

Choosing to Behave Like Cinderella or Matilda

God can use stories and even fairy tales to teach us profound lessons.

Recently I woke during the night and heard God say, "Cinderella doesn't like Matilda." My initial response was curiosity. It seemed such an odd thing to say. I knew the story of Cinderella, but who was Matilda?

I vaguely recalled that children's author, Roald Dahl, had written a book called *Matilda*. I checked my bookshelf. Sure enough I found the book. I set about reading it to see if I could unravel the riddle.

Matilda

Matilda is a pleasant and likable young girl. The thing that sets her apart from other young girls is her intelligence. By the age of 3, she has taught herself to read! There are few books in her home, but with the help of a friendly librarian, she starts reading many of the great classics of literature.

Matilda's parents care little about her genius; they have their own selfish interests. Matilda's father is a used-car salesman. He is both dishonest and devious, exploiting customers' ignorance to make a lot of money. He takes little interest in Matilda and finds her intelligence annoying.

When her father treats her badly, she gets her own back by anonymously playing tricks on him. Firstly she puts super-glue inside his hat causing it to stick fast to his head. Second, she puts a friend's talking parrot up the chimney. When the parrot speaks, she pretends it is a ghost. Her father, mother and brother are terrified. Third, she puts bleach in her father's hair tonic. The results definitely hurt her father's

pride, particularly as he is so proud of his image. Each time she tricks her father, he becomes far less cocky. It is a way of putting him in his place.

When Matilda goes to school, she discovers a new tyrant, Miss Trunchball, the school's headmistress. Miss Trunchball delights in terrorizing the children with abusive discipline—sometimes even picking them up and hurling them like a javelin as far as she can throw them.

One day, Matilda makes an amazing discovery: She can move objects by focusing her mind and her vision on them. Matilda combines her intelligence and her ability to move objects to play a masterful trick on Miss Trunchball. I won't reveal the entire plot, but at the end of the book, Miss Trunchball is no longer headmistress, and Matilda's family has fled the country because of her father's dishonest dealings. Matilda chooses to stay behind and is taken under the care of her teacher, Miss Honey, who has always appreciated and loved her.

The underlying message in the story of Matilda is that you don't have to be pushed around by bullies. Satan is a bully and intimidation is one of the main weapons he uses to keep people from walking in their destinies. Overcoming intimidation is important.

Matilda does this by being very clever. Jesus said we were to be as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves (Matt. 10:16). The Greek word for "wise" can also mean "clever" or "crafty." Used in association with serpents, these meanings definitely fit. But Jesus didn't mean devious or deceitful. The tricks Matilda does reveals that she is devious like her father.

Cinderella

Having read the story of Matilda, my next mission was to familiarize myself with the story of Cinderella. This turned out to be a lot more complicated than I thought. There are many versions of the story. Which one was I suppose to use?

Eventually I settled for the most well-known version by French author Charles Perrault.

Cinderella is a kindhearted and forgiving girl. She is treated very badly by her stepmother and her two stepsisters. They make her do menial tasks from dawn until dusk, treating her like a despised servant rather than a daughter and sister. She is continually taunted and mocked. Cinderella patiently endures the ill treatment. She is given the name Cinderwench because after she has finished her work, she goes to the chimney corner and sits down in the cinders and ashes. The younger sister is more gracious and calls her Cinderella.

The king's son, in search of a suitable wife, initiates a royal ball and invites all the young ladies in his kingdom. Cinderella's stepsisters are excited about the ball but Cinderella is forbidden to attend. After her sisters and their mother leave for the ball Cinderella is left alone.

She is overcome with inconsolable grief. Her fairy godmother finds her and remedies the situation. Her rags are transformed into a beautiful dress. Her fairy godmother warns her that the spell will cease at midnight when her dress will revert to her usual rags. With great excitement Cinderella goes to the ball. Everybody at the ball is stunned by her beauty—even her sisters, who do not recognize her. The king's son treats her with special favor, entranced by her beauty. Cinderella leaves the ball before midnight.

The second night of the ball the fairy godmother works her magic again. Cinderella attends the ball, looking even more beautiful than the night before. Suddenly at midnight, she remembers she must leave. She runs out in such haste that she leaves her glass slipper behind on the palace stairs. The king's son finds the slipper and declares he will marry the girl to whom it belongs. The slipper is tried on all the girls in the kingdom. Cinderella, dressed in her rags, asks to try on the slipper. It fits perfectly. Her godmother appears and

makes her clothes “richer and more magnificent than any of those she had worn before.” Her sisters recognize her as the beautiful princess at the ball and beg her forgiveness, which Cinderella graciously gives. A few days later, Cinderella marries the prince. She also arranges for her sisters to marry two great lords of the royal court.

