

**ELISHA THE PROPHET**

Elisha was a prophet during the Old Testament time. He was the successor of Elijah who served God under the reign of King Ahab and his son, King Ahaziah. Elisha served for more than 50 years during the reigns of four kings. Both prophets ministered to the northern kingdom of Israel warning the people to turn away from their sin of idolatry and to turn back to worshipping the Lord. They also warned them about God's punishment. They were indeed two of the greatest prophets named in the Bible.

We learnt how faithful and obedient to God Elijah was. One of his last tasks was to anoint Elisha as a prophet. It was God who chose Elisha. Elijah did not know of Elisha's existence at all. In 2 Timothy 2:2, Apostle Paul told Timothy to teach other godly men what he was taught. In turn, these godly men could teach other godly men the knowledge of God that they had learnt. Have you ever watched athletes running a 4 x 100m relay race? Each runner will carefully pass the baton to the next runner. However, there are differences. In the race of faith, speed does not count. The number of participants is not known beforehand. Neither is the distance of the race. This is because the race will last till our Lord Jesus returns.

The "passing of the baton" from Elijah to Elisha took place when Elijah and Elisha were separated by a chariot of fire and horses of fire. Elijah was then taken up into heaven by a whirlwind. Elisha took the mantle or cloak that fell from Elijah. We shall see what miracle Elisha performed with the mantle.

Thought: God has chosen Elisha. He knows everything about everyone.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may our church leaders all fear Thee. May they continue to faithfully preach and teach Thy Word. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## THE CALL OF ELISHA

Elijah obeyed God's command and went to Abelmeholah to look for Elisha. When he went past Elisha, he cast his mantle over Elisha. This signified the choice of Elisha as his successor. Of course, it was God who had chosen Elisha. It is little wonder that Elisha did not hesitate but readily ran after Elijah. God never makes a mistake. He will always make the perfect choice of persons for His work.

When Elijah first spotted Elisha, he was plowing his father's land. He was working on one of twelve yokes of oxen. A yoke is a large wooden instrument that binds two oxen together. As there were twelve pairs of oxen, Elisha's father must have been a wealthy man who provided Elisha with a comfortable life. So, why was Elisha so willing to follow Elijah into such a tough ministry? Notice how considerate and good a son Elisha was. He bade farewell to his parents showing gratitude, respect, love and care. He even prepared a feast for his family and rejoiced with them before he left.

What can we learn from Elisha's behaviour? Obviously, he honoured his parents. Above that, he honoured God. He had a heart willing to serve Him anytime and anywhere. We can tell this from his prompt response to God's calling. We also learn that God chooses whoever He wishes to serve Him. Elisha and Elijah were from very different backgrounds but both were chosen by God to be His prophets.

Answer this question.

What was Elisha doing when God called him?

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Thought: Do I honour my parents?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to be like Elisha in honouring my parents. Teach me to be grateful, considerate, kind, respectful, pray for them and obey them. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## ELISHA ASKED FOR A DOUBLE PORTION OF ELIJAH'S SPIRIT

Elijah was Elisha's mentor. But, the Bible says that the time for God to take Elijah to heaven had come. Elisha and all the other prophets under the leadership of Elijah knew about it. Elisha wanted to share Elijah's last moments on earth and to personally bid him farewell.

From Gilgal, God sent Elijah to Bethel, Jericho and Jordan. Perhaps it was to encourage the prophets in these cities. Interestingly, at each of these cities, Elijah told Elisha to stay behind when he was about to leave for the next city. But each time, Elisha refused to be left behind and insisted on accompanying Elijah. He passed the test and proved himself to be faithful to God's call. He obeyed God's call for him to be a prophet. When they reached the river Jordan, Elijah parted the waters by striking it with his mantle and they both walked across. Fifty prophets stood a distance away watching their every move.

Elijah then turned to ask his disciple what he could do for him before being taken away. Elisha answered, "*I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.*" What is this double portion of Elijah's spirit that Elisha had requested? Elisha had requested that he be given the ability to foretell and forthtell as a prophet just like Elijah. These are needed for the prophetic ministry. He did not ask for any material things. He had asked for things that help him serve God better.

We can learn from Elisha on what we should pray for. Underline the best thing to ask God for, in each of the following lists:

1. A new big house, Latest computer games, Peace in the home
2. The love of friends, The love of neighbours, The love of God
3. A big birthday party, An outing to the zoo, A friend to know Jesus
4. High marks for exams, A famous school, A true and faithful church

Thought: The Spirit of God is better than any riches in this world.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to seek after spiritual things that count for eternity rather than temporal things on this earth. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

**DOES GOD ANSWER PRAYER?**

Elisha asked for a rich portion of Elijah's spirit to be upon him. Elijah was godly and full of faith. He never failed to obey God. Even in his last moments on earth, he remembered to give all glory to God. He told Elisha that it was a hard thing to do because he was not able to do as Elisha requested. In other words, only God can give him Elijah's spirit. However, he did tell Elisha to watch out for a sign that would tell if God would answer his prayer.

If Elisha could actually see Elijah being taken away from him, then it would mean that God has granted him the "double portion" of the spirit of Elijah. Lo and behold! Elisha saw a chariot of fire and horses of fire and Elijah swept up to heaven by a whirlwind. In addition, Elijah's mantle fell upon him. This was certainly a confirmation that Elisha had been given what he asked for. Well, if he was too overwhelmed to believe his own eyes, there were fifty other prophets who had witnessed the same spectacular event to assure him. They were standing at a distance and watching.

If we ask God for the right things, He will surely give them to us. Read Luke 11:9-10 to be sure that God will give us only things that are good for us. So, don't hesitate to ask God for our daily needs, health, peace, patience, love and joy. With these, we can be a blessing to others and glorify God.

Describe the sign given to show Elisha that he will receive the double portion of Elijah's spirit.

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(v. 10)

Thought: God will answer your prayer according to His perfect will!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, remind me that You answer prayers still! Teach me to ask for the right things that I may serve You faithfully and be a blessing to others. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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**BY FAITH ELISHA PARTED THE RIVER JORDAN!**

After Elijah was taken up to heaven, Elisha stood alone and mourned for his master. He tore his own clothes into two to show his grief. That was the practice in those days, not now! He then picked up Elijah's mantle and returned to the bank of river Jordan. Elisha then struck the waters with Elijah's mantle and the waters parted!

It is by faith that he could perform the same miracle as Elijah, and not because he was powerful in any way. In Matthew 17:20, Jesus taught us that if we have faith as small as a mustard seed, we can move mountains and nothing shall be impossible. Wait a minute. Is Jesus saying that as long as I believe, I can have the power to do things by my own ability? Definitely not.

Children, remember that even prophets don't have any power of their own. Whether it was to bring down fire from heaven or parting of waters, it was always by God's power. Elijah prayed fervently and God answered his prayers. Elisha had to call upon the Lord too. Remember, real power comes from the one and only true and living God.

There were two other persons in the Old Testament whom God gave power to part the waters. Write their names in the blanks:

1. \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ led the children of Israel out of Egypt and parted the Red Sea for the children of Israel to cross over.
2. \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ led in the parting of the water of river Jordan, for the children of Israel to cross over into Canaan.

Thought: God is all powerful and with God, all things are possible!

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, help me to believe that Thou art the Almighty God. Remind me that You can do everything, if it is according to Your will to do so and on my own, without Jesus, I can do nothing. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## WATER, WATER, WATER

Elisha crossed over Jordan and entered Jericho. The people there were as idolatrous as any of the other cities of Israel. That city had a beautiful environment but not all was well - its water was bad. According to the people, the water had made the ground barren or unfruitful. They complained to Elisha the prophet about it.

Elisha asked for a new pot with some salt in it. He then went to the spring or source of their water supply. He emptied the pot into the spring and declared, "Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land." Drinking the unclean water had even killed some people. But, ever since Elisha spoke these words, the waters of Jericho had remained clean to this present day. Yes!

We know how important water is to us. Without water, we will die of thirst. In Singapore today, we need to just turn on the tap and we can enjoy clean drinking water. However, the clean water is a result of a long process of filtering and purifying. It would certainly take more than salt. Out of mercy, God healed the waters of Jericho although some of the people in Jericho may be idol worshippers who did not deserve it. Nevertheless, God loves them and wants them to return to Him. Do you know why? It is because He is the Lord and only He can heal our souls.

Only Jesus can give us water that will make us never thirst again.

Let us search the Bible for this promise of Jesus using the clues:

New Testament	One more than a baker's dozen	Chapter is 2+2	Last of the 4 Gospels
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Answer: The verse is found in \_\_\_\_\_

The verse says, " \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_”

Thought: Only God has the power to heal our souls.

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, I thank Thee for healing my soul and making me Thy child. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**TREASURE GOD'S WORD AND MESSENGER!**

Today's account is a very sad one. It is about God's punishment of some little children from Jericho. What did they do wrong? The Bible says that some little children went after Elisha when he was on his way to Bethel. They mocked him with these words, "Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head." Elisha then turned around and pronounced a curse on them. Immediately, two female bears appeared. They chased the children and mauled 42 of them to death. It was God who sent the bears. Do you think they were too harshly punished?

No, they deserved the punishment because God never makes mistakes. His judgment is always right. In the past, God spoke to the people through His prophets. Now, we have the Bible. Prophets were God's messengers of His word. Now, we are beginning to see how seriously the little children had sinned when they mocked Prophet Elisha. Elisha was unhappy because he was insulted. Insulting the prophet is tantamount to insulting God and His Word. Prophets were representatives of God. Their sin was that they mocked God and His Word. What they said showed no fear of God but only unbelief in their hearts. Likely they were children of idol worshippers. God knows the condition of every heart.

There are no prophets like those in the Old Testament in the world now. God has given us the Bible which is divinely inspired. It is the perfect written Word of God. We ought to honour God and His Word all the time. To doubt God's Word is to call God a liar! We must never do what those children from Jericho did. So, when God sends us pastors, elders, missionaries and Sunday School teachers to teach us the Bible, let us respect them by paying attention to their lessons!

1. How do you regard your Junior Worship teacher?
2. Do I try to apply lessons learnt?
3. How do you treat God's Word?
4. Do you treasure the Bible, and read it as a privilege?
5. Do I try to read my Bible everyday or only when troubles come my way?

Thought: May I treasure God's Word and messenger!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may we always honour Thy word for Thy word is truth. Help us to respect all our Sunday School teachers. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## WITH UNGODLY FRIENDS UNITY IS NOT STRENGTH

There were 3 kings: King Jehoshaphat of Judah (southern kingdom), King Jehoram of Israel (northern kingdom), and the king of Edom. Who were they and how did they become friends to join forces to fight a war? First, let us see what kind of character each of them was.

Jehoshaphat was a godly king. But we are told in today's text he made a mistake. He got involved with 2 ungodly kings. He placed his brotherly feeling for Jehoram above his love for God and agreed to help Jehoram fight against the rebelling Moabites. Jehoram was son of wicked King Ahab. To reach Moab, the army had to pass through Edom. So, Jehoram made an ally out of the king of Edom just to make use of him. Do you think God would approve of such a circle of friends? How should we choose our friends? Christians should stay away from the company of people with bad habits. Those would include smokers, gamblers, drinkers, users of vulgar language, hooligans, bullies and cheats. It is easy to fall under their influence.

More importantly, we must not have fellowship with enemies and mockers of God and God's Word. Of course, we can still make friends with unbelievers. If they do not have Christian friends, who will share the Gospel with them and encourage them to go to church? But, we must never join in any of their dishonourable activities that are not pleasing in God's sight. Jehoshaphat made that mistake. In their case, their unity was not strength. It was sin.

Who is your best friend? With whom do you hang around most? Remember your friends will influence you. No matter how strong you think you are, you would be impacted by the character of your friends.

So dear child, spend time with God's people. Faithfully attend Junior Worship classes. Always try to go for Church Bible Camps or Sunday School classes. And during holidays, if your church has camps – attend them! They are a foretaste of heaven!

Thought: Godly people make the best friends.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give me wisdom to choose godly friends. Also, teach me to befriend those who need Jesus, so that I can share the gospel with them. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



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## ELISHA REBUKES THE KING OF ISRAEL

Confident of victory, the three kings set off with their armies to attack Moab. They planned to spring a surprise on the Moabites by attacking them from behind. But, the surprise was on them instead! After a seven-day march through the desert of Edom, they could not find any water for both men and cattle. Without water, they would perish.

In despair, Jehoram the king of Israel started to blame God. Isn't he strange? He had been worshipping idols. Yet, when faced with a problem, he condemned the Lord! Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah acted differently. Though he was foolishly helping an idol worshipper, he still feared God. Knowing that God would be their only hope, he sought to hear the advice of a prophet of God for only God could get them out of trouble. When the three kings met Elisha, he showed no respect for Jehoram. He did not want to have anything to do with him. He told him to go get help from his parents' prophets instead i.e. the prophets of Baal.

Elisha was actually giving Jehoram a good scolding. It was God who gave him the courage to rebuke the king. We know idols can do nothing and false prophets have no power. So, let us ask ourselves: Am I like Jehoshaphat or Jehoram? Do I pray to the God of the Bible or to other gods? We may not literally pray to other "gods", but in our thinking and behaviour, do we show that we do not rely on God? Jehoshaphat looked to God for help in times of trouble. May we choose to be wise like him.

Fill in the blanks with these words: Lord, idols, pray, Israel, Judah

1. Elisha rebuked the king of \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. The king was rebuked for worshipping \_\_\_\_\_ and blaming God when things went wrong.
3. We must praise God always. When we face a problem, let us first \_\_\_\_\_ - and wait on the Lord.
4. All things will work together for good to those who look to the \_\_\_\_\_ .

Thought: We must pray only to the true and living God of the Bible.

Prayer: Father in Heaven, teach me to always be in prayer, whether I do anything major or not. Prayer is to seek Your will, and that I must always do. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## STRENGTH TO DO GOD'S WILL

Of the two kings, Jehoshaphat was God-fearing. If it was not for Jehoshaphat, Elisha would not even be bothered to speak to the kings. He was being sarcastic toward the idolatrous Jehoram when he told him to go and look for his own prophets for help!

Elisha then sent for a musician. As music was played, the Word of God came to Elisha. Elisha prophesied that God will supply water for their army and their cattle. However, they had to dig ditches that would cover the whole valley. More amazingly, Elisha also prophesied victory over the Moabites. We know that God's words always come true. After the kings' combined armies had dug the ditches, God filled all the ditches with water to the brim. There was not a cloud in the sky and not so much as a stir in the air. As predicted, it also did not rain. Elisha's prophecy of the supply of water was fulfilled. How did that miracle happen? We do not know! But we do know that it is the power of God.

The army followed God's orders and did their part by digging the trenches while God did the rest. Now, let us look at the physical condition of the soldiers when they were asked to dig trenches. After a seven-day march through the desert, they must have been exhausted, hungry and thirsty. Where did they get their energy to dig? Children, let us learn one important lesson. When God gives us a task to do, He will always give us the ability to do it. All we need to do is to obey and follow God's instructions step by step.

Write a T for True or F for False against each of the statements:

1. The music was meant to entertain Elisha. \_\_\_\_\_
2. The kings lost their way in the wilderness. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Elisha showed them the way out of the wilderness. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Elisha told them to dig ditches so that the men  
could hide in them. \_\_\_\_\_
5. The ditches that God ordered them to dig were  
meant to be reservoirs to hold water. \_\_\_\_\_

Thought: If we do our best, God will do the rest!

Prayer: Thank You, Heavenly Father, for all Thy promises in the Bible. Help me to first do my part by obeying You. It is often not easy, but please give me the strength to do so! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**ELISHA'S PROPHECY FULFILLED**

Everyone waited in anticipation of the water that God promised. In the morning water came by the way of Edom and the country was filled with water. The Moabites saw the water from the other side. Let us see how God gave the Israelites victory over the Moabites.

At a distance, the Moabites mistook the water to be blood! Then, collectively, they made the wrong deduction. They said, "This is blood: the kings are surely slain, and they have smitten one another: now therefore, Moab, to the spoil." Thinking that the kings had fought among themselves, they imagined what they saw to be the dead and injured. With easy victory in mind, they charged at their enemies expecting to conquer them in one swoop.

Needless to say, the poor Moabites were taken by surprise by the Israelites. The Moabites suffered great loss of both lives and assets as the Israelites fought fearlessly. They went in pursuit of the Moabites, destroying all in sight.

God caused an optical illusion to confuse the enemies. Though Jehoshaphat made a bad decision, God showed mercy and saved their lives. Jehoshaphat acted in faith when he sought Elisha for God's words to deliver the army from sure death. Of course, many lives could have been spared. If only Jehoshaphat had not chosen to be "unequally yoked" with an idol worshipper in the first place.

Thought: God delivers the righteous!

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

## THE HIDEOUS SIN OF IDOLATRY

The king of Moab was driven to desperation in the battle with the Israelites and Edomites. He mustered his remnant troop of 700 to charge at the king of Edom. When that failed, he turned to the gods he worshipped, and offered them a gift like no other. He took his eldest son who was his successor and offered him as a sacrifice to his gods in a bid for victory! See how depraved an idolater could be under the control of sin.

The Moabite king sacrificed his own son on the city wall in full view of all. After that, hatred of the kings of Israel among the people grew. Many of the idolatrous nations practised the offering of their children to the gods. In their evil minds, their gods would delight in blood and murder, and the destruction of mankind. To gain greater favour from their gods, they would kill or make burnt offerings of their children or things that were dearer to them. Why? Because they think that if they sacrifice something or someone dear to them, the idols will be touched.

The Lord God our Creator is a good God. He is the giver of human life and protects His children from harm. "For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Luke 9:56a). Jesus, the Son of God became the Son of man to die for our sins that we might live. So great is the love of our God and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Idolatry is the most hateful sin in God's sight but there are many other sins. These include the sin of:

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

*(You may choose from the list given in 2 Timothy 3:1-4)*

Thought: May I have no other gods before the Lord.

