

The Dog That Laughed All the Way Home

by Marvin Hunt

As Wayne parked his pickup truck beside his house one day after work, he heard the neighbor lady calling for him to come over to her house as fast as he could. When Wayne got there, he saw his little beagle dog lying on the ground, flopping around like a fish out of the water. The dog was foaming at the mouth and acting crazy. He had a weird look in his eyes.

Wayne carefully picked up his dog and brought him home. He was worried that his little dog had the terrible rabies disease. To keep the little beagle from escaping while he called the veterinarian, Wayne put him in a horse trailer with high side rails that he had in the yard. Then he ran into the house and called the vet. Hurriedly he explained all about the strange way his dog was acting. Sadly, he found out from the vet that the only way to tell for sure if his dog had rabies was to test some of its brain cells. Of course, there would be no way to do this test while his dog was still alive.

Wayne hung up the phone after making an appointment for the vet to see his dog. It looked very bad for his little pet. After making up his mind about what he had to do, he went outside to get the dog out of the trailer. As he walked up, the little beagle got so excited that he jumped clear over the top of the trailer side and landed on Wayne. As the dog struggled to keep from falling, he scratched Wayne's face. Some foam from his mouth fell into Wayne's bleeding scratches. Now Wayne was really worried, because a human can catch this terrible disease from the saliva of an animal who has rabies.

Wayne tied a rope around the dog's neck and loaded him into the front seat of his truck. All the way to the vet's office the dog kept acting crazy. He bit the seat, attacked the gear shift, and kept foaming at the mouth. When he reached the animal hospital, the veterinarian was waiting for them. Wayne pulled his dog from the truck. He seemed more like a wild dog now than a pet. The wise and experienced vet took one look at the little animal and said, "Oh, he's got a bone stuck in his throat! Bring him inside."

Wayne was astonished. He had been afraid his dog would have to die. Instead, the veterinarian simply took his fingers and forced the dog's mouth open. Then he reached down his throat and popped out a bone! It was just a little bone-about two inches long and as big around as a pencil.

Wayne said later that if a dog could sigh with relief, his beagle surely did. Immediately the dog calmed down and stopped foaming at the mouth. Wayne thought he even began to smile, almost like a human. On the way home, his dog sat up on the seat beside Wayne just like a little king, enjoying the scenery passing by.

Thanks to his training, the veterinarian knew just what to do. He saved the dog's life. He had studied and learned all he could about animals, and God had given him the ability and the talent to become a good animal doctor.

Isn't it wonderful that we have special people to whom we can turn when we have special needs? I'm sure Wayne was thankful that he had a good animal doctor to treat his little beagle friend. I know Wayne was glad he was not alone. When the beagle was so sick, Wayne was very scared. He didn't know what to do. Can you think of specially trained people who help you sometimes with things you cannot do for yourself? A doctor? A nurse? A fireman? I'm sure your mom's and dad's can name lots of special people they have turned to when they had needs. God loves us and hears our prayers when we are in need. And He provides special people to help us when we are in trouble. Let's be glad for them and thank Him for them.

Friends Again

by Karen Flowers

Janet and Julie were sisters. They were also best friends. They played together every day after school. Best of all, they liked playing with their dolls. Janet's best doll had real hair and would drink water from a bottle. Julie's favorite had the most beautiful dress you could ever imagine.

One day the girls had to ride downtown with their mother on an errand. They didn't mind because they just pretended they were taking their dolls for an outing. But the trip took longer than they had expected, and after awhile they got tired of playing with their dolls. Before you knew it, the girls were fighting.

"Hey, you're crowding me. Get over on your own side of the seat," Janet fussed.

"I'm not on your side! Mom, Janet's fussing at me and I'm not doing anything," Julie whined.

"And keep your hands off my doll," Janet retorted.

"I'm not hurting your doll. What do you care if I smooth her hair, anyway. You don't take care of her!" Julie kept the fight going.

"Then see how you like it if I give your precious little baby a thrill or two. You never take her out for any fun!" Janet dangled Julie's doll out the window by one leg. "Whee, baby! Don't you love feeling the wind in your hair?"

Julie went crazy! "Mom, Janet's going to throw my doll out the window! Make her stop! Make her stop!"

Janet felt the car slow as Mom put on the brake. "Julie needs to be taught a lesson," Janet thought. "She's always getting into my things. I'll just let go of her doll and give her a scare. Mom's stopping the car anyway." So Janet let go of Julie's doll and Julie began to wail.

Mom stopped the car and turned to ask the girls what on earth was going on. "She threw my doll out the window!" Julie screamed.

"I only dropped her as Mom brought the car to a stop." Janet pouted. "She's not hurt. You'll see. Anyway, you started it. You touched my doll first!"

Mother opened the car door. Julie and Janet pushed their heads out the window. The worst possible scene met their eyes. Julie's precious doll was pinned under the car's rear wheel. Her beautiful dress was covered with mud and her chest pressed flat.

"Now look what you've done!" Julie yelled. "I'll never forgive you, I won't, I won't! And I don't ever want to play with you again. You're not my friend! And I wish you weren't my sister!" Julie began to cry inconsolably.

How do you feel when someone hurts you badly? Usually you feel so bad you just wish you could hurt the person back just like they hurt you. You don't want anything to do with them, and there doesn't seem to be any way you could ever be friends again.

But God has provided a way for us to heal the hurts between us. The Bible teaches us how Christians live in relationship with one another. Human beings will hurt each other because of their sinfulness. But the Bible teaches us to say we are sorry when we have done wrong. And Jesus helps us to forgive one another even when we have hurt each other deeply. Saying we're

sorry and forgiving one another is hard, and it doesn't happen fast. But it is God's plan for helping us to live together as His family.

At first Janet was so mad at Julie she didn't want to say she was sorry. But after awhile she began to feel very badly about what she had done. It would be hard to admit she had done wrong. Maybe Julie wouldn't want to be her friend anymore. Then Janet had an idea. She would give Julie her favorite doll with the real hair and her baby bottle. It was the only way she could think of to show how sorry she was.

Meanwhile, Julie was so upset about her broken doll that all she could think about was getting back at Janet. She knew what she would do! She would sneak into her room and rip the hair out of her favorite doll and stomp on her baby bottle with her foot. A little part of her was worried she'd miss Janet as a friend, but right now she didn't care. Quietly she opened Janet's bedroom door. "Oh! Janet! I didn't know you were here!" she cried out in surprise. Her plan would just have to wait, she thought to herself.

Imagine her surprise when Janet invited her into her room. "I'm really sorry I dropped your doll out the window and she got run over," Janet said. "Mom says there's nothing that can be done to fix her up. So I want you to have my doll with the real hair and the baby bottle. Here. She's yours now."

Julie just looked at her friend. She thought about her plan to stomp on the baby bottle and pull out the doll's beautiful hair. "I'm sorry too for wanting to get you back," Julie said softly. "I can't take your favorite doll. But we can share her! I tell you what. Let's play like we're teachers and all our dolls are our students, want too?"

One thing was sure. Janet never wanted to hurt Julie like that again!

Saying your sorry and forgiving can make it possible for friends and family who hurt each other to come back together and live together happily again. It's God's special gift to His family on earth. He was the first to forgive, and when He lives in our hearts, His love makes it possible for us to say we're sorry and forgive too. It's a gift you'll want to pass on in your family and among your friends.

Grandpa and the Changing Butterfly

by Karen Holford

Note to storyteller: For this story it is helpful to have pictures or samples of a caterpillar, chrysalis, and butterfly to show the children. A chrysalis would be especially helpful.

Stevey was excited! He loved going to Grandpa and Grandma's place! Mom and Dad would be away for the weekend and he and Grandpa would have the whole farm to themselves! Grandpa would let Stevey feed the animals and ride in the tractor. They had all kinds of fun together! Grandpa and Grandma would go to a really small church on Sabbath. There was only one other boy there about Stevey's age. But the best bit was a little old lady who always had treats hiding in her big black purse for any boy who could answer a Bible question!

Stevey had such a wonderful weekend! For Sunday lunch Grandma even let Stevey make ice-cream the old fashioned way, with her ancient ice-cream churn and lots of ice and cream from the farm cows and fruit from the freezer.

Grandpa had a nap on Sunday afternoon. "I guess this side of heaven I'm still gonna need my beauty sleep!" he said. Stevey liked the way the sun shone through the window on Grandpa's shiny old, bald head and sparkled in his silvery whiskers.

Stevey let him rest and went outside to see Grandma. There he found caterpillars in Grandma's garden creeping about and eating up leaves. Grandma showed him a caterpillar which was turning into a chrysalis, wrapping itself all up in sticky thread. Grandma explained that going inside the chrysalis was a special time in the life of a caterpillar. When it eventually came out of the chrysalis, it would be a butterfly.

Then they found another chrysalis all finished and hanging on a leaf! Grandma had given him a jar in which to put the chrysalis and some leaves. Stevey wanted to take the chrysalis home and watch as it turned into a butterfly. Stevey thought it was amazing that a caterpillar, a chrysalis and a butterfly were one and the same creature! How could they all be the same when they looked so different? The chrysalis looked just like a dried up old autumn leaf with not a flicker of life in it. Stevey was sure it was really dead, but he didn't want to disappoint Grandma by telling her so!

When Mom and Dad came for him, Stevey was really tired, but very happy. "Next time I'll take you swimming in the river!" yelled Grandpa as they drove away waving. Stevey fell asleep on the way home holding the jar with his chrysalis inside. He was dreaming of owning his own tractor one day.

The next day Stevey watched with his Mom as the chrysalis began to wriggle and split. They took the leaves out of the jar and put them in their garden. Then they sat and watched for ages while the butterfly wriggled and squirmed and pulled its wet, crumpled wings out of that ugly little brown package. The butterfly waited a long time on the leaves until its wings were all dry and could open up. Then Stevey watched as the butterfly spread its wings out wide. He saw all the lovely colors in the wings as the butterfly flew into the sky for the first time. Stevey thought it was amazing! Like watching a miracle! He thought how much fun it would be to be a butterfly! Much more fun than creeping about like a caterpillar and eating cabbage! Stevey saved the dried up chrysalis skin. It was ugly, but it was kind of interesting. He put it in his special box with an old bird's nest and his special stone collection.

A couple of weeks later, Dad got a phone call. When he came off the phone, Dad was crying real tears. Stevey had never seen his Dad do that before. Dad just sat in his favorite big chair and cried and cried. Mom came and hugged him and Stevey patted his back because he didn't know what else to do. After a little while, Dad pulled Stevey up on his lap and put his arm around

Mom. They all had a big hug together. After a long time Dad's sobbing became quieter. Finally Dad was able to explain what had happened that made him cry.

Grandpa had been driving the tractor out on the farm when he had had a heart attack. A heart attack is when a person's heart gets sick and doesn't work properly any more. Lots of times doctors are able to help people who have a heart attack get better. But sometimes when people have a heart attack, they die. Grandpa had died, right out there on the tractor. Grandma missed him when he didn't come in for supper, and that's when she went to look for him.

Now Stevey cried and cried and cried. He loved Grandpa. They had had so much fun together. He would miss him so much. Grandpa had promised to take him swimming in the river next time he visited. Now he couldn't do that. Grandpa had said he would teach him to drive the tractor when he was big enough, and now he wouldn't be able to do that either. But most of all Stevey would miss Grandpa, just friendly, huggy, happy old Grandpa. He would miss the smell of his farm clothes and the tickle of his whiskery beard. He would miss the way the sun shone on Grandpa's shiny head.

That night in bed Stevey asked his Mom what it was like to die. Mom thought a long while and then she said, "Well, Stevey, death is a difficult thing to understand and talk about. But it's a bit like this. On earth, we are sort of like the caterpillars you found. We can do lots of things, but nothing like all the things God first wanted us to do before sin came into the world. Our bodies here don't last very long. They get worn out and ill and eventually everybody dies. It is sad when people die. We miss them lots and lots, and it hurts inside. But for people who love Jesus, like your Grandpa, dying is not the end of it.

"Next week we will go to Grandpa's funeral and Grandpa will be buried in the ground. I suppose that is a bit like when the caterpillar turns into a chrysalis. The caterpillar probably sleeps and doesn't really know what is happening. The Bible says that death is a bit like when you are asleep. When a person is dead he doesn't dream, or know anything at all. But one day, when Jesus returns, He will take all the dead, chrysalis-sort-of-bodies and wake them all up. He will transform the bodies of people who love Him into something totally new and amazing, something far more wonderful than we can imagine! We will be beautiful and strong and able to fly. We will never be sad or sick again. And we will live forever this time.

"The caterpillar in the chrysalis had to wait a while before it could be changed into a butterfly. We don't know how long it will be before Jesus will come again, but we know that He will. Then Grandpa will be alive and strong. He'll probably get all his hair back again too! And I guess that one of the first things that Grandpa will want to do in heaven is to find you there and take you swimming in a crystal clear river, just like he promised when you last saw him!"

"So Grandpa will remember me and I'll recognize him, even without his grey hair and whiskers?" Stevey asked.

"Yes, and he'll recognize you, even if you are quite grown up! With our new bodies Jesus will give us our special memories back. Although we'll have different sorts of bodies, we will still be just us.

"Would you like to make a special book to help you remember Grandpa and all the fun you had with him?"

"Can we put pictures of me and him in there? Could you write out some stories for me of all the things Grandpa and I have done together? I want to stick my chrysalis in there too. It will help me remember that pretty soon Grandpa won't be dead any more. And I'm going to draw a picture of me and him, swimming together in the river in heaven!"

Stevey was sad at Grandpa's funeral. It was hard to say goodbye. Stevey cried a lot and even after that, when he thought of Grandpa, he sometimes cried again. But when he felt sad, he went to look at his special "Grandpa and Stevey Book." When he touched the chrysalis and remembered the butterfly flying away so beautifully, he thought of how he and Grandpa would one day swim in that river in heaven, splashing and laughing. Then the smile came back to his face.

Hannah

By Karen Flowers

Grandma and the aunts and uncles rocked back and forth in the long swings which hung from the roof of the big porch. The three cousins, who were so happy to be together for a week of fun at Grandma's, continued their game of hide and seek in the bushes. But they did not venture far. They kept hoping that Grandma and their aunts and uncles would start talking about all their other relatives. Eventually, they knew, Grandma would send one of them for the big family Bible. Families sometimes use a family Bible to keep a record of things like who married whom, who was born when, who moved from where to where, and important dates like weddings, and births, and deaths, and baptisms.

There was one story the cousins were waiting for. The one about the stow-away. Oh, they knew the story word for word. But listening never made them tired. It was the story about their great, great grandma. It began longer ago than they could imagine, half way around the world on another continent. Every time, they dared to hope that Grandma would resurrect one more detail in her memory, or uncover some hidden fact never before discovered in the family Bible's records. The problem was that Grandma had pretty much remembered all that she could, even with the help of the old Bible into which her mother had written many interesting things about their family's history. For the cousins, the story would just start getting interesting when Grandma forgot, or Great Grandma had recorded no more details.

Later, the three cousins would lie awake late into the night, talking in whispers as they stretched out beside each other with one of Grandma's quilts pulled tight under their chins. The part about the story of their relatives that kept them awake was the part about Hannah. Poor Hannah! First off, she had three brothers-one named John, another named James, and, oh too bad, Great Grandma forgot to record the name of the third. Never mind, just being the only girl must have been bad enough. But worst of all, their parents died when they were very young, and Hannah and her brothers had to go live with their uncle who was very rich.

Now, living with a rich uncle sounded nice enough. Think of having all the money you could spend! But probably, the cousins thought, the rich uncle did not want four children, all of a sudden, very badly. They would chatter on and on about what might have been. But there was one piece of the story which they knew for sure. Hannah was not happy. So she decided to run away. Each of the cousins remembered out loud the times when they had been angry and thought about running away. Of course they had never gone far. Usually they started thinking about where they would sleep and what they would eat if they really left home.

Of course Hannah's situation was different. She was a young woman, ready to begin supporting herself. So when she decided to leave her uncle's home, she decided to really leave! Afraid that her uncle or her brothers would try to stop her, she slipped away after dark. As she made her way from their home in Devonshire to the English coast, her mind was racing. In her heart burned a desire to go to America and begin a new life. But how could she?

Then she got her chance! The cousins were wide-eyed just thinking about it. Carefully slipping through the darkness, Hannah crawled up the gangplank and hid herself in the hold of a big ship reported to be leaving for America the next day. She must have been very good at hiding, because no one found her until they were too far out to sea to bring her back. She was the cousins great, great grandmother, who eventually married and had five children. Their Grandpa had been born into this family down the line, and that was all they knew. The cousins would wiggle their sheets and blankets into a tangle with questions about her. But finally they would settle down and go to sleep, for it did no good to come up with more questions. Nobody knew the answers to them anyway.

Have you ever asked your mom and dad, or your grandpa and grandma and aunts and uncles about your family history? Maybe you have an old Bible in your family where some of the names of your relatives have been written down. It can be very interesting to find out who you are and

where you have come from. Sometimes the stories we learn about our relatives make us proud. Other times we are embarrassed to think about who some of our relatives were and what they did. Every family has relatives of both kinds!

But the good news is we are all related through one Relative who is the best in all the world. He never did anything to make us ashamed. He will never do anything to hurt us. He just loves us. And He wants to put His love into our hearts so we can love each other in our families here at church, just like He loves us. That Relative is Jesus. Did you know that when Jesus came to earth as a baby, God made Him our brother. Well, He did! And if He's our brother, then God is our Father, and we are His children. Aren't you glad Jesus is in our family history?

His Hands Wouldn't Go Round

by Archa O. Dart

Pedro looked like a giant toadstool that morning as he sat on a small stump with his poncho, or loose coat, thrown around his shoulders and his large sombrero, or hat, covering him completely. From his lofty seat on that high mountainside he could look for miles in every direction and watch the clouds as they constantly formed faces and images of man and beast. Pedro sat motionless, gazing into the quiet valley far below, while his goats nibbled at the short tough grass about him.

All at once he became aware that someone was coming up behind him. Before he had time to become frightened and run away, the stranger had smiled and spoken kindly to him. After talking for a little while, the man asked, "Sonny, how would you like to go to school?"

Now Pedro did not know whether going to school was like going to Lima, the big city on the other side of the mountains, or like going hunting. He had never heard of school before.

But the kind man told him so many interesting things about school that he decided that he would like to see what it was all about. So when the day came for the mission school to open, Pedro was right there. He saw a number of things that interested him in that little schoolroom, but there was one thing that was a great curiosity indeed. It was a queer little object on the teacher's desk. After a time, Pedro decided to ask the teacher what that queer little thing was.

"Teacher, what is this?"

"That, Pedro, is a clock," she answered.

Pedro didn't know any more now than he did before. "What is it for?" he asked.

"That tells me the time of the day," she replied. "I can sit right here in this room and tell where the sun is all day long by that little clock. I can tell when it is time to eat dinner and when it is time to dismiss school, so you boys and girls can reach your homes before dark."

This was almost more than Pedro could believe.

The teacher explained further, "When the two hands of this clock point straight up, the sun will be right overhead. Your shadow will be the shortest at that time of day. And when the hands are right here at three o'clock, the sun will be about there," she said pointing to a spot in the west.

This all seemed very strange indeed to Pedro. But sure enough, when the teacher announced that it was time for their noonday lunch, Pedro saw that the hands of the clock were right straight up and the sun was directly overhead. He scarcely had any shadow at all. He wondered and wondered how that little clock could tell where the sun was all day long.

Day after day Pedro watched that clock. It seemed to know just where the sun was all the time.

One day the teacher said, "Pedro how would you like to have a clock of your own?"

"What? You mean one that I could take home with me to keep?"

"Yes, Pedro," she answered. "If you bring me your centavos-that is, pennies and nickels- I shall keep them for you until you have enough to buy a clock for your own."

Pedro was very happy. Every time he sold some of his goat cheese, he would give the money to his teacher, until finally he had quite a little sum.

One morning the teacher had a large package on her desk. "Pedro, come here," she greeted him when he arrived. "I have something for you."

No boy or girl has ever been any happier on a birthday than Pedro was that morning when the teacher handed him his clock. He danced about for joy. The teacher showed him how to wind it up with the key and start it by swinging the pendulum, or loose arm, as he called it. Pedro took the clock home and put it right by his little bed. It was the last thing he looked at each night and the first thing he saw in the morning.

But one morning when he looked at his clock, he found that the hands were not going round. The loose arm was not swinging. It was not making that queer little sound. He was afraid his clock was dead, but he took it to his teacher, as he had learned to do with all his troubles, and asked her to fix his clock. She took the clock, gave it a shake or two, and it began ticking again, and the hands began going around. Every time after that when his clock would stop, he would give it a shake, and it would begin ticking again.

One morning Pedro woke up and found that his clock has stopped during the night. He gave it a shake, but nothing happened. Another big shake, and another, and another. All the shaking that Pedro could give it did not start it ticking. He thought it was dead for sure this time. Again he brought the clock to his teacher for her to repair.

The teacher tried the same remedy, but nothing happened. The teacher handed it back to Pedro, saying, "Pedro, I cannot repair your clock. I do not know what is wrong with it, but there is a man in Lima who makes and repair clocks. He can make it go all right. You take it to him, and he will make the hands go round again."

This brought some hope to Pedro. He was relieved to know that there was someone who could repair his clock. He took his clock back home and waited for the day to come when he and his father would make another trip to Lima.

All this time Pedro was getting along very well in the new mission school. He was learning many things. But one day he found himself standing by the teacher's desk, twisting his thumbs. He felt that everything was not just right with him. The look on the teacher's face told him plainly that he was in trouble.

The teacher began in a very solemn manner, "Pedro, you are not acting right out on the playground. When the other boys do not do as you say, and you do not have your own way, you begin to hit them with your fist. I thought you wanted to become a man, to be a real hero, to be a Christian gentleman. No Christian gentleman uses his fist to gain his point. Only cowards do that."

"Yes, teacher, I do want to be a real man, a Christian gentleman," Pedro answered quietly, "but there is something wrong with my hand. When a boy does something that I do not like, before I know it, my hand has hit him. I am sorry for it, but you see there's something wrong with my hand. I can't control it."

"Oh, no," answered the teacher, "there is nothing wrong with your hand, Pedro. Your hand is all right, but there is something wrong inside you."

Pedro felt his chest. What could the teacher mean? "Oh, no teacher, there is nothing wrong inside. I feel all right in there."

"Yes, Pedro, you have something wrong inside that makes your hand hit boys the way it does."

Pedro was puzzled. He thought a great deal about what the teacher had said. Everything went along as usual for a few days. Then Pedro found himself back by the teacher's desk again. He was twisting his thumbs as before, for he was afraid that something was certainly coming this time. The teacher had that same expression on her face.

