

Sharing Jesus:

Planning a Christ-Centered Christmas



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Christmas isn't really about all the food and presents... although those things are so much fun to enjoy. The very truth is -- there would be no Christmas without Christ.

As we grow older, we may get so caught up in the busy schedules of attending events and buying presents for everyone on our list that we soon lose sight of the real meaning of Christmas.

Yes, Christmas has become so commercialized that we hardly remember the true **GIFT** of Christmas.

God came to the world, as Christ, and walked among us as a man. His name is “**Immanuel**” which means “**God with us.**” He came to redeem us back to Himself and to offer forgiveness for all our sins.

I John 2:2 (KJV) says,

“And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world.*”

CHRIST-mas is all about **CHRIST JESUS**. Jesus became our **SUBSTITUTE** for the penalty of my sin and yours. He took our punishment and paid the price for our sin so that we could enter into the Holy Presence of God when our time here on earth is finished.

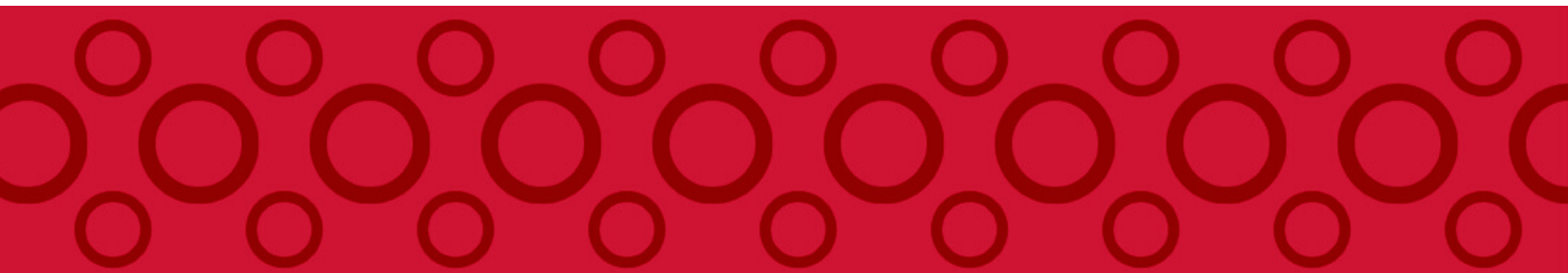
Just consider the pretty white snow...

Isaiah 1:18 (KJV) says,

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

What if you and I could recapture the true meaning of a Christ-centered Christmas?

What if we truly meant the song, “**O Come Let Us Adore Him**” when we sang it?





*O come all ye faithful
Come let us adore Him
O come all ye faithful
Come let us adore Him*

And the stanza from ***"Angels from the Realms of Glory."***



*Angels from the realms of glory
Wing your flight over all the earth
Ye, who sang Creation's story
Now proclaim Messiah's birth*

What we if we truly came and adored...and worshipped?

What if you and I could make the Christmas season this year more about sharing **JESUS** and having that wonderful spirit of love, wonder and joy?

You and your family can do that!

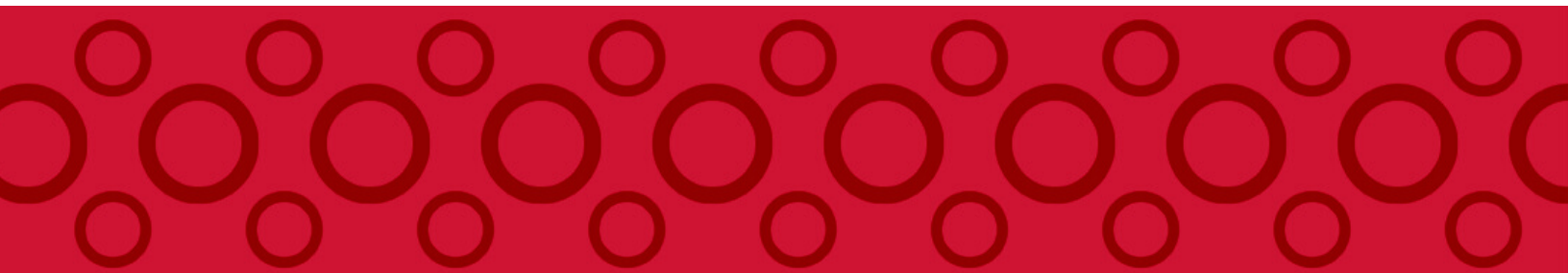
Here are three simple ways you can put more of Christ into your Christmas:

