

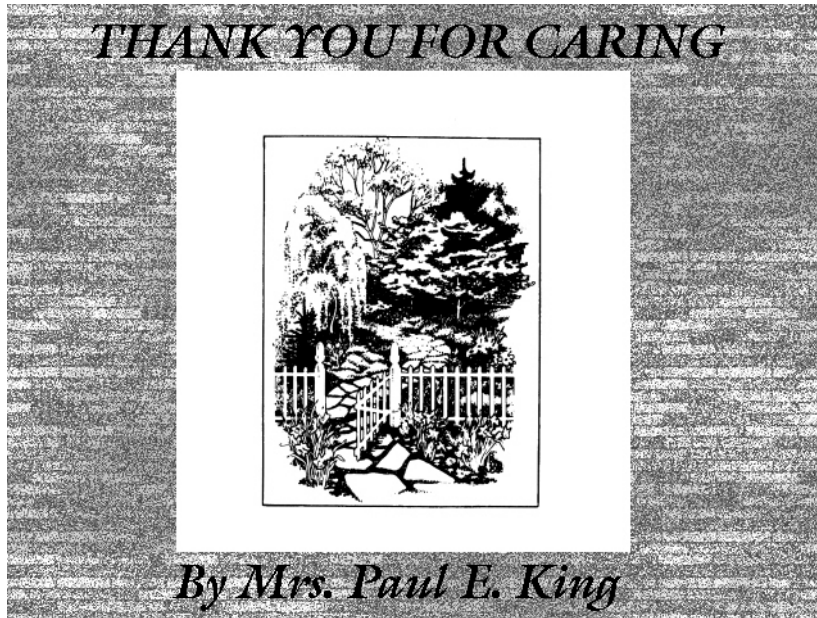
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THANK YOU FOR CARING
(Part 1)
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Ellen Kay Manley grew silent before the Lord as she had her early morning devotions. Drying tears from her cheeks and eyes she remained on her knees, wondering again why she felt this particular empathy and sympathy for the woman she had so recently met at the little corner market not far from the parsonage in which she and her husband resided. What was

it that drew her like a magnet to the fiftyish woman whose eyes of morning glory blue mirrored pools of sorrow and heartache and even disappointment in them? True, she and Dick, being a caring and compassionate pastor and wife, seemed always to be able to find those who were suffering and hurting, as well as those with spiritual needs. But there was something different about this woman, whose name she learned was Eleanor Houseman.

"Lord," she cried out loud, "please make me a blessing to Eleanor. I long to help her to see You in me. Grant me this request, for Jesus' sake. And whatever hurt is buried deep inside her heart, please help her to come to Thee and give it to Thee."

Ellen recalled the brief encounter with the woman during her equally brief and hasty trip down to the market less than two weeks ago. Having moved into the parsonage that very day, and needing milk and bread, she walked down to the store, wanting to get acquainted with not only the owner of the market but as many people whom she may meet and encounter on the short walk down to the small but neat-looking building. Eleanor Houseman greeted her and waited on her when she had bought her few food items.

Ellen had made herself acquainted with the woman, telling her that her husband Richard and she were the new minister and wife at the church less than two blocks away, and that they would be overjoyed to have her attend their services. They had visited for a while, she and Eleanor, and that's when Ellen learned that the woman didn't go to church anywhere. She used to go, she told Ellen, never missing a Sunday's service nor a mid-week prayer meeting. But that was long ago, she had admitted with a sad sigh.

And that's when Ellen had purposed within her heart that Eleanor Houseman would be number 1 on her prayer list. She had gotten the woman's street name and house number and Eleanor was even gracious enough to give her the telephone number. She had gone to the house twice but neither time was Eleanor home.

Ellen busied herself with the many things yet needing done in the tidy parsonage house before Richard's return from the church, where he had gone to pray. They were making their rounds to the houses of their church members together, as well as calling on those who were sick and in the hospital. Richard always made it a point in a new pastorate to call first on his membership and those who were ill, and then to expand into the community

by visiting friends of his flock as well as by going from door to door and house to house in search of the lost. It was a rewarding thing indeed to see the lost come to Christ and even more rewarding to share in the "birthing" of the "babes" through prayer and fasting and intercession.

