



The Sexton's Wife



Andrew Abbott was the sexton of the local church in Dale. He enjoyed this work very much.

The task of the sexton was to clean the church.

But that was not all.

He also had to open the doors every Sunday for the church services.

Of course there were also many meetings during the week.

And he had to make sure everything was ready for those meetings.

It was quite a big job and because he was not so very strong and healthy any more his wife, Carolyn, had to help him quite often.

They lived in a house next to the church.

This house belonged to the church and they did not have to pay rent. They also received wages for all the work they did.

Because the church work was not a full time job they also cleaned some offices and shops in town to earn more money.

They both enjoyed the work and they often sang Psalms and hymns while they did the cleaning.

The members of the congregation really appreciated what they did for the church.

Everything was always clean and everything was always ready on time.

So on their last wedding anniversary, their twenty fifth, they received a lovely bunch of flowers and several other gifts.

One day, while cleaning the church, Andrew slipped on the wet floor in the kitchen and hurt himself very badly.

He hurt his back and could not move at all.

He could not even call his wife.

When he did not come home at the usual time for dinner Carolyn became quite worried.



So she went to the church to see why he had not come home yet. And there she found Andrew on the kitchen floor in great pain. “Ah, my poor husband. What has happened?” she asked and full of concern she bent over him.

“I just slipped on the wet floor”, Andrew responded.

“And I can’t move because of the pain or whatever. I don’t really know what. All I know is that I am in agony”.

“We better call an ambulance”, Carolyn said. “I’ll go and ring up right now”.

After a few minutes she came back and said that the ambulance was on its way.



Andrew was taken to hospital and had to stay there for a whole week while they did tests and took X-rays.

After a week he was allowed to go home but he still could not do much. He was still in much pain and could hardly move.

So Carolyn now had to clean the church all by herself.

And on top of that she also had to do all the other work.

On Friday nights they always had to clean a shop in town.

“What are we going to do about that shop now?”, asked Andrew.

“I will just go on my own”, his wife responded.

“No, I don’t want you to go on your own”, Andrew said.

He was very concerned for her. He loved her so much and he did not want anything to happen to her.

“We have no choice, though”, Carolyn said.

“OK then”, he said, “You might as well go then”.

So when Friday night came around Carolyn went to town to clean the shop.

She started at about seven o’clock and if she worked fast she might even have it finished by about nine o’clock, she thought.

And that is what she did.



She worked as fast as possible so she could be back with her husband sooner.

She was nearly finished and was ready to pack up all her cleaning stuff when suddenly she heard a big bang at the back of the shop.

It sounded like broken glass. A window perhaps?

It gave her such a fright that she nearly dropped the bucket with soapy water. Then she would have to clean that up again.

“What could that noise have been?”, she thought.

Very carefully she walked to the back of the shop and much to her surprise she saw a young man there.

He was busy taking some stuff and putting it in a bag.

She frightened him for he had not expected to find anybody in the shop at this hour.

The young man felt trapped.

What should he do now? Run away as fast as he could?

But then the woman had seen him and she could pick up the phone and report it to the police. He could not think straight.

So in an impulse he picked up a piece of timber and hit Carolyn on the head with it.

He did it without thinking.

Carolyn sank to the ground, unconscious.

When the young man saw her on the ground he got such a fright.

She was bleeding from the wound on her head.

And she looked very pale.

“Perhaps she was dead”, he wondered.

And he had done that. He had not really meant to hurt her.

“What now?”, he thought.

In a panic he ran through the back door and jumped into his car.

He drove away as fast he could not knowing where he was going.

And that didn't matter either.

As long as he got away from that shop.

As far away as possible.



“Oh, what have I done?”, he asked himself.

That night he could not sleep.

All the time he saw that pale face in front of him.

Many years ago he used to go to church and memories of things he had heard in church started to come back to him.

“Thou shalt not kill”, he remembered very clearly.

He hoped he had not killed the poor woman.

But then a soft voice entered his mind.

“Don’t you be so silly now. That woman should not have been there in that shop. What was she doing there anyway?

Perhaps she was trying to steal something just like you were.

So don’t you worry about it.

And nobody is going to find out anyway”.

He knew that was the voice of the devil.

And yet the thought that the devil was putting in his mind appealed to him.

And he tried to put all thoughts about the commandments out of his mind.

But as hard as he tried he still could not go to sleep.

In the house of the sexton there was also someone who could not go to sleep.

Not that he was really trying to go to sleep. He always waited for his wife to come home just like she had always waited for him.

