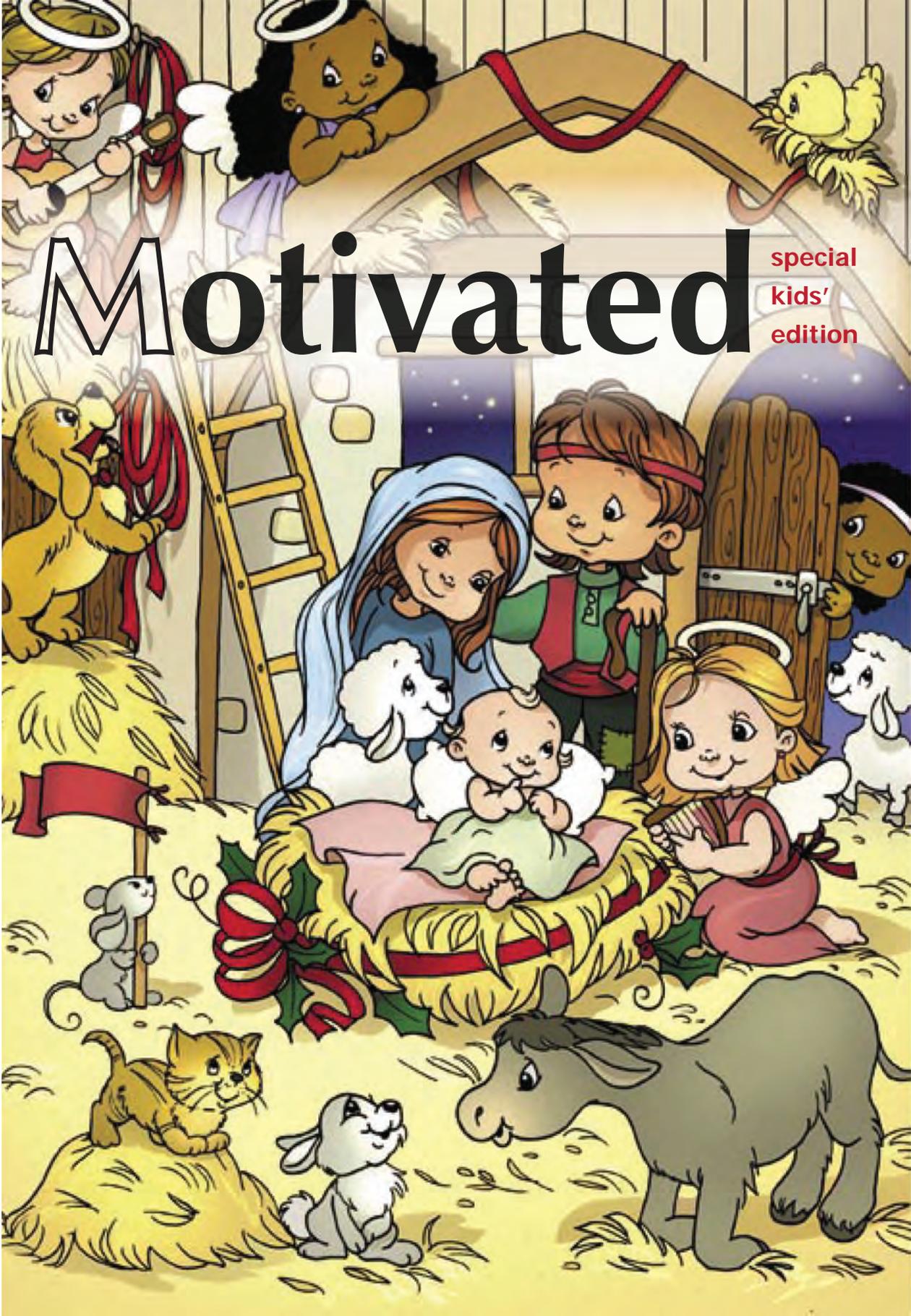


Motivated

special
kids'
edition



NOTE TO PARENTS

Merry Christmas! In this magazine, you'll find a combination of stories, activities, and coloring pages that we hope will be an inspiration in your children's lives this season. The stories focus on acts of love and compassion, and the coloring pages and other activities provide some fun for your little ones, giving them something challenging to do, while also reinforcing positive values. The content of this magazine is generally geared toward children between the ages of 5 and 8, but may also be suitable for children who are a bit younger. It's our hope that this magazine will provide you with fun and meaningful things to read and do together as a family!

