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## ELIJAH THE PROPHET



Have you heard of Elijah? He was a mighty prophet when King Ahab and his son Ahaziah ruled over Israel, the northern kingdom. Both kings were idol worshippers. So God sent Elijah to rebuke them for Israel's idolatry.

Elijah did not have the fear of man, not even of kings. God answered all his prayers and gave him power to perform miracles. Yet, there were times when he felt alone, weak and afraid. When Jezebel, Ahab's wife, wanted to kill him, he ran like crazy for his life. In fact, he ran a very long distance from Jezreel

in the north, to Beersheba in the south. Well, the Bible says that he was "a man subject to like passions as we are". It means that he was like any of us. He also had feelings of discouragement and fear at times. Though Elijah trusted God, there were times when he felt that God was not with him.

No matter how Elijah felt, God never left Elijah. He raised Elijah up again from his despair, supplied all his needs of food during the drought, gave him rest and assured him of His presence. We have a wonderful God. So, whenever we feel afraid and God seems so far away, let us overcome this feeling with earnest prayers.

Look at the picture of this prophet above. Draw in the hairy beard and circle the girdle of leather about his loins.

These two features identify him as Elijah.

Thought: Godly men pray fervently and God is with Christians always.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to pray fervently, and to believe that You answer prayers. This I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

## IDOLATRY IN THE NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

All the kings of the northern kingdom of Israel were wicked and did evil in the sight of the Lord. But Ahab did the most evil among them. He actively promoted all forms of idolatry in Israel.

Ahab married Jezebel, the daughter of the pagan king of the Zidonians, named Eth-baal. Ahab followed her in the worship of Baal and all the idols that she had placed rampantly throughout Israel, especially in Samaria, the capital city. Jezebel ambitiously promoted the worship of her idols and idolatry spread throughout the land. Ahab sinned against God. He broke both the First and Second Commandments. He worshipped false gods instead of the true and living God and made all sorts of graven images. These sins of Israel angered God. He sent Prophet Elijah to prophesy a drought over the nation.

What is an idol? It is a statue or object that people bow down to worship or pray to. It also refers to anything or anyone in your life that you love more than God. It could be your computer games, your studies, a friend or a favourite singer or movie star. It is wonderful to memorise the Ten Commandments because it will help us not to sin against God. Do you know them?

It is very clear from Exodus 20:4 that we should not worship idols. Write this verse down and try to keep it in your heart:

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Thought: God hates idolatry the most.

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, help us to worship only Thee all our lives. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

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## ELIJAH'S FIRST PROPHECY BEFORE KING AHAB

Israel, under the rule of King Ahab, had turned her back on God and gone to worship other gods. The Jews were steeped in idolatry. In mercy, God raised prophets to warn His people to repent of their sins and to foretell His punishment if they continue to sin. God sent Elijah to tell Ahab that God will shortly send a drought to punish the nation.

We learnt from Jesus in Luke 4:25 that the drought lasted for 3 years and 6 months. Imagine that – such a long drought! There would be so much suffering among the people. During a drought, when cattle and plants perish, there would be shortage of food and water. Put yourself in Elijah's shoes. He had to appear before an evil king to deliver such a piece of bad news. Will you not be trembling with fear? One word from Ahab could send Elijah's head rolling.

Elijah was truly brave. He believed that God will be with him always and confident that God will protect him. We too can have this confidence. What can we learn from Elijah? We can be sure that as long as we are doing what God wants us to do, man cannot harm us.

In Matthew 21:12 we read of a courageous deed of Jesus.

Write it down. Do you know why it is considered courageous?

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Thought: We must fear God rather than man.

Prayer: Our Father in Heaven, give me courage to serve Thee. It is often not easy, but with the help of the Holy Spirit, I'll try my best! In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

## GOD'S PROMISE OF RAIN AND WARNING AGAINST IDOLATRY

When God sent Elijah to prophesy a drought, there seemed to be no prior warning. It seemed like God did not give them a chance to repent. Let us look into history to help us find out the truth.

In Deuteronomy, we find that God had spoken to the people of Israel through Moses, long before they entered the Promised Land. They were told to diligently keep God's commandments and to love the Lord their God and to serve Him with all their heart and soul. When they serve God whole-heartedly, God will bless them with rain in due season and they will have plentiful harvests. Their cattle will thrive as they can feed on the grass which will be green and abundant. But, He also warned them against worshipping other gods and idols. This is a very important "but". If they do not serve the Lord God whole-heartedly, He will be angry. God is a jealous God who wants them to be faithful. If they become unfaithful, God will shut the windows of heaven and there will be no rain. Both crops and people will perish. In other words, there will be droughts and famines.

God instructed them to keep His Word in their hearts and in their souls. They must teach their children and all future generations to remember it forever. Alas! The kings and people of Israel (the northern kingdom) became more and more disobedient and idolatrous over time. King Ahab was especially evil under the influence of Jezebel, his wife.

Fill in the blanks. (Words to help: commandments, worship, trust, idols, bless)

To be faithful to God, means to \_\_\_\_\_ and pray to only the Lord God. We must not have any other gods or \_\_\_\_\_ in our minds. We must diligently love and keep God's \_\_\_\_\_. It will please God if we \_\_\_\_\_ and obey Him. He will \_\_\_\_\_ us.

Thought: God will bless me if I keep His commandments.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to worship only You. It is easy to love other things more – perhaps it could be some TV program, or studies, or computer games. Give me the strength Heavenly Father to love only You. This I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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## WHAT MADE ELIJAH SO COURAGEOUS?

It took much courage for Elijah to confront the evil king, Ahab with God's harsh words. His life was at stake because the king had the power to kill him. Ever wondered why he was so bold?

The Bible tells us that Elijah prayed earnestly and God answered all his prayers. For God to answer his prayers, he must have prayed according to God's will. What does that mean? That means he knew what God wanted him to do. So, we can say that he lived a godly life. He knew and kept God's word in his heart and kept listening for God's orders. He was ever ready to carry out God's orders. Elijah knew that the God he was worshipping is the same powerful God who parted the Red Sea for the children of Israel and drowned the pursuing Egyptians. He is the same God who fed the two million in the wilderness with manna for forty years. He believed that the same almighty God will protect him.

Elijah believed that God's words will come true. Therefore, he was not afraid to say the harsh words to even the king! Do you believe God's Word will come true? If so, children, would you not want to share with others? May you be bold to speak the truth about God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Write out the harsh words that Elijah spoke to King Ahab.

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Thought: Every Christian must boldly share the Gospel with unbelievers.

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, give me the courage to tell others about the Lord Jesus, our only Saviour. For all that He has done for me, this is the little I can do. In Jesus' precious name I pray. Amen.

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## GOD PROTECTS AND PROVIDES FOR ELIJAH.

After Elijah had spoken to Ahab, God told him to turn eastward and hide himself by the brook Cherith which was just before Jordan. Elijah obeyed God and went as directed.

By the brook of Cherith, something unusual happened. You must have fed a bird or birds before. But have you ever experienced a bird bringing you food? Elijah did! Ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and evening. Ravens are large glossy black species of crows. They are known to be greedy. You would expect these birds to eat up the food before Elijah could even notice! It is indeed a miracle that they delivered food to Elijah. Only God, the Creator of heaven and earth, has the power to make ravens do that. The brook which is a little stream, supplied drinking water for Elijah.

God knows our every need and lovingly provides for us. See how He provided Elijah with a safe place to rest, his meals and water. He even knows our future needs. As we read more about Elijah's experience, we will find God never fails to protect and provide for His children.



Colour the ravens black and the water in shades of blue.

Thought: God knows our every need!

Prayer: Thank you Heavenly Father for Your daily provisions. Thank you for blessing me daily so I will have no lack in my life. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

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## GOD WILL ALWAYS PROVIDE FOR THE GODLY

While Elijah was in hiding by the brook of Cherith, many people in Israel were starving. Their suffering was caused by their sin of idolatry. But there were some godly prophets who were hidden and fed with food and water. God never fails to provide for the righteous!

Just as God provided for Elijah, God will always provide for those who trust in Him. Philippians 4:19 tells us that God will supply all our needs. There are many overseas students studying in Far Eastern Bible College, Singapore who can testify how God provided for them and their families at home. Many come from poor countries. When God called them into full-time Christian service, they had to give up their jobs, leave their homes and come to be trained in Singapore. Every one of them shared how God met their needs and provided lovingly. God sent generous people into their lives to give and support them financially and in many ways. They know that God is faithful and will always supply all their needs as long as they obey God.

Children, your parents may lose their jobs at times. Do not be anxious. Pray and wait for God's provision. There was a man named George Muller. He built an orphanage for 5,000 orphans and never had to approach anyone for donations. That was because George Muller approached the richest person in the whole universe. Who is He? God. George Muller simply prayed and waited on God, and all his needs, and those of the 5,000 orphans were met without fail!

Look up Psalm 34:10 and write it down. The word, 'want', means 'lack' or 'short of'.

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Thought: The Lord provides in many ways.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for sending kind friends when I needed help and for Thy promise that I will always have enough. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

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## ELIJAH AT ZAREPHATH

As the drought lasted for 3 years and 6 months, the water in the brook Cherith also gradually dried up. Perhaps we will not be able to fully understand that for we have never experienced a drought. A drought often results in famine and death. However, without a doubt, God continued to care for Elijah. This time, God directed him to Zarephath at Zidon. This town is on the coast and all the way to the west of Israel. It is also the place where Jezebel, king Ahab's wife, came from.

Imagine that! Needless to say, Zarephath was a pagan place full of idols. Yet God sent Elijah there. If that was not surprising enough, God said that He had commanded a widow to provide food and lodging for him. Widows were the poorest people because they had no husbands to provide for them. Guess what? The Bible said, "So, he arose and went to Zarephath." Elijah did not hesitate. As soon as he heard God, he obeyed. He never questioned God. Very often, we think we know better than God. We don't even care to pray or seek God's help or direction when we face trouble. We often rely on our own wisdom. There is much to learn from Elijah.

As Elijah approached the gate of the city, he met the widow gathering sticks. God's timing is always perfect. When God calls someone to do His work, He will have a perfect plan for him. He will lead and guide his every step.

What did Elijah ask the widow to do?

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Thought: God will guide me all the way if I ask Him to. All I have to do is follow.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to seek Thy will for my life always and help me to obey Thee faithfully. Guide me each step of the way. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



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## LED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD

God has a plan for every one of us. His spirit will guide us step by step to fulfil it. We need to do our part by listening and obeying. For Elijah, God planned his meeting with the widow who will minister to him. When Elijah arrived at Zarephath. God made sure that the widow was at the gate to meet him at the right time. The moment when he saw her at the gate of the city, gathering sticks, he knew who she was.

When Elijah requested for water to drink, she promptly went to fetch some. It is amazing that she did it. Why? Because water was really scarce in a drought. Moreover, he was a stranger in that land. The widow did not hesitate because God had prepared her heart to do it.

Then Elijah asked for a morsel of bread. In response, she disclosed that she only had a handful of wheat flour and a bit of oil to make the last meal for her and her son. She was mentally prepared for both she and her son to die after that for they would have run out of food! Look at Elijah's reply, "Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and thy son." (1 Kings 17:13). If these words were not from God, do you think Elijah would have spoken them?

Let us test our memory in this exercise.

Write T for True and F for false against the statements below:

1. It was an accident that the widow was at the gate of the city when Elijah arrived. (     )
2. She was baking bread when Elijah met her. (     )
3. She and her son will have nothing to eat if they give Elijah the food. (     )
4. God made her to agree to give Elijah the last of her food. (     )
5. When they ate the food, there was nothing left. (     )

Thought: Our God is the God of the impossible!

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, help me to live each moment by faith in Thee. Teach me to trust in You in my studies too. This I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

## THE WIDOW WAS A WOMAN OF FAITH

The widow at Zarephath was very poor. She had nothing left to live on, but a handful of flour and a little oil for a last meal with her son. She had only sticks to make a fire with. Was she not in greater need of help than Elijah?

Yet, God sent Elijah to this poor widow to be taken care of. This is beyond human understanding. However, Elijah just trusted God and went as told. When the widow revealed that her food supply was almost fully used up, Elijah assured her that: “For thus saith the God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.” (1 Kings 17:14). Without a question or doubt, the widow just got up and made the cake Elijah asked for, before cooking for her son and herself. She acted in faith. She believed Elijah’s words were truly the words of God.

The widow lived by faith. God was so pleased by her faith that He blessed her with a never-ending supply of flour and oil. You can also live like this widow, trusting God to help you deal with bullies at school, give tithes no matter how little pocket money you have and overcome that addiction of computer games.

Share two lessons you have learnt. Look at 2 verses that may help you describe what you have learnt today: Luke 1:37 & Hebrews 11:6.

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Thought: Trusting God pleases Him.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to believe that You can help solve my problems because nothing is impossible with You. I may have problems at home, or in school. Help me to be like the widow – committing everything into Your loving hands. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

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## GOD THE CREATOR SUPPLIES FOR HIS PEOPLE

You would know the story of “Aladdin and his magic lamp”. It is just that – a story, a fairy tale. What about the story of a barrel of meal and the cruse of oil that did not run out until the rain came? It is a true account in history. It is recorded in the Bible which is God’s word. There are many of such accounts in the Bible about God’s special provision of daily needs for His people.

When God’s people were wandering for forty years in the wilderness, God supplied them with fresh manna daily and water. Even their clothing and footwear did not wear out. This is impossible today, and it is impossible for any human to reproduce, but with God, nothing is impossible. Another such miracle is recorded in the New Testament (Matthew 14:14-21). Jesus fed five thousand of His followers with just five loaves and two fishes given by a boy. This means that every time the disciples reached into the basket holding his loaves of bread, the loaves kept multiplying.

God never changes. Just as He provides for His people in the past, He will do the same today.

Complete this sentence.

\_\_\_\_\_ loaves and \_\_\_\_\_ fishes  
were able to feed \_\_\_\_\_ thousands  
of Jesus’ \_\_\_\_\_ .

Thought: God supplies our needs.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for supplying all my needs. Help me to trust You for all my needs. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

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## A TEST OF ELIJAH'S FAITH

Disaster suddenly struck in the widow's home. Her son fell sick and died. The widow was so grieved that she forgot how God had blessed them with food that had sustained them so far. She began to blame Elijah for her son's death. Her husband died, she was plagued with poverty, and now her only real love and possession in the world – her son – has died!

The widow at Zarephath thought her son's death was a punishment from God because Elijah's presence had reminded God of her sins. Being



a Gentile (a non-Jew), this woman of faith did not know God's Word well. God disciplines His children but punishes only those who ignore His warnings and willfully or purposely continue to sin by worshipping idols. She did not know that God was not punishing her, and has a very good purpose for her son's death.

Elijah was thus far respected by the widow. Now he suffered blame from her. It was a test of his faith. Elijah did not let his feelings distract him. He continued to exercise his faith. He prayed earnestly and a miracle happened.

How did Elijah raise the dead son of the widow? Read 1 Kings 17: 21.

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Thought: The prayers of a faithful man achieve much.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I seek Thee in prayer whenever I face a problem. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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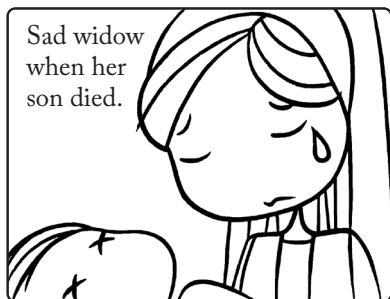
## ELIJAH PASSED THE TEST OF FAITH

God gave Elijah the power to raise a dead child to life. When the widow blamed him for her son's death, he must have felt miserable. But Elijah knew God's Word well and was confident that God had a purpose for the tragedy.

The first thing that Elijah did was to turn to God in prayer. He carried the child to his bed in the guest chamber. There, he cried to the Lord, "O Lord my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?" (1 Kings 17:20). He then stretched himself three times upon the boy and cried out to the Lord God to revive him. God then answered Elijah's prayer. The child was brought back to life! Can you imagine his mother's joy? It must have been such an amazing experience for them! She must have also learnt that when God forgives her sins, He will remember them no more.

The disaster turned into victory as Elijah turned to God in prayer. In times of trouble, we must follow Elijah's example. Faithfully pray for God's guidance.

Turn the sad widow into a smiling widow



Sad widow  
when her  
son died.

Smiling widow when her son  
became alive.

Thought: God will not remember my sins once I have confessed them.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to pray always, repent and confess every sin. I know I need Your forgiveness and cleansing every day. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## ELIJAH LIVED ACCORDNG TO GOD'S WORD

Many days after Elijah had raised the widow's son from the dead, God's word came to Elijah. "Go, shew thyself unto Ahab." The Bible says, "And Elijah went to show himself to Ahab." Elijah obeyed God's word without hesitation. He lived by God's word as it meant everything to him. Elijah was such a godly man. No wonder God could use him to be a mighty prophet.

God commanded Elijah to go into hiding, first at the brook of Cherith and then at Zarephath. Now, God sent him to go and face King Ahab at Samaria and to tell him that He would be sending rain. After more than three years of drought and famine, King Ahab's fury against Elijah must have reached its peak. His order to capture Elijah was sent to every nation and kingdom. Would it not be a sure death for Elijah if he were to show up before the king?

It is a marvel that Elijah did not worry a bit about his own life. All he cared about was to obey God's word. He trusted God with his whole heart. Do you know this is the way a Christian should live?

When Jesus was tempted by the devil to turn stones in the wilderness into bread, He quoted a verse from the book of Deuteronomy. Read Matthew 4:4 to write down what he said.

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Thought: To know God's will, we must know God's word.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be faithful in my daily reading of the Bible. Help me to persevere in the study Thy word and live by it. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## A MAN NAMED OBADIAH FEARS GOD



Obadiah was the governor of King Ahab's house. He is an interesting character. When the Bible first speaks of him, he was described as a God-fearing man who did a kind act to God's prophets while in King Ahab's service.

