

Parable Time

Rewarding Laziness

Themes • Responsibility

 20 min

 6 char

In the heart of the woods, a lumberjack earnestly works to provide for his precious daughter and three lazy sons. Pete, Frank, and Billy make plenty of excuses to avoid doing their chores around the yard. After much patience, their father can no longer ignore their lack of responsibility, and decides to give his sons one last chance to redeem their poor behavior. How they choose to respond to their father's clever test will determine the fate of their reward. This relatable, humor-filled story teaches the importance of approaching every assignment with diligence and integrity, not just in day-to-day tasks, but also in our service to others.

Rewarding Laziness

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

NARRATOR	(any)	
FATHER	(male)	Lumberjack
PETE	(male)	Oldest son
FRANK	(male)	Middle son
BILLY	(male)	Youngest son
MARTHA	(female)	Daughter

TIME AND SETTING

Timeless cottage in the forest

NARRATOR:

Deep in the woods where trees stood tall, the bunnies played and birds would call. There in a clearing where deer would roam, that's where you'd find the lumberjack's home. It was a nice little home, cozy and tight, simple, but still, a beautiful sight. Now, every day, at six in the morning, the lumberjack left to go make an earning.

(FATHER grabs his ax and exits)

NARRATOR:

He worked very hard, all through the day, to put bread on the table, to keep hunger away. When he left for the woods, his children would stay: Pete, Frank and Billy, and Martha Gourmet.

(PETE, FRANK and BILLY enter)

BILLY:

Oh, why does Father need this fence painted anyways. It looks perfectly fine as it is.

FRANK:

He just wants to keep us busy, that's all.

BILLY:

Nobody ever comes through here, who's gonna care if it's painted or not.

FRANK:

A waste of time is what I call it.

PETE:

You two better quit your complaining. Father said it has to be done, it has to be done.

FRANK:

Who made you boss? You're over here acting like you actually do anything.

PETE:

I'm the oldest. Father left me in charge.

BILLY:

Well if you're in charge, Mister Pete, then you paint it.

PETE:

Don't get smart with me, Billy. I'll tell Father what you did in the barn last night, and then we'll see who's still running their mouth.

BILLY:

Hmmh.

FRANK:

Well Father told all of us to paint it, and that includes you.

PETE:

Quiet Frank. You still owe me too.

FRANK:

Owe you for what? You got nothing on me.

PETE:

For that time I didn't snitch on you for taking Father's rifle out to the woods.

FRANK:

That was weeks ago.

PETE:

Boy if he finds out, you're gonna get a whoopin' so bad you won't be able to sit for a week.

FRANK:

That's all you ever say, you can't think of anything new.

PETE:

That's what I thought. Now get to work, both of you.

BILLY:

This isn't fair. Pete never does anything.

FRANK:

Yeah, well neither do you. I'm the only one that ever does anything around this place.

BILLY:

You got some nerve. I do more work than you and Pete combined.

FRANK:

Be quiet Billy. Everybody knows you don't do squat.

BILLY:

Don't do squat? Are you kidding me? You two always make me do your chores, just because I'm the youngest.

FRANK:

Well that's only fair. You're the one that wants to hang out with us.

BILLY:

You know what, I'm not doing anything.

FRANK:

Get back here.

BILLY:

No.

FRANK:

Pete, tell him.

BILLY:

You can paint the fence yourself. You're the only one that works around here, remember?

FRANK:

Get over here right now.

BILLY:

You don't tell me what to do.

FRANK:

I said, get up.

BILLY:

Back off!

PETE:

Stop it, both of you. I don't care who does it, that fence better be painted by the time Father gets home.

FRANK:

That fence can paint itself. I'm not doing it.

BILLY:

Well neither am I.

(MARTHA enters)

MARTHA:

Pete, why are you all just sitting around? Shouldn't you be doing your chores?

PETE:

We're taking a break.

MARTHA:

A break? From what? It doesn't look like you even touched that fence since yesterday.

PETE:

Sure did.

MARTHA:

What were you guys doing all morning? You didn't even finish the first coat.

PETE:

Don't worry about it.

MARTHA:

Well, you guys better finish it by the time Father gets home. You know he won't be happy to see it like this.

PETE:

Martha, maybe you want to paint the fence?

MARTHA:

Well you see...

PETE:

I didn't think so. Go inside and worry about your own chores.

MARTHA:

Oh, I knew I forgot something...Pete, can you please get me some potatoes from the garden?

PETE:

I can't. I need to paint the fence.

MARTHA:

Frank, can you? It shouldn't take too long.

FRANK:

I don't have time. I need to clean the chicken coop.

MARTHA:

Billy, would you be a dear and grab me some?

BILLY:

Sorry Martha, but I need to sweep the porch.

MARTHA:

Well alright, but don't be complaining if supper is late.

(Martha exits)

FRANK:

Hey Pete, let's go down to the waterhole for a swim.

PETE:

The fence isn't painted Frank, and the coop isn't clean.

FRANK:

Billy can do it.

