

# THE BACKYARD CLUB



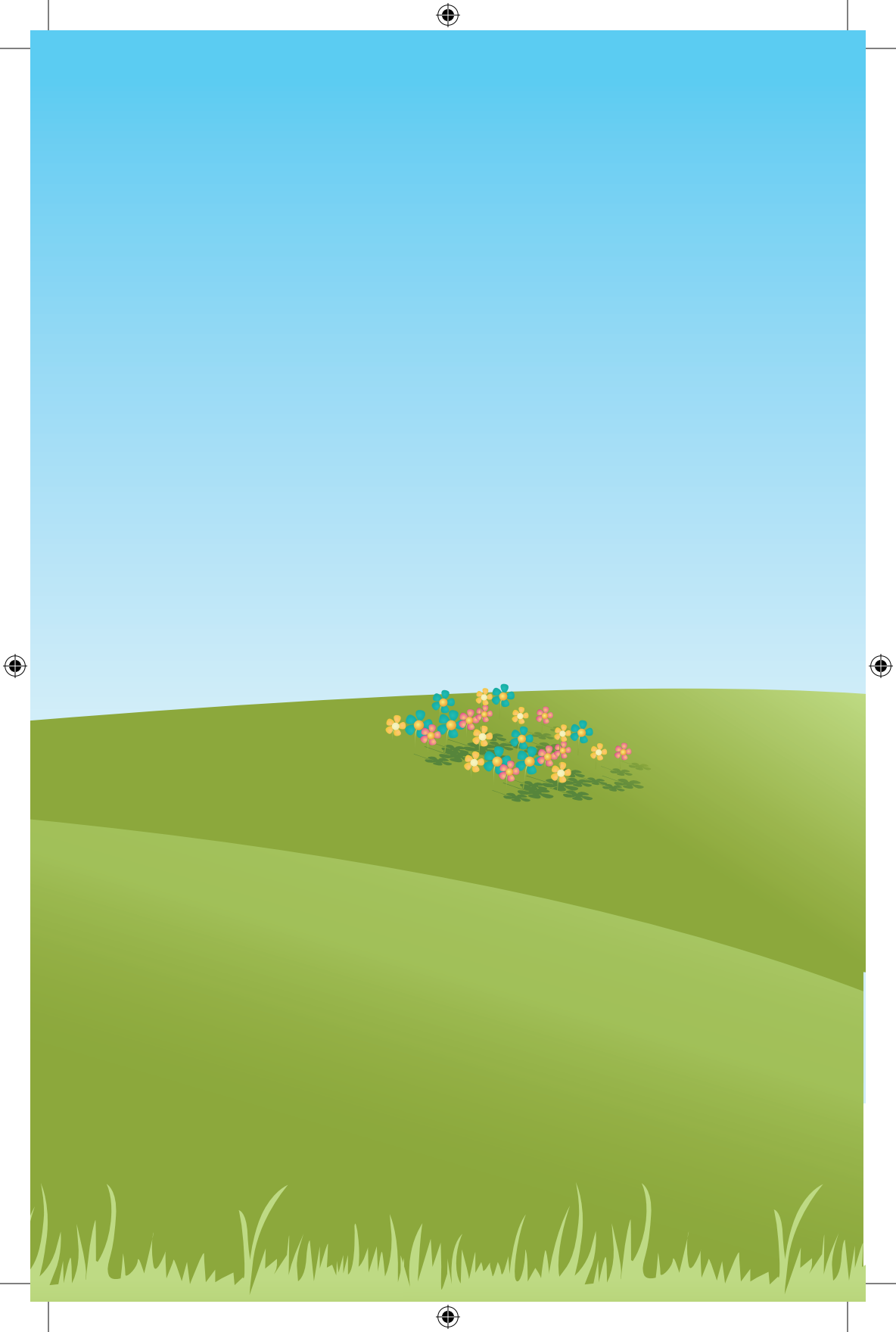
By V. Pat Farquharson






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The background features a light blue sky at the top, a brown tree branch with green leaves extending from the top right, and rolling green hills in the middle. At the bottom, there is a strip of green grass. The word "Introduction" is centered in the sky area.

# Introduction



We were born to be in community with one another, but it seems that the world in which we find ourselves today is not the community it once was, even 50 years ago. Neither is it the community that we all need. There is a pervasive sense of disconnectedness. We once had a sense of being a part of a whole family or a small neighborhood; we had a sense of belonging, of safety, and even of identity from those around us.

Now more and more families find themselves fractured relationally or strapped financially, feeling uncomfortably disconnected, often leaving their children to fend for themselves.

We were born to communicate with each other, but with the present pace of life, this communication is often missing or truncated to a quick email or text message. With the decline of community and the decrease in communication comes the increased risk that our children will suffer educationally, emotionally, and spiritually. We must do something to help them.

Research shows that even one caring adult in the life of a child can change the course of his or her life. When children feel that they are accepted and cared about, they become free to learn, to explore, to grow. Neighborhood Good News Clubs bring loving and caring adults into the lives of hurting and needy children and their families; they introduce the Gospel of Hope found in Jesus to replace their sad and lonely lives. I wish that I had found one in my early childhood. It was just what I needed to change my sad and lonely childhood. I pray the work done through them reaches many children for the Kingdom.

Andrea L. Taylor, Ph.D.  
Third Chapter Press  
Frisco, Texas  
August 2012

## chapter one – A Small District

In a small district there lived many families. There was the Brown family who lived across the street from the school library, the Willow family who lived on top of the hill, and many other families who lived on the hillside or across the river.

In this little district everyone knew each other. Some families were liked and others were not. If a family was not liked, it was because people thought they were not good examples for the district.

The Brown family was greatly loved because the parents (Jack and Joy) grew up in that community. They first met in elementary school a long time ago. The other students used to jeer and call Jack names. Joy felt sorry for him because the other students called Jack “roly-poly” since he was a little overweight.

When Joy went away to college, she had no idea how things would turn out for her. But that’s when she and Jack became friends. Joy went to Teachers College and Jack was a police officer who worked across the street from her school. They fell in love and soon became married.

The Brown’s had two daughters who were very smart. Everyone in the district knew how well the girls were doing in school. They were the talk of the town because of their good behavior and their good grades. Mr. and Mrs. Brown were very proud of their daughters. The family also went to church together on Sundays. They were like the star in the community—everyone looked up to them and wanted to be like them.

The Willow family was a bit different. The father lived and worked in the city and could only come home on weekends. When the dad was home the family had to do a lot of work around the house, because on Sunday night their father had to go back to the city to start working on Monday.

The four children were not happy at times because their mom was alone and would call them names if they didn’t do all the things that they were told to do. The children began to compare themselves with other children that they knew. The children thought that they weren’t good

enough since their mother called them names.

They always looked forward to the weekend when they could see their dad. Even though life was difficult for them, they all knew that their father and mother loved them and were doing their best for the family. The children always looked forward to the last Sunday in the month when they would all go to church, because their dad was the one who prepared the communion every last Sunday. The children especially liked to attend church because they didn't have to work in the yard that Sunday.

Across the river lived another family. People always talked about them because the mother was a single mom. The children only had a visiting father. They were often unsupervised and played in the street. The other parents in the district did not want their children to be friends with these children because they did not have the best example at home. The other children in the district obeyed their parents, but they were not happy because they liked the single mom's children.

The Brown's daughters asked, "Isn't there something we can do to help the other family?"

"You can pray for the family," said their mother, "because God loves them and wants them to have a better family life."

Mrs. Brown explained to her daughters that God was the one who made man and woman and it was God who first put the family together in Genesis 2:23-25. God's plan was for one man and one woman to be



married and stay together until death separates them.

