

## Part 1 - The Fastest 15-year-old in the Nation!

Ready, set, GO! All the runners took off. Violet got a quick start. With every step she went faster and faster. Sweat rolled off her face and her heart pounded as she passed other runners. She could see the finish line ahead and pushed her legs even harder until she crossed it.

The crowd jumped up from their seats, clapped, and cheered. "We have our national 100 meter champion! Violet!" She could hardly believe it. She had just become the fastest 15-year-old in the nation!

After a long ride, Violet and her parents finally arrived home. She carried her bags up the steps to the front door. As she opened the door, the two family dogs zoomed out into the yard knocking Violet over. She felt a sharp pain rip through her leg as she fell to the ground. "Ouch! You stupid dogs!" she cried out.

"What happened, Violet?" her mother called.

"My leg! My leg!" cried Violet. "It hurts!"

Her mom came over to take a look. "Oh dear. You'll need to go to the hospital." Violet's dad lifted her back into the car. Off they drove to the hospital. They had to wait a long time for the doctor to come in with her x-rays.

"Well, Violet," said the doctor, "you've certainly had a big day. You've gone from being the fastest runner in the country to a patient in the hospital. You have broken your leg and I'm afraid it's going to be many weeks before you are running again."

Violet was very upset. She knew it was going to be bad, but she was still hoping for better news than this. "It's going to be about eight weeks before you are able to begin practicing again," the doctor said. He put a cast on her leg and gave her crutches. They all drove home in silence.

Violet was very angry. She couldn't believe this had happened. Those rowdy dogs had ruined her whole summer. Violet's dad helped her out of the car and through the door. As soon as she saw the dogs, she whacked them with her crutch and yelled, "You guys ruined everything!"

She went to her room. "How could this have happened to me? I can't run anymore and that's what I love doing. This is going to be a *horrible* summer."

Violet lay on her bed and stared at the walls. Her eyes caught sight of a picture her running coach had given her last year. It was a verse from the bible. "*In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*" 1 Thessalonians 5:18

"How am I supposed to be grateful for THIS?" moaned Violet.

1. What did Violet just do that made her so happy? (*She became the fastest 100-meter runner in the nation.*)
2. What happened when she got home? (*Her dogs knocked her over and she broke her leg.*)
3. How did Violet show her anger when she got home from the hospital? (*She hit the dogs with her crutch and yelled at them.*)
4. \*Do you think she felt better after she hit the dogs? (*Answers may vary. Remind them that being mean toward others because they feel angry does not solve problems and makes God sad.*)
5. Does Violet think she can thank God for her broken leg? (*No. It's hard to thank God when we are mad or hurt. But Violet is going to learn some special things about God she never knew!*)

## Part 2 - Violet Discovers a New Way of Seeing

When Violet awoke the next morning, she felt a terrible pain in her leg - a sharp reminder that it was broken. She reached for her crutches and hobbled down to the kitchen. She immediately began complaining to her mom. "I can't do anything I planned this summer. I can't run with my friends or do any of the summer training our team has planned." She was still very angry. Her mom listened. "Violet, I'm sorry this happened to you and that it has upset all your plans."

"Mom, you know that bible verse in my room that says to give thanks in everything? How am I supposed to be thankful for THIS?"

"That's a good question," said her mom. "It can be hard to see good things and feel grateful when we are hurt. But God has given us a way to see things the way He does. Be thankful. When we are thankful, it is like getting new glasses so we can see more clearly."

"Well, there is nothing here to be thankful for!" yelled Violet, "I can't run and I'm going to be miserable for months!" Violet pushed away from the table, stomped away, and sat on the porch swing. She felt terrible. "I don't want to be mad and grumpy all summer," thought Violet. "What if Mom is right about seeing like God sees?" She hobbled back to the kitchen. "I'm sorry I yelled at you, Mom. I do want to have a good summer. But you know I can't change the fact that I have a broken leg. So what is it that I *can* change?"

