

NED 1-24

By CQ

Ned, Tony, and TedDY —Book 1

Fire Trucks on the Go!

“Weeeoooo...weeeoooo.....weeeoooo” wailed the sirens as two fire fighting vehicles zoomed down the road in front of Ned, Tony and Teddy’s house.

“Wow! Did you see those?” Ned said to Tony.

“I wonder where they are going?”

“Maybe we should pray for them?” Tony suggested. The two boys stopped to pray for those in trouble and the team of firefighters going to help.

“I want to learn to draw a fire truck,” said Tony, as he pulled out a piece of paper and his favorite red pen.

“Breakfast is ready!” they heard their mother calling. “Please come and sit at the table.”

Tony wondered if he should first draw the truck, or go right away to the table.

Then he remembered that one time when he chose to not go right away but instead kept playing, that all the jam was gone when he finally got to the table.

Tony didn’t want to miss out on the things he liked, and knew that good things happen to him when he obeys right away.

“Let’s wash our hands before we eat since we’ve been playing with our trucks on the floor,” said Ned.

“Good idea!” said Tony, while he put his paper and pen down for later.

There was a very happy mother who saw that moments later her quick-to-obey boys had washed up and were sitting at the table. They joined Teddy who was already there, starting his breakfast.

“I’m so glad you came when I called you—and you even washed up without me

reminding you. Now I have a special surprise to tell you!" Mother said.

"Oh, what is it?" Tony and Ned asked eagerly.

"Since you've been learning about fast obedience lately, today our family will get to do something special.

"What vehicle has to respond and act right away when someone calls, and go quickly to where it is needed?"

"An ambulance?" Tony guessed.

"Yes, that's true too. And what else?" Mother asked.

"A fire truck!" Ned added enthusiastically.

"That's right! What if someone needed help to put out a fire, but the driver and firemen said,

"Okay, we're coming, but we first want to finish our game, and then we'll come.'

"What might happen?"

"Someone could get hurt," Tony responded.

"Yes," said Mother.

Ned added, "And also, when they finally come they might find they have a very big job, because they waited too long, and the fire grew bigger."

"That's right. Those firemen have to learn to move quickly and stop whatever they are doing, to do whatever is needed," Mother commented.

"So what is the surprise?" Ned asked.

"Well, how would you like to get to visit the fire station today? We can talk to the firemen, and look at the big trucks."

"Wow! That would be so fun!" the boys exclaimed.

Tony said, "Can I bring my paper and pen and learn to draw a fire truck at the station?"

"That's a good idea. Aren't you glad you obeyed right away? Now you can actually see a truck close up and see how to draw it easily!"

The boys had a great time, and the firemen even let them try on their helmets and sit inside the trucks. It was a fun day.

The next day the boys decided they wanted to dress in red and yellow shirts, and Mother said that was a good idea, as it could remind them to be just as fast as the firemen, and zoom like the trucks when they were asked to do something.

Whenever they were needed for something, Mother called and said:

“Firemen—I need your help!” and then they’d quickly do whatever she asked them to do.

It was fun pretending to be quick moving firemen and zooming to where they needed to be, like a fire truck.

“The boys have obeyed so fast today!” Mother told Daddy at bedtime.

“Oh, that reminds me,” said Daddy to his boys,

“I have a new fire truck coloring book. I’ll give it to you both in the morning. Thank you for being do-it-right-now firemen-boys.”

Daddy and Mother gave each of them a big hug, and they got snug into bed for the night.

Ned, Tony, and Ted —Book 2

Mighty Motors

and Machines!

“Wow!” said Ned as he and his brother Tony looked out their window to the street and passing cars.

“Did you see that amazing digger? It had two kinds of scoops on it! One at the back and one on the front. I wonder where it was going?”

They sat down to play with their toy diggers, and imagined the big job that digger was off to do.

“Time to clean up the toys. It’s Bible story time now,” said mommy. “Let’s read while Ted is napping.”

“Okay,” said the boys. They’d had a great time, and now were looking forward to their story and prayer time. It was always special and lots of fun.

When Ned and Tony sat down they wanted to start by thanking Jesus for work vehicles and machines that they liked, and say how each reminded them of the things Jesus does for us.

Ned started,

“I’m thankful for the diggers and dump trucks, because they can help to clear away rocks and dirt when people need to build something.

“And it reminds me how when we build our life on Jesus the rock, we’ll be strong. He’s a good foundation and keeps us sturdy.”

Tony said,

“I like the bobcats, because they can do so many kinds of jobs and can drive around easily in smaller types of places. Even though a bobcat is smaller than many other types of work vehicles, it can still lift and move heavy things.

“Jesus can help me do whatever I need to do, even though I’m not so big yet. Jesus is the strongest guy!”

Tony continued,

“Jesus is not just like one kind of machine, but He’s like all of them, and can do whatever needs to be done.

“Jesus is like a machine that has all the attachments and can do all the jobs at the same time. Like a driller-digger-scooper-scraper-crane-fire engine.”

The boys and mommy laughed.

Just then daddy walked in and joined them.

“Hmmm, let’s see. I think I like the tow truck,” Daddy said, “because when my car got stuck in some deep mud, I was able to be pulled out.

“It makes me thankful to I know that when I can’t get out of something on my own, that Jesus can pull me out of any problem. I’ll never be stuck in one problem forever. When I pray and call for His help, the heavenly tow truck will rescue me.

“I guess Jesus is also like a mechanic, and if there’s something wrong, He can help us to fix it too. He’s the best mechanic there is.”

It was mommy’s turn then.

“I’m thankful for cranes—both the truck kinds and the tall stand-up cranes. They can do things that people can’t. The things that are heavy for us seem light and easy to lift when you use a crane.

“I’m thankful for Jesus’ strong arms that can lift any of our loads. When we claim God’s promises and pray, it’s like using a crane because then the difficult things are easy for us, with Jesus’ help.”

After reading some Bible stories the boys drew pictures of some of their favorite work vehicles, while listening to Bible story songs.

Beside their pictures mommy helped them to write a list of things that were hard for them, that they needed Jesus to help them learn and do.

Together they prayed for Jesus to help them.

Tony’s list was:

- To put away the toys and not to keep playing, when Daddy or Mommy asked him to stop.
- Also to learn to put on his shoes.

Ned’s list was:

- To share with his brother when it was something he’d rather keep for himself.
- Also to learn to be cheerful even when something wasn’t just the way he wanted it to be.

They were just finishing their Bible story and prayer time when suddenly a loud “brruum” noise was heard. Running quickly to see, it was the largest tanker truck the boys had ever seen driving down the road.

“That’s just like us now!” Mommy laughed. “We’re all tanked up and filled up with God’s Word and power, and now we can really drive and do our jobs today!”

“And we can help to fill up other people’s empty tanks too!” said Ned.

“If we see someone sad, we can tank them up with kindness and love!” added Tony.

The Slow Tortoise
and the Fast Rabbit

“Oh, cool! Look at that!” Tony said, pointing out a large lizard to Ned. They were out hiking with their daddy on a mountain trail.

It was summer, and the lizards liked to sun themselves on the rocks and get warm. Their thick skin didn’t get sunburned, so they could sit in the sun for a long time.

“Wow! What an interesting lizard!” Ned said. “He’s grey with a bit of brown too. And pretty big. He must be quite old, maybe like a grandfather lizard.”

“I wonder how many there are on this mountain trail?” Tony wondered.

“Daddy can you take a picture of the lizard, please?” Tony asked daddy.

Then he and Ned walked a bit closer, and Daddy came with the camera to take a picture. But before he could take it, the quick lizard slipped into a crack between the huge rocks and hid.

Just then, however, a rabbit hopped across the path.

“Did you see that?” Ned asked.

“What was it?” Tony wondered. He hadn’t been looking that direction.

“It was a brown rabbit, and very fast, too!” said Ned. “Do you think we’ll also see a tortoise?” he wondered.

“Maybe they are having a race,” joked Tony, and they laughed. They kept their eyes open for any signs of a tortoise.

It was a while later, as they were walking back down the trail again when Daddy said,

“Oh, there he is! I wonder who won the race?” Dad pointed over to a bush, where a tortoise was munching on some leaves, but then began to run away as the boys were getting closer.

But since tortoises don’t usually run that fast, they were able to take a picture of him.

When they got home and washed up for bed, they had some time to look at the pictures on their digital camera from their fun outing on the mountain trail.

There were pictures of trees, mountains, the hiking boys, and of their picnic sitting on some rocks. Then there were funny pictures they took of standing on a huge rock, looking very tall and strong.

But the only animal they were able to get a picture of that day had been the tortoise.
The others had just been too fast.

Ned thought as he went to bed, and said,

“Daddy, I was thinking about how it was nice that the tortoise was slower than the other animals. If he could have been as fast as he wanted to go, we wouldn’t have any pictures of any of the animals we saw today.”

“That’s true,” said his daddy.

Ned continued, “Sometimes I can’t do things so well, or just the way I’d like to. I can’t run as fast as some other older children, and it’s hard to build things with blocks so that they don’t ever fall, or with Lego so it doesn’t break.”

“Hmm, so you are learning to be happy with the things you are able to do instead?”
Daddy asked.

Ned continued his thoughts: “Sometimes maybe I feel I’m like the tortoise who can’t do things just the same as some of the other animals. He can’t go so fast, even when he really tries. I also can’t do things as well or as fast as I’d like to be able to. But, maybe there is something good about it.”

Ned began to think. “Oh, I know! When I can’t run the fastest, then my younger

brothers want to play games with me, because they can keep up better with me when we play.”

“Yes, that’s right. And don’t worry,” said Daddy, “You’ll soon run very fast.”

“Also, maybe when I can’t build things as strongly with the Lego as you can, Daddy, then you can come and help me, and then we have fun playing together,” Ned said.

“And you are learning, Ned. The other day you made a very nice helicopter-port, as well as an airport tower. And it’s fun playing with you, and even helping you too,” Daddy encouraged him.

“One day you’ll be a daddy, and you’ll be able to help your children even better, because you’ll know what it feels like to try to make nice things, and need some help. You’ll be a better daddy because you’ll understand what it’s like, and then you’ll try to make it fun for your children also,” Daddy explained.

Ned smiled. He was glad he had a fun daddy who liked to play with him and take him on hikes, and go camping sometimes, too.

Just then, Tony who was having story and talk-time with Mother, came in the room and climbed into his bed as well.

Daddy smiled at Tony and then gave them each a good-night hug, and prayed with them for the night.

Daddy looked over at Teddy who was already fast asleep. He had gone instead to the playground with Mother, and had a great time there.

Then Daddy said in a whisper to his older boys,

“Did you have fun today?”

“Yes,” they nodded, and were soon asleep. It had been a good hike, and now they were glad to be in their cosy beds to rest.

