

Christmas Bag Crafts



We like to keep our children's attention on giving rather than getting during the Christmas season. So last year we decided to start another tradition. We dubbed them Christmas Craft Bags. Each morning the boys would race downstairs and open the daily advent pouch, they'd patiently sit through our Jesse Tree devotional and hang the ornaments on the quilt, and then they'd break into their craft bags!

The craft bags were filled with supplies for them to put together a craft each day. Sometimes it was only parts of the craft and other times it was everything they needed. We also like to keep our focus on Jesus during the Christmas season, and so many of our crafts were based on that.

Because I was asked several different times, I've opted to put all the crafts we did together, with links. At the end of the Christmas season we tucked away the crafts we'd not given away into a notebook so we could view them again and again. We hope you enjoy making your own special memories during the Christmas Season!

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Aussie Pumpkin Patch

Christmas Bags

Assembling your own bags is quite simple:

1. Cut 2 pieces of fabric (we used Christmas patterns) to 7.5" x 8.5". Lay right sides together and sew around three sides of the material. Turn right side out. (See figure 1)
2. The side you did not sew will be the top of your bag. Fold down 1/4 inch and sew down, this will keep the top of your bag from unraveling. You can turn it down twice if you prefer. Ironing the folded down section will make it easier to sew.
3. Cut a reasonably length of drawstring cord; knot each end. Use this to tie your bag closed. I didn't make a casing to slip them in, but rather filled the bag, and wrapped the rope around the neck of the bag and tied closed.
4. Make or purchase wooden or paper tags to number your craft bags with. I numbered mine 1-7, with one bag per child for each of those numbers. This makes it easier for each child to locate their own craft bag, it also helps you from forgetting which craft is in which bag.

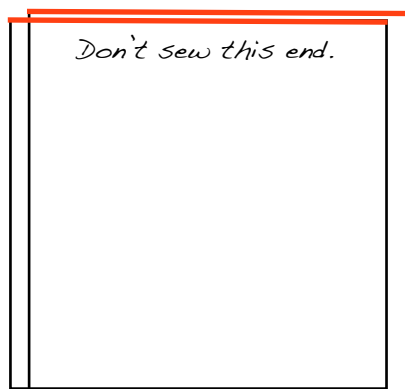


Figure 1

Christmas Crafts

1. Countdown Calendars -- even though we had 2 ways to count down the days, the boys still found time to ask constantly how many days until Christmas. So our first craft was for each of them to assemble their own count down calendar. They each made their own & found all the pieces in their bags: Older child, Younger Children. Note: for my younger child I had the stars all cut out. All he had to do was assemble the chain. For the older, I snipped off the activity before putting it into his craft bag as I didn't intend to do those particular activities each day.
2. Angel Craft -- We read about Gabriel and started listening to the 12 voices of Christmas. Then we made angels to represent him. This time the boys found everything except the markers in their bags. Angel Idea.
3. Elf Skittles -- we had everything cut to size and put everything in the boys bags. I also made the hats up before hand, and should have hot glued them on, as I didn't feel confident letting my kids use a hot glue gun. They, however, picked out their own paint, and did the painting. I provided 3 beanbags per child made from christmas fabrics. Note: I made an extra set of these myself and gave them to a little one for Christmas. They were a huge hit. I used the end of my paint brush (handle) to make some of the elves have an open mouth of shock at being knocked down.
4. Paper Nativity Set -- We own many nativity sets, but we always enjoy adding to them. This one was terrific to store in their bags so they could set it up. They spent many hours playing with it and acting out the story, in many ways..

5. Candy Cane Craft -- We watched The Legend Of The Candy Cane and then proceeded to make our own candy canes for giving away and hanging on our tree. You could also make candy cane cookies if you wanted and deliver them to neighbors, or simply copy the candy cane poem onto little tags and tie them on candy canes to deliver to friends and family.

