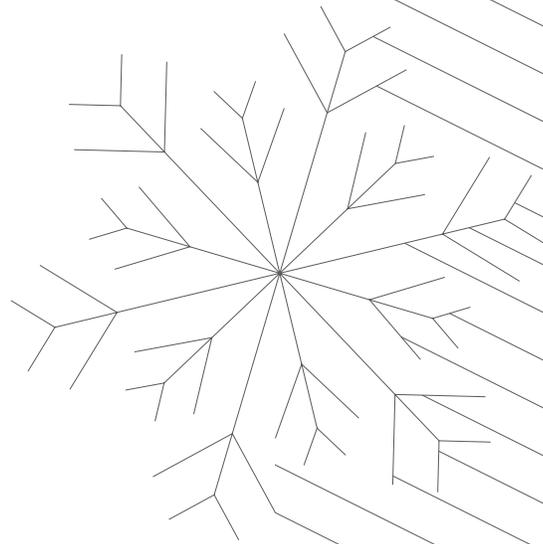


The Keep-Growing Guide to Christmas Break

- [The Break Destroyers: What Not to Pack](#)
- [Tips for a Better Christmas Break](#)



At first, Christmas break comes as a breath of fresh air. After a few months of living on your own and a grueling finals week, you come home to Christmas decorations and home cooking. You start to enjoy



what might be your favorite time of year.

But for many, Christmas break eventually takes a

rough turn. For me, going home reminded me how much I enjoyed being at college. I'd grown used to the freedom. At home, my parents acted like I was still a child. Old conflicts came back to the surface. Oh — and they'd saved up chores for me to do." Whether Christmas break feels like an amazing reprieve or like something to survive, one thing remains constant for college students: Break is a tough time to follow Jesus well. When you return home, the spiritual growth you experienced at college feels like it begins to disappear. You feel lonely and miss the friends you've made. Your Bible seems uninteresting. You burn hours staring mindlessly at a screen.

So what can you do to change this? First be mindful of what you take home. Then be strategic about what you do.

The Break Destroyers: What Not to Pack

There are three things we default to — things we like to take home — that have the potential to ruin Christmas break:

1. A Self-Oriented Heart

The biggest thing that holds you back from enjoying break is being too concerned with enjoying break. It's easy to think of this as your time to just rest from the last semester and gear up for the next. It's Christmas break after all, right? It's me-time.

But your life isn't just about you. Yeah, I know that goes against what many will tell you.

If you're the only person you think about, you'll waste your break.

But if you've brought Christ into your life and are following Him, your life is about Him and others, and you do things to represent who God is. Representing God makes you happier anyway.

If you're the only person you think about, you'll waste your break. Even if you work a full-time job over break, you have lots more time to think about

others than you do at school. How can you be a blessing? What might your friends need? If you'd appreciate something — like a phone call — chances are your friends would too. Be the one who takes the initiative and makes it happen.

2. An Entitled Attitude

“I deserve this break.”

“Just let me relax.”

“C'mon, Mom, how can you be so selfish that you'd wake me up at nine in the morning?”

These are entitled thoughts. And, incidentally, they're things I said to my parents during my Christmas breaks. It's easy to ignore our own entitled attitudes, but we're the most entitled generation to ever walk the face of the earth.

When you get upset with your parents for asking things of you, what you're really telling them is that they don't understand what you deserve. Do you and I really deserve to do whatever we think is best without anyone else telling us otherwise?

3. A Misguided Perspective

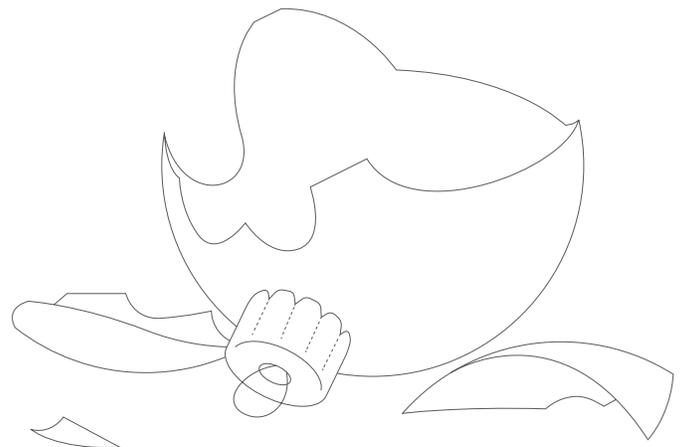
We often mistakenly equate having a relationship with Jesus to reading the Bible and praying. How your relationship with God is going isn't equivalent to how much time you've spent in religious activity. I've known a number of jerks who don't follow Jesus

well but read the Bible and pray every day with great devotion. And I've known many who struggle to spend consistent time in the Bible yet love Jesus greatly and follow him passionately.

