

GRACE OF GOD

The Corinthian church was founded by Apostle Paul during his 2nd missionary journey. Unlike in other churches, he spent a long period teaching the disciples there – one year and six months! After leaving them, he soon wrote a letter, or epistle, to them upon hearing difficult problems faced by the church. 1 Corinthians is this letter.

Paul started the letter in a gentle way. He reminded the church of the grace of God, for a church must always be built upon the recognition of God's grace. A Christian must understand what God's grace is. Child, do you know what God's grace is?

Grace is shown to us when Jesus came to be our Saviour, saving us from hell and also the sin that can so easily hurt us. There is a famous hymn that has the following words...

*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind but now I see*

Like the songwriter, each of us was a 'wretch' before we came to the Lord. This means we were bad, we were sinners condemned and undone. Now as sinners saved by grace, there must be changes in our lives.

How are we bad? A boy once asked his Sunday school teacher if God hears everything or every word he says. The teacher answered in affirmative and added, "God also hears every word you think." Then the child felt sad and told her that God would not like him because he thought of a lot of bad things. But she replied that even knowing how bad we are, God still loves us. This is the undeserved "amazing grace" of God that He shows to us if we are willing to confess and change. Even though we are wretches, God still loves us.

God did not just say He loved us, in fact, he demonstrated His love for us. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. God loves people even though they are sinners. Aren't you glad God loves you?

Write Romans 5:8, _____

Thought: Does knowing Romans 5:8 make you happy?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am glad that You love us even though we are sinners. Thank You for sending the Lord Jesus to die for us and save us from our sins. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

CONTENTIONS = ?

What are contentions? They are quarrels and disagreements. When was the last time you were unhappy or angry with someone? People argue and quarrel, and even fight with each other. Do you see this happening in your school or at home?

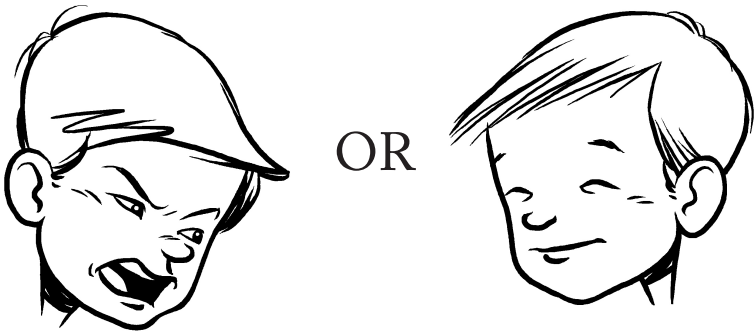
One of the problems in the Corinthian church was that it was divided. Some chose one leader while others preferred another. They thought only of doing what they wanted.

Should you do your own thing without thinking about others? When we do what we want without caring about others, we may cause a lot of trouble.

Let's use the illustration of a car. As long as the four wheels follow the control of the driver and move in the same direction and speed together, all is fine. But, if one of the wheels decides to do otherwise, what would happen? That car is not going anywhere.

To keep us going places together with those around us, we need a "driver", and Jesus is the best "driver". We must listen to Jesus who tells us to do everything in love. Love is caring about the people around us.

How about you? Are you a quarrelsome child? Do you like to go against what parents or teachers tell you to do? Or are you an obedient child?



Thought: Are you a quarrelsome child?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, forgive me for I've been quarrelsome at times. Help me to learn to obey and love my parents and teachers more. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

THE WORLD KNEW NOT GOD

Many clever people think that believing in our God is a silly thing. They think they have the intellect and wisdom to run their own lives and therefore need no God.

Consider this story: Mark noticed that the wall clock was running slow. Instead of consulting his dad, this smart aleck decided he would take the clock apart to look inside. But he did not know much about clocks. So did he see anything wrong or broken? No, of course not! After putting the clock back together, he realised that he had two wheels, and three small screws left. He did not know how to fit them back. Now, the clock was completely dead. It would not run at all.

Having no other choice, he told his dad about what he did. Where did his dad bring him? They both went to the clock repair-man. The repair-man knew all about clocks and had their clock mended in no time.

As for Mark, he thought he knew how to fix the clock. You see, many people are like Mark. They think they know a lot and take things into their own hands. They don't follow God. They do the things they want to do. They do not believe in God and the gospel that Christ died for their sins. They go on in their wayward living. These people are worldly-wise. Worldly-wise men are foolish in the eyes of God. They are fools.

The _____ hath said

in his _____,

There is no _____. (Psalm 14:1a)

Sin separates us from God. Only God can save us from our sins. If we repent of our sins, believe, and accept the Lord Jesus as Lord and Saviour, God will forgive us of our sins. We will have peace with God and a place in heaven.

Thought: Do you believe that Christ died for your sins?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, forgive me of my sins. Please help me believe that Christ died for me and help me trust You to lead my life. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

SPIRIT OF GOD

From yesterday's text, we learnt that the worldly wise do not know God. Why? We will know the reason from today's text. It says that they do not have the Spirit of God, that is the Holy Spirit, living inside them. However, those who love God know Him because the Holy Spirit inside them teaches them about God and the things of God. Child, do you love God?

Only Christians can have the Holy Spirit. If you are a true believer, you would have the Holy Spirit and what a blessing that is!

The Holy Spirit would guide us in the right way. When we are naughty or want to do something wrong, we must feel troubled. And when that happens, dear child, listen to the Holy Spirit and obey. Repent of your naughty ways and seek God for forgiveness. He does not talk to us in a human voice, but speaks to us through the Bible, for the Bible is God's Word. So we must be faithful in reading the Bible, to do our Quiet Time, to read our Junior RPG...

Are you faithful in these daily readings? I know it is hard, and even adult Christians miss Quiet Time once in a while. So don't feel bad. But do press on!

**anthatowear
mightmanknow
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However, reading the Bible is not enough. We need to obey. And that is how the Holy Spirit can help us – in guiding us and teaching us how to live a life that would please God.

Darken the extra letters to reveal 1 Cor2:12b

Thought: May I always faithfully do my daily readings, obey it, and be led by the Spirit.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, though I cannot see You, I know that the Holy Spirit is always with me. Help me to be faithful and press on in my Christian walk. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

ONLY MILK?

Do you know of a child your age who drinks only milk for lunch or dinner? No way! Only babies drink only milk for their dietary intake. In today's reading, we see how Paul had to feed spiritual milk to the Corinthians. He realised they were still mere "babies in Christ", which means their knowledge of God and His Word was very shallow. Like babies who take only milk, these Christians can only understand the simpler truths of Christianity.

Are you like them? There was a girl who was asked by her pastor what was in the Bible. Without hesitation, she chirped, "A flower-pressed bookmark, and a small calendar card, and a piece of paper." That may bring a smile, for she was thinking of the physical things between bible pages. What the pastor meant were the truths in the Holy Word.

The Bible is God's Word. Finding out what is "in" the Bible is not looking for the physical things between the pages. It means reading the Bible, thinking about the words and most of all, putting into practice what you read.

Perhaps you don't know much of what is in the Bible because you are a "babe in Christ", a young Christian. That is fine, but you must grow. If you have a 5-year old sister who is taking only milk during meals, you'd be worried. As she grows, she must be able to eat solid food and meat. Likewise as you keep reading and studying the Bible, you will be able to bear with "spiritual meat", the deeper things in the Bible.

If you don't understand what you read, ask your parents (if they're Christians) or Sunday School teachers for help. You can also try to memorise Bible verses which will help you remember and think about God's Word.

Thought: What are the things you must do to know God's Word better?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to know You better by reading and studying the Bible daily. Your Word is milk and meat to my soul. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

BIGGEST EXAMINATIONS!

I guess you won't know many students who love examinations. Well, I've got an announcement to make: one day, all Christians would have an examination they can't run away from! What would that be? Today's verses tell us that if our foundation is Jesus, we would be saved. On top of that, we would be rewarded according to what we have done. One day when we have to stand before God for judgement, we would have to be examined on the good works or good things we do, or the kind things we think and say. Every Christian has to answer to God for his deeds done on earth. As for you, how will God feel about your works? Will He be happy or angry? As for you, how will God feel about your works?

John 12:1-8 speaks of a woman called Mary who did the best she could, and she was eventually praised for it. In those days, travel on the roads was not as easy and convenient. Paths were dusty and travel was hard. To show her love for Jesus, Mary poured a bottle of very expensive perfume on the feet of Jesus. Not only that, she wiped them with her hair! The perfume smelt so good that the house was filled with the wonderful fragrance.

However, one of the disciples scolded Mary saying that she wasted the perfume. Had it been sold, the money could have been used to help the poor. Upon hearing the disciple, Jesus praised Mary for what she had done, for her act was one of love and sacrifice. She was doing the best she could and Jesus appreciated her gift of love.

Child, you can start preparing for this "examination". Reading and studying the Bible is one way. Another is to live out what you learn – by being kinder, being someone who thinks for others. Be like Mary, not shy in showing her love to Jesus. You should not feel shy if you want to show Christian love to others.

Thought: What are some things I can do to show I love Jesus?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, although I am already saved, one day my works will be judged. So please help me to do the best I can. Help me to be a real Christian – someone who not only knows what is in the Bible, but someone who lives by it. This is my prayer in Jesus' name, amen.

STEWARDS

It is important to be a faithful steward. A steward is someone who takes care of a responsibility on behalf of a master or boss. Faithfulness is the mark of a good steward. Whatever task he is given, he carries it out responsibly and faithfully.

Jesus told a story (Matthew 25:14-30). A master planned to go on a long journey. So he called his servants and gave them special responsibilities. To one servant, he gave five talents to invest for him. To the second servant, he gave two talents to invest for him. To the third, he gave one talent. Then the master left, leaving the servants to take care of his money.

While he was gone, the servants planned how to invest the money. The servant who was given five talents started a business and earned five talents more. The servant who was given two talents also started a business, and gained two talents more. The servant with one talent was different. He did not use the money but hid it.

Some time later the master returned home. He called his servants to ask what happened to the money. The first servant came and returned a total of ten talents. Including the five he earned. The second servant came and brought the two talents he was given and two more talents. The master was extremely pleased with them. He said, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

But when the third servant came, he brought only the same talent he was given. He hadn't invested the money. His master was furious with him for his laziness. He had not carried out his responsibility. So the master took the one talent away from him and gave it to the first servant who was responsible.

Don't be like the third servant!

Thought: Am I responsible and faithful?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to do my duties responsibly and faithfully for this is pleasing to You. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

FOLLOW ME!

Child, do you know of the game ‘Follow the Leader’? In the game, one child is chosen to be the “detective”, and another is selected to be the “leader”. The leader would move in a certain way, and the rest of the children had to copy the leader’s movements. The detective has to then discover who the “leader” is.

Do you like playing this game? The Bible tells us to follow our leaders. It is really about how we are to live our lives. We are to pattern ourselves after the lives of other people. Child, do you follow after the ways and actions of your parents?

In today’s text, we are told to follow the life of Paul. Paul loved God, so we too must love God. He served God, so we must also serve God. Paul shared the gospel with others, so we also must share the gospel. In fact, who was Paul’s leader? God. Paul followed God, and since we follow Paul, we also follow God.

When the members in the Corinthian Church chose a particular person to follow, there were many problems. The church was divided in making decisions. There was disunity and chaos. The members argued and quarrelled. They took the sides of the leaders whom they followed. It is very important that we follow God. God is our Leader. We must live our lives according to what God says and not what man says.

Read 1 John 4:19. In what area do we follow God?

Answer: _____

Thought: Who is your leader?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You are my only Leader. Help me to follow You in everything I do and say. It is not easy to do, please help me to follow You. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

PURGE OUT THE OLD LEAVEN

The old leaven is described in verse 8 as the ‘malice and wickedness’. We must get rid of the old leaven - the evil things. We must turn away from wickedness. Paul urged the Corinthians to turn away from evil and bad ways.

Imagine your dad was driving your family to Genting Highlands and came to an intersection or junction. One way was to the right, the other went straight. Which way should he take? He didn't know. He looked at the signs at the junction. One sign read ‘Highlands – 2 km’ and it pointed straight. Then he knew which way to go.

There are many “intersections” in your life and you need to decide which way to take. If you are invited for an outing but know your mother is very sick and needs your help at home, what do you do? Although mother may tell you to enjoy yourself outside, tell her that Jesus would want you to stay and take care of her. You won't take the ‘I-Want Highway’ but turn onto the ‘Highway of Love’.

On another day, you may go to a store. You cannot buy any chocolates because you do not have any money. The store owner is at the back helping someone. You could have stolen some chocolates. You decide not to turn onto the ‘Stealing Street’ and steal some chocolates. Instead, you stay on the ‘Honesty Street’ and shortly, you leave the store.

In the Bible, God tells us to turn away from the highway of ‘malice and wickedness’ and stay on the highway of _____ and _____ (verse 8). Those who trust in the Lord must do what is right. We must avoid evil. To live correctly, we must turn away from whatever is wrong.

Thought: What are the evil things you must avoid?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, sometimes I do wrong, please forgive me. Help me to avoid what is evil and to do what is right. It is not an easy thing to do, please help me to walk close to You and live correctly. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

RATHER TAKE WRONG

Many of the Christians in Corinth were arguing. They said nasty things about each other. They even went to the judges of the city and asked them to punish the Christians with whom they quarreled. Christians should not sue each other in the courts. Christians are brethren, belonging to the family of God.

We may quarrel and argue, but it is better to suffer small injuries and inconveniences for we know we are to sometimes suffer for Christ.

Imagine a situation where two brothers were having breakfast and saw a cereal packet with a very cute 'Kung Fu Panda' figurine. Abel and Ben started arguing. Abel had it in his hand. Ben said, "Give it to me. You had the last one."

"I saw it first and I am keeping it. No way, I am giving it to you," said Abel, holding the figurine away from Ben so that he could not reach it.

Looking visibly sad, Ben shouted, "You are so, so, very selfish!"

"I saw it first. You are just too slow!" shouted Abel, even louder.

Daddy stepped into the kitchen to see what this hullabaloo was all about. He sat down to talk to them. Just like the Apostle Paul who told the Christians in Corinth to quit fighting, Daddy advised his sons to stop arguing.

When you fight or argue, you won't win any fight. Instead you lose. What do you lose? You lose the testimony for God. When we lose our temper, we may also lose friends.

Abel handed the figurine to his brother. What did he lose? He lost his selfishness but made his brother happy. He suffered only a small 'loss' by not being quarrelsome.

Thought: What do you argue with your friends and siblings about? Consider giving those things up for the peace and joy of obedience to God's commands.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please forgive all the arguments and mean words that have come out of my selfish heart. Help me to bear wrongdoing rather than to do wrong to others. Help me to give in to others and not be selfish. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

YE ARE WASHED

Before becoming Christians, some in Corinth lived unrighteous and immoral lives. To find out more, you may want to read verses 9 and 10. Apostle Paul warned that those who continue to commit evil are shut out of the kingdom of heaven. How can a sinner be saved and be admitted into heaven? How can a sinner have everlasting life?

After Sunday school class, Mary came out of the classroom. Mummy was waiting outside for her.

“Mummy, do I have to be washed in blood?” asked Mary. “No,” said Mummy, “Who told you that?”

Mary told Mummy that her Sunday school teacher wanted her and her classmates to be washed in Jesus’ blood. “Your teacher didn’t mean that you had to be washed with blood the way we bathe ourselves with water,” explained Mummy.

Mary still looked confused. Mummy continued, “She meant that the blood of Jesus Christ is able to wash away all our sins.”

When Jesus died on the cross, His blood was shed for us. This means that He gave up His life for us. When we believe Jesus is our Saviour, His blood saves us.

Why did Jesus have to die for us? Jesus died on the cross so we could have a new life with God and be the people God wants us to be.



Thought: What does ‘washed by His blood’ mean?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Jesus to die on the cross for my sins. Help me to stay away from sin and to obey You always. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

BOUGHT WITH A PRICE

If you go into a store to buy something, you pay a price for it. Our salvation too has a price that needs to be paid. Jesus had to shed His precious blood and die so that we might be saved. This was the price Jesus paid up to redeem us.

Tony and a few of his friends had gone fishing in the lake where they were not supposed to. They had thought that it was alright, but it wasn't. When they were caught, each of them had to pay a \$100 fine because what they did was against the law.

The friends then gathered in Tony's house to discuss the matter. John, one of the friends, said, "I don't even have \$10, how am I going to pay the fine?" Not only John, but the others also did not have the money. Tony's father overheard their conversation and felt sorry for them, so he said, "I'll pay your fines for you."

"All of ours? Mine too?" John asked.

"Yes, yours too," he answered.

In a way, that's like what Jesus did for all of us. He paid the fines we owe God for breaking His commandments. He didn't pay money – He did much more; He gave His life. Jesus died for all. The "fines" we owe God, which would be eternal punishment in hell, are all paid up. Since Jesus has done so much for us, we must be thankful, and obey Him. We must not do things to please ourselves but to please God.

Thought: Am I grateful to the Lord Jesus for dying on the cross for my sins?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Jesus into the world to die for my sins. Help me to love You more and spend time consistently in prayer and quiet time of reading Your Word. So help me, God. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

IDOLS

There is no other God but ours. There is only one God who made all, and has power over all. This is our God, who created heaven and earth, who created man and all living things. Not only that, He created the universe and all the stars in the countless galaxies.

In today's verse, Paul warned the church in Corinth not to believe in idols. You too, must not trust in other gods.

Sadly, many people today follow after other religions that make their own gods which are really only idols. When you go sightseeing in some countries, you will see many statues or idols everywhere you go. The people in these places pray to the idols openly.

I'm sure you don't pray to a idol. But do you love something more than God? What are some things that children in Singapore love? Could be nice dresses, television, computers, toys and games. If we love anything or anyone, more than we love God, we make them our idols.

Do we love God more than anything else? He is the one real God who loves us. He must be most important in our hearts.



Thought: What are some things that people might love more than God?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You are my God and will always be. Forgive me for not always loving You more than anything else. Help me to trust You and love You always. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

KNOWLEDGE PUFFETH UP

Jane brought home her report card and beamingly showed her mother the good grades she obtained for her year end exams.

