

“Leave that one alone! It’s mine!” yelled Zac.

“No it isn’t!” retorted Ashley. “I saw it first! Why don’t you go over there—you’re always in my way!”

Sitting on the porch swing, Mom sighed. “There are hundreds of fireflies out there,” she said to Dad, “but the kids want the same one. They fight so much lately—over everything.”

Out in the dark, Ashley shouted, “Stop it, Zac! Don’t put your firefly in my jar! Use your own jar.”

Dad stood up. “Ashley! Zac!” he called. “Come here.”

Still arguing, the children came through the darkness to the porch. “Do we have to come in already?” whined Ashley.

Zac lifted his jar. “I bet I got more than you,” he said.

“No way!” Ashley held up her jar. “I . . . oh no! What’s that firefly doing?”

Zac peered closely at Ashley’s jar. “It looks like . . .” he paused. “Look, Dad!” Ashley held the jar so her father could see. “It looks like that firefly is eating another one.”

Dad nodded. “Could be,” he said. “I’ve heard that fireflies do that.”

“Gross!” exclaimed Ashley. “That’s horrible.”

“Yuck! It sure is,” agreed Zac.

“That shouldn’t bother you,” replied Dad. “You kids eat away at each other all day long.”

“We *what?*” asked Ashley. “What do you mean?”

“You kids are constantly fighting and saying mean things to one another,” said Dad. “The Bible refers to that kind of behavior as biting and devouring—eating—one another. You’re destroying each other’s self-esteem instead of showing the love God wants to see.”

“Just today, Ashley, you were crying because Zac said mean things about you to his friends, and Zac was angry and hurt when you laughed at the birdhouse he was building,” Mom reminded them. “Tonight you’re fighting over fireflies.”

“S-s-sorry, Zac,” said Ashley, putting her jar down. “I’m getting rid of these.”

“Me, too,” mumbled Zac, taking the lid off his jar. “And I’m sorry, too.”

“I hope that’s just the beginning of a change around here,” said Mom. “Think about the fireflies each time you find yourself starting to say something mean.”

Don’t fight

Key Verse

If you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

Galatians 5:15

Do you show love to your brothers and sisters? That’s what God says you should do. It’s the opposite of “biting and devouring” one another. So when you’re tempted to fight or say something mean, stop! Think of something nice to say instead. Love others as God says you should.

October

2

I Wish It Were Mine

Read: Exodus 20:17; Luke 12:15,20-24

When Rick saw the brand new baseball glove Caleb brought to school, he turned away, biting his lip. *That's the one we saw at the sports expo!* he thought. *I'm saving up for it, too. But it will take me until next year, and he has it already! It isn't fair—Caleb's dad is rich, so he gets everything he wants, and I never do!*

As the boys played ball, Rick glanced enviously at the glove he couldn't have. And during class, his thoughts kept going back to it time and time again.

As Rick left school, his eyes widened as he passed the baseball diamond. There, close to the backstop, lay Caleb's new glove. Rick picked it up, glancing around to see if anyone was watching. *I'll bring it back in the morning*, he told himself, *but for tonight—just tonight—I'll pretend it's my very own.*

That evening, Rick had a great time playing catch with his brother. When Dad asked where he got the glove, Rick thought fast. "Oh . . . one of the guys loaned it to me for the evening," he said.

In the morning, Rick purposely forgot to take the glove to school. *I'll just keep it one more day*, he thought. So when Caleb asked if anyone had seen it, Rick didn't say anything.

Don't covet

Key Verse

Take heed and beware
of covetousness.

Luke 12:15

A week passed, and the glove still lay in Rick's room. He couldn't play with it because Dad might ask questions. And since it would be embarrassing to return it to Caleb now, Rick just shoved it to the back of his closet. That's where his mother found it when she was putting his clean clothes away. She picked it up and went to ask him about it.

"I brought it home to try it out. I just . . ." Rick hesitated. "I . . . I never meant to keep it."

"You *did* keep it, though, didn't you?" replied Mom. Rick nodded slowly. "The real trouble is with your heart," said Mom. "Deep in your heart, you wanted something that wasn't yours—you coveted it. Instead of asking God to forgive you and make you content, you continued to think about what you wanted. That led you to steal and to lie."

"I'm sorry, Mom. "I . . . I'll give the glove back to Caleb tomorrow and ask him to forgive me," Rick promised.

"All right," replied Mom, "but I think first you ought to ask God to forgive you for coveting, don't you?" Rick slowly nodded.

Does someone have something you really want? Do you keep longing for it and wishing it were yours? Careful! God says you must not covet it. Admire it, yes—but then turn your mind to other things. God has promised to give you everything you need in your life. Trust Him to do that, and be careful to keep from getting caught up in wanting the many things you see on TV or in stores.

Journal It!



When Rick, in today's story, saw that his classmate had a baseball glove just like the one he wanted, should he have said, "That's okay. I'll just use my old glove and forget about getting one like that"? Why, or why not? _____

That would have been a good thing for Rick to say if it's wrong to see something someone else has and simply wish you could have one like it. But that isn't what Jesus was saying in today's verse. He was talking about greed—a strong, *improper* desire for something. He was talking about a greedy longing to have what belongs to someone else.

Put an X in front of the following statements that indicate greed and covetousness.

- _____ Do you care if I get a backpack like your new one? I really like it!
- _____ Fido, Sydney's puppy, is so cute! I bet I can make him like me better than he likes Sydney.
- _____ I don't see why Chris got the solo for our concert! I hope he gets sick. Then I'll get to sing it.
- _____ I love Kylie's new hair style! Maybe Mom will let me get mine cut like that.
- _____ Wow! Carter has a new skateboard! I think I'll start saving money to buy one, too.

Did you put an X before them all? Or can you see that the speakers in the first one and the last two don't really sound jealous? They simply like what someone has, and they would enjoy having it, too.



Ask an adult: I wish I could have _____, like _____ has. Is it wrong of me to wish that? Why or why not? _____

Our Key Verse repeats the message in the last of the Ten Commandments found in Exodus 20. God does not want us to greedily long for anything that belongs to someone else. And why should we? *Things* are not so important. God, who cares for even the little birds, says we are far more valuable, and He promises to take care of us. So let's trust Him and look to Him for what we need. Let's be careful to not covet anything He has given somebody else.

**One of God's commandments is . . .
don't covet**

"We hate tests, Grandpa!" announced Sheila as she plunked down on the sofa. She and her brother Steve were visiting Mr. Wilson, their favorite neighbor, but all the kids called him simply "Grandpa." Sheila sighed.

"Between Steve and me, we already had five tests this week!" she complained.

Grandpa smiled. "I guess nobody likes tests," he agreed, "but we all have 'em."

"*You* don't!" protested Steve. "You're done with school."

Grandpa smiled. "Yes, but not all tests are in school," he said, "and not all lessons are learned from a book or on the computer. Life throws lots of tests our way."

"I don't get it," said Steve. "What kind of tests?"

"Well, I'd say any difficulty you face could be considered a test," suggested Grandpa. "The good news is that we can learn lessons from the tests we face."

"Maybe." Sheila got up. "We better get going. I have to study for another test!"

A few days later, the kids again talked with Grandpa Wilson. He immediately saw that they both looked very unhappy. "Problems?" he asked.

"Might as well tell you," mumbled Steve. "Mom and Dad are getting a divorce."

"I thought they loved us!" cried Sheila. "But they're splitting up. Why should I have to choose between my own mom and dad?"

"They do love you," Grandpa assured her. "And what makes you think you have to choose? You love them both, and you always will."

"Yes, but . . . but everything is all messed up!" Sheila said sadly.

"I know, and I'm so sorry," Grandpa replied.

"You're facing one of the hardest tests of your lives right now, but God will help you. He wants you to trust Him, even during this difficult time."

"Well, I hate tests!" declared Steve. "Why does this have to happen?"

"There's not always a quick answer to the questions on life's tests," replied Grandpa. "We only know that God allows them for a reason. When we look for the lessons we can learn and don't become bitter, God blesses and helps us grow in Him." Grandpa nodded. "To start, look for ways to show God's love to both your parents," he advised. "Ask God to help you pass this test. Will you do that?" Solemnly, both kids agreed.

Trust God when tested

Key Verse

The testing of your faith
produces patience.

James 1:3

Are you facing one of life's tests? A death or divorce in your family? Loss of Dad's job? Mom going to work and not being home as much as you'd like? Illness? Whatever it is, trust the Lord. Wait to see what He is working out. Learn to be patient, sweet, and kind throughout this difficult time. As you maintain a good attitude and trust in God, it will help those around you learn to pass their tests, too.

Two Birthdays

Read: John 1:12-13; 3:1-7

October

4

“Who’s that guy leading the singing?” whispered Charlie.

“That’s Mr. Carson,” Todd whispered back. “He’s in charge of our Sunday school department.” Charlie was visiting Todd’s Sunday school class for the first time, and everything was new to him.

“If you’ve had a birthday this past week, come on up here,” Mr. Carson invited. “We want to sing ‘Happy Birthday’ to you.”

Charlie felt Todd’s elbow in his ribs. “Hey, that’s you, Charlie!” whispered Todd. “Your birthday was on Thursday, so go to the front; you’ll get a gift.”

At first, Charlie shook his head, but when he saw that several other kids were going, he slipped out of his seat and headed up the aisle. Mr. Carson handed each of the birthday kids a bookmark and a small candy bar. Then everyone sang “Happy Birthday”—two verses! Charlie recognized the first verse, but he’d never heard the second one. He listened to the words: “Happy birthday to you. Only one will not do. Take God’s gift of salvation, and then you’ll have two.”

After class, Charlie had a question. “Why does that song talk about only two birthdays?” he asked Todd. “I just had my tenth!”

“Not really, Charlie,” Todd replied. “You’ve only had one *birthday* . . . the day you were born. The rest of the time you were just celebrating that day.”

“Okay, but then what was all that about having second birthday?” Charlie asked.

“When you were born on earth, you became a child of your mom and dad,” explained Todd as they started home. “But we all do bad things—we sin, and no sin is allowed in heaven. The Bible says the only way we can be forgiven and go to heaven is to be born again—born into God’s family. That happens when we’re sorry for our sin and trust Jesus as Savior. Then we have two birthdays.” Todd looked at his friend. “Get it?”

