

**NEW START TO NEWYEAR!**

The Apostle Peter wrote 1 Peter. Although Peter was only a fisherman before he met Jesus, he was qualified to write God's message to the Christians. The Holy Spirit was with him to enable him to write this message of hope and encouragement. He himself had experienced much hope and encouragement from the Lord, for the Lord forgave and blessed him after he had sinned in denying Jesus three times. You, too, can experience this love of the Lord even if you have sinned in any way.

This is the first day of the year. How has the last year been? Have you been a good witness for Jesus, or have you been a stumbling block to others who may need to see the work of Jesus in you? Can you say that you glorified God last year? Have you been able to control your temper? Have you been kind? Can others, especially those in your family, see a real change in your life?

As you start a new year, may you begin a new life in Christ as Peter did when he realised he needed Jesus. Peter was proud and often acted on his own instead of seeking God's will.

Turn to God today and commit to Him every area of your life. Sometimes, we make the mistake of going to Him only when we have problems. That should not be the way. We must always turn to Him, in good times and in bad.

Thought: May I start the year right!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, forgive me for the many times I have sinned against You. Thank You for forgiving me of my sins and loving me still. I want to commit this new year to You and pray that I will not just call You Lord, but indeed look to You to lead me in all areas of my life. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**TO WHOM WAS THE EPISTLE ADDRESSED?**

Peter wrote this letter to the believers scattered throughout the different parts of Asia Minor, which is modern day Turkey. Those believers were called “strangers” because they had to leave their homeland and seek refuge in distant lands since they were persecuted for their faith. In those days, Christians who refused to worship the Roman emperor as well as idols were often persecuted. But there is another reason why they were called “strangers”. It was a reminder to them that their stay on earth was temporal and their real home is heaven, which they would go to when they die. We, too, must remember that we are strangers on earth.

Life was hard for these early Christians. Not only did they miss their homeland, they were also despised in the new land they had gone to. Yet, although rejected by men, they were special in God’s sight, for they were the chosen of God for His everlasting Kingdom. As an earthly father takes care of his children, God cared for and protected them.

Peter wrote to the Christians scattered throughout Asia Minor to encourage them. Likewise, I can also write letters or cards to people I know to encourage them. Who can they be?

1. \_\_\_\_\_ for Teachers’ Day.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ for taking care of me.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ to encourage him/her.

Thought: Peter wrote to encourage, so can I!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be an “encourager”. Whether I encourage someone by writing, or through a phone call, or through a discussion, help me to do something for Jesus. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

**THE REASON FOR WRITING (1)**

Peter was concerned for the new Christian converts in Asia Minor as they were facing persecution. Knowing they needed help, he wanted to strengthen them in the Lord. Many of them were accused of being evildoers, arrested and had their properties taken away from them. They had to flee for their lives and often lived in caves to escape capture. Persecution is something you and I would not be able to fully understand as we do not face such severe persecution, at least not in Singapore. But dear child, know that you are to stand up for the name of Christ as these people did for their faith centuries ago!

Peter also wanted to prepare them for further sufferings as the cruel Roman rulers would torment and persecute Christians further. History tells us that when a great big fire broke out in Rome, Nero put the blame on the Christians, and many of them had to die for their faith. Although they faced death, they continued to praise the Lord and prayed for their enemies even as they took their last breath! Such bravery and strength can only come from the Lord. We can learn much from these early Christians for we too need to be brave and take a stand for the Lord.

Peter wrote God’s Word to encourage the Christians who were persecuted. We now have God’s Word to strengthen us while we go through trials and persecution. Write and memorize Isaiah 41:10 to strengthen yourself.

Isaiah 41:10

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Thought: Fear not, for God will provide and protect.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, let me hide Your Word in my heart. Remind me of the promise in today’s verse that You will never leave or forsake me. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

**THE REASON FOR WRITING (2)**

An early historian wrote, "In the meantime, the number of Christians being now very large, it happened that Rome was destroyed by fire, while Nero was stationed at Antium. It was believed that he was the cause of the fire as he wanted the glory of building a new city. Nero could not escape from the charge that the fire had been caused by his order. He, therefore, turned the accusation against the Christians and the cruelest tortures were accordingly inflicted upon the innocent. They were covered in the skins of wild beasts and perished by being devoured by dogs, while many were crucified."

Peter wanted to strengthen these Christians for they lived in constant fear. We would, too, if we lived in those times. Peter called his people to hope and courage, and to holy and courageous Christian living which would show the world that they were a special people on their journey to heaven.

When Paul, the Apostle, suffered, God said,

"My grace is sufficient for thee:  
for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

(2 Corinthians 12:9)

Learn this verse by heart and use it when you face difficulties.

Thought: God's Word in our heart is strength indeed!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give me the wisdom to understand Your Word, the diligence to remember it, and the courage to live it out. Please help me with the problems which I cannot handle by myself: the heavy workload in school, my relationship with my parents, siblings and friends, etc. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**KNOW THAT YOU ARE CHOSEN OF GOD**

The Apostle Peter, writing in the Spirit, reminded the suffering Christians that they were “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father:” This means that they were specially chosen by God. From eternity past, God had planned and chosen certain people to become Christians. What a wonderful revelation! What a comfort as well!

Notice, also, that the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit, are at work in the salvation of a person. It is the Father who elects, the Son who died to reconcile sinners to God and the Spirit who works in the hearts of sinners to cleanse and give understanding. What a mighty power is at work here! The entire process of election involves all three persons of the Trinity. How wonderful it is to know we are saved!

There is an interesting chorus that goes like this:

\_\_\_\_\_ by the Father,

\_\_\_\_\_ by the Son,

\_\_\_\_\_ by the Spirit,

I'm His very own.

Fill in the blanks above with these helping words:  
Sealed, Chosen, Purchased

Thought: How wonderful it is to be chosen by God!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for choosing me out of the millions in this world. I know I am not worthy, but You have been so gracious. So Heavenly Father, help me to appreciate how precious this gift of salvation is. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**YOU ARE SANCTIFIED BY THE SPIRIT**

We all shower every day, don't we? Why? We want to be clean! In the same way, from a spiritual perspective, we need to be sanctified by the Spirit in order to be spiritually cleansed and washed. We cannot be sanctified without God. Neither can we be sanctified without an active participation on our part. We will need to want to be sanctified. We will need to reject the things of the world, and to receive the things of God. Sanctification is not through some external act but is an inward change in our hearts and minds, that we will devote ourselves to God as we are made clean.

Sanctification begins when a person believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection, and His coming again. No person can become a Christian without the working of the Holy Spirit. That person then becomes a new creature, renewed after the image of God. Sanctification is also not a one-time exercise. It continues throughout a believer's life, and on a daily basis the Christian has to be cleansed. That is why we pray for the forgiveness of our sins daily, and that is why in the Lord's Prayer, a portion of it is about asking God for the forgiveness of our trespasses. It is all the work of the Holy Spirit and is not what the world may have us believe, a "turning over a new leaf" or making of resolutions.



Thought: The best cleansing is from the Holy Spirit!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the blessed Holy Spirit that indwells me when I committed my life to You. May I continue to live a holy life so that I will not grieve the Holy Spirit. I know that it is difficult, and that is why I will need Your help. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## SPRINKLED BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

In the Old Testament, the sprinkling of blood was often a symbol of cleansing. When Aaron and the priests were chosen for the service of God in the Tabernacle, they were sprinkled with the blood of animals. This meant that they were made holy and set apart from others. Likewise, when we say we are sprinkled by the blood of Jesus Christ, it means that we are cleansed and made right with God.

Also, when God made an everlasting covenant with the Israelites that He will forever be their God and they would forever be His people, there was sprinkling of blood. This signified that the people would be obedient to the laws of God for the people said, "All the words which the Lord hath said will we do." (Exodus 24:1-8).

The death of Christ on the cross, where His precious blood was shed, replaces the Old Testament system of sacrifice of animals. But the significance behind cleansing by blood remains unchanged. When the Christian is cleansed from sin by the blood of Christ, his sins are forgiven and his relationship with God is restored.



What does this picture remind you of?

This picture reminds us of the \_\_\_\_\_ of the lamb that was smeared on the doorposts of the houses of the \_\_\_\_\_. (Exodus 12)

Thought: Only the blood of the Lamb of God can wash away our sins.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, always remind me that I have been bought with the precious blood of my Saviour. Help me to appreciate that although salvation is free, it was bought at such a great cost. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## A WONDERFUL HOPE!

A person without hope is a sad person. What is your greatest hope? Some students hope for the ability to excel in their studies, some for happiness in the family, some for a better tomorrow. Some of your friends may base their hope on luck, on hard work, on opportunities, or on what family and friends can help them with.

However, the basis of our hope is different, and today's verse gives us the answer to the basis of this hope — we have hope because of the resurrection of Jesus! That is a wonderful and lively hope, as no leader of any other religion or faith has ever been resurrected! As Jesus has been resurrected, so shall we when we die the physical death.

God's abundant mercy in saving you should also give you a lively hope in life. This hope is blessed and sure, and unlike earthly hopes, will not fail us. When we place our hope on earthly things, we sometimes meet with failure and disappointment, but God's promise is fail-safe, and therefore our hope of a heavenly home is completely guaranteed.



**Thank you God that my hope  
is built on nothing less than  
Jesus Christ.  
Thank you for this wonderful  
hope that encourages and  
strengthens me!**

Thought: What is your hope based on?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the resurrected Christ which is the basis of my hope. As He was resurrected and is now in heaven, so shall I be. So, help me to persevere on, despite any difficulties I may face in my studies, or family, or other areas of my life. Let me also commit them to You for I know You care for me. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



**YOU HAVE A FANTASTIC INHERITANCE!**

Inheritances are what people receive from loved ones when these loved ones die. Some inheritances can be huge, as some of these people who die are very wealthy. Some inheritances are not about wealth, but feature interesting collections of art, or even furniture. However, the best inheritance of all is that given by the most powerful being in the world, and that is God! By His grace, we have an inheritance in heaven!

Earthly inheritances are always temporal. Properties can be sold, money spent, valuables used up. They could also be stolen. The inheritance God gives is different for we are taught it is incorruptible, undefiled, and does not fade away.

This spiritual inheritance cannot be spoiled or stained, as it has been bought by the blood of Jesus. Despite our sins and failings, if we have sincerely accepted Christ as our Lord and Saviour, our salvation will never be lost. It will also not fade away. We will always value the wonder and beauty of this most precious gift of eternal life!

However, because we cannot see salvation with our physical eyes, some people doubt its value. These are the people who need to see to believe. If we think this through carefully, there are many things we cannot see but which we know exist. Can you see a gust of wind, or the love of your parents, or the fun you have when you are with good friends, or the excitement you feel before a major event?

Dear child, pray for the eyes of faith to understand and fully appreciate this great inheritance.

Thought: Heavenly inheritance is greater than any other!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give me the spiritual understanding to comprehend how precious this wonderful gift is. And help me to receive it with humility and gratitude. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## TRIALS ARE PRECIOUS

Do you have any trials? Christians, though blessed abundantly by the Lord, are not exempt from trials or difficulties. Trials are times when serious difficulties come your way. Some of you may have been very ill, or may come from families that are broken, whose parents may not be around for long periods of time. Some of you may not be able to afford things many of your friends take for granted. How do you find the strength to overcome these difficulties?

On the other hand, some of you may not have experienced trials. Life has been kind; your parents love you, discipline you for the right reasons, you have no lack of material things, and you are doing alright in school.

Which group would you rather be in: the first or the second? Naturally, we would prefer to be in the second group. However, we are told by Peter that all Christians will be tested, and that we will undergo trials. If you are in the first group, hang on with the Lord's strength, and know the testing will be for your good. As fire refines the gold it burns, your faith will be polished by trials.

If you are in the second group, thank God, but do not be complacent. Know that trials are good for us and can be precious as they can bring us closer to God. If you are able to keep close to God without trials, that is wonderful. But if you belong to the group of people who need difficulties and trials to test you, to strengthen your faith, and to remind you of the need to return to God, beware. It is far better to keep close to the Lord than to have trials bring you close to Him.

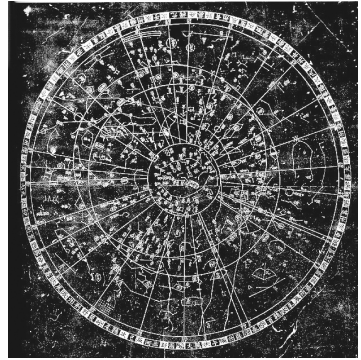
Thought: Should trials come my way, I must be prepared.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, let me follow the faithfulness of Jesus, who suffered the cruel cross and withstood so many trials. I am comforted that my Saviour will fully understand all my difficulties and so I ask for the strength and courage to face any trials in my life. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**WE ARE SO PRIVILEGED TO HAVE THE TRUTH!**

The doctrine of “salvation by faith in Jesus Christ” was no new doctrine when the Apostle Peter wrote this epistle. The prophets in the Old Testament had foretold the coming of Christ. Isaiah 53 was a whole chapter on a suffering Messiah who would die for the sins of His people. However, those prophets did not have the privilege of knowing what the New Testament would contain, but we have the benefit of having that revealed to us!

To the apostles, eyewitnesses of the actual ministry of Jesus, were given the glorious opportunity of reporting what they had seen and heard. Today, the New Testament we hold in our hands is perhaps valued and treasured a lot less than it is worth. Why? We can buy a Bible easily. Bibles are inexpensive and many Christian homes have more than one. However, how much of the Bible is read and loved? How many of us study and apply the truths in our lives? How much time do you spend reading and studying the Bible? The privilege of the truth carries with it the responsibility of following the Word.



*Ancient Chinese Star Chart*

What did the three wise men know about Christ?

The wise men knew that the unusual star they had seen meant that an important person is born.

They knew that the important person is \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Matthew 2:2) but they did not know that He is also the  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (1 John 4:14).

Thought: Privilege brings responsibility.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for giving me Your holy Word. Help me to treasure it, read it daily, and more importantly, to apply the truths in my life so that others can see little changes in me. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**STUDY GOD'S WORD**

Peter used an interesting phrase “gird up the loins of your mind”. During those times, as well as in the present days, many men in the Middle East wore long flowing robes which hindered any physically quick movements or strenuous action. They also wore a belt or girdle around the waist. When strenuous action was necessary, they would shorten the long robe by pulling it up within the belt to give them freedom of movement. That is the idea of “gird up”.

You can imagine the difficulty for someone trying to gird up his loins for the first few times. The girdle may drop, or it could be fastened in the wrong position. Or the girdle may drop after a certain amount of physical activity. The idea is that it will be very tough to gird up one’s loins especially for the first time. The second time will be less tough, and subsequent ones even less so. But it must start with the first try.

For us today, it is the mind that needs to apply itself to hard work — to study and meditate on God’s Word. I want to ask you four questions:

1. Do you think doing Quiet Time is important?
2. How faithful are you in doing Quiet Time?
3. Before you read His Word, do you seek His wisdom to understand the reading and Bible verses?
4. Do you meditate, or think about the lessons discussed, and consider how you may apply them in your life?

Thought: I must study God’s Word daily.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to read the Bible and pray every day. Remind me that I need You and Your wisdom to fight the sin and influence of the world on a daily basis. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

**BE HOLY IN ENTERTAINMENT!**

What is holiness? It is to be specially chosen by God to be set apart from sin, to stay away from that which will stain and soil. But in practical terms for you, my child, what does this mean? There are so many areas of your life we can consider holiness, but let us just think about one — that of entertainment.

What games do you play? Are the games you play suitable for a child of God? Do you access the Internet without proper supervision to play thousands of free games? Do you spend so much time on your games that you do not have enough time for your studies, your Quiet Time and your other responsibilities? Do you play MMOG (massively multiplayer online games) or MMORPG (massively multiplayer online role-playing games)? These games are dangerous as many of them have sinful content which are not suitable for any child of God. If you are playing them, please stop doing so. Sure, they may look exciting and tempting. But remember, to Eve, the fruit offered by the serpent was also attractive and tempting. Be on your guard! There are also a lot of games that promote violence and unnecessary fighting. Shun them.

We are not against good computer games played within reasonable timeframes. God is not some heavenly “kill-joy” who does not allow any fun in our lives. You just need to be careful about how to honour God in this area of your life, too!

We are commanded to be holy as God is holy. And we are to do it in “all manner of conversation”, which means wherever we are, at home or in school or at play, whoever we are with, we are to glorify God. So let us start glorifying God in our games!

Thought: Be holy in practical ways!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, have mercy on me and teach me to be holy in my choice of games. I know I can be holy as I have fun, but sometimes that is not easy. So, help me Heavenly Father. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## YOU ARE REDEEMED; YOU ARE NOT YOUR OWN!

Another reason why we should live a holy life is that we have been redeemed. We were once held captive by Satan – that means we were like slaves to Satan and his evil power. Because Christ had paid the price, redeemed us, and freed us from the bondage of sin with His precious blood, we are now free! We no longer belong to ourselves; we belong to Jesus!

Let us consider this story: Terry goes into a pet shop, pays the shopkeeper the price of an adorable puppy. That puppy does not belong to itself; it belongs to Terry. That puppy will need love and care, training and discipline. That, in a way, is what Christians are – we have been redeemed and belong to Jesus. Since we belong to Jesus, if we do not live a holy life but continue in the sinful old ways, we dishonour God.

Here are two Christian girls who live differently.  
Which example do you wish to follow?

