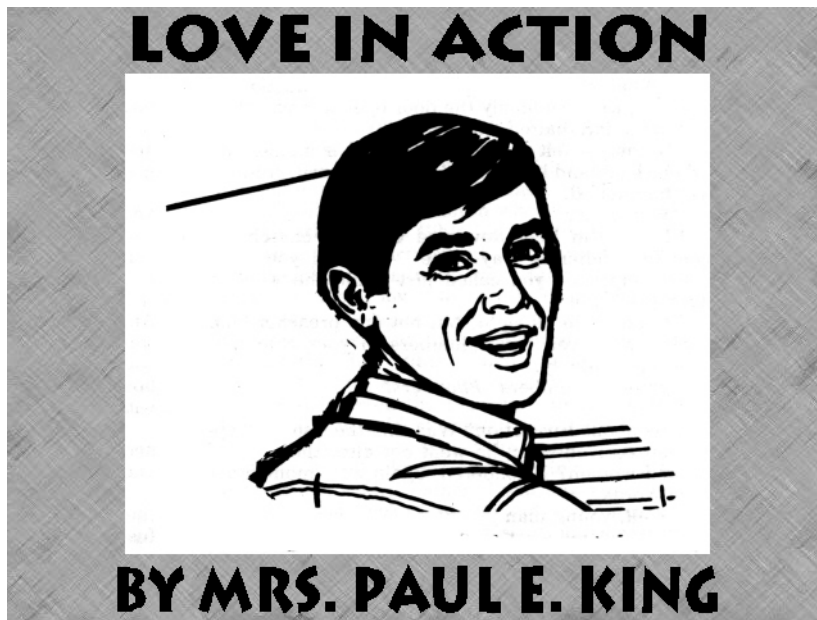


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LOVE IN ACTION
By Mrs. Paul E. King
From the May 15, 1983 Sunday School Beacon

I never realized, when Pastor Conley suggested that all of us who were born again and sanctified wholly should be out knocking on doors trying to persuade men and women to come to Christ, that so much was involved. But there I was, fresh out of my second year of Bible school, chomping at the bits (as the saying goes) to do for Christ, to be His vessel... His instrument..., in reaching lost souls. So it was, that, after the stirring, challenging message, I hurried up to him. "Tell me where to begin," I said. "Do you have any place in particular where you feel I should begin?"

The pastor's eyes looked sad, sort of like he may have been wondering if the impact of his message had fallen short of its intention.., its impassioned heart-cry and longing.

"I know you want us out doing door to door evangelization," I said quickly, reading the look in his eyes and on his face. "But I was wondering if there's any particular area you think I should begin in."

"The city is the field, Doug," he replied. "No matter where you look, which streets you go up and down, the 'fields are white unto harvest, but the laborers are few.' "

"But isn't there anywhere particularly special you'd like for me to begin? I mean, well..."

If anything, his look was even more sad and pitiful. Then, as though a sudden bright flash illuminated his mind, he said, "Perhaps there is. Here, Doug; this address. Go there. The woman said she needed help; called just before I came to church."

Handing me a slip of paper with a hastily-scrawled address on it, Pastor Conley slapped me gently on the shoulder then hurried away to shake hands with the people in the church.

Bright and early the next morning, I was up and away, eating nothing more than an orange for breakfast. I found the street listed on the slip of paper, then the block in which the house was located. Parking my old Chevy... trusty, durable, and faded with age and by the weather . . . I surveyed the area with a rather critical eye, wondering why people chose to let their dwellings get so run down and uncared for. Then I quickly reminded myself that I was not out on a house beautification project nor a community clean-up campaign but a soul-Winning one.

I walked up to the door and knocked, surprised that I hadn't seen any small children around, when it suddenly dawned on me that I had no name on the slip of paper; nothing but the address. Now that was something! What should I say by way of introduction? I wondered, when suddenly the door opened and before me stood a dark-haired woman.

My tongue felt tied; my mind did a momentary total black out and blank out. I felt stupid and, frankly, I was humiliated.

"Well... ?"

"I . . . I'm from Reverend Conley's church," I began in a faltering way. "He . . . said you . . . needed help; said you called just before he went to church last night..."

"I need help all right, but not any preacher kind of help. Don't you have plumbers in your church?" she asked suddenly.

I gulped. Plumbers? Plumbers!

"Well... ?"

Talk about frustration! Was this the usual reception one received when he went out after the souls of men and women? I wondered, again at a momentary loss of words.

"Well, young man... ?"

Don't ask me what made me do it... rather, say it . . . but suddenly I regained my composure and replied, "What's your trouble? Perhaps I'll be able to fix it. At least, I'll do my best to see if I can."

Sizing me up and down (to make sure that I was both harmless and trustworthy, I'm sure), she invited me inside. Pointing to a bucket on the floor which was slowly filling up with water dripping from the ceiling, she said, "There's my problem. But where is it coming from?"

Remembering how I had helped Dad fix a leak in our bathroom when a pipe had corroded and eventually gotten holes in it, I asked, "Is your bathroom above this room?"

"Yes. But I've looked and can't find a thing that looks any different than it's always looked."

"Is it all right if I check the pipes?"

"Of course. Something must be done. I called two different plumbers and neither one could get here for days. That's when I decided to call the minister."

"Oh, so you know our pastor."

"Never met him in my life; just went down the list of churches and called him at random."

Random, did she say? Well, maybe that's what she called it, but I called it God's appointment. I had a certain-sure conviction that that's what it was. "I'm Douglas Fisher," I said, following her up the steps to the bathroom, "and I'm a member of Rev. Conley's church."

