

The Greatest Gift

By
Tori Brewer

I'm in grave danger of becoming a Scrooge...

I vowed to get my shopping done ahead of the rush this year, so in early November I grabbed my keys and sped off to my favorite store, confident that by the time I left there, I would have the perfect gift for everyone on my list! The store was already decked out for Christmas – lights, sparkles, shimmers, trees ... and a rendition of Jingle bell Rock blaring just a little too loudly. It was meant to be magical and beautiful, but Thanksgiving wasn't even here yet! It ended up having a very un-magical effect, and I quit before I even got started.

So here I sit in mid-December, woefully behind and pondering my plight. What do I buy for children whose rooms are already crammed full of stuff? What can I give the adults in my life that won't end up in next year's garage sale? When did Christmas turn into a competition of over-the-top gifts? *Bah humbug.*

As I go through this same scenario every year, my inner Scrooge wonders if anyone even remembers presents from Christmases past. So I asked a group of friends that very question. Most responded with blank stares. But three of the women lit up as they told the story of a special gift that still fills them with delight. What I found most interesting was that each had been raised in families with very limited means.

One told of her parents who stayed up many long nights after the children had gone to bed, her mother stitching a wardrobe for a new baby doll, and her father, secretly working in the shed, crafting a wooden chest to store them in ... all just for her! Another smiled as she told of her widowed mother barely able to feed her brood of children, but who managed to put a doll under the tree for her each year. (She still has every one of them!)

One of my favorite memories was a humorous gift. A pancake. Still warm. With a jingle bell in the middle. Freshly made and dropped off by a good friend on Christmas Eve. There's a great story behind it, but it's one for another day.

Here's what I have concluded. You can spend a fortune at Christmas, but the gift that truly delights is the one that has a simple, but salient message – you are worth my time, my effort, and my sacrifice. It doesn't have to be costly or extravagant. Even a simple act of kindness to a stranger is a gift of love that says *I care.*

So have I convinced you to drastically scale back your gift giving? Me neither. But this year I ask one thing from you – a mindfulness of the needs of those around you this season. Give of your heart as well as your pocketbook.

And in the midst of all the holiday craziness, let's pause to remember the greatest gift of all—a baby born to bring forgiveness and a changed life to all who would receive Him. The Christ Child. The One without whom we wouldn't even have a Christmas to celebrate!

And now if you will excuse me, I have some shopping yet to do!



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