



INCLUDES
INSPIRING TRUE STORIES
FROM READERS







CHRISTMAS JARS



A NOVEL

JASON F. WRIGHT







For my children Oakli Shane, Jadi Thompson, Kason Samuel, and Koleson Ward



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I'M FOREVER GRATEFUL

Logan, Utah

To the group of teenagers at Primary Children's Hospital seven years ago:

On December 12th, 2008, you touched my life for the better. I was surrounded by loved ones in one of the waiting rooms at Primary Children's Hospital when I saw a group of you, just young teenagers, walking through the halls. You were giggling and being a little suspicious. You walked up to me and set a big jar of money on my lap and said "Merry Christmas" before rushing away.

I don't remember how much money was in the jar and I don't remember what all of you looked like. But I do remember the smiles on your faces and how you made me and everyone else in that waiting room feel.





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I'll never know why you decided to pick me when you must have walked passed countless others you could have given it to, but I'm forever grateful you chose me.

You didn't know this, but at that very moment, my precious two-day-old baby was undergoing a lifesaving surgery to fix a birth defect. It was a hard and scary day for us, filled with a lot of uncertainty and worry. I want you to know that you were our angels that day. You were our light in the dark and our good in the bad. You turned a negative experience into a positive one. You helped us experience the kind of joy that can only be felt during a hard time.

We were spending our Christmas season in a hospital a couple hours away from home, away from most loved ones, and away from everything else that makes Christmas feel like Christmas, and yet, I've never felt the spirit of Christmas as much as I did that year. You did that for me.

You see, it was never about the money to us. It was about the fact that you made us feel something that no amount of money can buy. You taught us that the gift of service can change a trial into a blessing. I don't



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think there is anything you can do for another person greater than that.

It's been seven years, but I think about all of you often. I have always wanted to tell you how much your kindness meant to us and how grateful we are for each of you. We have been able to tell many people about your kindness and we pay it forward as often as we can.

The baby that was in surgery that day—his name is Krew, and we are proud to say he is a happy and healthy little boy. Nothing would make us more proud than to see him grow up to be the kind of teenager you were that day. We all know how much the world needs people like you right now. You are the ones that truly make the world a brighter place.

I hope this message somehow finds you, and I sincerely hope that whatever trials have come and will come into your life, you will be blessed in the same way you helped bless us.

—Love, Ashley









SOMEONE MUST LOVE YOU VERY MUCH

Danville, Illinois

At the end of May 2013, I lost my teaching job due to budget cuts. I was unable to get a teaching job for that fall, but I was able to collect unemployment. Just before Christmas, I found out that I would no longer receive unemployment because the extension of benefits was not included in the federal budget. This put a lot of pressure on my husband, who was in a commission-only paying job.

In mid-August 2014, the pressure was just too great, and he was let go from his job. The pressure had also caused my husband to have medical issues which caused him to be hospitalized for a week in November. Thankfully, he has been able to get unemployment





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during this time, and I am working for a friend parttime, but we are still struggling.

However, last night, December 3, 2014, we came home from church to find a box sitting on our front steps. I had a hard time lifting it, so I asked my husband to help. My son Ethan, who is four, was very excited to begin opening the gift. In the box was a gift bag filled with all sorts of treats for him: two activity books, two candy-filled candy canes, a box of candy canes, a reading book, and a paper bag that was very heavy.

We opened the paper bag to find a gallon-sized pickle jar filled with change, the book *Christmas Jars*, and a gift card for a local gas station.

I cried as I looked at what God had laid on someone's heart and mind to give us. I took the jar to the bank this morning where the teller thought I was just bringing in shopping money. I was able to share the story with her, two other tellers, and the manager. They had chills as I shared the story. The first teller put the change into the counter. A few seconds later, she came back with three more gift cards and a roll of cash.





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Her words to me were, "Someone must love you very much."

I cried again, and even as I sit here at work, typing my story, I am crying. I am also excited to see what we are able to give to someone else next year.

We have been blessed beyond measure, and "thank you" seems so inadequate.

—Rachel Rice









A LIST OF EVERYONE WHO NEEDED SOME JOY

Shiremanstown, Pennsylvania

Last night my family gave away its second set of Christmas Jars. My soul has been touched in ways I never would have thought possible. Our Christmas Jars were meant to bless the lives of others, but it is truly our lives that have been blessed.

The Lord has been good to my family this year. We welcomed the birth of a third grandchild and are currently waiting patiently for the fourth to arrive, we are all healthy, my husband is employed, and I am doing well in school. Yes, life has been kind to us this year, but sadly those we love, know, work with, and who are our neighbors have experienced an untold number of struggles. No, life has not been easy for many of the people that we know.



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Deciding who should receive our Christmas Jar this year was proving to be a difficult decision because we know too many people who could use it. So how does one choose which of their friends, co-workers, or neighbors should receive the Christmas Jar? We couldn't choose . . . we simply could not bless one while another struggled this year.

In March of this year my family received a wonderful financial blessing. Not having any plans for the money, we put it in the bank for a rainy day.

Last Monday, I sat down at my desk and made a list of all the people I know who needed some Christmas joy. When I finished, there were twelve families on my list. After making my list, I dumped the contents of the Christmas jar on the table and began counting the change and bills: \$439.50. Divided by twelve, that would be about \$36.50 per family. Surely we could do better than that, right?

I have always been of the opinion that money is important when you need it, but that we shouldn't focus on having so much of it. Too much of anything is never a good thing.



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My husband and I decided that while we may have been financially blessed in March we were really only the safekeepers of that money. We finally understood that the money we received wasn't intended for our personal use. The Lord had other plans for it; we just needed to figure out what those plans were. We figured it out. The money was meant to go to those twelve families, so we withdrew the money from the bank, split it twelve ways, and made our jars. Each family will surely have a wonderful Christmas, but more than having a Happy Christmas, I hoped that they would feel all the love that God has for them.

As for me and my husband, we were overcome with emotion yesterday and completely fell apart. (In a good way.) When one of the jar recipients called on the phone last night to tell us what they found on their doorstep, my heart exploded with joy when they stated, "We feel so loved." They are!

—Anonymous



