



Christmas

GATHERINGS

Resource Manual

HOW TO HOST EVANGELISTIC
CHRISTMAS GATHERINGS

Founder Joyce Bademan | **Director** Sarah Kunze
cru.org/christmasgatherings

cru⁺



Warmest Greetings!

Little did I know, when I spoke for two Christmas Gatherings in 1981, that it was the beginning of a lifelong adventure that would be used of God to touch lives literally all over the world! Those first two parties were attended by 40 guests. We marveled at the ease we all felt as the gospel was simply shared. The response was thrilling, and in January, over half of the participants attended Bible studies held in the hostesses' homes.

I shared the Christmas Gathering idea with six women in a discipleship group the following year and, together, we held five Gatherings. The next year, twelve more friends experienced the joy of sharing the gospel with neighbors through Christmas Gatherings.

By now, I was convinced that anyone could host a Gathering. A pastor in my church asked how our church could utilize these Gatherings. The first year we trained five speakers and held 23 parties, and now our church does 40 to 75 annually!

As excitement grows, news is spreading to other churches and individuals. In Minneapolis and St. Paul, MN, over 75 churches of various denominations have hosted thousands of Gatherings reaching tens of thousands of people with the good news of Jesus Christ. Articles in magazines, radio programs, this manual, trainings and mainly word-of-mouth enthusiasm have caused these parties to spread all over the world.

Through some international travel, we have been able to share Christmas Gatherings with people from over 60 countries. Many places around the world have translated this manual and are hosting gatherings.

I have prayed for many years that God would raise up a capable, strong leader for Cru, so this ministry could continue to help staff and the Body of Christ effectively share God's love. God raised up Sarah Kunze who now leads me and this ministry wisely.

Through Christmas Gatherings, thousands have indicated that they have received Jesus Christ, and numerous follow-up Bible studies have been started. Not only have the Gatherings brought exciting changes in people's lives through a relationship with Jesus Christ, but they also foster incomparable growth opportunities for Christians who want to reach out and share their faith with others.

The following pages will tell you all you need to know about Christmas Gatherings and how to host one or many. It is my hope and prayer that this manual will be used to encourage and equip you to help reach your world with His powerful gospel. May you experience, as I have, God's enabling power and delight.



In His Love,

Joyce Bademan

Joyce Bademan
Founder



Over a 20 year period...

- **1,200 parties were held by individuals**
- **18,000 people attended**
- **2,040 people indicated that they received Christ**
- **3,600 people were interested in coming to Bible study**



Faithful Steps

In the fall of 2015, Cru staff member Debra Petersen handed me a Christmas Gathering training manual and challenged me to raise up a host for a gathering that holiday season. We gathered at a friend's home, and another friend shared her testimony and the true meaning of Christmas. That Saturday morning, we saw several people make the decision to trust in Jesus.

What struck me most was the simplicity of the gathering and the joy people experienced simply by coming together. From that moment, Christmas Gatherings became a staple of our ministry.

When Joyce and Rich Bademan passed the baton to me in the summer of 2023, I was honored to partner with incredible churches and individuals in continuing this mission.

There's never been a better time to relaunch this ministry and share a simple yet effective strategy with anyone feeling called to share the good news of Jesus with their neighbors, friends, and family. I've seen firsthand how God has used Christmas Gatherings in my own neighborhood, drawing people out of isolation and into community, and out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light.

Throughout my time getting to know Joyce and Rich, one key attribute has stood out: faithfulness. Joyce has been unwavering in her obedience to God's call. She'll often say she's never "led" anything; she simply followed God's lead as He gave her the idea for this ministry, surrounded her with the right people, and provided the resources to make it happen. She followed that call, taking it across every state in the U.S. and to many countries around the world, seeing tens of thousands hear the gospel and respond. She has remained faithful to God every step of the way.

As I continue this mission, carrying forward the vision God placed in Joyce's heart over 40 years ago, my prayer is that I will follow Jesus and His call as faithfully as the Bademans have. One of my favorite verses is Proverbs 16:9: "In his heart, a man plans his ways, but the Lord establishes his steps." My prayer is that my family and I will follow the Bademans' example and remain excellent followers of the Lord as He establishes our steps.



"What struck me the most was the simplicity of the gathering and the joy people experienced simply by coming together."



In Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sarah Kunze".

Sarah Kunze
Director



What People Say

Leaders say...



“Christmas Gatherings are the most effective, fruitful evangelistic strategy available today. This is a simple, practical, doable plan which anyone can implement. Tens of thousands of people, including your neighbors, are ready to receive Christ when properly approached with the Gospel.”

Dr. Bill Bright

Former President of Campus Crusade For Christ



“I’m so excited about the Christmas Gatherings strategy. Bill & I have had so many wonderful opportunities to have people in our home. In fact, our home has been the hub of our ministry. No matter how warm or beautiful a church building is, it can not possibly match the intimacy and comfort of the home.”

Vonette Bright

*Co-Founder of Campus Crusade For Christ
President of Women Today International*



“Holly and I are very excited about the Christmas gatherings strategy. We’ve welcomed people into our home at Christmas time wherever we’ve lived in the world, and every time, there is a unique openness to discussing the love of Jesus. This is something we can all do to give the greatest gift of all to our communities.”

Josh Newell

Executive Director, Jesus Film Project



“Christmas is the time to gather, enjoy, celebrate with friends and neighbors. Everyone seems eager to get together, to party, to enjoy delicious food, to meet new people. And it’s a time to recognize the real reason for the season—to lift up Jesus as the coming King, our Savior. To rejoice in the goodness of God and His gift to us. What a perfect opportunity to bring the two together: to gather, to eat, to talk, and to tell about the treasure we have found as we share our personal stories of discovering the true meaning of Christmas.”

Judy Douglas

Global Director, Cru Women’s Resources



“Jesus said, Come Follow ME and I WILL make you FISHERS of men” – Relational, intentional, & missional. Christmas Gatherings incorporate all three in a simple, doable, and fun way. A highly effective tool for “loving our neighbors.”

Dean Plumlee

Strategic Ministries Catalyst with Sonlife

For the past 40 years, ministry leaders have effectively used Christmas Gatherings as a powerful tool to share the message of Jesus in a warm, relational setting. As culture and communication methods evolve, the heart of Christmas Gatherings remains the same: creating a space where people can encounter the love of Christ. By leveraging personal invitations, digital tools, and creative approaches, we can build on this 40-year legacy and continue to reach hearts with the timeless message of Christmas.



Participants say...

“What a wonderful evening. I’m beginning to feel the “spirit” of the season after listening to Mary. There’s definitely something missing in my life. I need to pursue a greater relationship with God.”

Guest

“Thank you for a beautiful ‘presentation’ that allowed me some precious time for reflection! This is wonderful. Yes, I did take time for prayer. Call me for study class.”

Guest

“I appreciate the opportunity to take time to talk with everyone and reflect on the real meaning of Christmas.”

Guest

“I was so nervous about inviting my neighbors, some of whom I didn’t even know. But it was a huge success, and it changed the relationships in our neighborhood.”

Host

“Since sharing at a Christmas Gatherings I now feel comfortable and confident in sharing the gospel in other situations and with other people in my life.”

Speaker

“As a pastor, I have found that Christmas Gatherings are one of the most successful ways to equip people to become involved in evangelism.”

Pastor

“I have lived in this country for 20 years, and this is the first time someone has invited me into their home.”

