JENNNY PRICE

Jenny Price was born in the Land of Strength, and she displayed it the instant she was born. Her limbs were well formed and strong – she kicked and flailed her arms nonstop. “Look at her!” exclaimed her delighted father. “She’ll make a fine boxer like me.” “No,” said her mother, “look how she’s moving her limbs. I can see her winning many galas like me.” They took her home to their farmhouse on the lower alps of the Land of Strength where they bred cattle and sold them, the heifers for the meat market and the cows for their babies and for their milk and cheese. It was a prosperous business and the Prices, over time, became very wealthy. Their farmhouse was not your average farmhouse, next to the stables. It was ultra - modern, very large, double storied with huge windows overlooking the farm, and stretching over the countryside to the mountains in the distance.

After Jenny was born, Pete no longer fought in boxing competitions, nor Phoebe in galas. They decided to have more children, and Jenny soon had twin sisters, Priscilla and Pamela, and a brother called Jimmy. They were all like

Jenny, strong and healthy babies. Their parents were thrilled. Next to their opulent house, the proud parents built a modern gym with exercise machines to die for, a boxing ring and a large swimming pool with three sizes of diving boards. This required a large staff from cleaners to two professional teachers – Mr Senior who had won a gold medal at an Olympic competition some years previously, and Miss Poole who had accomplished the same. Because the children needed an education and normal schools would have interfered with their training, their parents engaged three tutors to teach them on weekdays. They were very bright children and matriculated in half the time it would have taken in a normal school. It seemed the family lived in the gym. They ate lunch and supper there, tried to beat their parents, and, of course, spent much of the day having lessons from Mister Senior and Miss Poole. Every day was much the same except Saturdays and Sundays when all the staff didn't come to work and almost all of them went to church in the village.

The Prices never went to church - the parents had been too busy competing and training for events. No thoughts about God or the fact that he might be relevant to their lives ever crossed their minds, and the children were much the same. On weekends they went to The Pizza Oven in the village or had bar-be-ques in the garden and continued their days in the gym.

After a few years when Jenny was fourteen, Pamela and Priscilla twelve and Jimmy ten, Daddy said to Mister Senior and Miss Poole, “Isn’t it time for the children to start competing? My wife and I started in provincial matches at their age.” “Well Mister Price, we have already organized that and entered the children for their first matches next month. They are quite ready for them and, we think, they will do you proud.” Extra training began in earnest, watched by the children’s proud parents. Meals were geared to stamina, so there was much meat and veg and little Cokes, cakes or biscuits. At night the children went to bed after supper and slept soundly. TV was out of the question. Boxing outfits were ordered for Jimmy, swimwear for the

girls. “It was a great idea of yours to order gear exactly like ours, with our logo and all-it will intimidate the opposition!” Daddy said to Mummy.

The great day arrived, and they all piled into the Rolls and Daddy drove to the City of Competition twenty miles away. They were met by a barrage of press taking shots of their arrival and shouting questions to the family. “Jimmy, will you be as good a boxer as your dad?” “I hope so,” he replied. “Jenny, can you dive as well as your Mum?” “Mum says I am better than her – more daring!” she shouted back. They went to the change rooms. They had to wait over an hour before they were called. Jimmy went first. “Go for it, Jimmy!” cried his sisters. It was a hard and long match. Both boys were panting as they dodged around the ring. At last, Jimmy delivered the knockout blow, and he proudly stood on the platform while the Mayor of Strength put the medal around his neck. The crowd went wild. “Like father, like son!” thundered over the arena. It was the first of many such occasions until it was the year of the Olympics held in PRIDE the capital city. All the children were now in their late

teens. The girls had performed as well as Jimmy and they were all firm favourites to win gold medals, although, it must be admitted, the opposition was very strong.

Over the next few years, they continued to collect more cups and gold medals. One day Mummy said to Daddy, “All the kids’ stuff is filling their bedrooms. Can’t you build a room somewhere where we can display all their cups, medals, costumes and gear?” “What a wonderful idea. I’ll build a huge exhibition room – we can charge their fans a dollar to visit once a month and give the proceeds to the Wounded Athletes Fund.” This proved to be an excellent idea – and the Fund was very grateful.

