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CHILDREN'S PAGE STORIES -- 1981

By Mrs. Paul E. King

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Digital Edition 09/12/2000
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Published in The Missionary Revivalist, January, 1981

Story 1
THE RIGHT WAY TO START

Crunch, crunch, crunch went the snow beneath Andrew's feet as he hurried from the front porch to the garage for a shovel and wag, wag, wag went Muffin's tail as he followed his little master with sheer delight and joy.

Andrew paused beside the garage door and looked up at the beautiful fast-falling snow. It fell on his head and dropped on the very tip of his tiny nose in a delightfully-frosty way, melting almost as fast as it landed and leaving only its sparkly drops of moisture as lovely reminders of its landing.

He turned his face skyward..., the way he'd seen the ducks on the pond do when it was raining. He wanted to catch as many of the beautiful snow flakes as he could. They made his face feel fresh and tingly, like hundreds of tiny, frosty-cold fingers were playing chopsticks on his cheeks and forehead.

Opening his eyes, Andrew looked into the swirling snow as it dropped from the clouds somewhere above him. He felt as if he was swirling with it... up, up, up and away. O how he did love the snow! he thought, feeling almost dizzy with happiness.

Muffin rubbed his shiny-wet fur along Andrew's leg and whined for attention.

"Okay, Okay!" Andrew exclaimed, stooping and patting the snow-covered, golden-haired cocker spaniel's head. Muffin was such an extra-ordinarily intelligent looking dog, the boy mused silently. "You want to play, don't you?" he teased.

Muffin whined again and wagged his tail fiercely. Andrew was sure he said, "Yes, yes." (What else could a happy little yip, yip mean?)

"Sorry, Muffin," he said. "I'm going to shovel snow. I promised Jesus that I'd help with the work before I'd play. I can't allow you to stop me; I'd be breaking my promise to God."
"Yip, yip," Muffin answered. Making a snowball, Andrew tossed it across the yard for Muffin to find while he extracted the snow shovel from the inside of the garage. "Andrew, An--drew, where are you?" a voice called through the falling snow.

"I'm here at the garage, Mark. I'm going to shovel snow so Daddy won't have to do it when he gets home from work."

"Say, it's really snowing!" the neighbor boy exclaimed, finding Andrew. "I made a big, tall, fat snow man," he added. "Come over and see him. I want to make a whole family of snow people. Will you help me? We'll make a Mrs. Snowman, a little boy and a tiny girl and"

"I can't do it, Mark; not till I get the snow off our porch and the sidewalk."

"Please, Andrew!" Mark begged. "Not now, Mark. I promised Jesus that I'd help Father and Mother before I go out and play."

"Aw c'mon, Andrew! Jesus knows that you're just a little boy and He won't care about you playing and having some fun."

"Not until I'm finished with this job," Andrew said softly but firmly.

"How come you made the promise?" Mark asked quickly. "It's kind of stupid, I think."

"I made it 'cause I felt I should. In family worship one night, Father read, 'It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.' I asked what it meant, and Dad said the best way he could say it was that God intended for us... Miriam and Rachael and myself . . . to begin assuming some responsibility while we were still children. He said it was good for us; that it would help to keep us from becoming lazy. And since today is the beginning of a brand new year, I thought it was the perfect time to begin doing something special and something worthwhile. Imagine it, Mark, 365 days to work for Jesus and to do deeds of kindness and goodness! It's wonderful! I feel good all over."

Mark scooped a fistful of snow up and shaped it into a perfectly round snowball. I guess I never thought of that," he confessed. "But the way you put it, it sounds exciting."

"Oh it is exciting, Mark. I believe this is going to be the most wonderful year of my life, because I'll be doing things for Jesus and for Mother and Father."

Aiming the snowball at a tree in the yard and hitting it, Mark said, "Well, I'll see you later, Andrew. Maybe if I hurry home I'll be able to help clear the snow off our sidewalk, too. Dad was shoveling when I left to come over here. Come by when you're finished; we'll have fun."

"We sure will," Andrew agreed.

"And we'll both enjoy it more because we had some work mixed in with our play." And the boy whistled happily while he worked.

* * * * *

February, 1981

Story 2
CRUMBS

Jonathan sat on the deacon's bench in front of the dining room window and looked outside at the blanket of white snow that covered the ground. The fir and spruce trees on the back of the lawn looked as if they were dusted with powder. O it was beautiful.

A salty tear stole out of Jonathan's eye and tumbled down his cheek. Why did he have to get chicken pox--hateful things!--and stay inside, when his heart was out there with the snow? It wasn't fair! Jonathan thought, feeling very, very sorry for himself. No indeed, it wasn't fair that Susan and Ann and Bobby could go skating on the creek and he had to stay home.

I see the birds are having a good time out at the feeder," Grandma said softly, patting Jonathan gently on the top of his wheat-colored hair. "It will help to pass the time away if you watch them closely. You can learn a lot from the birds," she added, giving his head another little pat before going into the living room after her knitting materials.

Jonathan cupped his face in his hands. The house had a quiet, peaceful atmosphere. It was really kind of nice; this he admitted secretly and silently. The soft, gentle click of Grandma's knitting needles at work was relaxing, and Mother's muffled footsteps on the carpeted floors above him gave him a sense of security.

Jonathan sighed. He drew his knees up beneath his chin, his eyes, all the while, watching the bird feeder, where bright-red cardinals and beautiful blue jays splashed color on the snow. Watching birds was fun, Jonathan decided, his eyes following the scolding jays and the brilliant cardinals as they took to the air and disappeared.

A sudden swoop of wings brought sparrows, sparrows and more sparrows. How greedily they ate! the boy thought, recalling his mother's careful teaching on good table manners. Then, just as quickly as the sparrows had come, they scattered; for, light as a feather in the breeze, a small bird descended into the feeder and began eating. An occasional sparrow challenged the lone eater and was driven away both times.

Jonathan watched as some of the braver birds flew to the ground and gleaned the seeds that dropped from the feeder. Then he saw something he could scarcely believe was real.

"Grandma! Grandma!" he called excitedly. "Come quickly! That little bird drove all the other birds away! Imagine! He won't let them get so much as the crumbs from the ground! O he's selfish! Selfish!"

Grandma, her knitting in her hands, stood beside the excited boy, watching. Time and time again some of the birds ventured to the ground after the 'crumbs,' as Jonathan had phrased the few dropped seeds, and each time the feisty little chirping sparrow had driven them away.

"I wish I could get to him!" Jonathan declared. "I'd chase him away! I would!"

Grandma cleared her throat, then she sat down on the deacon's bench.

"That is too bad!" she declared sadly.

