NEW ASSIGNMENT

By Mrs. Paul E. King

Beverly "fed" the words into the computer, trying hard to keep her mind on the work before her. So far, she was right up there at the top with her work. Mr. Merriman had told her more than once how pleased he was with her excellence.
"For one so young, and just coming out of school," he had said, "you amaze me. Your mind itself is like a computer," he had added.

"I couldn't do it if it wasn't for the Lord, Mr. Merriman," Beverly told her employer several times, after having listened to his favorable comments and high praise regarding her work.

Mr. Merriman had smiled and looked rather smug like, mumbling something or other about brains and not God at all, but Beverly knew better; she knew that every bit of knowledge and of wisdom that she had had come as a special gift or endowment from God. True, she had studied hard and she had willingly applied her heart to master her subject; but, still, it was God who gave one the understanding and the wisdom to know how to do the work. And the fine, new, updated computer with which she was working was nothing short of being complicated.

"Working toward that new assignment, Bev?"

Joel McDowell's words sliced into the very core of Beverly's thoughts

"Aren't you?" Beverly's softly-spoken question seemed to take Joel by surprise. She smiled up at him, dimpling her face as she did so.

Stuttering and stammering, Joel replied truthfully, "I . . . I guess I just figured there wasn't even the slightest ghost of a chance that I'd get it. It's going to be a real toss up between you and Helen Crumley."

"Helen's quite efficient, Joel."

Joel muttered something, then he wheeled around and stood facing her. "Don't act so sanctimonious, and . . . and don't pretend you don't want that job."

Beverly looked up from her work. Joel's voice sounded almost angry, she thought.

"I would like it, Joel," she admitted, softly, "but only if this is God's will for me."
"You and your religious bit!" Joel almost hissed the words at her. "Why must you always bring God into everything?"

"Because He's the center of my life, Joel. He means everything to me."

"More than that new assignment coming up?"

"Yes, more to me than that."

"You're weird!" With those words Joel rushed away.

Beverly concentrated on her work and tried to forget the last comment Joel had made. Perhaps he meant what he had said, she reasoned. Little matter. She loved the Lord with all her being. Just knowing that she was God's child was worth everything to her; worth, even, being called weird.

She wondered if Joel was still upset over her refusal to date him. Time after time he had asked her to go out with him and each time she had refused.

"Think I'm not good enough for you?" he had asked her once.

"Oh, Joel," she had replied, "it's not that at all. I enjoy your friendship here at work and I like you a lot."

"Well, that gives me two counts to the good," he had countered laughingly. "So, why won't you date me? What are the minus factors?"

"There are no plurals, Joel; it's singular: one thing. . . ."

"What might that be?" Joel asked, looking down at his well-polished shoes and his neat, conservative suit, pale blue pinstripe shirt and tie. "My parents have always seen to it that I dressed like a decent young man ought to. So what do I lack?"

"Jesus. You don't know the Lord, Joel."

"So. . . ?"
Beverly remembered how she had quoted the scripture to him about not being unequally yoked. He had looked dumbfounded and shocked.

"So that's the big hang-up!" he had exclaimed. "Well, let me tell you one thing, Beverly Brownlee, I may not be a Christian, as you call it, but neither am I a heathen. I'm a decent, sensible, law-abiding, morally good young man. Thank you!"

For days afterwards, Joel had avoided her as much as possible, not even responding to her cheerful good morning greetings when they met in the office room. He treated her with massive doses of icy coolness, which grieved her tender heart. She hadn't meant to make an enemy of him. Nor did she enjoy the feeling of tension when he was around. It bothered her. Several times she had tried to talk to him but he steadfastly ignored her.

She had told her parents what had transpired and taken place, asking their wise counsel and advice regarding what more she should do. Her father's answer helped to put her mind at ease:

"I would say you have done all that needs to be done," he had replied. "And really, Beverly, I suspect he's out of sorts with the Bible. You said you told him the Bible says for you not to be unequally yoked with an unbeliever. The Word is powerful, as you know, piercing and cutting as it penetrates the soul. The Word needs no apology, honey."

"Oh, I wouldn't apologize for anything which the Bible states, Daddy. Never! God's Word needs no apology."

"Just pray for Joel," her father had replied. "Prayer can reach through where you can’t."

She studied the work before her now, thinking back upon her father's answers, which helped to reassure her that God was in control. And each time she looked over at Joel's desk she had a calmness inside her being.

"What's eating him?" Elaine Landry asked Beverly in a low tone of voice and motioning toward Joel's desk when he stepped out of the room for a brief period. "He's as crabby as they come lately," she added, shaking her head in disgust.
"I won't date him, as you know," Beverly replied.

"So? He's not the first one who's been refused and he won't be the last," Elaine answered sagely. "I'm sure you have your reasons for not dating him."

Beverly was ready to answer Elaine when she saw Joel walk into the office, and since the desks were close to each other she made no reply but kept working diligently away. Helen looked over and smiled at her; Beverly returned her smile.

Mr. Merriman came into the room. "Helen, I would like to see you in my office for a few minutes, please."

Helen got to her feet. "Yes, Sir," she replied, as she followed the president of the company to his office.

Beverly looked up to see Joel watching her. Quickly she lowered her eyes to her work. She was sure Helen was going to get the new assignment. Joel was watching to see her reaction, she felt sure.

Her heart sent up a silent prayer to the Lord for His sweet will to be done in the matter of the assignment where her life was concerned. Then she prayed for God to bless Helen if she was chosen for the job, wondering, at the same time, why Mr. Merriman's receptionist or private secretary hadn't called for Helen over the intercom.

Beverly's thoughts were soon taken up with her work and Helen's absence was forgotten for the time being. But when Helen came back into the office twenty minutes later everyone knew the new assignment was hers. Her face was wreathed in a smile.

"Congratulations!" Joel exclaimed loudly; more loudly than any of the office help had ever heard him speak before.

"Thanks, Joel," Helen replied. "I can scarcely believe it's true. I thought surely Beverly would get it."
"Oh, Helen, I'm so happy for you!" Beverly remarked, getting to her feet and hugging Helen. "You deserve it: you are so very capable," she added, feeling a deep joy and happiness over her friend's promotion.

"But you wanted it, too," Helen said, looking shocked and dumb struck over Beverly's remarks.

"Only if it was God's will for me to have it, Helen. It wasn't, so I am extremely happy for you."

"You know that isn't true," Joel countered. "You're just trying to cover up for your own disappointment over not getting the assignment."

Looking Helen full in the face, Beverly repeated what she had previously said, adding softly, "I speak the truth, Helen; from the very bottom of my heart, I can say I am truly happy for you."

"Thanks, Beverly, I believe you. I have never known you to say what you didn't mean. I appreciate you. It's extremely noble and wonderful of you to feel this way. I can't understand it, but it's beautiful."

"It's Christ living in me," Beverly answered softly as she hurried back to her desk.

The Holy Spirit's sweet presence in the heart of a believer was indeed a mystery to the world, she realized with joy. To Joel, she was "weird." How anyone could rejoice, and actually and truly be happy when another got the new assignment, was indeed unnatural and totally and completely out of keeping with the way the "natural man" -- the world -- did things.

Her heart leaped for joy as she realized how wondrously natural and easy it was for one who was truly sanctified wholly and Spirit-filled to rejoice with true, pure inner joy over another's good news and promotion and not feel the least bit of carnal jealousy or envy in the heart. This was without a doubt a glorious and a blessed freedom; something the world knew nothing about and something which it could not give.

With heavenly joybells ringing in her soul, she offered silent but heartfelt thanks and praise to God for her liberty and freedom in Christ.