Guest who indicated they received Jesus



Table of Contents

Section	Page
I. Introduction	7
What is a Christmas Gathering.	8
Where in the World / Partnerships	9
2. Spiritual Preparation	10
3. Information for the Host	13
Guest	14
Speaker	14
Invitations	14
Creating an Atmosphere	16
Your Gathering	16
Following Your Gathering.	18
How To Begin An Evangelistic Bible Study	19
4. Information for the Speaker.	21
Components of the Talk.	22
Your Preparation with the Host	23
Your Preparation for the Party	23
Timetable	24
Points to Remember.	24
The Christmas Gathering Talk	25
How To Present The Christmas Gathering Talk	28
5. Information for the Coordinator	32
Responsibilities of the Coordinator	33
Time Line for Coordinator	35
Outlines for Trainings	36
Coordinator's Evaluation	37
Host Evaluation.	38
Speaker Evaluation.	39
6. Christmas Gathering Resources	40
Resources for Follow-Up Bible Studies.	40
Simple Gospel Presentations	40
7. Contact Info	41





Introduction

Give the People in Your Life the Greatest Gift this Christmas

Christmas Gatherings

What is a Christmas Gathering?

Christmas Gatherings are holiday parties. They feature seasonal goodies, sharing of Christmas traditions and a brief, nonthreatening talk on the meaning of Christmas. They provide a time for people to invite their neighbors or other groups into their home to hear about the love of Jesus Christ.

What are the Benefits?

These are just a few of the benefits of a Christmas Gathering that have encouraged so many:

- An opportunity to reach out to others and build loving relationships.
- Learning to share the Gospel clearly and with relevance.
- Modeling the simplicity of prayer - talking to God about the desires of our heart.
- Providing your home as a safe environment to not only hear about Jesus Christ, but also to learn about Him in His Word.
- Counteracts the trend of isolation. Many people are never invited into someone's home and they are honored to be included.
- Requires only two people to initiate – host and speaker.
- The privilege of experiencing the joy of trusting God.

How Does It Work?

Through many years of experience, certain distinctives have evolved that make a Christmas Gathering authentic and successful.

These are:

An invitation that includes the phrase: “a friend will share some inspiring thoughts about Christmas.”

An ten to fifteen minute presentation by someone other than the host that includes the following:

- A Christmas theme
- A clear non-threatening presentation of the Gospel
- An opportunity to receive Jesus Christ
- An opportunity to respond to the host and speaker
- An opportunity to attend a Bible Study

The best part is that this is a simple idea that anyone can do! After reading the manual or attending a training session, people say they feel prepared to share Christ in their home or workplace.

Our prayer is that God would create in each of us a heart that loves and cares enough about the people around us that we are compelled to lift Jesus up and share Him in a way that brings Him glory and moves people toward God.

The essence of the ministry of Christmas Gatherings is found in I Thessalonians 2:8:

“We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the Gospel of God, but our lives as well”



Partnerships

Christmas Gatherings, a ministry of Cru, has partnered widely with the body of Christ. Many denominations are included in the partnerships, such as Southern Baptist, Presbyterian Church of America (PCA), Evangelical Free Church, and over a hundred other independent churches. Other organizations like Women of Faith, Neighborhood Bible Studies, Family Life Today have encouraged Gatherings. Mission organizations around the world are doing them as well.

Eastern Wisconsin

Beginning with two Gatherings in 1992, Christmas Gatherings have multiplied to over 800 Gatherings held in Wisconsin with over 8,500 in attendance. Over 1,600 individuals have indicated decisions for Christ and approximately 250 follow-up Bible studies have resulted.

US Cities

Christmas Gatherings have spread through relationships. Yearly hundreds of Gatherings take place all over the US.

East Asia

Christmas Gatherings began on campuses in East Asia. In 2001, the manual was translated and the first year 12 Gatherings were hosted through one small house church. In 2003, through three house churches, over sixty parties were held with approximately 300 people receiving Christ. There is much curiosity about Christmas and hearts are very receptive. Persecution causes believers to be very careful, but small gatherings are still effective.

Europe

Germany calls their Christmas Gatherings “Advent Coffees.” These began in East Germany before the fall of the Berlin wall. They now continue freely in all of Germany as well as other European countries. “Advent Coffees” have been very effective in these post-modern countries.

Iran and India

Through an International Women’s Conference in 1999, Christmas Gatherings began in Iran. A few people hosted womens and couples parties. These same people are now helping others use Christmas Gatherings every year, and they report the results are amazing! A church planting pastor in India heard of the Gatherings and teaches his church planters to do Gatherings to begin Bible studies and new churches. In 2024, this same pastor trained 300 hosts and speakers. His goal was to have 1,000 trained in the surrounding towns and villages, where they are expected to reach up to 25,000 people with the Gospel. Even though persecution is a constant threat, Christmas is a rare time of year when people of many backgrounds are more receptive to Christians.

The Christmas Gathering Manual has already been translated into German, Spanish, French, Chinese, Albanian and Russian. Contact us for more information (see page 41).





Spiritual Preparation

Spiritual Preparation

Whether this is your first experience in reaching out to others with the gospel of Jesus Christ or you are a seasoned evangelist, the following information may be the most helpful part in this manual. God has already begun your spiritual preparation by placing within your heart the desire to share Him with others.

- II Corinthians 5:14 tells us that Christ's love compels us to witness to others.
- Acts 1:8 assures us that when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we will witness because we have His power to do so.

God does not care as much about our abilities as our availability.

- You are making yourself available to be used by Him as you take time to become acquainted with this manual and as you pray about how you will use this information.
- Just as God calls you to witness for Him, He also prepares you and empowers you as you surrender yourself to Him. He asks that we serve Him “not by might, nor by power, but by His Spirit.” —Zechariah 4:6
- Our eyes should not be on ourselves or the results of our Gatherings.
- Our eyes should be fixed on God's power, His sufficiency, and His ability to accomplish His purpose in our lives and in the lives of others. Successful witnessing is sharing Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God.

Here are some verses to use as you prayerfully prepare for your part in Christmas Gatherings:

If you are feeling inadequate:

- “I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.”
— Philippians 4:13
- “Call unto me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”
— Jeremiah 33:3
- “The One who calls you is faithful and He will do it.”
— I Thessalonians 5:24
- “And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”
— Philippians 4:19
- “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.”
— Matthew 7:7

If you are sensing that Satan is discouraging you:

- “You are going into the battle against your enemies. Do not be fainthearted or afraid. Do not be terrified, or give way to panic before them. For the Lord your God is the one who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory.”
— Deuteronomy 20:3-4
- “Trust the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.”
— Proverbs 3:5-6
- “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on all the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.”
— Ephesians 6:10-11



If you are feeling anxious:

“I sought the Lord, and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears.”

— Psalm 34:4

“Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.”

— 1 Peter 5:7

There are four things that God will support and bless:

By Watchman Nee in “Expecting the Lord’s Blessing”

- That which God initiates
- That which is done according to God’s Word and purpose
- That which is done for God’s glory
- That which depends upon Him for success

Prayer list of specific requests for your Gathering:

- For God’s protection for all those involved in the spiritual battle
- For hearts of guests to be prepared and for obstacles to be removed
- For uniting of hearts of the speaker and host
- For love for people, sensitivity to needs, and ability to remember names
- For Jesus Christ to be glorified in everything that is said and done
- For God’s enablement to clearly present the gospel message
- For full trust and dependence upon Jesus Christ
- For His confidence, strength, and wisdom

Additional verses for your spiritual preparation:

“The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?”

— Psalm 27:1

“You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast because he trusts in you.”

— Isaiah 26:3

“However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.”

— Acts 20:24

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

— 2 Corinthians 12:9

“You are my witnesses,” declares the Lord, “and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am He.”

— Isaiah 43:10

“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Jesus Christ, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

— Romans 15:5





Information for the Host



TO BE WELL-PREPARED IN ORDER TO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE GUESTS FEEL WARMLY WELCOMED

Prayer

Ask God's guidance over every detail of your Gathering and preparation. Enjoy the process of both trusting God and being used by Him. You will find the Spiritual Preparation section helpful, starting on page 11.

Ask two friends to pray for you and your Gathering.

Guests

Prayerfully consider the group of people you would like to reach.

- Possibilities include neighbors, co-workers, clubs, sports groups, mothers and daughters, etc.
- It is best not to mix groups.

Select an appropriate day and time for this group and your speaker.

Speaker

A. Select your speaker:

1. It is strongly recommended that you do not speak at your own Gathering.
Having a friend share as your speaker allows you to focus on being a host.
2. If your party is part of a coordinated effort in a church or city, a trained speaker should be provided for you.
3. If you are selecting your own speaker, read the material found in the speaker's section of this manual. Prayerfully choose an appropriate speaker and ask your speaker to follow the guidelines using the Christmas Gathering talk starting on page 25.
4. It is best to use a male speaker or a couple for mixed Gatherings.

B. Inform your speaker:

1. Discuss the type of party and dress, casual or formal.
2. Give clear directions to your home, as well as date and time of party.
3. Share prayer requests with regarding your Gathering.
4. Let your speaker know if you are willing to host a follow-up Bible study in January, so that they will include that information when presenting the comment cards.
5. If possible, arrange to meet personally with your speaker.

Invitations

A. Information

1. Invitations can be downloaded for free through our website.
2. In creating your own invitation, clearly state, "A friend will share some inspiring thoughts on Christmas."
This statement will help prepare guests for the formal content of the party.
3. The first weeks in December are usually the best time for a Gathering.



B. Quantity

1. A minimum of 8 to 10 guests offers the best comfort level for all.
2. As a general rule, invite three times the number of people you desire to attend. If you know your neighbors well, you may need to send only twice the number of invitations. If you do not know the people well, you may need to invite as many as six times the number of guests.
3. Begin with a minimum of 30 to 40 invitations. If there is ever a problem with a Gathering, it is usually because of too few guests.

C. Delivery

1. Hand-deliver invitations 10–14 days prior to your Gathering.

Whether you know your neighbors' names or not, it is best to personally deliver the invitations. This gives you an opportunity to introduce yourself and begin a friendship. Even if you know your neighbors well, hand-delivering helps warm the process of inviting (postal regulations prohibit leaving invitations in the mailbox). If no one is home, leave the invitation in the door (or where it will be found) with a personal note.

2. Mail only if necessary.

If you mail your invitations, allow enough time for them to arrive two weeks before the Gathering date.

3. Follow up your invitations.

When there has been no response, a text or call a few days prior to the Gathering is recommended. This could make a significant difference in the number of people coming.

D. Other Considerations

1. Unless you are having a children-focused gathering, children should not be invited. You may wish to provide childcare in another home. Include that information with your invitation.
2. No pets should be present during the Gathering.
3. Invite a Christian friend or relative to assist you in serving so you are able to focus on your guests.
4. Provide an incentive for guests to submit comment cards. Some hosts prepare a couple small gifts for the speaker to give away at random for those who choose to submit a comment card.



Creating An Atmosphere

- The first consideration should be the comfort of your guests.
- Gatherings vary from formal to informal with foods and decorations.
- As much as possible, create a Christmas atmosphere.
- Complete preparations before your speaker arrives.
- Background music may be used during arrival time.
- Additional activities (crafts, singing or selling) would hinder the purpose and timing of the party.
- Plan your speaker's location.
- Arrange your seating so the speaker will be in view and not near the entrance.
- Ask people to silence their cell phones.
- Use name tags to help the speaker and the group interact. You may wish to preprint them.
- It is a good idea to have a friend assist you with hosting.

Your Gathering

A. Schedule

Party should be two hours in length.

Sample schedule for an evening Gathering:

7:00 - 7:30	Arrival, conversation and refreshments
7:30 - 8:00	Sharing of traditions
8:00 - 8:30	Speaker and comment cards
8:30 - 9:00	More refreshments and conversation

B. Welcome your speaker

Speaker will arrive 30 minutes prior to party for prayer, orientation and to assist for a relaxed beginning.

C. Arrival of guests

1. Welcome your guests and enjoy good conversation and food.
2. As your guests meet your speaker, identify your speaker simply as _____, who will be sharing with us later.
3. It is your responsibility to have your guests be seated before the sharing of Christmas traditions.

D. Sharing of Christmas traditions

1. The purpose is to create a warm and personal atmosphere in preparation for the speaker's message.
2. Spontaneous sharing is best—taking turns in order around the circle may cause guests to feel pressured.
3. Introduction to sharing time:

"One of the things I find enjoyable and interesting is learning about other people's Christmas traditions. Why don't we take a few minutes to share some of our traditions with one another, such as the foods you eat, customs, special things you do in your family, or perhaps you would like to share your Christmas plans this year. In order to give you time to think about what you might say, I'll share first."

When having guests with non-Christian religious backgrounds, you may wish to say:

"If you don't celebrate Christmas, you may wish to share what you do to celebrate another holiday."

Caution: Please share a short non-religious tradition.

4. Be sure to end the sharing time on schedule to give your speaker enough time.



E. Introducing your “friend who will share”

“This has been such fun hearing your various traditions. I feel we have just started. Maybe we can share more of them a little later.”

“Christmas is such a unique time of year, isn’t it? I wanted to make my Christmas even more special this year by having you in my home. I hope our time together has been as enjoyable for you. As I said on my invitation, a friend of mine will be sharing some thoughts about Christmas today. I don’t know about you, but it is so easy for me to get caught up in the busyness of the season and not take time to really think about its significance. So, I’m eager to hear what _____ will share with us.”

F. Comment Cards

It is essential for the host to know the responses of the guests in order to know how to follow up the Gathering.

Your speaker will come prepared with cards, pencils and a basket and explain to your guests how to use the comment cards. Upon completion the cards will be collected in a basket. After your guests leave, read the cards with your speaker to help determine what type of follow-up is needed and pray together.

G. Closing your Gathering

Graciously thank your speaker and invite guests to enjoy more refreshments.

Points to Remember

If you are part of coordinated effort in your church:

- Notify the coordinator of your scheduled Gathering for prayer calendar.
- Attend Praise Gathering, Follow-Up and Bible Study Meeting.
- Send host evaluation to coordinator.



Following Your Gathering

Christmas Gatherings foster ongoing relationships

It is important to remember that the Christmas Gathering is not an end in itself. It is a tool to help you share Christ with people in your sphere of influence. Normally, an event like this will open up doors for relationships and future ministry opportunities. Proper follow-up is an essential part of having an ongoing ministry with friends, business associates, and neighbors.

Comment cards help determine the response to your Gathering

Use the comment cards to help you determine what type of follow-up is needed. There are generally three types of responses. After determining the nature of the response, the host should pray about what the next step with their guest should be. The following are some suggested ways to reach out:

A. Spiritual response: a response to the message and prayer

1. Start a 4 - 6 week follow-up Bible study in your neighborhood or workplace. See page 19 for tips.
2. Take your guests to a basic Bible study.
3. If your guest has indicated they received Christ, explain what took place and help them be assured of their salvation.
4. Get together for coffee and share your personal testimony and/or the gospel with them. You could use a small booklet such as *The Four Spiritual Laws*, or *Would You Like to Know God Personally?* See page 40 for resources.
5. Invite your guests to another Christian activity.

Examples: Christian concert, Christian conferences and retreats, social gathering at church, church small/community group, etc.

B. Social response: a response to you and being in your home

Take a personal interest in your guests and their activities such as hobbies, shopping, or sports. Purpose to not talk about spiritual things unless they initiate the conversation.

C. No response / Negative response:

When there is no apparent response, concentrate on those who seemed open to the gospel and you.

When there is a negative response, diffuse their resentment by personally apologizing if you offended them by including them in your Gathering. Explain that you purposefully stated that a friend would be sharing some thoughts about Christmas, so they would not be taken by surprise.

Remember that you are not apologizing for the gospel.

About one-third of Christmas Gatherings create enough spiritual response to begin a Bible study.

The following suggestions will help you begin a Bible study following your Gathering.

Ask God what He wants you to do in the lives of
your guests as a result of your Gathering!



How to Begin an Evangelistic Bible Study

Now that you have offered to have a Bible study in your home, let's consider why people have indicated an interest:

1. Curiosity
2. Need for fellowship (lonely)
3. Liked you – felt drawn to you as a person
4. Curious about the Bible
5. Deep needs
6. People want what they see in your life (or the speaker's)
7. Part of God's spiritual process

This is not a project! This is a new beginning in your neighborhood or workplace. These are new relationships, and your aim in having this study is to share the person of Christ in order to cause others to seriously consider the need to receive Him. For those who are already Christians, your aim will be to help establish them in their relationship with Christ.

Your basic responsibilities to the group will be:

1. To guide the group into what the Bible says and means
2. To help them see the relevancy of God in their lives
3. To value each person as an individual
4. To accept each person right where they are
5. To pray for each one that God entrusts to you

Begin with prayer! Pray about when to start. Set a date! If you would like, let those who responded to coming to the Bible study have input in the decision. Your Bible study should begin with a short commitment of four to six weeks.

Invite all who were originally invited to your Gathering. Personally call to invite everyone so that you can answer their questions. You may wish to include a Christian friend who can be a back-up person to help lead the study.

Use one home for all six weeks. It doesn't have to be your home. Be prompt in beginning and ending your Bible study. The minimum time for the study itself should be 45-60 minutes. Allow additional time for fellowship (1 1/2 hours works well).

If you want food and beverages, keep it very simple.

At your first meeting:

1. Use name tags.
2. Give an opportunity for introductions.
3. Explain the purpose of the Bible study:
"We want to learn together how God and the Bible are relevant to our lives."
4. Share guidelines for the study to set participants' mind at ease and provide a "safe" environment for learning.
For example, participants should be aware that they:
 - will not be quizzed on their knowledge of the Bible or Christianity.
 - will not be "called on" for answers, but hope all will want to take part.
 - will always be free to ask questions, looking for answers together.

It is essential that the Bible remain the centerpiece of conversation, not our diverse denominational or religious backgrounds and traditions.

5. Have an extra Bible available in case someone doesn't have one.
6. Tell them about the study you have picked for the next five weeks and distribute study books.



As the leader, remember to:

- Relax, laugh at yourself, have a sense of humor.
- Be enthusiastic but not overpowering.
- Resist temptation to answer questions – allow silence.
- Let group discuss – refer questions back to the group.
- Don't register shock – accept people where they are.
- Respond positively: *"That's an interesting thought. Does anyone have anything to add?"*
- Consider re-wording the question to get an appropriate response.
- Use people's names; respond as you would naturally.
- Be familiar with material so you can look at people as they respond.
- If you don't know the answer, admit it! *"Let's together try to find the answer for next week."*
- Let the Bible be the final authority; teach them to look back to see what the verse said.
- Don't waste time on irrelevant questions. Bring the group back to what you are studying.
- Avoid Christian clichés. Think about your language being understood by non-churched people.
- You can expect spiritually inaccurate responses.

Don't worry.
Love them... right where they are.
Expect results... God is at work!

During your remaining meetings, you might pray a simple prayer to open the Bible study. Take time to go through the guidelines again if new people come.

At your final meeting, wrap up your time by asking one or more of these questions:

- *What have you learned about God?*
- *What does this study tell you about yourself?*
- *What has this study meant to you?*
- *What new insights have you gained from this study?*

If you sense the group (or someone in the group) would like to continue, be prepared to talk about when and what you will study.

Other suggestions:

1. Keep a page in a notebook with notes about each person (family, insights, prayer requests). Use this page for your personal prayer time for them.
2. Keep a record of what you did each week and who came.
3. If appropriate, meet with each participant individually and ask what was helpful to them during the Bible study. This may give you an opportunity to help them take spiritual steps.

Several resources can be found on page 40.





Information for the Speaker



TO RELATE TO THE GUESTS AT A CHRISTMAS GATHERING AND PRESENT A WELL-PREPARED, CHRISTMAS MESSAGE THAT CLEARLY INCLUDES THE GOSPEL.

Prayer

Ask God's guidance over every detail of your preparation to speak. Enjoy the growth experience of trusting Him and being His instrument. You will find the Spiritual Preparation section helpful on page 11.

Ask two friends to pray for you as you prepare and speak at a Gathering.

Components of the Talk

As you prayerfully prepare your 10 - 15 minute talk, remember the focus is on the guests who will be attending. Their hearts have been prepared by much prayer and by the invitation's statement about your inspiring message. God has sovereignly arranged for both their attendance and your presence there as a speaker. He will use you to touch lives with the love of Jesus Christ. We encourage you to use the Christmas Gathering talk verbatim, personalizing where necessary, starting on page 25. Your talk should include the following:

A. An introduction

B. A clear Gospel message with a Christmas theme:

What is the gospel? I Corinthians 15:1-4 describes the Gospel that saves us as, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day."

The Gospel presentation should be Christmas-oriented, low-key, and non-threatening. It contains the following essential components for an authentic Christmas Gathering:

1. God's Love
2. Man's sin and separation from God
3. God's provision, Jesus Christ—His death and resurrection
4. Our response to Jesus Christ

C. A prayer to receive Christ:

You may be wondering how does someone begin a relationship with Jesus Christ. Prayer is simply just talking with God. In a moment, I will say a simple prayer similar to what I prayed when I received Jesus Christ. Would you please listen carefully to the words of my prayer? If they express what you would like to say to God today, I invite you to pray silently along with me. Could we all bow our heads?

*"Jesus, I have sinned against You in many ways. I believe you died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead.
Forgive me of all my sins and give me the gift of eternal life. Come into my life as Savior and Lord.
Help me become the person You want me to be. Amen."*

Why include a prayer?

1. We are modeling conversational prayer.
2. We do not want anyone to miss the opportunity to begin a relationship with Christ.
3. Even though guests may not make this choice now, they will know how to receive Christ when they are ready.



D. Presentation of Comment cards:

Comment cards are essential for the host to know the responses of the guests and to know how to follow up the Gathering.

Following the prayer, take out cards and pens (usually in a basket) and explain their purpose.

