

Asking Father

*Thirty-Four Stories
in Five Series*

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Asking Father

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One Sunday evening, when he was only five years old, F. B. Meyer added this extra request to his usual prayers: “Put Thy Holy Spirit in me to make my heart good, like Jesus Christ was,” and he continued to say it every day.



A little girl prayed: “Dear Lord, fill me with Your Spirit. I can’t hold much, but I can overflow a lot.”



Vance Havner was saved as a country boy. “I did not understand all about the plan of salvation,” he said. “One does not have to understand it, one has only to stand on it. I do not understand all about electricity, but I do not intend to sit around in the dark until I do! One thing I did understand even as a lad: I understood that I was under new management. I belonged to Christ and He was Lord.”

THE FIRST SERIES

ANIMALS THAT WORKED FOR FATHER

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The Horse That Wouldn't Go

Ling Su looked up as her grandfather strode into the room. She knew that something had happened to frighten him, for he usually walked slowly and deliberately, but now he had burst into the house, all out of breath. How anxious he seemed!

“I have been walking on the city walls today,” he told her, “and I saw in the distance a band of soldiers approaching our gates.”

Ling Su gave a shiver of fear. She remembered several years before when another band of lawless bandits had come to their city and to their house. Although she had been younger then, she could still remember how cruelly they had treated each member of her family. And they had just decided to stay as long as they wanted, stealing whatever they fancied. How very, very glad she had been when she saw them leave the house! What if these soldiers did even worse things!

The old grandfather thought for several moments, wondering what he could do to protect his family. Suddenly, Ling Su saw his face brighten.

“Ling Su,” he said, “will you pray to your Jesus and ask Him to protect us from these wicked men?”

Ling Su could hardly believe her ears. What had happened to her grandfather? He had beaten her every time he had heard her praying in the Name of Jesus. He did not

want any new god to take the place of their ancestral idols. And now he had actually asked her to pray!

“The bandits are coming any moment,” he said gruffly. Seizing her, he shook her roughly. “If ever you prayed in your life, pray now, little one,” he shouted in her ear, pushing her into a small room and banging the door shut behind him.

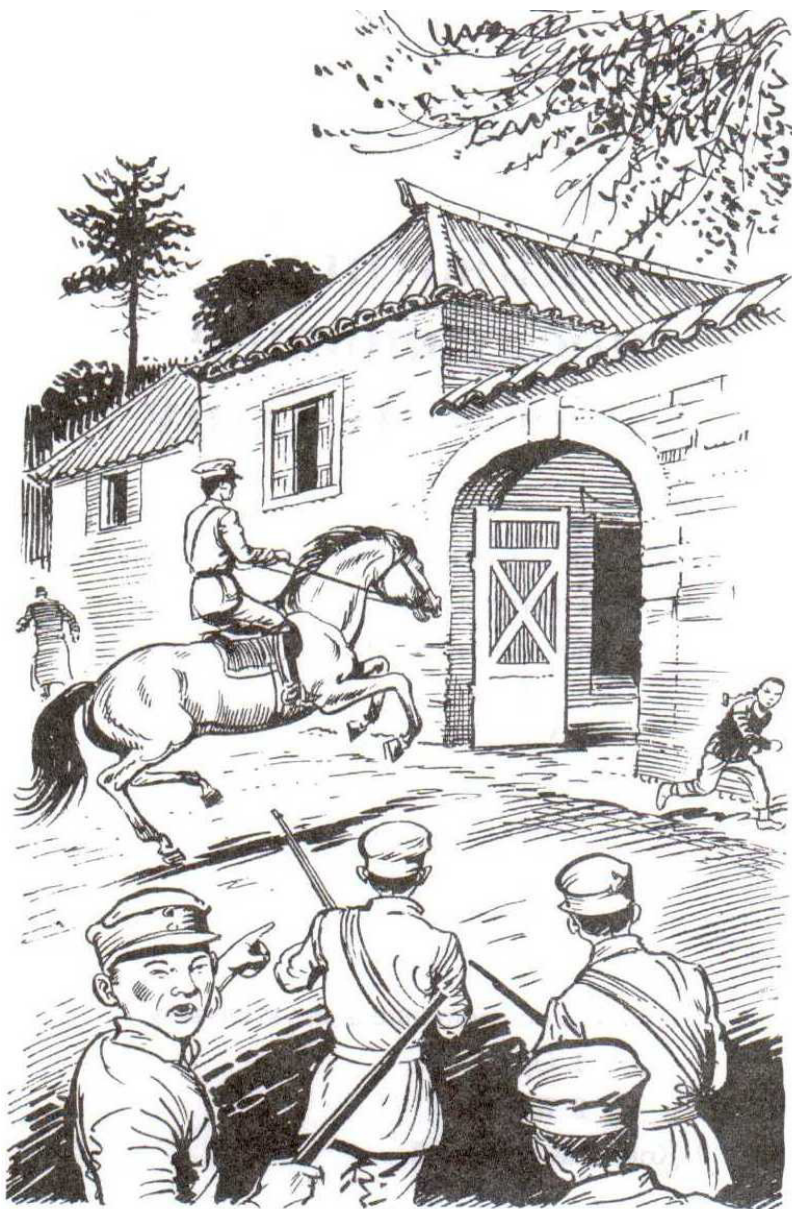
It all happened so very quickly; Ling Su felt confused and very frightened. But she had become a Christian and had tried so hard to be a bright light for Jesus in her family. She wanted to tell them the wonderful stories of Jesus which the missionary had told her. But maybe this was even better! This was a chance to prove to them that Jesus hears and answers prayer.

