

# Celebrating His Birth ...Don't Miss It!

■ by Lynne B. Scherschel, MS, LMFT

After Christmas has passed, do you ever feel like you missed it? Many of us have become so immersed in our culture of holiday busyness and fatigue that as Christmas nears, we just want to get it over with so we can rest! If this sounds all too familiar, you might want to make some changes NOW in order to make the day special without breaking your back or your bank account. Below are some ideas to consider:

1. You may need to eliminate some activities and expenses in order to focus in on the real meaning of Christmas. Discuss now with your family/friends which of your traditions are most meaningful to you and which might be eliminated, at least on a trial basis for this year. Then mark your calendars accordingly, rewrite your Christmas budget, and try to complete your gift shopping before Thanksgiving. It might be helpful to list all tasks to be done and then schedule them (including wrapping, decorating, cooking, etc.) on your calendar, so that you don't forget and end up having to do them at the last minute. Don't forget to put Christmas Eve/Day church services on your calendar and schedule other last-minute tasks around them.
2. Be sure to schedule times to rest before, during, and after Christmas. You don't want to be too tired to enjoy the special traditions you've chosen to observe.
3. Now that you have made a space, you will actually have time to focus on Jesus and the amazing Gift He is. Perhaps you could find a Christmas devotional that you/family can use throughout the month of December. Choose NOW to order it, and for younger children, be sure to have on hand a number of age-appropriate Christian books to read to them daily. A special time for family prayer would also be a good focus.
4. A nativity scene with all of the "players" can be a fun way to keep the story alive for young children on a day-to-day basis. I know a family who began the month with only the animals in the stable, baby Jesus hidden in a drawer, wise men on the east side of the room, Mary and Joseph in another location at a distance from the stable, etc. Each day someone would be moved a little closer, until on Christmas Eve Mary and Joseph reached the stable with others following, and baby Jesus was placed in the manger last.
5. Since we celebrate Christmas because of God's Gift to us, how about considering giving of yourself to others, as one of your new traditions. People in hospitals, nursing/rehab facilities, and homeless shelters can be encouraged by Christians caroling or providing a smile and a small gift (check with facility re what is appropriate).
6. A Christian advent calendar can help all of us of any age to stay focused on Jesus. Many of these have a place for a piece of candy or trinket. Consider placing a scriptural Christmas-related promise in each one instead or in addition.
7. One of our traditions when my children were still at home was to place a non-tangible gift to Jesus in a special ornament for each person. The gift might be to obey parents better, to do something for someone else, to spend special time with Him, etc.
8. In the end it is also important to maintain some time in the day to let the children play with their new toys and to just relax with your special people and enjoy them. They are God's gifts to you!

Celebrate His birth! You don't want to miss it! ■



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