



# The Rich Family in Our Church

Eddie Ogan

I'll never forget Easter 1946. I was fourteen, my little sister Ocy twelve, and my older sister Darlene sixteen. We lived at home with our mother, and the four of us knew what it was to do without many things. My dad had died five years before, leaving Mom with seven schoolchildren to raise and no money. By 1946 my older sisters were married, and my brothers had left home.

A month before Easter, the pastor of our church announced that a special Easter offering would be taken to help a poor family. He asked everyone to save and give sacrificially. When we got home, we talked about what we could do. We decided to buy fifty pounds of potatoes and live on them for a month. This would allow us to save twenty dollars of our grocery money for the offering.

Then we thought that if we kept our electric lights turned out as much as possible, we'd save money on that month's electric bill. Darlene got as many

house- and yard-cleaning jobs as possible, and both of us babysat for everyone we could. For fifteen cents, we could buy enough cotton loops to make three pot holders to sell for one dollar. We made twenty dollars on pot holders.

That month was one of the best of our lives. Every day we counted the money to see how much we had saved. At night we'd sit in the dark and talk about how the poor family was going to enjoy having the money the church would give them. We had about eighty people in church, so we figured that whatever the amount of money we had to give, the offering would surely be twenty times that much.

The day before Easter, Ocy and I walked to the grocery store and got the manager to give us three crisp twenty-dollar bills and one ten-dollar bill for all our change. We ran all the way home to show Mom and Darlene. We had never had so much money before.



On Sunday morning, rain was pouring. We didn't own an umbrella, and the church was over a mile from our home, but it didn't seem to matter how wet we got. Darlene had cardboard in her shoes to fill the holes. The cardboard came apart, and her feet got wet. But we were joyful as we sat in church.

When the sacrificial offering was taken, we were sitting on the second row from the front. Mom put in the ten-dollar bill, and each of us girls put in a twenty.

Late that afternoon the minister drove up in his car. Mom went to the door, talked with him for a moment, and then came back with an envelope in her hand. We asked what it was, but she didn't say a word. She opened the envelope, and out fell a bunch of money. There were three crisp twenty-dollar bills, one ten-dollar bill, and seventeen one-dollar bills.

Mom put the money back in the envelope. We didn't talk; we just sat and stared at the floor. We had gone from feeling like millionaires to feeling like poor folks.

I knew we didn't have a lot of things that other people had, but I never thought that we were poor. That Easter Day I found out we were. The minister had brought us the money for the poor family, so we must be poor.

I didn't like being poor. I looked at my dress and worn-out shoes and felt so ashamed that I didn't want to go back to church. Everyone there probably already knew we were poor! I thought about school. I was in ninth grade and at the top of my class of over one hundred students. I wondered if the others at school knew we were poor.

All that week, we girls went to school and came home, and no one talked much. Finally on Saturday, Mom asked us what we wanted to do with the money. What did poor people do with money? We didn't know. We'd never known we were poor.

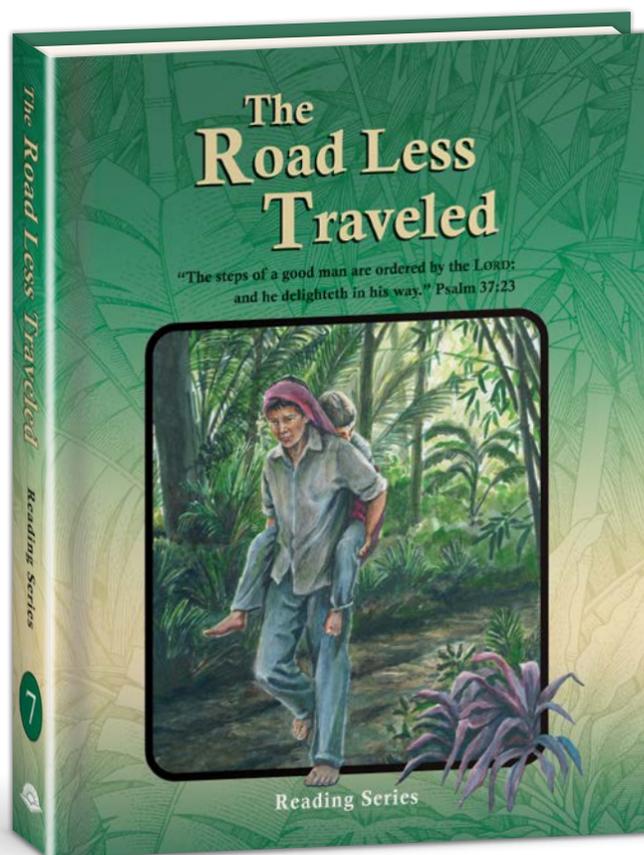
We didn't want to go to church on Sunday, but Mom said we had to. At church we had a missionary speaker. He talked about how churches in Africa made buildings out of sun-dried bricks, but they needed money to buy roofs. He said one hundred dollars would put a roof on a church. The minister said, "Can't we all sacrifice to help these poor people?"

