

December 2018

parenting CHRISTIAN kids



Make Christmas Come Alive for Children

POWERSOURCE

ASK JESUS:

1. To show your children that Christmas is an actual event featuring people who really lived.
2. To help your family members feel invested and involved in Christmas celebrations.
3. To make the holiday meaningful for your entire family.

When we tell kids Bible “stories,” the line between fact and fiction can sometimes get blurry. Use these ideas to emphasize the real-life, real-person aspect of Christmas.

- During Advent (the four weeks leading to Christmas), discuss the exciting anticipation of waiting for a special guest.
- Visit a living nativity scene, complete with farm animals.
- As a family, create your own interactive nativity scene, using costumes and props to put yourselves into the action.
- Use building blocks and toys to create scenes from the first Christmas (road to Bethlehem, the inn, the stable). Take a picture of each scene and then compile a computer slideshow.

- Create birth announcements for Jesus and include them with your family’s Christmas cards.
- Make gingerbread nativity scenes. (Marshmallows and stick pretzels make great angels and sheep!)
- Take a “census” to relate to Joseph and Mary. Use the questions here: <https://childrensministry.com/census-questions/>
- Make ornaments by tying red ribbon to concrete nails. Hang them on your Christmas tree and discuss the fact that Jesus was born so he could die on a tree for us.
- Have young children dictate the Christmas account to you. Each year, re-read them as a family.

The next page contains more ways your family can celebrate the true reason for the Christmas season.

© Group Publishing, Inc., 2018

parenting
CHRISTIAN
kids



How to Keep Christ in Christmas



TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Pick a Pose

Read aloud Luke 2:1-20. Say: **Pick one person or object in this Bible passage you identify with. Maybe you're like an angel, wanting to tell people about Jesus. Maybe you're a shepherd, full of wonder. Maybe you're an animal, seeing but not really participating. Or maybe you're the star, manger, hay...anything!**

Pause. Then say: **Now strike a pose that reminds you of what you chose.** Allow time. Ask: **Why did you identify with that person or object? How do you think the role you identified with affect how you celebrate Christmas?**

Have family members return to their pose and silently talk with God about Christmas and what it means to them.

Say: **Believing in Jesus gives us the gift of eternal life in heaven. There's no better Christmas present than that!** Close in prayer.

Although Jesus' birth marks the beginning of the New Testament, he's also present throughout the Old Testament. In fact, the first promise of a Savior occurs in Genesis 3, before Adam and Eve are sent from the Garden of Eden. Throughout the Old Testament, prophets tell of a coming Messiah who will save people from their sins. As we look forward to celebrating again the birth of that Messiah, Jesus, we also can look forward to the day when he'll return to take us to live with him in heaven. What an important message of Christmas hope to share with our children—and our world!

Jesus' Family Tree Gather brown bulletin-board paper, construction paper, scissors, markers, and tape. Twist and shape the brown paper into a tree trunk and branches. Attach green leaf shapes. Cut 10 ovals from construction paper. On each one, write an ancestor of Jesus (see Matthew 1:2-16). Cut a larger oval, write "Jesus" on it, and tape it to the center of the tree. Then tape the rest of the names in order from the bottom up. To show you're part of Jesus' family, write each of your names on a shape and tape those above Jesus' name. Display the tree by your Christmas tree.

Fear Not! Cover light switch plates with chalkboard spray paint. Talk about times you were scared in the dark. Say: "When Jesus' earthly dad, Joseph, was afraid, an angel visited in the night to tell him that God was with him." Read aloud Matthew 1:18-23. Say: "Joseph heard God was with him. He didn't need to be scared." With glow-in-the-dark paint, write on your switch plates a short Bible verse about fear (see Joshua 1:9; Psalm 23:4; Isaiah 35:4; Matthew 6:34; and John 14:27). Use the switch plates as reminders to pray and not be afraid when you turn out the light to go to bed at night.

Walk to Bethlehem Place signs throughout your home to help retell the Christmas story. As you walk, discuss the sounds Mary and Joseph may have heard, how tired they might have felt, where they could have stopped for water, and so on. Cut out five identical triangle shapes. On each one, write a Bible passage: Luke 1:28; Luke 2:1; Luke 2:7; Luke 2:9-10; and Luke 2:15. Use each triangle to tell about that part of Jesus' birth. At the end of the walk, attach the triangles to form a star.