"Pedro," the teacher began in a solemn tone, "I thought you wanted to become a brave, good soldier for the Lord, but sometimes I hear you call some of the children names. You say things that are not good. Why do you do that?"

"Oh, teacher, I do want to be a good boy and become a real brave soldier for the Lord, but there is something wrong with my tongue. When the boys and girls do things that I do not like, this tongue of mine says things that I do not want to say. I am sorry, but I cannot control it."

"No, Pedro," answered his teacher, "there is nothing wrong with that tongue of yours. It is all right, but there is something wrong inside of you."

Pedro thought she must be mistaken. He felt his chest. He felt all around. He was not sore anywhere. "No, teacher, there is nothing wrong inside. I do not hurt there at all."

"Yes, Pedro, there is something wrong inside of you, and until you get right inside, your tongue will continue to speak bad words."

Pedro went home thinking of what the teacher had told him. But still he could not make out just what was wrong inside of him. Several days went by, and he tried to be just as good a boy as he could.

By and by Pedro's father said, "Son, get your cheeses ready. We are going to Lima tomorrow to sell them." That was delightful news to him. Right away he thought of his clock.

The next morning when they had everything ready and were about to start, Pedro went into his room to get his clock. He stopped a moment to look at it. It was a large clock. It would get rather heavy with the other things he was planning to carry with him over the mountain. You see, he had no automobile or streetcar to ride in. He had to walk all the way.

Then, too, all the clock did not need repairing. The wood part was as good as ever, the numbers on the face were still all right, the back had not changed. In fact, the only thing that was wrong, so Pedro thought, was that the hands wouldn't go round. A bright idea came into his mind. Pedro opened the glass door of the clock and very carefully removed the two hands from the face, wrapped them up in a piece of paper, and put them into his pocket.

At last they arrived in the city of Lima, Pedro went directly to the watchmaker and unwrapped the two hands before the man. "Here, Señor, these hands will not go round, I want you to fix them so they will go."

The man smiled and said, "Sonny, I cannot fix those hands."

"Oh, yes, you can," Pedro pleaded. "My teacher says you can. I must have them fixed. They will not go round."

Seeing how anxious the little fellow was to have his clock repaired the good man explained, "Now see here, young man, there is nothing wrong with those hands. They are all right, but there is something wrong with the inside of your clock. Inside of your clock there are a number of little screws and wheels, and when dust or dirt or water or rust gets into them, they stop, and that stops the hands from going around. The next time you come to Lima, you bring me the inside of your clock, and I shall be happy to clean it and fix it so the hands will go around all right on the outside."

Pedro wrapped the hands up again and put them back into his pocket. On the way home he began thinking of what the watchmaker had said. It seemed very strange indeed that dirt and dust on the inside would keep the hands from going round on the outside. Then he thought of something. He would find out as soon as he got back to school.

He went to his teacher and told her what had happened in Lima about his clock. Then he added, "Teacher, what kind of screws and wheels are inside of me that need fixing?"

The teacher said, "Pedro, I have been waiting for you to ask that question for along, long time. You see, Jesus, who made you, put something inside of you that can think. When you allow bad thoughts to come into your mind, you do bad things. It's just like getting dirt or rust into your

clock. Every time you think about taking something that does not belong to you, or telling something that is not true, it is allowing dirt to come into your mind. But it is not easy to get into our minds to clean out all that dirt."

"How can I have my mind cleaned up?" asked Pedro.

"You do not need to go to Lima, Pedro, but you can begin by kneeling down right down here at my desk and asking Jesus to clean you up inside. Then your hands will do kind, loving acts, and your tongue will speak sweet, pleasant words."

How Jeff Witnessed During the Forest Fire

By Gary B. Swanson

Jeff Crandall leaned on his hoe. Another row and a half of string beans, and he would have the garden weeded for a couple of weeks at least. He heard the roar of a plane overhead. He looked at the billowing cloud of smoke rising, hot and glowing. It was behind Rattlesnake Ridge only three miles away.

The wind puffed up, blowing dust across the dry garden. Jeff knew such breezes fanned the fire and blew it across roads and rivers that should have stopped it. Twenty-four thousand acres of pear and apple orchards had already been burned.

The sun beat down on Jeff's bare back. He wiped the back of his hand across his forehead and finished up the last few feet of the row. Then he dragged out the hose and gave the struggling plants a drink of cool water.

Well, that's that, Jeff thought to himself. He went into the house for supper. He washed his hands at the kitchen sink. Then, leaning over the faucet, he splashed water on his face and neck.

The fire was on everyone's mind at the dinner table. Jeff's little brother, Eric, looked at Dad with wide, frightened eyes and asked if it was getting any closer.

"Hard to tell, son," Dad answered. "But if it does, someone will warn us before it gets too dangerous." He ruffled Eric's brown hair. "Don't worry, Son. God will take care of us."

"Well, we may be able to get away from the fire," Jeff said, "but if it comes up our hill, there won't be much we can do to stop it from burning the house down."

"That's true, Jeff, but there's no use worrying about it. Remember, 'All things work together for good to them that love God.'"

At worship that evening, just before they went to bed, the Crandall family prayed that God would protect them from the fire. Jeff lay awake in bed for longer than usual, thinking about the flames raging through the brittle undergrowth only three miles away.

It seemed to him that he had just floated off to sleep when Dad was shaking his shoulder. "The fire's getting too close," he said. "We have to leave."

Jeff scrambled out of bed and slipped a pair of jeans over his pajamas. He grabbed his jacket and followed Dad down the hall to the living room, where Mother was helping Eric button his sweater. Dad opened the front door. The sleepy family went out to the car. Farther up the hill Jeff could see the first line of the fire beginning to burn bushes, little more than two city blocks away.

"Is it going to burn the house down, Dad?" he asked as his father got in beside him.

"We've cleared away most of the weeds around the place," Dad said, "but if the big oak tree next to the house catches fire, we may be in trouble."

Dad started up the motor and drove down the hill toward town. "Where will we go?" Eric asked.

"The Red Cross has arranged for people to stay in the high-school gym," Dad said. "We'll have to stay there the rest of the night at least."

When they arrived at the school, other families were filing into the gym. A woman stood at the door, writing names on a clipboard. Inside, cots stood in neat rows, and at the far end of the gym, volunteers served fruit juice and doughnuts.

The Crandalls found four empty cots and got ready to spend the rest of the night. "Dad," Jeff asked, "God will take care of the house, won't He?"

"He will if it's for the best, Jeff."

"Well, how could it ever be for the best to lose your home and everything in it?"

Dad smiled. "It isn't always easy for us to understand, son, but we have to remember that God can make good things come out of bad."

"Why don't we pray that God will watch over our house tonight," Mother suggested. So the Crandall family bowed their heads together right there in the high-school gym, and each took a turn talking to God.

When Dad finished the last prayer, Jeff slipped under the blanket of his cot. Just then, he noticed another boy about his own age lying wide awake only three cots away. The boy looked frightened. He was watching Jeff as if he wanted to ask him a question but was afraid to.

Jeff threw his blanket back, got up and went over to the boy's cot. "Hi," he said. "I'm Jeff. What's your name?"

"Kevin," the boy mumbled. "I didn't mean to stare. What were you and your family doing just now?"

"Oh, do you mean when we were praying? We were asking God to watch over our house tonight and to keep it safe from the fire."

"Do you really think praying does any good?"

"Sure," Jeff said. "Well, would you pray to God for me and ask Him to protect my house too?"

"Sure, but there's no trick to it. You can do it yourself, you know."
"I'd rather have you do it."

The two boys bowed their heads together, and Jeff prayed for the protection of Kevin's home.

When the prayer was over, Jeff's new friend smiled shyly. "Thanks," he said. "I've never really prayed before."

"Well, listen," Jeff said. "Would you like to go to church with me sometime? I think you'd like it."

"I'll have to ask Dad," Kevin said, pointing to his father sleeping on the next cot. "But I don't think he'd mind."

Finally both boys lay back down on their cots. The clock on the gym wall showed 3:00 a.m. Jeff's eyes got very heavy, and he was soon asleep.

When Jeff awoke in the morning, Kevin was already up and was folding his blanket. Seeing Jeff awake, he came over and said, "Dad says it's OK for me to go to church with you sometime."

"Great," Jeff grinned. They gave each other their phone numbers. Just then Jeff's dad called for them to leave.

As they were walking out to the car, Jeff was thinking about Kevin. "You know, Dad," he said, "I think I understand now what the Bible means when it says, 'All things work together for good to them that love God.' I was worried about our house burning down, but if it hadn't been for the fire, I'd have never met Kevin. I made a new friend and had a chance to tell him about Jesus."

"Well," Dad said, "we've been doubly blessed, then. The police officer who came to tell us we could go home said the fire missed our house."

How Spot and Stripe Made Peace

By Alfred Wallace, adapted by Karen and Ron Flowers

This story illustrates in a striking way how human beings are connected together through their Creator. You will need a number of small blocks of wood or cardboard for the wall, a small mirror, two small sticks, and two simple mitten-style hand puppets, one with a spotted face and the other with stripes.

Spot: (He comes in singing.) I'm like you, you're like me. We're like each other and it's fun to be! Wheeeeeee! (Spot and Stripe laugh). Well, what shall we do today? Would you like to build something with my building blocks?

Stripe: Oh, I don't know. You build something with my blocks.

Spot: (Laughter) Well, it really doesn't matter who builds with what, as we are both alike.

Stripe: Yes!

Spot: Isn't it nice we have the same kind of head!

Stripe: Yes, and the same kind of hands.

Spot: Yes, and the same kind of shirt.

Stripe: Yes, and the same kind of spots!

Spot: What did you say?

Stripe: I said it's nice we both have spots!

Spot: Who has spots?

Stripe: We do!

Spot: (Laughter) You mean stripes. We have stripes!

Stripe: Well, I know the difference between spots and stripes!

Spot: All I know is that we have stripes!

Stripe: Spots!

Spot: Stripes!

Stripe: Spots!

Spot: Spots! I mean stripes!

Stripe: Don't be silly. Look at yourself!

Spot: How can I look at myself?

Stripe: In a mirror! Here!

Spot: (He looks.) Hey! I do have spots!

Stripe: That's what I told you. We have spots!

Spot: No! No! Just me! You have stripes. (He shows him the mirror.) Look!

Stripe: (Looking in the mirror) Hey, I do have stripes!

Spot: That's what I told you.

Stripe: Yeaah! And they're very handsome too! (He whispers to himself.) He doesn't have stripes. Only I have stripes. There must be something special about me. I don't know that I ought to have any more to do with him. (Admiring himself in the mirror again) Mm . . .mmm! Oh, you handsome fellow!

(Looking again at Spot, he mutters to himself.) He's different from me. I'd better watch him. You can't trust people who are different! They might take advantage of you. I'll just not have any more to do with him. Instead, I'll play with my own blocks. (Stripe begins to build a wall with his blocks.)

(Spot begins to build also. A common wall goes up between them with each adding a block when the other isn't looking.)

Stripe: There now! And you stay on your side of the wall! I don't allow anybody over here unless he has stripes like mine!

Spot: Well, who cares! I wouldn't come over there if you begged me to! Stripes! Stripes are nothing. Anybody can have stripes. Chipmunks have stripes. (He shouts over the wall.) Skunks have stripes!

Stripe: (Stripe, upset with Spot's remarks, peers around the wall and jeers.) Nah, nah, ni, nah, nah. Blaaaaaaaaah! (He retreats behind the wall and then calls out.) So what are you going to do about it? (No answer) What's the matter? Are you jealous or something?

Spot: (Spot creeps close to the wall and makes a loud noise like a gun firing.) Bang! Bang! Bang! (He chuckles to himself.)

Stripe: Sounds like a gun! I'll bet it is a gun! He's getting ready to fight me! (Sounds frightened). I don't want to fight him. What am I going to do?

Spot: Now what do you think, Stripe? (Silence) It's too quiet over there. He's up to something. He's probably getting ready to hurt me! I don't want to fight him! I don't want to fight anybody! If I could just scare him enough, then he wouldn't dare hurt me!

Stripe: (Stripe pretends he is a big snake and practices making loud hissing sounds and snake-biting gestures.) I'm a big snake! (Laughter) When old Spot meets me, he will run like a sissy! Yeaah!

Spot: (Spot pretends he is a lion and growls fiercely.) I am a lion. (He laughs) When Stripe meets the king of beasts he'll fall in a faint. (More laughter). I guess I'd better practice my roar.

(Each one dances around on his side of the wall, getting ready to look over it to scare the other.)

Both: (They suddenly look over the wall, making their fierce noises and gestures at each other. Both then scream in fear and retreat.)

Spot: (Crying) He's too big for me to fight! I'm too little! (He wails) I need help!! There's nothing to me but my little head (touching each part) and my little hands and my little shirt and . . . (He discovers a large arm and then sees the Toymaker). Oooooh! Who are you?

Toymaker: I am the Toymaker!

Spot: What do you make?

Toymaker: I made you.

Spot: You did?

Toymaker: Yes.

Spot: Well then, do you like me?

Toymaker: Yes, very much.

Spot: Well, if you like me, you must be on my side! And you're so big, too! Much bigger than my friend, Stripe, I mean my enemy, Stripe. Wait till I go get my club and I'll show old Stripe who's more important around here. (He leaves to get his club.)

Stripe: (Stripe moans and cries.) What am I going to do? I can't fight him. He's too fierce. I know what I'll do, I'll hide. Here's a hill. (The Toymaker's biceps and shoulder.) I'll climb up in the hills and hide. (He climbs up the Toymaker's arm and snuggles behind his neck).

Toymaker: What are you doing?

Stripe: I'm climbing this hill Wait a minute! . . . Hills can't talk! See here! You're no hill!

Toymaker: No, I'm the one who made you!

Stripe: Well, when did you get here?

Toymaker: I've been here all the time.

Stripe: Well, I never saw you before!

Toymaker: You never looked. But I'm right with you every minute.

Stripe: Is that so?! Well, then I can beat the spots off Spot! You will be right behind me?

Toymaker: Oh, I'll be closer than that!

Stripe: Good! (To himself) I wonder what he meant by that? Oh, well, with him behind me, what can I lose! (He leaves to get his weapon.)

(Spot returns with a club, humming a military song behind his wall. Stripe comes with a stick.)

Stripe: (Taunting from behind his wall) All right you over there, get ready to fight like a man! (He beats the air with his stick.) I defy you! (The swinging of his stick breaks parts of the wall and they grimace at each other.)

Spot: (Challenging) You'd better not hit anybody with that stick, boy!

(Spot cries out as the blows fall on him.) Ow! Ow! Ow!

(They exchange blows, with shouts and cries of pain. Finally they butt heads and knock each other unconscious.)

(As Spot regains consciousness, the Toymaker is sitting in the background.)

Spot: What happened! Something went wrong. What became of the Toymaker?

Toymaker: I'm still right here.

Spot: Well, I thought you were on my side!

Toymaker: I am.

Spot: Then why didn't you help me beat Stripe?

Toymaker: Because I'm on his side too. (Stripe regains consciousness.)

Spot: You are?

Toymaker: Of course. I made you both, and I love you both. And I couldn't take sides against either of you. After all, you are both the same thing.

Spot: Oh no we're not. We're very different! I have nothing in common with him!

Toymaker: Well, lets see if that's so. Stripe, go over and hit Spot.

Spot: Now wait a minute!

Toymaker: Be still, Spot. I just want to show you something. Go ahead, Stripe.

Stripe: (Stripe hits Spot with his fist. Spot howls with pain. Stripe laughs at first, then sadly drops his head.) Ooooh!

Toymaker: What's the matter, Stripe?

Stripe: I don't know . . . I don't feel so good. I guess I don't really want to hit him.

Toymaker: That's what I want you both to understand. Do you know what you are?

Stripe: Sure! Here's my little head and my little hand and my little shirt and my . . . a . . . a . . . and your arm, and your shoulder and you! And I'm part me and I'm part you!

Toymaker: Yes, but there's more than that. Keep going.

Stripe: Well, then there's your other shoulder and your other arm and then, there's . . . Spot! Hey, Spot! We're all one thing! You, me and the Toymaker!

Spot: (To Stripe)

Then, when you hit me it hurts you, because . . .

Toymaker: Because?

Stripe: Because I'm really hurting part of myself.

Toymaker: That's right.

Spot: But wait! I have spots and he has stripes. If we are both the same thing, why don't we look alike?

Toymaker: I never make any two things look exactly alike. Else how could anyone tell them apart? But you are really both the same. You are really part of me.

Stripe: Hey, Spot?

Spot: Yeah?

Stripe: If the Toymaker is always with us, then we don't need to be afraid! Or angry or lonely.

Spot: You can play with my blocks any time you want to!

Stripe: Thank you. That makes me very happy.

Spot: And that makes me very happy! (He laughs in a deep giggle.)

Both: (They sing.) I am you, you are me. We are each other and it's fun to be.

Jamie's Dilemma

by Jeanette Pelton

Jamie sat on the porch next to his suitcase with a worried frown on his face. His mother and dad had just given him some news he wasn't at all sure he liked.

The morning had started out all right. Mom had made pancakes for breakfast and Jamie liked pancakes. But after the blessing, Dad had cleared his throat and said, "Jamie, we have some good news for you. Do you remember how we talked last year about a new brother or sister? Well, last night, the adoption agency called us. They have found for us both a brother and a sister. We will be gone for a few days to go get them and sign all the papers. You will be staying with Grandma until we get back."

Jamie gulped. He had forgotten all about the discussion they'd had last year. At the time, the idea of a brother to play with had sounded fun, but he wasn't so sure now.

"How old is the brother?" he asked.

"Your new brother is seven and your new sister is five," said Mother. "Would you like to see a picture of them? His name is Jon and her name is Jacinta."

Jamie looked at the picture of two small, solemn looking children.

"Now Jamie, we have a lot to do to get ready. We are buying bunk beds for your room. You will have one bed and Jon the other. Jacinta is going to have your old bed in the spare bedroom, and we need to buy two dressers, and some clothes."

"I could share my legos with him," offered Jamie. He really didn't know why he said that.

"I'm sure he'll like that. Now, they won't speak English, you know. They speak Spanish."

"You mean he can't talk to me?"

"They'll learn English, you'll learn some Spanish. You'll get along fine. Now you go pack your suitcase to go to Grandma's."

It didn't take Jamie long to pack some playclothes. He went out to sit on the porch until it was time to go. Having a new brother had sounded like fun, but this new brother couldn't even talk to him. "Probably doesn't know how to play ball or anything," thought Jamie. "I'm not sure I like this at all. What if my friends at school laugh at him? Maybe they'll laugh at me too." Just as he felt like he might cry, his Dad came out and sat next to him.

"Going to be a big change, having more than one son around here," Daddy said as he sat down next to Jamie. "Glad we've got a big yard."

"Do we have to get the new kids?" asked Jamie suddenly.

"No, we don't have to get them," said Daddy slowly. "But we want them."

"I'm not sure I want to share my bedroom with somebody who can't even talk to me."

Daddy looked at Jamie for a long minute and then asked, "Jamie, are you afraid Mother and I won't have enough time for you once Jon and Jacinta come?"

Jamie looked at his feet. He didn't know how to put what he had in mind in words. He just felt scared and worried inside.

"Jamie, Mom and I love you. You're very special to us. Our love won't be divided between you and your new brother and sister. Jesus made love so that the more you give away, the more you have, so you never run out. You will always be loved. Do you understand?"

Jamie still felt strange, confused, and sort of afraid, but knowing his Daddy loved him helped.

About a week later, Grandpa and Grandma and Jamie were walking through the airport terminal to pick up Mother and Dad.

"There they are!" Jamie shouted to Grandpa. Daddy reached out his arms and Jamie ran into them for a hug. Then he hugged Mom. And then he saw his new brother and sister standing back holding hands.

They looked small and lost. They both had dark hair and big brown eyes.

Jamie smiled at them.

"Hi, I'm Jamie."

Jon looked at him for a long time. Then he stuttered shyly, "Hello-Jamie-I-am-Jon-How-are-you?"

"Hey, he speaks English!" Jamie said.

"Not really. He's been practicing that all the way from the orphanage! He does want to be friends," smiled Mother. "I think they're a little too shy to talk right now. We need to get them home away from this noisy airport."

On the way home, Jamie was silent. He really didn't know what to say. He kept peeking at Jon and Jon kept peeking at him. When they reached home and had carried in the suitcases, Mother showed Jon and Jacinta their rooms, and then their toys. They looked at everything with wide eyes. Mother sighed. "I wish I spoke more Spanish. I want them to feel at home."

Jamie was silent for a while. Then he brightened. "Mom, may I go for a walk? I'll be right back and I won't go far."

"Well, I guess you may, but what's so important right now?"

"I'll be right back, Mom." Jamie said as he ran out the door.

In a very short time, Jamie returned with an older man who walked with a cane. He brought him into the kitchen.

"Mom, I want you to meet my friend Mr. David. He special."

"Well, of course he is, but why . . ."

"Mr. David was a missionary. Now he teaches adults who want to learn Spanish at the high school. He can help us talk to Jon and Jacinta."

"He does? He will? That's a great idea! They're just in sitting on their beds afraid to move and I want them to know everything's going to be fine."

They all went into the bedroom. Jon and Jacinta looked up timidly. Mr. David smiled broadly, sat down on a chair and spoke to Jon. Jon was so surprised at hearing his own language that he forgot to answer him.

"What do you want to say to them?" Mr. David asked.

"First, tell them this is Jon's bed and these are his toys and his clothes. Then we need to show Jacinta her room and oh, wait- first tell them we love them. That's the most important," said Mother.

"Tell them I want to be their friend and big brother," added Jamie.

"Tell them this is their home and we want them to be happy," said Daddy. Mr. David laughed and began to speak in rapid Spanish. Jon and Jacinta looked at the beds and clothes and toys. Finally, Jon said something.

"Jon wants to know if these are really his and if we're sure they can stay," Mr. David translated.

Of course they are his! And we do want them to stay," said Mother. She smiled at the children. For the next hour, Mr. David helped the Rodgers talk to their new children. He promised to come back the next morning.

At worship that night, Daddy put his arm around Jamie. "Jamie that was a great idea. Having someone around who speaks Spanish will make the first few weeks so much easier."

"I think I'm going to like being a big brother. I'm going to start teaching Jon to speak English. And he can teach me some Spanish too. Mr. David said he'd help us."

"That's great. Let's thank Jesus right now for our safe trip, and our new family and our friend Mr. David."

Jon's Hard Lesson

Jon and Brent could hardly wait to leave on vacation. Mom and Dad had talked with them the night before about all the interesting places they would be visiting and had given each of them some spending money. This money, Dad explained, was their very own and they could choose how they would spend it. However, it was all the money they would have for the entire trip, and when it was gone they would not be able to buy anything more. Both boys said this was fine with them! They would take care not to lose it and would think very hard before spending it all.

