

I WITNESS Kids

Parable of the Tree

Hey, kids, we hope you enjoy this story written just for you!

With this story by Peggy Feagins, you can fill in the blanks by looking up the scriptures shown in the story.

Peggy Feagins

With a final burst of energy, I reached the summit of the hill, stopped to catch my breath, let my heart slow a little, and enjoy the view. Hiking had become a passion with me, and I spent a lot of time at it and enjoyed the challenge of matching my strength against the climb, my endurance against the long haul. But even with the thrill of meeting the challenges, of reaching the summits, I felt there should be something more—completeness I was lacking, a destination I had missed.



The breeze on the hilltop cooled my face and soothed my mind. I turned slowly, looking out over other hilltops and valleys—it was so vast, so beautiful. Then I stopped short. In the far distance I could see a beautiful valley; there was a river running through it and a single large tree beside the river. I was drawn to it. Taking out my pocket binoculars, I focused on that tree. Its form was of unusual grace and symmetry, and despite its size, the branches were laden with fruit of some kind. It seemed so wonderful to me; I longed to reach it, to know about it, perhaps to taste its fruit.

The next day was Sunday, and I hunted up my youth leader at the church I had started attending.

He worked with the Forest Service and was familiar with the area; maybe he would know about the tree. I described it to him the best I could and, to my delight, he knew just what I was talking about.

“What’s it called?” I quizzed him, feeling excitement growing within me. He looked squarely at me as he replied, “It is the _____ (1 Nephi 3:69 RLDS), (1 Nephi 11:25 LDS), and it will bring you greater joy than anything else you could want.”

My thoughts were tumbling over each other—was this the goal, the destination I had been looking for? It looked like a long journey. Could I make it? I knew I had to try.

“How do I get there?” I asked urgently.

So he pointed out to me a straight and narrow path of gospel living and told me if I would stay on that path, it would lead me to the tree.

“That sounds simple enough,” I enthused.

“It is simple,” he said earnestly, “but it will not always be easy.”

“Thanks,” I answered, anxious to get started. “I think I can handle it.”

“Wait!” he yelled after me. “There is something you need to know. There are many paths, but there is a rod of iron running along beside the straight and narrow path. This rod of iron is the _____ (1 Nephi 3:68 RLDS), (1 Nephi 11:25 LDS). If you hang onto that, you won’t lose your way.”

“Thanks,” I called again as I hurried away. I didn’t want to waste any time getting to the tree.

It was pleasant walking on the path. The weather was beautiful; other people on the path were friendly. It was great! I was visiting with a couple of friends when suddenly I exclaimed, “Hey! We’ve taken a wrong turn. There’s no rod of iron by this path!”

“Well,” said one, “There is a wooden railing. That’s just as good.”

“I don’t know,” I argued. We might get lost going this way.”

“Get lost?” they hooted. “What are you—chicken?”

I knew it wasn’t the right path, but I didn’t want to look like a wimp. I hesitated a moment undecided; then I heard someone calling my name. It was my youth leader. “I’m going back,” I said firmly. “You guys coming?”

“Naw,” was their response. “Not yet anyway. We wanna have some fun.”

I turned and hurried toward the voice. Nothing was as important to me now as getting back to the path. I was so glad to see his outstretched hand and smiling face. “I’m glad you’re here,” I said, catching my breath, “but why’d you come?”

“Well, sometimes folks new to the path need a little watching after,” he grinned. “Just thought I’d check on you.”

I told him I wished there was something I could do to show him how much I appreciated his time and effort on my behalf and, most of all, his caring about me. “Just pass it on,” he smiled, “just pass it on.”

It was then I decided I had better get a good hold on that rod of iron and not lose sight of it again.

It was much farther to the tree than I had supposed. Time passed, and I learned a lot as I walked down the path. There were so many things going on that if I wasn’t careful, I found myself distracted from my goal. Sometimes I stumbled, and sometimes I got discouraged. But I prayed to the Lord for strength and kept hold on the rod of iron. A few times, I felt I was really able to help someone else along the way, or bring back to the path someone who had started to stray. These were my times of greatest joy.

