



## STORIES | WAYS TO WORSHIP

### STORY

#### **TITLE OF STORY:** Ways to Worship

This is a story about Mrs. Evans. Mrs. Evans taught a class every week at church for children. She wanted the kids to grow up and know about Jesus and how much He loved them. One week, Mrs. Evans wanted to teach her class about worship!

There are many different kinds of worship. Sometimes you worship Jesus quietly in your prayers. Other times you sing and dance with a group of people to worship. Sometimes you worship Jesus through your actions, by obeying and listening to others. No matter how you worship, Jesus is by your side throughout the day, every day.

Once the children had settled into their seats, Mrs. Evans wrote these words on the board:

*Praise*  
*Give Thanks*  
*Listen*  
*Rejoice*  
*Pray*  
*Sing*  
*Share*

Mrs. Evans stood away from the board for a few seconds and then she said to the class...“What do you think these words have in common?”

The class was quiet for a little while and then a few children raised their hands. She called on Marcus and asked him to stand up to tell the class what he thought. Marcus was a little bit shy, but he stood up and said, “I think these are all ways we can express our love for Jesus.”

“That’s a very good answer, Marcus,” said Mrs. Evans. “Does anyone else have a different answer?”

Several children raised their hands and Mrs. Evans called on Grace. She stood up and said loudly, “These are things we do when our hearts are full of joy.”

“Another good answer!” said Mrs. Evans. “Are there any others?”



Theo was jumping up and down in his seat. He really wanted Mrs. Evans to call on him. Mrs. Evans smiled and said, "I guess I better call on you, Theo, otherwise you might fall out of your chair!" The class laughed when she said that.

Theo stood up, then he said, "These are different ways that we can worship Jesus every single day."

"Yes! I agree," said Mrs. Evans. "These are all excellent answers. In fact, all these answers are correct. Wherever you are or whatever you're doing, you can be worshipping Jesus. As you go about your day, you are always making decisions. Our decisions can lead us closer to Jesus. This means we can worship Jesus fully by focusing on Him in our heads, our hearts, and our actions."

Mrs. Evans went up to the board and she underlined the word Praise. "Now we're going to look at all these words more closely. What exactly does the word Praise mean?"

Mark stood up and said, "If we are praising Jesus, it means that we celebrate Him because He is so good. All good things come from Him."

Mrs. Evans smiled and nodded her head and wrote on the board:

**Praise—We celebrate Jesus' goodness in all that He is and does.**

"Let's move on to the next word," said Mrs. Evans. "What do you think give thanks means?" Then, she called on Sally.

Sally stood up and said, "It means we are grateful to Jesus. Our hearts are happy because of all the blessings Jesus gave us. We say prayers to Him when we're thankful."

Mrs. Evans went to the board and wrote what Sally had said:

**Give Thanks—We lift up our hearts to thank Jesus for everything we have been given.**

Mrs. Evans continued to ask the class what each word meant and when they finished they had the following descriptions for all of the words.



**PRAISE**—We celebrate Jesus’ goodness in all that He is and does.

**GIVE THANKS**—We lift up our hearts to thank Jesus for everything we have been given.

**LISTEN**—We follow the words and teachings of Jesus in the Bible.

**REJOICE**—We are filled with joy when we think about how much Jesus loves us.

**PRAY**—We ask Jesus for help to be our best every day.

**SING**—We sing songs to express our love for Jesus.

**SHARE**—We share the love of Jesus with our friends and family.

“Now that we’ve talked about all these different ways to worship, let’s talk about why it’s important to worship Jesus fully, especially at Christmastime,” said Mrs. Evans. “In other words, why is Christmas so important?”

Anita raised her hand and said, “Christmas is when we celebrate Jesus’ birthday. We worship Jesus because he is the Son of God who came into the world to be with us.”

“Exactly! Worshipping Jesus fully is part of our everyday lives as Christians, but especially at Christmas,” said Mrs. Evans. “When we take time to worship Jesus during Christmas, it’s like we’re giving Him the best birthday present ever!”

The kids all smiled at this thought. Theo raised his hand one more time and asked, “Mrs. Evans, does that mean that I can worship Jesus however I want?”

Mrs. Evans explained, “Yes! There’s no right or wrong way to worship Jesus. For the rest of this class, we’re going to spend time thinking about our favorite ways to worship.”



