

Chapter One

America was hardly a generation old when Henry Luther Crowell took his wife, Anna Eliza (Parsons) and left New England for the primitive territory of the Western Reserve. As part of its gains of the Revolution, America had acquired over a quarter million square miles of this land in 1783 from Britain as part of the Treaty of Paris settlement of the war. Luther* wasn't born until 1824, but the idea of claiming frontier land and starting a business was fresh and exciting--as it had been at the beginning of the new nation.

Tens of thousands of pioneers had already spread out across the Allegheny Mountains and onto the rich farmlands of Pennsylvania and Ohio. Some ventured to the far outposts of the Territory, to Indiana, Kentucky and Illinois. Still others took to the seas, all the way around the tip of South America up to the gold fields of California where the famous strike at Sutter's Mill had been made just four years earlier.

Luther, 29, and his bride, four years younger, had set out from Hartford, Connecticut in the spring of 1853. The couple was among the first to use the brand new four-horse stagecoach which covered the distance more speedily than "old fashioned" ox drawn covered wagons or the one or two horse carriages.

Inside the coach, Anna looked out the window at the blooming lilacs and leafing oaks as the stagecoach rolled over the rutted road. The sun was bright and she was encouraged. The young woman was still a radiant bride.

Slight but shapely, Anna had an aristocratic beauty that had first captured Luther's eyes, then his heart. She wore a bonnet, but it did not completely hide her dark brown curls. Her matching brown eyes, wide and innocent, often

**Henry Luther Crowell was probably called by his given name, but to avoid confusion in this biography, he shall be called Luther.*

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had people mistaking her for a girl and not the wife of the man on the seat across from her. Luther was napping but stirred slightly when the coach bumped and slid over a muddy rise in the road.

Anna reflected over the whirlwind activities of the past year. She'd met Luther in Connecticut where he courted her then asked her father for her hand. All during their courtship Luther Crowell, a slender young Yankee with dark flashing eyes and thick black hair and sideburns after the fashion of the day, entranced her with stories of the new lands to the west.

Luther always dressed in a manner that gave him the appearance and sophistication of a leader. He seldom appeared in public without coat and tie. But lest his public presence give him an aura of arrogance or make him seem pompous, Luther's hair had an unruly quality that gave balance, softening his presence. His ears stuck out just enough to keep him from seeming too handsome. His often wild, gesturing hands animated his conversations, and yet everyone felt comfortable in Luther's presence.

Luther had told Anna about the towns and cities of the Western Reserve and further beyond that, in the Northwest Territory. He had gotten his hands on as many reports and books as he could, and many evenings they discussed places that seemed so exotic. Finally, he had narrowed down his choices.

"I think it'll either be Madison city in the Wisconsin Territory. Or, maybe Cleveland, on the banks of the Erie Lake," he had told her. "One of these will be our new home. We'll settle in Cleveland first, 'cause it's closer. Maybe we'll stay there. If we don't like it, then we'll go west some more."

Anna smiled. As the stagecoach rolled along, she enjoyed her memories, recalling *his serious determination and excitement*. Frankly, she hadn't really cared where in the world Luther went, as long as he took her with him. They were married in a small but elegant ceremony in Hartford, just before

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the autumn chills of October. They spent the cold, winter months preparing for their journey.

Now, looking out the window, Anna saw that there were more signs of activity. Carriages, men on horseback, people walking alongside the road. Luther stirred from his nap, then looked outside. "We must be there!" he exclaimed. They had arrived in Cleveland on schedule--May 16, 1853.

Luther and Anna had each come from well-to-do families and it's likely they could have remained in New England with many others of the early aristocracy, but Luther strongly felt something calling them westward.

General Moses Cleaveland* had founded this small settlement, which he'd named for himself, on the banks of Lake Erie. Now, fifty years later, it was a thriving community. There was a boomtown quality of growth and the population had doubled in the last five years--now with over 25,000 souls.

The young bride and groom quickly found a house for sale on Sheriff Street, right on the town square and near the Presbyterian Church. Not long afterward, Luther went into business. He formed a partnership with another young pioneer, John Seymour and the two men started a wholesale shoe business and began selling to the burgeoning population. Almost immediately they prospered.