Your *Motivated* Family



CHRISTMAS Dream Dust



By Christiana Heins



Clayton Mansion stood magnificently, surrounded by perfectly mowed lawns. Elegant rows of rosebushes lined the pebbled pathways leading to the house, though no roses bloomed in December. Perfectly clipped hedges circled the beautiful property. It was a breathtaking sight.

The inside of Clayton Mansion was richly furnished and absolutely spotless. Large paintings lined the walls of the wide hallways. The doors in the mansion were all intricately carved out of oak.

Jessica was sitting by the Christmas tree, wearing a lovely green and gold velvet dress. A mountain of presents lay under the tree, and the eight-year-old girl was busily sorting through them, carefully inspecting the ones that bore her name on the tag.

"Can you play with me?" her little brother's voice asked.

Jessica didn't even look up. "Go away, Jeffrey," she said in a nasty voice. "I don't have time to play with you. And plus, you always ruin things."

"Miss Jessica," a maid called from the next room. "You need to get ready for your horse-riding lessons."

"I don't want to go riding today," answered Jessica lazily.

The maid sighed and continued cleaning.

Jeffrey came into the entrance hall, this time with his train set. "Please will you help me set up my train, Jess?" he asked. "I can't do it myself."

"I told you no before," Jessica snapped. "Go get one of the servants to help you, and don't bother me anymore.

You made me lose count of my presents. Why don't you count your presents? Maybe we can see who has more!"

"I don't want more presents. I just want somebody to play with." Jeffrey turned sadly and went back to his room.

"Wake up, Jessie! Wake up!" the little voice lisped. The chubby hands reached out and shook Jessica's shoulders insistently.

"Go away, Jeffrey," she muttered and turned over.

"I'm not Jeffrey. I'm Kenny," came the voice again.

"Who's Kenny?" Jessica asked, as she opened her eyes sleepily. As soon as she looked around the dark, cold room, she bolted out of bed. This wasn't her room at all!

Newspaper was stuffed into cracks in the walls to keep the cold air out. She saw tattered curtains and a rickety dresser. Four beds were crammed into the tiny room. The blankets on the beds were patched and stitched from continual wear. She looked out the window and saw the bustle of a fairly busy street. "Albertson Drive?!" she exclaimed, reading the street sign outside the window. "Where am I?"

Her puzzled thoughts were soon interrupted by a little questioning voice beside her. "Can you comb my hair?" Kenny asked. His eyes squinted as he smiled and held out a comb.

"Ask someone else to comb your hair," Jessica replied. "Where are my clothes?" She looked down, horrified, at the well-used and threadbare nightgown she was wearing. "Oh, where's my nightie?" Jessica looked around the room

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Crash!

One of the bowls fell to the ground and shattered.

for her clothes. On the dresser she found a set of folded clothes, but though they were clean and repaired nicely, they were obviously very old and frequently used. She put them on.

Kenny still stood there, holding out his comb. "Please?" he asked once more. But Jessica didn't even look at him. "Go ask your mommy to do it for you," she told him.

Just then a woman's head peeked around the door. "Good morning, Jessica," she called. "I trust you slept well." Her eyes sparkled kindly as she spoke. There was a tired look on her face, but her beautiful smile disguised it well.

"I slept fine," Jessica answered.

"Once you've made your bed, would you please set the table for breakfast?" the woman asked sweetly.

"Isn't the maid supposed to do that?" Jessica snapped back, before she could catch herself. Having grown up with maids and servants in Clayton Mansion, the idea of setting the table was new to Jessica.

Mother looked puzzled for a moment, and then a smile spread across her face. "That must've been quite some dream, child!" she said with a little laugh. "But we really must be on with our day. You can tell me all about your dream later. Father will be returning from his night shift shortly and we'll eat breakfast together. Please come and give me a hand as soon as you're done tidying your room."

"Father does a night shift?" Jessica thought aloud.

The woman turned with a sigh. "Jessica, I don't have time for your games right now. I need your help. We'll talk later if you have something that's troubling you."

