



YOUTH COMPASS

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THE WAY, TRUTH, AND LIFE SERIES



Crisis At Christmas

Matilda Nordtvedt

Connie balanced herself on the stepladder as she reached over to fasten the star to the top of the Christmas tree. She had always enjoyed the young people's tree-trimming party before. Why didn't she this year? She frowned thoughtfully as she descended from the ladder and started putting on tinsel. Was the theme of the Christmas program, "Christ's First and Second Comings," bothering her?

She pressed her mouth into a firm, hard line. "Why did they have to bring in Christ's Second Coming?" she asked herself crossly. That had been Brenda's idea. Brenda always had to think of something different! And to top it off, Connie had to read the climactic lines at the end after all the others had read the prophecies from the Old and New Testaments.

Connie could say her lines from memory without looking at her paper. "The prophecies of Christ's first coming were fulfilled that first Christmas, and the prophecies leading up to

His Second Coming have also been fulfilled. Christ could come again this Christmas, even tonight.”

“Say it with expectancy, Connie,” Brenda had urged with shining eyes. “It’s the most important line!”

But how could she? Connie didn’t want Jesus to come again this Christmas or for a long, long time. She wasn’t ready for His coming.

“Connie, we’re going to go over our trio number,” called Brenda from the piano. Will you play for us?”

Connie handed her tinsel to Paul Adams and took her place at the piano. The title of the song gave her a little start. It was, “He Is Coming Again.” Grimly she played the introduction, and the girls sang.

*“He is coming again, He is coming again,
The very same Jesus, rejected of men.*

Connie tried to close her ears to the song and think of something else, but she couldn’t get away from the words. Even after they had finished practicing, the lyric came back to haunt her. “He is coming again . . . the very same Jesus —.”

Connie didn’t stay for refreshments. She had told Bud to pick her up at ten o’clock. He would take her to the pizza parlor. She wanted to get away from the church kids and the disturbing theme of the Christmas program.

Connie sighed with relief when she saw the old car pull up. Slipping out the side door, she hurried across the hard-packed snow to the car.

They drove around, had pizza, and chatted as usual. But tonight Connie wasn’t enjoying it. “I’d better get home,” she said at a quarter past eleven. “I didn’t tell the folks I was going out with you tonight. They probably think that I’m still at church.”

Bud groaned but turned the car around and took Connie home. The house was dark except for one lamp in the living room. Connie hurried in, shutting the door quietly behind her. There was no use waking everybody up and having to answer silly questions.

Connie lay down on the couch. She would relax a minute before getting ready for bed. It had been such a busy day. She closed her eyes for a moment. There was Brenda, face beaming, exclaiming, “Say it with expectancy, Connie. Christ could come again this Christmas, even tonight!” The words of the song went through Connie’s mind “He is com-

ing again . . . the very same Jesus. . . .” Dimly she heard her own voice, “The prophecies leading up to His Second Coming have also been fulfilled. . . .”

Suddenly Connie sat bolt upright. What was that strange sound? A trumpet? At this time of night?

Fragments of one of the verses from the program flashed through her mind. “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout . . . and with the trump of God . . . we which are alive . . . shall be caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thess. 4:16, 17).

Connie felt chills racing up and down her spine. She uttered a cry. This was the Second Coming of Christ, and she wasn’t ready! Numbly she rose to her feet and looked wildly about her. Her parents would be gone, her older brother Jack, and the twins would, too. They had all accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior. They had urged her to, but she had always said, “No, not yet.”

Connie clasped her hands together. She had waited too long. Now it was too late. She was left behind! “Oh, God!” she cried out, dropping on her knees beside the couch, and giving way to quiet sobbing.

In a moment she felt a hand on her shoulder, shaking her. She looked up bewildered into her brother Jack’s anxious face.”

“What is the matter, Sis?” he asked. “Did something happen at church?”

