

Protecting your teens from the pull of materialism



It is no secret that teens are bombarded with images, commercials, and messages throughout the year selling the latest gadget or the next "must-have" item. It is not just a Christmas season issue. It is a year round issue. Protecting your teens from the pull of materialism seems practically impossible, but it doesn't mean that parents should give up. One way parents can combat materialism is to help teens understand the value of being thankful with what they have, instead of focusing on what they want. In fact, according to harrisinteractive.com, "Increasing materialism among youth does not immediately translate into less generous behavior; rather, gratitude plays an important role in influencing their level of generosity." Parents can also teach and model the

value of money itself. Money fuels the flame of materialism, and whether it is given to them by parents or whether they earn it themselves, teens will always have money to spend. In fact, teens spend billions of dollars each year on "things". But, if parents can positively influence HOW and WHAT teens spend their money on, we can then begin to see the effects of materialism slow down. The fight to defeat materialism cannot be won without teens understanding the value of giving. Acts 20:35b reminds all of us that, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Giving takes the focus off ourselves and allows us to put others first. Materialism is selfish, but giving is selfless. The ultimate selfless Gift was given to us in Jesus Christ. Let us all celebrate the way our Savior lived by sacrificing and giving this Christmas!

Here are some tips to help parents fight against materialism:

- 1. Make them wait.** Don't go out and immediately purchase an item your teen just HAS to have. Wait a few days to allow the excitement to cool down. This will allow you to see if this item is truly important to them.
- 2. Know what the priority is.** As the Christmas season is here, ask your teen to prioritize their Christmas list. With most families on a budget, this will help you figure out where to spend your money that is allotted for Christmas. NOTE: Use the questions given in the Student POV on page two.
- 3. Spend time rather than money on your kids.** Instead of your teen spending time alone on the computer or watching TV, why not take that time and spend it WITH them? The best gift your teen could receive this Christmas would be time with you and the family.
- 4. Set the example.** Yes, your family IS watching you and how you value the "things" of life. Parents can be just as materialistic as their teens. Keeping our priorities in check will help the whole family.



When asked about their approach to materialism, teens responded in the following ways:

- 71% - I would be happier if I had more money to buy more things for myself.
- 68% - I really enjoy going shopping.
- 61% - I would love to buy things that cost lots of money.
- 50% - I like to buy things my friends have.



When asked about their approach to sharing, teens responded in the following ways:

- 82% - I like to help raise money for needy people.
- 78% - I like to share my things with other people.
- 67% - I would give one of my favorite birthday presents to a person who has less than I do.
- 40% - Sometimes I get upset when someone wants to share my stuff.

(harrisinteractive.com)

You might know WHAT your teen wants for Christmas, but do you know WHY? These questions might give you some insight.

Have your teen make a list of the top 5 presents they want to receive this Christmas. Then ask:

1. What influenced you to rank your presents in this order (advertising, friends, preference, etc.)?
2. Do you think this present will be this important to you next year at this time? Why or why not?
3. Do these presents have any eternal significance to your life or to another's life? Do you think that should matter? Why or why not?
4. If we had the option to give our Christmas budget for presents to a needy family, would you agree to give:
 - a. all of it?
 - b. half of it?
 - c. some of it?
 - d. none of it?



Focus on Prayer

PRAY THAT:

1. God will give your family a heart "to give" this Christmas season instead of a heart "to get."
2. God will allow your teen to find their identity in Christ and not in the "things of this world."
3. God will help your teen spend some of their own money and time on things that have eternal significance.
4. God will be glorified and lifted up and not get lost in all the lights, reindeer, and Santa hats.

Verse of the month

"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wondered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." I Timothy 6:6-7, 10 (NIV)

If Christians would pursue godliness instead of pursuing things, the overwhelming response would be an attitude of contentment, and the world would be a much different place. Our greatest gains in life would then be things we could not put a price tag on. Unfortunately, it seems that most of the time we are concerned with the here and now instead of the hereafter. We must remind our teens (and ourselves) that money is not bad, but it is the love of money that causes major problems. There are many examples of people who have pursued money and are now paying big consequences for their decisions. That is why it is so important to stop and pray that God will protect your family from the lure and false status "things" can bring.

Pulse

- In a recent national survey, 95% of adults say that children/teens are too focused on buying and consuming things, and almost 80% agree that limits should be placed on advertising to children/teens. (*Journal of Consumer Research, December 2007*)
- A teen's intent to purchase a flat-panel TV within the next six months increased to 34 percent from 15 percent in the spring of 2006 and 11 percent year over year. (*piperjaffray.com*)
- 82% of teens say they will spend more/same amount of money as they did in 2006. (*alloymarketing.com*)



