

FAITHFUL FRED

There once was a boy named Fred who lived in a small farming town. He was ten years old and was an only child. Most people in the town, both children and grownups, admired this spunky little lad because he was always helpful and cheery. His father ran the town's grocery store, and Fred would often help his father around the store.

Fred had a cat that he loved very much. Often his cat, Fluffy, was Fred's only companion when he would look after the grocery store when his father had to take care of other business and his mother was at home. Fluffy would run around the store chasing mice and bugs, and sometimes Fred would run around with her—that is, of course, when there weren't any customers.



One summer evening when Fred's father was away for the day picking up supplies at a nearby town, Fred was looking out the window watching some of the other boys playing.

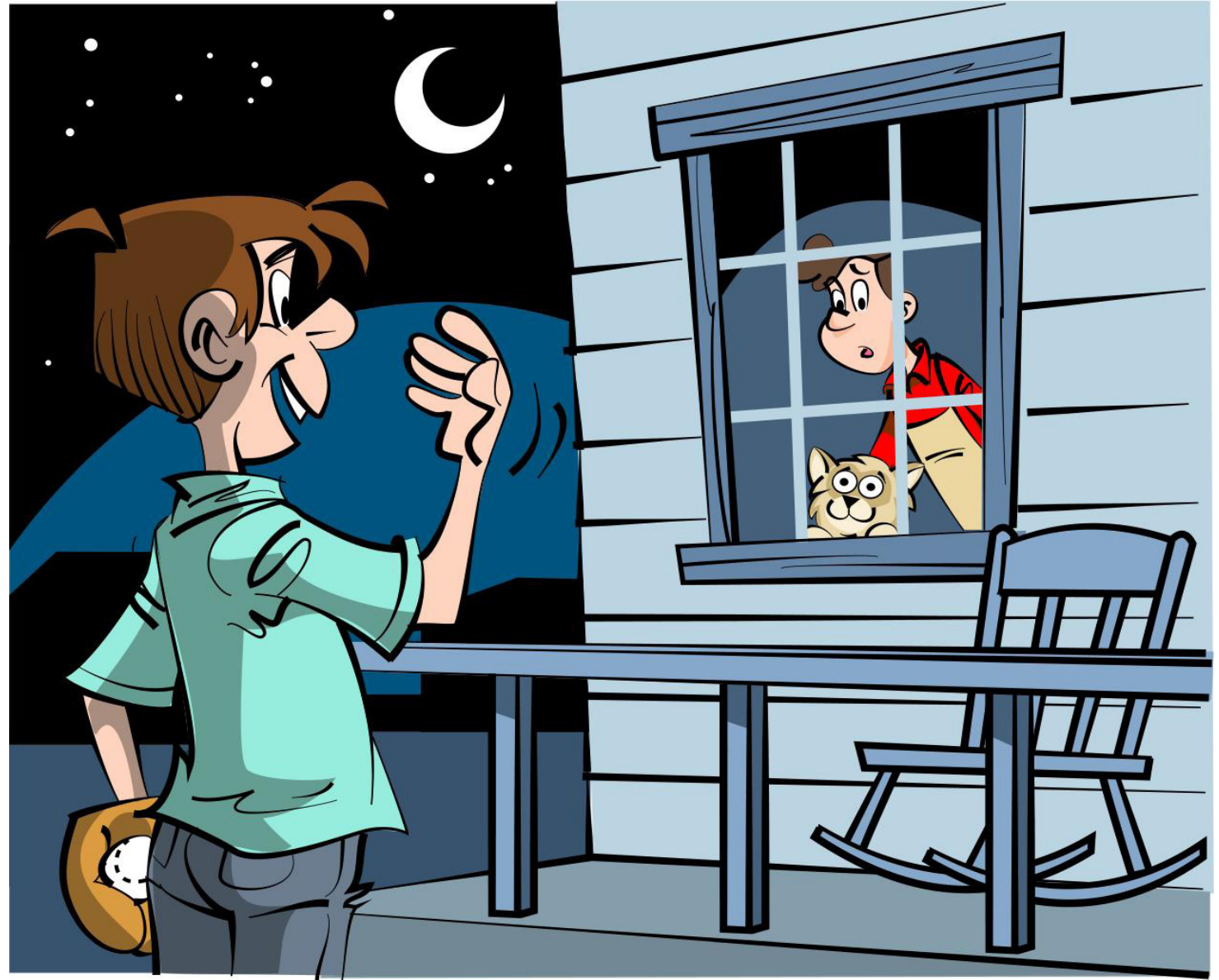
"Come out and join us, Fred," called his friend Abe.

"I can't," Fred replied. "I need to look after the store until my father returns. But thanks anyway."

"Aw, come on," said Abe. "Your father won't even know that you left. And besides, there haven't been any customers for the last 20 minutes."

Fred thought for a moment, and then with a shake of his head said, "I'm sorry, but I can't come and play with you when I know my father trusts me to look after the store for him."

"Whatever," Abe muttered, and walked off with the rest of the boys.



Fred turned around with a sigh when he saw his father standing at the back of the store. "Hello, Father." Fred grinned.

"Hello, Freddy," his father replied, as Fred gave his father a hug.

“I’m glad that I came back early,” his father said, “because I was able to overhear your exchange with Abe. I’m sure it wasn’t easy for you to choose to stay in the store instead of playing with your friends. I’m proud of you for making the right choice to be responsible and to do what you knew in your heart to be right.”

Fred was very pleased. He was always happy when his father commended him. “You can go and play with the other boys after you run home and tell Mother that I’m back,” said Father. “I’ll take care of the store now.”

Fred was elated. And off he ran.

Fred learned a very important lesson—that it’s best to follow through on his responsibilities. Even though he thought no one was watching him at the time, in his heart, Fred knew that God was always watching and could see everything he did, and that helped him to choose to do what he knew to be right.

