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## **BUT DAD, YOU GAVE THAT GUY OUR UMBRELLA!**

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Truly I tell you, just as you did it for the least of these  
who are members of my family, you did it to me.

Matthew 25: 40

In the midst of a torrential downpour, Mike and his two preschool children, Emma and Alex, dashed from their car into the store. Mike glanced back over his shoulder and saw a forlorn man, drenched to the skin, standing on the sidewalk with a bedraggled cardboard sign, announcing his homelessness and asking for a donation. Mike rushed back outside and gave the man his umbrella and a donation.

Mike, dripping wet, returned to the store, to the accusation of sweet Alex, "But Dad, you gave that guy our umbrella!" "Yes, I did, Son," Mike responded. "We have another one at home, and we have a warm, dry car and a warm, dry home to go back to. He doesn't have either one. Don't you think God would want us to share?" This loving father taught a life lesson in the midst of a grocery store.

Twin Cities parents, unable to buy gifts for their children for four years, last year finally had money to buy presents. Instead, with their children, they purchased and packed Christmas care packages for four young Americans, serving in the military in Iraq. Their own celebration was a birthday cake for baby Jesus.

This year, they identified four families who were going to have a very spare Christmas, and, enlisting the help of 33 email friends, created family gift baskets, delivered by two other Christmas angels.

Another couple chose not to give one another Christmas presents this year. Instead, they bought a basketful of slippers and donated them to a local nursing home. Two wondrous young boys were watching.

This month, many of us will scramble to give gifts to those we love on Valentines Day. What might happen if, instead of giving flowers or candy or dinner out or a new toy to those we love, we looked for the need in our community and gave gifts to those in need?

Acts 20:35 asserts, "Lord Jesus himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" God, our heavenly father, modeled that by giving God's son for us.

How then, might we teach the same lesson to our children, create in them caring, empathetic hearts, that look for the need, for ways to serve, for opportunities to love God back by giving to "the least of these who are members of my family." Jesus tell us that this is the way we do it for Him.

### **FAMILY ACTIVITIES**

1. Let your children see you sharing what you have with those in need.
2. Invite your children to look for needs that you can fill as a family. Talk about people on the street, stories in the newspaper or on the news. Wonder together about what you can do to meet some of those needs.
3. Visit a nursing home and ask for a resident who has few visitors. Visit that person regularly.
4. Make Valentines for shut ins in your congregation or for meals on wheels.
5. Check out a wonderful website, [www.doinggoodtogether.org](http://www.doinggoodtogether.org) Subscribe to their free monthly newsletter, filled with great ideas for family service.