"Nothing around you has to change, Violet. But if you begin to look for things that you are thankful for, you begin to see things that you never saw before. A thankful heart will always lead to a joyful heart. Here, Violet. Take this notebook and go outside. Try to write down ten things you are thankful for."

Violet was not too excited about this, but since she had to be resting anyway, she decided to try. She limped back to the swing and began to look around her.

Number 1. "I am thankful for this swing I can relax on."

Number 2. "I am thankful for the warm breeze today."

Number 3. "I am thankful for eyes that see."

As Violet wrote, she began to feel her anger go away and a little bit of joy growing inside of her. When she finally got to number 10 she was smiling. "I am thankful for being able to talk to my mom."

Then Violet rested on the swing in the warm breeze.

1. What did Violet do as soon as she saw her mom? (*She began to complain about what a terrible summer she was going to have.*)
2. Do you remember what bible verse Violet was talking about? (*"In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."* 1 Thessalonians 5:18)
3. What did Violet's mom compare being thankful to? (*When we are thankful, it is like getting new glasses so we can see more clearly.*)
4. How did Violet feel as she began to write down things she was thankful for? (*She began to feel her anger go away and a little bit of joy growing inside of her.*)
5. \*Can you tell me something you are thankful for today?

## Part 3 - How to Carry Weather Inside You

Violet woke up and stared at the bible verse on the wall. *"In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."* She was getting better at using her crutches now that she had been walking on them for over a week.

She went to the porch, but today was not very nice outside. It was dark and rainy. She went back into the house. "It's terrible out there. I hate waking up to mornings like this," Violet groaned. "Yeah, it's really coming down now," said her dad. "It reminds me of something my dad used to say. 'Carry weather inside you.' I thought it was very weird."

"That IS weird," said Violet. What does it mean?"

"Well, if you could control the weather, how would it be out there today?" asked her dad.

"It would be sunny with blue skies."

"And how would you feel if it was like that outside right now?" asked Dad.

"I would be in a great mood. I would be happy," said Violet.

"Well, you can't change the weather, but you *can* change the way you *think* about the weather. You can change your attitude."

Violet remembered how writing out what she was thankful for had changed her attitude. She felt happier afterwards. Could she really just decide to be happy or not? Could she really be the boss of her thoughts?

Violet went back outside even though it was miserable weather. As she sat on the swing she pulled her notebook out again. A few cold raindrops fell on her.

Number 1. "I am thankful for...." but she couldn't think of anything.

She had to stop and look around for a while. Finally, she spied a red tulip flower by a puddle. It's pretty, fragile petals stood strong against the raindrops beating on them.

"I am thankful for the flowers and their beautiful design." She had never noticed the detail with which God designed even the smallest flower. How kind of God to color the earth with so many pretty flowers!

Violet felt the warmth of joy growing in her again. She felt as good as she did on a bright and sunny morning. She was amazed at the power she had been given to choose her attitude. She could choose to be joyful, or she could choose to be angry. She could create her own weather inside of her!

1. What was the weather like today? (*Cold, rainy, miserable*)
2. What was the weird saying her dad told her? (*Carry weather inside you.*)
3. What did that mean? (*You can't change the weather, but you can change the way you think about the weather. You can change your attitude.*)
4. It was hard to find something to be thankful for in this bad weather, but what did Violet finally see? (*A pretty red tulip*)
5. \*What was Violet amazed at as she began to feel joyful again? (*She could decide if she was going to be happy or not. She was the boss of her thoughts. She could be happy inside even if it was not a nice day...*)

## Part 4 - A Special Gift from God

Today Violet was going to the doctor for a checkup. "He's probably going to tell me it's not getting better and that I'll never walk again," complained Violet. "Now, that's a little dramatic," her mom responded.

The doctor sent her to get x-rayed then she and her mom waited for him to tell them the news. "Well, it looks like you're halfway there, Violet," he said. "In a few more weeks you should be getting back to normal. We'll take off this cast and give you a walking boot so you can start using that instead of the crutches."

