The Little Church
By Mrs. Paul E. King
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Paul climbed the steep, dusty hill in back of the three-room parsonage and with his Bible in his hand, leaned wearily on the old rail fence that joined Mr. Whetstone's land. The night was clear; crickets and katydids joined together in song, all unmindful of the intense heat. Would it ever rain? he wondered as he stood looking up at the pale moon that was making its way across the heavens.

For a long time, he remained motionless, thinking. Had he missed God's will for his life by leaving the big church with its membership of two hundred and thirty? Glen Haven was never like this! The parsonage was spacious and beautifully decorated with the finest of furnishings and rich tapestries. The town streets were lined with stately oaks and maples, and flowers and shrubs abounded everywhere. Little wonder then that Glenna cried as she viewed the small three-room frame house which was to become their home. However, either through some miracle of which he was not aware or Glenna's knowledge of interior decorating, the three rooms were transformed into a miniature replica of a dream home. Glenna was an excellent housekeeper, but better still, she was a sincere, devout Christian wife. He could hear her voice again as she sweetly said:

"Paul, don't you think the Lord would be pleased if we took the little church at Broken Bow? It seems no one wants to go there, and the Lord has a special work for us. I've always felt that He'd use us in sort of... well... I guess you'd call it Home Mission work. You see, Paul," she continued, and he could feel the touch of her soft hand now as then as she looked up in his face with her honest, sincere blue eyes as she added, "it's
easy to get pastors for the big, good churches that already have their roots down and pay big salaries, but there are few truly consecrated couples who are willing to weather through the storm and hardships in a little place; especially is this so of Broken Bow. I know it's almost totally desert and waste land, but what miracles God can work as you and I use our hands and apply the methods and techniques we already know. Why, Paul, there's an old well there and we could irrigate enough of the land around us to make a garden."

How simple and childlike was Glenna in her belief and trust in God and him, Paul thought as he gazed wearily heavenward.

The irrigation proved hard and laborious at first, but together they had laid the pipes, and he had rigged up an old impoverished-looking pump that worked like magic. The results were heartening--almost unbelievable, in fact. The carrots they grew were like miniature baseball bats, while cabbages, lettuce, onions, squash, beans, tomatoes, and beets all responded to the water and yielded bushel upon bushel of edibles. "Our Magic Mesa," Glenna had called it. And magic it was, after all the hard, back-breaking work. Glenna had canned hundreds and hundreds of quarts of vegetables and stored them in the fruit cellar he had dug out for her.

All these things, he thought as he stood leaning wearily on the fence rail, are fine in themselves, but what about our church!

This was what really bothered him. All summer they had prayed and fasted and been faithful to the Lord and His leadings, yet they had seen only one man and his wife get genuinely converted.

"God doesn't measure things like you and I do, dear," Glenna told him one evening at the supper table. "He said there is more rejoicing in Heaven over one soul that repents than over ninety and nine just persons," she had added.

Yes, that was so, he mentally reflected. "But why can't I move Mr. Whetstone? He's as contemptible and mean a man as ever I've seen," he said aloud.

In the profound silence and stillness of the night a soft whisper said:

"Perhaps that's your trouble. You've been trying to move him; you haven't given Me a chance. Turn Mr. Whetstone over to Me and stop worrying about him. No man can come unto the Father except the Holy Ghost draws him. Just place Mr. Whetstone and all the other problems in my hands. I will go before thee and make the crooked places straight."

Paul fell to his knees, no longer weary and worn; it was as though an angel had sent a heavenly zephyr down upon his aching, perspiring body.
All night he wrestled upon his knees in prayer and intercession to God, and just as the sun was stretching her long golden fingers out to kiss and caress the earth with sunshine, he entered the kitchen of the parsonage where Glenna, as radiantly fresh-looking as the sun, and tiny John were waiting for him.

"Did you rest well, Glenna?" he asked tenderly, fondly embracing his wife.

"Real well, dear, after I got to bed," she replied. "Paul," she said as tears began flowing down her rosy cheeks, "it's going to be all right. Everything is. I know it! After you slipped out of bed and up on the hill to pray, I prayed a long time by Johnny's crib and the Lord promised to go before us and make the crooked places straight. I just know He's going to answer prayer and do what He has promised."

"Why, honey, God gave me the very same promise last night. Isn't it wonderful!"

"Yes it is, dear. And I feel strongly impressed to start a missionary campaign."

"Missionary campaign? What do you mean!"

"I mean," Glenna replied, "that we should present missions to our people--the Navajo work, British Guyana and the Philippines. Our people need to have a part in this. If we'll broaden our vision as the Holy Ghost helps us, our people won't feel their poverty so keenly. And the Lord always blesses those who have a missionary spirit."

