

## HALEY - THE POOR LITTLE RICH KID

"Haley, Haley," my mother said as she gently touched my shoulder to wake me up. "Get up sweetie, Eric is on the phone."

As soon as I knew it was my boyfriend calling, I jumped out of bed and rushed to the telephone that was in the kitchen. Eric wanted to know if I would like to go roller-skating with him and his older sister Frances. Of course I did so told him I'd ask my mother and call him back.

My disappointment could not have been greater when she told me that she already had plans for the day and they included taking me to the mall to buy me some clothes for school that was scheduled to start on Monday.

"Pleeeeee mom," I pleaded, "can't we go some other day?"

"Honey, you know that tomorrow is Sunday so we'll be going to Bible Class and we'll be going out witnessing afterwards.

It was times like this that I hated being ten years old and unable to run my own life. I had had a crush on Eric the whole time I was in third grade and at the beginning of fourth grade we were assigned by the teacher to work on a project together. It was then that he started liking me. I hardly got to see him this summer so it made me mad that my mother was holding me back from having a good time. I wasn't about to take "No" for an answer without a fight.

"But Mom," I said in a voice that expressed my extreme displeasure, "I can get new clothes next week. I don't mind going back to school with last year's clothes. Please mom let me go. Please. I've only gotten to see Eric three times this summer."

"Haley, I said the answer is 'No'."

By now my emotions were getting the best of me and I felt completely frustrated at not being able to get my own way. In tears, I blurted out, "I wish I had never been born!" and stomped off to my room and slammed the door behind me.

As I buried my face in my pillow I was shaking with emotion. I knew that it was just a matter of time until my mother would come into my room and I was hoping so much she would come in and see me in this pathetic state so she would take pity on me and let me go skating with Eric. The minutes seemed like hours and I constantly had to keep thinking about the fun I was missing out on with Eric so I could keep myself crying until she came in. Another thing that made me continue crying was that I knew the possibility existed that she was going to come in and spank me.

It was horrible having to wait and see how she was going to handle this situation. My mother was so inconsistent with how she dealt with me I could never be absolutely sure of how things would end up. Most of the time if I pleaded long and hard enough she would give in, but there were other times that no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't get her to budge. Knowing my mother was so inconsistent only made times like this harder and more painful because I was never sure if eventually she would come around or if I was like someone beating their head against the wall.

I heard her quietly turn the doorknob and I knew that was in my favor. If she had been angry with me, she would have been more forceful. She came over and put her hand on my back. "Haley," she said, "why do you wish you had never been born?"

I knew this was the time to act really hurt. I turned around and put my arms around her and cried on her shoulder. I said, "It hurts me so much not to see Eric today. I feel like I don't have any say about how I live my life."

There was silence for a moment and I knew that was a good sign. She sighed and said, "I guess we can wait 'til next week to go shopping."

I hugged her ever so tightly and said, "Thank you so much mom!"

I wiped the tears from my face and jumped up to go call Eric.

Two days later I started the fifth grade. I really enjoyed school and it was fun knowing I had Eric as a boyfriend. But right after Winter Break, my life took a sudden turn for the worse when a new girl came to school.

Lots of people would tell me how pretty I was and every time I looked in the mirror I had to agree. But Michelle was exceptionally pretty and all my friends, including Eric, told me how pretty they thought she was. I instantly felt jealous and whereas I usually would go out of my way to make a newcomer feel welcome, I didn't go out of my way to make Michelle feel welcome. But a friendship was forced between us that was not of my making.

It all started when Eric and his best friend Ricky started coming to Bible Club on Sunday mornings. Our teacher, Miss Helen, told us how important it is that we talk to people and tell them how to get to heaven. She explained that most people think they have to be good to go to heaven because they don't understand that when Jesus died on the cross that He paid our way to heaven. So because He did everything necessary to get us to heaven, we have no part in getting ourselves to heaven. Heaven isn't a reward we can earn by being good; it is a gift that we receive when we trust in Jesus to get us to heaven.