Prayer: I thank and praise You, our Heavenly Father, for bringing me out of darkness into the marvelous light. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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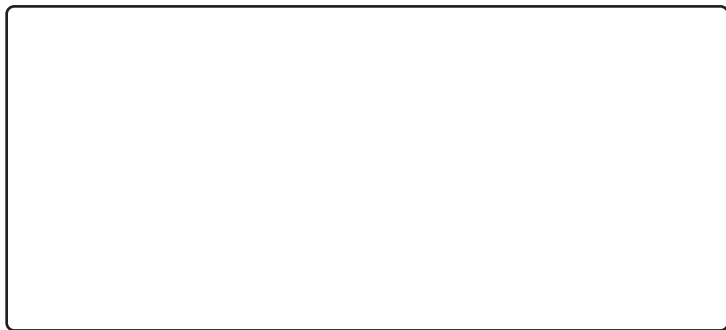
## GOD PROVIDES!

A widow approached Elisha for help. Her family had no means of earning an income and was heavily in debt and their creditors threatened to sell her two sons into slavery.

Anxiety over the prospective loss of her sons drove the poor woman to cry for help. Elisha, who knew her late husband to be a pious man, was prepared to help the poor woman. Elisha first asked her, "What hast thou in the house?" She could find only a pot of oil. He asked her to borrow from her neighbours all the empty vessels they could spare. Did she refuse or complain? No! by faith, she obeyed, filling the house with all the pots, jars and bottles she could find. Next, she was asked to lock the door of her house. Elisha instructed her to pour the oil from her very own jar into an empty vessel. Amazingly, the oil in her jar kept flowing. After the first, she was to fill another and then another until there was none left to be filled. What a miracle!

With the sale of the oil, the family's debt was settled and their livelihood was taken care of. Through the miracle, Elisha demonstrated that the Lord will provide for those who seek and trust Him.

Draw ten pots or jars of various shapes and sizes to show the many pots and jars that the widow had or borrowed. Colour them light yellow to show them full of oil.



Thought: God always provides.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for Thy great providence and peace. May I follow the example of the widow's faith and completely trust in You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## HOSPITALITY

Elisha often visits schools of prophets located at various towns. Whenever he travelled to the small town of Shunem, he would stay with a gracious couple. They so loved this man of God that they added a room to their house for him. They also furnished it with a bed, a table, a stool and a candlestick. He could concentrate on his reading at night and enjoy a good night's sleep. They took such care to ensure that Elisha felt comfortable in their home.

Apostle Peter exhorts us to *"Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."* (1 Peter 4: 9-10). Peter bids us to show hospitality cheerfully. Look at how fervent the Shunammite couple was, in making Elisha feel at home. Christian hospitality is likened to good stewardship of God's gifts. Whatever we have received freely, let us freely give especially to fellow members of our church family.

Men are naturally selfish but hospitality is the part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. You may think that hospitality does not concern you at your age. But sometimes, your parents may open their homes for cottage meetings, Bible study or for missionaries and any visitors. You can always help in tidying up the place and in preparing refreshments or welcoming guests with a smile! You can make the children feel at home.



Write a title or caption for the picture on the left.

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Thought: Showing hospitality is sharing what God has given me.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to freely share what I have received with others. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

## REWARD FOR HOSPITALITY

The Shunammite couple expected nothing in return for their gracious hospitality. After all, they were very contented with their lot. However, Elisha was so grateful to the couple that he wanted to repay them for their hospitality. When he asked the wife what he could do for them, she said nothing.

Elisha earnestly wanted to show his gratitude in a practical way. So he asked his servant Gehazi to see what the couple's wishes were. Gehazi observed that the lady's husband was old and they were still childless. To have an heir must be constantly on their minds. Elisha then asked the Lord to remove the barrenness of the Shunammite woman. And you know what? God answered the prayer! Elisha then told her that she would have a son in a year's time. The Shunammite woman was incredulous and asked Elisha not to tease her for perhaps she too was not young. But nothing is impossible with God and as predicted, the Lord rewarded them with a son!

The Lord notices every good deed and in His own time, will reward every man accordingly. The Lord Jesus says, *"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be"* (Revelations 22:12). God rewards us not because we deserve it but because of His goodness towards us.

Thought: Press on in doing good for the Lord!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be kind to others. Teach me to be like the old couple and give of my best to You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## A SON'S DEATH AND THE MOTHER'S FAITH

The Shunammite boy was working alongside his father in the field when he felt a severe headache. The servants hurriedly carried the child back to his mother to be comforted. But he just died on her lap! Imagine how the mother felt! But, there was not a sound from her. She simply carried her son and laid him onto Elisha's bed. Do you think such a thing is possible? Of course!

Next, she turned to her husband, requested for a servant to fetch her to see Prophet Elisha and left without another word. When Elisha saw her at some distance away, he sent his servant Gehazi to ask her for the reason of her visit. In response to the many questions that Gehazi posed to her, she simply replied, "It is well." She stayed focused so as to reach Elisha in the shortest time possible.

The moment she saw Elisha, she reached out for his feet and embraced them. Elisha stopped his servant from tearing her away. Then, out poured all her woes! The son that the Lord has given her has died. Her heart was broken. She had come to seek help from the man of God whom she believed would restore her son's life.

The woman's first thought was to seek God's help. Then she sprang into action. No hesitation and no dilly-dallying. Should we not learn from this mother with such faith? In times of trouble, whom do we first look to for help?

It is only a matter of time before trouble hits us. For some of you, you may have already experienced it. It could be in the form of difficult financial situation at home. Or your parents could be having frequent quarrels. Maybe you and your siblings cannot get along. Or you face nasty teachers. Perhaps you are bullied in school. Why does God allow problems in our life? So that we can learn to turn to Him and depend on Him.

Dear child, remember God is in complete control of your life and so turn to Him in prayer!

Thought: Do I turn to God?

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, life and death are in Thy hands. So, let me seek Thee first in all things. Whatever comes my way, please remind me to turn to You first. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



## RAISING OF THE SHUNAMMITE'S SON

Elisha was shocked at the twist of events. Didn't God give the couple a son to be an heir? He found it hard to believe what he just heard. The son was still a child and God would not have raised their hope of an heir so high just to dash it to pieces. Our God is a gracious and loving God!

Elisha could not believe what the Shunammite woman had told him. So he sent his servant Gehazi to her house to verify her words. Could it be that the boy had just fainted and she in her anxiety mistook him to have died? Gehazi was sent to see if he could revive the boy with Elisha's staff. Alas, he found that the woman was right - her son was indeed dead.

Gehazi reported back to Elisha who immediately set off to see the boy. Elisha went straight to his room. Once behind closed doors, he stayed by the boy's side to pray. Then he lay over the boy, with his mouth, eyes and hands correspondingly over the boy's mouth, eyes and hands. The cold body then started to warm up. Then Elisha continued praying, walking back and forth. What he did was repeated once and the boy began to stir and sneezed seven times. What a miracle!

With deep gratitude, his mother fell at Elisha's feet. This time, out poured the joy and praise, for God had raised her son to life. News of the miracle must have spread like wild fire. But how many do you think turned away from their idols to worship the true and living God?

What could the mother do to show her gratitude to God?

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Thought: God can conquer even death!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may Thy name be praised forever and ever. You are such a powerful God! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**POISONOUS SOUP MADE GOOD!**

Have you eaten anything poisonous? Would you like to try a hot steaming yummy looking bowl of soup if I told you it was poisonous, but that I've added something to it that would have made it safe? You would not try, would you? Well – read on and see how some people reacted when told the same by Elisha.

During a famine, Elisha visited the school of prophets at Gilgal. As there was no food, he ordered his servant to boil a pot of water. A student prophet gathered some wild herbs, shredded them, and put them into the pot. When the soup was served, the diners cried poison. Elisha reacted by asking for some flour and threw it into the pot. Then confidently, he told his student to pour out the porridge or pottage for the people who readily ate and filled their stomachs. Phew! The people did have a close shave with death, didn't they? Yet, they continued to trust Elisha and God. By drinking the soup as told, they showed much faith.

God will always provide sufficient food for His children. We will not be able to fully understand this incident until we remind ourselves they do not have supermarkets, food courts, or restaurants as we do today! People were generally not rich, and food was scarce.

God knows our every need, and will provide. At our end, let us not be choosy over food, but be contented with what God gives. That is the idea behind “saying grace” before we take our meals. Why do we “say grace”? It is an expression of our thankfulness and appreciation to God for His provision of food for us. Otherwise, we are being discontented and ungrateful. So, do not argue with mum or dad whenever they tell you to eat up the vegetables or something you may not particularly like.

Thought: In God, all my needs would be supplied!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for supplying all my needs. I know I must trust in You everyday, and to be contented and grateful too! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## 20 LOAVES AND EARS OF CORN

Have you ever been without food for more than a day? No? Then you won't know what hunger pangs are. You may have seen pictures of malnourished skinny bodies with bloated tummies. They are mostly found among tribes in lands that experience famines.

In those days, times were bad and food was scarce. The young trainees in the ministry of God's Word had no steady income. So, where did their meals come from? They were dependent on the donations of the kind and faithful. On one occasion, a man from Baalshalisha came with an offering of twenty loaves of barley bread together with some ears of corn.

These "loaves" were not of the size that we call loaves today. They were more like the pita bread they sell in supermarkets. 20 of them might make a decent meal for 6 or 7 men but Elisha had a total of 100 men to feed. That was way too little to feed 100 men! However, Elisha was not perturbed. He knew the gift of 20 loaves and ears of corn was from the Lord, and he gratefully accepted it and asked the men to sit and eat. The men obeyed and did eat to their fill. There were even leftovers!

How was the above possible? Was there some magic woven by Elisha? You see with God, there is no magic. With God, there is providence and in this case, the miracle of somehow multiplying the amount of bread such that they became sufficient for the men. These are things that we can only see with eyes of faith. Science, and many today, will tell us that was impossible. How can that happen? Well, they forget God is the God of the impossible! God has promised that, those who fear Him will never lack anything good. Of course, that will include the food we eat.

Compare Elisha's miracle with that of Jesus:

1. Fill in the blanks numbers: (Read Matthew 14:17-21)  
Jesus fed \_\_\_\_\_ thousand with \_\_\_\_\_ loaves and \_\_\_\_\_ fishes. Leftovers filled \_\_\_\_\_ baskets.
2. Fill in the blanks with the same word:  
Miracles are meant to increase our \_\_\_\_\_ in God. Christians must live by \_\_\_\_\_ and not by sight.  
Without \_\_\_\_\_ it is impossible to please God.

Thought: God always provides!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to increase my faith. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

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## BLESSING THROUGH A MAID

In the kingdom of Syria there was a powerful man named Naaman who had many maids, one of whom was an Israelite girl. Though still a child, she was a good witness for the Lord. She was one of the captives when the Syrians conquered some cities of Israel.

In those days, men, women and children of defeated countries were often carried away to serve as slaves. The little maid was such a captive. Though torn from loved ones, she kept close to God. Her parents must have taught her well for she remained faithful to God. They must have taught their little girl the things of God which she kept in her heart. She believed and remembered that Elisha was a prophet of God who could perform miracles. Her master was a favourite officer of the Syrian king. Sadly, he had leprosy – a terrible and scary disease then as it is now. One day while serving Naaman's wife, she mentioned that there was a prophet in Samaria, her hometown, who could heal her master of leprosy. She cared for her master. Because of her act of kindness, Naaman was later cured. He turned away from worshipping idols to worship the Lord. She was such a blessing in a home in a foreign land. Are you a blessing in your own home?



What is most commendable about the little maid from Israel?

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Thought: You are not too young to be a blessing to others!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to speak a word for Thee wherever I will be. Teach me that through my life of witness, others can be brought closer to You! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**ONLY NAAMAN THE SYRIAN LEPER WAS HEALED**

Today's text is from the New Testament and reminds us that Jesus knew all about Elisha and Naaman. Jesus tells us there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha but Elisha healed only one man - Naaman. And guess what? Naaman was not even from Israel! In fact, he was from Syria which was an enemy of Israel.

Why didn't Elisha heal the many lepers from Israel? They were idolatrous and had turned from the Lord. The people of Israel were God's chosen witnesses to all the other nations, and enjoyed God's special protection. Yet many of them did not believe in God!

How about you? Do you come from a Christian family and yet have not committed your life to Jesus? Or attend a wonderful church or nice Junior Worship class, but have never given your life to God? Do not make the mistakes the Israelites did!

Naaman was the leper singled out to show God's healing power. We do not know why God chose Naaman or you or me. God saves whoever He chooses to save. He has full authority over the world. We know God loves the world and sent Jesus, His only begotten son to save whosoever will believe in Him. We shall see later how Naaman humbled himself before God. He was healed not only from the leprosy of his physical body but also of his soul!

1. Circle Syria on the map.
2. Name the countries to the south-west and south-east of Israel:  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
3. Does God have believers in these countries, around Israel?  
YES / NO



Thought: May I have the faith of Naaman.

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, thank You for saving me. Thou art indeed the LORD of all. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## A HOPEFUL SYRIAN; A HOPELESS ISRAELITE KING

Children, you may have heard of someone diagnosed with cancer. It is a scary illness as there is no known cure. Leprosy was such a disease. Desperate to get well, Naaman was on the constant lookout for a miracle cure. So, when he learnt that Elisha of Israel could heal, his hope was raised. He was determined to seek Elisha out at all costs.

Now, the kings of Syria and Israel were not on good terms. Being a good subject, the hopeful Naaman sought permission from his king before heading for Israel. The king of Syria not only gave his approval but also wrote a letter to the king of Israel. The content was a request for a healer for Naaman's leprosy.

The reaction of the Israelite king to the letter was strange. He was so terrified that he tore his clothes and sat in sackcloth and ashes. Why was he mourning? He misconstrued the letter of diplomacy to be an excuse to invade Israel. He knew of no man who could cure a leper. The king of Syria must be placing a trap for him, he thought. Interestingly, he acknowledged that only God can heal. Aha, if only he had been faithful to the Lord, he would have known all about Prophet Elisha and his miracles. He would not have to be in such a panic.

As soon as Elisha found out why the king was mourning, he sent him a message rebuking him and telling him to send Naaman over. Elisha could heal him. If the king of Israel had been a godly king, he would have peace in his heart. He would have known: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" What is there to fear?

In a tough situation, the Israelite king was hopeless for he did not have God to help him. People without God will rely on themselves. On the other hand, Naaman placed his trust in God. In a tough situation, he relied on God and pinned his hopes on the Almighty.

How about you? In a tough situation, do you trust in yourself or your friends? Or do you turn to God in prayer? God can always give help through friends, but turn to Him first!

Thought: With God, an endless hope. Without God, a hopeless end.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, let my hope be in Thee so that I will not be afraid of difficulties in my life. Help me to pray to Thee, and to learn the blessed peace that comes from committing everything into Your hands. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**NAAMAN'S INITIAL RESISTANCE**

Naaman hurried to meet Elisha, full of expectations. First, he expected Elisha to be at the door to welcome him, for after all, he was a general making a grand entrance with his chariots and horses. Next, he thought Elisha would call upon his God, perhaps wave a hand over him and the leprosy would instantaneously disappear.

How disappointing it was for him. Elisha did not even meet him. Instead, a servant stood at the door with a message: *"Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean."* What a blow to Naaman's pride! Naaman felt so upset that he turned to go home. Surely, generals should be shown more respect than ordinary folk! Elisha could have at least met him personally. What kind of cure was that anyway? Were not the rivers Abana and Pharpar of Damascus far superior to the muddy waters of Jordan?

Naaman's servants however, managed to convince him to stay and follow Prophet Elisha's instructions. After all, what was so difficult about bathing in a river? Surely, Prophet Elisha's words were from God. Naaman came to his senses and went to dip himself into the waters of Jordan. Obediently, he dipped seven times. After the last dip, his leprosy was completely gone and his skin looked like a newborn baby's. There was no magic in the waters. It was his obedience to God's words that healed him. Obedience is faith in action.

Answer these questions.

1. How many times did Naaman dip into the water?

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
Name the river that Naaman dipped into.

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
What happened to him after the last dip?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thought: Trust and obey!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to trust and obey You always! In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

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## GRATITUDE

Finally, Naaman was cured from leprosy! He was overjoyed. Naaman was a grateful man. Once he got out of the water and got dressed, Naaman went straightaway to thank Elisha. He apologised to Elisha for making all the proud remarks and confessed: *“Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel.”*

Naaman was sincere in showing his gratitude. Way back in Syria, he had already prepared a substantial gift to reward Elisha. It consisted of ten new suits, six thousand gold coins and ten talents of silver. Do you remember how Elisha showed his gratitude to the Shunammite couple who were so hospitable to him? He did it in a practical way. He asked God to give them a son. It is important to show our gratitude to all those who have given us help and material things and had prayed for us.

In everything, we must give thanks. Do you thank God for safety on the road and at home? Do you praise God for giving you a sound mind and talents? Have you ever thanked God for your parents and a home? James 1:17 says, *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”* Thank God for health; of both body and soul.

Circle the right answer.

1. After getting out of the water,  
Naaman knew that (Elisha / God) had healed him.
2. With a heart full of gratitude, he wanted to give  
(gold & silver / a blessing) to Elisha.
3. Elisha was very (honest / greedy) and  
(agreed / did not agree) to take anything from him.

Thought: In everything, give thanks.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give me a truly grateful heart. Help me to count my blessings and to know they are all from You! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



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## ELISHA'S REFUSAL TO ACCEPT NAAMAN'S GIFT

Elisha refused to accept any of Naaman's gifts. Elisha said to him *"As the LORD liveth before whom I stand, I will receive none"* (2 Kings 5:16a). Elisha's refusal to accept the gift was to impress upon Naaman that it was God who healed and not Elisha.

It is important to note that Naaman was made whole not only in the flesh, but his soul was also made whole. Naaman no longer worshipped idols but instead worshipped the God of Israel. Who healed his body and soul? It was God. Elisha was merely used by God to bring healing to Naaman. Elisha could not claim any credit for all glory belongs to God.

The Bible has a similar story about a man's refusal of a king's offer of his possessions. Abraham would not take so much as a piece of thread or a sandal strap from the evil king of Sodom. He did not want the evil king to have a chance to say, *"I have made Abram rich."* (Genesis 14:23). Abraham made sure glory goes to God. Abraham set a good example.

A true believer will never serve God for money. However, it does not mean that a full time Church worker cannot receive any gifts. God knows his every need and will supply through love gifts from his brethren and church.

Write down what you think could be Elisha's reply when Naaman offered gifts to him.