“I am the best student in our class!” proclaimed Jane proudly. “Do you know who the worst student is?” asked Jane. Mother shook her head, somewhat surprised Jane asked that question. “Helen, our neighbour! She is weak in studies, and sometimes sleeps in class.”

“I am glad you have a good report card,” Mother said. “But Helen also has a good report card.” Jane was puzzled at what her mother meant. “Does Helen have a good report card? Did you see it?” asked the confused girl.

“I didn’t see it, but I heard from Helen’s mother,” replied Mother. Mother was about to explain to her that studies is not everything that makes a child good or bad.

“But mothers don’t give report cards,” said Jane. Mother explained, “Helen’s mother told me that her daughter helps her a lot. She helps wash the dishes after meal; she sweeps and mops the floor twice a week. When Helen’s mother falls sick, she goes to the market and makes simple dishes for the family. She also rocks her baby sister to sleep during the night.”

“This is why I said Helen has a good report card too. She is kind to her brother and helps her mother,” said Mother.

Report books tell us what we know, not how we love. Knowledge can swell the mind – that is, knowing things can make us become proud and think that we are important. Are you good in studies? Perhaps you can play a musical instrument well? Or you think you’re good looking or able to joke well? Or naturally talented at games?

Dear child, remember that all you and I have are from God. Never be proud!

Thought: In what areas am I proud?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please help me know my school lessons so that I can do well for You. But remind me that humility is more important. And if there is someone I can help in school, please give me strength to be the kind child I must be. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

PREACH THE GOSPEL

This verse may not be easy to understand. First of all, what does “Preach the Gospel”, mean? Is it only for adults and does not apply to children like you? Of course not! Then what could it be? In simple terms, “gospel” means “good news”. So to “Preach the Gospel” is to tell others of the good news of Jesus, and the wonderful things He had done in your life.

Secondly, Paul said he has nothing to glory of. Paul meant though he preached the Gospel, there is nothing for him to boast about himself. God had appointed to preach the gospel and gave him the ability to do so. All glory must go to God.

Then in the same verse, Paul uses these words, “necessity is laid upon me”. Now what does that mean? It meant Paul was compelled or duty-bound to share the gospel.

And finally, Paul tells us it was “woe to him” if he did not preach the gospel. What does that mean? It is his way of saying that he was commissioned by God and given ability to preach the gospel. If he does not do it, he will be disobeying God and God will not be pleased with him.

Dear child, have you shared the gospel? Its not easy, but pray and the Lord will give opportunities...

Thought: Have you shared the gospel?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, no matter what I may become, teach me to serve You by helping others and sharing the gospel. Help me not to forget to help others by telling them about You. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

RUN IN A RACE

Usain Bolt is called the fastest man in the world. He is a Jamaican sprinter and specialises in the 100-metre and 200-metre races. He also holds the world records for both of these races: 9.58 seconds and 19.19 seconds respectively. That's amazingly fast! IF you don't believe how fast that is.

At dinnertime, Kwong Lim spoke about Bolt and remarked, "Like Bolt, I want to be a great athlete."

"To be a great athlete you have to practise very hard, every day," said Dad.

"Sure, it's like playing the piano," said his sister Bee Hong. "Sometimes I get so tired of practising. But now I like it better because I can play hard and long."

"It takes hard work to be good in anything," said Mother, "and even Christians need to practice!"

Mum got it right; Christians need to practise to win the race. The Bible tells us to be sure to win our race. What race is this? It is our race to heaven.

What a good athlete must do is strict training. Does this mean that he must have a good physical shape? Yes. Bolt is very strong and muscular. He trains to win an earthly prize, but Christians train for much more: a heavenly prize. For Christians, running the race has to do with striving to live their lives according to God's will and for His glory.

Training involves taking good care of our bodies and doing what God wants. Training to do what God wants is helping others, going to church, studying and reading the Bible, praying and saying no to sin. Isn't this a lot for a Christian to do? Yes it is and it'd be difficult for anyone of us to do it on our own.

If we are close to God, the Holy Spirit would keep us fit spiritually so we may be strong Christians who can win our race to be faithful to Jesus.

Thought: Are you a disciplined "runner" for God?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please help me to press on in my spiritual run. It's not easy, and I pray You'd be merciful to teach me to stay close to You. This is my prayer in Jesus' name I pray, amen.

A WAY TO ESCAPE

There are many temptations in this world, and especially so for us in Singapore. So many things can take us away from being a good Christian. Wanting to sin was a constant struggle for the Corinthian believers. The Bible tells us that God helps us fight our wrong wishes and gets rid of the desire to sin.

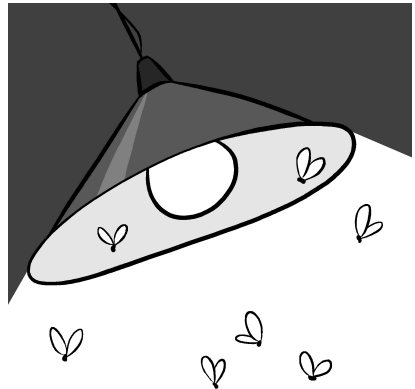
It was night time. Mother and Linda were sitting in the porch. They saw many flies flying around the light hanging from the ceiling. The flies kept hitting against the glass shade. Why were they doing that? They wanted to get near the light and could not stop dashing to the light source.

The next morning, Linda noticed that there were many dead flies on the floor of the porch and called out for her mother. "Mummy, come and see!" Mother came, and Linda asked, "What happened to all these flies, Mummy?"

"They had died trying to get into the light," replied Mummy. She added, "The light had burnt them."

In a way, we are sometimes like these flies. Even when we know something is not good for us, we still do it because we are tempted and succumb to it. The result is that we get hurt.

When we are tempted, God is able to help us fight any wrong wishes and help us get rid of the desire to sin. God has given us the Holy Spirit to guide our thoughts and actions.



Thought: Don't be like those flies!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please help me when I'm tempted to sin. May You grant me the strength to overcome my temptation to sin. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

DO ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD

Today's verse sounds somewhat tough to follow, does it not? In everything we do, to glorify God? Is it even possible? It is, but it's very tough...

A Christian should be wholly devoted to God. Paul, as a minister, put his whole heart into saving the souls of his hearers (read verses 32 and 33) and he earnestly encouraged his readers that in whatever they do, they must do it to the glory of God.

Perhaps let us learn from Paul how he did it. First of all, remember Paul was not perfect and neither are you, or anyone else for that matter. Even though we are Christians, we would never be perfect, until we reach heaven. But everyday, we must keep close to Jesus and learn from the Bible so that the teachings of the Bible will somehow become part of us. When that happens, we will be able to think more like Jesus, do things the way Jesus would, and that would be doing all to the glory of God.

Paul was also willing to suffer for Christ. He was shipwrecked, flogged (caned), and faced many other dangers. All for the sake of the Lord. How about us? It is not likely that God will ask you, a child, to face such dangers. But the Lord will ask you and me to live our life for Him, to learn how to "suffer" for Him.

How we "suffer" could be in the form of not lying, when we know that telling the truth will make mummy unhappy. Another way could involve us being faithful in doing our Quiet Time and reading the Bible, and we "suffer" in having less time to watch our favourite TV programmes.

That is the way God wants us to live. He wants us to do everything for His glory. When we serve the Lord, we must do it cheerfully and not complain. When our service for the Lord is difficult and tedious, we must persevere.

Thought: How else could you glorify God?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please help me remember to do all things to glorify Thee. Teach me that it has to be a natural part of me, and it starts with me being faithful with my quiet time and reading my Junior RPG and Bible. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

MANY MEMBERS OF ONE BODY

All spiritual gifts come from God. Spiritual gifts which are varied, are given by God for the purpose of serving others so that members of the body of Christ will be edified. While Paul gave this message, God also wanted you, young readers, to know this too.

What would happen to you if your eyes suddenly decided to not see. They just shut down and refuse to do what they are supposed to do: watch and see. And then your eyes thought it best they should be eating. Can we use our eyes to eat? Of course not!

What about our ears – what if they refuse to work and do the listening but instead, try to carry us around? Can that work? Have you ever seen someone walking with his ears?

Finally, what if your hands suddenly don't want to cooperate and want to instead smell? Can you smell with your hands? No one can! Impossible, you would think!

And you are right: it is impossible for the eyes to eat and for the ears to walk. That is what Paul was teaching us – that in the church, God has many of us doing different things according to what we are best suited for.

Your Sunday School teacher serves God by teaching your class; the church pianist serves by rendering good music during services; the usher helps newcomers to church find seats etc... The Bible says there are many ways of serving God.

What is yours?

Thought: What are some other ways people serve God?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please help me to know what my spiritual gift is and to use it to serve You faithfully in whatever area of service You lead me to. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

 ONE BODY

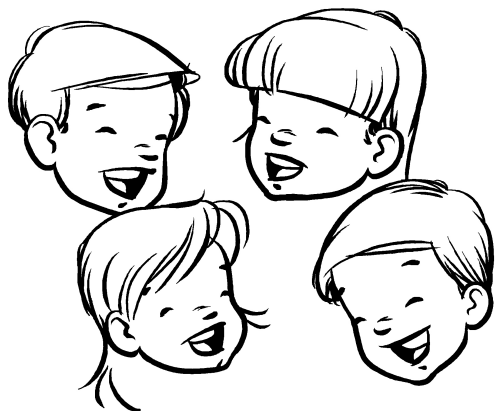
The Tan family bought an apartment near Pasir Panjang as their kids were posted to a school nearby. Soon after they moved to their new home, the neighbours came to welcome them. They were nice people, especially the Teo family. Both families hit it off right from the start and felt like old friends.

“I’m glad to see that cross on your wall,” Mrs Teo said to Mrs Tan. “We believe in Jesus too, so that makes us one family in Christ.”

When everybody was gone, Mrs Tan told her husband, “Isn’t it wonderful how quickly we feel at home with people who believe in Jesus like we do?”

Mr Tan said that when he was serving his term in the Army, he was always glad to find someone else who was also a Christian. The love of Jesus drew His people together. The couple recalled that when they were overseas doing their postgraduate studies, they got along well with fellow Christians; they would meet often for Bible studies and fellowship.

Mr Tan’s children were listening to the conversation. Their youngest daughter Charis said chirpily, “We learnt about that in Sunday school. In Christ we, who are many, form one body. There are many parts in a body, but they are all connected to the head. Jesus is the Head of His church.”



Christians love God and want to obey God. They are all related like brothers and sisters. They are a part of God’s family – that is the meaning of being “one body” in Christ. That’s why they want to worship and work together with other Christians.

Thought: Isn’t it wonderful we are one body with other Christians!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for making us members of Your family. Help us to love and work together with our brothers and sisters in Christ. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

CHARITY IS KIND

What does the word “charity”, that is found in the verse, mean? It is love in action. And this story below should help us understand a little more...

Mrs Lee and Shella her daughter had just reached home. When they walked into the flat, Sara – Shella’s older sister, suddenly burst into laughter when she saw her sister’s new haircut.

“Eek! Your haircut is horrible!” Sara exclaimed loudly.

Upon seeing the expression on Sara’s face and hearing her derogatory remarks, Shella burst into tears and ran into her bedroom.

“What’s wrong with Shella? I was just kidding her. She is so petty. Can’t she take a joke?” Sara said, obviously not realising she had done anything wrong.

Mother now sat Sara down and gently asked, “Don’t you think that you hurt Shella’s feelings when you laughed at her?”

Sara dropped her eyes. She thought about it, and indeed, felt ashamed. She knew she had been unkind. Mother explained, “We all want to be treated with love and kindness. And love is kind. People who love don’t hurt one another.”

God is love. If we say we are Christians and do not love others, then our Christian faith is useless. Paul stressed the importance of charity and described at length what charity is all about, encouraging the church not to just talk about love, but to actually live it out.

Thought: Have you ever hurt someone with your words and actions?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we are often thoughtless and unkind to others. Please forgive us. Help us love others by remembering how the Lord Jesus showed His love towards us in dying on the cross for our sins. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

LOVE IN ACTION...

Two days ago, we learnt how God's love brings His people together. His love in us must also be shared with others who are not Christians. By this, non-Christians will come to know the love of God and that we are God's followers. Charity is not passive, it is love in action. Charity cannot be kept to yourself but must be expressed in deeds and speech.

Mr Tham had new neighbours who moved in a few months ago. He said to himself, "I wonder why the new neighbours are so friendly and helpful. Nobody helps others for nothing." Mr Tham was rich, and people were always asking him for money or favours. But not his new neighbours, the Lims. They never asked for anything but were always giving him something or were trying to help him.

What did the Lims do? One time, Mr and Mrs Tham got back from a trip late at night. Mrs Lim knew they probably did not have anything to eat and despite the late hour, brought them some curry puffs and desserts. The Thams enjoyed their treats, and were very grateful.

On another occasion, Mr and Mrs Tham's 10-year-old grandson, Luke, came to visit but the couple had to go out for a little while. He was left alone with the maid and soon became bored. He went out of the house and met Mr Lim. Mr Lim invited him to play with his children. After telling his maid, the young lad went into Mr Lim's house. And since Mr and Mrs Tham were late, and didn't leave instructions to cook dinner, the maid didn't. So Luke had dinner with the Lims, an enjoyable time.

When Mr Tham came to pick up his grandson, he felt very grateful again. Mr Tham finally found out why Mr and Mrs Lim were so nice - they believed in Jesus and had God's love in their hearts and so they were always wanting to help others.

Loving and helping others is what a Christian must do. A Christian who loves God, loves and helps others. This is charity, love in action. Jesus gives us this law in the Bible - thou shalt love thy _____ as thyself (Matthew 19:19)

Thought: Having the love of God in our hearts, what should we do?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, forgive me that sometimes I do not love and help others. Help me to share with others the love that I have received through Your Son. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

CHARITY NEVER FAILETH

John and Dad were in McDonald's having breakfast. John commented, "I don't think I will help Peter anymore," John commented. "He never even says 'Thank you'." "How do you help Peter?" asked Dad.

"Oh, like sharing my food with him during recess, or telling him what homework we have to do when he is sick," said John unhappily.

Feeling concerned, Dad gently asked, "Why did you help him in the first place?" John answered, "Because I wanted to be nice to him. Was I doing the right thing?"

"Aha, you're right – be nice to him. And if you want to be nice, don't you think you should continue to even if Peter never says 'Thank you?'" asked Dad.

"So you think I am doing the right thing, and should continue?" asked John, this time happier.

"That's right." Dad replied. "By doing good to others, God is pleased. You do good to please God and not for thanks. You could say to yourself whenever you help Peter, 'I'm helping Peter because I'm a Christian'. Then you won't get tired of helping", added Dad.

A Christian keeps on doing something good even though love does not come back. This virtue of loving others will carry on to eternity, even when we are in heaven. This is the meaning of "Charity never faileth".

Thought: Who gives us the kind of love that never fails?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for sending the Lord Jesus to die on the cross for my sins. Your love never fails. Help me to be willing to love others even if they do not love me in return. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

IN UNDERSTANDING BE MEN

What does 'in understanding be men' mean? How about girls or ladies – are they supposed to think like men? No. What this phrase means is that we must have mature Christian thinking, knowing how foolish it is to sin and disobey God.

Four classmates - Abel, Bobby, Calvin and Derrick - went to Clementi mall after school. They entered a beautiful toy shop that was stacked with many tempting nice toys.

Abel, egging Bobby to steal a toy, whispered, "The old shopkeeper wouldn't know." Bobby pretended not to hear anything and acted as though he didn't understand what Abel and his other friends wanted him to do. Finally, he said, "It is wrong to steal. The Bible says that stealing is a sin."

"Listen to our silly Sunday School teacher talking," teased Calvin after they left the shop, trying to act big. Bobby remained steadfast and wouldn't let his friends pressure him into doing something wrong. "I don't care what you think of me. I want only to do what's right to please God."

"Coward!" said Abel, followed by Calvin who called him 'Timid'. Derrick too called him a "Chicken". Although all three of his friends left him alone outside the shop, he felt a warm wonderful feeling welling up. He knew what he did was right.

Bobby didn't mind being called names for not wanting to steal. Although a boy, he was mature in following God's Word, and was "a man in understanding". Some children think that daring to do wrong to please their friends makes them more "grown-up". That is wrong. A Christian who is grown-up or mature in his thinking knows that sinning is wrong and is going against God's will. Obeying God is "grown-up thinking".

Thought: Don't you want to be spiritually mature with "grown-up thinking"?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be spiritually mature in my decisions by reading and obeying Your Word daily. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS

Why did Paul write ‘first of all’? That “first of all” does not mean the first thing to do. What he meant was what he was going to write was very important – a teaching of the most necessary truth. This must wake us up to what he would write after that – that Christ died for our sins. What does it mean to you? Have you ever been so touched that you cried when you think of how Christ died for you?

Jane was thumbing through a picture bible story book that she got from her aunt. She was sitting on her bed in her pajamas, looking at a picture of Jesus nailed to the cross. She was crying softly. Daddy walked into her room to tuck her in bed and saw her crying. “Why are you crying, my love?” asked Daddy.

“They put nails through Jesus’ hands and feet,” said Jane as she showed the picture to Daddy. “He let them do such a horrible thing to Him.” “Jesus loved us that much,” Daddy said. “He was willing to be hurt and to die on the cross so that we would not be punished for the bad things we do.”

“Like when I hit brother Tommy?” asked Jane. “Yes,” Daddy answered, “Or when you disobey me or mummy. All these bad things that you do are punishable. But when you trust in Jesus and ask God for forgiveness, Jesus takes away your punishment by his death on the cross. He went to the cross willingly.”

Jesus died for our sins. Because of what He did, God forgives us and calls us His children and gives us everlasting life. That is why we can go to heaven.

Thought: Why did Jesus allow the soldiers to nail Him on the cross?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Jesus to die on the cross for my sins. It was such a horrible, painful and shameful death, and Jesus bore it all for me. I know through His death, my sins are forgiven and I am Your child and You are my Father. Help me to live as You want me to. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

HE ROSE AGAIN

You may have read from books or watched National Geographic programmes on how some rich and powerful people were buried. One such famous person was Napoleon – a great ruler of France. Years ago, he led the French army to conquer many countries.

But his power was short-lived. After his army lost a decisive war, Napoleon was captured and exiled to an island where he remained until he died.

