

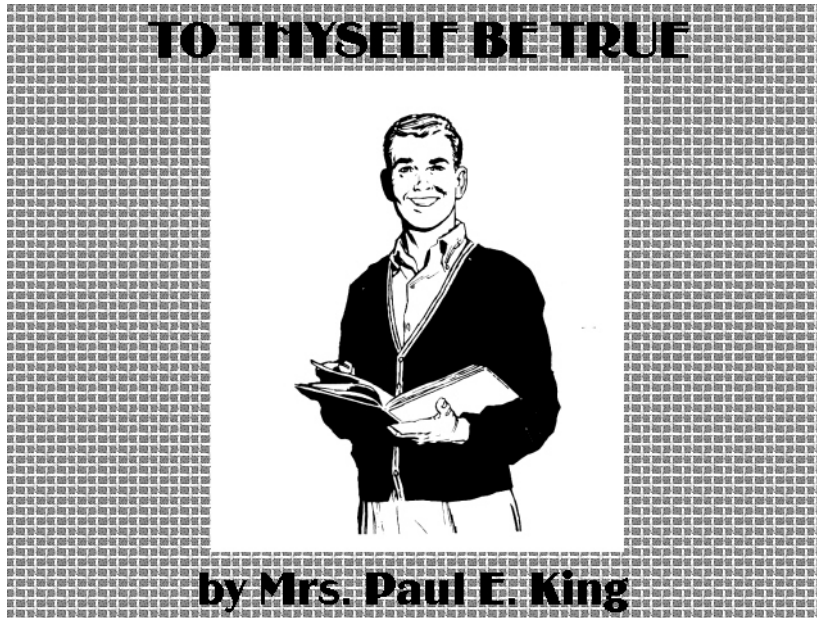
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TO THYSELF BE TRUE
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Dan closed his book, then bowed his head in silent prayer. He had studied long and hard for the test. He knew it was going to be a "stiff" one; Professor Hardwood had all but told the class that it was. Dan knew the professor well enough by now to know that he was not one to mince words. He was a severely austere man. There were times when Dan felt intimidated

by his presence. Then he would remember that he was an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ, and his fear would leave him.

Professor Hardwood seemed to be anti-God, anti-Bible and, to a large degree, antisocial. He was a teacher, period! This, Dan admitted silently, he was extremely proficient at and qualified for and in. But it ended there.

The man expected each of his students to absorb, imbibe and believe profoundly in each and all of his teachings. In fact, if any dared to disagree with him or take an opposite view, he incurred the professor's wrath and his sharp criticism and instant anger. Professor Hardwood had a razor-edged tongue which he used frequently to his advantage, not caring whom he left wounded by it.

"Hey, you seem worried," Jess Kemp remarked as he settled down on the seat next to Dan. "I'm not about to let some old test beat me down. Anyhow, I know I'll make a good grade."

"Don't be too sure about that," Dan replied. "The Prof. can be rather hard at times."

"At times! What an understatement, my friend! Just say he's hard all the time. I don't believe he has the slightest understanding of what the word kindness is all about. Nor feeling, for others. But don't you kid yourself, Dan, some of us are just as smart as the Prof. There are ways to make good grades in spite of his hardness and harshness. Yes, there are ways! Like to get in on the secret, Dan?"

Dan looked at Jess, shock registered on his face. "If your secret is what I think it is, and what your statement hinted of, then I don't have any desire to know."

"You'll pull a low mark, if not a failing one, I promise," Jess predicted. "Professor Hardwood gives very few good grades. And to get what amounts to even a half-decent mark you have to get in on the know-how-to-do-it strategy. The kids here have been pulling it all year. Prof. doesn't know."

"Jess," Dan said, "there is no way I'll stoop to cheating, since this is what you're trying to say, or tell me. Maybe Professor Hardwood doesn't know what some of you have been doing, but that doesn't make what you're

doing right. Without meaning to sound 'preachy,' as some of you call it when anything about God is mentioned, I want you to know that God sees all the cheating. Someday you will have to answer to Him for this."

"Oh, forget it! I might have known you'd say something like this. And I only meant to help you out."

"I'm here to learn," Dan said. "Whether I make a good grade or not, I won't cheat. Cheating never benefits anyone. What good will it be to you to put down the right answers to the questions without knowing the answer to the problems for yourself? Anyone can scribble down answers, but it takes a man with some know-how to know how to go about getting those answers. This is the thing we'll have to know when we're pushing a pencil in some office someday, God willing. What will you do, Jess, when you are faced with a sheet full of figures and you never took the time to learn how to solve them for yourself? Do you think you'll succeed in your chosen field of math?"