### LISA

Does her Quiet Time

Pays attention in class

Greets her teachers

Is honest and courteous

Careful in the type  
of games played

### BEE LING

Little or no Quiet Time

Plays and talks in class

Just walks past teachers

Rude most of the time

As long as it is fun,  
she will play it

Thought: Christ is my Redeemer and Owner!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, remind me of the lesson today, that You have redeemed me and that I am not my own. Therefore, I must live my life in a way that I know will please You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## LOVE ONE ANOTHER

True holiness brings about agape love, the type of love that is pure and wonderful, the type of love mentioned in the verses today. Why would true holiness bring about love? It is only when we truly yearn to be holy will we know how sinful we are and rely wholly on God to live a sinless life. And when we do so, we will experience His love, understand how wrong it is to be selfish and uncaring, and then eventually be able to possess and demonstrate that same type of love.

Agape love is such a wonderful and complex thing that no one can fully explain it! It is the kind of love God has for us, one that is sacrificial, when He loves us even though we remain sinful and disobedient. However, we want to concentrate on just one aspect of love – that real love is kind. Are you a kind child? Do you care for your parents, your sister or brother, your friends? Kindness extends even to strangers, but in your context, confine it to people you know until you grow older. Ask yourself, “When was the last time someone told me I was kind?” If no one has done so, then either no one has seen your kindness or you have not been kind!

Here is an example of a son’s love and kindness to his mother.



Write what the good son could have said to his mother.

Thought: May I just focus on one aspect of love – kindness.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give me a kind heart that thinks of and cares for others. I know that because of my fleshly nature, that is neither easy nor natural. But Heavenly Father, with Your help, I will be able to do it. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## SPIRITUAL MILK

Some of you may have heard that in 2008, there was this terrible incident of melamine-tainted baby milk powder sold in China. It was most evil of businessmen who, for the sake of money, knowingly produced and sold such defective products. The sin was compounded (made worse) because innocent babies died after drinking the tainted milk which was their only or main source of food.

For us, we thank God that the spiritual milk He gives us is pure and always the best. Spiritual milk are the easy spiritual lessons we learn from the Bible, and when we grow in the faith, this spiritual milk can be progressed to spiritual meat. This process takes time, but we must press on. However, spiritual milk must be nourishing for us. How do we see this spiritual nourishment or growth? You begin to lay aside the bad habits of your old life. This includes:

**Malice:** wickedness, anger, intent to create mischief e.g. being angry for selfish reasons, stretching out your leg to make someone fall

**Guile:** deceit in words e.g. flattery, falsehood, deception e.g. wearing school uniform but skipping school

**Hypocrisies:** false piety, false friendship, a false front e.g. pretending to make friends with one but harbouring ill intent

**Envies:** discontent at other's success

**Evil speakings:** backbiting, gossip

As Christians we should lay aside all these things which bring dishonour to our Lord. This change should also be accompanied by a desire to feed on God's Word which is like milk for newborn babes for them to grow.

Thought: Little by little, I must grow in my walk with God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I want to grow and shine for You. Help me to make the most of the spiritual milk, that I may mature to be the young man and young woman You want me to be. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



## WE ARE LIVELY STONES!

Have you seen stones that are alive? Of course not! A stone is a non-living thing and therefore cannot have life. So what does Peter mean by these verses? Peter was writing figuratively, and with a lot of imagination. He likened the body of believers that meet in a particular place, such as people who meet in your church, to a building. God has many churches in the world and on a global basis, these churches form one “Universal Church” with Jesus Christ being the most important part of this structure as the “chief cornerstone”. What then is a cornerstone? And what is a chief cornerstone?

Imagine you are building a simple house that has four walls. These walls take reference from corners so we know where these walls start and end. In ancient times, usually big stones would be placed at these four corners so they are stable and mark out the size of the house. But before these “four cornerstones are placed, they in turn have to take reference from the chief cornerstone which is placed first. That is the idea of Christ being our chief cornerstone – the church must take reference from Jesus in how we organise church or Sunday School activities and how we live our lives. We believers will then be the “lively stones” that make up the rest of this building.

What does this teach us? Let us just concentrate on one lesson – the need for us to be close to other believers. If we are to be lively stones in one building, we cannot be too far away from each other. No believer should be a loner. No believer should be excluded from the bond of fellowship and friendship with other believers. No building is made from one stone. All the stones, or bricks in a house, are placed near to each other, stacked on top of each other to add to the strength of the structure. Only when the stones are together can there be a proper structure. The whole body of believers together comprises that spiritual house with each believer serving the Lord, “an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (verse 5).

Thought: We are to be lively stones!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I learn to value fellowship with other Christians and remember that I have to be a part of them, and they a part of me. I also thank You for the reminder that only Jesus is the chief cornerstone, and with Him in the building, the structure cannot be wrong! In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## WE ARE STRANGERS & PILGRIMS

The most popular destination for people who travel is their own home. This is not surprising as our home is where we feel most comfortable, where we are with the familiar, and with people we love most. Home is where we can be ourselves.

The problem for God's people today is they are too comfortable with the things of the world. Even the strongest Christian is not immune to the snares and attractions of the world. Therefore Peter, in the most affectionate and earnest terms, exhorts them "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims..." We are to be strangers and pilgrims in this world as we are citizens of heaven and on our way to the Heavenly City.

But how do we make ourselves "strangers and pilgrims"? One way is to remind ourselves of exactly that – we are not of this world, our citizenship is of heaven, and our king is the Heavenly King. We will need to constantly remind ourselves to remain pure and strong.

When we travel to far-off exotic places, some of the things they eat will appear strange to us. Do you know that some people in other countries eat rats, grilled bats, and camels' feet? But let us not laugh at them; our customs may appear taboo to them!

The main point to learn here is – we do not do what others may do in distant lands because we are strangers. That is not what we typically do. If we can understand that as Christians, we are to be strangers and pilgrims, then we must not follow the world blindly. This does not mean whatever the world does is wrong. What we have to do is to check what the world does against the Word of God. What God forbids, we should never do.

Thought: This world is not my home, I am just passing through.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to assess the things of this world with the truth of Thy Word so I will know how to live the life of a true pilgrim, because this world is not my home. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## GLORIFY GOD – SUBMIT TO THE LAWS OF THE LAND

For the next few days, we will examine how to glorify God in practical ways. Today, we see how Peter looks at the duty of the Christian as a citizen. Governments are appointed by God to provide peace and maintain order. As Christian citizens, we are to obey the laws of the land. For those of us living in Singapore, we should be very grateful for our government.

Although not perfect, the Singapore government has done a great job, and there is safety and peace in our land. One only needs to think about the major problems many countries face: racism, drug wars, widespread poverty, government inefficiencies, to appreciate the government.

Test whether you are a good citizen...

1. I obey traffic rules and do not jaywalk.
2. I do not litter in school and elsewhere.
3. I do not draw or damage the walls of void decks.
4. I queue up when getting up the bus.
5. I do not eat or drink in the MRT train.
6. I pray for the government.

If you are able to say “Yes” to these, you are a good citizen!  
Well done!

Thought: A good Christian is a good citizen.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us a good government. I pray You will continue to protect the country and grant wisdom to our rulers so that we can have freedom to worship You, and enjoy the goodness You have given us. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

**GLORIFY GOD – SUBMIT TO YOUR MASTER**

Another category of people that Peter talked about were the “servants”. In those days, that would include hired servants as well as slaves. Some of these Christian servants might have imagined that their Christian liberty mentioned in verse 16 had freed them from their unbelieving masters, but that is not what the bible teaches. To these, the Apostle Peter said, “Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.” Christian liberty is freedom from the bondage of sin and Satan, not liberty from hard work in school for students or at work for adults.

None of you are servants or workers so how does today’s reading apply to you?

You are all students. As students, sometimes we come across teachers or classmates we may not like. Whilst there are nice teachers, some teachers can be very unreasonable; others can exercise favouritism. No child likes unreasonable or biased teachers. What should your conduct be should you have such teachers? Submit yourselves to them. Unless they tell you to commit something wrong or immoral, you are to obey them.

You may not feel like obeying them but if the Bible teaches all servants to obey their slave-masters, then all students have to obey their teachers, even if they are not likeable.

Some of you may say that is tough, and that is absolutely right! To live a good Christian life is not easy. In fact, if we try to do it on our own, it would be impossible! You have to turn to the Lord who gives you such instructions, for only He can help you achieve them!

Thought: Students, submit to your teachers!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to be meek and humble to glorify Thee. Even if I face teachers who may not be the most reasonable, help me to lean on You for additional strength so that by my good behaviour, others can see Jesus in me. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

**GLORIFY GOD – IN ANY SUFFERINGS**

How would you feel if you were punished for the fault of someone else? If you were not the one who messed up the kitchen, or spilt the milk, or forgot to turn off the fan for an hour, how would you feel if mother scolds you? Probably, like most others, you will feel unhappy, or even angry.

Today's passage teaches us to take all these well. Sometimes we may be accused wrongly by our parents or loved ones who do not mean it. However, there may be others who may intentionally accuse you wrongly. The Bible teaches us to be like Christ in this aspect, to bear them patiently.

Do you know the meaning of the word "martyr"? A martyr is one who dies for his faith. There were many Christian martyrs in the past; brave men, women and even children who laid down their lives for the Saviour and chose death instead of betraying Jesus.

It is unlikely any of you will need to be a martyr, but it is useful to learn from martyrs, and how they were able to glorify God in their sufferings. You learn to suffer for Jesus. But let us be very clear - If you were scolded for doing something wrong, that is not suffering for Christ! That is suffering for your own wrongdoing!

Suffering for Christ happens when your obedience to God's will makes people unhappy, and they impact you in a negative way. It could happen to a Christian child in a non-Christian family. That child may need to suffer for Jesus when his father or mother punishes him for praying or reading the Bible. If you are in that situation, trust the Lord, dear child. Commit unto Him, our gracious Father, and He will see you through your present difficulties.

Thought: For all that Jesus suffered for me, let me suffer a little for him.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to cast my burdens unto You, and I know You will see me through. In this way, I can learn to be a little more like Christ, for He suffered and complained not, but trusted in You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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**GLORIFY GOD – WIFE, SUBMIT TO YOUR HUSBAND**

God's formula for a happy family is a good relationship between husband and wife. Many problems at home start when the husband and wife cannot get along with each other. In today's passage, Peter gave the example of Sarah who was a godly wife and mother.

The Bible is not teaching that wives of today address their husbands the way Sarah did, calling her husband "lord". However, the wife is to submit to the husband, as unto God, for God has placed the man as the head of the house. So, as long as what the husband prefers is not against the laws of God, the wife should follow.

This concept of a woman submitting herself to her husband is not what the world believes in. Women of the world are fighting for liberation. As Christians, we are to be different. In the eyes of God, the beauty of the wife is not in the externals, but in the internal, the meek and quiet spirit, as verse 4 reminds us.

A Christian girl, whether married or not, should be more concerned about her spiritual condition rather than her outward appearance. She must not be vain and spend too much time on her hair, clothing and accessories. It is wise therefore to avoid unduly expensive clothing. The finest adornment of Christian girls and ladies is a meek and quiet spirit, a gentle disposition and a mild and modest temperament.

Finally, happiness in the family is not complete with just submission of the wife to the husband; it requires the husband to love and honour the wife in the way God wants. How should that be done? We shall examine it tomorrow!

Thought: A godly wife loves the Lord and submits to her husband.

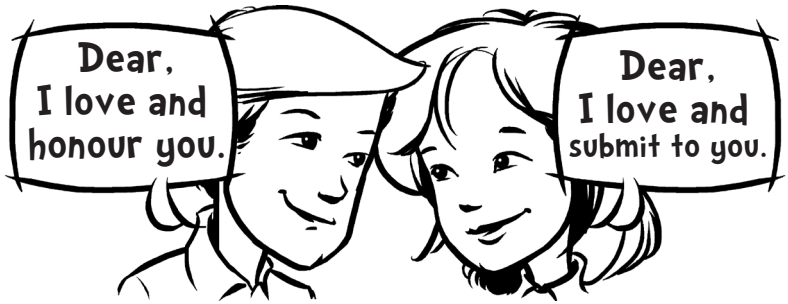
Prayer: Heavenly Father, I pray for my mother that she will learn to grow in the type of beauty You want to see: meekness and quietness of spirit. And I also pray for my parents, that they will grow closer to each other, and that my mother will learn to submit more to my father, unless his wishes are against Yours. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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**GLORIFY GOD – HUSBAND, HONOUR YOUR WIFE**

We continue from yesterday's reading. God's instruction to the Christian husbands is that they must not neglect their wives, but to love and honour them. Although that sounds logical, it was not so in the days of Peter where women were considered as inferior to men. They could not work outside of the family, they had to rely on their fathers before they were married and relied totally on their husbands when they married. Women were bullied and victimised, and so when Peter wrote these words, they were a shock to many men as it was not normal then to treat women well!

Peter reminded these men that as wives are the weaker vessel, they require their husbands' love, care, honour and support. Christian men need to remember that Christian women have equal spiritual rights. She is a fellow-heir of the grace of God. In Christianity, God gives women equal spiritual rights though in terms of function in the family, the husband is the head of the household.



Thought: A godly man loves and honours his wife.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, again I pray for my parents that they will keep close to You, and in turn, keep close to each other. And if they do that, they will be good parents to me! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**GLORIFY GOD – AVOID EVIL AND DO GOOD**

Christians are exhorted to be of one mind, united in a common faith. Unity is seen when one suffers, and the others respond in love and compassion. We are to continue to help each other, and what better way to help than to pray for each other, and to encourage each other to press on in the Lord.

Christians can also be disadvantaged at times. If so, willingly accept it for Christ's sake. The Apostle has this advice in verse 9, "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing." This means that we should not retaliate nor harbour any ill feeling. This is clearly taught as verse 10 tells us to control our tongue, or our speech, and not to speak evil of anyone who has wronged us.

On top of not repaying evil for evil, Peter tells us in verse 11 to eschew (avoid) evil, and to do good. Wow – this is getting really tough! To render evil for evil, or scolding for scolding, is sinful and unbecoming of Christians. Instead, they should live peaceably with all, and the Lord, who sees, will surely bless.

Would the following happen if someone in your class removes your chair which you need, and you retaliate by taking away his chair?

1. He will complain to the teacher.
2. There will be punishment for both.
3. There will be more unhappiness.
4. There will be interruption to the class lesson.
5. The incident may escalate further with the need for parents to come.

You are right, all the above would probably happen! If someone really plays a trick on you, do not get angry. Be kind, be gentle, behave as a Christian should. Of course, if you are bullied in school, that is a different matter altogether and you should tell your parents and teachers. But if it is some prank classmates play on each other at times, just bear with it.

Thought: If someone does evil to me, I should forgive and forget.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give me grace to do good when others do evil to me. This will be impossible without Your help. I know that and therefore to You I come for Thy grace to do what would be impossible on my own. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



**IS THERE HOPE & HAPPINESS IN YOUR LIFE?**

Sometimes, Christians have the wrong notion that the road to holiness is a sad one. That is absolutely not true. There will be times when friends tease us, or we are disadvantaged because of our faith. In times like these, while we wish they will not happen to us, we can draw strength from God.

When was the last time you smiled or laughed? Childhood should be one of the happiest times of your life. For the Christian child, there is even more reason to have happiness and hope in our lives, for we have Jesus!

The happiness we have is not as the world's, for their happiness is based very much on circumstances. When times are good, they feel up. But when times are bad, when problems surround them, they feel down.

For us, our hope is based on the Word of God. Today's lesson reminds us that if we have such a hope, we should also be ready to witness to others why we have this hope. So live a life of trust and happiness in the Lord, have a ready answer when people ask why you are happy, and the Lord will perhaps use you as a powerful witness!

Write "Agree" or "Disagree".

1. Holiness is happiness in the Lord. \_\_\_\_\_
2. I cannot be sure why  
I am happy in the Lord. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Knowing God's word will  
make me happier. \_\_\_\_\_
4. My hope may be used  
as a witness for God. \_\_\_\_\_

Thought: Happiness is living a life of obedience to God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, grant to me joy and happiness in obeying You and help me to know Thy Word more, so that I can be more prepared to give an answer for my hope and happiness. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## CONDUCT IN SUFFERING

January is usually a happy month as people celebrate the New Year and we in Singapore may also celebrate Chinese New Year. Such celebrations are joyous occasions and especially the children are happy when receiving red packets and eating a lot of goodies. However, if we could turn the clock back to January 1942, today will be a terrible day. We will know that the Japanese Imperial Army is just in Johor, Malaysia, and will soon start its full and cruel invasion of Singapore, ruling the country in terror for the next three and half years.

What if you were a Christian child living in those days? It would have been the most terrible and painful period of your life. Countless were killed, thousands of families destroyed. If the Japanese threatened death for all who do not deny Jesus, would you still remain faithful to Christ? Imagine others forsaking Jesus; they could include your Junior Worship teacher, your father, some older Christians and even some church leaders. With such examples, your heart sinks. What should you do?

Believers in the time of Peter were tested in quite the same way as those during the war. Christians were persecuted and hunted down and they were often not able to gather in public places to worship. Nonetheless, the Apostle encouraged them in verse 15 “and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”

The path to Christian glory is through suffering. Jesus Himself showed the way. He suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God. He, the Son of God, took our place that we, the sons of men, might be the sons of God. Thus, the purpose of our Lord’s suffering and death was to reconcile us to God, to give us access to the Father, and to bring us to eternal glory at last. All this was won for us through suffering. Now if our Lord suffered for our good, should we resist or rebel if we should suffer for Him?

