



Unexpected Help

Amelia Peterson was on her way to school. It was a school for girls. She loved this school and did very well in all her subjects. The only thing she did not like about school was that she was very often teased by the other girls. Why? She was a happy girl and loved to make fun and laugh happily. So Why? It was because she belonged to a family which was not as well off as most of the other girls. She did not wear fancy clothes but usually 'hand me downs' from her sisters. She never had any pocket money to spend on lollies or ice cream etc. The other girls always made fun of her. All this teasing and bullying made her very sad.

This morning too she was dragging her feet because she saw a group of girls from her class walking in front of her. Every morning they passed a very poor man who sat by the side of the road begging. This man could not walk well and neither could he work because he was too weak. The other girls always teased him and made fun of him. They also told him to find a job instead of just begging for money. But Amelia always greeted him friendly, gave him her best smile and wished him a good day.

This poor man had nowhere to live. He was homeless and lived on the street and sometimes he slept on a park bench or in a deserted house or shed. Begging was no longer permitted in this town, but because this poor fellow had been doing it for many years the authorities turned a blind eye to him. He was just part of the town scenery. Whenever someone walked past he held out his hands and asked for a small gift. Many people ignored him thinking, just like the girls in Amelia's class, he shouldn't be there. *"Why doesn't he find a job so that he can look after himself?"*, they thought. Others did not just think it, they also told him so and secretly were quite proud of themselves for telling him. They did not know that this man was so weak and disabled that he could not work at all and that nobody wanted to give him a job any way. He was totally dependent on the generosity of the community. Whenever people were



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unkind or rude to him he either did not hear it or he pretended not to hear their unfriendly remarks.



School was finished now and the girls were all on their way home. Again the other girls in their group made fun of the poor man and even poked their tongue out to him but he did not seem to notice. Amelia gave him her best smile again when she walked past him. And as usual she was always rewarded with a smile from this poor man. He did not have many teeth in his mouth, though, but his smile was always warm and genuine. It seemed as if he understood Amelia and Amelia also had understanding and compassion for him. So each time she passed this beggar, on the way to and from school, she gave him a warm smile just to encourage him. She often wished she had some money she could give him. But unlike all the other girls in her group she never got any pocket money. The other girls never, ever, gave him any money, though. They were selfish and only thought of themselves. They often bought sweets, which according to their parents are bad for their teeth.

This afternoon a Whippy van stopped close to where the man was sitting. Suddenly one of the girls called out in surprise: *“Look at that pink van, it’s a Mr. Whippy ice cream van”*.



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Of course, the whole group stopped at the ice cream van and everyone bought a delicious double cone ice cream. Amelia was standing a long way off watching the girls enjoying their treat. And, of course, she could not afford one. She did not even have one cent in her purse. So she just stood there and watched the girls enjoying themselves. She was looking quite sad. The other girls hardly noticed her or didn't care, but the poor man did. He saw her looking longingly at the ice cream van and he slowly shuffled up to her.

From the corner of her eye Amelia noticed the poor beggar approaching the Mr. Whippy van and she wondered if he was going to buy an ice cream for himself. But that was not the case. He had noticed how longingly she had looked at the ice cream van. And much to her surprise he stopped right behind her, touched her arm gently and whispered softly:

"Here is some money for you. Go and by yourself an ice cream".

Amelia was so surprised, and before she could say thank you to this friendly man he had already turned around and disappeared. He went back to his usual spot and sat down on the footpath holding up his hand for another coin from the people passing by. Most people did not give him anything, though. To some of them he was part of the scenery and to others he was just a nuisance. He shouldn't be allowed to stand or sit there begging for money, in their opinion.



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Amelia was delighted with this unexpected turn of events and quickly bought the cheapest ice cream she could get for her coin. It tasted delicious especially because she had not had an ice cream for many years. She was so happy and very grateful to the poor man. When she had finished it she walked up to the man and thanked him wholeheartedly.

Every day this poor beggar was at the same spot and each time Amelia passed by him she greeted him kindly and he returned her greeting with a warm and toothless smile. She thought of what her parents had taught her that *kindness was never wasted*.



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Her parents had always taught her from the Bible to reach out to those in need. *“Do to others as you would have them do to you”*, they always said.

