



*the Most
Surprising Gift

What could be better at
a party than presents?

By Colleen Hansen

(Based on a true story)

“Love one another as Jesus loves you. Try to show kindness in all that you do” (Children’s Songbook, 78).

Finished!” Mom said as she put the last of nine candles on the cake.

Tomorrow Maren’s friends were coming for her birthday party. There would be pizza, games, and best of all, presents!

“I can’t wait for the party,” Maren said. “Ella said she might get me a computer game, and Kisha told me I would love her present.”

Mom looked at Maren. “There is something you can do at your party that will be even better than opening gifts.”

Better than getting presents? Maren thought. *What would that be?*

“In family home evening we’ve been learning about Jesus and how He treated others,” Mom said. “Can you remember some things He did?”

“He was kind to others,” Maren said. “He healed them and took care of them. And He loved them all, even when they made mistakes.”

“That’s right,” Mom told her. “And if Jesus came to the party tomorrow, what do you think He might do?”

Maren thought for a minute. “Well, He would probably pay attention to everyone, not just some people. And I think He would try to help everyone have a good time.”

Mom smiled. “I think you’re exactly right,” she said.

“And I think He would like being kind to everyone more than getting lots of presents.”

Maren nodded her head slowly. “Maybe.”

Mom gave her a hug. “Why don’t you try it and see for yourself?”

The next day was sunny and beautiful, just right for a party. Soon Maren’s friends arrived. Maren tried to do what Mom had said. She helped serve the pizza, and she held her baby brother for a while without complaining



One day at church there was a new girl. My friend and I went over to meet her. We asked her to join us and sit together. I felt the Spirit, and I knew that I did the right thing. I know Heavenly Father is happy when we choose the right.

Gary H., age 7, Colorado, USA

until Mom could take care of him. She thought that was what Jesus would have done.

After they ate, it was time to open presents. Maren was excited to get the new computer game and other fun things. She remembered to thank each of her friends. Then she noticed Riley sitting very quietly and looking at the floor. She realized Riley hadn’t brought a gift.

After all the gifts were opened, it was time to go outside for a candy hunt. The girls each grabbed a small bag and raced outside. But Riley stayed back and looked sad.

“Are you OK?” Maren asked, sitting next to Riley.

“I’m sorry I couldn’t bring you a present,” Riley said quietly. “My family doesn’t have enough money right now.” Riley looked like she might cry.

“Oh, that doesn’t matter!” Maren said quickly. “I’m just glad you could come to my party, and I want you to have fun!”

Riley looked up. “Are you sure?”

“Of course!” Maren said as she put her arm around Riley. “Friends are way better than presents. Now let’s go find some candy!”

Riley smiled. “OK!” She and Maren grabbed their bags and ran to join their friends.

Maren felt good inside. She thought she had done what Jesus would do.

“That was a fun party,” Maren told Mom after her friends left.

“What was your favorite part?” Mom asked.

Maren thought for a minute. Then she said, “I really liked getting all my presents. But when I helped Riley feel better and made her smile, I felt so happy! That was the best birthday present of all.” ♦

The author lives in Pennsylvania, USA.