It's Not Funny

by Mrs. Paul E. King

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Jacalyn stopped dead-still in her tracks. She could hardly believe her ears. She was glad Dennis and Hilbert hadn't seen her. For one thing, she was shocked, and the other thing was, she was embarrassed. She thought Dennis was a Christian. And now she knew different; Christians didn't tell off-color, dirty jokes. Nor laugh at them when someone else told them, she knew.
"And listen to this one," Dennis was saying to Hilbert, who was all ears.

Jacalyn wanted to cry, "Oh no, Dennis. Don't say it! Please! Please!"
Instead she stood rooted to the spot in utter and complete shock and disbelief. If Lori would have told her that she had heard what Dennis said . . . and was even now saying . . . she would have thought Lori's ears had deceived her. It was unbelievable, she thought, squeezing her slender body behind the trunk of the maple tree.

It was the wild-sounding, raucous laughter of the two that shook her feet loose from the spot. Whirling around; she left the shadows of the tree and stood facing the pair.

Dennis turned a sickly ash-white. "Wh . . . where'd you come from, Jackie?" he managed to stammer.

Hilbert looked amused and totally unashamed. "Funny, wasn't it?" he asked quickly without the slightest hint of embarrassment.

"No. Disgusting. Sickening. And completely and totally un-Christ-like and un-Christian."

Her poignant, pungent rebuttal seemed to strike Hilbert's "funny bone;" he doubled over with hilarious laughter. "That's a joke!" he exclaimed, doubling over again. "Un-Christ-like! Un-Christian! Who's a Christian? Whew, what a joke!"

"I am," Jacalyn answered immediately. "And I thought Dennis was. And this is not a joke."

"Now Jackie, don't jump to conclusions," Dennis replied, shifting from one foot to the other.

"Don't jump to conclusions! There's no need for that;" Jacalyn announced sadly, "the evidence is clear. I heard; clearly so. With my very own ears. Oh, Dennis. Dennis!" she exclaimed, in tears now.

"You mean you thought Dennis was a Christian?" Hilbert asked incredulously. "You knew better than that, Jackie. Old Denny one of those
freaked-out oddities! No way, girl! No way. Denny's 'with it.' All the way, 'with it.' 

"Now Hil . . ."

"Well, you are, aren't you? You go to the same places my buddies and I go, do the same things we do, tell the same kind of jokes, and enjoy it as much as the rest of us do. You know that's the truth, Dennis. Why the sudden cover-up?"

"I . . .I . . ."

"'By their fruit ye shall know them,'" Jacalyn quoted. "One thing is absolutely plain, Dennis; you are not a Christian. 'He that is born of God cloth not commit sin.' (I John 3:9) The Epistle also says 'He that committeth sin is of the devil' (I John 3:8). These filthy jokes are not of . . ."

"Wait a minute, Jacalyn. Let me explain," Dennis cried, interrupting Jackie's unfinished sentence.

"Please, Dennis, don't!" she exclaimed, pained and grieved. "I need no explanation. I know what I heard. No amount of trying to cover up can alter what my ears heard. Please give thought to your soul, and where each of you will be spending eternity unless you repent and get truly converted."

"Aw Jackie they were only jokes," Dennis protested.

Jacalyn stood dumbfounded, wondering how long Dennis had been acting and playing the dual role. She knew he had been professing to be a Christian for several years. Had he been living like Hilbert said he was all that time, too? she wondered.

Looking him squarely in the face, she said, "Don't stop by on Thursday night. Never again. I'm sorry I let you take me out to the restaurant, Dennis. If I had known then what I know now I would never have consented. Anybody who can tell jokes that are dirty and filthy and . . . and debase womanhood the way you have just done, has an equally dirty and foul mind and heart. This sort of thing will never enter God's holy and pure and clean City. Think about it," she added, walking quickly away.
They watched as Jacalyn hurried down the street, neither of them saying a word. After a long period of silence, Hilbert said, "Hey, I'm sorry for squealing on you. I . . . I thought everybody knew the things you've been doing. But I sure didn't mean to get you in bad with your current flame."

Dennis stood still, looking first at Hilbert then down the sidewalk, where Jacalyn had vanished around the corner and was lost among the row of houses that forbade even so much as a last glimpse of her chestnut-brown hair.

