

Bringing Them Home

Elizabeth Wiens

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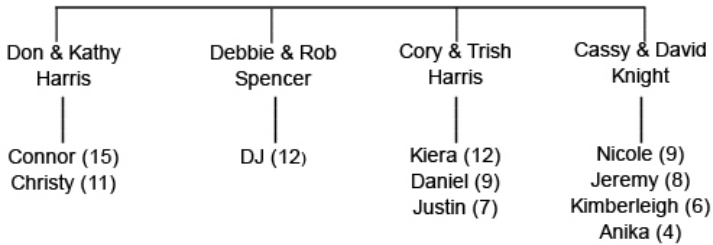
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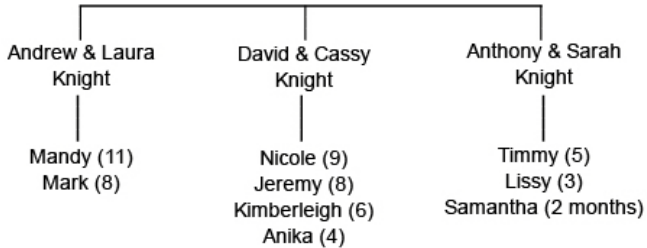
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Family Tree

Cassy's Family Mike & Joyce Harris (Pastor in B.C.)



David's Family Paul & Jean Knight (Farmer in Alberta)



The Dilemma

Quiet! With a tired sigh Cassy Knight drew up her legs and tucked them snugly beneath her on the couch. A steaming cup of coffee rested on the worn end table within easy reach. It was one of those rare, peaceful moments cherished by any mom with young children, and she intended to take full advantage of it. Anika was playing quietly in her room, and it would be several hours before her three older children would be home from school, narrowing the chances of her finding a few stolen moments of solitude. May sunshine filtered through the south-facing bay window and onto the couch where she sat, bringing a welcome warmth after the long winter.

Cassy sipped her coffee and opened the cover of the magazine in her lap. Scanning the table of contents, she noticed an article titled “Twenty Tips for Working Mothers.” Though Cassy had been out of the workforce for almost ten years, she planned to head back to work once Anika entered kindergarten in a year. She flipped a few pages and began to read. An unwelcome ring broke the silence before Cassy had even finished the first paragraph. With a frown she set her mug back on the table, flipped her magazine upside-down on the cushion and trudged to the kitchen to answer the phone.

“Hello, Mrs. Knight?”

“Speaking.” Cassy shifted the phone as she attempted to identify the voice on the other end.

“This is Shawna from Thompson Elementary School. I’m afraid I have to ask you to pick up your son, Jeremy.”

“Is he sick?” Cassy’s brows wrinkled with worry.

“No, he was in a fight at recess. Since this is his first offense, we

will not suspend him, but you need to take him home for the rest of the day.”

“I don’t get it.” Cassy sank into a nearby chair. “Why would Jeremy get in a fight?”

“You’ll have to ask him that question when you get here, since he started it,” the woman answered crisply before hanging up.

Cassy’s shoulders slumped as she stared at the phone in her hand for a moment before setting it down on the kitchen table. Jeremy was obviously not hurt too badly or the secretary would have said so, but what could have caused her eight-year-old son to pick a fight?

“So much for my peaceful afternoon.” Cassy shook her head as she rose to collect her purse and keys. “Anika,” she called down the hall.

“What, Mommy?”

“Come here, honey. We have to go get your brother from school.”

Immediately the four-year-old came bounding from her room where she had been playing, her blond ponytail bobbing as she ran. “Are Nico’e and Kimmy coming home, too?”

“Not right now. They’ll come home on the bus. We’re picking up your brother because he’s in trouble.”

“Oooh.” Anika’s face turned serious.

It was a twenty-minute drive from their acreage to the elementary school on the south end of Red Deer. Cassy was quiet as she drove, her mind focused on deciding what punishment would be appropriate to administer for her son’s behavior. Her fingers tapped the wheel as if keeping rhythm with her turbulent thoughts.

After they arrived, Cassy unbuckled Anika from her booster seat and led her into the school office. She recognized Shawna sitting behind the massive reception desk, working at a computer. The school secretary paused long enough to point toward the corner of the room where Jeremy fidgeted in his seat, head down. Taking in her son’s disheveled appearance, Cassy strode in his direction. At her movement Jeremy glanced up, and Cassy immediately noticed the purplish color already appearing along the curve of his cheek just under his left eye. She threw her son a disapproving look, causing him to turn away, his lips clamped tight and his arms crossed against his chest.

Not wanting to discuss the matter in the presence of the secretary,

Cassy gripped her son's shoulder. "Come on." Without a word, Jeremy followed his mother out to the van and climbed in.

"What happened to your eye?" Anika asked her brother once she had been buckled into her seat.

"Nothing."

"Are you in trouble?" Anika persisted.

"Be quiet," Jeremy snapped.

"You want to tell me what this is all about?" Cassy stared at her son in the rearview mirror, her keys resting idly in the ignition.