The Garbage Collector

Ned came running to Tony and Teddy, "Come quickly. The garbage truck is nearly at our house!"

The boys raced to go and watch this amazing machine pick up the big garbage bins that Daddy had placed on the roadside. The truck would dump the trash from the bin into it. The garbage truck also had a way to then squish it and make room for the next house's trash, too.

"Even though it's probably not a very fun job, I'm sure glad that it gets done," said Ned.

The boys then raced off to play in the sandbox.

"Ned, could you come for a minute, please?" Ned heard his mother say. Not sure what she wanted, and hoping it wasn't going to mean the end of play time, Ned decided to keep playing for a bit longer, without answering his mother.

Mother was unable to call him again right then, because she was in the middle of answering and making phone calls.

She'd needed to see if Ned could still fit into his snowsuit, or if he needed a new pair of snow pants. They were going to go to the mountains to play in the snow at a ski resort.

After about ten minutes, Mother wondered why Ned had not come in yet. She went out to see.

Ned was still playing happily in the sand with his digger and dump truck set. Tony was making roads in the sand with his road roller, and Teddy was driving cars on this new sand road.

"Did you hear me when I called you?" Mother asked Ned.

"Yes, but I was in the middle of filling my last three loads, and then I was going to come."

Mother then explained,

“A friend called and asked if we needed any new suits for tomorrow’s snow trip. But since you didn’t come, I couldn’t try yours on you to see if it still fits.”

“Oh,” responded Ned sadly. “I thought you were going to tell me I needed to stop playing, and I didn’t want to stop.”

Mother replied,

“How would we feel if the garbage collection truck had said the same thing as it drove past our house,

“‘I just don’t want to stop. And it’s something I don’t want to do anyway.’?”

“We’d have such a messy yard and tons of flies, and soon there would hardly be any way to drive out of the driveway as it would be so full of trash!”

“I’m sorry,” Ned apologized. “I’ll come quickly next time.”

“That would be wonderful, Ned,” Mother said, “because you never know what you’ll miss if you don’t.

“Our friend said she was going to phone later on to check if we needed anything for our trip tomorrow. Will you promise to come right away when I call for you, no matter what you are doing?”

“Yes, I will!” Ned said. And he did.

It was about half an hour later and Ned was washing his hands to have snack. Tony and Teddy were already enjoying the food, and Ned was looking forward to eating, too.

But just then, Ned heard his mother say, “Ned, I need to see you for a minute, can you please come?”

First he was about to walk the other way and take just one or two bites before going to his mother. But then he remembered the garbage truck lesson.

Ned pretended he was driving and went straight and fast to his mother.

He had the faith that, just like the truck could fit in lots of bags of trash, if he obeyed he’d be able to also fit into his day all the things he’d like to do—and fit lots of food into his tummy, as well.

“I’m so glad you came, and so quickly, too. Our friend said that she had some good snow boots for you, but I needed to make sure of the size of your feet. It will just take a moment, then you can go eat.”

Mother continued,

“Because you came right away, Ned, now we’ll be sure to have extra fun tomorrow, without feeling cold and wet! Remember last year we had to come home early, because we were getting too wet and cold?”

Ned nodded. He didn’t want that to happen again. And it wouldn’t. He continued to come quickly every time Mother called. As a result, they had all the things they needed for their fun in the snow the next day.

What a great day they had! Ned, and Tony, and Teddy with their daddy built the tallest, biggest snowman they’d ever seen.

Mother served a great snack of warm carob drink and banana loaf slices. They stayed a long time playing, and were warm enough and pretty dry, too.

When Ned thought about the day, he realized that he’d gotten to do so many things. It was a good day because he had learned to “stop”, just like the garbage truck, to do something that was needed.

Ned, Tony, and Teddy —Book 5

The Lego Truck

Teddy was Tony’s younger brother, and for some reason he always seemed to like doing whatever Tony was doing. The toys Tony had, seemed the best and most fun also to Teddy.

One day Mother’s friend gave the children a gift— a new silver-coloured airplane, with a pilot. It could zoom on the floor, or you could pick it up and fly it around.

At play time, the boys made an “airport” and lined up the toy people who were waiting to go for a ride in the airplane. They made a runway with blocks for it to drive on

and then take off into the sky. It was fun!

The only thing the brothers had trouble with was deciding who was going to play with the new toy first.

One day, when they both wanted to use it at the same time, they were crying instead of laughing at play time.

So Mother took the airplane and put it aside for a moment. She said, "Let's pray for Jesus to help you have a happy play time, by helping you enjoy making each other happy."

Tony prayed,

"Jesus, I'm so happy that we have this fun airplane to play with. And I'm glad that I have brothers to play games with. It wouldn't be so fun if I was always alone."

"Sometimes it's hard for me to let Teddy have the first turn with the toy that I really enjoy. Please help us to have fun times together by being willing to share even more than trying to get things for ourselves. The Bible says to be cheerful givers. Please help us, Jesus, to do it. Amen."

Mother said, "You may not feel cheerful when Teddy has just the toy that you want to play with, but now that you've prayed, Jesus can do the miracle and make you happy to see Teddy smile first."

"Jesus can bless you with even better play times, and also a happier brother who will share also with you. Thank you for wanting to be a kind brother and helping Teddy learn to share and give, through showing him how."

Tony decided to try something new. He decided that every time his little brother Teddy asked nicely to play with something that he had, that he would share it right way with Teddy.

At first it was hard, and even made him feel a bit sad because he wanted to keep playing with things. But then he noticed something amazing happened! His brother stopped grabbing things away from him.

Also, Teddy started to always ask nicely, instead of crying and getting all upset. Then, by the end of the day, Teddy was even giving things to Tony to show him kindness, too. They were starting to really have fun.

The next day Tony had been looking forward to playing with his new toy Lego truck. He'd built it all by himself. He'd added lights, the exhaust pipe, the driver's seat, and even a

spare tire for the truck.

He wanted to now add on a hook as well as a tiny chain for the truck to pull other cars that needed repair. Just as he was reaching for the pieces he needed, so did his younger brother, Teddy, reach for them as well.

Teddy had his own toy truck, made out of Duplo, so he didn't really need the Lego pieces. He just wanted to do things the same as his older brother, and join in the fun.

What should Tony do? He got an idea.

"Teddy, do you want to trade vehicles for a little while? Just please be sure to keep my Lego truck exactly the same. You have an amazing Duplo truck. I'll play with it, if you'd like to borrow my Lego truck."

Teddy was very happy. He had the best brother he could imagine, who was always thinking of ways to cheer him up and make him feel included.

After about ten minutes of playing with Tony's Lego truck, Teddy was interested in the set of toy tools instead, and Tony could resume his Lego truck constructing.

Tony's Lego truck was mostly intact, with only one part missing: The spare tire. It was nowhere to be seen.

"Where is it?" Tony thought, and began to regret that he'd let Teddy borrow it. After a few minutes of looking, and of course praying, he found it on the floor under another toy.

"I'm glad I found it now, but I wish it hadn't gotten lost," Tony thought, and began to feel sad about the time lost trying to find it, instead of being able to work on building it more. However, Tony prayed to have a loving heart, and he chose to forgive his little brother.

Tony got a new and better thought.

"What if instead of sharing it, I chose not to, and because of that my little brother ended up crying the whole time, wishing he had what I had?"

"He might have tried to grab it, and it might have gotten all broken then. However, because I shared it, we had a fun time together, even if I didn't get to play with my own toy

the whole time. And it was fun playing with his Duplo truck anyway.”

With that happy thought, Tony was able to finish making his amazing vehicle, and he even got new ideas of what could be added on to make it extra special.

Both Mother and Jesus were smiling, watching the happy boys play. Jesus was happy because Tony had discovered the reason for the toys He’d supplied for them—not just to have a fun time, but to learn things.

Tony had learned one of the most important things: kindness and love, making others happy first, and also forgiveness, too. If Tony could see Jesus with his natural eyes, he might have seen Him writing down an idea for the next surprise He wanted to give to him.

A few days later Mother, and Daddy, and Teddy presented Tony with a surprise! — Jesus gave the idea.

There was a note that said,

“Tony, you’ve learned to do things in such a loving way, to make your brother happy first. And now here is something special for you. We love you so much and want you to be happy, too. With love, Mother, Daddy and Teddy.”

With the note was a package of yummy treats and a toy that Tony really enjoyed. Tony was so happy now for each time that he had shared with Teddy, even when it was a little difficult. Fun things were coming back to him now in return.

“Thank you, Mother and Daddy, and thank you Teddy for being a friend to me, too. I’m glad I have such a fun little brother,” Tony said.

Ned, Tony, and Teddy —Book 6

Fredrick—The Fix-it Fireman

Ned, Tony, and Teddy had a very special daddy: Fredrick the Fireman! He was also a good fix-it man.

Today one of the fire trucks needed to be tuned up a bit, and all the valves checked that they were in good working order.

“Do it well, do it right,
In the day or in the night.
I do the very best I can,
‘Cause I’m the Fire Station’s fix it man.”

Fredrick would sing as he worked.

Fredrick had an array of the tools he was using set all around him, and was wearing his safety glasses. He was focusing on doing the best job he could.

Fredrick, along with the other firemen, would take turns at the station. Some days he would be at home where he could be with his family, and teach and care for his sons.

On other days it was his turn to be at the Fire Station working on fix-it jobs, and ready to be on call in case of an emergency.

When there was a fix-it job that needed his help, he never tried to just do things fast, so he could go on to something else he’d like to do.

Fredrick realized that everyone on the team—as well as those they would be going to help—would be depending on the truck and the needed equipment to be working well.

Fredrick knew he had to give each fix-it job his full attention and best effort, and be diligent, attentive to details, and very thorough.

Just as he finished his work on this particular day, his friend, Allen came by.

“Hi! How’s it going?” Allen said, meeting his friend.

“Just fixing things up a bit,” Fredrick replied.

“I’ll come chat in a minute. I better first double check to make sure that everything is finished and working right.”

“Okay, sure thing,” said Allen. He knew it was very important. He’d rather have a good working fire engine that could be there to help him and others, even if it meant he had to wait for his friend for a bit.

Allen decide to use the time to pray for Fredrick’s work on the truck, that nothing important would be missed. And it was good that he did, as just then his prayer was answered.

“Hmmm, let me see. Oh my! I’m glad I checked!” said Fredrick suddenly noticing a screw wasn’t fully tightened, after his fix-it job. “It sure pays to go slow and do it right.”

After he was done, he and Allen went to the dining room to sit and have lunch together. Allen opened up a box he’d brought with lunch for the two of them.

“That’s so nice of you to come and bring a lunch for us to share—and you brought such strengthening food, too!” Fredrick thanked Allen.

Fredrick washed his hands before eating, and poured each of them a glass of drinking water.

