

Character Construction Crew stories

(ISA-imaginary/inspired from Above)

By CQ

## **Character Construction Crew Stories**

### **Character Trait #1: Positive Attitude**

#### **Be Glad**

(Imaginary story)

It was a beautiful day outside, when Sammy Smilesine woke to embrace the new day. Little did he know that just because the sun shines, it doesn't make everything happen perfectly, like magic.

When he rose to dress he noticed that the clothes he was planning on wearing had a large tear in them.

“Oh, well, I'll have to find something else,” he said, though somewhat puzzled about what to do. He was determined to not let his joy on this new day be shooed away so quickly, by such a small thing as a rip.

“It’s normal, and bound to happen at some point or another,” he encouraged himself. “Clothes aren’t made to mend themselves overnight either.”

He whistled a merry tune as he found something else to wear, that though not his favourite, would be suitable for the day. As he sat down to eat his breakfast and open his Bible his eyes fell on the verse that says, “O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.” (Psalms 90:14)

Sammy Smilesine thought about each part of the verse:

“‘Early,’ that must mean now, first thing in the morning.

“‘Mercy,’ that means I need the Lord’s help and love, so I need to talk with Him about my day.

“‘Rejoice,’ that means to not just be happy, but to be very glad and excited about the wonderful things He can and will do for me!

“All our days,’ that means today, and every day! Not just birthdays or special times, and in any kind of weather or health condition.

“All’ doesn’t leave any days out. So if I’m to be very happy, today, I need to have some good prayer time to start with,” Sammy Smilesine concluded, and did just that.

“This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it!” he said aloud, as he stood and stretched his arms up into a praise. (Psalms 118:24)

Just then there was a knock on the door. It was the postman bringing a package. Excitedly Sammy Smilesine took it, but then noticed that it was for his neighbour.

“I think there’s been a mistake on the address,” he said to the postman, who then took the package to the right door.

Sammy Smilesine started to feel a little sad. It had been a fun thought that a gift had unexpectedly come for him! Here was his chance to choose to either “rejoice and be

glad,” or to feel down.

While washing his dish he began thinking, “Why is it that the neighbour is often getting packages? I can’t remember the last time I got one. Maybe people have forgotten about me...” His thoughts started going the wrong way.

Then he remembered his ripped clothes, and then he started thinking about the day before, and all the difficulties he had in his work – machines that didn’t work right, people that talked unkindly to him, stubbing his toe, and being told that the weekend party had been cancelled.

Things started to get too much for him. It was like he’d opened a bag by letting in that one negative and discouraging thought, and now he was letting it get all filled up with anything sad he could think of. Was he planning on carrying this heavy, sad bag around all day, and perhaps even adding more to it as he went along?

As he got into his truck and drove off to the work site, a frown was on his face, and his prayer time and verse long forgotten.

As the morning went along, those who talked with him usually went away also frowning. Everything he said just came out wrong, because he'd let unpleasant, sad, and undesirable events settle in his heart.

At lunch break he sat alone on a bench. No one wanted to be too near him today. His smile was lost somewhere in the kitchen back at home it seemed.

“Wait a minute!” he said to himself, “I’m doing just what I chose not to do today! I wanted to rejoice and have the best day yet, but here I am moping and complaining, when nothing is actually going wrong. –I still can see and hear and walk. I’m not hurt. I have food and a place to live. I have friends. I have clothes. I have work to do. And most of all I have a God Who is so powerful that He can help me in any situation!”

Sammy Smilesine realised that even if he prayed for a good day, it was still his choice to focus on the good things. And there were so many more than he even had time to think of right then at his lunch break!

“I’m going to do something to get me thinking about the good today. Every time something doesn’t go just the way I wish it would, or I start feeling sad, I will stop and think of ten other things that I can be glad about. There’s much more that is right than wrong, I think.”

He got the first chance to put his plan into practice, as soon as he walked back to begin driving the paver for his afternoon work job. Sammy Smilesine didn’t see where he was stepping, and he placed his foot right into a puddle of gooey black something or other.

An ugly word was about to leave his lips when he caught himself. “Ten things, remember, ten things!” he told himself quickly, as he forced a smile to his face.

Sammy Smilesine scraped his foot off in the

nearby sandy ground, and counted in his mind, “One: I can walk. Two: I didn’t get hurt. Three: These aren’t the only shoes I have. Four: I learned to be more careful, and that might save me from something worse later on. Five: I don’t have to do this whole job alone, but have a team to work with. ...” and on he went. By the time he’d reached ten, his smile was no longer forced, and he was even starting to laugh, thinking he had it pretty good, and was going to have a great afternoon.

It was good that he had decided to play the “Count Ten Things” game, as there were several other difficult moments throughout the rest of the day. If he hadn’t been choosing to look on the bright side, it would have made the day seem too hard. But, as he looked on the good, thought of the good and pushed away the “poor me’s” and feelings of discouragement, he had new joy and strength—even more than he had even before something tough happened.

When things were going well, he didn't always remember to thank the Lord for it. It would be odd if as soon as things went wrong he always remembered to complain about them. So when he took time to stop and praise the Lord for all that was still going well, even if one or two things weren't, it gave him a great boost of renewed energy and vigour.

That evening as Sammy Smilesine sat down at the kitchen table to enjoy a warm meal, he noticed his Bible was still open to the verse he'd found that morning. He read it over again, and then played his counting game one last time that day. This time he thanked the Lord for all the ways He had answered his prayers, and made it a wonderful day—maybe not a perfect day, but good in so many ways!

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**Notice the Good**

(Imaginary story)



Larry Laughinglad looked down at the cast on his leg and foot. It had all sorts of notes and pictures drawn on it from friends and relatives. “Be happy!” was written beside a funny looking smiley face. It was written by his cousin Anton. Larry Laughinglad smiled, not only because the picture was funny, but because it came from someone who was great at being positive and upbeat no matter what. His cousin was crippled, and stayed in a wheelchair most of the day, but still managed to see the good in nearly everything.

Larry Laughinglad wished he didn't have this cast on. His leg hurt a bit still, and it was very difficult to get around. The skiing trip a few weeks before had been fun. Well, fun until his accident. It could have been worse, but he was glad that it wasn't. Still, Larry Laughinglad couldn't say he was glad it happened. He hadn't been to work in quite awhile, as he needed time to heal.

The phone rang, and it was Tom Truckalong, his friend from work. “Wanna have some

company at your place for dinner? You won't have to worry about a thing! I and some others will bring dinner, and we can play some board games and chat. Sound good?"

Larry Laughinglad thought it was a great idea! Friends coming and food being prepared for him was a relaxing and happy thought.

"Just one thing more," Tom Truckalong added, "There is to be a rule for the dinner."

"A rule?" Larry Laughinglad questioned.

"Yes," explained Tom Truckalong. "No one is to say anything sad or negative or discouraging, or to complain in any way during the evening. We all must stay upbeat. That will be the ticket to coming to the dinner and game time. Do you agree? Would that help make it a great time?"

"Uh, yes. Okay, let's try that," Larry Laughinglad said. "Perhaps I can prepare a special game also, to do with that theme of the night, along with a few jokes?"

“Sounds great!” Tom Truckalong replied.

“Okay, we’ll see you at 7:00 PM.”

Larry Laughinglad was feeling cheered up, and was going to start getting things prepared.

However, nearly each time he thought of something he wanted to get or do, something held him back—his foot! He couldn’t just get up and dash here and there. Every step took a struggle!

“Well,” he thought to himself, “If I’m going to have a fun evening, and play the ‘gladness rule’ I’d better start practising now! If I’m grumbling about all I can’t do, and what is hurting, and how difficult things are, I’ll most likely still be reacting that way when my friends visit too.”

So every time something was hard for him, he chose to instead start singing a song, or whistling a tune. It started to become fun!

Larry Laughinglad would think of a new song

each time he needed a boost or a cheerful thought.

Before too long he had made a great game to play during the evening and other preparations as well. He felt ready for the guests to arrive. He dressed in something nice—even that helped to make him feel better.

“Now, to think up and collect some jokes...” He started to look through a little bookshelf and pulled out a book called, “Jolly Jester Jokes.” He smiled. The book was given to him by his brother when he was younger. Larry Laughinglad had held onto it all these years. He looked through the pages and chose a few jokes:

“What do you say when you are sick on your 16<sup>th</sup> birthday? ‘I’m sick-teen!’”

“What is a flying ant called, that won the contest for highest flight? Antronaut!”

“What does a grumpy antelope need to get better? Anti-mope.”

They were simple jokes, but might help to set the mood: light-hearted and cheerful.

Later when the guests arrived, at first they thought they'd come to the wrong place, or that he had gone to sleep, as it was completely dark inside. It seemed, however, that someone had left the door open for them. Just when they were about to leave, all of a sudden the light turned on. "Surprise!" Larry Laughinglad called out.

They were so surprised—both by the sudden light and also by the beautifully decorated dining area. There were balloons and a nice table cloth, a pile of games to choose from, and fancy plates and glasses set on the table.

"Wow!" said Tom Truckalong. "You did all this? Thanks!"

Larry Laughinglad smiled. "Come in and sit down!" he said, welcoming them all.

After setting the food they'd brought onto the table and sitting down together, they offered a prayer for their meal and their evening.

Larry Laughinglad then began with a question.

“What is the first thing you noticed when you came into my house?”

After a moment of thinking, several piped up with comments like, “It was dark,” or “No lights were on.”

Larry Laughinglad's game had begun, and he commented: “Isn't it interesting that we appreciate light the most when we are in darkness? If the light had been on, do you think you would have stopped to think, ‘Wow, how great! We have light!’ ?”

Most of the guests shook their heads.

“So this is the game we are going to play throughout the evening, no matter what else we are doing or what other games we are playing: To appreciate out loud what is still there, rather than only the few things that are gone, or are missing. You will notice that

some things aren't around, which I've purposely done to help us to practise the habit of looking for the good that is still there. We take so many things for granted and often only pause to comment on the things that are gone, right?"

Everyone agreed that this was most often the case.

Larry Laughinglad continued, "Let's see how many comments this evening can be of gratitude for the things that aren't gone, and how many comments will be just about what we don't have. Okay?"

People were wondering what was gone or had been hidden away, and with smiles began their meal. It wasn't long, however, before Tom Truckalong noticed he was the only one that didn't have the special glass that everyone else had.

Tom Truckalong was about to say something, but caught himself, and instead said, "I wanted to say thanks for setting the table so

nicely, and for making sure nearly all the guests had a glass to drink from.”

Larry Laughinglad smiled and said, “You win a point, Tom! You saw what was gone, but stopped to realise the good and comment on that first. Here is your glass! I was saving it here for you.”

During the meal Larry Laughinglad shared his jokes, and others added some too. They were all laughing and having a great time.

One of the guests got up to use the bathroom and noticed a sign on the sink that said “Out of order.” No water was coming out of the tap. What was he to do?

“Hmm,” he thought. “Is this part of the ‘Notice the Good’ game?”

“Well, I can be glad that there is any water in the house at all, good clean water. This isn’t the only place to find it. Imagine if I had to walk all the way to a far away well, or to pump water a mile or two away, that might not be so easy. One sink needing repair isn’t a



big deal or worth complaining about,” the guest told himself.

A new thought suddenly came to him. “Why didn’t I think of it? I can just use the bath tap. It’s right here, and although not what I’m used to or would prefer, it is clean water too!

When I was only thinking about what I wanted or missed, it was hard to find a solution. But when I stopped to notice the good, and appreciate what I do have, then it made things easier and a solution was found!”

When he returned to the sitting area, Larry Laughinglad knew what the guest had just discovered. Because he returned with a smile, rather than a face showing complaint, Larry Laughinglad said, “A point goes to Mr. Bell, who found the next missing thing, but chose to be glad anyway!”

Several other things were noticed as the evening continued, but all had done well to think the good, and notice the good, not just

mentioning things that weren't quite right. As a result of each one's attitudes, everyone had an especially great time. Not only did they try to play the game when things were gone or missing or not as they would have liked, but even as they played their board games. The team of friends maintained a cheerful attitude and said positive words when others were winning games and doing better than they were. Everyone one tried to compliment and encourage each other.

It was time for everyone to go home, and Larry Laughinglad said goodbye, and thanked Tom for organizing the evening and bringing the dinner.

“And just think, if it wasn't for this,” Larry Laughinglad said, pointing to the cast on his leg, “we might not have had this fun evening! There is always something good in every situation, when we look for it. But usually the good is so clearly in front of us, that we tend to get used to it and miss noticing and mentioning it!”

“Yes,” agreed Tom Truckalong. “Thanks for helping us to remember that. I think we’ll all have a great day tomorrow at the work site—even though we’ll miss you. We’ll just look for the good as we work, and it will make things go so much better!”

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### Character Trait #2: Patience/Longsuffering

#### Annie and the Truck Driver

(Imaginary story)

Charley Churrusting revved up the engine of the big old flat bed truck. On it he’d safely secured a small digger and two bobcats. They were no longer needed at the worksite. These vehicles were now to be rented out at a new site in another town.

But as he was turning the key to get its motor going, a saying he’d often heard said seemed to come to him. It was to be a clue or key to a smooth and happy day. “Slow and steady wins the race.”

He often thought of it, as in his line of work, nothing could be done all that fast. It took a patient plodding along, one step at a time. And if things weren’t done just right their work wouldn’t be solid and trustworthy. Today, however, he was to learn something new about this saying.

Finally, after several tries, the motor of the old truck had started. It always took a little effort. But Charley Churrusting was soon on his way. He looked forward to the drive. It was to be a beautiful one, through farm lands and with a good view of the mountains. It wouldn’t be called a quiet ride, as the truck’s engine was fairly loud, but it was at least a bit calmer than the clamour at the worksite.

