

# ACTING GOD

"There you are, Helen," her mother said as Helen wandered through the front door. "I was wondering about you."

Eight-year-old Helen had stood on the train station platform, watching the soldiers disembarking from the compartments while being greeted by cheering friends and family. World War II had finally ended and many soldiers were returning to their homes and countries. Helen imagined how nice it would have been if her father would have gotten off that train too. But she knew that wouldn't happen. Her father had died in the war.

"I was watching the soldiers return. All the families were so happy to be together again. Some people were singing. There was even a girl my age greeting her daddy."

"I'm so glad the war is over!" Helen said.

"Me too," her mother replied as she hugged her daughter.

"Would you mind putting on the water to boil for tea?" her mother asked. "Supper is almost ready."

Helen filled the gray kettle with water.

"While at the train station I was thinking...", she hesitantly began.

"About?"

"Well, I wish Daddy had also returned home from the war. I miss him very much! However, I don't feel sad for Daddy because I know that he is in heaven. But we're not the only ones who lost someone in the war. Like Mrs. Elda across the street. Almost every time I pass her, it seems she is crying."

"Yes, darling," Mother said. "We miss Daddy very much, and it hurts to not have him with us, but Jesus is taking good care of us. He has provided a house for us to live in, we have food for every meal, the sun shines, and my Helen still smiles."

Mother tickled her and Helen laughed.



## WORLD WAR II

In terms of lives lost and destruction, World War II is considered to be one of the most devastating wars in history. It began as a European conflict, but soon grew to include many more nations of the world, notably the United States and Japan. It lasted for four years and ended in 1945.

"Mother, I wish others could experience the comfort we receive from God. How can we help other people to be happier?"

"They need to see God's love put into action," said her mother.

"Hmmm."

Mother stopped her cooking, knelt down, and took Helen's hands in hers. "Let's say I wanted you to go to people who have never met us and to tell them how I look. How would you do it?"

Helen thought for a moment. "Maybe I'd draw them a picture of you. Then they'd know."

"Very good! Now if God asks us to show people what He is like, how do you think we can do that?"

Helen seemed puzzled. "Well, we can tell them what He says in the Bible. But I can't draw a picture of God because I haven't seen Him."

"Yes, it's true we don't know how God looks. But don't we know how He acts? What is God? God is..."

"Love," Helen answered.

"So what can we do to help people know what God is like and who He is?"

"Be kind to them?"

"Yes, my darling. And when people see you act like God by being kind, then they'll want to get to know Him better."

"I'm going to do that, Mother. I'm going to try to act like God by doing something kind every day. Maybe I can bring flowers to Mrs. Elda tomorrow and see how she's doing."

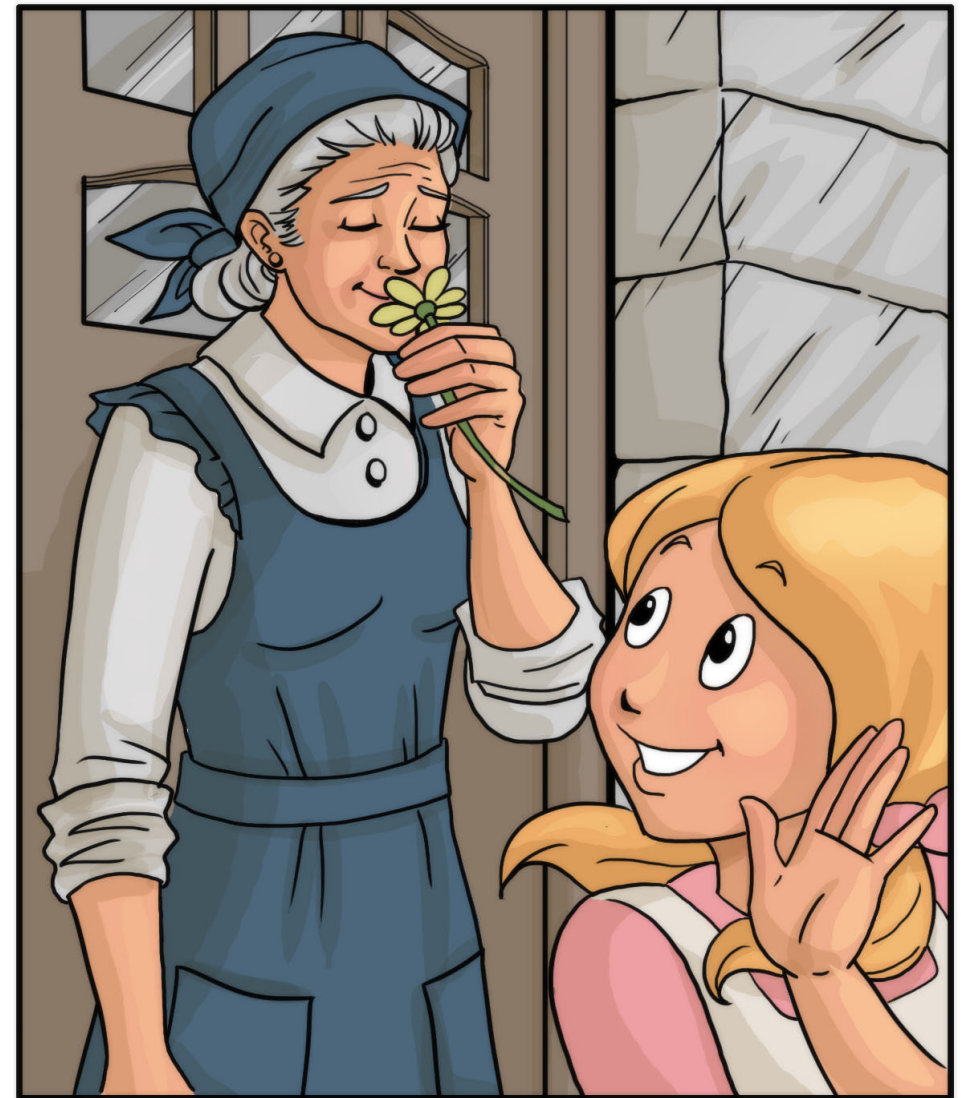
Mother hugged Helen.

