

Unwrapping Christmas

Aim of the assembly

Christmas is a time when children are hugely excited about the gifts they are going to receive. While we do not wish to diminish the joy of receiving gifts, it is also good to add the thought that not all Christmas gifts are material. The people involved in the first Christmas all received gifts of hope, joy and peace. These gifts are still of great value today and might be a great alternative present for the child that has no money to spend on Christmas gifts for others.

Props needed

Small table, large Christmas shopping bag, little Christmas tree, wrapped presents, Santa hats, bell, catalogue, crackers, Father Christmas doll or outfit. Three large signs saying: Hope, peace, joy.

Intro:

One character very over the top Christmassy: Santa hat, bell to ring, big present bag, Argos catalogue. Singing "Jingle bells" or "When Santa got stuck up the chimney..." meets other person. Over the top Christmassy person urges person 2 to put on a Santa hat and join in "festive cheer" of some sort, singing, eating, getting ready for Christmas...

Excited person: So excited, I am sooooo looking forward to Christmas and I have done my shopping, all my Christmas prep is in this bag... (Then gets out one item after the other and places them on a table...see list below of items in the bag)

Christmas is about.... Stops after each item to be excited about Christmas and then says, "But there is more..." then gets out the next thing. Children will get excited and cheer and can be asked to join in saying, "But there is more...!"

Catalogue: presents

Cracker: Christmas parties and presents

Father Christmas: presents!

Christmas tree: presents!

Second person eventually points out: Yes, it is all that...but there is more. The real people in the first Christmas received presents, yes, but they had different presents. See whether you can work out what their presents were and what they meant to them. We will act it out.

Link:

Ok, I have got an idea, I will act out a person. You can try and guess who it is. And I will try to tell you what the special Christmas gift was which they received.

Bible story in three scenes: There is more to Christmas than presents

Use the same props for each of the three characters:

- a big cardboard tube covered with silver paper or sprayed silver,
- and a blanket or shawl which can serve as a baby blanket, shepherd's covering and wise man's shawl.

The idea is to keep it very simple and stripped down, so that people have to use their imagination. Actor's need to mime well and speak with conviction. Make up three large signs: Peace, joy, hope. The signs are turned over after each section of the story and propped up, at the end of the stories you should have all three words clearly visible to the audience.

Use props as:

- Mary: Broom and baby blanket
- Shepherd: Shepherds staff and blanket
- Wise man: Telescope and shawl.

MARY

Sweeping the house. She is singing to herself. She listens to the noise from the bedroom, is that the baby crying? No, he is still asleep.

I am Mary. I am fourteen years old. When I first heard that I was going to have a baby I was nervous. I was afraid what the people would say, I was only engaged and not married then, you know.

Puts the broom away and picks up the baby.

But when my baby was born, all was good. I was so happy!

What does Christmas mean to me? In one word: Joy!! For me Christmas is all about Jesus...and Jesus has brought me joy.

Turn over JOY sign at the table and put props down for next person.

SHEPHERD

Huddling under his blanket, it is a cold morning. He gets up and wraps himself in the blanket. He picks up his shepherd staff. Where are the sheep, he can see them all settled.

I am a shepherd. We shepherds are poor people. We do not earn a lot, we do not get a lot to eat. We are away from home most of the time. We sleep in the wind and the rain, we have to fight with wild animals when they try to steal our sheep. Nobody really cares about us.

Christmas to me in one word? It is all about hope. We shepherds did not have a lot of hope. But when the angel came and spoke to us, I realised that God cares about me. And it gave me hope.

For me Christmas is all about Jesus, his birth showed me that God cares and he has brought me hope!!

Turn over HOPE sign at the table and put props down for next person.

WISE MAN/ KING

Looks through his telescope. Shakes his head and wonders. Then looks again and his gaze is fixed on something he sees. Could this be the star he has been waiting for? Get the camels ready, pack the food in this bag, it is going to be a long journey.

I am a King and they call me a wise man. I have searched for many years to find peace. I have read books, studied the stars and have come to believe that one day God would send us a King who would be able to show us the path of peace. When I saw his star, I knew the time had come.

It was a long journey. But when I saw the child, I knew he was the one. Don't ask me how I knew, but I knew that this was going to be the one to make peace.

What does Christmas mean to me, in one word: It is peace. Christmas to me is all about Jesus... and he brought me peace.

The turn the PEACE sign and leave it at the front of the table to create display:

Joy, hope, peace

A Christmas message

Then link to children: There is a Christmas message here from Mary, the shepherd and the Wise man: Joy, peace and hope. Can we get three of you out and ask you to put on some t-shirts for us. On the t-shirts we have a Christmas message...but you have to get it in the right order. (Make sure that the volunteers are lined up in such a way that the initial message is mixed up. Let the children in the audience work out the message.)

Three volunteers, T-shirts can be written on with large letters or get iron-on sheets which can be printed on a photocopier. Each shirt has two words written on two lines. Shirt 1: WE/ A Shirt 2 WISH/ MERRY Shirt 3: YOU/ CHRISTMAS, the combined T.shirts will say: We wish you a merry Christmas!

When they are turned around each one has a different Christmas message printed on the back of the T-shirts

- Bring: Joy
- Give: Hope
- Make: Peace

Talk to the three volunteers and describe to them how they can put these words into action. It works best if you have something for them to hold which signifies the action.

We can bring joy to someone by bringing them a surprise gift. (Present)

We can bring hope to someone by showing them that we care about them (Big Christmas card)

We can make peace by being willing to forgive and to extend friendship again. (Shake hands to make friends)

Song : May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace

Prayer