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CHILDREN'S PAGE STORIES -- 1984

By Mrs. Paul E. King

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Story 1
BETTER THAN RESOLUTIONS

Martha raced across the bedroom to the little desk in the corner. "You didn't help me one bit!" she exclaimed angrily as she looked down on the sheet of paper lying on top of the desk.

She grabbed the paper greedily in her hands. In large, bold lettering she read, I won't be cross anymore; I won't tease Kellendra ever; I won't say no under my breath when Mother tells me to do something; I won't pout; I won't

"You didn't help me!" she accused the written page. "I hate you. Hate you! I was sure there was magic in writing you down on paper. But I was wrong. Well," she added, stamping her foot, "I'll just tear you into tiny, tiny pieces and toss you into the wastebasket." And with that she ripped the paper in half; then she tore it again, and again, and again, moaning, "Oh, I was hoping you could help to make me as sweet and kind and... and loving as Emily is. Oh-h! You bad, bad paper!"

"Why Marty, whomever are you talking to?" Mrs. Carey asked, standing in the doorway. "Is it your little pretend-friend, Beegea, or whatever her name is? Or is it a he? I never could decide" Mother laughed pleasantly as she talked.

"No, it's not Beegea. And Beegea is not a boy; she's a little girl with golden-red hair and eyes as green as the mignonette in your flower garden in the summer time. She's my best friend."

"Then why are you so upset? And what are you tearing up, Martha Carey?" Mother asked, retrieving a piece of the paper from the waste basket and trying to read what was on it.

"Please, Mother!" Martha cried "Don't read it. It doesn't work at all. It didn't help me one bit. Not one tiny bit event Oh, I feel awful. Awful!" and Martha let the torn paper fall to the floor while she buried her face in Mother's apron and sobbed unashamedly.

"What are you talking about, Marty? Stop crying long enough to tell me. I can't help you if I don't know what you're crying about."

"It's those nasty old resolutions," Martha cried, pointing an accusing finger at the torn paper. "They don't work, Mother. They don't!"

"Resolutions, honey? What are you talking about?"

"Oh, you know; things you write down on paper that you want changed in your life. Rusty told me I needed to change. He said I'd better begin making some resolutions. So I tried; I really did. But it just doesn't work; it didn't help me."

"When I got downstairs, the first thing I did this morning was tease and torment Kellendra. And... and I was cross, too; and pouty, when you told me to leave Kellendra alone. I even said no under my breath and stamped my foot in my heart."

Mother studied her next to the youngest child thoughtfully. Then she said, "Martha, there's nothing magic about writing down on paper what you won't do or what you will do. Many people do this, I realize... especially this time of the year when the brand new year is beginning. They hope this will help them. But oh, how their heart must break and ache when they discover that writing a resolution down just doesn't solve their bad habits nor change their way of sinful living."

Martha was sobbing. "It didn't help me, other, she repeated again. "And I want to change. I want to be different."

Leading the little girl to the sofa and drawing her down beside her, Mother said kindly, "You've learned a lesson which grown people all over the world have found out: Making a resolution, or writing one down, is not the answer to the sin question or to the evil in one's heart. Jesus alone can change this. The Bible tells us that Jesus was manifested . . . or came down to us to bleed and die... that He might destroy the works of the devil. Do you really want to change, Marty dear? From the very bottom of your heart, do you?"

Oh yes. Yes, Mother, I do, I do!" Martha exclaimed with tears streaming down her pretty cheeks.

"Then we'll forget all about those resolutions, honey, and go to the only One who can really change you... the blessed Lord Jesus. He does the changing from the inside, Martha Faith, and when you are changed inside..., in your heart..., then you won't tease and torment the baby anymore and you won't say 'no' under your breath either, nor 'stamp' your foot in your heart, as you confessed you did when I had to reprimand you. Now come; let's pray and tell Jesus everything. He's waiting to save you and to forgive your sins and to come into your heart."

"And I want Him, Mother. I do!" Martha cried, as she began to pray and soon discovered the joy and peace of having Jesus inside her heart. This was far better than all the resolutions in the world, she thought happily, hugging her Mother and feeling au new and forgiven in her heart. It was the perfect way to start the New Year.

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February 1984

Story 2

DADDY'S FOOTPRINTS

Phyllis pressed her tiny nose up tight against the window pane. It was frosty-cold to the touch, but she didn't mind; she was too excited and too preoccupied over hearing the comforting sound of her Mother's footsteps as they hurried across the kitchen floor, doing the many tasks and chores that needed done every single day of the week.

The little girl sighed happily and contentedly, then she traced the footsteps of her father through the snow. Each morning, before he left for work, he filled the bird feeders with food. This morning, with the clouds having dropped a beautiful blanket of fresh, pure-looking white snow on the ground, she was able to see Daddy's footprints across the yard. It was such a grand and good feeling, she decided; seeing Daddy's boot-prints left in the snow, silently "telling" her where he was and, in a way, even showing her what he was doing by the way he went and where the footprints led to and didn't lead to.

It made all the difference in the world, Phyllis thought, seeing where he had walked. He had gone to the feeders each and every morning, to be sure. But she hadn't seen that he had been there; not until this morning: This beautiful morning all the world was dressed in sparkling, glittering white, and now she could see her father's foot-prints.

They were straight footprints, she noticed, leading from the kitchen door to where the bird feeders hung from low limbs on the maple trees in the back yard.

"Mother, come see!" she cried happily, turning quickly and momentarily from the window.

"See what, honey?" Mrs. Morgan asked, smiling down into the face of the excited child.

"Daddy's footprints. They're beautiful. See?" Phyllis exclaimed, pointing to the white-blanketed yard. "They're straight, and this morning, I can see where Daddy walked; yesterday morning, I couldn't. It makes me feel good all over, knowing those are my daddy's footprints."

Mrs. Morgan's eyes filled with bright tears. "My dear little girl," she said softly, "there's a great and wonderful lesson in this; a sort of object lesson."

Phyllis laughed. "Really? What is it, Mother?"

Mrs. Morgan wrapped an arm around her little girl. "So much of the time, we want to see God's footprints," she said thoughtfully. "Before we'll believe He's near, we want to see. In other words, unless we see God's "footprints" we can scarcely believe He's near or that He's working

out "all things" for our good and is still busy solving our problems. But true faith believes even though it cannot see. David, in Psalms 27:13, says, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see." We are told first to believe, then we can expect to see the results of our believing. As regularly as the sun comes up each morning, so regularly are Daddy's footprints left on the lawn from the kitchen door to the bird-feeders. And even though you haven't been able to see them before this beautiful white morning, they've been there, honey. All the time."