Miss Helen told us that God wanted us to tell our friends at school this good news so they could go to heaven too. She also told us to be sure to explain that God wants us to be good so He can reward us with a happy life and also give us rewards in heaven.

Eric and Ricky got all excited about talking to people about God. I felt a twinge of conscience because I had talked to very few of my fellow classmates and I knew that God had expected me to do more for Him.

The next day at school both Eric and Ricky spoke to several of the kids at school. One of them was Michelle and when Ricky asked her if she wanted to join us at Bible Club the following Sunday, she said, "Yes."

She came the following week and when Miss Helen asked if anyone would be interested in going with her to neighborhoods to talk to people about the Bible, she raised her hand. I always went out on Sundays with my mother talking to people because I had to; but if I had been given a choice between playing and going witnessing, I would have chosen playing. So it surprised me that Michelle volunteered to go. After Bible Club she called her mother and got permission to spend the day with Miss Helen.

The more Eric, Ricky, and Michelle got involved in serving the Lord the more miserable I became. I could see how happy they were and I was jealous. And I even became jealous of God because the more attention Eric gave Him the less he gave me. And of course I was jealous of the friendship that was developing between Eric and Michelle. It was becoming harder and harder to act nice to her.

Eric noticed that I treated her differently and he asked me why. At first I denied it, but he kept insisting I tell him the truth. I wasn't about to tell him the truth so I said, "I really didn't want to say anything, but I noticed that she sometimes cheats on her tests."

"Really?" he responded, genuinely surprised, "I never would have thought she was like that."

I felt a twinge of conscience for lying about her like that, but I thought Eric would never repeat what I told him. And how could I tell him the truth that I was jealous of her? And besides, it would make it easier for him to understand why I wasn't inviting her to my birthday party.

My parents had always made my birthdays a very special event. I had accumulated so many things that there was barely any space in my room for me! My friends loved coming over to my place to visit because they would never run out of things to play with. This birthday was going to be exceptionally special because my mother told me I could invite ten friends over for a pool party. I thought about inviting Michelle, but I didn't want anything or anyone spoiling my party for me, so I decided to invite everyone but her.

My birthday was two months away so I hadn't told anyone yet about my birthday party, not even Eric. My birthday was May 12th and I decided to wait 'til the middle of April to hand out invitations.

When the day finally came to write the invitations, my mother said to me, "You're planning on inviting all the kids from Bible Club to your party, aren't you?"

"Well...almost everyone."

"What do you mean, almost everyone? Who, pray tell, aren't you asking?"

"Mom, there are seven kids in Bible Club and that leaves only three of my friends to invite from school. I was going to invite six kids from Bible Club and four from school."

"That's no problem Haley. You can have eleven at your party."

I wasn't prepared for that. I absolutely hated that feeling when I had no control of what was happening in my life. It was my party and I didn't want anything to spoil it and I knew having Michelle there would spoil it.

And what made things even worse was that it seemed like my worst fears were coming true. Even though he would deny it when I asked him, it sure seemed like Eric was starting to like Michelle. And I wasn't about to let that happen.

I knew I had lied when I had told Eric that Michelle sometimes cheated on her tests and I really couldn't use that against her to stop Eric from ever wanting her as his girlfriend. So I decided the best way to find something against her was to become friends with her so I could find something in her life that would stop him from liking her.

At first I felt guilty for pretending to be her friend when I really wasn't, but I was so jealous of her that I couldn't even see straight. I knew that if Eric and her became girlfriend and boyfriend, I would feel like a fool in front of all the kids at school. And whatever I was going to do I had to do quickly because my birthday was fast approaching.