- 1. Read the Christmas story:** The Christmas story is found in the bible in Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 1:5-56 to 2:1-20. Take the time to read about the birth of Jesus with your family, or share it with someone that doesn't know Christ as Savior this year. Let them know the real meaning of Christmas.
- 2. Old-Fashioned Christmas Carols:** The old-fashioned Christmas carols certainly exalt Jesus Christ's birth. Gather some family, friends or church members together to sing out the beautiful songs of the season on the street or outside of homes. Go to a retirement home community or just sing inside of a shopping mall or a big store.
- 3. Attend Christmas events at church:** Sometimes Christmas falls on the weekend... When we choose to stay home rather than attend church services and events, then we end up putting Christ second place.

And here are 50 ways to offer your LOVE to the world this Christmas season...

Give the very best of yourself this Christmas. Share the gift of love in its simplest forms - a kind word, a helping hand, or a thoughtful gesture. Make hearts happy for the Christmas season.

- 1. Make homemade gifts this year:** Why not make gifts from the heart this year? Think about each family member. Ask God what would be meaningful to them. Get creative. You never know what you will come up with. It can be something simple, like home baked cookies, a crocheted pot holder... or how about some handmade lotion or soap from the heart?



2 Give up your parking spot. Here's a simple way to show others your love this holiday season. Take the faraway parking spot. Someone else might need that closer parking spot because they're trying to corral small children or they have a bad knee. They'll appreciate the short walk to the store, and you'll feel good knowing you made a difference for someone today.

3 Make Christmas less about gifts. Sure, it feels good to wow your children with gifts under the tree, but also remember to teach kids that Christmas is about being together, showing kindness, and sharing special moments.

4 Make tree decorating and gift-wrapping a shared family

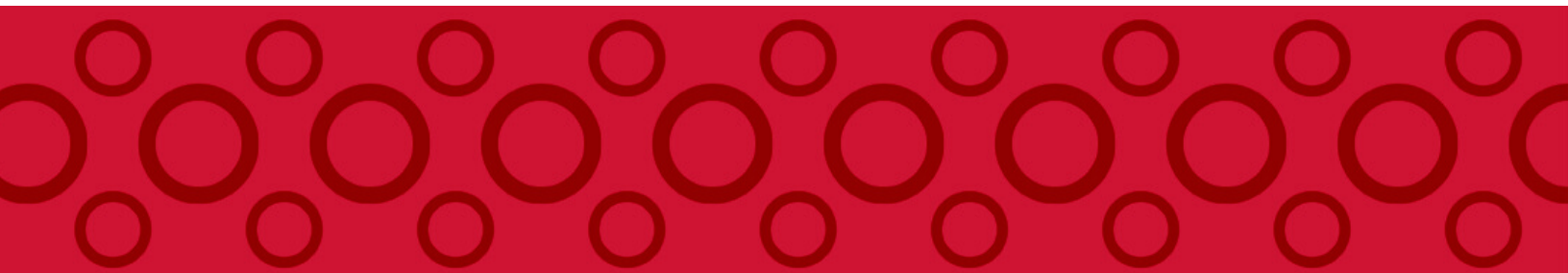
experience. Too often, decorating and wrapping becomes a frantic solo act starring Mom or Dad. Why not involve kids in the selection, purchase and wrapping of gifts for the special people on your list? It's not just about gifts; it's about including the people we love and fully engaging in the moment.