Seymour & Crowell started in business the summer of 1854, at a most pivotal time in the shoe manufacturing industry. Four years later, the invention of a Massachusetts shoemaker would revolutionize the business by eliminating the time-consuming hard work of hand sewing shoe leather.

Machines helped them make shoes better and faster than before, and the business grew beyond their greatest dreams. (In fact, the business would last for over a century, although through a succession of names: *Seymour & Crowell*, *Crowell & Childs*, finally, *A. O. Childs*.)

* An enterprising newspaper editor found that Cleaveland's name had one too many letters for the masthead and he shortened it to the present spelling by dropping the "a".

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By 1856, the settlement of Cleveland was 50 years old but incorporated as a town just 20 years earlier. Still, the population was already over 33,000 and exploding daily. Cleveland had grown by 8,000 since their arrival a year earlier.

(The same year that Luther and Anna moved here, another family also came. William and Eliza Rockefeller moved to Cleveland from New York, along with their son, John Davison. They were part of the business and society life of the city, but it would be the son--John D. Rockefeller--who would leave his mark, not just on the Crowell family and Cleveland, but the whole world, as unfolds in this story some years later.)

Luther and Anna, both of whom could trace their ancestry back hundreds of years, were also well known in society life. Yet, it wasn't something they sought out. Luther was more interested in making the church the central part of their life. He made sure that faith was a part of their growing family. Their new pastor, Dr. James Eells, was about Luther's age, so the two men formed a friendship that gave great meaning to each of them in years to come.

As Luther's business grew, he became more and more prosperous. For their house, they acquired furniture from the East and real carpets for the floors. Anna busied herself in decorating the house and making it a home. She became involved with the church. Before long, both Luther and Anna had given up any thoughts of moving further west to Madison.

Anna worried about one aspect of their move to Ohio, however. The icy cold winters of Cleveland were even more bone-chilling than those of New England. The winds roared continuously across Lake Erie, dumping amazing amounts of snow on the small city. Often it took days to clear paths to the general store or church.

In Hartford, Luther had suffered from "lung trouble". His regular bouts with the disease left him so weak that he had to give up plans to attend Yale. In fact, any kind of college

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education was out of the question, so he had resigned himself to making his mark in the business world.

Now, Anna thought of her husband's frail health as she carried a bowl of hot soup to his bedroom where he lay recuperating from a current winter bout of "lung trouble". Luther weakly sat up as Anna propped and fluffed his pillows but even that little effort triggered another coughing fit.

Anna gave him a drink of water and it helped. He took the soup bowl and began to feed himself. "Reckon I'm some better," he said a few minutes later.

Anna nodded, wiping his brow with a cool wash cloth. "Soon it'll be spring and you'll be better--just like last year," she offered. "Seems like the sickness just hangs on all winter and then you get better."

Luther finished the soup, put the bowl on the tray and lay back on the pillow. He closed his eyes and breathed hoarsely but didn't cough for a long time.

Anna's prediction was correct. By spring, Luther was able to spend more time at work and less in bed recovering. The sunny, warm days encouraged him. Despite his health problems, the business flourished.

It was ironic, though--now that it was summer and Luther was feeling better, Anna was strangely ill. A year after arriving in Cleveland, she found herself throwing up and feeling quite queasy for no apparent reason. Then she learned the reason--she was going to have a baby.

As Anna's abdomen grew bigger with the passing months, she somehow put aside her own needs to once again tend to her husband. As winter once again dumped snow and cold upon Cleveland, Luther's lung trouble afflicted him. Somehow, though, he rallied when January 27 came and it was time for his pretty young wife to deliver.

Dr. Naught*, the family doctor, parked his horse and carriage outside the small home on Sheriff Street and he went in

**The actual name of the family physician is lost in history.*

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to check on Anna. She had already begun her labor and had been having real contractions for several hours. A neighbor woman, standing by to act as midwife if the doctor hadn't come, helped Anna during the contractions.

Luther put more wood in the fireplace and the cookstove in the kitchen, warming the house for the birthing. Then, he paced outside the bedroom, praying for his wife. There were always complications that could overwhelm young mothers in situations like this, of course. True, fewer women were dying in childbirth these days than in the previous century, but there were still enough as to energize his prayers. Luther looked up from his vigil after awhile and watched the few people outside on the street in their comings and goings as the hours passed ever so slowly. Finally, he heard a slight commotion in the bedroom, followed by a fairly loud squalling.

