



Learning with Jesus

-Book 1-

Learning with Jesus

Stories 1-5

—Imaginary stories of children
living around and learning from Jesus
during His younger years

By Chariane Quille

Cover photo by: Naomi
Illustrated by: Fleur Celeste

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Introduction

Did you ever wonder what it would be like to be living in times past, at the time when Jesus was a boy?

Did you ever wish you could have been one of His friends?

Let's take a trip back to those times, and imagine that we are there, living in Nazareth.

What might it have been like? What might He have helped to teach and show you, as you played and grew up together?

Helping and Caring

Sarah had just finished feeding the animals in their family's small farm, and now she was headed down to the lake to wash out the clothes. The basket felt heavy and she was tired.

Just then she heard a voice that cheered her. "Shall I help you to carry that to the lake, Sarah?"

With gratefulness she handed it over to Jesus, who was taking his brothers and sisters for a walk, while their mother prepared the meal and cared for the youngest.

Sarah then had a race with the children to the water's edge.

"Please don't get wet!" Jesus was heard to say, knowing the evening was soon coming and they didn't have many extra clothes to put on.



It would be chilly. He cared for His brothers and sisters well. His mother was depending on Him.

When Jesus arrived at the lake with the basket of laundry, Sarah thanked Him, and began her job of washing.

“Thank you,” she said. “It was pretty heavy for me.”

“I’m glad I could help,” Jesus said, and continued the game of rock skipping that the other children had begun.

Jesus’ sisters were happy for time to talk with their friend, Sarah, and following their brother’s example of kindness, helped her wash out the clothes, while they chatted about this and that.

The boys then started some racing games with Jesus, and the sound of laughter and running was heard all around.

“It must be nice to be Jesus’ sisters,” Sarah said. “He must be the best brother of all!”

“We love Him so much,” the girls replied. “Sometimes He’s busy, and can’t always do things with us. He has a lot to do, since He is the eldest.

But He likes to help anyone He can. Mother really needs His help. He's a good hard worker and helper, but likes to have fun playing too. And we are glad for the times we get to play with Him. He's the best!" His sisters commented.

"Are you and the girls done with the washing?" Jesus came over to ask, with a bunch of tired-from-running boys.

"Yes, we just finished now," Sarah replied.

"We're going home now, and I could carry it back, if you like." Jesus offered.

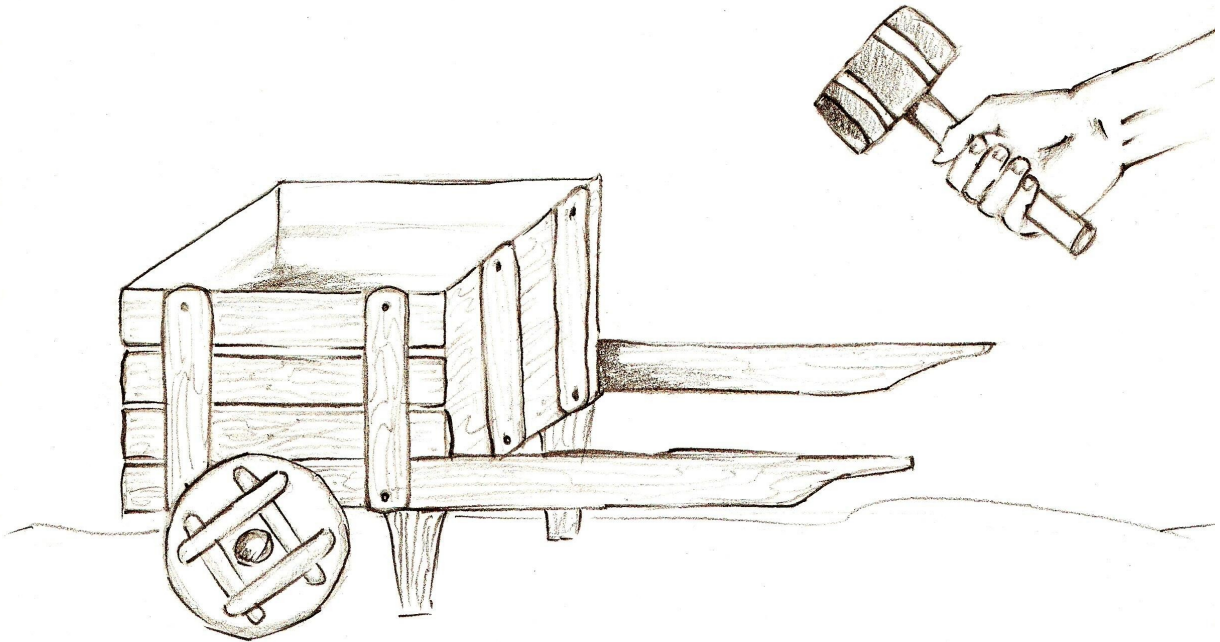
"Oh, that would be wonderful. Usually I have a little wagon that I use to pull it, but it's broken. I didn't know how I was going to do the carrying part.

