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CHILDREN'S PAGE STORIES -- 1990

By Mrs. Paul E. King

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Story 1
ERIN'S NEW YEAR

Erin sat between her father and mother, thinking of the beautiful snow that was falling outside and wishing she were out on the sidewalk playing instead of sitting on a pew in church. It was so very difficult to listen to the preacher when one's heart and thoughts were elsewhere, she told herself.

She wiggled ever so carefully in her seat., just the teeniest, tiniest bit! . . . hoping Father wouldn't notice. Then she went back to her world of private day-dreaming: Was Joann playing outside, perhaps? Her father would have the floodlights turned on in the backyard for her so she could see to make a snowman. By morning, everyone in the neighborhood would see Joann's snowman. He would stand big and tall and proud and be wearing a bright red plaid scarf around his neck, a jet-black hat on his fat, round, bald head, and gloves on his broom-stick arms. How funny-cute he would look!

Erin quickly stifled the giggle that almost escaped her lips. She tried to pay attention to the preacher and what he was saying. For a little while it worked; she heard what was being said. Then her mind wandered, and once again she was outside playing in the snow. Did birds like snow? Where did they sleep when everything wore a blanket of softest white? Didn't they get cold? Not ever? What did they eat, and where did they find their food? Mr. Johnson had a bird feeder, she knew; but what about the many birds that never heard of Mr. Johnson?

She thought about the little sparrows then, and how they hopped around in the backyard, looking for food. A big lump popped up in the middle of her throat. Erin felt like crying. She must do something for the birds, she decided. But wait; God took care of the lilies and the sparrows, didn't He! The one He clothed; the other He fed.

Sighing with relief over the revealed knowledge, Erin sat back against the pew. "The most wonderful thing anyone can do," the preacher was saying, "is give your heart to the Lord. It would be a perfect beginning for this brand new year coming in."

Erin sat up straight in the pew. She looked at Father, then she looked at Mother. Their heads were bowed in prayer. What's more, they were crying. Perhaps over her! She looked at the preacher then back to her parents again. Joann and the birds were all forgotten. She was almost ten, she solemnly reasoned. She should have given Jesus her heart long ago. Yes, long ago!

"It's now almost twelve o'clock," the preacher said. "Is there anyone here who will step out and come forward and give Jesus your heart? Maybe someone wants to get sanctified wholly; you come too."

Erin waited to hear no more. Getting quickly to her feet, she hurried down the aisle to the altar, her tears wetting the carpet as she went. Jesus had been waiting such a long time to hear her tell Him that she was sorry she hadn't come to Him sooner. She wanted to be saved. Oh, she did, she did! She had carried her heavy load of guilt and sin too long. Now... now! ... she would confess her sins to the only One who could forgive them and take the burden off her little, but aching heart.

Weeping brokenly, she knelt at the altar. How very wicked and sinful of her to have kept Jesus on the outside for so long when He was waiting all the time to be invited to live within her heart!

The Christians gathered around the altar for prayer, but Erin paid no attention to them..., she was lost in prayer for herself. Ten minutes after the new year had arrived, the load of sin was removed from her little heart. Oh, how very happy she was! She now had peace and rest in her soul.

"What a beautiful way to begin the New Year!" her mother exclaimed, throwing her arms around Erin.

"Yes, yes!" Erin cried happily. "Living it for Jesus only.., a brand new year and a brand new heart!"

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February 1990

Story 2

FRANKIE BECOMES THANKFUL

Frankie sat down on a fallen log and began lacing his skates up. All around him were spruce, hemlock, and pine trees. He felt like he was in a great, vast room; a room whose ceiling was

the sky and whose boundary was almost endless. Across the narrow lake, and as far as he could see, the tall, beautiful evergreen trees were growing. They reminded him of a great army of brave soldiers.

He paused in his lacing of the skates and sighed a contented sigh. All was silent and peaceful around him. Except for the soft twittering of the woodland birds, he heard no other sound. How he did love Thanksgiving! he thought, and the freedom it gave him to skate and be on the ice. It was one of his very favorite holidays. Fact was, he liked winter. Really liked it! It was a wonderful time for skating and sledding; building snowmen and snow-forts, and putting puzzles together with one's parents after school work was finished in the evening.

Frankie especially liked the "together" feeling which he shared with his father and mother around the table working puzzles, eating popcorn, and just being chummy and close to each other when it was too cold for any of them to be outside.

He was deep in thought, when he heard Randall and Warren's voices slice into his pleasant reverie. They were skating on the lake.

"Frankie doesn't know the first thing about being thankful," Warren told Randall, skating backwards and doing a quick, beautiful figure eight.

"You can say that again!" came Randall's quick exclamation of affirmation. "And he says he's a Christian, too."

The words seemed to hang in midair among the beautiful evergreen trees.

Frankie sat like a petrified mummy. So that's what they thought of him! And they were supposed to be his friends?? Well

"Talk about ungrateful and unthankful! Whew!" Warren commented skating perfect circles directly in front of Frankie, who was hidden by many young spruce trees.

"He has so very many nice things," Warren continued, "but he's never satisfied; he always wants more. Take Billy Parker now; he's the most thankful boy in our school. Mother gave him some of the clothes I outgrew..., he's a little shorter than I am... and you'd think he had a fortune given to him. He thanked Mother and Dad over and over for them. And he's not ashamed to wear them either. Now Frankie, well..."

"I know what you mean," Randall answered quickly. "Frankie's just not thankful, like Billy is. But Billy knows Jesus. He's a real Christian, Warren. He's so thankful that he even thanks God for his soggy jelly sandwiches. I know; I heard him. And you should see those sandwiches! Ugh! All soaked up and yucky looking. But the way he thanks God for them you'd think they were roast beef."