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*As a family, discuss the story and what you learned.*

- 1. WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE WAY TO WORSHIP JESUS?**
- 2. CAN YOU THINK OF ANY OTHER WAYS TO WORSHIP?**
- 3. SHOULD YOU BE LOUD WHEN YOU WORSHIP OR CAN YOU BE QUIET?**
- 4. HOW CAN YOU WORSHIP JESUS FULLY THIS WEEK?**



## STORIES | NEW CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

### STORY

**STORY TITLE:** New Christmas Traditions

The Miller family had four members. Mrs. Miller, Mr. Miller, their son Todd, who was 12 years old and their daughter Teresa who was 14 years old. One night during dinner Mr. Miller said, "It's time for us to have a family meeting."

Todd said, "Uh oh, Dad. Did we do something wrong?"

Teresa said, "I think you forgot to take the garbage out and I didn't fold my clothes yet from this week's laundry."

Their dad laughed. "Neither of you did anything wrong. Mom and I want to talk about Christmas and some of the ideas we have for things we can change."

"Well, I hope that things don't change too much! I love all the things we do at Christmas," said Teresa.

"What kinds of changes, Dad?" Todd asked. He was a little worried because he didn't like when things changed too much.

"Don't worry, mom and I think it's going to be the best Christmas ever," said their dad.

After dinner, they all sat down in the living room. Mr. and Mrs. Miller sat down in their chairs and Todd and Teresa sat on the couch across from them. Mr. Miller said, "Do you remember when we heard about Advent Conspiracy last week in church?"

"I remember that there were four parts," said Teresa.

Mrs. Miller said, "You're right. Dad and I have talked about this and we have decided that we want to have a different type of Christmas this year. We want our whole family to participate in Advent Conspiracy."

Todd said, "What does that mean, Mom?"

"It means we're going to spend time over the next month getting our hearts ready for Christmas. We're going to concentrate more on activities we can do together as a family and spend a little less money so we can spend a lot more time serving others," said Mrs. Miller. "We're going to have a more Christ-centered Christmas."



"Will we still have Christmas decorations?" asked Teresa.

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Miller. "We'll hang up lights, pick out a pretty tree, and set up the nativity."

"So what's going to be different," asked Todd.

Mr. Miller said, "We're going to go through the four steps of Advent Conspiracy as we get ready for Christmas... **Worship Fully, Spend Less, Give More, and Love All,**" said Mr. Miller. "Jesus was God's gift to the world. We want to make sure our Christmas traditions honor Jesus and celebrate everything He has done for us. We have to remember that Christmas is more than just the presents on Christmas morning. We'll be showing our love for Jesus in everything we do this holiday season. We're going to give more of our time to each other."

"...Will there still be presents on Christmas," Todd asked nervously.

"Absolutely! There's nothing wrong with giving gifts to people you love. But this year you'll be getting gifts that are extra special and meaningful. We don't want to just order something online or run to the mall. Dad and I are carefully thinking about each of you as we put together presents," said Mrs. Miller.

"We're also going to think of fun Christmas activities we can do together as a family. We want to spend more time together and remember the blessings God gave us. We're going to visit some strangers in the hospital and bring them some gifts, we're going to visit your grandma in the nursing home, and we're going to participate in the local policemen's toy drive."

"That sounds kind of fun. I like the idea of giving each other special presents and doing activities together as a family to get ready for Christmas," Teresa said.

"This Wednesday we're going to volunteer at church together. Our family is going to read Christmas story books to kids while their parents are at small group gatherings. Could the two of you to pick some of your favorite books to read? And we can bring some crafts too, like coloring books and stickers," said Mrs. Miller.

"I know the perfect book to bring!" exclaimed Todd.

"Thanks for agreeing to help us. I think we're going to have a lot of fun together. Before the two of you go to your rooms, I'd like you to remember one thing: God loves a cheerful giver. It makes His heart happy when we encourage, serve, and spend time together with others," said Mr. Miller.



Todd and Teresa smiled. They were worried at first but now it sounds like fun to do Advent Conspiracy together as a family.

On Wednesday night, the Miller family arrived at their church with bags full of books. They went into the classroom and saw little kids running around excitedly. All of the parents said thank you to the Millers and went off to enjoy their Bible study.

“Hi, my name is Teresa. We brought some Christmas books and coloring pages for you,” said Teresa. “Would you like me to read you a story?”

Two little girls, Samantha and Jasmine said yes.

Teresa took one of the books out. It was one of her favorite books, it told the story of the days leading up to the first Christmas in Bethlehem. The little girls listened as Teresa read the story. When she finished, she asked them, “Did you like that story?”

