

## Work as a Family to Conquer Materialism and Greed

'Tis the season to be bombarded by advertising and make wish lists of "must have" items. For many teenagers, providing relatives with Christmas ideas can be a challenge because they already own so much stuff. In a culture glutted with images of the "good life," many kids have a collective case of luxury gout. According to the Pew Research Center, 81% of young adults say getting rich is their first or second most-important life goal.

C.S. Lewis knew the dangers of money and wealth when he warned, "Prosperity knits a man to the world. He feels that he is finding his place in it, while really it is finding its place in him." Youth-culture expert Walt Mueller says the nonstop marketing barrage teenagers face is actually shaping their lives. They define themselves by their possessions, are vulnerable to impulse buying, work more in order to have more, understand life primarily in economic terms, are competitive rather than compassionate, get locked into consumer debt at earlier ages than ever before, and have become more and more spiritually hungry. Materialism steers us away from the one true God and toward worldly idols, leaving us empty.



The good news, Mueller says, is that when emptiness grows, kids' hunger longs to be fed even more. The Christmas season is the ideal time to show teenagers that God's gift of Jesus, not material things, gives them purpose, meaning, and hope. Read on for ways you can share this important message with your kids this holiday season.

### The United Methodist Perspective

John Wesley grew up poor. He entered ministry ready to live in poverty but instead made lots of money. For a few years, Wesley lived lavishly, but soon he began giving away most of his income. He had three rules about money:

1. **"Gain all you can."** Despite the potential for misuse, money can do a lot of good.
2. **"Save all you can."** Wesley urged people not to spend money on selfish desires but to buy only necessities. That way, they wouldn't waste money or increase their desires for things they didn't need.
3. **"Give all you can."** One's giving begins with tithing but shouldn't end there. All our money, not just the first tenth, belongs to God.

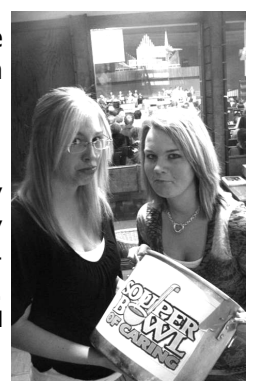
Wesley wrote, "[When I die], if I leave behind me 10 pounds...you and all mankind [may] bear witness against me, that I have lived and died a thief and a robber." When Wesley died in 1791, the only money mentioned in his will was the coins found in his pockets and dresser drawers.

What can you do—especially at Christmas—to gain all you can, save all you can, and give all you can?  
 —Hank Hilliard, Young People's Ministries, hhilliard@GBOD.org

### **Pulse**

#### Many of today's young people have dollar signs in their eyes:

- When senior highers were asked what makes them happy, 74% said money. (Harris Interactive)
- 61% of all teenagers say they love to shop at pricey stores. That's up 10 percentage points in just four years. (Harrison Group/VNU Teen Trend Report)
- Researchers found that teenagers who have supportive, accepting parents and peers in their lives are less materialistic. (physorg.com)
- Some research suggests that the negative effects of rampant materialism can be tempered by teaching kids to appreciate what they have. Teens who are both highly materialistic and highly thankful tend to say they like to spend their time helping other people. (Harris Interactive)



## Great Questions to Ask Your Kids

**Begin a conversation about materialism by asking these questions:**

1. What's on your wish list this Christmas, and why? Which items are "needs," and which are "wants"? Explain.
2. What do your possessions say about you? How would you life—or status—change if you suddenly lost them all?
3. How does materialism affect your relationship with God? How does it affect your celebration of Christmas?
4. How can our family have a meaningful "nonmaterialistic" Christmas this year?



# FOCUS on Prayer

### PRAY THAT:

1. Your teenagers will realize that their spiritual blessings from God are more valuable than any earthly possessions they could acquire.
2. Your teenagers are protected from the influence of advertisements and peer pressure to relentlessly buy and consume.
3. Your family can stay focused on God's precious gift of his Son, Jesus, this Christmas.

### Verse of the Month

**"Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own." (Luke 12:15)**

Almost half of Jesus' parables are about money and wealth. In Luke 12, Jesus describes a rich fool who planned to build bigger barns for all he owned. But the man died that night, and everything he'd worked for went to other people. Verse 21 says, "Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God."

## Going Deeper

**At [SimplyYouthMinistry.com](http://SimplyYouthMinistry.com), Walt Mueller, founder of the Center for Parent/Youth Understanding, offers these insights to help parents evaluate their attitudes about materialism:**

The fact that we often define ourselves by our work and worldly possessions hasn't been lost on our kids. Our job as parents is to help our teenagers redefine their idea of success by equipping them to understand and live out God's definition of success. Of course, this requires that we understand and live out his definition ourselves. Here are some questions to ponder as you examine your life and lifestyle. Take the time to answer them seriously. You might even want to ask your children for their impression of what you're teaching.