“This very special plan was spoiled because of sin,” said Mrs. Brown.

She explained to her daughters that as a result, some people were now living together who weren’t married and that many of these couples also had children.

“This is neither God’s order nor plan for a family,” said Mrs. Brown. “This is what happened with the family that lives on the other side of the district. We love them and we are praying for God to change their lives—to help them see God’s plan.

“At first, we did not want for you to be friends with those children, but deep in our hearts your father and I knew that God did not want us to treat them like that.

“We don’t mind you playing with the girls, because God works through each of us; and for you to love them and pray for them, because God could one day answer our prayers and change everything in their lives,” Mrs. Brown said gently.

“God is powerful and He can do everything, so we will pray and God will do the work,” she said. “And one day, God will work out everything in the life of that family because we pray for them. From now on we can see this family through the eyes of hope.”

## CHAPTER TWO – A Negative Message

The single mom across the river had three children: Mary, Joe, and Sissy. The children spent a lot of time by themselves because their mom had to work hard to purchase food and pay the bills. Their father had recently left the family and moved away to a foreign country to follow his dream of living overseas.

With their father away, Mary, Joe, and Sissy felt all alone. Joe remembered the painful words his father used to say to him: *You’re*



worthless. You'll never amount to anything in life when you grow up. Joe missed his dad, but he didn't miss those negative words. They stuck in his brain. Because he was older than his sisters, he could remember more. Those words truly bothered his thoughts.

As the children grew older there were days when Mary and Joe didn't want to help at home because they felt so unloved and unwanted. There was a time when Joe thought of leaving home to go live with his uncle in the city.

Each evening after school, the kids would meet with their friends and play and have lots of fun before going home. Their mom had friends too, but they would sometimes keep her away from home. The children were not happy about that, because they missed their mom on those days.

*Nobody cares what I do, so I may as well do what I want to do,* Joe thought to himself.

Mary didn't have many friends to play with, so very soon she began playing with Joe's friends but that was not a good idea.

Mary wasn't happy. She wasn't able to play the types of games that she enjoyed. *I don't know what to do,* she thought to herself. *Maybe I'll take Sissy with me so that I will have someone to talk to.*

On the way home tears began to roll down Mary's cheeks. "If I only had somebody to love me, life would be different," she said quietly to herself.

"What about me?" Joe said to Mary. "I wish I had a father at home that I could talk to. I too, feel that nobody loves me and sometimes I think that I don't want to continue going to school. My best friend stopped going to school last year and he's my age. He's 11 years old just like I am, but I don't really want to do that. I want to finish school and go to college. I dream of that!"

"If dad comes to visit us, I want to prove to him that I can stay in school and not act like the other children who don't. If only I had a father that cared about me."

"Each time dad told me that I wouldn't amount to anything, I felt very sad inside. I wish I could tell someone how I feel. Now that dad is away we don't get to hear from him. I know that mom is very sad, too. I only want a home. I only want to do my best and stay in school. I only want for mom to be at home, more like how things were before. I'm glad that

mom decided for us to live by our selves. Dad told me that I'm going to end up in a prison for 11 year olds. Whenever he would tell me that, I felt so scared. I don't want that to happen to me!" Joe said.

## Chapter Three – Mother at Home

Sissy, Joe, and Mary were so surprised when they arrived home and realized that their mom was already there. She was wondering what kept them so late. They were so surprised; they couldn't answer for a minute. Then, Joe answered, "We're not late. This is the time we get home every evening."

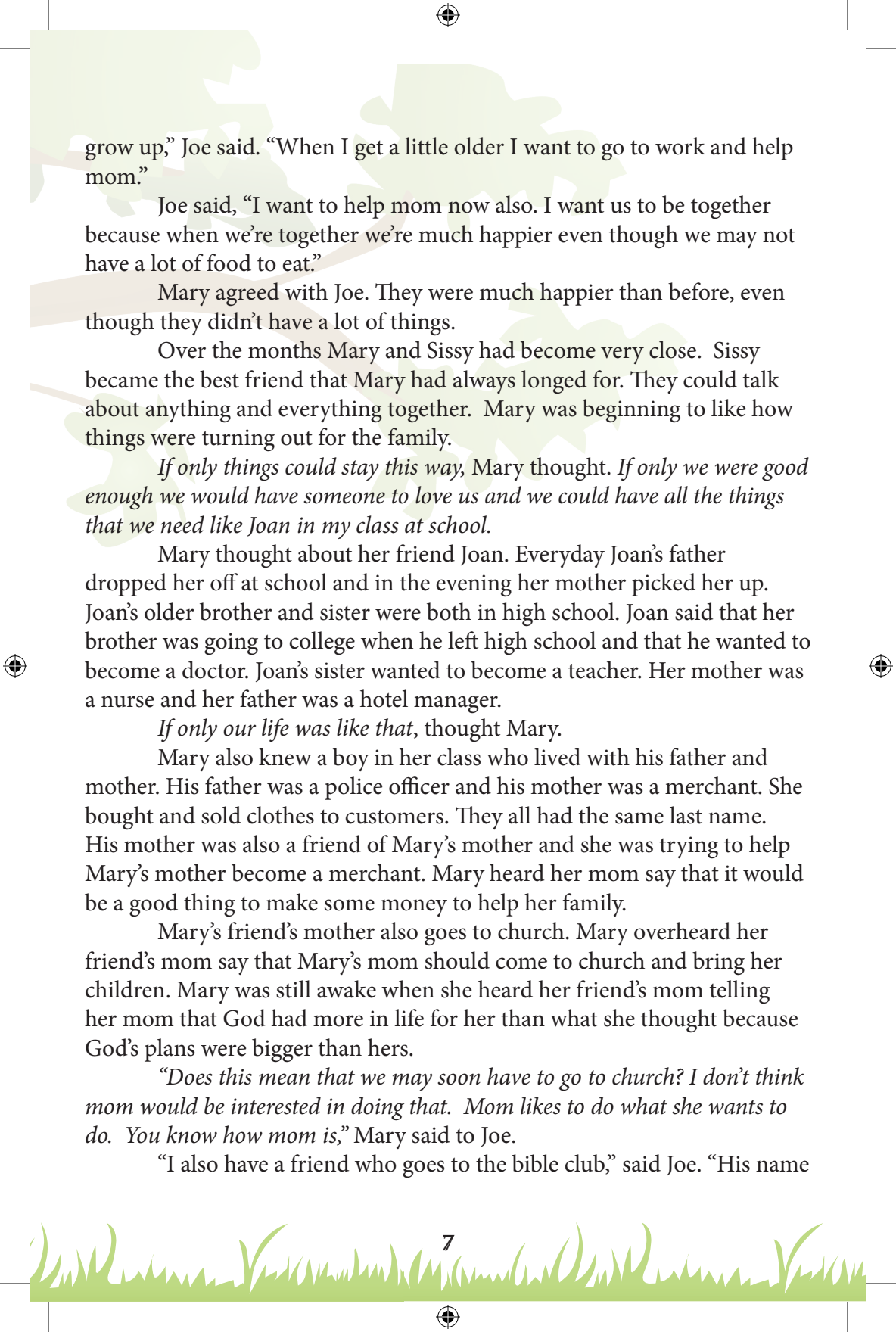
He could not understand why this evening was different from any other. "*Is mother beginning to pay some attention to us?*" they wondered. "*Could it be that things are now going to be different?*"

All of these thoughts began to flow in their minds. They knew they did not have a father that lived at home like their friends the Browns, whom they liked very much. In spite of that, they still wanted to be a family with their mother being home with them and being there for them. That's all they ever wanted.

