



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, family, or friends of different spiritual backgrounds to enjoy a safe time of sharing and getting to know each other. Your party this year could be the highlight of someone's Christmas season!

FOUR CHRISTMAS PARTY ELEMENTS

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.

Some options:

- ★ Use one of the Christmas Sharing options described on page 2.
- ★ Include an ornament or cookie exchange. Limit the cost of the ornament to \$10.
- ★ Choose one of the following for everyone to share:
 1. A favorite ornament and why it's a favorite.
 2. A photo from a past Christmas and why it is meaningful.
 3. Something that is associated with a Christmas memory (a dish, a gift, etc.) and reasons why it is special.

3. Read the Christmas story.

- ★ Read Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 2:1-20 from *The Message* paraphrase, so people who are familiar with the story will see it with fresh eyes. The reading will also be easier to understand for those who are not used to the Bible.
- ★ Consider passing out printed copies and asking those who feel comfortable to read one section at a time. This way, people can hear and see Scripture as they discuss it. (Plus, they can take it home.)
- ★ Invite everyone to share their general reaction to readings, or go deeper in discussion by asking questions like the ones on the next page. 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.

4. Wrap up with the Christmas carol "Silent Night."

- ★ You could sing together (*a capella*) or play a beautiful rendition.
- ★ Provide copies of the words for everyone. (See page 4.)

CHRISTMAS SHARING

Options:

1. In advance, choose 2-4 questions from the next page for a time of fun and meaningful sharing in the group. Use the questions as an icebreaker activity at the start of your hour of group interaction.
2. Cut out the questions on page 3 and place them in a festive container. (Eliminate any that you think might not work well.) Let each person pick a question and read it. They can choose to answer the question they picked or any question that has been asked so far.

Tips:

- ★ 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 as you choose questions.
- ★ Think ahead of time of how you might quickly rephrase 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.
- ★ Be sure to help all of your guests feel welcome and included as they respond to the questions.
- ★ 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.

THE CHRISTMAS STORY

Read Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 2:1-20 from *The Message*.

You can use these questions to get a discussion going:

1. What's familiar to you in this reading? What's not familiar?
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 element of this story stands out to you as particularly meaningful this year?

BEYOND CHRISTMAS . . . A NEW GROUP?

Your Christmas gathering could spark interest in an ongoing group for discussing life, God, and the Bible! During the party, everyone will get a taste of discussing Scripture in a way that feels safe and inviting. As God leads, you could suggest the potential for a group that would start up in January. Even if you don't bring it up during the party, prayerfully watch for openings in conversations where you can suggest the idea.

Need training for this? Go to QPlace.com and click on "Get Equipped."

QUESTIONS FOR CHRISTMAS SHARING

<p>How will you be spending this Christmas?</p> <p>1</p>	<p>Share a favorite Christmas memory from your childhood.</p> <p>2</p>	<p>Do you practice Christmas traditions? If so, what is one? If not, why not?</p> <p>3</p>	<p>What does a typical Christmas day look like in your household?</p> <p>4</p>
<p>If you could receive any Christmas gift you could imagine, what would it be?</p> <p>5</p>	<p>What do you like least about Christmas? What do you like most?</p> <p>6</p>	<p>What strange or funny Christmas gift have you received?</p> <p>7</p>	<p>If you could only give out handmade Christmas presents, what might you give?</p> <p>8</p>
<p>Why do you think Christmas is such a significant holiday in our society?</p> <p>9</p>	<p>If you were given the gift of time for Christmas, how would you spend it?</p> <p>10</p>	<p>Did you believe in Santa Claus as a child? What was it like when you realized he wasn't real?</p> <p>11</p>	<p>If you could give any gift regardless of its cost, what would it be and who would you give it to?</p> <p>12</p>
<p>What is a memorable Christmas you have had and why?</p> <p>13</p>	<p>What one essential element makes you feel like it is Christmas each year?</p> <p>14</p>	<p>What is one food that you have only at Christmas?</p> <p>15</p>	<p>What does Christmas mean to you?</p> <p>16</p>

Silent Night

- 1 Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace,
sleep in heavenly peace.
- 2 Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar,
heav'nly hosts sing, Alleluia!
Christ, the Savior, is born!
Christ, the Savior, is born!
- 3 Silent night, holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from thy holy face
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

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