

The Gift of the Milk Pitcher

One freezing and frosty Christmas when our family lived in Gillette, Wyoming, I received a present that truly was a heavenly gift.¹ As a young mother of four small boys, my days were filled with what seemed like a daunting work load. Then, the holiday season added more cooking, shopping, and lots of decorating. I hadn't taken the time to think about, or request, any special Christmas gifts for myself. My husband was very busy at work and had been asked to put in some overtime. He also had a great deal of church work, which made it difficult to think about gift giving or to spend time shopping.

Despite our lack of planning, Christmas did finally arrive and with it the opening of presents. I found that my husband had given me two gifts: one was a new waffle iron and the other a very ugly, mustard-colored pitcher for mixing milk. We combined our powered milk with whole milk that was purchased at the grocery store as a strategy for rotating our food storage and for saving money. I don't think the pitcher cost over \$2.

After opening these offerings, I was hurt. I suddenly realized that I didn't want a waffle iron for a gift. It was a work tool. I wanted something for myself, a gift that said I was a person, not just a cook. The real problem though was the budget pitcher. I don't know what my husband was thinking when he bought it, but if he had known how I would react to that single selection, I am sure he would not have considered getting or giving it.

It was the first time I realized that the ideal gift was one that said, "I have taken some time thinking about you and what you would love, and I might have spent a few extra dollars on it because you are a treasure to me." This just hadn't been the year for it though.

The result of that particular present was that I couldn't speak to my husband for at least two weeks. I couldn't get over it. It was winter at our home, inside and out. Day after day I continued to feel hurt—hurt to the core. But I began to see that we couldn't possibly go on like this forever, and I wanted to forgive him, but I simply couldn't figure out how to do it.

One day, while wishing I could change things, I suddenly decided I needed to pray about this problem. When the thought occurred to me, I dropped to my knees right where I was standing in my living room and leaned against my couch. I told my Heavenly Father that I was too injured, I couldn't forgive my husband, or that I didn't know how to forgive him, and would He please help me.

Suddenly I felt warmth pouring into my heart, and I knew that real healing was taking place. I was no longer suffering, experiencing disappointment, or feeling upset with my husband. These emotions had been taken away completely. I recognized that not only a spiritual, but also a physical change had occurred within me. This was a far greater gift than any I might have

¹ See original publication: Gail H. Johnsen, "The Gift of the Milk Pitcher," *Deseret News*, December 26, 2009.

anticipated that year. It included the reminder that God does hear and answer prayers, that He can heal His children, and that He takes an active interest in our lives and in our marriages.

Since that time I have prayed about many kinds of healings and found that the Lord does not always cure all our wounds immediately, and that I have to learn patience and trust in Him. This too has increased and strengthened my faith. But I will always remember that one Christmas Heavenly Father saw my disappointment and gave me not only the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, but also an unexpected gift of healing.