



SYNOPSIS

PREMIERES SATURDAY, APRIL 7 (9/8c)

In the cemetery on her small Western frontier ranch, Missie LaHaye bids a reluctant goodbye at the grave of her late husband, Willie, who died a few years previously in the line of duty as the sheriff of Tettesford Junction. Even after giving up her job as the town schoolteacher, Missie found running the ranch on her own overwhelming; she has resigned herself to letting her son Jeff and his new bride, plus her brothers Aaron and Willie, take control of the ranch.

Missie and her seven-year-old son, Maddie, travel back to her hometown where she can raise her son near the farm belonging to her parents, Clark and Marty Davis, and support herself by going back to teaching school.

At their first Sunday service, Missie and Maddie learn from the attractive – and single – Pastor Joe that an “Orphan Train” with homeless children in need of good homes will soon arrive from the Children’s Aid Society of New York.

Outside the church, Clark introduces Missie to Joe just after she took the upper hand in a tense discussion with sharp-tongued biddy Mrs. Pettis, who disdains the orphans as “ragamuffins.”

At the same time, Missie catches the eye of a passing handsome horseman, Sheriff Zach Tyler, a bachelor and another target of Mrs. Pettis’ vitriol. Claiming Zach is not a Godly man, the judgmental harpy implies he has a shameful past on the wrong side of the law.

Traveling to work one day, Missie passes the church when the orphan distribution is underway, even though she is firmly determined not to grant Maddie’s request for a new sibling. But then Missie witnesses 14-year-old Belinda behave belligerently toward the Pettises, who next choose eight-year-old Jacob, whom they look upon more as a farm worker than a son. Realizing that the lone orphan Belinda will be sent back to the foundling home in New York, Missie volunteers to adopt her.

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Unbeknownst to all, Belinda is Jacob's sister. She kept this secret to prevent potential parents, who won't admit they don't want a child as old as she, from refusing to break up siblings. With Jacob secured in a home nearby, Belinda can figure out a way for them to flee and find their father, believing he gave them up for adoption with the intention of eventually reuniting with them as a family at a later time.

Although embraced by the loving care of Missie, the Davises, Zach and the community, Belinda resists life in a family. She sneaks out of Missie's home nightly to reassure Jacob that soon they will leave together; and becomes more determined after learning he suffers beatings and starvation from the Pettis'.

Missie tells Marty she feels as if a voice inside told her to adopt the child, but she still can't explain why. Perhaps, says Marty, "God knew that Belinda needed you. And maybe, for some reason you don't understand yet, you need her."

Joe attempts to court Missie, but she resists, explaining she could never love anyone the way she did her late husband. Missie then struggles to convince herself that while not deeply in love with the Pastor, he at least would make a good partner in marriage.

Then, while Missie discusses Belinda's disturbing nocturnal disappearances with Zach, who has warmed her heart with his kindness toward the child, he states he has no faith in God if a child can suffer like Belinda. Later, Marty listens as Missie says she couldn't love a man who didn't share her faith.

Zach and Missie discover Jacob's plight, but are anguished that they can't rescue him unless he exposes the Pettises, which he won't out of fear of reprisal. While Missie and Zach appreciate their mutual desire to help the boy, they clash over how to save him. An angry Belinda berates them for their inability to help Jacob, claiming her father will soon come to their aid.

Exasperated by Belinda's rejection, Missie visits Marty, who reminds her that Missie once had trouble accepting Marty as her step-mother. Sagely, she tells Missie that "loving a child has nothing to do with giving birth" and "being a family is a choice, not necessarily something that just happens because you're related by blood."

Belinda shows Missie a note from her father that she can't read, but claims it explains how he'll come back for her and Jacob. Missie reads her the note, and Belinda hears that her father actually left them for good at the orphanage.

They are interrupted by news that Zach was involved in an altercation with a criminal and are relieved to find his wounds are superficial. Still, the incident forces Missie to tell Zach she is keeping herself from loving him because she couldn't bear to lose another love to the violence of a sheriff's job.

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Later, he visits her to explain his lack of faith: his fiancée was an innocent victim of murderous bank robbers. Missie then relates the story of her husband's death, but adds that she still can't be with a person who doesn't share her faith.

After Missie again fails to rescue Jacob, Belinda runs away with him into the stormy night. Everyone joins a desperate search for them. Amid the lightening laden thunderstorm, Zach thinks he hears a voice over the din leading to the abandoned mine where the children have sought shelter.

Zach tells Missie it was God's miracle that guided him in the wilderness, but as she later admits to her father, she doesn't know how to "let go of" her late husband. Clark tells her love doesn't die when a person passes away, but we keep it on our heart forever while moving on to a new life with a new chance for happiness.

Missie takes that chance by marrying Zach. They adopt Jacob as well and begin their lives as a family of five.

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