"Uh, yes," Jessica stuttered. She stared blankly at the bed, trying to think how

to go about making it. Her attempt ended in frustration; the bed was all wrinkles and lumps.

Kenny giggled as he watched. Jessica scowled at him fiercely, and the little boy stopped laughing and tried to help her finish making the bed.

Jessica gingerly crept out of the room, not sure where she was supposed to go. From the doorway of her room she could see the living room and kitchen. The house was small and shabby, but there were homemade Christmas decorations strung around the living room. A roaring fire blazed in the fireplace, and in the corner stood a scrawny tree decorated with simple, homemade decorations. Jessica went to the kitchen to set the table, but soon realized she didn't know how. Not knowing where anything was, she began to open every cupboard door in search of bowls and utensils.

CRASH! One of the bowls fell to the ground and shattered. The house went completely silent as everyone



turned and eyed Jessica. The family was so poor that every bowl was valuable. Jessica readied herself for a rebuke, but Mother only said: "Sweep it up carefully, so as not to cut yourself." And she went back to her cooking.

Jessica bent to pick up the larger pieces of the broken bowl. As she did, she cut her finger on the broken bowl, and let out a cry of pain. Mother quickly turned, saw the situation, and grabbed a cloth. She wrapped it tightly around the cut to stop the bleeding. "It'll be okay," she said softly.

"I'm sorry," was all Jessica could mutter.

"Maureen," her mother called, and a bright-eyed girl of about six came instantly. "Please finish setting the table for your sister," she instructed.

"Yes, Mother," Maureen responded, and instantly went about her work.

When the father had returned, the family gathered around the table. Everyone folded their hands and bowed their heads. "For what we are about to receive," the father began, "may the Lord make us truly thankful. Amen."

"Amen," came the chorus of voices, followed instantly by the clatter of spoons.

As Jessica took a bite of her porridge, she cringed. It had no butter and very little sugar in it. But she was so hungry that she gingerly took another bite and then another. It's not too bad, I guess, she thought to herself.

After breakfast there were dishes to do. The woman asked Sara, the eldest sister, to do the dishes, while Jessica was to keep an eye on the two younger ones, Kenny and Becky, so that she could go out.

"But I was going to go play with my..." Jessica started to answer, but stopped.

"All right," continued Jessica, and called the little kids to follow her.

That afternoon, after Mother had returned from the market, she came to see Jessica. She was carrying a small basin of warm water and a cloth. "How's your hand doing, Jessie?" she asked.

"Fine. The bleeding stopped a while ago, but it's a little sore."

"I'm sure it is. I'm so sorry about that. Let me

clean it, so that it won't get infected." Mother removed the bandage and gently cleaned the cut.

"Is everything okay?" she asked Jessica. "You seem a little out of sorts."

"You could say that," Jessica replied.

"And why's that?"

"I... I don't know," was all Jessica could answer.

"I noticed that you're finding your jobs harder to do around the house. You question doing them much more than you used to."

Jessica stared at the floor, embarrassed by what she heard. But how am I supposed to react? she asked herself.

"There is something I want you to know," Mother said, as she wrapped a clean bandage on Jessica's hand. "I want you to know how much I need and appreciate your help around the house. I'm sure it's difficult for you to have to look after your younger brothers and sisters, when you'd prefer to be doing something else. Sara and you are both so

helpful, and it makes things a lot easier for me.

"I can't imagine how it would be if I didn't have you to help me. So I wanted to thank you for helping me, even if there are other things that you would prefer to be doing instead."

Jessica had never had anyone thank her for helping, because she had never taken the time to help another person. Jessica felt



**"I'd like to give some of my presents
away to make them happy."**

ashamed of how selfish and unkind she had been. "I know you want to do the right thing, Jessica, and I understand that it's not always easy. So thank you very much for doing it anyway, and for helping me all the time. I love you so much."

Mother hugged Jessica for a few moments before she left the room.

Jessica sat there for a few minutes reflecting. I want to be kinder to other people, she thought. I don't know how exactly, but I'm sure there are things that I can do to help and I want to try to do that.

