

Stevie Goes Home

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"Isn't that Stevie out there?" Mrs. Rains said looking out the front window of their house. Suddenly the whole family ran to the front of the house to stare out the different windows that look out on the street.

"It's raining so hard. I can hardly see who it is." Joey said with panic in his voice. Stevie was Joey's best friend at school. Joey knew he was having some trouble at home but he didn't know if it was serious.

"It IS Stevie!" Mr. Rains, Joey's dad suddenly gasped. "But he lives miles from here. What is he doing wandering around on our street in the pouring rain?"

"Can I go get him dad?" Joey asked with emotion in his voice.

"Of course," his mom interrupted. "Go quickly, son." Joey dashed to the hall closet and pulled on his raincoat. "Here take another one for Stevie," his mom insisted. Joey shot out the front door and across the lawn to the street. The family watched nervously as little Joey ran to his friend to help him. They hugged and it was clear that Stevie was crying.

"What's wrong Stevie? Why aren't you home?" Joey asked his friend as they walked toward their porch to get him out of the rain.

"I ran away." Stevie cried. "I broke my mother's favorite antique glass angel. I was so afraid, I just ran away."

"Joey? Stevie?" they both heard the voices of Joey's parents calling to them. "Come in the house boys. We need to get you dried off."

Stevie was a little afraid to go in because he felt so guilty that he thought nobody could possibly forgive and love him. He felt such gratitude when Mrs. Rains dried his hair and Mr. Rains got some of Joey's clothes for him to get into while they got his clothes into the washer/dryer.

"Would you like some warm spaghetti, sweetie?" Mrs. Rains said so lovingly that Stevie accepted the offer gobbling down two servings. "You must have walked five miles in the rain," she observed, "No wonder you are so hungry." After he ate, the boys went to Joey's room to play video games while his clothes finished getting cleaned up.

"How come your parents are so nice?" Stevie asked his friend. "I bet they never hate you when you do bad things."

"Oh sure, I make lots of mistakes," Joey confessed. "But parents don't hate their children? Oh sure, they have to correct you and teach you and you have to make things right when you do bad, but parents always love you, no matter what. It's how they are made."

"I don't understand that. Can't you lose their love if you mess up?" Stevie asked, confused.

"I know. It's hard to understand," Joey agreed. "Oh, you know what? I just remembered that Pastor Ashcroft explained it in Sunday School a few weeks ago. He explained how God made parents to act like He did."

"Joey, I am really getting confused. How can parents act like God does? They are just people too." Stevie complained.

"Because parents love you even if you are bad. You don't have to do anything or please them or be any certain thing because parents just love you no matter what. There was a big word for it. Let me see. What was it? Oh yeah, unconditional love. That's what parents have. That means they love you just because you are theirs."

"Is that how God is then?"

"That's what Pastor Ashcroft said. He said God is Love and He loves us no matter what. Even when we do bad and like sin, you know? God just wants us to stop sinning so we will be happy."

"I would feel a lot happier if I hadn't broke my mom's angel and run away. I feel like I'm doomed now."

"Stevie?" they both heard Joey's mom calling. "Honey your mom is on the phone. She is so relieved you are ok."

"I can't talk to her." Stevie started to cry again. "I know she must hate me for breaking her angel and running away."

"Just try to talk to her, Stevie," Joey encouraged him. "Remember, she loves you like God does. But to get her love and forgiveness, you have to be willing to talk to her and let her love you."

Joey and his mom stepped out of the room while Stevie talked to his mom. But when he came out, he looked like a completely different boy.

"I'm going home now." He said with a happy melody in his voice.

"But what about the angel?" Joey asked.

"She said something that totally surprised me, Joey," Stevie said as though he was still in shock. "She said she loved me more than a thousand glass angels and would give them all away rather than lose me or my sister." Mrs. Rains got Stevie his clean dry clothes and he changed and sat on the porch bench with Joey waiting for his mom to come for him. The rain had cleared up and it looked like a bright happy sunshine was coming out. "You know what, Joey?" he said to his best friend. "I learned something today that was better than a million Sunday school lessons."

"What was that?" his pal asked.

"I learned how that kind of love works, that kind with the big word you said before...."

"Unconditional love?"

"Yeah, that kind. I never knew parents were like that and I sure didn't know God was like that. I thought He was all mad about our sins all the time."

"I don't think He is mad," Joey thought out loud with Stevie. "I just think he is sad when we sin because it hurts us but he loves us so much he let Jesus die for us so the sin would stop hurting us. And best of all, we get to go to heaven because of it because that is where God is and we get to be with him. It's like heaven is our home that we haven't even seen yet." They both saw Stevie's parent's car coming down the street. Stevie stood up to say good-bye to his friend.

"I like that last word you said the best," he confessed.

"Which one?"

"Home. That's where I'm going. I'm going home now, Joey. Thank you for teaching me about how parents and God loves me. I'll see you at school tomorrow."

"Ok Stevie. Bye, bye."

And Stevie ran to the car and his mommy jumped out and hugged him and kissed him what must have been a hundred times. Joey watched and thought. "Wow, one thing you can say about that unconditional love stuff. It sure involves a lot of kissing."

Then Joey went inside to have a second helping of spaghetti.