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After school the next day, Helen ran to Mrs. Elda's house.

*Knock, knock!*

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Elda! This is for you."



The cheery words brightened the elderly woman's face as she reached out a frail hand to receive a yellow flower.

"Why, thank you," Mrs. Elda replied in surprise.

"Have a nice day. See you tomorrow!" Helen called as she skipped back down the path.



At home, Helen pulled out her journal and wrote at the top of one of the pages: "Acting God," and under the title, she wrote, "Gave a flower to Mrs. Elda."

Throughout the week Helen tried to do something each day to "act God" for someone. Soon the journal page had six more phrases:

- Helped Mrs. Aubrey bring her laundry in from the rain.
- Played catch with the boy at the park in a wheelchair.
- Hugged Mrs. Elda.
- Forgave my little sister after she hit me.
- Read for Grandpa—his eyes are so sore.
- Made Mother's bed.

Helen smiled as she read over the list. She felt happy to know that in her own way she was showing people what God is like.

After several weeks of doing something kind each day, the phrases in Helen's notebook started getting longer and the entries would appear with more frequency. One day's entry read: "I finally told Henry (the boy in a wheelchair) about how Jesus died so we could know God's love and be with Him in heaven. He said he wanted to know Jesus too! I prayed with Henry today."

At eight years old, Helen's deeds of kindness began to change those around her.

One day, Helen saw a young man throwing rocks into a pond and seemed rather upset.

"Hello," Helen said. "Nice day, isn't it?"

"It's a horrible day, and I'd rather not talk," the young man replied.

Helen smiled. "How would you like these?"

She opened the bag she was carrying and took out three fresh jam tarts and handed them to him. "My mother made them, and I think you might enjoy them."

Then Helen skipped away.



Several days later while walking with her mother, Helen met the young man again. This time he thanked Helen and her mother for the jam tarts and introduced himself as Philip.

Helen's mother invited Philip back to their home for more jam tarts, at which time he opened up about what was weighing so heavily on his heart.

"As a child I had many dreams about what I wanted to be," he began. "One of those dreams was to be a pilot, and as soon as I was old enough, I joined the air force, where I was taught to fly.

"Then the war happened. My best friend and I were pilots in the war. His plane crashed on one of his missions, and I never saw him again."

At this, the young man started crying. "Helen, that day you handed me the jam tarts was his birthday."

Helen's mother softly patted Philip's arm. "I think we have an idea about how you feel," she said.

"My father was killed in the war too," explained Helen.

Philip became friends with Helen and her mother and visited them frequently. Helen would

often tell Philip stories of the ways she could see God's love showing through things that happened to her. Sometimes she read from her favorite children's Bible with Philip during his visits, and, one day, he too prayed that Jesus would help and be with him.

After this, Philip started telling his military friends about Jesus and Helen. At times, Helen's mother encouraged Philip to invite his friends to their home for dinner or for a fun activity and an opportunity to learn more about Jesus.

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As time passed, a positive change came over the town where Helen lived. People knew Helen as "the girl who spread kindness." Neighboring towns soon heard of her influence, and other girls and boys decided to do what she was doing.

Helen was no longer only doing one or two kind things each day; in fact, she could hardly keep count anymore. Nevertheless, she still wrote down each kind deed she remembered at the day's end, and soon she had several little notebooks of records.



Years passed, and when Helen's hair had whitened with age, she caught a small glimpse of the influence she'd had on others' lives.

