



SLEEPOVER

Each year the staff of the New Hope Christian School organises a sleepover for the children. They do that not only because the children love it so much but also because they, too, very much enjoy it every time. They really enjoy all the preparations for this event. It always needs much thought, many discussions, meetings and very much work. But it has always proven in the past that all the effort was really worth it.



This year, too, the staff decided to arrange another sleepover.

However, this time it was not so easy to come to that decision.

Why was that?

Well, last year, unfortunately, there was some unchristian behaviour. Some of the staff, therefore, did not want to organise another sleepover this time. The majority of the staff, though, did not want to disappoint the children.

“Remember”, they said, “they all apologised for their sinful behaviour”.

“Yes, that is true”, some of the other teachers commented. “But how can we be sure that it is not going to happen again? The behaviour is getting worse each year. It takes the fun out of it.”

The children were all aware that these discussions were going on and they anxiously waited for the outcome of the deliberations. They talked about it during recess and lunch breaks. They all looked forward to this annual event with great anticipation. Are we going to have a sleepover this year, or not? That was the great question that kept their minds occupied for days as they anxiously awaited the outcome of the staff’s deliberations.

After many meetings and lengthy discussions it was finally decided to go ahead. Of course when the children were told they were delighted.



The excitement was contagious and after weeks of preparations even the teachers, who first had their concerns, were now becoming quite excited. Everybody helped and also many of the parents got involved.

At the last staff meeting it was decided to send a note to all the parents to warn them that under no circumstances will any unchristian behaviour be tolerated. They also laid down some rules of behaviour.

One of the rules was that no alcohol was allowed at all on the premises. Some of the parents questioned if it was really necessary to include that rule. The staff, however, explained that this has proven necessary because last year some of the year twelve boys had brought alcohol onto the premises hidden in Coke bottles. So it was good to remind everyone, also the parents, that such deceptive behaviour would not be tolerated.



The second rule was that smoking would not be permitted. One would expect that all this was understood and that it would not be necessary to write these things to the parents. Surely everyone knows that alcohol is the cause of much trouble. It is the cause of marriage break ups, family disasters and road accidents. And is not everyone aware that smoking causes lung cancer? Surely all this need not be spelled out.

But, unfortunately, the devil is not only busy in the State schools but even more active in the Christian schools. More and more children, particularly the older ones take up smoking. Even some girls get involved with this nasty and filthy habit as if they had never read all the warnings about “smoking causes lung cancer”. And isn’t it true that all packets of smokes contain the warning “Smoking kills”? The Catechism does not teach us for nothing that *we are not to harm or recklessly endanger ourselves*”.

But some of the children think they know better. Apart from damaging their health they are also disobedient to their parents.



So the teachers were quite justified in sending out these reminders to the parents. They continually wanted to re-enforce the concept of the unity between what is taught in church, at home and at school. Some parents were offended and others thought it was a good idea. But the teachers were very strong on the issue. And so they ought to be.

One of the year twelve boys was not so impressed with these new rules. Eric, the tallest and toughest boy in this class, grumbled about it during the lunch break.

“It is not fair”, Eric said. “They treat us like little children”.

“Last year we had a good time, didn’t we?” responded Jimmy, who was nearly as tall as Eric. “Let us not spoil it now. We can still have a good time even if you are not allowed to bring your smokes”.

But Eric was not very happy as you could see from the expression on his sulky face. “I am still going to take my cigarettes”, he said. “I am not going to be told what I can do and what I can’t do. I don’t care what they say. It is just not fair. I am going to bring my smokes along but.... I want you to promise not to say anything. That is our secret”.

“No, I can’t promise that”, Jimmy said. “You are wrong in wanting to do that and you know it”.

“Don’t be silly”, Eric said. “They will never find out about it. We are too smart for them. You just wait and see”.

But Jimmy felt very uneasy about it. His parents had always insisted on strict obedience. And now Eric even demanded a promise from him that he couldn’t possibly keep. How could he ask that from him?

But as the day of the sleepover approached Eric reminded Jimmy again of what he had asked him to promise.

“You are my friend, aren’t you?”, he asked. Why can’t you then do such a small thing for me, your friend? If I get caught I will be the one who gets into trouble. Not you. So you don’t have anything to worry about, have you?”



Jimmy realised that Eric was putting on some pressure now. Now he was using their friendship to get his own way. He did not think that was very fair and he told Eric so.