"Say, you've got something there!" Paul admitted, picking up the cooing, begging Johnny and folding him fondly to his bosom. "It's too bad we didn't do something like this to begin with . . . when we first came here, I mean. I believe Mr. Miles has more money than he's letting on. I honestly do."

"Do you really?" Glenna asked, breaking eggs into the skillet and giving her husband a quizzical look.

"Yes, I do."

"What makes you think he has money, dear? Anything special, or just that wonderful sense of feeling with which God has so richly endowed you?"

"I can't pinpoint it to anything particular, but I still believe it, Glenna. It's just that my inmost self keeps telling me this is so. Funny, isn't it? It's a sort of . . . well . . . an intuitive feeling that he's really watching and observing you and me to see if we're real or if we're phonies. They've had some pretty hard and sad disappointments, I understand."

"Really? And how did you discover that?"

"It pays to keep one's mouth shut and ears open, honey."
Glenna laughed. "And that's how you learned this?" she teased, apologizing for not having any meat to offer him with his breakfast.

"I did, truly and honestly so. Bradford Stonyface was telling it to one of his little friends as I was getting something in the hardware store in town one day. I was too embarrassed to let him know I was there so I did a quick disappearing act."

Glenna seated herself across the table from her husband and when prayer was said she said softly, "Oh, my heart yearns to be of help to these dear, dear people. Sometimes I feel it's going to break if we don't see them move out for God."

"Well, like I said, I believe Mr. Miles is observing us to see how consecrated we are. He's part Indian, you know."

"No, I didn't; but I have often wondered if he wasn't."

"He is half Indian," Paul continued. "And Glenna, that's another thing that's burdening my soul: these unchurched, unsaved Indians! I feel we must begin a work for them as soon as possible. Over by Buffalo Run there is no church whatever for those poor unfortunate souls to worship or find God in."

"That is a challenge," Glenna said seriously. "WE must do something about it."

The next Sunday as Paul stood behind the small black desk that served as a pulpit, he raised his well-worn Bible heaven-ward and quoted:

"Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days" (Eccl. 11:1).

Then followed a message under the anointing of the Holy Spirit such as the small congregation had never before heard. All sat forward on the hard, straight chairs with both ears and eyes wide open. Even the quiet, studious, and almost expressionless face of Mr. Miles appeared radiant and a look of challenge swept over his ruddy weather-beaten countenance. But Paul never noticed; his heart was too intent on what the Holy Ghost was burning upon him. Toward the close of his sermon he said:

"Dearly beloved, we are now going to do something entirely different from what you've been used to. We're going to receive a missionary offering this morning and help those less fortunate than we. Yesterday, my wife and I drove into the city and sold her sewing machine and some tools of mine so we could give toward this need. This morning we have brought our offering of thirty-five dollars and forty-two cents to lay on the altar in behalf of missions. Is there someone else who would like to give, whether from your poverty or abundance? The world must be evangelized; it's up to us who have already
heard the good news to help spread it to the uttermost parts of the earth. Now what will you do?"

Paul bowed his head and offered a prayer of supplication. When he raised his tear-stained eyes, he saw a poorly clad girl in front of him. Her body was shaking convulsively under her sobs.

"Brother Blake," she began between sobs, "I...I...don't have much, but...I...raised... four bushels of fine potatoes this summer . . ." Her voice trailed off as a fresh flow of tears coursed down her thin cheeks. Then she slowly continued, "Mother told me to sell them and buy some material for new dresses for this winter. But please, Brother Blake, will you accept my potatoes? I found Jesus a few years ago and I... I'd like . . . to prove my love to Him in this way."

For a moment Paul was tempted to tell her to give just a part of the hard-earned potatoes. Then He felt a small check on his soul as a voice whispered, "I'll take care of her. She's mine!"

"Yes, Denise," he said brokenly, "the Lord will doubly reward and bless you for making this great sacrifice."

The slender young girl walked back to her seat with the radiance of Heaven upon her entire being and just as she was seated on one of the chairs, Mr. Miles began shouting. It was a shout such as Paul and Glenna had never heard, and apparently none of the small congregation either. He marched up and down the aisle. Then, shaking Paul's hand, he said brokenly, "Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord forever and ever. God is answering prayer!" Again another healthy shout ensured which stirred the entire group. Some of the unsettled folks ran to an altar of prayer, begging God for mercy, while others shouted and wept for joy.