Phyllis' eyes brightened. "You . . . you mean . . .? Oh, Mother, I know what you're trying to tell me: Even though I cannot see it now, God is working through my prayers for Joy Anna. She will be saved; I must believe first. And, like Daddy's straight footsteps, if I walk straight and live a holy life and let Jesus shine through me, I'll help lead Joy Anna to Jesus. Oh, look at those beautiful cardinals, Mother. I wonder why God didn't make all the birds bright and beautiful like they are."

"Beauty is another one of God's great gifts, Phyllis. But just because all birds aren't a scarlet-red doesn't mean they're not beautiful. Take the lark, for example; his coat of feathers isn't nearly so vivid nor so outstanding as is the cardinal's or the blue jay's, but his song is one of the sweetest ever to be heard. The gift of song is one of God's great and wonderful gifts bestowed upon the lark. The lark has been blest by God in the area of song; this makes him equally beautiful with the brilliant feathered cardinal. The peacock is quite a handsome creature, but his "song" leaves much to be desired.

"So you see, dear, God's gifts of beauty vary from one creature . . . and one person even., to another. On one, it's a coat of beautiful, handsome feathers; to another, it may be a gentle nature or the beauty and glory of a sweet and melodic song. Yet each is beautiful to God."

Phyllis was silent for a long while. Suddenly she spoke. "Mother, I was just thinking. Maybe it would help Joy Anna if I told her she has a lovely voice. She does, you know. I'm going to tell her what you said about God giving beautiful gifts to everyone, and that one of hers is the gift of song. And, oh yes, I'm going to tell her, that, since Jesus gave her this gift, she should show her thankfulness to Him by giving Him her heart."

Mother smiled. Big tears brimmed from her eyes.

"I'm going to talk to Joy Anna right now," Phyllis declared, leaving the window. "And then I'm going outside and walk in my daddy's footsteps," she added happily.

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March 1984

Story 3

ROSE ANN AND THE BIBLE

"There!" Charity exclaimed, closing the Bible and tossing it on the bed. "I've read my chapter for the day. ,Let's go into the playroom and play, she said to her cousin, Rose Ann.

"But I'm not ready to play," Rose Ann said softly as she pulled her Bible close to her heart. "I want to read more. Oh Charity," she cried happily, "I love the Bible! It's the best book I've ever read."

Charity surveyed her cousin for a long while, then she tossed her long, tawny curls off her small shoulders with a jerk of her saucy head and stomped out of the room, exclaiming tartly, "I'll play by myself, then."

It was quiet in the room after Charity left and Rose Ann, enjoying the peaceful atmosphere, read chapter after chapter. There were so many wonderful things in the Bible. She felt she just must explore its wonderful pages more so she continued to read.

"Well?" a voice questioned saucily from the doorway. "I'm having fun in the playroom. You don't know what you're missing..." Charity's sentence trailed provocatively.

Rose Ann looked up from her reading. "I...I'd rather read," she said softly, pulling the Bible close to her heart again. "I love It so," she added.

"You...You...Oh, I hate you, Rose Ann!" Charity cried. "I thought we'd have so much fun when you came here. But you're no fun at all! All you want to do is read that boring old Bible."

Rose Ann gasped. "But it's not boring, Charity; it's not. I love it. Oh, I love it. You've never been sick," she said in a small-sounding, far-away tone of voice.

"Oh, yes, I have!" the other girl replied indignantly. "I had the measles and the mumps, and my throat hurt me dreadfully. Why, I couldn't swallow. And...and I wanted a dill pickle and I couldn't have one 'cause Mother wouldn't give me any."

"Well, you've been sick," Rose Ann conceded kindly after hearing her cousin's sad story and her deprivation of the dill pickle, "but you've never been near-dead sick."

Charity came into the room and sat on the edge of the bed. "You...you were," she said remembering how fervently and tearfully her mother and father had prayed for Rose Ann around the family altar.

"The doctors said I couldn't live, Rose Ann recounted. "The night I thought I was dying, I began saying the 23 Psalm over and over to myself. And do you know, Charity, that the blessed Jesus Himself came and spoke to me. He said, 'Don't be afraid, I'm with you And I wasn't afraid at all because He was with me. I was so thankful I had loved God's word and that I had hidden it away inside my heart. When I needed it, it was in my heart and I knew it well enough to quote it from memory. This is why I want to keep reading it; so I can learn more and more. Maybe someday I'll need something different, and if I haven't read the Bible I won't know what it says. I never, never want it to happen this way."

Charity's head was bowed. She bit her lip and worked her fingers nervously.

"I'd feel really guilty if I didn't read my Bible, now that I have learned to read," Rose Ann continued softly. "Mother says God will hold us accountable for what we could have read and learned, but didn't. She says the heathen, who don't have any Bibles, treasure even a thing as simple as a tract when they have one given to them. They read it and read it until it's worn to shreds. And they do whatever the tract says for them to do, too. I'm so glad I can read, Charity. Oh, I do love my Bible.

Charity lifted her dark eyes to meet the sky-blue ones of her cousin. "Forgive me, please," she said. "I don't hate you. I guess I sort of hate myself because I'm not like you. I always hurry to get through my one chapter in the Bible a day. But I guess it's almost as if I didn't read it at all, 'cause I can't remember a thing I've read when I'm finished. And God doesn't want that."

Rose Ann was thoughtful for a while, then she said, "No, Charity, God doesn't want you to read just to say you read; He wants you to read so you can learn about Him and how He wants you to live."

"Then...then I guess I'd better get saved, and give Jesus my heart right now. I know His Word says that."

"Oh yes, Charity, it does say that. And after you're saved you'll love to read your Bible."

"Like you do, Rose Ann?"

"Like I do, Charity."

"Then let's pray," Charity pleaded as she fell to her knees.

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April 1984

Story 4

HE SEES ALL I DO... HE HEARS ALL I SAY

Kimberly Joanne Clark was excited. She was so excited, in fact, that she couldn't sit still and wait for Father to put Mother's and her suitcases into the trunk of the car. "Can't we go now?" she asked quickly and impatiently of her father as she slid off the sofa and hopped around the room, frowning with each hop she made.

Her father gave her a look of disapproval as he carried the luggage to the door.

"Please, Father, hurry!" the girl begged. "Why is it taking so long?"

Placing the luggage on the floor, Mr. Clark faced his little daughter. "Sit on the sofa," he ordered, "and don't say another word until we're ready to leave. You must learn that you cannot

order your mother and me around. It is you who must obey us; not Mother and I you." With those words, Father hurried to the car.

