

LESSONS ABOUT GODLY PEOPLE

The Bible is the Word of God which was written for our learning. It is inspired by the Holy Spirit and records the true life accounts of many heroes of faith. These are not meant for our entertainment but to teach us precious lessons of faith and godliness.

Though the heroes of the faith lived long ago, in places and time distant from ours, their life experiences are full of instruction and learning for us. They had trials and sufferings, but also joys and happy days. It is good to learn how they lived a life that pleased God. Certainly, they knew God and walked with Him. They are men like Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Every one of them was tested by God and was found to be faithful. Wouldn't it be wonderful to follow their godly example and be found faithful like them?

First, we must realise that we would not know anything about them unless we read our Bible. Their lives, including the details of their sins, their marriage and their quarrels are written there. Therefore, the most important thing is to read our Bible carefully, prayerfully, and regularly. Everything written there can help us grow in grace and the knowledge of the Lord. As you read about the life of Joseph this month, you will learn that Joseph was blessed with the great love from his father, Jacob. But at the same time, he faced jealousy and evil deeds done against him by his own brothers as well as strangers he met.

Joseph overcame all his sufferings because God was with him. Never once did Joseph forget God. He trusted God no matter how difficult life was. He continued to hope in God for better days. We should follow his example.

Match the following godly people to the qualities that are associated with them.

Daniel (Daniel 6: 1-10)

powerful prayers

Abraham

courage in the face of danger

Elijah (James 5:17)

brought gospel to many

Paul

strong faith in God

Thought: The lives of the heroes of the faith can teach us much.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to follow the examples of the faithful godly men and women in the Bible. This is my prayer in the name of Jesus. Amen.

HONOUR GOD

Joseph was the son of Rachel, the favourite wife of Jacob. However, his mother died at childbirth. When Joseph was 17 years old, he was given the task of feeding the flock, together with his brethren. He had ten elder brothers and one younger brother named Benjamin. Although he was his father's favourite, his father did not allow him to be slothful. He was given work to do.

Joseph did his duty diligently. He was a responsible youth. He was a good shepherd who ensured that his sheep were safe and well fed. However, it came to his notice that his brothers were not so responsible. We are not told exactly what they did wrong. They could be often quarrelling among themselves and neglecting their flock. Perhaps, they were wicked and sinning against the Lord. Joseph saw all that was happening. What was Joseph to do?

Joseph could have kept quiet but he knew the right thing to do was to tell his father Jacob about it. That is why he did as was recorded in the verse, "Joseph brought unto his father their evil report." It was not gossip. It means that he had to do a difficult thing of reporting the weaknesses of his brothers to his father.

Joseph did not take matters into his own hands as he knew that he had no authority over his brothers. Yet, he wanted his brothers to learn from their mistakes and not go on sinning. He was definitely not a tittle tattler. He reported out of loyalty to his father and respect of authority. Joseph probably knew that he would become unpopular among his brothers, even so he persisted because doing the right thing was more important to him. It is better to do right in the eyes of the Lord than to be popular with the wicked.

There is much to learn from Joseph. He was not afraid of telling the truth. Joseph respected the authority of his father because he honours God.

Do you tell the truth at home?

Do you tell the truth at all times?

Do you respect and honour your father and mother?

Thought: Those who do not respect authority are risking God's anger.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to respect the authority that Thou has place over me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

JEALOUSY

The Bible says that Joseph was his father's favourite son. Being the son of his favourite wife, Rachel and also the son of his old age, he was loved more than all his brothers.

Joseph was given a special coat of many colours and was the only child to receive this gift. Even Benjamin, the youngest son, did not get one. This coat was different from the ordinary coats that everyone had. Coats in those days were worn to protect them from the cold. The common coats were plain and of one colour while the special ones were longer, had sleeves and were decorated with many beautiful colours and ornaments. In ancient times, such decorated coats were usually only worn by royalty. It was a coat that showed to everybody that Joseph was loved more and also honoured above his brothers.

The immediate reaction from the brothers was jealousy. Joseph became even more unpopular with them. Driven by envy, they plotted to get rid of him. All brotherly love flew out the window.

It was not Joseph's fault that his father favoured him and he ended up suffering because of his brothers' jealousy. Their jealousy led to an act of tragedy when his brothers ganged up to strip him of his beautiful coat and threw him into a pit to die.

Colour as beautifully as you can on the special coat that Joseph is wearing.



Thought: Do not be jealous of others and allow jealousy to lead you into sin!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me not to be jealous of others but to remember that godliness with contentment is great gain. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

JOSEPH HAD A STRONG CHARACTER

We are not told of Joseph's reaction when his brothers were moved to hatred at the unfair treatment by their father. However, we can imagine how the brothers behaved towards him as a result of their hatred.

The brothers did not want to have anything to do with him. They ostracised him. They might have even mocked at him and passed unkind remarks about him: "Who do you think you are?", "Do you think you can order us around now?", "Don't think you are better than us!" Day in and day out, Joseph was taunted.

What is remarkable is that nothing has been recorded of Joseph's reaction to all these ill-treatment from his brothers. We notice that when he was scolded, he did not report their shabby treatment of him to his father. What he did report was whether they carried out their work in the sheepfold, as required by his father or when the sheep were left out in the cold, lost by the hillside or eaten by wolves.

He was willing to bear his hurts, as well as silently suffer their insults and ill-treatment. This shows that Joseph was not a pampered child although greatly loved. He did not complain to his father about how his brothers treated him. Instead, he worked as his brothers worked. He did his fair share and was not slothful in any way. He did not retaliate or hit back when his brothers mocked him. He was longsuffering towards his brothers. Where did Joseph's strength come from?

Are you able to suffer quietly when your classmates mock you because you are a Christian? Be like Joseph.

What will you ask God for strength to do when your playmate snatches a toy from you? Underline the correct answer:

1. Hit the person immediately.
2. Snatch the toy back at once.
3. Tell the person that he should not do that and to return it to you.
4. Carry tales to Mom or your teacher.
5. Quarrel with that person.

Thought: God can give me strength to do the right thing and not sin when I am ill treated.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be longsuffering and to forgive those who wrong me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

HUMILITY

Do you have dreams? I suspect your dreams are different from Joseph's. His dreams were special as they were divinely inspired. This means that God was sending a message to Joseph.

Joseph's first dream was about sheaves of wheat. The sheaf that Joseph bound in the field was upright while the sheaves his brothers bound were bent and bowing to his sheaf. Could you imagine how angry his brothers were when Joseph related his dream to them? They were being told that, one day they would have pay respect to him – who is their junior. What audacity? This drove them to say, "Shalt thou indeed reign over us? Or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us?" They refused to believe Joseph and detested him even more.

Days later, Joseph dreamed yet another dream. This time it was about the sun, moon (representing his father and mother) and eleven stars (representing eleven brothers) all bowing to him. It was interpreted as his parents and his brothers would pay homage to him one day. He would rise higher in position and become more important than all of them. When Joseph told his dream to his father and brothers, he was again met with ridicule. Even his father rebuked him and refused to openly acknowledge the interpretation of it, but Jacob did secretly keep it in his heart. While the brothers might have envied him inwardly, outwardly they only showed hatred.

Despite these dreams, was Joseph proud? Did Joseph try to exert power over his brothers? Not in the least. He did not sin against God by being proud. Despite such dreams, he was humble.

Dear child, humility is so important. Some of you may be gifted in studies, music, or art. Some of you may be able to speak a few languages easily. With such talents, it is tempting to think the world of yourself. Don't be puffed up. Remember Joseph. Remember that God will resist the proud and lift up the humble.



Thought: Humility is the best policy.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to be humble always and to bear a good testimony to Thy name. This I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

CHEERFUL OBEDIENCE

One day, when his brothers were far away in Shechem feeding the family's flock of sheep, Jacob sent Joseph to find out how they and the flock were doing. We notice that Joseph was very cheerful and obedient as he promptly obeyed his father. He did not find it a chore to look for his brothers who were miles from home. In those days, walking was the most common mode of transport.

His brothers, however, had left Shechem. Perhaps, their sheep had eaten up most of the grass from the pastures there. So they moved to Dothan which was about another 20 km to the north. Joseph carried on walking on for another 20 km to find his brothers.

Wow! Where did Joseph get his stamina from? I would have given up after the 20 km, won't you? Let's put it this way. Even if Joseph had given up at this point in time, his father would not have blamed him. However, Joseph was a responsible youth and was determined to complete the task his father entrusted him with. He did not so much as murmur.

God sent Jesus to earth to show how man ought to live righteously, and then to die to save us from our sins. He had to suffer man's mocking, ill treatment and rejection. Did Jesus give up because it was too hard a struggle to carry out His mission? No, Jesus persevered to do God's will and obeyed to the very end. He completed the task His Father gave Him to do. Joseph had the same attitude.

Young Joseph knew that he could not rest till he had carried out what his father told him to do. How happy and relieved he must have been when he finally reached Dothan and found his brothers! Let's learn from Joseph. It pays to be cheerfully obedient.

Check whether you have cheerfully obeyed your parents in these tasks. Draw a smiley face if you have done so.

1. Don't waste food.
2. Wash your hands before eating.
3. Wipe the table after dinner.
4. Bring mum a cup of water whenever she requests for it.
5. Pack up your toys after playing.

Thought: Cheerful obedience is a good habit that pleases the Lord.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to obey my parents in all that they ask me to do as I know it pleases You. This I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

DOWN BUT NOT OUT!

Joseph's brothers saw him afar off and were not pleased to see him. They conspired to kill him. They did not want to see the day Joseph would rule over them as his dream foretold. So they plotted to kill him and to cast his body into a pit. They even schemed on what to say to their father! They planned to say that some wild beast had eaten him up and to show Jacob Joseph's torn coat smeared with blood. What a clever plan!

Reuben, who was the oldest brother, was reluctant to see kill Joseph killed. He wanted to secretly rescue and restore Joseph to their aged father after the brothers' anger had subsided. He managed to convince his brothers to just throw him into the pit and leave him to die of starvation. The brothers thought that by getting rid of Joseph, the prophecy of Joseph's dream would be undone. What fools to think that God's plans could be changed by man!

How about Joseph? Do you think he too thought that God's plan to make him a ruler would be thrown out by his brothers' act? Down in the pit, who do you think would be the first person Joseph turned to for help? Yes the Lord God. Anyhow, the only direction he could look for a way out was upwards. Most importantly, Joseph did not lose faith or hope. He believed in God.

Who do you think made Reuben stop his brothers from killing Joseph, and sent some Midianite merchants willing to buy Joseph from the brothers for twenty pieces of silver, and to bring him to Egypt as a slave?

Where were these Midianite merchants traveling to?

How would you feel if you are sold to these merchants and brought as slave to a foreign land?

Thought: In times of danger, call upon the Lord and trust in Him.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, in times of danger, help me to turn to You and trust in You. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

TOUGH TIMES CAN HIT CHRISTIANS

“What do you want to be when you grow up?” This is a popular question posed to youngsters but never have I ever heard the answers to be: “A servant!”, “A maid!”, or even “A slave!” Try giving one of these answers when you are asked about your ambition and look at the inquirer’s reaction.

Nobody wishes to be a slave for you would be at your master’s beck and call, without wages, without freedom to what you wish to do and would be worked to the bone. Today, slavery is abolished but not during Joseph’s time. Joseph was sold as a slave.

Poor Joseph was sold to the Midianite merchants who were also slave traders. Most probably he was taken to a slave market where all the slaves were paraded and sold to wealthy people. All this while, Joseph must have prayed and looked to God to protect, watch and guide him. Perhaps he prayed for a good master and Potiphar, an important Egyptian official, came and bought Joseph to be his slave.

Meanwhile, his aged father Jacob mourned for him. The brothers showed him the coat of many colours, which they had smeared with the blood of a baby goat. When Jacob saw it, he wept and thought that his son Joseph was killed by a wild beast. The brothers kept quiet. Their trick had worked. They had deceived their father. They simply stood by as their father rent his clothes, put on sackcloth and refused to eat or drink.

Jacob could not be comforted no matter how his sons tried. He had great sorrow that no one could take away. When we suffer, look to God for He cares. Joseph did. Jacob the father also found his comfort in God and God alone.

What was the most recent unpleasant or sad event that had happened to you? Was it the passing away of a loved one? Or perhaps your father lost his job? Or maybe you did badly in an assessment although you put in effort? Things like these can happen. The Lord allows difficulties so we can grow stronger in our faith by learning to look to God for strength and comfort.

Thought: God is always present to help me in times of trouble.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, remind me that You are always present with Your children whether we are going through happy or sad times. Especially when the going gets tough, teach me to continue to trust in You and pray hard, for You will surely help. This I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

JOSEPH THE BLESSED SLAVE

Joseph was sold as a slave to the house of Potiphar – an important man, whose job was to protect the Pharaoh himself. Although Joseph was in Egypt and far from his family, God was with him. This can be seen in the way Joseph conducted himself. Potiphar was so impressed that he made Joseph to be in-charge of his house and all his possessions.

How did Joseph serve Potiphar so that even his master knew that the Lord was with him? First, Joseph was very hardworking. Not only did he do his work faithfully and responsibly but he also did it cheerfully. No work was too hard for him. He went to the field to work all day and returned home in the evening to continue to serve his master at the dinner table. He supervised the other slaves and saw to it that they brought in the harvest before it rained, that the cooks serve delicious meals and that the gardens were well trimmed and the plants thriving. Best of all, he treated the others around him with courtesy and with kindness. Joseph was outstanding!

From the time that Joseph was promoted and made overseer or supervisor of all in Potiphar's house, the Lord blessed Potiphar's household for Joseph's sake. Potiphar became more and more prosperous. The sheep and cattle multiplied till he had thousands of them. The grapes also overflowed so that they could be sold for profit in the market. We are told, "The blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field." Joseph was close to God and the Lord blessed him in all that he did. In turn, Joseph was a blessing to Potiphar's household.

Are you and I a blessing to those around us? May God give us grace to be a blessing to all around us.

Tick some ways in which you have been a blessing to your parents.

1. You obey your parents.
2. You love your siblings.
3. You do your homework without being told.
4. You are a peacemaker among your siblings.
5. You help around the house eg. Getting things for mummy.
6. You clean up and pack up after playing with your toys.

Thought: The best present I can give to my family is to be a blessing to them.

Prayer: Heavenly Father make me a channel of your blessings to those around me. May I learn to be like Joseph and work hard to fulfill my responsibilities, and strive to be a blessing to others! In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

FLEE FROM EVIL TEMPTATIONS!

Temptations came in all sorts and forms. For Joseph, it came in the form of Potiphar's wife. She was attracted to Joseph because he was handsome and capable.

One day, Potiphar's wife caught hold of Joseph and said, "Lie with me." He refused. He told her that his master trusted him and had committed all things into his hands. He would be true to this trust and would never betray that trust. He would not commit "this great wickedness" against his master who had treated him so well. Most importantly, Joseph said that he would not sin against God. For if Joseph were to take his master's wife, that would definitely be sin. Joseph feared God and did not want to sin against God.

Despite that, she pestered Joseph but failed at every attempt. One day, she thought she had an opportunity to be with him. Joseph went into the house to do some work and nobody was around. Potiphar's wife caught him by his garment and demanded, "Lie with me." Joseph fled from her and got out of the house as fast as he could, leaving his garment behind in her hand. Joseph did the right thing - he fled from evil and successfully overcame the temptation. He was wise not to stay a minute longer. Wisdom demands that he flees immediately. When you are faced with temptation, be sure to run far from it as soon as you can. Do not linger because the danger will only grow bigger.

Temptation might come through the television or the Internet. Be careful, little eyes, of what you see. The Father above is indeed watching over you, as He watched over Joseph long ago. When you fear God, you will surely not want to sin.

Can you sing this song that tells us to be careful of temptations?

Oh, be careful little eyes, what you see. Oh, be careful little eyes, what you see.

There's a Father up above, looking down in tender love, So be careful little eyes, what you see.

Thought: Flee temptation!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to flee from evil and temptation. At the same time, please teach me to love the things that are good, pure and lovely. This is my humble cry in the name of Christ my Saviour. Amen.

TRUSTING GOD WHEN ALL SEEMS WRONG

Potiphar's wife was furious. She was left holding on to Joseph's clothes. She shouted for the men of her house and lied that Joseph, the Hebrew slave, had tried to molest her.

When Potiphar returned home, she deceived him in the same manner too. He was so angry that he threw Joseph into prison. Joseph was imprisoned together with other prisoners that were from the king's palace. Joseph must have felt miserable to be in prison, with chains on his hands and legs. He could also have been beaten. The prison is a most unhappy place to be in. It would be dark, dirty and infested with rats. However, we do not read of Joseph being sad or depressed. Instead, we read that the Lord was with Joseph.

You can be sure that when the Lord was with Joseph, he was strong and trusted in God. He knew that God would take care of him. God would protect him and be with him so that he would not be lonely or afraid. Indeed we read that the keeper of the prison liked him and Joseph found favour in his sight. Perhaps he gave Joseph more and better food or even allowed him some freedom to walk about or even to read books. By and by, the keeper of the prison, or the jailer, even promoted him to be in charge of all the prisoners there. Again, Joseph proved to be so honest and capable that the jailor left everything to Joseph, giving him some power and authority! God was with Joseph and blessed the work of his hands. The prison became very well run and no prisoner was cruelly beaten or died. Also, none escaped or else the jailer would have to die.

You, too, can be a Joseph. You would first have to put your trust in God even when things look bad for you. If you have to take care of your baby sister and have a test coming up, do you moan? Or do you cheerfully spend time with your baby sister and do such a good job that mum is so pleased that she decided to give you a reward? As you do your duties faithfully, God will see to it that you have time to study and to honour Him whatever the results may be. Only trust Him. Always trust Him.

Thought: The Lord can help us even when all seems wrong!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to trust in You always. This I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

GIVE THANKS TO GOD FOR YOUR GIFT!

While in prison, Joseph came into contact with formerly important people who had fallen out of Pharaoh's favour. Two of these were the Pharaoh's butler and baker. The butler is a cupbearer of the king and his duties include serving food and drinks to the Pharaoh and his guests. The baker was the man who baked bread for Pharaoh.

These two prisoners had dreams which troubled them. They sought an interpretation, but they were unsuccessful until Joseph appeared on the scene. God had given Joseph the gift of interpreting dreams and he was able to tell the butler that he would be restored to his former position and be free again. Confident of the interpretation, Joseph, who was falsely accused, requested the butler to put in a kind word for him to Pharaoh so that he might be freed.

When the baker heard that the interpretation of the butler's dream was good, he too made known his dream to Joseph. However, to his dismay, his dream meant the opposite. Joseph told him that within three days, Pharaoh shall have him hung on a tree. Sadly for him, it came true. Three days later, when it was Pharaoh's birthday, he restored the chief butler but sentenced the chief baker to death.

Joseph had the marvelous gift of being able to interpret dreams. In those days, God sometimes spoke to the people in dreams. Nowadays we have the Bible and God speaks to us through the Bible. Joseph gave glory to God for this gift for he told them that "interpretations belong to God." He never gave the impression that he had any power.

