



Jerry and The J's Of Johnson's Creek

By Deborah Wassenberg

1. How Do I Know God Loves Me?

Jerry, The J's lead guitarist and singer, called out across the Johnson's Creek town hall. 'Thanks for coming kids. We'll see you back here at Kid's Club next week or in Church on Sunday. God bless you!'

He strummed the last down stroke on his guitar and then unplugged it as the kids trickled out of the hall to waiting parents. He looked over his left shoulder to Jandi on the keyboard.

'That went all right,' he smiled at her.

'Yeah,' said Jandi, 'the kids were really listening.'

Jerry addressed the whole band. 'We have to load out our equipment fast tonight,' he said. 'Mrs. Nicholls is waiting to decorate the hall.'

'Right,' nodded Jazz. She lifted the guitar strap over her head and rested her bass against an amplifier. 'Her daughter's getting married tomorrow and they're holding the reception in here. The whole district is invited.'

'And I'm DJ!' said Jax. He'd left his sound equipment at the other end of the hall to join the band on stage. 'I'm in charge of the music at the reception. And I'm getting paid for it.'

'Do they need a drummer?' asked Jericho. He jumped up from behind his drum kit but his boot caught the foot of the snare drum stand and he fell down. His fist, still clutching a drumstick, appeared over the top of the kit. 'I'm okay,' he called.

'No, sorry Jericho,' said Jax. 'No drum solos are needed this time. I'm trying out my new turntables,' and he made the sound effect of scratching a vinyl on a turntable. 'I can't wait.'

'Neither can Mrs Nicholls,' said Jazz nodding at the gathering of excited ladies at the hall entrance. 'Looks like all the Church ladies are on hand to help her.'

The band stowed their instruments in Jerry's dual cab Ute then returned to the stage to collect cords, stands and pedal decks as quickly as they could. Jerry was surprised when he felt a tap on his back. He turned around and looked down to find that one of the kids wanted him.

'Hey Amy, what are you still doing here?' he asked.

'I have a question,' said Amy.

'Okay, what is it?' asked Jerry.

'How do I know God loves me?'

Jerry's eyes widened in surprise. He looked across at Jericho, who looked at Jazz, who looked at Jax, who looked at Jandi, who looked back at Jerry. They all shrugged at him.

'Um, that's a great question,' Jerry nodded. 'I tell you what, I'll get back to you with the answer. Is that okay?'

Amy nodded. 'Okay,' she agreed and ran out of the hall.

'Whoa,' said Jerry.

'I know who can answer that question,' said Jericho.

'Reverend Mac!' they all cried.

'We'll all be at the Church for the wedding tomorrow,' said Jericho. 'We can ask Reverend Mac then!'

Jericho was so excited by his suggestion he tripped over a rolled-up extension lead and fell into the arms of Jax who caught him just before he toppled over the edge of the stage.

'I'm okay,' Jericho reassured them as Jax righted him.

'Okay J's,' said Jerry. 'See you at the Church.'

Reverend Mac adjusted his collar and looked out across the Church. It was packed with people from around the district. Some had taken days to travel from their cattle stations into town for the big event. The only person more nervous than Reverend Mac was the Bridegroom. Reverend Mac smiled at the bridegroom reassuringly and ran his eyes down the Groomsmen to see how they were holding up. He was taken aback to see Jerry standing at the end of the line.

'Jerry! What are you doing here?' asked Reverend Mac. 'You're not in the wedding party!'

Behind Jerry, standing in front of the first pew and blocking the view for the Bridegroom's family were the rest of The J's dressed in their best clothes. They waved at Reverend Mac.

'I know Reverend Mac,' said Jerry, 'but I have to ask you something.'

The organist began to play.

'You have to ask me now? The Bride has arrived. The wedding is about to start.'

'It will only take a second,' Jerry reassured him.

The congregation stood. The ladies were craning their necks to get a view of the Bride on her father's arm at the Church's front door.

'If I answer it will The J's stop hogging the front of the Church and let me get on with the ceremony?'

They all nodded.

'Okay, quick, what is it?'

'How do I know God loves me?'

'Easy,' said Reverend Mac. 'What's about to take place?'

Jandi poked her head between Groomsmen.

'A wedding!' she said.

'Yes, and marriage is a commitment,' said Reverend Mac. 'The Bride and Bridegroom are making vows that will commit them to each other in the sight of God. Today is lovey-dovey,' he said, 'and those lovey-dovey feelings will come and go.'

The Bridegroom looked nervously at Reverend Mac who caught sight of a Bridesmaid coming down the aisle.

'It's the commitment that's going to keep these two love birds together,' he said hurriedly. 'God is committed to loving you whether you feel Him or not. He sent His Son Jesus to die on the Cross so you could be with Him forever. That's how you know God loves you. Now, get going!'

'Thanks, Reverend Mac,' said Jerry, removing himself from the lineup of Groomsmen.

The rest of The J's dispersed just in time as Reverend Mac intoned, 'Dearly beloved we are gathered here in the sight of God, and in the presence of these witnesses, to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony.'

The following Friday night at Kid's Club, with all traces of the wedding reception cleared away, Jerry was back on stage sharing with the kids.

'Hi everyone. Last week Amy asked me an important question. How do I know God loves me? We hear that God loves us all the time. We take it for granted. But how do we know? God's love is not dependent on us. He loved us before the world began. He loved us before we knew He existed. God's love isn't a feeling because feelings change. God's love is a fact and He proved His love by sending His Son, Jesus Christ into the world. Jesus is the proof that God loves us because Jesus died on the Cross for the weak and the ungodly. He didn't die just for the people who loved Him, He died for the sins of the whole world! Do you know what God would love? If you were committed to Him. Put your faith in Jesus. It's the most important decision you will ever make!'

Jerry checked his bandmates, gave a nod and played a downstroke on his guitar.

'Come on everybody, it's time to praise the Lord!'