Ling Su was used to talking to her Heavenly Father every day when there were no bandits around and when everything was quiet and calm. It did not seem strange now, when she was surrounded by danger, to kneel down and ask her Heavenly Father to protect her and those she loved from danger.

“Heavenly Father,” she began, “I am so happy, so thankful because my grandfather told me to pray. Always before, he beat or kicked me if I prayed and was so very angry! But now he has told me to pray. Heavenly Father, now’s Your chance. Please show my grandfather that You do hear and answer prayer. Please don’t let those soldiers come to our house. In the Name of Jesus, I ask You this. Amen.”

Meanwhile, in the room next door, the rest of the family were cautiously peering through the curtains to see what would happen. With one ear, Ling Su’s mother could hear her daughter pouring out her simple prayer to the Lord Jesus in the next room, but with the other ear, she could also hear something else. The tramp, tramp, tramp of feet sounded faintly at first, but was growing louder and there was the clatter of horses’ hooves as well.

“Well, God certainly has not answered my daughter’s prayer,” she said to herself as she watched the officer in charge on his big horse leading his men towards their



courtyard door. Grandfather had left it open, knowing it would be far worse for them if he shut or bolted it.

They watched from behind the curtain, hardly daring to breath. The officer turned his horse's head, trying to make the animal enter the courtyard gate. Everyone's heart was beating wildly. What was going to happen next?

"Don't let them come to our house, Heavenly Father," Ling Su was pleading in the next room. "Now's Your chance! Please show Grandfather that You do answer prayer."

Then a very strange thing happened. The horse would not obey its master. It shied and kicked. It tossed its head and tried to back away. It reared up, but would not go forward. Over and over again, the bandit dug his spurs into its sides to make it enter the gate. But it was of no use. The creature would not go into that yard.

"Why, this courtyard is full of demons! We cannot see them, but the horse can," the officer told his men, thoroughly desperate now and very afraid. "Not one of you is to go in there!" he commanded, pointing to Ling Su's house.

Grandfather could hardly believe what he was hearing and seeing. These soldiers were actually turning around and marching away in the very direction from which they had come!

The next day, the missionary who lived in that city heard a knock at his door. It was Grandfather.

"Please, teach me how to pray," he begged the missionary. His eyes were full of tears. "To think," he said, "that all the while, that little granddaughter of mine was right and I was wrong! Teach me about the God Who answers prayer like that."

We do not know what the horse saw that day. The bandits said it was demons. What we do know is that God

heard a little girl's cry and sent and filled that courtyard with shining angels who guarded Ling Su's house and kept her and all her family safe. God has hosts of angels and they are sent to help those who trust in Jesus for their salvation and protection. David, wrote in one of his Psalms: "He shall give His angels charge over thee."

So maybe that horse did see angels. After all, if the ass that belonged to Baalam in the Bible could see an angel with a sword in his hand guarding the way, couldn't that bandit's horse have seen angels when others could see nothing? I think he did see them, and I have a feeling that Ling Su thought so too!

Ama and the Leopard

Little Ama had been sent on an errand by her father, but it wasn't to the shops, or to the house down the road. No, for Ama lived in a far-away country—a land of jungles, of snakes, and of leopards. And although she was just a small girl, she knew all about the dangers that lurked just beyond the village where she lived.