Charley Churrusting turned on the radio, just in time it seemed, to hear his favourite hymn being sung. “His Eye is on the Sparrow”. It was a good reminder, that no matter what happened today, or at all in his life, he was being watched over lovingly, by the Lord who made him. There seemed to be plenty of things that tried to get him down, or steal away his confidence in the Lord’s ever-faithful care, but this song seemed to wash them away. He

sang along with the cheery words: “I sing because I’m happy! I sing because I’m free! His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me!”

Just then his mind was alerted to slow down, and he eased the brakes just in time, as the car up the road a bit came to a halt, with lights flashing. It had broken down. Had Charley Churrusting been keen to rush along, thinking only of the destination and where he wanted to go, he might not have stopped so readily. An accident on the road would have cost him much more time and loss and difficulty, than merely stopping for a while, until he could get past the car and drive smoothly again.

He got out of the truck, while leaving its engine running, and went to see the driver of the car.

“Hi, how’s it going?” he said in his friendly manner. “Can I be of some assistance?”

“Well, I don’t have far to travel, but at this rate, I’ll never make it in time!” the car driver said.

“Where are you going?” Charley Churrusting asked.

“I needed to meet with Dr. Jones at his house. It’s only a 15 minute drive there. He’s doing a project today helping others—those who can’t afford to pay a regular doctor. I have in my car some donated supplies I was going to bring him for his project. He needs them now,” Annie, the car driver said with dismay.

“Well, as I always like to say, ‘slow and steady wins the race.’ I know it’ll work out. Look, I’ll call for a tow truck. I know a good one too. And if you’d like I can take you now to the town. It’s not exactly where I was going. I need to go a bit farther, but I’m making good time, and think I can afford a little detour for such a good cause. I’ll make some room here in the cab for the supplies you’re bringing. Sound good?” Charley Churrusting offered.

“Oh, that would be so kind of you. Perhaps the car could be towed to the town garage. I can wait there then after I bring the supplies to Dr. Jones while the car gets looked at. If it’s something that needs a long time to fix, I have a friend there that I’m sure can drive me home later on. Thank you so much for your kind offer. I’m very grateful for it—and so will those folks be who are being helped today,” Annie responded.

They loaded the supplies into the flat bed truck, and were on their way. Bart, the tow truck driver, would be on his way shortly.

“Sometimes things happen that seem to slow us down, or even stop us from getting to where we are going, or finishing what needs to be done, and that’s tough! But I figure it’ll make it twice as hard if I let those seeming disruptions and bothersome circumstances get me down as well. So if I just stay calm, and set my eyes upwards to the One Who is actually in charge of my life and is caring for me—Jesus— then I can take things in stride more. Instead of thinking so earnestly about where I’m trying to go, or what I’m trying to accomplish, I change my pace and my focus, and see what I can learn, or who I can help.” Charley Churrusting was explaining how he coped with patience-trying situations.

"It's hard being patient!" Annie added. It was all too easy for her to fret, to get upset, and in the difficult moments make others feel bad through unkind words. It was something she often wanted to do better in. She wanted to be able to cope with delays and what she called "road blocks"—the things that got in the way of her reaching her goals. She always had lots to do and was involved in several charitable projects.

"Well, look at it this way," Charley Churrusting said with a smile, "there are two ways to deal with the troubles and problems that each and every one of us has. We can't make the problems disappear or never enter our day. People will be people. Problems will come. Equipment will break down. Delays will try our patience. We and others will get sick or hurt. So we can choose to look at the problems with our eyes, and mind, and heart, so filled with the negative aspects of the situation, and how we feel about it, or we can immediately turn to the Solution Giver. When I do the latter I never regret it."

"Now, I don't always make that right decision, but when I forget or delay in doing it, I always have a tough go of things. So, let's take today, for example. Neither of us planned for this misfortune or delay with your car breaking down. If we focus on the good, however, and pray to see what God might have in mind for allowing it to happen, things might begin to look up." Charley Churrusting was enjoying sharing some of the things he'd learned over time. It felt good not to be driving alone, and to have a new friend to talk with.

Annie took his advice and stopped for a moment, and then said, "I think this might have happened to teach me patience, and that when we pray, God works things out for us. When my car stopped working at first I was real bothered, and worried about what to do next. You came along then, and have taught me some good things. I'm glad for it now. God worked things out better in the end—and I'm going to choose to have faith that everything else about the car and Dr. Jones' project will work out well too."

Charley Churrusting added, "And since life is all about learning most of all, not just about getting things done, we can be sure all kinds of experiences will lace our life and pop up here and there to help us do just that—learn new things. So when something unexpected, disappointing, discouraging, difficult, not the norm, saddening, or hard to cope with happens, we can look at it as if we are going up one more step on the ladder of learning. We can think of it as winning, one way or the other. Either we make fast and good progress and move forward, or we learn something new and move up higher, gaining new knowledge and closeness to the Lord as well. Either way it's good."

Just then they arrived at the town, and Annie got out with the supplies she'd brought. "I'll be fine from here. Everything in this town is just a short walk away. Thanks so much for the ride, and for the chat. They both helped me. Have a good day!" she said while leaving.

"Bye then, and you have a good day too!" Charley Churrusting replied.

It had been a nice ride, and it felt good to be able to help someone else.

"It may have taken longer than expected, but I'm not late," Charley Churrusting thought as he finally pulled into the worksite to deliver the digger and bobcats. "I think it's when we

have faith in our heart, knowing things are under God's control, that we can manage to have the greatest amount of patience."

He sang the chorus once again, "His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He's watching me!" He knew it would be a good day, one way or another.

## Stop and Go

(Imaginary story)

Marvin Merryglad whistled a happy tune as he climbed into his pickup truck, well loaded with supplies for that day's assignment. Then he noticed that one of his tyres was low on air.

"Hmmm. I'll need to get that checked at the nearest service station I see. I think I can make it fine on the road till then."

Off he drove to get things fixed right.

That wasn't the only trouble he encountered, however. Next, his bottle of water spilled all over the seat, as it slipped out of his hand. He managed to salvage some of it, and found something to sit on top of to keep his pants mostly dry.

"My windscreen could have used some of that water it seems! Hard to see out of because it's so dirty," he thought aloud, as he sprayed the windscreen with the cleaning button. But as he turned the windscreen wipers on, nothing happened.

"They must be jammed or something. I don't remember having this problem before. Well, I guess I haven't used them in awhile. It's taking a long time for the rain to grace our part of the world. S'pose I don't have anything to grumble about. I've got what I need. I just don't particularly enjoy having things breaking down, and need things that are dependable." Marvin Merryglad said.

His tune and whistle were long forgotten, he scanned the road's edge hoping to see a service station as soon as possible. Finally he noticed one, but when he got there it had a sign saying it was closed.

He sighed, and kept on driving as best as he could.

At long last, at the second service station he spotted he was able to get some of his mini-troubles taken care of. The tyre got air, the windscreen got cleaned, and the wipers adjusted. It turned out to be something minor, thankfully.

Happily he got back in his truck, and on his way again. "Well, I can't do much about a wet seat, but at least that won't affect my driving safety." He chose not to remain bothered by it, and be glad for the other things that got worked out so soon.

"I guess there is a time to be patient—like when things keep happening that are not our favourite, things that bother us, things that we can't do anything about anyway, and we just need to keep having peace and joy no matter what. There's also a time to not wait, but to

get things done and taken care of as soon as possible—like the things that needed to get fixed right away on my truck. I'm glad I didn't have to wait too long for those, and it wouldn't have been good to put them off, waiting for some other time. That wouldn't have been wise or safe. There's a time for both." Marvin Merryglad realised. "And even that takes patience too—getting those things fixed right away kept me waiting while the repair man worked on them."

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### **Character Trait #3: Honesty/Openness**

#### **The Stage**

(Imaginary story)

Darin Dillygint-deedz wasn't sure how it happened, but the hammer seemed to just break in his hand while working hard on setting up the stage for the park performances. It wasn't a stage that would be there all the time. It was just put together quickly to last for a few weeks. Each afternoon different teams of performers would be on the stage entertaining the crowds that wandered around the park. This spring time festival was always a fun one.

He was puzzled. "It just broke! Now what should I do?" There were a few more hammers to use, but he'd have to go and ask for another one. As he was on his way the craziest thoughts tried to stop him. "If I say I broke it, others might think that I am not a good handyman. Or maybe they won't let me finish the job, as they'll worry that more tools will break if I use them."

Darin Dillygint-deedz knew that these kinds of thoughts weren't right and weren't even true. The type of people that others can trust are those that tell the truth, are honest about the facts, and are humble to admit when something goes wrong. That was the kind of person he was, and always tried to be.

"I was using this hammer and the head just broke off. Perhaps I wasn't holding it right, I don't know." Darin Dillygint-deedz explained.

"Oh, don't worry about it!" said Kiran Kontolictuz. "I didn't even know we were still using that old hammer. It's been on the brink of breaking for awhile. We shouldn't have even had it with the tools. Here's a better one that we just bought. I'm glad you didn't get hurt with that old weak hammer. And hey, you are doing a terrific job! That stage is looking great. I'm amazed at how strong it looks, and how much you were able to do today. Good for you!"

Those words made Darin Dillygint-deedz feel pretty good. As he walked back to the stage he thought,

"It feels great to be honest, to tell what happened, and get things working right again. Sometimes people haven't been so understanding when I tried to be honest, even though it was the right thing to do, and it felt better than not saying anything at all. But honestly, I haven't always treated others that kindly either when they told me about their mistakes.

Kiran Kontolictuz made me feel encouraged and like doing an even better job. I hope I can be that way with others too.”

**“I don’t feel well...”**

(Imaginary story)

It was going to be a rather fun day, or so Ben-Jim Bennifits thought. He was looking forward to another good day of using the cement truck to starting filling in the area planned for today. It was always fun when things were starting to take shape. He’d been assigned to help with this part of the job in making a recreation centre. There were to be tennis courts, a basketball court, a playground, and all sorts of play areas.

“Okay, ready!” He yelled, above the noise of the trucks’ engines. They were working together well, and things were going great. That is until he started to get a bad pain in his stomach.

Ben-Jim Bennifits wasn’t often sick, so it was rather unusual. “Oh, dear. I just don’t think I can keep on right now,” he thought. “What shall I do? I don’t want everyone to have a hard time because I can’t do my part of the job. But if I don’t honestly tell them what is happening then I’ll risk not only getting worse—whatever it is—but I might make a big mistake on this project, because I can’t focus properly.” He was thinking it over.

Finally Ben-Jim Bennifits had the strength to say what he was feeling, and to excuse himself from the work for awhile. It felt hard to be honest. It would have been nicer for him to appear to be strong and like he was the perfect workman, able to do everything and to do it well, but he just couldn’t.

After resting on the side for a bit, his friend Carl came over to see how he was doing. “I feel a bit better now,” he said. “I think it’s just because I ate something that doesn’t agree with me.” He was starting to remember that on the way to the worksite he’d snacked on something that was in the truck, that wasn’t good for him personally to eat. It was hard to admit that he’d made that silly mistake.

“Well, at least it’s nothing too serious then,” Carl encouraged him. After about half an hour, Ben-Jim Bennifits was able to start work again. Things had to slow down a bit while he was gone, but it was sure better than pretending that everything was fine, and keeping his mistake to himself.

He apologized to everyone, and told them what had happened. He promised to not let that happen again. Everyone was glad to see that he was feeling better, and the work could now carry on full speed again.

When they were taking a break later on for lunch, one of the men, Stuart, came up to Ben-Jim Bennifits and said, “Thanks for being a good example to me today. See, I’ve been having a hard time telling my brother about a mistake I made. But you showed me how it’s easy to be honest and explain things, and apologize too. After what happened today I went to talk



to my brother who works nearby. I told him about what I did last week. By mistake I took his tool box, instead of mine. Then when he went to work it wasn't there. I didn't mean to, but I didn't want him to be upset at me so I didn't apologize. I just put it back as soon as I realised it. But that wasn't right, and I didn't feel good in my heart all week. So today, I just talked to him, and he forgave me, and I feel so much better. We're good friends you know, and when we are honest with each other we get along even better."

Ben-Jim Bennifits was glad to hear that his example helped someone else.

"Thanks for telling me that. It's nice to know what you think!" he told Stuart. "I'm glad even my mistake that seemed so hard for me to admit to you and the others helped in some way. That's pretty neat."

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**Character Trait #4:** Communicative/Expressive

**On a Bench**

(Imaginary story)

It had been an exhausting day. Tom Truckalong had worked hard shovelling wheelbarrow after wheelbarrow load of dirt to all the new flower beds that surrounded the town square. It was one of the last things to be done before the project of fixing up the area was complete.

A small pond had been built, and goldfish were swimming in it. Benches had been added, and even a barbeque area set up. There was a nearby playground made for the children, built out of logs. It had a cubby house up high that could be climbed up to, a slide, and other climbing structures. A load of soft bark mulch had been dumped and spread on the ground for the safety of lively climbing children. Tomorrow the gardeners were going to plant the flowers, so the dirt needed to be in place before then.

Finally his part of the job was done for the day, and the wheelbarrow, shovel, and all that Tom Truckalong had used was loaded into his pickup truck. He then sat down on one of the new benches to enjoy a cold drink of water, and rest while looking at the sunset. He opened up a snack he'd saved, and listened to a song on his player.

However, he'd been too tired to acknowledge and say hello to another person who was also sitting on the bench. He didn't realise it was his friend, as Tom Truckalong just wanted a few quiet moments before going home.

Jerry sat there for awhile, wondering why Tom Truckalong wasn't talking to him. "Maybe he's just tired... or maybe he didn't recognise me...or maybe he actually doesn't want to talk to me... did I do something to upset him?"

