

OH, THOSE SPOTS!

The day had finally arrived...the first day of a new school year! The sun was shining bright, the birds were chirping merrily in the trees outside Carrie's bedroom window and the sky was as blue as could be!

"Today should be a good day," said Carrie as she stretched out on her bed. However, she knew it was not going to be a good day much less a school year. Normally, Carrie loved the first day of school. That's when you meet your new teacher, catch up with old friends you haven't seen all summer and make new friends. It was supposed to be an exciting time. However, that all changed with Carrie's parents decided to move to a new town in a whole new state and she wasn't going to see her old friends ever again! After what happened to her all summer, Carrie decided she'd rather be grounded the rest of her life than go to school. Why was everyone treating her so mean? She knew the answer to that question...Billy Thompson! Why, oh why, did they have to move?

Billy Thompson was her neighbor across the street and he was as mean as a snake to her and, even though she knew why, she just didn't understand it. She tried to be friendly to him but he made her summer miserable every time she saw him. It wasn't something she had control over. Quite the contrary...she had absolutely NO control over it and it made her terribly sad. So sad, in fact, that she didn't want to even go outside to play.

"Carrie, time to get up!" called her mother happily. "Breakfast is ready and the school bus will be here soon!"

Wonderful! I can hardly wait thought Carrie begrudgingly.

She got up and slowly walked downstairs to the kitchen, still in her pajamas.

"Carrie Marie, whatever is the matter with you? You aren't dressed for your first day of at your new school," exclaimed Mother.

“Do I have to go, Mom?”

“Of course you have to go to school. Why, you are in the fourth grade this year. It’s going to be great! Aren’t you excited about making new friends and meeting your new teacher?” asked Mom,

“Can I just stay home today?” Carrie pleaded. “You can tell my teacher I’m dying of some dreaded disease that I got in a far away country or jungle or that I’m grounded for life for something awful I did over the summer and will never be allowed to go out of the house, not even to school.”

“Aren’t you being a little melodramatic?” asked her mother. “I cannot lie to your teacher and you have to go to school. Now go back upstairs, get dressed, comb your hair and come back down for your breakfast,” Mother scolded ever so gently.

Carrie did as she was told. When she trudged back to the kitchen, her mother was staring out the window.

“Carrie, isn’t that one of your new friends, Billy Thompson, standing over at the bus stop,” asked her mother. Her mother had no idea that Billy was so mean to her and convinced that other kids in the neighborhood that she was weird and they should have nothing to do with her.

Carrie peered out the window. Sure enough there stood Billy Thompson, who was anything but her friend!

“I guess so,” said Carrie matter-of-factly.

“Today won’t be so bad...you already know someone. Maybe he will be in your class at school,” said Mom.

Oh great, just what she needed...Billy in her class making fun of her all day. Carrie plopped down at the kitchen table and picked at her breakfast. She wasn’t hungry and would probably never eat again!

Finally, the bus pulled up.

“Have a great day!” Mom said cheerfully as she handed Carrie her new backpack.

“If you only knew,” Carrie said, sighing. I’ll never have a great day she ever again she thought to herself.

As she walked to the bus stop she wondered what Billy would say this time. He had been making fun and harassing her all summer since they moved in. She didn’t have to wait long to find out.

“Well, look what we have here...Spots!” said Billy as he laughed at her.

“Whatever,” sighed Carrie.

By the time they got to school Carrie was more miserable than ever. Everyone on the bus was staring and pointing at her. Some were even laughing at her and whispering to each other. Why, or why, did she have to have all these dumb freckles? She didn’t have just a few, she had them ALL over her face! She had more freckles than plain skin. A few would have been okay but she had what seemed liked hundreds of them and everyone stared at her and made fun of her!

When the bus finally arrived at school everyone jumped off and ran inside, leaving Carrie all alone. Not one person even talked to her and when she would walk by someone they would just point at her and whisper. How was she ever going to get through the day, must less the whole school year?

When she walked into her new classroom there he sat in the first seat of the very front row...mean old Billy Thompson. She couldn’t believe he was in her class! Just my luck, she thought as she headed to the back of the class to very last seat behind everyone. Carrie figured if she sat in the very back no one could make fun of her, at least during class time.

“Hey, Spots, looks like we’re in the same class! This is going to be a great year!” said Billy laughingly, as she went to her seat. When she got to her desk all she could do was put her head down and cry to herself! To make matters worse, Billy, and now the whole class, kept singing “Spots, spots, Carrie has spots!” She was miserable and just wanted to die!

Mrs. Smith, their new teacher, was standing at the front of the class with her back to the children writing on the board. Finally, she turned around and looked at the class.

“That will be enough class!” Mrs. Smith admonished. It suddenly got deathly quiet. Not a sound from anyone. Everyone just stared at Mrs. Smith.

Carrie still had her head down on her desk not really paying attention to what was going on and didn’t really care.

“You must be Carrie,” said Mrs. Smith, who was now standing beside Carrie’s desk. “I really like your freckles!” exclaimed Mrs. Smith.

Carrie lifted her head. She beamed from ear to ear with the biggest smile she ever had. She couldn’t believe what she was seeing! Right there in front of her was her new teacher with the most freckles she had ever seen on anyone’s face. Why, Mrs. Smith had as many freckles as she did!

“Thank you,” said Carrie. “I love your freckles too.”

“Not everyone has freckles, you know,” said Mrs. Smith. “My mother always told me my freckles were a gift from God and the more you have the more you are blessed. She also told me to be proud of who I am because God made me special, that I was the only one of my kind.”

“I think I am going to like the fourth grade!” said Carrie. She realized it doesn’t matter what other people say about you...it only matters what you think of yourself and what God thinks about you. Suddenly Carrie started feeling better about her “spots.”

Billy turned back around and sunk down in his chair. Carrie knew that he wouldn't be bothering her anymore.

Author's Notes:

Were you ever bullied at school or by your peers? Bullying is a tough problem to handle and to help your kids with. Most of the time your kids won't say anything to you about it. My daughter was bullied during high school to the point of us almost having to remove her from the school. My grandson (age 11) was bullied recently so much so that he would hit himself in the head and say over and over "I'm stupid, I'm stupid" because that's what the boys were telling him. His parents didn't know this was going on until he acted out at home one evening. Bullying is a very real problem in today's world for children, including teenagers, and it has to be dealt with quickly before it gets out of hand. It can leave scars the rest of a child's life. How many kids have committed suicide because of being bullied?

Parents, teachers and yes, even Sunday School teachers, need to be aware of behavior in children that have the signs of someone being bullied (or being THE bully). If you think this is happening to a child it is our responsibility to bring the problem to either the parent or authorities in order to help stop the destructive behavior and to help the children to heal.

There are a lot of children today that have never heard about Jesus. It seems inconceivable and hard to believe that this is taking place in our time. They need to know Jesus loves them and is there for them. Jesus said "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." As the song says, "Jesus loves the little children, ALL the children of the world, Red and Yellow, Black and White, they are precious in his sight, Jesus loves the little children of the world."

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