

## Three Choices

The family Adamson lived in a small village about ten kilometers from the City.

Dad worked in the city for one of the banks. And Mum was just a plain housewife. But if you asked her if she was just a plain housewife she would strongly disagree. The task of a housewife is a noble task in Mum's opinion. In fact it is a God-given task. And she loves it. She loves caring for her little family.



Apart from the family dog, a little and faithful Labrador puppy, there were four children in this family. First there was Jonathan, a boy of twelve. He was quite tall for his age. He loved playing soccer and his favorite food was Kentucky. And the second child in the family was Kate, a girl of eleven years. Her favorite pastime was craft work, sewing and embroidery. She loved sitting around quietly at night with her Mum while both of them were doing some craft work. Then there was also Fred, a boy of eight years. He was small but he could run faster than his older brother. He hoped to become a good soccer player one day.

Were they all the children in that family? No, there was one more child in the Adamson family. In the cot there was a little baby boy who was born only three weeks ago. They all loved him very much. Dad had made a special cot for him. He made it strong and solid. He even stood in it to test it for strength. Each of the three children often went into the baby's room to have a quick peek just to see if he was smiling already.



One morning at the breakfast table Dad said to Mum: "This cot is a bit big for that room, you know. It is bit crowded".



“You made it yourself”, Mum said. “So what do you want to do about it now?” she asked.

“Why don’t we get rid of that big vase?” Dad said. “It is only an ornamental vase and we never use it to put flowers in. We haven’t even got flowers big enough for that vase. You can only put big branches in it. It is too big for that room. Since our little boy is in that room there is so much more traffic around his cot. And we always have to walk around that vase very carefully because it is so precious and we truly treasure it. I am afraid we might break it one day”.

“You made that cot far too big and heavy”, Mum responded. “Not that I care about that but I don’t like moving that beautiful vase out of the room. Remember we bought that during our first overseas holiday in Thailand? I know it is very big but it looks so nice in that corner”.

“Yes, I know”, Dad said, “But one day we will bump into it and then it will be broken”.

“Alright then”, Mum said, “let us put it in our spare room in the attic upstairs until we can afford to buy a bigger house”.

“After breakfast you three children can do it together. One can open the door to the stairs and the other two children can carefully take it up to the spare room in the attic”, Dad said.

After Dad had left for work the three children first had to tidy up their bedrooms. When that was done they planned to take the precious vase to the attic upstairs. All that had to be done before school.

Mum called out to them:

“I am just going to see if our old neighbor is alright”.

He had been very sick the last few days and Mum was quite worried about him.

“Don’t forget the vase when you are finished with your rooms”, Mum said before she left.

“No, Mum, don’t worry”, they all called out in unison.



When all three children had cleaned up their rooms they went to the baby's room to get the vase. Of course, all three had to have a quick peep at the little brother in the cot. He was sound asleep and he looked so beautiful. Kate was tempted to pick him up and give him a little cuddle. But Jonathan warned her and reminded her that Mum had strictly forbidden to ever pick him up if Mum was not around, and certainly not when he was asleep.

So Jonathan and Fred both lifted the big vase and walked towards the door to the stairs. Kate opened the door for them and both boys carefully walked up the stairs with the vase. It was not easy and once Fred nearly tripped on a loose bit of carpet. It gave them a fright as they could have quite easily broken the vase. But fortunately all went well. They reached the top of the stairs without any accidents.

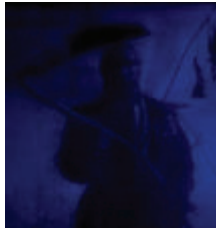
The boys, followed by Kate, carried the vase into the middle of the small room. It was quite dark in there as there was only one very small window in the roof. And that did not let much light into the attic. In fact it was quite spooky in that semi dark room. It certainly did not make them feel at ease. The spare room was quite full already. It was more like a store room. Everything that was no longer needed was put in there.

They never used that room and nobody ever went into it. It was full of stuff. There was an old ironing board that grandma used in her younger days. Mum just could not make herself to throw it away. There was also an old rusty little birdcage full of cob webs and many other unwanted items.

They carefully put the vase down on the floor and then the boys heard such a piercing scream from Kate.

“What's happened?”, they both asked.

“Look in that corner”, Kate said.



The boys looked and saw what made Kate scream. There in that dark corner of the room stood a man. He was tall and had both arms stretched out as if he was going to reach out for them and grab them. All three children were absolutely terrified. They scrambled out of the room as quickly as they could and in their haste and panic they knocked over the big vase. They heard it crack but had no time to see what happened exactly. They had carried the vase upstairs so carefully. And look what happened. There it was broken in several pieces.

