Four Anabaptist Martyr Stories for Children

Stories of Faith

Based on Martyrs’ Mirror Accounts

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Lands of the early Anabaptists
Living in Switzerland in the sixteen and seventeen hundreds was not easy. The churches were in a turmoil, and everything people did was watched with suspicion. A girl named Madlen lived in a town called Oberhofen. Her father’s business was making clothes for rich nobles. For as long as Madlen could remember, her father, Jacob, studied his Bible every chance he had. He often told her and her sisters and brothers how he and their mother had saved up for the precious Book for a long time. Late at night Madlen could hear them talking about the things they read. One night Madlen woke up and saw her father slip out the door, leaving her mother with a worried look as she knelt beside their bed in silent prayer. As quietly as she could, Madlen eased out of her bed and slipped to her side.

“Aren’t you sleeping?” Mother asked her, trying to smile. Her eyes looked worried.
Jacob sewed clothing for the rich townspeople in his tailor shop.
“Where did Father go?” Madlen wondered. “It’s so late and so dark. Will he be back soon?”

“It might be very late by the time he comes home. You should try to go to sleep. We don’t want to wake the others,” Mother replied, with a glance towards the shadowy corner where the rest of the family slept.

“But…where did Father go?” Madlen persisted. Something was not right.

Mother sighed. She looked down at her folded hands. “You are one of the oldest, so perhaps it would be good for you to know. We have been feeling for a long time that God wants more for us than what we hear preached in church. Last week Father spoke with a friend in town. He invited Father to go along to an Anabaptist meeting.”

Madlen gasped. “Surely not, Mother!” she managed to say. “Those people are being put in prison and killed!” Tears welled up in her eyes. “And now Father has gone to a service?”

Mother nodded silently.
Madlen’s brother and sister are asleep in their beds as Father leaves.
The rest of the night Madlen stayed up with Mother, praying for Father’s safety. At the first faint hint of dawn, a rattle sounded at the door and Father slipped inside. Madlen and her mother clung to his arms. His coat was cold and smelled of fresh mountain air.

Father was tired, but there was a joy in his eyes that Madlen had never seen before.

He smiled wearily and looked at his wife. “I think I’ve found what we’ve been looking for! Let me tell you both about it…”
Jacob returns safely as morning dawns
The months sped by for Madlen. Father attended every meeting he could. Some were many miles away. Mother sometimes went with him, so Madlen and her older sister Verena watched over the other children. Their parents told them the truths they were learning and the wonderful peace they had found. In the midst of the whispers of people being captured, killed, and imprisoned, Madlen felt comforted.

“Whatever happens, God will be with us,” her parents promised.