Years later, to hail their fallen hero, the French took the body of Napoleon back to France. They decided to do something unusual – what they thought befitting of such a great man, putting his body into one coffin, which was then inserted into a larger coffin. In all, six coffins were used with different precious materials.

Today, many French and tourists visit the church where Napoleon's coffin is kept. But Napoleon is dead. Can he help the French? Even when he was alive, he became great only by using force and authority.

Our beloved Jesus is infinitely greater than Napoleon. He didn't have to force people to follow and love Him. Napoleon killed thousands to maintain his position; Jesus instead died to save us. The Lord Jesus was 100% God and 100% man. And very important to note, as verse 4 reminds us – Jesus was raised three days after He died. He is not in some coffin or cave. He is now in heaven with God the Father.



Thought: Jesus is the greatest!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for sending the Lord Jesus to die on the cross to save me from my sins. I am also grateful that the Lord Jesus is now my risen and living Saviour. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

HOPE IN CHRIST

All who believe in Jesus as Savior are saved by Him and have the hope in Christ of being with Him one day, forever in heaven. Jesus is the Way to heaven.

John 14:6b says,

“I am the _____, the _____, and the _____: no man _____ unto the Father, but by _____.”

Can you go to heaven by yourself? No, Jesus takes you up there. Have you been to a shopping mall? Candice likes to go shopping in a mall with her parents, especially riding on the escalator. She will stand on the bottom step and the escalator will take her up to the next level.

One day, Candice tells her 3-year-old brother, Calvin about riding on the escalator. “What’s an escalator?” Calvin asks.

“It has steps that automatically move,” answers Candice, “You don’t need to walk up. The steps carry you up.”

“Wow! This is amazing!” Calvin exclaims. Overhearing their conversation, Mum walks in. She says, “just like an escalator that brings us upward, one day we will be taken upward into heaven.” “Do you agree with what Mum says?” asked Candice.

When Jesus lived on earth, one of His disciples, Thomas asked Him, “How can we know the way to where you are going?” Jesus did not say that he would show Thomas the way, but He said, “I am the way.” Jesus is the way to heaven.

When we believe in Jesus and love Him and trust Him, we are our way to heaven.

Thought: By believing in the Lord Jesus, we have the hope of heaven.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that Jesus is the Way to heaven and He will take us there because we can’t get there ourselves. Please help us to keep close to Jesus everyday. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

ABOUNDING IN THE WORK OF THE LORD

Apostle Paul is about to conclude his letter. What is more appropriate than to encourage the believers to devote time and efforts to God's work? He also wrote a similar exhortation to the Galatian church. What was it?

“And let us not be _____ in well doing:

for in due season we shall _____

if we _____ not” (Galatians 6:9).

Jesus did not quit doing good even people were not thankful. He once passed by a place where there were ten men sick with leprosy. Were doctors in Jesus' time able to heal leprosy sick people? No. These people had no hope of treatment and healing. They begged Jesus to heal them, and Jesus did. He healed them completely. But how many came back to say thank You to Jesus? Only one. Just one. Did Jesus quit doing good because people were not thankful?

Jesus never gets tired of being good to people. To whom does He do good? To me, you and everyone in the world, even though we often forget to thank Him. He is good to people who even disobey Him in many ways. We sometimes disobey Him, don't we? But He keeps on forgiving us and loving us and helping us.

So should we get tired of helping other people? Jesus sets the example for us to follow. We must keep on abounding in the work of the Lord and not grow weary in doing good. If people don't appreciate what we do for them, remember that they first didn't thank Jesus either. We don't need any thank you from any people because God sees what we do and will be pleased with us and will reward us. The work we do in the Lord is not in vain.

Thought: Even when people do not thank us, why must we keep on helping people?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that Jesus never gets tired of doing good to people. He is always helping me and loving me. Help me to be like Jesus to abound in the work of the Lord and to please You. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

MANY ADVERSARIES

Apostle Paul said that a ‘great door’ was open and there were ‘many adversaries’. He meant that while there are many opportunities to preach the Gospel, there are also many adversaries or enemies, who are against the work of the ministry. This is because the devil is our fiercest opponent and the worst troublemaker. He is determined to destroy God’s work and kingdom. However, Paul was equally determined to keep his spirits up.

Like Paul, are you determined to keep away from devil and not allow him to make you do wrong things? He is deceitful and is always zealous to tempt us to fall into sin.

Jane is 7 years old and she is in the kitchen watching her Mother bake a cake. After her mother removes the cake from the oven, she walks out of the kitchen saying “Jane dear, stay out of the kitchen. As long as you see the cake, you’ll want to taste it.” But Jane answers saying “I don’t want to eat the cake. I just want to look at it.” She stays on in the kitchen alone with her mouth watering as she stares at the freshly baked cake which looks and smells delicious.

Ten minutes later, Mother walks in and sees Jane pinching the sides of the cake and putting small pieces of cake into her mouth. Horrified, she tells her daughter to stop. She says, “Don’t give place to the devil.”

“There isn’t a devil,” Jane tells her Mother.

“The Bible says there is. Jesus Himself had been tempted by the devil. The devil tries to make us do wrong but he can’t if we don’t give him a chance,” explains Mother.

Not giving the devil any chance to make us do wrong things, is to not let him have any place in or around us. When Jane stays near the cake, she is giving the devil a place where he can get her to do wrong. Jane says, “I should go back to my room to pray. This way, the devil cannot tempt me.”

Thought: How do you stop the devil from tempting you?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we are sorry that we often give place to the devil. Please forgive us. Help us remember to resist the devil so that he will flee from us. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

WATCH AND STAND FAST

What does today's text mean? What is the meaning of "watch and stand fast"?

To watch is to be alert and really, just to be as careful and wary as a watchman or guard should be. In our country, soldiers or policemen will guard important locations: homes of senior government officials, army camps, banks and etc. These guards are to be watchful, always alert, constantly looking out for how best to protect the precious assets they guard from enemies or harm. How about "stand fast"? The imagery is quite the same: think of a soldier who is on guard and who is constantly ready to act. Would you see him standing and alert, or lying on the floor and relaxing?

So what does Paul mean when he tells the Corinthian Christians to "watch"? It is for them to be alert against any attack from Satan and his evil tricks. We are to be watchful as we are naturally not. Most of us are weak and unable to keep being watchful. Just like the disciples whom the Lord Jesus commanded to watch and pray but instead fell asleep (Matthew 26: 41-43). And what does Paul mean when he tells us to "stand fast"? We are to be constantly prepared. And the idea is to be standing fast in the Christian faith, not in any personal thinking, or views of others, or what friends tell you to.

Sometimes, we are influenced by our friends or the TV or music we hear, and we stand fast in these much less trustworthy things, instead of standing fast in the faith!

How do we become watchful and stand fast? We've got to go back to the Book of the Faith – and that is the Bible. How important it is to keep at reading your Junior RPG and bible passages during your daily quiet time!

Thought: How do I become watchful and stand fast?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please help me to be a faithful soldier and to watch and stand fast. It's not easy, but Heavenly Father, please do help me. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

LOVE NOT THE LORD

Sometimes we need to be warned before we fear. If we don't do our homework, we cannot watch any TV programmes or play on the computer. If we are rude to grandparents, we will get a caning. If we don't hand in our assignment, we will be detained in class. If we don't keep quiet, we don't get the goody bags. When we are warned of serious consequences, we will fear and not do the wrong things.

God's words must be taken seriously. Paul ends his epistle by giving a warning – if you don't love the Lord, you are cursed. There are many Christians in name who do not love Jesus in sincerity. Can Jesus who loved us and gave Himself for us and shed His blood for us not deserve our love and affection? Those who reject Him will face judgment of God. They will perish.

Read John 3:36 and find out what else will happen to those who believe not on the Son. "... he that believeth not the Son shall not see _____; but the _____ of God abideth on him."

Those who do not love Jesus cannot be Christians. But when we are true in our faith in Him, we will have sincere love for Jesus. Don't be a Christian in name only!

So, how to be a Christian in action? We must walk in love as we go through life. Our whole lives are to be spent walking with Jesus. Along the way, we sometimes forget to do the right things. We need to remember that Jesus is walking right beside us. We can ask God to help us do the things He wants us to do. As Jesus loved us that He gave His life for us on the cross, we love as He loved. We can ask God to help us to forget about ourselves and do things for other people.

A song to sing:

Walking with Jesus, walking everyday, walking all the way

Walking with Jesus, walking with Jesus alone

Walking in the sunlight, walking in the shadow

Walking everyday, walking all the way

Walking in the sunlight, walking in the shadow

Walking with Jesus alone

Thought: How do you walk in love?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please help us walk in love just like the way Jesus did when He was on earth – He walked in love. Forgive us when we forget. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

ARE YOU HAPPY WITH YOUR LOOKS?

“I hate this ugly nose!” wailed Lena as she looked in the mirror. “Why can’t I have a nose like Sara’s? Hers is just perfect!” “Oh, honey, your nose looks just fine!” said Mom as she picked up her purse. “We’ve got to get going if we want to stop at the zoo today. Are you ready?” “Yeah, I’m ready but I’m going have my nose fixed some day, Mom,” replied Lena, “and then it will look much better.” Mom just smiled.

It was a beautiful, sunny day, and Lena and her mother enjoyed a leisurely stroll through the zoo. “The elephants have such long trunks,” commented Mom as they stopped to watch the great beasts. “I’m glad my nose isn’t that long.” “It wouldn’t look so good on you,” agreed Lena, “but I like it on the elephants. That’s one of the things that makes an elephant an elephant!”

At the rhinoceros’ cage, Mom laughed as she pointed to the horns on their noses. “Oh, dear! That kind of nose would be even worse!” Lena laughed, too.

When Mom continued to make comments about almost every animal’s nose, it began to irritate Lena. She gave her mother a curious look. When they reached the baboons, Mom turned to her. “Their noses are much too stubby, don’t you think?” Mom asked. “Wouldn’t they look better if their noses were more like the tigers?” Lena was annoyed. “No, they wouldn’t,” she snapped. “I like them just the way they are. Besides, you’ve told me yourself that God made everything. He knows how they should look.”

“Exactly.” Mom nodded. “And who made you, Lena? And your nose?” “Oh!” exclaimed Lena as she clapped her hand over her nose. “God did. I... Okay, Mom. I guess I shouldn’t compare or complain. I get the message.”

Mom smiled. “Good,” she said. “I think we often worry too much about the way we look. Perhaps we should be more concerned about the way we act. I’m afraid our attitudes often stick out a lot more than our noses do, so let’s make sure our attitudes and actions are pleasing to other people and especially to God.”

Thought: Are you happy with the way you look? Or do you wish you looked like someone else? Perhaps you think your ears or your feet are too big. Maybe you wish your hair, eyes, or skin were a different colour. Looks are only skin deep. In other words, the way you look is not as important as what you are inside. And don’t forget that God made you special, and He loves you just the way you are. Your family and friends do too.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to learn to not look at the outside but focus more on the inside. May I be able to accept myself as I am, and thank you for making me the way I am! In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

ARE YOU GENTLE?

“What is wrong with this thing!” Diana cried out as she burst into tears. “These numbers won’t balance. Tomorrow when I turn in the treasurer’s report for our club, everyone will think I’m dumb, and Natalie will be so happy!”

Dad looked up from his paper. “Speaking of Natalie, I haven’t seen her lately,” said Dad. “Why would a mistake in your report make her happy? I thought she was your best friend.”

Diana hesitated. “Well, we... we sort of had a disagreement,” she said. “We both wanted to be the club treasurer. I got elected, but she still tried to tell me how to do the job. I finally informed her I’d do things my own way. She said that would be a big mistake. We haven’t spoken to each other since.”

“I’m sorry to hear that,” said Dad as his eyes scanned over Diana’s report. He pointed to some of the numbers at the top of the column. “I think you need to start right back at the beginning and carefully add these again.”

“Okay,” agreed Diana with a sigh, “but I don’t see how that will help. I used my calculator, and it can’t be wrong, can it?” But she got busy and began adding again. “I found my mistake, Dad!” she exclaimed after only a few minutes. “It’s way at the beginning of the column. I subtracted one of these numbers instead of adding it.”

Dad nodded. “You know, Diana,” he said, “I think it would also be a good idea to go back to the beginning of your problem with Natalie, too.” “What do you mean?” asked Diana.

“Think about when this all began,” said Dad. “Should you have done something differently? It sounds like perhaps you selfishly wanted your own way. Then you hurt each other by using cutting words, right? That kind of behaviour doesn’t please God, and it usually doesn’t make us feel very good, either.” Dad put an arm around Diana. “Why don’t you go to Natalie and apologise for the way you acted? Listen to what she has to say. I’m sure she has some good ideas. How about it?” Slowly, Diana nodded and smiled.

Thought: Is there someone you’ve had a disagreement with? Are you sure it was all that person’s fault? Ask God to show you what you might have done wrong, then go to the other person and talk it over. Apologise if needed. Don’t carry old grudges into this new month. A restored friendship will make both of you happy. Best of all, it will please God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for today’s lesson that I must be gentle to all. I pray I’d have the courage to do what is needed, and apologise to anyone whom I may have hurt. This is my prayer in Jesus’ name, amen.

WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE!

As John angrily stomped out of the room, a swear word exploded from his lips. “John! Come back here!” Mom ordered. John returned, and gritted his teeth as he stared at the floor. “Did you say what I think you said?” asked Mom. John did not answer. “You know we don’t tolerate swearing,” said Mom sternly, “and you know the punishment for it.”

“But, Mom, I didn’t mean to swear,” John pleaded. “All the guys at school say that word and... and it just slipped out. But I’ll be more careful! I promise it won’t happen again. I’m sorry! I really am!”

Mom sighed and looked at him closely. “I believe you are,” she decided. “Well... all right. We’ll forget it this time.”

Later that evening, loud, angry words burst from John’s room. “How many times have I told you not to touch my things?!” he roared.

As Mom started down the hall, she heard Tina’s voice. “I just wanted to borrow a pencil,” whimpered Tina. “I didn’t mean to break anything. I’m sorry.”

“That’s what you always say, but you don’t leave my things alone. You’re not really sorry! You’re just sorry you got caught,” scolded John. “You think I’ll forget about it if you cry.” He didn’t see his mother come into the room, and he swore softly as he bent over to pick up a broken model plane.

“John!” At the sound of Mom’s voice, Tina scooted out, and John jumped and dropped the model. “I’m afraid Tina isn’t the only one who’s ‘sorry’ about getting caught,” said Mom. “Didn’t you tell me this afternoon you were sorry you swore and that you wouldn’t do it again?” John nodded slowly. “God says we are to repent when we sin and to turn from it,” continued Mom. “True repentance is more than saying a few words of apology. It is being sorry enough for what you have done to make every effort to stop doing it.” She held up her hand to stop John from interrupting her as she spoke. “We have no excuse to continue in sin. God is able to help us to overcome sin, we need to be determined to stop, and depend on God for the power to do so.” She shook her head as she added, “And we can’t overlook your words this time.”

Thought: Do you often mutter bad or angry language? And when someone like mummy or daddy catches you, are you being truthful when you say “I’m sorry”? Or do you sometimes say it simply to stay out of trouble?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I guard my speech so that it is gracious and edifying to others. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

 SHARE GOD'S WORD!

"Hey, Dad," said John one day as he leafed through a garden catalogue, "there's a section in here called 'Unusual Seeds.' Can we order some?"

"Why not?" agreed Dad. "Exactly what kind did you have in mind?"

"Ginseng," said John. "This catalogue says it's so valuable that its dried roots will sell for a lot of money in health food stores. Can I get some?"

Dad looked at the catalogue. "I don't know," he said. "Those seeds cost a lot, and I've heard they take a long time to come up and grow-maybe even a year or more. Wouldn't you rather have something you'd see sooner?"

John shrugged. "Well, maybe... but most of the stuff we plant will grow faster," he said, "so I'd like to try growing something different, too. Even if only a few of them grow good, they could be worth a lot of money. Besides, you always say anything worth having is worth waiting for."

"I guess you've got me there," admitted Dad. "Okay, include ginseng in our order." He grinned as he added, "But promise me you'll wait a little more patiently for them to come up than you're waiting for the seed you planted last night to show results."

"Last night?" asked John. "I didn't plant anything last night."

"Sure you did," said Dad. "I heard you and your friend Sam talking about God. Sam seemed to think a loving God would allow everyone into heaven, and you told him he needed Jesus to get there. After Sam left, you said you didn't think he'd ever change his mind, right?" John frowned and nodded. "Every time we witness, we're planting the 'seed' of God's Word," added Dad. "Sometimes it takes a long time to grow. But when it grows, it produces 'fruit' that will last forever."

"And that's worth the wait, right?" asked John.

"Definitely!" said Dad. "After you plant your ginseng seeds, you and I can remind each other to have faith and patience to see results-not only in the garden, but also in witnessing!"

Thought: Have you planted the seed of the Gospel - the Word of God - by witnessing? Have you been discouraged because you haven't seen any results? Be patient.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be brave enough to share the message of salvation with my friends in school. And teach me to leave the outcome to You. It may be that I won't ever see the results, but You promised that Your word will accomplish its purpose - so what I've got to do is to trust in You. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

YOUNG BUT WISE!

“I heard some sad news at the church board meeting last night,” said Joel’s father one morning

“You did?” Joel looked up. “What was it, Dad?”

“It involves a family who visited our church for the first time,” Dad told him. “The Tan family. Last Sunday they attended our church, and on Monday night Elder Sim visited them. They apparently liked what they heard of his message.” Dad paused.

“What’s sad about that?” asked Joel in surprise. “Sounds fine to me!”

“The sad part is that they couldn’t hear the message very well,” replied Dad. “Three boys were sitting behind them and they were talking and laughing throughout the entire service. The Tans told Elder Sim they felt like going to look for another church.”

“Really? Maybe if...” began Joel, and then he remembered that some newcomers had been sitting in front of him and his friends this past Sunday! He suddenly realised why his dad was telling him about the Tans. He was one of those who had been talking!

“Son, we’ve told you before that it’s not only important to listen for what you can get out of a message, but it is just plain bad manners to disturb those around you!” said Dad. “For the next month, you will sit with Mom and me at every service. If you do sit with your friends again after that, you will sit in front of Mom and me and not behind us.” Joel nodded soberly. “And there’s something else you need to do,” continued Dad. “You need to go to the Tans’ house and apologise to them for making so much noise.”

