

Equipped to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ

It was in the middle of July when I heard it on an Internet radio station: “Only 162 days till Christmas”! I groaned inwardly and thought, *Oh, no, they’re not starting the Christmas countdown already!* Now, don’t get me wrong - I love Christmas - but somewhere the “reason for the season” seems to get lost in the middle of all our frenzied activity. So, how do we find it again and give it the priority it deserves? Being prepared to **C-E-L-E-B-R-A-T-E** might help!

Consider him...¹ Focus your thoughts on Jesus. Think of the baby of Bethlehem in terms of Isaiah’s prophecy of him as the Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace.² There are many, many more names for Jesus given in the Bible - see how many you can find, then spend some time thinking about him in these terms.

Enter the Christmas festivities with thankfulness for the gift of Jesus Christ. Give thanks for him often this month - perhaps you could even set aside specific times during the day just for this purpose. You’ll be amazed at how offering thanks to God will keep your focus on the One who really matters at Christmas-time.³

Let others know why you celebrate Christmas. There are certain times of year when it seems more natural to talk to others about what you believe. Christmas is one of these times. Use opportunities in your neighbourhood, workplace, school, or wherever, to share with others why Christmas is a time of celebration for you. Who knows what fruit will come from sowing seeds in this way!

Encourage someone for whom Christmas is a difficult time, perhaps because of bereavement, loneliness, or financial hardship. Think of ways you could minister to that person. Perhaps they would welcome an invitation to have a meal with you over the Christmas period, or maybe you could include them in one of your family Christmas activities, like going to a pantomime or concert.

Begin your daily time with God this month by using the words from selected Christmas carols to praise him. Although there is a lot of variation between carols, many of them accurately reflect biblical truth and, as a result, can be helpful to use in your personal worship times.

Read Bible passages that are linked to the Christmas story. Decide if you’ll do this on your own, with your spouse, with other family members or with friends. If you have children, they might welcome the opportunity of taking turns with you in reading, even if it’s only a verse or two. Some key verses you could read include **Isaiah 9:2-6; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:8-20; Matthew 2:1-12; and John 1:1-5, 14.** If the Christmas story is very familiar to you, reading these passages from a different translation could keep it fresh.

Attend your church’s Christmas Eve service and invite a non-Christian friend or colleague to join you. Don’t forget to pray that your friend will be impacted by what they hear at your church. If they’re not able to attend on this occasion, your invitation might still open up the way for future witnessing opportunities.

Think of a Christian relief organization to which you could contribute financially this Christmas. You might already be a regular contributor but, if not, consider if this is something you could do. You might want to check out the relative priorities given to spiritual and material needs by different organizations before deciding which one to support.

Enjoy all the gifts you receive this season, but especially the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ. Use this time of year to refocus your attention on him, reminding yourself that the baby in the manger became the man on the cross, so that everyone who believes in him would never die but have everlasting life.⁴ Now, that’s some reason to celebrate!

¹ Hebrews 12:3

² Isaiah 9:6

³ 2 Corinthians 9:15

⁴ John 3:16