Dr. Naught came out after another half hour, drying his hands on a small linen towel. "Anna's fine, Luther. Just fine. So is the baby."

"Thank God," Luther sighed.

"And you've got a nice strong boy. You can hear him yellin'," the doctor smiled. "D'ya know what you're gonna call him yet?"

Luther grinned and nodded. "We said if it was a boy, we'd call him Henry Parsons--after his mother's family."

"Nice name." Dr. Naught came over to where Luther was sitting. "And how are *you* doin'? Still havin' trouble with your lungs?"

"Not so bad," Luther answered with little conviction. "I haven't thought much about it lately, in all the excitement. I've just learned to kind of take it easy during the bad weather."

The doctor didn't say anything, but bent slightly to examine Luther's eyes, ears and throat. "When you go out, be sure to wear a muffler over your mouth. Try to warm the air before it goes into your lungs. That oughta help."

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It was now almost five years since Anna and Luther had arrived in Cleveland. Young Henry Parsons Crowell grew up in the small house at 14 Sheriff Street and enjoyed its comforts.

Little Harry, as his parents called him, began life in the nursery on the second floor of the home. He was too young to be aware of his father's growing business success or the skills and acumen which permitted Luther to make money. But Harry's parents were quite conscious of how God was blessing them. In addition to the nursery, rare for most homes, their house had other rooms that in that day seemed to be superfluous--a double parlor, twice the size of those of ordinary houses, plus extra bedrooms and even a dining room.

Anna took good care of the home, her touch being quite evident. Small pieces of Early American glass gleamed like jewels in the sunny bay windows. Paintings graced the walls of the parlor and other rooms. Embroidered samplers and painted mottoes, beautifully framed and placed in prominent places, were reminders of God's goodness and gave inspiration to those who were invited to the home for tea or an elegant dinner.

In plain sight on the dining room buffet was the big family Bible. No meal was ever eaten without this book. Luther would read a passage from it, perhaps offer simple comments of application, then lead the family in prayer. Young Harry prayed too, but sometimes his eyes were open ever so slightly to see what Mama had put on the table that smelled so good during Papa's prayers.

After dinner most nights, the boy was put to bed, this time with Mama's prayers, and after he was tucked in, Anna went downstairs where she and Luther talked about the day's events and planned for their future. It was during one of these talks that Anna sensed a seriousness in her husband.

"Is something wrong?" she asked him.

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Luther shook his head. "Not really. In fact, just the opposite. I can't get over the way things are going for us. We have more money now than I ever dreamed of making."

Anna smiled in relief. "You mean that you miss the days when we had less?"

Her husband laughed. He was silent for a moment, then the serious expression on his face returned. "Anna, I feel a sense of responsibility for our good fortune. Do you remember what Dr. Eells said in his sermon Sunday?"

"You mean the Bible verse about the person who has been given much--that much will be required of him?"

"Yes, exactly." Luther replied. "I was thinking about stewardship. Money. I've seen what unusual wealth can sometimes do to people. It seems especially true out here on the frontier. Some people get away from their roots, family and church and they seem to forget God. There are a lot of people like us who have prospered by coming west. A lot of them don't think much about God. And the next generation doesn't quite know how to handle it. I'm concerned about Harry . . . and any other children we might have. I don't want them to have parents who let money take the place of God. Or, be spoiled by wealth."

Anna wasn't sure she fully understood all of his concern. As if reading her mind, he explained his fears. "Anna, you've seen it, too. Some families with wealth turn it over to their children when they die and there are all sorts of troubles because of money. I'm going to pray that God will give us wisdom to help our children know how to use wealth and not the other way around."

The next day, Luther Crowell thought more about the conversation with his wife the night before. Of course, he had not told his wife what had prompted his concern for their future. But she would soon understand.

It was June, and flowers were abundant in the gardens and lanes. The weather was unseasonably warm and sunny, with

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the sounds of children playing. Luther had just come from a meeting with his partner, John Seymour, where the two of them had discussed their business.

Luther offered some changes for their partnership agreement that allowed for either partner to handle the problems of succession in the event something happened to either one of them. Luther took these signed agreements, put them into a leather folder and told Seymour that he'd deliver them to their attorney after lunch.

