



December 2008



## 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*)

PowerSource

### Ask God:

1. To give your children a joyful, Christ-centered Christmas.
2. To help your children feel satisfied with what they have.
3. To help your children place value on spiritual things, not material things.

### Parenting Insights

In *The Five Love Languages of Children*, Gary Chapman and Ross Campbell explain that some children get their emotional tanks filled by receiving gifts. Yet parents must exercise caution:

1. **Remember children's deep need for love.** When kids don't feel truly loved, they can misinterpret a gift, thinking it has conditions attached.
2. **Don't offer gifts as substitutes.** Time and emotional security are what children desire the most.
3. **Giving has little to do with an item's size and cost.** Children will be delighted by necessities that are lovingly offered, such as school clothes in fun wrapping paper.
4. **Not all gifts come from a store.** For example, kids will cherish a wildflower or unusual stone you present creatively.

## OpenTheBook

**"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

- 1. 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.
- 2. 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.
- 3. 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%.



**"So commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are **ON THE ROAD**, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up." Deuteronomy 11:18-19, NLT**

**What do your children value the most, and how do they view Christmas gift-giving? Start some important conversations this month with these questions:**

1. What's on your Christmas list this year? Why do you want each of these things?
2. How long will each of your Christmas presents make you happy? How will you feel if you don't get something on your list?
3. How does it feel to give someone a special gift? How does it feel to receive a gift that you aren't expecting?
4. Why do we exchange gifts at Christmas? Why is the baby Jesus the best gift we could ever receive?

## 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.





## What's Playing at the Movies

**Movie:** *Delgo* (Dec. 12)

**Genre:** Animated Adventure

**Rating:** PG (for sequences of fantasy action violence)

**Cast:** Val Kilmer, Freddie Prinze Jr., Jennifer Love Hewitt, Anne Bancroft, Kelly Ripa

**Synopsis:** In this computer-animated fantasy film, Delgo is an adventurous teenager in an exotic but divided land. He must rally his unlikely group of troubled friends to protect their world from conflict. There's an uneasy peace between the Lockni, who rule the land, and the winged Nohrin, who rule the skies. The plot involves Delgo trying to rescue a kidnapped princess and clear his name about a crime he didn't commit.

**Discussion Questions:** When your friends start arguing, how do you decide whether or not to get involved? How does it feel to be a peacemaker? Read Hebrews 12: 14. How do peace and holiness work together? Why are they both so important to living a Christlike life?



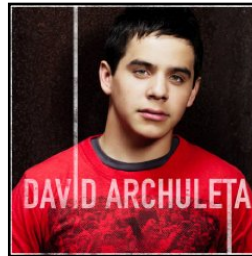
## What Music Is Releasing

**Album:** *David Archuleta*

**Artist Info:** David Archuleta, a high school student in Utah, was the runner-up on *American Idol* season seven. He began singing at age 6 and was winning the favor of *Star Search* audiences by 12. Archuleta attributes his song selection to his Mormon faith. His fans are known as "Archies" or "Arch Angels."

**Summary:** Archuleta's debut release is an adult-contemporary album with soulful ballads that will appeal to his many young, female fans. Several songs are piano-based and mid- to low-tempo, allowing Archuleta to feature his rich vocals. "Crush" and other songs address the ups and downs of relationships.

**Discussion Questions:** How would you define a crush? Why do so many kids experience such powerful crushes? How does a crush compare to true love? How can you determine what you're really feeling toward someone?



## What Games Are Out

Title	Content	Rating & Platform
<i>Bella Sara</i>	This online game allows girls to care for hundreds of virtual horses through trading cards and an online community.	E; Nintendo DS, PS2, Xbox
<i>Little Big Planet</i>	This community-based game lets kids play, create, and share what they build with other PlayStation Network games.	E; PS3
<i>Banjo-Kazooie: Nuts and Bolts</i>	Banjo and Gruntilda compete to own Spiral Mountain. A new character (LOG) tries to settle the conflict. Contains mild cartoon violence and comic mischief.	E10+; Xbox

**GAME RATINGS KEY:** EC=Early Childhood, E=Everyone (ages 6+), E10+ (ages 10+), T=Teen (ages 13+)



## Culture & Trends

**What's happening right now that may affect your children and family:**

- This year's hot holiday toy for both boys and girls is Elmo Live, which retails for about \$60. Other popular presents include e-pets and kid-friendly digital cameras.



(Toptoysguide.com)

- Even before this fall's financial crisis hit, 25% of parents surveyed said they planned to forego gifts for each other this Christmas to keep up with their spending on presents for their kids. (America's Research Group)

## Quick Stats

- More U.S. children now receive drugs for chronic conditions. Between 2002 and 2005, kids' prescriptions went up:
  - 50% for type-2 diabetes
  - 46% for asthma
  - 40% for ADHD (Pediatrics)
- In a study, kids who played a musical instrument had 15% better vocabulary scores than nonmusical peers. (PLOS ONE)

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