

**Billy Graham Evangelistic Association**  
**Audio Media Services**  
**Fearless – E89 – Santa Claus**  
**Final Transcript**

**Cissie Graham Lynch:**

**00:00:00** As I'm talking about making traditions—I love family traditions—I wanna encourage you: if you are in North Carolina area, in the Charlotte area specifically, maybe you're not, maybe you just wanna make a special trip out of it, check out Christmas at the Billy Graham Library. It is one of my favorite things to do with my family. They got carriage rides. It's beautiful. They got carolers, they have a live nativity, and my dad always chooses maybe a funky animal. I think one time there was a kangaroo in the live nativity. So it's become a family tradition that my kids look forward to every year when we are in North Carolina. So check it out and if you can't make it, you can follow them on Instagram or Facebook to see what's happening at the Library.

**MUSIC STARTS**

**Cissie Graham Lynch:**

**00:00:46** Can kids believe in Santa and Jesus during Christmastime? Well, in this episode of *Fearless*, we are gonna unwrap how my family talks about Santa and how we celebrate Christmas.

Hi, I'm Cissie Graham Lynch. Welcome to *Fearless*, helping you have a fearless faith in a compromising culture.

**MUSIC TRANSITION**

**Cissie Graham Lynch:**

**00:01:19** Welcome back to another episode of *Fearless*. And it's hard to believe that we're wrapping up the year, that Christmas season is here, whether we're ready or not—prepared. I know some families and some moms and women, they work so far ahead and I'm always scrambling to the last minute. But Christmas is here. I think this is always a fun time for families. I know a lot of people maybe dread the holiday season for different reasons that it might represent or memories that it might bring up.

And then some people have looked forward to it and started decorating back in October, listening to the Christmas music. But, I get this question every year and I'm gonna give a warning to parents who might be listening in front of their children. I'm gonna—you might wanna put your earbuds in or hit pause and listen to it later—I'm gonna give you your two-second warning and now I'll start. I get this question all the time about should Christians celebrate Santa or recognize Santa in the Christmas season or should we not? And I didn't really realize that that was kind of divisive issue. I didn't know that that was a big deal until the recent years I've gotten this question. And we're gonna talk about that today on *Fearless*. Should Christian families recognize Santa and celebrate Christmas with Santa?

And growing up—I'll just be up front—we celebrated Santa, we recognized Santa in our family. And I wanna be very clear that I don't think that this is a salvation issue [laugh].

**Billy Graham Evangelistic Association**  
**Audio Media Services**  
**Fearless – E89 – Santa Claus**  
**Final Transcript**

It's not a salvation issue. I really don't even think that this is a Biblical issue, but we're gonna discuss it. Of course, we've been doing the "Elephant in the Room" series and talking about some pretty heavy subjects, and today I feel like is a little bit lighter and let's just—I'm gonna share with what I do with my family, maybe it'll help you come up with a conclusion of what you should do with yours and encourage you. But we can disagree on this subject and it's gonna be okay [laugh]. Whether you choose to celebrate Santa or choose not to recognize Santa, it's all okay cuz this is not a spiritual issue. I think it's not even, and maybe some people might disagree with me even saying that statement, but it's definitely not a salvation issue.

Let me first share my experience with Santa [soft chuckle] and what my parents did growing up. And I was the youngest of four; I had three older brothers and they're quite older than me. They're 12, 10, and eight years older than me. So I was a surprise that came later on in my parents' life. And with three older brothers, they spoiled me. I was the only girl in the family. And so they had so much fun at the holiday season playing up Santa. And we did Santa in our home and I probably believed in Santa until I was awkwardly ... old. I can't remember exactly how old I was, but I can still remember being one of the last of my friends to believe in Santa. But my brothers, they would go outside and they would, you know, Christmas Eve, they would stomp on the roof and say, "Ho, ho, ho."

Cuz you have to remember, if I was, you know, just five years old, my oldest brother, Will, was 17, so they had just a lot of fun with it. They would do the jingle bells. I remember the last Christmas I did believe in Santa and my mom said she knew the question was coming when I said, "Mom, can I ask you a question?" And she knew it was coming and she just kind of prayed like, Lord, I don't wanna, you know, directly lie to her, especially here at this older age, but give me one more year with her. And she goes, "Sure Cissie, you can ask me a question." And I said, "Is Santa real? My friends are telling me he's not." And she goes, "Well, what do you think?"

