

Christmas A B I K E

BY RICK GREGORY

It was a rainy morning that holiday season as I sat at home working at my desk. I was deep in thought when I felt a small hand on my shoulder. My son, Jason, just 4 years old, had walked in and waited quietly for me to stop writing so he could talk to me.

As I turned and met his eyes, he communicated a sense of purpose that I hadn't felt from him before. "Daddy, I want a bicycle for Christmas," he announced.

I was afraid of that. Three years earlier I had left a well-paying job to join a small ministry outreach to those living on the Mexican border near San Diego.

Although my wife, Sherry, and I were certain of God's call, we struggled financially. We had no savings, no credit (except in the Bank of Heaven) and no money for Christmas presents for our two children. And now my son tells me he wants a bicycle! How could I look into his piercing, trusting, expectant eyes and say, "I'm sorry, Son, but we don't have any money?"

I placed my hands on his shoulders and said, "Jason, I'm sure God would love for you to have a bicycle. I'm also sure He wants you to know you can trust Him. In order for you to know that your Christmas bicycle is especially for you from Jesus, let's tell Him what color bike you want."

"Okay . . . I want a green bike."

We began praying every day and every night for that special green bike. We waited to see how the Lord would work out this object-lesson for Jason—and for Sherry and me. But a week before Christmas, we still had no money and no green bike. My faith began to waver.

Then my friend Paul called.

"Would Jason like a bicycle for Christmas?" he asked. Paul was calling from a garage sale where he'd found a bike in great shape. "It's got trainer wheels, and it'll fit him perfect."

I could hardly contain my excitement until I remembered something.

"Paul, can you tell me what color the bike is?"

"Sure. It's yellow."

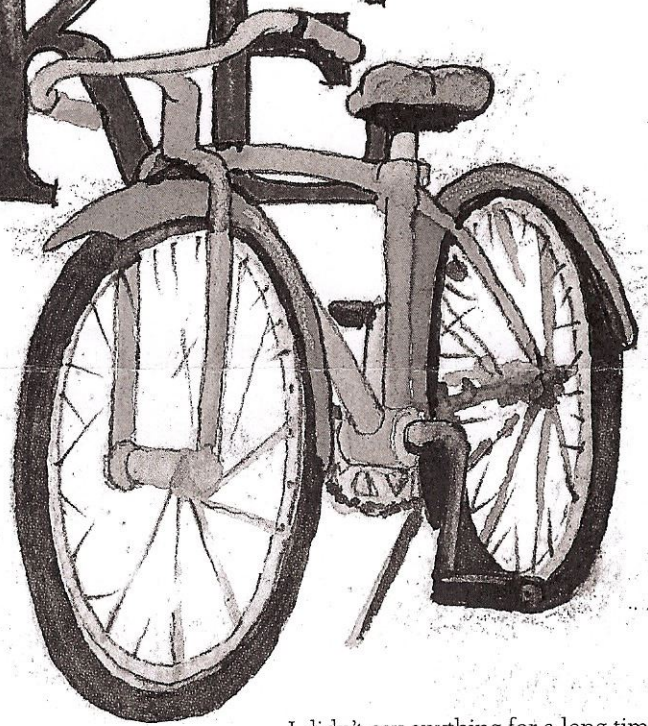


Illustration by Jeff Stoddard

I didn't say anything for a long time. "Is something wrong?" he asked.

"Yeah, Paul, this is going to sound crazy, but the bike's the wrong color."

Now it was his turn to be silent.

"You see, we've been praying for a green bike."

"Oh, I understand."

Now my own lack of faith kicked in.

Christmas is only a week away. Jason won't remember we had been praying for a green bike. He'd still know God had been faithful. Wouldn't he?

"Paul, why don't you go ahead and get the bike anyway?"

That afternoon Sherry and Jason walked by some bicycles in a local department store. Jason stopped and stared.

"Mommmy!" he jumped and pointed. "I want that bike!"

Sherry was taken back. "Jason, honey, that's not a green bike. Haven't we been telling Jesus you want a green one?"

"No, Mommy, I want that one. I want a yellow bike!"

That night, as we tucked Jason into bed, we marveled at God's faithfulness. But the topper came when Jason bowed his head and asked the Lord not to get confused by his request for a green bike.

"I really want a yellow one!" he exclaimed.

That Christmas, we knew the Lord had already heard him, loud and clear. ●

After living for a year in Mexico, the Gregorys are back in San Diego, where Rick is a commercial floorcovering salesman.