"I'm glad to meet you; my name is Amanda Peck. I certainly hope you'll be able to locate the trouble."

Amanda's house, though far from getting any magazine ratings for beauty, was immaculately clean and neat. Its walls were papered in cheerful pastel prints, its woodwork painted a gleaming white.

I prayed as I searched for the trouble spot, feeling for all the world that this would be the key to the woman's heart. I was rewarded, and my prayer was answered sooner than I had expected. "Here's your problem," I declared, showing her the slow but steadily-leaking pipe.

"Can you fix it?" came her anxious question.

"I think I can. I helped my father fix ours in our bathroom. I'll have to go to the hardware though, unless you have what I need," I told her.

"My late husband was very handy around the house, Doug. He had everything needed for any job or repair work, it seemed. Come to the basement with me and see if it's not there. I'm sure you'll find what you need. I'll be surprised if you don't."

The basement was a workshop of such neat order and careful planning as to make me gasp in awe when I saw it. "I wish I could have known your husband," I remarked. "He must have been an efficient and capable man."

I noticed the look of pride that crept into Amanda's eyes and knew I had said the right words. It was like unlocking the door of a room full of treasures --the treasures, in this case, being Amanda's storehouse of fond memories and once-cherished dreams with her beloved Andrew.

Conversation flowed freely after this and, true to her prediction, I found everything I needed to repair and fix the leak right there in Andrew's workshop.

It took some time to do the job, but when I was finished, Amanda was overjoyed. She praised me profusely, telling me over and over that she doubted anyone else my age could have done it. I told her all the credit for my sadly-limited plumbing knowledge would have to be given to my wonderful father who was, much like her Andrew, an ingenious Jack-of-all-trades and pretty much master of all.

"How much do I owe you?" she asked, "You worked at least two hours. Let's see, plumbers make .

"You owe me nothing, money-wise," I said quickly.

"But I must," she insisted. "I'd have had to pay a plumber."

"But you don't have to pay me, Mrs. Peck. I am so thankful the Lord helped me to get it fixed for you. If you'd like me to come back and help prepare the ceiling where the water leaked through I'll be happy to do so."

Amanda was silent for a while• Then she said, "You're quite an unusual young man; not at all like most of the ones Andy and I knew. What can I do for you, if you won't accept pay? Would you like a few of my husband's tools perhaps?"

"Thanks, Mrs. Peck, but no. I couldn't. That beautifully kept shop is packed full of memories for you. But I tell you what you can do; come to church next Sunday."

Without a moment's hesitation, she said, "I'll be there. I promise, Doug."

"That's better than any amount of money you could give me," I exclaimed joyously. "And now, before I go, may I read some scripture to you and have a word of prayer with you?"

"Indeed you may," came the instant reply.

My heart rang and sang for joy when I left and went on my way to the next house. Mrs. Peck's promise to be in church was the incentive I needed, giving me holy courage to attempt great things for God in this thrilling venture of soul-winning.

Sunday morning found me first at the church. Mrs. Peck and Harvey Graft . . . another who had promised me he'd come . . . must not arrive with no one there to greet and welcome them, I decided. So, parking my faithful, old, faded, blue chevy behind the church, I posted myself outside the church doors.

I saw Amanda Peck before she drove into the parking lot and rushed down the few church steps to greet her. She seemed as delighted to see me as I was to see her. We chatted like we had been long-time relatives or friends, and when I introduced her to the wonderful Conley family, I knew immediately that she liked them.

Harvey Graft didn't come that morning, much to my disappointment. But that gruff-spoken old man hadn't seen the last of me, I thought, fingering his house number and street address inside my suit coat pocket.

All through the service, Amanda Peck reminded me of a sponge.., a human sponge soaking up each and everything she heard. Nothing distracted her nor diverted her attention from the preacher and his impassioned, soul-burdened message, and when she nobly and unashamedly made her way to the mourner's bench for prayer at the close of that wonderful sermon, I could scarcely contain myself. The joy and thrill of knowing that I had had a part in what was happening there at that altar was one of the greatest experiences of my life. I was blest and happy and challenged to do more.

It wasn't long before Mrs. Peck stood to her feet with a shining face. Looking directly at me, she exclaimed joyously, "Thank God for Douglas Fisher! But for him, I'd still be lost and on my road to hell.

"I wasn't sure I liked him when he first came to my door. Truth is, I wouldn't have allowed him inside if it hadn't been out of dire necessity. I needed a plumber; being unable to get one, I was happy when he volunteered to see what he could do. Well, he fixed the leaky pipe. Like an expert, too! But when he refused any sort of remuneration, that did something to me. I couldn't get over it.

"I'm so thankful he invited me to church; so thankful, too, that he read scripture to me and prayed for me before leaving the house. Because of him and his concern for my soul, I am this morning a new creature in Christ. My load of sin is gone and my heart is full of joy and peace . . ."

Amanda Peck became a permanent and consistently-regular member of our church. More than that, she became a soul-winner.

Strange but beautiful the various methods or techniques one must use in winning souls, I thought some days later, coming to the conclusion that one word and one word alone was the motivating factor in one's attempts to win the lost; that word was love.

Not always is it the easiest thing to love the unlovely, the degraded, the drunkard, the drug addict and the violent. But when one has known the joy and blessing of leading a soul to Christ, he will never be the same; his search for more, and still more, will go on. He may have to dirty his hands and his clothes by fixing a rusted out leaky pipe, or something far worse than that, but love in action produces results., not always, but many times it does. Yes, many times it does; Amanda Peck is proof.