Kimberly plopped down on the sofa and pouted. Her lower lip drooped forward and her face wore a "hurt pride" look. How different she looked from the little girl who, earlier in the morning, bounced down the stair steps laughing and smiling and chatting for all she was worth, and told Mother that today --this day--she, Kimberly Joanne, would be Mother's helper and Mother's friend on the airplane!

Father came through the living room and Kimberly quickly put her lower lip back in its proper place. She didn't smile, to be sure. No. But at least her lower lip wasn't hanging out in a pout anymore. Not on the outside, that is, where Father could see it. But on the inside... Ah, that was a different story! She could pout all she wanted to on the inside and Father could never, never see it even.

Feeling a bit of triumph in the thought, Kimberly smiled to herself. That was another good thing about the mind, she told herself; she could pout and think all the hateful, ugly, and nasty thoughts she wanted to and Father would never know. In a way, she felt like she had a private, secret closet all her own. She alone carried the key to this secret thought closet and she was glad.

With Father's tall figure retreating through the doorway again, Kimberly's lower lip went into an immediate pout which remained until she got into the car to go to the airport.

All the way to the airport she was quiet. Inside her heart, she was sullen, nonetheless.

In the airport, she stood beside Mother and watched as the ticket agent checked their luggage through to where they were going. She even took her mother's hand while they walked together toward the gate where the big plane stood outside waiting for them. Passing alone through the, metal detector device, the beeper sounded. Kimberly felt frightened.

"Go through it again," the woman ordered her.

Kimberly forgot all about pouting and being sullen; instead, fears took over. Turning, she walked through the device the second time. Again the beeper sounded its alarm.

Quickly, a guard drew her aside and moved a hand metal detector over her coat. Once more the beeper sent out its alarm.

"Take your coat off," the guard ordered.

Kimberly was frightened. What did the man find on her person that would make the "beeper" sound its warning? she wondered as she unbuttoned her pretty blue coat and gave it to the man. There were no knives nor guns in her little pockets, so why the alarm? "Ah, here's the culprit!" the guard exclaimed, breaking into Kimberly's thoughts and pulling a pair of scissors from one of the pockets.

Kimberly gasped. She had put the metal scissors into her coat pocket so she could cut out paper dolls when she got to her cousin's house even though Mother had told her the scissors must remain at home.

Kimberly's cheeks burned with guilt and Shame. She couldn't look up into Father's or Mother's face. She was caught in the act of disobedience; the guard held the evidence in his hand.

"Come," Mother said, handing the coat to Kimberly and dropping the scissors inside her needlepoint work bag. All the way to gate number 4, Kimberly's heart condemned her. If a thing so simple as a metal detector could reveal the hiding place of a pair of forbidden scissors, what about God and His all-seeing eye! He saw everything. Yes, everything! Her inside pout and sullenness and her secret thought closet, too. Yes, He did. Oh, she was such a very wicked girl! She needed God's forgiveness. She did, she did!

Turning quickly to her father, she cried, 'Oh Daddy, forgive me! Forgive me, please! I need Jesus! I was pouting on the inside.., where I thought you couldn't see and didn't know. But God know; His great searchlight goes into every corner of my heart, I m sorry I was hateful. And Mother, I'm sorry I disobeyed you. Forgive me. I want Jesus to save me and to forgive my sins."

"We'll tell Him all about it on the plane, dear," Mrs. Clark said, kissing her husband good-bye and leading Kimberly through the gate to the plane. There, above the puffy looking marshmallow clouds, Kimberly confessed her many sins to Jesus and found peace and forgiveness and rest for her soul. Now she wasn't afraid of God's all-seeing eye anymore.

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May 1984

Story 5
SIMPLE THINGS

Whatever could he give Mother? Keith wondered sadly, cupping his face in his already sun-browned hands as he sat in the 'doorway' of his straw 'igloo.' How he loved the pretend house, made by digging a hole inside the straw stack in the barnyard! Father had been so kind to him, helping him to dig the 'cave-tunnel' into the enormous, winter-packed straw-stack until he could hide inside it and pretend ever so many wonderful things. Why even Father seemed to enjoy the pretend house: didn't he sit in it one day with him-- Keith --until the shower passed and they emerged together from the straw tunnel laughing and feeling closer than ever he had felt to his dad? And he had always felt real close to his father. Yes, he did, but seeing one's father sitting inside, beside his boy, and really enjoying the secrecy of the hide-away igloo home, well, it just seemed to cement them together. Oh, Keith was proud of his dad. His mother too. God had given him the very best parents in all the world, he was sure.

He wiggled a bit, and the straw made a friendly, rattly sound. He should have allowed Flop Ears to come with him, he thought sadly; but it was so much harder to concentrate when knew that one's dog liked nothing better than to have his ears and head stroked all the time. And he Keith

Massey, wasn't genius enough to be thinking how nicely shaded Flop Ears' ears were and how satiny-shiny too. He would. He knew this. He could not help it; it worked that way each time he was around the beautiful little rabbit dog his father and mother had given him for Christmas.

Again he wiggled. Then he 'unwound' his legs and scooted until his back rested against the straw wall in his 'igloo. Life could be ever so complicated when one turned eight and nine or ten, he thought. Now, if he were tiny like Kelly Sue, or teeny-tiny like Kendra, he wouldn't need to worry. His sisters were too small to think about doing something nice for Mother on Mother's Day. Still

"Keith. Keith, where are you, son?"

Keith jumped to his feet, hitting his head against the low straw ceiling. But it didn't hurt badly; it was only straw. He hurried out of the ever-open door to his father. "I'm here, Dad," he said, smiling. "I was inside the pretend house, trying to think what I could do for Mother on Mother's Day that would be nice. And you know, Dad, I can't think of a single thing."

Mr. Massey ruffled his son's hair in a loving, fatherly way. "You're such a good, obedient boy," he complimented with tears in his morning glory-blue eyes. "Your Mother and I thank God for you; over and over, again and again."

Keith blushed. He felt the hot flush rise into his cheeks. "It isn't I, Dad," he said softly; "Jesus makes me what I am. Since I got saved, and then sanctified wholly a few days later, it's ever so easy to be obedient and... and to live a holy life. You and Mother have been the two who made me hungry for what you had."

Tears flushed from Mr. Massey's eyes. How thankful he was that he had one day been gloriously converted, then later had had his personal Pentecost of heart-cleansing. Oh, how very important a thing this was for every parent into whose hands God had entrusted the souls of their children. "I thank God for you, Keith," he said hoarsely. "Yes, we--your Mother and I--thank God for you. May He always keep you faithful and true to Him. Now, here's what I called you for. Sunday, as you know, will be Mother's Day. And, like you said, we must do something special for Mother."

