FOR LOVE OF MOTHER

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Laurie put the vacuum cleaner away inside the closet. Then she stood back and looked over her finished task. The door banged shut and she looked up to see fifteen-year-old Bob standing in the kitchen.

"Don't mess the house up, Bob," she said. "Please, let's keep it nice for when Mother gets off work and comes home. The garbage needs to be put
outside in the garbage can. And be sure to fasten the chain over the lid and secure it through the handles. You know how those two dogs come around and scatter everything."

"If they were all that hungry," Bob declared, "I'd help to feed them by getting dog food for them out of my lawn mowing money. But they're well-cared for. They just like to forage from the cans. I guess they do get some pretty good food, though, out of some of the cans. Talk about waste! It's sinful. Why, Laurie, I read that a great portion of the starving millions could be well fed with all that's thrown out as waste into the garbage cans."

"And that's a fact, Bob!" Laurie declared, brushing a wisp of stray hair out of her eyes and tucking it into the mound of golden-blonde hair on her head. "Like you stated, it is sinful. Even Jesus told the disciples, in the miracle of the loaves and the fishes, to gather up the surplus so there would be no waste." Bob chuckled. "Know something, Sis?"

"What?" Laurie asked, seeing the look of mischief and humor in her younger brother's dark brown eyes.

"After Brother Colson stressed that very lesson so fully and firmly in our Sunday School class, I decided then and there that, like them or not, even if I choked on them, I would eat my carrots and spinach."

Laurie threw her head back and laughed. "So that's why you're downing those 'hated' vegetables, as you used to call them!" she remarked.

"The first few times I honestly thought I'd never make it. To me, they were two of the strangest tasting vegetables anyone could bother preparing and cooking. Then one day I mixed the carrot in with a potato that I had crushed on the plate with my fork. I put the pepper to the orange-white combination, added butter and a dash of onion salt and, would you believe, I enjoyed it."

"And now you like them, and seem to enjoy them any way Mother and I prepare them. I guess my very favorite way of getting my quota of the cholesterol fighting carrots is in juice. I love carrot and celery juice. And I'll tell you one thing, the little juice extractor that Father bought Mother before he died has certainly been a blessing in this family."
"I guess that's my favorite way of getting them into my stomach, too, Sis. That, and raw. But I even enjoy them cooked now. And I love them in those stir-fry things you and Mother prepare. Hats off to the noble carrot!" Bob exclaimed. "Now, how did we ever get onto such an interesting subject as vegetables?"

"We entered the conversation via the discussion of dogs and garbage cans, remember?" Laurie teased.

"Oh, that's right. And I guess I'd better be doing what you told me needed to be done before I forget to do it. I came into ask you what I could get for Mother. Honestly, I'm a typical male; not knowing what to buy for a woman."

"Take care of the garbage, Bob. Then come back; we'll talk it over then."

While Bob fulfilled the task, and carried his part of the work load, Laurie hurried to the kitchen cupboard and got the mixing bowls out. By the time her brother had returned, she had sifted flour, baking powder, and salt together and set it aside for the cake she wanted to bake as a very special gift for Mother for Mother's Day. Mother loved an orange-coconut cake. It was her very favorite. And by careful penny-pinching and wise spending of her baby sitting money she, Laurie, had been able to buy oranges, coconut, and a large can of vegetable shortening, to make the cake feather-light and extra delicious for the woman who was her ideal; the mother who had steered her right in every decision, encouraged her when she got the least bit discouraged, and taught her the invaluable lesson of trusting in God, following Him, and staying true to Him no matter what the circumstances or how difficult, severe and hard the trials, tests, and battles.

"Well, do you have any suggestions, Sis?" Bob asked, coming inside and sitting down on a kitchen chair.

"How much money do you have to spend?" was Laurie's first and very practical question.

"Fifteen dollars."
Laurie dropped the measuring spoon; she was Surprised. Pleasantly so. "Fifteen dollars!" she exclaimed. "Why, Bob, you can buy numerous things that Mother needs, and can use. Fifteen dollars! You've been saving for how long?"

"A month and one week, Sis."

Laurie looked at her lastly growing-up brother. Admiration registered in her eyes and on her face. "This means, then, that you didn't buy that shirt you saw on sale in the department store," she remarked, feeling tears swimming inside her eyes.

"Mine will last a while longer," the boy declared, lowering his head.

Laurie wanted to rush over to where Bob sat and hug him. But she refrained from doing it. He was going through that in between stage, where he was no longer a little boy neither a full-grown man and, as such, he felt just a bit embarrassed when either of the females in the family became "mushy," as he termed hugs and kisses. The phase would pass, Mother had told Laurie one day as they were preparing beans for the canner.

So, since Mother had said it, Laurie knew that it would. "Well, Sis, what about it? Any suggestions?" Bob's voice brought Laurie back in thought to the immediate present; to the now.

"She really needs a new Bible, Bob. But her best dress could well stand a new replacement, too. Oh, I wish we had gobs of money to spend on her, don't you?"

Laurie's question was almost a sob.