"It's nothing!"

"You picking a fight with someone isn't nothing. I want to know what happened."

Jeremy met his mother's steely blue gaze in the mirror. "Randy started it," he declared.

"The secretary said you started it."

"Randy was calling me names. He's always picking on me, and I'm tired of it!" As Jeremy's lower lip started to quiver, the defiance left his face.

Cassy noticed the tears beginning to pool in his eyes, and her heart softened. She turned to face her son, who was seated directly behind her. "What did he call you?"

"He said I was the dumbest kid in third grade and should go back to kindergarten." Jeremy turned to stare out the window, but Cassy could see a tear spill over and make a trail down his cheek.

"That's not very nice," Anika said solemnly.

Jeremy glanced over at his little sister before shifting his gaze toward the window once again.

"I'm sorry he hurt you, Jeremy. Randy was being nasty, but fighting never solves anything. You know your dad and I don't approve of such behavior." At Jeremy's silent nod, Cassy turned around. "We'll talk about this more when your dad gets home," she added before starting the van.

It was a quiet ride home.

When Kimberleigh and Nicole came in the back door a couple of hours later, Anika ran to meet them. "Jeremy got in a fight at school, and his eye is aw funny co'wers," she announced, obviously proud to be

the bearer of such news.

“I bet he’s in big trouble!” six-year-old Kimberleigh declared as she threw down her backpack and hurried off to investigate the situation.

“Is he okay?” Nicole asked quietly. “I was wondering what happened when my teacher told me he wouldn’t be on the bus.”

“Oh, he’s awright. He’s just mad because a mean boy caw’ed him names.”

Nicole’s forehead creased in a frown. Hanging up her jacket, she went in search of her brother. She found Jeremy sprawled on his bed, his face buried in his arms. Kimberleigh was standing beside him, jabbing his shoulder and pleading with him to show her his black eye, but Jeremy was ignoring her.

“Don’t bug him, Kimmy,” Nicole admonished her sister.

“Fine—he can’t hide forever!” Kimberleigh flounced from the room.

“You okay?” Nicole asked tentatively.

Jeremy peeked over the edge of his arm and scanned the room. “Yeah,” he said quietly.

“Don’t listen to those boys, whatever they said.”

“It’s just Randy. I wish he’d leave me alone. I can’t help it I’m so stupid.”

“You’re not stupid; you just don’t like school, is all. I bet you can do all kinds of things Randy can’t do.”

Cassy, in the midst of folding laundry in her bedroom, heard the exchange between her children. She had been glad when Nicole headed into Jeremy’s room. He had moped all afternoon, and she knew if anyone could cheer him up, it would be her tenderhearted daughter. Placing the last pair of socks in the appropriate pile, Cassy headed to the kitchen and busied herself with supper preparations. She had called David on his cell phone earlier, and her husband was planning to come home a little early to deal with Jeremy’s episode at school. David ran a construction business with his brother, Anthony, so his time was somewhat flexible when need be, though Cassy tried not to abuse it.

As soon as David came in the back door, he made his way to the kitchen. “How’s Jeremy?” He leaned against the counter at his wife’s elbow.

“Okay, I guess. He was mad at first, but I think he’s more hurt than anything. I don’t know how long this bullying has been going on.”

“I’ll go talk to him.” David squeezed his wife’s shoulder before he left.

Whether from Nicole’s comforting words or David’s talk with his son, Jeremy seemed more himself when he came to the table a half hour later. No one mentioned the fight over supper, and Cassy was glad that tomorrow was Saturday. Jeremy’s eye would have the weekend to heal a bit before heading back to school, though she was sure the evidence would last well into the following week. Cassy decided to chalk her son’s behavior up to an isolated incident and hoped it wouldn’t happen again.



The following afternoon Cassy had just started to mix up a batch of cookies when Jeremy came running in from outdoors. The next moment he was at his mother’s side.

“Look what I found!”

Cassy turned to find herself eye-to-eye with a garter snake. She jerked back and let out a shriek. “Jeremy David, you get that thing out of the house this instant!” Cassy dropped the egg she was holding, and it was now dripping down the front of the cupboard where it had landed. She glared at her son, who at least had the common sense to take a step back.

“But Mom, he’s so cool! Can’t I keep him, please?” Jeremy held up the twelve-inch snake once more in hopes his mother would see its colorful stripe and boyish appeal. The snake’s tongue darted in and out and the reptile gracefully coiled its tail more tightly around its captor’s hand. “See, Ziggy likes you.”

Pressing her back more firmly against the cupboard behind her, Cassy cocked her face away from the snake’s beady eyes and flicking tongue. She frantically shooed Jeremy to take it away. “I said no. Now get him out of my face!” She spat the words through gritted teeth in exasperation.

Jeremy gave a dejected sigh as he turned and headed for the back door. “Don’t worry, Ziggy, she didn’t mean it. She just needs a chance to get to know you better.”

