

t_{he} Chalkboard

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A Christmas Tradition

When my four children were very young, I owned a beautiful ceramic nativity which I always placed out of the reach of little hands. One Christmas season, my aunt purchased the children an inexpensive nativity set complete with a wooden stable for them to handle and arrange. Each following year, my husband and I would remove the pieces from the original packaging and tell the story of Jesus' birth together with our children. We would tell the story while our little ones moved the figures into place. As you might imagine, after several years, the hard plastic pieces endured several breaks and repairs. But, through all of the unwrapping and assembling, a family tradition was born.

One year, as our children were rearranging the nativity set, we overheard our six year old son tell his four year old brother, "This is the Ssiah. You know Jesus. He's the Ssiah!" When we began to discuss this new word with our boys, we realized a six year old who could not properly pronounce the word had come to understand its true meaning. He knew with assurance that Jesus was the Messiah or "the Anointed One." As proud parents, we now understood why we took the time each year to repeat this ritual. Through this simple tradition, our children came to know the Christ of Christmas.

Why do we commemorate Jesus' birth each year? We celebrate the birth of Christ so we never forget the significance of this miraculous event. In retelling the Christmas story, we remember God's salvation plan. In the book of Deuteronomy, God warns His people to "beware lest thou forget the Lord" (6:12). The Word of the Lord also reminds the Israelites to have a fervent love for God which is evidenced by their living according to His commandments. This outward expression through routines in daily life would teach future generations to love God "with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (6:5). As we serve and love God with our entire beings, our traditions do not become stale rituals but continue to encourage our own faith and the faith of our children and grandchildren. By establishing Christian traditions for our family, we keep Christ alive in our hearts and in our homes.



Ideas to Illuminate

Begin a new tradition in your Children's Ministry this year. Purchase an inexpensive nativity set. Wrap each piece individually. On the outside of the package, attach a tag with a Bible reference printed on it to be read before opening. If you have young children, the teacher should read the passages. School-aged children can read the passages themselves or with some assistance from the teacher. After the Scriptures are read aloud to the students, have one child open the package and place the object on a table for everyone to see. As the child places the piece in the Nativity, have him share the significance of the figure in his own words. It is a special treat to allow the youngest child the honor of opening the present with Baby Jesus inside. This activity will take some preparation on the part of the teacher, but it will create a meaningful tradition which the students will look forward to each year.

Scripture Reference

Luke 1: 26-38
Matthew 1:18-25
Luke 2:1-5
Luke 2:6-7
Luke 2:8-20
Matthew 2:1-15

Wrapped Item

Mary
Joseph
Stable
Jesus
Shepherds
Wise Men

Chalk Talk

Let's Talk! I want to hear from you. Let me know if this newsletter is a source of inspiration to you. If you have an inspiring Children's Ministry idea, send it to be included in a future newsletter. E-mail me at youngdisciples@att.net

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