

The Wooden Bowl

A frail old man went to live with his son, daughter-in-law, and four-year-old grandson. The old man's hands trembled, his eyesight was blurred, and his step faltered.

The family ate together at the table, but the elderly man's shaky hands and failing sight made eating difficult. Peas rolled off his spoon onto the floor, and, when he picked up his glass, milk spilled on the tablecloth.

The son and daughter-in-law became irritated with the mess. "We must do something about father," said the son. "I've had enough of his noisy eating, spilled milk, and food on the floor."

So the husband and wife set a small table in the corner. There, Grandfather ate alone while the rest of the family enjoyed dinner together. And, since Grandfather had broken a dish or two, his food was served in a wooden bowl.

Occasionally, the family would glance in Grandfather's direction during a meal and see a tear in his eye as he sat alone. Still, the only words the couple had for him were sharp admonitions whenever he dropped a fork or spilled food.

The couple's four-year-old watched all of this in silence. One evening before supper the father noticed his son sitting on the floor, playing with scraps of wood. He asked the child sweetly, "What are you making?" Just as sweetly, the boy responded, "I'm making a little bowl for you and Mama to eat your food in when I grow up." The boy smiled and went back to work.

The child's words so struck the parents that they were speechless. Within moments tears were streaming down their cheeks. Though not a word was spoken, both knew what must be done.

That evening, as the family was about to sit down to dinner, the husband gently took his father's hand and led him to the family table. For the remainder of his days he ate every meal with the family. And, for some reason, neither the husband nor the wife seemed to care any longer when a fork was dropped, milk spilled, or the tablecloth was soiled.