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**THE CLIQUE**  
**By Mrs. Paul E. King**

Patience Langdon felt utterly drained and perplexed. And she was heavily burdened, too. Was it worth the effort expended? she wondered from where she sat in the back seat of the car riding home with her parents after the evening church service.

She squeezed her petite form farther into the corner, wondering what more she could do, as tears did a sudden, sneaky run down her cheeks. She had been fasting twice weekly on a regular basis and her praying and Bible reading was a daily and consistent thing, blest and crowned wondrously by God's presence. Still the sad condition existed in the young people's group. It had not changed. Not even a little bit. At least not in any way that she could see, or tell, visibly.

She felt a heavy sigh heave itself from her breast. It was like she was carrying the burden and pulling the load by herself; like the young people didn't even care. Except for Jodie. Not that she was trying to impress anyone that she was above others spiritually or, like Elijah, that she felt she was the only one who hadn't bowed the knee to Baal; the Baal, in her particular case, being the god of fashion labels and names and tags, et cetera. She felt sick just thinking about it.

Once home, she thanked her father for his careful driving, then she hurried inside to her bedroom. Feeling like the young people's service that evening was an utter and total failure, she fell across the bed and wept, silently imploring God's help.

The light flicked on in the room and her mother stood beside her at the bed. She hadn't heard her parent come in. Not that it mattered: she needed someone to talk to. Someone to confide in. Someone to share her burden with.

"What's wrong, Patience?" Mrs. Langdon asked anxiously as she sat on the edge of the bed and caught her daughter up in her arms.

"Oh, Mother, I feel I'm such a failure."

"Now what makes you think that, my dear? I'm sure God doesn't view your situation and your circumstances in that way. It's the young people again, isn't it?" she probed gently and kindly.

Raising her head, Patience cried, "Oh, will they never change? I think I'll die unless something happens. That clique is growing, and growing fast. Even the boys are getting tied in. Honestly, Mother, I never saw anything like it. Either you are 'in' or you're very definitely 'out'."

"That sounds like a riddle," the mother teased, trying to evoke a smile from her daughter.

"It's heart-breaking," Patience declared. "Ever since Blenda Cox and Harriett Smith got into wearing these name brand, designer labeled clothes, and have begun bragging about whose or what name brand clothes they're wearing, it's done something to our young people. Oh, Mother," she cried, as she sat on the edge of the bed, "we have a group of young people who seem interested only in material things. Name brand clothes expressly. It's developed into an exclusive clique. I'm so troubled. You know that new family three blocks down the street from the church; the Mortons." Mrs. Langdon nodded.

"I was so excited and thrilled, and so thankful, when God answered prayer and rewarded my labors of week after week calling on them and visiting them, by sending them to church. The three young people came regularly every Sunday evening for young people's meeting, five weeks in a row. Then two Sundays ago, after hearing one of our own church young people make some catty remark about Maxine's 'cheap looking' dress -- Maxine is the oldest of the three Mortons who were coming to church -- it was more than they could take. They quit coming. They weren't out tonight again. My heart is broken."

"Have you mentioned this to our minister, honey?"

"No. I feel he has enough without carrying my load. He has to pastor the parents of these poor, blinded, snobbish young people. And if it's true that we -- the children -- are 'display patterns' and 'fruit products' of what our home life is like, I'm sure he has a heavy burden on his heart too and a weighty load to carry."

Mrs. Langdon hugged her daughter tightly to her. "Sometimes some children do things totally and completely different from what their home training has been, honey. There are many brokenhearted parents in this world; parents whose wise and godly counsel was not heeded by a rebellious son or daughter. We can manifest the Spirit of Jesus by being compassionate and kind to them. It wouldn't surprise me to hear that some of the parents in our church are grieving and hurting greatly inside over the way their children are behaving and doing, Patience. Many of these young people are earning their own money now" she said.

"But Mother, God hates cliques and snobbishness. The poor, Jesus said, have the gospel preached unto them. They receive it readily, it seems. Only, the poor who come to our young people's services aren't welcome anymore, because they don't wear expensive name brand and designer label clothes. It's sickening to me. You should hear them brag and talk about their clothing.

"Mrs. Whitman told me she will not allow Jodie to spend that kind of money; not for any of those "labeled things" her words. She was firm. 'No way!' she declared with authority and finality.

"Jodie was so embarrassed, when her mother's firm message of disapproval and disfavor was 'noised abroad' among this circle, that she stayed outside until the regular church service began.

"I went out and talked to her, telling her that it was pride that made one want nothing but those expensive name brand things, and that pride would damn our soul unless it was removed from the heart, root and all."

"She looked at me for a long while. Then she threw her arms around my neck and cried. She told me how happy she felt to know that I was not ashamed to be different, adding, that, if God's grace was sufficient for me to stand, He would give her the needed amount also."

"So that makes two of you who aren't afraid to stand up and be counted for what is right and righteous, Patience. And since one plus God is a majority you can easily see where that puts two plus God! Through prayer, honey, you and Jodie and your father and I can watch as God breaks up and disbands this clique of exclusiveness. 'If two of you agree on earth . . . ' Remember that wonderful promise?"

"Oh yes, I do! I do!"

"All right then, we shall lay claim to that, Patience. And on the authority of God's Word, this 'kingdom' of the world will crumble and fall and come to naught."

Much of the night was spent in prayer. Patience loved the young people and felt responsible for their souls since they had put her in as their new leader.

A few weeks after the prayer vigil was set by her mother and father and Jodie and herself, one of the ringleaders of the exclusive clique became violently ill and was rushed to the hospital's intensive care unit, lingering on the brink of eternity for days.

The prayers continued faithfully at their vigil, praying desperately and earnestly for Blenda's salvation and her healing, if this latter was God's will.

She rallied shortly thereafter and, opening her eyes wide, she exclaimed in amazement and wonder, "Oh, I'm not dead! I'm not dead! I'm still alive! Thank You, Jesus. Thank You!"

In her weakened condition, she began praying and calling on God for mercy on her soul; mercy to forgive and pardon her sins and her transgressions. And He, in His mercy, came with forgiveness and peace. She was changed radically.

Blenda's recovery was speedy after that. And her first service back in the young people's meeting, with all three of the Morton young people sitting with her, she electrified the service with her Spirit-filled testimony. She confessed her pride and asked the entire group to forgive her for her bad influence upon them, stating that she had had a vision of hell and the lake of fire and that she was not taking the broad way ever again; she was on the highway of holiness and she meant to stay on it.

The altar lined as one after another of the young people saw his or her need of the Savior -- the Mortons included.

God sent revival! Patience could do nothing but weep for joy and thankfulness. The clique was disbanded, broken up, done away with, and completely dissolved -- by God!