



# THE ART OF Giving

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little but give everything.*

By Lori Huff Goldade

Whenever I reflect upon this joyous time of year, I remember a Christmas from long ago when I learned the art of giving.

I was in the fourth grade, and my friends and I were filled with holiday excitement. As was customary in our class, we drew names for the Christmas gift exchange. I hoped that the cute boy across the room had drawn my name. Another boy named Paul sat behind me. He often came to school with unclean clothes and dirty hands. My friends and I had made no effort to befriend him.

When the day of the big party arrived, the teacher distributed our gifts. The package I received was large and appeared to be hastily wrapped. Anxiously I tore off the wrapping paper. Inside was the book *Lassie Come-Home*. It wasn't a clean, new copy as I might have hoped but had worn, frayed pages and a stain on the cover. Dismayed, I quickly hid it in my desk. Then I noticed something else hidden in the wrapping paper—a rattlesnake rattler in a pill bottle. On a name card was carefully written "From Paul." In tears, I ran to the girls' restroom.

Embarrassed, I remained in the restroom until the party was over and then hurried home. My mother, seeing

my tear-stained face, asked about the Christmas party. I expressed to her my disappointment about the gifts. My mother lovingly put her arms around me, looked sadly into my eyes, and then taught me a great lesson. She told me that Paul, most likely too poor to buy a gift, had probably searched through everything he had at home for a meaningful present and, after much thought, had probably chosen some of his most prized possessions to give to me.

Again tears came to my eyes, but not because I hadn't received something I wanted. This time they came because I had been so selfish and had not accepted the best gift given that Christmas. I had rejected a gift of love and sacrifice.

Some people have much and give very little. Others have little and give everything. Whenever I am tempted to be critical of another's offering—whether it is of time, resources, or effort—I try to remember that some give all they can, just as in the account of the widow who "did cast in all that she had, even all her living" (Mark 12:44). The art of giving is to give all that you can, even if it is only two mites.

I didn't express it as a fourth grader, but I am grateful for Paul's Christmas gift of sacrifice and love. ■

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