“You are not being fair to me now, Eric”, he said.

“OK then”, said Eric. “Have it your way”. And for the rest of the day he did not talk to Jimmy at all. Even the next morning he was still very sulky and not very talkative. The day after that Eric still was not very friendly and the following days there was no change in Eric’s behaviour. After several days Jimmy could not stand it any longer and even though he knew he would be doing wrong he promised Eric not to say anything.

“OK, that is our secret then”, Eric said, and his attitude towards Jimmy improved immediately. But Jimmy did not feel very happy about this at all. He did not want to do anything that he could not talk to his parents about. He had never done that before and he was most unhappy with himself. He had always had a good relationship with his parents and was this going to change now if he had to keep such an awful secret to



himself? But he did not want to spoil the sleepover night either. If he told the teachers that Eric was going to take his smokes then Eric would not be allowed to join in and then without his best friend it would not be much fun, would it? But then he suddenly remembered what his

father read yesterday from the Bible. At the dinner table he read from the letter of Paul to Timothy:

“Do not share in other people’s sins; keep yourself pure”.

He tried to push that thought far away. But he could not shake this uneasy and guilty feeling from his mind. It made him restless.

“Don’t worry so much”, said Eric. We will only smoke outside and nobody will ever notice. If we do it inside they will smell it, of course. No, don’t you worry about it. We will be smart about this”.

As the sleepover day approached Eric became more and more excited. Jimmy on the other hand found that the shine had been taken off this event. He did not even look forward to it any more.



Friday afternoon after school was busy and noisy with children excitedly running around, parents making last minute arrangements and teachers issuing final instructions.

The festivities began as usual with Psalm singing, Bible reading and prayer. This was followed with several games which were enjoyed by all. It was such good fun that even Jimmy temporarily forgot his misery as he got caught up in the happy atmosphere.

After the games it was time to eat. Some of the parents also joined in. They were there as cooks or supervisors. Each classroom had a supervisor to make sure that the children got at least a few hours sleep. Each of the boys had brought their own sleeping bag along and had spread them out onto the floor.

After some more exciting games in the dark there was evening devotion and after that the teachers told everyone to settle down for the night. The year twelve boys and girls were allowed to stay up until 11.00 p.m. They sure made the most of it. They all had a great time and soon after eleven they were all spread out on the floor of their classroom, the boys in one room and the girls in another room.

By midnight most of the boys were sound asleep after such an exhausting time outside. Eric waited until it was very quiet and then he said to Jimmy: “Come on, this is our chance. Are you ready?”

Even though Jimmy was not very happy about this adventure he quietly followed Eric outside. Some of the boys stirred but they did not ask any questions probably assuming they had to go to the toilet. They went behind the trees where the moonlight could not penetrate and Eric offered Jimmy a cigarette. But Jimmy, already feeling uneasy and guilty, refused to accept the cigarette.

“OK then”, Eric said. “Have it your way. I don’t care. I’ll enjoy this smoke while I can but remember you promised not to tell anyone. Don’t forget”.

Eric quietly lit his cigarette and seemed to enjoy it, at least so he said. Jimmy could never be sure if Eric told him the truth. To him smoking was a filthy habit and he hoped he would never be tempted to get involved with that health risk. His parents had often warned him about it. He could not understand why Eric found it so exciting. Maybe it was just the fact that he was disobedient. But that was not very exciting either in Jimmy’s opinion. When he had finished his cigarette Eric went inside again, followed by Jimmy.



It was well and truly after midnight when they returned to their place on the floor of the classroom. All the other boys were fast asleep. Jimmy was so tired now. He was not used to going to bed so late and after a few minutes he was also in dreamland.

Eric, however, was not planning to go to sleep yet. This was one night away from his parents’ supervision and he wanted to have at least one more cigarette before going to sleep. Nobody would notice, he thought. On a warm night like this all the windows were open and all the smoke from his cigarette would quickly disappear. He made sure everyone was asleep including the teacher who slept with them in their classroom. He took his lighter from his pocket and lit his second cigarette. If he was honest with himself he would have to admit that it was not such a nice experience.

The cigarette tasted awful.



But he just wanted to be just as tough as some of the other big boys. He wanted to act grown-up.