"He's selfish. Selfish; and greedy, too! He won't share; not even the 'crumbs,' Grandma!" Again Grandma cleared her throat. "I seem to know a little boy who is much like that"

Jonathan jerked his head around and looked into his grandmother's face. Whoever could it be? he wondered.

"Day before yesterday, when Bobby wanted only the smallest and the oldest cars to play with, this little 'sparrow' boy refused him--even the 'crumbs' of his toys. I watched in silence; I wanted to cry. In fact, I did cry when I was alone in my room. I prayed for the Lord to help this certain dear boy to become kind and meek and... and unselfish."

Jonathan gulped. "O Grandma, Grandma!" he cried. "I know who you mean. And I... I guess I didn't know how selfish I was. But Jesus can help me; can't He, Grandma?"

"Indeed He can, sweetheart. Indeed He can. He's the only one who can change your heart--and that's what you need, Jonathan, a heart change."

Sliding off the bench to his knees, Jonathan said brokenly, "Please pray for me, Grandma. I want to be kind and good and unselfish."

Jonathan prayed--How he did pray! and grandmother prayed! And suddenly Jesus came into Jonathan's heart. How good it was to know that he was saved--that he was forgiven of all the sins he had ever committed!

"Grandma," he said, taking his hand to brush the tears from his eyes, "I have a new heart: Jesus gave it to me when He forgave my sins. I'll not be selfish anymore; especially not after I get sanctified wholly; like you are, and... and like Father and Mother are."

Grandmother was too happy to talk; she merely smiled and patted Jonathan's wheat-colored hair and thanked God inwardly for the lesson of the 'crumbs' from the sparrows.

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March, 1981

Story 3

THE FRIENDLY CLOCK

Amy took one look at the beautiful bright red tulip in her hand, then she ran across the lawn to the back side of the garage. Out of breath and terribly frightened, she looked again at the lovely flower which she had picked.

"O, I didn't mean to pull the bulb! I didn't; I didn't!" she exclaimed out loud to a tiny bird that flitted nervously above her head, scolding ever so loudly at the golden-haired trespasser.

"What will I do?" Amy asked in deep distress as she looked up into the branches of the tree where the bird sat, twitching its pretty brown tail in fierce objection to the invasion of its privacy and its home.

In deepest perplexity, Amy's eyes followed the tiny creature. Then she saw it . . . a lovely little nest on a nearby branch. "O all right!" the distressed child cried. "I see you're as frightened as I am. But I promise, I won't bother your tiny nest. Not one bit!" And with that Amy tossed the beautiful bright, red tulip ... flower, plant and all.., behind a pile of weeds in a corner of the yard.

Why did she try to pick the flower? she asked herself over and over as she hurried across the lawn to the back porch. Mother had told her to be patient and to wait until there were more tulips in bloom; then she... Mother... would show her how to cut the long, slender stems. Then, too, Mother had said, there would be a big bouquet to take over to Carma and her mother.

At thought of Carma, Amy felt all sick inside. Carma was always such a good, obedient and holy-living girl. She loved Jesus very deeply and would never have allowed a disobedient thought to remain long in her mind. What's more, Carma was her best friend. O why . . . why . . . couldn't she, Amy Brooks, be good and obedient like Carma was!

"Hey, Amy, come watch me fly my kite," Justin Kellogg called from his back yard. "It's the prettiest kite I've ever had. It looks just like a big, beautiful eagle when I get it afloat. And, Amy, you should feel the tug on the cord in my hand! I believe it's going to be something like this when Jesus comes to take His children Home to Him. Only, of course, there won't be anything like an old cord or string to hold us here. Come over awhile."

Amy gave Justin and his kite only a quick glance, then she hurried away. "No, thanks, Justin; not today," she called as she disappeared inside the house.

Trembling with fear, Amy ran down the hallway to her bedroom. Closing the door ever so quietly, she stood in the middle of the room and stared through the open window at the front lawn and the houses across the street.

The grandfather clock in the hallway gonged out twelve deep, sonorous tones and Amy, frightened dreadfully, jumped nervously. A big salty tear slid out of her eye and tumbled down her cheek. Then another and another.

Amy never did notice Lexie Ann, and how well she was behaving in her tiny doll high-chair in front of the window; nor did she notice her always-friendly looking and very favorite teddy bear either; nor the dainty little tea set on her small play table. All she could think about was her gross sin of disobedience, Justin's remark about the coming of the Lord, those twelve judgment day sounding gongs of the heavy old clock in the hallway, and Brother Lippincott's message on Sunday morning.

The midnight hour! That's what the preacher had said; something about living in the midnight hour of God's time-clock. He said that Jesus was coming. SOON! And he had pleaded for all who were not ready to come forward for prayer; and she, Amy Brooks, had refused. Oh why hadn't she obeyed her minister! Obeying was such a hard thing for her, it seemed. And now..., now...! Was it too late?

Dropping to her knees beside the bed, the little girl cried out to God for mercy. "Please, please dear Jesus," she begged, "forgive me. I'm so very disobedient; such a wicked sinner. I'm sorry that I didn't go to the altar on Sunday and invite You to come into my heart. I'm so-o disobedient all the time, and I know I can't get into Heaven like this. Please save me"

Amy sobbed with brokenhearted contrition and repentance as she confessed her sins to Jesus. So earnest and sincere was she that she didn't hear when the bedroom door opened and Mother stepped inside the room. "I'm sorry about the tulip, Jesus, and I will tell Mother all about it. I tried to hide it behind a pile of weeds, but I'll tell Mother all about it " she confessed heavenward.

Getting to her feet and starting for the door, Amy ran into the waiting and open arms of her dear mother. Sobbing brokenly and unashamedly, she cried, "Forgive me, Mother! Forgive me! I disobeyed you and picked the pretty tulip that was blooming alongside the house. Only... only... I pulled the plant, too; and the bulb. Oh, Mother, I'm sorry. I'll never do it again."

"You are forgiven, Amy dear; and now, let's pray again. We'll pray until you know that Jesus has forgiven you for each and every sin that you've ever committed. Oh how happy you will be!"

"That's what I want, Mother, I must get rid of this heavy load."

It was a happy, joyful and shining-faced Amy who, a short while after, hurried to where the big grandfather clock stood. Patting the satin-smooth sides of the dependable clock, she said, "Thank you, friendly clock, for reminding me of the midnight-hour message. I'm not afraid any more; Jesus just came into my heart and saved my soul. You can't scare me any more; I'm ready for Heaven now. And just you wait until I'm sanctified wholly!" she added joyously, hurrying away to get the tulip plant so Mother could save the bulb for transplanting.