Thanks be to God for talents. For every good and every perfect gift comes from Him. Whatever your gift is, remember to be grateful to the divine Giver.

Name one thing you can give glory to God for:

Thought: Without God, I can do nothing.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be thankful for every good gift You have given me. Thank You most of all for Your love. And heavenly Father, teach me to use every gift for Your glory so that others may praise You. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

JOSEPH GLORIFIED GOD BEFORE PHARAOH

Two years passed and Joseph was still in prison. It tested Joseph's patience. However, he continued to trust God. Then Pharaoh himself had a dream. He dreamt that he was standing by the river and saw seven healthy cows come up out of the water, and after them seven skinny cows. When the thin, ugly cows ate up the fat healthy cows, the dream ended. He had a second dream. This time he saw seven healthy ears of corn. This was followed by seven thin ears of corn that ate up the seven good ears. At this point, Pharaoh woke up.

Pharaoh was troubled by his dream, just as the butler and baker were troubled by theirs. He sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt. He told them his dream. But there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh. It was at this time that the chief butler realised that he had forgotten to put in a kind word for Joseph. He told Pharaoh that while he was in prison, a young Hebrew slave interpreted his dream successfully.

Pharaoh sent for Joseph. When Joseph knew that Pharaoh wanted him to interpret his dream, he made it clear at the beginning that it was not he but God who is able to give the answer to his dream. In this way, Joseph glorified God and did not praise himself.

After Pharaoh described his dream, Joseph interpreted the dream. The next seven years would be years of abundance, but the seven years after that, years of famine. Joseph not only interpreted the dream, but also advised Pharaoh how to avoid the disaster.

Pharaoh was so impressed with Joseph, "in whom the spirit of God is" (v.38), that he promoted him to be the Prime Minister of Egypt, second only to the Pharaoh. Truly God has moved Joseph from prison to the palace. Through it all, Joseph honoured God and gave Him the glory.

If you win first prize in a competition, how do you give God the glory?

If you are good in singing, how do you give God the glory?

Thought: All that we have and all that we can do, comes from God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to glorify You in all that I do. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

JOSEPH SHOWED WISDOM

From interpreter, Joseph became an advisor. Pharaoh listened to him and found him to be wise in dealing with the impending national disaster. Joseph recommended that Pharaoh appoint someone to oversee and organise measures to deal with the situation. A fifth of the land would be dedicated to produce and store grain in the years of plenty. Stored in the cities, these reserves would serve the land of Egypt and be used to feed the people during the seven years of famine.

Joseph had good presence of mind to think of a good and wise plan to deal with the situation. He did not take days to come up with a plan. God had given him not only a good mind, but also a wise spirit as well as readiness of speech. So now Joseph could stand before the great king of Egypt and speak confidently of how best to deal with a coming national disaster. This ability could have developed over the years when he had to manage work given to him by Potiphar and the head jailer.

How was Joseph able to know just what to do? First, he had the fear of the Lord. Proverbs 9: 10 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding." We can begin to have wisdom only when we believe God. Wisdom increases when we read more and understand more of God's Word. Of course we must daily obey and do as God says. True wisdom comes from God and God alone.

Name one wrong thing you have done and not done anything about it. What will be the wise thing to do?

Thought: Wisdom comes from God and so we must ask God for it.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me daily that I might be a wise child. A wise child believes and trusts You. Thank You for the Bible and thank for the record of Joseph's life stories and his wonderful example. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

GOD REWARDED JOSEPH

Joseph received praises after he had presented his plan for saving Egypt in the coming famine. Both Pharaoh and all his men were very impressed with him and could not find any other as discreet and wise as Joseph. Pharaoh himself recognised that “Spirit of God” was in Joseph to make him so wise. When Joseph gave God the glory, God rewarded Joseph. God made Joseph to be in favour with men.

When Pharaoh made Joseph Prime Minister of Egypt, he also gave Joseph a high position, second only to his. Joseph could ride in the No. 2 chariot and had power over all the land of Egypt. Wherever he went, he travelled in his No. 2 chariot and people had to bow before him. Pharaoh also gave him a ring which had the royal seal with which Joseph was able to transact all manner of agreements in the affairs of the country. He was also given clothing and a gold chain around his neck that was befitting a Prime Minister. Riches and honour indeed come from the Lord. It is in His hand to make one great and to give strength to those who dutifully give Him the glory.

Pharaoh also gave Joseph an Egyptian name and thus became a citizen of Egypt. He was also given an Egyptian wife. This wife was not any ordinary Egyptian, but the daughter of an important priest. Priests form the highest class of people in Egypt at that time. Thus at the young age of thirty, Joseph had already risen to be the top person in Egypt, after Pharaoh. To rise to so senior a position at the age of 30 is unheard of, even in today’s context.

Do you think Joseph would have been blessed with such wisdom and riches had he not been grateful to God and ascribed glory to the Heavenly Father? Of course not! God wants us to be humble and to know that on our own, we cannot do anything.

Children, I know it is not easy to be humble for this world teaches us to be self-confident and to show off our strengths. But remember, as Christians, we are to be different from the people of the world.

When God rewards you – stay humble!

Thought: May I stay humble in success and in the midst of men’s praises!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, when someone praises me, remind me that all strength comes from You. Help me to give glory to You. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

PREPARATION FOR THE FUTURE

In accordance with his plan, Joseph gathered food during the seven years of abundant harvest.

For seven years, Joseph gathered and collected great quantities of grain into these storehouses that they were overflowing and could not be quantified.

In modern terms, we describe such an action as stockpiling. Most countries would have a stockpile of rice, for example, so that when prices go up, these reserves of rice can be released to meet the demand and prices need not escalate. Joseph was so advanced in his thinking that he knew how to practise stockpiling thousands of years before. He was wise to prepare for the future.

The Bible says that this earth will pass away one day. So, have you thought about the future home for your soul? Will it be in heaven? Let us be prepared for the future by putting our trust in our Creator God now. Believe in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and tell others how to secure a future home for their souls.

Do you look to God to provide for your future? Why?

Thought: I can trust God to secure my future. There is nothing to fear. Meanwhile I can lay up treasure in heaven by doing what God wants me to do with whatever He has given me.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me not to waste time, food and money. Help me to spend and use what you have provided for me now wisely. Thank you for preparing a heavenly home for me, heavenly Father. I pray that many more will come to believe in Jesus so that they will be saved from going to hell and their future will also be secured in heaven. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

JOSEPH, A NOBLE FATHER

God blessed Joseph with two sons. It was during the seven years of plenty, Joseph became the father of two sons named Manasseh and Ephraim. The name “Manasseh” reminded Joseph that God had made him forget his toil as a slave and his sadness at being torn away from his father’s house, and the name “Ephraim” reminded him of God’s wonderful blessing in the land of his affliction. Joseph chose names for his son to reflect God’s goodness and continuous presence with him throughout his days.

Whenever Joseph looked at his two sons, he was grateful to God. God had sustained him through his affliction and delivered him from his sufferings – the ill treatment from his unkind brothers, separation from his loving father and homeland, his slavery and his imprisonment because of a false accusation. Joseph trusted God during his affliction. Now, blessed with a family of his own, political power and riches, he continued to trust God.

Joseph saw that both affliction and blessings come from God. When Christians suffer for God without complaining, God will bless them and make them fruitful. God rewards those who stand steadfast in the midst of suffering and hardship, as Joseph did. The most fruitful experience for a Christian is the close relationship we can have with God, our heavenly Father.

What do you think were some of the things that Joseph, as a good father, would have done? Write Yes against the statements that you agree with.

1. Pray for his family daily.
2. Thank God for giving him a wife and children.
3. Let them relax more and work less.
4. Bring them up to fear God.
5. Teach them right from wrong.
6. Discipline them when they are disobedient.
7. Let them do what they like.

Thought: Godly parents make the most wonderful parents.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, grant my parents or caretakers wisdom and grace to care and nurture my family. Make me good and obedient. Help me to appreciate their love for me. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

JOSEPH, A STRONG LEADER

Soon the seven years of plenty were over; the seven years of famine came upon Egypt. The neighbouring countries were also affected. People did not have enough food and many starved and died. However, there was sufficient food to share although the ground yielded no crops in Egypt.

The Egyptians cried for food and bread. When they came to Pharaoh for bread, Pharaoh directed them to Joseph. Pharaoh trusted Joseph to know what to do when the hungry people rushed to him. Indeed, Joseph had it all planned in advance. He knew that it was the right time to open up the storehouses of grain and sell to the people in a measured pace. We can be sure that he did not sell at a high price but at a reasonable price. A good and strong leader like Joseph would always think for the good of the people and not for himself. He was also able to organise things in an orderly fashion and was fair and just to all.

A weak leader does not plan well. When disaster comes, he panics. He is often selfish and cares for himself and his family before others. That is why in modern times, when there is a scarcity of food supplies, prices can shoot up. When a loaf of bread costs \$10, we can say that the price has skyrocketed. This can happen when people hoard flour for themselves and refuse to sell their excess supplies to others. A good leader like Joseph will manage food supplies so that everyone has a fair share and no one can profit at the expense of others.

During the famine, Egypt was the only country which could supply food. Even neighbouring countries came to Joseph to buy corn. These included Canaan where Jacob's family was. They too heard of this news. God was preparing the way for Jacob's family to come to Joseph to be reunited with him. No one can ever spoil God's plan!

Thought: When God appoints a leader, He will make him strong to carry out his task.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, bless our church with strong, steadfast and faithful leaders. Give them wisdom to be good leaders both at home and in church. May they be godly examples for the flock. Watch over them and protect them. This is my prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

GOD'S PLAN

Do you remember Joseph's dreams? His brothers did not like the idea of bowing to Joseph and sold him as a slave. However, no one can ever change God's plan for God's words will always come true. We saw how Joseph rose to become the governor of Egypt.

As the famine hit Canaan too, Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to buy food. In charge of the sale of the nation's stock of grain was Joseph, the Prime Minister of Egypt. The brothers had no choice but to bow before him when they came to Egypt to get food. The bowing of the stalks of wheat in Joseph's dream was realised.

Joseph recognised his brothers instantly but did not acknowledge them. Was he angry with them? No. He was certainly choked with emotions. He must have very much wanted to ask about his aged father and Benjamin but held back. Perhaps, it was better for him to observe what kind of characters his brothers had grown to be before acknowledging them. With uncertainty, he chose to wait and see. He was patient and not rash. He is known to be a wise man.

When Joseph accused his brothers of being spies, a crime punishable by death, he was testing them. It was not with any retaliation. He just wanted to find out whether they were God-fearing and truthful or still liars as in the past.

Joseph trusted in God. He had faith that God is in control of every event in his life. He did not give up believing in God's power and love when he was down in the pit, or when he was sold as a slave, or even when he was falsely accused of a crime that he did not commit and imprisoned. When he met his long lost brothers, no thoughts of revenge crossed his mind. There was no space for pride or self confidence in his heart. He was filled with the Spirit of God! He believed that God's plan will never fail. Do you?

Thought: God's words always come true. So, His plan can never fail.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You are all powerful. Whatever You have said in Your Word will surely come true. Nobody and nothing can ever change Your plan or cause it to fail. Thank You most of all for Your salvation plan for me and all mankind. Thank You for giving us the Lord Jesus Christ to be our Saviour. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

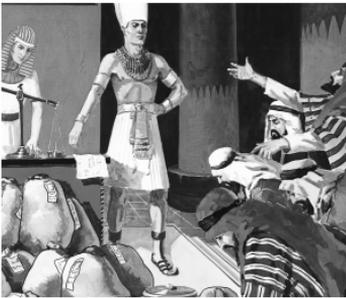
JOSEPH'S COMPASSION

Both Joseph and his younger brother, Benjamin were sons of Rachel, Jacob's favourite wife. Naturally, Joseph missed Benjamin a lot and couldn't wait to be reunited with him. Yet, he dared not disclose his identity till he was sure his other brothers would not harm Benjamin or their father in any way like before.

Joseph devised yet another scheme to test his brothers' sincerity. He laid down the condition that Benjamin be brought before him if they all wish to return home to their father and to prove that they were innocent of espionage. After detaining them for three days, Joseph allowed all of them except for one to leave for home. Simeon would be held hostage till they return with Benjamin to verify their account.

In spite of the evil act the brothers did, Joseph was still full of compassion for his father and family. He ordered his men to fill their sacks with corn and also on the quiet returned the money they brought to pay for the corn and let them leave for home. The brothers accepted Joseph's condition. They were remorseful of their evil act done to young Joseph and felt that their current distress was their punishment. Joseph who understood the Hebrew language heard their conversation and was overcome with emotion and wept secretly. However, he continued to pretend not to know them and let them go.

Do you know that after you had done something wrong but was let off



the hook too easily, you may also forget the lesson easily? Pause here. Can you remember a mistake that you will not dare to make again? Why? Joseph was a wise man and he wanted his brothers to truly repent. Joseph loved them dearly and wanted them to have peace. Only true repentance can give them peace. He loved them because he loved God. Do you love God?

Thought: Do I love God? If I do not show love to my brothers and sisters whom I can see, how can I say I love God whom I cannot see and mean it?

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, teach me to check my own conduct daily. Fill my heart with love that I may show others compassion, kindness and generosity. Help me to be a good witness to others so that they may be drawn to you and also experience Your love. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

JOSEPH'S READINESS TO FORGIVE

Joseph loved God and was forgiving. He would not seek revenge on his brothers but wanted to be sure that they had truly repented of their evil deeds. That was why he tested them by falsely accusing them of being spies and of theft. What they would do would reveal their heart.

When the food ran out, the brothers paid a second visit to Joseph. It was after some hard persuasion by the brothers that Jacob let Benjamin go along. Reuben even pledged the lives of his own two sons to Jacob for Benjamin's safe return. To keep their end of the bargain with Joseph, Benjamin must be brought to meet him.

The second visit to Joseph went smoothly, whose true identity was still hidden. Everyone was treated with hospitality but Benjamin received five times more. However, everyone was happy and there was no jealousy. Joseph set the final test for his brothers. He commanded his servant to secretly plant his own silver cup in Benjamin's sack. Then, they merrily set off on their journey home. But soon, they found soldiers, with a search warrant, in hot pursuit of them. They were so sure that none of them had taken Joseph's silver cup that they even vowed that the person who took the cup would be punished by death. But then came the shock. Oh no! The cup was found in Benjamin's sack.

Imagine the panic then. How can they let Benjamin die? The brothers began to cry. What did they do next? This was also what Joseph was keen to find out. Would they desert Benjamin like what they did to Joseph? Would they leave Benjamin to die and then bring Jacob the grievous news which would surely kill the bereaved father too? No. They turned back to Joseph, every one of them. They were not prepared to let Benjamin nor Jacob die. They return to plead with Joseph to spare their youngest brother. This time, Judah stepped forward and offered his life in exchange for Benjamin's. What sacrificial love!

Can we tell that Joseph's elder brothers had truly repented of their sins? They must have passed Joseph's tests because Joseph was so moved that he revealed his true identity to be united with them. Children, remember this happy reunion was possible only because Joseph was forgiving. Forgiveness brings peace.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for forgiving my sins. I believe that You sent the Lord Jesus to die in my place to save me from my sins. Help me Heavenly Father to forgive others following the example of Joseph. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

BROTHERLY LOVE

Here we have a touching reunion scene of brothers who missed each other a lot. Nothing could stop their tears from flowing. Benjamin wept upon Joseph's neck. Joseph also kissed his other brothers on the cheeks (then, kissing was a way of showing love and sincerity), showing them he forgave them. Such brotherly love is a delight, especially to parents who see siblings quarrelling and fighting all the time.

Many young children fight and quarrel with their siblings over things. Are you one of them? They snatch toys from one another. Some even end up hitting each other. When they grow older, they quarrel over the use of their precious belongings e.g. their computer games, their stationery or even their favourite T-shirts. Such selfishness is ugly. Parents are often distressed by children who fight and quarrel. It would break their heart when they see an elder brother or sister not giving way to the younger. How it warms the heart of many parents when they see the older sibling willingly share his/her toys, especially their favourite ones, with the younger ones. The older must not bully the younger.

Younger siblings tend to throw tantrums to get what they want from their older sister or brother. God will not be pleased with such behaviour. Being younger does not give you the right to getting everything before our seniors. While they show consideration for you, you must also remember to respect them by being obedient. What a peaceful home it would be if brothers and sisters could show love and care for one another. God will be pleased. Don't wait till you lose your brother to realise how much you love him. That was what happened to Joseph and his brothers. Love your brothers and sisters for God has given them to you.

I have not done these before. May I show love to my siblings in the following ways:

1. _____
2. _____

Thought: Love your family always.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to love others especially my family, even as You have loved me. This I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

HIGH ESTEEM AND HUMILITY

When Pharaoh received news of the presence of Joseph's brothers, he was pleased and more than willing to offer Joseph's family the best that Egypt had. Indeed, Joseph was highly esteemed by Pharaoh.

With Pharaoh's blessings, Joseph showered presents on his brothers to take home to Canaan. They were laden with gifts for everybody back home. These would prove that their story of what happened is true. Then they were to bring their father and their families to Egypt where they will not suffer from starvation.

Joseph's dream of the brothers' stalks of wheat bowing to him has come true. Now a man of great power and honour, he was able to bless his family. He was truly the hero who saved his family in their trouble. Do you know the deliverer who saved us from our sins? Yes, it is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Success did not change Joseph. Despite his new power, Joseph remained godly and humble. He showed genuine love and forgiveness. If he did not fear God, he would surely have taken revenge on his brothers. The one who fears God does not seek opportunities for revenge, but will rather seek to provide the best for those whom he has forgiven.

May all of us make Joseph our example. Although highly esteemed, he remained humble. As a student and child, people may praise you, rightly or wrongly, for perhaps one of the following reasons:

You got A's for all your exam papers.

You are a gifted pianist and your arts pieces are always displayed in school.

You are good looking.

What if you had all of the above? Are they good enough reasons to be proud?

Dear child, don't be proud. Be a Joseph and remember that whatever you have is from the Lord. So give Him the praise and glory. Don't ever let men's praises get to your head.

Thought: Without humility, there is no way we can serve God for He keeps away from the proud.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to give Thee the highest esteem and all honour for Thou art worthy. Even if others praise me, I know it is only by Thy grace that I am blessed. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

RESPONSIBILITIES

What a day of rejoicing it was when Joseph saw his father after nearly twenty years. Both were full of emotions as they embraced each other. When Jacob first received the news that his son was alive and was the Prime Minister of Egypt, he could not believe his ears! But looking at the many gifts convinced him of his sons' story and he agreed to visit Joseph before he died.

When Jacob arrived, Joseph was already waiting for him excitedly. He went in his chariot and presented himself to his father. *"He fell on his neck and wept on his neck for a good while."* Jacob, or Israel as he is now known, was so contented and happy that he said, *"Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive."* How Israel must have thanked God for preserving the life of his beloved son. For Joseph, he too praised and thanked God that he was able to see his father again.

