

What Did You Get for Christmas?



As I waited in the long December checkout line, my ears drifted to the conversation ahead of me. The woman in line must have been in her mid-30s, but her disheveled and stressed countenance added at least five years.

As she vented to the cashier, I learned the cause of this lady's anxiety. She explained how she despised the holiday months, the time of year she associated with long lines, family drama, and the pressure to decorate and be jovial.

"Pressure?" I thought in disbelief. My heart ached for this woman, who clearly had a skewed view of the holidays. I tried to put myself in this woman's shoes, and I could see what she meant by pressure. There is food to buy and there are goodies to prepare. There is pressure to buy gifts for the kids. Not only that, but we sometimes think the gifts have to be impressive. However, we each have the choice to rise above the commercial pressure of the holidays.

I can think back to one Christmas in which our family budget was extremely tight. We were supporting one of my brothers on his mission to Chicago, and that required us to skimp on nonessential items. The only gift-wrapped item I got that year was a fleece blanket. Nothing extravagant, just a plain blanket. I tried to talk it up to my friends at school and make it seem like it was a really great gift, but there was no use. It couldn't compare to a video game console.

Since then, that blanket has come to symbolize much more to me. That gift was one of warmth. Yes, it warmed me on those few cold Arizona nights, but it also warmed me with love. My parents gave me more: they gave me fun family traditions, a firm sense of belonging, and a knowledge that true gifts are ones of service, love, and sacrifice. My parents sacrificed their money for my brother's mission, but they never sacrificed their love for me, our family, and everyone around them as they served that year.

I wish I could go back to the school cafeteria table when my friends asked, "What did you get for Christmas?" I wish I could have answered them proudly: "I got a blanket, a blanket that warms me with the true love of the most wonderful time of year." **NE**

What gift could be better than a gaming console?

Watch a Video
Go to lds.org/go/210 to see the video "The Greatest Gift" on youth.lds.org.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY AUGUST MILLER