



SRI SATHYA SAI INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION



CHRISTMAS 2021 STUDY GUIDE

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# JESUS CHRIST - HIS LIFE AND MESSAGE

Offered with love and gratitude at the lotus feet of

# **Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba**

on the occasion of Holy Christmas 2021

“People talk of the sacrifice of Christ as evidenced by His crucifixion. He was surrounded, bound, and crowned by the crowd who captured Him with a crown of thorns, and later, nailed to the cross by His captors. A person bound and beaten by the police cannot say that he has sacrificed anything, for he is not a free man. Let us pay attention to the sacrifice that Jesus made while free, out of His own volition. He sacrificed His happiness, prosperity, comfort, safety, and position; He braved the enmity of the powerful. He refused to yield or compromise. He renounced the ‘ego’, which is the toughest thing to get rid of. Honor Him for these. He willingly sacrificed the desires with which the body torments man; this is sacrifice greater than the sacrifice of the body under duress. The celebration of His birthday has to be marked by your sacrificing at least a desire or two and conquering at least the more disastrous urges of the ego.”

Sri Sathya Sai Baba,  
December 24, 1972

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# The Message of Jesus Christ

On December 25th, when Jesus was born, three kings came to His birthplace. These three gave expression to three different views about the new-born baby. One of them, looking at the infant, said: "This child looks like one who will be a lover of God." A second king said: "God will love this child." The third king declared: "Verily, this child is God Himself." The first one viewed the child from the physical point of view. The second saw the child from the mental viewpoint. The third saw from the Atmic (spiritual) point of view.

The three declarations indicate how one can progress from the human to the divine level. What is needed is the destruction of the animal and demonic qualities in man. Man today worships inanimate idols and images, but makes no attempt to love his fellow human beings in flesh and blood. This was the first message of Jesus. Though one sees his neighbors day after day, he does not choose to love them. How can one believe that such a person can love an invisible God? If a man cannot love a fellow human being who is visible before his eyes, how can he love what is not visible to him? This is not

possible. Only a man who loves living beings around him can love the invisible Divine. Love must start with love for beings that have form. It must be extended to all beings. This is the primary stage in spirituality. Spirituality does not mean preoccupation with meditation, worship, etc. It involves total extinction of the animal and demonic qualities in man and the manifestation of one's inherent divinity. When the attachment and hatred in which man is enveloped are removed, the inherent divinity in man, the *Sath-chith-ananda* in him will manifest itself. There is no need to search for the omnipresent Divine in any specific place. When you are yourself divine, why search for the Divine elsewhere? It is a mark of ignorance.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba,  
December 25, 1992

## For Reflection

1. Reflect on what spiritual practices will enable you to curb animal qualities.
2. Reflect on how to manifest the inherent divinity present in each of us.
3. What is the greatest sacrifice for a spiritual seeker?

# This Life Is a Temporary Rest Place

Develop knowledge about the higher levels of consciousness and the higher planes of existence. Knowledge leads to skill. From skill in using such knowledge, one acquires balance.

You must recognize that this life is a stage in the long pilgrimage and that we are now at a hotel, a temporary resting place which has also a watchman. The mind is the watchman. So, do not feel permanently attached to the mind or the body. This 'negative' body has the 'positive' Divinity within it. When you become all-embracing infinite Love, the Divine will manifest in and through you. Try to be like Jesus.

Jesus was a person whose only joy was in spreading Divine Love, offering Divine Love, receiving Divine Love and living on Divine Love. There are various theories about the birth date of Jesus based on the 'bright star that appeared at His birth.' It is visible once in 800 years, it is said. Its appearance had nothing to do with the birth of Jesus. There is no rule that when Divine Energy or Divine Incarnation descends on Earth, a star has to appear. That is the opinion of devotees only.

But Jesus was Himself a 'Star' of infinite value, spreading brilliance of infinite dimension. Why posit another less brilliant glow?

Today is the birthday of Jesus, celebrated amidst December snowfalls with lights, Christmas Trees, and prayers. But it is useless to pray just one day and forget God the rest of the year. That is an empty show; it does not emanate from the heart. We are true Christians only when we live according to the teachings of Christ and practice them in daily life. Even if we follow two teachings of His, that would be enough. Christ said, "All life is one, my dear Son! Be alike to everyone."

Sri Sathya Sai Baba,  
December 25, 1979

## For Reflection

1. Reflect on the life of Jesus Christ and reflect on what amongst His qualities stand out for us
2. How can we practice the teachings of Jesus Christ and live His message?

# Love is God – Live in Love

“Develop love for God. All other forms of love are not love at all but only fleeting and impermanent attachments. Man’s biggest folly is forgetting his Divinity. All should realize that they come from God.