In the meantime school went on as normal and Amelia graduated when she completed Year twelve. Thankfully she had done very well and she was able to go on to University to study nursing, something she had always wanted to do. It had always been her desire to give of her time and energy to help others and in the nursing profession she would have ample opportunity to do just that. The study was harder than she had expected but she continued with much encouragement from her parents. She realised that her parents were struggling to pay for her education. Her father had an accident many years ago and as a result he was unable to work. They hardly managed to survive on the Disability Pension. Therefore her mother went to work so that she could pay for Amelia’s education. And whenever possible Amelia herself also worked in some part time jobs to help pay for her studies.

Four years later she graduated with honours. Her parents were also present at the graduation ceremony. It was a very exciting evening and needless to say Amelia’s parents were very proud of their daughter, but they were also very thankful to the Lord. They realised that all blessings and all good gifts come from His Fatherly hand.

At the hospital

Now that Amelia had finished her studies she was able to start applying for a job at one of the local hospitals. She had sent applications to several hospitals and after a few weeks she received a letter in the mail in which she was invited to come for an interview. The interview went quite well, she thought, and after a few days she received another letter saying she was accepted as a nurse in the City Hospital. Next Monday she happily went to work and enjoyed it very much. This is what she had always wanted to do, caring for people.



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She worked on the orthopaedic ward for several months. That's the ward where patients are nursed who have had broken bones. Just before Christmas she was transferred to the Emergency Department.



This was totally different than the other wards and she was not so sure if she appreciated the change because she witnessed some horrific injuries. But after some weeks she got used to it. Ambulances came and went every day.



They brought in people with heart attacks or some who had a motor vehicle accident. One day she heard one of the nurses talk about a man who was brought into the Emergency ward, who had been run over by a car. He was seriously injured and was more dead than alive. Several ribs were fractured and his face was also very much injured. His bottom jaw as well as his top jaw were broken. When she saw him the next day his face was all bandaged up and you could not even see his eyes. He could hardly speak due to the bandages on



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his face. The pain also made it very difficult to talk. So he gave up trying to speak. He was in a bad shape.

His face was all bandaged up and therefore it was impossible to recognise him. His hands, arms and shoulders were also bandaged up because he had broken several bones all over his body, including both jaws broken. It must have been a most terrible accident he was involved in. After a week or so the bandages came off the hands and Amelia went over to the poor man to talk to him, but unfortunately his eyes were still shut. Would he hear her if she talked to him, she wondered. She tried but there was no reaction from the poor man. The next day, when she was washing the wounds on his hands she suddenly thought there was something familiar about these hands. She could not remember where she had seen these hands before. She thought it was a long time ago and gave it no more thought. Life was busy on the ward and she had more important things to worry about. So she pushed those thoughts far from her mind. If she could only see his face it might trigger her memory. But his whole face was still bandaged up and only his eyes were visible. None of the nurses knew his name. He was brought into the hospital and had no papers on him, no credit card or any other identification. On his temperature chart, which was dangling off the end of his bed, the name was left blank, except someone had written on there "The unidentified man".

A week or so later she had duty on the same ward again. She noticed that the bandages had now been removed completely from his hands and again she tried very hard to remember where she had seen those old wrinkly hands before. Her thoughts went back to that happy moment when many years ago that poor beggar gave her that coin to buy an ice cream. Could it be that these were the same hands which gave her that coin for the ice cream so many years ago? No, that was impossible. There must be so many wrinkled old hands in this wide world. Why should it be him? She could not even ask the poor man himself because he still could not talk because of the bandages on his face and the pain in his jaws.

After he had been in the hospital for a while the doctors decided that he needed an operation on his jaws and of course the poor man could never



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afford this. He obviously had no relatives or friends and the question was asked:

“Who is going to pay for this operation?”

Amelia was also wondering how this poor man could be helped if he couldn't pay for the operation. It worried her and it kept her awake that night. The next morning a plan was ripening in her mind. What if she tried to raise some money to cover the cost of this operation? Of course, she had no idea how much money was needed. During the morning tea break she spoke to some of the other nurses. Some were quite sceptical and said:

“Why bother about that man? He is not our problem, is he?”

But Amelia thought of what the Lord taught her in Matthew 25:40 where it says:

*“Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of
these My brethren, you did it to Me”.*

Amelia became quite enthusiastic and said: “Whether we know the man's identity or not is not our problem. The point is that this man needs help. He needs an expensive operation and he would never be able to afford it. Isn't it wonderful that we now have an opportunity to put into practice what the Lord taught us?”, Amelia said to the other nurses. But not all of them agreed with her. Some even mocked her for bringing the Bible into it. But Amelia was unperturbed for she felt so sorry for this poor man and she dearly wanted to help him.

