

# Parents Crosslink

## CTN: Can't Talk Now

Michael Albrecht

Perhaps you've seen strange cryptic letters on your child's computer as your son or daughter feverishly types a chat room response or sends an instant message. CTN is kid code for *Can't talk now!* Your child is telling an online friend to be careful because parents are lurking in the vicinity.

But isn't that what parents do? Don't the experts encourage us to be aware and alert regarding our children's online activity? Aren't we supposed to be watching our children, whether it is on the computer, at school, or with their friends?

Maybe. However, the fact is that we cannot be with them 24-7 to watch everything they are doing.

Our kids' lives are immersed in technology. MP3 players, iPods, cell phones, and, of course, the personal computer are here to stay. Our children have to be taught how to muddle through the muck, especially some aspects of the Internet, and to use technology in God-pleasing ways.

After attending a workshop on online pedophiles, I wanted to destroy my computer so my children could never be exposed to any such dangers. That isn't realistic. We are aware of the darker side of new technology, yet we need to be careful that we do not reject the blessings technology brings us, especially through the Internet. We teach our children how to live in a sinful world, whether we help them deal with a bully at school or tell them not to talk to strangers online. We need to teach them how to deal with the realities of their computer usage so that they can enjoy its blessings.

### Yes alternatives

When monitoring our children's online lives, we often give them a firm no to things we find unacceptable.

When we give them a no, we need to supply a yes alternative. You can find kid-friendly content on the Internet. A good starting point is a kid-friendly search engine such as kids.yahoo.com. This will limit your child's surfing to appropriate sites. You could also subscribe to a service such as JuniorNet, which is sometimes called a kid's Internet. Closed environment services like JuniorNet do cost some money, but many parents feel the extra protection, plus the content, are well worth it.

We can continue to funnel our children's computer use into approved site lists where links are given to many preapproved sites. A good starting point would be the American Library

**Rather than let tension over computer use pull you apart, look for ways to use the computer to bring you and your children closer together.**

Association (ALA's Great Web Sites for Kids). Another rule of thumb when surfing for kid-friendly content is to stick with the tried-and-true brand names. Children's Television Workshop, PBS Kids online, and National Geographic Kids are just three examples of kid sites that offer entertaining and educational content.

### Making our kids accountable

We can try to steer our children away from Internet dangers, and we can monitor their computer use closely, but we know the evil that is always out



Illustration by Jim Stearn

there. Unfortunately, online predators and inappropriate content will never go away. And the temptation for kids to type slanderous things in chat rooms will remain. So how can we teach our children to be more accountable in what can admittedly be a dangerous environment?

It is important that parents are active and interested in their children's online lives. When children type in codes like PAW (*Parents Are Watching*) or PA (*Parent Alert*) when adults are nearby, it means that privacy issues are already a source of friction. But rather than let this tension pull you apart, you can look for ways to use the computer to bring you and your children together. Let your kids teach you things about the computer. Have them show you their favorite sites. Have them show you around an online forum, perhaps even pointing out to you the good and bad aspects of the site. This can help diffuse a tense, adversarial debate over computer use.

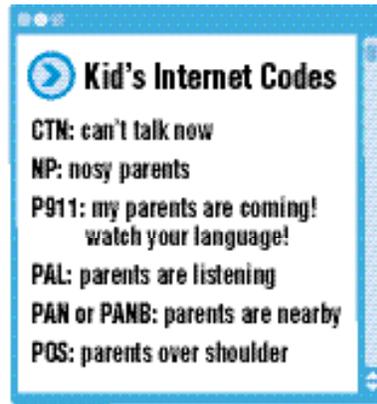
When Joseph was tempted by Potiphar's wife, he fled from sin's temptation. We need to learn how to flee from Internet sin so that we can teach our children to

(Continued on page 2.)

(CTN: Can't Talk Now . . . cont.)

do the same. This means that parents will refrain from looking at sinful pop-ups. It means we will stay away from online sex sites. It means we will avoid chat sites that provoke mean words or gossip. But it also means that we will teach our children to come to us right away when something inappropriate flashes onto the screen.

