



Steps to Navigating the Season of Nativity Successfully as a Family

By James Abbott

Christmas. There is such a contrast between the simple and complicated in this single day. The calm of Silent Night versus the mad rush for gifts; the joy of a family dinner versus the crazy mess and work of making that dinner! It's a rollercoaster.

Perhaps nothing can compare to the contrast in messages, beliefs, and reality that "Christmas" brings. As a parent myself, it's a challenge. The different holiday movies, books, and commercials — mixed with the ever-growing list of wants that my two boys have — can make it seem nearly impossible to help them get to the real meaning and heart of Christmas. Have you ever felt that? Have you ever wondered how to lead your family well through the Christmas holiday season? Maybe you're not so sure you're even leading yourself well.

As we approach this Christmas season, allow me to suggest a few simple reminders and ideas to help us navigate this challenging, yet absolutely beautiful time.

1. Be intentional — Now, before you roll your eyes and decide to stop reading, hear me out. I've noticed in my work, finances, calendar, marriage, and certainly parenting, that without some intentionality, things are missed. Things can go off track a bit, even a lot! I rarely if ever hit the mark when I'm not intentional. It's like shooting an arrow but not aiming at the target. Could you hit the target? Yeah. I suppose it could happen if you're lucky. However, I'd rather not leave my kids' faith and beliefs up to luck.

2. Keep it simple — Ahhhh. See, now you're with me. Intentionality doesn't mean a family devotional with three main points, object lesson, altar call, and three hours of preparation. Actually, if that's your plan, here's a prediction. It won't work. However, you can be simply intentional by praying each day for God to reveal moments to you to lead your kids. Pause the movie and take two minutes to explain what they are seeing, set your calendar to the time you all leave for the day and pray with your family, or read the Christmas story in the Bible. You can even have some fun! Put the kids in bed, wait five minutes, warm up the car, then get them all up and in the car for a special Christmas lights drive around the neighborhood. Then, tuck them in the second time and talk about the light of Jesus that came into the dark world that first Christmas. Simple, right?
3. Lead yourself first — Too often we roll into these holidays on empty, which means we have little to give to those we care about most. Use Advent as a gift and a tool to set an intentional and simple rhythm for the season for yourself. Wake up or go to bed 30 minutes sooner or later than normal to spend some quiet moments with Jesus. Eat lunch in a spot where you can read Scripture and pray. Listen to sermon podcasts on your commute. Make yourself take a 30-minute walk with God in a quiet place with no electronics or distractions. Whatever it is, set your heart on encountering the Who behind what Christmas is all about Jesus.

He will help you. He will guide you. He will give you wisdom and discernment. He will care for you and your family. He already is! Tune in. Be intentional. Keep it simple. Lead yourself first. Because Christmas really is all about Jesus.

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