

# A Giving Christmas

An illustration of a young boy and a young girl in a store. The boy, on the left, has short brown hair and is wearing a blue and white striped t-shirt. He is looking towards the right. The girl, on the right, has long brown hair and is wearing a dark green sweater with a white fur collar. She is looking at a shelf of items and has her hand raised as if pointing at something. The store shelves are filled with various items, including books and toys. The background is a warm, yellowish-orange color, suggesting a bright, indoor setting. The title 'A Giving Christmas' is written in a large, red, cursive font across the top of the illustration.

BY DEBORAH TOLLEY SHATTO

*My ward was providing Christmas for a needy family, but all the while I was wondering who could be more needy than my family.*

**C**hristmas was just two weeks away. We had just moved to Moab, Utah, and our family of 11 was living in a three-bedroom trailer without utilities. My parents' company had gone bankrupt, and there was no back pay. The situation was dismal, to say the least.

My singles ward was planning a service project called "The 12 Days of Christmas." The bishops in the stake had prayed and selected a family for us to help for 12 days. Considering my family's situation, I was disappointed that no one had offered to help us. I agreed to buy a gift for a boy in the family, but I couldn't help but wonder what my own brothers would get for Christmas.

The day came for me to purchase a gift for this boy, and I wanted to get him something special. I decided to go to the local department store to see what toys were popular. After 30 minutes I was getting discouraged because no toys seemed just right for the child.

Then a young boy came into the store. He was about the right age, and his appearance suggested that his family was probably struggling financially. I noticed the thrill on his face as he came across a train set. I knew I had found my gift.

As this little boy's brother came into the store to get him, I realized that this was the boy I was buying the gift for. I knew this was Heavenly Father's way of telling me that the stake had picked the right family to serve. I was glad that I had agreed to help them rather than



ILLUSTRATED BY DILEEN MARSH

***I was happy to give. And my family also received great blessings. I realized that Heavenly Father knows our needs and blesses us the most when we put others first.***

put my own needs first. But I had no idea that more blessings awaited my family.

My father found another job a couple of days before Christmas, and my parents managed to get a small gift for each child. And things were about to get even better.

The day before Christmas, a brother in

the ward called the bishop and offered to rent a house to a needy family. It was a large, five-bedroom home with the utilities already working, and best of all, he didn't expect rent until the next month. The bishop told us about the house, and we moved in that very morning.

Around the corner from the house was a little bar. Someone there noticed us moving in and was touched by our situation. He started collecting donations and brought over a mug filled with cash from perfect strangers.

Another miracle occurred when my father left work for the night. The bosses were passing out Christmas bonuses, but my dad had only been there for two days, so he assumed he wouldn't get anything. He started to leave, and they said they had something for him. He was surprised to see that each of the men had given up part of their bonuses to share with our family. His company matched the donations. My dad was humbled by their generosity.

That evening, I helped drop off the gifts for our service project. When I got home, my mother told me about the mug of cash and the bonus from work. She had just finished when we heard horns honking. We ran outside and, to our further amazement, dozens of gifts decorated our lawn. We were touched and humbled by the love of strangers for our family. What began as a very meager Christmas had become, instead, a Christmas that we would never forget.

Later, as I thought about the events of the previous month, I realized that Heavenly Father knows each of us. He knows our needs, and He often uses others to meet those needs. But He blesses us the most when we put others first. When I sacrificed my family's needs to help another family, my family was blessed more than I could have imagined. **NE**