Thought: What an honour to suffer for Christ!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to be a good soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ. As Jesus suffered so much for me, help me to be able to suffer a little for Him as well. Give me courage as You know I am still young and weak. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## GOD WILL BE JUDGE

Although God is our loving Heavenly Father, he will also be the Judge of all. He is not some heavenly “vending machine” which gives us whatever we want. He is also not some fairy-tale god that is all kindness and smiles. As God is holy, He demands that we be holy. The teachings in the Bible are very clear on what His requirements are and so one day, all of us will have to stand before Him and account for what we have done.

That is why Peter reminds us in verses 4 and 5 that we should be Christ-like, and stop living the way non-believers do. I want to ask you – how different are you from your non-Christian classmates? Are you able to show by your life that you are a child of God? Can others see Jesus in you? Think about it. How different are you from the past? Are you now more patient? Or less selfish? Or more willing to share? Peter told us the early believers used to indulge in selfish pleasures such as drinking, partying and praying to idols, but because of their faith, they had stopped such activities.

Can others say the same of you, that they have noticed you had stopped some sinful activity because you have Jesus inside? These sinful activities need not be the type mentioned in today’s passage; they could be spiritual laziness on your part, a lack of prayer, irresponsibility as a student or not honouring your parents.

Thought: Be prepared to stand before the Heavenly Judge.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me flee from all sinful habits so that others can see Jesus in me, and glorify Thee. And in doing so, I will be better prepared to stand before Thee when I am judged. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## REAL AGAPE LOVE

The Apostle Peter tells us that we are to have “fervent charity”. We want to ask three questions: What is “fervent charity”, why we are to have it, and why especially among Christians?

Firstly, fervent charity is to have persistent and consistent love for others. This type of love is not what you may see on television or hear in songs. The type of “love” portrayed by the world is not true love. Real agape love is sacrificial, is kind, and is not self-seeking.

Secondly, we are to have fervent charity because others can know we are Christians by our love since only true believers in Jesus can have and show such love. This kind of love is rare, and therefore easily distinguished from the other types of love. Such love is very tough to possess and none of us will be able to have it unless we rely on the Lord.

Thirdly, we are to have this love especially among believers as we need to spur one another unto good works. When you receive selfless love from someone, you will tend to want to reciprocate it. Imagine being a recipient of a kind and selfless act by a Junior Worship classmate. This positive action will in turn spur others in the class to do likewise. If everyone in the class shows agape love, any newcomer will get a pleasant surprise when he steps into the class!

When was the last time you saw a kind and selfless act in your Junior Worship class? When was the last time some students thanked the teacher or volunteered to help? Be the first one to do so!

Thought: Learn real love from the God of love.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for showing me what agape love is by the death of Jesus for me. In His selfless act, I can have salvation and I am so thankful. Please do help me to have a little of that same selfless love that can reach out to others, so that others can see Christ in me. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## CASTING ALL YOUR CARES UPON HIM

The meaning of “casting” is to throw. After you have thrown a ball to a friend, is the ball still in your hand? Of course not! Once you have cast the ball, it cannot be with you anymore.

This is the beauty of verse 7— once we have cast our care or burden to God, that care is not with us anymore! That care is now with God, and He will take care of it! However, before we cast our care, we must do what is in verse 6 – humble ourselves before Him. The formula is simple – if you truly humble yourselves before Him, He will lift you up! And then you will want to cast your care to Him, and He will handle whatever difficulty you have!

The problem with many of us is we do not humble ourselves before God. The fact that many of us pray so little shows we are not humble; the humble child knows he needs God and will go to Him frequently. How often do you pray? Is it just before meals when you say a quick and hurried grace. And another fast prayer before you do your RPG reading? Take time to lean on God. Take time to pray to Him. And after you have done so, you will be able to cast your cares on Him.

A careful reading of this epistle will impress upon the reader that a true believer’s life is not always smooth sailing as there are sins to conquer. A hostile world surrounds us, and we are to expect trials and sufferings. But we have an all-wise and all-powerful God who cares for us like a father, what better can we do than to cast all our cares upon Him?

Our cares are many and varied: our health, our studies, our family and fragile friendships. The best remedy to such worries and cares is to cast all of them upon our gracious and merciful God.

Thought: Burdens are lifted at Calvary!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for this open invitation to cast my cares to You. I will learn to do so, and after I have cast my cares, may I experience the peace and comfort in knowing that You will help me with these problems. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## CAN YOU BE PERFECT?

How many of you like to face difficulties? How many of you look forward to problems? If you are like the majority of people, you will not say “yes” to these two questions.

A prayer common among believers is for God to remove sufferings from them but the Apostle saw great virtue in enduring needful sufferings for “a while” so that God will “make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” An easy life will not make a Christian strong and Christ-like. Through suffering, endured with God’s grace, a Christian grows and matures. He will then be more complete in his faith, and will grow in love, understanding, wisdom and patience.

No one really knows the strength of his faith until it is tried and tested. Some cannot take the trials and fall away, but if trials are accepted as from a loving Father and endured, then out of them come precious blessings that an easy life will never bring.

“The hardy sailor hails from the stormy seas”. Do you know what this means?

What are the types of storms you face? Perhaps family problems where mum and dad are constantly quarrelling? Or maybe dad is in danger of losing his job and has become sad and quiet. Or maybe you think mum loves your brother or sister more than she loves you.

Dear child, if any of these is happening to you, do not be sad. The Lord knows the situation you are in and is always ready to listen to you as you pray.

Thought: With Christ in the vessel, we can smile at the storm.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, comfort me with Thy love especially when life is hard. I want to commit myself into Your hands and ask that You will prepare me for the difficult times which may come my way. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

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## SATAN, THE ROARING LION

The National Geographic Channel often airs television programmes featuring documentaries about nature. It is amazing how these wildlife journalists are able to capture those amazing moments – whether they be of marine life, or birds of the air, or animals in the jungles or the plains of Africa. In the animal world, the weak suffer. At the apex of the food chain, carnivores reign, and none more firmly than the lion, the king of animals.

Weighing an average of 400 pounds, the adult male lion is one of the most powerful animals. Its sense of smell is acute, its brown sandy body camouflages well in most terrain, and its speed is one of the lion's greatest assets. Of course, the lion's roar is magnificent to television viewers, but frightening to its prey.

The Bible describes our most powerful spiritual opponent as the most powerful animal – the lion. Not only is he depicted as a lion, but he is also a roaring lion, prowling and hungry as he is about to devour.

If we were to go on a safari to see lions in action, we would take extreme safety precautions so as not to end up being lunch for the lions! Likewise in our spiritual life, we have to take extreme care. We know the ability of Satan to camouflage and confuse, lie in wait and pounce on us in the most unexpected of times. On our own, we can do nothing against him. It is only in the finished work of Jesus that we can claim victory against him. So, we must go to Jesus whenever we feel tempted by Satan.



Thought: Do not be spiritual lunch for the roaring lion!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for reminding me that I face a powerful enemy. But thank You even more for I have a Saviour who is much more powerful than the roaring lion! Please help me to keep close to You so that I will be protected from the evil one. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**LIVE AT PEACE WITH EACH OTHER!**

Tom reached for the cereal box just as his younger brother picked it up. “Hey, I was going to take that,” yelled Tom, grabbing the box. “Give it here!” “No way!” retorted Billy, trying to pull it back. “I had it first.”

The box flipped out of their hands, and cereal flew in all directions. “Now see what you have done!” they accused each other.

Dad looked stern. “Quiet!” he ordered. “I don’t want to hear another word from either of you right now. You will both clean up this mess, and then we’ll talk about it.” The boys glared at each other as they got to work.

Dad shook his head and said. “The Bible teaches us to put others first, so the best way to make peace is by changing yourself, not the other person. Tom, how could you have prevented the fight over the cereal box?”

“I... I suppose I could have let go and let Billy pour his cereal first,” admitted Tom reluctantly.

“Yeah! After all, I...,” Billy stopped when he glanced at his father. He could see that Dad did not like what he was hearing. “I mean . . . maybe we could take turns being the first to do things,” added Billy. “Like... since we usually come down for breakfast at the same time, Tom could pour his cereal first one day, and I could do likewise the next day.”

“Excellent peacekeeping plan,” approved Dad.

Billy looked at the box of cereal standing on the table. “You can go first today,” he told his brother. “That’s better,” said Mom. “Now . . . will you remember who goes first tomorrow, or must you write it down?”

“Instead of writing it down,” said Dad, “how about each of you letting the other go first when you can’t remember or if you disagree?” Solemnly, the boys nodded.

Thought: Do you have frequent fights with your brother or sister or friends? There will be disagreements, but you can disagree in a pleasant way.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, forgive me for I can be difficult at times. Help me to be willing to share and take turns. Help me not to be greedy but to avoid conflict and live in peace with others. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.



**GOD SHALL SUPPLY ALL YOUR NEEDS**

Eric looked out the kitchen window. It had rained all morning, but now the sun was shining brightly like burnished gold. If only his family had real gold, then he and Mom could solve all their problems. He sighed. He could not help feeling worried now that his mother had lost her job. Ever since Eric's father died two years earlier, it had been hard for them to manage. Now it would be even harder. Turning toward his mother, he asked, "What are we going to do about money, Mom?"

"Don't you worry about that," said Mom. "I've been able to save a little, Eric, and I'm sure I'll find another job soon. There are lots of jobs available in the computer field."

As Mom came to stand beside Eric at the window, several sparrows swooped down and perched on a small branch. Under the weight of the birds, the thin branch sagged and swayed in the wind. Then amazingly, the thin branch became uprooted, and it crashed to the ground! Eric and Mom watched as the frightened birds flew away.

"You know, Eric," said Mom, "that flimsy branch is like money and material things. When we count on them to hold us up in times of trouble, they always fail, just like how that branch failed those birds. Aren't you glad we can count on someone who never fails?"

Eric nodded. "You mean God, don't you?" he asked. "He never fails." "That's right," said Mom, giving Eric a hug. "God takes care of the birds, and He'll provide for our needs, too. We can be sure of that."

Thought: Are you worried that your own family might not have enough money for all the things you need? Pray about it, and then trust God to provide. If you come from a family with no financial problems, thank God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I want to learn to trust You for all that I need. Help me to also remember the difficulties that others may have. These could be my parents, my siblings, my friends in church or at school. Teach me, Heavenly Father, to also pray for them. This I ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

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**MAY WE BE A BLESSING!**

“Sometimes when I get home from school, all I want is food that’s cool,” chanted Mandy, making up the rhyme as she opened the freezer and took out an ice cream bar. She grinned at her brother Michael.

Michael rolled his eyes and made up a rhyme of his own. “I think your rhyme is kind of sad; your poetry is really bad,” he said. Mandy laughed and went outside, where her mother was working in the garden. “Hello, Mother with a thumb that’s green. You have the best vegetables I’ve ever seen.”

Mom smiled. “Still working on that poem you need for school?” “I’m trying, but I’m about ready to give up. We read such good poems at school, but all I can think of are silly things,” complained Mandy.

When Dad arrived home, Mandy greeted him with another of her rhymes. “Dad, you’ve had to work all day. Sit down and relax now, while you may.”

“Oh, Mandy, I think your poems are getting worse,” teased Michael. “How about this? Mom, that chicken looks so fine that it’s time we sat down to dine.”

Dad laughed and joined in the fun. “My family is always such a delight. It’s a joy to be home this Monday night,” he told them. As he sat down at the table, he added, “Actually, I know of a very special poem. It’s mentioned in the Bible - in Ephesians 2:10.”

“That was our verse for Sunday school last week!” exclaimed Mandy. “Let me think! It’s... ah... oh, I remember! It says, ‘For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.’ That doesn’t sound like a poem, and it doesn’t say anything about a poem.”

“Don’t be so sure,” said Dad. “I read that the word ‘workmanship’ comes from the Greek word ‘poiema.’ That’s the same word from which we get our English word ‘poem.’ So to say we are God’s ‘workmanship’ is like saying we are His poem. Always remember that God wants you to be a poem that blesses others — one that does ‘good works.’”

Thought: If you are a Christian, remember that you are God’s “poem.” So, what kind of poem are you? Are you the kind people enjoy?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be a blessing to people as You have been! I now know I am to be a “poem” to others and pray that You would help me to be what I am supposed to be. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

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## JESUS DIED FOR YOU

“Hell is a terrible place, Daddy,” seven-year-old Kai Ling solemnly stated one day. “It’s not a place I’d like to go to.” “You’re right, honey,” agreed her father. “That’s what the Bible says.” “That’s what I told Jackie yesterday,” said Kai Ling. “She said her mom doesn’t believe there are any such places as heaven and hell. She doesn’t even think God is real.” Kai Ling looked concerned.

“And what do you think?” asked Dad. “I think God is real,” Kai Ling stated firmly. “Heaven and hell are real, too.”

“Because I say so?” asked Dad. “And because I tell all the people who come to church that they should believe in God?” Kai Ling’s father was a pastor.

“No... because the Bible says so,” answered Kai Ling, “and because God hears me when I pray. But Jackie says her mother thinks prayer is silly.” Suddenly Kai Ling had a terrible thought. “Oh, Daddy! Jackie won’t go to hell, will she?”

“I’m glad God gave Jackie a good friend like you, honey,” answered Dad, giving Kai Ling a big hug, “but she needs an even better friend - the Lord Jesus. He’s the best friend anyone can have. Jackie needs to know that Jesus loves her so much that He died to take the punishment for her sins.”

“That’s what I told her,” said Kai Ling. “I think Jackie wants to believe me, but she wants to believe her mother, too.”

“Talk to God about Jackie and her mother, honey,” said Dad, “and Mom and I will, too. Remember, God loves Jackie even more than you do. He’s the only One who can change her heart, and her mother’s heart.”

Thought: Do you have friends who do not know Jesus? No one likes to think about hell. Would not it be nice if everyone could go to heaven? But the Bible says only those who trust in Jesus may enter Heaven.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I thank Jesus He showed His great love for everyone when He laid down His life for us. Some of my friends still do not know that, and I would like to show them God’s love by being kind and loving. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

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## GOD NEITHER SLUMBERS NOR SLEEPS

Diane was excited! Her family was going on an all-day excursion to the zoo. “I love watching all the animals, but the penguins are my favourites,” she said. “They look so funny strutting around on land, and it’s even more fun to watch them swim. They look like they’re flying underwater!” Whenever she went swimming herself, Diane would try to imitate the smooth, flowing motions of the funny birds.

At the zoo, a guide explained how the penguin room was kept cold so the birds would be comfortable. “Otherwise,” said the guide, “the birds will get sick and possibly die from the hot climate of Singapore.” Diane listened eagerly as he described a number of other special things that were done to keep the penguins comfortable and healthy.

That evening, Dad turned to Psalm 121 for their family devotion. “Do these verses remind you of those penguins?” he asked after reading from the book of Psalm. “Remember how careful the zookeepers are in taking care of them?”

Diane nodded. “They make sure they get certain foods, and the right temperature and even special lights!” she replied. “The guys who take care of them - the zookeepers - know how to keep the conditions just right so the penguins won’t get sick.”

“Yes, and this Psalm tells me that God does the same thing for us,” said Dad. “Just think of what would happen if it hailed all the time, or if it suddenly got as hot as an oven. God knows the conditions we need in life, and He’s the one who controls our environment.”

“So we have a ‘keeper,’ just like the penguins do. God is our keeper, right?” asked Diane. “I think one of the verses in that Psalm says that, doesn’t it?”

Dad nodded. “God not only controls our physical environment, but also all the situations and circumstances that affect our lives. He is our keeper, and He does a perfect job, allowing only what is good for us — whether it seems good to us or not.”

Thought: Did you know that it is God who keeps you day by day?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for being our Keeper. I am so glad that You do not need to rest, so every minute of every day, I have You watching over me! You are the one who provides the air I breathe, the food and water I need, and the type of environment in which I need to survive in. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

**GOD KNOWS YOU BY NAME**

“Papa, how many people are there on earth?” asked Mary one evening. “Billions, I guess. Did you talk about that in school?” replied Dad. “No,” said Mary, “but our Bible teacher talked about how God loves every person, so some of us kids were wondering how many people that would be.”

“Well, I don’t know the number, but your teacher is right - God does love each one,” replied Dad. “Since there are so many, you’d think He’d forget who’s who,” said Mary. “Take me, for example. There are millions of girls like me with the same name!”

Dad laughed. “Don’t worry, dear,” he said. “God knows you’re the only Mary in our family, and He will treasure you!”

Mom smiled and nodded as she picked up her sweater. “Let’s go buy a cake for the fellowship group meeting tonight.” At the cake shop, cakes on identical holders filled several tables. “They’re all alike!” exclaimed Mary. “Although they may look similar, the baker will know they are slightly different because he made them!” said Mom. “Are you sure?” Mary asked. “They look the same as the others to me.”

“Not to me,” said the baker as he came in, “and yes, I’m sure. I made them, and I see little differences. For one thing, I recognize them by the way the frosting is swirled.”

Dad smiled at Mary. “Remember what we were talking about at home?” he asked. “God made you, dear, and He sees you as a special person. No two people look the same to Him. The baker knows his cakes, and God knows you. There’s not a chance that He’ll mix you up with anyone else.”

Thought: Do you wonder if God knows you personally? You can be assured that He does!

