

Black Thursday

In years past, it has been a fun family tradition.

After a lovely Thanksgiving afternoon, my mom, sister and I would have our list ready, store ads in hand and alarm clocks set for 2:00 a.m.

Yup, Black Friday shopping fun!

We would arrive at the chosen first store for the day and drink our coffee and muffins. It was a lovely time to visit and giggle about how silly we were for having gotten up so early to shop. Then we would rationalize it by comparing our adventure to those of the hunters who wake early for their hunts.

So, this year, I was excited to see what might be featured in this year's Black Friday sales...until I felt like several stores were crossing the line.

As you may have heard, a few stores like Wal-Mart, Target and Toys R Us will be opening on Thanksgiving Day for these "once-in-a-lifetime" sales.

Well, that just irritates me.

Christmas has already gotten so commercialized. Regardless of whether or not it's a religious holiday for you and your family, it's still supposed to be about family.

Thanksgiving isn't always thought of as a religious holiday and is simply a time for everyone to express thanks and gratitude and to spend time with their families. For those who do believe in a higher power, they use that time to give thanks to their higher power, as well. Regardless, it's a time to reflect and give thanks.

So, I'm frustrated that stores want us to forgo our family time to go wait in line for bargains.

They're taking advantage of the down economy and peoples' desperation to still provide great gifts for their family.

They're ignoring their employees' need to give thanks and be with their families. Many of them already work on Sundays, which is for many people a day for rest, praise and family. Why must the stores take away this one day the nation has set aside for thanks?

This also hurts small businesses that would have to totally forgo Thanksgiving celebrations in order to prepare for and open earlier on Thanksgiving.

One store interviewed on a Good Morning America segment about the earlier sales hours said they simply had to open early in order to meet the demand. Um, I'm sorry, but why not stay open for longer hours that weekend starting on Friday? Maybe hold the sales over for Monday's work day? Why must it cut into Thanksgiving?

My wish is that families would realize that getting that large screen TV at a rock bottom price isn't really a once-in-a-lifetime chance. Realize that your kids will vaguely remember the presents you got them, but will vividly remember the memories you make with them, the traditions you established with them and the

joy you shared.

I urge you to help spread the encouragement. Let's take back our family traditions. Take back our memories. Take back the holidays.

Black Friday won't be the last sale ever held, but we should celebrate each holiday with our families as if it's going to be the last one we spend with them.

What are your thoughts on the extra Black Friday hours? Will you be shopping during those extra hours?