

When You Don't Get What You Expected

Imagine you're a 7-year-old child who has just received a gift from someone. You're happy about that, of course. You thank the giver, and you open the box.

Now, imagine that inside the box is not just one gift, but a whole slew of gifts! You find a paint set, a craft kit, some candy, and 10 or 15 other cool-looking things. Now you're not just happy, you're delighted! You can hardly wait to begin playing with all your new stuff.

At least that's how Jessica felt recently when she opened a box to find a treasure trove of gifts from a family friend. She was thrilled! As soon as she could, she opened the paint set.

Actually, she had to have me open the paints. The lids were stuck to the containers by hardened paint. When I finally got the lids open, Jessica discovered that inside the containers was ... more dried paint. They were useless. (These were not the kind of paints you could simply add water to.)

Disappointed, Jessica moved on to the next item, a craft set that would help you turn an ordinary jar into a jar with a cute ladybug top. It came with googly eyes and everything. The only problem was ... that the back had come off one of the googly eyes before she even touched it.

The candy? Most of it was melted into shapeless lumps that were stuck to the wrappers. The other items? Some of them worked. Others were broken or unusable.

I'm sure you can imagine Jessica's disappointment when she realized that her awesome gift wasn't as great as it had appeared to be at first. It was sweet of the giver to attempt

to give her a nice gift. But the gift wasn't what the giver had intended to give, I'm sure, and it wasn't what Jessica had thought she was receiving.

There are other times in life, too, when we don't get what we thought we were getting—when we expect something marvelous and find out that it's really worthless, or maybe even harmful. I'm talking about when Satan gives us a beautifully wrapped gift that looks like everything we ever wanted, and we open it, only to find that what's inside is dry and dead.

When do we accept gifts from Satan? When we believe his promises of glitter and perfection, despite the fact that they contradict God's revealed Word, or what we know He wants for our lives.

"If you just keep nagging your husband, you can get him to change," Satan offers us. We gleefully accept, tear off the wrapping, and find that we've only undermined our marriage and made our entire household miserable.

"If God really loved you, He'd be helping you more than He is now," Satan whispers. "Go find your own means of making yourself feel better." So we do, only to find that at the end of the day, we feel much, much worse.

"God's plan for your life isn't going to make you feel very good," Satan tells us. "Look—here's another plan that will be way more satisfying!" The problem is, when we unwrap the promised satisfaction, we find that there's nothing inside.

Friends, Satan's whole purpose for your life is to destroy you, and/or use you to destroy others. He'll tell you whatever he has to tell you to get you to go along with him. He'll promise you the moon and the stars. He'll convince you to follow, and when he's through with you, he'll leave you lying broken at the side of the road. And then he'll go off to have a party while you're left to pick up the pieces.

Is there any area of life in which you're doing things your own way (or Satan's way)? Any place you're forsaking God's commands and plans for something you think will be better or more satisfying?

Don't let Satan trick you. There's never a good gift inside the box. There's only disappointment and shattered dreams.

Jesus offers you living water and eternal life. He can deliver, on both counts.

The devil offers you whatever your heart desires. But he can't deliver, because he has no power to truly satisfy your soul.

Whose gifts will you truly seek after?

John 10:10—"The thief does not come, except to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."

John 8:44b—"When he lies, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

1 Peter 5:8—"Be sober and watchful, because your adversary the devil walks around as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

*Adapted from **Megan Breedlove's** blog, *Manna for Moms*. Megan is the author of *Well Done, Good and Faithful Mommy* and *Manna for Moms: God's Provision for Your Hair-Raising, Miracle-Filled Mothering Adventure* (Regal Books.) She is also a blogger and a stay-at-home mom with five children.*