Cassy rolled her eyes and involuntarily shivered. In relief she heard the door close behind her son. *How am I ever going to survive Jeremy’s infatuation with disgusting critters?* Cassy wondered as she grabbed a paper towel and began cleaning up the messy egg.

Cassy was sure God had given her a son like Jeremy to test her patience, and most days she felt she was failing that test miserably. As the young mother washed her hands, she glanced out the window and spotted her son. He was still talking to the snake he held clutched in one hand, while he yanked out some grass with the other and flung it into a large, empty flower pot on the back deck. Jeremy stopped to stroke his pet before gently placing it into the planter. His chin rested between his hands on the curved rim of the snake’s new home. Then Jeremy began talking animatedly to Shasta, their brown cocker spaniel, who was parked at his side, tail wagging.

Cassy sighed and shook her head. So much for the petunias clustered among the flats of bedding plants on the deck soaking up the sunshine. She had hoped to get them transplanted into that pot next week if the warm weather held. She could only hope Ziggy would have tired of his new home by then.

Turning from the window, Cassy decided to go in search of the girls. Anika would be disappointed if she discovered her mother had baked some cookies without her. Making her way down the hall, Cassy paused and glanced in Nicole’s open door on the right. Her eldest was sprawled on her belly across the bed, her ankles crossed behind her. She was propped up on both elbows, a large book in her hands. The nine-year-old’s brows were knit in concentration.

“What are you reading?” Cassy braced herself on the doorframe.

“Oh, just this book on dinosaurs I got from the school library.” Nicole looked up with a frown.

“Looks pretty serious. So why the sudden interest in dinosaurs?”

“You remember our fieldtrip to the Royal Tyrrell Museum last Wednesday?” At her mother’s nod, Nicole continued, “Well, it just doesn’t make sense.”

“What do you mean?” Cassy slipped into her daughter’s room and sat on the edge of the bed.

“You know, all that stuff about everything evolving from a single cell and all. That’s not what the Bible says happened, is it?”

“Well, we didn’t come from apes, if that’s what you mean. Though sometimes I wonder when I watch your brother climb a tree.” Instead of the smile Cassy expected, a small tear trickled down her daughter’s face. Cassy reached to put a hand on Nicole’s shoulder. “I’m sorry, Nicole. What’s really bugging you?”

“When I told Mrs. Owen the Bible says God created everything, she laughed at me and said the Bible is just a storybook and that evolution is science. Then she told me not to talk about the Bible anymore.” More tears came now, and Cassy pulled her troubled daughter onto her lap. “That was wrong of her to say that to you,” Cassy struggled to keep the anger from her voice. “The Bible is not just stories, it’s God’s Word. He gave us all those stories so we would know what really happened and so we’d know more about Him. Mrs. Owen has just chosen not to believe the Bible.”

“But Mom, what about the dinosaurs and all that? The lady at the museum said the dinosaurs lived millions of years before man. If man was created only a few days after God created the earth, how could they have lived before the earth was created?” Nicole wiped at her tears, frustration still keen in her voice.

“Hmm, so that explains the dinosaur book.” Cassy had never been able to clearly understand this herself. “Well you see, some people believe the six days of creation were not real days like we know them today; they might actually have been longer periods of time.”

Nicole raised her eyebrows incredulously, not looking very convinced.

“Or, some people think God created a world before ours with dinosaurs and prehistoric things, but then, for some reason, He destroyed it about the time He kicked Satan out of Heaven and started over.”

“Oh, why would He have done that? I didn’t know that was in the Bible.” Nicole looked into her mother’s eyes.

“It’s not really in the Bible, but sometimes God doesn’t give us the

whole picture, and we may not fully understand it all until we get to Heaven. Does that make sense?"

"I guess so. I just wish God had told us the whole story so we could know."

Cassy could tell the answer she'd given hadn't really pleased her daughter, but she was unsure what else to say. When she thought about it, Cassy realized she'd never settled this dilemma in her own mind but long ago had filed it away as unanswerable. However, she was not pleased with Nicole's teacher and her response concerning the Bible. She would definitely talk to David about that later.

"I wish I had all the answers for you, Nicole. Maybe I'll ask Pastor Nelson about it if I get a chance. Whatever you do, don't let anyone make you doubt the Bible is God's Word and that it's true. Okay?" She situated her daughter back on the bed.

Nicole nodded silently as she flipped the page in her library book.

Cassy gave her daughter's shoulder a reassuring pat and headed down the hall. Reaching Anika and Kimberleigh's room, she found the door slightly ajar. Gently Cassy eased it open and peeked inside. Her youngest daughters sat on the floor surrounded by doll clothes and paraphernalia, and each held a small doll.

"Miss Stacy, I would be so delighted if you could join me tonight at the ball. I will send my carriage to pick you up promptly at 7:00," Kimberleigh drawled with a flourish.

"What's a ba'w, Kimmy?"

"I'm not Kimmy! I'm Lady Violet, and a ball is a fancy party with lots of princes and everything."

