

Howard B. Wigglebottom and the Power of Giving: A Christmas Story

Lessons and Reflections

★THE HAPPINESS OF GETTING

The first moments after we get a new toy or game, or phone or bike, we become very excited and happy. We can't part with it. It's all we can think about! But not long after, we notice that the thing doesn't bring us as much joy as before.

Where did the excitement go? How come the happiness didn't last? Well, it is because long-lasting happiness never comes from things. Howard had a room full of toys and things but he always wanted more. He couldn't stay happy for long.

Most people want to be as happy and excited as they can be for as long as possible. Like Howard in the beginning of the book, many people believe happiness comes from getting new things all the time.

How can we make happiness last for a long time? By looking for happiness in places other than toys and things.

★THE HAPPINESS OF GIVING

Howard learned that there is joy and happiness from giving. He understood he didn't need all the stuff he had and that he could make other people happy by sharing his things.

Giving brings us happiness that will last and stay with us for a long time. What else can we do to bring happiness into our lives? Here are few examples:

- Being kind to others
- Being friendly to the kids who don't have friends
- Learning to share our things and toys
- Being grateful for what we have
- Helping people in any way we can

Can you think of something else that will bring us real and long-lasting happiness?

★LEARNING TO SHARE

Do you like to share your things and toys? Howard didn't like to share. He grabbed his toys away from his brothers and sisters. He was angry and unhappy all the time until he learned there was joy in letting other kids play with all the things he owned.

It might not be easy in the beginning. It will take practice and a little time for you to get used to and comfortable with the idea of sharing. Just like learning a new sport or a musical instrument, the more we practice the better we get. Start with a toy or a thing that you don't care about very much. When you are comfortable sharing that, then try sharing something that you really like.

★ PAYING ATTENTION TO STAY OUT OF TROUBLE

Why was Howard left all alone at the train station? Because he didn't listen to his mom! Instead of bringing a couple of sweaters for the train ride, he brought a big bag of toys that got caught in the train's door.

Most of us don't like to follow rules or to be told what to do. Then we get in trouble and don't know why! When grown-ups tell us to do something it is for our protection and because they care about us. It is not because they want us to be unhappy. So when you feel like disobeying and not paying attention, think again! You don't want bad things to happen to you. You don't want to invite unhappiness in your life!

★ HOMELESS

When Howard was left behind and the train left, he didn't know what to do. He had no phone and didn't know the way back home. He became homeless for the day—that means he had no place to sleep, eat, shower, etc. He didn't appreciate all the good things he had until he lost them all. Some people are homeless for a long, long time, until they find someone to help them.

Are you grateful for having a place to sleep, something to eat, shoes on your feet and clothes to

wear? Many kids don't have any of that. Many kids don't have anyone who loves them or protects them from danger, either. What would you do if you were left behind and got lost? Did Howard do the right thing by walking away from the train station?

★ TALKING TO STRANGERS

Is it safe to talk to strangers? Was Howard scared of the strangers that were following him?

Not really. He was upset because he thought the strangers wanted his things.

What would you tell Howard if you were his mom or dad? He was lucky that the strangers were nice little birds that wanted to help. Some strangers can be nice but some can be very mean. So it is best to talk to strangers only if your teacher or an adult you know is next to you.

★ THE SPIRIT OF HOLIDAYS OR CHRISTMAS

Most of us have some kind of holiday, a special day when we are supposed to be extra nice and caring towards each other. Everybody feels good and happy. People are kind and smile a lot. When grown-ups talk about the “spirit of the holidays” they mean “Let's get happy by being nice, generous and polite with everyone.”