

Make Christmas merry and meaningful for teenagers



The Christmas season probably means different things to different members of your family. As parents, you likely feel overwhelmed by your growing to-do list. Younger children feel like December can't go by quickly enough, as they keep adding to their wish lists. Teenagers, meanwhile, may feel like they've outgrown some of your family's Christmas traditions. The good news is that the holidays offer the most focused family time that kids will experience all year—and that traditions can change along with your family.

With a little intentional planning, you can make Christmas both fun and meaningful for your teenagers. Most importantly, you can emphasize that the holiday is about Jesus coming to earth to save us. Next, you can move the focus from "self" and receiving gifts to other people, serving, and giving. Instead of packing the Christmas season with constant activities, step back and enjoy some quiet times together. Talk about your favorite Christmas memories as a child. Spend some time with older or younger relatives. Complete holiday preparations such as shopping and baking together.

You can also start new traditions as your kids grow up. For example, decorate and hang stockings, and then fill them with affirmations, notes, and small goodies. Or do a "white elephant" gift exchange and then talk about the gifts we offer to God and what might be on God's Christmas wish list. When kids learn that Christmas isn't all about "me," they're ready to go deeper and experience true Christmas joy.



Pulse

Check out these insights into what teenagers really want this Christmas.

- Last year, a poll asking teenagers what they wanted for Christmas had some surprising results. Although money and electronics topped the list, kids also said they wanted "something homemade just for me" and "something I will cherish for all my life." (associatedcontent.com)
- In *Group Magazine's* annual survey of almost 30,000 Christian teenagers, 52% of kids said "Spending time with my parents is one of my favorite things to do." But almost 40% said "I'm around my parents a lot, but we rarely have long, enjoyable conversations." Ellen Galinsky of the Families and Work Institute says, "Not only is the amount of time the parents spend with their kids important, but what happens in that time is also important.... Particularly important to young people is that there's time to hang around together."



Great Questions to Ask Your Kids

As you get ready for Christmas, chat with your kids about their holiday attitudes and wishes.

1. What are your favorite memories of Christmas as a child? How have your feelings about Christmas changed as you've grown up?
2. What old traditions would you like our family to keep, and what new traditions would you like us to start?
3. What does Christmas mean to you? How would you explain the meaning of Christmas to someone who doesn't know Jesus?
4. What are some ways we can honor the true meaning of Christmas this year?



Focus on Prayer

PRAY THAT:

1. Your teenagers will focus on the true meaning of Christmas, rather than on the holiday's materialistic trappings.
2. Your teenagers will find joy in "family time" during the Christmas season—and all year long.
3. God will give your kids an abundance of peace, calmness, and rest as they celebrate Jesus' birth.
4. The meaning of Christmas will encourage your teenagers to serve other people and to share the good news of Jesus' love with them.

Verse of the Month

"I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!" (Luke 2:10-11)

On that first Christmas night, the angels announced a message of joy and "peace on earth" to the terrified shepherds. Our modern Christmas celebrations can be terrifying in their own right, with more chaos than peace. But because of our newborn Savior, we can step back from the "busyness" of Christmas and thank Jesus for his gift of eternal peace.

Insights from SimplyYouthMinistry.com

Youth ministry expert Jim Burns offers memorable family Christmas traditions you can try:

- Watch favorite Christmas movies together, or go to the movies on Christmas Day.
- Start traditions with meals; for example, eat chili or tamales before you go to Christmas Eve worship.
- Drive around and look at Christmas lights, possibly on your way home from church.
- Bake and decorate homemade cookies, allowing everyone to request their favorite kind.
- Read the Christmas story from Luke 2 before your family opens presents.
- Celebrate your family's ethnic heritage(s). Prepare a meal or try a tradition that honors your roots.
- Go caroling or, if weather permits, ice skating, sledding, or tubing.
- Keep a holiday memory journal or scrapbook. Have each family member contribute thoughts, drawings, or photos.
- Volunteer together. Serve at a food bank or visit a nursing home.
- Live out an annual family version of "The Twelve Days of Christmas." Designate a recipient, and then give him or her unique variations of all the "gifts." For example, five golden rings could be five glazed doughnuts.



MUSIC SPOTLIGHT



Mainstream Artist

Background: This popular metal band has been around since 1996. So far they've sold more than 11 million albums. They're one of only seven bands to have three consecutive studio albums debut at number one on the Billboard charts.

Albums: *Indestructible* (2008), *Ten Thousand Fists* (2005), *The Sickness* (2000)

What Parents Should Know: Disturbed tackles dark subjects such as domestic abuse, war, suicide, demons, and murder. The song "Inside the Fire" from their latest album is about the singer standing over the body of his girlfriend, who's just killed herself. The devil whispers in his ear that he should do the same. Dark.