"Come out of it!" Hilbert exclaimed angrily. "You're not a Christian, so what! She's weird. She's not 'with it,' and the sooner you realize this the better off you'll be. Sooner or later, she'd have learned the truth about you, Dennis. Like my parents, when they found out I was smoking on the sly. At first, Dad blew his stack. Gave me a lecture on the evils of smoking -how it foul's up one's breath, his clothes, the car and the house; yellows one's teeth and the fingers that hold it; coats the lungs and throat with a certain some-kind of substance . . . . I forgot what he said it was, it's been so long ago . . . and how it can cause cancer. You know, Denny, the usual parent kind of lecture. I listened 'attentively,' in that super-good pretend way I have, but kept right on puffing, thinking of the many things Dad was doing that were every bit as bad and wrong. In a little while, they accepted my habit. That made it so much easier to go on to, well, you know what." And Hilbert laughed hilariously again.

Suddenly Dennis stood straight and tall. Pointing his index finger in Hilbert's face, he exclaimed vehemently, "It's not funny, Hil! Not one bit funny. Just because you're getting by with what you're doing doesn't make it right. And," he added in a provocative way, "maybe you're not 'getting by' with it. Maybe the dreadful disease of cancer has already begun to do its deadly work inside your lungs . . . your throat . . . your liver. Not to mention the destruction your brain cells may be presently experiencing because of your usage of drugs.

"I've been a spineless, shiftless, easily-persuaded-wrongly young man . . . a fool! A 'yes man.' And all to my downfall and detriment, until a few minutes ago, when a certain young woman had the courage and the backbone to level with us, with me especially. I was an easy-going 'go-alonger,' a flesh and blood human tumbleweed. Know what tumbleweeds are, Hilbert? They're bushes that grow in the west, especially. They get three
feet across sometimes. But their roots are so small and shallow that when a strong wind blows they are uprooted. Then, like windbags or bits of dry fluff, they tumble here and there across the fields, the roads and the grazing land at the mercy of every vagrant breeze.

I've been all of these things," Dennis continued, looking Hilbert full in the face. "Not being blown entirely away so that I was given up for lost. But like the tumbleweed, I was 'blown' first into the fields of passiveness . . . 'no harm in it.' I lingered there too long. Unable to buck the winds of opposition, I was soon permanently affixed to the idea. I drifted from there into the actual committing of the 'no-harm-in-it' things and there's where I am presently. But this doesn't mean I can't change! I can. And I will! I know I'll never be able to do the changing in my own strength. But I know of a God who can do this."

"You're crazy, Dennis. Plumb crazy!" Hilbert retorted angrily. "Just because Jacalyn tossed you over, you're frantic. Panicky."

"It's not Jacalyn, Hilbert. Believe me, it's not. Sure I'll miss seeing her. Sure. Her words . . . what she said . . . they struck home. I'm guilty. Guilty on every count."

"You're being to hard on yourself," Hilbert declared. "Overly-conscientious and sensitive. Jacalyn doesn't know what real living is. She's never tried any of the things we're enjoying and doing; so how does she know?"

"She doesn't need to try, Hilbert. She has the Bible which tells her what paths to follow and which ones to avoid."

"That's a bunch of foolishness! We're only young once."

"Thanks for reminding me of that, Hilbert; it brought to mind something I read when I first was saved . . . before my heart believed in that 'no harm in it' bit. It goes something like this, 'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not . . . .' I may never get another date from Jackie; I don't deserve her. She's too good for me. But I can follow the injunction given in Ecclesiastes 12:1; that about remembering my Creator while I'm still young. I'm going to do it, Hilbert. Today. Now. I'm tired of being a human tumbleweed. The Bible says I can be like a tree, a tree planted by rivers of waters. A tree has roots, Hil, deep roots. Stability too. Care to join
me? I'd sure be happy to have you come over on the right side of the fence . . . God's side."

"Crazy, man! Crazy!" Hilbert declared, turning and racing away.

Dennis smiled. He felt something in his heart, something nudging him on in the right direction. Turning, he headed toward home. He could scarcely wait till he could get to his bedroom to pray.