

## Silent Night

*You exalted me above those who rose against me; You delivered me from men of violence.  
2 Samuel 22:47-51 NIV*

*Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? O you of little faith! And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. Luke 12:24-25, 29-31*

In Silent Night, American soldiers needed to find shelter and came to the cabin of Frau Vincken and her son. She was willing to give them refuge but insisted they not bring weapons into the cabin. Because it was Christmas Eve they agree to do so. Her son took the weapons and hid them outside. He could have turned one of the guns on the American soldiers but he didn't. He thought he was old enough be part of the war effort for Germany, but his mother wanted him to be free to live his life away from war. Have you ever thought you wanted something and someone advised you against it? Did you listen to them?

Frau Vincken wanted her home to be a place that would honor Christmas. Even though she had little to offer the men, she was willing to share. One of the American soldiers suggested that each of them should share something for Christmas. As they each contributed from their meager rations, the celebration took on a more festive tone for all of them.

What is the best Christmas that you remember? What made it so meaningful to you?

When the German soldiers came it seemed that they would overpower the Americans who didn't have their weapons. But again Frau Vincken insisted that their weapons needed to be outside. Instead of fighting the war with guns she wanted to bring peace through Christmas. Although the Germans and Americans didn't really trust each other, both sides trusted Frau Vincken and agreed to her terms.

The Bible says, "*Blessed are the peacemakers.*" Matthew 5:9 How can you be a peacemaker?

Without their guns, the soldiers from both sides began to visit. Each of them had many of the same dreams for their lives and families. As they shared their food, their possessions, and their thoughts, they began to trust each other and even enjoy their Christmas together. Frau Vincken had an amazing effect on all of them, because she and her son represented the families that they loved.

Do you work to bring out the best in other people?

When Christmas was over and the soldiers had to return to war, the leaders parted with the Americans taking the young German soldier as a prisoner of war. The German officer knew that the war would soon be over and that the young German soldier would be safer out of the battle as a prisoner of war. The German soldier, who was once an American and pretended to be an American soldier, would have to face an altogether different experience as a prisoner of war because of his betrayal.

Have you ever experienced betrayal from someone you thought was a friend?

Although war is never a good thing, there are times when we need to fight in order to stand up for what is right. Frau Vincken chose to fight, not with guns or weapons, but with love. Her love for honoring Christmas was more powerful than her fear of the soldiers and their weapons. Anyone who has conflicts can learn about bravery and convictions from this story. We need to agree to set aside all of our weapons; sharp words, unkind names, and physical control. When we listen to each other the healing can begin.

*Dear Lord, we all carry weapons of many kinds that we use to protect ourselves; sharp words, anger, resentment ... the list could go on and on. You ask us to lay our weapons down but sometimes we just don't know how. Help us to trust that you will protect us. Help us to see the damage that is caused by our carelessness. Set us free to love You. In Jesus' name, Amen.*