I had invited her over for dinner hoping that she would invite me over so I could see how she lived. She did invite me over and I was really taken back by how poor she was. I would never have known it because she was always so nicely dressed. I was so curious about how her parents could afford to buy her those that later that night I asked her where she bought her clothes. Her face turned red and she looked down so I knew I had really hit a sore spot. After what seemed like a few minutes, she quietly answered, "Salvation Army."

"Uuuw, gross."

As soon as I said that big tears welled up in her eyes and I felt bad that I had hurt her feelings.

That night as I lay in bed, I started thinking about how mean I was being. Even though it was dark in my room, the light from the moon provided some light and as I looked around at all the things I had it made me feel bad that Michelle had so little. I thought that maybe I should share some of my things with her, for after all, I knew that the Bible taught that God wants us to share.

The next day after school I went home and gathered some of my toys and put them in a bag. Then I called Eric and asked if he wanted to go with me over to Michelle's house. I called him not just because I wanted some company to and from her house, but also so he could see what a generous person I was to share my things with her.

When we got to her house I could tell by the look on Eric's face that he was surprised that she lived in such a shabby house.

When I handed her my bag of treasures and she opened it up and looked in, her face turned red. I thought she would have been gushing over with gratitude but instead she was embarrassed. I could barely hear her when she said, "Thank you."

On the way home I told Eric how surprised I was by her response. But instead of agreeing with me, he got upset with me. He said, "How do you think you'd feel if someone made you feel like a charity case? I really don't think she wanted your charity!"

"Oh brother!" I said and walked away from him in a huff.

The next day at school I could tell he was really going out of his way to be nice to her. Then at lunchtime, my best friend Irene whispered in my ear, "I overheard Janet telling Rachel that Eric has a crush on Michelle."

I couldn't believe my ears. My worst fears were coming true. I felt like such a fool. I had to do something. I was fighting to hold back the tears. Is this how Michelle shows her gratitude to me for giving her some of my possessions?

My birthday was only three days away and the way things were going it would be the worst

day of my life. I imagined my friends being at my party watching on while Eric gave his attention to Michelle instead of me!

The thought was almost too much to bear. I had to do something. I wasn't sure what I was going to do; I just knew I had to do something.

I barely listened during the rest of the school. All I could think of was coming up with a way to turn Eric against Michelle.

Then all of a sudden it hit me; if I could turn Michelle against Eric I could accomplish the same thing. I knew I had finally come up with a plan that would guarantee that Michelle and Eric would not become girlfriend and boyfriend.

After school I approached her and told her there was something I wanted to tell her. I started walking home with her and explained, "Now what I want to tell you has to be a secret just between you and me. If you can't keep a secret then I can't tell you."

I could tell I had really gotten her interest and she was dying to know what I had to tell her. After she solemnly promised not to share a word of what I was going to tell her with anyone, I proceeded, "Now I know what I'm going to tell you is going to hurt your feelings..."

As soon as I said that I could see the pain in her face so I said, "Are you sure you want to hear this?" knowing, of course, she would say, "Yes," which she did.

I continued, "Well, after Eric and I came over to your place yesterday he..." I paused acting like it was really hurting me to even convey these words.

"He what?" she asked, wanting me to finish my sentence.

"He said that he couldn't believe how shabby your house was. He said it was too bad you were poor because that meant you could never be popular."

I was expecting her to be hurt, but I wasn't expecting her to start crying. And when she did I felt bad, but not bad enough to tell her the truth that I had made the whole thing up.

It was Friday when this conversation took place and I figured that by Sunday when she came to Bible Club, she'd be over the hurt and would just not want to be friends with Eric anymore. But when she didn't show up on Sunday I had this sick feeling in my stomach that maybe I had hurt her more than I knew. And an even worse thought went through my mind and that was that she would tell someone what I had told her and it would be discovered that I lied. I could barely listen to Miss Helen teach that morning as I thought about these things.

Then after Bible Club, Miss Helen phoned Michelle to see why she hadn't come. I was sitting on pins and needles waiting to hear what she said. Then I heard Miss Helen say, "We'll be praying for you that you get all better soon."