“Sort of, I guess, but not really,” Charlie replied. “I mean, I know I’m not always good, but I never thought about being born all over again. And I don’t really know a whole lot about Jesus. Can you tell me about Him and explain it all again?”

“Sure.” Todd was delighted. “If you still don’t get it, Dad will help you, too.”

“Okay,” agreed Charlie. He looked at Todd. “Well,” he added, “get started!”



You need two birthdays

Key Verse

I (Jesus) said to you,
“You must be born again.”

John 3:7

How many birthdays do you have? Have you been born again—born into the family of God by trusting the Lord Jesus as your Savior? Your first birthday—the day you were born on this earth—made you a part of your mom and dad’s family. God wants you to be a part of His family, too. As the song says, “Take God’s gift of salvation, and then you’ll have two”—two birthdays. Don’t wait; accept Jesus right now! (See the ABCs of Salvation at the end of this book.)

October

5

Invisible God

Read: Psalm 34:7-8; Matthew 18:10; Hebrews 13:5-6

Tommy was scared. *Where's Mommy?* he wondered, looking up and down the book aisle of the store. He had found colorful and exciting pictures in the shark books, and had knelt down to look at those on the bottom shelf. Tommy hadn't noticed his mother leaving the book aisle. "Mommy! Where are you?" he called, and his eyes slowly filled with tears when his mother didn't answer. Tommy nervously ran to the end of the aisle and searched both directions.

"Do you need help, little boy?" asked a friendly saleswoman. "I think I saw you with the lady over in the next aisle. Is she your mommy?" As the woman spoke, Tommy's mother came around the corner.

Tommy ran to her and grabbed her leg in a huge bear hug. "I didn't know where you were, and I was so scared!" Tommy's voice still shook.

"Oh, I'm sorry, honey. I should have told you where I was going. I knew you were looking at the shark books, and I could see you through the book shelves. Look!" She pointed, and Tommy turned and peered through the shelves and into the next aisle. "I was still watching you, and someone else was watching out for you, too," added Mom.

"Who?" asked Tommy, looking surprised.

"God and His angels," Mom explained. "God is always watching over you even though you can't see Him—just like I was watching you even though you didn't see me."

"That's good," said Tommy. "I knew you'd never leave me. I just forgot."

"God won't leave you, either," Mom assured him.

"I'll thank the lady for helping me find you,"

said Tommy, turning to look for the sales clerk. "Do you see her?"

"No, she must have gone to help someone else," answered Tommy's mom.

"Do you think she was an angel?" asked Tommy.

"I don't know about that." Mom smiled. "I suppose it's possible."

"I think she was," declared Tommy.

Mom hugged him tightly. "If you ever feel alone again, remember that God is with you," she reminded Tommy.

"I will," Tommy replied.

Though unseen, God is with you

Key Verse

Lo, I am with you always,
even to the end of the age.

Matthew 28:20

Have you ever gotten lost or felt scared or alone? Did you know that many verses in the Bible speak of angels watching over and helping people? Thank God for them. Even better, remember that He is always with you. Whenever you feel scared or nervous, breathe a quick prayer to God. Ask Him to help you know what to do, and trust Him even though you can't see Him.

Stepping Stones

Read: Exodus 31:18; Matthew 5:17-18

October

6

“Grandpa, can we make our stepping stones now?” begged Amanda, and Jessica echoed the request.

Grandpa agreed, so the girls took their stepping stone kits out to the patio. “We’ll spread out newspaper so we don’t make a mess,” said Grandpa. He set an old bucket on the paper and carefully dumped the cement powder into the bucket. The girls added water and took turns stirring. When the cement was ready, they poured it into several stepping stone molds. They jiggled the molds to get out the air bubbles, and then they went to play while the cement hardened a little.

After a while, Grandpa called to the girls. “It’s time to make impressions in the cement,” he told them.

“All right!” said Jessica. She ran to the patio and promptly plopped her hand into the middle of the soft cement, being careful not to press it down too deep.

“Oh, yuck,” cried Amanda. “That looks messy. Maybe I won’t do that.”

“When the cement hardens, my handprint will be set in stone, won’t it, Grandpa?” asked Jessica. “It will never change. My handprint will be there forever!”

Grandpa smiled. “It’ll wear down a bit as time goes by,” he said, “but it will last a long time.”

“I guess I’ll do it, too,” Amanda decided. She pressed her palm into the goopy cement. “Not bad,” she admitted, admiring her handprint. “Let’s draw pictures in the rest of the stones.”

“My friend Amy says God put His finger in cement once,” said Jessica. “That’s not true, is it?”

“It’s not exactly right,” replied Grandpa. “She was probably referring to the time when God gave the Commandments. The Bible says He gave Moses two tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.”

“Then what God wrote will never change, either,” declared Amanda. “The Bible will always be the same, just like our handprints in this cement.”

“It won’t change,” agreed Grandpa, “but not because God wrote some of it in stone. God’s Word is truth, and truth never changes.” He picked up the newspaper. “The stories and articles in this paper change every day,” he said, “and sometimes the information isn’t even right—but you can always depend on the Bible. It is true, and it will last forever!”

**You can always
trust God’s Word**

Key Verse

The word of the
Lord endures forever.

1 Peter 1:25

Have you ever put your hand in wet cement—or written in it? It’s fun to do that and then look at it several years later. You might ask, “Is that the best I could write?” Or, “Was my hand really that small?” Things change—your hand gets bigger, and your writing gets better. But God’s Word never changes. It’s perfect, and it will last forever.

Several days after their grandfather helped Amanda and Jessica make cement stepping stones, the girls were at their grandparents' home again. "I bet you'd like to paint your stepping stones today," Grandpa said with a smile. "Right?"

"Yes!" exclaimed both girls at the same time.

"Okay. Ask Grandma to help you get out the paint and brushes," said Grandpa, "and I'll put newspaper on the picnic table. You can do the painting out there." So after collecting all the materials, the girls went out to the patio. "Load up your brushes and create your masterpieces!" Grandpa said.

"I'm going to paint my name on one of my stones," said Amanda. "I'll make it pink." She dipped her paint brush into a cup of rosy, pink paint and began painting her name on a stepping stone.

"I like blue," said Jessica, and she brushed pale blue swirls onto the circles drawn in one of her stones. She stopped and frowned. "These will make a pretty path in Grandma's flower garden, but they're too pretty to step on," she said. "They'd get dirty."

"The dirt will wash off," said Amanda. "Besides, we'll need to walk on them so our feet won't get all muddy when it's wet."

"That's right, honey," agreed Grandma, who had joined them. She smiled and said, "You know, if you follow *God's* stepping stones through life, your lives won't get muddied in His garden, either."

"God has a garden?" asked Jessica.

"Grandpa and I like to think of the whole world as God's garden," explained Grandma.

"Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden," said Amanda. "I learned that in Sunday school." She hesitated. "Would sin be like mud in God's garden?"

Grandpa nodded. "Yes, but God sent Jesus to die for us, and He takes away our sin when we trust in Him. God also gave us the Bible. By following the commands in God's Word, we can keep our lives from being muddied with sin."

"You mean the Ten Commandments?" asked Jessica.

"Those, and all the other instructions God gives in His Word," replied Grandpa. "So think of God's commands as stepping stones, girls. Follow them. As it says in Psalm Nineteen, when you keep them, you will be rewarded."

Walk along God's paths

Key Verse

In keeping them (God's words)
there is great reward.

Psalm 19:11

What kind of stepping stones do you use? Have you made any to look pretty in your garden or to make a nice walkway? Even more important, have you thought of the commands in God's Word as stepping stones for you to follow as you go through life? Don't hesitate to obey them. As the Psalm writer points out in today's Scripture reading, they are perfect, right, pure, and more desirable than gold or food—and "in keeping them, there is great reward."

Journal It!



How many commands did God give? _____ Did you say ten? That's what many people might say because the word *command* makes them think of the Ten Commandments found in Exodus 20. They're important, but they're not the only commands God has given. Many more can be found in both the Old and New Testaments. Some were given to specific people for a particular time; others still apply to all of God's children. The list below names some of those in the New Testament.

Draw a line from each Scripture reference to the command found in that verse.

1 Thessalonians 5:17	give cheerfully
Luke 6:27	be kind to each other
Mark 12:31	confess sins
John 15:12	love your enemies
Ephesians 4:32	love your neighbor as yourself
Matthew 7:1	be hospitable
1 Peter 4:9	pray continually
John 1:9	don't judge others
2 Corinthians 9:7	love one another

These are just some of the things God says you should do. As you read your Bible each day, watch for more of them. It's good to know what they are, and it's very important to obey them. Sometimes it may seem hard to obey, but don't forget what God promises to those who walk in His path. Psalm 19:11 says that when you keep His Word, He gives _____



Ask an adult: What are some other commands given by God?

Our Key Verse tells us what to expect when we use God's stepping stones to keep us on His path. In our Scripture reading, what God says is referred to as the law, testimony, statutes, and commandment of the Lord. Knowing that He rewards those who follow His instructions encourages us to read His Word and obey it. Let's be sure to do that.

**It pays to . . .
walk along God's paths by obeying His Word**

“So, that’s what I’ve been wanting to tell you,” finished Joe. For a long time he’d been trying to find courage to witness to his friend. “Ever since I became a Christian at camp, I wanted to tell you, but I never knew how to bring it up.”

“Since it’s so important to you, it seems like you’d have told me—your best friend—about it sooner,” said Mike.

Joe blushed. “I should have,” he admitted.

Mike punched him in the arm. “Well, I’m glad you finally did. I’ve been wondering about God lately. Maybe you can answer some of my questions.”

“Sure!” Joe felt a surge of relief, and the boys talked more about Jesus and His love for everyone. Before the evening ended, Mike asked Jesus to be his Savior.

“I’m sorry I waited so long to tell you about Jesus,” Joe apologized, “but I sure am glad you’re a Christian now, Mike.”

“Me, too!” Mike grinned at his friend as he looked at his watch. “Well, I gotta go home. See you tomorrow, Joe.”

Witness now

Key Verse

How shall they believe in Him
of whom they have not heard?

Romans 10:14

The next morning, Joe was up early for breakfast. “Oh, yummy! Pancakes! But before I eat, I gotta see if the weather will be good for fishing today,” he said as he turned on the radio.

