

The True Meaning of Christmas

Christmas Time! Christmas Time! For many people this is a time of the year when they have mixed feelings. They want to feel excited and happy but instead feel overwhelmed and sad. They want to feel relaxed and calm but instead feel stretched and tense. They would like to relive the “good ole days” but know those days are gone forever. Then people question “What is the true meaning of Christmas?” in this day and age.

Year after year we often hear the question, “What is the true meaning of this holiday season?” Does it not strike you a little strange that as popular as this season seems to be, that we should continually have to ask that question. Perhaps we continue to ask the question for fear that the answer will be lost, or is already lost, in the commotion and promotion of the holiday season.

- So, the search for the true meaning of Christmas is a recurring one. I am reminded of the children in *Charlie Brown's Christmas* who are obsessed with the trappings of Christmas from the pageants to presents to the Christmas trees, while poor Charlie Brown keeps searching for the “reason for the season”. It is Linus who shows them the right path when he recites the Christmas Story from the King James Version of the Bible. Somehow Christmas has become so frenzied and fast-paced and materialistic that many people find it hard to ponder on its true meaning. So how do you keep your family from getting stuck in the rut of "gimme, gimme"? How do you avoid the Holiday Season stress? Here are some helpful hints.
- **You don't have to cut out buying and giving gifts.** Giving is part of the holiday season. So how do we keep it in perspective? Do we need to be reminded of the chaos of Black Friday? Shopping is one thing, but letting it turn you into a maniac is another. We should be shopping with joy in our hearts because of the people that we are shopping for.
- **How do you buy gifts without going broke?** Make a list of names of the people on your gift list. Is there a person you could take off or maybe substitute a gift with a card? Could you talk with other family members and agree to only buy for the kids? Could you agree with friends to just have a get-together without gifts or at least just get a small \$5.00 gift? They may be thinking the same thing you are, but they are afraid to ask. You shouldn't feel guilty because you can't buy for every single person you know. Most people are tightening their belts this year. **The main thing is enjoying this time together, not going broke trying to buy gifts.** If you are overspending your budget, it will be hard to have joy about Christmas. You don't

want your children to see you stressed out over buying presents. That will really make them think that Christmas is all about material things.

- **Get involved in giving to the less fortunate.** Samaritan's Purse organizes a project called "Operation Christmas Child" which delivers gift filled shoe boxes to needy children around the world. Kids will enjoy picking out the toys and items that go into the boxes. Help out at a soup kitchen. Give toys to Toys for Tots. Most communities have organizations and projects that help the needy, especially during this season; your family can help with one of these agencies. It shouldn't be hard to find someone in need. Get your children involved so that they can see how blessed they really are and see that there is true joy in giving instead of just receiving.
- **Visit a live Nativity scene in your community.** Go to the church or synagogue of your choice and see holiday plays and musicals. Read books about the Christmas Story. Talk about it and help your small children learn at an early age what Christmas is all about. Pray with your children and spend time with your family reviewing all the things that bring you joy and thanks. Make it a tradition to review the things in life you are thankful for everyday with your children.
- Try playing traditional Christmas music in the background at home and in the car.
- **Make family traditions and keep them special.** Children love traditions. Parents and children will be able to look back on family traditions with joy in their hearts. Light the advent candles. Take a car drive to look at Christmas lights while drinking hot chocolate. Make Christmas cookies together and deliver them to neighbors who live alone or to the residents of a nursing home.

The point is to make sure your Christmas season is filled with unselfish activities. Give to the needy. Share the true meaning of the holiday season with your children. Develop a different mind-set about the holidays. Don't see it as a stressful time of year that you can't wait to be over. Instead cherish it and love it! Remember, we celebrate Christmas to acknowledge the birth of a man of wisdom, a man of compassion and love, and a man of peace. These are three things that our society urgently needs, but is sorely lacking. Please remember to share this season with your families and loved ones and tell them that you "Love" them. Giving love to those around us is the most important gift of all.