



SERVING MORE THAN SOUP

By Brooke Jameson

Delivering a bowl of soup was easy enough, but I found out there was something more important to give.

I still remember that cold, crisp Sunday night in December. Our mom had just made her delicious potato soup with steaming vegetables for me and my brothers to take to a few of our neighbors. When she handed me a warm bowl of soup, she said, “This one goes to Ben’s house.”

I knew of Ben, but I’d never really seen or talked to him before. So I wasn’t very excited about dropping this soup off to him. As I walked over, I noticed the run-down home with leaves everywhere, and I decided I didn’t want to stay and try to get to know this stranger. I left the soup on the porch, rang the doorbell, and hurried away. But just before I crossed the street, I hid behind a bush and watched as a tall, delicate, older man opened his door and picked up the soup. But rather than rushing inside, he stood there for a moment and looked around to see who’d left it. As I watched him, he seemed very humble, with his knitted old sweater, simple black sweatpants, and worn-out shoes. Soon, I walked home, but I couldn’t get the picture of Ben on his porch out of my head.

As I sat down for dinner, my

parents asked my older brother how the neighbor he dropped off the soup to was doing, then she asked my younger brother, and then she asked me. I paused hesitantly before saying, "Well, he's doing fine, I think."

My mom asked, "What did he say to you?"

I stared at the plate in front of me and mumbled, "I didn't really talk to him. I just dropped it off and hurried back home."

At this point my parents seemed less than happy about what I'd done—or perhaps what I had *not* done—so I asked them what they wanted me to do differently. In a loving way, they explained that the soup was not just something to give to the neighbors but an opportunity to get to know and spend time with others, which would've been far more significant than just a simple bowl of soup.

Later that week, I watched Ben's home as I went out to get the mail. I noticed he hadn't shoveled his driveway after it had recently snowed, and I ran home to ask my brothers for help. We got our shovels and hurried across the street to the home. The more I shoveled, the more I realized this man must be all alone here in this large and empty home. We finished shoveling, and Ben came out, smiled, and motioned for us to come inside. As we entered, we were surprised to see the house was beautiful, filled with pictures of his kids, grandkids, and even great-grandkids.

As we sat down, he handed each of us a piece of candy and thanked us one by one, telling us how happy he was to have company. Later he even mentioned the bowl of soup.

"The soup was delicious, but I don't know who dropped it off. I wanted to thank them and return the bowl."

I smiled and said, "It's my mom's soup, but I dropped it off."

He brightened and

replied, "Thank you so much. It was so warm and delicious." At that moment, I felt real love for this man.

He then pointed to a picture of his wife and explained that he'd lost her a few years ago. But at that moment, he seemed so happy.

My family and I still bring soup to Ben, mow his lawn, and shovel his driveway. We also now visit him and invite him to family events, like our sports games and dinners. He's never failed to express his appreciation with a simple "Thank you!" and a piece of candy for each of us. I'm grateful for the lesson I learned that December day and for the symbolism of the soup. Anyone can give food, clothing, and money, but giving of your time and yourself is truly one of the most valuable of all gifts. **NE**

The author lives in Utah, USA.

