

Meaning of the Season

The Christmas season is called "Advent" which means "the coming of Christ the Messiah into the world." The official season begins four Sundays before the holiday as believers prepare their hearts for the arrival of the Savior and celebrate the moment when "God with us" became a literal reality. We celebrate more than a special baby's birth; we celebrate "Incarnation," which means "God becoming flesh and living among us." (John 1:14)

Meaningful Gift Giving

Three Gifts: This creative approach to gift giving limits everyone to three gifts, each representing one of the three gifts the Wise Men brought to the baby King.

- Gold (a precious metal): This gift that would be most precious—possibly the biggest item or something they've wanted for a long time. Place a gold bow on red wrapping paper to symbolize the most costly gift God gave when Jesus shed His blood for our sins. Before opening read John 3:16 together.
- Frankincense (a sweet-smelling perfume): This item would be the "sweetest" to them; something that fits their personality, their passions, their interests or hobbies. Many choose a favorite food item for this gift. Wrap it in silver paper, representing the fulfillment of the promised Messiah. Read Isaiah 9:6 together before opening.
- Myrrh (an oil used for many practical purposes, like anointing): This gift is a highly practical item. Although it may not be exciting, some things simply need to be replaced. One year you might give each child new bedding; another year, fun pajamas. A sweater, socks, t-shirts, tights, and the like, can be bundled together in one big box. Wrap this gift in green paper, representing Jesus as the everlasting hope of mankind. Read Titus 2:13 together before opening.

Gifts from the Heart: During the first week of December, call the family together to talk about the meaning of Christmas as you make paper ornaments with construction paper and ribbon. Place them in a basket or gift box. Let the family know that during the rest of the month you will give "gifts from the heart" — gifts that money can't buy, such as dad getting the newspaper for a sick neighbor or sister helping little brother pick up his room. Each time you catch someone giving a "gift from the heart," write it on a paper ornament and hang it on the Christmas tree. On Christmas Eve, gather the ornaments and wrap them in a box. Put a label reading: *To: Jesus, Love-* and insert your names. Before unwrapping presents take time to give these "gifts from the heart" to Jesus in celebration of His birthday. Open the gift to Jesus, and take time to pull out each ornament and read it aloud. You can have a birthday cake, donut or cupcake with a candle to sing "Happy Birthday" to Jesus or thank God for giving the best "gift from the heart" on that first Christmas.

Going Further Resources

It should be noted that Calvary Chapel Chino Hills does not necessarily endorse any particular resource and the entirety of its content.

Use these recommended resources to become even more intentional about CHRISTmas@Home this season.



What God Wants For Christmas

An interactive nativity set designed to be used the seven days preceding Christmas. Available from amazon.com.



Holidays: Family Nights Tool Chest

Activities for each key holiday throughout the year, including Thanksgiving and Christmas. Available from heritagebuilders.com.



The Christmas Story

Here is the story of Jesus' birth and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies in a beautiful pamphlet. Available at the CCHC Bookstore.



The Legend of the Candy Cane

A story about the symbolism found within the candy cane. Available from amazon.com.



Intentional Holidays

Get more ideas for intentionality by going to the @Home Room for loads of resources.

@Home
Building Strong Families

A ministry of Calvary Chapel Chino Hills • calvarych.org
Go to athomecalvary.org for more information and resources.
Like us at: [Facebook.com/athomecalvary](https://www.facebook.com/athomecalvary)

CHRISTmas@Home



A Family Guide to Celebrating the Birth of Christ

Become more intentional by using this guide to help you create and capture CHRISTmas@Home moments.



Find Baby Jesus

Gather as a family and read the Christmas story in Luke 2. Go through your nativity set and talk about each piece as described in the Bible, ending with Baby Jesus. Let your family know that you want to remember to "find" the true meaning of Christmas during this season, so every day Baby Jesus will be hidden somewhere around the house. Each day, your children can search and find Baby Jesus to put Him in the manger. This reminds us to seek Him throughout the season and all year long.



Prayerful Christmas Cards

The Christmas season is filled with wonderful wishes from family and friends. Each time you receive a special Christmas card or annual Christmas letter, take a couple of minutes to talk about the blessing that God has given you in those friends or family. Then, thank the Lord for those individuals and pray for them. Instead of throwing these beautiful pictures and thoughtful cards in the trash, put them in a special box or basket. Place the box/basket near your table. Throughout the year, pick a card as your family prays before a meal, and spend some time praying for the family who sent the card. Also, if you choose to send cards, come together as a family and pray for those who will receive them and ask Him to protect, bless or even save them.



