Lorri shuffled through the brightly-colored leaves, her loafers ploughing leaf furrows as she went. All around her was the delightfully-delicious scent of crisply-fresh fall air with a hint of still-smoldering leaf piles along the curb of the street in their picturesque little village-town.
She threw her head back and laughed for pure joy and delight. Fall! Ah, it was without a doubt the crowning time of all the year, she thought happily as she trudged down the street toward the school.

She passed by the town's one lone store and called a cheery greeting to old Mrs. Burneyside who, along with her kindly husband, owned and operated the sprawling General Store for as long as Lorri could remember. That was one of the many plus factors of growing up in a small town, the willowy blonde soliloquized happily; you knew everybody and everybody knew you. In a way, it was almost like one big family. Neighbor helped neighbor; kindness begat kindness. Sort of a chain reaction thing from house to house; down one short street and up another. Lorri liked the feeling of it all.

She was almost at the steps of the yellow brick high school when Kate's voice sang through the air to her fall-attuned ears . . . leaves dropping like stealthy cat's feet; crows calling raucously from a nearby woods; blue jays scolding over a 'breakfast smorgasbord' feeder in the Pimpkerneys perfectly manicured and meticulously-kept back yard.

"Not so fast, Lorri!" the near-breathless Kate shouted as she quickened her footsteps to fall in step with her senior high classmate.

"What's on your mind, Kate?" Lorri asked, flashing a dimpled smile in the dark-haired girl's direction.

"Tests. No kidding, Lorri."

Lorri laughed. It was a bubbly kind of laughter that had a decided hint of a happy little brook meandering its peaceful way in and out of forests, across and around pebbly stones and rocks and through bird-chorused meadows.

What's so funny?" Kate asked. "I'm serious. Dead serious. I'm scared."

"Why?"

"Well, you know Mr. Hellerman."

"Yes . . . ?"

"He's something else!"
"Only if we're not 'producing' to our fullest ability and capabilities, Kate. I go along with him. Why bother going to school at all unless we do our very best in all our subjects? I know some things are harder to grasp than others, but I believe that with concerted effort and diligent study, each of us can do better than we're doing. You have brains, Kate, a sort of photostatic mind. That's to your advantage. It's a special gift -- blessing from God. Me? I have brains all right; but I must study, study, study to get my lessons. When finally the light breaks through and dawns on me, well, it's down pat. It's there!"

The two walked into the building.

"Lorri, do me a favor, huh?" Kate ventured quickly.

"That depends."

"I was out late last night; consequently, I'm not ready for the Hellerman tests. Lay your papers so I can see the answers to the questions, please."

Lorri gasped. "Oh, Kate," she exclaimed in utter disbelief, "I can't do that. It would be cheating and you wouldn't have learned a single thing by it."

"Please, Lorri," Kate cajoled. "I'll flunk! I... I'll get an F from Mr. Hellerman."

"I can't, Kate. No, I can't do that. I'd be almost, if not entirely, as guilty as you."

"But Lorri, don't you understand? I... I'll flunk those tests. Every one of them. Then I'll really get it from Mom and Dad."

Lorri squared her shoulders. Touching Kate lightly on the arm she said, "Much better to flunk than to cheat and have a guilty conscience."

Tears stood like pools of liquid blue in Kate's eyes. "Please!" she begged. "I've got to have help; your desk is the one nearest to me."

"I can't, Kate, and I won't. If I can help you with your books sometime I'll gladly do that."
"Why, Lorri? Why? I thought you were my friend. I honestly did."

"And your thinking was correct, Kate; I am your friend. Sure as it's fall, I am your friend. But not even a friendship dare cross the lines of God's do's and don'ts; of His 'Thou shalt not's,' and His 'Thou shalt's.' I am a Christian, not in name only but in deed and in practice. I'm God's personal property, His love-slave through salvation from sin and sanctification of heart."

"I know you're religious," Kate protested. "But I know a lot of others who are religious too, and they'd do this for me if their desk were where yours is. Look Lorri, you won't be doing the copying; so why the 'thumbs-down' attitude?"

"Because it's cheating, that's why. If it's wrong for you to copy my answers, then it's equally wrong and sinful for me to allow you to copy them. I'm helping you in your wrong-doing and sinning. No, I won't do it. The Bible talks about having a 'conscience void of offense toward both God and man.' So, for conscience sake and Biblical principles, I can't do it. I'll pray for you . . . ."

Tossing her long auburn hair angrily across her shoulders, Kate walked briskly away, exclaiming, "Save your prayers. If you can't help me when I need help desperately, I don't want your prayers."

Tears stung Lorri's eyes. She knew why Kate . . . couldn't understand; Ephesians 4:18 stated it clearly, "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." In the marginal reading of her Bible, blindness was rendered as hardness, making the last phrase read "because of the hardness of their heart." . . . Hardness! Lorri shuddered.

"Say, I couldn't help but overhear the conversation," Reg Kaymer said, coming up beside Lorri. "Three cheers for you!" he exclaimed.

"My heart actually bleeds for Kate, Reginald. I want her to pass those tests. I do. But I couldn't possibly allow her to copy from my papers. That's sinful."

"You're so right, Lorri. Yet students do it all the time, thinking . . . or at least hoping . . . they won't get caught. If only they could realize what's
happening to the moral fiber of their being each and every time they cheat. Something good within breaks and gives away. Ultimately, they actually don't feel it's wrong to cheat, lie, steal, et cetera, et cetera. I just wanted you to know that I, for one am proud of you. I always knew you were genuine and real. And in my book of special people, you're tops. It's girls like you who make it easy for fellows like me to want to live noble, upright and Spirit-filled lives."

"Thanks, Reg. Perhaps I should tell you that it's young men like you who make it easy for some of us girls to take a nobler, bolder, really positive stand for Jesus. Ever since my conversion and subsequent experience of entire sanctification, I have realized fully why we are commanded in the Bible to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together: we need each other for spiritual growth and encouragement. And even though Kate may not understand, I'm going to keep the channels open between God and me."

"You'll be rewarded for it someday, Lorri. Well, we'd better be getting into class. Don't change," Reg whispered as they came through the door together. "Not ever," he added.

"By God's grace, I won't," Lorri replied, sliding into her seat.