DAVID WAS NEITHER JEALOUS NOR BITTER

When Saul was king, he was a selfish king, and knowing David would take over the throne, he wanted to kill David. Cruel and unrelenting, Saul sent his forces to hunt David down. Now Saul was dead, should David not rejoice?

Although not perfect, David was not a jealous or bitter man. Although he knew Saul wanted his life, he never once wanted to repay evil for evil. Neither did he covet the kingdom. Why? He was able to find strength in God and through those difficult times, God led David to pen some of the most beautiful psalms which remain today for our encouragement.

How about you? Are you in a difficult situation? Do you at times feel jealous or bitter over people and events in your life? Do you think that God has sometimes been "unfair"? That perhaps others have been more blessed than you? Or perhaps God has allowed very tough times to befall you and your family?

Learn to be a David. Even when his life was threatened, he trusted in God and refused to give up. Perhaps not many of us have had our lives threatened, but many of us have come across troubles and problems that seem too big to handle. What do we do then? As you start this month, start it right: never be jealous of others, or bitter about things. To be jealous of others is to be discontented with what God has given you. Should God want you to have that blessing, He will. And please do not be bitter. Bitterness harbours a spirit of unforgiveness and only hurts the bitter person most.

Commit to the Lord as David did, and He will give you the strength you need to overcome whatever difficulty you have.

Thought: Be neither jealous nor bitter.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me contentment. Teach me to accept Your will and even though I may be tempted to be jealous or bitter, help me to always trust in You. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

FORGIVENESS FROM DAVID, THE NEW KING

The tragic death of Saul and his sons meant the defeated Israel was left without a king. At this low point of his people, David sensed that the hour had come for him to return to his country after living as a fugitive among the Philistines. But first, he inquired of the Lord which city he should go to begin his leadership of the nation. Initially, he was not king over the whole of Israel, but only over the 2 southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin as the other tribes were loyal to a son of Saul – Ishbosheth.

Nonetheless, David sought God for he was wise enough to realize that only clear direction from the Lord would enable him to restore the nation to greatness. The Lord wanted David to go to Hebron. So David brought his two wives as well as his six hundred fighting men, and their families who had followed him into exile. The leaders and patriarchs of Judah also welcomed him and decided that David deserved to be their king. Then as king, the first noble action David undertook was to commend the men of Jabesh-gilead for giving Saul and his three sons an honourable burial.

Christianity is about forgiveness. If God did not forgive us, we would be doomed for hell. But because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, we are forgiven and saved. As we have been forgiven of the greatest sins, we ought to forgive others should they wrong us.

Dear child, is there someone who has wronged you? Do you feel it is tough to forgive and forget? On your own strength, it would be difficult or even impossible but with the help of God, you will be able to forgive.

Thought: If God could forgive me, so should I forgive others.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to remember forgiveness is central to Christianity and if I am a real Christian who has experienced true forgiveness, I will be able to forgive others. In Jesus' name I pray – amen.

ABNER DEFECTS TO DAVID

Abner was the formidable commander of Saul's army and he tried to rally the ten northern tribes around the only surviving son of Saul, Ishbosheth. However, Ishbosheth was a weakling. One day he accused Abner of having an affair with Rizpah, one of Saul's concubines. If it was true, it was a dangerous move, because to claim one of the king's concubines was a sign of claiming the throne. So Ishbosheth could have felt threatened by this action.

In any case, the charge so angered Abner that in a fit of fury he turned against Ishbosheth whom he himself had helped put on the throne. He swore that he would switch his loyalty from the dynasty of Saul and offer the entire ten tribes to David, the king of Judah. He dispatched messengers to David informing him of his defecting to David's side. David was only too glad to meet him. Now, there was hope that the nation would be united as one.

How did God make Abner to defect to David's side?
Did David plan and plot this move?

God did this by first souring the relationship between him and _____ , the king that he championed. Ishbosheth accused him of having an affair with one of his _____ which Abner denied. He felt unfairly treated that he decided to _____ side and pledge his loyalty to David.