When Israel was a hundred and forty-seven years old, he knew that it was time for him to die. He called Joseph and made him promise to bury his body in his homeland of Canaan when he died; he must not be buried in Egypt. Thus it was to Joseph that Israel gave the responsibility of carrying out his last wishes. He knew that Joseph would surely respect his wishes and carry it out. He trusted Joseph.

When someone trusts us a lot and gives us responsibility to carry out a task, it is an honour. Do your friends trust you? Do your parents trust you? Do your parents ask you to do anything? If so, that is your responsibility to make sure that the task is done right.

Some of the things that your parents may assign you to do include: Finishing schoolwork before you watch TV, turning off lights and fan when you leave your room for some time, taking care of plants and feeding and cleaning pets and making sure your bedroom is tidy

Dear child, just reading about ways to become a better Christian would be of little use. It is important we be responsible with the simple things mum or dad asks us to do. Our actions will show whether we are good witnesses for God!

Thought: If I learn to be responsible in doing simple tasks now, I can do more difficult tasks as I grow older.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be a responsible person and to bear a good witness for You. This I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH

Joseph arranged a meeting between his family and Pharaoh to settle his family in Egypt. Joseph had no intention of deceiving Pharaoh or of his family becoming illegal immigrants! He considered it important to properly introduce his brothers and their occupation to Pharaoh. Since they were shepherds in Canaan, they should continue with their occupation in Egypt.

Shepherds were despised in Egypt. Joseph knew this well. He told them to stress the fact that they also looked after cattle. In this way, he hoped to secure for them Goshen to live in. This land was ideal because it was well suited for flocks and herds as well. It was near the capital, where Joseph lived, and he could contact his family easily. It was also isolated and away from the Egyptians, permitting the Hebrews to live their own lives and practise their own culture and religion.

First to appear before Pharaoh were five of Joseph's brothers. Their answers to Pharaoh were honest and forthright. The first question asked concerned their occupation. They replied that they were shepherds like their ancestors but the famine had taken away pasture land in Canaan. They requested to dwell in Goshen and Pharaoh granted them the privilege. He even invited someone from among them to look after his royal cattle. Pharaoh then summoned Joseph's family and personally announced his decision. Jacob was so happy with Pharaoh's kindness that he blessed him. God's mighty hand had led them all the way!

Do you think Joseph's brothers were tempted to lie that they were not shepherds? Perhaps. Especially after they knew shepherds were a despised lot, they might have entertained that idea. But they stood their ground and trusted God.

How about you? Are there times when you're tempted to lie? Perhaps when you've done something wrong and want to cover up?

Trust God and tell the truth. If you tell one lie, you'll have to tell another to cover the first one. And then another to cover the second. Telling the truth may lead us to punishment, but accept that as a lesson so you would be more careful in the future.

Thought: Truth hurts but heals.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, grant me the courage to tell the truth always. This I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

JOSEPH'S BLESSINGS FROM GOD

In his last moments, Jacob gathered his sons together. Then he spoke of the prophecies for each of them, giving his blessings. For Joseph, Jacob's blessings flowed with special love.

First, Joseph was seen as a fruitful tree with branches spread out wide. It was growing by a well which constantly supplied water. This is a picture of Joseph's good and strong character, influencing those around him with godliness.

Joseph's life was full of ups and downs. The "archers" in the passage who "shot at him" refers to the enemies that would make his life difficult and cause him suffering. These were seen in the cruel treatment of his brothers, the false accusation of Potiphar's wife and his imprisonment despite his innocence. However, he would triumph as God strengthened his arms. God will help him and bless him. Indeed we have seen how God gave him grace to bear his trials as a slave, bear a good testimony for Him and the gift of interpreting dreams so that he can appear before Pharaoh and be in his favour.

Thus, Joseph's blessings will be great. They are both the blessings of heaven above, (spiritual blessings of love, joy, peace, wisdom and understanding) and blessings of the deep as the earth yields her harvest of grains and food. The blessings of the breasts and of the womb refer to many children that will come from the line of Joseph's family. Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

God has blessed all Christians with the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5: 22-23).

Thought: God gives bountifully to His children.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me ever to be grateful to You for Your rich blessings. I know I've also been very blessed and I want to learn to be grateful. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

DEATH OF LOVED ONES

After Jacob had given different blessings to each of his twelve sons, he died. He died peacefully, completely satisfied with God's grace to him. According to Genesis 47: 28, he died at the age of 147.

Joseph's tender affection for his father is expressed in the words, "Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him" (Genesis 50:1). He immediately commanded his servants to summon physicians to embalm Jacob's body. This embalming is only for the royal and noble families in Egypt. This shows the respect and honour that Pharaoh had for Jacob and Joseph.

Death can come anytime. You may recall the tsunami that hit Japan on 11th March 2011. Japan has had many tsunamis and is one of the most prepared nations for them. But that quake was the most serious they had and the tsunami was a great tragedy that killed many. Did the family members of the dead expect them to pass away so soon? No. Only God knows.

Dear child, if you have any loved ones who are not Christians yet, pray hard for them. And live your life for Christ so that they may hopefully turn to Christ because of your testimony.

Though we mourn for our loved ones, we are comforted that those who die in the Lord are with Him in heaven. The Bible tells us, "Absent in the body, present with the Lord." Believers mourn but have a blessed and sure hope that our departed loved ones who have believed in Christ are in heaven.

Write out a comforting verse from the Bible (Psalm 116: 15) which tells us that the death of a loved one in the Lord is precious to Him.

Thought: May I be a good witness for the Lord!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be good witness for You and to share the Gospel with the unsaved. This I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

JOSEPH, A PROMISE KEEPER

What was the vow that Joseph gave to his father? Before Jacob died, he had asked Joseph to promise that he would bury his body in Canaan. He did not want to be buried in Egypt; he wanted to be buried in his dear homeland where his ancestors like Abraham and Sarah were laid to rest. Joseph promised and vowed to his father that he would obey his last wishes.

Joseph had to get permission to leave his duties and responsibilities as a Prime Minister in Egypt to go to Canaan to bury his father. It would take time and a lot of effort. After many days of traveling through thousands of miles, they arrived at the field of Machpelah in Canaan. There, in a cave, they laid Jacob's body to rest. This was the exact spot where Abraham and Sarah were buried. It was not an easy promise to keep, but Joseph kept his word.

How about you? Are you a promise-keeper? Do you keep your word?

Why should we keep our word? Because we want to be people who are trusted by others and because we want to always mean what we say and say what we mean. A person who does not keep his word cannot be trusted.

Imagine you have a classmate called Esther who borrowed a book from you and promises to return after the one-week March holidays. When Esther comes back to school after the one-week break, she tells you she will return the books in April. And in April, she tells you she needs more time to read, and will return the book after the one-month June holidays. What would you think of Esther? Would you dare to trust her in other things?

Are you like Esther? Have you been like her? If you have, repent and change. Our Lord teaches us that we are to mean what we say. And that includes promises made. Our God is a God who keeps His Word. All promises in the Bible will be kept. Likewise, we are to follow Him in keeping our word! Before you give the next promise to someone, think hard. Are you sure you can keep that promise? Unless you're absolutely sure, don't make that promise.

Thought: Do I keep my word?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for today's reminder that I must keep my word. I pray I'd be more careful with what I say so that I will not break my word. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

JOSEPH'S REASSURANCE

After Jacob's death, Joseph's brothers' fear that Joseph might take revenge on them resurfaced. However, their doubt of Joseph's sincerity in forgiving them was unfounded. Joseph had to reassure them that he had truly forgiven them. He believed that whatever had happened was according to God's will.

How did Joseph sense his brother's fears? Besides sending a messenger to Joseph to remind him of what their father had commanded, they also asked for his forgiveness again. Joseph saw their sorry state of fear and wept for he had compassion on them. He comforted them and told them not to bow in fear. He also told them not to bow to him because he was not God. He said to his brothers, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good..." (Genesis 50: 20).

Clearly, the Bible tells us that God cared and watched over Joseph. Evil men may make us suffer, but our God will always turn their deeds to bring about good in the end. Do remember this as you grow up. When you are facing danger or hardships in your studies or relationships, remember God is always there for you. Constantly trust in God. Joseph is a good example of someone who trusted in God throughout his life and God saw him through all the hardships in life.

Good brother Joseph sincerely loved his brothers! He did not want them to live in fear but to enjoy the peace of God. He promised to take care of and provide for them and their children all their lives. Like Joseph's brothers, we would have doubts about God's love for us at times. What do we do then? Read God's Word for assurance. God has forgiven our sin and we are reconciled with God.

What does Romans 8:28 teach us about going through hard times?
Memorise this verse and write it down.

Thought: God is in control of everything in this world. We have nothing to fear.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to remember that You are in control of my life everyday. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

FAITH IN GOD

What were the last days of Joseph like? Holy Scripture tells us that Joseph lived to a good old age of 110.

Then the day came when the Lord called him home. All men will die. Some will receive eternal life. Those who do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ will be condemned to eternal death. It is important to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as He is the only Saviour of mankind, to save us from our sins and give us eternal life. Are you in the Lord Jesus Christ? Nothing is as important as believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Our precious souls will end up in hell if we do not have a saviour in the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved us and died on the cross for our sins.

Joseph knew that he was dying and prophesied about the last days of the children of Israel concerning their stay in Egypt. He said that God would surely visit them and bring them out of Egypt, back to Canaan, the land which God gave to their forefathers. This prophecy came true 430 years later when Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt.

Joseph also made the children of Israel take an oath to carry his bones out of Egypt when God deliver them out of Egypt. This is an act of faith in God. When God said that the children of Israel would leave Egypt, Joseph believed. Hundreds of years later, the children of Israel, led by Moses, in true obedience, took Joseph's bones out of Egypt and brought them to Canaan (Exodus 13:19).

Hebrews 11: 6 teaches us how to please God. Joseph had faith in God and this pleased God. Memorize it and fill in the blanks.

“But without _____, it is impossible to please him: for he that _____ to God must believe that he is, and that he is a _____ of them that diligently _____ him.”

Thought: Faith is the victory that conquers the world.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to have faith in Thee and trust Thee always. I know my faith in You may waver sometimes and often, I trust in myself more than in Thee. Give me the wisdom not to trust myself, but the courage to trust Thee. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

BE A JOSEPH

We must exercise our faith in the promises of God because they are true and sure. Doubting God's word dishonours Him. Joseph was wise to please God with his steadfast faith. He believed in God when God promised to visit the children of Israel in later years. Therefore, just before his death, he instructed his people to carry his remains to Canaan to be buried there. Today's text is in Hebrews chapter 11, often known as the chapter on the heroes of faith. Here, Joseph is given a place of honour for this.

Be a Joseph. Believe in all the promises of God. What is the most important promise in the whole Bible? It is the famous John 3:16 which says, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish but have everlasting life." If you believe in what God says here, you would believe in Jesus, trusting that you would receive everlasting life.

What are the other promises in the Bible? For the child of God, another important promise is that in Hebrews 13:5b, which says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." This tells of the continual presence of God to guide and to protect us. We need that. In this world of conflicts and confusion, it is most comforting to know that God is always with us. Many promises in the Bible have already come true. Search the Bible for more of God's promises. Isn't it exciting to know that they will all come true?

Joseph's life was a wonderful example for us because of his faith. It was one of righteousness, full of wisdom, compassion, courage, patience and integrity. Indeed, it was a God honouring life that pleases God. May we be like Joseph.

Thought: All the promises of God are better than silver and gold!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, let me learn about your promises and believe in them with all my heart. I thank You for this month's lessons on Joseph and I pray that I'd be like him, always trusting in You. I pray also that I'd learn humility and patience so clearly seen in the life of Joseph too. This is my prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

SLOW TO SPEAK, SLOW TO WRATH

“Ouch!” yelled Nate. “You tripped me!” He held onto his skinned knee and rocked back and forth. “I didn’t trip you,” said Philip. “You weren’t watching where you were going, and you fell over my foot.”

Nate’s face was red with anger. “You stuck it out on purpose,” he insisted. “I did not. It was your own fault!” replied Philip loudly. He was angry, too.

Nate stood up, held up his fists, and lunged toward his brother. Philip moved aside quickly, but not before Nate managed to give his arm a hard whack. Philip struck back, and a fight broke out!

John, their neighbour and Junior Worship friend, had been watching the brothers. “Boys!” he called as he hurried over. “Boys!” John was just about to pull them apart when they heard loud growling and barking in the yard across the street. Philip and Nate stopped fighting and turned to look in the direction of the noise. Two dogs were snarling and snapping at each other.

“That little dog is going to get hurt!” exclaimed Nate, heading toward them. To his relief, the owner of the dogs came out of the house and separated them. “It scares me when dogs fight,” said Philip.

John nodded. “It probably started over a bone,” he said. After a moment he added, “How do you think God feels when He sees people fighting? Like what you boys were just doing? Do you think that makes Him feel the way you felt when you saw the dogs fighting?”

The boys looked at each other. Philip shrugged. “I don’t think He really gets scared, does He?” John smiled. “Well, no,” he replied, “but don’t you think it makes Him sad to see people get angry and fight? We’re not pleased when dogs fight, and God isn’t pleased when people fight and argue. He tells us in the Bible that a quick-tempered person will do foolish things. So... how about talking things out instead of using your fists?”

Nate and Philip looked at each other and nodded. Even though both of them felt they had a good reason to be angry, they also knew deep down that they were probably wrong...

Thought: Do you often lose your temper? God says that’s foolish.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know the Bible commends those who are “slow to wrath” - those who don’t get angry quickly. Heavenly Father, the next time I feel angry, teach me to be patient and longsuffering towards others. This I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

FLEE YOUTHFUL LUSTS

Ivan's mother was shaking him gently, and he struggled to wake up. He sat up and opened his eyes wide. "I had to run!" he said in a shaky voice.

Mom sat beside him on the bed. "I heard you yell," she said. "What were you running from?" Taking a deep breath, Ivan said, "I must have been dreaming, and... and soldiers were shooting at me. I had to run!"

Mom frowned. "What did you watch on TV at Kevin's last night?" she asked. "I... I don't remember the name of the movie," he said, "but it was scary. I shouldn't have watched it, but everyone else did. So what else could I do?"

Mom looked at him thoughtfully. "Do you remember hearing Grandpa tell how Jesus helped him stop drinking?" she asked. Ivan nodded. "Remember what Grandpa did whenever he had to go near a bar after he was saved?" asked Mom.

Ivan thought for a moment. "Grandpa said whenever an errand took him near a bar or liquor store, he'd cross the street to avoid it," Ivan replied slowly.

Mom nodded. "Jesus had helped him quit drinking," she said, "but Grandpa knew it would be difficult to resist temptation if he went to any place where there was alcohol."

"I guess being around alcohol would make it a lot harder not to drink," agreed Ivan. "Yes," said Mom, "and Grandpa never went into a bar again as far as I know. He stayed sober for the rest of his life. Now... how does that apply to you?"

"Well, I... I'm not sure. Are you saying I shouldn't go to Kevin's house anymore?" asked Ivan. Mom shrugged. "Well, think about it," she said. "You've watched bad movies at Kevin's several times, so don't you think it might be a good idea not to go there unless you have definite plans to do something other than watch TV?" Ivan was quiet for a moment. Then he asked, "Would it be okay to invite Kevin over more often?"

"Good idea," agreed Mom. She tucked the blankets around Ivan. "If you let Him, Jesus will help you make the right choices. But you need to do your part, Ivan, by not putting yourself in the way of temptation."

Thought: Do you avoid going to places that may cause you to sin?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for Your reminder to me to flee from temptations. In Jesus' precious name I pray. Amen.

NOTHING CAN SEPARATE US FROM GOD

“You’re ugly, Bee Leng!” shouted Ella. “I’m leaving!” With that, Ella dashed out the door and ran to the next block to her own home, but she felt terrible. I shouldn’t have gotten mad at Bee Leng, she thought. I’m a Christian now - at least I guess I am. Just the day before, she had decided to trust Jesus to forgive her sins. But now she had lost her temper-as usual! Maybe I’m not really saved after all, she thought. It bothered her the rest of the week.

The next Sunday, she stayed after Sunday school class to talk with her teacher. “I want to be saved,” said Ella.

Mrs. Lee smiled. “You asked God to save you last week, remember?” Mrs. Lee asked gently. “You confessed that you’re a sinner and asked Him to forgive you.” Ella nodded. “Well, let me explain this again,” said Mrs. Lee, and she did. After they prayed together, Ella felt much better.

A few days later, Ella became angry when her mother insisted she washed the dishes. “I hate you!” mumbled Ella - under her breath, of course. Again she felt awful. “I don’t deserve to go to heaven!” she thought.

The next Sunday, Mrs. Lee was surprised when Ella again stayed after class and said she wanted to be saved. “I know Jesus died for me, and I asked Him to forgive me. But I’m such a terrible sinner!” said Ella tearfully. “I still keep doing bad things. And I’m so sorry! I really do want to be saved.”

“Ella, you said you know you’re a sinner and you asked Jesus to forgive you and save you, right?” asked Mrs. Lee. Ella nodded, and Mrs. Lee continued. “If you really mean it, you’re born into God’s family. You’re His child forever.”

“Forever?” asked Ella.

Mrs. Lee nodded. “It’s like when you were born into your earthly family,” she said. “Your parents don’t disown you every time you do something wrong, although it may spoil your relationship with them for a while. Neither will your heavenly Father disown you every time you sin, but it does spoil fellowship with Him. When you sin, confess it to God right away and depend on His strength to not repeat it. But you remain a part of God’s family.”

“Oh,” breathed Ella. She was beginning to understand. “That’s good!”

Thought: Do you feel unsure of your salvation?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for your assurance that once saved I am always saved. This is my prayer in Jesus’ name - Amen.

EVOLUTION IS A LIE!

Just as Kai Min was bending over to pick up his science book, he heard a knock on the door. "I'll get it," he called. "It's probably Brent. He said he'd come over tonight to study Science together."

A while later, in Kai Min's room, the two boys silently read the assigned pages and answered the questions. "This doesn't make much sense," mumbled Kai Min. "It says that animals developed from some creature that came out of the sea!"

The boys looked up as Kai Min's mom came into the room with a few papayas. "Would you like some papayas?" she asked. "I just picked some from our own tree."

As Kai Min and Brent helped themselves, Mom continued. "I heard what you were saying," she said, "and I agree with you - it doesn't make sense to think that one kind of plant or animal evolved and changed into another." She picked up a papaya, cut it in half, and pointed to the seeds. "What do you think would come up if you planted those seeds?" she asked. "Apples?"

Kai Min laughed. "Of course not, Mom," he said. "You know the answer to that question." "Well, when fish lay eggs, do turtles hatch out?" asked Mom. "Or when chickens lay eggs, do ducks hatch out?" Both boys laughed at that idea. Mom looked at the papaya seeds again. "In a way, seeds speak to us," she said. "They tell us that what God said in His Word is true - that He created all things, and He has placed within plants and animals and humans the ability to reproduce after their own kind."

