

# A SISTER'S Gift

By Jane McBride

(Based on a true story)

*"God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).*

Emilie looked out her window at the Arizona desert. Even the spiky plants and shrubs seemed gray and cold this Christmas. It was the end of 1908, a hard year for Emilie's family. Her father was serving a three-year mission in Samoa, a faraway island in the Pacific Ocean.

Emilie knew they would not have presents under the tree this year. Her little sister, Faith, was too young to understand that there was no money for presents. Any extra money Mama earned from selling eggs went to help Papa on his mission.

Emilie turned to Mama. Mama's eyes looked sad and worried.

Was she thinking about Christmas too?

"It's all right, Mama," Emilie said. "I don't need any presents."

Mama smiled, but just a little.

"We won't have presents," Mama said. "But we have each other. And we are blessed because Papa is serving Heavenly Father."

Emilie wrapped her arms around Mama's waist. "That's enough for me," she said.

The day before Christmas, Mama baked cookies using some extra sugar she had bought with egg money.

Emilie and Faith decorated the cookies with raisins and peppermint pieces. They would be delicious Christmas treats! But Emilie knew Faith would still be sad to not have any real presents this year.

As Emilie got ready for bed that night, she picked up her doll, Sarah. Sarah had a beautiful dress and a real china face with painted eyes, nose, and mouth. While Emilie held Sarah, she suddenly had an idea. She loved Sarah. But she loved someone else even more.

Early Christmas morning, Emilie and Faith ran into the front room. Beneath the tree were two plates of cookies, two oranges—and one wrapped package!

Mama picked up the brown paper package. She turned it over in her hands.

"Faith, it has your name on it."

Faith's eyes grew wide. Eagerly, she tore open the paper. She stared at the doll, then at Emilie.

"It's Sarah," Faith said. "But you love her more than anything."

Faith started to hand the doll back to Emilie. But Emilie shook her head and hugged her sister instead.

"I love you more."

Emilie saw Mama wipe tears from her eyes.

"I'm sorry I don't have anything to give you, Mama," Emilie said in a small voice.

Mama smiled, and this time her smile was a big one.

"Your gift to Faith is the best present you could have ever given me," she said, pulling them both into a hug.

Emilie, Faith, and Mama sat down at the kitchen table to enjoy their Christmas treats. Emilie bit into a cookie. She loved the sweet taste, but the warmth that filled her heart was even sweeter. ♦

The author lives in Colorado, USA.

Turn the page for an activity to go with this story!

I read one of my little sisters  
her favorite book.

Elisabeth J., age 9,  
Utah, USA

