



Ten ways to Go Shopping this Christmas

The shopping frenzy can be a real trap for Christians in the weeks leading up to Christmas. While desiring to remain focused on Christ we often find ourselves swept along with a consumer ethic. If you *must* join the shopping queues this Christmas, here are some helpful tips to keep you in check.

1. Shop less!

Resist being swept along by the consumer frenzy. Draw up a list of essentials and spend as little time as possible in the shops this Christmas. Instead, spend your time and energies on activities which strengthen family life and deepen faith.

2. Shop with your heart

Instead of material presents, draw up a shopping list of 'Christmas gifts of the heart.' A gift of listening to a parent. A gift of playtime with your child. A gift of romance with your spouse. A gift of praise for your teenager. Choose a unique gift to the person you love, write it down on a card or scroll and tie it to the Christmas tree.

3. Shop early...or late

Becoming stressed by the Christmas crowds is not the way to enter into the spirit of Advent. If you must join the shopping queues, try to choose the less congested time of day so that you don't wind up cranky and irritable.

4. Pray as you shop

Turn your shopping expedition into a journey with the Lord. Pray to be led by the Holy Spirit in your choices, in your focus, in all your dealings with people.

5. Shop in peace

Even if you lose that valuable parking space or are delayed in the check-out queue, resolve to maintain your inner calm and sense of good will. Smile! Slow down and relax. Wish people well and be attentive to helping each other out.

6. Shop with justice

When purchasing Christmas presents, don't select brands which are known to support unjust work practices in developing countries. (Your parish/diocesan social justice group may be able to inform you on such issues.) Cut back on commercial spending and pool your funds to assist someone in genuine material need.

7. More shopping tips

Throw away the catalogues which entice you to spend more money. Don't even look at them! Out of sight, out of mind. Simplify your lifestyle. Resist the material expectations that others place upon you. Shop at the less expensive and discount stores rather than the up-market boutiques.

8. Offer to assist

Treat the exercise of shopping as a form of outreach. Help an elderly relative with her shopping. Or offer to shop for a housebound parishioner.

9. Shop, give, teach

Many malls have a collection bin for shoppers to donate gifts to be distributed to families in need. Take time to explain the process to a young child and help him/her to buy a gift to place in the bin.

10. Affirm

The religious origins of Christmas are often ignored in shopping centres. But if you spot a nativity crib display, or come across some carollers from the local church, take a moment to register your appreciation with the management. Let it be known that Christians treasure Christmas as a religious feast!

Helpful Hint

At the start of Advent discuss with your family/friends the dilemma posed by your Christmas shopping. Pray to be guided by the Holy Spirit. Together, come up with a shopping strategy which, instead of being a secular distraction, will bring you closer to Christ and one another. During Advent, support each other in your shopping resolutions.

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