

jesus' birthday party | christmas resources

GRANT HENDRY share ideas for a Christmas service ...

General comments ...

This is full details of a service that lasts 35 - 40 minutes, which intentionally has little extraneous guff! The suggestion that follows actually gives suggested songs.

A suggested theme to flow through the service...

- The birthday of Jesus (as opposed to the birth of Jesus)
- The importance of clearly celebrating the fact that JESUS IS SAVIOUR & LORD (not just a helpless baby in a manger!)

Props...

Have a large 'J' shaped birthday cake in the centre of a table (with a bright table cloth etc)... all placed in the centre of the church (with chairs set in a formation so that the table is an unusual focus, and indeed, the whole auditorium is set up in an informal and somewhat unusual way.

Around this cake, there would be 5 wrapped presents (Christmas paper, with each present also numbered, and clearly identified as 'male' or 'female'). The cake would need to be raised on something, to stand out from the presents. Each wrapped up present would contain a 'cue card' and an item or two of clothing. The 'cue card' would be the words of a particular character speaking in honour of Jesus, on the occasion of his birthday! The clothing would be symbolic of the

character (eg a shepherds cloak and head piece)... to be quickly put on!

Suggestions for the cue cards:

Print in large text, onto thick A5 card [a sample text is included in what follows].

Service details ...

Welcome to the celebration of the BIRTHDAY of Jesus!

Opening prayer etc

Sing: *Joy to the world* (verses 1-3)

Today I would like to ask you a QUESTION!

- It's NOT 'What did you get for Christmas'...
- Nor is it even a Question about WHAT Christmas is all about!
- But this...

'Why do we celebrate the birthday of Jesus SO DIFFERENTLY to any other birthday?'

When we celebrate a birthday...

- WE DON'T usually pull out all the baby photo's...
- Or sing songs about the hospital that the person was born in...
- Or focus on recreating the scene of doctors, midwives, the décor of the birthing suite etc!
- RATHER... we simply use the occasion to celebrate the LIFE

of the person, as known to us!

- Don't we???

Even if the birthday that we are celebrating is for someone that is no longer alive...

- Like the way Americans celebrate Abraham Lincoln's birthday...
- The focus is still on the LIFE the person lived... WHO they were and WHAT they did, not the birth they had, or the very short period they had as a helpless baby!
- And as far as I know no one celebrates days like that by recreating the setting of their birth!...
- In the case of Abraham Lincoln... that would be by recreating a primitive log cabin!
- It simply isn't done!
- But his birthday is celebrated!

So at Christmas... the birthday of Jesus, why do we focus so heavily on Jesus as a baby?

- Christmas is really the celebration of Jesus' LIFE!
- Of course, there's nothing wrong to think for a while about Jesus being born... and it's not even a problem to be helped in this by recreating the scene of his birth... manger... shepherds... angels... wise men... cows and camels!
- BUT the focus is on CELEBRATING THE JESUS WHO LIVED AND

WORKED AND TAUGHT...
not a baby, but Jesus himself!

**Lets LEARN about and
CELEBRATE the LIFE of Jesus
today, through the testimony of
those who played a big part in
the account!**

For which I will need a few
volunteers!

(Note: Each time a volunteer is
needed, get someone of the right
gender who is capable of 'pulling
off' the task! My suggestion is that 5
people are 'primed' before hand...
even given the text to become
familiar with, and to experiment
with an accent or way of reading
that would be in character. But then,
on the day... to call for volunteers,
aiming to pick the ones that have
been primed! The reason for this is
that the task will be much easier for
someone who has thought about it
for a while, but on the other hand, it
would probably be best to have the
degree of informality that goes with
simply calling for volunteers! This
way those involved don't need to
feel bad about the need to read the
full text, or nervous about making
mistakes, poor accents etc!)

[1] Mary (based on Luke 1:28-33)

Voice: Sweet & innocent!

Props: Ladies head gear & gown?

Hi! My name is Mary. I was thinking
about all the things to get ready for
my marriage to a great bloke called
Joseph... when an angel scared the
living day lights out of me! The
angel said to me as clear as a bell...

