

Start with Friendship

ONE DAY, OUR SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER, MISS COOK, ASKED US, "CHILDREN, DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T YET KNOW JESUS AS THE GOOD FRIEND THAT HE CAN BE?"

I KNEW OF SOMEONE.

SHE LET US THINK ABOUT IT. AND THEN SHE SAID, "MAYBE JESUS IS ASKING YOU TO BE THAT PERSON'S FRIEND. FRIENDSHIP IS AN IMPORTANT FIRST STEP TO TAKE IN ORDER TO HELP OTHERS LEARN ABOUT HIM."

RICKY WAS NEW TO OUR SMALL FARMING COMMUNITY AND DIDN'T HAVE ANY FRIENDS YET. I GOT TO KNOW HIM, BECAUSE WE WERE IN THE SAME SECOND GRADE CLASS IN SCHOOL, AND WE ALSO RODE THE SAME SCHOOL BUS.

SO WHEN MISS COOK ASKED US THAT QUESTION, I IMMEDIATELY THOUGHT OF RICKY. "JESUS, PLEASE HELP ME FIND A WAY TO BE A FRIEND TO RICKY," I PRAYED. "I WANT TO HELP HIM GET TO KNOW YOU."



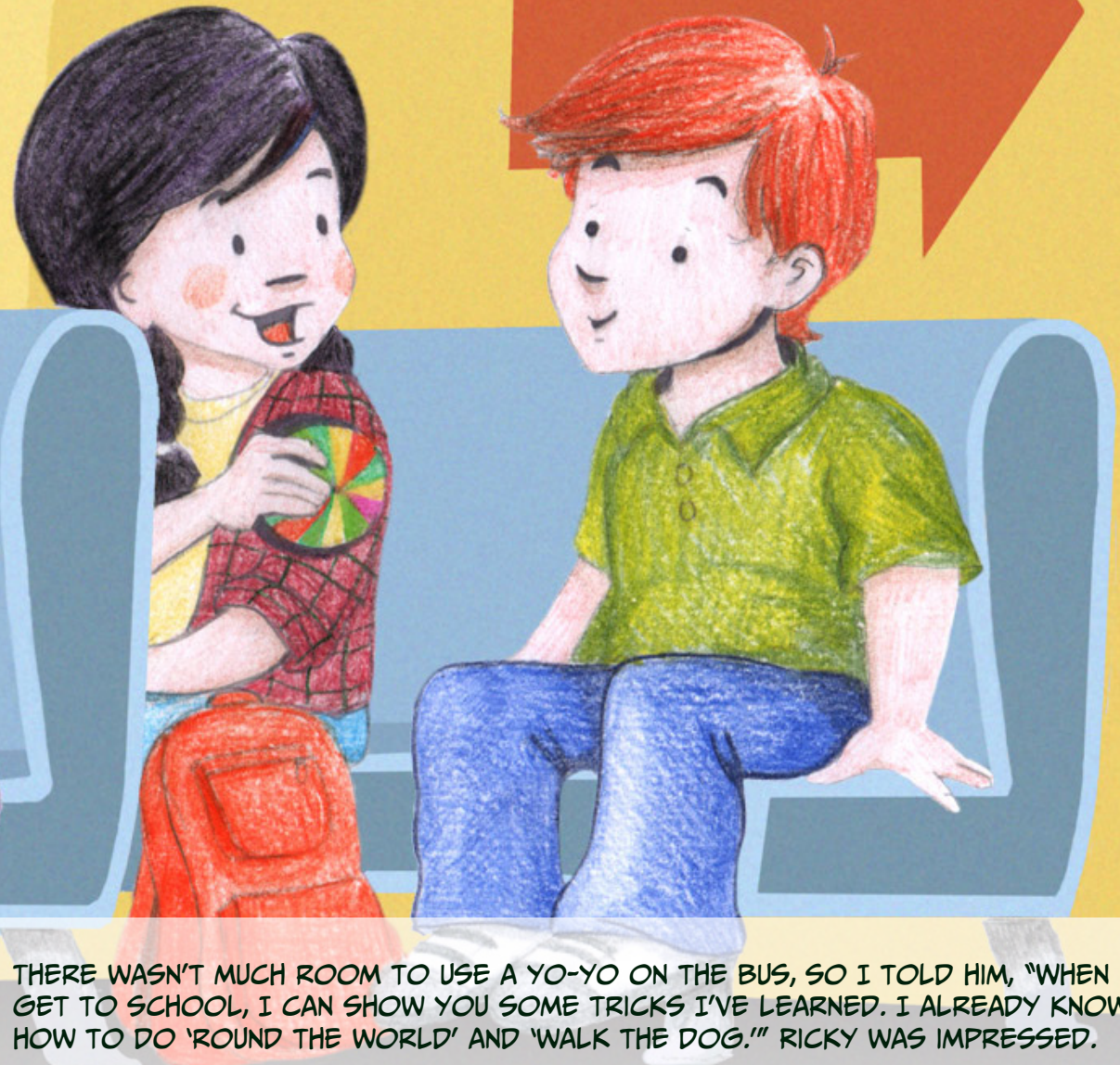
A FEW WEEKS PRIOR TO THAT, I HAD BEEN GIVEN A BRIGHTLY COLORED YO-YO FOR MY BIRTHDAY, WHICH WAS MY FAVORITE PRESENT!

