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C'mon, Nels!

Read the story on the following pages about Nels and Christmas gifts.

Mandy Plough

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C'mon, Nels!

NELS sits on his bed, absentmindedly tossing his football from one hand to the other. His thoughts are glued to his conversation with Robert, a school friend, a few days before.


"I'm sure I'll be getting an iPad from my mom this year. I got my dad to promise to buy a new bike, and my grandpa gives me 100 dollars every Christmas. I can't wait till the break! What do you think you'll get, Nels?"

"I don't know..." Nels mutters with embarrassment. However, he did know that his gifts would be nothing like Robert's. Each year his mom and dad give something practical or useful, like a new jacket or tennis shoes. They get an exchange gift as well, but the kids have a ten-dollar limit, so he knows there's no way the gift will be anything like an iPad or a bike. Most likely it'll be a Frisbee, a box of Legos, or something. He knows there's no point hoping for a big gift from grandpa and grandma, or from an aunt or uncle for that matter. With

Photo: Crystal Lee. Artwork: Ruth Roiko



such a big family, it's hardly possible to remember everyone with a gift, and a family gift always has to be shared.



What am I going to tell Robert when school starts again? Nels wonders. "Oh yeah, well, I got a new toothbrush, and we all got to share a box of chocolates from Finland...that will be impressive," he thinks, grumpily.

A rapid knocking at the bedroom door interrupts his thoughts. It's his little sister Emma. "C'mon Nels, hurry up! We're all waiting for you downstairs!" she shouts.

"I'm coming," Nels mutters.

Nels usually feels the same excitement for the Christmas Eve celebration that Emma is showing; however, thoughts about Robert and all the gifts he's probably getting sour his usual feelings.

Joining the family in the living room, he grudgingly accepts the songbook little Eddie passes him. Marissa is seated at the piano ready for the first song request.

"Let's start with song #16," mom suggests.

"From heav'n above to earth I come," rings out in the living room. Nels slumps lower into the couch—he just doesn't feel like singing. He reads the words as the rest of the family sings.

"He will on you the gifts bestow prepared by God for all below..." These words touch his heart. He recognizes his jealous feelings that

came from the conversation with Robert at school the day before Christmas break.

"Now let us all with gladsome cheer go with the shepherds and draw near to see the precious gift of God, who hath His own dear Son bestowed." Nels had forgotten that God was the one whose gift is most precious and the reason we celebrate Christmas, not any temporal gifts. How selfish and greedy I've been, he thinks, as tears fill his eyes.

"And thus, dear Lord, it pleaseth Thee to make this truth quite plain to me, that all the world's wealth, honor, might, are naught and worthless in Thy sight."

Why do I care what Robert thinks? I have the best gift a person can have! Nels realizes as he moves across the room to dad's side while Marissa starts playing song #30, Trevor's favorite.

"Dad," he whispers, "I've been feeling grumpy and jealous about not getting gifts like my friend Robert at school. Can I have these bad thoughts forgiven?"

"You can believe this and all sins forgiven in Jesus' name and precious blood," Dad whispers back, squeezing Nels' hand.

Joy and peace fills Nels' heart, and he starts to sing with the others. "O little Child of Christmas, the greatest gift of love, oh, guide my earthly pathway to heaven's home above."