“Tragedy struck our town this morning,” came the voice of a news reporter. “Fire broke out at 1243 Vining Street. . . .”

“Oh, no!” gasped Joe. “That’s Mike’s address!”

“All the members of the family escaped,” the voice continued, “except twelve-year-old Michael Warner, who lost his life in the blaze.”

Joe broke down crying. “I can’t believe it!” he said between sobs. “Mike was here just last night, and now he’s d-dead!”

“I’m sorry, Joe . . . so sorry.” Dad put his arm around Joe’s shoulder.

“I wish I hadn’t waited so long to tell Mike about Jesus,” Joe said slowly, “but just think . . . if I hadn’t told him yesterday, he would have been lost forever and I would never see him again! I’m so glad he became a Christian last night.”

Dad nodded. “I am, too,” he said. “We’re so sad now, but some day there will be a wonderful reunion when you see him in heaven.”

Have you put off telling someone about Jesus? Does your best friend know about Him? Is everyone in your family saved? Do they know that Jesus loves them? Do you wonder what to say to them? Ask God to give you courage to speak up and use every opportunity to witness. Don’t wait. Your words may be someone’s last chance to hear the story of Jesus and His love.

Ryan leaned against the tree and stared at the dying embers inside the ring of rocks. “Don’t stay up too late,” Dad had said as he crawled into the tent to join Mom and Emily. Ryan shook his head. Any other night, he’d be in bed by now, but tonight was different. Mom and Dad knew he wanted a little time alone with his thoughts.

Ryan sat down on a log as he thought about his dog. King had been a wiggly little ball of black and white fur when Ryan got him for his tenth birthday. Since then, King had grown into a big dog and a faithful friend. Today King had shown his friendship in a dramatic way.

Shortly before supper, Ryan had gone to gather wood for the campfire, and King went with him. As Ryan stooped to pick up a large limb, he immediately heard the furious sound of a rattlesnake who’d been disturbed. When he turned, he saw that the snake was ready to strike. Suddenly a black and white blur passed between him and the snake. It was King. The rattler struck King in the face, but the dog fought bravely, biting and shaking the snake until it was dead. Then King collapsed, too.

Ryan’s heart ached over the memory of running back to camp carrying his unconscious pet—hoping someone could help. But there wasn’t anything anyone could do. King had given his life to save Ryan.

A tear ran down Ryan’s cheek. He longed to hold King, ruffle his fur, and thank him for saving his life. A Bible verse popped into his mind—“He laid down His life for us.” *That verse is talking about Jesus*, thought Ryan. *King gave his life to save me, and Jesus did, too.* Ryan sighed. *I can’t do anything for King now. Like Dad said, I can just remember the good times we had together. But there is something I can do to thank Jesus for dying in my place. I can live for Him each day and show His love to my friends and everyone I know.*

Ryan stood up and covered the cooling embers of the fire with dirt. Then he crawled into the tent and into his sleeping bag. He thanked God for King and also for the salvation Jesus provided. He asked God to help him not miss his pet too much and to be a faithful witness for Jesus. Then he fell asleep.

Live to serve Jesus

Key Verse

Present your bodies a living
sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God.
Romans 12:1

Do you know that Jesus loved you enough to die for you? (See the ABCs of Salvation at the end of this book.) Are you willing to give Him your life? If you’ve trusted Jesus as your Savior, live to serve Him. Think of things you can do to show your appreciation and love—things like talking with Him often, obeying parents, helping a neighbor, inviting a friend to church. Add some more things to the list—and then *do them!*

“Ouch!” grumbled Marissa one morning as she yanked the brush through her thick hair.

“You could cut your hair, you know, or wear braids at night,” said her older sister Shelby, who was propped up in bed with her devotional book and Bible.

“Well, right now I just want it to . . . untangle!” said Marissa, gritting her teeth as she pulled on the brush.

“Let me help,” offered Shelby. She took the brush and started working on the snarls. “You should have strong arms after doing this so much,” she joked as she attacked another section of hair. “Am I pulling too much?”

“No more than I do,” Marissa said.

After a few more minutes, Shelby put the brush on the dresser. “That should do it!” she said. “Now I’d better finish untangling my *head* before I have to get ready for school!” She picked up her Bible and devotional book again.

“What do you mean, untangle your head?” asked Marissa, stuffing books

into her book bag. “Your hair doesn’t get in knots like mine does.”

“My hair doesn’t get in knots, but my mind does,” said Shelby. “Sometimes I get really worried about things. Then I have trouble concentrating on my lessons or other things I have to do throughout the day.”

“So how do you get over it?” asked Marissa. “A brush works good on hair. What works on minds?”

“The Bible. I make sure I read some verses from it every day,” replied Shelby. “My thoughts seem to

get tangled up all by themselves—just like your hair does—but I have to purposely put God’s Word in my mind. I make myself think about what He says. Doing that helps me straighten out my thinking.”

“Maybe I should try that, too,” said Marissa, heaving her book bag to her shoulder, “but since my bus comes so early, doing it after school or just before bed would work better for me.” She looked around. “Where’s my sweater?”

“Over there,” said Shelby, pointing to the corner. “You’re right, sis,” she added. “You should try reading some Bible verses every day. Untangling thoughts can be even more important than untangling your hair.”

Do your thoughts get all mixed up sometimes? Do you worry about classes, friendships, and what will happen at home? Do you wonder if certain activities are okay or not? Are you unsure of what you ought to do? Things you hear about in the news, shows on TV, or what you read online can greatly influence your thinking. Be sure to take time to be influenced by God’s Word as well. You need it to keep your mind and life in order.

Get God’s Word into your mind

Key Verse

I will meditate on Your
statutes (the Bible).

Psalm 119:48

Remembered for What?

Read: 2 Timothy 4:11-16

October

11

“Can you believe that Joanna won the ‘Great American’ essay contest with a report about a *woman* who was an *author*?” Jared asked. “My report about Abraham Lincoln should have won! He was a lot greater than some writer.”

“What about mine on the first guy to walk on the moon?” asked Tom.

“Or mine on George Washington?” suggested Kendall. “After all, he’s called the ‘Father of Our Country.’ What’s greater than that?” He looked at his father. “If you had to write about a really great American, who would you pick, Dad?”

Kendall’s dad smiled at the group of boys lounging around in the living room. “I don’t really know who I’d pick,” he answered after thinking for a minute.

“So many people have worked together to make this country great. Some were scientists, some were explorers and pioneers, and some were politicians. It could even be that the person who contributed the most is someone we’ve never heard of.” He grinned. “So, Kendall, maybe next time you should write your essay about *me*! Not everyone makes the history books, you know.”

The boys laughed. “Do you think any of us will? Make the history books, I mean?” wondered Kendall.

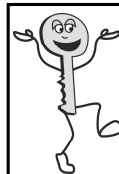
“I’m sure I won’t,” said Ian.

“Well, whether your name gets put into history books or not, you all *will* be remembered by someone for something,” Dad told the boys. “It’s up to you what it will be—whether it’s for good things or for not-so-good things that you’ve done.”

“What would you like to be remembered for, Mr. West?” Tom asked.

“Me? Well, I’d like to be remembered as someone who loved the Lord and did all he could to serve Him,” replied Dad. “Someone who shared God’s plan of salvation with others and served God, both through witnessing and through helping other people in practical ways.”

Jared got up and stretched. “Well, I gotta go home and mow the lawn and hit the books,” he said, “or I’ll be remembered for being lazy and failing all my classes.” As the other boys laughed, he added, “Tell you what—you can write about your dad now, Kendall, but I’ll work hard, and a hundred years from now, your great-grandkids can write a ‘Great American’ essay about *me*.”



**Do all you can
for Jesus**

Key Verse

Be an example . . . in word,
in conduct, in love, in spirit,
in faith, in purity.

1 Timothy 4:12

How will you be remembered by those who know you? As a kind person? An honest one? A hard worker? A Christian who tells others about Jesus? You will be remembered for something, and being remembered as a Christian who loved God and lived for Him is more important than any other fame you might achieve. Use the gifts God has given you to bring glory to Him and to lead others to faith in Jesus. Do all you can to serve Him.

October
12

Mending Needed

Read: Psalm 6:2-4,9

“We can’t afford it, honey. I’m so sorry.” Ellie’s mother turned so her daughter could not see her eyes fill with tears.

“But, Mom! Everyone I know is going to camp,” protested Ellie. “It’s not fair!” Her bottom lip quivered as she continued to help her mom fold towels.

“If there were a way I could send you, I would, but I just can’t do it right now,” Mom replied as she placed folded towels back into the basket.

“Why did Dad have to leave us?” cried Ellie. “I thought he loved me.”

“Oh, honey, he does love you!” Mom comforted Ellie. “We need to pray for him. He’s going through a difficult time right now. Jobs are scarce, and he feels like he’s not providing for our family the way he should.” Mom dumped unmatched socks on the table and began to put them in pairs.

“So that gives him a right to leave?” asked Ellie. “A lot of good that does us!” She wiped a tear with one of the socks. “This sock has a hole in it,” she added. “I’ll throw it away.” Rolling the sock into a ball, she headed for the wastebasket.

**Don’t give up;
turn to God**



Key Verse

He (God) heals the brokenhearted
and binds up their wounds.

Psalm 147:3

“Wait, honey,” said Mom. She took the sock and looked it over. “I can mend this.” As she set the sock aside, she added, “Dad has a . . . a hole in his life, Ellie. He just needs to find a way to mend it.”

Ellie shrugged. “I hear the doorbell,” she said. “It’s probably Megan wanting to talk about camp.”

When Ellie opened the door, she was surprised to see her father with a bouquet of daisies in his hand. “Daddy!” she cried, hugging him desperately.

He held her close. “I’m back, sweetheart, for as long as your mom says it’s okay,” he said softly.

Just then Mom stepped into the room, and Dad gave her the flowers and hugged her, too. “Are you all right?” she asked with a trembling voice.

Dad pulled a small Bible from his pocket. “I am now,” he said. “I’ve been reading this little book, and I’ve come to realize that instead of running from my problems, I need to let God take care of them.”

