

THE WATERMELON THIEVES

The watermelon looked so delicious, and no one would ever know.

By Nichole Giles

(Based on a true story)

“I’ll form good habits in my youth, to keep my word, to tell the truth” (Children’s Songbook, 149).

“IT’S HOT!” Joseph complained to his little brother, Loren.

Yesterday a heat wave had blasted through town. Now they were trying to play marbles, but Joseph was so sweaty that his shooter marble stuck to his fingers.

“Let’s go for a swim!” Joseph said.

As the boys walked toward the Little Colorado River, they saw Sam and Frank, who ran to join them.

“Swimming’s just what we need to cool off!” Sam said, kicking a rock.

“Sure is,” Frank agreed. “Too bad we don’t have a sweet treat to take with us.” Then he looked at the field they were passing. The afternoon sun blazed off the smooth round watermelons in Farmer Davis’s patch.

“Hey, Joseph,” Frank said, “I dare you to climb over that fence and get us a ripe watermelon.”

“I don’t know . . .” Joseph said. “Isn’t that stealing?”

Loren looked uncomfortable too. “I don’t think that’s such a good idea.”

“Come on,” Frank said, pushing Joseph toward the fence. “No one will ever know.”

“What’s the matter?” Sam teased. “Are you chicken?”

“No,” Joseph said, squirming.

Frank started to climb the wooden fence rails. “Come on, don’t be a baby. I’ll go with you.”

Joseph frowned but scaled the fence and jumped with Frank into the watermelon patch.

“Don’t worry,” Frank said. “We’ll only take a small one. No one will even miss it.”

Joseph grabbed the closest melon and raced back to the fence. The other boys laughed and took turns carrying the heavy melon as they ran to the river. Finally they broke open the watermelon. The sticky sweet juice that trickled down their chins was delicious! But Joseph already wished he hadn’t taken the melon.

On the walk home, they finished off the last of the melon just as they passed the watermelon patch again. Joseph ducked when he saw Farmer Davis in the field. He glanced up and waved at the boys, who quickly tossed the melon rinds to the side of the road. Farmer

Davis frowned, took off his hat, and scratched his head as the boys hurried by.

Joseph felt terrible. It had been wrong to take the watermelon. He knew he had to tell Farmer Davis what they had done and ask for forgiveness.

That evening Farmer Davis visited Joseph and Loren at their house. “One of my prize watermelons went missing,” he said. “I was wondering if you boys happened to see anyone in my field as you passed by today.”

Joseph looked at his shoes, a knot tightening in his stomach. “Yes, sir,” he said quietly. “We were with some

other boys, and I took a melon from your field. We took it to the river, and all of us ate it together.”

Farmer Davis pressed his lips into a straight line. “Taking a melon that you didn’t grow is stealing.”

“I’m really sorry,” Joseph said. “I don’t have any money, but I could do some chores to repay you.”

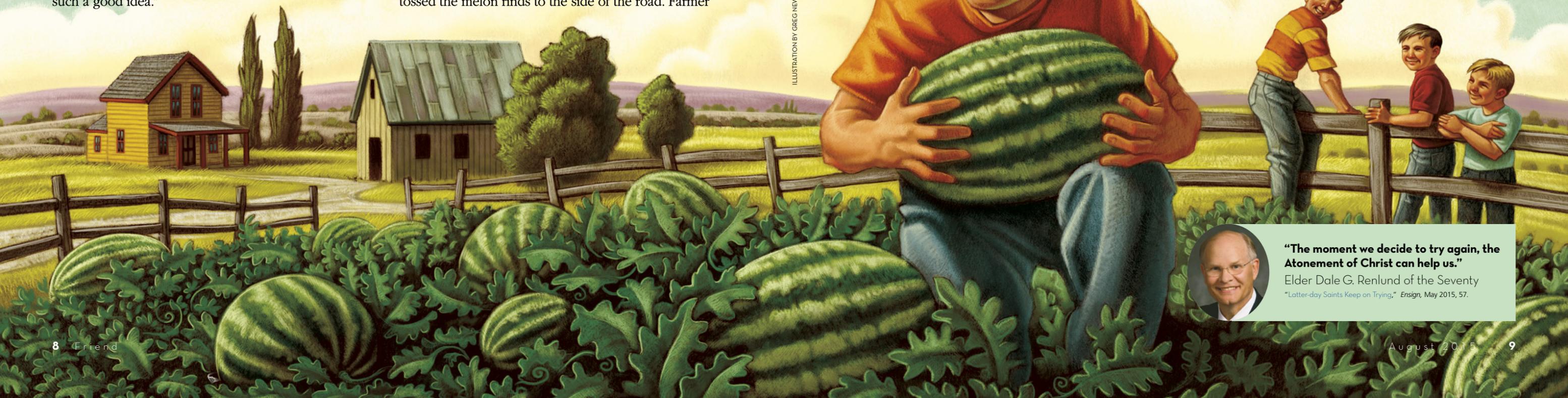
“I ate some too,” Loren said. “I’ll help.”

Farmer Davis thought for a minute. “Tomorrow morning, when you’ve finished your chores at home, come by my field. I think I can find some work for you.”

That night Joseph asked Heavenly Father to forgive him for taking something that didn’t belong to him. He prayed that next time someone asked him to steal something, he’d have the courage to say no. The knot in Joseph’s stomach loosened. Tomorrow morning he would go to the Davis’s farm and do whatever chores the farmer asked him to do. And he wouldn’t complain about the extra work—or the heat. ♦

The author lives in Utah, USA.

ILLUSTRATION BY GREG NEWBOLD



“The moment we decide to try again, the Atonement of Christ can help us.”

Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Seventy
“Latter-day Saints Keep on Trying,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 57.