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April, 1981

Story 4
TOMMY'S FEARS

"Tommy is a scaredy cat; Tommy is a scaredy cat! Tommy is a"

Tommy ran away from the sing-song voices of Alvin and Binji as fast as his legs would carry him. By the time he reached the big beech tree beside the creek his legs felt all rubbery and weak, almost the way the new-born colt's legs had looked and acted when he saw it a few days ago, he thought.

Trembling all over, Tommy leaned his back against the cool bark of the tree trunk and closed his eyes, squeezing out hot, salty tears that surfaced in spite of his resolution not to cry. Why did Alvin and Binji always frighten him so terribly? he asked himself silently. And why was it that they seemed especially delighted when they saw how afraid of them he was?

Going around to the other side of the tree, Tommy climbed the built on ladder against the tree to his favorite of all places..., the snug little hide-away tree house which he and his father had built out of scrap lumber.

Once inside, Tommy sat cross-legged on the floor, wondering what to do to get rid of his terrible fears.

Alvin was a big boy, far bigger than most boys his age. Binji, too. Binji was not only tall, he had the broadest shoulders Tommy had ever seen for a boy of twelve. Alvin and Binji were always together, it seemed.

Their favorite pastime was scaring other smaller children away. They reminded Tommy of the wicked Goliath, who kept the Israelites scared all the time.

Tommy sat with his face cupped in the palms of his sun-browned hands and thought and thought. Then he got on his knees and prayed, being careful not to have a wrong attitude toward Alvin and Binji as he talked to Jesus. He knew that the Bible had said if he regarded iniquity in his heart, the Lord would not hear him when he prayed. (Psalm 66:18).

He told Jesus how much he loved the two boys. Then he asked Him to show him some way to help Alvin and Binji and, also, he prayed for God to chase away each and every fear that he had when he saw the boys or was anywhere near them.

Hadn't David said, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee!" (Psalm 56:3).

That Scripture was as much for him as it was for the shepherd boy who had gone out in the NAME of the LORD and killed the wicked giant, Tommy knew. And from today on he meant to lean hard upon it. He may be much smaller in size than were the two well-known neighborhood bullies, but shrunken in soul he was not! Like David, God would give him strength and fearless courage when next he encountered his tormentors, his persecutors.

As Tommy played inside the solidly constructed tree house, he heard voices..., the very same voices from which he had run away such a short time ago: "Tommy is a scaredy cat; scared like a mouse chased by a rat. Tommy is a scaredy"

"Hello Alvin; hi Binji," Tommy called as he stepped through the doorway to the landing around the tree house and looked down through the branches, "Want to come up and play with me?" he asked, peeking through the leaves to the boys, who stood some distance away.

Alvin looked at Binji and Binji looked at Alvin. A look of fear was on their faces. "Come up and play," Tommy invited. "I've been wanting to tell you about Jesus and how very much He loves you."

Alvin's mouth flew open wide, like he was ready to say something. Then his face turned chalky-white. Suddenly, Tommy heard footsteps below him; not running toward him and the tree house but away from his hide-away house, Then he realized what was happening: Alvin and Binji were afraid! And, of all people, they were afraid of him!

Watching the retreating figures of the two boys, Tommy scratched his head, wondering what had frightened Alvin and Binji so terribly. Was it the shock of his brave invitation that they join him in play or his declaration that he wanted to talk to them about Jesus? Upon further thinking, he was sure it was the mention of Jesus' name.

Going back into the cozy little house, Tommy smiled happily. There was power in Jesus' name. Yes, there was. Not only to save and to sanctify and heal, and keep, but there was power in that wonderful name to take away all the fear from a boy's heart and make him brave and bold and courageous when necessary. Suddenly, Tommy knew that he would never again be afraid of Alvin and Binji. Jesus had answered his prayer and chased every bit of fear away from him. Forever and for always, he would remember that what David had said was true and dependable: "What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee."

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May, 1981

Story 5
ABBEY'S GIFT

It was a beautiful day. In fact, it was so beautiful that Abigail had difficulty, staying inside the house. Outside, the sun was shining and the birds were singing and building new nests in the trees and bushes on the lawn. The apple trees and lilac bushes were especially lovely, covered with beautiful blossoms of palest pink and deepest purples. Abigail, standing inside the window, noticed the apple blossom carpet on the ground and her nose picked up the fragrant scent of the satiny-soft blooms.

Oh, how she longed to be outside playing beneath the fragrant trees. But she had work to do. Mother had entrusted tiny baby Allen into her care for an hour. She was to watch over him as

he slept and feed him when he got awake. The living and dining room furniture needed to be dusted, too, and the bathroom could stand a good scouring.

Abigail turned away from the window and began tidying up the kitchen. Then she hurried into the bathroom and scoured the bowl and the tub, making sure that she cleaned extra well in all the corners. As soon as the bathroom looked spic and span and was shiny-clean, she dusted the furniture in the living and dining rooms, cleaning carefully in the corners again.

"Abbey. Abbey," Jorene called from the yard, "Come Out and play with me. It's such a beautiful day. We can play beneath the forsythia bush in our yard."

Abbey hurried to the door. "I can't, Jorene," she said softly. "Mother told me to watch over Baby Allen."

"But we could hear him when he awakens," Jorene said quickly. "Our forsythia bush isn't far from his room and the windows are open."

Abbey shook her pretty head. "Not now, Jorene. Mother's depending on me, and I promised her I'd be a good little mother until she gets back."

"I'm sure she wouldn't mind if you came out for just a little while." Abbey shook her head again. "Not now," she answered quietly and softly. "I wouldn't disobey Mother for anything. Since Jesus saved my soul and sanctified me wholly, I find it easy and enjoyable to obey Mother and Father."

Jorene kicked at a clump of grass with her slippers. "You make it sound so easy to be obedient," she said sadly. "I think it's hard and... and unfair, too. After all, it's a whole lot nicer to play outside in the pretty sunshine than to dust and clean and do dirty dishes. O Abbey," she moaned "I hate to wash dishes. All those messy plates and bowls! Ugh!"

"Don't you ever pretend you're a big woman when you wash the dishes and dust the furniture, Jorene? Mother says this is one of the nicest ways to play pretend. She said it's not only fun it's preparing me for when I'm really big and grown and when I will be a real home-maker, like she is. That's why I try to do everything just the way Mother does it. I want to be a good home-maker like Mother."

"I guess I never thought of it like that," Jorene admitted. "You make it sound like it's fun.., almost!"

"O, it is fun, Jorene, and I feel all grown-up and . . . and big when Mother tells me what needs to be done, then says she knows she can depend on me. This makes me feel good all over. I love to work for Mother. And when we work together, we have such grand times. She tells me stories of when she was a little girl, helping her mother and daddy. We giggle and laugh together and almost before you know it, our work is done."