All three of them stumbled down the stairs. They wanted to get away from that man as quickly as possible. Fortunately he did not come after them. They quickly shut the door to the stairs and ran to their room. They were exhausted and out of breath. They gathered in Jonathan's room and looked at each other with panic and fear in their eyes.

When they finally managed to speak Kate asked,  
"Who was that upstairs?"

"I have no idea", Fred said.

But Jonathan was quiet and after thinking about it for a while he thought he knew what it could be.

"Do you remember that Dad had a farm many years ago?" Jonathan said. Kate could vaguely remember something like that but Fred was too young to remember. As a matter of fact he was not even born yet when they lived on the farm.

Apparently their parents had to give up farming when year after year turned out to be such a disaster. They had not had much rain the last few years. Each year Dad had hoped that it would get better. But the following year it was the same story. No rain. The wheat just shriveled up and there was hardly anything to harvest. If they had kept going they would have been very poor. So the best thing was to sell the farm.



“I remember”, Jonathan continued, “that Dad came home one day with a scarecrow. He thought it was such a beautiful scarecrow and did not want to leave it behind. So he then put it away into this spare room. So what we saw must have been that scarecrow”.

When they heard that they all burst out laughing.

“What a joke”, Fred said.

“It really scared me, though”, Kate said. “I was terrified”.

“No wonder”, said Fred, “It looked so real in that dark room”.

“But what are we going to do now?”, said Jonathan. He was the oldest and felt responsible for what had happened.

“The vase is now broken. So what are we going to do about that?”

“I am really sad about it”, Kate said. “Dad and Mum really loved that vase. It was their treasure and it was very special to them”.

“Do you know what?” Jonathan suggested, “Let us not say anything to Mum and think about it for a while. It is nearly time to go to school. Let us talk about it on our way to school”.

“Yes, I agree with that”, Fred responded. “I don’t want anyone to know how frightened I was of a scarecrow”.

“So we better not say anything”.

“We can’t do that”, Kate said. “That does not seem right.”

But Jonathan would not listen to that.

“Mum will be back soon from our sick neighbor. So let us not talk about it any longer now and decide what to do about it on our walk to school”, he suggested.

Kate was not very happy about it but she thought that Jonathan being the eldest of the three would know best.

When Mum came back from the neighbor’s place all three children quickly grabbed their schoolbags and kissed Mum goodbye. They almost



ran out of the door to avoid difficult questions from their Mum. They couldn't possibly face her right now. But just as they disappeared Mum called after them: "Did you manage that beautiful vase alright?" "Yes Mum", they called out and quickly walked on hoping Mum wouldn't probe any further.

All three children felt most uncomfortable. And no wonder! They had lied to their mother. They were trying to hide something from her. And this was very unusual. They had a good relationship with both their parents and never had any secrets for them.

They closed the gate behind them so that Bonny, their little puppy, wouldn't be able to run onto the road.

"Well", said Fred. "What are we going to do about that broken vase?" He was keen to talk about it and find a solution to their problem. He felt uncomfortable and guilty.

"Nobody ever goes upstairs", Jonathan responded. "So they will never find out about it."

"That's not the point", said Kate. "We have broken their precious vase and we should tell them about it. We should simply and honestly own up to it."

"Let us just say we managed alright and that the vase is standing there nicely amongst all the other items in the spare room", Jonathan said.

"That's a lie", reacted Kate angrily. "That is wrong! You as the oldest boy should know better".

"I have an idea", Fred suggested. "Dad has some very special glue in the drawer of his desk and we could easily glue all the broken pieces together again. If we do it very carefully you would never know it had been broken".

"No, that won't work", said Jonathan. "You will always see the joints and the cracks".



“We are nearly at school now”, said Fred. “Why don’t we talk about it again after school, on our way home?”

That settled it. At least for a little while. Nothing was solved yet. All three children had a most unhappy day at school.

While the children were at school Mum decided to have a look upstairs to make sure the three children had carefully followed her instructions. Before she went upstairs she quickly checked on her little baby. All seemed well. Their puppy was peacefully curled up in front of the cot. Bonny loved their baby and was always very close when Mum was feeding him. And whenever Mum left the baby on the couch Bonny would sit right next to little Johnny and watch over him. At moments like that Bonny always had a most tender expression in his eyes. Bonny was a faithful little thing. It never got tired of playing with the children and chasing their ball.

Mum opened the door to the staircase and just as she was halfway the stairs the phone rang. “I better answer that first”, she mumbled to herself. The vase can wait, she thought. But after the long phone conversation with her friend from church she forgot all about their precious vase.