We know that he was serving the wicked King Ahab because he was ordered to go with Ahab to find grass to feed Ahab's horses and mules. The long drought had taken a toll on Ahab's horses and mules. The king had to go

personally to faraway places in the land to look for grass.

Obadiah feared God from his youth. That gave him courage to hide a hundred of God's prophets in caves where he supplied them with food and water. They were persecuted by Jezebel, Ahab's idolatrous and wicked queen. Obadiah took a stand for his faith although he did it in secret. God had caused the king and queen to be blind to his act. He was doing God's will in protecting the prophets. Can you guess who put Obadiah in the position of governor in King Ahab's household?

What three things have you learnt about Obadiah?

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

Thought: God will provide!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please give me the courage to stand up for You in times of trials and temptations. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## OBADIAH'S FEAR OF HIS EARTHLY MASTER

Obadiah was out searching for green grass with his master King Ahab. They separated to try to cover more ground. Elijah was led by the Spirit to where Obadiah was. Obadiah instantly knew he was Elijah though they had never met. How did they know? Was there email or Facebook then where they could have “linked up” before they met? No way! It was truly amazing how the Spirit of God works. Obadiah greeted Elijah with great respect saying, “Art thou that my lord Elijah?”

Elijah confirmed his own identity. He asked Obadiah to tell Ahab of his intention to speak to Ahab. Obadiah begged to be excused from the task. He feared that God might send Elijah elsewhere to protect him from Ahab after Obadiah had told Ahab of his whereabouts. Then, King Ahab might accuse him of lying and put him to death. For the last three years, King Ahab was so anxious to capture Elijah that he had issued his order far and wide. Obadiah's fear of his master was not without reason.

Understanding Obadiah's dilemma, Elijah gave his word. He would stay where he was till King Ahab came to meet him. Obadiah trusted this man of God and proceeded with his task. He feared God more than he feared his human master.

What words would you use to describe King Ahab as a master to his servants? Circle all the words.

**Reasonable   Fierce   Kind**

**Longsuffering   Cruel   Gentle**

**Unreasonable   Unforgiving**

**Uncaring   Short-tempered   Impatient**

Thought: How wonderful it would be for my parents' bosses to be as kind as our Lord Jesus.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank and praise Thee that we belong to Thee. Thou art the kindest master of all. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



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## THE STEPS OF A GOOD MAN

Psalm 37:23 says, “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighted in his way” What kind of man will God consider a good man?

King David was called a “man after God’s heart”. Obadiah did a good deed by hiding and taking care of a hundred godly prophets at the risk of his own life. Although doing good deeds does not make us good, Obadiah had a good motive. He feared God. Elijah sought God’s direction in everything and was obedient to God’s every command. There is something common among them:

1. God is in all their thoughts and they fully trust God.
2. God’s Word is in their hearts and they obey God’s every command.

These good men spent their lives doing what God wants them to do. God is pleased and guides them in every step they take. Do you want God to consider you a “good man”?

Design a poster with the words: The Steps of a Good Man are Ordered by the Lord.



Thought: When we trust and obey God, He guides our every step.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be a good child, and please guide my steps daily. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## GOD HAS CONTROL OVER ALL THINGS

God sent Obadiah to tell King Ahab to meet Elijah. King Ahab did not hesitate. As soon as he arrived, he spoke disrespectfully to God's messenger, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" Compare that to Obadiah's salutation.

Elijah immediately corrected King Ahab of his wrong accusation. He told King Ahab that it was the sins of Ahab and his forefathers that have brought the drought upon Israel. They had turned from worshipping God to worshipping "Baalim" - idols and false gods. God's anger was on Ahab and his idolatrous forefathers. Under normal circumstances, Elijah could have been killed by the king by now. But he was able to continue speaking to King Ahab. He requested Ahab to gather all four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and Jezebel's four hundred prophets of the groves, scattered throughout Israel, to meet him at Mt. Carmel.

Amazingly, King Ahab obeyed the order and later on at Mt Carmel, there was a great showdown between these ungodly prophets and Elijah. This could not have happened if God were not in control. God is always in control.

What forces do you think keep our earth spinning and rotating round the sun? What powers keep the sun in its place, and not move towards earth? If it did, life on earth would burn up for the sun's heat would be unbearable if it were nearer. How do we explain such things? Are they because of "luck"? No! The whole world is controlled and supported by God!

Thought: God is in control of all things.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for choosing me to be Your child. I know You are in control of all things. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## THERE IS ONLY ONE LIVING AND TRUE GOD

When the people of Israel and all the prophets of Baal had arrived at Mt. Carmel, Elijah rebuked the people for their double-mindedness. He pointed out that they would sometimes worship the God of Israel and sometimes Baal and other gods. He described them as “halting between two opinions” (vs 21).

Elijah stood alone on the Lord’s side. He worshipped only the one true God of Israel. He challenged the people to make a decision to serve whoever they considered to be God – either the God of Israel or Baal. There was no answer. Then Elijah proposed a contest between himself and all the prophets of Baal and the other gods, to help them see who is God. Both sides would prepare a sacrifice each and the God or god who answers by sending down fire to consume the sacrifice would be God. All approved of his proposal.

What about you? Have you decided to be on the Lord’s side? Remember Jesus’ words. He says that no man can serve two masters. You cannot serve God and money, or anything money can bring.

Draw a figure to represent yourself and place it where you want to be in the picture...

ONLY ON  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
sandsandsand THE SOLID ROCK I STAND sandsandsandsand  
sandsandsandsand

Thought: There is only one true God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may Thou truly be the Lord of my life. Help me to understand the meaning of that word, “Lord”, for it means I have to submit to You in everything! In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## NO ANSWER FROM BAAL

The people of Israel agreed that the contest would be a fair method to tell who is truly more powerful – the God of Elijah or Baal. The true God will have the power to send down fire on the sacrifice.

Each party had to prepare a bullock and lay it onto the wood with no fire beneath. Baal's prophets were told to begin first. Elijah was confident that the Lord's answer would be instant. He knew no matter how much time the four hundred and fifty prophets take, they would not get an answer. From morning till noon, they called out to Baal. Then, they began to leap and dance around the altar. What a ruckus! Past noon, Elijah mocked them; suggesting that they cry louder because their god could be meditating, gone on a journey or fallen asleep! Closer to evening, they were desperate and began cutting themselves with knives and swords till blood gushed out. They did this to show to their "god" they were sincere and need his help. Still, there was not even a whimper from Baal.

That was not surprising at all. We know that idols have no power of their own and cannot even talk or walk. But today, idolaters still carry out the senseless acts like the prophets of Baal who never got an answer.

Unscramble the words in the brackets.

You will find out more about idols:

1. Idols are made by \_\_\_\_\_ (anm).
2. They have no \_\_\_\_\_ (owerp) of their own.
3. They may have ears but they cannot \_\_\_\_\_ (eahr).
4. Idols cannot \_\_\_\_\_ (nsaerw) prayers.

Thought: Idols have ears that hear not, eyes that see not.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thou art worthy of worship for Thou art the only true and living God. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## THE ONLY TRUE GOD ANSWERS PRAYER



Elijah called out to the people of Israel to gather near so that they could witness him offering the sacrifice to the God of Israel.

First, he repaired the old altar of the Lord that was broken down. He rebuilt it with twelve stones, which represent the twelve tribes from the sons of Jacob. He also built a trench round the altar. He prepared a bullock and to show God is fully in control of the elements, ordered four barrels of water to be poured over the sacrifice three times! Wow - in total, twelve barrels were poured and water filled the trench. Next, Elijah waited till it was time for the offering of the evening

sacrifice before he approached the altar.

Elijah addressed the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He prayed that God will show that He is the Lord God of Israel. And, it was according to His word that Elijah had gathered the people and offered the evening sacrifice. Do you notice that all of his prayer was for God's glory? When God answered with fire that consumed the sacrifice and dried up the trench, the people fell on their faces and acknowledged the Lord God. For He alone can answer prayers.

Write down two amazing things that happened after Elijah prayed to God.

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

Thought: God answers prayer!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, all glory belongs to You. Thank You for all Thy wondrous works and most of all, for saving me! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## ELIJAH RAN FOR HIS LIFE

The victory at Mt. Carmel was spectacular. Elijah ordered the people to capture and kill all the prophets of Baal. Then, he went up to Mt. Carmel to pray for rain and rain came down in abundance just as he had prophesied to King Ahab. The people seemed to have turned from worshipping idols to worshipping the God of Israel. Everything seemed to be going well.

Then the shocking news came - Jezebel wanted his life. Apparently, King Ahab had reported to his wife all of Elijah's deeds, including the slaying of her prophets. The Bible says that Elijah got up and ran for his life. Surprised? The courageous prophet, who had stood against hundreds of God's enemies and the nation of Israel, now panicked and decided to run for his life. After all the experience of the Lord's protection and provisions, what had happened to his courage?

Actually, we should not be surprised. Remember Elijah is human like us. He had weaknesses too. He had expected the people who witnessed the miracle at Mt Carmel to have repented and been converted, but none stood on his side when Jezebel threatened him. When he realised that they had not repented, he felt disappointed. His work as a prophet seemed to have come to nought. Do we not sometimes feel like running away from our troubles?

Look at the picture and answer these questions.



Who is praying?

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Who is looking for the rain?

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Who ran in the rain before Ahab?

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Thought: Run to God for He will help!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You know that even a brave prophet like Elijah can be afraid. Help me to turn to You when I am fearful. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## GOD SHOWED ELIJAH MERCY

You must know what a marathon is. It is a very tough and long race of about 42 km or 26 miles. Wow – 26 miles – that is very long. But do you know? Elijah ran a distance almost four times that because he ran a hundred-mile-long marathon, from Jezreel in the north all the way to Beersheba in the south. He was desperate to get away from Jezebel. Leaving his servant in Beersheba, he traveled for another day into the wilderness. Then, he came to rest under a juniper tree. There, he requested the Lord to take his life. He felt that his ministry as a prophet had failed and he could be of no more use to God. Then he fell asleep.

Don't we sometimes think we fail, like Elijah did? Don't we sometimes tell God what to do instead of asking Him to tell us what we should do? So, what was God's answer to Elijah's request? He sent an angel to wake Elijah up to eat the cake and to drink the water brought to him. He did and fell asleep again. It was obvious that God's answer was no. The angel of the Lord was sent a second time and said to him, "Arise and eat: because the journey is too great for thee." God sustained him with food that would give him sufficient strength for his journey to Mt. Horeb that would last for forty days and forty nights. God knew where he intended to go.

Previously, Elijah would go wherever God commanded him to. Now, he went to the wilderness on his own accord. It was not ordered by God. Yet God showed him mercy.

Fill in the blanks:

Elijah was so lonely, tired and discouraged that he wanted to \_\_\_\_\_. But the Lord did not want him to die and so the Lord sent angels to give him \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

Thought: God decides when we are born and when we die.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, all power is in Thy hands. May Thy goodness and mercy follow me all the days of my life. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## GOD WAS LONG-SUFFERING TOWARDS ELIJAH

Elijah stayed in a cave at Mt. Horeb. We know that it was not a command from God. In fact, God came to ask him what he was doing at Mt. Horeb.



It was an opportunity for Elijah to pour out his frustrations to God. His sole concern was to see the people of Israel repent. He thought he was the one and only faithful prophet who obeyed every word of God during his time. But, Jezebel and King Ahab were now after his life. The people had showed no sign of repentance. He felt it was pointless being the only faithful person zealous about God's work.

What lessons can we learn here? There is nowhere we can hide from God. He will catch up with us sooner or later. It is better to pray and wait for God's direction whenever we face a problem. Very often, we disobey God and do things as we please. But God is long-suffering to us. He will gently guide us back to the right path. Isn't God wonderful?

What was Elijah doing in the cave?

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Does God want Him there? Why?

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Thought: Running away from doing God's work is foolish.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to seek Thee always when I face problems in my life. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



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## HEARTS ARE NOT MOVED BY GREAT HAPPENINGS

God taught Elijah a great spiritual lesson. He told Elijah to stand before Him on Mt. Horeb. There God showed this man spectacular sights!

The Lord passed by and a great & mighty wind tore up the mountains and broke up the great rocks! Wow! But interestingly, the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind came an earthquake. But the Lord was also not in the earthquake. After the earthquake was a magnificent fire. It could have been the same kind of fire that he saw which came from heaven on Mt. Carmel and consumed the sacrifice so completely. But still, God was nowhere to be found. The Lord was not in the fire. After these three great manifestations, a complete hush and stillness ensued. Then came a still small voice. Elijah heard it. For the second time, God asked him what he was doing at Mt. Horeb. Elijah began to whine again and gave God the same old reply. This time, God commanded him to return to the wilderness of Damascus.

God had shown Elijah that miracles or great happenings will not convert a man. It is only by the Holy Spirit using the Word of God that hearts are moved to repent of sins and to believe in the Lord Jesus. When we do our daily quiet time in reading the Bible, the RPG, and prayer, God also speaks to us.

Identify the above three manifestations of God, and draw in the 3<sup>rd</sup> one.



1.



2.



3.

Thought: God moves hearts.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, how great Thou art. Thank You for teaching me today's lesson on how I may be able to learn from You if I quieten my heart and listen to Your Word. This I pray in Jesus name, Amen.

**GOD DOES NOT GIVE UP ON YOU!**

After the commotion of the three manifestations, Elijah heard the still small voice of God. It aroused him and brought him out of the cave. Out of reverence for God's presence, Elijah pulled his mantel or cloak over his face.

Elijah expected a display of power at Mount Carmel, to turn the people's hearts around. Now, he learnt that the still small voice of God is far more powerful as God speaks directly to his heart. Elijah must have felt very ashamed for running away instead of waiting for God's order. He must have felt sorry for giving God the same, lame excuse for his getaway. What may we learn from him?

If we do wrong, we must confess and ask for forgiveness and not give excuses. Elijah was encouraged because God did not give up on him. God came to guide him back to the right path.

Our God is all-knowing, all-powerful and all-present. Nothing is impossible for Him. He created everything from nothing and can destroy all just by speaking a word. Yet God is patient to all of us.

Cancel the odd one out. The still small voice of God can be:

1. A Bible verse telling us about Jesus Christ our Saviour.
2. God's word comforting us when we are upset or sad.
3. A lesson learnt at Sunday School.
4. Telling us that we have sinned and must confess to God.
5. The desire to skip church to study hard.
6. A feeling that a friend needs your help.

Thought: Thank God for His patience!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you so much for Your patience towards me. Teach me to be patient and more tolerant to the people around me. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## ELIJAH QUILTS THE MINISTRY

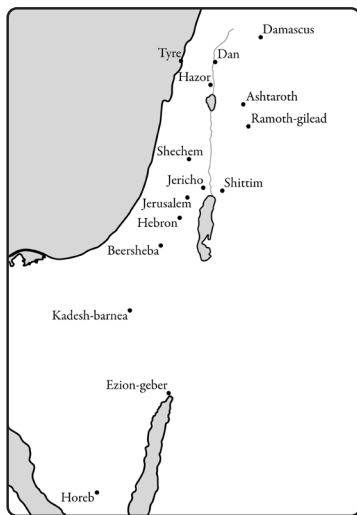
God showed Elijah that He is all-powerful and in absolute control of all things. He demonstrated to Elijah that he could create strong winds, earthquakes and fire, but He was not in them. God showed Elijah that these miracles will not bring about repentance in people. On the other hand, when He spoke in a still small voice, hearts of people can be changed. In other words, only the Holy Spirt through the Word of God is able to bring about repentance and the conversion of hearts.

Elijah was discouraged. He thought that he was alone fighting zealously on God's side. But the Lord later told him that he was not alone; there were seven thousand other who had not bowed their knees to Baal. The Lord asked Elijah "what doest Thou here, Elijah" a second time (verse 13). He had previously asked Elijah the same question (1 Kings 19:9). The Lord was giving Elijah a chance to admit is wrong and continue in his ministry. But instead Elijah asked God to take his life. This meant that Elijah wanted to give up his ministry.

The Lord accepted Elijah's request to quit the ministry. Elijah was then sent by God to anoint Elisha as prophet in his place. God had chosen Elisha to be Elijah's successor.

Elijah should have continued in his ministry and trusted the Lord to help him. Although Elijah was overall a faithful prophet, this was one of his short comings. When we face difficulties in serving God, we must not give up. We need to persevere, pray and depend on the Lord .

Find Damascus in the north and Horeb in the south and circle them. This is the distance Elijah traveled after the Lord spoke to him.



Thought: God will restore!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, remind me always to turn to You, even if I am down and out so that I can seek restoration from You, after confessing my sins. Help me to cast away pride and self, so I will rely on Your wonderful grace and strength. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## A REMNANT (REMAINDER)

God revealed to Elijah that there was a remnant of 7,000 in Israel who had remained loyal worshippers of Him. They had neither bowed to Baal nor kissed him. How do you think they could remain faithful to God when the whole nation was worshipping idols?

It is God who has preserved their faith because their hearts were for Him. If we love God with all our hearts, minds, souls and strength, He will surely protect us from the devil and his attack. How do we know that? It is by listening to the still small voice and by studying God's Word. This remnant of believers of God kept God's law in their hearts and obeyed God's Word. They stood firm on the Lord's side. Just like we need food daily, we need to read the Bible every day if we want to grow spiritually. God's Word is food for our souls.

Are you one of a few Christians in your class? Have any of your classmates ever teased you about being the "holy one"? Do you sometimes feel alone? Do some of your classmates try to tell you about how powerful their gods are? Well, remember Elijah and the 7,000 who did not bow their knees to Baal.

Fill in the blanks:

1. The Bible will keep you from sin  
but sin will keep you from the \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. If there are 1000 students in my school,  
the remnant will fill \_\_\_\_\_ schools.
3. God's still small \_\_\_\_\_ is more powerful  
than any earthquake.
4. The First Commandment states that we must love God  
with all our \_\_\_\_\_ , our \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
our \_\_\_\_\_ and all our \_\_\_\_\_ .

