

## Christmas 1997

Dear Family and Friends:

We had just dropped Mom off for a special choir rehearsal. Dad had an idea. We had an hour and a half, just enough time to go to Wegmans, do the grocery shopping for the week, and come back in time for Mom to feed Jeremy. We would surprise her! Two-year old Jessica thought that was a great idea. Jeremy sat contentedly in his car seat. Let's go for it! No problem.

Things did not go as planned. Two hours later, we were standing at the grocery checkout. Jeremy's stomach told him something was late. His feelings about that tardiness were finding full orchestration through his vocal cords. Meanwhile, Jessica was inspecting the interesting array of items that appear at grocery checkouts. We had been discussing the difference between what we wanted, and what we needed. She had resolved the matter in her mind. Two fistfuls of chocolate candies and gum appeared over the edge of the cart. A little voice pleaded loudly: "But Daddy, I needs it, I needs it so bad,"

The checkout clerk impatiently waited for me to get our items on the conveyor belt. Neither she nor the eight or nine patrons waiting in line behind us saw humor in this scene of paternal woe. Except the matronly lady directly behind us. She had a grin on her face as wide as the Grand Canyon. I will never forget what she said to me. "Just think, son. Someday, you will miss all this."

That was fourteen years ago. This past Fall, I sat in a meeting listening to our school's guidance counselor give an immensely helpful action plan for the college admission process. There was a twenty-month checklist for what the college applicant (my daughter?) needed to be doing and thinking during this time. My mind leaped to the pith of the matter. Frantically, I scanned the bullet items. Alas, there was no item for those most needful of commodities—chocolate candies and gum. I pointed out the omission to the attractive young woman sitting next to me. ... Deep sigh. Rolling of the eyes. There are only two words for Dad—IMMMMMMMMMMMMM—POSSIBLE.

This is a "How did this happen Christmas" for us. We are coming to the end of one stage and entering another. It is hard to fathom! We have matured a little bit. When did Jessica and Jeremy have time to grow up?

Other than occasional bouts of parental silliness, we are doing fine.

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We are amazed by the turns in our road. Frequently, we do not know the scenery or the territory through we will travel, but we do know the One who is driving and the ultimate destination. By the grace of God, we will learn to rest easy in his hands.

God bless you, our family and friends. May this Christmas be for you a time of joy, reflection, strengthening, and hope as we again celebrate the birth of the King of kings and Lord of lords.