



Christmas Bus Promotion/ Campaign

Oct/Nov/Dec 2009

I noticed several years ago that from Thanksgiving to Christmas, our attendance simply plunged downward. Wanting to address the problem, I tried something last year that I used years ago but not since the early 1990's. I decided to have a Christmas Stocking Campaign. The idea is simple: each week starting the Sunday after Thanksgiving, each child receives a gift to be placed in his stocking (also provided). This continues each week and concludes on the Sunday

before Christmas. If you were to do the promotion this year (2009), your schedule might look like this:
November 29- receive stocking and first gift.
December 6- receive second gift.
December 13- DOUBLE GIFT DAY (receive third gift and bonus gift).
December 20- receive final gift and take stocking with all gifts home. This could be combined with class or bus Christmas parties.
To make this promo-

tion work smoothly, you will need to plan ahead. Each child will need a mesh Christmas stocking. These are available in bulk from Oriental Trading Company (Orientaltrading.com). You will also need to purchase gifts for each week of the promotion. We noticed an increase in our attendance each week as excitement built among the kids. We purchased the appropriate number of gifts from the Dollar Store and Kipp Brothers (Kipptoys.com). Be sure to buy age appro-

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Through the Eyes of a Child

I am sure that you, the reader, remember the time when all the children came running up to Jesus. What a fantastic story it is because it teaches us so many important lessons. I

like the fact that the children wanted to be with Jesus and even more the fact that Jesus wanted to be with the children! When you look at the short story of this account given in Mark

10:13-16, it is easy for us to see through the eyes of the children. That's a good thing, but the danger can be that we forget to see ourselves in this story. When the disci-

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The Story of Christmas

I like to watch movies on DVD; the main reason is that I like the Special Features on the DVD menu. This is where you can get the “Behind The Scenes,” found only in the special features; you see not only how they made the movie, but also what was the reason or purpose in making the movie. For me, once I know these things I have a greater appreciation for the movie and the director. The same can be said of our communication of God’s Word. The holidays are fast approaching, and before you know it Christmas will be here. As communicators of God’s Word, it is through these special days we can give a “Behind The Scenes” and give a Big Picture point of view. As communicators of God’s Word we can show the reason and purpose behind the Christmas story to those we minister to, while also being evangelistic. You might be speaking from the platform or in a Sunday school classroom; this article is designed for both young and old alike. I would like to share a different and creative way of telling the “Christmas Story,” or as I like to call it – **The Story of Christmas**. From The Story of Christmas, we understand that from the beginning of time – God desired one thing, that one thing was a gift wrapped with a promise. The promise was to spend Christmas with you.

When I tell The Story of Christmas I use seven visual aids and a beautifully wrapped gift. The seven visuals are of different pictures that connect like a puzzle. When I present it like a puzzle I want my audience to not only hear each story but I also want them to see that all of these stories connect with each other. *(You can have physical pictures or you can use the pictures as a part of a Power*

Point or Keynote. Another idea is if you have an artist in your ministry have them draw out each picture to better illustrate The Story of Christmas. Use your creativity.)

The following is just an outline of how I tell the story. My hope for this article is that it will generate ideas and help you convey the “Behind the Scenes” of **The Story of Christmas**.

Holding the beautifully wrapped gift – Christmas is a time when gifts are given. I want to tell you a story of how someone gave us the most amazing gift. I want to tell you the story of

Christmas. You might know the story of Christmas or you might not, because the story of Christmas may not begin or end where you may think. *(Keep the gift always in sight of your audience and refer back to the gift as you progress with the story.)*

Picture #1 Stars / Space – The story of Christmas starts here. Before the universe was a universe, God thought about you. Before time began you were in God’s thoughts. He thought about having Christmas with you. *(After showing the first pic-*

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Three Ways to Make the Holidays Special

November and December are great months to teach some of the most marvelous truths of God’s Word. Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years are all holidays that lend themselves to some wonderful lessons and we should take advantage of each of them by making the holidays as special as we can. Here are three easy ways to make your class distinctive, fun, and unique.

1. **Continue traditions but try something new.** We all know children love and look forward to the special things that are part of each holiday’s celebration. It could be that play you always do in Children’s Church, the unusual treat they always get for that particular holiday or the unique lesson you always teach. All are part of the what makes your ministry distinctive. You should continue to do these things but also add something

new from time to time. A new teaching method, a different approach to the lesson or an out-of-the-ordinary guest can all help the holiday and your message to be even more memorable. And, who knows, it may become a new tradition.

2. **Look for different ways to explain the holiday.** Most children know the basics of most holidays so try to find new ways to illuminate the truths that they can learn. Try a Gospel magic trick, a different type of lesson, anything that could be used to help make the children look at the holiday from a difference perspective.
3. **Let the children share.** Have the children tell you their favorite things about the holidays, their best memory, etc. Discuss what they have to say and weave it into your lesson.



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appropriate gifts for your children.

