



Gift Giving and Siblings

My husband and I always thought giving our children the freedom to choose gifts for their siblings was the right approach, but we changed our minds the year our 12-year-old gave his younger brothers matching 98-cent rubber mallets—with price stickers still attached. The younger boys had spent around \$10 each on their big brother and were hurt by his thoughtlessness. Over the years, those mallets have become a family joke and found their way back under the tree more than once. At the time, though, we needed an intervention.

We tasked the boys with learning about each other, specifically focusing on the following categories: favorite activities, dearest possessions and “most important.”

We left “most important” open-ended for individual interpretation. It generated some interesting insights.

We then had the boys list their observations and write one paragraph describing what they liked most about that brother. When their projects (and subsequent whining) were done, we thanked the boys and put their “reports” away, thinking we would pull them out as necessary.

There was never a need. The act of getting to know what was important to one another caused a shift from “me-based” buying to “you-based” giving. Learning these things firsthand somehow gave them a desire to please each other with their gifts, and that has made all the difference.

—Karen Klasi

Put Feet to Their Faith

One of my family’s favorite ways to highlight the Gospel during Christmas break emerged from a long-standing tradition of hosting birthday parties for Jesus. When the cake and confetti eventually lost their luster, we opted for a more creative celebration.

Inspired by Isaiah 52:7, we developed the “foot party.” The details change year to year, but the concept remains the same. We organize fun activities that involve our feet, and then we use our feet to creatively spread the Good News.

Last year, my daughter and her friends enjoyed a home spa complete with crazy pedicures and washable foot tattoos. Then, they put their feet to work at a local nursing home, delivering small bags of Christmas goodies to the residents.

Likewise, my son invited his buddies to participate in a basement obstacle course demanding quick footwork. After some rowdy competition, the boys set their feet to walking the neighborhood, collecting items for our local food pantry.

—Alicia Bruxvoort

