



Family Matters



A Christ-center resource for families and teachers

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Helping Your Child to “C”

Discovering ways to impart critical skills and values in your child’s life and family setting.

Celebration

Christmas is a great time for kids. A time of wonder, a time of anticipation — a time of waiting. When it finally arrives, it’s always worth the wait! One of the great moments in life is being a kid, waking up and realizing it’s Christmas morning!!

Even in the world around us, although it doesn’t always recognize that Christmas is a time to celebrate Jesus’ birth, there is a festive presence as people celebrate the “holidays.” It seems that everyone likes a celebration, be it a special achievement, a birthday or anniversary, the end of school or another significant accomplishment. We celebrate with parties and presents; we celebrate by taking time to gather with friends and family for the special observation. We celebrate with food. Special food for the occasion — especially sweet stuff!



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“The Christian should be an Alleluia from head to foot.”
—St. Augustine

When the celebration is over, there is always the clean-up process and getting things back to normal. We go back to our routines and anticipate the next celebration. Children move their wish lists from Christmas mode into birthday mode. Adults think of the next party that they will need to coordinate. Those with birthdays in late December and early January often get the short end of the celebration stick.

Celebrations often trace their roots to a time of need or want, a time of decisiveness, a time of victory, a time of controversy or a time of new directions. They mark the past and give energy for the future. Celebrations honor those who have gone before us and the accomplishments of those in the “here and now.” Celebrations bring out the best in us and should be a regular part of our family calendars.

Each day that God gives us is a gift. As such, we can receive it with joy and acknowledge it with thanksgiving. But we don’t always do this as often as we should. How can we carry over the excitement of celebration into everyday life? I think it starts with the little things — noticing the small and precious gifts of grace from God every single day. Celebration is not just a scheduled event or a moment, it’s an attitude. It is something that surfaces within a joyful heart every day.

Just as we parents teach our children skills and disciplines related to life, so, too, we must teach our children to celebrate. That, too, is life!

FAMILY LINKS: Activities for families to reinforce Bible story truths in the home.

Gather the family together and follow the outline below. Make sure you have a Bible.

Opening Prayer: Have a parent say an opening prayer.

Starters: What are some of your favorite holidays? What makes them special for you?

Into the Word: Read Luke 2:1–20 (the Christmas account) and discuss these questions:

1. What celebration comes from this true story? (Christmas)
2. Did it look like a celebration when it began? (No, Mary and Joseph were following the law, which required them to go and be part of a census.)
3. Who announced the news that was cause for celebration? (An angel)
4. Describe how it was announced. (Angels appeared, sang and praised God.)
5. What was the news? (The Savior, Christ the Lord, had been born!)

6. What did the shepherds do? (They went to see the newborn Savior.)
7. What did the shepherds do after they saw Baby Jesus? (They told others.)

Christmas This Year: Talk about how your family plans to celebrate Christmas through family activities, decorations, gift giving and attending church.

Closing Prayer: Conclude by singing a favorite Christmas carol.



TIPS FOR PARENTS: Here are a few suggestions to follow to assist parents in creating a culture of celebration within the family setting.

1. Have a family calendar visible where all special events are listed, such as birthdays, civic holidays, special school events and family activities.
2. Talk about these upcoming events in advance, so children can be thinking about them and so detailed plans can be made ahead of time.
3. Take time to decorate the home for special civic and national events, and plan to attend such events in the community.
4. Hold special celebrations for unique events within your home. Have a half birthday for kids, where you have half of a cake! Purchase a teacher's calendar that has all the notices of special things that happen day to day, and plan special celebrations around those things that sound fun to your family. Check the Internet for free calendars.
5. Emphasize the spiritual aspect of celebrations. Go to church on all the special celebration days. Take time to recognize how God gave blessings, how God is present in these celebrations and that all good things are a gift from our loving God.

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Writer: Dr. Steve Christopher **Editor:** Ed Grube **Designer:** Chrissy Thomas

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