

Lena-From a Taker to a Giver

Lena was a teenager with a penchant for taking—taking time, taking attention, and taking resources. She was caught up in her own world, oblivious to the struggles of those around her. Her friends often joked that Lena had a “receiving radar” that detected opportunities for personal gain.

One chilly winter morning, Lena walked to school, her backpack heavy with textbooks and her mind preoccupied with her own worries. As she crossed the park, she noticed an elderly man sitting on a bench. His thin coat barely shielded him from the biting wind, and his eyes held a weariness that tugged at Lena’s heart.

She hesitated. Should she stop? The old man seemed lost in thought, staring at the distant trees. Lena’s “receiving radar” buzzed—maybe he had a story to tell, a lesson to impart. But something else stirred within her—a whisper of compassion.

Lena sat down next to him. “Hi,” she said, her voice tentative. “I’m Lena.”

The man turned, surprised by her presence. His name was Mr. Wallace, and he had lived in the neighborhood for decades. His wife had passed away recently, and loneliness clung to him like frost on a windowpane.

They talked—a conversation that meandered through memories, regrets, and dreams. Lena listened, truly listened, and for the first time, her “receiving radar” fell silent. She realized that sometimes, the greatest gift was not what you received but what you gave.

As winter deepened, Lena visited Mr. Wallace regularly. She brought him warm soup, shared stories from her day, and even helped him with errands. In return, he shared wisdom—a lifetime’s worth—about love, resilience, and the beauty of small acts of kindness.

One day, Lena noticed a community center flyer pinned to the park bulletin board. They needed volunteers for a holiday food drive. Lena’s initial instinct was to ignore it—after all, she had her own problems. But Mr. Wallace’s words echoed in her mind: “Don’t let this chain of love end with you.”

She signed up, and on a frosty Saturday morning, Lena stood in the bustling center, handing out food baskets to families in need. Their gratitude warmed her heart more than any material possession ever could. She saw the sparkle in children’s eyes, the relief on parents’ faces, and realized that giving was a privilege.

From that day on, Lena’s life changed. She stopped taking and started giving—her time, her energy, and even one time she gave a twenty dollar bill. She volunteered at shelters, mentored younger students, and discovered the joy of selflessness.

Mr. Wallace passed away that spring, but his legacy lived on. Lena planted flowers in the park, tended to the bench where they had shared countless conversations, and whispered, “Thank you Mr. Wallace for showing me that I too could share in the compassion of Jesus.”

Years later, as an adult, Lena stood before a group of young people, sharing her story. “We all have a ‘receiving radar,’” she said. “But let’s also cultivate a ‘giving compass, guided by Holy Spirit.’ He will point us toward kindness, empathy, honoring Jesus, by making someone’s day a little brighter.”

And so, Lena’s gift of kindness rippled outward—a bridge connecting hearts, generations, and the simple truth that sometimes, the most valuable things cannot be measured in what we take but in what we give.

Reflections:

- Lenas’ friends saw her as a taker. Do you think they thought that was a bad thing?
- Do you think Lena saw herself as a taker?
- What specifics really had to happen to Lena to make such a radical change in her life?
- How important is Mr. Wallace to Lenas’ story?
- This Holy Spirit transformation changed Lenas entire life, however, do you think as a teenager Lenas friends were positive or negative as she started this new life by demonstrating compassion in real time throughout her community?

We would so appreciate hearing your thoughts as you reflected on the story of:

Lena-From a Taker to a Giver. info@The520Project.org