"What should Miss Stacy wear?" Anika rummaged through a pile of clothes on the floor.

"Quit asking questions." Kimberleigh sounded exasperated. "You're supposed to say, 'I would be honored to come to your ball. It sounds lovely, Lady Violet!'"

"I can't remember all that stuff, and if I don't ask what to wear, you a'ways make me change cwothes, and it's too hard for me to get those dresses on right." At Anika's obvious frustration, Cassy stepped in before Kimberleigh had a chance to respond.

"How would Miss Stacy like to come help me make cookies, since I

can't find Anika?"

"Yeah, cookies, cookies!" Anika dropped Miss Stacy and jumped up and down. "I'm right here, Mom, I'm Anika! You're being siwy."

Cassy laughed at her daughter's exuberance. "Well, hurry and put Miss Stacy away because the cookie dough is already started, and I need a taste-tester."

"I'm a taste-tester. I can do it!" Anika was quickly stuffing Miss Stacy and her clothes away in a box, as though afraid the position might be filled if she didn't hurry.

"Mom, what about Lady Violet's ball? I need Anika to bring Miss Stacy!"

"You can help make cookies too if you want."

"But I'm the taste-tester, right, Mom?" Anika crinkled her brow.

"I think I could use two taste-testers today. What do you think?"

"Well, okay. But Kimmy can't bring Wady Viowet to help make cookies, 'cause she's too bossy!"

Struggling to hide her smile, Cassy told the girls to join her in the kitchen as soon as their dolls were picked up. She would have to hurry to get the cookies baked in time to get supper on.

Even though the nicer weather meant busier days for David, he was conscientious about guarding his supper time and evenings with his family. For that Cassy was grateful, and she liked to have a nice hot meal ready when he got home. She knew he was usually tired and very hungry after a day of heavy work.

Barely did she make it back to her cookie dough before Anika was at her side, clamoring to be lifted to sit on the counter. Kimberleigh was not far behind, dragging a chair from the table to stand on. They took turns adding the remaining ingredients and stirring the dough until it got too stiff, then Cassy once again took over.

Eager hands waited for the small mound of chocolate chips they knew they'd each get. Kimberleigh quickly grasped Anika's hand before she could eat any and counted the chips to compare against her own handful. Cassy waited with the chip bag to even it off if necessary.

"You got it right, Mom!" Kimberleigh announced.

"I've had lots of practice ever since you learned to count!" Cassy tweaked her daughter's nose, and Kimberleigh giggled.

It didn't take long once the first pan was out of the oven for Nicole and Jeremy to find their way to the kitchen for a warm cookie. Cassy put out her hand to stop Jeremy just out of reach of the cookie rack.

"Did you wash your hands when you came in?" Cassy knew the answer before her son moaned and headed for the sink.

"They're not dirty." Jeremy studied his hands before he turned on the tap, ran his hands quickly under the water, and turned it off again.

"Use soap!" Cassy didn't even need to turn around—she knew her son well enough.

With another moan, Jeremy turned on the water again for a little longer this time. After a swipe of his hands across the towel, Jeremy snatched a warm cookie from the rack. The whole thing almost disappeared in one bite. Cassy shook her head as she glanced from him to Nicole, who sat daintily nibbling her cookie at the table. How could her children be so different? *Lord, help me to mold each one to your will*, she silently prayed.

When Cassy heard her husband come in the back door awhile later, she hurried to finish supper preparations. David headed to the bathroom to get cleaned up before coming to give his wife a kiss.

"You could teach your son a thing or two about washing up when he comes in from outside," she teased.

"I'm afraid he comes by that honestly; it took my mom a long time to drill that habit into her sons."

"Thanks a lot!"

As Cassy put the last dish on the table, Jeremy came bounding into the kitchen. "Daddy!"

"Hey Bud, what's up?"

"Daddy, can I keep Ziggy?" the small boy implored.

"And who's Ziggy?"

Jeremy glanced at his mom, who was giving him a warning look, before continuing. "He's my snake I found and he's only little. He might die if I leave him outside, and I'll take real good care of him." His words tumbled over one another.

David smirked as he looked from his son to his wife, and at the threatening expression on Cassy's face, he laughed outright. "I think God made snakes to like living outside, so let's see if we can find a good

spot to keep him out there. Besides,” David stooped to whisper loudly in his son’s ear, “I rather like having your mother live in the house. Don’t you?”

Jeremy sighed in defeat. “Yeah, I guess so.”

“You guess so!” Cassy gave her son a light swat and he smirked as he scooted to the table.

“And Jeremy,” David spoke to his son more sternly this time, “I get the distinct feeling you’ve already had this discussion with your mother. Am I right?”

“Yes, sir.” Jeremy dropped his gaze.

“Then should you come and ask me if Mom already gave you an answer?”

“No, sir.” Jeremy glanced again toward his mom and Cassy saw the genuine remorse in her son’s eyes. She tousled his hair and threw David a thankful smile before calling the girls to the table.



