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Mary *Sings* and Darcie *Doodles*

By Eugene H. Maze

“The next word is *vegetable*,” announced Mrs. Whittaker to her third-grade class.

Vegetable was the second word on the written spelling test. All the students were ready to write down the word *vegetable* because the first word was *cat* and everyone knew how to spell *cat*.

Well, not all the students were ready for the second word. Darcie wrote her answer: K ... A ... T.

But even though Mrs. Whittaker had moved on to the second word, Darcie wasn't so sure of her answer. She looked at it on the page for such a long time. By the time Mrs. Whittaker said *vegetable*, Darcie had already given up. *Vegetable* would be impossible. So she simply started doodling on the lined paper on her desk.

Mary heard that *vegetable* was the next word on the list, but she was busy staring at the wallpaper in the corner of the classroom because, once again, she had disrupted the class with her constant talking and fidgeting. And once again she was being punished for her behavior.

T “Young lady,” Mrs. Whittaker had announced, “you can just go sit in the corner. You know the one.”

“But, Mrs. Whittaker, I will stop. I promise.”

“Go ahead now; scoot on over in the corner. You will miss the spelling test. Maybe this time you will see that by disrupting the class you are only hurting yourself.”

Darcie was outlining a carrot on the page where she had just written *KAT*. Her mother had told her that if she could “see” the word in her mind or imagine what the word looked like, maybe that would help her spell better. But it didn’t help Darcie—not at all—because how could she imagine a vegetable? There are so many different vegetables to choose from. So she drew a picture of a carrot. That was the first vegetable she thought about. But now Darcie was aware that even though a carrot was a vegetable, it wasn’t the same word as *vegetable*, so how was that going to help? It was always so hard for Darcie to do well on her tests. Always!

She looked very hard at that carrot and decided to give it long leaves on its top and then draw little eyes near the top. Next, she drew arms and feet on the carrot and gave it the ability to dance. The imaginary carrot danced across the page, hopped off the page, and skipped around on Darcie’s desk.

In the meantime, Mary was humming a new song that she had written while staring at the wallpaper. The vegetable garden song sounded a lot like “Happy Birthday,” but that was all right with Mary because most of her songs sounded like “Happy Birthday.”

“Mary!” Mrs. Whittaker said. “Be quiet. You are disturbing the class again.”

Mary went back to humming softly and wondered if she would be able to play the vegetable garden song on her piano at home.

The carrot jumped off Darcie’s desk, danced across the floor, ran to the front of the class, and jumped up on the windowsill. Mr. Carrot turned and waved goodbye to Darcie, then jumped to freedom. Darcie hurriedly wrote *VEDJUTBUL* next to the 2 on her spelling test and waited for the next word. But they were already on the fourth word. What was the third word? Oh no!

Darcie hated spelling. She hated school. She wanted to follow the carrot out the window. When she got home, she was going to ask her mom if she could borrow the sewing machine because she was going to make a carrot puppet. It would have a heart and everything. But it would

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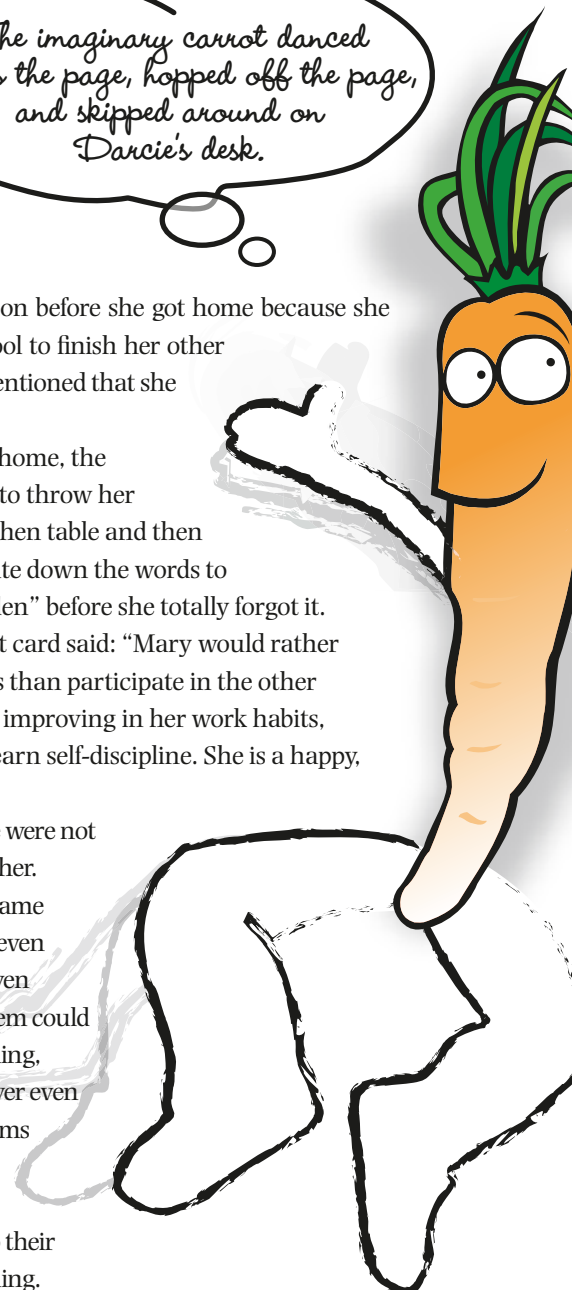
be late in the afternoon before she got home because she had to stay after school to finish her other schoolwork. Was it mentioned that she hated school?