Jerry started to get worried, and the more he thought about it, the more he felt sad. Now, Tom Truckalong wasn't upset at him or anything like that at all. What was needed here was just some simple communication.

Jerry nearly just got up and left, without saying anything. But as he stood up he waved at Tom Truckalong, and said "Hi! How was your day?"

"Oh!" Tom Truckalong looked up with surprise. "I didn't recognise it was you," he said, taking his earphones out of his ears, so he could chat. Jerry sat back down, and they both enjoyed the sunset while talking about how things were going with Jerry's sports team. He was a trainer for cricket, and the team had met for a good practice that day.

"Nice seeing you again!" Tom Truckalong said, as Jerry was leaving.

"Yes, you too," Jerry said and then paused, wondering whether to say what he was thinking. He decided to.

"Thanks for chatting. I actually was wondering what you were thinking before, as you weren't talking to me. I thought for sure you'd noticed I was there, but thought that perhaps you were upset at me and didn't want to talk to me or something."

"Oh, no, not at all!" Tom Truckalong quickly said. Now it was his turn to express his thoughts.

"I should have taken more notice, but I was just so tired from my work today, and just needed to have some quiet time, to sit and rest. But seeing you was great! Talking to a friend is a nice way to end a busy day. Thanks for getting my attention. It would have been sad to think that you thought I didn't want to talk with you. Thanks for the chat, and for initiating the conversation. It really helps to ask and find out, instead of imagining what someone might be feeling—especially if it's something that's making you feel sad. It's very likely not to be the way you think it is," Tom Truckalong said.

"You're right, Tom," Jerry agreed. "I'll see you some other time. Bye!"

"See you, Jerry," Tom Truckalong said, heading to his truck, looking forward to seeing his children at home.

"Talking and expressing our thoughts is real important," he thought, "especially if we're using words that are helpful, kind and true."

## **A Dream**

(Imaginary story)

"What an odd dream I had last night," Jeffery Just-in-time wrote in his diary. "In the dream people didn't want to talk to others. When things were going wrong, no one spoke up and said what they thought should be done to change it. When someone was sad, no one stopped to find out why, and they never told anyone what was bothering them either. When cars were going too fast, no one told them to slow down. The postmen didn't have

any work to do, because no one wrote to others. By the end of the dream things were in a pretty sad state. Roads were crazy; people were sad and lonely; no one could learn anything from others because no one wanted to teach and explain things. People had to learn things on their own, and it sometimes took years to figure things out, instead of learning it right away from someone else who knew.”

As Jeffery Just-in-time thought about his day, he realised that there were lots of times when he could or even should say things, but he just chose not to—like saying hello to others, and saying a kind word, instead of only thinking about his work. And there were other times when he wished he’d said nothing at all—like when he thought of a foolish joke that made someone feel embarrassed, or when he got upset and spoke unkindly to someone.

“Communication and being able to express things properly is really important,” he thought. “Knowing when not to say anything at all is good too. My dream made me appreciate the gift of being able to communicate with others, and to use it to make the world a better place.”

So as Jeffery Just-in-time arrived at the worksite and began his job of mixing a batch of cement, he made sure to acknowledge and greet each one working with him. It seemed to bring smiles to their faces, and the day was sprinkled with laughs and kind deeds. He also mentioned a new idea to his work overseer—something he thought would make things easier that day and save time.

“Instead of going all the way over there to get the sand needed for this job here, I was thinking we could use Tom Truckalong’s pickup truck to bring the bags to a closer spot. If we just take a few minutes to work together we could clear a space for the sand right here. Then we could all load up the truck and bring it on over. It would help save time, I think,” Jeffery Just-in-time suggested.

Thankfully the overseer was good at listening, and good at trying out others’ ideas—not just his own. Jeffery Just-in-time’s idea worked great, and saved time and energy.

When Jeffery Just-in-time was getting ready to go home he spotted one of the guys on the team—Jason—who seemed to be rather down about something. Wanting to just go home, Jeffery Just-in-time at first didn’t want to take the time to talk with him to see if he was okay. However, as he took the kind step, Jason explained that he was feeling badly, as it seemed everyone else on the team could do their jobs so much better than he. Since he was new to the job he had lots to learn and was feeling discouraged, like he might never catch up to being able to do things as well as the others.

Jeffery Just-in-time encouraged Jason, telling him what it was like when he first started off as a workman.

“It took me quite awhile to learn things,” Jeffery Just-in-time said, “but after awhile I caught on.” Jeffery Just-in-time told Jason to just be patient, to not compare with the others, and that doing things carefully, diligently and to the best of his ability was what was important. Jason felt a lot better. Jeffery Just-in-time had been not only at the right place at the right

time, but had said the right thing in the right way. He was glad he'd stopped to talk—and to listen, to learn about what someone else was feeling.

“Communication is a tool that helps us all do a better job,” Jeffery Just-in-time thought, as he whistled on his way.

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**Character Trait #5:** Undaunted by challenges/Tackling difficulties with faith

### **Parking a Pick-up Truck**

(Imaginary story)

The work team arrived on the new site. It was their first time to begin working on this new project. Together they looked over the instructions and plan, to get an idea of what they were helping to build.

“Can we really do all that? It looks like a huge job!” some of the workmen were saying.

The team overseer said, “Well, it doesn't have to all be done today! You don't have to think about everything all at once. That will just overwhelm you. Just think about the first step. Let's plan that.”

Each team member received their job assignment for the day, and began to tackle the huge job—one little part at a time. They were trying to build a four-level parking lot. Two level's underground, and two above ground.

Gordie Go'n'do-it wasn't one to wait around thinking about how difficult something might be. His motto which he was often heard to say was, “It's better to do one good thing—if that's all you can do—than to do nothing at all.”

His job for the day was to use the bulldozer to push stumps and roots of the old trees out of the ground, to help clear the way. “I'm off to start,” he said, and put on his hat. The others made a start too.

By the end of the day, as they parked their vehicles and looked at what progress had been made, they were all pleasantly surprised.

“What a great day of progress we had today!” Gordie Go'n'do-it exclaimed. “I love starting new and seemingly 'too big' jobs, because it is great fun to see it actually get done. Each time I see it happen I get more confident that nothing is too hard, no matter how it looks. It wouldn't be as fun to only do the simplest things that you know are easy and can be done real fast. Doing something new that even looks too hard is more exciting. —Partly because you aren't totally sure of the outcome, and you are interested to see how things turn out, and partly also because it is so fulfilling and courage-strengthening when you accomplish it.”

That night Gordie Go'n'do-it had a dream. He was driving a pick-up truck through the town. His son was driving with him. They were going to go hiking in the nearby hillside, but first

they needed to get petrol and some food for their picnic lunch. In the dream they were driving around and around town, but there was no place to park. So Gordie Go'n'do-it and his son had to park far away, and walk back to the town to get what they needed for their day of hiking.

When Gordie Go'n'do-it woke up and thought about his dream, it made him glad that they were building the new parking lot. "I may be real glad it's there one day," he said. He eagerly got on his work clothes and headed off to the work site, ready to make new progress for the day.

## **Encountering Problems**

(Imaginary story)

The treads were stuck or jammed or something, on the bulldozer. Darin Dillygint-deedz couldn't quite figure out the problem. The other workmen nearby came to look too, but didn't know what to do. This was stopping them from continuing on the project. It seemed to be a tough fix-it job. When things like this happened, they knew who to call on.

Kiran Kontolictuz was used to being called on for the "really hard jobs." He was someone who didn't mind problems—whether it was a broken down bulldozer, or a flat tire, or a piece of equipment that wouldn't work properly, or even a person who wasn't making things easy and seemed to be upsetting things.

Kiran Kontolictuz came over to take a look at the bulldozer. "You know why I like to encounter problems?" he asked. The others looked at him, puzzled. It was the last thing they liked to have happen to them. Often when a problem came up, most of the time it made people want to walk the other way, and do things that were easy—but not Kiran Kontolictuz.

He said, "I like facing things that go wrong, because I then get to discover something new I never realized before, and then I'm able to help others even more with the extra knowledge and experience gained through it."

"Doesn't that make it hard for you to get jobs done, if things are always going wrong?" Darin Dillygint-deedz asked. He didn't want these problems causing his job to go so slow or for him have to stop for awhile. He wanted it done right, and well, and right away!

"Well," Kiran Kontolictuz responded. "If what you are trying to do, or your goal each day, is only to get things done, then it could be rather upsetting to have things that are like red lights or brakes that stop you from making steady progress. But if you see things differently, that each day has more to it than doing things, and you realise that you are to most of all learn things, then even a problem is part of your accomplishing that—since it's helping you to learn something."

Kiran Kontolictuz continued to look at the treads, and then stopped for a word of prayer. In an instant the Lord showed him what the problem was. There was a rock wedged in the tread, stopping it from moving easily. He cleared out the rock that was jamming things up.

Darin Dillygint-deedz could now continue with the job, but stopped first to summarise what he'd just learned. "I see! When we are using our strength and thoughts to focus on and worry about a problem, wishing it would go away so that things would be nice and easy, then it's hard for us to find solutions. If instead we think of a problem as something positive and good, in that it will help us to learn something new, and we pray for the answers, we'll find a solution quicker."

"That's right!" Kiran Kontolictuz agreed. "If we focus on the good that can come out of the difficulty, and ask the Lord for the solution, the trouble will be over sooner, and we'll be on to doing new things, and making faster progress again."

"Brrrrrrrrmmmm!" the motor roared, and off Darin Dillygint-deedz happily continued with his big job for the day.

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**Character Trait #6:** Intrigued and interested in life/Full of vigour, zest, and not giving place to boredom

### Something Interesting

(Imaginary Story)

As Larry Laughinglad sat eating his lunch at his work break, he fixed his eyes on something intriguing. "How do they do it?" he wondered, as he noticed a spider on a nearby bush, making its web. "Fascinating," he whispered. "Without a blueprint or instructions, or any work overseer it just knows what to do, and how to do it. And it probably builds one each day. Amazing!"

It was rare to get to see it.

"What are you up to?" asked his friend, Colin, who came by just then for his park 'n' lunch break too.

Colin sat down beside Larry Laughinglad, who pointed out what he was watching.

"You always seem to find new and interesting things around you, and no matter where you are you always find something to learn," said Colin to Larry Laughinglad. "Sometimes I just run out of ideas of things to do, and I even get the silly idea that I already know and have learned nearly everything that is important to learn. I know there is actually so much more to discover."

"Ha, ha," laughed Larry Laughinglad. He knew how funny it would be if someone thought they had learned everything there was to know, or thought there wasn't anything new to find out about.

“Well, I guess I just like learning new things, and I just know that no matter where I am or what I’m doing there’s something I can discover. It doesn’t have to be big or seem real amazing. Even tiny things can teach me something. Like this little spider. I was starting to get bored with my job on the work site thinking there wasn’t anything special about it, but this spider taught me to think differently,” said Larry Laughinglad.

“What’s your job?” wondered Colin.

“It’s often my job to hold the sign that tells the cars to go slow or to stop, when we are working on a road, and I help to put up and take away the road cones. Other times I help to put up the fences around the work site if it’s on a bigger lot of land. I also help to carry supplies that are needed here and there,” explained Larry Laughinglad.

“And what could a spider help you to learn?” asked Colin.

“Well, I guess it does its job day by day, doing the same thing all the time. It doesn’t give up, or do a poor job just because it’s not as fancy as some other creature. It makes its web as nice as it can, and does the best it can, every day,” commented Larry Laughinglad. “And really, no day or activity is really totally the same, everyday. There is always something new or interesting to try, to experiment with, to learn, to invent, to see, no matter where we are, who we are with, or what we are doing!”

“You’re right!” said Colin. “I think today, instead of just doing things the same way I usually do them, I’ll dream up a better way! My job is washing the dishes and helping with cutting up the food for the restaurant cooks. Maybe I can invent a machine that…” Colin’s mind was starting to think. “I can hardly wait to get started, that way I can have a chance to find new and better ways to do things. Bye, see you later, gotta go now!”

“Bye, Colin! Thanks for coming by. See you next time—and I can hardly wait to see what you’ll figure out!” Larry Laughinglad smiled and returned to his job.

Then something caught his eye. It was a coin. A new shiny coin, there in the mud. “I wonder how it got here?” he thought. “And more importantly, I wonder why I was the one to find it. Interesting. There must be something I’m to do with it.”

As he was holding his sign that day to tell the cars to stop or go slow, his mind was thinking of cool ideas. There was so much he wanted to do to make this town a better place. There were people to help, places to fix up, trash to clear, children that needed sports areas and equipment and so forth. He was getting excited! There was so much to do, and he didn’t know where to start.

After he prayed the idea came to him: Play music on the street corner, and have people drop coins in a hat or bowl for him. When he had enough money he would use it to give to some under privileged people who were often just sitting around with nothing to do. In return for his gift, they could help to clear the park and sidewalks of trash. The ideas were starting. His life was getting more interesting by the minute—even though he was still just standing there holding a sign. But he was also praying. He knew prayer would change things and make all these town improvements possible.

## Rest Day—Best Day

(Imaginary Story)

Wilden Wilbeethere was feeling very sick today. It was the week end, and he couldn't do much of anything, or so it seemed. He looked out of his window at the partly cloudy sky, between coughs.

He was trying to distract himself from the way he felt. "Well, at least I can see, and hear, and I can move! I'm not really that bad off. I just feel unwell, but in time I'll feel strong again."

Wilden Wilbeethere wasn't going to allow himself to get too down about having to remain resting, and having to cope with all the discomfort that the illness brought. His main problem was wondering what to do. It was hard for him to just be still and do nothing much.

Soon, though, he fell asleep and had a good rest.