Later that night, as Cassy lay beside her husband in bed, she remembered her discussion with Nicole. “David?”

“What?” he answered sleepily as he shifted to face his wife.

“Do you think we’re wrong to have the kids in the public school with teachers who don’t believe the Bible?”

“Well, I don’t think the public school hurt us too much—they’re just teaching basic facts. I think as long as we’re aware of what’s going on, the kids are okay. Why?”

Cassy propped herself up on one elbow. “Nicole had a run-in with her teacher the other day, and it made me mad. You know, they went to the Royal Tyrrell Museum and it’s very evolutionary. When Nicole told her teacher that the Bible says God created everything, her teacher made fun of the Bible and said it was just a storybook and that evolution was science.”

David sat up now. “I’m not sure how to reconcile all of science with the Bible—they do seem to contradict each other—but she had no right to say that! How did Nicole take it?”

“She seemed confused and wanted answers to when the dinosaurs lived and all that. I’m not sure I helped her very much—I didn’t know what to tell her. I mean, in some respects, I don’t think it really matters when they lived or how they died, and God doesn’t tell us everything. But Nicole brought home a book on dinosaurs from the library to look through. Now that I think about it, she’s been awfully quiet the last couple of days. I thought she was just tired, but I’m sure what her teacher said is really bothering her. What if she hadn’t told me what Mrs. Owen had said, and she started believing it?” Fear edged Cassy’s voice.

Sighing, David nodded. “I think we need to talk to Mrs. Owen and see what she says. I’ll talk to Nicole tomorrow and try to encourage her, but I don’t think one comment is going to make her stop believing the Bible.”

Cassy flopped back on her pillow. “I know,” she huffed, “it just made me so mad, that’s all.”

David lay down, placed his arm around his wife, and soon was quiet again. But try as she might, Cassy couldn’t block the vision of Nicole’s tears of hurt and doubt. Without warning, questions from her own childhood long ago came back to haunt her. Questions about the billions of years credited to the earth, the cave men and where they fit, and the many evidences for evolution she’d been exposed to throughout the years.

Cassy remembered bits and pieces of the different theories she’d heard that tried to fit evolution with the Bible. Some explanations she’d heard from her own father who’d picked up different theories from his years in seminary, but the details seemed hazy to her now. *Could anyone know the answers for certain?* she wondered. She didn’t think so, but for some reason she felt compelled to try. What difference it would make in her life she didn’t know, but she would try. As Cassy prayed about it, peace stole over her and sleep finally came.

The Confrontation

Frazzled, Cassy hurried to buckle Anika into her booster seat before collapsing into her own seat for the ride to church. Kimberleigh had been in one of her moods again that morning where none of her dresses “looked right” or “fit right,” except the one that was sitting in the basket of dirty clothes in the laundry room. Cassy had finally picked a dress and ordered her to put it on. Kimberleigh knew better than to openly defy her mother, but she had been sulky and dawdled all through breakfast.

Then Jeremy, in his rush to beat Nicole to the Cheerios, had brought the cereal box back right into his glass of milk, tipping it over so that it ran into Anika’s lap. Cassy carried her crying daughter from the room to change her clothes, while David oversaw the cleanup in the kitchen by a subdued little boy. Only Nicole looked happy as she reached triumphantly for the abandoned cereal box.

The twenty-minute drive to church was a quiet one. As Cassy hurried the children to their respective Sunday school classes, she tried to lay the tension of the morning aside and focus on why she was there. *It must get better when the kids get older*, she told herself, as she rushed to her own Sunday school class.

As Cassy’s frustration subsided, she was able to enjoy the morning. However, by the time Pastor Nelson stood to preach, Cassy found her mind wandering once again to her thoughts of the night before. She found it difficult to concentrate on the message, and after they were dismissed, Cassy waited for the cloud of greeters to clear from around the pastor. When there was a break, she made her approach with Anika in tow.

“Good morning, Cassy, how are you?” Pastor Nelson greeted warmly.

“Good morning, I’m fine, but I have a question for you.” She highly respected the elder gentleman.

“Sure, what is it?”

“I was wondering if you could suggest any books I might read that would give answers to some of the claims of evolution in light of the Bible. You see,” Cassy continued, “Nicole had a problem with her teacher the other day because the Bible doesn’t line up with evolution, and I was wondering how to answer that. How do we support the Bible and creation, and at the same time give our children answers to what they are learning in science?”

“Ah, I’ve done a fair bit of reading on that myself and it’s actually not as complicated to fit it all together as you might think. I have a good book in my library I’ll lend you called *Understanding God and Time*. It’s a study in progressive creationism, and I found it quite informative. It makes sense, though I don’t think we’ll ever have it all figured out until we get to Heaven. It’s not like the method of creation is a core doctrine that affects our faith, so I wouldn’t worry about it too much.”

“Yeah, I guess so.” Cassy shrugged.

“It makes for an interesting read if you’re into that sort of thing. Just wait a minute, and I’ll get it from my office.” Pastor Nelson excused himself, and Cassy turned to find Lauren Andrews waiting quietly behind her.