What Disturbed Says: Singer David Draiman says the song "Divide" is meant to "detract from the idea 'oh, let's all be one, let's all be united!' ... [Expletive] that. Be yourself, be an individual, stand out, make your mark, make an impact."

Discussion Questions: Is unity a good or bad thing, and why? Is it possible to be united and still maintain your individuality? If so, explain. Read Ephesians 4:3-6. Why is unity so important in the church? What obstacles stand in the way of unity in families? of unity among Christians?

Christian Artist

Background: These alternative rockers have been together since 2000, but it wasn't until 2003 that they released their platinum-selling self-titled debut. They've toured with Disturbed on the Family Values Tour, as well as with the band Korn.

Albums: *Memento Mori* (2009), *Flyleaf* (2003)

What Parents Should Know: The band dislikes the label "Christian band" because people don't refer to other occupations that way. But they also don't hide the fact that they're a band of Christians. The title of their latest album means "remember you will die," and many of their lyrics speak to their faith.

What Flyleaf Says: Regarding their decision to tour with secular bands, singer Lacey Mosley asks people to pray for the bands they're touring with and those bands' fans. "You can pray that we have strength and enjoy all the fruits of the Holy Spirit. [Pray] that we would love each other and that people would know us by our love."

Discussion Questions: Is it wrong for Flyleaf to tour with bands that oppose Christianity? Why or why not? What challenges and opportunities does that present? Read John 17:9-18. Should Christians fear the world? If so, explain. How can we know when we're aligning too much with the world?

FILMWATCH

Movie: *Avatar* (releases Dec. 16)

Genre: Action-Adventure

Rating: Not Yet Rated

Synopsis: Humans have found a mineral-rich planet, and in order to plunder it, they must use "avatars." These genetically bred human-alien hybrids allow people to breathe the air and interact with the planet and its inhabitants.

Discussion Questions: Do you ever wish you could be someone else? If so, explain. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be, and why? Why do people try so hard to change how they look? Can altering your appearance ever change you on the inside? Explain. Read Psalm 139:14. What's your reaction to this verse? Does it change how you view yourself? If so, explain.



December 2009

		1	2	3	4	5
EDGE = Middle School 6 th – 8 th Grades	FUEL = High School 9 th – 12 th Grades		B.Y.F.N. EDGE 7-8:30		B.Y.F.N. FUEL 7:30-10:30	FUEL NYC Trip
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
			EDGE 7-8:30		FUEL Off-Campus Activity	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
			EDGE Christmas Party 7-8:30		FUEL Christmas Party 7:30-10:30	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
				Christmas Eve Services 4&7 pm		
27	28	29	30	31		
Deposit due for EDGE Twin pines Retreat				Happy New Year!		
FUEL Winter Retreat @ C.O.W. 12/27-31						



LOOKING AHEAD:

 2010

1/29-1/31- EDGE Retreat @ Twin Pines

"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation."
- Luke 2:29&30 (NIV)

10 MOST VIOLENT VIDEO GAMES

ACCORDING TO COMMON SENSE MEDIA

OCTOBER 2009

1. *Manhunt*
2. *Resident Evil 5*
3. *Dead Rising*
4. *Resident Evil 4*
5. *Grand Theft Auto (IV and San Andreas)*
6. *God of War II*
7. *Mortal Kombat: Deception*
8. *MadWorld*
9. *Gears of War*
10. *Saints Row 2*

YOUTH CULTURE HOT QUOTE

"I was hungover for two years. I'll be the first to say I had a problem. I felt like I couldn't say anything if I was wronged or disrespected or there was ungratefulness or lack of effort within the band. Then I'd get drunk and say what I wanted to say. But that's no way to be."

- Julian Casablancas, frontman of the Strokes, *Spin*, November 2009

NOT TOO MUCH

It's December. . . . and chances are that right now while your reading these words, a multitude of people in your community are traversing the halls and stores of your local mall in a Christmas spending frenzy marked by reckless abandon. Many shoppers who have children and grandchildren are loading their trunks with an abundance of gifts, many of them with high price tags. Come Christmas morning, a host of happy kids will spend time unwrapping piles of stuff. . . . all of which will eventually break or wear out, if they don't get bored with it first.

Is it possible that we give our kids too much? According to a growing body of research, today's parents are over-nurturing and over-indulging their kids. The research is pointing to the fact that while we think we might be helping our kids by giving them the good life, we might actually be setting them up for a bad life.

Wise and thoughtful parents should pause to think about the need to give their kids the *best* life, rather than giving them the *good* life. More and more, the nasty effects of giving the good life are being seen in even our youngest children. Pediatrician Ralph Minear was puzzled by the physical and emotional symptoms of stress that he and his colleagues were seeing in children as young as preschool age. He has diagnosed the malady as *Affluenza* or *Rich Kids Syndrome* because the children have been given too much of something - whether it's pressure to perform, freedom, money, food, protection, or parental sacrifice.

