

Pass-a-Hug- and-Smile Day



The sun was shining brightly and glistening in the morning dewdrops on the window pane. Toby woke with a stretch and a smile.

The night before, as he was drifting off to sleep, he'd made a plan for the following day, which he aptly called his "Pass a Hug and Smile Day." The plan was simple: Pass as many hugs and smiles on to others as he could.

Toby spied his first target, his mother. With a leap from his bed, he went over and encircled her waist with his warmest hug. "Good morning, Mom!"

"Good morning to you too, Toby," his mother answered, and warmly hugged him in return. "Thank you for the hug! It's a great way to start off the day."



Toby smiled. This was going to be fun!

Before Toby made it to the dining room for breakfast, his love-giving cycle was in full gear. He cuddled his toddler sister, Lauren; greeted his dad with a smile and a hug; and everyone he encountered so far had experienced Toby's brightest smile.

As his day went on, Toby did his best to enact his Pass-a-Hug-and-Smile plan. Toby was thrilled to see people's faces light up when he shared a smile or a hug with them. And best of all, he noticed that the more hugs he gave to others, the more they in turn would pass the hugs on.



That afternoon, Toby and his friends were playing outdoors. They'd decided to play a game of badminton, which Toby particularly enjoyed.

They had made two teams: Toby and his friend Arthur were one team, and Carla and Joel formed the other team. The four children happily played in the warm sun. Carla and Joel had the upper hand in the game, while Arthur and Toby were struggling to make points.



Toby was particularly annoyed, as he felt Arthur was not giving his best to the game, and was frequently missing the birdie or when he'd hit it, it would either fail to go over the net or would go out of the court.



"Arthur," Toby said with a hint of frustration, "can't you try a little harder to play better! You're always missing the birdie!"

Arthur shrugged his shoulders and told Toby he was trying his best. "Well, maybe you should try harder," Toby muttered as they continued playing.

"OWWWW!" Toby shouted with a roar. "What did you do that for?"

Carla served the birdie. As Arthur lunged forward to return the birdie, he failed to realize that Toby was standing so close, and his racket whacked Toby squarely on the back of his head.

"Ohhh! I'm really, really sorry. I was just trying to get the birdie." Arthur looked despondently at the ground. "I was really just trying to play better."

"Well, you should've seen me there, but instead you hit me on the head. I don't want to be on your team anymore!"



Toby marched off the court, nursing his sore head, while the other three children wondered what to do. As Toby left the field, he heard a little voice in his heart reminding him about his plan for the day.

Isn't this your Pass-a-Hug-and-Smile Day? he heard Jesus speak to his heart. *Remember smiles and hugs come from a heart of love, and real love keeps giving even when things go wrong.*

Toby thought about Jesus' words. He knew he should forgive Arthur. With a prayer asking Jesus to help him to show love, Toby walked back to his friends.

"Arthur, I'm sorry for getting angry at you," he said apologetically. "I know it was an accident, and that you were trying to play better. Please forgive me for shouting at you."

Thankful for Arthur's forgiveness, Toby gave him a hug. "I'm glad you're my friend," he added with a smile.

"Me too. And I promise to do my best to play better, but without hurting you as well."



Toby picked up his racket and the game began again. Much to his delight, Arthur and Toby won that round.

After the games of badminton were done, the four friends stretched out on the grassy lawn and watched the fluffy clouds—beautifully tinted by the setting sun—drift serenely by.



Toby reflected on his day, and thought about his hug-and-smile plan. Yes, there were times in his day when it had been easy to give and show love, and other times when it was much harder to do so, but he found that showing love to others even when it was difficult was just as important as when it was easy.

Toby thought about Jesus' unfailing love for him, even when he was having a rough time; Jesus' love was constant, unconditional, and always there. That thought made Toby smile. As he lay on the lawn, he prayed that he would continue to be an example to others of Jesus' love in action, whether through hugs, kisses, smiles, kind deeds, prayer for others, and the many other ways that love is manifested.

"By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35 KJV).