Children need to remember to let their gospel light shine as they traverse the Internet. This is especially relevant when your child is involved with instant messaging or chat rooms. It may be easy to make fun of someone, bully someone, or hurt someone's reputation through seemingly anonymous online communication. Things that children would never dream of saying to a person's face are communicated via instant messaging. When others engage in mudslinging on the Internet, our children need to



know that it is wrong, and they need to learn to stand in opposition to such disparaging language.

As parents, we should monitor our children's computer use. We keep the computer in an open, central location. We warn our children about online predators. We explain that they should never provide any personal information.

We tell them that online people are not always who they say they are. We act as role models with our own computer behavior. Yet even with these safeguards, our children will encounter Internet sin. They will be tempted. And, yes, they may even succumb to the temptations. Thank God that our children have godly parents to guide them. And even though we will carry out our parenting responsibilities imperfectly, you and I are God's way of providing a safe and secure way for our children to learn how to function in this exciting new medium.

*Michael Albrecht lives in Grafton, Wisconsin, with his wife, Heather, and their three children.*



To add thoughts and continue the discussions about these questions and answers, go to

[www.parentsconnect.net](http://www.parentsconnect.net).

### Are there guidelines that can help me decide when my child is too sick to attend school?

This discussion needs to begin with a brief reminder to use good personal hygiene at home so your child isn't always catching the latest classroom bug. Still, when your child isn't feeling well and you are faced with the decision to send him to school, here are a few basic guidelines to make sure your child's best interests and the best interests of the children in the classroom are considered.

Clearly, you should keep your child home if he or she has a contagious illness. Also keep your child home if he or she is too sick to learn or has been up all night coughing and has no energy to learn. Sending a child under such circumstances will only frustrate the learning process. Teachers frequently send children home if they are feverish or show

signs of strep throat, vomiting, diarrhea, eye and/or skin infections, chicken pox, and head lice.

If you're a working parent who cannot afford to take the time off on short notice, it's always a good idea to have a backup plan for those days when your child may need to stay home from school.

### I'm worried about my nephew. He is very effeminate. I'm afraid the kids in his class will think he is a sissy. What can I do to help him act a little more masculine?

Helping your nephew begins with asking him how he thinks his peers may perceive him. Does he feel left out, bullied, or mistreated? Find out if he realizes that his mannerisms may come across as being different from others. If so, encourage him to strengthen friendships by identifying shared interests and creating relationships one-on-one rather than on an individual to group basis. Teach him some basic social skills to effectively communicate with peers. Never shame him for any personality characteristics. Demonstrate a model of what masculine traits are and how to act in groups. Help your nephew build his identity in Christ as one who has been created uniquely. And always remind him of God's love.

### Every time we are in a public place our three-year-old says something to embarrass us with a politically incorrect observation. How can I teach him to be more sensitive?

Preschool children are full of questions. They're eager to express their thoughts and questions as they observe their surroundings. At age 3, children begin to think about the feelings of others. This is the time to teach children to be sensitive and to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Galatians 5:14). "Who is my neighbor?" they ask. We will want to teach them to be sensitive to the people with whom they come in contact: young, old, big, small, people of different ethnic or racial background, people with disabilities, etc.

When your child says something in public that is politically incorrect—don't ignore the comment. If it is a hurtful comment—without shaming—respond with "that wasn't a nice thing to say."

One added thought: a diverse classroom, where there are children with disabilities or different ethnic backgrounds, is a great environment for children to learn to love and serve others who are different from themselves.

# THE *Extra* MILE

Rachel Urfer

A cold morning rain drizzled down the windowpane, and Lizzie had an attitude to match the early November weather. She stared expressionless at the bleak piles of wet leaves that had replaced her beautiful green backyard. Summer was her favorite season; fall was more of a challenge. The last remnants of rotten pumpkins had disappeared from the front porch. Hats and mittens were already hanging on their hooks in the closet. Frost now covered the ground every morning.

“Lizzie, time for breakfast,” her father cheerfully shouted from the bottom of the stairs.

In the kitchen Lizzie found lumpy, gray oatmeal waiting for her—the same color and texture as the clouds outside.