Ellen sighed with contentment as she worked, recalling some whom Richard and she had helped to lead to the Lord in their last pastorate. The joy of having had a part in their radical and blessed heart change -- conversion -- and their subsequent entire sanctification more than compensated for her inability to ever become a mother again. The Lord, whose all-wise wisdom she had tearfully but resignedly ascribed and acquiesced to when He called both their newly-born babies back into His loving arms and gentle bosom, had made no mistake, she knew. She may not have understood the reason for her empty arms and the pain in her heart, but she had no doubts whatever where Richard's and her son and daughter were residing. None whatever! God had transplanted their two "jewels" where sin could never tarnish or mar them and where they were basking in the light and the glory of the Lamb.

Ellen wiped tears away, recalling their son's short life with them -- less than twelve hours, it had been. But Richard and she had filled those brief and priceless moments with every ounce of fatherly-motherly love that could be poured into his precious body. Oh how they loved him!

His Homegoing seemed to have been attended by angels; the atmosphere was filled with the presence of God. Even the nurses sensed it: while Richard and she gave back to God that which He had so miraculously given to them in the first place -- without bitterness or questioning on their part -- the nurses wept openly. Two years later the scene was repeated again, this time in the form of a precious and lovely little daughter whose existence with them was slightly less than that of her brother. Shortly after, came the major surgery for her, Ellen.

"You can always adopt, Mrs. Manley," the nurses informed her while she recuperated from the surgery in the hospital. "There are ever so many babies needing a good home."

She had smiled and thanked them graciously. Richard and she had discussed the alternative option repeatedly after the passing of Elizabeth Eden; prayed earnestly about it too. And each and every time they did so

they sensed the checks of the Holy Spirit. In sweet and humble resignation to the One who had promised to guide them in all ways if they would acknowledge Him and seek His wisdom, His way and His guidance, they never again mentioned it either in prayer nor between themselves. It was a settled issue. God was all-wise, all-knowing and all-kind; they would thank Him for the privilege of having had their babies to love for the few precious hours they had had. This they did, consistently, too -- and the Healer of broken hearts had healed their hearts wondrously.

Ellen thought back upon the events and happenings in her life and marveled afresh and anew, realizing, like always, that each thing that had transpired was by no mere happenstance but was all under the marvelous supervision and the miraculous leadership and guidance of the Lord, under whose wings she had come to trust since she was a child ten years of age.

She had often wondered whom her mother was and what she looked like. Even more so, was her for-real biological mother still living? And what about her father? Until recent years, with Richard's genuine love for her, she had often wondered about her flesh and blood parents and had almost become ill with wondering why she could remember nothing but being cared for by two families other than her parents. In each case, she was treated kindly and lovingly. For this she would be eternally thankful and grateful. She had loved each of her two foster mothers deeply.

It was while she was living with Mama Eddersby, as she had called her first foster parent, that she was soundly converted and sanctified wholly. She thought she would die when Mama Eddersby became too ill in body to care for her any longer and she was moved to the home of the Shearlings, friends of Mama Eddersby. She had known no other mother but Mama Eddersby, who had told her she found her at her front porch door in a neat little wicker basket one fine May morning. She had consulted with the police and the then existing agency for homeless children and was told that she, Mrs. Edna Eddersby, widow of the late Jacob Eddersby, could have the baby, whom she named Ellen Kay.

Ellen knew that so long as she lived, Mama Eddersby would always be mother to her. Mrs. Shearling was kind and good to her but she never had the time to listen to her or to talk to and with her like Mama Eddersby had. Often, she would run to the orchard or the garden and sob bitterly as she poured her soul out to her ever-present and best Friend, Jesus. Then she

would come back to the house with a song on her lips and true gratefulness in her heart that she had a clean and lovely place in which to live and a loving family to share and work with. She was treated like a member of the Shearling family and was never abused nor spoken to unkindly. This was a God-sent blessing to her, she knew.

