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Justin Harter

New Rules for Christmas

I've noticed an interesting thing about Christmas this year and it's clear to me that far fewer people than last year are celebrating it. As I drive around Indy I notice fewer houses are sporting Christmas lights and wreaths. Some homes are putting up those monstrous inflatable nativity scenes featuring Winnie the Pooh and St. Nick, but not many. I wondered, briefly, if this was a sign of the times. Maybe people are hard pressed for money and can't afford lights or the electricity to power them. My best theory is that people are becoming much more apathetic about the holidays. That's why I've created this short list of new rules for you to follow regarding the holidays.

New rule: no more Christmas cards. I know I'll take flack for this one, but seriously, how many people still keep their Christmas cards? I don't like unnecessary clutter in my file cabinets or drawers and I don't have room to keep half a dozen cards that all say about the same thing. Last year I made my own Christmas cards because I thought they would show a more personal touch. I realized it was just another piece of paper that people had to put somewhere. I always feel bad when I throw away cards and I shouldn't feel guilty about something so simple. So this year when you don't get a card from me, it's not because I've stopped liking you; I've just stopped liking cards.

Our next new rule: enough with the gift cards. I just realized that gift cards are incredibly thoughtless and I'm just as guilty of using them as you are. Nothing says you put absolutely no thought or effort into thinking of a gift for someone like a gift card. Believe it or not, some people probably don't like getting a card that acts sort of like money, but not really; and it loses value over time and comes with penalties and restrictions on where you can spend it. If you can't think of a gift for someone that has real meaning and value you evidently don't know them very well or you should just give them cash so they can spend it wherever they want.

New rule: no more lists. If you have kids and one of them walked up to you and handed you a list of demands and things they wanted in say, June, for no reason at all you'd probably laugh at them and tell them to get a job. But when that same kid does it in December you promise to look it over with Santa and answer their demands. Countries have gone to war over less than that. I, nor anyone else, should have to make a list. The people that buy me gifts should buy gifts that serve some utility in my life.

New rule: everyone has to realize Christmas trees are a pagan tradition, not a Christian one. I see no good reason to go out into the wilderness, chop down a perfectly good tree, fill it full of junk and stuff it into the corner of my living room to rot for a month. Plus, I have cats and that spells a disaster. But if I did own a tree I'd at least recognize that Christmas trees are a pagan tradition designed to honor the tree and the earth. When the

Christian movement got its footing, the tree was just something cutesy they evidently liked. It has nothing to do with Jesus or any other part of Christmas.

New rule: Everyone has to stop telling me that I've leaving the "Christ" out of "Christmas" when I write "Xmas". The symbol "X" was used to represent the Greek symbol "chi", which is also the first letter in "Christ". That usage has been around since Roman times. So when you tell me I'm leaving out the "Christ", I'm really not.

New rule: I'm asking that everyone stop complaining when someone says "Happy Holidays" instead of "Merry Christmas". Here in reality lots of people celebrate lots of different things. I know several people that don't even celebrate anything around "the holidays" because they're single, divorced or downright lonely. Cheerful attitudes and the assumption that everyone gets to be happy around this time of year only sadden some people and irritate others. Just say "Happy Indiana Winter" and we'll all be on the same page.

New rule: people who celebrate Christmas have to stop thinking that's the mightiest holiday in the history of the universe. Realize that everyone's a skeptic...about other religions.

And lastly, new rule: Everyone has to volunteer to do something nice for someone they don't know year-round. Christmas and other major holidays serve a good purpose for reminding us to do good things for people who can't get their foot in the world's door. There is no reason why the Salvation Army has to have bell ringers only around Christmas. There is no reason why we only have food drives and clothing drives around Christmas. Everyday should be like Christmas for everyone.