Thought: Our Lord will always provide a way out for His children who face trials.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that You always provide a way out for Your children when they face trials. May I always turn to You so that I know the real help is from You, not from myself. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## GOD IS FORGIVING AND JUST

Ahaziah became king after Ahab's death. He was as idolatrous as his father. While Moab rebelled against Israel, Ahaziah fell through a lattice or a skylight, in his palace. When he became very sick, he sent his messengers to ask Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron whether he would recover. His action angered the Lord, who sent Elijah to tell his messengers that he would surely die because he had turned to other gods instead of the God of Israel.

Following Elijah's message, he sent a captain with 50 men to capture Elijah. He must have thought that capturing Elijah could change his message. When the captain found Elijah on top of a hill, he ordered him to see the king. Elijah replied that fire would surely descend from heaven to consume him and his men. Instantly, fire came down. Ahaziah sent another captain and fifty men and they were also killed by fire from heaven. Stubborn Ahaziah sent a third captain and his fifty men. The third captain was different. He was repentant, begging Elijah to spare their lives. God forgave him and told Elijah to go with him. Elijah obeyed and told Ahaziah personally that he would surely die. God will never change his mind about judgement. He knows all things from beginning to end.

God loves us and is ever ready to forgive us our sins. However, He is just and will judge sinners. God knows all things from the beginning to end.

Find out what the Bible says about God's judgement and forgiveness:

1. Romans 6:23a.

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2. 1 John 1:9 shows us how to turn back to the Lord:

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Thought: God promises to forgive me if I confess my sin.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for Your mercy. I know I have sinned against You many times, so teach me to learn obedience to You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## FROM ELIJAH THE TISHBITE TO A PROPHET OF FIRE

The Bible did not tell us much about Elijah's background except that he was a Tishbite. He came from an unknown mountain in Gilead. Only now were we told a little of his appearance. "He was a hairy man, girt with a girdle of leather about his loins."

Elijah could have come from an unknown or lowly background but look at all the powerful deeds God led him to do! He stood before King Ahab and pronounced God's punishment of a drought because of idolatry. He stood against hundreds of Baal's and Jezebel's prophets at Mt. Carmel, calling down fire to consume his evening sacrifice to the Lord. God sent him to anoint kings and even to bring a message of death to King Ahaziah. Elijah twice called down fire from heaven to consume captains and their fifty men. No wonder he is sometimes called "The Prophet of Fire"!

Do you sometimes feel that you are too small to do anything great for God? Think of Elijah. Also remember how faithful and obedient to God he was and how fervently he prayed.

Here is a picture of Gilead. Do you expect a great prophet to come from such a place. How will you describe this place?



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Thought: God can use even me when I trust and obey Him.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You have the power to make great servants out of normal men. I pray I may be used for You in service – to be a good servant for You. This I can do in helping others, being kind to others, and perhaps to help my Junior Worship teacher do something practical in class. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**TAKEN TO HEAVEN IN A WHIRLWIND**

God gives a prophet power to rebuke men and to foretell future events. Therefore, it is not surprising that Elijah knew when God was taking him to heaven. Even Elisha, his successor and God's prophets at Bethel and Jericho knew.

Elisha stuck close to him while he travelled from Gilgal to Bethel, then to Jericho and finally to the river Jordan. Fifty prophets came to the river Jordan and stood at a distance. God had gathered them to witness the departure of their leader and they expected no less than a spectacular event. As Elijah smote the waters with his cloak, the waters parted creating dry land for both Elijah and Elisha to walk on. As they talked, a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared from above separating Elijah and Elisha. Thus, Elijah went up to heaven by a whirlwind. What a sight it must have been!

Elijah was taken up to heaven without dying. Would you like to be taken to heaven without dying? One day the Lord Jesus Christ will return, and we will be with Him forever in heaven.

Who is on the ground below?

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Where did Elijah go?

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Thought: One day, the Lord Jesus will return.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the blessed hope of the Lord Jesus' return when all believers will be with the Lord forever in heaven. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## PLAY PRANKS

This month we shall look at different types of wrong behaviour. As the Bible is our authoritative book for faith and practice, we shall address why the behaviour is wrong.

Let's start with a story on playing pranks. James is the joker of his class. When his classmates laugh at his jokes and pranks, he loves the attention he gets. They all really like him. Quite the opposite of James is Linda, a quiet girl in his class. No one really talks much to her, because she is quiet and she also stutters.

One day, James decides to do something which he thinks is funny and will trick his classmates. On arriving at school, he puts on a glum face which of course puzzles his friends. They start to approach him to find out what is wrong with him.

"I... chok..ed...ed..ooooon....t..t..he... ap...ap...ple...", James starts to speak, and with great difficulty. His pretentious act works, for it draws more and more of his friends, even quiet Linda, to crowd around him. His classmates are all in shock. James tries so hard to explain why he is speaking in a stammering manner. Suddenly, laughing out loudly, James explodes, "Gotcha, I don't stutter!" This really hurts Linda who walks away quickly. All can see her crying in the corner.

It is perfectly alright to crack jokes and play pranks on friends but sometimes we may get carried away like James. Today's reading describes the love Christians should have for other Christians. Love is showing kindness and affection. We have the example of Jesus Christ to follow. As Christians, we must love others, not only fellow Christians, but even more so, the non-Christians.

Thought: Have you purposed in your heart to be kind and loving towards others, Christians and non-Christians alike?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, remind me that I must not have fun at the expense of others. I have been unkind towards my friends before, please forgive me. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.



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## DO YOU SHARE THINGS WILLINGLY?

Siew Hoon's elder sister, Siew Leng, is the apple of her mother's eye. She loves shopping and many of her purchases are not necessary but mother does not stop her. In this aspect, mother treats Siew Hoon differently and monitors her shopping. Mother shows favouritism to Siew Leng.

One day, Siew Leng buys a special bottle of shampoo imported from the US, and leaves it in the bathroom. That evening, when Siew Hoon is in the bathroom and is about to wash her hair, she realises her own shampoo is used up and so she calls out to her older sister to use her shampoo but she is not at home. So Siew Hoon uses the new shampoo. After her bath, knowing that her sister can be unreasonable, she intends to wait for her sister to return to tell her she has used the shampoo. But she falls asleep.

When Siew Leng returns home and finds out that the cap of the bottle of new shampoo has been tampered with, she immediately knows who the culprit is. She flies into a rage! "How dare you use my shampoo! And don't you know it is my NEW shampoo – a special brand from the US! You are so rude, you should have asked permission!" Siew Hoon tries to explain but her sister will not listen. Siew Leng complains to mother who scolds Siew Hoon as well!

Dear child, are you like Siew Leng, who does not share? It is wrong not to share things with others. 'He that hath a bountiful eye' in today's reading refers to one who seeks out charity and gives to or shares with one in need. The opposite of 'bountiful eye' is a wicked eye. Are you a child that has a 'bountiful eye' or a wicked eye?

Thought: It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35).

Prayer: Heavenly Father, sharing my things with others will make them happy and You will be pleased with me. Help me remember today's lesson. This I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

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## HOW MANY FRIENDS DO YOU HAVE?

Some of you have Facebook accounts as do your friends, siblings, and parents. The writer also has a Facebook account and as he was browsing it the other day, he was surprised that he has more than 200 “friends”. Wow – that is a lot! Are all these really his friends?

What is a friend? One dictionary defines a friend as ‘a person who shares the same feelings of natural liking and understanding, the same interests, etc and is not a member of the same family’. In simple words, people who like and understand each other and also like to do things together are friends. You like John and John likes you. You trust Jane and Jane trusts you. You and Michael always play together. Then the writer asks himself – do I feel this way for these 200 “friends”? The frank answer is “No”. Here is the wrong idea of a friend. Some of you may have the idea that the more friends we have, the more popular we are. That is simply not true. However, this may be what you hear in school. Your classmates may even tell you that to have more friends you have to do what they want you to do. While this may be alright in certain circumstances, it can be dangerous for a Christian child to be involved in activities such as hanging out with gangs, playing truant, bullying others and the list goes on.

It is important how we choose our friends. Friends are people we can trust and confide in, and there is no way we can confide and share our problems with 200 people! So you have to choose friends carefully. Some people are smart or good-looking or come from wealthy homes. Do you choose these types of people to be your friends? In the selection of a king to rule Israel, the Lord advised Samuel not to look at ‘his countenance, or on the height of his stature...’ (1 Sam 16:7). In the same way, don’t choose a friend based on outward appearance or status or wealth. Instead, choose a person who has true inner value within. This person should be one whom you can trust and share your problems with, and will stay close and stand by you in times of difficulties. This is the meaning of the phrase ‘a brother is born for adversity’ which we read in the text today.

Thought: Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13). Jesus calls us his friends (John 15:15).

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me choose my friends wisely. This I pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.

**BAD FRIENDSHIPS**

John takes out his mini electronic game device during Junior Worship class to play. He knows it is wrong but he listens to his friend David who says it is alright to do so. David is regarded as the 'leader' in class. Some female classmates have told John not to follow David blindly. However, John trusts David and so he continues playing. While he is engrossed in playing, the teacher notices his game device and calls out to him.

"John, what are you doing?" asked the teacher. "Mmmm, I am doing some stuff," answered John. Some students laugh but the teacher is not amused and so they keep quiet. John confesses, "I am playing the electronic game, because David said it was OK to do so!"

Immediately, David retorts, "This is not true, John, I never told you it is OK!" It was a blatant lie, but David did not even bat an eyelid saying it. David, though he has been attending church for a long time, was a habitual liar and lying was second nature to him.

John bursts out crying for he feels betrayed by a friend. The Lord Jesus was betrayed by His own disciple Judas Iscariot. Apostle Paul also felt betrayed by many who deserted him. David was a bad influence and bad company for John. Bad behaviour is infectious and can lead us to sin against God. Dear child, remember to keep good company.

Thought: Name some good qualities of a friend.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be careful not to be influenced by others to sin against you. Help me to keep good company. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**BLAME SHIFTING**

Bee Leng's mother plans to visit a friend who is sick in the hospital to encourage her. She asks Bee Leng to take care of her toddler sister, Bee Hoon, at home in her absence. Before leaving home, she tells Bee Leng not to allow Bee Hoon to go near the cans of paint in the balcony.

At first, it is easy to watch over Bee Hoon, but when Bee Leng receives a phone call from her good friend Martha, she excitedly chats with Martha on the phone, and forgets all about supervising her toddler sister. She loses track of what Bee Hoon is doing.

Suddenly, Bee Leng hears a crashing sound. She hangs up the phone and goes to find out what has caused the noise. To her horror, her sister has toppled a can of paint. As the cover was not closed properly, the paint spilt all over the floor.

Sternly, Bee Leng stares at her little sister. And guess what happens next? The sister, knowing she has done wrong, instead turns and looks at their pet dog, and says, "Naughty dog!" The little girl shifts blame on the dog!

Covering of sins is mentioned in today's reading. One who covers sins does not let others know he has sinned or puts the blame on someone else. It is wrong to cover sins. Don't be like Bee Hoon.

Thought: Read 1 John 1:9 on forgiveness of sins.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, forgive me my sins and cleanse me from all unrighteousness. This I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

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## BRAGGING

John is a smart boy. Not only is he eloquent but he also has a good memory. Every year he excels in school and emerges among the top in his class. However, John has a weakness: bragging. What is bragging? Bragging is talking too proudly about oneself, one's possessions, etc. Another word for bragging is boasting. You can imagine John is not a popular boy in school for he goes around telling people how clever he is, what good memory he has... Because John is a braggart, no one in his class wants to be his friend.

As the mid-year examinations draws near, teachers encourage the pupils to work hard. True to his conceited self, John proclaims he will do well again. When the exam timetable is given out, John takes a copy home and chucks it aside without looking at it.

Days and weeks go by, John still feels very confident. Although he occasionally revises his studies, he is easily distracted, does not focus and so does not know his work well. When the exams are a week away, his parents ask how he is coping with the revision and he tells his parents that he is doing just fine! However, when he realises he has lost his timetable, he starts to panic and is no longer as cool as a cucumber. Now he starts to worry that he may fail his exams. He confesses his sin to God for being a braggart. And you know what? Shortly after, John finds his lost timetable!

Actually, children like to boast and you see them doing this all the time and everywhere. Dear child, are you a braggart? What do you boast about? Never brag if you are the best student in class, or in school, or even in the whole of Singapore. Never brag about what post your father holds in his company and that he has friends in high places. Never boast that you have the latest television set in your home, or that your mum has bought you the latest video game console like the PSP, Nintendo DS, X-Box, etc.. Talking proudly of yourself or your possessions is displeasing to God who detests one who has a high look and a proud heart.

Thought: Are you guilty of bragging?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for reminding me that I should not be proud and brag. I have bragged before, please forgive me. This I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

## CONCEIT

Yesterday we talked about bragging, today, we shall talk about something more subtle – conceit. While a braggart talks proudly about himself or something he owes, a conceited person harbours pride in his heart and thinks highly of himself. A braggart is easily identified when he shows pride but a conceited person may not display it.

Tim comes from a wealthy family. His father is a successful businessman, and the family lives in a large bungalow in an exclusive part of Singapore. His bedroom is larger than a small HDB flat. Born with a silver spoon in his mouth, he is used to luxurious living and travelling to faraway expensive places for vacation. As the only child, he is spoilt. He is driven to school in a chauffeur-driven car. At primary 3, he is given \$10 a day for pocket money. He harbours conceit in his heart because his family is rich. Though he has been taught in church to be humble, he never gives much thought to it until one day, his conceitedness reveals itself.

His class is discussing holiday destinations. Each student is asked to share where he has been for holiday. Kok Leong, who comes from a poor family, is very excited and shouts out his that family has gone to Malacca. It was his first overseas trip and although Malacca is nearby, it was a big deal to Kok Leong. When it comes to Tim's turn, he cannot hide his pride and exclaims he will not be excited if he has gone to Malacca. If it is America, Tim boasts, then he will be overjoyed and he also adds, "Malacca sounds like America, but they are very different, you know?"

Romans 12 from which today's text is taken speaks of the unity of the Body of Christ. (Read the whole chapter) Conceitedness in Christians will destroy harmony and so causes division and disunity and lack of love for each other. Tim's conceited nature creates a distance between himself and others, and he will not enjoy true fellowship with fellow believers.

Thought: Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall (Proverbs 16:18).

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please help me not to be proud, but be humble. The Bible says it is wrong to be proud, and please help me not to fall into sin. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**COMPLAINING (1)**

Jane and Jean are identical twins who are similar in many ways . This makes it hard to tell them apart based on their looks, dressing, likes, dislikes and even their tendency to complain. Whenever they are asked to do a chore by mum or dad, they will complain and murmur.

Such a nature stems from selfishness and self-centeredness. When doing a chore, they will not co-operate. They operate on a 'I-do-mine-and-you-do-yours' attitude. For example, Jane will wash her own plate after use and not Jean's and vice-versa. Complaining to their parents about each other is very much a common practice at home and it is not a pretty sight at all. Their attitude leads to a ' no-one-does-anything' attitude and so one day, something terrible almost happens.

The twins live with their 80 year old grandma, and they have been told not to leave their things on the floor in case grandma trips on those things. This instruction fell on deaf ears. One night, after returning from a party, instead of putting away their bags properly, they left their bags on the floor haphazardly. Even though they were aware of their parents' instruction, they could not be bothered to obey because they were self-centred.

The next morning, after grandma woke up, she tripped over the bags because the colour of the bags blended in with the colour of the floor. Thankfully, her fall was cushioned by the nearby sofa and she was not badly hurt. However, she suffered a nasty shock. When the twins learnt of it, they apologised to grandma. They were ashamed and promised not to be selfish or complain or argue with each other.

Thought: Do you complain or murmur? Do you argue with your sibling over who is to do the chores at home?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me not to complain, especially when I am asked to do some chores. I must always be willing to help others at home, in school and church. In Jesus' name, I pray Amen.

## COMPLAINING (2)

Dad has a respectable job as an engineer in a big company. Mum is a housewife. They live in a large nicely-furnished 5-room HDB flat with their two sons, Peow and Peng. The children are well provided for and do not lack anything.

Peow and Peng attend a school where a lot of the kids come from wealthy families. Most of these kids go to school in their parents' cars or are chauffeured in big cars. This is a sore point for the brothers. Why? They envy these children who have nice cars. Their father has no car and they have to take the school bus which is not so comfortable compared to a chauffeur-driven car. Besides, taking the bus means waking up early as the bus driver needs to go to different places to pick up students.

Day by day, their envy of others intensifies and advances to the development of a complaining spirit and discontentment. One day, Peow complains to his mum, "Mum, why don't we have a car? A lot of my friends' parents have cars. Some even have more than one car!" His younger brother also adds, "Mum, it is embarrassing to go to school in a bus!"

Dear child, do you sometimes feel this way like Peow or Peng? You envy your friends living in big houses and having nice cars. You start to murmur why you don't have what your friends have. Does having material things equate to godliness? Some people think so but we learn from today's scriptural reading that when we are contented and do not envy or covet, we are counted godly and so in the same manner, when we are godly, we will be contented and will not complain.

Thought: Have you complained about what you don't have?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I confess that I sometimes complain about not having things that I wish I had. Remind me that covetousness and complaining is a sin and help me not to do it again. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



**CONFLICT RESOLUTION: THE OFFENDED**

Gabriel and John are brothers. Being the older brother, Gabriel leads by example and will give in to John. However, John is not easy to get along with. Not only is John selfish, he likes to make up stories about others.

