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TRUE TO HER WORD
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Andrea Drye all but ran down the sidewalk from Sarah's house to her own. She could scarcely wait to get home to ask her mother if she could go with some of the young people from their church to the brand new mall that had opened. It would be so much fun, all of them together, "exploring" the myriad shops and the four big department stores in the mall. It was the

largest mall, so the papers had said, for miles around. And best of all, Andrea thought, it was within easy driving distance from Pleasantview Hills.

She smiled now as she remembered how excited Jan had sounded when she talked to her on the phone at Sarah's house. And Sarah was about as excited as she could be, too, Andrea thought, as she walked faster now.

It would be great to go shopping with the group from the church. Jan's father had given her permission to use their older model car and for this Andrea felt grateful: the big, old Buick had all kinds of leg room as well as seat room. The newer cars could be quite cramped when there were six or seven inside them. Not so with the Raney's old blue Buick; seven or eight could sit comfortably and ride for long distances in its roomy interior without feeling cramped or "squished" as they phrased it when they seemed to be packed like sardines in some of the smaller, later model cars.

Mentally, Andrea began figuring how much money she had with which to go shopping in the mall. She had been saving for some new shoes and a dress, also. And she could really use a medium weight sweater, too, she thought, as she hurried along. Her sweater had, indeed, seen its best days. She was wearing it now as a "knock-about" everyday sweater, when she needed it.

Money, in the Drye household, was certainly not plentiful. It was not spent foolishly, nor was it squandered. From their earliest years, Andrea remembered they were taught that a tenth -- the tithe -- of all they received didn't belong to them; it belonged to God, Who said, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, . . . and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10).

Since childhood, when she received her first dime ever that she could remember, she had taken two pennies out to be brought "into the storehouse," her church. One penny was tithe, the other was her special gift, an offering.

She smiled happily now, recalling how she gave a penny even when she received only a nickel as her own . . . half-a-penny tithe and half-a-penny offering.

Her parents had taught their children well, she thought, feeling blessed to have been born into their household. Each of the five offspring was taught to be a good steward of both money and time; to use each wisely, carefully and prayerfully, and not to squander either. And for this, God had blessed them: she never lacked for baby-sitting jobs. Never.

"Thank You, Lord," she said aloud. "Thank You for blessing me so richly and abundantly with all spiritual blessings as well as with physical, good health blessings, and financial blessings."

Her financial blessings were sometimes on the meager side after she had given generous love offerings on top of her tithe and, as an added blessing-bonus for her, she had given a love-gift-offering to her parents, but the joy and satisfaction she received by her willing giving far outweighed her lack of remaining funds,

Andrea smelled the delightful fragrance of her mother's very-special, super-delicious cinnamon sticky buns even before she stepped up on the porch. She felt like hers was, indeed, an unusually wonderful family. How many other mothers took the time to do so many lovely things for their family like her mother did? she wondered. She knew there were precious few like her mom. Her heart swelled in love and sincere appreciation for her parents. Again, she thanked God for them.

She bounded into the house with a burst of joyous, bubbly laughter. "You are the greatest!" she exclaimed to her mother as she twined her arms lovingly around her neck. "It's a wonder we don't have everybody on the block rushing up to our door for a handout. Mom, your sticky buns smell positively ambrosial!"

"It sounds to me as though my lovely daughter is hungry," Mrs. Drye teased as she patted Andrea affectionately on her cheeks.

"I am; but I'll wait till supper time. No need to spoil one's appetite for the main course."

"I have potatoes that need peeled, Andrea, and a salad to prepare "

"I'll do it, Mother," and Andrea donned an apron and began to work, happy to be in her parent's company and presence again.

She had finished peeling the potatoes and was almost through making the salad when she remembered about the mall. "Oh, Mother," she said quickly, "some of the young people from church are going to the new mall tonight for shopping. They wondered if I'd go with them. Jan's father has given permission for her to use their big Buick; this way we'll be able to go together, God willing. May I go, please? I imagine it's going to be one crowded mall, but I think it will be fun to go, too."

"Why Andrea honey, of course I'd allow you to go; only, I believe this is the night you promised Mrs. Smithson you'd watch her two small children for an hour or two. Right?"

Andrea drew her breath in quick-like. "Oh, dear! I had forgotten about that! I did promise her; I told her that I'd do it for her if she had to go see her ailing mother. She was to call me if she changed her plans. Did she call?"

"No, she didn't, honey."

"So that means she's depending on me to watch the little ones," Andrea said thoughtfully. "And this means no mall for tonight. That would have been so nice; just us young people together."