“I’m sorry, were you waiting to talk to the pastor?”

“Uh, no,” Lauren stammered awkwardly. “Actually, I was walking by when I heard your question, and it caught my attention. You see, Richard and I have some DVDs we bought at a homeschool convention reinforcing the truth of the Bible while exposing the dangers and lies of evolution. They are very good. The DVDs are put together by a group of creation scientists from an organization called Foundations in Truth. I think you would find them quite helpful.”

Cassy glanced to see if the pastor was returning yet, but there was no sign of him. She trusted his recommendation and wasn’t sure how many resources she wanted to sort through at once. Cassy didn’t know

the young ginger-haired woman in front of her very well, other than the fact she had five children whom she homeschooled. Brianne was Nicole's age and James was in Anika's class, but Cassy had always thought homeschoolers were a little strange or fanatical.

Lauren seemed to sense Cassy's doubt and became a little bolder. "Please consider watching a couple of them; I can drop them by one day this week. The DVDs will give you a different perspective from the book Pastor Nelson mentioned, but they have given us answers to many difficult questions, and they have helped us learn how to teach our kids to have a solid foundation in Scripture."

Cassy could not help but see the conviction and sincerity in Lauren's eyes. "Sure, I'll watch them. Thanks."

"Will you be home Tuesday afternoon? I can drop them by on my way back from taking the kids to swim lessons, about 2:30."

"Sure. Do you know where I live?" Cassy quickly gave Lauren directions to their acreage. She vaguely remembered hearing that the Andrews lived in their vicinity and hoped she wasn't going too far out of her way.

Just then Pastor Nelson arrived with the book he had promised. "Sorry to keep you waiting, Cassy, I couldn't find it at first."

"Thank you," Cassy replied, as Lauren gave her a little wave before leaving. "I'll get it back to you as soon as I can."

"No hurry."

Cassy picked up Anika, who had been pulling impatiently on her skirt, and went in search of the rest of her family. She found David talking with his younger brother, Anthony, and his sister-in-law, Sarah. Their kids were all playing in a corner of the foyer, except for two-month-old Samantha who was sleeping contentedly on Sarah's shoulder. Anika squirmed from Cassy's arms and ran to join her cousins.

"Sarah invited us to come for dinner." David raised his eyebrows at Cassy.

"You're sure you guys aren't sick of each other and need a break?" Cassy teased Anthony. The two brothers worked together and saw each other almost every day, but Cassy didn't know if there were two men who had ever gotten along better. Anthony was three years younger,

but they were both pushing six feet, had ebony hair, and looked a lot alike, though Anthony had a slightly slimmer build. Cassy was often amazed at his agility when she saw him climb limberly atop the open beams of a set of trusses. Anthony was even more of a tease than David, and her kids adored their uncle.

“Considering the fact that we were going home to leftovers today, that sounds great! Do we have time to run home and change so the kids can play outside?” Though they lived outside the city, Anthony and Sarah lived right on the edge, so it wasn’t too far.

“Sure.”



Cassy enjoyed visiting together over dinner, and when five-year-old Timothy and three-year-old Lissy invited their cousins to come try out their new swing set, the kids jumped eagerly from the table and raced for the door. Only Nicole lagged behind, offering to play with her baby cousin, whom she begged to hold every chance she could get. This gave the ladies a chance to clean off the table and do the dishes while the men reclined at the table with their coffee. Just as they were finishing, Anika came running into the house.

“Mommy!”

“What, honey?” Cassy hung up her dish towel and turned toward her daughter.

“Do I have to be the piggy this time?”

“The piggy?”

“Yeah. We’re pwaying farm and Kimmy a’ways gets to be the horse, and she said Wissy gets to be the sheep, and I have to be the piggy. I a’ways have to be the piggy, and I don’t wike piggies. I can’t even make a good piggy noise. See...” Anika proceeded to crinkle her nose until her top lip curled up. Putting a hand to each cheek, she pushed her cheeks forward to make them look pudgy and snorted air in through her nose.

Anthony and David burst out laughing, and Cassy put a hand over her mouth to hide her smile.

“Daddy!” Anika turned and stomped her foot in indignation, her hands in little fists at her side.

“Sorry, honey,” David said but he couldn’t control his grin. “So, what do you want to be?”

“I want to be a buffa’wo wike on the farm by us.”

“A buffalo?” Anthony smirked at his brother. “I thought she was going to pick a kitten or something,” he whispered. Clearing his throat, he looked back at his niece and declared, “Yeah, I guess you would make a good buffalo. With those horns of yours, you look just perfect.”

“Uncle Anthony, I don’t have any horns!” Anika giggled.

“Oh yeah?” Anthony crossed the room and grabbed Anika’s piggy tails and held them straight up. “What are these, hmm?”

Anika removed her hair from his grasp and giggled again. “Those are piggy tails siwy!”

“Ah hah,” David exclaimed. “I knew you looked more like a piggy.”