Jorene looked at the ground. "I'm almost ashamed to admit it, Abbey, but I hate to wash the dishes, like I said, and I put it off as long as I can."

"But you know you'll have to wash them, Jorene, so why not get them done as soon as the meal is over? Think of all the time you'd have to play, after the dishes are done!"

"I guess I hadn't thought of that either, Abbey, but I believe I'll try it today. Maybe even right now: those nasty old breakfast dishes are still in the sink waiting for me to do them."

Abbey laughed. "Let's do as Mother said and make a game out of it, Jorene: We'll pretend that we really are grown-up people and that we're keeping house just like our mothers do."

Jorene giggled. "O. K." she agreed. "And when I'm done, I'll come over; and as soon as your mother gets home we'll be able to play together."

"Let's do our work carefully," Abbey said, "'Cause one of my very special Mother's Day gifts this year is going to be the gift of being a cheerful and a happy helper. And now that Jesus has all of me it's going to be easy to do."

A smile crossed Jorene's face. "That sounds like a super Mother's Day gift," she answered. "And know something, Abbey? I may give that to my mother, too."

"Won't our mothers be happy!" was Abbey's excited comment.

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June, 1981

Story 6

A VERY SPECIAL GIFT

Kevin sat on the porch swing, swinging back and forth, his mind not one bit on the swing and the merry little breeze that played a game of hide-and-go-seek through his wheat-colored hair. A frown creased the forehead of his otherwise handsome face and his mouth was turned in an upside-down smile at the corners, making him look horrid and cross, not at all like the usually sunny and cheerful little boy he was.

Back and forth went the porch swing; squeak, squeak, squeak, went the chain that held the swing on the big hook in the ceiling of the porch, and frown, frown, frown went Kevin.

Bridgit and Candace came around the side of the house, laughing and giggling in a merry sort of way and talking as fast as two little magpies.

"O I'm so excited!" Bridgit told her friend. "My present for Father is be-au-ti-ful; just like Mother's was last month. And Candy," she added happily, "Mother thinks it was the most lovely little present I've ever given her. I guess that's because I helped to make it." Candy giggled, then

she said, "Sometimes mothers and fathers surprise me: They like the oddest and strangest things. Take my morn. She cried for joy when I told her that one of my gifts to her was a year-round gift of making my very own bed each and every morning, and keeping the furniture dusted and the rooms tidied up."

"That's what I mean!" Bridgit cried happily. "Whoever would have thought that we could make such beautiful things from weeds! Mother loves that flower arrangement Mrs. Croon helped us to make in school. Daddy's gift is almost finished now and I can hardly . . . Why Kevin!" Bridgit exclaimed without finishing her sentence. "I thought Daddy told you to weed the garden for Mother. Are you finished already?"

Kevin jumped off the swing and ran away without answering his sister, never even saying a pleasant "good morning" to Candy, Bridgit's best friend.

"I wonder what's wrong with Kevin," Candy remarked, sitting on the top porch step and leafing through the Bible Story book which she brought over to share with her friend.

"I can't imagine!" Bridgit answered soberly. "He was frowning! I don't like frowns, do you?"

"O no! Why, they remind me of thunder clouds, Bridgit."

"They do!" Bridgit exclaimed, realizing suddenly just how well a frown and a big black thunder cloud matched and were alike. "Poor Kevin! I hope he'll get alone somewhere and talk to Jesus about whatever it is that's bothering him. I miss his smile. Why Candy, Kevin rarely ever frowns. O I do wonder what's wrong with him!"

Candy dropped the book and got to her feet. "Let's go and find out," she suggested. "After all, Christians are supposed to help each other, not talk about each other."

Bridgit's eyes were shining. "And that's what the Bible must mean, when it tells about someone being overtaken in a fault. It says the Christian is to go to that person and try to help him. 'Restore' him, I believe It says."

Down the porch steps marched two pairs of helpful feet. Along the garden path, they looked for Kevin. They saw his wheat-colored hair bent downward as he worked diligently, pulling weeds from the garden.

"Kevin, Kevin," the girls called, hurrying to his side. "We've come to help you."

"What's wrong?" Candace asked quickly. "You were frowning."

"That's not like you," Bridgit said. "You almost always wear a smile since Jesus saved you."

Kevin felt all choked up, kind of like he couldn't swallow.

"The Bible says we are to bear one another's burdens," Candy added. "That's why we're here."

Kevin looked up at the girls, great tears in his sky-blue eyes. "My burden is sin, he admitted honestly. The girls gasped.

"But you got saved!" Bridgit remarked in astonishment.

"I was saved," the boy replied, "but I allowed this awful carnal mind and carnal nature to pull me down. This job of keeping the weeds pulled got to me, and I decided that I just wasn't going to do it. Something wicked and evil rose up inside me and asserted itself, saying, 'You don't have to do it, Kevin!' Well, I listened so long to that evil voice until I decided I wouldn't do it. And now Jesus has gone. I pushed Him right out of my heart when I said yes to the other voice. And oh, I feel so lonely and.., and all alone without Him. And what will Father say and think, when he knows how wicked I've been?"

"But Jesus will come back, Kevin. I know He will! You must tell Him how very sorry you are for your carnal uprising and invite Him back into your heart. As for daddy, well, he'll think the grandest Father's Day present you will give him will be a truly saved and sanctified wholly Kevin. Why just think of it, Kevin, you won't ever do this again, and you'll be the sweet, smiling Kevin just like you were when you first got saved. Now let's have a prayer meeting right here in the garden. Candy and I'll pray for you."

A broken and contrite Kevin knelt down in the middle of a long row of peas and prayed until he prayed clear through and knew that once again he was saved. And guess what, boys and girls; that little boy's father was happiest of all on Father's Day because his Kevin had done the noble thing and gotten back to God... not only in saving grace, but in sanctifying power, too. (Kevin got sanctified the very next day! How about you; are you sanctified wholly? Perhaps you aren't even saved! Hurry away and ask Jesus to come into your heart. You won't be sorry; I promise you!)

* * * * *

July, 1981

Story 7
BOOTKINS

"Mother! Mother, come quick! See what's here!" Heather and Cristine squealed with delight and their slender legs, working like speedy pistons, carried them across the lawn to the kitchen door. "A kitten, Mother!" they exclaimed, their excited voices floating like a song on the air and their eyes bright with joy and eager anticipation and surprise.

"Really!" Mother commented, dropping the last dumpling into the bubbly, boiling chicken broth. "We don't have any kittens, my dears."

"We do now," Noel and Matthew stated factually, all business-like and grown-up sounding. "Someone must have dropped it off.., again!"

Mother smiled a faint, understanding smile at Noel's last comment. It seemed their home was a depository for stray and unwanted dogs and cats. She felt sure the word got around that each stray would be well cared for and would be treated kindly; else, why was it that so many animals got dropped off at their house or just seemed to wander in from seemingly nowhere!

