

Dave's Laptop

November 17, 2015

When Jill and I drove through Ocean City, Bethany Beach, Rehoboth Beach and Cape May last week, guess what we saw nearly everywhere we turned? We saw the beginning of this year's PCW . . . the "pre-Christmas Whirlpool." Yes, I know it's awfully early to be thinking about Christmas . . . but that's my point.



Now while I enjoy many aspects of the CHRISTmas Season, it distresses me that more often than not, it seems that "the tail wags the dog." Any spiritual dimension of the season



frequently takes a back seat to the various dimensions of our secular observances. Indeed, sometimes we feel pretty lucky just to survive Christmas (as distinct from CHRISTmas). If you "control-click" on the "survival" graphic below, you'll see a short video that makes the point pretty well. ¹

While each person and each family must make their own decisions, the stress of my own "Christmasing" went WAY down a number of years ago when I decided to stop sending Christmas letters and Christmas cards, to do almost no decorating, and to limit modest gift-giving to our most immediate family.

And, since the whole gift-giving enterprise is supposed to be rooted in God's gift of Jesus to us, and since we're supposed to be primarily celebrating Jesus' birthday, Jill and I decided years ago that our "gift to Jesus" should be AT LEAST as large as our gifts to any other single person, including ourselves. Such "gifts to Jesus" are, for us, gifts to Christian missionary causes over and above our tithes to the church, and for the past several years, we've found it easier to give more to such causes by giving every month rather than once a year. Using this strategy, we find it possible to give something like four times as much as we were doing previously.

If you've watched the video, you've discovered one of the several groups of Christians that promote this alternative approach to CHRISTmas—the "Advent Conspiracy." The Advent Conspiracy encourages us to "Worship Fully," "Spend Less," "Give More," and "Love All."



¹ You can also watch the video at <https://vimeo.com/50320595>.

You can find out more about their approach to CHRISTmas at www.adventconspiracy.org, including another video that develops the same idea. Here's a bit more about each one:

ADVENT CONSPIRACY




Worship Fully

It starts with Jesus. It ends with Jesus. This is the holistic approach God had in mind for Christmas. It's a season where we are called to put down our burdens and lift a song up to our God. It's a season where love wins, peace reigns, and a king is celebrated with each breath. It's the party of the year. Entering the story of advent means entering this season with an overwhelming passion to worship Jesus to the fullest.




Spend Less


Quick question for you: What was the one gift you remember getting for Christmas last year? Next question: What about the fourth gift? Do you remember that one? Truth is many of us don't because it wasn't something we necessarily wanted or needed. Spending Less isn't a call to stop giving gifts; it's a call to stop spending money on gifts we won't remember in less than a year. America spends around \$600 billion dollars during the Christmas season, and much of that it joyless and goes right onto a credit card. By spending wisely on gifts we free ourselves from the anxiety associated with debt so we can take in the season with a full heart.




WORSHIP FULLY



SPEND LESS



GIVE MORE



LOVE ALL

ADVENT CONSPIRACY



Give More

We know what you're thinking. "Wait, didn't they just say I should spend less, and yet here they are telling me to give more? What gives?" The most powerful, memorable gift you can give to someone else is yourself. And nobody modeled this more than Jesus. So what does this look like for you? Tickets to a ball game or the theater? A movie night? The main point is simple: When it comes to spending time with those you love, it's all about quality, not quantity.



Love All

It all boils down to love. Love from a savior. Love to a neighbor in need. By spending just a little less on gifts we free up our resources to love as Jesus loves by giving to those who really need help. This is the conspiracy three churches began a few years ago, and has since grown to an international movement where thousands of churches have raised millions of dollars to love others in life-changing ways. It's not that there's something wrong with the shopping mall—it's that the better story is about loving all.

How might your next six weeks become less stressful and more meaningful?

What different kinds of choices might you and your family make?

Experience the Wonder once more.

Dave