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Susan E. Murray
Andrews University

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All I Want for Christmas

BY SUSAN E. MURRAY

Dear Mom and Dad,

Instead of writing Santa, I decided to write to you about what I really want for Christmas. I know you worry about spending too much on me, and then you worry about not spending enough. When you listen to me and buy me a few of the things I want, I feel listened to. It is important for me to have some of the same things other kids have. But you can overdo it, and then I feel guilty myself! You may not believe your ears, but it's really not about the money you spend on me.

What I'd really like is for both of you to tell me that you love me every day. I may pull away or even try to escape, but I'm listening. The way you think you are showing your love may not mean the same to me. Could you also write it in a note and leave it on my pillow, or write it on the bathroom mirror or on the banana you send in my lunch, too? Could you tell others, during conversations, how special and important I am to you?

I'd really like you to keep your promises, too. I'm pretty smart, you know. If you put me off and say, "We'll do that another time" or "We don't have money for that now, but later," I'll be counting on that.

I need you to say what you mean and mean what you say. If you tell my brother he'll have to go to bed early and then let him stay up until I go to bed, just because he whines and stalls, I'll be disappointed and angry.

I know you are busy at work and stuff, but I am busy all day at school. I need you to have some down time with me in the evening. I want you to listen to what really happened at school. And when I talk to you, I don't need your solutions about how I should do better. I just want you to listen.

My friends are important to me. I wish they were important to you, too. When you don't remember their names, that hurts! I'd like for my friends to be able to come over to our house. I'd like to take a friend to town or have them come over on Sabbath afternoon. They don't care if the house isn't clean, and I don't either!

Well, actually I do care if the house is clean. I really need to learn how to be organized and do important things around the house. Can you show me how, and then trust me to take some responsibility?

I know Christmas is really about Christ's birth and God's love for us. Could you let me know that you will absolutely and un- abashedly love me forever, no matter what? Then I can better understand God's love for me, and I'll be getting the best gifts ever!

Thanks for listening,
Your kid



Susan E. Murray is a professor emerita of behavioral sciences at Andrews University, certified family life educator, and licensed marriage and family therapist.