



ILLUMINE CHURCH

CHRISTMAS TOOLKIT

Tips and ideas to help people celebrate and proclaim
the Savior's birth at Christmastime.

Christ is born!

KEEPING CHRISTMAS IN CHRIST

It's not uncommon to hear of "keeping Christ in Christmas" this time of year, but in all honesty, that phrase puts the cart before the horse. Christ is essential to Christmas – everything else (Santa, gifts, peace on earth, carols, family, food, traditions) is what's added into the holiday. Taking Christ out of Christmas is like taking the gift out of the wrapping paper – you're left with nothing but a worthless decoration.

Nevertheless, Satan, the world, and human selfishness would like to remove Christ from your Christmases. Illumine wants to help you find ways to keep God's fulfilled promise – a Savior born for you – at the center of your Christmas celebrations. The following pages are full of ideas for you and your loved ones.

Philippians 2:5-11

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

⁷ rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Can you find Christmas in these verses?

The Nativity Scene

Nativity scenes have been around since the 1200s. They are attributed to St. Francis of Assisi.

These artistic depictions of Christ's birth almost always include

1. Baby Jesus
2. Mary
3. Joseph

and sometimes also include

1. Star
2. Angel(s)
3. Shepherds
4. Magi (Wise Men)
5. Animals



Ways to Make it More Significant

For Younger Children

- When unpacking/setting up the scene, read through Luke 2 and bring in the characters as Luke introduces them.
- Wait until Christmas day to add the infant Christ.
- Wait until Epiphany to add the Magi.
 - Until Epiphany, you might display the Magi somewhere removed from the stable, and perhaps even “in the East.”

For Older Children

- As a family, select a charity. As each family member decides what they'll give, lay the gift by the nativity until all are ready to be donated.
- When Christ was born, the characters probably weren't facing the same direction, posing for a picture. Challenge older children to work up a realistic setup.

For Everyone

- Instead of putting the scene on a mantle or shelf, put it on the kitchen table. Let all of the hustle and bustle of the season center on this reminder.

Christmas Build-up

The season starts early, and you can take advantage of this. Focus your family on anticipating not only the decorations and traditions, but the celebration of the importance of Christ.

As You Decorate

- Review the story as you unpack decorations such as angels, mangers, or religious ornaments.

Christmas Cards

- Choose a religious theme for your card, and explain to your family why you made that choice.
- As cards arrive, read together the scriptures inside and discuss how the art on the card brings out the idea in the verse.
- Make sure to send cards – whether they are religious in nature or not – to unchurched friends, family, and neighbors. Love them like Jesus does.

Christmas Eve

Most people have a variety of Christmas Eve traditions. Consider adding one or two of these as unapologetic ways to focus on Jesus.

For Younger Children

- Read Luke 2 as your bedtime story on Christmas Eve, hopefully replacing “visions of sugarplums” with a picture of hope’s arrival on earth.
 - You could also sing vs. 1 of Silent Night.
- Write a letter to Jesus and leave it out on Christmas Eve, like you might leave cookies and milk.
- Have a stocking for Christ like you would for a family member. Place the offering for Christmas worship in it. (Just don’t forget it when you go to worship!)

For Older Children

- *Without looking at the Bible*, challenge yourself to retell the Christmas account and then check Luke 2 to see what you may have missed.
- Sing a Christmas hymn as a prayer before bed.
 - Silent Night
 - What Child is This
 - Where Shepherds Lately Knelt
- Have a stocking for Jesus, and place prayers (requests, thanks, confession, praise) in that stocking. It’s a good reminder that Christ *wants* our prayers.

For Everyone

- Study the verses of a well-known Christmas hymn. You’ll be surprised what jumps out at you.
- Thank Jesus for the people in your life that know him, and pray for opportunities to tell those who don’t about him in the coming year. Be specific!
- Fast. Christ denied himself all the perfection of heaven to be born. Every time you feel hunger, alternate between reading and praying through Luke 2 & Philippians 2.

Christmas Morning

Few moments of the year are more picturesque than the waking moments of Christmas morning. Whether you worship formally at a church on Christmas morning or not, here are ways the morning can focus on Christ.

For Younger Children

- Gift wrap the infant Christ from your nativity scene and make it the first gift the family opens. Have them place Jesus in the nativity scene. Christ is born!
- If you open presents on Christmas morning, have one for Jesus under the tree. It can be as simple as a box in which you will put prayer requests on New Years Eve.
- Simply ask why. “Why was Jesus born?” is an important question for a child of any age to answer.

For Older Children

- Christmas morning is often very busy. Take the first 5 minutes to read a devotion or Philippians 2:1-11 with them.
- Give them their own nativity scene as a special gift. They can open it and set it up on Christmas morning.
- If you have an Advent wreath in your home, light those candles today!

For Everyone

- Consider serving. Many local charities offer opportunities to share joy on Christmas morning. You could visit the NICU or Salvation Army and bring cookies.
- Deliver a gift to someone struggling early enough that they won't know it was you.
- Sing triumphant Christmas Day hymns like
 - Go Tell It on the Mountain
 - Joy to the World
 - Hark the Herald Angels Sing

Christmas Day

Christmas Day is a full day, one filled with making memories and enjoying God's blessing – here are a few ways to make sure it is also filled with Christ.

Birthday Cake for Jesus

- All ages can be part of baking, decorating, singing for, and enjoying a birthday cake for Jesus. It's a particularly good reminder for younger children that Christ is both *real* and *present*.

Thank You Reminders

- As presents are opened, keep track of who have what to whom so that you can
 - write thank-you notes to the generous people you love and
 - pray through the list that evening, thanking God for all the blessings he's given.

Movie Selections

- There are plenty of great Christmas movies. Consider adding *The Nativity Story* to the mix. It can also be great to let kids realize that *Merry Christmas, Charlie Brown* includes a full reading of Luke 2:1-19!

Music Selections

- If you have any control over the music played today, remember to include the hymns of Christmas alongside classics like "White Christmas."
- Some good albums might include...
 - Koine – *Emmanuel Lux*
 - MercyMe – *The Christmas Sessions*
 - Chris Rice – *The Living Room Sessions: Christmas*
 - You can also check out NoiseTrade.com to download numerous *free and legal* Christmas albums.

Luke 2:1-19

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

A Savior has been born to you;
he is Christ, the Lord. | Luke 2:11

MERRY CHRISTMAS

from your friends at



ILLUMINE
CHURCH

1262 Riverchase Blvd., Rock Hill, SC 29732

illuminechurch.com | (803)810-9398