"Ah, now that's better!" Wilden Wilbeethere said when he awoke, though he was still coughing a bit. "That sleep was just what I needed. I know I need to keep taking it easy if I want to recover quickly. I'm just not sure what to use my time for. I could choose to be grumpy about not being able to go on the outing that I had planned with my cousin this weekend, or I can choose to get a new idea of what else can be done even while I'm lying here resting and not able to do much at all."

Wilden Wilbeethere chose to do the latter, but he was out of ideas. Things kept popping into his mind of activities that would require him to be up and around to do them. So he stopped to pray.

"Lord, I know You are right here with me, and this is where You want me to be today. I want to thank You for giving me this opportunity to be here. I now get to do something I wouldn't have gotten to if things had gone just the way I thought they would or should. What can I use this time for now, Jesus? What would be a fun and good use of my time?"

After his prayer Wilden Wilbeethere paused for a moment to listen to Jesus, and as he did a new thought came to him.

"Oh, that's right! I had completely forgotten! I'm so glad that I paused to pray!" Wilden Wilbeethere exclaimed.

A month before he'd promised to write down the stories of his adventures while hiking and travelling all over the country a few years back. His nephew, Sean, who lived far away, had wanted to hear all about it. Wilden Wilbeethere agreed to do it in time for his nephew's birthday, as a gift. There was now only two weeks left to get it done and sent off in the mail.

"A promise is a promise!" he told himself, and was feeling a bit better that he was right where he was, with time on his hands while resting. This time in bed gave him time to think,



to pause, to reflect and to most of all remember all those neat things that had happened, and to write them down.

Wilden Wilbeethere sat up with his pen and paper, and the stories began to flow. He laughed at some of the memories—like the time a large bird took off with his sandwich that he'd put down for a minute in order to tie his shoe! Or the time he was trying to cross a stream, walking on the rocks, but slipped and got all wet, and spent the next while trying to dry his clothes by a fire. He shook his head at other memories, remembering some of the things he'd learned—like the time he forgot to fill the rented car with enough petrol and found himself stuck on a dirt road. Thankfully a farmer came driving past after a while, and helped fill his tank with a can of petrol, giving Wilden Wilbeethere enough to keep him going until he got to the town.

After about 1½ hours of writing Wilden Wilbeethere had filled up 12 pages with stories! "I'll get this photocopied before I send it off to Sean. Then I can share them with others too, who want to hear about the trip," Wilden Wilbeethere thought.

It was hard work in some ways, though not as hard as working at the construction site, for sure. Wilden Wilbeethere was ready now for some warm soup and another nap. Before he did so, he paused for one more prayer.

"Jesus, thank You for giving me that idea. It was a great and fun use of my time. Please show me anything else that I can do today, after my nap. I sure like to know I've got neat things to do. It helps to keep me happy and inspired!"

This time Jesus told him that he should take some time in prayer for the many people he'd heard about in far-off countries which were experiencing very difficult weather conditions.

Wilden Wilbeethere took a few moments to jot down a list of all the people and situations he would take time to pray for later on that afternoon.

"I'm going to be a world traveller this afternoon!" he said with a smile. "I'll send my prayers to help people in places that I never could go to, all in one hour, even if I tried to zoom there on the fastest aeroplane invented. Through the power of prayer the help will get to them so much faster! Even if some prayers take longer to be fully answered, I know the second that I call out to Jesus, and ask for His help, He gets to work right away!"

When the day was over, Wilden Wilbeethere felt like it had gone by rather quickly, and that it was actually a fun day, after all! He was glad he'd learned that no matter what was happening, or what he had to do, there was always room for a good idea, something that made things better—he just had to ask the best idea Man ever!

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**Character Trait #7:** Desire Godly ways/Respect and reverence the Lord/Stay on His channel

## Character Construction Crew

(Imaginary Story)

***Adapt story: I just was pondering about the tool one "silly ideas". It's a great pic, but different than the setting I had in mind, about the mini cement mixer and bigger tools.. but then I thought I can make it be for building a house, and they were fitting the wooden frame of the house, etc. so then these tools and this picture would work.***

### Silly Ideas

"I felt like I would cry," Harolt Hoowalhelp was telling his best friend Bob about what had happened that day. "It all started off fine. But then things got worse, and by the end of the day everything I had tried to do was a wreck!"

Bob took a sip of his tea and nodded his head. He knew what that felt like. "Go on," he said.

"Well, at first I thought it was a bit of fun. We were messing around, playing rather unsafely with the tools before work time. But I think that's where we missed it. If we had been mindful of the important job, as well as the dangers, and were thinking, praying, and focusing on doing a wise job, things might have turned out better."

"What happened?" Bob wondered.

Harolt Hoowalhelp explained: "We didn't mix the cement properly, and it just turned to muck. The Crane truck's hook wasn't loaded safely and dropped its load. I got a big scrape on my arm from tripping over tools that weren't put away properly. Not only didn't we do the job we needed to do, but we have extra work tomorrow to fix up the mess we got into."

Jeffery Just-in-time came into the cafe just then as well. The two motioned for him to come and join them.

"I learned something today," Jeffery added to the discussion, "that we can have the Lord's help and protection as long as we are working together with Him on the team. If we aren't listening to His instructions, then we get ourselves into difficult or dangerous situations, that could have been avoided."

"You're right," Harolt Hoowalhelp said. "It has a lot to do with what we are thinking about. Whatever we are thinking, affects what we say. What we say affects what we do. What we do affects if we have a nice day or an especially difficult one. But if we shoo away the foolish thoughts and ideas, and don't just do whatever comes into our mind, and instead try and work together with Jesus, as the wisest workman there is, then even if things are hard, they turn out for good."

Bob surmised, "We all get silly ideas, and thoughts that aren't that great. But it seems if we can stop ourselves from continuing to think about them, to talk about them, or from doing them, and instead think 'What are Your thoughts right now, Jesus?' that we'd not only be happier and safer, but the job would get done faster."

"I think I'm going to try that tomorrow," Harolt Hoowalhelp decided.

"Me too!" agreed Jeffery Just-in-time.

And they did! There were lots of silly ideas, and not-nice-words and unpleasant thoughts that were trying to bother them. But every time they would just shoo them away with an “I only want to do things Your way, Jesus”. And it was amazing! Not only were they able to fix their mistakes from the day before and do the job for that day, but they got half of the work for the next day done as well.

“Yippee!” the team shouted.

“See you all tomorrow, for another great day!” said Harolt Hoowalhelp.

## The Last Coins

(Imaginary Story)

Sammy Smileshine was taking a break from work. He was in charge of using the large digger. The basement was starting to take shape—at least the hole for it. He went to eat his snack on the park bench. The thought of looking at the trees, listening to the gentle song of the birds, and enjoying the pretty fountain of water, relaxed him. He’d had enough loudness for one morning. The sound of the digger was anything but relaxing.

But on his way his head turned to see something he really wished he hadn’t. There was a sign saying: Come and see my new video! It’s the craziest thing you ever saw!

It was hard to resist. He wanted some quiet moments, and knew that to have a nice day, and to stay happy and friendly with the others on the team, he needed to have some time with Jesus out in nature. But it started to get him interested. Well, that’s what the sign was trying to do.

He used the last coins he had—that was going to be for a snack with a friend at the end of the day. He paid to go in and see what this was all about. But as soon as the video started, he knew he wasn’t enjoying it. It was just full of foolishness, dangerous ideas, unkind deeds, ugly pictures, and things that made him feel very sad his heart. He walked out disgusted.

“Why would someone spend so much time and money on making something terrible like that? It was definitely not of the Lord! I feel very sad I watched it.” Sammy Smileshine thought.

But now his time was spent, and so was his “fun time” money. He didn’t have time now for the park, and he was feeling grumpy from the show he’d seen.

“I’m going to be wiser now,” he determined. “The next time there is a fancy sign, and something that seems to be fun, I’ll pray before I do it. I’m sure the Lord would have warned me. Actually, He told me this morning to take my break in the park. I should have followed through and done that, no matter what tried to get me distracted.”

As he walked back his digger, Charley Churrusting came up to him asking,

“So where shall we go later for our ‘after work snack-and-friendship time’?”

Sammy Smilesine, who almost always was smiling, was looking down sadly. He didn’t know what to say.

“What’s wrong?” wondered Charley Churrusting. “Are you okay?”

“Well, it’s just that I made a silly mistake. I spent the money for our snack later on something that wasn’t good at all. I really want to still have our time together though.”

Being the faithful friend and encouragement that Charley Churrusting was, he said, “That’s okay. I’ve done that before. It helped me learn to keep my ears open to what the Lord wants to tell me, and to make Him happy in all that I do. I’m always happier that way. I know that feeling you have now in your heart when you’ve heard or seen or said or done something that wasn’t God’s happy, loving, pleasant way. How about for our time together, we go to the park. We can just look at the beauty around, and enjoy the sounds of nature. We don’t have to buy a snack. We can still have fun!”

“You’re such a good friend to me!” Sammy Smilesine said. “That’s what I’d wanted to do before. I can have another chance now. That will be great!”

“Okay! See you then!” Charley Churrusting said with a wave, as he went off to drive the dump truck’s next load off the work site.

He whistled while he worked. They were using the dirt from the dug out hole to fill up a landfill—a place where the garbage trucks dump the trash each week. They were covering it up with the new dirt.

“Hmm, that’s an interesting thought,” he mused. “I guess the unpleasant things from the Enemy, that are in the world—or that even just come into our thoughts—are like the trash. Our mind is like a big hole, waiting for something to fill it up. If we let the Enemy fill it, he’ll just give us trashy thoughts and ideas, and stinky things. But this new load of dirt that I’m bringing is like Jesus’ Word and thoughts. He can fill us up and make us into something useful. When this landfill is covered in good dirt, plants, grass, flowers and everything nice can be grown on it. It will be a nice park one day.”

With the hard work done for the day, Charley Churrusting parked the dump truck, and strolled over to meet his friend. Just then something caught his eye—a coin...no, a few coins. “Must have dropped from someone’s pocket a while ago while they ran and played. Or maybe Jesus just put them here for us? Wow!”

Noticing Sammy Smilesine hadn’t arrived yet, he wanted to surprise him. He ran quickly over to the snack stand at the entrance of the park and got something for the two of them.

“Where did you get that?” said Sammy Smilesine, when he arrived.

“A miracle!” Charley Churrusting told the story. And as they ate it, the most beautiful bird came and sat in the tree and sang them its song. Sammy Smilesine felt happy and warm inside. “Jesus, you are really cheering us up! Thank You!” he said.

“You know, I was thinking,” added Charley Churrusting, “Jesus is like the most beautiful light you’ve ever seen—and I just love light—lights of all kinds. The morning sunrise, the warm, golden late afternoon sunlight, a flashlight walk at night with the bright stars shining, coloured lights on a Christmas

tree, the full silvery moon, a soft lamp for a bedtime story, a shiny crystal chandelier—those are some of my favourite. And Jesus is the light of the world—better and brighter and more beautiful than any light on Earth. ‘In Him is no darkness at all.’” Charley Churrusting remembered the Bible verse.

“Jesus just makes me feel great! I have so much more energy, fun, and good ideas when I think His thoughts and remember His love,” said Sammy Smilesine.

After taking some time to praise the Lord together, they felt encouraged and strong again—ready for a happy work day the next day.

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### **Character Trait #8: Enjoy Nature**

#### **Character Construction Crew**

(Imaginary Story)

#### **Sketch Pad**

It was his day off, and Marrvin Merryglad was particularly excited. It was the day that he had planned for so long, with his friends Joey and Marty.

Looking at the map closely, to get the right idea of just how to get to the waterfall, the team of three were ready to get hiking.

Joey called out “Everyone have their water, hat, snacks, and sketch books, pens and pencils?” They all nodded.

An interest in art was something they had in common. Though they all worked at different jobs--Marrvin Merryglad worked with the bobcat at the construction site, Marty was a bus driver, and Joey worked at the bank--they all liked to draw.

Today they wanted to capture, in art, some of the beauties that they would see up on the mountain—trees, plants, the waterfall, maybe even some animals, if they were quiet enough.

“It’s hard work getting to the top!” Joey exclaimed, as they hiked up the steep and rocky mountain pathway. Since each of them mostly sat down at their jobs, the exercise took a bit of effort, but was so good for them.

“It may be hard”, Marrvin Merryglad said, “but it’s sure a lot more fun than driving a noisy bobcat—and much better for us too!”

The team stopped for a rest and snack, then pulled out their sketch pads.

“What are you going to draw?” Joey asked his friends.

Marrvin Merryglad decided on a wild mountain flower, with a bee on it. Marty chose the distant mountain. And Joey thought he'd sketch the nearby sparkling brook of rippling water, where a bird or two would stop by for a little splash, or perhaps to find bugs.

After spending about an hour, resting, talking and drawing, they set off again. The next stop was the large, and breathtaking mountain waterfall.

The excited team took off their shoes and socks and waded in the parts of the pool they could reach.

"This was certainly worth it!" Marrvin Merryglad said. "It was hard work climbing, but it's so beautiful here."

"And quiet too! Away from the city sounds, noisy traffic, and polluted air," said Marty, glad to not be driving a bus that day.

All of them wanted to add the sight to their sketch pads. They drew the waterfall, each in their own way, as best as they could, while thanking the Lord for creating such a wonderful place--and hoped to come back again as soon as possible.

Somehow the next day, even though their jobs involved noise and not as much beauty as they had seen together on the mountain, their work seemed not as hard. They felt refreshed, and the memories in their minds of the gorgeous nature, made them feel happy. Their bodies were stronger too, and they felt healthy from the vigorous climb.

(Imaginary Story)

### **Nature Time**

Ben-Jim Bennifits had just put on his jogging suit and shoes, and had filled a bottle of water. He was all set now.

"Off to the park I go, for some good exercise!" he called out to his wife and children.