Ellie thought about the sock. “Mom mends socks, and God can mend your problem,” she said. Her thoughts turned to camp again, but it didn’t seem so important now. “I’m just so glad you’re back home,” she added.

“Me, too,” echoed Dad. “Me, too!”

Do you have problems that need mending? Do you feel like you might as well give up trying to do well in school, to get along with someone, or to make new friends? Don’t do that! Never give up on yourself or others. Turn to God. His power is great, and He can heal and mend whatever is broken. Be sure to pray each day for yourself and for those you love. Trust God to give help and comfort and to teach you lessons He wants you to learn you as you go through difficult times.

No Shortcuts

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:10; Colossians 3:23-25

October
13

“Do you think Grandpa expects us to get all A’s and B’s to get a prize?” Alyce asked her brother Phil. “He knows that’s what we did last year.” Grandpa Burns was coming for a visit, and he had promised to give Phil and Alyce a reward if they could show they had done their best in school that semester. “I wonder what he’ll give us,” added Alyce. “I hope I did well enough to get it.”

“No problem,” answered Phil on his way out the door. “I’ve got all A’s so far.”

“I know. How do you do it?” asked Alyce. “I hardly ever see you studying.”

Phil lowered his voice. “I just . . .” He paused. “I’m just smart,” he said.

“Do you copy from someone?” Alyce whispered. Phil didn’t answer. “You do, don’t you?” asked Alyce, enraged. “That’s cheating! I’m going to tell!”

“What is there to tell?” asked Phil. “You don’t *know* anything.” Alyce had to admit that was true, but she was still suspicious.

Grandpa arrived on the same day report cards came out. Both children proudly showed him their grades and several homework papers. To their surprise, he started to quiz them from the material on their papers. Alyce had very little trouble answering her questions. But Phil gave wrong answer after wrong answer on material for which he had gotten all A’s.

“I guess I just forgot most everything,” muttered Phil, his face red.

“Or maybe you took a shortcut to good grades by cheating,” said Grandpa. “Is that possible?”

“I . . . I . . .” Phil stuttered. He didn’t know what to say. “How did you know?” he blurted out. Then he glared at his sister. “Alyce told you!”

“You told me yourself by giving so many wrong answers to the questions I’ve been asking,” replied Grandpa. “I’m sorry, but I can’t give you a reward—there are no shortcuts to winning the reward I planned for you.”

When Dad came home that evening and heard what had happened, Phil was embarrassed and ashamed. Dad shook his head. “You thought you could just show Grandpa your grades without giving him an actual account of your work, but he required more,” said Dad. “It’s kind of like the lesson in our men’s Bible study last night. We were reminded that one day we’ll stand before God and give a report to Him. I hope you’ll remember that, and won’t be ashamed then.”

You must answer to God

Key Verse

Each of us shall give account
of himself to God.

Romans 14:12

Are you a Christian who will *not* be ashamed when you stand before God? Will He see kind, honest, and helpful things you’ve done? Or will you be embarrassed and have to confess that you failed to live for Him? You *will* have to answer to Him for the way you live your life. Live it in such a way that you’ll receive His reward and hear Him say, “Well done!”

“Wow!” Kurt exclaimed.

He and his friend Jesse were spending the weekend with Jesse’s Uncle Jake, who was a pilot for an emergency helicopter service, and Uncle Jake had promised to take the kids for a helicopter ride. “It has to be at a time when both me and my helicopter are off duty,” he had said with a grin.

“Wow!” repeated Kurt a few days later as he scrambled aboard the helicopter. “I never thought I’d get a chance to ride in one of these! Wow!”

Uncle Jake chuckled. “I always have such eager passengers,” he said. “Take my last one, for example. A couple of young guys were mountain climbing near here, and one of them fell over the edge of a cliff and landed on a ledge. He was trapped in an odd spot where no one could climb down to help him, so it was Jesse’s old Uncle Jake to the rescue. Now there was an eager passenger!”

“How did you get him out?” Kurt asked. “Was there room to land?”

“No,” replied Uncle Jake, “but this helicopter has a lot of special equipment, like that rescue basket you see over there.” He

Only Jesus can bring salvation

Key Verse

Whoever believes in Him (Jesus)
should not perish
but have eternal life.

John 3:15

pointed to a long wire mesh basket attached to a rope. “While I kept the helicopter over the spot, my partner lowered the basket to the man on the ledge. Since he wasn’t too badly hurt, he was able to get into the basket, and he was pulled up into the helicopter.” Uncle Jake chuckled. “That man was even more happy to be on board than you are.”

The boys laughed, too, as they examined the rescue basket. A minute later, Uncle Jake added thoughtfully, “You know, guys, we’re something

like that mountain climber. He was helpless to save himself, and we’re helpless sinners who aren’t able to save ourselves, either.”

“Yeah,” said Jesse. “That rescue basket was the only thing that could save him that day, and Jesus is the only one who can save us, right?”

“Exactly,” agreed Uncle Jake. “Only Jesus can save us from our sinful natures and bring us into the safety of His family.”

“So we should be even more thankful than that mountain climber was,” Kurt put in. “His life on earth was saved for a while, but Jesus saves us for all eternity.”

“That’s right,” agreed Uncle Jake, smiling broadly. “That certainly is right.”

Do you know that God provided the way for you to go to heaven? He gave His Son Jesus, who died on the cross and paid the penalty for your sin. Jesus is the only one who can rescue you from eternal death and give you eternal life. Trust in Him as Savior today. (See the ABCs of Salvation at the end of this book.) And be sure to thank Him for the great salvation He offers you.

“This is so cool!” exclaimed Jesse as his uncle flew the helicopter along a river. Uncle Jake, a pilot with an emergency helicopter service, was giving Jesse and his friend Kurt a special treat—a helicopter ride.

Kurt grinned. “Tell us about some of the rescues you’ve made,” he begged.

“Well,” said Uncle Jake, pointing toward the river, “see the white birch trees down there, just a little on this side of that waterfall?” The boys nodded.

“There are signs along the river, warning boaters not to go beyond those trees because there’s a strong current and a dangerous whirlpool in that part of the river. Boaters who get caught in it often end up going right over the falls.”

“And you’ve rescued some of them?” Kurt asked eagerly.

Uncle Jake nodded. “A few weeks ago, a fisherman was on the river, and he sat still and let his boat drift while he fished. He didn’t notice how fast he was drifting, and before he knew it, he’d gone beyond the trees and couldn’t get back.”

“Did you use the rescue basket to save him?” asked Jesse.

“We did,” said Uncle Jake. “My partner was with me, and he lowered the basket. The fisherman quickly climbed in, and he reached the safety of the helicopter just as his boat went over the falls.”

Jesse whistled. “Wow! That was close,” he said.

“Yes,” Uncle Jake replied. “He said he was just drifting along when he suddenly realized he had crossed the danger line.”

“So he didn’t even go past the line on purpose,” observed Kurt. “He just drifted on by.”

“That’s correct. Keep in mind, boys, that drifting can be dangerous,” Uncle Jake said. “You guys may be tempted to drift sometimes.”

“We’ll remember—but we don’t get out on rivers very often,” replied Jesse.

“I know, but it’s easy to drift in other ways,” said Uncle Jake. “It’s easy to drift along with the crowd in the current of worldly pleasures. Instead of just going along with what everybody else is doing, you need to think about what God says and what pleases Him.”

Thoughtfully, the boys nodded.

“Listen to God,” added Uncle Jake, “and obey what He says in order to keep from drifting away from Him.”

Don’t drift with the crowd

Key Verse

Do not be conformed
to this world.
Romans 12:2

Are you drifting along with the crowd? Have you thought that if everybody else is doing something, it must be okay? Do things you know are wrong sometimes seem not so bad now? If they do, ask Jesus to forgive you for going the easy way and drifting away from Him. Be faithful in studying His Word and obeying it. Each day, ask God to help you, protect you, and keep you close to Him.

October
16

One Turn at a Time

Read: Matthew 6:25-34

“Mrs. Melton sure is going like the dinner we’re taking to her,” Katie said, buckling her seat belt and peeking at the rolls under the bread cloth.

Mom smiled. “I think so, too. Her hands must be full with the new baby.”

Katie put both hands firmly on the warm bowl of rolls. “Mom,” she asked, “will I have a baby when I grow up? Or twins? Boys, or girls?”

“I don’t know, honey,” Mom replied. “Only God knows that.”

“But I want to know. I want Him to tell me now.” Katie stared glumly out the window as they approached a stop sign.

“Turn right at the next intersection,” instructed the voice from the GPS when they had gone a little farther, and Mom did as instructed.

“Didn’t we pass the library last time we drove to the Meltons?” Katie asked, twisting in her seat to look back at the intersection. “Is the GPS wrong?”

“No. It knows where it’s taking us,” Mom assured her. “The Meltons moved to a new house last month, remember?”

Trust God for life’s next step

Key Verse

Do not worry about tomorrow.

Matthew 6:34

“That’s right! I forgot,” said Katie, leaning back. “We were always getting lost before you had a GPS. It tells you each direction just when you need it.”

“I know,” Mom agreed with a laugh. “It’s a little like what God does,” she added. “He directs each turn in our lives—just one turn at a time.”

“But . . . I don’t *hear* Him giving directions,” said Katie. “Do you mean through the Bible?”

“Yes, often through the Bible,” Mom replied. “And sometimes He uses other things to point us in the right direction. Like . . . if we know a neighbor

is sick, we might take his mail to him. Or a phone call telling us someone is in the hospital might also tell us to pray for that person or to go visit him.”

“Turn left now,” the GPS voice broke in.

“When I’m driving, I don’t need to know all the future turns right now. All I need is the *next* turn,” said Mom. “We don’t need to know all the future turns in life, either. When we’re sensitive to God, He’ll reveal each next turn in His perfect time.”

Katie grinned as the car wheels crunched on a gravel driveway. “I think I know my next turn,” she said. “It will be taking these rolls in to Mrs. Melton!”

Do you wonder what kind of job you’ll have when you grow up? Where you’ll live? Who your friends will be? God knows every detail of your future, but you don’t have to know it all now. What direction does He have for you *today*? Is it to go to school or to help your dad wash the car? Is it to do your Bible lesson or to attend junior choir practice? Trust God to show the turns you should take, one by one—and be faithful to do what He shows you!

Journal It!



