



"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"
(Mark 12:31).

The basketball slipped through my fingertips and rolled down the driveway. "Nooooo!" I cried as it bounced across the street—right into Mrs. Clark's yard!

I remembered Mrs. Clark's angry words to Mason when *his* ball had bounced into

Oh no, not in Mrs. Clark's yard again!



ILLUSTRATION BY MARK ROBISON

her yard. "Look at this flowerbed," she had shrieked. "It's completely destroyed! If you come into my yard, I'll call the police!" With that, she'd picked up his basketball, and it was gone. Now I was too afraid to even cross the street to get mine.

I worried all night about my ball. Sure enough, in the morning it was gone. Mom talked to Mrs. Clark the next day, but she wouldn't give it back. She was one grumpy neighbor.

Mason and Andrew and I thought of ways to get even—like letting her dog out of her backyard at night. But we decided not to.

A few days later my friends and I were outside playing basketball when Mom came out with a cardboard box. Inside was a spaghetti dinner. "Is this for us?" Andrew asked, licking his lips.

"No, it's for Mrs. Clark," Mom replied. "She was in a car accident."

We all frowned. "Why would you do that for Mrs. Clark?" Mason asked. "She's the meanest person I know!"

"Mrs. Clark needs our help," Mom answered. "It's what Jesus would want us to do. Will you boys please take this dinner over to her?"

We walked to Mrs. Clark's door with shaky knees, rang the doorbell, and waited. And waited. Finally, a cranky voice asked, "What do you want?"

"We, uh, have some food," I said.



*"Let us reach out to others with faith and with love."*²
Elder Arnulfo Valenzuela of the Seventy

"Food? Why are you bringing me food?" she asked. "Mom told us to. It's spaghetti," I said.

"Oh, spaghetti," she said softly as she opened the door. Slowly a smile crept across her face. It was the first time I'd ever seen Mrs. Clark smile. She fumbled around in her purse. "Here," she said, handing me some money. "Take this to your mother and thank her for me."

"Oh, she won't want the money," I answered.

But Mrs. Clark wouldn't take no for an answer. She dropped the dollar bills into my hand and quickly closed the door.

The next day Mom had another box, this time with beef stew. I placed the money from last time under the bowl of beef stew. Mrs. Clark smiled again when we brought her the food, and again she tried to pay me. But this time we got away without taking it.

"Mom doesn't want the money," I called back as we scurried away. "She wants you to have the food."

The next Saturday we were playing basketball again, and this time *Andrew's* ball got away! It bounced down the driveway, across the street, and landed smack in the middle of Mrs. Clark's flowerbed. As usual, she picked up the ball and disappeared into her house. But this time something different happened. Mrs. Clark came back out carrying a box. She walked across the street, up the driveway, right to where we were standing. We were all about to run.

"Here," she said, handing me the box. Inside were all three of our basketballs!

"Thanks!" I said with a big smile on my face.

On Sunday in sharing time, Sister Jones asked, "How can we love our enemies?"

I raised my hand high in the air. "By doing something nice for them," I answered.

Sister Jones beamed. "That's a great answer."

When I looked at Mason and Andrew, they were smiling too. ♦

The author lives in Washington, USA.

ONE GRUMPY NEIGHBOR

By Ron Knowlton
(Based on a true story)