She had graduated from high school with Janette Shearling and when college was discussed for Janette, it was also discussed for her. Together they had gone off to Bible school, rooming together, praying together and growing closer to each other as the months passed. Shy by nature, it was Janette who insisted that she accompany her on a date to a revival meeting in another area.

"I have the perfect date for you, Ellen," Janette had told her. "In fact, he's been trying to get to talk to you but you keep evading him, he declares. Tonight, God willing, you and I are double-dating: Richard Manley and you, and whom else but John and yours truly. You'll like Richard, Ellen; like him a lot. He's spiritual and wonderful, like John is. Truth of the matter is, John and I won't let you date anyone but Richard." And Janette had winked mischievously at her.

That had been the beginning of their romance, Richard's and hers. A whole new world of exciting things to look forward to: the double wedding, after all had graduated, with John and Janette and Richard and she on the Shearlings' back lawn beneath the big rose arbor, literally loaded with fragrantly-sweet scarlet roses; their honeymoon together to the nearby mountains for hiking and fishing and boating before John and Janette left for their first-ever missions abroad assignment and Richard and she assumed the role of pastor and wife in a distant state.

Ellen smiled now, recalling the numerous and sundry adjustments about which Janette had written, all of which John and she had had to make and get used to during that initial and first-ever assignment abroad. Now, however, along with their three children, they were "veteran" missionaries, both speaking and translating the New Testament into the language of the peoples among whom they were living and working. Janette and she had retained their former close contact status, writing and communicating via telephone when finances allowed a ten or fifteen-minute call.

"Is my lovely wife ready to go calling?" a voice called from the porch, and in the next instant Richard's arms held Ellen tight. "Your mind was a thousand miles away," he teased, with a smile.

"More than a thousand, my dear," Ellen admitted. "I was thinking about Janette and John and the children. But yes, I'm ready to go with you. Oh Richard, I love being your wife and being a pastor's wife."

"A little shepherdess, my dear; that's what you are," Richard said, as Ellen untied her apron and hurried to the bedroom after her purse.

(Part 2)

Ellen rejoiced greatly one Sunday morning, some months after Richard's and her arrival to the new pastorate, to see Eleanor Houseman seated in the congregation of worshippers. Ellen had made weekly visits to the woman, whom she learned to love greatly, and while Eleanor had never given her any assurance that she would come to the church, in her heart, Ellen had the calmly-sweet assurance that she would be doing so: She had claimed God's "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do . . ." promise, and to her trusting heart it was as good as having already been fulfilled and answered.

She slipped quietly into the pew beside Eleanor and squeezed her hand gently, saying, "I'm delighted to have you here; I've been expecting you. Do you mind if I share the pew with you, my dear?"

Eleanor's eyes took on a look of glad surprise. "Will you, please?" she asked quickly. "I'm on the shy side; I've always been scared of venturing in among strangers. It gives me sort of a panicky feeling. Inside, that is."

Ellen smiled and squeezed the woman's hand again in a comforting way. "I know just how you feel," she replied. "I am exactly the same way. People who are of a different temperament don't know how we feel inside, I'm sure."

Eleanor smiled, nodding her head in agreement with Ellen's comment and stating in little more than a whisper that they didn't know. Then she eased back against the pew and listened intently to the heartfelt, stirring, and

moving congregational singing, joining in, softly, with the songs she knew from a long ago past as tears swam in her eyes.

It was during Richard's simple and easy to understand sermon on being born again that Ellen became acutely aware of the sobs that were coming from her friend. She had been so absorbed in her husband's message that she all but forgot about Eleanor Houseman. The convulsive sobs, however, relayed their own story to Ellen.

"Would you like to pray?" she asked in a whispered tone.

Eleanor trembled. Her eyes spilled their tears over the boundary of eyelids and lashes and ran down her cheeks and on to her dress where they were soon absorbed by the cloth. "When?" she asked simply, openly, longingly.

"Now?" Ellen answered in the form of a question of her own, trying to feel her way into the woman's desire; into her heart.

