

KATIE LOGIC

I am learning to accept Christmas presents in whatever form they present themselves, and I'm continually amazed at the abundance of forms they can take. One recently came to me in the form of a conversation which I overheard, between Elizabeth and Katie. I will relate that exchange in some detail below, but first I should say that, as is true for many families this Christmas, money is very tight for us this year. The reasons for this are varied, as they are for the rest of the nation, but they include some fairly common themes – my extended unemployment and underemployment, the government-sanctioned usurpation of the nation's purchasing power by the oil companies, and our continually declining family income being among the larger ones. In any case, money is tight and our focus on that fact has slowly been impressed upon Katie. She has begun to ask questions like, "Do we have enough money to eat at Chic-fil-A?" and "Daddy, how much did you make on your carpet job this morning?" – that sort of thing. Her concern is welcome and, in a way, necessary, but the questions themselves can be painful. Nevertheless, it is a small price to pay for the unparalleled delight of watching a brilliant and highly perceptive child grow and develop.

Having said that, I should explain that Elizabeth wants an i-Pod for Christmas – you know the little personal music boxes that people carry around with them. They're approximately the size of a flat cell phone, and they hold about thirteen zillion songs or movies or whatever you put on them. Well, she's wanted one for a good long while – since before last Christmas, I suppose, but we've been slow to buy, since they are a bit pricey. In any case, we'd decided that this Christmas might be a good time to go ahead and get one for her, and that was the topic of the conversation that I overheard. Elizabeth was carefully explaining to Katie that, due to the price, the i-Pod would be the only Christmas present she'd be asking for this Christmas. Katie was listening intently. "Mommy," she said, "here's what you should do. Tell Daddy about something else you'd like to have for Christmas, and Daddy and I'll get it for you. Then tell Santa about wanting an i-Pod, and let him get it." Needless to say, she had my attention as well as Elizabeth's. "But what if Santa doesn't get me one?" Elizabeth asked. "Not a problem," Katie responded. "More than likely you'll get it, because you've been – well, OK this year, and if you do see, you'll save all that i-Pod money. And even if you don't, you know all the stores have everything on sale after Christmas, so you just go and buy it then. You can't lose, either way, but if you go and buy now, you could be wasting all that money instead of just letting Santa handle it."

"Well, it's doggone difficult to argue with that kind of logic, and Elizabeth, practical woman that she is, didn't try to. Neither did I; I just tried to make enough mental notes that I'd be able to write about it afterwards. And now as I write and reflect, I see that Katie was right – as usual. The biggest presents on our list or the most important or gut-wrenching issues in our lives are often in someone else's hands – maybe God's, maybe Santa's, maybe some other person's, but not ours. Then thinking on further, I caught a glimpse of how much happier and less stressful our lives would be, if we could just find a way to be content to leave those things in those other hands and to keep our focus on those challenges and opportunities which we are capable of handling.

Only God knows how many times I'll have to learn that lesson before it becomes a part of my psychology, but Katie already knows it by heart. Yesterday, as the two of us were running about picking up some late additions to our shopping list, right out of the blue Katie said, "Daddy, you don't have to worry about getting Mom an i-Pod anymore." "Why not?" I asked. "Well", she began, "when I talked to Santa at the mall, I asked him, and he said he'd take care of it. So what you need to do is to get her a gift certificate to a sushi restaurant." Always intrigued by the workings of a great mind, I couldn't resist asking, "Why a sushi restaurant?" Katie's response was immediate. "Because it's her favorite meal, and Santa doesn't do sushi."

Here's wishing one and all a **Merry Christmas**, and hoping that we see you at Nikko's,

Dean Greene
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