



December 2016

# parenting CHRISTIAN kids



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## Waiting: The Hardest Part

### POWERSOURCE

#### ASK GOD:

1. To teach you how to wait for God—and to seek God daily.
2. To give you patience with one another, especially during busy and stressful times.
3. To remind your children about the blessing of Jesus, our long-awaited Savior.

For most people, patience is a difficult character trait to develop. But God commands us to patiently wait on God and to show patience with other people. Not only is patience a virtue; it's also a fruit of the Spirit (see Galatians 5:22-23).

Unfortunately, patience is often in short supply during the Christmas season. As kids excitedly count down to celebrations, presents, vacations, and special events, frazzled parents are often pushed to the breaking point.

Amid the busyness and stress, it's easy to forget why we celebrate Christmas: the birth of Jesus, a fulfillment of God's promise to God's people.

As you look forward to celebrating Christmas, help your children see how this time of waiting can not only grow their patience but also prepare their hearts. Jesus' cousin John the Baptist shouted, "Prepare the way for the Lord's coming! Clear the road for him!" (Matthew 3:3).

How can you help your children prepare for Jesus' birth at Christmas—and for his eventual return? What "roadblocks" do you need to clear away from your lives in order to better focus on Jesus and what he offers?

Practicing patience is challenging—especially in December—but Jesus makes the wait worthwhile. Read on for family-friendly ideas about discovering the wonder of waiting.

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## The Power of Patience

In Psalm 27:14 David writes, “Wait patiently for the Lord.” That sounds like a pretty passive endeavor, right? Actually the Hebrew word for *wait* means to be bound together by twisting. Waiting is actively bound up in the object of our waiting. During December, go beyond just opening a daily Advent calendar with your kids. Encourage them to be “active waiters” who are filled with expectancy and confidence. As we prepare for Christmas, waiting involves being certain of who Jesus is: a fully human yet fully divine baby who died for our sins, and our heavenly King who’s coming back to take us to heaven. What a powerful message to share with your children as they wait patiently for Christmas—and for Jesus.

**Hope-Filled Home** At breakfast each morning, talk about your family’s upcoming Christmas plans. Discuss how anticipating this special time is like or unlike what Mary and Joseph hoped for as they awaited Jesus’ birth.

**Sweet News** The color yellow often represents hope. Tie yellow ribbons around candy canes and deliver them to neighbors. Explain the symbolism of the yellow ribbon and the candy cane. (The “J” is for Jesus, red is for his shed blood, and white means we’re forgiven.)

**Go Bananas** Buy green bananas and talk about how waiting can have a great outcome. If you peel a banana too soon, it won’t taste good. Share times when you’ve had to be patient but were rewarded. Say: “God has the best plans in mind for us. They just might take time.” Emphasize that God is patient with us and wants us to be patient with other people.

**Is It Jesus?** Beforehand, wrap several gift boxes that are all empty except for one that has a baby Jesus in it. Begin by going on a search for a “hidden” baby (but don’t actually hide one). Ask family members what they felt like when their search was fruitless. Sum up the account of Simeon and Anna

(see Luke 2:25-38). Set out a trail of wrapped boxes, with the last one containing the baby Jesus. Have people follow the trail and open each empty box. Before they open each one, ask, “Is it Jesus?” Celebrate when you get to the gift with baby Jesus inside.

**Follow the Star** Hold up a large star ornament. Tell family members that wherever you move the star, they should move as far as they can in that direction—up, down, or to the side. Afterward, say: “Following this star takes lots of energy! When Jesus was born, wise men followed a star for weeks and weeks just to meet him and give him gifts. But their patience paid off—and so does ours!”

**Waiting to Hatch** Read *Horton Hatches the Egg* by Dr. Seuss. Ask: “Why didn’t Mayzie want to sit on her egg? What was it like for Horton to sit on it for so long? How do you think he felt when it finally hatched? When have you been that patient and faithful? Read Ecclesiastes 7:8. Ask, “What does this Bible verse say about patience? Which character in the book had patience? Who kept a promise? Who was rewarded in the end?” Say, “Being patient isn’t always easy, but the outcome is worth it.”

“Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.”  
—Colossians 3:12, NLT



## TEACHABLE MOMENTS

### Fulfilled Prophecies

Have family members share one interesting thing about their day or week. While the person is talking, take a picture of him or her with a smart phone. Make everyone wait while you use a face-aging app (such as Oldify) to disguise each photo.

Say: **Thanks for your patience! Soon I’ll show you what I did.** Read aloud Luke 2:25-38. Then show the photos and see who can guess each correct identity first. Ask: **What was it like waiting to see how the pictures turned out? How patient were you?**

Say: **Simeon and Anna were very old. They had waited a very long time for Jesus to come, and God’s people waited hundreds of years. But Jesus was born at just the right time.**

Ask: **What’s it like to wait on God? How can Jesus help us be patient?** Close in prayer, asking Jesus to help you all wait patiently for him.

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## MEDIA MADNESS



### MOVIE

**Title:** *Sing*

**Genre:** Animation, Comedy, Drama

**Rating:** PG

**Cast:** Matthew McConaughey, Reese Witherspoon, Seth MacFarlane

**Synopsis:** To keep his theater open, a koala named Buster Moon holds a singing competition to raise money. All the celebrity-seeking animals in town audition for a role.

**Our Take:** The creators of *Despicable Me* are offering one of the few kid-friendly films this holiday season. With dozens of hit songs, the movie will appeal to children as well as parents. After seeing the movie, discuss why people want to be famous and why God gives people such a wide range of talents.



### TV

**Title:** *Trollhunters*

**Network:** Netflix

**Synopsis:** This widely anticipated animated series was eight years in the making. Fifteen-year-old Jim is transformed into defender of the good trolls after finding a magical amulet. While Jim wages epic battles against evil in an underground town, he also must fulfill his real-world responsibilities as a son and student.

**Our Take:** Director Guillermo del Toro is known for dark fantasy, horror, and superhero movies. But his inspiration for *Trollhunters* was milder '80s adventure flicks such as *The Goonies*. Del Tor wanted to juxtapose "that Jim could be bad at gym class but fantastic at fighting in the troll arena." If you watch, talk with kids about reality vs. fantasy.

## Games, Sites & Apps

### Steep

In this new game set in the Alps, players compete in extreme winter sports: skiing, snowboarding, wingsuit flying, and paragliding. Online multi-person play is encouraged. Some play styles reward precision, while others reward stunts and crashes. (Rating pending)

### GamerDad.com/blog

Video-game expert Andrew Bub offers insights about new games and apps, as well as how they affect children. His detailed reviews include pros and cons of new titles, as well as specifics about violence, foul language, and other objectionable content.

### Woody: Endless Summer

Kids who miss warm weather will get a kick out of this wakeboarding dog. Players collect coins by helping Woody avoid obstacles. The app is free to download and play, but ads and in-game purchases are offered. Violence is minimal and cartoonish.



## CULTURE & TRENDS

**Hamilton Fever** The Broadway smash hit *Hamilton*, which injects diversity and rap music into history, has enthralled many young Americans. Kids are having *Hamilton*-themed birthday parties, dressing in Revolutionary-era garb, and singing the play's soundtrack along with their parents. (*time.com*)

### Middle Schoolers and Marijuana

The TV sitcom *Mom* addresses a junior higher using pot. In an ongoing storyline, mom Christy must deal with the marijuana use of her 12-year-old son, Roscoe. Pot is now the most popular drug among middle schoolers—and easier for them to get than alcohol. (*Entertainment Weekly*)

## QUICK STATS

**Happiest Place on Earth?** Half of 800 people surveyed say they've canceled or reconsidered trips to Florida's Walt Disney World due to fears of the Zika virus. (*Bloomberg News*)

**Mindful Students** Fourth- and fifth-graders in a mindfulness program scored 15% higher than their peers on math tests. Some parents have voiced complaints about religious influences (mindfulness has roots in Buddhism), but teachers say kids are simply learning to pay attention. (*Time*)

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