"He's like that about everything," Warren answered. "And know something, Randall? When I get saved, I want whatever it is Billy has. He's real. He's thankful if they get anything for

Christmas or if they don't get anything; if they have a big Thanksgiving dinner or if they have only jelly sandwiches and dried beans to eat. I like to be near Billy, don't you Randall?"

"Do I ever! He makes me feel that he really does love me and that he's praying for me. It shows all through him; his love and those prayers. Now Frankie... well, he says he loves me, and that he's praying for me; but something's just not there, Not like when Billy tells me."

"I feel the same way," Warren admitted, heading down the lake with Randall right beside him.

Frankie sat in dumb silence. Slowly he unlaced his skates and put his shoes and boots on. Then he headed back the way he had come, through the spruce and pine trees. Randall and Warren were right about him, he knew. He wasn't really thankful, and he didn't know Jesus like Billy did. But that was because he had only a lip profession, and Billy had Jesus living in his heart.

Tears slid out of Frankie's dark brown eyes and skipped down his cheeks. He, too, wanted what Billy had. Yes, he did; with all his heart, he wanted full salvation.

Dropping to his knees, he asked Jesus to forgive his sins and to come into his heart. And Jesus answered his prayer. Frankie was soundly converted and, like Billy, he became thankful for everything. He now had a three-hundred-sixty-five-day Thanksgiving in his heart. Oh, he was so very happy! Warren and Randall noticed the change: this time, Franklin's testimony was real.

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March 1990

Story 3

TOMMY'S FEAR

"Well! Well! Well!" Mr. Morris exclaimed, taking Tommy's hand and smiling down upon the little boy whose face seemed crestfallen and his eyes near to tears. "Where are those sunny-bright smiles today?" the jolly policeman asked in his equally jolly, booming-big voice.

Tommy gulped. He was sure he was going to choke on the heavy lump that seemed to be stuck inside his throat and made swallowing very difficult and almost impossible.

"You all right, Tommy boy?" Mr. Morris prodded gently. "Your father and mother doing OK? I haven't seen your dad since last Sunday in church."

Tommy swallowed. Hard. "They're fine, Mr. Morris," he answered, thankful that the big, friendly policeman had changed the subject from himself, Tommy--to his parents.

As soon as Tommy was across the street, Mr. Morris turned loose of his hand, saying, "God bless you, Tommy, my boy. Have a good day. Shine for Jesus. Keep smiling and, above all else, let Jesus be seen in you."

"Th... thank you, Mr. Morris," Tommy stammered. "And... and thank you for helping me to cross the street."

"It was a pleasure, little man," the kind policeman replied, hurrying away to resume his duties.

A big, bright tear trickled out of Tommy's eye. He stuck his hand in his coat pocket and felt the limp, coolly-damp daffodil that he had picked in the park. He had wanted it for Mother. He had seen its bud grow bigger and fuller and fatter each day and had decided that his mother must have that first bright yellow, slender-tall, deliciously-delightful fragrant spring flower.

He had meant for it to be a very, very special gift of love for her. Every day he had watched the bud; watched until it had opened and unfolded its smooth, soft petals until it stood like a regal queen upon its straight-as-an-arrow dark green stem. And he had gone to the park early and picked the beautiful flower. Then Mr. Morris came along

Now Tommy loved Mr. Morris, loved him a lot. But sometime and somewhere, Tommy had heard that the flowers that grew in the park were not to be picked. Yes, he had heard this, sometime and somewhere, and from somebody. But that one flower would certainly never be missed! he had told himself over again and again. And, besides, since he had wanted to give it to his mother as a very special gift it would be okay and all right to pick it.

Tommy hurried along, brushing tears from his bright, dark eyes, realizing, quite suddenly, why he had been afraid and felt fear well up inside him when he saw Mr. Morris. Mr. Morris was his friend. He knew this; and Mr. Morris was a good man; a helping, caring man. And until he, Tommy, had picked the lovely daffodil, he had never before been afraid when he saw Mr. Morris.

He lifted the bright flower from its dark hiding place inside his pocket and looked at it. Instead of its previous exquisite beauty, the daffodil was not only wilted but crushed, as well. And instead of its once lovely stateliness, it was ruined.

Tommy held the flower in his hand, How sorry he felt for it. He had ruined it, he knew, by shoving it down in his pocket when he saw Mr. Morris standing on the street corner. He had wanted to cover up and hide his "forbidden" flower and in doing so he had ruined and destroyed it forever. His fear had come because, sometime and somewhere, and from somebody, he had learned, and heard, that the flowers in the park must not be picked. They were planted by park officials and were meant to be enjoyed as a thing of beauty by and for the many people who visited the park. Tommy knew that, each year, crowds of people came to see their beautiful park. The flowers that bloomed from early spring to late fall were a big attraction to the park.

With the daffodil in his hand, Tommy turned around and headed back toward Mr. Morris. He had done wrong by picking the flower. He would confess it to Mr. Morris and would even offer to pay for it with money from his piggy bank. Then he would never fear the kind policeman again. It was sin that made one afraid of hearing God's Word preached, he knew. Sin loved darkness; it wanted to remain covered-like he had tried to do with the daffodil, by sticking it down

into his pocket. But until sin was uncovered and confessed, one could not be pardoned or forgiven. Tommy knew this too. And since God saw and knew everything, even the now-crushed and in-the-pocket daffodil, well, there was no point in trying to conceal or hide his sin any longer. Somewhere down the road, he knew he'd have to confess what he'd done, and it may just as well be right now, he decided.

Holding the flower gently in his hand, he headed straight for Mr. Morris. He knew that Jesus was going along with him and that he was doing the right thing.