"Kitty," Rachael chortled gleefully, her short legs bringing her a bit less speedily to the kitchen door than her sisters, but her enormous green-blue eyes no less a study of eager delight and joy and excitement. "Kitty!" she exclaimed again, her dimpled face upturned toward her mother.

Picking the little girl up in her arms and hugging her soundly, Mother needed no further proof of the validity of her childrens' declaration. On the porch, meowing for all she was worth, stood a ball of beautiful blue-gray fur. Wistfully, the kitten peered through the screen door. Then, deciding she could do better than just peek inside, she climbed up the screen. Clinging tenaciously to the netting, she begged and pleaded in her kitten way to be a part of the happy family standing inside the door.

"Look, Mother! Look!" Heather cried, clasping her hands together in rapture. "She likes us. She does! She wants to come in. Hear her say, 'Let me in; let me in!' "

"It's too bad she can't say 'please,' " Noel teased. "How you can ever get 'let me in' out of that meowing racket is more than I can understand."

"But she is, Noel; she's saying, 'let me in, let me in.' At least I think that's what she's saying."

Noel laughed; so did Matthew.

"See Kitty!" Rachael cried happily, clapping her small chubby hands together in glee. "My kitty!"

"Rachel wants to keep her, too," Crissy said quickly. "Please, Mother, may we keep her? We'll call her Bootkins, 'cause she has white booties on all of her feet. O, isn't she darling! And her little booties are all clean and white, too. They're not one bit dirty or muddy. She's a clean little kitty and a good kitty; I know she is: I can feel it."

"Feel it!" Noel exclaimed teasingly. "These animals have a real friend in all of us and I'm beginning to believe they know it. Maybe that's why we get so many of them." And he laughed pleasantly.

"May we bring her inside?" Matthew and Heather asked at the same time, patting the tiny claws clinging to the screen on the door.

Smiling, Mother consented.

Once inside, Bootkins smoothed her silken fur along the girl's leg, purring and singing her little cat song for the full worth of her lungs. The children were all fascinated.

"How can anyone do such a thing?" Noel asked suddenly as Bootkins lay sleeping at his feet sometime later.

"Do what?" Mother asked.

Drop a tiny kitten off and not care if it dies or lives; nor even if it gets fed or starves to death? That's terrible!"

"I've often wondered the same thing, dear," Mother replied.

"Well, whoever does it just doesn't have a spirit like Jesus has," Crissy said thoughtfully. "Daddy just read in family worship that 'When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.' Why, Jesus was so wonderful that He said not even one tiny little sparrow dies but what He doesn't see it! So I know that He would never forsake any of His children, like the person did who dropped off this kitten."

Heather was silent and thoughtful for a long while, then she said, "And I'm glad we have a Christian mommie and daddy. They'd never leave us like tiny Bootkins was left, outside and all alone and scared nearly to death with no bed to go to when it was night. And they'd never, never leave us all alone in the house all day long, like poor Kendra and Shane are left, while their father and mother go to work. Oh-h! I'd be scared."

Noel reached down and stroked the silky fur of the kitten. "I guess maybe we aren't as thankful as we ought to be," he said seriously. "But I know what I'm going to do right now

"What?" came a chorus of questioning voices.

"I'm going to my bedroom and I'm going to thank Jesus for giving me a father and a mother who love me and teach me about Jesus and who really care."

"We will, too," the girls said, hurrying away to the bedroom they shared with each other.

Following close at their heels were Matthew, small Rachael and tiny Bootkins.

* * * * *

August, 1981

Story 8
SWEET TARTS

The air was warm and balmy and a cardinal whistled loud and long from the top of the maple tree as Renee hurried down the sidewalk with her brother, Loren. It was the kind of day the girl liked best of all. But today she didn't notice the playful little breeze as it skipped through her long golden hair and sent it flying out over her shoulders and down her back. No, she didn't! Nor did she hear the scarlet cardinal's happy song of, "Cheer, cheer, cheer." Her mind was on other things.

"Loren," she said, her slender fingers touching the pack of Sweet Tarts which were hidden way down deep inside her jumper pocket, "I . . . I don't feel right about these We should have asked Grandma and Grandpa before we bought them. It . . . it's stealing, isn't it?"

"They'll never know we bought them if you don't tell them," the older brother said quickly.

"Well, I don't feel good about it, Loren. I'd rather not have any Sweet Tarts . . . not ever! . . . if we're going to have to steal to buy them."

"But we didn't steal, Renee; Grandpa gave us the dollar to buy milk, and we got the milk: it's right here in this bag. He didn't say we couldn't have the change."

"But he didn't say we could, either. I wish we had asked; I'm sure he'd have told us to keep it."

"Then why worry? He didn't know how much the milk would cost. You heard him say he didn't. Neither did Grandma. So we're safe."

Nervously, Renee brushed stray wisps of hair off her face and forehead. Then she declared solemnly, "But God knows, Loren. So do you and I; and the little voice inside me keeps saying it's wrong."

"Aw c'mon, let's get moving and forget all about it. Grandpa's not selfish; neither is Grandma. What do they care about two little dimes being spent for a couple packs of Sweet Tarts?"

"I still think we should have asked if we could keep the change, Loren. At least, then we wouldn't have to be sneaky about it and I wouldn't have to keep mine hidden way down deep inside this pocket. Where do you have yours?"

"In my back pocket."

"Aren't you going to tell Grandpa and Grandma that you bought them, even?"

" 'Course I'm not."

"See? That's just what I mean: Now we'll have to act a lie, too! Oh, I feel awful about it!"

Loren turned and faced his sister. "That's the trouble with girls: You're all a bunch of sissies Cowards! Always afraid of doing wrong. Now hurry; Grandpa wanted the milk. Remember?"

Renee gulped and swallowed hard, feeling for all the world like she was going to cry or choke to death. It was wrong, what they had done. Yes, it was! An arrow, piercing her heart, told her it was all wrong. And oh, so very, very sinful.

Loren's legs, much longer than his sister's, soon brought him to the picket fence of his grandparents' home. Turning, to tell his sister not to worry, he saw Renee far down the street. Her footsteps were dragging and she was walking slowly . . . oh so slowly! . . . toward the familiar house on Laurel Street.

"Hurry!" Loren shouted.

The single command brought the girl out of her serious thinking and gave speed to her lagging footsteps. In no time at all, she was standing beside her brother.

"I'll do the talking," Loren said sternly.

"And this is the way thieves and criminals have their beginning!" Renee exclaimed, bursting into tears. "I'm sorry I listened to you and let you buy me those old Sweet Tarts."