Allen had brought a thick, healthful smoothie—a drink of fresh fruit and veggies and a few other goodies blended.

Allen also had made some fresh bread out of different types of cooked or ground-up seeds, and grated carrots. He brought different “sandwich makings” to go on the bread, like tahini, avocado, tomato, sauerkraut, sprouts and lettuce.

As Allen prepared and packed the lunch that day, he told himself, “It’s my little way of supporting and appreciating those who give of their time and strength to be a help to others.”

Fredrick and Allen often encouraged each other to keep living in the ways that brought good health and strength so they could always be ready to help others.

They chose to stay in shape by eating the right foods and drinking plenty of water. They avoided eating or doing things that would weaken their health or eyes.

They also made sure to get lots of good exercise outdoors, as well as to get enough sleep.

“How are Ned, Tony, and Teddy?” Allen asked.

“Oh, my sons are growing fast and well. They might be coming over later this afternoon to learn a bit more about mechanics. Simple stuff of course. It’s something I can teach them. And they enjoy it here at the station,” said Fredrick, the boys’ dad.

“I’m sure they do,” replied Allen. “I’m glad they can learn from you how to be diligent, careful, and how to be a help to others.”

Just then the siren sounded; the emergency call.

Fredrick excused himself to quickly get ready. He was on the team to go to the rescue this time. He was so glad that he’d finished the job, and done it well. It was just in time.

“Thanks for the lunch!” Fredrick said as he quickly left.

He was glad for a friend who had come to help him with a health-strengthening meal, just at the right time. He had good energy now to go and help others.

Ned, Tony, and Teddy —Book 7

Ned was putting on his little bowtie and shiny black shoes, as he was going to his friend's birthday party, along with his family.

Just then Tony walked in.

He was also dressed in his nice clothes, but he didn't have his own bowtie. Tony started to cry. He wished he had what his older brother was wearing.

"Don't cry, Tony. Why don't you ask Mother if she knows where there is another one for you to use."

But even if Mother did have another tie for Tony, his heart was set on having one just the same type, if not the very one, that Ned was wearing.

Oh, dear, what should he do? It would be no fun going to a party if his brother was sad the whole time, feeling like he wasn't as fancily dressed as Ned.

Ned thought for a moment.

"Well, I do like this bowtie, but I love my brother more than it. And maybe if I give him a turn, he'll share it back again with me."

Mother walked in just then, with a fun and colourful neck tie. It was the one that daddy used for doing skits.

"Tony, you can use my bowtie for a while, if you like. I can use the necktie. Then maybe later we can swap."

Tony was very happy, and it made him love his older brother all the more. He thanked his brother, and then went to check if Teddy had something nice to wear as well.

Ned felt happy, and soon they all went to enjoy the time with their friends.

After about ten minutes Tony decided that he wanted the necktie more than the bowtie, as it looked so fun and fancy on Ned.

So they traded.

The happy boys joined in the games feeling glad to have each other's friendship.

There was a piñata game. There were relay races using funny dress-up clothing. There was even a hide-and-seek game played out in the garden.

Then, while the children were enjoying the birthday snack, a fun skit and music show was put on for them. Lots of laughter was heard!

At the end of the party, Mother asked Ned what he liked most from his time there.

He remembered that his brother Tony had been so funny and made everyone laugh.

Ned also remembered that when it was snack time, Tony made sure that he, Ned, and his brother Teddy, had their snack first.

Mother said,

"It's probably because you made sure to put people before things—Tony's happiness before what you wanted to wear. In return, he made you and others happy, and you were able to have a great time."

Ned nodded. He could see now the good result of his being willing to share his bowtie. He not only got it back later on, but also had an especially fun time at the party.

Mother continued,

"I think you both are going to get some pretty big rewards both now and in Heaven as well, for the loving way you work things out.

"There will be lots of parties there, and delicious snacks, and fun, amazing treats for those who put the needs and happiness of others first."

Ned replied,

“At first it was kind of bothering me that Tony always wants the things that I have. But then I just thought of all the times when he did share things with me, so it made me want to keep sharing things with him.”

Mother gave Ned a big hug, and off he went to play with the new set of race cars that he and Tony won at one of the party games.

Ned, Tony, and Teddy —Book 8

Convalescence and Caring

Cough, cough! Sputter! Snort! Ahhchoo!

“Mother, I don’t like being sick!” Tony said.

Mother was helping Tony put on something dry and warm, after he’d spilt his soup on himself, while eating in bed.

All three brothers were sick and in bed.

Teddy was at last asleep for awhile, but wasn’t resting so well, as he felt uncomfortable with a stuffy nose.

“It’s not my favourite time either!” Mother said.

“It is hard to feel unwell, and it can get you down too, if you let it! But we don’t have to let it ruin all our fun. Can you think of anything that we get to do now that we don’t always get to do when we are in good health?”

“Oh, I know one!” Tony exclaimed, “We get to read more stories than we usually do, because when we feel well often we are too energetic to slow down and read for too long. And it’s fun now!”

Tony liked all the new and not-so-new-but-still-fun stories that they had been reading together.

He was the first one to get people thinking happy thoughts again.

“That’s true,” replied Mother, “and we get to talk together about all sorts of things.

“If all we do is play games and toys when you boys are together, sometimes it’s easy to get bothered when someone is messing things up a bit.

“But now that we need to take it easy we can learn more about each other, talk to one another and show our love and appreciation for each other.”

Mother continued,

“It might even help you to have more pleasant times with each other later on when you feel well, as you’ll just be so glad you can run and play again. You won’t be focusing on the little bothersome things as much, but will be happy you are healthy!”

Just then the door opened with a surprise! It was Daddy holding a bouquet of flowers.

“Thank you for taking care of the children,” Daddy said, as he gave his wife a hug.

Daddy said, “I thought to bring in a bit of the garden to you all, since you can’t enjoy it like you wanted to today!”

Everyone smiled at Daddy’s loving care and thoughtfulness. Mother put the flowers in a vase where they could all see them. It helped to brighten up the room.

The flowers made the children feel happy. Every time they looked at the pretty bouquet it reminded them that their Daddy and Mother loved and cared about them, and each other.

When everyone was settled again and ready to read a book with Mother, Ned expressed

a thought:

“Maybe that’s really what is the best thing about being sick. It’s not that we get to do so many cool things right now, but because of the way it makes us change, and the way it will make things be even better, later on, when we are well again.”

“Like what sorts of things?” Mother asked.

Ned continued,

“Just like what you were saying before, and also what Daddy thought of doing. We can start to appreciate each other more, and show more kindness as we help each other get well quickly.”

Tony joined in and expressed,

“Maybe if things are always just fine and we never get sick or hurt, then we get used to things too much, and it makes us forget to show as much love to each other as we should.

“I feel happy that we love each other, and when we are sick it seems to remind us to show it more, and it reminds us that others care about us too, as we have to help care for each other.”

Mother wrapped her arms around both her big boys and gave them a hug. Teddy stirred in his sleep and then woke up to join in on the hug and cosy story time.

Before too long they were on the way to full health and strength, and there seemed to be an extra bit of love and joy in their home, because of that time of learning to care for and appreciate each other.

The Lost Toy Digger

“Where did I put it?”

Ned said while looking under every bed and couch where he thought it might have been. It was his yellow and green digger that his daddy gave him on his birthday.

He couldn't remember where it was now.

Just then he saw it. It wasn't lost. Tony had taken it without asking and was playing with it.

Ned wanted to grab it and tell his brother to not do it again. However, just before he did that, he remembered a Bible verse.

“Be ye kind, one to another. Tenderhearted, forgiving one another...” (Ephesians 4:32)

Instead of acting in anger he asked Tony nicely, “Where did you find my digger? I've been looking everywhere for it.”

Tony said it was on the porch, and he was planning on giving it to Ned after playing with it for a little while.

Now Ned was glad he had been patient.

“Thank you for finding it. I'm so glad to see it again. If you like, you can play with my toy truck and wagon instead.”

So the boys traded and Ned was able to play again with his favorite digger.

That night while Ned was in bed he began to think how important it is to act kindly and to be patient with each other.

Ned prayed for Jesus to help them have a happier, more loved-filled home. The answer came right away through an idea that popped in his head. He would share it the next morning with his family.

“I had a fun idea last night, after I prayed!” Ned said at the breakfast table.

Mother and Daddy were interested to hear it.

“It’s a game we can start to play today!”

Tony and Teddy looked up at their big brother when they heard the words “game” and “play”. They were always eager for fun.

Ned said, “We can cut out paper hearts and write on them ideas of kind deeds that we can do for each other. Each day we can pick a few hearts and do what it says to do! That way we can keep showing love and kindness to one another, and we won’t forget.”

Tony was quick to get some coloured paper after breakfast, and Ned drew hearts on the paper.

Teddy tried to cut some of them out, with Mother helping him. Together they thought of what to say on each one.

Mother wrote the ideas on each paper heart.

The paper hearts were placed in a special coloured envelope and put on the door.

The happy family was eager to start their “Love and Kindness Game.”

Ned and Tony picked the cards for that day.

The first one said:

“Let someone else be the first to play with the toy.”

The second heart card said,

“Tell each one in your family one thing that you like about them!”

The hearts were put where they could be easily seen and remembered as the love deeds for the day!

At lunch time they all had a round of telling each other what things they appreciated about one another, then the boys were off to play.

During play time, Ned remembered what the other card had said, and let Tony have the first turn with his toy digger.

This inspired Tony to let Teddy have the first turn with his favorite toy train. Then Teddy, feeling happy, gave Ned a turn with his favorite ball.

A happy day it was, full of smiles, appreciation and kindness.

Ned, Tony, and Teddy —Book 10

The Broken Toy Truck—Part 1

“Daddy, can you please help me?”

Ned began to cry. His toy truck had broken. The wheel had come off. It seemed there were several of his toys that were weak and would fall apart easily.

It was sad and frustrating for Ned. He wanted toys that would always be nice.

“Hmmm,” Daddy thought as he looked at the broken wheel.

“I think I have just the thing that can fix it.”

Daddy was able to get it fixed for a little while, but not “forever”.

“Oh, dear. I think this toy is just a weak and easy-to-break toy, made with the wrong kind of materials,” Daddy explained.

“That reminds me of a funny story, would you like to hear it?” Daddy asked.

“Yes, can you tell it to me now, please?” Ned was very interested.

Play time was now up, and it was time to get in bed. So Ned got ready for bed, and then Daddy’s story began.

“There was once a carpenter who wanted to build a fine looking wagon, that he could use to load things up in, and use to carry heavy loads.

“However, he wanted it to be finished right away, so he didn’t want to use some strong wood. He thought it might take too long to build. Instead, he found a big cardboard box, and taped on some big round lids that he had in his shed.”

