



019: Should Christian parents play the Santa-game?

INTRO AUDIO:

Well it's that time of year again. We're starting to see the big guy in the red suit with the fake beard all over the place. <laugh> Christians, How should we deal with this whole Santa Claus thing? Should we play the game of the pretend Santa? Should we not? Should we avoid it all together? This episode of God Fearing Kids and the Parents Who Raise Them, that's the issue we want to address. So stick around.

CAREY:

Hey friends, welcome back. It's glad to have you here as we are moving toward December. I'm Carrie Green.

MINDI:

And I'm Mindi.

CAREY:

We are glad to have you here. One of the topics that has been brought up a lot in my experience as a pastor that I felt like it would be good for us to address coming up on the holiday season is that someone in my church, or my circle of friends almost every year asks me my opinion about Santa. How should Christians think about Santa? Well, let's step back from that question first to address the issue of Christmas in general. We just published our last episode on holidays and the mindset around the holidays. I hope you listen to that first before you listen to this. Because in a nutshell, that episode is saying Jesus should be the center of every holiday. And that really is the case for Christmas, for Christians, Christmas is the birthday of Jesus.

CAREY:

So we want that to be preeminent in our celebration as Christian families. So whatever you need to do to make Jesus highlighted, amplified, lifted, high, made the central focus in your home. That's what you need to do for Christmas. And the way the Santa game is normally played is not that, uh, many parents, and this may not be you, but many parents go to elaborate extremes to lie to their kids. I mean, think about it. They're up at night when their kids are already in bed putting out the gifts, putting from Santa on them, putting out the milk and cookies. Yeah, the milk and cookies already put out. So they eat it and they make it look like Santa sat there. You know, they do all these things to trick their kids, make their kids think there's this magical guy in a red suit who shows up in their house.

CAREY:

Even if they don't have a chimney, he somehow got in the house. I mean, that's a little scary if you ask me. But, uh, but people do this well-meaning people who think it's fun and all that. But let's think about this from a Christian perspective. Jesus himself said, I am the way, the truth and the life. Jesus is all about truth. What we're doing when we try to deceive our kids like that is not a truthful thing. And you may say, Oh, you're just a curmudgeon. It's in fun spirit. It's goodhearted, you know, blah, blah blah. But where else do we intentionally lie to our kids? Where else do we say to our kids, You shouldn't lie? And yet we lie deliberately to them. It seems to me very hypocritical.

MINDI:

And also think about just the focus of this podcast is we are wanting to raise our children to fear God, to fear the Lord. And in doing that they will be drawing closer to the Lord in their own relationship with him. So if we are teaching them that Jesus is their savior and we're teaching them on a regular basis how to have a relationship with him, it really is very hypocritical of parents to not have Christ be the center of attention on Christmas. And maybe let's just say he is the center of attention, but you're adding Santa along with that. You can't put Santa right next to Jesus. It's a, it's a confusion. Put him where he is. He's the fake story. And you want to continue to help your children grow in their relationship with Jesus through the Christmas season, by teaching them of Christ's love and his birth and his gift to us and all the different things that you might do with your traditions that connect to Jesus.

MINDI:

Let that be the joy. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And if you have room and you don't have that conviction to have Santa out of the theme, fine have it be a cute little story like Mickey Mouse or Sleeping Beauty or you know, whatever it is. But I'll just tell you for me, as I started seeing the focus of Santa in our culture and how we talked and raised our kids about the truth about Santa, I just started kind of getting sick when I saw him. I mean, literally, I do feel sick to my stomach when I see Santa, just like I feel sick to my stomach when I see ghost and skeletons because that's celebrating death and Christ is life. And so why celebrate death? Why would I want to celebrate Santa? So I'm just saying that that personally is how it got extreme for me as far as decorations in the home. I'd never put Santa on there because no, I'm not happy about him because I'm upset with how many people put him as center of Christmas.

CAREY:

To your point about confusing your children by putting Santa and Jesus on a similar level, think it through from a realistic standpoint, you're placing the historic son of God who truly came to the earth and saved us from our sin on the same level with a mythical, somehow magical, jolly old elf who some your kids are going to discover isn't real. And what is that going to do for them about Jesus when they realize Santa's not real, are they going to question Jesus being real because they were on the same level and they were side by side in the celebration? I mean, there's just so much potential for something to go wrong there as Christians. Why would we want to confuse our kids? That just doesn't make sense to me.

MINDI:

And how would your children feel if you were to continue this lie until 10, 11, 12 years and then you tell them the truth? How are they going to feel when you deceive them? Maybe some will be fine, but maybe not. We know of some people who actually as adults in their thirties, forties, fifties are still upset that their parents did that. And they're not weirdos, they're not emotionally unstable. They just see how wrong it was that they were lied to.