Joe and Mary liked the idea that all four of them were going to be a happy little family someday. Mr. Brown told Joe that his family was praying for them and that God loves them. Joe, Mary, and Sissy were not sure what all that meant, but they really liked the idea.

As nightfall came and the family of four settled in for the evening, they did not have much but they seemed to be happy to be together. They all talked among themselves and talked about the type of family that they could be. They talked a lot about the beautiful stories that the Browns told them about their family and how Jesus loves us all. The children were very happy when they met the Brown family. Their words gave them a dream of what to expect as they grew older.

"I have always dreamed of having a happy home one day when I



grow up,” Joe said. “When I get a little older I want to go to work and help mom.”

Joe said, “I want to help mom now also. I want us to be together because when we’re together we’re much happier even though we may not have a lot of food to eat.”

Mary agreed with Joe. They were much happier than before, even though they didn’t have a lot of things.

Over the months Mary and Sissy had become very close. Sissy became the best friend that Mary had always longed for. They could talk about anything and everything together. Mary was beginning to like how things were turning out for the family.

*If only things could stay this way, Mary thought. If only we were good enough we would have someone to love us and we could have all the things that we need like Joan in my class at school.*

Mary thought about her friend Joan. Everyday Joan’s father dropped her off at school and in the evening her mother picked her up. Joan’s older brother and sister were both in high school. Joan said that her brother was going to college when he left high school and that he wanted to become a doctor. Joan’s sister wanted to become a teacher. Her mother was a nurse and her father was a hotel manager.

*If only our life was like that,* thought Mary.

Mary also knew a boy in her class who lived with his father and mother. His father was a police officer and his mother was a merchant. She bought and sold clothes to customers. They all had the same last name. His mother was also a friend of Mary’s mother and she was trying to help Mary’s mother become a merchant. Mary heard her mom say that it would be a good thing to make some money to help her family.

Mary’s friend’s mother also goes to church. Mary overheard her friend’s mom say that Mary’s mom should come to church and bring her children. Mary was still awake when she heard her friend’s mom telling her mom that God had more in life for her than what she thought because God’s plans were bigger than hers.

*“Does this mean that we may soon have to go to church? I don’t think mom would be interested in doing that. Mom likes to do what she wants to do. You know how mom is,”* Mary said to Joe.

“I also have a friend who goes to the bible club,” said Joe. “His name

is John. He does things differently than the rest of us.”

Joe really liked the way his friend lived. He thought he was cool.

“He doesn’t tell lies like the rest of us and he doesn’t leave school early. He waits until the bell rings and then he walks home from school,” said Joe. Of all the friends that Joe had, he liked John the most because when Joe was with him, Joe did not do the bad things that he did with his other friends.

*I don’t want to be like my other friends because they are all doing a lot of bad things that I know we should not be doing. My other friend, Ben, is only 11 years old like me, but he has some older friends and he says that he does not need to go to school. I don’t want to be like Ben because he has some bad friends,* thought Joe.

John’s dad was a police officer and he told Joe about children who were picked up off the street by the police because they were fighting.

*John told me that when he goes home in the evenings he and his sister do their homework together for the next day of school. I’ve never done any homework, all I do after school is go and hang out with my friends and come home late. Now that mother is coming home early, I think I want to go home after school,* thought Joe.

## Chapter Four – A Surprise Visitor

Mary heard her mother and Sissy come home. Her mother had taken Sissy to see her Aunt who was visiting from England. Mary ran inside with Joe to see her mother and Aunt Kate.

Aunt Kate was just saying goodbye when she came to greet her other niece and nephew. They all thought that Aunt Kate seemed very nice. They had not met her before because she lived in England and had not visited since before Joe, Mary, and Sissy were born.

Aunt Kate gave each of the children candy. She told their mom that she knew a lady in the district that she wanted their mom to meet. She told their mom that they were friends many years ago and that her friend

helped her to see life in a different way and that she wanted mom to get to know her, too. Their mom promised Aunt Kate that she would go and visit Aunt Kate's friend on her next day off.

With their mom being home more with the family, the children were beginning to be happy and were all becoming interested in other things at school such as sports for Joe.

## Chapter Five – Joe's Sports Adventure

Joe did not know how fast he could run until he had a try out a few weeks ago. He came in first. His teacher was very surprised that he had never noticed what a fast runner he had in his class. Joe was also very good at playing basketball.

He surprised everyone. No one knew that Joe had so many gifts because no one had taken the time, until Mr. Scott asked him to try out. Joe now stays after school for basketball and for track and field.

"I'm so proud of Joe," Mary said to Sissy.

"Me too," said Sissy. "We have such a good big brother. They are also saying that they want Joe to go to high school and even to college because he may one day be able to try out for our island. I would be so happy to see our brother do well and be in our newspaper."

As promised, their mom went to see the lady that their Auntie told her to see. They couldn't wait to hear what their mom had to say.

"I know Auntie likes the lady a lot and wants us all to meet her," said Sissy. "Her name is Miss Elsie and I heard that she has a club at her home. I heard some girls from my class talk about it and I think they like it."

## Chapter Six – Someone Special



On Friday morning their mother told all three children that they should all hurry home after school together, because she would be coming in later from work after stopping by to see Miss Elsie.


All the kids began to talk and wonder what that would mean for them. Joe was excited, because he had friends from his school that attended the club in the district and none of them were ever in trouble except for one boy in his class. He thought it very cool that all the other kids in the bible club stayed out of trouble, because all of his other friends were *always* in trouble.

The children were all very uncertain what their mom's visit to the lady would mean for all of them. They sat eagerly talking while they waited for their mother to come home from visiting the club.

"Here comes mother!" they said, excitedly.

Mother seemed just as usual, happy to see that they were all home, but did not discuss anything with them about her visit to the club. All the kids went to bed a bit disappointed that night.

The next morning was Saturday, the only day that the children had the chance of staying in bed late.



Somehow Joe was not very happy and everyone could see that something was wrong. Joe told Mary that he stayed awake for the most of the night because he was worried.

“What if what dad said really happens? What if I end up in jail when I get older?” Joe said.

Joe truly did not want that to happen to him, but didn't know what to do because the words he was accustomed to hearing were still lingering in his thoughts.

Their mother realized that something was different about Joe. She, too, was becoming concerned, because he was in his last year at the elementary school and if plans weren't made for him, he would soon be out of school and would be hanging out with the wrong crowd.

Their mother began to wonder if the things that she talked about with Miss Elsie were going to be too late for Joe. She began to hold on to every word that she was told and began to wonder what would be the best way for her to talk to the children. What would be the next step for her to take?

At last, she decided that she couldn't wait any longer because the longer she waited, the more difficult it would be for her to tell the children what she would like for them to do.

Their mother called all the children together, Joe, Mary, and Sissy. The children were on the edge of their seats as their mom started to speak.

“I've been thinking seriously about life and I want the best life for each of you,” she said gently. “I've made a lot of mistakes in my life and I don't want you to make the same ones. Aunt Kate told me about a lady who lives nearby who has a club. She wanted me to meet her.

“I went to meet her and she told me all about the club and the many children from the club who stayed in school and did well. Many of them did well in their exams after leaving elementary school and were able to move on to high school. I'm very happy to know that there is such a place not far from here,” said their mom.

As their mom spoke, Joe's eyes lit up for the first time. He said, “I also know children from my school who go to that club and they're not getting into trouble like all the other children.” Joe wondered if this club would be the light he was looking for in his life. Their mother continued on.

“The lady’s name is Miss Elsie. She teaches the children about Jesus,” she said. In truth, their mother was really not interested in Jesus. She simply wanted to see her children out of trouble and for them to better their lives.

“Miss Elsie told me that she does not force anyone to believe in Jesus. It’s a free decision that they could make if they wanted. What she did say, however, was that everything that she teaches is straight from the word of God—the bible—and that was what made all the difference in the children’s lives,” said their mom.