““That should be just great!’ he thought. And then went to try it out.”

Ned started to giggle. It was a funny idea.

Daddy continued,

“The man loaded up the box wagon with some bricks. He was building a little brick house and needed to carry them. But as soon as he put them in, the box collapsed, and he just had to pull along the ground like a sled.

“It was very hard and he couldn’t even put that many bricks in it. He was sweaty and exhausted. It was even harder than carrying them bit by bit. He needed a better wagon

plan.”

“‘Maybe if I use an old laundry basket, and then put some roller skates at the bottom of it, and tie a string on to it, then it will roll and carry my load.’ He thought, and then tried to attached the stakes to the bottom of it.”

“First the carpenter tried some glue, but it wasn’t strong enough to make them stay. Then he tried to staple them on, but the stapler wouldn’t go through the thick plastic, nor metal. Then he tried tape, but that came off. With a piece of string he was able to get them to stay a little bit in place.”

Ned was really laughing now!

“‘Time to try it out,’ the carpenter said and began to load up the bricks in his new style wagon. But the weight of the bricks made it lose its balance and fell over on its side, spilling the bricks and breaking the already cracked side of the old laundry basket.”

“‘Well, it’s been fun trying new things, but I don’t want a wagon that doesn’t work. Even though it’s harder to make a good strong one from wood and nails and the right material, I think it will work better and make my work easier. –Harder to make, but easier to use.’

“So he set off to collect and get the needed items. The wagon took most of the day to make.

“First he had to draw a plan, and figure out just how much wood he needed, and what size and shape the wagon would be in.

“The carpenter then needed to cut the wood and nail it together. Then the wheels needed to be attached properly. The long and strong handle was put on.”

“Now he was ready to try it out. The carpenter decided to try to carry first something small and light-weight in it—a blanket. And it worked! The wheels rolled great.

“Then he tried something heavier—some wooden blocks. Still the wagon worked. It was heavier to pull, but it didn’t break.

“Lastly, he tried some bricks, but didn’t load it up too heavy. He put just enough in it. Still it pulled well.

“Wow! I’m so happy that I took the time to make it right. Now it will make my work go easier. And I’ll take care of it, and not put too many things in it, or make its load too heavy. Then it will work well and last a long time.”

(Continued in “The Broken Toy Truck—Part 2”)

Ned, Tony, and Teddy —Book 11

The Broken Toy Truck—Part 2

(See “The Broken Toy Truck—Part 1”)

Ned was sitting up in bed listening as Daddy ended his funny bedtime story and explained,

“Well, Ned, some of our toys were made too fast and without all the good materials. Perhaps the people making the toys, and having them manufactured wanted something that would be made quickly, and in ways that would not be too expensive to make. These kinds of toys break very easily.”

“Sometimes they are easier for us to get, as they are the most common in the stores, or maybe that was the only kind that was available there. So we can enjoy these for a short while, unless we can make our own, stronger ones, one day.”

That got Ned thinking, and expressed,

“One day I want to make some really good toys for children! Toys that make them glad, not sad.”

Daddy continued chatting,

“Here are three things we can learn from our broken toys:

“First of all, that the only things that will last forever and never ever get broken are the things that Jesus has for us in Heaven, and the things He planned and made to last forever.”

“We have to learn to enjoy things while we have them, and then forsake them when they are no longer good for us or working for us.

“We can try not to be too sad while we remember Jesus will always give us better things, if we have to give up things that aren’t the best, or things that get broken.

“Secondly, we can learn that if we take the time to do things well, and are patient, we’ll enjoy it better in the end.”

“Thirdly, maybe even if we see a fancy toy in a shop and think it will be super nice, it doesn’t mean it will be the funnest toy for us and may disappoint us in the end.

“Not everything that looks nice is the best. Sometimes you have to look more, or go slow to find something else that is stronger, or even make something ourselves that will last better.

“Sometimes we can get the fun-looking, shiny things, even if they will break soon, just for fun, and because that’s all we can do right then. But then we can pray for some better things to come our way.”

“Praying can bring miracles, and Jesus can help to send good toys our way.” Daddy finished explaining, and then gave his son a good night hug.

Ned parked his toy truck beside his bed, the one with the wheel that Daddy put on again, while he went to sleep.

Daddy prayed for their night, and prayed that he’d have good dreams.

When Ned woke the next morning, he had a big smile on his face.

“Daddy!” he said. “I’m not so sad about my broken and weak truck anymore.”

“Why? What happened that made you feel happy?” Daddy asked.

“Well, when I was going to sleep, I prayed for Jesus to show me something far-out and amazing that I would get to drive in one day, when I am in Heaven. And it He did!

“It was an amazing zoomer, with all kinds of coloured lights, and wheels spinning and it could go so fast. And not just on roads, but over water, and under water, and even through the ground, and it would go up high into the sky. It could go anywhere.”

“It had all these special buttons in it, that if you pushed them something new would happen. Some buttons would make music play, or make the lights go on and off and change colors. Other buttons would make the zoomer spin around or even dance!

“That was the funnest—to travel in a dancing Heavenly zoomer! It could also do summersaults through the air. And if I were to race with a car from Earth, the zoomer would be way ahead; so far you couldn’t even see the car or truck, it would be far away in the distance.”

“I’m glad you had such fun in your dream last night, Ned!” Daddy said, then added:

“And guess what? Last night, one of our friends brought over some toys for you boys. And I think there might be just the kind of stronger toys that we were praying for!

“Yay!” said Ned. He was looking forward to the next play time with Daddy and his brothers.

“Thank You Jesus, for fun, strong new toys!”

Ned, Tony, and Teddy —Book 12

Tony was filling his toy cars with imaginative petrol at his Duplo service station. “Okay, you’re good to go!” And off each car would be zoomed.

“Next!” he would call out, and then drive the next vehicle over.

Something caught his attention: a distant siren. An ambulance was then zooming down the road outside after a short while.

“Hmmm. We better pray,” he called over to his brother, Ned, who was in the middle of painting a picture. They prayed for the person needing help.

Just then they heard a “help” kind of sound. It was their youngest brother, Teddy. He liked to do everything that his older brothers could do, even though he didn’t yet know how to do things safely.

Tony was deciding whether to keep playing or to run and see if Teddy needed help, or to at least make sure their mother was nearby to help.

First Tony thought he would just keep playing, but then he remembered the ambulance.

“I’ll pretend that I’m an ambulance, and zoom to help at the first sound of a cry for help—from Teddy, or Ned, or Mother and Daddy.

He checked on his brother and saw that Mother was there helping him. Then Tony decided to put on a white shirt, and carry a little flashlight in his pocket to remind him how he wants to run to help whoever needed help.

He may not be driving a big ambulance or rescue vehicle, but Tony still wanted to be in the habit of helping others when they needed help.

“It’s good practice for when I’m older,” he thought, as he kept on playing “service station”.

A week later Tony was pulling weeds in the garden while his daddy and older brother

were digging out a new place to plant seeds.

Suddenly, some of the dirt from the weed he pulled out flew through the air and went right into his eyes.

Mother was nearby giving Teddy a drink of water and heard Tony calling out for help.

When Teddy heard Mother say that his brother needed his eyes washed to get the dirt out, he came quickly over with his cup of water. He wanted to be a help right away, and offered it to his mother.

“Thank you, Teddy,” Mother said, “You were being like an ambulance, quickly bringing help and needed supplies. I’ll get you more water after I use this.”

Teddy was glad to help. He wanted his brother to be safe and to feel well. He was also looking forward to the strawberries that would grow better once the weeds were taken out.

He was glad his brother Tony was doing that job. Teddy would help by watering the strawberries, soon. They needed a drink of water, too.

When Tony was feeling fine again, he gave his brother Teddy a hug.

“Thanks for sharing your water with me, Teddy. I’m fine now!”

Teddy smiled. Then they looked at each other and made a running dash around the yard, racing as they were singing out the siren sound of an ambulance.

It was a fun game they liked to play. It was their way of saying they wanted to be a quick help to each one in their family, whenever they needed help.

Ned decided to join them in the race, but rather than try to out-run Tony and Teddy, he held on to one of Teddy’s hands, and Tony took his other.

The three boys enjoyed the friendship they had. The more they were willing to stop and help each other, even if they were “busy” with other things, the happier they would all be.

Mother smiled as she set up the hose, getting it ready for Teddy to do some watering.

She called out, “These strawberry plants need some rescuing. They are very thirsty. Is there a Teddy-ambulance that can come and help?”

The older boys that were holding Teddy’s hands then gently ran with him over to the strawberry patch, with their vocal sirens sounding all the way.

“Wonderful boys!” their mother said, and gave each one of them a hug.

While Teddy watered the plants, he was imagining how big and juicy the strawberries would get. And how they would be red too, just like some rescue vehicles are.

Then Tony got a thought, and said,

“When we help others, then they can help us! Just like these strawberries will help us one day by being a great snack!”

The boys nodded, and then went off to finish helping in the garden.

Ned, Tony, and Teddy —Book 13

Bigger Tony

It was hard to believe that it was already his birthday again! The year had passed quickly by for Tony. So much had happened.

Tony had grown in so many ways. He was taller. He knew better how to do things. He could write and read more easily than the year before.

As he was going to sleep, the night before his birthday celebration day, he had asked his mother,

“Do you like me more when I am big or when I am small?”

See, he had a little brother, Teddy. And he seemed so cute. Sometime he did naughty things, but just because he didn't know any better. He still had so much to learn. Tony had already learned those lessons, and sometimes would help to teach his brother things that would keep him safer.

Because Teddy was smaller and needed lots of help from Mother, sometimes Tony wondered if Mother liked to be with him the most. But that wasn't true.

Mother loved each of her boys—each in their own special way: Ned, Tony and Teddy.

Tony was wondering that if he got older and bigger, if that would mean he would have even less time with his mother. Perhaps if he was younger it would be better, and more special?

When he talked to his mother about his feelings, she said to him:

“I love you, Tony, just the way you are each day. If you are big, I love doing the things you can do, together with you. When you were small and didn't know how to do much, I loved helping you and holding you. But each new age and size that you are, is special to me.”

Tony felt happy to know that.

Mother asked,

“What is something really fun that you'd like to do together, on your birthday; something that makes you feel loved and happy?”

Tony thought for a moment and then said, “I like it when we dress up and play a rescue game together.”

And so now that it was his birthday, they did that! The whole family dressed up and pretended that they were at a special rescue station with all sorts of vehicles to help anyone in any kind of situation.

It was a fun birthday game!

Afterwards they enjoyed some yummy snacks.—Things they couldn't have eaten if they were still just little babies. It was fun growing up!

“Happy Birthday, Tony!” said Daddy and Mother, together, sandwiching Tony into a

warm hug. They placed a kiss on both of his cheeks at the same time, one on each side of him.

