

December 2017

# parenting CHRISTIAN kids



## 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.

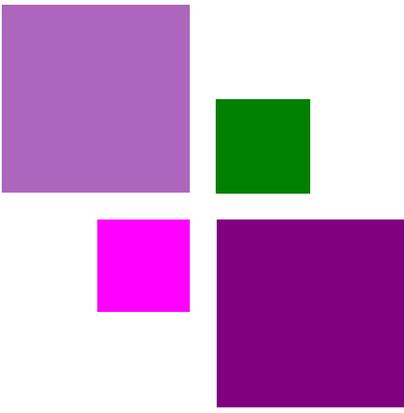
From a spiritual standpoint, materialism shifts our priorities and dependence from God and heavenly things to what the world offers. From a developmental standpoint, overindulged children are less able to cope with stress, often lack self-control, and are at risk for being self-centered and depressed,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



# December



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p>4th and 5th Grade parents - Please join your child at the Dec. 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> session.</p>						<p>1<sup>st</sup> Recon. Retreat</p> <p>No Room at the Inn</p>
<p>3 Elem. R.E.</p>	<p>4 Elem. R.E.</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>6 St. Nicholas 7:00 Stations of the Nativity</p>	<p>7 7:00 PM Immaculate Conception Liturgy</p>	<p>8 9:30 AM Immaculate Conception Liturgy</p>	<p>9 10:00 AM 1<sup>st</sup> Recon. Service Fair Trade Festival</p>
<p>10 Elem. R.E. Fair Trade Festival &amp; Christmas Concert</p>	<p>11 Elem. R.E.</p>	<p>12 Our Lady of Guadalupe</p>	<p>13 St. Lucy  7:00 Taize Prayer</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>16 6:30 PM Spaghetti with Santa</p>
<p>17 Elem. R.E.</p>	<p>18 Elem. R.E.</p>	<p>19</p>	<p>20 7:00 Parish Recon. Service</p>	<p>21</p>	<p>22</p>	<p>23</p>
<p>24 Christmas Eve Liturgies: 4:00, 6:00 &amp; 10:00 PM</p>	<p>25 Christmas Day Liturgy 10:00 AM</p>	<p>26 St. Stephen</p>	<p>27 7:00 Guided Meditation</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30</p>
<p>31 Feast of the Holy Family  Happy New Year</p>						



## Our New Bishop!



Pope Francis has named Bishop Barry C. Knestout, auxiliary (assistant) bishop of the Archdiocese of Washington, to serve as our Diocese's bishop. He will be installed on Friday, January 12, 2018, at 2 p.m. at the Cathedral. You can learn more [here](#).

## Share the Gift of Warmth

One of our parishioners who teaches in a Richmond city school has asked us to help keep the children in her school warm this winter. As you prepare your own child for the chills of the season, please consider donating new or gently-used winter coats, gloves, and hats for children in grades K-5.

Your gifts can be placed in the donation box by the Youth Tables in the commons by **December 11th**.

## Prayer of the Month

We are continuing to practice the Apostles' Creed this month. (You'll get an extra chance to practice each week at Mass!)

*I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.*

## Celebrate Our December Saints

December is filled with special days!

How will you celebrate them?

- Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>** - Surprise your children with chocolate coins or small gifts in their shoes on **St. Nicholas'** feast day.
- Dec. 8<sup>th</sup>** - Attend Mass for the **Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary** if possible. This feast celebrates that **Mary** was free from all sin from the very first moment of her conception and throughout her whole life.
- Dec. 9<sup>th</sup>** - Decorate your table with roses - real, artificial, home-made - for the feast of **St. Juan Diego**. Read about him [here](#).
- Dec. 12<sup>th</sup>** - Have a Mexican feast (or simple taco dinner) for the feast of **Our Lady of Guadalupe**.
- Dec. 13<sup>th</sup>** - Bake a braided sweet bread ring (or canned cinnamon rolls) for **St. Lucy's** feast day.
- Christmas Eve or Day** - Read one of the Gospel accounts of Jesus' birth - Matt. 1:18-25 or Luke 2:1-20.
- Dec. 26<sup>th</sup>** - Sing *Good King Wenceslaus*, the story of how King Wenceslaus went out on **St. Stephen's** day to bring charity to the poor. How can your family help someone in need?
- Dec. 28<sup>th</sup>** - On the **Feast of the Holy Innocents**, say a prayer that children around the world will be safe, happy and well.
- Dec. 30<sup>th</sup>** - Plan a special family activity to celebrate the **Feast of the Holy Family**. What can you do to live more like them?

### Christmas Gift Suggestions:

To your enemy - forgiveness.

To an opponent - tolerance.

To a friend - your heart.

To a customer - service.

To all - charity.

To a child - a good example.

To yourself - respect.



*I wait for the LORD, my whole being WAITS, and in HIS WORD I put my HOPE. Psalm 130:5*

## Advent Activities

Talk as a family about how you can make the most of the Advent season. Be realistic about what can be done and what will be most meaningful - see "Simplify Your Holidays" below. Here are some possibilities:

- Go see Christmas lights and take time to talk about Jesus, the Light of the World, bringing light into the darkness.
- Have a family movie night with your favorite Christmas movie. (Bonus: bundle up in blankets, with popcorn and cocoa!)
- Go Christmas caroling to spread the joy of the season.
- Make and deliver treats to neighbors.
- Attend an Advent or Christmas musical performance or play. **(Redeemer's concert is Sunday, Dec. 10th, at 3:00.)**
- Give a gift (or three!) to Jesus to celebrate His birthday. Jesus taught that when we help those in need, we are helping Him. Do something to make the holiday season better for someone who is in need, sad, or lonely this year.
- Lighten the baking load and enjoy fellowship by holding a cookie swap or cookie decorating party with friends and family.
- Visit a Living Nativity. If this isn't possible, gather around your family's Nativity and talk about what the sights, sounds, and even smells may have been. Enjoy the **12 days of Christmas!** Christmas Day is just the beginning - the season lasts through **Epiphany** on January 6<sup>th</sup>, so keep celebrating and don't rush to put away decorations!