5 Help someone who is struggling. Winter weather can take its toll on aging joints, and sidewalks become slick with the cold and snow. If you see someone having a hard time getting packages to the car, offer assistance. Send a little love to a stranger in the form of a helping hand.

6 Offer to babysit. Give a stressed-out couple some needed down-time or a date night. Host the kids for dinner or maybe even a sleepover. Worn-out parents deserve a peaceful evening out, or even just some alone time together at home.

7 Acknowledge someone. Whether it's a dad working overtime to pay for gifts, a busy mom putting in her all, or Grandma staying up late to make every kind of Christmas cookie, this is a time for giving and a time to say "thank you." It feels nice to be noticed. So, if you see someone doing good out there, give them a warm hug, a thoughtful word of encouragement, or a kind note of appreciation.

8 Get together with grandparents. With so much going on, it can be hard to squeeze in quality time for aging grandparents. Set a date to have the kids sleep over, or take Grandpa out for a haircut and holiday



lunch. Simple gestures go a long way for creating closeness, and will mean so much.

9 Send out thank you notes to the people who help make your

life wonderful. This year, instead of just sending out a generic family photo card, why not go the extra step if you have a free evening? Hand-write letters of thanks to the special people in your life - grandmas, grandpas, teachers, church leaders, the bus driver who gets your precious cargo to and from school safely each day.

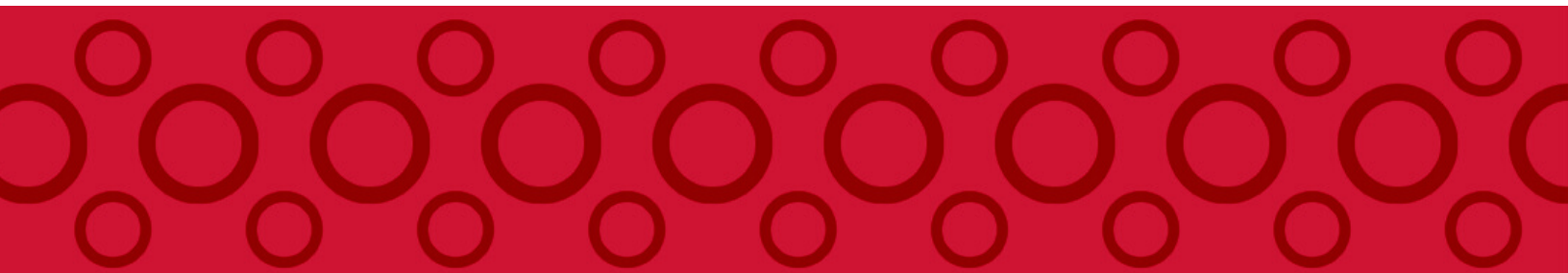
10 Have a Christmas dinner for others: How about inviting someone new to dinner? Invite a stranger or a co-worker to dinner. You could also invite a college student that can't go back home to their family. Is there a teacher at the school that is lonely and has no family? What about someone newly divorced or someone grieving the loss of a child, a spouse or their entire family? The list is endless.

11 Make dinner for a busy mom. Mothers and working women do so much for everyone else, especially at this busy and bustling time of year. Just think of all the extra hours she has to put in this December as she shops, bakes, cooks and decorates to make everyone else's Christmas special. Just a simple meal could save her an hour in a day.

12 Pray for those who need it. Not everyone will be enjoying carefree holidays. Some may be struggling with relationships, loss, experiencing financial hardships or fighting illness. Remember to send your thoughts and prayers to those who need them at this festive yet pressure-filled time of year.

13 Skip the gift-giving focus. One way you can send love to busy parents, teachers and coaches is by saying "*thanks but no need,*" to the many obligatory gift exchanges we get hit up for at this time of year. Sometimes it's okay to just show up with a holiday snack and a smile.