All are children of God. Everyone should seek to get nearer and nearer to God. That is spiritual practice (*Sadhana*). You must feel that God dwells in your heart. You must develop compassion in the heart because without it, the heart is only a stone.

That is the message of Jesus: The message of love. Love is God. Live in love. Start the day with love. Spend the day with love. End the day with love. This is the way to God.

Only the person who is filled with love will be dear to the Lord. Today, devotees from

many countries are here. Whatever happiness you may have experienced here, you must sustain that when you go back to your countries. That is got by God’s grace.

You can get it through love and love alone. When you have that love, your proximity to God is ensured forever.”

Sri Sathya Sai Baba,  
December 25, 1979

## For Reflection

1. How can we become dear to the Lord?
2. How can we practice divine love and share with all?
3. What is the way to God?

# Always Speak Obligingly

Spirituality does not mean simply doing bhajans and performing some acts of worship. Cultivate noble qualities. Always be helpful to others and earn a good name. Jesus earned such a good name by sacrificing His body on the cross. You also must be prepared for such a great sacrifice. Jesus Christ developed such noble qualities. He gave protection to several poor and destitute people with a loving heart. In fact, several such people sought refuge in Him. In the process, He had to face the wrath of several enemies. You should help people even if you have to undergo some difficulties. Never indulge in reviling others, for the same Atma permeating every living being. If you abuse others, it amounts to abusing your own self. If you do not like them, keep yourself away from them, but never abuse them. Any amount of good work done by you will be of no use if you do not give up bad qualities.

If you cannot do good to others, at least speak good words. You cannot always oblige, but you can speak always obligingly. If you find someone suffering, try to help him. Today it is his turn, but tomorrow it could be yours. Always keep this in mind. Nobody can escape from pain and suffering. Always pray for the welfare of all.

Sai Sathya Sai Baba,  
December 25, 2002

## For Reflection

1. How can one consciously practice speaking obligingly?
2. Reflect on the statement “Good work done by you will be of no use if you don’t give up bad qualities”.
3. Why is reviling others bad for a spiritual seeker?

# God is Omnipresent

Jesus advised one of His foremost disciples, Peter to live in love, for Love is God. Man can experience God only when he becomes the embodiment of Love, which doesn't seek anything or expect even gratitude in return. Love becomes sacrifice and service, spontaneously. When Peter listened to such exhortations from the Master, he found a new joy welling up within him and a new meaning in the word joy. 'J' meant Jesus and the letter directed him to love Jesus first. 'O' meant others who must be loved next. 'Y' meant yourself who ought to be loved only last. But look at the human condition today. Man loves himself first, others next and Jesus last! When God occupies the mind, the objective world or nature which is only the product of the mind loses its validity and man, the wave on the ocean, lapses in his Source.

Jesus demonstrated and preached the power of faith and, ultimately, invited on Himself the supreme sacrifice of life itself. When His disciples started abusing His tormentors, His voice warned them to desist. "All are one, my son! Be alike to everyone." By a vision He granted to Paul who was reviling him, He transformed him into a penitent disciple, full of faith and ardor. It is only when we look

upon the universe as permeated by God that we acquire the strength to fight the forces of evil. Many persons who engage themselves in prayers and pilgrimages for years wonder why they have not been able to realize God. It is unnecessary to go round the world searching for God. God is in search of the genuine devotee. The devotee who is conscious of the omnipresence of God will find Him everywhere. He must have the firm conviction that there is no place where God is not present. That is the real mark of devotion. Meditation and prayer have value as means of purifying oneself. But they do not lead to God-realization. Unwavering faith in God grants inexpressible Bliss. One should not give way to doubts which undermine faith. The power of Love is infinite. It can conquer anything.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba,  
December 25, 1986

## For Reflection

1. How do we find real joy in life?
2. What is the relationship between faith, love and sacrifice?
3. Reflect on the value that meditation and prayer provide in your lives.

# Sacrifice and Charity

Sacrifice is also an aspect of character. It is one of the qualities that young people should imbibe. It is often thought that charitable and philanthropic acts make for sacrifice, but there is a vast difference between charity and sacrifice. Charitable people give only a fraction of their bounty to others. Gifts of land, distribution of food, contribution of physical labor, and spreading of education and knowledge belong to this category. Through acts of charity, no person ever gives up all that they have. One is not cursed to be born penurious if one does not perform acts of charity. Going a step higher, some retain for themselves what is just and essential and give away the rest to society. Such people win the highest acclaim in the world. Our sacred texts prescribed that a portion of one's possessions must be offered to the poor and helpless. Neglecting this injunction, one

should not accumulate millions of rupees in a selfish, callous, unfair, and unjust manner, like an avaricious curmudgeon. Sooner or later, such a miser will become a victim of disaster and degradation. It is inevitable. Wealth piled up through unfair means is the result of exploitation of the blood of the poor. Young people should not become slaves of such unfair existence and should not adopt exploitation as a means of living.