"So the evolution we're studying on in this book doesn't make sense compared to what the Bible says, and it doesn't make sense compared to what happens in nature, either," said Kai Min. "I'm so glad I know the truth." "Me, too," agreed Brent, "but I wonder if Mr. Koh does." Kai Min shook his head. "I don't know," he said. "I guess we'll have to learn these theories, but I'm going to make sure Mr. Koh knows I don't believe them." Brent nodded. "We can tell him the truth, and then it'll be up to him to believe it or not."

Thought: Do you know that man's theories regarding evolution are just man's ideas and are untrue? They are lies.

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, thank You for the reminder that evolution is only a theory and a big lie. Thank you for Your truth in the creation account of the Book of Genesis. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

CONFESS AND LAY ASIDE SIN

Maria frantically searched through her closet and dresser drawers. “Mom?” she called. “I don’t know what I did with my running shorts, and I need them for the race tomorrow.”

“What’s going on?” asked her older brother Zach, as he stepped into the room. “Have you seen my running shorts?” asked Maria, her head still in the closet.

Behind Zach came little Sammy, who picked up a pair of jeans from the bed and said, “Here!” Zach took them from him and held them out to Maria. “Wear these.”

“I can’t wear those, Zach!” replied Maria angrily. “You know perfectly well that I can’t run in them!”

“You probably could if necessary,” said Mom as she came into the room with clean laundry, “but when we race, guys, we don’t want any extra weight.” Mom patted the neatly folded running shorts on the top of the stack of clothes. “I washed these for you, along with my own. Shall we get them on and go practise?”

“Yes, thanks.” Maria grinned sheepishly as she recalled putting the shorts in the laundry basket. “My coach at school says that on the day of the race we should put everything else out of our minds and give of our best!”

“That’s good advice,” agreed Mom. “It’s like the advice the writer of Hebrews gives.” “The Bible gives advice for running a race?” asked Zach. “I didn’t know that.”

“The Apostle Paul refers to the Christian life as a race,” Mom explained. “He refers to sinful things as ‘weights’ in our lives and urges us to put them aside. The weight of any sin - such as a half-truth, a bitter spirit, or an impatient attitude - will keep us from doing our best in our life-race.”

“Oops!” exclaimed Maria. She patted Zach’s arm and leaned toward him. “I’m sorry for being irritable when you came in, brother!” “Okay,” Zach said, backing out the door. “Just don’t kiss me! Come on, Sammy. Let’s go!” Maria just laughed merrily.

Thought: Are you a Christian who’s running your life-race free of the weight of sin?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me confess my sins and seek Thy forgiveness, so that I may run my Christian race without hindrances. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

WE SHALL BE GIVEN GLORIFIED BODIES

Michelle sighed as she struggled to her feet. “Why do I have to wear these old leg braces?” she thought. “Mom and Dad say I should be thankful that they make it possible for me to walk. I am glad for that, but why didn’t God just make me with good and strong legs like other kids?” Michelle looked at herself in the full-view mirror. “They look funny, too,” she thought. “I hate looking like a robot.” The more she thought about her image, the more she felt like crying.

When Michelle went to the supermarket with her mother that evening, they saw a friend from their church. “Mrs. Tan! Hello! How are you?” Mom greeted the lady. “You recently moved into an apartment nearby, didn’t you? How do you like it here?”

Mrs. Tan laughed. “As a matter of fact, we don’t like it very much at all,” she said, shaking her head. “The lift does not work well and we’re tired of the constant dripping in the bathroom sink. The colour of the walls is ugly, and the rent is much too high.”

“That’s too bad,” said Michelle’s mother, “but you sure seem cheerful about it.”

Mrs. Tan grinned. “I guess that’s because it’s not our final home,” she said. “It’s just a place to live in till the renovators are finished with our new house. Every time I feel discouraged because of all that’s wrong with the place, I just think of how happy I’ll be in our new home. Then I feel cheerful again.”

That evening, Mom told Michelle’s dad what Mrs. Tan had said. “Good for her!” approved Dad. He grinned. “That’s a good way for Christians to think, too. In fact, the next time my back hurts, I’ll have to remember that my body is just a temporary home. As long as we’re on this earth, we’re all living in temporary housing, but someday we’ll have a new home in heaven - and even new bodies.”

“Hey, that’s right,” thought Michelle. “I guess I shouldn’t complain so much about all that’s wrong with me, either.”

Thought: Do you have a health problem that discourages you? Do you become impatient, waiting for it to get better?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I may have a medical condition or other serious problems, but I know my body is just a temporary housing. Thank You that I’ll have a new, perfect body someday like Jesus! So teach me not to be discouraged about the current one - it’s definitely not the final home for my soul! This I pray in the precious name of Jesus Christ - Amen.

WITH GOD THERE CANNOT BE ANY WICKEDNESS AT ALL!

Buttons, Dan's dog, raced around the living room, barking at the men who were carrying out the tattered old couch and chair. He romped across the faded, threadbare rug while the workmen were trying to roll it up. "Dan called Mom, "please take Buttons outdoors." "All right," Dan answered. "Come on, Buttons. You're excited, aren't you, boy?"

A few hours later, everything was finally done. "Wow, Mom!" Dan exclaimed. "This room looks great! Everything is so clean and nice now!" "Yes, we've been needing new things for a long time," said Mom. Just then Buttons ran into the room. "Sorry, but you have to get that dog out of here!" exclaimed Mom.

"But, Mom," protested Dan as he went over and picked up Buttons, "he wants to see the new stuff, too. You've always let him come in here before." "That was when we had our worn-out furniture and that grimy old rug," Mom replied. "I want our new things kept clean! Out he goes!"

"Sorry, old boy," said Dan as he took Buttons to the kitchen. That night, Dad told the family about a man he had talked with. "Joe can't understand that he needs Jesus," said Dad. "He often helps his neighbours and has received several awards for community service. Joe is sure he is good enough to make it to heaven on his own. His friends think so too.

"Hey! He's like Buttons!" observed Dan. "Buttons was allowed in the living room when the furniture and carpet were old, so he thinks he's good enough to be in there with the new stuff, too. I would have let him in, but not Mom. When he went in, Mom had me take him right out!" Dan nodded. "Joe and his friends think he's good enough for heaven, but God doesn't."

"That's right!" agreed Dad. "We may be good enough for this sinful old world, but we're too dirty to live in heaven. God would never allow us in until we let Jesus wash away our sin with His blood."

Thought: Do you think God will let you into heaven just because you're kind helpful, loving and generous?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for sending the Lord Jesus to save me from my sins. This I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

SERVE THE LORD

Ming stared at a painting in an art store window. It was a picture of two hands clasped in prayer. “Why would an artist paint hands, Mom?” asked Ming. “I think there are much more interesting things to paint.” Mom smiled. “That’s a well-known painting,” she said. “I recently read an article about it. The artist painted the hands of someone who was very special to him. Not everyone agrees on whose hands they are, but this article claims they’re his brother’s.”

“Why did he paint his brother’s hands instead of his face?” asked Ming. “What’s the story?”

“According to the article, the painter who went by the name of Albrecht was born into a very poor family. Both he and his brother dreamt of becoming artists, and they decided together that one of them would study art while the other worked to support him. Then they would trade places, and the other would study art. They tossed a coin to see who would study first, and Albrecht won. His brother worked hard - probably in the mines - while Albrecht studied. By the time Albrecht finished his studies, he was already famous.”

“Cool!” said Ming. “Did his brother get to be a good artist, too?”

Mom shook her head. “By that time, his fingers were stiff and rough from his hard work,” she said, “and he had arthritis in his right hand. He was no longer able to paint. To Albrecht, those sacrificial hands were beautiful, and he very lovingly painted them to pay homage to his brother.”

“Wow! I hope he helped his brother in other ways, too!” exclaimed Ming. “After all, his brother really sacrificed his own dream to support him.”

“Yes,” agreed Mom, and after a moment added, “I’m thinking of some other hands - hands of someone who made an even greater sacrifice, and it was for us.” “You mean Jesus, don’t you?” asked Ming.

Mom nodded. “He gave His life for us so that we can have our sins forgiven,” she said. “His hands bear the print of the nails that held Him to the cross. Surely we should do all we can to honour Him.”

Thought: Are you willing to do anything for Jesus? Will you tell others about Him? Will you serve Him by serving others?

Prayer: Our heavenly Father, thank You for today’s reminder of the great love of Jesus and that as Christians we are also saved to serve the Lord Jesus. This I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

GOD DISCIPLINES HIS BELOVED

Steven slammed the front door and threw his bag on the sofa. His mother looked up from the book she was reading. "Steven, that was quite an entrance," she said. "Sorry, Mom," Steven replied as he dropped into a chair, "but I had a terrible day at school. Mrs. Wan got mad at us guys, including me!"

Mom closed her book. "Really? She's your favorite teacher. Why?" "Oh, she got upset just because we left our meal trays on the table," Steven mumbled. "She made us go back in and help clean up the cafeteria during recess. It's not fair!"

"But what if everyone left their trays too?" Mom asked. "It would be quite a mess for the cafeteria workers to clean up, wouldn't it?" "I know, but . . . other kids do leave them sometimes," protested Steven. "I never saw them get into trouble." He sighed. "I always thought Mrs. Wan liked me, but I guess not or she wouldn't get so mad. She looked right at me when she said we all had to go back in and clean up." Mom thought for a minute. She said, "Steven, do you remember when your dad got upset with me because I'd left the house keys in the front door all night? He wasn't upset with me because he was angry, but because he loves us and wants us to stay safe. He said I needed to be more careful about checking the keys after that."

Steven remembered, but he still frowned. "Well, I'm sure Mrs. Wan wasn't afraid we wouldn't be safe!" he said. "No, but I do think she got upset because she cares about you and the other kids," Mom replied. "She knows that doing the wrong thing brings trouble, and learning to do the right thing brings happiness." Steven couldn't contradict what Mom said. She smiled. "If we disobey God," Mom added, "He sometimes sends people to rebuke us because He loves us and wants us to be Christians who obey His words. He disciplines us, but not because He wants to hurt us. He does it out of love."

After a minute, Steven jumped up. "Tomorrow I'll apologise to Mrs. Wan," he declared. "And I'm going to be careful to take care of my tray after this."

Thought: Do you get angry or hurt when you're punished? Or do you realise that if others let you keep doing something that's wrong, they aren't really showing love to you?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for Your reminder that when You discipline me, it is because You love me and want the best for me. This I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

TRUST IN THE LORD

It had not been a good week for Jenny! First, her friend moved away from their neighbourhood. Then her dog died. To top it off, on Saturday Jenny discovered that her favourite dress had accidentally been bleached in the washer. By the time Mom returned from her afternoon shopping trip, Jenny was feeling absolutely terrible. Crying, she told Mom all about her troubles.

Mom listened thoughtfully. "Things certainly seem to have taken a turn for the worse, haven't they," said Mom as she put a big square package on the table. Jenny nodded and watched as Mom took a pair of scissors from a drawer and began to carefully cut a small hole in the center of the wrapping.

"What are you doing?" asked Jenny as Mom finished cutting and returned the scissors to the drawer.

"I bought a picture to hang on the living room wall," said Mom. She smiled and held the package up for Jenny to see. "What do you think of it?"

Jenny frowned. "Unwrap it so I can see it," she said.

"I cut that hole in the wrapping so you can look at the picture," answered Mom. "You can see it through this hole, can't you?"

Jenny shook her head. She was puzzled. "Are you kidding?" she asked. "That little hole is much too small for me to see what the picture looks like!"

"You're right about that," said Mom. "What I really want you to see is that life is like this picture."

"In what way?" asked Jenny.

"All we can see of the big picture of our lives is what's happening to us right now," explained Mom. "It's as though we're looking at it through a small 'hole' in the wrapping. But God can see the whole picture. He allows us to face troubles because he knows that the experience we gain will mould our lives into a beautiful picture. We just have to trust Him." Mom smiled at Jenny. "Now go ahead and unwrap the picture," she added. "You'll see that it really is beautiful."

Thought: Are you troubled by things that have happened in your life? Keep on trusting God to take care of you.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to trust You even as I go through adversities in life. Help me to know that You are in sovereign control of my life. This is my prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

ALL THINGS WORK GOOD

“I’m missing everything because I’ve got chicken pox,” wailed Tara as she wiped a tear from her eye. “First, I couldn’t sing in the concert. Then I missed Bob’s party, and now I can’t go on the class field trip to the glass company!”

“That is too bad,” sympathised Mom. “Maybe you’ll get to go another time.”

“But I’ve been looking forward to the trip ever since we studied glassblowing in school,” said Tara with a sigh. “A lot of places use modern machines to shape the glass, but some of the workers at this company still blow glass and shape it themselves.”

“It does sound interesting,” agreed Mom. “What did you learn in school about glassblowing?”

“The glass has to be really, really hot to put it in what they call a ‘workable state,’” said Tara. “Then a person can blow the glass and use tools to make different shapes. If it doesn’t look right yet, the glassblower can reheat it to soften it again, and then he can blow it and shape it some more.”

“Sounds a little like what God does in our lives,” said Mother thoughtfully. “Sometimes He needs to return us to a workable state so He can form us into just the right shape, too.”

“He does?” asked Tara. “How does He do that?”

“Oh, He uses various ways,” replied Mom. “He might use sickness.” She smiled at Tara and added, “Maybe God is giving you this time from your busy life for a quiet spell – a time to reshape you and to remind you that He wants to have first place in your life.”

Tara was quiet, remembering complaints she had voiced recently – complaints about Sunday activities taking too much of her time. She had also claimed to be too busy to memorise verses for Kids Bible Club. Now that she cannot go anywhere but stay at home, this would perhaps be the best time to start learning verses!

Thought: Are some things in your life frustrating and not happening according to your plans? God may want to use those things to do some reshaping of your life.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for reminding me to put my trust in You. Even when difficult times come my way, help me to believe that You have allow them for my good. So, help me to accept and bear with them. This I pray in Jesus’ name - Amen.

BE CONSIDERATE

Mother surveyed the living room with dismay. Jason's toy cars were parked under the couch. A toy airplane had landed on the television, and toy soldiers surrounded the lamp and held it under siege; a Lego collection was on the bookcase; Mother's handbag was on the floor; a used plate and cup decorated the dining table.

Mother sighed. Then she grinned; she had an idea. She scooped up some toy soldiers and cars, and Lego pieces. As she lifted the aquarium lid, her apology to the fish went unnoticed. A bright and colourful guppy darted to one side as the handful of toys sank to the bottom.

Jason was surprised when went to feed his fish after school. "What's all this junk doing in my fish tank?" he yelled. "I just cleaned it Saturday afternoon!" He went into the kitchen where Mother was fixing dinner. After dumping the dripping wet toys on the table, he put his hands on his hips. "I wonder who put my toys into the fish tank?"

"I did, Jason," said Mother calmly. "Isn't a tank full of toys mixed with fish what you want?"

"What I want? Of course not!" exclaimed Jason.

Pointing to Jason's Bible, Mother said, "Well, when you were reading your Sunday school verse last night, you said you wished people would live the way the verse said they should. Recite the verse for me, please."

Jason hesitated a moment. Then he slowly quoted Matthew 7:12. "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them..."

"I spent Saturday cleaning the living room while you cleaned your aquarium," said Mother. "Then last night you left your things all over the living room. If you were treating me like you want to be treated, it must mean that you would like me to clutter up your aquarium."

Jason felt bad. He knew he'd been pretty vocal about people not living up to the verse. "I'm sorry," he apologised. "I'll try to do better."

Thought: Are you as considerate to others as you would like others to be considerate to you?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be considerate and care for other's needs too. This I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

DO OUR ACTIONS TELL OF OUR FAITH?

“Look!” exclaimed Kevin as he pointed towards the ditch. “Someone knocked the stop sign down again.”

Dad nodded and stopped the car. “I wish,” he said as he got out, “that people would learn to slow down when they round this corner.” Kevin and Brandon got out of the car, too. “What are you going to do?” asked Kevin.

“We’ll see if we can put the sign back where it belongs,” replied Dad. “If drivers don’t stop at this corner, there could be a serious accident.” He walked down into the ditch. “Help me carry it back to the road.”

“We’re right behind you,” said Brandon.

Together the three of them lifted the sign and carried it to the corner. They tried to stand it up against the jagged pole still sticking out of the ground. However, it kept falling over. Dad frowned. “We’ll lay it down against the pole,” he said. “That will have to do until the Traffic Police Department fixes it properly.”

“But when we put it down like this, the sign lays sideways,” said Kevin. “Won’t it be hard to read?”

“Yes,” said Dad, “but motorists can recognise it by its shape and colour, not just by what it says.”

“That’s something like what our Sunday School Teacher Michael told us in Sunday school last week,” said Brandon. “He says there are ways people can recognise us as Christians – sort of like the way people will recognise this sign.”

“They’ll recognise us by our shape and colour?” asked Kevin in jest.

Brandon laughed. “No, but people can recognise Christians by what we do as well as by what we say- or sometimes by what we don’t do or say. Teacher Michael says we can’t expect others to know we’re Christians if we swear or lie or cheat like lots of kids do.”

“Teacher Michael is right,” agreed Dad. “People should know we’re Christians by our words – but more so, our attitude and actions should show that we belong to God.”

Thought: Can you be recognised as a Christian by the way you live?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I live my life wisely. It’s great to tell others that I belong to Jesus, but may my actions speak louder than my words. May my Christian faith be shown through my attitude and my actions. This I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

BE DOERS, NOT JUST HEARERS

I can hardly wait for our kids' choir to sing this morning," said Su Ling excitedly. "This is the first Sunday we're going to sign the words, too."

As her choir sang, Su Ling not only watched the choir conductor, but also Toby, a young deaf boy sitting in the front row. Toby was watching attentively, and Su Ling felt warm inside. It was exciting to sing in a way that a deaf person could understand, too. Later, when the Pastor spoke, she again noticed Toby carefully watching the Pastor.

That afternoon, Su Ling's brother wanted her to help him with an experiment. "Oh, Kevin! I'm sick of your dumb experiments!" Su Ling grumbled. "They're silly, and none of them work. Most of them don't even make sense!"

Kevin sighed and went to his room, but he returned a few minutes later. "I really need help with this," he said. Su Ling ignored him. "Please, Su Ling," he pleaded, but she refused to help.

"Get away from me," said Su Ling crossly. Then she added some other mean comments.

Mother looked at her sadly. "I was just remembering that you told us how eagerly your friend Toby listened to God's message this morning," she said. "Even though his ears didn't work, he still heard by lip-reading. But I'm not sure you heard the message."

Su Ling scowled. "I'm not deaf," she said. "Of course I heard Pastor's message."

Mom raised her brows. "Well, Pastor said Christians need to build each other up and help one another," she said. "After the service I saw Toby helping others. He helped push Mrs. Ong's wheelchair for her. I think his actions showed that he heard the message by lip-reading even though he couldn't hear with his ears. Listening to the way you've been speaking to your brother, I wonder if this morning's message stopped at your ears."