“Good morning, honey. How are you today?” her mother asked as she gently fastened a bib on Lizzie’s two-and-a-half-year-old brother, Jay.

After a long silence, Lizzie dramatically rested her chin in her hands and said, “Why does it have to be so yucky outside?”

“Oh, cheer up!” her mother replied. “Have some breakfast. We’ll do our devotion, and then we can talk about it. Besides, the weather report said that a front is coming through this afternoon; we may see some sun after all.”

After breakfast Lizzie played cards with her stuffed frog. Some words from their family devotion kept popping back into her thoughts. “*If a man asks you to go one mile, go with him two miles.*” Two miles seemed like a tall order. In school they sometimes ran a lap around the gym. Her teacher had once told the class it would need to run around the gym eight times to go 1 mile.

“So if Jesus wants us to go 2 miles, that’s 8 + 8,” she paused to count out loud before informing Froggy, “That’s 16 times around the gym!” As she was trying to imagine Froggy’s reply, Lizzie’s father appeared in the doorway. “Look out the window.” A beam of sunlight caught Lizzie’s eye, and her whole body seemed to glow from within. “You wouldn’t be interested in a walk to the park, would

you?” her father teased. “Your mom already has Jay in the stroller.”

“Let’s go!” Lizzie shrieked.

Soon all four of them were rounding the last corner near the park’s entrance. This was Lizzie’s cue to start running. The crisp air smelled fresh and clean. A large grassy meadow lay ahead of her. As she ran faster, the wind lifted the hair away from her neck and the sun blanketed her face. Cool and warm all at the same time, this is how she imagined it would feel to fly in heaven.

At the far end of the field, Lizzie noticed a girl in a wheelchair being pushed by the girl’s mother. It appeared as though the two had stopped to watch Lizzie run. Lizzie had never met anyone in a wheelchair. She adjusted her course and dashed toward them, showing off a little to demonstrate how fast she could run. When she was just a few feet away, Lizzie stopped abruptly and tried to catch her breath. “Hi, I’m Lizzie,” she sputtered.

“I’m Josie,” said the girl in the wheelchair, shifting her tiny body as though she wanted to join Lizzie in another romp across the field.

“How old are you, Lizzie?” asked the girl’s mother.

“Eight and a half,” Lizzie said, still gasping for breath. She looked over her shoulder and saw her mother and father following Jay’s stroller down the park’s narrow path.

“I just turned seven,” said Josie, which surprised Lizzie since the girl didn’t look much taller than Jay.

Lizzie took a long look at the large wheels and the footrests on the wheelchair. “What’s it like to ride in a wheelchair?” she asked.

“Just normal. I’ve always used my wheelchair to walk,” Josie replied.

“Do you use it to run too?” asked Lizzie.

Josie giggled. “Not as fast as you were going!”

A sad thought crept into Lizzie’s mind. Maybe Josie didn’t know how good the wind and sun could feel on your face when running across a field without a care in the world. “Would you like a

piggyback ride?” asked Lizzie. “I give them to my brother all the time.”

Lizzie’s parents reached Lizzie and her new friend just in time to hear Lizzie’s idea. “Oh, I’m sorry,” Lizzie’s mother said with an apologetic look of embarrassment. Then she half-whispered to Lizzie, “I don’t think that’s such a good idea.”

Sensing Lizzie’s mom’s apprehension, Josie’s mother dismissed any concern with a reassuring smile. “I think it’s a fine idea. How does that sound to you, Josie?”

“Sure,” said Josie. “Then Lizzie can take a turn in my wheelchair.”

As Lizzie started to run with Josie’s arms draped around her shoulders and her legs dangling behind, the words from the family devotion flashed through her thoughts once more—“*go with him two miles.*” Maybe those Bible words weren’t about laps after all. Maybe this is what God had in mind—helping others, not so much with the *2 miles* part but more of the *going with*, even if it’s a little awkward trying to run with an undersized seven-year-old hanging on for dear life.

As the three parents stood and watched their daughters crossing the meadow, they laughed. The faces of the two girls were framed in the warm autumn sunshine. And neither seemed to have a care in the world.

