



# FOREVER CHANGED BY THE BOOK

*The Jo Shetler Story*

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*Teacher:* The chapter titles are given to distinguish major events or people in this story. If you announce the title of each chapter prior to telling the story, it will be anticlimatic. Chapter titles are only for the teacher's benefit.

## Chapter 1

### “Just Do It, Jo!”

The truck engine roared to a start when seven-year-old Joanne turned the key in the ignition. She sputtered, *Now what? I don't know how to drive this truck!* Joanne, Jo as her friends called her, panicked. *What were Dad's blunt instructions?* “*Get the truck,*” he'd said. “*Drive it to me in the field.*” When she protested that she didn't know how, he'd told her, “*I didn't ask if you knew how. I just told you to do it!*”



#### Show Illustration #1

Once the motor was humming, Jo fiddled with her foot until she found the clutch and pushed down on it. Then she yanked the stick shift from neutral straight into second gear and eased up on the clutch. The pickup lurched ahead

like a bucking bronco. Jo worked the unfamiliar pedals until the truck steadied and moved forward.

She stared through the windshield in fear and amazement. “How'd I do that?” she gasped. “Oh, who cares! The truck's going!” She aimed the truck for the open fence gate and got through it. Her dad waited in the massive field near a high mound of garden weeds they'd uprooted earlier.

“The brake! Where's the brake? I've got to stop this thing!” she cried, wide-eyed with fear. Finding the brake, Jo shoved it down with both feet and all her weight.

Jo's dad jumped out of the way as the truck careened toward him and abruptly stalled. He wasn't happy. Jo wasn't catching on to driving like his two sons had when they were young. Though it was a rough ride, Jo had done it exactly as her dad had required.

Trembling, she didn't look at her dad as she slid out of the cab. Without a word between them, they silently piled the weeds high on the truck bed.

Joanne lived with her parents and brothers, Wayne and Art, on their thousand-acre farm in central California. There were so many fields, valleys, fruit orchards, and woods that one could barely see the rooftops of the closest neighbors.

One Friday afternoon several years later when Jo was eleven, she and her brothers were riding home on the school bus. As they bolted down the bus steps, the driver, Pastor Brown, called after them, “Hey, kids, we're having some special children's meetings all next week at church after school. Ask your folks if you can attend them. You'd love the Gospel magician! I'll bring you back home each day if they say it's okay.”

“Okay,” said Wayne as the Shetler kids waved and ran towards their farmhouse. The kids were hesitant to ask for time off from afternoon farm chores to attend the kids' meetings for five afternoons straight. But they would ask anyway.

Wayne, Art and Jo filed in as the porch screen closed with a bang. Mrs. Shetler, home from her shift as head nurse at the local hospital, greeted the children as they dropped their schoolbooks and lunch boxes on the kitchen counter. The boys quickly changed into work clothes, ate a snack and headed outdoors to do their jobs. Jo went after the cows to herd them in for the five o'clock milking.



#### Show Illustration #2

Then, back in the kitchen, Jo grabbed her apron and tied it behind her. “I love working in the kitchen with you, Mom.”

“Are you glad it's Friday?” Jo's mom inquired.

“Yeah,” Jo said. “You know that I like school, but by Friday I feel like one of those cooped-up chickens out in the hen house.”

Mrs. Shetler laughed. “Mix up a batch of biscuits,” she instructed, “and then go take care of those cooped-up chickens. Laddie is waiting outside for you. He'd love a good run.”

“Okay.” Soon a cloud of white flour swirled in the air around Jo's face. “Mom, as a nurse, what's it like to give a shot to a patient? Did you ever see a person die? Maybe I'll grow up and be a nurse—a good one—just like you, Mom.”

Mrs. Shetler gave Jo a loving look. “I think you'd make a great nurse, Joanne.” Giving her daughter a gentle whack, she added, “Now, get busy. You've got to take care of those animals before dinner.”

Jo dashed from the house and headed for the barn. She whistled for Laddie. The collie dog shook himself from sleep and bounded towards Jo. They ran side by side to the chicken house. Jo finished her chores and returned to help her mom fix dinner. Then she called the family in to eat.



#### Show Illustration #3

When the Shetler family was seated around the dinner table, Art and Wayne dug into the beef stew and biscuits. It appeared as if they'd not eaten all day.

“Slow down a bit, Wayne, or you won't be getting any birthday cake,”

their dad warned.

The kids never talked back to their parents. But Wayne got up his nerve and blurted out, “Dad, Joanne already stole my candy bar earlier today. Please, I want a piece of my birthday cake!”

Jo's brothers glared at her. Her face turned bright red with