

Tackling the Unexpected

Leaders must be resourceful, cool when the unexpected occurs, able to think on their feet, and get things back on track when plans go awry. This Christmas story illustrates the point.

A little boy had aspirations to be cast as Joseph in the school Nativity play, but he lost out to a classmate. The teacher in charge gave him the minor role of the innkeeper instead, and he was bitterly disappointed. During the weeks of rehearsal, he brooded and thought only of revenge.

On the evening of the performance, Joseph and Mary came on stage and knocked on the door of the inn. The innkeeper opened the door slightly, and Joseph spoke his line: "We seek board and lodging for the night." Then Joseph stepped back, awaiting the innkeeper's rebuff, "There is no room in the inn."

But the innkeeper had not pondered all these weeks for naught. Gleefully, he flung the door wide open and cried, "Come in! Come in! I can give you the best room in the house."

Joseph stared at the innkeeper. Then with great presence of mind, he said to Mary, "Stay here. I'll see what the room looks like." When he reappeared, he shook his head and said, "No way am I going to take my wife into a place like that. Come on, Mary, we'll sleep in the stable."

Things were back on track.

--Beecher Hunter