

Thunder in Our Hearts Lightning in Our Veins

One

The Weight of a Butterfly

When you live in the country you can't just jump into a car and go to the store when you feel like it. If you have a long, dirt road to your house, you spend a lot of the time fighting with mud, ice and snow because the weather decides whether you leave the farm or whether you are trapped at home for a few days.

Most of the time, I'm perfectly happy being at home with my family, but nothing makes me want to leave more than knowing I can't.

It had been pouring rain for days and it was hard to tell whether the road to our farm was a road or a muddy river.

I decided to take my chances and try to drive out of the yard in spite of the puddles. It only took a minute before my car was stuck axle deep in the mud and I'd spun my wheels, spraying everything with mud and making the car sink even deeper.

I knew I couldn't just leave the car where it was and wait for the puddles to dry up, because then my car would be trapped in caked mud as hard as concrete. I needed to get it out of the mud *now*.

I walked to the neighbor's farm and asked for help. Tom suggested putting a long pole under the car for leverage, and then lift it up until we could put some rocks and branches under the wheels. He had four husky sons who agreed to use their strong muscles to push down on the pole and lift the car.

The men waded around in the slick, slimy muck, the pole kept slipping, the

tires kept spinning, and everyone was covered with mud from head to foot.

My daughter was only two years old at the time and when she saw the men struggling to push down on the pole, she climbed up and sat on the very end of it and perched there. She was so tiny, she barely weighed as much as a butterfly, but when she sat on the pole and smiled at the muddy men, they laughed. Their spirits lifted and they threw all their energy into their task.

The car was finally raised. We filled the deep ruts with tree branches and rocks and in a few more minutes, the vehicle was back on solid ground.

My daughter's weight didn't make any difference in the job, but her enthusiasm did. Her smile and her faith in the men encouraged them and inspired them to try harder until the job was done.

Sometimes we think we can't help people. Their burdens are too big; they need more time or help or money than we can give; but sometimes, all people need is a little faith and encouragement.

I'm lucky to have some wonderful friends who always seem to know how I feel and who say the right things at the right time. They are generous with compliments and always have words of encouragement. They are loyal to me whether I am right or wrong. It is easy to have friends who will stand with you when you are right; it is rare to find people who will stand with you when you are wrong and love and support you anyway.

Some people are stingy with compliments; they hoard them like a miser hoards gold.

There is an old story about a hard, stingy man at his wife's funeral. He said, "I'm going to miss my wife. She was a good woman, a good mother to our six children and worked hard for forty years to give me a good home. She was such a good wife that once or twice I almost told her I loved her."

Everyone needs to hear a few kind words every day. It lifts our spirits, warms our hearts and makes us smile.

Last week I was standing in a long line at the market. The checker was very nervous and struggling to keep up with the customers. When my turn came I told her how much I liked her sweater and what a beautiful color of green it was.

“Thank you,” she said. “This is my favorite sweater and I wore it today because this is my first day on the job and I was hoping it would bring me good luck.”

Three of us in the line wished her good luck on her new job and everyone was more patient with her once they knew it was her first day at work. Everything changed because of a small compliment.

We all need a kind word, a smile and a hug, and it is important to pass them along to others. If all we do is give one person a compliment or a smile every day, we’ve made more than three hundred people a year feel better.

There was an old man who would sometimes sit on a tree stump near the road and wave at every car that went by.

I would watch for him and when I saw him, I knew I was halfway home. He'd smile and wave like an old friend and I'd wave back. When the weather was bad and he couldn't sit outside, I missed him; the rest of the drive home seemed longer without his smile and wave.

I never met him. The road was too narrow to pull off and visit. Each day he touched hundreds of lives; in a month he touched thousands. All he did was sit beside the road and smile and wave, but in his own way he paid each one of us a compliment every day. He noticed us, he wished us a safe journey home. He made a difference in our lives.

Maybe we can't do the big things. But sometimes doing little things with great love is more important than doing the big things; and sometimes, encouragement, even if it is so small it weighs as much as a butterfly, is the best gift we can give.