Su Ling blushed. She knew Mom was right. Hearing God's message with one's ears was important. But, responding with one's heart was even more important.

Thought: Be ye doers of God's Word and not just hearers!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I pray that You will help me to pay attention whenever Your Word is read or taught. May I never let it go in one ear and out the other. Help me think hard about it and let it correct my sinful attitudes and help me to please you with my life. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS

Joshua's Sunday School teacher had given the class a written quiz. "Oh, no!" whispered Joshua as he was handing up his paper. "I should have put seven, not five, in this blank. When Daniel's friends were thrown into the furnace, it was heated seven times hotter than usual."

"I'll change that answer for you," said Teacher Molly. She turned to the class. "Ask God to help you make right choices this week," she said, "and next week, be ready to share with us about a choice that took you courage to make."

That lunchtime, Joshua was oblivious to the people around him. He was day dreaming about some heroic acts he could do. He looked at his little sister. "Maybe I can save her from kidnappers this week," he thought. "I'll trip one of them and then... naah! That's not going to happen! I know! I'll rescue Mrs. Lee's big, gray cat if it climbs too high up a tree." Joshua sighed. That timid cat would never do that. "So what courageous thing can I do?"

Joshua had other things on his mind during the week, and he didn't think about courage again – not until Saturday morning when he went to the grocery store with his father. The cashier forgot to charge them for one item. So Dad told her about it. "Dad, did that take courage?" asked Joshua as they headed to the car.

"No, not really," replied Dad. "It was just the right thing to do – but I must admit that it often does take courage to do the right thing."

On hearing his dad, Joshua's stomach seemed to churn as guilt overcame him. It was a feeling he had been struggling with all week. There was something he had to do, and it would take much courage.

On Sunday morning, Joshua hurried to his classroom. Only his teacher was there. "Teacher Molly," he began, "I... I..." Joshua swallowed hard. "I didn't really know the right answer that you changed for me. I saw it on Jill's paper."

Teacher Molly looked serious, but she gave him a pat on the back. "It was hard to tell me that, wasn't it?" she asked. "I'm so glad you had the courage to admit what you did."

Thought: Do I have the courage to admit my mistakes and ask for forgiveness or am I a coward who would cover up my wrongdoings?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please give me the courage to always do what is right. If I have done wrong, help me confess my sin, put the matter behind me and never do it again. This I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

DON'T BE ASHAMED OF GOD

When the waitress served the food the Chang family had ordered, ten-year-old Hannah could hardly wait to eat. “Hannah,” said Dad, “you seem eager to get started. So, why don’t you lead us in giving thanks.”

Hannah glanced around the busy restaurant. “Right now?” she asked. “What if the waitress comes back with the ketchup?”

“I’m sure she won’t mind waiting,” replied Dad, and they all bowed their heads. Hannah glanced around again and then mumbled a quick prayer.

“I couldn’t even understand what you said,” complained Alex. “Me, neither,” agreed Diana. “You talked too fast.” “I wasn’t praying to you,” retorted Hannah. “God understood me, and He knows I’m thankful.”

“That’s enough, kids,” said Dad. “Hannah’s right. God does know what she prayed – but honey, Alex and Diana are right, too.”

Mom nodded. “Do you find it embarrassing to pray?” she asked. “No,” said Hannah, “not usually but everybody is watching us here.” “Who is?” asked Alex, looking at the other tables.

“Well... it feels like everybody is watching us when we all close our eyes,” said Hannah. “Why can’t we pray with our eyes open?”

“It isn’t your eyes that God is concerned about,” said Dad. “It’s your heart. Since you’re a Christian, Jesus is a part of your life just like you’re part of our family’s life. How would you feel if we have left you at home because we didn’t want to be seen talking to you?”

“Pretty bad, I guess,” admitted Hannah. “But we would never do that,” Mom assured her, “because we love you and we’re proud to be with you.”

Hannah was quiet for a moment. I wonder how God feels if I’m ashamed to be seen talking to Him, she thought. Putting down her fork, she asked, “Could I pray again?” Mom and Dad smiled and nodded.

“Our Father in heaven,” boldly began Hannah and from her heart, she thanked God for the food. She finished with a hearty amen. “Amen,” repeated another voice beside the table. Hannah looked up and smiled as the waitress handed her the ketchup.

Thought: Is it hard to acknowledge God and show love for Him when unbelievers are nearby?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me never to be ashamed of You. I recall that Jesus suffered and died for me, and He didn’t worry about what people would think. May I never be ashamed of Him! This is my prayer in Jesus’ name. Amen.

WE ARE ADOPTED CHILDREN TOO!

“We had a new girl in our class today,” said Leng Leng as she nibbled on a cookie. “Her name is Anna. She’s from an orphanage in Cambodia, and a local family – the Lees – adopted her.”

“How wonderful for her!” exclaimed Mother.

“Deborah said that she pities Anna because she doesn’t have any real family of her own,” added Leng Leng. Mother sat down at the table. “That’s ridiculous,” she declared. “Of course she has a family! The minute Anna was adopted, she became as much a part of the Lee family as if she had been physically born into it.” Mother smiled at Leng Leng. “I wonder if Deborah realises that you are also adopted.”

When Leng Leng heard those words her jaws dropped. She stared hard at her mother and dropped her cookie. “I didn’t know I was adopted!” she exclaimed.

Still smiling, Mother said, “Well, you are. When you accepted Jesus as Saviour last year, you were immediately adopted into God’s family. You’re a child of God now, just like Anna is a child of the Lees.” Mother reached over and picked up her Bible from the counter. She opened it and handed it to Leng Leng. “Read Romans 8:16-17a,” she said.

Leng Leng read aloud. “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.”

Mother nodded. “You became a child of God and an heir to His heavenly riches,” she said. “God has accepted you as His own as Anna’s new parents have accepted her as their very own.”

Leng Leng nodded. “I think Anna and I should get along well together,” she said thoughtfully. “She’ll be glad to learn that I’ve been adopted, too.” After a moment she looked at her mother and grinned. “You know what, Mom? If Anna becomes a Christian, she would’ve been adopted twice. Isn’t that cool? I’m going to tell her.”

Thought: Have you been adopted into God’s family? If not, wouldn’t you like to be?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for adopting me to be Your child. It is wonderful to know that the moment I trusted Jesus to be my Lord and Saviour, I became a member of the royal family and will receive a spiritual inheritance. Help me to treasure this truth and keep trusting Jesus. I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

ARE YOU SALT OF THE EARTH?

“Mommy, Lisa made me thirsty!” cried Matthew. “She gave me some potato chips.” Lisa laughed. “You didn’t have to eat them, Matthew.”

Matthew pouted. “But she tempted me, Mommy,” he insisted. “That’s why I ate so many. Lisa said they were so good, and she kept eating and eating.”

“Were they good, Matthew?” asked Mother. “Yes.” Matthew nodded and repeated, “But now, I’m thirsty.”

Mother smiled as she poured out two glasses of fruit juice. “Did you know that Christians are supposed to be like potato chips?” she asked. “Mom! That sounds silly,” said Lisa as she took a glass of juice. “How can anybody be like a potato chip?”

“Yeah,” agreed Matthew. He grinned at his big sister. “I’d sure be thirsty if I ate a giant potato chip like you, Lisa.”

“That would make you really thirsty, won’t it?” agreed Mother. She gave Matthew a little tap under the chin. “Well, that’s exactly how you’re supposed to be, Matthew. You’re supposed to make people thirst for Jesus, the Living Waters.” “How could we do that?” asked Lisa.

“Those potato chips make you thirsty because they’re salted,” explained Mother. “Jesus called His followers the salt of the earth. If we’re salt, we should make people thirst for Him.”

“I still don’t know how to do that, though,” said Lisa as she took another handful of potato chips.

“Matthew said you made him eat the potato chips by telling him how good they were, right?” asked Mother. “He also saw you keep eating them -- he saw that you enjoyed eating them.”

“I think I get it!” cried Lisa. “If we tell our friends how wonderful Jesus is, and if they can see that we’re happy as Christians, they’ll want what we have – they’ll thirst to know Jesus.”

Thought: Can Jesus call me salt of the earth? Do my friends see Jesus in my life? Do my actions and attitude show that I’m a Christian?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know how important it is to be a good witness for Jesus. Help me to share the joy of learning about You in Sunday School and Church with my friends so that they will also want to come to know and accept You as their Saviour. Help me Heavenly Father to be the salt you want me to be. In Jesus’ name, I pray - Amen.

BE THANKFUL

Bryce was walking home from school together with his twin brother, Andrew. “I sure hope we get remote control race cars for our birthday,” he said. “Me, too,” agreed Andrew, “but with Dad out of work, you know we won’t get them.” He kicked a stone on the sidewalk.

“Don’t be so sure,” replied Bryce. “When Aunt Elizabeth called last week, she asked what we wanted. So, I told her we wanted the cars. Who knows! She might come with them.”

When the boys arrived home, there was a large package on the table. It was for them – a package from Aunt Elizabeth. Could it be? It was! A remote control car... well, sort of. “A remote control truck?” Andrew asked. “Not a car?” There was dismay in his voice.

“And do we have to share it?” asked Bryce in disbelief. “Certainly, you can share,” said Mother. “Why shouldn’t you?” The boys sighed, but they took turns playing with the truck and figuring out how to use the remote control.

“It’s really tricky to back the truck up with that trailer attached,” said Andrew after a while. “I didn’t expect it to be like this.” “What did you expect?” asked Mother. “I thought each of us would get a car,” said Bryce.

“I didn’t think that,” said Andrew. “I didn’t expect to get a remote control car at all.” He looked thoughtful. “I suppose we really should be thankful to have this truck, even if we do have to share it.”

“I agree with that,” said Mother firmly. “Tell me – what are some things you like about it?” “Well,” said Bryce after a moment, “it does have ‘turbo speed.’” “I never saw one that came with a trailer before, and I think it’s kind of fun to figure out how to make it back up the right way,” said Andrew.

Bryce grinned. “Yeah,” he agreed. “It might be more fun and challenging than an ordinary remote control car.”

Mother nodded. “How about writing a thank-you note to Aunt Elizabeth?” she suggested. “Mention all the things that you do like about the gift. Thank her for it – and don’t forget to thank God for Aunt Elizabeth. She’s been very good to you.” The boys grinned and nodded.

Thought: Do I grumble and complain if I receive gifts that aren’t exactly what I wished for?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be grateful and thankful to Thee always for Thy many blessings. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

OUR HEAVENLY FATHER LOVES YOU

Lynda looked at the tall buildings surrounding her new home. A big lump came to her throat as she thought about the stormy divorce that had taken her father away from her. Lynda tried to tell her mother how lonely she was, but she felt like Mother didn't really listen. It seemed to Lynda that Mother always talked about her own problems, not Lynda's. She knew her mother was nervous because it was her first day at a new job. "She doesn't even think about me and how I'm feeling on my first day at a new school," Lynda said to herself with tears in her eyes.

Lynda dreaded walking into her new school, but the principal was kind and sent a teacher helper to guide her to the classroom. When the bell rang for recess, Hong, the girl sitting in front of Lynda, turned around. "Want to spend recess with me?" asked Hong. Lynda breathed a huge sigh of relief as she went with her new friend to the canteen.

"What does your dad do?" asked Hong as she and Lynda ate.

Lynda had hoped no one would ask about her dad. "He's a salesman," she answered vaguely. "How about your dad?"

Hong shrugged. "He left my mom when I was a baby."

Lynda didn't answer right away. Then she said in a small voice, "My parents are divorced too." Almost in tears, she added, "And Mom just thinks about her own problems and doesn't even hear me when I talk about mine."

"I know what you mean," answered Hong. "I was really lonely until I met my Heavenly Father." "Your what?" asked Lynda.

"My Heavenly Father - God," replied Hong. "He always listens. I can talk to Him about anything, and He helps me not to feel so lonely." "Must be nice," said Lynda wistfully.

Hong leaned forward eagerly. "Why don't you come to Sunday school with me and learn about Him?" she invited. "When you don't have a dad, it's really neat to have a Heavenly Father."

"Someone to listen, right?" asked Lynda. Hong nodded. "He'll listen, and He'll help."

Thought: Do you know the Heavenly Father – God? Even if you have an earthly father, you need to know God, too.

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, I'm so grateful You love me and are always ready to listen to me, no matter where I am or what problems I have. Thank You for this reminder that I can always turn to You. Please help me remember that always. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

BE A CHEERFUL GIVER

Samantha is a cheerful giver. When she heard that her little nephew was ill, she visited him in hospital and bought him a Bible storybook to read. On Missions Sunday, when she heard about the needs of missionaries and their mission work, she put a good sum of money into the offering bag. She even bought an extra gospel CD to give away to her classmate because she wanted her classmate to hear the gospel.

Samantha had learnt from the Bible that all that she has comes from the God. She also learnt from the Bible that God loves a cheerful giver. God had provided for all of Samantha's needs. Samantha was thankful and grateful to God for providing for her needs. She was also thankful that God enabled her to be a cheerful giver, supporting God's work and giving to others in need.

Samantha is also faithful in giving her tithes to the Lord.

Do you know what happens to the tithes collected during the offering on Sunday?

Here are some examples what it is used for.

1. It is used to pay for the utility bills of the church.
2. It is used to support the pastors and the people who work in church.
3. It is used to pay for the activities and events in church.
4. It is used to support missions and missionaries.

Thought: Am I a cheerful giver?

Prayer: Heavenly Father help me to give cheerfully and willingly. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

SHINE FOR GOD!

“Mom’s calling,” said Ruth as she and her sister Sarah played with neighbors in the common area of their flat. Sarah looked at her watch. “Wow!” she exclaimed. “It’s dinnertime already!” The girls told their friends good-bye and hurried to their apartment.

“Guess what!” said Mom as they talked about their day. “I got a job offer.”

Dad smiled. “I bet someone asked you to do day care for their kids,” he said.

Mom laughed. “You’re right. I was out talking with other moms in our church today. Melissa Lee who lives near us asked if I’d like to watch Tanya and Bob when she goes back to work on Mondays and Fridays.”

Ruth looked surprised. “Dad, how did you know that was what someone wanted Mom to do?” she asked.

“Well, it’s not the first time that’s happened,” replied Dad. “The Choos wanted Mom to take care of their son one weekend when they had to be away, remember? And a few weeks ago, the librarian at your school asked Mom to baby sit for a couple of days.”

Sarah looked puzzled. “That’s so weird. It’s not like Mom has a sign saying ‘I’ll baby sit.’ In fact, she doesn’t take care of any babies regularly!”

Mom smiled. “No, but they know I’m a stay-at-home mom, so maybe they figure I’d like to earn a little money,” she said. “And I think another reason they like to have me is because of you two.”

“Us? I don’t get it,” said Ruth. Mom smiled, “I think they look at you and say to themselves, ‘Those are nice kids! I could trust my children to be in that home. I’ll see if their mother would like to work for me.’”

Sarah grinned. “We’re just such angels,” she joked. “So thanks, girls,” added Mom, “for being lights in our neighborhood.”

Thought: Do your actions cause people to notice that you’re different – different from the world in general? Your attitudes should shine as a light, pointing others to Christ.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to shine for You and to bear a good testimony to Thy name. In Jesus’ name I pray – amen.

GOD LOVES EVERYBODY

Caleb and his friend, Alex, were studying the displays at a sports store. “There sure are lots of different kinds of balls, aren’t there?” he remarked.

“Yeah, and I like them all,” said Alex with a grin.

An elderly couple stopped to look too. Their clothes looked strange to the boys, and neither Caleb nor Alex could understand the language they spoke. Caleb frowned. “Let’s get going,” he said. The boys strolled off, and when they were out of hearing distance, Caleb added, “I don’t like foreigners. You can’t understand their language, and they dress funny. I think when foreigners come here they should try to be more like us.”

“That’s not fair,” said Alex. “They’re probably here for just a short visit. If you were to go to Africa for a visit, would you start dressing the way they do over there? And would you quit talking until you learned their language?”

Caleb ignored Alex’s questions. “Look!” he exclaimed. “A store for stamp collectors! My dad collects postage stamps.”

The boys peered through the window at the display of stamps. Alex noticed the prices, and his eyes widened. “Why do some of those stamps cost so much?” he asked. “They’re nothing but little pieces of paper.”

Caleb laughed. “Some stamps are expensive because there weren’t many of them printed,” he explained. “That makes them valuable. And some of the most expensive ones are those that were misprinted. They’re valuable because they’re different from other stamps.”

Just then, the foreign-speaking couple walked by. “Hey,” said Alex, “if it’s so great for stamps to be different, why do people have to all be the same? Maybe being different makes them interesting, too.” Caleb frowned. “We like variety in all kinds of things,” continued Alex. “Things like flowers and birds and balls and... and stamps, so why wouldn’t we want variety in people, too? Besides, remember our Sunday school lesson last week? It was all about how God loves the world and desires for all men, regardless of the race or ethnicity, to be saved. They’re all important to Him.”

Thought: Should we judge people by the country they’re from or the accent they speak with?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me not to be prejudiced against anybody regardless of the country or race they come from, as well as their social status. Help me instead to witness to them if they are unsaved. This I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

SEEK GOD'S HELP TO UNDERSTAND SCRIPTURES

Kevin looked up with a frown on his face. "You don't look very happy," observed his twin sister, Jenny, "What are you thinking about?"

Kevin hesitated. "About God," he said after a moment. "I'm just wondering if God really hears us when we pray."

"Of course He does!" exclaimed Jenny. "Another thing," added Kevin, "my Sunday school lesson says God is everywhere. How can that be? And how can He have no beginning?"

"I can't believe you're questioning God," scolded Jenny. "Better not let Dad hear you do that!" "Do what?" asked Dad as he joined them. "Come on – out with it."

"Well," muttered Kevin, "sometimes I don't understand things about the Bible and God but Jenny thinks it's wrong for me to question."

"Well," said Dad, "it's actually okay for you to have questions." "It is?" exclaimed the twins in unison. "It's by asking questions that you learn," said Dad. "For example, Jenny, you made chicken noodles for our lunch yesterday, right?" As Jenny nodded, Dad continued. "How did you learn to do that?"

"I heard her ask Mom a ton of questions," Kevin chimed in. "She had to ask how much water to use and which pot to use. And she asked how long it would take to boil." He turned to his sister. "You saw Mom make it a million times, Jenny, but you didn't seem to know anything when you tried to do it."

"Well, I can do it now," replied Jenny.

Dad smiled. "I think you can," he agreed. "Asking questions helped you learn what to do. And you know, that's why God doesn't mind when you ask honest questions – He knows it helps you learn. You've watched Mom and me try to follow God and live for Him, and you've imitated what you've seen us do. But as you start following God yourselves, you may have questions. Don't be afraid to ask your parents, Sunday school teachers or Pastor when you do not understand what God has told us in His Word."

Thought: Are there things you don't understand about God? It's good to ask questions.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to know that You are pleased to answer my questions whenever I pray. Your answers may be through my parents, Sunday School teachers or other Christian adults whom I can trust. Most of all, thank You for helping me believe that the Bible has all the answers. In Jesus' precious name I pray. Amen.

