

# SIMON LEARNS ABOUT LOVE

## **Simon felt mad. And sad. And hurt. All at once.**

Why wouldn't Father listen? Tears stung his eyes as he tossed handfuls of grain to the noisy chickens pecking at his feet. He hadn't meant to drop the lamp earlier that morning. Filling it with new oil, he'd tripped over a small wooden horse, his favorite toy—the same wooden horse he'd forgotten to put away as Mother had asked. The lamp slipped from his hands, hit the hard clay floor and cracked in two. Father was angry.

Throwing the last of the feed on the ground, Simon heard Father calling. "Hurry now, Simon! We must be on our way."

## **They walked to the marketplace in silence.**

Simon usually loved their long walks together, glad to make the trip to Jericho anytime Mother needed spices or olives or fish. But not today. Father was still unhappy about the lamp. Looking at the ground as they walked, neither noticed the crowd gathering up ahead.

"It's Jesus!" a woman yelled as she scurried passed. "He is here!"

Simon and his father walked faster, eager to see the carpenter's son from Nazareth. They had heard Jesus speak. They had witnessed His miracles. They were amazed by His teaching. But when they reached Him, Jesus wasn't speaking. He was standing quietly, gazing into a sycamore tree. Suddenly, He called, "Zacchaeus! Come down."

The crowd began to whisper as Zacchaeus the tax collector made his way down the tree. Everyone knew Zacchaeus, the short, rich man who was known for stealing money. Now he stood before Jesus with his head bowed.

**"Zacchaeus," Jesus said, placing a gentle hand on the tax collector's shoulder, "I will be a guest in your home today."** Zacchaeus looked up, a bright smile replacing sorrow. But the people began to grumble. "How can this be?" they whispered. "This man is bad. This man cheats and steals. He is a sinner. He's a liar and a thief!"

Simon and his father watched as Zacchaeus and Jesus passed.

"I'm sorry," Zacchaeus said. "I will pay back what I've stolen. I will give half of my money to the poor." Jesus listened respectfully. He forgave quickly.

*That's what love is,* thought Simon.

## **Simon and his father got what they needed from the marketplace and were soon heading home.**

"I'm sorry I got angry with you this morning, Simon," his father said quietly as they walked. "I should have listened. I should have forgiven."

Simon's heart was filled with joy. *That's what love is,* thought Simon. "Thank you, Father. I will put my things away and be more careful next time."

When they arrived home, Simon's little sister, Sarah, was standing at the door. Her eyes were filled with tears.

"What is it, Sarah?" Father asked.

Slowly Sarah lifted her small hands toward Simon. She was holding a wooden horse, her brother's favorite toy. One of its legs was cracked in two. Sarah started to cry. "I'm sorry, Simon. I didn't mean to break it."

**Simon looked at his father and knew exactly what to do.** He reached out to his little sister, hugging her tightly. "It's all right, Sarah," he told her. Simon listened and Simon forgave.

Because that's what love is.

*"That's  
what love  
is, thought  
Simon."*

by Kathryn O'Brien

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