



### **Christmas All Year Long**

By Mark Taylor, College/University Representative

During one December, our family did something different. An ice and snowstorm knocked out electrical power to half a million homes in the St. Louis area. Our church had to cancel services due to the storm and power outage, and we contemplated what we were going to do.

#### **A Christmas Movie**

Someone suggested that we see the movie, "The Nativity Story," since the theatre had power and lights. Along with other families, we went to see the story of the birth of Christ on film. The movie was well-done and meaningful. The movie triggered my intrigue about the wise men from the East. They were incredible individuals who went to great lengths to give gifts! They also were able to interpret prophecy and follow the stars to greet the Christ child and worship Him. They traveled a long distance to worship Him and present Him with their gifts. The Scripture tells us, ". . . They opened their treasures and presented him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh" (Matthew 2:11, NIV).

#### **What Are We Teaching about Giving?**

To what length would we go to give gifts? How are we demonstrating giving? We can give gifts in honor of Christ's birth. We certainly can give of our time and our resources. What are we teaching our family and/or our students about giving? Our culture today is self-centered and more interested in receiving than giving. I remember one Christmas season where people were killed over their desire for the latest version of PlayStation!

Christian schools where I have been involved have planned diverse ways to instruct students about giving. One of the best ideas was to eliminate gift exchanges in the classrooms. Instead of exchanging gifts, we started collectively giving towards an outreach project. This changed the focus solely to giving. Do you need some ideas?

1. Your school or your family could anonymously provide Christmas for a family. One year, when I was a Christian school administrator, our family decided that we would provide gifts for one of our school employees. We knew that financial resources for this family were quite limited, and

God impressed upon us to provide Christmas items for them. It was such a blessing and so much fun to sneak the huge bag of gifts onto their porch without them knowing who did it.

2. Our school has supported and given to Angel Tree, a ministry of Prison Fellowship. Our students have been able to purchase and deliver gifts to families of those serving time in prison.
3. We have taken classes and musical ensembles to sing Christmas songs at nursing homes and to homebound people.
4. We have also supported local missions in the St. Louis area. You could research those opportunities in your own area.
5. In the past, our students have given through Operation Christmas Child, a program through Samaritan's Purse. According to Samaritan Purse, since 1993 they have distributed more than 188 million shoe box gifts to children in 170 countries and territories through Operation Christmas Child. Along with the shoe box gifts, they give gospel booklets in the children's own language. I remember our Christian school gave and shipped 169 shoe boxes to Victorious Nazarene Primary School in San Jose Succatz, Belize.

### **Should We Limit Our Giving to Christmas?**

God has taught us much about giving by His sending the gift of His Son! And, we have learned about giving from the wise men from the East. Now, all we must do is answer the question: "What are you teaching about giving at Christmas?"

It is good that we celebrate by giving in a unique way during Christmas. But shouldn't we be looking for ways to give all the time? We need to think about it being Christmas all year long! Then we would need to ask, "What are we teaching about giving from January to December?"

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