At the end of the story, Perrault includes two morals:

Beauty in a woman is a rare treasure that will always be admired. Graciousness, however, is priceless and of even greater value. This is what Cinderella’s godmother gave to her when she taught her to behave like a queen. Young women, in the winning of a heart, graciousness is more important than a beautiful hairdo. It is a true gift of the fairies. Without it nothing is possible; with it, one can do anything.

Without doubt, it is a great advantage to have intelligence, courage, good breeding and common sense. These and similar talents come only from heaven, and it is good to have them. However, even these may fail to bring you success, without the blessing of a godfather or a godmother.

After reading this, suddenly the comparison between Matilda and Cinderella made sense. The second moral mentions intelligence and courage—two qualities Matilda exhibits. In addition to this, Matilda has a supernatural ability to move things with her eyes. Using these endowments and abilities, Matilda takes things into her own hands. The outcome is positive. The bullies are sorted out.

However, note that Cinderella also has to contend with bullies. In the process, she learns the rare quality of graciousness. She doesn’t take things into her own hands by the use of a natural or supernatural ability. Instead, she is set apart by the supernatural blessing that comes from her godmother (an analogy of God’s supernatural blessing). Cinderella submits to her fairy godmother. At the end of the

story, Cinderella's sisters are transformed by her graciousness. (Graciousness describes a life drenched with grace, anointing and favor). Note the comparison: Cinderella's sisters strove to gain the attention of the king's son, whereas, Cinderella—in a moment of despair—simply decided to trust her fairy godmother.

I have only summarized the story of Cinderella briefly. I would encourage you to read the story yourself and notice, one, how cruel her sisters are to her and, two, how gracious Cinderella is to her sisters. Cinderella never lowers herself to their despicable behavior.

Although it is a fairy tale, the story of Cinderella teaches the following principles:

"Repay no one evil for evil ... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:17, 21).

"The Lord is near to the broken-hearted, and saves the contrite of spirit" (Ps. 34:18).

"For neither from the east nor west, nor from the wilderness comes victory. But God is the judge; He brings one low, and lifts up another" (Ps. 75:6-7).

God gives "beauty for ashes" (Is. 61:3). The name Cinderella comes from the word "cinder," which is associated with ashes.

Matilda Or Cinderella?

Cinderella and Matilda are both fictional characters. To understand the statement "Cinderella doesn't like Matilda," I had to imagine what it would be like if they met each other. "Cinderella doesn't like Matilda" doesn't mean Cinderella would have had a bad attitude about Matilda. Cinderella didn't have a bad attitude about her cruel sisters, so there is no reason to believe she would have had a bad attitude toward Matilda. However, Cinderella certainly didn't

like her sisters' behavior. It is also true that Cinderella's and Matilda's behavior is different, and ultimately, incompatible. It is so easy to use the natural and supernatural abilities God has given us to take matters into our own hands. This is a test for every servant of God.

It is true that those destined for great authority in God's kingdom often endure the jealousy and anger of other Christians. There are many like Cinderella in the body of Christ right now. They have endured jealousy, anger and injustice, and there's no denying the deep heart-pain this has caused. God is about to promote them with great Kingdom authority. In many cases, it will happen suddenly, dramatically, unexpectedly, and everyone—even the “jealous sisters”—will be taken by surprise. The King's Son—Jesus—is looking for co-rulers who will carry His heart and His authority. When those with the true gift of graciousness are promoted, people learn graciousness.

In the story of Matilda, the bullies are removed. In the story of Cinderella, the bullies are transformed. A central message of God's Kingdom is this: God's justice brings transformation—and transformation is much more powerful than condemnation. For those who have humbly endured assignments of jealousy and anger, God's justice also brings promotion. Consider that when the king's son initiated the ball, it was a strategic moment for the Kingdom. The outcome would have an impact there for decades to come. It was Cinderella's moment of destiny, and she was shut out from it. That's why she was so grief-stricken. But no matter what others do or say, God knows how to get us to the right place at the right time.

Matilda was clever. Cinderella was gracious.

Matilda dealt with the bullies. Cinderella was granted rulership and influence over the kingdom.

We are on the brink of a major advance of God's kingdom. How

we use that which God has given us and how we respond to those around us is important. The choice is ours whether to behave like Matilda or Cinderella. {eoa}

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