One evening while mum is in the kitchen preparing dinner, 11-year old John shouts loudly from the bedroom in a distinctive “informer” sing-song voice saying, “Mommmeeee, Gabriel said ‘SHUT UP’ to meeeee...!” In a calm manner, Gabriel strides into the kitchen where their mother is and says, “Mum, it was John who started it. He first took my things without permission, broke my electronic calculator without informing me, and then looked at my SMSes. And when I tried to reason with him, he said that since I am named after an archangel of the New Testament, I should forgive him. I did not say ‘shut up’, I told him to stop the nonsense.”

Mum gently says, “Gabriel, I am pleased with you, showing understanding towards your brother despite his actions. You are really an angel! I know John likes to make up stories and has done those things. Will you forgive him?” Gabriel replies with a smile, “I forgive John.” In fact, he has been praying that God will help him to have patience and long suffering when conflicts with John arise.

John overhears Gabriel’s conversation with mum when he is about to enter the kitchen. His heart is pricked and is ashamed of himself and confesses his sin.

Today’s reading describes how to behave towards enemies. 1 Peter was written by the apostle Peter. At that time Christians were hated and badly treated by all men for Christ’s sake, many were even martyred, so Peter warned them not to return evil for evil. Taking revenge is an unchristian practice. Dear child, the guiding principle is that when you are offended by anyone, you do not bear any grudge and take revenge. Be like Gabriel. Be an angel. You will ‘inherit a blessing’ as promised by God.

Thought: Do not repay evil with evil.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to remember that when there is conflict, I should not blow my top, and instead should look to You for help and guidance to react kindly to people though they are wrong. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

**CONFLICT RESOLUTION: THE OFFENDER**

Paul gets along well with the kids in his neighbourhood. A smart and fun kid to be with, he is also assertive and has leadership qualities which others admire. Despite his strengths, Paul has one big flaw: bad temper.

Paul and his friends love to play basketball in the open court near their flats and will spend hours on end having fun in the court. Sometimes, they challenge other groups of boys to games of basketball and feel jubilant when they win. Many groups are no match for Paul's team except for one from a nearby secondary school. The challenge has come from these secondary school guys. Paul, assuming leadership, told his team mates to train hard to win.

For hours each day, they sweat and toil. They are happy to do so as they want badly to win their strongest competitor. When the important day finally comes, they are excited and put up a fight. However, the other team is faster and has more stamina. Furthermore, they are more accurate in their throws and it is obviously clear that Paul and his friends are no match this time.

Paul's team has lost. The boys are all moody. Paul puts the blame on Kok Leong for not guarding the "star" player of the winning team. His accusation causes Kok Leong to be unhappy and for the first time, he opposes Paul publicly. Now Paul is furious! He scolds Kok Leong for arguing with him and challenging his judgment and authority as the team leader. He loses his cool, goes up to Kok Leong, grabs him by the shirt and shakes him very hard. Paul's behaviour and actions shocks everyone.

Oh yes, bad temper. Many of us are like Paul. When things go wrong, we throw our temper and flare up, offending and hurting others. Don't agitate others or you will run into trouble.

Thought: Read Proverbs 21:23. This is a verse that can keep us out of trouble.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I have lost my temper many times before. Please forgive me. Help me remember today's lesson and apply it. In Jesus' name I pray Amen.

## COVETING

“Hey Tom, my parents bought me a new pencil case over the weekend. Want to see?” said Peter, Tom’s best friend in school.

Tom laughed. “What’s so special about a pencil case?”

“It’s not just a pencil case. It has tons of special features. I’ll show you.” The plastic box had many compartments and a long row of buttons on the side. As Peter pressed each button, fascinating things happened — lights shone, flaps popped up, and pens appeared where you would least expect them. There was even a complicated sequence that Peter could press to open a top secret compartment.

By the end of the demonstration, Tom’s mouth was hanging open. “Can I use it for a while?” he begged.

“Sure, just return it to me before the class starts later,” said Peter, generously. Tom placed Peter’s pencil case next to his own pencil case on the table. His pencil case now looked old and boring in comparison, even though he had been perfectly contented with it before.

After school, Tom was still thinking about the pencil case and its amazing features. He rushed through dinner, brushing off his parents’ questions, so that he could search for more information about it online. That night, he even dreamt about how he would get one.

The next day, Tom couldn’t wait to use the pencil case again. But before he could ask Peter, Peter was called away by the teacher to help with something. Tom fidgeted, staring at the pencil case on Peter’s table. He could just take it for a moment, and no one would know. Taking a deep breath, he grabbed the pencil case. But as he did so, he accidentally pressed a button. A cheerful song started to play at maximum volume from the pencil case. Everyone turned to look at Tom. He quickly put the pencil case back, feeling very ashamed.

What is coveting, and why is it wrong? Coveting is craving for something that is not yours, such as others’ clothes, gadgets and grades. To covet is forbidden by God in the 10th Commandment. Coveting may lead us to commit other sins such as stealing.

Thought: Contentment is protection against coveting.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, forgive my sin of covetousness. Please help me not to commit this sin again. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## DEFIANCE AGAINST PARENTS

10-year-old Shirley is sitting on the couch watching her favourite cartoon Lilo and Stitch. Mum is leaving the house to go to the market. Before leaving, she instructs Shirley to spend not more than another half an hour watching TV and then to do her homework and practise the piano in preparation for her Grade 4 piano exams. As she is engrossed with the TV and is eager to have mum out of the house so she will not be disturbed, she replies, "Yes, yes, Mum." But she has not paid much attention to what mum has said. After mum has left, the TV is everything to her. She uses the remote control to switch from channel to channel, watching one program after another.

After an hour and a half, there is the sound of the door opening and mum has returned home lugging bags of groceries. She is fuming mad when she sees Shirley still watching the TV. Putting the bags in the kitchen and then storming to the TV set, she switches off the machine. Shirley is stunned as well as unhappy, shouting, "Mum, what are you doing? That is the best part of the show." With that, she uses the remote control to turn the TV back on. This time, Mum plucks out the plug from the socket and the TV turns dead. Now the look on Shirley's face turns defiant, and without a word, she strides into her room.

Dear child, are you ever defiant towards your parents? Don't and never! The opposite of defying is obeying. Obeying our parents is the law of the 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment. The great duty of children is to obey their parents and it involves an inward reverence as well as the outward expression and acts. It is the order of nature as determined by God that parents command and children obey. Though this may be a hard saying, yet it is a duty and those children who want to please the Lord will do it.

Thought: Have you been defying your parents' orders? Think of those things you have done that are defiant and stop them now!

Prayer: Thank you Heavenly Father for today's reminder that I must never disobey mum or dad. I must never be defiant by talking back or staring at them. Forgive me and change me to love and obey my parents. TIn Jesus' name I pray Amen.

**OTHERS' INTERESTS**

Jenny and Jane's grandma visits them every Saturday and buys cute presents and their favourite food for them. They will have a nice time together and in the evening, uncle comes and brings grandma home. Grandma lives with uncle. She looks forward to Saturdays to visit her granddaughters.

On Chinese New Year Day, grandma goes out with the entire family for a meal but something unfortunate happens. She falls when walking up the steps to the restaurant and becomes very weak after that. As she is unable to take care of herself, she needs round-the-clock attention and aid. The family decides that she will live with the family of Jenny and Jane.

Before this incident, the two girls adored their grandma, but now their feelings for her have changed. They do not love her as much as before. Do you know why? Now grandma occupies one of the girls' rooms and so the two sisters have to share a room. The sisters feel a bit cramped for space and they do not like the new arrangement. They complain to their parents.

What is their problem? Today's reading tells us the sisters' problem lie in not thinking first of others. They don't look out for the interests of others, but care only for themselves. Don't be like Jenny or Jane. We should look to Christ as our model. Phil 2:1-11 describes that Christ thinks first of others, not of Himself. He has a servant's attitude, being willing to sacrifice for others. Have you the same attitude?

List down 3 things that you will do for others:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Thought: Think first of others.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to think first of others and look out for their interests. Help me to be like You. In Jesus' name I pray Amen.

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## DO YOU ANSWER IN THE RIGHT WAY?

Seng's grandma is a little deaf and so he always has to speak loudly when talking to her. He also has to repeat what he says many times to make himself understood. Not only grandma, he thinks his parents have the same problem! "Wow – that is terrible," he thinks, "all these old folks are losing their hearing!"

Actually his parents are not deaf. When they do not quite catch what he says, they simply ignore him and this makes Seng unhappy. Instead of being honest with them about his feelings, what he does is to pretend not to hear his parents because he thinks, "If they can ignore me, so can I."

One day mum comes back from the market feeling hot and tired. Calling out loudly in a clear tone to Seng, she asks him to get her a glass of cold water. Seng is playing computer games in the hall, and has heard his mum. However, he pretends not to hear. Mum calls again and again, but Seng still pretends not to hear. Eventually she could not tolerate being ignored and she scolds Seng harshly for not paying attention. However Seng raises his voice arguing she, too, does not answer his questions or hear what he is trying to say. This makes her even angrier.

Is Seng right in pretending not to hear his mum? Of course not. This is a terrible thing to do, and dear child, you must never do this. When someone is angry with you, what is the best way to handle it? The Bible has the answer for you which is found in today's text which reads 'a soft answer turneth away wrath'. A soft answer does not mean speaking softly but speaking gently, kindly and respectfully. We speak gently not just to our parents but to anyone we come into contact with. In doing so, we keep peace and can avoid more arguments.

Thought: What do I do when someone is angry with me?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, remind me that by soft words peace may be kept and arguments kept at bay. Help me remember today's lesson. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## SELF-CENTEREDNESS

Patricia used to be sickly when young and that made her parents worried. But now, she eats more because she loves food and perhaps because of this, has returned to good health. Patricia loves all types of food, but none more than Japanese food.



*Photo by Luciano Gazai*

One day, Dad brought the family for a buffet at a nice Japanese restaurant. It was a popular place, so the restaurant was crowded. If Dad had not made reservations, they would not have a table for their meal. Before Dad could give thanks to the Lord for the meal, Patricia already headed for the buffet table.

She went straight for her favourite – salmon sashimi. Although there was not much salmon sashimi left on the buffet table, Patricia took all of them – ten pieces. That made a few diners nearby stare at her. She was a little self-conscious, and wanting to avoid them, quickly turned the corner to get to her table. In her haste, she did not see a piece of food on the floor which she stepped on and slipped! Poor Patricia – she fell hard but thank God she did not hurt herself badly!

Was it right for Patricia to grab all the food that she liked? No. Sometimes we are like Patricia. When we come across something we really like, and without any thought for others, we take hold of whatever is available. Not that we cannot take what we like freely, but we should be mindful to leave some for others.

Dear child, please be considerate. Please think of others and not just yourself. The verse today reminds us to think of others.

Thought: Do I usually think of myself before others?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for the reminder not to be selfish or self-centered. Teach me to be more like Jesus, and think more for others. Help me start doing it today. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## KINDNESS

The alarm clock rang. Sally hid under the blanket, wishing she did not have to go to school. Her family had moved to Singapore a year ago, but she still could not fit in at school. Her classmates laughed at the way she spoke English. Whenever there were group activities, no one wanted her in their group. Everyday, she ate alone. Nothing was going to change, ever.

Well, there was one thing different today. Sally's teacher was sick, so their class would be joining Mrs Lee's class.

"Today, we will be doing a project in pairs. Everyone, go and find a partner," said Mrs Lee.

Sally's heart sank. She watched as the students quickly paired up, laughing and chattering away. Soon, she would be the only one left, as usual. She then saw that a girl from the other class was looking at her thoughtfully. Sally quickly looked down, embarrassed that someone had noticed she was alone. She was so focused on looking down that she jumped when someone tapped her on the shoulder.

"Hello, you're Sally, right? I'm Emma. Would you like to be my partner?" said the girl from the other class.

Sally gasped. All she knew about Emma was that she was always surrounded by friends, and she was a Christian. Why would Emma want to partner her? "Are you sure?" stammered Sally.

"Yes, I'm sure! I know we will make a great team," said Emma. In no time, the girls got to know each other as they worked on the project. It felt as if they had always been friends.

"Want to eat lunch together later?" said Emma, after they had completed the project.

"Oh, yes! Thank you so much," exclaimed Sally, smiling. An act of kindness had changed everything.

Showing kindness means helping and caring for others. You can show kindness in little ways, like saying an encouraging word, or doing something for your family or classmates. Showing kindness is part of bearing a good Christian testimony.

Thought: As I have received the kindness of God, may I show kindness to others.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be kind to someone today. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



## THE DAMAGE OF GOSSIP

Everyone in Soo San's class does not like Mike. Mike is big and burly, bigger than most of his classmates. But that is not the reason they do not like him. Why doesn't the class like him? He likes to tease people saying so-and-so is a 'shorty', another a "fatty". Sometimes he sticks his leg out on purpose to try to trip someone. Soo San is fed up with Mike's nonsense and decides to take revenge...

"Soo San told me that Mike's mum is ugly and fat," remarks Eddie. Mandy responds, "That is what I heard too. She weighs 89 kg. She is short too. She must look like a hippo!" "She must have got that big after giving birth to Mike. Look how BIG Mike is, hahaha!" says Johnny with his two arms slightly curved by his side gesturing fatness. Now a small group of the classmates is starting to gather round Soo San and they are all laughing irresponsibly.

What exactly are these children doing? Gossiping. It is saying mean things about another person. What damage can gossip do? A story was told as follows:

A young man told others mean things about an old man. When the old man found out, he led the young man to the top of a tower. Under one arm, the old man had a pillow. At the top, where the wind was blowing at their faces, he handed the young man the pillow and asked him to rip it open. He did as he was told. Instantly the wind carried the feathers tossing them every which way and spreading far and wide. The young man was then asked to collect all the feathers back. Dear children, what do you think the young man said? Do you think it is possible to gather all the feathers back? So, in the same manner, it is impossible to take back the terrible effects of gossip.

Thought: I should control my tongue or it will control me!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for reminding me of the damage that gossip can cause. Help me to remember today's lesson. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**FIGHTING BACK**

Do you have a younger sibling? Or younger siblings? A sibling is a brother or sister. Even if you don't have, today's reading is still applicable to you.

"Mum, Sean hit me!" shouted Sally. Sean is Sally's little brother and he also has a bad temper. When he is angry, he will hit and kick. 'Spare the rod and spoil the child' is the teaching of God's Word and so mother will always punish Sean for his bad behaviour. Now, mum is going to punish Sean. But instead, Sally stops her mother and tells her not to punish her little brother. What is Sally up to? In her mind, she thinks that she knows how to teach Sean not to hit people anymore.

She holds Sean's hand firmly and takes him into a bedroom. Thinking that his sister wants to lock him up, he resists and struggles but he is too young to resist. In the bedroom, she manages to pacify Sean and firmly told him, "Let us both kneel down by the bed." The two children kneel down and Sally prays a simple prayer: (Fill in the blanks)

"Heavenly Father, \_\_\_\_\_ my little brother for hitting me. Give him a \_\_\_\_\_ heart so that he will not hit me again; and if he does hit me or push me, \_\_\_\_\_ me not to fight back. Help me to be \_\_\_\_\_ with him. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Retaliation is no use. The world will tell you that it is the right thing to do; it is to fight and claim your rights. Do you fight back? The Bible alone is our authority and we must use it to guide all our action and speech. Remember today's Bible text. So don't fight anyone. Like Sally, pray for the person or with the person. So, dear children, do you know what you should do next time when someone hits or kicks you?

Thought: 'Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.' (Luke 6:36)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to pray instead of retaliating against others who hurt me. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## LEARNING BY HEART

There was once a boy who was excited after managing to memorise some Bible verses from the Book of 1 John. He was to recite them before his Sunday School class that coming Sunday. When his grandpa got home, he told him about his 'achievement'.

Grandpa asked, "Which chapter are the verses from?"

"1 John 4," replied the boy with beaming eyes and ran off to play after hearing grandpa saying something about writing it on the heart.

He went to play in his tree house in the backyard. When his little brother also climbed into the tree house, he disallowed him from entering in. There was a scuffle between the brothers; the younger brother hit him on his chest. If not for grandpa who boomed in his loud voice and ordered them to stop, they would have gotten into a serious fight.

The older boy was called into the house by his grandfather. He was asked to recite the Bible verses he had memorised. He started rattling off the verses but was asked to slow down and think about the verses he said. When he came to verses 7 and 8, he realized why grandpa had asked him to slow down and think about the verses. He looked down, feeling ashamed of himself. The verses had pricked his conscience.

Write 1 John 4:7,8 \_\_\_\_\_

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This boy had head knowledge only. There is difference between head knowledge and heart knowledge. Head knowledge is not enough. It will not keep us from sinning. Applying God's words to our heart is very important. 1 John 4:7,8 says that we must love one another because God is love. Will this be in your heart?

Thought: Memorising Bible verses is good, but what is more important than this?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for today's lesson. Help me to be a hearer and doer of Your Word. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## A GENTLE SPIRIT

‘A gentle spirit is a cure-all.’ What does this mean? A man called John told a story about himself. When he was a boy about ten years old, his father who was a senior officer in the army used to tell him that if someone teased or bullied him, he must fight him to teach him a lesson. Children, do you think in this way, or have you been told this?

John was sent to a famous school and befriended a good student called Tom. Tom was good at playing baseball and so they both got along very well. However, John would skip classes despite Tom telling him not to. One day, another boy came to tell John that Tom had reported his bad conduct to the teachers. John was so furious with Tom and after school he went to Tom’s home.

“Did you tell the teachers about me?” shouted John.

“You may hit me but I want you to know that I won’t fight back,” said Tom firmly. Tom was so firm and yet so mild! Surprisingly, John did not fight but felt ashamed of himself. From that day onwards, he had more respect for Tom. A lot more.

Fighting is not the way to solve problems. Children, very often when you are angry with someone, you may think of doing something to that person. That could include fighting or doing something nasty. You may want to kick, punch or even bite him. Even if you don’t, you will shout or scream. Is this the right behaviour? The right way for a Christian child is to pray, cool down, and then talk it out.

