

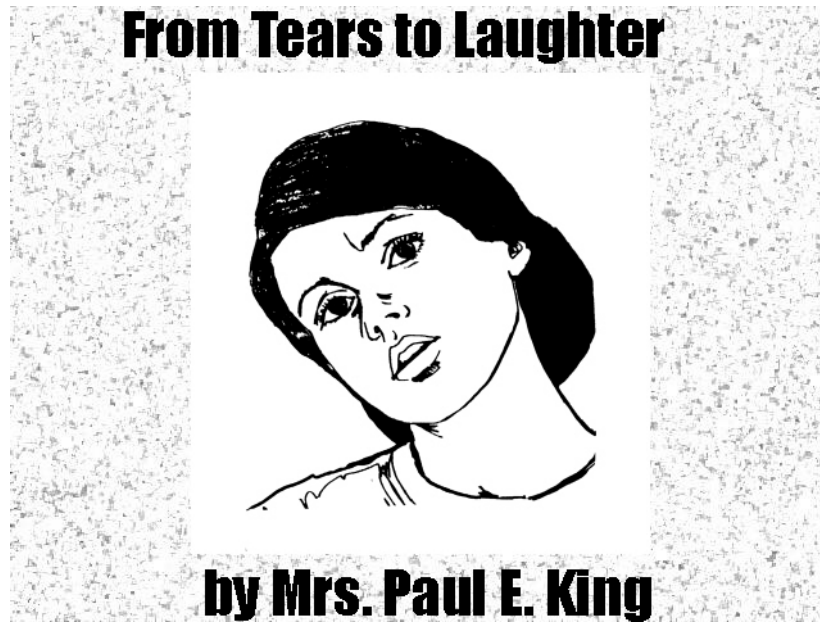
Copyright 2001 By Lucille King  
All Rights Reserved and Duplication  
Of This Publication Is Forbidden,  
Except For Personal Use

\* \* \* \* \*

Digital Edition 10/22/2001  
By Holiness Data Ministry

\* \* \* \* \*

The Sunday School Beacon  
April 25, 1993



**FROM TEARS TO LAUGHTER**  
**By Mrs. Paul E. King**

Shannon could scarcely wait for the sound of the dismissal bell. She felt she would suffocate unless she could get away and have a good cry. The news of Joel breaking his leg and lying in the hospital wearing a cast was just too much for her. And from what Joci had told her, it was a rather serious break too. Joci was Joel's sister. She was so much like Joel that they could have passed for identical twins. But they weren't; there was two years

difference in their ages: Joel was a senior in Bethany Christian Academy; Joci was a sophomore.

The bell startled Shannon. Fearing that someone would stop her and want to talk, she hurried to the locker and grabbed her coat then all but ran out the door. The chatter and laughter of students rushing about sounded like the noise of the seventeen-year locusts to her ears. At the moment, she felt like she couldn't talk to anybody; not even her best friend Judy.

She darted quickly around the corner of the school building and began a fast, brisk walk homeward, wondering for the umpteenth time why something like this had to have happened to Joel. At this time especially. This was to have been a very special night for her. Very, very special! Joel had asked to take her to the junior-senior banquet: This would have been her very first date!

Shannon gulped great, deep breaths of air, trying not to sob -- or, even, not to cry, until she was farther away from school. But it didn't work. Like a dam broke loose, the tears ran down her cheeks. She shouldn't feel so badly, she knew, for Joel couldn't help it that his leg was broken. He'd been helping Mr. Shetron, the math teacher, move something or other that was very heavy and it had fallen on him and broken his leg. Joel, no doubt, felt every bit as badly about the banquet as she did, she thought.

She broke into a slow but steady jog, hoping the run would help her forget. Or, at the least, stimulate her being until some of the pain would leave and she wouldn't feel so badly. But it didn't quite work; for, ever since she had moved to Pineville with her parents two years ago and had enrolled in BCA, she had looked forward to the time when she could have her first date - - "When you are a junior in high school, Shannon," her parents had told her, "you may do some dating, God willing, but not before. And only with Christian boys." And now that very special anticipated and long-looked-forward-to first date -- the big event, as she secretly called it -- would not become reality after all.

She ran faster, trying to fill her mind with scripture portions but invariably her thoughts drifted back to her disappointment. Joel had been special to her from the time she became a part of the wonderful Christian school. Nor had it been a one-sided thing: Joel had tried repeatedly to date

her but always she had reminded him what her parents' rule was for her -- not until she became a junior.

"I can wait, Shannon," he told her with a smile. "I feel you're worth waiting for."

The thought of his words sent a happy thrill through her being. Joel was so genuine and Christ-like; not at all fickle nor flirty and careless in his deportment and behavior. He was a gentleman through and through. His greatest desire was to please Christ; his highest aim was to keep the Lord's constant smile and favor and approval upon his life.