"Don't be frightened, Mary... for
God has decided to bless you! You

will become pregnant and have a
son, and you are to name him Jesus,
for he will SAVE his people. He will
be very great and will be called the
Son of the Most High. And the
Lord God will give him the throne
of his ancestor David. And he will
reign over Israel forever; his
Kingdom will never end!"

I said, WOW... will all that happen
NINE months after I get married?
The angel NO MARY! "The Holy
Spirit will come upon you RIGHT
NOW, and the power of the Most
High will overshadow you. God will
be your baby's father, not Joseph!
And your baby will be holy, and will
be called the Son of God!

I said (with trembling)... "I am the
Lord's servant, and I'm willing to
accept whatever he wants. May
everything you have said come
true." And then the angel left. And
ALL that I could think of was
this... that I... Miss Mary
NOBODY was going to have a
wiggly little baby who was the Son
of God, KING & SAVIOUR of the
world. Then I fainted.

Song: *'I can not tell why he whom
angels worship'* (verse 1 & 4)

[2] Angel Gabriel (based on Luke 1:26-37)

Voice: 'sweet', slow & in control!

Props: Halo & white sheet to drape
over shoulders

My name is Gabriel. I'm the one
that spoke to Mary. Given the
unimaginably great news that I told
her... she did a remarkable job of
remembering all the important bits!

I mean... she was hardly expecting
an angel to speak to her, let alone
tell her what I told her! I happen
to know that as amazed as she was,
she didn't fully understand HOW
significant her baby is going to be!
Because her son Jesus IS going to
be THE ONE AND ONLY way
of having a relationship with God!

She also didn't know that Jesus'
LIFE was going to be far from
easy and far from long... that he
would be murdered in his early
30's. But she didn't need to know
that, for NOTHING could ever
stop Jesus, the Son of God from
doing what He set out to do...
SAVE people from their sins! And
the means of doing that was for
Jesus the man, to die a death that
he didn't deserve.

There was a lot that Mary didn't
realise! But I made sure that she
knew all that she needed to... that
she was going to give birth to the
SAVIOUR of the world!

Song: *'Angels from the Realms of
Glory'* (verses 1 & 4)

[3] Joseph (based on Matthew 1:18-19)

Voice: Working class, sincere!

Props: A wooden mallet (to wave
in air!) + sack like cape

Hi. My name's Joe. I was busy
running a fairly ordinary carpentry
business... looking forward to
marrying my fiancé Mary, when
suddenly the wheels fell off my
life. I discovered that Mary was
pregnant... and I certainly had
NOTHING to do with it! She told

me about a special message from an angel... that just made me feel worse. I was so confused, hurt and betrayed... and now it looked like my beautiful wife-to-be was not only immoral, but loopy. But my love for Mary stopped me from wanting to make a spectacle of her. I obviously needed to break the engagement... I was thinking about how I could do it quietly when something VERY EXTRAORDINARY happened.

When I was asleep, an angel of the Lord appeared to me in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David... don't be afraid to go ahead with your marriage to Mary. For the child within her has been conceived by the Holy Spirit. She will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

I woke up with a start, knowing without a shadow of doubt, that Mary had told me the truth... that she really was still a virgin, and that her baby was going to be the most remarkable and most significant person to ever be born. I fainted.

When I told Mary about all this... she cried and laughed at the same time. And when she could finally speak, she told me that when the angel had left her, she had fainted too!

Song: *'To God Be the Glory'* (verse 1 & 3)

Well... Mary conceived and in due time, Jesus was born!

- Lets continue to hear more testimony about JESUS!

[4] Shepherd (based on Luke 2:8-16)

Voice: Rough, working class

Props: Shepherds head covering and a crook

Listen here! I'm Zac the shepherd. I'm not a chariot scientist, nor am I a story writer! But what I have to say, as strange as it sounds, is TRUE. I was with my mates late one night looking after some sheep, when the sky lit up... as bright as the noon day's sun, with a whole host of shining, amazingly beautiful creatures. I instantly knew that they were angels, even though I had never seen one before. I thought that I must have suddenly died! I asked my friend to hit me with his crook... and I discovered that I was very much alive!