“Me? By myself?” protested Joel. “The other guys were talking, too!” “They’re not my sons,” said Dad. “You are. You will have to go.”

Joel wanted to argue, but he knew he had done wrong, and he was sorry. He nodded reluctantly. “Maybe they’ll change their minds and decide to come to church again,” he said with a sigh.

Thought: Do you listen quietly during the church service? Wouldn’t it be sad if someone refused to return to your church because of the way you behaved during the service? Be polite to those who are around you. Smile and greet new people. Sit still. Don’t make it difficult for them to listen to the message.

Prayer: Teach me, to be attentive and listen whenever Your Word is taught to me. This I pray in Jesus’ name, amen.

JESUS – THE ONLY WAY!

“Hi Mom,” said Beng Lee as he tossed his book bag onto a chair and sat down at the kitchen table. Mom was pulling out a tray of cookies from the oven.

“Hi, Beng Lee.” Mom turned and smiled. “So how was school today?”

“Great!” he answered. “Can I have a cookie?”

“Sure,” agreed Mom, “but just one. We’ll be having dinner shortly.” She handed him a cookie and then asked, “What was so great at school?”

Beng Lee took a big bite. “We learned about passwords in our computer class,” he said. “Do you know what a password is, Mom?”

“Why don’t you tell me?” Mom suggested as she poured milk into a glass and handed it to Beng Lee.

“It’s a special word you have to type into some of the computers at school. If you don’t know the right word, the computers won’t let you into the programs,” explained Beng Lee.

Mom smiled. “That sounds a lot like what I told our neighbour Mrs. Goh today.” “You were telling her about computers?” asked Beng Lee. Mom laughed. “No. I was telling her about Jesus.”

Beng Lee frowned. “Jesus? He didn’t use computers,” he said. “They weren’t invented yet when Jesus lived on earth.”

Mom sat down next to Beng Lee. “Mrs. Goh believes that every person who leads what she calls a ‘good life’ will be in heaven, no matter what his religion is or who he believes in,” said Mom. “We talked about that for a while, and I showed her the verse in John 14:6 where Jesus says, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.’ I explained to her that when each of us stands before God some day, only those who trust in Jesus as Lord and Saviour will be allowed to enter His kingdom - the kingdom of heaven.”

“So we need to believe in Jesus to go to heaven?” asked Beng Lee. “Just like you needed to have your password to log in to your computer” Mom nodded. “And did she believe you?” asked Beng Lee

“She said she would think about it,” replied Mom. “Let’s pray for her, Beng Lee.”

Thought: Is there someone you know who needs this “password”?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for reminding me that I need to share the gospel with others. Help me to have a burden for lost souls. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

ARE YOU A FRIEND OF JESUS?

“Did you know there are only three kinds of people in this world?” Caleb asked his Sunday school teacher one day.

“And what would they be?” asked Mr. Kan. “Those who can count and those who can’t,” said Caleb with a grin. Mr. Kan hesitated a moment and then burst out laughing.

“I don’t get it. Why is that so funny?” asked Jon, one of the boys in the class.

“I said three kinds of people,” repeated Caleb, “but I named only two - those who can count and those who can’t. So I’m obviously one who can’t. Get it now?” Jon and a couple of the other boys joined in the laughter.

“We might also say there are only two kinds of people,” said Mr. Kan, “and it wouldn’t be a joke. There are those who are friends of God and those who aren’t.”

The boys were silent a moment. Then Caleb nodded. “I’m a Christian, so I’m a friend of God, right?” he asked. “Me, too,” said Justin, and most of the others nodded. Mr. Kan smiled. “Good-and are you growing in your friendship with God?” he asked. “Think about the kids at school - how can you tell which ones are friends?”

Caleb remembered seeing girls jumping rope, boys playing football in the grass, and groups of older students busily talking and laughing with one another. “That’s easy,” he said. “They hang out together.”

Mr. Kan nodded. “That’s how friendships grow - through time spent together,” he said. “When you put your faith in Jesus, you made the commitment to be God’s friend. Now you need to ‘grow’ that friendship by spending time with Him. You do that by letting Him talk to you as you read and study His Word - the Bible. You talk to Him through prayer. As you do this and yield yourself to Him, you’ll find yourself treating others in a more loving way. The decisions you make from day to day will reflect His love and show that you are His friend.”

Thought: Are you growing in your friendship with God?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I learn to walk closer with You. I pray that as I read the Bible, may it influence me in the things I value, the way I treat others and how I spend my time. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

GONE FISHING – 1

Todd grabbed his fishing rod and bait. He hurried out the car and ran most of the way down to the pond. When he reached his favourite spot, he saw a boy already sitting there. “Oh” Todd grumbled in disappointment to himself. He hesitated, then decided to stay at that spot, anyway. “Catching anything?” he asked as the boy jerked his rod, popping his line completely out of the water.

The boy looked up. “No, this isn’t a very good spot,” he said with a shrug. Todd couldn’t believe his ears! This was the best spot! “I’ve been sitting here all morning without any bites,” the boy complained as he again jerked his line up.

“Well, you have to be patient,” said Todd. “How often do you keep popping your line out of the water like that?” The boy shrugged. “Oh, every few minutes,” he said. “Just checking to see if a fish has eaten the worm yet.”

“You fish much?” asked Todd, sure that he already knew the answer.

The boy shook his head. “Never did fish before,” he answered. “I just wanted to give it a try.”

“What’s your name?” Todd asked. “Peter,” came the reply.

Todd sat down. “Peter,” he said, “we’ve got to talk.”

At dinner that night, Todd told his family about Peter.

Dad grinned. “I’m reminded of the Peter in the Bible. He was a fisherman, too, you know. One day Jesus came to Peter and said, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ Todd, you have a perfect opportunity to ‘fish’ for Peter. Use your friendship to share the gospel with Peter - and if you let God work through you, He may use you to ‘catch’ Peter. Be a fisher of men, Todd, not just an ordinary fisherman.”

Thought: Do you go fishing? You should if you’re following Jesus. Being a “fisher of men” doesn’t require handling wiggly worms or slippery fish! It may require a smile, some time, and perhaps an invitation to some activity.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to share the gospel with others and to be a fisher of men for You. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

GONE FISHING – 2

Todd thought about his dad's suggestion that he be a "fisher of men"—and especially, a "fisher" of his new friend, Peter. I'm going to do it, Todd decided. I want Peter to know Jesus, too. So each day Todd would bring up a Bible verse he had learned, or he'd ask Peter to go with him to church or perhaps to a Sunday school party. Peter always refused, and he often acted a bit annoyed when Todd would quote a Bible verse. Todd was frustrated. "I give up, Dad," he said one evening. "Peter never wants to come to church, and he's getting sick of me asking all the time. I don't think he likes it when I share Bible verses, either. I'm going to quit!"

"Todd, what was one of the very first things you taught Peter about fishing?" asked Dad. Todd grinned, remembering. "Not to keep popping his line out of the water to see if a fish took the bait," he replied. "He didn't know much about how to bait the hook so the fish couldn't just steal it, either."

Dad nodded. "You need patience for fishing, and you need to bait the hook properly. Those things are important when you fish for men, too. I think you've been worrying too much about whether Peter has taken your bait. Maybe you're even using the wrong bait."

"The wrong bait?" asked Todd. "I think so," said Dad. "Don't give up on Peter, but you don't have to quote verses or ask him every day to go to church with you. Why don't you first strengthen your friendship? Spend time together. Pray for him. Share what you enjoy at church and at the parties. Maybe he'll become interested enough to come sometime. But be sure you don't lie to make it sound like it's just all fun. You must be honest."

During the next few weeks, Todd practised what his dad had suggested. Finally, he felt the nibble he'd been waiting for. "Dad!" he shouted as he burst into the house. "Guess what happened today!"

"Well, I know you planned to go fishing after school, so I'd say you caught a fish," said Dad with a smile. "Well... at least I got a nibble!" Todd beamed. "And his name is Peter! He said he'd go to JW with me this week."

Thought: Patience, patience, patience!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me patience when I witness to someone. And teach me too that I must be really interested in that person's life – not just to get that person to church! In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

SUPER SWORD!

“This knife will barely slice butter!” complained Mom as she fixed dinner.

Dad laughed. “I don’t think it can possibly be that bad,” he said, “but I’ll sharpen it later anyway.”

After dinner, Liz approached her father. “Dad, I’m stuck on this math problem. Can you help me?” She held out her paper and pencil.

“I’ll try,” agreed Dad, but he soon handed the pencil back to her. “Don’t you know how to use a pencil sharpener?” he asked with a grin. “This is so dull it hardly has a point at all.” Liz quickly sharpened the pencil, and Dad helped her see what she had been doing wrong on the problem.

When they all gathered for family devotion, Dad read Hebrews 4:12. “The dull tools we’ve had around here tonight made me think of the sword that never needs sharpening - the Word of God,” he said. “Our knives and pencils become dull and need to be sharpened often, but God’s Word is always sharp and powerful. Of course, we need to get that sword out and use it. Who knows how we do that?”

“Well... I guess we use it when we read it,” suggested Liz.

“Yes,” said Dad. “As we read, God often uses His Word to speak to us. At what other times do we use it?”

Liz’s brother Isaac had a suggestion. “When we talk to other people about Jesus,” he said.

“Good,” Dad approved. “We should be sharing with others what God says - especially about their need to know Him. When we do that, it’s good to include Bible verses because God says His Word will always accomplish what He sends it forth to do. Any other ideas?”

“We use it when we think about it and apply its truths to our lives,” said Mom. “For example, Grandma has been so ill lately, and I’m comforted when I remember God’s promise to work everything for her best-and mine!”

Dad nodded. “Let’s all be sure to use our ‘swords’ every day,” he said.

Thought: Are you using your “sword” everyday?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I open my Bible and read it daily. Please teach me to think about what the Bible says, and how it applies to my life. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

DO YOU GIVE YOUR BEST TO GOD?

“Can I have a kitten? Please? Please?” Jessica begged. A big sign at the SPCA (Singapore Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) said, “Free Kittens,” and Jessica persistently pleaded with her mother to let her have one of them. She squealed with joy when Mom finally agreed and they went to choose a kitten. Jessica picked the smallest one of the lot. “I’m going to name him Runt,” she said.

A few weeks later, Mom and Jessica took Runt for his first visit to the veterinarian. “Well,” said the vet, after checking the kitten, “Runt is a bit scrawny. What have you been feeding him?”

“Milk,” said Jessica promptly, “and leftovers.”

Mom nodded. “That’s true - most of what he gets is leftover scraps from our meals.”

“That may be the problem,” said the vet. “Your leftovers probably don’t have the right nutrients to help Runt grow properly. Try feeding him food made especially for kittens and see if he quickly gets healthy and strong.” So on the way home, Jessica and her mother stopped at a store to buy the special food the veterinarian had suggested for the kitten.

“No more leftovers for Runt,” Jessica told her dad that evening. “Only good, healthy kitten food.”

“All right!” exclaimed Dad with a grin. “I’m sure Runt will appreciate that.” After a moment he added, “Do you know who else shouldn’t get leftovers?”

“You?” asked Jessica. She looked a little concerned. “I thought you liked them.”

Dad laughed. “I do,” he said, “though not quite as much as when things are served the first time. But I was thinking of God. Instead of giving leftover time or love or effort to God, we should give Him our best in whatever we do.”

“O-o-oh, I think I get it,” replied Jessica. “That’s why you taught me to put part of my allowance in the church offering, right? And to review my Bible verses before I get too sleepy every night.” Mom added.

Thought: Do you give God your best? Do you give at least 10% of your allowance to the Lord?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me the joy of giving and of offering my best to You, remembering that You have done so much for me. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

GOD CAN SEE EVERYTHING!

Phil looked up from his puzzle as his mother walked into the house with two bags of groceries. “Hi, Phil,” she said. “There are two more bags of groceries at the lift lobby. Will you get them, please? And I need you to get some other things, too. When I picked up my purse along with these bags, it was upside down, and several things fell out. Pick up that stuff, too, okay?”

“Sure, Mom.” Phil nodded and hurried out to the lift lobby. He took the bags of groceries into the house and set them on the cupboard. Then he went back to get the things that had spilled from Mom’s purse. Along with several other items, he found four ten dollar notes. Phil picked them up and looked at them thoughtfully. Then he put one of the notes in his pocket. “Here’s your stuff,” he said to Mom when he returned to the house.

“Thanks, Phil,” said Mom. “Now I’d like you to take the swatter and get rid of these flies.” She frowned. “Where do they come from?”

Phil grinned and got the swatter. “Gotcha!” he exclaimed after a moment. Then he saw a fly sunning itself on a window sill. “Mom, come see this fly,” he called. “It looks like it is cleaning its face - just like our cat does.”

“It does look that way,” agreed Mom. “A man on TV was talking about flies the other day. He mentioned some interesting things. He said the flies’ legs have brushes that they use to clean their eyes.”

“Oh, yuck!” groaned Phil, making a face.

“The man described their eyes, too,” continued Mom, “and they’re amazing! He said they have 4000 simple eyes in each large eye.”

“Wow!” exclaimed Phil. “That’s weird.” “When I heard that, it made me think of a verse in the Psalms,” said Mom. “David wrote, ‘He that formed the eye, shall He not see?’”

As Phil put his hand into his pocket, he felt the note. God sees this, too, he thought. I better give it back-but if I give it back now, Mom will know I was going to keep it. I’ll leave and come back and pretend I just found it. He started toward the door, then stopped. But God would see that, too. With a sigh, he pulled out the note. “I... I was going to keep this,” he confessed, “but... here it is, and... I’m sorry.”

Thought: God is everywhere present!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be aware of Your presence with me always. Please grant me the strength to resist the temptation to sin. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

DO GOOD TO OTHERS!

“Jacob told me his dad got a bonus at his job,” reported Alex one day. “What’s a bonus, Mom?”

“A bonus is something extra that you get in addition to what you have earned” explained Mom. Alex liked that idea. “I wish I could get a bonus,” he said.

“Well, here’s an idea,” said Mom. “Every day, think of one or two things you can do for other people. Then do them. Try it for a week and see what happens.”

Alex was thoughtful for a moment. “You mean I’ll get bonuses for helping?” he asked. “Who will give them to me? Whoever I help?”

“Not always” said Mom. But sometimes, they come from people in the form of an expression of thankfulness and gratitude for what you did for them. More importantly, God is pleased with you for doing good to others.”

Alex decided to try it. That week he polished his dad’s shoes; he washed the floor; he even took his dog for a walk. After all, dogs are God’s creatures, too, he thought. “My experiment is going pretty good,” Alex told his mother one day, “but I’m not sure if I have gotten any bonuses yet.”

“Well, think about it,” said Mom. “How do you feel when you’ve done something nice for someone?”

As he thought it over, Alex realised he felt happy when he finished a job. “I feel good,” he replied, “and you know what else? When I help people, they smile at me a lot, too.”

Mom nodded. “That sounds like a bonus to me!” she said. “The Bible says Jesus went about doing good, and you’ve been doing that, too. I know He’s pleased with you, and that’s worth a lot.” “I guess so,” agreed Alex, “but once in a while it would be nice to get something I can hold in my hand.”

“True,” said Mom. Opening the freezer door, she added, “Right now you may have the bonus of an ice cream bar for packing your room without being told.” Alex grinned happily.

Thought: Have you been “doing good” as Jesus did?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to do good to others. I’ve friends or siblings or parents who would appreciate a little help sometimes, so teach me to be a blessing to them! In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

ETERNAL LIFE!

Megan shrugged as she missed her basketball shot. “Oh, well! Nobody’s perfect!” she said, and the other girls laughed with her. “Nobody’s perfect” was one of Megan’s favorite phrases, and her friends almost knew ahead of time when they would hear it again.

One day Megan went with her friend Alice to Sunday School. She enjoyed most of it, but she certainly did not agree with one of the things the teacher said. “No matter how good you are,” said Mrs. Goh, “you’re not good enough for heaven. You’re a sinner, but Jesus took the punishment for your sins. The only way you can get into heaven is by trusting in Jesus as your Saviour.”

“That’s silly!” insisted Megan as she left the class with Alice. “She makes it sound like everybody’s such a terrible sinner. I’m not all that bad!” “You may be a pretty decent kid,” replied Alice, “but I know you’ve done things that are wrong. I remember the time you and I sneaked...”

Megan laughed. “Okay, okay,” she said, “but even that wasn’t so bad. And what about people like my Uncle Bob? He’s always helping others. He gives lots of money to places like the Cancer Society and the Red Cross - even the church. And last year when his neighbour’s house was on fire, he rushed in himself to get the baby out. He could have been killed! Besides, he always...” Suddenly she stopped. “Oh, I’m so busy talking, I’m not paying attention! We just passed the toilet, and I forgot to turn.” Megan laughed at herself. “How dumb can I be? And then she added, “Oh well! Nobody’s perfect!”

“That’s what God said, too – and He also said we’ve all sinned,” replied Alice. “Even though the wrong things that you do don’t seem so bad in your eyes, no one who has sin can enter heaven. So no matter how much good you or your uncle do, you still have to get rid of your sin. Only Jesus can take it away. Think about that.”

Megan did think about it slowly.

Thought: Are you fit for heaven?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for reminding me in today’s Scripture – that there is only one way to Heaven – through Jesus Christ. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

TEAM WORK

Cherry walked into the house more briskly than usual. "I've had it with her," she said, pulling up a kitchen chair. "You've had it with who?" asked Mom. "Jolene - that's who." Restlessly, Cherry pushed the chair back and fiddled with a strand of her hair. She bit her lower lip before starting to explain. "Do you remember what I gave her for her birthday?"

Mom nodded. "You gave her a year's subscription to the Christian Creation magazine. As I recall, you wanted to give her the subscription because you hoped it would be a witness to her - that maybe it would help her come to know Jesus."

"That's right," Cherry replied. There was still anger in her voice. "She was always reading my magazine whenever she was here, so I spent my pocket money to get it for her. Well, I overheard her telling some girls that I was pushing religion on her and that she hasn't read either of the two issues that came to her house!" "I'm sorry," said Mom sympathetically. "Let's be sure to pray for her."