## Simplify Your Holidays

Take a moment to reflect on what kind of holiday celebration you want. Are you looking for more activities to enjoy with your children? New charitable or community-based traditions? A clearer celebration of your spiritual beliefs? Or are you trying to reduce the stress and get a little extra time to sleep? Once you have decided what you want to do differently, it's easier to decide how to act.

Imagine that the holidays have come and gone, and you are observing the aftermath. Picture the scene carefully: the way the house looks, the way you feel, what your family is doing. Once you can see the image clearly, answer the following questions:

- \* Does your usual celebration focus on those aspects of the holiday that you feel are most important?
- \* Which parts of your celebration would be the easiest to change so that you could spend more time on the things that are most meaningful for you?
- \* What holiday memories do you want for yourself & your family?
- \* Which activities could you scale back to reduce stress?
- \* Where can you enlist help to make tasks easier and more fun?
- \* Which activities could you cut out altogether?
- \* Which activities do you find particularly enriching, and worthy of more time and effort?



Click the image to get fun, faithful and FREE Advent activities and videos delivered to your email.

## The Advent Wreath

The Advent wreath can help you focus on preparing for Jesus' coming, amidst the hustle and bustle of the holiday season.

The evergreen circle reminds us of God's love for us, which has no beginning or end. We light the candles in the dark of winter as we anticipate the coming of Jesus, the Light of the World.

Try turning down the lights so you can focus more on the candles and making this a special, prayerful time. There is no correct way to pray with your wreath, so you can decide for yourself what works best for you family. Use an Advent booklet, pray in your own words, or try the ones at these links:

[Advent Wreath Prayers](#)

[Shorter Advent Wreath Prayers](#)

## Blessing the Nativity

In a small procession, each member of the family can carry one of the figures to its place. (Consider waiting to add Jesus until Christmas Eve.) When all are in place, pray:

*God of Love, bless this nativity we have prepared. Let it be a daily reminder of the hope and promise of the coming of your Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ. In his holy name, we pray. Amen.*

## 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.

“Store your treasures in heaven ...  
Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your  
heart will also be.”  
- Matthew 6:20-21

# MEDIA MADNESS



## MOVIE

**Title:** *The Star*

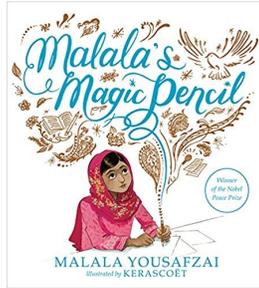
**Genre:** Animation, Adventure, Comedy

**Rating:** PG

**Cast:** Tyler Perry, Oprah Winfrey, Kristin Chenoweth, Zachary Levi

**Synopsis:** A brave donkey yearning for adventure teams up with some eccentric stable animals. When the new friends follow a star, they become unlikely heroes of the first Christmas.

**Our Take:** This major Sony Pictures release includes lots of big-name talent, including a title song by Mariah Carey. Based on the trailer, the movie seems to offer more comedy and animated antics than religious insight. It is refreshing, though, to have a holiday release that actually focuses on the reason for the season - Jesus.



## BOOK

**Title:** *Malala's Magic Pencil*

**Author:** Malala Yousafzai

**Synopsis:** The 20-year-old Nobel Peace Prize winner, who advocates for human rights and education, offers inspiration in this new picture book. While sharing her vision for equality and opportunity, she encourages young readers to change the world.

**Our Take:** Despite Malala's experience surviving an attempted murder, this book remains age-appropriate for kids ages 4 to 8. There's a suggestion of danger and hardship, but Malala's message about educational ideals and the goodness of people is positive. Older kids may wonder what the author endured, and the book may provide a great opportunity to discuss the basics of Christian faith versus other faiths.

## Games, Sites & Apps

### Anaxi

In this lighthearted card game, which won a "best family fun" award, players make creative connections between words. The goal is to brainstorm people, places, and things that have qualities in common. Answers can be challenged. For ages 8 and up.

### AutismHwy.com

This site, launched by the mother of an autistic boy, features fun games for children who are on the autism spectrum. It's also filled with lots of helpful information for parents, including a blog, articles, resources, events, and specialists. Users must create an account to access site material.

### Leela Kids

This free educational app for kids ages 3 to 15 curates podcast content based on topics and age groups. Topics range from science and space to music and animals. Kids and parents can rate and share any episode or story. Parents can hide certain age categories as desired.



## CULTURE & TRENDS

**An Eye-Opener** Spending more time playing outdoors has a protective effect on children's eyesight, say researchers. Lots of exposure to outdoor light may also reduce kids' chances of needing glasses for nearsightedness. ([cnn.com](http://cnn.com))

**Moods Are Catchy** Children whose friends deal with bad moods are more likely to report being in bad moods themselves, according to a new study. The opposite is true for children whose friends are generally happy. ([time.com](http://time.com))

## QUICK STATS

**"Spoiled" Alert!** 46% of parents say they've gone into debt buying something their children want. ([cnbc.com](http://cnbc.com))

**Tipping the Scales** The number of obese children and teens worldwide now tops 124 million. That's more than 10 times the number from four decades ago. ([The Lancet](http://TheLancet))

**Pardon Me** About half of parents say they're interrupted by their smartphones at least three times a day while talking with their kids. These interruptions contribute to negative behavior among children, research reveals. ([telegraph.co.uk](http://telegraph.co.uk))

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