Tony smiled.

“Happy Birthday, Tony,” Teddy said and gave his brother a hug, and then gave him a freshly picked strawberry that was nearly shaped like a heart.

“Yummy Yuv!” It did look just like a bit of love, and it was very nice of him to share it with this brother.

“Happy Birthday, Tony,” Ned said, and handed his brother a hand-made gift all wrapped up. When Tony opened it he saw it was a plaque made of wood and clay on it with the inscription that said,

“Brothers forever. –Ned”

Tony was happy for this love from his family.

Daddy then sat down on the big armchair, and all the boys piled up on him as if he was some sort of delivery truck!

“Honey,” he called out to his wife, “I have a special package for you!—Actually it’s an amazing three-part gift.”

Mother came over and said it was the best gift ever! She gave her boys each a hug and said they were like birthday presents to her, every day.

Tony was glad for such a happy family that loved him and cared for him. That was the best gift he could have on this special day. Everyone sang him a special birthday song, and told him all the things they liked about him.

Tony realized how special he was to his parents, and to his brothers. And he realized that it sure was better to have brothers than to be all alone. They could have a lot more fun that way.

It might mean they’d need to share their parents’ time more, but then they could enjoy friendship with one another, also.

If their parents were busy, there was always someone around to be with. He saw that part of growing up was learning more about love and giving.

The kinder someone acted, and the more they were willing to share the people and things that were special to them, the more mature and older they seemed.

Tony wanted to keep growing up right, by being kind and sharing with his brothers in his next new year ahead.

Ned, Tony, and Teddy —Book 14

The Green Tree Frog

Ned was looking at an animal book with his brother Tony.

It was called, "A Green Tree Frog".

The book was showing and talking about these interesting little creatures, and all the things they could do, where they lived, and how they survived. They were funny and cute looking.

The boys were discussing some things the book was showing and telling.

"That's amazing!" Tony said.

"The green tree frog's feet can stick like suction cups! I'd like to be able to do that. Think of all the new things I could climb on if my feet didn't slip!"

He was getting some pretty wild ideas!

Just then Mother called,

"Boys, I would appreciate some help with the shopping bags. Could you please come for a minute."

“Sure!” Ned called out, and they both scampered off to be a help.

Before bringing in the first bag, they took a peek inside of it.

“Oh, wow, what are these?” Ned asked.

“New hooks for the bathroom door,” Mother replied.

They put it down, and picked out the next item.

“Goodie!” Tony said. “A new toothbrush, and it’s my favorite color!”

“Would you be able to bring the bags inside please, and then you can look at it as we unpack and put things away,” their mother asked.

The boys had gotten so distracted, they had totally forgotten what they had started doing.

So they stopped their looking and continued their lifting, and carried the supplies into the house.

At last all the shopping bags were inside, and the discovering and putting things away continued.

“Tony, can you please bring this to the bathroom? Thank you.” Mother was handing them things to put here and there.

“This, Ned, goes under the kitchen sink.”

Things were going well, until they found it! Their favorite snack! There it was, right in the last bag they were all emptying.

“Yay!” the boys exclaimed, while grabbing it joyfully, and beginning to open the package of dried fruit.

Mother reminded them again,

“Let’s finish our job first, and then we can enjoy a great snack at the end. If we stop to do every fun thing we think of, just imagine how long it will take to do anything! Nothing will get done, and we won’t have the things we need either.”

Mother explained it this way,

“What if I was about to make your lunch, and on the way to the kitchen I spotted my sewing machine.

““Oh, I want to sew!” I said, and took a long while making my new dress. Then I remembered to cook, but by that time I was so hungry, I just grabbed a snack for myself.

“Then I looked out the window while eating it and noticed that the laundry wasn’t hung out yet. ‘I’ve got to hang it out first’ I thought, and did it. Meanwhile you both would be still waiting to eat some lunch.”

The boys listened, as mother continued,

“See, I have to focus on one thing at a time, and do it. There are always tons of things I need to do, and things I want to do as well. It will all work out best if I do what is meant to be done, at the time, and not get distracted. I have to stick to it.”

“Stick to it? That reminds me of the frogs we were reading about today!” said Ned. “Their feet can stick so well, it helps them to really climb!”

“Yes!” said Tony. “It made me want to climb all kinds of things.”

“Perhaps you can practice sticking with this job first, and then we can have some fun climbing at the park afterwards. Want to?” Mother offered.

They did! So Ned and Tony stayed focused on the job and didn’t get distracted.

Then, because they did the job well and quickly, soon they were eating a fun snack and playing at the park.

The Mobile Construction Site

“It’s the biggest digger in the world!”

Ned exclaimed, showing Tony and Teddy his new duplo invention.

“It can do so many things, and it even has a crane attached to it!”

“Wow, that would be handy,” said Tony, while making his road construction vehicle out of duplo also.

They were going to make a construction site using blocks and duplo, and toy work vehicles of all types.

Mother had given them a sheet to put on the carpeted floor, and some dry grains to use as materials to scoop up.

Teddy was having a great time trying to use some of the vehicles to play with in the grains.

A digger was used to scoop and fill up a dump truck. Then it would be driven by him just a bit, then dumped out again—ready to be refilled.

Ned, Tony, and Teddy then heard their mother say,

“In 15 minutes it will be time for outdoor races, and a prize of nutbutter and carrot sticks!”

It was a very fun idea, but at that moment the boys thought they wanted to keep playing and playing with their toys. Perhaps all day, they wished.

Mother explained,

“Just imagine if a construction site with its workers were trying to make a new building, but there weren’t any rocks, or cement, or wood, or bricks, or metal rods, or glass to use. They couldn’t build much, could they?”

The boys nodded, and laughed a bit, imagining the building being made of wet, mushy muddy piles of dirt only.

Mother said,

“The things that help to build your body’s muscles and good health are like building materials. You have a vehicle—your body, but you also need building supplies. You need good food and water, rest and sleep, and you also need exercise and fresh air!”

“Can we just have a quick snack and then keep on playing?” they asked.

Mother replied,

“Well, good food can help you grow stronger, but you need to get your body moving to make it really work and do the job.

“Think of your construction site—the construction site of your body—and all the things it needs to be able to do its jobs.”

The boys could easily imagine what their mother was saying,

“You need the trucks to not just sit around—but to move to get the job done. And you need the building supplies to make anything at all.

You need both—movement and supplies.

“When you have exercise it helps to move the right things around in your body and bring supplies to the needed places. Movement helps to take away what needs to be removed,” Mother explained.

This was a good way to understand it.

When the 15 minute timer rang, the boys dashed to get on their shoes for some good active play outside. Soon they were laughing and running and having a great time.

“I’m glad we came outside,” Ned said as he was scooping his nutbutter with a carrot stick, while resting a bit from all the running.

“Yes, me too!” added Tony.

“The construction site is still working! It just changed from duplo to our bodies for awhile—our own mobile worksite, that can be building and working as we eat, and as we run and move and play outside.”

Ned, Tony, and Teddy—Book 16

A Cherry Picker Just in Time

It had been stormy weather lately, and when it got like this, often the electricity would go off.

That morning the cold wind blew outside while the family was eating their breakfast.

When Ned and Tony glanced over to the window, they saw a cherry picker driving down the road. It stopped not too far away.

Teddy heard his brothers exclaim what they saw, and got interested.

“Can we go see it, please? Can we watch what the men are doing?”

The boys were bursting with excitement, nearly forgetting they were having breakfast.

“Sure, let’s take a walk down the sidewalk—but after your food is done. And we’ll need

to put on our hats and coats. It's coooold outside!" their mother said.

The boys were finished in no time, and wasted none either getting ready for their chilly walk. They didn't want to miss one second of this adventure, if they could help it.

With warm jackets on they walked out to a place they could clearly and safely watch what was going on.

The long arm of the cherry picker was extended way up high, and it appeared the man in the bucket of the cherry picker was holding a chainsaw.

He had on safety glasses, a helmet, gloves and ear muffers. The sound of the chainsaw would be loud for him. The wind was blowing the leaves and branches of the tree that was nearby his cherry picker.

"What's he trying to do?" Tony asked.

"I think he's cutting the tree branches that are getting too near the power lines. He's helping to make things more safe and secure for those living here. If one of these stormy nights the wind blows hard enough, it might knock a branch down on the wires and put our lights out for while, until it gets fixed."

After a while, Ned said,

"Speaking of wind, I'm getting rather cold out here, can we please go back now?"

After watching for a few last minutes, the job of the man in the cherry picker was done anyway—at least done working there where they were watching.

The bucket was lowered, and the man got out. The boys waved a "good-bye" and headed back to the house.

Later in the day Daddy had to go out, but when he came back he held a bag with something interesting in it.

"Can you guess what I have in here?" Daddy said, showing the boys a bag.

Wondering if it was some new toy vehicle, they tried to reach for it, but Daddy was

taller and for fun held it up high. The boys laughed as they tried to jump up to get it.

“I think we need a cherry picker to get that bag!” Tony said. “Yes!” replied Ned, as they continued jumping.

“Well, before I show you what’s in here, I have a question for you. Why was the man in the cherry picker?”

The boys answered about the power lines, and the branches and the whole situation with storms.

“So it was to prevent something from happening. It wasn’t fixing a problem that was wrong, but helping to stop something from happening that wouldn’t be good.”

“Okay, so there’s a clue,” Daddy said with a smile, while sitting down.

The boys came over to look. In the bag was a roll of red tape, some electrical socket plugs, some door locks, and a few odds and ends of handyman supplies.

“I think it’s time to get on our handyman pouches, put on our hardhats and protective glasses, and get to work on securing things around the house, to make it safer,” said Daddy, calling his team into action.

The boys and Daddy had fun spending time looking around the house and marking with the red tape things that were “off limits” for them to touch and were dangerous.

They even put a line of tape in the kitchen on the floor to show where the stove area was, so care would be taken not to run there without looking and making sure it was safe.

The electrical sockets were covered with the plastic plugs, and other odds and ends of safety hazards were fixed.

“Great job, team!” said a pleased daddy.

“Now the next step is to follow the guidelines that we marked around the house, as well as follow other safety tips we’ve talked about.”

Happy to have a safer house, the boys put their hats and pouches away, put on their outdoor running shoes. They were off for a good play outside with daddy, now that the sun had just started to shine again!

Ned, Tony, and Teddy —Book 17

The “Too Loud” Motorbike

Mother was reading her boys a story.

The story had to pause for a moment as a noisy motorbike roared down the road. It was too loud to keep reading the story until the motorbike was nearly out of sight.

When Tony and Ned, and little brother Teddy, had settle down once again, it wasn't for long.

Next, they heard the horn beeping on a fast, shiny red car that zoomed past on the road.