When the children came home from school later on in the afternoon she was busy peeling the potatoes and cutting the vegies for the evening meal. It was only then that she suddenly remembered the vase and she asked the children: “I suppose you didn’t have any trouble with that vase, did you children?”

“No Mum”, they answered in chorus.

That was it then, the children thought and Mum did not even notice how they all blushed. They were ashamed of themselves.

On the way home from school they had not been able to come to an agreement about what to say about the vase. They all knew they had three



choices. They could either own up to it and tell her exactly what happened or they could patch it up with the risk that you would always see the cracks. And the third option, which was not a very good one at all, was to tell a lie. And that is exactly what they had done and they did not feel very good about that. Naturally that night none of the three children slept very well. And no wonder. This deliberate lie would weigh very heavily on their conscience. And it would continue to weigh them down until they would confess. It certainly taught them that sin breeds sin. They had broken the vase. And, even worse, they had now also told a lie.

The next day Jonathan felt a bit better. He did not feel so guilty any more. But the other two children were still very worried and anxious. Jonathan thought it would wear off but Kate told him it would continue to play on his conscience. When they walked home after school they suddenly noticed Bonny coming towards them. Someone obviously must have left the gate open. Bonny was so happy to see them and so were the children. “How clever you are, Bonny, to find us”, said Kate.

But deep down they were quite concerned for there were quite a few cars on this road. Bonny was not used to all that traffic and had no idea of danger. He was so excited and happily jumped around the children. Fred decided it was best to carry Bonny all the way home and that is what he did. But after a while Bonny wriggled out of his arms and ran away right in front of a car. Fred quickly ran after him to protect him. The driver of the car saw them and quickly swerved. His brakes squealed but it was too late. The front of the car had picked Fred up on the bonnet and threw him onto the road. Fred lay very still. His head was bleeding quite badly. Jonathan and Kate were very frightened and did not know what to do. But soon many people arrived on the scene of the accident. Someone had a mobile phone and rang the ambulance which arrived a few minutes later. Fred was taken to the hospital and the other two children walked home with Bonny.



In the meantime a policeman had phoned their Mum to tell them about the accident and that Fred was taken away by ambulance. Naturally Mum was very worried and ran onto the road to meet the children. The children explained what happened. That Bonny had come to meet them on their way home from school.

“But how could he get out then?” Jonathan asked, “I’m sure we closed the gate when we went to school”.

Mum answered: “I must have left the gate open when I went to see the neighbor again after lunch. Oh, it is all my fault”, she cried. Jonathan thought to himself that Mum was very honest and they were definitely not. They had lied to their Mum.

Mum phoned the hospital to find out some news about Fred. The nurse told her that he had a broken leg and some slight injury to his head. He should be alright after a few days in hospital. They could come and see him as soon as they could, they were told.

They were all very thankful that it was not much worse. He could have been killed. Together they thanked the Lord for His care and protection. Then Mum phoned Dad at work. He was nearly ready to leave. They agreed to meet in the hospital car park. When they arrived Dad was there already and together they went to the Ward where they found Fred. His head was bandaged up and his leg was in plaster. He gave them a weak smile and said to Mum. “The Lord has punished me for telling a lie” and then he burst into tears. Dad and Mum waited patiently for the rest of the story till he finished crying.

Jonathan and Kate were ashamed of themselves and felt like hiding in a corner. After a while Fred told his Dad and Mum what happened to the vase and that they had told a lie. “I am glad, though”, Dad said, “That you



owned up to it. That is always the best way. I am not so worried about the vase. But I am glad and thankful that you realized how wrong it was to tell a lie. And do you know”, Dad continued, “that a lie has no legs?”

“What do you mean with that?”, Jonathan asked. Well, Dad answered “when you get older you will understand that a lie never stands on its own. You always have to tell another lie to support the first lie and then another one, and then another lie. And so it goes on. So that’s why I say that a lie has no legs for it is always supported by other lies”.

And then to Fred he said: “You have made the best choice, my boy. For you had three choices”. Yes, that’s right”, Kate said. “We thought about that too. We even thought we could patch the vase up with some glue but then we would always see the cracks”. Then she, too, burst into tears.

“I am ashamed of myself”, Jonathan said, “ Because, I as the oldest one, should have known better. I was the worst offender. I even suggested telling the lie. Please forgive me Dad and Mum”.

“We forgive you children”, Dad said.

“But Fred”, Dad continued, “Don’t think that God is now punishing you with this accident. He has punished Christ in our place. He died for our sins including this lie. Never cover up. Let Christ cover your sins. Together they praised the Lord and sang Psalm 103:4 from the Book of Praise:

*The Lord has dealt with us in great compassion,  
Not punished us according to transgression”.*

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