"It's even heavier now that it's all wet!" Sarah explained.

“We could help fix the wagon!” the boys said, who had gathered around. “Jesus could tell us what to do.”

Sarah was delighted, and the boys were happy for an opportunity to get to work in the carpentry shed.

“Alright!” said Jesus.



“I think we have the time to do it now. Why don’t you boys go with Sarah to get it, and bring it to our workshop. I’ll bring the clothes to her house, and bring the girls home.”

“Yeah!” said the boys and off they went to get and carry, pull, drag, and whatever else they could do to bring the broken wagon to their place. Getting to work on a project with Jesus was always fun.

The next day the team of boys and girls, with Jesus of course, went over to Sarah’s house to deliver the fixed wagon.

Sarah and her family were very grateful! “Thank you all so much!” they said again and again.

“Here, this is for your kind work!” said Sarah’s mother, handing them a bowl of figs, as well as a bag of ground wheat.

“Take these to your mother, and tell her our thanks as well.”

The children knew these were special gifts. It took a long time to grow grain, to thresh it, and to grind it. And the figs were a treat too.

Neither of the families had all that much to spare. It was a kind, generous and thoughtful gift.

Jesus wanted to say, “Oh, that’s fine, please keep it for your family. You need it too!” But it would have been of no use.

Sarah’s mother was kind-hearted and insisted on Jesus’ family having what they needed too.

“Thank you so very much!” Jesus and his brothers and sisters all said, and brought the gifts to their mother.

“Here, Mother!” Jesus said.

Mary was so very surprised. “Where did you get those?”

“Remember the wagon that we fixed yesterday, for Sarah’s family?” Jesus asked.

Mary nodded.

“And the laundry we helped to wash and carry!” added the girls.

“Sarah’s family offered these in return for our kindness,” Jesus said.

It was just what they needed! God had used their loving hearts to help others in need, and now, through kindness given back, they had received food for their next meal.

“Praise God!” Mary exclaimed. ■

Grapes of Gentleness

Jude, a childhood friend of Jesus, tells of one day in the vineyard:

The hot sun was beginning to set. This was our favourite time to play. My sister Tamara and I, along with our neighbour friends met in the central courtyard, while our mothers prepared the supper.

Suddenly Tamara leapt with joy. “Jesus is here!” she exclaimed.

We asked our mothers if we could go to the nearby vineyard. It belonged to my uncle, and we could snack on the ripening grapes as we played. We always enjoyed it when Jesus was with us.

As Tamara and I walked up the road, I saw Jesus holding the hand of a little child who wanted to come along.

He always seemed to notice the youngest ones, and took great care to see that no harm came to them. He was never too busy in play to stop and help the littlest children.

“Tamara,” I said. “I want to be like Jesus.”

“Yes, Jude,” she agreed. “He’s so kind to those who are smaller, or in need of care.”

“And He doesn’t seem to mind whether He is first, or if He wins a game. He’d rather that all of us are safe and happy, and treating each other well.”

I added.

“He doesn’t act roughly, or speak harshly to others. Even if someone taunts Him to do something unkind, He won’t do it.” Tamara said.



“Jesus shows gentle care to animals too.” I said, remembering a time when He helped to rescue a baby sparrow that had fallen from its nest.