So the next day she raised the matter again during the lunch break and now some of the nurses were more sympathetic towards her suggestion to raise funds for this unknown man's operation. Somehow their hearts got softened and one of the nurses was sorry for her lack of sympathy. She even apologised for her callous remark of the previous day. Together they came up with a plan to ask all the staff to donate something towards this man's operation. Amelia was given the task to write an email to all the staff explaining what was needed and one of the other nurses volunteered to make a poster and put it on the



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staff notice board. Most of the nurses started to become more enthusiastic about this fund raising effort. They decided to open a special bank account and the name of the account was going to be “Operation cost for the unidentified patient”. After a week they had collected about \$2000 dollars. They realised very well that was not enough. Therefore at the next lunch hour they decided to speak to the specialist who was going to perform the delicate operation. Two nurses were delegated to speak to the specialist, Amelia and Felicity. They decided it was best not to postpone it and the next morning they knocked on the door of the specialist’s office. Their hearts were beating faster than usual because they were quite nervous about it.

“What will he say?” said Felicity.

“Don’t worry”, said Amelia, “we will take it as it comes”.

They softly knocked on the door of the specialist’s office. After a little while the specialist opened the door and asked what they wanted.

“Can we please have a few moments of your time”, Amelia asked politely.

“Time is something I have very little of, unfortunately”, the man answered. “Sit down anyway and tell me what your problem is, and please make it quick because I’m in a hurry”.

They sat down and Amelia explained the circumstances of this poor man and pleaded with the specialist to wave the charges.

“You girls must be mad. Just imagine if I do operations free of charge for every Tom, Dick and Harry. I’ll be broke in no time”, the specialist said in an irritated voice. He actually seemed quite disturbed by their request.

“But this man is not every Tom, Dick and Harry”, Amelia responded. “He is a very poor man. He doesn’t have any money at all and he urgently needs this delicate operation”.

And Felicity added to this in an excited voice: “And do you know what doctor? We did some fundraising ourselves and all the nurses have already contributed



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towards the cost of this man's operation. And so far we have raised about \$2000 already. Isn't that wonderful?"

The specialist, however, was not going to give in. He was definitely not planning to change his mind and abruptly told the two nurses to leave his office. He was fed up with them and was becoming quite angry.

"Just leave me alone, I'm too busy", he shouted.

"Please listen to us, Doctor, for a little while longer. What if you were in similar circumstances? Wouldn't you be very happy if someone offered to pay for the operation? Please, doctor, with our \$2000 it may not be such a big sacrifice for you", Felicity said.

When the specialist heard again about the \$2000 raised by the other nurses, and when he noticed the warmth and enthusiasm in the voices of the two nurses, he was suddenly very quiet. It was so quiet in the room that you could hear a pin drop. Both nurses thought they had taken too big a task on themselves. As nurses you just don't go and talk to a specialist and come with a strange and bold request like this. The doctor just sat there and did not say a word. Was he perhaps still angry with them? The two nurses didn't say anything either. They anxiously waited for the outcome. What was this man thinking? Did he have any feeling for a poor and deserted man? The doctor was deep in thought and was looking at the floor.

Suddenly a remarkable change came over him. He lifted up his head and smiled. His heart melted and he had even tears in his eyes. He was very touched by Amelia and Felicity's compassion for an unknown man.

"Do you know what, young ladies? I am very impressed by your generous efforts and how you so diligently and lovingly showed love and compassion to someone you don't even know. So I have decided to follow your good example. I will not charge any more than the amount you have already raised. Consider the matter settled".

Amelia and Felicity were very touched by this and thanked the doctor wholeheartedly. They could have jumped for joy but then they remembered



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they were in the office of a very important man. They left his office with joy and thankfulness in their hearts. They couldn't wait to tell the other nurses. At lunch time the next day they stumbled over their words due to their excitement.

"Guess what?", they said to the other nurses. "The doctor told us that he would charge no more than what we have already collected. Isn't that wonderful?"