Using her cane, Helen slowly walked to answer a knock at the door. She opened it to see three little smiling faces looking up at her. One child held a flower in her hand and held it up for Helen to take.

"Good morning, ma'am!" the children chorused. "We wanted to give you this flower and wish you a happy day."

Helen was reminded of the first kind deed she had done, so similar to this one.

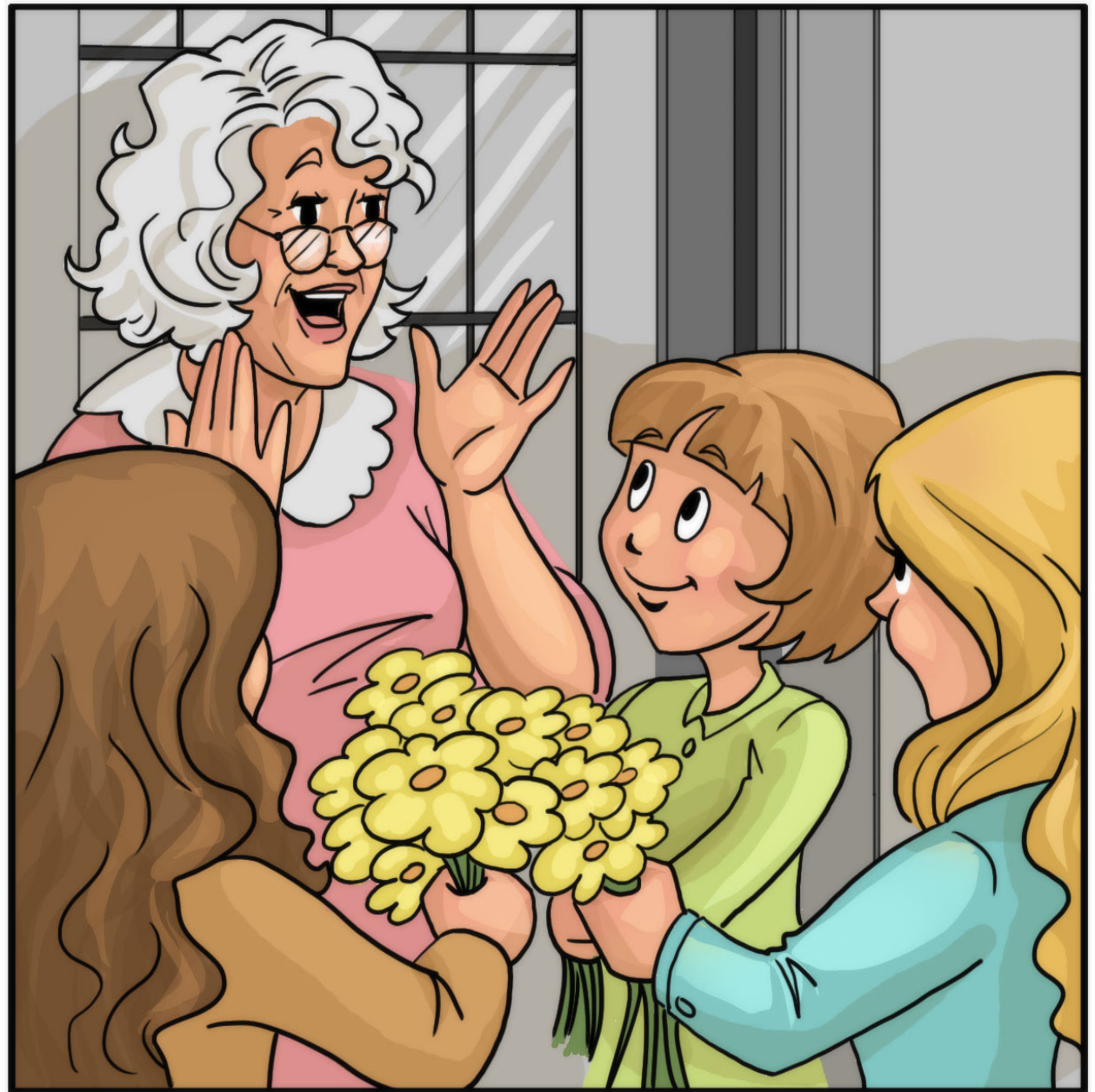
"My, what a kind deed. Whose idea was it?" she asked.

"Our teacher's," one little girl replied. "She said that when she was a child, her mother told her of a little girl who did something kind every day for someone, and soon people throughout the town were much happier."

"Our teacher said that we should try to do the same," said the next little girl.

"And we're starting with you," said the third girl.

Helen hugged each child. She had no idea just how far her influence had gone, but it had lived on. Her deeds of kindness continued to bring joy to others.



Choose a day to "act God." As the day proceeds, make a list of each deed of kindness performed.

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