"But what, Dad? I emptied my bank for the Missions offering in church and I haven't a dime even. Now, when I sell those eggs which my chickens have laid for me I'll have a little, But that won't be till after Mother's Day. Mrs. Armsby said she won't need eggs till next week, God willing."

Again Mr. Massey ruffled his son's hair. "Don't worry about money, Keith," he said. "Good holy women aren't hard to please; they are ever so happy with simple things. So you and I are going to do something very simple and and ordinary, if a bit out of the ordinary for two 'men.' We're going to have a very special dinner for your Mother on Sunday, prepared by you and me."

Keith laughed: "But... we don't know how to cook, Dad!"

"Wait until you see, Son. I used to help my mother . . . your grandmother., in the kitchen when she was expecting company and when the threshing crew came around. Always, the day before, I helped --until the other womenfolk came, that is. There were no girls in our family; all boys. Seven of us, to be exact. And each of us had to take turns helping Mother. Dad said it wouldn't make us any more sissified than Mother helping in the field would make her mannish."

"Grandma's such a small, dainty woman, Dad. No one would dare to think of her as being anything but dainty. And... and very much like God."

"Right. Now, here's the plan: Grandma and Grandpa want to come here for Sunday. So I told your mother she is to go into the city Saturday morning with the girls and stay overnight with my parents. Then, early Sunday morning they will leave for home here, meeting us at church. When they get home, God willing, the surprise meal will all be ready, having been prepared by you and me on Saturday."

"But Dad, can you., well, don't you think we should have a big cake for Mother?"

"Susie Pringles is going to come to our rescue there, Son. She offered to bake a cake in exchange for a quart of Honey's rich Jersey cream."

Keith felt like clapping his hands for joy. And when church was over that Sunday morning, and his mother and grandparents entered the house to the tantalizing odor of beef roasting and baking macaroni and cheese, tears sprang up into Mrs. Massey's eyes. "I have the most wonderful family in all the world!" she exclaimed joyously. "And this is the happiest Mother's Day of all, I do believe," she added softly, kissing Keith's nose and flinging herself into her husband's arms.

"Dad, you forgot the rose bushes!" Keith exclaimed, rushing to the porch and bringing his mother the family's extra-special surprise of two beautiful tea roses, ready for planting when Monday arrived.

"How thoughtful!" Mother exclaimed, bursting into happy tears

"Such Simple things!" Keith exclaimed happily, hurrying to the stove to help his father get the dinner on the table.

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June 1984

Story 6
COURAGEOUS DAVE

Dave sat on the stump of a tree near the edge of the woods and looked across to the meadow where the boys were playing ball. They were shouting and laughing and having the very best kind of fun.

He sighed. A big knot jumped up inside his throat and stationed itself midway there. He felt like crying, but decided he was getting too big to cry. Still, how could he not cry sometimes? When he remembered the good times he and his dad used to have, especially!

"Hey Dave, you ashamed to come over? Afraid to, huh?" A voice called from the meadow. It was Wally Finger.

Dave wanted to answer, but decided not to. No matter what he'd say, Wally would have some kind of smart remark or retort to throw at him verbally, and he, Dave, would be a peacemaker at any cost. Jesus meant everything to him now.

"Scared, aren't you?" Wally chided, bully fashion. "If you wouldn't have lost your head over religion.., you and your Mother... your dad wouldn't have disappeared. Too much for him, I hear, to put up with a bunch of religious fanatics."

"Stop it!" Benjamin Ware exclaimed to Wally. "It's not Dave's fault; it's not! I'm not going to play with you anymore unless you stop being so hateful to Dave."

"Look who's talking!" Wally said derisively. "Guess you're getting religious too, like Dave and his mother. But I'm warning you, Ben, you'll lose all your friends if you do."

"So, what if I do!" Benjamin countered quickly. "I'll always have Dave. He's my friend. He's for real. He has something inside that's different from anything you fellows have. Whatever it is, it works."

"It sure does!" Wally mocked, laughing uproariously. "It works all right; it made a sissy and a coward out of him. Even his father couldn't stand a sissy for his son."

"That's not true!" Benjamin defended. "Dave's no more a sissy nor a coward than you are. The Lord just changed his heart and took all the fight and back-biting, get-even spirit out of him, that's what. He told me so, and I know it's true. He's different since he went to the altar and got saved and sanctified wholly. All over, different."

"Let the fraidy cat talk for himself," Wally shouted to Ben.

Dave felt the tears sting his eyes. He knew now--in a small way--how Jesus must have felt when He was falsely accused by wicked men. Oh, only his dear father would come home and get saved, it would be worth all the harassment and cruel verbal tauntings Wally was giving him, he thought, praying silently for Wally.

"You're a coward!" Wally shouted across to Dave. "No wonder your dad was ashamed of you and left home."

From the edge of the woods a tall man stepped through the bushes. Walking quickly toward Dave and speaking so all could hear him, he said, "Who's a coward? Not my son; he's courageous."

He's a giant. A giant for God! A noble and courageous hero! And I'm not ashamed of him; I'm proud of him."

"D . . . dad! Dad!" Dave cried, flinging himself into the protective, loving arms.

His father continued speaking, "I've been the coward, boys. So cowardly, in fact, that I, like you, didn't have the courage to go to the altar and repent of my sins and get saved . . . become born again. But things are different "

"Dad, you..., you..."

"Yes, Son, I'm a new creation! I've been born again! I left your Mother and you because of deep conviction for my sins. I had thought it would go away if I got away from both of you. Your changed lives were a continual conviction to my heart, and your much praying and reading of the Bible only added to my misery. So I left, thinking it would wear off in a short time. But I soon learned that God is everywhere: He followed me day and night. Fellows," he cried happily, "I'm newborn . . . in Christ. This Father's Day, as Dave and I sit side by side in church, I'll be the happiest man there. The Gift he led me to cannot be bought with money: Jesus Christ offers salvation and freedom from sin to all. Who will come over and join us? It's a wonderful way! We'll pray for you. Each of your fathers needs a son like Dave, a son who has the courage to follow Jesus."

Without hesitation, Benjamin ran over and stood beside Dave. The others disappeared quickly when they saw the prayer meeting begin. Dave's heart ran over with joy. He was glad he had been faithful and true to Jesus.

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July 1984

Story 7

EDDIE'S FREEDOM

Derek sat at the desk, thinking. Deep, great thoughts, they were. Grandpa had told him so many wonderful things about the 4th of July that it seemed he could hardly take it all in. But he tried. Yes, indeed. Opening the book from which Grandpa had been reading, Derek read out loud, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with..."

