

"A Christmas Game"

by Lara Hochstetler

MATERIALS AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- 1 You will need an assortment of lawn ornaments. Anything will do—from real nativity scene characters to flamingoes, plastic deer—whatever you can find. You need to have enough characters for two sets of the traditional nativity scene. (Mary, Joseph, Jesus, shepherds, a few animals.) Maybe around eight per set. Place the lawn ornaments on a table or on the floor at one end of the room.
- 2 Christmas tree ornaments, at least one per student.
- 3 Play-Doh

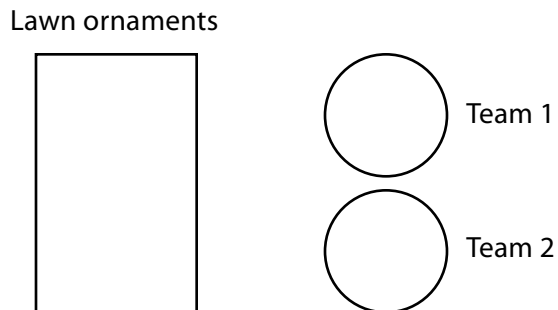
SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS:

Ask students to pick out a Christmas tree ornament when they arrive. Go around the group and have each student explain what their ornament has to do with Christmas.

PLAY THE GAME:

Split the group into two teams, arranged this way:



Rules: Each team is racing to create an “untraditional” nativity scene. One person from each team runs up to the table and must state one true fact about Christmas. (You be the judge.) After stating a correct statement, the team member selects a lawn ornament and takes it back, then sends someone else up until they have the whole nativity scene completed.

Discuss:

- 1 Ask youth what they think was the purpose of this game.

- 2 As ridiculous as this game was, how close is it to how much we've distorted Christmas?
- 3 What distorts Christmas in our society? (examples—gifts, Santa, x-mas, time off of school no longer for "Christmas break" but for "winter break"?)
- 4 Just like commercialization has taken the point out of Christmas, we did the same thing tonight by taking the true and amazing message out of the scene that has been depicted for 2000 years.

APPLY:

Discuss:

- 1 How many times does your family talk about Jesus over the holidays?
- 2 How can we focus more practically on service (since Jesus was about service) instead of on commercialization? Make plans to do something as a class that focuses on the servant aspect of Christmas, and plan to do it throughout the year, not just at Christmas. Examples: visit a nursing home, baby-sit to give a stressed-out parent a break, work in a soup kitchen.

RESPOND:

Ask students to take some Play-Doh and create a symbol of what they would like to receive spiritually this Christmas. As they think about gifts, what spiritual gift would they like to receive?

Sharing is optional, based on whether you feel your students are open to that.

Close with a prayer.