One day when Jenny was competing on the highest diving board, she felt desperate. Her opponent was doing brilliantly. “I’ll do it! I’ll do the dive no one had attempted before!” She climbed up the steps repeating, “I’ll do it.” And she did. Tragically she found out why no one had attempted it. The crowd gasped and jumped up. The family ran to the

pool where helpers were pulling the unconscious Jenny from it and rushing her to hospital followed by her family, all weeping and worried. Daddy nearly caused three accidents, and the police escort stopped the car and drove them to the hospital. They found Jenny in the operation room. A surgeon came out, “Jenny has many injuries” he said, “it will require multiple surgeries to address her problems. I am afraid to tell you that she will be in a wheelchair for the rest of her life. I am so very sorry.” The family stayed at the hospital for hours waiting for Jenny to regain consciousness and taking it in turns to sit with her. When she woke, her first words were. “Why has God done this to me?” It was the first time the word God had been heard in the family, who all reiterated her words, “Why has God done this to us?”

Jenny was nineteen when she was paralysed and wheelchair bound in hospital facing the numerous operations she had been told to expect. The family lived in a five-star hotel near Saint Peter’s Hospital. Every day they took turns to visit her or stay by her bedside waiting for her

to wake up after an operation. She had four major operations followed in quick succession by six others. The Regal Hotel had a splendid pool area, but the family could not face using it. They drew the curtains in their suite so they wouldn't see it. They all put on weight as the ate too much. "It makes me feel I can cope," said Pamela. Daddy said, "I have dismissed Mister Senior and Miss Poole. I gave them six month's pay – they will easily get good jobs." And Mummy said, "I have asked Mister Games to cancel all visits to the trophy room and lock the door."

At last, the operations were successfully completed. An occupational therapist visited Jenny every day. They got on well because she was not much older than Jenny who called her by her Christian name. Christina began with Jenny lying on her bed and doing simple exercises. "Press your right night knee into the mattress and hold it there while I count five. Then do it with your left knee," she said. After a week, Jenny learnt how to pull herself up. The family was thrilled. "Maybe she will soon be walking," said Jimmy.

“No,” replied Mummy, “Poor Jenny will never walk again Doctor Allan says.” And she burst into tears.

“Do you have a boyfriend,” Jenny asked Christina. “I have never had one and probably never will with this handicap.” “Yes,” Christina replied. “His name is Christopher and he’s the Youth Pastor at our church.” “I suppose you must be a Christian – I don’t believe in a God who could do this to me and all kinds of things to innocent people. Look at the flash flood in which hundreds were drowned including girls from a Christian holiday camp.” And that was the opportunity Christina had been praying for. “I will give you a copy of a booklet I have. It’s called WHY JESUS? By Nicky Gumbel who is a converted Jew. And I have a brilliant book by John Stott that you may have. I have a wonderful life, but I have problems too as does everyone in the world because it is a fallen world.” And she told Jenny how God had created the world in six days, saw that it was good and rested from his work. How Adam and Eve sinned and were the cause of man’s fall from grace and disaster came on them and on all mankind. Of God’s amazing plan to rescue mankind. “This

is what it says in the New Testament in John's Gospel chapter three verses sixteen and seventeen. 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.'"

Over the next few weeks Jenny read and reread WHY JESUS and BASIC CHRISTIAMITY. She asked Christina to push her into the hospital's beautiful gardens. They sat under a jacaranda tree in full bloom, it lilac blossoms swaying in the gentle breeze. They did not talk. Christina saw that Jenny was in a thoughtful mood. At last, she said, "Christina, I am a Christian. I have given myself to Jesus and will serve him in whatever way he has for me. I am well named Jenny Price for I have been bought with a price, the blood of my Lord Jesus Christ. "Praise the Lord!" exclaimed Christina as she put her arms around Jenny and hugged her.

The next day the family came to take Jenny to a fantastic restaurant they had discovered. You'll love the prawns," said Pamila, "and the cheesecake," said Mummy. "Let's go," said Daddy taking the handles of Jenny's wheelchair. "No" said Jenny, "sit down everyone – I have something to tell you. I am a Christian, I believe that Jesus died for my sins, and I'll be praying that my darling family who has been ever so wonderful to me over this time will be Christians too. And now," she said rising from her wheelchair, "I go in the strength and the might of the Lord." And she walked to the door.

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