

NO ROOM

By Cathy Whitaker Marshall

It was a beautiful spring day, and the bell hadn't yet rung for my French class to begin. With great animation I was explaining to my friend the details of my upcoming trip to Brigham Young University during spring break. My mother, Trudy* (my good friend from church), and I were taking a road trip to check out BYU.

It was a 12-hour drive from my home in Washington State to Provo, Utah, but that was also part of the fun. We would take our time and see the sights along the way and have lots of girl fun. I had never been on a trip without my dad and the rest of my brothers and sisters, so this was a real treat.

Finally I was free to leave. As I began gathering my books and papers, a voice from behind me timidly asked, "Hey, Cathy, can I talk to you for a minute?"

It was Jane Stevens.* I didn't know Jane very well because she didn't hang out with my usual friends. She wasn't LDS and seemed a little shy.

"Uh, sure Jane," I replied. "What's up?"

"Well." She cleared her throat. "I heard you talking about your trip to Brigham Young University, and I wanted to know . . ." She stopped, and when she said the next sentence it was strung together without a pause: "It sounds like fun and I want to know if it's OK if I come along too."

Had I heard her right? Did she really just ask if she could come along on this once-in-a-life-time adventure with me and my mom and my best friend? How could anyone just barge in and ask if they could come on a trip

I thought she would ruin our trip. Instead, having her there changed our lives.

in the Car



with someone they hardly knew? Finally, I said the only thing that came to mind that made any sense: “I’ll have to ask my mom.”

Jane looked up at me. “Yeah, you should ask your mom. Thanks. Do you . . . think you could ask her tonight and then tell me tomorrow?” Now I was committed.

As I walked the three blocks to my job I kept thinking, “What have I done? I don’t want Jane to mess up our plans. This was supposed to be an adventure for just the three of us.” Then, the perfect answer came to me with a jolt: I’ll tell her my mom said no. We didn’t have enough room or something equally plausible. Mom would go along with this story, I just knew she would.

Suddenly I felt better, if somewhat deceitful. At least I had a plan.

I hurried straight home and raced into the house. “Mom! Mom!” I called.

“I’m in the kitchen,” she answered. “What in the world are you in such a rush for?” She was drying the last of the dinner dishes.

“Mom, there’s this girl at school, and she wants to come with us on our trip. I don’t want her to come, and I want you to tell her she can’t come for some reason.”

“Whew!” My mom said laughing. “Slow down and tell me that again.”

“OK, there is this girl Jane at school . . .”

* Names
have been
changed.

“Jane Stevens?” my mom interrupted. “I know her parents. They are nice. I think it would be lovely if she came along,” said my mother.

“Noooo, Mom! We have all these plans made. I hardly know her and, and . . . and we don’t have any room in the car!”

“Let’s see.” Why was my mother so calm? “One: plans can be changed. Two: this would be a good way to get to know Jane. And three, we actually do have room in the car.”

“But Mom, it just won’t be as much fun if Jane comes with us.”

My mother, still calm, said, “Cathy, I can see how this upsets you. So I am going to leave the decision up to you. I just want you to know, Jane is welcome to come with us, but if you aren’t comfortable with that, you will be the one to explain to her that she can’t come.”

“OK. Thanks, Mom.” That made it easy. All I had to do was tell Jane there wasn’t enough room in the car, and she would understand. She’d have to.

I didn’t see Jane until the next day just before French. Why was my heart beating so fast?

“Did you ask your mom, Cathy?” she asked. She was looking at me and smiling.

Say it. “The car is *too* full. So sorry.” “The *car* is too full.” Say it!

“My mom said it would be fine if you come with us, and . . . I think it will be fun if you do.”

Where did that come from? I couldn’t believe I had said that.

Jane gave me a quick hug. “This is so wonderful!” she exclaimed. “I can’t wait!”

To this day I don’t know what came over me. But whatever it was, I am so very thankful it did. Jane went with us, and we had a great time. We had a marvelous tour of BYU and visited with other students from our hometown. We bowled, went out to dinner, visited family, and got to know one another better.

I learned to love Jane on that trip, and she began to love the gospel of Jesus Christ. When we returned home to Washington, Jane took the missionary lessons and soon became the first member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in her family. She returned to BYU with me that fall as my roommate. She eventually married in the temple and raised her family in the gospel.

What led me to change my mind that spring day so long ago? I have had a lot of years to think about that question. I now believe it was the Holy Ghost. He knew Jane’s heart was ready for the gospel. And He knew my heart needed a good gospel wake-up lesson.

Since that day, I have learned to be more accepting of those who are not in my circle and to open my mouth about the gospel of Jesus Christ. I try to follow Paul’s lead when he said, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Romans 1:16).

I also learned that you never know how many lives you will touch when you simply say, “You can come with us.” **NE**

