

If you are reading this and you are an elementary school student I am certain that your level of excitement is growing by the day as you anticipate time with your family and friends, getting presents, and having a long break from school work. I know that some of you celebrate Christmas a Christian holiday which celebrates the birth of Jesus (God's Son sent to earth) while others enjoy Hanukkah which celebrates the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem during the time of the Maccabean Revolt. Kwanzaa (which means "First Fruits") is an African harvest festival which celebrates family life and unity. Nochebuena is a Latino holiday that occurs on Christmas eve and involves gift-giving and a late night Mass service (Misa del Gallo). Regardless of what your family is celebrating, it is important to remember that the truly important things in life are often not found in things, but rather are found in each other.

I recently went to the movies with my family and saw *The Grinch*. This movie was very funny and actually has a great meaning. The Grinch, who does not like Christmas because he spent most of his Christmases as an outsider. He saw the other children enjoying themselves, getting gifts, and spending time with those they love most while he spent his holiday breaks alone. When he got older and continued to live his life in isolation, his anger and resentment towards the residents of Who-ville only grew stronger. Eventually, he decided that if he couldn't have joy in his heart, then he would try and steal the joy away from everyone else. He was going to do this by "stealing Christmas" from all of the households in Who-ville.

He spent all night going to each house and stealing everything even remotely connected to Christmas (trees, decorations, food, presents). When he arrived back at his house on top of Mount Crumpit, the Grinch still wasn't happy but comforted himself by thinking that at least the residents of Who-ville wouldn't be either. At that moment, he heard not the sound of crying but of singing as the Who's gathered in the middle of town to sing as they always did on Christmas day. He could hardly believe his ears!! Hadn't he stolen everything that made the Who's happy at Christmas? Then why were they singing? It was at that moment he realized that it isn't the outward things (parties, presents, decorations, food) that bring us joy at Christmas. Instead, Christmas is an opportunity to share the joy that is in our hearts in an outward display of love to others. That day the Grinch's heart grew 3 sizes and he began to love Christmas and love others.

Maybe you find yourself feeling like the Grinch at the beginning of the story. You don't feel happy and you think it is because of the "things" you don't have. Here is a little secret: "Things" and "Other People" will never bring you joy. Joy comes from within your heart. Since no one or nothing can give you joy, then no one or nothing can take your joy away! I challenge you to find others that you can "give" love to during the holiday season and throughout the year. It is only by sharing your joy with others that your own joy will grow and be complete!!