After a few puffs on his cigarette Eric became quite drowsy. This was not only caused by the cigarette but also because he was getting tired. It was already one o'clock. He should have been asleep a long time ago. He carefully laid down making sure, of course, that the cigarette was not touching his sleeping bag. Then he realised how tired he really was. He laid his head on the pillow. After one more puff he held the cigarette away from his sleeping bag to make sure it would not touch it. After a while, though, the drowsiness became worse and after a few more minutes he, too, was sound asleep.

Eric was no longer able to think about his cigarette which was still burning, of course. Slowly the burning cigarette started to slip from his limp fingers. Would he wake up and notice what was going on?

After a while the burning cigarette fell from his hand onto the floor. It landed right on top of one of the newspapers the other boys had been reading before going to sleep.

First the paper started to smoulder a little bit. Surely that would not cause any damage. But soon the little red glow became a tiny flicker and a small flame slowly grew.



Then the small flame became a big flame and soon the flame spread all over the newspaper. The teacher, who was sleeping only a few places away from Eric's sleeping bag, stirred in his sleep. Somehow the smoke irritated his nose. Would he wake up in time to raise the alarm? The boy, who was sleeping next to Eric, suddenly felt a sharp pain

on his hand and quickly moved away from the flame.

He too continued sleeping. He was too tired to be disturbed.

By now the flames had nearly burned the whole newspaper and started to wander along the floor. The flames were hungry and wanted more stuff to burn. The curtains were the nearest target and soon they were burning too.



Then the flames spread to the bookshelves and found plenty of books to burn.

One of the boys inhaled some smoke and started coughing. Then other boys started coughing. But they had all been so tired that they did not wake up enough to realise what was going on. They did not realise the danger they were in.

Then a sudden gust of wind came through the open windows and the flames shot up to the ceiling. This time one of the boys, whose name was Tim, woke up and instantly he realised the danger.

He called out as loudly as possible: “Fire! Fire! Everybody out. Run for your lives. Fire! Fire!”

Quickly he raced around the room trying to wake everybody up. The teacher was the first one and immediately he realised that quick action was needed. He, too, started calling out and tried to wake the boys up. Some of them even needed a solid kick for they just wouldn’t wake up. In their panic most of the boys could not even find the door. The smoke, of course, made it even worse.

Finally all managed to rush outside. The teacher hoped that he and Tim managed to alert them all. Teachers, parents and children from the other classrooms also woke up and many of the parents panicked.

“Is Jack still inside? I hope not. I can’t see him, though. Oh, thanks be to God, there he is”.

Another mother was frantically looking for her son and finally found him amongst the other boys.



Someone had already called the Fire Brigade and within minutes they were on the scene.

The headmaster then asked the teacher who had escaped from the burning classroom if he had made sure if all the boys were now safely outside.



“Yes, I am quite sure”, he responded. But then one of the boys, Samuel, suddenly called out in great panic:

”I can’t see Freddy anywhere. Where is my friend Freddy?”

Then suddenly, before anyone was able to stop him, he rushed back into the burning classroom. He was worried about his friend and had to find him. It was not as easy, though, as he thought. The smoke bothered him very much. He got smoke into his eyes which made it difficult to see where he was going. It also caused him to cough. Some of the firemen called him back but he did not hear it. All the people outside panicked and called out to Sam: “Come back, Sam. You’ll get yourself killed”.

But his friend was in there somewhere and he had to do something. He couldn’t be selfish. He had to save Freddy.

The coughing hurt his lungs and he found it difficult to breathe.

Would he be able to find Freddy? Where was he? He could hardly see anything because of the darkness as well as the smoke.

Then he thought he heard groaning and yes, he was right. There in the back of the classroom he heard a boy groaning in pain. He quickly dashed to his side. He could not see who it was. All he knew was that this boy needed help, and quickly too.

The boy could not move because during the panic and rush a cupboard had fallen over and his leg was pinned under the cupboard. He could not move at all. Samuel quickly managed to move the cupboard and started pulling the boy towards the door. But where was the door? All he could see was smoke and he had no idea where the door was.



All the smoke in his lungs started to bother him. He pulled the boy, who by now was unconscious towards where he thought the door was. Fortunately he went in the right direction even though he was not even aware of it. As they got close to the door he started to feel funny and dizzy. Next he fell on the floor and the unconscious boy fell down next to him on the floor.



What now? They were so close to the door. So close to safety but surrounded by flames and smoke. The flames were already burning Samuel's trousers and he was in great pain.

After a while, though, he was also unconscious. Both boys lay very still on the floor with smoke all around them and flames starting to burn their clothes. Now there was no hope of getting out of this burning classroom alive.

