

Keep the 'holy' in holiday

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by: [Louisa Austin](#) on December 3, 2012

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Thanksgiving has come and gone, and after trying to run off all the calories I ate, the "holiday" season officially begins. I say that lightly.

The first definition on Merriam-Webster's website for holiday is "holy day." Let's explore this. There is nothing "holy" about the holidays anymore, at least not in mainstream society. Everything is focused on how much money we can spend, whose kids have the latest tech gadgets and who has the most stuff. Gifts are given with hopefully the right spirit in mind and then are returned the day after Christmas because the receiver doesn't like what they got. The lines to customer service are always extremely long after Christmas.

Sure, there are Christian folk who celebrate for the reason Christmas began: the birth of the Christian God, Jesus Christ, who taught love and kindness for mankind. I don't see much love and kindness in trampling someone to death because they're in your way for the latest video game console or being beat up or shot while fighting over a parking space.

Truth be told, I'm disgusted by the "holidays." I don't consider myself a Scrooge. I just don't like where our society goes every year at this time: greed and entitlement.

I try to get in the spirit by listening to Christmas music and remembering my childhood Christmases. I grew up in a religious household, but I was still more excited about Santa coming and bringing me gifts than I was about looking at a nativity scene. Jesus didn't bring a pretty jewelry box or snazzy watch, but Santa did.

But I still try to remember the good times — the traditions my family had — Christmas Eve dinner when our mom would make hot spiced punch, sausage and seven-layer bean dip — a weird conglomeration, yes, but still delicious. And there was always the requisite cheese ball and crackers. We'd light a candle in the window at 7 p.m. to remember our cousins spread across the country whose mothers and fathers (my mom's siblings) were doing the same thing.

Christmas became about family and Christ's birth. We would sing Christmas hymns while my mom played the piano, and Dad would read the Christmas story from the Bible. Then we'd open one gift, usually the gift we bought for a sibling in our secret Santa drawing. We'd have to write a poem that described the sibling to go with the gift. It was a time for laughter at the silly poems and to be together watching the movies "The Santa Clause" and "A Christmas Story."

These memories help me make it through the crowds at Walmart in December when I need toilet paper or toothpaste. Otherwise, I'd hole up in my house and not come out until January.

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