- What do you want to pass on to your children?
- How much does your lifestyle reflect and conform to the values prevalent in our consumer society?
- If your kids were to write out a definition of success based on how you define it through your lifestyle, what would they write?
- How competitive are you, financially? Are you jealous when someone acquires something you don't have?
- Do you mope about what you *don't* have rather than express joy about those things you *do* have?
- When will you know you've "made it"?
- Do you possess your possessions, or do they possess you?
- Are you a cheerful, generous, and joyful giver?
- Do your faith and security rest in God or in your things?



One of the most important lessons to teach teenagers is that God owns everything that we have and are. As a result, every spending or lifestyle decision we make is a spiritual decision. My parents taught me that everything is God's and should be used according to his rules of stewardship and for his glory. They modeled thrifty living and generous giving, without becoming boastful about either. And they taught me that living hand-to-mouth isn't such a bad way to live when the hand feeding my mouth belongs to God.

**Movie:** *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (releases Dec. 10)

**Genre:** Adventure, fantasy

**Rating:** PG (for some frightening images and sequences of fantasy action)

**Synopsis:** Edmund and Lucy Pevensie, as well as their annoying cousin Eustace, are sucked into a painting and back to Narnia. They embark on a voyage across the seas to save Narnia and the magical beasts.

**Discussion Questions:** How do you cope with people when they start to annoy you? How did Jesus deal with difficult people? Read aloud Ephesians 1:3-6. What do these verses say to you about interpersonal relationships? How can we show love to others in God's "adopted" family? How might that change them—and you?

## FILMWATCH



# You're Invited

FIND OUT WHERE & WHEN...

- Logos articles
- Youth-2-O Newsletter
- Posters
- E-mails
- Face Book posts
- Announcements in church
- Announcements at UMYF
- Announcements at Chat Room
- Postcards

We try to communicate as many ways as possible so that you can plan your schedule. However from time to time things change... So stay informed. Confirm all dates and times one week out!

# Materialism

off the mark.com by Mark Parisi



## Give Me What I Want!

*"Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. 'Teacher,' they said, 'we want you to do for us whatever we ask.' "* (Mark 10:35)

I was doing some research for our upcoming New Year Pre-Eve Lock-in and stumbled across a conversation in Mark 10 that fit better in this news letter than in the Lock-in. Two brothers approach Jesus with the biggest prayer request in the history of human kind. Okay, that might be overstating it a little, but it was a giant "ask." Notice their approach. It's a popular strategy with 4-year-olds: "Daddy, will you do something for me," they ask in their sweetest pre-school voice. If you slip up and say, "Sure, sweetie, what do you need?" Then they hit you with: "I want a pony and some chocolate cake and a chain saw! You promised!"

James and John try to get Jesus to say yes to their wish before they actually ask it, thinking they can get Him to give them what they want at their request. Do we pray like that sometimes? Do we think we have a contract with God that binds Him to deliver "whatever we ask"? A good dad knows better than to give a 4-year-old a chain saw, and God the Father knows better than to be manipulated into giving us the wrong things. One of the things I'm most grateful to God for is some of the prayers He has said "no" to.

I now realize that I didn't know what I was asking; prayers for broken relationships to be fixed, to get a particular job or spot on a sports team, to avoid the pain of failure. As I look back now, I can see the opportunities that followed God's negative answers. If that idea had worked, I'd have missed one that worked much better. If I'd not broken my leg, I would not have discovered an unexpected lifelong relationship. Don't get me wrong. I wanted those things badly at the time — and I still have questions about other "no" answers God has given me. I can't find a gift or the silver lining in every rejected request. And that's kind of the point. I'm just not smart enough to know all the implications if God did exactly what I wanted right now. But He does. And He loves me enough to say "no" when I need it. So I'll keep asking, and I'll keep trying to trust His judgment on the answers.



# A Newsletter for Parents

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West Heights UMC













December







Youth



**December 10** Coming in January: 2 No Youth, 9 Second Sunday!, Pre-Ski mtg., 14-17 Ski Trip, 29 Worship Caravan Retreat

Sun                      Mon                      Tue                      Wed                      Thu                      Fri                      Sat

			 1 HS Youth Mission Week Dinner 4:00-7p	2 Y.E.S. Group at College Hill 9:30a	3	4 Angel Tree Mid Sch 9a-12 High Sch 12-3p 
  5 Cookie Pick-up Youth Choir 12:30 Brass & Pan-	6	7 Mem/Evang 7:00p	8 Chat Shop 6-7:30p Board of Youth 7:30-8:30p 	9 Food Handlers Classes	10	11 Food Handlers Classes
  12 Breakfast 8:45a Yth Choir 4:30p UMYF 5:30-7:30	13 Trustees 6:00p	14	15 Chat Room 6-7	16	17 U Watchem I'm Shoppin BB Siting 6-11p 	18 Special Youth Choir 10a Chamber Choral 7:30p 
  19 Yth Choir 4:30 White Elephant 5:30-7:30p	20 Church Council 7:00p	21	22 Chat Room 6-7	23	24	25 Christmas
26 No Youth	27 <b>Closed</b> ----- <b>Kris Off</b>	28	 29 New Years Eve Pre-Eve Lock-in 9p-7a	30	31	

 Lesson   
  Fellowship   
  Mission/Service   
  Fundraiser   
  Lock-in   
  Other/Kris stuff