Prayer: Thank You Heavenly Father that You know the work of Your hands. You even know the number of hairs on my head! Knowing You care about those little details assures me You care about every part of my life, and in that thought I am fully comforted. Thank You. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

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## BE CONSIDERATE TO OTHERS

“Hi, Mom!” called Traci as she came in from school. “Hi, honey,” replied Mom. “Ellie called a few minutes ago and asked if you could go over and play at her house when you got home.” “I don’t want to go there today,” said Traci. “I invited Maggie to come here and play if it’s okay with you. Is it?” “Well, I guess so,” said Mom, “but why don’t you ask Ellie to come, too? You hardly ever have time to play with her lately, and she really misses you. She doesn’t have many friends, you know.”

“But, Mom, you know Ellie can’t do anything much but play simple games,” pleaded Traci. “Maggie and I might want to play some harder ones.”

“I’m sure Ellie would enjoy that,” said Mom. “You know she just likes to be with you.”

“I know,” admitted Traci. She hesitated before adding, “It’s just that she... well, it’s just that the kids at school say she’s not too smart. They’d probably think I’m not, either, if they knew I played with her.” Wanting to change the subject, she added, “Maggie can come, can’t she? She’s going to bring her new doll, and I’m going to play with one of my old ones, Baby Chrissy.”

“You are?” asked Mom. “One of her arms is missing, isn’t it? In fact, didn’t Maggie point that out to you the last time she was here? If she sees you still play with that old doll, won’t she think you’re a little odd?”

“Maggie knows Baby Chrissy is my favourite one, so why would she think I’m odd for playing with her?” asked Traci. “Besides, I don’t care what Maggie thinks. I still like Baby Chrissy best of all my dolls.”

“I see,” murmured Mom. “So it’s all right to enjoy a ‘thing’, even if it doesn’t look so good to some people, but if a person is ‘different’, it’s okay to just ignore her?”

“Mmmm, a person?” asked Traci. Then she blushed. “Oh, you mean Ellie. I... I...” She was quiet for a moment. “Okay, Mom,” she said finally. “I do like Ellie. I’ll ask both Maggie and Ellie to come over.”

Thought: Do you include children who look different or are challenged in some way? God created every person, and He loves them all.

Prayer: Teach me, Heavenly Father, to treat everyone the way I would like to be treated. I may not understand why You made some one way and some another, but all are created in Your image. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## ARE YOU A NEW CREATION?

“Mom! Mom!” called Ti Seng one morning. “Look what happened!” He was clutching a glass jar with holes punched in the lid and some twigs and leaves on the inside. Mom and Ti Seng’s sister, Emily, came into the room to find out what had happened. Mom took the jar, and they peered through the glass. “Oh, good!” said Mom. “This is great!”

“Great?” wailed Emily. “How can you say that? Fuzzy’s dead! He’s all closed up in that dead piece of skin. He’s not even moving!” “That’s okay, honey,” said Mom. “You’re going to learn a lesson about nature and a lesson about God, too. It’s all about new life.”

“Is Jesus going to give Fuzzy new life?” asked Emily.

“In a way, He is,” replied Mom. “I know you liked Fuzzy as a caterpillar, but this is all part of God’s plan for caterpillars. You knew this would happen. We have talked about it, don’t you remember?”

“Yeah, Emily. When the time is right, caterpillars weave a chrysalis around themselves, and then they change,” said Ti Seng. “I forgot,” said Emily.

“The chrysalis is what you see around Fuzzy now,” said Mom. “In a way, it dies as a caterpillar while it is in the chrysalis. However, you’ll get to see it as a new creature in a few weeks. It won’t be a caterpillar - it’ll be a butterfly.” Mom smiled. “It reminds me of the stages a person goes through in becoming a Christian,” she added. “We’re spiritually dead when we’re born into this world, but when we place our faith in Jesus, we’re born into God’s family, and we’re changed. We become alive in Him. Fuzzy will be more beautiful when it leaves that chrysalis, and our new life in Christ is much more beautiful and freer than the old one was.”

Ti Seng grinned. “And we didn’t even have to spin a chrysalis!” he said.

Thought: Are you aware that without Jesus, you are spiritually dead? However, the good news is that you can be made alive! Jesus gives new life to those who accept Him as their Saviour.

Prayer: Thank You Heavenly Father that if my sins are washed away, I am a new creation. Remind me it is far better in every way than the old sinful life I once knew. I know it is still a daily struggle for me to try not to sin. Please help me. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

Jack and his friend Steven stayed after school to work on their project for the Science fair. “We need to think of a way to show that molecules move around,” said Jack. “Then our project will have a better chance of winning.”

“I think it’s good enough the way it is,” argued Steven. “After all, a molecule is such a small thing it can’t even be seen. They supposedly move and bang into each other, but who knows if they really do move all the time?”

“Scientists say they do, and they should know,” insisted Jack. “They’ve studied them really carefully.” After further discussion, the boys agreed to give it deeper thoughts for a day or two.

During dinner that evening, Jack’s dad mentioned their friends, the Lees, who were facing some challenging problems. “They surely need our prayers,” said Dad. Jack sighed. “Do you really think it helps?” he asked. “It seems like we’ve prayed for them a million times, but I haven’t seen any improvement in their situation yet.”

“Don’t underestimate the power of prayer,” advised Dad. “You may not see it, but God is working.”

While they were eating, Jack told his parents about the project for the Science fair. “We’ve learned that everything is made up of tiny particles, called molecules, and scientists tell us they’re always in motion,” he said. “But just because we can’t actually see them, Steven isn’t so sure they’re really moving all the time.” He frowned. “Steven ought to know that just because you can’t see something, it doesn’t mean it’s not happening.”

“That’s true — but you shouldn’t be too annoyed with him,” challenged Mom. “After all, you and Steven seem to think a lot alike.”

Dad nodded. “Good point,” he agreed. “Sometimes changes are taking place that aren’t visible to us. We need to pray about things that concern us, and then trust God and believe He’s working even when we don’t see what’s happening.”

Thought: Are you confident that God answers prayer — even when you do not see anything happening? He often works in quiet ways, but He’s always working

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please grant me patience. I know You have told me to pray without ceasing, but I get tired so easily. Help me to trust You even when I cannot see the results hoped for. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.



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## GOD WATCHES OVER YOU

Tim stretched and yawned, lazily watching the campfire. He was on an outing with his Sunday school class, and he was tired. His head started to nod, and his eyes grew heavy. He suddenly sat up, awakened by an eerie sound emitting from the dark, forbidding woods. “Whooo, hoo-hoo, whooo, whooo.” Everyone peered into the deep darkness, and Tim and a few other boys sat a little closer to the bright, comforting fire.

“That’s my friend, Mr Owl,” said their Sunday school teacher. “I guess he’s ready to do a little hunting for his dinner. Now... let’s see what you boys know about owls. What kind of beaks do they have?”

“Hooked beaks!” Tim blurted out quickly. “Right,” replied Brother Michael. “What are their claws like?”

Another boy volunteered the answer. “They’re sharp!” “Hey, you guys are pretty good so far,” approved Brother Michael. “Owls have interesting eyes, too. Who can tell me something about them?”

“They can see in the dark,” offered one boy.

“Right! They have night vision,” said Brother Michael, “so they sleep during the day and hunt at night. Their eyes are very sensitive, and when they fly overhead, they can see even very small animals on the ground.”

Again, the hooting of an owl was heard coming out from the woods. “Whooo! Whooo!” This time no one seemed afraid. Having talked about the owls made the sound seem friendlier.

“The good news is that owls don’t eat boys,” added Brother Michael with a chuckle in his voice. “And although they have wonderful vision, it’s nothing compared to the way God can see. The Bible says the ‘eyes of the Lord are in every place.’ To be able to see everywhere at the same time — that’s great eyesight, isn’t it?”

Thought: Are you glad God can see over the whole world all at one time — even into the heart of every person? What will He see in your life today?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You see when I do wrong things, and You also see all my good deeds and acts of obedience. You can even read my mind! Help me not to disappoint You but to have only good acts and thoughts. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

**TREASURES IN HEAVEN**

“Sheila is so lucky,” thought Nick. Sheila’s family lived nearby, and they were wealthy. Sheila had all sorts of things — her own phone and TV, a closet bursting with clothes, and just a few minutes earlier, she had ridden up on her new bike and teased Nick by showing him a special cartoon card he had been wanting. “Some friend she is,” thought Nick. “She knows I want a card like that, and that I’m hoping for a new bike, too.” He sighed and stretched his legs out in front of him.

The clanging of dishes told Nick that his mother was setting the table for dinner. He went inside. “Hi, Mom,” he murmured. As she looked up, he voiced his frustration. “It’s not fair!” he exclaimed. “Sheila gets everything she wants, and she even gets everything I want.” Before Mom could answer, Dad came back.

Mom nodded. “Yes, and dinner’s ready,” she said. “You’d better go wash up.”

During the meal, Nick complained to his father about Sheila and how she had proudly shown him her new bike and made sure he saw her card. “I don’t care that she has so much stuff,” grumbled Nick, “but she doesn’t have to wave it in my face.”

“Sheila does seem to have a lot of nice things,” agreed Dad, “but how valuable are her things really?” He was thoughtful. “I hope Sheila also has treasure stored in heaven, where it can’t be taken away or stolen.” Nick shrugged. “I don’t know about that,” he said, “but it sure would be nice to have the stuff she has for a little while anyway. There’s nothing wrong with having nice things, is there?”

Dad smiled. “No,” he said, “but think about what we discussed in our family devotion yesterday—things that have real value. Remember what will happen to our earthly possessions when Christ returns.”

Thought: Where is your treasure — on earth or in heaven? If God chooses to provide you with things like money, toys, cars, or expensive clothes, thank Him and enjoy them. But remember that they do not give lasting joy and treasure in heaven.

Prayer: Help me, Heavenly Father, to store up treasures in heaven by spending time telling others about Jesus, helping friends when they have problems, encouraging them to worship God, and inviting them to attend church and Sunday school. Please give me the courage to talk to them. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

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## HERE AM I, SEND ME

Kam Seng sat in church listening to a missionary speaker talk about a far-away country. The missionary wore a long, white robe and had a scarf wrapped around his head. "This is the way we often dress on the mission field," he said, turning so everyone could see his clothes. "The purpose of this loose scarf is to keep the sun off my head. It really works quite well." Kam Seng sat up straight to see better. "The people are difficult to reach with the Gospel, but I'm happy to be there because I know God has sent me to tell them about Jesus," continued the missionary. Kam Seng's eyes opened wide. He was seven years old and had never been away from home. He hoped God would not send him to a strange country. He did not want to leave his family.

The next evening, while Kam Seng was seated on the sofa, he could hear sounds from the kitchen where his mother was working, and he could hear his father humming while reading a book. Kam Seng liked those sounds. He looked out of the window and could see the familiar sight of the block of flats next to his. Then he heard a puffing noise outside his house.

It was old Mrs. Tan, their neighbour, walking to her flat with a heavy bag of groceries. She stopped in front of Kam Seng's unit, set down her grocery bag, and smiled as she took a rest. Just then, the grocery bag tipped, and several cans of food dropped out.

Kam Seng went out to help her. "I'll get the cans, Mrs. Tan," he said. The old woman sighed and took a deep breath "Thanks, Kam Seng, I'm so tired. Please help me to my unit before you collect the cans." She put one hand on the wall and the other on Kam Seng's shoulder. He walked beside her and hoped she would not fall. When they reached her unit, Mrs. Tan sat down on one of the chairs outside her unit. She looked up at Kam Seng and smiled. "God sent you to me, Kam Seng," she said. "He knew I needed help, and He sent you."

Kam Seng ran back to pick up the cans. He felt good. He recognized that there were many ways he could serve God, and he did not even have to leave home — at least not yet.

Thought: Are you serving God in your family? In your neighbourhood? With your friends? You do not need to wait until you are older.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please show me what You want me to do for You right now. Here am I, and may I be willing to serve You wherever You want to use me. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## NO BETTER FOUNDATION THAN JESUS

“Here’s my dad. Want a ride home, Jason?” asked Kai after school one day. Jason nodded, and the boys climbed into the car in time to hear a news report about the clean-up efforts in an area where an earthquake had recently occurred. “How are earthquakes triggered?” Kai asked his father. “Well, the earth’s crust has splits in some places. They’re called faults,” Dad explained. “Sometimes the sides of a fault shift against each other and cause the earth to tremble. If they move against each other hard enough, it may shake the earth so much that buildings crumple.”

Jason frowned. “Can that happen here in Singapore?” he asked fearfully. He imagined his HDB flat tumbling down.

“Earthquakes do occur all over the world, but according to the most recent geological maps, Singapore is not in danger of that. Since we’re on a more solid foundation, we’re not likely to experience an earthquake — or even if we do, it probably wouldn’t be a very severe one.”

“Good!” exclaimed Jason. “I’m glad our home is on solid ground!”

Kai’s father nodded. “So am I,” he agreed. He smiled at Jason and added, “But do you know that we need to build our lives on a solid foundation, too? That’s even more important than having our homes built on a firm spot in the earth’s crust.”

The two boys looked at each other. They grinned as they started to sing. “The wise man built his house upon the rock...”

“Last verse,” said Kai, and Dad joined in as they sang, “So build your life on the Lord Jesus Christ...” When they had finished, Kai grinned at his dad and said, “Just last week in Junior Worship class, our lesson was about the wise man who built his house on a rock.”

“And people who are Christians are like the wise man,” added Jason, “because they’re building their lives on Jesus!”

Thought: Is Jesus the foundation of your life? He is the only foundation that will withstand all the trials of life and help you avoid a spiritual earthquake.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, young as I may be, help me to build my life on the firm foundation of Jesus. May I put my trust in Him, and in Him only. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

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## SET YOUR MIND ON THINGS ABOVE

“Look at that guy, Mom,” said Bee Choo as she and her mother were waiting at a traffic light which had turned red. “He’s practically dancing down the street instead of walking! He sure looks silly with his head bopping back and forth like that.”

Mom smiled when she looked in the direction Bee Choo pointed. “I think he’s listening to his radio,” she said. “See his headphones?”

“Yeah,” replied Bee Choo, “and he’s walking to the beat of the music he’s listening to, isn’t he?” “That’s how it looks to me,” agreed Mom, “and that could be dangerous. He doesn’t seem to notice what’s going on around him.” The traffic light changed, and Mom drove forward. “That man reminds me of our walk as Christians in this world,” she added.

Bee Choo gave her mother a puzzled glance. “I know it’s dangerous to be a Christian in some countries,” said Bee Choo, “but it’s not dangerous here, is it?”

“Well, I didn’t mean it was dangerous in that sense,” said Mom. “I was just thinking that when we live our life in obedience to the Word of God we sometimes feel like we’re walking around looking pretty strange, like being out of sync with the rest of the world.”

“That’s true,” agreed Bee Choo. “That happened to me just last week. The kids were all teasing me about not being allowed to watch that violent show on TV. Even my best friend made fun of me because you and Dad wouldn’t allow me to watch shows involving violence and murder.”

“Did that bother you?” asked Mom. Bee Choo nodded. “Well... kind of,” she said, “but I guess we just have to be like that guy back there, and not worry about what other people think of us?”

“That’s right, Bee Choo,” replied Mom. “What God thinks is much more important than what people think. I pray you’ll always choose to listen to Jesus instead of marching to the beat of the world.”

Thought: Are you walking to a different beat from that of your classmates? It should be so as you cannot expect unbelievers to hear God’s “beat” and live to please Him.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to live the way You want me to live, no matter how tough it is and what others may think. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## FREELY GIVE

“Look what Grandma gave me, Mom!” Cheri held out an oval-shaped box with glittering, green stones outlining the lid. “I’m going to keep my special stuff in it, and I don’t want anybody to touch it!” she said with a scowl.

Cheri took the box to her room and placed it on her dresser. Before long, she had quite a number of things in it.

One afternoon, Cheri’s neighbour, Sasha, came over to play. But whenever Sasha picked up one of Cheri’s toys or books, Cheri insisted that she wanted it herself. “How pretty!” exclaimed Sasha when she noticed the box on Cheri’s dresser. “What do you keep in here?” She lifted the lid. “Leave that alone,” Cheri snapped at her. “That’s mine!” “Yuck!” exclaimed Sasha, looking at the contents of the box. “You can have it! And I’m going home.” Angrily, she left the room.

Cheri grabbed the box. “Oh, no!” she groaned as she looked into it. She ran to show her mother. “The rose petals I saved are dried up,” said Cheri tearfully. “Worst of all, my birthday cake is all mouldy!”

“Oh, honey, I didn’t know you put that slice of cake in there,” said Mom. “Dump it out, and then let’s see what we need to do to clean the box.” Cheri got the wastebasket, and they began to sort through the things she had saved. “You need to be careful about what you put into this box, Cheri,” said Mom, “but it’s even more important to be careful about what you put into your heart box!”

“I don’t have a heart-shaped box,” said Cheri.

“I’m referring to your inner being — we call it your heart,” replied Mom. “Are you filling it with selfishness, honey? You refused to give anything when your brother was collecting money for a needy family, remember? You wouldn’t let your sister borrow a blouse yesterday. And when Sasha left here a little while ago, she didn’t look very happy. I wondered why.”

Thought: Why did Sasha leave unhappy? Are you sometimes like Cheri?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, instead of keeping everything for myself, help me to share my blessings. Help me to give a portion of my blessings for Your work or to help those who are needy. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

**GOD KNOWS YOUR HEART!**

Luke climbed into the dentist's chair and laid his head back to have his teeth checked by Dr Yee. "I don't see any cavities today," Dr Yee announced after a few minutes, "but we'll get a better look with an x-ray picture."

