

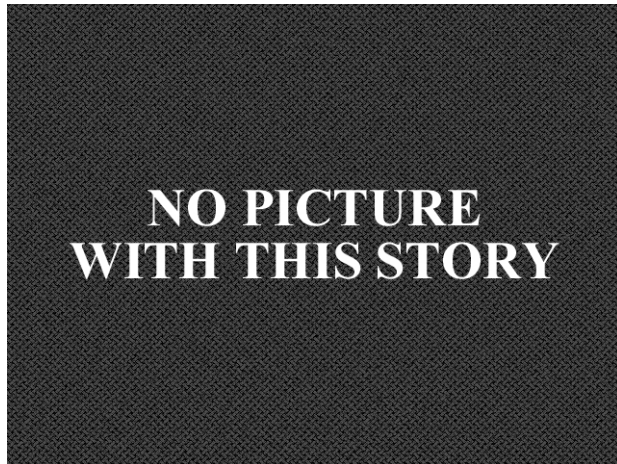
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BROKEN PROMISES
By Mrs. Paul E. King

"Are you sure Megan and Maynard will be over?" Mrs. Barrows asked Wendy before leaving the house to join her husband, who was waiting for her in the car.

"She promised me they would, Mother."

"I don't like to leave you alone, honey. Not that I don't trust you, for I do. Implicitly so. You have always been so obedient to your father and me from the time you were a very little girl. With all the crime, though. . . ." Mrs. Barrows' face clouded perceptibly.

"The eyes of the Lord will be watching over me, Mother dear. And the Bible tells us that the angel of the Lord encamps round about those who fear Him, and delivers them. And, too, Megan promised that she'd be over. Also Maynard. They enjoyed that new Bible game immensely. Maynard said it 'sharpened' his spiritual senses and Megan told me she's going to save her baby-sitting money so she can get one, the Lord willing. We had such a good time that night. It sure makes you think, that Bible game, I mean."

"We'll hardly be able to get back before midnight, Wendy; it's far to where Benton and his wife live, and I don't know just how serious the accident was."

"That's fine, Mom. I'm almost seventeen and I'm not afraid."

"If only I knew for sure that Megan was coming. She sometimes forgets. . . ."

Wendy laughed. "I know. But if she told Maynard I'm sure he won't let her forget. I told her I'd have popcorn and cookies and apples ready, God willing. Please don't worry."

"Oh, Wendy, you're such a dear, sweet daughter. I love you. Be careful, dear, and have a lovely evening."

"I will, Mother. I'm never bored, not even if or when I'm alone: The Bible and my good books keep me engrossed. They make excellent 'company' for me."

"I know. How well I know!" Mrs. Barrows exclaimed, hugging Wendy then hurrying outside to her patient husband.

Wendy locked the door and checked the plate of cookies she'd baked when she got home from school. They looked good enough to eat, she thought, smiling down upon her creations. Maynard loved peanut butter cookies; Megan loved chocolate chip and oatmeal. She had made a batch of each; her parents enjoyed them as much as Megan and Maynard did and she wanted a good supply to put in her mother's Tupperware containers.

She popped a big bowl of popcorn and washed and polished the apples, then put everything on the table. "Hm," she remarked to herself, "it looks lovely, the combination of colors. And good enough to eat, too." Then she picked up her Bible and began to read. She was more than halfway through it again.

She had made it a practice to read through the entire Bible once a year and an additional time through the New Testament. Then she repeated the process again, beginning in Genesis and reading through the Old Testament and on into the New. Oh, how she treasured her Bible! It was so very dear to her heart; especially so since she had learned as a little girl that each and every promise contained between the two leather covers of the dear, precious Book were hers to stand upon and trust in for each and every trial and test and temptation that came her way.

The mantel clock struck the hour. Wendy got up from the chair and hurried into the kitchen. She pulled the door curtain aside and peeked outside, hoping to see headlights coming up the lane. But not a single sign of a car could she see. Making sure that the door was locked, she turned the kitchen light off and checked to see that the porch light was still on, then she walked thoughtfully back to her Bible. She hadn't realized that she had read over two hours.

"Oh Megan," she said aloud to herself, "you promised to be here by the time Mom and Dad left and now it's two full hours and a half later and you're still not here."

Wendy felt a sense of keen disappointment in Megan sweep over her, and just then her mother's words came forcefully back to her, "She sometimes forgets." Lately, and more and more, Megan was becoming careless about her many promises and commitments. Didn't she realize that when one made a promise that promise was to be kept? Wendy wondered.

Fearing lest she lose confidence completely in her friend and lest a wrong attitude possess her, Wendy prayed and asked the Lord to help her to think only upon those things that were true and honest, just and pure, and lovely and good, as Paul recorded in Phil. 4:11. Something may have hindered Megan from coming, she reasoned, after she had prayed.

Wendy hurried to the telephone, wondering if something could have happened. There was always that possibility. What if Megan got sick! Or, maybe they had to rush her grandmother in to City Hospital again, the way they had done less than a year ago. With fingers that shook, Wendy dialed the Jastons' number.