She said, I sat there and I paused a little bit and I said, "Well, I think he's real, although everybody's telling me he's not." And right then she looked up in the sky and this was Christmas Eve and there was an airplane going by that was blinking red. And she goes, "Well look up there, what do you see?" And she said my face just started to glow. And I said, "Oh Mom, I just knew it. He *is* real." And I ran back in the house and wanted to, you know, go to sleep fast, and all the excitement. And for me it was just always kind of like this innocent time. Of course it's a magical time, a time of the imagination, and I just had really sweet memories. And so I don't remember that exact moment where I realized Santa wasn't real. I think it just kind of came naturally, and it wasn't this like traumatic experience that I was like, "What? They're lying to me." It just—I kind of grew out of it.

But I hear over the years just some common objections that we might have about Santa Claus. And some people object to Santa because they think when you're telling Santa—

**Billy Graham Evangelistic Association**  
**Audio Media Services**  
**Fearless – E89 – Santa Claus**  
**Final Transcript**

that you're basically—you're—it's a form of lying to your children. That's obviously a very common objection. And I kind of look at that as more it's the imagination of a child. This is, like, the imagination of a lot of things that our children play with and we kind of go along with it, you know how when we're playing make-believe with our kids. And so I just kind of see that as another form of that. I don't see it as this direct lying, but I know, once again, I'm gonna get a lot of people that disagree with me on that. But it's just a fun imagination time for kids. And then some people have had, like I just said, a really negative experience when they've discovered that Santa isn't real, that they were feeling tricked, they felt betrayed by their family members who might have known the truth, and so they just have held onto this very bad experience with it.

And then there's concerns that having Santa as a part of the family tradition and then revealing that he's not real can lead to mistrust issues. Like one time I was driving a babysitter home and we were talking about Santa Claus and she grew up not doing Santa Claus, and she goes, "Well, don't you think that that would mess up with their beliefs with Jesus when they feel like you've lied to them about Santa and then they'll probably think you're lying to them about Jesus?" And I started laughing at that moment because I've never really thought of it that way. But to be honest, I've never known one person to say that they walked away from their Christian faith because they believed in Santa Claus. I've never heard that, maybe you have. There are many other reasons—a lot of reasons we discuss here on *Fearless*—of why people might walk away from their faith, but I've never heard anybody say that they walked away from their faith at five years old because their parents lied to them about Santa Claus.

And then some think, you know, of course the focus of the season should be Jesus. And of course, I don't disagree with that; that should be the focus. And there's ways that we can incorporate that in both of 'em and that Jesus should always be the focus and we'll get in that in a little bit later. And you know, it teaches our kids to be materialistic. I think that's how you approach Santa Claus. That's how you approach the Christmas season with your family individually. We'll get into that. I've also heard the reason in recent years just amongst women saying that they've worked so hard at being a mom and that they wanna get all the credit for the presents, they don't want Santa Claus to get the credit for the presents, and just laugh and it's just funny, but then I kind of think, "Well, that's not really the reason of Christmas is to get the credit of the presents."

But everybody's got their reasons and like I said, this isn't, should not be a divisive issue, that we're talking about. But I always think of the real St. Nick and growing up they'll teach you—I went to public school—but they'll teach you about real St. Nicholas and the origin of where the story of Santa Claus kind of came from, that St. Nicholas was a real person who was born in what we would call Turkey, modern-day Turkey, in the third century, and that he was born to this wealthy family and his parents died when he was a young boy and he took what Jesus said seriously and took His teaching seriously to sell all you have and give to the poor. And, what a remarkable man.

**Billy Graham Evangelistic Association**  
**Audio Media Services**  
**Fearless – E89 – Santa Claus**  
**Final Transcript**

What they didn't tell you when you're a little kid in elementary school—because that would probably terrify little kids—that he was imprisoned for his faith at a time when a lot of Christians were being persecuted for their faith. And that's something I didn't learn until later on. And it's kind of—what things that we might see in our future. It's definitely what Christians have faced around the world, being persecuted for their faith. I think when you talk about real St. Nicholas and his faith, you can open up a lot of opportunities with your children to encourage them of the Christmas season, what it truly means, what Christ did for you, why He came to this Earth, why God sent Him, but to also teach them the reality that being a Christian is very difficult, that the world will hate you, and those are hard topics to have. Those are, personally, topics I do talk about with my children even at a young age, especially in the times that we're in and seeing that our Biblical beliefs are being more and more attacked, especially here in our culture and things that we have not seen and things that might happen in the future.