Rachel Urfer is a part-time student of psychology and theology. She lives in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, with her husband, Gil, and their two children.





## ... did I just say that out loud?

Lois Maurer

**O**kay, I'll admit it. Basketball isn't one of my favorite sports. So when our oldest child, our fifth-grade son, decided to play, let's just say I wasn't sure how to be a supportive parent. . . .

It's the first game of the season. Through the din of the crowd I hear a man behind me yelling, "Oh, not this ref again!" Then the woman next to me jumps up shouting, "C'mon! Didn't they teach you what traveling looks like in ref school?" Soon, someone in front of me yells, "If you're not gonna call it on them, you can't call it on us!"

*Hmmm, I think to myself, the woman has a point. And since my son looks kind of disappointed, I'm willing to bet that ref has just called something against him. Another bad call, followed by another outcry from the stands: "Hey, Ref! Get some new glasses!" Wait a second. Was that my voice? Did I just say that out loud? But I don't even know the rules of the game. How could I be yelling at a ref?*

Perhaps if fewer people had been yelling, I might have been embarrassed by my poor behavior. But I wasn't. In

fact, I fit right in. I was caught up in basketball mania.

And I'm not alone.

Bill Gosse, president of TeamScore Inc., decided it was time to do something about the mania after observing poor sportsmanship issues from every angle—as a fan, a parent, a coach, an official, and an athlete. He started his nonprofit organization with one goal in mind: to further the advance of good sportsmanship. He talks to all five participants in sporting events—players, coaches, officials, parents, and fans at large. And

when it comes to parents and fans, he makes an interesting observation. When he asked the most vocal individuals why they yell, the response was usually the same: “I don’t do that.” Gosse compares loud fans to people who snore. When you tell them that they do it, they find it hard to believe you.

Athletic directors and school officials of WIAA (Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association) member schools believe their fans yell too much, and not in a good way. TeamScore Inc. conducted a sportsmanship baseline survey for the WIAA that asked athletic directors and athletes about sportsmanship issues. All WIAA members, which included both public and parochial schools, were included in the survey. Sixty-six percent of the responding schools said they have a moderate to severe problem with fans yelling at officials during sporting events. Forty-nine percent have fans who yell at opponents. Forty-four percent have fans who yell at their own players. And forty-three percent say their fans also yell at the coaches. Well, that’s pretty much everybody inside the gym, isn’t it? (Watch out concession stand workers, you’re next!)

Respondents to the WIAA survey cite the primary reason for poor sportsmanship as “parental influence.” According to Gosse, there has been a shift in why sports are important. “When today’s current parents were kids, sports were a great way to get exercise and be with your friends or to make new ones. Plain and simple, it was a great way to have fun. Sadly, it seems the focus has changed to winning at all costs.”

Jeff Sitz, the director of athletics for Wisconsin Lutheran High School (WLHS), and also a dad, thinks he knows why parents often lose their cool at their kids’ sporting events. “Being a parent of an athlete is so difficult. You want your child to be happy, content, successful, and fulfilled. We want them to play, to start, to be the star. Yet for most of us, that does not happen. So we turn to coaching from the stands or during the ride home at night. We officiate because our kid was shortchanged; we are critical of other teammates because we think that will build up our child’s confidence. It is too easy to lose focus

on the bigger picture, the purpose of organized athletics, the reason we educate in the arena of sport.”

When a parent has an intense reaction at a game, what does that say to the players—our children? In essence, it says something like this: “Now here’s the really important stuff in life. Forget that you’ve never seen me pray with such passion. Ignore that I don’t whoop and holler when you bring home good grades,

**What if we hung giant posters of Jesus in every gym? Maybe that would remind us that he’s listening all the time.**

help a neighbor, or witness your faith effectively. But if you show everyone that you’re a good athlete by scoring, I’ll get excited. And if another player trips you or elbows you, then I’ll protect your honor by losing mine.”

Not a very God-pleasing thing to say to your kids, is it?

