

AMY HAMMOND HAGBERG

# *Compassion* ROCKS!

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Legendary drummer, Zoro, has toured and recorded with some of the biggest names in rock music including Lenny Kravitz, Bobby Brown, Sean Lennon, and Jody Watley. This globe-trotting, jet-setting musician has seen first-hand the temptations that the world of rock and roll has to offer. Financial success could have triggered self-indulgence, but the "Minister of Groove" remains humble and grateful. In this "go for all you can get" culture, Zoro is using his amazing platform to relay a powerful message: Compassion rocks!

## A ROUGH START

Growing up fatherless with six siblings on the tough streets of Los Angeles, Zoro knows what it's like to live the flip side of the American dream. His mother, Maria, was unable to hold down a job because of health issues, so she relied on welfare and food stamps to provide for her children.

GOTTA HAVE IT

WEEKEND!



By the time Zoro was in fourth grade, his family had moved 30 times. He still remembers those moving days: "My youngest brother, Robert, and I would physically move things like beds and dressers on our little red Radio Flyer wagon."

Maria often found it difficult to make ends meet. Yet Zoro, like most kids, spent a lot of time dreaming about what he wanted for Christmas and looking through the Sears catalog, wishing for things he could never have.

### AN IMPOSSIBLE DREAM

To provide gifts for her children, Maria took advantage of local charity programs. One of those programs was the local chapter of Toys for Tots. Since it's inception in 1947, Toys for Tots has given away more than 351 million toys. One year, Toys for Tots provided Lincoln Logs for Zoro. "That was the biggest thrill ever," he remembers. "On Christmas morning I set them up a thousand different ways."

Without community outreach programs, there would have been no presents on Christmas morning at Zoro's house. Through the generosity of others, Zoro learned first-hand what compassion is all about.

As a child, Zoro loved to bang on things. For years he dreamed of having a real drum set, but he knew his mom couldn't afford one. Then under the tree one Christmas morning was an enormous box with his name on it. Inside he found a Mickey Mouse drum set. He banged happily on that drum set all Christmas Day, until it broke. It took everything Maria had to buy that drum set, but her love and sacrifice planted a seed. Zoro believes that particular Christmas changed his life.

### BETTER TO GIVE

Now that Zoro has children of his own, he is teaching them to be compassionate. When Zoro's children were toddlers, he took them to the toy store and told them to pick out what they wanted most for Christmas. Of course, they each picked the biggest and coolest thing they could find. Then he said, "I'm not going to give these toys to you. We're going to take them to the fire department and put them in the big Toys for Tots

### ZORO'S CHRISTMAS PLAYLIST

(ESPECIALLY IF SUNG BY NAT KING COLE OR FRANK SINATRA)

- > Joy to the World
- > Hark! the Herald Angels Sing
- > O Little Town of Bethlehem
- > O Holy Night
- > What Child Is This?
- > A Cradle In Bethlehem
- > Away in a Manger
- > The First Noel
- > O Come, All Ye Faithful
- > Silent Night
- > Go, Tell It on the Mountain
- > God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen
- > Deck the Halls

bin and bless somebody else.” He explained that many people in the community had no money for presents. “I was one of those children. If it weren’t for the fire department, I wouldn’t have had something big and special.”

When he took the kids to the fire department later that day, the firefighters gave them star treatment: a private tour of the fire station and a stint on the fire engine. “They were blessed because they gave from their hearts and God showed them his favor,” Zoro says proudly.

Last year after a mission trip to Ghana, Zoro showed his children the trip photos. “One of the little African boys in the pictures was missing a finger, and my five-year-old son asked me how much a finger cost. He wanted to buy a new one for that little boy for Christmas!” In that moment, Zoro knew his son had truly come to understand the joy of giving. <

Learn more about Zoro—his music and his ministry—at [www.zorothedrummer.com](http://www.zorothedrummer.com).

**Amy Hammond Hagberg** enjoys telling the faith stories of musicians, athletes, and actors. Learn more about Zoro and about other celebrities in her book *My Favorite Christmas* (Integrity House, 2006). See page 79.



## 16 NEXT DAY STRETCH

Read Luke 12:48b. Remember, everything we have comes from God, and we are stewards of God's property. To help those less fortunate is not an obligation but a privilege. How will you bless others with gifts of compassion this Christmas?