

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  
June 13, 1999



**FIRST PLACE**  
**By Mrs. Paul E. King**

"Eeek! I can't believe it!" Millie's shriek and her added exclamatory sentence made Tammy jump and Connie scream. "Whatever ails you, Millie?" Connie demanded, standing in front of the perky redhead and trembling with fear. "Is this to be some sort of joke, or what?"

"Joke!" Millie exclaimed, grabbing her light weight jacket off the sofa and making a mad dash to the door. "Tory'll be home for lunch in twenty minutes and I don't have a thing prepared. Worse still, the house is in a mess; what with the teens over for supper last night. Sometimes I think Tory takes on too much for the church. See you," she added as she rushed away.

Tammy stood like one in shock. Then, like one awakening from a dream, she said softly, "I'm sorry, Connie, but you'll have to excuse me. Gregg will soon be home for lunch and I really must get something ready for him to eat. I had no idea it was so late; so near to noon."

"I'll see you, Tammy," Connie remarked nonchalantly. "I'm certainly not going to panic because I don't have anything fixed for Walt. After all, there's always the Wendys or the McDonalds he can go to."

"But a good, home-cooked meal can't be substituted, Connie, and I'm sure Walt would appreciate it."

Shrugging her shoulders, Connie remarked, "I don't intend to become a slave to my husband. Never! There are plenty of eating places around. See you . . ." and she hurried away.

Tammy stared at her image in the hallway mirror as soon as Connie was gone. Tears filled her eyes. What a sight she was: hair uncombed, still in her robe, bed unmade, bathroom uncleaned, dishes in the kitchen sink, no dinner for Gregg, and him due home in less than forty-five minutes and no private devotions!

"God, forgive me, please!" she cried, as she shed her robe and headed for the bathroom, where she got a quick shower and straightened up the cheerful room, then brushed her long, dark, thick hair until it shone, and put it up neatly on her head.

Rushing into the bedroom, she made the bed and picked Gregg's socks up off the floor; then she put on the pretty blue dress her husband had recently bought her, "Just because I love you," he had told her.

In the kitchen, she grabbed a pack of minute steaks from the freezer, put the dirty dishes soaking in the sink and made a quick casserole that she

shoved into the oven before tossing Gregg's favorite of all salads, a Caesar Salad.

Rushing for all she was worth, she had all the dishes washed and dried and put away and the living room neat and tidy just as she heard Gregg pull into the driveway with their old but still good car.

"Hey," Gregg called as he neared the kitchen door, "I smell something that nearly has my taste buds jumping! What's cooking, my dear?" he asked, as he hugged her and kissed her on the tip of her freckled nose.

"Wash up, and be seated, my prince, and thou shalt see," Tommy teased as she patted his ruddy cheeks gently.

Squeezing her gently, Gregg sighed happily, exclaiming almost reverently, "I must have the best wife in all the world. God has been so good to me. You know, Tommy, several times recently, I was getting scared for you, Coming home and finding the house in a mess and you not even bathed and combed and dressed -- at noon -- whew! I sure have been doing some earnest praying. I guess I was all wrong. But the praying sure did me a world of good: I drew closer to the Lord and my love for you has grown and grown."

"Thanks, Gregg. I needed it. I love you and, no, you weren't wrong."

"You look beautiful in that dress," he stated as he took a bite out of the sandwich, which Tommy had put between a crusty French roll and smothered with sauteed onion, peppers and mushrooms -- a Gregg Millard favorite.

"Thank you, dear. My husband has unusual insight into his wife's likes and her preferences."

"How did you know I was hungry for this casserole?" Gregg asked, taking a second helping. "We've only been married three years, Tommy, and already I believe we are beginning to think each other's thoughts."

Tommy laughed. "Maybe we are," she replied. "I think it's a beautiful thing. I know my parents are pretty much this way. Sometimes it seems Mother thinks what Dad is about to say. Maybe this is also a part of that scripture, ' . . . and they shall be one flesh.'"

"I like it," Gregg commented, adding, "Everything God did and ordained was, and is, done well. And now, my dear, I'll have to get back to work. Thanks for the delicious meal. You're a wonderful wife."

Watching as Gregg drove away and waving as far as she could see, Tommy's eyes filled with tears. She hadn't meant to get into the rut of having friends over every morning. No, she hadn't. It just happened. For far too many days now, it seemed that Gregg was scarcely gone in the morning when Connie came over. Then Millie dropped in. Sometimes Candace and her friend came by, and before she knew what was happening, Almost, Tommy discovered that her mornings were gone and she hadn't had her Bible reading nor her prayer time alone with God, not to mention that she hadn't had the time to bathe and comb her hair and get dressed for the day nor to straighten up the house.