"But Mrs. Smithson doesn't know the Lord, Andrea, and if you would not keep your promise this would be a very poor testimony to her. Most sinner people expect Christians to keep their promises, even if they themselves don't."

"I know. I've been talking to her about the Lord, and telling her how wonderful it is to know one's sins are forgiven and that you're ready for Heaven. She said she thought it would be great to be sure of something so important as this. I told her she could know it, that Jesus had paid the price for our salvation by His death on the cross. Well, I guess I'd better get Sarah and Jan on the phone and tell them I won't be going tonight. You and Dad always said our word should be as good as gold. I mean to continue my practice of this, for Jesus' sake! And, too, it's good discipline for me, Mother; not to be able to do what I'd like to do all the time, nor every time."

Mrs. Drye brushed a tear from her cheek as she heard Andrea call her friends and tell them she wouldn't be going with them. This meant sacrifice

on her daughter's part, but she knew God would more than repay her for being faithful to her promise and for abiding by her word.

Andrea came back into the kitchen humming "God's Way Is The Best Way." "I'm so thankful you remembered about tonight, Mother dear," she remarked. "That would have been perfectly terrible for me to have gone to the mall while dear Mrs. Smithson sat home wondering why I didn't come. Worse still, she wouldn't have been able to get to her poor, sick mother. And what a testimony I would have been to that dear woman! Thanks for reminding me. I guess the reason I didn't remember is because it isn't my usual time for babysitting her little ones."

"You'll be able to get to the mall another time, God willing, honey, and the Lord is going to bless you for being truthful to your word."

Immediately after eating an early evening meal, before her family ate, Andrea left for the Smithson home.

Mrs. Smithson met her at the door. "I'm so grateful for you, Andrea!" she remarked, smiling. "You are always so dependable. And besides, I never worry when the children are in your care. Thanks for being you. I've never had a baby sitter like you. Someday, when my mother is home from the hospital and improved, I want to talk to you about spiritual things. I never gave this too much thought until you said we could know we were ready for Heaven. That set me to thinking. Well, I'll have to be going. I mustn't linger any more; Mother will be expecting me. It will perhaps be a couple hours this evening. Thanks for coming early. If I'm needed, you have the phone number in Mother's room; call me. My husband will be working late tonight. He plans to stop in to see Mother on his way home from work; then he'll follow me home. Have a good evening. You're a jewel. A rare jewel!"

"Thanks, Mrs. Smithson. I've been praying for your mother. And for you, too. I love you."

"And I love Andrea! You are one of a kind; a rare, honest, and beautiful kind: you always keep your word. This speaks louder to me than any sermon. You not only say you love the Lord, you live it. All the time. Bye. I must hurry. I help Mother with her therapy."

Tears swam in Andrea's eyes as she walked into the house. She now realized the meaning of the scripture in Ephesians 5:15: "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." The phrases, "walk circumspectly" and "redeeming the time," stood out before her in bold command and new meaning. To "walk circumspectly" meant that she must be "watchful on all sides"; "prudent; discreet."

"Please help me, kind Father," she prayed. "Help me to ever be one who keeps her word; one who will always 'walk circumspectly.' The world is watching. . . ."

"Andrea! Andrea!" the Smithson children called as she closed the storm door and locked it behind her. "Come see what we built! It's a fort! A real fort!"

"Oh, I must see this!" Andrea cried happily as each child took her by the hand and led her into the family room where the newly constructed fort stood, stately and solidly, on the marble tile in front of the enormous fireplace.

"It's beautiful!" she remarked with enthusiasm and truthfulness. "You are great builders and I am very proud of you."

"We followed the picture, Andrea," the oldest, Timothy, stated proudly. "It's fun to build a fort," he added excitedly.

"Oh, I know it must be!" Andrea remarked happily. And suddenly she realized how delightful her evening was to be. The Smithson children were obedient, well-behaved children. They were a joy to be around and to have around. She could go to the mall anytime, she thought, but her little "charges" would only be little once. She had a work to do for the Lord while they were little; the gospel seed needed to be sown in little hearts on soft that was still fertile and tender. God had given her another golden opportunity to sow more seed; she had two whole hours to do the delightful work.

"Do we get more Bible stories tonight?" Heather asked quickly. "I hope so."

"Indeed you will, you sweet little darlings. I'll tell you about Jesus tonight and how very much He loves you. . . .

With the children's squeal of delight, the shopping trip to the mall faded away completely from Andrea's thoughts and from her mind. Gathering them closely around her, she began the story of Jesus.