



Carl's CHRISTMAS Gift

By Juliann Tenney Doman

(Based on a true story)

"Do more than you are asked to do and go the second mile"
(Children's Songbook, 167).

Carl shivered as he pushed his bike against the wind. *I can't wait to get home and get warm, he thought. And I can't wait to open Christmas presents!*

He had gotten up extra early that morning to deliver newspapers. As he pushed his bike up the steep hill on his way home, he thought about Mom's homemade Christmas cinnamon rolls. They were going to taste so good. He could almost taste the sweet creamy frosting.

Cream! Carl's shoulders slumped. He had forgotten about milking the cow and the other chores he needed to do. Even on Christmas.

Carl parked his bike in front of the house. He and his brother liked racing to see who could get their paper routes done first. He didn't see his brother's bike, so Carl had won!

The only problem with winning was that now he had to wait for his brother before they could open their presents. Then they'd have to go back outside and do chores. Carl wished he could just stay inside and enjoy Christmas.

I could just get my chores done now, Carl thought. Then I won't have to come back out in the cold. He hurried to the barn.

As he grabbed a pail and sat down to milk the cow, Carl looked around. All the other chores still needed to be done. Then he had an idea. If he did all the chores himself, he could surprise his family and they could spend the rest of Christmas morning together. It would be the best Christmas present ever!

Carl hurried and milked the cows. Then he cleaned the

barn, fed the chickens, and collected the eggs. He smiled as he thought of how surprised his family would be.

Carl went back to the house. He peeked in the door to see if anyone was there. Then he sneaked into the kitchen. He had just finished putting the milk and eggs in the refrigerator when Mom walked in.

"Oh good, you're home," Mom said, giving him a hug. "We were beginning to worry about you."

Mom helped him take off his coat. When Carl's siblings saw him they shouted, "Carl's home! Let's open our presents!" Everyone crowded around the Christmas tree and waited for Dad to hand out gifts. Carl loved watching as everyone opened their treasures.

"All right!" Dad said. "Now it's time to do the chores. But first, I think we need some juice and cinnamon rolls."

Dad walked to the kitchen and opened the refrigerator. He stopped and stared.

"Well, look at that!" Dad said. "The milk jug is already full, and here are the eggs already gathered! Who could have done that?"

Dad came back into the living room. Carl tried his best to hide his smile.

"Do you know anything about this, Carl?" Dad said with a smile of his own. "It seems our chores are already done."

"Merry Christmas!" Carl shouted.

Dad put his arm around Carl. "Thank you, son. That was very thoughtful. This might be our best Christmas yet!"

Carl grinned. He already knew this was *his* best Christmas ever. ●

The author lives in Colorado, USA.