

STARS FOR SYLVIA

by

Dorothy C. Haskin

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

TWO KINDS OF BELIEF

SYLVIA WAS so pleased that Ellen came to church, though Norma would not. For several Sundays she was content that Ellen heard the Word, and then she began to grow anxious; Ellen went to church, but she hadn't accepted Christ as Saviour. She talked about Ellen to Nancy, and wondered anxiously, "Why doesn't she accept the Lord?"

"Give her time," Nancy encouraged. "After all, **Faith comes by hearing.**" Then Nancy laughed, and said, "I'm getting like you, I think I have to quote Scripture to answer every question."

"I'm thankful I have Scripture to answer my questions," Sylvia returned warmly. "It means a lot to me, and as for Ellen, I'll have to **let patience have her perfect work.**"

While she waited, there were other things to cheer her. The cast was removed from Fern's leg, and Sylvia and Nancy had the pleasure of taking her to Sunday school for the first time. And another Sunday, La Von sang a short solo part in the choir and the girls were thrilled to hear her. But mostly, Sylvia prayed and waited for the Lord to use her again.

One day, Marguerite stopped her in the hall and asked, "Sylvia, I'm getting some information on hobbies for the annual. Can you tell me those of your friends?"

"I'll try," Sylvia answered, thankful to be able to do any favor for Marguerite.

"Good." They strolled out of doors and sat on the steps in the sun. Marguerite took out her list and one by one they went over the names of the girls. Finally Marguerite remarked, "That's all but you. What's your hobby?"

Sylvia thought deeply. She knew how she spent all her spare time—trying to win her friends to Jesus. But she couldn't tell that to anyone but a consecrated Christian. No one else would understand what she meant. She wondered what she could say, and then with a bright smile, decided on "Memorizing Bible verses."

"Memorizing Bible verses," Marguerite repeated in a tone that implied scorn, but she carefully wrote it after Sylvia's name.

Sylvia flushed. Marguerite's attitude made her wish she hadn't said anything; and yet, as she looked at Marguerite's arrogant expression, Sylvia could only feel sorry for her. She was sorry for anyone who did not have the love of the Lord, and she suddenly said, "Wouldn't you like to come to Sunday school with the rest of us and learn about Jesus?"

Marguerite carefully put the cap on her fountain pen, arched her eyebrows and in a chilly tone replied, "We study about Christ, the Way-shower, at my church."

Sylvia grew hot at the idea of anyone calling Christ a Way-shower. He was so much more than that! She defended, "Christ is not the Way-shower. He is the Way!"

"He is the Way-shower," Marguerite contradicted; "and let's not argue religion."

"I don't mean to . . . only . . ." and she was more confused than ever as to how to reach Marguerite.

Marguerite got up and with a swish of her skirts walked away. Sylvia buried her face in her hands, almost ready to cry. She prayed, "Why is it, Lord, that if I say something to one person, it's all right; yet the same thing to another person seems so wrong?" And then the remembrance that even her Lord did not win to Himself everyone to whom He spoke, comforted her heart.

She got up and started for home. She was nearly to the apartment house where Claudia and the Bowen girls lived when she noticed something bright on the sidewalk. She picked it up and decided it looked like a barrette she had seen Norma wear. Anyway, she had worn one with red and green stones like this. She hurried over to Norma's door and rang the bell.

Norma came to the door and greeted, "Oh, hello, Sylvia."

Sylvia held out her hand with the barrette lying in it. "Is this yours?"

"Yes. Where did you find it?"

"Lying on the street."

Norma narrowed her eyes and exclaimed crossly, "Ellen has taken it and worn it again. You know, I can't see that there's been any improvement in Ellen since you got her to go to Sunday school. All she does is get out of some of the work."

Sylvia bit her lip. There was nothing she could say. Norma was probably right—Ellen hadn't changed because she hadn't become a Christian.

And that night she prayed harder than ever for Ellen. She prayed that she might have the opportunity to speak to her about the Lord. She didn't know when it would be, but the next Sunday when she found herself unexpectedly alone in the school room with Ellen, she thought, "This is my opportunity."

She said, “Ellen, do you enjoy Sunday school now that you’ve come?”

“A lot,” Ellen breathed.

“Then,” with her heart pounding, Sylvia asked, “why don’t you become a Christian?”

Ellen’s brown eyes opened wide and she gasped, “But I am.”

“You are?” Sylvia exclaimed. It couldn’t be! She had watched Ellen too closely for her to have made public confession of Christ to have missed it.

“Don’t I come to church with you?”

So that’s what she thought! Sylvia dropped back onto the bench, wondering what had made Ellen think that going to church made her a Christian. She told her, “Going to church won’t make you a Christian.”

“But weren’t you after me to come to church?” Ellen sat beside her, a surprised expression on her young face. “And aren’t those who come to church Christians?”

“Usually, but not always,” Sylvia carefully explained. “Fern accepted the Lord as her Saviour while she was still in the hospital and was a Christian long before she was able to come to church.”

“But you asked me to come to church so I’d be a Christian,” Ellen reminded.

“That was because at church you hear about Jesus, and to be a Christian you have to believe in Jesus.”

“But I believe in Jesus.”

Sylvia realized that she probably did believe in her head, but that wasn’t enough. It was hard to explain exactly what believing meant, but she tried: “Just believing that Jesus was a good man isn’t enough. **‘The demons believe and tremble’** (James 2:19) but they aren’t saved.”

“But how shall I believe?” Ellen looked confused.

Sylvia drew a deep breath and quoted,

“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:9, 10)

“Say it again.”

Anxiously, Sylvia slowly repeated the verses, and then added, “You have to do two things to be a Christian. You have to believe in your heart, not just in your head, and you have to tell people that you do believe in Jesus. Believing in your heart is different from believing in your head.”

“How is it different?”

“You believe lots of things in your head. You believe in your head that Caesar lived; but in your heart you believe in and love your mother, don’t you?”

“Yes,” Ellen nodded earnestly.

“And that’s the way you have to believe in Jesus. It’s believing ‘harder.’ It makes you sorry when you’re bad, and makes you want to know Jesus more and more. If we really believe in Jesus, we will show it in our actions. Understand?”

“I think so,” Ellen replied, thoughtfully.

“And the rest of the verse says to confess Him before men. That means that after you believe, you tell others that you do. See?”

“I think I see.”

Suddenly Sylvia realized that Ellen was really saying “Yes,” saying that she believed and was willing to confess Him before others. She gulped, and urged, “Then why don’t you kneel, right now, and tell Him you believe in Him?”

“If that’s the right thing to do, why, I will.” Ellen knelt and Sylvia listened as Ellen prayed, telling the Lord that she did believe in Him and wanted to live for Him.

A great joy rose in Sylvia’s heart, but even in her happiness she remembered that there were still Norma, Marguerite, Sarah and Mr. Brown and others out of the fold; others for whom she must pray and whom she must win to the Lord.

~ end of chapter 15 ~

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