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April 1990

Story 4

[NO TITLE WAS SHOWN -- Somehow, there was no Title printed with this Children's Story. Perhaps it was an oversight. -- DVM]

"It does, too, lay eggs!" Bitsy declared vehemently, looking daggers at Nevin. Just who did Nevin think he was? she wondered, feeling more and more agitated over the fact that Nevin Peters was so very religious and pious.

"Rabbits don't lay eggs," Nevin affirmed patiently and kindly. "Honest, Bitsy, they don't."

"But they do! Where else would colored eggs come from? Chickens don't lay all those brightly colored eggs. You know that!"

Nevin picked up a bit of grass and wound it around his finger. Then he laughed softly. "Our parents color the eggs; that's how they get those pretty bright shells on them," he said. "It's still the truth that rabbits don't lay eggs. Who ever heard of a rabbit laying an egg!"

"I have. It's the Easter bunny; he lays all kinds of beautiful eggs."

Again Nevin laughed. Then his face got all sober and sad looking. "Do you really believe that?" he asked.

"Of course I believe it, Nevin Peters! And I want you to know that next to Christmas, I like Easter. Easter's like Christmas, only in a different way. Instead of getting presents, I get all kinds of chocolate bunnies and marshmallow chicks and a whole bunch of beautiful colored eggs. I go to an Easter egg hunt in the park, and I get ever so many new clothes, too. Why, I'm even in the Easter parade."

Nevin sighed. He felt sad, sad and very sorry for Bitsy. "Is this all you know about Easter?" he asked quickly. "I... I mean, don't you know why we have Easter? Have you never heard what the real meaning of Easter is?"

Bitsy tossed her pretty blonde curls over her shoulders in a haughty manner. "Of course I know why we have Easter!" she declared vehemently. "It's so we can get Easter dresses and lovely eggs and have fun, Dummy!"

"Bitsy, will you listen to me?" Nevin asked solemnly. "You... you said you have never gone to church. Right?"

"Right."

"Well, I wish you'd go with us sometime. You'd learn so many things. For one thing, you'd learn that Easter isn't chocolate bunnies and marshmallow chicks and such things. It's the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He arose from the grave, Bitsy. He did! Surely, you've heard that Jesus was crucified, nailed by wicked men to a splintery old cross and left hanging there to die for your sins and for mine!"

Bitsy's face became suddenly very serious. "My... grandmother told me about this once. But is it true, Nevin? I mean, really true?"

"It is, Bitsy; every single part of it is true. You can read all about it in the Bible."

Bitsy swallowed. A great lump popped in her throat. "Why would Jesus die like that?" she asked quickly, searching Nevin's face. "To be nailed there!" she exclaimed, shuddering. "Why did He do it?"

Tears stole into Nevin's eyes. "Love, Bitsy. Love! For you and me. 'For God so loved the world,' " he quoted, " 'that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Jesus died for our sins., yours and mine. Think of it, Bitsy; He died to save our soul and take us to Heaven. After He died and was buried, He arose from the grave. He got up just like we do after we've taken a good nap. This is why we have Easter; Jesus conquered that old grave by coming out of it . . . alive!"

Suddenly Bitsy had deep respect for Nevin. "You'd make a good preacher," she said quickly. "I do wish my grandmother lived closer to me. She'd tell me things like you just did."

"Why not go to Sunday school and church with us, Bitsy? You'd learn what the Bible says we are to do and what not to do, and you'd soon realize that Easter isn't eggs and candy and new dresses."

"I believe you, Nevin, and I'm sorry for being angry with you. Let me go home and ask Mother if I may go to church with you. Now that I know the real meaning of Easter, I'd like to do something about it."

"You mean like asking Jesus to come into your heart?" Nevin asked.

"That's what I mean," Bitsy called across her shoulder as she hurried away.

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May 1990

Story 5

WHAT MOTHER WANTED MOST

June slipped quietly out the screen door. On tip-toe feet, she hurried along the house until she reached the bushy lilac at the back of the lawn. From then on, her escape to the icy-cold stream was easy.

She looked back toward the house to make sure that no one had seen her, then she skipped over the narrow meadow with its spring-green carpet of new-grown grass to the gurgling stream. The meadow carpet was tacked down all over with pretty yellow buttercups and bright, golden dandelions and daisies. June was delighted. Here was the answer to her bouquet for Mother, she thought happily, hurrying on toward the stream,

A meadow lark soared upward out of the grasses and sailed into the sky, tossing a song as it flew! If only she could somehow capture the beautiful song for Mother! she thought, watching until the happy songster disappeared above her.

Pulling off her shoes and socks, June walked in the cool grass toward the stream. The grass tickled her toes and felt like a big, thick, springy carpet beneath her feet Oh, May was such a beautiful month; she thought, feeling light and happy and free.

Coming to the stream, she paused and listened to its happy little sound. Here tall willows grew and swayed in the breeze. Their long, slender, string-like branches made a dense, cool shade and a gentle swish, swishing sound as the merry south wind danced through them. June loved to hear it. It reminded her of Grandma and how she used to rock her when she was very little, and whisper "shsh-sh-h-sh-h," in her equally tiny ears.

Putting her shoes and socks beneath one of the largest willows, she plunged her toes into the stream. Oh-h-h! It was cold; just like ice water.

She pulled her toes out of the water and giggled with glee A redwing blackbird, from his perch overhead, scolded her loudly. She looked up and laughed at him. "This doesn't just belong to you," she said softly. "It's for anyone who wants to come here."

The bird cocked his head and eyed June with a critical eye--then flew away.

