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## **CHILDREN'S PAGE STORIES -- 1989**

**By Mrs. Paul E. King**

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Story 1  
RESOLUTIONS

"I resolve to study diligently every day," Danny said aloud to himself, writing the spoken words on a piece of notebook paper. "And I resolve to keep my room neat and clean so Mother won't have to pick up and make-over for me.

"I further resolve to keep the garage clean for Father, and to speak ... ever and only and always!..., softly and kindly to Daphne, my sister, biting my tongue (if necessary) to keep from saying hateful, nasty and unkind things to her. I firmly resolve, from this day forward, to never again shout at her, tease her, nor try to pick an argument with her and..."

"Oh Danny, that's great. Just great!" Daphne exclaimed, coming into the room and looking over her brother's shoulder.

Quickly Danny's hand covered the writing. Scowling angrily, he said, "This is not for you to see. Now move!"

"But... but Danny, I.. thought."

"Get out of here, Daphne. This is my very own personal business."

"But, Danny, you said ...."

"Get away!" the boy shouted. "You have no business to meddle with my resolutions."

"I'm sorry," Daphne apologized sweetly. Great tears gathered in the corners of her eyes and hung there like shiny jewels. "I was hoping you had changed," she added softly. "Mother and Father and I have been praying for you; I thought you had gotten alone somewhere and prayed

through. How I wish you would! This is the beginning of a brand new year, Danny. It would be wonderful if you'd begin it with a new heart."

Danny merely scowled at his sister. "All your resolutions are absolutely worthless and useless without the Lord to help you, Danny," Daphne continued tearfully. "Do you remember those very special scripture verses you and I had to learn about four years ago?"

"We're always having to learn new verses," the boy mumbled.

"This is good for us," Daphne replied. "Mother and Father said that everything we learn now, while we're young, we'll perhaps never forget. But the special verses of which I'm speaking became our memory verses for an entire week . . . after we pledged two dimes apiece for missions, then went down to the store and spent them on candy. Remember?"

Danny's eyes brightened perceptibly. "Do I remember!" he exclaimed, his mouth wearing a crooked half-smile now. 'I'll never forget those verses! Daddy had me repeat them to him twice a day for a solid week. 'When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it'; he began quoting, 'for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin...' Ecclesiastes 5:4-6. Say, Daphne, I believe I see now what you're trying to tell me about my resolutions They... they really are worthless with..., without... Jesus' help. Oh, I see it; I do! I was so foolish to... to think that I could do better and be better..., by... myself." There was a catch in Danny's voice as she finished speaking.

"Would you like to pray?" Daphne asked. "I'll call Mother...."

Bright tears filled Danny's blue eyes. Soon they were chasing each other down his ruddy cheeks in a stream. His chin quivered, and when he spoke, his voice trembled. "Please, Daphne, do call Mother. Tell her I want to get saved. Right now! And ... and Daphne, can you forgive me for being so hateful and unkind to you? I'm truly sorry for the way I've treated you. You've been so kind and..."

"Oh, Danny, I freely forgive you! I do! And now I shall go and find Mother and tell her that you want to have a prayer meeting..., a personal prayer meeting. Oh, I am so very, very happy!" Daphne exclaimed as she hurried away to find Mother.

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February 1989

Story 2

LOVE MANIFESTED

Jerry pulled the warm cap down over his ears and pushed his fingers into the gloves. He removed the glove on his left hand three times because, three times, his index finger and his middle finger tried to snuggle inside one of the glove's fingers together.

"I believe my fingers love each other," Jerry said to Mother as he tried one last time to guide the fingers correctly.

Mother laughed out loud. "Why do you say that?" she asked softly. "I'm not sure that our fingers can experience this wonderful feeling and knowledge of love, honey. You see, love is something we experience in our heart; our soul. Love comes from God."

"My fingers don't want to become separated, Mother; these two," he said, pointing to the little "trouble makers," "don't want to be separated. They want to hide in the same glove-finger together. But I can't work on my snow man very well if they do; they get cramped in there."

Mother smiled down on Jerry. "You are right, little man. Here, let me help you; your fingers need to be guided right." And, very gently, Mother "guided" the fingers into the gloves.

"Thank you, Mother," Jerry said, as he threw his arms around her neck and squeezed her tightly. "You're the best mother in all the world. I love you."

"And I love you too, my little man. Now have fun, and when you get cold, come inside. I'll have hot chocolate ready for you."

Jerry hurried outside. If there was one thing he liked better than making a snow man it was making two or three snow men. Last winter he had made many snow men in his back yard. His father and mother had told he had a little village of snow people. Some were big and fat and round; some were tall and skinny; some were medium-size, others were small and tiny; together, they made up his family of snow people.

Jerry liked his snow family very much. They had stick arms, stone buttons down their fat, round tummies, stone noses and mouths and eyes and each wore a bright scarf around his neck and a hat or scarf on his/her head. Altogether, the yard looked occupied and like it was happy and pleased to fence in such a motley looking group of people, even if they were only snow people.

Jerry rolled a big, fat snow ball ... how nicely it did roll and stick together! This should be the father of all the rest of his creations, he decided, as he placed the big, round ball in the center of the yard where Mother could see it each time she looked out the kitchen window above the sink, where she washed the dishes.

"Jerry! Jerry!" A voice called from somewhere nearby.

Jerry stopped rolling his second ball to look up and see where the voice was coming from. "May I help you, please?"

Jerry saw Meredith Blankenship leaning against the fence that surrounded their entire yard. Meredith could be mean. Very mean. And nasty, too. Jerry knew this. How well he knew it! Meredith had lied about him to their teacher; said that he, Jerry, had taken Alice Long's pencil and tablet. (Alice couldn't find those items, so she had told her teacher about it.)

"Please, may I help you?"

Jerry looked at Meredith. He felt sorry for him. True, he had lied about him. It all came out when Alice found her pencil and tablet in her lunch box, of all places! Her mother's little note in the lunch box, when Alice opened the lunch box to eat her noon meal in school, explained how she, Alice, had forgotten to leave the tablet and pencil in school and had tucked it neatly away inside her back pack. Their teacher had read the note so the entire class could hear just what had happened to the missing items.

"We must never lie about another," Mrs. Pritchard had said after reading the note aloud to the class. She had looked long at Meredith, Jerry remembered, as she finished her statement.

"Please, Jerry, may I help?" Meredith's voice sounded sad and pleading like.

Jerry smiled. Mother's statement about love being in the heart came to him real quick-like. Not that he needed her words; he had Jesus living in his heart in saving grace and sanctifying power so this made it easy for him to love everybody, including Meredith.

"Let me open the gate for you, Meredith," Jerry remarked as he ran along the side of the house and unlatched the gate for Meredith to come inside of the fenced-in yard.

"This will be fun!" Jerry exclaimed as he walked alongside of Meredith to the back yard.

"It's sure nice and kind of you, Jerry," Meredith said. "Especially after what I said about you. Maybe that's why I wanted to come over here today."

Jerry was busy rolling the second snowball into an even-larger ball. "What do you mean?" he asked, pausing long enough to pat the round ball smoothly and firmly into another more solid mass before fitting it on top of the first mammoth ball.

"I . . . I'm ashamed of myself, Jerry; ashamed of lying about you. Why don't you hate me?" he asked quickly, his voice breaking into a sob. "Why don't you, Jerry? I must know."