In the meantime three firemen outside the classroom tried to get inside to try and save Samuel and whoever else might be in there. They were all wearing protective clothing and gas masks. So they were well protected against the fire and the smoke.

As they entered the burning classroom they tripped over the unconscious boys. This was fortunate because now they did not need to waste time looking for them. They quickly dragged both boys outside where some of the teachers immediately applied first aid. It was quite obvious that both



boys were in a bad shape. They were both badly burned and their lungs were in a bad way. An ambulance had already been called in case there were injuries and they quickly took both boys to the hospital. And one of the boys was Freddy. Sam, being unconscious, had not even noticed which boy he had saved.

Fortunately everyone was now accounted for. Nobody was missing. How sad that Freddy and Samuel were injured. Everyone hoped it wouldn't be too serious.

News of the fire had quickly spread and in no time most of the parents had arrived to ask about their children's safety. It was decided that everyone should go home because there was much cleaning up to be done. And also because the tragic events of this night made it impossible to enjoy the rest of the sleepover. It was spoiled well and truly.

"Remember what you promised", Eric hastened to whisper to Jimmy.



Yes, he did remember and it made him very sad. Both boys knew very well what had caused the fire. Jimmy had to think of Samuel and Freddy who were now in hospital. He hoped they would be alright.

A little while later several policemen arrived on the scene to investigate the cause of the fire. It did not take them long to work it out. Close to Eric's bed they had found a cigarette lighter. So they were quite sure about what had happened. They talked to each of the children and asked lots of questions. They also spoke to Eric and he told them that he had been asleep and was woken up by someone calling "Fire, Fire".

"That was all he could remember", he said.

The next boy they spoke to was Jimmy. Remembering his promise to Eric, he also told the policemen that he had not noticed anything.



After the interrogation by the policemen all the children went home with their parents. That night Jimmy could not sleep. He was so mixed up. One moment he thought of his promise to his best friend. And the next moment he thought of those poor boys in hospital. After a long time he finally fell asleep. He was totally exhausted after this night's ordeal. At about four o'clock he woke up screaming. He was having a nightmare. His Mum was there immediately and stroked his head to try and calm him.

Then Jimmy could not hold back his tears any longer. He sobbed his heart out. He was so distressed. His Mum prompted him to tell her what was bothering him.

"The fire, of course", Jimmy said.

"Yes, I can understand that. And you are worried about those two boys in hospital, aren't you?", his mum said.

"Yes, Mum, I am very worried about them. They are such nice boys", Jimmy answered. "They are such good friends. That was really great of Sam to save his friend". But as soon as he mentioned the word friend he had to think of his promise to Eric. His friend was the cause of the fire and he was also the cause of the injuries to the two boys in hospital. And he



had made him promise to keep the secret. When he thought of that he burst out crying again for he felt he was just as much to blame. He could have prevented this disaster if he had told the teachers what Eric had been planning.

His Mum realised there was much more involved.

“Come on, Jimmy”, she said. “Tell me what really happened”.

“I can’t, Mum, for I made a promise”, Jimmy answered.

“What did you promise?”, His mum asked.

“I really am not allowed to tell you, Mum. I can’t break a promise, can I?”

And then the tears rolled down his cheeks again.

“Does it have something to do with the fire, Jimmy?”, Mum continued. She was adamant to get to the bottom of this.

“Yes, Mum that is the whole trouble. It has something to do with the fire. But I can’t tell you. Really, I can’t”.

“Well, in that case you should perhaps tell me”, Jimmy’s Mum said. I’m sure the policemen would also want to know. If you know something then you are not allowed to keep it to yourself. Then it is your duty to tell the police even if it means you have to break your promise.

So after much hesitation and many more tears Jimmy finally gave in and told his Mum the whole sad story.

Now his Mum understood it all and she said how glad she was that he had told her everything.

“When there is a crime involved”, she said, “then you have the duty to help the police. Eric won’t be very happy with you but we will worry about that later. First we need to get in touch with the police and we will do that right now because it is important. Jimmy’s Dad had also woken up

in the meantime and when he heard what had happened he fully agreed with his wife. “That was a wise decision”, he said. They agreed that Dad would talk to the police. So Dad phoned the police and after about ten minutes two policemen arrived and spoke to Jimmy for quite a while. They told him that he was fortunate to have such good and wise parents who





had encouraged him to do the right thing.

