

# Habits of the Heart

## Preface

Over three decades ago, while attending the University of Utah, I had the pleasure of taking a class from Dr. Lowell Bennion at the LDS institute of religion. Although I find it difficult to remember many of the classes or lectures from my college days, I distinctly remember a lesson Dr. Bennion gave about the different kinds of love. He discussed how poorly we deal with the concept of love in the English language. His lesson led us through different levels of love. He began with the rather selfish concept of romantic love, which tends to create within the love-smitten the desire to possess the other person. He led us through the concept of love expressed in service to others and concluded with the love epitomized by the Savior's selfless sacrifice. Eros, agape, phileo.

Dr. Bennion's words have come back to haunt me over the years. I often have found myself wondering, in quiet contemplation, how mature my ability to love has grown. Perhaps it is easier to see in others than in oneself the deeper meanings of the expressions of love.

All of the stories in this book are based upon actual incidents. Because of the nature of the situations, however, the names, locations, and events have been altered to preserve the anonymity of those involved. In some cases, individuals or events have been combined. The intent is not to deceive but to entertain.

I am indebted to those involved for their abilities to display love in a multitude of ways. I must give credit to my wife for her unstinting support and to those at Bookcraft who have expressed their faith in me, especially Cory Maxwell. I am also indeed to Alexis de Tocqueville, who coined the phrase, "a habit of the heart."

## Chapter 1

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First love is often bittersweet. It is filled with fantasy and daydreams that never seem to be fulfilled.

It was her hair I first noticed. Her hair was cut in a pageboy style, turned under at the ends, shoulder length, and the color of honey. We had a jar of Miller's honey on the shelf in our kitchen at home. I often turned it over and placed it upside down on our kitchen table. An air bubble moved slowly upward through the amber nectar like a large transparent marble. Margo's hair was the same color as that honey. I watched that hair from my vantage point two rows behind her. We were in the third grade. I was eight years old.

Our school building was a two-story brick structure on the corner of McClelland Street and Harrison Avenue. Across McClelland to the west was a fenced playground where we spent recesses and learned to play baseball and kickball. During the winter months, when the playground was covered with snow, we played "fox and geese." At other times we fell backward in the snow and moved our arms up and down to make snow angels.

It was during one such recess, late in the school year, that I sat against the fence and watched Margo. My next-door neighbor, Alan, squatted down next to me. "What's ya doin'?" he asked.

"Nothin'."

"How come you ain't playing baseball with the other guys?" In all fairness, only about half of the kids on the playground were involved in any kind of play, organized or not. The rest of us stood or sat near the fence and watched. Those of us who sat watching were typically the less skilled at whatever game was going on at the time. Since I was the youngest and smallest member of my class, I often chose to sit out the activities at recess time.

"You look kinda sad," pursued Alan. "Somethin' wrong?"

I signed. Margo was leaning against the fence behind home plate, her fingers clutching the chain-link fence. Her honey hair glowed in the April sunshine. No one could possibly have been more beautiful. I quickly looked away. There was no way I could let Alan know the desires of my heart. He couldn't keep a secret for long the tea in China. I shook my head. "Nothing's wrong," I said quietly.

Delmar Porter was up at bat. I focused my attention on him. Delmar was the biggest boy in our class. I suppose it's normal for the big to pick on the small, but Delmar carried it to the extreme. I was often the target of his abuse.

The ball was pitched, and Delmar's bat connected. The ball went flying deep into the left field. Delmar charged furiously down the baseline toward first base. The first baseman stood, hands on hips, watching the ball bounce in the outfield. Delmar rounded first and started toward second base. The fielder reached the ball and threw it with all his might in the general direction of third base. Delmar rounded second and thundered toward third. Just as Delmar reached third base, the ball bounced to a halt about ten feet short of the third baseman. Delmar glanced over his shoulder as the third baseman ran to retrieve the ball, and then picked up steam as he raced toward home. The catcher fumbled the ball in his gloved left hand toward the charging Delmar. Delmar crashed full force into the catcher. The ball squirted loose. The catcher landed flat on his back and let out a scream of pain. Delmar lost his balance and tumbled into the backstop just in front of Margo.

"Oh!" exclaimed Margo. She quickly ran around the fence to where Delmar now stood, dusting off his corduroy pants. "Are you hurt?"

Delmar shook his head.

Miss Nacarato, our playground supervisor, was kneeling beside the catcher, who was struggling to catch his breath. "Delmar," she snarled, "that was totally unnecessary."

"He got in my way," shrugged Delmar. Just then the bell rang, calling us back to class.