Once again she dangled her toes in the water; then she stepped out into the crystal-clear stream, wading out to where the prettiest, smoothest, flattest stones lay clean and white at the bottom of the stream. With discriminating taste she began collecting only those stones which she thought were worthy of a place in her mother's tiny rock garden beneath the kitchen window.

Carefully she placed the stones in a basket which she had brought for the purpose. When the basket was full, she stepped out of the water. Her feet were purple-blue, but she felt happy. She had ever so many lovely stones for Mother.

The walk home was tiring; her basket was heavy. Oh, so heavy. She put her shoes and socks on and picked only a small bouquet of daisies instead of the big armful she had planned to take to Mother.

Before she reached the house, she was sneezing and her nose was running fiercely. She felt all funny and chilly, too.

"June! June!" Mother cried, when she saw her little girl. "Where have you been?" she asked. "Your father and I have been looking all over for you."

"Oh, Mother," June said. "I'm so-o tired and I . . . I feel all funny and achy in my legs and my head." And she began sneezing hard again. "I . . . I brought you these for . . . Mother's Day. They're for your rock garden, and..."

"And you're coming down with the flu," Mother said. "You've been in the water, and it's still like ice. Oh June, I told you not to."

"But I did it for you, Mother. For Mother's Day. And here are some flowers, too. I wanted more, but I felt too funny and sick to pick more."

Mother looked at June. Then she put her arms around her. "Thank you, honey; thank you," she said softly. "The stones and flowers are beautiful. But the nicest kind of present you can give me for Mother's Day is an obedient heart."

"I'm sorry, Mother; I really am. Please help me to bed, then you may punish me. I deserve it. Oh-h, my head aches so, and I... I'm so very cold and chilly."

Seeing how very ill June was, Mother said softly, "Come, dear, into a tub of hot water and then to bed for you. Your disobedience is bringing its own punishment with it. And it may last for many days, too. Now let's get a bath; then we'll tell Jesus how very sorry we are that we disobeyed and sinned against Him."

"Yes, please!" came the repentant reply.

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June 1990

Story 6

DAD'S HIGHEST COMPLIMENT

Joseph turned the page in the Bible story reading book then looked up at his dad. He reread the story and once again looked into the face of his father. How kind and tender was the face! he thought. But Dad could get very firm and stern when necessary, too, the boy realized. Firm and uncompromising where morals and holy convictions and principles were involved--like God. Again he studied the face of his father who sat reading the Bible.

"God loved us a lot, didn't He?" Joseph asked, surprising himself by the question.

Mr. Tate looked down at his son, sitting cross-legged on the floor. "He certainly did," he replied softly. "In fact, He loved us so much that He gave His only Son to die for us. Imagine it, Joseph; He gave Jesus, to die! For our sins; yours and mine, and the sins of the world."

Joseph was silent for a long time. Then he said, "That was really love, wasn't it, Dad?"

Tears brimmed and swam in Mr. Tate's eyes. "The greatest and deepest kind of love, my boy. Jesus Himself said, 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. 'Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.' "

Joseph made no reply. He sat thinking--deep, great thoughts. Thoughts that troubled his heart. Giving his father another long look, he got to his feet and hurried outside.

Pepper saw his little master and came bounding happily toward Joseph. "I can't play with you now, Pepper," he told the black and white spotted dog, "I need to think."

Pepper, taking the conversation as an invitation to play, jumped up and down like a rubber ball in front of Joseph.

"Not now, Pepper," Joseph repeated. "I must think. Think! Do you understand? No, I can see you don't. But then, I guess I shouldn't expect you to understand man's troubles and his thoughts. You're a dog, and dogs are different. They're not like people."

Pepper jumped up and down gleefully and wagged his tail fiercely. "Bow-wow-wow; woof-woof-woof," he barked.

Joseph patted the friendly dog then hurried out to the tree house to think. Pepper stood beneath the leafy tree, looking up into the branches where the house was nestled snugly and cozily, whining for his master to carry him up.

"Not now," Joseph said, as he looked down from the snug little house. "I want to concentrate, Pepper, and I can't do it with you wanting to play. I'll bring you up some other time. I promise."

Giving one last pitiful whine, the dog sat down beneath the tree in full resignation, every now and then casting a wistful glance at the house above him.

Joseph sat on the floor and thought about what his father had told him. God loved him... Joseph Tate... so much that He sent Jesus to die for him! Oh, God must have loved him greatly and deeply to do something wonderful and so sacrificial. But then, it was easy to believe that God would be so very unselfish and kind, and so concerned about him Joseph thought; his father was like this, too. That's why he kept looking at his dad; he was so much like what he read about God and Jesus in the Bible story book.

Suddenly, big, salty tears trickled out of Joseph's eyes and chased each other down his cheeks. How he wished he were like his dad, who was so much like God. He didn't like being a sinner. No, he didn't. His heart felt all sad and hungry and unsatisfied, like it was searching for something. Or was it Someone? he wondered, getting to his feet and hurrying down the tree.

He ran across the lawn to the house with Pepper chasing after him in an ecstasy of sheer delight. Reaching the kitchen door, he patted the spotted head then hurried in to where his father sat, still reading the Bible.

"Dad," he cried, "I want to give Jesus my heart. Will you pray for me, please? You are so much like Jesus and God that I want to be like you."

Laying his Bible down carefully, Mr. Tate knelt beside his weeping son whose prayer was speedily answered.

"I'm so glad you're my dad!" Joseph said between shouts of praise and tears of happiness and joy. "You made me want to be like Jesus."

Mr. Tate could scarcely speak for crying. "You have paid me the highest and greatest compliment or tribute a boy can give his father," he said brokenly. "Thank you, my son. Now there will be two of us living like Jesus."

