

It's a Wonderful Home School

November, 2004

Georgia Bailey sighed as she pulled out of the parking lot of the coffee house. Mom's Night Out meant so much to her and encouraged her tremendously as a home schooling mom, but sometimes these gatherings left her feeling so inadequate. Everyone seemed to have it so together! Their home schools always seemed to run so smoothly! What was wrong with her? As she began the long drive home, she considered her own family.

Her husband, Marty, was enthusiastic about home schooling from the first moment Georgia mentioned it to him when Suzie was only four years old. They had never regretted their decision to educate their children at home and loved everything about the home schooling lifestyle. They made it to every home schooling convention they could and sat hand in hand during workshops, inspired by speakers who had blazed the trail for families who chose to go against the norm of society. But tonight, as Georgia left the regular meeting for moms, she felt less than inspired. She felt like a failure.

Her oldest daughter, Suzie, was now sixteen years old. She was a good student, to be sure, but Georgia was having a difficult time keeping Suzie on task. It was as if she lived with her head in the clouds and there were very few subjects that could hold her attention. She had a real proficiency when it came to foreign languages and was currently whizzing through a French program. In fact, Suzie made As and Bs in just about everything, but Georgia always felt somehow that she had failed in her efforts to make academics a priority for Suzie. Suzie only cared about getting the work done so she could be about her own activities.

Georgia's fourteen-year-old son Johnny was another case altogether and was the particular cause for her depression this evening. They had had another argument today, and when she left home Johnny was in his room... drawing, no doubt, instead of applying himself to the research project she had assigned a month ago. It seemed that her son cared only about one thing: his artwork. Sometimes Georgia felt as though every day of school she had ever shared with her son had been a struggle. It was especially frustrating because she knew how bright Johnny was. She had used the argument, "but you could do so much better!" until she was blue in the face, but to no avail.

"Well," Georgia thought, sighing again, "At least there's Georgie!" She smiled as she thought of her sweet eleven-year-old son. What a delight he was! He was the apple of his father's eye and the joy of his mother's heart; but even Georgie was showing some signs of resistance to his schoolwork, and this was causing his mother great pain.

"What is wrong with me?" Georgia thought again, for surely she must be the problem! Her husband was supportive, they were using the best curriculum on the market, and she had (for the most part) a good relationship with her children... what was wrong? She was no rookie to home schooling, and over the years she had researched learning styles and teaching techniques in order to provide the best material and environment for each child. She knew that each child was different and worked to individualize her teaching and her expectations to meet their needs... so what was wrong?

As Georgia continued to reflect on her dismal life, she became more and more despondent until finally unable to hold back the tears, she pulled into the parking lot of a large grocery store and turned off the minivan. Her hands flew to her face and she began to sob uncontrollably.

"Oh, Lord," she prayed, "Help me! Help me! I can't do this anymore! I am a miserable failure and I am going to ruin my children!"

Suddenly, Georgia sensed a presence next to her. She raised her head from her hands and was startled to see a glowing figure in the minivan's passenger seat. Trying to decide whether she should flee or just faint, she found herself awed by this presence. The glow began to fade and before long Georgia found herself seated next to a rather plain-looking individual in a denim jumper, tennis shoes, and white bobby sox.

"Who... WHAT... are you?" Georgia asked, fumbling for words.

"I am your guardian angel. My name is Clara," answered the presence.

"My guardian angel?? Well, I guess you're about the kind of guardian angel I would get!" laughed Georgia. "Why are you here?"

"You asked our Heavenly Father for help, so He has sent me to minister to you," replied Clara.

"Oh, that is so wonderful! Please, Clara, tell me what to do about my children. I've just made a mess of this whole home schooling thing! I just don't know what to do anymore. Should I just put my children into public school? Or maybe a good private school... there is one very close to our home."

"Well," said Clara, "I suppose you could. Of course, since your children have never been in a classroom setting, they might have a bit of an adjustment ahead."

"You're right," sighed Georgia, despondent again. "I suppose it would be better if I had never started homeschooling at all!"

