Dear Parents,

Hopefully by now you are all getting in the Christmas spirit. We have finished with all of our Thanksgiving traditions and now it is time to prepare for the most wonderful time of the year! Sometimes even though we try our hardest to be present and remember the true reason for the season, it can be easy for our children to get caught up in the materialistic aspects of the holiday.

Do you feel like your children have lost the true meaning of Christmas? Are they more focused on what Santa is going to bring them and fail to celebrate the birth of Jesus? Our children are surrounded by advertisements and seeing the latest toy or gadget. Combine that with what friends are getting and toy catalogs coming in droves in the mail and you get a bad case of the gimmies!

How can you help your child understand that Jesus should be our focus at Christmas? How do we teach them the joy in giving and not turn into miniature Scrooges? We want to help you in teaching your children to truly enjoy and celebrate Christmas and the gift of Jesus. Check out this video, then we will take a deeper look.

<https://vimeo.com/parentministry/review/112240863/b6a5ef90b9>

1 Timothy 6:10 says, “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.” We must teach our children the joy of giving rather than receiving. What better time to do this than at Christmas when we received the greatest gift of all. We have put together some tips and suggestions to help you with this task.

First, as parents, we must take a look at ourselves and ask “what are my actions showing my children”? Are *you* consumed with the latest gadget and accumulating more stuff? If so, you are teaching your child what to place their focus on too. Practice what you preach. Perhaps it is time to rein in on how much you are spending on your children this Christmas and not overspend. Surveys have shown that Americans plan (on average) to spend nearly $300 per child this year! Is it any wonder that our children can become materialistic this time of year? Help your child to understand the concept of money and how much things cost. If they receive an allowance, help them to prioritize their own money. Set a limit for what they can spend and what must be saved or given.

Many children have no idea how fortunate they are because luckily, they have never known hunger or felt the disappointment of not receiving gifts at Christmas. We must teach them the difference between a need and a want. Involve them in giving to someone less fortunate. Let them help to choose toys they no longer play with and donate them. Participate in mission projects with your children and talk about why you are giving back. Sponsor a child in a poverty nation or adopt an angel off an angel tree. Children often have empathy for other children. When they see others who are less fortunate firsthand, they may learn to appreciate what they have at home. Hebrews 13:16 says, “Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.”

Take the time to foster positive memories this Christmas that don’t involve consumer products. Bake Christmas cookies together and take them to a neighbor, drive/walk around your neighborhood and look at lights and decorations, or watch Christmas movies as a family. Do not reward them with money or treats, but with praise and the gift of your time. Doing these things will create memories that they will remember long after that toy is long gone and help set characteristics in them to carry into adulthood.

Building Young Disciples,

Pastor Sarah