



The Catholic Youth Community of St. John Neumann

Christmas is central to our faith and getting the meaning straight all starts at home. It's what you teach in your home that matters. Christian families need to do a thorough job of passing on the time-tested, historical, and Biblical truths of Christmas to their children and grandchildren. Here are the basic truths of Christmas...

CHRISTMAS TRUTH #1: GOD IS THE GREAT GIFT-GIVER

It all starts with the God who created us and loves us. God loves mankind so much that He GAVE. He reached out to His creation to re-establish a relationship broken by our sin and selfishness. His greatest act of love was sending His only Son into this world. God gave us Jesus out of love. "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." (**John 3:16**). Teach your teens that Jesus is the greatest gift ever given from a God – He is real and truly loves them. Tell your kids that God loves them a ton and His love is unconditional and unending!

CHRISTMAS TRUTH #2: JESUS IS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON

Tell the full Jesus – **Luke, Chapters 1 and 2**. This is not folklore, not just a storybook, or a fairytale. It really happened. It's a true story and not fiction. Jesus entered history - a real flesh and blood, crying, helpless infant. Through Jesus, God became man and lived among us (**John 1:14**). Jesus was to be called Immanuel - promised in **Isaiah 7:14** and fulfilled in **Matthew 1:23**. The name means "God with us." Because Jesus willingly surrendered to the will of God the Father to come to earth, reach out to mankind, and then die for us all, "God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (**Philippians 2:9-11**). Christmas is fully about Christ.



CHRISTMAS TRUTH #3: IT'S BETTER TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE

The Apostle Paul quoted Jesus' teaching as to why he was working hard to help others when he says "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (**Acts 20:35**). This is a core life principle that could anchor your teen to a lifetime of joy through others-centered service. It's fully what God wants. We give of ourselves - time, talent, and treasure - to enhance the lives of others. Teens - all of us - need to learn this joy of giving.

The sooner you can impress on your teen that Christmas is not about getting but about giving, their lives will be enriched, and the Lord honored. Here are a few great ways to do this:

- **Show what it is to give freely** – sponsor a needy family through the St. Vincent de Paul Society or some other charity, give of your time in service to the community, live out our call to love so your teen can see that you give freely and without question.
- **Create holiday habits** - each year keep a tradition of giving back and giving something (gifts, food to the food bank, donation items, financial means). Involve your children as much as you can in the process, perhaps even having them research and learn about different charities and allow THEM to pick which one you donate to.

CHRISTMAS TRUTH #4: IT STARTS AND ENDS WITH FAMILY



Christmas means family gatherings - sometimes too many of them! For some well-meaning people, Christmas is family. Wrong. Christmas is Jesus. Remember? But Christmas is done in families and there is no better place to practice what Jesus wants for the family than at Christmas. "As we have the opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers," (**Galatians 6:10**).

Treat your family well both those near and those far. Each year, you have an opportunity to work at getting things right and keeping things right within your primary relationships. Jesus needs to be Lord at home first. Never hold a grudge into the New Year.

Give the gift of forgiveness. Make the amends of an apology.

Then, teach your teens to live their faith where it matters most - at home. "Therefore, as a Christian family guided by the Lord, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds your family all together in perfect unity". (**Colossians 3:12-14**). Teach this

every day, of course, but push to always “clear the air” at Christmas. Jesus said it's in this way that people will see that you are His disciple - your love for one another (**John 13:35**).



CHRISTMAS TRUTH #5: THE GREATEST GIFT YOU CAN GIVE JESUS IS YOUR LIFE

What present could we give Jesus? After all, it is HIS birthday! Scripture is clear. We are urged to “present our bodies to God” (**Romans 12:1**), to “seek His Kingdom first” (**Matthew 6:33**), and to “trust in the Lord with all our heart” (**Proverbs 3:5**). He desires us to “no longer live for ourselves but for Him” (**2 Cor. 5:15**). Urge your teens the following: *“give Jesus your life as a thank you gift back to Him - you’ll never regret it. Though Jesus clearly requests you to surrender your life to Him, you must choose to make it so. It’s your decision – your gift back to Him.”* We need to thank God for sending Jesus during our Christmas prayer times.

Why not discuss as a family how well you are teaching these core truths of Christmas? I’d love to hear from you about what you try to teach your kids at Christmas and even how you attempt to do that. Send me a message and let me know! God bless you and your family this Christmas and into the new year!

Peace,

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