"Hey, what's this all about?" Eddie asked, coming into the room and interrupting Derek's unfinished paragraph.

Derek smiled. "Grandpa told me so many wonderful things this morning, Eddie, until I feel all patriotic and . . . and noble. I was reading the Declaration of Independence. Grandpa left the book lying open on the desk. Talk about big words! Whew! But Dad says the only way we'll ever

learn how to pronounce them, and become good at reading, is to practice reading those long, hard-looking words."

"Reading's not for me." Eddie answered. "And who cares what's in that Declaration of Independence on a day as nice as this! I'm going fishing."

Derek, spun himself around in grandpa's desk chair. "Dad said you're to mow the lawn, Eddie, then wash the car."

"What? You're kidding! This is the 4th of July. What about my independence and my freedom? That's not fair. It isn't!"

"I did it last week, Eddie. Remember? Dad said this was how he wanted it... you mow and wash the car one week and I do it the next. It seems like a good idea to me. I like it. Work is good for us."

"You make me sick!" Eddie said angrily. "Washing the car and mowing the lawn's not so bad if that's all I had to do. But we always have so many other things to do, too..., each and every day of our life. Talk about freedom! I can't see where that Declaration of Independence benefits me one bit. Not one bit!"

Derek felt like crying. "Oh, Eddie," he cried, "it's plain to see that you don't know the meaning of that wonderful document at all. The founding fathers would hang their heads in sorrow if they could hear you, I'm sure. Grandpa said the Bible was the guide book our forefathers used, and God doesn't give any of us freedom to do only what we want. The kind of freedom those great and good men meant and wrote about, was freedom to worship God. It isn't freedom to go fishing just because this is Independence Day. Besides, we're having a picnic on the lawn today."

"Derek's right, Eddie," Grandpa said, coming quietly into the room.

Eddie slumped in a chair. "But it still doesn't seem fair, Grandpa," he declared. "This is the 4th of July; why must I work? Other boys are out doing what they..."

"Those 'other' boys don't live under this roof, Eddie my boy, that's why. Your father and mother have rules and regulations, and you should be truly thankful for these rules and restrictions. They'll help to make you the kind of young man God wants you to be. 'A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame,' " Grandpa Said, quoting from Proverbs 29:15.

"Well, it still isn't fair," Eddie contended, grumbling. "Seems like Dad would give us one day to do just as we please. What's wrong with fishing?"

"Nothing, Eddie my boy," came grandpa's soft reply. "Nothing," he repeated again. "The 'wrong' comes in when you violate your father's orders, however. Let me ask you something: Are you 'free' when you go against God's 'thou shalt' and his 'thou shalt not's'? Is this what 'freedom' means to you; doing what you want to do, when you want to do it, regardless of how many rules you break or how disobedient you are? You realize, I know, that disobedience is a violation of one

of God's commands to you... 'Children, obey your parents.' Do you really feel 'free' when you disobey your parents' orders, Eddie? Do you? Is disobedience 'freedom'?"

Eddie gulped then he wiggled in his chair. "Well No," he stammered.

"Disobedience brings only bondage with it," Grandpa said sadly, "bondage to the soul. Do you want freedom, Eddie; real freedom?"

"I.. know what you mean, Grandpa," Eddie confessed brokenly. "And I'm not one bit happy without Jesus in my heart. I guess I wanted to be independent so I could be like Chad and Harley. But they're always in some kind of trouble. And I... I... well I don't want to be like them in that way. Grandpa," he said standing to his feet, "will you pray for me, please? I want the same kind of freedom you and Derek and Father and Mother have. I've been bound too long by sin..."

"Right you are, dear boy. Yes, right you are. And it's time now that you get flee..., in Christ. This is the greatest kind of freedom..., freedom m sin. Let us pray." And do you know what, boys and girls? Eddie became a brand-new, all-different boy. He was made new in Jesus. And he had his very own 'spiritual' Independence Day! Have you? Are you free in Christ? You can be. Why not ask Jesus to come into your heart! Right now!

* * * * *

August 1984

Story 8
THE PRICE

Buddy set his bucket down on the grass. Running his shirt sleeve across his face and his forehead, he mopped the sweat away that was running like small streams down his ruddy, sun-browned cheeks. It was so very hot today, he thought. It was so hot, in fact, that the dusty road, down which he had walked to get to the woods and to the wild raspberries, had burned his bare feet. Always, he had loved the feel of the soft, powdery, light chocolate-brown colored dust as it filtered up between his toes and disappeared in little dust clouds behind him. But today was different; it was just too hot. The road burned his feet. Oh, it was so very hot.

A little breeze skipped through leaves of the bushes--just the teeniest, tiniest, wee bit of a breeze, it was--and Buddy heaved a sigh of relief. "Thank you for that breeze, dear Jesus," he said. "Thank you so very much."

Another little breeze whispered through the trees. It rustled Buddy's hair--just the teeniest bit --and cooled his hot face. How very good it felt. "Thank you, dear Jesus," he said again, picking his bucket up and plunging into the woods where the black raspberries .grew thick and tangled and hung juicy sweet on the vines.

He knew exactly where to go. Every summer, for so long as he could remember almost, Grandma or Grandpa and he had made regular trips to the woods to gather the delicious berries.

Now that he was nine--almost ten--he had begged to go alone. It was so exciting. He felt grown-up and big; almost like Grandpa.

He followed the narrow, winding, overgrown path till he came to where the raspberries grew. Sitting down on a clump of grass, he slid his feet into the shoes which he had been carrying . . . he knew how the berry bushes could prick, stick and tear his flesh and leave their thorny stickers in his feet and toes. he didn't like that; not at all.

As he picked, Buddy thought about bears and how much they enjoyed a meal of berries. Well, he wasn't a bear--that was a certain-sure fact!--but he enjoyed berries too, and he would eat until he was full. And why not? Everywhere he looked, he saw the bushes were loaded with fruit. Picking berries for Grandma was ever so much fun!

Ping, ping, ping, ping, went the bucket as Buddy's picked berries dropped down into its galvanized bottom. Soon there was no 'ping' sound at all; the bottom was completely covered with juicy black raspberries.

Buddy plunged deeper and deeper into the berry thicket, his hands working fast and skillfully at his job. Mosquitoes buzzed and hummed around his head and shoulders. One zeroed in on his ear, stinging him soundly. Then another and another. Thorns grabbed at his shirt and pulled on his overall legs. They tore into his arms and hands, bringing blood to the surface and making him wince with pain. "Oh-h-h!" he exclaimed in pain. "That hurts. Oh, it hurts!"

