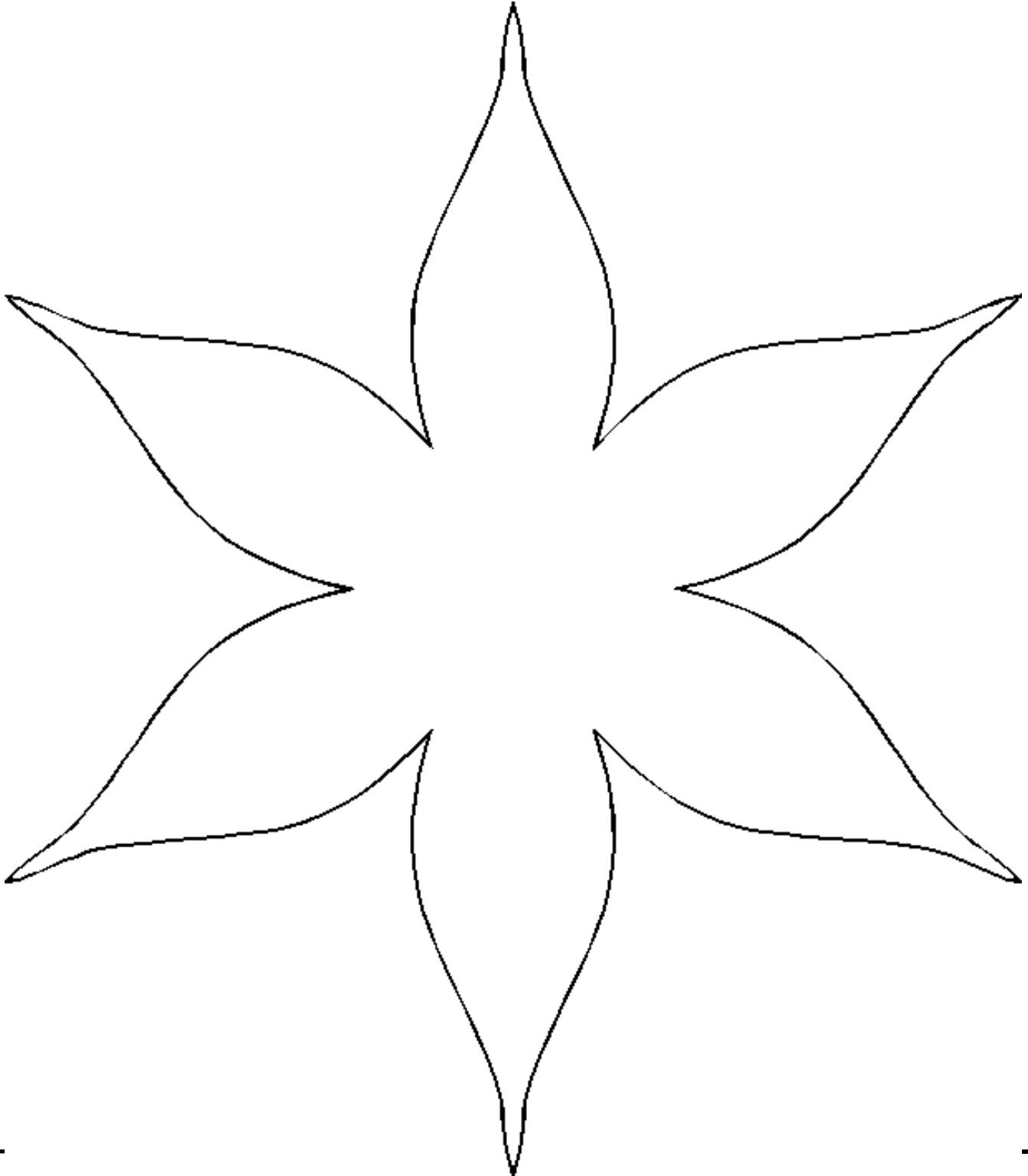
Now the poinsettia has become a symbol of beauty at Christmastime. This Christmas when you see a poinsettia, think of the Star of Bethlehem shining its light to the world with the glad news of the coming of Jesus!

► **Use the pattern on the next page to make some red poinsettias to decorate your room.** When you see your Christmas flowers, remember the Star of Bethlehem!

*Memory Verse: "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing" (Isaiah 35:1).*

 **PAPER POINSETTIA**

Use this pattern to cut out poinsettias from red construction paper. Use yellow construction paper to make small yellow centers.

