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NEW FATHER
By Mrs. Paul E. King

I stood there, my nose against the thick glass, never so much as noticing how cold the glass really felt.

There: over there! It's the one with the long dark hair. They said she's a girl, and the hair says so too. But then, maybe hair isn't the "telling" symbol at birth. But all I could really tell was that she was red, and that she was crying.

I stood there, my nose flat against the glass -- stood as one transfixed. I was a father. Not just any father. A new father, A new father for the first time!

A pleased smile tugged the corners of my mouth upward, At the same time uncontrolled tears of thankfulness and gratitude danced down my cheeks to the floor below.

"Lori!" I called softly, wanting desperately to hold the tiny bundle to my chest and quiet and still her crying. "Lori Elizabeth, I'm right here. Your mother's doing fine. Can you hear me? I'm your father!" I spoke the word with awe and manly pride, both amazed and confused that a 6 lb., 4 oz. baby girl could make such noise and so much fuss.

Lungs! She was blessed with an exceptional pair of them I was sure. "You'll be a singer someday, Lori!" I exclaimed, trying another approach, but still she cried.

I cooed, I waved, I admired, I compared as my broad chest swelled and swelled with love for the helpless little girl who had made my family complete. "Poor little dear!" I exclaimed again, knowing full well my voice would never penetrate the glass-paneled nursery room where all the babies were stacked like so many baskets of carrots.

In spite of my feeling of exhilaration, a sobering thought took sudden possession of my heart. I had had a part in creating something with a great deal of potential -- and a soul! This child, this bundle of hopes and dreams in the nursery basket, what paths would her feet take in the years that lay ahead? Would she abhor evil and love righteousness? Would she find and gladly follow the "narrow way," or would she desire the "broad way that leadeth to destruction"?

In spite of the air-cooled hospital, beads of perspiration broke out upon my forehead. I turned from the nursery window and walked thoughtfully down the corridor to my wife's room.

"Like her?" Marilyn asked groggily as I stepped up to the bed and held her hand lovingly in mine. "She looks like you, Don," Marilyn went on. "Hair and all. I'm so proud of her. I asked the Lord to give me a child exactly like you." Bright tears were flooding her eyes.

"Oh, honey!" I said, brushing her forehead with my lips. "You're a wonderful mother!"

"How do you know?" Marilyn teased softly. "I haven't had time to prove that yet. Isn't she beautiful, Don? So tiny, and petite, and oh, so dainty."

"She's tiny all right. Fragile looking, too. I won't know how to hold her."

Marilyn laughed softly and brushed the happy tears from her eyes, "You'll be a wonderful father," she said dreamily.

"Marilyn," I began, "I -- I'm scared."

"Scared? Why, Don, you can't be serious!"

"But I am, dear. Many things passed before me as I stood in front of that nursery window, The future -- I mean, what will Lori Elizabeth be like in the future? Suppose she she doesn't take the way of the cross and goes to hell? We are now responsible not only for her life, but for her soul! Oh, Marilyn, it frightens me."

"Don, can't you trust the Lord to give us His help and aid, His wisdom, and His guidance in raising our little daughter? All these months of waiting have been months of praying and fasting for me -- for wisdom from above to rear this child right and in paths of righteousness. I found the guidelines, Don."

"You did?"

"Yes, dear, they're all in the Bible. They're there for us to follow and to obey."

"But suppose when she gets older that she decides, like so many others are doing today, that this old-fashioned way is no longer relevant for her generation?"

"We must not be anxious about any of our tomorrows, Don. God gives us one day at a time. Let us pray for wisdom and guidance for our todays. We will face the tomorrows when they become our todays. God promises

grace sufficient for our day. 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be.'
Remember?"

I sighed deeply. "Oh, Marilyn," I said suddenly, "I must get inside my secret closet and pray. We have a tremendous responsibility. Our little daughter has a never-dying soul!"

"Indeed she does. And with God's help, you and I will take her with us to heaven."

It was late when I turned the key in the door to our house. I stepped across the threshold and walked to the tiny crib that stood near our bed, waiting and ready for Lori Elizabeth to use it.

Kneeling there, I poured my innermost feelings and fears out to the Lord; nor did I cease praying until I knew I had prayed clear through and touched God. Then it was that my anxious fears subsided, faith took hold of the promises, and I was at perfect rest.

Marilyn was right, God would help us with every today; as well as any and all of the tomorrows He saw fit to send.

Crawling slowly into bed, the Scripture soothed my heart, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

As sleep began to possess me, I saw God's guidelines unfolding. I knew what course I was to take, and my heart lost its fear. Rearing Lori Elizabeth required teamwork -- teamwork and a full agreement of two people to follow God's guidelines. No pulling separate ways here, Ah, no! Rather, it would mean 100 per cent teamwork on the part of both parents, in love, correction, and, yes, in discipline.

A sleepy drowsiness engulfed me. "Goodnight, Lori -- and mother dearest!" I said softly, practicing for the time when my two favorite girls would come home from the hospital.