Do your parents have a GPS? Or do you know someone who does? GPS stands for Global Positioning System, and it's a device many people have in their cars. It's programmed to tell them what turns to make to get from one place to another.

Do you, like Katie in today's story, want to know what will happen in your life? What do you *think* you'd like to be some day? _____

_____ Where do you *think* you'd like to live? _____

Perhaps you've no idea, and that's fine. You're still young, and you may change your mind several times before you have to decide those things. But if you know Jesus, you don't have to "worry about tomorrow." He already knows your future, and He uses many ways to show you what "turn" you should take each day.

Do you think it's great that God shows people like pastors or missionaries—and even parents and other adults—what they should do? _____ Yes, that is great, but hey! They're not the only ones God will direct. Look up Proverbs 3:5-6. God will direct the paths of those who wholeheartedly _____ in the Lord. That includes kids.

What's one thing God recently directed you to do—one "turn" He directed you to take. (Read again the bottom of the previous page to help get an idea.) _____

How did He show you what you should do? _____

Instead of worrying about the future, will you trust Him to show you day by day what turns to take?



Ask an adult: What ways has God used to show you what your next turn in life should be? _____

What do you do if you ever begin to worry about what will happen next? _____

Our Key Verse is short, simple, and easy to memorize. Let's do that—let's memorize it and then let it remind us that we don't have to worry about the future. If we let Him, God will direct us each day. He knows all the "turns" we should take. So let's trust Him and follow His directions, one turn at a time, both right now and in future years.

**Each day . . .
trust God for life's next step**

October
17

Forgive Me, Forgive Me

Read: 1 John 1:5-9

“. . . and please forgive me. I pray in Jesus name. Amen.” Hannah sighed as she climbed into bed. After lying to her mother a few days earlier, Hannah had asked God to forgive her—but every now and then she still felt so guilty. Then she’d ask Him again. Mom smiled, gave her a kiss, and turned out the light.

The next afternoon, Mom suddenly exclaimed, “Oh, Hannah, I was supposed to ask if you wanted to go shopping with Grandma this afternoon, and it slipped my mind! I’m afraid it’s too late now. I’m so sorry.”

“Oh-h-h-h,” wailed Hannah. “That would have been so much fun!”

Mom felt bad. “Can you forgive me?” she asked. Hannah sighed, but nodded.

As the family sat down for supper that evening, Mom looked at Hannah. “I’m so sorry about forgetting the shopping trip, honey,” said Mom. “Please forgive me.”

“That’s okay, Mom,” Hannah replied, picking up the meat platter. She helped herself to some chicken. “This looks so yummy!”

After supper, Hannah helped Mom clear the table. “Honey, I do feel bad

Accept God’s forgiveness



Key Verse

If we confess our sins He is
faithful and just
to forgive us our sins.

1 John 1:9

that you missed the excursion with Grandma,” said Mom. “Will you forgive me?”

Hannah gave her mother a puzzled look. “I told you—it’s okay, Mom,” she said, not noticing her mother’s smile.

When Hannah was ready for bed that night, she prayed, once again asking God to forgive her for the lie she had confessed so often. Then she happily jumped into bed. “About the shopping trip, honey,” began Mom as she tucked the blankets around Hannah, “can you forgive me for . . .”

“Mom! You’ve apologized over and over!” objected Hannah. “I forgave you the first time, but you sound as though you don’t believe me!”

Mom smiled. “Isn’t that also how you sound to God?” she asked gently. “You sinned when you lied to me about where you had been the other day. You were sorry and confessed it to me and to God, and I think you know I forgave you. God says He forgives you, too, yet you continue to confess the same thing again and again—as though you don’t believe Him.”

Hannah was startled. Then she grinned. “I guess you’re right,” she admitted. “I’ll just thank Him for forgiving me—and thank you, too, Mom!”

Do you still feel guilty after you have confessed a sin to God? Do you continue to ask forgiveness over and over? When you sin, you should confess it to God—and sometimes to someone else, too—and ask to be forgiven. Then remember that God says He forgives you the first time you sincerely ask Him to. Believe Him. He’s pleased when you do.

“Melissa, you know the rule,” said Mom. “You do not go to sleepovers unless we know the adults who will be present. So—no, you cannot go to Vicki’s on Friday night.” Melissa recognized the “that’s final” tone. Mom changed the subject. “Have you fed your fish?”

“I feed the fishes!” exclaimed little Jordan. He headed for the den.

“No!” Melissa ran after him. “You don’t know how.” Melissa scowled. “I thought this was a free country,” she grumbled after checking to make sure Mom couldn’t hear her. “But there’s sure not any freedom around this house! ‘No, you can’t go there.’ ‘Do this.’ ‘Don’t do that.’”

“What’s freedom, Sissy?” asked Jordan.

“Freedom,” corrected Melissa. “Freedom is getting to do what you want to do when you want to do it.”

“I want to feed the fishes,” Jordan said. Melissa ignored him, and he watched as she dropped tiny grains of fish food into the water. The fish quickly swam to the top to get them. “I like fishes,” the little boy said. “They like me, too.” He pressed his nose against the glass. “Fishes, do you wantta come out and play with me?”

“No, they don’t,” Melissa said crossly. “They’re perfectly happy where they are.” She put the fish food in a drawer, slammed it, and stomped from the room.

Melissa was in her room, pouting, when Jordan came in. He held out his hand. “This fishy won’t play,” he said sadly. Jordan was holding a dead fish. “He want out of bowl. I gave fishy freedom, but he won’t play anymore.”

Anger rose in Melissa. “What a stupid . . .” she began. She stopped as she suddenly realized something important. *That fish was safe and free only as long as he was in the aquarium, she thought. I guess I’m safe only when I’m in the right surroundings, too. That’s why Mom and Dad make rules.* She found a small box in her desk drawer and handed it to Jordan. “Fish die when they stay out of water, Jordan,” she said. “Put him in here. In a little while, we’ll go bury him.”

Melissa sat at her desk and began to write. “Dear Vicki, thanks for inviting me to the sleepover, but I can’t come. I’m sorry . . .”

Freedom has boundaries

Key Verse

If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

John 8:36

Do the rules at your house seem to threaten your freedom? True freedom has boundaries. Rules and laws actually safeguard freedom. Thank God for parents who establish rules to help keep you safe. Obey them. Thank Him for other rules He shows you through His Word, too. If you’re a Christian, God says you’re “free indeed.” You are now a “slave to God.” Behaving in a way that pleases Him gives you true freedom and happiness.

“Mom, can I stay over at Kristi’s house next weekend?” asked Eva when she arrived home from school. “Her mom says I can go home from school with Kristi on Friday. Then we’ll all come in for church on Sunday, and I’ll come home after Sunday school. Is that okay?” Eva waited eagerly for her mom’s answer. “Kristi lives on a farm, you know,” she added, “and she has a pony.”

Mom smiled. “We’ve gotten to know Kristi’s parents quite well, and I’m sure that will be all right,” she agreed.

When the girls arrived at Kristi’s home on Friday afternoon, they ran straight to the corral. The pony was beautiful and so gentle that Eva wasn’t afraid of him at all. “Kristi, you’re so lucky,” Eva said as they fed him sugar cubes and brushed his golden mane. “I’d love to have a horse of my own.” Then they changed clothes and took turns riding him.

When the girls went to bed that evening, Eva looked around at Kristi’s room. “This looks just like something out of one of Mom’s magazines!” exclaimed

Eva. “I love your canopy bed—I’ve always wanted one. Your whole room is perfect! I love it!”

“Thanks,” said Kristi.

“Your dad must make a lot of money!” exclaimed Eva. She clapped her hand over her mouth. “Not that it’s any of my business,” she added. “It’s just that your whole house is so beautiful! You have everything I’ve ever dreamed of.”

“I like it, too—especially my room—but we didn’t always have such a nice place,” said Kristi.

“Dad inherited this farm when Grandma died last year.” Tears came to her eyes as she looked around her beautiful room. “I’d give it all up, though, if I could just have Grandma back! I miss her so much!”

Eva lay awake a long time that night, thinking of her own grandmothers. *I wouldn’t give up my grandmas for anything!* she thought. Before falling asleep, she asked the Lord to comfort Kristi. *And thank You for both Grandma Wright and Grandma Banks,* she prayed silently. *Thank You for my family and my home—and my room. It’s nice enough! Thank You. Amen.* Then she turned over and went to sleep.

Be content

Key Verse

Be content with such things as you have.

Hebrews 13:5

Do you have friends who seem to have everything you ever dreamed of?

Perhaps they wish they had something you have. Instead of looking at what God has given someone else, look at all the good things He has provided for you. He not only gives material things like toys, clothes, or food. He also gives blessings such as peace, comfort, talents, and the promises found in His Word. He wants you to quit wishing for things other people have and be content with what you have.

Pigs Will Be Pigs

Read: Psalm 14:1-3

October
20

“That’s the pig for our 4-H project!” squealed Mary as a crate was unloaded from a delivery truck. “Isn’t she darling, Mom? We’re going to call her Annabel.”

Mom looked at the small pig in the crate. “Well, drag the crate over to the pig pen, Eliot,” she told her son, “and be sure to close the gate when you leave her.”

“The pig pen!” exclaimed Mary as Mom returned to the house. Mary turned to her brother. “Annabel would hate the dirty pig pen!”

“Yeah.” Eliot nodded. “Let’s give her a bath and fix her a nice bed of straw.”

“Good idea!” agreed Mary, so they got the hose and went to work. “Hold her still,” said Mary as the pig struggled to get free. Annabel wouldn’t be still, but they finally had her reasonably clean. Then Mary tied a pretty pink bow around Annabel’s neck. “Mom has to see her now!” exclaimed Mary.

Eliot nodded. “Let’s put her in the rose garden,” he suggested. “She’d like that.” So they let Annabel loose in the garden and ran to get their mother.

When they returned, disaster met their eyes. Plants were uprooted, the yard was a mess, the pig was gone, and Mom was not happy! “Whatever were you thinking?” she asked sternly. She sighed. “Well, maybe Annabel found the pig pen where she belongs and went in.”

“No way!” exclaimed Eliot—but that’s where they found Annabel, and she was covered with mud! “Annabel!” cried Eliot. “Why would you come here?”