“Yes, I liked the animals and the part where the angels came,” said Jasmine. “Can we read more?”

Todd said, “I can read the next one. Here, pick out one that looks good.”

Samantha picked a picture book that showed a family celebrating Christmas together. That made Todd smile as he thought about his own family and their new traditions. When the book was finished, the little girls colored pictures with Mrs. Miller.

At the end of the night, the parents came back from their small groups and thanked the Millers one more time. Jasmine’s mom stopped and said, “Thank you for coming tonight and spending time with our little girl. I was able to have a great night at my Bible study knowing that Jasmine was having a fun time with your family. She even told me about the angels in the story!”

At dinner that night, Mr. Miller asked, “Did you kids have a good time tonight?”

“I had a lot of fun actually,” said Teresa.

Todd was quiet for a second, then he said, “Me too. I never thought that spending time with someone was a gift, but Jasmine’s mom was so grateful. She kept saying ‘thank you’ to us.”

Mrs. Miller looked at her children, and smiled, “I’m proud of you both for helping out tonight and for giving more of your time to people in need. You have been cheerful givers! Let’s keep noticing what God is saying to us over the next few weeks as we prepare for Christmas.”

Mr. Miller smiled and nodded his head in agreement.



Over the next few weeks, the Millers continued to work together as a family, serving people, creating special gifts for friends and family, and spending quality time with each other. The week before Christmas, their mom called a family meeting.

“Tonight we’re going to decorate our tree. Your dad brought it home and it’s out in the garage. But, we have a special surprise... We’re going to make our own decorations out of these photos,” Mrs Miller said. She handed photos out to everyone with a string. There were pictures from all of their Advent activities - reading to kids at church, visiting people in the hospital, helping at the toy drive, setting up the nativity scene, baking Christmas cookies, making crafts. Mr. Miller had been taking photos of their family all throughout December to remember all the good times they had as a family.

“We can hang up the pictures with string and use them as special Christmas ornaments,” said Mr. Miller.

“Oh wow!” said Teresa. “This is a Christmas I’m never going to forget. And I can’t wait until Christmas morning when I can give everyone their special gifts. I’ve worked really hard on making them for everyone.”

“Me too! I want to do this again next year too. This has been the best Christmas ever,” Todd said cheerfully.

The Millers started new Christmas traditions and created lots of new memories by giving more of their time and talents to others.





## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **WHAT KIND OF GIVER DOES GOD WANT US TO BE?**
2. **WHAT ACTIVITIES DID THE MILLER FAMILY DO TOGETHER?**
3. **WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF THE STORY?**
4. **WHAT ACTIVITIES WOULD YOU LIKE TO DO WITH OUR FAMILY THIS CHRISTMAS?**



## STORIES | A SOCCER BALL FOR JOEY

### STORY

**STORY TITLE:** A Soccer Ball for Joey

Joey loved playing soccer at school with his friends. One night over dinner Joey asked his mom, "Could you buy me a soccer ball and a net for our backyard?"

Joey's mom had had a hard day at work and she was very tired. "Joey, you have lots of toys and games around this house. Why don't you play with any of those? Your dad and I have lots of things to pay for as we get ready for Christmas. We can't spend extra money on soccer stuff."

Joey was disappointed. His dad would be home soon, he could wait and ask his dad for a new soccer ball. Maybe dad would buy him new soccer stuff.

When his dad came home later, Joey waited until the right moment to ask about the soccer ball and net. His mom was reading in the living room so Joey talked to his dad in the kitchen. "Dad, I found the coolest thing. There's this new soccer ball and net that I want for the backyard. It's supposed to be really cool and none of my friends have it! Can we order it this weekend?"

His dad smiled and then said, "I'm really happy that you found a sport you like, Joey. But your mom and I have talked about this and we think you should save your allowance to buy the soccer ball and net."

"But, Dad, it's going to take me forever to save up that much money," Joey said disappointedly. "I wanted it now so I could show all my friends at school."

"I understand, but your mom and I are making some new changes when it comes to spending money," said his dad.

"What do you mean?" asked Joey.

"Well, soon it's going to be Advent and this year we're going to remember that Jesus is the reason we celebrate Christmas. The last few years, our family has spent a lot of money on gifts and it doesn't seem like we even end up using most of them. We want to spend our money helping others this year and that means we need to spend less," his dad said.

“Ugh,” grumbled Joey.