Jerry walked over to Meredith and said, "Hate you! Why, Meredith Blankenship, I don't have anything inside my heart to make me hate you or anybody else. Jesus lives in my heart. He forgave me of all my sins.

Of course, I had to ask him to forgive me of them and let Him know that I was sorry I had ever committed them in the first place. And then He..."

"Jerry," Meredith interrupted, "I knew there was something different about you. Will... will Jesus forgive me if I'm truly sorry and... and ask Him?"

"Why, yes." Jerry was so happy he began to cry.

"I... I'm truly sorry, Jerry." And now Meredith was crying... over his sins; his lies, his meanness and nastiness. What's more, he was telling Jesus just how mean he was, and he was asking Jesus to come into his heart and to forgive him for lying and for all his many sins.

Then Jesus came. Meredith's face looked like a light had come on somewhere on the inside and was making his face to shine.

"He forgave me, Jerry! Jesus forgave me! Oh Jerry, I feel so happy and... and wonderful. All over me. I . . . I feel new!"

"You are new!" Jerry said joyously. "Now each of us loves Jesus! Oh, Meredith, I'm so happy!"

"I am, too. I'm so glad you were like Jesus, Jerry; now I know Him, too."

Making snow people was more fun than ever, Jerry thought, as Meredith and he made a "village" full of people--snow people--right inside the big, fenced-in back yard of his home.

It was wonderful to feel God's love in one's heart but it was also wonderful to manifest God's love, Jerry thought, as he stood back and looked over the happy-faced snow people.

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March 1989

Story 3

SALLY'S PROMISE

Sally finished wiping the last dish, then she put it up inside the cupboard with the others. Working busily, she soon had every pot and pan in its place beneath the counter top on the lower shelf inside the kitchen cabinets.

She stood back and surveyed her work with a satisfied smile. How nice things looked when everything was put in its proper place! she thought, as she closed the cabinet doors quietly and noiselessly.

"Now to tackle the kitchen floor!" she said in a soft whisper to herself.

She hurried to the basement after the scrub pail, where she had seen Andrew carry it with something in it. Dear little Andy! she thought. What a busy little busybody he was! Always into something, it seemed. But he was so bubbly and happy that she couldn't help but love him.

A tear squeezed out of Sally's eye when she thought about Andy and his past life. Her parents had heard about the little boy whose parents didn't want him. They made inquiry as to where the little fellow lived, then they went into action. Soon Andy belonged, by love, to their family.

He had been nothing but a tiny pile of bones covered with skin when he arrived at their house. His voice was so weak and pitiful sounding that it reminded Sally of a little mouse squeaking. With proper food, much love, and tender, loving care, Andy began to grow, both up and out. Soon his little sallow-looking cheeks turned a beautiful soft baby pink. Then he was laughing and cooing. And then he began to walk. Sally remembered how she had coaxed the first-ever steps out of him.

"He loves you, Sally!" her mother had exclaimed, teary-eyed, as she watched Andy, on tottering feet, take those first steps over into Sally's arms. "You're a great little mother!"

Sally recalled how her mother's words had made her feel quite grownup in spite of her less than seven years of age. That was a year and a half ago, she remembered. And now Andrew, or Andy, as he was more often called than not, was walking everywhere and was into almost constant mischief.

"What a busybody!" Sally remarked as she carried the scrub pail up the steps and hurried outside to dispose of the sticks and stones that lay on the bottom of the bucket.

"Hey, Sally, you're just the girl I'm looking for," AnMarie Chrysler remarked, as she hurried after Sally on her way to the trash burner with Andy's picked-up pieces of wood.

"I'm very busy, AnMarie," Sally said ever so softly. "I promised Mother that I'd do whatever I can around the house. She's sitting with Mr. and Mrs. Downing until their daughter gets home from her job at the hospital."

"Please, Sally, we need you to help in our game; we're short one person. Helen and Cynthia and Gigi and I want you to come over and play with us. Please, Sally!" AnMarie pleaded.

"I can't do it, AnMarie; I promised Mother I'd work, and have the house all pretty and clean and tidy for her when she got home."

"You're thinking about Andy, too, aren't you?" AnMarie asked. "Or did your mother take him with her?"

"No, she didn't."

"Well, bring Andy then and come over. He can play with Oliver the dog, and there are scads of toys around the house. Please, Sally."

"Oh, AnMarie, you know I'd love to come over and play. We always have so much fun when we're together. But I can't come today. I made a promise to Mother and I mean to keep that promise."

"Why did you promise in the first place?" came AnMarie's quick question.

"Because I love Mother. She's the best mother in all the world. It makes me feel happy and good all over when I do something for her. And for Father, too."

"Are you sure you won't come? Your father could tell your mother that you decided to play for a little while. I'm sure he wouldn't mind. And he'd watch Andy, too. He's in his shop. I saw him when I passed the door."

"Daddy had off work today, so he's been working in his shop, trying to finish some cupboards or cabinets, or whatever, for the Turleys' kitchen. But I really can't come now, AnMarie; I made a promise and I mean to keep it. Mother said habits are formed by doing things just like you are suggesting. If I'd break my promise now, it would make it easier to do it again. Soon I wouldn't mind breaking all of them, if I wanted to do something else instead. And it's sinful to promise and then not do what you have promised to do. In family worship one morning we read something about, if you made a vow, or a promise, you were to pay or fulfill that vow or promise."

"Okay, Sally, I understand," AnMarie said. "I guess I need to ask Jesus to help me to be more like you."

"Ask Him to make you like He is, AnMarie. It's not hard to serve Jesus when you love Him and want only to please Him. Some other time, we'll play together, AnMarie, the Lord willing."

"Well, I'd better get back to the girls. We'll think of something else to play. I love you, Sally."

"And I love you, AnMarie."

Just then Father came around the house with Andy holding to his hand.

"You're a wonderful daughter, Sally," he remarked. "I couldn't help hearing what AnMarie and you were talking about. I love you very much. I know how well you like to play with your little friends. But you did right by sticking to and fulfilling your promise made to your mother. This is also called discipline, honey. If you will continue to discipline your life now, it will make it easier to do so in bigger decisions, even, in later years. Resist what is wrong and evil and wicked now, and in the years ahead, with God's help and His grace, it will be easier to do."

"Jesus makes it easy to do, Daddy. Because I love Him, I want to please Him and to serve Him."

"I'm very proud of my little daughter." Tears shimmered in Daddy's eyes as he said it.

"And I love you, Daddy. You and Mother. And you, too, Andy, little sweet busybody."

As Sally hurried back inside the kitchen, she felt happy all over. She was glad she was keeping her promise. She felt stronger in her soul and she knew Jesus was smiling down upon her. Oh, how wonderful it was to know this!

She began to sing while she worked.

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April 1989

Story 4  
JEFF'S GOAT

"I can climb higher than any of you!" Billy declared stoutly and positively as he watched his friends having fun trying to reach the first limb of a tree.

"Just give me a little lift," Randy remarked in his amiable way. "I'm not afraid of climbing once I get up into the tree. The limbs are too high to grab and get up. We need a chair."

"Or a stool," Karla cried happily as she went in search of one.

"Aw, who needs a stool!" Billy exclaimed, grabbing hold of the tree trunk and shinnying up the tree like a squirrel. "Nothing to it," he shouted triumphantly from the branches of the thick-leaved tree. "I can do anything. See; here I go, right up to the top."

"Watch out!" Sue Ann shouted as she saw the slender branch near the top sway and bend under Billy's weight.