"I'll deal with that when I face it," Jess answered casually and in an impersonal sounding tone of voice. "Why worry about something you're not confronted with, I always say. Furthermore, my chief concern now is to get through here. And I intend to continue using the 'system' to my advantage toward that final passing mark and, ultimately, to graduate. I feel sorry for you, Dan; you'll never make it in the Prof.'s class. You'll learn someday, when it's too late, that you have to stay one step ahead of the man if you expect to pass in his class."

"No sale, Jess. I'm not that kind. I belong to the Lord Jesus Christ and, as His child, I will trust in Him to help me. Whatever grade I make, you can be sure that it will be of my own learning and not because I cheated. I'll be facing God someday; I mean to stand in His presence with clean hands and a holy heart. Then, too, I must be true to myself. I live with 'me'; it's blissfully wonderful having a conscience that's void of offense toward God and myself. No, Jess, it's no go here. I started out on this Heavenly, Holy way -- like you once did--and I mean to finish exactly the way I started."

"Have it your way!" Jess exclaimed angrily as he hurried away. "I only meant to help you."

After Jess was gone, Dan again asked help from the Lord. His heart felt heavy and grieved for Jess. He and Jess were once close friends. Since Jess

began going around with the wrong crowd, he had changed drastically and radically. There were no absolutes for him anymore; he "absorbed" the no-moral beliefs of his counterparts, declaring that life was meant to be lived and enjoyed to its fullest and its utmost.

Dan prayed for Jess; this cheating thing was still another evidence and indication of how far he had drifted and fallen. And the saddest part of all was that he wanted to hear nothing about God. Nothing whatever.

Dan walked from the campus bench, where he had been studying and praying for help, into Melrose Hall and on into Professor Hardwood's classroom. God expected and wanted only his best -- his very best. He would fulfill the requirement to the best of his ability and leave the results with his kind Heavenly Father. He would rather a thousand times over make a failing grade in the class than to break God's laws and violate His standard of holy living and lose the deep inner peace and soul-rest which so sweetly was his through Christ.

Jess didn't even bother to look at him as he slid into the seat next to his. Dan sensed an air of coolness; the gap was widening more and more between his one-time good friend and himself. It pained and grieved Dan. He knew the reason why the once-true fellowship was gone. This grieved him even more deeply. Ever since Jess turned his back on spiritual things and the way of Holiness and began dabbling in the things of the world, he wanted little to do with Dan. But this was no marvel, Dan realized; Light had no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. There was no common bond between the two. Jess feared the Light because, now, his deeds were evil.

Professor Hardwood's caustic words brought Dan quickly out of his world of private thinking to the immediate present. He sat up straight in his seat, his entire being paying full attention to what was being said. There would be no leniency or mercy coming from the professor, this was made candidly plain in the man's pre-exam speech. "I hope you have come prepared," Professor Hardwood added as a grand finale to his lecture speech.

The first part of the test went well and was quite easy for Dan. The last half, however, was completely different; it was exceedingly difficult. Dan bowed his head and closed his eyes, praying to the Lord for help and for

clarity of mind and thought. God had promised wisdom to those who asked and, now, he was asking. He needed help.

He opened his eyes and discovered a sheet of paper on his desk. Prof. had left the room. Scribbled in bold writing at the top of the paper were these words: "Quit worrying, Dan; copy these answers."

Without looking at any of the answers, Dan wrote quickly beneath the words, "To God and myself I must be true. No, thanks." Then he slid the paper over to Jess's desk and continued working on the test before him.

One by one he put the answers down to the questions, and when he turned his papers in to Professor Hardwood he had a conscience that was at peace and at rest with God and with himself. He may not make the honor roll of Stoney Hill College but he knew he had God's smile of approval upon him. This meant far more to him than having his name on an honor roll. Too, he had done his very best in the test, this was all that was expected of him.

As he left the classroom Jess punched him in the ribs. "You're a fool!" he exclaimed. "Bryan Hardwood got the answers from his dad's desk for a select few of us. You could have made it, Dan."

"I have One who helped me, Jess. And I have a clean conscience, too. I'll be able to sleep well tonight; no cheating to keep me awake nor to disturb my conscience and my soul."
Jess gave Dan a look of disgust then walked away. Dan went whistling on his way to his next class. The peace of God flooded his soul.