BILLY:

Yeah right.

FRANK:

Billy, tell you what, if you finish the fence and clean the coop, you can come with us.

BILLY:

No, that's gonna take too long.

FRANK:

Fine. You can do it when we get back.

BILLY:

Deal.

FRANK:

Promise you'll do it?

BILLY:

I promise.

FRANK:

You better.

PETE:

If Father gets back and it's not done, boy you're in for it.

FRANK:

Don't sweat it, he'll get it done.

(Pete, Frank and Billy exit)

NARRATOR:

Day by day the boys were lazy, doing chores would drive them crazy. Back and forth they went all day, they didn't work, they'd only play. Their sister, however, was not lazy at all, she did all her chores while her brothers played ball. Although she was young, she really worked hard, she cooked, and she cleaned, and worked in the yard.

(Martha enters)

MARTHA:

Where did those boys run off to now? Oh, Father will be so upset.

NARRATOR:

The hours went by, and the clock would tick on. Martha made supper, but the boys were still gone. Now their father came home from gathering wood. Today he was early, his chopping was good.

(Father enters)

FATHER:

Boys, Pete, Frank. Give me a hand, will you? Billy, I'm home...hmm...Martha, my dear, did you see your brothers?

MARTHA:

Father, you're home early today.

FATHER:

I am. The Lord has been gracious to me.

MARTHA:

That's wonderful. Supper will be ready in just a minute.

FATHER:

Where's Pete, and the boys?

MARTHA:

I'm not sure. I thought they were doing their chores.

NARRATOR:

Their father stepped out to check if they finished. As he came to the yard, his smile diminished. The coop wasn't cleaned. The porch wasn't swept. The fence wasn't painted. He was very upset. After a minute, he came back so sad. His sons were just lazy, it made him so mad.

FATHER:

Lazy! That's what they are. Can't do a single thing I ask them.

MARTHA:

What's the matter, Father?

FATHER:

The fence isn't painted and the coop isn't clean. I told Pete to get it done.

MARTHA:

Don't be upset, I'm sure they'll get it done.

FATHER:

Martha, that fence has been there a week. They're lazy, that's all. Father works in the sun, sweaty and tired, while his sons sit around and eat their fill. No! It's time I sent them to work. They need to learn what real life is. All they know is play.

MARTHA:

Supper is ready, Father.

FATHER:

Oh, why couldn't they be more like you, Martha? You're as sweet as your mother was. I don't know what I'd do without you.

MARTHA:

Give them time, they'll get to it.

FATHER:

Time? I gave them time. It's time I teach them a lesson.

MARTHA:

Let's pray.

NARRATOR:

They sat down to eat, and enjoyed a good meal. Supper was tasty, it was close to ideal. Now the sun was still up, it had yet to grow dim, and the lumberjack's sons came from their swim. Their father was home, but their chores were not done. They knew they'd messed up, but had nowhere to run.

(Pete, Frank and Billy enter)

PETE:

Father's home!

FRANK:

No, he wasn't supposed to be back until sunset.

PETE:

Now we're in for it.

FRANK:

This ain't good, this ain't good.

PETE:

It's your fault Frank. I knew we should have stayed and finished.

FRANK:

My fault? I told you to leave an hour ago. You were too busy chasing frogs.

PETE:

Now what am I gonna tell him?

FRANK:

We don't have to go in.

PETE:

Yes we do.

FRANK:

Let's just sleep in the barn.

PETE:

No, then he'll know for sure we were up to no good.

FRANK:

We'll then think of something.

PETE:

Go in and tell him we went looking for Billy because he ran after the dog in the woods.

FRANK:

He won't buy it.

PETE:

Go.

FRANK:

No.

PETE:

Billy, go in and tell him we ran out of paint.

BILLY:

I'm not gonna lie to Father.

PETE:

I said go in.

BILLY:

No, you go in and tell him the truth.

FRANK:

Billy, you promised to do our chores if we took you.

BILLY:

We were supposed to be back before Father came home.

FRANK:

Get in there.

FATHER:

Pete, is that you?

BILLY:

Father! You're home!

FATHER:

Where have you guys been?

BILLY:

I missed you so much.

FATHER:

Billy, what's gotten into you?

BILLY:

I love you Father.

FATHER:

Pete, you know I left you in charge. Why didn't you get your chores done?

PETE:

H..h..hi Father, well, uhhh, you see, you're not going to believe this, but uh, basically...we were painting the fence, and then you know the neighbor's dog, you know how he is, he came running after Billy, and...and Frank and I chased him off with a stick, but that old dog spilled the paint can all over, so we had to go down to the neighbors and ask them for some paint, but they didn't have any, so we went down to the market to see if we can find some, and we did, so we came back. But don't worry Father, we'll get it done, first thing in the morning.

FATHER:

Frank, is that true?

FRANK:

Yessir.

FATHER:

I'm going to the market tomorrow morning to pick up some supplies. I'm gonna need that wheelbarrow unloaded before I leave.

BILLY:

Father, can I come?

