

3*The Jitters*

Caught between taking care of her three children and her parents' needs, Terry, a forty-four-year-old single mom of two sons and a daughter, gripped the steering wheel with a vengeance. En route to the fifth grocery store of the morning, and for a box of Jell-O no less, Terry felt about ready to explode. Be reasonable, calm down, demonstrate patience, Terry repeated over and over. This is the last stop, I can do this. I can make it through the next few hours without losing self-control. Attempting to still the uproar in her emotions, Terry prayed for God to give her the kind words and gentle attitude she knew her mom needed right now. But it wasn't easy.

The last three years had revealed just how frail and needy Terry's father had become. At last, after frequent family discussions, Terry's parents agreed that the current living arrangement wasn't working. Terry was running herself ragged trying to maintain her own home and take care of her parents' yard and house as well. Even with three teens to assist her, Terry's resources were running dangerously low. Finally, a decision had been agreed upon. Terry would move in with her parents. Their sprawling house and acres of farm land would be perfect for her kids' last years at home. Terry looked forward to selling her smaller home

and investing the revenue from the sale. Each day, Terry found new positives about moving in with her folks, where caregiving wouldn't require long distance phone conversations or forty-five minute travel time. Still, after patiently playing chauffeur to her mother all morning, Terry was having second thoughts. What ifs loomed large. If today is a sample of how I'll react to my mom's requests, can I handle living with both Mom and Dad around the clock? Terry then experienced a squirm in her stomach that cautioned her to take a deep breath and say another prayer.



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*For He Himself is our peace.*

—EPHESIANS 2:14A

*Dear Lord, thank you for your abundant care for my family and me. Over the years, I've come to recognize your tender touch more readily. You've helped me listen with ears that truly hear your voice. I am so grateful for your guiding hand, your rod of protection. Lord, I praise you. In the innermost depths of my soul, I bow to your holiness. It is a good thing to give praise to you, my God. In every circumstance, you have shown yourself faithful to meet my every need. And now, I come again, asking for your wisdom, your perspective. I am wrestling with an issue that is unclear to me. While I am certain of the right step to take, I am concerned that I don't have what it takes to fulfill my responsibilities. Today, when confronted with demands I felt were unreasonable, I did not handle it well. Instead of communicating with honesty, I*

*held back and allowed bitterness and anger to well up inside me. It was not a pretty picture. Even now as I recall the episode, I bristle. Lord, will you give me a heart of service? Demonstrate to me how important it is to lay down my life in countless small ways every day. I am in sore need of your touch of grace. I feel ashamed that I still tend to react with selfish intent. Please extend to me your good word of encouragement. I do ask your forgiveness for resisting the grace you offered me earlier. Grace to do good without grumbling. In the future, teach me to handle difficult situations, difficult people, with honesty and forthrightness. Be my guide as I make more feeble attempts at serving others with the same bountiful spirit of abandonment that Christ demonstrated with those he served. I commit my life, my hands, and my feet to your service. In these coming days, let your goodness and grace be the watchword of my life. Amen.*

*In His [Jesus'] last message before His death, He wanted you and me to comprehend with our whole being that He has left us on this planet for one compelling reason—and it has everything to do with fruit.*

—BRUCE WILKINSON IN *Secrets of the Vine*