“It’s her nature to like mud,” said Mom. “It’s just natural for a pig to wallow in it.” She paused. “Did you know,” she asked with a twinkle in her eye, “that kids are like pigs in some ways?”

“Mother!” protested Eliot as he looked at the dirty pig. “How can you say that?”

Mom laughed at his indignant tone. “Well,” she said, “it’s natural for children to say things they shouldn’t say and do things they shouldn’t do—like putting pigs in rose gardens, for instance. Of course, that’s a small thing, but the point is that it’s natural for all people—big and small—to wallow in the filth of sin.”

“But we cleaned Annabel all up,” cried Mary, “and I even gave her a pink bow.”

“But that didn’t change her nature,” replied Mom.

Mary looked at Annabel and sighed. “What a dirty pig,” she said. “I hate to think that I’m like you.”

You have sinned

Key Verse

All have sinned and fall short
of the glory of God.

Romans 3:23

Have you ever compared yourself to a pig? That doesn’t seem like a very nice comparison, does it? But just like it’s a pig’s nature to wallow in mud, it’s your nature to sin. A bath and a pretty bow can’t change the pig’s nature, and trying to clean up your life with good deeds doesn’t change your nature. Only the blood of Jesus Christ can do that. Admit that you’re a sinner and you can’t save yourself. Turn to Jesus today. (See the ABCs of Salvation at the end of this book.)

As Brett helped his father shingle the garage roof, Dad's cell phone rang. Dad took it from its pouch and answered the call. "That was my boss," he told Brett a minute later. "I need to go in and check a paper and call him back. This may take a while, Brett, so why don't you take a rest, too?"

"Can't I do a few rows by myself?" asked Brett.

"Well . . . okay, but we're just starting a new row. Be sure to line up the shingles with the row below. If you get them on crooked, all the rest of the rows will be crooked, too," Dad warned. "The farther you go, the worse it will get."

"I'll watch it," said Brett. "Don't worry." *I'll show Dad how much I can do alone*, he thought as Dad left. So Brett began pounding nails, hurrying to get as much done as possible. But when he started his second row, he noticed that the previous one ran a little crooked. *It's not bad*, he thought. *I'll do better on this row.*

"Wow!" exclaimed Dad when he got back. "You've done three whole rows!" But then he frowned. "Come down here and look at the roof," he said.

Brett climbed down and stood back to look at his work. "Oh, no," he moaned. Just like Dad had warned, each row had gotten more uneven.

"You went a little too fast, didn't you?" asked Dad. "By the time you finished the first row, it wasn't quite straight. Instead of taking time to do it over, you tried to make the next row straight, but things got worse instead of better."

Brett nodded. "What can we do to fix it?"

"There's only one thing to do," replied Dad. "We'll have to take the shingles off—all the way to where they start to go wrong—and nail them back correctly. Let's do it together."

As they removed the crooked rows, Dad spoke thoughtfully. "You know, Son, there's a good lesson for us here. Can you guess what it is?"

"Ah-h-h-h . . ." Brett stopped working and thought about it. "No," he said.

Dad smiled. "It's a spiritual lesson," he replied. "Like crooked shingles, sin shouldn't be ignored. When we sin, we need to make things right before going on. We need to confess our sin to the Lord, and receive His forgiveness."

"Yeah. Else we'll be like those crooked rows." Brett grinned. "I sure don't want to turn out like that!"

Confess and forsake sin

Key Verse

For I will declare my iniquity;
I will be in anguish over my sin.

Psalm 38:18

Have you ignored some wrong thing you've done and figured it doesn't really matter? Have you seen things get worse and worse, little by little? It will keep going that way until you do something to stop it. Don't try to avoid the problem, thinking you'll deal with it later. As soon as you know you've done something wrong, that's the time to confess it to God. The longer you wait to fix a problem, the harder it will be and the more work it will take to make it right.

“Mom! Look at my scarf now!” With a ball of yarn dragging behind her, Erin ran into the kitchen, clutching her knitting needles and the scarf she was learning to knit. “Look how long it’s getting! I think it’s almost finished. Isn’t it perfect?” She spread out the length of the scarf on the table. “Oh, wait—there’s a hole here, right in the middle!” she wailed. “How did that happen? It’s ruined!” Tears started to shine in her eyes as she stared down at the hole.

Mom came over and picked up the scarf. “It looks like you dropped a stitch in the middle of this row,” she said, holding it close. “When that happens, it makes a big hole. But don’t worry—we can fix it.”

Erin sniffed. “We can?” she asked hopefully.

“Sure,” said Mom. “I’ll show you as soon as I get my meatloaf into the oven.”

Soon the meatloaf was baking, and Mom showed Erin how to pick up the dropped stitch and fix the hole it had made. “Wow! Thanks, Mom!” Erin said joyfully, giving Mom a hug. “I thought I’d have to throw this out and start a whole new scarf!”

“No problem,” Mom replied. “You know,” she added after a moment, “I think you could learn something from this scarf. You’re still pretty mad at Lindsey for not inviting you to the zoo last weekend, aren’t you?”

“Well . . . yes,” admitted Erin. “She isn’t much of a friend if she would leave me out like that!”

“Didn’t Lindsey take you along on their Labor Day picnic?” asked Mom. “And remember when you sprained your ankle and she came and played games with you? She helped you catch up with your homework, too.”

“Yes, but . . .” Erin wasn’t sure what Mom was getting at.

“So,” Mom continued, “it seems to me Lindsey’s been a pretty good friend to you in the past. The Apostle Paul spoke of friends’ hearts being ‘knit together in love.’ So I don’t think you should toss out the whole friendship with Lindsey just because she ‘dropped a stitch’ in the middle. A hole in a friendship can be fixed, too, and God tells us how to do that. He says we are to forgive.”

Erin was quiet for a minute. “You’re right. Lindsey has been a good friend,” she said finally. “How about I invite her over for a meatloaf dinner tonight?”

Fix friendship holes

Key Verse

That their hearts may be
encouraged being
knit together in love.

Colossians 2:2

Have you ever been really angry with a friend? Maybe he or she said something that was mean, or maybe you weren’t included in an activity. It probably made you feel bad, but that shouldn’t end your friendship. Listen to God’s reminder to love, forgive, and encourage one another. If there’s a “hole” in your friendship with someone, don’t follow the temptation to throw the whole thing out. Instead, follow God’s directions and see how quickly it can be mended.

“Wow, Dad! Did you see those fish?” Samantha’s eyes sparkled as she lifted her face out of the water and adjusted her snorkeling mask.

“I sure did!” Dad grinned. “Those little blue ones look like some we’ve seen in aquariums at the pet store.”

“And I almost touched one of those yellow and black striped ones!” Samantha was bubbling with excitement.

Dad looked at the setting sun. “Well, it’s getting late,” he said. “We’d better start swimming back to shore. Are you ready?”

“So soon?” asked Samantha. “Okay . . . let’s go. Bet I can beat you back.” They started toward shore, but it was farther away than Samantha had realized. “Dad, can we rest a minute?” she called out after a while.

Dad stopped swimming and shook his head. “If we do, this current may take us too far off shore. Here . . .” Dad stretched out his hand to Samantha. “I’ll pull you along.” Soon they reached shore, tired but safe.

Look to God for help

Key Verse

I (God) am with you . . . I will
strengthen you,
yes, I will help you.
Isaiah 41:10

When they got home, Samantha told her mother about their afternoon. “It’s a good thing Dad was there to tow me in to shore,” said Samantha with a grin. “I was really tired!”

Mom smiled. “You know, just this afternoon, I needed a little towing myself,” she said. Samantha looked at her in surprise. “I was preparing the Sunday school lesson I have to teach next week, and I felt like quitting. God used Grandma Jones and some verses I read in the Bible to encourage me. It’s like I was ‘towed’ back to a better attitude.”

Dad nodded. “I know you trust in Jesus as your Savior, Samantha, but sometimes you may get a little weary of doing things you know are right,” he said. “Where do you suppose you can get encouragement and help then?”

“From you and Mom,” Samantha answered promptly.

Dad chuckled softly. “Good,” he said. “We’ll help all we can. God often uses other Christians to help us when we struggle against the current of temptation or difficult circumstances. But there’s an even better source of help—the Lord Himself. We need to learn to depend on Him. Sometimes it almost seems to me as if He’s saying, ‘Here . . . I’ll pull you along.’”

Do you get discouraged in living for the Lord? Does it seem like you’re the only one who obeys some of the rules? Do you see other kids going places your parents won’t let you go? When you’re feeling left out, do you look to other Christians for encouragement? That’s good, but be sure to also ask the Lord Himself to help you. He may remind you of a Bible verse, send someone to talk with you, show you a book or magazine, or use some other method to help you. Depend on Him.

Help is Available!

In today's story, Samantha needed help to get to shore safely. Christians need help, too—they need help in living for God.

Samantha's father was able to help her. Use the clues at the bottom of this page to put these words in the correct order. You'll find a verse that tells you who is the best source of help for Christians.

WHO	EARTH	MY	MADE
LORD	AND	HEAVEN	COMES
HELP	PSALM 121:2	THE	FROM

_____	_____	_____	_____
1	2	3	4
_____	_____	_____	_____
5	6	7	8
_____	_____	_____	
9	10	11	

	12		

1. The 2nd word begins with H and ends with P.
2. The 9th word is thought of as a place above the sky.
3. The 6th word is often used for God.
4. The 11th word starts with 2 vowels.
5. The 3rd word has an M in the middle.
6. The word with a Y in it goes on the first line.
7. AND is the 10th word.
8. The 7th word begins with a W.
9. The 4th word is the only one that has an F.
10. Line 12 is the Bible reference for this verse.
11. The 5th word is THE.
12. The 8th word has 4 letters, and 2 of them are vowels.

Nathan watched little Nikki. The baby blinked, then nodded, and finally her eyes closed as she snuggled back in her car seat. When Nathan was sure she was asleep, he spoke softly to his mother. “You know, Mom, I keep thinking about Pastor Ryan’s sermon yesterday,” he said. “It was about heaven, but I don’t think I really want to go there very soon—not for a long, long time.”

Mom glanced at him. “And why is that?”

