

By Hilary M. Hendricks (Based on a true story)

We a gift before thee lay. Praise we sing on Christmas Day!
(Children's Songbook, 39).

Carter opened the back door and felt the wind blow him into the house. *Brrr!* He reached into his pocket. There it was—the money Sister Campbell had given him for shoveling snow.

“Hey, Madison,” Carter called to his sister. “Look what I have for the Christmas jar!”

“Cool,” Madison said. She reached on top of the fridge for the jar. Last year, when their jar was full of money, they'd left it on the front porch of a family whose father had lost his job.

Madison handed him the jar, and they both frowned at the coins inside.

“Where did all the money go?” Carter asked.
“There's barely anything in there.”

“There hasn't been much all year,” Madison said.

Carter nodded. He knew money was tight for their family this year. “It's almost Christmas,” he said. “What are we going to do?”

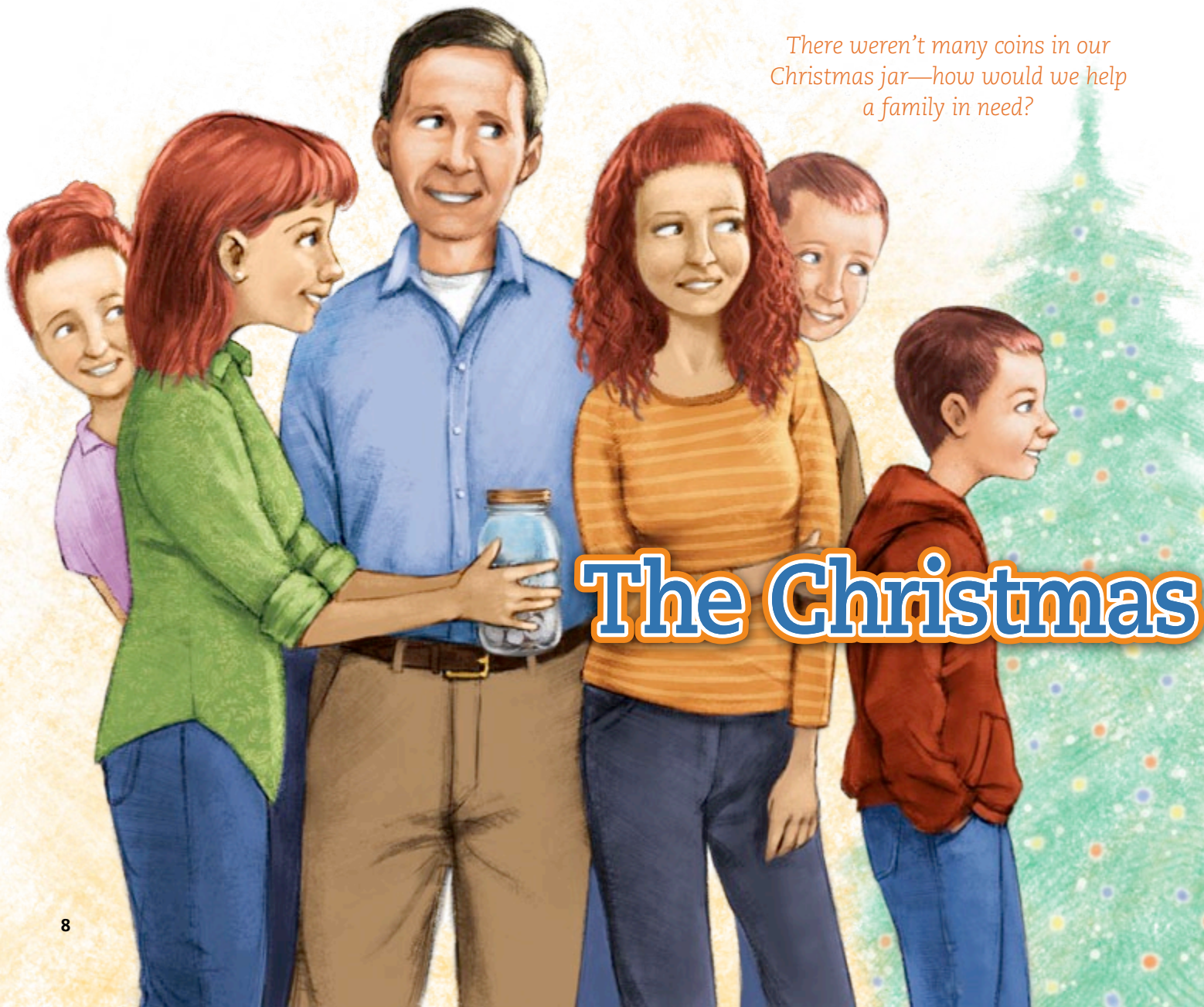
That night Mom got down the almost-empty jar. “Dad and I have been talking about Christmas and how we won't have as many gifts this year,” she said.

“That's OK,” Carter said.

“Yeah, we'll still get presents from our aunts and uncles,” said Carter's sister Kennedy.

“Well, actually,” Dad said, “we've been thinking about a new way to help others who have less than we do.”

There weren't many coins in our Christmas jar—how would we help a family in need?



“We thought we could ask Aunt Stephanie and Uncle J.J. to join us in giving this year,” Mom said. “We would use the money we would have spent on gifts for each other’s families and buy presents for a family in need instead.”

“You mean we won’t get *anything* for Christmas?” Kennedy asked.

“We’ll still have *some* presents,” Dad said. “But more important, we’ll have the gift of helping someone else.”

On Saturday the whole family—aunts, uncles, grandparents, and a few cousins—met to go shopping.

“Kennedy and Carter, we’ll shop for the little girl. She’s seven,” Mom said.

They walked past the sleds and scooters. Carter tried not to think about how much he would like to open those toys on Christmas morning. Instead, he picked out a pretty doll for the little girl.

Back at home, Carter couldn’t wait to show Grandma and Grandpa what they had found. “We got some boots and a doll and some pink gloves too!” he said.

“Very nice,” Grandma said.

“Never saw you get so excited about shopping before,” Grandpa laughed.

On Christmas Eve, Carter looked at the small pile of presents under the tree. Then he thought of all the gifts for the little girl, wrapped in shiny paper. He imagined her smile when she saw them under her own tree.

Just then Carter heard a knock on the front door. He jumped up to open it.

“Hi, Bishop Black,” Carter said. “Come in.”

The bishop stepped into the front room, smiling. He held a bag in his arms.

“This is from some people in the ward,”

the bishop said, handing the sack to Dad. “We all love your family so much, and we want to wish you a merry Christmas.”

“Thank you,” Dad said. His eyes were filling with tears, and Mom was crying too.

Carter could hardly wait until the bishop was out the

door to ask, “What’s in the bag? Can we peek?”

“We’ll see on Christmas,” Mom said. “I’m sure it will be wonderful.”

“But what’s more wonderful,” Dad said, “is that other people care about us and want to help.”

“Like we helped that little girl,” Carter said.

“Right,” Mom said. “Because helping each other, and remembering how Jesus helps us, is what Christmas is all about.” ♦



We had a mother and her two daughters move into our ward. Unfortunately, she was not able to bring many clothes or toys for the little girls. My mom gathered together some clothes, and I happily went through my toys and picked out a bunch to give to them. I love to share with others and feel that this is what Jesus would want me to do.

Hannah H., age 7, Hawaii, USA



Surprise