



Miles and Miles of Smiles

“Let all your things be done with charity” (1 Corinthians 16:14).

BY RAY GOLDRUP

Based on a true story

Marcus watched the crackling campfire as he listened to his father’s lesson. “We should all follow Jesus Christ’s example so we can be happy,” Dad said to the family. They were sitting on logs around the fire. “It’s very important for each of us to show charity toward others,” he said.

“What’s charity, Dad?” Marcus asked.

Dad added more wood to the campfire. “Charity is the pure love of Christ,” he explained. “We cannot be saved in the kingdom of God without it.”

Marcus looked confused. Dad looked around at their family and asked, “Can each of you think of an example of charity, to help Marcus better understand what it is?”

Mom turned a marshmallow over the fire on a stick. “When Mrs. Clanton fell and hurt her hip, I helped do chores around her house,” she said.

Tanner told how last week he helped the deacons

quorum collect food and clothing for some of the city’s poor and homeless.

Ashley had befriended a neighborhood girl whom other girls ignored.

“Dad helped fix Mr. Johnson’s roof because Mr. Johnson is in a wheelchair,” Mom said.

“Does taking care of Jo-Jo count?” Marcus asked. Jo-Jo was his hamster. “I feed him and change his water and give him a new sock for his bed.” Marcus bit into a toasty marshmallow.

“Any act of kindness or service we do for someone—including Jo-Jo—is charity,” Dad said.

“I want to do stuff for somebody bigger than Jo-Jo, like you and Mom and Tanner and Ashley do,” Marcus said. “But I’m too little, I guess.”

“You don’t have to be big to help someone, do you, Marcus?” Dad asked. “Or to have your prayers answered?”

Marcus smiled. “No.”

“Why don’t you ask Heavenly Father to help you find someone you can help, and when the time is right, you’ll know it.”

“How will I know it?” Marcus asked.

Ashley reached over and wiped a smear of marshmallow from the side of Marcus’s mouth. “You’ll feel it about as deep down inside you as that marshmallow you just ate,” she said.

Later that night, Marcus lay curled up in his sleeping bag. He listened to the tree branches rub against the outside of the tent. “Heavenly Father, please help me find someone I can help,” he prayed. “I’m just a little kid, but Dad said you don’t have to be big to be kind or helpful to others. I help Jo-Jo and my family by being kind and doing my chores, but I want to do something for somebody else. Jesus helped lots of people, and I want to be like Him.”

One Saturday afternoon two weeks later, Marcus worked alongside his mother in their flower garden. He noticed their next-door neighbor sitting alone in her front-porch swing. She looked sad. “Mom, what’s the matter with Mrs. Walton?” Marcus asked.

Mom straightened up from bending over the flowers and looked at their neighbor. “Mr. Walton died almost a year ago, and she misses him very much. Some days are hard for her, and it looks like this is one of those days.”

Marcus stood up and looked at Mrs. Walton across the low hedge that separated the two yards. He felt a feeling deep inside him. It got bigger and warmer just like the campfire did when his father added more wood to it. “Can I pick one of our big yellow flowers and give it to Mrs. Walton?” Marcus asked.

Mom smiled and nodded.

A few moments later Marcus stood in front of Mrs.



Marcus held out the flower to Mrs. Walton. "This is for you," he said.