FATHER:

You didn't sweep the porch, Billy.

BILLY:

I'll do it, I promise. I'll help Martha in the kitchen too.

FRANK:

Can I go too Father? It's about time I get my allowance.

FATHER:

The coop isn't clean, Frank.

FRANK:

Billy promised he'll do it...[gets pushed]...I...I mean, I'll do it. I promise. I can do it after we get back from the market.

PETE:

I need my share too. I haven't been paid for over a week.

FATHER:

Pete, I've been asking you to paint that fence for a week and it's still sitting there. I even asked Frank and Billy to help you because you were too busy doing who knows what.

PETE:

But Paps, I already told you what happened.

FATHER:

No. No one's going to the market tomorrow. All of you are going to finish your chores. No more excuses. Now off to bed, all of you. You got an early start tomorrow.

BILLY:

But we didn't have supper yet.

FATHER:

Good night.

MARTHA:

Good night, Father.

(Martha, Frank and Billy exit)

FATHER:

Pete, that cart better be empty by six, or you're all going hungry next week.

PETE:

Yessir.

FATHER:

And if those chores aren't done by the time I get back, I'm taking all of your allowances for a month.

PETE:

Yessir.

FATHER:

Good night.

(Pete exits)

NARRATOR:

The lumberjack's children went off to bed, but he stayed up late, to think, and he said:

FATHER:

What must I do? When will they learn? I work very hard for the money I earn.

NARRATOR:

He thought and he wondered what would be best. That's when it hit him, he'd give them a test.

FATHER:

I know how to check who is lazy at heart. I'll hide their allowance inside of the cart.

NARRATOR:

So the lumberjack hid three coins in the cart, one for each son, if they should be smart. Those who are lazy will go without pay, but those who work hard, can go on to play. His plan was now set, so he put out the light. He went off to bed and slept through the night.

(Father exits)

NARRATOR:

Early next morning, before the sun rose, Martha got up, and put on her clothes. She went to the kitchen and started to sweep. Her brothers, however, were still sound asleep.

(Martha enters)

MARTHA:

Pete, Frank, Billy! It's time to get up. Father needs the cart cleared to go to the market...You guys better hurry up before Father gets here, it's almost six.

(Frank and Billy enter)

BILLY:

This ain't fair. I wanna sleep.

FRANK:

I didn't have breakfast yet.

MARTHA:

You guys can eat when you finish. If that cart isn't empty, you won't eat for a week. Where's Pete?

FRANK:

He's not coming.

MARTHA:

How come?

FRANK:

He made me and Billy do it.

BILLY:

Yeah, just cuz he's the oldest.

MARTHA:

That's not right.

FRANK:

You're right Martha, he can do it himself. Father put Pete in charge. I'm going back to bed.

BILLY:

Me too.

MARTHA:

Well someone has to do it.

FRANK:

Then you go do it.

(Frank and Billy exit)

MARTHA:

Me? The cart is too heavy for me. Guys, come back. Oh come on. Mmmm...come on...Pete, come out and give me a hand.

NARRATOR:

Martha, their sister, was not lazy at heart, she used all her strength to unload the cart. Piece by piece, she stacked the wood, one by one, the best she could. Smaller and smaller, the pile diminished, just a little bit more, she was nearing the finish. That's when she saw a small little bag, there at the bottom, attached was a tag.

(Pete, Frank and Billy enter)

PETE:

Looks like you got it all taken care of. Good.

FRANK:

Yep.

BILLY:

All finished Pete, just as you see.

PETE:

Martha, what are you doing out here? Shouldn't you be making breakfast?

MARTHA:

Pete, where have you been? I needed your help.

PETE:

Help?

MARTHA:

Oh, never mind. Look what I found in the cart.

BILLY:

Sweet! Our allowance!

MARTHA:

Hey, give it back!

PETE:

I'll take that.

MARTHA:

I found it.

PETE:

Well it's rightfully ours.

MARTHA:

No, it's Father's. He probably dropped it on accident.

PETE:

Finders, keepers.

(Father enters)

FATHER:

Hold it right there, Pete.

PETE:

Father! Look what I found in the cart after unloading the wood. Perhaps you misplaced it?

FATHER:

You should be ashamed of yourselves, all of you. Making your sister unload the cart?

PETE:

But Father..

FATHER:

Not another word Pete. I put your allowances in the cart to test you. If you had unloaded the cart, you would have earned your allowance for the week. Instead, you were lazy. You made Martha do your work.

FRANK:

But Pa, I was just about to help her.

BILLY:

Yeah, me too.

FATHER:

All of your allowances go to Martha. I'm taking her with me to the market. As for the rest of you, get to work. If I return and your chores aren't done, you'll lose a lot more than your allowance, and I mean it.

(Father and Martha exit)

NARRATOR:

So the lumberjack left, while his sons stayed to clean. Martha, however, felt like a queen. Thus is the outcome for those who work hard, it's a matter of time till they see their reward. But those who are lazy and don't do their part, are left disappointed and empty at heart.

(End scene)