We looked at each other and smiled for the first time in a week. Mom reached into her purse and pulled out the envelope. She passed it to Darlene, Darlene gave it to me, and I handed it to Ocy. Ocy put it in the offering.

When the offering was counted, the minister announced that it was a little over one hundred dollars. The missionary was excited. He hadn't expected such a large offering from our small church. He said, "You must have some rich people in this church."

Suddenly it struck us! We had given eighty-seven dollars of the "little over one hundred dollars." We were the rich family in the church! Hadn't the missionary said so? From that day on I've never been poor again.

**Selected and condensed from the seventh-grade reader *The Road Less Traveled*.**



### Reading 7 Course Components

Reader	\$15.20
LightUnits	\$22.00
Teacher's Guide	\$15.50

# Read Well, Think Well



## 13. The Rich Family in Our Church

For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves. 2 Corinthians 8:3

### Introducing the Story

In "The Rich Family in Our Church," Eddie Ogan tells the true story of a time she and her family discover they are poor. After a week of feeling ashamed of their poverty, something happens that makes Eddie and her sisters realize they are, in fact, the rich family in their church. Who or what determines whether a person is rich?



Read "The Rich Family in Our Church" (pages 155-157).  
After you read it, initial the line. \_\_\_\_\_

### Understanding the Content

A Write the letter of each person or group beside their idea of being rich or poor.

a. church members   b. Eddie's family   c. the missionary

- \_\_\_\_\_ If you put a large amount of money in the offering, you are rich.
- \_\_\_\_\_ If you have a happy life and can share with others, you are rich.
- \_\_\_\_\_ If you can't wear new clothes on Easter Sunday, if your shoes have holes, and if you have to walk to church, you are poor.

B Write the letter of the cause of each effect.

Cause		Effect
4. _____	→	The girls and their mother saved money and found extra jobs.
5. _____	→	The girls and their mother sang all the way home from church.
6. _____	→	The girls and their mother felt ashamed that they were poor.
7. _____	→	The girls and their mother smiled for the first time in a week.

- The pastor brought the offering to Eddie's family.
- The missionary announced special offering for Africa.
- The girls and their mother gave money for the special offering.
- The pastor announced special offering to help the family.

In Christian Light's Reading curriculum for Grades 1-8, students do more than simply read stories and fill in blanks.

For example, in Reading 7 students examine literary elements such as setting, theme, and tone; interpret literary techniques such as metaphors, symbols, allusions, irony, and foreshadowing; identify story genres; identify types of writing; and learn critical thinking skills.

### Lesson 13

### Examining the Narrative

#### Literary Technique: Irony

**Irony:** a contradiction between what is expected and what occurs

A story can include both ironic statements and ironic situations. Irony helps readers see a truth about life and stirs their emotions. It often makes a story memorable and is sometimes humorous. Study the following example:

In "The Ransom of Red Chief" by O. Henry, two men kidnap a boy from a rich family. They plan to ask the boy's family to pay them a ransom before they return him. But the boy is such a nuisance that the two captors become desperate to be rid of him. In an ironic turn of events, they pay his parents to take him back.

C "The Rich Family in Our Church" contains much irony. Answer each question.

8. Eddie's family had a good time saving for the offering. Think about that and about what happened in the rest of the story. What is ironic in the following sentence?

"At night we'd sit in the dark and talk about how the poor family was going to enjoy having the money the church would give them."

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Think about the offerings the church took.

a. How much did Eddie's family put into the first offering? \_\_\_\_\_

b. How much did the rest of the eighty people at church put in? \_\_\_\_\_

c. Why is this ironic? \_\_\_\_\_

d. How much money was in the second offering? \_\_\_\_\_

e. How much did Eddie's family put in the second offering? \_\_\_\_\_

- △ 10. What impression do the ironic situations in the story give you about the rest of the church?