Thought: Glory be to God forever.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I do all things for Thy glory. May Thou give me the strength to do so. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## GREEDY GEHAZI MADE A LEPER

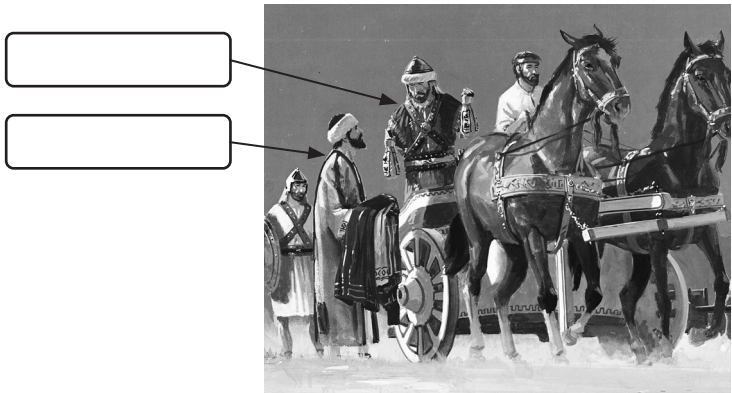
*"Thou shalt not covet."* If only Gehazi had hidden God's word in his heart, he and his descendents would not have suffered the curse of leprosy. Why did he deserve such a severe punishment? Let us see what he did.

Elisha refused Naaman's gifts. However, as soon as his back was turned, Gehazi ran after the Syrian chariot and spun a story that Elisha had changed his mind for the sake of two young men who needed money and garments. Naaman fell for his story and gave Gehazi whatever he asked for. Gehazi then squirrelled the loot away and strolled into Elisha's home as though nothing had happened. When Elisha queried him on what he had done, he continued to lie.

How could Elisha not know? He was actually giving Gehazi a chance to confess his sins. Alas, he was unrepentant. Gehazi was blinded by greed. He coveted, used his master's name, but in fact used God's name in vain. On top of that, he lied continually to cover up his sins.

The sin of covetousness leads to many other sins. And breaking one commandment is as good as breaking all.

Write the names of Naaman and Gehazi in the correct blanks.



Thought: May I never be a greedy child!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please help me guard myself against greed. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

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## HOW CAN IRON SWIM?

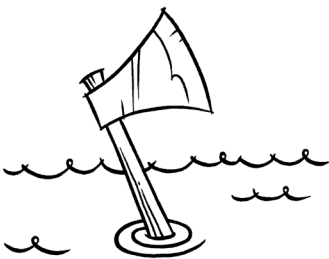
Iron is a heavy metal. Science and experience tells us that a piece of iron will sink quickly in water. But the Bible tells us of an incident when iron did float. God used Elisha to perform a miracle causing iron to float. As the population of the school of prophets grew, more space was needed for the school. The students proposed an extension to the existing building. They asked Elisha for permission to go to the river Jordan to bring back some wood to enlarge the building. They invited Elisha to join them.

That was why Elisha was at the scene when an accident occurred.

The students were diligently chopping trees when an iron head came loose and fell into the river. It had slipped off the handle of one of the axes. The student who lost it was frantic. He had borrowed it for their project and he could not afford to compensate the owner for the loss. The axe already sunk to the river bed. Like what most students would do, he ran to his teacher for help. What did Elisha do? He simply aimed and threw a stick to the place where the iron entered the water. Instantly, the iron floated and was easily retrieved.

With God nothing is impossible! Do you truly believe it?

Can you point out the inaccuracy of the illustration below?  
Did the Bible say that the whole axe fell into the river?



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Thought: No problem is too difficult for God!

Prayer: Our Father in Heaven, may I always seek Thy help first whenever I face a problem. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

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## GOD MADE THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE !

Our eyes are wonderful designs of God. We can see objects both near and far. However, there is a limit to what we can see with the naked eye. Beyond this limit, we need microscopes to see tiny creatures like bacteria; and telescopes to gaze at the stars which are much larger than the earth but invisible to the naked eye because they are so far away. In today's narration, God let Elisha's servant see what neither telescope nor microscope can ever help him see. God made him see the invisible!

The king of Syria had secretly devised a plan to destroy Israel. But his every move was forestalled by the king of Israel. While he began to wonder if there was a spy in his camp, a servant told him it was their prophet Elisha who had the foreknowledge. Why didn't this clever king probe further to ask who gave Elisha the foreknowledge? Obviously, he believed what his servant told him. He did immediately send his troops to Dothan to get rid of Elisha. Elisha's young servant panicked at the sight of the Syrian troops. But Elisha calmly prayed for God to open the young man's spiritual eyes. Then a magnificent scene burst out in sight! He saw the surrounding mountains full of horses and chariots of fire. If we fear the Lord like Elisha and his servant, we too need not be afraid of what man can do to us. If only we can see how God always accompanies us in times of trouble.

Describe in your own words what the young man saw:



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Thought: Give me eyes of faith!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I be able to place my trust in You as Elisha did! In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

**GOD MADE THE VISIBLE INVISIBLE!**

Yesterday, we read about how God opened a young man's eyes to see what the human eye could never have seen. Today, we will read about how God blinded the Syrians and reopened their eyes according to Elisha's prayers.

When the Syrian troops closed in to capture Elisha, he asked God to blind them so that they could not see where they were. Elisha then redirected them to Samaria instead. They only found out they were at Samaria when Elisha asked God to open their eyes again.

At Samaria, the troops became captives of the king of Israel who eagerly asked Elisha if he could kill them. Why not? It was such an easy conquest. What was Elisha's advice to him? Instead of taking revenge, the king was to provide the Syrians with food and water and to set them free. Our God is merciful. Well, what happened after the Syrians returned home? After their enemies had showed such kindness and mercy to them, could they resume their attack? The Syrians abandoned their war plan. Israel had a rest and the Syrians' eyes were opened to see the mercy of the Lord.

Elisha had always acted according to God's Word.

Which part of Scriptures reflected his advice to the king of Israel?

Write out Proverbs 25:21, 22

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Thought: Do not repay evil with evil.

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, help me to show kindness to my enemies. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

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## A MIRACLE FROM THE GRAVE

What kind of man was Elisha? Why was he so cool and calm even in life threatening situations? Was it because he was of a special make that even his bones could miraculously resurrect a dead body? Apparently it was not, because the Bible did not say so. The Bible tells us about his prophecies and miracles. Yet, we know that he was just an ordinary person like you and me.

Elisha's vocation was to be a prophet. As a prophet, he was God's spokesman to the kings and the people. He was fearless and was given power to work miracles. Sometimes, he had to even rebuke them for their idolatrous lifestyle. Predictions of doom often put his life at stake and predictions of victory earned him no awards. From the human perspective, he had a thankless job. Yet, to Elisha, it was a privilege and honour to be appointed by God as a prophet.

As far as his record shows, never did Elisha once shirk his responsibility. Like Elijah, he continually prayed and praised God. Whatever knowledge he gained from Elijah, he faithfully passed onto his student prophets. For about sixty long years he remained a faithful servant of God and refrained from accumulating any earthly treasure. Elisha lived for only one purpose.

The one purpose was to please God and to glorify His Name forever. Children, do you know what? We too exist for the same purpose.



Which way will you choose?

Thought: May I learn to please God!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to read the Bible, pray and live each day according to Your will for me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

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## CAN MODERN MIRACLES BE TRUE?

Although we have read about many miracles this month, these are within one period of the Bible. In the entire Bible, there are 3 such “periods” where a lot of miracles were performed: during the time of Moses, when he brought the people out of Egypt; during the time of Elijah and Elisha, when they confronted false prophets and evil kings; during the time of the Lord Jesus when He performed miracles and also gave power to His disciples to do so.

What is the purpose of miracles? It is to show to the idolatrous people who the one and true living God is. That happened in all 3 periods of the Bible: that Pharaoh will know who God is and release the Israelites; that the evil kings will know that the God of Elisha is the true God; that the people in the time of Jesus would repent and turn to Him. Miracles should increase the faith of the believers in God. Miracles point to the power of God.

Today, many have claimed to have received signs, dreams and visions from God. Some claim to be prophets and some apostles, thereby promoting themselves above fellow believers. Of these, the most popular are the self proclaimed faith healers. Yet to date, no blind has been made to see. No lame made to walk again. No one had ever raised a dead body to life. If the sick does not get well after faith healing, the healer will say that the patient does not have enough faith. God’s name is being used to gain fame for oneself. Worse still, some make merchandise of the Gospel. An example is the “Signs and Wonders movement” that has deceived many.

We know why God does not send prophets to us anymore. He has given us the Bible. A lot of false prophets today claim that God spoke to them in visions and dreams. Let us not be deceived by them.

Thought: Only the prophecies and miracles written in the Bible are true.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to believe only Thy word because Thy word is truth. Keep me away from any false teachings. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

**TREASURES!**

“Look, Max!” exclaimed Emma as she pulled a small, worn book out of an old trunk that had belonged to their grandmother. “This looks like a journal that Grandma wrote. She gave it the title ‘My Trophies.’” “Cool,” said Max. “I wonder what kind of trophies Grandma won.”

“I bet they’re not for long distance running, like you’re hoping for,” said Emma with a grin. “Maybe she entered a reading contest and won a trophy like the one I’m trying to win.”

“Well, let’s look,” said Max, taking the book and opening it. He read aloud. “May 10. Thank You, Lord, for letting me talk to Abigail today and that she understood how much You love her. I’m so glad she accepted Jesus as her Saviour.” Max turned a few pages. “July 16. Today Jonathan left for India as a missionary. He had changed so much since he was saved, and now he’s serving the Lord.”

“I wonder who Abigail and Jonathan were,” said Emma.

“Let’s ask Dad.” When the kids asked their father, he smiled. “I think they were children Grandma led to the Lord,” he replied. “She worked as a children’s missionary for many years. Those kids became living trophies as they turned to Christ. It was the most important thing to her.”

“Yes,” agreed Mom. “Grandma didn’t have much earthly treasure, but she was rich in heavenly treasures. There are some verses in Matthew that tell us it’s important to lay up treasures in heaven.”

“There’s a good lesson here for all of us,” added Dad. “Each of us should ask ourselves, ‘Where am I storing treasure? On earth, or in heaven?’”

“But do I have to lead somebody to Jesus to get treasure in heaven?” asked Emma. “I’m not sure I could do that.”

“Maybe you’d be surprised,” said Dad. “Actually, I believe we lay up treasure in heaven whenever we do something for Jesus—whether it’s witnessing to someone, being kind, or maybe just willingly helping at home. If we do it for the Lord, He’ll reward us.”

Thought: Where is your treasure?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the lesson today. Remind me that in witnessing, helping others and being obedient to my parents and to God, I am laying up and storing treasure in heaven. And these treasures will last throughout eternity! In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.



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## LEARN TO FORGIVE!

“We’re going to clean your room, Matt,” Mom announced one afternoon. “Right now.” “Oh, Mom,” Matt protested, “do we have to?”

“Yes, we do.” Mom took cleaning supplies from the utility closet. In Matt’s bedroom she handed him a large, black garbage bag. “Start with the things under the bed. Throw away everything you do not absolutely have to keep.”

Mom started with the closet and quickly filled a basket with clothes Matt had outgrown. Matt pulled things from under the bed and put a few into the garbage bag, but he piled most of them beside him. He looked at some tattered game cards. “The last time we played this game, Jason cheated,” he said. “I’m not going to play with him anymore.”

“Jason said he was sorry, Matt,” Mom reminded him. “You need to forget the times people disappoint you. Throw those memories away and remember the good times you had with him. You...” The sound of the phone ringing interrupted her.

“That was Grandma,” said Mom after answering the phone. “She wants us to go there for Grandpa’s birthday dinner, but she invited Aunt Cindy’s family too. She should remember that we don’t spend time with them anymore. We haven’t since Uncle Charles lost his temper and ruined the day for everyone.” Mom knelt beside Matt’s keep pile. “Son, you’ve got to learn what to keep and what to throw away!” she exclaimed. “This junk is making a disaster zone out of your room. You’ve got to get rid of more of this stuff!”

Matt grinned. “Mom, you have to learn to throw things away, too, like bad memories. They make life a disaster zone,” he said. “Uncle Charles did apologise, you know, so if you’ll forgive Uncle Charles, I’ll take your advice and forgive Jason too.”

Mom was startled, but after a moment, she reached around the pile of stuff and hugged Matt. “I’ll call Grandma and tell her we’ll be there,” she said, getting up. “Then I will call Jason and invite him over,” said Matt. “When he comes, we’ll play this game if I can find all of the cards.” He reached under the bed to search for them.

Thought: Do you hang onto bad memories? Learn to forgive!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to forgive others just as You have forgiven me. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

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## CONTROL YOUR TONGUE!

A group of students gathered around the notice board where there was a list of names of those who were picked for various parts for the school play.

"The princess! I just have to get the part of the princess!", Tess thought as she crowded closer to see. But her name wasn't anywhere on the list. Miss Lee had picked Jayna to play the princess.

"Jayna's so braggy about getting the princess part," Tess grumbled to her friend, Lynn. "With a family like hers, I wouldn't brag so much." "What's the matter with her family?" Lynn asked eagerly. "Well, I heard that Jayna's father is an alcoholic and her mother has some kind of mental problem." Tess felt a little guilty about saying those things, but pushed the feeling aside.

"Tess," said her mom at dinner, a couple of weeks later, "I heard that kids have been avoiding Jayna because of rumours about their family. The story is that her dad is a drunkard and her mum may have to go to a mental institution. Do you know anything about this?"

Tess shrugged and she blushed. "Well, Jayna did say her dad took a drink at a Christmas party," she murmured. "And she said her mom might... ah... well.."

Dad frowned. "Don't tell me you started the rumour!" he exclaimed. "Uh... well, I didn't mean to," stammered Tess, "but maybe I told... someone else, and..."

"Tess, those things should not have been repeated," said Mom sternly, "I know the family and those rumours are complete lies!" Dad frowned. "Remember the little fire by the park we read about, not long ago?" he asked. "One little match caused so much trouble! Now one little tongue has done the same thing, and this fire may be harder to put out."

"Oh, Dad, I'm so sorry," cried Tess.

"Well, in the morning, you'll have to go to Jayna to explain and apologise," Dad told her. "And at school, you'll have to straighten out the story with anyone you told those rumours to. Even then, you may never be able to repair all the damage you've done, but you'll have to try." Solemnly, Tess nodded.

Thought: Do you control your tongue? Or does it give you trouble?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may You help me to guard my tongue always. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## ARE YOU SAVED?

“This is quite a storm!” exclaimed Grandpa, watching from the front window as the rain poured down. His house was right next to the Bedok Reservoir. Ellen and Andy came out to stand beside him. Wide-eyed, they watched the trees blowing in the wind. “Grandpa,” said Andy, “there was a news report on TV, and it said the roads all through this area are almost impassable because of a few fallen trees, so we can’t get out of here, can we?”

“Not by car,” said Grandpa, “but I’m afraid the lower part of Bedok South Park might be flooded if the flash rains continue!” When Grandpa mentioned “Bedok South Park”, Andy remembered a friend, Teck Leng, who told him that she was going there with her family! Andy called Teck Leng and told her about the potential flooding. But she was not concerned. “That area has never been flooded, and I’m sure it won’t now,” she said.

Teck Leng was not a Christian, but she joked saying, “Well! Well! It isn’t like Noah and his ark! Are you trying to be like a little version of Noah?” Andy sighed. “I wish she’d listen,” he said, “but she won’t, so we’ll just hope that the place won’t flood.”

Teck Leng and family did go to Bedok South Park and that place indeed was flooded. Although no one was hurt, that was an experience Teck Leng did not ever want to go through again. “Your friend teased you about being a little ‘Noah,’ remember?” asked Ellen. “No one believed Noah when he warned them about a flood, just like Teck Leng did not believe you.”

Grandpa shook his head. “Noah and his family were safe because they believed God,” he mused. “They’re an example of those who trust in Christ. Only those who have accepted Jesus as their personal Saviour will be safe when God’s judgment comes.” “That could come at any time too, couldn’t it?” Ellen asked.

“That’s right,” Grandpa agreed. “It’s sad when lives are lost because people don’t believe warnings of coming trouble. It’s even more sad when souls are lost because they don’t believe warnings about God’s judgment.”

Thought: Have you trusted Jesus as your Saviour?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please help me to preach the Gospel to the unsaved and to warn them about impending judgment and hell, should they die in their sins. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

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## ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER

“Meng, listen to me say this verse,” said John, as he helped a neighbour learn a memory verse for Sunday School. He recited each word slowly. “Okay, now see if you can repeat it,” said John. Meng tried to repeat the verse, but he stumbled over unfamiliar words. At first, John tried to help him with them, but after several attempts, he scowled. “You’re hopeless,” he said. “Take your book and go home and practise.”

As the boys stood up, John saw his mom in the doorway. A frown replaced her usual smile. “How long have you been there?” asked John. “Long enough,” replied Mom. She smiled at Meng. “Come over anytime, Meng.”

After Meng left, Mom turned to John. “I’m disappointed with your attitude toward Meng,” she said. “His family just migrated to Singapore from China, his English is not the same standard as kids his age, and that is why he needs more help and encouragement.” “Okay. Sorry,” mumbled John, and he turned to go outside.

Later that day, John’s parents spread pictures across the table. “These were taken before, during, and after the Hilton Hotel construction,” said Dad. “I need to choose photos to use in my newspaper article about the project.”

John picked up a picture. “I like this one,” he said. “You can see the entire old building and the crane.” He pointed to dates stamped on some of the pictures. “Wow! They tore down the old building in only a week?” he said. “Didn’t it take over a year to build the new one?”

“Yes, it did,” replied Dad. “Unfortunately, it’s generally easier to tear down than to build up in almost any area of life, not just in construction.” Mom nodded. “For example, we often find it easier to criticise people for what they do wrong than to praise them for their good qualities,” she said. She looked at John, and he remembered how impatient he had been with Meng. He suspected that Mom was remembering that too.

“Which reminds me, I need to call a colleague I work with and congratulate him on a promotion,” said Dad. “I think I’ll invite him to church tomorrow too.” “And I need to call Meng,” said John quickly, “and help him learn a verse.”

Thought: Do your words and attitude encourage others?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to remember that if someone is struggling with something, I must patiently try to help him. And if someone does well in a certain area, I should congratulate him. Help me to encourage others.. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## MIX WITH THE RIGHT COMPANY

Jeff was annoyed. "Why do Mom and Dad have to be so old-fashioned?" he muttered to himself. "Everybody else gets to go to Sam's party tonight, even Phil." Jeff's parents would not let him go to the party because Sam's mom and dad were out of town and Sam's older brother, James, who was chaperoning the party, did not have a good reputation.

