

Gifts of May Baskets

Perhaps your grandparents were familiar with the tradition of May Baskets – handmade baskets of flowers and treats left on doorsteps the evening before May 1.

After leaving a basket, the giver would ring the doorbell and then run and hide nearby to watch the happy responses of the recipients.

The practice has a long history, stemming from the European pagan festival of spring, Beltane. The more raucous elements were toned down after the continent became Christianized, but the May pole dance and May Baskets survived in a more G-rated form. Online research shows the practice is on the wane.



Handing out May Baskets is a charming and gentle activity for children and adults, and need not be confined to May 1. It is a tradition that Louisa May Alcott wrote in the classic children’s book *Jack and Jill*. The story takes place in a small New England town after the American Civil War.

Jack Minot and Janey Pecq are best friends who live next door to each other. They are always seen together, so Janey gets the nickname of Jill to mimic the old rhyme. The two do go up a hill one winter day – and then suffer a terrible accident. Seriously injured in a sledding accident, they recover from their physical injuries while learning life lessons along with their many friends.

Jill busies herself with making May Baskets to fill and give to others in the spring. Knowing that her long, painful ordeal will soon be ending, she’s filled with joy and hope as she makes the baskets, thinking about the enjoyment they’ll give.

Here’s the point: Jill’s childlike disposition illustrates the kind of attitude we should have during difficult times in our lives. Instead of complaining about our circumstances, we should focus on drawing closer to God through prayer and reading His Word.

He might give us opportunities, even amid our trials, to serve Him and to demonstrate His love to others.

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It is a proven principle that when we focus on helping others, our own problems tend to fade in importance – just as Jill discovered.

In his exhortation to the Christians in Rome, the Apostle Paul encouraged the believers to have confident hope and to keep praying, even in difficult circumstances.

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer (Romans 12:12 NIV).

– Beecher Hunter