Anika raced to her dad, who grabbed her and started tickling until Anika couldn’t stop laughing—a game they both enjoyed.

“I thought you were playing on the new swing set?” Cassy finally cut in, as Anika climbed up on her father’s knee.

“We are,” Anika informed her. “Jeremy’s making it into our barn.”

“How’s he doing that?” Cassy wrinkled her brow.

“He cwimbed up on top and is hanging a big tarp over it,” Anika answered matter-of-factly.

Cassy dashed for the back door, and David followed a little more slowly.

“Jeremy David, what are you doing up there?” she demanded, heading for the swing set. A large blue tarp had been draped over the tall wooden frame Anthony had built, and Jeremy was nonchalantly walking along the top cross-beam inspecting his work.

“I’m making a barn,” he said with a grin. “It’s easy. You just climb up from the top of the slide.” He swiveled around on his toes to point.

“Yeah, well, you can just get down before you break your neck. What are you teaching Timmy?”

“Come on, buddy,” David crossed the yard to help Jeremy down.

“I tell you, he’ll climb anything. He’s going to be the death of me yet.” Cassy turned to go back in the house once her son’s feet were

safely on the ground.

“How do you think we got so good at climbing across rafters?” Anthony grinned from his place in the doorway.

“Yeah, but you didn’t start when you were eight!”

Anthony and David just looked at each other and laughed. “You’d be surprised.” Anthony gave his sister-in-law a goofy grin. “Didn’t your brothers ever do things like that growing up?”

“Well, Don is seven years older than I am, and Cory is three years older, so I don’t remember too much when they were this young, but now that you mention it, they did do some pretty stupid things.”

“I don’t know about *stupid*...well, okay, some things boys do might be stupid, but they need to be adventurous.” Anthony defended his nephew.

“I know. I’m sure God took out more than Adam’s rib when he made Eve!” Cassy huffed as she brushed past her brother-in-law and into the house. She was followed by the men’s laughter.

As they were leaving late that afternoon, David made arrangements with Anthony to start early the next morning so that he could get off in time to join Cassy at the school. They were hoping to catch Mrs. Owen after class.

“I can’t believe a teacher would come right out and say that to a student,” Sarah remarked when she’d heard the story.

“I’m sure most teachers wouldn’t,” Cassy answered in all fairness, “but we thought we’d better follow up on this and see what she has to say about it.”

“Of course. Let me know how it goes.” Sarah waved to them from the doorway.



David and Cassy talked with Nicole before bed to make sure they had a clear understanding of what had transpired between their daughter and her teacher. As David tucked her into bed, he reassured Nicole that they would go see Mrs. Owen after school the next day.

That evening Cassy read the first couple of chapters in the book

the pastor had given her, and though it was hard to follow some of the reasoning, she thought she understood the gist of the author's arguments. Basically he was saying that the days of creation were not literal days, but long periods of time. Each day represented a long age in which creation progressed slowly and followed natural processes. These processes followed some of the time-frame and evolutionary development of life as "proven" by science, but it was all God directed.

Cassy closed the book and got out her Bible to read the first chapter of Genesis. She frowned and read it through again more slowly, but she found it hard to see the long elements of time within the creation week that the book referred to. There were certainly no clear indications of it that she could see, but she was not a Bible scholar and had no way of comparing it to the original Hebrew. Maybe the author would explain the basis for his interpretation more thoroughly throughout his book. Cassy closed her Bible with a yawn. David had already headed to bed awhile ago. Pushing her troubled thoughts aside, Cassy went to join him.



By three o'clock the next afternoon, Cassy was seated in a chair where she could watch out the front window for her husband. She was hoping he didn't have any trouble getting away from the construction site on time. Cassy had managed to read a few more chapters of the book *Understanding God and Time*, while Anika napped. Though the author had made a strong case to support the old age of the earth and some evolutionary aspects of creation, Cassy felt little peace over it. Science certainly seemed to support what he said, but somehow Cassy couldn't reconcile this view of creation with what she felt the Bible described.

Just a few minutes past three, David's truck pulled in the drive. He hurried into the house to wash up and change, and he was soon ready to go. Cassy hoped Jeremy, Nicole, and Kimberleigh had remembered not to get on the bus.

Once at the elementary school, Cassy and David had little trouble finding both girls clustered beside Jeremy's locker. He was still trying to

stuff his lunch kit and papers into his backpack.

“Nicole, you take Anika and the others to the bench by the front door and wait for us, okay?” Cassy instructed her eldest. “We shouldn’t be too long. Did you give Mrs. Owen our note saying that we wanted to see her?”

“Yes, she’s in her room.” Nicole pointed down the noisy hall.

Making their way down the corridor, the Knights paused outside room 23. David gave his wife’s hand a squeeze and offered a reassuring smile. Cassy hated confrontations.

Mrs. Owen was tidying her desk when the couple entered. She looked up and motioned them over. “What can I help you with, Mr. and Mrs. Knight?”

