



December 2017

parenting CHRISTIAN kids



**MIFFLIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**

Teach Children What to Treasure

POWERSOURCE

ASK GOD:

1. To bless your family's Christmas preparations and reflections.
2. To help your children feel satisfied with what they have.
3. To show your family the value of spiritual things rather than material things.

Despite Christians' efforts to honor the true meaning of Christmas, each December we must do battle with our consumer-oriented culture. The temptation to overindulge our children isn't limited to the holiday season, either. All year long, kids are bombarded by ads for "must-have" items. Parents often give in, either because they can or because they don't want their kids to feel deprived or left out.

From a spiritual standpoint, materialism shifts our priorities and dependence from God and heavenly things to what the world offers. From a developmental standpoint, overindulged children are less able to cope with stress, often lack self-control, and are at risk for being self-centered and depressed,

researchers say. As the Christmas season approaches, keep these tips in mind.

Don't rely on gifts as substitutes. Children desire time with you and emotional security. Deep down, they want relationships more than things.

Emphasize the importance of nonmaterial values. Prioritize spending time together as a family, whether you're engaged in experiences and activities or spending quiet time at home. Watch the example you set regarding shopping and spending.

Help children explore their values. Instead of just saying "no" to every request, use the moment to discover what's important to kids.

Nurture Generous Hearts

Jesus gave us the best guidance for living in a culture that overflows with materialism. In Matthew 6:33 (NLT), he challenges us to “seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.” When we trust Jesus to provide, we can be generous and find joy in giving to others. Helping children develop a heart of gratitude is the best cure for a sense of entitlement. Gratitude moves the focus off ourselves so we can consider other people’s needs and act generously in response. Start by talking with your children about sharing. Then discuss why God wants us to be generous—and how sharing our blessings with others becomes a blessing for them. Try these ideas to nurture generosity and a giving spirit this Christmas.

Hearts for Jesus Make a big stocking with the name “Jesus” in glitter. Let children make felt or paper hearts with their names on them and give their “hearts” to Jesus. (After all, that’s what he wants the most at Christmas!)

12 Days of Serving As a family, come up with 12 acts of service you can perform together during December. For example, shovel snow for a neighbor, donate extra blankets to a homeless shelter, and deliver cookies and hot cocoa to homebound senior citizens.

Try Tithing When children receive money for Christmas, have them use 10 percent to help someone else, whether they donate it or buy a small gift. Together, keep a journal detailing how children use that 10 percent—and see how the blessings add up!

Adopt a Family Purchase gifts and a holiday meal for a family in need. Then deliver everything on (or right before) Christmas Eve. You can do this anonymously.

All-Night Anticipation Curl up in sleeping bags beneath your tree on Christmas Eve. Before going to sleep, talk about what Mary and Joseph experienced on the journey to

Bethlehem and in the stable. Before opening gifts in the morning, emphasize that Jesus is the first—and best—Christmas gift.

Baby Blessings Older kids can throw a baby shower (complete with birth announcements!) for Jesus and then donate items to a local crisis-pregnancy center.

Anonymous Angels On Christmas morning, have family members draw names. During each of the next 12 days, angels should anonymously do something special for their person (do a chore, leave a note or drawing, make a treat, etc.). On January 6 (Epiphany), have an Angel Party and reveal your identities. Serve angel food cake and discuss what it was like to bless others—and to be blessed by others.

Bearing Gifts Fill lunch sacks with small treats and tape them shut. Read aloud Matthew 2:1-12 and say: “After Jesus was born, wise men traveled a long way to bring him gifts. Let’s pretend to be wise men and camels!” Take turns being wise men who guide camels on all fours—carrying a sack on their back. Then talk about what gifts the wise men gave Jesus and what gifts we can give him.



TEACHABLE MOMENTS

The Greatest Gift

Beforehand, wrap a small gift for each family member. (Choose a variety of items that anyone would enjoy.) Sit in a circle and give each person one gift to hold.

Say: **As I read the Christmas story, pass your gift to the person on your right every time I say “God,” “Lord,” or “Jesus.” When I’m done, I’ll say “amen,” and you’ll keep the gift you’re holding at that time.**

Read aloud Matthew 2:1-12; Luke 1:26-38; and Luke 2:1-20. Then say “amen.” Have family members hold their gifts while you ask these questions: **What did you have to do to receive the gift you have? What did we have to do to receive the gift of Jesus? What is most exciting to you about the Christmas story, and why?**

Say: **Jesus is the greatest gift of all! He freely gave his life for us out of love. Because of Jesus, we’ll live forever with him—and so will everyone else who loves him.**

Close in prayer and open your gifts.

SCRIPTURE OF THE MONTH

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."
Isaiah 52:7

DECEMBER CALENDAR

Saturday, December 2 11:45 am Family Service Project

Join us as we gather after the Children's Christmas Program dress rehearsal to fill food bags for children. This new church program provides children from Goshen Lane Elementary School a source of food every Friday for those who have "food insecurity" over the weekend. All children in grades K-6 are encouraged to participate (younger ones can with parent's assistance, and older ones can be "supervisors"). We will meet in room 8 downstairs.

Sunday, December 3 10:30 am Children's Christmas Program

We have **one worship service this Sunday** (with Sunday School at 9:15 am), with some of our children leading worship with "An Advent Program that Almost Wasn't". Please invite others to come worship with us and support our little ones.

Sunday, December 17 3:30 pm All-Church Caroling

Our whole church family is invited to join us for Christmas Caroling. We will meet at the church at 3:30 pm, then go to nursing homes and a few homebound members to carol until around 5:00 pm. We'll return to the church for hot chocolate and cookies. Help us spread the Christmas spirit while joining in with your Mifflin Church Family—all ages are welcome.

Sunday, December 24 5:30 pm Family Christmas Eve Service

Our own 8th Day Puppets will be in the service, along with a chance for all children to help tell the Christmas story. Your child can come in costume (Mary, Joseph, wise men, sheep...) or come early to borrow one. Invite your family and friends to join us (services also at 8:00 and 11:00 pm).

WORSHIP IN DECEMBER

Here's the definitive list of worship services for this month (yes, it can be confusing!!)

Sunday December 3

One Service at 10:30 am
Sunday School at 9:15 am

Sunday, December 10

Two Services at 9:00 and 11:15 am.
Sunday School at 10:10 am

Sunday, December 17

Two Services at 9:00 and 11:15 am.
Sunday School at 10:10 am

Sunday, December 24

One Service at 10:30 am
NO Sunday School

Sunday, December 31

One Service at 10:30 am
NO Sunday School



Growing in Faith Together

Last month's conversation about children and technology just scratched the surface, so we are looking to continue the conversation in the Spring. Thank you to Christian Billman for leading the conversation.

GiFT for Parents

Sunday, December 3

Once you have dropped off your children and grabbed a cup of coffee, join with other parents and grandparents in the choir room at **9:30 am**. **(note the time change—**

Sunday School at 9:15 am!) How do we survive the holidays?

LOOKING AHEAD:

Our **GiFT for Parents** in January will be on Sunday, January 7, when we will talk about program ideas for the remainder of the year, as well as resolutions (individual and family).