As Luke waited for the x-ray to be developed, he looked around the dentist's office. On the wall, there was a poster with pictures and instructions on how to brush teeth, and on a shelf, Luke saw a model of a tooth. "You must like teeth," he said when Dr Yee came back into the room.

The doctor laughed. "Teeth are important, and we need to keep them healthy," he said. "Tell me, Luke-how often do you brush your teeth?"

"Every day," said Luke. "Sometimes more than once! Mom makes me."

Just then D. Yee's assistant handed him the x-ray pictures of Luke's teeth. "Oops!" said Dr Yee, as he studied the x-rays. "You do have some decay in one of your molars."

Luke groaned. "I almost wish x-ray machines didn't exist," he said. "Then you wouldn't know about the decay and drill on my tooth." "Whoa!" protested the doctor. "You should be glad we found the decay and can clean it out before it gets worse. "Relax!" "Relax?" asked Luke as he watched Dr Yee prepare a drill.

Dr Yee smiled. "Sure," he said. "There's only a small amount of decay, and it won't take long to fix it." After he finished the drilling, the dentist spoke thoughtfully. "You know, Luke, an x-ray machine is something like the Bible."

Luke grinned. "Having my Sunday school teacher for my dentist means I get a lesson here as well as on Sunday," he said.

"Yes," said Dr Yee with a chuckle, "and it's a good lesson. You see, the x-ray showed decay that I couldn't see with my eyes. And sometimes God's Word shows us sin-decay in our lives-that no one else can see. When that happens, we need to quickly drill it out."

Thought: Do you use God's x-ray machine — the Bible — to look at your heart and life?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know that sin may be hidden from others, but it is never hidden from You. Please help me to confess my sins and to be right with You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**RESIST THE DEVIL**

As Jasmine's youth group started on a nature hike, Brother Simon pointed out wildflowers and animals. After hiking a short time, Jasmine gasped. "Is that a snake?" she asked in horror, looking up at a tree. "I didn't know they could climb."

Brother Simon smiled. "That kind of snake can," he replied. "Let's stop and see what it does. I think it's headed for that hole up there." He pointed to a hole higher up the tree. "That's a woodpecker's nest," he added. The kids watched as the snake moved closer and closer to the hole. When it got quite near, it began to squirm. Then, to their surprise, it began to retreat down the tree. "It's leaving," observed Jasmine. "Why is that?"

"That hole is a red woodpecker's nest," explained Brother Simon. "They make nests in pine trees that have a thick resin, or sap, and it comes out around the woodpecker's hole. The snake doesn't like that sap on its skin, so it leaves."

"I'm leaving, too," declared Jasmine, "before that snake gets down here." "Good idea!" agreed some other girls. The boys laughed, and a few lingered behind, but soon they all continued their way.

After the hike, the kids enjoyed a light picnic. Then Brother Simon gathered them for a short devotion. "Seeing that woodpecker's nest made me think of a Bible verse," he said. "Red woodpeckers resist predators by making nests in pine trees with sticky sap. It caused the snake to leave, to flee from the bird's nest. Like the snake, Satan is a predator, and the Bible says if we will resist him, he will flee too. But how do we do that?" "Well... we had lessons about the armour of God," remembered one of the boys. "Using those things would be a way to resist him, right?" Brother Simon nodded. "Quoting Bible verses like Jesus did would be another way," suggested Jasmine, "but sometimes it's hard to think of verses that apply to what's happening."

"That points out one reason why Bible memory verses are so important," said Brother Simon.

Thought: Do you know that it is possible to have victory over temptation? Use the armour God provides.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please help me resist the temptation Satan sets before me. I know I can do that by reading the Bible and talking to You regularly. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



**BE DOERS OF THE WORD**

“What time was it when you put dinner in the oven, Dad?” asked Mark. “I’m hungry! It seems like we’ve been waiting a long time for that lasagne to be ready, but I don’t even smell it yet.”

“I don’t either,” said Dad. He glanced at his watch. “Mom said it would need to bake about an hour.” Dad got up and went to the kitchen. “Oh, no!” he exclaimed. “I followed the directions Mom left - took the cover off and put the dish in the oven - but I forgot to turn the oven on! Looks like dinner will take quite a while yet.”

“Da-a-ad! I’m starving!” complained Mark.

“I’m sorry,” apologised Dad. “Let’s have an apple to soothe some of the hunger pangs.” They each chose a shiny red apple. “This mistake reminds me of Pastor’s message last Sunday,” added Dad. Mark grinned. “Oh-oh! Did he make a mistake, too?” he asked.

“No... no. But it reminds me of some things he said,” Dad replied with a smile as he reached for the Bible on a nearby shelf. He turned to the book of James and asked Mark to read several verses from the end of the first chapter. “Remember what Pastor told us?” Dad asked when Mark finished reading.

“Same thing this chapter says,” answered Mark. “He said we often take in God’s Word, but we don’t apply it to our lives. But what’s that got to do with the oven or our lasagne?”

“Well, in Sunday school and church-and in our own devotions-we’re taught how we should live. But when we become too concerned with our own pleasures and plans, it’s like we don’t ‘turn those lessons on’ in our lives. The knowledge sits there, cold, like our lasagne,” explained Dad. “Like God says, we need to be ‘doers’ of His word. Let them fill us and apply them to daily life. Otherwise, we’re left spiritually hungry.”

Thought: Have you learned lots of Bible lessons and verses? They will often come back to you, but the most important thing is to apply them in your life.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to “turn on” Bible lessons in my life and do the things You would have me do. Help me be a “doer” of Your Word. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

**BE FISHERS OF MEN**

Derek sighed. He wished a fish would take the bait on his hook. "I've finally got a bite," he said when the fishing line jiggled at last. Derek jerked the fishing rod quickly, but there was no fish, and most of the bait was gone. "That must be the 'big one that got away,'" said Grandpa with a chuckle as he handed Derek a fresh worm to put on the hook. "Don't give up. Try again."

A little later, Derek pulled up his line again. "I got one this time!" he exclaimed. He took a fish off the hook and put it in the pail of water. "You sure did!" agreed Grandpa. "That would be nice for dinner! Let's see how many more we can catch."

After Derek and Grandpa caught several more fish, Grandpa said, "Jesus talked to His disciples about fishing. Some of them had fished for a living, so they understood fish talk. Do you remember what Jesus said they should do?"

"Be fishers of men," replied Derek promptly. "We sang that song in Sunday school when I was just a little kid. But . . . I'm not sure how you fish for people, Grandpa." Derek grinned. "They don't like worms," he added.

Grandpa laughed. "That's right, so you offer them a different kind of food—spiritual food," he replied. "You offer them the 'Bread of Life.' That's what Jesus called Himself, remember?"

Derek thought about that for a moment. "Sometimes they don't bite, though," he said.

Grandpa shook his head. "No, they don't," he agreed. "Some don't want to hear about Jesus at all. Others are like fish that only nibble. They're sort of interested, but not too much. They leave after hearing only a little about Jesus. But . . ." Grandpa's eyes sparkled like the water around them, "other people are like the fish we caught. They want to know all they can, and they accept Jesus as Saviour." He pointed to the fish in the bucket. "We kept on fishing even though they weren't biting at first, right? And it paid off. We need to keep fishing for men, too."

Thought: Are you a "fisher of men"? If you're a Christian, you should be. Watch for opportunities to talk about Jesus. Let others know that you are thankful to God for saving you.

Prayer: Help me, Heavenly Father, to tell others about things learned from the Bible or about a prayer God has answered. Or maybe a special blessing You have given me. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**STAY FAITHFUL!**

Rex sat in the living room and pouted while his little sister played in the hall with her new kitten. “If Lisa can have a kitten, I don’t see why I can’t have a puppy!” he muttered angrily.

“Rex,” said Dad when he saw his son’s unhappy face and heard his complaints, “you don’t have any excuse for acting the way you do. You had the same chance to have a puppy as Lisa did to have a kitten. If you had taken good care of your goldfish, we’d have allowed you to get a puppy. Instead of caring for the fish, you neither cleaned its bowl nor fed it. Lisa had to take over and do your work as well as hers.”

“But I don’t like goldfish anymore!” wailed Rex.

“You didn’t have to like the fish,” said Dad, “but after you bought it, you have to take good care of it. If we can’t trust you to take care of something small, how can we expect you to care for something bigger and more complicated-like a dog?” Dad paused, then added, “You know, Rex, it’s a good thing to remember that God often works in this way, too.”

“What do you mean?” asked Rex. “Are you saying I shouldn’t ask Him for a puppy?”

“No,” replied Dad, “but I’m saying that God usually trusts His children with small tasks before giving them bigger things to do. I’ve known people who had dreams of doing great things for God, but they lacked the discipline to follow through on things that seem small-like doing everyday tasks faithfully and cheerfully.” Dad squeezed Rex’s shoulder, and added, “Doing well in small things - even jobs like caring for a goldfish - helps us prepare for bigger tasks God might give us.”

Rex thought about his father’s words. “Dad?” he said after a moment. “Can I have my goldfish back?” Dad smiled. “I suppose we could give it another try,” he agreed.

Thought: Do you do your best in small tasks that are given to you? Do you do a good job with your chores? With your schoolwork? With piano practice or other responsibilities?

Prayer: Help me Heavenly Father to be faithful in small things so that I may shoulder bigger responsibilities as I mature. As I grow older, may I learn to be more and more responsible and to help out at home and in school. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

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**THOU SHALT NOT LIE**

Moments before the morning service began, Jane whispered in her mother's ear. "I'm going to the nursery, okay? They need my help again." Mom looked concerned but nodded.

Jane enjoyed playing with the babies, and time passed quickly. After the service, she was surprised to see her mother at the nursery door. The supervisor went to greet her, and while Jane continued picking up toys, she heard Mrs. Lim say, "We appreciate your daughter's help."

"She likes to help," replied Mom, "but she has missed a lot of services lately." Mrs. Lim and Mom talked quietly as Mom waited for Jane to finish her work. Then Jane and Mom left together. "Jane," said Mom as they walked down the hall, "you led me to believe that Mrs. Lim asked you to help in the nursery today. She says she didn't, neither today nor last week."

"Actually, I just said they needed my help," Jane defended herself, "and they did. We all were really busy." Jane knew her argument was weak.

Mother said, "You tricked me into believing something untrue so you could do what you wanted. Is that honest, or would you say it's some kind of lie?"

"I... I'm sorry," mumbled Jane.

"Helping others is part of serving the Lord," Mom added, "but learning is important, too, and I think today's sermon was one you needed to hear. It was on honesty. I'll tell you about it on the drive home."

Thought: Have you deceived someone or have you been deceived, tricked into believing something untrue? Lies take many forms. When you twist your words to make them sound like you are saying something you are not, it is a kind of lie, and it is sin.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am sorry for the times when I have twisted the truth and used some form of lying. Cleanse me and remind me not to lie in any manner. I know I need Your help in this, and I pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

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## ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR MISTAKES

I should read this,” said May as she flipped open a small manual that had come with their new toaster. She started reading. “Some of these warnings are silly! Listen,” she said with a chuckle. “Do not put under water. Do not touch hot surfaces. Do not put fingers in slots. Anybody with any sense at all would know those things,” she said. “Why do they write such silly instructions?”

“They do seem pretty silly, but you might be surprised how many people would do some of those things,” replied Mom. “Then if the toaster breaks or they get hurt, they might blame the manufacturer if those warnings weren’t in the manual. Sometimes people go to court and sue for a lot of money.” “Even though it’s their own fault?” asked May’s brother, Aik Leng.

Mom nodded. “It’s human nature to blame somebody else,” she said. “Both Adam and Eve did it in the Garden of Eden, and people have been doing it ever since. Who do you think gets blamed more than anyone else?” “I do!” declared Aik Leng. “You do not,” scoffed May. “I’d say it’s God,” said Mom. “He gave detailed instructions on how to live, but people often ignore them. Then when something goes wrong, they blame God even though they’re the ones who didn’t follow His instructions.”

“Like you, Aik Leng, when you read that comic book when Mum told you to go to sleep last week,” May teased. “Serve you right when you hit your head when walking to the bed.”

“Hold it!” exclaimed Aik Leng. “I admit I wasn’t following Mom’s, Dad’s or God’s instructions, but I didn’t blame either them or Him for my fall. I accepted responsibility, and...,” Aik Leng paused and grinned at his sister. “And now I’m a model son,” he finished. May and Mom both laughed. Mom picked up the manual. “I don’t think we’ll need this again, so I’ll put it away. But be sure we don’t leave God’s instruction manual in a drawer. Let’s all read our Bibles every day and do what it says. Then we won’t be so tempted to play the ‘blame game.’”

Thought: Do you accept responsibility for what you do? Or do you look for someone to blame when something goes wrong? Do you even blame God?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to dare to own up to my mistakes and accept responsibility instead of blaming others. In that way, I may learn to be a better Christian and know that I need to improve every day. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

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## OBEY GOD RATHER THAN MAN

“Can we get some fries, Mom?” asked Mei Ling as she and her mother passed the food court. Mom agreed, so Mei Ling went to get the fries, and they sat down to eat, Mei Ling touched her cross pendant. “Mom,” she said, “at school today, Carli asked me why I was wearing a cross.”

“And what did you say?” asked Mom.

“I told her I thought it was pretty and I liked it,” replied Mei Ling. She frowned slightly and added, “I said something about it reminding me of Jesus and what He did on the cross, but I’m not sure I should have said anything about that. She said I was just strict and narrow-minded like all Christians.”

Suddenly, a cross-sounding voice startled Mei Ling. She looked up and saw an angry lady scolding the young man behind the hamburger counter. “What do you mean, my coupons have expired?” the lady demanded with a scowl. “Just close your eyes and bend the rules a bit!”

The young man answered calmly. “I’m sorry, Ma’am, but I can’t do that. We were given stern warnings about accepting expired coupons.” The lady continued to complain loudly, but the clerk remained firm. “I’m sorry, but I can’t help you,” he said. “These coupons are not valid.”

When the lady finally left, Mom turned to Mei Ling. “That young man must seem pretty strict and narrow-minded to that lady,” she said. “Do you think he should have bent the rules for her and given her the discount of the coupons?”

“Of course not,” said Mei Ling. Mom nodded. “That’s right,” she said. “He shouldn’t feel bad about having done the right thing.” Mom smiled at Mei Ling. “When you tell your friend about Jesus and she gives you a hard time, it’s natural to feel bad because she doesn’t understand. However, you shouldn’t feel bad that you told her. Even though people don’t like to accept it, they need to know that faith in Jesus is the only way to Heaven.”

Thought: Have you felt bad for speaking the truth about Jesus and salvation? Have you been called narrow-minded, or some other unpleasant name?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know that many people will not accept Your truth. Help me to realise that believing that Jesus is the way is not a personal opinion, but simply what the Bible says. And help me to obey You rather than man. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

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## FEAR NOT, GOD IS WITH YOU

“If I don’t make any noise when I walk by that house, maybe the dog won’t see me,” Kevin thought. But the barking, growling dog across the street jumped against the fence, making a loud bang. Kevin took off. He was out of breath when he got home and slammed the door behind him. “I always walk on the other side of the road, but that big dog still sees me,” Kevin told his mother. “I’m afraid it will go right through the fence someday.”

“Since you have to pass that house every day to and from school, maybe you should make friends with the dog,” suggested Mom.

“Yeah, right,” replied Kevin. “I’ll just say, ‘Hi dog. My name is Kevin. What’s your name? Pleased to meet you. Do you think we could be friends?’” He frowned. “That dog would throw me around like a Frisbee before I can say two words.” That night, Kevin learned a memory verse: “Fear not, for I am with you.” He repeated the verse several times.

The next day, Kevin decided to walk on the dog’s side of the road. The dog came barking and running toward him. Trembling, he prayed, “You said You’d be with me to help me God.” He stopped. “All right, dog!” he said loudly, “you can bark all you want, but I’m not scared of you! You got that?” The dog backed away. He and Kevin stared at each other. Then the dog whimpered and began to slowly wag its tail. Magic?

Kevin then heard a voice. “You’re making friends with my Sweetie! I’ve been praying he’d find a friend.” Kevin turned around and saw an elderly lady leaning on a cane. “You named this big dog Sweetie?” he asked in surprise.

The lady nodded. “My husband used to play with Sweetie and take Sweetie for walks, but he died recently,” she said sadly. “You can see I’m not able to do those things.” “So... you want me to play with your dog?” Kevin asked slowly.

“That would be so nice,” replied the lady.

Thought: Are you afraid of something? Perhaps you are frightened when you are in the dark, scared to go to the doctor for a shot, or afraid of a bully at school. Whenever you feel afraid, remember that God is always with you.

Prayer: Thank You, Heavenly Father, that You promise me courage to face my fears. I want to commit to You the areas in my life that I need strength in. Please help me. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

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**BETTER A GOOD NAME...**

Tara turned a page in the book and showed the picture of Papa Bear to her little sister, Tania. Their brother Jason looked up as Tara continued to read the story aloud. “Who’s been eating my porridge?” growled Papa Bear.”

Jason spoke up. “Papa Bear could have found out who ate it if he had lifted fingerprints from his spoon,” he said. “Everybody has a different set of prints. No two are alike, ever. Match the prints and you’ve got the criminal.” “Yeah, well, that’s nice, Jason. Now let us finish this story,” said Tara.

