

Gifts from God

I love to watch the videos that we recorded when our daughters were too young to understand the concept of a 'wish list' for Santa. Christmas morning was a wonder to them as they woke up to find stuffed stockings and gifts under the tree.

One of my favourite videos was made on December 25, 1989. As my girls come into the living room it is obvious that they are overwhelmed by what they see. But as I watch it now, I notice the deep appreciation they have for every little thing.

They start to empty their stockings and examine everything carefully. The items are small and inexpensive but received with great joy. I see my oldest daughter take out a car for Fred Flintstone. She puts it carefully aside. When she finds Fred to go with the car she exclaims with happiness. She stops to put Fred IN the car. Other things can wait?even the larger, mysterious presents under the tree.

As children grow, their focus can change. They start to write letters in which they ask for specific items. In our home the girls knew that they could ask for as much as they wanted but Santa only brought three gifts. So they usually chose to keep their list short. And they were always very happy when they opened their presents and found 'exactly what they wanted'.

Children change as they grow older. I didn't notice it too much with my girls but I do remember that when I started to ask for specific items for Christmas, I appreciated all the other gifts just a little less.

Stockings were just a prelude to the 'main event' rather than a source of simple things to enjoy. And if, for some reason, Santa was not able to bring me what I really wanted, then that disappointment weighed on my mind.

In Matthew 18, Jesus reminds us that we need to change and become like children, but not just children?LITTLE CHILDREN. As I think back on past Christmas celebrations, I wonder if one of the reasons is that little children really do live and rejoice in the moment and in the smallest of delights. They might not be able to express the emotion of gratitude but they obviously experience it. They smile and laugh and thoroughly enter into the blessing of whatever has been given to them, whether it is a simple cookie or a wonderful new toy.

One of my daily prayers on my Christian journey is that I will be like a little child. I need to take time to be grateful and to enjoy all the blessings that God gives each day. It can be too easy to be like an older child, focused on getting what I have asked for, instead of delighting in everything else that I have been given.

Laura Ingalls Wilder wrote that 'we are better throughout the year for having, in spirit, become a child again at Christmas time.' I pray that God will help me to remain a child in spirit, not just at Christmas but in all the months that follow.

May each of us allow God to fill us with wonder each day. And as we present our petitions to God may we also have grateful hearts for the main simple blessings that come our way.

Blessings on you all this Christmas as you celebrate Immanuel: God with Us.

'Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!' 2 Corinthians 9:15

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