Don't get me wrong; if you're serious about following Christ, you'll love his Word and dig into it as often as you can. But lose the shame and guilt for the time you haven't spent in the Bible. And lose the pride for the time you do spend in it. Strip the lies of pride and shame from the activity, and you'll experience something true: genuine life change that flows from time spent with God.

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So if you indeed leave a self-oriented heart, an entitled attitude and a misguided perspective behind you, what intentional things can you do to set yourself up for a better break?



Tips for a Better Christmas Break

While this is far from a checklist that'll ensure your happiness, these tips should put you on a path to the break you're looking for.

1. Stay Connected to Friends Who Understand You

After a few months at college, you may feel like no one — especially not your parents — understands you. Your life at college is different, and you aren't the same person you were when you left. That can lead to some serious loneliness during break.

Remember, your college friends are apt to feel just as lonely. Call them — yes, using your voice, not texting them. Or, even better, go see them if that's feasible. If you can find encouragement in the places you've been connected for the past few months, it'll be easier to love your family well, walk with Jesus and enjoy the blessings break brings.

2. Serve Your Family

I don't have to know your mom to know that your mom's language of love is having someone else wash the dishes. You may feel bored a lot during break and think there's nothing to do. But that's just because

Step back and ask yourself what would really bless your parents or siblings.

you're only thinking about your own desires. Step back and ask yourself what would really bless your parents or siblings. Then go do those things. Or better yet, ask how you could help them and be a blessing to them!

I'll tell you this: My dad doesn't know Jesus, but when I served and helped him around the house (mind you, without complaining about it), our relationship improved.

3. Make Good Use of Your Time

Breaks can seem to fly by. They can also feel like an eternity if you can't wait to get back to college. Either way, every college student has the same 24 hours in a day for those few weeks. Make good use of that time. Different things work for different people, but making yourself a schedule, or even just a list of goals, will go a long way.

Whatever you do, don't wing it and expect to have a good break.

Proverbs makes it clear

that the wise person is one who plans and then works, trusting the results to God (Proverbs 16:9, 21:5). Plan out what you hope to study in the Bible, how you'll help around the house, what friends you'll connect with. Set daily goals and weekly ones too. You could even get ahead on the classwork that will hit hard once break ends.

“The plans of the diligent lead surely to advantage, but everyone who is hasty comes surely to poverty.”

Proverbs 21:5

4. Rest Well

While spending 20 hours a day on the couch isn't the goal, make solid rest part of your game plan! Real, healthy rest comes not as a result of doing nothing or doing whatever your body or brain tells you to do but from intentionally taking time to relax. Prepare for good rest and you'll get it.

Talk with your parents about you taking a day or part of a day to rest. Then ask them how you can help now so that you can actually take that day to rest. Don't just wake up on that day and announce you're taking the day off. It won't go well. Trust me.

When you have your day (or part of the day), rest well. Take some extended time alone to connect with God. Go to your favorite coffee shop or restaurant alone or with a friend. Watch a movie, read a book or enjoy a restful activity. Enjoy the time, knowing you've served your family and considered others well.

Here's a pro tip: If you spend five hours each day on a device, you'll probably get snarky responses if you tell your parents that you're going to take a day to rest.

5. Read a Book

Pick up one of these excellent, short, break-friendly reads:

[“Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God's Will”](#) by Kevin DeYoung.

[“The Prodigal God: Recovering the Heart of the Christian Faith”](#) by Timothy Keller.

[“Humility: True Greatness”](#) by C. J. Mahaney.

[“The Knowledge of the Holy”](#) by A. W. Tozer (the characteristics of God and their meaning for Christians).

[“Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ”](#) by John Piper.