"Aw, there's nothing to be afraid of, Sue Ann. You're all just a bunch of scaredy cats, that's all. See, here I go, all the way to the top branch."

"Billy-y!" Sue Ann screamed, seeing the very-slender branch upon which the boy teetered, bend, then give a loud, sharp crack and snap.

There was rustling in the leaves and branches as Billy began tumbling earthward. The children held their breath in fear.

"I'm fine," came the voice from somewhere midway down in the tree. "I can do anything. See, I caught hold of this branch and I'm all right."

"Well, I think you'd better get down here as fast as you can," Karla said as she stood looking up into the tree. "Here's an old box for you to step on when you're down to the bottom limb. That's too high up for you to jump."

"Who says!" Billy demanded, reaching the bottom and jumping to the ground.

"You're hurt!" Sue Ann cried, seeing Billy limp as he tried to get up and walk. "Oh, Billy, why must, you always try to be so... so ...." "So what, Sue Ann?"

"So show offish, or whatever it's called."

With a groan, Billy got to his feet and leaned on the box for support.

"I'll be all right after I rest my leg," Billy said.

"Let's play tag," Randy proposed. "We can't fall out of trees if we keep our feet on the ground."

"You mean, after I dragged this box here we... we're not going to climb up into the tree?"

"It's safer if we don't, Karla. Especially after what happened to Billy," Randy answered.

"Hey, I'm all right. That little old fall from the tree top didn't hurt me."

"Are you sure, Billy? That limb cracked like a gun when it's fired. Sure scared the girls and me."

"That's 'cause you're scaredy cats. I'm glad I'm not a scaredy cat; I'm brave. Let's play tag. I'll beat you all over to that lamp post at the far corner. I can run faster than you..." and Billy's sentence trailed in the breeze as he ran across the lot toward the lamp post.

"You don't play fair," Sue Ann chided kindly when she reached the post last. "You started running before the rest of us, Billy, and this isn't playing fairly. In a race, everyone starts at the same time and on the same line. You didn't do this, so you can't say you're the winner. Not truthfully and honestly. God doesn't approve of cheating."

"You're just jealous 'cause you didn't win, that's all," Billy retorted quickly.

"No, I'm not, Billy. Since Jesus sanctified me wholly I don't get jealous. Not one bit. It's just that you need to learn to play fairly. What do you think Jesus thinks of you, and how you cheated?"

"Just 'cause I can run faster than you, you're not happy. Say, come on, I want to show you Jeff's goat."

"Jeff has a goat?" Karla asked excitedly.

"He does. He rides him and he even has him pull his red wagon. Jeff's kinda' scared of the goat. But I'm not afraid. Just watch me ride him!"

In a little while, the children were at Jeff's house.

"Jeff! Jeff!" Billy called and called but no Jeff appeared. And neither did Jeff's father or mother.

"We'd better leave," Randy declared. "No one's at home."

"So-o!" Billy exclaimed loudly. "I'm going to show you how I can ride Jeff's goat. Come on," and Billy ran ahead, down to the small fenced-in pasture where the goat was grazing.

Randy and Karla and Sue Ann stood, watching.

"I think it's only right that we go home," Randy remarked again as he turned and, with the girls following, started back toward their own home.

A loud scream for help made them freeze in their tracks. Turning, they saw Billy. He wasn't riding Jeff's goat! Ah, no! Jeff's goat looked furiously angry: lowering his head and dancing backward two-three-four steps, he came at Billy for all he was worth. Pow! Down went Billy, screaming at the top of his lungs for someone to help him. "Get me out of here! Get me out of here!" he cried.

"The fence, Billy! Quick! Climb the fence! Qu--ick!" Karla and Randy screamed together, seeing the goat do his little but quick "dance routine" again.

"Get up, Billy!" Sue Ann cried. "Run! Run! Climb the fence. The fence!" she screamed, just as the goat started toward Billy, his head lowered.

Rolling over, Billy missed the blow as the goat charged past him. Quick as ever in his life, he got to his feet, grabbed hold of the link chain fencing and climbed up. With a thud, he dropped safely to the grassy floor outside the goat's domain.

"Are you all right?" the children asked, trying to help Billy up to his feet.

Tears shimmered in Billy's eyes. Big, bright tears. Randy, Karla, and Sue Ann were surprised: they had never seen Billy so humbled before; he had never cried in their presence. Never!

"I... I'm not brave; not at all. I ... I've been a big pretender," Billy admitted, walking stiffly away beside the friends, hurting dreadfully with each step he took.

"In the pen, with that goat," he said, "I asked Jesus to forgive me."

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May 1989

Story 5

ESPECIALLY FOR MOTHER

Becky picked Barbara up from the living room floor and carried her to the rocking chair. Cradling the fretful baby in her arms she rocked back and forth, back and forth, crooning softly in

the tiny ear so close to her head. Mother looked so very tired today, Becky thought, and she could help Mother by rocking Barbara and singing to her.

"Mercy there was great and grace was free...." Becky's voice was soft and sweet. Almost immediately Barbara's crying ceased. With half-closed eyes, and singing a sleepy lullaby all her own, the baby smiled a crooked half-smile at her sister. Becky laughed and kissed Barbara's full, round cheeks, then she continued her song. In no time at all, it seemed, Barbara was sound asleep.

Sliding carefully off the rocking chair, Becky carried the baby to her crib. Closing the door quietly, she hurried to the bathroom and picked up all the soiled towels and washcloths and took them to the laundry room. Next she cleaned the bathtub and the sink, then hung clean towels on the towel racks. She would do all she could to help Mother, she reasoned happily, going to the living room where Barbara's teething ring and her rattles and small toys were scattered over the floor.

Becky gathered the things up and placed them carefully inside the playpen, then she dusted the furniture and straightened the throw pillows on the sofa. Helping Mother to keep house was so much fun, she thought. Especially since she was doing it so Mother could have a wee bit of time to rest.

"Becky. Becky, dear." Her mother's voice reached her from the kitchen. "Lorna wants to see you, dear," Mother said.

Becky hurried to the kitchen. "Hi, Lorna," she greeted her friend pleasantly. "You wanted to see me?" she asked.

"I just came by to see if you'd go to the store with Kathy and me. Tomorrow's Mother's Day, you know," Lorna said meaningfully. "Father gave each of us money to buy a gift and I thought you may like to go too. Kathy's good at picking out the right thing. Of course, she's older than you and I. But she'd be happy to help you choose something nice for your mother; she's going to help me."

Becky smiled. "Thanks, Lorna, but I'll stay here and help Mother. You and Kathy have a good time."

When Lorna left, Becky hurried to her bedroom and cried. How she wished she could have bought Mother the pretty blouse she had seen in one of the shop windows! But she didn't have enough money. No, she didn't. She had nothing special to give to her wonderful mother. Nothing but the candy dish which Aunt Ellen had given her for her "hope chest," as her aunt had phrased it when she gave her the dainty, antique hobnail dish on one of her infrequent visits to their home.

Her mother had admired the pale, lime-green dish, and that's when Becky decided that it should belong to Mother! A soft footfall in the room caused Becky's head to come up... out of her hands, in which she was crying. "What's wrong, dear?" Mother asked softly, putting an arm around Becky's slender shoulders. Not one to hide anything from her mother, Becky sobbed, "I wanted something really special for you for Mother's Day, that's all. I love you so, Mother dear."

"I love you, too, Becky; so very, very dearly. But you have given me the best Mother's Day present of all."

