

By Jane McBride Choate

(Based on a true story)

We believe in being honest (Articles of Faith 1:13).

Moving from his hometown hadn't been easy for Charlie. After Dad had been offered a better job, the family decided to move. Charlie's seven-year-old brother, Justin, didn't mind the move. Justin made friends wherever he went.

But going into a new sixth-grade class in the middle of the school year was hard for Charlie. Most of the kids had known each other since kindergarten. No one seemed interested in getting to know him. So Charlie was excited when Ryan and a couple other guys in his class asked him to go to the mall with them after school. They were going to look for some equipment for baseball season, which was only two weeks away.

As the boys walked into a sports equipment store, Charlie pulled a catcher's mitt from the wall and tried it on.

"That's a cool mitt," Ryan said.

"I know," Charlie said. "Too bad I don't have any money."

"Just stick it in your backpack," Ryan said. "Nobody's watching."

"What? You just want me to take it?" Charlie asked.

"They overcharge for everything in this store," Ryan said. "We probably pay too much for a lot of things."

Charlie wanted that mitt. Baseball season started soon, and he needed a new catcher's mitt. A lump formed in his throat. He knew he shouldn't take the mitt.

"Go ahead. Take it," Ryan said.

"Not right now," Charlie said. "Maybe later."

Charlie hung the glove back on the wall and turned

around. The boys were laughing.

"Baseball season is coming up," Ryan reminded Charlie as they left the store.

"You're going to need a glove soon."

Charlie couldn't concentrate on his homework

THE CATCHER'S MITT



that evening. He still wanted that mitt. He started to wonder if Ryan was right. At dinner, Mom and Dad noticed something was wrong.

“How are things at school, Charlie?” Dad asked.

“I got 100 percent on my spelling test,” Justin said.

“That’s great,” Dad said.

“How about you, Charlie?” Mom asked. “How’s that essay coming along?”

“I’m almost done,” Charlie muttered. “I’ll go finish it now.”



“Just stick it in your backpack.”

Charlie’s teacher had assigned him to write an essay about freedom. Charlie pulled out his notebook, picked up his pen, and began reading from his textbook.

“Freedom has two parts—agency and responsibility.”

Charlie had learned about agency at church, but he never really thought about it being connected with freedom. He started thinking about the catcher’s mitt. He knew he shouldn’t take it. He decided he wouldn’t—no matter what the other guys thought.

The next day at school, Charlie told Ryan he wasn’t going to take the catcher’s mitt.

“What’s the big deal?” Ryan asked. “They’ve got hundreds of them.”

“Stealing is wrong, even if the store has a lot,” Charlie said.

Ryan laughed as Charlie walked away.

That night, Charlie told his parents how he had been tempted to take the mitt.

“What stopped you?” Dad asked.

“I just knew it wasn’t honest,” Charlie said. “I knew it would be the wrong choice.”

Dad placed his hand on Charlie’s shoulder.

“We’re proud of you,” he said.

Even though Charlie still hadn’t made any good friends in his new class yet, he felt happy as he lay in bed that night. With baseball season just around the corner, he knew he would have a chance to make some new friends. ♦

“How very important it is to be true to ourselves.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008),
“Stand True and Faithful,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 92.