Thought: The hearts of men are in the Lord's hands.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, let me trust Thy great power to do great and mighty things that men think impossible. Faith is the victory that conquers the world. In Jesus' precious name I pray, amen.

EVIL OF MAN'S REVENGE

Tragedy struck at this point. When Joab, King David's military commander heard that Abner was going to form an alliance with David, he was jealous, and then got furious. In his anger, he even dared to question David on his wisdom in trusting Abner!

Taking things in his own hands, Joab dispatched soldiers to bring Abner back. When Abner returned, he walked right into a trap. Joab waited for him at the city gate; pretended to talk to him and while whispering to Abner, plunged his sword into Abner's abdomen, killing him.

Why did Joab murder Abner? It was a mixture of jealousy and bitterness. Jealous perhaps because he was afraid of losing David's trust and confidence as Abner could also be a strong military leader as he was. He was afraid of losing his favoured position as the top military commander of David's troops. Bitter and unforgiving as there was a history of enmity between their two families: Abner had killed Joab's brother Asahel. Should we take revenge against people who have wronged us? The answer to this question is found in the devotion in the first 2 days of this month's reading. When the Lord allows difficulties and problems to come our way, remember there is always a purpose.

Do you face bullies in school? Or perhaps your parents face financial problems in this economic situation? Maybe you think parents and loved ones favour your brother or sister? Perhaps your classmate keeps expecting you to help him or her but refuses to play his part when you need help? It may not be easy to understand, but with faith, we will be able to trust God.

Thought: When God puts a tear in our eye, He wants a rainbow in our heart.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I not want to take revenge but leave things in Your hands, trusting that You will take care of me. Help me to also share problems with loved ones so that they can help me understand how to cope with them. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

DAVID STRENGTHENS HIS POWER

King David conducted himself wisely and graciously concerning the deaths of not only Abner but also Isbosheth, Saul's son. The people saw the compassion of their king. They saw that though he was anointed by Samuel to be the king of Israel, he waited according to God's will. It had already been more than 10 years since Samuel anointed him. These were years of suffering at the hand of Saul, but now, the time for celebration had come, and all the tribes of Israel came to crown him king over the whole of Israel.

David was king of Judah at the young age of thirty. There he ruled for seven and a half years and now at thirty-seven, the entire nation of Israel wanted him to rule over them. The civil strife between his loyal followers (the 2 tribes of Judah and Benjamin) and the dynasty of Saul (the other ten tribes) was over. With sincerity, the men of Israel declared, "We are thy bone and thy flesh." For such a great honour, and peace in the land assured, David was grateful to God and never failed to thank him for putting him on the throne.

David waited about fourteen years before he became king.
How did he conduct himself with honour and great blessing?

1. He waited patiently for God's timing.

2. He did not take matters into his own hands
   e.g. killing Saul when he had the opportunity.

3. He prayed and asked for the Lord's will daily.

4. He showed compassion and love to others.

Thought: May I learn from David.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I wait patiently and trust in You in good or bad times. Help me not to rush things, but to trust in Your timing for it is the best timing. This I pray in the Saviour's precious name, amen.

GOD IS NOT JUST A GOD OF LOVE

King David had united his people and established a new capital in Jerusalem. He had also shown remarkable leadership and courage in defeating the Philistines. Best of all, he saw his role clearly as being God's special under-shepherd to Israel.

He realized Israel had seriously neglected her spiritual life as a people of God; the Ark of the Lord had been almost forgotten! Many priests had been killed by Saul (1 Sam 22:18-19). The Levites no longer had the great honour of serving God. He wanted to bring the Ark back into the lives of the Israelites and lead them to seek and serve God. Thus, he decided to bring the Ark up to Jerusalem. Alas, it was carried in a cart and Uzzah, a non-priest who was not supposed to touch the Ark, touched it when the oxen shook it. The anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah and he was struck dead immediately.