She had poured the concerns of her heart out before the Lord, asking Him to help her to let her friends see that too much togetherness could become detrimental to one's spiritual life and growth. Then Connie had told her that she didn't know what she would do if she didn't have her daily morning visit at her house. And Millie declared that the morning visits were spiritual uplifts for her.

Poor Connie! Tommy's heart went out to her. She was a compulsive complainer; especially where Walt was concerned. Walt never did anything quite right, according to Connie. Tommy had tried to tell her to do all she could, to have his meals on time and to keep the house orderly, neat and tidy and to praise him for all the nice things he did, but Connie declared she would not become "enslaved" to any man. Just like she had said again today.

Tommy longed to see Walt and Connie become Christians. Gregg and she had invited to take them to church with them but to no avail. Walt said there was no need for him trying to even to think of living a Christian life with Connie's constant nagging and complaining and running him down. Their marriage, at best, was shaky. Tommy and Gregg each new this. So did Millie. Tommy had prayed with Connie and for her. But not once had Connie yielded her heart and life to Jesus and asked Him to forgive her for her sins. It seemed, almost, like she wasn't interested in spiritual things.

As for Millie, she and Tory were wonderful Christians. But Christians, too, had to be watchful and careful, Tommy suddenly realized. And without any doubt, this getting together every morning-was one such area. It had been robbing Tommy of her quiet time alone with God. She could feel the spiritual dearth and paralysis that it was bringing to her soul, and she knew that something had to be done to curb it and put a stop to it.

Getting a roast out of the freezer for the evening meal, Tommy cleared the table and did up the dirty dishes, putting the kitchen in neat and attractive order, then she hurried to the bedroom.

With her Bible open before her, on her knees, she began reading where she would have read in the early morning hour before Connie's arrival. God's Word was like a two-edged sword in certain verses and portions; then it was a warm, soothing balm in others:

She read and wept; then meditated upon what she had read, and wept some more, embracing the truth and loving it. Never had she found any of God's commands to be grievous or hard. Always, she had delighted in obeying and following them. It had been her shining pathway to continual victory and glory in Christ,

It was while she was praying that she seemed to hear her kind Shepherd's gentle voice tell her that, yes, she must always have an ear that was ready to listen and a heart that was tender and kind and compassionate toward others; but that, in all things and at all times, Christ her Lord must have the preeminence. He must take first place. Always! Nothing must come between, and no one. Not even one's friends.

Praying until she knew she had touched Heaven and her soul was revived and refreshed, Tommy got to her feet, knowing she had a job to do; a duty to perform.

Dialing Millie's number, she waited. Then, at Millie's "Hello," she said, "Millie, the Lord's been talking to me about something."

"He's been talking to me, too, Tommy," a weeping Millie confessed into the mouthpiece. "Oh, Tommy," she cried, "forgive me for taking up your mornings. I've been depriving God and you of the time we both ordinarily spend with Him each morning, and I've been neglecting Tory and the house

he provided for us. I've asked both the Lord and Tory to forgive me and now I want to ask your forgiveness. This has been one of Satan's subtle doings and workings, and from today on, I mean to stop it."

"Millie! Oh, thank God! Thank God! I was just going to tell you that I mustn't deprive God, not one more morning, of the time I always give Him. And that, from here on out, I am going to be the wife and housekeeper God intends for me to be; getting myself bathed, dressed and combed in the morning and doing the housework that needs to be done. Too, I mean to have Gregg's meals prepared on time for him."

Millie's "Praise the Lord!" echoed in Tammy's heart long after the two had finished speaking.

Connie was something else. But Tammy knew she had to break the cycle. "You see, Connie," she said, "I have always made it a daily practice since my conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ, and then my subsequent sanctification of heart and life to Him, to give Him the first part of my day. I mean, I spend that special, wonderful and quiet time alone with Him reading His Holy Word, the Bible, and praying to Him. Oh, it's such a wonderful time. If you really need me, maybe I could stop over at your house later in the day and pray for you. But I can no longer continue on like this, morning after morning. God must have first place in my heart and life, and in our home. And it isn't fair to Gregg and Tory and Walt. We've been neglecting and depriving them, Connie."

"Who cares! Why, Tammy, you're from the dark ages. Like I said, I'll never allow a man to make a slave out of me. Do as you and Millie please; but me, no way!" And Connie slammed the phone down.

Tammy knew, however, that what she had done was right. She would continue to pray for Connie and Walt. God alone was able to change them, she realized as she headed for the kitchen to bake a peach crumb pie for Gregg's supper.