

A Hive of



Busy Bees

Stories to Build  
Faith and Character  
by Effie M. Williams

Adapted for a Biblical Family Discipleship Approach by  
Joshua Schwisow and Kevin Swanson

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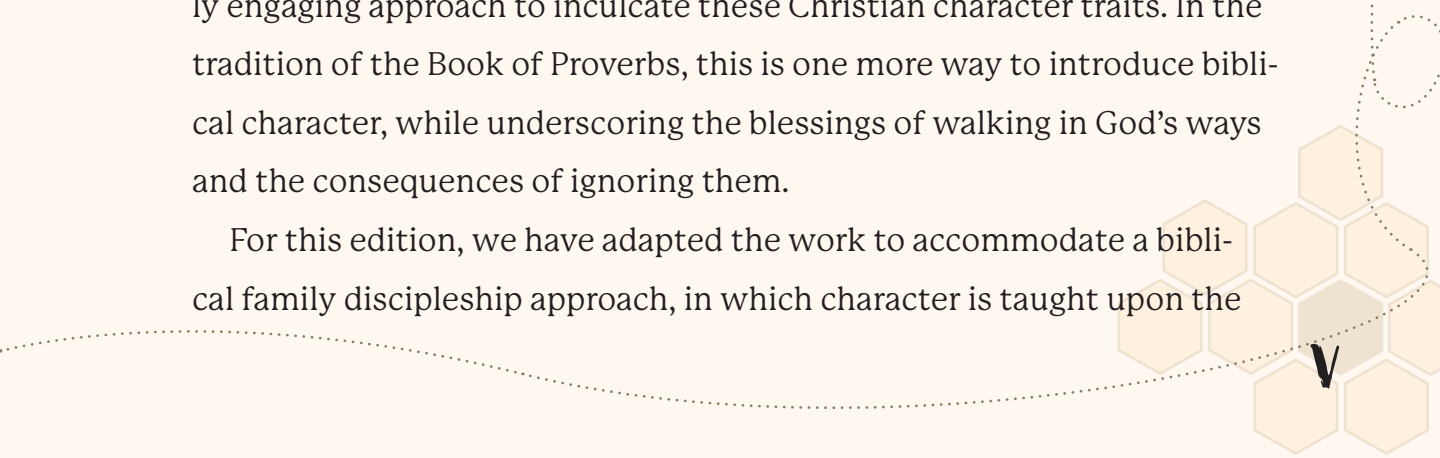
# Introduction for Parents

Since its first release in 1931, this little collection of stories called *A Hive of Busy Bees* has become something of a “sleeper” classic children’s book. Four generations of children have enjoyed this bedtime story collection. Each of these poignant stories have a way of making an indelible mark on the mind of a child. Those of us who have heard these stories as children find these character lessons still sticking with us.

The frame narrative featuring the two children visiting their grandparent’s farm is enough of a context to capture a child’s interest. This takes us back to another time and place of generational faith and relational health. Don and Joyce experience their own life’s lessons throughout the summer, while listening in to grandmother’s stories before going to bed.

Since entering the public domain, this collection has been republished in various venues over the decades, sometimes with modifications to the original text. The Generations team recommends this collection as a highly engaging approach to inculcate these Christian character traits. In the tradition of the Book of Proverbs, this is one more way to introduce biblical character, while underscoring the blessings of walking in God’s ways and the consequences of ignoring them.

For this edition, we have adapted the work to accommodate a biblical family discipleship approach, in which character is taught upon the







grounds of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our children need lessons in both faith and character. These adaptations are intended to seamlessly work into the fabric of the narratives. We want to be sure that every lesson concerning character to be rooted in the soil of Scriptural truth. Our children must know that godly character cannot be self-generated. This comes by genuine sorrow for sin and true repentance, by faith in Christ, and by that new life come by the Holy Spirit's working in their souls. Only then will they bear fruit that is pleasing to God.

To this end, we have added additional scriptural content. For example, the Scripture weaves together God's forgiveness with the character traits of kindness and forgiveness in Ephesians 4:32:

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another,  
even as God in Christ forgave you.