Joe told his mother that he was not interested either and that Jesus was for those who attend church and they did not. But the club was a Good News Club for everyone and they did not have to attend a church in order to join.

Their mother felt very comfortable sending the children to the club that was nearby. The older children who attended the club met on a Tuesday or Thursday. The younger ones had a different teacher, as did the boys.

Thursday, after school, Joe was very happy because he and his sisters were all going to the club. They were all attending the same day but his younger sisters would be having a different teacher than he would be having. Excitedly, they all attended the club for the first time. Joe only had one problem. He only wished that his teacher at the club were a man and not a lady.

You see Joe, was the only boy at home with mother, Mary, and Sissy. In his heart he was truly hoping that he would have a man to teach him at the club. They went again on Tuesday and all the boys and the girls gathered together for prayer. Then after the prayer Uncle Barry came in and took all the boys.

## Chapter Seven – Joe’s Excitement



Joe was very happy! It was like a dream come true for him when he realized that his Good News Club teacher was going to be a man and not a woman as he had first thought.

As Joe looked across to the next row, he saw, John, his friend from his school. John moved from where he was sitting to sit beside Joe.

Joe was so happy he didn't know what to do! John was the friend who Joe met at school whose father was a police officer, the one who told him things about the other children from their class who were always getting into trouble. Joe was so happy to be with his friend John and to be in Uncle Barry's class.

As the class dismissed, Uncle Barry went over to Joe to let him know how very happy he was to have Joe in his club. This made Joe feel very special. Uncle Barry also told Joe that if he ever wanted to talk, at any time, he would always be available.

## Chapter Eight – Choices

The children joined the Good News Club in the month of May when they were studying 'choices,' just before dismissing for the summer holidays in another six weeks. The girls were with Miss Elsie who told them a story from a very special book—the bible.

Mary and Sissy could not stop talking about Ruth, the character from the bible story, and how sad it was for her husband to have died. (Ruth 1: 4 – 17) Mary told Sissy that her teacher at school also lost her husband a few months ago when he was hit on his bicycle while riding home from work. He was rushed to the hospital, but he died the following morning.

Mary said that she could just imagine how Ruth felt, because she could remember how sad her teacher was when her husband died. She said that for many days she would see her teacher at school wiping her tears and that sometimes she did not go for lunch.

Joe soon joined the girls to walk home together. He began to tell the

girls how very nice Uncle Barry was to him and how he told Joe that if he ever wanted to talk, Uncle Barry would love to talk with him. He told his sisters how he was looking for a man to talk with that he could trust.

“I finally found that person and I am very happy,” Joe said.

The girls said that they liked their teacher, Miss Elsie, and that they could hardly wait for next week so that they could return to the club.

Joe told the girls that he learned a lot from his class because Uncle Barry taught them from the bible and he told them about a young man by the name of Joseph who was not liked by his brothers and how they sold him.

Mary began to laugh and said, “I wonder if Joseph was also called ‘Joe?’”

They all laughed and Joe confessed to them that when his teacher began talking about Joseph he was very surprised that someone in the bible had his name. As far as Joe could think he was sure that Joseph was called ‘Joe’ for short. He wondered if his name should really have been ‘Joseph’, but that his parents only gave him the name Joe. It didn’t really matter to him. He was so glad that he found someone in the bible with his own name.

“Uncle Barry said to the class, ‘we also have a Joe in our class today,’” said Joe. “I felt very special, because it felt as if they were all learning about me. What a surprise! Then, Uncle Barry said that next week we will be learning about some of the choices that Joe made, I meant Joseph.”

The children were very happy walking home and sharing their stories. Another thing that they could not get over was how nice the other children were to them. Everyone was so very kind and helpful. They couldn’t wait to tell their mother about their wonderful time.

When they got home that evening mother was already home but she told the children that she really had nothing for them to eat for the night. The children knew that money was hard to come by for their mother who is a single mom. They all agreed that although their mom was single they were all happy to be together. They didn’t have anything to eat, but they were all very happy just to be together, and more so now to be part of the bible club and to have new friends.

## Chapter Nine – A Late Visitor



Before going to bed that night, there was a knock on the door. Everyone was surprised, wondering who it could be.

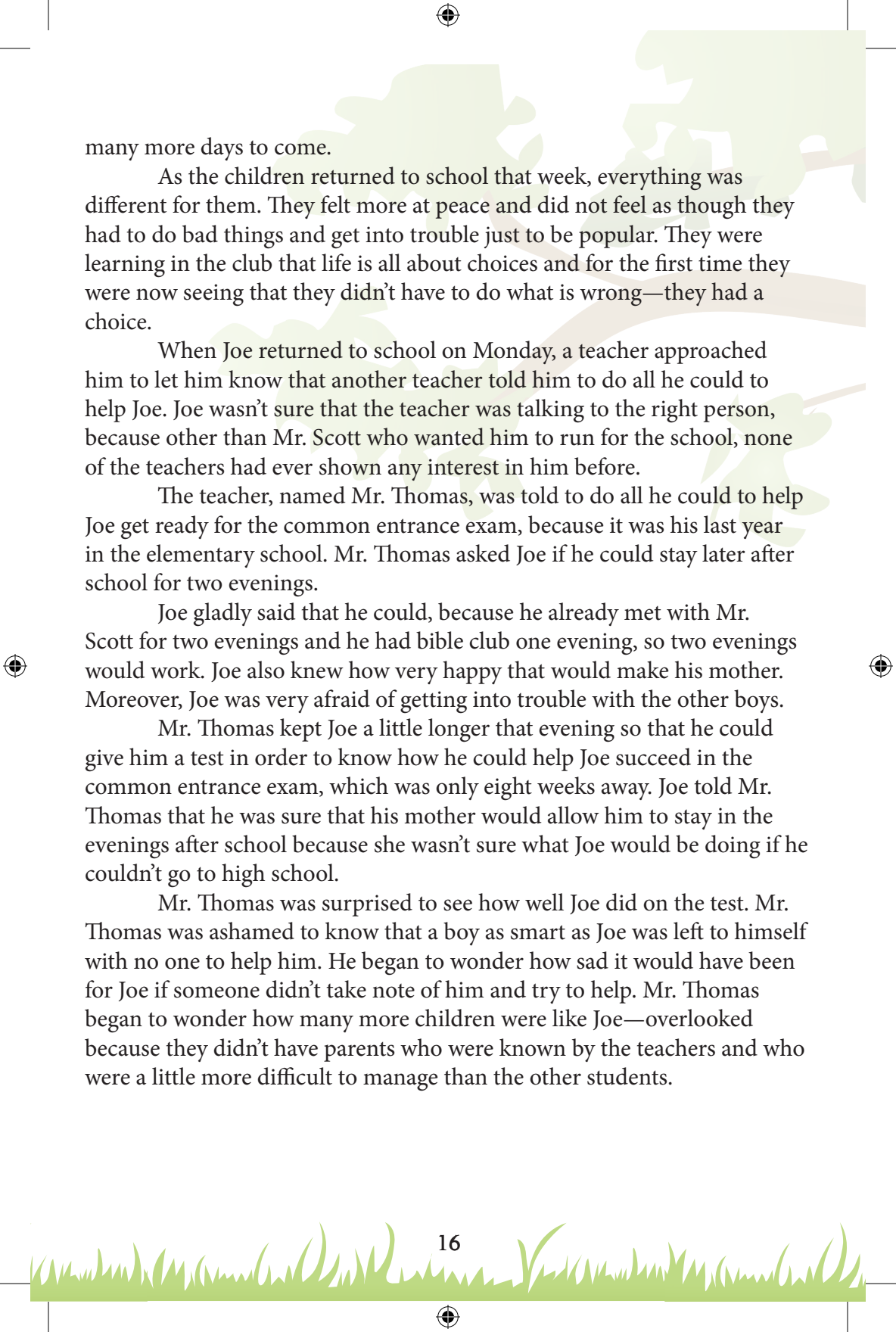
Joe looked through the window and shouted, “It’s Uncle Barry!”

