Candy is my best friend. We shared everything . . . our joys and happinesses, our real or imaginary sorrows and woes, and our secrets. We grew up together on the same block and lived in side-by-side houses ever since we were babies. In fact, Mom often told me how close . . . or near . . . Candy and I came to almost being twins. Neighbor twins, not sister twins. I mean, we aren't from the same blood line: Candy's a Morgan; I'm a Barrett. See what I mean? But at any rate, Candy was born exactly one minute to twelve midnight--and I was born exactly on midnight. Just one minute apart,
and born to two side-by-side mothers! That's some record, I think. Maybe this partly accounts for our closeness, our best-friend feeling.

Well, I went to church with Cynthia Brookins last week and I got saved. Converted. Something brand new to me and to my upbringing. I never knew there was such a thing like being born again, or saved or converted . . . Cynthia explained that they all meant about the same thing; she said that when a person was saved, or born again or converted, it meant that that person was forgiven of his sins and was made all new in Christ.

Well, whatever you want to call it, I know I passed from death unto life when I told the Lord I was sorry for all my sins and that I wanted to have His peace. He came; and He gave me such a radically-beautiful change of heart and way of life that I can scarcely believe I'm me anymore. Old things passed away . . . every single bit of it . . . and all things became new. My bad habits changed. Just seemed to drop off; and my desires, too.

Being close to Candy, I tried to explain to her what happened to me: why I don't want to go to movies anymore; why I can't stand the noise and the beat of the records which once I had thought were so great; why I love to get alone and talk to God; and why it's such a delight and a joy to go to church with Cynthia. But she wouldn't listen. She just looked sort of amused and tolerant, and asked me how long I thought it would take for my experience of religious euphoria to "wear off." She did!

Her trite answer of seeming unconcern and total disinterest shocked me. To be truthful, it grieved me. My very best friend not concerned about her soul. So I just didn't say anything more about it to her.

Then last night, Cynthia asked me over for supper. (She invited Candy, too, I learned. But Candy said she had more important things to do than listen to a bunch of religious ideas over a plate of chicken. Quite naturally, she didn't come.)

While eating a slice of Mrs. Brookins' perfectly light chocolate cake, Dick asked me how things were going since I got saved, and had I witnessed to any of my friends, telling them what Jesus had done for me? (Dick is Cynthia's brother and the young peoples' leader in the church where they attend.)

"Great!" Dick exclaimed. "That's great Angie. How'd it go?"

"Flat, I'm afraid. Candy merely looked at me with tolerance and a rather smug smile then asked me how long I thought it would take for the 'experience of religious euphoria to wear off.' I guess I'm not a good witness," I added, as I felt the tears surface and roll down my cheeks.

Dick was quick to defend my position. Looking at me squarely, kind of like he was bearing his own heart, or something like that, he said kindly, "I guess we all came through that same kind of experience, with the same question asked."

I blinked the tears out of my eyes. "Say that again, will you, Dick? Please. Did I hear you correctly? I mean, well, did you . . ., did someone . . .?"

Dick's deep, soft laughter was both uplifting and heartening. "Yes, Angie, when I got saved, I was so happy and full of joy and peace that I felt the whole world had to hear about what the Lord Jesus Christ had done for me: how He had lifted me out of sin and its deadly 'quicksand' and put my feet on the Solid Rock. Oh, but I was happy. In fact, I wanted to shout the good news of salvation from the tallest tree top and the highest roof.

"So I hunted up Fred. He was my best and closest friend, and I didn't need a roof nor a tree top to witness from. Fred and I were buddies from the age of three years up. So away I went."

I sat on the edge of my chair now, listening. "Really? It's almost like Candy and me; we grew up together," I said. "What did Fred do? I mean, wasn't he happy? And did he get saved?"

Dick's head dropped. He looked sad. "I wish I could say yes, Angie, but the answer to both questions is 'no.' When I testified to Fred and told him whom I had found and what I found, he spit on me."

