

**Youth Culture Lesson**  
**Finding Teachable Moments in Culture**  
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**Better to Give:** Christmas Can Look Different in Tough Times

By Paul Asay

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**What Happened:**

With unemployment still high and many families cutting back on spending, the Christmas season isn't quite the materialistic free-for-all for many families that it's been in the past. No one knows this better than Santa Claus.

According to the Associated Press, Mr. Claus—or rather, his mall-based representatives—are reporting that the children they talk with are asking for fewer gifts this year, and they're often asking for gifts for others: a job for Dad, rent money, food...

One Santa recalls how one little boy asked for toilet paper. His mother apparently had been taking napkins from fast-food restaurants for bathroom use. "He wanted to buy her real toilet paper—a common, everyday item that we all take for granted," Santa said, "and this child is thinking this is a Christmas gift."

Santas across the country are also tailoring what they tell children during these ticklish economic times. They make no promises; and if a child asks for something big, Santa will often ask the child to wish for a backup present in case the first one's not economically feasible.

Parents are getting into the act, too. Starlight Fonseca has warned her five kids that, "to make it fair for everyone, Santa has to cut back for everyone... We paint it in a way that Santa is doing the best he can to make everybody happy at Christmas."

**Talk About It:**

What does Christmas typically look like at your house? What was the coolest present you've ever received? What made it special?

Can you tell when your parents are having a tougher time, financially? If you have younger brothers or sisters, can they tell? Do they get upset? Do they understand? Do you try to help them understand?

Even if your family is doing OK this Christmas, there are plenty of other families that are struggling...and plenty of ways to help those families. Do you do anything to help other families have a merrier Christmas? Does your family? Does your church have any programs that help folks in need this time of year?

We've always been told that it's better to give than receive. Is it true? What's the best present you've ever given?

**What the Bible Says:**

“On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh” (Matt. 2:11).

“But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you” (Matt: 6:3-4).

“Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service” (2 Cor. 8:2-3).