

Some day, you'll know

Do you like children's stories?

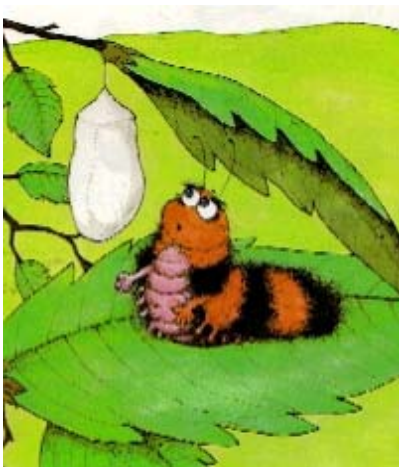
As our youngest daughter, Kathleen, is now eighteen years old and is, of course, an excellent reader, my wife and I don't have many opportunities to read to her or to her older sisters any more. Most children's stories contain some kind of moral or message but there are a few that are, either by design or by accident, so thought-provoking and meaningful that reading them again, even now, can send shivers up my spine. One such story is "The Dream Tree" by Stephen Cosgrove. It is a very short story but it holds a very important lesson for our children, and for their parents.

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The Dream Tree

Have you ever gazed at a spreading apple tree and wondered how many kinds of life live within its branches? There are probably little black ants, funny little spiders, and, of course, fuzzy caterpillars.

Patti Caterpillar was one of those very same caterpillars, who lived in an apple tree at the edge of a large meadow. She was young, furry, fluffy, and most of all, full of mischief.



One day as she was slipping and sliding on a branch at the far side of the tree, she came upon a large, perfectly white cocoon nestled among the leaves. Patti studied it, walked around it, but for the life of her could not decide what such a thing would be used for. She was so curious that she began to scurry home to ask her mother.

As she wriggled and giggled her way along the main trunk of the tree, she caught sight of the most beautiful butterfly she had ever seen.

"My!" thought Patti. "How wonderful it would be to soar in the air like that."

She moved closer to the edge of the branch and shouted, "Mr. Butterfly, how did you become such a beautiful butterfly?" The butterfly just floated along on the breeze, and did not answer her.

"Stuck-up old butterfly," muttered Patti.

She then resumed her journey and soon came to her home which was made of leaves. She slipped in the front door and up to her mother.

"Mom," she said, "today while playing on the far side of the tree, I came upon a white cocoon. What are they used for?"

Her mother sat her down on the toadstool couch and said, "Patti, when caterpillars know that it is the right time, they go and spin their own white cocoon. Then they slip inside and fall asleep. When they wake up, they have been transformed into beautiful butterflies."

Patti scrunched up her nose and wiggled her antennae. "That's silly," she said. "Who would ever believe that a furry caterpillar would turn into a beautiful butterfly?"

"But it's true," said her mother.

Patti thought for a moment. "Then how come butterflies don't fly back and tell us what it is like?"

Her mother just smiled and said, "Someday you'll know, Patti. Someday you'll know."

Patti jumped down from the couch and scampered outside. "I think I'll just find a butterfly and ask him what it's like," she said. And with that thought in mind, she headed for the branches nearest the outside of the tree. She waited and waited, and finally a large butterfly fluttered by.

"Ahem," she said. "Mr. Butterfly, can you tell me exactly what it feels like to be a butterfly?"

The butterfly gazed at Patti and smiled. Then with a flip of his wings, he caught a passing breeze and floated majestically up and away.

"Mr. Butterfly," she shouted, "why won't you tell me?"

The butterfly from high above said, just in a whisper like the breeze, "Someday you'll know. Someday you'll know."

"Oh!" Patti said. "Nobody will tell me!" She turned and wandered over to her favorite twig and curled up. She thought and thought, trying to understand why nobody could tell her what it felt like to be a butterfly.

"I know what I'll do," she said. "When I turn into a butterfly, I'll come back and tell all my caterpillar friends what it's like." Then, contented that she had solved the problem, she closed her eyes and fell asleep in the warm spring sun.

For months thereafter Patti frolicked and played in the tree. But she always kept in mind her promise to herself that when her time came to become a butterfly, she would come back. Then one day, as Patti was skittering along a branch, she suddenly stopped and her antennae began to quiver.

"It is time," she thought, "for me to go and build my cocoon."

