

Christmas ideas

Be near us Lord Jesus – creative ideas for finding Christ in Christmas

This sheet is designed to be glanced through so you know what it contains, and then printed off and kept to hand through the Christmas period for you and/or your family to use. In it you'll find ideas, playlist suggestions and written prayers to return to in a quiet moment to help you re-focus on who Christmas is really about; help you process difficult or stressful situation; or intentionally incorporate into your celebrations.

Section 1 – Creative ideas for putting Christ at the centre of your celebrations

1.1 Seeking peace

In the busyness, and with more people around, it can often be hard to find some peace and stillness to seek God in prayer. To make this time easier to find, be intentional. Perhaps you could specifically build in some time to go for a walk, or to draw aside for a while. Or, perhaps you could book in a time as a family, amongst all your other celebrations, when you will worship and pray together.

1.2 Prayerful associations

In order to help you remember to give thanks to God, keep your focus on Jesus, and remember to pray for others during the busiest time of Christmas, you might find it helpful to make intentional associations – whether these are visual, auditory or otherwise – which can then act as triggers for a moment of reflection, prayer or worship. For example, you could pray for peace in for the Middle East whenever you hear or see the word Bethlehem; thank God for all those he has placed around you when you see a nativity scene; or put a post it note with a verse such as John 3:16 on it near your kettle to re-focus you on thanksgiving for Christ's coming throughout the day.

1.3 Table talk

There are plenty of ways to draw nearer to God in your conversations round the table too. You could talk about your favourite Christmas carols and why their words capture the beauty or meaning of Christmas for you; come up with all the things you want to thank God for about Christmas and your time together celebrating it; share testimonies of what God has done in your lives, especially during the past year; or chat about what you're hoping to explore more of next year.

1.4 A present of prayer

To try and increase thankfulness, and a perspective on where all good gifts come from, consider making time during, or just after, present-opening to offer short prayers of thanks for what you have received; to pray for the givers; and to intercede for anyone that comes to mind who would benefit from a similar, or related gift.

1.5 Creative thanks

Consider spending some time individually, or with others, on creating something to represent and record your thankfulness to God for his presence with you, and all the gifts you enjoy in life... this might be a written prayer, a picture, an acrostic or poem, or even a song.

Section 2 – Playlist ideas for soundtracks which celebrate Christ-with-us

Many of us will listen to Christmas carols and songs, and many of these are full of truth, and very uplifting. Why not also create a playlist or CD with some of your favourite carols and/or more general worship tracks that focus on who Jesus is, the gospel, and the themes of Advent and the Incarnation?

Here are some songs from compilations we've created that we find particularly helpful at this time of year, and that are available to download as single tracks:

| Title | Artist | Where can I get it? |
|--------------------------|-----------------|---|
| Saviour of the world | Ben Cantelon | On ALBUM: <i>Saviour of the world</i> . Available as single track on Amazon |
| Undivided Love | Ben Cantelon | On ALBUM: <i>Worship Central: Spirit Break Out</i> . Available as single track on Amazon |
| Humble King | Brenton Brown | On ALBUM: <i>You have shown us</i> . Available to download as single track on Amazon |
| Christmas offering | Casting Crowns | On ALBUM: <i>Peace on earth</i> . Available as single track on Amazon |
| God is with us | Casting Crowns | On ALBUM: <i>Peace on earth</i> . Available as single track on Amazon |
| If we've ever needed you | Casting Crowns | On ALBUM: <i>Until the whole world hears</i> . Available as single track on Amazon |
| Make straight | Charlie Hall | On ALBUM: <i>Porch and Altar</i> . Available as single track on Amazon |
| Priceless treasure | Charlie Hall | On ALBUM: <i>On the road to beautiful</i> . Available as single track on Amazon |
| Lily of the valley | David Ruis | On ALBUM: <i>Wide wide world</i> . Available as single track on Amazon |
| Hosanna | Hillsong United | On ALBUM: <i>All of the above</i> . Available as single track on Amazon |
| Soon | Hillsong United | On ALBUM: <i>Across the earth: Tear down the walls</i> . Available as single track on Amazon |
| Emmanuel | Liz Baddaley | On ALBUM: <i>For you</i> . Available to download free from www.thesanctuarycentre.org/whereworldandworshipmeet-songs |
| He is risen | Liz Baddaley | Available to download free from www.thesanctuarycentre.org/whereworldandworshipmeet-songs |
| Unfailing Love | Liz Baddaley | Available to download free from www.thesanctuarycentre.org/whereworldandworshipmeet-songs |
| See the lamb of God | Lou Fellingham | On ALBUM: <i>Step into the light</i> . Available as single track on Amazon |
| Light of the world | Matt Redman | On ALBUM: <i>The Father's Song</i> . Available as single track on Amazon feat. Chris Tomlin |
| My hope | Matt Redman | On ALBUM: <i>We shall not be shaken</i> . Available as single track on Amazon |
| You alone can rescue | Matt Redman | On ALBUM: <i>We shall not be shaken</i> . Available as single track on Amazon |
| The light will come | Phil Wickham | On ALBUM: <i>Cannons</i> . Available as single track on Amazon |
| This blood | Rita Springer | On ALBUM: <i>In this forever</i> . Available as single track on Amazon |
| Counting on your name | Tim Hughes | On ALBUM: <i>Love shine through</i> . Available as single track on Amazon |
| Emmanuel | Vicky Beeching | On ALBUM: <i>Eternity Invades</i> . Available as single track on Amazon |