But Jason grabbed his magnifying glass and held it above Tara’s fingers. “See those ridges?” he asked. “They leave a mark on everything you touch. Police and investigators use special powders to dust for fingerprints. The powder sticks to the invisible ridge marks. The investigator carefully brushes away the dust between the ridges, and then they take a picture of it. The print can be lifted with a print-lifting tape, too.” Jason sat back. “I know how to do it,” he added, “and I better not catch you messing with any of my stuff or you’ll be sorry!”

“Jason! We don’t care about fingerprints right now. We just want to read the story,” said Tara.

“Well, you just remember-I’ve been practicing with the detective kit I got for my birthday,” grumbled Jason, “so you’d better keep your fingers off my things! Both of you!”

“Don’t be rude, Jason,” warned Mom, who had come into the room. “I think you need to be more concerned about the kind of ‘prints’ you’re leaving on the lives of others. I hope you’ll make sure they’re nice-not ugly. Like fingerprints, they identify us. Not by ridges, of course, but by either the pleasant way we talk and act or by how rude we are.”

Thought: What kind of prints, or impressions, do you make on others? Are the things you do and say hurtful, or are they kind?

Prayer: Father in heaven, I hope the impressions I make are pleasing to You. I pray they give me a reputation of being helpful, friendly, and patient. And perhaps that way, others will want to spend time with me. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.



## ENJOYING QUIET TIME WITH GOD

It was early when Alex woke up. He knew it was early because there was only a little light outside. Alex got out of bed and went to look for his mother. He looked in the kitchen, but she was not there. She was not in the living room or the family room, either. Finally, Alex peeked into her bedroom and found his mother sitting in the rocker, her Bible on her lap. Her eyes were shut; he knew she was praying.

Alex wanted a hug, so he quietly crawled onto his mother's lap. She opened her eyes. "Good morning," said Mom, hugging him close. "You're up early."

"Are you praying?" asked Alex. "Yes," replied Mom. "I am." "What about?" asked Alex.

"Oh, quite a few things," answered Mom with a smile, "just spending time with God."

"What do you mean?" asked Alex.

Mom smiled again. "When you came in and climbed on my lap because you wanted to be with me," she told him. "I'm glad you did, because I love you, and I like to be with you, too." Alex smiled and snuggled closer. "Well, sometimes I just like to be with God," continued Mom. "Sometimes I like to sit with Him-thinking about how good He is, talking with Him a little, and just enjoying Him. I think He's glad I like to be with Him."

"Can I sit with Him, too?" asked Alex.

"Sure," said Mom. "Think about Him being with us right here, right now." She closed her eyes and rocked the chair.

Thought: Do you have a friend with whom you always like to spend time? Someone with whom it does not matter what you are doing-just so you are together? That's part of loving someone. If you love God, try just "being with" Him.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to enjoy my Quiet Time, to sometimes sit quietly and think about You and what You have done for me, and think about what the Bible says about You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**RESERVED FOR YOU**

“Hurry, Dad!” urged Daniel as he and his father sped down the highway toward the stadium. It was Daniel’s first time attending a football game, and he did not want to miss any part of it. “If we’re late, we might not find a good place to sit!” he added.

“Don’t worry, Daniel,” said Dad with a smile. “They won’t give our seats away. Our tickets are right here.” Dad tapped his left jacket pocket. “Bought and paid for. Our places are reserved for us.” “Reserved... that means they’re saved for us, right?” asked Daniel.

“Right,” agreed Dad as he turned into the stadium parking lot. “People make reservations all the time, for airplane tickets, hotel rooms, restaurants, and...” Dad patted his pocket again, “...for seats at certain games.” He glanced at Daniel. “You may not have known it, but when you trusted Jesus as Savior and Lord, you were making a reservation then, too.”

“I was?” asked Daniel, looking at his father in surprise.

“Yes, you were,” said Dad. “You were making a reservation in heaven, and there will always be a place there for you.”

They parked the car and hurried to the stadium. “Are you sure they saved our seats?” asked Daniel as he looked at the sea of spectators. “If they didn’t, I bet we’ll have to stand up the entire game!”

Dad smiled as he looked at the stubs of their tickets. He motioned toward a man who was helping people find their seats. “That gentleman will show us where to go,” said Dad. “Come along.”

Daniel followed his father through the noisy crowd, and soon, there they were—two empty seats. “All right!” exclaimed Daniel. “Here they are, Dad! Waiting just for us!”

Thought: Is there a place reserved in Heaven for you? There is if you’ve trusted Jesus as your Saviour. God guarantees a place in heaven for all those who believe in Jesus.

Prayer: Thank You, Heavenly Father, for promising to reserve a place for me in heaven as I have given my life to You. Just help me to make sure I am really saved, then I will be really safe! In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

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## TRIALS STRENGTHEN OUR FAITH

“Hold still, Tippy,” commanded Kannan. “I know you don’t like this, but you have to be on a leash when we take a walk.” The impatient little dog wriggled and squirmed, and at last Kannan said, “Okay, you’re ready. Let’s go.”

As they walked, Tippy kept pulling on his leash, wanting to dash off or to investigate a rustling in the bushes. He tried to run over to a neighbour who was working in his garden. “Hi, Mr Wee,” called Kannan. “Hi, Kannan,” said Mr Wee. “How are things going? You’ve got a lively dog there.”

“I know,” agreed Kannan. He walked over to talk with M. Wee. “Grandma’s sick again,” Kannan told him with a sigh, “and last night my bike was stolen. It seems like everything is going wrong for me.” He paused, then added, “I sometimes wonder if God even cares.”

As Kannan spoke, Tippy tugged hard on his leash. Kannan picked up his dog and held him in his arms. “Tippy doesn’t like that leash, does he?” asked Mr Wee. “Why don’t you just let him roam free?”

Kannan gave the puppy a squeeze. “If he ran free, he might get run over by a car or be attacked by a big dog or something,” he said. “You know that.”

“That’s true,” agreed Mr Wee, “so you keep him on a leash whether he likes it or not. At least he likes all the other things you do, doesn’t he? Like giving him a bath or taking him to the vet for shots? Or how about when you scold him? Does he like that?” Kannan managed a little smile and shook his head. “That’s why God allows trials in your life,” said Mr Wee. “He loves you far more than you love Tippy, and He knows what’s best for you. Learn from the experiences you go through, and trust the Lord, knowing He cares for you.”

Just then Tippy reached up and nuzzled Kannan’s cheek. “You can see Tippy loves you, even though you don’t always treat him the way he’d like you to,” said Mr Wee. “Respond to God in the same way — show that you love Him, too.”

Thought: Do you wonder why God has allowed some trial or problem in your life?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to trust You more so that when troubles come my way, I will not complain but know they are sent my way to strengthen me. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

**SHINE FOR GOD!**

“Mom’s calling,” said Ruth as she and her sister Sarah played with neighbours in the common area of their flat. Sarah looked at her watch. “Wow!” she exclaimed. “It’s dinner time already!” The girls said goodbye to their friends and hurried to their apartment.

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

Dad smiled. “Someone must have asked you to help to take care of their kids,” he said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thought: Do your actions cause people to notice that you are different from the world in general? Your attitude should shine as a light, pointing others to Him.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to shine for You so others can see changes in my life. I recognise that others will observe me. I pray that I had been a good example for the sake of Jesus. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

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## GOD LOVES CHILDREN WHATEVER THEIR RACE OR BACKGROUND

As Tai Loong waited to see what art project the class would be doing, he looked at the variety of coloured cards. Mrs Lin, the art teacher, turned to the class. "Tai Loong, please come up here and take the red card," she said. Tai Loong rose from his seat and slowly walked to the front. He looked at the cards. Then he hesitantly lifted one of them, and everyone laughed. "That's enough, class," said Mrs Lin. She turned to Tai Loong. "Take the red card, please," she said. "Not the green one."

Tai Loong frowned. "I'm colour-blind," he told her. "Oh!" said Mrs Lin in surprise. "We'll excuse you then and let someone else help with this demonstration." So Tai Loong returned to his seat.

At recess time, Tai Loong played with Rick, a boy whose nationality was different from Tai Loong's. They were having fun together when another classmate spoke to Tai Loong. "Hey, Tai Loong," he called, "no wonder Rick is your friend. You can't tell that he's a different colour." "Ignore him," Tai Loong told Rick. "I don't get it," thought Tai Loong. "Why would anybody decide to not like a person just because his skin is a different colour?"

During science class a little later, the subject of colour-blindness came up again. Tai Loong was asked several questions about it. "Does it bother you that lots of times you don't know what colour things are?" asked one of the girls. Tai Loong grinned. "It doesn't matter what colour they are," he said. "Red apples taste good and so do yellow ones. Colour isn't what makes something good or bad." As he spoke, the incident at recess popped into his mind. He took a deep breath. "That's true of people, too," he added. "God made every person, and He made them all the same in value." He looked at the boy who had teased him at recess, and added, "I think everyone should be 'colour-blind' when it comes to seeing people."

"Good for you, Tai Loong," approved his teacher. "You're absolutely right."

Thought: Do you develop opinions about others based on skin colour? Or their background? Or how they look? Do not forget that God made everyone special.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me not to discriminate others but to treat everyone fairly. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**WHERE IS YOUR TREASURE?**

While the rest of her family swam and soaked up the sun at the beach, Joy moulded a huge sandcastle. She made soaring towers and dug a deep moat all around her castle. When Joy noticed that waves were coming closer and closer, she quickly began to pile sand high up all around the castle walls. “Help, Dad!” exclaimed Joy after a moment. “The water’s going to get my castle!”

Dad shook his head. “It’s no use,” he said. “The tide is coming in, and the waves will come a lot higher before they go back down.”

Joy did not want to believe that. She dug a wide trench all around her castle and continued to build a sand barrier to protect it. But water soon crashed over the barrier and filled the trench. The waves splashed against the edge of the castle, pulling it apart with watery fingers. “It took me a long time to build that, and now it’s gone in no time,” moaned Joy.

“Well, just be glad it’s only sand,” said her sister, Danielle. “Sometimes people lose real houses in catastrophes like fires and storms, don’t they, Dad?”

Dad nodded. “Actually, all earthly possessions are a little like that sandcastle,” he said. “Many people work all their lives to get more and more things—things that won’t last. It’s too bad so many people are more concerned about their present life than their future one. They forget that there’s something much more important than earthly things.”

“Like doing stuff for God?” asked Joy. Dad nodded. “That’s right. First of all, we need to make sure we possess eternal life through Jesus. And then we need to remember that nobody can keep earthly things forever. Soon they’ll all be gone. Instead of worrying so much about them, we should store up treasure in heaven by serving God.”

“When we’re grown up, right?” suggested Danielle.

Dad smiled. “Yes, and right now, too,” he said. “Kids can store treasure in heaven by being kind, helpful, and obedient. I’m sure you’ll be able to think of many things you can do.”

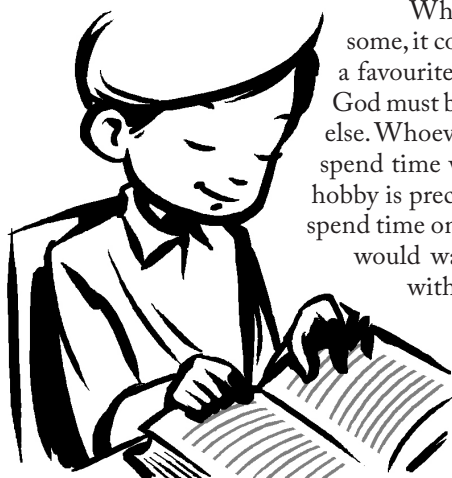
Thought: Where are you storing treasure — on earth or in Heaven?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me remember the things I can buy and enjoy on this earth will not last. Help me to focus on things that will last, and that is treasure stored in heaven. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## PRECIOUS FAITH!

You already know the author of this letter (or epistle) is the Apostle Peter who denied the Lord three times, and then rose to become the leader of the Apostles, and who was willing to suffer much for Jesus. At the time of his writing this letter, he was not a young temperamental man. He was old and mature, having learnt from his past failures. With gracious words the Apostle Peter greets his readers. He states his authority as an Apostle of Jesus, serving under the direct teaching of Christ. His words and writing therefore have authority and weight. It must be received as God's divinely inspired and preserved Word.

Peter writes to those who have "obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ". This shows his deep concern for the believers that they know how precious their faith is. This precious faith was of a right kind. It is not a faith of doing miracles or a mere profession of belief, but a deep and lasting trust in the Almighty God. This would be most precious.



What is most precious to you? To some, it could be their parents. To others, a favourite toy. But the faith we have in God must be more precious than anything else. Whoever you deem precious, you will spend time with, and love to be with. If a hobby is precious to you, you would like to spend time on it. If mummy is precious, you would want to be with her. Is this so with your faith? If you claim that God is precious to you, do you spend time with God and love to read His Word? Or do you have your Quiet Time reluctantly?

Thought: Treasure your faith!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for this precious faith that You give to me. May I grow and learn more so that I may mature and grow like Peter did. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**DO YOU HAVE GRACE AND PEACE?**

If you have experienced salvation through the Lord Jesus, you will also have grace and peace. What is grace? Grace is unmerited favour from God; what you do not deserve but God still gives to you. This is because of the finished work of the Lord Jesus on the cross. Think of “grace” in this way:

G od’s  
R iches  
A t  
C hrist’s  
E xpense

If you have truly experienced salvation, if you have been washed in the blood of the Lamb (that is Jesus), you will also automatically receive grace. The grace of God will grant you peace and calm. Peace is a big concept that some of us may not be able to fully understand. This peace is more than having a safe home, food on the table, clothes to wear and shelter in stormy weather. The peace of God will be able to comfort us even if we face an unsafe home, uncertainty about our next meal, inadequate clothing and shelter. The peace will keep your heart calm and at rest even when others around you are panicking.

Is this peace possible? Yes, but it is not easy to have. Perhaps your parents are having a serious argument and are having a shouting match. How can you have peace in such a time? Or when examinations are round the corner, what should you do in times like these? Cast your cares and burdens on Him, and He will carry you through. This is not magic, but guidance for how we should live our lives, to always trust in God and to go to Him in prayer. That way, we will have peace in our lives.

Thought: GRACE – God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for this wonderful verse that reminds me of what I can have through Jesus Christ. May I embrace this wonderful truth and have real grace and peace in my heart as I cast all my cares on You. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.



**DO YOU KNOW GOD?**

All of you know about God. As long as you have read the Junior RPG or attended church, you must have come across the word “God”. But knowing God and knowing about God are two very different things.

Many say that the most powerful man in the world today is the President of America. Millions around the world know about him. They know he is powerful and was chosen by the American public to be their leader. But of these millions, how many know him personally? A very small number of people do, out of these millions.

Likewise, many of us know about God. We read of Him in the Bible, in Junior RPG, and hear of Him in Sunday School. But do you really know Him personally? Can you call Him your Saviour and Friend? Is He the One to whom you turn when you are afraid? Is He the One to whom you ask for guidance when you are not sure about things? If so, thank God! If not, beware. Millions know about God. However, the important thing is not knowing about Him — it is knowing Him. To know God is to be His child. Once we are God’s children, we should read His Word, love Him, obey Him, to try to be a good child.

Tick these circles if you know God personally.

- Committed your life to Him.
- Read and follow the Bible.
- Witness to others for Jesus.
- Put others above yourself.

Thought: To know God is to love Him.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I know You and love You more and more. And Heavenly Father, teach me to commit more of myself to You. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

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**EXCEEDING GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISES (1)**

When a person is dying on the sickbed, the greatest comfort anyone can give them is the simple promise that our God will bring them to a far better place in Heaven where they will be happy forever. When you or I go through difficulties in life, the simple promise of our God that He will care for us and protect us is enough for us to go patiently through that trial. Imagine what we would be without the promises of God?

These simple promises are also “exceeding great and precious”. The Author of the Bible is the omnipotent God of Heaven and earth. He will not make any promises unless He wants to. These wonderful promises of grace and favour have been given to us. They relate to things that are eternal and spiritual, so that we will have grace and peace. And you know what? These promises are of far more value than gold and silver!

Circle the promises of God...

**IMPOSSIBLE**  
**STUPENDOUS**  
**UNCERTAIN**  
**CHANGEABLE**  
**AWESOME**  
**MAGNIFICENT**  
**PRECIOUS**

Thought: We are blessed to receive God's promises!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for granting us Your promises. Help me appreciate how wonderful and what a privilege it is to have these from the King of kings! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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**EXCEEDING GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISES (2)**

What are some of these “exceeding great and precious promises” that concern salvation? They refer to the forgiveness of sins, strength, comfort, and support in trial, a glorious resurrection, and an everlasting life.

How blessed it is to have our sins forgiven and to escape the wrath of God. Previously, we were far from God; we were enemies of God. All sinners are enemies of God in that our sin prevents us from fellowship with God. But once we believe in Christ, we are reconciled and have made peace with God through the blood of the cross. Not only that, we have received the Spirit of adoption — which means we are adopted into the Family of God! And the Holy Spirit now indwells us to guide us to live a holy life. We would still continue to sin, but we would sin less and less as the Holy Spirit in us would convict us to fight against sin.

When you last sinned, when you last did something you know you should not have done, did you feel it was wrong, and that the Holy Spirit in you was displeased? The Holy Spirit will also slowly mould us after God’s image.