All that day, whenever she was asked, Jessica helped with the children, and cleaned the house. She also helped Mother and Sara cook dinner. It was a lot of work, but Jessica found that it was actually fun. Every time she helped someone or shared something with others, she felt good inside. That night she went to bed feeling content and satisfied.

"Good morning, Jessica! Merry Christmas!" a voice called from beside her bed. Jessica opened her eyes slowly and there standing beside her bed was Jeffrey. She was back in her own room, in Clayton Mansion!

"How did I get back?" she cried, as she jumped out of bed. "Oh my goodness, Jeffrey! It must have all just been a dream!"

She laughed happily. "It's wonderful to be back. And it's so good to see you!" she said as she gave him a big hug. Jeffrey's eyes were wide with surprise!

"I love you, Jeffrey. I'm so sorry I haven't been very nice to you lately. Please forgive me? Let's go set the table for breakfast." The two of them went downstairs to the dining room.

"Merry Christmas, Maria!" the two

chorused, as the maid came in with a big tray of food. She was so surprised at the sight of the set table that she almost dropped the tray on the floor.

"Why, thank you for helping," Maria said with a smile. "That's just wonderful!"

After breakfast, their mother asked if they wanted to open their presents.

Jessica exclaimed, "Oh, Mother, I have an idea. Why don't we find a poor family who doesn't have anything special for Christmas, and bring them some presents? I'd like to give some of my presents away to make them happy."

There were tears in her mother's eyes when Jessica had finished.

"That is such a kind thought, Sweetheart."

Her mother told the maid to get a basket with food to give to the poor family. Jessica also asked for a sack to put the presents in. Maria quickly hurried off, surprised by all that she was hearing and seeing.

As Jessica was putting presents into a big red sack, Jeffrey came to her. "I want to share my presents too," he said softly.

Jessica and Jeffrey finished filling the sack with presents, and tied it shut with a gold ribbon.

When they got to the shabby house on Albertson Drive, they set the sack and basket outside the door. Jessica peeked out from behind a bush and saw the woman, with a few small children behind her, coming out of the house and looking in surprise at the bundle on the doorstep.

"Look what God has sent us!" she happily exclaimed.

Jessica smiled and felt warm inside. It really did feel good to be kind and sharing and to do nice things for other people.

Color the picture.



Draw a line from the shapes to the part of the picture that they match.



How many of each of these shapes
can you find on the tree?

Fill in the blanks.



Find the 5 differences between these pictures and circle them.



The House that Glowed



Author Unknown

It was Christmas Eve, and poor little Rami, an orphan with no home or family to go to, was trudging wearily through the snow. His coat was ragged, and wet with melted snow. His shoes were worn and split at the seams, so that his feet were numb with cold. His cap, pulled well down over his ears and forehead, had a tear that let in the biting wind. Night was falling, and the gathering darkness found the homeless little boy still plodding on his sad and lonely way. If only I could find some shelter, some place where I could get warm, he thought. If only someone would give me some food to eat, and something hot to drink!

Coming to the edge of the forest, he caught sight of a little village in the valley below, with several fine, large houses filling the hillside all around. Lights were twinkling in the windows, while the smoke from many chimneys, curling upward, blended with the cloudy sky. Hope sprang up in little Rami's heart. Here at last, among so many lovely homes, he felt he would no doubt find someone to care for him. He walked more quickly, so sure he was that his troubles were almost over.

Soon he came to the entrance of a fine, big mansion. There were many lights in the windows and a very bright one over the front door. Surely, he thought, people who could live in such a house must have lots of money and would be only too pleased to help a poor, hungry

little boy.

Very bravely he walked up to the front door, and by standing on tiptoe, managed to catch hold of the handle of the bell. He pulled it hard, and there was such a noise inside that it frightened him. But he was more frightened still when the great oak door was thrown back and a big man dressed in the finest clothes looked out at him.

"Did you ring that bell?" asked the butler, frowning.

"Y-y-y-yes," stammered Rami, "I-I-I'm very cold and hungry, and I thought you..."

"This is Christmas Eve," snapped the butler, "and the house is full of guests. I'm sorry, but we haven't time to bother with the likes of you just now. Good night." And the door was shut.

