CONTEMPORARY COMMENTS ON THE ADULT SABBATH SCHOOL LESSON

[Title] The Gospel and the Church
[Text] Galatians 6:1-10; Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 10:12; Romans 15:1; John 13:34; Luke 22:3
[Use] December 24, 2011

It’s a Kmart phenomenon that began in Michigan and is spreading across the country. Anonymous benefactors are paying off the layaway balances of total strangers—buying clothes, toys and other Christmas gifts set aside by impoverished parents.

A young father and his three children stood in the layaway line at a Kmart store in Indianapolis. His clothes were dirty, his boots worn. He asked to pay something on his bill, even though he knew the gifts for his kids couldn’t possibly be paid-off before Christmas. But a woman stepped up to the counter and told the sales associate, “No, I’m paying for it.” The father thought it was some sort of joke. When he realized it wasn’t, he burst into tears.

Last week, another woman in Indianapolis paid the layaway balances for 50 people. While she was leaving the store, she handed out $50 bills and then paid for another two carts of toys for a woman standing in line. Assistant manager, Edna Deppe, said she’d never seen anything like this in her 40 years of working retail. “It was like an angel fell out of the sky and appeared in our store.”

In Missoula, Montana, one donor paid over $1,200 for six customers whose goods were being returned to store shelves because payments were late. Store employees began to call the beneficiaries. One was reached via her cell phone. She was at Seattle’s Children’s Hospital where her son is being treated for an illness. She could be heard yelling to the nurses, “We’re going to have Christmas after all!”

In Omaha, Nebraska, Dona Bremser received a phone call at work from her Kmart store. They told her that someone had paid off the $70 balance on her account, which held Christmas presents for her 4-year-old son. “I was speechless,” Dona said. “It made me believe in Christmas again.”

Roberta Carter from Plainfield Township, Michigan, received a call from Kmart last week, telling her that someone had paid all but 40 cents of her $60 layaway. She and her family of eight children had been struggling for weeks while she’s searched for a full-time job. Crying when she heard the news, Roberta said, “My kids will have clothes for Christmas.”

Dozens of other customers have received similar calls. “It is honestly being driven by people wanting to do a good deed at this time of the year,” said Salima Yala, Kmart’s division vice president for layaway.

Paul’s lesson to us in Galatians 6:2 encourages us to do what these benefactors have done: “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” Why does carrying someone’s burden—lifting their load—fulfill the law of Christ? Because Christ’s law is love.
The world’s burden was lifted one night in Bethlehem some 2,000 years ago. That burden was sin. Death. We have been given the greatest Gift of all. And this is the perfect time of year to give back by lifting others’ burdens in whatever way we can.

~ nc

Additional Resource: YouTube

1. Yahoo News

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Paul Richardson, Director
Center for Creative Ministry
[www.creativeministry.org](http://www.creativeministry.org)
O: 800.272.4664

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