“I know it’s hard but we’ve already been blessed with so many things. We have a house we love, a beautiful backyard, food and clean water, toys and games to play with. This year, instead of buying more and more for ourselves, we’re going to celebrate a little differently.”

“What does that mean? No presents?” Joey asked worriedly.

“There will still be presents on Christmas morning but we’re not going to over do it. Part of our plan is for our family to collect money and then give it to someone else who needs it more than we do. Mom made us a special jar for the kitchen so we can put our money in there and then bring it to church on Christmas,” his dad said.

Joey didn’t say anything at first. He didn’t understand everything his dad was saying but he did understand one thing—he wasn’t going to get his new soccer gear this weekend.

“You can save up your allowance from doing chores and buy your new soccer ball and net. It might take you a little bit of time to save up, but it’s your money so you can decide how to spend it,” his dad said.

“Okay,” said Joey. He went up to his room to think about things. He realized that it would take him the whole month of December to save up enough money to buy the new soccer gear. Joey started to think about what else he could do to raise money.

The next day, before school, Joey asked his mom, “Mom, could I have a yard sale to sell some things?”

“That’s a great idea, Joey. I’ll help you too. Your dad and I can pick out some stuff to sell too. Ask your little sister if she wants to join in. Anything you sell that’s yours, you can keep that money. Sound fair?”

“That sounds great! I’ll be able to buy my soccer stuff in no time!” Joey yelled.

Two weeks later was their yard sale. Joey worked really hard. He went all around the house and collected things he didn’t need or want anymore. Things like old clothes, toys, and books. His mom gave him lots of stuff too. The day of the garage sale he sold a lot. Joey had saved up \$25.00 from his allowance and another \$75.00 from the sale. That means he had \$100.00 of his own money to spend. Joey’s parents and sister sold a lot at the yard sale too. At the end of the day they put their money into the collection jar in the kitchen.



It was getting close to Christmas and Joey still hadn't bought his soccer net and ball. "Hey buddy, do you want me to help you order your soccer gear? I know you worked hard saving up money for it," asked Joey's mom.

"Not yet, maybe tonight," answered Joey. Over the last couple of weeks, Joey had noticed how happy his parents and little sister were. They were having a great time getting ready for Christmas and nobody seemed stressed out. They had bought a few presents and have been saving their money. The collection jar in the kitchen was almost full!

That night after dinner Joey brought his \$75.00 to his dad.

"What's this?" Joey's dad asked.

"It's most of the money I saved from doing chores and the garage sale. I want to add it to the collection jar in the kitchen so I can be a part of the Christmas offering at church," said Joey.

"Are you sure? What about your soccer ball and net?" his dad asked.

"I'm sure," said Joey. "I want to help someone else this Christmas. Besides, I still have \$25.00 left over and I know I can buy a soccer ball with that. I won't buy the soccer net, but I can still have fun in the backyard!" exclaimed Joey.

"I'm proud of you. You made the decision to spend a little less on yourself this year so you could bless someone else. That's what Christmas should be all about anyway," his dad said. Then, he gave Joey a big hug.

On Christmas Eve Joey's family brought their collection jar to church and put their money in the special Christmas offering. They worked together as a family to save money and help someone in need.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*As a family, discuss the story and what you learned.*

- 1. WHAT DID JOEY WANT TO BUY?**
- 2. HOW DID HE SAVE UP TO BUY IT?**
- 3. JOEY DIDN'T END UP BUYING THE FANCY SOCCER BALL AND SOCCER NET. WHAT DECISION DID HE MAKE INSTEAD?**
- 4. WHY DID HE MAKE THAT DECISION?**
- 5. HOW DID HE FEEL AFTER HE MADE HIS DECISION?**

## STORIES | AMANDA'S GIFT

### STORY

**STORY TITLE:** Amanda's Gift

Amanda loved the holidays. She loved the food, the decorations, the presents, and family traditions. But not everyone in her family looked forward to Christmas. She overheard her mom and dad talking in the kitchen one night.

"You know, I love the holidays, but I do get tired of all these extra chores. It seems like I always have laundry to fold, dishes to wash, and presents to wrap. I'm getting tired and we still have a few weeks to Christmas. I wish Christmas was already over," said Amanda's mom.

"I'm sorry you're having a hard day. I know how hard you work here at home. The holidays always seem to create more stress," said Amanda's dad.