When Mary got home, the first thing she did was to throw her report card on the kitchen table and then run to her room to write down the words to “In My Vegetable Garden” before she totally forgot it. Here is what the report card said: “Mary would rather sing and draw pictures than participate in the other school subjects. She is improving in her work habits, but she still needs to learn self-discipline. She is a happy, uninhibited child.”

Mary and Darcie were not in the same class together. They were not in the same grade. They were not even in the same school. Even though neither of them could concentrate on learning, Mary and Darcie never even had the same problems in school because they each had their unique responses to their struggles with learning.

Eventually, however, Mary and Darcie grew up. And guess what? They became the very real grown-ups we know as Mary Rice Hopkins and Darcie Maze. The very talents that got them into so much trouble in school many years earlier are the talents that have allowed them to minister to children and teachers all over the world. God knew what He was doing.

If only the teachers had been able to recognize those hidden talents! There are students like Mary and Darcie in your classrooms today. Darcie and Mary are perfect examples of how the Lord can use those “troubled” children. All teachers know that their



classrooms are filled with children with different personalities, different learning curves, and unique problems. How can teachers minister to all those different children at the same time and with just one curriculum, usually assigned by a school board?

There is no easy answer, of course. And all teachers know that it is not about what they teach but whom they teach. As the saying reminds us, we can learn to work smarter, not harder. Wouldn't it be great if a couple of people could visit their former teachers and offer them a better perspective on how to reach and teach those students who "need to learn self-discipline"?

Mary grew up to become a talented musician who teaches kids through song about the love of God. She has written hundreds of songs and has published many books for children. Darcie grew up to become a gifted puppeteer and speaker. The very things that Darcie was worst at—writing and speaking—have become her greatest contributions to the Lord's work.

So here are some thoughts for teachers from two grown-up children who would like teachers to spend more time with the children who are a lot like they were:

1. Sometimes, children's greatest strengths are hidden in their learning challenges.
2. Your words shape your children. According to the Word of God, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Proverbs 18:21, NASB).
3. There is enough punishment dished out by the world that surrounds today's children. Let your attitude provide hope for all children, and find

ways to reward them for their creativity and to encourage them to use it.

4. Jesus will use children's apparent weaknesses as much as He will use their strengths.
5. Hidden talents usually accompany rebellion in the young heart. Find ways to help your students direct their talents and gifts toward God's calling.
6. Carrots can dance and sing, and, sometimes, CAT can be spelled KAT.

Can you imagine that Jesus would tell a child to sit in the corner for talking too much? It is true that children need discipline and that at times the role of the teacher is to administer that discipline. But maybe, if we were to follow Jesus' example, we would sit in the corner with little Mary, or offer little Darcie a box of crayons to give a little color to that carrot that she is going to draw—whether you want her to or not!

In the young heart, God-given talents may be hidden in apparent rebellion, in a lack of self-discipline, or in the inability to spell words correctly. Eventually, that talent will surface. Then it will have been the attitude of the teacher as much as the student that helped shape the direction that the talent took in the child's grown-up life. So find a place for Mary to sing merrily and a place for Darcie to doodle happily. ☺

Written by **Eugene H. Maze**, as told by **Mary Rice Hopkins** and **Darcie Maze**. Eugene is a freelance writer and a member of the Christian Writer's Guild. You can contact him by visiting www.ehylmazemaze.com.

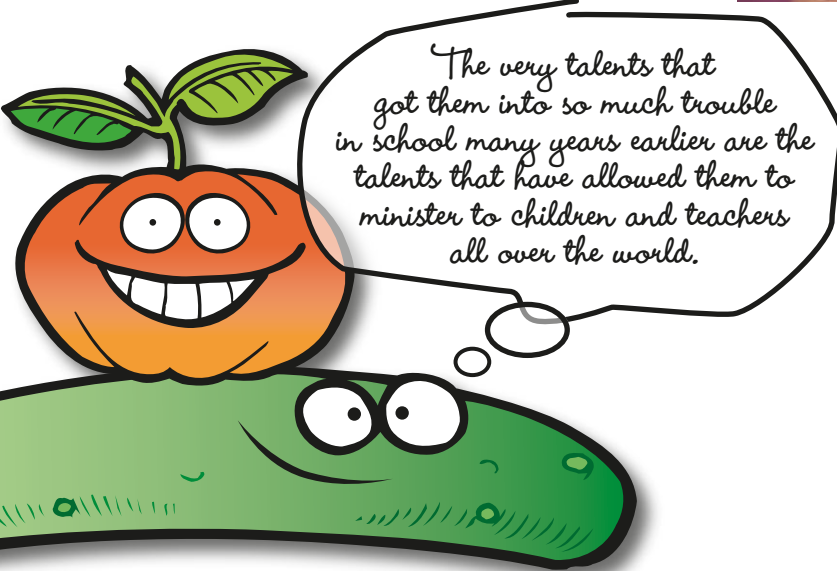


Mary Rice Hopkins, BA, is a renowned children's musician who has an amazing list of accomplishments and testimonies. She received the Lifetime Achievement award from her alma mater, Point Loma Nazarene University, in 1998. Her musical stylings have been the perfect answer for children's church and family camps. Mary's music goes beyond merely entertaining children; it touches and moves them. You can contact her by visiting www.maryricehopkins.com.



Darcie Maze became an ordained minister after studying child evangelism at Christ for the Nations Institute and Life Bible College. She is the creator and designer of Puppets with a Heart (Amaze Healing Wings puppets), and she has been teaching puppetry for many years. You can contact her by visiting www.puppetswithaheart.com.

Mary and **Darcie** have combined their unique talents and gifts by performing concerts in several church venues, as well as by traveling to church conferences and conventions all over the world.



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