What is the lesson for us? God is not just a God of love, but a God who will punish those who sin. It was not that there was magical power in the Ark; it was not that God was too harsh with Uzzah. The Israelites did not follow established rules for the handling of the Ark and thus, there were consequences to their sin.

Some children have the wrong idea that God is more like some heavenly vending machine who will give us what we want if we ask in the right way. Or that God is a spiritual form of Santa Claus, that He is always smiling, having no regard for sin. That is simply not true. Our God demands from us loyalty and obedience and as His children, we should not feel it a pain to follow Him, but take it as a privilege to be able to know His will and to do it.

Thought: Our Heavenly Father will also punish us if necessary.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I approach Thee with fear and reverence for Thou art a holy God. Help me to realize I must live a holy life so that I can please Thee. This I ask in Jesus' name, amen.

GOD'S WAYS NOT OUR WAYS

The first 3 verses here tell us David was, at least for the moment, at rest. Remembering those years of struggle with both kinsmen and enemies, David's thoughts turned toward doing something special for God. It was customary for conquering kings in the neighboring countries to build monuments to their gods, so why not build a monument to the Almighty God? Why not build a beautiful temple for God?

Verses 4-7 tell us that later that night, Nathan the prophet recognized that God did not agree with David's plans. As good as the idea sounded, God did not want David to build a temple.

Verses 8-11 show us God's intention; He wanted to build a house, or kingdom, for David. In this passage, God promised to make David's name great, to appoint a place for Israel, to give David rest from his enemies, and to establish David's throne forever.

Was it a good idea to build the temple? One would probably say "Yes". And David's intention was good; he felt bad that his palace was impressive and grand and the "dwelling place" of God at that time a humble tabernacle made of tents. However, God does not want David to build it as his hands have shed too much blood in the battles he fought.

Today's lesson is that sometimes, our plans may be good ideas but God may have other better plans, or better timings. Although the temple was eventually built, it was built not by David but by his son Solomon.

Was David disappointed? I guess so. This reminds us that we can sometimes be disappointed but we must always remember that if God does not want us to do something, He would have His special reasons.

Thought: God's ways are higher than our ways.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, let me accept disappointments in life. Help me to trust Thee because You know what is best for me! This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

GOD IS LORD!

Nathan's message was humbly accepted by David. He knew that his fighting days had stained his hands and thus was not suited to be chosen to erect a sanctuary for the glory and honour of the Most High.

God went on further to assure David through Nathan that his dynasty would be built and established forever. We know that eventually, David's family would provide the royal lineage through which the Greater David, Jesus Christ would come.

Count the number of times the word "Lord" was used in today's passage. Quite a lot, was it not? And did you notice at times this word had 4 capital letters? Why do you think David used this word so often? What does this word mean?

The word "Lord" means Master or King. That is a word that may be used for earthly kings, or some wealthy ruler. The word "LORD" has a very different meaning. It conveys the special covenantal relationship God has with Israel, and stresses the fact that Israel is the only country in the world that has been founded by God, and is named after God (Israel means "Prince of God").

David used "Lord" and "LORD" as he recognized the power of God and the kindness of God toward Israel. At that time, Israel was a new country surrounded by enemies. If not for the protection and mercies of God, Israel would not have existed, much less become a sovereign nation.

To this day, Israel coexists with neighbours that are not friendly. However, God has remained faithful to this nation and we can see it with our own eyes today!

Thought: The promises of the Lord are exceeding great and precious

Prayer: Heavenly Father, as You led and protected Israel all these years, may You also be merciful to me and guide me. I am but a child, but I know that in You I can find security, and peace. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

KINDNESS OF DAVID

You will recall Jonathan was David's best friend. Jonathan had a lame son called Mephibosheth. David had promised Jonathan he will take care of him and his family when he became king, and now he keeps his word David ordered a nationwide search to see if any member of Jonathan's family survived. Eventually, David learned that Mephibosheth was alive, and quickly ordered that he be brought to Jerusalem.

