

## The Mysterious Message

### Chapter One

Jason! Do you think it's wise for you to do that?" Andy looked wide-eyed as his twelve-year-old brother boldly put his hands on the cover of the bee hive. "I mean, what if thousands of bees come flying out and start stinging you?"

Jason tried to look brave, yet he too felt apprehensive. Looking at ten-year-old Andy, he tried to decide what he should do. Finally he replied, "I'm not worried about it, Andy. I've done this before, you know."

"Sure, but Cathy or Dad were always with you," Andy cautioned.

That was a fact of which Jason was aware. In fact, if the truth be told, he had been thinking about that very fact before Andy mentioned it. Jason tried to think clearly. "Cathy said she needed the mystery solved. If she thought it was somehow unsafe for us to look at the bees, don't you think she would have said something about it? Besides, we told Mom we were going to look at the hives, and she said it was okay."

"I know she did. But you're a lot braver than I am!" Andy took a few steps back to watch Jason from a safer distance.

All bee hives have a top cover. In fact, most have two covers. The outer cover is designed to be a barrier from wind and rain, and is usually held on with a concrete block or other heavy object. Jason had

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already tossed off the rock holding the outer cover of this hive.

Jason thought, *I've either got to do it now or just walk away.* It would be an understatement to say that his nerves were a bit on edge.

Carefully, slowly, Jason lifted off the outer cover of the bee hive. His courage rebounded as no bees came flying out. "See, it's going to be okay," he said, smiling at Andy. Next, he tried to remove the inner cover, but it was stuck on pretty well. The bees had sealed it with propolis, a sticky, gummy substance that bees use to block holes and seal along cracks. Amazingly, bees collect this glue from tree sap, just as God taught them to do.

Even though it was the first week in December and about 55 degrees, Jason started to sweat. With his tool, he pried around all sides of the inside cover. There, it was almost loose. "Now if I can just get this one corner off . . ."

Jason found the strength he needed to pry the last corner loose. In fact, he had so much strength that the inside cover of the bee hive went sailing into the air and crashed on the ground a few feet away.

At first only a few bees came out to investigate the damage and the "damager." Jason and Andy didn't pay much attention to them. "It looks like there are plenty of bees to me," Jason stated. "I wonder why Cathy thought we were losing bees?" Jason was a little surprised at his own level of calm while looking down at thousands of bees. Andy, too, was feeling pretty grown up about the whole situation.

Now, bees can be quiet and peaceful little creatures. However, anyone can get a bit perturbed when

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you start jolting their house and tearing off their roof. Alarm among the bees began to spread, and before long the air was filled with buzzing, irritated bees. The boys were so intent on thinking about their mystery that they didn't notice the increase in "air traffic" for a few moments. By the time they did, it was too late.

"Hey . . . uh-oh, there's a bunch of bees . . . Jason, there's a bee on your face . . . ouch! . . . we'd better run!" Andy cried, taking his own advice and running away from the hive while trying to wave the bees from his face. This just stirred the bees to higher indignation. First one bee, then another, left its poisonous stinger in Andy's skin. "Ouch!" he cried out as he ran. "Mom! Cathy! Somebody get them off me! Ouch!"

Jason had troubles of his own. He was quickly trying to replace the inner cover and top on the hive, which was especially dangerous as bees were landing all over them. He got stung several times doing this, then was stung a few more times as he raced away.

By the time they reached the house, the boys were very unhappy and in a great deal of pain. As Mom administered some healing ointment on the stings, the boys unsuccessfully fought back tears.

"Oh boys!" Mom exclaimed as she continued to remove stingers and doctor the boys. "Whatever did you get into?"

"It was one of our bee hives, Mom," Jason said between sobs. "We took the cover off to look inside." He couldn't continue because of the pain. Andy, too, was in no shape to answer questions at this time.

"I know I said you could look at the hives. But I

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didn't know you would take the cover off!" Mom exclaimed, wiping away Jason's tears. "God must have used the bees this morning, to teach you a lesson about wisdom and caution. But we can talk about that later. Why don't you guys go sit on the back porch a minute? Maybe the cooler air will help take your mind off these stings. I'll prepare a herbal tea for you that will help take away your pain."

Although the pain was terrible, it was good to have Mom taking care of them. It was easy to see Mom's love by the way she moved so quickly and the concern in her expression. She was well known in their Tennessee town as one who had great compassion. Everyone was thankful to see Connie Nelson's appearance when something bad happened. Of course, the same could be said for their father, Timothy Nelson, as well. The boys were blessed to have Mom and Dad as examples in demonstrating Christian love and kindness.

Both boys got up and walked to the porch. It wasn't easy. Their legs and arms were starting to swell here and there from the bee venom. After sipping on Mom's herbal tea a few minutes, the boys began talking about their mystery. The pain, however, persisted.