



A Christmas Story: Parent Cue

WHAT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT:

Here is an overview of what we're talking about. Listed below the summary is a "parent cue" to help you dialog with your child about the session. The question is intended not just to be asked by you, but to be responded to by **BOTH** of you. Use this opportunity to find out what God is teaching your child, and allow your child to see what God is teaching you as well.

A Christmas Story:

Series Overview

Christmas is such a crazy time. Students are busy dreaming about what they want to get, and parents are shopping frantically for what they want to give. We all become consumed with malls and wrapping paper. *It's a Wonderful Life* and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* play on TV and Santa Clause poses for pictures with every excited (and screaming) child. At church we tell the story about shepherds, angels and a manger, but so often the significance of the story is lost because it seems like just one more holiday tradition. Or we've heard it so much that we don't hear it anymore. Our upcoming series is going to tell the Christmas Story—but in a slightly different way.

Session One (12/7/11)

Everyone has a vision for their lives. We dream of the type of home we'll live in, the car we'll drive, the job we want, the love we desire or the family we'll have. And even if we wouldn't dare share those things with someone else, deep within us we hope that life will turn out one way . . . even if we're at the same time skeptical it won't. But sometimes the life we envision is different than the one we actually have . . . okay, most of the time. So how do we react when life doesn't turn out the way we hoped? And more importantly, what do we do with Jesus, because as wonderful as He is, He steps into our lives and makes things messy. He leads us down paths we never thought we would go. He asks us to do things we don't always want to do. And even with all that, somehow life still turns out even better than we dreamed.



Session One Parent Cue: What are some events in your life that turned out differently than you hoped? Looking back, did things work out better than you expected at the time?

Session Two (12/14/11)

It's so easy for something to capture our sense of wonder, especially during the Christmas season. For some of us, there is that one thing we would love to unwrap. Whether it's the latest cell phone, wide screen TV or money for a shopping spree, there is one thing that makes our heart skip a beat with anticipation wondering if this Christmas it will happen. Simeon lived his whole life with that type of anticipation. His life was consumed by one thing, but it was really the only thing that mattered.



Session Two Parent Cue: What would your life look like if the one consuming thing behind every action and every word was Jesus?

Session Three (12/21/11)

It's the easiest thing in the world to do, and that's probably why so many of us are guilty of doing it. God gives us something--a talent, a provision, a relationship--we take it, make big plans for it, then

somehow forget all about Him. In the act of serving God, sometimes we completely miss Him. Sometimes our big God becomes very small in our lives. Perhaps that's why God chose Mary, someone who was very aware of what little she had to offer, to provide the gift that the world so desperately needed. Mary is remembered not only for what she did, but for why she did it--simply to honor God's request.



Session Three Parent Cue: Have you ever had a moment when you felt like God asked you to do something specific? How did you respond?

CREATING A RHYTHM

Increase the quantity of quality time you spend together.

Have you ever been a part of something bigger than yourself? Maybe you were able to send food, shoes, or presents to a family hundred's of miles away. Maybe you were able to hold the hand of a grieving stranger. Our world is full of need and each one of us has been equipped with resources to meet some of those needs. And when we do that, we also gain in the process.

Whenever we are able to work together as a team, neighborhood or family, it is amazing how much we are drawn together. In the act of serving together all the tension and stress of our day-to-day lives seem to melt away and we walk away with a powerful shared experience. This month, think about a project that you and your family can do together so that you can be a part of something bigger than yourselves.

You may want to consider one of the following options:

World Vision: World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. They serve close to 100 million people in nearly 100 countries around the world. The excellence of World Vision's work has earned the trust of more than 3 million donors, supporters, and volunteers; more than half a million child sponsors; thousands of churches; hundreds of corporations; and government agencies in the United States and around the world. Log onto their web site to find out one of the many ways your family can partner with Compassion to make a lasting difference in the life of a child.

[www.worldvision.org]

Compassion International: Compassion International is a Christian child advocacy ministry dedicated to release children from poverty. Through sponsorship programs, Compassion addresses the economic, health, environmental, social, educational and spiritual needs of these children. Currently, Compassion helps more than 800,000 children in 24 countries. Log onto their web site to find out one of the many ways your family can partner with Compassion to make a lasting difference in the life of a child.

[www.compassion.com]

TOMS Shoes: TOMS was born in 2006 by Blake Mycoskie out of a commitment to produce stylish, comfortable, and practical footwear while improving the lives of children around the world. Every pair sold is personally matched with a donated pair to a child in need. This Christmas have fun giving TOMS shoes and celebrating the children who will also be comforted by your donation.

[www.tomsshoes.com]

410 Bridge: 410 Bridge began in 2005 by Lanny Donoho. The overall goal is life transformation, for Americans and Kenyans alike through building lasting relationships within cross-cultural communities. This month your students are partnering with 410 Bridge to help solve the water crisis in 410 bridge communities in Kenya by purchasing bottled water. To find out more about

how your family can partner with 410 Bridge communities, go to their web site and click on the link to “communities,” then look for projects that interest you. Be creative in thinking of activities that would raise money and enable you to give to these communities.

[www.410bridge.org]

In Your Community: Find a local women’s shelter, soup kitchen or other community program in your area and see where you can help. You may want to present the idea of a project to your student and let him or her have ownership in the process by doing some research online to see what you can do.

Get connected to a wider community of parents at www.orangeparents.org.