I want to thank (Host) for inviting me here today, and I want to thank you for listening to what I have shared. Now I want to give all of us the opportunity to communicate and reflect on our time together. I have some cards and pens which I will pass around, and this is what I would like us to do with these cards. You might like to take a moment and share with (Host) how you felt about being here today and spending time together. I would welcome your honest comments about what I had have shared.

(Host) is considering starting a basic 4 - 6 week Bible study (discussion group) in January. If you have never been in a study before, this would be a great opportunity to learn more about God. Please indicate on your card that you would like to be a part of this. Include whatever information you're comfortable with giving so (Host) can contact you. Finally, if you listened to my prayer and prayed silently with me, would you indicate that on your card too. Thank you for taking the time to communicate with us. When you are finished, please put your card in this basket on the table.

You may need to repeat some of the information while they are writing on their cards.

Be comfortable allowing time for silence and writing.

Your Preparation with the Host

- A. Be sure you have the name, address, and phone number of the host.
- B. Call the host to get clear directions to the home and reconfirm time and date of Gathering.
- C. If possible, visit in the home of your host and pray together for your Gathering.
- D. Ask questions about the guests:
 - 1. Approximate age
 - 2. How they might dress
 - 3. Special prayer requests
 - 4. Any uniqueness about group or type of party or particular guests
- E. Ask host about willingness to offer a Bible study and choose appropriate closing for the talk.

Your Preparation for the Party

- A. Bring plain 3x5 or 4x6 note cards, or download free comment cards from cru.org/christmasgatherings, and have pens in a small basket or container.
- B. Bring an inexpensive gift such as an ornament or candy, wrapped or in a gift bag.
- C. Arrive 30 minutes in advance to pray with the host and help with last minute preparations.
- D. Discuss with the host where you will sit to give your presentation and where the host will sit. With an average-sized group, you will sit as you give your talk.
- E. As guests arrive, try to connect with as many as possible. Enjoy them! Your love for them may speak louder than your message. Try to remember and use their names.
- F. As you share your talk, let your love for Jesus Christ be seen. Smile! Don't lecture, but share lovingly from your heart. If you are nervous, tell your audience, "I've never done anything like this before, but I am very excited about what I have to share with you..."
- G. After the guests have left, read the comment cards with the host to help determine what type of follow-up is needed and pray together. Please leave the comment cards with the host. Follow-up suggestions are on page 18.



Timetable

Party should be two hours in length.

Sample schedule for an evening Gathering:

7:00 - 7:30	Arrival, conversation and refreshments
7:30 - 8:00	Sharing of traditions
8:00 - 8:30	Speaker and comment cards
8:30 - 9:00	More refreshments and conversation

Note: Remember the length of your talk is 10 to 15 minutes.

The additional time allowed is for comment cards.

Points to Remember

1. Although you will use the talk verbatim, there are two places where you will personalize:
 - The introduction and tradition.
 - Your brief testimony.
Use words a non-Christian can understand.
Avoid Christians clichés.
2. To underscore the gospel, a few well-selected Bible verses have been used, in the talk.
3. Do not mention names of denominations, church groups, Christian celebrities, or organizations. Keep the focus on Jesus Christ.
4. Be sensitive to your listeners' perspective. Ask yourself, *"Will this be clearly understood? Is this controversial? Does this need to be included?"*
5. Allow yourself plenty of time to prepare your talk. Your prayerful preparation is essential for the comfort level of all involved.
6. Get started on your talk as soon as possible so that you can polish, practice, and gain confidence in giving it. You may wish to practice with someone.
7. Feel free to use note cards as you deliver your message. Some have used transition statements as prompts. Others feel more comfortable putting the complete talk on cards.
8. Following the Gathering, prayerfully read the follow-up on page 18 to determine the next steps God would have you take to help and encourage your host in follow-up.
9. If you are part of coordinated effort in your church:
 - Notify the coordinator of scheduled Gatherings for prayer calendar.
 - Turn in your personalized talk.
 - Attend Praise Gathering, Follow-Up and Bible Study Meeting.
 - Send speaker evaluation to coordinator.



The Christmas Gathering Talk

I have enjoyed hearing the traditions many of you have shared. Recently, I asked my own children what they remembered our family traditions to be. When all three mentioned the decoration of the Christmas tree, I was certain they were thinking about those wonderful individual ornaments I either made or purchased for them each year... but nobody mentioned the ornaments! What they all remembered was the annual discussion over who should run to Target to get more lights (when none of them worked)—and then the tinsel war! Should we hang each piece of tinsel individually and carefully as my family always did (the right way) or should we throw it on in big clumps as my husband's family did? I was grateful when all three children remembered the darkened room and that wonderful moment when we turned on the lights for the first time and cuddled on the couch together with Christmas music playing softly in the background.

Probably the most common Christmas tradition is gift giving. Certainly the giving and receiving of gifts is part of what we remember about Christmas. Let's pause for a moment and think about the dynamics of "gift giving!"

- 1. Giver:** the giver of the gift is someone who makes a sacrifice of money, time...
- 2. Gift:** a gift is free, no obligation, no strings attached, usually serves a purpose or fulfills a need.
- 3. Receiver:** person who receives the gift, opens the gift, uses the gift as his (her) own.

Now, I have a gift in my hands.

I am the giver of this gift.

In order to complete my illustration, I need someone to receive my gift (Choose someone by name to come take the gift and ask them to receive it).

While _____ opens the gift, let's go over the characteristics of gift giving:

1. I was the giver of the gift. There was some sacrifice involved in picking it out, wrapping it, and there was a little sacrifice in terms of money.
2. Then we have the gift itself. It is free. Did you see _____ give me any money? I don't see any money. I don't know if _____ even really deserves the gift. But it was given with no condition or strings attached. Hopefully, it will serve a purpose this Christmas season and will be a special reminder of our Christmas Gathering today.
3. _____ gets to keep the gift because he (she) was chosen to receive it as his (her) own. My reason for going through this illustration of the elements of gift giving is that (Host) has asked me to share for a few moments about the most precious and greatest gift that was ever given.

*"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son,
that whoever believes in Him would not perish, but would have eternal life."*

These words are from the book of John in the Bible and may or may not be familiar to you.

Let's take a moment and reflect on what these words from the Bible mean:

1. God... who is God? God is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. He created everything in the world including you and me. And because He created us, He knows everything about us. He knows what fills our heart with joy, and He knows what causes us to grieve. He knows when we are lonely, he knows our frustrations and our hurts. He knows what makes us laugh. He knows all of these things because He made us. He created you and me to have a personal relationship with Him forever.

And how do we respond to God's plan for us? We often turn our backs on God and choose to go our own way, rather than God's way. The reason we do this is because we seek fulfillment for our lives, not in God, the Creator of the universe, but in the things He has created. We worship intellect, material things, money, and other people. We worship the things that God made rather than worshipping the Creator.



This separates us from God and is called sin. The Bible tells us, “All of us have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God.” Sin is actually a crime against God. What do you think the punishment is for committing a crime against God?

Well Romans 6:23 in the Bible says “For the wages (which is consequences) for our sin is death.”

Sin wrecks everything! All we must do is look around to see the impacts of sin, we see it in the news headlines, we see it in our families, and if we’re honest, we see the brokenness of sin in our own lives too. That’s the bad news, but there’s good news!