Just then Zach and Jordan, who were walking ahead of us all, began an argument. Jesus shook his head, looked back at us and said, “When you use force and anger to try to get someone to agree with you, it’s like offering sour grapes. But gentle words and kind deeds are received and enjoyed like sweet ripe grapes.”

At the vineyard Jesus called Zach and Jordan. He jokingly offered them some grapes that were unripe. They made a face imagining how sour they would taste. Jesus then gave them the best ones He could find. The boys gladly ate them, while Jesus explained:

“Gentle speech and actions makes others happy to agree, and grateful for your friendship. When our tongues and hands are like these sweet grapes, others are more willing to consider our feelings and opinions.”



We all listened intently while Jesus continued,
“People are also like grapes, with feelings—like
the thin skin—that can be easily hurt. They need to
be treated with care and gentleness.”

Jesus’ way of teaching, and what He showed by
example, made it easy to learn. ■

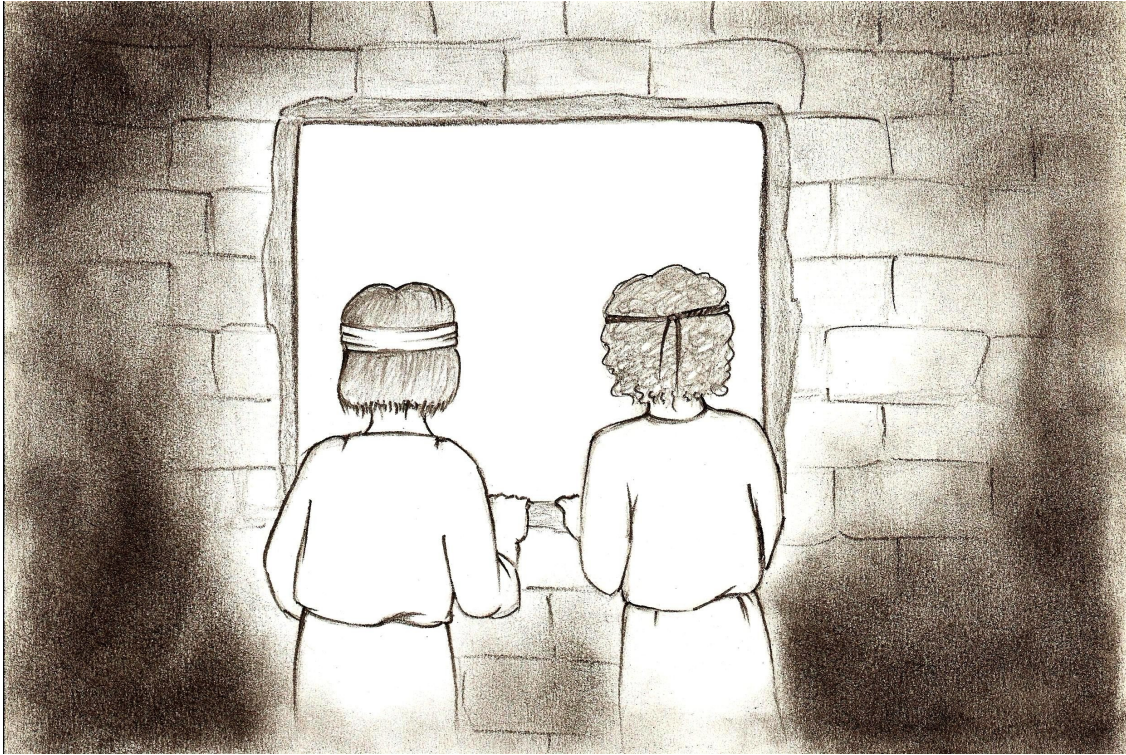
The Wooden Chest

Nehemiah, a childhood friend of Jesus, tells of one interesting evening:

It was winter, when the sun sets early, the stars come out to play, and around the fire place is the favoured spot to be. My cousin Samuel and I ventured away for a walk under the stars, as the brilliant moon was rising over the hills.

“Let’s go see what’s happening over there.” I offered. We made our way to a small shed, with a few oil lamps burning.