Amanda had already been thinking about Christmas, it was her favorite time of the whole year. She made her Christmas list a while ago but she still wasn't sure what to buy her mom or dad. Amanda knows how hard her mom has been working and she wanted to get something extra special for her this Christmas. Next week, Amanda's aunt Julia, was visiting. I'll ask Aunt Julia if she can take me shopping for Mom, Amanda thought to herself.

When her Aunt Julia picked her up from school the following week, Amanda asked her, "Can we go to the mall before we go home? I want to look for a special gift for Mom."

"Sure, sweetie," said her aunt. "I'll let your mom know we'll be home a little later."

"Ok, but don't tell her that I'm looking for a gift for her. I want it to be a surprise," said Amanda.

"Don't worry. I won't spoil the surprise!" exclaimed her aunt as she smiled.

When they got to the mall, Aunt Julia said, "Where would you like to go first?"

"Hmmm...I don't know," said Amanda. "Let's just walk around."



They walked in and out of stores... they looked at earrings, scarves, candles, books, clothes, but nothing was catching Amanda's attention. Everything was so expensive and Amanda felt sad.

"What's wrong? Why do you look so sad?" said her aunt. She looked confused.

Amanda said, "I want to find something special for mom but everything is so expensive. I only have ten dollars saved up from my allowance. I'm not going to have enough money to buy something special for mom and other presents for our family."

"I can help you buy something, Amanda," said her aunt Julia.

"That's okay," said Amanda. "There's nothing here that feels special enough for mom. Let's go home and I'll keep thinking about it."

A few days later, it was time for Aunt Julia to go home. "I've had so much fun visiting with you, Amanda. I'm sure you can come up with a special gift for your mom. You're always so creative! If I had a daughter like you, I would be happy with any gift she gave me," said her aunt. "Especially if it was handmade and given with love."

"Thanks, Aunt Julia. I'm going to miss you," said Amanda as she gave her aunt a hug.

That night after dinner, Amanda offered to help her mom with the dishes.

"Thank you for helping tonight," said her mom. She started to wash the dishes and handed them to Amanda to rinse and dry.

"Mom, what would you like for Christmas?" Amanda asked.

"Hmmm, I don't know. I don't need anything, so I guess some fun times together. If we could spend more time together as a family, that would be the best present. I love going to church together for Christmas Eve, I love setting up our nativity scene in the living room, I love decorating the house for Christmas together..I love being together."

When they were finished with the dishes, Amanda's mom said, "Thanks to you we got the dishes done in half the time. Let's go read a book together before bed."

The next day Amanda was still thinking about what present to get her mom. She looked all around her room. Then, she suddenly had a great idea! She got some colored paper, markers, and scissors. "Mom is going to love this," Amanda thought.



On Christmas morning, Amanda woke up so excited to give her mom the special gift. She had wrapped it with shiny silver paper and a gold bow. Her mom started to unwrap the gift. It was a book Amanda had made full of coupons. Each coupon had a special idea for a way Amanda could spend time with her mom or help her around the house. The coupons said:

*I will do the dishes after dinner.*

*I will fold my clean clothes.*

*I will have a special movie night with mom, just us two.*

*I will help brush our dog.*

*Dad and I will help make breakfast.*

*I will take the trash outside.*

*I will have a dance party with Mom.*

*I will paint my nails with Mom.*

*Dad and I will make dessert.*

Her mom slowly turned every page. Amanda had decorated each coupon. It was a beautiful book. You can tell that Amanda spent time thinking about her mom while making coupons.

"Thank you so much, Amanda! I love it! It's so thoughtful!" exclaimed her mom.

"I wish I had thought of it! That is such a special gift" said Amanda's dad.

"I'm glad you like it, Mom! I wanted to think of something that would show you how special you are to me!" Amanda said as she hugged her mom.

"There are lots of things I love about it, but the best thing of all is that you've given me the gift of time and memories! I can tell that each coupon is filled with love," said Amanda's mom. "Thank you so much."

Amanda felt so happy inside.





## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*As a family, discuss the story and what you learned.*

- 1. WHY DIDN'T AMANDA BUY ANYTHING AT THE MALL FOR HER MOM?**
- 2. WHAT GIFT DID AMANDA END UP GIVING HER MOM INSTEAD?**
- 3. DID AMANDA'S MOM LIKE HER GIFT?**
- 4. WHAT DID SHE LIKE BEST ABOUT THE GIFT?**
- 5. CAN YOU THINK OF A SPECIAL GIFT YOU CAN MAKE FOR SOMEONE THIS YEAR?**