"But she's making accusations about me!" Cherry complained. "Some friend she is!"

"Honey," said Mom, "it's too bad she reacted that way, but you gave her that subscription because you knew she needed the Lord. She still needs Him, doesn't she?"

"Well... sure," mumbled Cherry.

"Don't forget, Jolene has had only two issues," said Mom. "There will be ten more months of witness coming to her house. Let's pray that she'll read those." Mom paused, waiting for Cherry to comment, but she said nothing. "You know, it's possible that one day she will accept the Lord Jesus as her Lord and Saviour" added Mom. "You've planted the seed, but someone else may follow up in witnessing to her. According to God's timing and will, God may convict her heart and she may become a Christian."

Thought: When you tried to witness, has someone reacted in anger? Don't get discouraged or become angry in return. Continue to show love and friendship.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for teaching me that patience is required when I share the gospel and that I must leave everything in your hands. Help me to genuinely love and care for those I witness to. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

IS JESUS IN YOUR HEART?

“Wow!” Brent’s eyes were wide with excitement. His parents had just explained to him and his little brother Sammy that the doctors had decided Grandpa should have a heart transplant as soon as a donor could be found. “It’s amazing what doctors have learned to do,” said Dad. “We must remember, though, that it’s a very dangerous operation and not always successful. Let’s pray for Grandpa and trust the Lord for the outcome.”

“But what if Grandpa has the heart transplant and then dies anyway?” Sammy asked anxiously. “He wouldn’t go to heaven.”

Everyone turned and looked at Sammy curiously. “Why do you say that?” asked Mom. “Of course Grandpa would go to heaven. He loves Jesus.”

“But my Sunday school teacher says we won’t go to heaven unless we have Jesus in our hearts,” replied Sammy, “so if Grandpa gets a different heart, he won’t be a Christian anymore, will he?”

“Didn’t she explain what she meant by having Jesus in your heart?” asked Dad. “Well, she did but I still could not understand” said Sammy. “Well”, said Dad “think of it like this, Sammy. When we talk about having Jesus in our hearts, we don’t mean He is in our physical heart. When we trust God to forgive our sins, by accepting the Lord Jesus, His Holy Spirit indwells in us. God is with us all the time, and we look to Him to direct us. So... no matter what physical heart is inside Grandpa’s body, Grandpa loves Jesus and belongs to Him. Okay?”

Sammy nodded. “Okay,” he said. He smiled. “I feel better now.”

Thought: Do you have Jesus in your heart?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that Jesus is in my heart. I pray I would subject myself to Him and be a better Christian and child everyday. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

LIFE IS SHORT...

“Look at that bumper sticker!” Jon pointed ahead. “Life is short, and then you die,” he read. He looked at his mother. “Is that supposed to be funny?” “I don’t think it’s funny,” said Mom. After a moment she added. “It does make a point, though. Remember all the cicadas we saw at the park last week?”

“Those big bugs that were kind of like grasshoppers, but with big wings?” asked Jon. “The ones that were always making such a lot of noise and bumping into people?”

Mom nodded. “They live only about six weeks,” she said. “Sounds like that bumper sticker could apply to them,” observed Jon. “Their lives are short, and then they die. But you said the bumper sticker makes a point. You didn’t mean about cicadas, did you?”

“No.” Mom shook her head. “We see cicadas’ lives as being very short, and they are. But we forget that there’s no time in eternity. The way God sees us could be the way we see cicadas,” she said. “Take your great-grandmother, for instance. She’s ninety years old, but that’s only a short time compared with eternity. James 4:14 says, ‘For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.’”

“So if a cicada’s time on earth looks short to us and our lives on earth look short to God, the bumper sticker is right,” said Jon. “We live a short time, then we die and go to heaven.”

“Are you sure?” asked Mom seriously. “I think so,” Jon replied.

“Jon, God the Holy Spirit guided the men who wrote the Bible,” said Mom, “and it tells us there’s a way to be sure of going to heaven when we die. We can only go to heaven if we have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour. Like we said... from God’s viewpoint, life is short, and then you die. Make sure you will go to heaven when that happens.”

Thought: Are you sure you’ll go to heaven when you die?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the reminder that although I’m young, death can come to anyone at any time. I must understand I’m a sinner and I can go to heaven only by trusting in Jesus. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

GOD SPEAKS TO US THROUGH HIS WORD

“Jack, have you learned your memory verse for tomorrow?” asked Mom.

Jack shook his head. “No, but I want to finish this first.” He held up the model plane he was putting together. “Ee Meng was supposed to come and help me with it this morning,” added Jack with a scowl. “He said he’d call if he couldn’t come. It’s almost noon, and he still hasn’t come or called.” “Why don’t you see if he can come this afternoon instead?” suggested Mom. “Get that verse learned before lunch.”

“Aw, Mom,” complained Jack, “what’s the hurry?” But he put the model down and went to the telephone. When he picked it up, he heard his sister’s voice as she talked with one of her friends. “Ee Meng’s probably been trying to call and getting a busy signal!” Jake exclaimed as he replaced the receiver. “Nicole’s on the phone, and I bet she’s been talking all morning!” He reached for the phone again. “I’m going to tell her to get off the line.”

“Hold on,” said Mom. “I’ll talk to her in a minute.” She frowned. “I know Nicole had to make several calls today, so like you said, maybe Ee Meng couldn’t get through to you because the line was busy. How often do you suppose the Lord gets a busy signal when He wants to get through to us?”

Jack gave her a puzzled look. “What do you mean?”

“Sometimes we don’t hear the things God wants us to hear, because we’re too busy with other things,” said Mom. “We have homework and music practice and football games - all kinds of things to keep us from God’s Word. Memorising Bible verses is one way we can stay in touch with Him as we think about those verses and what they say to us.”

Jack frowned. “You’re talking about my Sunday school verse again, aren’t you?” “Yes, I am,” said Mom. “I’d be glad to help you learn your verse. Then you can call Ee Meng about coming over.”

Thought: Do you find time to study and learn Bible verses?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for reminding me in today’s lesson that You want to communicate with me through Your Word. I pray I will have the discipline to set aside time to read and memorise Bible verses so that my knowledge of Your Word and my faith in You will grow. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen

PURE, LIKE JESUS

One evening not long before her marriage was to take place, Lisa looked up from her desk. She smiled at Tina. "I thought I'd read my Bible and forget all about weddings for a few minutes," said Lisa, "but guess what the passage I read was about?" "What?" asked Tina, who was sprawled on her bed. She was almost as excited about wedding plans as her sister was.

"It's about Jesus and the Church - the Bible refers to believers as God's Church. It says husbands are to love their wives as Christ loves the Church," Lisa answered. "The Church is also called the Bride of Christ, and Jesus is referred to as the bridegroom! Someday He'll come back for His bride." She paused, a thoughtful look on her face. "You know how hard I've worked to make sure everything is just right for my wedding to Dan! Now I'm wondering if I've been as careful in preparing to meet Jesus."

"I've seen the preparations you've done for your wedding," said Tina, "but how do we prepare ourselves to meet Jesus?"

"Trusting in Christ to forgive our sins is the beginning, of course," Lisa answered, "and then, according to the third chapter of First John, we should be purifying ourselves."

"What does that mean?" Tina asked.

"Well, think about it," said Lisa. "I want Dan to always be pleased with the way I behave. I want to learn to love the things Dan loves - and the places he enjoys going." She grinned. "I'm even glad to go fishing with him!"

Tina laughed, remembering how Lisa disliked squiggly worms. "So... if we really love Jesus, we should want to be doing things that would please Him if He came right now. And we should be in a place He would approve of, right?"

Lisa nodded as she climbed into bed. "That's right," she agreed. "We should want to stay away from sin and live pure, clean lives for Him. Let's both remember to work on that as well as on wedding plans."

Thought: If Jesus came today, would you be ready? Are you keeping your life pure? Do your thoughts and actions please Him?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to look forward to the Second Coming of Jesus. Teach me to be a good Christian child, and to seek to live a life of holiness pleasing before You. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

GUARD YOUR TONGUE!

“Thank you for our food and for Mom and Dad who work so hard,” Jack prayed aloud at dinner one night. “And please, God, help Nick do better at school.” He finished his prayer in the name of Jesus, and said “Amen.”

Mom passed the spaghetti to Jack. “I’m glad you prayed for Nick. How is he doing?” she asked.

“About the same,” Jack replied. He laughed. “He’s so weird, and nobody likes him.” Jack shook his head and went on to criticise Nick and list some of his faults. “And you know what else?” he asked. “We’re supposed to have our bug collections all done by Monday, and Nick has barely started. He’s lazy!”

“How many bugs do you have?” asked Jack’s little sister Allie.

“Lots,” said Jack. “I even have a praying mantis. We learned that they’ll eat almost any insect, including their own kind.” “Does your praying mantis really pray?” Allie wanted to know.

“Of course not!” Jack laughed. “It’s called that because of the way it puts its front feet together. Did you think it said a prayer for one of its friends and then ate it? Maybe it was saying grace!”

Dad looked at Jack thoughtfully. “Some people do that,” he said. “They say a prayer for someone, and then they eat that person.”

“People don’t eat each other,” Jack protested. “Not in civilized countries.”

“They don’t eat each other physically,” agreed Dad. “But gossiping, criticising others, and finding fault with them is referred to as ‘backbiting’ in the Bible. The Bible also speaks of ‘devouring’ one another. So saying unkind things about people behind their backs is a little like chewing on them, isn’t it?”

“Jack did that,” piped up Allie. “He said Nick...” Mom quickly stopped the little girl from saying any more. “If we really want to help others, we should stop hurting them with our words and find ways to encourage them,” added Dad. “We need to remember what God says about the way we are to use our tongues.”

Thought: Does someone who’s a little “odd” need your help? Someone the other kids criticise and laugh about? Or maybe someone who’s just a bit shy?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I confess I’m guilty of talking bad about others. Help me instead to pray for them and look for ways to help them. Help me also to use my tongue to give encouragement, not criticism. This I pray in Jesus’ name, amen.

NOTHING EVIL BEFORE ME!

“Look, Dad.” Nat held out the camera his mother had brought home. “This camera says ‘automatic focus.’ What does that mean?”

“It means that no matter how close or far you are from your subject, you won’t have to adjust anything to make each picture come out clearly,” explained Dad. “There’s a little mechanism at the front of this camera that automatically opens or closes the shutter to let in just the right amount of light, too.”

Nat held the camera up to his eye and looked through it. “You know what?” he asked. “My science teacher says our eyes work a lot like a camera does. She says the colored part of the eye is like the shutter. It’s called the iris, and when the light is real bright, it makes the pupil get smaller. When it’s dark, the iris opens up wide to let more light through the pupil.”

“That’s interesting, isn’t it?” Mom joined in the conversation. “I read somewhere that the eye also has a lens that allows things far away to be in focus, as well as things close up.”

“The eyes God has given us are unique,” added Dad. “They not only take pictures for us, but like a camera, they also record the pictures they take. The pictures taken with a camera are recorded on a film, and the pictures taken by your eyes are recorded on your brain.”

“Wow! I never thought about my eyes recording a picture on my brain,” said Nat. “But that’s what happens,” said Dad. “That’s why your mother and I don’t allow you to read certain books or watch certain TV programmes. We want your brain to be imprinted with better things.”

“That’s right,” agreed Mom. “We should be careful to use the cameras in our heads to record good pictures.” She smiled as she added, “And let’s be sure to thank God for our eyes and the wonderful way they work.”

Thought: What are your eyes seeing? Do they see things that leave a good impression on your brain? Does what they see cause you to think on things that are true, honest, just, pure, and lovely?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to appreciate the wonderful gift of sight and thank You for it. I pray I’d use my eyes to look at things that are good and wholesome and pure! I pray in Jesus’ name, amen.

DELIGHT YOURSELF IN GOD'S WORD

Katie rubbed her stomach as she eyed the cake Mom had just finished frosting. "Christy and I sure are hungry!" said Katie. Her cousin Christy was spending the next two days with her, and the girls were looking for an afternoon snack.

Mom laughed. "Help yourself," she invited.

As the girls began to eat their cake, Katie looked at Christy in surprise. "Christy, are you just going to eat the frosting?" asked Katie. "The cake itself is yummy - it's the best part! It's a special cake Mom makes with nuts and chocolate chunks in it. I like it even better than the frosting!"

"The frosting is all I ever eat," Christy replied. She glanced at Katie's mother. "I guess I shouldn't have taken a piece. I hope you don't mind too much," added Christy.

"Well," said Mom, "dinner won't be ready for a while, and I'm afraid you won't find the frosting very satisfying. Like Katie says, you're really leaving the best part. Why don't you take one taste and see if you like it?"

Christy wrinkled her nose, paused, but eventually took a tiny bite. "It is good!" she said in surprise. "I think I'll eat the rest."

That evening the girls were in the middle of a game when Dad called them for family devotion. "Can we just read the story in the devotional book tonight and skip the rest so we have time to finish our game?" suggested Katie. Dad frowned. "Skip the Bible reading and prayer?" he asked.

"Well, just this once," Katie murmured.

"That would be like eating the frosting and leaving the cake, wouldn't it?" asked Mom. "We'd be missing the best part. If we don't have time for both the Scripture and the story, we had better read the Scripture."

"I... I see what you mean," Katie admitted. She grinned. "Okay, let's just 'eat' the whole thing. It's all good!"

Thought: Have you read the suggested Scripture passage for today? Do you usually skip the verses that you are supposed to read?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, sometimes I am tempted to skip the Bible reading and read only the story. I pray I won't do that. Remind me that Scripture is the most important part of this devotional, and I must not miss it! This is my prayer in Jesus' precious name, amen.

LIVING FOR THE LORD!

“Are you as smart as a donkey?” asked Mr. Lim, the Junior Worship teacher. The kids laughed, and Mr. Lim continued. “If you are, you can serve Jesus. The donkey in today’s lesson did.”

“I don’t get it,” said Trevor. “Jesus ever rode on a donkey’s back, didn’t He? You mean we’re supposed to give people rides on our backs?” Trevor liked to ask questions that might make the kids laugh. And the kids laughed. Mr. Lim smiled. “No,” he said, “but the donkey gives us a great picture of a servant. First of all, he was where God wanted him to be - he was available. We should ask ourselves, ‘Am I in a place where God can use me? Am I available to Him?’”

Trevor shrugged. “I am,” he said. “I’m here all the time - whether I want to be or not.” Some of the kids laughed, and he looked pleased with himself. “But I’m not good at singing or speaking,” he added, “and I don’t have any money to give, either.”

“I’ve sat in front of you in church, Trevor,” said Mr. Lim. “I happen to know you actually have a very good singing voice.” He smiled as he added, “Perhaps you have fear of singing in public. You can seek the Lord Jesus’ help to overcome your fear.”

Trevor frowned. He couldn’t think of any smart reply, and Mr. Lim continued the lesson. “Also, the donkey was willing to let Jesus control him,” said Mr. Lim, and he explained that even though the donkey had never been ridden before, he did what Jesus wanted him to do. “Have you truly let Jesus control you, or have you been stubborn?” asked Mr. Lim. Trevor began to feel more uncomfortable.

“How about it, class?” asked Mr. Lim at the end of the lesson. “Will you ask God to take control of your life, to untie your fears and to loosen your tongue to speak a word for Him or sing praises unto him? Will you be a servant just like the little donkey was?”

Thought: Are you afraid to sing or play an instrument to serve Jesus? Do you think kids will laugh if you make a mistake? Are you willing to give a testimony or share a Scripture verse if you sense God wants you to do that?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be available for whatever task, great or small, You have for me. I also pray that You’d please remove any fear, and let Jesus control my life. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

WATCH YOUR WORDS...

Boon looked up from his plate as he and his family were eating dinner. "You know what?" he asked. "Today I remembered what Pastor said about witnessing and being the salt of the earth, and I decided to witness to Keith. He's always doing bad stuff. Like... he swears sometimes, and he's mean to the little kids, and today I saw him cheat. So after school, I told him he was a sinner going to hell, and that he should repent."

"Whoa! Sounds like you came on a little strong," said Dad. "What else did you tell him?"

"I invited him to come to church," replied Boon, "but he says he already goes. He must be silly if he goes to church but isn't a Christian yet."

"I hope you didn't tell him that," said Dad. "Did you?" "Well... sort of," said Boon.

"Boon, if you insult the person you're talking to, he'll probably just get angry and will not listen to you share the Gospel," warned Dad.

When you hit him with all that talk, you may have given him too much too fast, and it could spoil his interest in spiritual things."

"Do you think so?" he asked.

"I'm afraid so," replied Dad. "Why not apologise to him tomorrow? Don't stop witnessing, but next time, try to be kind and tactful. Be sensitive to the other person's feelings."

Thought: Do you witness to your friends? It's important that you do so. You may be the only Christian they know—the only one who will tell them about Jesus. Show love and concern when you witness.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the reminder that my friends have feelings just like I do. And when I need to share or witness to them, even if they need to hear some harsh truths, please give me the right words to tell it to them lovingly. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

BE A HEARER AND DOER OF GOD'S WORD!

Tony struggled to unscrew the lid of a small bottle of paint. He needed to use it on a model airplane he'd received for his birthday. His face turned red as he tried with all his might to turn the lid. When he failed, he became angry and impatient. He went to the storeroom, picked up one of Dad's screwdrivers, and tried to pry the lid off. The screwdriver slipped and jabbed his finger. "Ouch!" Tony cried as he watched a trickle of blood run from the cut. He put the bottle down and applied a bandage on his finger.

"What did you do to your finger?" Dad asked, looking at the bandage on Tony's hand. Tony explained about the lid. "Did you read the directions on the bottle?" asked Dad.

"Directions?" Tony frowned. "To open a bottle?" Dad picked up the paint and pointed to the writing on the top of the lid. "It says to push down and then turn."

Troy followed the directions and the lid came off easily. "Guess I should have paid attention," he said. "I didn't even see those directions before."

Dad watched as Tony got ready to paint. "Hey, Dad, this is like what you told me last week," said Tony.

Dad grinned. "I told you a lot of things last week," he said. "Which one are you thinking of?"

"You said the Bible gives us directions for life," replied Tony, "and that without those directions, we might do things that are wrong and then we're sure to get hurt. Like I hurt my finger when I ignored the directions on the bottle of paint, right?"