Sathya Sai Vahini,  
Chapter XXI, The Inner Inquiry

## For Reflection

1. What is the difference between charity and sacrifice? How can we make sacrifice an integral part of our daily life?
2. How should one use one's wealth?

# Truth, Goodness and Beauty

Truth is a fundamental principle. All religions have declared that no one should break his plighted word, that man should honor his pledges, that he should regard his words as his life-breath, and that keeping his promises is the greatest treasure – this was the primary teaching of the great Law-giver, Emperor Manu (author of the Dharmasastra). Plato was the foremost among the disciples of Socrates. Aristotle was a disciple of Plato. Alexander was a pupil of Aristotle. Plato commended a system of polity based on morality, righteousness, mutual forbearance as conducive to the well-being of society. He attached the greatest importance to Truth, Beauty and Goodness as the basic virtues. In

the Vedas these three qualities have been described as *Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram*. Thus, though different words are used, their essential purport is the same. Spiritual discipline consists in recognizing the unity underlying the apparent diversity and realizing divinity.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba,  
December 25, 1990

## For Reflection

1. Reflect on life situations where we can look for unity in a place of apparent diversity.
2. Reflect on truth, goodness and beauty as important basic virtues for a seeker.



# The Three Real Treasures to be Gathered

At that time, the priests of the holy temples of Jerusalem had become corrupt and commercialized. They had deteriorated into proud and selfish men. Jesus condemned them and tried to root out the evil practices. For, all forms were in the eyes of Jesus, Divine Forms and He could not tolerate any action which belied this status. So, when asked by people who He was, He could reply, "I and my Father are One." Jesus tried to teach everyone the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man.

Tradition-minded and egoistic men considered Jesus a false prophet and they tried by every means to thwart His mission. Jesus, however, did not waver. Faced with opposition, He continued to be an example of living Truth, and to purify society. Many disciples followed Jesus but throughout history, it has been the experience of Rama, Krishna, Jesus and Muhammad that disciples however close are seldom fully dedicated. Most are only part-time devotees. Jesus had 12 disciples, most of whom had faith in Him and lived His teachings. But Judas yielded to greed. He betrayed his Master for a mere 30 coins. He could not find joy in life after this treachery. His mind gave him no peace. He had to seek refuge in suicide. Betrayal by people who pretend to adore is happening since ages. Corrupt, greedy and selfish people spread

falsehoods about their own Masters. We hear of a Judas, 2000 years ago. But in the Kali Age, people are obsessed with money and Judases have multiplied. They seek to amass paltry riches whereas good character, good conduct and knowledge of God are the three real treasures to be gathered. Land and buildings, silver and gold, dollars and other currencies are temporary and trivial. They are possessions only until life lasts. But those three treasures will stay on, sustain and strengthen you until you attain union with the Infinite.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba,  
December 25, 1979

## For Reflection

1. How can the thought of "I and my Father are one" influence our worldly actions?
2. Reflect on the relationship of Jesus with His disciples.
3. What are the three real treasures one should acquire?

# The Greatness Of Unity And Purity

All religions propagated unity for promoting the well-being of society. The welfare of the world is bound up with the well-being of society. Self-realization and Self-knowledge can be got only through social involvement. Unfortunately, society today is riddled with strife, chaos and conflict.

**All religions preached the greatness of spiritual purity. All religions called upon people to adhere to the path of Truth.** They also taught that good qualities are essential for man. Thus, when the essence of all religions is one and the same, when all the scriptures proclaim the same truth, and when the goal of all human efforts is one, where is the basis for any differences? The paths are varied, but the destination is one and the same.

It is a sign of man's degradation that in spite of these truths, he indulges in conflicts and agitations on account of religious differences. When there is a downpour, the water that comes down is pure. The rain falls on mountains, plains, rivers, the sea and so on.

According to the region through which the rainwater passes, its name and form undergo changes. Because of these variations, it should not be thought that the water itself is different. Based on the teachings of the founders of different faiths, having regard to the requirements of the time and circumstance of countries, and keeping in view the specific needs of the people concerned, certain rules and regulations were laid down. On this account, one faith should not be considered superior and another inferior. Man's primary duty is to bear in mind these sacred truths and practice them in his life.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba,  
December 25, 1990

## For Reflection

1. What are fundamental principles of Unity amongst all religions?
2. Reflect on conflicts that arise from the lack of unity in the practice of various religions.





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