

Teach Kids Through Giving Gifts

By Paul Jetter, Pastor, Upper Valley Community Church, Piqua, Ohio
www.uvcc.info



It's that time of year when the stores are full of Christmas shoppers. Some parents fear they will damage their children's self-image unless they give them what they want for Christmas. They figure that unless their children receive the latest toys it will create scars of feeling left out that may never heal.

The sad fact is that such parents are helping to create the very thing they are hoping to avoid. By constantly getting their children whatever they want, they are sowing the seeds for a lifetime of inner dissatisfaction.

We will never be happy by getting everything we want. As soon as we have what we wanted, we discover there is something else to want. The Bible sums it up like this, *"Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income"* (Ecclesiastes 5:10).

A person's view on life is largely set during the first five years. During these years, most parents can get a child everything he wants. Happy meals, gum from the brightly colored gum dispenser and most toys are within the budget of nearly everyone.

But as a child grows older, his demands often increase. Now toys cost more, but the parents have already set a precedence. If they refuse to get him most everything he wants they risk having a war. So mom and dad both work while Junior's closet of slightly used toys continues to expand.

But the real crisis is yet to come. As Junior moves out on his own, he mistakenly believes that the world is going to dump his every whim at his feet. Whether it's a car, the latest computer or cellular phone, or just his favorite soft drink, he thinks that he has to have it.

So what does he do? He uses plastic. Chances are he's watched his parents use these magical cards for most of his life. And amazingly, they work! He gets what he wants.

But the sad day of reckoning is just around the corner. Bills! Junior is probably headed to a life of living on the brink of financial ruin. He's not alone. In the event of the loss of income, the average American family is just three to six weeks away from bankruptcy.

Is it any wonder that as our country becomes richer the problems of low self-esteem increase? Persons who try to fill their inner void with things are twice disappointed: first because they never get all the things they think they need and secondly because they become a slave to pay for the things that never made them happy in the first place.

Parents have a wonderful opportunity to begin to build a healthy self-image in their children. Instead of giving in to their demands, they can just say, "No, we really don't need that."

Then you can take your child's hand, waltz around the store looking at the pretty toys and discuss how foolish it is to think that they all do what they promise to do. Eventually, you may discover something that your child will actually use. On the other hand, you may not. It might just be a fun-filled day of affirming your child's value by giving him yourself instead of buying him off with the latest fad.

And in the process you may teach him the true meaning of Christmas.