

CHRISTMAS EVE AT - HOME GUIDE



Merry Christmas!

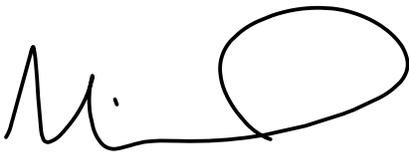
What a year its been – but here we are at Christmas time with an indestructible joy that comes from remembering Christ’s entrance into our broken world to ultimately redeem it all for good.

When I was little, my family was very intentional about doing Christmas Eve from home. We had an incredibly solid local church that we faithfully attended AND that offered a yearly Christmas Eve service to attend; and yet it was something my parents often opted not to be a part of in favor of a more personal time of gathering as a family to remember together what Christ’s birth means. Some of my fondest Christmas memories are in my living room as a kid, talking about the Christmas story together as a family; and this season I long for you and those you’re gathered with to experience the same. In fact, if there was ever a year to give it a try – 2020 would certainly be it!

The following guide is meant to help you think through how to do a simple time of focusing on the Christmas story as a family together on Christmas Eve. Look it over ahead of time to make any changes you’d want, or plan anything out before actually sitting down together on Christmas Eve. The sections are as follows:

1. Opening Discussion
2. Read the Christmas Story
3. Tune in (Message for kids and adults)
4. React (Discuss take-aways)

Our prayer as staff and elders putting it together for you, is that you would behold the amazing realities of Christ’s birth (and have a little fun together while you’re at it). Enjoy this Christmas at home as a family – can’t wait to see how God uses it for your good and his glory.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Micheal". The signature is stylized with a large, circular flourish at the end.

Pastor Micheal

Opening Discussion:

Start things off by going around and having people answer any/all of the following questions:

- What's your favorite Christmas movie?
- What's a favorite Christmas tradition?
- What's one of your favorite memories associated with Christmas?
- What's Christmas mean to you? (no wrong answers)

Read the Christmas account together:

For this you can either all find one of the 2 Christmas accounts in the Bible (Matthew 1-2, or Luke 1-2) and read it together. Or, you will find a dramatized mash-up version of Luke 2 and Matthew 2 below! We encourage you to have each "voice" read by a different person (there are 3 total).

Some ideas to get more involved and to make it memorable:

- Get some props from around the house (i.e. bath robes, stuffed animals, make a stable out couch cushions, etc) and act out the story as it is being read.
- If you enjoy singing, there are a number of Christmas songs (with lyrics) listed at the end. Feel free to pick a favorite or two and sing them together either at some point during the narrative, or once the reading is done.

Voice 1:

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.

Voice 2:

He – Joseph – went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Voice 3:

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

Voice 1:

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: "'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.'"

Voice 3:

On the night when Christ was born...

Voice 2:

... there were shepherds living out in the fields [near Bethlehem], keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Voice 1:

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

Voice 2:

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

Voice 3:

Meanwhile in Jerusalem ...

Voice 1:

... Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go

and worship him.” After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.

Voice 2:

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they – the Shepherds – had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told [by the angel and the great company of the Heavenly host].

Voice 3:

When they – Magi – saw the star, they were overjoyed.

Voice 2:

On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they – Magi – returned to their country by another route.

Voice 1:

But Mary ... Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Songs to Pick from (optional):

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Oh little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie.
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth, the everlasting light.
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

Away in the Manger

Away in a manger, No crib for His bed
The little Lord Jesus, Lay down His sweet head
The stars in the sky, look down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay

Silent Night

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

Tune in:

Now that you've dug into the actual Christmas story for yourselves, tune in to watch a reading of the book "The Christmas Promise" (great for small children), followed by a 25 minute message based on the text you just read!

You can find the video at www.bethelowatonna.com/christmas

Final Discussion:

Close your time together by discussing (if comfortable) any of the following questions:

- What's one thing from the reading, story, or sermon that stood out to you the most?
- If someone asked you: "What's the significance of Christmas?" how would you answer them?
- Is there anything you'll change (personally) in your own life based on your time together tonight?
- Spend some time praying together thanking God for the gift of Christmas.