Giving a gentle nod of her head, Eleanor got to her feet. Clinging tightly to Ellen's hand, she walked from the pew and made a straight path to the altar.

Ellen knelt beside the brokenhearted and contrite woman while others who were in need of salvation and sanctification followed. It was a gracious service; the Holy Spirit moved mightily among the congregation and many were the victories that followed, among whom was Eleanor Houseman. The woman was beside herself with pure and holy joy and remained at the altar for a long time praising the Lord -- long after the others had gone home. Only Ellen and Richard remained.

Through tears of joy, she looked at the minister and his wife, saying softly, "Today, after years of carrying a load. which almost smothered and killed me at times, and for which I felt constantly guilty, I am free. Free! Oh, it is glorious! It is wonderful! For the first time ever in my life, I feel like I want to talk about it. Do you have time to listen, please?"

"We have all the time you need, Mrs. Houseman," Richard Manley said through his tears.

Eleanor smiled. "Thank you kindly," she said, adding softly, "What I have to tell you goes back to thirty-three years ago. I was twenty years old at the time, a sophomore in college, preparing to become a lab technician in City Hospital, near where my parents lived.

"I was happy and full of joy for I was a truly born again Christian and very active in the ministries of our church. I met and married a young man who professed to love the Lord with all his heart -- while in college -- and eleven months after our marriage I gave birth to our first child, a sweet little baby girl.

"Rod was upset that we had become parents so soon after we were married. He felt our child was both a nuisance and a hindrance; the hindrance part more toward me, because he felt Alana Joy -- our daughter -- would hinder me from graduating and getting my degree as quickly as planned. So, instead of loving the lovely little child whom the Lord blessed us with, he said she had 'messed up his life and disrupted his plans' -- his words -- and that he was the most unhappy man on earth.

"I told him softly and kindly that our baby was worth far more to me than any kind of degree I may be able to earn or have bestowed and conferred upon me, adding that my new title-role of mother was God's specially-designed and designated plan for me and that I loved being a wife and a mother, in that order.

"He became furious, grabbed up Alana Joy and rushed out of the house. I stood in numbed shock, never having seen my husband like this before. Then, like one awaking from a bad dream, I realized our little girl was with him. I ran from the house in the hope of bringing her back with me but it was too late; the car was racing with a crazy speed out of sight.

"Fear clutched my heart; I felt like it was suffocating me. Tears ran from my eyes and dropped to the floor. Again I felt numb. I had never before seen such a display of carnal anger and hatred and bitterness. It caused me to tremble. What should I do? What could I do? Dare I call the police? What would I tell them if I did call?

"I raced to the telephone and dialed 911. My voice was shaking with sobs when I told the police to please try to intercept my husband and get him slowed down, at least. I answered their questions quickly and truthfully,

begging them to please go after him immediately and bring my little daughter back with them before he should have a wreck and kill both himself and Alana Joy.

"After giving them the car's license number and our street name and house number, I fell to my knees and in earnest prayer asked the Lord to bring Rod to his senses as well as to his knees.

"I hadn't been praying long before the telephone rang. Instinctively and intuitively I knew it was going to be bad news. It was. My husband had a serious accident on a curve outside of town, I was to come to the hospital's emergency room immediately.

"I asked about Alana Joy but the caller had hung up.

"It's almost like a blur to me yet, how I got to the hospital and identified both my husband's and baby's body and even made the funeral arrangements a short time later on. By now, both of my parents and my pastor and wife were by my side. I felt their love and support, but most of all I was keenly and wondrously aware of my blessed Holy Comforter's Divine presence and help.

"Things changed radically after the funeral. The apartment seemed like a tomb to me: I couldn't bear to stay in it without hearing Alana's soft little coos. I missed her bright eyes each morning upon awaking and her beautiful, heavenly looking smile as she saw me. Her crib was beside our bed. We went to sleep at night holding hands, she and I. Wanting my husband to know the joy and experience the thrill of her tiny little hand resting trustingly in his ere going to sleep, I often moved the little crib over to his side of the bed only to be told to move it away, that he had 'no desire whatever to treat kindly a disruption in his life,' his words, again.

