

EAGLE EYES

As Jenny left the church on this sunny November morning she was irritated. In fact, irritation was a common emotion for Jenny these days. As she shook hands with the pastor and murmured something quite unintelligible about the sermon the pastor inquired “How is Ralph these days Jenny ? I haven’t seen him in church for quite awhile.” “You know, pastor, how much Ralph would like to be here. Church is very important to him, but he has been working so hard lately that he is using the biblical injunction that we should have one day of rest. Sunday seems to be it for Ralph”, Jenny responded. In fact Ralph was sick and tired of Church and had no interest at all in going but Jenny certainly didn’t want to tell pastor that. This small unimportant interchange produced more unrest in Jenny since she was very conscious of the falsehood. “Why do I have to cover up for Ralph all the time. It wouldn’t hurt him to attend church once in awhile, for my sake if nothing else”, she thought. “He must not love me as much as he used to. There was a time Ralph would do almost anything I asked him. It was the same with the kids”, she continued to herself. “Charlie, Ben, and Betty used to be such sweet children. They were so much fun to dress up and show off to others. They were not so hard to control a few years ago. Now it seems like it is a battle just to get them to come to dinner. There is so much arguing and fussing at home anymore. I just don’t know what to do”. These thoughts were not new ones for Jenny. In fact, something like this ran through her mind most of the time. I work so hard to keep the house clean, put good wholesome meals on the table, make sure they all have clean clothes, and that the kids have done their homework. If I weren’t there to keep everything running smoothly, I don’t know what they would do. Do they appreciate all that I do ? They do not. They complain and withdraw and act like I am trying to run their lives when all I am trying to do is help them not get into trouble. After all they are going to need a civilized perspective if they are going to get ahead in this life@.

When Jenny got home from church she got the casserole out of the oven and began setting the table. “Those kids are old enough to help a lot around here but it is just not worth the struggle they put up to try to get them in here”, Jenny thought to herself. When all was ready she called Ralph and the kids to the table but her deep resentment was embedded in her voice and gestures. Jenny had almost perfected negative body language. Once again, the family gathered around the table trying to make innocuous small talk so that they would not set Mom off. The strain was so thick you could cut it with a knife, with enough defensiveness in the room to fortify a championship football team. Jenny demanded that Ralph return thanks and then they ate. “How was church, Jen”, Ralph asked? “It was okay I suppose. They are talking about taking a special collection for those who were hit by the hurricane in the Bahamas”, Jenny continued. “I suppose that is good but we sure haven’t met all of our own needs here at home. It seems we are losing most of our teenagers. They should think about spending some of our money on a recreation facility or perhaps another youth director. I think Pastor is in a bit of a rut. It is about time we brought in some new ideas. The church could sure use some fixing up too. The family listened to Jenny’s monologue with half an ear. They had heard it all many times before. It seemed that Jenny could find a dark cloud behind every silver lining. Nothing was ever quite right. Jenny’s family was being fragmented by her constant whining and criticism. It seemed as though there was nothing they could do, no changes that satisfied Jenny. It was much like punching a soft pillow. If you pushed it in one place it only bounced out somewhere else. The effort had become so exhausting for Ralph, Charlie, Ben, and Betty that they had just given up. When Jenny was not around, the family enjoyed each other a lot. Ralph was a good father and, basically, a contented happy man. He was no wave maker and had decided to live his home life in the yard and in front of the TV and let Jenny handle the details. At work Ralph dealt with interesting challenges and received a lot of significance. Ralph was an office manager for a computer software developer and worked with excited, creative people. His job did not require that Ralph motivate his workers, they were already creative and dynamic. He did need to know just about everything that was going on so he could properly direct activities, assign people, and allocate facilities. The company was growing and had a lot of potential and he felt fortunate just to be a part of it. Though he put a lot of energy into his work, he also loved his three children and was involved with them and their lives as well. There had been a time when he and Jenny did a lot of fun things together but that was some years ago. Now, Ralph just drifted into the woodwork when Jenny was around. Life was

much simpler for him that way and he hardly realized how he had abdicated his fundamental family responsibilities. Ralph still loved Jennie but the closeness that they had once experienced was gone and the entire relationship has suffered much. Ralph still loved the Lord with all his heart and prayed early and often though Jenny thought him back-slidden. Ralph was just sick and tired of being a pew-sitter in an organization which was enormously dull and spent almost all of its resources on maintaining its own status quo.

