

A Prize In Every Box

When I was six years old growing up in Gastonia, N.C., I recall receiving a jumbo-sized box of Cracker Jacks for my birthday. As you can imagine, I was quite excited as I sat down to enjoy that delicious mix of caramel coated popcorn and peanuts. But we all know what THE BEST part of a box of Cracker Jacks is, right? Yes, that's it—the Prize. "A prize in every box."

Well, as I recall, I ate the entire box in one sitting, but when I got to the bottom, there was no prize! I was devastated, and like any self-respecting six-year-old would do, I threw an absolute fit. After a few minutes of my tantrum, my parents had had enough. My father interrupted me and asked what I was going to do about it. I looked at him like "What?" I'm just six years old, what can I do? He said I could write a letter to Cracker Jacks and explain what had happened.

So, I grabbed a box of crayons and a lined sheet of paper and wrote a letter to Cracker Jacks, or to "Mr. Jack," expressing my "profound disappointment" that I had no prize in my box. The next day, my parents and I dropped the letter in the mail—uncertain as to what might happen.


About two weeks later, I received a package in the mail from Cracker Jacks. It was a jumbo-sized box, but instead of being filled with popcorn and peanuts, it was filled with prizes and an apologetic note, and I was over the moon! I had all the little plastic toys and temporary tattoos that a young boy could ever want, and I took great joy in sharing them with my friends.

I guess you could say that was my first foray into "lobbying and advocacy," and I learned very early that if you make an effort, sometimes you might be rewarded with a positive result. Conversely, if you make no effort and wallow in self-pity, you can expect nothing to change.

As I reflect back on this experience, I think there's an important lesson to be learned, especially in our current state of political affairs. With all the division, the political rancor, and the partisan fighting in our state and nation, it is easy to get discouraged, to experience "profound disappointment," and to want to either throw a fit, or to simply "throw in the towel."

However, I would contend as Christians that is the exact opposite of what we should do!

Jesus says in Matthew, Chapter 5, that if we are living for Him, we are the "Salt of the Earth" and the "Light of the World." We are to be flavorful and illuminating agents of impact to the culture in which we live. This is true regardless of our circumstances or the response of others—Jesus even goes so far as to say that we may face persecution if we closely associate ourselves with Him.

Now don't get me wrong! I am not likening the critical issues facing our state, nation, and world to a missing prize in a box of Cracker Jacks. But what I am saying is that we can be like that six-year-old boy who followed his father's advice and chose to take action; we can—with God's help—act in obedience to be Salt and Light to the world around us, and, as a result, experience His blessings, and be a blessing to others! 



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