

Why This Pastor Still Believes in Santa Claus

Around this time, decorations of Santa Claus are practically everywhere. Santa displays are set up in people's homes, in their yards—even in stores! And tomorrow, on Christmas morning, children will look under the Christmas tree asking what Santa brought them this year.

Many know that this whimsical tradition is based on a real person—St. Nicholas of Myra. But what most probably don't know is the deep, Christ-centered faith St. Nicholas had and how it affects how we celebrate Christmas in modern times.

Pastor Maury Davis of Cornerstone Church in Madison, Tennessee, recently wrote a book about this very subject called *Why I Believe in Santa Claus*. I invited Davis onto my podcast to share the incredible story behind the Christmas legend.

In Davis' extensive travels around the world for his ministry, he's discovered something quite surprising. He tells me there are people in every country who don't know about Jesus and His disciples and have never seen a Bible. But there are two things every culture recognizes: Coca-Cola and Santa Claus.

"It was amazing to me, as I really began to think about it, that the most famous Christian in the history of Christianity is Santa Claus," Davis says.

After this surprising revelation, Davis began researching and unpacking the story of St. Nicholas. He learned that St. Nicholas was the son of wealthy parents, and because of that, he had the privilege of learning how to read. His parents firmly believed in the Bible, and because of their wealth, they could actually read it.

After St. Nicholas' parents died, God spoke to the bishop of Turkey and told him that the next person named Nicholas who walked through the door of the church the next day would be the next bishop of Turkey. That man ended up being, of course, St. Nicholas.

But there was one problem. Going into ministry meant that Nicholas needed to take a vow of poverty. As someone who just inherited his parents' very large fortune, Nicholas knew this meant he had the opportunity to be extremely generous.

That's when he began performing random acts of kindness. Nicholas learned that one man was so poor that he didn't have a dowry to give his daughter away in marriage. So Nicholas wrapped a large sum of money in plain, brown wrapping paper and left it on the man's porch. He did the same thing for the man's second and third daughters. But on the third time, the man caught Nicholas leaving the money. Nicholas made him promise not to tell people about his random acts of generosity.

"What happened is there had been other random acts of kindness, and so people began to realize that Bishop Nicholas was doing these things," Davis says. "So they began to say, 'Well, St. Nicholas must have been here. Nicholas must have been here' when people did [kind] things."

Another thing many people don't know about St. Nicholas is that he was actually involved in writing the Nicene Creed. He was in the thick of the controversy at that time and was a vocal opponent to Arius, who denied the deity of Jesus. (Some say he even slapped Arius across the face during the Council of Nicea!)

When St. Nicholas died, the village he came from set aside a day in his honor and called it St. Nicholas day.

"They had a doll that they would make and [dress in] a pope-ish looking outfit," Davis says. "And they would put him in

the back of a sleigh and pull him with reindeer down the streets of the city. And little children would dress up and throw candy out into the crowd. And it became their St. Nicholas Day parade.”

As this tradition began to spread, the Dutch began calling it Sinterklaas. As that name went through different languages, it eventually became Santa Claus.

Davis tells me that one day Dr. Clement C. Moore heard the story of St. Nicholas and how he defended the faith while on his way to the store to buy a Christmas Eve turkey. The man who told Dr. Moore the story was a “little fat man with a white beard and a little red nose and rosy cheeks, smoking a corncob pipe,” Davis says.

“Dr. Clement Moore went to the man’s house and was so inspired that he took out a brown bag and wrote on the brown bag the title of his poem, which was *’Twas the Night Before Christmas*. And out of that we have our modern version of Santa Claus. But the principles of authenticity, biblical integrity and giving in secret ... actually came from a gentleman called Nicholas.”

It’s fascinating to me that one man could make such an impact on the entire world. And while it is sad that the world only recognizes Santa Claus as a magical man who rides a sleigh and gives toys to children across the world, it does provide a unique opportunity to tell the true story—and with it, the gospel.

I encourage you to listen to my full interview with Davis. He shares many more fascinating insights into the story of St. Nicholas that I simply didn’t have room to share in this article. You can listen by clicking [here](#).