Jenny was a hard worker and Monday morning found her doing the family wash, cleaning up the house after the weekend, and watering her plants. It was a busy day but that didn't bother Jenny much. She liked staying busy. That way she didn't think so much. That evening Jenny had a club committee meeting. She was a key part of the Membership committee and this was a terrifically important meeting. Every year the club had a big Membership Drive to enlist new members and every year they tried to find something new, exciting, and different to entice women to join their club. The meeting was scheduled for 7 PM but by 7:45 the women were still standing around in small groups talking about this and that. For most of the ladies this was a highlight of the meeting, to visit and catch up on all the local news. A few, perhaps, were even talking about the membership drive. Jenny began to fret. The club was serious business to her and they were here to make some important decisions. Didn't they understand that? Finally Jenny lost it. "Ladies, please !! Can we please get started !!" Jenny was not in charge, in fact she was not even an officer but if no one else was going to do it ----- . Once they were seated it was clear that a number of the ladies had done a lot of serious thinking about the drive and had come with suggestions ranging from silly to superb. One by one they made their proposals and suggestions and one by one they discussed them. Mary Thomas spoke first. "I have been thinking that a Catered Dinner Dance would attract the kind of lively energetic people we seek for membership. We could hold it at the Country Club, get a good dance band, and have a really nice door prize." Other members picked up this idea and it looked like they were about to have a plan when Jenny spoke up. "I want to express my appreciation to Mary for putting in the time and effort on the promotion. It is a good idea but:

1. The Country Club is really busy this time of year.
2. It will take a great deal of up-front money to rent the Country Club, get a good dance band, and buy the door prize. Can we afford this. I know the idea is good but I remember eight years ago we tried something quite elaborate and lost a lot of money and got very few members.

3. You know how hard it is to get a good dance band and who can predict the kind of music they will play. It could turn into a full blown disaster.@

Martha Groves spoke up “ Why not have a 50's style sock hop. We could have an ice cream bar with Ice Cream Sodas, Sundaes, and Malts. We could bring in a Juke Box with 50's and early 60's style music. The members could dress in great full skirts with scarves and bobby sox.” This idea brought a lot of enthusiasm and things were really rolling when Jenny spoke up again. “I congratulate Martha on her originality. A sock hop really does sound pleasant and exciting but I wonder if we have thought this through far enough.

1. Where will we get a juke box with all those old records. Records are just about a thing of the past, you know.

2. Many of our members may find it a real hardship to come up with clothes from so long ago. Besides, I hardly need point out that for some, our figures are not what they used to be and those full skirts may look better in memory than they do at a party.”

There was a lot of spirited discussion about the possibilities. To most of the committee, things seemed to be going very well. They had a lot of interest and a lot of ideas to work from. Jenny thought otherwise. She listened to each proposal carefully and found flaws in every one. Some were just bad ideas. Some were good ideas but not workable. One by one Jenny shot down each idea until there were none left. The meeting grew longer and longer but the committee could find no resolution. Some of the ladies with the very best ideas were not assertive enough to plow past Jenny's remarks. Others just did not have the vocabulary to win over her scornful objections. Finally the ladies tabled the discussion and headed for home with absolutely nothing decided. Privately, a number of them decided to look for another club that would be a little fun. Jenny was furious. She really did not understand what had just taken place but placed the blame on everyone but herself. “No one is willing to work anymore”, she thought. “Besides, everyone seems so cross and bad tempered. What is this world coming to? I remember when there was lots of laughter and joy and good times but not any more.” Deep down Jenny really thought that the basic trouble was Satan, God's arch enemy. “If only people would go to church more and keep the ten commandments, things would be a lot better. No one seems to have any joy anymore, not even at church. These surely must be the last days with the devourer stealing and deceiving even the elect, if possible. If only we would be more

religious !”