This particular day, however, she had been told to take a short cut and as she usually obeyed her father, she started off quite happily. It wasn't far to go, but the path took her through dense jungle which lay between her village and the next. During the day, Ama didn't dread the dense undergrowth, but at night it was full of danger and not at all the sort of place for girls and boys.

Well, when Ama had finished her errand, she started home, but it was already beginning to grow dark. The trees seemed so thick in the jungle that she became nervous and decided that she must get home as fast as she could. She began to run, thinking all the time of the shelter of her own home and of her parents waiting for her return. When she was nearly out of the woods, Ama walked more slowly, for her legs felt very, very tired.

Suddenly she stopped and listened, her eyes growing big with terror. It was not imaginary, she was sure of that, but something very real and very frightening that she heard. It was the pad, pad, pad of a leopard's paws, and she recognized the familiar leopard scent. She had often smelled it before, but always in the safety of her own home. But now, here she was, all alone in the dark jungle with the dreadful creature coming nearer and nearer.

"Run, Ama, run," I can hear you saying. "Why don't you run?" But Ama knew that however fast she might be able to do so, the leopard could run much faster. She knew also that once he begins to stalk his prey, he never stops until it is firmly in his clutch. There was nothing to do but to sit down right there, beneath the trees, for she was much too frightened and tired to do anything else.

As she sat there with her heart thumping loudly, she remembered something. Her parents did not believe in Jesus. They were Moslems and worshiped the prophet Mohammed. But Ama had been told by missionaries who had come to their village, about One called Jesus Who had come to this world to show how loving is our Father in Heaven. Ama came to love this Jesus as she had listened to the stories from the missionaries' lips. She remembered all this as she sat, terribly afraid, beneath the trees, knowing that the leopard

was coming closer and closer all the time. And she remembered that she had learned to ask Father for whatever she needed. So, right there, all alone in the darkness, she prayed, “Oh, Lord Jesus, I’m so frightened. But I know You love and care for me and I trust You to keep me safe. Amen.”

She felt much better after that prayer. In fact, Jesus had taken the fear all away. Now, even though she knew that the leopard was circling nearer and nearer, somehow, she was sure all would be well.

The rest of this story is almost too good to be true, but when you or I tell Father about our great need, things happen that are nearly too wonderful to believe. We might have to wait for a while before we get an answer but it will always come.

When Ama had finished praying, she could hear the great beast going round and round her, each time drawing closer. Then, just when you would have thought it was about to pounce, it lay down beside her, placing its great head on her lap and purring just like a big cat. It seemed happy and contented, lying there beside little Ama, and then, after a few minutes, it slowly rose and walked off into the darkness of the night.

When Ama felt strong enough, for after all, it isn’t every day a leopard comes and puts its head on your lap, she ran all the way home. But she said nothing about it to her father that night. Perhaps she was too tired, or maybe she thought that he wouldn’t believe her or understand. She did, however, thank the dear Lord Jesus for keeping her safe and for letting her find out from the missionaries about His love and how He always helps those who call upon Him.

Four weeks passed before Ama told her father about her jungle adventure. “I’m not surprised, Ama,” he said, “for after you had gone, I smelled a leopard nearby.”



Then the little girl told him how she had prayed to her Friend and how He had answered. Her father said, “Yes, Ama. It must have been the one true God Who answered your prayer and kept you safe from those terrible paws. No one else, not even Mohammed, has ever been known to do a thing like that.”

We do not know if her father became a Christian, but from that day on, he was sure that the way Ama talked to Father and the way He answered, was very real and wonderful. And I think so too, don’t you?

The Smallest Boy with the Highest Reach

George Williams lived on a farm in Devonshire, England, and was the youngest of eight sons. All of his brothers were tall and muscular, but also rather stern men who didn't show their feelings or talk a lot. George, on the other hand, was small for his age and not very strong. He was also high-strung, sensitive, and gentle. He sometimes grew weary of being so small, but supposed he would have to be a farmer all his life. After all, he came from a family of farmers. His grandfather and his great-grandfather had been farmers, too, and their fathers before them. Then one day, something happened that changed his future and through him, the future of many young men all over the world.

It was haymaking time on the farm. All the farmhands were feverishly working to get the hay in before the rain came and spoiled the harvest. George was driving a fully loaded wagon, but the threatening storm clouds made him hurry so much that he did not notice the deep rut in the road. Down went wagon and hay, and George with them. Fortunately, his brothers weren't far away and soon came to help him.

