

Settle Up!

Settlement Newsletter



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A Christmas Gift

One of my favorite Christmas movies is “Miracle on 34th Street.” In that movie, a little girl wishes for some family togetherness that she just doesn’t think will ever happen. But after she meets Kris Kringle, she gets the togetherness she was looking for. After she receives what she hoped for, the family drives out to the suburbs where a real estate agent meets them and provides them with keys to a wonderful home that is fully furnished. It’s a gift from Kris Kringle.

A big part of the movie concerns the motives - and actions - of corporate America during the Holiday Season. In the movie, some of the big Christmas retailers seemed to have big hearts, others less so. It’s a wonderful Christmas show, but at the end it can seem like there’s nothing more – and that this is just a “feel good” movie. But there’s more to Christmas - and similar Holidays - than

just the shopping that goes on. And the good things that happen during the Holidays aren’t limited to just Holiday movies.

Several years ago, I got to wrap presents for underprivileged children. Some local real estate agents had identified underprivileged children who could use a hand-up. They had contacted families, purchased gifts, and brought them to a central location where a small army of us wielded scissors, tape, ribbons and bows and wrapped up a big group of gifts for these youngsters. It brought out the best in us - a free gift of time to bless someone else whom we’ll never know and never meet.

That year I also had the choice opportunity to work with a group of young men ages 12-15. There were six of them, and I was assigned to help them shop on a sub-for-santa basis for a young girl who wears size 7 pants who needed

“warm clothes or a jacket.”

We drove over to Target with our six young men and two adult leaders. We

“...For you, they are on sale tonight.”

got into the store, and an experienced sales associate immediately saw our plight. “Do you need some help?” she asked. “Yes,” I said, “a lot of it.” I explained to her what we were doing and who we were shopping for. “Come with me” she said, and she took us over to the girls section, where none of us had ever been before. She started helping us find the few meager warm clothes that were on display - some thin sweatshirt tops and pants, nothing that looked very warm. “These are all on sale,” she said, “thirty percent off.” My young men had a \$40 budget to work with.

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I spied a single rack of good looking jackets - some pink, some lavender with purple accents - heavy, thick and warm. “How about these?” I asked “are these on sale too?” The listed pricing was over our budget. Our sales associate said “Let me see” and she left us to keep shopping. She was gone a long time. She eventually returned with a more senior sales associate.

I pointed to one of the jackets and asked “Is this on sale too?” The senior associate looked for sale or discount information, but couldn’t find any. “Yes,” she said, “this jacket is on sale too.”

“But no,” the junior associate said, “I rang it up. It didn’t show any sales discount.”

The senior associate eyed us carefully. She knew what we were up to. If we

didn’t get this coat, then our sub-for-santa recipient would get a few smaller things, less warm and thin. “Yes,” she said, “these jackets are on sale. For you, they are on sale tonight.”

I asked my boys “What do you think? This girl needs something warm. Should we get some smaller, thinner sweats, or something that will keep her really warm on cold nights outdoors?”

The vote was unanimous. We chose the coat.

“Come with me,” said the junior associate, “I’ll make sure you get your discount.” She took us over to the jewelry register which was vacant, and rang us up. The total with tax was \$39.97 - nearly all of our allocated budget. Three cents to spare.

We took the coat back to a central location, where we wrapped it. We don’t know the girl who got it. And we don’t know what her situation was. But somewhere, there was a little girl who was very, very happy on Christmas morning when she unwrapped a warm lavender coat with purple accents. And she wasn’t the only one who was helped: our opportunity to serve this unknown little girl was also a joy and a blessing to my six boys and myself. It’s a big part of what Christmas is all about.

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