"Yes, two of us, Dad, and three, with Mother," Joseph said quickly, thankful that his heart had finally found its rest in Jesus.

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July 1990

Story 7

THE FLAG IS PASSING BY

Josh and Judith climbed the small hill in back of their house and stood looking out over the small town in which they lived. How pretty the town looked, and how peaceful, too. From every porch, a flag waved. The red, white, and blue flapped gently in the soft breeze that hopscotched up and down the narrow streets and played tag with the many flags. Oh, they were so beautiful, those flags. So very, very beautiful!

"Josh, I'm all excited!" Judith told her twin brother. "When I think what those flags stand for..." Her sentence trailed provocatively.

"I know what you mean and how you feel." Josh said in a soft voice. "I'm so glad that God let us be born in America"

"Me too" Judith answered. "Just think what it would be like to live in a Communistic country where God's name dare not be mentioned even. Oh Josh, what would we do? I love Jesus so very much, and if I didn't dare to talk to Him in prayer, nor be able to mention His dear name even, oh, what would we do?"

Josh was silent for a while, thinking of the many Christians who were enduring severe trials and persecutions in some of the countries. "I don't know what we'd do" he replied seriously. "But I know I love America, and I'm proud of our flag and what it stands for. Just look at those flags, Judith; they look like they're waving to welcome people."

Judith clapped her hands together in sheer ecstasy, exclaiming, "Oh Josh, you are so smart! They do look like they're waving at people. At us, too." Quickly she put her hand over her heart and began saying, "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America..."

"And to the republic for which it stands" Josh chimed in, standing straight and tall and reverently respectful.

"One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all" both finished in unison.

"I think we should pledge allegiance to the Christian flag too" Judith said quickly.

"We can," her brother told her, "only there aren't any Christian flags flying to say the pledge to."

"Uncle Ben's got one. I'm sure he has it on the porch with the American flag. Let's run down the hill and see, Josh. I feel all patriotic and... and soldierly, like David when he killed Goliath."

Josh laughed. "Some soldier you'd make," he teased, "with those pretty, long braids and yellow hair ribbons."

"What's this about flags?" a voice asked just as the children started down the hill.

Turning, they saw a strange young man.

"We just said the pledge of allegiance to our flag." Josh said. "And we are going to Uncle Ben's house and say our pledge to the Christian flag!"

"That's great!" the young man commented. "I come here every year at this time to see the flags and to feel the patriotism of the people of this town. It does something for me. We used to

have the same kind of feeling in our school, but not anymore. We used to have Bible reading and prayer every morning, but nothing anymore. And believe me. I miss it all. It always made the day go smoother and better for me; for everybody, really."

"We pray every day in our school." Josh told the young man.

"And read the Bible." Judith added quickly, "and pledge allegiance to the Christian flag and to the American flag."

"You go to a Christian school, I would imagine?"

The children nodded.

"That's great," the man answered. "I love America and all that it stands for, by way of religious liberty and freedom of speech and such like things. My grandfather gave his life to help keep these freedoms. But come, I hear the band playing. Let's go down the hill and pledge allegiance to the flag with all the loyal, noble and true citizens of this town.., and all those of all America. I get all choked up when I hear THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER and AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL being played."

"So do I," Josh said, as they hurried down the hill.

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August 1990

Story 8

YIELD NOT

It was such a beautiful day. In fact, Benjamin decided it was one of the most beautiful days he had ever seen. The earth was filled with sunshine; birds were singing, and flowers were blooming everywhere in Grandma's yard, in her garden, and up and down the rose arbor and the trellis.

Benjamin sighed with sheer contentment, then he leaned against the apple tree and looked upward. The sky was as blue as the morning glories that bloomed on the fence, and the clouds looked like playful woolly lambs. They really did; lambs that hopscotched across the sky instead of gamboling across Grandpa's meadow.

He watched the clouds for a long time. Then he ran across the lawn to the barn where HaPenny was neighing and nickering for him.

"I'm here, HaPenny. I suppose you want more grain" he told the gentle mare, patting the satin-smooth hair on her nose.

For answer, HaPenny neighed again.

"Just one scoop more" Benjamin said with finality. "This will have to be your last grain-treat before supper. No more snacking. Grandma says it's a bad habit to get into and that it's not good for one to do."

HaPenny neighed again, then she nudged Benjamin with her nose, as if to say "thank you" before eating the oats and wheat.

Hearing the low hum of Grandpa's tractor in the alfalfa field, Benjamin hurried outside. Oh, how he longed to be with Grandpa. But he was told to stay away while Grandpa was mowing. The mower blade could cut his leg off.

He sat on the split raft fence and watched as Grandpa made round after round in the nearby field. Then, jumping off the fence, he walked around the barn to where the new-mown hay was piled in the haymow overhead. How deliciously good and sweet-smelling it was!

Benjamin leaned against the barn door and looked longingly toward the mow. Oh, he did wish he was allowed to climb the ladder and play in the hay!

"Go ahead" a voice urged. "Do what you'd like to do"

Benjamin nearly jumped with fright. "I can't" he answered back. "Grandpa said not to; said I may fall down the hay chute"

"Sissy!" the evil voice chided. "That ladder's stout; it's built solidly against the wall of the barn."

Benjamin eyed the ladder. It was solid, and it was built against the barn wall. From the bottom of the floor where he was standing clear up to the eaves, the ladder climbed the wall, long and narrow but solidly strong.

He stepped over to the ladder and looked up, then he cast a curious glance to the hay chute directly in front and to the side of it. If he climbed the ladder and fell . . . well

"Come on! No one's here to see you" the voice urged. "You'll have fun up in the haymow. Why, even if you would fall, you'd land on the pile of hay down near HaPenny's stall. Go on; try it."