"We'll see you there in a bit! As soon as we're done eating we'll come and join you," said Milly his wife.

The park had a big grassy area, and it was just a two-minute walk from their house.

"Sure is pleasant to have a bit of nature so close to our home," Milly thought while she gathered the items needed for their morning at the park together.

"Please put on your shoes and hats and get a good drink of water," she instructed her children after breakfast.

No time was lost. They didn't want to miss a bit of this refreshing outing.

When they had joined in prayer for their trip, then out the door the children and their mother went.

“There he is!” shouted Patrick. “Daddy’s over there! I see him jogging. Let’s go and chase him!”

“Yea!” said his brother Eric, and off they went, playing a game of trying to catch up with him. They had a good time of running and exercise in the fresh air and cheerful morning sunlight. Afterwards they walked around exploring this great natural environment.

“Mummy, mummy!” called out Selene as she went to give her mother a handful of dandelions that she’d picked.

“Can we save these for later, please?” Selene asked. “I want to tape them onto a piece of paper to make a card for my friend Anita.

“Alright then, I’ll put them here while you play. And if you like I can help you find some other wild flowers around that are delicate and are good for pressing. If we press some of the pretty flowers we find they’ll last a long time and are nice to add to cards—or even to put into a picture frame. Would you like that?” mother asked.

Selene smiled and thought that would be so nice. Together she and her mummy found some more wild flowers to add to their collection.

“Shhh!” Eric said to his brother, holding out his hand to indicate for him to stop running and to look.

“I think I saw something moving in the bushes there!” Eric whispered.

Ben-Jim Bennifits had caught up to his boys and quietly listened and watched along with them. Just then a rabbit hopped out of the bush and was gone in a flash.

“Did you see that?” Patrick asked.

Daddy and Eric nodded.

“I wish I could run that fast too,” said Ben-Jim Bennifits. “I’d complete all my running laps in a very short time!” he laughed.

“Shall we explore this trail a bit then, and do some hiking?” Ben-Jim Bennifits asked his sons.

“Ouch!” Eric said, before he could answer his dad.

“I think I have something pokey in my shoe,” he explained.

Sure enough, a prickle that was discovered.

“Well, being out in nature isn’t trouble-free, and not everything will be easy—but it’s safer than a whole lot of other things that people are doing in this modern world. You just need to make sure you are dressed right, have good shoes and keep an eye open for anything unsafe,” Ben-Jim Bennifits commented.

“And pray!” added Patrick.

“Yes! The One who made the grass, the trees, the mountains, the animals, and all these things that we are seeing here today knows how to help us explore it safely. It sure is a lot more fun than working on a busy work site! One thing that does is make me enjoy it so much more out here!” Ben-Jim Bennifits said.

“But why do you have to work to take away some nature and to instead build roads and buildings?” Eric wondered.

“Well, God put us here on Earth to live, but things aren’t as perfect as they were when He first created the World. Due to consequences that came as a result of choices that were made, there are now things that people need to protect themselves from. Can you think of some?” Ben-Jim Bennifits asked his boys.

“Too much sun!” Patrick answered.

“Cold winters, and rain, wind, snow and hail too!” added Eric.

“That’s right! It’s hard to live outside in some parts of the world as the weather isn’t easy to cope with and would be too harsh for most people,” Ben-Jim Bennifits commented.

“Oh, I know, some animals aren’t very friendly, or would get into our food supplies if we didn’t have good places to keep things,” Eric said.

“And pests and other bothersome bugs would make things hard for us. A house or tent keeps things like flies and mosquitoes away a bit more than when you are out in the open. But what about roads, what good are they for?” Patrick asked his dad.

Ben-Jim Bennifits began to talk about it, as the team of hiking boys walked around the nature trail.

“Sometimes there are too many construction projects happening all in one area, and then there isn’t enough nature to keep the right balance of fresh air and beautiful surroundings that are so important to people’s health and well-being.

“Also, roads with many cars can cause a lot of trouble too. There are road accidents and fumes that make people unwell. In some areas where trees and growth are cut down too much it makes it hard or impossible for some species of creatures to continue living there, and soon there aren’t many of them left.

“So it’s a tricky thing to get just right—people need safe places to live, and so do the animals. And the world needs lots of good clean air that the plants help to produce.”

Ben-Jim Bennifits continued to explain:

“However, there are many good uses for roads and so forth—for example ambulances and fire engines and rescue vehicles can get to places faster and relief can get to areas that might not be reached if a road wasn’t there. People are able to transport goods and supplies to faraway places, so that people get to benefit from foods and products that



others produce. Friends and families can visit each other and can go to new places without having to take a lot of time just travelling there.”

Eric and Patrick listened to their dad explaining things, and enjoyed the beautiful surroundings—the smell of the pine trees, the songs of birds, and the many interesting things they noticed along the way. It felt good to be out in nature.

“So, the best thing, I’d say, my boys,” Ben-Jim Bennifits concluded, “is to keep a good balance when building plans are being made. Make sure both animals and nature, as well as the people around, have what they most need. See to it that neither is crowding each other out, or causing troubles.”

As they rounded the last corner they saw the park again, as the trail had looped back to where they started out.

“There’s Mum and Selene!” Patrick was the first to spot them.

“Looks like it’s picnic time!” Eric added, and the two boys raced over to enjoy it!

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**Character Trait #9:** Think well of others (Not critical/looking down on/judgemental)

### **Character Construction Crew**

#### **We don’t have to be Perfect**

(Imaginary Story)

“We’ll get this done in no time at all!” Harolt Hoowalhelp was heard to yell above the din of the roaring motors of the work vehicles.

But just then they struck a problem.

“There’s a problem! Stop!” he called out and motioned for the digger to cease while they figured out what was going on.

“All of a sudden there is a pool of water. Now either we’ve discovered a hidden spring of fresh water, or—and I think this might be more the case—we just hit a water pipe that no one knew or no one told us about!” Harolt Hoowalhelp explained.

Jeffery Just-in-time got out of the big digger and came to see what was going on. The water was just getting deeper.

“Oh dear! This will cost us quite a bit of time and work—and I don’t even know if this project will work out as was planned after all,” he commented.

“I guess I was the one who broke it—but if I had been told about it being here, it wouldn’t have happened,” Jeffery Just-in-time said.

“Well, what we need here is ideas and solutions, because really, it’s no one’s fault. Accidents and unexpected events happen, and they just help us to discover and learn new things. We don’t need to waste time finding out who’s to blame. I think everyone here is doing the best they can. Let’s just get to work finding out what we can do to change the situation for the better, shall we?” Harolt Hoowalhelp said.

Jeffery Just-in-time felt better. He was rather expecting others to be upset at him and be quick to criticise. Instead he was **well thought of** and complimented for the good and hard work that he had been doing.

The men all stopped work for a while to talk together with the foreman. New jobs were assigned. A team would find out more about the water pipe—where it came from and what it led to. Others were put to work drawing up new plans, as they needed to adjust their blueprints a bit. Another team got busy repairing the pipe by first of all pumping out the extra water that was pouring out, while replacing the broken piece.

“We’ve discovered what that pipe was!” said the returning team a couple hours later.

“It’s the water supply that goes down to the old little village—one of the first towns established in this part of the country. That’s why there was no record of it on the modern day blue prints of the city,” the team explained.

“That’s so interesting,” Jeffery Just-in-time said. “Makes me curious to find out more about the history of this area.”

Soon the pipe was fixed and Jeffery Just-in-time used the digger to cover it over again with dirt.

“Well, that’s all we have time for today team,” said the foreman. “You all did well! Perhaps the job we planned on doing wasn’t completed due to new factors and challenges that we faced. But I’m real pleased that you all worked together as a good team, like brothers, helping to fix the situation and not getting down about things. Even if things don’t go perfectly well, and people make mistakes, if we can be forgiving and appreciate each other’s good qualities, then that makes us winners. We need to see past the things that go wrong or differently than expected and not just try to place blame and find fault, but join together in friendship to pull **to** of difficult situations or problems. That’s what makes you all such a great team. I’ll see you tomorrow then to start anew on the revised plan. Good going! And have a good evening.”

With that the foreman waved goodbye and so did the others.

It had been a different day than was expected, but a good day, as each one had noticed the good in each other, and had spoken words that were helpful and uplifting.

Jeffery Just-in-time paused before walking away. He looked at each one on the team. He could think of countless mistakes that each one had made. He could remember the times that each one had in some way disappointed others, or were unable to do as good

a job as was needed at different times. He thought of himself too, and all the many blunders that he'd made.

"Maybe we don't have to be perfect. Maybe we just need to focus on what is good in each other, and to be glad for the many more times that things are done well. It's easy to remember the mistakes—but perhaps that's because they don't happen as often as the good things people do, so it seems more noticeable," Jeffery Just-in-time thought.

"I think I'd like to change that. From now I want to think and see and say the good qualities that each of my friends and teamworkers have. And I'm just going to ignore the rest, unless there is a kind and helpful word or deed I can do that would make things better and easier for them."

With that thought Jeffery Just-in-time left, a smile on his face. He knew tomorrow would be the best day yet. Appreciating those you live with and are **around**—rather than fault finding and pointing out the failures—has a way of making things so much better!

## **A Positive Help**

(Imaginary Story)

It had been an early start this morning for Gordie Go'n'do-it, and he was reading the newspaper while sipping his coffee.

"Ah! I love these early morning times, when everything is quiet," he thought while pausing to look **at** the window. "I **just** this time to prepare for the day. If I ever get a late start and don't take time to pray and pause before the rush of work starts, things just don't seem to go as well.

After praying for his day and reading some passages in his Bible he also liked to read about what was going on in the country and what was happening in people's lives.

Most people wouldn't think of reading about troubles and problems and mistakes that people made would be a nice start to the day. But Gordie Go'n'do-it wasn't reading the newspaper to find fault or to think negatively about what was going on. He actually used it as his prayer primer.

He would read about something, and no matter what it was saying, he would find something good to think about it. He would begin a simple prayer stating what was positive in the situation, and thanking the Lord for something about it. Then he would say a prayer for anyone involved and what they might need.

He would tell his friends, "Those who write the papers don't realise the good they are doing. It's my prayer list, and I believe I can actually make a difference in people's

lives by praying for them. They may never know that I prayed, but perhaps the good effects that my prayer do will eventually come back to me, in the form of a happier town, due to my prayers!”

Some would question, “But can you really see something good in each article? What about those that tell of the unkind deeds or wrongs done by others?”

“Well,” Gordie Go’n’do-it would say, “it’s like what Jesus said to those who thought they were oh-so-good, and wondered why Jesus would even take time to talk with the less-than-perfect people. He gave the example that it’s the sick who need the doctors. So it’s the people that are having a hard time making the right decisions that probably need the prayer the most.”

“But why do you always include something good to say about them or the situation in your prayers. Why not just pray for them to do better and to stop doing the wrong things they are doing?” one friend asked him.

Gordie Go’n’do-it was a kind man, and he also knew a secret.

“The Bible says to ‘Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,’ so if I’m going to get close to the Lord and to say prayers that will really change things, then I need to start with praise. And it’s very hard to be praiseful if in my heart I’m still thinking bad and negative thoughts about a person or situation.

“Also, remember that story Jesus told about the cheating tax collector, and the Pharisee who thought so well of himself? The man who was thinking badly of others didn’t receive God’s forgiveness for his own mistakes—mistakes he seemed to forget while only remembering others wrong doings. I don’t want to be like that. I make plenty of blunders too, and anything I do good and well I know is only because Jesus is helping me,” Gordie Go’n’do-it explained one day.

So now on this beautiful early morning he could smile as he enjoyed this time in quiet, helping others through his positive prayers. And for some reason, every day he took time to lift others through prayer, things seem to go extra good for him!

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**Character Trait #10:** Empathetic/ Understanding/ Put one’s self in another’s place

**Tying Shoes**

(Imaginary Story)

Robert was trying to tie his shoes for the first time, but didn't quite get it right and ended up with a bit of a tangled string. In frustration he called out to his dad to show him once again how to do it right.

"Okay, son," said Wilden Wilbeethere, "Here's how to do it," he said and demonstrated the method.

"Think ya got it now?" he asked his son.

Robert tried it once more and with a big grin showed his dad that he did it! It was mostly done right and was good enough for a first try.

"Good for you! You didn't give up, did you? I'll tell you some things just aren't easy and you can't win 'em the first time around. But with that good skill of yours—the skill of not giving up—you'll be able to learn anything you put your mind to!" Wilden Wilbeethere said to his son.

Together they walked to a large patch of grass nearby to play some ball and Wilden Wilbeethere continued to chat.

"I'll tell you, some of the jobs we've got on the site aren't a piece of cake, if you know what I mean. And there isn't anything that I can do now that didn't take me a good amount of effort and putting my mind and muscles to work to master the skill."

"Really? Can you tell me about something you learned?" Robert asked his dad.

They sat down on a log and Wilden Wilbeethere began.

"You see, I'm not the fastest of the bunch nor the smartest by any means. It seems I have to work harder than most to pick up a new skill and to do what it takes others with a quick wit to learn in a short while. Perhaps it helps me understand and be patient with others when it seems it take a while to learn things. I can't be impatient when I know it takes me time to learn things as well." Wilden Wilbeethere said.

"Daddy, I'm glad you are patient with me when I'm trying to learn things," Robert expressed. "It helps me to keep on going and not give up."

"Well, I guess that's a good thing about me taking awhile to learn new things too. It helps me react with understanding," Wilden Wilbeethere commented.

"What was something you took a while to learn?" Robert asked.

