



# *The tiny house on the hill*

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## 20 Simple Ways to Offer the Love of Christ at Christmas

1. As you receive Christmas cards in the mail, place them in a bowl in the center of your table. Pick a card each night and pray for that family.
2. Before your fluffy socks hit the floor each morning, ask God to help you be attentive to the divine opportunities He has for you that day. Maybe you will be the only patient person in line behind the woman who plops down 20 items in a 10 item lane. Or, the only person who shows restraint in honking at the person ahead of you who robs you of the green light because she's reading her phone.
3. Not only come to a complete stop for pedestrians, but smile at them. It's a nice way to let them know they're not an intrusion on your day and that they are worthy of your time.
4. Go beyond what's expected when you hear the bell ring near a favorite store. Buy a bottle of water or a hot cup of cocoa for the person who is willing to brave the weather to raise money for those in need. If you really want to make their day, take their order for a nearby coffee shop or restaurant. The smile you receive will be the brightest gift you'll open this season.
5. Family activity: Bundle up, grab a basket and head outdoors to find objects in nature for a holiday centerpiece. As you walk, consider pointing out the details of God's magnificent handiwork. When you return home, place a large white candle in the center, sharing how Christ is the true Light, the Light of all mankind (read John 1). Capturing ordinary moments for God's glory releases extraordinary possibilities.
6. Celebrate Advent as a family. It begins December 2nd and ends December 24th. Advent - A Countdown to Christmas, by Focus on the Family has several resources that are sure to help you get started.
7. Give the gift of song. Gather friends for cocoa and go caroling! Hand out peppermint canes with tags that read, Taste and see that the Lord is good. (Psalm 34:8)
8. Exchange busy for being. For a few minutes each day, be intentionally still and quiet as you meditate on Psalm 46:10, Be still and know that I am God.
9. Curl up with your favorite cup of tea and Christmas novella. After all, how can we serve others if we ourselves are depleted?

10. Lend an ear—a listening one, that is. For those who are struggling with the season, be there. It's not so much what you say as much as what you hear.

11. Do you enjoy decorating? Take time to notice those around you who may have physical difficulties and unable to decorate a tree.

12. Gift a day. If you know someone who became a widow in 2018, create a day for them. If they're a single mom of young children, offer to watch the children. Or plan a day that doesn't require money -- hiking, festivals, or a church Christmas program.

13. "Wrap gifts" for Jesus. I was a single mom when I celebrated my first Christmas as a Christ-follower. Throughout the month of December, I jotted down specific ways I was thankful for my new life, His promises, and blessings. Each one went on a different notecard and under the spindly Christmas tree. On Christmas morning, after the boys had gone to their dad's, I spent a quiet time unwrapping the gifts and saying each one aloud. It was a Christmas I'll never forget. That's what happens when one crosses over from darkness to light.

14. Invite a lonely neighbor to dinner or dessert. The blessing doesn't dwell in a dish but rather, the heart.

15. Adopt a family with a deployed military parent. Being a single parent is never easy but this is especially so during the holidays.

16. Write someone who has especially blessed you this year. "More than kisses, letters mingle souls." – John Donne. What would it mean to you to receive such a letter?

17. Who couldn't use a cup of coffee? Consider treating the person behind you in line. Not so long ago, I chose to forego a pay-it-backward moment because the woman seemed to have it all together. Why would a woman driving a BMW with impeccable style need a free coffee? (Must I reason everything out?) One divine tap. That's all it took. God alone knows what's going on in the heart of another.

18. As you flick on your lights in December, let it remind you how Jesus is the Light of the World. He pierced your darkness, and mine.

19. Do you know someone who has lost a loved one in 2018? Consider gifting them an evergreen plant or tree. In the note, remind them that like the evergreen that retains color all year long, their love too will remain. Perhaps invite a few close friends and spend time sharing sweet memories of the person as you plant the tree together.

20. Take a cue from the song Silent Night, Holy Night and turn off all TV's, phones and laptops. Read a book, sing Christmas carols, work on a Christmas puzzle, or bake Christmas cookies for yourself and others.