

# STARS FOR SYLVIA

by

Dorothy C. Haskin

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## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### A FUTURE FOR SYLVIA

IT WAS A WARM, lazy Sunday afternoon and Sylvia was lying in the porch swing, reading the biography of Adoniram Judson. For a while she read intently, thrilled by all God had done for and with him.

Then she began thinking how wonderful the Lord had led her since that afternoon, some months ago, when she had dedicated her life to winning others to Him.

There had been times of testing, times when she needed patience; but nearly every girl she had prayed for was now a Christian. It was the most satisfying feeling she had ever had in her life!

“It’s me again,” Claudia called as she walked up the steps and perched on the porch rail.

“Hi. What’s on your mind?” Sylvia put down her book and smiled, happy to see her friend.

A worried look crossed Claudia’s oval face and she asked, “Sylvia, how can we be sure our religion is the right one? How can we know for sure that our religion is better than the ones the heathen have?”

“Not another question?” Sylvia half-joked.

“It isn’t mine. You know that. It’s one of Dad’s.”

Sylvia grew serious and admitted, “His questions used to puzzle me until I remembered that the only religious leader, if you want to call Jesus that, who died for the sins of the world was Jesus. Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Tao, all died of old age; but Christ was made a sacrifice for sin.”

“The answer is always in Jesus, isn’t it?” Claudia’s face glowed softly. “But when I try to talk to Dad, I get all mixed up. I was trying to tell him what Miss Harper said about the heathen this morning, and he said we didn’t need missionaries; that charity begins at home.”

“But we do need missionaries.”

“I know we do; and I told him you could answer his questions, so he said I should bring you over.”

“Me?” Sylvia gulped. It was one thing to talk about the Lord to her friends at school and another thing to talk to Mr. Brown. She knew she couldn’t do it! “Don’t you think Miss Harper or my dad would be better?”

“No. He wouldn’t listen to Miss Harper because she is a school teacher, and he thinks all school teachers talk down to people; and he’d only be polite to your dad, but he would say what he really thinks to you. You will come, won’t you?”

“Yes,” Sylvia agreed reluctantly. If Mr. Brown wanted to talk to her, she ought to try; but she had a frightened feeling that she would not know what to say.

She called through the open window, “Mom, I’m going over to Claudia’s, but I won’t be long.”

“All right, dear,” Mrs. Ingle called back.

Sylvia followed Claudia down the steps, feeling sure she wouldn’t be long because she wouldn’t have much to say. She ran over in her mind all the verses she could remember, but she felt that none of them would be the right verse for Mr. Brown. He could think of more questions than any ten girls! She stopped going over her verses and prayed, “Lord, this is the hardest thing I’ve had to do so far; help me, please.”

“You’re awful quiet,” Claudia remarked.

“I was going over my verses.”

“You’ll think of the right one for Dad. I know you will.”

Sylvia sighed, wishing she had the confidence in herself that Claudia had in her.

When they reached the Browns’, Claudia opened the door and the girls walked in. Sylvia glanced shyly at Mr. Brown. He was sitting in an easy chair, with parts of the Sunday paper scattered around him on the floor.

“Dad, this is my friend, Sylvia.”

Mr. Brown tipped his head back and stared at Sylvia. “So you’re the girl who has been giving my Claudia all these new ideas about religion.”

“I’ve only talked about the Lord,” Sylvia answered meekly and decided that Mr. Brown couldn’t be too bad—Claudia looked a lot like him.

“Here, Sylvia, sit down.” Claudia pushed a chair toward Sylvia. Sylvia sat on the edge of it.

Claudia faced her dad and reminded him, “You’ve got to admit that some of Sylvia’s ideas have been good ones. I’ve been a better girl since I’ve been going to church, haven’t I?”

“Sure enough.” He grinned. “That part of it I like. But all this faith stuff. I can’t go for that. I have a mind and like to reason things out. That’s one reason why I don’t go to church. They expect a man to swallow whole everything they tell him.”

“I don’t know about the church you went to,” Sylvia politely agreed, “but I do know what the Bible says. It says ‘**Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow**’” (Isaiah 1:18).

“Reason, you say. Well, that appeals to me. Let’s hear your reasons. Claudia has been giving me an argument about missionaries and I tell her that charity begins at home. If those missionaries want to help people, why don’t they stay home and clean up the slums we have in this country?”

“Tell him, Sylvia,” Claudia urged.

