

## *Simple Ideas for a Christ-Centered Christmas*



**December 5:** Decide to make Christmas music a part of each day of your celebration. Dig out carol sheets, CDs, cassettes. Invite friends in for a carol sing. If none of your friends play musical instruments, create some using beans in coffee cans, glasses filled with water, spoons or rubber bands.

**December 6:** This is St. Nicholas Day. If you don't have the story of St. Nicholas in a Christmas book at your home, visit the public library and find it.

**December 7:** Choose a Christmas colour (green, gold, red, white) and make it a Christmas Day Colour. If you have chosen a Red Day, fix meals where everything is that colour. Wear clothes in the same colour. Play I Spy to see how many items in your home are that colour.

**December 8:** If there are children in your home (or grandchildren at the other end of a phone), invite them to select and wrap a good used toy as a gift given in Jesus' name. Donate it to a mission, children's home, hospital or abuse shelter.

**December 9:** Think about caring for others. How can you/your family help a lonely person? Do you know anyone far from home this holiday? Do you know someone who will be alone for the first time this Christmas? Can you invite this person for dinner? Is there some way to share time or a talent with this person?

**December 10:** Prepare a take-out party to share with somebody. Put hot chocolate mix, cookies, napkins, cups, a book, a game, a video into a basket. Take the party to the person's home and spend the evening enjoying it together.

**December 11:** Be creative. Make decorations (garlands of cranberries and popcorn, paper snowflakes, scriptures written on ball ornaments or symbolic tree ornaments (star, cross, manger, lamb).

**December 12:** Think about our responsibility to care for animals. Decorate an outside tree with seed balls for birds. Or hang pinecones spread with peanut butter or lard and rolled in birdseed. Cut an orange in half, remove the centre carefully to keep the rind intact. Put the orange rinds filled with suet, sunflower seeds, and bread crumbs on trees or railings.

**December 13:** Put a jigsaw puzzle out on a table. People won't resist putting some of it together.

**December 14:** Read or watch Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Look around your home for gifts that can be given to others: food, toys, books, furniture, clothing.

**December 15:** Invite someone who may be lonely to go out with you to look at decorations and window displays. Take a moment and look for stars.

**December 16:** Be a witness to your neighbourhood. What decorations at the front of your home tell others about the good news of Jesus? If there are none, what can you add?

**December 17:** Read Luke 2:13-14. Write out a birth announcement for the Christ child. Post it where others can see.

**December 18:** Make a creative gift—a redeemable chore, hug coupons, a promise to let someone else use the TV remote control, homemade tickets for an outing, etc.

**December 19:** Designate one meal as the Good News Meal. Only good news may be shared. Live alone? Think only about good news as you eat.

**December 20:** Do something unexpected for neighbours. Shovel their walk, take them a plate of Christmas cookies, walk their dog, offer to help them clean their house for Christmas visitors.

**December 21:** Memorize Luke 2:1-14. If you live with small children, divide the passage so everyone can memorize a part.

**December 22:** Read and meditate on 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Romans 16: 25-27 and/or Luke 1:26-38. [*The story of the Annunciation may not be familiar to all children. The Good News Bible offers the best translation for children.*]

**December 23:** Plan a “special day.” (If you live with young children, this will relieve some stress and give them something to focus on.) Festive day themes might be: Polish the Silverware Day; Bake Fruitcakes Day; Decorate Your Clothes Day (Kids can cut out holly designs from paper and pin them to guests on Christmas Day); A Non-Stop Christmas Carol Listening Day, Placemats/Name Cards for Christmas Day.

**December 24:** Read and meditate on Isaiah 9:2-7; Titus 2:11-14 and/or Luke 2:1-14.

**December 25:** Read and meditate on Isaiah 62:6-12; Titus 3:4-7, Luke 2: 8-20, Isaiah 5:7-10, Hebrews 1:1-4, John 1:1-14. [*If you read John 1:1-14 with children, explain that “the Word” was sort of a code word for Jesus. Everything the Word was or did, John said that Jesus was or did.*]

**December 26:** Day to stay up as late as you want.



**December 27:** Day to read as many stories as you want.

**December 28:** Day to go for a special car ride or walk.

**December 29:** Read and meditate on Isaiah 61:10-62:3, Galatians 4:4-7, Luke 2:22-40. *[If you read Luke 2:22-40 with children, it may be helpful to compare the Temple rite to the baptism or dedication of an infant. The story of Simeon and Anna may be unfamiliar to most children, but they may have had visits with grandparents over the holidays and will appreciate older people in their lives.]*

**December 30:** If you live alone or in family with others, take time to ask these questions:

- What goals do I/we have?
- What new dreams are emerging in my/our life?

**December 31:** Plan a day of “no blame.” Listen empathetically to others. Encourage each other. Plan a special meal. If you live with others, plan a time of reflecting on the past year by asking:

- What has been the high point of the year for our family?
- What is the best thing our family did together this year? The worst?
- What is the best thing that happened to you personally? The worst?
- What is your biggest disappointment?
- Who was the most important person in your life in the past year? Why?
- What is one thing you wish you had done differently?
- What are you most thankful for right now?



**January 1:** Begin a scrap book for the coming year.

**January 2:** Read and reflect on Jeremiah 31: 7-14, Ephesians 1: 3-14, John 1: 10-18.

**January 3:** Declare this a “no chores day.” Do something fun, instead.

**January 4:** Declare this a day when no one needs to get dressed up all day long. If you like, stay in pajamas all day.

**January 5:** This is a day for children to choose the menu.

**January 6:** Read and meditate on Isaiah 60:1-6, Ephesians 3:1-12, Matthew 2:1-12.

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*Adapted from “Whose Birthday is it, anyway?” Reformed Church in America, 2002 and “Forbid Them Not, Year B” by Carolyn Brown, Abingdon Press, 1993.*