The rest of Romans 6:23 says, “BUT the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

2. In fact, “God so loved the world that He gave”—Some 2000 years ago His Son Jesus to be born in a stable. When I was little, I thought a stable was the cute little nativity with sweet smelling animals and clean hay that I saw in pictures. It wasn’t until I was much older that I learned that the stable was actually a dark, damp cave where animals were kept. They were not very sweet-smelling, and the hay was probably not very clean. The manger in which Jesus slept was actually the animals’ feeding through. Imagine, our children are born under conditions fit for a king, and Jesus, the King of Creation, was born under conditions fit for an animal.

Fortunately, Jesus didn’t stay in the manger. He grew to be a man and lived on earth for about 33 years. While He was on earth, He said and did many amazing things which are recorded not only in the Bible, but also in other historical books written during that time.

One of the incredible things Jesus said was, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” He could say that because of something that He did—something that I still don’t completely understand.

He willingly chose to die on the cross for every sin that you and I would ever commit! He died on the cross in our place. Jesus paid the penalty by shedding His blood, so that you and I would no longer be separated from God because of our sin. Because Jesus willingly laid down His life, we can have forgiveness for our sin and have a relationship with God restored forever. How can we know this is true? Because Jesus rose from the dead! He was seen by over 500 witnesses before returning to Heaven. He’s alive! The Bible tells us He sits at the right hand of God the Father praying for us—for you and for me.

Now let’s see how this relates to the gift illustration:

1. Who is the giver of the greatest gift? God. He gave us a gift that involved the greatest amount of love and sacrifice.
2. The gift was Jesus Christ. His purpose was to restore our broken relationship with God the Father and assure us of eternal life. The gift of Jesus Christ is free and cannot be earned. Even though most of us try to live good lives, we will never deserve Him. However, the opposite is true, no matter how much we have sinned, the gift of Jesus Christ will never be withheld from us. This is where my gift illustration breaks down. I only had one gift to give and only one of you could accept it. But the gift of Jesus Christ is for anyone who believes.

Think about the third characteristic. We’ve looked at the giver of the gift, the gift itself, and now we need to look at the receiver of the gift. We can know all the words to every Christmas carol or attend every church service or mass that’s offered, but the gift of Jesus Christ cannot be truly ours until we believe He is who He says He is and receive Him into our lives.

In the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation, there is a word picture where Jesus says; “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in.” This is a picture of Jesus Christ gently knocking on the door of your life, at the door of your heart. This shows the persistent desire of Jesus to be in relationship with those He calls to believe in Him. He is calling us to restore a relationship with Him and to open the door if you hear His voice.



You may be wondering how does someone begin a relationship with Jesus Christ? It's as simple as ABC...

A - Admit: We must admit that we are sinners, that we have committed crimes against God, and that we can't save ourselves.

B - Believe: We must believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that He alone offers us eternal life. Eternal life comes by trusting Jesus alone for forgiveness of sin.
And then we...

C - Commit: We commit our lives to following Jesus and doing life as God intended.

There was a time in my life when I did everything for me. I was selfish and self-serving. But then I met Jesus, and He showed me that I was created for Him and for others and not just myself. My sin was keeping me from seeing my need for Jesus. Then I experienced His grace and forgiveness and was freed to be able to love Him and others in new ways. But the best part is that now I know for certain that I have eternal life.

How about you? Do you have a story like this?

(Host) and I would like to invite you to receive this free gift! In a moment, I will say a simple prayer similar to what I prayed when I received Jesus Christ. Prayer is simply just talking to God. Would you listen carefully to the words of my prayer? If they express what you would like to say to God today, I invite you to pray silently along with me. Could we all bow our heads?

"Jesus, I have sinned against You in many ways. I believe you died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead. Forgive me of all my sins and give me the gift of eternal life. Come into my life as Savior and Lord. Help me become the person You want me to be. Amen."

If you have believed and received Jesus Christ into your life sometime in the past or if you have prayed with me today, there is a wonderful promise in the Bible that we can cling to in this unstable world. Jesus says, "I will never leave you or forsake you."

Christmas is not always a joyful time. Sometimes there are circumstances of life that make this season difficult and lonely. You may have lost someone through death or a broken relationship, or perhaps you have moved far away from the people you love. But, if Jesus Christ is in your life because you believe in Him, you have His promise that He will never leave you or forsake you.

I want to thank (Host) for inviting me here today, and I want to thank you for listening to what I have shared. Now I want to give all of us the opportunity to communicate and reflect on our time together. I have some cards and pens which I will pass around, and this is what I would like us to do with these cards. You might like to take a moment and share with (Host) how you felt about being here today and spending time together. I would welcome your honest comments about what I shared.

(Host) is considering starting a basic 4-6 week Bible study in January. If you have never studied the Bible before, this would be a great opportunity to learn more about God. Please indicate on your card that you would like to be a part of this. Include whatever contact information you're comfortable with giving so (Host) can contact you. Finally, if you listened to my prayer and prayed silently with me, would you indicate that on your card too? Thank you for taking the time to communicate with us. When you're done, we are going to collect them and draw out a couple for a small gift (Wait a minute and then end time). Thank you again (Host). Have a Merry Christmas!

Note: If it is not possible to offer a Bible study, please say:

"One of the things that has helped me has been being in a small group Bible study. I know that there are some wonderful studies in the area. If you would be interested in knowing more about them, (Host) could let you know what is available. If you think you might be interested, indicate that on your card and include whatever contact information you're comfortable with giving. (Host) will contact you after the holidays."



How to Present the Christmas Gathering Talk

- P** The “P” indicates where you would personalize the talk.
- T** The “T” indicates transition sentences to help flow smoothly through your talk.

A. An introduction:

Your introduction should capture the attention of the audience. Use a few introductory sentences to transition from the tradition sharing to your talk. Include a personal, non-religious Christmas tradition. Use enough detail to make your tradition interesting, but not too long.

- P** *I have enjoyed hearing the traditions many of you have shared. Recently, I asked my own children what they remembered our family traditions to be. When all three mentioned the decorating of the Christmas tree, I was certain they were thinking about those wonderful individual ornaments I either made or purchased for them each year... but nobody mentioned the ornaments! What they all remembered was the annual discussion over who should run to Target to get more lights—when none of them worked—and the tinsel war! Should we hang each piece of tinsel individually and carefully as my family always did (the right way) OR should we throw it on in big clumps as my husband’s family did? I was grateful when all three children remembered the darkened room and that wonderful moment when we turned on the lights for the first time and cuddled on the couch together with Christmas music playing softly in the background.*

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- 2. Then we have the gift itself. It is free. Did you see _____ give me any money? I don’t see any money. I don’t know if _____ even really deserves the gift. But it was given with no conditions or strings attached. Hopefully, it will serve a purpose this Christmas season and will be a special reminder of our Christmas Gathering today.*
- 3. _____ gets to keep the gift because he (she) was chosen to receive it.*

- T** *My reason for going through this illustration of the elements of gift giving is that (_____) has asked me to share for a few moments about the most precious and greatest gift that was ever given.*



B . The Gospel Message:

1. God's Love

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him would not perish, but would have eternal life."

These words are from the book of John in the Bible and may or may not be familiar to you.

Let's take a moment and reflect on what these words from the Bible mean:

God... who is God? God is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. He created everything in the world including you and me. And because He created us, He knows everything about us. He knows what fills our heart with joy, and He knows what causes us to grieve. He knows when we are lonely, He knows our frustrations and our hurts. He knows what makes us laugh. He knows all of these things because He made us. He created you and me to have a personal relationship with Him forever.