He rushed to the door and Uncle Barry came inside and introduced himself, of course not to Joe, because Joe knew who Uncle Barry was.

Uncle Barry said, “I was just passing by and thought I would drop by to see you all. And, moreover, I have a car trunk filled with fresh produce from my friend’s farm. I also have some freshly picked oranges and a good supply of bananas. Could you all use any of these? A lot of the bananas are getting ripe.”

They all went out to the car and helped Uncle Barry empty out his car trunk.

As Uncle Barry left he made sure to let them know that it was God who provided all this food for them and put it in his heart to stop by. They were all smiling as they waved goodbye to him. Immediately they began to take out the produce and they all had a ripe banana for supper before going to bed. They also knew that God had provided them with lots of food for



many more days to come.

As the children returned to school that week, everything was different for them. They felt more at peace and did not feel as though they had to do bad things and get into trouble just to be popular. They were learning in the club that life is all about choices and for the first time they were now seeing that they didn't have to do what is wrong—they had a choice.

When Joe returned to school on Monday, a teacher approached him to let him know that another teacher told him to do all he could to help Joe. Joe wasn't sure that the teacher was talking to the right person, because other than Mr. Scott who wanted him to run for the school, none of the teachers had ever shown any interest in him before.

The teacher, named Mr. Thomas, was told to do all he could to help Joe get ready for the common entrance exam, because it was his last year in the elementary school. Mr. Thomas asked Joe if he could stay later after school for two evenings.

Joe gladly said that he could, because he already met with Mr. Scott for two evenings and he had bible club one evening, so two evenings would work. Joe also knew how very happy that would make his mother. Moreover, Joe was very afraid of getting into trouble with the other boys.

Mr. Thomas kept Joe a little longer that evening so that he could give him a test in order to know how he could help Joe succeed in the common entrance exam, which was only eight weeks away. Joe told Mr. Thomas that he was sure that his mother would allow him to stay in the evenings after school because she wasn't sure what Joe would be doing if he couldn't go to high school.

Mr. Thomas was surprised to see how well Joe did on the test. Mr. Thomas was ashamed to know that a boy as smart as Joe was left to himself with no one to help him. He began to wonder how sad it would have been for Joe if someone didn't take note of him and try to help. Mr. Thomas began to wonder how many more children were like Joe—overlooked because they didn't have parents who were known by the teachers and who were a little more difficult to manage than the other students.

## Chapter Ten – Joseph's Dream

Joe continued going to school everyday and stayed late two days a week to be assisted by Mr. Thomas. He also continued attending the Good News Club with Uncle Barry. Joe wanted to tell Uncle Barry 'thanks' for sending Mr. Thomas to help him, but somehow he felt too shy to tell him.

That evening in the Good News Club, Uncle Barry told the class about the dream that Joseph had and how his brothers hated him for the dream. God showed Joseph through his dream that he would one day become a leader over his brothers and family. Joe couldn't understand why Joseph's brothers hated him. Joseph didn't give himself his dream—God gave him the dream.

Uncle Barry told the class how good Joseph was, and yet hated by his own family—his own brothers. They didn't want Joseph to be part of the family. But all the time God had a plan for Joseph, which was going to be revealed one day.

Uncle Barry explained to the boys that as in the case of Joseph, no one has the power to alter God's plans for a life. Whatever one may do to harm someone, God will only use it for that person's good as it was in the case of Joseph.

"Last week we read in the Bible, Genesis 39, that Joseph's brothers put him in a pit, then took him out and sold him to traders who carried him to Egypt," said Uncle Barry. "Joseph got there and was given a nice job in a home. But the master's wife told a lie on him. She said that Joseph did something that he didn't do and as a result of her lie Joseph was sent to prison.

"As we continue in our study, you are all going to see that no one can change God's plans for our lives," said Uncle Barry. Both Joseph's brothers and his master's wife intended harm for Joseph but God fulfilled His own plan and Joseph became the second most important person in Egypt. And because of God's plan, many Egyptians and the children of Abraham were saved from starvation.

Uncle Barry continued on. "The sad things that others may say to us and the wrong things that they may do to us can all be used by God.

Sometimes family members may tell us that we are not loved and that we are not good enough. They may sometimes try to compare us with someone else and cause us to feel very unhappy, because we can only be who we are. When they do that, we do not have to believe what they say. We only have to know that what they have to say will not change what God has to say about us, because God tells us in the bible that He loves us very much and He will always love and care about us.

“Let us all turn in our bibles to Genesis 39,” Uncle Barry said.

He looked over and realized that Joe did not have a bible, so Uncle Barry handed him one and told him he could keep it. Joe received his first bible. As they turned to verses 9 to 23, Uncle Barry called on different boys who raised their hands when they wanted to read.

Joe’s hand was the last hand to go up, so he was the last person to read. As they read the passage it talked about Joseph who was in prison and as they read the passage each person got the chance to read these famous lines ‘but God was with Joseph.’

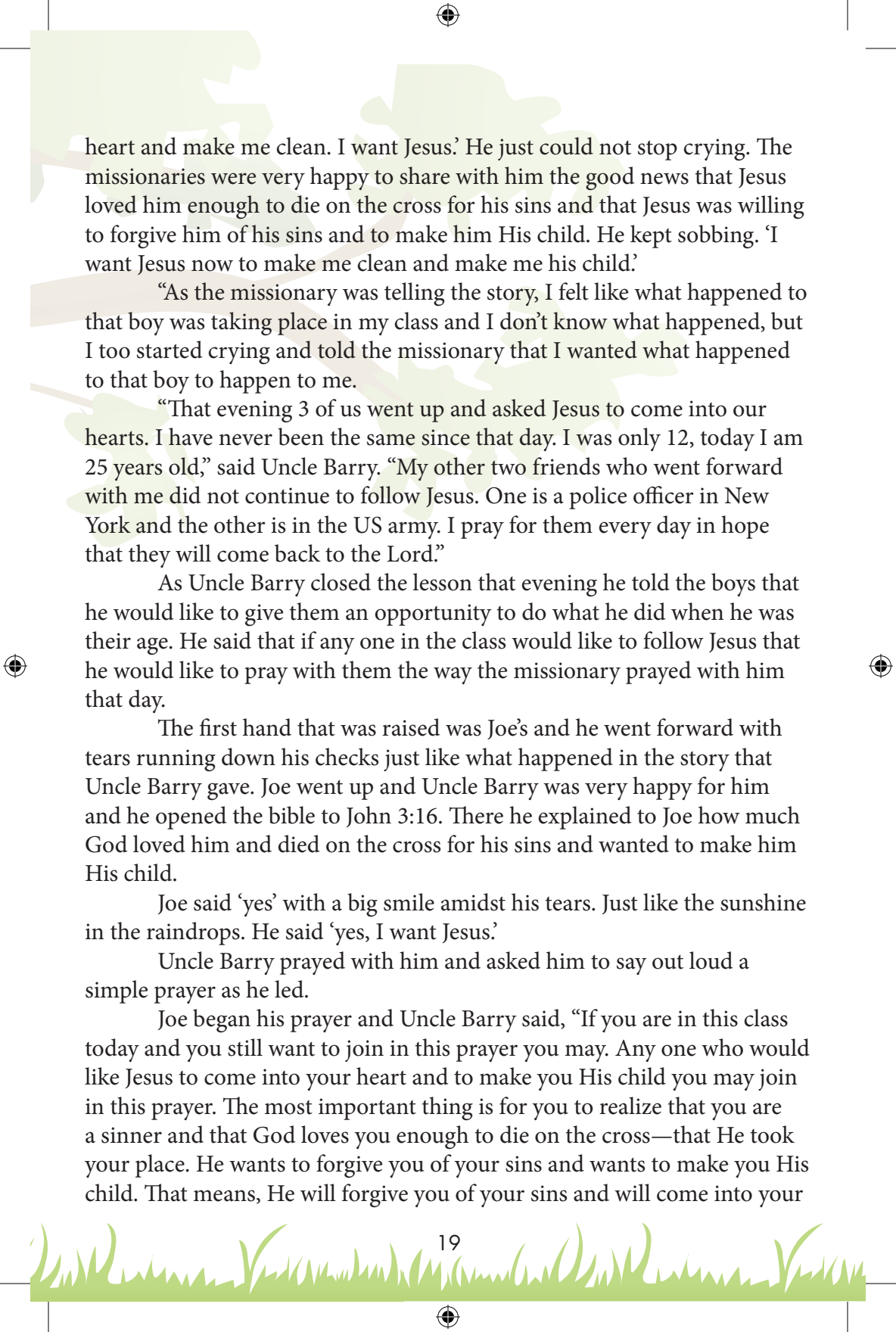
As Uncle Barry closed the study that evening, he said to the boys, “God wants to be with you no matter what difficulty you may be going through at school or at home. God can be to each of you that friend that you never had or that father that you desire to have and don’t have.”

