



*This is our favorite season of the year – lots of family times, lots of music, lots of sneaking around with secrets, lots of special traditions, and lots of rich times of fellowship with covenant family around His Word!*

*One tradition we have enjoyed for many years as our children have grown up is the celebration of St. Nicholas Day. Our pastor introduced the holiday to us when our children were very small. We were very excited to introduce them to the story of the real man behind the Santa Claus that has taken over Christmas in our culture. He was a man of great generosity, with a deep concern for the*

*needy and a love for people and the Lord. There is much about selflessness that our children can learn from his story, in contrast to the selfishness that is associated with the Santa Claus of our day.*

*We always enjoy delving into history and into the customs of other countries. St. Nicholas Day is an excellent opportunity to do both! Some of the stories of St. Nicholas are obviously fable, and we don't believe that men should be worshipped as saints, but we can certainly learn from men of the past!*

*Every December 5<sup>th</sup> we have bratwurst and sauerkraut and watch a video about St. Nicholas. We hang up our stockings, and then we all camp out on the living room floor around the Christmas tree. We wake up together in the morning to open small gifts in our stockings. These always include fresh and dried fruit and chocolate, especially chocolate coins wrapped in gold foil. When the children were small, we also put an ounce of silver in the toe of the stocking. Breakfast always includes hot chocolate in St. Nicholas cups that we have picked up over the years at thrift stores.*

*We read some of the stories about St. Nicholas throughout the day, and have a dinner that usually includes pork roast and potatoes. Dessert is yellow sugar cookies baked to resemble the gold coins that St. Nicholas is said to have thrown down the chimney of a household of poor dowryless young ladies.*

*Many websites exist that we did not have access to in our younger days. You might want to do a little exploring between now and St. Nicholas Day, December 6. I've enjoyed looking around at [www.stnicholascenter.org](http://www.stnicholascenter.org) while writing up this little note to you. This site is loaded with ideas for crafts and activities, and it will certainly inspire you if you would like to include the story of St. Nicholas in your Advent celebrations. I've found some great new ideas that I want to include in our celebration this year!*

*Be sure to read the sections on "Plays and Scripts," "Celebrate at Home," "Recipes," "Activities," "Handouts," "Advent Saint," and try out their St. Nicholas Day screen saver that counts down the days, hours, and minutes until St. Nicholas Day.*

*A special section on books links up with Amazon to help you purchase books and videos about St. Nicholas:*

***Nicholas: The Boy Who Became Santa*** *This is the video we watch every year. We have it memorized.*

***Santa, Are You for Real?*** *I think this is the first book we started out with as we taught the children the story of St. Nicholas.*

***Saint Nicholas*** *by Ann Tompert. This is another book we look at each year. It has beautiful illustrations in it.*

*Spend some time on a website or two, and try out a couple ideas. Then...if you enjoy celebrating St. Nicholas Day, you might want to learn more about St. Lucia! Her feast day is on December 13, and we've had a lot of fun learning about her while we celebrate each year.*

*These traditions are part of what weaves our family closer together! We look forward to the day when we can share with our grandchildren the traditions of their parents' childhoods!*