"Good evening, Mrs. Jaston speaking."

"Oh, Mrs. Jaston, I'm so thankful I got you. This is Wendy. I became worried that maybe you had to rush Grandma Jaston to the hospital again. Or that maybe Megan got sick. Or Maynard. . . ."

Mrs. Jaston laughed softly. "Oh, we're all doing fine, Wendy. Why would you ever think of this tonight?"

"Because Megan and Maynard didn't come over."

"Megan didn't.., oh, was she supposed to come over, Wendy?"

"She said she would. She said both Maynard and she would be over, God willing. Mother and Dad had to run over to Benton and Sue's -- the Hendricksons' -- one of Dad's cousins. They were in an accident. I guess it was quite serious. So when Megan found out that I'd be alone until the folks returned, she said she and Maynard would be over to stay with me awhile and keep me company. I baked three different kinds of cookies and popped a huge bowl of popcorn. I told Megan we'd have apples and cookies and popcorn to snack on. It's all out on the table, and it smells so good."

"Oh, Wendy," Mrs. Jaston said, sounding sad, "I don't know what I'm going to do. Megan's getting terrible about breaking promises. It has me worried and greatly concerned. She makes many promises but keeps few of them. She never said one word about promising you she'd be there while your folks went away. Instead, she said she promised Missy that she'd go with her to the Cut And Sew store and help her pick out fabric for a Home Ec project Missy has coming up. Oh, Wendy, I'm so sorry. I'm sure Maynard didn't know anything about it either."

"About what, Mother?" Maynard asked his mother as he stepped into the room, and Wendy heard the question.

"About going over to Wendy's home for the evening."

"Is that Wendy? Is she on the line, Mother? If so, may I please speak to her?"

"Maynard wants to talk to you, Wendy. So I'll be turning the phone over to him. But only after I've told you once more that I'm sorry. And please pray for Megan, honey."

"I will, Mrs. Jaston. Thanks for being so sweet. Maybe Megan forgot."

"Megan needs to realize that breaking all these promises is like telling an outright lie, Wendy. For if we say we'll do a certain thing and don't do it, nor intend to do it, even, that is telling a lie. I know there are times when something may come up that prevents us from keeping our promise, and in that case we need to call the one to whom we made our promise and tell them why we're unable to carry out what we promised. This is not the case with our daughter, however," Mrs. Jaston said sadly. "Here's Maynard, honey. And please, do remember Megan in prayer."

"I will, Mrs. Jaston. It's a promise."

"Well, well," Maynard said as he spoke to Wendy. "It sounds like my sister has done it again, I glean, from Mother's conversation with you. I'm sorry, Wendy."

"Hey, I'm not a troublemaker, Maynard; I didn't mean to add more fat to an already boiling pot."

"You haven't, believe me. I take it, from what I've heard of Mother's words that Megan said she'd be over to your place tonight. Right?"

"Both of you, she told me."

"Now isn't that something! She never uttered one word about it to me. Why, Wendy, there isn't anything I'd have liked better. Especially since I didn't have to work tonight. It's my night off at the part-time job I have. We're all troubled over Megan's promise-making, promise-breaking habit. I wouldn't dare sit on the seat of judgment; however, I know from actual personal experience that when one is living close to the Lord he doesn't do such

things: the gentle Holy Spirit checks you and 'corrals' you long before you step out of line even. At least it's been this way in my life. And I'm ever so grateful for His sweet, gentle nudges which I interpret to mean 'Don't do that, My child.' He is faithful, Wendy; oh, so faithful to those who are His."

"I've found this to be true, Maynard; and there's joy and pure bliss in obeying Him and His checks and bounds. I tell my folks that He's my Safeguard."

"Amen to that. Now, are you alone?"

"Is one ever alone when he or she has the Lord, Maynard?"

"Well, no. But do you want me to come over? I take it your folks have had to go out of town. . . ."

"One of Daddy's cousins -- Benton Hendrickson -was in a serious accident. A drunk hit him and his wife head on. Madrill, their oldest daughter, called here and said Benton was calling for Daddy. They left as quickly as Daddy could get ready to go after work. Mother figured they won't be back before midnight, God willing. But I'm not afraid, Maynard, so don't worry about that."

"I'll run over if you want me to."

"Thanks, Maynard, you're kind and thoughtful. We'd have had a great time if things had gone as planned. But since they didn't, and since it's getting late and you get up early in the morning, I wouldn't think of making you come over here now."

"Say," Maynard exclaimed, "I hadn't noticed how late it actually is. I wonder where Megan could be. The fabric shop doesn't stay open this late. I know it doesn't. I'd better hang up and go check on my sister. Don't forget to pray for her, Wendy. We're all concerned about these broken promises of hers."

"I'll be praying, Maynard. . . ."

And pray Wendy did; not only for Megan, but for herself too, that the Lord would keep her dependable and transparent and honest and

trustworthy, both to God and to her fellow beings and that, always, she would fulfill and be true to her promises.