



CREATIVE PARENTING

If He Had Not Come: A Christmas Story of Warmth and Wonder

by Susan E. Murray

It was Christmas Eve—the one night in the year when seven-year-old Bobby was in a hurry to go to bed. His stocking was tacked to the mantel, the beautiful tree stood in the corner. He kissed his mother and father good night and raced upstairs and leaped into bed.

It seemed to Bobby that he hadn't been asleep any time when a harsh voice shouted, "Get up!" He opened his eyes, blinking in the bright sunlight. Then he remembered what day it was. With a joyful shout he hurried into his clothes and bounded down the stairs.

On the bottom step he stopped. No stockings hung from the mantel. The Christmas tree was missing. "But ... but I put the paper angels on myself," Bobby began as the shrill whistle from the factory nearby made him jump.

"The factory can't be open on Christmas!" Bobby thought, as he put on his coat and ran out of the house. The gatekeeper at the factory was his friend. He would tell Bobby why ... "Clear out of here, you!" the gatekeeper jerked his thumb at him. "No kids allowed!"

As Bobby slowly turned to go, he saw to his amazement that up and down the street all the stores were open. "Why are they open on Christmas?" he asked a woman coming out of the supermarket. "Christmas?" the woman asked. "What's that?" The hardware store, the bakery, the five-

and-ten—everywhere it was the same. People were busy. They were cross. They'd never heard of Christmas.

"But I know one place where they've heard of Christmas," Bobby cried. "At my church! There's a special service there this morning." He started to run. Here was the street! At least he thought it was, but there was only a weed-filled vacant lot. The tower with the carillon bells, the Sunday school windows where Bobby had pasted snowflakes—there was nothing there.

Just then, from the tall grass near the side of the road, Bobby heard a moan. A man was lying on the ground. "A car struck me," he gasped. "Never even stopped." "Help!" called Bobby to a woman walking past. "This man's hurt."

The lady jerked Bobby away. "Don't touch him. He doesn't live here. We don't know anything about him."

"I'll run to the hospital, Mister," Bobby promised. "They'll send an ambulance." And he tore off down the street.

Hospital of the Good Samaritan. Bobby had often read the name over the archway in the great stone wall. But now the stone wall ran around an empty field. Where the name of the hospital had been, the following words were carved instead, *If He Had Not Come*.

Suddenly Bobby was running home as if his life depended on it. Last night his father had read from the Bible. Maybe the Bible would tell him why everything was changed. The Bible was still lying on the table in the living room. Bobby snatched it up and ran upstairs to his room. But where the New Testament should have started, there were only blank pages. There was no Christmas story—no Jesus at all. Bobby flung himself on his bed and began to cry.

"Merry Christmas, Bobby." It was his mother's voice from downstairs. "Aren't you getting up on Christmas morning?" Bobby sprang out of bed and ran to the window. There was a Christmas wreath on the house across the street. Suddenly the

carillon bells from the church tower began to ring *Joy to the world, the Lord is come!*

"Here I come, Mother," Bobby cried. But he paused at the door and shut his eyes. "You came!" he whispered. "Thank you for coming!"



With this last issue of Creative Parenting for 2002, I offer you this little gift—one of our favorite Christmas stories. We are thankful that the Lord Jesus Christ did come. He came to save each of us. It is my prayer that He will continue to lead in your lives as you nurture your children. It has been my

goal to bring you meaningful and helpful insights into parenting this year, and in the process, I have been blessed!