After the policemen had left Dad and Mum both reminded Jimmy of the sermon they had all heard on the previous Sunday about not sharing in other people's sins. "Yes, I had to think of that myself, too," Jimmy said, "and I really want to do what is right. I want to please the Lord in everything I do".

Then his father said: "The next thing you ought to do then is to go to Eric tomorrow morning and tell him that you felt you had to tell the police and that it was not right for Eric to make him promise something that he could not possibly keep. Tell him also that you did not want to share in his sins". So next morning straight after breakfast Jimmy went to Eric's place. He did not like doing it but he knew also that there was no other way. He had to be fair. He did not expect Eric to be very pleased with him. But he had to do it.

He knocked on the door of Eric's place and Eric's mother opened the door for him.

"Well, you are early", she said. "I suppose you didn't sleep very well either after last night's tragedy, just like Eric. He was tossing and turning all night. He is at the back somewhere".

Jimmy found Eric in the back of the garden. He could see that Eric was not very happy and he already felt sorry for him. But he had a difficult task to perform so immediately he told Eric that he had to tell his parents and that his parents told him that he had no choice. He just had to tell the police about all that had happened.



Eric was really furious when he heard this. In fact he was very angry with his friend. He shouted angry words at him and told him that he was no longer his friend. He was never going to speak to him again.

Jimmy left an angry boy behind. It made him really sad that he lost his friend but he was glad he had done the right thing. That was more important. Now he had peace in his heart.



As he turned the corner of the street he noticed a police car driving into Eric's street. They obviously did not waste any time. He felt sorry for Eric and hoped that everything would still work out alright for Eric and that one day they would be able to be friends again.

The police took Eric to the police station and spoke to him for a long time. They did not make it easy for him. He was punished severally. They sent him home and told him that they would be in touch with him again and would also speak to his parents.

Eric had bitter feelings towards his friend Jimmy. It just was not fair of Jimmy not to keep his promise. He was never going to speak to him again. He was quite sure about that. From now on he was going to ignore him completely. As a matter of fact he started to hate him. That was not very good. It showed again how one sin leads to another. Sin breeds sin.

He also turned his back to the Lord. He did not want to learn his Catechism any more. The minister, the elders and his parents just did not know what to do with him any more.

Eric had sent his friend away. He now only had bitterness in his heart. He had lost his friend and worst of all he had lost the Lord.

Jimmy had also lost a friend but at least he had a clear conscience. That same night Jimmy slept very well.

But Eric on the other hand did not sleep so well. He was plagued by a bad conscience. The Lord was busy with him. But instead of listening to God's voice he went from bad to worse. Instead of listening to the warnings of his parents and of his elders he started to skip Catechism lessons and later he even stayed away from church. Naturally this was a great worry for his parents.



Then one day Eric was riding his bike along one of the busiest streets in the town when suddenly a little toddler crossed the road right in front of him. He quickly swerved to avoid hitting the boy but in doing so he hit an oncoming car.



He was knocked unconscious and woke up in hospital three days later. He had serious head injuries and two broken legs. He was in a bad way. When he woke up both his father and his mother were sitting next to his bed. They were so happy and thankful when he opened his eyes.

But Eric was not happy for he was in much pain. He became very bitter and angry. He shouted at the nurses and became most unreasonable. In the bed next to him was a boy of about the same age as Eric.

“How long have you been here?” Eric said to him.

“I have been here for nearly a year”, answered the boy whose name was Daniel. Today the doctor is going to bring me some good news, I hope”.

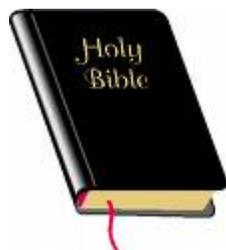
It was a sunny day when the doctor walked into the room. It was such a bright and cheery morning. The birds were singing in the hospital garden and Daniel felt happy and optimistic. He was sure he would be able to go home soon. But his optimistic mood suddenly changed when the doctor opened his mouth.

He told him some very sad news.

“I’m very sorry, Daniel”, he said, “There is not much more we can do for you in this place. Unfortunately you will never be able to walk again. The injuries of that accident were so severe that we are not able to help you any more. You will still need to stay here for a few more weeks and then we will send you home. You will be in a wheel chair for the rest of your life”.

Daniel was shocked to hear this sad news and started crying. A nurse quickly rushed to his side to comfort him.

