**On Your Mind**

**Nov/Dec Edition, Athens Oconee Parent Magazine**

**Holidays Edition**

**Jonathan C. Robinson, Ph.D.**

Dear Dr. Robinson,

 My teenage son is fast maturing and, as all teens do, challenging convention. Recently, he asked me why we celebrate Christmas in the dead of winter, since the best estimates place Jesus’ birth in early Spring. He long ago challenged the existence of Santa Claus. He, of course, wants to hang with all of his friends, but he also indulges us by accepting family time and traditions. What can I tell him about the timing of Christmas?

Signed, Puzzled

Dear Puzzled,

 You have a great son there! He sounds thoughtful, mature, considerate, and inquisitive, as well as challenging. If you aren’t getting a whiff of an emotional fever, no need to active listen his queries. However, I encourage you to be prepared for a thoughtful discussion. You may start with, “Wow! You ask some great questions. Who are you and what have you done with my son? (LOL) Seriously, though, let me do some research and get back with you.”

 Later, with research in hand, plan a time to sit down and discuss what you know with him, beginning, of course, with, “I have some thoughts about your questions. Can I share them with you?” Remember, getting permission from your child and teen always sets the tone for them to be accepting and attentive.

 What I know about the Christmas holiday is that the time was actually a pagan winter holiday for which Christians gave a new meaning. The date gave a wider attention to sharing the gospel, even if it may be factually inaccurate as to the chronological birth of our Savior. Then Santa came out of Norway as St. Nicholas, adding the joys of blessing, sharing and relationship to our Christian message.

 I pray that your son continues to foster blessing, sharing, and relationship in your family year round with such thought-provoking questions. I hope you are now “puzzled no more.”

Dear Dr. Robinson,

 So, Joey, my five year old, is really a handful. Always on the go. Wants what he wants. God’s grace is helping me keep it together raising our son. He is so excited about Christmas this year that he wants to stay up, meet Santa, and start opening up presents right after giving Santa his milk and cookies. When I try to tell him that his plans are not possible, he ramps up and throws a fit. Help!!

Signed, Exasperated

Dear E,

 Okay. Deep breaths. You got this. My first question is this, “Who’s in charge?” In chapter 3 of my book, **Teachable Moments: Building Blocks of Christian Parenting**, I note that children will always test the limits. Why? They want assurance that limits are there. When a child has no limits, he becomes anxious and fearful, hence the always on the go and wanting what he wants.

 Start with using your active listening to help Joey understand his feelings behind his demands. Telling him that it’s not possible before his emotional fever is gone is giving him an opinion and solution he’s not ready to hear. This will only ramp him up all the more.

 When his emotional fever is down because of your active listening, then you can offer solutions…with his permission. If he seems to ramp up again despite your best efforts, consider letting him try to stay up to wait for Santa. Give him a nice palette by the fireplace, settle him in, but make sure he knows all of the rest of you will be fast asleep. After Joey falls asleep, bring the Santa presents in, drink half the milk and take a bite out of the cookies, and then go back to bed.

 When morning comes and Joey wakes up, active listen his disappointment first, but quickly refocus his attention on the presents and Christmas morning activities. My prayers are for you folks and your strong-willed child. Let me know how it goes.