VALUE TEAM WORK!

“Well, if that’s the way you’re going to be, I’ll just find someone else to do my project with,” Jeff angrily told Nathan and Tom. He crossed his arms, turned, and walked away from the two boys.

At dinnertime, Jeff was still angry. “Those guys just won’t listen to me,” he grumbled. “They want to change the whole project. I don’t care what they say; I like the way I planned it. I think I’ll find someone else to work with me on my project.”

Dad frowned and then asked, “So I guess you can’t fly in formation then?”

“Huh?” grunted Jeff. “What are you talking about?”

“Remember when we went to see the Air Force’s flying team perform at the air show last month?” asked Dad. Jeff nodded. “Do you remember how far apart those six jets flew?” asked Dad.

“About a meter, I think,” replied Jeff. His eyes sparkled as he remembered the thrill of watching the shiny blue and yellow jets. “That really takes some teamwork! When one of them moved, they all moved.”

Dad nodded. “Flying in formation certainly does take teamwork,” he agreed. “Doing a good job on any group project does – including your current project. In a sense, you should be ‘flying in formation’ as you work on that. The other boys should listen to your ideas, but you should also listen to theirs, shouldn’t you?”

“Well... maybe,” Jeff admitted slowly. “Yeah, I guess you’re right, Dad. We need to work together.” Sighing, he added, “I’d better call Tom and Nathan and ask about their ideas.”

“While we’re on the subject of teamwork,” Mother said quickly as Jeff started to get up, “let’s remember that the most important team of all is God’s team. Christians need to work together for His glory.”

Jeff grinned. “And you’re afraid I’m forgetting the special Junior Worship anniversary next week, right?” he asked. “Well, I’m not – and while I’m talking to Tom and Nathan, I’ll ask them to come, too.”

Thought: Do you sometimes resent others’ suggestions? Do you have a hard time working in a team?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that today’s reading has taught me how important it is for Christians to work together in unity. So help me to be a considerate team member both in church, home and school. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

YOUR SINS FORGIVEN?

“We’re collecting our school pictures tomorrow!” exclaimed Andrea one evening. “I hope mine turned out good.” “Well, how good can they be?” teased her brother Matthew. “After all, the camera can only take a picture of what it sees.” He ducked just as Andrea threw a small pillow at him.

After school the next day, Andrea came slowly into the house. “My pictures are so awful,” she wailed when she saw her mother. “I fell on my bike a couple of weeks before they were taken, remember? I got that bump on my forehead – and skinned my nose, of all things! I sure didn’t think the scratches would show in the pictures, but guess what! They do!” In disgust, she threw the envelope of pictures down on the table.

“Why did you think they wouldn’t show?” asked Mother.

“I covered them with some powder Miss Yeo gave me,” said Andrea, “and besides, Cheryl said they wouldn’t show. Her sister, Dana, had a cold sore when her graduation pictures were taken, but it didn’t show up on the pictures.” Andrea paused and then added, “Cheryl said Dana was afraid her hair was going to look bad, too, but in her pictures every hair was perfectly in place. Look how my hair sticks out!”

Mother smiled. “Well,” she said, “I’m sure Dana’s pictures were taken at a photographer’s studio, and the finished pictures were touched up by the photographer. That means that all the little blemishes – such as spots on the face or hairs out of place – were removed or covered over.”

That evening, Dad also heard Andrea’s complaints. “So you think your picture needs a little touching up?” he asked. Matt laughed. “Like I told her, the camera just shows what’s there,” he said. “You can’t fool it.”

Dad smiled. “This reminds me of people who try to cover up their sins,” he said, “but no matter how good they’ve made themselves look, God’s ‘camera’ shows just what’s there – a heart full of sin.”

“And only God can cover our sins,” said Mother. “He does that for us when we accept Jesus as Saviour. We are imputed with the righteousness of Christ.”

Thought: Have your sins been covered by God?

Prayer : Heavenly Father, I know there is no way I can cover up or remove sin myself – no matter how good I try to be to make up for my wrongdoings. Thank You for sending the Lord Jesus to die for my sins. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

ONLY JESUS SAVES

Brad trembled as he stood in court before a judge. He had been in trouble before - once for shop-lifting and once for destroying public property. Because this was his third offence, he was afraid he would be placed in jail. Nervously, he glanced at Mr. Tay, a social worker who had offered to speak on his behalf. "Your Honour," began Mr. Tay, "Brad's just thirteen..." The judge nodded. "Just thirteen, and already he has a very bad record," he said.

"That's true, but would you give me a chance to work with him?" asked Mr. Tay. The judge frowned. "You've done fine work with some of these boys," he admitted, "but I don't know." He turned to Brad. "Are you willing to cooperate with Mr. Tay if I place you in his custody?" he asked. Brad nodded. "Oh, yes, Sir!" he said quickly. The judge leafed through papers as he considered the situation. "I've decided to grant you your request," he said at last, "but I want you to know, young man, that the moment you step out of line, you will be put in a correctional school." Brad was very relieved as he left the courtroom with Mr. Tay. "I sure do thank you," he told Mr. Tay, "and I'll really try hard! I do want to be good."

Mr. Tay smiled. "Brad, there's something I want you to think about," he said. "You were guilty and headed for punishment when I spoke for you and saved you from it. But do you realise you are headed for eternal punishment far worse than jail? One day you're going to stand before God, to be judged. Who's going to help you then?" "I... I don't know," faltered Brad. "Nobody, I guess." "I was able to help you and save you from the punishment you deserved," said Mr. Tay, "and there is one person, and only one, who can save you from the eternal punishment you deserve. Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins. You need to turn to Him and receive His forgiveness. Then God, the Judge, will declare you to be 'not guilty.'"

Thought: Are you sure you are saved? If yes, thank God! If not, remember the only one who can save you is Jesus Christ. Admit your guilt and ask Him to save you today.

Prayer (if not sure): Heavenly Father, thank You for the lesson today that reminds me I need to be saved. I know I've sinned and cannot save myself. So please help me for I ask for forgiveness of sins. I ask the Lord Jesus to come into my life and be my Saviour. I pray I'd be a good Christian starting today. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Prayer (if saved): Heavenly Father, Thank You I'm saved. It is such a precious gift and I'd always be grateful. In Jesus' precious name I pray. Amen.

WHAT IS A GOOD FRIEND?

Kathy came bouncing into the house. “Mom, you’ll never guess what happened!” she said. “Lena’s aunt in England sent her some British currency – five ten-pound notes. Some of us stopped to see them after school, and Lena let us pass them around. Jana left before the rest of us did – and you know what?” Kathy didn’t wait for an answer, but hurried on. “When we left, one of the notes was missing!” she reported. “Everybody thinks Jana must have taken it!”

“Oh, I’m sure Jana wouldn’t have done that!” exclaimed Mom. “Did you see her take that money? Did you ever see Jana take anything that didn’t belong to her?” Kathy slowly shook her head. “As her friend, you should have stood up for her and told Lena that you don’t believe Jana would do that.”

“But who else could have taken it?” asked Kathy. “We looked everywhere, but it’s gone!” She glanced at the clock. “Oh, no!” she groaned. “I told Jana I’d walk to the library with her in half an hour, but now I don’t feel like it. If Lena or the other kids see me with her, what will they think? I’ll call and tell her I can’t go.”

“Listen to yourself!” scolded Mom. “You have no good reason to think Jana has done anything wrong. You made a commitment, and you need to keep it.”

At her mother’s insistence, Kathy reluctantly met Jana as they had planned. As the girls walked along, Kathy was embarrassed to see Lena approaching. “Wait up!” called Lena. “I’ll walk with you.”

“Are you out to spend your fifty pounds?” joked Jana.

“Oh, no!” replied Lena. “I’m going to keep them!” She laughed merrily. “You should have seen us this afternoon, Jana! We looked all over the house for one of the notes because I didn’t know my mother had taken it over to show our neighbour next door.”

When Kathy returned home, she hesitantly told her mother what had happened to the money. “With a friend like me, who needs enemies?” she concluded. “I’m so ashamed!”

Mom nodded. “I’m sure you’ve learned a lesson today,” she said. “Proverbs 17:17 would be a good verse for you to learn – go look it up, okay?”

Thought: What kind of friend are you? Do you refuse to listen to gossip - or to spread gossip - about your friends?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me be a good and faithful friend to others. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

A NEW CREATURE

“Was that Aunt Karen?” asked Greg as his mother hung up the phone.

“Yes, it was,” replied Mom with a big smile, “and she said the infection in Maria’s eye has completely cleared up. It’s really a miracle!”

“I guess so!” exclaimed Greg as he thought back over the past months. His little cousin had been taking various medications to clear up an eye infection, but the eye specialist thought she would probably need surgery. Greg and his family had been praying for Maria every day.

“What’s up?” asked Greg’s sister Susie as she came into the room. Greg and Mom told her what Aunt Karen had said. “Oh, great!” cheered Susie. “God answered our prayers, didn’t He?” She sat down at the table. “Wouldn’t it be cool to have God do a miracle in your life?”

Greg grinned at his sister. “What miracle would you pray for?” he asked. “It couldn’t be that you’d get over an illness—you’re healthy as a horse.” He scratched his head as he pretended to think about it. “Maybe you could pray you’d become beautiful,” he teased. “Or better yet, that you’d become the helpful, kind, loving sister your wonderful brother deserves to have.”

Susie playfully swatted at him as she answered. “I’m already a more terrific sister than my baby brother deserves,” she told him.

Mom smiled. “Actually, God has already performed a wonderful miracle in each of your lives,” she said. “He has? When was that?” asked Susie.

“Yeah, Mom. What miracle are you talking about?” Greg wanted to know. “I know God’s given us lots of blessings, but they’re not really miracles, are they? Not the kind of miracles we’re thinking of.”

“I’m talking about when you received Jesus as Saviour,” Mom explained. “When God changes our hearts and lives and when He takes away our sin and gives us new life in Christ, that’s the greatest miracle of all.”

Thought: Has Jesus done a miracle in your life? Are you changed?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for making me a new creature and giving me a new life in Christ. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

RUN FROM EVIL!

Lauren liked being on her own for an hour before her mother got home from her half-day work. She poured herself a glass of milk, grabbed a cookie, and sat down to watch her favourite TV programme. Mom wouldn't approve of this, she thought, but Mom's old fashioned. Lauren can't imagine how watching a little TV would hurt anything. So she watched, laughing so hard at the jokes that she didn't hear her mother's footsteps... When Mom entered the room, Lauren jumped up in surprise. "Mom," she exclaimed. "You're home early!"

Mom looked at the TV. "You shouldn't be watching that programme, Lauren," she said. "Some of the jokes are what we call 'off-colour'-they're actually sinful." "Oh, Mom! I don't pay any attention to that bad stuff," replied Lauren.

Mom frowned. "We'll talk about it while we fix dinner. Let's have noodles tonight. Please go prepare the chicken meat and soup," she said. "I'll join you as soon as I've changed out of these clothes." Hoping Mom would forget about the TV, Lauren quickly turned it off and headed for the kitchen.

When Mom came in and went to get something from the refrigerator. She pulled out a plastic container and opened it. Taking a whiff, she wrinkled her nose before putting the cover back on and handed it to Lauren. "Here's the leftover turkey hamburger we had last week," she said. "You can have the rest of it tonight." "Oh, good!" exclaimed Lauren. But when she opened the container, she made a face. "Mom!" she exclaimed. "This stuff is moldy! It's gross!"

"Well, don't eat the part that's bad," said Mom. "Just eat the good part." Lauren stared at her mother in disbelief. "I can't eat just the good part," she objected. "It's... it'll be contaminated by the part that's spoiled."

"I agree with you," said Mom. "I wouldn't eat it, but since you seem to think you can filter out all the bad things from the stuff you feed your mind, I thought maybe you'd like to try that with the things you feed your body too." Lauren slowly shook her head. "I see what you're saying," she admitted. "From now on I'll find something better to do after school-I promise!"

"Wise decision," said Mom. "Then I'll throw out the spoiled food."

Thought: Be careful of bad influences from friends or TV...

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, help me to stay away from temptations lest I fall into sin. This I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

BOOK OF JUDGES

FOCUS ON GIDEON, A VALIANT SOLDIER

This month's study is from The Book of Judges in The Old Testament. The Book of Judges is a book of history. History tells us about people and events that happened in the past. Besides being interesting, many precious lessons can be learnt by studying history. The time of the Judges took place after the death of Joshua who led the children of Israel to conquer The Promised Land.

After Joshua's death, the people did not always stay faithful to the Lord. Their fellowship (close relationship) with God was broken when they fell into sin. The Lord punished them by letting another nation conquer them.

During their sufferings as servants, they would repent and cry to the Lord. The Lord would then raise up a leader to save and help them. This leader or deliverer was known as a Judge. There were different judges, thus the name of the book – Judges. Some judges were good and others bad. This pattern of fellowship, sin, punishment, servitude (being servants or slaves), repentance, and deliverance happened again and again.

This month, we'll learn the exciting story of one of the good judges. His name is Gideon. The title of our study is Gideon, a valiant soldier. The word "valiant" means brave, like a hero.



We'll see that Gideon was a soldier of the Lord. He was a literal one, as he had to lead Israel against many enemy forces. But he was also a spiritual soldier for the Lord. When we think of soldiers, we think of fit, hardworking and persistent individuals fighting for a common cause. Spiritually, we must be like that. We must be a hardworking Christian in that we persevere in doing our Quiet Time ("QT") and our Junior RPG readings, so that we can be spiritually "fit"!

Thought: Are you regular in QT?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be a good soldier and be consistent in my QT and RPG readings so that I may grow and be a strong and fit Christian! In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

ARE WE ALSO LIVING LIKE THE PEOPLE IN THE PERIOD OF JUDGES?

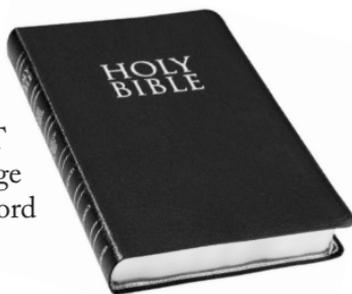
You may be surprised to see that today's text is the last verse of the last chapter of the Book of Judges. That's not a mistake; that's exactly what we want to focus on. In those days when there were no kings in Israel, every man did that which was right in his own eyes. This means many of them were self-centred and living lives of sin as there was little law and order.

Think about a daily occurrence in today's context – the roads of Singapore. Imagine for a minute there were no traffic lights. What do you think would happen on the roads? Complete chaos and confusion! There'd be cars and buses colliding and drivers would be sounding their horns at each other. Instead of stopping at what may have been "Stop" signs, drivers would proceed. The end result? People would be hurt, vehicles would crash, everyone would be unhappy with everybody. In a way, the time of Judges was like that – they were selfish and just did what they thought was right for them.

In today's world, it may seem like many also live like people in the time of the Judges. Many in the world do not obey laws, especially the laws of God. But today's lesson is not about them, it is about you.

Think about these questions:

Do you live according to God's law?
Or do you live according to what you like and don't like?
Or do you follow your own thinking?
Do you follow what is in the Bible?
How is your QT?



Dear child, take time to do your QT everyday and you'd see how the Lord can change and strengthen you through His wonderful Word of truth!

Thought: It is best to live according to God's Laws.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to live my life according to Your Word. I know it's not easy to obey You all the way but I also know it would be easier if I pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help me. So give me the strength, Father in heaven. This is my prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

BEARING THE NAME OF CHRIST

Every name has a meaning. Since we are going to spend one month learning about Gideon, it will be useful to know what the name Gideon means!

In Hebrew, Gideon means “feller of trees” or “powerful warrior”. That is a wonderful name, and indeed the biblical Gideon fulfilled the meaning of his name for he was a mighty warrior leading the people of God in battles.

You may know of boys called Alan, Bryan, Calvin; you may know of girls called Alicia, Betty or Carolyn. There are so many names. And we have our Chinese names or Indian names, and they would mean something.

Do you know the meaning of your name? Go ask your parents! Whatever names we have, there is one that all of us have in common: Christian.

Because of what Jesus has done on the cross and because of our repentance and faith in God the Father, we are all “Christians”. What does this word – Christian – mean? Simply, it means a “follower of Christ”. Are you a follower of Christ? If so, we must know what Christ wants us to do. And how do we do that? By reading and knowing more of the Bible!

Dear child, if you’re a Christian, there are responsibilities. You’d read the Bible and do your QT consistently. There may be times when you are not able to do it. There could be a host of reasons, but try to keep at it. Press on. The Lord knows it is not easy, for you may be busy, forgetful and distracted. But, He has given us the privilege of prayer. So, we may ask Him in prayer to help us remember to read and love the Bible more! The more we read and pray, the more we will grow spiritually!

That is the meaning of the RPG
– Read, Pray, Grow!



Thought: Simply read, pray and grow!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for helping me to be a Christian. I know I must press on in reading, praying and growing! This is my request, heavenly Father, in Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

PUNISHMENT FOR SIN

The book of Judges begins with the account of the children of Israel sinning against the Lord once again. They suffered under the oppression (control) of the Midianites, Amalekites, and the peoples from the desert in the east. For seven years, their enemies destroyed or robbed them of crops they had planted. Some of the children of Israel tried to hide in the mountains. There was no food for either the people or their animals. The Israelites were in such a terrible state, that they cried to the Lord for help.

When God's people obey Him, they will be blessed. But when they sin, God will punish them. Dear reader, is this the case with you? Is there sin in your life? How about secret sins that no one knows? How has this affected your relationship with God? Do you feel guilty about some secret sin? Be sure that there is nothing you can hide from Him. God hates sin and He will definitely send punishment. Sometimes God does not punish us immediately, so we get complacent. But dear child, be careful.

Or is God a stranger to you? Why? One day, God will judge all non-believers and by then it'd be too late to repent. Will you not confess your sins and accept His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour today?

Use the code to complete the message:

A	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
J	M	N	O	R	S	T	U

One day we must appear before

HTO AINSCODH GOJH ER MTFUGH

Thought: I must confess my sins and repent. God has promised to forgive and forget my sins.

Prayer (if saved): Heavenly Father, help me live a life pleasing to You, so I will enjoy your blessings, and not suffer Your punishment. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Prayer (if unsaved): Heavenly Father, thank You for giving me the message that one day, all will be judged. I know I've sinned and now accept Jesus as my personal Lord and Saviour. So please help me, God. In the precious name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

GOD'S GREAT BLESSINGS

The Lord sent a prophet – a messenger to the children of Israel. The Lord's message was a reminder of how He had delivered them in the past. The Lord saved them out of slavery in Egypt. He helped them drive away their enemies from the land of Canaan and had given the land to them. But, they had then disobeyed and sinned against God. The Israelites had forgotten God and had become ungrateful!

Dear reader, do you know God loves you? Think of the many good things God has blessed you with! You may think of your lovely home, school and church friends, family or your wardrobe and new computer games.

But there is a gift which in fact is the greatest of all. It is the gift of salvation. Believe on the Lord Jesus and your sins will be forgiven and you get to live forever with Him in Heaven.