Lunch was eaten at home, with his family. Young Harry asked his father, after eating, if he might go back to the shoe store with him and help. Luther smiled. "In time, son. You go out and play now. You'll have time for work later." He kissed Anna and headed back toward town. It was true that he was stopping at the attorney's office. But there was another appointment he'd scheduled that neither his partner nor wife knew about.

Outside the offices of their family doctor, Luther paused for an instant, then walked up the wooden steps to the small foyer. By coming just after lunch, Dr. Naught had assured Luther he wouldn't have to wait in the usually crowded waiting room.

Sitting on the edge of the examining table, Luther was silent as the doctor listened to his chest. Then Dr. Naught was finished. "You can put your shirt back on," he said. As Luther dressed, he already knew the answer.

"I've had lung trouble most all of my life," he confided to Dr. Naught. "But this is the first year I can remember having it this late in the year."

The doctor nodded. "Your lungs are filled. And your blood's been affected. That's what saps your strength. You need rest. Real rest."

"Maybe I'll take Harry and Anna and take a holiday. We could journey down the Ohio on a steamer."

"The fresh air ought to help. But"

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Luther saw a dark expression on Dr. Naught's face.

"What is it?"

"Well, Luther, you've got tuberculosis. That's a fancy name for what we've always called consumption. And I think you already know there's no cure. The newspapers say that big American cities--like New York, Boston, and Philadelphia--have the highest rates in the world. TB's the biggest cause of death in these cities. Sure, we're learning more about tuberculosis, and one day there might--"

"I know," Luther sighed. "I'm resigned to it."

The diagnosis was not a surprise, but Luther had hoped he'd escape this death sentence. "How much time do I have?"

"It's hard to say. Maybe a couple years, even five. Probably not that much, though. Sorry, Luther."

Dr. Naught had merely confirmed Luther's suspicions. At 35 he should be in the prime of life, but instead, he was pale, anemic and had been losing weight consistently. The winter's hacking cough still hung on in June, long after he'd lost it in previous years.

Consumption, or tuberculosis, robbed its victims of hope as well as health. It preyed on the young; many never even got to finish childhood. Fathers with babies should have qualified for a reprieve, but there was no such luck.

"You'll have to tell Anna," Dr. Naught said.

"I suppose so," Luther acknowledged. "Can you help me? Will you come over for dinner and explain it to her?"

The doctor nodded. Although it was the same as issuing a death sentence, Dr. Naught had real experience in telling people about dying. His calm and reassuring manner could ease the emotional impact of such a pronouncement to the young wife, but nothing could really make it easy.

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Little Harry didn't really know what his father was experiencing. Despite the hopelessness of Luther's future, immediate days were spent carefully, as if time was as much of the family's treasure as money. Work and family were Luther's total preoccupations now. He built up his prosperous business even more, and added to his family.

A brother for Harry was born on New Year's day, 1861. Harry was now six and his parents named the new baby Edward.

Two years later, another brother, Charles was born.

In addition to the fact that all three were boys, there was something else that they all had in common. Each boy--Harry, Edward and Charles--had inherited Luther's genetic constitution. All three would later contract the same dreaded tuberculosis. Two of them, Edward and Charles, would die from it. Only Harry would survive.

Luther did not know that now, of course, but he began to plan for its possibility. The disease was well known to make an appearance in successive generations. Acutely aware of his own limited time, he took conscious efforts to make plans not only for his own absence from the family, but to cover needs not yet known.

He had twin concerns. The first he had discussed with Anna on that June evening several years earlier. He wanted to set the example by making God central to his life and that of each family member. The second issue had to do with providing for his family after he was gone. There was an overlapping consideration that brought the two together.

As a young man in Connecticut, Luther had seen that wealth kept for two or three generations could corrupt those who were inexperienced with it. He saw the same thing happen in Cleveland.

"Wealth will either poison its possessor or be a tool for great accomplishment," Luther told his new pastor. Dr. Theron Hawks had succeeded Luther's friend, Dr. Eells, as minister of the Second Presbyterian Church (where the Crowell family

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attended). Dr. Hawks listened to Luther express his concerns. "The Bible is clear about the choices involved in serving God or mammon. It's quite hard to keep money from being your god," the minister commented.

