



Be the Message Christmas

based on the book *Be the Message* by Kerry and Chris Shook

At Christmas time, of course, we celebrate the Incarnation: the Word becoming flesh (John 1:14). The theme of Be the Message is another kind of incarnation. The Christ-centered message of love and grace takes up residence in our lives. As Scripture tells us: “Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly” (Colossians 3:16).

FOR CHURCH LEADERS

Challenge the congregation to give Christmas gifts to the people “in front of them.”

If everyone in the church gave a little something to 1-5 people in their orbit—the neighbors, co-workers, and service people they see every day—imagine the effect that would have on the community. The gifts should not be expensive, but could be nicely wrapped. People could include their name on the card, and a brief Christmas greeting, but avoid any appearance of manipulation. This is a gift of love, not a bribe to get someone to come to church.

Teach about the “astonishing” Jesus.

We sometimes assume we know everything there is to know about our Savior, but he keeps surprising us. Christmas is a great time to unpack some of those surprises—from the humble birth through his unlikely followers, his shocking parables, and his witty one-liners, to his tragic death and glorious resurrection.

Find Jesus in every book.

In chapter 3 of *Be the Message*, the Shooks include a litany of how Jesus “is alive” in every book of the Bible. As you celebrate his Incarnation, use this text as a reading, a drama, a poster, or a giveaway bookmark.

Unleash church artists on the Servant Song.

Gather the church artists and study Philippians 2:1-16 together. See what new songs, dramas, dances, or visual art they can develop based on this account of the Incarnation of Christ and its ramifications in our lives.



FOR SMALL GROUPS

Recover an old tradition.

Research and discuss the Christian tradition of *lectio divina*. Practice this together with a Christmas text—perhaps Luke 2, Matthew 2, or Isaiah 9:6-7. This involves reading it, meditating on it with your full imagination, praying it back to the Lord, and contemplating the changes God wants to make within you.

Learn and share a Christmas verse.

As a group, memorize John 1:14. Talk about this verse's Christmas connection. Ask group members to email this verse to one another along with a message of encouragement.

Give resources—and yourselves—to the needy.

Consider how your group might combine resources to provide a Christmas gift to a person or group outside your group. This might be a financial donation, but consider other options as well. Could you offer an “experiential” gift of some kind—tutoring needy students, taking special-needs children to a ball game, organizing a job fair for the unemployed? Use your imagination and listen for the Lord's surprising guidance.

Throw a Christmas party that's all about joy.

Ask each group member to invite one or two other people from outside the church. Wrap up little stocking-stuffers so that everyone will get a gift. Plan wacky games that will have everyone laughing. And you might end up with a time of singing some favorite Christmas carols (have words available) and holding a light discussion. *What do you like most about the Christmas season? What does Christmas mean to you?* (Show gentleness and respect to your guests. Remember that the message of Christ will come more through *who you are* than whatever you say.)



FOR INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES

A gift that keeps on giving.

If you truly are buying gifts for family members who seem to “have everything.” Try something new. Instead of getting another tie or scarf, could you make a donation to a worthy charity in that person’s name? Be sure it’s a cause that they would want to support. And perhaps you could wrap up a little object or card that would remind them of the larger gift you’re donating.

Try on a new attitude this Christmas.

Instead of grouching about how secular and commercial the season is becoming, try looking for those cases where the love and truth of Christ come through. Talk about these “Christ-sightings” with your family.