

POSITIVE PARENTING
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IF YOU REALLY BELIEVED THAT JESUS WAS COMING TO YOUR HOME THIS ADVENT SEASON...

Advent means “coming.” Jesus is coming into the world, into your world. Advent is the season that begins the new church year with the four Sundays before Christmas. It is intended to be a season to slow down, to wait for Jesus, and to be filled with wonder. But this culture has turned it into marathon shopping, baking, entertaining, and doing that pulls focus off the coming of the Messiah and onto the coming of the UPS truck, off receiving God’s best gift and onto the dozens of gifts yet to purchase, wrap, ship, and deliver. It may look festive, but it is frenzied. This isn’t what the angel announced to the shepherds on the night of Jesus’ birth: “I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.” Remember, kids are watching and learning from you!

HOW COULD YOU DO IT DIFFERENTLY, TO EXPERIENCE JOY AND RECEIVE THE GOOD NEWS? SOME IDEAS TO CONSIDER:

Have a goal for the 26th of December, that is more than just surviving. May you have experienced Jesus’ coming and may your family still be glad to be related to you.

Prioritize. Ask your family, “What is the one thing that you need to see, hear, read, sing, eat, do or experience this Advent season to make it feel as though Christmas has really come for you?” Let that be your focus this Advent.

Delegate. One person can’t do it all. Decide who will do what, and include everyone.

Collaborate. Have a family wrap-a-thon or make cookie baking a group activity. Put on carols. Enjoy one another, as well as accomplish what you have chosen to do. Turn a chore into a memorable time by doing it together.

Delete. Without apology, decide what you will not do this year, those things that drain the life and delight out of you. It makes space for those things that give you life and delight.

Do it differently. If you host Christmas Eve dinner, instead of slaving over a hot stove, serve a purchased lasagna or have a potluck or make something ahead and freeze it.

Tell others what you are doing and why. Invite them to join you in a simpler, more joyous Christmas season.

About those gifts:

SIMPLIFY AND DOWNSCALE – Trim the list of those with whom you exchange

gifts. Talk now about sharing time, rather than giving a tangible gift.

HOMEMADE – Do you have a special recipe for cookies, appetizer, cocoa mix, bread, or snack? Or, how about a collection of favorite recipes? If you knit, paint, or do needlework, share your gift. Every parent and grandparent loves some refrigerator art by their favorite young artist!

FRAMED PICTURE – A picture of you and the recipient is always appreciated.

A PHILANTHROPIC GIFT – Give a gift to a charity or cause that reflects the interests, values, or passions of the receiver.

COUPONS FOR SERVICES OR TIME TOGETHER – Think about the gift of a leisurely day together or deliver a meal, do a load of laundry, run errands, babysit, or give a back rub.

TICKETS FOR A SHARED EVENT – Is there a movie, concert, play, or art exhibit you'd both enjoy? Give tickets or a promise of that shared experience.

MEMBERSHIP – By giving a membership to the zoo, arboretum, or museum, you give the gift of time and experience together.

SOMETHING YOU ALREADY OWN – Pass on something a friend has admired or give your child or grandchild a piece of their family history.

GIVE LESSONS OR CAMP – Here is something that kids love and don't expect. Think about an interest, sport, or skill in which they have expressed an interest. Camp will make memories for a lifetime.

DO SERVICE TOGETHER – Shovel snow for a shut in neighbor, visit a friend or relative in a nursing home, serve a meal at a soup kitchen, or plan a mission trip together. This captures the meaning of the season.

JESUS IS COMING TO YOUR HOME THIS ADVENT. WELCOME HIS PRESENCE AND SAVOR THIS TIME.

For more on an alternative Advent season, see the promotional video for Advent Conspiracy at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOG6WVTE8A>