This was quickly followed by a loud pick-up truck, that seemed as if he was trying to let everyone know he was driving by revving up his engine and roared down the road.

Just as they were about to read the next part of the story, a black car that was driving way over the speed limit wove his way dangerously around the cars in front of him.

All the while, as the black car passed their house, out from it was booming the sounds of a version of music being played too loud.

On went the disturbing traffic. It was nearly ten minutes until the story could be finished.

“Why do they have to be so loud, and try to be the first and the fastest? Isn't that dangerous?” Tony asked.

Yes, it was! Their mother confirmed, and was glad that they weren't driving in a car at that time.

Careless and loud drivers weren't any fun to have around the others trying to also use the road and make it safely home.

Ned then thought for a moment at what had happened a while before—the reason they had all stopped to read a story with their mother, and have a bit of a quieter moment.

He expressed his thoughts:

“Maybe the way we were talking this morning, all kind of loud and not so politely, is kind of like those drivers.—We were being ‘careless and loud’ also.”

“And we nearly had an accident!” Tony added.

“That's right!” Mother commented, and explained more:

“Because when someone is being too loud and isn't thinking about what might happen, or what others need, or how to be safe, then it's a dangerous set up for an accident. —And you can't hear Jesus trying to talk to you either, because your own words are booming out too much!”

They hardly finished their discussion when yet another vehicle came up the road. This time it wasn't going fast, and it wasn't too loud.

It was a flatbed truck carrying a tractor.

“I guess he's not going too fast because he wants to make sure that the tractor is safe and makes it to the farm, or wherever it's meant to go,” Tony said.

“Perhaps that's the example of how to stay safe—to think about others, with the words you say and the fun and wild ideas you might get,” Mother suggested.

“If you always imagine that you are like that truck carrying a tractor—that you have others you need to be careful for—it might help you to slow down, and think about your words. You can then choose to make your words be polite, caring, and more soft-spoken.”

Ned got out some paper and a pen. He was followed quickly by Tony who was eager to join him in anything that looked fun. Teddy first climbed into Mother's lap for a hug—then jumped up to do some drawing too, like his brothers.

Ned said,

“I think I'm going to draw that tractor and truck, and post it up. It can remind us about being thoughtful, quieter, calm and safe—even when we are having fun, so things can stay fun and no one will get hurt.”

Tony said,

“And I'll draw the motorbike! To remind us to not be like that with our words—all kind of rattling and loud!”

“A too loud motorbike,” Teddy said in his cute way, pointing to the scribbles on his papers, showing he had attempted to draw it too. He was always keenly aware of anything his brothers were saying.

Everyone smiled. Perhaps these pictures would help save them from a careless accident later on.

Ned, Tony, and Teddy —Book 18

The Project and the Puppy

—Part 1—

Today was a special day of going out on a special mission. Ned and Tony were out with Mother. They were going to meet a kind shop owner who wanted to give them a special gift.

He had offered for them to come on this day and choose whatever food supplies they needed from his shop, and he would give it to them for free.

It was nearly Christmas time and their family wanted to do something special for those who didn't have much food to eat.

The shop owner would do his part in sharing some supplies, and Mother would cook

the food. Together as a family, they would then deliver nice meals to some needy families that they were going to visit.

It is nice when people want to do deeds of kindness for others; and it is nice when people kindly accept the gifts that are offered. It makes the givers feel happy.

When Mother and the boys arrived and met the shop owner, the boys remembered their good manners and said, "Good morning!" and Ned reached out to shake his hand.

"Good morning to you, young man!" he said to Ned.

"Good morning, Sir! My name is Ned," Ned replied.

"Nice to meet you!" said Tony, as he then shook the man's hand.

"And what's your name?" the shop owner asked him.

"My name is Tony and I'm four years old," he said.

"Well, I'm so glad to see you, all!"

"Thank you for inviting us," said Mother.

"We are so happy to come to your shop," the brothers added.

"Do you know what?" said the man. "I have a new little puppy. Would you like to see him?"

Ned and Tony's eyes opened wide and they shook their heads and said, "Yes!"

"Come with me!" He led the boys and their mother to his office down a little hallway. There they saw an area penned off, and in it was a cute little black puppy sitting in a little puppy box bed.

"What's his name?" Tony asked.

"His name is Black Pup," the man replied.

"That's the perfect name for him!" Ned commented.

"Okay, have fun and enjoy your shopping time," the shop owner said to this little family.

"Thank you so much!" Mother said and shook his hand. "You are helping to make many families happy!"

"I'm very happy to help," he replied.

"I'll see you later!"

So off they went, pushing the shopping cart through the shop, picking out the items they needed to make some good and healthy meals for others.

Since there was only one shopping cart, and both boys would like to push it, Ned was the first to offer,

"Tony, I want you to be happy. You can have a turn with the shopping cart first. I'll help Mother take the food off the shelves."

"That was kind of you. Thank you so much," said their mother. "I need your help, Ned."

Where should we go first? Since you are sharing and giving Tony the first turn with the shopping cart you can choose where we'll go first."

Ned thought, "Hmmm. I'd like to go to the bananas first, please."

"All right, to the fruits and veggies we go!" Mother said, showing the way.

Tony pretended to turn on the shopping cart, as if it was a car, and made driving noises all the way over to the bananas. (Brrrrumm!)

Ned helped pick up a big bunch of bananas.

"Oh, it is heavy."

Mother helped to put it in the shopping cart gently, so as not to bruise any, and they continued on going around the shop.

After a while Tony said, "Ned can have a turn with the shopping cart." So they swapped.

"That was very nice of you boys to kindly share the shopping cart. And you were both a great help to me. You were patient, also, and didn't complain," Mother complimented Tony and Ned.

"Since you were such a big help to me, here is a prize for you both to share."

"What is it?" they wondered.

It was a new sticker pack with shiny car stickers, along with a colouring pad and coloured markers to use. Mother had this saved in her purse for a few days, ready to give them out at the right moment.

The boys were so glad they had shared kindly and behaved nicely at the shop.

Tony and Ned smiled. They were glad they made their mother happy. And they knew it would make the shop owner happy that he had invited them. Perhaps he was even watching them from his office, on the screen that showed what the surveillance cameras in the shop were filming.

When they were done with the food shopping, they went back to see the man and say thank you.

The shop owner said to Mother,

"I am so glad to see you are happy helping others. And your boys are kind and helpful. I'm glad to be a part of this project. More loving kindness is just what everyone needs."

Then he turned to the boys and added, "Maybe next time I see you, you can come and visit my house nearby and you can see how the puppy is doing."

"Oh, yes!" Tony and Ned really wanted to go to his house and see the puppy again sometime. That sounded fun.

"Why don't you come again in a week, and you can also tell me about your project, and how it went with giving the meals to the families," the shop owner said.

And so it was planned that their family would be back next week, to visit his house.

(Continued in “The Project and The Puppy” —Part 2)

Ned, Tony, and Ted —Book 19

The Project and the Puppy

—Part 2—

Daddy, Mother, Ned, Tony, and Teddy went to visit the kind shop owner at his house—the one who had donated food for their meal-giving project.

He had invited them so that the boys could see his new little puppy again. When they walked in, the man said to the boys, “I want to play a game with you. See if you can find Black Pup. He is somewhere in the house.”

“Where can we find him?” the two boys wondered.

“I’ll give you a clue. He says, ‘Aarf, aarf, aarf, aarf’. So you can walk around the whole house and see if you can hear him barking.”

Tony and Ned thought this was a great idea! But before they began looking, they remembered to shake the man’s hand and say hello.

“Hello! Thank you for having us visit your house so we can see the puppy dog,” Tony said, shaking the man’s hand, and this was followed by Ned doing the same.

Then the looking and listening game began, while Daddy and Mother, and Teddy too, sat in the livingroom with this shop owner.

Ned, together with his younger brother Tony, started walking down the hallway. They walked very quietly so they could listen and hear where the puppy was.

They heard a “Meow!”

“Huh? What’s that?” There was a little kitty cat walking up beside them.

“Oh, that’s not a puppy dog!” And they kept walking.

While the boys were off exploring, Daddy, Mother and the shop owner decided to read a passage of the Bible together—a story that told about Christmas, the birthday of Jesus.

The shop owner gave Teddy some Christmas decorations to play with on the little table there, while the adults read from the Bible.

They read together the part where the wise kings travelled a long time to bring their gifts to the one who was King of kings! —Young Jesus.

It was a good story to read, as after all, the man had given a gift to others. Since he couldn’t give to the Baby Jesus, at least he could give to families with children. That was a great gift for Jesus.

Ned and Tony were nearly at the end of the long hallway, passing several doors and rooms, when they suddenly heard a whimper and a scratching noise.

“Oh, the puppy is behind that door!” they exclaimed happily, and quickly went back to tell those sitting in the livingroom.

However, when they entered the livingroom they saw that a passage from the Bible was being read, so being the thoughtful boys that they were, they waited quietly so as not to disturb.

The shop owner, impressed by their polite manners, looked up and said, “So, what do you have to say?”

“We found him!” both boys exclaimed, all at once.

“Did you go into the room?” the man asked.

The boys shook their heads “no”. They thought perhaps it was best to not explore behind closed doors in someone else’s house, but went to ask the owner’s permission first.

“Go ahead, you can open that door. Black Pup will be very happy to see you!” the man said.

And so off the boys ran to do just that.

They stood in front of the door where some barking and whimpering was coming from, then turned the doorknob.

Very quickly a little dog came scampering out. He was trying to get outside to run and play.

They went chasing him down the hallway, and he went running, running, running so fast to the livingroom.

The boys were laughing, saying, “Oh, pup, pup, pup!”

Teddy was laughing and getting excited too.

The shop owner said, “Aha, I see you found him indeed. You are having some fun. Would you like to play outside with the pup?”

There was a little corner in the yard that had a fence around it so the pup wouldn’t run too far away. He could stay safe there.

Everyone went outside together, to watch the puppy and the boys play. The boys threw some little sticks for the pup, to see if he would get them. They were careful to make sure he was safe.

“Would you like to feed him?” the shop owner asked.

He showed them what to do. Tony scooped out some puppy food and put it in his bowl, and Ned filled up his water bowl by pouring into it from a jug of water.

After eating a bit of food, Black Pup was ready for some more fun and running around.

At last he was ready for a nice puppy dog nap time, and it was time for the family to leave anyway.

The shop owner said, “Okay, it’s time for Black Pup to get in his little bed.”

“Come on, pup. Come on, pup!” the man said, and carried him back into the little room, and placed him in his little bed box.

The family was shown where to wash their hands, and afterwards they thanked the man for the fun time that they had. They said, “Good-bye!”

But before they left, they had a special package to give to the shop owner. It was an envelope filled with several cards, notes, and photos.

These were notes of thankfulness from the families that enjoyed the food he had shared.