Connie stared at her brother. Why was he here? Trembling, she got to her feet. “Jack, you’re still here?” she questioned.

“Calm down, Connie,” he instructed. “You must have had a bad dream.”

She passed one hand over her face, then sank onto the couch. “A-a dream?” she echoed weakly.

Jack sat beside his sister. “Sure,” he said reassuringly. “Tell me all about it, Sis.”

“I thought Jesus came, and I wasn’t ready,” she whispered. “Oh, Jack, I thought I was left behind, because I wasn’t ready.”

Jack nodded soberly. “But you can get ready, Connie — right now. Jesus wants to save you if you’ll ask Him into your heart and really mean it.”

“I mean it, Jack,” answered Connie, slipping to her knees. “I want to be saved right now more than anything else! Will you pray for me, Jack?”

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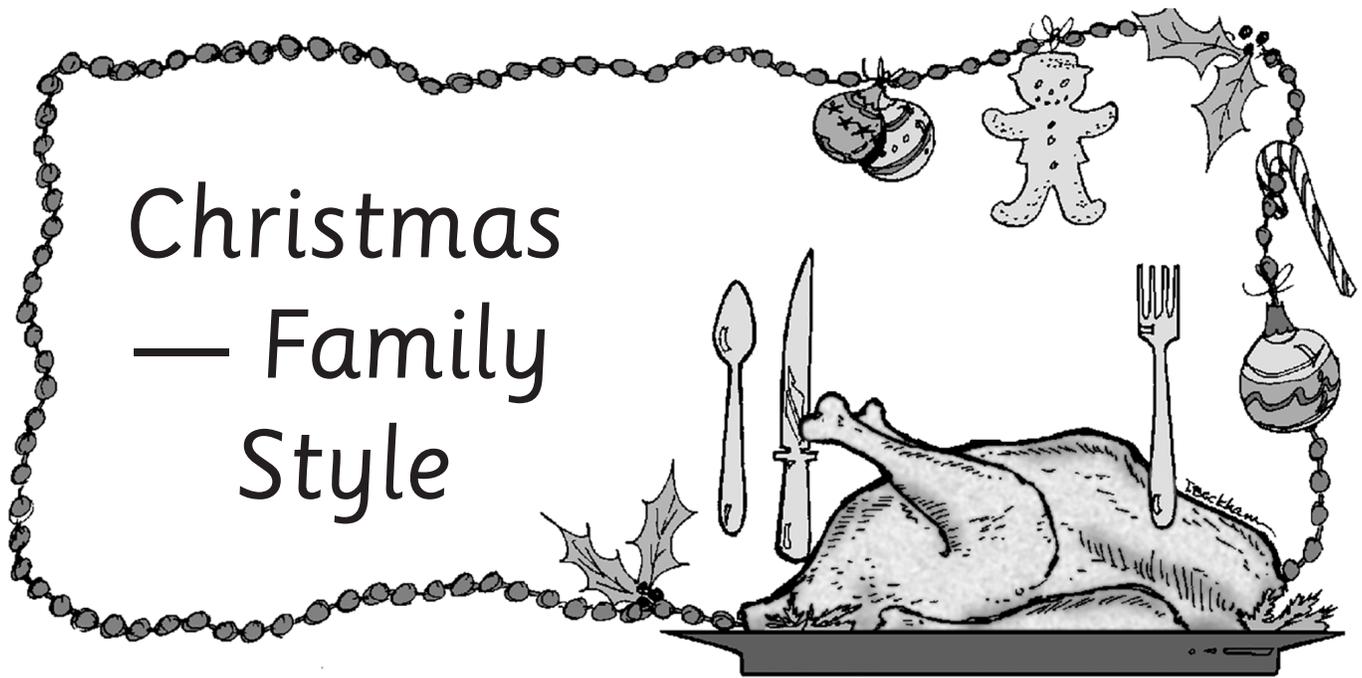


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Christmas — Family Style

Margaret N. Freeman

“What are you doing for Christmas, Carolyn?” Lucinda Abbott asked as they were clearing their desks.