Section 3 – Written prayers for specific times and situations

3.1 A Christmas grace

Be near us Lord Jesus – we ask you to stay at the centre
Of all of our celebrations and laughter this Christmas.

We thank you for every good gift on our table, and under our tree.
But most of all we thank you for coming, for loving, for dying, for rising, for setting us free.

Let our happiness at the gifts you have given, never mask the deeper joy of knowing the giver of all –
And may our lives shine always with your love and glory, brighter than any glitter or bauble
That's enjoyed for a while, and packed away tomorrow.

Christmas will come and go.
But Christ you are with us always – and we would be always yours.

Keep us near to you, we pray.
Amen.

3.2 Prayer to memorise and use whilst cooking, wrapping, shopping etc...

Be near us Lord Jesus – I ask you to stay at the centre.
Close by us – and in us – despite what we put in your way.
I pray that I, and my family, would focus on your love this Christmas
And that we would partner with you to bless all your children today, and always.
Amen.

3.3 Prayer to use when difficult things (such as singleness, bereavement, separation or childlessness) are highlighted by the season.

Be near me Lord Jesus – I ask you to stay at the centre
And to flood my heart with your life-giving love.

Help me to surrender to your perfect plans and timing
And to find you in my suffering and circumstances
Even when it causes me grief, pain and anger.

Help me to be honest about my feelings and questions,
Bringing them to you, as I run to your arms
Rather than hiding them, or taking them somewhere else for answers.

Help me to remember this time is not about the things or people I do not yet have, or no longer have –
But about you – the one who never leaves nor forsakes me –
Who came to bind up the broken-hearted, and to bestow a crown of beauty in exchange for my ashes.

Be near me Lord Jesus – I ask you to be at the centre
Of my grief, and of my joy – today and always.
Amen.

3.4 Short prayer to use following conflict or quarrels

Be near us Lord Jesus – I ask you to stay at the centre,
To stand between me and *[insert name]* with your arms of love stretched out
That we might find a way
To return to you, and to come back towards each other.

Prince of peace you said that peacemakers are blessed
And we know it is true.
Create in us new hearts, full of your Spirit's fruit
Of peace, gentleness and self-control
That we might follow your way of love.

At this time when kings humbled themselves to kneel
And you laid aside your majesty to reconcile God and man,
Help me to put down my anger, my rights, and my pain
For the sake of my love for *[insert name]* and my worship of you.
Amen.

3.5 Prayer to re-focus on the true meaning of Christmas

Be near us Lord Jesus – I ask you to stay at the centre,
And to work in me this Christmas to make me more
like you.

Lift my eyes from materialism and fix them on you;
Free my heart from selfishness and flood it with your
compassion;
Unclench my hands from what I own, or have just
been given, that I would be ready to give
And tune my ears to hear your voice, and the voices of
those crying out for your help.

Lord Jesus, give me your perspective on what this
season, and every season, is for.
May I speak peacefully; act justly; give generously;
pray fervently; and love sacrificially
This Christmas, and always.
Amen.

3.6 Prayer of compassion for all in need this Christmas

Be near us Lord Jesus – I ask you to stay at the centre,
Flooding our hearts with a love that cannot be
contained
And must be given, and given, and given away.

Lord Jesus, you loved our world so much that the
whole of heaven could not contain it
And so overflowing, you spilled out, ran over, walked
among us, chased after us to make yourself known.

Come again Lord Jesus, and walk your love up and
down our world's streets,
Through your Spirit, and through us.

May the hungry, the elderly, the homeless, the
bereaved, the lonely, the anxious, and the distracted
Find you and be found by you.
As you again come looking to minister your love this
Christmas
Through food, and warmth, and shelter, and
company, and most of all – love.
Amen.

3.7 Prayer for the Middle East

Lord Jesus I dare to pray, as you asked me to, for the
peace of Jerusalem.
I choose to lift my eyes from dense newspaper print,
complex political arguments, and impossible
headlines.
I look to you.

Lord Jesus I dare to believe, as your word says, that
you are the hope of nations.
I choose to lift to you all situations and places that
seem beyond the reach of human wisdom,
Especially in the region where you walked.

Lord Jesus I dare to trust, as I am learning to do in my
own life, that in you all things are possible.
And so I choose to pray for Israel, the Palestinian
Territories, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya and Egypt.
And I dare to hope for peace.
Amen.