

The JC Team

Bible Stories told like never before!

Volume 3

THE JC TEAM

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Chapter 1

DAVE'S DILEMMA

“Talia, you are so blessed to have a son like Dave. He is such a fine gentleman!” a lady stated to Talia as they walked down the lane, one fine afternoon.

“It is all the grace of God. Dave left early this morning to meet the pearl merchant. He has plans to begin a new trade. His work keeps him too busy,” Talia said.

“Find him a fine bride and he will slow down,” smiled the lady as she took leave and turned to the path that led to her home. Talia walked on towards her house, a little further away.

As Talia entered, she noticed Dave was already home.

“You are back soon!” Talia exclaimed.

“I was able to fix a fair deal with the pearl merchant. He will pay the price we put for the pearls. Mother, we will make a huge profit from this trade,” he beamed.

Talia smiled. “God is with us. I was just talking to the ladies, and all of them were telling me how lucky I

am to have a son like you. I felt so proud,” said Talia as she sat beside him.

Dave smiled at his mother. “I’ve met the priests and made an offering at the Temple. I assured them of my help for the synagogue repair work.”

“I’m sure they must have been very happy and blessed you,” Talia said.

Dave nodded and managed a faint smile, but there seemed to be something deep inside that was disturbing him. “Despite all this, why do I still feel empty inside, mother? Why do I still feel that something is lacking in me?” Dave sighed.

Talia looked kindly at her son and held his cheek. “You lack nothing, son. There is no need for you to feel that way. You are a good person. And you have everything,” she assured.

But somehow, that feeling just wouldn’t shake off him.

A few days later, as Jesus was preaching to a crowd by the lake of Galilee, Dave came that way. He had heard of Jesus and was happy to learn that it was Jesus who was preaching. Dave settled down to listen. Jesus was teaching about the Ten Commandments.

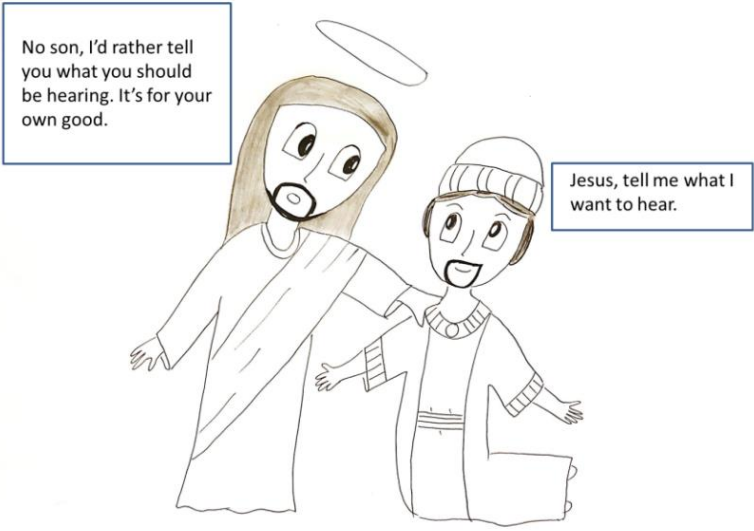
“These Ten Commandments can be made into one commandment-Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength and love your neighbor as you love yourself. If you observe carefully, you’ll get to see that the first three commandments speak of the love in our relationship with God and the rest seven instruct us on the love in our relationship with other people. It is all summed up in ‘Love’. It is the measure of love that you have in your hearts that will take you to eternal life in Heaven. Nothing else can get you there.”

After the sermon, as the crowds were leaving, Dave came and knelt before Jesus.

He asked, “Good master, what should I do to earn eternal life?”

Jesus looked at him and could see that Dave was a good man. Jesus saw the earnestness in his eyes and could sense the confusion in his heart. Jesus knew the disturbing questions that were going through Dave’s mind, and Jesus had the answers to them. But would Dave be willing to accept what Jesus had to say?

Jesus spoke, “Why do you call me good? No one is ‘good’ but God. People may call a person ‘good’ if he seems perfect on the outside, but God alone sees the inside, which is often ‘not so good.’ If you wish to earn eternal life, keep the commandments.



No son, I'd rather tell you what you should be hearing. It's for your own good.

Jesus, tell me what I want to hear.

Dave asked him. “Which ones?”

Jesus thought it a silly question and was going to reply, “All ten, of course!” but he could see that it was pride in Dave’s heart that had made him ask this question because Dave believed, and many others spoke of him too as a ‘gentleman’. Dave was sure that he kept all the Ten Commandments, and Jesus knew that whichever commandment Jesus would now state, Dave would claim he faithfully followed it. However, Jesus could see that Dave hadn’t realized that he was living a life dented in the very first commandment.

Jesus understood that what Dave wanted to hear was an assurance, “You are good...good enough to get to eternal life already!” Though it was something that

Dave had heard about himself often from many people, it didn't quite satisfy him. But if he heard it from a great prophet and 'man of God' like Jesus, it would pacify his soul. Jesus decided to go soft on him, and so evading the first three commandments, Jesus put forward the last seven...