14 Stop, look and listen. Here's an easy way to be more loving at Christmas. Open your mind and heart to another person. Really see, hear and feel what they may be saying. Nothing says love like authentic connection. So, offer a listening ear and an open heart this holiday season.



15 Random Acts of Kindness: This is a fun one. Take the entire season of Christmas, usually the month of December, and commit to doing random acts of kindness. Get your kids involved in this one. Make a kindness calendar and write different things you can do for others in your community, family, church, neighbors, friends, relatives, or strangers. These acts can be anything. They can be in person or anonymous.

16 Give your hardworking spouse a head-to-toe rubdown.

Nothing says love like a nice massage. A back rub, neck kneading or foot massage lets couples connect and relax without words.

17 Show love to your favorite small business owners. Don't

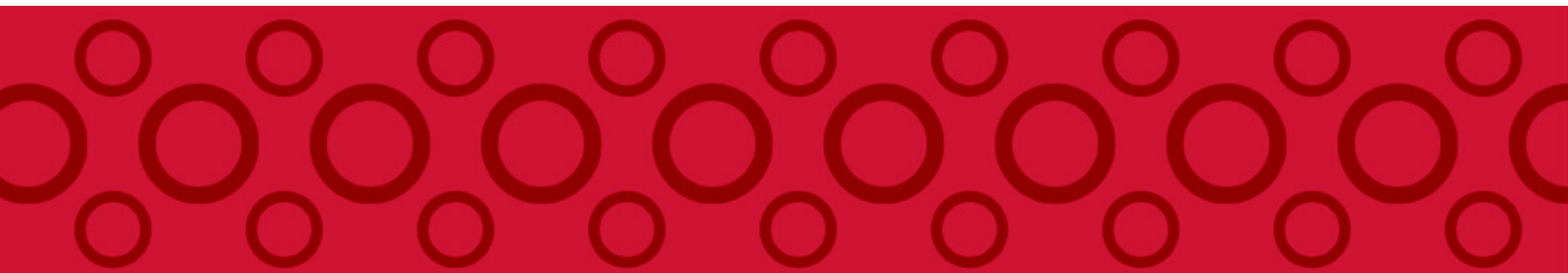
forget those bold souls on your list who are giving entrepreneurship a go. A positive review, personal referral or even just shopping for the holidays at their store, if applicable, goes a long way to share love and respect for the small business community.

18 Update your family pics. These days, we have so many memories living on our smart phones. And yet, nothing brings a smile quite like passing by precious photos of your loved ones. If you get a moment, give your home some holiday love by switching up the pictures in your photo collages.

19 Savor the snow. Instead of grumbling about traffic or quibbling over who will clear the driveway this time, put your cares and stresses to rest. Slip out into the white-covered world, and use this precious time to engage with your kids. Frolic, play, and feel the joy of being alive on a snowy, home-bound day.

20 Let go, forgive. Do you have a long-time feud going with a relative or friend from the past? Make this Christmas the year you bury the hatchet. Forgiveness has a way of unburdening the spirit, which is what the holiday season is all about.

21 Send Happy Howlidays. Deliver old blankets, dog sweaters and chew toys to a nearby pet shelter. Spend some time petting a pooch, caressing some cats and holding hamsters. Our furry shelter friends need love too, especially around the holidays.



22 Remember the lonely and the lovelorn. Not everyone heads into the holiday season with happy and upbeat thoughts. Some are facing a breakup, struggling through divorce or missing loved ones who have departed. You don't have to bring up the details...Simply including them in your holiday may just be enough to help them shake off the blues and know they're loved.

23 Help with holiday events at school and church. Find out what events are coming up. Make a call, and see how your skills can be put to good use.