God’s promises will always be true because:

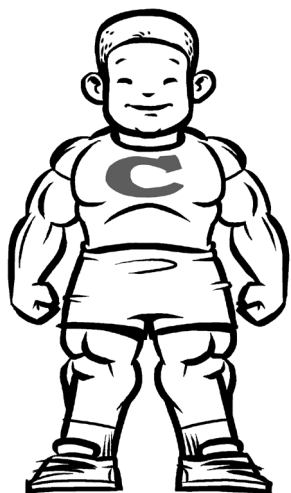
1. He is all \_\_\_\_\_(werpoluf),  
doing things that no man can do.
2. He has already given  
us the blessed Holy \_\_\_\_\_(iritsp).
3. He has already given us  
His perfect and holy \_\_\_\_\_(orwd).
4. He had already shown His \_\_\_\_\_(ovel)  
for us by dying for us.

Thought: Let us claim the promises that God gives us.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for all your wonderful promises. Help me appropriate them in my life, and I know I will need all Your promises to keep me in the narrow and right path for Thee. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

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## GIVING ALL DILIGENCE



As a faithful pastor of the people, Peter is anxious that the people would grow spiritually. They should not just be satisfied with salvation and then stagnate in their spiritual life. Just simply having faith and dwelling on God's promises is not good enough. Peter is concerned for the flock's spiritual welfare and progress. So he exhorts believers to be diligent.

You have to work hard in school. Likewise in our spiritual life, we have to work hard. If you have to sleep a little later to complete your Quiet Time, do it. If you find it difficult to control your temper and be forgiving, work hard to follow God's Word as we know it is not easy to fight against the sin that is still in all of us. If you find the going tough, ask the Lord for help. But always, try your best!

Most of us have watched the Olympic Games. Some of the most amazing performances would be witnessed, and world records perhaps shattered. How do you think these athletes managed to accomplish what they did? The answer is found in one word – diligence. Without exception, all of them have put in a lot of hard work. All of them have sacrificed for their sport. They would have to keep to a strict timetable for training, resting, and strengthening.

The Christian faith is the same — we have to be diligent. There is no other way but to work hard at reading His Word, keeping our promises to be true and to always have a prayerful attitude. Be diligent for the Lord and you may become spiritually stronger.

Thought: Work hard for the Lord!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, as much as my physical body grows stronger with exercise, may my spiritual body also grow stronger as I try to work hard at being a good Christian! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**ADD TO FAITH, VIRTUE**

Faith without works is dead, that is why we need to add something to our faith, and this something is virtue. Virtue is right living. Christians must grow in spiritual graces so that he or she may bear more fruit for God. These spiritual graces make him zealous for God, trusting and obeying God in everyday life, and fruitful in works of righteousness.

Faith must result in a changed life. Our parents, brothers and sisters must be able to see that we are more helpful and considerate. For example, we could help our parents without being asked to. We can give way to our siblings because we know they like that cereal or piece of juicy chicken thigh more than we do. Or we could remember not to make noise or inconvenience our classmates because we are considerate and kind. We shine for Jesus when we are full of good works!

Try to recall some changes in your life...

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Thought: There is joy in growing and being a better Christian!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I abound in every good work for Thee. Help me be a true Christian, and not be nice and considerate only on certain days or at certain times. Jesus was always the kind and wonderful Saviour. He was full of virtue, and I hope to follow Him! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**ADD TO VIRTUE, KNOWLEDGE**

To continue to be able to do the right things, you need to know right from wrong. That is why Peter tells the readers that we must add knowledge to our virtue.

How do you grow in the knowledge of God and His Word? First, you must be interested in God's Word, it is food for your soul. Pay close attention when God's Word is being taught. Some children do not pay attention nor listen carefully during Sunday School lessons. They lose their focus, or worse, act in such a way that distracts others too! Have you seen such a child?

These children do not realise they are wasting a great opportunity. They are letting the precious Word of God pass them by. At the end of the lesson, they would have learnt nothing much. Are you one of them? Pray that God will make you desire and value His Word more.

However, if you not only pay attention in Sunday School but also do your Quiet Time regularly with Junior RPG or other devotionals, you will make good progress and add to your faith. May God richly bless you!

These three statements are all true. But are they seen in your life?

1. Children increase in their Bible knowledge when they attend Junior Worship.
2. Children increase in their Bible knowledge when their parents teach them God's Word.
3. Reading the Bible ourselves is the best way to increase in Bible knowledge.

Thought: To know God's Word is crucial to my spiritual walk.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, although I am young, grant me the wisdom to love and treasure Thy Word, that I may hide it in my heart so I will not sin against Thee. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**ADD TO KNOWLEDGE, TEMPERANCE**

We often think that the people who know the Bible best in church are the pastors or elders. As spiritual leaders, they are to guide us with the Word of God. Yet imagine, if these men with the right knowledge are rude in their behaviour, proud in their attitude, harsh in their conversation, would that be what you think God wants?

Temperance or self-control must be added to the knowledge of God's Word. Otherwise, what the person knows is but head knowledge, useful for Bible quizzes but useless in making us more like God. This is especially important if a Christian gets angry easily or is hot-tempered. He or she must exercise self-control. If not, there will be trouble.

Imagine a father with an anger problem. He will easily raise his voice and shout at his wife and children. One day before going to church, he was so angry with his daughter that he threw a chair at her. Then he slammed the door without apologising. In church that day, this father gave a Bible study lesson on how to be a good example in controlling one's temper. Would this father have been a good example of temperance?

Do you have a problem controlling your temper? Know that anger for the wrong reasons is sin, and you must ask God to help you overcome it.

Thought: May I learn to exercise self-control.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me that nothing is too hard for me to do, for Your grace is sufficient. There are times when I get angry, but Lord, please teach me to commit this area of my life to You too, so that I can learn to be temperate. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**ADD TO TEMPERANCE, PATIENCE**

To self-control must be added patience. Not only must we be self-controlled, but we should also be patient. Why? Because the testing may be long. Patience could be defined as an endurance of difficult situations, delay or trouble, without getting angry or upset.

Think of Jesus as the best example of patience. How many years was He on earth before he started his ministry? It was about 30 years. And how long was His ministry? About three years. Why then did he not start earlier? Why did He wait till he was 30 years old to start? Because He knew it was God's timing that He had to follow. If God the Father says "30 years", God the Son will patiently wait for 30 years.

In fast-paced Singapore, we seem to like to hurry. We seem to rush from home to school, back home, get schoolwork done, and then fulfil other responsibilities. We have fast food, and instant noodles. We are told by teachers and parents that the race belongs to the swift. In university, some students put in even more effort to graduate earlier than others of the same age as they want to finish their education as soon as possible. However, sometimes hurrying may not be possible nor wise. Some tasks require our patience to complete.

However, the Bible teaches we must have patience. We should ask God for patience to press on in prayer and to wait on the Lord for His plan to be shown to us in His time. Patience is good for us as it tests our temperance and strengthens our faith. The great evangelist William Carey had a heart for India. He loved the Indian people although they were initially not receptive to the Word of God. Do you know how long he laboured before there was the first Indian convert to Christianity? Seven years! Carey was patient. Would you be patient if God needs you to be?

Thought: May I learn patience from Jesus.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me patience as that is not my usual self. Help me, Heavenly Father, for I know it is a very hard thing to do. Only You can help me, so I ask for Your wisdom and patience. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



## ADD TO PATIENCE, GODLINESS

To patience must be added godliness. Godliness is having the ways of God in the soul of a child. Is it difficult to achieve? Of course! Is it impossible — no! But it can only be achieved if you press on and have patience in your life.

There is no greater commendation for a Christian than to be called “godly”. One may be a dedicated Sunday School teacher for the Lord, or a talented youth leader, or an inspiring preacher. But to call someone “godly” is to say he is a reflection of the Most High God!

Glance through the past few days of RPG reading and you will notice godliness does not arrive early but will need to be carefully nurtured by careful knowledge and application of the Bible

Godliness can be seen in the choices we make.

What choices would you prefer? Shade your choice.

**Likes to attend church  
on Sunday**

**Drags feet to church,  
prefers staying at  
home to watch television**

**Brags about holiday  
destinations**

**Whether destination  
is near or far,  
thanks God for holiday**

**Does Quiet Time  
regularly and  
feels Holy Spirit  
grievance when  
skipping Quiet Time**

**Cannot remember  
the last time Quiet  
Time was done**

**Spends money only on  
snacks, comics, toys**

**Tithes, spends money  
carefully and saves**

Thought: Godliness is putting God and the things of God first.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to live a godly life. I may be young but am not too young to grow close to You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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**ADD TO GODLINESS, BROTHERLY KINDNESS**

Have you read this poem?

*Kind hearts are the gardens,  
                   kind thoughts are the roots.  
 Kind words are the flowers,  
                   kind deeds are the fruits.  
 Take care of your garden,  
                   and keep out the weeds.  
 Fill it up with sunshine,  
                   kind words and kind deeds.*

Godly persons are also kind persons. This kindness is not just courtesy or being nice to others. It springs from a changed heart, a soul touched by the love of Christ. If a person is godly, he will know that God will want him to be kind and giving. This kindness is of a practical nature.

True religion is not just about mission work to some remote villages, or meditation of God's Word. A truly godly person will care for the poor and needy and be kind to the weak and slow.

Has anyone said you are kind? If yes, why were you considered kind? If no one has mentioned that you are kind, what are some of the reasons you believe that is so?

How can children show kindness to one another at the playground?

Perhaps you can think of a few ways.

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Thought: May I be kind!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give me a kind and caring heart. Remind me that as Jesus was kind, so should I be. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

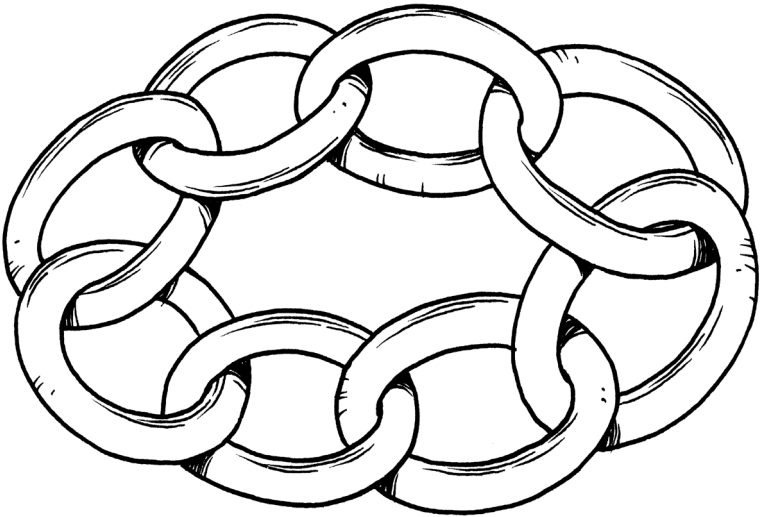
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## ADD TO BROTHERLY KINDNESS, CHARITY

The Apostle Paul exhorts us to grow in eight virtues. The last of these virtues is charity. “Charity” means love in action. It is a sacrificial form of love. It is the same kind of love that the Lord Jesus Christ has shown towards us in dying on the Cross for our sins. Here, Peter encourages us to love one another. But let our love not be like that of the world, for it should spring from a cleansed and renewed heart.

The ladder of Christian virtues must end in Christian love. To whom can you show love? Start with the family. Be respectful and grateful to parents, kind and considerate to siblings, generous and gracious to friends. We have been studying the list of virtues so far. Can you recall the list?

Fill in this golden chain of eight virtues starting with “faith”.



Thought: May I learn to love others just as God loves me.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to love, for You are love. It is only because of the great love You have for us that You sent Jesus. For that incomparable act of love and sacrifice, I am so grateful. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## WHY DO TEACHERS KEEP REPEATING?

Do you sometimes feel that the pastors, parents and teachers repeat what they say too often? In 2 Peter 1:12, Peter reminds readers to keep in remembrance the things they were taught. Why? Because he knows they are forgetful. How about you — are you not forgetful also?

Do you really live and walk with Jesus every day? Think about it this way. You have a pen pal who could come to Singapore for a few weeks. You take this opportunity to invite him to stay with you and both of you are so glad when your parents allow it. Although he has been around for a few weeks, something strange is happening — you are not speaking with him! Especially when you claim he is a friend, it is awkward. We often do that to Christ. We invite Him into our hearts, claiming that we will obey and love Him. And yet, many of us forget to talk to God and to read His Word.

Dear child, perhaps that is why your parents and Junior Worship teachers have to keep reminding you to be a good Christian child.

Name some frequently repeated Bible stories.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Have you been guilty of being impatient with such repetitions? Pray for forgiveness, that the Lord will teach you new things every time they are repeated.

Thought: Forgetful people, like me, need reminders.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to humbly learn the precious truths of Your Word. Also, please remind me there is so much to learn from Your word, so help me to be teachable each time I open the Bible, that Your truth will open my eyes. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**HOW MUCH CAN YOU REMEMBER AND SHARE?**

At the time of writing this epistle, Peter was not a young man. He mentions that he is in the earthly tabernacle, which is his physical body. He reminds us that our body is a tabernacle – temple – of God. Nonetheless, it is still physical and temporary, and will one day pass away. Having learnt so much from the Lord, he wants to share God with others.

How about you? You may think you have learnt quite a lot from the Bible. Do you take the effort to remember what you learned, and share it with others? Are you able to retell the Bible accounts of which you have been told many times?

Read Luke 15:11-32, the account of the Prodigal Son carefully. Then underline the key points of the story.

1. It tells of a father's love for his wayward son and compares it with God's love for sinners.
2. It shows the sins of the younger son.
3. It reveals to us how we need to humble ourselves before we repent.
4. It depicts the life and custom of the people at that time.

Also, are you able to retell the story to witness to sinners?

Thought: Remember God's Word to share it with others.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us Your Word. As Peter was so keen to share it with others, may I learn from him. Help me to study and remember the wonderful accounts in the Bible so that I may be able to tell it to others! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**BEWARE OF CUNNINGLY DEvised FABLES**

Satan has infiltrated the world with many cults or faiths that have a likeness to our faith, but are very different. You have to be careful and watch out for them. Some are doomsday cults — predicting a particular date Jesus will return and teach that they are to stop living their lives as they normally do, but perhaps sell all they have, contribute to the cult, and invite others to do so.

Others may add books to the Bible, saying that God’s revelation was not completed with the Bible but will need other books. But God warns us against adding to, or subtracting from, His Word. Deuteronomy 4:2 says “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.”

Still others teach the need to do good works in order to go to Heaven. But the Bible says in Ephesians 2:8-9, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

All these false teachings are what Peter calls “cunningly devised fables”. Satan is more cunning than we think. We have to be careful of him and men who follow him, for they can spin seemingly wonderful stories that sound believable. So, what can we do? Keep close to God through knowing His Word. We have to pay close attention when God’s Word is taught and add to our knowledge of His Word.

Thought: May I remain faithful to the Lord!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to be wise and learn much from You, and be careful of cults that teach wrong doctrines. Thank You for Your Word, and I pray that I will really treasure and learn from it so that I can detect wrong doctrines and not fall for them. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## EYEWITNESSES OF HIS MAJESTY

Some unbelievers think that the Gospel accounts, including the many miracles of Jesus, are not true. They think that these are just some fables. Peter here defends the gospel. He was personally selected by Jesus to be His disciple. He had a personal relationship with Jesus and had intimate knowledge of Him. He was with Jesus for three years and can be trusted as someone who was an eyewitness of the majesty of Christ! So, when we read this book as well as other books of the Bible, we can fully rely on them.

Peter also makes mention of a most important event, the Transfiguration of Christ. Remember Jesus chose Peter, James, and John to accompany Him up the Mount of Olives? There on the holy mount, our Lord was transfigured before the three of them. His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as light, exceeding white as snow. Then a voice from Heaven declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Both by sight and sound, our Lord's divine majesty was established beyond doubt.

Thought: What a privilege to learn from Peter who saw Jesus personally!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to know that the Bible is true, and apply this in my life. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**WE HAVE A MORE SURE WORD (1)**

Peter continues to defend the gospel with another powerful argument. He declares, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy”! Peter was referring to the Old Testament, as the New Testament was not completed at the time of Peter, since he was among others who were still writing the New Testament. In the Old Testament, there were prophecies of the First Coming of the Messiah of God, Immanuel. The Old Testament prophets foretold it, “The Saviour is coming!”

Then in New Testament times, God sent forth His Son, to be born of a virgin, to take on human form. With the other disciples, Peter saw the Messiah, walked with Him, worked with Him, witnessed His many wonderful acts, including His resurrection from the dead! Thus, we can say that the New Testament is a historical record of all those Old Testament prophecies being fulfilled: “The Saviour has come!” And if we add the Old Testament and the New Testament, what do we get? A complete Bible, God’s precious Word! So to us today, “a more sure word of prophecy” refers to the entire completed and perfect Word of God!

What does “a more sure word of prophecy” refer to?  
Circle the right answer.

**The Old Testament**  
**The New Testament**  
**The complete Bible**  
**Old writings**

Thought: Thank God I can read His Word, both the Old Testament and the New Testament, in such a simple way.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I trust the faithfulness and truthfulness of the Bible evermore. It is such a precious gift. I pray I will use and treasure it every day. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.



**WE HAVE A MORE SURE WORD (2)**

Patricia has been sad lately. She fell and hurt her knee badly, broke her mum's favourite vase when she was not careful the previous evening and was punished in school for something she did not do. To add to the list of unhappy things, she heard that her good friend Sok Cheng was hurt in an accident and had to be hospitalised. As she opened the Bible to do her Quiet Time, she thought how wonderful it would be if Jesus was there next to her and able to teach and comfort her. Sometimes we may feel the way Patricia did, don't we?