Jesus is the Light

Get a strand of lights. Turn out the lights to show the darkness and then plug in the lights to show its glow. In John 8:12, Jesus says, "I am the light of the world. If you follow Me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life." (NLT) Read this passage together and briefly discuss ways in which we can follow Christ. Then have everyone put on their pajamas, enjoy hot cocoa or apple cider and drive around to look at Christmas lights. Play traditional Christmas music as you drive and sing Christmas carols together. Notice how beautiful and brightly lit the homes with lights are. Point out the homes that don't have any lights at all and how dark they are. Have everyone vote on which house with lights was his or her favorite; then pray for the family who lives in that home and pray that those who see that house will remember that Jesus is the light of the world. Before you head home, thank God for sending His Son to shine His light for us.



Tree Decorating Tradition

Turn on Christmas worship music, such as *Gloria in the Highest* by Chris Tomlin. Decorate the Christmas tree. Sit and read *The Legend of the Christmas Tree*. Children ages 4 to 8 will discover the wonderful story of how the evergreen tree first became a symbol of Christmas and a way to tell people about God.



The Greatest Gift— Christmas Family Night

Help children connect the dots between the birth of Baby Jesus and the reason He came. (We recommend the NLT when reading Bible verses to young children)

- During this Christmas season, have your children help you create a large cardboard cross for this family night activity. You can also use wooden boards to nail together if your children are old enough.
- Give each person several index cards and a marker and invite them to write a word or draw a picture on each that represents something they do wrong that the Bible calls "sin." Younger children might draw a mean face to represent temper tantrums or the word "NO" to represent disobedience. Ask one of your children to read aloud Romans 3:23, "For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard." (NLT) Explain that sin means "to disobey God."
- Ask your children "How many of us sin according to this verse?" Then have your child read Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord." (NLT) Explain that "wages" means punishment. Then explain that the most important "gift" of Christmas is that Jesus came to pay the "wages" for our sin!
- Invite each person to tape or nail their index card(s) / "sins" to the cross while mom or dad reads John 3:16, "For God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life." (NLT)
- Now use a big red marker or crayon to write the word "Jesus" across each image and word on your cardboard cross, explaining that God no longer sees our sin—He only sees what Jesus did for us!
- Give thanks to God for the gift of Jesus and memorize Romans 6:23 together.

A Christmas Carol - Movie Night

Rent your favorite version of the film *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens for a family movie night discussion with your older children. After watching the film together, discuss key scenes and themes from a Christian perspective. Take turns asking one another the following questions (and some of your own)...

- Question: Was Scrooge made in the image of God?
Answer: Yes, but he certainly didn't live like it!
- Question: In what ways did Scrooge show he had a sinful heart?
Answer: He was selfish, stingy, mean, etc.—all of which show the dark side of people.
- Question: After he realized he was wrong, what did Scrooge do?
Answer: He turned away from the wrong toward the right. He repented—and showed it by changing his ways!

Go further by downloading a free discussion guide at movenightchat.com



Legend of the Candy Cane

Share the Christmas message with others. Purchase candy canes and attach a tag to each with the following text...

A Gift for You...

I hope you enjoy this candy cane. As you take it in your hand turn it upside down and you will see the "J" that reminds us of Jesus who was born on Christmas day. Turn it back upright and you will see the crook of the Good Shepherd. The stripes are a reminder that He was beaten for us and the red color reminds us that He shed His blood for us on Calvary. The white tells us how He can wash our sins white as snow. As you taste this candy cane, be reminded that fellowship with Christ is ever so sweet!

I am glad you accepted this candy cane gift from me, but even more I hope that you accept God's gift of eternal life found only through His Son Jesus.

Read the legend on the tag together or get a copy of the book, *The Legend of the Candy Cane*. Then spend time together tying the tags on individual candy canes using ribbon or string. You can put them in a basket and give one to those that visit your home during the holidays, or take them to neighbors with an invitation to attend the Christmas service with you at church. You can also use them to bless others at places like a nursing home.

Other CHRISTmas@Home Ideas...

- Bake Christmas cookies, decorate and take to a neighbor or friend with an invitation to attend the Christmas Eve service.
- Have everyone in the family give a gift of time/service to someone else by wrapping it as a gift to give away. This could be a date night for your spouse or helping your child work on a project they have wanted to do together.
- Go shopping in a different kind of catalog this year. Check out programs like Samaritan's Purse (samaritanaspurse.com) for "gifts" your family can request to change someone else's life.
- Make your own garland using strips of paper. Write or draw the things that you are thankful for on each strip. Staple or tape the strips of paper together to create your garland. Use it to decorate your tree or put over a door as a reminder of God's many blessings.
- Adopt a struggling family for the Christmas holidays. Try to choose children that are similar ages to your kids. Shop together to find gifts. Pay specifically for their family.
- For other resources on how you can help during this season, check out the e-bulletin or calvarychc.org or you can also go to athomecalvary.org or facebook.com/athomecalvary.