

Johnny and His Closet

Do you have any hidden wounds and hurts in your past? You've been told that now that you are a Christian, all things are new. Yet when you try to deal with present life situations, do you find these things from the past tumbling out at you? What are you to do, put them away and pretend they don't exist? Or should you let them "hang out" and walk around hurting all the time? Is there another alternative?

Once upon a time there was a boy named Johnny who loved cars, trucks, and anything on wheels. His dad was a truck driver and Johnny's dream was to grow up and drive a big semi truck just like his dad.

But he was only five years old so he had to be content for the time being collecting and playing with toy trucks and cars. Some he received as presents for his birthday or Christmas (trucks were always at the top of his list). Some his dad gave him when he came home from one of his numerous cross-country trips. Some Johnny made himself out of scraps of wood and old bottle caps. Others he made of paper and cardboard.

After a few years, his room was becoming very cluttered. His mom could barely walk into his room to put his clothes away for the trucks and cars all over the floor. Then one day, as she opened the drawer to put his shirts away, there was no room.. It too was filled with trucks and cars. There were trucks and cars on the bed, under the bed, on the floor, on his dresser and desk and in his drawers.

"This is too much," She exclaimed.

When Johnny came home from school that day, he was met by his mother who was wearing a frown on her face.

"Oh,oh," thought Johnny. "I must be in trouble.

"Johnny", his mother spoke sternly. "Your room! You must do something about it. I'll not let you live in a room like that anymore. Clean it up!"

"Oh,that's what's bothering her,"he said to himself. "I sort of like my room like it is." But he knew his mom. He would have to do something. He sat on his bed on the small space he had cleared off and looked around. Where could he put all the stuff? The closet-thats' it. Slowly he began to gather up all his trucks and cars and pile them in his closet, first the ones from the bed, then the ones from the floor, then from the dresser, and finally from under the bed. His closet would barely shut. He had to lean on it, but it finally closed. .

He sat down, "Whew! He was so relieved. It had taken him all afternoon and evening except for a short break for supper.

"Mom, I did it. I'm all done he called.

His mom came upstairs to look at his room. “Johnny, I'm proud of you. You did a great job.”

Johnny felt real good, that is until next morning when he realized he had to get into the closet to get his pants. As he opened the door, he tried to reach in and grab them quickly, but he couldn't reach them and had to open the door further and further. Out spilled some of his stuff. He finally found his pants and then with some difficulty managed to put his stuff back in and pushed and shoved and got the door shut again. He was beginning to think maybe the closet wasn't the best solution. He just might have a problem keeping the stuff in the closet.

That afternoon, he came home from school and wanted to change his shoes to go out and play ball with the guys. But then he remembered that his sneakers were at the bottom of the closet, as well as his mitt and ball. “Oh, no!” he thought. He had no choice but to unload the closet and there it was, his stuff all over the floor again. But if he stayed to put it back, he would be too late to play with his friends. If he left it in his room, his mom might see. He'd need to think of a solution later. So he grabbed his ball and mitt and ran off to play, hoping his mom wouldn't see his room.

But when he came home, he knew she had. There was his mom with a scowl on her face. “Oh, oh,” I guess she did see, “he thought to himself.

“Johnny, your room! I told you to clean it up. It's still a mess. You'll have to throw the stuff out. Get rid of it!”

Get rid of it? Johnny was horror stricken. No, his stuff was too good to throw out. It was his stuff. Then he thought, “Well, maybe I could get rid of some of it. That very evening he started to sort through it. Some things he put in the downstairs wastebasket and the rest he put back in the closet. “Whew,” he said. “I feel better already.” His room did look nice again.

But the next morning there was a pile of stuff in the middle of his floor, all the things he had thrown out. He was sitting there in bed looking at it wonderingly when his little three year old brother Mikey, toddled in. “Johnny, Johnny, some of your good stuff got in the garbage by mistake. I rescued it for you.” he said proudly with a big grin on his face.

Johnny didn't want to hurt his feelings but thought with a sinking feeling, “Now what can I do?” His problem was starting to get him down.

That night at supper dad asked him how he was doing. “You haven't asked for a new truck lately Johnny. Is everything OK?”

“Yeah, sure dad.” Johnny replied.

After supper his dad said, “Johnny, let's go look at your truck collection. I haven't seen them in awhile.” (Now his dad knew what the problem was having talked to mom, but was waiting for Johnny to come to him for help.)

Johnny started to panic. “Dad will find out I haven't taken good care of all the nice trucks and cars he bought me by just stuffing them all in my closet” Out loud he said, “No dad-please not tonight. I don't feel real good.

But as the days went on, Johnny kept having problems. Every time he opened the closet door, things would fall out at him. His friends wanted to play with him and his trucks, but he couldn't find the ones they wanted to play with. Quite a few were getting broken and dirty with the treatment they were getting.. even some of the good ones his dad had bought him. His friends told him to throw out the broken ones, but he said, "No, I couldn't do that. Dad would be really mad at me." So he lived in fear that his dad would find out about his closet and his treatment of his presents.

The closet was becoming quite a source of embarrassment from his friends, that eventually he quit inviting them over. His mom noticed and asked, "Why don't you have your friends over after school anymore?"

Johnny figured, " Oh, I guess they're busy with stuff. I don't have time for them anyway."

Yet after school he would sit in his room staring at the closet. He missed being able to find and play with his trucks and other toys. He also felt badly about the broken ones. He was afraid to open his closet anymore or there would be an avalanche. He didn't know what to do and he was a most miserable little boy.

Then one day as Johnny was sitting on his bed looking at the closet, he heard his father's voice in the hall. "Johnny, I'm home. I got back early from my trip." On entering his room, dad said "Look what I brought you." It was a beautiful truck, just like the one his dad drove.

"That's really great, dad," he replied and then started to cry.

His father sat down on the bed and said to him, OK, Johnny tell me what is really the matter."

Slowly the words spilled out between sobs as his father held him. "Mom said I had to clean my room. I didn't know what to do with all my stuff, so I put it in the closet. But then it kept falling out when I opened the door. I tried to throw some out and that didn't work. I can't get to the ones I want to play with. My friends won't play with me. Some of the trucks and cars you gave me are broken and I know you'll be really mad." He hesitated for a moment to catch his breath and then said, "I.. I don't know what to do." as big tears rolled down his cheeks. His dad held him until the sobbing stopped.

"OK, here's what we are going to do. We'll have to work together on this one. You sort out your things in three piles- ones that are good and just need to be cleaned, the ones that are good and in need of repair, and the ones that are really trash and need to be thrown away. Then I'll help you clean and fix the broken ones. We'll build shelves on your walls so you can display the best ones. We'll build shelves in your closet so you can store and still find the others. We'll put the trash in a big bag and I will personally take it to the dump so it will be gone for good."

So the next weekend, Johnny and his dad were very busy. They opened the closet and sorted through the stuff.. The cheap broken toys of no more value, Johnny placed in the trash bag. The paper and cardboard trucks he had made, by now ripped and bent, he threw out. The good trucks and cars his dad had him, including some quite valuable collector's items, he cleaned. His dad repaired any broken ones. Then his dad built the shelves all around his room on the walls and in the closet. Finally they placed the now cleaned and repaired trucks and cars on the shelves, all neatly in order and all where Johnny could find them.

Johnny was so happy. He called mom in to inspect. She looked at the floor, on the dresser, under the bed, even in the closet. All was in order. She hugged both Johnny and his dad. At that point little Mikey came in. "Oh, wow!" he exclaimed as his eyes lit up seeing all the trucks and cars on the walls. "Gee dad, could you help with my room now?" And they all laughed.