

...AND BREATHE!

CHRISTMAS

INTRODUCTION

Is your family like the families in the Christmas TV adverts – so much fun and a happy ending? When in reality it's more like overcooked turkey and family arguments! Let's not talk about social media – when clearly all our friends and their families appear to be having the best time ever...

Then there's nostalgia – that feeling that makes everything that's happened in the past seem so much better than today, especially if significant family members are no longer here.

Trying to remember the reason for Christmas can be difficult and get lost in all of the fun, excitement and pressure. So this Faith@Home plan aims to help you slow things down just a little bit and find some time to discover something especially for you and your family this Christmas.



PREPARATION

- + Make sure you have been given the *Nativity Set Colouring* pages on card, *Bible Verses*, and a *Christmas Toddler Song* sheet.
- + You will also need to find one or two clean jars for 'The Gift that Keeps on Giving' activity.

BIBLE READING/THOUGHT

God's Great Gift

What's the best present you ever received? Was it special because it was big, or small? Or was it special because of the person who gave it to you?

Who did you tell about the gift? Who did you show it to? Where is it now, I wonder?

Here are some wonderful five-minute clips from *The Jesus Storybook Bible* that tell the Christmas Story, from the part where the Angel Gabriel tells Mary about her baby to the visit of the wise men from the East. As you watch these clips with family members, think about the questions below and then have a conversation.

The Jesus Storybook Bible – He's Here! www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2y2FJqsv_8

The Jesus Storybook Bible – Light of the Whole World www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fqMhLApCmA

The Jesus Storybook Bible – The King of all Kings www.vimeo.com/114683530

- 🗨️ I wonder which part of the whole story different members of your family like the best?
- 🗨️ Which images do you all like?
- 🗨️ How do the words as they are spoken make you feel?
- 🗨️ Do they help you understand this story in a new way?

Jesus is God's greatest gift – we remember the day he came to the world at Christmas, and we go to a lot of trouble to mark the occasion.

However, the real meaning of Christmas can get lost. In the same way that gifts we think are the best gifts ever at the time they are given, these gifts can get lost, break, end up under the bed, or have even been taken to the tip.

Some people will talk about a time when the baby Jesus from their Nativity set went missing, but that is the actual reality for so many. Even people who DO believe can still get so busy with the commercialism of Christmas. Jesus, the reason for the celebration, is not even invited to his own party.

Take time to remember Jesus this Christmas.



FAMILY ACTIVITIES

THE GIFT THAT KEEPS GIVING

- 1) Planning for Christmas is a very stressful and busy time and opportunities to have fun can sometimes get missed; or we try and cram so much in and end up exhausted! Have a jar ready to fill with fun things, jotted on bits of paper, that you just can't fit into December. Then over the next few months, choose to do them when there is time. This could be quite funny if you have put 'Carol singing' in the jar!
- 2) In a similar way you could have a jar to fill with prayers or memories during December.

TALKING AT THE TABLE

www.table-talk.org/game.aspx?id=TableTalkforChristmas&language=English

This is a great link to a game of conversations. You might want to prepare the questions before you sit around the table, unless you are OK with phones being used at mealtime! Examples of some of the questions – Who would win in a fight: the wise men or the shepherds? Christmas is for children – do you agree?

SONG TIME

Spend time listening to, reflecting with, or singing along to...

- 🎵 'Celebrate the season by Andrew Blyth
- 🎵 'Majesty Resides' by Yvonne Field
- 🎵 'Christmas Crackers' by Chris Baker

Visit www.salvationarmy.org.uk/faith-at-home

Other songs you might like to listen to are:

- 🎵 'Away in a manger'
- 🎵 'Calypso Carol'
- 🎵 'It was on a starry night'
- 🎵 Hillsong Kids – 'Born is the King (It's Christmas)'
www.youtube.com/watch?v=EnMBUjCPaZ0
- 🎵 Hillsong – 'We have a Saviour' www.vimeo.com/53111691
- 🎵 Or have a family sing-song using the *Toddler Christmas Song Sheet*.

REFLECT

Taking time to think, talk, create, pray and tell Christmas stories helps to make memories that last long after the event.

When the time comes to take down the decorations, put the posh plates away, put spare chairs back in their places and recycle the Christmas cards, think about how your family can take the Gift of Christmas into the New Year.

SHARE

Share some of the ideas of how you are going to spread Christmas joy over the next few months with each other and the person who gave your family the Faith@Home Challenge and ask them any questions you have.

ALTERNATIVE ADVENT CALENDAR – THE GIFT OF TIME

Each day, invite a member of the family to identify something for everyone to spend some time together looking at, talking and wondering about. It might be a toy, some food, a story, a photo, a memory, or even some homework. Sharing time with each other is a generous thing to do.

FAMILY PHOTO-BOOTH

Another daily activity is to get all the family together and record it with a photo. It might be as one member of the family is going out to work – this might mean an early start! Or perhaps as someone comes home, or at the kids' bedtime, going out on a trip or to the shops, decorating the tree, or even when you are sharing 'The Gift of Time'. Get inventive and get together. You could then create a photo album of 'December' and include the prayers or memories from the activity above.

NATIVITY SET

Create your own Nativity Set – you can find out the story of the characters in the Bible in Luke 2:1-20 and Matthew 2:1-12. Use the *Nativity Colouring* pages and the *Bible Verses* sheets. As you colour them in, think about who each person was and what they did. If the whole family can join in with this activity, it will help it become really meaningful for everyone. While you are colouring in, take the time to listen to some worship music.