Brent immediately asked Mom if she would put his money envelope in her purse and keep it for him until he was sure he was ready to spend it. But Jon liked the feel of his own money in his own pocket, so he decided to take care of his own. Soon they were off on their big adventure.

After they had travelled for several hours, Dad stopped to get some gas. Inside the station there was candy and a few small toys for sale. Brent and Jon both looked at everything there was to be had, and some things did look like they would taste good. "I like red licorice," Brent said to Jon, "and I haven't had any for a long time, but once it's gone, it's gone. I think I'll save my money." "I don't think I'll get any candy either," Jon replied. "They don't have my favorite, anyway. Besides, Mom said we'll stop for a picnic soon." Jon fingered the money in his pocket. Some of the travel games did look fun, but he still had things to do in the bag he had packed to entertain himself in the car. Later that day, Mom pulled into the parking lot of a large store. "I need to run in here and get some mosquito repellent before we camp tonight," Mom said. "I'll only be a minute."

"Can we go in, too?" chimed both boys together.

"I guess so," Mom agreed. "It'll give you a chance to stretch your legs."

Brent and Jon told Mom she'd find them in the toy section when she was ready to leave and began immediately to scan the shelves. "Look at these roller skates!" Brent called to Jon. "Someday I want a pair just like these. We could skate on the bike path in the park." When Jon did not come to look at the skates, Brent went looking for him. He found him struggling to get a bag with a plastic marble game in it down from a high shelf. It was a new game that neither boy had seen before. "This looks great! And I have enough money right here to buy it!" Jon announced. "Just think of all the fun we can have in the car with this!"

"But Jon, that will take nearly all your money! What about all the special places we will be going? I'm sure they will have wonderful things to buy, but you'll have no money left. You better ask Mom before you buy that." Brent instructed.

"I don't have to ask anyone, least of all you!" Jon snapped. "Dad says this money is mine and I can do anything I please with it! You just take care of your money and I'll take care of mine."

Just at that moment Mom called to the boys that she was finished. When they met her at the cashiers she was a little surprised to see Jon with the marble game. "What do you have there?" she asked?

"A wonderful new game that I have decided to buy with my own money." Jon informed her.

"Are you sure this is how you want to spend most of your money?" Mom questioned. "We have many fun places to visit where you may find other things you would like to buy."

"I want to buy this," Jon insisted. And buy it he did.

Back in the car, Jon opened his bag and for quite a long while forgot about everything else while he learned how to play his new game. It had a snapper which shot marbles into a large open

area full of pegs. Eventually the marble bounced into one of several compartments at the bottom each worth a certain number of points. It was fun, so it was quite a long time before Jon began to tire of it and look for something else to do. Even the next day and the next he enjoyed the game for a while each day. But then it happened. The snapper that shot the marbles around the pegs suddenly broke off in his hands. Now there was no way to shoot the marbles, no way to play the game. Jon felt bad for a while, but they were having so much fun on the trip he soon forgot about it.

"Today we will be stopping at our country's first Pony Express Office," Dad told the boys early one morning. "A long time ago, mail was carried across our country by men on horseback," he continued. "There were post offices all along the way where they stopped to change horses and riders. You will see one of them and learn more about the riders in just about an hour now. I think you will enjoy."

The boys were excited. They had read all about the Pony Express. But what would it really be like? They were not disappointed. At the old post office there was a man dressed up like one of the riders who told his story and then answered questions. Inside there was a little store where they sold old fashioned candy, copies of old newspapers from the days of the Pony Express, and wonderful hats and belt buckles like the riders wore.

Brent and Jon pressed their noses against the glass case full of buckles. "I think I would like one of those, right over there," Brent pointed out to Jon.

"I like the one up in the right-hand corner," Jon replied. "Let's see if Dad will get us one."

"Hey Dad, look at these!" Brent called. "Can we get one for each of us? I like that one, and Jon likes this one."

"Sure boys," Dad replied, "if that's what you decide you want to spend your money on, I will get the clerk to help you."

"I'll get my money from Mom," Brent called to Jon. "Dad will get someone to help us."

Brent returned with his envelope from Mom's purse. He found Jon digging deep into his pocket, but coming up with only a few coins. "I thought I had more than this," Jon mumbled. "I couldn't have spent that much for that crazy game."

Brent made his purchase and the clerk turned to Jon. "And which one did you want, son?" he asked.

"Just a minute," Jon stuttered. "I have to get some more money from my Dad."

"Dad, Dad!" he called. "I need some more money for my belt buckle." But Dad motioned Jon to come to his side.

"Where is the money I gave you for the trip?" Dad asked. "You remember I gave you all the spending money you would have before we left home."

"Yes, I know, but I didn't know that game was going to cost so much, and now I only have this much left, and it's not enough to buy my buckle like Brent's. Can't you just give me a little more money?"

"I'm sorry Jon, but that was not our agreement. I'm sorry if you spent all your money on the game and don't have enough for a buckle. You can look around and see if there is something else you would like for the money you have left."

Big tears started to form in Jon's eyes as he looked into the glass case for the last time at the beautiful belt buckle. How he wished he had listened to Brent and Mom before he spent nearly all his money for that crazy game. But now all he could do was hope there would be a next time when he could buy a buckle like this one. One thing he knew for sure, on their next vacation, he would think longer and harder before spending his money. He would make better choices next time. And Mom and Dad reassured him that they knew that he would.

Keeper of the Light

A Scrapbook Story of Ellen G. White

Mary's father was the keeper of a lighthouse on the coast of England. The light of these lamps shines at night to guide ships on their way and to keep them from dangerous rocks and shoals. The lighthouse seems to say: "Take care, sailors, for rocks and sands are here. Keep a good lookout and mind how you sail, or you will be lost."

One afternoon Mary was in the lighthouse alone. Mary's father had trimmed the lamps, and they were ready for lighting when evening came. As he needed to buy some food, he crossed the causeway which led to the land. This causeway was a path over the rocks and sands, which could be used only two or three hours in the day; at other times, the waters rose and covered it. The father intended to hasten home before the tide flowed over this path. Night was coming on, and a storm was rising on the sea. Waves dashed against the rocks, and the wind moaned around the tower.

Mary's mother was dead, and although she was alone, her father had told the girl not to be afraid, for he would soon return. Now there were some rough-looking men behind a rock, who were watching Mary's father. They watched him go to the land.

Who were they? They were "wreckers" who lurked about the coast. If a vessel was driven on the rocks by a storm, they rushed down-not to help the sailors, but to rob them, and to plunder the ship.

The wicked men knew that a little girl was left alone in the lighthouse. They planned to keep her father on the shore all night. Ships filled with rich goods were expected to pass the point before the morning and these men knew if the light did not shine, the vessels would run upon the rocks and be wrecked. How cruel and wicked they were to seek the death of the ships' crews!

Mary's father had filled his basket, and prepared to return to the lighthouse. As he drew near the road leading to the causeway, the wreckers rushed from their hiding place and threw him on the ground. They quickly bound his hands and feet with ropes and carried him into a shed, where he had to lie until morning. It was in vain that he shouted for them to set him free; they only mocked his distress. They then left him in the charge of two men, while they ran back to the shore.

"Oh, Mary, what will you do?" cried the father as he lay in the shed. "There will be no one to light the lamps. Ships may be wrecked, and sailors may be lost."

Mary looked from a narrow window toward the shore, thinking it was time for her father to return. When the clock in the little room struck six, she knew that the water would soon be over the causeway.

An hour passed. The clock struck seven, and Mary still looked toward the beach; but her father was not to be seen. By the time it was eight, the tide was nearly over the causeway; only bits of rock here and there were above the water. "O father, hurry," cried Mary, as though her father could hear her. "Have you forgotten your little girl?" But the only answer was the noise of the waters as they rose higher and higher, and the roar of the wind as it gave notice of the coming storm. Surely there would be no lights that night.

Mary thought of what her mother used to say: "We should pray in every time of need." Quickly she knelt and prayed for help: "O Lord, show me what to do, and bless my father, and bring him home safe."

The water was now over the causeway. The sun had set more than an hour ago, and, as the moon rose, black storm clouds covered it from sight.

The wreckers walked along the shore, looking for some ship to strike on the coast. They hoped that the sailors, not seeing the lights, would think they were far at sea.

At this moment Mary decided she would try to light the lamps. But what could a little girl do? The lamps were far above her reach. She got matches and carried a small stepladder to the spot. After much labor she found that the lamps were still above her head. Then she got a small table and put the stepladder on it. But when she climbed to the top the lights were still beyond her reach. "If I had a stick," she said, "I would tie a match to it, and then I could set a light to the wicks." But no stick was to be found.

The storm was raging with almost hurricane force. The sailors at sea looked along the coast for the light. Where could it be? Had they sailed in the wrong direction? They were lost and knew not which way to steer.

All this time Mary's father was praying that God would take care of his child in the dark and lonely lighthouse.

Mary, frightened and lonely, was about to sit down again, when she thought of the old Bible in the room below. But how could she step on that Book? It was God's Holy Word that her mother had loved to read. "Yet, it is to save life," said she; "and if mother were here, would she not allow me to take it?"

In a minute the large book was brought and placed under the steps, and up she climbed once more. Yes, she was high enough! She touched one wick, then another, and another, until the rays of the lamps shone brightly far above the dark waters.

The father saw the light as he lay in the shed, and thanked God for sending help in the hour of danger. The sailors saw the light, and steered their ships away from the rocks. The wreckers, too, saw the light, and were angry to see that their evil plot had failed.

All that stormy night the lamps cast their rays over the foaming sea; and when the morning came, the father escaped from the shed. Soon he reached the lighthouse and found out how his little girl had stood faithful to duty in the dark hours of storm.

Lahemane Mushe

by Virginia Moyer as told to Karen Flowers

The three boys stopped dead in their tracks. They were three boys from Sierra Leone. But who on earth was he? Only moments before, the three of them had been chattering their way down the path that led from the school to the headmaster's house where they were hired to do household chores. Now they were holding their breath behind the palm trees that lined the long driveway. Venturing another look, they made sure they hadn't just been imagining things. No, he was really there. And with him there, they weren't going any closer-not for anything!

He was much older than they were. But it wasn't his age, nor anything unusual about his hair, or his long blue-and-white-stripped shirt, his sandals, or even his height that made him so alarming. But his face! Big black designs bulged from the flesh of his cheeks and forehead as he scowled in every direction, watching. And in his right hand he held the longest spear the boys had ever seen. At the slightest noise he would lift it, at the same time readjusting the fierce looking hatchet that hung from his left shoulder.

Actually, he had been hired while the boys were studying that day. Thieves had frequently broken into the school compound in recent weeks, and the headmaster had decided it was time for action. And so it was that Lahemane Mushe (La-ha-ma-nee Moo-she) became the school watchman.

It could never be said that the three boys got over their fear of Lahemane Mushe. He was enough to make even the headmaster shiver if he met him unexpectedly. There was so much mystery about him. Like the little black pouch he carried everywhere.

"What's in your bag?" the principal's wife questioned one day when curiosity got the best of her.

"It's for men only," was Lahemane's reply.

One day she watched him from the far corner of the garden as he ceremoniously opened the pouch and took out a tuft of what seemed to be monkey's hair. Carefully he placed it under a leaf at one corner of the compound. Muttering something to himself, he deposited a polished leopard's tooth in another corner, a smooth stone in another, and an old wheel from a watch on a piece of string in another.

Slowly, in bits and pieces, the mystery of who Lahemane Mushe was and where he came from unraveled. He was from a tribe in the North. A nomadic band of his people had been forced to migrate South in search of pasture land for their animals. Perhaps it was because he now lived in a strange place that Lahemane so fiercely preserved his tribal family heritage. Take that black pouch for instance. Since a watchman cannot watch everywhere at once, wise men of his village had taught him how to hide certain charms in every corner of the village to watch for him and protect the village from harm when he was not there. And the black marks on his face? They were not strange or scary to him. Every man in his tribe wore them with pride. And every boy looked forward to the day when he would become a man and have his face permanently marked with the identifying pattern of his father's family and the tribe.

Then there was his name. Lahemane Mushe. According to ancient custom, his father had spent the first seven days after he was born deciding on a name for his son. The name chosen was very important because they believed that a child will become like the person he is named after. On the eighth day, the village buzzed with expectation. After morning prayers, all watched as his father bent down and whispered the name his parents had chosen for him into the baby's ear. They believed that a child should be the first one to know who he is. Drums sounded again as father ceremoniously bent and whispered one more time, this time to the village schoolmaster who nodded and smiled. The drums intensified, and at last the announcement was made for all

to hear. The baby would be called "Lahemane Mushe" after his great-grandfather, a revered tribal chief. Lahemane Mushe was a distinguished and honorable name to be sure.

One thing completely baffled Lahemane when he first came to the christian school. From time to time he would hear one of the boys speak of changing his name when he became a Christian. Change his name? It was unthinkable! All of his proud heritage was linked to his name. This was strange indeed. Lahemane Mushe he would remain!

From time to time a traveling storyteller would come to the marketplace and tell stories about the history of the tribes. Lahemane would listen with interest, eager to learn more about his tribe and the family to which he belonged. And with pride he would repeat his name over and over to himself. Then he would pick up his spear, readjust his hatchet, and take up his watchman's post at the school.

Have you ever asked your mom or dad about your first name? Does your name have a special meaning? Are you named after someone important in your family? Ask and see what you can find out. Did you know that Jesus knows your name? That's because He made you and is interested in being your friend.

Last names tell what family you belong to. Did you know that Jesus Christ has called us by His name? We're called Christians because we're part of His family. What makes you glad to be part of Jesus family? I'm glad to be part of Jesus family too. I think it's the best family in the world!

Lucky

by Pastor Luis Badillo

A jogger noticed a large poster tacked to a tree in her neighborhood. The first word that caught her eye was printed in big black letters: "REWARD! \$100.00!"

The jogger was curious, and certainly interested in a reward, so she read on:

LOST DOG!
Black and tan dog of Poodle and German Shepherd descent.
Flea-bitten
Missing left hind-leg
No hair on rump
Going blind
Too old for tricks
Might bite if cornered
Answers to the name of "Lucky"

Lucky! The jogger had to chuckle to herself. How could anyone call a mongrel, flea-bitten, three-legged, mangy, nearly blind, old, and dangerous dog "Lucky"? And who would be crazy enough to pay a \$100 reward to get such a dog back?

Then the jogger stopped laughing and a big smile broke over her face. Stop to think of it, this may be one of the luckiest dogs in town. This lucky dog belonged to a family that loved him no matter what. It didn't matter where he came from or what he looked like. It didn't matter whether he could perform tricks or was getting old. All that mattered was that he belonged to the family, and he was lost.

Jesus came to our world because we were lost in sin. He left his home in heaven and offered His life as a reward to get us back and reunite us with God's family. It doesn't matter where we come from or what we look like. It doesn't matter whether we are smart and clever, young or old. All that matters is that He created us and He wants us part of His family forever. And that makes us very "lucky" too. That's the reason we've come to church to sing and praise and pray to our God.

Missing Grandpa

By Karen Flowers

Rebecca loved her grandpa! How many of you have to travel quite a ways to see your grandma and grandpa? And some of you can only go to visit them for a vacation or for Christmas? Well, Rebecca was lucky because her grandma and grandpa lived in the same town she did. In fact, the school bus dropped her off at their house after school every day to wait until her Mom got off work and picked her up.

The best thing about Grandpa was he had time. Grandma was often busy preparing dinner, doing church work, tidying up the house. But Grandpa would always put down whatever he was doing when she arrived, pour her a big glass of lemonade, and just look her in the eye and listen to whatever she had to tell him about her day. Then some days they worked on the big puzzle they were putting together, some days they washed the car, some days they went to the library and then curled up to read, some days they ran errands, whatever, Grandpa was always there.

One morning Mother told Rebecca that she would not be going to Grandpa and Grandma's after school. Grandpa wasn't feeling well, she said. He was going to see the doctor. Rebecca was sorry Grandpa was sick, but she wasn't too worried. She got sick sometimes, but with a day or two in bed or perhaps a quick trip to the doctor, she was all right. She never even thought about how she would feel if Grandpa didn't get better. Well, Grandpa did get better, for a while, but soon there were many days when Rebecca couldn't go to Grandma and Grandpa's after school, because Grandpa just needed to rest. So she had to go to a friend's house instead.

One afternoon, just before school let out for the day, the teacher called Rebecca to the door of the classroom. Standing just outside, she saw her pastor waiting. Teacher said that Mother had called and told her that the pastor was going to pick Rebecca up after school and take her home. Rebecca thought this was strange, but since her mother had called the teacher, she thought everything was okay. Rebecca liked the pastor, and they talked all the way home. But when they arrived, Rebecca saw several cars parked in the driveway. There was Grandma's car, and Aunt Suzie's car, and Daddy's car. What were all these people doing over in the middle of the afternoon, Rebecca wondered. When she went into the house, she met Mother in the hall. Her eyes were red like she had been crying. She put her arm around Rebecca and pulled her close. "You know that Grandpa has been very sick," she said. "Well, today his heart just couldn't pump any more blood so it stopped. Grandpa died this afternoon. He will sleep now until Jesus comes to wake him up. Then we will all go to heaven together."

Then Rebecca began to cry too. She knew Grandpa loved Jesus, and she knew that she loved Jesus, so she was sure they would be together in heaven. But she still felt sad about not having Grandpa with her right now. Who would take her to the library? And how would they finish the puzzle? And who would have time for her every day after school? Mother said it was all right to cry. It was all right to miss Grandpa now. Someone in everybody's family dies sooner or later, because death is a very sad part of living in a sinful world. But Rebecca was sure glad for Jesus.

Now she was beginning to understand more about why He came to die on the cross. The pastor said at Grandpa's funeral that Jesus died so that everyone who dies but who loves Him will only sleep for a short time until Jesus wakes them up.

Some of you may know how Rebecca was feeling. Maybe someone close to you has died. Aren't you glad for Jesus, too? Jesus is always with us when we feel sad. When we cry, the Bible says Jesus cries too. That's because He loves us so much. He came here to be with us because He wanted to share in our troubles. And now He is making preparation to come again so that everything that makes us sad will be wiped away, and everything will be made new. I'm looking forward to that day, aren't you?

Mother's Hands

by Arthur S. Maxwell, adapted by Karen Flowers

A young mother laid her baby girl to sleep in her cradle. I'll just go to the neighbors for a minute to visit, she thought to herself. I haven't had time to talk to her for such a long time. But while she and the neighbor were chatting, the city fire alarm sent a chill through them both.

"Don't worry," said the neighbor. "Most likely it's only a grass fire. There are lots of them at this time of year. I'm sure the fire isn't anywhere near here."

"But listen," said the mother. "I think I hear the fire engine coming this way. Look! People are running down the street-running toward my house!"

Without another word she dashed into the street and ran with the gathering crowd. Then she saw it. Her own house was on fire! Smoke and flames were already pouring through the roof.

"My baby!" she cried frantically. "My baby!"

The crowd was thick around the house, but she pushed and shoved until she reached the door. A fireman stopped her and said, "You can't go in there! You will be burned!"

But the mother cried, "Let me go! Let me go!" as she broke free and dashed into the flaming house.

She knew just where to go. Running through the smoke and flames, she seized her precious baby, then turned to make her way out. But by now the smoke made it very hard to see and breathe. Nearly overcome, she swayed and fell, and would not have made it out of the house safely if a fireman had not picked her up and carried her out.

What a cheer went up as they appeared! Baby Marjorie was not hurt at all! But the poor mother's hands were terribly burned. Kind friends took care of the baby while the ambulance took her to the hospital. The doctors did their best, but her hands were terribly scared.

Years later, when Marjorie had grown, she suddenly noticed something she had not noticed before. Her mother's hands were so ugly! "Why are your hands so ugly?" she asked her mother when they were alone.

Tears filled her mother's eyes as she remembered how frightened she was the day the house burned with Marjorie asleep and unaware of the danger.

"Have I said something wrong?" Marjorie asked when she saw the tears.

"No, my dear," replied her mother. "But there's a story I need to tell you."

Then she told Marjorie the story of the fire. She told how the people tried to hold her back, how the fireman tried to stop her, how she battled the flames to rescue her, how she fell, and how they were rescued. Then she held out her scared hands for Marjorie to see.

"They are ugly, in a way, aren't they," Mother said softly. "For me, the only thing that mattered was to save your life."

Now it was Marjorie's turn to shed a few tears. "Oh, Mother," she cried, "You must love me so much! These are the most beautiful hands in all the world!"

Do you know there are hands that were hurt for you? The hands of Jesus.

Soldiers drove great nails through His hands and hung Him on a cross to die so you could go to heaven. Even when He comes again, the marks made by those nails will still be there. If you ask Him, He will show them to you. When you see them, you will know for sure how much Jesus loves you!

The Mysterious Life of a Pond

By Karen Flowers

Note: You may wish to adapt this nature lesson to include plants and animals well known to the children in your locale to teach the same lesson. Pictures will heighten interest and hold attention.

Have you ever looked into a pond? What did you see?

The water in some ponds is so clear you can see to the bottom. You can see plants growing, maybe a fish, and the squishy pond bottom under your toes. Some ponds are so covered with lily pads and other plants you can barely see the water. Some ponds have a thick green scum on the top with lots of interesting insects and maybe a black and yellow water snake making his way along.

When Kelly was a little girl, there was a "green scum" pond near where she lived. The water wasn't deep, but it was mysterious. It was a favorite place for all the children in the neighborhood. There were some logs that had fallen out over the pond. The children would carefully slide out on the logs on their bellies and poke long sticks down into the pond to see what they could feel. They would stir the green scum, trying to see what was underneath. Sometimes they would make up stories about what would happen to children who fell off their logs and disappeared under the mysterious green scum.

A pond is a really interesting place. All kinds of wonderful creatures live there. Some are big like the great blue heron you may have seen standing as still as a statue at the water's edge until he sees the fish he wants for dinner. Some are little one-celled creatures, so small you can't see them without a microscope. Yet they come in all kinds of colors and shapes. And some, like an amoeba, can even change its shape to move itself along.

Kelly especially liked to watch the water striders. These bugs, with their long, slender legs, can stand right on the water. They have large flat feet which are lined with a velvety coating of waxy hairs that repel water. They can walk, run, skate or skim on top of the water in search of something to eat. Even more amazing, they can jump six inches into the air. In human terms, this would be like your being able to jump from the ground to the roof of a five story apartment building!

While the water striders skate on top of the water, the crayfish is a pond-bottom dweller. He looks like a miniature version of a lobster. He eats a wide variety of food, including partly-rotted plants that would otherwise fill up the pond. Catfish also clean up little bits of plant and animal matter that would build up and make the pond smelly and unpleasant.