And so it went. Everywhere Jenny went the devourer was sure to go. If she went to parent- teacher conferences, there he was sowing discord and trouble. At church, at home, even with her friends (who were shrinking in number), and most of all with her family there was dissension, bickering, and strife. Jenny’s words, however, were often absolutely at variance with her frustrated attitude. It was approaching the Thanksgiving holiday and Jenny’s mouth was often full of words about being thankful. When talking to Ralph she would remind him of all he had to be thankful for (she, Jenny, was in the center of this group). Charlie, Ben, and Betty grew to HATE THE WORD thanksgiving. They were constantly being told how they should be glad they had this and they should be thankful for that. Why didn’t they show their gratitude a little more ? A simple thank you once in awhile for clean clothes and a neat home would be appreciated, thank you very much ! You see, Jenny’s view of herself was much different than you would suppose. She considered herself polite and gracious, one who appreciated others but almost never received appreciation in return. Jenny, in fact, felt that she was greatly neglected and had earned a lot more praise than she was getting.

On the Sunday evening before Thanksgiving Day, Ralph and Jenny found themselves with a rare evening at home by themselves. Instead of retreating to the TV, Ralph decided to try to warm Jenny up a little. He had not quite given up hope that their relationship might be renewed. “Come on Jen and join me here on the couch for awhile”, Ralph said. “I am too busy Ralph”, Jenny responded. “It seems that I am the only one around here who cares how the house looks” .”Let it go a bit.

Lets sit and enjoy the evening, for my sake. I really miss spending special time with you”, he said. “Well, okay. I suppose I can relax for a few minutes”. As they sat Ralph slipped his arm over Jenny’s shoulders and pulled her to him. Jenny seemed to thaw a little and even began to rest her weight on Ralph like they used to do. “Are you happy, Jen Babe”, Ralph asked ? “Happy ? I am not even sure what that word means any more. If only other people would be more conscientious Ralph. No one seems to care any more.” “Explain, Jen”, Ralph responded. “I am not sure I know what you mean ? Care about what ?” “Don’t play dumb Ralph ! It is as clear as the nose on your face. No one wants to work hard any more. They are all just concerned with their own little pleasures.” “What do you do to have fun these days”, Ralph asked, trying to turn the conversation away from the direction it seemed to always go? “Life is NOT about having fun. It is time you grew up enough to know that. Life is serious and unless we find some way to teach our children a little responsibility they will enter into life totally unprepared. I am at my

wits end to know how to get them to keep their rooms straightened up, do their homework, and all the other little details that life is all about “, Jenny began to preach. Warily Ralph switched on the remote and began to surf. Jenny was clueless.

Late that evening Jenny was in the sewing room doing some mending. Her mind was still in turmoil and the mending was not going very well when she sensed a presence in the room. Jenny turned to look and saw a very pleasant, smiling, young woman sitting on the couch across from her. “What are you doing here and who are you anyway”, Jenny blurted out. The young lady smiled graciously. “I wondered when you would discover that I was here”, she said. “My name is Grace and I have been sent to be your friend”. “I have lots of friends already”, Jenny shrieked. “I can’t handle any more friends. All of them turn against me and tear me down. They think I don’t know but I do. No thanks, I don’t want any more friends. I think I would rather have a few more enemies. At least then I would know what to expect”. “How about Ralph”, Grace asked? “Isn’t he a good friend to you”? “Ralph? Ralph doesn’t understand anything at all. He is no help around the house. He lets the kids get by with ANYTHING. When I try to talk to him and explain how I feel, Ralph just switches on the tube. He used to be my friend but Ralph has become a stranger to me”! “You are a silly girl, my dear Jenny. When my friends and I discuss you and what to do to help we always call you “Blind Jenny”, or BJ for short.” This set Jenny’s short fuse ablaze. “How dare you come into my house and say something like that. That simply is not even remotely true. I work hard and keep my eyes open for the things that need to be done. Suddenly Jenny stopped and thought. “Why do you call me Blind Jenny? I am totally confused by this@. You see, something had caught Jenny’s attention. Grace had an unusual presence about her and her statements were not easily dismissed. Like a lightning bolt it hit Jenny that there MUST be truth in what Grace had said. In fact, she felt a voice inside her telling her that Grace COULD NOT LIE. “I am not blind, am I?” “I have an idea”, Grace said. “Lets watch some home movies”. “I am sorry”, Jenny replied. We don’t have a video camera or any video tape”. “No problem”, Grace said. “Just turn on the TV”. Bewildered, Jenny did as she was told saying “I am sure there is nothing but filth on this time of evening”. “Perhaps”, Grace said, as the tube warmed up. Suddenly Jenny began to see a re-run of her early evening with Ralph. This time she really looked at Ralph. Before, in real life, she had been trying to convince, manipulate, and re-direct Ralph. Now she just sat and watched.