Shannon wiped the tears from her eyes. She should be thanking the Lord that Joel had asked her to the banquet instead of crying and feeling sorry about him not being able to take her, she thought suddenly. And since God knew everything, and this in advance, too, the broken leg came as no surprise to Him, she realized, feeling instantly that what had happened would still work together for good for both of them.

She walked through the kitchen doorway, hugged and kissed her mother, and put her books on the table, saying, "I won't be going to the banquet after all, tonight, Mom. Joel's in the hospital with a broken leg."

"That's too bad, honey. I know you are disappointed. I'm sorry, Shannon. Really sorry. And for Joel, too."

"Something good's bound to come of it, Mother, for God's Word says so: 'And we know that all things work together for good to them that love the Lord. . . .' I especially like that little 'work together' part. I felt so disappointed when I first learned about the accident today that I just wanted to cry, cry, cry. And I did some of this on my way home, I'm sorry to say, until I felt I should be thanking God that Joel asked me, even.

"I'm just thankful that that heavy concrete thing -- whatever it was -- didn't crush Joel's body and kill him. He was helping our math teacher at lunchtime; they were trying to move this thing to a less conspicuous place and. . . ."

The jingling of the telephone cut Shannon's sentence short. "I'll get it, Mother," she said, "Shannon?" It was Joci.

"Oh, hi, Joci. This is Shannon."

"Yes, I know. Why'd you leave so quickly? I had a message I was supposed to give you: Joel called from the hospital; he told me to make sure you got the corsage of roses he bought to give you for tonight's banquet. He wants you to wear it, even though he won't be able to give it to you personally nor see you with it on."

"Oh, Joci! I . . . I . . . believe I'm going to cry again," Shannon said brokenly.

"Go ahead and cry," Joci urged. "I'd perhaps be squawling dreadfully loud if something like this happened to me on a night as special as tonight would have been for both Joel and you. Know something, Shannon?"

"What?"

"You were Joel's first date, too."

"I . . . I was? I mean, I am?"

"Yes indeed. You're the only girl -- the first girl -he's ever wanted to date, or cared about dating. Don't you let on that I told you, though. Please! I'll be over in a little while with the corsage. I must get it to you, because Joel's going to call me -- soon -- to find out if I obeyed his kind but very urgent order. See you soon, God willing. . . ."

Shannon sat there, in an ecstasy of pleasant shock. She felt a thrill of joy go through her. Joel's first date, too! She had no idea! None whatever. Well, she could keep Joci's secret: she was good at keeping secrets. She hoped, though, that someday Joci might be willing to tell her parents this.

She remembered that she had work to do in helping her mother with the supper preparation, so she hurried back to the kitchen just as the doorbell rang.

"I'll answer that, Mother," she said. "It's Joci, I'm sure. Joel bought me a corsage and he told Joci to bring it over to me. . . ." and she rushed to the living room door.

"I can't stay, Shannon," Joci said, breathlessly. "Mother has ever so many things for me to do. Here's your corsage. It's beautiful, isn't it?"

"Oh Joci, it . . . it's gorgeous. Thank you for delivering it. Can't you stay for just a little while?"

"Sorry, I can't. Wish I could though. But my poor crippled brother will be calling me any minute now to make sure I followed orders. And Mom has enough work for two or three nights for me."

"Really, Joci?"

She laughed softly. "I'm rather slow, Shannon," she confessed. "It's difficult for me to get my body into high gear when I work; this is my problem. If I could listen to 'Keep on the Firing Line' all the time while I'm working I could have it done in no time much at all. But that's the only really fast song I have: everything else is either slow or moderately slow. And I flow with the tempo of the music. Poor Mother! I'm sure it's a trial to her. She's so patient and kind. Well, I must go."

"Thanks, Joci. Thanks much. I love you. You're a sweetheart."

"In slow motion," Joci replied with a hearty laugh as she hurried away.

"Oh, Mother, look!" Shannon exclaimed, holding the lovely corsage up for her parent to see. "It's so beautiful!" she remarked.

"Beautiful, indeed. It's gorgeous! Why not pay Joel a visit tonight? I'm sure it would cheer him up and I think you would enjoy the evening too."

Shannon's eyes sparkled like jewels. "Mom, you're the greatest!" she cried. "What a fabulous suggestion and idea! Oh, you're wonderful! Thanks!"

"Surprise him by dressing like you'd have dressed for the banquet, honey. And don't forget to wear his corsage. I have a freshly baked orange coconut cake inside the cake caddy, Shannon. He'll enjoy some of it, I'm sure. The coconut was ever so moist when I grated it and the milk was so sweet. It should be delicious. The cake, I mean."

"Oh, Mom, you never cease to amaze me. I know I have the world's best mother. And father, too. I'm so excited. What a pleasant surprise for Joel!"

Later, as she dressed for the surprise visit to the hospital, Shannon's eyes filled with tears. Truly -- truly -- all things had (again) worked together for good. God had turned her tears into laughter and joy; the disappointment into singing and a thing of beauty. Humbled, she dropped to her knees: her Lord deserved a time of praise and thanksgiving.