



Parents' Night & Stage Fright

"All right, class," announced Mrs. Bentley, Justin and Jessie's schoolteacher, "we have to get ready for parents' night. So let's get busy." Everyone would do something, but only a few students would have speaking parts. And one of those students was Justin! Justin's hands felt sweaty as he waited for his turn.

"Jessie, you and Patrick go over to the map on the wall and show what we've learned in geography. Use my pointer. That's right," Mrs. Bentley said as she directed them.

"Okay, we've done math, reading, geography, and now Bible." Mrs. Bentley counted on her fingers and looked at her list. "Ah, Justin. It's your turn now. Tell what we've been learning about God."

Justin stared at his teacher. He was excited about their program, but at the same time, his stomach felt like it was doing flip-flops as he opened his mouth to say his part.

At dinner that night, Justin's mom reminded his dad about the parents' program. "It's tomorrow night. Jessie sure was excited today. She chattered about it all the way home from school. But I get the feeling Justin isn't too happy about his part in it," she said as she turned to look at Justin. "Why is that, Justin?"

Justin squirmed in his chair. "I don't want to talk in front of everybody. I might mess up. I don't think I can do it."

"But you've been in plays at church before and did fine. And you've practiced plenty."

"Yeah, but I never had a speaking part before. I always sang with the other kids. What if I forget what I'm supposed to say, and they all laugh at me? Mrs. Bentley should've asked Jessie to do it. She's not afraid of talkin' in front of people." Justin picked at his dinner.

"You know," said Dad, "this reminds me of someone else who didn't want to speak in front of people."

"Who?"

"Me," Dad replied. "When I first started my job, I didn't like to have to talk in front of everyone at our work meetings. But my boss reminded me that it was part of my job."

"Were you scared, like me?" asked Justin.

"Yes, actually. I felt pretty nervous. But I prayed for God's help and courage. As I started doing more speaking, the easier it got. That was God helping me!"

"God will help you, too," said Mom. "Mrs. Bentley picked you, not Jessie, to speak because she knows you will do your best."

"Okay," Justin gulped. "I'll try."

The next night was parents' night. The desks and the chalkboard had been

scrubbed clean, and the walls were decorated with the children's paintings and drawings. All the parents squeezed into the little chairs to watch as the students took turns doing their parts.

First, some kids talked about math and how to tell time. Everyone chuckled when Alex accidentally made the hands on the clock go backwards. Oops!

Then more kids came up to talk about reading. They all held signs with letters that were supposed to spell "welcome," but the student who held the w put it upside down so the word looked like "melcome." But the parents knew what it was supposed to say.

Next was Jessie and Patrick's turn. They went to the map with Mrs. Bentley's pointer. Patrick pointed to the right country then handed the pointer to Jessie.

"This is our town," Jessie announced proudly. She poked the map on the correct town, but her poke was so hard that it dislodged the map. The big map flopped down on top of her head! Mrs. Bentley ran to help while everyone laughed, including Jessie.

Finally, it was Justin's turn to tell what they were learning about God and the Bible. Justin stepped forward. His throat was dry, and he swallowed hard.

"Go ahead, Justin. You can do it," whispered Jessie from behind.

"Yes," thought Justin, "God is with me." Justin took a deep breath and started speaking. He talked about God: how big God is, how powerful God is, and how the Bible tells all about him. Suddenly, he wasn't afraid anymore, and he spoke louder and smiled.

All the parents clapped and cheered when the kids finished their program. Even though some things didn't work quite right, the parents thought it was the best program ever!

The kids grabbed their parents and pulled them toward the cookie table. While they were chatting and munching cookies, Mrs. Bentley introduced Justin to one of the dads.

"Justin," he said. "I just wanted to thank you for telling us about God. After hearing how excited you are to talk about him, it makes me want to share with people at work who don't know him. Thanks for speaking tonight."

Justin smiled. Now he was really glad he had done his part.

"Great job, Justin!" said Jessie as she handed him a chocolate cookie.

"Thanks!" he replied. He popped the whole cookie in his mouth and grinned.