CAREY:

Yeah. Yeah. Uh, one of the relationships that should be the most trusting is that between parent and child. So why would you want to do anything that's going to call that trust into question with your children? It just doesn't make sense. Now I know some of the objections, you know, well Christmas is a magical time. And having the magical story of St. Nick and Christmas coming, you know, coming down the chimney and the reindeer and all that, that's just fun for kids. They really love it. Well let's talk about real magic. Can we, It's called miracles <laugh>. It's called the Divine Son of God, becoming a little embryo in Mary's womb and growing into a child and being born and living a holy life and dying on a cross to save us from our sin. I mean, talk about magical, that's a reality magical thing that we can tell our kids about and we can help them embrace and cause Jesus to come into the reality of life rather than just be this Sunday school story.

MINDI:

So how would you handle situations where your children's friends, maybe even cousins, believe in Santa and their parents are telling them the lie? Even Christian parents are telling them the lie. Well, you need to be honest with them and talk to them about

CAREY:

It. Meaning that your kids

MINDI:

With your kids, yes. And tell them, sadly this is what happens. Let's pray for them. Let's pray for the parents that they will know what's true. And I will, as the parent will pray about, if I should talk to the parents of your friends, I mean just be honest about the whole situation and teach your children a non-critical, non-judgmental, humble attitude in that interaction. It's actually a beautiful thing and a beautiful opportunity. Yeah. You can teach them to love their friends or their family members that are happily spouting off about a lie <laugh>. But then also kindly tell the truth, Well I don't believe there's a Santa. My mommy and daddy told me there's not. And I believe that Christmas is about Jesus. And then go about your play. I mean you can. You can guide them and teach them how to practically just live it out. And kids are going to be a lot more accepting to this kind of thing when they're younger. It's not going to be that big of a deal. But they might go home and say, you know, so and so doesn't believe in Santa, their mommy and daddy said he is not true. And they might bring that up to their parents. And so their parents are thinking, Oh, well maybe we should rethink this.

CAREY:

Yeah. And let me just clarify there. You're not saying we should intentionally make our kids into Christian commandos who are going after kids who believe in Santa. You're not saying that, right? You're just saying if it comes up in conversation, don't tell your kids to take part in the lie. Don't tell them to lie about it themselves. Just have them be honest about what they believe and go on and play. Be loving to the kid as you talk about it,

MINDI:

To encourage your kids not to necessarily be shy to talk about what's true. And that's another opportunity to teach your children to speak the truth and love, especially if it's a Christian friend.

CAREY:

Doesn't this sound so much like adult to adult when religious things come up or spiritual things come up. And here we have an opportunity to talk about the truth of Jesus bringing life to people and we feel hesitant and we have a great opportunity here to start teaching our kids a mindset of boldness about what they believe to stand for truth.

MINDI:

Right? Because Paul talks about don't involve yourself in sinful things. He says rather expose them. So there's a wisdom in how and when to expose wrong things. And this is, we're talking about the body of Christ. We're not talking about non-believers out there because they don't have a reason to know what's true yet.

CAREY:

Yeah. But in relationship to non-believers, Paul did say always be ready to give an answer for what you believe and great opportunity for us to begin teaching our kids how to think about how to feel about other people in a context where there may be a disagreement, yet they can be ready to give an answer for what they believe. And it's training ground, it's just training ground and, and it sounds scary and it's probably sounds scarier than it really is. It's, it's just a good parenting practice to teach your kids the truth and teach your kids how to handle interactions with other people who don't believe that truth. That's part of life. So in summary, as Christians simply put, we should just love Jesus and we should love him more than the fun of pretend. We should love him more than any traditions handed down through a family line. We should love him more than the cultural expectations or norms and more than what other parents think about our practices. We should just love Jesus and we should teach our families to do the same

MINDI:

And honor him and uphold him, especially when we are celebrating his birthday.

CAREY:

That's right.

MINDI:

Thank you so much for listening. Let's end in prayer. Dear Lord, thank you for the teaching through your holy Spirit of your truth. And I just ask that you will encourage parents as they are thinking about the whole Santa issue regarding Christmas. I pray, Father, that you encourage those who are thinking rightly along your will and those who need to make some corrections. I ask that you'll encourage them and show them how to make the corrections wisely and smoothly with their children. And I ask those who might be having a hard time with this issue, that you will lovingly give them your humility and openness to learn and to be corrected, and to know that you are there just ready to help them and love them. And it's not a condemning thing, it's just a gentle correction. And I just pray, Father, that you will guide all these parents who are listening to learn to honor you more and more, and to learn to teach their children to honor you more and more each day. In Jesus' name, Amen.

CAREY:

Amen. Friends, you can be an integral part of helping us spread the message of God-fearing kids and the parents who raise them by becoming a financial partner. Your monthly gift for as little as \$5 a month can

help us spread the word. And as our thank you gift to you, we'll subscribe you to our partners only podcast called Digging Deeper to help you dig further into the word of God.