

Chapter 1

Christopher sat on an upside-down bucket at the corner of the open shop door. Daddy was building another mini barn. Christopher's big brown eyes sparkled as he watched everything Daddy did. He wished he could be in the shop, but Daddy had a rule. When Daddy was using power tools, Christopher had to stay outside. He sighed. He was almost seven. Perhaps soon he'd be allowed to help Daddy with the saws. But for now, Daddy would call him when it was safe for him to be in the shop.

Thunk! Thunk! Daddy slid five long boards into place on the shop floor.

Christopher clapped his hands over his ears when Daddy began nailing the boards together to make the floor. *Bam! Bam! Bam!* boomed the air-nailer. *Grumble, rumble, roar,* growled the air compressor.

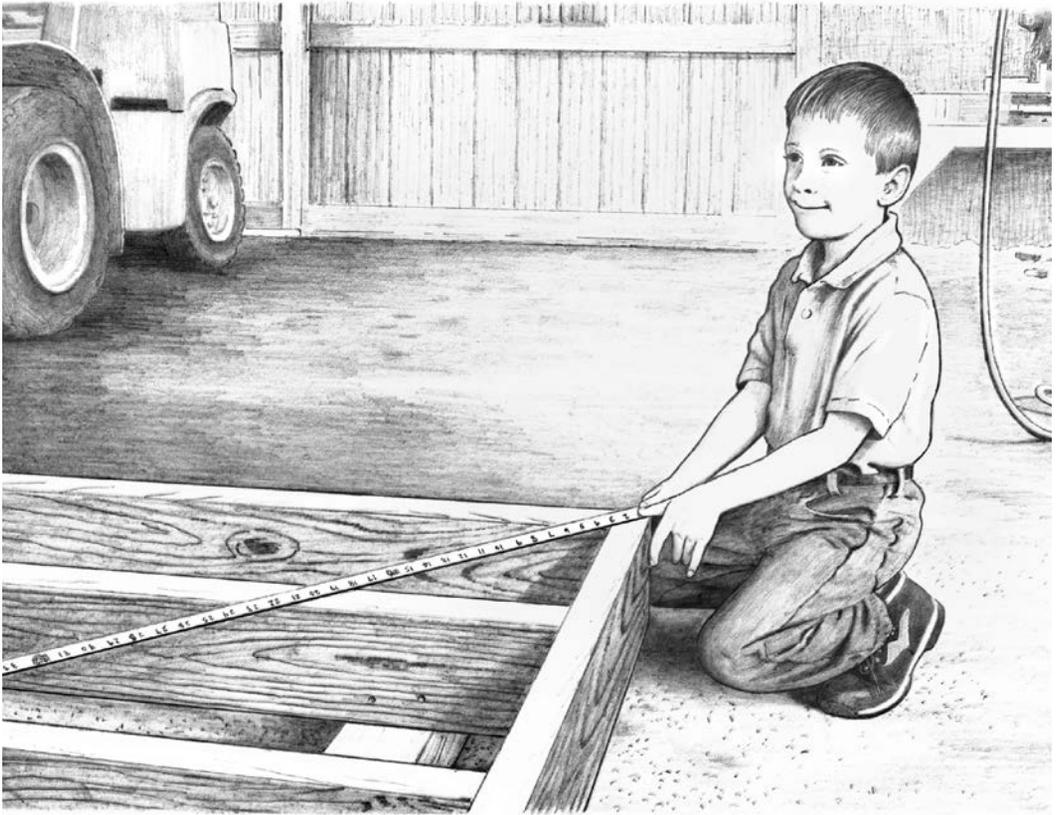
“Christopher,” Daddy called, “I need your help to do some measuring, please.”

“Here I come!” Christopher hopped off his perch. He pressed his thumb down tight on the end of the tape measure.

“Why are you doing this, Daddy?” Christopher wondered as he watched him stretch the tape measure to the opposite corner.

“I’ll measure across the floor the other way too. If the two numbers are the same, the floor is square.” Daddy showed Christopher how to move the tape measure to another corner.

Daddy checked his numbers and frowned. “Not quite square,” he said. He gave the corner a tap with his big hammer. “Now let’s measure again.”



“Why does it have to be square?” Christopher was curious.

“We want the floor to be square so the corners meet when we put up the walls. The rafters must sit squarely on top of the walls. It’s very important to start out right.”

After the floor was finished, Daddy began to put the walls together. When the walls were standing tall and straight, Daddy called, "Christopher, come check the walls."

Christopher walked into the shop to check the corners. Sure enough, they fit together, neat and square.

"Good thing we started right, Daddy!" Christopher said.

"Christopher," Daddy said, "building a straight, strong mini barn is important to me. I want to make my customers happy. But building a life is much more important. Every day you're building your life, my boy. And when you do and say good things while you're young, you make Mama and me happy. Being good while you are young will help you do good when you are older."

Every day Christopher peered into the shop to see what Daddy was doing. Usually there were several unfinished sheds in the shop at once. One might just be getting started. Another could have the walls up and

rafters on. Another might be ready for shingles. It was interesting to see what Daddy was doing.

Christopher often sat on his bucket and watched. Sometimes he thought about Daddy's wise words about building a life and starting out right.

Sometimes Katie came out to watch too. She was just four years old. One day they watched together as Daddy put up rafters. Next he nailed plywood on top of the rafters.

"See how it all fits together?" Christopher asked Katie. "Everything meets just right. You know why? Because Daddy started out with a square floor." Christopher wanted Katie to understand how important it was to start right.

When Christopher got tired of sitting on his bucket and watching, he rode his bike in big looping trails on the driveway in front of the shop.

One afternoon when Christopher slid his bike to a stop at the shop door, Daddy said, "I'm getting ready to paint this shed. You may watch, but please