"His unkindness and hatred made me love her more and pray all the more earnestly for her. I knew the Lord loved her greatly, for he loved all the little ones in Bible times. This knowledge, that she had a Heavenly Father who loved her and cared about her, gave me great comfort whenever my churlish husband paid her no attention or shouted at her when she cried, which was not all that often: she was a good baby, and so pleasant and cheerful.

"I nearly had a nervous breakdown, so I dropped out of college for a much-needed rest and break, which I took by moving back with my parents at the dear old home place.

"I never did finish college. I felt I couldn't stand the thought of anything connected so closely to, and with, my baby and my husband. I began working for some friends in their little country store, which was a thriving and very prosperous general store with crafts. It was tiring work but I loved it, and when the owners enlarged and expanded the store and kept it open till nine every week night, I was right there working with them until closing time. This was good to keep my mind occupied during my years of healing but it left me spiritually bankrupt: I was too exhausted and tired to pray and read God's Word when I finally got home to the little cottage which I had by this time rented so I'd be near to my work.

"My parents, due to declining health and accumulating years, sold the dear old home place in the country and moved into a smaller house in town, where they lived until their Homegoing less than six years ago; my father first, followed by Mother eight months later.

"Their passing seemed to open the wound in my heart anew and afresh. It was almost like I was burying Rod and Alana Joy all over again, so I moved away, coming, ultimately, to live here, near a dear old saint of God who took me under her wing, figuratively speaking, until she, too, deceased.

"I was never rebellious nor bitter toward God because of everything that happened to me, and for this I am grateful. I blamed myself, however, and carried such a load of guilt all these years because I wasn't able to fulfill Rod's desire and have gotten my degree while he lived. It seemed to all but consume him, this desire for me to get my degree."

"But Eleanor," Ellen said, speaking kindly and softly, "you could not have accomplished this in any less time, could you?"

"Oh no, indeed not."

"Then why should you have worried about it and allowed Satan to torment you with these endless and needless feelings of guilt, my dear?"

"I suppose it was because my husband had kept it before me constantly," Eleanor replied. "He wanted to do so many things. I would have made good wages. He wanted the money."

"Was your husband generous with God's cause?" Brother Manley asked.

Eleanor shook her head negatively, saying, "He felt it unnecessary to tithe, even. I was consistent and faithful in this area, however, with whatever he gave me for spending and for groceries."

"Carnality is so ruthless, Mrs. Houseman," Richard Manley continued, softly. "It not only manifests itself in anger and hatred; it takes on many other forms too, not the least of which is often displayed in selfishness and 'tight-fistedness' where money matters are concerned."

Eleanor Houseman looked up at the minister and his wife and said softly, "Rod was an extremely selfish man. And why I should have allowed Satan to keep me down spiritually all these years and be defeated all this time doesn't make good sense at all to me, now that I am back in the Great Shepherd's fold and know I'm ready for Heaven. Oh, isn't the love of Jesus wonderful! Wonderful! I now have the witness that I am born again, and I know I'll be seeing my dear little girl someday. I mean to go to Heaven at any cost. I'm going through."

"Carnality is a frightening thing," she added. "It drives men and women to do abnormal and exceeding wicked things. Rod's overpowering anger sent him to an untimely death and put our daughter in her grave. Anger -- murder." Eleanor trembled, then she added, "I'm afraid my husband had murder in his heart. The Bible says, 'He that hateth his brother is a murderer.' Rod hated our child. But that's in the past," she said brightly. "I'm free, free, free! I will now press on toward the price. Thank you so kindly for helping me to get back on God's Holy highway again. And thank you for caring and for loving me," and she got to her feet.

"I have a chicken roasting in the oven," Ellen said. "Please share our dinner with us."

Smiling heavenly and wiping her tears, Eleanor said, "Thank you, I'd love to. It's been so long since I've had Christian fellowship and a meal."

Ellen smiled, knowing there would be more of the same ahead, God willing.