

A Family Guide to A Christmas Carol



TITLE: *A Christmas Carol* (1984), Color, 100 minutes

STARRING: George C. Scott, Angela Pleasence, Roger Rees, David Warner

RATED: PG, for some intensely scary scenes involving ghosts near the beginning and end of the movie.

AGES: 10 and up

WHAT IT'S ABOUT: For years, old miser Ebenezer Scrooge has scoffed at those who waste time and money celebrating something that is to him as useless and frivolous as Christmas. Then one Christmas Eve, this “squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner” comes face to face with his own wretchedness—the greed and selfishness that has long enslaved him—and the terrifying doom that awaits him at his death. Scrooge encounters the Spirit of Christmas—Past, Present, and Future. He discovers the true meaning of the blessed holiday and undergoes a truly miraculous transformation, becoming “as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man as the old city knew... Ever afterwards, it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge.”

First published in 1843, Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol* has become one of the most beloved holiday stories of all time. It’s a story of faith and hope, of transformation, redemption, and rebirth – a story that points us to the very first Christmas and the birth of the Savior who came to set us free from sin. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16).

We may not seem quite as miserable as old Scrooge, but each one of us has the capacity to be selfish, greedy, uncaring or unkind toward others. Like Scrooge, we sometimes get our priorities mixed up; we forget what’s really important in life. We can let our hurts and heartaches make us angry, bitter, or hard-hearted. We all need the Spirit of Christmas – the Spirit of Jesus – to transform our hearts and minds and make us new.

BIBLICAL PARALLELS AND PRINCIPLES:

~ The Bible warns us repeatedly about the dangers of greed: “Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied...” (Ecclesiastes 5:10) “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil...” (1 Timothy 6:10) “Do

not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven...For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:19-21)

~ Scrooge’s old business partner comes back from the dead to warn him about the judgment that awaits him if he continues in his sin. In Luke 16:19-31, Jesus tells a parable in which a greedy rich man experiencing the torments of hell begs to be allowed to go back and warn his brothers to repent, so that they won’t suffer the same fate. Jesus explains that God has already sent His prophets (given us His Word) for that very purpose, and that even if Someone were to rise from the dead – as He was about to do – there are some who still would not believe!

~ The Bible tells us, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9) “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

~ When we respond to God’s love for us by loving others, when we show compassion, when we reach out to the poor and needy, when we give generously – even sacrificially – Jesus says it’s as if we are giving to Him: “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.” (Matthew 25:40)

BEFORE THE MOVIE STARTS ~ DISCUSSION STARTERS:

People often talk about “getting into the Christmas spirit”? What does that mean? Why do we celebrate Christmas? What do we celebrate? What are some of the ways we celebrate?

Do you have a favorite Christmas tradition? (For many people, watching A Christmas Carol is a favorite tradition!)

AFTER THE MOVIE ENDS ~ DISCUSSION STARTERS:

How did Scrooge become such a miserable man? What sad things happened in his life that were not his fault? How did he respond to those heartaches? What things happened as the result of choices he made?

When Scrooge was a young man, he thought that making a lot of money would bring him happiness. Did it? Who were the happiest people in the story? Why? How did they choose to respond to hardship and suffering?

It’s been said that “actions speak louder than words.” How did Scrooge prove that his heart really had changed – that he meant what he said to the Ghost of Christmas Future?

How can we celebrate the true meaning of Christmas? How – specifically – can we share God’s love with others and reach out to those in need this holiday season?

DID YOU KNOW? Dickens once wrote his own version of the very first Christmas—not for publication, but for his family. It was called *The Life of Our Lord*. In it, Dickens shared from his heart, his own experience of the life-changing power of the gospel. He began:



Dickens

My Dear Children,

I am very anxious that you should know something about the history of Jesus Christ. For everybody ought to know about Him. No one ever lived, who was so good, so kind, so gentle, and so sorry for all people who did wrong, or were in any way ill or miserable... And as He is now in Heaven, where we hope to go, and all to meet each other after we are dead, and there be happy always together, you never can think what a good place Heaven is, without knowing who He was and what He did.

Who was Jesus? He was – and is – the Son of God. And what did He do? As Tiny Tim reminds us, He made the lame to walk and the blind to see. Ultimately, He gave up His own life for ours, taking on Himself the punishment for our sins, making it possible for us to be reconciled to God and receive the precious gift of eternal life.

YOU MAY ALSO LIKE: *A Muppet Christmas Carol* starring Michael Caine, great for families wanting to include younger children (ages 5 and up) in this Christmas tradition. Brian Henson’s heartwarming adaptation is surprisingly faithful to the original story and includes a beautiful hymn inspired by the words of Tiny Tim: “Bless Us All.” The comic relief provided by Muppets Gonzo and Rizzo the Rat lessens the tension during the scarier moments in the story.

Other Movie Versions (Traditional):

- A Christmas Carol* (1938) starring Reginald Owen (Black and White)
- A Christmas Carol* (1951) starring Alastair Simm (B/W and Colorized)
- Scrooge* (1970) starring Albert Finney (Musical)
- A Christmas Carol* (2000) starring Patrick Stewart
- A Christmas Carol: The Musical* (2004) starring Kelsey Grammer
- Disney’s A Christmas Carol* (2009) starring Jim Carrey (Animated)