“Seems someone is working there. Let’s see what they are doing.” Samuel said, eager for something to amuse us.



There was a father and three boys, one older and two younger. They seemed to be building something out of wood scraps they'd found. We decided to sit quietly near the window and watch.

Joseph, the father, was offering suggestions and giving advice, or helping with a tool. The older child, Jesus, with His eager brothers Joses and Simon, was trying to make a wooden chest.

We observed the delight on the young boys' faces, being allowed to “work” in the shed. The time with their father and older brother was special to them.

Clearly, it would have been easier for Jesus to work on His own with His father. But as we watched we noticed the patience Jesus had.

Joses was trying to fit the wood together just right but wasn't using the correct pieces that had been cut for that part of the wooden chest. Jesus just smiled, and gave him time to notice it for himself. It was obvious that Joses was trying to do this part alone.

When he was ready for help, Jesus offered the right piece. It worked better now. Jose smiled. It was nice working with his older brother. He was so patient, even when others didn't do things just right. Being together and having a nice time was important to Him.

We continued watching from the window. Not only were we learning carpentry, but how to get along well with others, and how to have patience.

It was Simon's turn to help. It was his job to sand the chest, so there wouldn't be rough surfaces.

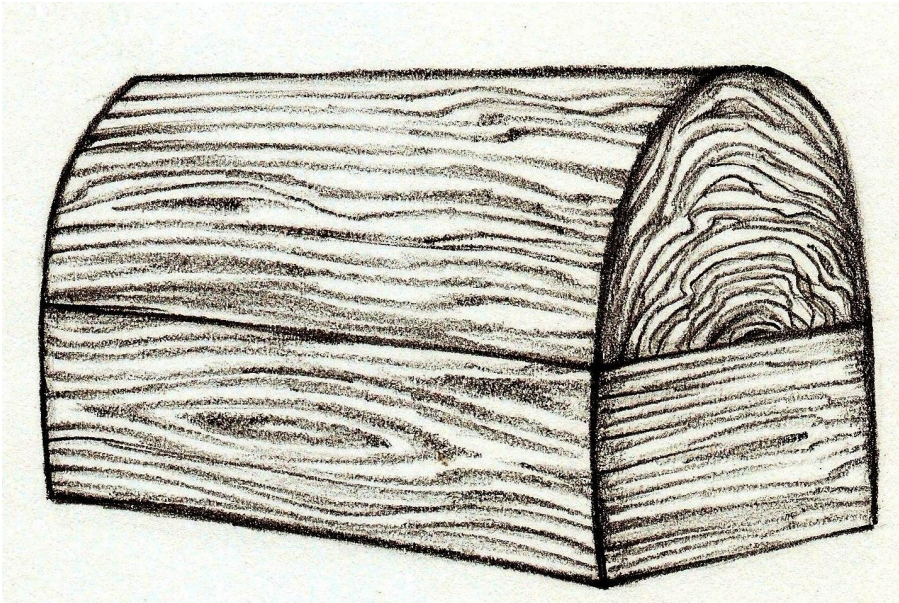
"Do I have to do this?" He asked. It seemed like a long job. He just wanted the chest to be done right away, imagining how happy his mother would be to have it all complete and ready to use.

"I'll help you," Jesus offered. "It'll go faster that way. But we must sometimes do these time-

consuming and tedious jobs, if we want the best result. It takes time and hard work. But wouldn't you rather do that, than get a splinter? Or have mother get one?"

Simon didn't want anyone to get hurt while using their new, strong chest. Thinking of what might happen if he were to be too impatient, helped him to slow down and do the job well.

At last the wooden chest was complete.



They all clapped. Joses and Simon carried it excitedly out to show it to their mother.

With the job done we prepared to leave and go to bed for the night. But just then Jesus noticed us.

“Come in,” He said warmly, as He beckoned us to come into the work shed.

We got to see all the tools as He showed them to us, as well as the projects that were being worked on, but were only part of the way completed.

“If you want to come tomorrow night, you could help us, if you like,” Jesus said.

Samuel and I were delighted. Happily we skipped off to our house. We could hardly wait to work on a project with Jesus. He was the best and most patient teacher and helper we had known.

