



## A Christmas Party . . . about Christmas!

Christmas is the time of year when people are often the most open to spiritual things. Why not host a holiday party with a slight twist? Facilitate a fun discussion centered on Christmas! Invite neighbors, co-workers, and friends of different spiritual backgrounds to enjoy a time of sharing and getting to know each other.

### FIVE ELEMENTS FOR A PARTY WITH A TWIST

- 1. Provide for unstructured time with festive refreshments.** Allow time for lots of spontaneous interaction and provide plenty of food. Christmas cookies and hot cider are always favorites. Also provide name tags if people will not know each other.
- 2. Allocate about an hour for fun group interaction.** Use the Christmas Sharing questions on the next page. Be aware that guests with different religious backgrounds may have never celebrated Christmas. Also, some guests may have bad memories or negative emotions rather than feelings of endearment about Christmas. Be sensitive to this and help all of your guests feel welcome and included in the discussion.
- 3. Consider including an ornament exchange.** Limit the cost of the ornament to \$5.
- 4. Read the Christmas story, Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 2:1-20, from *The Message*.** (Using *The Message* will help people who are familiar with the story to see it with fresh eyes, and the reading will be easier to understand for those who are not used to the Bible.)
  - Consider passing out printed copies of this passage and asking those who feel comfortable to read one section at a time. This way, people can hear and see Scripture as they discuss. Plus, they can take it home.
  - Invite everyone to share their general reaction to this passage, or go deeper by asking questions like those below.
  - Of course, don't become the answer person or teacher or be confrontational. Allow people simply to discuss and respond to the Bible narrative, respecting each person's viewpoint. These questions will help start the discussion:
    1. What's familiar to you in this reading? What's not?
    2. What surprises you?
    3. How do you think this event impacted Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds?
    4. What kind of impact, if any, does this story have today?
    5. What strikes you personally as the most meaningful part of this story?
- 5. You could wrap up by singing "Silent Night" together (a capella).** Be sure to provide copies of the song for everyone.

## CHRISTMAS SHARING

### Preparation:

1. Cut out the questions and place them in a festive container.
2. Think ahead of time of how you might alter a question read by a guest from a different religious background. Be genuinely curious regarding how they view Christmas or what they do when others are celebrating Christmas.
3. Feel free to make up your own questions and add them to the container.
4. Ahead of time, ask your spouse or a close friend to plan on going first to give everyone else time to settle in and grow comfortable with the interactions.

What do you need the most help with during this season?	If you could give any gift regardless of its cost, what would it be and who would you give it to?	What does Christmas mean to you?	If you could receive any Christmas gift you could imagine, what would it be?
Do you have expectations for the Christmas season? Are they usually met? Why or why not?	What does Christmas mean to you?	Did you believe in Santa Claus as a child? If so, what was it like when you realized he isn't real?	How have things changed about Christmas as you have gotten older?
Do you practice any unique traditions this time of year? Describe one of them.	What is the strangest or funniest Christmas gift you ever received?	If you were limited to giving out only handmade Christmas presents, what would you make?	What does Christmas mean to you?
What kind of mood does the Christmas season put you in? Why?	What is one "essential" to make you feel like it is Christmas?	What is the most memorable Christmas you have had and why?	Why do you think Christmas is such a significant holiday in our society?
What does Christmas mean to you?	What do you like least about Christmas? What do you like most?	What is the strangest or funniest Christmas gift you ever gave?	What is your most memorable Christmas, and why?

### Sharing Time:

Have each person pick one question to read out loud. They can choose to answer the question they picked or any question that's been asked so far. ("What does Christmas mean to you?" is listed multiple times in order to get several answers.)