



# Christmas: Making it ALL About CHRIST

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## Ministry Direction

The first Christmas, the birth of our Savior, was totally and completely all about Christ. The angels filled the night sky singing praises to God and to the newborn Savior. The shepherds hurried to Bethlehem to see the baby then told everyone what they had seen and heard. The wise men traveled far from their homes following an unusual star to the place where the Christ child lived. And Mary treasured all these miraculous events that surrounded the birth of her baby boy, the Son of God.

The name of the celebration still contains His name—CHRIST. But is Christmas all about CHRIST? Christmas is about celebrations, traditions, relationships—all wonderful but not always Christ focused. I'm great at celebrating Christmas. I decorate multiple trees. I send out Christmas cards to family and friends with a newsy family letter and hand-written notes. I bake delicious desserts and prepare huge feasts for family and friends. But in the busyness of celebrating Christmas, I often fail to celebrate CHRISTmas.

**Celebrate CHRISTmas in your heart.** Luke 2:19 gives us a glimpse into Mary's celebration of her son's birth, "But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart." Mary didn't let one moment of the celebration escape her. And those memories lingered in her thoughts and emotions throughout her life. **CHRISTmas always begins in the heart.** Treasure the miraculous birth of Christ by—

- Asking God to help you honor His child's birth during this holiday season

- Reading the Christmas story each day. Try reading different gospel accounts from various translations.
- Playing Christmas carols
- Celebrating Advent
- Reading a modern-day story of Christmas with your family. One of our family favorites is **THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER.** It will make you laugh and cry and celebrate the real meaning of Christmas.

**Celebrate CHRISTmas in your activities.** When the Christmas season has passed, what will you have done to honor Christ's birth? Determine your priorities for this Christmas season NOW. For me, I would like to have only two—worship of the Christ child and ministry/service to others. Long before December arrives, make a list of your usual activities. Decide which activities fulfill your CHRISTmas priorities and which need to be deleted or minimized.

**Celebrate CHRISTmas with the children.** What can you do to help the children treasure the miraculous events of Jesus' birth and ponder His birth in their hearts throughout their lives? Determine what you want the children to experience during this CHRISTmas season then plan lessons and events that will accomplish those goals. Here are some worthy objectives for ministry during this CHRISTmas season:

- Children will recognize Jesus as the Son of God through the miraculous, prophetic events surrounding His birth.
- Children will rejoice in His birth.
- Children will share the joy of His birth with others.

## Ideas You Can Use

### Cookie Cutters, an object lesson

**Materials needed:** Several gingerbread men cookie cutters.

One of the Christmas traditions in many families is making gingerbread cookies. After rolling out the dough, you take a gingerbread-man cookie cutter and make lots of little gingerbread men. After the gingerbread men are baked, you can decorate them with different colored frostings and candies. Even though each gingerbread man has different icing or candies, all the gingerbread men look much the same and they all taste the same too—like gingerbread.



The gingerbread men remind me that on the first Christmas a baby was born who wasn't a cookie cutter baby. His birth was told about by many prophets hundreds of years before He was born. Angels announced His birth to his mother, his father, and to the shepherds. A star guided the wise men to the place where He was. He was a very special baby born with a very special purpose—to save His people from their sins. And He did what God had sent Him to do. He lived a life without sin so that he could take the punishment for our sins. He died on the cross and came back to life so that you and I could be forgiven from our sins. He wasn't a cookie cutter baby. He was God's only son.



And what about you? Are you like the cookie cutter gingerbread men? No, you are different from any other person that has ever been born too. You have been wonderfully made by God and He created you for His special purposes. Just as God had a plan for Jesus' life here on earth, He has a plan for your life too. And just as Jesus accomplished God's plan for his life, God will help you become all that He has planned for you to be.

So, this Christmas season, when you are making gingerbread cookies, remember that just as Jesus was born to save us from sin you have been specially made by God for His very special purposes.

**Activity:** Let the children decorate pre-baked gingerbread-men cookies. Discuss how the cookies are alike, different. Discuss that the cookies were made for our enjoyment. Why did God send Jesus to earth? Why has He made you?

## Birth Announcement, a lesson for preteens

**Materials needed:**  
Birth announcement(s)  
(If possible, ask parents to send one of the birth announce-

ments that they sent when each child in your class was born.) Index cards with Scripture references printed on them.

**Attention getter:** Show the birth announcements. Discuss why the birth announcement is sent and when it is sent. (The announcement is sent after the baby is born to give the details of the birth to family and friends.)