What are some of God's blessings to you?

The first one is done for you -

1. Mum and Dad who love me.

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

Thought: God is so good to me!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to be grateful, so that I will always remember to praise You for the many blessings you have showered upon me! In Jesus' I pray. Amen.

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

The doctrine of the Trinity tells us that there is only one God and three persons in the Godhead; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. They are same in substance, equal in power and glory. These three persons are not divided but distinguished; the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit, the Spirit is not the Father; but the Father is God, the Son is God and the Spirit is God. God the Son is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Who is “the angel of the LORD” in today’s text? He is none other than the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ.

The Trinity was already present at creation when God said in Gen 1:26a, “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...” During the water baptism of Jesus, God the Father spoke in an audible voice, and God the Holy Spirit descended like a dove on God the Son in Luke 3:22, “And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.”

How do members in the Trinity work? Well, one example is in prayer. We don’t pray to Jesus or the Spirit. Instead, we pray to the Father through the power of the Spirit, and on the basis of the Son’s work of salvation for our souls. That is why we pray in Jesus’ name.

Thought: The word, “Trinity” may not be found in the Bible but the Bible speaks about the three persons, the Father, Son and Spirit in one God which is what the doctrine of Trinity means. I believe what the Bible says is true.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the wonderful doctrine of Trinity. This I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

BEING THANKFUL TO GOD FOR PHYSICAL NEEDS!

Gideon was the son of Joash the Abiezrite, from the tribe of Manasseh. They lived in the city of Ophrah. The name “Gideon” means “feller of trees” (one who cuts down trees). He was secretly beating the wheat by the winepress (a machine used to press grapes in the making of wine). “Threshing” the wheat, would separate the kernels of grain from the stalks. The kernels could be used to make flour, bread and other kinds of food

Why was he hiding from the Midianites? It was to prevent the Midianites from finding out that he had wheat and robbing him of his wheat, which was his only paltry supply of food.

Imagine how difficult and miserable life must have been for the Israelites! Children, don't you appreciate the wide choice and varieties of foods that you can have every day? Furthermore, there is little danger of losing your food to strangers who might snatch it away from you? Can you imagine what it would be like if your parents were forced to hide all the food to prevent theft? Or having to look over your shoulder all the time just in case someone either steals your money or snatches the food right out of your hands after you had bought it. Aren't you grateful that you live in a time and place free from such fears?

Circle all your favourite foods.

**juice pretzels sausage hamburger
buns pasta spaghetti fish cheese
bacon chicken nuggets pizza lasagne
meat balls chocolates vegetables steak
cakes ice-cream candy bread biscuits
doughnuts noodles fruits rice jelly
soup porridge Kentucky Fried Chicken**

Thought: Do I thank God for all the food I eat every day, even the ones I do not quite like?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me always to be thankful and grateful for Thy provision of my needs. This is my prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

GOD'S PRAISE FOR GIDEON

As Gideon was secretly threshing wheat, the Angel of the LORD appeared to him. Hear what the Angel of the LORD said: "The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." The word "valour" means courage. So, Gideon was a courageous person. The LORD had seen the brave things Gideon had done.

Children, what about you? Have you ever done anything brave for the Lord? Have you taken the brave step of sharing the gospel with a friend or loved one? Have you ever invited a friend to church? Or have you been in constant fear that they might say 'no' or might laugh at you. Even so, should you just give up? When someone takes the Lord's name in vain, do you sheepishly keep quiet?

Have you ever owned up to a mistake you have made before? That is also a brave thing to do. Or apologise to someone whom you have offended – that takes courage too.

God knows everything about you and me - what we think, say or do. If the Angel of the Lord were to appear to you, would he praise you and call you "a mighty child of valour"? Be brave not because of your own strength, but because the Lord is with you just like He was with Gideon.

Read the following acronym.

P lease God and do
 R ight things
 A lways
 I n everything, at home, at
 S chool, during play, to
 E njoy God's praise.

1. Will God praise you? YES / NO

2. Why? _____

Thought: Have I been doing things that God will praise me for?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give me the courage to tell others about Your wonderful, saving grace. Also, please give me the courage to admit mistakes I have made and to apologise whenever necessary, for that is the mark of a brave child of Yours. This is my prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

GOD'S CHOICE OF GIDEON

The LORD told Gideon he had been chosen to deliver Israel from the oppression of the Midianites. But Gideon questioned as to how he could possibly do that. His family was poor and he was “the least” in his father’s house. Gideon probably meant he was the youngest or not an important or influential member of his family. What power would he have to save the nation? None! From this, we can see how humble Gideon was. There was no trace of arrogance in him.

Tomorrow we will hear the LORD’s promise to Gideon! Today, we read that Gideon was chosen by God to serve Him. This means God called him to the ministry.

Dear child, God has chosen you to read this. Do you know that God wants you to be the best Christian you can be at home and at school? Have you listened and obeyed this call? When God calls someone, should they say “no”?

God may not have chosen you to do something as major as the task for Gideon. But each day, each small area of our life, can be an opportunity for us to do something for God. It does not need to be something extreme or far-reaching in its impact, It is good enough for us to live each day righteously for the Lord.

1. God told (ohna) _____ to build an ark because God was going to send a global (worldwide) flood [Genesis 6:13-14].
2. The Lord told (bmraa) _____ to leave his home in Haran and follow the Lord to a new land [Genesis 12:1].
3. The Lord in the midst of a burning bush called (ssmoe) _____ [Exodus 3:4].
4. The Lord came and called and (mlause) _____ answered [I Samuel 3:10].
5. The Lord said “Whom shall I send?” and (aahisi) _____ said, “Send me” [Isaiah 6:8].

Thought: When God calls, I must promptly answer.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me how to be attentive to Your call to service and to count it a privilege. This is my prayer in Jesus’ name. Amen.

GOD SAID “I WILL BE WITH THEE”

Read Judges 6:16 again. The LORD said to Gideon: “Surely I will be with thee.” - This was the second time the LORD promised to be with Gideon; the first time was in Judges 6:12. It did not matter that Gideon’s family had no money and Gideon was a nobody in his own family. The LORD Almighty had promised to help him.

Sometimes we cannot fulfill what we say we will do. Perhaps you had promised to play with your friend one Saturday. But unfortunately, you could not keep your promise because it rained heavily that day or Dad required you to help with something urgent at home. However, things like these will not happen to God. We can trust God to do what He says because God is the highest authority (power) over everyone and everything. Therefore, when the Lord told Gideon He would be with him, that was such a wonderful and powerful promise.

Are there times when you are afraid? Perhaps the darkness of the night frightens you? Or the ferocious lightning and thunder on stormy days? Or the fear of losing grandma or grandpa who is very ill? Do not be afraid. God has also promised that we may cast all our burdens and cares to Him, and He will carry us through all tough times.

The Lord promised to be with the following persons:

Jacob	Christians	Joshua	Isaac
-------	------------	--------	-------

1. As I was with Moses,
I will be with thee: I will not forsake thee - _____
2. Go and teach all nations, I am with you always - _____
3. The Lord told him to go
and live with his son in Egypt - _____
4. He dreamt of a ladder reaching up to Heaven - _____

Thought: God always does what He says.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the reminder that You are with me and that I can cast all my cares and worries to You. Teach me to trust You more, and to commit all my problems and fears to You. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

GIDEON'S REQUEST FOR A SIGN

Gideon was a careful person. Initially, his faith was not strong. So he wanted a sign from the Angel of the LORD. This would assure him that it really was the Angel of the LORD and he should obey him. He asked the Angel to wait while he prepared a present for Him. When it was ready, the Angel of the LORD told Gideon to put the meat offering and bread on the rock, and pour the broth (soup) over them. The Angel of the LORD then touched the offering with the tip of the staff (stick) in His hand. Fire appeared and burned the offering up! And the Angel of the LORD was gone. Gideon got the sign he wanted!

Dear reader, today we do not need signs from angels to tell us what to do or to give us courage to do it. Such signs are no longer given by God as they are not needed. We have a perfect book – the Bible – that tells us what God's promises and commandments are for us. But if you do not read the Bible, how will God speak to you? How will you know what to obey and what to do?

Some signs given by God - pick from the following words:

blossom(flower) rainbow flies

1. God will not send a flood to destroy the world again - _____.
2. The rod of the man whom God shall choose as priest shall - _____.
3. No swarms of _____ will be found in the land of Goshen.

Thought: God can show me His will (what He wants me to do) through the Bible.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me pray and read Your Word every day, so that I can know Your will for me. This is my prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

GOD'S ORDER TO GIDEON

The same night when Gideon received the sign he asked for, the LORD gave him a job to do. Gideon was to use his father's young bullock to break his father's altar to the idol, Baal, and to cut down the grove by it. (A "grove" was some kind of wooden image or symbol of the idol or another idol). Then Gideon must build an altar to the LORD upon the rock. He was to use the young bullock as an offering and burn it with the wood of the grove.

John 4:24 says, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth." So if we want to worship God truly and properly, we must first be born again (born of the Spirit), and we must worship Him according to His ways as taught in the Scriptures (in truth), and not in our own ways. Dear reader, believe in the Creator, not in idols or other things made by man. Lifeless, man-made idols are not the only idols. Do you know that there are many other invisible idols in our heart? They could be your favourite pop stars, secret yearnings for fame, or even your pet dog. Whatever occupies the topmost place in your heart which rightfully belongs to the Lord is an idol.

Dear child, remember the Lord's order to Gideon to destroy the idol. Likewise, not only must we remove all physical man-made idols from our lives, we must also not allow anything to occupy the topmost place in our hearts.

Try to fill in all the blanks (Psalm 115:4-8):

Their idols are silver and gold, the work of _____'s hands.

They have _____, but they speak not: eyes have they, but

they _____ not: They have ears, but they _____ not:

_____ have they, but they smell not: They have _____,

but they handle not: feet have they, but they _____ not,

neither _____ they through their throat. They that make

them are like unto them: so is every one that trusteth in them.

Thought: I must have no idols in my life.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to worship You in spirit and in truth. This is my prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

OBEDIENT GIDEON

Despite being given a dangerous task, Gideon obeyed the LORD and took it on. He was afraid of his father and the men from the city. They would surely be very angry if they knew what Gideon planned to do to their precious idol Baal. In the dark of the night, Gideon took ten of his servants to do all that the LORD had commanded.

The next morning, the men in the city saw their idol, Baal, thrown down and the grove of trees cut. They also saw a new altar built with the bullock offered upon it. How do you think they felt?

Dear reader it is always good to obey the Lord. But it is not always easy. People, even friends and family might be angry with you. You may be scared and lack the courage to obey God. But when you do obey, there is peace in your heart. What happens when you do not obey? You would feel sorry that you have not pleased God, who loves you. For God has blessed you with many good things. He will give you courage. Trust Him!

Tick the things that show obedience to God.

- () Watched TV until very late - too sleepy to pray at bed-time.
- () Gave thanks for my food in school, even though the other children did not.
- () Prayed and read the Bible before I went out to play.
- () Invited my neighbour to Sunday School.
- () After so many computer games, my eyes were too tired to read the Bible.
- () Told my friends the Lord Jesus can forgive their sins and save them.
- () Was a good student in school.
- () Learnt my memory verses.

Thought: It is always right to obey God, no matter what.

Prayer:

“ Heavenly Father, please give me the strength and courage to obey You always. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

JOASH IN DEFENCE OF SON GIDEON

The men of the city were very angry that someone had thrown their idol down. Soon they found out that the culprit was Gideon. They told Gideon's father, Joash to "bring out" Gideon because they wanted to put Gideon to death. But God protected Gideon for his obedience. Joash told the men of the city that if Baal was really a god, Baal would take care of himself. That day his father gave Gideon a new name, Jerubbaal, which meant "let Baal plead." The word "plead" means complain against or defend himself.

Dear reader, do you know an idol is also some person or some thing that you love more than God. It is not a bad thing to love people and things but do not love them more than you love God.

You must have heard of the TV programme, "The American Idol". It promotes the kind of hero worship common among kids who would adore pop stars, singers or movie actors or even school leaders. Some adore things like: music, studies, food, games which would be alright if taken in moderation. Never give in to an excessive amount of such things for they may cause you to lose your love for God.

Circle the things that you love or enjoy.

comics friend
music pets candy
sports money toys
computer games video
food television books
chocolates bicycles

IMPORTANT: I must not love any of them more than God!

Thought: God loves me so much - I must love God most of all!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to spend more time with You and Your Word, so that I will learn to love You more. I know that I tend to stray and love other things more, so please help me Father not to do that. I must worship only You. This I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

THE SOLDIERS' OBEDIENCE

The enemies of the Israelites gathered together in the Valley of Jezreel. They included the Midianites, the Amalekites and all the children of the east who joined forces to attack the Israelites.

Gideon needed great courage. He was up against a strong army which numbered many. God, once again, did not desert Gideon. The spirit of God was with Gideon (v34). He blew a loud trumpet and sent messengers to gather the people together from all around. The soldiers turned up. Who do you think has the power to move them?

We need strong and courageous leaders like Gideon who was filled with the Holy Spirit. But can you imagine the situation where people refused to come when Gideon called them? Or the messengers were too lazy and could not be bothered to go call the people? In your family, school and church, it takes teamwork to achieve things doesn't it? Every Christian has a part to play, however big or small, in doing God's work. Are you doing your part for the LORD? Are you a good soldier of the Lord? Do you support activities of your Sunday School or Junior Worship?

Write down 2 things at home and in church that you can do for the Lord:

Home:

Church:

Thought: May I be a good soldier for God!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me remember to do Your bidding. That means I am to serve You wherever I am, whether at home, at school, or at play. Help me keep this in my heart all the time. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

GIDEON'S FLEECE

There were 135,000 Midianites, Amalekites and their other enemies near them (Judges 8:10). Compared to the Israelite soldiers, this was a huge battle-hardened and combat-ready force. Lacking confidence and faith, Gideon wanted a sign from God to confirm He would help him save the children of Israel. Understandably, he was afraid. If we were in his shoes, we would be frightened too.

He placed a piece of fleece (wool from a sheep) on the ground and asked God to let the fleece be wet while keeping the surrounding ground dry overnight. Wouldn't the night dew that wets the fleece, wet the ground too? But what Gideon requested to see came true the next morning. Still weak in his faith, Gideon wanted to be absolutely sure and asked God for another sign. This time he wanted the fleece dry and the ground wet. God kindly obliged again.

Dear children, unlike Gideon, we have the Bible today that has a perfect record of God's prophecies and promises. If God has said it, it shall be done. Read the Bible and grow in the knowledge of God.

Use the CODE to read the message:

A	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	K	L	N	O	P	R	S	T	U	W	Y
																		

Thought: Only trust in God. Jesus said that faith can move mountains.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to trust you more and more. And please help me to be consistent with my bible reading and quiet time so my faith will grow in knowledge of You. In Jesus' I pray. Amen.

GIDEON ROSE UP EARLY

Gideon asked God for a sign, and the next morning he rose up early (6:38). He was eager to know whether God had answered his request. Gideon was also eager to meet with God and commune with Him.

Dear reader, do you wake up early each day, eagerly to have your morning devotion and pray to God? And on Sunday, do you wake up early, excited to go to church, to sing praises to the Lord, learn about Him and have fellowship with other Christians?

Or do you sleep late on Saturday night and drag your feet to church the next day? If your answer is yes, this is a wrong attitude that you should correct. If you love the Lord, you'd look forward to Sunday for you can go to church to learn God's Word and be with God's people. So, why stay up late on Saturday nights and feel tired on Sunday mornings.

Will you follow the example of Gideon in rising early to meet with God? Even the Lord Jesus, the Son of God rose up early to commune with God the Father. Mark 1:35 says, "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed."

Thought: May I honour the Lord by rising early to start each day with Bible reading and prayer.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, grant me an eagerness to commune with You. Help me to prepare myself for Sunday worship and be in church punctually. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

STAND UP FOR GOD!

Men from the other tribes of Israel answered Gideon's call (Judges 6:35). The Israelites now had an army of 32,000. However, compared to 135,000 enemies, Gideon's army was still small. And, guess what? God told Gideon that he had too many soldiers! God explained that He did not want Israel to think that they could save themselves. God is all-powerful. Whatever strength and wisdom that we have are all given by God. He did not want Israel to boast of themselves. God instructed Gideon to use the test of courage to trim down his army. The people were probably told the battle would be fierce and dangerous. Since they were up against a much greater force, the probability of serious injury and death would be high. So those who were fearful or too afraid to stand up for God were told to leave. And you know what? 22,000 left Gideon! Dear reader, do you know how many were left? Yes, only 10,000! But God still said Gideon's army was too big! Tomorrow you will find out how small an army God had in mind!

See who else dared to stand alone against the enemies...

1. The prophet (Ijhiea) _____ challenged 450 false prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18:20-22).
2. The Apostle (etrpe) _____ was chained between two soldiers in prison, with guards at the door, but the angel of the Lord saved him (Acts 12:5-10).
3. The Syrian soldiers, horses and chariots went to capture the prophet (lsheia) _____ but the Lord delivered him (2 Kings 6:11-17).

Do you find it tough to stand up for God? To "stand up" means to speak for, support or defend a belief or someone. If you love God, stand up for Him and be brave enough to let others know you're a Christian!

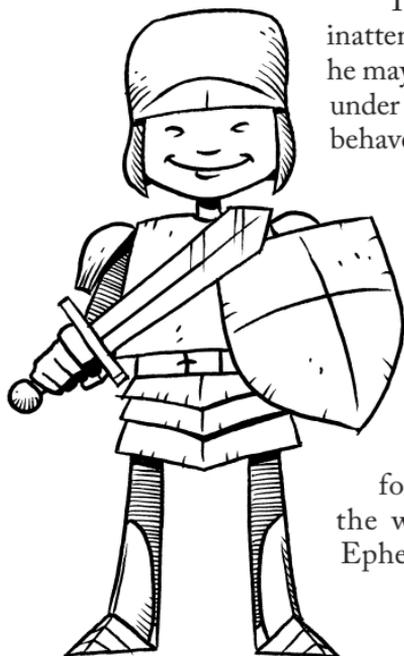
Thought: Am I afraid to stand up for God? If I were in Gideon's army, would I have stayed or would I have left?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please grant me courage to stand up for You always. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

TEST OF ALERTNESS

After the test of courage, there were merely 10,000 men left. But, God wanted Gideon to have an even smaller army. To trim the army further, God ordered another test. It was to be a test of alertness (being watchful, attentive). The men were brought down to the stream to quench their thirst.

Most of the men knelt down to lap water directly from the stream. Only 300 stayed on their guard, using their hands to quickly scoop up water to drink while standing. The men who knelt would not be alert soldiers, they failed the test. Those who used their hands to bring water to their mouths were still on the lookout for potential enemies or attacks while they drank. They would be able to react quickly if there was danger. These 300 soldiers passed. They were specially chosen by God to help Gideon defeat the Midianites.