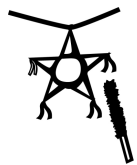


# Discover Christmas: Day 11

## What are some other Christmas traditions in Mexico?

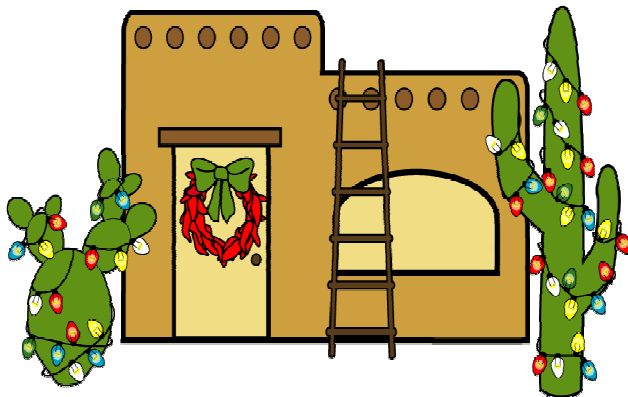
You read about the Poinsettia plant that came from Mexico. In Mexico, there are other interesting Christmas festivities, too. **Las Posadas** is nine day celebration of lively parties and candlelight processions that begins on December 16 and continues until Christmas Eve.

During that time, children gather to perform **Christmas plays** that tell the story of Mary and Jesus seeking for a place to stay in Bethlehem. A girl plays the part of Mary, riding a donkey from house to house. Other children play the parts of Joseph, angels, and shepherds. They carry handmade lanterns and brightly colored walking sticks. As Mary and Joseph approach each house, they are turned away. At the third house, they are offered room in the stable.



The Christmas play is followed by a **lively party**, complete with piñatas stuffed with fruit, sugar cane, peanuts, and candies!

Another play that is often performed during Christmastime is **Las Pastorelas**, or shepherds' plays. These funny plays tell the story of the shepherds seeing the angel and going to find the baby Jesus. As the shepherds journey to the stable, a series of evils and misadventures plague them. But they finally arrive and see the baby Jesus.



Do you have a **Nativity scene** in your home? In many homes today, a Nativity scene is used in Christmas decorations to remind us of the true purpose for the season. In Mexico, the Nativity scene, or **Nacimiento** is often the main decoration at Christmastime. "Baby Jesus" usually arrives in the little manger in the Nacimiento on Christmas Eve.

On Christmas Eve, or **Noche Buena** (the “Good Night”), Mexican families attend a special church service. Afterwards they have a traditional Christmas supper of homemade tamales and *atole* (corn gruel), or other special dishes from their region. Usually there are gifts to be opened, piñatas, and sparklers to complete the celebration!

**Christmas Day** is a simple day of rest and eating leftovers. The opening of more gifts is reserved for January 6, the **Three Kings Day**, when Mexican children find toys left for them by the Three Kings, just like Jesus received gifts. Sometimes there are parades on Three Kings Day too, with children dressing up as the kings!

On Three Kings Day, Mexican children drink hot chocolate and eat a special sweet bread called **Rosca de Reyes**, “Crown of the Kings.” The crown-shaped bread is decorated with candied fruit, and tiny figures of babies are hidden in the dough before baking, so there is a lot of excitement as each person takes a bite of his slice of bread. Whoever gets a slice with a baby gets to host another holiday party for family and friends!



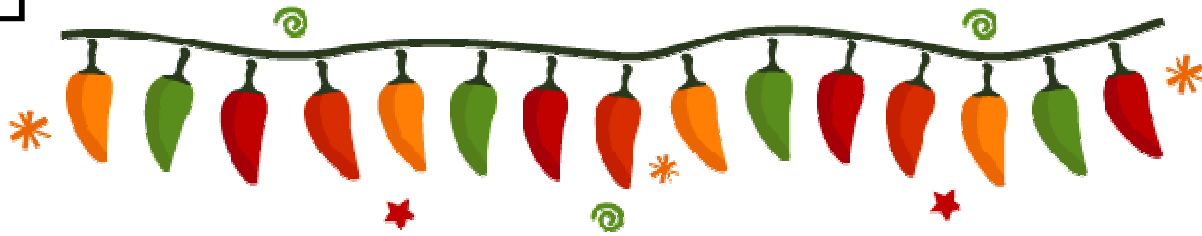
► **You can make your own Mexican hot chocolate!** The dash of cinnamon gives it an unexpected flavor!

### **CHOCOLATE CALIENTE**

6 cups of milk  
6 oz sweet chocolate, 6 oz semi sweet chocolate  
½ tsp vanilla  
dash of cinnamon

Heat the milk over medium heat. Break the chocolate into small pieces and dissolve in the warm milk. Increase heat and let the mixture slowly boil. Add vanilla and cinnamon. Take off heat and beat until frothy.





► You can make these easy **Mexican Hot Chocolate Jars** for friends and teachers.

### **MEXICAN HOT CHOCOLATE JARS**

1 cup unsweetened cocoa powder

1 cup powdered milk

1 cup firmly packed brown sugar

½ teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon ground cinnamon

¾ cup chopped Mexican chocolate (such as Ibarra) or other chocolate

Cinnamon sticks for decoration

Layer cocoa powder, powdered milk, brown sugar, salt, cinnamon, and chocolate in a 1 quart jar. Add a pretty ribbon or raffia and a few cinnamon sticks to top of jar.

Cut out the tag below, or make your own, and attach it to your jar.

