



**C**AST thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days. <sup>2</sup> Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth. (Eccl 11:1-2)

INTRODUCTORY NOTE: The following little story is taken from the FIFTH READER, the Horace Mann Readers, 1887 (published in the Youth's Companion). This was not a reader we used in my school, but comes from a book of stories in my collection. The more I read these early reader text books, the more impressed I am with the biblical inspirations contained in story plots. The closer we get back to the time of the Founding Fathers, the more biblical the stories. The McGuffey Readers are prime examples which I hope to include in future mail-outs. *Jerry Ogles*

The snow lay deep in the streets, and it was cold as only mid-January can be, when a boy about fourteen years old approached a man who was standing on a corner, waiting for a car, and asked him for a nickel. The man looked at the boy keenly, and saw that his clothes, although poor, were neat, and that he had an honest face.

"What would you do with a nickel?" he inquired.

"I would buy some papers and start in business," was the reply.

"Are you sure you wouldn't spend it foolishly?"

"Sure, mister. I want to earn some money. I only want to borrow the nickel. I'll give it back to you tomorrow afternoon at five o'clock."

"Well, here's the nickel," and the man put the coin in the boy's outstretched hand. "Now, remember, I'm merely lending you five cents, and I trust you to return it as promised."

“That’s all right, sir,” cried the boy, as he hurried away. “I’ll be here with the money, just as I told you.”

The man kept the appointment, but he was twelve minutes late. The boy was there waiting for him, and he had the nickel, which he returned with some very earnest expressions of gratitude.

“It helped me to earn sixty-five cents,” he said.

“What did you do with it?” the man inquired.

“I gave fifty cents to mother, kept ten for my papers to-day, and gave five to you.” And the youngster was again away to resume business.

That was fifteen years ago. The boy has become a man. He is married, and has an excellent position in the electrical department of a great manufactory. But rheumatism has forced his friend, who was a carpenter, to abandon his trade. He has been idle nearly three years. His savings were soon exhausted, although his habits are good, and he is a bachelor.

But someone has paid more than one hundred and fifty dollars for medical assistance, and has been paying for his board, at the rate of six dollars per week, for more than a year. And the payments continue.

It was a small thing that the carpenter did – but a good many men would not have done it. And the boy, as it happened, was not only honest, but grateful.

POSTSCRIPT: Our works of charity may seem small in our eyes, but often, in the eyes of the recipient, a small gift or hand up can mean the difference in eating a meal or starving, surviving, or perishing. Stories such as the one above, written for eleven year olds, were intended to plant the seeds of character in young minds.

What seeds do you suppose are being planted in the minds of our young people today in public schools?