

# ZION'S FAITH AT HOME MINISTRIES NEWSLETTER

theParentLink<sup>SM</sup>

December 2009



## Loosen the Grip of Materialism

During the Christmas season, our efforts to honor the holiday's true meaning do battle with the consumer culture. But the temptation to overindulge our kids isn't limited to December. All year long, children are bombarded by ads for "must-have" items that promise fun, excitement, and popularity. And parents often give in, either because they can or because they don't want their kids to be deprived.

Research shows that overindulged children are less able to cope with stress, often lack self-control, and are at risk for being self-centered and depressed. From a spiritual standpoint, materialism shifts our priorities from heavenly things to earthly things.

Consider these ways to tame the monsters of materialism and overindulgence:

**Emphasize the importance of nonmaterial values.** Place a priority on spending time as a family, doing things other than shopping. Also watch what kind of example you set.

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

**Realize that overindulgence comes in many forms.** Avoid indulging your children emotionally by expecting too much or too little of them. Children crave boundaries, so don't feel guilty about setting limits. Also, resist the temptation to do chores and tasks for your kids that they should be doing themselves.

### An Overload of Overindulgence

- The average American family spends \$800 on Christmas gifts every year but only nine minutes playing together on Christmas morning.  
(Washington Dept. of Parks & Recreation)
- More children go shopping every week than read, go to church, play outdoors, or talk with their family.  
(*Born to Buy*, Juliet Schor)
- America's 27 million preteens (kids ages 9-14) directly or indirectly influence \$170 billion in sales each year.  
(Journal of Consumer Psychology)



The Children of Zion invite you to join them for  
*Simply Christmas*

December 13<sup>th</sup> at 9:45am in the Sanctuary. There will be a cookie reception following.

*Are you interested in being a part of a high school small group?*

Consider starting the new year by joining a high school small group. Call Berit Wright or Debbie Boyce at 253.631.0100 for more information, or complete an application that can be found on Zion's website [www.zionkent.org](http://www.zionkent.org).

**"Store your treasures in heaven.... Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be."**

**Matthew 6:20-21**

Only God, not possessions, can satisfy our longings for love and belonging. Help your family treasure the baby Jesus this Christmas and focus on giving, not receiving.

### Teachable Moments

#### **Adopt a Family:**

Purchase gifts and a holiday meal for a family in need. Then deliver everything on Christmas Eve. You can do this anonymously.

#### **Seasonal Celebrations:**

For younger children, make a birthday cake and sing "Happy Birthday" to Jesus. For older children, throw a baby shower for Jesus by donating items to a local crisis-pregnancy center.

#### **Make Allowances:**

Try this idea with money your kids receive for Christmas, and continue it year-round: Have children use 10% of their money to help someone else, whether it's donated or used to buy a small gift. Together, keep a journal detailing how children use that 10%.

# Faith in Action!

## 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Day Retreat

January 17<sup>th</sup> 9:45-4:00PM \$10

The challenge to serve others resounds clearly throughout the Bible. Jesus gives countless examples of service and calls us to do likewise. Let's put our Faith into Action with devotions and service and fun!

Please sign-up in the Living Word House or email Kelly Mullin at [kmullin.zionkent@comcast.net](mailto:kmullin.zionkent@comcast.net).

## Family Experience: Merry "Christ"mas!

Traditions are a wonderful way to build lasting memories as a family. Consider adding these Jesus-focused traditions to your Christmas celebrations this year:

- **Hearts for Jesus**—Make a big stocking with the name "Jesus" in glittery gold and silver. Let kids 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!
- **Stable Sleepover**—Curl up in sleeping bags beneath your tree on Christmas Eve. Just before you go to sleep, talk about what it must have been like for Mary and Joseph to sleep in a barn with baby Jesus. When you awake in the morning, you'll know how uncomfortable that first Christmas night must have been. And the excitement and anticipation of opening presents will remind your family of Jesus, the first and best Christmas gift.
- **Anonymous Angels**—On Christmas morning, have family members draw names. During each of the 12 days after Christmas, angels should anonymously do something special for their person (do a chore, leave a love note, make a goodie, etc.). Have family members each make a calling card, such as angel wings, to leave with treats. On January 6 (Epiphany), have an angel party and reveal your identities. Serve angel food cake.



# Help Teens Celebrate the Season by Serving



With some guidance and encouragement, your teenagers can transform Christmas from a time of receiving into a time of giving and serving. Winter break is an ideal opportunity for young people to donate some time and talents to other people.