"You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor you father and mother; You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Dave responded confidently, "I have faithfully kept all these from my young days. What do I still lack?"

Jesus looked straight into Dave's eyes and said those words that Dave would forever remember with a heavy heart, "If you want to be 'perfect' go sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor and you will have treasure in Heaven. Then, come and follow me."

At these words, Dave's mouth fell open. He had never imagined something of this sort was coming!

Jesus went on, "I see the unrest in your heart. It is because God speaks to your heart of a higher calling. He has chosen you to be His instrument in proclaiming that it is not in attaining riches of the world one finds fulfillment, but in earning riches of Heaven. I know it

is a hard decision- but if you are willing to take this step, God will give you the grace, and the unrest in your heart will find peace in the decision you make.”

Jesus looked on at Dave for a response. Glancing away from Jesus and staring at the ground, Dave was still and silent for a while. He couldn't imagine himself as a poor man. He couldn't imagine himself away from the security of his home. People who respected and envied him would treat him with derision once he became poor. Dave couldn't imagine all that! Although the power of Jesus' call was tugging at his heart, the sacrifice that was demanded of him seemed too much.

Dave shook his head and looked at Jesus. His eyes were moist, and his voice was shaking, “I can't...I can't come with you.”

Jesus said, “You have the freedom to choose. All I can promise you is if you choose to come with me, you will be part of a great adventure, and will definitely attain the eternal life you seek. If you choose to remain in your home, you will miss out on many enriching experiences in life God has reserved for you. You can't have the best of both worlds, Dave. So far, you have experienced the riches and glory of the mortal world. God, who made you to be born into a noble family, has given it to you. Now God calls you to forgo it and invites you to a higher calling that will

lead you to the riches and glory of eternal life. God now wants to give you the best that is offered there, but for that, you will have to forgo the best you have here. I place the choice before you. Decide now. Is it mortal life or eternal life that you prize more?"

"Will I lose eternal life if I stay at home?" Dave asked.

"You will attain eternal life as long as you keep all the Ten Commandments. As of now, you are a charitable man, and willing to share your riches with the needy. But as you grow in the riches of this world, there is every possibility you will become greedy and break the first commandment 'I am the Lord your God. You shall not have other Gods before me.' Your wealth will become God for you...and I can see it already has taken God's place in your heart."

Dave spoke, "I know this call of God should be an honor to me, but I feel it like a burden. It is a call I cannot follow. Please forgive me."

Saying this, Dave turned and walked away in tears. Jesus' gaze followed him for a while. Then he said to his disciples, "It's hard to give up on the riches and comforts of this world once you have tasted and enjoyed it. But with the grace of God, and the strong will of your heart, it is possible! One has to be bold to take the first step and then God will help him through."

It's so hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God through the Narrow way if he has too much baggage. It would be easier for a camel to get through the eye of a needle!"

Zeke nudged Dan, "Can you imagine that? A camel through the eye of a needle?"

Zorah shook her head. "It's not easy to even get the thread through the needle's eye at times....can't even think of a camel!"

Zeka spoke, "Jesus is talking about the Needle Gate, the narrow gates used for entering the city when the main gates close at night."

Zorah understood. "Oh yes, I have seen how the men who come through that gate unload their camels, bend and push them through the Needle Gate. It is quite a task."

"Does that mean that the entry will be tough for the rich, and easy for the poor?" Zeke asked.

Jesus said, "Heaven is open to all men with a heart. It is what one does with his riches that matters. If he spends them feasting and drinking while many around him are hungry and cold, he sins. If he is willing to share and care for those who need food, clothing, and shelter, God sees the heart and will open wide the Gates of Heaven for him."

“Yeah, for he comes to Heaven with less baggage when he gives away in charity. He can get through the Narrow Way to Heaven!” Zeke reflected.

Peter spoke, “Jesus, we never had many riches to give up for you. But the little that we had, our homes, our families, our jobs-we’ve left all these for you.”

“Yes, you have, Peter,” Jesus agreed. “God sees. He has blessed you from the moment you made the sacrifice and took the decision. The places we go, the people we meet...God has now and will again give you many more fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters....a hundred times more than what you have given up for him. When you love, you will be loved. This love will qualify you to behold the beauty of eternal life in Heaven.”

“The Gates of Heaven will open for me?” Peter asked with a smile.

Jesus smiled back, “Much more for you Peter- you might just be the one who will open it for the others too.”

Chapter 2

MARTHA AND MARY

“Mary, Jesus has come,” informed her sister Martha. Mary hurried to the door where Jesus and his disciples stood. Martha poured out water from a jar to wash Jesus’ and his disciples’ feet. Finally, she came to a pair of tiny feet. She looked up to see a beaming seven-year-old Dan.

“He is one of us,” smiled James.

“Yes, John is no longer the youngest disciple,” joked Peter.

“Jesus now has a gang of naughty kid disciples hanging around him,” smiled John.

Martha washed Dan’s feet and kissed him welcome.