"Spit on you! But why, Dick? That's horrible! Ugh!"
"Hate, Angie. But then, Jesus was spat upon, too."

"Hate? How's that? Why?" This seemed incredulous. Almost like something I'd read in fiction.

"He had an uncle . . . a favorite uncle, I might add . . . who was once a prominent and prosperous sports figure. His uncle got converted and, feeling he could no longer partake of worldly ambitions and pursuits, he relinquished it all to follow Christ and preach the glorious gospel of freedom from sin.

"Fred held his uncle in highest esteem, all but idolizing him... if, indeed, he didn't! Loving sports himself and having dreams of someday becoming a renowned figure like his Uncle Bob, my best friend was working furiously to achieve his goal. He kept all the rigid rules of a great and true athlete and was climbing the ladder of success in rapid succession, rung by rung. Then came the earth-shattering blow: Uncle Bob had gotten saved and sanctified wholly and was giving up his ball-playing for Jesus Christ.

"I guess that was the most embarrassing thing that ever happened to Fred. He came to me with tears, asking what I thought about it and wondering if his uncle hadn't possibly lost his mind. Or at least a part of it."

I laughed, recalling the look on Candy's face when I told her of the change in me--in my heart. I believe she thought had lost my mind, or was losing it.

"What did you tell Fred, Dick?" I asked quickly. "I said I thought it was great that Bob had changed. I remember telling him that someday I'd perhaps think about such things..., this is before any of us in here were converted. We weren't churchminded until God took our four-year-old sister. That changed everything. Us included."

I looked over at the Brookins and saw tears in their eyes. Then Mrs. Brookins said, "We have one family member in Heaven, Angie. She's waiting for us. By God's grace, we mean to see her again. You've heard of the little lamb being taken so the older sheep would follow, perhaps."

I hadn't heard, but I interpreted the meaning and the significance. Reaching over, I squeezed Mrs. Brookins' hand gently and affectionately.
Then, having to hear more about Dick's witnessing to Fred, I asked, "Did Fred ever get saved?"

Before Dick replied even, I knew the answer. The tears in his eyes and the look of sadness on his face gave it away.

"No, Angie he didn't. Not ever. And the sad thing is that he'll never have another opportunity to repent and get right with God. Less than a year after I was so gloriously lifted out of the quagmire of sin, Fred was killed instantly in an automobile accident."


"Not everyone will turn from sin to God, Angie. No matter how effective and sincere you are in witnessing," Cynthia said, reading my thoughts, it seemed. "Our business and duty is to be faithful in witnessing. Many of the old prophets were mocked and tortured and laughed to scorn for witnessing and telling the people what God's message was for them."

"I have so much to learn," I admitted softly, longingly.

"Don't we all!" came Dick's emphatic exclamation. Then he began to tell me some things to expect and some not to expect. He gave me insight into common questions and objections of people, and some sound down-to-earth practical rules to observe when testifying and witnessing. Listening to Dick made witnessing sound easy, exciting and wonderful. And before I realized it almost, the burning desire to witness to Candy again washed over me with almost overwhelming force. He said something about negative responses and not becoming discouraged. But I was so deep in thought of witnessing to my best friend that I'm afraid it didn't sink in the way it would have if I had concentrated more fully upon what was being said.

It was almost 8:30 when I got home. Mom told me that Candy called and wanted me to return the call as soon as I got home.

I hugged Mom, wishing for all that was within me that she were saved. Then, while tears trickled down my cheeks, I said, "Oh, Mom, I love you so! Why don't you give your heart to Jesus and get saved? I want us all to go to Heaven, Dad and you and I."
Mom was sobbing. Actually sobbing! Her shoulders shook and trembled until I didn't know what to think.

"I was wondering why you didn't ask me," she cried, looking into my face with a look of such utter dejection and misery as to nearly pull the heart out of me.