Benjamin squared his shoulders. "NO, old Satan!" he said out loud, "I refuse to yield to you and your temptations. Jesus is my Lord and my Saviour, and I love Him too much to sin against Him by being disobedient to Grandpa."

Turning quickly, he fled from the upper part of the barn and almost ran into Grandpa.

"Why Benjamin, what's wrong?" Grandpa asked. "Something frighten you? Why the big rush?"

"I was just running away from temptation, Grandpa."

"Temptation, dear boy?"

"Yes, temptation. The devil told me to go up into the haymow. But I remembered the song about not yielding to temptation; that yielding was sin."

"Would you like to go up there, Benjamin?"

"Oh Grandpa, do you mean it? Really? Yes, yes, I'd love to go if you'll permit me to."

"A little rest will do me good" Grandpa said, starting for the ladder. "Here, I'll help you up first. You may play in the hay while I try to remember where the part is that I need for the hay mower. I'm proud of you" Grandpa said. "Each time you say no to the devil it makes it easier to say no the next time."

"I know" Benjamin said, reaching the top of the ladder and stepping over on the hay that was piled almost up to the barn roof. "Jesus made me stronger in my soul when I said no to the devil and ran away. I can feel it, Grandpa."

"Course you can, laddie. It works that way" Grandpa replied, settling himself on top of the hay while Benjamin played nearby and sang lustily,

"Yield not to temptation,
For yielding is sin;
Each vict'ry will help you
Some other to win..."

* * * * *

September 1990

Story 9

ALWAYS-LATE JACK

"Jack, hurry, or you'll be late for school. You'll miss the bus" Mother called from the bottom of the stairs. "Ja--ck! You're going to be late."

Mother started up the stairs, but saw baby Todd in time to rush to his side and save him from falling out of the high chair. "What a mess you made of your cereal!" she told the blue-eyed baby, scooping him up in her arms and hurrying him to the bathroom for a thorough clean-up job.

By the time Todd was shiny-clean and dressed in clean clothing, the school bus was gone. Mother's heart was heavy; she hadn't stood at the door to wave good-bye to Janet and Jonell, a thing she always did, and, again, Jack had missed the bus.

Cuddling Todd to her, she sat in the rocking chair to think. What should she do about Jack? As Christian parents, she and her husband had followed the admonitions and injunctions of the book of Proverbs to the very letter in disciplining their children, not on a hit-and-miss basis, but a consistently Biblical one.

Hot tears stung her eyes. Getting to her feet, she hurried to the shed to pray, taking Todd with her.

In his bedroom upstairs, Jack slept on and on. The sun shone its sunny head around the maple tree and poked Jack's nose with her warm rays; still he slept. He dreamed of meadows and foxes and of fighting rainbow trout on the end of his fishing line. Then suddenly his dream changed. He was fishing, to be sure, beside his dad. One minute they were talking together, his dad and he, the next instant he was talking to himself; his dad was gone! Just like that, quick as he could blink his eyes: gone!

Forgetting about his fishing tackle... the lures and everything... Jack began running up and down the bank of the fast-flowing stream, calling..., almost shouting..., for his father. But the only answer he received was the hollow mocking echo of his own frantic voice. "Dad! Dad!" he screamed.

Suddenly Jack was awake WIDE AWAKE! He sat up in bed and rubbed the tears off his cheeks where they had rolled down while he was searching for his dad in his dream.

He jumped out of bed and dressed; then he made the bed and rushed downstairs. "Mom," he called brokenly. "I'm sorry I'm late again. I promise I'll..."

Where was everybody? he wondered. And why was the house so deathly quiet and silent?

"Mom!" he called again, racing from room to room.

He hurried up the stair steps, almost stumbling in his haste. "Mother!" he cried, seeing the beds all made and the rooms in neat order. "Mother, where are you?"

Tears were flowing freely down his face now. Mother was gone. Gone! Todd too! Even Dad! The car was in the driveway..., empty!

"O God, hear me! Help me!" Jack called, falling to his knees in prayer. "I... I'm just plain lazy, God" he cried, confessing his sins. "I'm lazy and..., and terribly disobedient. Lord God, You know how many times I've missed the school bus, and how I've broken Father and Mother's heart. And now..., well, I... I guess You've come and taken everybody to Heaven in the rapture, and I... O God! I've been left behind! Oh please, forgive me of all my sins and save my poor lost soul. I don't want to go to hell Forgive me, Jesus! Come into my heart. I'll never be lazy nor disobedient again. I promise..."

In the silent house, Jack prayed until he was truly born again and forgiven of his many sins. His old lazy, disobedient heart was changed, made all new and different in Jesus.

He got to his feet and walked downstairs to the kitchen again. Todd's cereal was scattered over the tray of his high chair. Jack stared at the mess. He was certain-sure that the rapture had taken place and that Mother was gone.., she never allowed anything like that to stay on Todd's tray.

He sat in the rocking chair and buried his face in his hands, sobbing unashamedly. Suddenly he heard the door open. Turning, he saw Mother and baby Todd.

"MOTHER!" he cried, rushing to her side and flinging himself into her arms. "O Mother, I thought Jesus had come and taken you and Father, and everybody here, up in the rapture I'm so glad you're still here I'm a new boy, Mother: Jesus saved my soul a little while ago, I'll never miss the bus again. I'm going to obey you and Father . . . always. And Mother, I'm going to get sanctified wholly, like you and Dad have done. I'm going to go up in the rapture when Jesus comes."

Tears shimmered in Mother's pretty blue eyes. Jack was changed, she saw. What Jesus had done for him was real! She hugged him to her and thanked the Lord for answering her prayers.