The Bible tells us our Lord Jesus was very gentle with the people when they wrongly accused Him. He neither retaliated nor fought. The prophet Isaiah describes Jesus in this way: ‘He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth’ (Isaiah 53:7). So remember, ‘a gentle spirit is a cure-all’!

Thought: Memorise Galatians 5:22, 23.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, forgive me for the times I retaliated against people who made me angry. Help me to be a good Christian. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## GOING TO SUNDAY SCHOOL

Why is going to Sunday School important? There is a story told of Kok Leong who stopped attending Sunday school. He either stayed at home to watch television programs or went outside to play with his neighbours. Do you think he did the right thing in quitting Sunday school?

Gradually, Kok Leong mixed with the wrong company and he stopped doing his Quiet Time. One day, he and his friends decided to steal a bicycle but they were caught red-handed by the owner who handed them to the police. Kok Leong could not believe his eyes when he saw the policeman walking towards him – it was Teacher Mike his Sunday School teacher! You can imagine what happened next. Teacher Mike had to punish Kok Leong as he would any other thief, but thank God the owner decided not to put up any charge against the boys. That night, Kok Leong was also touched by Teacher Mike who said, “If you repent, the Heavenly Judge, our loving Heavenly Father, will forgive you anytime.”

From that day on, Kok Leong learnt his lesson and decided to return Sunday School. The next Sunday, he was bright and early! And guess who was there to welcome him?

It is important for you to go to Sunday school and church every week. God wants us to be with other Christians to worship God together and to encourage each other. Christians should be concerned about one another. We must know God's Word so that we will grow in our faith in Jesus and in love for other believers.

There is a song that goes like this:

*Everybody ought to go Sunday school  
Sunday school, Sunday school  
Men and women, and boys and girls  
Everybody ought to go Sunday school.*

Thought: Do I appreciate Sunday School?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for Sunday school and my teachers. Help my teachers to teach me well. Remind me that I must go to Sunday School every week so that I can grow in the Lord. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## SWEARING

Fifteen-year-old Ai Mei has a brother seven years younger than her. His name is Wei Loon. Wei Loon has learnt to swear (say bad words).

One day at home, the phone rings and the call is for Wei Loon. As the conversation is going on, he got agitated and started to swear under his breath. But although it was soft, it caught Ai Mei's attention and she was upset by his behavior. After Wei Loon slammed the receiver on the cradle, he sank into the sofa sulking.

Since their parents were not at home, Ai Mei decided to do something about her brother's conduct. She talks to him very seriously. "God is not pleased with your swearing. You must stop doing this and ask God for forgiveness. I will tell Dad about this, Wei Loon," says Ai Mei.

That frightened the little boy. "No! Don't tell Dad! He'll be so angry! Don't tell him, please!"

Wei Loon cried so hard that the sister felt sorry for him and prayed with him. She will not let their father know and let him off this time. Wei Loon promises never to do it again.

Swearing is commonplace. You hear people on the streets swear all the time. You also hear it on the TV. Swearing is a very bad thing to do. Children, it not only displeases your parents but more importantly, it causes God to be very unhappy. Your parents will punish you when you do that, won't they? God abhors those who swear. Be careful of what you say.

Thought: Do not join people who \_\_\_\_\_ and make friends with people who \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blanks with the word related to theme of today's reading)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for today's lesson. Swearing is displeasing to my parents and God. I must never swear and behave badly. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## A REAL FRIEND

Gek Lan was given a book as a gift from her Sunday School class teacher for memorising Bible verses. She was very happy and brought the book to a nearby park to read. When Gek Lan was walking to a bench, naughty Kim Lee who was her neighbour whizzed past her and snatched the book from her. It just happened so quickly that Gek Lan was too shocked to react. She was stunned.

What she saw the next moment was horrible – Kim Lee tore her prize up! She threw the book on the ground and ran away. Gek Lan bent down to pick up the book. She was crying. She cried not just because her book was broken but because Kim Lee was so rude. When they were very little children, they used to play together often, but lately Kim Lee had become so naughty that Gek Lan did not want to play with her anymore. What had happened to the sweet friend Kim Lee used to be? She had been so gentle and kind, but not anymore.

At home, Grandma comforted Gek Lan, then said, “The best thing you can do for Kim Lee is to be kind to her. Kim Lee has no friends to teach her what is right and wrong as her parents are both working and are not Christians. I know that she is now at home, why don’t you go over there now?”

When she got inside Kim Lee’s flat, she found Kim Lee crying. She understood from Kim Lee that she also wished to have a book. Kim Lee’s parents were not able to afford it. Gek Lan said, “But I know how you could get your very own book.”

“How?” asked Kim Lee, wiping away her tears.

“You could come to Sunday School with me. I’ll help you with your memory verses, and then you could earn a book too!”

A real friend is kind to his friends, especially those who are not well-off. You can share your toys and books with them. Not just this alone, you can share Christ with them and bring them to Sunday School. When your friend becomes a Christian, this brings glory to God.

Thought: Shall I bring a friend to Sunday School?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I pray for \_\_\_\_\_ (name of a friend) who is not a Christian and does not go to Sunday School. I want to ask him (her) to go to Sunday School with me. Help me to do this. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## ARE YOU PUTTING ON A SHOW?

Kok Soon is an obedient boy. He listens to his parents and does what they ask him to do. He does not complain nor murmur. Furthermore, he is brilliant and hardworking and would do well in class. His parents are proud of his achievements but he is not arrogant because he learnt in Sunday school not to be.

Always willing to help others, he gives guidance to weaker students. Sometimes when his classmates come to school without money to buy food during recess, he is ever ready to share his food or lend them the little he has. He also helps out in his neighbour's provision shop when he has free time. He does all these because he wants to follow the teachings of the Bible. Every Sunday, he goes to Sunday School, enjoys the lessons and has fun with his friends in the church. He seems a model child that every parent wishes his child may be!

However, one morning Kok Soon wakes up feeling troubled in his heart. He has never felt such a feeling before. He felt that although he has done all the "good things", he has been doing them only to please his parents. There was a spiritual emptiness inside. You see, Kok Soon has not accepted Jesus as his personal Lord and Saviour. Why then does he do all these "good things"? Only to please his parents. He had been putting on a show all this while! That morning, he prayed for the Lord to forgive him and for Jesus to be his personal Saviour. And you know what – he felt such relief and happiness after that!

In the past, Kok Soon thought that doing all the right things like pleasing parents, attending church and helping people will make him a Christian. That is not true. Being "good children" and attending church regularly does not make you a Christian. You must personally accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour.

Thought: I should speak to my parents or Sunday School teacher if I am not sure if I am saved.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am a sinner. Forgive me of my sins and save me by the blood of Christ. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



**CHRISTIAN CHARACTER**

Consider these situations. Students in class get to correct their own work in the school; Su Min passes over a question she knows she has answered wrongly. Kong Meng throws a ball too hard and it breaks the window of his neighbour's house; he quickly sneaks away. Passing by the teacher's desk, Mee Lee sees the answers to a test; she glances at them to try to get some answers. Chong Yew finds a wallet on the field; he picks it and slips it in his own pocket. Wai Soon sees someone leave a basketball in the school playground; he takes it home.

The list goes on... Maybe you can think of more wrong things that you have seen with your own eyes or heard from someone. All these examples show what these boys or girls do when no one sees them. Are they children of character? Are they SURE no one has seen them? Do they not know that God sees and knows everything?

The Bible tells us what Christian character is in 2 Peter 1:5-7.

Every believer must diligently work on these qualities.

List some of them below.

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |

When you try to do the above, you will be happy and blessed. Not only does good character make a believer happy but it makes him a good testimony and witness for God. Remember as you try to have Christian character – it is like growing a tree. It will take time for the roots to strengthen and the tree to grow. It will not be a quick solution for the fruits will not happen overnight. So be patient, and press on!

Thought: From today's reading, what must I do to be happy?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to develop godly qualities in my life. Please guide me daily. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## STANDING ALONE

On his birthday, John received from grandma a Nintendo DS as present. Next, he got an Xbox 360 for doing well in his examinations. For Christmas, he received a handphone. All these things that John received were requested by him. You see, months before he received them, John had it all planned...

“Grandma, Nintendo DS is very fun. Marcus has one too. I don’t want to keep borrowing from him. Please buy it for my birthday,” requested John before his birthday.

“Dad, Mum, there are many interesting Xbox games. Will you promise to buy it when I score 75 marks for all the subjects? Ben has it, so does Andrew. Even Billy has a second-hand one,” pleaded John.

“Everyone has a handphone. Some in class even have I Phones! Everyone has a handphone. I gotta have it!”, whined John.

The message of the world is that you need to fit in. You must dress a certain way, own specific things and act in a certain manner. The message is you can’t be happy unless you are like everyone else. This is what John thinks. Is this how you think?

There is nothing wrong in owning a handphone, or some latest computer game. But to want them because everyone else has it – that is not right. Worse, some children may think it is cool to have these and therefore show off! Are you like that?

To be holy is to separate from the world and its ways. It is to live according to God’s ways rather than the world’s ways. It takes courage to be different from others. It takes more courage to stay on the right path. It means standing alone. Are you brave enough to stand alone?

Thought: When I stand alone for God, God will be with me!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You have called me to be holy as You are holy. Help me not to follow the world’s ways but Your ways. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

**FORGETTING YOUR FAILURES**

Ten-year-old Fanny returned home, ran straight into her bedroom and locked it. From outside, Mum heard crying and knew that Fanny was very upset. She wondered what caused it. Can you guess?

Fanny came out of her bedroom after a while. With her eyes swollen and red, she sat on the sofa still looking sad.

“What happened, Fanny?” asked Mum gently.

“I felt lousy about myself,” replied Fanny sadly, and continued, “I failed the trial to qualify for the school team.” Putting her arms round Fanny, Mum comforted her daughter and prayed with her.

Fanny had failed. Have you failed before and felt terrible after that? Failure does make us feel we are weak. But weaknesses cause us to depend on God even more. Failure also helps us to grow in character; failure teaches us humility, perseverance and value of hard work. Through failing, we learn how to succeed. Through failure, we grow and mature.

We must learn from mistakes and make changes. To make changes, we put failure behind.

Thought: Recite and memorise today's text.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, in life we sometimes fail. When it happens, help us to learn from the mistakes, and move forward and grow. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## MARATHON

Guess what is the longest distance for competitive runs? It is the marathon. Just how long is that? It is 42.195 kilometers. Wow – that is very long! How long does it take to complete the marathon? Well, the answer to that depends on who runs it! If it were me, it would take days for I cannot run that distance in one day! But the fastest timing for men is just over two hours to complete that gruelling race!

The athletes who compete in marathons are super fit and all will want to try their best. Do you think it is easy for them to run one marathon, even if they are very well-trained? Of course not. It is a long and tough route. But all who run will hope to win! No one joins a competition to lose.

Our spiritual race is a long and tough one too. And God is telling us that like athletes, we must try to run the race well and try to win the prize. The difference between our spiritual race and marathons is this: there is only one winner in a marathon. But in our spiritual race, you and I can both be winners, if we press on!

But remember, it will not be an easy race. Today's reading tells we should run to win, so that we might obtain the prize. So, don't be a quitter.

Here is a song:

*It will be worth it all when we see Jesus,  
Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ;  
One glimpse of His dear face all sorrow will erase,  
So bravely run the race till we see Christ*

Thought: Press on!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me not to quit in our spiritual race. Life can be difficult but by Your grace and strength, I can live victoriously. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## HAPPY FOR SUCCESS OF OTHERS

Many of you will know the biblical story of Jonathan and David. Jonathan was the son of the King Saul, and although Saul wanted Jonathan to be king, Jonathan supported David to be the next king.

That way of thinking is strange to most. Why would Jonathan not want to be king? After all, is it not wonderful to be king in that position, he could do almost anything he wants! Why did Jonathan give way to David?

Wouldn't Jonathan be jealous of the future success of David? No. in fact, he was happy for the success of David!

How about you? When you see someone do better than you in class, how do you feel? When you know there is another soccer player more skilled than you are, are you secretly jealous? Some kids like to be class monitors. If you wanted to be one but did not get chosen, how would you treat the class monitor?

There will be times when the Lord calls you to be a supporter of someone's success. Will you be like Jonathan or would you sulk and hope the other person fails? Learn to be happy for others.

Think of ways to support and encourage someone's success:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Thought: I should not envy others but be happy for their success.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for today's lesson. Help me to be like Jonathan willing to give way and support others. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**GOD'S FAVOURITES**

Lily is the apple of mummy's eye. Ryan is the coach's favourite. Jack is Mrs. Ling's favourite student. Are you someone's favourite? When you are someone's favourite, he or she is very fond of you. Your life and experiences matter much to him or her.

Interestingly, Christians are God's favourites. Today's text tells us so:

- The Father adopts us and we are sons of God.
- We are sinners but the Father is not ashamed to be called our Father, and to call us His sons.
- The Father loves us with an everlasting love.
- We are heirs with the Son of God.
- We will inherit from God.
- We shall be like the Son in honour, power and glory
- We shall see the Son and the Father.

The Lord has blessed you with so much. As we consider today's topic – learn to be grateful for the much He has given. List below some of the blessings God has given you – and thank God for them!

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Thought: We are favoured of God, if we are Christians.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for Your love and for adopting us to be Your children. We are Your favourites! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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**FOR TO ME, TO LIVE IS CHRIST, AND TO DIE IS GAIN**

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“Grandpa,” said Jennifer as she climbed up onto her grandfather’s lap for a story, “would you rather live a long time or only a short time?”

Grandpa laughed. “Well, I guess most people would like a long life,” he said. “I know somebody who’s going to die,” Jennifer said softly. “Really?” asked Grandpa. “Somebody old or somebody young?”

“Somebody six,” replied Jennifer. “Bee Hin was absent again today. She’s been sick a lot, and last week she told me she has something called leukemia.” “I’m so sorry to hear that,” said Grandpa, “but leukemia can be treated. It doesn’t mean she’ll die.”

“That’s what our teacher said,” Jennifer replied, “but today, Bee Hin’s cousin Peter said she is going to die because she has a blood disease doctors can’t cure. Our teacher says that’s not true. She says Bee Hin is very sick, but there’s medicine that can make her better. Jennifer said while looking sad, “But some kids think they might catch what Bee Hin has if they play with her or eat with her.” “I hope they will soon learn how foolish that is,” said Grandpa. “How do you feel about it?” “I’m always going to be her friend and sit with her,” Jennifer said. Tears formed in her eyes. “I wish God would make her well.”

“So do I,” said Grandpa, “and we’ll pray for her.” He held Jennifer close for a minute, then asked, “Does Bee Hin know how sick she is?” Jennifer nodded. “She says her mommy told her everybody will die sometime, and only God knows when.” Jennifer wiped her eyes. Grandpa nodded. “Good. Her mommy is right about that,” he said.

Jennifer smiled. “Bee Hin told me she loves Jesus and He’s got a special place for her in heaven. Her mommy said heaven is even better than being here on earth.”

“That’s great,” said Grandpa. “A few minutes ago, you asked if I’d rather live a long time or a short time. Always remember that how long you live isn’t nearly so important as what happens to you after you die. Whether I live a long life or a short one, the important thing is to know that when I die, I’ll be forever in the special place Jesus prepared for me.” “Me, too,” said Jennifer. “Just like Bee Hin.”

Thought: Do I know where I will go when this life is over?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, it is important for me to know that I will go to be with Jesus in Heaven, when my life is over. Help me to be sure of my salvation. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THOSE WHO LOVE GOD

"I'm getting our bedroom ready for my brother and me," announced Steve proudly. He was sure their new baby would be a boy. "We've got enough girls," he added, glancing at Audrey and Hannah, his two sisters. "I'm praying for a little brother."

"You can tell God how you feel about it, but don't forget that it's up to Him to decide whether to send us a girl or a boy," his mother told him. "Yeah, Steve. Don't be so sure it will be a boy," said Hannah. "I'd rather have a girl."

"It'll be a boy," Steve insisted stubbornly. "I told you that I prayed." The big day finally came. The new baby arrived, and it was... a girl! Steve was disappointed.

"Oh, look!" exclaimed Audrey as they drove home. She pointed. "That's the house we wanted to buy, and there's a 'For Sale' sign in front of it."

"Interesting," said Mom. "Remember how disappointed we were when we found out it was sold just an hour before we wanted to buy it? We thought that house was exactly what we wanted, but now I'm really glad we don't live there. We could never afford to pay the loan for a place like that, and so if we had bought it, we'd have to get ready to move right now! That would have been terrible timing."

"Our second choice turned out to be better anyway," said Dad, "It is more affordable, and hasn't it been fun fixing up this home and making it just the way we like it?" "It sure has," agreed Audrey. "Plus I get to have my own room! I see now that God gave us our second choice in houses because He knew it was best for us."

"How about with babies?" asked Dad, glancing at Steve, who was sitting next to his new sister. "How's the baby doing?" "She is kinda cute," Steve admitted. "Look! She's holding my finger. She's was my second choice-like the house was for you-Since she's God's choice for us, so she must be the best one for us."

"I'm sure she is," said Mom with a smile.

Thought: As today's Scripture reading tells us, all things work together for good, to those who love God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, sometimes what I really want is not what is best for me. Teach me to trust You and remember that You know the future. Please help me to trust that Your choice is the best for me. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



## IF YOU LOVE ME, KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS

“Goodbye! Have a great time! Take lots of pictures!” Everyone was waving to Leanne and Leonard as they left their wedding reception to go on their honeymoon. Joanna noticed Leanne’s little sister Bella sitting by herself and looking unhappy. “What’s the matter?” Joanna asked the little girl. Bella sniffed. “I don’t want Leanne to go,” she whispered. “I’ll miss her.”

“But she’ll be back soon!” Joanna assured Bella as she tried to comfort the little girl.