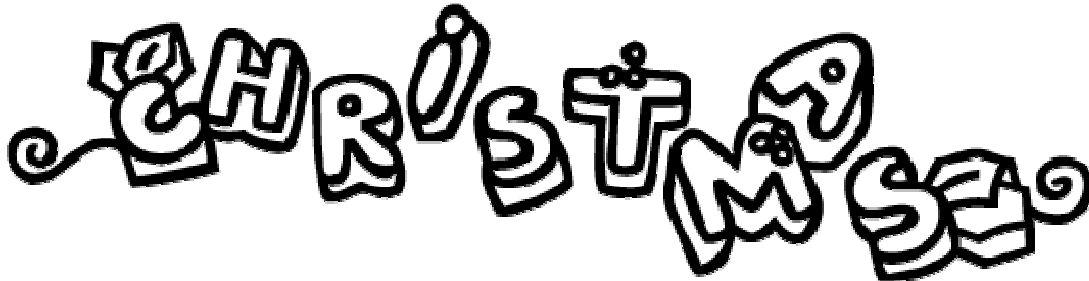


*Memory Verse: "Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8).*

# Discover Christmas: Day 12

## What does *Merry Christmas* mean?

During the Christmas season, we have a lot of greetings that we use on cards, presents, letters, and songs to send our love to family and friends. Here is the meaning of some of them.



*Seasons Greetings* just means “hello in the middle of winter!”

*Merry Christmas* is the most common Christmas greeting. *Merry* means “happy or joyful.” *Christmas* comes from an old English word that meant “Christ’s Mass,” or the church service many people attended to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Interestingly, at the “Christ’s Mass,” people took communion, or the Lord’s supper—not to remember Christ’s birth, but his death and resurrection. Why? Because without the life and mission of Jesus Christ, we would need to celebrate his birth!

*Happy Holidays* really means “happy holy day,” which is a special day set apart to worship God. That describes Christmas perfectly! However, in the sixteenth century, holy day or holiday came to mean any day of rest from work or school. Now we use “happy holiday” to send good wishes to our friends throughout the season—no matter what holiday they are celebrating.

## CHRISTMAS GREETING BANNER

Make a banner or sign for your house with Christmas greetings. Tell your family what you have learned about what each message means. You might want to add these greetings that children across the world use at Christmas:

*Buon Natale* (Italian)    *Suk San Wan Christmas* (Thai)    *Feliz Navidad* (Spanish)

## *“Merry Christmas” Word Search*



Below are Christmas greetings in many languages. See if you can find them in the word search!

Buon Natale (Italian)  
Feliz Navidad (Spanish)  
Feliz Natal (Portuguese)  
God Jul (Norwegian)

Mele Kalikimaka (Hawaiian)  
Gledileg Jol (Icelandic)  
Joyeux Noel (French)  
Milad Majid (Arabic)

B	U	O	N	N	A	T	A	L	E	H	M
F	M	I	L	A	D	M	A	J	I	D	E
E	E	A	V	E	A	V	E	R	Y	M	L
L	E	L	R	R	Y	C	H	R	I	L	E
I	S	T	I	M	A	S	A	N	D	O	K
Z	A	V	E	Z	R	Y	H	A	P	J	A
N	P	Y	N	E	N	W	Y	E	A	G	L
A	R	T	H	I	S	A	Y	E	A	E	I
V	R	L	A	N	D	A	T	L	W	L	K
I	A	U	Y	S	K	E	E	A	P	I	I
D	C	J	H	R	I	S	T	I	L	D	M
A	N	D	C	H	R	I	S	T	M	E	A
D	J	O	Y	E	U	X	N	O	E	L	K
A	S	G	T	H	I	S	Y	E	A	G	A

# Discover Christmas: Day 13


## Why do we give gifts at Christmas?

The act of giving gifts is symbolic of the gift of God to us on that first Christmas Eve. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Because of God’s love, we have the gift of Jesus Christ, and it is the example of Jesus that teaches us about true love. “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” (1 John 3:16).

It was the Wise Men, who first followed God’s example of gift giving when they visited Mary and Jesus and gave gold, frankincense, and myrrh to honor baby Jesus.

Why did they choose those gifts? *Gold* represented royalty, and symbolizes Jesus as the Kings of Kings. *Frankincense* was an expensive spice used in worship that symbolizes the divine power of Jesus. *Myrrh* was a spice used in burial, and represents the death of Jesus, who would then rise again on the third day!

From the Victorian era on, gifts, or presents, have been wrapped with elaborate papers, ribbons, and bows, and instead of placing the gifts at the foot of a King, they are now scattered underneath a Christmas Tree, or found snuggled within our Christmas Stockings. When we give gifts to those we love at Christmastime, we are following God’s example of love!

 **HOMEMADE WRAPPING PAPER.** Make your own wrapping paper. Decorate plain brown roll paper with symbols of Christmas—candy canes, trees, stars, wreaths, bows, nativity characters, etc. Use markers, paints, or glitter and get creative! When it comes time to wrap presents, you’ll be ready.



**Memory Verse:** “Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!” (2 Corinthians 9:15)