



## 2016 Home Christmas Celebration

Family traditions on both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day provide us with a sense of love, security and gratitude. If, on these special times, you struggle *slowing down* to celebrate the birth of Christ or if you are looking to add something new to your festivity, our prayer is that the following ideas will be of help.

### A Few Reminders . . .

1. Plan before Christmas Eve how you want to celebrate the birth of Christ with family.
2. It is best for most families to have your Worship Celebration before opening gifts. Distractions run high for both young and old on Christmas. Amid opened presents, it is very difficult to maintain one's focus on contemplating the meaning of Christmas.
3. Keep it simple. A huge production that takes hours will begin to frustrate and focus will wane. The goal is to find a main theme you want to emphasize and reinforce it with a few items.
4. Keep expectations in balance. If you are looking for a life changing experience from everyone in the house, you are going to be disappointed. The hope is that everyone pauses a moment on the day we celebrate God coming as a man to be our Savior.
5. Be joyful! Remember the angel's words, "Joy to the world". It's important that our spirits reflect this. No one enjoys being around Christians who seem to have been baptized in lemon juice and fed the lemon peel for communion.

### Organizing Your Family Christmas Celebration:

1. Gathering. Gather everyone with the expectation that nothing will distract for the next few moments. This means food preparation, phone calls, wrapping last minute gifts, etc.
2. Prayer. The head of the household should say a prayer of blessing upon the celebration. You may want everyone to say a short prayer.
3. Music. If someone in the family has a musical gift, then let it shine on Christmas! A family may want to go caroling to their neighbors.
4. Scripture. It is always a wonderful experience to read the Christmas story from Luke 2:1-20. You may choose someone to read the whole story or divide it up among the group. If you want to add the Magi (Wise men) then read Matthew 2:1-12.
5. Creative Lesson. Here you have great flexibility. The *Creative Lesson Ideas* on the next page are some suggestions that may help. Pick one or come up with your own.
6. Prayer. Close off this time with prayer. It can be one person or everyone. You may want to have everyone say a silent prayer to God about what they learned in the creative lesson. The concluding prayer should include a blessing on the events that unfold afterwards.

## *Creative Lesson Ideas* (Pick one from below or make up your own!)

### A. Theme: Happy Birthday, Jesus!

This is a Birthday party for Jesus so bake a Birthday cake and sing Happy Birthday to Him. It is also a good idea to ask if anyone has a gift to give him either in an expression of praise OR in a time of silent prayer OR something creative like a song or picture.

### B. Theme: What to Get the Lord Who Has Everything?

1) Using Nativity figurines, ask what each one gave to the baby Jesus.<sup>1</sup> 2) Once you've discussed this, ask "Is there something you can give to Jesus this year?" Suggestions on what to give: a talent/gift, a situation, a relationship, a good deed, a commitment, a praise, a thank-you, etc.

### C. Theme: How do others see God in us?

1) Have each person to pick a favorite ornament off the tree that best represents Christmas to them. 2) Ask each person to explain why it represents Christmas to him or her. This question alone could be a wonderful family connection time. 3) You could also ask, "Does it say anything about God and/or Jesus to you?" (This second question may not be easy to answer but others can help someone if they are stuck.<sup>2</sup>) 4) One further question is, "Like the ornaments, how do or can others see Jesus in us?"

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<sup>1</sup> Here are some answers as to what they gave:

Mary: love, life, care. Joseph: protection, provision, love. Angels: praise, testimony as to who He was. Shepherds: praise, faith-filled obedience. Magi (Wise Men): gifts, praise, faith-filled obedience. Animals –their stable and manger (feeding trough).

<sup>2</sup> Here are some possible answers to common ornaments:

Nativity characters: see footnote 1. Drummer boy or drum: God gives gifts that should be given back to Him, Rom. 12:6. Christmas tree: evergreen representing God's eternal life, Hos. 14:8, John 17:3 & the beauty of God's creation, Jer. 10:12, Rom. 1:20. Snowman: man's sins washed white as snow, Isa. 1:18. Santa Claus: St. Nick was a godly man who helped the needy, Prov. 14:31. *12 days of Christmas* items and Candy Canes: find their stories online about the symbolism in each. Toys: God is the giver of all good gifts, James 1:17, 1Ti. 6:17. An ornament that invokes a memory: God is good, Psa. 119:68. Any other unique ornaments: pray for wisdom! (James 1:5).