

By Heidi Renouf-Brisco

(Based on a true story)

“Jesus said love ev’ryone; treat them kindly too” (Children’s Songbook, 67).

Elizabeth loved going to Primary every week. She loved singing Church songs and feeling the peaceful spirit there. She loved all her friends in Primary. But then her Primary class changed.

A new boy named Joseph moved in, and he seemed different from the other kids. His clothes were rumpled and dirty, and he didn’t seem to know when to talk and when to be quiet. He never raised his hand.

When Elizabeth talked to her mom about the new boy, her mom said that Joseph came from a “hard situation.” Elizabeth wasn’t really sure what that meant, but

*It was obvious—
no one wanted to sit by Joseph.*

she noticed that Joseph’s family didn’t come to church with him.

A few weeks after Joseph started coming to Primary, the trouble started.

“Everyone sit down so we can begin class,” Sister Johnson said. All the kids started to take their seats, but when Joseph sat down, everyone moved away from him.

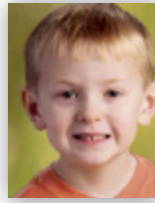
From then on, if Joseph sat on one side of the room, everyone hurried and moved to other side. It was like a game of musical chairs, where everyone tried to move as far away from Joseph as possible. Elizabeth had been taught to be kind, but even she began to play the musical chairs game. Sister Johnson told everyone to stay in their seats, but it was obvious—no one wanted to sit by Joseph.

Then one week at church, Joseph wasn’t there. Then another week, and another week passed, and Joseph still didn’t come.

Elizabeth wondered about Joseph and

Musical





I helped make a shy visitor feel happy in Primary. I asked her to sit by me and talked to her.

Tommy S., age 5, California, USA

why he wasn't coming to church anymore. She thought that maybe it was because of his "hard situation." Or maybe he had moved away. But she just couldn't get rid of an icky feeling that she had done something wrong. The more she thought, the more Elizabeth realized that their musical chairs game had been mean and wrong and that maybe it was the reason Joseph stopped coming to church.

One night after family prayer, Elizabeth gave her mom a hug and started to cry.

"Mom, I think I did something wrong. I didn't mean to, but I did."

Elizabeth told her mom about how no one in her Primary class wanted to sit next to Joseph. She told her how they had all laughed and tried to get the farthest seat away from him and how she felt bad for being mean to him. Elizabeth and her mom talked about repentance and what she could do to feel better and make things right.

Mom said, "Joseph is a child of God. It doesn't matter

if he looks and acts different; Heavenly Father loves him. We should always treat others like they are valuable, because they truly are."

Elizabeth promised herself that she would never treat anyone like that again. Even if it meant being less popular, she would treat everyone like a child of God.

One Sunday, Joseph finally returned to Primary. When the other kids started to giggle and race to find a seat away from Joseph, Elizabeth chose the seat right next to him.

"Hey, Joseph! What's up?" she asked with a warm smile.

For Elizabeth, the musical chairs game was over. Joseph would always have someone to sit by now. ◆

The author lives in Utah, USA.

CHAIRS

ILLUSTRATION BY BRAD TEARE

