



CHARACTER BUILDING LESSONS

SOMMER-TIME STORIES

by Christa Grant, PhD

THE UGLY PRINCESS

Story Description

This lovely tale tells the story of Princess Isabella who is greatly loved by her parents. Isabella is happy and carefree until she overhears girls making fun of her large nose and ears. Miserable and ashamed, she quits playing and hides in the palace. Nothing can sway Isabella's feelings of ugliness and sadness until an old woman reminds her that giving love to others brings deep happiness.

Isabella listens and helps unfortunate people in the kingdom. Through her unselfish actions, she gains self-esteem and grows into a happy, compassionate adult. When it comes time to choose someone to marry, she looks for a wise and kind husband, rather than focusing on appearance.

Readers of this illuminating story learn how Isabella by loving others, gains self-esteem, and how she finds the ideal suitor.



Main Character Traits

Self-Esteem/Kindness/Respect for Parents

Other Character Traits

Being content, encouraging and helping others, respect for wisdom, compassion, forgiveness, diligence, respect for others

Contents

Self-esteem and Being Content	Respect for Parents
Respect for Parents	Diligence
Being Content	Respect for Wisdom
Encouraging and Helping Others	Respect for Others and for Parents
Kindness and Compassion	Kindness
Respect for Wisdom	Wisdom and Kindness
Forgiveness	

Self-esteem and Being Content

In a faraway land lived a princess named Isabella. Isabella, an only child, was greatly loved by her parents, the king and queen. She was a very happy child. Isabella loved school, and after school she had lots of fun playing with her friends. But one day everything changed.

After playing tag, Isabella happened to walk past two girls. She heard one of the girls say, "Did you notice how big Isabella's nose and ears are?" Isabella stopped.

The other girl laughed and said, "They are sure funny looking."

When Isabella heard what the girls had said, she rushed to her bathroom. She looked in the mirror and began to cry, "It is true! Not only are my ears and nose big, but they are ugly!" After crying for a long time, she washed her face and went outside. As the other children played, Isabella sat down and groaned over and over, "Why do I have such an ugly nose and ears?"

When Isabella came home, Mom asked, "Why are you so sad?"

"I am fine," Isabella mumbled.

"No, Isabella," said Mom in a sweet voice, "you are not fine. Something is wrong."

"Why do I have such an ugly nose and ears?"

Mom shook her head and said, "Your nose and ears are not ugly."

When the king heard what happened, he called Isabella. "What is this I hear about your nose and ears?"

"All my friends made fun of my big, ugly nose and ears," complained Isabella.

"How many friends really made fun of you?"

"Two."

"So it is two friends, not all your friends." Then the king put his arms around Isabella and said, "If you always listen to what other people say, you will live a very unhappy life. You have two ears. Some things you hear should pass through your ears, and some things should go into your heart." Then he gave her a big hug and said, "Your mother and I love you just the way you are. That is something you should always keep in your heart."

Isabella allowed comments from other girls to affect how she felt about herself. She allowed their comments to influence her thinking and her self-esteem. Instead she should have ignored their comments; she should have told herself that her parents love her and think she is beautiful and that is all she needs. She needed to be content with who she is and the way God made her.

Respect for Parents

The king thought much about how he could help Isabella. Then one day he said, "Isabella, I would like you to try something."

"Is it about my ugly nose and ears?" she asked.

"No, it is not," said the king. "It is about how unhappy you have been. I want you to study people to find out what makes them happy. Can you do this for me?"

"I will do that," said Isabella.

The king gave her a big hug and kiss. Then he said, "I love you, Isabella."

The next week the king, queen, and Isabella went to a feast. After Isabella ate, she said to herself, "I'm going to look for someone who is very happy." Isabella looked around and found an old woman laughing in the middle of a happy group of children. "Oh, my!" she exclaimed. "Look at her. Her nose and ears are much bigger than mine! How can she be so happy? I'm going to find out why."

Because Isabella loved and respected her parents, she was willing to do what her father suggested, and she did not whine or complain about doing it. It is important to realize that even when you do not agree with your parents or understand why they make certain decisions, they may know something about the situation that you cannot understand until you are older, so do as your parents ask. Ultimately, you will be glad that you did.

Being Content

When Isabella came to the old woman, she asked, "May I ask you a question?"

"Sure," said the old woman. "Let's go to that empty table."

When they sat down, Isabella asked, "What makes you so happy?"