We knew we’d learn not only how to build and make things, but also the more important lessons that Jesus was able to teach us—the things that helped us to grow in character and in love. ■

Humble Grains of Kindness

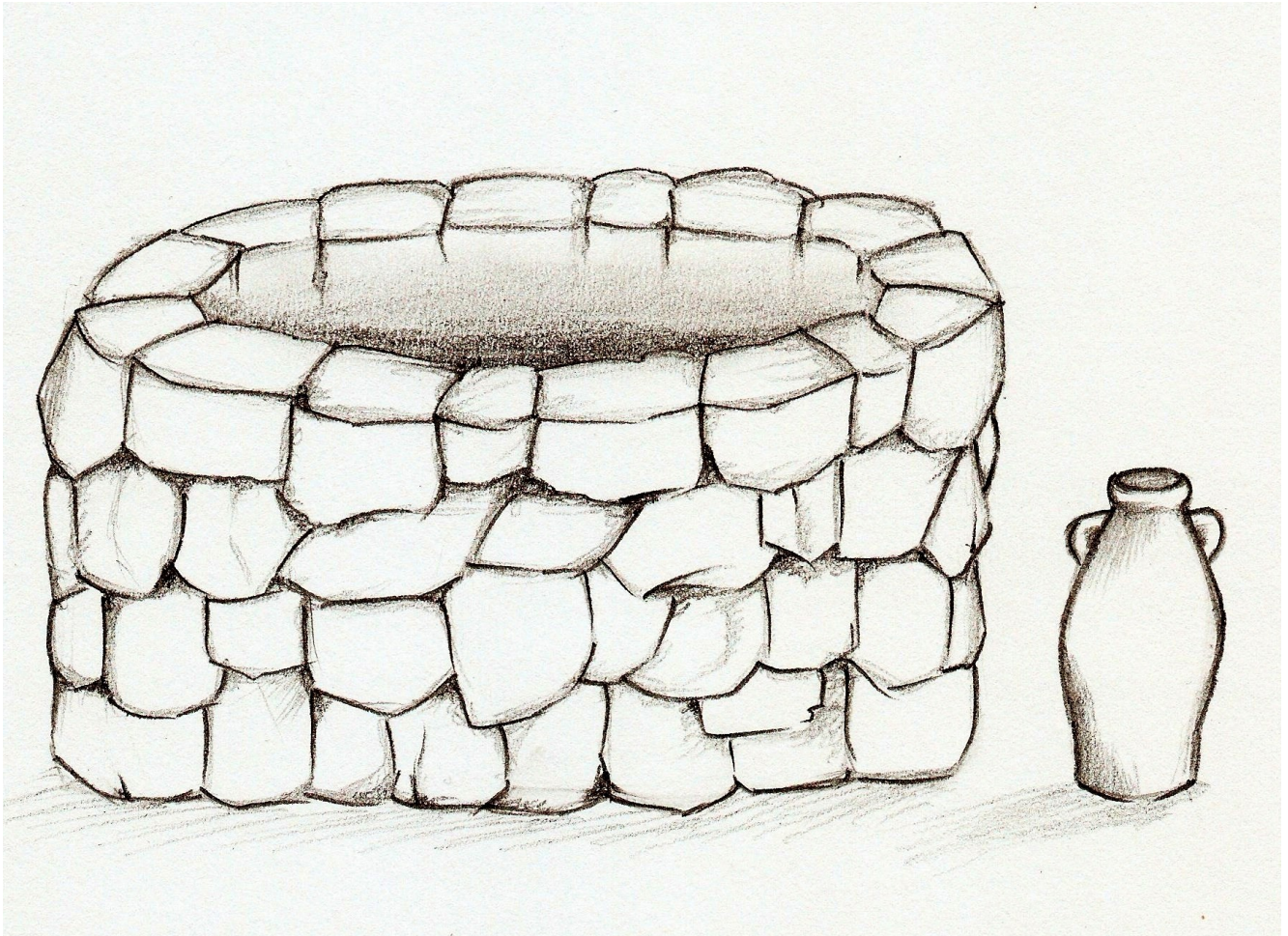
Samuel, a childhood friend of Jesus, tells of one harvest day:

“Nehemiah, how would you like to come out to the field with me? Father, Uncle and the others are harvesting the barley.