He reminded them that Joseph was away from his father and mother and away from his brothers due to the choice that his brothers made for him. Joseph was also away from home and away from friends or anyone that he had known.

“Here is Joseph, a young man away from his family in a foreign country and now in prison. What good can ever come out of such a sad story?” asked Uncle Barry.

Uncle Barry told his own story of going to church and Sunday school. He had not really understood what it meant to know Jesus until he was age 12 and a missionary came to his Sunday school class.

“The missionary told a story about a little boy in the village where she worked. He had neither a father nor a mother and he didn’t have a home. He lived on the streets of Hong Kong and a few missionaries took him in as their own child and gave him a home, fed him, and sent him to school. No one forced Jesus on Him, but he saw how good God was to him and one day he came to the missionary crying and telling her that he wanted Jesus. He just kept sobbing, ‘I want Jesus to come into my



heart and make me clean. I want Jesus.’ He just could not stop crying. The missionaries were very happy to share with him the good news that Jesus loved him enough to die on the cross for his sins and that Jesus was willing to forgive him of his sins and to make him His child. He kept sobbing. ‘I want Jesus now to make me clean and make me his child.’

“As the missionary was telling the story, I felt like what happened to that boy was taking place in my class and I don’t know what happened, but I too started crying and told the missionary that I wanted what happened to that boy to happen to me.

“That evening 3 of us went up and asked Jesus to come into our hearts. I have never been the same since that day. I was only 12, today I am 25 years old,” said Uncle Barry. “My other two friends who went forward with me did not continue to follow Jesus. One is a police officer in New York and the other is in the US army. I pray for them every day in hope that they will come back to the Lord.”

As Uncle Barry closed the lesson that evening he told the boys that he would like to give them an opportunity to do what he did when he was their age. He said that if any one in the class would like to follow Jesus that he would like to pray with them the way the missionary prayed with him that day.

The first hand that was raised was Joe’s and he went forward with tears running down his checks just like what happened in the story that Uncle Barry gave. Joe went up and Uncle Barry was very happy for him and he opened the bible to John 3:16. There he explained to Joe how much God loved him and died on the cross for his sins and wanted to make him His child.

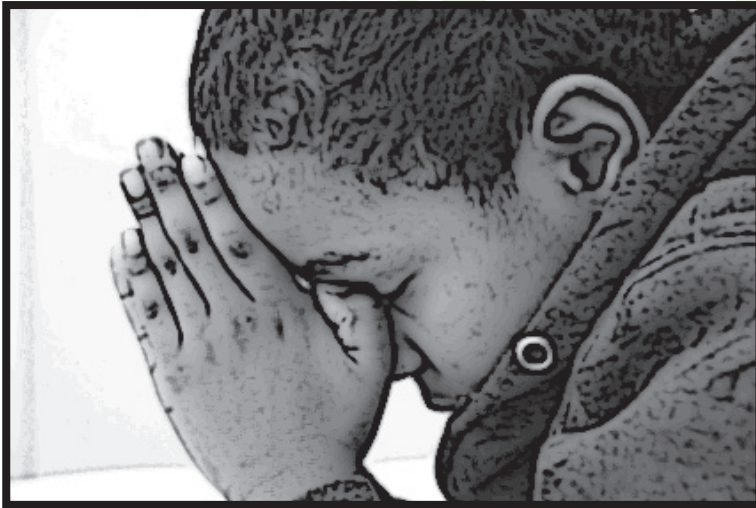
Joe said ‘yes’ with a big smile amidst his tears. Just like the sunshine in the raindrops. He said ‘yes, I want Jesus.’

Uncle Barry prayed with him and asked him to say out loud a simple prayer as he led.

Joe began his prayer and Uncle Barry said, “If you are in this class today and you still want to join in this prayer you may. Any one who would like Jesus to come into your heart and to make you His child you may join in this prayer. The most important thing is for you to realize that you are a sinner and that God loves you enough to die on the cross—that He took your place. He wants to forgive you of your sins and wants to make you His child. That means, He will forgive you of your sins and will come into your

heart and change your life the same way He did for me 13 years ago when I was your age. Pray with me now.”

*Lord Jesus, I am a sinner and I am asking you to forgive me of all my sins and make me your child. I am sorry for all the bad things that I have done. I am asking you to make me clean and make me your child. Thank you for dying on the cross for all my sins. I receive you now as my savior and Lord, in Jesus' name amen.*



At the end of the prayer, Uncle Barry closed in prayer and gave Joe a great big hug. Joe smiled and told Uncle Barry how happy he felt and that he couldn't help but tell him that coming to Jesus was not what he thought he wanted, but smiling he said, "I am so happy! I am so happy!"

"Okay class, we are dismissed for the day," said Uncle Barry. "I look forward to seeing you next week and don't forget to bring a friend along with you. I may be bringing a couple of friends with me as we study Joseph's family reunion."



## Chapter Eleven – The Walk Home

That evening after the club, the children all began to share their story. Joe was the first one to tell his sisters that he asked Jesus to forgive him of his sins and to come into his heart.

His sisters were left speechless.

“Is that true, Joe?” they asked.

Joe said, “Yes. Uncle Barry told us how his heart was touched when he was my age and he asked Jesus to come into his heart. I truly don’t know what happened, but all I knew was that I wanted Jesus and I began to cry and Uncle Barry prayed with me and I prayed that prayer with him. And Jesus is now in my heart and I am so glad. I feel so different I can’t explain it.”

“Today at the end of the story, Miss Elsie also told all of us that if anyone wanted Jesus, they could come up for prayer,” said Mary. “Sissy told me that she wanted to go up and I told her that I wanted to go up too, but I told her that we should not go up because I didn’t know what you would say or what mother would say.

“Now I’m so sorry because I kept Sissy from going forward and I also wanted to do so and now it’s too late. I wish I had done what you did.”

Joe reassured them that it wasn’t too late and he was able to pray with them as uncle Barry prayed with him, because he said that he remembered every word that he prayed.

The girls weren’t sure it would mean as much if they prayed only with Joe. Joe assured them that it would and that he would say the same prayer that he prayed with Uncle Barry.

