

## You're Hired!

*You might begin by saying something like, "Stewardship is taking care of God's stuff God's way, and the one thing that's more important to God than any other thing in the whole universe is His children. When we serve God by giving faithful service to our fellow human beings, everyone is blessed. Today's story is about a boy who wants to take care of God's kids God's way."*

*This story is about an older child, but may still be enjoyed by younger kids as there are younger characters in the story.*

Anthony needed to make some money. His ancient, thrift-store bike was getting harder to fix each time. He really needed a new one, or at least a newer one, so Anthony was doing every odd job he could find. He cleaned the garage for his dad, raked the lawn for Mr. Brenner, weeded Mrs. James' flower beds, and took a package to the post office for Mrs. King, carrying it in the basket of his old, rickety bike. He'd even picked up all the aluminum cans within a mile (or so it seemed) of his house and turned them in at the recycling center.

So far he'd been working for four whole weeks, and all he had was \$38! At this rate, he would be old and gray before he earned enough for a whole new bike!

Then one evening, his mom told his dad, "Joan's taking a six-week online course for her home business. She did the first session last night, but the boys interrupted her so much that she wants a babysitter, just to keep them out of her hair for two hours. It's too bad I can't do it. The webinars are exactly the time I'm helping with choir rehearsals for the special church program. I wouldn't charge her, of course, but she says she'll pay \$5 per hour."

Ten dollars every week, for six weeks. Anthony was on it! "Mom, I could do it!" he said.

"You?" Mom said, looking surprised, and also like she was about to say "No."

Anthony hurried on. "She lives right next door, she'll be there in the house, I can do it, Mom!"

"What if you have to change Calvin's diaper?" asked Dad.

"I can do that, too. Aunt Joan taught me, back when he was tiny."

"Yes, but Anthony, it's a lot harder to put a diaper on a squirming one-year-old baby! I really think..."

"Oh, please, Mom! You know I'm trying to save money! Let me try it just once, and then if Aunt Joan isn't satisfied, she can get somebody else! Please?"

Mom and Dad agreed, as well as Aunt Joan, and a week later, Anthony found himself in a messy playroom with one-year-old Calvin, three-year-old Josiah, and four-year-old Martin.

"Okay, guys, this is going to be fun!" Anthony promised, getting down on his knees and starting a tower of building blocks. It was fun—for about 20 minutes. Then Calvin started crying for Mama, and Martin hit Josiah over the head with a toy truck, and the rain, which had already kept them inside, turned into a loud thunderstorm.

Anthony took the truck away from Martin and made him say "sorry" to his brother. He picked Calvin up, checked his diaper, and jounced him around the room until he started giggling. Then Martin and Josiah had to be jounced around, too. And then Calvin did need a change, and Josiah had to have help

to go potty. By the time the two hours were over, Anthony was TIRED! He thought it might be easier to clean out ten garages! But when Aunt Joan gave him \$10, a hug, and a big thank you, he decided it was worth it.

The second week it was sunny, and they played outside. That was better. The third week, all three boys were sleepy, so Anthony read them a story and they all fell asleep on the rug. That was great! He looked at the three tousled little heads and smiled. They were hard work, but they were cute little guys. And the story he read reminded him that they were also Jesus' little lambs. Anthony quietly sang "Jesus Loves Me," even though they were out like lights and couldn't hear him.

He felt kind of guilty for taking money that day, but Aunt Joan said he was worth a million bucks and she wished she could give him that much. Anthony laughed, thanked her, and went home to count his money. He'd found four more small jobs, and now he had almost \$90. The bike he had his eye on was \$120. He figured he'd need at least \$20 extra in order to give back God's ten percent tithe, plus some to give for offering. That made \$140. Only \$50 to go!

The fourth week, disaster struck.

The four boys were out in the backyard. Josiah and Martin were making truck noises in the sand box, and Calvin was crawling around the grass, inspecting clover blossoms. Anthony now had well over \$100, and he was looking at a bicycle magazine he'd brought—and he wasn't paying enough attention. Calvin had just started taking some steps lately. He decided now was a good time to try out his new skill, and he managed to push himself up on the wooden edge of the sandbox. He toddled three steps, then fell over sideways.

Anthony was jerked out of his magazine-reading by a shriek. He looked up and saw the screaming baby, lying on the ground by the sandbox, with blood pouring from a cut in his head. Anthony raced over to pick him up. Both of the older boys were starting to cry, too.

The screen door banged open and Aunt Joan ran into the yard. "Oh, my word!" she cried, grabbing her baby. "What happened?"

"I—I'm not sure," stammered Anthony.

"He fell and hit his head on the board," whimpered Martin, pointing to the edge of the sandbox.

"Bring them in—hurry!" Aunt Joan dashed in the house with a crying, bleeding Baby Calvin.

Anthony didn't have to get the others. They climbed out of the sandbox and ran after their mother, wailing.

It was a confusing half hour. The next door neighbor on the other side heard the commotion and came over. She was a nurse, and her calmness made everyone feel better. "Of course, you can call an ambulance if you want to, Joan, but you don't really need to. Head wounds always bleed a lot. Let's clean it up and see what we've got."

The cut really wasn't that big, and it was soon bandaged with a funny kind of bandage called a "butterfly." Calvin was distracted with a snack, and the two older boys settled down when he did, and begged for snacks too. Anthony got them something to nibble on, but as for himself, he felt sick to his stomach.

When Aunt Joan finally had time to talk to him, he said bravely, "It was my fault, Aunt Joan. I was

looking at a picture of the kind of bike I want, and I wasn't watching. I'm really sorry!" He took a deep breath. "I'll give you back the money you've paid me so far and you can get a better babysitter."

Aunt Joan put her arm around his shoulders. "That's not necessary, Anthony. This is the kind of thing that can happen to anybody. Did you know that Martin once broke his arm because I wasn't paying close attention? The question is, what have you learned? What will you do differently?"

Anthony had been thinking about that very thing while the bandaging was going on. "I was taking care of them just because I wanted the money," he confessed. "If you trust me again, I want to take care of them because they're Jesus' little lambs."

Aunt Joan hugged him. "Great answer! You're hired!"

Anthony felt a lump in his throat. "Thanks, Aunt Joan. From now on, I'll leave the magazines at home and take care of God's kids God's way!"

*Thought Question: What are some ways you can serve God's other children?*

*Taking Care of God's Stuff God's Way* by Debbonnaire Kovacs pp. 61-64