We could help out a bit, and learn from watching them. Perhaps we can bring water to the workmen. It’s not an easy job, you know. But if they didn’t do it, we wouldn’t have much to eat in the coming year,” I asked my cousin.

“Well, I’d like to, but I’ve also promised my sister that I would help her finish the chores early, so we

could have time to play with Jesus and our friends in the already harvested field, over near the hill,” Nehemiah replied.



“Alright, then. Perhaps afterwards I could join you for play? I’ll help in the field first, and then I’ll see you later,” I said and headed in that direction.

Just as I was walking I met Jesus on my way.

“It’s a good idea to help out. Even if all you can do is bring water to the workmen.” Jesus said, when I told him what I was going to do.

“May I join you?” He asked.

“Of course!” I was very happy to have a friend to accompany me, and especially such a special one. We hauled water from the well, and served it out under a shady tree for those who were thirsty to come and drink it when they could.

Jesus suggested that we ask if we could pick up the grain that fell, to gather it up and give it to our families.

Together it was fun. We weren't doing anything very great, nothing that others would have cheered us for, as if we'd won some race or done some amazing feat. But doing the humble, simple things brings special rewards our way.

The smiles from those working hard, thanking us for the water, made us feel happy that we'd done an act of kindness, even if it was just a lowly little job.

The hugs from our mothers for bringing back the grain that we'd gathered made us glad.

After, as we walked to the nearby field for play with our friends, Jesus said,

“Remember the barley that we helped to collect? Each little seed seems so small, and could be considered unimportant.



“But when you add them all together, it makes a big harvest that feeds many. In the same way, deeds of thoughtfulness may seem small and humble, but when done with a kind heart, they add up to a feast of love, shared by all whose lives you touched. Remember that.” Jesus said to me.

And I did. The next time my mother asked me to do something that seemed small, and not very exciting—like washing the dirty dishes, or hanging out the wet clothes—I remembered the field of barley.

This little job might be just like one humble seed. But if I do it, and whatever else I can do to show love and kindness, our lives will be filled with happiness, and enriched with love. These are more precious than the finest things found on Earth. ■

