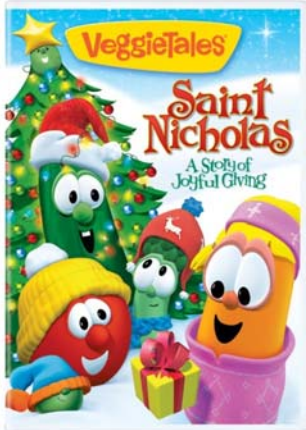




## “What If December Looked Different This Year?”

by Deborah Evans Price

Leave it to Bob the Tomato and Larry the Cucumber to share the spirit of Christmas with humor and heart as they discover the power of giving in *VeggieTales®: Saint Nicholas—A Story of Joyful Giving*. The popular VeggieTales characters anchor the third Christmas DVD in the best-selling children’s franchise; the first new VeggieTales Christmas project from Big Idea Inc. in seven years.



In a perfect relationship that underscores the message of giving in the new DVD, Big Idea has partnered with Operation Christmas Child to collect gifts for needy children around the world. More than 65,000 churches across the country will hold shoe box collection activities, and many churches plan to hold screenings of *Saint Nicholas* to encourage kids in the spirit of giving.

“Right after watching *Saint Nicholas*, in the wake of being so inspired to give, that’s the perfect time to put a shoe box together,” says GRAMMY Award-winning recording artist Amy Grant, who has teamed with singer/songwriter Matthew West for the *Saint Nicholas* theme song “Give This Christmas Away.” “It’s love in action. It’s active learning with a great example of the joy of giving through the life of the real Saint Nicholas. And what better way to say, ‘Hey kids, we could change a life, too. We could do something just that special.’”

Teaching children faith-based lessons through entertaining animation has made VeggieTales one of the most successful children’s brands in the world. Big Idea Inc. was launched in 1993 and since then VeggieTales has sold over 52 million videos, 13 million books and more than seven million CDs. VeggieTales is in its fourth season as a top-rated series on NBC Saturday mornings. There have also been two successful theatrical releases—2002’s “*Jonah—A VeggieTales Movie*” and 2008’s “*The Pirates Who Don’t Do Anything—A VeggieTales Movie*.”



In true VeggieTales style, *Saint Nicholas* illustrates an important message—We don’t give to others to make ourselves happy, we give because we are happy, thanks to the gifts God has given to us first.

In a plot that will resonate with viewers during these troubled economic times, Bob and Larry share the plight of Laura Carrot, whose stocking may be empty this year because her dad is in danger of losing his job. Larry thinks a letter to the North Pole should fix the problem, but Bob offers a solution by sharing the story of a little boy named Nicholas. While in Bethlehem, Nicholas made a great discovery that changes Christmas forever when he met Sister Claire and she shared with him the reason she was so devoted to helping the poor---to spread the love of Jesus.



Nicholas’ heart had been hardened by the loss of his parents, but the important lesson he learned set him on a new mission for his life. As he returns to his village and begins helping others less fortunate—even though the evil town mayor had forbidden such generous acts—the legend of Saint Nicholas is born. After Bob shares the story, it becomes obvious to Laura Carrot’s friends what they need to do.

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“When I was asked to consider writing a song for the end credits of *Saint Nicholas*, I was given an inside look at one of the earlier drafts of the script. And honestly, the script impacted my approach to the lyrics almost 100%,” says Matthew West, who co-wrote “Give This Christmas Away” with Sam Mizell. “What it means to me to ‘give this Christmas away’ is to be mindful of the world around us that may be in need—the people you may ordinarily overlook and the causes that have greater needs this year. It’s about stopping and pausing long enough to look at the world from a perspective of ‘How can I help? How can I give? How can God use me to help meet the needs of somebody else this Christmas instead of me just checking off the list of everything I want?’”

Amy Grant adds, “We’ve gotten Christmas a little backwards haven’t we? Of course, you’re going to give your sibling or best friend a gift. But what about when you reach beyond that circle of family and friends – and say, ‘I want to give to somebody who’s not even expecting it?’ Now that is the Gospel and a perfect example of God’s love. This song is such a great reminder that the reason we celebrate gifts is because we are just mimicking what God did for us. He loved us so much that He gave.”



West and Grant’s recording of “Give This Christmas Away” and the partnership with Operation Christmas Child in conjunction with the October 3<sup>rd</sup> DVD release create a perfect storm of opportunity to demonstrate how art and entertainment can inspire youngsters to make an impact on the world around them. “As I read through the script, I was thinking about how amazing Operation Christmas Child is and how well the movie is tied in with that cause,” says West.

Operation Christmas Child is a project of the international Christian relief organization Samaritan’s Purse and is the world’s largest Christmas project. Since 1993, Operation Christmas Child has delivered more than 70 million gift-filled shoe boxes to underprivileged children in more than 140 countries. This year the goal is to deliver more than eight million shoe boxes worldwide.

In partnering with Operation Christmas Child, Big Idea executives hope to help the organization meet or exceed that goal. “*Saint Nicholas—A Story of Joyful Giving* captures the message of giving in a very special story as little Nicholas learns how and why we give to others,” says VeggieTales Co-creator, VP of Creative Development and voice of Larry The Cucumber, Mike Nawrocki. “This new DVD release combined with the mission of Operation Christmas Child will help show our kids how they too can reach out to children around the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ while sharing the message that VeggieTales has been telling kids for many years – ‘God made you special and He loves you very much!’”

Franklin Graham, President and CEO of Samaritan’s Purse and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, shares, “We are delighted that VeggieTales is joining with Operation Christmas Child to help give even more children the opportunity to know about God’s Son Jesus Christ.”

Randy Riddle, Domestic Director for Operation Christmas Child, Samaritan’s Purse, agrees, “The message of giving found in *Saint Nicholas* will encourage many children and families to give and to pray for needy children this Christmas. We look forward with anticipation to many more shoe box gifts and opportunities to share the Gospel from those who learn about this ministry through *Saint Nicholas*.”



As part of these efforts, Big Idea is making a special giveaway offer available to anyone who purchases a *VeggieTales: Saint Nicholas—A Story of Joyful Giving* DVD. Through this unique offer inside the DVD, Veggie fans can log onto a designated website and select a second VeggieTales DVD for free to give to a friend or someone in need with only \$2.99 for shipping and handling.

In addition to the 45-minute *Saint Nicholas* DVD, there will also be a *Saint Nicholas* Little Golden Book from Random House, plush toys from Pint Size, a Christmas Ornament from DaySpring and shoes and shoe charms from Jibbitz, a subsidiary of Crocs. There will also be a *Saint Nicholas* album available exclusively at iTunes, which will include “Give This Christmas Away.” The song will further be serviced by Sparrow Records/EMI CMG as a single to radio in November.

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