The other nurses agreed and shared in Amelia and Felicity's excitement. "Now all we need to wait for is the day of the operation", said one of the other nurses. Fortunately they did not have to wait too long. The next day already they heard that this poor man's operation was scheduled for next week Monday and he was first on the list because it was going to be a long and delicate operation, which would take many hours. All the nurses and other staff members had heard about the doctor's response and they were all eagerly waiting for the day of the operation. Everyone was talking about this poor man and his serious injuries and this kind doctor who was going to operate on him. Two days later on her way home Amelia just checked her pigeon hole in the staffroom to see if there was any staff news. Much to her surprise there was an envelope from the specialist addressed to her and Felicity. She quickly opened the envelope and read the note:

"Dear girls, who so lovingly taught me a lesson, would you please pray for me and the patient next Monday".

"Wow", said Amelia to herself, "he is not even a Christian and he asks us to pray for him and the patient". She quickly showed the note to Felicity, who responded: *"The Lord can do wonderful things, Amelia; He can change the heart of an unbelieving specialist".*

Next Monday morning this 'unidentified patient' was wheeled into the operation theatre. It was going to be a very complicated and delicate operation and Amelia had prayed before she went to work and asked the Lord to bless the operation and strengthen the specialist and care for the patient. They all knew that it was going to be quite a long operation but when by three o'clock



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they had not heard anything they were becoming quite concerned. Everyone was talking about this difficult operation. Finally by five o'clock it was all over and the patient was taken to the Intensive Care Unit, which is often referred to as ICU.



This was not Amelia's ward but, fortunately, she was allowed to visit this poor man the next day. She spoke softly to him but she was not sure if he even heard her. There was no reaction. He was obviously in great pain, which was not surprising after such a major and traumatic operation. She was not allowed to stay very long, she was told. So after ten minutes she left and told him she would come back the next day after her afternoon shift. Again she wondered if he had heard her.

The next day, as she had promised she visited this poor man again. The nurse in charge told her again not to stay too long because this 'unidentified' man was not well at all. In fact he was in quite a critical condition. Some infection had started and he needed intravenous antibiotics. So Amelia did as she was told and did not stay very long. Each day, as soon as her shift was over, she hurried to the Intensive Care ward to see if there was any improvement in the poor man's condition. Unfortunately instead of improvement his condition had deteriorated. In fact the nurse in charge told Amelia that he might not make it through the night. This saddened her very much. Would he now die after all



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that outpouring of love and compassion? Would all their fundraising efforts have been in vain? It was so wonderful how the doctor's cold and hard attitude had changed and turned into compassion. As soon as she got home she went on her knees and prayed that the Lord would bless the man's treatment and that he would get better again.



The next morning she went to work earlier than usual and went straight to the Intensive Care Unit to see how this poor man was going and if he was still alive. As soon as she walked into the ward she could already notice that the head nurse wanted to tell her something.

“Guess what”, she said. “Your friend is still alive. Halfway the night there was a sudden change in his condition. His temperature was not quite so dangerously high. So hopefully the antibiotics are doing some good for him”.

Amelia told her that she had prayed to the Lord and asked Him to bless the treatment and medication. “This was obviously an answer to prayer”, she said. The nurse, who was not a believer, did not know what to say to that and became very quiet.



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After a couple of weeks “the unidentified patient” was transferred to a normal ward. He was fortunate to get a single room. This gave him peace and quiet which he needed so much. It also gave him time to think about the past.

After a couple of more weeks all the bandages were removed from his face. Amelia had been to see him every day after her shift. This afternoon she walked into the room of “the unidentified patient” and the first thing she noticed was that his bandages had been removed.

“Was this the same man she had seen before, the one who had given her that coin to buy an ice cream?”, she wondered. This was many years ago. Could it really be him? But his face looked so different now after the operation. It obviously needed some more healing. It surely looked like him, though. He also looked at her and studied her face very carefully. But when that toothless smile appeared she was sure that this was the poor beggar who gave her that coin, that coin that allowed her to buy an ice cream. Suddenly he managed to say a few words: “Hello, my dear friendly little girl. How could I ever forget you?”

Amelia’s eyes suddenly filled with happy tears of emotion. And realising she had to be extra careful with the man’s damaged face, she tenderly kissed him on his forehead.

“There were times I thought I recognised your hands”, she said. “But they had also been very much injured in the accident. So I was never sure. Now I know for sure that it was you, when I saw your smile. God is good”.

“Yes, God is always good”, the “unidentified patient”, said.

It is amazing how the Lord used one simple act of love with one single coin and how He multiplied it in an outpouring of love, not only by the nursing staff but also by this surgeon, who performed this very delicate operation.



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