"Well, well; back already!" Grandpa said, coming out on the porch to welcome the grandchildren. "You made record time, I do declare. And where's the milk?"

"Right here, Grandpa," Loren answered, handing him the milk.

"Thank you, dear boy. Thank you. How much did it cost?"

"I can't exactly say," Loren hedged, following his grandfather inside- the house.

"Wasn't there any change?" And Grandpa searched inside the brown bag for coins. "Is it in your pocket, Loren?"

"No."

"Well, well, that's strange. I didn't think a quart of milk would cost a dollar. Come, children, we'll go down to the grocery store and find out what's wrong. The grocer must have charged you too much I'm sure there should have been some change." And Grandpa started for the door.

Loren looked at Renee; Renee looked at the floor. Tears darted into her great, dark eyes. Now she knew that what her heart had been telling her about the Sweet Tarts being all wrong, was true! It had been God's Voice doing the talking and whispering. Oh, if only she would not have

listened to her brother It was so much like Adam and Eve in the beautiful garden of Eden, she thought remorsefully.

"Let's go," Grandpa said, hurrying across the porch to the steps.

Renee looked at Loren. His face was white and tears were spilling down his full, ruddy cheeks. "Grandpa," he said quickly, handing the Sweet Tarts to the kind man, "here . . . here's the change. We . . . no, I mean, I bought two packs of Sweet Tarts with the two dimes Mr. Moran gave me back. Renee didn't want to do it; said it wasn't right. But I went ahead and did it anyway. I . . . I'm terribly sorry. Please take the candy, Grandpa; it's been burning my heart and my conscience. "

Grandpa's eyes were shiny-bright with tears. Placing a gentle arm around each of the children's shoulders he said, "Loren, you and Renee must learn to resist temptation by fleeing to Jesus and asking Him to help you, when you are tempted. Each time that you yield to temptation, you grow weaker and weaker, but when you resist the devil and his awful temptations, then you grow stronger and stronger. I'm so sorry you did this, Loren; it breaks my heart."

Loren's shoulders shook with sobs. "I... I'm sorry too, Grandpa. Please forgive me. And . . . and I want to ask Jesus to forgive me, too. Will you pray for me? I don't want to go to hell."

"Of course you don't!" Grandpa cried. "And I'll be glad to pray for you, Gladly, gladly!"

"I need Jesus to help me, too, Grandpa!" It was Renee. Already she was on her knees and calling upon God to have mercy on her soul and to forgive her of all her sins.

With a loving arm around each child, Grandfather prayed. O how he prayed! And when Loren and Renee stood to their feet a short time later, their faces were shining. It was so wonderful to be washed in Jesus' Blood and to know that nothing was standing in their way! No, not even Sweet Tarts!

* * * * *

September, 1981

Story 9

THE RIGHT KIND OF WITNESS

"Twenty-four, twenty-five, twenty-six... I'm Almost done!" Donald cried jubilantly. "Four more and. . ."

"You're cheatin'!" Ken shouted, only on his fourteenth push-up. "Cheatin'!" he repeated again.

"It isn't cheatin', Ken, it's cheating," Paul declared.

"Wrong!" Jay cried, breathing heavily and pushing himself up to number nineteen. "It's cheating. At least, that's the way Mrs. McDonal pronounces it."

"Maybe it's not so important how we say it," Ken replied sadly, "so long as we don't cheat. And that's what Donald's doing. He's not doing real push-ups. His are only half-way push-ups. That's not fair; I'm quitting. I may be slower than the rest of you, but at least I'm honest." And with that Ken jumped to his feet.

"Aw c'mon, Ken!" Jay called, dropping on the ground and rolling over on his back to get his breath. "It's no fun if everybody quits. This was to be fun; remember?"

"'Course I remember," Ken answered with hurt in his voice. "And I thought it was fun until Donald got to cheating and . . . and lying."

"Now wait a minute!" Donald exclaimed, jumping to his feet and facing Ken. "I don't like being called a cheater and a liar."

"'Course you don't," Ken replied. "No one likes it. But that's what you are. You didn't do a real push-up; not a single one of them. And you lied about how many you did, too."

Color rose in Donald's cheeks. He was very, very angry. "Why you . . . you . . ."

"But you know it's true, Donald," Ken insisted, facing the angry boy fearlessly. "You know it's true. And God knows it, too. You skipped from number twelve to number twenty. That put you ahead by eight counts. But it didn't really. You just didn't do them. So whether you counted the numbers out or not doesn't change the fact that you didn't do the push-ups. You told a lie and you know you did."

Ken was almost in tears. "So long, fellows," he called, hurrying away. "Don't bother asking me out to church and Sunday School anymore. There's no need to go; not if you think it's all right to lie and cheat and do just like everyone else almost is doing. I don't believe in doing it. My dad and morn say it isn't right; it's wrong. ALL WRONG! Maybe I'm not a Christian, but I don't cheat or lie . . . which is more than Donald can say. And he says he's saved, too!"

As Ken's voice faded away, Paul turned to Donald, "Why did you do it?" he asked brokenly. "Now he'll never come back to church with me again."

Donald made an ugly face, then jumped to his feet and ran away, shouting angrily that he didn't "care to ever play with Paul and Jay again. Not ever!"

"Now what do we do?" Jay asked, sitting on a clump of thick, cool, green grass. "Ken's right; Donald did cheat. And he lied, too. I saw how he was pretending to do his push-ups, but he never did one single, solitary, real he-man pushup. He didn't! And he did lie. He skipped from twelve to twenty, just like Ken said he did."

Paul gulped. Sitting down beside Jay and pulling at a slender piece of grass, he said, "That's too bad. I've worked so long and so hard trying to get permission from his parents for him to come, and now that he's started, and was really getting interested in all the things Mr. Short was saying in Sunday School, Donaid comes along and ruins everything. This is awful!"

Jay cupped his face in the palms of his hands, his face a study of concentration and agony. It seemed as though the devil was working over-time where Ken was concerned. Then, brightening perceptibly, he said, "We can pray, Paul. Mr. Short and our parents say that prayer is one's strongest and greatest weapon Let's tell the Lord about this problem He cares about Ken and his soul as much as we do."

"More!" Paul declared quickly. "He died for Ken's salvation. Let's pray."

Greatly relieved after prayer, Paul said, "Let's go right over and see Ken. I'm sure he'll be glad to see us."

Jay nodded. "I think it's the only thing to do," he agreed. "And God will go before us. I'm sure He will."

Ken was sitting alone on the shady side of his father's garage when the two rode up the driveway on their bicycles.

Paul was the first to speak. "Ken!" he cried brokenly. "I'm sorry for what happened Jay and I don't believe in cheating and lying . . . nor do we do it either. You know that. Not since Jesus saved us and sanctified us wholly."