"I was once a very sad girl. Boys and girls often made fun of my big nose and ears. One day my grandpa asked me, 'Why are you so sad?' I told him why. Then he took me for a walk and said, 'Listen to me very carefully. You cannot change the way you were born. So be wise and content with what you cannot change. Instead of always looking at yourself, aim to love others. If you do this, you'll find great happiness.'

Isabella received wise advice. Although makeup and hair styles can enhance a person's appearance, no one can change actual physical features. Since people will have their looks for their whole lives, they should accept their looks as something they cannot change, concentrate on their strengths and gifts, and focus on helping others rather than focusing on how they look. This will bring true happiness, while self-focus on beauty or lack of it will not bring happiness. In addition, beauty eventually fades because everyone grows older, and no one can be permanently beautiful on the outside. However, inward beauty will last forever.

Encouraging and Helping Others

“I listened to my grandpa, and from that day on I always tried to love others. Now I am a very happy, old lady with lots of friends.”

“Thank you so much,” said Isabella. “Your words have been a great help to me.” That night as Isabella lay in bed she said, “That old woman is right. I cannot change the way I look, but I can change the way I live. My aim from now on will be to love others. But what can I do?” Suddenly she sat up and exclaimed, “I have an idea!”

The next day Isabella went to her father and said, “I would like to do something special.”

“How can I help?” the king asked.

“I would like to invite the children with special needs to come to the palace. I want to make them happy.”

The king was shocked. “That is wonderful!” he exclaimed. “We will get whatever you need.” Then Isabella gave her dad a big hug.

Isabella realized that making others happy would, in turn, make her happy. However, it was also important for her to take action rather than simply think about it.

Kindness and Compassion

When the day came, over fifty children with special needs and their parents came to the palace. They played all sorts of games, and Isabella played with them. During the party, Isabella hugged her father and said, “This is the happiest day of my life, seeing these children playing and having so much fun. It is true—loving others brings happiness.” From that day on, Isabella continued to help others. She became a very happy, young woman.

Isabella became truly happy by showing kindness and compassion to the children with special needs. When we help others whose problems are greater than our own, it helps us realize that we have a lot to be thankful for and helps us be happy!

Respect for Wisdom

One day the king said, “Isabella, you know that the one you marry will become the next king. How can we help you find the right man?”

“How someone looks is unimportant to me,” she said. “I want to marry a wise and kind man. I have an idea about how to find such a man.” Then Isabella whispered her idea to the king.

“Excellent!” exclaimed the king. “I would be glad to help.” The next day the king ordered his seven advisors, “Search for the wisest and kindest young man in each of your districts. In one month bring them to the palace. We want to honor them.” Isabella hoped that among these seven men, one would strike a spark in her heart.

Because Isabella had learned that her physical appearance was not what really mattered, she was able to realize that she needed to look for a wise and kind husband rather than just a handsome husband.

Forgiveness (Isabella chooses to overlook an offense).

The king's brother had an only child named Jezreal. Jezreal was jealous of Isabella. Jezreal often told her friends, "If something happens to the king and Isabella, I'll be the next queen."

When Jezreal found out about the seven men, she told an artist, "Draw an ugly picture of Isabella with a very long nose and extra big ears." Jezreal came early to the celebration and placed the picture on Isabella's table. "I hope this makes Isabella furious," she said. When Isabella sat down, Jezreal watched her unfold the paper. "I hope the picture makes her real mad," Jezreal mumbled to herself.

Isabella looked at the picture and then remembered what her father had said, "You have two ears. Some things you hear should pass through your ears, and some things should go into your heart." Isabella smiled, tore up the picture, and said to the waiter, "Please throw it away."

Since Isabella had learned not to let other people's opinions bother her, she was able to keep from becoming upset at Jezreal's mean picture. Isabella was focusing on the essential aspects of life such as inward qualities. This also helped her overlook Jezreal's action and probably think about why Jezreal would do such a thing.

Respect for Parents

After the seven men were honored, Isabella spoke with each of them. One of the men was Steven. When she greeted him, a spark lit up in her heart. The same thing happened to Steven.

After talking awhile, Steven said, "May we meet again?"

"I would be glad to see you again," said Isabella, "but first you need to meet my dad and mom."

"I would be greatly honored to meet them," said Steven.

Isabella realized that to show respect to her parents, Steven needed to meet them. It was also important for her parents to meet him so they could help determine what kind of personal qualities he had.

Diligence

When Steven came to the palace, the king said, "Tell me about yourself."

"Thank you for inviting me," said Steven. "My father died when I was six years old. My mother had to work hard to support my two

younger sisters and me. After school we had to work to help my mother."

