

## **Worship Activity: One Solitary Life**

Lead your group in Christmas worship.

Tami Rudkin | posted 11/03/2005

**Ask your group:** In one word, what would your life be like without Jesus? Give each one a chance to share their word. Then ask: In what ways has Jesus changed your life?

**Take a moment and read these "Christmas" passages as a way of worship:**

Luke 1:26-33—In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

Luke 2:26-32—It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

Isaiah 9:6—For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

John 1:14—The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

**Sing a worship song such as "O, Come All Ye Faithful."**

**Read "One Solitary Life"**

He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman.

He grew up in another village where he worked in a carpenter shop until he was thirty.

Then for three years he was an itinerant preacher. He never owned a home.

He never wrote a book. He never had a family of his own. He never held an office.

He never went to college. He never visited a big city. He never traveled more than two hundred miles from the place where he was born. He did none of the things that are usually associated with greatness. He had no credentials but himself.

He was only thirty three, when the tide of popular opinion turned against him. His friends ran away; one of them denied him. He was turned over to his enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves.

While he was dying, his executioners gambled for the only property he had on earth—his coat. When he was dead he was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Nineteen centuries have come and gone. Today Jesus is the central figure of the human race and the leader of mankind's progress. All the armies that have ever marched, all the navies that have ever sailed, all the parliaments that have ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned put together, have not affected the life of mankind on earth as powerfully as that one solitary life.

**Leader:** Take a few minutes to have your group give thanks for One Solitary Life.

## **Article: Opening Gifts Isn't Just for Kids**

Get everyone in your group using their gifts.

by [Brett Eastman](#) | posted 11/23/2004

I grew up with a single mom, two sisters, a girl cousin, and an aunt. One Christmas we were sitting around the tree tearing open our presents and showing them to the rest of the family. When I opened one of my gifts, I pulled out...a skirt! The family exploded in laughter. Late on Christmas Eve, my mom had gotten the gifts all goofed up.

The same can be true of spiritual gifts. The Bible says our spiritual gifts are given for the common good of the body of Christ and that the body is blessed when we open our gifts and use them in the power and love of Christ. But before using them, we need to open them and let others see them, so they can either affirm them or say, "You know what? I don't think that's your gift. It belongs to somebody else." Of course, not opening them at all is an even bigger mistake. That would be like walking by a Christmas tree and leaving all of the packages wrapped. What joy would there be in that?

As a small group host, one of your chief goals is to help your small group identify and develop their spiritual gifts. Below is an acronym (CHAMPION) to help you lead your small group in this key area:

1. **CELEBRATE** every member's spiritual gift. While everybody is blessed with abilities and skills, an individual understands their unique God-given gift when they trust Christ with their lives. God uses circles of friends—the body of Christ—to affirm and help develop those particular gifts.

We need to mirror one another. Once, I told a friend I thought I had a certain spiritual gift, and I was wondering what he thought. He said, "I really don't think it's that gift. It's this gift, Brett." Soon after that encounter, another person said, "Brett, you need to be focusing on this particular gift in your life."

If you don't create an atmosphere for your small group members to get this type of feedback, you may be leaving a package wrapped with a nice little bow on it. Take the package, shred the paper, open it, and have everyone ask, "What do you think? Here it is!" Be gentle, but don't be afraid to help them identify and develop their spiritual gifts.

2. **HAVE** every member take a baby step toward using his or her gifts. A small group is the smallest form of the body of Christ. Within each group, there are just enough gifts to

accomplish exactly what God wants—He provides this for every small group and every church around the world. His dream is for all of us to get in the game.

Try to assign a responsibility to everybody in the group. Do this regardless of where they are in their spiritual journey; just get them moving in an area where they think they are gifted. And take time to encourage them. Say, "You're so good at this!" "Thank you for that!" Or "Have you thought of this?" This your chance to to get them in the game.

3. **AFFIRM** every individual's gift and every step he or she takes in ministry. No matter what steps they take, you and your group should be hootin' and hollerin'. Ask the group, "Hey guys, wasn't that fantastic?" It doesn't matter what they did, just praise them.

Also, encourage members to test-drive ministries such as the children's ministry, youth ministry, music ministry, or mission team. Introduce them to areas where they could be involved and urge them to try and participate in one. Another good way for a member to find a fit is to do a spiritual gift assessment. From those results, they'll be able to see where God uniquely made them to fit in.

4. **MOTIVATE** every member to develop their God-given shape for life. One way to do this is to say, "What things would you guys like to do? What are some ideas?" Fill a whiteboard, and then say, "Who should fill these individual roles?" They'll fire out some names. Then ask, "Who would you like to join you in accomplishing this particular deal?" They'll proceed to give names of individuals who they enjoy hanging with.

One turn deserves another, so rotate the responsibilities every month--or every series--so each time everyone's doing something different (but still working together). This won't happen overnight, but dream to have this happen over time.

5. **PUT** them into teams in order to mobilize everyone. Jesus didn't send out his disciples alone; he sent them out in pairs. Use the power of pairs to accomplish any task. If you have people at different spiritual levels--one is a new Christian and one is a long-time believer--pair them together. This makes the new believer feel safe and empowers them to accomplish something they would never do on their own. It also provides accountability.

6. **INSPIRE** your members with your own examples and stories. I've told my scariest small group stories, ones in which I was reluctant to lead but was pushed to lead anyway. This is your chance to testify that God uses all people with various gifts—regardless of whether they feel prepared or not.

7. **OFFER** open discussion about serving together. Ask your group, "What can we do together?" Don't just tell them what you're going to do as a group; instead, involve them in determining what to do and where you think God is calling them to go. You may consider watching and discussing the movie *Pay It Forward* to demonstrate how doing small things catalyzes others to get in the game also.

8. **NEVER** give up. The body of Christ needs you. If you're a little wobbly at times, remember what Hebrews 13:7 says: He will never leave you. He will never forsake you.

He will never leave you out there in a place where he doesn't want you to grow and go to the next level in your own gifts. Be steadfast; be immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil in the Lord is not in vain. It is for a great measure and a great cause (2 Corinthians 15:58).

## **Outreach Activity: Caroling and Candy Canes**

Help spread the word for your church's holiday service.

Sue Kline | posted 11/12/1998

**Does your church hold a cantata or special service to celebrate Christmas? If so, your small group can help spread the word to people who might not otherwise attend a church function during Christmas time.**

You'll need:

- a plentiful supply of candy canes
- homemade gift tags
- tape
- song sheets
- enthusiastic carolers.

If you can recruit other small groups to participate, you can cover more neighborhoods. If your small group is going it alone, plan to carol in the neighborhood closest to your church.

Schedule your night of caroling a week before your church's Christmas program.

Early in December, purchase enough candy canes to distribute to the homes you visit. Estimate three or four people per household. In lieu of your typical small-group meeting, spend an evening cutting homemade gift tags from red and green construction paper. On one side, write out a verse (perhaps Is. 9:6, Lk. 2:10-11, or Jn. 3:16). On the other side, write an invitation to your church's Christmas service, giving the essential information plus the church's phone number. (You may want to type the verses and invitations into a computer and print them in bulk. Just cut them to size and glue them to gift tags.) Tape a gift tag to each candy cane.

While you prepare the candy canes, distribute song sheets of some familiar Christmas carols. You'll only need about six songs since you'll be singing some of the same songs over again as you move throughout the neighborhood. The important thing is to give group members time to refresh their memories of the lyrics since it's hard to read song sheets in the dark! While you're making gift tags, you can rehearse.

After your caroling, meet at a group member's home for hot drinks and cookies and to pray for the people to whom you've given invitations.