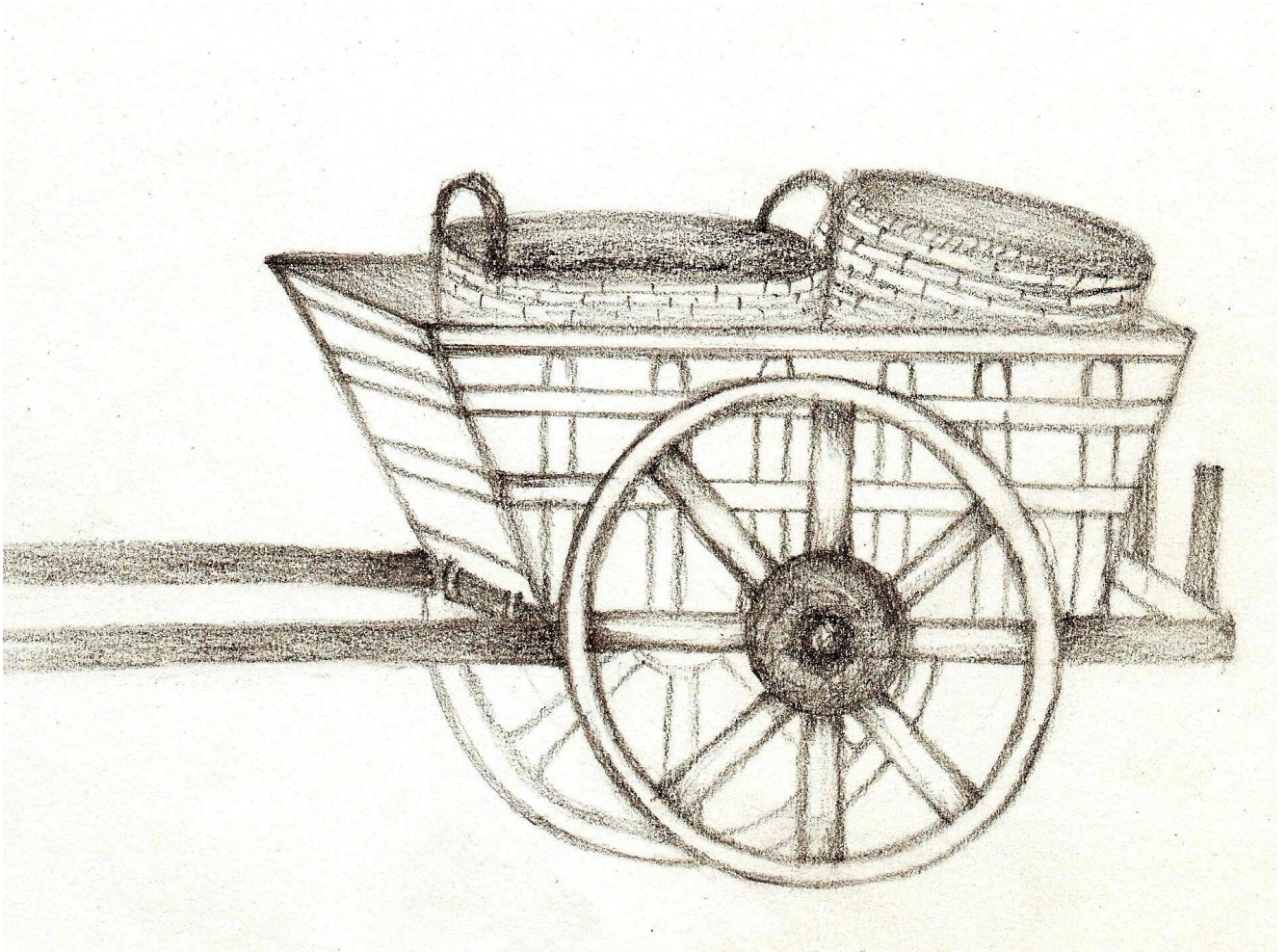
Loads of Love

Zach, a childhood friend of Jesus, tells us this next story:

“Could you please help me with one more thing?” Jesus heard his tired mother say, as He was just about to walk out the door for His late-afternoon stroll.

He so looked forward to this time of day, when He could relax out in nature, and take a break from His otherwise busy life.

Had I been in His situation, with lots to do each day, and many brothers and sisters to care for, I might have had a hard time staying longer to do yet another job.



I had dropped by to see him, and was about to leave when I heard His mother calling Him.

I wondered what He would do. But rather than acting impatiently, Jesus calmly responded, “Yes, Mother?”

He was the oldest and was depended on for so much.

“Could you please help me to lift this heavy basket on to the horse cart? I just don’t have the strength to do it.”

“Of course, Mother,” He said. “That’s what I’m here for, to help you!”

Mary gave her son a hug and thanked Him.

“Now off you go. Enjoy your time away for a bit,” she said with a smile of thankfulness.

I caught up with Him as He headed out to the nearby hill.

“You’re so kind to your family. Of course we have to obey what our parents tell us to do. But the way you do it, Jesus, shows that you aren’t just obeying because you have to, but because you love them.”

“That’s what makes work easier,” Jesus said.

“When you do something out of love, and you think about how much you love someone and want to please them. Then it’s almost like it’s not work anymore.”

“Really?” I responded. “I’ll have to think about that—and try it out too. But I think it would be hard if I was really tired and still had to do something.”

“Well,” Jesus replied. “Our mothers and fathers have helped us with so much as we were young—and still do so much for us—most of the time when they are so tired. Why do they do it? —Because they love us.



“They show their love to us in more ways than we could to them. So helping with the jobs we can do, is one way to say, ‘Thank you’ to them for all that they have done and continue to do.

“Also, they will be less tired if we help in all the ways we can. We’ll be a happier family, because they won’t feel like they have to do all the work.”

“Okay then! I guess I’ll be off to see if my mum needs my help. See you later!” I said to Jesus, while He walked on for His quiet time on the hill. ■