

# A little child shall lead them

*Innocence renewed by giving, receiving most important aspect of holiday season*



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I had it all figured out. This was going to be a brilliant, carefully crafted spiel about why Christmas gets tainted more often than not by capitalist pitfalls and what we should do to avoid this problem.

It was filled with \$10 words like "consumerism" and "materialistic over-emphasis." I probably could have gone the usual route of asking you not to see the dollar signs in every store you go to, but I decided not to choke on that cliché.

What I was going to write about seems more to me like a legal brief or an officially worded document than anything else, and that has no business invading the true spirit of the holidays.

Some people understand what Christmas is really about better than I do, and a lot of people don't fall into the proverbial traps we seem to hear about every year.

I have made a point to never, even during the roughest weeks, lose sight of what's important, and I'm not about to start now.

So let's talk about children. Without children, none of us would see the world as it is meant to be seen, and Christmas would not exist.

It began 2,000 years ago with the birth of Jesus. If you forget that simple fact, then it's over. You'd be better off in hibernation for a while.

The world changed forever because of the birth of one child. I find hope in knowing that something that happened so long ago still matters more than Bill

Gates' net worth or detailed sexual lingo about a presidential affair, but we'll let that voice rest as promised.

This is about children.

I remember watching a home video showing two of my younger cousins opening their Christmas presents a few years back. One of them ripped open a large box containing a brand-new Super Nintendo.

I feel that I might trip over my own words trying to describe the look in their eyes — the absolute, pure joy that took over their faces in a state of shock and disbelief. To them, it was the Holy Grail of presents.

For a second, I may be inclined to side with the masses who say that Christmas at that point became nothing more to them than a video game. Then, when I actually think about it for more than two seconds, I realize that is not the most important aspect in the scope of things.

Behind that coveted "superficial" or "material" item are two parents who probably were envisioning that perfect moment as they made their way through a Toys R Us or a Kmart, not because their children would have "the" toy of the season but because they would be happy.

You see, it's not about the gift, it's about the act of giving. It's about looking beyond yourself.

A few years ago, I was in Kansas for a religious retreat as Christmas was quickly approaching. There were about 10 of us in a group that went, and we all stayed with host families in the town where the retreat was held.

Another guy and I stayed in the home of a man who had lost his wife in a car accident within the previous six months. The man was driving when the couple's car was hit head-on — there was nothing he could do to save his wife.

As it turned out, there were some legal undertakings that he continued to deal with on top of his grief. The man who hit them also lost his wife and baby in the accident, leaving only the



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two widowers to continue with their lives.

The older gentleman had been married to his wife for more than 40 years. As we stayed with him, he showed us pictures of her and spoke of her with a

timeless admiration.

He talked about how full of energy she had always been, her love for living and about the profound impact she had on his life. For a grieving man, one I imagine felt an emptiness like I've

never known, he acted like the richest man on earth.

There was an innocence in the way he spoke, even though he had experienced a great deal. In him, I saw the preservation of youth. He treated us as if we were at home, and in many ways we were.

But the journey didn't stop there. The true meaning of Christmas was still incomplete for me.

When I was driving around Omaha last year, I heard KQKQ-FM (98.5) "Sweet 98" replaying excerpts from its morning show. Rocket, a morning DJ, had been hosting a make-a-wish program where people who were especially needy could call in and get help from the community.

One boy called in, probably 5 or 6 years old, and told Rocket his younger sister had recently died. Apparently, he and his mom were not financially able to properly memorialize his sister, so he asked Rocket if he would help them obtain a headstone for his sister's grave.

It affected me like few things before. I'm tired of seeing the same old faces on television and in the newspapers. I want this boy to be an international hero and for tribal members in India and bakers and government employees in Rwanda to know about what this boy has contributed to the human race.

Did he cure cancer? No.

Did he physically contribute to world peace or the end of world hunger? No.

All he did was look beyond himself and have the simple courage and heart to ask for the one thing that mattered to him more than what toy he was going to get.

**Cooper's Law:** *The heart of a child is worth more than we could fit under one billion Christmas trees. Inside lies the world's most valuable treasure.*

Children represent the most important aspect of the Christmas season. The most important things we can give to children and to others are the gifts money can't buy.

## Question everything

*Good luck finding the answers to the university's real puzzles*



**MATTHEW EICKMAN is a senior finance and economics major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.**

Entering the final stretch. Pulling all-nighters to finish the papers that we've had the entire semester to do.

The roof is caving in. Cramming. Hoping. Praying. Describe it as you wish, but the semester is coming to an end.