But, back to Christmas. I didn't mean to get off on all of that, but I didn't realize that, they didn't teach that in elementary school, that St. Nicholas was imprisoned. But after his death, many Christians honored him through the years on St. Nicholas Day in the day of December. And not to go too deep and not to make this all too spiritual, but I think of the Bible verse—Hebrews 13:7—and it says, *“Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. [And] consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.”*

And those are conversations that we can have with our children about who the real St. Nicholas was and what Scripture says about remembering them and the outcome of their life and to imitate their life. So once again, I don't wanna go too deep into making a spiritual tie because I don't really think this should be a spiritual debate. It's kind of you choose what's best for your family, I choose what's best for my family. But with all of that, how can we—if we choose to do Santa, not to choose Santa—keep Jesus in the center of Christmas? Because even with the best intentions, we can get so busy and so overwhelmed in the Christmas season, but how can we just make sure He's the focus in all that we do in this season? And I think back, when I think of Santa Claus, I think of the innocence of children.

You have this short window with them that they have this huge imagination, that everything at Christmas can be magical and joyful. And we have just this short window of innocence with our children. Think of the things that they're having to talk about at school, the things that social media is introducing them to, the things that the TV and entertainment talk to them about at such a young age, that I think that that innocence is lost so quickly. And a prayer that I've had as a mom for my children over the last couple years is: Lord, protect their innocence as long as possible and that playful imagination and that wonder. My daughter is pretty old for her age, and I think she's known for quite a while that Santa's not real, but she plays along with it and plays along for her younger brother.

**Billy Graham Evangelistic Association**  
**Audio Media Services**  
**Fearless – E89 – Santa Claus**  
**Final Transcript**

But it's just a short window of their innocence. And so that's another reason: the world comes after them so quickly. And I think a lot of Christians might have the best intentions. Once again, I don't think they're wrong. Whether we are fighting for truth in the world, that's of a lot of things we've talked here on *Fearless*, we're talking about truth, standing for truth, knowing truth, but I think a lot of people can get in this debate and say, "No, we gotta stand. Jesus is the reason for the season. We gotta fight for this. We can't let this—the world define what Christmas is and take it away from us." And I just think sometimes we get too serious that we miss out on the joy. And I wanna be careful saying "too serious," cuz I don't think we can ever be too serious, but we gotta have a sense of humor, we gotta have joy, we gotta have imagination.

And of course at Christmas, whether your children know who Santa is or not, we are always to focus on the greatest gift that God gave us and that is His Son, Jesus Christ. And just in the car the other day, we were talking about Christmas and talking about Santa Claus and I always turn it back around to: Well, why do we celebrate Christmas? What does it truly mean? Those are the basic conversations that it's up to us parents that if you choose to do both, you can always guide 'em back to the true meaning of Christmas. And of course, let your children know the generosity of the real St. Nicholas, which was based on how he understood God's generosity to himself, that he wanted to give back.

We don't make Santa the center of our celebration. He's definitely a part of it. Even my mom still signs Christmas presents from Santa when she's 72 years old, and to her grown children, that's how she signs. She used to tell us, "If you don't believe in Santa, then you're not getting any presents." And just speaking of that, when I talk about my mom or maybe that generation, Santa was never a debate. I feel like it's now this younger generation, my generation, maybe millennials that have kind of ruined it, again. Kind of like what we talked about at Halloween, Christians are ruining all the fun. It's like they're more enlightened, they're more spiritual, they're gonna do things better than their parents did, and our parents lied to us and we can't lie to our children. And they've become so dramatic with it.