It was very helpful for Isabella to know that Steven was a hard worker and not lazy. If you want to be successful in life, you must be a diligent worker. Success will not fall in your lap.

Respect for Wisdom

The queen asked Steven, "What would you do if you were king?"

"If I had the great honor of being the next king, I would seek wisdom from others on how to make our people happy and successful."

Steven was able to demonstrate that he realized the importance of wisdom and that he realized the importance of making his people happy.

Respect for Others and for Parents

After listening to Steven, the king and queen went to another room. "Did you notice that Steven always spoke about others and not about himself?" the queen said.

"I did," the king said. "He would be a great man both for Isabella and for our kingdom."

Then the queen took Isabella aside and whispered, "We approve of Steven."

Isabella hugged her mother and father. Then she went to Steven and said, "My parents approve of you. Let's visit with one another for one year."

Again, Isabella showed her wisdom and respect by accepting her parent's advice. She also displayed her wisdom by being willing to wait and get to know Steven over the next year.

Kindness

"That would be great!" said Steven. "Let's also try to do a kind deed every day."

"That's an excellent idea!" exclaimed Isabella. When they heard a poor man had died, leaving his wife with four children to care for themselves, Steven and Isabella brought food to the family. Steven proved to be the kindest man that Isabella had ever met, and her love for him grew more and more.

Word spread everywhere that Isabella had chosen someone to marry, not for looks, but one who was wise and kind. Many parents told their children, "Did you see what Isabella did? She didn't pick someone just for looks, but someone who was wise and kind. If you want to have a happy life, do the same."

Isabella helped people learn that kindness and wisdom are much more important to having a happy life than outward appearance.

Wisdom and Kindness

Steven had been eagerly counting the days until he could ask Isabella to marry him. Then exactly one year after meeting her, he took her hands and asked with a big smile, “Isabella, will you marry me?”

“Absolutely!” Isabella exclaimed. “You are the kindest man that I have ever met. I know we will have a wonderful and happy marriage, and you will make a great king.”

When the wedding was announced, there was great joy in the kingdom. The people knew their kingdom would be successful because their future king and queen would be wise and kind. Steven and Isabella had a very happy life together. The people in their kingdom also prospered because of the wise and kind leadership of their king and queen.

Wisdom and kindness are contagious and will radiate to others. Because Isabella and Steven focused on making others happy, all the people in their kingdom benefited from it.

Questions

1. Isabella loved school and playing with her friends, but one day that changed. What happened to cause this change? *She heard some friends say that her ears and nose were very big and funny looking.*

2. Isabella became very miserable because she only focused on herself—her big nose and ears. What advice did her father give her about listening to what others say? *He said that if she always listened to what others say, she would have a very miserable and unhappy life. He also said that she has two ears. Some things that people say should pass through her ears and other things can go to her heart. What does this mean? It means that she should not listen to mean, ugly talk, but should take to heart the nice things people say.*

3. What did her father ask her to do to help her overcome her unhappiness? *He asked her to study people to find out what makes them happy.*

4. Who did Isabella find when she was studying people? *She found an old woman with a nose and ears bigger than hers who was extremely happy.*

5. Why was the old woman so happy? *She realized that she could not change her looks, but could change how she lived. She decided to love others.*

6. What did Isabella decide to do? *She invited children with special needs to come to the palace for a party and to play all sorts of games.*

7. How did Isabella feel after the party? *It was the happiest day of her life, seeing the children playing and having so much fun!*

8. What kind of man did Isabella want to marry? *She wanted to marry a wise and kind man. His looks did not matter to her.*

9. Isabella did not tell Jezreal that she forgave her, but how do you know that she did? *She chose to overlook Jezreal's mean actions and words. She simply tore the note up and had the servant throw it away without telling anyone.*

10. Why do you think Jezreal sent the mean picture? *She was probably jealous because Isabella was a princess and because Isabella had a kind heart.*

11. When Isabella wanted to meet Steven again, how did she show her parents respect? *She first introduced Steven to her parents to see if they approved of him.*

12. How did the king and queen know that Steven would make a good husband for Isabella and a good king? *They knew that Steven had worked hard for his family when his father died, that he was concerned about the people's happiness and success, and that he didn't constantly talk about himself.*

13. What did Isabella and Steven decide to do for one year? *They decided to visit each other for one year and to do a kind deed every day.*

14. What were the benefits of waiting for a year to get married? *Isabella had a chance to get to know Steven better and see if he was truly as he portrayed himself.*

15. How did the people in the kingdom benefit from Isabella's choice in a husband? *They prospered and were successful because of the wise leadership of their kind king and queen.*