

gift giving

Traditions teach values

by Georgia Perkins

Christmas! There is something about this time of the year—the excitement, aromas and cold briskness in the air—it creates cheerful anticipation, animated energy and thoughtful consideration of others. The tradition of gift giving reflects the message of the nativity story and encourages generosity in our communities, which adds to the excitement. That gift giving also can have a tendency to weaken the meaning most of us attach to the holiday season, especially for children. The pleasure of receiving sometimes outweighs the pleasure of giving if not carefully trained and experienced.

Creating a tradition of giving as a family is one way of allowing our children to experience that delight. One of our family traditions included creating special trays or baskets for others in our neighborhood or others less fortunate. Beginning a couple of weeks before Christmas we would gather a list of names we thought should receive a blessing. Some years the blessing would be a tray of various cookies or candies; other years we would bundle fruit baskets and decorate them with pine boughs from our evergreens and ribbon for delivery. The kids were involved from beginning to end—creating the list,

deciding the shopping list, baking, boiling or filling baskets and trays and delivering the finished product. It is amazing how much fun it is to peruse cookbooks and magazines for ideas, then identify what we needed from the store. It was a great learning experience practicing social graces and academic skills to make all of this happen.

Just bundling up in our coats and gloves for delivery day was exciting. Seeing a smile on the face of a small child or receiving a tearful hug from a lonely elderly shut-in is a heartwarming learning experience children will remember forever. It builds a sense of pride in having done well, accomplishment for finishing well and joy for the sharing. My kids often came home from one of these excursions with exclamations of, “She even invited us in for hot chocolate,” or “He insisted we take this money, so we could do this some more for his friend,” or “That little girl was so cute!”

Find a way this Christmas to share with others as a family unit. Whether serving a meal at the mission, or choosing a needy family from the Angel Tree or packaging cookies for the troops, do it as a family. Enjoy the camaraderie. Relish the memories. Everyone working for a common goal, especially when it is as touching as blessing someone less fortunate, is an even

greater blessing for the givers. If your kids are like mine, they will love it so much they will continue to do it into adulthood with their own children.

Georgia Perkins is the principal at Kingspoint Christian School.



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