



By John Starley Allen
(Based on a true story)

"Pray, He is there; speak, He is list'ning" (Children's Songbook, 12).

One summer morning Elizabeth saw a big moving van pull up in front of the house next door. *New neighbors!* Wouldn't it be fun if the new family had a girl close to her own age?

Later that day, while Elizabeth was playing croquet by herself in the front yard, she saw a car drive up next door. A man and woman got out of the car. And then a girl with bright red hair got out. She looked just the right age! Elizabeth ran over to meet her.

The new girl's name was Becky. Elizabeth smiled at her. Becky smiled back.

"I'm playing croquet," Elizabeth said. "Do you want to play?"

"I've never played it before . . ." Becky said shyly.

Elizabeth smiled and held out a croquet ball. "Want to learn?"

Becky nodded and ran over to play.

From then on Elizabeth and Becky were always together. During the day they played and ate snacks in their clubhouse. At night they sat by their bedroom windows and yelled to each other so they could keep talking.

One night as the girls were yelling back and forth, Elizabeth's older brother stopped by her room. "You know what you two need?" he said. "Soup-can phones."

"What are those?" Elizabeth asked.

"All you do is connect two cans with some string. You run the string between your windows. And then you won't have to yell." He promised to help set it all up tomorrow.

The next night Elizabeth and Becky had their first soup-can phone conversation.

The rest of the summer was filled with playing tennis,

picnicking in the park, roller-skating, and playing more croquet. And of course, every night they talked using their soup cans.

All too soon summer turned to fall. With homework and dancing lessons (for Elizabeth) and swimming lessons (for Becky), they didn't see each other as much as they had during the summer. But almost every night, they sat by their windows and talked using their soup-can phones.

They talked about lots of things. If Elizabeth had a hard day at school, she told Becky about it. And if Becky had good news to share, she always told Elizabeth.

One day Becky left for her grandma's funeral. She didn't know how long she'd be gone.

"I'll miss you," Elizabeth said.

Becky nodded and hugged her goodbye.

That night, after saying her prayer and getting in bed, Elizabeth couldn't sleep. She missed talking with her friend.

A thought came to her: *Why not pray?* But she prayed every night before going to bed. And besides, she had already said her prayer tonight.

But the thought came again: *Pray. Pray as if you're really talking with Heavenly Father.*

And so she got on her knees again and prayed.

Only this time she didn't just repeat what she usually said. This time she really talked about how she felt about things—small things and big things.

Prayer isn't just a bunch of words you say, Elizabeth thought as she climbed back in bed. Prayer could be like a real conversation—like her soup-can conversations with Becky.

In her prayers Elizabeth started talking about things that had happened to her earlier in the day. She talked about her problems and her feelings. She felt like she'd found another friend.

Elizabeth was glad when Becky finally came home. That night they had their usual soup-can phone conversation. And later, just before she went to bed, Elizabeth had another special conversation—with her Heavenly Father. ♦

The author lives in Utah, USA.

ILLUSTRATION BY BROOKE SMART

Let's make our own soup-can phones!



Turn the page to find out how.