

The Spelling Bee



By Nancy L. Brown
(Based on a true story)



I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you (John 14:18).

Nancy jumped down the steps of the school bus and ran into the house.

“Mom, guess what happened—I got first place in the class spelling bee! Now I get to compete in the spelling bee for the whole school!”

“Oh, Nancy, that’s great!” Mom said, giving her a big hug.

Nancy took her backpack to her bedroom. Kicking off her shoes, she lay back on her bed and grinned. With two weeks to study the list of words her teacher had given her, there would be plenty of time to study for the school spelling bee.

As the competition approached, Nancy started to get a little nervous. But she studied hard and won the school spelling bee. She even got her picture in the newspaper! But Nancy knew the hardest work was still to come.

Now Nancy had a month to study for the district-wide spelling bee. She kept the spelling list in her pocket and studied the words every chance she got. She had done everything she could to be ready, but she was still nervous.

The morning of the spelling bee, Nancy woke up with a sick feeling in her stomach.

“I don’t feel so good,” she told Mom.

“Do you think it could just be that you’re nervous about the spelling bee?” Mom asked.

Nancy nodded. “I don’t think I can do this,” she whispered.

Mom gave Nancy a hug. “I think you should say a prayer,” she said.

Nancy returned to her bedroom, knelt down, and asked Heavenly Father to help her feel better. She remembered that she had studied hard and was well prepared. She asked Heavenly Father to give her the confidence she needed. She felt better as she ended her prayer and stood up.

Mom drove Nancy to the spelling bee and smiled at her whenever Nancy looked out into the audience. After five rounds, only two spellers were left: Nancy and another girl. Nancy approached the microphone, her heart pounding.

“Can you please spell the word *camouflage*,” the woman giving the words said.

Nancy felt her courage fail as she realized this was one word she didn’t know.

Hesitantly, she began. “Camouflage. C-a-m . . . o-f-l-a-g-e. Camouflage.”

The woman’s quick shake of the head let Nancy know she had spelled it wrong. Hanging her head, Nancy returned to her seat, barely listening as the last girl spelled the word correctly. The audience began to clap, and Nancy joined in, but inside she felt like crying. That same sick feeling returned to her stomach.

Then Nancy remembered her prayer from that morning. Still sitting on the stage, she whispered, “Please help me be happy, Heavenly Father. I did my best, but I’m so sad. Please help me be OK with not winning. Please comfort me.”

Slowly, a peaceful feeling spread through her. A smile inched onto her face. She stood and put out her hand to the winner, giving a hearty congratulations.

Afterward, Mom wrapped Nancy in a hug. “Nancy, I’m so proud of you. You did fantastic. Are you OK?”

Nancy nodded. “Yes, I’m OK. I asked Heavenly Father for comfort, and I feel good in my heart.”

“I’m glad you remembered to pray,” Mom said. “Heavenly Father will always be there for you.” She winked at Nancy. “I think you learned a lot more today than just how to spell the word *camouflage*!” ♦

“[Heavenly Father] wants you to pray to Him every day. He wants to help you because He loves you, and He will help you if you pray to Him and ask Him for His help.”¹

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994)

