

# Christmas Magic

Does the flurry of activity surrounding Christmas blur your worship of Jesus? Does the hustle and bustle, hurry and scurry, cloud His light in your life? For some of us, Christmas has become the craziest time of the year! We rush around, trying to catch and recreate Christmas magic.

This Christmas, draw away from the holiday scramble. Fix your eyes on Jesus. With Him in focus, we don't have to create magic. He is beyond Christmas magic. He is the Christmas miracle – the answer to our salvation. Wonder at His birth. Marvel at His perfect life. Stand in awe of His death and resurrection.

Here are some ideas to get you started on creating special memories that help your family focus on God's Christmas miracle. Right after Thanksgiving, list your family's Christmas plans – everything from baking cookies and sending packages to attending the Christmas Eve candlelight service. Which activities celebrate Christ's birth? Which ones – though worthwhile and fun for your family – can be optional? As you fill your calendar, give priority to those activities that center around the birth of Jesus.

## FIX YOUR EYES ON JESUS

◆ **Have family devotions.** God tells us in His Word to teach His truth to our children (Deuteronomy 6: 5-9). Gather as a family each day during Advent – at breakfast, after dinner, at bedtime – to celebrate Jesus. Help your children remember, prepare for, and anticipate the celebration of His birth. The Holy Spirit works through these family times to strengthen the bedrock of our children's faith, which was begun at their Baptism. Devotional times remind us of the world's need for redemption and our part in bringing Christ's love to those who are lost and suffering.

◆ **Light an Advent wreath.** Purchase or make an Advent wreath – a simple ring, covered with greenery - that holds three blue candles and one pink candle. You may wish to place a white candle in the middle of the ring to light on Jesus' birthday. Light a blue candle during the first week of Advent and two blue candles during the second week. During the third week of Advent, light the pink candle along with the two blue ones. Explain to your children that the pink candle reminds us that we can barely contain our joy because Jesus' birthday is almost here. During the fourth week of Advent, light all four candles. Teach your children to say, "Jesus is the Light of the world" (John 8: 12) each time you light the candles.

◆ **Set up a nativity.** Nativities provide an interactive way for the Spirit to write the Christmas story on your children's hearts. If your children are young, you may wish to introduce one figure each day. Reenact the story of Mary and Joseph's trip to Bethlehem. Place baby Jesus in the manger on Christmas Eve. During each of the 12 days of Christmas (Christmas Day through Epiphany), move the Wise Men closer to "Bethlehem."

## TODAY'S ACTIVITIES BECOME TOMORROW'S MEMORIES

◆ **Read a part of the Christmas story each day.** One tool to use is *The Story of Christmas Book Set and Advent Calendar* by Mary Packard. This set contains 24 mini-books, each telling a small part of the Christmas story. You may read one book each day, then hang it on your Christmas tree or set it by your nativity.

◆ **Memorize Luke 1: 1-20 as a family.** Start on December 1. The entire family can memorize the whole selection, or you can divide the verses among family members. Set a goal to say the verses together on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day before you open your presents. Consider reciting the verses as a Christmas gift to grandparents or to homebound members for whom you provide care. Repeat the words on Epiphany and read the story of the Wise Men's visit.

## BE SECRET ANGELS

◆ **At dinnertime pray for the friends and family members who sent you Christmas cards that day.** Pray for the people on your Christmas card list as you mail cards. Explain to your children that when we send Christian Christmas cards, we join the angels in proclaiming God's glory.

◆ **Give gifts to Jesus.** Place a wrapped shoebox under the Christmas tree. Invite family members to place money in it throughout Advent. Small children can do extra chores to earn pennies and nickels to put in the box. On December 24 count the money, and give it as a special offering to your church or another charitable organization.

◆ **Quietly look for needs in your congregation and neighborhood and ask God to work through you to meet them.** Shovel an elderly neighbor's driveway. Pick up trash in the neighborhood. Take a meal to a homebound person. Baby-sit for a young couple who needs to shop for Christmas.

## SAVOR THE EXCITEMENT

◆ **Pop the corn, heat the hot chocolate, and settle in for an evening at the movies.** Watch a Christmas classic. Talk together about how it did or did not focus on the celebration of our Savior's birth. See if your church library has some children's Christian Christmas videos to borrow. If it doesn't, consider purchasing some for the library.

◆ **Take a pajama drive to look at Christmas lights.** Remind your children that Jesus is a light shining in the darkness (John 1: 5). He takes away the darkness of our sin and lights the way to heaven. Look for lighted crosses or stars that point to Him.

◆ **Read Christmas stories at bedtime.** If your children are older, take turns reading chapter books. Ask your librarian to direct you to Christmas books that describe Christian Christmas traditions from around the world.

## SHARE THE WONDER

◆ **Host a neighborhood birthday party for Jesus, complete with party favors, hats, and games.** Ask each child to bring a toy to donate to a local homeless shelter, crisis pregnancy center, Lutheran World Relief, or your local congregation's donation program.

◆ **Make Christmas ornaments and take them to a nursing home or hospice.** Sing Christmas carols with a group of friends when you drop off the ornaments.

◆ **Host a Christmas tea.** Invite neighbors, friends, and relatives caught up in the holiday scramble. Draw them away from the hustle and point them toward the Prince of Peace. Serve tea and cookies and read Luke 2 together.

## ENJOY THE AFTERGLOW

◆ **Have a special family night to celebrate Epiphany on January 6.** Ask each family member to prepare a surprise – a song, poem, drawing, or Scripture reading – to celebrate the visit of the Wise Men. Reenact the Christmas story together. Be as dramatic as you dare!

Long after the tinsel loses its glow, glitter fades, and gifts are forgotten, Jesus is still with us. He is our Savior and Redeemer, our personal Christmas gift from God the Father. Jesus is the reason we celebrate!

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