It is important to be alert, and not inattentive. If a soldier does not pay attention, he may lose his life and even the lives of soldiers under his command. How should an alert soldier behave? He is always watchful. His eyes look right, left, and everywhere. This means he will be ready for the enemy or for any trouble.

How can we apply today's lesson in our lives? Be alert soldiers for the Lord! If you were to find the soldiers of our country slack in training and not alert, you'd be worried, wouldn't you? Likewise, if we are to be good soldiers for God, we are to be alert and put on the whole armour of God. Read more in Ephesians 6.

Thought: Am I a good and alert soldier for the Lord Jesus? Am I alert to see and stay away from sin?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be an alert and good soldier of Yours. Help me also to always watch and pray. I am weak but with your help I can lead others to You and stay away from sin. This I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

GOD'S ENCOURAGEMENT

The valley of Jezreel was the place where the battle would take place. It was packed with enemy soldiers. There were so many that they looked like grasshoppers. Their camels could not be counted, like the sand on the beach! That night, God told Gideon to take one of his soldiers and go down to hear what the enemies were saying. It must have frightened Gideon when he saw the multitude of enemies.

Most of the soldiers were sleeping but God placed Gideon within earshot of two enemy soldiers. Why? God wanted Gideon to hear what they were saying. One was telling the other about his strange dream of a loaf of barley bread rolling down the hill and knocking a tent down! How can a small and powerless thing like a loaf knock a tent right over?! The other soldier said that loaf of bread was Gideon and that God was going to give Gideon's small army of 300 victory over their vast army.

Dear reader, if you were Gideon, would you not be encouraged? If you believe in the Lord, you will enjoy God's power, protection and care. If you trust God, He will help you with your problems and help keep you out of trouble. Remember, there is no enemy or problem too great for God.

Find the words and shade them with a coloured pencil.

Then use the remaining letters to complete the message at the bottom.

CAKE	DREAM
BREAD	DOWN
LORD	OUTSIDE
BARLEY	NIGHT
WAR	SAY MEN

N L O R D M E W N B
 W I C O E K A C N R
 O Y G B A R L E Y E
 D U A H R A M G R A
 E D I S T U O E D D

God _____ Gideon.

Thought: If I am a child of God, He will always be with me. Can any problem be too difficult for God?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for today's lesson that You will always be present to guide and help me. Teach me to always turn to You first whenever I need help and advice. So help me to submit and commit everything to You in prayer. This I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

THE SWORD OF THE LORD

Gideon thanked God for leading him into the enemy camp to hear that encouraging message. You can perhaps, imagine how frightened Gideon could have been when God told him to go into the enemies' camp. He would be walking straight into the stronghold of the powerful Midianite army! But still, Gideon obeyed God. And what a wonderful blessing he received when he obeyed!

Greatly encouraged, he must have sprinted back to his men, woke them up, and told them the Lord had assured them of victory. Gideon divided his 300 men into 3 groups. Each man was given a trumpet and an empty water jar with a torch inside. The soldiers put the torches inside the water jars to hide the light from the enemy. Gideon told them to look at him and follow what he did. When Gideon blew his trumpet every man would do the same and shout "The sword of the LORD and of Gideon"!

Dear reader, did you notice their battle-cry was not "the sword of Gideon" though Gideon was their commander. Gideon knew it was the Lord who had arranged for him to listen to that conversation in the enemy camp. Gideon knew it was the Lord who promised him victory, and therefore all glory must be given to God.

Remember always that it is God who gives you whatever intelligence, talents, and blessings you have. Always be grateful to God and give Him the honour. Of course, this is easier said than done. Sometimes when people praise us for either doing well in a test or scoring high marks in assessments or having a talent such as playing the piano or drawing well, we could be given to pride. Watch out! If you begin to feel puffed up, push the alarm button. Remember: "The sword of the LORD".



Thought: Do I remember that it is God who has given me all my successes and achievements?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me never to be proud but be grateful for the many blessings in my life. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

FOLLOWING THE LORD TO SURE VICTORY

Gideon and his men quietly crept towards the enemies' camp. They surrounded the valley where the enemies were sleeping. Closely following Gideon's instructions and actions, they blasted their trumpets at the foes. Then they broke their water jars, making even more noise. Finally, holding their torches high, they shouted, "The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!"

The dark, quiet night was suddenly invaded by bright lights and loud noises and shouts! The enemies were rudely woken up. Taken by surprise, they were clueless and scrambled in all directions and fled in great fear, leaving their weapons behind. They could not put up any fight even though they far outnumbered the Israelites. Instead of being armed to fight, they were seized with fright! Men from other tribes of Israel then joined in to chase after the enemies and succeeded in killing them and their leaders.

Do you know Christians are continuously at war? Yes it is spiritual warfare and our leader is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ! Just as how the men followed Gideon closely, Christians ought to follow Christ too.

Following Christ can be a lonely road, especially when you're the only Christian at home. Sometimes, the other members in your family may call themselves Christians but they do not actually live by the teachings of the Bible. In other words, they do not follow Christ. What do you do then? Follow their ways, or continue to follow Christ? Christian, be sure you know the answer!

Read the words and see how many times "follow" appears.

*Down in the valley with my Saviour I would go,
Where the flowers are blooming and the sweet waters flow;
Ev'rywhere He leads me I would follow, follow on,
Walking in His footsteps till the crown be won.*

*Follow! Follow! I would follow Jesus!
Anywhere, ev'rywhere, I would follow on!
Follow! Follow! I would follow Jesus!
Ev'rywhere He leads me I would follow on!*
(William O. Cushing)

Thought: Do I do as the Bible teaches? Do I follow Christ?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to follow You always. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

GIDEON'S GENTLE ANSWER

The men from the tribe of Ephraim caught and killed the two Midianite princes, Oreb and Zeeb (Judges 7:24-25). But they were still mad at Gideon for not calling them to join in the fight against the Midianites from the beginning. They scolded him angrily.

If you remember how God purposely downsized Gideon's army from 32,000 to 300 men, you would know why the men of Ephraim could not be included. Gideon knew he was not responsible for not asking the men of Ephraim. Rightfully, he had the right to be angry in return. However, being humble and wise, Gideon chose to give them a soft answer. Instead of arguing or pulling rank and reprimanding them, he praised them!

Gideon said what they had done in battle was greater than what he and his army had done! He could see they wanted to fight for the Lord, which was in itself a good thing. See how Gideon looked out for the good in the men confronting him and praised them for the good thing they had done. Capturing the two enemy leaders, Oreb and Zeeb was indeed a good thing.

Dear child of God, let's look at what we can learn from Gideon's attitude and action. He was humble. As their leader, he had the authority to tell the men off. He could have just told them in their face that God did not choose them and put them in their place. He did not do that, for in his heart he considered that the men of Ephraim did a better thing.

Gideon was also wise. He followed the teaching of Proverbs 15:1. He was considerate of the men's feelings and was therefore tactful in his reply to them. He praised them sincerely. By doing that, the men from Ephraim were not angry anymore. Everyone became happy.



Thought: Be gentle. Handle angry people with care. But be sincere.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me not to let anger make me sin against you. Help me to be gentle even with people who like to pick quarrels with me. Teach me to look out for good things about others that I can praise them for. This is my prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

THE RIGHT TYPE OF ANGER

The battle against Midianites was not over. Two of their kings had escaped. Gideon and his army continued to give chase. Miraculously, none of the 300 men perished, but they were tired, hungry and thirsty. Remember, Gideon and his little army had been fighting for many hours already. As they chased the two kings past Jordan, they came to the cities of Succoth and Penuel.

In these cities, Gideon was looking forward to some relief for his fighting men. So, he asked the residents for food and water. Unfortunately the people of both cities said "No!" For this refusal, Gideon was angry and vowed to punish them after the Lord helps him capture the Midianite kings.

Pause here. Gideon was angry? Not only that, he threatened to punish the men who refuse to help? What did we learn yesterday? Gideon was gentle in his reply and we are supposed to learn from him. What is happening today?

Let us look at the difference between the lessons of yesterday and today. Yesterday, men from Ephraim were zealous and eager to serve God. They wanted to help Gideon fight and were angry for missing out on the action. Today, the men at Succoth and Penuel refused to help Gideon and his men do God's work. They had committed a serious sin. Gideon was right to be angry at them because of their sin against God. For that, Gideon did not give them a gentle answer like he did to the men of Ephraim. Instead, he harshly punished them.

Tick the ways which you can work together with or help other children of God:

- () Share my Bible or hymn book.
- () Pray for pastor and JW teacher.
- () Hand out tracts to other people.
- () Help to play the piano for church meetings or lead in songs.
- () Give notebook or pen to someone who needs it.
- () Take care of a new student in the Sunday School.

Thought: If I am a child of God, I must be willing to help others.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to work together with other Christians to serve You. Sometimes I am shy or downright lazy, but please strengthen me to do the right things. This I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

THE GREATEST GIFT AT CHRISTMAS!

Singapore is a shopping paradise. Especially when Christmas is just around the corner, shopping can reach dizzying heights. For many shopping malls, particularly those along Orchard Road, Christmas sales are a major event for them.

The weekend leading up to Christmas is usually the busiest; you get everybody rushing to buy their last minute gifts. It's nice to give gifts to loved ones to show our appreciation!

In the frenzy over Christmas, we sometimes forget that the greatest gift has already been given. What is that greatest gift? It is the Lord Jesus!

Thanks to the many misleading images on Christmas cards or advertisements, many of us tend to think that Jesus was born in a beautiful manger with sparkling clean surroundings. Have you been to a manger? What is a manger? It is where animals feed and live. And those of us who keep pets know animals are usually not clean. In fact, mangers are usually very dirty and stinky. And yet, God the Father allowed His Son Jesus to be born in that sort of an environment. More than that, Jesus came to earth to suffer on the cross and die for our sins.

The Lord Jesus Christ is indeed God's greatest gift to us.



Thought: Jesus Christ – the greatest gift of all!

Prayer: Thank You, Heavenly Father for sending the Lord Jesus to die on the cross for my sins. I know that I am undeserving sinner saved only by Thy grace. This I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

BOXING DAY!

Today, the 26th of December, is often called “Boxing Day”. The exact origin of the term “boxing” is unclear and there are several competing theories. One has it that in the past, there were boxes that collected money and other gifts for those who were needy. Another theory is that since presents were exchanged or given during Christmas, this was the day to open the boxes. Hence, the word “boxing”.

Most people forget Christmas was for us to remember the birth of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus. Also, why He came to this earth? Well, it is because of God’s love for sinners like you and I. God the Father sent His Son the Lord Jesus to save us from our sins. The Lord Jesus Christ live a perfect life on this earth. He died and rose on the third day and now sits at the right hand of God the Father. If you confess yourself as a sinner, repent of your sins and personally accept the Lord Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, you will be saved. Dear child, have you accepted the Lord Jesus as your Lord and Saviour?

Dear child, there is nothing wrong with buying or opening gifts. Just remember the the birth of Jesus, and give Him your heart and devotion.



Thought: Thank God for the wonderful gift of His Son Jesus.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, even though I have received gifts this Christmas, help me to remember that there is no better gift than the gift of Jesus my Saviour which you have so freely and graciously given to me. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen

FAITH IN GOD AND NOT NUMBERS!

Remember how many soldiers the Midianites, Amalekites and the peoples from the desert had before the battle? There were 135,000 of them. How many have been killed? 120,000 men! How many were left? 15,000. These remaining soldiers were with the two Midianite kings, Zebah and Zalmunna and still they could not escape from Gideon and his men. Remember that the Lord was with Gideon and He is all-powerful.

Dear child, the Lord chose only 300 men for Gideon's army to fight against a force of 135,000. That was a ratio of 450 enemy soldiers to one Israelite warrior. Surely no other army on this planet earth would dare to venture into the combat knowing how terribly outnumbered they are. It would simply be suicidal. But Gideon's soldiers are no ordinary soldiers. They are warriors representing Israel, a nation that God has chosen. Israel is the nation where the Son of God and Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ, will come from.

To teach Israel a spiritual lesson, God gave them a small army by any standards. It was an overwhelming disadvantage in terms of numbers. The objective was to prevent the children of Israel from thinking that they could survive the battle against their enemies on their own strength.

It was a test to see if Gideon and his men would trust Him. They did, and the rest is history. Do you think some of the men could have felt a wee bit frightened during the battle? Everyone has fears and concerns. But the men pressed on, trusting God and by the power of God they won!

Sometimes, when you read certain bible verses, don't you feel like some of these 300 soldiers? The things that God wants you to do seem so tough, don't they? Like not lying, being nice to a nasty person, to be patient, or to forgive and not seek revenge? Dear child, let's try to do so with the Lord's help!

Thought: Live a good Christian life and depend on God's strength!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the reminder to trust You. There are a lot of times when I feel like doing something that is wrong. There are also a lot of times that I don't want to do things that I should do. Father in heaven, please give me patience and determination to press on. This is my prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

DISCIPLINE IS FOR OUR GOOD

Remember what Gideon said he would do, after killing the two runaway Midianite kings, Zebah and Zalmunna? If you cannot remember, please turn back to the lesson on December 24. The people of Succoth and Penuel refused Gideon's request for food for his men. They received the punishments that were promised them by Gideon. They had sinned against the Lord and against their brethren and had to be punished.

The leaders of Succoth were punished. In Penuel, their tower, an important landmark was destroyed and the men were killed.

Do you think Gideon rejoiced over what he had to do? The people of Succoth and Penuel were also Israelites, like him. I am sure he wished things had been different. If only they had helped him in the first place. The people had to be taught that their actions were wrong. It was also to teach others not to follow their example. Punishment is to correct our behaviour. Whilst painful, it is good for us. It is not what we want, but it is what we need.

Dear reader, have you sinned today? If so, have you repented? Think of the times in the past when you were punished by your parents or teachers. Have you learned your lesson? Or do you continue to behave sinfully? We are disciplined by parents because they love us and want us to correct our bad behaviour and attitude. Good teachers also discipline us for our own good.

If you have friends who want to teach you to do wrong things, run far away from them. Have nothing to do with them, even if they were to call you names like "Chicken" or "Coward". Not associating with them does not make you a coward. In fact, it shows how brave you are because you dare to be different from them!



Thought: Discipline is good for me!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to remember that whenever I sin against You, I deserve to be punished. Punishment will help me stay away from sin in future. Thank You for my parents who love me and care enough to discipline and correct me whenever I do wrong. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

HUMILITY IN GIDEON!

The children of Israel were incredibly happy! No more enemies to bully them and to make their lives miserable. Gideon had shown his courage and ability. They said Gideon had saved them from the Midianites. So they asked Gideon and his sons after him to rule over them. But Gideon refused, saying "The LORD shall rule over you." This showed Gideon's loyalty to God and his humility.

Although the position of a ruler was given to him and his descendants, he declined. He did not demand kingship and even when offered, he rejected it. Why? Because he knew that behind it all, it was God who had blessed the people and he was but a channel.

Real Christians are humble. Why? Because they know that God is in full control and is the power behind whatever they do. Have you been humble like Gideon? Has anyone said you're a humble child?

If you did well in school and someone praised you, how would you react? Sow humility and reap wonderful benefits. We will grow in knowledge. In humility, we will come to know that we can do nothing on our own. We will grow in grace. With humility; we will grow in love, peace, joy, patience, kindness, faith, goodness, meekness and self control. Without humility, God will not call us to work with Him. Only the humble can serve God.

Read the following verses and fill in the blanks:

Mathew 23:12

...and he that shall _____ himself shall be _____ .

James 4:6

...God resisted the _____ , but giveth grace to the _____ .

James 4:10

_____ yourselves in the sight of the Lord,
and he shall _____ you up.

Thought: God calls only the humble to His service.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I always be humble and know that it is only by Your grace and mercy that I am what I am. Help me to continue to put my trust in You. For this I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

PROSPERITY AND PRIDE

So far, we've read that Gideon was a godly and brave man. Just yesterday, we learn the lesson of humility from Gideon. But was this man perfect? Far from it! No man, except Jesus, is perfect. Today, we read of Gideon requesting his people to give him their golden earrings and all the valuable items taken from defeated enemies. The people were so grateful to Gideon and happy to be free of their enemies, that they gladly gave him the gold. The total weight of the gold was 1,700 shekels of gold which is about 10 kilograms. That is a lot of precious gold!

Gideon used the gold to make an ephod, a special garment for priests. Did God call Gideon to be a priest? Did God order him to make the ephod of gold? No! Why then did he make that ephod? Pride! It was like a commemorative medal for him. He kept it in his hometown at Ophrah so that the people of Israel could admire and praise him for driving their oppressors out.

Dear child, do you think it was a good idea to make this golden ephod? We will soon find out. The Bible describes it as a 'snare' or a trap. Often, animals are trapped and killed for food. The ephod was probably a beautiful thing that attracted many. Tragically, its beauty became a trap for many who began to worship the ephod instead of the true and living God!— They went one big circle back to idolatry after being delivered from God's punishment for their idolatry!

Prosperity made Gideon so proud that he foolishly built an idol. Beware of pride. It can blind you spiritually.

Thought: No man is perfect, except Jesus.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be careful not to make anyone or anything an idol that I worship. At the same time, I pray I'd be careful not to be proud so that I won't make the mistake Gideon made. I also pray for my church, family and friends. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

FORGETFUL PEOPLE

Gideon lived a long life. But as soon as he died, the children of Israel fell into the sin of idolatry again, worshipping Baal. So quickly had they forgotten how God had delivered them from the Midianites. Are you surprised? Actually, we are not that different in being forgetful of God's grace to us. Today is the last day of the year. How has God blessed you this year? Has God not been merciful and patient with you? Have you been patient with others? Let's just focus on this one aspect – that of patience. Often, families dine out at restaurants to celebrate the New Year. Imagine the scene below:

Everyone has placed their orders for drinks and you have requested for an iced lemon tea. Ten minutes passed but none of the drinks were served. Ten minutes later, everybody else's drinks came except yours. Knowing you are easily thirsty, Dad caught the attention of a waiter and reminded him of your order. The waiter scurried away. The clock continued to tick on. Still no lemon tea at your table! A thirsty man is an angry man. But, bursting into a temper would not speak well for you as a Christian. What then can you do so that you will not sin?

First, remember you are in spiritual warfare all the time. So, pray to our Father in heaven for power to resist sin. Next, remember what the Bible teaches about love, patience and kindness and a good testimony. Thirdly, consider the feelings of your loved ones around you. Don't murmur and complain or make a scene. Believe me; before you finish doing these 3 steps, your tea should have arrived. Even if it does not, you could simply ask to share either mum's or dad's or a sibling's if you were desperate!

We will not grow in grace if we do not apply the biblical truths that we have studied and understood. It would be like salivating at the feast spread before you and not putting the food into your mouth. Very often, we face situations like this restaurant scene. It is so easy to forget God when we are not with Christians in church. But Jesus was patient and kind with the humble, weak and needy everywhere He went. So, let us resolve to follow Christ in the brand new year ahead. Never forget that He is with us always.

Thought: May I be patient and kind with everyone I meet anywhere.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to always remember Thy goodness and grace towards me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

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