

Playing Games and Guitars



Cooper started saving his money to get a new gaming system.

ILLUSTRATION BY JIM MADSEN

By Kimberly Reid
(Based on a true story)

“That every man may improve upon his talent, that every man may gain other talents” (D&C 82:18).

Cooper’s video game system was getting old. Whenever he raced cars, the screen froze and he had to restart the game.

“Can I get a new game system for my birthday?” Cooper asked Dad.

Dad shook his head. “I don’t think it fits into our budget. Remember how we spent quite a bit of money last year to buy your guitar and pay for music lessons?”

Cooper frowned. He wasn’t taking music lessons anymore.

“What if I earn the money?” Cooper asked. “Then maybe you could help me order one online.”

“That sounds like a good idea,” Dad said.

Cooper went to work doing extra chores and mowing lawns for neighbors. He saved all summer.

Finally he had enough money, and Dad sent it to an online seller advertising the best price for the gaming system Cooper wanted.

Cooper couldn’t wait. Whenever the mailman came, Cooper checked the mailbox. When a delivery truck came down his street, Cooper hoped it was bringing a package for him. But none of the trucks stopped at his house. Weeks went by.

“When is it going to get here?” Cooper asked.

Dad looked worried. “I’m not sure. The seller never sent me the tracking number.”

A few days later, Dad told Cooper some bad news. “I think the seller we chose is dishonest. I can’t contact him on the phone or through email.”

Cooper couldn’t believe it. “You mean he stole my money?”

“It looks that way.”

Cooper hoped it wasn’t true. At night he prayed for a way to still get the gaming system he’d earned. The next day he asked Dad if he could have one for Christmas, but Dad just said, “I’m sorry this happened. Next time we’ll both know to be more careful.”

It seemed there was only one thing left to do: start



“I hope none of us spend money for that which is of no worth nor labor for that which does not satisfy.”

Elder Michael John U. Teh of the Seventy
“Where Your Treasure Is,” Ensign, May 2014, 107.

saving money again. But school had started and Cooper didn’t have as much time for extra chores. “It isn’t fair,” he complained to himself as he sat moping in his room one afternoon. Then he noticed something he hadn’t paid much attention to for a while—his guitar.

Cooper picked it up and tuned it. He strummed a few chords and played through the songs he’d learned. It didn’t take long because he hadn’t had many lessons. He sat with the guitar on his lap, his fingers itching to play something new. He wondered if he could make up a song of his own.

A few hours later, Cooper played his brand new song all the way through. It felt so great that he couldn’t wait to write another one.

Cooper practiced his guitar all winter. He read books about playing the guitar. And when he had time, he earned a little extra money.

When spring came, Dad said, “How are the savings coming? Are you ready to pick out a new gaming system?”

Cooper thought about it. “I don’t know if I want one anymore.”

Sometimes he played video games at his friends’ houses, but he hadn’t really missed playing them at home. Playing guitar was fun, and he felt like he’d accomplished something great every time he wrote or learned a new song.

“I think I’ll leave the money in savings until I know what I want to use it for,” Cooper said.

“Sounds smart.”

Cooper was surprised at how much fun he was having playing his guitar. All year long, his plan had been to play video games. Now he didn’t even miss them. Heavenly Father hadn’t helped him get the video game system, but He had blessed Cooper with something better—the ability to be happy without it. ♦

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