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A shoebox of valentines

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One year, my elementary school teacher made a special project of Valentine's Day. We brought shoeboxes from home and decorated them. These were our mailboxes. Then each student bought a packet of valentines or made valentines, one for each person in the class.

When the day came, we went from desk to desk delivering them. Everyone received a valentine from everyone else. No one was left out, and everyone went home with a shoebox full of valentines.

That year, I decided to do something a little different when I wrote my valentines. I decided to think of one good thing about each person I wrote to. It was fun! For instance, I thought about one girl who was very kind. One boy drew excellent pictures and made up interesting stories.

It was also good for me to think about the kids I didn't know very well. Everyone has good qualities. But sometimes we don't take the time to think about them. By the time I finished writing a note to each person, I was seeing something good about everyone in the class.

Actually, seeing good things about your friends is pretty easy. But seeing good in kids you don't know very well - or maybe don't like very much - makes you try harder. It means you've got to think spiritually. That means to see what God sees about someone. So instead of looking at things on the outside like clothes and hair, you see inside a person. You see them as the child of God.

Seeing that way helps you, too. I like something Mary Baker Eddy (the Founder of Christian Science) wrote in a book. She said that if you're nice to someone, even if they're not nice back, it makes you a better person (see "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures," pg. 57, line 22).

Once a new girl moved into our neighborhood after school started. She was really shy and didn't talk to anyone. So I decided to talk to her even if she didn't talk to me. I talked to her every time I saw her. And I prayed by knowing she was God's child and looking for good qualities in her. Soon we were friends and walked home from school together sometimes. I told other kids how nice she was whenever I had the chance. In just a month or two, she had lots of friends.

Letting people know that you appreciate them is like opening up a bottle of perfume. When the bottle's tightly closed, you don't smell the perfume at all. But if you open the bottle and put the perfume on, everyone enjoys the fragrance. When you appreciate what's good about people, good gets spread around even more. That's the best kind of valentine.

The Bible also uses a word picture that could describe a valentine. It says, "A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver" (Prov. 25:11). Apples made of gold might be like kind words you say to someone. A setting is what you put around something beautiful so more people notice it. So settings of silver might be letting other people know good things about someone.

This year, I want to send more valentines. I don't mean buy a lot of cards and candy. I want to think more about the good in everyone I meet and let others know about it. Kind words don't cost a cent.

My mailbox may not be full of valentines today. (Neither are my shoeboxes.) But I feel like God is sending you and me and everyone a valentine that says "I love you and you and you." No one is left out. And God sends this message every day. So get your shoebox ready.