How would you feel if you were Mephibosheth? The custom of kings then was that all family members, especially male offspring of the previous empire, be killed. This was for self-preservation so that these men do not live to threaten the new kingdom. How do you think Mephibosheth felt?

He must have been full of fear. He must have wanted to plead for mercy, for what can he, a lame man, do to threaten King David? On seeing King David, Mephibosheth was assured of his kindness. King David restored the land taken away from him and welcomed him to eat at the king's table, as one of the king's sons.

How can you be kind?

I can be kind to my family and friends by:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Thought: Kindness is the language the blind see and the deaf hear.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give me a heart that is kind and loving. Sometimes I am just not like that, so Heavenly Father, help me to be better, to be a little kinder. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

AN IDLE MIND IS THE DEVIL'S WORKSHOP

Many of us seem to have too little time to do too many things. Your parents have to work, to take care of you, to manage household issues, to spend time with their parents. You have increasing amounts of homework. You also have to go for enrichment classes, co-curricular activities, and others. Perhaps on top of that you have music classes and sports lessons. Some children have also been encouraged by their parents to play what traditionally have been games for grown-ups, such as golf. Given the above, sometimes we wish we just have nothing to do, do we not?

The longest holiday for children would be the year-end holidays when you will have about seven weeks off school. Seven weeks – wow! The problem is although many students yearn for the holidays, some do not know what to do when the school holiday begins. Boredom sets in. With so much time but so little or nothing to accomplish, the mind becomes idle.

Such was the situation for King David. One day, instead of leading his men in battle, David was enjoying himself at home. Perhaps to enjoy the evening breeze, he went to the rooftop of the palace to relax. Then he spied a beautiful woman bathing.

Was he praying when he saw her? No. Was he doing something for the Lord or for the people when he saw her? No. His mind was empty and idle. And when he saw her, he lusted after her.

Be careful of an idle mind. We do not need to be busy all the time everyday. In fact, it is good to reserve a time of quiet and to give yourself a break. Such times can be put to good use for doing your Quiet Time. Remember, it is when your mind is idle that you are open to evil suggestions and temptations by the Devil.

Instead, dear child, put your mind to good use. Study hard. Play hard during leisure. When you have time, read a good book or do something with friends or loved ones instead of spending too much time on the television or Internet.

Thought: Idleness is sweet but its consequences are bitter

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be occupied with the right things. Protect me against idleness for during such periods, it is easy to fall into sin. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

ONE SIN LEADS TO ANOTHER

We read yesterday how an idle mind can be the devil's workshop. Today, we see the development of that. David had lusted for her and found out she was the wife of Uriah, one of his military commanders who was at that time fighting for David. David then committed adultery and one sin led to another; Bathsheba reported that she had David's child.

This set off a series of cunning schemes by David. First, he sent for her husband to come back so that he could be with his wife and then the child would appear to belong to him. But Uriah was so noble that he slept in the palace and refused to sleep in comfort with his wife for he thought it not right to enjoy himself while others were fighting hard for king and country. Desperate, David sent Joab a message to put Uriah where the fiercest of battles were and eventually, Uriah was killed. His death was engineered by David and thus, David committed murder for plotting Uriah's death.

With the death of Uriah, David's wish came true; he could marry Bathsheba who then bore him a son. The pattern we see: one sin leading to another is common. After David committed adultery, he committed murder.

Do we see a little of that in us sometimes? Perhaps we have done wrong in not doing homework on time. Mummy asks why, and we give an excuse, or lie about why we did not do the homework.

Dear child, even if we can cover our tracks for a while, they would be found out sooner or later. Also, remember that God can see every little sin we commit! Do not be like David in this case. If we have sinned, let us confess our sins and come before his cleansing grace through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Do not for a moment think that we can escape punishment for sins that we commit. David was punished severely for his sin, and we shall read about it tomorrow.