The next day was Saturday, and Jeff's friend, Phil, came over to play video games. "Did you know that Alan is in the hospital?" Phil asked, as soon as he arrived. "They think he may have bacterial meningitis and we sat next to him on the bus yesterday! My mom says if he has it, we'll probably have to get shots!"

"Aw!" groaned Jeff. "How come?" "Because the kind he probably has is contagious, and we've been exposed," Phil explained. "My mom thinks there are shots that might keep us from getting it. It's a really serious disease."

"I sure hope Alan's going to be alright," Jeff said. "By the way, how was the party last night?"

"Be glad you didn't go!" exclaimed Phil. "James and some of his friends had alcoholic drinks there. They were using us younger guys as a cover-up. And I didn't like the loud music and the way they were acting. I was not comfortable and left early."

Jeff's mother had been listening. "I was afraid something like that might happen," she said. "That's why I didn't want you to go, Jeff. I didn't want you to be exposed to sin." "But sin is everywhere, isn't it?" protested Jeff. "We're exposed to it every day." "That's true," agreed Mom. "And bacterial meningitis germs could be anywhere too. But some places are more dangerous than others."

Phil nodded. "I get it! We were in more danger sitting next to Alan on the bus than we would have been somewhere away from him," he said, "and I was in more danger at the party than you were at home, Jeff. Wow! Two close calls for me in one day - double exposure!"

Thought: Do you avoid exposure to sin? What about the places you go to, the friends you choose, the TV programmes you watch, or the websites you look at?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to be careful and to avoid bad company for it can easily corrupt me and be a real danger. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## PEACE AND SAFETY

Kok Leong sat up in bed. "What's that noise?" he wondered. He and his family had moved to a new home, and now he slept in a strange, new room. Somehow he did not feel safe, the way he felt back in his old, familiar home. Kok Leong heard the noise again. "I don't like this room! I don't want to sleep here!", he thought. He jumped out of bed and went to find his mother.

"Son!" exclaimed Mom when Kok Leong rushed into the living room. "What's wrong, honey?"

"What's that noise, Mom?" asked Kok Leong. Mom listened for a moment. "There's a bit of thunder in the distance," she said. "It won't hurt you." Kok Leong knew his mom was right. The noise did sound like thunder, and it was not even close. There was nothing to be afraid of, but he was still scared. "I don't like my new room," he said.

Mom put her arm around Kok Leong. "Sometimes it's hard to get used to a new house," she told him. "You don't feel safe here yet." She pointed to their little dog sitting at her feet. "I think Spunky still feels a little strange here too. Why don't you take him to your room? He'll be good company for you."

Kok Leong looked at the puppy. "Okay," he agreed. "Come on, Spunky. I'll take care of you, just like I always did." Mom went to tuck Kok Leong back into his bed. "When you feel afraid, remember that we didn't move away from God," she said. "He's right here with you, just like He was with you in our old house, even when it's dark and there's a storm outside. You can trust Him to take care of you."

When Kok Leong heard the noise again a little later, he pulled the blanket snugly around himself and Spunky. "You aren't scared when you know I'm near, you know I'll take care of you and keep you safe, don't you?" he asked as he stroked the puppy's head. "I'm not scared either, because I know God is near. He'll take care of me and keep me safe." Then Kok Leong and Spunky closed their eyes and went to sleep.

Thought: Do you have trouble getting to sleep when things seem scary or new?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I may be troubled by thoughts of a test coming up at school or of a school bully. Please remind me You will watch over me when I face those things You are with me everywhere, all the time, anytime I need You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## ARE YOU A THIEF?

When Bala got home from school, he proudly showed his mother his history test. All the questions were answered correctly. "Wonderful!" exclaimed Mom. "I'm surprised! I know you didn't study very much." She looked over the paper. "I used to know a lot of these things myself," she said. "Let's play a game. I'll ask you some questions, and then you can ask me some. We'll see who can do better."

"Aw, Mom," objected Bala. "I want to go outside." But Mom insisted, and it was soon apparent that Bala knew little or nothing about the material covered in the test. "Bala, have you been cheating?" asked Mom, after he missed most of the answers.

"Well... n-not exactly," stammered Bala. "I mean, lots of kids get a few answers from somebody else. That's normal." "Perhaps they do, but that doesn't make it right," Mom answered sternly. "Besides, you say you've accepted Jesus as your Saviour, so don't you think you should be different from 'lots of kids'?" "Yeah... well, I suppose, but I am only human," Bala defended himself, "and it's not really so bad. It's... it's just kinda like... like getting a little help, that's all."

"Bala, would you steal something?" Mom asked. "Of course not!" Bala replied. "It's wrong to steal. That's one of the Ten Commandments." "Exactly," agreed Mom. "And what is stealing?" "Well, it's taking something that doesn't belong to you," Bala answered. "Correct again." Mom held up his paper. "And you took answers that did not belong to you. You stole them, Bala." "I... I..." Bala didn't know what to say. "I didn't mean to steal."

Mom shook her head. "No," she said, "maybe not, but you did steal. You'll have to take this paper to your teacher and tell her what you did today and about any other times you cheated. She'll decide what to do about it." "Aw, Mom," protested Bala. "Can't I just... just not do it ever again?"

Mom shook her head. "Right now, it would be good to confess it to the Lord and ask His forgiveness," she suggested. "And then, instead of playing after school, you'll have to stay inside every day and study until you know this material."

Thought: Have you ever cheated or stolen?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to examine my heart. If I have cheated, I need to confess to You and ask for forgiveness. And it is necessary to admit to others as well. That is not easy to do, but with Your help, I can do it. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**BODY OF CHRIST**

Rachel watched as Mom tied the sash of Kay's sparkly new dress and handed her a basket of flower petals. "It's not fair," Rachel muttered. She had never got to be a flower girl in a wedding, but her little sister had been picked for that job in Aunt Jessica's wedding. "All I get to do is stand at the door and hand out programmes," continued Rachel.

Mom frowned. "Rachel," she said, "please stop whining." "I'm not whining," insisted Rachel, but she could not make herself smile. It is just not fair! she thought again. "Come here and see Aunt Jessica's flowers," said Mom. Rachel walked over to the beautiful bouquet on the table. There were white roses and pink tulips, fragrant lilies, and dainty violets. "Which flower is the prettiest?" asked Mom. Rachel studied them. "I like all of them," she said. "It's hard to pick one."

"I agree. There are so many different kinds of flowers, and it takes all of them to make up the bouquet," Mom said with a smile. "Can you imagine the tulip crying because it doesn't smell like the rose? Or the violet being upset because it's smaller than the lily?" "No!" Rachel shook her head.

"That would be silly, wouldn't it?" asked Mom. "Well, like flowers, people are all different. They have a variety of jobs to do, and each is important." Rachel glanced up. "You want me to stop being mad that I can't be a flower girl, don't you?"

Mom nodded. "If you and Kay were both flower girls, who would greet the guests? Both jobs are needed, so be content with the one you have." Mom gave Rachel a hug. "In the Bible, God points out that various parts of our physical bodies have different jobs, and all are needed. All the different jobs given to members of the body of Christ are needed too. The things God has for you to do won't be exactly the same as those He has for Kay, but whatever God gives you to do is important."

"Like smiling while I greet everyone who comes to the wedding?" asked Rachel.

"Okay, I'll smile," promised Rachel. And she did.

Thought: Are you content to do the things God gives you to do or are you jealous of others?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me not to be jealous but to know that all of us are given different spiritual gifts to serve You. Help me to be happy for others when they do well! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



**GOD LOVES ALL CHILDREN**

“Yesu yana kaunar yara,” sang Allison.

“What language is that?” asked her friend Jill, with a grin. “Like my Grandma always says when she doesn’t understand something... it’s Greek to me!” Allison laughed. “It’s not Greek, it’s Hausa,” she said. “I learnt the song from my Aunt Mary and Uncle Steve, who are missionaries in Nigeria.” “What does it mean?” Jill wanted to know. Allison smiled. “It means, ‘Jesus, He loves the children,’” she explained.

“Oh, that’s almost the same as a song Mom taught me!” exclaimed Jill. “It’s called ‘Jesus Loves the Little Children.’ The tune sounded familiar too.” Allison nodded. “Aunt Mary teaches a class of Nigerian girls who are the same age as we are. She says one girl reminds her of me.”

Jill laughed. “Really?” she asked. “My dad always teases me and says I’m one-of-a-kind. How are you and the other girl alike?”

“Well, Aunt Mary says one way we’re alike is that we both love God. And she says we act so much alike,” replied Allison. “We’re going to write to each other, and Aunt Mary will translate for us. It’ll be fun having a Nigerian pen pal.”

“Cool! I guess maybe we’re not really as different from kids in other countries as we think we are,” observed Jill. Allison shook her head. “Aunt Mary always reminds me that we’re all the same to the Lord,” she said. “He loves Nigerian children, and all the children in the world, just like He loves us.”

“Right,” agreed Jill, “just like your song said. How did that go? Sing it again.” Allison sang the strange words, and she laughed as Jill tried it too. “That’s okay. You can laugh at me,” said Jill. She grinned and added, “I bet the Nigerians would laugh at you!”

“Probably,” agreed Allison, “but who cares? God understands, even when we mispronounce all these words. It’s not Greek to Him.” “Let’s make it a duet,” suggested Jill. And they did.

Thought: Did you know there are children all over the world who love the Lord?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that Your love reaches children in every country in the world. It is so wonderful to know that Jesus died for all of us, and that He loves all the children everywhere, just like He loves me. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

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## ARE YOU A BOASTER?

Honk! Honk-honk-Honk! The horn on little Todd's tricycle was making an awful racket. Patti clapped her hands over her ears as she came home from school. "You hurt my ears with all the horn honking you do lately!" she exclaimed.

Mom smiled. "Todd," she said, "Let Patti help you take your tricycle outside the flat to the playground." "But I want to ride here," wailed Todd. "I like my new horn." He reached for the squeeze bulb on the handlebars.

Patti grabbed his hand. "No more!" she exclaimed. She picked up the tricycle and started for the door, with her little brother following. "Blow it all you want in the park where it won't bother anybody."

When Patti came back, she said, "Now I can tell you my news, Mom. I've been promoted to the advanced class. Only five percent of the kids make that class." Her chin went up.

Mom came over to give her a hug. "Congratulations, girl!" she said. Patti beamed. "I've got to tell everybody!" she declared, picking up the cordless phone. She dialed, and then for several minutes, she paced the floor and talked on the phone. The longer she talked, the more serious Mom looked. When Patti hung up after the sixth call and started dialing another number, Mom said, "That's enough, Patti. You're hurting my ears!"

Patti looked puzzled. "Hurting your ears!" she exclaimed. "But, Mom, I'm not even talking loudly."

"I know you're not," Mom replied, "but you're blowing your own horn, and it's not something that's pleasing to hear." "What do you mean, Mom? I just..." began Patti. Mom held up her hand. "You've been telling people how wonderful and smart you are. Bragging is blowing your own horn, and no one likes to hear it," she said. "God has blessed you with a sharp mind, and your teachers have helped you develop that mind. You have much to be thankful for but remember that all you have comes from the Lord."

The faint sound of a tricycle horn drifted into the house. Mom smiled. "If you're going to honk your own horn, honey, do it in the park," she joked.

Thought: Do you like to hear people brag? Do you brag yourself?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please help me not to be a boaster. If I am good at something, please remind me never to forget that any ability or talent is from You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**TO BE PRESENT WITH THE LORD**

Stretching sleepily, Mac wondered why he had a strange, empty feeling in his stomach. Then it all came back to him. He glanced over at the other bed. Yes, it was empty. It really was true, his brother Aaron, was gone. It had been almost a month since Aaron had left for school in the morning and had not come back. Tears rolled down Mac's cheeks as he remembered. There had been an accident. Aaron had been killed. Mom said he had gone to heaven.

The door to Mac's room opened, and his mother came in. "Morning, honey!" she said. "I see you're already awake." Noticing his tears, she sat beside him on the bed. "You're thinking of Aaron, aren't you?" she asked. "Daddy and I miss him too, but we try to remember how happy he is with Jesus."

"But Mom, how do you know he's with Jesus?" asked Mac. "I know because Aaron accepted Jesus as his Saviour," Mom answered. "The Bible says those who trust in Him go to be with Him when they die."

Mac nodded. "Yes, but... but he was right there in the casket," he said with a sob. "And then he was put in the ground at the cemetery." Mac covered his face with his hands. "Aaron's body is in the grave, but his soul, or his life, the real Aaron, is with Jesus," explained Mom. Mac looked at his hands. "So... my hands and feet, and my head and ears and eyes... they aren't really me?"

Mom shook her head. "Not really," she told him. "Your body is like a house in which the real you, your soul lives. Your body may die, but not your soul. It lives forever. Aaron's body died, and we buried it, but God took Aaron's soul to heaven. So when I think of Aaron, I think of him in heaven, not in the cemetery."

Mac sighed. "I still wish I could see Aaron every day," he said slowly. "I know," Mom answered, giving him a hug. "We all do. We can't see him again here on earth, but because we all know Jesus, we can look forward to seeing him in heaven some day. Then we'll all be together forever!"

Thought: Do you know that your life, or soul, will live forever, either in heaven or in hell?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the assurance that when a Christian dies, his soul goes to be with Jesus. Help me to be sure of my salvation. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## GOD'S WONDERFUL THOUGHTS

"Come here, Mr. Wiggle Worm," said Pete as he put an earthworm in a can. "Hey, Dad, are worms good for anything else besides bird food and fish bait?"

"Sure are," said Dad. "They help the earth breathe." Pete laughed. "Like lungs?" he asked.

Dad smiled. "Not exactly, but as worms burrow through the ground, they let fresh air through the soil. And when they eat and digest the soil, that's like when Mom sifts flour to make a cake," he explained. "The more the soil is digested and fertilised by worms, the better it is for growing things. God has a purpose for everything."

"Yeah... and I'm glad one purpose for worms is to make bait," said Pete. "This will be enough, won't it?" Dad nodded, and they were off to the East Coast Park..

That evening, the family enjoyed fish for supper. "Yum!" exclaimed Pete. "Fishing is so much fun! Wish I could skip school and go fishing every day." Mom laughed. "Now that would be overdoing it a little," she said.

"Besides, you like school," said Pete's sister, Ann. "Yeah, except science," Pete said. "I just don't believe some stuff Mrs. Tan teaches - like the theory we evolved from a lower form of life. God made everything... even worms, didn't He?"

"He sure did," said Mom. "It's amazing that people can't see there must be a God who planned everything and made it all work together so well." "He made everything to be useful..." began Dad.

"Except spiders," Ann put in quickly. Pete laughed. "They're useful, too," he said. "They eat insects and help keep them under control, and they're food for some animals."

"The sun is another good example of God's wisdom," observed Dad. "It's just the right distance away so we can live comfortably. And seasons follow one another in perfect order. Only God could have planned everything so well."

"He has a special plan and purpose for me, right?" asked Pete. "Indeed He does!" Dad assured him.

Thought: Are you glad God is in charge of everything?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for planning and making the whole universe. You have a plan and purpose for everything, including me! Help me to be willing to let You take charge of my life. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## JESUS DIED ON THE CROSS FOR OUR SINS

“Mom, I don’t understand my memory verse,” said Alec, one afternoon. “It’s 2 Corinthians 5:21. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.’ I know it’s talking about Jesus, but what does “He was made to be sin for us” mean? Jesus was sinless, wasn’t He?”

“Yes, He was,” answered Mom, “and taking our sin away is what caused Him to suffer so much. It involved more than just the physical pain from the crucifixion. Let’s see...” She reached for a book from the bookcase. “Here,” she said, “look at this picture of a leper. It was taken by some missionaries years ago. They often saw people with this condition.”

Alec frowned as he looked at the picture. “That man sure looks awful,” he said. “He hasn’t got any fingers or toes! Just ugly little stumps!” “Yes,” Mom nodded, “and he’s blind and so thin! You’re a Christian, Alec. If you saw someone like this, what could you do for him?”

Alec thought about it. “I could give him a drink of water and some food,” he suggested.

“But he’s dying,” answered Mom. “Could you love that poor man enough to get down on your knees beside him and take him into your arms and tell him that if he will believe in Christ, he will go to heaven? What do you think?”

Alec hesitated. “I don’t know. If I forced myself, maybe I could.”

“In order to help him,” continued Mom, “and if you had the power to do it, would you allow all of his sickness to flow into your body and allow all of your strength and health to flow into his body?” Alec cringed at that idea. “That’s asking too much!” he objected. “He has such a horrible disease!”

Mom nodded. “That’s what Jesus did when He was made to be sin for you and me, Alec,” she explained. “Jesus hates sin even more than you hate leprosy. He was sinless, yet He took the punishment for our sins by dying on the Cross for us.”

Alec thought it over. “I think I’m beginning to understand,” he said.

Thought: Did you ever stop to think about what Jesus did when He died for your sins?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for sending the Lord Jesus Christ to die on the Cross for my sins. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

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## GOD WILL HELP YOU

With a big sigh, Joy dropped her books on the table and flopped into the chair beside her mother.

“Something wrong, honey?” asked Mom. Joy nodded. “It’s Mary,” she said. “You know, that annoying girl in my class. I can’t help it- I just don’t like her at all. The best I’ve been able to do is to stop making fun of her.”

“Well, judging from what you’ve told me before, it sounds like that’s an improvement,” said Mom.

“But it’s not enough!” replied Joy. “My Sunday School teacher says Jesus expects us to love people, even those who hate us, and to do good to them. I don’t think I’ll ever be able to love Mary the way I’m supposed to!” She sighed. “God must be getting pretty annoyed with me,” she added.

“Ask Him to help you,” said Mom. “Pray for Mary and keep working on your attitude towards her. Dad and I will pray about it too.” “Okay,” agreed Joy. She stood up. “Can I make some chocolate chip cookies, Mom?” she asked.

“Sure,” said Mom. “Need any help?” “Nope! I can handle this,” said

Joy. As she reached for the recipe book, her four-year-old brother burst into the kitchen. “Hey, buddy! Want to learn how to make cookies?” asked Joy.

