

Six Dollars and Change

BY SETH L. BRYANT

*When the little girl asked
if she had enough money,
how could I say no?*



ILLUSTRATED BY DILEEN MARSH

It was December 23rd. The mall was dead after an exhausting day. My legs ached after walking the aisles all day at the music store where I worked.

My heart was warmed by the true spirit of Christmas evidenced by the light and laughter dancing in people's eyes as they searched for gifts to show their love to those they adore.

I had also discovered the joy of giving. My only problem was I didn't like shopping. Why was I working at the mall, then? The employee's discount helped.

After the metal gate was partway down, signaling that we were closed, I got out the CDs I had selected for my brother and sister. I had tucked away the exact amount. It was the last of my money until my next paycheck. The money, \$26 and change, was all I had and all I needed.

Just as I was about to complete my transaction, a little girl walked in. She was so little she had no need to duck under the metal gate.

I put down my CDs and asked, "Can I help you?"

She explained that her little brother wanted a popular cartoon video for Christmas, but all the stores were sold out.

"Well," I said, "you're in luck."

**Offering
this
little girl**

**the last of my
Christmas money
reminded me of the
joy that awaits us
when we sacrifice
unselfishly like
Christ did.**

Her face brightened as she exclaimed, “You mean you have one?”

It was always a fulfilling thing for me to take the customer right to the item they had been searching for. Straight to the video we went.

She saw it and ran toward it before I had a chance to get it. “This is the one I’ve looked for!” Carefully she turned the video over, looking at the cartoon figures on the back. It was then that I saw the price: \$24.99.

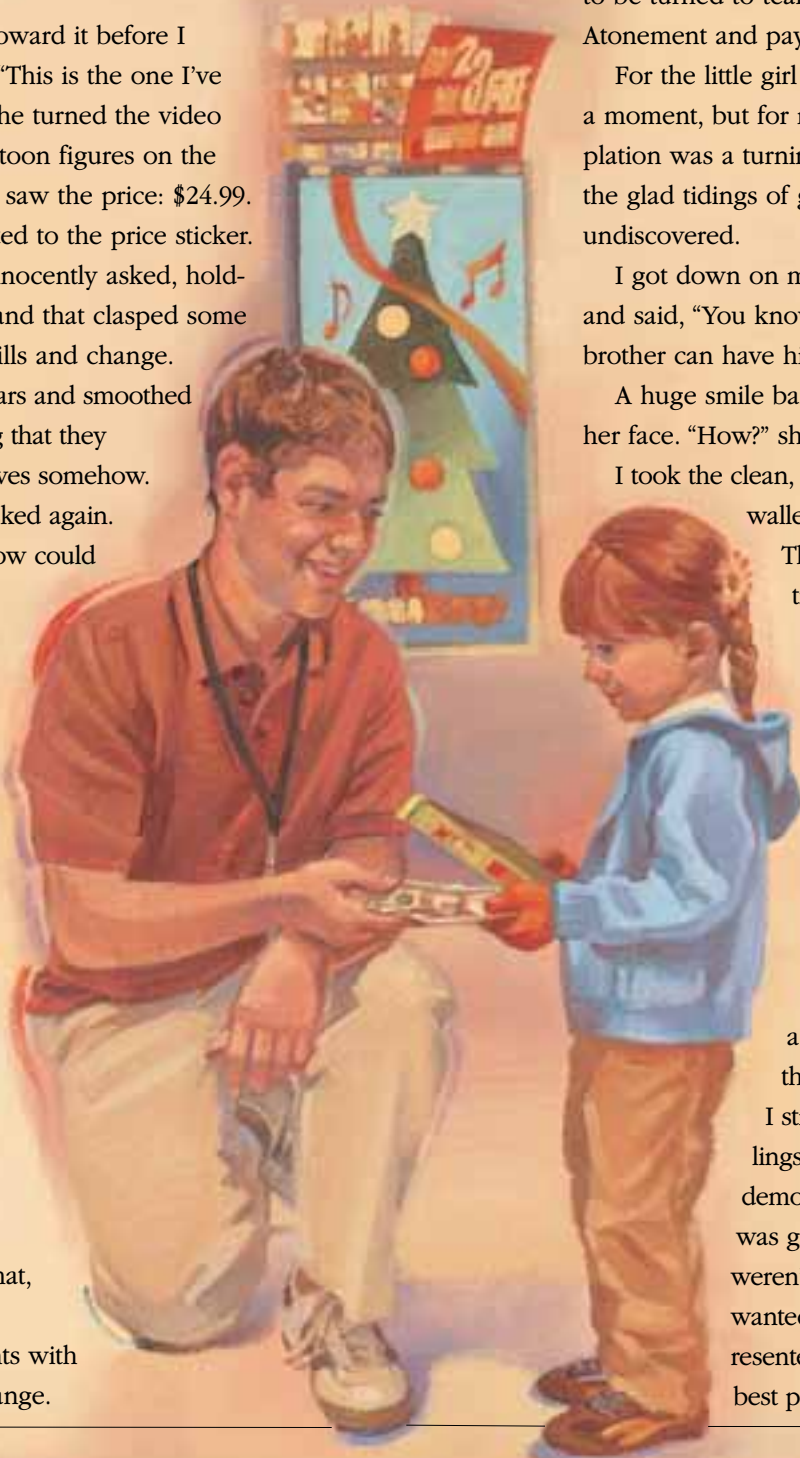
Her eyes also migrated to the price sticker. “Is this enough?” she innocently asked, holding out her mittened hand that clasped some very crumpled dollar bills and change.

I took the warm dollars and smoothed them out slowly, hoping that they would multiply themselves somehow.

“Is it enough?” she asked again. I didn’t say anything. How could I tell her?

Large tears welled up in her eyes as she realized why I kept silent. Discouragement washed over her face. With a sigh she asked, “What can I buy with this much?”

In the store there was no gift that six dollars and some change could buy—trust me; I looked. The only option, if she was to have her video, was for me to help her pay for it. Yet, if I did that, I would then be in her predicament: no presents with only six dollars and change.



A scripture came to my mind: “Knowest thou the condescension of God?” (1 Nephi 11:16). In my mind, I envisioned Christ descending from His heavenly throne, causing the tears of our shortcomings to be turned to tears of joy through His Atonement and payment of our deficit.

For the little girl it may have only been a moment, but for me that time of contemplation was a turning point. I saw a level of the glad tidings of great joy that I had left undiscovered.

I got down on my knees, at her level, and said, “You know, there is a way your brother can have his movie.”

A huge smile banished all sorrow from her face. “How?” she asked.

I took the clean, crisp \$20 bill from my wallet and handed it to her.

Through my new perception, I happily and thankfully watched her skip to the counter. Already on my knees, I took the opportunity to thank Heavenly Father for my Savior and His gift, which He taught me affectionately that night.

Can you put a price on a great understanding of the Atonement? I think not. I still lacked gifts for my siblings, except for some cheap demo CDs the music store was giving away. Though they weren’t what I had originally wanted to give, what they represented to me made them the best presents I’ve ever given. **NE**