THE NEXT SCHOOL DAY, WHEN RICKY GOT ON THE BUS, I DECIDED TO GET TO KNOW MY NEW CLASSMATE. I MOVED OVER AND MADE ROOM FOR HIM TO SIT NEXT TO ME. "HI, RICKY!"

"HI, CHRISTI," RICKY RESPONDED, AND SAT BY ME.

"RICKY, WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MY YO-YO?"

"OH, YES!" RICKY RIGHT AWAY TRIED IT OUT.



THERE WASN'T MUCH ROOM TO USE A YO-YO ON THE BUS, SO I TOLD HIM, "WHEN WE GET TO SCHOOL, I CAN SHOW YOU SOME TRICKS I'VE LEARNED. I ALREADY KNOW HOW TO DO 'ROUND THE WORLD' AND 'WALK THE DOG.'" RICKY WAS IMPRESSED.

JESUS USED THAT YO-YO AS PART OF THE ANSWER TO MY PRAYER.

AS THE BUS CONTINUED ON THE ROUTE TO THE SCHOOL, WE TOOK TURNS WITH THE YO-YO. "RICKY, DO YOU KNOW ABOUT JESUS?" I ASKED.

"NO, I DON'T THINK SO," RICKY RESPONDED. "SHOULD I?"

"I THINK YOU'D REALLY LIKE TO GET TO KNOW HIM."

"WHY?" RICKY ASKED. I HAD NEVER HEARD SOMEONE ASK THAT QUESTION BEFORE. SO I SAT THERE AND THOUGHT ABOUT IT.

"BECAUSE HE IS A VERY GOOD FRIEND," I TOLD RICKY. "I THINK YOU'D LIKE HAVING HIM AS YOUR FRIEND, TOO."

THE NEXT SUNDAY, RICKY'S MOTHER DROVE HIM TO THE SMALL TOWN CHURCH, AND RICKY JOINED OUR SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS.

THREE YEARS PASSED, DURING WHICH ALL OF US WHO ATTENDED SUNDAY SCHOOL CONTINUED TO LEARN MORE ABOUT JESUS. SUMMER CAME, AND THERE WAS A SPECIAL SUMMER CAMP HELD FOR THE CHILDREN WHO ATTENDED THE SUNDAY SCHOOL. RICKY AND I AND SOME OF OUR OTHER CLASSMATES ATTENDED.



ONE NIGHT, WHILE SITTING AROUND THE CAMP FIRE, THE CAMP LEADER WALKED OVER TO THE FIRE AND THREW IN A PINECONE. AS THE PINECONE CRACKLED AND BURNED, THE CAMP LEADER EXPLAINED, "IF ANYONE HAS A SPECIAL TESTIMONY TO TELL OF SOMETHING JESUS HAS DONE FOR THEM, THROW A PINECONE INTO THE FIRE, AND THEN TELL YOUR STORY."

TO MY SURPRISE, RICKY STEPPED UP. HE THREW HIS PINECONE INTO THE FIRE AND TOLD EVERYONE, "I GOT TO KNOW JESUS BECAUSE A FEW YEARS AGO MY FRIEND, CHRISTI, TOLD ME ABOUT HIM. I'M VERY GLAD SHE DID!"

THAT MADE ME SO HAPPY! I DIDN'T KNOW RICKY REMEMBERED THAT I HAD INVITED HIM TO KNOW JESUS, AND I FELT HONORED BY WHAT HE SAID.

NOW, MANY YEARS LATER, I'M STILL MAKING FRIENDS AND TELLING THEM THAT JESUS WANTS TO BE THEIR FRIEND TOO.

IT'S SIMPLE TO HELP OTHERS KNOW JESUS LIKE YOU DO. IT STARTS WITH FRIENDSHIP.