"I haven't given you anything . . . yet," Becky stammered, wide-eyed with wonder.

"Your Mother's Day gift is a perpetual gift., a year-long gift, honey. You wash and dry the dishes, you dust the furniture, you help me with the baby, you keep the bathroom clean and tidy and...."

"But that's not a gift, Mother!"

"Oh, yes it is, and I am a proud and thankful mother: God has blessed me with an unusually kind and unselfish daughter, You, dear Rebecca Ann, with your loving ways and your sunny disposition and helpful hands, are a giver of continual Mother's Day gifts. You give me things that no amount of money could buy -- joy, happiness, love; and kind, soft words. I ask for nothing else, dear little girl. Nothing, other than that you remain always the way you are."

Becky smiled and leaned her head gently on Mother's shoulder. She felt good all over.

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June 1989

Story 6

SURPRISE FOR FATHER

"I hate cleaning this old garage!" Jimmy grumbled. "A lot you have to mumble about!" Betsy snapped. "I have the whole garden to weed!" Betsy's ordinarily pretty mouth wore a defiant pout as she finished the words.

"It seems like all you and Kurt and I do on Saturday anymore is work!" Jimmy complained to his sister. "Work, work, work!"

"Is this a complaint department?" a cheery voice asked from the doorway.

Betsy blushed in shame and Jimmy fell silent.

"What, may I ask, could be better for three active children than work?" Mr. Seymore asked pleasantly, stepping inside.

"But Father, we never get to play like other boys and girls do on Saturday!" Jimmy lamented with a hint of I-feel-sorry-for-myself in his voice.

Mr. Seymore laughed pleasantly again. "There's plenty of time for play after you get your work done," he said. "And remember this, the sooner you begin a job, the quicker it gets done."

Grabbing the hoe from where it hung on the wall, Betsy hurried to the garden. She would take Father's advice, she decided, and begin her job immediately.

In a few hours Betsy had the garden finished. A happy, good kind of feeling swept over her as she put the hoe back where she had gotten it.

Kurt met her at the kitchen door. He was crying; so was Jimmy. "Daddy's in the hospital," he said. "He fell off the ladder while painting. Mother's with him now."

Betsy felt stunned. She ran quickly to her room to cry.

"Crying won't help us," Kurt said from the doorway. "Praying WILL! Let's pray."

"Oh, Kurt," Betsy wafted, "I was awful to Daddy. I mean, I complained terribly about having to work. I need prayer . . . for MYSELF!"

"So do I!" Jimmy confessed, coming up behind Kurt. "The last words Daddy heard me speak were grouchy, complaining words. What if... if ... he never comes home again! Oh-h Kurt...!"

"We'll pray right now," Kurt said, kneeling with his brokenhearted sister and brother.

It was a wonderful prayer meeting for Jimmy and Betsy. They were gloriously converted that day. Now the entire Seymore household were Christians. Oh, how wonderful it was!

For many weeks, Mr. Seymore was hospitalized, and it was a happy day in June when the family received the good news that he could return home.

"He'll come home on Father's Day!" Jimmy remarked happily, checking the date on the calendar. "I wonder if he'll notice the change in Betsy and me."

"He'll notice," Kurt declared, smiling.

The first thing Mr. Seymore said as he hugged the two younger children when he was inside the house was, "You're different, Betsy and Jimmy, and I like your kind of new difference. You're kind and loving to each other. Why, even your faces look different; they're shining. And I would dare to say that I know the reason for this, too; you've gotten SAVED!"

"And sanctified wholly, too!" Betsy and Jimmy said simultaneously. "And now, Happy Father's Day to the best father in all the world," they added, 'handing their beautifully-wrapped packages to Daddy.

"Come with me, Daddy," Jimmy urged, leading the way into the garage. "This is Kurt's and my very special Father's Day surprise for you. See?" Mr. Seymore saw an immaculately clean garage with shelves from floor to ceiling along one of the walls.

"It's beautiful, boys!" Mr. Seymore exclaimed in astonished surprise. "Beautiful!"

"Kurt built it and I helped," Jimmy said, beaming proudly. "And Daddy, I'll be cleaning the garage for you every week without grumbling."

"Thank you, dear children, for making this such a very special day. And you, Jimmy and Betsy, well, you have given me the greatest gift possible by giving your hearts and lives to Jesus. You've given me happiness. I shall always remember this as my very special Father's Day gift from both of you."

Betsy's eyes were shining; so were Jimmy's.

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July 1989

Story 7

BENJI'S FEAR

Benji pulled the covers up tightly around his head, making sure his ears and the very last bit of unruly hair was covered. He was certain-sure he had heard the stair steps creaking. It sounded like someone was coming up the steps. In fact, he just knew someone was coming up those steps; the sound was unmistakable.

Sweat broke out on Benji's body. He shoved the sheet back off his head just a teeny-tiny bit, feeling as though he was going to suffocate with the heat. He was afraid to move; afraid whoever was on those steps would hear the movement and would know for sure that somebody was in the bedroom and would come in and find him.

He listened for all he was worth, trying to decide what to do. He could jump out of bed, race to the door and shut it tightly, he thought, almost persuaded to do just that. Then he remembered that the door didn't have a lock on it. He became more frightened than ever as he remembered this.

Again he pulled the sheet tightly over and around and about his head. Inside his chest, his heart thumped and jumped and hammered loudly and wildly. His body was wet with perspiration. He was oh, so afraid. So very much afraid. He longed to toss the sheet back off his hot, sweaty body; longed to feel the gentle, cool breeze sweep refreshingly over him from the two open windows in his bedroom. But he dare not uncover his head; no, indeed! Whoever was on those steps would see him. Then what!

Benji's body tensed. He heard a footstep. He knew he did. He was sure he did. And this time it was closer; this time it sounded like.., like.., it was right beside his bed!

He wanted to scream for help but fear kept him silent. He dare not move. He must not!

He felt the hand touch his tightly wrapped-in shoulder and loosen the sheet from around his head. No! No! He wanted to scream but he was paralyzed with fear. He was sure his heart would burst with its unnatural, loud hammering.

"Benji. Honey..."

"Mother!" Benji tossed the sheet off his head and flung himself into his mother's arms, sobbing uncontrollable sobs.

"Why Benji, whatever is wrong with you?" his mother asked as she rocked him gently in her arms, sitting on the side of the bed.

"Someone's coming up the stair steps," Benji sobbed. "I heard their footsteps. I did. I did!"

"You must calm down, Benji. There, that's better," Mother soothed, wiping tears off Benji's ruddy cheeks as he became more quiet.

"I heard the steps creak, Mother, the way they always do when we come up them."

"I was coming up them, Benji. I was waiting up for Daddy. He just got home from that business meeting. Have you forgotten that you have a kind Heavenly Father whose eyes never slumber or sleep? While you and Daddy and I sleep, and get new strength for the upcoming day, our Heavenly Father's eyes are looking down and watching over us all the night. He never sleeps, honey."

"I . . . I'm sorry, Mother. Is Jesus . . . disappointed in me? Or ashamed of me, even? I guess I'm just never going to be brave like Daddy." Benji cried some more. Oh, how good Mother's arms felt around him, holding him ever so snugly and tightly to her.

"Of course you're going to be brave, honey. And no, God isn't like people are; He isn't disappointed in you nor is He ashamed of you: He knows that you're still a little boy-a little boy-man--and that little boys and girls sometimes have fears. But so do big people, Benji."