On the way home, Joanna told her family about Bella’s reaction to Leanne’s leaving. Mom smiled. “Bella doesn’t understand that Leanne’s place is with Leonard now,” she said. “But imagine how hard it would have been for Leanne to convince Leonard that she loved him if she suddenly decided to cancel her leave and go back to work rather than spend time with him on their honeymoon. When you love someone, you will like to be with him and talk to him.”

“And talk about him, I guess,” added Joanna. “Leanne was always talking about Leonard.” “Everybody could see that she loves him, and he loves her,” added Joanna’s sister Dinah. Dad nodded. “So love is seen in actions and speech, right?” Dad asked as he turned into MacDonald’s. “Okay. This evening, let’s see how many ways we can show our love for each other.”

“Let’s also be sure to show that we love Jesus,” added Mom.

“Yes,” agreed Dad. “He loves us so much that He willingly died for us. But do you think He believes us when we say we love Him but don’t want to spend time with Him or talk about Him or to Him?”

“You mean... like if we say we love Jesus but don’t like to go to church or read the Bible or pray, we’re not acting like we love Him very much?” asked Joanna.

“Or if we don’t want to talk about Him to other people?” suggested Dinah. “It seems that way to me,” Dad said. “After all, real love is more than words. It’s wanting to be with and please the person you love.”

“Yes,” agreed Mom, “and the thing that pleases Jesus most is obedience to Him. The way to show that we truly love Him is to obey Him—to do what He says.”

Thought: Do you really love Jesus, or do you just say you do?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for this reminder that my actions must show that I love You. Help me to obey Your commandments always. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

**FOOLS FOR CHRIST'S SAKE**

After school, Daniel took his Bible from his locker and looked around a little nervously. He knew that if certain kids saw him with a Bible, he'd have to listen to some taunting remarks. "Hey! Daniel!" called James, a boy from his church youth group. "You dropped something." As Daniel looked down, James said "Just kidding!" and the boys laughed together. "Let's go to the shopping center across the road and spend time with some of the guys," suggested James. Daniel hesitated, and James noticed the Bible in his hand. "You're not going to that Bible club again, are you?" James asked.

Daniel nodded. "Why don't you come with me?" he asked. "I get enough Bible lessons on Sunday," replied James. "Don't you?"

"Not really," said Daniel. "Besides, last week our Sunday school teacher, Teacher Whie Kwang said that if we go to Bible club, it is one way to show others that we are Christians." We can also invite others so that they will learn about the Lord Jesus. "Why don't you come with me?" urged Daniel. "You're a Christian, too, aren't you, James?"

"Yeah, sure," mumbled James, "but I don't think we have to talk about it all the time." He paused. "What I mean is... well... some of the guys are already teasing me about going to Sunday school. If I go to Bible club instead of hanging out with them, I bet they'll call me a fool!"

Daniel thought it over. Then he shrugged. "It's funny," he said. "Teacher Whie Kwang said we're always somebody's fool - either the world's or Christ's. As for me, I'd rather be a fool for Christ." They turned at the next corner. "We're meeting at church fellowship hall today, in case you decide to come," Daniel said. "Otherwise, I'll see you on Sunday."

James thought over what Daniel had said as he watched Daniel hurry down the street. "Maybe I should head over for Bible study-even if I do get called a fool, at least I'll be a fool for Jesus!"

Thought: Am I afraid to let others see that I am a Christian?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to bear a good testimony for the Lord Jesus. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**HE WHO BELIEVES IN ME HAS EVERLASTING LIFE**

“Oh, no!” exclaimed Joe as he looked at his report card. He didn’t like math, so he always hurried through his assignments as quickly as he could. Sometimes he didn’t even do them. But this grade was even worse than what he expected!

Joe’s parents were also unhappy with his results. “Mom and I talked with your teacher about this,” Dad told him the next day. “If you’re doing your best work, that’s fine, but the teacher doesn’t believe you are. We don’t think so, either. We think you’re able to get a passing grade in math. What do you think?” Joe sighed and nodded. “I’ll do better,” he promised.

“So we all agree that if you work hard and do your best, you’ll pass, right?” asked Dad. Joe nodded. “Okay,” Dad continued. “Well, Mom and I decided that if you pass, we’ll reward you this Christmas with the remote control car we’ve been talking about. If you don’t put in your effort, you know what will happen.”

“All right!” exclaimed Joe. “I’ll be sure to get my assignments done every day, so getting that car will be easy.”

For a while, Joe did well. Assignments were in on time, and the grades on his papers were good. Then, gradually, he studied less and played more. The night before his math test, Joe got out his book and spent several hours studying. “I don’t get it! How do you work out this problem?” he asked from time to time. He listened carefully as Mom or Dad explained.

After taking the test, Joe wasn’t sure he had passed. “But maybe I did”, he thought. “I should have studied more, but maybe I made it anyway.”

When Joe got his paper back, he sighed. He had learned a lot in that last night of frantic study, but he had started too late and just missed a passing grade. He knew - and Mom and Dad knew - he hadn’t done his best. “I’m sorry,” said Dad when he saw Joe’s grade, “but you know what this means.” “But, Dad, I almost passed,” Joe pleaded.

“Almost isn’t enough,” said Dad. “You agreed that if you did your best, you’d easily pass math. We said if you did that, you’d get a remote-controlled car - not if you almost passed” Joe had nothing more to say.

Thought: Are you almost persuaded to be a Christian? Almost is not enough.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to genuinely believe in Jesus and live a life that shows it. Please help me to be sure of my own salvation. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

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## TRUST IN THE LORD

“Why, God?” murmured Jolene as she hugged her baby brother. Scott was adorable, but they had recently learned that he was deaf. “Don’t blame God, Jolene,” Mom said gently. “His ways are above our ways. We need to trust Him even when we can’t understand.” But Jolene wanted to understand. “After all, we’re Christians”, she thought. “Isn’t God supposed to take care of Christians? How can Mom and Dad be so calm? They treat Scott like any other baby.

“Are you ready to go to the park, Jolene?” Mom interrupted Jolene’s thoughts. “If we don’t hurry we’ll miss part of it.” She held out her arms to the baby. “Come to Mommy, darling,” she said.

“I don’t see why you should talk to him, Mom,” Jolene said harshly. “You know he can’t hear you!”

Mom sighed. “I’ve told you, Jolene,” she said. “It’s important for him to see our lips move and to feel the vibration of our words. Now brush away the tears and angry thoughts. Let’s have a good time. Scott will love the park.”

It was a long weekend and the park was crowded. As they settled under the shade of a large tree, other groups of people were quite near them. There was a carnival at the park and because it was crowded, Jolene could not see clearly. Dad handed Scott to Mom, and with a swoop, Jolene was up on her father’s shoulder. She clapped her hands. “Now I can see the whole carnival,” she said, grinning down at her dad.

Soon the carnival was over and they rested a while at the park before making their way home. “Life is a lot like the carnival,” observed Dad. “We’re like children in the crowd, and we can see only one moment at a time. God is above the crowd. He sees each person’s entire life, the past and the future, as well as the present. We wonder why Scott is deaf, but that’s because we see only the present. God knows why, because He sees the whole picture.”

Jolene patted her sleeping brother’s hand. “I’ll try to remember that, Dad,” she promised.

Thought: Am I questioning God about something that happened? His ways are above mine.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, many things in my life are beyond my ability to understand. At any point in time, I see only a very small part. But please remind me that You see it from beginning to end. Teach me to simply trust You to do what is best. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## DO NOT JUDGE ACCORDING TO APPEARANCE

"I can't believe it!" Brenda exclaimed as she watched a TV show. "Seems like the main character has everything she could want. She's gorgeous, she's talented, she's rich, she's famous, and..."

"And she has spoiled her life by using drugs, and now she's been arrested," said Brenda's mother, shaking her head. "How sad!"

"Yeah... but I still I wish I looked like her!" said Brenda. "I'd say she's a good example of the fact that looks can be deceiving," Mom replied, opening the refrigerator. "Oh, dear, where is the jar of beet roots we bought last week?"

"Mmm" said Brenda, "Thought I placed them in the fridge last week?" Brenda realized she had forgotten and found them near the cupboard. "I love the color of these beets, especially the juice!" she exclaimed as she held up the jar at a sunny window. "Just look at them! Aren't they pretty?" Mom laughed.

"It is a pretty color," she agreed as she took the jar and opened it. "Oh, no!" she exclaimed. "This lid wasn't sealed and it hasn't been in the fridge. We'd better not eat these beets. They may have gone bad."

"But they look just fine," said Brenda.

"They may look okay, but when the lid isn't sealed, bacteria can get in. We're not going to take any chances," Mom replied, and she began to pour the contents of the jar into the garbage bin. "If they're spoiled, they could cause serious food poisoning."

"Wow!" exclaimed Brenda. "Then I'm glad you noticed that it wasn't sealed."

"You know, dear, those beets remind me of Jennifer Taylor," said Mom. "She's beautiful and talented, and to many people, her life looked perfect but Satan was spreading his poison in her life through the drugs she took and the company she keeps."

You're saying that like the beets, she looks good," said Brenda thoughtfully, "and ... like how bacteria can spoil the beets when they get in, Jennifer Taylor got spoiled when sin got into her heart. Right?"

"Yes," agreed Mom. "Things like those beets can look good when they're bad. People are like that, too. They may look good on the outside, but only God knows what's going on in their hearts."

Thought: Do I remember that appearances can be deceiving?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for making me who I am. Help me to be contented with how I look. Please help me to realise that what is more important is a heart of obedience to You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## ARE YOU “PLUGGED IN”?

“Mom, I can’t get the toaster to work,” called Jason. Receiving no answer, he went to the room where his mother was ironing. “I want to make some toast, but I can’t get the toaster to work,” said Jason. “It doesn’t heat up.”

“Is it plugged in?” asked Mom. “Plugged in?” repeated Jason. “I guess so, it always is. But I’ll go check.” Jason went back to the kitchen and saw that it was not plugged in. Oops! he thought. No wonder it didn’t work. He plugged in the toaster, put two pieces of raisin bread into it, and soon enjoyed perfectly browned, buttered toast.

In Sunday school class the next morning, Jason’s teacher held up his Bible. “I’m sure you all learnt long ago that you should read your Bible every day, right?” asked Teacher June. Heads nodded. “Good,” Teacher June continued. “I hope you do that, but are you aware that just reading the Bible isn’t enough? What you read needs to be plugged into your life.”

“Plugged into my life?” asked Samantha. “What do you mean by that?” Jason raised his hand. “I have an example of something that needed to be plugged in,” he said. “I was trying to make toast yesterday, but the toaster wouldn’t work. When I checked, I found out that it wasn’t plugged in.”

“I know about plugging in toasters,” said Samantha, “but I still don’t get how we plug the Bible into our lives.” She grinned. “The Bible doesn’t have a cord.”

Teacher June smiled. “When something is plugged in, it’s useful and there is a change,” she said. “Toasters change the bread that’s put into them. The Bible was meant to change us, so... plugging it into your life means letting it change you as you do what it says. For instance, if you read, ‘Obey your parents,’ but then try to get out of doing your chores, you’re not letting what the Bible says change you.”

“But if I read, ‘Forgive one another,’ and then I do forgive somebody who treated me badly, does it mean I’ve plugged in what I read?” asked Jason. “You’ve got it!” said Teacher June. “This week, let’s not just read the Bible. Let’s plug it in by allowing it to change our lives as we obey it.”

Thought: Am I “plugged into” the Bible? Has the Bible change my attitudes and actions?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to be wise. Help me to remember that while it is good to read the Bible, simply reading it isn’t enough. As I read it each day, may I put into practice the things that I read! In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

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## ARE YOU GOING TO HEAVEN?

Rhambau, an elderly pearl diver in India, pointed to a man on the street. "Look, Mr. Grayson. That pilgrim goes to Calcutta. He walks barefoot and picks the sharpest stones to step on. Sometimes he kneels down and kisses the road! That is good!" Rhambau sighed. "I'm old and must prepare for the life to come," he said. "I must begin my pilgrimage to make sure of my place in heaven. I shall go to Calcutta on my knees. The gods will reward me. The suffering will be sweet, for it shall purchase heaven for me."

"Oh, Rhambau, a trip such as that would be much too hard for you please don't do that!" pleaded Mr. Grayson, who had come to India as a missionary many years before. "Jesus died to save you from your sins and to provide for you a place in heaven," continued Mr. Grayson. "You must simply believe and accept His free gift of salvation."

"No! No, that is too easy," insisted Rhambau. "One must work for a place in heaven!" Then he held out a beautiful pearl and spoke with a sob in his voice. "Before I go, I give this to you. My son was a pearl diver, and he found this pearl, but he stayed under the water too long! He died soon after. I give it to you, my best friend."

"I'm so sorry about your son!" exclaimed Mr. Grayson. "But..." He hesitated. "That's a wonderful pearl," he added. "I will buy it from you." Rhambau shook his head. "No one has enough money to pay what this pearl is worth to me," he answered sadly. "You may have it only as a gift."

"Oh, but that is too easy!" exclaimed Mr. Grayson. "I must pay for it or work for it." Rhambau spoke quickly. "No! No! I would never sell this pearl-its value is in the life blood of my only son." He held out the pearl. "Just accept it as a token of the love I bear for you."

"Rhambau," said Mr. Grayson gently, "to make it possible for you to enter heaven, it cost God the life blood of His only Son. In a million years or in hundreds of pilgrimages you will never earn entrance to heaven! It is so priceless that no one can pay for it. God offers you salvation as a free gift. Accept it as a token of God's love for you, a sinner." Rhambau gasped. "I see!" he exclaimed. "This pearl is priceless there is nothing you can do to earn it. And you said, heaven is like too. Tell me about it once again!"

Thought: Have I received the priceless pearl of salvation?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for reminding me that the only way to heaven is through the Lord Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## WHAT ME – A PRINCE?

“Don’t forget we’re having a special program at school tonight,” Tom reminded Mom one morning. “I’ll be in our class play, you know.” “We know,” answered Mom, “and we wouldn’t miss it!”

That evening, Mom and Dad watched proudly as the play began. Tom played the role of an emperor’s son who was unhappy with his life. “Why must I study all day?” he grumbled. “Why must I know all the responsibilities of an emperor and learn court etiquette stuff and learn all the history of my father’s kingdom? Who cares what my great-grandfather did anyway?” He pushed his books away. “The village kids play and have fun. Why can’t I ever have fun? Everyday I’m told a prince must always remember to be careful with what he says and that everyone watches what he does. It’s tiresome!”

“Prince!” exclaimed his tutor. “You should feel honoured to be the emperor’s son and to have all the privileges you have!” The prince frowned. “Well, does that mean I can’t be human?” he asked. “Does it mean I must never lose my temper in public? I must never break a law? I must always look neat and clean and always say just the right thing?”

“Of course it does.” The tutor nodded. “You must never do anything that would bring shame to your father. You must be an example to the children in the village—and to everyone there.”

“Will I ever stop hearing all those do’s and don’ts?” grumbled the prince. “I’m sure the village children don’t hear them all day long.”

“You are not a village child. You are the son of the emperor,” lectured the tutor. “You must study and learn the ways of a king, for the village people are watching you. They expect you to display kingly qualities. If they look at you and see that you have no respect for your father, for his reputation and his laws, they will also lose their respect for him and won’t obey his commands. As a prince, you must bring honour to your father’s name.”

Tom’s parents and the others in the audience clapped loudly as the first scene of the play ended.

Thought: Am I a child of a king? My earthly father is not a king, but if I am a Christian, I am a child of God. He is the King of kings!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for today’s lesson. I will examine my life to see if it brings shame or honour to You. Help me to obey what the Bible says and to live in a way that will bring honour to You. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.



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## REDEMPTION THROUGH JESUS

Kai sighed loudly when Mom had to stop because of a roadblock. Workers were repairing the bridge ahead, and traffic was temporarily stopped. “How long will we have to wait?” moaned Kai. “I’m not sure,” Mom replied. “It might be a while.” Kai looked out the window. She saw a red van, a delivery truck, some cars, and a motorcycle. Drivers craned their necks, trying to see if they’d be able to move soon. Some kept looking at their watches every now and then.

“Am I going to be late for the swimming class?” Kai asked, “The class at the community pool on the other side of the bridge starts at ten o’clock. “I don’t know,” Mom answered, “but we can’t go anywhere until that roadblock is removed.”

Kai sighed impatiently. “I wish they’d work faster!” she muttered. “Well, it’s out of our control,” replied Mom. “We’ll just have to be patient.”

They waited another five minutes. Then Kai noticed cars moving ahead. “Look!” she said. “I think the roadblock’s down!” Kai’s mom slowly eased the car forward, and soon they were across the bridge. “I’m so glad that I’m going to make it for the swimming class!” breathed Kai with a sigh of relief.

Mom smiled. “Just this morning, I was reading about a different kind of roadblock,” she said. “Really?” asked Kai. Mom nodded. “My devotional book referred to sin as a roadblock that keeps us from being close to God. Unlike the roadblock on the bridge, we don’t need to wait and wait for Jesus to take away our sin. It happens the moment we confess and ask His forgiveness.”

“No waiting or wondering if we’ll make it to heaven, right?” asked Kai. “Or even if He still loves us anytime we’ve sinned.” “Nope! He assures us that He does and that He wants us to enjoy fellowship with Him each day,” Mom replied. “We need to confess our sin to Him and receive His forgiveness in order for that to happen.” She swung into the pool parking lot.

Kai grinned and jumped out. “Thanks, Mom,” she said. “If I hurry, I might still make warm-ups.”

Thought: Is there a roadblock of sin in my life? Perhaps it’s a bad habit, lying, disobedience, or stubbornness....