"Good thinking," said Dad, "only you can get hurt a lot worse when you don't follow God's directions on how to live a Christian life."

Thought: Do you read the directions God gives? Do you follow them? They are all found in the Bible!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know I ought to follow the Bible but at times, I still try to do things my own way. Please help me to read the Bible more to learn what You say, and then may I be sure to follow! In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

ARE YOU KIND?

“It’s not fair!” Siew Ling complained as she and her mother walked into the supermarket. “It’s just not fair! When Mr. Tan said we could have free time to study, I opened my history book, and my pencil fell off my desk. I couldn’t reach it from where I was sitting, so I stood up to get it, and he yelled at me! He didn’t ask why I was standing up or anything - just told me I had to write ‘I will stay in my seat’ fifty times! It’s ridic...” Siew Ling’s voice stopped in the middle of the sentence as she spotted Mr. Tan himself at the produce counter. What a coincidence!

The teacher greeted Siew Ling and her mother and then looked awkwardly at his cart. “I’m not used to planning meals and doing the grocery shopping,” he said, “but my wife is in the hospital for surgery. Actually, the biggest challenge each day is getting two of my kids to the day care center, and the third to kindergarten.” He sighed. “Teaching, parenting, and trying to spend as much time as possible with my wife keeps me busy!” After talking with Siew Ling and her mom for a few minutes, Mr. Tan turned back to his cart and moved on.

“I think you know now why Mr. Tan scolded you unfairly today,” Mom said as she and Siew Ling drove home. “He looked very tired and worn out.” “I know. I never thought about a teacher having problems before,” said Siew Ling. “I guess I shouldn’t have gotten so mad at him, right Mom?”

Mom smiled. “I’ve had the same kind of experience,” she said gently. “There have been times when I felt someone acted unfairly toward me. I got upset about it, only to discover later that the person I was angry with was reacting to a serious personal problem. We need to remember that God wants us to be patient and accept other people. We should be kind and help them through their difficulties instead of becoming angry.”

“I’ll ask God to help me be nice to Mr. Tan,” Siew Ling said thoughtfully. “I’m not mad at him anymore.” She grinned at her mother and added, “I’ll try to remember that teachers are people, too.”

Thought: Do people sometimes treat you unfairly? It’s easy to get angry in such a situation, isn’t it? Remember that the Lord tells you to have patience with others and to be forgiving.

Prayer: Thank You Heavenly Father for today’s reminder – that perhaps, others have problems I don’t know about. It is true that if I am friendly, my attitude could help them feel better. So teach me to be more kind, and more forgiving. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

GOD THE CREATOR!

When Miss Arul asked Jason a review question from the lesson on evolution, he gave the answer she wanted. “That’s what our science book says, but I don’t believe it,” he added. “I believe God made everything - like the Bible says.” Miss Arul raised her eyebrows in surprise, but she smiled. “There are many theories - or ideas - as to how the world began,” she said, “and I suppose it doesn’t matter too much which one you believe. However, scientists have put much time and study into this one, and I expect you to know it thoroughly.”

“But creation isn’t just an idea,” Jason declared. “God said it, and it’s a fact.”

Miss Arul frowned. “As I said, you can believe whatever you want. It’s not that important,” she replied. “I believe in evolution. That’s what scientists believe, too, and it’s what we’re studying right now.” Just then the dismissal bell rang, and the students gathered their things and went out. Kam Seng joined Jason and they started home. “I don’t think Miss Arul liked what you said,” Kam Seng remarked. “Sounded to me like she was annoyed.”

“Could be,” replied Jason, “but what she’s teaching is all wrong.” “But why say anything?” asked Kam Seng. “Is it really that important?” “Important? Of course it’s important!” exclaimed Jason. “If the very first verse in the Bible is a lie, how can we believe any...”

Jason was interrupted by another classmate. “Hey, guys, how about loaning me fifty cents?” asked Bart. “I lost some of the money Mom gave me for a loaf of bread. I’ll pay you back tomorrow.” “Sure you will,” sneered Kam Seng. “Just like you paid me the other times I loaned you money, right? Forget it!” Without another word, Bart scowled and left.

Jason turned to Kam Seng. “That’s it! Because Bart lied to you before, you don’t believe him now,” said Jason. “And if God lied in the first verse of the Bible - why would we believe any of what He says?” “Well, I... ah... agree,” Kam Seng admitted.

Thought: Do you believe everything was created by God?. God’s Word is true regarding creation and everything else He says.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, make me humble enough to remember that in the beginning, You created the heavens and the earth, as You said You did. Help me to be one of the brave ones who dare to take You at Your Word. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

BE PREPARED TO WITNESS FOR JESUS!

Patrick loved fishing and always took a long time getting ready. He would check his tackle box to make sure all the lures and hooks were in order, and he would check his rod thoroughly. He'd also dig a good supply of worms from the nearby park. All his care paid off - he nearly always came home with at least one fish. Sometimes his friend Bryce went with him. They had great fun together - fishing, talking, and especially eating the picnic lunch they took with them.

When Patrick got home from fishing one day, his mother noticed he was unusually quiet. "Is something wrong?" she asked. "Well, when Bryce and I were eating the lunch you prepared today, he asked me why I always bow my head and close my eyes for a few minutes before I eat," replied Patrick. "I told him I was praying, and he asked why I was doing that."

"And what did you tell him?" asked Mom.

"I told him I was thanking God for our food," said Patrick. "Then Bryce asked me about church and God and all sorts of things, and I didn't know what to say! I never really thought about why we go to church, or how I know God loves me. I just know, that's all!" Patrick was obviously feeling frustrated.

"Oh, I see." Mom was thoughtful. "Do you know what it means to be a 'fisher of men'?" she asked after a moment. "Sure," answered Patrick. "It means to try to bring others to Jesus. We talked about that in Sunday school just a few weeks ago. When we were little kids, we sang a song about being fishers of men, too."

"Well," said Mom, "before you go fishing for fish, you always prepare very carefully. I've noticed you checking your rod and tackle - you're very thorough. We need to be prepared when we're fishing for men, too. Let's think and talk about the things Bryce asked you. We can look up some Bible verses, too-becoming familiar with God's Word is part of preparing to be a fisher of men. So let's prepare, and then when the chance comes, you'll be ready with an answer for Bryce - or for anyone who asks."

Thought: What will you say if you're asked why you believe in Jesus? Or why you go to church or read the Bible?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks me the reason for the hope that I have in You. Please help me to know the Bible well and to be ever ready to share the gospel anywhere and anytime. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

GOD WILL CONTINUE TO MOULD US!

Jessie carefully worked a lump of clay with her fingers. After a while, what had begun as a brown glob was turning into a vase. When Mom came into the kitchen, Jessie held it up. "It's a present for Granny's birthday," said Jessie. "I'll keep working on it until I have it just right." And she did. When the vase was finally just the way she liked it, she put it on a shelf to dry.

That afternoon, Jessie was in the middle of an exciting book when Mom asked her to empty the waste baskets. Jessie made a face. "Why do I always have to stop what I'm doing to do my chores?" she grumbled as she got up. Mom caught her eye and frowned.

Later, Jessie's friend Michele came over to play... but after a while, Jessie lost her temper. "Hey!" she snarled when they were playing "dress-up" and Michele tried walking in Jessie's new shoes. "Leave my stuff alone!" Michele kicked off the shoes angrily, and went home. With a sigh, Jessie went to the kitchen. "Mom," she began hesitantly, "I... I did it again. I lost my temper and shouted at Michele." She sat down at the table and rubbed a hand across her eyes. "I... I'm sorry I was grouchy about my chores, too," she added. "I guess I'm hopeless. I'll never be the kind of person I want to be."

Mom wiped her hands and pointed to the shelf holding the vase Jessie had made. "That vase started out as a lump of clay," she said. "It took a potter – you – to mould it into something lovely. And you worked at it until you had it just right, didn't you?" Jessie nodded. "Well, when you accepted Jesus, you agreed to let Him mould your life," continued Mom. "It takes time and patience, but He can smooth out the 'lumps' that keep you from being the kind of person He wants you to be."

"Lumps?" asked Jessie. "Like my bad temper?"

"Exactly," said Mom. "Sometimes He uses parents and discipline to help smooth the lumps away. Other times He may use unpleasant results from your own actions. But Jesus keeps working to make you more and more like Him. He doesn't give up, and you shouldn't, either!"

Thought: Are you discouraged because you often do or say wrong things? Do you feel you're hopeless, even though you're sorry for doing wrong? God doesn't give up on you, and you shouldn't, either.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know I keep falling into sin, but please teach me to accept whatever correction You send as You mould me. Teach me to depend on You for help to stop doing the things that displease You. Thank You for continuing to work on me! In Jesus' name I pray amen.

DO YOU BELIEVE IN JESUS?

David turned off his alarm clock and stretched. He thought again of the sermon the past Sunday. It had been about the need to trust Jesus as Saviour. David had almost decided to talk to Pastor or his dad about it. Maybe I should have, but... oh, well - I'm almost sure I'm saved anyway. I can't worry about it now! he told himself. David shook the thoughts from his mind as he got out of bed. Right now he had other things to think about - baseball, for instance. Today was the day his ball team would be competing against a really good team from River Valley Primary School for the championship.

As the game progressed, it became obvious that the teams were well matched. First David's school was ahead, and then it was River Valley, and then the other way again. Unhappily for David and his teammates, River Valley eventually won the championship.

"That was really a great game!" Dad said as they drove home. "Both teams played very well." "A great game?" David shook his head. "We lost!" "You ended up as the second place team in the whole of Singapore. You should feel good about that," said Mom encouragingly.

"Yeah, David," his sister agreed. "Second place is good, too. Your team almost won!" "Well, almost isn't enough!" mumbled David. He seemed determined to be discouraged. Dad gave him a thoughtful look. "Just like how King Agrippa said to Apostle Paul that Apostle Paul almost persuaded him to become a Christian," he murmured. "What?" asked David, startled. "What are you talking about?"

"I was thinking of King Agrippa's answer to the Apostle Paul when Apostle Paul shared the gospel with him," said Dad. "And you're right, David. Almost isn't enough - not in winning baseball games, nor in getting to heaven."

David was startled. He was almost sure he was saved - but what if he wasn't? He had been almost ready to make sure about it the past Sunday. Now, he knew he shouldn't put it off any longer. He needed to make sure he understood what it was all about. Being almost sure he was a Christian was not enough.

Thought: Have you repented of your sins and accepted Jesus as your Saviour? If so, thank God for saving you. If not, please pray the prayer below.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I believe that Jesus died for my sins and rose again from the dead. I pray now for forgiveness of my sins, and for Jesus to come into my life and be my Saviour. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

WHAT ARE PARABLES?

“Okee-dokee-doke,” said Mom as she shut the oven door. “This lime pie will be done in time for supper.” “I love lime pies,” said Heather, doodling in some flour on the table. “So does your dad,” said Mom. “Almost as much as cheesecake.”

After the cake was done, Heather, who was still looking at the table, asked. “Mom, how come Jesus talked in parables so often? Why didn’t He just say what they meant?” “That’s a good question,” replied Mom. “Do you have any idea why?”

“Well... maybe He was making it more interesting so people would listen better,” suggested Heather. “I read some parables in Luke 15 this morning, and I found them interesting. I like stories, and they illustrate what Jesus was teaching, don’t they?”

Mom nodded. “Right,” she agreed. “I think Jesus used stories to make Bible truths easier for us to understand. Another reason might be . . . well . . .” Mom opened the refrigerator. “Here,” she said, “taking out a huge lime. “How about eating this, Heather?”

“That lime?” asked Heather in surprise. “I can’t eat a whole lime. They’re sour!”

Mom scooped up a slice of lime cake from the table. It was a nice yummy slice. “How about this? Could you eat it?” she asked.

Heather eyed it happily. “Of course!” Mom nodded and took a tiny bite. “Yes, and I think that’s kind of what a parable is like.”

“So... it’s a little story people can handle?” asked Heather.

“Exactly,” agreed Mom, “but it contains a big truth. Jesus could have told the people a lot of harsh truths in no uncertain terms - and sometimes He did. But often they listened and learned from the parables - the little stories - He told.” Mom paused, then added, “Jesus sometimes used parables to give a special message to his disciples, too. He didn’t always intend for those who weren’t His followers to understand. In fact, God still has messages especially for His own children, and the Holy Spirit helps us understand them.” She smiled as she added, “And then they’re something special, like the lime pie.”

Thought: Do you enjoy stories and learn from them? The stories Jesus told illustrate truths people need to know -not only at the time He lived, but today as well.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I learn to enjoy the accounts and parables I read in the Bible. May I read more, and enjoy more! In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

GOD COMFORTS (I)

God comforts. Apostle Paul begins this second letter to the Christians in Corinth with this promise from God. When he first went to Corinth, people opposed him. It was hard and he had anticipated problems. God knew how he felt and appeared to him, what a comfort! The appearance of the Lord was timely.

Write down the words of comfort God said to the anguishing apostle:

(Acts 18:9,10a)

Paul stayed on in Corinth for a long 18 months because God had comforted him.

Have you read a beautiful poem called 'Footprints'? It describes a man who in a dream sees God walking with him. As he sees scenes of his life pass by, he notices 2 pairs of footprints on the sand, one belonging to him and one belonging to the Lord. But as the last scene of his life passes before him he notices there is only one set of footprints. It appears during the lowest and saddest times of his life. This really bothers him, and so he asks the Lord about it, "Lord, didn't You promise that You would never leave nor forsake me? But I have noticed that during the tumultuous times of my life there is only one set of footsteps. Where were You during those times?" The Lord graciously replied, "My precious child, when you see only one set of footsteps, it was then that I carried you."

The Lord surely comforts, even when you think no one understands.

Thought: How can we experience the comfort of God?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for Your words. They bring comfort and joy. In times of trial, You will never leave me nor forsake me. Nothing can pluck me out of the Father's hand. Thank You for being with me always. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

 GOD COMFORTS (II)

Paul and his fellow co-workers were struggling and finding things very difficult. Their lives were at stake. Many Christians like Paul make many sacrifices doing the gospel work. They are willing to risk their lives for Christ's sake.

Are you feeling discouraged? Perhaps someone is being unkind to you and whispering untrue things about you. Perhaps there are arguments at home that worry you, or you are finding school work too difficult and your grades have disappointed you and your parents. Or are you thinking that you are not a good Christian and are you feeling discouraged about your walk with the Lord.

Prophet Isaiah said these comforting words: "He shall _____ his flock like a _____: he shall _____ the lambs with his _____, and _____ them in his _____, and shall gently _____ those that are with young." (Isaiah 40:11)

In the Bible, the apostle Peter was very discouraged and had felt he was an utter failure. The reason was that he had denied His Lord three times. Even though Jesus could cast Peter off, He did not do so. Instead the Lord went to Peter and gently restored him. What advice did Jesus give to him? "Feed my sheep." What does this mean? Continue to minister to Christ's followers. Peter obeyed Jesus. He became a pastor and evangelist.

Back to the apostle Paul. He concentrated on helping others by telling them about Christ. He never wallowed in self-pity nor remained discouraged. So, you can do as Paul did.

Listen to God's word and take hold of His promises. Think hard about them and apply them to yourself. They are like water to a thirsty soul.

Thought: How do you stop from being discouraged?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for your words of comfort from the Bible, and help me to know and apply them. Also help me to do what You want me to do, especially to help others and to encourage them. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

TRUST IN GOD, NOT OURSELVES

Paul avoided trusting in himself or relying on his own strength or wisdom. He got into so much trouble that he thought that he would soon be dead. He depended on God to help him.

Let's look at what little James learned on a rainy day. The pavement was slippery after a heavy downpour. James and his father were walking to the supermarket together.

"I don't need you," said young James when his father tried to hold his hand. "I can walk by myself." But very soon he slipped on a puddle of water. He got his shorts all wet.

"I'll take hold of your jacket, Daddy," said James as he got up. Both walked on. He stumbled and fell again. He cried this time.

"Daddy, you take my hand," said James after he stopped crying. So his father took his hand. When James slipped yet again, his father held him up and kept him from falling.

With a smile on his face, James said, "It's better when you hold me than when I hold you." The rest of the walk to the supermarket was smooth, and they finally reached their destination.

So to trust in God is letting God hold us up and help us. Sometimes God lets trouble happen to show us that we don't have a strong hold on Him. When we ask God to hold us up, things go far better. That's what it means to trust in God and not ourselves.

Thought: What is the meaning of trusting in God and not ourselves?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, sometimes I do things my way and I get into trouble. Please forgive me. Help me to trust in You and let You lead me and help me. In this way, things will go better. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

HELP OTHERS BY PRAYING

In 1 Thessalonians, Paul wrote ‘Pray without _____ (unscramble IAENGCS).’

A missionary was leaving for work in a country far away. Before leaving, he spoke to some young people in their Sunday school class. After his talk, some young people said, “We are young, we cannot go with you.” Others said, “We wish we could go with you.” The missionary said, “Come with me in your prayers every day. You can help me by praying for me.”

This was what the apostle Paul wanted the Corinthian believers to do – to pray for him and his fellow workers in the gospel outreach. If the Corinthian believers pray, they’d know to give thanks should these prayers be answered.

Our prayers do great things for the people who work for God. God gladly listens to those prayers. The Bible says that “the effectual _____ prayer of a righteous man availeth _____” (James 5:16b). Prayer is powerful.

Our missionaries today also say, “You help us by prayer.” Our pastors and our Sunday school teachers say, “You help us by prayer.” All the other people who serve in the church say, “You help us by prayer.”

Would you now write down the names of people to pray for?

The list would help you remember missionaries, pastors and other servants of Jesus. Do pray for these people every day. They are doing their work for God and you, and you can help them by your prayers. Will you pray for them?

Thought: How can we help missionaries, pastors and other servants of God?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for missionaries and pastors and Sunday school teachers and other church workers. Remind me to pray for them daily. I am only a little child but by my prayers I can help them. May You be pleased with me. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

PROMISES OF GOD

Have you ever broken a promise? You may have promised your parents that you'll never do something again but soon return to doing it? Have you ever forgotten a promise that you have made? Or perhaps you have been unable to keep a promise?