“Can I?” asked Jimmy eagerly. Mom smiled. “Teaching Jimmy to make cookies will take some patience,” she warned.

“That’s okay,” said Joy. “I’ll give him all the help he needs for as long as he needs it.”

Mom nodded. “You know, from your comments about the problem you’re having with Mary, I get the impression that you think God is less patient than you are,” she said.

Joy was silent. “I think I get it,” she said after a moment. “It will take some time for Jimmy to learn to make cookies, but I’ll help him as long as he needs me. And it’s taking time for me to learn to show love to Mary, but God will help me as long as I need Him.” “Which will always be the case,” added Mom.

Thought: Are you impatient with your spiritual progress?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know I need a lot of your help in my life. If I find it difficult to show love to people I find annoying – help me not to give up. I ask for strength to keep on learning to do the things You want me to do. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## ARE YOU SENSITIVE TO GOD'S WORD?

"Where's Molly, Grandpa?" asked Dan. "I want to play with her." Dan had just come to spend a week with Grandpa, and he loved to play with Grandpa's big brown and white collie. In reply, Grandpa took a whistle from his pocket, put it to his mouth and blew it. "It doesn't make any sound," said Dan. "It must be broken." But Molly came running from the park. Grandpa laughed. "No, the whistle is not broken. It emits a high-pitched sound that can't be heard by human ears, but a dog can hear it plainly," he explained. "Molly's been trained to respond to the sound of the whistle."

Dan and Molly raced back to the park. Then Dan threw a stick for Molly to fetch. She brought it back and waited eagerly for him to throw it again. Grandpa sat on the bench and watched. When Dan was tired, he went to sit beside Grandpa, and Molly lay down nearby.

"May I play with your whistle, Grandpa?" Dan asked.

"No, Dan." Grandpa shook his head. "It's not a toy. We use it only when we want Molly to respond. It gets her attention every time." He paused, and then added, "While I was watching you and Molly play, I was thinking of some of the ways God calls us when He wants our attention."

"But God doesn't have a whistle," said Dan, with a laugh. Grandpa smiled. "No," he said, "but sometimes He speaks to us loudly through our parents, teachers, and pastors. Sometimes He speaks through the Bible as we read it or listen to it being read. And sometimes the Holy Spirit speaks silently through our consciences and minds."

"And we're the only ones who hear Him, aren't we?" Dan asked, remembering how his classmates in his music band could not understand why he went to church on Sundays, even when there was a practice scheduled. "That's right," agreed Grandpa. "Only God's children can hear and understand what He says to them."

Dan scratched Molly's ears. "I'll try to answer as quickly when God 'whistles' for me, as you do when someone whistles for you," he told her.

Thought: Are you a hearer and doer of God's Word?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please teach me to be sensitive to Thy Word. I know that sometimes, You may speak to me through my parents or Sunday School teacher. Help me to pay attention, and to heed Your call. It is the only way to be truly happy. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**ARE YOU ALWAYS COMPLAINING?**

“George is such a pain,” complained Ben, as he placed the toy elephants side by side, in Noah’s Ark. “He’s always talking about how he played soccer in the school he used to go to. Who cares?”

Katie picked up the pig. “He can’t be worse than Anna,” she said. I don’t think she ever takes a bath and her hair looks like a broom! I’m going to ask my teacher if I can change places next week.” She set the pig down.

“Hey! You better not put your pig next to Mrs. Noah,” said Ben. “I’m sure she wouldn’t like the smell!” Katie giggled. “I wouldn’t have liked to be Mrs. Noah, living with a boat full of smelly, noisy animals! I bet they fought a lot too.”

“I’d like to think neither the Noah family nor the animals had fights,” said Mom. “They would have been so thankful to be in the ark, safe from the storm and flood, that they would rather put up with bad smells and loud noises.”

“I guess so,” agreed Katie. “I mean, what’s a bad smell, even pigs, compared to being drowned?”

“But I guess you two would have grumbled and complained while inside the ark!” continued Mom.

“Mom!” cried Katie indignantly. “Why would you say that?”

“Well, listen to yourselves grumbling about your classmates,” said Mom. “I understand that George and Anna may be annoying at times, but from what you’ve told me before, I gather that they both come from homes where no one gives them much attention. Have you forgotten that you are blessed to be part of a Christian family and that you know the Lord Jesus? He provides a safe place from the storms of the world. Perhaps George and Anna don’t have that.”

Thought: Are you constantly annoyed with others? Do not be!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me not to murmur and complain about others. Instead, may I be a good testimony for You. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.



**THOU SHALT NOT STEAL!**

“Look at that old uncle at his newspaper stand, Beng” said Ken. “Let’s have some fun with that old man. You keep his attention, while I’ll get a magazine or comic book from his stand!” In the alley, a few moments later, each boy held a comic book. “That old man didn’t even notice me!” exclaimed Ken. “He was watching you.”

Beng laughed. “I made him think I was after a paper for my dad. That was great fun!” “Maybe you think prison will be fun too,” said a voice behind the boys. They turned around to see a police officer standing there.

Since it was the boys’ first “run-in” with the law, the newspaper vendor agreed not to press charges. However, the officer took the boys to the nearby police station and called the boys’ parents. Before they were released, they were given a stern lecture and warning.

“I can’t see why there should be such a fuss just over snitching a couple of comic books,” complained Ken, when they were ready to go. “Yeah,” agreed Beng. “It was such a little thing.”

“Boys, you stole something and thought it was fun?” said Beng’s father. Ken’s father nodded. “And I’m afraid you don’t even feel remorseful, except for getting caught. That’s serious. It’s the way a life of crime often begins.”

“Aw, Dad, you don’t really believe we’d do anything really bad, do you?” objected Ken. “We wouldn’t take anything big.”

“The act of stealing, regardless of the value of the stolen item, is sinful,” replied Dad. “I find this especially disappointing since both of you claim to be Christians and attend the same Junior Worship class!” “You’re old enough to know right from wrong,” said Dad, “and God expects you to use that knowledge to live a life pleasing to Him right now.”

Thought: Live a right life for the Lord starting right now!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to realise that stealing is a sin. May Thou grant me the strength to resist the temptation to take what belongs to others. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## DON'T MURMUR

"Oh, no! Looks like it's raining," Bob exclaimed, looking anxiously up at the sky, one Saturday morning. "It is," Dad agreed. "I think we'd better postpone our picnic until next week."

Bob was most unhappy about the delay. As the raindrops began to fall, his eyebrows drew together in a frown. And when the rain poured down, he became downright grumpy. "My whole day is spoiled," he complained over and over.

"Shhh. . .listen." Bob's sister, Becky, held up her finger. A clear, pure song came from a treetop outside. A robin was singing in the rain.

"Well, let the dumb bird sing. My day is ruined," Bob grumped. He knew grumbling did not please God, but he was so disappointed. "Why don't you get one of your board games, Bob? We can still have some fun, in spite of the rain," suggested Dad.

Bob grudgingly went to get a game, and soon he, Becky, Dad and Mom were all busy playing and laughing. The time flew by, and Bob forgot all about the rain spoiling his fun. Suddenly, Dad looked up at the clock. "Can you believe it's nearly dinner time?" he asked.

"We'll have a picnic right here on the floor," decided Mother. "Becky and I will get things ready, and you guys can clean up."

When the food was brought in, they all sat on a blanket on the floor while they ate. "This is fun!" declared Bob. "The whole day was so much fun that I forgot about the rain. I've been thinking that robin had the right idea about singing in the rain. My grumbling didn't stop the rain from coming, and I had as much fun as if I had gone on a picnic, well, almost, anyway. I'm sorry I grumbled."

Dad put his arm around Bob. "That's right!" he approved. "That robin was a good example for all of us. There's always a cause to sing, even when it rains."

Thought: Do you grumble when it "rains" in your life, when things do not go your way?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me that there are plenty of reasons to be happy and sing, in spite of disappointments. You have already given me so much, so please help me not to murmur. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## GUARD WHAT YOU SAY

Brad started towards the family room. “VAR-O-O-O-M!” sang out his little brother, Kevin, as he charged through the room, holding up his toy plane. He crashed into Brad.

“Why don’t you watch where you’re going, you stupid boy?” said Brad angrily. “You’re hopeless in coordination!” “You know very well that you are not to call people names,” Dad said sternly, as Kevin ran to his room.

Brad sighed. “Oops! I suppose I better go apologise.” Just then the phone rang, and Brad picked it up. “Hello...oh hi, Tim. ...Yeah, I heard what they’re saying about Mrs. Tan, that she comes to school looking all bleary-eyed because she’s an alcoholic, right? I believe it too. Did you notice how she stumbled over her words in class? ...Yeah, and she... oh, I have to go, Tim. Dad wants me for something. ‘Bye.” Brad hung up the phone and looked at his father.

“You’ll have to call Tim back and apologise for that bit of gossip I just heard,” said Dad. When Brad started to protest, Dad held up a hand. “Did you know that Mrs. Tan’s husband is dying?” he asked. “She has to stay up many nights caring for him. No wonder she’s tired.”

“Oh... I didn’t know that.” Brad looked truly sorry. Then he shrugged. “Okay, I’ll call Tim and tell him.” “First, follow me,” said Dad, leading the way. He picked up a hammer and some nails. “I want you to pound these nails about halfway into this board.”

Brad obeyed with a puzzled look. “Okay. Now what?” “Pull the nails out.” Brad did so. “Brad, your words lately have been as sharp as these nails,” said Dad. “They’ve been cutting and hurting. Then you’ve had to go to folks and apologise. Saying you’re sorry is fine. But look at this board. What do you see?”

“The nail holes,” said Brad, glancing at the board. “Exactly,” said Dad. “You can apologise – that’s what God wants you to do – and you can be forgiven, but you can never take back all the harm you’ve caused.” Brad picked up the board. “I get your point, Dad,” he said slowly.

“Good,” said Dad. “Now why don’t you go hang that in your room as a reminder to be more careful with your tongue.”

Thought: Are you careless with your words?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to guard my speech so that it edifies others instead of stumbling them. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

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## SEE NO EVIL

Jeremy and Alicia were lying on the floor watching a television show when their parents arrived home. “What’s on?” Dad asked, as he sat down in his favorite chair.

“Oh, some show about an undercover policeman who’s trying to break the mob’s secret code.” Jeremy kept his eyes glued to the television set as he answered.

“Oh, wow! Look at that, Jeremy!” Alicia kept her eyes fastened on the television set. “He’s breaking into the mob’s warehouse where they store their drugs. See! He’s got a shotgun, and he’s going to blast the bad guys.” “Wait! There’s his girlfriend! I wonder if they’re going to kill her?”

Alicia sat up straight. “I hope not! They just fell in love at the beginning of the show,” she said. Just then, a loud burst of gunfire pierced the stillness of the living room, followed by a torrent of staccato machine-gun fire. The mobsters began to fall to the ground while the hero continued to recklessly shoot around the warehouse. It was a violent scene.

Dad got up, walked over to the television set, and turned it off. “I thought you two knew better than to watch such a programme,” he said. “Doesn’t that violence bother you?”

“It’s not real,” Alicia protested weakly. “Real or not, this kind of entertainment is wrong,” replied Dad. “In fact, just this morning I read some verses that talk about these kinds of television shows.”

“Aw, Dad, the Bible doesn’t mention television shows,” objected Jeremy. “Well,” said Dad, “Psalm 101 says, ‘I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes.’ Wouldn’t you say that could be applied to programmes like the one you were watching?”

Mother nodded in agreement. “You kids did not make a good choice when you picked that show.” Jeremy and Alicia looked ashamed.

“But Mom,” protested Jeremy, “there’s nothing better on.” “You forgot one option,” said Dad. “You could shut the television off – in fact, that’s what you should do.” He smiled. “Now, how about if Mom and I challenge you two to a board game? Alicia, you pick one out.”

Thought: Are you careful with television or computer games that have violent themes?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be discerning with regards to what I watch on television and the games I play on my computer. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

**YOU ARE GOD'S PROPERTY!**

As Christie was cleaning out her closet one day, she found a library book tucked away in the corner. "Oh no!" she groaned. "I forgot about this book." She checked the due date. "It's more than a year overdue!" she gasped. "By now, the fine will be really huge. I'll never be able to pay it, and I bet Mom and Dad will be mad too. They always say I need to be more responsible for the things I have." She sighed. "I wonder why they haven't been sending me notices about it."

Christie shoved the book back in the closet, but she continued to worry about it for days. Finally, just before family devotions one evening, she told her parents about the problem. "I'm really sorry I forgot to take the book back," she said. "I... I would have told you before, but I thought I'd first try to save enough money to pay the fine." She looked down at her hands. "I just don't know when I'll ever have enough money though, and the fine just gets bigger and bigger. What should I do?"

"Oh!" exclaimed her mother. "When I was at the library about a month ago, the librarian asked me about that book. It was already so long overdue that it was cheaper to buy it than to pay the fine, so that's what I did." She smiled at Christie. "I must admit, I was a bit annoyed that you hadn't brought it back, but then I decided to surprise you by letting you keep it. I can hardly believe I forgot to tell you!"

"Whew!" Christie breathed a sigh of relief. "Thanks a lot, Mom. Just think – I've been feeling so guilty and worried, and all the time the book was paid for!"

"What happened to you is similar to what happens to lots of people," said Dad. "People often feel guilty for years about things they've done wrong. Just as you put off going back to the library, they wait to come to God, thinking that they'll first 'clean up' their lives. But they'll never be able to do that. They just keep on sinning. They don't realise that Jesus paid the full price for all their sins on the cross and all they have to do is accept Him and receive His gift."

Thought: Jesus paid it all!

Prayer: Thank you, Heavenly Father, for today's reminder that Jesus paid it all for me on the Cross. With this knowledge, may I learn to live a life that will please Him! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## TEACH ME THY WAY

“Mom, why do we have to go to church every Sunday?” Soon Tat asked at breakfast. “Lots of my friends don’t go.”

“Well, son,” Mother answered. “We go to be instructed from God’s Word, so please get ready. We’ll be leaving soon.” She sighed. This was not the first time Soon Tat had complained about going to church recently. When he was little, he loved to go to Sunday School and church, but as he grew older, sometimes he did not want to go.

That afternoon, the subject came up again. “My friends are playing basketball next Sunday morning,” said Soon Tat. “May I go?” “Soon Tat...” Dad answered this time. “...we’re going to church.” “I don’t see why we can’t just read the Bible for ourselves instead of having to sit in church all the time,” Soon Tat grumbled as he slowly started getting ready.

After dinner the next day, Soon Tat covered a table with newspapers. “I’m going to work on my new model car, it’s going to be some car when I get it put together! Just look at all those pieces. And aren’t these decals something!” he exclaimed. He began to work, but soon he looked up. “Can you help me with this, Dad?” he asked. “I can’t understand these instructions.”

Dad shrugged. “I don’t think you need me,” he said. “Just put the pieces together. It should turn out just fine.” “But, Dad!” Soon Tat was discouraged. “How do I know how the pieces go? I told you... I can’t understand the instructions!”

Dad got up and walked over to the table. “Soon Tat,” he said, “trying to put this model together without my help is a little like trying to live your Christian life without help from God’s servants. Lately you’ve not wanted to go to church, yet our pastor and Sunday School teachers help us understand God’s instructions on how we should live.”

Soon Tat thought about it. “I guess you’re right. There are lots of things in the Bible that I don’t understand by myself,” he admitted. “I’ll try to remember that. Now do you think you could help me with this model?” “Sure thing!” agreed Dad.

Thought: Do you enjoy going to church?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please help me appreciate that it is a privilege to be able to go to church. It is great to read the Bible for myself, and I should do that. But You have provided godly men and women in church and Sunday School who can help me understand the Word, so please help me to learn from them. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

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## CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE

Julie quickly ran to answer the telephone. It was her friend, Susie. "I'm sorry, Susie, but I can't go over," said Julie after listening for a few minutes. "My mother has work for me to do. She needs my help with the laundry." Julie hung up the phone and began helping Mom fold clothes.

"Why, Julie," Mother said in surprise, "I never mentioned needing help with the laundry. Why did you tell Susie that I needed you?" "Don't you want me to help you?" Julie asked.

"It's nice having your help," agreed Mother. "However, what you told Susie wasn't really true, was it?" "In a way it was true, even though you hadn't asked for my help," argued Julie. "If you needed me to help I would. Besides, a lot of people say things that aren't completely true, so is that so bad?"

Mother frowned. She pointed to a couple of pillow cases. "What colour are these?" she asked.

Puzzled, Julie looked at the pillowcases. "They're white, Mom," she replied promptly.

"Now get the pillowcase that's on the top shelf in the linen closet," said Mother. Julie looked puzzled but did as she was told. "What colour is that one?" asked Mother.

Julie looked at it. "It's white too," she said, "but when it's next to these others, they look yellowish-white."

"That's right, Julie." Mother nodded. "Until you had a really white pillowcase, you couldn't tell that the first one was actually old and yellow. It's the same with our lives. If we compare them with the lives of people around us, we may think we're doing alright. But when we compare ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, we see just how sinful we are. People may think it's alright to tell what they call 'little white lies,' but God says, 'Thou shalt not lie.' Jesus, the Son of God, never lied or sinned in any way. He left a perfect example for us to follow. Learn to use the Lord Jesus as your example instead of watching how others live."

Thought: Do you try to live like Jesus?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me not to compare my life with anyone else. Instead, let me compare it with the life of Jesus only, for He is the perfect pattern after which to shape my life. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## BIBLE MEMORISATION

"I can't get my new locker open." Ann frowned at the notebook in her hand. "Here, take this notebook and read the instructions to me, okay, Tanya?"

"Sure," agreed Tanya. She read the instructions slowly. "You go right to 3, left two rounds to 8, and right to 4." "All right!" exclaimed Ann as the door opened. "Thanks." "You'd better memorise that combination," suggested Tanya.

At the breakfast table, the next morning, Ann's brother, Joel, turned to Mom. "I'm ready to recite my Bible verse for today," he said cheerfully. The verse had been assigned the night before, and each family member was expected to learn it. "It's Colossians 3:16," continued Joel. "It says, Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." He grinned at his sister as he repeated the verse. He knew she hated memorising. "Your turn, Ann."

"I don't know it yet. I'll learn it tonight." Ann glared at her brother, then quickly changed the subject. "We have new combination lockers at school."

"What's your combination?" asked Mom.

