

WHITE WING

December 2021

MESSENGER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY



...and we beheld his glory...

Making Christmas Sparkle!



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The challenges of the past two years have been significant for most families. The impact and disruption of the global pandemic have brought uncertainty, loss, and instability to all of our lives. The holiday seasons can add additional stress to our homes, as many families are unsure of how to celebrate in the midst of such crisis and devastation. But as Christian families, we can respond to this season and make it still shine and sparkle! How do we do this?

We do so by keeping our focus on the true meaning of the season, the celebration of Jesus' birth! Christmas without Christ is like counterfeit money, it is worthless. Without remembering the Savior, this season would be hopeless.

Christmas is Christ's birthday, so let us treat him like the honored guest. Ask any child who is about to have a birthday, and he will tell you that his birthday is a special day, a day unlike all the rest of the year. Christmas is a holy day because it marks the greatest birth this world will ever know. We need to take time to reflect upon this holy day and thank God for all it means. Without an awareness of God's purposes for this special day, Christmas ceases to be a holy day and just becomes a holiday. The real meaning is still found in the declaration of the angel, "I bring you good news...today the Savior is born who is Christ the Lord." The message of the angels is just as real today as it was on that first Christmas.

- The Lord is come, and we must receive him as our King.
- The joy of the season is in the birth of the Savior!
- Christmas will sparkle when you crown Jesus as King of your life.

So our challenge as children's ministry leaders and parents is to lead children to discover not only a baby in a manger but the living Lord of Christmas! So that each one might know him as Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace, Savior, and Emmanuel, God with us!

To make Christmas sparkle, begin by reading the account of Jesus' birth in the Bible with your children. Set-up a nativity scene in your ministry or home. Look for an age-appropriate book about the Christmas story, and read it with your children. Then, discuss Jesus' life, how he loved people and did things for others. Teach them to imitate Jesus by doing things for others. Read the scriptures and the examples below for inspiration.

Teach Them to Give

In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35 NIV).

Invite your children to choose one of their own toys (in good condition) to give to a child who has none. Or ask them to choose a clothing item, such as a coat or shoes to give to a local shelter that assists families with children.

Allow the children to help provide the ingredients for a Christmas meal, as well as presents for the children and articles of clothing for a family in need.

Gather your family or the children from your church to go Christmas caroling to the homes of elderly members of the community. This activity can be done



outdoors, providing plenty of space for social distancing. This can brighten the days of our most vulnerable in our community, especially those who have had to remain isolated for their health and safety.

Teach Them to Share

Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share (1 Timothy 6:18 NIV).

Talk with the children about what they have to share with others. Guide them to discover that they cannot only share things but also their unique talents and time. Let them help you prepare and safely package simple treats that they can share with a neighbor, teacher, or coach. Invite them to use their creative gifts to record a greeting, song, or devotion to send to someone living alone. Or ask the children to think of a family member or close family friend who would enjoy a visit from them. Help them think of things they can do with this special person—such as playing a game or reading together.

Teach Them to Care

A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families, he leads forth the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land (Psalm 68:5,6 NIV).

Plan a visit to a children's hospital. With your help, the children can prepare a short program that the young patients might enjoy and a special gift to share with each

one. Or allow the children to collect clothing, school supplies, or toys to share with children in an orphanage or homeless shelter.

Teach Them to Serve

Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:26-28 NIV).

Volunteer to take your children to the homeless shelter to serve a meal. Determine a menu and assign responsibility for preparation to children and their families. In advance, the children could prepare table decorations. They could also make care packages consisting of snacks and toiletry items. Are there people in your congregation or community who are unable to do yard work, housework, or car detailing? With adult supervision, assign these tasks to children in your ministry.

By teaching our children to imitate Jesus, we will keep the true meaning of Christmas alive for this generation and for the next and will truly make Christmas sparkle even in the darkest of times!