"Do you ever get scared, Mother, and are you ever afraid? You and Daddy always seem so brave."

"Oh yes, I do get scared sometimes. Some types of fear are good for us, my little one."

"Like what?" Benji asked.

"If we see a tornado coming or a car coming over in our driving lane instead of staying in its own lane. And if we see a fire in our neighbor's house, or ours. Then there's a fear of falling, if we're up high, and a fear of drowning. These are what we big people call 'natural' fears; they are 'healthy' fears.. for our protection."

"Was mine a healthy fear?" Benji asked.

"I suppose in a way it was. But you forgot to call on Jesus to help you and to protect you, dear. In all of our fears, big people or little people fears, we must never forget to trust our kind Heavenly Father to protect us and to keep us.

"You remember when the wind nearly took Daddy's shed and garage away last summer?"

Benji nodded, and snuggled closer to his mother. "I was scared!" he remarked.

"So was I, Benji. But I didn't allow that fear to get the best of me. Remember what we did, you and I?"

Benji sat up and looked at Mother's sweet face. In the moonlight, she looked like an angel, he thought. "We prayed," he answered. "You held me close to you and, kneeling in the living room on the floor, we prayed. I prayed, too, Mother. I asked Jesus to please stop that wind and make it lay still, the way He did to those big waves on the sea that almost drowned the disciples in their boat."

"And what happened, Benji; do you remember?"

"Oh yes, I do, Mother!" By now Benji was sitting up straight and tall on Mother's lap. Putting a loving finger on her cheek, he said, "God stopped the wind."

He sounded almost reverent, the tone of voice he used.

"Indeed He did, honey. It was a miracle. He preserved Daddy's shed, our house, and the garage. Now, will you try to always remember that when we love the Lord Jesus Christ with all of our heart and soul and mind and strength He watches over us and protects us from harm and danger? Do you think you can remember this, Benji? David in the Psalms, said, 'What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee'... God. Every time you feel fear coming over you, ask Jesus to help you and to protect you and He'll do it, dear. Daddy and I do this all the time."

"Really, Mother? Oh, I'm so glad I know Jesus and that He knows me. I'm going to trust Him; yes, I'm going to trust Jesus. It's wonderful to know that He never sleeps and that He watches over me all night long. Tuck me in, Mother, I'm sleepy."

Lovingly and tenderly, Mother smoothed out the sheet and put Benji upon his soft, fluffy pillow. Kneeling beside his bed, she talked to Jesus and asked Him to take good care of her little boy. Benji fell asleep before Mother had finished her prayer. It was so good to know that God was taking care of him all through the night.

Mother kissed Benji's cheek, then tiptoed out of the room.

\* \* \* \* \*

August 1989

## Story 8

### THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE

Amy looked toward the porch where the Randolphs used to live and, sure enough, the little old lady was still sitting in the rocking chair, rocking back and forth in the chair. Every day, since Tuesday when the new neighbors had moved into the Randolph house, Amy noticed the little old woman sitting on the porch, rocking. She looked lonely, Amy thought, and yesterday, watching the woman from behind the wisteria vine in her own yard, Amy had felt the gentle Holy Spirit nudge her to go over and talk to the little woman.

How will I begin? Amy wondered now, feeling more shy than ever. The little old lady was a total stranger to her; should she just go over and say, "Hi. I'm Amy Brandon. I live next door to you. Do you love Jesus? Is He living in your heart?"

Amy sat down beneath the japonica bush and thought and thought. She wanted to obey the voice of Jesus but she wasn't sure how she should approach the stranger. It was easy to talk to Holly and Rita about Jesus; they knew Jesus and they loved Jesus. In fact, all three of them played church together when they visited each other. Holly made a good preacher and Rita was the best song leader Amy thought she ever heard. Rita carried a tune not only beautifully but extra loud, too. To Amy, that was every bit as needful for song leading as was the ability and the blessing of being able to carry a tune all the way through a song.

She dug little trenches in the dirt with her fingers now as she sat and thought. A soul winner must be wise, her father had told his congregation. Amy remembered his sermon like it had only been preached yesterday instead of months ago.

After the sermon, Rita and Holly and she decided they would have to do something for Jesus besides just playing church. They must try to lead some of their little friends to Jesus.

Holly had then invited Shandra over to play and, while they played, she had told Shandra about Jesus. Shandra came to church with Holly the next Sunday and was converted in Mrs. Miller's Sunday school class.

Rita had invited two little friends to church from her neighborhood. Stephanie got saved in the Sunday school class but Renee only cried. Renee was always on their "request for prayer" now whenever they played church.

Amy remembered how God had used her to get Mr. Townley and Mrs. Montgomery started to church, where each was converted in a revival meeting shortly after they began coming. Mr. Townley had testified in a prayer meeting service that it was her "shining light" that put him to shame and he decided to start to church. Mrs. Montgomery had said, "Amy's little light was shining so brightly that I felt ashamed of myself for not going to church. That dear child just kept coming, inviting me to church every time she came."

Amy got to her feet quickly. She brushed the dirt off her dress and her hands. She wanted to look nice when she got to the little old lady sitting on the porch. What had worked for Mrs. Montgomery and Mr. Townley would work for the woman on the porch, she was sure.

"Please help me, dear Jesus. I'll be Your little light," she prayed. "Father and Mother said You have no hands but ours to work for You today; no feet but ours, to walk to people and tell them about You; and no mouth but our mouth to tell them how much You love them, and that You died to save them and sanctify them."

Amy started down the sidewalk, remembering what she had said to Mrs. Montgomery when she first started going to her house, three doors away. In a very little while, she was in front of the Randolph house.

"Good morning," she called brightly to the little old lady sitting in the rocking chair. "I'm Amy Brandon, your next door neighbor. I wonder if there's anything you would like for me to do..."

She was up on the porch now, standing near the woman.

"Why, hello, child! Oh, but it's good to hear a young voice!" the woman exclaimed. "Amy. You said your name is Amy, right?"

"Yes, I'm Amy Brandon." "That's a nice name, Amy. Thank you for coming. I'm Mrs. Winfield. I'm glad to meet you. Come nearer, dear child, my eyes aren't as good as they once were; I want to see you up close."

Amy stepped up to the chair. The woman put her hand on Amy's head; her fingers followed the long, flowing tresses from the top of Amy's head to midway down her back.

"Um-m! Beautiful hair, Amy. Is it brown or black?" the woman asked.

"Brown. Would you like me to read to you?" Amy asked, remembering how she had asked Mrs. Montgomery the same question.

"Read to me?" the little woman asked. "How old are you, Amy, and what would you read?"

"The Bible, Mrs. Winfield. I'm a Christian. Jesus lives in my heart. Father and Mother let me read the Bible often in family worship. And I read it each and every morning, all by myself, in my quiet time with Jesus. Do you know Jesus, Mrs. Winfield?"

Drawing Amy close to her, the little woman wept. "God sent you here, Amy child. Yes, I know Jesus," she remarked. "I was born again many years ago, and sanctified wholly some time later on. Please, dear child go into the living room and find my Bible. I am starving for the Word! I can't see well enough to read anymore, and my daughter isn't interested in spiritual things any longer.

"I had to sell my home and move in with Teresa and her husband. They work long hours; I'm alone all day, and sometimes into the night hours. They're good to me, Amy, but I get so lonely."