Violet and her mom headed back home. "I can't believe I have MORE time with this stupid injury," Violet said as she stared at the boot on her leg.

"The doctor said it's coming along well, Violet. You're already halfway through. You can choose to look at all the things you still can't do OR you can put on those special glasses of thankfulness and see things like God does."

"Four weeks is sooo long," whined Violet. "Who cares that I can walk on it now. I still can't run."

"Violet, you can't change the fact that your leg is broken, but you can change the way you think. I don't want to hear anymore complaining," her mother said sternly.

Violet sat in her room staring out the window when she remembered the saying 'carry weather inside you'. She wanted to feel happy inside like she does when it's sunny and warm. She didn't always want to feel like a rain cloud was over her. So she decided she would change. Violet focused on the bible verse. "*In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*"

"What can I give thanks for right now?" she thought. "I'm thankful that I can walk without my crutches now. I'm thankful that God made my body to be able to heal." She looked at her leg and tried to think of another. "I'm thankful that I am getting closer to being able to run again." Violet was starting to cheer up. As she looked for the good things happening around her and not the bad, she thought of something else - something she never paid attention to before. "I'm thankful I can choose how I am going to feel." What if she HAD to feel horrible the whole time her leg was broken? What if she HAD to stay angry? But she didn't! God had given her the gift of choice. She could be joyful or sad. Violet went over to the bible verse on her wall. Under the verse she wrote, *I am glad I can choose.*

1. What was Violet thinking the doctor would tell her? (*She's not getting better and that she'll never walk again.*)
2. What did the doctor tell her instead? (*She was halfway to being healed. In a few more weeks she should be getting back to normal. He took the cast off and gave her a walking boot.*)
3. Was Violet excited about that news? (*No*) Why? (*She was only looking at the things she was not able to do.*)
4. Violet decided she would change so she focused on the bible verse. What did she do then? (*She began saying things she was thankful for.*)
5. What was the last thing Violet realized she was very thankful for? (*She was thankful that she didn't have to stay sad or angry but that she was able to CHOOSE to feel happy.*)

## Part 5 - The Secret to Overcoming Bad Habits

Each time Violet entered her room she read the bible verse on her wall from 1 Thessalonians 5:18. She even memorized it. *"In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."* And then she would read her own words underneath: *I am glad I can choose.*

Over the last few weeks, Violet had learned a lot. She learned that if she only thought about all the things she couldn't do with her broken leg, she would be angry and complain. But if she looked for things she could give thanks for, she was much happier. Most of all, she was amazed that she could create happiness inside by choosing to be thankful.

Still, there was something that bothered Violet. Some days she would choose to be thankful, and other days she would be sad and feeling sorry for herself. She thought, "Is it possible to always choose thankfulness?" She went to find her dad. He was out in the yard splitting wood.

"What do you need, Vi?" he asked. "Dad, I've been working on being thankful lately." "Yes, I've noticed," he said with a smile.

"I want to be thankful and feel joy all day, every day. But I can't seem to get myself to do that all the time, so I start to whine. How can I change that?" Her dad sat next to Violet on a log and said, "That is one of the great struggles in life. We try to do the right thing, but we can't seem to make ourselves do it. That is why we need God, Violet. He can help us. Ephesians 4:23 says, *'Let the Spirit change your way of thinking.'* When you let God change your mind, you can begin to overcome your natural habits, like whining."

Dad went back to his chopping and Violet headed back to the house. "How can I change my way of thinking to be thankful all the time?" she thought. As she walked, she remembered how quickly she could change her attitude when she would begin saying aloud what she was thankful for. *"In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."* "I know!" she said. "Instead of waiting until I start to complain and feel mad, I'll begin every morning with saying something I am thankful for!"

She found a notebook and on the front she wrote: *I am thankful for....* She laid it next to her bed where she would see it as soon as she woke up. Everyday she would start and end her day with thankfulness. She would give thanks in everything.