* * * * *

October 1990

Story 10

IF YE FORGIVE NOT

Lorie sat on a fallen log near the edge of the ravine and put her face in her hands. For as long as she could remember, she and Mellodie had been friends. Best friends. Suddenly her best friend had turned against her and wasn't her best friend anymore. In fact, Mellodie wouldn't even speak to her!

Lorie felt all crushed and crumbly in her heart; kind of like something had broken in her chest. Big tears rushed to her eyes and skipped down her pretty cheeks. What had she done to cause Mellodie to treat her like a stranger? she wondered for the umpteenth time. All she could think of was what Jill was supposed to have told Mellodie about her.., something that was not true at all.

Lorie tossed the thought away like it was poison. She must not think anything evil about Jill; not about anybody. Positively and absolutely not. It was evil to do so. Still, Mellodie did say that Jill had said....

"Please help me, dear Jesus." Lorie said aloud in a quick prayer-plea to God. "I will not think anything evil about Jill. No, I won't. Nor Mellodie either."

Quickly Lorie stood to her feet. She looked across the ravine to where Mellodie's house was nestled among a grouping of cottonwood trees. Every day they used to call to each other,

finding out when each could play with the other. It was so much fun, listening to the echo of their call and their conversation. And now, for four days, Mellodie refused to answer her call.

"It's Jill's fault." a voice told her. "Jill came between you and Mellodie. Get even with her."

"No. No!" Lorie cried. "Please, Jesus, help me. I love Jill, and I love Mellodie."

"But can't you see that Jill's to blame!" the tempter exclaimed, trying to get Lorie's attention. "Forget about them and get a new friend."

Lorie fell to her knees in prayer. Jesus said that unless she forgave those who had wronged her she would not be forgiven. God wouldn't hear her prayer even. No, she must forgive if she expected to be forgiven.

She prayed until she knew Jesus had heard, then she got to her feet, feeling all warm and good inside her heart. She knew that she must always be willing and ready to forgive any and all wrongs which were done to her if she were to keep the peace and the joy of Jesus in her soul. This was the only way to constant victory.

She looked across the ravine again; then she called Mellodie's name. No answer. Calling more loudly this time. she said, "I love you, Mellodie. Please come over and play with me."

Her words hit the wall of the ravine and bounced up and down its sides, echoing back and forth, "I love you, Mellodie. Please come over and play with me." No answer.

Lorie waited for a while then she called again, "Come over and play with me, Mellodie. I love you."

"Come over and play with me, Mellodie" I love you." the echo repeated clearly. Still no Mellodie.

Lorie buried her face in her hands and cried. Oh, how she missed Mellodie! Remembering how patient Jesus had been with her, she decided to call again.

"Mellodie, I love you. Please come over and play with me. Bring Jill, if she's there."

She heard the echo of her words and suddenly a bright red plaid skirt appeared at the edge of the cottonwoods. It was Mellodie. She was waving her hands. "Do you really want me to come over?" she asked.

"Oh I do. I do!" Lorie repeated quickly.

The figure in the bright red plaid skirt seemed to fly into action; Mellodie raced across the bridge that connected both sides of the ravine and was soon standing beside Lorie.

"I'm so glad you called." she told Lorie, panting for breath. "You're a real Christian; Jill's a bear and a..."

Lorie placed a finger over Mellodie's lips. "Please don't." she said. "I love Jill. She's lonely and needs friends."

"But Lorie, she said something bad about you; a... a lie!"

"If we don't forgive others." Lorie said, "Jesus will not forgive us. Now let's call Jill. I want her to come over."

Mellodie scratched her head; then she said, "Know what I think, Lorie? That you're wonderful. And if you'll have me, I'd like to be your best friend again. For always."

Lorie smiled. Taking Mellodie's hand in hers, they started walking along the ravine toward Jill's house.

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November 1990

Story 11 SHARING

Jonathan stood inside the shed looking at his father's pumpkins. There were big pumpkins and little pumpkins; great, round, fat ones and longer oval-shaped ones. Some were yellow, others were a deep beautiful orange.

It smelled good inside the shed; sort of earthy, and like a cornfield with brown rattly-sounding fodder. Jonathan breathed long and deep, trying to fill his lungs with the sweet perfume of it all. He felt all happy and excited inside his chest... Mother said he could pick out the pumpkin from which she would make the Thanksgiving pies.

He walked around the piles and piles of pumpkins, tasting pumpkin pies with each and every one he looked at. At last he settled on a round, fat, golden orange pumpkin and hurried into the house. "Our pumpkin pie pumpkin!" he exclaimed to his mother, setting the golden trophy on the table.

"You made an excellent choice," Mother commented. "This will make delicious pies."

Jonathan beamed. His greatest delight was in pleasing his blessed Saviour and his father and mother. "Day after tomorrow will be Thanksgiving Day," he said. "I can hardly wait for it to get here."

"I know how you feel." Mother said. "I used to be the same way when I was a child. I can't help but feel sorry for those who will have little or nothing to eat, though," she added softly.

"Nothing to eat! Why Mother, everybody has turkey or ham or chicken to eat on Thanksgiving."

"Not everybody, Jonathan; the poor can't afford these things."

A lump popped up somewhere in Jonathan's throat. He hurried away to his bedroom. Would Monty have good things to eat? he wondered. And would there be any smooth, spicy pumpkin pies at their house? Monty's folks were very, very poor. Suddenly, Jonathan felt sad. He must do something to help Monty and his folks to have a good Thanksgiving, too; wasn't one happiest when he was sharing?

Jonathan hung his coat on the hanger inside the closet, being sure to put the woolen cap on the shelf so he could find it without bothering Mother when he needed it. Then he sat down to think. What could he do to help Monty?