"Do I ever!" the fifteen-year-old exclaimed. "Why, Laurie, I'd buy her a different car and ever so many things. But since I have only fifteen dollars, I'll have to put the car thought on the back burner, as Tom Coolridge says, until a later time, God willing. Now, which of the two things do you think she'd appreciate the most: the Bible or the dress? Shaffleys is having a sale on women's clothes. I saw the sign in the window as I passed, coming from the Henson's house."
"You mowed their lawn today?" Laurie questioned. "I thought they wanted you on Tuesday."

"Mr. Henson said he thought it needed it twice this week, so I mowed it. And it was rather tall again. Sometimes I think it's God's way of helping me make a bit more money. With you and Mother and me all pooling our money, we're getting along pretty good, aren't we?"

"We're keeping that horrid old proverbial wolf away from the door, Mother says. So we are truly blest, Bob.

And I was just thinking of something. . . ."

"Like what?"

"Well, I was wondering if, maybe, by pooling our money, you and I, if we can't just get both of those things for Mother. I have almost as much saved for her as a gift as you have. And, knowing Shaffleys. . . . Well, we'll find some real buys in there. When they want to make room for their new, incoming stock, they clear out. At almost unheard of low prices. Maybe we'd better go down there now, before the dresses in Mother's size are all picked over, Bob. We can go to Drakes Bookstore, too. They had King James Bibles on sale. Mary Lou told me so in prayer meeting On Wednesday night. What do you think?"

"I'm ready to go!" Bob exclaimed, jumping to his feet. "What about the cake, Laurie?"

"It can wait until we return. The sugar and shortening and oleo will be all the nicer and easier for me to cream when we get home. I should have taken the oleo out of the refrigerator earlier and allowed it to get to room temperature. This will help."

"Let's go!" Bob shouted, racing through the house to his bedroom for the fifteen dollars. "I have almost sixteen dollars, Sis!" he declared, as they hurried along the village streets to the heart of town. "I forgot all about the fifty-cent piece and the quarter which I had stuck away in one of the dollar bills. I rolled the money in a bill so as not to lose it. So I'm even richer than I thought I was. Praise the Lord forever!"
"God is full of surprises for His children," Laurie said sweetly.

They came to Shaffleys first. Laurie was ecstatic with joy and overcome with thankfulness to find three dresses that were in her mother's size. And for only $18.00!

"Please, Mrs. Montag," she said to the pleasant faced, motherly woman who was in the store, "hold all three of these dresses for Bob and me until we get back from Drakes Bookstore. Mother also needs a new Bible. Desperately so! Bob and I want to get her one. We have no idea how much they'll cost."

"I'll hold them for you, Laurie and Bob, have no fear. And may God bless your dear, sweet mother."

The bookstore carried a display of the King James Bibles. It was set up close to where Laurie and Bob entered.

"Look at this one!" Bob exclaimed to his sister. "Isn't it beautiful, Laurie!"

Laurie picked the Bible up and opened it gently and carefully. "Oh, Bob, it is beautiful. And it has a lovely concordance in the back, too. Also many helps. Mother will love it. And . . . and, look, it's only eleven dollars! Oh, isn't it wonderful. Shall we get it? I'm all for buying it. It was originally $36.00. Imagine it!"

"Let's get it," Bob said, smiling broadly. "The Lord has gone before us."

They bought the Bible then hurried back to Shaffleys Dress Store.

"I see you got the Bible," Mrs. Montag said, looking at Bob, who carried the Treasure.

"It's beautiful, Mrs. Montag," Laurie remarked. "And we want all three of the dresses, too."

From behind the counter, Mrs. Montag lifted a gift-wrapped box. "They're yours for $15.00," she remarked with a smile. "My husband said to clear the racks; this will help to fulfill his command. They're good dresses,
too. We have so many new ones to put out that these must go. That's the drawback in having a small store; not enough room for everything."

Laurie and Bob were speechless for a moment. Then Laurie, in a burst of joyous emotion and complete thankfulness, cried, "Oh, thank you, Mrs. Montag! Thank you! And may God bless you!" In the next moment, she had wrapped her arms around the woman's neck and was crying on her shoulder, exclaiming, "I am so happy! Mother needed dresses ever so much. God will bless you for it. See if He doesn't."

"The pleasure is all mine," the store woman replied, ringing the $15.00 up on the cash register.

All the way home, Laurie and Bob felt as if they were dreaming.

"You were right," Bob said, pulling the boxed Bible closer to his heart." God has so many surprises for His children. Oh, I can hardly wait until we can give Mother her special gifts, Laurie."

"I want to get that cake mixed and baked now, Bob. And just you wait until it's frosted, and has that super delicious filling between its layers! Um! Um! Mother will be surprised!"

"And ever so happy, too!" Bob said, opening the door for his sister. Some of the boys on the block might think it sissy of him, doing what he did for Mother's Day. Little matter; for love of Mother, he was willing to be dubbed a sissy. And with God's help, and by His grace, he would never change. His wonderful Christian mother deserved all that Laurie and he could do for her. and much more besides.

Laurie handed the gift-wrapped box of dresses to her brother, saying, "Hide these in your room till tomorrow, Bob. I must get busy on that cake. Mother works only till four today at the Bessemer's house."

Bob took the two boxes and went away whistling.