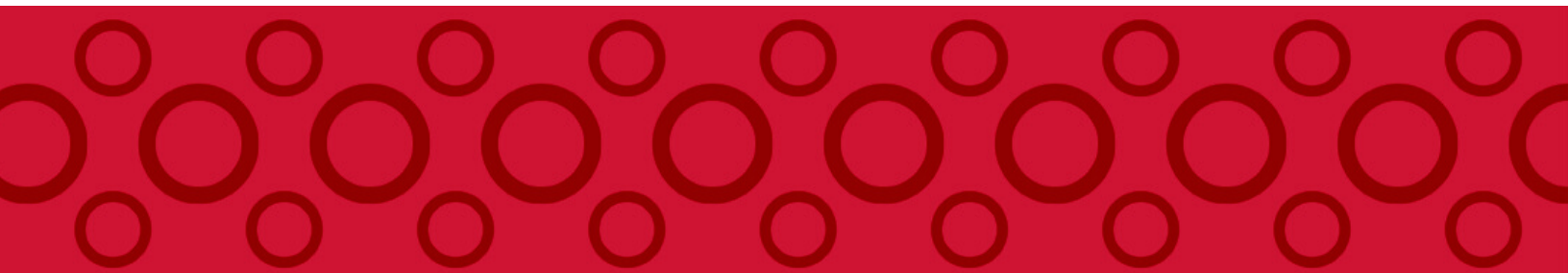
24 Presence, not presents. There's so much pressure to get everything picture-perfect and make this time of year about a perfect Christmas day. Take the pressure off and just be ready to be present...enjoying conversations, laughs, favorite snacks and even a lazy afternoon nap together.

25 Visit sick kids. No child wants to spend Christmas in a hospital room. Sadly though, this is reality for many who have cancer and other serious illnesses. Set up a time to visit the hospital with Christmas gifts, decorations, toys, treats and activities for the kids to enjoy.

26 Hold the baby. During holidays, moms especially struggle with having to be all things to all people. If your friend, sister, or other acquaintance is a mother of small children is hosting a holiday party or attending one, and seems overwhelmed, just stop what you're doing and take the baby. Hold the baby... help feed the kids. Help equals love. Yes, it's that easy!

27 Be the first to say "I'm sorry." Christmas comes with its share of quibbles amidst the merriment of this busy season. Did a carelessly placed remark offend a friend or relative? Be the bigger person and express your apologies. It only takes those two little words to right a wrong and smooth things over with the people you care about.

28 Don't forget about the dog. Your dog doesn't need expensive toys or a fancy sweater. He's happy with a dirty tennis ball, an old worn-out blanket and your love and affection. Enjoy a special moment with your favorite hound this holiday season. He / she needs your love!



29 Smile and say thank you for that not-quite-right gift. Let's face it; shopping for the be-all-end-all Christmas gift isn't easy. If someone gives you something that doesn't fit right or isn't quite what you wanted, just smile and say thank you anyway. At Christmas time, it's the thought that counts.

30 Be grateful for small kindnesses. Each day that we head out into the world, we see people doing their best, giving to others, working hard to make life meaningful for all. Take a moment and give thanks for the people whom you encounter in your daily travels. If you get the opportunity, tell them in words that you appreciate all they do.

31 Laugh at someone's joke, even if it's not that funny.

Christmas is not a time to be critical. If a friend's quip turns out not to be a side-splitter, don't critique. Instead, give the friend credit for trying.