"I don't remember, but I put it in my notebook." Ann reached for a piece of toast. "All I have to do is..." Her mouth dropped open. "All I have to do..." she repeated slowly, "is look in my notebook." She shoved back her chair and stood up. "And my notebook is in my locker!" she wailed. "What am I going to do? Oh, why didn't I memorise it like Tanya said? Hey, maybe she remembers it." Ann dashed for the phone. A few minutes later she returned smiling. "Tanya knew it. I've written it down now, and I'll memorise it on the way to school."

"Good," said Mom. "But right now, how about learning Colossians 3:16? It's not a good idea to delay memorising important things, right?"

Thought: Do you complain about memorising Bible verses?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may Thou help me to memorise Thy Word and to obey what it says. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



## GOD LOVES LITTLE CHILDREN

Maggie and her younger sister, Rachel, looked curiously at Dad as he cleared his throat. “Your mother and I have a surprise for you,” he told them. Maggie hoped this meant a new wide-screen television, while Rachel envisioned a trip to Disneyland.

Mom clasped Dad’s hand. “We’re going to have a baby,” she said smiling. “Really?” six-year-old Rachel jumped up and down excitedly. “You’ve got to be kidding!” wailed Maggie.

Mom and Dad were surprised by her response. “We thought you’d be happy,” said Mom. “You enjoy the babies in the families of our friends.” “That’s different!” exclaimed Maggie. “They’re not around all the time to get into my stuff. Will I have to change diapers? And baby-sit all the time? Everything will be different with a baby around!”

“That’s true,” said Mom, “but I’m sure we all have plenty of love to share.” Princess, one of the family’s two cats, jumped up into Maggie’s lap and purred happily as the girl stroked her fur. Rodney, the older cat, lay napping nearby, curled into a ball. Looking at his daughter and the kitten, Dad smiled. “Do you remember when Princess became our pet?” he asked. “And do you remember how Rodney acted when we brought Princess into the house?”

“Well... sure,” said Maggie slowly. “Rodney didn’t like it much at first because she invaded his territory, but before long they became good friends.” Maggie hesitated as she understood her father’s meaning. “So you think I’ll like having a new brother or sister once the baby gets here?” she asked.

Mom and Dad nodded. “You’ll have several months to get used to the idea,” said Dad. “We’ll ask God to help us all look forward to the birth with joy.”

“Well, okay,” agreed Maggie doubtfully. “What will we name it? I hope it’s a boy.” She grinned a little when she noticed her parents’ smiles. “I guess I’m getting a little used to the idea already,” she admitted.

Thought: Does someone need your love- a new baby sibling or new friend?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for Your love for little children. Help me to love them too, whether my baby sister or brother, or someone else. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

**SUBMIT TO GOD; RESIST THE DEVIL**

“Joel, will you please help me with this computer?” called Mom, so Joel went to see what she needed. “I’ve typed my document, but I can’t get it to print,” Mom told him. Joel grinned and tapped a few buttons. Soon the printer was whirring away. “Thank you!” exclaimed Mom. “You’re a big help.”

Later that evening, Joel came home from playing ball with his friends. “Mom, can I talk to you?” he asked hesitantly. “Sure, Joel,” said Mom. “What is it?”

“Well, after the game, some of the kids wanted Tim and Alex and me to go with them and look at a bad website they had found,” replied Joel. “Tim and Alex said no, like it wasn’t a big deal to them. I said no too, Mom, but I really wanted to go. The other guys called us chickens and babies.” Joel cleared his throat. “It wasn’t that I wanted to see that stuff, but I don’t like having the kids make fun of me.” He sighed. “Why is it so easy for Tim and Alex to say no, but not for me?”

Mom gave Joel a hug. “I’m really proud that you didn’t go in spite of how you felt,” she said. “As for Tim and Alex, well, let’s be glad they didn’t seem to be bothered by peer pressure as much as you are. They probably have other temptations that are as hard for them to deal with as this is for you.” “So... something else might be a bigger deal to them than to me?” asked Joel.

“Perhaps.” Mom nodded. “Remember when you helped me with the computer? You knew which buttons to push to get it to print. Well, Satan knows which ‘buttons’ to push to tempt you, he knows your weaknesses. Just like you push different buttons on the computer to have it perform different functions, Satan pushes different ‘weakness-buttons’ to tempt different people.”

“That makes sense.” Joel nodded.

“God also knows our weaknesses,” added Mom. “Let’s trust Him to help all of us to continue following Him and resist temptation.”

Thought: Are there some situations or things that seem to tempt you more than they tempt other kids? Turn to God!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to submit to You, and at the same time, to resist the devil. If I do so, I will surely gain victory and not fall into sin. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

**FOR WE WALK BY FAITH NOT BY SIGHT**

Luke sneezed. He put down the book he was reading and reached for a tissue. A bad cold had kept him home from Sunday school. "How do you feel?" asked Mom, as she came in with a glass of juice.

Luke sneezed again and reached for another tissue. "I keep sneezing," he said. "But I got this cold from Dylan, and he feels okay now, so I guess I'll feel better in a day or two." He frowned. "Something else bothers me though."

Mom put the juice down and sat beside Luke. "Something I can help with?"

"Well, the other day, I asked Dylan to come to Sunday school with me," said Luke. "Dylan says he doesn't believe in things he can't see. He asked how I know there's such a place as heaven, or even that there's a God, since I can't see them. I told him I just know... and I do, but... how do I know, Mom?"

Mom thought for a moment. "You said Dylan had a cold last week, right?" Luke nodded. "He even missed school for one day," he said. "I guess Dylan has read about germs that cause colds and diseases," said Mom. "You can ask if he's ever seen those germs." Luke grinned. "Good idea," he said. "I'm sure he believes they're what made him sick."

Mom nodded. "There are germs around us all the time. Just because we can't see them doesn't mean they aren't there. Whenever we get sick, we see evidence that they exist. It's the same with God. We don't see Him, but we see evidence of His existence in the world around us and in the witness of His Spirit in our hearts. God describes heaven in the Bible. It's a world we can't see, but that doesn't mean it's not there. We believe by faith that heaven exists."

"I'll tell that to Dylan, and I'll ask him again to come to Sunday School with me," said Luke. "Maybe he'll want to learn more about other things he can't see. And someday maybe he'll even see heaven." Luke grinned. "I know I will," he added.

Thought: Do you realise you believe in lots of things you cannot see? Sound waves, the wind, electricity, germs...

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give me the faith to believe the things You wrote in the Bible. I know many around me may not believe, and laugh at me for believing. Teach me to trust You, and Your Word. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## THE MOST EXCITING BOOK!

Bryce slammed his book shut. "This is the most boring book I have ever read!" he declared. "I like books that have lots of action."

"You should read this," said Mom. She held up a Bible. Bryce frowned. "To tell the truth, I think it's boring too," he muttered.

"Try reading the book of Acts," suggested Mom. "The story of the early church is exciting. It begins with someone ascending to heaven."

Bryce sat up. "Oh, Mom, you're kidding." "No, I'm not," Mom replied. "Read the first chapter of Acts for yourself." She handed him the Bible. Bryce took the book and began reading. "Oh," he said after a few minutes, "you're talking about Jesus going up into heaven."

Mom chuckled. "Right," she said, "and then there's the chapter about the man whose shadow was so powerful that people came from miles around to see it and have it fall on them."

Bryce frowned. "Are you talking about Jesus again?" he asked. Mom shook her head. "Nope," she said. "Check the fourth or fifth chapter of Acts." Again all was silent, except for the rustling of pages. Then Bryce looked up. "I remember hearing this in Sunday School! Tell me another one."

Mom thought for a moment. "Once there was an exciting jailbreak," she said. "It seems that a prisoner had contacts on the outside. The outsider apparently had a strange effect on the guards and right under their noses, he led the prisoner out of the prison gates."

"Okay, where's that one found?" asked Bryce.

"I don't remember exactly. Somewhere in Acts. You find it," Mom answered with a smile. "Bryce," she added, "as interesting as the book of Acts is, don't you think it would be worth your time to read all of it?"

Thought: Do you keep your daily Quiet Time and read your Bible?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, remind me that as I read these devotions, I must read the scripture verse as well for that is the most important part, as it is Your Word! Teach me to persevere in doing my daily Quiet Time. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## EVERY WORD OF GOD IS PURE

Rick was frustrated. No matter how hard he tried, he just couldn't get his math problem worked out. He slammed his book shut with a bang. Dad looked up from the newspaper. "What's the problem, Rick?" he asked. "This stupid math book is the problem," fumed Rick. "It has to be wrong! I don't care what the book says, the figures don't add up like they're supposed to. This thing won't come out right no matter what I do!"

Dad put aside the paper. "Let me take a look at it," he said. "Maybe we can solve the problem together." Taking Rick's book and paper, Dad compared Rick's work with the book's instructions and the examples in the text. "I see what happened," he said, pointing to the place where Rick had made a mistake. "What are you supposed to do here?"

Rick looked at the page. "Oh! Add!" he exclaimed. "But I subtracted." Rick re-worked the problem. "How come I didn't notice that?" "Maybe you didn't study your figures carefully because you were so sure the book was wrong," Dad replied. "The problem wasn't the book, it was you."

"I heard that," said Mom, coming into the room. "Mrs. Lee had that problem too. I was talking with her today, and she wasn't sure she could believe the Bible because in one place it says Jesus fed 5,000 people and in another place it says 4,000. She was sure the Bible was in error until I showed her that those were two separate events."

"There you have it, Rick," said Dad. "Someone else assumed the Book was wrong because she hadn't studied it carefully."

"Well, I may not know or understand all of the Bible, but I know it's never wrong," said Rick.

"Good," said Dad. "That's even more important than knowing that your math book is right. Now, how about studying both of those books a little more carefully?"

You do not need to understand everything to believe it is all true. Ask God to give you wisdom as you read it. Look up unfamiliar words in a dictionary. The more you read God's Word, trusting Him to teach you, the more you will understand it.

Thought: Do you treasure God's Word?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me never to make excuses for not reading Your Word or to tell myself I might as well skip it because I do not understand all of it. Instead, help me to treasure it. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## WITNESSING FOR CHRIST

This month we shall explore the riches of God's Word in the book of Acts. This book bridges the time Christ was on earth to the writings of the Apostles (disciples of Jesus). Have you ever wondered if the church today is the same as that in the past? By reading the book of Acts, we shall find out more about the church that existed some 2000 years ago. But what is more important to know is that God is the one who builds the church by the power of the Holy Spirit. Another key person to be aware of is God's fiercest enemy - Satan. We will also learn of his tricks and tactics. Needless to say, there are some prominent heroes of faith with whom we will get acquainted too!

I have a challenge for the older readers -read through the whole of chapter one and you'll get a better flavour of the context.

Chapter 1 describes the first church with just about 120 members, among whom, some are well known to us – the 11 disciples (Judas Iscariot, the traitor who betrayed Jesus, was already dead). Is the number of 120 members a large one? No! In terms of numbers, the first church would look like the number of children who attend our church's Junior Worship singspiration.

Today's reading is a command by our Lord Jesus to the disciples to witness. The witnessing of the early believers would be in vain without the Holy Spirit. Christ had commanded them to wait for the promise of the Father, and for the coming of the Holy Spirit. What can the Holy Spirit do for them? He would come upon them and empower them as they share the Gospel in Jerusalem and Judea first, and bring it to Samaria, and then finally, to other parts of the world.

What does "Witnessing for Christ" mean? It is to introduce Jesus to the people you know. It is to tell them Jesus is your Saviour, and that He died for your sins and rose again, and if your friends or relatives confess their sins and accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour, He too can bless them with eternal life!

Thought: Will you also share the gospel with others?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to share the Gospel with others by the power of the Holy Spirit. I know it is not easy, but Heavenly Father, give me the courage and strength to do so. Please grant me the wisdom to know when is the best time to share the Gospel. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## DO YOU HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT?

The coming of the Holy Ghost was something that the disciples had never experienced. It happened on the Day of Pentecost and He enabled the disciples to speak in different languages to witness to many people who had gathered in Jerusalem for the feast of weeks.

The people came from different countries and heard the ‘wonderful works of God’ (Acts 2:11). Because of the amazing ability of the disciples to speak the different languages they were not taught in – many believed. Guess how many? 3000 souls were converted just in one day! This was one of many things the Holy Spirit did – to enable a disciple to speak in a different language to witness for Christ.

Who does the Holy Spirit indwell? Only those who accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Remember yesterday’s sharing – “Witnessing for Christ”? After a person accepts Jesus, he or she will have the Holy Spirit indwelling in him or her. However, the Holy Spirit today does not bless believers with the gift of speaking in different languages because it is no longer needed.

What does the Holy Spirit do then? He will convict us of sin in our lives. If we commit sin, the Holy Spirit will be grieved – and will make us feel bad. What are some of these sins? It could be disobeying your parents, or having an unforgiving heart, or being a selfish child. The list is almost endless. But if you have really accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour, the Holy Spirit will dwell in you and will teach you gradually how to live a life that will please God.

How does the Holy Spirit communicate with us? Certainly not through dreams and visions. The Holy Spirit will communicate through His Word – and that is the Bible! That is why it is so important we read the Bible and pray everyday. The Holy Spirit will also give courage and wisdom. Though uneducated and unlearned, Christ’s disciples could preach Christ boldly. Examples were Peter and John who were mere fishermen. This was the work of the Holy Spirit.

It is so wonderful to have the Holy Spirit. We would never be alone, for the Holy Spirit would be with us all the way, even when no one else is with us, even when your parents are not around to guide and guard you.

Thought: Do you have the Holy Spirit in you?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for today’s lesson. Help me to remember what the Holy Spirit can do for me and that I must lean on Him. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

**POWER TO SAVE**

Many of you may be familiar with this song:

*Peter and John went to pray, they met a lame man on the way  
He asked for alms and held out his palms, and this is what Peter did say  
“Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I you.  
In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, in Jesus’ name rise up and walk”  
The man went walking and leaping and praising God,  
Walking and leaping and praising God,  
“In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, In Jesus’ name rise up and walk”.*

The songwriter wrote this song based on the incident of the healing of the lame by John and Peter recorded in Acts 3. The apostles had the power to heal – a gift from God. Isn’t it amazing – to be able to heal without the many years of training as a doctor? Furthermore, the healing ability of the apostles was way above that of any doctor for they can heal any disease, and the sick would be healed immediately!

Whilst the power to heal is fantastic, God has a greater power - the power to save people from eternal hell!

The power to save is given in God’s Word. Peter preached a great sermon recorded in this chapter from verse 12 onwards calling Jewish men to repent and be saved. (The Gospel went to the Jews first – this was taught in the first reading of this month – remember?)

God saves. What does this mean? When you confess your sins and believe that Christ died on the cross to take away your sins, God will take away your sins and save you from eternal hell.

Will you make the decision to believe in Jesus Christ and be saved? That would be the most important decision you can make, ever!

Thought: Thank God for His gift of salvation.

Prayer: Thank You, Heavenly Father for saving me and taking away my sins. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.



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## CHRISTIANS ARE PERSECUTED

Shortly after Christ ascended to heaven, the strongest enemy of the Gospel started to attack. Satan masterminded the first persecution by making use of the Sadducees. They objected to the teaching of the resurrection of Christ. They were supposed to be religious teachers of the Jews, yet they themselves could not discern that Jesus was the Son of God. When they knew that Peter and John were preaching the Gospel of Jesus, they were very angry and had both of them locked up in a jail overnight.

More persecution awaited the apostles. After the one-night imprisonment, they had to face the Sanhedrin (a group of supposedly wise men who decide on matters as would a judge in today's court of law) who would decide what to do to them. Would they lose their lives? Would their families be persecuted too? Would they be tortured? Praise be to God that none of these happened. They were spared but were warned against preaching about Christ.

Has anyone opposed you before for your faith? Perhaps parents disallowed you from going to church or bible study class. Maybe your grandmother had wanted you to go to the temple with her. Or have you lost some friends because you shared Christ with them or you gave them tracts. Can you think of some obstacles you have experienced?

Why do people persecute Christians?

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(John 15:20-21)

Thought: Read Acts 4:4. God did an amazing thing. What was it?

Write the answer here. \_\_\_\_\_

Prayer: Heavenly Father, when people go against me due to my faith in You, please help me, and give me strength so I'll not waver in my faith. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## A CHRISTIAN PRAYS

Yesterday we learnt that Peter and John were persecuted. Today's text records they returned to the church. When the church members heard how the apostles were delivered from their persecutors, what do you think they did first? Turn to the Lord. The first thing that the church did was to pray. When a church is in trouble or has to overcome a problem, it must pray. The early church did just that.

What is prayer? Prayer is simply a conversation with the Lord. However, God is not someone we contact by mobile phone or email! We communicate with Him through prayer. When we pray, we must not use words that are meaningless or repetitive. Some religions teach chanting: repeating a word or phrase over and over again. That is not what we should do when we pray. Instead we should use simple and more importantly, heartfelt words to talk to our Heavenly Father. We could also remember Bible verses or promises as we speak to Him. Prayer is knowing what God would like us to have or do, and then doing it.

A Christian must pray regularly. We think about God and how much He loves us. We tell Him about many things and we ask Him for some things. Will God hear us? Indeed, He will!

There is a hymn we often sing.

*Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer,  
That bids me from a world of care,  
And bids me at my Father's throne,  
Make all my wants and wishes known;*

*In seasons of distress and grief,  
My soul has often found relief,  
And oft escaped the tempter's name,  
By thy return, sweet hour of prayer.*

Thought: How often do you talk to God? Why?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that I can pray any time to tell You about my problems. Teach me to pray and help me to remember how great and kind You are. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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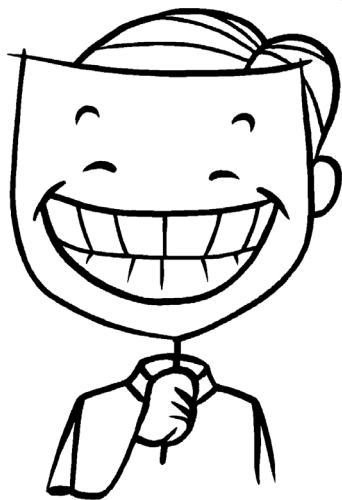
## LYING IS A SIN

Some of you may be familiar with the couple Ananias and Sapphira in this chapter. Do you think it is an honour to have one's name in the Bible? After all, millions of people will read about you! However, it is not an honour if one's name is listed in the bible as an example of what not to do! Ananias and Sapphira was one such couple - they both lied, and were punished for their sin with immediate death.

