

BY DARLENE YOUNG

(Based on a true story)

Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you (Matthew 5:44).

Abby hadn't paid much attention when Rachel and her family moved in across the street. Abby already had a best friend. Besides, Rachel wasn't Abby's type. Rachel and her older brothers wore the kind of clothes that Abby knew her parents would never let her wear. And the Miller kids stayed up really late at night—Abby knew because she heard them yelling at each other and playing loud music.

Abby saw Rachel every day at school but didn't bother to introduce herself. She figured Rachel would find her own friends who were more like her. Sure enough, Rachel started hanging around with Kami. Kami bullied some of the other kids, and she swore a lot. Abby thought Kami and Rachel were perfect for each other.

A few weeks later, Abby stepped out onto her porch to go to school. The night before, Abby and her family had placed pumpkins on their front porch. Abby gasped as she saw the remains of the pumpkins smashed to smithereens and smeared all over the porch steps. Abby stared at the sticky, orange mess and wanted to cry. When she looked up, she saw Rachel's older

brother watching her from across the street. Abby *knew* that Rachel and her brothers had smashed the pumpkins on purpose.

She went inside and told her mom what had happened. "I know it was Rachel and her brothers," she said.

"You can't know that for sure," Mom said.

"I just know," Abby said. "And I hate them."

Abby's mom tried to tell her

that hate was wrong, but Abby didn't listen.

At school, Abby watched Rachel. Would Rachel brag to Kami about smashing the pumpkins? Was she secretly laughing at Abby?

That night after dinner, Mom asked Abby if she would try an experiment.

"I guess so," Abby said. "What is it?"

"For the rest of the week, I want you to do everything you can to replace your anger with feelings of love for Rachel," Mom said. "Pray for her. Think about her. Smile at her at school. Do whatever you can think of to show love. Then we'll talk about it."

"Five days!" Abby thought. She didn't think she could have feelings of love for Rachel, but she wanted to do what her mom asked.

"OK," Abby agreed. "I'll do it for the rest of the week. But I don't know if it will work."

Abby began by praying for Rachel. She didn't really know what to say in her prayer, so she just said, "Please bless Rachel." That day she watched Rachel more closely during school. She noticed that Rachel was having a hard time in math. "That's something I can pray about," Abby thought.

On day two, Abby prayed, "Please help Rachel do better in math." During math class, Rachel must have felt Abby watching her because she looked right back at Abby. Abby didn't know what to do, so she smiled. On the way home from school, Rachel caught up to Abby.

"Why were you staring at me in math?" Rachel asked.

Abby's heart raced. Would Rachel hit her?

"Um, I was wondering if you needed some help. I'm kind of good at math," Abby said.

"I don't need help!" Rachel said, and she ran ahead of Abby.

The Pumpkin Experiment

On day three, Abby prayed that she would be able to help Rachel. At recess, Rachel didn't play with Kami. She came over to Abby instead. "Are you really good at math?" she asked.

Abby nodded.

"Could you help me after school?"

Abby thought about Rachel's house. She didn't want to go there. "Sure," she said. "Can you come over to my house?"

"OK," Rachel said, smiling. "How about tomorrow?"