"I'll keep you company, Mrs. Winfield. And maybe Holly and Rita and I can have our church services over here when we play together, God willing. Holly's a real good preacher and Rita's the best song leader I've ever heard. Would you like that, Mrs. Winfield?"

"Oh, Amy, I would. I would! I miss my church so much!"

"You can go to church with Father and Mother and me," Amy said joyfully. "Daddy pastors the church. We have such good services."

Mrs. Winfield cried for joy. "I am so happy, Amy child!" she exclaimed. "I felt desolate and downhearted over having to leave my church and move into a strange, new community. And all the time my Heavenly Father was working things together for my good! Bless His worthy name! Now bring the Bible, dear girl, and read to me. My soul needs the spiritual bread from God's Word."

Amy's heart felt happy and joyful. Hers might be a little light, but Jesus needed little lights, too, to shine for Him. And too, He used little lights. Didn't He bless a boy's little loaves and fishes with a great abundance? Indeed He did!

Finding the Bible, she hurried out to the little old lady on the porch. She would begin reading at the 34th Psalm, she decided, as she pulled a chair up close to the rocking chair.

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September 1989

Story 9

THE DECEIVER

"I won't forgive her, Candace. I will not/Now stop talking to mew Jeremy cried out in anger.

"But you know you can't get to Heaven unless you forgive," Candace exclaimed as tears went bouncing down her fair little cheeks. "Oh Jeremy, don't you want to go to Heaven? You know where the wicked people go when they die! Oh, don't go there, Jeremy! You'll bum forever and ever and ever and..."

"Stop it, Candace! Now let me alone. Go inside and play with your doll. I just will not forgive old gabby, gossipy, trouble-making Tilly. She made fun of me and she said something that is not true and now Mrs. Randall will give me a poor grade on my report card."

Jeremy was almost breathless as he finished the long statement-sentence that was minus commas and any other punctuation marks.

"But maybe she didn't say what you think she said," Candace told her brother, as her tender heart went out in loving compassion for the girl who was the object of Jeremy's hot anger. "And Mother said we were to please call her Matilda, not Tillie."

Jeremy's cheeks were flushed with anger. His dark eyes seemed to snap like sparks of fire. He opened his mouth as if to say something, then shut it again.

"Jeremy, please, please, let's pray together, and you ask Jesus to forgive you for the way you feel toward Matilda. Don't go to hell. I pity Matilda. She has no mother and... and her daddy's gone so much of the time. Forgive her, Jeremy. Maybe she didn't say those things."

"Go away, Candace. Now! And forget about me forgiving Tillie. She's a trouble-maker." And ten-year-old Jeremy stomped his foot in anger.

"But Jesus said we must forgive or we won't be forgiven," Candace implored tearfully.

"I said go away! Leave me alone. Okay, since you won't listen to me, I'll leave you." And away Jeremy ran, out from beneath the maple tree, across the lawn and through the vacant lot, until Candace couldn't see him anymore.

"Dear Jesus," Candace cried, as she looked heavenward, "please save Jeremy. Forgive his sins. Speak to Jeremy's heart and... and don't let him lose his soul and go to the lake of fire. Please! Please! And Jesus dear, help Matilda Beecher. I feel so sorry for her. She has no mother anymore, like Jeremy and I do. Bless dear Matilda. And... and if she did say anything about Jeremy, help her to... to ask Jeremy to forgive her. Amen."

Candace looked toward the vacant lot but there was no sign of her brother. She felt a big lump pop up inside her throat. Oh, why was Jeremy so rebellious against God? she wondered. He knew that Jesus had said that if anybody hated anybody else he was a murderer. Her brother, only one and a half years older than she, hated Matilda, and this, from Jesus' words in the Bible, made Jeremy a murderer in his heart.

Candace walked back to the house. Her little heart felt like it was carrying a big, heavy weight on the inside. She wanted Jeremy to love Jesus and go to Heaven when he died. Their father and mother would be going there, she knew. And so would she. But Jeremy had hatred in his heart, and hatred would never get into Heaven. Heaven was filled with righteousness and purity and holiness and love, and only those who were pure and holy and righteous could enter into that beautiful City.

Candace heard a light, scratching sound on the kitchen screen door; then she heard a soft tap, tapping sound. Wiping the tears from her eyes, she hurried to the door.

"Matilda!" she cried joyously. "Oh, Matilda dear, I am so happy to see you. Come inside. Why, Matilda Beecher, you're crying. What happened to you?" And Candace led the girl to a kitchen chair and made her sit down.

"It... it's Jeremy, Candace. He... he saw me playing in the yard and he... he called me all kinds of ugly names, and he said I was a trouble maker and that I lied about him to Mrs. Randall. But I didn't, Candace. Honest, I didn't. I don't know what he's talking about. And I wouldn't lie; I love Jesus too much to lie. I want to go to Heaven. If I'd tell lies I wouldn't go to Heaven."

Candace, in her loving, caring way, had put her arms around the weeping Matilda. "I believe you, Matilda. I love you very much. And so does my mother. And daddy, too. Indeed we do!"

The girls had not heard Mrs. Kendall come into the kitchen.

"Now tell me what is wrong," the mother said as she drew both Matilda and Candace into the circle of her loving arms.

"It's Jeremy, Mother," Candace cried. "He said Matilda said something about him that wasn't true."

"But I didn't, Mrs. Kendall. I really didn't. It was Gloria who laughed. Oh, I'm sorry," Matilda said quickly. "I didn't mean to tell. Gloria doesn't know Jesus. I'm sorry I said who it was. Please don't tell Jeremy. Gloria wasn't ugly; she just laughed about something Jeremy said."

"I'll take care of Jeremy," Mrs. Kendall said softly. "He needs to learn a few lessons. Now you stay here and play with Candace. Dinner is almost ready; you will eat with us, honey. Your father's gone again, isn't he?"

"He left early this morning. I get so lonely without Mother. And I... I'm scared at night. I ask Jesus to help me and... and to un-scare me. He lets me go to sleep and then I'm all right, 'cause I don't know what goes on."

"Would you like to stay here with us, Matilda? Mr. Kendall and I have been talking to your father about this. We would love to have another little girl in our home--all the time."

"Oh Mother, really? Forever and ever, would she stay? She could sleep in my bedroom and...."

"She will be doing just that, as soon as her father and we have finished all the legal ends. Now run along and play, my little darlings. I see Jeremy's stomach is leading him home in time for dinner."

Candace and Matilda ran down the hallway, squealing with delight and pleasure.

"Let's thank Jesus before we play," Matilda said. "I'm so happy I can't help crying."

"Me too," Candace added.

In the kitchen, meanwhile, Jeremy was shocked by what his mother was saying: "Your heart needs a washing, Jeremy; it needs to be washed in the blood of Jesus, or you won't go to Heaven with the rest of us. You are jealous of Matilda; jealous because we will soon be taking her into our home as one of our very own. So you had to take your jealousy and your anger out on an innocent person, namely Matilda.

"You have tried to make something big out of something that is really Almost nothing at all. Matilda has not lied about you to Mrs. Randall. Nor has anyone else done so. One of the girls in your class laughed over something you said, but there were no lies told about you. Your poor grade, Mrs. Randall told me, was because you are not paying attention in class. Yes, Jeremy, your teacher called me. Don't look so surprised. Deceit always comes out in some way. Now don't you think it's time to repent and to confess your sins and to get a new heart and be converted?"

Jeremy broke down into tears. "I do, Mother, I do! I hate what I've done. I must tell Matilda, first, that I'm sorry for accusing her of something I knew she didn't do. And I want her to forgive me for being jealous of her."