“We just wanted to clear up a little misunderstanding Nicole seems to have had with you last Wednesday,” David said.

“Oh? And what might that be?” Mrs. Owen rose from her desk with a look of surprise.

“Well.” David cleared his throat before continuing. “It seems that Nicole made a comment on your fieldtrip questioning the theory of evolution against our belief in creation. From Nicole’s account, we felt that her belief in the Bible was undermined and we just wanted to hear your account of what happened.”

Mrs. Owen visibly stiffened as she replied crisply, “If I offended you, I am sorry. But Mr. Knight, this is a public school and we are not here to teach or promote the Bible, and neither are the students.”

“I hardly feel that Nicole was promoting the Bible; she was just standing up for her faith,” David interjected. Though he appeared calm, Cassy sensed the tension in his voice.

“Precisely, Mr. Knight, and if you choose to fill her head with such stories at home I cannot stop you, but it must stay out of the classroom.”

“It was a fieldtrip,” Cassy objected, “not a classroom discussion.”

“A class fieldtrip, and she made her comment in front of other students. Mrs. Knight—” the teacher’s voice took on a condescending tone as if talking to a troublesome child—“we were being instructed with the simple facts of science, and if I allowed every child to question what is taught with their own opinions, I would accomplish nothing in the classroom.”

“I realize you have to have order, but since when did evolution become a fact?” David questioned pointedly.

Mrs. Owen was clearly tiring of this line of questioning. “It is well known that most scientists support evolution. And though a few, like yourselves, choose to believe otherwise, it is the accepted science curriculum of the Board of Education. Though it is not necessarily in the core curriculum for fourth grade, it was a part of our fieldtrip and fully acceptable. We teach science in school, and you are free to teach the Bible in church. Even if I should choose to teach the Bible in my classroom, which I wouldn’t, I would not be allowed to. If you have a problem with that, you can take it up with the principal. Now, if you have no other concerns, I must be going.”

“Thank you for your time,” David replied calmly. When Cassy looked with frustration at her husband, he placed his hand on her back and directed her from the room.

“I can’t believe that,” Cassy fumed angrily the moment they were out of earshot.

“She definitely holds Christianity in low regard, but she shouldn’t let it cross into the classroom. We weren’t going to get anywhere debating it with her, though. Let’s just stop and check if the principal is in and see what he says.”

After a five-minute wait, the Knights were escorted by the secretary into Mr. Johnson’s office. Following a brief recounting of the issue at hand, Mr. Johnson addressed the concerned parents in front of him.

“Mr. Knight, we employ teachers with many varying belief and value systems. We try our best to keep these beliefs from being expressed in the classroom, but occasionally they do come through. It’s inevitable, I guess. I’m sorry if Mrs. Owen’s comment about the Bible troubled your daughter, but in a way she is right. We cannot teach the Bible, or any specific set of religious beliefs, within a public school system. I’m sure you can understand and appreciate why. If we should let one group in the door to teach their faith, we would have to let them all in, and then where would we be? That is why we must keep matters of religion out of the classroom and restrict our teachers to the curriculum set out by the government. We have to meet the objectives

and standards they have established.”

David sighed, his frustration evident. “Thank you very much for seeing us on such short notice. I know you’re busy.” He rose to go. “You’ve given me something to think about.”

“Glad I could help,” Mr. Johnson reached across his desk to shake David’s hand.

“That went well,” Cassy said sarcastically as they headed for the front door.

“I guess we shouldn’t be surprised. After all, it’s not a Christian school system. I know we have no right to force our faith on the teachers, but in a way, by leaving Christ out of the picture, aren’t they imposing their faith on the students? It must be really frustrating for the Christian teachers out there trying to make a difference but forbidden to share anything about God.”

“I guess I never thought of it much before. I’ll have to say an extra prayer for Don, teaching in a public high school. It must be hard teaching history without God,” Cassy mused.

She had grown up as a preacher’s kid and knew her Bible well, but as she thought back, she didn’t remember ever once hearing God mentioned as an integral part of history. God’s interaction with man seemed to end with the Bible, though she knew in her heart this was not so. Cassy was hit with the distinct realization that she had missed something, perhaps something vital. Something that, until this moment, she had never realized was missing at all....

For more of the story, read on...

Bringing Them Home

Elizabeth Wiens

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ELIZABETH WIENS and her husband, Gary, have four daughters and live in Alberta, Canada. Their family has enjoyed working together in children's ministry for almost sixteen years while serving full-time with Child Evangelism Fellowship. They are now ministering with GoodSeed Canada.

Elizabeth feels passionate about God's call for parents to purposefully mentor their children for Him. She and Gary have been homeschooling their family for fourteen years, and Elizabeth is involved in homeschool leadership in her community. In her spare time, she enjoys writing and doing research—seeking biblical answers to life's issues. She has previously published a novel entitled *Destined For Eternity*, which she coauthored with her twin sister. Currently Elizabeth is working on a sequel to *Bringing Them Home*, following the Knight family through the teen years and courtship.

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