Martha and Mary led them into the living room, where they all were seated. People from the neighborhood had also come to see Jesus and hear him speak. Jesus spoke about the Kingdom of Heaven. The people were attentive to his words. Martha tried to be attentive, but felt distracted. She was concerned about the arrangements. “When will the sermon end? Should I set the table now? What if the dishes get cold? I wonder if Jesus will like the dishes I made. What if he doesn’t? What if he gets upset with something? What

if something goes wrong? I don't know what, but something could just go wrong no matter how well I plan things out." These pestering thoughts kept disturbing her and she couldn't listen in peace to what Jesus was saying.

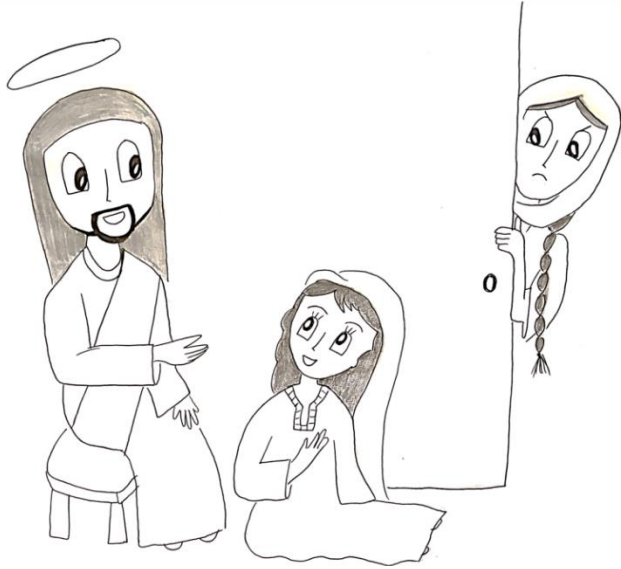
Martha looked at her sister Mary, who was sitting near her, soaking in each word Jesus was saying. Martha nudged her. Mary turned to her sister. Martha spoke in a low voice, "Mary, shouldn't we be setting the table? Let's go make sure the food is still warm."

"We'll do all that after he finishes preaching," Mary whispered back.

But Martha just couldn't sit still. She excused herself and went to the kitchen, hurrying about to make sure everything was fine. Minutes passed by. Jesus was still speaking and Mary was still gazing at him.

"Shouldn't she be helping me here?" Martha felt offended. "Why does she leave me with all the work?"

Every now and then, Martha would come near the door of the living room and glance at Mary, hoping she would turn to look at her so Martha could beckon her to the kitchen. But Mary's eyes were fixed on Jesus and her ears were attentive to his words. Martha became agitated.



Even though he was preaching to the crowd in the living room, Jesus noticed Martha and sensed the inner turmoil she was going through. He felt sorry for her. At one point, when Martha came near the door to peek in at Mary, Jesus paused his sermon and told the crowd, “Would you now ponder over the words I have said for a while till I’m back?” Jesus rose and followed Martha.

Jesus asked her, “Martha is there something worrying you? Can I help you?”

Martha was surprised that Jesus had actually followed her. It also embarrassed her to tell him the matter of her concern, but the earnestness in his eyes prompted her to open up to him.

Martha spoke, “Lord, please ask my sister Mary to come and help me. There is much work to do in the kitchen.”

Jesus smiled and said, “I thought I was invited here to preach to you all?”

“Yes, Jesus. We believe you speak the Word of God. I am blessed to have you in my home today, and I desire to make you happy and fulfilled!” Martha innocently answered.

“How do you intend to make me ‘happy and fulfilled?’” he asked.

“By making your stay comfortable and offering a hearty meal,” she replied.

Her love moved Jesus. He held her hand, gazed into her eyes, and said, “Martha, I understand that it is the love in your heart for me that motivates you to do all this for me. I appreciate that. But I want you to know that what would make me happier than these delicious dishes would be your presence with me. Do you want to love me ‘the way you want’ or do you want to love me ‘the way I want’? Mary has chosen to sit at my feet, and that will not be taken away from her as long as she desires to stay there. There is a place for you there too... would you?” Martha’s eyes welled with tears. She kissed Jesus’ hands.

“Lord, I want to love you the way ‘you want me to love you’,” she said.

“Then come....” holding her hand, Jesus led her back into the living room. He seated her by his side, near Mary. Mary was glad that Martha had returned. She looked at Martha and smiled. Martha smiled back.

Jesus continued with his sermon. “Once, there was a shepherd who had a hundred sheep. One fine day, as they were all grazing, the shepherd noted that one adventurous little sheep had gotten distracted and strayed away. Now he could have said ‘Why bother? I have the other ninety-nine with me. Why waste time searching for ‘one’ lost sheep? Once the breeding season comes, I will be able to make up for the lost sheep because I’ll have many new sheep then.’

But this shepherd didn’t say that. He loved his flock. Each sheep was unique and special to him, dear to his heart, and irreplaceable. So he set out in search of the lost one. He searched high and low, far and wide, till he found it. And when he did, he rejoiced, and holding it close to his heart, brought it back to where the others were. And they all rejoiced with him.”

Jesus said this and looked lovingly at Martha who smiled and wiped a tear trickling down from the side of her eye.

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