As you plan, try to project what your attendance will be and buy that number of gifts. After the gifts are purchased, you could easily have your workers meet you for a “wrapping party” and wrap all the gifts at once. This is the most time-consuming part of this promotion. Once everything is wrapped, the rest of the promotion is simple. The workers need to keep the gifts for their class/bus so that they will be ready for each week.

On the first Sunday of the promotion you will need to give each child a stocking. Use a 3x5 card and sharpie marker to write the name of each child on the card and staple it to the mesh stocking. Allow the child to place the wrapped gift (gift #1) in the stocking. This will increase the excitement level among the kids. The stocking with the gift is then given back to the worker. ***The child does not take the stocking home today!!*** On the following weeks, the child receives an additional gift to place in the stocking. Again, the stocking does not go home with the child until the last week of the promotion.

On the third week, we give every child who attends an extra gift as a “bonus” gift. This is a no-strings-attached bonus. All they have to do is show up. Our thinking is that this allows a child that missed the first week (Sunday after Thanksgiving) because of the holidays to make up his lost

gift. The last week of the promotion should be built up around the anticipation of taking the stocking and the gifts home. You may even want to have a Christmas party in your class or bus.

The following suggestions we have found to work well:

- Decide what gifts you will give out on week 1, 2 etc. It can get confusing if guidelines are not set.
- Decide how you will allow the kids to earn gifts and do not stray from this. This will keep feelings from getting hurt.
- It is easier to have the Sunday School teachers keep up with the stockings rather than the Children’s Church workers. This is because of the generally smaller atten-



dance in the S.S. classes.

May God bless you as you do this promotion to reach kids. We did this for our bus kids and church kids both. We were gratified to see our attendance explode in both areas. We average approximately 850 children per week in the children’s ministry (bus and church kids), and had 877 on the first weekend of the promotion (holiday weekend). The attendance grew every week and the final week we had 1,263 in the children’s ministry....not a bad promotion to help beat the holiday attendance “slump!”

Robby Greene is the Children’s Pastor at Lavon Drive Baptist Church in Garland, TX. Robby is a frequent speaker at BTI Children’s Ministry Conferences and helps many churches across the country improve their Bus and Children’s Ministries. Robby’s church’s Bus Ministry is one of the largest in the country having recently had over 1,400 riders on one Sunday.

Host a 2010 BTI Training Event

We are working on the 2010 conference schedule and we are looking for host churches.

What we are looking for is churches that have a heart for children, that want to get quality training for their Children’s Ministry leaders, and want to help other churches in their area reach kids for Christ as well.

We have conferences in all size churches in all sorts of locations, so don’t let those things stop you from contacting us. We’ll work with you to

make a conference happen in your church.

Get complete information three ways: check out the “Host a Bring Them In Event” link under the BTI Training Events tab on the menu bar on the home page of our web site, call us at 281-922-6743, or email us at bring-themin@bringthemin.com

If a conference is a little too much for your church, consider hosting a BTI Seminar with Dr. Larry Hipps. Get details as shown above.

Happy Birthday, Jesus

As I'm writing this, it is mid-October, so thinking about things to do for Christmas seems far away to me. I'm not really one of those people who spends a lot of time planning things too far in advance. But, by the time you are reading this, it will be time to gear up for the holiday season.

The holidays are a time when we usually turn our thoughts toward others. Cowtown Clowns, my home alley, uses some of the funds we have received for our clowning during the year to provide Christmas gifts and food for some families in need. We ask the membership for recommendations and there is usually no shortage of folks we know who could use a little help each year. We also use some alley funds, as well as donations from individual members, to help supply toiletries, baby supplies, toys and other items for the County Hospital in Fort Worth for their Christmas packages.

There are many other avenues to share God's love during the sea-

son when we celebrate the birth of His son. In the "busy" of the season, it's a great way to remind us what we are here for, and why Jesus came that night so long ago.

Now to the question about what we, as clowns, can do to present the Christmas message in our clowning. One of the performances I love to do during the holidays is my birthday party. Yep, you read it right. I enjoy doing my regular birthday party show for children at churches in the area. Of course, our honored guest is not one of the children, but Jesus himself. And the guests don't have to bring gifts, but we do talk about the gifts that Jesus really wants from us. It also gives us the opportunity to talk about the great gift that Jesus has for everyone who comes to Him...Salvation! This helps young children understand a little more about why we celebrate Christmas in the first place.

Another performance I enjoy during this time of year is a skit I

call "The Gift." As my bag lady character, "Aggie", I present a more serious representation of what Christmas is about. As Aggie is looking through a trash can, she discovers the bottom limb of a Christmas tree. She then looks around at the other items in the can and spends the next few minutes using the trash to decorate a tree of her own. As she is admiring her tree, she notices a manger under a street lamp nearby. She approaches and discovers a baby in the manger and three gifts out in front. She begins to recognize who the baby is and tries to find something to give him. When she realizes she has nothing worthy of a gift, she gives her heart. (A more detailed explanation of this skit can be found in "Sharing God's Love Through Laughter.")

