



## More Than We Can Bear



It was a frigid Christmas Eve, and I was at home preparing to go to our Christmas Eve church service. At the last minute I decided not to go. This was a very unusual decision for me, but I felt an uneasiness in my spirit that I really couldn't explain at the time. My wife and kids went to church without me. As I walked through the kitchen I noticed a plastic shopping bag on the kitchen counter my wife had brought home from the store earlier that afternoon. I innocently thought, "I wonder what she bought," and looked in. I was not trying to spy on her or anything like that. After all, it was a shopping bag sitting on the kitchen counter in plain view. Inside there were some sampler boxed chocolates, a bag of snack-sized Snickers, and some bags of nuts. There was also a greeting card. I read the card, and the words were very romantic. Immediately my heart sank. My first thought was this card couldn't be for me. My wife was barely speaking to me at the

time, and had been treating me with contempt. I knew the candy wasn't for her, because she only ate chocolate during her menstrual cycle, and this wasn't her time. I decided to wait and see if she would give me that card the following morning for Christmas. I prayed she would. I thought maybe my wife would use Christmas as a starting point to renew our struggling relationship.

Soon after my wife returned home from church, the shopping bag disappeared. By then I was sure she hadn't planned on leaving it out on the counter, regardless of whom the items were for. That night I didn't sleep well at all. I kept looking over at the clock next to my bed. The time seemed to creep by. While I lay in my bed, I kept praying that my wife would give me that card in the morning. I wanted my marriage to work, and I didn't want to believe the worst.

On Christmas morning we exchanged and unwrapped dozens of gifts. After all the gifts were opened, there was nothing for me—not even from the kids, through my wife. (They were too young to buy gifts on their own, being only four and two years old.) Then after seeing that I was the only one empty-handed, my wife pointed to a small gift bag the size of an index card and said to me, “This is for you.” It appeared that she had not expected me to give her any gifts, and felt she had to make up for the fact she had not gotten me anything. In the bag was one of those boxes of chocolate I had seen the previous day, out of the wrapper, (she had to remove the wrapper to separate them), one bag of nuts, and about 4 mini Snickers bars. No card.

I was heart-broken. My wife was a gift-giver. She enjoyed spending money on gifts for others. In the past, she had given me a camcorder, a scanner, nice shirts and the like. So for her to give me a couple of pieces of candy and some nuts as a

Christmas present was a significant statement. That was just like giving me nothing at all.

In what seemed like an effort to cover, she said she had gotten me a gift card from one of the big electronics stores, but it must have gotten lost under the Christmas tree. That was an obvious lie, but I let it go. How could it get lost under the tree? It would be easy enough to find. Then she changed her story to say that maybe she lost it in her car, but she never went to her car to look for it. To this day I haven't received the gift card. It was not the gifts themselves that were the issue for me. I have been known to give gifts back to her and tell her that she didn't need to spend that kind of money on me. I knew what this meant. My Christmas gift was the knowledge and confirmation that my wife was having an affair.

*I cannot recount how many times in my Christian experience I have heard the phrase, "God will not put more on you than you can bear;"*