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know I may have this sin (write it here \_\_\_\_\_) and I confess it now and seek Your forgiveness. Help me to remember that Jesus suffered and died on the Cross for my sins. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## GO TO JESUS

Just as Mom and Bee Tin sat down to eat lunch one day, the door opened and Dad walked in. His clothes and face were dirty, and his hand was bandaged. "What happened?" cried Mom. "The apartments near my factory went up in flames, and several of us ran there to help," explained Dad.

"You're hurt!" Mom exclaimed, looking at his hand. "Nothing serious—I'll be fine," Dad assured her, "but I'm home for the day. I'll go change, and then I'll tell you all about it while we eat."

Bee Tin and Mom listened eagerly as Dad talked about the fire. "Smoke and flames were billowing from the building," he said, "and I saw a little girl about your age at an open second-story window. I just held out my arms and called, 'Jump! Jump! I'll catch you. I promise I will.' She was crying, but she hesitated only a moment before she jumped. Her clothes were on fire, but I caught her and was able to beat out the flames."

Bee Tin was wide-eyed as she listened. "You're a hero, Daddy!" she exclaimed. "I'm so glad you caught her. You saved her life!" After a moment, Bee Tin added, "She needed to be saved, and you... you just stood there and told her to come to you, didn't you?"

"Yes, honey, I did," answered Dad. "I'm glad she trusted me and jumped like I told her to."

In Sunday school, my teacher said Jesus wants us to come to Him. We need to be saved from sin, and He loves us and wants to save us. I thought maybe I should wait until I was older-like you and Mom are. But if that little girl was old enough to trust you and just go to you when you called her, Daddy, I guess I'm old enough to go to Jesus and trust Him."

"Wow, dear!" exclaimed Dad. "Of course you can trust Him. This is an answer to our prayers."

After making sure Bee Tin understood what Jesus did for her, they all bowed their heads. Bee Tin talked to the Lord and asked Jesus to come into her life. "Thank You, Lord," prayed Dad when she finished. "Thank You so much. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen."

Thought: Have I accepted the Lord as my personal Lord and Saviour?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for reminding me I don't have to wait until I'm older to trust in You. Teach me to trust You now! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## ALWAYS TRY YOUR BEST!

One Saturday morning, Kok Peng sat at the kitchen table, reading a sports magazine. “Did you memorise the Bible verses for tomorrow?” asked his sister, Siew Peng. “This is the last week we can recite them for prizes, and Mrs. Chan said we have to know them all or we won’t be included in the winners’ group.”

Kok Peng scowled. “I hate memorizing,” he mumbled. “It’s too hard.”

“Don’t forget to feed Riley,” said Mom as she cleared the table. At the mention of his name, the dog picked up his bowl and dropped it at Kok Peng’s feet.

“Just a minute, boy,” said Kok Peng. He put down the magazine, got up, and went to his room. Riley picked up his bowl, followed Kok Peng, and again dropped it at Kok Peng’s feet.

“In a minute,” repeated Kok Peng, taking a few seconds to half-heartedly study his verse. Once more, Riley dropped his bowl. Kok Peng laughed. “You don’t give up, do you, Riley?” he asked. “Okay, I’ll feed you.”

In Sunday School, Kok Peng tried to recite his verses, but he could not remember much of it. “Who cares?”, he thought, “I bet the prize is a pencil anyway, and I already have enough pencils.” But the prize wasn’t a pencil. It was a beautiful Bible cover, and Sharon was one of the winners.

“It’s not fair,” grumbled Kok Peng on the way home. “Sharon gets everything!”

“Sharon worked hard at that contest,” said Dad. “Right,” agreed Mom. “She showed as much diligence as Riley did when he wanted breakfast.” “I don’t even know what that means,” Kok Peng mumbled. “What’s ‘diligence’?”

“It’s keeping at something and refusing to give up, like what Riley does,” said Mom. “He doesn’t get lazy and give up,” added Dad. “I think we should all be a little more like him. When we’re diligent, we give our best effort. That’s what we should do in all areas of our lives. That’s the way to be a winner.” As Kok Peng thought about it, he felt a little foolish—he hadn’t expected to learn a lesson from his dog!

Thought: Do you give your best in everything you do?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I remember to do things “with my might” - to be diligent. In other words, I must give my best effort in doing my chores, learning about God, doing schoolwork, or “whatever my hand finds to do.” In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## DON'T HIDE YOUR SINS

Matt's friend, Nick, had a flat tire on his bike, so Matt ran home to see if he could use Dad's tire pump. Matt liked using his father's tools, and usually Dad didn't mind. "Just follow my rules," Dad had told him. "Get permission before you use them, and put the tools away as soon as you're finished with them." But this time, Dad wasn't home to ask. Matt shrugged and took the pump to Nick's house anyway. The boys fixed the tire and then went for a ride.

As Matt and Nick rode their bikes home, it began to rain. "Don't bother to stop for your pump. I'll bring it over in the morning," Nick promised. Matt hesitated. "Well... all right," he agreed. He felt a little guilty as he sped on home.

The next morning, Nick called Matt. "I've looked all over, and I can't find the tire pump anywhere," said Nick. "Oh, no!" groaned Matt. "Dad doesn't know I took it, and I have to put it back where it belongs before he notices."

"Look... just pretend you don't know anything about it," urged Nick. "If you don't mention it, no one will even know we took it."

At first that seemed like a good idea, but as the morning passed, Matt was very uncomfortable about the whole thing. "I'm going to have to tell Dad," he muttered to himself. With a sigh, he went to find his dad and told him the whole story.

Dad nodded. "Nick's dad called me just a few minutes ago," he said. "He found the pump last night and took it in out of the rain. He said it just occurred to him that it was mine, and he's sending Nick over with it now. As for you, Matt, consider yourself grounded."

"But Dad... can't we just forget about it this one time?" pleaded Matt. "I did come and tell you about it."

"Yes, and I appreciate that," said Dad. "I had intended to ground you for a week, but because you were honest about this, Matt, I'll ground you for only the weekend."

"I will! I promise," Matt said solemnly. He turned to leave, then stopped. "And thanks, Dad," he added.

Thought: God will not be pleased with me when I hide my sins.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be honest and never to cover up my sins. Instead if I have done wrong to others help me to admit my wrongdoing to them. Please help me to repent and seek Your forgiveness when I sin against You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## KEEP ON PRAYING

Ruth glanced around, then bowed her head shyly as her dad led the family in prayer before their meal. “Why do we have to pray when we’re at a restaurant?” Ruth asked after Dad finished. “Don’t you think it makes people think we’re weird? Most of them don’t pray.”

“No, they don’t,” said Dad, “but we’re thankful for what God does for us, and we want to tell Him so, no matter where we are. And if it shows people that we love God, so much the better.”

Little did they know, a married couple named Bill and Christine sat at a nearby table. They had not been getting along. They knew their children often felt hurt when they heard their parents argue, but neither parent seemed able to stop. As Bill and Christine began to eat, they noticed Ruth and her family praying before their meal.

“Look,” said Bill, softly. “Do you see that family over there? Did you notice that they prayed before they started eating?”

“Yes,” murmured Christine. “You know, I just remembered a little saying, ‘The family that prays together stays together.’ Do you believe that?”

“I don’t know,” replied Bill, “but by the looks of that family, I’d say there might be something to it.” He hesitated, then continued, “You know, Christine, I think we’ve both tried hard to settle our differences, but maybe there’s one more thing we should try. We were married in a church, that’s where we started our life together. But we’ve hardly been to church since then. Maybe we should go back to church. We should pray and ask God for His help in getting along with each other.”

“I’ve been thinking the same thing myself,” Christine replied, “but I wonder if it’s too late.”

“It can’t hurt,” replied Bill. “We’ve got nothing to lose. I almost feel like we should thank that family for having the courage to pray in public, and let them know how it influenced us.” Christine gave him a small, tearful smile.

Thought: Do you have the courage to pray when others are watching?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give me the courage to pray in public. I remember the story of Daniel and how he purposed in his heart to stand up for You. I know some children might think it is a strange thing to do, but praying in public is one way to be a testimony for You. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

**SAVED ONLY THROUGH CHRIST**

Mandy who was seated at her computer desk, called out to her father, “Dad, can you help me with this email? I tried to send it twice, but I don’t think it was sent out.”

Dad put the newspaper he was reading aside, pushed himself out of his chair, and walked over to Mandy. “Are you sure you typed the address right?” he asked. Mandy nodded. “Yes, I’m positive. Hee Peng wrote it down herself on this paper.” She showed Dad a page in her notebook.

Dad pulled up a chair and sat beside Mandy. He looked at the paper and then at the computer screen. “I see the problem. You typed the letter ‘O’ after Hee Peng’s name. It should be the number zero.” Mandy checked the paper and then typed Hee Peng’s address again, this time with a zero. She clicked on the “send” key, and a moment later the screen showed that her message had been sent.

Mandy swung around in her chair with a grin. “Thanks, Dad!” she said.

That evening, Mandy and Dad shared some kueh lapis. “Guess what, Dad,” said Mandy. “Today I forgot to write down our math homework assignment, but Hee Peng sent it to me. It’s a good thing you corrected my mistake, or that email would not have gotten to Hee Peng even though I thought I had the right address.”

Dad nodded. “You know, dear, the mistake you made with an email address is a little like the mistake many people make regarding salvation. It’s like they use the wrong address to get to Heaven.”

“Heaven has an address?” Mandy asked.

“Not exactly,” said Dad, “but I was thinking of a man I talked to this morning. He thinks it doesn’t make any difference if people have different religious beliefs ... or even if they believe in themselves and their own good works. He thinks everyone ends up in the same place... Heaven. But that’s not what the Bible says.” Mandy raised her eyebrows. “You mean... it’s kind of like they’re using those people or things for the address to reach Heaven, right?”

Dad nodded. “There’s only one correct address, and that’s Jesus,” he said. “It’s only through Him that anyone will reach Heaven.”

Thought: Jesus is the only way to Heaven.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am grateful and thankful that the Lord Jesus died on the Cross for my sins. Jesus is the only way to Heaven. Help me to share the Gospel message with the unsaved. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## THE LORD WILL HEAR YOUR CRY

Over family devotion one evening, Dad read from Psalm 40:1, “I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry”, Dad read slowly. He looked up. “That’s a good verse for us,” he said. “We need to be patient and wait for the Lord to help us.”

“But we’ve prayed and prayed, and things are not getting any better,” said Jack with a frown. “Why doesn’t God answer our prayers? Things have been going bad for so long!”

“Yeah,” agreed Janet. “You’re still out of work, Dad, and Mom’s still sick in the hospital.”

“And now even the toilet is not working properly!” added Jack. “It almost seems like God doesn’t really answer prayers at all.”

“Well,” said Dad, “God always answers the prayers of Christians, but He doesn’t always say yes. He sometimes says “no”, or He just wants us to be patient. Jack, do you remember when Janet got her first two-wheel bike?”

“I remember!” exclaimed Janet. She grinned. “Jack begged for one, too, but it wouldn’t have done him any good to have one. He was too little to ride it.”

Dad nodded. “When you were old enough, we were happy to get you a bike, Jack,” Dad said to Jack. “It’s like that with God. He knows what’s right for us.” If something is good for us, He’ll give it to us at just the right time.”

A few days later, Dad went for an interview. When he returned home, he was smiling. “God answered our prayers,” he said. “Mr. Tan just told me he’d employ me to be his driver!”

“Wow! God did work things out!” exclaimed Jack. “I guess I should have known He would.”

“But what about Mom?” asked Janet. “She’s still not back home.” Dad nodded. “We’ll keep on praying for Mom,” he said. “God will work out the very best plan for her life, too. Let’s trust Him to do that.”

Thought: Am I sometimes impatient when my prayers do not seem to be answered?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to be patient, and to be willing to accept Your will even if the answer is “No”. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## GOD SEES EVERYTHING!

"I shouldn't have allowed you to look at my test paper," said Luen guiltily as he and his friend Joel walked home after school. "I think I should tell Mr. Sim I cheated."

"Why would you do that?" exclaimed Joel. "You didn't cheat. I did." "But I helped you," said Luen, "so I cheated, too." "We'll never do it again," said Joel. "Nobody saw us." "God did," replied Luen. "He sees everything."

"You mean God doesn't trust us, so He sits up round-the-clock to spy on us? I don't believe that," protested Joel. "Not spy, but He does see," said Luen. "He... ah..." Luen sighed, not sure how to explain what he meant. "Maybe you'll change your mind by tomorrow," said Joel. "At least, I hope so."

The next evening, Joel went with Luen's family for dinner at East Coast Park. On the way home, they passed an oncoming car with its headlights on 'high beam'. Luen's father, Seng squinted. "That guy should dim his headlights!" he muttered. "They're blinding me!"

"Seng!" Mom cried out. "Look out! You're going too near..." The car brakes squealed, there was a thump, and they felt the car skid a little. They had hit a curb, but no one was hurt.

"Well, that was exciting," said Joel when they dropped him off. "Thank God for watching over us," said Luen's mother.

"That's it!" exclaimed Luen. "That's what I meant earlier today. God does watch over us, but not just to catch us doing something bad. He watches over us to protect us, too." Dad nodded. "The Bible says 'The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.'"

Joel was deep in thought when he saw Luen the next morning. "I've been thinking," he said, "and, well... if you still want to tell Mr. Sim about the test, I... I'll go with you. Hey! Do you think God will see us do that, too?"

"Sure He will!" answered Luen with a smile. "And this time, I think He'll like what He sees."

Thought: Do I realise that God sees and knows what I do?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, remind me that nothing I do is hidden from you. You see the good as well as the bad things I do - or even think. You see me when I'm mean to someone, take something that doesn't belong to me, or tell a lie. Teach me to be a good child. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



## WE LOVE HIM BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US

“Mom,” Nick said hesitantly one day, “did you... ah... did you ever think about having plastic surgery to fix all those scars on your face?” For as long as Nick could remember, there had always been ugly, red scars on his mother’s face and hands. He was used to them and hardly notices them. Sadly, some kids in his class had asked what was wrong with her, and made jokes about the way she looked.

Mom put her hand up to her face. “I had plastic surgery years ago,” she said. “Maybe doctors could do a better job now, but it would be very expensive.” “I know you got those scars in a fire,” added Nick. “I remember hearing something about it years ago, but I can’t remember what happened.”

Nick’s mother hesitated. “When you were just a little baby, our house caught fire,” she said. “You were in your crib, and that whole area was on fire. I ran in, grabbed you and wrapped you up in blankets. I’m so thankful I was able to shelter you as I ran out of the house. We both were all right, but as you can see, my hands and face got burnt in the fire.”

Tears came to Nick’s eyes. “Oh, Mom,” he cried, “you got those scars saving me? I didn’t know that! Why didn’t you tell me before?” Mom put her arms around Nick and squeezed him tight. “I thought you knew,” she said. Nick hugged his mother, too. “Thank you, Mom. Knowing you loved me so much makes me love you more than ever!” he declared.

“I love you, too,” said Mom. “You know, you’ve had a lot of questions lately about church, the Bible and Jesus. Well, maybe my scars can help you understand how much Jesus loves you. We’re all helpless sinners, remember? We can’t save ourselves, but Jesus came to save us. What He did for us on the Cross caused Him scars, too. His body was scarred where the spear was thrust into His side and where the nails pierced His hands and feet. He suffered for us! He gave Himself-He bore the pain and suffering, and He died on the Cross so that we can have eternal life.”

“Wow!” exclaimed Nick. “Jesus really does love us, and His scars show us how much!”

Thought: Do I know how much the Lord Jesus suffered for me on the Cross?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am thankful that Jesus died on the Cross for my sins. Not only did He sacrifice Himself, He had to endure a long and cruel death. Teach me to love You more and more. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

**YOU DON'T WORK, YOU DON'T EAT**

"Hi, Teacher Ming!" Tom greeted his Sunday school teacher. "You're up! We thought you'd be in bed." Teacher Ming had fallen from a ladder and hurt his back. After surgery, he had spent several days in the hospital. Now he was back home, and Tom had gone with his dad to visit him.

Teacher Ming smiled. "You can't keep a good man down," he joked. "I'm thankful that I don't have much pain now. I may never be able to go back to construction work, or even lift anything very heavy."

"That's too bad," sympathised Tom's father. "I know you loved your work."

Teacher Ming nodded. "I had wondered if there would still be any work that I can do," he said. "Then just a couple of days ago, God provided a new opportunity for me."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Dad. "Where will you be working?"

"My boss is giving me a job in the office," said Teacher Ming. "Instead of doing the actual construction, I'll be helping with planning and finding all the building materials. I've had training in that area, and I look forward to it. In fact, I already have two projects to work on, right here at home."

"What a great answer to prayer!" marvelled Dad.

Teacher Ming nodded. "You know," he said, "the Bible says if a man won't work, he shouldn't eat! So as long as I can do something, I want to work. After all, I love to eat!" They all laughed. "I also found out the truth in a Bible verse that says 'The sleep of a laboring man is sweet,'" added Teacher Ming. "Since I've been working again, I'm so contented that I sleep like a log." He grinned as he looked at Tom. "I'm looking forward to serving in church at Junior Worship again, too. I'm very grateful that God has taken such good care of me, and I want to serve Him all I can."

On the way home, Tom was thoughtful. He had never really thought about how it would feel if he were hurt and unable to do work. Tom was thankful that he could help with chores. "You know, I think work is good after all," he told his father. When Dad looked at him in surprise, Tom chuckled and added, "I like to eat, too!"

Thought: Do I enjoy studying hard? I must work hard!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for giving me spiritual gifts to serve You. Help me to do my best and work hard as I serve You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## ARE YOU NEW?

Ellen was pouting when she and her mother returned home from shopping one day. "What's the matter, sourface?" teased her brother John. Ellen scowled. "Mom gets you everything you want, but she wouldn't buy a thing for me," she grumbled. "All I wanted was a 'smile' shirt."

John howled with laughter. "A 'smile' shirt on you?" he asked. "That would be a joke! Those things aren't very popular anyway. And I heard you talking with Mom yesterday." Using a high-pitched tone, he imitated her. "Mo-o-om! I want something cool!" He smirked, and his sister hit him. "Ow!" he yelled, hitting back.