I felt like a weight had just been lifted off my shoulders. I had been worried for nothing. She was sick, that's why she didn't come to Bible Club. I secretly hoped that she would be sick until Tuesday so she wouldn't come to my birthday party the next day.

I got my wish and had the most wonderful party I had ever had. All my friends had a really good time and my parents bought me all the things that I had asked for.

The next day at school I approached Michelle and told her I was glad she was all better and that it was too bad that she hadn't been at my party.

At lunchtime Eric asked her if she wanted to join us for lunch at the school cafeteria. Her eyes welled up with tears and she said, "No thank you."

At lunch Eric asked me if I knew what was wrong with Michelle. I said that she probably wasn't feeling completely well yet. I was terrified that Eric was going to try and find out why she was acting differently. I had hoped so much that she would simply withdraw her friendship from Eric; I hadn't planned on this response.

After school he approached her and I could not believe the look of hurt on her face. She told him that she really didn't want to talk.

I was so nervous that she was going to eventually tell him what I had told her that I phoned her as soon as I got home from school. I said, "You aren't going to share our secret with anyone, are you?"

"No, I would never do that."

I breathed a sigh of relief. Mission accomplished.

The next day when I came home from school and bounced into the kitchen I noticed that my mother was sitting at the kitchen table with a very serious look on her face. When I asked her what was wrong, she told me that she needed to have a heart to heart talk with me. My heart sunk when she said that because, of course, I thought it had to do with what I had done to Michelle. But instead it had to do with how my mother was dealing with me.

She said, "Haley, I realize now that I haven't been a very good mother to you." I couldn't believe my ears. I said, "What do you mean, Mom? I think you've been a wonderful mother."

"Not really, Haley. You see God expects me to deal with you the same way that He deals with us. God is good and loving and because of that He faithfully rewards us when we are good and He punishes us when we are bad. He doesn't spoil us or let us get our own way."

I was so used to having things my way and my every wish being granted that I couldn't bear the thought of things changing in my life. So I felt miserable as she continued. She said, "You know how many times I give in to you just because you keep demanding your own way. I am wrong in doing that. Please don't think that I'm blaming you in any way. It is my responsibility when I say 'no' to mean 'no'."

My heart sank when she told me this. The thought that no matter how long or how hard I fought I wouldn't end up having her give in to me made me feel horrible.

"And another thing," she continued, "you have enough things in your room to make a hundred children happy."

I knew what she was getting around to. First she takes away my having a say in my life, now she wanted to take away my possessions. "But Mom," I protested, "remember I told you that I took a bunch of my stuff and gave it to Michelle?"

"Haley, to be honest with you, when I went into your room the next day I couldn't tell anything

was missing.”

My whole world was falling apart. In an anguished voice I cried out, “What have I done so bad for you to treat me like this? Does Daddy know about this?”

She hugged my trembling body and said, “Haley, I’ve already explained to you that I’m not blaming you. I am blaming myself for not being the mother to you that God expects me to be. Someday when you get older it will all make sense to you. And ‘Yes’ your father knows about this and he is in complete agreement.”

“It’s just not fair!” I yelled out and stomped off to my room and slammed the door behind me.

I wasn’t prepared for what followed. Instead of the sympathy I was expecting, she followed me into the room and said, “Haley, I’m not going to tolerate this kind of behavior from you any more. Either apologize or be spanked.”

“Apologize?” I said in a voice that showed I couldn’t believe my ears, “apologize for what?”

She quickly walked over to my side and leaned over and slapped me in the rear end. I was humiliated and in an angry voice I screamed, “I hate you!”

Again she slapped me, but this time harder, which only made me cry harder.

Then she said, “When you are ready to apologize you can come out of your room.”