A cloud obscured the bright blue of Carolyn’s eyes for a moment as a frown flitted over her face.

Attempting gaiety, she flung out her hand — “Not one thing but read Dickens’ ‘A Christmas Carol,’ hunt up the best restaurant in town and eat a big Christmas dinner, and go to church services somewhere.”

“Poor dear,” murmured Lucinda, “I’d ask you home with me, but since Christmas is on Saturday, the folks and I are going to Silver City to spend it with my sister.”

“Think nothing of it!” Carolyn said. “And have a good Christmas!”

“Somehow a restaurant Christmas dinner chills me!” shuddered Bruce Edwards, putting on his hat.

Carolyn smiled wryly at the firm’s newest bookkeeper. “But can you imagine how a turkey would look on my table set for one?”

“Rather lonely, I expect,” Bruce agreed. “Say!” he smiled shyly, “why don’t you have dinner with me? It will still have to be a restaurant one, but I have a treat afterward. The young people in our church are going caroling in the evening, and you’ll be a very welcome addition.”

“Thank you,” Carolyn answered carefully, “if you’re sure you want me to and it’s not just out of pity.”

“My intentions are very noble, madam,” he smiled. “I’ve been trying to work up nerve to ask you to go out with me ever since I met you!”

Carolyn’s heart lifted. “How nice of you to say so!” she murmured — not adding that the feeling of attraction was mutual.

Carolyn put on her new red wool jersey the next evening, congratulating herself that she had a new dress for this festive occasion. She brushed her brown hair until it fell in shining waves. The eyes that looked back from her mirror shone, and her cheeks were flushed with happiness. She had been lonely since coming to the city, and it was good to have a friend, especially at Christmas.

Her eyes sought the picture in the silver frame on her dresser. Her heart twisted with longing to see the handsome young brother who wore the Air Force uniform. “God keep you safe and give you a blessed Christmas, Bud,” she whispered.

It had been a long day, and Carolyn had read Dickens’ “A Christmas Carol,” and also Luke 2. She had also cleaned the little apartment until it shone. She was anticipating going caroling with the young people. She had not as yet found a church home that made her feel close to the Lord as her church back home did. She was waiting for Bruce when he rang the doorbell at a quarter of six.

“I’m glad you’re ready,” Bruce approved, “for I want you to stop in and see some friends of mine on the way downtown.”

As they were riding along, he resumed, “It’s Mrs. Towner and her two children. Her husband was in my brother’s outfit overseas. He was killed in action, and Ned — that’s my brother — asked me to call on them. They’re so lonely I’ve kept on going to see them.”

“So you have a brother in service, too? Bud is the last of my family, and he’s overseas,” Carolyn said sadly.

“Another bond!” Bruce said quickly. “Ned and I are alone, too. Well, here’s the Towners’. I’ve got some packages for the children.”

"How old are they?" asked Carolyn.

"Roger is eight, Teresa is six, and the baby, Donnie, is about a year old."

"Poor little tykes!" murmured Carolyn.

They knocked on the door, and Roger peeped out. "Mommy's been sick," he greeted them.

Bruce hurried in. He came out of the bedroom looking concerned. "Come in and meet Mrs. Towner," he said. "She's had the flu, and it left her weak and ill. She was bound to get the children some gifts so she went shopping for gifts and things for a Christmas dinner yesterday. She got the turkey in the oven, which explains the delicious smell in here, and after that she collapsed."

Carolyn's eyes were full of sympathy as she greeted the sick woman. As they left the room quietly, she looked at Bruce. "If we hurry, I think we can make it!" she urged.

"Make it?" he echoed in puzzlement.

"Yes, since she has the turkey almost roasted, we can fix the rest of the meal in a jiffy and get done in time to go caroling. That's what you really want to do, isn't it?" she smiled.