It was Carolyn’s husband who could not sleep either.

He was very worried about his wife.

Where would she be? What had happened?

That cleaning job did not normally take that long.

She should have been home a long time ago.

He was very worried and distressed.

He knew the telephone number of the shop but he could not even ring his wife because he could not reach the telephone.

It was too far away from the bed.



“What can I do?”, he said to himself.
He was becoming very, very anxious.
He prayed to the Lord and asked if He would watch over his dear wife,
Carolyn.
All night he was awake waiting for news about his wife.
He felt so helpless. He couldn’t do anything.

His wife in the meantime was still on the floor in the shop.
Her wound had stopped bleeding.
She was no longer unconscious. But she could not remember what she was
doing on the floor.
After a while she tried to get up but she had to get hold of a nearby chair
to stop her from falling again.
But she felt so weak and dizzy and she slipped down again.
Each time she tried to get up she sank down again onto the floor.
If she could only get up and find a telephone somewhere.
Then she could ring her husband and tell him not to worry.
She could even ring an ambulance because it was quite clear to her that
she needed to have medical help. But she was helpless.
It was not until the next morning that help finally arrived.
The shopkeeper was early that morning. He opened the door and switched
the lights on.
He was shocked to find Carolyn on the floor.
“What happened to you?”, the concerned shopkeeper asked.
“Someone broke into the shop while I was cleaning last night”,
Carolyn responded.
“I think he must have broken a window for I think I heard the breaking of
glass”, she said. “I am not sure, though, it feels so strange in my head. I
don’t seem to remember much”.
“Well first things first”, the shopkeeper said. “We better get help for you,
Carolyn. I’ll ring for an ambulance straightaway”.



And there she was now, in bed in the Lakeview hospital while her poor husband was in bed at home and he did not even know where she was.

She asked the staff if they could get a message to him to let him know that she was alright.

She was so worried about him.

“The only problem is that he can’t reach the phone. So perhaps you could ring the next door neighbour for me”, she asked.

The staff was very friendly and caring. They quickly found the neighbour’s phone number in the book and told them what was going on. They promised to go to Andrew immediately and put his mind at ease.

Of course, he was so relieved to hear that his wife was alright.

Unfortunately he could not go and visit her as he could not leave his bed.

But hopefully Carolyn could come home soon.

After a couple of days she did come home again much to Andrew’s delight.

They were so happy and thankful to be together again after their few days of separation.

But what about the young man who had broken into the shop and who had also caused the injury to Carolyn?

Was he proud of himself?

Did he feel good about what he had done?

Was he happy now with the stuff he took from the shop?

No, he was most unhappy.

And he certainly was not very proud of himself.

In fact he felt most miserable and also very guilty.

“What should he do?”, he asked himself.

He could not sleep at night because he had nightmares.

All the time he saw the poor woman in his mind.

He saw her on the floor in the shop with all that blood on her head. All the time he saw that white face.



Was she dead or was she still alive?

How could he find out?

He remembered what his father once told him about King David.

He had sinned and it bothered him for a long time.

David was troubled and could not sleep at night.

The hand of the Lord was heavy on him.

But he finally got peace when he confessed his sins to the Lord.

So what should he do now?

Should he go and give himself up to the police?

He knew what his father would have said.

So he plucked up enough courage. It was not an easy thing to do. To go and confess and apologize is never easy.

But it is the only way.

He felt much better already after making that difficult decision.

So he drove to the nearest police station and told them what he had done.

He told the police that he broken into that shop and that he hit the cleaning lady on the head.

Fortunately they could tell him that the lady was alright after spending a couple of days in hospital.

He handed all the stolen goods to the police man in charge and asked what he could do to make things good again.

“Well”, the policeman said, “first you should go and face the shopkeeper and then you can give all that stolen stuff back yourself.

Next you should go and apologise to the cleaning lady and her husband.

We know where they live and we can give you their address.

But, you must realize that we have to record this crime and we will get you to report to this police station every morning for the next two weeks.

And then if the shopkeeper does not want to make work of this crime we will also leave it at that”.



So the policeman gave the young man, whose name was Jamie, Andrew and Carolyn's address.

When he had introduced himself at the door he discovered, much to his surprise, that he was most welcome.

They invited him inside and gave him a nice cup of coffee.

He apologized to them and when the Abbotts saw how genuine and sincere Jamie was they wholeheartedly forgave him.



Together they praised the Lord for a sinner who had repented.

It was the Lord's doing!

July 2007