



By Jan Pinborough
(Based on a true story)

I say to myself, "Remember this: kindness begins with me" (Children's Songbook, 145).

Whoosh, whoosh." Laura leaned back in her swing, pumping as hard as she could, her eyes squeezed shut. Maybe if she went high enough, she wouldn't be able to hear what the girls over by the slide were saying about her.

That morning when she remembered that it was the first day of school, Laura was excited. She would wear

her favorite shirt, and at recess she would jump double Dutch with Sara and Ava. Last year the three girls jumped rope almost every recess.

Then at breakfast Laura remembered that she was going to be in Mrs. Shepherd's class again this year. Laura felt a fluttery feeling in her stomach. Mom and Dad said she needed to be a better reader before she was ready for fourth grade. Laura knew reading was important. But it was still hard for her to sound out some of the longer words.

Mom finished tying a ribbon around Laura's shiny

A Golden Friend

brown braid and gave her a kiss on the top of her head. “You’re so friendly and kind,” Mom said. “I know you’ll make friends. Maybe you’ll even find a golden friend.”

Laura hoped Mom was right. But then she remembered a little song she knew: *“Make new friends, but keep the old. One is silver, and the other’s gold.”* Didn’t that mean a new friend could only be silver, not gold?

When she walked into Mrs. Shepherd’s room, Laura looked at the pictures of students on the bulletin board. She recognized most of the girls from recess last year, but there were a few faces she had never seen before. Laura sat down in her old desk and opened her reading book. She turned to one of the stories at the back. The words seemed a *little* easier to read than they were last year.

When it was time for recess, Laura checked out a jump rope from the equipment closet and hurried outside. She saw Sara and Ava standing by the slide with another fourth-grade girl. Then Laura heard her name and the words *held back* and *dumb*. The girls laughed. Laura thought Sara and Ava would look at her, but they kept talking to the other girl.

Laura’s face felt hot as she ran to the swings. She dropped the jump rope, sat down, and began pumping with all her might. A few hot tears rolled down her cheeks. After a little while, the feeling of flying up toward the sky and back down again made her feel a little better.

Laura opened her eyes. Someone was sitting on the next swing over. It was one of the girls she didn’t know from Mrs. Shepherd’s class. She had a kind face, and she was looking at Laura in a friendly way.

Laura dragged her foot to stop her swing. “Hi,” she said. “I’m Laura.”

“I’m Christy,” said the girl. “I heard what those girls were saying. But don’t worry. You’re not the only one.”

“What do you mean?” Laura asked.

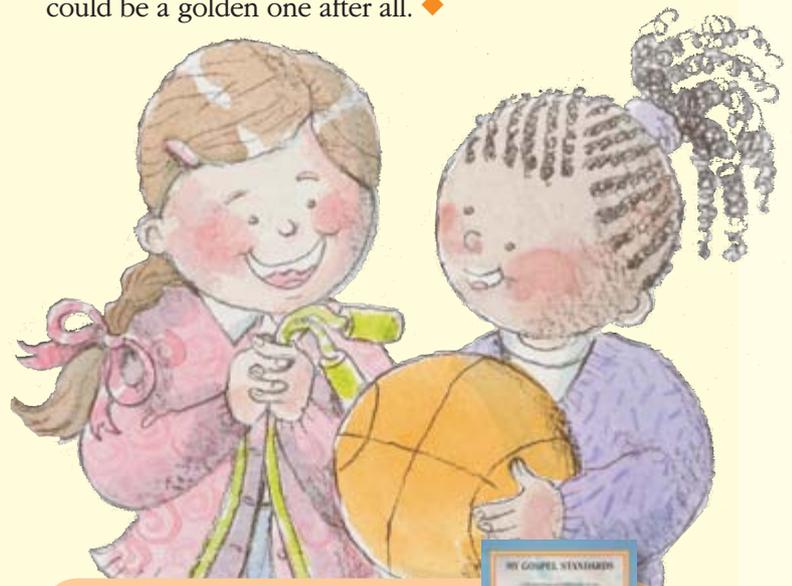
“Last year in my old school I missed a lot of days because I was sick, so I’m in third grade again too,” Christy said.

“It’s too bad you were sick, but I’m glad you’re in my class,” Laura said. Then she smiled. “Do you know how to jump double Dutch?”

Christy smiled back. “No, but I can bounce a basketball while I’m jumping.”

Laura jumped off her swing. “Maybe we could learn to jump double Dutch and bounce a basketball at the same time!”

Laura’s heart felt happy. Maybe a new friend really could be a golden one after all. ♦



“I will seek good friends and treat others kindly.”

My Gospel Standards