He pulled one of Grandpa's handkerchiefs from his hip pocket and wiped the blood away. In turning, the briars from a nearby bush tore the flesh of his forehead in a long gash, leaving blood behind. Was it worth all this to get berries? he wondered, wiping the blood and feeling the sting of the open gashes.

Grandpa's words came back to him then: "There's a price for everything good, Buddy. And everything bad, too for that matter. The wages of sin is death. This is the price tag for sin--death and, ultimately, hell. But back to the good, dear boy. You wanted a trumpet. You got a trumpet. But the price for learning to Flay the trumpet was practice and more practice. The price for making good grades in school is study. And more study. This will mean leaving the play-ground--less ball playing-- and devoting that time to study. Salvation cost, too! What a price! It cost the Son of God His life..."

Buddy looked down at his torn flesh. The blood was now beginning to coagulate and 'cake' on his arms and hands. His forehead, too. Those gashes hurt. Stung, really. Oh, what pain Jesus must have suffered and endured for him! he thought, recalling Grandpa's words again.

Tears filled his sky-blue eyes. Dropping to his knees, he thanked God for sending Jesus into the world to be his Saviour. Then he thanked Jesus for dying for his sins, and for saving and sanctifying his soul through His Blood. How very thankful he was that Jesus had paid the price for his salvation. His part of the price, to get salvation, was that he had to repent of his sins and forsake them. Oh, it was worth it! Yes, it was!

As he picked the berries and remembered Grandpa's words, he decided that, yes, it was worth it, coming to the woods and gathering the delicious fruit. Scratches, gashes, bites and all, it was worth the price. Especially when he could spread the delicious jelly over a piece of Grandma's freshly baked homemade bread.

At the thought of pies, cobblers, jam and jelly, Buddy picked faster. A price? Yes. But it was worth it.

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September 1984

Story 9

TROUBLED TOMMY

Tommy shuffled down the sidewalk, dragging his feet through the pretty colored leaves, plowing furrows as he walked. He wished he didn't need to go home ... at least not just yet. Mother would know some thing was wrong. Yes, she would. It seemed she could read him like a book, his thoughts and everything.

But it wasn't his fault. Or was it? At least part of it? He stopped beneath a sugar maple and stood staring at his feet, not really seeing his feet at all but thinking, wondering, and dreading going home. A breeze skipped through the tree, sending a shower of rose-gold leaves down on his head, but Tommy was too busy worrying to notice the glory of Autumn around him and beneath his feet, "Hey Tommy," Tim called, "I don't blame you for telling Kurt off. I'd have done the same thing ..."

Tommy didn't wait to hear any more. Away he ran, down the side walk toward home. He tip-toed up the porch steps and hoped that..., maybe just for once ... the screen door wouldn't squeak and let Mother know he was home. But it did! There was no way he could run to his bedroom now and hide. No, indeed.

"That you," Tommy?" Mother called from the pantry where she was cleaning shelves. "I'm home," he replied, trying to get past the kitchen and down the hallway before Mother asked too many questions.

"How was school today?"

Tommy sucked his breath in quick-like. What should he say? He couldn't say 'fine,' for he'd be lying. That would be adding another sin onto the one he committed at school. And if he said,

"Oh, so-so," Mother was sure to know something was wrong. He hurried down the hallway, pretending he hadn't heard. Maybe if he got busy working his arithmetic problems she wouldn't notice

Opening the book, Tommy pretended to be real busy when Mother came into the room. He knew she'd be in; she always kissed the top of his head when he left for school in the morning and returned home at night.

"Is something bothering you?" Mother asked, coming over to Tommy's desk chair and looking him in the face. "It is!" she declared, sitting on the edge of the little desk and tilting Tommy's face so he had to look into her eyes Tommy swallowed. Somewhere in the pit of his stomach a knot gathered and rose quickly into his throat.

"Do... does God tell you everything?" he asked quickly as a tear spilled down his cheeks.

"A good Christian mother is your very best earthly friend, Tommy," Mother replied softly, slipping an arm around the shaking shoulders.

Suddenly Tommy realized how true his mother's words were, and he was glad and thankful that he could tell someone. It was such a heavy burden for a boy to carry alone.

"Do you want to tell me about your troubles, Tommy?"

He looked up into Mother's kind, sweet face and then everything just seemed to tumble out. "I... I called him all kinds of ugly names, like being proud and bossy and mean and"

"Why did you do it, Tommy?" Mother asked, concerned.

" 'Cause I chose Jana Spell to play ball on our side and Kurt said I couldn't. He said Jana didn't know how to hold a bat, much less use one to hit a decent ball. But I pitied Jana. She's from a poor family. Kurt thinks she's too far beneath him to play on the same team with him, I ... I got angry with Kurt and told him what I thought of him. Then Mrs. Kaiser came out to the playground and made us go to her room and stand in separate corners with our face to the chalk board."

Mother sighed. "What you did, in standing up for Jana, was noble, Tommy; but how you did it was wrong. Do you see now why Daddy and I said you should go on and get sanctified wholly right after you were converted and forgiven of your sins? The sweet Holy Ghost would have sanctified and purged that temper of yours. Well," she said softly, "you know what you must do..."

"Yes, Mother. And I'm so anxious to get the burden off my heart that I'm going to start right now. Pray for me; I want Jesus to forgive me for being so nasty to Kurt. Jesus can't live in a heart with sin."

"What else will you do, Tommy?" "I'll tell Kurt how sorry I am for talking to him the way I did, and I'll ask him to forgive me. Then I'll tell Mrs. Kaiser I'm sorry and ask her to forgive me too."

"Good boy, Tommy. That's just what you'll have to do. And now, let's ask God to forgive you."

"Yes. Yes!" Tommy cried dropping to his knees.

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October 1984

Story 10

PROMISES, PROMISES

"Promises, promises!" Marni exclaimed in singsong fashion. "All you ever do is make promises, Sheila. I don't believe you anymore; not one little bit even. You say you'll do a thing but you never do it. Never! "you tell Mother you'll"

"Be still!" Sheila cried, breaking into Marni's unfinished sentence.

"But it's true Sheila," Marni replied sadly. "You're always making promises. Yesterday you promised Julie Markley a popsicle if she'd let you play with her new doll. She did, but you didn't fulfill your end of the bargain. Today I heard you promise Mother that you'd wash and dry the dishes without being told to do so, and what have you done about it? Nothing! You're telling lies, Sheila. And you know where all liars are going to go."

