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But the picture stuck in his mind.

Worthiness WORRIES



By Christine Merrill

(Based on a true story)

“Jesus is our loving friend. He is always near”

(Children’s Songbook, 58).

Matthew’s family went to New York City for spring break. He saw some really cool things—the Statue of Liberty, the Manhattan Temple, and a lot more. But he saw one thing that definitely *wasn’t* cool: a huge ad on a building with a really immodest picture on it.

Matthew turned his head away. But the picture stuck in his mind. He tried thinking about other things. But that just reminded him of what he was trying to forget!

As weeks passed, he got more and more frustrated. Then one night at dinner Mom said something that made things even worse.

“Matthew, I can’t believe you’re almost 12,” she said. “It’s time to have your bishop’s interview for the Aaronic Priesthood.”

Dad smiled at Matthew. “I’ll call and set it up.”

Matthew stopped eating. What if he wasn’t worthy to be a deacon because he couldn’t forget the bad picture? Mom and Dad kept smiling and talking. They didn’t seem to notice anything was wrong.

A few days later Matthew overheard Mom talking to Grandma on the phone. “Matthew seems to be worried about turning 12,” she said. “Maybe he’s worried about passing the sacrament.”

So Mom *had* noticed! Would he get in trouble if she knew what was *really* wrong?

After Mom said bye to Grandma, Matthew sat down on the couch. “I heard you talking about me seeming worried and stuff.” He took a deep breath. Then he blurted everything out. About how hard he’d tried to forget what he’d seen, but couldn’t.

“Maybe I’m not ready to be a deacon,” he said.

Mom put her arm around him. “First, you need to know that you didn’t sin by seeing that picture. It wasn’t your fault. Also, being worthy doesn’t mean being perfect.”

Part of Matthew’s worry disappeared, but not all. “So then why is it so hard to get that picture out of my head? Why does it make me feel so bad?”

“Well, it still hurt your spirit. And it might take a while for those thoughts to fade away,” Mom said. “But the great news is that Jesus Christ’s Atonement can help heal

us from everything, even things that aren’t our fault. Do you remember the scripture you learned for the Primary program?”

“Yeah—Alma 7:11. It says that Jesus takes people’s pains and sicknesses.”

“That means He can help you feel better again,” Mom said. “You’ve felt a lot of pain lately, haven’t you?”

“Yeah,” Matthew said.

“Well, you can pray and ask for His help. And you can have faith that He wants to help you and *can* help you. You can’t do it by yourself.”

Matthew nodded. The whole time he’d been fighting bad thoughts, he hadn’t wanted to pray. He’d felt too embarrassed.

That night, he knelt and asked Heavenly Father to help him stop thinking about what he’d seen and to help him feel worthy to have the Aaronic Priesthood. Then he fell asleep faster than he had in a long time.

On Sunday, Matthew got dressed for his interview with the bishop. He felt happy and thankful for Jesus Christ’s Atonement. Now when the bishop asked if he was ready to receive the priesthood, he knew he could answer, “Yes!” ♦

The author lives in Maryland, USA.



- 1 Tell a parent or trusted adult as soon as possible. You don’t have to carry the bad thought alone.
- 2 Tell Heavenly Father about it and ask for His help.
- 3 Imagine putting the bad thought in a balloon and letting it float away.
- 4 Do something fun or something to help someone.
- 5 Read a story from the *Friend*, or learn about something you’re interested in.