

By Annalisa Hall

(Based on a true story)

Listen to the still small voice! Listen! Listen!

(*Children's Songbook*, 107).

The words *don't do it* raced through Joe's mind, but Ethan's words were louder.

"Write your name," Ethan said.

So Joe did. In big black letters he wrote "JOE" on the garbage can in Mrs. Burhopp's driveway.

When Ethan's grandmother called him in for dinner, Joe ran into his house, grabbed a wet rag off the counter, and ran back outside. He scrubbed hard to remove his name from the garbage can, but he couldn't do it. As he scrubbed, Joe felt like he should tell his parents.

Joe ran back to his house and began to cry. He knew he had made a bad choice when he wrote on the garbage can. When he walked into the house, Mom was waiting for him.

"Mrs. Burhopp called me," Mom said. "She said you made a big mess of her garbage can."

"I tried to wash my name off, but I couldn't," Joe said.

Mom was very quiet for what seemed like a long time.



Garbage
Can
Graffiti



“My mind told me not to do it,” Joe said, “but Ethan told me I should.”

“Joe, when you heard that first voice in your mind, why didn’t you listen to it?” Mom asked.

“I’m not sure why,” Joe said. “Ethan’s voice was louder.”

“The voice in your mind telling you not to do it was the Holy Ghost,” Mom said. “Listening to the Holy Ghost can help us choose the right.”

Mom gave Joe a new cloth and soap and sent him back to finish cleaning the garbage can. Joe went to Mrs. Burhopp and apologized, and then worked hard to clean the can.

Mrs. Burhopp came out to see Joe’s progress. When there was only a light “JOE” on the can, she said he could go home and come back the next day to finish the job.

When Joe woke up the next morning, he looked out his window and noticed Mrs. Burhopp’s trash can wasn’t in the driveway. As he walked downstairs, Joe thought maybe he had done enough scrubbing to satisfy Mrs. Burhopp. But when Mom pulled out a small bucket of paint and a paintbrush, Joe knew he would need to repaint the garbage can.

As Joe painted, he thought about his bad choice. But he knew that he would do better next time by listening to the Holy Ghost when he had a choice to make. ♦

“When temptations come our way, if we will listen, the Holy Ghost will remind us that we have promised to remember our Savior and obey the commandments of God.”²

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