Nathan squirmed. “Well, I know preachers always say heaven will be so great, but all that music and singing sounds boring to me,” he confessed. “I like church okay, but I don’t think I’d like to be there all the time. I’d miss baseball and hamburgers and TV. This is a great world right here!”

Suddenly Nikki jumped in her sleep and cried out. Mom looked thoughtful as Nathan reached back to pat the baby. “Do you suppose Nikki was thinking something just like that a few months ago?” she asked.

Nathan was puzzled. “She’s only two months old!”

Heaven will be great

Key Verse

In My Father’s house are many
mansions . . . I go to prepare
a place for you.

John 14:2

“Yes, but she was alive before she was born, you know,” replied Mom. “Maybe she liked being right where she was then.”

“Well . . . I doubt it,” said Nathan. “She was in the dark and couldn’t move around much before she was born.”

“True,” agreed Mom, “but she was warm and comfortable and never hungry. If someone could have asked her if she wanted to be born and be part of a brand new world, she might have said, ‘No. I’d rather stay here.’”

“If she did that, she’d miss out on an awful lot,” declared Nathan.

“I agree,” said Mom. “We couldn’t even begin to describe the sights, sounds, and tastes to her. She’d have to experience them for herself to understand.” She smiled at Nathan. “I’m sure it’s that way with heaven, too, Nathan. What we’ll experience in heaven will be far more fantastic than we can imagine and far better than we can understand down here.”

“Okay,” said Nathan. He hesitated. “But I still like living here,” he added.

“That’s fine. Until we get to heaven, God wants us to enjoy all the things He has for us here on earth,” Mom assured him with a smile. Nathan smiled, too.

Are you afraid heaven won’t really be much fun—that it might even be boring? God created you and all the things that give you enjoyment here, and He is responsible for heaven as well. Be sure to read today’s Scripture passages. We don’t know everything we’ll see or experience there, but you can be sure it won’t be boring. Trust God for that.

Do You Know Him?

Read: John 1:35-42

October
25

“Hey, Kyle, wait up,” Julian called as he ran to catch up with a new boy in his class. “Didn’t you just move here from Wyncote, Pennsylvania?”

“Yeah,” replied Kyle. “Got here last week.”

“Isn’t that the hometown of Wilt Smith, the baseball player?” asked Julian. “Do you know him?”

“Oh, yeah, I know Wilt,” said Kyle, happy to meet a new friend who was interested in baseball. “I saw him play lots of times, and he even autographed a ball for me. I have all of Wilt’s baseball cards, and all his books, too. He taught me everything I know about baseball.”

Julian and Kyle became close friends. If they weren’t playing ball, they were talking about it and hoping they could make plans to see Wilt Smith play. Kyle always spoke proudly of his friendship with the famous ball player. “My mom says I listen to him better than I do to her,” he said with a grin.

Soon the boys’ parents made plans to see Wilt Smith play. Their families would sit together several rows behind home plate. Everyone was looking forward to the big day.

On the Sunday before the game, Julian could hardly contain himself as he shared the news with his Sunday school class. “Guess what! I’m going to meet Wilt Smith!” he said.

“The baseball player?” asked his teacher.

“Yes! My friend Kyle knows Wilt,” said Julian.

“We have tickets to see him play at Riverside Stadium this week!”

“Great!” exclaimed Mr. Jones. “That’s exciting.”

“Kyle talks about Wilt all the time,” said Julian. After sharing some of the things Kyle had told him, Julian added, “Since Kyle knows him, I’ll get to meet him after the game!”

Mr. Jones held up his Bible. “Our lesson today deals with the importance of telling others about Jesus,” he said, “and your friend Kyle is a good example of someone who is eager to talk about an important person he knows. Those of us who know Jesus should be like that—eager to tell others about Him. Let’s pause for prayer and ask God to help us learn to do that.”

Share Christ with others

Key Verse

Those (Christians) who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.

Acts 8:4

Are you eager to tell your friends about important people you meet? Do you tell them about Jesus? Today’s Scripture tells how Andrew brought his own brother to Jesus. Will you introduce a brother or sister or friend to Jesus, too? You can tell them how they can know Jesus as a personal friend. You can encourage them to get to know Him better by praying, reading the Bible, and following what He teaches.

Julian and Kyle, along with their families, joined thousands of other fans who had come to Riverside Stadium to see the Major League baseball game. They cheered loudly for their team—especially when Wilt Smith was up to bat.

In the bottom of the last inning, with the score tied and two out, Wilt Smith was batting again. Julian and Kyle could hardly stand the suspense. “Come on, Wilt!” shouted Kyle. “You can do it.”

“He hit it!” yelled Julian. “Look at that ball go!” He jumped up. “They won! They won!” The boys stood with the crowd as Wilt rounded the bases and then was carried off the field on the shoulders of his teammates.

“Let’s go to the locker room,” said Julian as the crowd began to leave.

“I’m sure they don’t let just anybody go into the locker room, honey,” Mom said.

“No, but Kyle knows Wilt, and I want to meet him. Come on, Kyle,” Julian urged. “You can get us in, right? I’ve been waiting for this!”

“Aw, he’ll be too busy,” muttered Kyle as he headed toward the gate with his parents and little sister.

You can know Jesus personally

Key Verse

That I may know Him (Jesus) and
the power of His resurrection.

Philippians 3:10

“Then can you take me to meet him later?” Julian pleaded. Kyle just shrugged and continued walking.

Suddenly, Julian realized that Kyle didn’t really *know* Wilt Smith at all—he just knew *about* him.

“It’s time to go, kiddo,” Julian’s dad said quietly.

At Sunday school the next day, Julian told his teacher about the game. “Kyle lied,” said Julian.

“He said he knew Wilt, but he really doesn’t.”

“Sometimes people say they know a person when they only know about him,” said Mr. Jones.

“Yeah—like Kyle did,” said Julian.

“Yes, and many people who call themselves Christians do that, too,” said Mr. Jones. “They read about Jesus’ miracles and hear about His death on the cross. They go to church and may even quote verses from the Bible. They claim to know Jesus, yet they’ve never trusted Him as Savior. They don’t know Him personally—they only know about Him.”

“Well, I’m not making that mistake,” Julian assured his teacher. “I don’t just know *about* Jesus; I really do know Him—I’ve accepted Him as my Savior.”

Do you know Jesus as your friend and Savior, or is He someone you just know about? He wants to be—and can be—your very best friend. Know Him personally by trusting Him as Savior. (See the ABCs of Salvation at the end of this book.) Then get to know Him better by reading His Word, and talking to Him each day in prayer.

"Hi, Mom. " Shelly put her books down. "Hi, Gram."

"Why are we all dressed up?" asked Grandma.

"We're having dinner with the Hoyles," said Mom.

"The Hoyles are so nice. I remember when we spent a week with them at the lake. It was so pretty . . ." Grandma's voice trailed off, and Shelly sighed. "Why are we all dressed up?" asked Grandma again, and Mom once more answered patiently. "The Hoyles are such nice people," said Grandma. Shelly scowled, picked up her books, and went to her room.

"How can you be so patient when Grandma repeats the same things over and over?" Shelly asked her mom later.

"I just remind myself that she can't help it," said Mom. "She has Alzheimer's disease, you know, and she forgets things."

Shelly frowned. "I know, but why does she have to live here?" she asked.

"Because we love Grandma and this is what's best for her," said Mom.

"Well, I'm tired of hearing the same things a hundred times," said Shelly with a sigh. "I wish I were old enough to go to the mission field like Miss Borelle, our speaker last Sunday. Then I wouldn't hear Grandma's stories over and over anymore."

"There are difficult people on the mission field, too," said Mom. "Last week, Miss Borelle said one lady looked in her window and stared at her every day. Think how annoying that would be."

"But I'd be doing important work for God," Shelly said, "so it would be worth it."

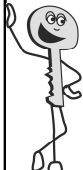
"Grandma is important, too," replied Mom. "Through our family situations, God prepares us for other ministries. Our daily experiences are like a training school God uses to teach us lessons we need to help us in the future."

Just then, Grandma came to the door and asked, "Why are we all dressed up?"

Shelly sighed as she glanced at her mom. "We're having dinner with the Hoyles, Gram," Shelly said.

"They're such nice people. I remember the time we were at the lake together," said Grandma.

Shelly hesitated. "Tell me about it, Grandma," she replied with a little smile.



**Be patient
and
understanding**

Key Verse

Comfort the fainthearted, uphold
the weak, be patient with all.
1 Thessalonians 5:14

Do you need to show extra understanding or patience to a family member or friend? Have you ever met someone who talks or walks a little slower than you'd like? Or someone who has trouble hearing and often asks you to repeat things? Ask the Lord to help you develop patience. As you honor Him by showing love and kindness now, you'll also be preparing yourself for whatever ministry the Lord has for you as an adult.

A sharp flash of lightning and a crack of thunder made Adele jump. As she put down the book she'd been reading, the lights in her bedroom went out.

"Mom!" she shouted. She waited a minute. "Mom!" she yelled again.

"I'm right here," Mom answered, coming into the room.

"Where's D-Dad?" sputtered Adele, as another crack of thunder rocked the house. "That thunder is so loud!"

"I know," said Mom. "Let's go downstairs and find some flashlights."

Adele and her mother made their way down the stairs. As they turned to go into the family room, Adele ran into something. "Oh!" she exclaimed in surprise.

She heard a chuckle. "It's just me, honey," came Dad's reassuring voice. "I found a couple of flashlights, but they don't work."

"Well, we need them! It's so dark in here that I couldn't even see you," Adele said. "What's wrong with the flashlights?" She shivered as thunder boomed.

"We haven't used them in a very long time, and the batteries are no doubt dead now," said Dad. "I'll pick up some new batteries tomorrow."

Read the Bible regularly

Key Verse

Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.

Psalm 119:105

A flash of lightning lit up the room. "Well, after this, we'd better use flashlights more often and keep them in shape so we'll be ready when another storm hits," declared Amanda.

"True," agreed Mom, "but for now I'll get out some candles. I know just where to find them—and matches, too. I'm prepared!"

"Good!" Dad approved. "Does this remind anybody of Pastor Grey's sermon last Sunday?"

Adele shrugged. "Not me," she said. "He didn't talk about thunder storms."

"No," said Mom, "but he mentioned a different kind of storm. Pastor Grey pointed out that studying God's Word every day helps keep us ready for storms of life. In fact, the Bible gives us light, too—light on our path through life."

