

# **Trouble with Lent**

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## **Introduction**

Nicholas and Samantha Perry are twins. Nicholas is usually called Nick and Samantha is called Sam. They are both eight years old. They have a ten-year-old sister named Lizzy. Lizzy is short for Elizabeth. They also have a twelve-year-old brother named Andrew. Their parents are named Jon and Belle.

Nick and Sam have a good friend named Brad Wilkes. Brad comes to their house to play. He sometimes leads Nick and Sam into trouble.

Early last summer the Perry family moved from Denver to a town called Hope Springs. Hope Springs is near the

Rocky Mountains in Colorado. It is a town that has a lot of fun things to do.

Their church is called St. Clare of Assisi Catholic Church. Nick and Sam attend the church school next door. Father Cliff Montgomery is the new pastor at St. Clare's. He is young and full of energy. Sam says he is handsome. Nick says he is smart. Dad says he looks too young to be a pastor.

Deacon Chuck Crosby is older and helps Father Cliff a lot. Norm Sullivan is the handyman for the church and the adjoining school. He is friendly and has an unusual way of thinking about things.

Nick and Sam like Hope Springs. They visited relatives there when they were growing up. Now they are happy to live there.

Our stories tell about Nick's and Sam's life in Hope Springs. Maybe theirs is a lot like yours.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **Pancakes & Promises**

Nick looked down at the golden brown pancake on his plate. A smiley face of chocolate chips smiled back at him. He reached for the bowl that held more chocolate chips.

“Don’t overdo it,” his mom warned him.

The Perry family was sitting at the kitchen table for dinner. They didn’t normally eat pancakes for dinner. This meal was special because it was “Shrove Tuesday.” Shrove Tuesday was the day





when many Christians prepared for the season of Lent.

Nick's mom put pancakes on everyone's plates while they talked.

"Why is it called Shrove Tuesday?" Nick's twin sister Sam asked. "I don't remember."

Nick's father looked at Andrew and Lizzy. Andrew was Nick's oldest brother. Lizzy was Nick's older sister. "One of you two should answer," he said.

Lizzy said, "The word 'shrove' means 'absolve.'"

"What does the word 'absolve' mean?" he asked.

Andrew said, "It means 'to be forgiven' or 'to be set free from guilt.' Just like we are absolved by the priest when we go to Confession."

"Very good," Mrs. Perry said.

"Pass the syrup," Nick asked Sam, then remembered to add "please."

Sam passed the bottle of syrup and

groaned. “You’re going to put syrup on *that?*”

“Yep.” Nick began to squeeze syrup all over the chocolate-chip-smiley-face pancake.

Nick flexed his left hand. He moved his wrist back and forth. He had been wearing a cast on his wrist for almost two months because of a fall he’d taken.<sup>1</sup> The doctor took the cast off that morning.

“How does it feel?” Mr. Perry asked.

“Kind of stiff,” Nick said.

“The doctor gave you a sheet of special exercises to do,” Mrs. Perry reminded him. “You have to start right away. We’ll take you to a physical therapist next week.”

“It seems okay to me.” Nick picked up his fork and took a big bite of his pancake.

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<sup>1</sup> For that story, read *The Adventures of Nick & Sam 3: The Best Advent Ever*

“In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” Mr. Perry said as he did the Sign of the Cross.

Nick froze. He had forgotten to wait to pray.

“Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts, which we are about to receive from thy bounty,” the rest of the family said together. Nick mumbled. Then they finished with the Sign of the Cross again.

Nick didn’t look at the others. He chewed his pancake again.

“What do pancakes have to do with being forgiven?” Mr. Perry asked.

Andrew shifted in his chair. “People used to give up things like eggs and milk and flour and sugar for Lent. So they used up their supply on Shrove Tuesday.”

“Because tomorrow is Ash Wednesday,” Lizzy added. “And that’s when Lent really begins.”

Mrs. Perry said, "Your father and I have decided what we will give up for Lent this year."

Nick looked up. He hoped it wasn't going to be anything too hard.

"We're going to give up the television," his mom said.

Mr. Perry looked around the table. "Have you decided what you're giving up for Lent?"

Nick took another bite. He hadn't thought about it at all, even though Sister Lucy, his teacher, kept reminding them to.

"I'm giving up math," Andrew said.

The family laughed.

"Or, I'll give up watching television, too," he added.

"What about you, Lizzy?" Mr. Perry asked.

"I'm going to give up reading books that aren't about my faith," Lizzy said.

"Sam?"

Sam took a bite of bacon. "I'm going to give up eating hamburgers," she said.

Nick knew he was next. He didn't know what he should give up. He didn't want to give up anything.

His father coaxed him. "Nick?"

Nick looked down at his pancake. "I haven't decided."

"You should give up sweets," Sam said.

Nick shot a look at her.

"That's a good idea," Mrs. Perry said.

"Forty days without sweets?" Andrew said. "He can't do it."

Nick looked at his brother. "I can if I decide to do it."

"It's the healthy thing to do," said Mr. Perry. He thought for a moment. "How about this? I'll give up sweets if you will. We can help each other."

All eyes were on Nick. He wiggled in his chair.

“He can’t do it,” Andrew said again.

“I can too!”

“Don’t tease him,” Mrs. Perry said to Andrew. “It’s his choice.”

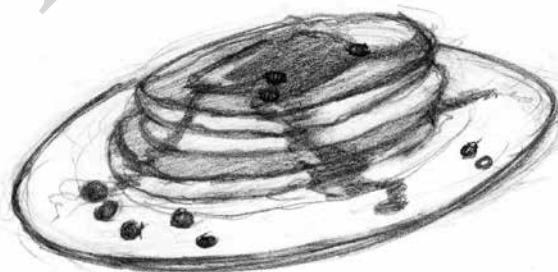
“Remember: we don’t fast during Lent just to fast,” Mr. Perry said. “We do it to get things out of the way of our relationship with God.”

Mrs. Perry said to Nick, “You don’t have to decide right now.”

Nick looked at Andrew like he’d taken a dare. “I’m giving up sweets,” he declared.

“So will I,” Mr. Perry said.

Nick grabbed some chocolate chips from the bowl and dropped them onto the last portion of his pancake.



“Ew,” Sam said.

“That’s enough,” said his mom.

Nick smiled. “I better eat them while I can.”



Later, Nick got ready for bed. His mind was racing. He felt twitchy because of all of the chocolate and syrup. He put on his pajamas and paced around his room.

He saw the sheet of exercises for his wrist sitting on his bed.

One exercise had him put his arm on a table and make a fist then move his fist up and down ten times as far as he could. Others had him put his palms up and down and straight out and around and bent this way and that five times and ten times and—

Nick tossed the sheet on his desk. *I don't need to do all of these. My wrist feels okay*, he thought.

Book Preview