The truth is that, as Christian parents, we know better. According to Sitz, “Being WELS does not make you immune from bad behavior, but I believe when it happens in a Christian setting, it helps to set the table for a baseline understanding of what is right and acceptable. I think that it is easier to bring people back in line when there is a common understanding of how to behave. We honestly do not have a lot of problems with our parents and guests in general. Our crowds are well behaved.

In the Wisconsin Little Ten Conference, we have a simple but effective rule: ‘Cheers are to be done in positive support of your team.’ Therefore, you do not cheer negatively against the other team in any way. Easy to say, difficult to consistently enforce.

“Faculty supervision is also in place for every contest. If fans do not comply when confronted, they will ultimately be removed from a game or may be banned from the gym for the season.”

WLHS has the staff to enforce parental code; most elementary schools don’t. So perhaps it’s time to get creative. What if we hang up giant pictures of Jesus in every gym? Maybe if he were staring at us the whole time, it would remind us that he’s listening all the time too. And just to make sure that we lay off the refs, let’s have them all wear Jesus masks. Wouldn’t be too easy to scream at them then, would it? Or how about a serious solution: Can we simply remember that all we do should be to the glory of God? Sports and sporting events are meant to lift us up. So as a fan, if what you’re saying isn’t going to lift someone up, just don’t say it.

So, fast forward. It’s been an interesting, if stressful, basketball season. Personally, I’ve accomplished two goals: I now know the rules of the game, and I make a conscious choice not to embarrass my child, my family, myself, or my Lord by yelling negative things. I just focus on the court and ignore the crowd banter. . . . *And there’s the final buzzer! Still undefeated. Isn’t that great? Hmmm . . . that’s odd. The players don’t seem all that happy.* “What’s that? I can’t hear you. Say it again.”

“Mom, did you see that? The refs weren’t calling anything!”

Okay, now that I’ve tackled parental sportsmanship, apparently it’s time to move on to player sportsmanship.

*Media producer/director Lois Maurer lives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, with her husband and their four children. They are members of Saint John Lutheran Church in Wauwatosa.*



For more information about supportive fan behavior, visit [www.teamscoreinc.com](http://www.teamscoreinc.com).

# Viewpoint

## My Personal Cabinet

Karla Aden

Ten years ago God handed my husband and me something eternal. We had almost four weeks to prepare for our first child—just enough time to climb a mountain of adoption paperwork and establish the fact that we were completely unprepared. I scanned a few parenting books and discovered that babies will develop symptoms and have episodes not found in the books.

Shortly after we moved to a new location, a group of remarkable women invited me to join their circle. Overwhelmed, I was already feeling the need to be together with others who might understand my plight as a new parent. But I was also nervous about revealing my inadequacies. It didn't take me long to realize that these women were not there to judge. When I was weary, they encouraged. When I was apathetic, they spurred me on. We celebrated many beautiful moments together. They saw me through the trivial times of potty training and comforted me after the loss of a child.

Even today I think of them as my own personal cabinet of advisors. God sent them into my life to counsel me on this amazing journey we call parenting.

We have since moved. But the lesson of that experience has stayed with me to this day. My cabinet taught me the importance of sharing the joys and lightening the loads of raising a family.

Every day brings new challenges. It is not necessary to face them alone. Whether frustrated by the antics of a strong-willed child (or teenager), hip-deep in housework, or sitting in the doctor's office waiting for test results, a Christian cabinet member can turn you toward the refreshing words of our heavenly parent, who would stop at nothing to secure the future of his dear children.

I have also learned that a group of wonderful women will not always come knocking at my door. Sometimes you've got to go looking for them.

In a new church, surrounded at first by strangers, I did not see the allies around me. Now, thankfully, God has shown me another group of women who have spent years in the trenches of motherhood. They are there with an understanding nod and the kind of wisdom that can only come from years of experience. When I look closer, I see women just like me—each trying to hold her head high as she carries a screaming toddler out of worship or cleans smashed cereal out of the carpeting. We need each others' shoulders, whether they are to laugh on or cry on.

But look! There in the back row are the women who still need words of encouragement. Their eyes tell the same story—of a woman who gets very little sleep and buys her clothes to match the color of spit up. They need to hear that it is okay to be tired and frustrated—that they will sleep some night and wear black again . . . someday.