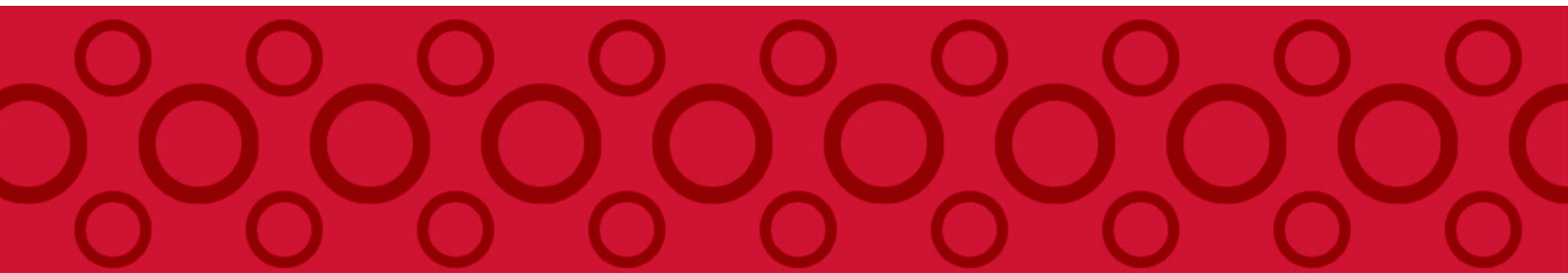
32 Let someone else have a nap. Extend peace to that special someone - let them savor a snooze. Next time you pass your spouse or parent snoring on the sofa, do this. Tone down your voice, lightly place a warm blanket over them, and tiptoe off to enjoy some Christmas quiet while they slumber.

33 When life gets difficult, lift your spirits and hold your head

high. Challenges come at any time of year, even Christmas. If you run into personal problems that make you feel less-than-loving, find a way to keep a positive and grateful spirit. Things could always be worse.

34 Engage with an elderly person. The holidays can be tough for bedridden and nursing home-bound individuals. Bring love to those who need it most. Show up with books or magazines, do a crossword or puzzle together, sing songs or even just sit quietly and be a good listener.

35 Take time out for a bedtime story. Nothing compares to cuddling up for a goodnight story. Just 15 minutes of hugs and shared reading can make all the difference in helping children wind down for the night. Bonding at bed time reminds them of how much they're loved.



36 Send a Christmas care package to a military member. Visit SupportOurTroops.org for ideas on what items to include, suggestions for how to sort and pack your care packages, and types of donations that will be of use to these dedicated service men and women.

37 Give without expecting to get. Not every Christmas will be a windfall of presents. If this is the year for you to give rather than receive, roll with it. Generosity does the heart good.

38 Mail Christmas cards to soldiers. Military members can use encouragement any time of year in the form of letters and cards. Visit HugsforSoldiers.org for information on ideas for what to say, size limits on the card or note you send, and an address on where to mail your notes for screening before they are sent overseas.

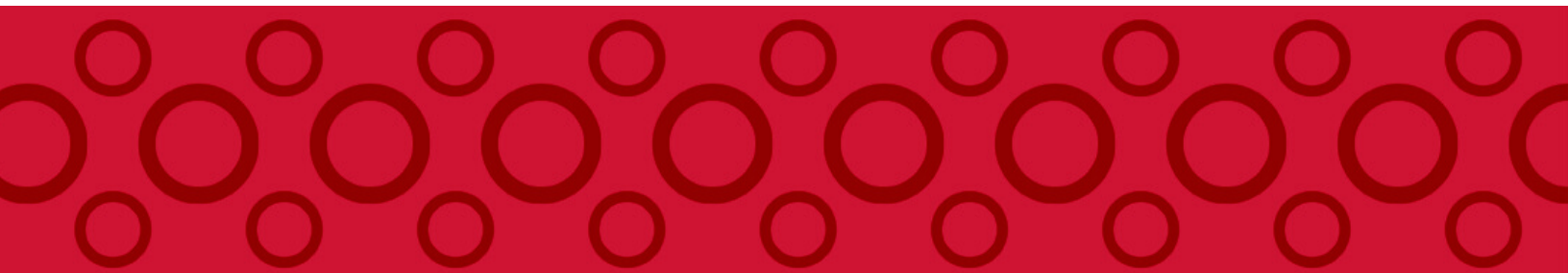
39 Be the Christmas clean-up crew. Surprise someone by helping to clean the kitchen, sweeping the floor, or picking up after a holiday party. The Christmas season takes a lot of work, effort and dollars and can be especially hard on others.

