



# CHARACTER BUILDING LESSONS

CARL SOMMER

## LIGHT YOUR CANDLE

### About the Book

Witnessing the deterioration of her inner-city neighborhood, Stephanie decides to “light her candle” to help clean up the trash and stop the violence. After convincing her two friends to do as much good as they can for one week, Stephanie and her friends, with the help of parents, end up transforming their inner-city school and the whole city from a place of violence and deterioration to a model of order and cleanliness.

Carl Sommer shows that in spite of many obstacles, one person’s determination and desire to do well can transform an entire community. This inspiring story teaches the importance of citizenship, caring for others, and community service.



### Main Virtues

#### Citizenship/Caring/Community Service

#### Other Virtues

Appreciation, Assertiveness, Civic Virtue, Cleanliness, Commitment, Compassion, Cooperation, Courage, Courtesy, Creativity, Diligence, Generosity, Initiative, Kindness, Patience, Perseverance, Positive Mental Attitude, Respect for the Environment, Respect for Others, Responsible Citizenship, Self-Discipline, and Self-Reliance



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## **Stealing**

One day while Stephanie was walking with her friends Lori and Cindy, they saw a boy grab a purse from a lady and run. It is wrong to steal from others.

## **Hating and Fighting**

While the three friends were talking, a gang called “The Skulls” came strutting down the street with bats and sticks. They were going to have a fight with “The Scorpions.”

It is wrong to go around hating and fighting others. People who live like this are often miserable. It is a much happier lifestyle wanting to help people rather than hurting them.

## **Doing Good to Others—Citizenship**

While walking home from school the next day, Stephanie said to her friends, “We need to find a way to help people like that lady yesterday.”

It is an excellent virtue when our goal in life is to do good to others. What would happen to our society if everyone had that desire of doing good to others?

## **Being Ridiculed**

When Stephanie, Cindy, and Lori were sweeping the sidewalk in front of Mrs. Williams’ house, some boys came over and laughed at them and said, “Look at those silly girls. I guess we have new street cleaners.”

The girls were being ridiculed for doing good. Never let ridicule stop you from doing good.

## **Being Thankful**

After the men took the old refrigerator and some old tires from the lot, Stephanie said, “Thank you!”

We should be appreciative and thankful when people do good things for us.

## **Taking Care of Our Bodies**

The drug dealer wanted to give the girls something free to make them feel good. Stephanie said, “We don’t want your drugs. You’re ruining our neighborhood.”

Stephanie was wise. She knew that drugs weren’t good for her. Drugs may give you a good feeling for a short time, but in the end they will destroy your body.

## **Desiring Wisdom**

As the girls walked home, Stephanie asked, “What can we do to stop the fighting in school?”

Lori added, “This constant fighting makes it hard for the teachers to teach.”

“It sure does,” said Cindy. “My dad said that our school was once the best in the city; now it’s the worst!”

The girls had a desire to learn. They were wise.

## **Having Discipline**

The president of the PTA said, “In order for our children to learn, we must make sure we have an orderly school. Let’s make some rules that will help our school to become great again.”

These were the rules:

Students must not fight in school.

Students cannot run in the halls.

Students must stay in their rooms during class.

Students must respect and obey teachers.

A parent must come to school if any student disobeys the rules.

To have an orderly school, schools must have rules and discipline.

## **Being Punished for Disobedience**

When Larry’s mother found out what her son had done, she apologized to the principal. Then she said, “He’s going to get punished at home, too. If Larry ever acts up again, make sure you let me know.”

Larry’s mother was going to punish her son for disobeying the rules of the school. Parents who love their children will discipline them when they do wrong. Wise children will obey their parents so they will not have to be disciplined.

## **Lighting Your Candle**

Now everyone in the city heard what the girls were doing. Light Your Candle Crusades were starting everywhere. The whole city was being transformed.

Now when houses needed repairs, people would fix them. When people saw someone stealing, they would yell, “Stop stealing!” When they saw anyone selling drugs or gangs fighting, they would call the police. Now people felt safe to walk in their neighborhood.

When students misbehaved, teachers would call parents. Schools were orderly and students were learning. Now children were no longer afraid to go to school.

All these things happened because one young girl decided to light her candle.

What can *you* do to light your candle?

## **Living in a Society Where Everyone is Selfish**

Crime, gangs, and drugs  
Fear of traveling  
Unsafe homes, schools, and workplaces  
Locks on bikes, cars, and homes  
No concern when trouble strikes  
Great unrest and unhappiness

## **Living in a Society Where Everyone Is Caring**

No crime, gangs or drugs  
Freedom to go anywhere, anytime  
Safe homes, schools, and workplaces  
No locks on bikes, cars, or homes  
Help when trouble strikes  
Great peace and happiness

### **Questions**

1. Where did Stephanie live?

*Stephanie lived in a big city.*

2. What were some of the bad things Stephanie saw in her neighborhood?

*Stephanie saw trash in the street, broken windows, houses needing repairs, boys and girls stealing, men selling drugs, gangs fighting, and other bad things.*

3. What were some of the bad things Stephanie saw in her school?

*In Stephanie's school, the students roamed the halls, and boys and girls fought. In the cafeteria the children threw food, and in class the kids threw paper airplanes. Teachers were constantly yelling at the students to behave. School was not a good place to learn.*

4. Why was school not a good place to learn?

*A school needs to have discipline for it to be good place to learn.*

5. What did Stephanie and her two friends see a boy do to a lady?

*Stephanie and her two friends saw a boy grab a purse from a lady and run. It is wrong to steal from others.*

6. What were the Skulls going to do as they were strutting down the street with bats and sticks?

*The Skulls were going to have a fight with the Scorpions.*

*It is wrong to go around hating and fighting others. People who live like this are often miserable. A much happier lifestyle is helping people rather than hurting them.*

7. As Stephanie was walking home from school the next day, what did she

say to her friends about the lady who had her purse stolen?