"George will never make a good farmer," they said to each other. "He's not strong enough to do heavy work around the farm." They must have shared their thoughts with their father, because it wasn't long before George was apprenticed to a draper in Bridgewater, twenty-five miles away.



Life suddenly changed for young George Williams. He had never been away from home before and now he found himself working with twenty-seven other lads whom he had never met before. Among George's new workmates were two serious-minded boys who had a good influence on the young boy who must have felt rather lonely and out-of-place.

It was fortunate for George that his new master was a Christian who demanded that all his workers go to church on Sunday. As the young farm boy would listen to the Methodists preachers who had come to that part of the country, he began to realize that there was another world besides this one. He had never thought of that before. If he closed his eyes, he could see two great roads stretching out in front of him and leading right into Eternity. "Every person born into this world must journey on one of these," he thought. "I now began to pray, but even on my knees oaths would come to my lips," he confessed.

One day, while sitting in the back pew at church, George just turned his face up to God and decided in his heart that he would travel the road that led upwards. This was a turning point in his life. "I learned at Bridgewater," he tells us, "to see the tremendous importance of the spiritual life. I saw in this town two roads—the downward road and the upward road. I began to think to myself: 'What if I continue along this downward road, where shall I get to? Where is the end of it? What will become of me?' Thank God! I had been kept from going far astray; still, I was on the downward road."

After returning from the service, George knelt down behind the counter of the shop and gave his heart into God's

keeping. “I cannot describe to you the joy and peace which flowed into my soul,” he tells us, “when I first saw that the Lord Jesus had died for my sins and that they were all forgiven.” In the years that followed, George learned to ask Father about all sorts of things, and this later helped him in the work Father would give him to do.

When he was nineteen and had served his apprenticeship in Bridgewater, his brother took him up to London and asked for an interview with Mr. Hitchcock, head of a large firm of drapers on Ludgate Hill.

The rich and powerful man looked at George and thought how small and weak he looked. He shook his head. “No! I’ve no place for him,” he said decidedly. “He’s too small.”

“There might be little of him,” his brother admitted, “but it is very good.”

The boss thought about that for a moment or two and then turned to George. “Come again tomorrow,” he told him.

“You seem to be a healthy young man,” the boss said when George arrived at his office the next day. “I’ll give you a trial.”

And so George Williams came to live in London. Life there was so different from home or even from Bridgewater. He had to sleep in a large dormitory filled with beds. The boys who shared the room were coarse and bad-mannered. They slept two in a bed—a single bed in many cases. They worked like slaves from early morning until late at night. And if they ever did have any free time, there was nowhere to go but the street. Life was difficult, but George kept hoping that he might eventually discover some other boys who were Christians like himself.

After searching for quite a while, he did find two or three young men who would gather with him to pray. He tried to teach them about asking Father and often read from a book by a minister, Charles Finney, who wrote that our prayers could change situations and cause God to move in other people's hearts. George believed with the faith of a small child that Father always answers. He believed that his humble words would reach way up and beyond to where God was, and that the answer would come back down to earth again. He might be small and young but that did not hinder him from reaching up to Heaven as he prayed.

George and his companions began asking Father that these wicked young men who lived with them might come to know Christ and be born into a new family of believers. They began to write down the names of those they wished to see converted. In fact, they picked out some of the very worst and prayed for them day after day and night after night, right in the dormitory where life was almost like hell on earth.

This small praying group decided to ask Father to save a notorious lad named Rogers. This young man was not only bad himself, but he would do all he could to keep the others from becoming religious. He was a champion for the devil and an enemy to good. It seemed to George that Rogers was like another Saul of Tarsus, whom he wished God to change into a Paul.

One morning as George prayed, it seemed as though he heard a voice from Heaven saying to him, "Yes." This clear answer made George know that Rogers would be converted and so he was. He was soundly born again and became one of his closest friends.

As the weeks went by, George did well in his new job. He worked hard and knew how to handle customers so became a valuable employee. But he worried that his boss was not a Christian and so he and his friends began to pray for Mr. Hitchcock every night. What happened next might seem to belong to a fairy story, but it is very, very true.

One day the boss asked George to come to his office. “Is it true, “he demanded, “this tale that I hear about you, that you are praying for my soul?”

George was startled, but he faced his master courageously and said, “Yes, sir, it is true.”