My Russian Crisis (at least my term paper) is over, but I still have a lot on my mind.

Right now, there's not much in it, but a lot weighing upon it.

The semester has taught us how to stomach stories about the President and his cigar.

We have learned (once again) not to trust Saddam Hussein. We have learned what happens when the offensive line can't block.

Yet so many questions are left unanswered.

As we were taught when little, it is good to ask questions. When questions arise, people are inclined to think.

So, here we go.

1) Why does it take until the

middle of November to distribute the student directories?

After finally saving the university operator's number into a speed dial slot, we finally got the books.

This year, they arrived just in time to hear three responses.

"You've reached my room. I'm at home for Thanksgiving."

"You've reached my room. I'm at home for Christmas Break."

"You haven't reached my room. I moved to start the second semester. You can get my new number next November. Maybe."

If these directories are to serve their purpose, why can't we get them earlier?

As soon as we move to Lincoln to start the school year, we start receiving mail from the university. The university obviously knows where we live, so it probably knows our phone numbers.

Let's shoot for September next year.

2) Speaking of the mail, are these consolidated bills supposed to be beneficial?

Yes, they are beneficial. Not to the students, but to the departments that sneak money out of our pockets.

The bills are supposed to make us feel special because they find a way to charge a "special fee" for everything we do.

As if students are not paying enough for tuition, room and board, books and student fees, they have these hidden fees also.

I see we have found the answer. The fees are ambiguous, hence their effectiveness.

3) Why is finding a parking place the most trying part of a student's day?

They oversell blue lots. They give freshmen the same priority as upper-class students. They make it impossible to find a spot.

The answer to this problem lies in your wallet.

If you can afford a yellow parking permit, you can have your pick of spots. In fact, there are probably three empty spots for each person who has dished out the cash.

If you live off campus, you can park in the stadium parking garage. There are always spots available because the garage has priced itself out of students' range.

Simply pay hundreds of dollars and you can have a spot in the garage.

When closely examined, it becomes obvious that we have no reason to ever complain about parking.

We simply have to open our empty wallets.

4) Are they ever going to do something with the Reunion?

My editor tells me it has been empty since he has been at school. It's about time to open that things up.

Put a shopping center in it. A dry cleaner. A campus convenience store. Something.

The building is located near Harper, Schramm, Smith, Abel and Sandoz halls. It is close to many of the sororities and fraternities. It is even close to the Rec Center.

The building has potential. It may have failed in the past, but it still has

untapped potential.

If the primary idea for the Reunion over the last few years was to move all of our reserved textbooks down there, it is time for a new think tank.

At least tear the thing down and give us some more parking spots.

5) If they ever get the Nebraska Union done (a question in itself), will other campus buildings see improvements?

It is likely. Surely we must notice what an embarrassment it is to show Andrews Hall to prospective university students or faculty members.

They are planning to tear down a couple of the horrendous buildings on campus. This should give the university even more incentive to improve the facilities to other buildings.

Look at the fantastic remodeling jobs in the CBA and Burnett. More will come.

Of course, we will probably have to wait until Memorial Stadium and then the Nebraska Union are finished to find enough construction workers.

Which should be the higher priority?

6) Why is Danny Nee still here? Unfortunately, the final question

has no answer.

The coach isn't recruiting. The teams aren't improving. The fans aren't coming.

He should be gone.

We go to a school with a successful athletic department. It raises impressive amounts of money to support the athletes and alumni.

It uses money as an excuse for

every new burden placed on season ticket holders.

The men's basketball team is not bringing in any money. Six thousand fans is not going to cut it. Maybe we'll get lucky and get 10,000 for the Kansas game.

Nee doesn't recruit big men well. He doesn't develop any depth. His teams have no discipline on the court. He doesn't recruit in Nebraska.

An all-star team from UNK, Wayne State and Hastings College could easily defeat the Huskers this year.

People want to see winners. They want to see hustle. They want to watch their blue-collar Nebraska kids.

They don't want to watch a Danny Nee-coached team.

Maybe a pink slip is the only answer to this question.

Because questions without definite answers exist, it is important to question anything and everything.

Find out why we get the student directories so late, why we pay those special fees, why parking is so screwed up, why the Reunion is a waste of space and why some of your classrooms are referred to as dungeons.

You can even try to figure out why Danny Nee is still here.

Of course, don't hurt yourself doing so. Dead Week is coming soon.

You'll probably spend most of that week trying to figure out why it's called "Dead Week" when the only dead aspect is the fried brain cells from quiz after quiz after term paper after term paper ...