For the salamander, however, the smell of the pond is very important. A salamander is a lizard-like creature that hatches from eggs in a pond, but lives its adult life in the woods. The unique smell of the pond in which it was hatched as a baby is the way the salamander finds its way back to the pond to breed. When it's time, the male and female return to the pond of their birth and do a nose-rubbing mating dance. Then the female releases her eggs by the two-hundreds into the pond just as her mother did, and her mother before her.

The fire-red water mite lives among the pond plants. You could line 10 bright red water mites up on your ruler side by side and all ten would measure about one inch. They can get themselves around by using the hairs on their legs as paddles. But most often they hitch a ride on insects, worms, and other creatures that pass by. And they not only don't provide any thanks for the ride, they slowly suck out the other creatures life juices through a long, sharp beak while they are traveling along!

Ducks love ponds. Have you ever noticed that a male duck is usually much more brightly colored than the female? One reason Jesus made them this way is that the female usually cares for the young, and her dull colors don't attract the attention of predators who might make a meal of her little chicks.

Plant life in a pond is very important to all the creatures that live there. The tall slender-stalked cattails which fringe the edge provide a protected home and a place to hide from harm. Did you know that cattail leaves are so strong they can bend and twist without breaking, even in the fiercest wind? The sweet smell of the water lily lures all kinds of creatures to live safely under its big umbrella leaves and in its folds.

Tiny drifting plants and animals known as plankton are so small that a single drop of water contains thousands of them. But they are the source of food for many other creatures like the waterflea. The waterflea which swims by paddling one of its two pairs of antennae. The tiny waterflea is clear as glass. You can see all of its internal organs, including a small yellow heart which pumps colorless blood around its body.

Ponds are so interesting that many scientists have spent their entire lives learning about just one of the creatures that live there. Scientists are now learning that it can be even more interesting to study how all the animals and plants living in a pond affect one another. They are interested in things like who eats what, and who protects what, and who cleans up after whom. That's because in order for a pond to stay alive and well, all the plants and animals have a part to play. The salamander needs the algae to smell. The waterflea needs the plankton to eat. The ducklings and their mother need the cattails to nest and hide in. The fire-red water mite survives by stealing a ride and nourishment from another insect or worm. And everybody needs the crayfish and catfish to clean up after them. Every plant and animal has its effect on everything else. And each is dependent on the pond as a whole to survive.

People are like that too. Your family at home, your friends, and our family here at church. Everything we do and say affects the others around us. And we all need each other to stay alive and well. When you wake up in the morning and decide to be grumpy today, it's harder for the people around you to be cheerful. When you smile and offer to help your friend with a hard math problem, people around you might find themselves smiling and helping too. The Bible says, "Encourage one another and build each other up." See what you can think of to make your family and our church a happy place this week.

A New Front Tooth

By Karen Flowers

Richard looked at himself in the mirror with disgust. One thing was clear. He just couldn't smile any more. If he kept his lips together, maybe no one would ever find out. But I'm ahead of my story. . . .

Richard was eleven years old. He was a happy boy with a big smile. That was until today. Only a few minutes ago he had been smiling and horsing around with his brothers at home while they were getting ready for school. When Mom called that the bus had arrived, Dick grabbed his clarinet and his backpack off the foot of his bed and ran for the stairs. Just as he rounded the curve at the landing half way down, he slipped, and the next thing you knew he found himself in a heap with his stuff at the bottom of the stairs. At first he thought nothing too bad had happened. He had consciously protected his clarinet, and what could happen to a bag of books. He hurt in a few places, but nothing was broken or anything.

Just then his brother Brendon came back in looking for him, hollering that he'd better hurry up or he'd be left behind. When Richard flashed a sheepish smile, a look of horror came over Brendon's face. Your tooth! What happened to your tooth!

Forgetting all about the waiting bus, Richard ran for the bathroom. A quick smile reflected in the mirror explained his brother's reaction. A big corner of his front tooth was gone and he looked like a jack'o'lantern. Would he have to look like this for the rest of his life, Richard wondered.

Everybody has things that happen to them in their lives that they didn't expect. Sometimes they are happy things, sometimes they are frightening things, sometimes they are things that make you worry a lot. Jesus is glad when happy things happen to us. He also understands when we are frightened or worried. When He was here, He talked to His disciples about things that make people frightened or worried. He said we don't need to worry, because He knows all our needs and He will take care of us. He wants us to leave the worrying to Him. To help us know how much He cares for us, He told His followers that He even knew how many hairs they had in their heads and every time even a sparrow falls. There are no experiences in our lives that Jesus doesn't know about and that He won't help us get through.

When Mom saw what had happened to Richard, she was reassuring and made an appointment to see the dentist as soon as his office opened. For Richard, the wait seemed like forever, but eventually Dr. Scribner was looking down at him with his kind eyes. Dr. Scribner told Richard there was lots of good news and a little bad news. The good news was that probably there was enough left of Richard's tooth that the tooth would not die inside. The good news was that Dr. Scribner could make a cap to go over Richard's tooth that would protect his broken one and look just like a real tooth. The good news was that fixing it wasn't going to hurt a bit. The bad news was that this cap would have to be changed several more times until it could be permanently replaced when he was older. Richard thought he could live with that.

Remember, you may not know what will happen to you today, tomorrow, next week, or next month. But you can always know that Jesus is with you and will help you no matter what. Isn't that good news!

Playing Dress Up

By Karen Flowers

In the back of Mother's closet was a big box. You never could tell what you would find in there. Some days it was full to overflowing, other days there wasn't so much. But Kathy and her sister Julie watched and waited with anticipation for the day Mom cleaned out her clothes closet, like when the season changed and she put away her winter clothes and got out her summer ones. Those were the best days of all. The box was always full, full, full!

You see, Kathy and Julie loved to play dress up! And the box was the place where Mother put the clothes she was going to give to the Good Will or take to the church Community Service Center. And before she got them washed and ironed up to give away, she would let the girls get in there and play.

Some days they played like they were high society ladies. They wore the highest heels they could find and the biggest hats. They pretended they were going to concerts and fancy restaurants, and out for a drive in a big limousine. Some days they were career women, dressing and re-dressing as teachers, surgeons, pastors, executives, lawyers, whatever. Some days they even got their brother Jason and his friend David to play so they could pretend they were married and had a family. [The storyteller may want to bring a large box of hats, clothes, and other accouterments and dress several children quickly-for example with a Bible for a pastor, a hat and a briefcase for an executive, a cellular phone and a legal pad for a lawyer, etc.-to heighten interest.]

It's fun to think about what you will be when you grow up. It's fun to pretend you are grown up now and to think of all the things grownups do. Sometimes you may even get to wishing you could grow up faster because it seems like grownups can do whatever they want and don't have anyone telling them what to do all the time.

But there's an interesting text over in the book of Ecclesiastes that I would like to have _____ read for us. [Let one of the children read Ecclesiastes 11:9a from a modern version. "Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth."]

This passage was written by the wise man Solomon. First of all, he wants you to know that while it's lots of fun to think ahead to what you will be and do in the future, there are lots of good things about being a child. And your job right now is to enjoy all those good things. It's your job right now to be part of your family, to play and talk and work together with your family. It's your job right now to go to school and learn all you can about the world and the people in it and what makes them tick. It's your job right now to make friends and to learn to get along with other people. It's your job right now to learn about God and develop your talents for His service. God wants you to feel good about being a boy or a girl. He wants you to be happy as a part of your family and as a member of His family. He wants you to enjoy this time in your life to the full. And He wants you to know, that whatever you decide to be when you grow up, He will have a special work for you to do for Him in sharing the good news about Jesus with whomever you meet.

Reggie's Angry Face

*by Gary Oliver, adapted by Ron Flowers**

Reggie liked to make funny faces and do silly things just to get his friends laughing and smiling. Reggie had one face though, that sometimes would scare his friends away. When Reggie got really angry, his face wasn't funny anymore.

One hot summer day, Reggie went looking for his friends. He hoped that no matter what happened, he would be able to keep his angry face hidden away. He wanted his friends to like him, not be scared off by his anger.

As he came to the end of the block, he saw Carla, Elwood and Bruce just standing around. "Hi, what are you doing?" he said. Carla answered, "We can't decide what to do."

"Let's go see if we can get some friends and play ball," said Reggie.

"Play ball? You've got to be kidding," Carla remarked. "I'm no good at playing ball."

Reggie was frustrated, but he didn't want his friends to know. So he stuffed his anger inside. But he could still feel it. And when he did this, his eyes began to get squinty.

"What about hide and seek," said Reggie.

"I hate that game," said Bruce, who was quite fat and couldn't run very fast.

"I always lose."

This time Reggie stomped his foot in anger, but he didn't tell Bruce what he was feeling. And now not only were his eyes still squinty, but he could feel his ears getting bright red and hot.

Finally, with a pouty kind of voice, Reggie said, "How about all of us racing to the park and we can throw rocks in the creek." He was a fast runner.

Elwood, who was also a fast runner said, "Let's go." So off they ran.

Elwood was faster than Reggie that day. And when Elwood beat him, he got very, very angry. His eyes were still squinty and his ears bright red and hot. In a loud voice he snapped, "You guys are no fun and I don't want to play with you anymore."

Bruce, who just got to the park in time to hear Reggie say this, said, "Reggie, you're our friend. And usually you're funny and we like to play with you. But when you stuff and stomp and snap, you change. Then we don't like to be with you."

With that, Bruce and Elwood and Carla walked away.

"Well, I never liked them anyway," Reggie mumbled as he stomped around the park and scuffed stones with his shoes. "I'll go to my secret place and play by myself."

His secret place was in a little grassy spot behind a lilac bush next to the fence at the far corner of the lot behind his family's house. When he felt like nobody liked him, when he didn't understand his feelings, when he wanted to feel safe, Reggie would go to this secret place.

"Nobody will find me here," he muttered. So he sat and sat and muttered and muttered. There was no one to make him frustrated, or hurt, or sad. But there was nobody to talk to either. He thought he would feel better, but he didn't. He felt lonely.

Suddenly, he heard a noise. Somebody was nearby, just on the other side of the fence. He looked up to see Mr. Jones peering over the fence at him. Mr. Jones was retired, and he had a flower garden just on the other side. Reggie hoped Mr. Jones hadn't heard him muttering.

"Is that you, Reggie? What are you doing here alone?" Mr. Jones asked.

"Just having fun by myself," Reggie muttered and looked down at the ground.

"If you're having so much fun, why do you look and sound so sad?"

"I'm angry and I want go to be alone," Reggie replied.

Mr. Jones looked deep into Reggie's eyes and said, "Sometimes when we get hurt or feel frustrated, we get angry. And sometimes if we sit on our anger, it can become red hot. And when we let our anger get red hot, we can do or say things that hurt people."

"What do you do when you feel red-hot anger?" asked Reggie.

"My feelings don't get red hot very often."

Reggie was surprised to hear Mr. Jones say that. He thought everyone felt things the same way he did. "Why don't your feelings get red hot very often?" he asked.

"Because," said Mr. Jones, "when I start to get angry, I've learned to talk about what I'm feeling."

Reggie replied, "When I get angry, I stuff and stomp and snap."

Mr. Jones reached down to pick off a dead blossom from one of his flowers, "Does it help you to stuff and stomp and snap?"

"It doesn't," Reggie admitted.

"And how do you feel when your friends don't like you?"

"I feel hurt and sad. And then I feel mad."

"So, sometimes when you feel mad, it's because you first felt hurt and sad?" asked Mr. Jones.

"I guess so," said Reggie. "I had never thought of that."

"Well," said Mr. Jones, "if stuffing and stomping and snapping don't help, what else could you do that might work better?"

Reggie didn't know how to answer.

Mr. Jones turned to go. Next time you want to stuff and stomp and snap, tell your friends what you feel and see if that helps.

Next day, Reggie went by himself to the park to throw stones in the creek. He saw his friends having a wonderful time at the other side of the park playing hide and seek. He went over to them and hoped they would invite him to play. "Hi," he said. They waved back, but continued with their game. They did not invite him to play. Reggie felt really hurt inside. He felt sad.

When Elwood saw that he was sad and not mad, he called, "Reggie, would you like to play with us?"

"Sure," said Reggie. But in his eagerness to get to his friends, he slipped in the mud at the edge of the creek and fell in. He had mud all over. He heard his friends start to snicker. When he stumbled toward them, they laughed even louder.

Reggie was embarrassed that he had fallen in the mud. He didn't like his friends laughing at him. He felt his eyes grow squinty and his ears get red and hot. He snapped. But this time he said something different. "It doesn't feel good to be laughed at!"

"We're not making fun of you. We thought you were being silly again."

Reggie looked down at himself. He did look pretty funny. He began to laugh at himself. It felt good to laugh instead of stuffing or stomping or snapping. Then they all went back to their game of hide and seek.

Second Chances

By Karen Flowers

Note to storyteller: This telling of the Bible story "Jonah and the Whale" is illustrated by using balloons filled with helium gas, tied with strings or ribbons approximately 1½ meters long. Older children will enjoy controlling the balloons while the story is being told to the younger children.

Create a barrier (i.e. a large table or two turned on their sides) behind which the balloon "puppeteers" can hide. Practice ahead of time is essential so each one knows when to let his or her balloon(s) rise above the table as marked in the script. Remind the puppeteers to hold the string tightly so the balloon will not escape to the ceiling before the climax of the story. One child can control several "waves" or "people of Nineveh" balloons. This story is especially appropriate for a family camp or retreat setting. If used indoors, take into account how you will retrieve the balloons if the ceiling is very high!

If a wide variety of colors of balloons is available, the following color choices are suggested:

God: gold balloon

Jonah: red balloon

Ship captain: silver balloon

Sailors: 2-3 dark blue balloons

Waves: 4-6 balloons, a mixture of light blue and white

People of Nineveh: 4-6 balloons, a mixture of pink and brown

Jesus: purple balloon

Whale: gray or black balloon

Once there was a man named Jonah. Jonah was God's prophet which means God gave him special jobs to do for Him.

(All balloons and puppeteers hidden behind barrier, out of sight.)

One day God found Jonah and said to him: "Jonah, I want you to take a message for me to the people living in the big city of Nineveh. I want you to tell them that I want them to change their wicked ways because I love them very much."

(Jonah balloon goes up on string.)

(God balloon goes up on string.)

(People of Nineveh balloons go up on strings.)

But Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh. First of all, he didn't want to walk all that way across the hot desert sand.

(God and People of Nineveh balloons down.)

But mostly he didn't want to go because the things the people of Nineveh did were bad, bad, bad, and Jonah thought God should just send a plague or something to destroy them from the face of the earth.

(Jonah balloon bounces up and down with children puppeteers calling out "ouch, ouch, ouch, ouch.")

(People of Nineveh balloons up)

So Jonah thought and thought about how he could get out of doing this job for God.

(People of Nineveh balloons down.)

Then he had a bright idea. He would take a trip on a ship in the opposite direction. By the time God found him, maybe He would decide to send someone else. So Jonah went down to the dock and found just the ship.

(Jonah balloon slowly raised and lowered as though in "thought," ending in lowered position.)

(Jonah balloon pops up to full length of

"Ahoy, there, Sir!" he called out to the captain.
"Got any room for another passenger?"

string as narrator reads "bright idea.")

"Yes, we can take you along," said the captain.
"You look okay to me." But what he didn't know
was that Jonah was running away from the God
of heaven.

(Captain balloon goes up.)

Jonah was very very tired from all his running,
and he wanted to make sure God didn't find him,
so he went down into the bottom of the ship
where it was dark. It was a good place to hide
and to have a good sleep.

(God balloon goes up.)

(Jonah, Captain and God balloons go down.)

While Jonah slept, a violent storm blew up that
threatened to destroy the ship.

*(Wave balloons up, jouncing up and down as
though tossed in a storm.)*

"All hands on deck!" the captain called out to his
crew. "Secure the foremast! Keep the ship
before the wind! Throw the cargo overboard!
Pray to your gods! . . . Hey, where's that
stranger we took onboard? I'm going to wake
him up myself. He'd better pray while he bails or
we perish! I've never seen a storm like this!"

*(Captain balloon up, followed immediately by
sailor balloons up.)*

*(Sailor balloons raise and lower in unison as
though agitated.)*

"Let's find out who caused this storm!" the
sailors cried out. "Whoever's name we draw out
of the hat, he's the man!"

(Jonah balloon up.)

Into the hat went one of the sailor's hands. Out
came the name: JONAH!

(Captain, sailor and Jonah balloons down.)

"Who are you, anyway? And what have we done
that made you bring such bad luck upon us?" the
sailors asked.

(God balloon up.)

"I am Jonah and I worship the God of heaven
who made the sea and the land," Jonah replied.

(Whale balloon up.)

The sailors' faces were filled with fear. "Then
what have YOU done?" the sailors wanted to
know.

*(Wave balloons still. God balloon slowly
lowered.)*

(Jonah balloon up)

"Just throw me into the sea." Jonah replied. "I'm
the reason for the storm."

(Wave and whale balloons down.)

(God balloon up.)

So they threw Jonah overboard into the storm.
And Jonah would have drowned, except for our
God who gives people who make mistakes a
second chance. Can you believe it, he sent a
whale to rescue his prophet from the storm! And
immediately the wind and the rain and the
thunder and lightning stopped and the sea was

(People of Nineveh balloons up)

calm!

Safe and sound inside the whale, Jonah thanked God for saving him and promised to do whatever God asked him to do. So God caused the whale to deposit Jonah on dry land so he could be about his business.

(Jonah, God, and People of Nineveh balloons down.)

(Jesus balloon up.)

And God spoke again to Jonah. "I still want you to go to Nineveh," He said. Jonah thought to himself, "Okay. I'll go and preach to those Ninevites, but they are so bad they won't pay any attention and then God will punish them like they deserve.

(At narration's end, all balloons released to the ceiling while puppeteers cheer.)

So Jonah preached the good news to the Ninevites that God wanted to give them another chance to love Him and live good lives. Much to his surprise, the Ninevites listened. God was so happy, He sent Jonah right back to tell them how much He had always loved them. He wanted them to know how glad He was they had stopped behaving badly, because their wicked ways could lead to nothing good!

God sent Jesus to bring the same good news to us. No matter what mistakes you have made, this good news is for you. God loves you very much. He wants you to choose the good life He has planned for you. But when you make mistakes, you can always say you're sorry and God will help you begin again. Yay! A big thanks! A big shout of praise to our "second chance God!

School Daze

By Jeanette Pelton

Anna looked in the mirror to brush her bangs. She sighed. Today was her first day of school. She would go with her big sister Marti. Mother had bought them new crayons and paper and pencils and paste and a school bag to carry them in. She had a new lunchbox too, a pretty red and blue one that held a thermos of juice and a sandwich and an apple and cookies.

Anna felt confused. Part of her wanted so much to grow up and go to school. The other part was scared. Scared to leave mother and go to that big building at the end of the road. She knew her big sister would go with her, and that the school wasn't too far from home, but somehow that didn't really help much.

"Come on, Anna, we'll be late," said Marti as she passed her door. "You don't want to be late on the first day of school do you?"

Actually, she wished she could just stay here and not go at all. But mother called again, "Anna, time for breakfast! You don't want to be late!"

Anna dragged herself downstairs. Her sister had told her all about school-the hours of writing and sitting and waiting for everyone else. Mother had said she would like it, but the way her sister had described it didn't really sound too promising. She dawdled over breakfast until time for worship. After Mother had prayer, she had hugged Anna tight. Anna thought she saw a tear in her mother's eyes. It made her worry even more. If school was going to be good, why did Mother look so sad?

Anna walked to school with Marti. Marti's friend joined them as they went down the street. Anna walked more and more slowly as they got closer to the building. She was afraid, but she was not quite sure why. Mother had taken her to the school last week to meet her teacher and show her around the building. The room had been pretty, with bright bulletin boards. She like the flowers on the windowsill. There had even been a guinea pig in a cage that the children could pet. Her teacher had seemed nice enough, in a grownup sort of way. Other children her age where there with their parents. She hadn't spoken to any of them. She had suddenly felt shy.

Now here she was, standing in the doorway of her first grade class. Her teacher smiled and showed her to her desk and helped her put her things in it. Then she showed her where to hang her coat and put her lunch on the shelf. The teacher had to go and help someone else, so Anna sat at her desk, waiting. She looked around as the desks started to fill up with children. There were 18 students in her class. How would she ever remember all their names?

After everyone was seated, the teacher prayed and then told part of the story of Moses for worship. Then she began passing out arithmetic books. Anna opened hers to the middle and gulped. It looked hard. Teacher helped them put their names on the covers and open to page one. She showed them how to make numerals and they spent time practicing. It seemed like no time until teacher told them to put their books away for recess. At recess, they played running games. It was fun. Anna enjoyed running. When it was time for school again, they got more books and papers. Soon it was time for lunch. In the lunchroom, Anna found a seat between two girls.

"My name is Mary," the girl on her left said.

"I'm Alicia. I sit behind you in class. Do you like school?"

"I don't know yet. I'm Anna."

"I wonder who that man is?" asked Anna.

"That's the principal. If you get into any trouble, you go to his office," said Alicia. "My big brother goes there lots."

"What does the principal do?"

"I think he's in charge of the whole school," Mary answered.

"I liked recess," Anna offered.

"You can run fast," Mary said. "I'm not a very good runner, but I like to jump rope."

"Do we do that here?"

"I don't know. I hope so. I brought my rope to play with after lunch."

"Teacher said when we're finished eating to put our lunch boxes back on the shelf and go outside and play till she calls us," said Alicia.

"Do you want to jump rope with us?" Anna asked as they went out to play.

Alicia was really good at jumping and showed Anna several new games with a rope. She found out that Alicia lived some distance away and her mother brought her to school by car. Mary and Anna lived quite near each other. The girls had so much fun they felt a little sorry when it was time to go in. But they got to color some pictures to take home to their mothers. After a story and a little rest on their mats, it was time to learn the sounds of letters. Suddenly a bell rang.

"It's time to get ready to go home," announced her teacher. "Please get your lunch boxes and papers and line up by the door in single file."

Anna was surprised. The day had gone so quickly she hadn't noticed. Out front she met her sister Marti again.

On their way home, Marti asked, "So how do you like school?"

Anna thought for a moment about the jump roping and the games, the coloring and her two new friends. She smiled. "I think I'm going to like school. It's not bad at all. I'll race you home!"

The Tummy-ache

by Jeannette Pelton

"Mommy!," shouted Maria. "Mommy!" It was late at night as Maria called from her bed. "My tummy hurts."

Mother came into her bedroom and turned on the light. "Where do you hurt?" asked Mommy. She felt her head. "Oh dear, you have a fever, too." Mother felt Maria's tummy. When she pushed on it, she howled out loud. "I'm going to get dressed and take you into the clinic."

Maria cried on the way to the doctor. Her head seemed to swim, and whenever Mommy hit a bump she thought she would throw up. Finally, they reached the doctor's clinic. Then she did throw up.

