

## MisSion CriTikal

### #19 – *FEARED DEAD – No Clues!*

... would be the newspaper headlines – that is, if the little village had a newspaper. As best as could be determined, every single person, young and old, was searching everywhere for Toby. The 5 yr old orphan boy had begun life with many more challenges than most. He could capture most anyone's empathy in a minute.

He became an orphan about a year ago. A birth defect caused chronic shoulder pain that restricted him from playing with the other village children and reduced his 'friend list' to almost a blank page. The teens had learned his intense desire to make Jesus his forever papa, and even donated his favorite sparkle stone to seal the deal. But now his struggle for lasting love hit absolute bottom.

How much does a little 5 yr old have to pay; how much does he have to sacrifice for a cup of love? And was he still alive? Could a wild animal have gotten him? Or maybe he didn't even want to be found. Only God knows.

The whole village searched as though he was a real part of each of their families. The mission teens were notified and they prayed like never before to find the little ragamuffin before it was too late. The afternoon sun marked the shortening of the daylight hours left, and still no sign of little Toby – dead or alive.

Lenny was searching along the shore of a small creek that stumbled along the rocks near the village. At quite a distance for a 5 yr old to walk, in the best of conditions, the teenager saw something unusual in the middle of the creek. He began running not believing what he hoped to find. But there he was – the orphan Toby, more alone now that anyone could describe.

The closer Lenny got, the better he could see that it was Toby sitting in the middle of the creek of about ten inches of water. As soon as Toby saw Lenny, he pointed at his shirt on the tree branch. Toby spoke loud to the teenager with, “Give my shirt to someone that needs it. I won't need it any more!”

As Lenny waded toward Toby, he could see the 5 yr old shivering greatly and his lips were already turning blue. The little orphan said, “Leave me alone. I'm waitin' for God to send a gush of water and wash me away to where He sends bad boys and liars!”

Lenny stumbled a little as he heard the rejection from the

little fella that felt so alone and dirty inside. The teen exclaimed, “Well hold on now. This sounds like something I need to learn about. I want you to teach me about this right now. We'll go over to the bank and you teach me before the water gush comes.” The teen wanted every muscle in his body to rescue the little boy to safety and understand about the things God does.

Lenny left Toby's shirt alone and instead put his own shirt on Toby. The teen tried to give Toby a real 'daddy hug' and begging Heaven for the right words to warm a cold orphaned heart next to him. Lenny learned that Toby had lied to one of the grownups in the village and then lied again to try to cover it up. This 5 yr old was without a doubt, dead sure God wouldn't let no liars into heaven – even orphan ones. He'd lost his chance at getting a forever papa.

“Toby, can I tell you something about God's Love? I don't blame you at all for wanting a gush of God's water to wash you away. I really don't. But there's something you need to know about God's flavor of love.” In the arms of the teenager, the little boy's shivering was diminishing and color was coming back into his lips.

“See, Toby, God's love is given to others – to you and me, not because we deserve it, but because of Who HE is. Think of it as a special gift so big it won't fit in any box, with or without a ribbon and pretty paper. We don't earn gifts by being good or that we've earned the love gift. God's gift is given to us because He loves us and will keep on loving us.”

“Toby. Have you seen a mama chicken and her fuzzy little chicks always pecking the ground for food? If danger comes, mama chicken opens her wings and her chicks hide under her wings. And she never asks them if they've been good enough to get under her wings. That's the way God is. He knows we sometimes do and think things that make Him sad. And He wants us to come to Him tell Him we know we've done wrong - we've sinned. But either way, His wings of love are always open to us.”

Lenny put his ball cap on Toby's head as he carried him home, probably like the Good Samaritan did. A few days later the village people began asking Toby why the chicken feather in his cap. He said it reminded him that he was under His wings of love.