The Bible tells us that God is true and trustworthy. God never forgets or breaks a promise. God had promised Abram that he would have many descendants like the sand on the beach and stars in the sky. It did not seem possible as Abram and his wife had waited for a long time but still Abram's wife, Sarai, could not conceive. One day, God told Abram that He had not forgotten His promise, and in His time He would fulfill it. God repeated His promise to Abram. He had Abram walk through the land that would be occupied by his descendants. God said He would make Abram's offspring to be as populous as the dust of the earth. Abram must be patient. Did Abram have many offspring who would occupy the land filled with God's enemies? Yes. God's promises are always fulfilled!

One of God's greatest promises is found in the book of Acts.

Write Acts 2:21 _____

We should be punished for our sins but Jesus sacrificed Himself by dying in our place. Jesus washed away our sins when He died on the cross. Whoever you are and wherever you come from, cry out to God for forgiveness and mercy, and you will be saved. God never breaks a promise. If you call out to God in the name of Jesus, you will be saved – saved from sin and saved from eternal hell fire. After receiving Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, tell others about your best and true Friend.

Thought: What is God's promise to anyone who will call out to Him in the name of Jesus?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that You are true and trustworthy. You are the God of promises and are faithful in keeping them. Help me know the Bible and the promises inside it and never to doubt You. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The apostle Paul, in writing this epistle to the Corinthian church, told them many promises and blessings of God. One of the blessings is the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Once a person calls out to God in the name of Jesus, the Holy Spirit will come and dwell in the heart of this person. This is a wonderful promise of God.

Do you know who the Holy Spirit is? There are three Persons in the Godhead, and yet there is only one God. The Holy Spirit is one of these three Persons. He is God the Holy Spirit. The other two Persons are God the Father and God the Son.

Just before Jesus died, He told His disciples that He was returning to heaven to be with God the Father, and that He would send them the Holy Spirit. Sure enough, on the day of the Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came unto them. Read Acts 2 and list some things the Holy Spirit did to the disciples.

Answer: _____

The Holy Spirit comes into the hearts of all who love the Lord Jesus and helps them live for Him. All heavenly thoughts and desires come from Him. He helps us to trust and obey. He helps us to be pure, loving and honest. Because of Him, we have love, joy and peace in our hearts.

The Holy Spirit helps us to pray. With sighs and groanings too deep for words, He takes our prayers and cries out to God because He knows how we feel.

Not only that, the Holy Spirit helps people who are not Christians know and love Jesus. He helps them understand what Jesus has done for them. When you accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour, the Holy Spirit was working in your heart through God's words. The Bible convicted you of your sins and of the need to know Jesus.

One more thing: do you know who helps you understand the Bible when you read it? It's the Holy Spirit.

Thought: Who is the Holy Spirit? Where is He?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for sending the Holy Spirit to help us in many ways. Help us to live clean lives by following the ways of the Holy Spirit and not our own ways. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER

One reason that the apostle Paul wrote this epistle was to urge the church in Corinth to forgive a brother-in-Christ who had sinned and had been excommunicated from church. To excommunicate is to expel a church member who refuses to repent of his or her sin even after being warned. Such a person is not allowed to worship in church or join the fellowship of the brethren. However, the brother-in-Christ in Paul's epistle had repented of his sins. Paul directed the church to restore him and to receive him again to their assembly.

To forgive someone means that we should not be angry with anyone who has done something wrong. Jesus tells us to forgive people who try to hurt us and who don't like us. If they hit us, do we hit them back? No. Just as Jesus forgave us of our sins, we should follow His example and turn away from seeking revenge.

We should be kind to our enemies, remembering the Lord Jesus' command for us to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44). There was a missionary who was preaching on a street. Suddenly one man sneaked behind the missionary and hit his head with a large stick. The preacher fell. The people grabbed the assailant and called a policeman to take him to jail, but the missionary stopped the policeman. All the people were very surprised and asked why.

He replied, "Jesus, the One I am telling you about, told me to be kind to those who hurt me and to forgive them." Turning to the assailant, he said, "I forgive you, but always remember that you are released because Jesus tells me not to be angry with you." The people became more interested to hear about Jesus and the Bible. What if the missionary did not forgive the attacker? What if he was angry?

When someone hurts you and isn't nice to you, tell God about it. He fully understands what it means to be gracious and merciful. He will help you show Christian love. Think about Jesus often and be like Jesus.

Thought: How do you not get angry when someone hurts you and isn't nice to you?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for forgiving my sins. Help me to forgive those who try to hurt me and to love them because You love them too. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

WHO IS SATAN?

The apostle Paul warned the Corinthian Christians about Satan. As the founding pastor of that church, Paul had the duty to do so.

Satan was one of God's greatest angels. Initially, he happily did whatever God wanted him to do. But one day Satan decided he would disobey God. He no longer loved God. He became jealous of God and wanted to be like God. Then he became God's greatest enemy. The Bible tells us that he tries to do us harm. Someday God will punish him by casting him into the lake of fire.

Satan wants us to sin against God and the people around you. Perhaps you wake up one day and do not feel like going to school. Satan might put thoughts in your mind, "It is alright not to go to school just for one day. Just lie to your mother. Nothing will happen to you." Then you lie to your mother about having a headache. By lying, you would have sinned against God.

Satan had influenced a couple to lie to God. They were Ananias and Sapphira. They sold some property and got money from the sale. They lied to the church leaders that they donated all the money, but in reality they kept a part of it for themselves. Satan had made them do wrong things (Acts 5). Satan does not work alone. Many angels who used to be good also became bad and now follow Satan. They are called demons. They are all around us. They obey Satan and help him do bad things. Someday God will also punish them severely.

Satan and his demons are very strong. In the Bible, a young girl who had a demonic power was used by her master to make money. The apostle Paul cast the demon out of her and she lost the power. This made her master very angry with Paul (Acts 16:16-19). But God is powerful to save anyone who believes in Him.

Would you always love the Lord Jesus so that Satan will not be able to get you to do wrong things?

Thought: How can you make sure that Satan and his demons cannot harm you?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that Satan and his demons cannot hurt me because I am Your child. Help me to keep close to You by reading the Bible, praying, worshipping You in church and making friends with other Christians. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

JESUS DESTROYED DEATH (I)

There is one thing that we know for certain – we are mortal beings and will die someday. Some people can live to a ripe old age. Some die young because of accidents or illnesses. Some babies do not even survive a day.

Do you want to know the day of your death? Just imagine that you know you are going to die on five days from now. You will probably be anxious and keep thinking about that day more and more as you draw closer to your death.

Even though we don't know when our death is, we know for sure that we won't live on earth forever. Only God knows our future. He knows everything from the beginning of time to the end. Our lives and deaths are in His hand.

In the New Testament, the apostle James says that our life is like a mist. A mist disappears when the sun rises in the morning. Our life is like that. We are here one day and gone the next. We are like a candle flickering in the wind. At any moment our life can be snuffed out.

Some believe a person just disappears after death (this means he is annihilated). There are others who believe they will be reincarnated after death; that's to say, they believe they will be reborn into this world to live another life. These are all wrong ideas.

If we die in our sins without accepting Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, God will cast us into hell and the lake of fire. How then can we be saved? By accepting the Lord Jesus as our personal Lord and Saviour. When Jesus died on the cross, He sacrificed Himself to pay for our sins. God accepts us and forgives our sins on account of what the Lord Jesus had done for us. Instead of being bound for hell, after we die, we will have eternal life with God in heaven.

Thought: What will happen to a Christian after he or she dies?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that Jesus died on the cross for my sins and saved me from hell. Thank You that when I die, I will go to heaven to be with You. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

JESUS DESTROYED DEATH (II)

Paul and his workers were not afraid of death. By sharing the gospel, some Christians were even killed. Today, when a Christian dies, pastors conducting vigil services often use 2 Cor 5:2 to comfort those left behind. Is death so scary? To a Christian, it means going to a better place – Heaven!

When Sarah died, Abraham mourned for her. He had been married to her for years, enjoying many things together. They travelled to Canaan, setting up their tents in many different places. And when Abraham was called to rescue Lot, his nephew, Sarah must have been worried and prayed to God for Abraham's safety. They talked about God's promises. They laughed about having a child when they were so old. They had also cried together.

It was very painful for Abraham that his beloved wife had died. But he had hope.

Like Abraham, Christians have great hope when confronted with death. Here are two sayings that illustrate the Christian's great hope:

- 2 Timothy 1:10 recorded that Jesus destroyed death.
- Jesus in John 11:25 says "I am the r_____ and the l_____: he that b_____ in me, though he were d_____, yet shall he l_____." (The first letters are given as clues.)

Jesus gives us life. All who trust in Him will live again, in heaven, after they die.

Now read this aloud — "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The verse tells us of God's great love in sending His Son to die on the cross for the sins of the world so that when believers die, they will not go to hell even though they deserve to. Instead, believers shall enjoy life with God in heaven. Every Christian should look forward to heaven, for when we say goodbye to this world, we say hello to our heavenly home.

Thought: Should you be afraid of death? Why not?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for sending the Lord Jesus to die for sinners like me. I have no more fear of death but hope of life. Heaven is my home. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

HEAVEN

Where is God? God is in heaven. Someday our bodies will grow old, and we will go away to live in another place. We will not always live here on earth. If we believe in Jesus Christ as our Saviour, we can go to heaven and live with God.

We must learn to love God. Some foolish people spend their time on earth loving themselves instead of loving God, thinking that they don't need God. When they die, they will not be in heaven but God will send them to the 'lake of fire' where they live suffer and be separated from God forever. Isn't it scary to be in the lake of fire?

If we are going to live forever, and we want to be in heaven to live with God after we die, then we must be careful how we live now. The Bible tells a story of a rich farmer who loved himself instead of loving God. The farmer went to every barn he owned. He saw that they were all full of grain. This made him very happy because he had so much in his barns. He knew he could sell the grain for a lot of money and that it would make him very rich. He would not need to work anymore. He could buy as much food and wine as he wanted and do all the things he liked.

When he went to bed, he thought about how rich he was and how he would spend his money. The rich farmer who trusted in riches rather than God died that night. He met God. But it was too late. He did not believe in God nor love Him.

Do you love God? Do you think, say and do things that are pleasing to God?

Here's a chorus you can sing about going to heaven:

*When we all get to heaven,
What a day of rejoicing that will be!
When we all see Jesus,
We'll sing and shout the victory.*

Thought: How should you live your life?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us eternal life through Jesus Christ. Help me to do the things that will please You. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

WHAT IS HEAVEN LIKE?

The apostle John describes in detail what heaven is like in Revelation. Do you want to know what heaven is like? Then read what John wrote about heaven.

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

“And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

“And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.

“And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie....

“And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.”

(Revelation 21:1-4, 23, 25, 27 and 22:1-5)

Let’s thank God that He loves us so much that He’s prepared a wonderful place for us to be forever. Do you know the way to heaven?

Thought: How is heaven lit up?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for saving me and giving me a place in heaven. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

WALK BY FAITH (I)

A true Christian has faith. Faith is not in the head; it comes from hearing the word of God.

Twelve men spied the land of Canaan. Ten of them said, "These men are huge. There is no way we will ever win." They were disheartened. The men in Canaan were giants compared with the men of Israel.

However, Joshua and Caleb thought differently. The two walked by faith and not by sight. Both said, "We should go up and take possession of the land for we can certainly do it." They understood that God was bigger than the giants in Canaan, and they had faith in God's ability to enable them to do what He had told them to do. They were not trusting in their own strength. They simply believed the promise of God that He had given the land of Canaan to them.

Sometimes, there will be 'giant' problems in life but the Bible tells us that God's power is not blocked by any giant, not even Satan. 1 John 4:4 says: "Ye are of _____, little children, and have _____ them, because greater is he that is in you, than he is in the _____." This is the faith God wants us to have.

Is our walk on this earth marked by faith in Jesus? As you walk with God, will others see your trust in God?

Faith is being certain about what you do not see. When you see a tree bent by the wind, you are certain it is windy. It is impossible to see the wind but you see the effect of it. Having faith in God is like this. You don't see God but you see the effect of God's presence and work in your life. You put your trust in God by faith. You pray to God by faith, believing and knowing that He hears. In reading the Bible, you see how God had worked in the lives of real people, and you know that He is real, even though you cannot see Him.

Know that you cannot please God if you do not exercise faith. The Bible tells us so. "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Hebrews 11:6)

Thought: What is faith?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for giving me the faith to believe in Jesus. Without faith it is impossible to please You. Help me to walk by faith and not by sight, trusting in Your strength and not my own. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

WALK BY FAITH (II)

Elisha was a man of great faith. He trusted in God with a deep conviction. The Syrians had been raiding Israel and threatening war (2 Kings 6). The servant reported to Elisha that the Syrian army had surrounded the city, but Elisha was calm. Elisha told his servant, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." His perspective was an example of great faith.

How could he be calm in a time like this? The people of Israel would be killed; their homes would be destroyed; the survivors would be taken captives and become slaves.

Hebrews 11:1 says "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.." Elisha believed that God and His heavenly host were with him even though he could not see them.

When you lack faith or are afraid, sing this song of encouragement:

1. *Be not dismayed whate'er betide, God will take care of you;
beneath his wings of love abide, God will take care of you.*

Refrain:

*God will take care of you, through every day, o'er all the way;
he will take care of you, God will take care of you.*

2. *Through days of toil when heart doth fail, God will take care of you;
when dangers fierce your path assail, God will take care of you.
(Refrain)*

3. *All you may need he will provide, God will take care of you;
Nothing you ask will be denied, God will take care of you.
(Refrain)*

Thought: What is faith based on?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, when something goes wrong, help me to keep trusting in You, and to walk by faith and not by sight. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

Do you know that one day, all Christians will have to stand in judgment before the Lord Jesus? All believers, after they die must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Although they are saved, they will have to give an account about how they have lived their lives and served the Lord Jesus while on earth. Those who are faithful in service to the Lord Jesus will be commended by Him and will receive rewards. Dear children, you too will have to give account of your life before the Lord Jesus one day. I am sure you want to be commended by the Lord Jesus.

The commendation and reward that God is preparing for you will last forever. This therefore should encourage you to serve the Lord Jesus faithfully and to do your best for Him, while on this earth. As you have your whole life ahead of you, you should spend it serving the Lord Jesus who gave His life for you.

The Apostle Paul and his companions are examples to us regarding the way we ought to serve the Lord. See what they had been through in serving the Lord – (fill in the blanks; the first few letters are given).

“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed _____; we are perplexed, but not in despair _____; Persecuted, but not forsaken _____; cast down, but not destroyed _____; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body” (2 Corinthians 4:8-10).

They were willing to bear suffering for Jesus’ sake, even to die for the Lord Jesus. They loved the Lord and served Him zealously.

Dear children, will you live your life in obedience to God and bear a good testimony for Jesus?

Thought: Why must we be careful how we live our lives now?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to obey You by living a holy life and witnessing for the Lord Jesus, while I am on this earth. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

A NEW CREATURE

Paul had written so many comforting promises in this epistle to the church of Corinth. But these promises cannot be theirs if they are not 'a new creation'.

Anyone who receives Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour becomes a new creature and the old things are history. The new heart within you wants to do right and honour God.

However, Christians can be drawn to sin. As a Christian, your old fleshly nature fights your new nature in Christ every day. Even though you are a new person in Christ, Satan still wants to pull you down and make you think you will always be a failure and unable to overcome certain temptations.

The apostle Paul talks about this kind of struggle in Romans 7:18-19.

“For I know that in _____ (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no _____ thing: for to _____ is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find _____. For the good that I would I do _____: but the evil which I would not, that I _____.”

Paul wanted to do good but kept finding himself doing poorly and sinning. This kind of struggle goes on inside every Christian. Are you surprised to learn that you have this kind of struggle? As a human, you are still vulnerable to sin, even though the new heart within you wants to do right and honour God.

Do you let your fleshly nature take control of you? The first step is to know your weakness and correct it. For example, you are easily jealous of your friend's abilities. To overcome this, you can put Romans 12:15 into practice. God wants us to rejoice with those who rejoice. For your friend's success, you show genuine happiness for him and encourage him. In this way, you can overcome envy.

Remember that when you became a Christian, God put a new heart inside you. You are a changed person. God will help you resist temptations and overcome them, so that you'll be more like Christ.

Thought: What does being a new creation mean?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that in Christ, I am a new creature. Help me overcome my weaknesses so that I will always please You. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

RECONCILED TO GOD

Reconciliation is a big word. Do you know what it means? If someone breaks your toy, you would be angry with him. If he says he is sorry, then you would forgive him and play happily with him. When that happens, we say that you have been reconciled to him.

We are all born sinners and cannot to be reconciled with God using own own efforts. But God, because His love for us has provided the way for reconciliation. God sent His only Son, the Lord Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. All we have to do is to repent of our sins, seek God's forgiveness, and accept the Lord Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. Then our sins will be forgiven and we will be reconciled with God.

God is ever ready to be reconciled with anyone who receives Jesus as his or her Lord and Saviour. But the trouble is, many people in the world still reject God. These people are proud, disobedient and refuse to accept God's grace through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Only those who are humble and who are willing to acknowledge themselves as sinners in need of the Saviour will be saved. They will be reconciled to God and they will have a hope and future in heaven. Those who die in their sins without accepting the Lord Jesus will face the wrath of God. They will end up in hell and the lake of fire.

Are you reconciled with God? If not, ask God to forgive you of your sins and help you start obeying Him. Once you become reconciled with Him, you will be a blessed child.

Here's a song to sing:

Since Jesus came into my heart,

Since Jesus came into my heart,

Floods of joy o'ver my soul like sea billows roll,

Since Jesus came into my heart.

Thought: What does being reconciled with someone mean?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that You sent Jesus to come into the world to die to save us from our sins and to reconcile us with You. This is Your love for us. Forgive my wrongdoings and help me to love You with all my heart. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

AMBASSADORS OF CHRIST

The apostle Paul and his fellow gospel labourers are Christ's ambassadors. He told the believers in the Corinth church they too were ambassadors of Christ.

What is an ambassador? An ambassador is someone who represents a King or head of state of a country. He or she goes to live in another land, intentionally building relationships with the people of that land. As ambassadors for Christ, we, Christian boys and girls, represent Christ to the world of unbelievers. Our speech and actions tell others about Jesus' love and His power to save us.