6. Wrapped Presents & Door Hangers -- I've told my children all their lives that God gave them to me, and I prayed for them before they were born. I also wanted them to understand how important family is, and what a true gift from God it is. So, on this day they found a GIANT bow in each of their bags. We then wrapped bedroom doors. My children were too young to be able to wrap their parents bedroom door alone, so one parent helped them wrap that door, and the other parent helped the other child wrap their own bedroom door. We left them up and "unwrapped" them on Christmas Day. We also made cute little door hangers for the season, which could also be given away to friends. Note: On the children's door the tag read: To: Mommy & Daddy From: God; On our door it said: To: Morgan & Jayden From: God

7. Make Fireless Candles -- I put the supplies in each child's bag, but I also put a real candle in there. We kept the real candles on the table, and the fireless candles on the fireplace. At each meal we lit the real candles to remind us of the Light Of The World. Notes: We used those instructions for making our candles, but wrote "Jesus Is The Light Of The World" on ours. We didn't hid treats inside ours. I used a plastic "y" tissue paper in orange and yellow to form our flames.

8. Christmas Trees -- We talked about how Christmas trees are triangular in shape. We reminded the children of the trinity. Then we discussed how one could use a Christmas tree to tell other's about Jesus. Then we grabbed up some old magazines and set to work making our trees! Notes: The younger one had more fun watching

then making on this craft. We also found that TWO good sized magazines per tree was much more neat and we could set them on the counter and they looked like full trees rather than placing them against a wall.

9. 3-D stars -- We hung these from the ceiling in the living room to remind us of the star the wise men followed. It was also fun to go outside and look at the stars we could see and to realize that even the brightest star in our sky doesn't compare to the one they most likely saw. We also popped a few of these atop our Christmas trees from yesterday's craft.
10. Jesus Name -- this craft was simple, but messy. The boys found glitter and glue in their bags and were permitted to decorate the papers I gave them anyway they wanted. When they were done we glued their papers to colored card stock and hung them on the wall. Notes: Older children may prefer this craft. It's one I hope to tackle this year, and could be done one of many ways. Let your older child be as creative or simple as they wish and use it as a garland around your home!
11. Nativity Craft -- We like to add to our Nativity sets each year, and I love watching the kids play with some of them too. There are so many different ways you can make them. Here are three options for: Littlest Ones, Little Ones, Big Ones.
12. Hand Print Sheep -- I know a few Grandmas & Aunties who love getting handprint/footprint crafts for any occasion. These work wonderfully well for such a gift. We have each child make one for each relative we choose to give one too. We've also done these on shirts before and given those away. Notes: We traced each child's hand onto black craft foam. Punch a hole at the base of the palm for hanging this up, it will be harder to do once the cotton balls are attached! Then they covered the hand with glue (use glue sticks for easier clean-up) and stuck cotton balls all over it. We cut strips of red ribbon to tie a bow around the neck, tiny bells work too.

13. M&M Craft -- The boys found little tags with this poem on it and small bags of M&M's to give away to friends and family. Anyone they wanted. We attached the poem to the bag of M&M's with a bit of tape, but you could also pour the candies into a bag, jar, etc and attach the poem with a ribbon. Note: You could also do a "cookie mix in a jar" as gifts and use M&M's in the mix. Then attach the poem to the inside of the tag and change candies to cookies.
14. Scented Ornaments -- Ever since our eldest encountered his first Christmas we've been making these ornaments. Each year I trace the kids hands on white card stock. Then we make the dough (one batch for the hands, and one batch for the kids.) I give the kids cookie cutters and let them have at it. I take the handprints and trace around it with a knife. I let them poke a straw through it to make a hole for the ribbon we'll attach once it's dry. Not only have these marked the years with the kids handprints, but they smell fantastic year after year too! We also use these as decorations on packages for relatives. The ornaments the boys make are hung around the house, on the tree, and/or given away. Notes: Homemade applesauce works fine in these. I've never had a problem with that. White glue is not clag, for those of you in Australia. I have found White Glue (pvc) at ChickenFeed & Kmart (Mr Maglue) As long as it says White Glue or PVC glue you should be fine. You could also try making them with homemade glue, but I must be honest and say I've never done that. If your ornaments break (we mail some of these out) they are easily fixed with a dab of white glue.
15. Angel Craft Again -- this isn't the same craft. We made this one after discussing how the angel visited Zacharias, Mary, Joseph, the Shepherds, etc. We printed out the paper and then the boys found paint, glue, & feathers in their bags. They had a blast making their angels.