BY WALT MUELLER, PRESIDENT, CPYU

These are children whose parents want them to have all the benefits of the good life. Consequently, they push them to be perfect children, cramming them with more cultural, educational, athletic, and material opportunities than they can handle. And its victims aren't just those from wealthy homes. The disease is as common in middle-class and poor families as in those with lots of money. Included are nausea, headaches, eating disorders, anxiety, depression, and high blood pressure. . . . all because they've been given too much of the good life.

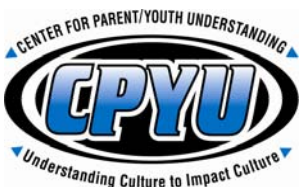
What are the options for those of us who realize that it is dangerous to give our kids the good life? The good news is that there is something better. In fact, it's the "best life." Our lives and actions should communicate to our kids that the best life is found in living in relationship with God by God's will and way, according to his standards of success. The best life consists of directing all that we have, do, and are towards loving God in every nook, cranny, and minute of our lives. And then, because of our love for him, we should love those around us rather than treating them as competition or the means to material ends.

John Wesley had these priorities in mind when he gave this timely and timeless advice: "Work as hard as you can, to make all the money you can, to save as much as you can in order to give away all that you can." Maybe these priorities are the best gift we can give to our kids this Christmas.

CPYU TREND ALERT: SLEEPOVERS

When most of us were young, we would occasionally sleep over at a friend's house. Our parents usually knew each other and shared the same values. Consequently, our parents had few if any worries about what might happen while we were away from home for the night. In today's world, sleepovers are happening more and more frequently, with a larger number of kids sacking out on the floor. But you can no longer assume that the host parents share your values or will

even provide supervision. It's more important than ever to be sure that you not only know the parents and know them well, but to ask the difficult questions about what will and will not be allowed at the sleepover. Many parents have no standards regarding the media kids will watch. At times, the sleepovers are coed. Alcohol is oftentimes provided. Sadly, some recent news reports tell of dads who have perpetrated molestation. Parents, you can't know too much.



LATEST RESEARCH: TECH ADDICTION

When you hear the word “addiction,” what comes to mind? Perhaps you immediately think about the horrible consequences of drug and alcohol abuse. But health care professionals are adding a new type of addiction to the list. Technology addiction among young people is on the rise, and it’s having a disruptive effect on their ability to concentrate and learn. The study of 267 British students ages eleven to eighteen found that 63 percent feel they are addicted to the Internet, and 53 percent feel addicted to

their mobile phones. It appears that early access to these devices might be partially to blame. 62 percent first used or owned a computer before the age of eight, and 80 percent first used the Internet between the ages of five and ten. 58 percent first used a mobile phone between the ages of eight and ten. The message for parents is obvious. Teach your kids to use technology by setting clear limits and rules, thereby preventing addiction.



FROM THE WORD

Since this is the month when we celebrate the birth of Jesus, I thought I would share one of my favorite Christmas scriptures. In the Gospel of Luke (Chapter 2, verses 21-40), we are told that eight days after his birth, Jesus was brought by Mary and Joseph to Jerusalem to be circumcised. While there, they took Jesus into the temple where an upright man by the name of Simeon took the infant in his arms. God had promised Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Lord’s Christ with his own eyes. As he looks upon the Messiah, Simeon says, “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gen-

tiles and for glory to your people Israel.” I can only imagine the joy that Simeon felt.

God in His amazing mercy and grace gives us the same opportunity to gaze on the Messiah and to accept His gift of salvation by faith in Jesus. As a parent, you have been called to point your children to the Christ so that they might hear and heed His call to “come and follow me.” It is in following Jesus that we enter into the Kingdom of God and the joy of salvation.

This Christmas, may you and your family focus your eyes, thoughts, hearts, and minds on that infant. And, may Simeon’s words be yours. May you rejoice with great satisfaction in the coming of your Savior. Have a very blessed Christmas!

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information about your
kids and their world?

YOUTH CULTURE
CPYU **eupdate**

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IN THE NEWS: TANNING BEDS

As people concerned about children and teens, we want to protect them from harm and provide for their well-being. Parents are especially concerned about the physical safety of their kids, as we teach them to care for the bodies Scripture calls the temple of God’s spirit. One relatively new physical danger kids are recklessly exposing themselves to is the local tanning salon. Exposure to UV radiation from indoor tanning lamps has been linked to melanoma and other forms of cancer, with exposure

before the age of 35 increasing risk by as much as 75 percent. This has caused the FDA to recommend that tanning bed operators limit teens to three or fewer tanning sessions a week. But researchers recently found that 71 percent of tanning bed operators allow teens to tan up to seven times a week. Parents, this is an issue you need to consider. Talk to your teen about the dangers of tanning, and if needed, step in to protect them if they aren’t making healthy decisions for themselves.