1. What verse did Violet have memorized? (1 Thessalonians 5:18. *"In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."*)
2. What bothered Violet? (*She couldn't get herself to always be thankful. Some days she was happy, other days she complained.*)
3. What new bible verse did Dad give her to help her break a bad habit? (Ephesians 4:23 *"Let the Spirit change your way of thinking."*)
4. What was the great idea Violet thought of to help her be thankful every day? (*"Instead of waiting until I start to complain and feel mad, I'll begin every morning with saying something I am thankful for!"*)
5. \*What are some things you can give thanks to God for when you get up every morning?

## Part 6 - If God is Good, Why Does He let Bad Things Happen?

Violet awoke and reached for her *thankful* notebook. She was ready write! "I am thankful for having a safe place to live. I am thankful for parents who take good care of me."

After breakfast, she waited for her friend Anna who was taking her to practice. This would be her first practice since she broke her leg. She still had her boot on and couldn't run yet, but she was looking forward to doing the drills and strength training.

"Bye, Mom!" she called.

"I'll pick you up after practice!" Mom called back.

"I'm so glad you're coming today!" said Anna. "Me, too," said Violet. "I've missed everyone."

"You must've been miserable all summer with your broken leg," said Anna.

"Yeah, the summer started out bad," responded Violet, "but God has been good and taught me a lot." Anna was quiet, then said, "I know you believe in God, Violet, but how can you think God is good when something bad like this happens?" Violet didn't know how to answer. "I don't know. I haven't thought about that."

On the way home, Violet sat staring out the window. "Everything alright, Violet? I thought you would be really happy after going to practice," said Mom.

"Oh, sorry, Mom. Yeah, it was a lot of fun. But Anna asked me how I can think God is good when something bad like this happens. I didn't know what to say."

"That's a good question," Mom said. "When do *you* normally feel like God is good?"

"Well, I guess when everything's going good for me."

"And when is it easiest to think God is *not* good?"

"When something bad happens to me."

"I feel like that, too," replied her mom.

"When you were a little girl, you didn't like to share your toys. Remember that?"

"Yes!" Violet laughed. "I was pretty selfish."

"And what did I do?" asked Mom.

"You took my toy away and made me sit alone."

"And you thought that was a terrible thing!" smiled Mom. "But you've learned to share very well since then. And sharing is a good thing. It was because we loved you that we insisted that you learn to share, even though it seemed a bad thing to you at the time.

"God loves us, too, and wants the best for us. Sometimes He lets bad things happen to teach us important lessons."

"Oh!" exclaimed Violet. "Like being thankful! I've learned a lot about how good it feels to be thankful."

"That's right," said Mom.

"And every year at Christmastime, we remember just how much God loves us. He gave us His Son, Jesus, as a tiny baby. Then, when Jesus grew up, He showed people how they could know God and live with Him forever. He had to suffer a lot of bad things in order to do that. He even had to die. But soon God made Him alive again! Jesus *CHOSE* to suffer because He knew that it was the only way you and I and all people could be with God forever. So when we think bad things are happening to us, we can be sure of how much God loves us. We can be sure God is teaching us important things - even though it may be unpleasant."

Violet went to her room and pulled out her thankfulness journal. She prayed, "Please forgive me God for all the complaining I did this summer." Then she wrote this on the last page: "I am thankful that Jesus came to show me how to know God and live with Him forever."

1. What was the first thing Violet did when she woke up? *(She wrote down what she was thankful for.)*
2. Where was she going with Anna? *(She was going to the first practice since she broke her leg.)*
3. What hard question did Anna ask Violet? *(How can you think God is good when something bad like this happens?)*
4. \*Your parents love you but they make you do things you do not like. Why? *(They are teaching you important things like sharing, helping others, how to stay healthy...)*
5. God loves us even more than our parents do! How can we sure God loves us so much? *(He sent His Son Jesus to show us how we can know God and live with Him forever.)*

\*\* Extra question:

Do you want to know God and live with Him forever? (Lead in simple prayer - *God, I want to know You and live with You forever. Amen.*)