She went to the farthest leaf on the farthest branch and spun herself into her cocoon. When she was done, she fell into a long sleep. After many days of resting, she gently woke up and forced her way out of the cocoon. She felt different all over and she knew that she was now a butterfly. Patti slowly opened her wings and felt the soft summer breeze begin to lift her quietly into the air and away from the tree.

"Oh, I should go back and tell the others how it feels," she said. "But it feels so wonderful to float in the warm wind." She began to drift up and away, enjoying every motion of her wings.

As she floated upwards, she could see a small caterpillar far below and heard him shout, "What does it feel like to be a butterfly?"

Patti knew what her answer had to be.

"Someday you'll know, little caterpillar. Someday you'll know."

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Children can misunderstand

The purpose of this article is to help our children comprehend some of the prophesied events surrounding the coming resurrection and to help them understand where they come into the picture.

The fall Feast days bring three weeks of sermons and sermonettes: a concentrated serving of special messages, some of them about such matters as the last days, beasts, wars, plagues, famines, tribulation, a place of safety, the return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection, spirit beings, the binding of Satan, and the Millennium.

These messages are normally presented in grown-up language and are huge concepts, even for adults! For children, these things can be almost impossible to understand and some of them can be somewhat frightening. Our children – yes, even the children of church members – can and do worry. Here, from the mouths of church children, are some of the things they worry about:

- That God's calling is for adults only, and that children are not included in it,
- That they will be shut out of God's Kingdom if it comes before they are old enough to be baptized,
- That they will be separated from their parents at the time of the Resurrection,
- That they might not be allowed into the place of safety and that this, too, might separate them from their parents,
- That end time events and the return of Jesus Christ will cut short their careers, fun, dating and marriage.

Our children need to hear the reassuring truth about how the return of Jesus Christ will affect them.

Does Jesus Christ really look upon our children as "second class citizens"? Does He reject our children from His plan and from access to a happy and successful life in the World Tomorrow? Not at all. Here's what He says:

But Jesus called them unto him, saying, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for to such belongs the kingdom of God. (Luke 18:16)

Whosoever shall receive one of such little children in my name, receives me: and whosoever receives me, receives not me, but him that sent me. (Mark 9:37)

Through His apostles, He says these things:

For to you is the promise, and to your children... even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him. (Acts 2:39)

**...else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.
(I Corinthians 7:14)**

These scriptures make it clear that our children are very special to God.

In Stephen Cosgrove's story, young Patti Caterpillar can be likened to any young child or teen in God's Church. Patti, at first, did not know that she was to be transformed into a beautiful butterfly. She had no idea. When her mother did tell her, she did not at first believe it. It seemed too incredible to be true.

Are we parents in God's Church teaching our children about God and His plan? Are we teaching them about the World Tomorrow and the events that will lead up to it? Are we teaching them that, one day, they too will be given the opportunity to become spirit beings? Do they really believe it? Are they convinced?

Patti Caterpillar was ravenous for information about what it would be like to be a butterfly. Yet even the butterflies themselves couldn't attempt to explain it to her. Being a mere caterpillar, and such a young one, her understanding was so limited. It was impossible for her to understand. Let me write a few words directly to our children:

Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is. (I John 3:2)

God is telling you through this scripture that even baptized adults, equipped with the powerful help of His Holy Spirit cannot fully understand what it will be like to be spirit beings. This verse gives you some additional information – amazing information. Do you want to know what you are going to be like when your time comes to be transformed into a spirit being? If you make the right choices in your life, you are going to look very similar to the way Jesus Christ looks right now!

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child: now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know fully even as also I was fully known. (1 Corinthians 13:9-12)

For adults and children alike, our knowledge of spiritual things and prophesied events is imperfect now, naturally so, as we are still physical. However, this imperfect knowledge will one day be replaced by perfect knowledge, again naturally so, because we will be totally spiritual.

Our Children's part in prophesied events

In the space available, we can only brush the surface of this topic. It is the parents' responsibility to fill in the blanks and to help our children become interested and excited about their involvement in prophesied events.

Another word to the children: Be like Patti Caterpillar! Be inquisitive! Ask your parents for more information on these things... on what it's going to be like! For now, I'll give you a quick summary of the wonderful things God has in store for you – yes **you!** – if you make the right choices. The following refers to those who will still be children when Jesus Christ returns but, as we don't know exactly when that is to occur, it is possible that some of you may be out of your childhood by then.