In today's text, however, we read that Peter did not feel that way. Peter, who had been with Jesus for three years, learning from, and living with, the perfect Son of God, wrote that we have a "more sure word of prophecy" – in other words, better than his personal experience of being with Jesus! What is this "more sure word"? We remember it is the Bible – the blessed Book we can hold in our hands.

Dear child, when you feel down and sad like Patricia and hope to be able to have Jesus next to you, remember these words of Peter – that to have the Bible is "more sure". What is the Bible "more sure" than? Experience! From Peter, who experienced Jesus for three years, we have the wise words that it is better to trust in the written Word of God than personal experiences of man.

Thought: How I must love the Bible!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You so much for the Bible. May I learn to treasure and love it, and may I be faithful to have my daily Quiet Time and prayer. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## FALSE PROPHETS AND TEACHERS

The church has never been free from false prophets and teachers. Whenever God's work is growing, the Devil will be displeased and will want to devise something against it. While God sends true prophets and servants, the Devil sends deceivers to wreck the work. The Apostle warns us against false teachers and the heresies they teach. They are like deadly poison.

One of the most poisonous animals in the world is a small (about 2 cm long) frog called the poison arrow frog. Found in Central and South America, this frog can be very dangerous although it does not look dangerous. Just two micrograms of toxin from the poison arrow frog are enough to kill a human. A 'microgram' is a very small amount. The ink in the period (or full stop) at the end of this sentence will weigh around six micrograms.

Now knowing the danger that poison arrow frogs can pose, would you keep them as pets? Would you even go near them? Of course not!

In the same way, we must be wary of false doctrines. Pray for your church, that the Lord will keep it faithful, that God will give you wise and godly leaders, not false teachers and prophets. It is so easy to take our leaders for granted. Whether pastors or elders, deacons or Junior Worship teachers, they need our prayer support and encouragement. They are fighting a tough battle and so be part of the battle against false teachers by praying for our own leaders!

Thought: Lord, protect us from false teachers.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I be grateful for my leaders and pray for them that they be not tired in the fight against the wrong. Help me also to support them, to encourage them in ways that I can to assure them they are not alone in the battle for the truth. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## PUNISHMENT FOR THE FALSE TEACHERS

It is sad but many follow the way of falsehood. Even among churches, not many still teach the good old fundamental truths they may have held on to in the past. Why is this the case? What has happened? Two words: false teachers.

In 2 Peter 2:4, Peter gives the illustration of the punishment of the fallen angels to show the destruction that God will bring to sinners, especially those who lead others astray. God will cast them down to Hell where they will be bound in chains of darkness, waiting for further judgment and punishment. While they are there, they will suffer much pain and anguish; their misery is an unending one. Similarly, in verses 5 and 6, the ungodly in the time of Noah and Lot were also not spared; God in judgment sent water and fire, respectively, to destroy them.

There is the story of an old man who did not believe in Hell. He told that to his Christian grandchild who was sad his grandfather did not believe in Jesus. The old man declared, "I'm 80 years old and I have not seen a place called 'Hell' and therefore cannot believe in it." His 8-year-old grandson, who had been listening intently, asked, "But grandpa, have you ever been dead yet?"

Was he not a wise child to understand that?

Dear child, may you be given the wisdom to trust in God and to take Him at His Word, that there will be severe punishment for false teachers in Hell, where there is eternal fire and brimstone.

Thought: It is an awful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, keep me from falling into sin and disobedience. Help me realise the seriousness of sin and keep away from it as well as from false teachings. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## DON'T YOU FEEL VEXED?

The Bible in 2 Peter 2:7, 8 tells us that Lot, the nephew of Abraham, was vexed. To be vexed is to feel bad and not at ease. The idea is one of great unrest and discomfort. It also means that a person is distressed, annoyed, and troubled. Why was Lot feeling this way? It was because he lived in an evil place called Sodom. As he was a believer and the Holy Spirit lived in him, he knew the things happening around him were dishonouring to God. Yet, he remained in Sodom as that was where his home and business were.

When you see evil around, does that trouble you? When you mix with children who are unkind, disobedient to parents and sloppy in schoolwork, do you feel out of place? If not, that is a dangerous sign. Why? Because if you are a Christian, the Holy Spirit in you will move you to feel vexed in such company or place. However, if you do not feel vexed, perhaps the Holy Spirit is not even in you, which will mean that you are not saved!

To be vexed means you are sensitive to sin, you know the sin happening around you is wrong, and that you want to do something about it. To be sensitive to sin is one of the signs of a true Christian, because the Holy Spirit will automatically prompt the believer into a distaste or dislike for things that are sinful.

If your friends are unkind to a new child in the group, you will feel vexed because you know that is not the right thing to do. If your classmates gang up to cheat someone, you will not want to join them because you know that will bring dishonour to your Heavenly Father.

Thought: May we feel vexed for the cause of Christ.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, keep me from bad company and teach me to be sensitive to sin, so that I will stay away from people who will influence me in a negative way. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## THE LORD KNOWS HOW TO DELIVER THE GODLY

In yesterday's devotion, you learnt about how vexed Lot was over Sodom's sins. It was Lot's own decision in choosing to stay in Sodom that brought about vexation upon him. You also learnt that as a Christian, you will feel vexed or troubled when you see evil around you. This is despite the fact that you did not choose to be where evil is present. Some of you may be troubled for example, by ungodly behaviour of other children whether in school or elsewhere. You must realise that the world that we live in is waxing worse and worse in evil and we will see more and more of it in the days to come.

Today's verse provides great encouragement to Christians who are vexed or troubled. 2 Peter 2:9a says, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation..." God knows how to deliver us out of our troubles. Just as he delivered Lot from Sodom, He is certainly able to deliver you and me out of our troubles. The Bible also tells us that God will not let trials and temptations to overwhelm us (1 Corinthians 10:13). He will provide us with grace to bear. This is because God loves His children.

You may wonder why the wicked who commit evil deeds seem to escape unpunished. Does that also make you wonder whether God had forgotten their misdeeds? Well, God is a just God. 2 Peter 2:9b tells us "... and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." Even if the unjust or wicked appear to be unpunished in their life on earth, God reserves them or keeps them for the day of judgment. When the Lord returns in His Second Coming, He will certainly punish the rebellious and unrepentant sinners. Their punishment will be swift and sure.

Thought: God loves me and cares for me!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the assurance that You care for the godly and will punish the wicked. May I look forward to the soon return of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## CONSIDER THE LIFE OF FALSE TEACHERS

You may have heard in the news some time back about a Singaporean lawyer who stole about ten million dollars of his clients' money and fled Singapore. Up till today, he is still missing. Those cheated by him included a jewellery store which lent him a lot of precious stones, but the most affected victims were a couple who had given him millions of dollars to buy a house, but had those millions stolen.

Although he stole a lot of money, the people at least now know the truth. False teachers of God's Word are a lot worse than errant lawyers. False teachers of God's Word harm and destroy souls, and the people will know only when it is too late. Is it difficult to detect these false teachers?

What does 2 Peter 2:17 mean when it says that false teachers are "wells without water"? Wells are dug for the sole purpose of collecting and storing water. If wells are without water, they are useless. Likewise spiritual teachers are to teach us the Bible and warn us about going against the Lord. When these false teachers do not teach us the truth, they are like "wells without water". 2 Peter 2:18 tells us they "speak great swelling words of vanity". Many false teachers are eloquent enough to sway crowds. However, eloquence is not the factor to see whether someone is right or wrong. These teachers are eloquent but what they speak are just empty words without real spiritual substance.

So dear child, do not be too impressed with eloquent words, but listen out for truthful words of spiritual substance and speak with a trusted Junior Worship teacher if you are unsure. This is the way to see whether the spiritual teacher is a false one or otherwise.

Thought: May I beware of false spiritual teachers.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, grant me the wisdom to see right from wrong, to be able to discern truth from falsehood. This I know is difficult for a child my age, and so I commit this into Your hands. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## HAVE A PURE MIND

In South America, there is a curious little spider that does not live like other species of spiders — it has its home underwater! It forms a bubble around itself, like a diving bell, and then it sinks to the bottom of a pond or river. It will remain there for hours, living below the water, and yet breathing the air it took from above! The amazing thing is when it returns to the surface, it will be found to be perfectly dry. Not the slightest moisture would have penetrated its capsule. It is in the water and yet separate from it.



In a way, that is how we should live our lives. This fantastic diving-bell spider actually is a land creature, but with the bubble, it is able to live below water. We are to be heavenly citizens but need to live on earth. Very often, we find it difficult to keep our minds pure, and our lives holy. May the Word of God and faith that we have be like this spiritual bubble that surrounds us, and that protects us from the stain of this world. Would it not be wonderful if we can be free from the stain of sin and shame?

Thought: May I be like the diving-bell spider that lives in water!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for that account of the spider that can still remain dry although it lives in water. Help me realise I can still be pure and holy even if I live in this sin-stained world. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## A PURE MIND IS A MIND OF GODLY REMEMBRANCE

A pure mind (recall yesterday's reading?) is to have a mind full of the things of God. This means to be mindful of the words spoken by the prophets and the Apostles. It means to be mindful of the commandments of God.

To be mindful of God's Word also means we have to diligently study the Word of God which alone instructs us and directs us to the way in which we should go. Pay attention in class when the Junior Worship teacher teaches and do your Quiet Time diligently. Then, as you go to school or interact with family or friends, remember and do what God wants you to do!

On an average day, how much time do you take to do these:

1. Complete school homework?
2. Relax (read leisure book, play games, watch TV etc.)?
3. Read God's Word?

Sometimes we get nightmares. Often, this is because we watched something scary on the television or heard someone tell a frightening story. Then we think about it and these thoughts enter our mind even at night, causing us to have nightmares.

If we fill our mind with the things of God, we would then be thinking more about the things of God! If instead we are too preoccupied with schoolwork or entertainment, our minds will be filled with these things!

Dear child, how then do we have "godly remembrance"? One good method is to memorise Bible verses. Then as we commit the verses to memory, our mind would repeat these words and they will bring comfort to us. For a start, try remembering today's text in 2 Peter 3:2, "That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour."

Thought: We must fill our minds with the right things.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, let me fill my mind with Your truth so that it can guide me to love You and Your Word more. Help me be more diligent in memorising Bible verses. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



**JESUS IS COMING AGAIN!**

If you try talking to people about the Rapture, or about Jesus' second coming, you will find that many do not take you seriously. Some may laugh at you; They think it is ridiculous. These people are called scoffers.

Some of these scoffers might even claim to be Christians. They come from churches which do not teach the Rapture or the Second Coming of Christ. Their pastors and teachers do not talk about them. Thus, their members are ignorant of the doctrine of the Last Days, about the Rapture and the Second Coming. However, to those of us who believe this doctrine, it is a precious promise and our blessed hope. We look forward to that glorious day when we shall see Christ in all His glory.

The Rapture will take place in the most unexpected of times and will be a time when all Christians on earth will be raised up to Heaven by the Lord Himself. Jesus Himself will be so glad to see us that He will meet us halfway! Seven years after the Rapture, Jesus will come again, and this is commonly called The Second Coming; giving us a wonderful hope.

The doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ is a blessed doctrine because:

1. It gives \_\_\_\_\_ (orygl) to Christ who will physically and spiritually be Kings of kings and Lord of lords.
2. It prepares us to live \_\_\_\_\_ (olhy) lives as we wait for His coming.
3. It gives us \_\_\_\_\_ (ealz) to serve the Lord fervently knowing that Christ will come soon.

Thought: Be a believer, not a scoffer.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, grant me grace to wait and work as I wait for the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus. I know I must persevere and with Your help, I will! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## PATIENCE OF THE LORD

Time is not the same to God as it is to man. To God, a thousand years can be as one day. Man is bounded by time but God is not.

However, the main reason for God's patience in His Second Coming, is His mercy to many people who are not saved yet. The years God gives the world is a further opportunity for men to repent and turn to Him.

When men are slow to fulfill their promises, they are slack. But with God, it is an indication of His longsuffering to us. He is allowing time for more men to repent. God's great loving heart is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But when He finally comes, it will be an earth-shaking event!

And you know, Jesus is coming again soon. There are a few signs that have been fulfilled, and they point to the imminent return of Jesus. These are some of them:

1. The number of wars, famines and earthquakes has risen in recent years. You will recall the great Japanese Tsunami (2011) and the Shanghai earthquake (2008) and the many wars in the world.
2. Pestilences abound - SARS, bird flu, mad cow disease, nipah virus in pigs as well as dengue fever.
3. The gospel has been preached to every corner of the world, possible only with modern technology.

Thought: Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I be occupied with You and Your Kingdom while I wait for the Second Coming of Christ. As I see the signs of His coming, may I really determine in my heart to be a good Christian. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH

Some of you may have heard about global warming. Some scientists speculate that this increase in the earth's temperature in turn creates a huge warming effect that melts icecaps and eventually, many coastal cities of the world will be destroyed by water. This, coupled an increasing number of disasters around the globe, led the United Nations to warn



that this earth is entering into a spiral of self-destruction. Will this be the way that the earth will be destroyed? The Bible tells otherwise. It is true that the earth will eventually be destroyed. But how it is to be destroyed is where the difference lies; the Bible in 2 Peter 3:12 says the earth will be destroyed by God through fire.

The Apostle Peter clearly says that the whole world, and all the works that are therein, will be burnt up. How then should we live our lives? Should we not prepare for the new Heaven and the new earth to come?

We could prepare for the new Heaven and the new earth by living a holy life and obeying God's commandments. We strive for God's Kingdom, witnessing and inviting our friends to Junior Worship or Vacation Bible School because they will hear the Gospel. We give out tracts wherever possible, and we also share our testimony of how God saved us. We do all we can to extend God's Kingdom and tell the Gospel to our unsaved friends and loved ones.

Thought: Remember you are a citizen of Heaven!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to live like a citizen of Heaven, not of earth as I await the Second Coming of Christ. I know this will be tough to do, and that is why I need Your help. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## CAN WE BE BLAMELESS?

Reading today's verse may surprise some of you. How can we ever be sinless and spotless and blameless? Is this verse teaching us that we can be perfect? No! Instead, it is teaching us to live lives that are holy, pleasing before God so much so that others will not be able to find fault with us. The purpose in doing so is to bear a good witness to the unbelieving world.

If we are serious about living a committed Christian life, we must, as taught in yesterday's reading, believe that there would be a new Heaven and a new earth for us. We may have been blessed with a delightful family and wonderful friends. You may be much loved and blessed. But no matter how blessed life on earth is, we must not forget this is a temporary home; Our real home is in Heaven. And when we have that in mind, we would have a new perspective of our lives in a practical way.

There was a girl called Tracy. Tracy was heartbroken when her father told the family a year ago he had cancer of the lungs. The family was devastated. Dad did not smoke and was a happy and committed Christian, and yet God allowed this illness. Although only ten years old, Tracy wanted to know why God would allow this dreadful illness to afflict her precious daddy? And she never had the courage to ask Dad until one day when the two of them were alone at home. She summoned the courage and asked Dad. Although weak with the illness, Dad smiled and told Tracy to turn to 2 Peter 3:14, our text for today! And what did Dad say? He taught his precious little girl that if we fix our eyes on heavenly things and know that everything on earth would not last, we would love the things God wants us to love. We would also rely on God for everything, and through leaning on God alone, be in peace and eventually become mature Christians, even if one has cancer. Tracy never forgot that lesson...

Thought: May I grow to be a mature Christian.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I would love to grow in my Christian walk and I pray that I may always have the right focus on Jesus and heavenly things. In that way, I may mature and be at peace with things around me, even if difficulties come my way. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

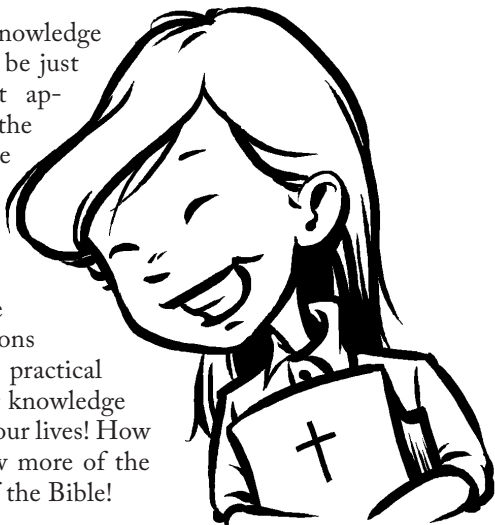
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## GROW IN GRACE AND KNOWLEDGE

The Lord is coming, and He is going to see how you have lived your life. Will the way you live be approved, and commended by Him? To win His acceptance and praise, you must be diligent in living a holy life now.

We must grow in two ways — in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus. These two are interlinked. The more we know about Jesus, the more we will know how wonderful God is, and the more we will know how to live our lives. It is only when we can have more grace together with a higher level of spiritual understanding of the Word that we can mature as believers.

We cannot grow in knowledge alone, because this would be just head knowledge without applying what we know of the Bible in our lives. At the same time, we cannot live a strong Christian life without knowing more of God's Word. So as Peter ends his epistle, he gives us useful instructions that our faith has to be practical and based on the growing knowledge of God's Word applied in our lives! How wonderful if we can know more of the Bible and live out more of the Bible!



Thought: Know and live out God's Word!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I want to grow in the grace and knowledge of You, and if I do that, I know I will be more loving, more prayerful and joyful. In other words, I will be more like Jesus every day! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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