How is your Christian walk? The Bible tells us to walk wisely because other people are watching. Who are they?

Answer: _____.

Your walk and talk must go together and must be consistent. Some people are all talk and no action. For some others, their actions contradict their talk. Some Christians are like that too. Non-Christians are watching your walk.

Being ambassadors of Christ, we reflect Christ. If you identify yourself as a Christian, it is important that you also walk as God would have His children walk.

Proverbs 20:11 says: "Even a _____ (IDLHC) is known of his _____ (IDSONG); whether his _____ (ROWK) be pure, and whether it be right."

What is your life like? Does it tell a good or bad message to all those around you at home, in school and in church?

Thought: How can you be a constant witness for Christ?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for making me Your child. As Your child, help me to live my life in obedience to You and to bear good testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name I pray, amen

MAKING OTHERS SPIRITUALLY RICH

Mary said, "I am going to marry Collin; he will make me rich." And she did marry Collin. As Collin was rich, he made her rich too. However they were not happy together. They did not love each other. Making someone rich with money does not always make that person happy. Shortly, they divorced.

The apostle Paul tells us that there is another way of making others rich. Even someone who is poor can make another person rich in the biblical sense. Memorise "as poor, yet making many rich". Though Paul and his friends were poor, he wrote that they made many rich.

What did he mean? How did he and his friends make others rich? Apostle Paul and his friends were very poor people. They did not have much money. They did not own many things. How could they possibly make other people rich? You are wrong if you think that riches here refer to material things.

Paul and his friends went evangelising, telling people about Jesus. Through the gospel, the Holy Spirit led the people to faith in Jesus as their Saviour and Lord. They received the forgiveness of their sins and everlasting life, which are worth more than all the money in the world.

Moreover, Jesus gives us peace with God and joy in our hearts. He fills our hearts with the love of God and helps us to obey His teachings and love others. In this way, our hearts and lives are made spiritually rich. Money cannot buy the fullness of joy that only God can give.

How can we make other people spiritually rich? We can follow what Paul and his friends did. We can tell others about Jesus and His love. We too can make others spiritually rich even though we are materially poor.

Thought: How can we make others spiritually rich?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for forgiving me of my sins and giving me a blessed life with Jesus. Money cannot buy the joy that I have in Jesus. Help me make other people spiritually rich by telling them about Jesus and His love. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

BE YE SEPARATE

The Bible commands Christians, “Be ye separate”. But what are we as Christians to separate ourselves from? We are to separate ourselves from false teachings. We are to live holy lives before the Lord and also separate ourselves from this world and its values. As Christians, we are to be different from the rest of the world. Unlike other people who follow after the ways of the world, Christians are to follow what the Bible teaches them. To be separate calls for us to stand for Christ so that our faith is not compromised. Sometimes, we called to stand alone for Christ.

In the Old Testament, Daniel was only a youth when he “_____ {Unscramble UOESRPPD} in his heart...” (Daniel 1:8). He resolved not to defile himself with all the worldly pleasures in the king’s court. He wanted nothing to pollute or corrupt his mind and heart, whether it be through food or activities. You can be like Daniel. You can make the decision to stand alone now.

As Daniel was committed to being steadfast for God, he was prepared for the testings to come. When King Darius decreed that no one could pray to any god except him, Daniel would not compromise his faith. He had been living for God. So, he could stand alone publicly in this circumstance. He was always ready to stand alone for God.

Standing alone also makes us stand out in a world that is full of wrongdoing. Stand out as an honest and trustworthy person. This is good and pleasing to the Lord because He is righteous and cannot tolerate sin. Do not follow the crowd.

Thought: Why must you stand alone and stand out?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to keep myself holy instead of following the world’s ways. Give me courage to do this. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

DON'T TOUCH THE UNCLEAN THING

A soldier in India was in a library and spotted a book high up on the shelf. He reached for it but a snake among the books fell out and bit him. Its bite was poisonous. The soldier killed it but his hand became swollen. He almost died from the bite.

You also read, don't you? There is poison in some books which is different from the snake poison in the earlier story. When you read books that encourage evil or contain violence, you are allowing your mind and heart to be poisoned. These books harm your spiritual life. Such books make you think it is all right to live sinfully and do evil. Some television programs can do the same thing. Evil can be made to look fun. However, it isn't fun when it separates you from God. We must avoid things that are not good for us.

The apostle Paul gave another reason to avoid such evil things. God is our Father and we are His children. God lives in us and we are the temple of the living God. So we cannot touch spiritually unclean things. So we must not spoil ourselves with anything bad we might read, listen to or watch.

Let's sing this song:

O be careful little eyes what you see, (x2)
For our Father up above, Is looking down in love
So, be careful little eyes what you see.

O be careful little ears what you hear, (x2)
For our Father up above, Is looking down in love
So, be careful little ears what you hear.

Thought: What reason does the apostle Paul give for avoiding things that are spiritually unclean?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please help me avoid what is not good for me to read, watch and listen to. As I am your child, help me be willing to turn away from what is evil. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

GIVING THEMSELVES TO THE LORD

Anna was born into a very rich family. But she scarcely saw her parents because they travelled all over the world for business. She was left at home with her maid.

One day, a parcel arrived at the door. It came from Anna's mother. She had sent her a beautiful and expensive doll. At first Anna did not want to open the parcel. When she opened it, she threw it on the floor. The doll broke. If you were Anna, would you throw the doll on the floor? Why do you think Anna did that?

Anna cried loudly and could not be consoled. Her maid could not stop her. Anna cried, "Mummy, don't just send me pretty things. I want YOU!" She sobbed for a very long time. Poor Anna!

In the same way, Jesus is not happy when people give Him only things. Some people think He is pleased when they give His church an offering now and then. The apostle Paul wrote that the Christians in the Macedonian churches gave generously to help their brethren in the Corinthian church. They did this for the Lord. They constantly gave their hearts, their love and themselves. This is exactly what Jesus wants us to do too. Like the Macedonian Christians who gave themselves first to the Lord, we must also give ourselves first to God.

How do we give ourselves first to the Lord?

- Believe that He is our only Lord and Saviour;
- Trust in His promises;
- Be thankful;
- Let Him rule and own us;
- Give up our selfish wants;
- Live for Him;
- Read and obey what He tells us in His Word.

Have you given yourself first to the Lord? He wants us, not our presents.

Thought: What did the Macedonian Christians give to the Lord?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us Your only begotten Son to save us from our sins. Help us to give ourselves fully to You. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

A CHEERFUL GIVER (I)

It is more blessed to give than to receive. This is what the Bible says. Do you expect something in return from the person to whom you give things?

Mary knew the next day was Kelly's birthday. She said, "Mummy, I don't want to give Kelly anything for her birthday this year." Puzzled, Mummy asked, "Why?" "She never gives me anything in return," replied Mary.

"You know that she can't afford to give you presents because her parents are very poor," said her Mummy. "Do you give presents so that you can get some back?" Mary shrugged her shoulders. Putting her arm around Mary, she said, "You will not be happy if you give to get. The Bible tells us that God loves a cheerful giver."

"What does this mean?" said Mary. Mummy explained, "It says that we should give what is in our hearts. We shouldn't give when we don't want to or because we have to."

After hearing what Mummy had said, Mary thought aloud, "Kelly never has a birthday cake. Can I buy her a cake for her birthday?" That day, Mary and Mummy went to the cake shop to buy a big cake for Kelly.

We should not be selfish with what we have. When we give our tithes and offerings to God we must do so cheerfully and willingly. Likewise, when we give to others we should also give cheerfully and willingly without expecting anything in return. This is the way of showing our love for God. God gave us His Son, Jesus as a gift. He loves us and provides everything we need.

Thought: What kind of giver does God love? What does it mean?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please help me to be a willing and cheerful giver. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

A CHEERFUL GIVER (II)

We have learnt that we should give without expecting anything in return. We must also give from the heart, and that we give because we want to.

Mrs. Lim asked her Sunday school class, "If you had a million dollars, would you give a part of it to the church?" The class said they would.

"If you had \$1,000, would you give \$500 to the church?" Mrs Lim asked.

"Yes, we would," her students answered unanimously.

Then she asked: "If you had \$1, would you give a portion of it to Jesus?"

Her students looked at each other. Peter replied that he would but what he did not say was he didn't have a dollar to give; Peter came from a poor family. Another boy, Collin, took 50 cents out of his pocket and put it in the offering bag.

The other students kept quiet. They had not brought any money to church but kept the money at home. They did not want to give a part of their money to church. They had all said they would give part of their million dollars because it was something they didn't have. But they didn't want to give what they had.

We are like these students. If we had a million dollars it is easy to say what we would do for God. But how much will we really do for God with what we actually have? What are we willing to do for Him right here and now? This is the real test of our love for God.

Do you love God? God is pleased with us when what we offer to him comes out of a willing heart. God loves a cheerful giver. Cheerful givers are people who give because they want to. They are happy to do what they can for Jesus because Jesus gave His life for them. Are you a cheerful giver?

Thought: What are the things you can do for Jesus?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be a cheerful giver for I know that all that I have comes from You. And please help me grow in my love for You. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

THE WAY AHEAD CAN BE HARD

Two brothers, Lee and Sean, were having a conversation. Lee said he wants to be a pastor if he is called by God when he grows up. Sean grumbled that there should be an easier way to become a doctor or a lawyer or a teacher or a pastor.

- Sean: I want to be a doctor.
 But I don't want to study for a long time.
- Lee: But that is the only way to become a doctor.
- Sean: Then I will be a lawyer.
- Lee: You will have to study law.
 That will also take a long time.
- Sean: Well, then I will be a teacher.
- Lee: Don't you think teachers have to go teachers' training school for many years?
- Sean: What about a pastor? You won't have to go to a bible college for a long time to be a pastor, will you?
- Lee: Yes, I will, as much as a doctor or a lawyer.
 Sometimes, more.

We would not amount to much by just doing the things that are easy. Sometimes we have to do things the hard way. To become a Christian is easy by just believing in Jesus but to truly live as a Christian takes a lot of studying and praying.

A Christian must endure hardship. The Bible tells us that the apostle Paul was not just an ordinary minister of God, but he had also been an extraordinary sufferer for Christ. Paul had to endure tremendous hardship. He exhorted a young pastor, Timothy, with these words:

“Thou therefore endure _____, as a good _____ of Jesus Christ.” (2 Timothy 2:3)

Every Christian must expect some hardship or ill treatment. Those who are good soldiers of Jesus Christ must endure hardship. They would do the hard things like Jesus did.

Thought: Is it easy to be a Christian? Why?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for sending the Lord Jesus to save us from our sins. He suffered and died on the cross in our place. Please help us to be willing to bear hardship like Jesus and to help others. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

PAUL ENDURED

When you look at the list of trials Apostle Paul went through, from beatings and shipwrecks to hunger and imprisonment, you might wonder how he could have endured so much. Why didn't he give up? He had endured such injustice, yet he kept going, hurdle after hurdle. He was not deterred but kept pressing on toward the _____ (unscramble EIPZR) (Philippians 3:14) and because his goal was _____ (NLEEART) (2 Corinthians 4:17).

God is pleased with our resolve to give Him our best and not take the easy way out. Some people have the habit of quitting whenever the going gets tough. If we give up half way, we don't learn to persevere and grow. It affects our spiritual life.

How can a Christian child learn to persevere? It is to have a solid foundation in the fundamentals. These fundamental skills require diligence, endurance and a willingness to repeat them over and over again. What are these basic skills? They are regular Bible reading, prayer, attending Bible studies and going to church. Are you doing these regularly? These will build up your relationship with God. Apostle Paul had these basics right and so he had the spiritual strength and endurance for hardships. If you do not have a solid foundation, you will stumble in your faith and backslide when you face trials and obstacles.

When the Chicago Bulls won six National Basketball Association championships, their coach said the strength of his team was the players' solid fundamentals. The Bulls started every practice with time devoted to drills on basic skills. That was why they could play so well under pressure as a team. So in the same way, your regular practice of Bible reading and praying will help you function well spiritually and keep you from quitting.

Thought: What are the Christian basic skills that you must learn and practise?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me practise the fundamentals daily so that when a setback happens, I will persevere in my faith. Help me to endure with the grace and strength You give me to overcome difficulties. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

GOD'S GRACE

When in trouble, we worry. It means that we do not trust in God. The promise that God's grace is sufficient to take care of our troubles is the antidote to worry. Will you trust in the grace of God?

There was a farmer called Joseph. After harvest, he would sell his wheat and keep what was remaining to feed his family as well as those who worked for him. One day, after selling his harvest, accompanied by his son, Tom, he went check his barn. He wanted to see what he had left to feed his family and his workers. He estimated that he had more than enough of wheat to feed his family. He was happy. But Tom was not.

"What are you worried about, Tom?" asked his father.

"I am worried that you may not have enough wheat for us," replied Tom. "What happens if the wheat gets stolen, or eaten by pests?" Tom was a perpetual worrier.

Sometimes we are like Tom. We worry about potential troubles and don't think that everything would come out all right. We need to trust God. God tells us that His grace is sufficient for us. That means God's grace and love are enough to help see us through every problem we face.

Do you ever have troubles? None of your troubles is too big for God to handle. No matter how much trouble we may have, no matter what we need, God's love and grace will take care of you.

Let's sing this song:

*Though sorrows befall us and Satan oppose,
God leads His dear children along;
Through grace we can conquer, defeat all our foes,
God leads His dear children along.*

Refrain:

*Some through the waters, some through the flood,
Some through the fire, but all through the blood;
Some through great sorrow, but God gives a song,
In the night season and all the day long.*

Thought: To whom does God give His grace?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know that Your grace is enough to take care of me in all my troubles. Sometimes I fail to trust You. Please forgive me. Help me remember that all I need is Your grace every day. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

JESUS GIVES ME STRENGTH

The “I-can’t-do-it” mentality is common in many people, even Christians. Some Christians don’t depend on God, but on themselves, and are therefore weak.

“I can’t do it. I just can’t do it,” said Don as he walked into the house. He kicked the waster paper basket that was in his way. Dad heard him and asked, “What can’t you do?”

“I wanted to make room in the backyard by moving that big stone so that I could cycle around but it won’t move. It is too heavy,” answered Don.

Dad thought it was no big deal and Don did not have to make such a hullabaloo. Dad gently said, “Well, maybe we can move it together. I’ll help you.” Father and son went outside, and with his dad’s help, Don moved the stone easily.

There are many things we cannot do by ourselves. We often say, “We can’t do it.” But the apostle Paul said,

“I can do _____ (LLA) things through _____ (HISCTR)
 which _____ (EEESTT’TNNHHRG) me.”
 (Philippians 4:13).

With Jesus’ help, we can do anything. Isn’t it good to have Jesus as a Friend and Helper?

When there are things He does not want us to do, He won’t help us. When you are having a test and you don’t know the answers to the questions, do you think that Jesus will help you copy your classmate’s answer sheet? Of course not.

Jesus helps us do the things that are right and pleasing to God. He makes us strong even though we are very weak.

Have you been in a race? Feeling nervous? Pray. After that, you feel light when running. You may not win the race but you know Jesus has helped you. Everything is possible for him who believes.

Thought: Why is Jesus able to help us do anything that God wants?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that Jesus is my Friend and Helper. With the strength He gives, I can do anything according to His will. Please help me to depend on Jesus more, and not on myself. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

WHEN I AM WEAK, I AM STRONG

Unanswered prayers usually trouble us. When a great need exists, and a prayer isn't answered, we become disappointed, doubtful and even angry.

The apostle Paul had a "no" from God in answer to one of his prayers. He had healed so many sick people but he himself was not healed from a disease. Many bible scholars believe it was an eye disease. Perhaps this was why Paul had people writing his epistles. He recited to them what to write by the Holy Spirit.

Paul had spent his whole life teaching others about Christ. God had answered many of Paul's prayers. So when Paul prayed that God would make his eyes well, he really expected God to do it, and soon. But Paul did not get well. He prayed again and again. But still he didn't begin to get well.

Then God told Paul something very special and he wrote it down in the Bible, for anyone who reads the Bible to learn from. The Lord said He would give Paul enough grace to live with his sickness. When Paul felt the weakest, God promised that He would be there to give him strength.

The fact that Paul was sick did not mean that God did not love him. When 'bad' things happen to us, it doesn't mean that God has stopped loving us. God has a purpose for everything that happens to Christians. And Paul knew that his sickness had a purpose — in fact, God became even more real to him and he knew how much he needed God's help. It also helped Paul know that God still loved him. Paul wrote,

“...when I am _____, then am I _____.”
(2 Corinthians 12:10)

Thought: What was the purpose of Paul's sickness?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that everything that happens to me has a good purpose. Help me trust You all the time especially when I am weak. You will give me grace and strength, and I will be strong. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

LIVE IN PEACE

No man is an island. You are surrounded by people at home, in school and elsewhere. How is your relationship with them? As Paul exhorted the church members to live in harmony with one another, this is the same message he has for you.

Have you ever played with dominoes? Dominoes are small blocks of wood that you place in a line. When the front domino is pushed over, the block behind it will hit the next block as it falls. How can you stop the whole row from falling? You take one domino out of the row.

A quarrel or an argument is like a row of dominoes. Imagine this situation: You speak harshly to a person, he hits back at you with harsh words, and you both exchange unkind words. To stop the argument, don't say angry words, or to say something kind, or just say nothing. In any of these ways, the quarrel will end.

In Proverbs, we learn how an argument can go on or can end. To end an argument, you give a _____ answer. To provoke more arguing is to say _____ words (Proverbs 15:1). "Pleasant words are as a honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones" (Proverbs 16:24).

The apostle Paul exhorted the Corinthian Christians to live in peace among themselves. Christians must get along with one another. We must avoid fighting, quarrelling, envying, backbiting, gossiping and so on.

God is the God of love and peace. He is the author of peace and lover of concord. He has loved us and is willing to be at peace with us. He commands us to love Him, and that we love one another. God will love those who love peace.

Thought: Christians must get along with others. What must we not do in order to keep peace with each other?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for loving us and for being willing to be make peace with us through Jesus Christ. When we can't get along with someone, help us to be willing to make peace and love him or her, because You are our greatest example. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

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