

HELPING A STRANGER YIELDS GREAT REWARD

BY ALVA JAMES-JOHNSON



The sun was setting on a recent Friday evening as I did some last-minute shopping. With the Sabbath quickly approaching, I dashed into Walmart with my 14-year-old daughter, guilt-ridden and frustrated. I had already spent too much money at Sam's Club, but I needed a few more items for Sabbath dinner.

So we rushed into the store and divided the grocery list. My daughter went looking for paper plates, and I shopped for produce. That's when I noticed a cute little toddler sitting in a grocery cart, while his mother picked out vegetables. I gave them a quick smile and kept shopping.

"He's adorable." I told his mother as I rolled my grocery cart on by.

I really didn't have time for conversation, but his mother smiled and began saying something to me in a strong foreign accent. I realized then she spoke little English.

"Food," she said. "No money. Three kids. Please help."

Well, that was the last thing I needed that Friday evening. I had already blown my budget, and I just wanted to get home to welcome the Sabbath. But, when I looked in the woman's eyes, I saw a des-

peration I couldn't ignore. "Okay, I'll buy you groceries," I said reluctantly.

When my daughter returned, she wanted to know why the woman was following me around, filling her cart with food. I told her I had agreed to pay for her groceries, and would put it on my credit card.

"I really can't afford it," I said, "but God will replace the money somehow."

"Even if He doesn't," my daughter said, "we're doing the right thing."

I knew then that I had made a good decision.

We went to the checkout counter, and the woman's groceries came up to \$50. She thanked me, and then we hugged and went our separate ways. When my daughter and I returned home, we told the story to my husband and my older daughter. After that, I didn't give it much thought.

Three days later, I got a phone call from an editor. By the end of the conversation, my income increased by \$800. It was money I hadn't expected, and could have only come from God.

I told my daughter the good news, and she agreed. She knew all along that He would come through.

I learned that day that it pays to give,



Alva James-Johnson

even when it hurts. In life, you reap what you sow — and more.

This feature is the first in a series of short bi-monthly stories featuring God's providence in our lives. If you have a 300-word stewardship story about how God has blessed you, and you would like to share it with the Southern Tidings readership, please email it to idouce@southernunion.com.

Alva James-Johnson is a reporter and columnist at the Ledger-Enquirer in Columbus, Georgia. For more of her writing, visit <https://www.facebook.com/AlvaJames-JohnsonLedger>.