"Oh!" said Rami to himself, "I never thought anyone would do that. But perhaps they are too busy here. I must try somewhere else." So he walked on down into the village itself, passing by the other big mansions for fear the people inside might also be too busy to care about hungry little boys on Christmas Eve.

From the first village house he reached there came sounds of music and laughter, and feeling sure that there must be very friendly people living there, he knocked gently on the door. But there was so much noise inside that he had to knock again and again, each time louder than before.



At last the door swung open, and a young man wearing a funny paper cap looked out.

"Excuse me," said Rami, "but I wondered if you could..."

"Sorry," the young man answered, "we're having a Christmas Eve party in here, and we can't stop now."

"But please, please!" pleaded Rami.

"Sorry, good night!" said the young man. Bang! The door was shut.

Terribly disappointed, Rami went next door, but the people there were making so much noise that they didn't even hear him at all, loud as he knocked.

At the next house, a crabby old gentleman merely told him to run home and not bother the neighbors. "Run home?" thought Rami. "How can I do that?"

At another house he was told to call again another day. They would help him then, perhaps, the people said. But he needed help now!

So, going from house to house through the entire village, he sought shelter and food, and found none. Almost hopeless and heartbroken, he trudged out into the night, leaving the twinkling lights behind him. He felt like giving up.

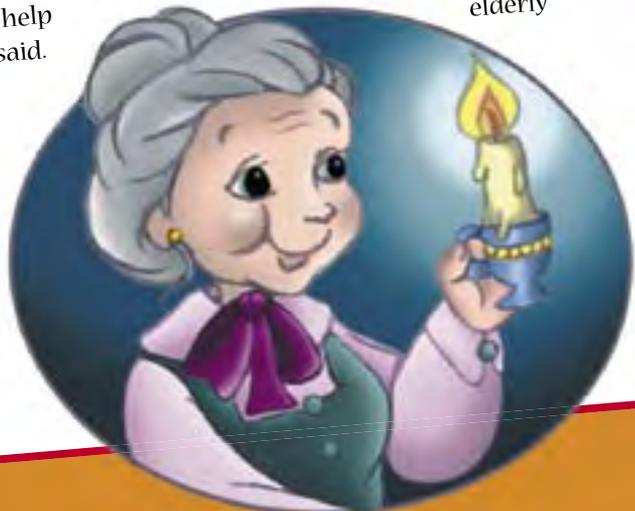
He was so tired, so hungry, so discouraged.

Just then he happened to look up and found himself passing an old cottage, so dark and small that he probably wouldn't have seen it at all but for the white carpet of snow on the ground showing it up. A blind covered the one window, but faint streaks of light gleamed from under the door and through cracks in the woodwork.

Rami stood still and wondered what he should do. Should he knock here? What would be the use? Surely if the people who lived in all the big houses—who had money for lovely parties and things—couldn't afford to help a poor boy, how could the folks in a house like this? No, it was of no use. Better not bother them.

Then he thought again. He had knocked at so many houses; there could be no harm in trying one more. So he turned from the road up the snow-covered garden path and tapped gently on the door.

A moment later the door opened cautiously, and an elderly



woman peered out. "Bless my soul!" she exclaimed. "Whatever are you doing out there in the cold tonight?"

"Please..." began Rami. But before he could say another word she had flung the door wide open and pulled him inside.

"You poor little child!" she exclaimed. "Deary, deary me! You look so cold and hungry and wet through. Let's get those things off at once! Wait a moment while I stir up the fire and put the kettle on."

Rami looked about him and saw that the little one-room cottage was as bare as could be. The light he had seen through the crack came from one lone candle set on the mantelpiece. But he hadn't time to see much else, for the kind woman was wrapping him in a blanket, and setting him up at the table before a bowl of steaming soup.

Then she went back to stir the pot on the stove. As she did so, she suddenly noticed something and looked up. Was it a dream, or were her eyes deceiving her? The candlelight had given place to a warm and lovely glow that seemed to be getting brighter every minute, filling every corner of the cottage with a heavenly radiance. Every drab piece of furniture seemed to be shining and glistening like polished. And the rich man, looking down from his mansion on the hill, suddenly exclaimed, "There's a strange light in the valley. Look!

Widow Greatheart's cottage is on fire!"

