

Merry Christmas From 'Intellectual Takeout'!

You've probably been asked, as I have, "What do you want for Christmas?"

My father planted churches all over the Midwest. This meant that every few years, we moved to a new location, and it also meant we didn't always have a steady income. That lack of steady income meant a lot of ups and downs, and a complicated relationship with Christmas.

When I was younger, I wanted clothes for Christmas that would make me look more like the kids in school. As I grew older, I wanted video games so that I could share in the activities those kids were talking about. Older still, I wanted CDs so that I could be part of those conversations too. The truth is, my parents had to say "no," and Santa didn't always bring our family of six what we asked for.

My parents couldn't give me objects advertised on billboards and commercials. But, here is what they could give me:

1. A traditional two-parent home that stuck together through tough times.
2. An intense appreciation of logic.
3. A real education.
4. Values like honesty, integrity, and, above all else, the importance of family.

If you had looked at my family in 1998, you might have said, "They're doing everything wrong." *Wrong house. Wrong car. Wrong clothes. Wrong neighborhood. Wrong school in the middle of nowhere. That family can't be going anywhere.*

Fast forward to today.

1. My baby brother is a tech guru working with Ford. He's

married with two kids and a dog. He owns his own beautiful home, and he coaches football at a Christian school in Michigan.

2. My other brother is married and works in real estate. After volunteering as an advocate for abused kids, he adopted four beautiful children who had been abandoned by their family. Together, they raise horses on a big farm.
3. My sister is married and raising five biological children and one adopted special-needs baby. With her husband, she bought a big farm in Indiana and filled it with chickens, cows, and barn cats, and she's built a home on the property for my parents to retire in.
4. Last year, my parents gladly sold their home in Michigan and accepted my sister's offer.

And there's me. As the oldest, I'm a little behind on the grandbaby game (Sorry, Momma! Better late than never!). But as some of you know, I am expecting my first child, and my heart sings to think of the beauty and joy I'll be blessed with in a few months.

As many a man knows, with the new baby comes making space, and that means putting away my stuff. Here's what had to be put away or donated: Some of the clothes I bought myself to fit in and be flashy. Some of my collection of vinyl records. And all those video games. They're in the basement now, being stored. Maybe I'll sell them for my daughter's college education?

The point is: I got all the things I wanted, all the things my parents couldn't give me, because they gave me what no child can give themselves. They gave our family the first list, and that made the second list possible. Those values and stability they instilled in me allowed me to buy all the silly, trivial things I thought I needed when I was growing up.

So when I get asked, "What do you want for Christmas?" I don't have an answer anymore. I went out and got myself all that

stuff I once thought I wanted, and then, I threw it all in storage to make room for something far better: family.

Maybe, I do have an answer: *I want to give for Christmas*. I want to be part of defending the first list. The one my parents sacrificed so much to give to me. I'm part of *Intellectual Takeout* because defending that list, those views, and those values is our battle. We fight for rational discourse, we fight for real education, and we fight for family values. We're making sure those things are there for my daughter, and your kids too.

While the media might make buying the highlight of the season, we know that the family is the cornerstone of our society, and that is what truly must be center stage during the holidays. Because, it is within the embrace of the traditional family unit that we find strength, love, and a sense of belonging.

As we unwrap the gifts of tradition, family, and rational discourse this Christmas, let's remember the profound impact each one of us has in shaping a future that honors our shared values.

Thank you for being an integral part of the *Intellectual Takeout* family.

Wishing you a joyous Christmas filled with what really matters, love, warmth, and meaningful connections,

Benjamin

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