"I wanted to learn to operate the mobile crane, as it seemed it would be more fun to sit and use gears and buttons rather than sweating it out under the sun with spades and bricks. But as it turns out it wasn't as easy as I thought. That thing took a ton of studying and practice and lots of plain hard work until I felt I could use it capably. Nothing is really ever easy. If it seems like someone has an easier time doing whatever job they have, think again. Someone somewhere is probably looking over at you and thinking the very same thing—that you have things easier than they do.

“It’s like the shoes you learned to tie this morning; everyone in life has on their own pair of shoes. Well, not everyone wears shoes, but it’s an example, that everyone has a different lot in life and different skills, traits, abilities and difficulties as well. No one has it all smooth—not you, not me, not your mother or even your best friend. Everyone has something that is hard for them, as well as some things that are easy too—something that might be hard for others. It all balances out and everyone learns something that others might not have gotten to learn yet. So we can all help each other and learn from one another.

“But if you look at someone and think things are easy for them, maybe in some ways they are, but there’s always something, or a lot of somethings that are also tough. It’s good to put yourself in their shoes, as the expression says. Imagine what it might be like for you if you were to do, day in and day out, what they have to do—without the advantages that you have right now. It might give you a new understanding and insight. You might start to appreciate new things about them and feel yourself more eager to help even those that at first to you seemed to have all that they needed.”

Just then Robert’s friends Sally and her brother Mike came walking past. He waved and invited them to join in the ball game that was soon to start.

“Oh, that would have been great,” Sally said, “but Mike here needs me to help him run an errand. It’s safer when we go together.”

Mike was a friendly and fun guy to be around, but he also was hearing impaired, and there were times when neither he nor his sister were able to join in on games and activities, since she helped him out a lot.

“Okay then, I’ll see you around sometime,” said Robert and waved good bye.

Robert said to his dad, “I think I see more what you mean about understanding what others are experiencing, so I can be a help to them. If I’d have just thought about what I wanted, I would have been sad that I couldn’t play with them now. Also, at times I’ve wished we had a nice back yard like they do, with so many fun things to do. But when I think about how hard it must be to not be able to hear anything, and to miss out on lots of things that boys like I get to do, then I don’t feel sad for myself anymore, and instead I just want to do what I can to help them.”

“Good for you!” Wilden Wilbeethere replied. “I think you’ve got it! Now, let’s go and play some ball together. Maybe it’s just you and I right now, and we don’t have a big yard to play in at home, but we could have a good chat and hear each other! Not everyone gets that!”

Robert was glad for the fun dad that he had, and he hoped he could always remember what he’d learned that day—to be understanding of other’s needs and feelings, and not just look on the outward display or what is most noticed by others.

When they got home mother said, “Robert a letter came in the mail for you!”

Robert eagerly opened it to read,

“Dear Robert,

I'm sorry I couldn't attend your birthday a few weeks back. I hope you weren't too sad. I suddenly came down with the flu and am at last feeling well again. I hope to see you next week end!

--Jorge"

Robert smiled. It was good to have his question answered finally. He had wondered why Jorge never came, and hadn't felt too happy about it. He began to think that Jorge was too busy for him and had too many toys and other friends to play with. But none of it was true. Jorge was in fact feeling very lonely, having no other brothers or sisters, and had been very uncomfortable with his sickness.

Robert thought about what it must have been like, and planned to write a letter back to encourage his friend, until he could see him again.

"Even though he lives in the nicest house around, it doesn't mean he has all that he needs. Everyone needs love and friendship. I'll remember that next time!" Robert thought.

## At the Docks

(Imaginary Story)

It started off as a sunny day down at the docks. Today was the day when Tom Truckalong would load new building materials that came in by ship on to his truck. These materials would be taken to the construction crew's large company warehouse.

It was just one of the jobs he had to do, though he liked seeing the big ships and enjoyed the smell of sea air. Sometimes he'd look out over the blue water that stretched out as far as his eyes could see and imagine what it must be like for the sailors on their oftentimes long voyages.

Well, at least the trips didn't take nearly as long as they did many years ago, before the invention of modern means of transportation, and diesel and petrol powered engines.

Tom Truckalong's thoughts were brought back to the present when he heard the honking of horns and the various noises of the loading zone at the docks. It was his turn next, to put his truck in

position for the container to be lowered on to it. He was about to pull up when he heard a shout to stop. Someone was drawing attention to something that lay on the ground in front of him, right where he was about to drive.

A pair of glasses had fallen off someone and on the ground and would have been smashed by his trucks' wheels if he hadn't stopped in time. A grateful dock worker retrieved them from the thoughtful man who had spotted them. His glasses would have been sorely missed that day, if he had tried to carry on his work without them, and most likely would have caused an accident at this bustling place of heavy loads and moving vehicles. It wasn't a place to relax and ignore the surrounding activity.

"Thank you so very much! I just noticed that they were missing from my pocket, as I was wearing my sunglasses, but now needed to put my regular glasses on. No one would have missed or noticed if they had gotten driven over—well, not yet! See, I'm the next crane driver. Without these I couldn't have done the job well at all. Because you called for a halt to show thoughtfulness to whoever was the owner of the glasses, and because Tom Truckalong cared enough to stop and find out what the problem was—even if it made him have to wait longer to get on his way, it ended up saving you all time. Instead of Tom Truckalong waiting a minute while the glasses were given to me, he would have been waiting until another crane driver could have been found to replace me—as I wouldn't have been able to see well enough to do the job." The crane driver explained, and made his way to operate the machine that would load up Tom Truckalong truck.

The man, who's name was Nate, who had returned the crane drivers glasses to him said to Tom Truckalong, while standing outside of his truck's window:



“I just looked at those glasses on the pavement and thought, ‘Now what if I had just lost them—it would cause quite a disruption and expense to me.’ When I see someone that seems to be needing help, or there is a problem that needs fixing, it helps me to trade places with that person—all in my mind. I pretend just for a moment that it is me, and see how I would feel if I were in their place. Then almost instantly I seemed to know what to do! If it’s something that I would appreciate others doing for me if I were in their place, then I figure there’s a good chance that they would like it too, and then I just do it. I try not to hesitate too long, but just jump in and do what seems like the best and most kind response. If I wait around thinking about it, trying to decide if I should do it or not, often times I’ll choose to not do anything about it, and the chance is missed, and the person or situation isn’t helped.”

Tom Truckalong asked, “But what if you think someone would appreciate something—but then when you do it, they aren’t so pleased about it after all, because they didn’t understand that you were only trying to help, or something about what you do bothers them. Then what do you do? Wouldn’t that make you not want to try again next time? Sometimes I’m afraid of people’s reactions.”

“Well,” Nate added. “The times that good—genuine good, real humble and helpful actions actually bother someone, is pretty rare. We can’t let the fear of what people might say to us, stop us from sharing our time and care with those in need. What if you were walking along carrying a heavy load, and someone was walking nearby that could help you. What would you rather—that they try to imagine what you were in need of and then jump in to help you, or would you like them to pause and worry that you won’t like the help? If what you are doing is done in a kind and gentle, humble and truly helpful way, without any self-pleasing or selfish intentions, then most of the time most people will not only

be grateful for it, but will in turn do something that has a good effect on your life as well.”

Tom Truckalong thought about it. “You know it’s true. Most of the time we go around thinking about ourselves and what we want. But if we all made the effort to think about others more, I think we’d all find ourselves and our homes and our families and our towns a whole lot happier!”

“Okay, see you then!” Nate said, as he waved.

Tom Truckalong made sure his load was secure and loaded on properly, then waved to the crane driver and was off on his way to the warehouse. Just then his phone rang.

“Hello, I’m from the bed and table company, and I wanted to let you know about this great deal we are having this weekend....” It was a phone sales man.

Tom Truckalong really wasn’t in the mood to be listening to an advertisement, and he had lots to do. But before he hung up the phone he decided to put into practice what he had just learned.

He answered kindly and said, “Thanks for calling, I’m sure you are doing a great job and have wonderful furniture to offer. I’ll keep your company in mind the next time I need something. I’m about to drive now and will need to turn off the phone for safety. I hope you have a good day and great success with your week end sale!”

It didn’t take that much time to respond in the way he would have liked someone to talk with him, if his job had been to make sales calls. It made Tom Truckalong feel a heap better just thinking, even for a moment, about what someone else was feeling and what they would appreciate. The “Thank you. Have a good day too!” that he heard from the pleasantly surprised sales man on the other end of the phone felt good. He’d try to do it more often.

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## **Character Trait #11:** Encouraging

### **Right words at the right time**

(Imaginary Story)

It felt like one of those days when Kiran Kontolictuz wished he was comfortably still sleeping in his bed. It wasn't because he was tired or feeling sick, but things just weren't going well. He was trying to keep a smile on his face when it seemed people kept bumping into him or stepping on his toes, and when his coffee spilled on his shirt for the second time he chose to whistle a cheery tune. But by the time he found out that his tyre on his car was flat when he wanted to go get some lunch at his break, and that his work overseer spoke grumpily to him, telling him that he needed to do better at his work, he just felt like crumbling.

Just then as he was staring towards the ground he heard children's voices and looked up to see children waving and smiling. He'd never seen that boy and his young sister before, but they seemed rather glad to see him. Their mother was close beside pushing the baby.

On the little family walked after that brief encounter. They had come to see the workmen from a distance, and spotted Kiran Kontolictuz looking rather glum as they walked on down the path. These children had a gift for noticing when people were in need of encouragement. They didn't do much, and it had only taken a second of time, but the effect it had on Kiran Kontolictuz was amazing.

"I was feeling like I was getting all the bad things happening to me all in one day, but the moment someone smile and seemed to notice me—and not just notice me but acted like they cared about me and thought I was a good workman, it made my heart smile."

He mused, amazed that it takes so little time and effort to help cheer someone's day.

Since he could no longer drive in his car to get his lunch, until he had time to change the tyre, he decided to just sit there in his car and eat what he had brought for his lunch. The only reason he was planning on driving anywhere at his lunch break was to see if it would make him feel better to get away from things a bit. But now he didn't need to. Happiness was in his heart and a smile on his face. Things weren't as bad as his mind was starting to make him believe.

Then he chose to pass on the favour to another. He decided that the first person he saw he would give them a bit of encouragement, in whatever way would be best.

As he was about to bite into his apple he spotted a business man obviously late for some "lunch meeting" or something. He was half running half walking and it was awkward with his overstuffed briefcase, probably containing all that he would need for the appointment.

"I wish my car was up and running—I could give him a lift. Well, at least I can give him a lift of spirit."

"Good day to you!" he called out. "I'm sure you'll do just great at what you are needing to do!"

The surprised man turned and then smiled and nodded before hurrying on his way.

Kiran Kontolictuz wondered what good that would do, but at least he had kept his promise and passed on a word of encouragement to someone.

His break was over all too soon, and it was time to face the worksite again. But somehow he felt better, and had a new secret plan.

“If a smile, a kind word and thoughtful acknowledgement changed me from feeling down to feeling cheerful and like I could cope with the day, I’m sure it could change others. I’m going to see what I can do to perk things up by encouraging those I work with all I can, no matter what is happening.”

So with his secret plan, Kiran Kontolictuz headed off to begin the rest of the day’s toil.

He got his first chance to see what a good word could do when he saw his worksite overseer heading his way.

“Uh, oh, here comes Mr. ...” Kiran Kontolictuz was beginning to think, but then stopped himself, stood up straight and put on a friendly smile.

“Hi, Sir. It’s good to know that we have someone who is concerned about the job being done well overseeing it. I’ll remember those points you mentioned this morning and try to up the quality of my work. God bless you!” Kiran Kontolictuz said.

The worksite overseer was taken back and finally found the words to say.

“Uh, thank you. That’s the only kind word I’ve heard in weeks. I’m glad to have you on the team. Even though I made some comments to you this morning about the improvement that I thought was needed in your work, that doesn’t at all mean that you aren’t a top-notch worker. I appreciate all you do and I know I can count on you.” The worksite overseer said.

Now it was Kiran Kontolictuz’s turn to be surprised.

“Thank you, Sir, that means a lot to me. Thank you. I’ll continue to do my best.”

With both men feeling the amazing boost and lift of heart and spirit that simply and kind word and sincere appreciation can

bring, there was already a noticeable change on the site. The atmosphere on the worksite and attitudes of those working improved, and more work got accomplished as a result.

Kiran Kontolictuz was able to bring a hearty smile to several of the others on the team. And at last a tired Kiran Kontolictuz was relieved from his work for the day to go home—if he could get his tyre fixed that is.

The timing however was amazing. Just as he was heading to the parking lot the very same business man was again walking past on the side walk—this time however at a more relaxed pace.

Kiran Kontolictuz recognized him, and the businessman remembered the kind word that had been spoken and decided to come over and chat. When he found out that Kiran Kontolictuz's tyre was flat he offered to lend him hand.

“I used to be a mechanic—well, I sort of still am, just in my spare time now, which seems to be a lot less than it used to be!” said the business man.

“I have just what is needed in my car over at the other side of the lot. Just give me a second and I'll be right back.”

In about five minutes the man was back and Kiran Kontolictuz and he changed the tyre replacing it with the spare that Kiran Kontolictuz always kept in the trunk of the car.

“I'll get that one fixed for you, if you like, and return it to you. Where do you live? I'll drop it off to you in a couple of days.” Offered the businessman.

Kiran Kontolictuz was quite surprised at what a little kind word spoken at just the right time could do.

“Thank you so very much. I so very appreciate it. You have a good heart!” Kiran Kontolictuz complimented the businessman-mechanic.

“Well, I guess we both best be going. It’s been a long day for the both of us, but I’m glad we met and thanks again for your kind help with the tyre.” Kiran Kontolictuz said.