The nurse heard Mommy's description and took Maria back to the examining room. The doctor took some blood out of her arm. Maria tried hard not to cry, but it was very scary. Mommy held her hand. The doctor looked very serious.

"I'm afraid Maria has got appendicitis. She'll have to have her appendix taken out right away. It might break open and then she could get much worse. She might even die. I've called the hospital, and they will be waiting for you."

Mommy carried Maria out to the car for the two-block trip to the hospital. They went into the emergency room. A man dressed in green met them and had mother put Maria on a bed with wheels. Maria tightened her hold around Mommy's neck. "I'm afraid, Mommy. Don't go away."

Mommy smiled at her. "You don't need to be afraid. Remember what Jesus said? 'I will give my angels charge over you to keep you safe.' Your angel is right here. Part of you is sick and the doctors need to fix it. You won't feel anything because they will give you medicine so you will sleep. When you wake up, it will be all over and we can soon go home. Don't be afraid. Let's have a prayer before you go with the doctor." Maria let go and folded her hands and closed her eyes. "Dear Jesus, please help the doctors make Maria well again. Don't let her be too scared and don't let it hurt too much. Help her to be very brave. Thank you, Jesus. Amen." Mommy kissed Maria and the man wheeled the bed away.

The next morning when Maria woke up, Mommy was waiting by the bed with her teddy bear and a new puzzle.

"How do you feel?" asked Mommy.

Maria thought for a minute. "I'm thirsty. My tummy doesn't hurt as bad."

"Doctor says we can take you home later this afternoon, here's a drink of water."

Maria looked down at the bandage on her stomach. It looked so big it frightened her.

"Do I have a very big hole in my stomach?" she whispered.

"No, you don't. The doctor took out the spoiled appendix and sewed you back up. We'll go to Dr. Hatton to have the stitches removed end of next week."

Later that day, Maria and Mother went home. Mother put Maria to bed and told her to take a little nap while she made supper. She closed her eyes but couldn't quite seem to go to sleep. She wondered what stitches looked like. She wondered if she lifted the edge of the bandage, could she see them? Just as she was about to try mother came back in. "I thought you might

like some apple juice," she smiled. "It is going to be hard to stay in bed for a few days, so I thought you might like to watch a nature video. I've asked your sister to bring a couple of them home from school." Maria drank her juice. Mother studied her a minute. "What's the matter? Do you hurt? Would it feel good if I rubbed your back?"

"It only hurts a little. But when I sit up I get dizzy."

"That will go away soon. It's always like that after an operation."

"Mommy, why did my appendix spoil?"

"What do you mean?"

"I eat good food, I sleep and drink water, and everything, so why did my appendix spoil?"

Mother thought for a minute. "You didn't do anything wrong, if that's what's bothering you. Good health habits will help you stay well and help you keep from getting sick, but sometimes things happen just because of sin. There isn't anything you can do about it, except take care of yourself and give your life to Jesus. He gives strength to resist disease and be happy."

"How long will it be before I am all better?"

"By Sabbath, you should be able to be up and out of bed. That's two days. You won't be well enough to go to church this week, but you will be next week. I'll call your teacher and tell her. Anything she wants to send home for you, your sister can bring. In three weeks, you won't even know you had been sick, except that you'll have a little scar where the bad appendix was taken out."

"Will it always be there?"

"Yes, it will fade a little as time passes, but it will still be there."

Maria thought for minute. "Why didn't Jesus stop my tummy from hurting?"

"But He did," answered Mommy. "Jesus helped the doctor know how to make you better. And He made your body so it can fix itself. There are little white blood cells working hard to kill any germs that might have gotten into the wound. There are other cells whose job it is to mend the skin and muscles, and more red blood cells are being made in your bones. Jesus made your whole body in such a wonderful way that it can repair itself. Sometimes it needs help, like when the doctor helped you by taking away the spoiled appendix, but most of the time your body works really well. That's why it's important to take good care of it by eating good food, and getting exercise, and resting, and drinking lots of water."

"If my body is doing all that work, it's probably getting sleepy," said Maria. "I think I can take my nap now."

"Good. When your sister comes back, you two can watch the video while I finish making supper." Mother smiled and pulled the drapes shut. "If you need anything, just call me. I'll leave your door open."

"OK, Mommy."

"Have a good little sleep, Maria."

The Vanishing Black Smudge

Adapted by Karen Holford

Many years ago a boy named Davy lived on a farm. It was a big farm, and there was lots to do to care for the animals and grow food for his family. Davy had a big sister Angie, a big brother Joe, and a sister Mary who was just a bit older than he was.

One day Davy's parents announced that they had to go away for a few days, but they were sure the children were old enough to manage the farm work by themselves while they were gone. They put Angie in charge because she was getting quite grown-up. Davy didn't think she was really grown up. He just thought she was bossy, and he really didn't like to be bossed around by his own sister.

But after Mom and Dad drove off, Angie wasn't so bossy after all. Wow! They were free to do anything they wanted! Go to bed when they wanted, get up when they wanted. Eat anything they liked, whenever they liked. Play when they liked, work when they liked. This was great!

The children had a great week. They made ice-cream every day, and rich chocolate fudge. They made popcorn and pancakes dripping with maple syrup. Of course they did their usual chores—milking the cows, feeding the animals, collecting eggs, and chopping wood. But mostly they just had lots of fun.

Then one morning Angie suddenly realized that Mom and Dad would be coming home the very next day. The children looked around at the house. There were dirty dishes on the table. There were toys on the floor. The beds were unmade. There were towels and dirty clothes on the floor. There were blocks and a wagon in the yard outside, and they still hadn't cleaned up the garden tools in the barn for Dad.

Angie looked worried. She wanted everything to look perfect for Mom and Dad when they got home. They had left her in charge and she wanted them to be proud of her.

Suddenly Angie got bossy again. She ordered Joe to clean up the garden tools in the barn. She sent Mary to clean up the dishes and scrub the kitchen floor. Davy was to hurry up and dust the house from top to bottom, except for the parlor. Everyone knew the things Mom had in the parlor were too fragile for Davy to dust! When he was done with that, he could help Angie change the beds and do the laundry. Davy hated dusting. He hated changing beds and doing the laundry. He wanted to be outside helping Joe do grown up jobs. But Angie was in charge, so he followed her instructions feeling grumpy and angry inside.

Angie was so busy she had no time to cook lunch, so they all ate cold leftovers. Davy was hot and tired. He wanted to make ice-cream and have fun again, but Angie wasn't through bossing.

"You have to help again this afternoon, Davy," she said. "First I want you to polish all the shoes and boots with this black polish and brush. Then you can shake all the rugs. Mary has to go pick the beans in the garden, and Joe has to straighten the yard." Davy was feeling more and more angry inside. The worst job in the world was polishing shoes and boots. It was so messy, and so easy to get big black smudges all over you and everything else.

While Davy was polishing shoes, Angie decided to dust and sweep the parlor so the whole house would be just perfect. The parlor was a beautiful room full of their mother's best things. They weren't allowed to play in there. They only went in there when there were visitors. While Angie was in the parlor she noticed Davy was not working very hard. She told him to hurry up because she had more work for him to do. By this time Davy was so mad that everything bubbled up inside him. Before he knew what he'd done, he had thrown a brush full of shoe polish at Angie. The brush sailed right past Angie's head and landed smack in the middle of the parlor wall. He

stared in horror at the big black mark on the expensive white and gold wallpaper. Then he ran out of the house and hid in the barn.

Davy stayed in the barn a very long time. He thought about how proud his mother was of their beautiful parlor, and how dreadful she would feel when she saw the mess he'd made of it. He thought about what his punishment might be. He was so mad at Angie. "It's all her fault," he thought. "I would never have done such a terrible thing if she hadn't been so bossy and made me so mad!"

It was dark by the time Joe found him. Joe knew what had happened. But he didn't say anything. He just took Davy into the house for a bite of supper before bed-time. Davy didn't sleep very well. He knew Mom and Dad would be back in the morning. He wanted to run away, but there was nowhere he could go. He cried big tears into his pillow.

When Mom and Dad got home, they were very pleased with how well the children had managed the chores and how neat and clean everything was. They thought Davy was a bit quiet, and they did notice that he didn't eat much lunch. Mom even gave him a huge spoonful of nasty tasting medicine, just in case he was getting sick. Davy knew she hadn't looked in the parlor, but he wasn't brave enough to tell her what had happened. He was just miserable.

Then the worst thing possible happened. Mr. and Mrs. Johnson from across the town came to visit. Davy heard his mother welcome them, and invite them into the parlor. Oh, no! She would take them in there and see the mess, and she would be so embarrassed! He expected to hear his mother scream, but instead he heard Mrs. Johnson exclaim, "My, what a lovely parlor this is!"

Davy couldn't believe his ears! What had happened? The black smudge was on the wall opposite the door. There was no way anyone could go in there without seeing that awful mark, spoiling everything else. Davy crept close to the door, and peeped in. He was so shocked by what he saw, he just stood there with his mouth open and stared. The wall looked exactly as it had before he threw the shoe polish brush. The wall paper where the black smudge had been was perfectly white and trimmed in gold like the pattern on the rest of the wall. His mom saw him in the doorway and invited him in. He sat on a slippery chair and stared at the wall most of the afternoon, his mind racing with what might have happened. After tea and cakes, the Johnsons finally went home. Davy lingered in the parlor so he would be the last to leave. When everyone had gone, he went up to the wall and stared at it closely. Someone had cut a piece of wallpaper to fit perfectly over the nasty mess. The paper had been cut ever so carefully to follow the edges of the pattern all around the little scrolls of gold. Then the edges of the paper had been sanded very thin so that there would not be a bump where the new paper was added.

Davy ate twice as much food at supper time to make up for all he had missed. He started to laugh and joke again, and Mom was pleased to see that her medicine had made him better! After supper Davy found Angie. He gave her a great big enormous hug. "Thank you," he whispered in her ear. "I'm sorry I threw the brush at you, and made that awful mess. You fixed it, didn't you."

"Yes, I found some of the paper in the attic, and I cut it all out, smoothed the edges, and stuck it on with flour paste. I'm sorry too, it was mostly my fault. I shouldn't have been so bossy. No wonder you felt like throwing something at me!"

If they noticed, Mom and Dad never said anything about the mark on the parlor wall. And Davy never forgot how special it was to discover that someone loves you enough to cover your mistake and save you from the consequences you deserve.

Does that sound like another Person you know? Yes! Jesus loves us enough to cover our mistakes with His perfect life. He saved us from the death we deserve because of our sin and gave us another chance to have the best life possible, now and forever. Isn't that Good News!

Angel in a Storm

This story happened during one of those South Dakota blizzards. For three days great swirling gusts of snow had been sweeping across the countryside. The cold wind howled with increasing intensity. In most places the fence posts were buried in snowdrifts.

Daddy Nelson was ill, the well was frozen, and there was no more drinking water. Melted snow could be used for most purposes, but the Nelsons didn't feel that it was safe for drinking water. Not too much was known in those days about germs, and there were several epidemics going around. The worried family gathered for consultation to determine what could be done. Kaye and her brother Joe were elected to go after water from another well across the road.

Kaye donned Daddy's heavy jacket, which reached below her knees. The rest of the family brought old trousers, scarves, and everything warm they could find to wrap her in. Brother Joe was subjected to the same treatment, and they started out with their buckets in the storm.

The cold wind was awful. Before they had gone very far Kaye called to Joe, "Oh, I forgot to leave my glasses at home, and they are frozen over so I can't see! But I guess I can put them in my pocket."

"Be careful, Kaye," yelled Joe above the storm; "be sure you don't put them in a pocket that has holes in it!"

"Oh, don't worry, I won't," Kaye shouted back.

On they went, falling often as they stepped into holes and ruts they couldn't see because of the snow.

"Kaye, I'm worried about your glasses; check and see if you still have them."

Kaye felt in her pocket.

They were gone!

The children paused and looked back. The snow was coming down so fast that even their footprints were covered over right behind them and could not be seen.

Now the Nelsons were in no position to buy another pair of glasses, and Kaye was desperate.

What could she do? She just had to have those glasses!

There was only one hope to brighten the situation. God knew where those much-needed glasses were. He would help her find them.

As they stumbled through the blinding storm on their way to the well, Kaye prayed more earnestly than she had prayed in a long time.

After many struggles they got their buckets of water and were on their way back to the farmhouse. There was no use to try to go back the way they had come because there was nothing to guide them. Everything was covered with freshly fallen snow, even where they had fallen into holes.

Somewhere along the way Joe stared in amazement and Kaye shouted for joy! There were her glasses! They were lying right on top of the snow, not covered at all! She picked them up almost reverently.

In her heart she felt certain that an angel had found them and laid them there for her. With the snow falling so fast, how else could it have happened!

Kaye and Joe were very thankful they had the glasses, but the experience meant far more than any material blessing.

It is a wonderful thing to worship a God who cares, a God who will send an angel from heaven to find a pair of glasses for a little girl in a snowstorm.

And it is a real thrill to wear glasses that have been carried in the hands of an angel!

Ellen's Prayer

Ellen was at home praying one day with her mother and brother, Robert. Suddenly a rock crashed into the window behind Ellen, and broken glass came sprinkling down on her. Ellen was not hurt by the glass, but continued praying and asking God for His protection. The man who threw the rock stood outside cursing, but as he heard the clear, calm voice of prayer inside the house, he ran away, frightened and ashamed.

A few days later, while Ellen's family was praying again, two neighbors came bursting into the house and shouted, "Up, and off your knees - in 15 minutes the police will come and arrest you!" But the little group continued praying. These unkind neighbors kept coming back, saying the same thing again and again.

Later that afternoon police officers came to the house, and some of the neighbors raised their windows to hear what would be said. Ellen's father was at work, so her mother talked with the policeman at the door. He told her he had gotten many complaints from their neighbors about noisy praying at this house, sometimes late at night.

Ellen's mother told the policeman about Daniel in the Bible, praying three times a day to God, even though the king had a law that forbade such prayer. The policeman said, "I don't see anything wrong with your praying, but the neighbors say it bothers them to hear you pray at night."

Ellen's mother answered, "If anyone in my home is sick or troubled at night, we call upon God for relief. He always helps us when we do this. But we are not acting in a noisy or bothersome way."

Then Ellen's mother asked the policeman, "A nearby neighbor often speaks loud, angry curses when he gets drunk.

Why don't the neighbors complain about him?" How strange that this man's loud, devilish words didn't seem to bother the neighbors, while the gentle voice of prayer greatly troubled them! "Well," said the officer, "what shall I tell them you will do?"

Ellen's mother replied, "Serve God, and let the consequences be what they may." The officer left, having nothing more to say.

A few days later some teenage boys started shouting outside Ellen's house while she and her family were having evening devotions. After a while the boys ran for a policeman to complain about a disturbance at the house. The policeman hurried back with the boys, who said, "Listen!"

After listening carefully to the beautiful, loving prayers that were being spoken inside the house, the policeman turned to the boys and said, "Is this what you have called me out for?"

That family is doing what every family ought to do. They are making no disturbance; and if you call me for this purpose again, I will put you in the lockup for disturbing a peaceable family attending to their religious duties." After this Ellen's family had no more trouble from their neighbors.

That summer brought many thunderstorms. Ellen's neighbors were frightened by the storms. From time to time some of the people in the area were killed by lightning. Whenever it looked like a storm was coming, some parents sent their children over to Ellen's house and told them to stay there until the storm was over. One of the children told Ellen's mother, "Ma says the lightning will not strike a house where the Advent people are." How sad that these neighbors would not trust God for themselves!

One night a very big storm struck. The thunder was booming like cannons, and the sky blazed with lightning, as though the whole world were on fire. Some people rushed out of their beds and into the street, begging God for mercy, because they thought the end of the world had come. Ellen's brother, Robert, went out into the street, praising the Lord. The scene thrilled his heart because it made him think of the soon-coming day when Jesus will return. But he thought sadly also of the terror and hopelessness of those who do not love God, and of how frightening a day it will be for them when Jesus comes. Frightening because they chose to live sinfully and would not let Jesus into their hearts.

Read Psalm 91 and see all the beautiful promises of safety and protection for those who love God, no matter how many dangers and troubles arise. Ask God to help you put your trust in Him.

Flyers from the Cave

Only because bats live in caves does Isaiah say that at Christ's coming man's worthless idols will be thrown into the places where they live. God meant no implication against bats, only that men will use dark caves to hide the gold and silver idols they have worshiped.

These cave dwellers are very interesting, as Leonard Dubin discovered when he found a small cave, or grotto, under a tree in Chicago. It was occupied by more than 200 bats. Often he entered this unusual cave to observe them. One day he witnessed the birth of a baby bat, which to his surprise was a rare albino, completely white. When the baby was a day old she slept beside her mother during the day, hanging upside down from the leafy, sloping roof. With the tiny white bat to guide him, he noted that each bat hung in its own place. Hanging in the wrong spot brought a deluge of threatening squeaks and sharp teeth.

Until she was five days old the baby clung to her mother as she flew from the cave at night. Then, when the baby's eyes opened, she stayed in the cave at night, joining other young bats playfully biting, squeaking, and crawling over one another. When 23 days old she flew for the first time, zooming and diving with mature skill. Because of her grace and beauty as she flew in the twilight, he named her White Lady.

Always as he came to the grotto when the bats were flying, White Lady, unlike other bats, would dive toward him flashing her wings near his face. One evening as he held a grasshopper in his hand there was a sudden whir of white wings and the grasshopper disappeared. He found a beetle. Almost immediately White Lady swooped down from twenty feet and snatched four more insects without touching his hand.

When Jesus comes, wicked men and their idols will be in caves and darkness. The saints will soar to the clouds, with skills that exceed those of the graceful bat, to welcome their Creator.

Four Noble Young Men

Daniel 1

“Where am I?” asked Daniel, rubbing his eyes. “Prison!” muttered Hananiah, who lay beside him in the dungeon. “We’re in Babylon.”

Babylon! Suddenly it all came back. What a nightmare! Daniel remembered how the prisoners had been seized and bound, the dreadful march across the desert to Babylon, the blows and curses of the conquerors, and finally prison.

Now, as the morning sun shone through the grating above their heads, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah began to realize what a sad, sad thing had happened to them. All four belonged to good families in Judah. They had always enjoyed the best of everything. Now they had nothing, not even freedom.

As they looked ahead, the future seemed dark. They would never again see their beloved country, their homes, their fathers and mothers, their brothers and sisters. For the rest of their lives they would be slaves of a hated enemy.

As they talked together they must have asked each other, Why did it all happen? Then they remembered Jeremiah’s warnings that these very things would take place if the people did not give up their idols and turn again to God. Perhaps right there in prison the four young men asked God’s forgiveness for their sins and made up their minds to be true to Him always, no matter what the Babylonians might do to them.

One day the prison door opened, and an officer named Ashpenaz came in. He looked over the prisoners and picked out Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. At first they wondered why. Had they done something wrong?

Ashpenaz explained that Nebuchadnezzar was a great and farseeing king. He did not kill all his captives. Instead he chose the best of them, those who appeared strong, healthy, and intelligent, and he educated them in the school of Babylon. In this way, they would become a strength to the country in days to come. The four boys, he said, should consider themselves very fortunate that they were among the few chosen for this honor.

They did. They were very happy about it. But they were worried about what else this honor might mean. Would they be expected to worship the god of Babylon?

They were even more worried when Ashpenaz told them that their names would be changed. Now they would have Babylonian, not Hebrew, names. Daniel was given the name of Belteshazzar; Hananiah was called Shadrach; Mishael, Meshach; and Azariah, Abednego. Apparently their masters meant to change them completely. They were to forget they were Hebrews and become Babylonians.

Then came the first big test.

King Nebuchadnezzar gave orders that the captives who had been chosen to be taught “the language and literature of the Babylonians” should be fed from the king’s table. They were to eat what he ate.

No doubt the king thought he was doing the captives a very great favor in providing them “a daily amount of food and wine from the king’s table” – and he was. But Daniel and his friends were troubled. They felt they couldn’t eat the food that was prepared for the king. It was probably first offered to idols. As much of it was forbidden by God as “unclean.” As for the wine, it was the fermented kind that was full of alcohol. So they couldn’t take that either.

What should they do? Was it worth fussing about? After all, it was only food and drink. Maybe they could take just a little and avoid offending the king. Surely when a heathen king had gone so far in trying to be kind and generous to his captives, it would be downright rude not to take the food and drink he gave them.

“But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine.” He felt that if he were to yield on this point, he would give away everything. He could never take a stand on anything else. If he was going to be loyal to God all the way, he had better start here and now.

So Daniel plucked up his courage and spoke to Ashpenaz. He respectfully explained why he and his three friends could not take the food so kindly offered them. Would it be all right if they had something else? Nothing special of course – just vegetables and cereals, and good plain water to drink.

Ashpenaz listened patiently. He liked this young man. Indeed, “God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel.” But now he was worried. He didn’t see how it could be done.

“I am afraid of my lord the king,” he said. “If you don’t eat the food he has provided, and you come thinner than the rest of the boys, he’ll take my head off.”

Daniel knew how easily this could happen. Yet he felt sure all would be well. So he went to Melzar, the guard Ashpenaz had put in charge of the four boys, and told him what they wanted to do. “Just let us try it for ten days,” he said pleaded. “Give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then look us over and do what seems best.”

With many feelings of doubt, Melzar agreed. Instead of king’s food and wine, he gave them vegetables, cereals, and water. And you can imagine how he watched them day by day for the first signs of weakness!

But they didn't fall sick, and their faces didn't grow thin and pale as Melzar had expected. "At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food."

Melzar was surprised and very pleased. From now on he gladly gave the four boys the food they wanted. And somehow they were able to think more clearly than the others. They remembered their lessons better. Living on a clean, simple diet, they were able to gather knowledge and wisdom faster than all the rest put together.

At the end of three years they graduated from school with highest honors. As a special reward, they were presented to King Nebuchadnezzar. "The king talked with them."

They had never expected this! Certainly not on that far-off night when they arrived, all weary and discouraged, at the prison. As for Nebuchadnezzar, he was impressed. Of all the young men he had in training, "he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom."

Would you like to be "ten times better" than all the boys and girls in your school? Ten times wiser, 10 times healthier, 10 times nobler? You can be. Just determine in your heart to serve God always, whatever the cost.

Freddy's Find

One morning while Freddy hurried down the empty school hallway toward his class, he saw some money on the floor. Picking it up, he discovered it was a \$20 bill. He had never held \$20 in his hand before.

Wow, I could get a lot of candy and ice cream with this money, he thought. I'll have a feast for days to come! Freddy put the money in his pocket and marched to class feeling excited and rich.

But in class Freddy got to thinking about his find. His conscience told him that the money really wasn't his to keep. Then Freddy's mind drifted away from everything around him. He remembered a day when his parents had sent him to the store to buy some groceries. On the way to the store he had lost the money and went back home scared and miserable. The money was lost forever.