God partnered with us when we became parents. In our children he has given us something truly eternal. He did not ask us to do this important task alone but placed us in families, communities, and churches. Look around. There are others who will gladly share your load. And there are some who need help from someone who is willing to carry their burden for a mile or two. Encourage. Serve. Experience the blessings of being part of a spiritual cabinet. If your church does not have a moms' Bible study or play group, it's time to start one. By joining together with others, you will discover how much we have to offer one another. Those embarrassing, frustrating, and even fearful moments can be turned to laughter and hope when we realize we are not alone.

*Karla Aden and her husband, Darin, live in Greenville, Wisconsin, with their children: Lydia, Maya, Joshua, and Anna.*



The lesson I needed to learn was that it is not necessary to face these challenges alone.

# OUR family MATTERS

## Thankful for a Daddy Who Likes to Talk

Jonathan Johnson

After a day of Christmastime hustle and bustle, my wife and I came home with countless packages and two tired children. We unloaded the car and shepherded our daughters to bed. They said their prayers and added a special thank-you to God for giving them a daddy who likes to talk. This epilogue was an obvious reference to earlier that day when I had met an old friend at the mall entrance and spent 15 minutes chatting with him. I'm known for my gift of gab, so I asked why they were thankful for it. My oldest said, "If you didn't stop to talk to your friend, we wouldn't have met Amy and Dusty."

My wife smiled, and sensing my confusion, informed me about Amy and Dusty. Amy was a teenage girl with epilepsy,



and Dusty was her service dog. They were at the mall helping with a fundraiser for the local children's hospital. While I was talking, my daughters played with Dusty and Amy explained how Dusty helps her. My daughters wanted to help other kids who needed dogs like Dusty, so they each donated the 20 dollars they had planned to spend at the mall.

That night my wife and I said a special thank-you to God for giving us children who like to listen and act, rather than talk like me.

*Jonathan Johnson is a member of Saint John Lutheran Church in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, where he lives with his wife, Kelly, and their two daughters, Clarissa and Anna.*



# SHINING IN THE DARKNESS

Philip Leyrer

Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus used two striking metaphors to describe our distinctive role in the world: we are to be *salt*, and we are to be *light*. In the last issue, we considered the preservative (salty) role Christians have in retarding the corrosive effects of sin as we live for Jesus. While no one disputes the importance of “salt” in a godless society, it is no less important in a “moral” society that places an equal value on all belief systems.

Just as vivid is Jesus’ light metaphor. In Matthew 5:16 Jesus speaks to us, converted sinners, and he addresses our lives of sanctification. Letting our lights shine, he says, has a purpose: “that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” Of course, our heavenly Father does not need us to recommend him, but reflecting his light is a role he lets us fill and a role he uses to bring glory to himself. Our lives, and the lives of our children, could have no greater fulfillment than to be lights that give evidence to the world that Jesus lives in our hearts.

Simply put, we want to raise our children to be lights. We accomplish that by keeping them close to God’s Word, by modeling the love of Christ, by praying earnestly for their growing faith, and by reminding them that one day they will be responsible for their own lives and the lives of others. As difficult as this might sound when they are young, our job as parents is to get them ready to leave us. A legitimate question, then, is this: What *kind* of light are we supposed to be for our children, and what kind of light do we want them to be?

Consider an illustration from real life. A back alley in a tough neighborhood had become the site of many crimes. Vandals broke into cars parked there. Drug traders found it ideal for trafficking. The local police hit upon a simple solution. High atop the alley, they mounted a floodlight that was protected by a

OUR LIVES, AND THE LIVES OF OUR CHILDREN, COULD HAVE NO GREATER PURPOSE THAN TO BE LIGHTS THAT GIVE EVIDENCE TO THE WORLD THAT JESUS LIVES IN OUR HEARTS.

cage. All night the alley was washed in light. Crime decreased, and children and adults began to use the alley for walking and playing.