There were times when great mists of darkness obscured the path. These mists were the _____ of the _____ (1 Nephi 3:125 RLDS), (1 Nephi 12:17 LDS). Sometimes it seemed more than I could bear; and I clung desperately to the rod of iron to keep from being swept away and lost in the filthy river, which is the depths of _____ (1 Nephi 3:124 RLDS), (1 Nephi 12:16 LDS). When I made it safely through the mists of darkness, the sunshine was brighter, the birds’ songs sweeter than I ever remembered before. Then I could sing praises as I walked along, realizing only afterward that I had been strengthened and blessed by my trial.

Once as I was swinging along, I saw a large and spacious building. There were more people in it than I had ever imagined. There was something very intriguing about it. As I watched the goings on in that building, I forgot to watch where I was going. I tripped over a root and fell in a mud puddle. I heard a loud guffaw. There was one of my friends from early on the path among those in the building, and I recognized some kids from my school. They were laughing, and they were pointing at me.

I picked myself up. I felt shame coloring my face. They were all dressed in the latest style and seemed very wise. I was disheveled, had mud on my clothes, and felt rather foolish. I hated them for laughing at me, yet ironically I wanted to be one of them. I wanted to be cool and sophisticated and worldly. The vision of the tree seemed very dim compared with the glitter of this classy crowd in the great and spacious building.

“It will fall,” said a voice at my elbow. It was an old lady I had seen at church. “That great and spacious building is the _____ of the _____ (1 Nephi 3:93 RLDS), (1 Nephi 11:36 LDS). It is not built on a good foundation. It will fall, and the fall thereof will be great. Why don’t you take hold of the rod again?” With that she continued on the path, and I was left very alone in the presence of that mocking crowd.

I felt tired and rebellious. Why should I go on? Would I really ever get anywhere? I’ve come a long way. Isn’t that enough? From out of the past a scripture came to me we had learned once in Sunday school. “But behold, for none of these can I hope, except they shall be reconciled unto Christ, and enter into the narrow gate, and walk in the _____ which leads to life, and _____ of the day of probation.” (2 Nephi 15:10 RLDS), (2 Nephi 33:9 LDS).

I hate quitters, I mumbled. I reached out and took hold of the rod of iron. Suddenly, all around me were people I knew had walked this path before me—Abraham, Nephi, Queen Esther, Apostle Peter, Mormon, Joseph and Emma . . . They had no doubt been discouraged, been tempted, and gone astray, repented and pressed on. I could tell by just looking at them they felt the effort was more than worthwhile. I had never felt more humble. I knelt there in the path and asked my Lord’s forgiveness. And that sweet, sweet Spirit came into my heart and crowded out all the wrong feelings. I felt wrapped in His love.

I can’t tell you all the things that happened to me on the path, but the time came when I did reach the tree and received of its fruit a great fullness. I was filled with a joy and peace which I cannot describe or even understand. But, strangely enough, I had no desire to end my journey. I felt refreshed and empowered; and this wonderful fruit was too good not to share. I thought of my parents and sister who had showed no interest in the journey; I must reach them. And I was sure there were many on the path needing help and encouragement, and even others looking for the path. Then I thought of those in the great and spacious building; I no longer hated them. I felt great sorrow for them and knew I must try to tell any who would listen about the path and the rod of iron and the tree of life which is the _____ (1 Nephi 3:69 RLDS), (1 Nephi 11:25 LDS).

*Ref: 1 Nephi, chapters 2 & 3
2 Nephi, chapter 15*

I Haven’t Been Talking to Jesus

I haven’t been talking to Jesus today.
I got out of bed, but forgot to pray.
I haven’t been asking Him to bless my food.
I hope that He doesn’t think I’m being rude.

The scriptures say that I must pray day and night.
If I do not talk to Him it’s just not right.
There are many times that I know I should pray.
But though I forget, He loves me anyway.

My prayers I’ll start sending to Jesus right now.
I’ll pray that He’ll help me remember somehow.
God’s gonna rejoice when my prayers are not missin’.
He may choose to speak, but He always will listen.

Steve Rideout