"I'll give the money to Mr. Genaro, the vice principal," Freddy decided. "He's honest and will work hard to find the owner of this money."

As soon as class was over, Freddy ran to the vice principal's office and explained his mission to Mr. Genaro, who looked at him in a very serious but kind way. "Thank you, Freddy, for your honesty," he remarked. "I'll try to find the owner of this money."

A few days later Mr. Genaro called Freddy into his office and told him that the owner of the money had been found. It belonged to a girl who was supposed to buy groceries with it on her way home from school.

Freddy felt very glad that he hadn't allowed his selfish feelings to get in the way of turning the money over to Mr. Genaro. How much better it felt to have done this rather than to keep the money dishonestly and to spend it on ice cream cones and candy bars.

Sometime afterward Freddy learned about Jesus and happily gave his heart to Him. It was then that Freddy realized who had shown him what to do with the lost money.

Ghost in the Parlor

I don't care. I want to go!" stormed Marilyn. "All the other girls in my room have been invited too, and their mothers'll let them go to the slumber party." Tears of self-pity filled her resentful brown eyes and splashed unheeded on her new silk blouse.

"Did your invitation say it was only a slumber party?" mother asked gently. A hurt little frown creased her forehead as she watched her daughter's unusual display of temper.

"O Mother, you know what the invitation said as well as I do," Marilyn exclaimed pettishly. "First we're to have dinner at Jane's house. Then her mother's going to take all of us to a real fortuneteller to have our fortunes told. It'll be perfectly thrilling. She's actually a clair—clair----"

"Clairvoyant?" smiled patient mother.

"I guess that's what she's called. Anyway, Jane's mother says she's a real medium, and she can tell wonderful fortunes. I just can't miss such an exciting Halloween party. Please, Mother. Please let me go," Marilyn begged.

"Why can't Marilyn go to the party?" questioned little Stephen. "Has she been naughty?"

"No, dear, she's been a good girl. But neither daddy nor I approve of school-night slumber parties for these young girls who are just Marilyn's age. If the invitation were for an early dinner hour and a few games afterward I'd be glad to let her go. But it would be unthinkable to permit her to visit a medium, and that trip is to be the evening's entertainment.

"Why not?" sniffed Marilyn, her tearful attention caught by the solemn note in mother's voice. "I can't see any harm in going there for fun. It's just a joke. After all, no one's really going to believe anything she tells us."

Marilyn and Stephen watched as mother sank into a nearby rocker and slowly shook her head.

"No, dear, you must write a nice little note to thank Jane for the invitation. But you must tell her that you cannot come. However, I think that you should know why I feel so strongly on this subject.

"Sit down, both of you. Then I'll tell you this story as it was told to me many years ago by a very talented young woman who was at that time a member of my college music group. She was a real Christian – a young person who was not given to foolish fears. That is why this story of night of terror has always remained so plainly in my mind.

"Elsie was extremely fond of good music and loved to hear the great artists. However, she was working her way through college. She had no money with which to buy tickets for the many fine programs given in the large city nearby," mother began.

"Neither had the young college men of her acquaintance extra money for such entertainments. Consequently, for months Elsie had to try to content herself with reading newspaper notices about the artists who played and sang in the concert series.

"Therefore it wasn't at all strange that, when she was introduced to a nice-appearing young man employed near the school, she began after a time to accept his invitations. She was never disappointed when she spent an evening with him, for not only was he polite and thoughtful but he always took her to a really worthwhile concert or lecture.

"As the months sped rapidly by they became quite good friends. But Elsie could not help noticing that in spite of their friendship he had never invited her to his home. She knew he had a mother, although he rarely spoke of her. In fact, he seemed not to hear Elsie's quite broad hints that she would like to meet this other member of his family.

"But at last something happened that made it possible for Elsie actually to meet Bill's mother. And, when she did, she would have given almost anything in the world to have been thousands of miles away. But by that time it was too late."

"Mother!" gasped Marilyn. "What happened?" She leaned tensely forward, Halloween invitation completely forgotten.

"Don't hurry me," smiled mother, looking at Marilyn's worried face and Stephen's round eyes. "I'll tell you the entire story, but you mustn't interrupt. Just listen until I finish.

"At length Bill invited Elsie to go to a very special concert with him. On this date one of the world's most famous symphony orchestras was going to play. The tickets were very expensive, but he made arrangements for them weeks ahead of time. Elsie thought that she could never wait until the day arrived, but at last it did. And then at noon the blow fell. During the lunch hour Bill telephoned and told Elsie that it was necessary for him to work overtime that night.

"'I'm sorry that I can't get away, Elsie,' he said. 'However, I've made arrangements for you to pick up your ticket at the ticket office. They'll keep it for you until eight-thirty. I'm sure you can get down there by that time if you leave the school by six o'clock.'

"'O Bill, what a shame!' Elsie replied. 'It's very kind of you to go to so much trouble, but I couldn't think of going alone. I don't mind the long streetcar trip early in the evening, but I wouldn't want to come home by myself late at night. I wouldn't get back to my landlady's until about one o'clock in the morning, and that's too late on a winter night. I guess I'll just have to miss the program, after all. But thank you anyway.'

"'Wait a minute. Don't hang up,' Bill urged. 'You haven't given me time to finish. Of course, I know it's very informal; you should have a written invitation from mother. But, lacking time to do all that, she told me to invite you to come to our house to spend the night after the concert. Since we live only twelve blocks from the auditorium, you can get there in a couple of minutes

by taxi. Mother said it would be very foolish for you to make a long trip across the city on a cold snowy night when you could stay with her.'

"Almost before she knew what she was doing, Elsie had accepted the informal invitation. The hours whirled by until at last the wonderful, wonderful concert was over. Then she was one of the hurrying crowd carried out of the emptying concert hall. Quickly she called a taxicab, and in a few minutes found herself in front of a brown house on a quiet, tree-lined street.

"Elsie's heart beat more quickly as she ran up the icy steps and rang the doorbell. She jumped as the door swung noiselessly open and a soft voice greeted her.

"'Good evening, my dear. Of course you're Elsie. Do come right on in. We've been expecting you!' A small, white-haired lady motioned her into the lonely dimly lighted hall.

"'G---good evening. Is Bill here already? Did you say, "We've been expecting you?'" Elsie stammered, suddenly and strangely ill-at-ease.

"'Oh dear me! Did I? No, Bill won't be home until after twelve. His employer was taken to the hospital today, so that Bill has had to take full charge of the overtime work tonight. He'll be tired when he gets home. But come into the parlor, my dear child. I don't know what I'm thinking of to keep you standing here!

"'Take off your coat,' Mrs. Gray said. 'I know you must be tired and anxious to get to bed. I'm only sorry that I can't offer you a guest room, but our sofa-bed will have to do. However, it's really very soft and comfortable, and I've spread an extra wool blanket over the foot, in case you're chilly.'

"'Thank you so much, Mrs. Gray,' Elsie said. 'I know that I'll sleep well. And I'm very grateful for your invitation to stay here. Without it I couldn't have gone to the program.'

"'I'm also very glad that you could come,' said her hostess. 'As I mentioned before, one would think that such a large house would have a guest room. But I've had to remodel several of the former upstairs bedrooms into an apartment for my business.

"'Now let me show you the way to the washroom. I've hung your towels on the rack by the mirror. I'll give you my flashlight too, so that you can slip it under your pillow. I know how confusing it is to get up at night in a strange place and try to find the light switch.'

"'Oh, I'm sure I'll rest well,' Elsie answered, eyeing the neatly made bed all ready and waiting for its overnight guest. 'Of course, I probably won't go to sleep right away; I'll be thinking of tonight's program and hearing it all again.'

"'Wouldn't you like a cup of hot milk?' Mrs. Gray asked. 'I'd be glad to bring it to you. Bill usually likes a bite when he comes home late, so I'm used to preparing midnight snacks. However, we

won't wait for him. He won't be home for another hour. It's just eleven o'clock now, and I don't expect him until twelve.

"By the way, Elsie, he'll have to go through this room to get to the kitchen, for our other hallway is being painted. But he'll tiptoe through very quietly so that he won't rouse you. He won't need a light; he could find his way blindfolded, I'm sure. Now shall I bring a hot drink?"

"Please do, Mrs. Gray," Elsie answered. "It's very kind of you. I'm sure that some hot milk would taste good."

"Fine! Now get ready for bed. Then when I return you can slip under your quilts and get warm. You'll be able to go to sleep very quickly, I'm sure."

"Soon Elsie was alone in the big old-fashioned parlor. She leaned back against the plump bed pillows as she gratefully sipped a delicious hot drink from a thin Blue Willow cup. Then she read her evening chapter from her little purse-size Bible and for some unknown reason put the Holy Book at the edge of her pillow instead of back in its leather case.

"Now I'm going to try to go right to sleep," Elsie thought as she slipped across the room and clicked off the light switch. "But somehow I'm not one bit sleepy. I guess the concert was too exciting. Anyhow, I'll lie as snug as can be in my soft bed and think back over the program. Ouch!"

"She stumbled as a round object loomed out of the darkness and she bumped full force against its hard surface.

"Oh dear," she wailed. "I should have used that flashlight. I'm all turned around; I forgot all about that little table Mrs. Gray moved away from the bed.

"And Bill won't know about it either. He'll probably stumble against it and bump his shins too. If I'm still awake when he gets home, I'll call out and warn him to be careful. But I hope I'm asleep by that time."

"However, try as she would, Elsie could not get to sleep. The bed was soft, the sheets and pillowcases were snowy white and faintly perfumed with lavender, and the woolen coverings were light and warm. But Elsie felt as though something – some unknown danger – was lurking near, drawing closer and closer.

"Just as the clock chimed twelve Elsie was glad to hear the front door open. She was glad to feel the blast of cold night air that blew in and followed the echoing footsteps along the hallway and into the musty parlor. She heard them pause for a moment. Then on they came, steadily, heavily, toward the center of the room.

"'Wait, Bill,' Elsie called softly, fearful of waking her hostess in the room above. 'Your mother has pulled the sofa out from the wall and put the little table in the middle of the room. Watch out for it. I bruised my knee when I bumped into it awhile ago.'

"The heavy footsteps came on and on. At last they stopped. Elsie's heart throbbed heavily at the sound of silence.

"'Bill, where are you?' she demanded, half afraid and half angry. 'Don't try to scare me. I know you're there. Your mother told me you'd be home at midnight. Now go on into the kitchen and get your midnight lunch. You won't keep me awake, for I haven't been able to go to sleep.'

"Elsie heard no voice in reply, but again she heard the heavy tread on the carpet. The footsteps moved on, around the table, directly to the edge of her bed.

"'Bill!' Elsie half-screamed. 'What are you doing? Say something to me!'

"But no human sound broke the night stillness in answer to her terrified cry. Elsie heard only the eerie sighing of the winter wind as it moaned around the corners of the house, high above the heaving gasps of her own frightened breathing.

"With cold, trembling fingers she reached under the pillow and grabbed frantically for the little flashlight. Quickly she pulled it out, sat up, and snapped the button. She turned its bright beam squarely upon the exact spot where stood her midnight visitor.

"Elsie's eyes stared unbelievably as the flashlight trembled in her hand. 'It – it isn't true! It can't be true,' she thought. 'If I pinch myself, I'll find I'm dreaming.'

"For Elsie saw there was no one there – no one at all! The bright flashlight beam revealed only the empty room – only the old-fashioned, quiet room, and nothing more.

"With a terrified moan Elsie dropped the flashlight and fell back upon the pillow. Frantically she pulled the covers over her head and curled under them, shaking and shivering, for what seemed an endless time. She thrust her fingers into her ears to try to shut out the sound of the footsteps as they walked round and round the room.

"Then for a time there was utter silence. Elsie unclenched her stiffened fingers and rubbed them together. She was thankful for even a moment's rest from the awful sound of those tramping footsteps.

"'Why did I ever come to this strange place?' she wailed. 'Oh, how I wish I were safe at home in my own bed.' Elsie felt two salty, burning tears trickle down her cheeks as she choked back a racking sob. 'Dear Father,' she prayed, 'protect me and deliver me from evil – from whatever this awful thing is that can be heard but not seen.'

"Then once again Elsie heard the front door open and close. Again she felt the sharp blast of cold night air that blew through the hallway and followed the footsteps into the room where she lay, almost frozen with fear. Again she heard the footsteps slowly advance into the blackness. But this time Elsie heard a thud as the unknown object struck against the table and a very well-known voice exclaimed, 'Ouch!'

"'Bill!' she exclaimed. Anger swept through her. Quickly she turned the flashlight's shining rays upon a frowning Bill. She saw that he hopped storklike upon one foot while he grasped the injured one in his hands.

"'It serves you right!' she exploded. 'How could you frighten me so! Why, I was almost scared out of my wits. I tried and tried to warn you about that table, but of course you wouldn't listen to me. Of course you wouldn't! You were too busy playing your cruel joke.'

"'A joke? Warn me? What on earth are you talking about, Elsie!' Bill stammered. 'You must have had a nightmare. Why, I just now came in the front door. I had to work an extra half hour before the relief operator came on duty. That's why I couldn't get home by midnight. But you sound really frightened. What has happened?'

"'What's happened!' Elsie gasped, holding the bed covers tight around her neck. 'I – well, I don't know what happened, but something did, Bill. If you didn't come in that front door at the stroke of twelve, I don't know who did, but someone did. Maybe you think I've been dreaming, but someone came in that door before you got home.'

"'You're quite right, my dear. Of course someone came in that door.' said a soft voice from the hallway. 'There. Let's have a little light while we talk.' Mrs. Gray spoke calmly.

"'Now, first of all I must tell you that I'm so sorry you were frightened, Elsie. But no harm would have befallen you. I supposed that Bill long ago had told you that many of my 'friends' come here regularly to see me and to visit with me. In fact, sometimes he visits with them too. They walk through the entire house, but most often they come upstairs, where I hold small meetings. Then at times they come in here on evenings when I am tired and lie down on that davenport.'

"'Your friends?' Elsie asked fearfully. 'What friends do you mean, Mrs. Gray? This couldn't have been one of them, for I saw no one at all.'

"'You probably wouldn't see my friends, Elsie,' Mrs. Gray said. As she spoke Elsie saw her hostess' eyes glance toward the little Bible. 'You see, they wouldn't be visible to you unless you were in close contact with the spirit world as I am. Since I am a spiritualist medium, I can visit with these friends from the other world.'

"'But we've talked enough for now. Lie down and go to sleep. We can visit in the morning when I will tell you more about my work. I've had some wonderful messages from departed ones who

have gone on before us – not only from my own loved ones but from strangers who wish to contact their own living relatives and friends.'

"Sleep!' Elsie felt that she would never be able to sleep in that haunted room. Every time she opened her eyes she was sure she would see a ghost in the parlor. Elsie's face was as white as the snowy pillowcase that framed it; her hands felt almost too nerveless to pick up even as light a weight as the little Bible on the edge of the bed. But as she held the Blessed Book in her hands she felt a comforting returning glow of warmth and security. And then she finally fell asleep for a few brief hours of rest.

"No one was stirring when Elsie roused early the next morning. Quietly she slipped out of bed, dressed rapidly, and repacked her overnight bag. But before closing it she took out her leather writing case and fountain pen. Sitting down, she hastily wrote a note of thanks to her hostess and to Bill.

"I wonder if any other girl ever wrote a thank-you note for the most terrifying night of her life,' Elsie thought grimly as she signed her name and propped the envelope on the fireplace mantel. 'But I've no one to blame but myself for coming here. The least I can do is to thank them for the concert and for my parlor bedroom, even if it did have a ghost in it.'

"Quickly Elsie put her Bible in her purse, picked up her small handbag and tiptoed down the hallway. Quietly she opened the front door and gently she closed it behind her. Then, on winged feet, she flew down the steps, down the deserted street, and at the nearest stop swung aboard a streetcar.

"Just as the car rounded the corner Elsie turned for a last glimpse of the house she hoped never to see again. As the early morning sunlight sparkled frostily against the big upstairs window something white flickered there. And though after one startled glance Elsie knew that it was only the lace window curtain flapping in the chilly breeze, she turned her head hastily away.

"She talked to Bill only once after that. Then she thanked him for his many kindnesses to her. But I guess she made it plain that because of his interest in spiritualism she could never really enjoy going anywhere with him again!"

"Oh, what a ghost story!" cried Stephen. "But why was Elsie afraid to see Bill again, Mother. He'd been nice to her. And those old spirits or whatever they were wouldn't have hurt her, would they?"

"Elsie was very wise to tell Bill good-by, Stephen," mother soberly replied. "According to her belief she felt it wrong to have anything to do with a medium. As she told me the story she quoted Bible verses that proved her position.

"And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God?"

"The dead know not any thing,' 'Man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep.'

"In Bible days, the spiritualistic activity of mediums was condemned, and since Mrs. Gray was a medium Elsie wanted to stay far, far way from her séances. She did not want to have anything to do with what she called 'the spirits of devils.' "

Mother turned toward Marilyn, who sat strangely quiet. "Now do you begin to see why I have asked you not to go to this Halloween fortune-telling party, dear? It might be just a harmless prank, but again it might prove to be something far more dangerous. I have always remembered Elsie's story. I hope you children will always remember it too."

"Thank you, Mother," said Marilyn. "I'm glad you told us the story. And I'm sorry I was so cross about insisting on going to Jane's party. Of course, I wanted to go, but I don't now."

"I'll hurry and write that note this very minute. In fact, I'll hurry almost as much as Elsie did when she wrote her note to Bill and his mother. But at least I'll be safe afterward. I'm glad there's no ghost in our parlor."

Gleaner Girl

Key Texts: Ruth 1-4

Out of all the darkness and sadness of the days when Israel was ruled by the judges comes one of the sweetest stories ever told. It is about a girl called Ruth, who belonged to the Moabites, long-time enemies of Israel.

As a child, I suppose she heard only bad things about the Israelites, and if she hadn't met Naomi, maybe she never would have known any better. Naomi was the mother of two boys about Ruth's age. One was called Mahlon, the other, Kilion. Their father's name was Elimelech and the four of them had come all the way from Bethlehem to Moab because of a famine in their own country.

After Elimelech's death Ruth and Mahlon fell in love and married. Also a girl friend of Ruth's name Orpah, married Kilion. The five of them were very happy together, for Naomi was the nicest mother-in-law any girl could wish to have. She loved her daughters-in-law dearly, and they loved her just as much.

Naomi was a godly woman, and she must have been very sorry when her sons married heathen girls. But she made up her mind to lead them if she could, to love the God of Israel. She took every chance to talk to them of God's love and to tell them the stories she had heard from her parents long before.

Naomi explained to Ruth and Orpah how God created the world in the beginning and made it into a beautiful home for man, how Adam and Eve sinned and lost their garden home, and how God planned to give it back to them some day. She also told them about the Flood and the rescue of Noah and his family in the ark, of God's promises to Abraham, the dark days in Egypt, the great deliverance in the days of Moses, and all God had done for His people since then.

Ruth and Orpah loved to listen as Naomi talked to them. They especially liked to hear of the wonderful things she believed God would do for Israel in the future. Naomi may have told them that someday, through some sweet girl, Eve's offspring would come to crush the snake's head.

Ten years passed by. Then trouble came, and great sorrow. First Mahlon died, then Kilion, one after the other.

The sadness in that home must have been terrible. How Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah must have cried together. Poor things! It must have been hard for them to believe in the goodness of God. But they did.

Brave Naomi decided she would go back to her old home in Bethlehem, and the two girls said they would go with her. On the way, however, Naomi began to worry about them. She

wondered whether she was doing right in taking them away from their own country. Perhaps they would be better off if they were to go back to their mothers.

"Go back, each of you, to your mother's home," she said to them kindly: "May the Lord show kindness to you, as you have shown to your dead and to me." Then she kissed them, and they all burst out crying again.

Both Ruth and Orpah said they would rather stay with her than go back to their homeland. They wouldn't leave her. They loved her too much. But Naomi said it was better for them to go back to their own homes. They must find new husbands, she said, and it would be easier to do this where they were known, among their own people.

They talked for a long time about it, and finally Orpah decided that maybe Naomi was right. She said goodbye with many tears and turned around to go back home. I can see her waving her last farewell before disappearing from view around a bend in the road.

But Ruth wouldn't go. In words that will live forever, she told Naomi, "Don't urge me to leave you....Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God."

So Naomi and Ruth went on their way together, trudging slowly and sadly up the rough, steep mountain trail that led to Bethlehem. When they finally arrived at the village, everyone in town was excited. "Naomi is back!" the people cried, crowding around to hear the news she brought from the land of Moab.

"But where is your husband?" they asked. And, "Where are the boys?" Tearfully Naomi told her story. "I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty."

Fortunately the barley harvest was just beginning, so there was work to do and food to eat. Ruth offered to go into the fields and glean with the other village girls. In those days, grain was cut and gathered by hand, and what was left by the reapers could be picked up by the gleaners.

One day as she was busily at work, Boaz, the owner of the field, came by. Seeing a strange girl among his gleaners, he stopped to ask who she was.

The man in charge replied, "She is the Moabitess who came back from Moab with Naomi."

Boaz was interested. He had wanted to meet her, especially since Naomi was a relative of his. Calling Ruth to him, he told her he had heard about her kindness to Naomi and how she had willingly left her own country to come and live among strangers. "May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge," he said.

Smiling sweetly, Ruth thanked him for his kind words; and Boaz, liking her more every minute, told the reapers to let some of the sheaves drop where she could glean them. He wanted to make sure Ruth would have lots of grain to take home to Naomi.

As the days went by, Boaz and Ruth saw more and more of each other, and one day there was a wedding in Bethlehem. It must have been quite an event, for Boaz was very rich and Ruth was very poor, and a Moabitess too.

People must have talked about it for weeks, and they would have talked even more if they had known what this marriage would mean in the years ahead. For Ruth and Boaz had a son called Obed. And Obed had a son called Jesse. And Jesse had a son called David.

So Ruth -- dear, kind, faithful Ruth -- was the great-grandmother of King David. She was a direct ancestor of Joseph the husband of Mary who, more than 1,000 years later, in this very same village of Bethlehem, gave birth to the baby Jesus.

I am sure Ruth never dreamed that she would receive such a great honor when, far away in Moab, she listened to Naomi telling those wonderful stories of the God of Israel, the God of heaven and earth. How glad she will be, through all eternity, that she gave her heart to Him then.

Grandpa and the Cougar

"I wish I could have a big dog like Max's St. Bernard. Of course, Blondie's all right, but she's really too little to be a real watchdog. She'd never be able to scare away burglars or pull me out of a river if I started to drown or – well, do anything brave like that. Would you, Blondie?" Stevie asked his tiny fox terrier, who sat looking up at him, her big brown eyes aglow with love and devotion.