The news spread swiftly from house to house, and soon the parties were abandoned as the people, wrapping themselves up in their coats and shawls, rushed out to see what was the matter.

They saw the light, too, and running toward the widow's cottage, beheld the poor old house as it glowed. Peering inside, all they could see was the dear old woman caring for the very same little boy who had called that night at all their homes.

Then, as the light faded, they knocked on the door to ask anxiously what could have happened.

"I really do not know," said Widow Greatheart, with a smile of wondrous joy and satisfaction on her face. "I just seemed to hear a Voice saying to me, 'Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these My children, you have done it unto Me.'"



Go through the maze,
starting at the arrow
and ending at the stars.



Answer page.



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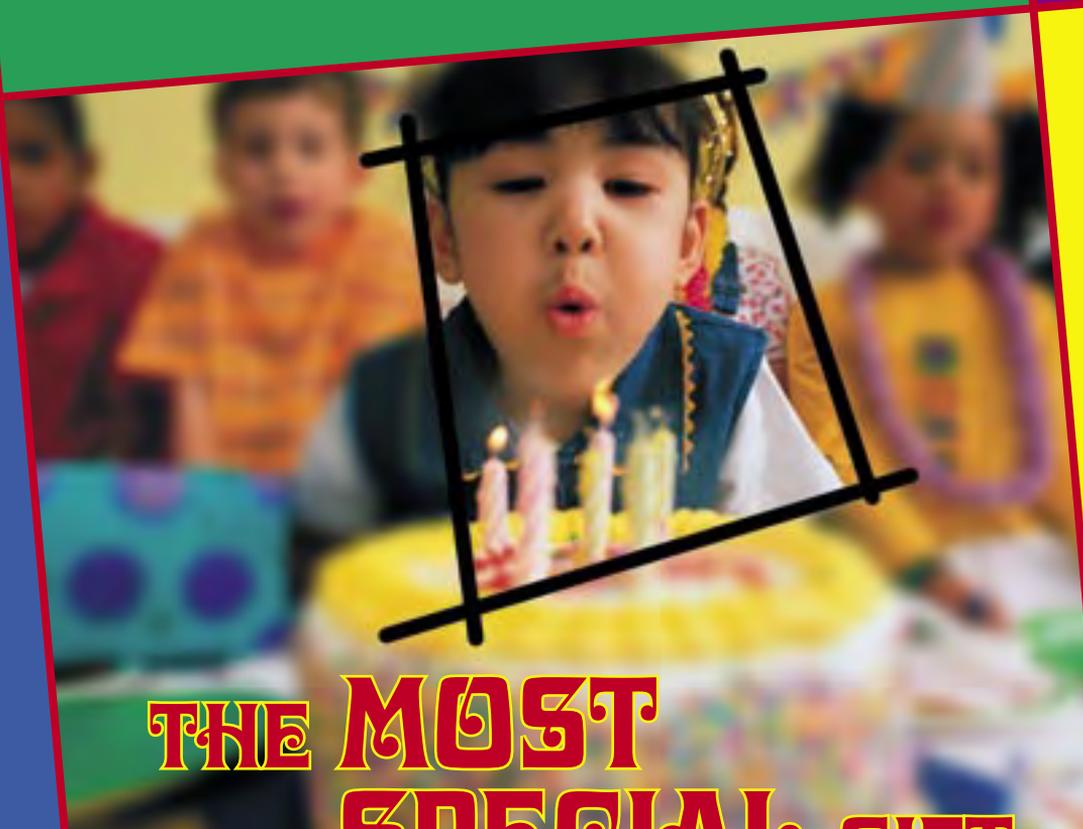
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THE MOST SPECIAL GIFT

Can you remember a time when you wanted something so badly that it seemed that special something would never come?—And then when it finally did come, it was something even better than you expected? That's the kind of wonderful gift God gave us on the first Christmas.

Since the beginning of time, people had wished for a special something to make their lives truly happy and complete. Who would have ever thought that all of that would come in the form of a tiny baby born in a cave in the land of Palestine? But that's exactly what happened.

God looked at every human heart He had created and every heart to come, and He knew just what we needed. So He prepared the perfect answer, and sent the answer into the world. The answer was Jesus Christ, the Spirit of love and Word of God!