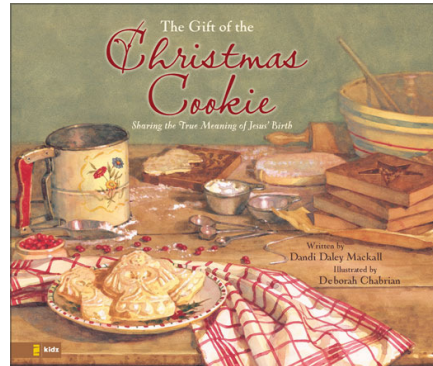


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I wanted to extend my sincerest thanks to Lauren Wong at Phenix Publicity for giving me the opportunity to review Dandi Daley Mackall's *The Gift of the Christmas Cookie: Sharing the True Meaning of Jesus' Birth*.

The Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays are a blessed time, when we're able to get together with family and friends. At these holiday gatherings we often share our family traditions with one another. These traditions may involve preparing special foods, giving gifts, and decorating our homes with a certain type or style of decoration. Most of us can think back to a time when we first learned about these traditions. Perhaps it was from our parents, grandparents, or maybe even our great grandparents. While we may be able to identify the person who first shared these traditions with us, we may not know the story behind the person or circumstances that brought our traditions into existence. In *The Gift of the Christmas Cookie*, Dandi Daley Mackall shares the origin story of the decorated Christmas cookie and how it relates to sharing the good news about Jesus' birth, which is the true meaning of Christmas.

In the story we encounter a young boy named Jack. It'll be just Jack and his Mom at home this Christmas, because Dad went west to find work. The story centers around Jack helping his Mom prepare Christmas cookies to share with the needy at church. While they're working, Jack's Mom shares the story behind the cookie boards they use to press the dough into the shapes of shepherds, stars, camels, kings, crosses, babies, and a man and woman who are kneeling. She tells him about his ancestors from the old country in the middle ages. They wanted to share the true meaning of Christmas with their hungry neighbors, so they made cookies into shapes from the Christmas story. Later, as they shared the different cookies with their neighbors, they were able to tell them the story of Christ's birth. At the close of the story, Jack follows in his ancestors' footsteps and offers his angel Christmas cookie to a stranger and tells him about the Christmas story behind it.

The Gift of the Christmas cookie is a great story to share with your children this Christmas season. It will be a good lead in to a discussion about various ways your family can share the true meaning of Christmas. Be sure to try the cookie recipe on the last page. Happy reading and happy eating!

Dandi Daley Mackall is the author of more than 400 books. She has written on a wide range of topics and has an audience that ranges from the preschooler to the adult. Dandi lives with her husband and three children in West Salem, Ohio. You can learn more about Dandi and her books at www.dandibooks.com.

Deborah Chabrian is an award winning artist who has painted more than 500 book covers and hundreds of still life paintings. She lives in Connecticut with her husband and 2 children.