"That's what I mean. I've seen it too often," replied Luther. "When money is earned apart from God, or if it's kept without Him, it's the children who grow up into that wealth who are destroyed."

"I think I know what you're saying," Dr. Hawks observed. "The Bible says, '*A fool and his money are soon parted.*' And, '*A man cannot serve two masters*' --he must serve God or mammon."

"That's true," said Luther. "But what I'm saying is that God must be involved from the beginning--with the making and using of money. I think that's the reason God blesses our family. We've made Him the head of our house, and we exercise the stewardship of tithing."

The pastor nodded agreement. "By asking for God's wisdom in the acquisition of material things, those things are put into perspective."

"And in the case of illness, money can buy doctors, and nurses," Luther continued. "It can buy education and housing, meals and clothes when I'm not here to see to it."

Luther did not want his home to lose its God-centric basis and he prayed it would always be so. Otherwise money would be lavished on selfishness and sinfulness. He'd also seen how deep into debauchery a man (or woman, for that matter) could sink with the help of riches.

The ailing father set about to make certain that his young family would stay true to the right use of wealth. He created a trust for his family that would leave them with enough money to keep them in the style of living that he'd been providing for them. Then, there was money set aside for schooling. And upon becoming adults, money would be there to help the children start out on their own.

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Yet, there were strings attached. The trust saw to it that there was no way for immature or selfish children to get hold of money when it might do them harm. Anna would be taken care of, too. And the business could continue. He'd thought of everything.

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Luther continued to work in his business but grew steadily weaker. The Civil War had started and was being waged during these years. He'd escaped the draft because of his consumption yet devoted himself to the war effort by making boots for Union soldiers. This effort only added to the success of his already thriving business.

In his fortieth year, Luther's illness grew much worse. He was now bedridden nearly all of the time. Anna nursed him through the difficulty. Harry, now nine, even tried to help look after his father.

"Papa," asked Harry, "do you think you'll feel better by Christmas?"

"Well, son," Luther replied, "let's hope so."

Anna came into the room, wiped Luther's forehead and suggested to Harry, "Why not read to your father?"

"All right!" The youngster's eyes brightened. He welcomed the chance to show off his reading skills. "What should I read to you, Papa?"

"I'd like to hear you read from the Bible. The Psalms. Or is that too difficult for you?"

"No, sir. I can do that!" Harry ran downstairs to get the family Bible from the dining room. He was back in less than a minute, leafing through the heavy book to find a text.

"Read from the 23rd Psalm," his father requested. Harry found that passage and began to read, sounding out phonetically the bigger words with which he wasn't quite as

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familiar. "He leadeth me in the paths of *right-e-ous-ness* for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the *shadow* of death, I will fear no evil . . ."

The young voice was clear and the words reassuring. Harry read the familiar passage and some others that his mother helped him find. Soon his father was sleeping.

The next day, November 20, 1864, Harry's Uncle Will came over to the house. After a brief talk with Harry's mother, Uncle Will took the boy downstairs and put on his coat. Then he took Harry hurriedly away from the house. Harry doesn't remember much more about that day, except later he was told that his father had died. Luther Crowell had lost his on-going, life-long battle with tuberculosis.

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None of Luther's three sons really grasped the significance of his death. The undertaker had come and carried away their father in a wagon but not in their sight. They only knew that somehow, somewhat suddenly, he was gone. They were told he had died and was now in heaven, but they were confused and frightened.

A number of relatives and friends dropped by the house over the next several days. Harry saw his mother weeping. His brothers went over to hold onto her apron or hug her. Harry wished he could comfort his mother and ease her terrible pain.

At the church, a memorial service took place, followed by a graveside burial at the cemetery. The weather had turned bleak and a raw, gusty wind made Harry shiver as he watched them lower the wooden coffin into the ground.

Strangely, during these days, Harry suddenly grew up. Uncle Will, his mother's sister's husband, had told Harry that as the eldest son, now he was the "man" of the family. The boy knew he couldn't fill his father's shoes--work in the shoe

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business, take care of the house, pay the bills. Is that what he was supposed to do now as the man in the family? Harry wondered what Uncle Will meant, especially since he'd already heard him tell Mama, "Remember Anna, if there's anything at all you need, just let us know."

The nine-year-old suddenly felt relieved that his aunt and uncle would be there if they needed help.