The scriptural exhortation does not commend kindness for the sake of kindness. Nor are we to be kind and forgiving merely for the reason that "it is the right thing to do." Nor are we to be kind, lest things go badly for us. While it is true that kind actions and forgiving others is the right thing to do, and there are consequences for not living by God's truth, the basis laid out in Ephesians 4:32 is the kindness with which God has treated us. We forgive others because we have been forgiven by God in Christ.

We sincerely pray that these stories may be used for the discipleship,

edification, encouragement, and salvation of many children in this generation and the next.

Editors, Joshua Schwisow and Kevin Swanson

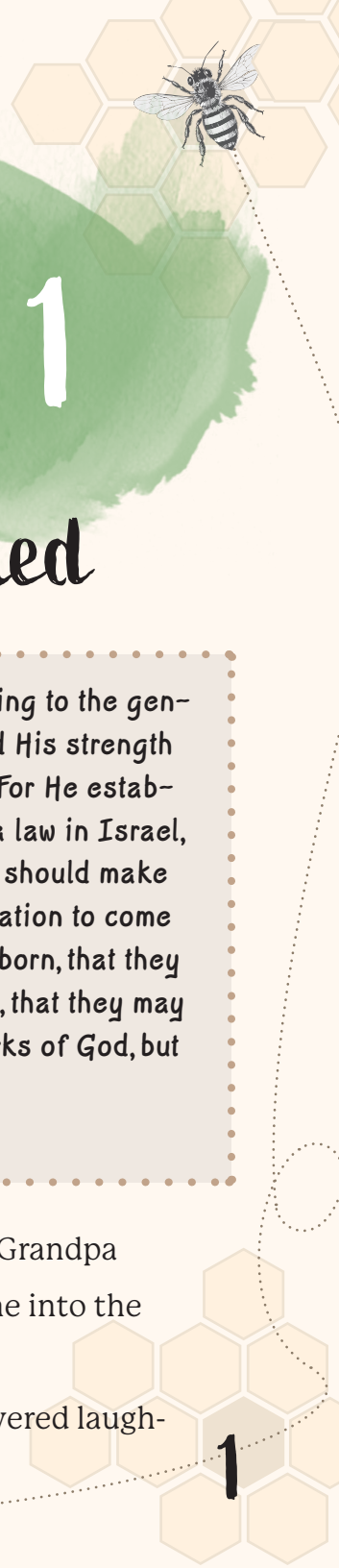
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# Chapter 1

## How it Happened

We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done. For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children, that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments...

(Psalm 78:4-7)

“The sun’s gone under a cloud,” called Grandpa cheerily over his shoulder, as he came into the dining room.

Grandma, following close behind, answered laugh-



ingly, “Why, my dear, this is the brightest day we’ve had for two weeks!”

“But look at Don’s face,” said Grandpa soberly, “and Joyce’s too, for that matter”—glancing from one to the other.

“Children, children,” said Grandma kindly, “do tell us what is wrong.”

No answer.

“Only,” said Daddy at last, “that they are thinking about next summer.”

Grandpa threw back his white head, then, and laughed his loud, hearty laugh. “You little trouble-borrowers,” he cried, “worrying about next summer! Why, only day before yesterday was Christmas; and by the looks of the dolls, and trains, and picture-books lying all over the house—”

“But, Grandpa,” said Don in a small voice, trying not to cry, “summer will be here before we know it—you said so this morning yourself; and Daddy says he’s going north on a fishing trip—”

“—And so,” added Joyce sorrowfully, “Don and I can’t go to the farm and stay with you as we did last year, and the year before last, and every year since we can remember.”

Joyce looked anxiously from one face to another. Daddy’s eyes were twinkling. Mother looked rather sorry, and so did Grandma. But she knew at once, by the look on Grandpa’s face that he understood. He only nodded his white head wisely. “I see,” he said. And some way, after that, Joyce felt that it would come out all right.

It did.

On the last morning that Grandpa and Grandma were there, Daddy



said at the breakfast table—quite suddenly, as if he had just thought of it— “Mother, suppose we let the children choose for themselves. You and I will go to the lake next summer, and catch the big fish; but if they would be happier on the old farm, why—”

“Oo-oo-ooh!” cried Joyce delightedly. “Don, you and I may go to Grandpa’s house next summer, if we like!”