*Stephanie said, "We need to find a way to help people like that lady yesterday."*

It is an excellent virtue when our goal in life is to do good to others.

8. What did Stephanie say about Lori's comment, "One little candle in a big, dark room doesn't do any good"?

*Stephanie said, "Well, one candle does do some good—it lights one area. If we just help one person, we're doing something that's good."*

9. What did Lori suggest they do first in lighting their candle?

*Lori said, "Mrs. Williams just had an accident and can barely walk. Let's see if Mrs. Williams needs groceries."*

10. What did Stephanie say they should do next when they finished shopping for Mrs. Williams?

*Stephanie said, "Let's clean up the trash in front of the houses."*

11. What did some boys do when they saw the girls sweeping up the sidewalk in front of Mrs. Williams' house?

*Some boys came over and laughed at them and said, "Look at those silly girls. I guess we got new street cleaners."*

The girls were being ridiculed for doing good.

12. How did the girls get an old refrigerator on the sidewalk so the trash collectors could move it?

*The girls walked over to some men across the street and asked, "Could you please help us move the refrigerator?"*

13. When the men said, "Sure, we'll be glad to help you move the refrigerator," what did the girls say?

*The girls said, "Thank you!"*

We should be appreciative and thankful when people do good things for us.

14. What did Stephanie say when a drug dealer offered the girls a free bag of drugs and said to them that it was something to make them feel good?

*Stephanie said, "We don't want your drugs. You're ruining our neighborhood."*

Stephanie was wise. She knew that drugs were not good for her. Never take drugs for pleasure. Drugs may give a short-time good feeling, but in the end they will destroy your body.

15. Why do drug dealers often offer free drugs?

*Drug dealers offer free drugs so they can get kids hooked on drugs. Once kids get hooked, then they will have to buy more drugs.*

16. What did Stephanie's brother Billy say to her when she got home?

*Billy said, "Stop making a fool of yourself by being street cleaners. Everyone's laughing at you!"*

17. What did Stephanie say about Billy's remark that everyone was laughing at her?

*Stephanie said, "Let them laugh."*

Stephanie did not get discouraged because someone thought what she was doing was foolish. She wanted to help people. Real men or women will insist on doing right even when they are pressured to follow the crowd or when they are ridiculed.

18. When Stephanie told her dad what the drug dealer had said, what did her dad say?

*Stephanie's dad said, "What? We'll put a stop to that right away!"*

19. What did the drug dealer do after the angry parents spoke to him?

*The drug dealer took off running.*

20. What effect did Stephanie say the constant fighting had in school?

*Stephanie said, "This constant fighting makes it hard for the teachers to teach."*

The girls had a desire to learn. Be wise—appreciate the education you are receiving.

21. What did Lori say they should do on Open School Night?

*Lori said, "Let's tell our parents what's happening in our school and ask them to speak to the principal."*

22. When the school principal told the parents what the girls had done, what did the parents do as the three girls walked down the aisle?

*The parents stood and cheered when they were told what the girls had done.*

23. What were some of the rules the parents wanted in the school?

*Students must not fight in school.*

*Students cannot run in the halls.*

*Students must stay in their rooms during class.*

*Students must respect and obey teachers.*

*A parent must come to school if any student disobeys the rules.*

To have an orderly school, schools must have discipline.

24. What are some other rules schools must have so children can learn?

*No cheating allowed.*

*Homework must be turned in on time.*

*No talking in class while the teacher is talking.*

25. Why are school rules important?

*Learning cannot take place in schools without discipline. To have disciplined schools, schools must have rules.*

26. What warning did the parents give to their children when they went home that night?

*The parents warned their children, "You had better behave in school! We don't want to come to school because you're not obeying the rules!"*

27. What did Larry's mother tell the principal when Larry got into trouble in school?

*Larry's mother said, "He's going to get punished at home, too. If Larry ever acts up again, make sure you let me know."*

Parents who love their children will discipline them when they do wrong. Wise children will obey their parents so they will not have to be disciplined.

28. How did the street look because of what the girls were doing?

*Their street was becoming the best looking street in the entire neighborhood.*

29. What did Stephanie say to the reporter when he asked her, "How would someone start a Light Your Candle Crusade?"

*Stephanie smiled and said, "It's easy. Find someone who is needy and go and help that one. Then try to get others to do the same. And never get discouraged."*

30. What did the reporter say when he heard what Stephanie said?

*The reporter said, "That's some of the best advice I've ever heard."*

31. What did the reporter do?

*The reporter took pictures of the girls and wrote a story about them for the Sunday newspaper.*

32. What happened to the whole city when everyone heard what the three girls were doing?

*The whole city was being transformed.*

33. Why did all these good things happen in the city?

*All these things happened because one young girl decided to light her candle.*

34. List some things that you can do to light your candle.

*Your answer:*