"Be quiet!" Sheila exclaimed loudly. "And mind your own business, too!"

"But I can't be quiet, Sheila, not when I know you're telling lies by making promises that you know you won't carry through and fulfill. The Bible says it's better never to make a vow than to make one and break it. A vow's like a promise."

"Leave me alone!" Sheila said, jumping off the porch swing and running across the lawn to the garden. It was damply-cool on the ground as she sat down between the rows of tall corn to get her breath. Marni could be so... so exasperating! she thought, resting her back against a stalk of corn and looking up at the puffy, lazy looking white clouds in the sky.

A big black crow flew clumsily overhead, calling "caw, caw, caw" as he went. Sheila watched him until he disappeared, then she closed her eyes and listened to the many sounds around her.

The garden was full of crickets and other insects. They chirruped and cheeped from all over the place, and the corn, brown and dry from the summer sun and wind and the fast approaching fall, rattled its leaves above her head. The garden was getting ready to go to sleep for the winter.

Suddenly Sheila felt sad. What if God forgot to wake it up in the springtime? But no, He wouldn't forget. He had promised that so long as the earth would remain there would be seed-time

and harvest, winter and summer, springtime and fall. She remembered Father reading that from the Bible one night during the family altar time.

Sheila quickly sat up straight and tall. Promises! God made promises too. Yes, He did. And He always kept His promises. If He didn't, and if He hadn't, the world would no doubt have been destroyed by another flood. But He promised that this would never happen again, and to let her know that He was keeping His promise, He had put a pretty rainbow in the sky. And too, He had said that any one who came to Him He would not cast out. He also said He'd forgive the sins of the one who came to Him and confessed them to Him. He kept these promises too; her parents and Marni were proof of sins forgiven.

Sheila felt guilt wash over her. What if God were like she was, and didn't keep His promises! There would never be another springtime to waken the garden and there would never be the rainbow in the cloud either. But God had kept His promises, every one of them! And because He had, and did, she, Sheila Keister, could be forgiven of all her many sins. Yes, even the sins of making promises that she never intended to keep. Lies, they were, just like Marni had told her.

Without waiting to hear anymore from the cawing crow and the chirruping crickets, Sheila got on her knees. She was a very wicked little girl for not allowing Jesus to come into her heart and save her soul, she realized, as tears rolled down her cheeks. She could have been every bit as happy and as free as Marni, but she just wouldn't yield her heart and life to the blessed Saviour. But now . . . well, now she would. Oh, yes. Yes! She needed Jesus. What's more, she wanted Jesus. Oh she was glad for this . . . that she wanted Jesus. She hadn't felt this way before.

It was easy for Sheila to pray. (It's always easy to pray when boys and girls . . . men and women, too . . . mean business and want to touch Jesus!) And when she hurried to the kitchen a short time later to tell Mother and Marni that Jesus had come into her heart to live, well, she knew the "promise" problem was solved. Gone! Forever!

Feeling light as a feather on the inside, Sheila bounded through the door with the good news.

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November 1984

Story 11 ALAN'S MISSION

The long tree shadows of evening looked even more skinny-long and foreboding to Alan as he hurried home through the woods after helping Mr. Finnegan shell corn. All day, he helped Mr. Finnegan. And his back ached. Yes, it did. Dreadfully so. Mr. Finnegan was a "driver." Yes, he was. A tea! slave driver. Grumpy, too. And hard to please--"Alan, put that bucket under the hopper," he yelled; "Alan, help me turn this handle;" "Alan, stop smiling; you can't work and smile. And really, Alan, there's nothing to smile over: this world's in one awful mess. Now help me lift this bag of corn..."

All day long it had been the same. Yes, every single minute of the day, Mr. Finnegan's face wore a gray-black cloud and his forehead was twisted and contorted into an ugly frown. Alan was anxious to get home. Home, where laughter and smiles and love met you at the door and stayed with you through every waking moment of the day, it seemed. But then, Jesus made the difference between his home and Mr. Finnegan's, he knew.

He looked over his shoulder, Thinking he heard someone, or something, following him. But all he saw were the long, skinny shadows of the naked trees. Nothing else. He knew that unless he hurried--really hurried--the moon would soon be riding a cloud above him, or be playing hide-and-go-seek behind the fast scudding smoky-gray clouds as they scurried across the ever darkening sky.

He liked doing odd jobs for Mr. Finnegan. He did. The elderly man had ever so many interestingly different things which he used to get his work done; things like the hand-turned corn sheller, the big grindstone and the seed separator extractor.

Oh, they were so much more interesting to work with and to use than some of the modern equipment, he thought. Take the corn sheller, for instance. Sure, it was hard, muscle building work to turn the handle as the ears of dry corn were fed into the ever-hungry mouth of the quaint machine. But what reward, to see the golden corn "nuggets"--kernels --run through the hopper into the waiting bucket-container beneath!

Alan took a hand and tried to feel the muscle of his upper arm. Sure enough, the hard work was building up those arm muscles. Not only muscles, he realized suddenly, but a ravenous appetite as well. Right now he felt like he could eat an entire serving bowl full of creamy-rich mashed potatoes and gravy. Oh, he was hungry.

He was perspiring from the hard work he had done and from hurrying, too, and the chill November air sent little shivers over him. Soon Thanksgiving Day would be here; a day he liked almost every bit as much as Christmas. Or as his birthday, even.

Thanksgiving Day held ever so many wonderful things for him, he thought, forgetting about the long, skinny tree shadows and the fast approaching night. It was a time when most of his cousins and aunts and uncles came to his house on the farm. And both sets of grandparents, too, And why did they come? Just to eat? Was that the only reason? No! No] Alan thought happily. They ate, to be sure; laughed and visited and played, too. But the "coming together of his relatives was far more significant than that. It was a sort of family campmeeting affair; a time of testifying to each other of God's goodness and special blessings to each throughout the year--no deaths in the family, a bountiful harvest, bodies touched and healed by God, no serious accidents, that sort of thing.

A smile played at the corner of Alan s mouth as he thought about Thanksgiving Day and the house full of happy people. Even now, he could almost taste the turkey and ham. And the delicious, golden-yellow pumpkin pies and hot, home made mince meat pies, too. Oh, everything was always so delicious and tempting and there was always ever so much food left.

His thoughts raced quickly to the poor and needy--those who never knew what it was like to go to bed without being hungry--and a tear slid from his eye and rolled down his cold cheek. How he did wish he could feed them all. This wouldn't be possible, he knew. But he felt happy all over, knowing that the money he was earning by helping Mr. Finnegan would be going to help evangelize the heathen via the foreign missions offering. Except for the tithe which he would be putting into the little white church envelope, every other dollar would go in for foreign missions. He had made a pledge and God was helping him to pay it in full. And he was getting muscles as a bonus. Muscles--like his dad--from hard work.