2. Man's Sin

And how do we respond to God's plan for us? We often turn our backs on God and choose to go our own way, rather than God's way. The reason we do this is because we seek fulfillment for our lives, not in God, the Creator of the universe, but in the things He has created. We worship intellect, material things, money, and other people. We worship the things that God made rather than worshiping the Creator.

This separates us from God and is called sin. The Bible tells us, "All of us have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God." Sin is actually a crime against God. What do you think the punishment is for committing a crime against God? Well Romans 6:23 in the Bible says, "For the wages (which is consequences) for our sin is death." Sin wrecks everything! All we must do is look around to see the impacts of sin. We see it in the news headlines, we see it in our families, and if we're honest, we see the brokenness of sin in our own lives too. That's the bad news, but there's good news! The rest of Romans 6:23 says, "...BUT the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

3. God's Provision

In fact, "God so loved the world that He gave"—Some 2000 years ago God gave His Son Jesus to be born in a stable. When I was little, I thought a stable was the cute little nativity with the sweet smelling animals and clean hay that I saw in pictures. It wasn't until I was much older that I learned that the stable was actually a dark, damp cave where animals were kept. They were not very sweet smelling, and the hay was probably not very clean. The manger in which Jesus slept was actually the animals' feeding trough. Imagine, our children are born under conditions fit for a king, and Jesus, the King of Creation, was born under conditions fit for an animal.

Fortunately, Jesus didn't stay in the manger. He grew to be a man and lived on this earth for about 33 years. While He was on earth, He said and did many amazing things which are recorded not only in the Bible, but also in other historical books written during that time.

One of the incredible things Jesus said was,

Key Verse: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

He could say that because of something that He did—something that I still don't completely understand.

He willingly chose to die on the cross for every sin that you and I would ever commit! He died on the cross in our place. Jesus paid the penalty by shedding His blood, so that you and I would no longer be separated from God because of our sin. Because Jesus willingly laid down His life, we can have forgiveness for our sin and have a relationship with God restored forever. How can we know this is true? Because Jesus rose from the dead! He was seen by over 500 witnesses, before returning to Heaven. He's alive! The Bible tells us He sits at the right hand of God, the Father, praying for us—for you and for me.



T Now let's see how this relates to the gift illustration:

1. Who is the giver of the greatest gift? God. He gave us a gift that involved the greatest amount of love and sacrifice.
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Think about the third characteristic. We've looked at the giver of the gift, the gift itself, and now we need to look at the receiver of the gift. We can know all the words to every Christmas carol, or attend every church service or mass that's offered, but the gift of Jesus Christ cannot be truly ours until we believe He is who He says He is and receive Him into our lives.

4. Our Response:

In the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation, there is a word picture where Jesus says; "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in." This is a picture of Jesus Christ gently knocking on the door of your life; at the door of your heart. This shows the persistent desire of Jesus to be in relationship with those He calls to believe in Him. He is calling us to restore a relationship with Him and to open the door if you hear His voice.

Your testimony (spiritual journey) is not the main focus of the talk. It is important to consider your audience and select a few, brief details from your life that will help the guests to identify with you.

T You may be wondering how does someone begin a relationship with Jesus Christ. It's as simple as ABC...

A - Admit: We must admit that we are sinners, that we have committed crimes against God, and that we can't save ourselves.

B - Believe: We must believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that He alone offers us eternal life. Eternal life comes by trusting Jesus alone for forgiveness of sin.

And then we...

C - Commit: We commit our lives to following Jesus and doing life as God intended.

P There was a time in my life when I did everything for me. I was selfish and self-serving. But then I met Jesus, and He showed me that I was created for Him and for others and not just myself. My sin was keeping me from seeing my need for Jesus. Then I experienced His grace and forgiveness and was freed to be able to love Him and others in new ways. But the best part is that now I know for certain that I have eternal life.

How about you? Do you have a story like this? (Note: Areas underlined should be your own personal testimony.)

(Host) And I would like to invite you to receive this free gift! In a moment, I will say a simple prayer similar to what I prayed when I received Jesus Christ. Prayer is simply just talking to God. Would you please listen carefully to the words of my prayer? If they express what you would like to say to God today, I invite you to pray silently along with me. Could we all bow our heads?

C. Prayer to receive Christ:

"Jesus, I have sinned against you in many ways. I believe you died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead. Forgive me of all my sins and give me the gift of eternal life. Come into my life as Savior and Lord. Help me become the person you want me to be. Amen."

(Remember to keep this prayer simple and brief. We recommend that you write it out and read it or memorize it.)



Assurance of Salvation:

- T** If you have believed and received Jesus Christ into your life sometime in the past or if you have prayed with me today, there is a wonderful promise in the Bible that we can cling to in this unstable world. Jesus says, "I will never leave you or forsake you."

Christmas is not always a joyful time. Sometimes there are circumstances of life that make this season difficult and lonely. You may have lost someone through death or a broken relationship, or perhaps you have moved and are far away from the people you love. But if Jesus Christ is in your life because you invited Him to come in, you have His promise that He will never leave you or forsake you.

D. Comment Cards

- T** I want to thank (Host) for inviting me here today, and I want to thank you for listening to what I have shared. Now I want to give all of us the opportunity to communicate and reflect on our time together. I have some cards and pens which I will pass around, and this is what I would like you to do with these cards. You might like to take a moment and share with (Host) how you felt about being here today and spending time together. I would welcome your honest comments about what I have shared.

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Note: If it is not possible to offer a Bible study please say:

"One of the things that has helped me has been being a small group Bible study. I know that there are some wonderful studies in the area. If you would be interested in knowing more about them, (Host) could let you know what is available. If you think you might be interested, indicate that on your card and include whatever contact information you are comfortable with giving. (Host) will contact you after the holidays.





Information for the Coordinator



TO PASS ON THE VISION AND ADMINISTER THE DETAILS OF CHRISTMAS GATHERINGS IN YOUR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE.

The coordinator is the person in a church or group who accepts the responsibility for the following administrative and training tasks:

I. Organize a committee:

Create a committee of like-minded people who will help in the administrative and training tasks. Encourage committee with regular communication.

II. Permission:

Seek permission from the pastor, the board, or Bible study leader depending on the group planning the Gatherings.

III. Finances:

The church or Bible study may fund expenses relating to printing, postage, and promotion. (Often hosts pay for their own manuals & invitations.) Donations may also be requested from interested friends.

IV. Vision:

Promote Gatherings within the church or Bible study through use of posters, verbal announcements, a bulletin insert, social media, or testimonies. One great way to impart vision to potential hosts and speakers is to share some of the comments from people who have been involved in the Christmas Gatherings in past years. You can put these on a flyer that is distributed in your church bulletin or newsletter.

V. Recruit Speakers:

Prayerfully make a list of potential speakers. Look for teachability, a heart for evangelism, a love for people and an ability to relate to others – not necessarily a public speaker or teacher. Ask your pastor or other leaders to suggest potential speakers. Use discernment with those who “volunteer” to speak. Plan on speakers doing at least two Gatherings.

VI. Recruit Host:

Prayerfully make a list of people you believe would want to host a Gathering in their home. Make personal contact with them and share how they can reach out to friends and neighbors. Use publicity such as announcements, social media, newsletter, a bulletin insert, and posters. You may wish to hold “Demonstration Gatherings” in homes or the church to introduce this opportunity.



