

# Generosity

*Making someone's day  
by giving something away*

*God Gave Us Jesus*

1 John 4:9-11

**MEMORY VERSE | 1 Timothy 6:18**

**A**s Victoria picked up her keys and opened the door, she looked around her tiny studio apartment and sighed.

"Barely bigger than a closet," she murmured to herself.

Victoria had been so excited when she landed her first job out of design school helping create display windows for Gimble's department store. But moving to New York City hadn't been what she expected. Everything seemed crowded and loud, and her apartment building was old and dingy.

As Victoria stepped out into the hallway, she spotted an elderly neighbor, Mr. Finkenhoffer, carrying groceries back to his apartment.

"Hello there, Miss Vicki," he called out. "Going home for Christmas?"

"Yessir," Victoria replied. "I've got a flight to Indiana tomorrow. Christmas Eve! What about you?"

He shook his head. "Oh, my son and his family are with his wife's parents in Guatemala this year. So it's just me." He held up his bag of groceries and added, "I've got a canned ham right here."

It sounded pretty depressing to Victoria, but she said goodbye and headed for the elevator.

"It's broken again!" Mr. Finkenhoffer cautioned her. "Take the stairs."

In the stairwell, Victoria passed Keisha, the woman from two doors down. "Merry Christmas!" Victoria said as she waved.

"Well, I hope it is," Keisha said, shrugging. "My daughter's home from deployment, but I can't even do a Christmas tree this year."

Victoria nodded. There wasn't much you could do to celebrate in tiny apartments like these. She was even more grateful to be heading home for Christmas as she stepped out onto the busy sidewalk and then descended the steps of her subway station.

As Victoria checked the weather app on her phone, she noted a snowstorm coming in. "Just in time for Christmas. That's perfect!" she exclaimed. Her excitement died, though, as she recalled that she needed to fly home. Suddenly the snowstorm didn't seem like such a good thing.

***Suddenly the snowstorm didn't seem like such a good thing.***

Victoria's spirits rose again as she emerged from the subway, and spotted the huge windows of Gimble's department store. She surveyed the gleaming lights and colors of a magical winter wonderland with pride. After all, she'd spent eleven-and-a-half hours the previous day twisting fake snow and tiny lights around hundreds of branches for the new trees just added to the display. It was tedious work, but she hoped soon she'd actually be designing displays.

"I'll ask Ms. Robinson today!" she told herself.

But before Victoria could even ask, Ms. Robinson invited her into the back office. She didn't exactly look full of holiday cheer as she offered Victoria a seat.

"We've really enjoyed having you on staff this month, Victoria," she began.

“Oh, me too!” Victoria exclaimed.

“But,” Ms. Robinson continued, “Christmas sales haven’t been good, so we have to cut staff going into the new year. And, well, you’ve been here the shortest time.”

Victoria’s hands tightened on her seat. “You’re not . . . are you . . . firing me?” she asked in disbelief.

Ms. Robinson sighed. “I’m sorry, Victoria. I know it’s bad timing. But we do have to let you go,” she confirmed.

Stunned, Victoria gathered the few items in her locker and stepped back out onto the street. Holiday lights glittered everywhere, but she didn’t even notice.

“Why did I even bother moving here?” she muttered. “At least I’m going home tomorrow.”

Just then Victoria’s phone buzzed with a new alert. She glanced down at the screen, startled to see an alert from the airline. Due to the brewing snowstorm, her flight was cancelled!

“Great,” she muttered. “I’ll be stuck here alone for Christmas . . . eating Ramen noodles . . .”

Victoria had spent nearly every penny on rent for her tiny apartment and her now-cancelled flight home. She couldn’t even afford a nice Christmas dinner. Her feet carried her down the street, but Victoria was too busy feeling sorry for herself to notice the snowflakes beginning to float through the air.

Music finally caught Victoria’s ear, voices singing a carol. “What Child is this who laid to rest on Mary’s lap is sleeping . . .”

When Victoria looked up, she found herself in front of the arched doorway and towering spires of a soaring cathedral. Members of a quartet, dressed in wool coats with festive scarves, sang on the front steps.

“It’s beautiful!” she murmured.

Victoria glanced at the sign. Just below the name was a verse: 1 John 4:9 -11.

Curious, Victoria opened a Bible app and searched for the passage. Slowly she read aloud, *"Here is how God showed his love . . . He sent his one and only Son into the world . . . so we could receive life through him. Here is what love is. It is not that we loved God. It is that he loved us and sent his Son to give his life to pay for our sins. Dear friends, since God loved us this much, we should also love one another."* (NirV)

As Victoria tried to process what she'd just read, the voices of the singers continued to haunt her.

*"... the King of Kings s alvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone Him ..."*

Victoria took a deep breath. It felt as though a great weight was lifting from her chest. She might not have much this year, but that didn't change the great gift God had given to her. Or that she could still pass it on.

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"I've got it!" she exclaimed. Then she turned around and hurried back the way she'd come. Before she reached her building, Victoria made a quick stop at the Ninety-Nine Cent Store. Then she bolted up the four flights of stairs to her apartment, cranked the music, and got to work.

When she was finished, half a dozen branches from the park down the street were wrapped in cotton and twinkling lights. Strings of popcorn and cranberries festooned the walls and ceiling. She surveyed her work with satisfaction, and then headed for the door.

In the hallway, she knocked on Mr. Finkenhoffer's door. As soon as he opened it, she handed him a hand-printed invitation. "There's been a change of plans. So you're invited to my place for Christmas Eve dinner," she explained. "Ramen Surprise!"

Mr. Finkenhoffer grinned. "Sounds delightful. I'll bring the ham."

Victoria knocked on Keisha's door, too. She extended her dinner invitation and added, "I've got Little Debbie Christmas Trees for dessert."

Keisha smiled at her and nodded. "Count us in!"

Victoria found herself humming "Deck the Halls" as she returned to her own festive wonderland and watched the snow come down outside. Though nothing was going the way she'd planned, she was grateful to recall she always had something to give.



Let's  
Talk!

*What do you have that you can give?*

**Take a few minutes and share with each other what you think you have that you could give away. Think about more than just "stuff!" Here's the awesome thing: God gave first. Generosity is completely His idea! Because He gave us His love in Jesus, we've got love to give away to others in all sorts of creative ways, every single day. Pray for each other, that you will experience God's love in a special way this Christmas season, and that you will find ways to share that love with others.**