"Hmm..." said Clara under her breath. "That might be possible." Looking upward she was quiet for a moment, then nodded and said, "That's it then! You've never homeschooled!"

Instantly, the minivan was transformed into a late model sedan, rather sporty in design and immaculate both inside and out. Georgia gasped. "What in the world has happened?!"

"Nothing 'in the world' as a matter of fact," answered Clara. "You've just been given a wonderful gift ~ the chance to see what your children would be like if you had never homeschooled them."

Georgia had dedicated her life to God when she was a young girl and was a strong believer in the power and love of God, but she just could not believe that He would answer her prayer in such a personal way.

"I... I... I just don't know what to say," stammered Georgia.

"Well, then, don't say anything... just watch and listen," responded Clara. "First of all, perhaps you should let me drive." Once again, with the blink of an eye, Clara and Georgia had changed positions and Clara was starting up the car.

"Where are we going?" asked Georgia apprehensively.

"I need to explain something to you," Clara said. "We are not in your reality anymore, nor are we in your time. I am going to show you what your children will be like in 15 years if you had never homeschooled them. We are on our way to Suzie's house."

"Oh, my!" thought Georgia. "This is just amazing! I can't wait to see how Suzie has turned out!"

Before long, they pulled up to a large gate flanked by guardhouses. Georgia was so impressed to think that Suzie had become so successful at... well, something! She was amazed when, instead of speaking to the guards, Clara just drove the car right through the gates as though they were not there. They drove up a long, winding driveway until they reached an enormous house.

"What is this place?" asked Georgia.

"It is the Holy Grail Ashram," replied Clara. "This is where Suzie lives."

"I don't understand. Is this Suzie's house?"

"Well, in a manner of speaking. She is considered by these people to be a great spiritual

leader."

"A great spiritual leader! That's fantastic!"

"Well... not so much. You see, when Suzie was about fifteen years old she was searching for meaning in her life. Someone at school introduced her to some New Age teachings and Suzie became more and more indoctrinated into those belief systems. In this reality, she left home as soon as she graduated from high school, and you have not spoken to her since."

"That's not possible!" cried Georgia. "Suzie may have her head in the clouds, but she loves the Lord with all her heart! Why, she wants to serve as a missionary in a remote village in Africa. She heard about the needs for missionaries in that particular region when someone visited our church and it's all she talks about! She wants to witness to the people in that village."

"The people in that village have yet to hear about the saving grace of God because Suzie chose another path, because you chose another path. Don't you see, every life touches so many other lives?"

"Oh, this is just terrible!" thought Georgia. She was afraid to ask about Johnny, but Clara, sensing her thoughts, brought up the subject.

"Would you like to know about Johnny?"

"I'm not sure."

"Johnny left home at fourteen. By the time he was twelve, he had been kicked out of school for repeatedly defacing public property and he went from one private school to another until he finally gave up and left school, and home, to join his friends on the street. The local gangs all liked Johnny because of his superior artwork, but it took a lot more than a little graffiti to reach the high ranking he now holds."

"No, no! That just can't be! Johnny is a good boy! He's a good boy!"

"Johnny needed the individual attention you were able to give him to make it through the academics of school. In a public school setting, he was just seen as a slacker and a troublemaker, so that is what he became."

Clara reached out to touch Georgia's shoulder, as if to steady her. "Would you like to see Georgie now?" In her numbness, Georgia just nodded.

They pulled up in front of a high rise building just as a handsome man exited. Georgia recognized him immediately as the older version of her sweet little boy. Hesitantly, she inquired, "What does he do?"

"Oh, Georgie is quite a success story!" beamed Clara. "He made short work of college, graduating at the top of his class. He now holds a master's degree and is one of the wealthiest men in this state."

"Well, finally!" said Georgia. "I always knew Georgie would turn out well! What about family? Does he have children?"

"Georgie doesn't really have the time, or the inclination, for family. You see, he works upwards of 80 hours a week (The business world is very competitive, you know.) To stay at the top of his game, he must devote himself exclusively to his corporation."