“Would you really?” asked Mary and Sissy.

“Yes,” said Joe.

Both of the girls said that they would be willing to pray because they wanted to today with Miss Elsie but did not.

Joe prayed with both of his sisters and they prayed asking Jesus to forgive them of their sins and to come into their hearts and to be their Savior.

The girls were very happy now.

The next question was...how were they going to tell their mother what happened?

Joe said, "I can't wait to tell her, because I'm so happy I did."

Mary and Sissy agreed. They were happy and wanted to tell mother, too.



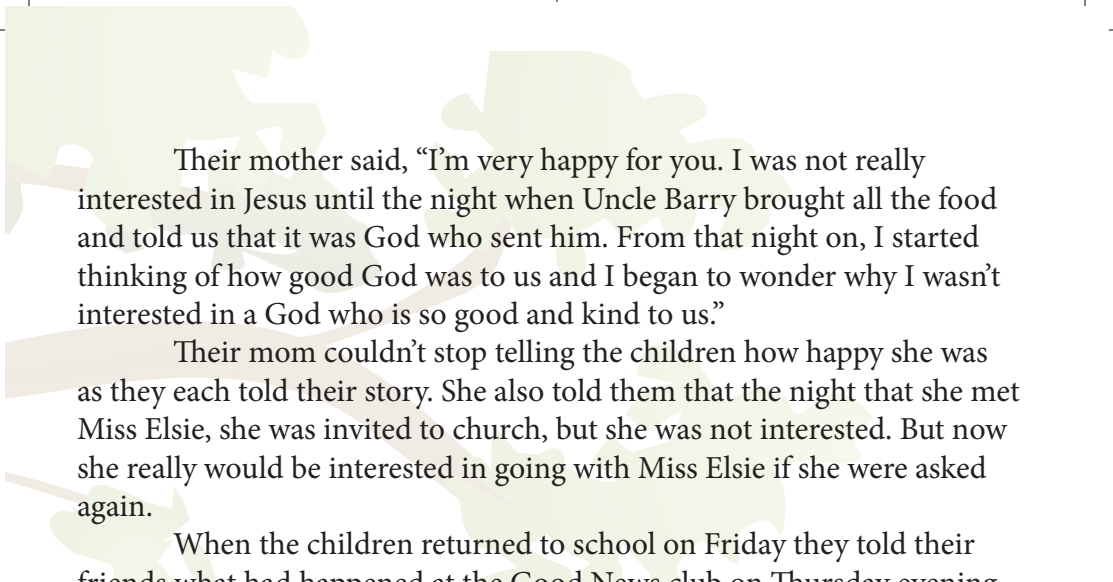
## CHAPTER TWELVE – A GOOD NEWS STORY

As the children walked through the door that evening, mother was there to greet them and she happily told them that she had a very nice dinner for them, which she made from the produce that Uncle Barry brought for the family.

"Did you enjoy the club?" asked mother.

They all said that they liked it a lot and Joe said that something very special happened to him today at the Good News club.

"I asked Jesus to come into my heart and to forgive me of my sins," said Joe.



Their mother said, "I'm very happy for you. I was not really interested in Jesus until the night when Uncle Barry brought all the food and told us that it was God who sent him. From that night on, I started thinking of how good God was to us and I began to wonder why I wasn't interested in a God who is so good and kind to us."

Their mom couldn't stop telling the children how happy she was as they each told their story. She also told them that the night that she met Miss Elsie, she was invited to church, but she was not interested. But now she really would be interested in going with Miss Elsie if she were asked again.

When the children returned to school on Friday they told their friends what had happened at the Good News club on Thursday evening. Joe's friends laughed at him, but Ben was there to tell him how he, too, was laughed at when he told them that he asked Jesus into his life. The girls did not have the same experience; their friends didn't say anything.

On Monday when they returned to school, Mr. Thomas met with Joe and they continued their study for the common entrance exam that would be coming up very soon. Mr. Thomas realized that Joe was continuing to make good progress with his lessons. He could hardly believe how smart Joe was. He was quite sure that Joe would pass his exam and be able to go right on to high school and college.

They all had a busy rest of the week with school, chores at home, and homework. Now, they were involved in doing homework, which none of them did before. As the week went by, it was Thursday again and they were all told to invite someone to the Good News club.

The girls invited Mary's friend who sat next to Mary in school. She told Mary that she could not come because her mother would not allow her. Joe invited someone too, but he was turned down. They all went to the club that evening, but none of them had anyone who wanted to attend with them.

The girls couldn't wait to tell Miss Elsie what had happened to them with Joe. They told her everything.

Mary and Sissy said, "We wanted to go forward but didn't. Joe, however, went forward and he remembered the prayer and told us that we could pray with him."

Miss Elsie was so excited she could hardly believe her ears.

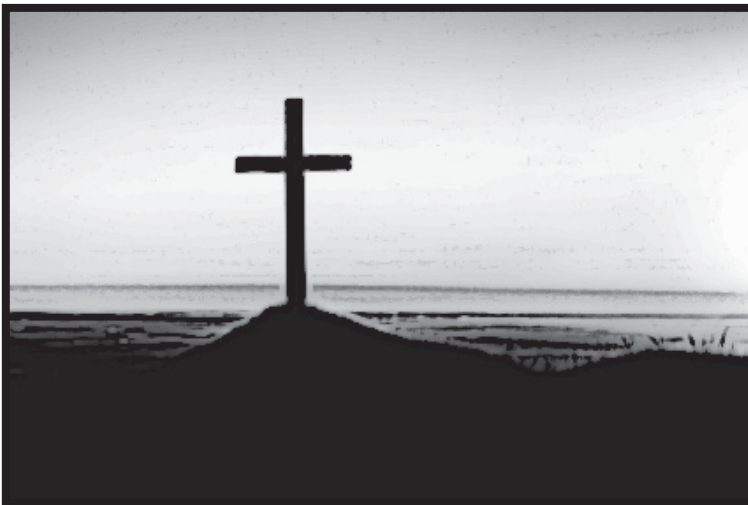
“I’m so excited to see what the Lord did in all of your lives. This is truly an amazing story,” she said. “What Joe did is something that each of us can do, and that is to tell others about Jesus and to give them the opportunity to ask Jesus to come into their heart. You can all be God’s missionaries and help your mom make this great decision if she wants to.”