In an earlier devotional reading, the persecution of Peter and John came from outside the church (Chapter 4), but in today's reading, the attack of Satan was internal. Satan had influenced Ananias and Sapphira to lie. This is one of the wiles of Satan, causing Christians to sin.

The couple was dishonest and hypocritical – pretending to be godly, but their hearts were worldly. Their act undermined the testimony of the church and reflected badly on the church's teachings of upholding truth. Because the church then was just started, to show the seriousness of their sin, they were struck dead by the Lord!

Don't be like Ananias and Sapphira. Don't be hypocritical; don't tell lies. Nobody lamented for the lying pair. They left nothing behind but a bad name.



Thought: Are you hypocritical? Have you lied?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the reminder of Thy Word that lying is a sin. Help me always to bear a good testimony for You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## GOD HAS A HIGHER PURPOSE

Stephen was the first Christian martyr recorded in church history. What is a martyr? Someone who dies for his Christian faith. Chapter 6 describes the start of the ministry of Stephen and chapter 7 details the rest of his stand for Christ, ending with his death.

Wicked men who were against Stephen's preaching in the synagogue reported him to the elders and scribes and had him brought before the Jewish council. Before the Jewish council, these wicked men accused Stephen of blasphemy. Stephen, in his defence, spoke boldly before the Jewish council and condemned them for rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ. The crowd who listened to what Stephen had said became very angry. They took Stephen out of the city and stoned him to death.

Stephen was a fearless preacher of God's Word, yet God allowed him to suffer, even to be stoned to death! Why would God allow such things to happen to those who love Him so much? The Bible tells us in Philippians 1:29, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake". All believers are called to suffer for Jesus' sake. Some like Stephen are even called to die for Jesus' sake.

Dear children, you may not be called to be a martyr like Stephen, but you may be called to suffer for the Lord Jesus in your own way. Have you experienced being teased by your school friends for being a Christian? Did anyone make fun of you when you said "grace" before your meal? You need to trust in God and know that suffering for the Lord Jesus is part and parcel of Christian living. Our suffering for Jesus will bring glory to His Name (1 Peter 4:16).

Thought: All believers are called to suffer for Christ!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for sending the Lord Jesus to suffer and die on the cross for me. Help me to count it a privilege to suffer for Jesus. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## COURAGE OF CHRISTIANS

Chapter 8 is the turning point of the book of Acts. With this chapter, the focus changes to record the spread of Gospel to Samaria and to areas occupied by Gentiles.

After killing Stephen, the Jews persecuted the church. So deep was the hatred of the Jews for Christians that even Christian women were not spared from persecution. Many Christians in Jerusalem ran away to other regions of Judea and Samaria. Saul was the chief person leading the persecution of the church. It seemed that Satan had won – Stephen was killed, the church faced a fierce enemy in Saul and the church had scattered.

In times like these, what should Christians do? They turned to the Lord in prayer. That gave them courage and guess what they did? They went about proclaiming Christ instead of running to hide! Ordinary church members were used by God to do His work. They were inspired by Stephen and his courage. Despite persecution, a church continued to grow as a result of the zeal of its members in preaching the Gospel.

The church in Samaria started and grew because Philip, having left Judea, went to Samaria to preach the Gospel. Many were converted through the evangelization efforts of Philip (Acts 8:12).

Dear child, we must thank the Lord for these early evangelists. Following in the footsteps of Stephen and Philip were many other evangelists. If not for their stand and bravery, the Gospel may not have been preached as far and as fast. Let us be grateful to God for the many early Christians suffered for their faith so that you and your family have the Gospel.

Thought: Are you willing to suffer for Christ?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the faith and boldness of the early Christians who spread the Gospel so that many can be saved. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## A TRANSFORMED LIFE

Philip went to Samaria and witnessed to the people there. He also did many miracles to prove that he was sent by God. There was great joy in the people who had accepted Jesus as their Savior. When a person becomes a Christian, he becomes a joyful person. Are you a joyful Christian?

Among those who became a Christian was a sorcerer named Simon. His craft enchanted the people of Samaria and he was highly regarded by them, who thought he had the 'great power of God'. Did Simon have the power of God? We will find out...

Simon was baptised and followed Philip wherever he went. When the church in Jerusalem heard that many Samaritans were saved, they sent forth Peter and John to Samaria. The apostles laid hands on the Samaritans to fill them with the Holy Spirit. Simon was awed by the power of the apostles and wanted this power for himself. He offered the apostles money to buy the power from them. So was Simon's power of sorcery from God? Can God's power be bought by money? The answer is obviously "No!"

The important question to ask is 'Was Simon a Christian?' Obviously not. Simon was not a Christian. He did not show that he had a new life. This new life comes from the new self God produces in our lives. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says that a Christian is a new creature with a new life because the old life has passed away. Simon did not turn away from his old life; he wanted to use the power of the apostles to do more and greater magic to make more money.

A transformed life proves that a person is truly saved. The person's faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, will be shown in the fruit of good works. A person truly saved will forsake his old wicked ways and desire to live a holy life pleasing before the Lord.

Thought: Are you a true Christian?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for reminding me that going to church or "doing good things" does not save me. A real Christian must be different in his thinking and behaviour. I pray I'd be sure You have saved me, and have given me a new life. Help me to turn away from my old ways by reading Your Word and praying to You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## ARE YOU BRAND NEW?

Some of you may know about the dramatic conversion of Saul. Saul was going to Damascus to hunt down more believers but God intervened when he was on his way. What is interesting to note is three days earlier, Saul was doing the work of Satan; and after the conversion, he was doing the work of God. Before, he was consumed with passion and desire to crush Christianity and to kill Christians; now he was filled with the love of God to preach Christ and to save sinners. What a transformation! Saul seemed as if he was beyond hope to be saved but God stepped in. Nothing is impossible with God!

Saul went 3 days without sight. It must have been a scary and humbling experience for him. For all the evil things he did against Christians, he deserved death. But God spared him. Instead, God showed him such amazing grace.

What about you and me?

Although we may not have persecuted Christians, we are still sinners, full of sin. Like Saul, we need the forgiveness of the Lord.

If you have accepted the Lord, you would have received the forgiveness of the Lord and are now a child of God. However, are you a changed person? Do your parents see that you have become a kinder person? Are you more willing to share things precious to you with siblings, or friends?



Thought: Are you changed? Are you brand new?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am saved to serve and to be a witness for You. Help me to be helpful and serve others at home, in school and wherever there is opportunity to serve. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

## THE GOSPEL IS FOR ALL

Years ago, some older Asians had the wrong perception that Christianity was a religion of the west. Particularly because the Gospel was brought to the East by Western missionaries, this idea was cemented. Is that kind of thinking right?

This is not true! The Gospel is for everyone regardless of race, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God!

However, Jews in those days were brought up having prejudices or biased views towards the Gentiles (non-Jews) and could never imagine that Gentiles could be saved. God was going to change their wrong thinking. Acts chapter 10 reveals the sovereignty of God and how He had a plan to save Gentiles.

God in His infinite wisdom separately prepared two persons, Cornelius and Peter and the result was the miraculous conversion of Cornelius. Cornelius was a Roman centurion, a Gentile. He was described as devout, God-fearing, giving alms to the poor and always praying to God but did his deeds make him a Christian? No, works could not save him. Only the Gospel of Jesus Christ can save and God was about to do it through the intervention of an angel, who spoke to him to look for Peter.

Whilst God was working on Cornelius, He separately revealed to Peter a vision: to show Peter that Jews should not discriminate against Gentiles, and that if Gentiles repent of their sins, they can also obtain salvation. God then brought these 2 men together: Peter preached Christ; Cornelius believed and salvation, hope and peace were his. Praise be to God! The Gospel had gone to Gentiles and this event was the key to opening the Gospel door to the whole world.

Dear child, because the believing Jews had dropped their prejudices against Gentiles and reached out to Gentiles all over the world, we have the gospel today. Isn't God great? Hope you have understood the significance of the conversion of Cornelius by Peter. Hurray, Cornelius was saved! The gospel is for all.

Thought: Put aside prejudices. The Gospel is for all.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that the gospel is for all. Your grace is for all. Thank You for saving us by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



**CHRISTIANS!**

Where did the word “Christian” first appear in the Bible? Today’s text has the answer.

The Bible in Acts 11:25-26 tells us, *“Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.”* Believers in the Lord Jesus were first called Christians at the church in Antioch. The church in Antioch was a good and healthy church. Although a young church, it was growing for many heard and believed the word and turned unto the Lord and joined the church. But why are they called Christians? The word “Christian” simply means “follower of Christ”.

Now that we know what is the meaning of the word “Christian”, we need to understand what it means to be a follower of Christ. Remember that when we became believers we accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. We accepted Jesus as our Saviour by putting our faith in Him and His work which includes His death on the cross as payment for our sins and His resurrection on the third day. We accept Him as Lord when we obey whatever He says. A true Christian will have his life transformed and he will live his life in obedience to God bringing glory to His name.

Sadly, there are many who call themselves Christians today. Some may even serve and seem to do a lot of things for God. Yet they may not have truly accepted the Lord Jesus Christ or obeyed His Word.

Thought: Are you a true Christian?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for today’s lesson. Thank You for saving me and help me to bear a good testimony for You as a Christian. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

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## PRAYING BUT DOUBTING

Satan can use political powers or kings or government to persecute God's people. One method to attack a church is to do something to the ministers and leaders. In chapter 12, King Herod killed Apostle James and captured Apostle Peter. They were both leaders of the Jerusalem church. It was a dangerous moment for the church. Did the church collapse? Did the members hide for fear of their lives or torture? Did they renounce their faith? Not at all!

The church prayed! The response was one of trusting God and turning to Him for help. Their prayer was full of perseverance and lasted for seven days. Can you imagine that kind of prayer marathon! They needed Peter to do the work of God in Jerusalem.

We know from the Bible that Peter eventually escaped from prison in the most miraculous way! Interestingly, when Peter came to the house where the believers were praying, a young girl opened the door and announced that the apostle was at the door. But, those inside were reluctant to believe that God had answered their prayers. Although they prayed, they doubted. They were not super Christians. But God still answered their prayers.

Do you doubt when you pray?

Another James in his epistle wrote against doubting in prayer. Mind you, this James was not the one that was killed by Herod. He was the brother of Jesus who also wrote the book of James. Turn to James 1:6-8, and fill in the blanks:

But let him ask in \_\_\_\_\_, nothing \_\_\_\_\_.

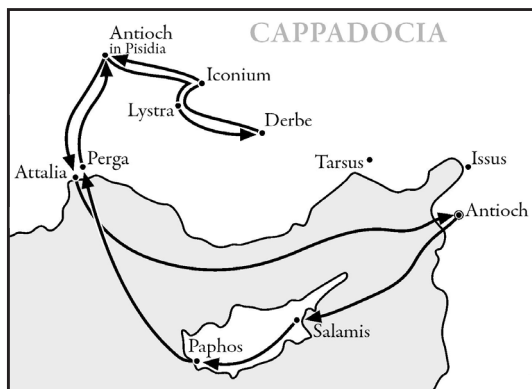
For he that wavereth is like a wave of the \_\_\_\_\_ driven with the \_\_\_\_\_ and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall \_\_\_\_\_ any thing of the \_\_\_\_\_.

A double minded man is \_\_\_\_\_ in all his ways.

Thought: Don't doubt God when praying.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for hearing all our prayers. Teach me to pray in faith believing that You are able to accomplish anything if it is according to Your will. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

## GIVING UP



It was time to extend the Gospel beyond Syria by sending missionaries out. The church in Antioch of Syria worshipped and prayed and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Barnabas and Paul were called to this task. Taking along with them John Mark, they set off on their course.

They brought the Gospel to places such as Cyprus, Pamphylia, and Pisidia. During the journey, the missionaries met with strong opposition. One setback was the breaking up of the team. John Mark left Paul and Barnabas when they were in Perga in Pamphylia (Acts 13:13). He could not cope with the rigors of missions work. From a 3-man team, it was reduced to a pair.

It must be very hard to be a missionary. What will you be when you grow up? A missionary? There is a story told of Meng who wanted to be a missionary. When he was only six years, he told his dad, "Daddy, I am going to be a missionary doctor when I grow up, and I am going to Tibet and help the people there know about the Lord Jesus Christ." "That's fine," his father said.

The boy grew up, studied in medical school and graduated! However, instead of going to Tibet, the Lord told him to go to Africa. He went to Africa and helped the people there with their medical and physical needs. However, more than that, he was preaching the Gospel to them! And when he visits or gives them medicine, he talks to them about the Lord. Many accepted Jesus as their Saviour because of him. This boy grew up, and did not give up.

Thought: May I not give up doing things for God!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please help me to do things for You according to Your will and not to give up! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD!

In Lystra (see map in yesterday's JRPG), after Paul had preached, he healed a cripple. The people at Lystra were impressed but for the wrong reasons. They were impressed by the miracle. Instead of praising God, they exalted Paul and Barnabas. They called the apostles "gods"! They believed Paul and Barnabas were perhaps Jupiter and Mercury, reincarnations of Roman gods. Why did they respond in this way? Simply because they did not know the true God.

Some people think that there is no God, and others think that there are many gods and some of these may even think that the sun and moon are gods, so they bow down and pray to the sun and moon. They ask the gods of the sun and moon to take care of them and help them.

Some people are like the Lycaonians thinking so-and-so is god because he has done something spectacular and worship him. Others make images of birds, beasts and creeping creatures and worship them as gods. The imaginations of these idol worshippers are twisted and they are spiritually lost.

God is the Creator of all things. Therefore He is angry with those who do not worship Him but worship idols. He is also angry with those who love anything more than Him.

Some of you may have friends who are atheists or idolaters. Others may have friends who believe in false and deceptive forms of Christianity which will not save them. Dear child, you need to witness to these friends and pray for their salvation.

Turn to Ephesians 4:5-6 and write the verses down.

\_\_\_\_\_ Lord, \_\_\_\_\_ faith, \_\_\_\_\_ baptism, \_\_\_\_\_ God  
and Father of \_\_\_\_\_ , who is above \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
and through \_\_\_\_\_ , and in you \_\_\_\_\_ .

Thought: There is only one God!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that You are the one and only God and there is none like You. Help me to love and to serve You only. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## ATTACK ON GOD'S WORD

Satan has many tactics and methods to destroy Christianity. In chapter 15 of Acts, he launched the first attack on the teachings of God. A group of Judaizers from Judea came to Antioch and taught the church there that Gentile Christians must be circumcised in order to be saved. Paul, together with Barnabas, argued with them. They all went to the Jerusalem church and debated. Apostle Peter spoke a great sermon defending that salvation is by faith alone. The Judaizers did not know the Word of God well and so misled others whereas Peter, Paul and Barnabas had the knowledge of God's Word.

Is baptism also required for salvation? Of course not! How would it be possible then for the thief who was crucified next to Jesus to go to heaven? That thief was not baptised. He simply believed in the Lord Jesus when he was on the cross and the Lord Jesus told him he would be in heaven that very day. Satan will continue to attack the Word of God. He knows that if the Bible is attacked, our faith in God's Word would be shaken.

One of the wonderful truths recorded in the Bible is that our sins are forgiven and that our lives will be changed by the power of God when we accept the Lord Jesus as our Saviour. Dear child, read your Bible daily to know more of God.

Here is a song for you to sing:

*Sing them over again to me, Wonderful words of life;*

*Let me more of their beauty see, Wonderful words of life.*

*Word of life and beauty, Teach me faith and duty;*

*Beautiful words, wonderful words, Wonderful words of life.*

Thought: May I treasure God's Word!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You so much for Your Word, the Bible. Thank You for telling us how we can have our sins forgiven. Please help me to read the Bible everyday and to obey it. This I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

## HOW CAN YOU BE SAVED?



For the 2<sup>nd</sup> journey, Paul and Silas first went to the Lycaonian churches and it was there they recruited Timothy to join their mission team. In Philippi, Paul, Silas and Timothy found a spot by the river where some Jewish women met for prayers. They

spoke with the women. Lydia, whose heart God opened, received the Gospel. She was saved and baptised together with her family!

While God saved a woman, Satan used a damsel—a young woman—who was demon-possessed to oppose the missionaries. After Paul removed her demonic power, her masters became very angry. Why? Because this poor damsel was used by the masters to earn money! So the masters put Paul and Silas into prison. They were also beaten! Despite being in jail, the servants of God neither complained nor murmured but sang praises. They had joy despite their circumstances. In a miraculous way, Paul and Silas were freed and in a dramatic way the jailor was saved and baptised together with his family. Lydia and the jailor's family formed the first church in Philippi.

How can we be saved? Today's text gives the answer. We are all born sinners and deserve punishment from God. But God loves us and has sent His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus to live a perfect life on this earth and to die on the Cross for our sins. All we have to do to be saved is to acknowledge that we are sinners, ask God for forgiveness of our sins, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thought: How can you be saved? Believe in Jesus as Lord and Saviour!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for sending the Lord Jesus to die on the Cross for my sins. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**BE A BEREAN CHRISTIAN!**

The apostle Paul and Silas visited Berea during their second missionary journey. There, Paul preached to the Jews in the synagogue. The Jews there had a good heart and true mind and were receptive to what Paul preached. Although they were open to hearing the gospel they checked what Paul had said against the Old Testament Scriptures. They found the gospel Paul preached to be consistent with the Old Testament Scriptures. As a consequence, many of them believed and were saved. Not only Jews but also many Gentiles became Christians in Berea. Their lives were also transformed. This was evident in the way they helped Paul to escape to Athens when the Jews from Thessalonica came to Berea to persecute Paul. These Jews came to Berea to incite the Berean people against Paul. The Berean Christians therefore showed evidence of their faith through their works.

What spiritual lessons can you learn from the Berean Christians? The Berean Christians diligently studied the Scriptures. Do you diligently study the Bible like the Bereans and examine what it says? The Bereans also regarded the Scriptures reverentially. Is the Bible your sole source of authority and truth? For example, if your teacher in school teaches you that man came about through evolution but you know from the Bible that God created man, who will you believe? The Berean Christians not only studied the Bible but obeyed what the Bible taught them. Do you also obey what the Bible teaches you?