\_\_\_\_\_

A **paradox** is a statement that seems to contradict itself. It contains ideas that sound inconsistent or even contradictory but that may present a truth when considered together. For example, Jesus said that the person who is least among others is the one who is great.

D Put a check mark beside the paradox that best states the theme of the story.

11. a. \_\_\_\_\_ The greatest wealth is to live content with little.

b. \_\_\_\_\_ Wealth is not his that has it, but his that enjoys it.

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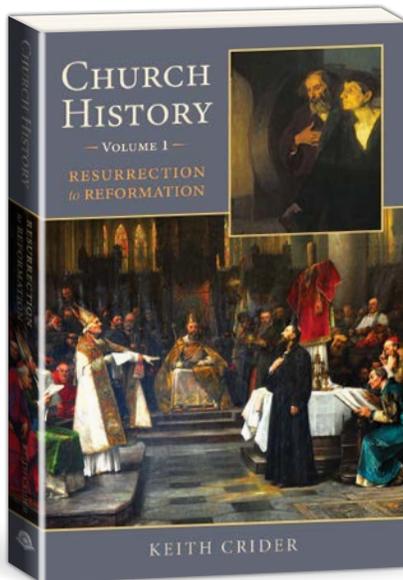
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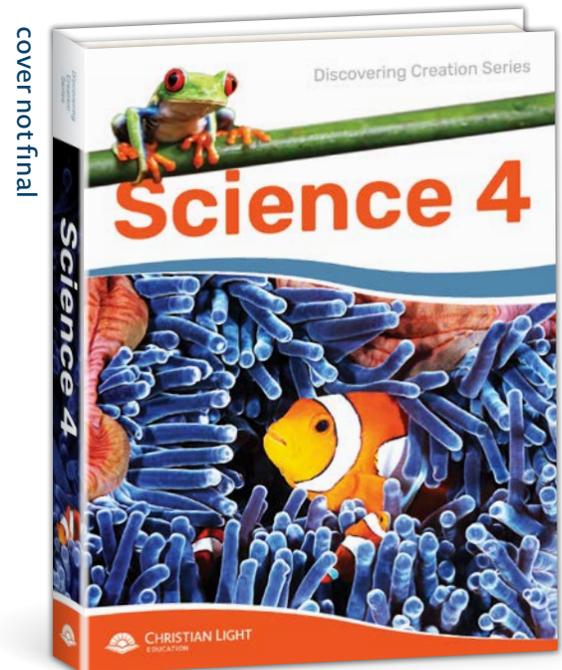
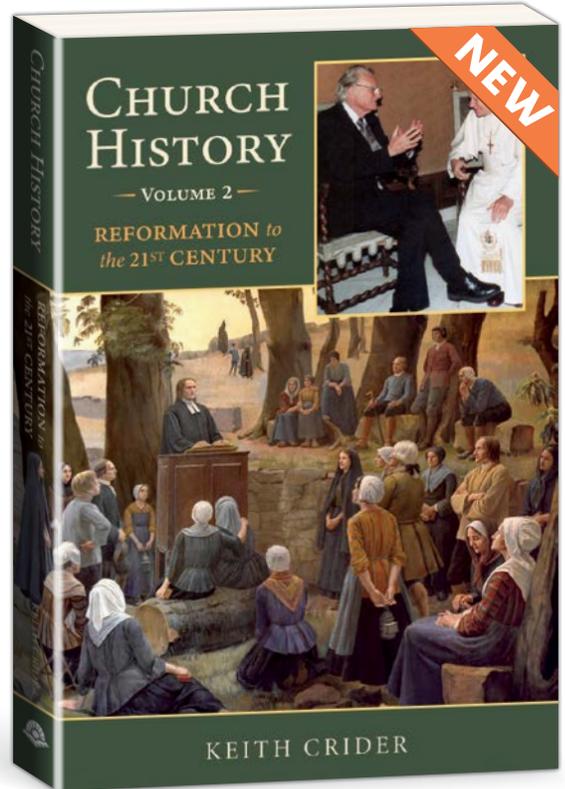
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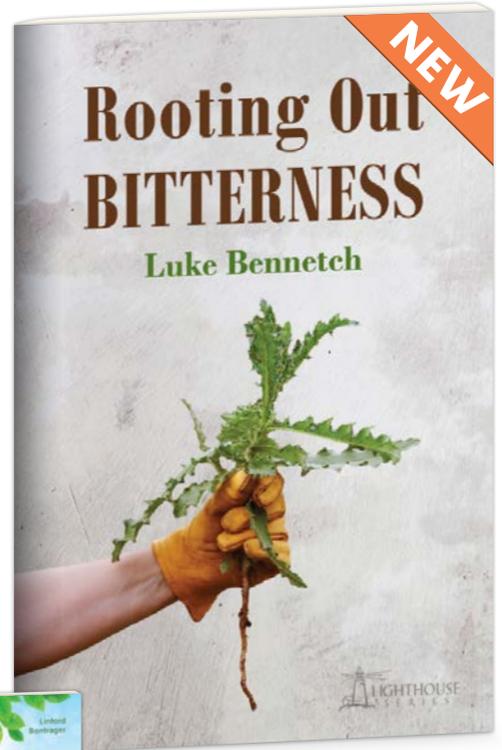


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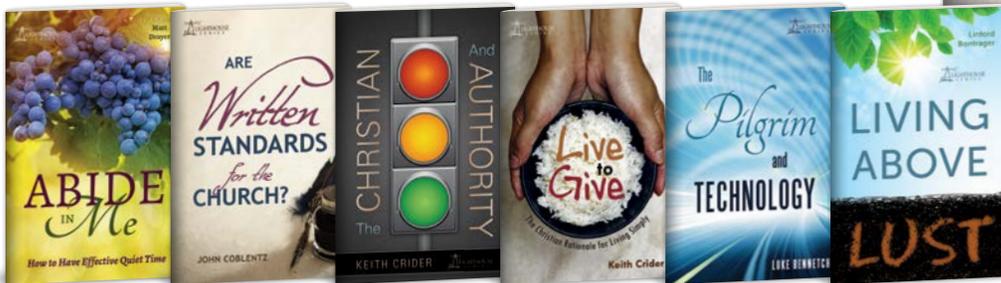
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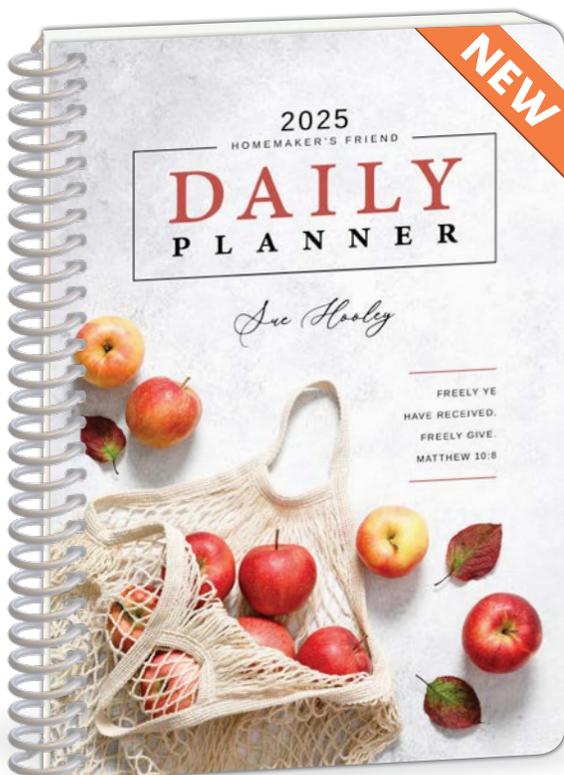


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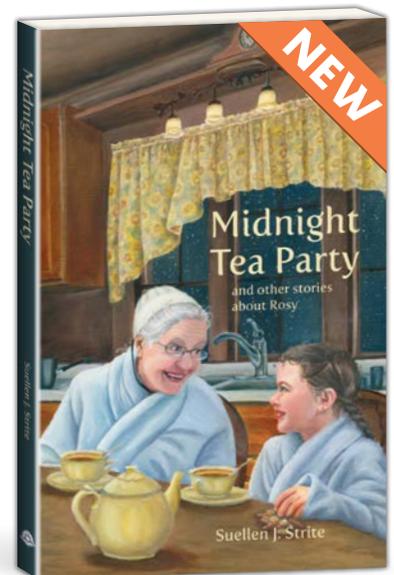
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Who is the  
richest family  
in your church?  
See page 1.

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