

Christmas begins with 'S'

On your marks:

The following thoughts and ideas are suggestions to help parents and children find ways to celebrate the Christmas story at home.

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Christmas begins with 'S'...

Shopping, stockings, satsumas, supermarkets, sprouts and, of course, Santa (believe in him or not!) Certainly, all of the above are aspects of Christmas, some more popular than others. However, it's not those that draws me to the statement at the beginning. It is the aspect that is central to all that the season brings - a gift given; yes, a special offer! In fact more than that - a gift given freely. Indeed, Christmas does begin with 'S' - however, not shopping, stockings or even sprouts but the gift of a Son and Saviour.

Many of those other things have become part of our traditions - not that this is necessarily a bad thing. Tradition can bring some structure and routine. What that looks like varies from one home to another: traditions about when to put the tree up; who carves the turkey; who eats (or doesn't eat!) the sprouts and many others besides. All may play an important part in our celebrations but are there other ways we can celebrate that we may not have considered? Maybe this year you might like to consider one of the following ways to help focus on the Christmas story, as a family, church group or individually. Here are just a few examples to give some ideas.

- Do you bake cookies/biscuits? This year, could you make star-shaped ones and when sitting down to enjoy them, read together the part of the Christmas story when the wise men follow the star to where Jesus was (Matthew 2:1- 11)?
- This year, could you make a Christingle together as a family? Details of how to make one can be found at www.childrenssociety.org.uk. When you sit down to eat together, light the candle. Think of one thing that you would like to thank God for, for example your home, friends, family, teachers and so on.
- Take a look at www.paperlesschristmas.org.uk paperlesschristmas 2009: the Adventures of Mary and Joseph - The Road Movie tells the Christmas story in nine entertaining and informative episodes. Watch this together and talk about it. If you enjoy word searches? Follow up the Road Movie (above) by having a go at the

nine free, fun word searches for all ages, which are part of the follow-up material. Simply go to www.barnabasinschools.org.uk/paperlesschristmas. Maybe have a word search evening as a family, children's group at church or any other gathering. See who can complete all nine word searches the fastest.

- Go to www.barnabasforchildren.org.uk, where you will find a range of books for adults and children to read together, and look at the Advent and Christmas books. Chose a new book to add to your home Christmas library collection this year.

However you choose to celebrate, we hope you will enjoy this special season with all 'S's that it brings but most of all the celebration of our Saviour.

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