Later, young Harry listened when Dr. Hawks came around to offer heartfelt and sympathetic consolation. His words were comforting, and he seemed to understand what had happened. In the memorial service, the preacher told of his conversations with Luther--how the devout husband and father had sought God's will for his life and his family. He spoke of Luther's quest for faith as the search for the "pearl of great price". Harry knew the parable, having recently read about it in the Bible. Dr. Hawks also talked about the father's concern to have right priorities for his business and finances.

"But perhaps the most important matter in Luther's life was his relationship with Jesus Christ. Nothing to him was as great as being a Christian with a servant's heart," the pastor told those in the pews.

Harry listened and thought much about his father, about his faith, and of his journey to heaven from his sickbed. There was much the boy did not fully understand, but his mind was beginning to put the matters into focus. It was all overwhelming. At the grave of his father, Harry began to sob. At the conclusion of the service, the minister once more came over to console the family.

Stopping in front of Anna at graveside, Dr. Hawks took her hand and bowed his head. He prayed with her in a voice not louder than a whisper, words meant to encourage the grieving wife and mother. They were the words Anna needed to hear, and she smiled despite her tears as the minister concluded the prayer.

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Next, Dr. Hawks patted the heads of the two younger boys. However, turning to Harry, he shook hands with him, granting him stature over his brothers. Harry's tiny fingers were enveloped by the huge hand of the pastor. He felt its warmth and gentle pressure. Looking up, Harry, still crying, blurted, "Dr. Hawks, may I come and see you tomorrow?"

"Of course, son. Come to the church. I'll be in my study after nine."

That night, Harry tossed and turned in his bed. The events of the past several days had caught up with him, and he was emotionally wrung out and still very much in fear of what had taken place. He cried softly into his pillow and eventually fell asleep.

The next morning, he went to Dr. Hawk's study. The minister was seated at a huge and imposing desk, with books and papers scattered about. At the boy's soft knock, he looked up and smiled. "Come in, lad. Please . . . have a seat." He pointed to the large leather chair directly across from his desk.

Harry crawled up into the chair and squirmed to be comfortable, but his feet did not reach the floor. The minister rose and walked over to a nearby *settee* and fetched a small footstool placed nearby. He carried it over and put it under Harry's feet.

"What brings you to visit me?" Dr. Hawks asked.

"Well, sir," Harry stammered, "I . . . I--uh--" Frustrated by his inability to articulate his thoughts, the boy started to get up. The minister gestured for him to stay.

"It's all right, Harry. I know you're going through difficult times just now. You're afraid, and sad. Maybe even a little bit angry that your father has left you, eh?"

Harry looked up, surprised. How did he know? And was it all right to feel angry at such a time? In a moment or so, Harry finally found words. He talked about being afraid, angry, confused. But more than anything, he wanted to talk to Dr. Hawks about his father's faith.

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"How come Papa is in heaven? Why did he die? What happens when you die? When will I die? What happens if my Mama dies?" The questions came as a volley.

The minister smiled reassuringly. "You have a lot on your mind for a young lad. But I sense that you have some thoughts that are far beyond your years. And what is it that troubles you most?"

The boy sank back into the leather chair. He felt helpless again, and small. "I . . . I guess that what upsets me most is whether I can go to heaven and see my father. How do you get to go to heaven, sir?"

"Well, young man," the minister smiled, "of all the questions you could have asked, that is probably the one I can answer with the most authority. You see, I'm an expert on heaven. It's my job to tell people how to go to heaven."

For nearly an hour the pastor and his youthful inquirer talked. Harry heard what the minister called "the Good News" and how to become a Christian--something to be settled in his mind and heart. He explained things to Harry in words the boy could understand. He didn't use the theological terms or ecclesiastical expressions that brought confusion. Instead, he shared these thoughts with simplicity and sensitivity and introduced Harry to Jesus, God's Son.

And the young seeker understood. He bowed his head and prayed with the minister, inviting Jesus to come into his life and show him the way to live for God. In all the years to follow, this experience would never be forgotten, nor would its reality ever leave Harry. When he got up from the huge chair to leave, he was conscious of something wonderful having taken place within him. The power, validity and wonder of that event would be ever-present in Harry's life and work and stay with him for the rest of his earthly life.