



Charlotte Regional Office  
Counseling

## Peace of Mind Santa

by Lori Fox, Counseling Supervisor

Santa:  
To Ho Ho or not to Ho Ho?  
That is the Christmas question.

If a stroll down the seasonal aisle at your local department store leaves you wondering what in the world Darth Vader, Spiderman, and Homer Simpson have to do with Christmas, you are not alone. It seems like we get further and further from the true meaning of Christmas with each passing year. Many of us question if it would be better to honor this blessed holiday by removing every scrap of commercialism. That includes The Grinch, Rudolph, Frosty, and even Santa Claus.

In response to the materialistic season that Christmas has become, many parents consider whether teaching their children about a large jolly man who flies in a sleigh, somehow squeezes down everybody's chimney in one night, and leaves festive packages of heart's desire under a tree detracts from the celebration of the birth of Jesus just a wee bit. Are we only setting our children up to have unrealistic expectations and an ultimately colossal disappointment?

Not to worry! The figure of Santa Claus may actually be one of the greatest tools to help us teach our children about the miraculous life of Jesus.

The story of the nativity is a tough one for children (and many adults) to really understand. A virgin gives birth to God's son and the biggest star of all times shines in the sky, and angels appear to the shepherds..., and what does this all really mean to a five year old anyway?

The beauty of Santa Claus, is that he can reach children's' minds and teach the mysteries of Jesus in a way that they can understand.

Think about these lessons:

1. **Santa** has a soft spot for children (and the child in all of us).

**Jesus** loved children and stated that the kingdom of heaven belonged to "such as these".

2. **Santa** somehow sees whether we are naughty or nice and it actually matters to him. He wants us to be accountable for our behavior and wants to reward the goodness in us.

**Jesus** gave us the Golden Rule, to remind us to do right by ourselves and others. He spoke of rewards in heaven for the goodness of our acts.

3. **Santa** has magic and can do incredible things. Time and space are relative.

**Jesus** taught us that all things are possible through God. Healing for the sick, forgiveness of our most grievous sins, life for the dead...not a problem.

4. **Santa** lives in a land far away, but is still very much with us in our lives. Children truly have an individual relationship with Santa and believe that the wishes of their hearts are not falling on deaf ears.

**Jesus** hears and answers (to varying degrees of satisfaction) our prayers. We believe that he knows and accepts even our most silent yearnings.

In terms of a child's cognitive development, Santa offers a perfect opportunity to lay the groundwork for an understanding of the real Christmas story. Santa teaches love, behavioral accountability, the power of prayer, and the hope that what seems impossible can indeed happen.

So as we enter the season of Advent, let us all, child and adult alike, open our hearts to belief. Set up the nativity crèche and put out the milk and cookies for that red-clad visitor. Let us prepare for the arrival of the most precious gift of all time, in the smallest of packages, given in perfect love.