

The Invisible Visitor

BY HEIDI PYPER

(Based on a true story)

All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them (Matthew 7:12).

Julia's heart pounded as she peeked into the empty room. The Primary classroom, with its half circle of folding chairs and dusty chalkboard, looked exactly like hers at home. But Julia's stomach flip-flopped as she walked through the door. Things might look the same, but Julia knew they weren't. Today she was a visitor.

Julia sank into the chair farthest from the door. She loved everything about her family's summer visits to see cousins and grandparents, except for being a visitor in a different ward. Singing Primary songs and learning about the Savior was nice, but she didn't like sitting by herself and not knowing anyone.

Julia also didn't like listening to the other kids talk and laugh together while no one even looked at her. To her, it felt like no one cared if she came or not. It was like being invisible—Julia, the amazing invisible visitor!

Julia twirled her long blonde braids and wished she were back home with her own Primary teacher, Sister Johansson, and her best friend, Hanna. "Maybe this time will be different," she told herself as she adjusted her glasses and smoothed her skirt one more time. "Maybe if I try really hard, I can make it different."

Julia jumped as the door opened. Three girls stepped into the room, talking excitedly. Two boys followed. Julia took a quick breath and forced her mouth into a smile.

"Hi!" she burst out. Suddenly everyone's eyes were on her. Julia's face got hot.

"Uh, hi," mumbled one of the girls.

"Are you new?" another girl asked.

Julia cleared her throat. "No, I'm just visiting my grandma."

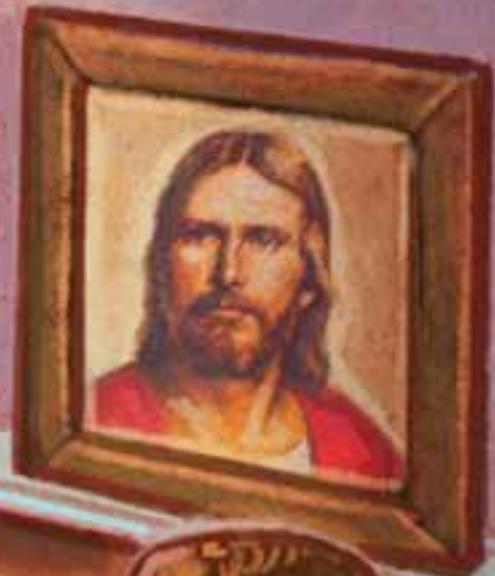
"Oh."

Everyone chose a seat. Julia's smile faded when she



"We cannot fully love God without loving our neighbor. We cannot fully love our neighbor without loving God."¹

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



realized that each chair was taken except the one next to her. No one said a word to Julia. She stared at her hands. "The amazing invisible visitor strikes again," she thought. A tear slid down her cheek.

A week later Julia's heart seemed to float as she hurried down the hallway at church. It was so good to be home! When she walked into her classroom, Hanna was already there.

"Hi, Julia! I'm so glad you're back!" Hanna said. Julia sat down next to Hanna. Soon they were laughing and talking. Julia had just started to tell Hanna all about her week with Grandma when a tall, slender girl with reddish-gold hair appeared in the doorway. Julia watched the girl slip into the chair farthest from the door and sit by herself.

"She must be a visitor," Julia thought. "Boy, am I glad

Do you know someone in Primary or at school who feels left out?



It's not that hard to include them!



it's not me this time!" The girl raised her eyes to look around and then stared down at her hands. Julia's heart twisted as no one said a word to the visitor. "I wish being the visitor didn't have to be so hard," she thought. "It should be different!" Last Sunday flashed through her mind for a moment as she remembered being the sad, invisible visitor. She blinked. Wait a minute—she could make it different this time!

Julia stood up. "Hi," she said with a smile. She crossed the room and sat down in the chair next to the girl. "Are you visiting today?"

The girl looked up with wide eyes, and then her face lit up. "Yes, I'm visiting my aunt. Are you visiting too?"

Julia shook her head. "No, but I know how it is,"

she explained. "I'm Julia. What's your name?"

"Ella."

"Want to come over and sit with Hanna and me?"

Ella grinned and nodded. As the two girls moved back across the room, Julia felt warm inside. "No invisible visitors allowed!" she thought. "Not if I can help it!" ●

FAMILY HOME EVENING IDEA

Role-play this story by having family members take turns coming into the room pretending they are visitors to a Primary class. Practice different ways of welcoming the person into the class. Conclude by reading and discussing Matthew 7:12.

