

# What's in the Box?

*It was a beautiful wooden box: about the size of a modern shoebox. It had been in the family for hundreds of years. Over the centuries the box had been polished so that it now had a lustrous sheen that was almost mirror-like, and the burr walnut veneer glowed like burnished bronze. The brass corner protectors and escutcheon around the keyhole were exquisitely engraved with swirls and curls that blended with the pattern of the wood and they shone, almost like gold. The family cherished the box: it had pride of place in the house on the coffee table in the front room.*

*The box was heavy to lift but when it was tilted something inside would slide from end to end. The box was locked and sadly the key for the box had vanished so it had not been opened and nobody knew what it was inside the box that was sliding around. There were many theories. Some thought it was a bar of gold. Others thought that it was a large jewel. Still others felt that it was probably an ancient first edition of a valuable book. And others had suggested that it was a carved stone that had revealed the location of pirate treasure. Someone had even suggested that it was the key for the box that had been locked inside through a secret compartment. But because the box was locked it was all guesswork.*

*Several years ago the box had been taken to the Antiques Roadshow for a valuation and the family were delighted to discover that it was worth thousands of pounds because it was so old yet in such good condition. The expert had suggested that it was possible for a skilled locksmith to pick the lock and open the box. The family was unclear about what to do. Some of the children were desperate to have the box opened to find out what was inside. But most of the adults didn't want the box opened because they felt that to do so would ruin the family tradition of speculating about what was inside or were afraid that they would be disappointed by what the box contained and preferred not to know. So it was never opened.*

*Or at least that's what almost everyone thought. What the family didn't know was that the key was not lost. Grandma had the key. It had been given to her by her grandmother when she was just 9 years old, and today Grandma was about to give it to her eldest granddaughter on her ninth birthday. This secret tradition had been passed down the generations without the knowledge of anyone else in the family. Grandma called Amy into her bedroom and showed her the key. She explained how she had received the key on her ninth birthday and how her grandmother had made her promise not to tell anyone about it. Amy made the same promise to her grandma and couldn't wait to be on her own so that she could unlock the box and see what was inside.*

*Late that evening, when everyone else was asleep, Amy crept downstairs with the brass key clutched tightly in her hand. Trembling, she slid the key into the lock and turned it. There was a solid 'click' and the box was unlocked. Amy took a deep breath and opened the box.*

*But we can't tell you what is inside because you are not the nine-year-old granddaughter in the family.*

## To Consider

How does it feel to be kept from knowing what was inside the box because of the tradition? Are there people who don't get to hear the amazing news about Jesus because we have traditions or rules that exclude them?

How can we share the good news in as inclusive way as possible?

The adults in the family had their reasons for not opening the box, but what might they have been missing out on? Might we miss out on what God has in store for us because we have decided that isn't what we want?



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