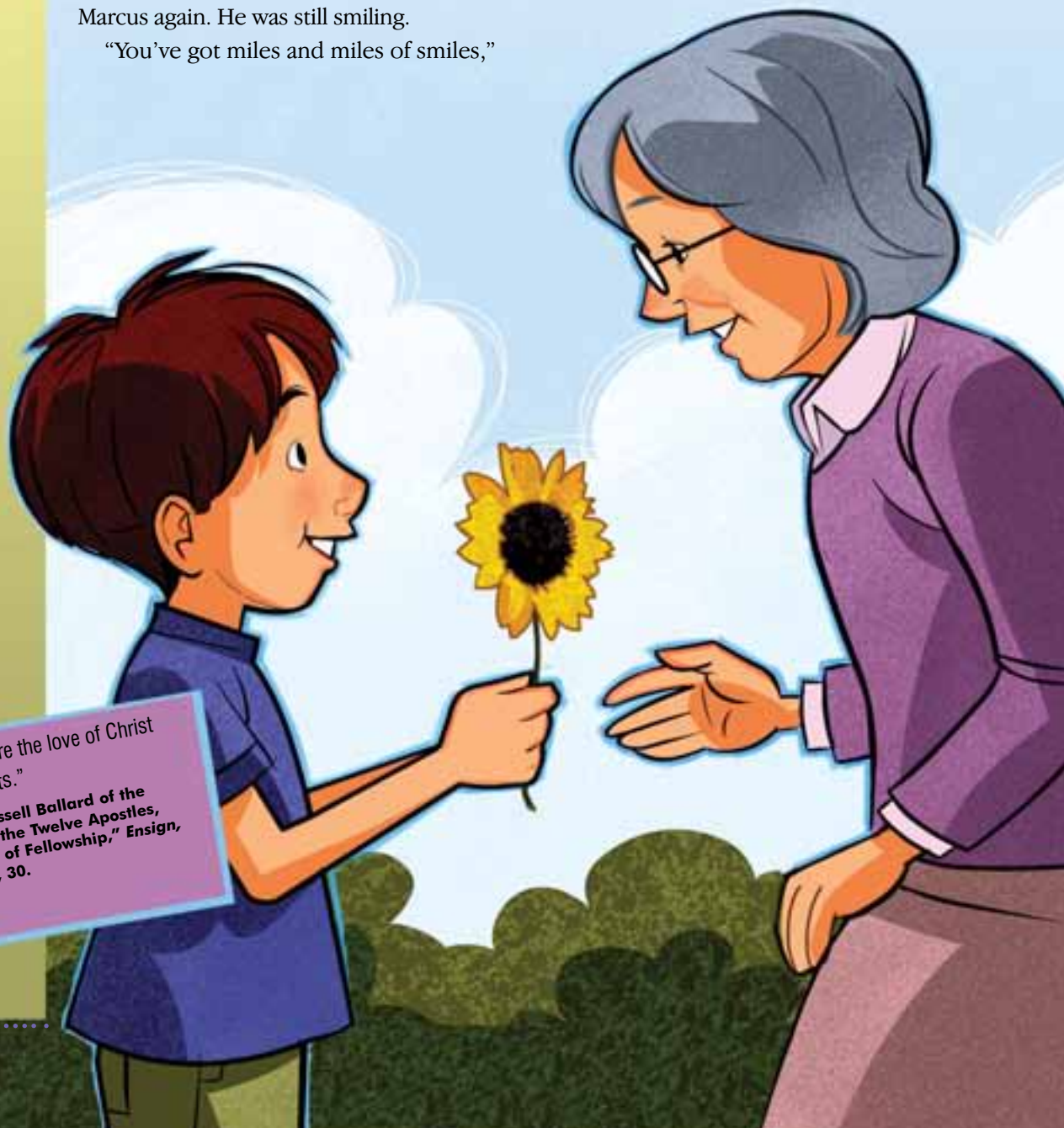
Walton. She looked surprised. Marcus held out the flower to her. "This is for you," he said.

She took the flower and then looked at Marcus. He climbed into the swing and sat beside her. He didn't say anything. He just smiled. Mrs. Walton patted Marcus's hand, and the two of them sat there together and listened to two red birds singing in her maple tree. Then Mrs. Walton looked at Marcus again. He was still smiling.

"You've got miles and miles of smiles,"

she said. "Did you know that?" Marcus kept smiling. "Your smiles came at a time when I most needed them. Thank you."

That night Marcus put clean bark shavings in his hamster's cage before going to bed. "Jo-Jo, today I worked with Mom in the flower garden, and I helped Mrs. Walton be happy. It made me feel happy too. I don't have to be big to help others. I can be like Jesus right now." ●



"We can share the love of Christ in simple acts."

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Hand of Fellowship," *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 30.