“Come on Jen and join me here on the couch for awhile”, Ralph said. **Jenny noted the strained look on his tired face** “I am too busy Ralph”, Jenny responded. “It seems that I am the only one around here who cares how the house looks” . **Here Jenny heard as if for the first time the accusation and stridency in her own voice.** “Let it go a bit. Lets sit and enjoy the evening, for my sake. I really miss spending special time with you”, he said. **This time Jenny heard the concern, the yearning in Ralph’s voice. It made her want to weep and go throw her arms around him. He sounded like a little boy without a friend.** “Well, okay. I suppose I can relax for a few minutes”. As they sat Ralph slipped his arm over Jenny’s shoulders and pulled her to him. Jenny seemed to thaw a little and even began to rest her weight on Ralph like they used to do. “Are you happy, Jen Babe”, Ralph asked ? **This was a sincere question, she thought. He really is concerned about me.** “Happy ? I am not even sure what that word means any more. If only other people would be more conscientious Ralph. No one seems to care any more.” **Do I really sound like THAT ?** “Explain, Jen”, Ralph responded. “I am not sure I know what you mean ? Care about what ?” “Don’t play dumb Ralph ! It is as clear as the nose on your face. No one wants to work hard any more. They are all just concerned with their own little pleasures.” **SHE HEARD HERSELF AND HATED WHAT SHE HEARD.** “What do you do to have fun these days”, Ralph asked, trying to turn the conversation away from the direction it seemed to always go? “Life is NOT about having fun. It is time you grew up enough to know that. Life is serious and unless we find some way to teach our children a little responsibility they will enter into life totally unprepared. I am at my wits end to know how to get them to keep their rooms straightened up, do their homework, and all the other little details that life is all about A, Jenny began to preach. **Jenny sat silently weeping.** Wearily Ralph switched on the remote and began to surf. **Jenny wept openly.** “Perhaps we should switch to another channel”, Grace suggested. She touched the switch and Jenny was watching her morning ritual with the children last Friday morning.

“Charlie, Ben, Betty. Time to get up. I have let you sleep till the last minute. Get up NOW !”. Ben, as usual, was very slow in getting up and even slower after he got up. Jenny kept up a constant barrage of words demanding he move quicker and warning him of what was going to happen soon”. Finally they were all at the breakfast table. Jenny sat the fruit and cereal before them. Charlie was the first to speak up and his tone was belligerent. “Ralston again. Phooey! I hate Ralston. I have told you a million zillion times that I hate Ralston.” “That is just about

enough from you young man”, Jenny responded quickly and defensively. Ralston is good for you and you will eat it and like it. There are children all over the world who would be grateful for a bowl of good, wholesome, warm cereal. There are children starving and you sit here and complain because you don’t get just exactly what you want. When you have your own house you can make your own rules. You are living in my house now and I MAKE THE RULES. Sit down and eat and I don’t want to hear another word.” ***Jenny listened but could hardly believe her ears. Surely she did not sound like that ! In real time she had not been watching Charlie but now she saw his face, his awful face. He was filled with a rage that Jenny had never seen. Crushed, she sat and watched as he inhaled the awful cereal and stomped from the room. TRULY, I WAS BLIND !*** The scene continued but Jenny had just about reached full absorption. She was shocked and numb. Grace stopped the TV. Jenny sat and wept awhile and then, raising her eyes, she spoke “What should I do ?” No one was there. Grace was not to be seen and Jenny was all alone, or so she thought.