"I need what you have, Angie. How I need it! What must I do . . . "

It was all so new to me. But I asked the Lord to help me, and He did. Kneeling by the sofa, my wonderful mother was gloriously converted. I wish you could have seen her face. Radiant! It looked like a 2,000 watt light bulb was turned on somewhere inside her being and it radiated through her face. She was my first trophy for the Lord. What a trophy; my mother!

Happy, thankful and excited, I called Candy. "Can you come over, Angie?" she asked. "For just a few minutes, please? I have a sore throat and can't get out."

"Let me ask Mom, Candy, and if she says yes, I'll be over in a jiffy."

Mom gave me full permission and in a real jiffy, I was standing at Candy's door, our side-by-side house meaning that all I had to do was go down our three front porch steps and up Candy's connecting three steps. For boys, it meant merely a jump across the railing that served as a sort of dividing line between the old-fashioned, well-constructed brownstone duplex, built right on the sidewalk.

Candy opened the door and let me in, being careful to keep herself out of the draft. I giggled when I saw how funny she looked, dressed in her mother's heavy dark blue robe, her dad's insulated booties . . . or something or other that he wore in his boots on extra cold days . . . and a thick, wooly rag wrapped around her throat.

"What a picture you make!" I exclaimed.

Candy laughed, too. "I wouldn't show my face to anyone but you, looking like this, Angie. Will I ever be glad when this miserable sore throat is healed!"
"I've been praying for you, Candy. I honestly have."

She stood and looked at me, as if studying me, I thought. Then she said, "Thanks. Let's go into the living room. I want to show you what I'm making."

"Candy, are you crocheting?" I asked, seeing the making of a beautiful, brightly-colored afghan on the edge of the davenport.

"What do you think of it, Angie?"

"It's beautiful!" I exclaimed with delight and glee. "Candy, I can't believe it; you crocheting!"

"I had to do something to keep my sanity while I'm housebound," she said. "And I miss my best friend terribly. She's so preoccupied with religious beliefs and notions these days. No fun in going to a movie by yourself. I had to find something to do."

"I guess I am busy, Candy," I admitted. "But I've never been so happy in all my life. My heart has found peace and rest. Oh, Candy, I wish you'd open your heart and life to Jesus and ask Him to come inside. You have to experience what I have and what I'm telling you about."

She listened attentively while I told her that she was a sinner who needed God's forgiveness, being careful to tell her that Jesus had paid sin's penalty with His own blood on Calvary's rugged cross and that if she'd confess her sins to God, and repent, she could be saved, just like I was.

I stopped talking and we faced each other in perfect silence. Then she collapsed on the sofa, laughing so hard that she could scarcely talk.

"Oh, Angie, you dear, sweet thing. So impressionable, always, and so gullible. You really fell for that hell-fire-and-brimstone stuff, didn't you? You're too funny for words! But you're still my best friend."

Candy was laughing too hard to see the tears that stood in my eyes. And suddenly, I realized that everything I had said was nothing more than a big joke to her.
I waited till her laughter had subsided. Then I said, "Guess what? Mother got saved just before I called you. I wish you could see the change in her! It's wonderful!"

Candy sobered. "Don't tell me you're all going crazy!" she exclaimed.

"Not at all. We're just learning what the meaning of a sound mind really is, Candy."

We settled back into discussions on algebra, English Lit. and such things, and soon I had to leave. Needless to say, I felt heavy and in a sense, defeated. Then I thought how God had saved Mother and my heart seemed to skip a beat. I remembered, too, what Dick and Cynthia had told me about witnessing and being "faithful" even though not everybody would humble themself and be saved.

Telling Candy good night, I stepped down three steps then up three steps to our door. As surely as dawn followed darkness, I knew I'd be witnessing to Candy again. I felt the time would come when she'd listen. I didn't know when, nor how, but it would come. In the meantime, I would be faithful to the Lord in witnessing and leave the results with Him.

I hurried inside where I found Mom reading my Bible.