Alan was almost through the woods when he thought of something. It was almost as if he had pushed a button and a great, bright light had been turned on somewhere in his head. It came as such a tremendous thought that he stopped dead-still in his tracks. Then he smiled. God had given him the key to unlock an old man's heart, he was sure. Yes, he was. And the combination was totally uncomplicated and ever so simple: Mr. Finnegan was alone. Always alone, since his "beautiful Amanda,"--as he called his wife, died. His two sons and their families couldn't possibly get home for the holidays since they lived abroad, where their employment was located. Mr. Finnegan was a lonely old man. Yes, a very lonely man.

Alan's heart seemed to be doing hop-scotch beats inside his chest; happy little hop-scotch beats. He knew what he must do when he got to Mr. Finnegan's farm for work tomorrow morning, God willing. Yes, he knew. The Lord had just revealed it to him. And Alan was sure that Mr. Finnegan would say "yes"--with a smile--when he was asked over for Thanksgiving dinner.

The light from his mother's kitchen window drew Alan like a magnet. He broke into a run. His hard-earned money would be going into the foreign missions offering, he thought joyously, but he had just as great a mission at home: that of reaching Mr. Finnegan for Jesus. By God's help, he would accomplish the "home mission" part, too!

Feeling utterly famished, he threw open the kitchen door and hurried inside to his waiting supper.

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December 1984

Story 12

THE TRUE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

"Oh go away, you saucy old Blue-jay!" Bridgett scolded from inside the kitchen window as she watched the birds eating hungrily from the feeder on the lawn. "You're a greedy old bird," she added with a frown on her face, "and I don't like you."

"Bridgett Aronson! How dare you talk like that! ' Barbara exclaimed, coming up beside her twin. "Blue-jays are ever so beautiful. God made them the same as He made other birds. Why are you so grumpy and .. and"

Giving her long dark curls a saucy toss over her shoulder, Bridgett declared quite stubbornly, "I guess I can think what I want to, and... and, say what I want to, too. If I can't have that new blue coat for Christmas I don't see why Mr. Blue-jay should be allowed his coat of blue feathers. It isn't fair, Barbara. No it isn't!" the little girl added with indignation.

Barbara gasped in shocked concern. "Br . . . Bridgett. she exclaimed in utter disbelief. "Oh Bridgett, you . . . you're jealous, that's what. And you know that jealousy can't get into Heaven. Oh, Bridgett! Bridgett!" she cried rushing to throw her arms around her twin, who ran from the room, shouting "It isn't fair! It isn't! I want that new coat for Christmas or I don't want anything. So there!"

The Blue-jay flew to a limb above the bird feeder and shouted "Thief! Thief! Thief!" to the world, but Barbara neither heard nor saw the magnificent bird make his declaration from the "podium" of the maple tree limb. She was too shocked and too grieved to hear, or to see. Her sister --yes, her very own sister-twin was almost demanding that she get that new, expensive coat in the window of Sharff's Department Store. And their parents were so poor and ... and unable to buy anything so expensive and costly, too!

"It couldn't be! Barbara thought forlornly. "Oh, it couldn't be!" Christmas wasn't expensive blue coats and such like things. No, it wasn't; it was the day set aside to remember that God sent His only Son into the world to be man's Saviour. That's what it was. Yes, indeed.

She sat on a chair in front of the window to think. When she lifted her eyes and looked out at the bird feeder she saw a pair of cardinals feeding comfortably among chick-a-dees and sparrows. How peaceful and happy it made her heart feel. Then the scarlet cardinal flew to a nearby limb and whistled a happy "Cheer! Cheer! Cheer!" to her. It was almost as if the great, gray overcast clouds had left the sky and the sun had broken through, she thought, as she bowed her head and said a big "thank you!" to God before she hurried to the pantry for the potatoes.

Mother had told her to peel potatoes for supper; Bridgett was to set the table. But if she knew anything about her twin, Barbara knew that Bridgett was, this very moment, upstairs pouting and fretting over the expensive blue coat in Sharff's store window. And the thought of her sister doing such a thing made Barbara's heart feel sad and weepy. Oh, how she wanted Bridgett to love Jesus the way she had come to love Him since she was converted and sanctified wholly!

Barbara peeled the potatoes and rinsed them carefully through two separate waters, then she set them on the stove for cooking, just like Mother had told her to do. She wanted to set the table, but since Mother had said that each must do exactly what she was told to do, Barbara knew it would be an act of disobedience on her part if she did Bridgett's work. So she went into the living room and practiced her piano lesson instead.

Up and down the keyboard went her nimble fingers "Christ is born! Christ is born! King of kings; Lord of lords!" the notes seemed to shout, and Barbara, watching the music and reading the words, felt happy and joyful through and through. Oh, how she loved her special Christmas music piece! It matched the feeling of her heart.

So intent was she in what she was playing that she didn't hear the soft snuffle in the room. Not until a weeping voice said, "Barbara," did she pause for one second even.

"Bridgett, you're crying!" Barbara exclaimed, turning around and looking her twin full in the face. "What's wrong?" she asked throwing her arms around her sister's neck.

"I... I'm so very wicked," came the broken reply. "My... my heart is full of covetousness. I see it all now! It is wrong for me to covet that pretty coat. Oh, Barbara, I'm so wretched and wicked in my heart and I don't care if we never get a new coat. I'll wear my old plaid one and be happy if I can only get peace in my heart. You are always so happy since Jesus came into your heart. Do you suppose Jesus will forgive me and..., and

"Oh, Bridgett! Bridgett! Of course He'll forgive you. I know He will!" Barbara cried. "Let's pray"

A short time later, as Mother came in from the store, a new Bridgett met her at the door. With a shining face, the little girl exclaimed, "I'm all new, Mother. Like Barbara, I'm all new in my heart. Jesus saved me and forgave me of all my sins and now I don't care if I ever get a new coat. Jesus lives in my heart, and that's far better than the finest, prettiest blue coat I could ever own. Oh, Mother, Mother, I finally know why there's a Christmas Day! Today--just a short while ago-Jesus was born in my heart. I found the dearest, greatest Gift of all and oh, I do love Him so very, very much!"

Mother was too happy to speak Gathering the child close to her heart she let the tears flow down her cheeks unashamedly. The true meaning of the Christmas season had penetrated the little heart at last. This was reason for rejoicing.

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THE END