“And thank you too,” said the business man. “You noticed that I was struggling and running late and knew just what to say to encourage me earlier on today. The fact that you took time to think about me and give me a boost with kind words made all the difference to my day. As a result I was able to relax and enjoy the day rather than been so stressed and worried, and getting a headache like I usually do on days like today. See, because I felt better—due to your well-timed words of encouragement, that’s why I was able to be a help to you now. So really, it’s you who helped me, and helped make this possible. It probably didn’t seem to you like it did much of anything when you chose to speak a kind word to me, but I’m glad we met again so I could let you know the difference it did make.” The businessman shared.

Kiran Kontolictuz was amazed that such a small word of encouragement could have such an effect.

“This is a power tool of progress that brings more good than we realise—this tool of kind words well spoken. A little encouragement can go such a long way and affect so many other things in ours and other’s lives,” Kiran Kontolictuz pondered.

The men shook hands and Kiran Kontolictuz wrote out his street address for the businessman to know where to drop the fixed tyre off.

“Thanks again! Have a good evening!” Kiran Kontolictuz said, as he hopped in his now good-to-go car, and smiled as he drove on

home. The day had been good after all. Kind words and thoughtfulness made the positive difference.

## **Splash City**

(Imaginary Story)

It was the Sunday the children had all been looking forward to for a long time! Uncle Larry Laughinglad was visiting and offered to take his sister and her children to the newly opened waterpark.

“Yea! We’re going to ‘Splash City’ today!” they exclaimed, and as soon as possible they were ready and in the car to pray for their outing.

“Do you have all that you need?” Larry Laughinglad asked before beginning the drive. He liked to have a time to pause before leaving to go anywhere to see if anything had been forgotten.

“Oh, I forgot my sun hat!” Cherille, five years old, said. “It must have fallen off my head when I was putting on my shoes.

Her mother helped her go back into the house and find it.

“Thank you mummy for helping me,” she said.

“It was great that you remembered—and stopped to think about what might be missing, just like daddy asked. It’s a great help to us when you do your part to help take care of yourself, and keep yourself safe and healthy! Good for you.” Mum encouraged her girl.

Cherille had a big grin on her face. It felt good to have her efforts appreciated. It was a great way to start a fun excursion day. If



instead someone had spoken unkindly and grumbled to her about forgetting her hat—rather than commending her for remembering and taking action on it—it would have made things a whole lot less fun.

“Thanks for driving us there!” Baron said to his uncle as they pulled out of the driveway.

“I’m glad to do it! –Especially with such a great team in the car as you all. We’re going to have one awesome day!” Larry Laughinglad exclaimed.

“Uncle Larry, do you like to swim?” Larry Laughinglad’s nephew Toddy asked. “Didn’t you win a medal one time for being the fastest swimmer at a completion? Mummy told us about that, as it happened when you both were teens, is that right?”

“Ah, yes,” Larry Laughinglad remembered. “Well, I wasn’t always fast or good—at anything it seemed. But then something changed one summer when I was 14 years old. I my friend’s cousin, Harley, who was a very good swimmer and was quite a bit older than me, came for a visit, and stayed for a few weeks.

“Often we spent our time down by the river and had lots of time swimming and canoeing. One day we were about to have a race in the water when Harley, turned to me and said something that I’ve remembered for a long time. He knew that I would probably be the slowest swimmer, and there was a good chance I would feel bad about it.

“ ‘You know, Larry, it’s not how fast or good someone is at things that counts—but it’s how they react to things. **Some** can seem to be real skilled, but then still act grumpy or unkind to others when the slightest thing goes wrong. A true winner keeps his head and his heart up, no matter how they seem to fare. And another tip to remember is, with a good deal of practice, perseverance and

prayer, anyone can learn just about anything—and do it quite capably.’ Harley said to me right before the count off.

“ ‘One-two-three-Go!’ and the water race was on. We **all** swam with all our might, and as was expected I was the last one to reach the goal. But with the smile on Harley’s face as he looked at me, I was able to put one on mine too.

“ ‘Good going!’ he said. You’re getting the hang of it—being a winner is being a grinner, no matter what! And one day, if you choose to also get the hang of swimming, I know you’ll do great at that too!’ Harley encouraged.

“So with my heart fortified with a bit more courage and joy I chose to join a swimming team to enhance my skill. My scheduled time learning with the team wasn’t the only **times** I worked on my swimming. It seemed it was about all I did for the next two years and a bit more. I swam and exercised in other ways at any chance I got. Then when I found out that there was going to be statewide competition for the fastest swimmer, I took the plunge to sign up for it. And boy did I work hard on it day after day. I wanted to win—but I didn’t know if it really was possible. But because I’d learned that other and most important skill of taking the outcome of things bravely and cheerful, then I knew it wouldn’t really bother me that much if I lost. I would be a winner either way—either I’d win the medal, or I’d win at staying fit and working towards a goal of trying something anyway, and staying positive even if I didn’t do as well as someone else.

“When it was announced that I was the winner many people who knew me from before were real surprised—but not Harley, who happened to be in town for the race. I didn’t even know he was there, but when I was heading to get on my bicycle, holding my trophy, to **head** back to the place I was staying in, there he was, ready to shake my hand.

“ ‘Good to see you again! I’m so glad for you! I tried for that race several years ago too—and well, I didn’t win. But I still had fun. I’m glad you got the prize! You worked hard for that!’” Harley commended him.

“ ‘Harley!’” I said “Good to see you too! But I think you are mistaken—you did win a prize! This medal here was only possible, because of your words of encouragement to me that summer a few years ago. Thanks for giving me the tips. I’m here today because of you.’ I told him.

“So that’s the story of the swimming contest and how affective, motivating and **life** changing words of encouragement are. Well, here we are at ‘Splash City’. Let’s pray for safety, keep an eye on each other, and have a good time!” Larry Laughinglad said.

A good time was had by all, and even Cherille, with the encouragement of her family, was able to **do** start learning some new swimming tricks that she hadn’t felt capable of doing before.

As they got in the car to leave they stopped to pause and think if anything had been forgotten.

“I think there is one thing we forgot,” Baron said, with a bit of a smile, and whispered something to his brother Toddy, who nodded in agreement.

“Well, what is it?” Mother asked, curious what the boys were thinking.

“We’d like to go and thank those at Splash City who **help** to keep it clean and safe. May we tell them thank you for the good job they do?” said the boys.

“I have an idea,” said mum, pulling out a piece of paper and pen from her purse. “Why don’t you tell me what you’d like to say to them, and I’ll write it down here. We can then post it on the

corkboard of office where they enter. The workers and also those who come to swim will get to see it then!”

“Good idea,’ Larry Laughinglad agreed.

And so the little note of appreciation was written and posted:

“Thank you, all of you who work at Splash City, to keep it safe and clean and fun for all of us. You are doing a good job!”

It felt good to do that, and there was a smile and a wave from the secretary and greeting woman who saw the note. The children waved good-bye—and were looking forward to their next visit.

“Wait! Here’s something for you!” they heard a woman’s voice calling, before they got in their car.

“I had a ticket to give away today, for a family to come to Splash City for one day for free. I decided, after seeing your thoughtfulness in writing that note, and seeing how much your family enjoyed your time, that I would give it to you!” The smiling lady said, and their mother took the ticket with appreciation and placed it in her purse.

“Hmmm,” mum thought. “If I hadn’t taken that piece of paper out of **here** to write words of encouragement and appreciation on it, I might not have been putting in this piece of paper—this ticket. Words of kindness come back in all kinds of ways.”

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**Character Trait #12:** Show out going concern

**Knock, knock!**

*Knock, knock!*

It was Darin Dillygint-deedz coming to check on his neighbour.

“Come in,” said Paul, who showed Darin Dillygint-deedz the way down the hallway to the room that Trover was resting in.

“Thanking for coming,” Paul, Trover’s much older brother, said to Darin Dillygint-deedz. “It means a lot to us.”

“Hi, Trover!” Darin Dillygint-deedz said as he popped his head into the room.

Trover had been unable to get out and around for some time, and it seemed like it would take forever until he would be able to walk properly again. His leg had been hurt in a fall, and wasn’t healing as fast as he would have liked. It was nice to have someone visit.

“I brought you something, Trover,” Darin Dillygint-deedz said and opened a small bag, pulling out a little velvet box.

“It’s something I always keep on the table beside my bed. Take a look.”

Trover opened the box and found it was filled with little colourful cards, and on each card was written a verse from the Bible. The box was also a music box and could be wound up to play a beautiful tune.

Darin Dillygint-deedz said, “I like to pick a few and read them when I wake up in the morning, or before I go to sleep, and sometimes just for fun, or if I get hurt or sick. Then I sometimes wind it up and play the music while I close my eyes and think about the words that I’ve just read on the coloured card. It makes me realise that I’m never alone, and that Jesus is right with me wherever I am.

“I wanted you to enjoy them for this time while you are here getting some extra rest. Maybe you can’t be as active right now as your friends perhaps can be, but there may be things that you get to do that they won’t have the time for right now.”

Trover looked up curiously and said, “Really? Like what?”

Darin Dillygint-deedz explained: “Well, when you are grown, there will be a lot of things expected of you—you’ll need to take care of yourself and help provide for others as well, maybe even have a family of your own one day. One way you can handle all that will come your way is through doing some good workout, exercise and growing muscles—not the kind on your body, but the muscles of your heart and mind and spirit.

“Right now, though it looks like you are just resting, it can be the perfect time to build muscles—muscles of faith, prayer, confidence in God’s care, and thinking through some thoughts and ideas and plans for your life too. Maybe you can’t do much now, but there is plenty you can do to prepare for the time when you will need to do a whole lot.”

Trover nestled comfortably on the pile of pillows that Paul had set him up with, while listening to the interesting things his visitor had to say.

Darin Dillygint-deedz continued, “Just running around and playing games, and meeting with friends and having a good time isn’t what will make you a strong and capable man one day. But today, here, right now, you can get ready.

“You can read books that build your muscles of faith. You can read these faith-building promises from the Bible and memorize them, and they will be as guidance that you’ll think of at just the right times in your life when you are wondering what to do.

“You can pray for others and see answers to prayer occur. That will be just as good or even better than if you were up and around doing all those great things! –Except that you have asked Jesus to do it for you, and He knows how to do things just right. Your prayers will be like workmen that can do things that you can’t do.

That can be one of the best skills and habits you can acquire for a happy and well-lived life.”

Trover was starting to feel better already, and when Paul showed up with a warm drink for him he was able to smile—one of the rare times he had smiled since his accident.

Someone showing some outgoing concern for him had made all the difference. Darin Dillygint-deedz didn't have to come by to visit. It wasn't on his to do list of things he was required to do. But Jesus' instruction to “love your neighbour” made it a priority for Darin Dillygint-deedz to do so, and it made all the difference to Trover.

Trover's health began to improve day-by-day from that time on.

A few weeks later he was able to get around fairly well, and he hobbled to his neighbour's house to do something kind for Darin Dillygint-deedz. It wasn't a big thing, but it was thoughtful.

Darin Dillygint-deedz had been gone for three days already to work on a big construction job in another city. He was to be gone for a week. However, it was the day before the garbage trucks came to pick up the trash on their street. Darin Dillygint-deedz wasn't there and his trash would have been missed.

Trover limped as well as he could and placed the bins on the curb just like they were meant to be placed, and then went back to sit down on his favourite livingroom couch. It had taken some effort to do that deed, but after all, Darin Dillygint-deedz was kind enough to care about him. It was a good way to live, Trover thought.

Trover got an idea to write a storybook. It would be called, “The Crippled Boy Who Changed a Country.” Well, Trover wasn't crippled, but it wasn't easy to get around yet, and he wanted to tell everyone who read his book, how to make things in the country better.

The story was about how a bit more caring for others—and not just thinking about nice things to do, but putting kindness into action—could eventually make the place they live so much better.

Trover had learned a lot since his accident, and he wanted to express it through this story. He had the time to write stories now, and was enjoying it. Perhaps his older brother Paul, who was good at drawing, could even add some pictures to the story. It would make a fun project to work together on.

Of course sitting around writing a story about caring and helping each other wasn't good enough—Trover realised that he needed to do his part to be the example of what he wanted people to start doing. Darin Dillygint-deedz had showed kindness and concern for him, and now he wanted to show it to others.

As he glanced out the window and saw the neatly placed trash bin that he'd put out for Darin Dillygint-deedz, it made him smile. He was doing it! He was showing thoughtfulness and concern in whatever way he could. —And he hoped it would catch on until many others were doing the same kinds of things for others—whatever they saw needed to be done, and were helping others because they cared and wanted to show genuine concern.

### **A special building project**

(Imaginary Story)

The summer heat was rather overpowering at times, as Charley Churrusting brought the next load of bricks by wheelbarrow down the narrow street to the structure that was being built. This wasn't a city construction project, but rather a deed of kindness that a team of workmen chose to do on the weekends. There were enough people helping that they took turns working on it, so no one had to work each weekend on it.



There wasn't an actual road that led to the small plot of land that they were building on, but just a dirt pathway, so all the building materials needed to be carried by hand to where the work was being done.

"Guess I can be glad it's not the rainy season yet—or this pathway would be very difficult to manage, as muddy as it must get then! I suppose the next thing we should do is plan to make it a gravel pathway." Charley Churrusting thought as he wended his way down the path and arrived to the rest of the team that was happy for the next batch of bricks.

Charley Churrusting smiled as he straightened out his back and wiped the sweat off his forehead. A lot of progress had been made that weekend, and things were taking shape. It had all started a few months back when Charley Churrusting was taking his dog for a walk, but his dog Burley had taken off on a run and Charley Churrusting was panting to catch up to him and found him here at this very place. Months earlier it didn't look anything like what it did now. Back then it was an overgrown plot of muddy land, filled with prickles, thorns and a fair bit of trash thrown in as well.