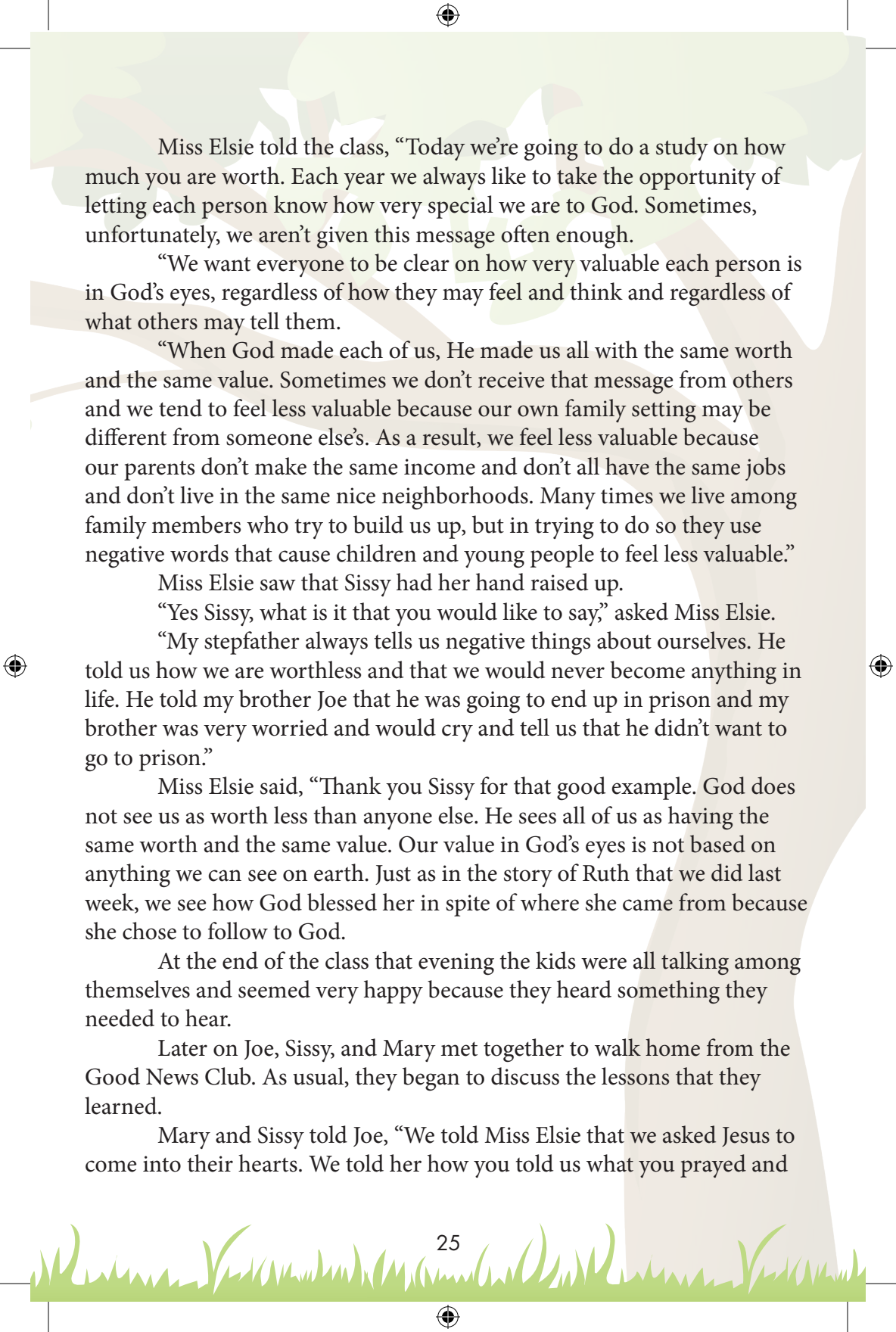
The children told Miss Elsie how excited their mom was and that their mom told them that, at first, she did not have much interest in God, but that her heart was truly changed when Uncle Barry stopped by the home last week and dropped off food for them and told them it was God who sent him.

“Mother couldn’t believe how very good God was to us,” said Mary and Sissy.

Miss Elsie said, “Why don’t you go home and tell your mom again what you did and ask her if she would like to have Jesus in her heart too.” The girls agreed that they would tell Joe and that they all would tell their mom again and ask her.

## **Chapter Thirteen – How Much Are You Worth?**





Miss Elsie told the class, “Today we’re going to do a study on how much you are worth. Each year we always like to take the opportunity of letting each person know how very special we are to God. Sometimes, unfortunately, we aren’t given this message often enough.

“We want everyone to be clear on how very valuable each person is in God’s eyes, regardless of how they may feel and think and regardless of what others may tell them.

“When God made each of us, He made us all with the same worth and the same value. Sometimes we don’t receive that message from others and we tend to feel less valuable because our own family setting may be different from someone else’s. As a result, we feel less valuable because our parents don’t make the same income and don’t all have the same jobs and don’t live in the same nice neighborhoods. Many times we live among family members who try to build us up, but in trying to do so they use negative words that cause children and young people to feel less valuable.”

Miss Elsie saw that Sissy had her hand raised up.

“Yes Sissy, what is it that you would like to say,” asked Miss Elsie.

“My stepfather always tells us negative things about ourselves. He told us how we are worthless and that we would never become anything in life. He told my brother Joe that he was going to end up in prison and my brother was very worried and would cry and tell us that he didn’t want to go to prison.”

Miss Elsie said, “Thank you Sissy for that good example. God does not see us as worth less than anyone else. He sees all of us as having the same worth and the same value. Our value in God’s eyes is not based on anything we can see on earth. Just as in the story of Ruth that we did last week, we see how God blessed her in spite of where she came from because she chose to follow to God.

At the end of the class that evening the kids were all talking among themselves and seemed very happy because they heard something they needed to hear.

Later on Joe, Sissy, and Mary met together to walk home from the Good News Club. As usual, they began to discuss the lessons that they learned.

Mary and Sissy told Joe, “We told Miss Elsie that we asked Jesus to come into their hearts. We told her how you told us what you prayed and

that we prayed the same prayer.

“Miss Elsie told us that we could do the same thing with mom.”

Joe was very excited and told them how much he wanted to do that and he would be glad for them to do that together when they got home.

Joe told his sisters, “Uncle Barry taught us about self-worth and he told us how valuable and how special we are to God and that each person had the same worth and value regardless of where they came from.

“Uncle Barry said that we should not believe the negative words that others tell us, because God is the person who made us all and He has a plan for every life.

“At the end of the class, I told Uncle Barry all the negative things our stepfather told me and how worried I was because I don’t want to go to prison.

“Uncle Barry said that those negative words could truly harm me, but that I have a choice and that I don’t need to believe those words.

“I’m so happy, because it always bothered me.”

Mary and Sissy were so happy to hear Joe’s words, because they knew how he would cry and feel sad at times.

## Chapter Fourteen – At Home

When the kids arrived home their mother was there and she was preparing dinner. As they entered the home she wanted to know what they learned in the Club that evening. They all began to share their story. She was happy to hear all of the good news and she told them that what they learned and shared with her was very important to her because she, too, believed the same lies that she was told as a child.

Their mom said, “What you were taught was very good and important.”

After talking about that, Joe said, “A week ago, I made the decision to ask Jesus to come into my life. Mary and Sissy have done so, too. I was so happy when you told us last week that you were thinking differently about

God because of the good things that had happened to us.

“Each one of us has made this decision—and you could make that decision too if you want to.”

Their mother said, “I’ve been thinking about it since last week. I’m thinking that if Miss Elsie invites me to her church again, I’d go and I would like to make the decision that you all have made.”

Joe was very excited and couldn’t believe what he was hearing.

He quickly told his mother, “You don’t have to wait until you go to church to make that decision. I’d be very happy to pray with you as I did with Sissy and Mary.”

Their mother agreed that she’d like for them to do that.

Joe was more than excited and he led his mother in the same prayer that he led his sisters in:

*Lord Jesus, I am a sinner and I am asking you to forgive me of all my sins and make me your child. I am sorry for all the bad things that I have done I am asking you to make me clean and make me your child. Thank you for dying on the cross for all my sins. I receive you now as my savior and Lord, in Jesus’ name amen.*

This little family made a brand new start. They were all heading in the same direction now—with a lot of hope and a bright future ahead of them. They didn’t change because things had changed around them, but because of the hope they found by following Jesus.

Joe continued to make good grades in school. He continued playing sports and was very happy with the friends that he made in his club. A few weeks later, Joe took his common entrance exam. His mother and sisters were praying that he would be able to pass, so that he could go to high school.

Joe took his exam and did his very best. Later when the results came out, only fifteen students from that school succeeded in the common entrance exam and Joe’s name was among the fifteen.

Joe was so delighted. He couldn’t believe that his dream was going to come true and that he was going to go to high school. He kept on giving God thanks for all He had done for him—he purposed in his heart that he was going to give his best and be all that he could be.