Many middle and high school students now have to perform community service to meet graduation requirements. But that shouldn't be the only reason kids step out of their comfort zone to help others. Instead, serving is our response to God's love and the great gifts he gives us.

Youth-group service projects and summer mission trips are tremendous times of growth and giving. Kids can reap the same benefits all year, however, by stepping out in faith to be Jesus' hands and feet to others.

You can help kids get started by finding one day of their break to set aside for service. Brainstorm some volunteer opportunities that meet kids' particular interests. Musical teenagers can join in on the Christmas Caroling to bring joy to many members and those in nursing homes. Kids who like to be outside and work with their hands can help elderly neighbors with snow removal and other chores. Young people who are comfortable sharing their faith can assist with your church's Christmas program or evangelism efforts.

Even better, look for ways you can volunteer together as a family. Start a new Christmas tradition this year by putting your faith into action through serving.

**Teenagers become more like Christ when they shift their focus to other people's needs. Youth Pastor Eric Bryant, writing in *Group Magazine*, offers these insights into raising kids with servant hearts:**

- 1. Expect more from your kids.** Stop praying only for minor behavioral changes; instead, share with teenagers the urgency of Jesus' call to go and make disciples.
- 2. Encourage kids to commit to a cause.** Having a cause creates community, life-transformation, and Christlikeness. After teenagers overcome any initial reluctance, their lives will never be the same.
- 3. Be a role model.** Serving and faith-sharing should be "do as I do" activities.
- 4. Help willing faith-sharers find receptive hearers.** Some of your kids' friends are likely experiencing brokenness and pain. Encourage your teenagers to invite those people to church events.

**Recognize your young evangelists.** Service brings its own rewards, but kids also are encouraged when they hear that what they're doing matters.

## Living Word

Sixth-Eighth Graders

This month we will be studying the 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Commandments. These are great commandments to study right before Christmastime—a time when we think more about what we want, than how we can serve others!

Here are some questions to ponder as a family about these Commandments:

- ✝ Describe a time in your life when something you valued was stolen from you. How did you feel? What did you do about it?
- ✝ What was the last thing you really wanted but couldn't possess?

Dear God, Make me think twice before I ever take something that isn't mine. Help me to be faithful even in little things that don't seem to matter...answers on tests, pocket change on the table, and small words of gossip. Teach me to live in integrity and do what is right whether anyone is looking or not. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen

# Senior High News

**December 6<sup>th</sup>:** Join us in the Faith Café for a Christmas celebration! We'll look at some Christmas movie clips, talk about traditions, and much more. How do *YOU* celebrate the birth of Jesus *your* Savior?

**December 13<sup>th</sup>:** Come to the Christmas program in the Sanctuary during the education hour. If you would like to help with the program please contact Danielle Acay.

**No regular class December 20<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> and January 3<sup>rd</sup>.**



the Sas high school small group for planning and leading the November 22<sup>nd</sup> evening worship service, "Thanks and Giving." Your hard work and careful planning were appreciated by all who attended the service.

## What's Up With Kids

Jesus commands his followers to "go" and serve others. At [SimplyYouthMinistry.com](http://SimplyYouthMinistry.com), youth minister Tim Kurth writes about the amazing things that happen when young Christians leave their comfort zones to impact others with God's love:

- Volunteering encourages young people to be "salt and light" in practical, tangible ways.
- When teenagers are outside their comfort zones, they rely more directly on God.
- By serving others, teenagers gain a greater sense of value for every life. The "poor" and "less fortunate" become real and human.
- Teenagers' hearts are melted when they encounter people in need. They realize they're not just serving others, but serving God. And they're growing closer to him in the process.
- Outreach offers opportunities to build relationships, which help kids' own relationship with God grow.
- Serving helps build other life skills, such as responsibility, compassion, acceptance, determination, endurance, and dependability.
- Volunteering helps establish a lifestyle of service in teenagers that often carries into adulthood.
- Many kids who are engaged in outreach experience a new hunger for God.
- In addition, young volunteers learn to appreciate how fortunate and blessed they really are.



**December 6<sup>th</sup>:** Chili Lunch and Christmas Caroling at 12:30 pm: Enjoy the wonderful chili and then we will go share some Christmas music with those in our community!

**December 6<sup>th</sup>:** Christmas Program Rehearsal

**December 13<sup>th</sup>:** Christmas Program 9:45 am in the Sanctuary

**December 20<sup>th</sup>– January 3<sup>rd</sup>:** Christmas Break - No Sunday School

Mark your calendars – **January 10<sup>th</sup>** we will be celebrating Baptism with a reception during the coffee hour.