40 Fill a frame for family and friends. Short on holiday funds? Take a look around the attic for a photo album to dust off and fill with happy moments. If you don't have one, head over to the town thrift shop. Sweet, meaningful gifts fill the heart without emptying the wallet.

41 Donate your stuff. Now is a good time to declutter some of those items that are in great shape but serve no purpose in your home. There are many sources, such as Goodwill, where you can donate your items, and they can find a brand-new home where they might also make a great gift for someone else.

42 Gift-wrap a toy for a tot. Not every child gets a nice gift. Get in touch with your local Toys for Tots, a charitable organization run by the US Marine Corps, to find out how you can send a holiday gift to a child in need.

43 Find the silver lining. Caught up in personal problems this Christmas season? Don't fret for too long. You might be struggling, but with this comes growth and wisdom. Journal and write some related



Bible verses...then, next year, you'll reflect back on this holiday as a wiser, more matured individual.

44 Give an extra tip. Many wait staff will be spending the holidays working hard to serve others so that their kids can have a nice Christmas. This holiday season, make your server's day with an extra big tip.

45 Share a cup of cheer. Here's a simple gesture to offer this Christmas. Surprise someone you love with a hot beverage. Coffee, tea, cocoa or chai, whatever their pleasure. Send a cup of cheer to someone you hold dear.

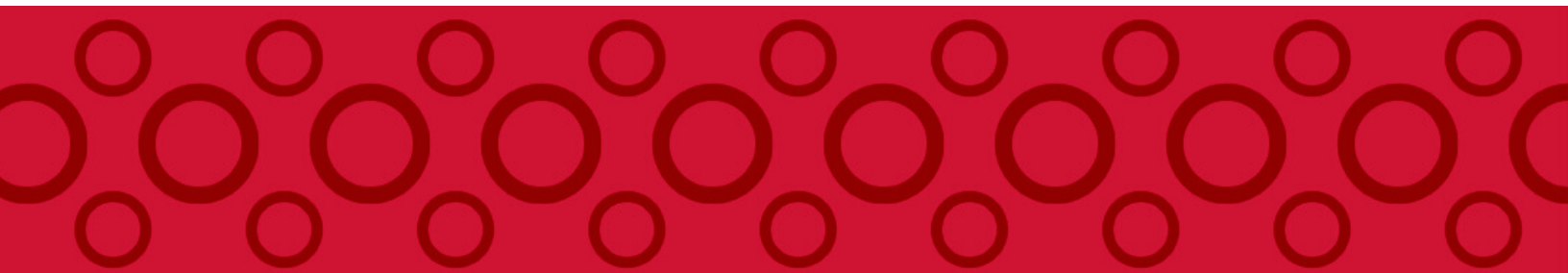
46 Let things slide. The holidays bring lots of fun and surprises... but also high expectations. If someone isn't feeling up to cooking, or if a party guest isn't financially able to buy gifts this year, just give them a pass. Share love this Christmas by lowering expectations. Sometimes, togetherness is enough.

47 Make homeless gift baggies. Hit the nearest dollar store and create little gift baggies to hand out to those strangers holding signs on the sides of the road. Include personal items such as baby wipes, Chapstick, lotion, a snack, and a gospel tract, etc. Keep these handy in your car.

48 Do an errand for someone. Most of us are not wealthy enough to enjoy the luxury of having hired servants to help us with an abundance of tasks needing to be done, but lending a helping hand to someone else is a wonderful gift to receive.

49 Give a smile and a word of encouragement. Even if you've fallen on hard times and have nothing financially to give, a smile and word of encouragement to others everywhere you go is free to hand out. It's truly a gift that lifts others up.

50 Appreciate or add a new tradition It can make a fun discussion to hear about other people's Christmas traditions. You might find one that you'd like to add to your own yearly tradition.



As you celebrate Christmas this year, make sure above all that you put Christ in it...

Christ was all about people... He served them, blessed them, and cared for them. You can be His extended hand this CHRIST-mas season.



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