



By Lindsay Stevens Tanner

(Based on a true story)

“And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the Lord” (Deuteronomy 6:18).

Niles stared blankly at the book in his hands, trying hard to concentrate on the words on the page.

But Anna was throwing a paper airplane across the classroom, Tyler was making seal noises, and Chris was bragging about how many free throws he could make. Who could pay attention to a book when everyone else was doing all that stuff?

Niles dropped the book on his desk in frustration. His teacher, Mrs. Bradshaw, was gone for the day. She had left a reading assignment with the substitute teacher, but everyone in the class was doing whatever they wanted. Niles glanced up at the substitute, who was running after the paper plane.

“Hey, Niles,” Sarah called from the back of the class. “I bet you can’t do this!” She leaned forward and lifted her feet above her head in a perfect handstand. Niles knew she was challenging him—he had the handstand record in his class.

As he started to get up to show off his own handstand, his elbow bumped the book he was supposed to be reading. He sighed and changed his mind. “Next recess, it’s on!” he called to Sarah, who was still upside down. He opened his book again and stuffed his fingers into his ears. He could still hear some of the commotion going on around him, but now he could actually concentrate on his book.

The next day Niles’s teacher was back. “Pop quiz!” she announced as she passed the papers down the rows. “Ten questions on what you read yesterday.”

The whole class groaned. Niles started to feel worried. He had tried to read the assignment yesterday, but even though he had concentrated his hardest, he had only gotten through about half of it. He answered the questions the best he could, but he knew he failed the quiz.

When the final bell rang, Niles’s teacher asked him to stay behind while the other kids left the classroom.

“The substitute teacher left me a note, and it mentions you by name,” Mrs. Bradshaw said. “Would you like to know what it says?”

Niles swallowed and nodded, trying to remember if he had done anything wrong the day before.

“Of the entire class,” she read, “Niles was the only one who actually tried to read the assignment. He was an example to his classmates.”

Niles was stunned. He didn’t know the substitute had noticed him. He thought she was too busy with the other kids.

“Niles, I am going to give you full credit for the quiz,” Mrs. Bradshaw said. “Thank you for being an example yesterday.”

Niles's jaw dropped. He didn't know you could get good grades for being an example! As he ran home, he thought about what his teacher said. Not only was he the class handstand champion, but by being an example, he was a pop quiz champion too! ♦

The author lives in Utah, USA.

