

Chapter 12

A Clean Van

Another Saturday had arrived, and an idea was on Mitch's mind when he woke up. "Max, I think we should wash the van and clean the inside as a surprise for Mom."

"How would that surprise her when she could look out the window and see us?" Max lowered his voice to a whisper, remembering Moses was still asleep.

"I heard that Mom and Grandma might go shopping this morning, and we can do it while they're away."

"Let's try for it," Max agreed. The boys slipped from the room to have their Bible time in the living room.

"Dad's not here; he must have gotten up early and already had his time with the Lord," Mitch commented. "I always like it when he's here with us. Oh, well."

Mollie joined them with her Bible, and Mitch told her his idea. "I like that, Mitch," she remarked. Maddie trotted in, found the CD player, and snuggled next to Mollie to listen to the Bible.

A little later, Dad and Mom came down with the twins. "Good morning!" Dad greeted them. Mom had Melissa in the sling, and she stepped into the kitchen to begin breakfast.

Mitch hurried to Dad, whispering, "I want to ask you something." Dad leaned toward Mitch. "I'd like to know if we may wash and clean the van as a surprise for Mom if she goes shopping."

"Sure! I'll pull the van from the garage after she leaves!"

At breakfast, Mom explained that she and Grandma had decided to go shopping. “Grandma wanted company, and Dad thought it’d be nice for me to have an outing. We’ll be back right after lunch.”

“When are you leaving?” Mollie wondered.

“I’ll feed the twins after breakfast, and then we’ll go.”

When Grandma came, Dad helped her buckle the twins’ car seats in her car. The children could hardly wait for Mom and the twins to leave! Grandma’s car was soon out of sight, and Dad backed the van from the garage. “Mom is going to be very happy,” Dad encouraged them. “I’ll be inside trying to catch up on some bank paperwork I let go while we had that big work project.”

Mitch grabbed a bucket, and Max uncoiled the hose. “Where’s the nozzle?” Max walked around the area where it should have been. “Someone didn’t put it away where it belongs,” he complained.

“I know where it is,” Mollie offered. “I used it in the backyard for my sunflowers since they need more than a watering can’s worth of water now.”

“Dad says we always should keep the nozzle right here,” Max fussed at Mollie. “I’ll go ahead and start washing the van without it, but please hurry and get it.”

“I’m sorry, Max,” Mollie apologized.

Max placed his thumb over the hose opening and used his thumb like a nozzle. Water vigorously shot out around the edges and began to soak him. “This isn’t a good solution,” Max grumbled.

A few minutes later, Mollie returned with the nozzle. “Here you go, Max.”

“Thanks, Mollie. While you were gone, the Lord convicted me of my anger. Please forgive me. I don’t put things away where they belong all the time either.” Max took the brass

nozzle, struggling to twist it on. Water sprayed in every direction, and if he thought he was wet before, he was really wet now!

“I’ll turn the water off.” Mitch ran for the water spigot.

Just then, Mr. Delome hurried across the street. “When you’re through, you can give my car a bath!” he exclaimed with a smile.

“We’re surprising Mom by cleaning the van,” Mitch informed him, waiting near the water spigot for Max to screw the nozzle on.

“I’m sure your mom will be blessed.” Mr. Delome watched Max. “You’re pretty wet.”

“We couldn’t find the nozzle to start with, so I made the mistake of trying to use my thumb as a nozzle. Then I was too lazy to go turn the water off. Okay, Mitch,” Max called. “You may turn it back on. Maddie, I’ll let you spray the van.” Max walked around the van with her, demonstrating how to do it.

Mitch dipped a sponge into the sudsy water and scrubbed the front of the van. Mr. Delome observed Mitch. “Smashed, dried bugs are tough to get off, aren’t they?”

“They sure are.”

“Bill left yesterday,” Mr. Delome informed them. “And I’m feeling lonely already. It was wonderful having another person around. We had our best visit ever because we didn’t argue. In the past, we never shouted over things, but we could get pretty unhappy with each other. This was our first visit since I’ve been saved, and when Bill would say something I would normally get mad about, I just prayed the Lord would help me not to say things I shouldn’t. Every morning, I woke up early to have my time with the Lord, and I have even been memorizing Scripture about not being angry, which helped. Bill also came to church, and he liked Pastor Thompson’s message.”

“Were you able to witness to him?” Mollie vigorously rubbed on a black streak on the side of the van. “It looks like we drove through tar.”

“Let me try.” Mr. Delome took Mollie’s sponge and instructed Maddie, “Spray this area.”

Maddie obediently followed Mr. Delome’s instructions. “To answer your question, I did share the Lord with him. He wasn’t too interested, yet he listened. He wasn’t awake when I would read the Bible in the morning, but in the evenings, he would listen when I read a chapter of Scripture. Max, you’ve missed several spots over here.” Mr. Delome pointed to a small section, and Max used his sponge to clean the area.

“Speaking of witnessing, we’re praying for Mrs. Bagwell’s salvation,” Max said. “She never talks about the Lord, and we as a family are praying for her and opportunities to share Jesus.”

“I’m praying too,” Mr. Delome agreed, “and I’ve also been trying to witness to her. I don’t know if I’m doing a whole lot of good, but I’m working on it. Maud’s pretty set in her ways and self-sufficient. But, I figure I have to learn how to witness by trial and error.”

Mitch went to the house to turn down the water pressure. He then asked Maddie, “May I borrow the hose?”

“Sure.” Maddie obligingly handed it to Mitch, curious what he had in mind.

Mitch called, “Maple, come here!” The dog lazily lifted her head from her spot in the yard. “Do you want a drink?” Mitch held the hose out while Maple trotted over. Maple happily lapped from the stream of water.

Mr. Delome and the children continued to chat until the van was clean. “I’ll inspect now,” Mr. Delome offered. “Here’s a spot, and another one over here, and one on this side,” he nodded. “When that’s taken care of, you’re ready to dry it.”



Maple happily lapped from the stream of water.

“Thanks for your help,” Max said, as he worked on the areas Mr. Delome had pointed out. “Maddie, you may do a final rinse.”

Mitch found the special absorbent rag they used to dry the van and car after they had been washed. If the van air-dried, there would be noticeable water spots. “Max, I’ll dry the van if you want to vacuum,” Mitch decided.

“Thanks,” Max agreed. “Mollie, why don’t you clean the windows, and Maddie you may pick up the trash.”

Mr. Delome emptied the bucket of dirty water in the street, and after turning the water off, he coiled up the hose. Soon, the van was clean, and Max went inside to ask Dad to come see their finished product. Dad came outside and greeted Mr. Delome.

“Howdy, Jim!” Mr. Delome replied.

“Wow, the van looks beautiful!” Dad saw the silver twelve-passenger van sparkle in the sunlight. He opened a door. “You cleaned the inside too, I think! I could do the white