

ParentPause

Ideas to Grow Your Preschooler's Faith at Home

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CHRISTMAS with the FAMILY

For many children, the enjoyment of Christmas really kicks in when the relatives arrive. Sure, there's decorating and baking cookies and presents under the tree — maybe even a nativity program at church. But when Grandpa and Grandma walk through the front door, perhaps followed by aunts and uncles and cousins, then it gets super exciting.

Or maybe you're the ones who travel to visit family. If that's the case, your children will probably burst out of the car at full speed and rush to the front door. Inside there's the tree and the smell of dinner cooking and the hugs from Grandpa and Grandma and cousins to play with and gifts to shake to try to guess what's inside.

Family is a very important part of Christmas, especially in our culture where

some of us don't see our relatives except on major holidays.

As much as possible, make your extended family part of the celebration of Christmas. It's important for children to feel loved and to have a large support group. And maybe most importantly, it's essential for them to see the values they are taught at home echoed and modeled in the lives of others in addition to you, the parents.

Keep in mind that this works both ways. When you get together with family, always be open for opportunities to nurture your nieces and nephews.

If you don't have a large or supportive extended family, or if you are prevented for some reason from getting together with them, create a family. Look for other families in your church who are in a similar situation and spend a holiday together or get together regularly for fellowship and support.

The Bible has a lot to say about how we treat others. The apostle Peter wrote this: *Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms (1 Peter 4:9-10).*

If those words apply to other believers, how much more do they apply to our own families? Christmas is an ideal time to join with your extended family members to make the home an amazing place to teach your child important truths — and have fun doing it.



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Did you know?

During New Testament times, families were much larger. Grown sons would bring their wives home to live with their parents. Soon the household was a community with grandparents, parents, children, grandchildren and servants interacting daily. We aren't told why Joseph's family wasn't with him and Mary when Jesus was born, but we know that his extended family was

around twelve years later when they went to Jerusalem for Passover.

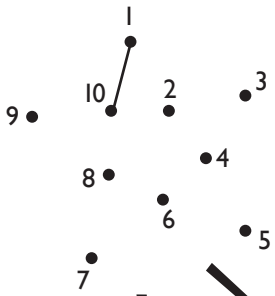
After the feast, the group started the journey home. Jesus wasn't with them. He was still in the temple, listening to the teachers and asking questions. It took an entire day, in the crowd of friends and relatives (Luke 2:44), for Joseph and Mary to notice that Jesus wasn't there.



TRADITIONS

Your family probably has traditions centered on Christmas day, but what about the rest of the season? Is December four weeks of chaos followed by post-holiday collapse? Take time to plan some traditional activities with extended family members into your schedule. Go caroling. Visit a tree farm and cut your own trees, then decorate them with the whole gang. Have a family gift-buying outing followed by a meal. And make sure you include a celebration of the Lord's birth in your plans. Remember, with all other believers, you are part of God's extended family too.





*... A Savior has been born to you;
He is Christ the Lord.
Luke 2:11*



Parents, does your child constantly ask, "How many days until Christmas?" Start a fun tradition this year (recommended by families with young children). Make a paper chain, with a link for each day until Christmas. After dinner each evening, ask one child to remove a link, and then tell part of the Christmas story from Luke 2:1-21. Watch your child's excitement grow as the length of the chain shrinks.

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