As Charley Churrusting held the leash tightly and began walking home his thoughts started racing. "What if this place was transformed into a place for shade and rest, a place to read and relax. The houses around here are so small and run down—in some places they would hardly even be called houses. I'm sure those living in this underprivileged area would appreciate a place to take their children, a place to go when it's raining, a place to do arts and crafts. It could be like a small community centre. I wonder who owns this piece of land. Whoever does, might be glad for something good to be built on it."

Just then he passed by a mother holding her baby. Neither of them were well dressed at all. She was trying to hang her ripped and stained load of washed laundry that she managed to lug from the nearby river.

Charley Churrusting added to his thoughts. "Perhaps it could have laundry washing facilities as well."

From that day forward he and his fellow workmen friends set out to make that area a bit better. It wasn't hard to find out who the owner of the land was, and he readily agreed to their plan. Anything to make this area better was great.

Next, the team met to talk about the plans and to draw the simple blueprints for the building they wanted to make.

Charley Churrusting was sure to bring out the points about it being a good strong place that wouldn't leak in the rainy and wet season, nor flood the floor. What it was to be built out of, and how and where to get the supplies were important points discussed.

An ad was put in the local newspaper for anyone who wanted to help on the weekends, to build the new centre, to contact Charley Churrusting, who would manage the project. Also a plea for supplies and materials or funding to be given towards it was added in the article.

It was only a month after their first discussion and planning meeting when they were able to actually start the work. It was going to take quite a while, as all the digging and building and material carrying had to be done by hand. But it was fun work, as the goal of having a happier neighbourhood and better cared for children made it worth the extra struggle.

Every time the men got to work the children of the neighbourhood would come by to watch the progress. Some of

the older boys and teens even offered to help. On the days they did, much more progress was made.

Finally, after eight months the work was complete! A neighbourhood party was held. Banners and simple decorations were strung up, with balloons and music playing from the loud speakers of Charley Churrusting's pick-up truck. Donated snacks were served and it was a happy time. It gave everyone that lived there the hope that things would get better. Just the thought that someone—or several people cared—and not just cared but worked hard on their time off in the hot sun, to make things better for those who lived there, encouraged everyone so much. It made everyone want to live in love and help each other so much more. They'd seen the example of kindness and concern put into action, and they all were enjoying the change that love was having on their poor neighbourhood. They didn't need to be rich to be happy. If they all just put some more effort into helping each other and doing their part to make things better and easier for each other, things would improve a whole lot more!

The next weekend the team met again, this time with a bigger team—some of the people from the neighbourhood, parents, teens, and an elderly couple. New plans were to be made for whatever was the next most important change that would be appreciated by those living there. There was lots to do, but working together to help those in need was a great way to live, and everyone was finding their hearts filled with more joy than they had known before.

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**Character Trait #13: Generous**

**Character Construction Crew Stories**

**The dinner**

“Ding-a-ling, Ding-a-ding” the sound of the bell was heard of the man holding a can who was asking and hoping for donations. It was nearly the end of the year, and it was a time when people often thought more about giving to others than at other times during the year.

Ben-Jim Bennifits had walked to the shop with his sons, Patrick and Eric, and now **were** starting to head home.

“Let’s stop and give this man whatever coins we have, shall we?” Ben-Jim Bennifits asked his sons, who agreed. “We may not have all that we want or even sometimes all that we feel we need right when we want it, but we get along—and it seems the more times I choose to give to others who have even less than I, the more I get, in many ways.”

Patrick wondered what his dad meant. “How can you get more if you give things away?”

Ben-Jim Bennifits explained it like this: “It’s like those putting on a circus—the more tickets they give out, the more people will come to their circus. The more who come, the more people they will then go and tell about people about it—and then even more will come to see the next performances. And the more funds the circus team will get from those who buy tickets to see it.

“Giving in the ways we can—whether it is coins to the needy, or a hug to someone who’s sad, or it’s giving the best seat at a show, or giving your place in a line to someone who would appreciate not waiting so long, or whatever is like giving away a ticket to a show. What is the show? You are showing love and when you **show love you are** showing what Jesus is like. Then, when you need help, either those you chose to give to will also give back to you—or Jesus will give to you in some other amazing way, in return for your gift of showing Him and His love to others, and inviting them to see a bit of what He is like.”

Patrick and Eric dropped the coins into the man's tin and told him, "God bless you!" before carrying on their way.

"We don't always have money or things to give away, and that's not even the biggest need of those we meet or hear about." Ben-Jim Bennifits mentioned. "But if we are ready to give whatever we can, putting the needs and wants of others above our own, then this is being like Jesus."

"Daddy, what does it mean to be 'generous'? Sometimes I've heard you use that word when we are at the market—like the man who filled a bag of rice for us. You said he gave us a generous amount." Eric asked.

"When you give not only what it seems you should, but you even throw in a bit more, that's being generous. For example, if you and your brother were taking turns with our new kite, and one of you let the other one have an extra long turn, even more than you got, that would be giving generously. Or if I went to get a snack at the café, and rather than me the just receiving the regular amount of food I paid for, I was also given an extra piece of fruit for free, that would be generous." Ben-Jim Bennifits explained.

"But daddy, what if some has more than we do, are we supposed to be giving and generous with them? Or is it their turn to give to us?" Patrick asked his dad.

"No matter how much it might appear to you or others that someone has a lot—or even too much—there is always something that they don't have. If someone has a lot in the physical, there's a pretty good chance that they don't have all they need in the many other areas of their lives. It may seem to them like you are the one who gets the best things. Perhaps they don't or didn't have a family like you do. Or perhaps they or one of their loved ones are handicapped in some way. Or maybe they haven't ever heard about Jesus and a God who loves them immeasurably, and they

know nothing of the joy of being allowed to go to Heaven.” Ben-Jim Bennifits explained.

**When Ben-Jim Bennifits** and his boys arrived back at their house they found a generous spread awaiting them at the table.

“Thank you Milly and Selene!” Ben-Jim Bennifits said to his wife and daughter who had made a wonderful family meal, all nicely laid out.

When everyone was settled at the table Ben-Jim Bennifits said a prayer of thanks.

“Dear Jesus, Thank You for how bountifully and generously you have provided for us today. We are so very grateful for Your wonderful and loving care. Today we celebrate how freely You gave to us all, by coming down to Earth to show us your love and to save us. Please fill our hearts with Your spirit of giving, so that we might freely give to others, as you have richly given to us in so many ways. We have love, we have life, we have each other, and we have Heaven and joy forever. Amen.”

Before the meal could begin there was a knock at the door. A family with a few small children were asking for donations of any kind. They were struggling to get by and had many needs.

Milly answered the door and then told them to wait for a few minutes while she went to see what she could find.

“What should we give to them?” she asked the children and Ben-Jim Bennifits.

“We could give some of the food,” Eric offered. “There will probably be left-overs anyway.” And he jumped up to get a container from the cupboard, and chose a bit of this and that to add to the food gift.

“Be generous,” whispered Patrick. “Remember, when we give to others, it’s like we are giving to Jesus.”

Meanwhile Selene and her mother found a box and added an extra towel, a few sheets, and a bag of clothes they had grown out of and were planning to give away.

Ben-Jim Bennifits pulled out his wallet and took what he could spare out of it to give. He didn’t really have much to spare, but these folks had even less. He knew the Lord would repay and they would manage.

Someone had recently given Milly a nice new sweater as a gift, but since she already had a few others, she chose to add it to the box.

“Mummy, we have this extra blanket that we don’t really need, it just sits in the closet most of the time, we can spare it I think,” Selene suggested, and into the box it went.

A bit of fresh fruit and a package of dried beans were added and the package was complete.

The family took it to the door to give to the family. Gratefully the father took it and thanked them.

“Now it’s really like a celebration!” Eric said, as they went to sit down to their slightly smaller, but sufficient meal.

“Because we gave a big gift away—just like on real birthdays, you always give gifts to the one who’s birthday you are celebrating.” Eric explained.

“Happy Birthday Jesus!” the family chorused then laughed. It felt good to share—generously. Looking around them at all they still had and the great food they were able to enjoy, it was obvious that Jesus gave more to them than they had given away—and kept doing so, as they were a family that chose to share with others all they could.

(Imaginary story)

“It’s amazing how a little bit of kindness can change the way you feel—sometimes for the rest of the day!” Harolt Hoowalhelp said to the children he taught on Friday late afternoon.

Besides being a construction worker, he was very good at horticulture. He had a nice garden in his back yard where he grew an assortment of plants, some of which were vegetables as well. He knew so much about plants and what each of them needed.

On Friday afternoon the children who wanted to learn from Harolt Hoowalhelp on how to keep a garden would come over to talk. Depending on what season it was the children would learn about growing various types of vegetable and what different plants needed in the different seasons of the year.

Part of the time was sitting in his large green house on little stools sipping fresh mint tea, from mint Harolt Hoowalhelp grew right there. They would relax and talk and ask questions. Today someone had asked if plants have feelings too, and can react to the feelings, words and behaviour of those around them.

“If you want your plants to grow well you need to care for them lovingly. You must treat them with kindness and genuine concern. Of course that’s not all you need to do, as it helps to know a bit about what you are doing, and that’s also part of kindness—to study, read and research, and talk to others about what is the best way to care for that plant.” Harolt Hoowalhelp explained.

He then went on to say how people are much the same way.



“Kind words and behaviour, and giving people hope that they will do well at something, can really make them thrive and live more happily.”

At the end of their visit and class the children thanked Harolt Hoowalhelp for teaching them all they knew. But before they left Harolt Hoowalhelp had one more thing for them, that he'd saved to surprise them. He had prepared something special for each of them.

“I've prepared a gift **packaged** for each one of you!” Harolt Hoowalhelp said and began handing the packages out to each of the children.

“Oh wow! What's in here?” the children wondered.

“Since it's spring, and the perfect time to start a vegetable garden, I've put together a starting kit for each of you, of the right kinds of seeds to plant at this time of year, along with instructions on how to sprout them and care for them! I've also included a pair of gardening gloves, a trowel and garden fork. There are also some plastic containers to plant the seeds that need to be sprouted first, and then the seedlings transferred to your garden later on.” Harolt Hoowalhelp happily announced, as the children opened their packages and took a look.

“Oh! And one more thing I forgot to tell you. If you need some good soil with compost added to it, you can let me know. I have a bit to spare, if that's what you need to improve the soil in your garden.”

“You're so kind and generous! This was just what I was hoping for!” Mandy said, and the others thanked Harolt Hoowalhelp as well.

It felt good to give—especially to those who would put the gift to good use and it would benefit them in many ways.

“I hope it works out well for you all!” Harolt Hoowalhelp said. “And remember, if you have any questions, I'm happy to help and answer you whenever you come next. Bye-then!”

The children waved and Harolt Hoowalhelp could tell they were eager and excited about their new garden project.

“Just think of all the food we could grow with all the seeds Mr. Harolt Hoowalhelp gave us!” one boy said.

“Maybe when the vegetables grow, we could return the favour and surprised him by bringing him some to eat for his dinner on that day!” Elaine offered.

The children smiled and nodded. This was going to be fun!

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**Character Trait #14: Giving/Caring about others more than yourself**

#### **Character Construction Crew Stories**

“Ouch! It’s that blister again!” Harolt Hoowalhelp said. He’d gone jogging that morning, and went too fast trying to get ready. He thought he could skip on wearing socks, but now he regretted it. Trying to walk in his work boots was making things real uncomfortable for him.

“I think I’ve got a couple of band aids here,” offered Charley Churrusting.

“I always like to keep a few with me while at work, as you never know what bump or bruise—or blister. I’ve got one myself too, on my thumb, from doing the shovelling yesterday.”

Charley Churrusting looked in his pocket but saw that he only had one left. What should he do? Harolt Hoowalhelp obviously really needed one, as each step was uncomfortable, and he had plenty of work to do.

Charley Churrusting pondered for just a moment, deciding if he should give it anyway, even if it meant that he wouldn't have one for his thumb, if he needed a new one later on.

"Go ahead, you take it!" Charley Churrusting said, handing it to a very grateful Harolt Hoowalhelp.

"Are you sure?" Harolt Hoowalhelp said, but Charley Churrusting was undeterred. He figured it felt just as bad to see someone else hurting, as it would if he was the one hurt.

He was okay for right now, and if Harolt Hoowalhelp was in need, and there was something he could do to make things better, he would want to do it. It would bring Charley Churrusting no comfort to have a spare band aid in his pocket for "just in case he needed it" while Harolt Hoowalhelp was struggling with each step.

"Besides, I can choose how to use my hands, but there's only one way to take a step—and it's the only way to move around out here! So I think it's far better that you have it. I'm glad to help." Charley Churrusting expressed.

Harolt Hoowalhelp did feel much better, and was then able to make faster progress, and get his mind on happier things.

"Ah! This garden court is going to look so nice real soon! The work part is tough—the clearing, the cement work, the brick carrying, laying the pipes for the fountain and irrigation and so forth. But once we get to the fun part and we get to see the beautiful flowers and lush grass it will be worth it!" Harolt Hoowalhelp **though**, reminding himself of the great end result.

As he was working, and able to do it much more comfortably, he thought of how when Charley Churrusting gave to him his last band aid, that in some ways it was like what they were working on building just now. To give to others something that you could use

yourself can be hard—like the hard building work now. But then when someone's deeds of kindness make other's heart's glad it's like flowers that bloom in their life. It not only makes their life better and more beautiful, but all those around them too! And those that gave to others soon find themselves surrounded with flowers of deeds of kindness and caring done for them in return, and beautiful smiles of those they have helped.

Every time someone gives to others, because they want another to feel loved and cared for, it's like planting a seed of joy—and when a whole town is filled with loving deeds of unselfishness, the whole place will become a wonderful a beautiful place to be. Those living there will be surrounded by a whole garden-worth of beauty represented by happy and kind hearts, and cheerful caring smiles.