16. Christmas Shopping -- to continue to foster the want to give we gave them the shopping ads for the week and let them browse through it to see what they'd like to get for each other. They were given a budget and had to work within it. Then, on the given day they found a cloth shopping bag and a roll of tape in their craft bags. We split up and took each child out to pick out something for the other. They also picked out something for Mom & Dad. We hid them in our cloth bags and came home for lunch. After lunch each child was set up in a different room with wrapping paper, tape, and scissors left to wrap their present. They had so much fun doing it all on their own and sticking them under the Christmas tree.
17. Homemade Christmas Cards -- while our family does an annual Christmas letter I filled each child's bag with pre-folded red & green cards, Christmas stickers, glue, glitter, etc. I let them choose who they wished to send a card to and let them decorate away. We then addressed the envelopes and walked to our post office to mail them (Remember it's summer here in December!) We stopped for a juice at the bakery on the way home.
18. Christmas Crackers -- in Australia we like to use crackers after our Christmas meal. It's fun to see what silly little trinket is hidden inside. It's also a tradition for our family to put on silly tissue paper crowns and take a funny photo. You can make your own with a kit, or with a few things from around the house. Notes: Traditional Crackers have a joke, tissue paper crown, and a small trinket inside. We like to buy small chocolates as our trinkets for the homemade ones. We also pop a sticker and a bit of confetti inside the homemade ones.
19. Paper Gingerbread Boys -- each family member was given a brown paper gingerbread boy and we decorated them as we saw fit. We all chose to use oil crayons, but pom-poms, yarn, rik-rak, stickers,

etc would all be fun to decorate them with. We taped ours together (after trying staples) and stuffed them with paper. To make it a garland, run cord/rope/yarn through each gingerbread boy before sealing shut. Notes: Originally my idea had been to make them from cloth like felt, and have the kids stitch (by hand) around the outside of their gingerbread boys. We ended up using paper last year, but may do cloth this year. These could be given away or kept depending on your child's desires. If you include a ribbon at the top of it's head you could hang it up. A few cloves or a cinnamon stick sewn inside would make it smell nice too!

20. Peppermint Playdough -- the boys found ingredients for making this. I let them each pour parts of what we needed in the pan. I cooked it, and let them help knead the coloring in. Then they played away with it. Notes: I prefer this playdough recipe as I've never had a problem with it. You could simply add a bit of peppermint oil/extract to it. You could also make extras of this to give away for Christmas.
21. Christmas Village -- this one is quite simple and children can decorate them anyway they like. Older children might prefer making this one.
22. Reindeer Cookies -- while we don't do Santa and Reindeers here, these cookies were cute, and could also be referred to as Moose cookies. At the same time, my children know the myth of Santa and they're always up for a cookie. Notes: You can use a red M&M candy if you'd rather for the nose.
23. Birthday Party -- because our family usually spends Christmas day with relatives, we like to have our own "private" Christmas on Christmas eve. Which means that on the 23rd the kids usually decorate the house for a birthday party. They use balloons, the birthday banner, the party cloth, etc. Anything that we would normally use for a birthday party. Notes: Often Christian stores will

sell Nativity balloons, and sometimes even ones that say Happy Birthday Jesus on them. They are awfully fun for this special birthday party.