"Yes, sure, but —" he stammered — "is it what you want to do?"

"Yes," she answered firmly. "Now you won't have to shudder over a restaurant Christmas dinner!"

"Nor you!" he returned, flashing her a smile of camaraderie.

"Say, Mrs. Towner, you've got you some dinner guests!" he yelled into the bedroom. He turned to Carolyn and grinned over her protests.

"You're doing us a favor; isn't she, Carolyn?"

Carolyn found an apron and covered the new red dress. She peeped into the refrigerator and in the pantry, and soon potatoes and cranberries were boiling merrily. Her deft fingers prepared a salad, and there was even time to slip a pumpkin pie into the oven.

She shooed Bruce and the children into the living room to fix the tree she had found on the back porch. When she returned to the living room later to announce dinner, there stood the little tree filling its corner, and sending its fragrance and beauty into the room. It was beautiful with bright balls, colored lights, and a silver star beaming at the top.

"You've done a wonderful job!" she smiled.

"Judging from the aroma, you've done a masterful job yourself!" Bruce sniffed appreciatively. Swooping down, he scooped up the baby in his arms, while Roger and Teresa each clung to a leg, and Mrs. Towner came to the table, leaning weakly on Carolyn.

Bruce bowed his head and offered simple thanks, after which everyone ate until they could eat no more. Bruce looked at Carolyn in mock amazement. "I didn't think girls could cook any more!"

"Oh, you have funny ideas!" said Carolyn, jumping up from the table. "Hurry now, and we'll wash the dishes."

"I can put them all away," Roger offered gravely.

"That can be your job, dear," she smiled, "and, Teresa,

you play with the baby, and then I'll tell you all a bedtime story and tuck you in before we go."

"Goody! goody!" chorused the children.

The dishes were done in short order. "That girl is a slave driver!" complained Bruce as he rejoined Mrs. Towner. They smiled at each other. Then they sat quietly listening as Carolyn's voice drifted out in the words of the beautiful story of Christmas, of Jesus the Savior's birth.

Mrs. Towner and Bruce slipped in. Roger and Teresa were in their beds, and Donnie was nodding in Carolyn's arms.

"Let's sing 'Silent Night, Holy Night' before we go," Bruce suggested, and softly the beautiful refrain echoed in the room and slipped its peace into each singing heart.

Then Carolyn and Bruce were in the car driving through the clear, cold, star-filled night.

"We'll make it for the caroling," Bruce said happily. "You'll like the young people's group — they're genuine, born-again Christians."

"I'll be glad to join them then," Carolyn said gladly.

"You're one too, aren't you?" asked Bruce. "I sensed that from some things you said around the office."

"Yes," Carolyn said gladly, "and I know I don't need to ask you the same question."

Bruce replied, "I can sing the Christmas carols from my heart. Before we get to church, let me tell you how much I enjoyed the Christmas party at the Towners'."

"You can't beat Christmas dinner — family style — can you?" laughed Carolyn.

"Family style?" murmured Bruce. "Christians are all one family, aren't they?" he mused. "All who love the Lord belong to God's family, and Christmas seems to bring Christians closer in thought and motive."

Both were silent as they thought of that long ago Christmas night when the angels' words echoed over the lonely hillside and the shepherds heard and received the message with joy. Christmas peace and joy flooded their hearts as they rode in understanding silence.



Crisis at Christmas

From page 2

On the night of the Christmas program, it seemed to Connie that the Christmas tree lights shone more brightly through the shimmering tinsel than she had ever seen them. And how softly and beautifully the candles glowed in the church windows!

Now the organ was playing "Silent Night" as the program moved toward its climax. In her mind, Connie went over her last line. "Christ could come again this Christmas, even tonight!" She knew she was ready now to say the line as Brenda wanted it said — with true expectancy.

— *The Evangelist*