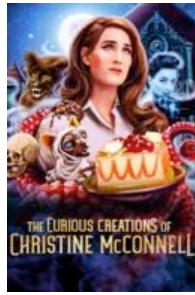
Three Gifts for Jesus Read aloud Matthew 2:2. Say: "The wise men gave baby Jesus gold to show he's a king." Place a gold-colored photo frame or fancy costume jewelry under your Christmas tree. Take turns naming things you love about Jesus. Read Revelation 5:8. Say: "The wise men gave Jesus frankincense, a spice people used when they worshipped God." Set an unlit candle or other fragrant item under the tree. Take turns offering prayers as a gift to Jesus. Read John 19:39-40. Say: "The wise men brought myrrh, an ointment put on bodies that were going to be buried." Set out lotion or perfume. Take turns thanking Jesus for dying for your sins.

"I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!"
—Luke 2:10-11, NLT

MEDIA MADNESS



MOVIE



TV

Title: *Mary Poppins Returns*

Genre: Family, Fantasy, Musical

Rating: PG

Cast: Emily Blunt, Angela Lansbury, Meryl Streep, Colin Firth

Synopsis: This new film, which director Rob Marshall says is *not* a remake, is set in 1935 London, 25 years after the original. As the Banks family faces financial troubles and grieves a tragic death, an eccentric, cheerful nanny re-enters their lives.

Our Take: The return of the popular Poppins should be a spoonful of sugar for holiday moviegoers. Younger kids will be captivated by the movie's "magic" but may not understand it. Families can discuss what it takes to maintain a positive attitude—and vibrant faith—during difficult times.

Title: *The Curious Creations of Christine McConnell*

Network: Netflix

Synopsis: In this cooking and crafting show that's also part sitcom, social-media star McConnell creates edgy, creepy concoctions inside her enchanted home. She lives with puppets, who sometimes make violent threats or engage in campy innuendo. But the show, rated TV-PG, avoids vulgarity as it inspires young DIY-ers.

Our Take: This twist on the typical "how to" show is aimed at preteens who enjoy the strange and grotesque. It's slightly spooky yet maintains a sense of humor. McConnell says playing around with creepy stuff makes it "less scary" for me. Parents should use caution and preview the show first.



CULTURE & TRENDS

Graphic Novels Galore As graphic novels continue to climb best-seller lists, more are being released for kids—and serving as important teaching tools. For example, John Hendrix's well-reviewed graphic novel *The Faithful Spy* is about Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Christian who was martyred for resisting Hitler's agenda. (*Amazon*)

Young YouTubers Companies are banking on young social-media "influencers" to build buzz and attract shoppers. Wal-Mart debuted Ryan's World, a line of toys and T-shirts created by a 6-year-old whose YouTube channel gets almost 1 billion views monthly. (*USA Today*)

Games, Podcasts & Apps

Marble It Up!

In this racing platformer for the Nintendo Switch, players roll marbles around mazes and obstacles to earn medals and unlock new levels. Players can jump and collect power-ups. The \$20 game, rated E for Everyone, has no objectionable content or violence.

The Punies

Retired basketball star Kobe Bryant directs this free 10-part series that helps kids build self-confidence and battle negative self-talk. In 15-minute episodes, "Puny" Pete and friends navigate various challenges. Bryant wants families to listen to positive material when driving to sports practices.

Metamorphabet

With this collection of imaginative, interactive letters, children learn about the alphabet's power and practicality. As kids manipulate each letter, it transforms into crisply animated objects and creatures. The \$3.99 app, which has no in-app purchases, is best for ages 3 and up.

QUICK STATS

Childhood's End? According to the "End of Childhood Report," the U.S. ranks 36th out of 175 countries for factors such as widespread poverty, conflict, and discrimination against girls. (*Save the Children*)

Comin' to Town? About 85% of 4-year-olds believe in Santa Claus, a number that has held steady for several decades. Experts say the largest drop-off in belief occurs around age 8. (*CNN*)

© Group Publishing, Inc., 2018



This page is designed to help educate parents and isn't meant to endorse any movie, music, or product. Our prayer is that you'll make informed decisions about what your children watch, read, listen to, and play.



December

The Youth Group delivered 47 Shoe Boxes for the Christmas Child Project. They enjoyed pizza after the delivery.