Ken got to his feet. Facing Paul he said tearfully, "I'm sorry about it, too. I know you and Jay don't cheat or lie--you're different."

"You... you'll still be coming to church with me on Sunday then, the Lord willing?" Paul asked quickly.

"Ye... yes. But... but Paul, do I have to wait till Sunday to get saved? I mean, well..., you and Jay are the right kind of witness Your life tells for Jesus. You're honest and fair in every game we play together, and I've never seen either of you get stirred up and angry, either. I want whatever it is you have. Could I get saved now? Right here?"

"Of course you can!" Paul answered, with tears rolling joyfully down his cheeks as he knelt beside his friend.

* * * * *

October, 1981

Story 10

TO OBEY IS BETTER

Ellene's heart felt light and happy as she walked down the sidewalk shuffling her feet through the brightly colored leaves that lay beneath the trees. Fall was one of the most beautiful times of the year she was sure.

She breathed deeply, inhaling all that her lungs would hold of the deliciously-clean, crisply-fresh air as she trudged home from school. Why did she always have to rush home and help with the work around the house? she wondered, wanting more than anything else to stay outside and play. Being out in the frosty-cold air and among the rattly, crackly leaves was so much nicer than setting tables and cleaning wash bowls in the bathroom, she thought, shoving the humpy, bumpy package (which Mrs. Brooks had handed her as she passed her house) beneath an evergreen bush before she slipped away to the slides and swings in the nearby park. Whatever could be inside Mrs. Brooks' package? Ellene wondered, climbing the ladder for a quick ride down the smooth, slippery slide. The package felt lumpy and bulgy. But it was soft, she admitted, as she ran toward the swings.

She played in the park until she became tired and weary then she ran to the bush to get the package. BUT IT WAS GONE!

"O dear!" she cried. "Who would have wanted that bumpy, bulgy package! Now who would have taken it?"

Ellene looked beneath the bush and around the bush. The package was gone! Whatever could have happened to it? she wondered,, starting homeward.

Mrs. Tooley was just Calling Jason in for supper when Ellene passed her house, and suddenly a dagger of conviction went through her heart. She hadn't meant to stay out and play that long! No, she hadn't. (Where did the time get to?)

Bright tears shimmered in the tittle girl's eyes, making the blue in them look like great pools of morning glories with dewy-mist,

"Where s the package?" Mother asked as Ellene burst into the kitchen. "Mrs. Brooks was to have given you a package, honey."

Ellene's mouth opened wide. "O Mother," she cried, "it's gone! Mrs. Brooks gave it to me but I... I disobeyed again and . . . and"

"What did you do with it, Ellene? How could it be gone if you had it?" Ellene's wheat-colored hair bobbed back and forth as she shook her head. "I... I hid it under a bush while I played in the park on the slide and the swings. When I got back to where I had hidden it, it was gone. It disappeared, Mother. O I'm so sorry. Forgive me, please! I don't want to be disobedient. Not ever again! I don't! I don't!"

Mother sighed tiredly. Tears shone in her eyes. "Jesus has been waiting for a long, long time to help you, Ellene; but you must want His help," she said gently and softly, patting the long silken hair.

"I want Him to help me, Mother. O I, do; I do! Right now! Then we shall tell Him about it, dear. 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins' " Mother quoted, kneeling beside the little, sobbing girl whose tears of sorrow turned suddenly to tears of joy and happiness as Jesus forgave her and saved her soul.

Drawing Ellene close to her heart, Mother said kindly, "I have something to tell you, honey; something which will make you very sorry for your act of disobedience, but also, it will be a lesson which I am sure you will never forget; and now that you are saved, and will be seeking to get sanctified wholly, I am sure you will never again be repeating this sin, dear. That package was your birthday present from Daddy and me."

Ellene gasped. It felt all humpy and, bumpy and lumpy and and "That humpy, bumpy package was a brand new dolly for you . . . one of Mrs. Brooks' nicest and best!" Mother said, smiling sadly.

"O Mother, no! No! Was it like Ramona's? The one her mother got for her birthday?"

"Yes, dear; just like Ramona's. It had golden-blond hair, big blue eyes and a soft cuddly body. Tonight I would have put her in a box and wrapped the box with pretty paper and ribbon and tomorrow, the Lord willing, you would have found the box beside your plate. Now though, there will be no new dolly; we don't have money for another one."

Mother's words were like daggers in Ellene's heart. "Oh-h!" was all she could say as tears chased each other across her long eyelashes and ran down her cheeks.

Wrapping her arms around her mother's neck, she smiled in spite of the falling tears. "It won't happen again," she said joyfully; "Jesus is living in my heart now!"

And Mother, looking into the shining face, knew it was true.

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November, 1981

Story 11

THE THANKSGIVING SECRET

The house felt all toasty-warm and cozy when Jennifer wiggled her toes out from beneath the bed covers and jumped out of bed. Today was Thanksgiving Day, she thought with excited emotion as she dressed and made her bed before hurrying down the stair-steps as fast as her legs would carry her.

"Are they here, Mother?" she asked quickly, almost before her feet were on the bottom step, "Have they come--Uncle John and Grandpa and Grandma and Aunt Betty and Marilyn, I mean?" Jennifer's eyes were shining with joy and eager anticipation as she asked the questions.

"What a dear, sweet little question box you are!" Mother exclaimed, sliding the last of the unbaked pies into the oven and pausing long enough to kiss her daughter on the very tip of her pretty nose and pat her long, silken hair. "They're not here yet. But I'll tell you something you can do after breakfast..."

Clapping her hands together in childish glee and excitement, and interrupting Mother's unfinished sentence, she asked, "What, Mother dear? What may I do? O please tell me. I can hardly wait until they come and see how nice everything looks and smell how wonderful the house smells. Um-m-m, that turkey makes me hungry."

Mother laughed softly. "When you have finished your breakfast," she said gently, "you may stand inside the big picture window and watch for Grandpa and Grandma. They're bound to be here soon. Uncle John and Aunt Betty and Marilyn, too."

Jennifer skipped to the kitchen table, her heart feeling as light as a feather. Suddenly she stopped. With her great, round, dark eyes looking wistfully up into her mother's pretty face, she asked, "May I help to set the dining room table? Please, Mother?"

Mother looked at her little girl, sizing her up from head to foot. "You're quite small to handle the dishes," she stated kindly but meaningfully.

"Please, Mother! Please!" Jennifer begged. "I'll be ever so careful not to break the pretty plates."

"All right, honey, you may put the plates around the table. I've already placed the napkins and the silverware on the table so be sure you put a plate between where the fork and knife are."

"I know how to do it . . . from helping you here in the kitchen," the little girl replied sweetly, hurrying into the dining room.