Then one of the angels said... "Don't be afraid! I bring you good news of great joy for everyone! The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born tonight in Bethlehem, the city of David! And this is how you will recognize him: You will find a baby lying in a manger, wrapped snugly in strips of cloth!"

I had grown up knowing the prophecies of Isaiah and Micah's, about the coming of the Messiah. And without a doubt, knew that this baby was none other than THE Messiah Himself. As I was taking this in, the angels started to sing the most beautiful song I have ever heard. It went like this...

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to all whom God favours."

When my heart started beating again, I said 'Lets Go!'... and together we ran all the way to Bethlehem to see the wonderful thing that we had just been told! And sure enough... we found Mary and Joseph AND the baby, lying in the manger, exactly as the angel told us.

When we finally left, we ran around telling EVERYONE what had happened, giving GLORY and praise to God. For we had seen with our own eyes, the SAVIOUR, the LORD... the MESSIAH that we had been waiting for.

Song: *'The First Noel'* (verses 1, 2 & 3)

During this Carol... collect an offering for humanitarian aid? [emphasising that ALL that is collected will go for this purpose]

[5] Wise Man (based on Matthew 2:8-12)

Voice: Use a deep, educated voice!

Props: A crown and classy cape

OK... you know who I am, and you probably know what happened. But I'm going to tell you again anyway. My friends and I saw a star suddenly appear in the sky. It was clearly a special act of God... so when it started moving, we did the only natural thing... grab a camel and follow.

After MONTHS on the road, sleeping by day, travelling by night... we came to village called

Bethlehem. And the star stopped moving! And in a way that I had never witnessed before, it just hung there, above a little house... it was an old house, and even smaller than the tiny carpenters workshop it was next to.

I was the most excited that I had ever been in my life! My friend knocked on the door. We were met by a man called Joseph. He invited us in. And there on the mat was a young boy... sitting, quietly playing with a wooden rattle!

He was only a kid in a shed like house, but we knew that he was no ordinary kid! For we also knew without a shadow of doubt that GOD had used a star to lead us to the greatest king to ever live! We fell down before him and worshiped him, and opened our treasure chests to give him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Song: *'We Three Kings'* (verses 1 & 5)

Conclusion

Some people say Christmas is about presents...

- Some say it's about Santa.
- Some say it's about family.
- Some say it's about parties.
- Some says it's about holidays and relaxing.
- Some say it's about world peace.
- Some even say that it's about the birth of baby Jesus!

In the end... all of those things miss the mark, even the last one!

- We have heard and sung today, that Christmas is all about the

LIFE of Jesus... God's gift to the world.

Because, as we have heard today...

- Miss Mary NOBODY... was astounded that as a virgin, she was going to have a baby... but even more so, that this baby would be the Son of God, KING & SAVIOUR of the world!
- And we have heard from Angel Gabriel... who knew that NOTHING was going to stop Mary's little baby from doing what He set out to do... SAVE people from their sins... by dying a death that he didn't deserve.
- And we heard from Joseph... who realised that he had the earthly role of being dad to the most remarkable and most significant person to ever be born!
- And from one of the shepherds... who ran around telling EVERYONE what had happened, giving GLORY and praise to God, because he had SEEN the SAVIOUR, the LORD... the MESSIAH that all Jews had been waiting for.
- And finally, we heard from one of the wise men... who came to understand, without a shadow of doubt, that GOD had used a star to lead him to the greatest king to ever live... and he rightly fell down before him and worshiped him, and gave him royal gifts!

From all of these sources, we have heard of the remarkable LIFE of Jesus, that we are here today to celebrate!

For, Christmas is about

celebrating the LIFE of THE King who has authority over all of us, but who also loves us enough to come among us and set us free from the punishment we deserve.

- The appropriate response to a gift like Jesus is to gratefully accept him and submit to him.

TODAY we have focused on JESUS... not just his birth, but on WHO he was and is!

May none of us shrink back from celebrating the birth of Jesus!

As we heard earlier... it's appropriate to marvel at the wiggly baby, born to Mary!

But may we all step back in wonder, for the story gets better and better! As this divine baby grew into a perfect man who willingly died for your sins and mine!

May we celebrate the birth of Jesus as a baby... but trust Him as saviour!

Close in prayer.

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