"Of course, I can understand that," retorted Georgia. "But surely he has time for a social life."

"He makes time when socializing would benefit him in some way. He has a regular golf date with a couple of local politicians, and he often cuts the day short for a game of racquetball when his scout reports to him that his competition is at the gym."

"Look, I know that businessmen must work hard, but I just can't see Georgie turning out like this. His father passed up a big promotion in the corporate world in order to begin working out of our home. We aren't as well off as we might like, but Marty makes a good living, and-more importantly-he has been a wonderful role model for all our children. They know that family is Marty's priority, and I just don't think Georgie would choose..."

A little impatient, Clara interrupted, "In this reality, Marty took that promotion. Why would he choose to be at home? You and the children were gone all day. As soon as Georgie was school age, you returned to the work force and have been there ever since. It was your salary that paid for this cute little car of yours. Sure, Marty is a good Christian father who tries to be a good role model, but what he really models in this reality is that working to get ahead and provide things for his family is his priority."

For the first time, Georgia began to really understand what she was seeing this evening. "Oh, Clara," she cried. "I just don't know what to say!"

Clara's countenance softened as she sensed Georgia's brokenness. "Georgia," she whispered, "would you like to know how your children will turn out if you stay the course?"

"Can I?!"

"You know, our God lives outside of time, and He has given me special permission to give you a glimpse into the future. He wants to reassure you that you are doing His will in the lives of these children.

"First, let's talk about Suzie. In your reality, Suzie will indeed become a missionary and visit that remote village in Africa. But not only that, her children and their children for many generations will carry on as missionaries, carrying the word of God to the most remote parts of the world. Many years from now, there will be a foundation named after Suzie that ministers to missionaries. The front lawn will be graced by a statue of Suzie surrounded by the little children from that very first village.

"I know you often throw your hands up when you battle with Johnny about schoolwork, but you must have noticed that God has given him a remarkable gift. In your reality, Johnny will become one of the most renowned illustrators of his time. He will develop a set of books for teens that will impact the lives of millions of young people, turning them from the culture of their day toward a relationship with Jesus Christ. When he becomes famous, he will begin a ministry to take back the streets from the gangs, encouraging young people to dedicate their artistic and musical talents to God."

Slowly, the pounding in Georgia's head began to diminish as she listened. Almost in a whisper she asked, "And Georgie?"

"Well, now, Georgie is going to be just fine, too. His years of apprenticing under his father will give him a strong understanding of business. He will never become the corporate magnate that you saw, but he will go into business for himself and will provide for his family very well. He will never be wealthy, but he will be a pillar of the community. His strong love of family and dedication to the Lord Jesus Christ will be a shining example to all who meet him. Whenever he struggles with keeping his priorities in place, he will think back to the years he spent in your home and he will place his family just where you and Marty have always placed yours--at the foot of the cross." After a moment's pause, Clara continued, "So you see, Georgia, yours really is a wonderful home school. While you may struggle and stumble in this present day, if you will stay the course your obedience to God's call will some day garner you the ultimate praise, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant.'"

Georgia leaned back in her seat and closed her eyes, praying as she did, "Lord, forgive my weakness and my fear. Thank You for reminding me that the rewards of this lifestyle are eternal. Thank You for giving me the opportunity to raise children that love and honor You. Thank You for my home school!"

Her cell phone started ringing, bringing Georgia back to the moment. When she opened her eyes, she found herself back in the driver's seat of her minivan, all alone. She answered the phone and heard Johnny's voice. "Mom, are you coming home, or what?"

"Yes, Johnny, I'm on my way. What's up?"

"Well, I just thought you were gonna help me with this goofy paper, that's all! I can't find anything on this Machiavelli guy and you said you would help!"

"I'll be home in ten minutes, but I had an idea tonight. Instead of Machiavelli, why don't we do your report on Leonardo da Vinci? I think you might find him a little more interesting."

"Yeah, whatever"

