It was one of those hot, humid, sultry days of summer and Margaret Ann Sothers, after sliding a sheaf of papers into the filing cabinet, hurried to the thermostat on the wall, checking to see what was wrong with the small box-like contraption that controlled the room's coolness in summer and its warmth in winter.
"Something wrong with it, Meg?" Art Stiffert called from his desk across the room.

Margaret smiled. Wiping the perspiration from her forehead, she said softly, "I wish I knew. It's stifling-hot in here today."

"If we could only open a window or two," Lexie Coxel remarked. "Honestly, I don't believe I can stand much more of this humidity." She sighed, then added, "Well, I guess we opted for this when we were so anxious to move out of our airy, barny building on Mullet Avenue to this exciting new and modern office building. Part of the price, this totally air conditioned, unable-to-open-windows suite of offices which today, is more like a torture chamber."

The door swung open then and Mr. Smithson, president of Smithson and Smithson Inc., stepped into the room. "Trouble with the air conditioning," he announced, removing his suit coat and matching vest. "Take a break for an hour or hour-and-a-half. The men are checking the units in the building so everything should be back to normal later on.

Margaret Ann stacked her unfinished papers neatly on her desk. Thanking Mr. Smithson, she hurried out of the almost unbearably-hot room, followed quickly by each employee.

"I'd ask you to join me," Art said as he hurried past her, "but I know you're a tee-totaler. So there's no use to ask, Right?"

"Positively and absolutely so. And you'd be doing yourself and your family a favor if you stopped patronizing such places. I know Emmadene would be one happy wife, Art."

The fortyish man laughed heartily. "Maybe so, Meg. But I need a thirst quencher now. Do I ever!"

"The drinking fountain's working perfectly well, Art. I know, I just had some of the icy-cold, delicious refreshing water."

"Stick to it, Meg. Water, I mean. It can't hurt you." With that, the man walked down the street.
Margaret Ann crossed the street to the tree and bush covered park a short distance from the office complex and sat down on a bench near a small lake. She pulled her New Testament out of her purse and began reading, thankful for the peace and quiet as well as for the cooler air of the park.

"So this is what you do for pastime. I've often wondered." And Patrick Orson settled himself beside Margaret Ann on the bench.

Pat, as everybody at work called the industrious enterprising young man, was half-Irish, half-English. He was both handsome and out-going and was possessed with a smile so infectious and contagious that even the most austere and steely-eyed would-be investors who came into the office of Smithson and Smithson Inc. with their hard-hitting approach, melted under the genuineness of Pat's smile and his courtesy.

"I hope you don't mind this invasion of your privacy Meg. I've been waiting for a long time to ask you something, watching for the right opportunity. Today, as luck would have it, is the ideal time. When I saw you hurrying away, I followed you. Discreetly and carefully, of course. I didn't want anyone to see, and think that you and I were having some kind of secret rendezvous. Not that such a thing would be possible; it seems the office has a thousand eyes."

Meg laughed with Pat, knowing only too well how gossip "caught on" when a bit of "interesting" news was brought into the offices. Leona Caskey was the worst at repeating the "interesting," "juicy" tid-bits. Margaret Ann took no part whatever in the circulated tales and stories and, with God's help and her rigid discipline of the mind, she managed to "tune out" completely when anything was started. Gossip and God-likeness didn't go together; they weren't compatible she knew. Where one existed, the other was absent.

Pat brought one knee up hear his chin and hugged it to him with locked arms in a relaxed sort of position. Then, in his forth-right, without-preamble manner, he asked, "What makes you so different, Meg? I've got to know. You're not like the other girls. In fact, you're unlike any girl I've ever met."

"I guess that really sets me apart, Pat, huh? I'm on a plane all my own?" she stated, testing his words and wanting to hear what he'd have to answer.
Without hesitation, he exclaimed sincerely, "You are. You really are on a plane all your own and set apart from anyone I know. And why? What? I noticed, when you first came into Mr. Smithson's employ, that you neither told off-color stories and jokes nor listened to them. Many considered you a bore and a real killjoy. Not I; your "difference" attracted me, appealed to me. And now, thanks to your constancy and consistency, we have few if any of those filthy stories told anymore."

"I wish there were some way to stop the gossip, too," Margaret Ann said soberly.

"I suppose so long as there are certain types of people around, there will be gossip, Meg. You know as well as I that some seem to thrive on this sort of thing. Now tell me, why are you the way you are?"

"Because of the Lord Jesus Christ, Pat. He lifted me out of sin and changed me completely. Inside-out, changed. When God for Christ's sake forgave me of all my sins and saved my soul, He changed my desires. The things I once loved, and loved to do, dropped off and were gone. In their place came new desires and new likes -- spiritual, Christ-centered likes and desires. The Apostle Paul stated it this way in II Corinthians 5:17, 'Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.'"

Pat sat thinking. "It's hard for me to imagine you ever having been anything but good," he stated honestly and factually. "How come you wanted to change? I mean, well, I'm sure you never wronged anyone nor willfully and maliciously maligned or injured anyone either."

"Pat," Margaret Ann said as she leafed through her Testament to Romans 3:23, "'All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.' It says it right here in the Bible. That means you and it meant me. And, since we know that no sin nor unrighteousness will ever enter into the City of God, we know that something must be done to make us righteous, to prepare us for Heaven. The plan of redemption was decided in Heaven when God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus, to come into the world in the form of a baby. He took on Himself humanity so that He could more perfectly know the sufferings and the feelings of us humans. But He was God Incarnate.

"He didn't remain an infant, as you well know; He grew into adulthood and was, ultimately, convicted and condemned to die, innocent and pure
though He was. Sinless, too. The blood that flowed from Calvary's Cross provided the all-sufficient atonement for our sins -- yours and mine, and the sins of the whole world. But until we acknowledge our sins and confess them to God, then forsake them and ask the Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us our sins and to come into our heart, this precious Blood will avail us nothing. Through Jesus' Blood, and His Blood alone, can our sins be forgiven, and can we know that our heart is made right with God. This is what happened to me, Pat, and this is why I am different. I wish you'd give your heart and life to Jesus. He satisfies the deepest longing of the soul. The search for true happiness and lasting peace is over when one finds Christ."

Again Pat lapsed into silence. "I'll think about it, Meg," he promised, getting to his feet.

"Don't think too long, Pat; God gives us every single breath we breathe, you know. Some are cut off rather suddenly. So don't think too long, act. Now. You won't be sorry, I promise."

"Thanks Meg. I'll think about it. I like what I've seen displayed in you and through you. It's a pretty convincing thing," he said, walking away.

Margaret Ann continued reading, thankful to God for His grace that made one a "living" testimony.