I'm sure each of you has your own favorite ways to celebrate the season and I hope you use your clown character(s) to share the good news of God's greatest gift

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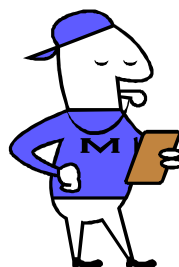
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to us. Be sure to take a little time out during the hustle and bustle, and warm yourself in the love of God.

Brenda "Sam" Marshall has been clowning around as "Flower" since 1981. She has become a world class clown, ministering across the United States and around the world. She taught classes at the clown ministry conference,



Joey to the World, the first eight years of its existence in Houston, TX as well as various other conferences and seminars, including many Bring Them In conferences. Brenda received the Clown Ministry Impact Award in 1999 for her impact on people and the art of Christian clowning and she is the author of "Sharing God's Love Through Laughter - A Guide To Christian Clowning"

The Story of Christmas

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ture before moving to the next I then briefly tell the Genesis 1-3 story.)

Sin entered the world and all hope seemed to be lost all because of a choice to disobey God. (Romans 5:12) Even when it seemed that there was no way out, God was still thinking about having Christmas with you.

Picture #2 A Prophet - God sent prophets to give people hope. A prophet is like a megaphone for God. God would speak to the prophet, the prophet would tell the people what God had said. It is through a prophet God said that he would give us someone special. (Read Isaiah 9:6, and stress, "A Child is born, a Son is given")

God's plan and His gift was about to be revealed - (Read John 3:16).

Picture #3 Baby Lying in a Manger - On one silent night as the world slept, the birth of God's only Son tip-toed quietly by. It was here that God was thinking about you. He gave and sent His Son for you. (Romans 6:23 - this is where you can tell the traditional Christmas story.)

Picture #4 The Life of Jesus - Jesus had a message and His message was simple and that was: you

matter to God and God loves you. No matter who you are, you matter to God. (You can also talk about Jesus' other miracles and teachings.)

Picture #5 Cross - Jesus lived a life that you and I could never live. He paid a price that you and I could never pay. The price was His life. From Jesus' death you can have life, but Jesus didn't stay dead. After three days God raised His Son. Even if you were the only one on the face of the earth He would have still come. (Romans 5:8)

Picture #6 A Big ? Mark - God did this for you. The story of Christmas has a "Chose your own" ending.

Glenn Ray Little is the founder of Little Productions in Houston, TX.

Glenn is a professional actor and storyteller who has performed for more than 90,000 children and adults to date. Glenn brings all his years of experience to churches throughout the country. He makes the Bible come alive with dramatic retelling of Bible stories, historical events and answers to contemporary issues that affect young and old. You can find out more about Glenn's ministry at littleproductions.org or www.askmrlittle.com

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Through the Eyes of a Child

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ples saw the children coming in, they saw something very different than what Jesus saw and what the children saw. What the disciples saw was an interruption. They saw a problem. They saw the schedule changing. They even spoke "for" Jesus and began to rebuke those who were bringing all the kids in to hang out with Jesus!

There was nothing wrong with bringing the kids to Jesus. In fact, that's what we are supposed to do! The parents wanted Jesus to "touch" their children. They wanted them to have direct contact with the God man. Any parent in their right mind wants the same today for their children... I know I do. But, it's my responsibility to "Bring them to Him." We need a generation of children to be TOUCHED by the Master and we need a generation of parents that will take them to Him!

Now, back to the disciples. What they represent is (and the truth can hurt) US... the grownups. I know we are all grown up and we have to work hard to make a living. I know that sometimes there is more MONTH left at the end of the MONEY (I am in ministry so I certainly know that). I know the pressures of life are hard and demanding and we seem to be at everyone's beck and call, but, let's be careful not to become like the disciples on that day - harsh,

impatient, stressed, and then trying to speak for Jesus.

How did Jesus feel about all of this? It plainly says that He was "much displeased." Jesus went on to explain to His disciples that the Kingdom of God is made up of people who are "like" children in their faith. He even went on to say that if anyone gets into the kingdom of God they must have "child-like faith" to do so.

The Holidays are fast approaching. I know it sounds like I have changed the subject. I have not. I have said what I have said to say this... Let's not allow another Holiday Season to pass us by without seeing it all through the eyes of a child. To the believer it's all about Jesus anyway, so, let's focus on Him. Let's not get all stressed out and bent out of shape and actually ruin the chances of our children, and others, to be able to come to Jesus and get touched. Kids like hanging out with those who are loving, joyful, peaceful, truthful and just plain fun! I have just described Jesus. HE IS STILL THE REASON FOR THE SEASON, so, even though we still have all the hustle and bustle to deal with, let's make sure we clear the path to Jesus. Focus on Him and not all the stuff. See the Holidays through the eyes of a child and you just might find Jesus.

Jack Henry is the Children's Pastor at Grace Baptist Church in Powder Springs, GA where he heads up the Grace Baptist Kidz Connection. Pastor Jack is available for special Children's Meetings as well as camps and retreats. You can get more information by visiting www.gracega.org



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