As soon as she walked out of my room I threw myself on my bed sobbing uncontrollably thinking that I would die in that room before I would ever apologize. How could I apologize when it was her who was being cruel and unmerciful. I cried so hard that I finally fell asleep from exhaustion and when I awoke it was dark outside. I looked at the clock and saw it was eight thirty. I was very hungry and the house smelled of a delicious dinner that I had missed. I wanted so badly to go out and eat something, but I didn’t want to apologize because that would be admitting that she was right in how she was dealing with me and I didn’t think she was right. How could she turn my world upside down and feel like she was right? I was so miserable and felt so helpless to change my circumstances that I started crying again.

Shortly after that I heard my father come home and I was praying that when he found out what was going on that he would do something about it. Within a few minutes he did come in and when he came over to my bed I put my arms around him sobbing.

“Are you ready to come out yet, Haley?”

“Oh yes, Daddy.”

“Then you’re going to tell your mother you are sorry for how you behaved and that you told her that you hated her?”

“Of course I’ll apologize for saying that. You know I didn’t mean that. It’s just that I was upset when she told me that things were going to change in my life. She even said that she was going to take some of my things away from me.”

“Haley that just wasn’t your mother’s idea. We’ve talked a lot about this and prayed about

this. We want to do what's best for you and we realize now that we haven't been raising you the way the Lord would have us raise you. It's going to be painful for a while, but, believe me, you're going to a happier girl because of it."

I didn't believe it and now that I knew that he felt the same way as my mother, I knew that I wasn't going to get his pity.

He said, "Come on girl, come make up with your mother and let's have a nice meal together."

As upset as I was, I was even more hungry at this point, so I gave in and went and apologized to my mother.

And what really amazed me was that as the weeks went on I was happier. Maybe God knew what He was talking about after all when He told parents in the Bible how to raise their children. I could see that I was changing and becoming a much more calm and peaceful person. My parents were teaching me that whatever I sowed I would reap, which means, that good behavior was rewarded and bad behavior was punished.

Then it really started to bother me how I had lied to Michelle. I had this nagging thought in the back of my mind that maybe God was going to punish me for doing that. I asked God to forgive me, hoping He would overlook it.

But one day during the summer when I came home from playing, I found my parents having a very serious conversation. When I asked what was wrong, my father explained that he had lost his job. My dad sold insurance and he made a lot of money. He said, "Your mother and I were just discussing if we might have to sell this house and move into an apartment for awhile until I can land a good job."

"Move?" I said in an anguished voice, "oh please don't make us move. You'll find another job soon."

"I think I will find a job, but it is very unlikely that I'll be able to get one that will pay me as much as this one. Haley, we just have to trust that God has a purpose for this. If God can use us more for His glory if we're poor, than let God's will be done."

As soon as he said the word "poor" I had this sick feeling in the pit of my stomach. In my heart I felt like I had brought this misfortune upon my family because of what I had said to Michelle.

"Daddy," I cried, "it's my fault you lost your job."

My father and mother both looked at me with a startled look on their face. My mother asked, "What do you mean?"

In tears I confessed the whole story to them. They were quiet for a moment after I finished, then my dad said, "Haley, you have no choice but to go to Michelle and tell her and ask her forgiveness. And then you need to go to Eric and explain it to him too."

I knew what he was saying was right. And as hard as it was I did and I couldn't believe how nice Michelle was about it. Eric was really upset with me at first, but he did forgive me.

Two weeks later, the insurance company that had laid off my dad called and asked if he

would be willing to come back to work for them.

Maybe what happened to my dad had nothing to do me. Maybe it was just a test for him to see if he would be faithful to God no matter what. I personally think it happened for both reasons. I realize now that if I hadn't gotten things straightened out between myself and Michelle, I never could be God's friend.

I thank God for loving me enough to discipline me through my parents and through the circumstances He lets us go through. I finally know that happiness doesn't come through having your own way or through having a lot of things; it comes through obeying God.

I'm no longer the person I used to be. I'm not a spoiled kid anymore; I'm God's friend!"