"That's right. If we grab the Bible only when we feel like we really need it—like we did our flashlights—we may not know exactly where to turn," added Dad. "But if we're very familiar with the Bible, we can usually find verses that help us."

"I remember now!" Adele nodded. "We might even remember some without looking them up," she added. "Let's see . . . What's one we could use tonight?"

Do you read the Bible every day? Reading it regularly helps prepare you for times when you feel lonely or sad, or when you're tempted to do wrong. If you memorize verses or if you read passages of the Bible several times, they're likely to come to mind when you need them. You may recall that God is with you, that He provides a way to escape temptation, or that you'll be reunited with loved ones who have died. The Bible gives comfort, encouragement, and instructions. Use it daily.

“Catch!” Mom tossed a package of napkins to Chad, who was helping her pack the picnic basket. “Okay, we’ve got plates, silverware, napkins, cups . . . what else should we pack?” She looked around the kitchen thoughtfully. “Salt! We’ll want it for the fish you guys catch, and for the corn on the cob, too.”

Just then Dad walked into the kitchen. “Are you ready?” he asked. “I’ve got all the gear packed in the car. Let’s get going!” Chad scooped up the picnic basket, Mom grabbed the cooler, and they were off to the lake.

To Chad’s great delight, he and Dad did catch fish. Dad showed him how to filet them so there would be no bones, and then they grilled them while Mom set the table. “Man, that smells great!” exclaimed Chad. “Makes me hungry!”

When the fish were ready, Dad thanked God for the food. “I’m starved,” declared Chad, as he took a big bite of fish. “Whoa! Needs salt.”

“Salt!” Mom exclaimed. “I didn’t see it in the picnic basket. I remember mentioning it, but I’m sure I didn’t put it in. Did you, Chad?”

“Oh, no!” cried Chad. “I forgot, too! This fish really needs it!” But there was no salt, so they ate their meal without it.

“You know,” Mom said thoughtfully as they finished eating, “some of our picnic food tastes a little flat without salt, and it occurs to me that the lives of people can be sort of flat, too. I think God wants us to add a little salt to them.”

“What are you talking about?” asked Chad. “How can we salt someone’s life?” He grinned. “Dumping salt on somebody’s head doesn’t make any sense.”

Dad chuckled. “No, but I think Mom’s right,” he said. “Ah-h-h . . . think of your friend Wyatt for a minute. Since his dad died, his mom is pretty busy. Wyatt doesn’t get to do very many special things, so maybe his life seems a little flat now. If we had invited him along on this picnic, it would have put a little flavor into his life. Right, Mom?”

“Yes—and I wish we had done that,” said Mom. “Let’s all try to add salt to the life of at least one person this week.”

“Can we go on another picnic next Saturday?” Chad asked eagerly. “I’ll invite Wyatt—and I won’t forget to pack the salt!”

Help others

Key Verse

You are the salt of the earth.
Matthew 5:13

Did you know that Christians are to be like salt? They’re the ones who should make life better for other people. How can you do that? Could you invite somebody to a party or to play at your home? Can you help a friend with homework or chores? Even sending a friendly note or making a phone call can brighten somebody’s day. Adding “salt” to someone’s life may be the first step in bringing him to Jesus.

October
30

Pass the Salt (Cont'd.)

Read: Colossians 4:2-6

“Our memory verse today is Colossians 4:6. ‘Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt,’” said Chad’s Sunday school teacher. “What does salt do?”

Chad felt he knew a little about that! His hand shot up. “It adds flavor,” he said, and he shared with the class what he had learned at the saltless fish dinner his family had experienced the day before.

“So what you’re saying is that Christians should add flavor to the lives of others by helping them,” commented Mr. Adams. “That’s great. Can anyone think of something else that salt does?”

“Salt makes you thirsty,” suggested Isabella. “When you eat salty things—like potato chips—you get thirsty.”

“Good thought,” said Mr. Adams. “And like salt, Christians should make people around them thirsty—spiritually thirsty. People should become interested in knowing more about Christ because of the way we live.”

Olivia eagerly raised her hand. “My dad said one of the guys he works with

asked him last week how come he’s so patient when things go wrong. Dad had helped him with a problem and had a chance to witness to him. That guy and his wife came to church with us today.”

“Great!” said Mr. Adams.

“It doesn’t always work like that, though, does it?” wondered Carlos. “My mom’s always doing nice things for the lady next door, but every time Mom tries to talk to her about Jesus, she gets mad and won’t listen.”

Witness faithfully

Key Verse

Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

Colossians 4:6

“That brings up one more thing about salt that we should consider,” said Mr. Adams. “In the days before modern medicine, salt was often used to disinfect a wound. When it was applied to the wound, it stung, but it was needed even if it hurt. In a way, your witness may ‘sting’ people, too, by making them aware of their sin. They may not like that, but like salt, the truth is needed even when it hurts.” He smiled at Carlos. “Maybe that’s what happens when your mom witnesses, but perhaps she’ll have the joy of bringing that lady to Jesus at a later time.”

The bell rang. “Okay. You’re dismissed,” said Mr. Adams. “As you go, think about ways you can be like salt in the coming week.”

Has your testimony for Jesus made anyone thirsty for Him? Has someone wanted to know more about Him? But perhaps somebody became defensive or angry when you talked about Jesus. Don’t be discouraged if your witness—in words and in actions— isn’t accepted right away. Remember, salt has many jobs to do. Be faithful in applying the salt, and leave the results with God.

Journal It!



Do you like salt? Before you say no, try eating an egg without it and then eat one with it. Your mom would probably tell you salt is used to prepare nearly all foods. In fact, it adds so much to the flavor that if someone can't have salt for health reasons, a substitute is generally used. Salt has other uses, too.

Chad learned that salt does several things. It adds _____. It makes people _____. And when it was used to _____ wounds, it _____, but it was necessary.

Chad also learned that people's lives often need a little flavor added to them. In Matthew 5:13, what does Jesus call His followers? _____. To whose life could you add salt—flavor? _____. What is one way you could do that? _____

Who do you wish would become thirsty to know Jesus? _____ How can you help make him or her spiritually thirsty? _____

Who, if anyone, has acted annoyed when you invited him to Sunday school or Bible club or told him about Jesus? _____ What did you do to try make it better? _____

Don't forget—medicine sometimes stings, but it's needed, so don't give up. Keep helping others, praying, and faithfully witnessing.



Ask an adult: How do you handle it if someone gets angry when you witness to him or her? _____

What suggestion can you give me to add flavor to someone's life? _____

Our Key Verses in the last two stories both refer to salt. The first says *we* are salt, and the second reminds us that even our *speech* must reflect the qualities of salt. Our actions and the things we say should together make others thirsty for Jesus. Their lives should be better as a result of knowing us. Even if they are "stung" by our witness and resent it, let's make sure they know that Jesus can heal their wounds and give them real joy.

**As salt, we should . . .
help others and witness faithfully**

When Grandpa pulled some photos from a drawer and began to tell the family about his recent ice-fishing trip, Natalie could hardly believe her ears. “You mean you really drove right out on the ice, Grandpa?” she asked.

“Yes, indeed,” Grandpa replied. “I drove out on the lake and fished through a hole in the ice.”

“But you said Dad almost lost his life one time because he trusted the ice!” exclaimed Natalie.

Natalie’s dad smiled. “The difference between my danger on that river and Grandpa’s safety on the lake was the thickness of the ice,” he explained. “Unlike the river ice that day, the lake ice was very thick, and Grandpa was in no danger.”

“Right!” Grandpa looked thoughtful. “Do you know what this reminds me of?”

Natalie’s father laughed. “Knowing you, I expect you’re thinking of something taught in the Bible, right?” he asked.

Grandpa chuckled. “It reminds me of our trust in Christ,” he said. “You see,

Put your faith in Jesus

Key Verse

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,
and you will be saved,
you and your household.

Acts 16:31

Natalie—no matter how much faith your father had in the river ice, it wouldn’t hold him up. On the other hand, even if I were nervous and distrustful, the lake ice would support me. No matter how I felt about it, it was thick and strong.”

“So what’s the lesson?” Natalie asked.

“That our feelings are not as important as what we are trusting,” explained Grandpa. “Some people feel sure their church membership or good works will get them to heaven—but that’s like trusting thin ice that won’t hold. Other people know

they’re sinners and are very unworthy of God’s love. They know God says He loves them and that Jesus died to save them, so they put their trust in Him. But then they sometimes sin against Him and wonder if they’re really saved. Jesus is like the thick, strong ice. When your trust is in Him, you’re safe.”

“Even though . . . like . . . maybe when I’ve done something wrong, I hardly *feel* like a Christian?” asked Natalie. “But God says I am one because I’ve accepted Jesus as my Savior, right?”

“Exactly!” agreed Grandpa. “Your faith may be weak, but Jesus—whom you’re trusting—is strong and always supports and keeps you.”

What are you trusting in for salvation? Do you believe the good things you do will earn salvation for you? That’s like trusting thin ice that will not hold you. God says you’re not saved by works. You must trust Jesus, who died for your sins. If your faith is in Him, you’re saved and on your way to heaven! Leave the thin ice of trusting good works and put your trust in Jesus today! (See the ABCs of Salvation at the end of this book.)

The ABCs of Salvation

Have you asked Jesus to be your Savior? He's waiting to hear from you!

Admit honestly to God that you have sinned and disobeyed Him.

The Bible says:

Romans 3:23 *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*

Romans 6:23 *"The wages of sin is death (everlasting punishment)."*

No sin is allowed in heaven.

Believe that Jesus died on the cross and rose again. His blood was shed to pay for your sins.

The Bible says:

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 *"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."*

Romans 5:8 *"But God demonstrates His own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*

Because Jesus loves you so much, He took the punishment for you so that you can be forgiven.

Choose to trust Jesus alone for the forgiveness of your sins.

The Bible says:

Romans 10:13 *"Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

John 3:18 *"He who believes in Him (Jesus) is not condemned."*

When you trust in Jesus Christ alone to save you, God forgives you! You become His child, and He promises you a home in heaven forever! Put your trust in Jesus as your Savior from sin. Do it today, and begin following Him by obeying His Word, the Bible.