



## Four Things Children Really Want for Christmas That Won't Put You into Debt!

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What do children really want for Christmas? It's not another toy or electronic gadget. Here's what they really want:

### **Time with parents and the family**

- Kids spell love T-I-M-E.
- Consider what you really enjoy about the Christmas season. Remember your childhood Christmas holidays. What traditions, activities or occasions were particularly pleasurable to you? What brings you peace and joy? List them and focus on them during December
- Encourage time-related activities instead of stuff-giving. Decorate the tree together, bake cookies together. See a Christmas play together.
- Have a plan for Christmas day and the day after to ward off boredom. Make sure one of the toys is something that can be played with together such as a board game or puzzle.

### **Reliable traditions**

- Traditions can be simple such as the same decorations on the tree year after year, visiting a local nativity, watching the movie *A Christmas Story*, or doing a puzzle and drinking hot chocolate.
- Consider asking your children to donate a nearly-new toy that they rarely play with to a homeless shelter or Toys for Tots campaign.

### **Realistic expectations about gifts**

- Talk to your children and spouse about realistic expectations and the real reason for the season.
- Ask your children for ideas on how to make Christmas more Christ-centered. They may

surprise you!

- Teach your children to recognize advertising slogans that emphasize spending, consumerism and a false sense of perfection for the holidays. (“have the perfect tree-shop now!”)
- Jesus received only three gifts, they will receive only three gifts.
- Consider buying only for children and not adults. Ask your extended family to exchange names instead of buying for everyone.
- Consider buying one gift for an entire family such as a movie night gift basket or tickets to their local zoo or a local play.
- Pay for gifts in cash. Studies have shown that we spend up to 20% more when we use debit or credit cards instead of cash.
- Talk to your children about proper behavior *before* you enter a store. Explain that you are shopping for someone else (not them) or for necessities, not toys. Be clear about your expectations of how they will behave (no whining, begging, pleading, etc.)

#### **An even pace to the holiday season**

- Don't start Christmas too early. Wait until after Thanksgiving or later to start activities.
- Put aside count-down calendars or “letters to Santa” wish lists if they promote greed and over-emphasize the gift-aspect of the holiday.
- Support stores that delay Christmas displays until after Thanksgiving. Ask the “early birds” to delay their Christmas displays.
- Save some activities for the post-Christmas let-down such as playing games, baking cookies, watching a movie.
- If your children receive an overabundance of toys (from grandparents or relatives), hide some away and pull them out in February or even as late as the summer.
- Consider with holding some gifts until Epiphany (the 12<sup>th</sup> day after Christmas) which is traditionally when the Wise Men arrived with their gifts for the baby Jesus.



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