VII. Train Speakers and Hosts:

Hold sessions in October or early November for speakers and hosts unless there is area- or city-wide training available.

VIII. Schedule Gatherings:

Prayerfully match speakers and hosts and record on prayer calendar.

IX. Organize Prayer Support:

A Christmas Gathering calendar may be created by coordination and emailed to all participants. One or two specific prayer partners can be recruited by the speaker and host to pray for their particular Gathering.

Consider posting on your church website and emailed to church staff.

X. Praise and Follow-Up Meeting:

Plan a praise gathering for December or early January for host and speakers.

XI. Physical Arrangements for Meetings:

Plan for room set-up, child care, refreshments, materials, and decorations for various meetings.

XII. Record Keeping

Print and give evaluation forms at training sessions to all participants. By January, collect all information and record results. Keep records of all meetings. This information will help you for the following year.

You may wish to share a summary of the ministry year with your pastor. Please email christmasgatherings1@gmail.com to share updates of your gatherings with our ministry.



Time Line for Coordinator

September / October

- Authority / Approval
Pastor, evangelism leader, Board, Bible study leader, women's ministry director
- Finances
For publicity, mailings, manuals and invitations
- Select Speakers
- Purchase or make Invitations
30 - 40 per Gathering
- Present Vision / Publicity
Pulpit, flyers, women's groups, video, Sunday school classes, bulletin, posters, word-of-mouth, table in foyer
- Recruit Hosts

October / November

- Continue Recruiting Hosts
- Hold Speaker and Host Training

November

- Schedule All Gatherings With Speaker and Date
- Make and email Prayer Calendar

December

- Hold Gatherings
First two weeks

December / January

- Praise and Follow-Up Meeting and How to Lead a Bible Study Training
One week prior to Christmas or early January



Outlines for Trainings

Training for Hosts and Speakers (2 - 2 1/2 Hours)

- I. Welcome and Opening Prayer
- II. Model a Christmas Gathering
- III. Vision—Description of a Gathering
(See Joyce's letter on page 2, and the intro starting on page 7)
- IV. Introductions
 - A. What has God done in your heart to cause you to be here?
 - B. For what group will you have a Gathering?
- V. Read Comment Cards
- VI. Spiritual Preparation (page 11)
- VII. What You Need to Know as a Speaker (page 21)
 - A. Prayer
 - B. The Guests
 - C. The Christmas Gathering Talk
 - D. Preparation for the Gathering and time table.
 - E. Points to remember
- VIII. What You Need to Know as a Host (page 13)
 - A. Prayer
 - B. Guests
 - C. Your Speaker
 - D. Invitations
 - E. Creating the Atmosphere
 - F. Your Gathering
 - G. Follow-Up (Page 18)
- IX. Prayer – Closing – Questions

Praise / Follow-up Meeting (1 - 1 1/2 Hours)

- I. Welcome and Opening Prayer
- II. (Optional) Sing two or three hymns or choruses at the beginning or intersperse.
- III. Guidelines for sharing time
 - A. Bring glory to God, not to the people involved.
 - B. Question: What did God do in your life or in the lives of others as you prepared for and were involved in Christmas Gatherings.
- IV. Read from comment cards from your Gatherings
- V. Ideas for follow-up see page 18
 - A. Responses to three types of comment cards
Pick out and read some cards from all three categories
 - B. Bible Study suggestions (Page 40)
- VI. Prayer – Closing – Questions

How To Lead An Evangelistic Bible Study (1 - 1 1/2 Hours)

Training for those hosting Bible Studies held after Praise Meeting or at another time.
(Page 19)



Coordinator's Evaluation

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Church of Group Coordinated _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Number of Gatherings _____ Number of People Attending Gatherings _____

Number of Indicated Decisions _____ Number of Follow-Up Bible Studies _____

1. In your opinion, how would you evaluate your Christmas Gatherings?

2. Were your desires for the year met?

What was positive?

What would you have done differently?

3. Would you be willing to serve as a coordinator next year?

4. Describe the follow-up that has resulted from the Christmas Gatherings this year.

5. Do you know of other churches or groups interested in Christmas Gatherings?

Submit the Coordinator's Evaluation by emailing christmasgatherings1@gmail.com.



Host Evaluation

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Number Invited _____ Number Attended _____

Number of Spiritual Responses _____ Any Indicated Decisions _____

1. In your opinion, how would you evaluate your Christmas Gatherings?

2. Were your desires your Gathering met?

What was positive?

What would you have done differently?

3. What part of the training was especially helpful to you?

Was there anything not covered in the training that you needed?

4. Briefly evaluate your speaker. Did you feel comfortable with him/her?

Did he/she fit well? _____ Was the gospel clear? _____ Did he/she use comment cards? _____

5. Was hosting a positive experience for you?

Would you be interested in being involved in the future? In what capacity?

6. Are you planning to have a Bible Study? Do you need help?

7. Do you know others who might be interested in speaking or hosting Gatherings in the future?

Please provide this feedback, as appropriate, to the event coordinator.



Speaker Evaluation

Name_____ Phone_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

Host_____ Number Attended_____

1. In your opinion, how did your Christmas Gatherings go?

2. Were your expectations for the Gathering met?

What was positive?

What would you have done differently?

3. What part of the speakers' training was especially helpful to you?

4. Did you feel comfortable with your host?

5. Was speaking a positive experience for you? Would you be interested in being involved in Christmas Gatherings next year?

6. Did you use comment cards? Will you be helping your host with follow-up?

7. Do you know others who might be interested in speaking or hosting Gatherings in the future?

Please provide this feedback, as appropriate, to the event coordinator.



Suggested Resources for Follow-up Bible Studies

Check our website for downloads of invitations, comment cards, & brochures for your church promo & Training Manual. The website will also have the most up to date resources & contact information. Also on our web-site is a list of suggested resources for follow-up Bible Studies & simple Gospel presentations resources.

1. Jesus Investigative Bible Study (2003)

[CLICK HERE](#) >

or visit: <https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/bible-studies/jesus-investigative-bible-study.html>

2. Meeting Jesus in the Gospel of John (Jeannie Vogel, 2023)

[CLICK HERE](#) >

or visit: <https://www.amazon.com/meet-jesus-gospel-john-leaders/dp/B0CHGHW2TZ>

3. Your Life in Christ - Design for Discipleship (Navpress, 2006)

[CLICK HERE](#) >

or visit: <https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1600060048>

4. Neighbor Bible Studies - Multiple Studies (A Cru Ministry)

[CLICK HERE](#) >

or visit: <https://nbs2go.com/index.php/english-bible-studies/>

Simple Gospel Presentations

1. The Four Spiritual Laws

[CLICK HERE](#) >

or visit: <https://crustore.org/product/4-spiritual-laws>

2. Would You Like To Know God Personally?

[CLICK HERE](#) >

or visit: <https://crustore.org/product/kgp-scenic>



Thank you!

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus gave this command to His disciples:

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Just as the baton of faith was passed to me, I now pass it to you. Jesus has called us to “go,” to “make,” to “baptize,” and to “teach” those He places in our lives. And, He promises that He will be with us every step of the way as we walk in obedience to His calling.

Thank you for stepping out in faith and answering the call to share the true meaning of Christmas with your community. I pray this Christmas is the best one you’ve ever had!

Contact Info

For the most up-to-date information and available resources, please visit our website or reach out with any questions.

cru.org/christmasgatherings

Sarah Kunze, Director

christmasgatherings1@gmail.com