"She's down the hallway playing with Candace. Go to her, son, quickly. Then come back and we'll pray."

It didn't take Jeremy long to find Jesus after he confessed and repented of his sins. And oh, what a happy time they had around the dinner table as a family. And the wonderful thing was that now Jeremy loved Matilda. It would be easy for him to call her sister, he thought happily.

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October 1989

## Story 10 HABITS

Duane ran outside to his very favorite of all places: the big umbrella-like weeping willow tree at the far end of the lawn. Somehow he always felt "hidden away" when he came here. It was his secret hiding place.

He leaned his back up tight against the stout old tree trunk, whistling a soft, meaningless tune, then he suddenly sat down on the soft grass to think.

Whatever did Mother mean about habits and the path? Sometimes Mother seemed to talk in riddles, he thought. Or even in "parables," like Jesus.

Duane heard a happy little "Woof, Woof; Bow-Wow" and lifted his eyes to see Pepper come bouncing under the long, slender willow wither to his hiding place. In an instant she was

beside him, looking for all the world like she was laughing into his face as she wagged her long, shaggy black and white tail in supreme delight at having found him.

"Pepper!" Duane exclaimed. "Why'd you come down here? I need to think."

"Bow-wow. Bow-wow," Pepper replied, her tail wagging fiercely and her dark eyes full of fun and merriment and mischief. "Bow-wow. Bow-wow," she barked again.

Duane reached over and patted the English shepherd on her shiny, silken head. "I love you, Pepper; you know I do; but I must think. Think!! Think!! Do you understand?" he asked, looking into the dog's face.

"Woof-woof; Bow-wow," Pepper responded, jumping up and down in playful excitement.

"Lie down, Pepper!" Duane ordered softly. "I can't play with you. Not now. I must think. Think!" he repeated emphatically, looking into her shiny black eyes.

Thinking Duane was teasing her, Pepper frolicked to the edge of the willow and rolled over and over in the grass, barking short little dog sentences which only she could understand and which she hoped desperately her companion-playmate would interpret and come out of his seriousness and romp and play with her. But the boy merely continued to sit--and think.

"Your heart is beginning to form a path, Duane," Mother had told him just a few minutes ago. "It's similar to the path Pepper has made beside the flower bed at the back of the house...."

Duane scratched his head. Then he gulped. Looking toward the house now, he could see the outline of that path. "Pepper's Path," the whole family called it. He had always liked both the path and its name--until just a short while ago.

He gulped again. This time he almost cried when he swallowed and gulped. He knew he shouldn't have taken Stevie's little car home in his pocket (when he left Stevie's house), but he did! And, yes, he did know that he was stealing, he told his heart and his tormented conscience now. He knew it all the time! But a big, strong voice somewhere inside him had argued that no one--not even Stevie!--would know he had slipped the small matchbox type car into his pocket. And they hadn't known--not anybody; until Mother found it and asked where he got it. That made things bad. Very bad; for he told a lie to hide and conceal his theft!

Duane swallowed again. A big salty tear slithered from his eye and rolled down his fat little cheek. It seemed to him that God told Mother every single, solitary bad and wicked and evil thing he ever did, else how would she always know when he committed some sin and transgression?

That's when she told Duane about evil habits becoming like Pepper's Path, only the hard imprint would be inside his heart and not on the ground. But his heart would become just as hard and packed-down and barren and desolate-looking as Pepper's Path was hard and packed-down and dusty along the back of the house.

Did he want his heart like that path? he asked himself suddenly. Did he? Why, nothing ever grew on the path. Nothing! It was too hard. Too packed-down. And how did the once-beautiful lawn become a path? By Pepper's small feet going across the same stretch of lawn over and over, again and again and again, day after day after day. That's exactly the way the hard, dusty path was formed!

Duane began to cry. He didn't want his heart to become like "Pepper's Path." Oh, he didn't! But unless he changed his way of living that's just what would happen. Yes, it would. And with a hard heart, Jesus might never, never speak to him again! Oh, that would be dreadful. He'd go to hell then and lose his soul. He'd be doomed forever; tormented eternally in the flames of hell's fire.

Oh, he couldn't have that happen to him. He couldn't! He must do something about his soul. Right now, too, while the sweet Holy Spirit was still finding his heart a little bit soft and tender.

Duane got to his feet and started running toward the house. He would take Stevie's little car back to him and tell him how very sorry he was that he had listened to the devil and stolen it; and he would even give Stevie two of his very own favorite cars--to keep--for having taken his one car.

He was crying hard now. He ran as fast as his feet would carry him, straight into Mother's open arms.

"I want to be saved!" he sobbed. "I don't want to steal and.., and lie. Never, never again. I know Jesus can change my heart and make it all new on the inside. Pray, Mother! Please, please pray for me!"

It was a happy little boy with a shining face who, a short time later, walked across the street to Steve's house with the stolen car and two extras.

How wonderful it was to be forgiven of his sins, Duane thought. And how glorious it would be when he was wholly sanctified and had that "second anchor" about which his father and mother testified and talked.

Whistling joyously, he knocked on Stevie's door.

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November 1989

Story 11

THE UNSHARED THANKSGIVING

"You mean the Tucketts are coming?" T. Jay, asked, scowling and frowning and looking extremely unhappy and displeased. He slumped down in a kitchen chair and looked at the floor, counting the number of tiles in each square.

"It's always far better to share," Mother answered as she continued crimping the edges of the pie crust. "Jesus shared all that He had."

"Why can't we have a Thanksgiving all by ourselves?" the boy lamented. "It seems as though we always have someone else here for Thanksgiving. I don't mind my cousins and their parents. But the Tucketts! Mom, do you realize how . . . how unliked they are? People don't like them. They're dirty and sloppy and...."

"How do you know?" Mother interrupted quickly, not one bit happy over her son's attitude and bad disposition.

"Well it's so; Rudy and Blair and Anthony all told me the same thing."

"Oh, they did! Well, I want you to begin tuning out gossip reports, T. Jay. It's just as evil to listen to gossip as it is to peddle or repeat it."

"But Mom, it's so!" the boy insisted.

"It's the spreading of an evil tale, son, and I insist that you say no more about the Tucketts. They're our neighbors and they're poor; we will be sharing our Thanksgiving meal with them. Jesus said when we made a feast we were not to invite the wealthy but we were to invite the poor; those who would not be able to repay us. We will be doing just that, God willing. And I expect you to be kind and courteous and loving to them. If Rudy and Anthony and Blair continue to spread gossip I will have to tell them they can't play with you anymore. Now run down to the basement and fill this pot with apples then bring it up to me, please."

Grumbling under his breath, T. Jay took the pot and headed down to the basement. He was not happy about the Tucketts coming. No indeed. He felt sick over thinking how much turkey and how many pies the boys alone would consume and eat. He had heard Anthony say that the two older boys were greedy and that they had enormous appetites for their age. It was nothing for them to eat a whole pie, so Anthony had said, in less time than his dad could eat a single piece.

The mere thought of his mother's delicious pumpkin pies disappearing before his Very eyes by two greedy boys was almost more than T. Jay could endure. He loved pumpkin pie. Yes sir. Even better than the turkey and his mother's delicious stuffing, he liked pumpkin pie. And now he would once more have to share what he loved best of all.

"It's not fair!" he exclaimed out loud. "It just isn't fair. Why must we always be the ones to take in the poor and the hungry; why can't some of the church people do it for a change?"