Did you know that there were more than 300 announcements of Christ's birth and that these announcements were made before He was born, hundreds of years before He was born? Men of God called prophets made these announcements. The announcements were made so that the Israelites would expect and recognize Jesus when He came. If someone told you 300 facts about someone you never met, do you think you would recognize him?

**Bible Lesson:** Let the children form pairs. Give each pair an index card containing a Scripture reference. Ask the children to look up the verse and be ready to share what the prophecy announced about Jesus' birth.

Be born of a woman (Gen 3:15)

Be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14)

Be the son of God (Psalm 2:7)

Be descended from the house of David (Jer. 23:5)

Be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)

Be presented with gifts (Psalm 72:10)

Be threatened by Herod (Jer. 31:15)

After they have shared the descriptions, discuss how Jesus' birth fulfilled every prophecy. Could any two men meet all those descriptions perfectly? No - only Jesus.

Some people recognized Him when He came. The wise men that brought presents knew He was the Messiah, the shepherds that visited, Simeon and Anna at the temple in Jerusalem, His mother and father, and John's parents.

Others did not recognize Him as the Messiah, the Savior. When he grew up, they crucified Him on a cross even though He had never done anything wrong. But He died for my sins and for your sins. Today you can recognize Him as Jesus' Son by con-

fessing your sins and believing that He died for the wrong things you have done.

**Interactive Application:** Give each child a plain index card. Ask him to create an announcement of Jesus' birth that would help someone recognize Him as God's Son and Savior today.



### Angel Paper Garland, a Scripture memorization and craft activity

**Materials needed:** Construction paper, markers, glitter, metallic elasticized cording or yarn, rigatoni noodles, scissors, hole punch.

- Make an angel pattern and use it to cut out angels from construction paper. Make enough angels so that one word from the scripture Luke 2:11 can fit on each angel and a couple of extra for mistakes. Punch a hole in each angel so that it can be strung.
- Give each child 6 angels. Instruct each child to write one word of the verse on each angel then decorate the angel with glitter, sequins, and other available materials.
- Let the children string the angels with rigatoni noodles on metallic elasticized cording. (Tie one end of the cording to a noodle so the other pieces of the garland will not fall off. On the other end of the cording wrap a piece of tape around the end so that it will be easier for younger children to string the noodles and angels.)

### The Best Christmas Pageant Ever

Several weeks before the busy Christmas season, ask parents and children to meet you at a park or a quiet spot in the country. Prior to the shoot, have volunteers prepare the walls of the stall from a large piece of cardboard box such as a refrigerator box. Cut a window in the back of the stall for the bright shining light. Also prepare cardboard sheep, cattle, a manger, and other props. Use a doll for baby Jesus. Spread hay around the stall walls and ground in front of the stall.



Bring costumes to the site. Children will slip on an appropriate costume for the various roles in the pageant. Take pictures of the children as they pose in various "scenes" from the Nativity story. Since you can organize the pictures later, scenes can be shot out of sequence and all children could be angels, shepherds, and even rotate as Wise Men, Mary and Joseph - just by changing costumes! Suggested scenes to pose are: the angel coming to Mary, Joseph in his wood shop (complete with tools!), Joseph visited by the angel, A Roman soldier speaking to the people and the decree to be taxed, people traveling on the "road" to their home towns, Mary and Joseph (leading a cardboard painted donkey) going to Bethlehem, angels visiting shepherds (complete with several cardboard sheep), shepherds walking to Bethlehem, 3 Magi and cardboard camels traveling and of course everyone worshipping the Child at the manger.

Have someone create a PowerPoint presentation using the slides with Christmas carols interspersed. Then enjoy a stress-free Christmas pageant with the children, parents, and members of your congregation.

## Resource Review

### Christmas Crafts & Activities.



A compendium of ideas and resources for involving children in active learning about the true meaning of Christmas and celebration of Jesus' birth. The book contains a great variety of resources to meet the needs of those who want to create a customized Children's Christmas Program or enrich Kids' Club and

Sunday School programs. Reproducible. Code: 08307.23595 Retail Price: \$17.99 (USD); Gospel Light 1957 Eastman Ave., Ventura, CA 93003; 1-800-4-GOSPEL; Outside the US 805-644-9721; www.gospellight.com

### Fun Group Devotions for Children's Ministry.

Help your children grow closer to God with these 58 ready-to-go devotions! Each devotion includes a theme, Bible passage, fun learning experience, and already-prepared discussion questions on topics like fear... anger... trust... friendship...

Loneliness...keeping promises...and God's love. Plus holiday topics like Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, and more! ISBN: 1559451610 Price: \$15.99 (USD); Group Publishing, PO Box 481, Loveland, CO 80539; 800-447-1070; www.grouppublishing.com



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