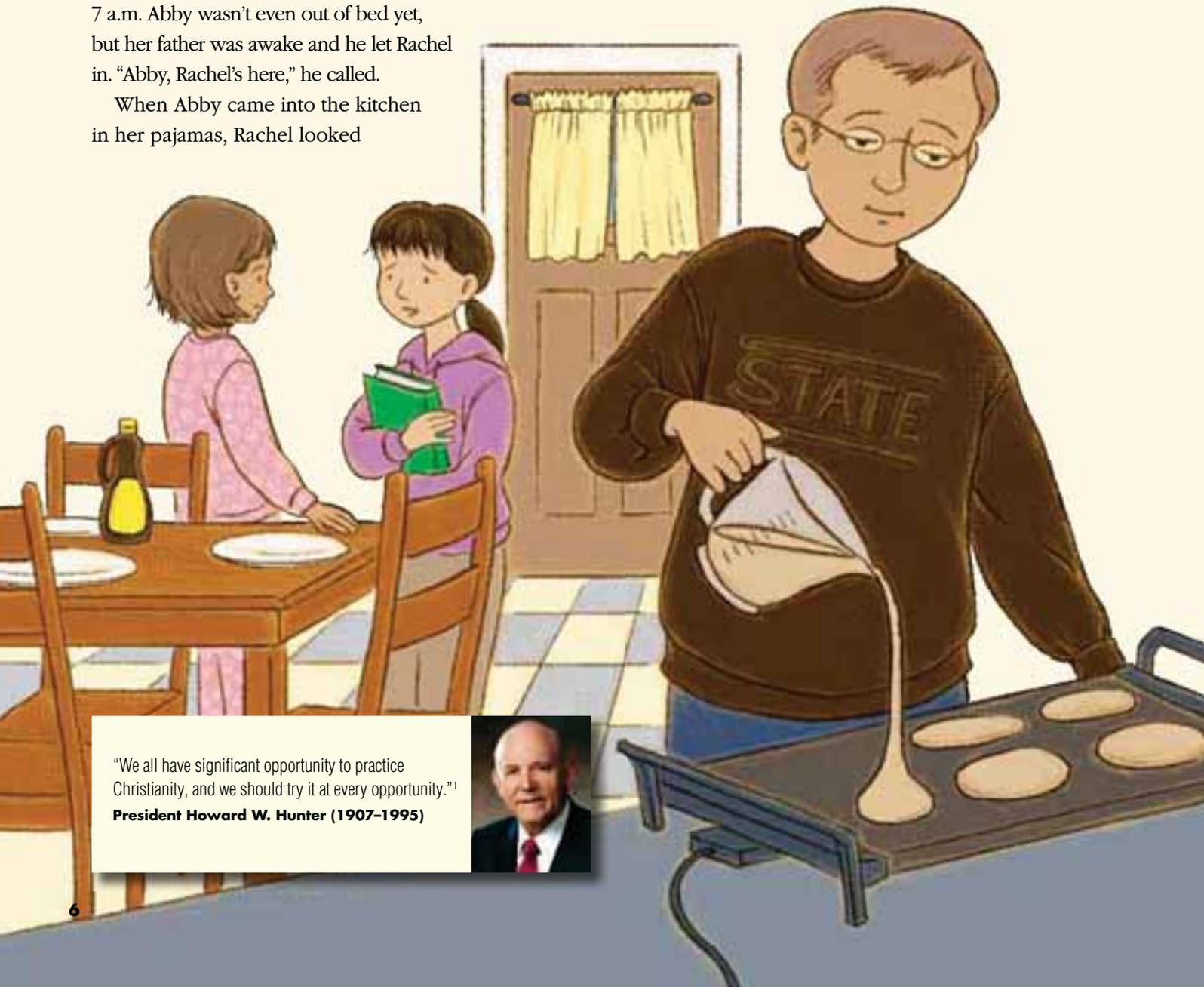
On day four, which was Saturday, the doorbell rang at 7 a.m. Abby wasn't even out of bed yet, but her father was awake and he let Rachel in. "Abby, Rachel's here," he called.

When Abby came into the kitchen in her pajamas, Rachel looked

embarrassed. "I guess I came over too early," she said. "I just didn't want to be at my house right now."

Abby was glad Rachel was in their house. She didn't want Rachel to be feeling sad at her own house this morning. Abby's dad was making pancakes. Abby smiled at Rachel and got her a plate and a fork.

On day five, Abby took Rachel with her to Primary. After church, she told her mom she had been right about the experiment. It *did* feel better to love her enemies. "Only, Rachel's not my enemy anymore," she said. "She's my friend." ●



"We all have significant opportunity to practice Christianity, and we should try it at every opportunity."¹

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–1995)