Dad walked in the room as the kids continued hitting each other. "Break it up," he said. "The place I'd like to see a smile is on your faces for a change."

The next Sunday, John and Ellen got ready to go to church. They went regularly with their next-door neighbours. Both John and Ellen had accepted Jesus as Saviour, but their parents were not Christians. "Why don't you come to church with us today?" John asked them hopefully.

"Count me out!" exclaimed Dad. "You two fight constantly. If that's all the good your religion does you, I want nothing to do with it." John and Ellen didn't know what to say! "We've got to quit fighting," Ellen told her brother later. "If we don't, Mom and Dad will never listen when we try to tell them how to be saved."

John nodded thoughtfully. "I know. The Bible says we're supposed to be different now. We've got to do better." So they asked God to help them, and they did do better. Soon their parents noticed the difference. For example, when a vase was broken several weeks later, both Ellen and John admitted responsibility for being careless when they played. Dad was amazed. "They're not blaming each other!" he exclaimed. "I never thought I'd see the day!"

The next Sunday, Dad surprised them all. "I don't suppose your mother and I are too old for church, are we?" he asked. "You mean... you'll go?" asked John. "If your mother would like to," Dad replied, and Mom nodded. John and Ellen cheered. Dad laughed. "Look!" he said. "That brought smiles to their faces!"

Thought: Do my actions and attitudes show that I am a Christian, a "new creation"?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to bear a good testimony for You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## ARE YOU STILL ANGRY?

Liz hung up the phone and walked into the living room with her arms crossed and her jaw clenched. “That was Elsa,” she said. Her mother frowned. “Don’t tell me you’re still angry with her,” said Mom.

“Yes, I am!” replied Liz. “Elsa shouldn’t have made fun of me that way. She did it right in front of everyone, and they were all laughing at me!” “I know, but you shouldn’t be fussing over it for so long,” said Mom as she knelt down to scrub a spot in the carpet. “You need to get over your anger.”

Liz watched as her mother vigorously worked on the stain in the carpet. She saw that the dark spot made by spilled grape juice wasn’t looking any better than before. “Do you think that will ever come out?” Liz asked.

“I hope so,” said Mom. “Of course, it would have come out a lot easier if I had cleaned it right after the juice was spilled.” Mom wiped sweat off her face and glanced up at Liz. “You should deal with your anger the way I should have dealt with this stain,” she added.

Liz frowned. “What do you mean?” she asked.

Mom continued to rub the dark blotch. “Time has allowed this stain to penetrate into the carpet fibers,” she explained. “Once it’s soaked in and dried, it’s really hard to remove all traces of it. Anger does something like that to your heart. If you let it stay and saturate there, it becomes more and more difficult to remove. Over time, it can grow into bitterness and rage.”

Liz looked at the stain on the carpet and sighed. “I don’t really see how I can help being mad at Elsa,” she said at last, “but I’ll try to get over it.”

Mom smiled. “Right choice! Don’t let your anger build up inside you. Always deal with it right away,” she said. “Start by talking to God about it—and pray for Elsa, too. It’s hard to be angry with someone you’re praying for. With God’s help, you can let your anger go. Then maybe you should call Elsa and ask her to come over so you can talk with her about what happened.”

Liz slowly nodded. “Okay,” she agreed. “I will.”

Thought: Am I still angry with someone over something that happened long ago?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, there are some people who do make me angry, and sometimes I may have a good reason for being angry. But I know that You do not want anger to build up in my heart. Help me to learn to let it go. Teach me to forgive others, just as You have forgiven me. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

**GOD CREATED YOU!**

“Our science teacher, Mr Lee, says all life began in the water that used to cover the earth,” Joe informed his parents one evening. “He says that when dry land began to appear, some of the creatures grew legs and lungs so they could live on land. They kept changing, and over millions of years, they slowly developed into intelligent human beings, and that was the start of the human race.”

“Mr. Lee called it evolution,” added Grace, his twin sister. “And do you believe that?” Dad asked. Joe shook his head. “Not me! It sounds dumb!” he declared. “I asked Mr. Lee about the Bible’s account of creation, and he says it’s a myth. He says we have to learn what the science book teaches and...”

“Joe asked Mr. Lee if he really believed all that stuff about evolution,” interrupted Grace with a big grin, “and Mr. Lee said he does. Just as the bell was ringing, Joe said, ‘Well, I guess it’s all right for you to believe in evolution as long as it’s all right for me to believe in creation.’ The whole class just roared!”

Joe grinned, too. “Yeah,” he added. “Mr. Lee was so mad!” Joe and Grace burst into laughter, but their parents didn’t laugh. “It’s never right to show disrespect for a teacher,” said Dad, “even if you know he’s wrong.”

“But what can we do?” asked Grace. “We can’t learn stuff that we don’t believe in!” “No, and we’ll fail our tests if we don’t answer questions the way he wants us to,” added Joe.

“Learn the material,” said Dad, “and when you write test answers you don’t agree with, you can let Mr. Lee know you’ve answered the questions according to the science book but personally, you still believe the Bible.”

“We can do that,” said Joe. He turned to Grace. “Let’s try to get the best grades in class,” he suggested, “but we’ll tell Mr. Lee we still believe the human race began when God created Adam. Okay?” Grace nodded.

“All right!” said Dad. “Mom and I will pray for you and for Mr. Lee.”

Thought: Do my teachers say that humans evolved from animals? Believe God, rather than teachers who teach evolution.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I want to always show respect to teachers so that I can be a good testimony to them. However, at the same time, I want to be faithful to You. Please give me the courage to let my teachers and classmates know that I believe what the Bible says; You are the one who created all things, including the human race. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## WHAT IS “CLOSET PRAYER”?

“Where’s Tony?” thought Dad as he walked into Tony’s room to tell him it was time for bed. As he turned to leave, he heard a muffled voice coming from behind the closed door of the clothes closet. Dad heard, “Amen,” and a minute later, Tony came out of his closet.

“I didn’t mean to interrupt you, Tony,” said Dad, “but I must admit I’m curious. Why were you praying in your closet?”

“Well, I always prayed beside my bed,” answered Tony, “but our Junior Worship lesson was about prayer, and my teacher quoted a verse that says to go into your closet and shut the door when you pray. So tonight I prayed in the closet.”

Dad nodded and chuckled. “I think the closet in that verse means something a little different from our clothes closets,” he said. “In fact, most Bible scholars agree that the word translated as ‘closet’ in that verse means a room that is private and quiet.” “Really?” asked Tony. “Oh, good! Then I can just pray beside my bed again, can’t I? It was stuffy in that closet!”

Dad smiled. “I think the main thing Jesus is teaching us is that we should not be praying to show off in front of other people,” he said. “That’s why it’s good to get away by ourselves-like in a separate room-and shut the door.” Dad paused. “Of course, we can pray anytime, anywhere. When we go into the privacy of our own hearts and minds and shut the door...”

“But, Dad,” interrupted Tony, “how could I shut a door in my heart and mind?” “One way is to close your eyes when you pray,” explained Dad, “but even if you’re doing something where you can’t close your eyes, you can still control your mind and shut out thoughts about other things.”

Tony nodded. “It’s like having a prayer room inside my mind then,” he said. “I’m not always home when I need to pray, so this is better! It’s like I have my prayer room with me all the time, and I can pray anywhere.”

“Right!” agreed Dad. “It’s great to be able to pray at home, at school, when you’re playing or anywhere at all. But be sure to also have a quiet time with God each day. Like I said, it’s good to have a special time and place for prayer, too.”

Thought: Do I have a quiet time alone with God each day? I can talk to Him anytime, anywhere.

Prayer: Teach me Heavenly Father to talk with You in a quiet place, by myself. Help me not to be distracted when I pray. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## HOW TO MAKE DECISIONS...

“Are you allowed to use that for your homework?” asked Mom when she saw Cassandra punching numbers on her calculator. “Actually, I am, but this isn’t homework,” said Cassandra. “I’m trying to figure out how much I can give to the missions in Thailand.”

“I thought that was settled,” said Mom.

“Yeah, but at the mall, I saw a jacket I wanted, so I’m checking...” Cassandra interrupted herself with a shake of her head. “There isn’t enough money for both the jacket and the love-gift,” she said, “so now I’ll have to decide whether to buy the jacket or to give the love gift.”

“The missions in Thailand seemed so important to you,” Mom said, surprised.

“I know.” Cassandra nodded. “The youth who went last year said it was really good and they had such blessings. And they even caught a monkey – you remember?”

“Sounds vaguely familiar,” said Mom. “What happened?”

Cassandra grinned. “There was this monkey that would come into the village, and he was stealing food. To catch him, they attached a jar with a narrow opening to a tree branch. They put treats in the jar, and the monkey reached in and grabbed the treats—which made its fist too big to get it out.

Mom smiled. “I know you’d enjoy giving to the missions,” she said. “Yeah,” Cassandra agreed. She sighed. “But I really like that jacket. Mmm...”

“Well...” Mom hesitated. “It’s your money,” she said at last, “but think about that monkey again. He gave up his freedom for a small treat. It seems to me that the jacket is just a small treat, while giving to the missions would produce a lasting treasure if it’s truly done for the Lord. Will you give that up because you’re too stubborn to let go of a treat?”

“Wow! When you put it like that...” Cassandra shut off her calculator. “I guess the decision isn’t so hard after all.”

Thought: Do I find it hard to choose between earthly things and Heavenly treasures?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, sometimes the choice of a temporary pleasure may seem more attractive than something that brings lasting rewards. Teach me not to hold onto “treats” so tightly that I lose sight of what really matters. This is my prayer in Jesus’ name, Amen.

## EVER TRIED A SOFT ANSWER?

“That Keith really makes me mad!” said Joey as he sat in the living room with his parents one evening. “He’s always picking on me. No matter what I say or do, he won’t leave me alone.”

“Why not try following Jesus’ advice?” suggested Dad. “He tells us to pray for those who mistreat us.” Just then Joey’s little brother, Roy, came into the room. “Play catch with me, Joey,” he begged. He tossed the ball to Joey.

“Not now,” replied Joey, tossing it back as he continued telling his parents about his problem. “No matter how mad I get at Keith, he won’t quit bugging me.”

“Catch this, Joey!” interrupted Roy as he threw the soft foam ball into Joey’s lap.

“Joey doesn’t want to play right now,” said Mom.

Roy looked at her. “Yes, he does,” he said. “We’re playing catch.”

“No, we’re not,” objected Joey. “You’re the one who keeps throwing the ball.”

“But you’re the one who keeps throwing it back,” said Dad. “It takes two to keep it going. If you would just leave it alone, he’d soon stop bothering you.” Joey looked doubtful, but the next time Roy threw the ball to him, he just set it on the table. “I don’t want to play,” he said. Roy tried to get Joey to toss the ball again, but he soon grew tired of playing a one-person game and went off to do something else.

“Now, let’s talk about your problem with Keith,” said Dad. “It sounds like Keith enjoys upsetting you. So as long as you keep responding to his remarks in anger, he’s not going to quit.”

“Oh-h-h-h! I get it,” responded Joey thoughtfully. “Maybe I should just ignore him next time.”

“You could even respond to his insult with a sincere compliment,” suggested Mom. “That would be a good testimony for the Lord. He advises us to be nice even to those who are our enemies and to pray for them.”

Thought: Do I realise that it takes two to make a quarrel?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, when someone irritates me, help me to say something nice or stay calm instead of responding in anger. And help me to answer in a “soft” way, instead of a harsh way. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.



**IF YE LOVE ME, KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS**

Dawn's new puppy wriggled in her arms as she hugged him tight. "I'll call him Duke!" she announced.

"Well, Duke has lots of things to learn," commented Dad. "You'll need to reward him when he's good and spank him when he does something bad. That way he'll learn what things he's not supposed to do."

Dawn frowned. "He won't be bad, Dad. I'll love him so much that he'll want to be good. You'll see. Duke will be the best dog in the world!"

But Duke was not a good puppy. He chewed on shoes and tables. He didn't come when he was called. Dawn did scold and spank, but nothing seemed to help. "Why is Duke so bad?" Dawn asked sadly one day. "I scold him and scold him, and he acts like he's sorry. He licks my face and wags his tail, so I pet him and hug him. Then he turns around and is bad all over again. I love him so much, so why does he keep on being bad?"

Dad put down his paper and pulled Dawn onto his lap. "Sometimes it takes a long time to train a puppy," he said. "I'm sure Duke will learn eventually. But you know what? The way Duke responds to you is something like the way we often respond to God."

"What do you mean?" asked Dawn.

"Remember what you said when you got Duke?" asked Dad. "You said you were going to love him so much that he would want to be good and please you. Instead, he's been a lot of trouble - and sometimes we're that way with God. He loves us so much that we should all want to be good and please Him. Instead, we often want to do things our own way and do things we know we shouldn't do."

Dawn nodded. "So we have to learn to obey God like Duke has to learn to obey us."

"Right," agreed Dad. "And remember how bad you feel when Duke disobeys you? Think how bad God must feel when the people He loves keep on ignoring His teachings."

Thought: Am I an obedient child of God?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to remember I must stop grieving You with my disobedience. I must learn to read the Bible more and do what it says. In this way, You would be pleased, and I'd live a better Christian life too! This I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

## BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS...

Paul sighed in relief as he answered the last question on his test paper. He thought he'd done well, and it made him feel good to know his studying had paid off. Just then he noticed a movement in the next row. His friend Jeff was sliding a small paper out of sight before jotting down some figures. Then Jeff took another secret glance at the paper, finished the test, and handed it in to Mr. Arul. Paul's heart sank, "Oh, no! Jeff cheated!"

All afternoon Paul wondered what he should do. Should he tell Mr. Arul? Accuse Jeff? Forget he'd ever seen anything?

In the bus journey home, Paul recalled what his Sunday school teacher, Teacher John had told the class last week. "Christians need to encourage and help each other. All of us need to nudge each other!" Teacher John had said.

As Paul remembered those words, he thought of Jeff. He knew Jeff is a Christian, and that in a moment of weakness he had given in to the temptation to cheat. Jeff needed a friend to encourage him to be strong in his Christian life – a friend to talk to him about what he had done. Paul sighed. He really didn't want to be the one to talk to Jeff. He might get mad about it, thought Paul. Maybe Teacher John could talk to him. But Paul was the one who had seen what had happened, and he knew what he needed to do.

After he reached home, Paul called Jeff. "Hi, Jeff," Paul greeted his friend. "I need to talk to you because I saw what happened during the test today." Jeff was very surprised, and Paul continued speaking. "I really think you need to tell Mr. Arul what happened, and that you're sorry," he said. "I'll go with you if you want. Maybe he'll let you take another test. If he does, I'll help you study so you can pass because you understand it, not because you cheated."

Thought: When someone does something wrong, do I get angry and accuse him or tell on him?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, grant me boldness to confront an erring brother in love so that he repents and seeks Thy forgiveness. Help me to love, encourage and care for fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**DARE TO SUFFER FOR GOD...**

Mandy marched into the house and headed for the kitchen where Mom was preparing dinner. "I'm never going back to school again!" she announced, slamming her books on the table. "I hate it there! Some of the kids were acting up and misbehaving today, and they wanted me to join them. When I wouldn't, they chanted, 'Chicken! Chicken! Mandy is a chicken!' They make me so mad."

"Hmmm," murmured Mom as she got out a pan and opened a can of food. "Why, look at this!" she exclaimed. "The label on this can says 'green beans,' but there are peaches inside."

"Oh, good! I like peaches better than green beans," said Mandy with a grin. Then she remembered her problem. "But what am I going to do about being called 'chicken' at school? Words do hurt sometimes, Mom," said Mandy.

"Yes, they can hurt a person's feelings," replied Mom. "What do the other kids mean when they call you 'chicken'?"

"That I'm scared. Chickens scare easily, I guess," replied Mandy. She looked thoughtful.

"Hey, you know what? I think some of those kids are the real chickens," Mandy said. "They're afraid they'll be laughed at if they stand up for what's right."

"Well, I'm glad you weren't afraid to do that," said Mom. "You're not a 'chicken'. You weren't scared to do the right thing in spite of what the crowd did or said."

"I knew I had to do what was right," agreed Mandy.

Mom picked up the can of peaches. "No matter what label was put on this can, these are still peaches, and that's what counts," she said. "And Mandy, it's what you really are that counts, not what you're called. The next time this happens, you can say, 'No, I'm not a 'chicken'. I'm a Christian, and I'm not scared to act like one.'"

Thought: I must stay true to Christ.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, even if I'm called names because I would not do something that is wrong. Teach me not to be afraid. Help me to be faithful to You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**BE STILL, AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD**

It was still early when Alex woke up. He knew it was early because there it was dark. Alex got out of bed and went to look for his mother. He looked in the kitchen, but she wasn't there. She wasn't in the living room, either. Finally, Alex peeked into Mother's bedroom and found her sitting by the bedside, her Bible on her lap. Her eyes were shut; he knew she was praying.

Alex wanted a hug, so he quietly crawled onto Mother's lap. "Good morning," said Mother, giving him a hug. "You're up early."

"Were you praying?" asked Alex.

"Yes," replied Mother, "I was."

"What about?" asked Alex.

"Oh, quite a few things," answered Mother, "but I was mostly just being alone with the Lord."

"Being alone with the Lord?" asked Alex. He didn't quite understand that.

Mother nodded. "Just now 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. Well, sometimes I just like to be alone with God. I think about how good He is, speak to Him in prayer, and just enjoy His presence. I think He's pleased that I like to be with Him."

"Can I spend time alone with God, too?" asked Alex.

"Sure," said Mother.

Thought: If I say I love God, I would also want to spend time with Him!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I must confess that sometimes I am so busy that I forget to sit still and just enjoy being with You. Help me to be close to You always. This I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

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