The episode with Grace made an enormous impact on Jenny and she was determined to do better. She tried. She failed. Jenny had been exposed to the symptoms but she knew neither the source of the disease nor the cure. Jenny tried hard. She failed again. Jenny began to grow desperate. She had always thought of herself as a good person and now she discovered that she was not good and she had little control over her badness. Her world began to fall apart. In quiet fear, Jenny began to pray. Oh, she had prayed before. She had offered thanks for meals, asked for general healing for sickness, and traveling mercies for friends but this was different. Now Jenny was praying with an intensity she had never felt before. Now she was praying from her heart. Father has said that He would give us the desires of our heart. This must be viewed as both a promise AND a threat. If our hearts are black we are destroyed by those desires. If our hearts are regenerated but independent those desires bring conviction as they come in conflict with our reborn Spirit. If our hearts are pure, those desires bring manifest blessings. Father was in the process of purifying Jenny’s heart. Just when Jenny thought she could not handle any more of this, Grace appeared again. Jenny was in the Shopping Mall when suddenly Grace was by her side. “Hello, BJ. How are things today”, Grace said. “Oh Grace, how glad I am to see you again. I need help, lots of help and I do not know where to go.” “JENNY !! Don’t say that. Surely you DO know where to go. Do you not have a heavenly Father who has said that He is an ever present help in a time of trouble ?” Jenny stopped dead in her tracks. It was like this was an entirely new thought to her. “You mean that literally”, she asked? “I thought that was just a poetic statement. God has always seemed far away. Perhaps if I

had lived in Bible times He would have seemed real, but now He is just far off. I never once thought that He might be a REAL HELP. “I believe your vision is already beginning to improve”, Grace said. “At least you are beginning to see what you do not see. He is indeed the God of old. He is indeed the Creator and Sustainer of all things. He is all those things of awesome might and power which you have held in your thoughts. He is so big, so awesome, so fabulous that He has made a way to LIVE INSIDE YOU and be your comforter and your guide.” Jenny began to remember some of the beautiful scripture from the gospel of John about how Jesus prayed that His children would be one with both Father and Himself. How He had promised that the Holy Spirit would come to dwell with His children and be their teacher and their comfort. All at once these things which had been theory, began to seem quite possible, quite real. Again Jenny was caught up in a multitude of thoughts. She remembered a Sunday School Teacher who had always shown so much love. What a comfort she had been to Jenny. She also remembered that as she had gotten older she began to be critical of this lady because she was ‘so spiritually minded she was no earthly good’. She remembered Ralph who was so patient and gentle though he had withdrawn from her. “What shall I do”, she blurted. No one was there. She was in a busy crowded Mall, alone. “What shall I do”, Jenny sobbed. Then, for the first time, she heard a still small voice say with great love and kindness. “Repent My child. Turn around and start the other way. Simply, REPENT”.

Jenny’s life was in the process of being turned right side up but she actually DID what you and I would have done. She pondered these things in her heart and sought for understanding. Jenny was not sure how she had gotten where she was. Jenny was not sure exactly where she was. Jenny had no idea where she was supposed to go nor where to find the road to get there. Jenny had been in Church most of her life. She believed in Jesus as the Son of the living God. She had accepted Him as her savior. Her spiritual life (perhaps we should say religious life) was steeped in traditions indeed she knew nothing else. Where should she go, what should she do? As the days and weeks went by Jenny became more and more determined. She would find the way. **(Father LOVES those strong willed children).**