He bowed his head and prayed; then he opened his eyes and right there before him on the dresser sat the big fat toad which held all his savings. The toad seemed to be saying: "Open me and look inside... Surprised I'm sure you'll be; My tummy's full., clear up to my mouth... And I can help that family."

Laughing, Jonathan lifted the toad off the dresser. It felt heavy. When he emptied the contents out onto the floor, he shouted with glee, "Mother! Mother! Monty's Thanksgiving dinner; it's all here! When can we go shopping?"

Mrs. Brisco's eyes were shiny-bright with tears. "Why, Jonathan," she said, "I do believe you have enough there for a turkey and all the trimmings! Won't Monty and his folks be happy! We'll go grocery shopping right now."

The grocery store looked more beautiful than ever as Jonathan walked up one aisle and down another with his mother, selecting the necessary things for the poor family's dinner. And for the first time in his young life, Jonathan experienced Acts 20:35... "It is more blessed to give than to receive." His heart felt warm all over when he saw Mr. and Mrs. Montague's happy tears of thankfulness for the food, and when he saw Monty's smile that spread all the way across his face.

But another thought saddened the bright little face of Jonathan. His money hadn't stretched far enough for a pumpkin pie for his friend's Thanksgiving dinner! Now, how could he remedy that?

"Mother," he said quickly, as soon as he was inside his own house, "May I give my share of the pumpkin pie to Monty and his family? We couldn't buy any..."

"What a dear, unselfish boy the Lord gave your father and me!" Mother commented. "You may give them two whole pies, Jonathan. I plan on doing some baking for them, the Lord willing."

Jonathan hurried to his mother and threw his arms around her neck. He had the most wonderful father and mother in all the world, he was sure, and he was the happiest boy in the world. He had learned the pure delight and joy of sharing!

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December 1990

Story 12

THE BEST GIFT FOR JESUS

Ding, dong, ding, dong, ding

Trenton stopped piling the snow to listen to the ringing bells. How very beautiful and clear they sounded, he thought, digging the shovel into a fluffy marshmallow drift before hurrying across the lawn to where Jennifer and Barbara were putting the finishing touches to a much-overweight snowman.

"Don't you just love to hear the church bells ring?" he asked his sisters as he picked up a long, slender golden-orange carrot and shoved it into the face for a nose.

"Oh I do, I do!" Jennifer exclaimed happily as she inserted coal into the snowman for eyes and used six scarlet radishes for his mouth.

"I do too." Barbara chorused. "And I like our snowman even if he is fat."

Placing an old black hat on the snowman's head, Jennifer turned serious eyes upon her brother. "I wonder if church bells rang the night Jesus was born," she said out loud.

Trent stood back and surveyed the finished snow creation. "Hey, the hat gives that frigid old man personality and... dignity!" He complimented his sister profusely.

"Trent," Jennifer said seriously, "didn't you hear me? Did church bells ring for the Baby Jesus when He was born?"

Trenton turned away from the portly looking snowman and faced his sister. Then he hung his head. "No, Jennifer," he said sadly, "there were no church bells that rang for Jesus when He was born."

"Why not?" came Jennifer's immediate question. "They should have; cause Jesus' coming was special and ... and important."

"Well, for one thing" the older brother explained, "not too many people were looking for Jesus to be born in the way He was born. Dad said the Jews expected their Messiah to come as a king, not as a tiny baby. And especially not as a baby born in a stable and laid in a manger!"

"Oh, Trent!" Jennifer cried, as tears slid out of her great, round dark eyes. "Why didn't they welcome Jesus? WHY? Mother said He left Heaven and came to earth to die for our sins! And . . . and Trenton, He wouldn't have needed to do this. But He did it just the same., all because He loved us so very much. He should have had a grand and wonderful welcome. Bells should have rung and . . . and.."

"You remember who heard the good news first, and who welcomed Him and rejoiced over His coming." Trenton said, interrupting his sister's unfinished sentence. "It was the humble shepherds."

"And I wish I could have been a shepherd then." Barbara added seriously and thoughtfully. "I would have run as fast as I could to the stable and the manger. Oh, wouldn't it have been wonderful to see Jesus and . . . and., to kiss His dear face!"

"It really would have been," Jennifer declared. "And maybe we could have picked Him up and held Him in our arms too."

"What a beautiful subject," Uncle Joel exclaimed, coming upon the children as they talked. "I just know you all would have been loving and kind to the Saviour if you could have seen Him. But I know something really wonderful..." and Uncle Joel's sentence was left hanging enticingly somewhere in mid-air above the children's heads.

"What is it?" the three children cried in unison. "Please tell us, Uncle Joel!"

A broad smile parted the uncle's lips. Rolling tiny snowballs and tucking them into the front of the snowman's chest to simulate buttons on a coat, he said, "I know what you can do to make the Lord Jesus very, very happy In fact, it's something each and every one of us can do.."

"I know what it is" Trenton declared. "We can give Him our heart. That makes Him happiest of all."

"You are so right," the uncle replied. "This is the very best thing anyone can do for Jesus. When we give Him our heart and life, and surrender everything to Him, we are proving to Him that we really do love and appreciate Him and what He did for us by leaving Heaven and His dear Father to come down to earth to be our Saviour. And while bells didn't ring to welcome His coming, every time a sinner repents and gets saved, there is great rejoicing in heaven over the soul that has been converted."

The children looked at each other and smiled.

"We made Jesus very happy, then," Jennifer said softly with shining eyes, "because we gave Him our hearts and now He lives inside."

Uncle Joel nodded his head reverently and brushed the happy tears from his eyes, knowing the best gift any boy or girl, man or woman could give to Jesus would be a total surrender of the heart.

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THE END