

## Nathan and the Purple Cow



Every day, Nathan rode on the bus to school. Most of the time he and the other kids had fun on the bus, laughing and visiting with each other. However, sometimes there would be an empty seat because one of the children was not going to school on that day.

Some of the boys and girls would talk about the kid who was absent. They would say that he was sick, and then they would begin talking all about the sickness. Nathan was learning in Sunday school that sickness is unreal. He knew this because he had learned that God made everything, and everything that God made was good. So anything that wasn't good was nothing, just a lie. Nathan didn't believe lies, nor did he tell lies about anyone or anything.

One night, just before he went to bed, Nathan talked with his mother about all the talking on the bus. "Mother," he said, "there were three children absent from school today. The boys on the bus said that the disease the kids had was very catching. I don't want to believe it—really I don't—but they seemed like they were so sure about it."

His mother sat down on the edge of his bed. "Nathan Dear," she said, "did you ever see a purple cow with yellow polka dots?" Nathan laughed and said of course he hadn't. "Neither have I," Mother said. "But if I were in some place where people were talking about things that I knew for sure were not true, like a purple cow with yellow polka dots, then no matter how much they talked, I still wouldn't believe it." Nathan said that he wouldn't believe it either because it was just a lie. "But the boys on the bus don't really think that they are lying," he said.

Mother said that of course they didn't mean to tell lies. They did not understand the truth about sickness, so Nathan needed to be loving toward them and not judge them. There was something else that he could do that would help. It was just to know that what the boys were saying about sickness was not true. Nathan didn't need to say anything to them. All he had to do was to guard his thinking about the lies and not let them in.

A few days later, Nathan ran into the house and told his mother what had happened. He said, "One of the kids didn't get on the bus, and the boys started talking about how sick he was. I said to myself: 'That's a lie, and if it's a lie, then it isn't true and it can't hurt me or anyone. So I had better slam the door on it right now and not let it into my thinking.'" Then I began talking to the boy next to me about the basketball game. Right away, everyone started to talk about the game, and no one mentioned sickness the rest of the way to school."

Nathan did not become sick, nor did the other children on the bus. Mother was so thankful that Nathan had been able to help protect himself and his friends from error. "No matter how often you see error or hear it," she reminded him, "always remember that any kind of error is no more real than a purple cow with yellow polka dots." "And," said Nathan, "we mustn't forget that it never was real."

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*Genesis 1:31 "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good."*