The manager of the firm looked the young man up and down, this lad whom he had thought was “too small.” He paused and then said, “You pray for my conversion?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You think I need conversion?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Are you aware that I am a church warden?”

“Yes, sir.”

“But you do not think that I am converted?”

“No, sir.”

“Why not?”

George then told this rich man about the shocking conditions existing among his workmen. He spared nothing. When he had finished, Mr. Hitchcock said, “You can go, but keep on praying for me.”

George and his friends kept praying and Father did answer, for it was only a matter of days before his boss was a born again man. He then began, with George’s help of course, to clean up his place of business and to improve the

living conditions. What a transformation took place in only three years! “It would be impossible to live in this place,” someone remarked, “and not be a Christian.”

But young George was still not satisfied. Yes, he was glad that his own firm had been so transformed, but what about other draper business scattered all over London? Didn't they need transforming as well?

George had already reached right up to Heaven when he had asked for his boss to be converted. Now he must do it again, only this time his request was even larger. He was not only praying for his own roommates and his own boss, he was asking now for all the young men who had come to the great city from villages and towns all over Britain and had learned unspeakable evil within a very short time.

“How can I reach them, Father?” he would ask. Well, Father answered as He always does and the result was the founding of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) which has now spread all over the world.

George Williams eventually married Helen Hitchcock, the daughter of his boss. And when his father-in-law went Home to be with the One he had come to love so much, the boy who had seemed too small to employ, took over his business which became known as “Hitchcock and Williams.”

When George became a wealthy man, he began to ask Father how to use his money, time, and influence so as to help thousands of others to choose the road that led upwards. In this way, he reached out to all the world and persuaded many to live an honorable, Christian life.

For Children and Young People

Father Calling

by E. F. & L. Harvey & Trudy Harvey Tait

This companion to *Asking Father* relates the childhood experiences of such famous Christians as C. H. Spurgeon, Adam Clarke, Samuel Chadwick, Ida Scudder, and others, showing how God spoke to them at an early age, thus preparing them for their unique place in His divine plan.

Jessica's First Prayer

by Hesba Stretton

To Jessica, a poor outcast girl on the streets of London who has to beg or steal to keep herself alive, Mr. Daniel's coffee stall becomes, for a few moments each week, a little paradise. The unlikely pair are influenced by each other in striking ways: Jessica comes to a knowledge of the God Who answers prayer, and Mr. Daniel is brought to repentance for his life of meanness and covetousness.

Eric, Or Little by Little

by F. W. Farrar

An extremely poignant story of a popular schoolboy's descent into evil at an English boarding school. The author shows graphically that the descent into sin is most often akin to a slow leak rather than a blowout. This book has been the means of numerous conversions.

The King's Diamond

by Lillian Harvey

Young people considering or entering the Christian life will find this novel—centered around a study of “human diamonds”—an inspiration to take “the more excellent way.” A young Christian girl, facing the many subtle pressures and temptations of this age, chooses to exalt Christ as the One Who can take worthless ore and produce from it a gem of priceless worth..

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The Velvet Curtain Series

by, Trudy Harvey Tait.

In writing *The Velvet Curtain* and its sequel *Behind the Velvet Curtain*, I fulfilled my long-cherished desire to write something that would help Christians live out their faith in a materialistic and amoral society. The Iron Curtain may have indeed fallen, yet its Western counterpart still makes itself felt in every land where freedom professes to hold sway.

The Velvet Curtain 336 p. \$10.00

Leaving the Iron Curtain behind forever, Esther has no idea that she has merely exchanged one Curtain for another...

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Esther and Gabby, the two Romanian girls who, escape the Iron Curtain find themselves enmeshed in its Western counterpart. Esther takes drastic measures to stay clear of the Velvet Curtain while Gabby denies its very existence and calls it, instead, *The American Dream*.

Escaping The Velvet Curtain 272 p. \$10.00

Esther, her sister Gabby, and their friends explore various ways in which each of them can escape the Velvet Curtain. Writing this book has made me retrace my own spiritual pilgrimage. I realize afresh that God puts us in a seemingly impossible position and then delights to deliver us when He sees that our trust is in Him alone.

If, like myself, you often wish that life was less complex, then you will empathize with Gabby, Aaron, and their friends, as they make momentous choices, often not knowing where God is leading them. And when the story takes unpredictable twists and turns, it is because God's grace is producing miracles in the lives of flawed and erring individuals, often, however, upsetting the smooth flow of their earth-bound existence.

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