

Nobility of a Boy

(story adapted from a story told by Margaret Eggleston in her book "The Use of the Story in Religious Education")

There was once a young boy named David who lived in New York City in the early 1900's. He worked as an errand boy at a bank near his home. His job was very important to the family for his father had recently passed away and he had a mother and sister at home who were ill and could not walk. David was the only one left to care for his mother and sister and he was the sole support for them. It took every cent he could possibly earn to take care of their little family.

A few weeks after David's father's funeral, the doctor came to the house to check in on David's mother and sister. The doctor told David that unless he could get his mother to the country where there was plenty of fresh air that she would grow increasingly worse and may very well be gone by winter. David tried everything he could to find a way to send his mother and sister to the country but there was no way. He made barely enough money to provide their basic needs; there was no money to pay for them to stay in the country and no one to house them. David was broken hearted and he felt helpless as he watched day after day as his mother grew less and less strong.

One day while working at the bank, David was sweeping under a table when he found a roll of bills—a big roll and he could see that some of them were yellow-backs. Now at that time, yellow-backs were a type of paper currency that was redeemable for gold coin. These were issued until the early 1900's and thought very valuable as they were able to be exchanged into precious metal on demand.

David scooped up the bills and started to head for the office of the bank president when he suddenly hesitated realizing what this money would mean. "Just think," he thought, "of what these bills will do. They can send mother and Millie away for the whole summer and then they will be well. No one knows I have them and they don't belong to the bank. They were on the floor with trash paper. I'm going to keep them. Finding is keeping and they are mine."

So David dropped the wad of bills into his front pocket, then his back pocket, then shifted them into his coat pocket. He felt sure that everyone could see them as he left the bank but no one stopped him. All the way home he fingered the bills in his pocket taking his hand in and out of the pocket and shifting the bills inside. When he arrived home he checked on his mother and sister and then walked to the cupboard in the hallway, opened the front drawer and dropped the bills inside closing the drawer with a hard thud.

An hour later David walked back into the bank and shuffled quickly through the front room making his way to the office of the bank president. Entering the office, he threw

the bills on the desk and whispered, “I found these when I swept.” Then, with a cry of pain, he fled from the bank.

The next morning David was back at the bank to do his work when he was called into the bank president’s office. When David entered the room the bank president looked up from his desk and spoke.

“David,” he said, “I wish you would tell me why you brought those bills back last night. I know why you wanted them and what they would have done for you and your family. No one knew you had them. Why did you bring them back?”

David leaned far over the desk and looked right in the eyes of the president of the bank. “Sir,” he said, “as long as I live, I have to live with myself and I don’t want to live with a thief.”

A few days later the mother and Millie went to the country but not alone. David went with them and they spent the whole summer in the countryside—a gift from the bank to show their deep appreciation for the nobility of the boy.