What caused the transformation? Light scatters darkness; it disbands evil activity. But know something else about the light the police set up. While it was bright, it was not harsh. It bathed the alley in a light that had an inviting effect. It not only made the alley unsuitable for crime, but it also made it suitable for legitimate activity.

Light also has the ability to repel. Some light is too much for the retina to handle. Might we compare such a light to the Christian who is always right; who is so secure in his biblical correctness that he sees no need to listen to or understand others; who is proud of the way he can bring judgment upon unbelievers and those outside his fellowship, or even those inside his fellowship, according to the way they worship or serve God’s people. This kind of light may illuminate, but it does not attract.

Jesus tells us to be the kind of light that moves others to praise our heavenly Father. We can talk to our children about the way a kind act toward a bully might be the light that dissolves his insecurity. Or how sharing our possessions with those less fortunate might be the light that dispels their hopelessness. Or how an encouraging word to another who is low might be the light that drives away her despair.

Jesus said, “You are the light of the world.” This role is nonnegotiable. God helps us become lights that are warm and inviting—lights that glow with the love of Christ who looked with compassion on the crowds he faced every day. God enables us to model forgiveness and understanding, to be slow to judge, and to be accepting of other traditions and practices that do not violate God’s Word.

Saint Paul also used the light metaphor when he said that Christians “shine like stars” (Philippians 2:15). Such a light fills the observer with wonder and appreciation for a personal, loving God who has created us, redeemed us, and caused us to shine in sanctified glory.

So, shine.

*Philip Leyrer serves on the faculty of Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota. He and his wife, Beth, have four children.*

# Keeping CHRIST in Christmas

Ideas to Help Keep Your Spiritual Focus

Pam Holz

1.

Consume holiday calories that are good for you by keeping yourself spiritually fed. Indulge in God's Word on a daily basis. Supplement your personal devotion time with Advent devotional materials like *Be Near Me, Lord Jesus* by Richard Lauersdorf (NPH).

2.

Make displaying your nativity set a special event. Read the Luke 2 account together. Then discuss each individual's role in the account. Locate the wise men away from the manger, explaining they weren't present at the birth of Jesus.



3.

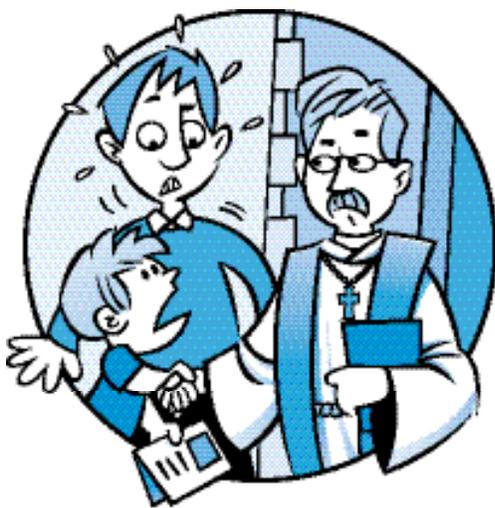
Give your children a kid-friendly nativity set of their own. Playmobile has a great set for older children that allows them to reenact the Christmas account. Place the set near the tree for easy access and frequent use.

4.

Print out eight or nine favorite Christmas hymn stanzas on index cards, and place them in a beautifully wrapped gift box with a removable top. Every evening select a stanza to use as a bedtime prayer or song.

5.

Make an Advent wreath using an evergreen wreath and five candles with holders: a purple Prophecy candle, a purple Bethlehem candle, a pink Shepherds candle, a purple Angel candle, and a central white Christ candle. Each evening light the proper number of candles and share a devotion or Bible reading.



"Dad says we wouldn't get any sleep if it weren't for your sermons."

## Parents & Crosslink

DEAR READER,

Today's parents learn from each other, sharing ideas and encouraging one another to meet the daily challenges of living in an increasingly godless society. In the context of the gospel, this is a very powerful dynamic. *Parents Crosslink* (PCL) is a response to the demand for an interactive approach to assisting parents with a biblical view of family. Please join our ongoing conversation about Christian parenting at the PCL Web site located at [www.parentscrosslink.net](http://www.parentscrosslink.net).

Kenneth Kremer, PCL Editor

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