

Jenny's Pearls

The cheerful girl with bouncy golden curls was almost five. Waiting with her mother at the checkout stand, she saw them; a circle of glistening white pearls, in a pink foil box. *"Oh please, Mummy. Can I have them? Please, Mummy, please!"*

Quickly the mother checked the back of the little foil box and then looked back into the pleading blue eyes of her little girl's upturned face. *"A dollar ninety-five. That's almost \$2.00. If you really want them, I'll think of some extra chores for you, and in no time you can save enough money to buy them for yourself. Your birthday's only a week away, and you might get another dollar from Grandma."*

As soon as Jenny got home, she emptied her piggy bank and counted out 17 cents. After dinner, she did more than her share of chores, and she went to the neighbour and asked Mrs James if she could pick dandelions for ten cents. On her birthday, Grandma did give her another dollar and at last she had enough money to buy the necklace.

Jenny loved her pearls. They made her feel dressed up and grown up. She wore them everywhere; Sunday school, kindergarten, even to bed. The only time she took them off was when she went swimming or had a bath. Mother said if they got wet, they might turn her neck green.

Jenny had a very loving daddy and every night when she was ready for bed, he would stop whatever he was doing and come upstairs to read her a story.

One night when he finished the story, he asked Jenny, *"Do you love me?"*

"Oh yes, Daddy. You know I love you."

"Then give me your pearls."

"Oh, Daddy, not my pearls. But you can have Princess. The white horse from my collection, the one with the pink tail. Remember, Daddy? The one you gave me. She's my favourite."

"That's okay, Honey. Daddy loves you. Good night." And he brushed her cheek with a kiss.

About a week later, after the story time, Jenny's daddy asked again, *"Do you love me?"*

"Daddy, you know I love you."

"Then give me your pearls."

"Oh Daddy, not my pearls. But you can have my Barbie doll. The brand new one I got for my birthday. She is so beautiful and you can have the yellow blanket that matches her sleeper."

"That's okay. Sleep well. God bless you, little one. Daddy loves you." And as always, he brushed her cheek with a gentle kiss.

A few nights later when her daddy came in, Jenny was sitting on her bed with her legs crossed Indian-style. As he came close, he noticed her chin was trembling and one little tear rolled down her cheek.

"What is it, Jenny? What's the matter?"

Jenny didn't say anything but lifted her little hand up to her daddy. When she opened it, there was her little pearl necklace. With a little quiver, she finally said, *"Here, Daddy. It's for you."*

With tears gathering in his own eyes, Jenny's kind daddy reached out with one hand to take the plastic necklace, and with the other hand he reached into his pocket and pulled out a blue velvet case with a strand of genuine pearls and gave them to Jenny.

He had them in his pocket all the time. He was just waiting for her to give up the cheap imitation so he could give her genuine treasure.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is there your heart will be also."

(Matthew 6:19-21)