

## Simple Christmas Ideas

(How to celebrate Jesus @ Christmas)

### Simpson Family

**Letter to Jesus** = Ever since I was a little girl we have always taken time out of our Christmas celebrating to write a letter to Jesus...come to think of it I don't think we ever wrote a letter to Santa. In this letter we could say anything that was on our hearts. My mom is the keeper of these letters and I know that someday when I take a look back over them I will be blessed with memories!

### Jenkins Family

**Christmas Story** = We have always read the story of Christ's birth in Luke 2 & pray on Christmas morning before any stockings or gifts are allowed to be opened. If we're so tired that we momentarily forget, the kids would tell us we couldn't start until we read from the Bible (that just warmed our hearts when that happened!). My husband has always read and 2 years ago, my son asked if he could be the one to read out of the Bible (he was 12 at the time). Now, each year he gets very excited about getting to be the one to read. It's a great final-minute reminder for us all to remember the reason we're celebrating!

### Derr Family

**"The Gift"** = Here's what we've done at our house since the kids were small. The first present under the tree is a present for Jesus – it is a shoebox with a slit in the top. Years ago we had a discussion with the kids . . . *what would Jesus want for his birthday?* We decided that He would want us to show God's love to other people. So, each night we discuss who and how we showed God's love today and we write down our "gift" to Jesus and put them in the box. On Christmas morning or sometimes Christmas Eve, we read them and marvel at all the good we were able to do – all the 'gifts' we gave to Jesus for His birthday. The kids get quite motivated to show God's love and start their day brainstorming ideas. It is a blast. We've kept some of our entries over the years, too – fun to see what the kids did and what we adults did!

### Sabiston Family

**Happy Birthday** = As a family we would always bake a birthday cake for Jesus. It may sound too simple, but I remember when I was a kid how cool it was. My mom still does it to this day! We usually eat the cake with our mid-day meal and talk about what Christ's birth must have been like. It's a good reminder during the day, after all gifts and stockings have been thrashed, that Christ is the "reason for the season."

### Van Donge Family

**St. Nicklaus' Day** = We celebrate St. Nicklaus' Day on December 6. He is how the tradition of Santa Claus got started, and there are a lot of great children's books out there about his story. The main idea is that he was a real person who looked for opportunities to help others that were in need. So, we try to pick someone to provide for their needs as a family. We make a whole night of it. This way, we acknowledge the role of St. Nicklaus but keep Christmas for Jesus.

### Carnahan Family

**Nativity Calendar** = One tradition that we have (and has now been passed to my sister's family) is a handmade calendar from my Grandma that features the story of Christ's birth. Every day we turn over a new piece which displays an element of the "nativity" with the final three days featuring Mary, Joseph and finally baby Jesus. Growing up we always wanted to be the one to turn over Baby Jesus (parents had to put us on a rotation so that each year one of us would turn over Baby Jesus). This remains one of my favorite memories of how we focused on Jesus during the Christmas season.

## Long Family

**Jesse Tree** = The Jesse Tree idea is born from the scripture found in Isaiah 11:1-2. "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit." This refers to the fact the Jesus would be born from the line of David, whose father was Jesse. Starting with this idea on November 30th, we do a small devotional each day that relates to Jesus. As we countdown to the celebration of His birthday we hang ornaments or symbols on our Jesse Tree. For example, we read the story of Daniel in the Lion's Den found in Daniel 6. We talk about the fact that God is the most important thing in our lives and we have to choose Him above anything else. Then we hang a lion ornament on our tree and say a pray. You can find a lot of information about how to do a Jesse Tree and example devotionals on line. There are even books with devotionals and ideas available. Ultimately, each Jesse Tree will be slightly different and you can customize it over the years for your family. The important thing is that you are reading scripture and learning God's Word and plans as you prepare to celebrate our Savior's birth.

**Books:** "The Advent Jesse Tree" by Dean Meador Lambert or "The Jesse Tree" by Geraldine McCaughrean

**Websites:** [www.jesse-tress.com](http://www.jesse-tress.com)  
<http://www.rca.org/NETCOMMUNITY/Page.aspx?&pid=1628&srcid=1602>

## Bloodworth Family

**Advent Calendar** = Advent means to celebrate that which is coming (the birth of Christ). We have an "Advent Calendar" which has pockets for counting down each day. Each morning, we gather the troops for a morning devotion. It includes a passage of scripture; a family activity; and a reading from "Why does Santa Wear Red?". We alternate kids to open the pocket for each day and do the readings. The Scripture starts with Old Testament prophecies and ends Christmas morning with the birth of Christ passage in Luke 2. The family activity ensures that each day we *do something* together to keep our family a priority. [Example: "S" Night = spaghetti, soda, and watch "The Santa Clause" movie together.— or—Road Trip = a hot chocolate from McD's & driving around looking @ Christmas lights together] The readings from "Why does Santa Wear Red?" tells us where common Christmas practices come from & how people celebrate Christmas in other countries. This helps remind us of how Growing up, we even had an "Advent Log" which included the practice of lighting a candle for each day. At the beginning of the season, only one candle is lit—until on Christmas morning, when every candle lights up the room. This has always kept our family close throughout the holiday season and it keeps our Christmas Christ-centered.

**Calendars available at:** Wal-Mart; Target; Berean Christian Stores

**Websites:** [www.adventdevotions.net](http://www.adventdevotions.net) ; [www.christmasincyberspace.com/advent](http://www.christmasincyberspace.com/advent)  
[www.churchyear.net/adventwreath.html](http://www.churchyear.net/adventwreath.html)

## Shearman Family

**Jesus Tree** = I would have a small tree and decorate it with little paper ornaments with words written on them to Jesus. Example: I love you Lord, Happy Birthday Jesus, You are the Son of God, etc. Just personal things we want to say to Him. We would do this beginning Dec 1<sup>st</sup> through the night of Christmas Eve. Each day up through Christmas Eve one would be added to the tree. Now I did this with an artificial tree and it was small and sat on a table with a ceramic Nativity Scene. Then on Christmas morning, we fix breakfast and read each one to Jesus, then open presents.

## For other suggestions on how to have a Simple Christmas:

**Websites:** [adventconspiracy.org](http://adventconspiracy.org) [christianitytoday.com/](http://christianitytoday.com/) search: Simple Christmas

**Books:** **A Simple Christmas:** A Faith-filled guide to a meaningful and stress-free Christmas by Sharon Hanby-Robie \$13.95 on Amazon.com