“At least he could have told him a bit more gently”, she mumbled under her breath.



Daniel stopped crying and the doctor left to attend to his next patient in another ward.

After a while Daniel took his Bible from the bedside cabinet and started reading. That cheered him up quite a bit.

Eric in the bed next to Daniel was wondering why Daniel was not screaming and yelling abuse all over the ward. He

would have done, he thought. What was his secret? Why could he accept this sad news so easily?

He was not even aware that the Lord was using his stay in hospital to change his hardened heart.

At the moment he only felt like cursing and screaming because of all the pain he was experiencing.

That afternoon Daniel got a visitor. It was his neighbour, a friendly old lady.

“And how are you today?”, she asked in a most pleasant voice.

“Oh, I’m OK, I had a slight set-back this morning. The doctor told me I would never be able to walk again. I am fine now and have peace with it. There are so many people worse off than I am”, Daniel said to his friendly visitor.

The lady was surprised to hear Daniel speak like this after hearing such sad news.

“I have so much to be thankful for”, Daniel continued. “I can see, I can read and I can hear the beautiful sound of the birds and I have two hands I can use. I suppose I am really blessed, don’t you think?”



For a moment the kind lady had no words and was in awe of God’s Almighty hand in the life of this young boy. She did not know what to say and simply put her hand over his hand.

Then the words of Psalm 136 came to mind and she reminded Daniel of God’s everlasting love and faithfulness.

The next day Daniel was transferred to another ward because of the change in treatment. But the bed was not empty for long. Another boy was brought in soon after. He was in a wheelchair. He had meningitis some years ago and as a result was now completely blind and was also unable to walk by himself. He was a very happy boy and talked much in a cheerful voice.



“Did you hear that beautiful bird”, he asked Eric. Naturally this new boy’s hearing was extremely well developed. This often happens with blind people. But Eric was not interested in the beautiful sound of the birds. His heart was dark and sombre and there was no place for joy and the sound of birds in his heart.

Yet, the constant happy chatting of this new boy, whose name was Jonathan, cheered him up a little even though he did not yet want to give into it. The Lord, however, was not letting go of Eric.

The Lord first used Daniel to brighten Eric’s heart and now He used his new companion, Jonathan, to soften his hardened heart.

Eric had not read his Bible for a long time. He knew there was a little Bible in the top drawer of his bedside cabinet. He had heard once about the Gideons. That was an association started in 1898 by a couple of businessmen. They had decided to place a bible in each hospital ward, each hotel room as well as in all the prison cells. They hoped that by placing these bibles people would read about the glad tidings and of the forgiveness of sins. Their wish was to share the riches of the gospel so that people would turn to God and repent. In 1899 Gideon International was founded and they now have offices in 180 countries and each year they distribute millions of bibles all over the world.

Eric took the little bible from the drawer and opened it at Psalm 32 which speaks about David and how he suffered because of his guilt. It also told about how blessed he was as soon as he had confessed his guilt to the Lord. Before he confessed he felt most unhappy. But after his confession he was relieved and happy.

If only I could be like that, Eric thought to himself. I feel so unhappy. I wish I could be free of this burden of guilt just like David.

The next day Eric’s mother came to visit him.

She straight away noticed the little bible on Eric’s bedside cabinet and she asked if he had been reading it.



“Yes, I did”, Eric responded “and I have come to realise how wrong I have been. I have been very selfish and cruel and have been the cause of much misery. I have caused misery to myself, to my parents and to all the people at school. I have lied to the Police and I have even rejected my best friend”. At the mention of his best friend Jimmy he burst out into tears. How could he ever have done that to his best friend? He had been so unfair to him.

“I asked him to promise not to tell anyone about my smoking. That was so unfair to ask that from him”, Eric said.

“I am so thankful to hear you speak like that”, his Mum said. “Now you must make up with Jimmy as soon as possible”, she continued. “The quicker the better!”

And, of course, you also need to speak to all the others you have caused pain and misery to.



“We can do so much good when we walk in the ways of the Lord”, she said. “We can be such a blessing to others, too, when we live close to God”.

“And what a blessing when we can speak about the forgiveness we have received”.

That same evening Eric’s Mum spoke to Jimmy and paved the way for a chat with her son.

Next morning Jimmy went to see his friend in hospital. They spoke for a long time and parted as very good friends. Their relationship was even better than before.

Their parents had so often told them that there is great joy and delight in the keeping of God’s commandments.

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