Sylvia took a deep breath; then plunged. “There are missionaries in this country. Actually every minister is a missionary; and there are far more social workers, Christian workers, doctors and nurses that stay in the United States than ever go to a foreign country. And there are also organizations that do strictly missionary work in the rural districts, organizations such as the American Sunday School Union.”

“Huh! Never heard of it.”

“Neither did I until one of their missionaries spoke at our church. He told how he and others went into the rural districts and started Sunday schools. And whenever a church is ready to go into that district, the missionary who has been working there moves on to a new place.”

“That sounds like something!”

Encouraged because he had agreed that some work was being done in the United States, Sylvia went over to the other side of the subject.

“As for foreign missionaries, the Rockefeller Foundation, which is interested in taking medical aid to other countries, says that we in the United States can’t be free of germs until we wipe them all off the face of the earth. They claim that as long as there are boats, disease will be carried from one country to another. So it is important that we clean up the other countries.”

“They’re a pretty smart outfit and I’ll go along with them that it may be all right for there to be medical missionaries, but not preachers who turn missionary. Those people have their own religious beliefs. They’re satisfied and I believe in letting them alone.”

“If they’re so satisfied why are there three religions in China? Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism?” Sylvia grew bolder as she grew excited.

“If they’re so satisfied why does India have hundreds of gods? I would think if they were satisfied, one god, or one religion, would be enough.”

“Say, you’re a fiery one, aren’t you? All right, I’ll admit they seem to be hankering after another religion.

But what makes you so all-fired sure that Christianity is the best religion of the batch?”

“Because, **‘By their fruits ye shall know them,’** and the fruit of these other religions is not good. In India, some people are called ‘untouchables.’ It’s only lately that they’ve even been allowed to go into a temple of worship. What kind of religion is it that bars some people from church? The untouchables are proof that their religion does not make its followers kind and lovable. Why, a person of the other castes would not even touch one of the untouchables if he were dying.”

“Some folks act that touchy over here.” Mr. Brown squirmed.

“That’s the difference, isn’t it? Over here, it is some people. Over there, it is their religion that makes them that way. Besides, if you knew Jesus, you’d understand what a difference He makes to a person.”

Moved by her love for Him, Sylvia rose to her feet and the words almost tumbled over each other as she said, “Perhaps Jesus is not as important to a man as He is to a girl. Over in Africa, a girl is sold for a cow or a chicken. She is a slave until Jesus comes into men’s hearts and makes them treat girls as if they were human beings.”

“What do you think of that?” Claudia put in.

“It’s not so good,” he admitted and his expression was serious.

“But there is an even more important reason for’ being a missionary.”

“What is it?”

“God loves everyone in the world and He told us, **‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature’** (Mark 16:15). He told us to go and go we must.”

“Then why don’t you?” he flung at her.

Sylvia dropped back onto the chair. Yes, she believed it, why didn’t she go? God had blessed her witness here, wouldn’t He also bless her as a missionary? She looked up and said, “Perhaps I will. At least, I shall pray about it and see if it is the Lord’s will for me.”

“Oh, Sylvia, that would be wonderful!” Claudia exclaimed.

“I’ve got to admit this, you live what you talk. I’m making no promises, but this much I will do. Next Sunday I’ll go to church with Claudia. Here, shake.” He stood up and held out his hand.

But Sylvia stood there, not seeing his hand. Her heart was awed by the vision of an ever-widening field of service. She could go on and on on “**proclaiming the name of the Lord.**”

### THE LIST MISS HARPER GAVE SYLVIA

Verses to use with

1. *Those seeking*

Romans 3:23

John 3:16

I Corinthians 15:3,4

6. *Those who say there is no Hell*

Matthew 5:22

Matthew 16:18

Matthew 25:46

Matthew 23:33

Revelation 22:11

2. *Those who would postpone believing in Christ*

Ecclesiastes 12:1

II Corinthians 6:2

7. *Those who are afraid they can’t stay true*

Jude 24

II Timothy 1:12

3. *Those who lack assurance*

John 5:24

8. *Those who say nature is an adequate revelation of God*

Romans 1:20

Romans 1:18

John 1:18

4. *Those who say there are hypocrites in the church*

Job 27:8

Job 13:16

Job 8:13

Job 20:5

9. *Those who do not know what to believe*

James 2:9

Romans 10:9, 10.

5. *Those who think they have sinned too greatly*

I Timothy 1:15

Isaiah 1:18

John 6:37

I John 1:9

10. *Those who are self-righteous*

James 2:10

Romans 3:23

Ephesians 2:8, 9

Titus 3:5

~ end of book ~

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