

NOVEMBER 7

The Gift of Believing

Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young.

1 TIMOTHY 4:12

Tommy was in the second grade the year his life intersected with his Aunt Melanie's. His parents had just divorced, and then his dad was shipped to Vietnam. Tommy's mom was battling emotional problems and couldn't care for her two sons, so Melanie, a twenty-one-year-old nurse with no kids of her own, agreed to care for Tommy and his brother while their mother went into treatment.

Melanie didn't look down on her nephews or focus on their problems. Just as Paul, the writer of today's verse, believed in Timothy when he was young and inexperienced, Melanie believed in her nephews and looked for the good in them. She noticed that Tommy had an interest in science and said one day, "Tommy, you'd make a wonderful scientist." At Christmas she bought him a microscope, and for his birthday, a science testing kit. The following year their dad came home from Vietnam and took the boys away. He worked as a long-distance trucker, so the boys were left alone a lot. When Melanie offered them a home, they said their dad needed them.

When the boys were in high school, their father left for good; Tommy's brother flew the coop, and Tommy was left on his own. He worked in a grocery store and lived without running water. But somehow, against all odds, he supported himself, graduated from high school, and managed to put himself through college. Eventually, he completed both a master's degree and a doctorate in microbiology.

After Tommy's graduation, Melanie received a letter from him: "I believed in myself because you believed in me," he wrote. "No matter how tough things got in my life, I knew I could succeed because you said I could."

Today Tommy is a prestigious scientist with a wife and three beautiful children. He didn't get a lot of things he needed when he was growing up, but during that brief year with his aunt, he got the thing he needed most—someone who believed in him. —CHERI

Father of love, may my actions, attitudes, and words express belief in others' potential, no matter what obstacles or struggles they face.

The deepest craving in human nature is the craving to be appreciated.

—WILLIAM JAMES (1842–1910), AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGIST, PHILOSOPHER, AND PHYSICIAN