T. Jay took an apple and, using his excellent pitching arm, he smashed the apple to mush against the basement wall.

"Take the apples upstairs," Mother ordered, as she brought a pot of something delicious smelling down to the basement and set it inside the big cupboard and closed the door. "Then you

march back down here with hot soapy water and a cloth and clean the mess off the wall, and what splattered on to the floor, too. I don't want to see a single splatter, not on the wall nor on the floor. Now get busy, young man. And one more thing out of you regarding our neighbors and you and I will be having a 'business' meeting; a very important and needful business meeting. And I promise, you won't come out of it without a painful session. Your companion playmates have poisoned your mind about innocent people and I don't believe a word of what they've said."

T. Jay marched upstairs with hurried steps; his mother was right behind him. He knew that tone of voice; knew it meant every word that was said.

He put the apples on the kitchen table then got a bucket and a cloth. What a mess he got himself into! he thought as he squeezed liquid detergent into the bucket before getting the water.

The wall seemed worse than sandpaper to work on. He scrubbed and washed and discovered that he was "shredding" the cloth with his effort. Bits and pieces of the much-worn wash cloth clung tenaciously to the rough wall. Sudden tears stung his eyes. He was mean, to feel as he did toward the Tucketts, he realized. It was wicked of him, really. He knew this. Knew it all along.

The longer he scrubbed and worked, the worse the wall looked from the fastly disappearing cloth in his hand. But T. Jay wasn't paying much attention to that anymore: His mind went back to the year when his mother and he had to eat their Thanksgiving dinner alone. His father had gotten stranded in a snow blizzard and had to stay at some stranger's house. His grandparents, too, were snowbound. So were his cousins and his uncles and aunts.

He remembered how lonely and sad he had felt that day. The house was empty without his father, and it was ever so still and silent, too. He had eaten his dinner, then he had crept away to his room and cried. He missed the dear, pleasant voice of his father and the merry laughter and noise of his cousins and relatives. He had cried himself to sleep. Something important and priceless was missing. It was an unshared Thanksgiving and it was his saddest of all Thanksgivings, he remembered now.

Suddenly, T. Jay felt ashamed of himself; ashamed of how he felt towards the Tucketts. Then he felt condemned. He was being so very selfish, he realized now. Oh so selfish. And hateful and unkind, too. He certainly would not want to ever have another Thanksgiving like the lonely one the year of the big blizzard, when no one was there to share the meal with his mother and he.

The cloth, what was left of it, fell to the floor, T. Jay dropped to his knees, crying. "Please, dear Jesus," he prayed, "forgive me for being so... so selfish and... and unkind. I'm a poor, lost, wicked sinner. Forgive me. Oh, please, please, forgive me. Save me! I have never even tried to be nice or friendly to the Tckett boys. I . . . I didn't... want them to... to become friends with Rudy and Blair and Anthony. I'm sorry, dear Jesus ....

T. Jay prayed on and on, confessing and repenting of his sins. He knew the Bible said he had to do this if he wanted to be born again-forgiven. And then Jesus came. Yes, He did. He came into T. Jay's heart and changed him completely. Oh, he was happy!

Rushing up the steps, he said, "I'm saved! I'm saved, Mother! And I love the Tucketts. I can hardly wait till they come over. We'll have so much fun together!"

Happy tears went dancing down Mother's cheeks.

\* \* \* \* \*

December 1989

Story 12

JULIE'S GIFT

"Do-re-me-faso-la-te-do; do-te la... la... Silent Night, Holy Night..."

"Can't you practice somewhere else, Julie!" Kenny asked. "My fever will rise for sure. Oh, I hate these measles! Why did I have to get them so near Christmas time? Oh-h!" he moaned.

"The Bible says that everything works together for good if we love the Lord, Kenny, so something good is bound to come out of your measles."

"I believe the Bible, Julie, but how measles can work together for good . . . for anybody! . . . is more than I can see."

"Well, for one thing, I think you should be thanking the Lord that you got them now, when you're ten years old, instead of waiting to get them when you're older and nearly die, like Mr. Pinkerton did last year."

"You're a little better than Job's comforters!" Kenny exclaimed miserably.

"Sorry, Kenny. Silent Night, Holy Night; All is calm, all...."

"Please, Julie. Please! Go somewhere else. How come you're singing anyhow?"

" 'Cause I'm happy, and too, Mrs. Walker wants someone to sing 'Silent Night' in church on Christmas Sunday morning. And our class will recite St. Luke 2... all 52 verses of it, the Lord willing."

"Will you be singing 'Silent Night,' Julie?"

"Mrs. Walker didn't say who was to sing it."

"Mindy Keller'll get the solo part; see if she doesn't, Mindy or Karla Miller. They always do."

"They have pretty voices," Julie replied.

"Not any prettier than yours."

"But I thought my singing made your fever rise!" Julie teased.

"Well, it does bother me today, but that doesn't mean that you don't have a pretty voice. I hate that do-re-me thing, though."

Julie laughed. "I was trying to find where to begin," she said, "and I landed on la."

Kenny closed his eyes. Sometime later, in a sleepy kind of daze, he heard his mother tell Julie that Mrs. Walker wanted her to tell Julie that she was to sing "Silent Night" for the entire congregation on Christmas Sunday morning.

"But I can't, Mother!" Kenny heard his sister say. "Mindy would be hurt. I wouldn't offend her for anything!" Julie continued. "You see, she isn't sanctified. She told me so, and if I were to take the part .... well..."

"Mrs. Walker wants you to do it, honey. Pray about it," Mother said softly.

"I will, but I really don't feel it's the best thing right now. I want to see Mindy get sanctified more than anything else. She'll be hurt. I know she will."

And Mindy was offended! Terribly so! "A fine friend you are!" she told Julie, when hearing of Mrs. Walker's decision. "A fine friend indeed!"

"But I didn't have anything to do with getting the solo," Julie declared sweetly. "Honest, I didn't, Mindy."

Mindy shrugged her shoulders haughtily and walked away. And that's when Julie decided to speak to her Sunday school teacher.

"Please, Mrs. Walker!" she begged. "I love Mindy, and I want to see her get sanctified wholly. Please, let her sing 'Silent Night.' I'd love to do it but.., well.., with Mindy feeling as she does..."

"I don't believe in appeasing carnality, Julie, honey," the teacher replied, "but I see what you mean."

"It's just that I want Mindy to see that holiness works, and that it's real," Julie said.

Tears glimmered in Mrs. Walker's eyes. "Your gift of unselfishness is one of the most beautiful and wonderful gifts that can ever be given, Julie," she remarked. "Love gifts like yours will not go without being rewarded."

And Mrs. Walker was right; Mindy's heart came under heavy condemnation when she learned of her friend's noble sacrifice. "Forgive me, Julie!" she cried, when she saw her.

"Please, will you pray for me? I do need a holy heart, like you told me I did. I see it plainly now. I do! I do! And Julie, I want to be exactly like you..."

"No, Mindy, not like me, like Jesus!"

"Well, I want whatever it is you have..."

On Christmas Sunday morning, Mrs. Walker proudly introduced the "Joyful Airs" -- Mindy, Karla and Julie -- who sang "Silent Night" with radiant, shining faces.

Sitting on the front seat, with not the slightest hint of measles on his person, Kenny thought Julie looked like an angel. On second thought, Mindy and Karla did too -- now that they were sanctified wholly.

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THE END