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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

1. _____ If you put a large amount of money in the offering, you are rich.
2. _____ If you have a happy life and can share with others, you are rich.
3. _____ 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.

- a. The pastor brought the offering to Eddie’s family.
- b. The missionary announced a special offering for Africa.
- c. The girls and their mother gave money for the special offering.
- d. The pastor announced a special offering to help a poor family.

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.

- How much did Eddie’s family put into the first offering? _____
- How much did the rest of the eighty people at church put in? _____
- Why is this ironic? _____
- How much money was in the second offering? _____
- 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.

- _____ The greatest wealth is to live content with little.
 - _____ Wealth is not his that has it, but his that enjoys it.



E Write the letter of a type of conflict to identify each example.

- a. man against himself b. man against man c. man against nature

12. _____ Eddie's family didn't own an umbrella and had a mile to walk to church in the pouring rain.
13. _____ Eddie's family felt rich, but their minister and church treated them as a poor family.
14. _____ Eddie felt so ashamed of being poor that she didn't want to go back to church.

Life Application

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote of the generosity of the churches in Macedonia. Although they were poor, they gave "beyond their power." Paul explained that a person who has given himself to the Lord will give generously to the needs of those around him.

F Answer each question.

15. What were two of the things Eddie's family did in order to give "beyond their power"?

16. Although it seems that the month of hard work and doing without would have been a hardship, what sentence from the story tells you this was not so? _____

17. What made Eddie's family feel rich even though other people viewed them as poor?

- △ 18. What are two or more things you could do without so that you would have money to give to someone who needs it more than you? _____

Thinking Skills

One way to evaluate a story is to ask yourself what the story says, what it means, and why it matters. These three questions help you understand the significance of the story and how it can influence you.

Sometimes a story influences readers in ways the author did not expect. For example, Eddie Ogan could find humor in most experiences, and she intended "The Rich Family in Our Church" to be an entertaining story. Instead, the story brought tears to readers and gave them a helpful insight about life.

G Answer three important questions about “The Rich Family in Our Church.”

19. **What does it say?** Circle the letter of the main idea of the story.
 - a. Eddie and her family went from feeling rich to poor and then richer than ever.
 - b. The minister meant to help Eddie and her family but hurt them by his actions.
 - c. The missionary didn’t understand which families at church were rich.
20. **What does it mean?** Circle the letter of something you can infer from the main idea.
 - a. Being rich means a person has more money to give to others.
 - b. Being rich is not based on how many things a person has.
 - c. Being poor causes people to feel unhappy.
21. **Why does it matter?** Circle the letter of the idea to apply to your life.
 - a. Being poor shows you the selfishness of people who do not give sacrificially.
 - b. You can depend on others to be more generous than you are.
 - c. Contentment helps you understand what true riches are.

Review

H Write the theme of “Betsy’s Sewing Society” from Lesson 12.

22. _____
- _____

I Write yes if the vocabulary word is used correctly or no if it is not.

23. _____ Instead of obeying God’s commands, the *rebellious* Israelites worshiped idols.
24. _____ The customer’s *objectionable* behavior made her a favorite with everybody.
25. _____ Miss Kuhns suspected that Wyatt was ill because he seemed *listless*.
26. _____ Tyler answered *emphatically* in his usual hesitant, unsure manner.
27. _____ Maggie’s *complacent* response showed that she was actively working to resolve the conflict between herself and her friend.
28. _____ Jasmine seemed to be on the *verge* of laughter as she listened to her niece’s story.
29. _____ Gary’s *perception* of his neighbor changed after he learned the old man’s story.
30. _____ It’s hard to know what Mason is really saying because he is so *blunt*.
31. _____ Wilson felt *remorseful* when he realized he had caused the accident.