



By Gayle Kinney-Cornelius  
(Based on a true story)

"Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8).

**G**ood morning, birthday boy!" Mama said. "Come and get some birthday breakfast."

Marcus jumped out of bed and hurried to the kitchen to eat his sweet oatmeal and berries. "Thanks, Mama!"

After breakfast, Marcus ran to his room and reached under his bed for his box of drawing things. Marcus loved oatmeal, he loved soccer, and he loved race cars. But most of all, he loved *drawing*.

Marcus pulled out his notebook and markers. He started drawing a race track with a bright orange race car zooming around.

Pretty soon his race car was almost perfect. All it needed was some cool red stripes. He pulled the lid off his red marker. But it was all dried up!

*Oh no! Marcus thought. I wanted to make the stripes red!*

He grabbed the blue marker. *Oh well. I guess blue stripes will be OK*, he thought. But the blue marker was all dried up too.

Marcus frowned. He definitely needed new



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markers. Usually he got a new set of markers for his birthday, but Dad had just lost his job. His family didn't have a lot of money right now. So Marcus would just have to wait. At least he would still get a birthday cake tonight.

With a sigh, Marcus put his drawing things back in the box and slid it under his bed. Soon his friend Peter would be over to play.

When the doorbell rang, Marcus ran to the door. "Happy birthday!" Peter said. "We're the same age



again!" Peter was exactly one week older than Marcus and lived nearby. Marcus loved having a birthday in the same month as his friend.

Marcus and Peter played soccer in the backyard. Then they built rocket ships out of boxes. Marcus had so much fun that he almost forgot about the markers.

Then there was a knock at the door. "Marcus," Mama called. "Auntie is here to see you!"

"Happy birthday, Marcus!" Auntie said. She handed him a present wrapped in bright paper.

Marcus tore off the paper and couldn't believe what he saw inside. A new set of markers! And even better, there were two of each color.

"Thanks, Auntie!" Marcus gave her a big hug. Then he ran to his bedroom to finish his race-car picture. Peter watched him add the last red stripe. It was perfect!

When the day was over, Marcus lay in bed and thought about his fun day. He got to play with his best friend, and he got new markers!

But a thought kept bothering him. Peter was really quiet when Marcus opened his birthday present from Auntie. *Did my present make him sad?* Marcus wondered.

Then Marcus remembered something. Peter's dad had lost his job too. *What if Peter didn't get any presents on his birthday?* That thought made Marcus sad. But maybe there was a way he could help.

The next morning, Marcus woke up early. He found the crumpled wrapping paper from his present. He pulled out his markers and wrapped one of each color in the paper. Then he put the present by Peter's front door and hurried away before anyone could see him.

When Marcus got home, he looked at his set of markers. There was only one of each color now. Marcus sighed. Then he pictured Peter unwrapping his surprise and smiled. Maybe Peter would come over to play after he found his present. Then they could draw race cars together! ●

The author lives in Vermont, USA.