24. *Birthdya Cake* -- traditionally we have cinnamon rolls for breakfast on Christmas morning. We stick a candle in each of the boys rolls and we all sing Happy Birthday to Jesus before they blow out the candles. Then we dig in and enjoy them. We save the ice cream for Christmas day!

25. *Merry Christmas!* The boys didn't have a craft bag this day, instead we spent the day with family. You could have fun and perform a shadow puppet show of the Nativity though..



Resources

1. http://www.hubbardscupboard.org/Verses_for_Advent_Countdown_Chain.pdf, http://www.teacherhelp.org/make_a_christmas_countdown_craft.htm
2. <http://www.dltk-bible.com/angels/mspoonangel.htm>; <http://www.backtothebible.org/index.php/The-Twelve-Voices-of-Christmas.html>
3. <http://thelongthread.com/?p=1604>
4. http://www.curreclick.com/product_info.php?products_id=25589&affiliate_id=23996
5. <http://www.marthastewart.com/article/pipe-cleaner-ornaments>; http://www.christianbook.com/legend-candy-cane-dvd/9780310702764/pd/02763?item_code=WW&netp_id=253041&event=ESRCN&view=covers; <http://www.bettycrocker.com/recipes.aspx/candy-cane-cookies>; <http://www.angelfire.com/poetry/fanny/231.html>
7. <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/kwanza/candles/>
8. http://leemills.typepad.com/just_like_martha/2008/11/a-recycled-christmas-tree-by-lilly.html
9. <http://www.dltk-holidays.com/Xmas/3dstar.htm>
10. http://www.dltk-bible.com/t_template.asp?t=http://www.dltk-bible.com/advent/13.gif; <http://thehomespunheart.blogspot.com/2009/03/names-of-jesus-garland-easter.html>

11. <http://www.first-school.ws/activities/bible/nativity.htm>,
http://www.activityvillage.co.uk/handmade_nativity_scene.htm,
<http://www.rogersplaceblog.com/2007/12/christmas-clothespin-nativity-scene.html>
12. <http://www.dltk-kids.com/animals/mhprintlamb.htm>
13. <http://www.executivehomemaker.com/2009/03/mm-christmas-poem/>, <http://www.bellaonline.com/articles/art14409.asp>
14. <http://jas.familyfun.go.com/arts-and-crafts?craftid=10692&page=CraftDisplay>
15. <http://www.daniellesplace.com/Images3/christmascard2003pat72.gif>
18. <http://www.oldenglishcrackers.com/make-your-own-crackers.htm>; http://www.oldenglishcrackers.com/index.php?main_page=index&cPath=L8
19. <http://www.aokcorral.com/projects/gingerpat.gif>
20. <http://www.easyfunschool.com/article1409.html>; <http://www.marthastewart.com/article/making-play-dough-with-kids>
21. <http://jas.familyfun.go.com/arts-and-crafts?page=CraftDisplay&craftid=10154>; <http://www.gulf-shores-real-estate.com/free-printable-christmas-village.html>
22. <http://heavenlyhomemakers.com/blog/smells-like-christmas-cookies-reindeer-cuties>

Additional Websites:

More candy cane info: http://www.paversnest.com/candy_cane_lane.htm

Gingerbread Finger Puppets: http://www.pearsonlongman.com/young_learners/teachers/resources-archive/gingerbread/storytemplate.html

Jan Bret Advent Calendar: http://www.janbrett.com/christmas_treasury_advent_calendar.htm

Gobs Of Christmas Stuff: <http://www.homeschoolblogger.com/joyfulmusic/622672/>

Preschool Christmas Fun including, advent calendars, Bible stories, crafts, etc.: <http://www.hubbardscupboard.org/christmas.html>

More Gobs Of Christmas Stuff: <http://www.teacherhelp.org/chris.htm>

Online Advent Calendar: <http://www.teachingmom.com/features/advent.html>

Homeschool In The Woods Christmas Plans & More: <http://www.homeschoolinthewoods.com/ChristmasLesson/>