And so my mom, you know, I look at that generation, and even comments I get on social media or something, if it's an older person, they just say, "We always did Santa and we never thought twice about it." So I think we've kind of taken the fun out of things, again. But I think it's important, when you want to focus on the Christmas season with your children, to make those memories special. And I don't think parents should become overwhelmed with trying to make, you know—especially as moms, we can come up with this never-ending to-do list at Christmas season of what we have to do, and we can lose the joy of the season real quickly. And we're so stressed that we gotta make the cookies and we gotta do this and we gotta, you know, get all these traditions in. And I'm a traditionalist, I love tradition, but sometimes tradition can rob us of the joy. So I would encourage you pick like three or four, five things what you think you're capable of getting done to do with your family to make those memories and pick those traditions

**Billy Graham Evangelistic Association**  
**Audio Media Services**  
**Fearless – E89 – Santa Claus**  
**Final Transcript**

that you do every year with your kids. Don't do a whole list of 'em cuz you won't get 'em all done, and then you'll be more upset with yourself that you didn't get 'em done. Just pick a couple and have that fun with your children.

And just enjoy that time. It's a sweet time with your little ones, a time of innocence, a time of ... magic, I should say—people won't like that if I say that here on *Fearless*—but it's a magical time for kids and I think I just had the best of memories growing up, that I wanna imitate that for my children. And yeah, we've even gotten sucked into over the last few years with Elf on the Shelf, of course. But, make the family a priority in this busy season. Do Advent. We always find an Advent activity each year. There's some great ministries out there that have Advent cards that you can do with your kids or even Pinterest—you can download an Advent activity to do with your kids, that we did last year, like a countdown. And so that's a one way that we always, every year, draw the focus at the end of each day during Advent and have that family time, that devotional time as a family.

But I will say one of my biggest pet peeves are pastors during Christmas. So let me just say this one note to pastors. Pastors, I don't think it's your job to tell kids that Santa is not real [soft chuckle]. I remember one of my favorite pastors that I've grown up with and I love him dearly, he said it last year during the Christmas service about Santa not being real. And thankfully my kids were in Sunday school and he said during the Sunday service that—right at Christmas—that Santa wasn't real. And I was [laugh] so mad about it. Thankfully my kids weren't in there, and it's not that I got so mad that I got up and walked and left the church service, but I just couldn't believe that he said that during church. So just a warning to pastors: don't take it as your obligation to tell kids that Santa's not real. Leave that to the parents and let the parents decide on that.

But with that, I've seen so many arguments and fights on social media between friends and family that it's almost comical. There's so many things dividing us in this world, Santa should not be one of them. And don't ruin it for other people—if you choose not to do Santa, then don't think yourself as more righteous than the others, that you know better, that you're more enlightened, and ruin it for their family. And if you choose to do Santa, don't think of yourself as more fun of a parent and not taking yourself too seriously and looking down on those who don't.

No, of course—not to be too Biblical, but Colossians says, “*Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food [or] drink, or with regard to a festival or [the] new moon or a Sabbath.*” Not to let some of these little things become judgment that they divide us on a silly subject. But as we close, I just wanna encourage you to love one another during this season. Let there be room for us to disagree on the subject of Santa or not Santa and all of us to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas. Because if we draw the line at Santa, like where would we stop? We can always get legalistic on certain things. When we look at the Christmas tree, the Christmas tree had pagan roots of where it started from, and now of course as Christians, we use it to celebrate

**Billy Graham Evangelistic Association**  
**Audio Media Services**  
**Fearless – E89 – Santa Claus**  
**Final Transcript**

Christmas. Even the December 25th and the reasons that that was chosen didn't have the best of roots of where the story came from.

So if we chose not to do Santa, but where do we draw that line? And so just be gracious with one another this Christmas season. Love one another, choose what's best for your family on Santa Claus. My family will definitely be doing Santa even when my kids are older—I'll be like my mom signing, "Love, Santa Claus." I even give myself presents from Santa. I go shopping and sign, "You have been a very good wife and a very good mom this year. Love, Santa." There's a tip for you moms out there and for you women. But anyways, once again, I hope the beginning of this Christmas season that your family is full of joy, that y'all have a wonderful time as a family, building beautiful memories and Merry Christmas.

**MUSIC TRANSITION**

**Cissie Graham Lynch:**

**00:20:08** Thank you for joining me on another episode of *Fearless*. And if you're looking for a Christmas devotional or other Christmas resources, maybe articles from my grandfather Billy Graham, I encourage you to check out [BillyGraham.org](http://BillyGraham.org). And once again, thank you for always following me, Cissie Graham Lynch, on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter.

**CLOSING MUSIC**

**# # #**