

The day my kids and I came (to Loaves & Fishes) for the first time, my then seven-year-old asked me why we didn't pay for our groceries when we walked out of the building. She said, rather alarmed, "Mom, I think you just stole all of this food!" I told her you gave us FREE food. She asked why it was free and I told her it was because I didn't have any money to buy food. When we arrived home, I was unloading the bags and she came into the kitchen. "Mom?" she asked. "If rich people have a lot of money and we don't have any, are we poor?" My. Heart. Sank.

The answer of course was yes, but I just stood there quietly for a moment, staring at the bags of food that I still couldn't believe were now in my kitchen. I was thinking about all the smiling faces and the kindness I'd felt, and how much anxiety I'd felt the night before about having to go to a food pantry – yet how my experience here was nothing like I'd imagined it to be. It was welcoming and loving and made me feel human and accepted. NOT judged by my situation. Suddenly, I didn't FEEL poor. I looked at my child with all of her innocence and said, "WE are not poor. In fact, WE ARE RICH. WEALTHY people have a lot of money. But to be RICH means something different. It means that you have family and friends to enjoy this life with, that you can see the kindness in someone unexpected, that you can feel a blessing within a disaster, that you can be a blessing to someone else, that you can find joy in simple things. It means you have contentment in your heart with what you have AND that you love and are loved back. That is what it means to be rich. And I will take rich over wealthy any day.

Never underestimate the gift that you give with your smile, or conversation, or how simply making eye contact with another human can change their life.

Thank you for all you've given to my family and to me. Thank you for all you do for our community. And thank you for giving us the opportunity to give back.

- Jenny