It was Christmas eve eve. Jenny, being highly organized, was not in a last minute rush of buying and wrapping but the rest of her family sure were. The tree was trimmed and the house was absolutely gorgeous with beautiful Christmas decorations all over the house. Ralph had taken Charlie, Ben, and Betty out

shopping and she was alone in the house. Christmas cooking was done (what she could do ahead of time), fudge, cookies, and other goodies had been prepared and set out and Jenny had some time to rest and think. Jenny had been doing lots of thinking. Even more, her heart, her Spirit, had been making ready for repentance. Foolish ones think that repentance comes from the mind but it never does. Repentance comes from the heart and the heart must convince the mind that this is the way we are going to go. The mind is the dumbest part of the human. Dumber than the body and much inferior to the Spirit (which is from Father God). Anyway, Jenny had been making preparations for the Christ Child, not only for Christmas celebration but also for Him to take over as Lord of her entire being. Did Jenny know how to do this ? Of course not. She didn't know this any more than you would know it. Did Jenny know what would happen to her AFTER she had done this? Of course not. She didn't know this any more than you would know it. Was this risky ? Her mind thought so but her Spirit knew that **NOT DOING IT WAS THE RISKY ACTION.**

As Jenny sat and thought she once again looked up to see her good companion Grace. This time Jenny took the initiative. "Grace. Tell me. What should I do !" Grace's smile was wonderfully beautiful. Grace understood that, once again, Father had known just exactly how to reach His child. "Jenny, how happy you have made me. How happy you have made Father with your question. There is but one thing for you to do. You must do **NOTHING.** It is your Father who will do all that you need. He will supply the strength where you are weak. Wait, there is one thing you must do after your repentance (for you have already repented). You must open yourself up to Father God and let Him do **ANYTHING HE WANTS.** You are allowed no reservations. All of the Kingdom of Jenny which you have been building must be swept away. The empire which you ruled must be replaced by the Kingdom of God at the center of your life. All your dreams, your goals, your status in life. all these things must die. Father then will do the rest." Jenny thought only briefly. "I simply can not go on as I have. I know that whatever God chooses to do with me **MUST** be better than what I have done with myself. Father, come! Do whatever you must! I am your little child and I need you more than I need life itself!" As Jenny sat there she began to feel a presence. Jenny received the presence, did not resist. The presence grew and grew until the room grew dim. Slowly there began a moving deep inside her, a moving like a small mountain stream down in the depths of her soul. The stream began to flow bringing freshness and a clean feeling. Jenny just sat there loving and praising her God, her Father, her Abba. Almost imperceptibly the small mountain stream began to grow in both size

and speed . Now it was flowing painlessly but relentlessly through her entire being.

Jenny was responding with more joy than she had ever known. God, the Creator, the Maker of the entire Universe was truly and actually working in her. What He was doing she knew not. What He was doing she cared not. Righteousness, peace, and joy began building in her heart. Praise to the living God flowed flawlessly from her tongue. Cleansing, precious cleansing, was flowing through her being. Fear, anger, and insecurity were being replaced with love, peace, and assurance. Jenny vaguely remembered incidents in her life from which her former attitudes had sprung. As she remembered them she uttered words of peace and forgiveness to those others who had been involved. Suddenly Jenny was stunned to discover that her need to control had disappeared. She was at peace just trusting Father to take care of EVERYTHING. It was as though pressure had been released from the pressure cooker, a huge weight had been lifted from her soul. Jenny sank back on the couch peacefully exhausted.

It takes awhile to mend a broken pot. Wounds are not healed in an instant. Our resolve, Jenny's, yours and mine is not constant but is pushed about by emotions and events. Miracles DO HAPPEN. Jenny did not immediately become perfect. In fact Jenny never did become perfect. She did become well and healthy.

It became normal for her to be patient and gentle. She thought more of others than she did herself. Her value system changed from one that involved herself as the center of the universe and everything judged by how it affected that center to one where Jesus and His Kingdom was the central axis of her life. Grace christened her Jenny Eagle Eyes.

She once was blind but now she could see.

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