"Brother Blake." It was Mr. Miles again. "This is an answer to prayer if ever I saw one. You and your wife proved your sincerity to His cause. For years I've been waiting and praying for just someone like you to come our way. This morning I'd like to give. I have been blessed of God in basket and store--most bountifully blessed--and I want to give an offering of several thousand dollars. Been a long time since I gave any offering." Then the old gentleman paused and looked squarely into Paul Blake's eyes as he said with deep contrition, "Matter of fact, Brother Blake, I've got almost as much tithe to pay. I've been saving it back until God sent us a holy man along. This morning, I'm going to write a check out for my tithe and one for the offering for missions. And Brother Blake, from here on out, you'll not need to go hungry --you nor your family. I've got a plenty. God bless you, son! I'll make everything up to you, now that you've proved your concern for God's cause and for us. We Indians 'round about these parts are kinda' peculiar I reckon but once a man proves himself, we'll stick with him. This church house'll be filled up one of these days. Just you wait and see." And he walked back to his seat, saying,
"I've got some money for Miss Denise's dress goods, too."

All seemed loathe to leave the small church that morning, and when the evening service began, there was another time of great rejoicing as the newborn and newly sanctified souls shouted and testified.

Paul noticed several new families seated in his congregation. Particularly, he noticed not only Mr. Whetstone but Mrs. Whetstone and the five tan-skinned children, as well. His heart beat excitedly as he saw them and remembered God's promise to him up on the hill that starry night.

His message was God anointed and heavily laden with much prayer and tearful supplications from the afternoon prayer closet, and when he opened the altar for needy, hungry souls to come, Mr. Whetstone tearfully and penitently made his way forward, his timid wife trailing his heels and the five children following her. Several others came, among them some new folks whom neither Paul nor Glenna had ever met. It was quite apparent, however, that Mr. Miles knew them well, for he kept encouraging them to pray until they prayed clear through.

The victories around the altar that night were clear and genuine; all who came had done so with no reservations in the heart and with but one purpose of soul and mind--that of finding God.

The first to testify was Mr. Whetstone. Paul noticed (to his amazement) that the ordinarily rough-looking, burly, out-spoken man was now as humble and docile as a lamb.

"Rev. Blake," he began, "tonight, I want to thank God for having mercy on my wicked soul and for saving me. I've been as contemptible and mean a man as ever lived. I've been most unkind toward you and your little wife. I want you to forgive me. This afternoon Brother Miles was over to my ranch. He told the Missus and me what you and Mrs. Blake did toward helping foreign missions, and I figgered anybody who'd do such as that was consecrated to God. So I told my Missus we must hear you. Tonight we came. I thank God we did. My heart is free from the awful load of sin I came with. Been years since I set foot in a church door. We had a man here who wanted what money he could get out of us, that's all. He'd sit around telling silly jokes with not a bit of concern for our lost souls. Well, I decided I'd never again go back. But tonight, I've changed my mind. Rev. Blake, you can sure be countin' on me and my family from here on out."

Shouts of praise rang throughout the congregation as the newly converted folks filed through the door. Paul learned where each of the new families lived and promised to call on them the very next day.

The following Sunday more new families came from the surrounding hills. Paul and Glenna wondered where they came from and soon found out that Brother Miles was out calling and spreading the good news every evening possible.
One Sunday morning, after Paul had finished preaching and had asked the congregation to stand for a prayer of dismissal, Brother Whetstone stepped forward.

"Brother and Sister Blake and small Johnny," he said, "the congregation of Broken Bow Church wants to make you a present. Here's an envelope with a check for six hundred dollars for you to use as you need it. You are greatly deserving of it."

When Brother Whetstone had finished speaking, some of the congregation, who had stepped outside after the sermon was finished, entered the door with sacks of groceries, meats and canned fruits for their pastor and family.

"A small thanksgiving offering and contribution for our preacher and his family," Brother Whetstone added.

Then Paul and Glenna heard Brother Miles say, "Christian brethren and sisters, in answer to Brother and Sister Blake's prayers and concern for the unsaved and unchurched Indians over by Buffalo Run, I've been looking and talking to my people--for I am part Cherokee you know. Well, we've got the building all ready for our first service over there whenever Brother Blake feels he can began a revival."

Paul and Glenna shouted praises to God for His great and mighty answers to prayer, and after Paul had thanked his rapidly growing congregation, he said:

"We shall begin the meeting at Buffalo Run this week. As soon as possible after that, we'll begin construction of a larger church here. I see, by today's attendance board, we've had 145, and we need more space. Looks like we have growing pains," and a heavenly smile played across his face.

With his hands raised heavenward, he led the congregation in singing, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

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