From now on until these "big things" begin to happen, you must do your best in all that you do, both at school and at home. You must love and obey your parents. You must do your very best to live God's way of life. And you should, of course, have fun!

Now, here's the bad news. Times will gradually get tougher for the whole world, including the area in which you live. These hard times will have some effect on you and me but, if we are patient and obedient, God promises to look after His children:

Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial which is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell upon the earth. (Revelation 3:10 RSV)

It is our hope and belief that, when God's time is right, He will – by means of a miracle – take all but a remnant of His children to a place of safety where they will be protected from all the events that will be then going on in the world outside:

But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. (Revelation 12:14-17)

You don't have to worry. If you have done your best to be patient and obedient, you will be protected there with your parents. It is our hope and belief that we will spend three and a half years in this place of safety. While we're there, your education will continue. (No groans, please!) God has called some excellent teachers into His Church. Just think! You will no longer have to suffer the difficulties you have faced in the past due to Christmas, Halloween, Easter and Valentine's Day. Neither will you have any more problems because of the time you take off school to keep God's holy days. Such problems will then be history.

Again, when God's time is right, seven trumpets will sound. By means of another miracle, every single living person around the world – including you – will hear them. At the blast of the seventh and last of the trumpets, with your very own eyes, you will see Jesus Christ beginning His descent to earth from heaven. With your very own eyes, you will see your parents changed from physical human beings into brilliant spirit beings. You won't know which way to look! God will make sure that, rather than being weird or scary, these experiences will be exciting and enjoyable to you. Your parents' new spirit bodies will be as bright as the sun to look at but they will have the ability to "turn their brightness down" so that you will be able to be with them without discomfort.

The time will then at last arrive when you and your parents must be parted. However, this separation will be only for a very short time. This parting is necessary as this will be a very special time when your parents will go to meet Jesus Christ. Again I must stress that this separation from your parents will only be for a very short time and, even for this brief period, you will not be on your own. God will make sure that you are well taken care of. The younger children may, perhaps, be looked after by church teens whom you know. Now *that* could be scary!

Yet again, with your very own eyes, you will witness the awe-inspiring spectacle of Jesus Christ, your parents along with thousands of other transformed or resurrected Christians and a huge army of angels "touching down" on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem.

There will be a second brief separation from your parents as they leave with Jesus Christ and His angels to fulfil their first assignment, to put down a rebellion against the newly returned King of kings and to imprison Satan and his followers. With that unpleasant task looked after, then will begin one thousand years of peace and happiness. Your childhood, education and play will continue and you will enjoy the added benefit of something that no child has enjoyed since the beginning of the world: perfect parents!

You will see your spirit-bodied parents leading your older brothers and sisters and other human beings in a vast rebuilding program. They won't be rebuilding today's polluted cities to their old designs but they will raise up brand new and beautiful ones to God's specifications.

During these busy years of rebuilding, will your parents have time to spend with you? Yes. The speed at which they will be able to complete their tasks and to travel home to be with you will astound you at first; but you'll soon get used to it.

You will grow from human children into human adults. Once you become physically mature and the time is right, you will ask to be baptized after which you will begin to mature spiritually. As the world gets better every day, jobs will be different – better than they are today. There will be no unemployment. Every one of you will have the opportunity to enjoy a wonderfully interesting and fulfilling career.

Although some of you may not be able to bear the thought of it now, you will meet the man or woman of your dreams. You will get married and have children of your own. Through all of this, your perfect parents will have been with you to help you through it all.

Again, when the time is right (no "twitching antennae" will be necessary for you!), God will change you from human to spirit beings. Yes, you too: Jordan, Melissa, Michael, Lynda, Walter, Kathleen, David, all of you! Although it is difficult for you to understand today, you all will become glorious, brilliant spirit beings... like your parents will be... like Jesus Christ is now.

A word to the adults before closing: Let us not forget our young people. Parents, please take the time to fill in the details which I have not had the space to cover in this article. Please discuss with your children the sermons and sermonettes you hear week-by-week.

Children and teens, we adults do realize that it is hard for you to fully understand these great things that God has in store for you. But someday you'll know, children....

Someday, you *will* know

John Plunkett

Building Bridges, The Church of God Canada

Qualicum Beach, British Columbia, Canada