Heather opened the french doors in the dining room and slipped quietly to the patio outside. She walked to the glider and sat down, seething inwardly over Kendra’s frankness and bluntness. How dare she say what she did about Cody? she thought, "replaying" her best friend's words over again in her mind. Kendra was jealous, she decided; jealous because Cody was interested in her -- Heather -- and not Kendra.
In anger, Heather picked up the phone and dialed the number of her best friend.

Kendra's soft, "Hello, Kendra Stanford speaking," served only to anger Heather more.

"I don't need to tell you who this is," she lashed out quickly. "And I just wanted you to know it's none of your business whom I date. You're jealous because Cody didn't choose you instead of me. . . ."

"Oh, Heather, no! No!" Kendra cried. "Cody begged me to date him. Six months ago, he nearly bugged me to death. He called the house daily for weeks on end. That's the reason I rarely ever answered the phone when it rang -- I was afraid it was Cody. I had told him I wouldn't date him because he wasn't a Christian and that God's Word was against this kind of relationship. No, Heather dear, I'm not jealous. Not one bit. The Lord took that out of my heart when He sanctified me wholly and filled me with His Holy Spirit. I'm afraid for you, though. I love you, and I'm deeply concerned for you. All these weeks of secret dating, trying to keep it from your parents, will lead to only one thing -- trouble."

"That's none of your business, even if we've been best friends. And you'd better not squeal on me. My parents like Alana and think she's great. So as long as they know I'm with her there's no problem."

"But they don't know you're dating Cody, even if you are with Alana and Tim."

"They've never asked, so why tell? It's been a good arrangement, so far as I'm concerned."

"But, Heather, your born again experience: doesn't this mean anything to you? A Christian and a non-Christian aren't compatible. Usually, the non-Christian drags the Christian down to his level, and into his ways."

"It doesn't need to be that way, Kendra."

"It doesn't, you're right; but it is that way in almost every case. And with you still not sanctified, well, your willpower and resistance to Cody and his
charms will be nothing. It's dangerous, Heather. Very dangerous! And the fact that since you began to date Cody you haven't been seeking after holiness and for a pure and cleansed heart, scares me dreadfully. Oh, my dear Heather, can't you see how Cody has already influenced you and your thinking? You've changed, and it's not for the better of you: he's pulling you down to where he is and to how he thinks and feels about things. Spiritual things especially."

"That's my business. Again I repeat; it's my business. Cody and I love each other. Very much. I'm not in the mood for a sermon nor advice. I'm eighteen and a half. Goodbye."

Kendra stared at the phone in her hand for a long while after Heather hung upon her. Then tears began falling. She dropped to her knees in prayer; agonizing, intercessory prayer. But only for a little while: with a suddenness that both astonished and amazed her, God dried her tears up and the prayer burden left her instantly. A horrible fear grabbed her; a fear for her friend.

She wasn't too surprised when a friend at church approached her several weeks later with the news that Heather and Cody had run away and eloped, not letting Alana and Tim know, even. They had found a small three-room, furnished apartment in some town and set up housekeeping.

Kendra tried to pray for Heather and Cody but the burden was gone. God had removed it from her heart the day her friend had informed her with the unmistakably clear message that what she did was her business. Heather had avoided her ever since.

Kendra's Sunday school class of six- and seven-year-olds kept her busy when she wasn't working at Gromans Department Store or helping out at home; but her heart was happy and blessed in knowing she was doing and being what the Lord wanted her to do and be. Her heart was full. She had but one desire and that was to please her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

She was extremely surprised one evening to hear Heather's voice as she answered the ringing phone.

"Heather!" she exclaimed in glad surprise. "It's good to hear your voice again. We've been missing you. You're an old married woman now, I hear. What is it -seven months already?"
"Eight and a half, and I feel like it's been years instead of months. Oh, Kendra, Cody's a bear. I asked him to go to church with me and he laughed in my face. I cried then, and he grabbed my wrists and said I knew before I married him that he wasn't a religious man, and that he never intended to go to church.

"I reminded him that within three months he would be a father, and I thought every child should have Christian parents who took their children to church instead of sending them. He laughed, mockingly in my face, then told me his children would not be going to church. Oh, Kendra, I feel trapped! What shall I do?

"He provides well for me and we're now living in a three-bedroom house at the edge of town; but life is more than a good living: I want my children to know what a stabilizing force the church can be, and is. But if Cody carries through with his words, my children will be deprived of religious training, and this is almost more than I can bear.

"I feel trapped, Kendra. What can I do? Please pray for me. For us! I . . . I . . . you were right, dear friend: I got my way, all right; but my way, contrary to God's way and to His Word and His will, has gotten me into trouble. Much trouble. Deep trouble. And there's nothing much for me to do but to sit tight while I pay for my disregard of and open defiance to the scriptural injunction to 'be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.' I see my error and my mistake but it's too late. I'll reap what I have sown for the rest of my life."

"Cody's not . . . well . . . is he nasty to you in other ways, Heather dear?." Kendra asked quickly, wishing she could recall time and events for her once-best friend.

"Yes. He's extremely verbally abusive, and more than once I thought he was going to hit me. He's not the least excited or happy about the little one who's going to soon become a member of our household and our family."

By now, Heather was sobbing. "Oh, Kendra, Kendra," she cried. "You know how well I love children; all children. I'm so excited and thrilled over the knowledge that soon I'll be a mother. But what's going to happen to this child, who will be welcomed by one parent and not welcomed by the other? Worse still, if he dare have no religious training whatever he'll be like a heathen."
"You must train the child at home then, Heather. Read the Bible to this child that is coming; pray with him, or her, and sing spiritual songs too. Are you where you should be spiritually?"

"I'm trying, Kendra. But it's hard. So hard. If Cody knew the Lord, we could pray together, read scripture together and just keep each other encouraged in Christ. But when one is married to an unbelieving, hard-as-nails heathen, it's all you can do to keep your head above water, spiritually speaking. And that's where I am. I need your prayers. Desperately so. I'm sorry I was so ugly and nasty and rude to you on the phone when you tried to help me those many months ago. Forgive me for the way I treated you. I only wish now that I'd have cut our relationship off then. But it's a little late for wishful thinking. So please, please, pray for me."

Kendra sat for a long while with bowed head after Heather hung up. She felt sad. So very sad. Reaping day had come and it was only just begun for her dear friend.

She dropped her head on her arms and wept, seeking afresh the will of God for her life in regards to a life companion.