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It's More Blessed to Give Than to Receive

Tags: Christmas encouragment high school HSLDA

Dear Friends,

Christmas is coming! Carols are in the air! Your children are busy making up their Christmas wish lists. The planning of parties, family holiday dinners, and Christmas cookie swaps may be crowding out the thoughts of English, history, and math. It's that time of the year! If you are already overwhelmed by the holidays, don't feel any obligation to add one more item to your plate. Instead, schedule down time on your calendar and spend some quiet moments meditating on the wonder and gift of Christmas, specifically, Immanuel, God with us.

BUT...if you would like to introduce the idea that "it's more blessed to give than to receive" as part of your Christmas traditions, this month we want to suggest ways you and your children can bring hope and God's love to those near and far away who are less fortunate. Of course, we are not saying each family must incorporate all of these ideas, but you may elect to choose one to try, or come up with your own idea to give a blessing. As homeschooling families, you are in the unique position to schedule your days to reflect your family's values and priorities. Especially during the high school years, you have the opportunity to assist your teen to distinctively choose ways to bless others so that it becomes a natural way of life to him. When you take time out of the school day to volunteer or coordinate a project with your teen, you show him that serving others is not an afterthought, but it is an opportunity to enjoy and to take advantage of the flexibility provided by your homeschooling.

In Matthew 25:35-36, 40 Jesus says,

> "For I was hungry, and you gave Me
> something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me a drink; I was a
> stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick
> and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me. Truly I say
> to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of
> Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me." (NASB)

You and your family can live out these verses through participating in programs your churches sponsor, such as assembling and distributing baskets of food to the needy. Or, your family may enjoy caroling one evening at a nursing home or volunteering at a soup kitchen (maybe even on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day). These activities can be participated in by young and old. Possibly your church or community is sponsoring Prison Fellowship's Angel Tree or maybe a coordinator is needed to promote this ministry. Is your family willing? Having your children (or even each child individually) choose a name and buy the gift with his or her own money will make the giving a more personal blessing. If your family elects to take on a whole family through Angel Tree, consider showing the love of Christ by volunteering to deliver these gifts personally.

A couple of recommended organizations provide catalogs during this Christmas season whereby you and your family can give gifts in the name of another. If it's a challenge to know what to give Grandma or Grandpa for Christmas, your child can "buy" a chicken or pig or school books which will then be delivered by the organization in the name of these members of the family. A lovely gift card is sent to the named person from you or your child. For more information on this idea, go to Oakseed Ministries, Romanian Christian Enterprises, or similar ministries of your choice.

Christmas may be a time to give a family gift of a mission trip which you will take over the Christmas break or during the summer vacation. There are mission agencies which offer short-term mission service for families as well as for different age groups. On our Homeschooling Thru Highschool Website Year of Transition page we list some of these agencies which will help you get started. Not only will this be a gift to your family, but an opportunity to serve cross-culturally.

If you are looking for ways of giving which extend throughout the year rather than just at Christmas time, a tutoring program may be something to explore. Check for a program through a church or community organization which adopts a school and offers after-school tutoring for its students. Many times these programs will run one evening a week and a child will be assigned to you for a semester. Your high school children can use this as a means of returning to another child what they have received from you and, in the process, make a friend and have an impact on a child's future.

Befriending an international student and opening your home to him or her is another way of giving and then receiving a blessing. Many international students desire to enjoy American hospitality yet never have the opportunity to actually visit an American home. Because many cannot return to their homes for holidays, consider inviting them to your home and alleviating the loneliness of an empty dorm. It's also an opportunity for the international students to see how an American family interacts with one another, to taste different foods, and to enjoy new traditions. Remember, your family is an ambassador for not only our country, but for God's Kingdom as well, so use these opportunities to share words of life and truth with students who may live in countries that are closed to the gospel. These students' impressions will remain with them as they return to their own countries.

We hope some of these ideas will resonate with you as you celebrate Christ's birth. Looking ahead to 2008, our January newsletter will offer suggestions on to homeschool responsibly during the high school years.

From our homes to yours, a very merry Christmas,

Becky Cooke & Diane Kummer
HSLDA High School Coordinators

This resource is an article from the *Homeschooling Thru Highschool* newsletter (12/4/2007), and is provided by the Home School Legal Defense Association as a service to the homeschooling community.

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