Thought: God gave us His precious Word, the Bible.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for Your precious Word, the Bible. Help me not only to be a hearer but also doer of Thy Word. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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## JUDGMENT OF GOD

Athens was a great center of knowledge, art and culture in the time of Paul. Great minds and scholars could be found in this famous city. However, the Athenians were also steeped in idolatry for idols were found everywhere. For fear of missing out on any god, they even made an altar with a sign saying 'TO THE UNKNOWN GOD'.

When the apostle Paul came to Athens, he saw that the people were lost and without God. He was filled with pity for these lost souls and earnestly preached Christ. He urged them to acknowledge the one true and living God because God has appointed His resurrected Son to return to judge the world.

What happens when Christ returns? Those without Christ will be punished and it will be a frightening time for them; for the judgement they deserve will come upon them. For believers, it will be a glorious time, for blessings and rewards will be bestowed. At Christ's return, the Lord Jesus is going to take us with Him to heaven. What a day that will be! At last, we will see our Redeemer.

Would you like to see Jesus? Would you like to bow down and worship and thank the One who gave His life for you? Are you waiting for Jesus to return?

A song to sing:

*Every day with Jesus,  
Is sweeter than the day before,  
Every day with Jesus,  
I love Him more and more;  
Jesus saves and keeps me,  
And He's the One I'm waiting for;  
Every day with Jesus,  
Is sweeter than the day before*

Thought: Am I ready for the return of Jesus?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for sending the Lord Jesus Christ to die on the Cross for my sins. Thank You also for Your promise that Lord Jesus will return again. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



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## I AM NOT SO SINFUL...

From Athens, the city of knowledge, Paul travelled to Corinth—the city of great sins. Corinth was a place of many nationalities, a trading place and very wealthy. In the eyes of men, it was a great city but in God's eyes, it was an ungodly and sinful city. The apostle spent 18 months preaching the Gospel to the Corinthians and encouraging them to repent.

Are we like the Corinthians? Well, some of us may think our sins are less than theirs. We did not steal or physically hurt others. As long as we try our best, we think we can get to heaven. If we do whatever our parents tell us, and do what our teachers say, and are kind to other children, and try not to quarrel or fight or become angry, then God will take us to heaven. But that is not true.

No matter how hard we try, we will sin. It could be uttering a selfish word, or even thinking a selfish thought. We, like the Corinthians, have sinned. There is no such thing as different degrees of sin; a lesser sin or a greater sin. Sin is sin.

Further, when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, sin had entered into the world and every person is born in sin. That is why even babies will often disobey parents and can become angry and naughty.

Since we are all born sinners, we cannot go to heaven on our own merit. God is holy and just. He cannot let sin go unpunished. However, because of His great love for us, God sent Jesus to take the punishment that we deserve for our sins. Jesus died in our place.



Thought: Have you ever thought you're not sinful? We have all sinned and all of us need Jesus as our Lord and Saviour.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God. Thank you for sending the Lord Jesus to die on the Cross for my sins. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## GOD'S POWER & WORD GREATER THAN ANY MAGIC



After completing the 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey, Paul returned to Antioch. Not long after that, he began the 3<sup>rd</sup> trip.

In Ephesus, Paul was reputed for his healing power but some people thought that this could be imitated. The

7 sons of the chief priest tried to cast out a demon in Jesus' name but instead were overcome by it. Paul's power was real because it came from God and that moved the magicians of Ephesus to burn their magic books and follow Christ.

Magic is only man's doing. Not only is God's power greater than magic, God's Word is greater than magic too! What is your view of God's Word? Do you believe it is from God? Of course! Some prophecies in the Bible have already been fulfilled. For example, the messianic prophecies regarding the First Coming of Christ have already been fulfilled. Future prophecies such as Christ's Second Coming certainly come to pass.

God's Word is powerful indeed! But more than giving accurate prophecies, God's Word can change lives. Is your life changed by the power of God's Word?

Thought: Is your life changed by the power of God?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that the Bible is true and powerful. As I study and obey it each day, my life will be transformed. I will be more Christ-like. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## FALLING ASLEEP IN CHURCH?

Have you ever slept in church when listening to a message or in a JW class? Hopefully not. However, someone during the time of Paul did just that...

In Troas, Paul visited the church and preached on the Lord's Day – which means Sunday. It was a very long session of preaching. Paul was zealous and fiery in his preaching and the hearers were hungry for the Word of God. The meeting place was packed with people. Paul preached all day long and through the night. Then at midnight, a person named Eutychus, who was in the upper chamber, fell asleep, fell from the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, and died! Was Paul insulted that someone was sleeping when he was preaching? Of course, not. Instead, Paul used God's power to raise this man from the dead! The people heard the power of God's Word! They also saw the power of God, for Eutychus lived again!

These Christians were hungry for God's Word. Are you? If you are physically hungry, you would want to eat something. Likewise if you are hungry for God's Word, you would read the Bible! Do you read the Bible every day? I know it is tough and sometimes, we will forget. But dear child, press on and the Lord will reward you. You must desire to read the Bible to grow just like a newborn desiring milk for growth.

Write down 1 Peter 2:2.

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When you are hungry for God's Word, you will search the Scriptures. Pen down the words in John 5:39.

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Thought: When you read the Bible daily, you will not go 'hungry' spiritually.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. Please help me to be diligent in studying the Bible. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE

As we approach Christmas and remember the greatest gift of God in the person of Jesus Christ, let's consider the lesson of giving.

In Miletus, the apostle Paul met elders of the Ephesian church. This could be his last time seeing them and so he poured his heart out. He talked about his life. Two things he strived to do were to reach out to the unsaved and to teach believers. God had instructed Paul to go to Jerusalem. Even though he knew he would face problems there, he willingly submitted to God's will. He remained steadfast in trials.

In his farewell sermon, he warned the elders against false teachers, some entering the church from outside and some rising from within the church, that seek to lead members astray. The Word of God is the only safeguard against false and wrong teachings and the elders must teach only the Bible.

In all these, he only wanted to follow Jesus' example of giving and sacrificing. For Jesus had said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Paul had given his entire life to the Gospel work. A Christian gives of his time and effort to serve God because of his love for God. Love always shows itself in the action of giving. Jesus is our perfect example. Will you follow after Paul's example even as he follows after Christ?

Write Galatians 2:20.

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Thought: Have you given of yourself to serve God? How do you feel?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Christian living is a life of giving because Jesus gave Himself for us. Help me to give my time and effort to serve You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRISTIANS

We learnt from yesterday's devotion that giving of ourselves is an expression of God's love in us. Today, we will learn that love for Christians comes from the love of God inside us. After Paul left Miletus and later reached Tyre, he and his team stayed for 7 days with Christians. Christians shouldn't separate themselves from other Christians. Christians must love other Christians.

Many verses in the Bible teach us about fellowshiping with Christian brethren. Below is what taught in some of the verses.

- We must treasure fellowship with believers. (Psalms 133:1)
- We must gather to study God's Word, fellowship, observe the Lord's Supper and pray together. (Acts 2:42)
- We must only fellowship with like-minded Christians and separate from unbelievers. (2 Corinthians 6:14)
- We must meet regularly and edify one another. (Hebrews 10:24, 25)



Thought: What is the test of a true Christian?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for Christian love and fellowship. Help me to be part of the church to fellowship with other Christians. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD?

“What shall I do, Lord?” These words of Paul are what every Christian should ask the Lord. First, Jesus must be the Lord of our lives. We call Jesus “Lord” often, but do we mean what we say?

Next, we are to ask God what he wants us to do. Now God or Jesus does not talk to us the way Jesus did when He was on earth. He does not speak to us in an audible voice, but speaks to us through the written Word – the Bible!

Paul was transformed and that is why he could ask God what He wanted him to do. May we follow Paul! Here is a snapshot of Paul’s life:

- Before conversion - He was a student of Gamaliel who was the best teacher and scholar of Judaism at that time. Paul knew the Old Testament and law inside-out and practised Judaism zealously. Paul was also the chief persecutor of the church. He hated Christians.
- At conversion - On the way to Damascus, he met Christ and was saved.
- After conversion – God chose him to be a missionary to the Gentiles and he gave his life to this calling.

Using the above layout, can you write your testimony below?

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Thought: We are all saved to serve the Lord!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for saving me. Help me to serve Thee zealously. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

## THE LORD COMFORTS

Paul's 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey ended in Jerusalem and he reported back to the church leaders. We would have thought that he would have his well deserved rest. But it was not so. Instead in Jerusalem he faced more persecution. In Acts chapter 21, there was a rumour that Paul taught Jews to abandon the Law and Jewish rituals. When he was in the temple of Jerusalem preaching, the Jews stirred up the people to throw him out of the temple and he almost died. The Roman soldiers on duty were ordered by their commander to put Paul in jail. The commander thought Paul was the Egyptian who had caused a riot a few days ago. All these sufferings that Paul went through had a very great impact on him, draining him of his strength physically and emotionally.

Later on in Acts chapter 23, inside a prison, the good Lord appeared to him and comforted him. The Lord brought peace and assurance to the lonely and sad apostle. This was the second incident recorded in the Bible that Jesus appeared to Paul.

When was the first incident? \_\_\_\_\_ .

Our Heavenly Father cares for us just as He cared for Paul.

Are you down and discouraged? Have you lost something precious? Are you facing a problem now? Perhaps it is a loved one, a grandmother or father, who is not well. Maybe you were scolded unfairly by teachers in school. Someone accused you of something you did not do. Talk to the Lord – cast all your worries to God!

1 Peter 5:7 tells us, "*Cast all your care upon him; for he careth for you.*" That is our gracious God. He loves to comfort us, but we must first go to Him in prayer.

Thought: The Lord will comfort.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the reminder that You care. Sometimes I feel lonely and sad. Sometimes I am confused and weak. Help me Lord, especially during those times, to turn to You for comfort. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## ESCAPE FROM DEATH!

Today's text tells us of a plot to kill Paul.

One of Satan's plots to stop the spread of the gospel is to destroy God's messengers. Satan would not let Paul off, influencing at least 40 Jews to want to take the apostle's life. These killers conspired with the Sanhedrin to have Paul questioned before the council and while Paul was on the way to the hearing court, to ambush and kill him. Their plot was found out by Paul's nephew who informed the Roman chief captain. Believing the lad's story to be plausible, the chief captain sent Paul to Caesarea by night under heavy escort of many soldiers. In this way, Paul escaped death. God was sovereign. Paul was later kept in a castle in Caesarea.

The writer also had a close shave with death. When I was about ten years old, I was almost knocked down by a fast-moving vehicle. I was crossing the road at the traffic lights when it was my right of way. Suddenly out of nowhere, a vehicle zoomed past right in front of me! I could even feel the quick brush of the wind before me. A friend who was with me said I "turned white"! Was it "luck"? No, there is no "luck" in the life of a Christian. God was sovereign and kind to me.

Apostle Paul almost died, so did the writer. Are you afraid of death? Have you or a loved one been close to death because of a serious illness or a major operation? Or you have never thought about this since you are young. If you are a Christian, take heart for God says, "*Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints*" (Psalms 116:15). God's children will go to heaven and live with God after they die; this is the promise of God. If a person is not a Christian, he would be punished and when he dies, will suffer in hell separated from God.

Today is the day of salvation. Will you believe that Jesus, the Son of God came from heaven and suffered and died for our sins and three days later He rose from the dead? Believe in Jesus and you will be saved.

Thought: Escape from the lack of faith, believe in the Bible!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that You love children and I am precious to You. I believe in Jesus as my Saviour and will hold on to Your promise of heaven. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



## THE WAY OF THE CROSS

The plan to kill Paul was foiled because the chief captain sent him off to Caesarea. God knows best. It was safer for the apostle to be anywhere else but Jerusalem because the Jews hated Paul and his message. In Caesarea, the Roman governor Felix conducted a hearing. The Jewish leaders had engaged one of the best lawyers, Tertullus.

Tertullus said all the nice things about Felix to flatter him but in contrast, he changed his tone when accusing Paul. Paul was described as a virus that spread his wrong teachings everywhere. Paul caused division between Jews and Christians. Paul also had profaned the Temple by letting Gentiles entering it. The assembled Jews took side with Tertullus.

The apostle denied all the charges against him. Seizing the opportunity, he talked about the WAY of salvation which is by the cross. Paul also mentioned that what they call “heresy” was actually the right way to God. He was to point the people to the way to God. We are all sinners and have lost the hope of entering heaven to be with God. Sinners have no hope of heaven but are heading towards hell, the way of eternal death. But if we believe that Jesus died on the cross to pay for the punishment of our sins, the way to heaven will be opened to us. The cross is the only way that leads us to heaven.

Have you heard of this song?

*The way of the cross leads home,  
The way of the cross leads home  
It is sweet to know, as I onward go,  
The way of the cross leads home.*

Will you follow the cross which is the way to the heavenly home?

Thought: Jesus is the only way to Heaven!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the promise of heaven, our future home. Home on earth is not forever, home in heaven is. Help me believe in Jesus and look forward to heaven. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**RICHERS AND WISDOM ARE FOUND IN THE GOSPEL**

When God called Paul to be His apostle, Paul was to preach the Gospel to all, even to kings (Read Acts 9:15). In Acts chapter 25, Paul was already in Caesarea. It was here that he had the opportunities to reach out to high-ranking officials, such as Felix and Festus, and even to royalty. Visiting Caesarea were King Agrippa and his wife Bernice.

The king and his wife, the governor, chief captains and many great men of the city of Caesarea gathered to hear Paul. What a huge and powerful audience that must have been! Paul was not just any ordinary prisoner. He was a prisoner bound to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He was going to take this chance to preach Christ. The Gospel is for all – rich or poor, weak or powerful.

Paul spoke of his testimony and urged the audience to repent and turn to God, to live a godly life (Read Paul's sermon in Acts 26:1-23). After Paul finished preaching, Festus called him mad but the king whose response was entirely different, said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." The king was almost saved. Sadly, he did not take that final step of faith to accept Jesus. Why did King Agrippa not accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour? We do not know but one reason why many smart or powerful or wealthy people in the world do not accept Jesus is they feel there is no need for help in their lives.

They have everything they like. They are able to go where they want. They can eat whatever they desire. So why the need to believe in Jesus? Of course, such thinking is wrong. The riches and wisdom in the world cannot give the eternal salvation that only Christ can offer.

No matter how clever or wise kings may be, they will all die. What will not pass away? God's words will not pass away. God's words are true and will stand forever. Riches and wisdom are found in the Gospel. You are now a child of God. As a child of God you have God's spiritual blessings and also wisdom from His Word.

Thought: Riches and knowledge are found in Jesus.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for Your precious Word that is able to make me wise. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## GOD BUILDS HIS CHURCH

King Agrippa found no guilt in Paul and would have him released if Paul had not appealed to Caesar. Paul was on the way to see Caesar in Rome, according to God's plan. A Roman centurion called Julius was in charge of bringing Paul to Rome and they travelled on a ship. On board the ship were other passengers who were prisoners like Paul. They suffered a shipwreck and God protected all two hundred and seventy-six of them. God had promised safety to those who would stay with Paul and God kept His word. Finally all of them reached Rome.

What would happen to Paul in Rome? Persecution? Death? Far from it – by the grace of God, he enjoyed relative freedom instead. He was kept under house arrest in the palace. This means he had to stay in a part of the palace, but under very decent circumstances; certainly not like in a jail. He had freedom to preach the Gospel. In fact, Jews in Rome could come to hear Paul and the church grew in Rome! Is it not amazing – that through a very difficult time for Paul, God blesses the church?

Do you remember that at the beginning of this month, we learnt that God gave the command that His disciples must witness for Christ everywhere? By their obedience, the Gospel went to many places, to the Jews, Samaritans and the Gentiles. The Gospel went to Rome too. As a result, many churches sprung up. God is the One building His church.

Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- Are you happy in your church?
- Are you learning about God's goodness in your church?
- Does your church teach the Bible?
- Do you have fellowship with other Christians?
- Do you attend church camps or vacation bible camps?
- Do you pray with other Christians?

The answers to the above questions should be yes. God wants every of His children to belong to a church to grow in their faith in God's words and to have Christian love for one another. If you are not attending one, obey God and start to go to church.

Thought: May the Lord bless and protect my church.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for my church. Help me to grow spiritually and to love other Christians who attend my church. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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SERVE GOD

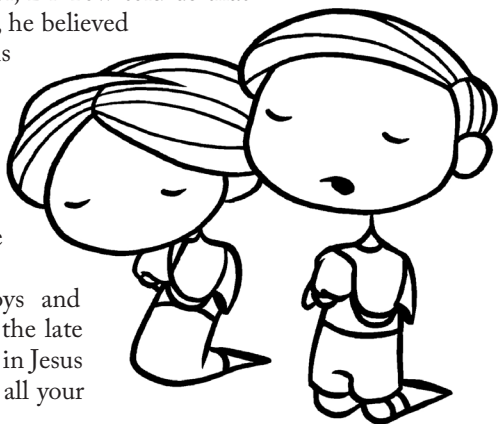
In the book of Acts, we learnt how the apostle Paul founded many churches. This included the church of Philippi. The Book of Philippians describes how Paul dedicated his life to God. He lived humbly and obedient to God's will. He was totally devoted to his calling as a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ. He preached the Gospel everywhere he went. He never stopped talking about the Messiah. His desire was that people hear the Gospel and would believe.

His life was full of sufferings. Even though he was physically assaulted, stoned, almost killed, imprisoned, stood trials, shipwrecked, suffered hunger and thirst, etc, did he give up? He never complained nor murmured. Instead, Paul said, *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."* (Philippians 4:13)

By the grace and sovereign will of God, this was one man who was greatly used by God to do God's work, to frustrate Satan, to turn the world upside-down and make history. His life, work and words are preserved in the Holy Scriptures. We remember Paul who is the greatest apostle of all. Will you follow Paul's footsteps to serve God?

Our late senior pastor, Dr Tow told us that when he was ten years old, he believed in Jesus and dedicated his life to serve God. The writer believes that the late Dr Tow already knew he wanted to serve God and promised to serve Him even though he was only a small boy.

I challenge you, boys and girls, that you may follow the late Dr Tow's footsteps to trust in Jesus and promise to serve God all your life. May God help you!



Thought: Will you trust in Jesus and serve Him all your life?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for helping me read through the Book of Acts. Thank You for the Gospel which is able to save sinners. Help me to love You and serve You all my life. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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