**Tears of Joy**

By Kim McCarthy

Recently, I was asked to help out at my Churches Missions Store. A family from Columbia, South America, with five small children aged 2 to 6, needed entertaining while their parents shopped in peace. I asked the parents if playing ball with the children would be ok, and I got a resounding "yes." So, holding hands, we were off to find Miss Sandra, our Children's Ministry Director, to see if she had a ball we could play with. Sure, I have a ball, what color would you like? The kid's eyes were filled with excitement. "I said, I think the blue one will work." I gave the ball to the oldest child, Santiago, and backed away with my hands held out to receive his initial toss.  Much to my surprise and disappointment, he threw it down instead of throwing it back to me.  In the nano-second between actions, I thought, "Did you not want to play ball?" Then, all of a sudden, the ball sailed past me on the floor after I received a swift kick from Santiago. You would have thought it was the opening kick of the World Cup!  I laughed at myself as that possibility had eclipsed me!  "Playing ball" to me, a vintage 66-year-old, single, childless woman who was a kid long before soccer leagues for children became part of America's fabric, meant using your upper body appendages to play. It never dawned on me that these kids could understand what it meant differently.

Well, the children started playing by kicking the ball back and forth. But with the passion for the sport, another sibling, Maria, would be in the wrong place at the wrong time and would inadvertently be knocked down by Santiago as they both tried to get a foot on the ball. The crocodile tears began flowing. I went over to them, and my heart melted when, in trust, Maria raised her arms to me for comfort.  She didn't know me from "Adam's house cat"!  I quickly scooped her up in my arms.  Eventually, her river of tears on my shoulder became a dried-up brook, and her cries subsided to whimpers.  By the time her mother had finished shopping, she had fallen into a blissful sleep.  When I returned Maria to her mother, she hugged me tightly before letting go as if to say, "Thanks!  I love ya!!!" Wow, now it was my turn to cry, but with tears of joy. While I am not a mother, I know God has put the instincts of comforting children in my heart. I am thankful that God reminds me in his word that he is our shield, our refuge in a time of discomfort.

Psalm 91:4

He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

Kim McCarthy is a single, retired engineer living in Greensboro, NC. She loves to serve the Lord in various ways. She also has a fun sense of humor that allows her to see things differently than most---helping her to calm the stress of others with her witty personality.

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