A few little tears came to the shop owner’s eyes. His heart was encouraged. It really did feel good to make others happy in some way, even if it cost a bit to share.

“Thank you,” he said, “Thank you for letting me be a part of the good your family is doing this Christmas.”

He then said to the boys, “If you would like to visit again sometime, I’m sure Black Pup would like you to come again. It was fun seeing you all having a good time playing. I like hearing laughter in my usually quiet house.”

(Continued in “The Project and The Puppy” —Part 3)

Ned, Tony, and Teddy —Book 20

The Project and the Puppy

—Part 3—

While looking out the window one day at the white and snowy front yard, the children saw someone taking their black dog for a walk. This reminded them of a certain puppy they wished to see again: Black Pup.

“I wonder how big he is now? Or what new tricks he can do,” Ned thought out loud.

Teddy remembered the cute and lively little puppy, and started chatting about what he could remember, in his own special way of expression and speech.

Tony said,

“Well, it hasn’t been that long since we saw him, but maybe he grows faster than we do. I wonder when we can go see him again.”

Mother said,

“I have a fun idea. Maybe we can get our pens and some paper and see if we can learn to

draw a dog.”

“Oh, yes!” they all replied.

These brothers loved to draw.

Ned added, “And maybe we can also make a ‘Thank You’ card and mail it to the shop owner, thanking him for letting us play with his dog, and to say, ‘Happy Christmas and New Year’.”

“We could put a picture of a dog on it!” Tony suggested.

So the boys got their pens and crayons, as well as scissors and glue and colored paper, and all the things they needed to make a big fancy card. Mother brought over some books with pictures of puppies to help them copy.

They wrote on the card, “Thank you so much!” and “Happy Christmas!” and “Happy New Year!”

In the card they also included a little Bible verse and note that Mother helped them write out.

Of course the picture on the front of the card was of a black puppy dog—but he had on a few things that Black Pup probably did not. The drawing looked like a Christmas dog, with some decorations him!

It would make the shop owner smile for sure.

That afternoon the boys and Daddy and Mother took a walk to the post office, and placed a stamp on their envelope.

“I wonder when we can play with Black Pup again?” Tony wondered, while together he and Ned dropped the envelope in the post box at the post office.

When the shop owner received the card, he loved it and smiled. It reminded him of the other envelope of cards that he had received from those that his donated food and supplies had helped.

One of the cards said,

“I am just so thankful to you for your generous gift this year to my family, of a nice meal to eat. We have hardly had any food to eat for a few days, and when the darling family brought a meal and some other supplies from your shop, I knew that there was still love in this world. And as soon as things get better for me and my family, I’m going to repay the kindness by giving to others in any way I can. Merry Christmas! –From Milly and family.”

Another note said,

“It was the best Christmas I ever had, because of you. To know that someone cares about me, as old as I am, and unable to do most things as I am, was special to me. I needed to know that I was still important and could still do my part, as well, to help others—even if all

I can do is pray. I will do that for you, as my return gift to you in this coming year. I will pray for you and for God's blessing on your business too. —From Gerold."

There were photos included that showed the happy faces of those who he had helped. These warmed his heart, and encouraged him to want to keep helping others—as that is how happiness would find him too.

After thinking things over a bit, the shop owner got out a pen and paper and wrote out a reply to Ned, Tony, Teddy, and their parents. He posted it promptly.

A week after the boys had sent their "Thank You" card to the shop owner, a reply letter from him came in the mail.

The letter said some things they were very happy to hear. Mother opened it and saw that it said,

"Dear wonderful boys. I very much enjoyed your card of appreciation. I would like to invite you all, very soon, to visit my house again and meet my relatives that will visit me also."

"You can eat the special New Year's feast with us then, if you want. Some of them also bring along their dogs, so there will be plenty of fun. Black Pup will be happy to see you especially—and perhaps a few other creatures I now have will also like you to visit.

"I have decided to make my house the happiest place around, a place where children can visit and meet with little animal friends. I now also have a turtle, a bunny, of course the cat, and now I just got a hamster.

"I am making some big and fun areas in my yard for the animal friends to live in. I think you will enjoy this miniature animal park.

"This is one of my projects for the New Year. And I have decided to help you more in your family's project, also."

The shop owner's letter concluded with,

"If you want to have another shopping trip to my store to give out more meals to the needy families next month, I'm happy to help support you in this project. Have a good New Year!"

When Mother read this note to everyone at the dinner table, they all cheered! It would be a happy New Year indeed! They just knew it would be.

(Continued in “The Project and The Puppy” —Part 4)

Ned, Tony, and Teddy —Book 21

The Project and the Puppy

—Part 4—

The morning after receiving the shop owner’s invitation letter, Daddy phoned to let him know that they had received it.

They talked about some details of when to come to his house, and when to visit his shop as well to select the needed supplies he was giving them freely, for their project.

Three days later the boys were dressing nicely, and practicing a few songs that they knew how to sing, along with their daddy.

It would be a little gift they could give to those at the New Year gathering that they were invited to.

They would visit the shop owner’s house in the midday, when the feast was being served. In the afternoon they could see and play with the animals, and meet some other visiting children as well. The day afterwards they could get supplies from his shop for their next project.

This was the plan they were looking forward to. When they arrived at the shop owner’s house, it was filled with guests, but seats were reserved for them at the long table.

Mother helped the boys select the foods being served that would be best for them. And of course only the best table manners were used. This pleased everyone there.

After the meal Mother said that the three boys had a New Year’s gift for them all. Everyone was surprised! The three boys stood up where they could be seen and heard well, and sang while Daddy played the guitar.

Teddy liked to stand near his brothers, even though he didn’t really know how to sing all the songs’ words. Mostly he just looked cute, and tried his best to smile.

The boys smiled and sang so lovely that when they finished, all the guests clapped for

them for a long time. The guests enjoyed it, and the boys were glad.

Maybe that kind of gift couldn't be put into a box and wrapped up, but maybe it was better, as everyone could share it, and remember it for a long time.

"I think there are some animals that need a few friends!" the shop owner said. And there were at least three very eager boys ready to be those friends.

Off they went—in fact everyone at the table did—as they all wanted to get a grand tour of the new miniature animal park that was being created.

Tony got to hold and play with the hamster, while Teddy helped to feed some lettuce to the turtle.

Ned held the bunny on his lap and gave him a carrot to gnaw on. Then came a little active puppy that was ready for some fun.

When the other creatures were safely in their homes, Ned and Tony and Teddy ran around with Black Pup, laughing and playing.

They played and ran around until it was time to go.

"Thank you for letting us shop tomorrow, freely, for our next meal-giving project," Mother said to the shop owner, as they were walking back into the house.

"Your welcome," he said. "I found out that when I give to others, not only am I a bit happier, but things also go well in my work. So it's really worth it."

Daddy shook his hand to say good-bye, as did the rest of the family. The shop owner then offered,

"I'd like you to come over every month, if you want, to let the children play with and feed the animals.

"I will prepare a few boxes of supplies for you to use in your meal-giving projects, and you can get them from me when you visit."

Mother and Daddy thanked him heartily, and then Mother asked, "Is there anything that you need, that we can help you with?"

The shop owner replied,

"Well, there is one thing that I did really enjoy. As you know I live alone, and I don't often have company. Perhaps I will now, with the visits of children to see the animals.

"However, if you could spare some time to read more of the Bible with me when you visit, I would enjoy that. Reading the Bible makes me feel better in my heart, and helps me think clearly."

“It was the Bible that motivated me to begin giving to others, and it is what gives me the strength to show love and kindness, no matter how I am feeling.”

Mother remembered the little card she gave him when they very first met, as she shopped at his store many months before. On it was a little Bible verse.

And so it was decided that on the first weekend of each month in that New Year, they would visit the shop owner to read the Bible—as a family all together, and then play with the animals.

The food the shop owner would donate to them when they visited would be used that week in their monthly project of meal-giving.

Hugs and hand shakes ended the visit, and soon jackets were put on. It was time to leave.

“Bye then,” they waved to the shop owner and the other guests who were relaxing over in the livingroom.

“Until next time!” he called out and waved.

It would be a fun year ahead for sure!

Ned, Tony, and Teddy —Book 22

A Pet Called Torty

Ned had a little pet and his name was Torty. It was a green tortoise. Ned, Tony, Teddy, Mother and daddy needed to go on a trip for one week. Ned was sitting down feeling a little sad one day. Mother came and sat beside him. “What’s the matter, Ned?”

Ned said, “I don’t want to leave Torty. Can I bring him? I’m afraid he won’t be cared for so well.”

“Well,” said Mother, “Which would be better for Torty? To be here in this special area we made for him and have someone else caring for him, or take him out of his nice place and try to carry him in a box while we travel?”

“We might drop the box or maybe it might get lost, or maybe he might not like being inside of it. Where do you think Torty would be happiest?”

Ned thought for a minute. “I have an idea,” he said. “Since Torty would be happier here, we can give our friend Sam our email address. Since he will be taking care of Torty, he can take pictures and little videos of Torty. He can send them to us on email, and then we

can see them.”

“That’s a great idea!” said Mother. “You will be able to see him even when we are on our trip.”

So Ned went to Torty and prayed for him that he would be safe and sound. He wrote down on a piece of paper all the things that Sam needed to do to take good care of him – what kind of food to give him, and water. He wrote down his family’s email address. Sam had a good camera.

Sam said, “Oh yes, I’ll take a picture and video of Torty every day and send it to you on email and then you can see them. I’ll take good care of him.”

Ned, Tony, Teddy, Mother and Daddy then went on the trip and Sam and his family looked after their house.

Sam took care of Torty and fed him every day and he was a safe and well-cared for tortoise. Sam took pictures of him, and his mother helped to email the videos and pictures of him to Ned’s family. Ned and his brothers and parents too, got to see Torty in this way while they were gone.

When the family returned home again, Sam said, “Come, Ned, I have a surprise to show you. It’s something about Torty!” They came into the room and he said, “Close your eyes. Okay, surprise!”

There was a box, and when Ned opened the box and guess what was in it? Another tortoise!

Sam said, “We got you and your family another one! Now both tortoise friends can be together and they won’t be lonely. Now you can have two pet tortoises, and they can have fun together.”

“Oh, thanks!” Ned said, and gave Sam a big hug. “Thank you for taking care of Torty. Thank you for the pictures and the videos that you sent to me on the computer, and thank you for the new surprise of a friend for Torty. What should we call her?”

“Hmmm. I was thinking,” Sam said, “of calling her Tia. It could be Torty and Tia!”

“Ha! Ha!” said Ned. “That’s funny! That’s just like ‘tortilla’! Maybe we can have some tortillas for dinner one day!”