“How do you know?” said Don rather crossly. “Daddy hasn’t said that we could.”

“Why, he said it just now—didn’t you, Daddy?”

“Not exactly; but that’s what I was going to say,” said Daddy, smiling into Joyce’s shining eyes.

After that, it wasn’t a bit hard to tell Grandpa and Grandma goodbye. “Only until next summer,” whispered Joyce when she kissed Grandma for the last time.

Long months followed, but June came at last. One happy day the children came home and threw their books down on the table; and Don raced through the house singing the last song he had learned at school:

“School is done! school is done!

Toss up caps and have a run!”

“And now,” said Mother that night, “we must begin to get ready for our trips. Are you sure, children, that you still want to go to Grandma’s?”

“Sure!” whooped Don, dancing about the room; while Joyce answered quietly,









“You know, Mother, that nothing could ever change my mind.”

“Very well,” said Mother. “Tomorrow we must go shopping, for you will need some new clothes—good, dark colored clothes to work and play in, so Grandma won’t have to be washing all summer.”

What fun they had in the days that followed! Mother’s sewing machine hummed for many hours every day. And at last she got out the little trunk and began to carefully pack away the neatly folded gingham dresses, the blue shirts and overalls, a few toys and other things she knew the children would need. A letter had already been written to Grandma, telling her when to meet them at the station. And she had written back, promising to be there at the very minute.

When the great day came, the children were so excited they could hardly eat any breakfast. Mother wisely remembered that when she packed their lunch-box. The last minute, they ran across the street to tell their playmates goodbye. When they came back, Daddy had brought the car to the front of the house and was carrying out the little trunk. Mother was already waiting in the car.

It was getting near train time, so Daddy quickly drove off to the station. He bought the children’s tickets, had the trunk checked, and then he gave Joyce some money to put into the new red purse Mother had given her as a parting gift. He slipped a few coins into Don’s pocket, too, and the little boy rattled and jingled them with delight. How grown-up he felt!

The children were very brave, until the train whistled and they knew





they must say goodbye. Joyce could not keep the tears back, as she threw her arms around her mother's neck; but she brushed them away and smiled. "Joyce, dear," Mother was saying, "I am expecting you to be my good, brave little daughter. Take care of Don. Remember to pray every day—and be sure to write to Mother."

Joyce promised; and then, almost before the children knew what was happening, they were aboard the train, the engine was puffing, the wheels were grinding on the rails, and they were speeding along through the green countryside.

Joyce was trying very hard to be brave, for Don's sake. But a lump would keep coming in her throat, when she thought of Mother standing beside the train and waving her handkerchief as it moved away.

Although Joyce was only twelve herself, she really began to feel quite like a mother to eight-year-old Don. She must try to help him forget his loneliness. Soon they were looking out the window; and what interesting sights were whirling past! First there was a big flock of chickens; then some calves in a meadow, running away from the train in a great fright. A flock of sheep with their little lambs frolicked on a green hillside; and a frisky colt kicked up its heels and darted across the pasture as the train went by.

By and by, in her most grown-up way, Joyce looked at the watch on her wrist. It was just noon, so she opened the lunch-box; and dainty sandwiches and fruit soon disappeared. But they saved two big slices of Moth-



er's good cake—to take to Grandma and Grandpa.

After lunch, the train seemed to creep along rather slowly. But at last it stopped at the station where Grandma had promised to meet them. And sure enough, there stood Grandpa with his snowy hair and his big broad smile. Grandma was waiting nearby in the car.

It was late afternoon when they reached the old farmhouse, and Grandma soon had supper ready. After supper, Joyce helped to clear away the dishes; and then the little trunk was unpacked.

Grandma was watching keenly, to see if the children were lonely. “Now,” she said briskly, “it is milking time. Run down the lane, children, and let the bars down for the cows to come through the lot; and we will give them a good drink of water.”

Away scampered Joyce and Don; and soon the cows were standing at the trough and Grandpa was pumping water for them.

“Let us pump!” cried Joyce.

“Fine!” said Grandpa—“that will be your job every evening—to water the cows.”

After that, they watched the foaming milk stream into the shiny pails; and then they all went into the house together. It was almost dark now; two sleepy children prayed together, and Grandma soon had them tucked snugly in bed.



