

ABUNDANT LIVING FAMILY STYLE

December 2011

'Tis the Season to be Thrifty

With job lay-offs, stock market crashes and rising prices, the prospect of Christmas seems like one huge financial burden to many. It is good to remember that the first Christmas was a frugal affair... a poor carpenter, a teen mother, a baby in a feeding trough, simple shepherds living out in the fields. Somehow, especially in recent years Christmas has become so much more complex and extravagant.

The economic challenges of 2011 might actually be a blessing in disguise... forcing families to simplify and scale down their Christmas fixings and get back to focusing on the truly important lessons of Jesus' birth.

Following are some suggestions for cutting costs this Christmas. And you might try brainstorming with your family and friends to come up with even more creative ideas!:

- ✿ Cut up old Christmas cards and use the front to make your own postcards.
- ✿ Send a photo e-card (that way friends can print it if they want or download it onto their iPad).
- ✿ Hand deliver as many cards as possible... at work, church, school, in the neighborhood, at family gatherings. This eliminates the cost of postage except for those people who live at a distance.
- ✿ Instead of making cards, consider making phone calls to friends to wish them a wonderful holy season.
- ✿ Make your own gift wrap from old grocery bags, newspaper, packing paper, or tissue paper. Dress it up with some art work, glitter or ribbon.
- ✿ Make get-togethers "pot-luck." Ask friends or family members to bring one item to share. This saves not only money spent on groceries, but your time as well.
- ✿ Discuss gift-giving with extended family. Suggest cutting it out altogether. Or, if folks insist on giving gifts, set a dollar limit (it's amazing what can be bought with less than \$5.00), or draw names so that each person only has to purchase one gift. Consider gift cards for groceries or gasoline.
- ✿ Give gifts of service. Things such as help with spring cleaning, washing windows, or assisting with a remodeling project can save the recipient much time and money and be a greater blessing than another sweater or necktie.



- ✿ For children or grandchildren, instead of buying an item that really isn't a necessity, consider depositing money in a savings account or some kind of long-term investment program.
- ✿ Books make great gifts and you can often purchase used ones on-line at a fraction of the cost of new ones. Most people won't mind getting a used book, which they're probably only going to read once anyway.
- ✿ Same thing for clothing and other gifts... check out garage sales, flea markets, on-line trading sites and second-hand shops.
- ✿ Decorate the tree the old-fashioned way... popcorn strings, cranberry strings, paper chains (have family members write a Scripture verse or prayer on each chain) and pine cones. Or make ornaments from a salt and flour mixture.
- ✿ Simple votives or tea lights lined up on a tray or mirror with some pine cones or sprays intermingled make an elegant centerpiece.
- ✿ Limit the number of Christmas celebrations your family attends. Not only does all the busy-ness of multiple parties cause stress and use up time, but they often rob your family of precious quiet times together at home, where you can reflect on Jesus' amazing incarnation.

The late Dr. John Hall said he liked to look into store windows to see how many things he could do without. The truth is, we can all do without a lot this Christmas and still have a special celebration of God's greatest Gift. In fact, less "stuff" might very well mean more substance. So, go ahead... be brave enough to set a new thrifty trend... you may discover it turns out to be the most precious gift of the season!

A New Year Begins at ALM

Open Arms

Childbirth Classes
Jan. 5– Feb. 2, 2011
Thursday evenings 7-9 PM

Taught by a certified childbirth educator, this class covers the same information offered in a hospital course, but includes a distinctively Christian perspective. There is no cost for this class, but please call the office to register.

Valentine Dinners



Friday, February 10
Saturdays, February 4, 11, 18
6:30 pm \$42 per couple

A romantic evening... special music, a delicious meal, lots of fun and laughter, plus a message of hope and help for married couples from John and Sharon Charles.

Call the ALM office at (717) 626-9575
 or email to info@AbundantLivingMinistries.org to register for the above events.
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