When he asked his Mother later if they could have some, she said, “Sure! How about we have tortilla’s tomorrow night to celebrate that we are all home again and had a safe and fun trip. We’ll invite Sam’s family to join us, as a way to thank them for the things they did for us so we could travel.”

Yay! Tony and Ned started to jump up and down. They were so happy that they could have a special celebration.

The next afternoon, Ned, Tony, and Teddy put on some colorful, bright clothes, and set

the table nicely.

Sam's dad played some Spanish songs on the guitar and everyone got up and did some dancing. Then they sat down and ate their tortillas.

"Oh, this is so good," said Ned. "May I please have some more?"

"You certainly can," Mother said. "You are using your best manners tonight." Tony was wiping his face with his napkin, saying, "Thank you, Jesus, for this yummy food!"

After dinner everyone went and sat in the livingroom. They were going to watch a video about a missionary family in Mexico. It would show lots of music and dancing and performances. Next, they all played some musical games—like Musical chairs, and Freeze Dancing, and sang songs. They had a great time.

When the boys were all tucked in their bed later that night, Daddy came to read them a Bible story, and to pray with them for the night.

Tony asked, "Daddy, can we learn some Spanish songs, and learn to speak some Spanish?"

Daddy said, "That's a good idea. We can start tomorrow."

The next day when they were outside playing, riding their bicycles and tricycle, Daddy said,

"Let's play a special Spanish game! We'll play 'Red light, Green Light' and we'll learn our first words. When I tell you to 'stop' in Spanish, you have to stop driving your vehicles, and when I say 'go' you can go."

Later, at their evening meal, they learned how to say 'please' and 'thank you' and 'you're welcome' in Spanish. They had fun starting to learning this new language.

That night when Daddy and Mother said, "Good night, they said, "Buenos noches!"

And Ned and Tony and Teddy, thankful for the nice day said, "Gracias."

Ned, Tony, and Teddy —Book 23

Friends on Vacation

It had been about a month since Tony and his family had gone to the seaside for a few days. They went with their friend Mark, and his family also.

Instead of traveling in their cars, the two families traveled in a big bus. The place they were visiting was several hours away. It was fun getting to sit together and chat all the way there. Or sometimes they were quiet, and dosed a little. Their mother's also handed them all snacks to eat. There was so much to see outside the windows.

"Look over there!" Tony would say to Mark.

They didn't want each other to miss anything interesting.

At one point in the journey Daddy pulled out his guitar to sing songs of praise to the Lord together. This was fun; there were extra voices to join in the singing. It sounded like the whole bus was a moving speaker playing music.

At last they arrived at their destination, and before too long they were enjoying the beach.

There were other activities and outings they got to do while there. It was a short vacation with a lot of enjoyment packed in.

Before too long, everyone was back on a bus again going home. First, the bus would stop at the town where Mark's family lived, then it would continue on driving to take Tony and his family to their home.

The best part of the trip for Tony was the friendship time he had with Mark.

Though he was a bit sad to say good-bye, their families had decided to take another trip together in the future.

One day Tony got a letter! In the envelope was a letter from his friend!

It said, *"Dear Tony, I miss you. It was so fun going on that trip together. I hope you are happy. See you next time. Love, Mark"*

Included were some pictures of Mark and Tony, and some of the fun things they'd done on their trip – their bus drives, going on a ferry boat, and a snack their families had at a little restaurant.

Tony was so happy to hear from his friend.

"I miss Mark too," he said.

"Well," Mother said, "Do you want to write him a letter also? I'm sure he'd love to hear from you."

So Mother got a pencil and some paper and Tony sat down to write a letter to Mark, while Ned kindly read some books and drew pictures with Teddy, so mother could help Tony do this.

"I don't know what to say," Tony said.

"You could start off the way he started his letter.

"Say, 'Dear Mark,' and then, why don't you tell him something you did last week?" Mother suggested.

Tony thought about it and said, "Oh, I remember something fun. We got to go to the circus!"

So Tony wrote:

“Dear Mark, I miss you too. Last week we got to go to the circus. There was a juggler, and some funny monkeys that were dressed like clowns and they could even ride the tricycle. I hope to see you again. Love, Tony”

Mother helped Tony know how to write the words, and helped put the address on the envelope, and they included a picture that Tony had drawn.

“I’ll mail your letter for you tomorrow. It should get to him soon.”

“Oh, that would be great. Thank you so much,” Tony gave his mother a big hug.

Tony went off to go practice his ball bouncing, while Mother went to wash the dishes in the kitchen.

“Oh, I’ve got an idea,” Mother suddenly thought.

She then made a telephone call, and then called out the window,

“Tony, there’s someone on the telephone to talk with you.”

“Who is it?” he asked. He came in really quickly to the house.

“Hello.”

“Hi, Tony. This is Mark!”

“I just wrote a letter to you!” Tony said.

“You did? Did you get my letter?” Mark asked.

Tony said, “Yes, thank you for sending those pictures.”

“You know what, Tony, I was just thinking about you and then your Mother phoned us,” Mark said.

Then Mark asked, “What are you doing today?”

“I’m practicing my ball bouncing,” Tony answered.

“Really? I’m practicing getting the basketball into the hoop. Okay, I’ll look forward to getting your letter later. Bye.”

“Bye,” replied Tony.

Then they hung up the telephone.

“Thanks, Mother,” Tony said, handing her back the phone.

Mother said,

“I thought it would be fun to talk with him. It’s fun to talk with friends sometimes when you can’t see them or be with them. And when you can’t talk with them, at least you can write them. That’s nice too.”

Tony was glad he was learning to write. It felt nice to talk to a friend, and nice to talk using paper sometimes. The paper talks from his friend he could keep and read again and keep in a special place.

A Winter Christmas

It was winter time, where Ned, Tony and Teddy lived. Instead of green grass outside and green leaves, everything was white and cold. The white of snow covered the ground. Snow was everywhere, and Ned was ready to play.

Ned put on his red snow boots and his dark blue snowsuit and his warm, wooly hat, and some mittens. His brothers Tony and Teddy were helped into their warm snow suits, also, and were off to play.

Some of the neighbor children were also out playing in the lovely white, but very cold snow.

Ned suggested, "Let's have a contest, who can make the biggest snowman!" Everyone agreed and Ned with this brothers began their snowman. They started rolling a ball of snow and adding to it more snow, then adding more. They made the base of the snowman first, and then the rest.

When they were done they all felt pretty cold, but they were happy for their snowman. They could see into their neighbour's yard and saw they had done a nice job too.

"Nice snowman!" Tony called out to compliment them.

"Yours is too!" they called back.

Ned asked their daddy to please come and take a picture of it so they could remember it when the snow melted.

When the boys were ready to come back indoors to warm up, their Mother said, "I've got a nice, warm snack for you."

She paused when she saw that the neighbour children had heard and it seemed they wished they could visit then, too. Mother added, "Your friends could come to the kitchen also, if they like."

So the cold but friendly neighbour children ran inside to ask their older adult sister who was watching over them, since their mother was in the hospital and their father had to work. She agreed and let them visit to have the warm snack.

The visiting children were very happy and grateful. Everyone was glad to take off their wet snowsuits and gloves and warm up with a snack. There was something the children noticed also—the Christmas decoration, and manger scene of Baby Jesus.

Though these children celebrated Christmas each year, it seemed they didn't know the full meaning of what it was all about, until now. They were looking around at all the meaningful decorations, and asking questions.

Mother got an idea, then whispered something to Ned when he came to get a refill of his warm drink.

"Maybe this would be a good chance you could talk to the visiting children about Jesus. You could tell them the Christmas Story, and how Jesus loves them. Maybe they would like

to pray with us to receive the best Christmas gift ever.”

Ned nodded and whispered, “It would be wonderful if they could go to Heaven with us too.”

Ned brought a plate of extra snack nibbles to the table and offered it to all the visiting children, then sat beside Ralph. Ralph was the eldest of the children there.

“Ralph, do you want to read a story together?” Ralph looked with interest.

Ned got a story book off the shelf that showed the true story of Christmas, and told briefly of the life of Jesus. Ralph had never seen that before. That was a new storybook and a new story for him.

So Ned began to read it aloud, and all the children listened while they were sipping their drinks.

When he finished the story, Ned motioned for his Mother to please come over and he whispered,

“Can you help me know what to say so we can pray with the children to receive Jesus as their Saviour, so they can go to heaven too?”

Then Mother said, “Ned wants to offer you a very special Christmas present. Would you like to have it?”

All the children said, “Yes.”

Ned said, “I want you all to be able to go to Heaven, and live forever with Jesus.”

Tony helped explain what Heaven was, and how only the people with permission from God, their Heavenly Father, could go in there. But it was sure going to be a lot of fun, and no one that liked fun should miss out on it. They would be glad forever to be there!

Since the children didn’t know how to get there, they said, “How do we get to Heaven?”

Ned said, “Well,” then he looked at his Mother and she whispered in his ear, “Just tell them to pray with you—just to ask Jesus to let them go there, later on.”

Ned said, “You just have to ask Jesus, and He will let you go to Heaven because He loves you.”

Mother helped explain, that because Heaven was such a nice place, that only people who never did anything unkind or wrong would normally be allowed to go there. But that would mean nobody could go.

Since everyone did wrong things sometimes and so they couldn’t be allowed in Heaven, God would miss everyone and be sad. God instead chose a way to forgive people for the wrongs they did, and to then let them come in to Heaven anyway. And a way for them to learn how to give love.

God said that people who were sorry for their wrongdoings, and would let Jesus Christ, God’s Son, take a very big punishment for them instead, could come in to Heaven. Jesus would help them to be loving and kind, and nice.

Since Jesus has taken this punishment already, people now just need to know that He did this for us, and we need to thank Him for it, and to ask to be forgiven.

Ned said, "To talk to Jesus is called praying. Would you like to pray and ask Jesus for this free gift of living in Heaven forever?"

The children nodded. They wanted to feel happier, and they wanted to get a good present. And they wanted to get to know Jesus better. He could help them. He could help their sick mother. He could give them something really nice to look forward to later on.

So Ned led them in a prayer that said:

"Jesus, please come into my heart. Forgive me for being bad. Thank you for giving me eternal life in Heaven."

Ralph suddenly felt very happy and said,

"Wow! That's the best Christmas gift you can give us, to be able to go to Heaven. Tell us more about what Heaven is like?"

So Ned and his brother Tony started to talk about some of the many fun things they could get to do in Heaven.

The children wanted to learn more about Jesus and read more stories with Ned and Tony. Mother said they could come back for a snack and story time the next day, if they wanted to, and their parents agreed.

When the children left they were very happy and said, "Thanks for that beautiful gift and thanks for the snow play."

"Good-bye. Maybe we'll see you tomorrow," said Ned and Tony, as the children put back on their jackets and headed home. The smiles on their faces showed they had a nice time.