"That shows how little you understand dogs, Stevie," laughed Mrs. Smith. Wait until I stir the potato soup that is cooking for supper, and I'll tell you a story that will make you appreciate the real courage of a small dog."

After a few moments Mrs. Smith returned to the living room, where Stevie and Blondie sat waiting for her.

"This happened many, many years ago, when my grandfather was a young man. He had been working about sixty miles from home, up in the McKenzie River region, which was then thickly wooded, with only a rough wagon road leading across the mountains.

"He had finished his work in that particular section of the country and had spent several days walking down along the roadway that wound beside the beautiful, rushing McKenzie River.

"His only companion and friend was Trixie, a tiny black-and-white fox terrier who had been with him ever since grandfather had bought her as a tiny pup a few years before.

"Here is a lovely spot in which to eat our lunch and enjoy some of this dried venison, old girl," he said, pausing by a grove at the river's edge. "There's a nice, quiet pool here, too, where we can drink. Come on."

"He started down toward the pool and then looked back. Trixie stood frozen and tense at the spot where he had left her. Her ears pointed straight up and the hair along her back also stood straight up.

"What in the world!" shouted Grandpa Brown. "Trixie! Come along now."

"A deep growl rumbled in Trixie's throat. She didn't even look at her master. Her keen eyes stared straight ahead down the road where, a short distance away, an enormous boulder rose skyward some twenty feet or more. It lay between the road and the river, and they would pass beneath it when they continued their journey.

"Stop that!" spoke grandpa sharply. Then he did something that he had never done before that time and which he always regretted afterward. He was hot and tired, and the dog's seeming disobedience angered him. Leaning over, he gave her a hard slap.

"Cringing, she followed him to their midday resting place, but though he offered her both food and water she refused them and lay motionless, nose sniffing the air, eyes fastened upon the rock.

"What's wrong with that dog? She must have smelled out a rabbit or a chipmunk,' muttered grandpa to himself, as he finally rose to continue his trek. 'Hope she doesn't act like this the rest of the day, or I'll have to carry her in order to reach Trail's End Ranch by nightfall. And since I loaned my gun yesterday to friend Jones, I'd rather not be caught out in the mountains after dark. Too many wild animals, though they never bother humans in the daytime.'

"Come along,' he spoke disgustedly to his pet, who followed nervously, breaking into gruff little growls every step or two.

"Grandpa strode impatiently ahead and did not look back until Trixie yelped shrilly and then ran excitedly around and around him, pulling frantically at his leggings.

"Stop it, you crazy dog,' he ordered, looking all about them. He saw nothing to cause the slightest alarm. The only moving object was his terrier, trying to block her master's way.

"Stop it," Grandpa repeated, and, pushing Trixie aside, he hurried on. A few strides and he was opposite the tall rock, whose upper half jutted out over their path. Again Trixie pulled at his clothing.

"Suddenly a terrific blow ripped slantwise across his back, so that he staggered and almost fell face downward. A sharp stinging sensation spread across his shoulders, and blood began to drip down his loosely rolled sleeves.

"A whirling cloud of dust from which arose fierce deep growls, frantic barks, and at last a wild howl roused him from his half-fainting condition, and he managed to turn just in time to see a half-grown mountain lion, or cougar, bounding into the woods, with Trixie dangling from his clenched jaws.

"Grandpa Brown half walked and half fell down to the river, where he lay for some time before he could lift himself up to wash his deep wounds. From his resting place he could look up and see very plainly the wide, almost hidden ledge upon which the mountain beast had crouched, probably waiting for a young deer to pass by.

"While it was unusual for one of his kind to attack a man in the daytime, our family always thought that it might have occurred because he was angered by Trixie's barking and because he was tempted by the smell of the dried deer meat slung across Grandpa's back.

"At any rate grandpa was a much sadder and wiser man as he crippled along, mourning the loss of his faithful watchdog and companion. Telling the story to friends at Trail's End Ranch that

night, his eyes filled with tears as he relived Trixie's vain efforts to warn him, and his cruel impatience with her.

" 'There went the best friend a man ever had,' he said sorrowfully. 'Look for her? No, I didn't look for her. I was wounded and had no gun, and, anyway, how long do you think she'd have lasted with that big mountain lion? She'd make about one bite for him. No, I just figured that was the end of Trix. Poor little pet!' And grandfather, big strong man that he was, was not ashamed to take out his handkerchief and wipe his eyes."

In all this time Stevie had not once stirred. Now he let out his breath in a deep sigh, and tears filled his eyes as he cried, "Oh, Mom, how awful! That brave little dog. Grandpa should have gone back to search for her. That wasn't one bit fair, after Trixie saved his life."

He caught up Blondie and held her tight in his arms, as though he half expected her to be snatched away by a pouncing beast.

Mom smiled. "But that isn't the end of my story. A few days later, after grandfather had somewhat recovered from his experience, he was walking in the woods near the ranch. Suddenly he heard faint, faraway yelps. He stopped and listened. They grew louder and louder and closer and closer until finally, crashing through the underbrush came bounding-----"

"The cougar!" exclaimed Stevie, wide-eyed.

"No," laughed mom. "It was Trixie. Faithful little Trixie had found her way back to her beloved master. Grandpa could hardly believe his eyes as he saw her jumping up toward him, overjoyed at being with him once more. How she had escaped from her captor no one ever knew and, of course, Trixie could not tell. Her body was covered with scratches and bites, but she soon healed up and was none the worse for her ordeal.

"You may be sure that grandpa and Trixie were the talk of the valley for a while, and Trixie was so petted and praised like a conquering hero.

"The little terrier lived to a ripe old age. Grandpa treated her like royalty, catering to her every whim.

"And that is the end of the true story about how Cougar Rock got its name. And that is the end of the story of a brave little dog. Of course," added Mrs. Smith, slyly, "if Trixie had been a really large dog, such as a St. Bernard, for instance, she might have-----"

"Uh-oh!" Stevie answered, hugging Blondie so tight that she squealed, "I guess a fox terrier is just about the best watchdog anyone could have. Size doesn't mean very much, after all. Even if you're little you can be brave."

"I'm glad that you have learned a lesson from my story," smiled his mother. "Size doesn't count. And that is true of people as well as animals. It is the brave heart that helps one to win, whether the body surrounding that heart is large or small."

Heather's Birthday

A great steamship, the "General Slocum," was docked at its East River pier in New York, its sides gleaming white in the morning sunshine and the smoke slowly curling from its huge smokestacks. Deck hands were busy scouring the decks, polishing the brass railings, and sprucing up the ship for an excursion scheduled for that day.

It was to be an outing for Christian young people and children, and all who wished to join the group were urged to be at the pier before ten o'clock that morning, at which time the steamer was to leave the dock.

"Heather!" Becky asked, "Did you hear about that wonderful trip down Long Island Sound on the 'General Slocum'? I've been begging Mom to let me go ever since I heard about it, and she has finally said that I may if your parents allow you to go, too. Won't you come?"

"I don't know, Becky. How much would it cost?"

"Only fifty cents for children, and it is to be an all-day excursion. Think of that! There will be music and games, and we will have our lunch with us, of course. Then there will be just hundreds and hundreds of people on the boat. I love a big crowd if I have a friend along. Please hurry, Heather, and find out if you can get permission to go."

"OK, Becky. I'll go and see what my parents think, and I'll let you know. Today's my birthday, so I guess they'll let me go. We should hurry; the boat leaves in two hours."

Heather vanished, while Becky skipped back to have her mother begin fixing the picnic lunch. She was sure her friend would soon be back with the happy news that they could go together.

Heather had just enough time to tell her parents about the excursion in glowing terms, before she received a firm refusal.

"I couldn't let you go away like that, my love," said her father. "It's never safe for a child to go out alone in a large crowd. Something could easily happen to you while you are off for a day like that. Think of it, most of the company would be entire strangers to you, with no interest in what you do or what becomes of you. I'm sorry to say no, but no it must be this time."

"But Dad," protested Heather, "with a big crowd, that's all the more reason why it is safe. What could happen anyway, with all those people around? It is the finest excursion ship there is, and it surely has plenty of life preservers. Besides, there will be no fog on this sunshiny day. There just couldn't be an accident. And remember, this is my birthday!"

"I'm sorry to disappoint you," said Dad, "and especially on your birthday, but I don't think it is best. One never can foresee the difficulties that may arise on a large, crowded steamer like that."

“Oh, Mom, can’t I go? You will let me, won’t you?” begged Heather. “Dad just doesn’t understand. I am certainly old enough to take care of myself—twelve years old, and going on thirteen. When am I ever going to learn to go places and to do things by myself, if I am always tied to someone’s apron strings?”

“Dad is right,” said mother quietly. “You can trust his judgment, dear; so run along now, and let’s hear no more about it. Sometime soon we shall try to plan a boat ride for all of us under more favorable conditions.”

“Well, I s’pose I can’t go then. Becky won’t like that one bit, because if I don’t go, she will have to stay at home, too. Isn’t there any chance you’ll change your mind?”

“No, the matter is settled. Someday you will learn that we have your best good at heart in the decisions we make for you. You may not always see why, but try to trust us, Heather.”

Becky’s mother was inwardly very much relieved to learn that her neighbor had failed to give her consent to the excursion trip. She herself had been very reluctant to grant permission to her own little girl, even on the condition that she be accompanied by her friend. So the matter was quickly dismissed by both girls, and instead of the boat ride, they took their picnic lunch to Bronx Park with Heather’s mother. They had a fine time together, and soon forgot about the disappointment of the morning.

When they left the park about the middle of the afternoon, they were startled by the excitement in the streets. Newsboys appeared everywhere, shouting, “Extra! Extra! read all about it. Steamer ‘General Slocum’ sinks!”

“What is it? What are they saying?” cried Heather, clutching Becky’s arm, as they picked their way through the streets.

“I think I heard the words, ‘Steamer “General Slocum,” ’ girls, “ said Heather’s mom, “but I’m not sure what else. Let’s buy a paper and see what it is, for an extra usually means something serious has happened.”

It was not until her dad came home that evening that Heather heard the details of the terrible disaster. While he read the account of all the tragic happenings, she sat listening with strained attention, never taking her eyes from his face.

The excursion steamer had left its pier on schedule that morning, and was well under way with its cargo of more than 1,300 persons, when the cry of “Fire! Fire!” pierced the air. In an instant there was mad panic on board the “General Slocum.” Being constructed of wood, the vessel was very quickly enveloped in flames. Shrieks and moans of despair rose from every part of the doomed ship; and hundreds, crazed with fear, leaped into the river to their death.

“Lower the lifeboats!” shouted the captain, above the terrific din. But the crew was not well disciplined, and besides, how pitifully few boats there were in comparison with the great throng of human beings on board. There was only one hope of escape for the majority of those still on the ship. If they were to be saved, it must be by means of the life preservers. Each fought frantically to secure the needed help before being forced to abandon the flaming vessel. But alas! The one means, which might have meant safety, proved all but worthless; for instead of being made of cork as they should have been, it was reported that the life preservers were filled with sawdust. “Criminal negligence,” said the judge later, when he sentenced the captain to ten years in the penitentiary.

One of the saddest things in the whole tragic experience was that the passengers who were drowned in the East River, or burned, lost their lives within sight of the shore. So near safety, yet lost. And then a weary search followed, when throngs of friends and loved ones crowded down to the riverbank to identify the bodies that were washed ashore. No words can describe the sorrow of mothers and fathers whose children could not be found; the agony of friends who would never again see the friends with whom they had parted only that morning.

Heather’s heart almost stood still when she realized that but for her parents’ decision, she, too, might have been among the missing, lost in the churning waters of the East River or in the flames of the burning vessel.

When her father finished reading, he turned towards her, fixing his eyes earnestly upon her. “Little daughter,” he said tenderly, “you are spared to us, when many a home is dark tonight because it has lost its most precious treasure. How very grateful we are that we still have you, dear.”

Heather’s eyes filled with tears as she slipped her hand into his and said, “How glad I am for such a wise mom and dad.”

(Note: The “General Slocum” burned and sank in New York’s East River on June 15, 1904. Over 1,000 lives were lost, most of them women and children.)

Is The Message Getting Through?

Is that voice coming to you clear and strong? Are you connected so that the message gets through?

Certain spiders that weave intricate orb webs attach a signal thread from the center of the web to their hidden retreat. At all times that line is grasped in the spider's claws.

Fabre, the great French naturalist, decided to test how much the spider depended on this "telegraph wire." He placed a large dragonfly, a tempting meal for the spider, in the center of the web. The web vibrated violently from its struggles. Immediately the spider, hidden in the foliage, came running down her signal line. Binding the dragonfly with silk strands, she dragged him back to her hiding place, and enjoyed her succulent meal.

A few days later Fabre cut the communication thread, and then placed another dragonfly in the net. The web shook constantly as the insect struggled long and hard, but the spider didn't appear. The telegraph wire dangled uselessly. Though the spider held the other end of the line in its claw, the message didn't get through. After dark the hungry spider made her routine check of the web. She found it torn and in ruins. In the center was the dragonfly, which she ate on the spot before repairing her web.

When the wind blows, the spider takes no notice of the web shaking. Only when an insect arrives does she come. Listening with her leg, she decodes the messages, interpreting them correctly.

Is the voice of God getting through to you? Many have become deaf or insensible to the counsels and reproofs from God. The warnings are given, but they don't feel the tug. The devil has cut the strands. Sin no longer appears sinful. Asleep, deceived, whatever the cause, they have become separated from the only control of their life. They are no longer connected with Jesus. Check your conscience today. Is it intact, or has the enemy cut it and you are unaware that communications aren't getting through?

Julia's Mysterious Missionary Money

During the American Civil War, a loving, cheerful girl named Julia lived in a small town in New York State. She grew up in a large, rambling old house, happy and carefree with her parents and brothers. Guests loved to visit this home because it had plenty of room, and they were always treated with hospitality and kindness.

President Abraham Lincoln was one of the guests who liked visiting this home from time-to-time. Julia was always delighted when he came for an overnight stay, because he was so kind and had lots of interesting stories to tell. She used to like to sit on his lap and talk to him. She called him "Uncle Abe," and he called her "Sissy."

During one of the President's visits, the family gathered in the living room for the evening. Julia was counting the money in her missionary box. Mr. Lincoln watched her.

"What are you doing over there?" he asked, with friendly interest.

"I'm counting my missionary money, Uncle Abe," Julia answered.

Mr. Lincoln pulled out a coin and held it toward Julia. But she pulled her box away, shaking her head. "Oh, no, I can't take that, Uncle Abe. I have to earn all the money I put in this box," she said emphatically.

"Is that so?" replied Mr. Lincoln, thoughtfully. Then he put the coin back in his pocket.

The next day, as he got ready for his train back to Washington, D.C., he said, "I wonder if you'd walk down to the depot with me, Sissy?"

"Oh, yes, I'd love to!" cried Julia, as she ran for her hat.

As they started down the street together, Abraham Lincoln changed his suitcase to the hand that was on Julia's side next to him. The suitcase had two handles. As he looked down from his great height at his little companion, he asked, do you suppose you could help me carry my suitcase, Julia? It's pretty heavy."

Julia was a little surprised. Uncle Abe had never before asked her to help him carry his suitcase. But she took one of the handles, and they carried Lincoln's luggage between them to the depot, talking and laughing along the way. At the depot, the President took his suitcase and pulled a shiny coin out of his pocket, holding it out to his little friend.

"There, Julia," he said, "Now you have earned your missionary money."

Julia was surprised, because she never saw her helpful deed for Mr. Lincoln as work, but as a delightful privilege that made her glow all over. But then she figured, "I suppose I really have

earned this penny." She also saw that this was his carefully planned way of contributing to her missionary fund.

"O, thank you, Uncle Abe!" she exclaimed joyfully.

Then he went away on the train, and Julia ran home, tightly clutching her shiny coin fresh from the President's hand. She thought it was the very brightest penny she had ever seen, and hurried to put it in her missionary box where it would be safe.

Next week at church, when the children's missionary boxes were opened, Julia's teacher called her into another room. There sat the superintendent with her father and one of her brothers. And on a table before them was her missionary box. Everyone looked very serious and solemn.

"Julia, how much money did you have in your missionary box?" asked the superintendent.

"Eighty-two cents," she answered.

"I knew it was a mistake. It's not her box," said her father with some relief.

Julia was really puzzled by now and a little afraid of all this serious concern about her missionary box.

"Are you sure that was all you had – just eighty-two cents? Where did this come from?" the superintendent asked, holding up the bright penny that President Lincoln had given her.

"Oh," exclaimed Julia, "that's the money Uncle Abe gave me!" The shiny coin was a five-dollar gold piece.

Murder! Horror!

The pale-cream larva of the ichneumon fly on the back of a spider looks harmless. Though its sharp, hooked little teeth have pierced the skin, the spider continues to spin its web, devour its prey, and lay its eggs. But it is no longer healthy and free. Its doom is sealed, for the tiny larva steadily gains strength and size from the vital juices it sucks from the spider. Not until the larva is almost full grown does the spider show visible signs of weakness. She begins to make sudden, aimless rushes around her web, becomes listless, neglects to repair her web or does the job badly. Indifferent to the juicy insects caught in her web, she doesn't bother to eat them. The end is near. Finally, the larva, now fully grown, murders its host and eats the corpse.

What a horrible way to die, yet many youth choose equal horrors. The spider can't help itself. These young people can. For the thrill of a "trip" away from the real works, a "kick" or a "high," many become dependent on drugs. Friends urge them to experience pep pills, marijuana, or "crack cocaine." They do it from curiosity or perhaps to escape unpleasant reality, thinking no harm will result. Already the sharp, hooked teeth have become imbedded. If they have a tendency to run away from life's problems they find delight in this easy way. Soon, like the spider, they are unable to make decisions, unable to concentrate or get up in the morning, without ambition, become lazy, and lose their appetite. They drop out of school; their personal habits and appearance begin to change. They become emotionally unstable, lose their jobs, and develop a "so what" attitude to authority. All this from marijuana, the drug that was supposed to bring delight, but instead brought progressive deterioration mentally, physically, and morally.

Young friends, you are slaves to whom you obey. If that slave is sin, be it drug abuse or something else, the result is death sooner or later. That momentary delight is a vicious delusion.

Nature's Masks

Large pink orchids were growing along the pathway. Stopping to admire an especially lovely one, scientist Edward Ross noticed it move. When he touched it the “orchid” walked away.

This Malayan praying mantis so closely mimics the beautiful flower that even the details of its body are like the lovely pink orchid. Its legs are flanked by large pink petals. A green section of its thorax looks like part of the stem, and occasional brown markings resemble wilted areas. When a breeze is blowing, the mantis even sways in imitation of the orchid blossoms. This deceitful guise serves the insect’s purpose, for when a butterfly alights to feed on the nectar, the so-called “flower” strikes with lightning speed, seizing its prey in its cruelly spiked pink forelegs. Then good-bye butterfly!

A missionary’s Singapore home, built above ground, has sand underneath. While playing there one day, the son of the missionary, called him to see the tiny funnel-shaped pits with steep sides. Two innocent-looking jaws protruded from the center of each tiny pit. They watched an ant, scurrying along, rush over the edge and slide downward. Struggling frantically, it was hit by a jet of sand that knocked it down to the fatal jaws of the hidden ant lion. Another victim of deception.

We’ve watched deception along the ocean shores. Hermit crabs looking like the marine shells they occupy, speed across the sand while stalking their prey. Other crabs hang bits of colorful sponge mask just the right size to fit, and holds it in place by a special pair of legs. Their unwary prey is soon clasped in the “sponge’s” sharp claws.

Satan, the master deceiver, has taught man to make that which is deadly appear innocent. The basic human need to be accepted by others may lead young people to make popularity and the approval of friends their supreme goal in life. Putting God aside, they listen to the deceiver, who sometimes speaks through friends. By talking and acting what they don’t really believe, they begin to change. Deception becomes their way of life, until they themselves are deceived.

Jesus has the answer. Be genuine. Then no man can deceive you.

Not Forgotten

During the American Civil War a young soldier lay wounded in a hospital far from home. As he grew worse each day, he felt that his only hope of recovery was to be with his family.

One morning President Lincoln visited the hospital to comfort the wounded men. As the homesick soldier watched the president, he saw how kindly he treated every man, passing by none without some fatherly expression of interest. He decided that when the president approached his bed, he would ask him a favor.

Finally his turn came. President Lincoln asked the soldier, "Are you comfortable?"

He answered, "Not so comfortable as I would be, Mr. President, if I were back home."

"What's your name?" asked Lincoln.

"Samuel Stover, Company H, 2nd Maryland Volunteers," he quickly replied, hope rising in his heart.

The president looked at the young man for a few moments, gave him a friendly nod, and continued through the ward, visiting every patient.

Private Stover kept a close watch on the president until he left the hospital ward. He was dismayed that, after seeing so many men, Lincoln hadn't jotted down his name or taken a single note. Sinking hopelessly back into his bed, Private Stover was certain that he would never see his family again.

How surprised he was a few days later when an order came in Lincoln's own handwriting to transfer Private Stover of Company H, 2nd Maryland Volunteers to the military hospital at Annapolis, his hometown!

Young Stover got better under his family's care at the new hospital. Years later he said, "It has always been a mystery to me that a man with so much to think of should keep in mind the name, company and regiment of a private soldier and care about his need."

Lincoln's kindness to the soldier is a miniature illustration of the loving, deeply personal interest God has in every one of us. He knows our cares and needs, including the needs we're not even aware of. He doesn't have to take notes to remember our lives and burdens, because He says in the Scriptures that our names are written on the palms of His hands, and that we are set as a seal upon His heart, and as gems in His crown. See Isaiah 49:16; Song of Solomon 8:6; Zechariah 9:16. We may come to God with our prayers, and He will hear us, and send us merciful and loving answers far beyond our expectations.

Orphan Girl Becomes Queen

Esther 2:2-17

There must have been a lot of excitement in Persia those days. Every girl from India to Cush, in all the 127 provinces of the empire, was talking about the king's search for a new queen. Everyone hoped she would be the one to be chosen. And you may be sure that every mother was certain her daughter was the most worthy for this high honor.

By the king's command, beauty contests, or something similar, were held in every province, and the loveliest girls were given a free trip to Susa for the king's inspection.

As more and more girls arrived at the palace, Mordecai had an idea. Why, his Esther was far more beautiful than any of these young ladies from Aram, Egypt, Arabia, and other parts of the country. They didn't stand a chance beside his precious little star. They weren't in the same class. Esther was far and away the best-looking girl in the world.

"I'm sure you could win," he told her one day, after seeing some of the latest arrivals. "You're so much lovelier than any of the others. Why not try and see what happens? It could be that God wants you to be queen."

