

Copyright 2001 By Lucille King  
All Rights Reserved and Duplication  
Of This Publication Is Forbidden,  
Except For Personal Use

\* \* \* \* \*

Digital Edition 09/01/2001  
By Holiness Data Ministry

\* \* \* \* \*

## Spare Hours

By Mrs. Paul E. King

From the September 6, 1981 Sunday School Beacon

Margaret Finnagen kissed the full, round cheeks of her youngest offspring fondly then waved good-bye as the six-year-old ran eagerly down the sidewalk and stepped inside the door of the big yellow school bus. Angie was such a tiny little thing to be going off to school, Margaret mused as the bus disappeared from view. Yes, such a very tiny, petite and diminutive child.

Without realizing it almost, subtle tears slid out of her dark brown eyes and rushed frantically down her olive-colored skin. Taking her hand, she brushed them away. Going to school was a normal thing for every child, she scolded herself. The natural thing really. She had gone; her mother before her had gone, and her mother's mother, also.



Did they feel as bereft when their offspring left -- the last one especially -- as she did? Was this also a natural, normal thing which happened to every mother who loved her children and was solicitous over them and careful of their upbringing, she wondered, or was she just one of those overly-fond, overly-cautious mothers?

Suppose something happened to Angie? Then what would she do? God had sent the child to James and her long after the other children were started in school; Angie came as a sort of second family. Ever and always, she was guarded, protected, loved and coddled by her older brothers and sisters. But today she was on her own; there

were no big brothers and older sisters to see that she made it into the right classroom and to look out for her when she got settled in school. What if her teacher didn't like their little girl? And what if the other children were rough and hateful to her? What if... what if . . . what if...?

The questions and imaginations spun around dizzily inside Margaret's head. This would never do, she decided, quickly pulling herself together and falling to her knees beside a chair. It was a trick of the devil to make her become over-anxious. This would, ultimately, bring on a migraine headache if she didn't cast her every care and all her anxiety upon the Lord.

"O God," she prayed, "help me; hear me! Today Angie goes to school. She is so very little, dear Lord. She is our baby -- Thy special gift to our entire family. Watch over her -- where my eyes cannot follow and see.

"Oh, my God, -- my wonderful Lord -- there are so many things she does not know -- about the other students and classmates who may tease and torment her and laugh at her for her mistakes, or maybe make fun of her because her clothes are not as good as theirs, or because her hair is hanging in two long, straight but beautiful braids. You know how brutal and unkind some can be, Lord. She does not know about this kind of cruelty yet. Nor does she know about pushing or shoving or how much it hurts -- being tag end on a crack-the-whip line. Protect her, all-wise, all-kind God with a grateful heart.

"And please, Lord, help her to love and respect her teachers, each and every one that she'll ever have in the long, bitter-sweet years of her schooling. Help Angie to remember that they get tired, too. Help her to fill their days with love -- no veneer-polishing, but that warm, steady, little flame that will tell them she appreciates them and what they are doing for her.

"She's a bright child, Lord, as bright as a new silver dollar. Please give her grace to carry this gift with humility. May she exercise this specially-endowed gift from Thee to be used for Thee in building up Thy kingdom.

"Please, my God, open her eyes and heart to the troubles of those about her so that all who look to her may be comforted, and none through her be willfully hurt or grieved. I commit her into Thy hands .... "

With the final commitment, Margaret felt the load lift, the anxiety flee. God was far superior to her in looking after their little sunbeam, she mused in silent meditation, getting to her feet and beginning the myriad jobs that awaited her.

She was amazed how swiftly the house work was completed and finished and, taking a shower after all was neatness and orderliness, she decided that, since she had time for other things now, she would run over to Mrs. Banner.

Margaret's heart beat wildly as she stepped up on the woman's porch and pressed the door bell. For years she had dreams of getting out and doing something more for God than what she had been doing—things like visiting the sick and the elderly and taking them grocery shopping or writing letters for those who were no longer able to hold a pen steady and write legibly. And now, with Angie in first grade, her dreams were to become reality. While Angie was learning, she, Margaret Finnagen, would be doing-for God and for others.

She was reveling in the discovery that, at last, she had hours of free time, and her mind was so absorbed with the revelation that she didn't notice when Mrs. Banner opened the door.

"My dear Mrs. Finnagen!" The widow woman spoke softly, startling Margaret out of her daydreaming and bringing her back to the present. "Do come inside, please. This is such a pleasant and welcome surprise. It isn't often that I get company anymore; not with Janice and Tim moving away and Norma in college."

Following the petite woman inside, Margaret said, "That's why I came; I thought a bit of company would do you good. Then too, I want to know what housework I can help you do. What about groceries; do you need to go to the store?"

Mrs. Banner's eyes brimmed with happy tears. "Sit down, my dear," she instructed kindly. "And thanks for your offer of help; but the housework, and tending my garden and the flower beds, are my main source of physical exercise. No, there is nothing needs done in either area. Thanks. I will allow you to take me to the grocery store later on. But Margaret, the nicest thing you can do for me is just to visit with me. It gets so terribly lonesome without the children here to stop in and visit. Tim's company transferred him to the midwest and Tom's employer felt he should be over the business in the east; so that took Janice. But this is normal when one is married. I'm not complaining, my dear; God forbid it! Just explaining why I get hungry for company occasionally."

Margaret patted the small arm so near to her. "Complaining is the farthest thing from you," she said. "And I am truly grateful for your friendship. Now that Angie is in school I shall be more free to spend a part of my day with you and others who may need my help. We need each others' help and prayers and encouragement. Christian fellowship is vital to one's spiritual growth."

The two visited for a long while, reading Scripture and discussing it and praying, and when Margaret took her leave, after carrying the groceries inside, she felt a wave of warm satisfaction and accomplishment wash over her.

This was a wonderfully rewarding way of filling in those long hours of waiting until the children got home from school, she mused contentedly and happily, making a mental tabulation of the homes in which she would visit and the people whom she would contact.

This would be her way of helping to build up God's kingdom and filling the empty church pews. Not all the visiting and contacting people should be thrown onto their pastor's already over-loaded shoulders. No, indeed. She and her husband and their family had a part to play and a place to fill in touching men and women and bringing them into the church services so they could hear God's Word as it fell from the lips of their pastor, God's servant.

Arriving home a half-hour before Angie's bus dropped her off in front of the house, Margaret prepared a blackberry cobbler to finish off her oven meal of scalloped potatoes, baked beans and ham. She was surprised over how utterly alive she felt, how needed she was, and what a worth-while mission she had filled in her spare hours.

Humming softly, she removed lettuce from the refrigerator to make a tossed salad. Life was beautiful when one worked happily at helping to build up God's kingdom, she thought, making plans for baking cookies to take with her when she went calling on the new family down the street.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE END