



120

Happy People

By Elizabeth Child

(Based on a true story)

"Your sorrow shall be turned into joy" (John 16:20).

What are we doing for our Ellen Project this year?" Mark asked at dinner. "Can we collect eyeglasses again?"

"No, let's do what we did last year!" said Caleb.

"Remember? We earned money doing jobs. Then on Ellen's birthday we walked around town helping people. I put coins in parking meters so people wouldn't get tickets."

"I paid for someone's lunch!" said Mark.

"What did I do? I can't remember." Abby looked at Dad.

"You saw a mom and baby sitting in the rain," Dad said. "So you—"

"Oh yeah! I gave them my umbrella."

Dad spooned peas onto Abby's plate. "Do you

remember why we do service each November?"

Mark remembered how sad they all felt when Ellen, his baby sister, died two years before. He still felt sad about it sometimes, especially during special family times or when Mom cried.

"I remember," Mark said. "When it was almost Ellen's first birthday, we were sad, so we made up 'Ellen Projects' to help people. Mom said serving helps us feel thankful for what we have."

"And when we feel thankful, we feel happy," Mom said. "Even when we are missing our baby."

Suddenly Mark had an idea. He remembered the note his Primary teacher gave him to thank him for giving a talk in Primary last week. Her note made him feel warm and happy inside.





"I know!" Mark said. "Let's write thank-you notes for our project this year."

"How many would we write?" Caleb asked.

"We could all write one note a day," Mark said.

"Let's see." Dad put down his fork. "Ellen's birthday is in 23 days. If we each write one note a day from now until then, that would be . . . 115 notes!"

Caleb did some math in his head. "That's 120 happy people! Because the five of us will be *really* happy after writing all those notes too."

For the next 23 days, Mark and his family tried hard to notice helpful things people did for them. The first week, they wrote thank-you notes to their grandparents and school and Primary teachers.

The second week, Mark wrote to his friends, his coach, and the garbage collector. Caleb wrote to the

bishop, the bus driver, the people at his favorite bakery, and the school janitor. Abby wrote to her doctor and the grocery store clerk who gave her a sticker.

One afternoon, Abby stared at her paper. "This is getting hard," she said. "I don't know anybody else!"

"It's fun!" Mark said. "There are so many people to thank."

The last week, Mark wrote to his dentist and his piano teacher.

Caleb wrote to his coach, a playground teacher who helped him when he got hurt, the librarian, and the road workers fixing holes in the street.

Abby wrote to cousins and to Mom, Dad, Mark, and Caleb.

On November 23, the family wrote thank-you notes to Ellen. Abby looked at the sky. "I said thank you to baby Ellen for helping me so much."

"How has she helped you?" asked Mom.

"She showed me how many people do nice things," Abby said.

"This is my favorite Ellen Project so far!" Mark bounced on his toes. "It makes me want to help people more, even if I never get a thank-you note." ●

The author lives in Utah, USA.



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