Finally Esther agreed, and she "was taken to the King's palace and entrusted to Hegai, who had charge of the harem." As Mordecai told her goodbye, he added one word of caution. "Don't tell anyone you are a Jewess," he said. "That might spoil everything."

"I won't," said Esther, and she was gone.

When Hegai saw Esther, he was so struck with her beauty that he felt sure she would be chosen queen. So he gave her the best rooms in the house of the women and seven maids to wait on her.

This was encouraging, but it didn't mean that Esther would be queen. After all, the king had to see all the other girls before he could make up his mind; and there might be someone else prettier than she.

As for poor Mordecai, he waited impatiently for news about his precious daughter. He felt certain that the king would choose her. How could he do otherwise? But if he didn't what would happen to her? Would she be allowed to come home again?

"Every day he walked back and forth near the courtyard of the harem to find out how Esther was and what was happening to her." Can't you see him pacing back and forth, looking up at the barred windows, hoping to get a glimpse of her face or a wave of her hand?

“O Esther, Esther, where are you?” I can hear him calling. “What has happened to you, my little star?”

Twelve months passed. Then one day Esther was called to meet the king. How excited she must have been! How hard she must have tried to look her very best! How she must have prayed for God’s help and guidance on this greatest day of her life!

Mordecai was waiting outside, you can be sure. And when Esther walked from the women’s house to meet the king, dressed in the finest robes the Persian court could supply and attended by all her lovely maidens, I can imagine he almost burst with pride. Such a beautiful dream she was! Onlookers in the corridors gasped in wonder as she passed by. Indeed she “won the favor of everyone who saw her.”

At last she came into “the royal residence,” and the king was overcome by her breathtaking beauty. It was a case of love at first sight. “Now the king was attracted to Esther more than to any of the other women, and she won his favor and approval more than any of the other virgins. So he set a royal crown on her head and made her queen.”

Sonar to the Rescue

The tiny voice box emits as many as 200 beeps a second as the brown bat homes in on an insect. Big ears pick up the sounds of returning echoes, and a brain weighing but milligrams computes the data and controls the hunter's speed and direction.

His cruising beeps are broadcast like an FM radio station at 100,000 cycles per second but are quickly scaled down to 40,000, 30,000 and 20,000 as he nears the target. It's at this point that the human ear can pick up his beeps.

Brown bats judge direction by comparing the echo at one ear with that at the other. Range to a target or barrier is judged by sensing the time delay between the outgoing pulse and the echo. Your science book may refer to this as sonar.

The Creator made bats so that some send out ten rhythmic clicks a second, which is sufficient to guide them in flight. This increased to a buzz of 200 a second, improving his accuracy as he approaches the target meal. Suppose that a mosquito dinner is but six inches from the bat's mouth. The time delay for the sound to make a round trip is about a thousandth of a second. This is time enough for the bat to swoop to the attack - a feat of nature that man with all his electronic skill cannot equal. But do not be misled - the brown bat does not catch his food in his mouth. He uses the stretched-out skin of his tail as a scoop, transfers the prey to his mouth, changes direction, and dives away to enjoy the morsel.

The unpredictable flight of bats against the evening sky is actually their skillful pursuit of darting insects. Motion pictures have shown a bat catching two flies in half a second. Another gobbled as many as 220 of the insects in fifteen minutes.

The Creator provided the bat with a magnificent listening device to aid in his search for food. God is concerned about you too. That's why He told you not to worry about your need for food and clothing. If you will listen for His directions He will provide more than you need.

Spider Silk

For its size, spider silk is one of the strongest materials known. Large insects are held firmly in seemingly fragile webs, and the spiders suspend themselves by one strand. Some tropical spiders weave webs that are as much as six feet in diameter. These giant webs are used as nets, and are capable of holding three or four pounds of fish.

Depending on the species, a spider has six or eight spinnerets, fingerlike organs that produce threads of silk from the secretion of the silk glands inside the abdomen. The various silk glands secrete different kinds of silk, each of which may be used for a specific purpose such as parts of the web or the egg cocoon.

Spider silk will stretch one fifth of its length before breaking. Thus the insect may safely launch itself without danger of its dragline snapping. As a spider walks around, it plays out this dragline from the spinnerets, attaching it at various spots on his travels. When the spider climbs up the dragline, it catches the strand on one of its legs and rolls it into a ball. This ball is either discarded, or, if the spider is hungry, is eaten and recycled.

It was once believed that spider silk could be woven into clothing, but this is not practical, because thousands of spiders would be needed to produce one pound of usable silk. But today spider silk is used for the cross hairs and lines of reference in various optical instruments such as telescopes, levels, and surveying equipment.

Spider's silk is relatively strong, yet, when we consider the many, far greater forces in the world that can destroy it, we realize, as our text suggests, that it is frail indeed. So trusting in our own strength to survive in a world of sin is like trusting in a spider's web. We may say that our will to do right is strong, but if we trust to that will to be good we will find that Satan can snap it as easily as we break a spider's web. So "it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man" (Psalm 118:8).

Spider Traps

by James A. Tucker - From Windows On God's World There is a species of spider that carries a net spread between its hind legs. When this spider spots a potential meal, it launches itself into the air with legs spread and nets its victim as it lands. Another spider "fishes" with a long strand of gluelike substance. Hanging from a twig, the spider lets down the strand, then pulls it up from time to time to eat any insects that have become stuck to the glue. Another species throws out strands of glue-covered silk that fasten its victims to the ground.

Another spider, the trap-door spider, lives in an underground burrow, keeping its hinged door shut tightly against enemies. When its lunch walks by, it jumps out quicker than you can blink, grabs its prey, and retreats into its burrow, pulling the trap door shut over its head. Still another spider waits under a silken net. When an insect steps on top of the net, the spider reaches up, grabs and pulls its prey down through the silk.

There are also spiders that live off other spiders. One waits in the web of another and eats the food that is ensnared there. Another resembles the ants it lives with. By living with ants it escapes pests that bother it but do not bother ants.

There is still another spider that doesn't use its web or silk at all, but ejects a glob of sticky goo manufactured in its mouth. When this strikes its prey the substance hardens, rendering the insect unable to defend itself.

There are about as many kinds of spider snares as there are spiders. And there are about as many varieties of ways that Satan uses to trap us, as there are people.

If it is all that bad, we may be tempted to think, is there much use of our being on guard? We can't keep from being trapped in some way. But we can. Jesus has given us the Bible, the Holy Spirit, and angels to keep us from being snared.

The Aqua-Lung Spider

While all the relative of the aqua-lung spider of Europe and Asia live comfortably on land, he chooses to make his home under water. Like other spiders, the aqua-lung breathes air, so it must have a ready supply under the surface of the water. To provide the needed air, he spins a web tent under water, then goes to the surface to grab an air bubble. He carries the bubble down and releases it under the tent where it joins other bubbles to form an air pocket. He adds bubbles until he has a big bubble large enough to crawl into to carry on his activities.

When it comes time to mate and raise a family, the male and female aqua-lung spiders build bubble tents side by side and the female builds a third bubble room upstairs for the eggs. Each spiderling is given a tiny bubble of air as a start in life, without which it would die. Soon he swims to the surface for a new supply of air and joins the spider force of "frog men."

Aqua-lung spiders feed chiefly on small fish, which they capture and take to their diving bell to eat. They do not catch the fish in their webs, as some land spiders catch insect prey. Instead they use threads as telegraph lines. When a potential meal brushes against one of these threads, the movement signals the spider, then it quickly moves into action to capture the prey.

When away from his tent, an aqua-lung spider must carry an air bubble with him. The placing of that bubble is extremely important. He breathes through tiny pores in his abdomen, so the bubble must totally engulf that part of the body, serving as a kind of oxygen mask. If you were to duplicate the spider's method of underwater survival, you would swim to the surface of the water, grab an air bubble somewhat larger than your head and then put your head into it to breathe the air.

Isn't it amazing the way God created such a great variety of life on our earth, then gave each the wisdom and know-how to live?

The Arrow-Poison Frog

The most beautiful frogs in the world are so deadly that the natives of Central and South America use the poison from their bodies to paint the tips of their arrows. These frogs, appropriately called arrow-poison frogs, are found only in tropical America. One of them inhabits the island of Cuba. It is the world's smallest frog, measuring less than one-half inch in length.

The striking beauty of these frogs, appearing in such colors as yellows, reds, emerald green, and black, is thought to be a flash of warning to all predators. If an animal preys on the beautiful frog, the result is certain death.

The kokoi frog, an arrow-poison type that lives in Colombia, contains in its body the most powerful poison known to man. One one-hundred-thousandth of an ounce of it is enough to kill a man. No wonder it has been said that simply to be pricked by the tip of one of the Indians' poison arrow is enough to kill you.

The poison from these frogs has just recently been found to possess a very useful drug that may actually save life. This chemical acts much like the chemical your body produces in the adrenal gland that is very important to the healthy functioning of your nervous system. Wouldn't it be exciting if the arrow-poison frog were to become a life-saving animal instead of such a messenger of death? It all depends on how it is used.

It was much the same way when the death angel passed over Egypt. For some it meant death. But for those who believed, it meant life and release from slavery. Again, those in the wilderness who looked upon the cross, lived; those who scoffed and refused, died. God's way is beautiful, but it can't be tampered with and twisted to fit our own ideas of what is best. It is best in the simple way that God presents it. When we believe in Jesus, we pass from a condition bringing death, to a condition bring everlasting life.

The Bearded Dragon

A two-foot-long lizard with a large head, whiplike tail, and a body covered with spines certainly deserves the name "dragon." The bearded dragon is a resident of Australia, living in sparse forests, deserts, and even along the shores.

The body of the bearded dragon is bulkier than that of other lizards, but it can stand greater temperature extremes than other lizards. Actually, the daily pattern of the bearded dragon is determined by temperature changes from sunrise to sunset.

During the cool morning hours, the reptile turns its back to the sun and flattens its body to receive as much of the sun's warmth as possible. As the day grows warmer, it begins to hunt. As the temperature increases, the animal may run along on its hind legs, exposing more of its body to cooling air. Eventually, however, it must find shade, where it will spend the hottest hours of the day. When the air begins to cool, the lizard emerges, raises its tail to keep it off the ground, which is still hot, and moves around on the toes of its forelegs and the heels of its hind legs. It faces the sun to reduce the heat striking its body.

In spite of its large size and ferocious appearance, the bearded dragon prefers to hide from danger than fight. Even when cornered, it swells its neck pouch, opens its mouth to show the yellow inside, and hisses in a way that usually scares off predators and rivals. Its bite is used, instead, on the insects, smaller lizards, and snakes that make up its diet.

How different in character is this dragon from the one of our text, Satan. He is a bold, deadly enemy who uses every trick of the trade to bring about our eternal loss. How good it is that Jesus has defeated him, and so made it possible for us to defeat him also.

The Mother Spider

Even though some people cringe at the thought of a spider, this eight-legged creature is one of the most interesting in the world. All spiders produce silk, but not all of them spin webs. One of the unique characteristics of spiders is the way webless spider mothers care for their young. Tiny white eggs are encased in a wrapping of silk and carried around by the mother. The whole bundle is attached to the mother's abdomen, as she goes about her daily business, the eggs are dragged along behind her. In order that the bundle will not be too heavy, some of the hunting spiders lay only a few eggs at a time. Others hang the wrapped eggs on a twig while they hunt. Some spider mothers eat very little or nothing at all during the two weeks or so that the eggs are incubating.

A mother spider will fight fiercely to defend her egg cases or babies. But she will not fight unless she has possession of the young or the eggs. She needs a reason to fight, and her babies are more than enough. But if you take away her bundle she may go limp, as if dazed. Give it back to her, and she will rear up on her two pair of back legs while throwing tiny punches with the front two pair. If something else is substituted in the bundle for her eggs, such as a piece of popcorn or a wad of paper, she will continue to fight as though her eggs were in her possession. It doesn't seem to matter what the bundle contains so long as she has it. Of course, the reason is that the mother spider is always going to have spider eggs in her bundle (naturalists aren't going to meddle very often), so she doesn't need to recognize anything else.

We have seen that a mother spider, deprived of her children, stops fighting for them and, no doubt, soon forgets about them. So, as our text says, a human mother may forget her baby. But God never forgets us. No matter how far we may be removed from Him spiritually, He will always try to bring us back as long as there is any possibility.

The Roseate Spoonbill

At the turn of this century, fashionable women used the plumes of birds for ornamentation on their hats and clothes. In some cases, whole birds were used. Many species were in danger of being wiped out for their feathers.

One of the most beautiful birds that faced extinction was the roseate spoonbill - a large, pink and white bird with vivid red shoulders. It gets its name from its large red shoulders and flat, spoon-shaped bill that it uses to feed in the muck of the ponds and shallow lagoons where it lives. Through stringent conservation techniques, the bird has made a remarkable comeback.

Nature has provided for the helplessness of the young spoonbill in its struggle for survival. Constant shelter is found in the heavy cover of mangrove trees under which the parent birds build their nests. There the young are carefully tended until they are able to fly down to the shallow water where food is available.

A scientist once wanted to study the nesting habits of spoonbills. He marked with blue paint the rims of those nests he was going to observe. Thus the breasts of the birds would automatically be marked when they settled on the eggs. This method had worked with other species of birds but it didn't work so well in this case. When the male parent approached the freshly painted nest, he seemed to study the painted area intently and then dropped down to make sure the eggs were untouched. After this, he set about removing the painted sticks from the nest, picking them up carefully by the unpainted ends. He took out every stick with even the least trace of paint and then settled on the eggs.

Just as that spoonbill wouldn't spoil its natural beauty with paint, so we maintain our natural appearance and cultivate an inner beauty that makes even the homeliest person beautiful.

The Shiny Dime

Bobby and Billy were twins. They looked so much alike that people often had to look twice to see which was Bobby and which was Billy. But when Mom gave them each an apple, they didn't act a bit like twins. Billy always grabbed for the larger one.

Although Mom had tried hard to get Billy not to be so selfish, nothing seemed to do any good. But Bobby never seemed to mind having the smaller share of things, and would always let his brother have anything he wanted.

As father watched the boys, he felt really bad to see Billy becoming so selfish. He tried to think of some way to teach him a lesson he would never forget. Christmas was approaching and he had a strategy. Looking over his coin collection he selected an old dime. Then he called the twins in from their play and said, "I wonder if there are two boys who would be willing to clean up the basement for Daddy."

"Oh Daddy, I don't want to clean it up! I'm making a kite, and it's almost done," said Billy. "Let's go ahead and do it," said Bobby. "We can finish our kites later."

"I'll give each of you a dime when the basement is cleaned," Daddy promised, and then went off to visit a neighbor. When he came back, the basement was spick and span, and the twins were waiting for their dimes.

"Here they are," said Daddy, as he held out the dimes. One was the old one that he had taken from his coin collection, and the other was a shiny new dime. Billy pounced on the shiny dime and left the old one for Bobby.

What are you going to do with your dimes, boys? Are you going to put them in your banks? Daddy asked.

"I'm going to buy two striped peppermint canes with mine," Billy promptly answered. Bobby quickly responded, "I like candy canes, too, but, I think I'll surprise Mother with a new rug for the family room for Christmas. She said just today that the old rug is wearing out."

"Huh!" said Billy, "it would take more than one dime to get a good rug." "Would it, Daddy?" asked Bobby. "I really want to get a new rug for Mom and I saw such a nice one in the store window." "I think that may be possible," said Daddy. "I'll tell you a secret. Bring your dimes here, both of you." Then Daddy began to tell them a story.

"You see, Bobby's dime is old; but yours, Billy, is brand new. Because Bobby's dime is old and rare, this one is worth \$50.00. You see some people collect coins, and many collectors want this particular dime. This coin, sold to an honest dealer, will buy a nice rug for your mother, and maybe some candy canes besides." And Daddy smiled "behind his face," as the twins called it when he looked serious, but with a twinkle in his eye.

"Aw, Daddy, my dime is hardly worth anything," complained Billy. "I don't think it's not a bit fair for Bobby to get such a good dime - one that's worth so much more than mine."

"Billy," said Daddy, "I gave you your choice of the dimes on purpose. Didn't you choose first, and take the shiny one and leave the old one for your brother, when I offered them to you?"

"Yes, I did, Daddy," said Billy, looking very much ashamed of himself.

"Don't you think this ought to help you to remember not to always take the best for yourself, and leave the poorest of everything for Bobby?" he asked. "Yes, I do," said Billy slowly. "I will try Daddy." "I'd like to remind you, Billy, what you've heard in Bible class, that Jesus, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor, so that we through His poverty might become spiritually rich. This includes you becoming generous, unselfish and cheerfully giving. It also means that we won't grab for the biggest, the best and the brightest for ourselves, but will lovingly give others first choice." That very afternoon Billy went down to the store and bought two candy canes. When he came back, he shyly held out one of them to Bobby. "What shall I do with it?" asked Bobby. "Eat it," said Billy. "You see," he explained, "we're going to be twins in everything after this - apples and dimes and candy canes and all!"

And Bobby, with Dad's help sold his dime for even more than \$50.00. Mom got her rug for Christmas, and together as a family they figured out how to use the rest of the money to help others less fortunate than themselves.

The Snake's Problem

Because the devil used a serpent to deceive Eve in the Garden of Eden, the reptile has been the subject of much abuse. Ellen White writes the following description of the serpent as it appeared before sin: "{It} was then one of the wisest and most beautiful creatures on the earth. It had wings, and while flying through the air presented an appearance of dazzling brightness, having the color and brilliancy of burnished gold." - Patriarchs and Prophets, page 53.

At the entrance of sin the serpent was cursed to crawl on its belly instead of being able to fly about through the trees as it once did.

But perhaps the snake has received far more condemnation as an animal than it deserves. It is used throughout the Bible as an illustration of sin, and there are many characteristics of snakes that suit such a description, but these traits are frequently referred to in terms of the actions or character of the devil. If we could separate the imputed characteristics of Satan from the simple living qualities of the animal, perhaps we could appreciate the value of snakes as fulfilling their part in the balance of nature.

There is one physical characteristic of snakes that offers a very interesting illustration of a trait of the devil in particular, and perhaps of human beings in general. Having no legs, a snake must depend on the large scales on its belly, called scutes, to get around. These scutes overlap in such a way that the creature can move forward but not backward.

Like the snake, after which he is named, Satan got to the place where he could not back down. Following the first stage of his rebellion in heaven, God offered to forgive Satan (then called Lucifer) if he would admit his wrong words and actions, and repent. He almost did, but pride, like the scutes of the snake, would not let him back up. We must learn a lesson from Satan's history since then.

The Spiders That Got Drunk

Not long ago a young scientist won first prize in a high school science fair with an exhibit of her experiments with spiders and their webs. Her project involved a comparison between the webs spun by normal spiders and those spun by spiders under the influence of alcohol.

At first the girl collected a number of common house spiders for her experiment, but she had difficulty with them. When she injected the wine directly into them, they all dropped dead. Then she adopted the plan of feeding wine-injected flies to the spiders. The spiders did not die, but they did not spin webs, either. Somewhat discouraged, she took her problem to her teacher and learned that house spiders are not much for making webs. They simply make strands of silk that are strung in all directions with no particular pattern. She was advised to find some of the common garden species, long known for their talent for constructing beautiful orb webs.

Thus encouraged, the girl again got busy with her project. She found a number of garden spiders and fed them wine-injected flies. This time her efforts were rewarded. The drunken spiders began to spin all sorts of wild and unorganized webs that did not at all resemble the intricate and near-perfect designs they were able to spin under normal circumstances.

After eating the spiked flies, a spider would begin spinning frantically, totally without method or reason. And the tipsy creature would keep on spinning without stopping until it passed out cold. The master weaver was confused at its ancient art. It and its web reminded one of the all-too-familiar "morning after the night before."

Each of us is weaving a pattern of life and we need all our abilities under control to do it properly. We will not be able to do this if we take into our bodies alcohol, or any other substance that wrongly affects us in any way. "Whosoever is deceived...{by those substances} is not wise."

The Toad That Changes Colors

In Africa there are toads that come in different colors and that can also change colors. Sometimes they are yellow and black, sometimes deep reddish-brown or mottled brown. At times they are a light-brown color. These changes indicate how wet their skin is or how upset they are. The skin color of these toads changes in much the same way that our skin color changes when we blush.

Just before they molt, the toads take on a grayish-brown color caused by dust sticking to the old skin. At this time they remain dull because their brighter colors are hidden under all the dust and old skin.

When molting time comes, the toads merely take deep breaths and puff up like balloons. Then their old skins split open and each toad climbs out clad in a new, beautiful coat of sensitive skin that can do all the color-changing again.

In addition to their abilities to change color, these toads sing in an interesting way. They utter a rhythmic series of "quir-rrr-rrr-whirr" sounds one toad will start singing during a period of silence, and then one by one others will join in - all in perfect rhythm - until the whole countryside is filled with the mechanical throbbing of their voices. Then all at once they stop, making the contrast of sudden total silence startling and difficult for visiting foreigners to get used to.

There are a number of animals that can change colors, but these toads are interesting in that when they get all dusty and crusty they aren't able to change anymore. Their coats are no longer delicate or pretty, and until they are rid of the old skin they are very ordinary looking.

The molting of the toads reminds us of the picture the apostle Paul draws for us in our text. By the working of the Holy Spirit the born-again person throws aside the old, ugly self, as it were, and emerges as a new person, prepared to show the beauty of Jesus.

The Tree That Bleeds

There are about six hundred species and varieties of eucalyptus trees, all but six of which are native only to Australia and only one is not found there. These trees, which may reach three hundred feet in height, grow as large forests only in a small area of Australia.

The trees have a number of ways to survive natural disasters such as fire, drought, and frost, but are not as long-lived as some of the oaks and conifers of the Northern Hemisphere. They seem to be more susceptible to fungus and termites than the very long-lived trees. Their long branches make them subject to severe wind damage, which exposes the inner wood to the attacks of fungus and boring insects that sometimes kill the tree. Eucalyptus trees live an average of two to four hundred years, with old ones reported to reach one thousand years of age.

Some species of eucalyptus, however, have a remarkable defense against insect and fungus invasions. As soon as an injury occurs to the tree, the injured area is flooded with a sticky red liquid called "kino." As the kino comes in contact with air, it hardens to a bright-red mass that seals the wound off from the elements and attacking enemies.

The liquid sometimes pours forth with such force that attacking insects are literally washed away and may even become trapped in the substance as it hardens.

In the Northern Hemisphere we see much the same thing in cone-bearing trees when a wound causes the tree to seal the area with a sticky white resin.

One day a Man - Jesus by name - was hanging on a tree when a Roman soldier thrust a spear into His side. The power of the blood that was thus shed is inconceivable. It repels all the forces of sin that would invade the heart of even the weakest of God's children. And it seals the life of those who accept Jesus, making it possible for them to grow up spiritually strong in Him.