"I said 'after breakfast!' " Mother reminded softly and Jennifer, laughing pleasantly, skipped back into the kitchen and ate her breakfast

In a very short time, she had a plate placed neatly between each fork and knife and spoon. Then she hurried to the window in the living room and waited.

Outside, snow was falling. It tumbled out of the sky in great big fluffy-white flakes and dropped tiredly and lazily on to the lawn. Jennifer laughed with glee. The snowflakes looked like they were tired; yes, they did! she thought pleasantly.

Her eyes traveled from the far end of the lawn to the driveway and in a sudden rush she was out the door and running down the sidewalk, her long braids trailing behind her. "Grandpa!

Grandma!" she cried joyously, rushing up to the car where Grandpa swept her off the ground into his strong arms.

"I thought you'd never get here!" she said softly, wrapping her arms tightly around Grandpa's neck.

"Don't forget that I get a hug and a kiss, too!" Grandma teased, coming around the car to where Jennifer had wiggled out of Grandpa's arms and was coming to meet her.

"O Grandma," she cried, "I waited so long for you, it seems. But look; here's Uncle John and Aunt Betty and Marilyn!"

Away Jennifer ran, calling, "Marilyn! Marilyn, let's play. O, do hurry; the dollies and I have waited ever so long for you to get here! The turkey's roasting golden-brown in the oven and the pies are baking and... and..."

"You make me hungry!" Uncle John declared, winking at his favorite niece and smacking his lips.

Jennifer laughed. Leading Marilyn by the hand, she hurried inside and up the stairs to play. She could hardly wait till dinner time, she thought, remembering her little secret. Soon . . . yes, soon . . . it would be out!

It was after Grandpa had offered thanks around the dinner table that Mother, noticing the upside-down plates, remarked, "Jennifer, honey, you always put the plates right-side-up; never up-side-down."

"I know, Mother; but I.. I had a secret..."

"And I found your secret!" Grandma exclaimed suddenly, unfolding a piece of paper found beneath her upside-down plate. "It says, 'I'm thankful for you.' How nice! Yes, how very nice and how thoughtful, too!" And Grandma's eyes were smiling into Jennifer's.

"Well, well, well!" Grandpa exclaimed. "Mine says the same thing. Now isn't that wonderful and kind of a certain little girl!"

"I got one, too!" Father and Mother chorused together, followed closely by Uncle John and Aunt Betty and Marilyn.

"What prompted you to do it?" Mother asked, as shiny-bright tears stood in her eyes.

"'Cause I'm thankful. Grandma and Grandpa are like Jesus; I'm thankful for that. You and Father led me to Jesus and taught me how to be thankful; I'm grateful for this. Uncle John and Aunt Betty are always kind and good and . . . and . . . unselfish, and . . . and Marilyn's my very dearest cousin." Jennifer was almost out of breath by the time she finished.

"What a lovely thing to do!" Father declared. "And it just wouldn't hurt one bit if Mother and I said that we are thankful to the Lord for Jennifer... for sending her to us!"

Now that her secret was out, Jennifer felt she could hardly wait until Grandfather carved the golden-brown turkey.

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December, 1981

Story 12

BONNIE'S GIFT

Bonnie looked at the stacks of beautifully wrapped gifts, then she hurried to the picture window. Parting the sheer curtains beneath the expensive drapes, she eased her small body forward and stood framed inside the window, her thoughts troubling her.

Snow tumbled merrily from the sky and filtered softly earthward, its glistening, shimmering flakes settling noiselessly on the lawn and the bushes beyond the window and its pure whiteness reflecting the myriads of twinkling, blinking lights which made rainbows on the snow.

Bonnie pressed her tiny nose against the windowpane, wondering what she could do; how she could give Jesus a present. It didn't seem quite right, she thought, to give presents to everyone but Jesus. Especially since it was supposed to be His birthday.

A snow plow whizzed past the house, its enormous blade pushing and throwing the snow into an enormous wall of white along the boulevard. Bonnie looked up and down the street. Everywhere she looked, she saw beautiful colored lights twinkling and blinking from doorways and houses and lawns, all reminders that this was Christmas. But her little heart wasn't happy; Jesus was being forgotten. He seemed to be left out of everything, she thought. Oh, if only she had something for Him!

Tears stung her dark brown eyes. She sighed disconsolately.

Across the street from the Hollister's fashionable two-story house, candles burned in every window. Their soft, warm, yellow glow spread warmth and cheer on the cold night air and the reflection of their stance inside the window made halo shadows on the blanket of white beneath them. It was beautiful, the little girl thought. So very beautiful! Of all the shining lights at Christmas, she liked the soft glow of the yellow candles best of all.

A sudden gust of wind sent snow swirling in all directions in front of the window and Bonnie, shivering with fright, turned away and fled to her bedroom where Linda and Lisa and Lois and Lolly were all waiting for her.

"What good babies you are!" she exclaimed to her dolls, who hadn't moved an inch from where she had put them before leaving the room. "I have a problem," she confided softly in Lolly's

tiny ear. "It's Christmas time again and I want to give Jesus a present . . . a very special present it must be, Lolly dear! But I don't know what to give Him," she added on a sadly pathetic note.

She hurried to the rocking chair near the window and sat down in it, hugging Lolly close to her heart. Lolly was home-made. From the top of her yarn-braided hair to the soles of her crocheted booties, she was hand-made . . . by Grandma's kind, gentle, and loving hands. Bonnie loved Lolly especially much because Grandma made her; and she loved Grandma extra-special-much 'cause she was Grandma, and 'cause Grandma loved Jesus and told her many wonderful things about Him.

A sudden idea popped into Bonnie's little head. It was a wonderful idea! So wonderful, in fact, that she marveled that she hadn't thought about it long ago and done it. Grandma had told her that she must do it if she expected to get into Heaven.

Sliding quickly off the chair, she dropped to her knees and prayed, inviting Jesus to come into her heart. "I make a present of my heart to You, dear Jesus," she cried earnestly. "Forever and ever and ever, I want You to have my heart and life. Please come into my heart and save me. I'm sorry I sinned against You..."

By now the tears were flowing freely and Bonnie, in earnestness of soul, cried out, "O Jesus, please save my soul! Grandma read to me where You said 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not.' Here I am, Jesus; I've come to You." Instantly the room seemed to be filled with a heavenly light. Bonnie's heart was made new in Christ! At last, she had peace and rest inside her heart. O it was wonderful. Wonderful! "Thank You, sweet Jesus! Thank You!" she cried joyfully.

Hugging Lolly close to her heart, Bonnie said, "This is what Jesus wanted all the time; nothing but my heart!" -- Taken from God's Revivalist.

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THE END