Thought: One sin leads to another.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be brave enough to confess my sins when I am wrong. Help me never to commit another sin to cover the first. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

PUNISHMENT FOLLOWS SIN

God was clearly displeased with David. David had done a list of shameful things: taking another man's wife, murdering him, and sinning against the Lord who loved and blessed him. As a king, how was he going to guide his people and nation in spiritual leadership?

God sent Nathan the prophet to confront David about his sin. Nathan was wise to use a parable about a poor man's only lamb being taken by a rich man to serve it to his guests. Immediately, David saw the injustice of it and said, "As the Lord lived, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die, and he shall restore the lamb fourfold." When Nathan replied, "Thou art the man", David must have been shocked! Surely he stole no one's lamb. Then the reality of his sin hit David and he realised he had sinned against the Lord. But God in his great mercy to David, spared his life but David had to pay fourfold, as he himself said should be the penalty of the rich man. How could he pay fourfold for the death of Uriah? Four of his sons will have to die for the one death of Uriah.

In the speech bubble, summarize in your own words what Nathan said to the king, using verses 7, 9 and 10.

Thought: Punishment always follows sin.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I guard against sinning because punishment will also be reserved for those who sin. Instead, let me walk closely with thee. In Jesus' name I pray – amen.

GOOD LOOKS DO NOT EQUATE TO GOOD HEART

One of the most sought after things in life is to look good. Millions around the world buy billions of dollars worth of beauty products like skin care to be able to "look good". Others may go to specialist doctors to have face-lifts and other types of cosmetic surgery. Absalom, if he lived today, need not do any of these. Why? Because he was very handsome. Verse 25 tells us that perhaps Absalom was the most handsome man in Israel! And not only was he handsome, he had very nice hair too! Men of a certain age tend to lose hair, but Absalom did not have that problem. In fact, he was endowed with a lot of hair. And we may presume it is healthy and beautiful locks of hair. His good looks and eventual popularity made him proud and evil.

Is there anything wrong with being good-looking? Of course not. If God has given us good looks, like He may give us a good mind, we thank Him. However, good looks, like any other gift from God, may make one proud. Are you blessed with good looks? Do people say you look "cute" or "pretty" or "handsome"? How do you feel what they say such things? A right attitude is to be grateful to the Giver, our gracious God. And to thank the one who complimented you. A wrong attitude is to feel this swelling inside and think you are better or "more special" than others.

What is more important than good looks is to have a good heart. Do you have a good heart? Do you have Christ-likeness? Sometimes we come across classmates or other children who may look different from us, or are in some way "disadvantaged". They may have special needs and may not be able to do the things you can. How do we view them? May today's lesson teach us not to look at that which is external, but to treasure that which is internal – someone who possesses a good and kind heart.

Thought: A good heart is better than good looks.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to value the right things – a good heart, a kind person, a gracious boy or girl. Teach me to show that I am a Christian in these practical ways so that perhaps others can see Jesus in me. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

ABSALOM REVOLTS AGAINST HIS FATHER

Instead of being grateful to his father for allowing him to return, Absalom plotted. He carried out a detailed plan to usurp the throne. Absalom first sought to build up his popularity. He equipped himself with magnificent horses and chariots. On top of that, he always had a contingent of fifty footmen to run before his chariot, announcing his arrival with pomp and ceremony. He also sat at the city gate to court the favour of all those who came to the capital, seeking justice for wrongs they suffered in the kingdom. Pretending to care for the people, he slowly gained the confidence of the people and eventually stole their hearts. Finally, he organised a revolt against the king, his father. This was to be one of David's darkest moments as he fled for his life from his son!

What lessons are there for us today? Never be ungrateful to your parents and elders. Your parents have sacrificed a lot for you. On top of providing for your education and home, they may wake up early every school day to ensure you get ready for school. They keep awake when your fever spikes up, especially when you were a baby. The list goes on; they care and love for you in so other many ways!

Write T for True or F for False against the sentence.

1. There was nothing sinister in Absalom presenting himself with chariots and fifty men escorting him whenever he travels. _____

2. Absalom genuinely wanted to help the people when he stood at the city gate. _____

3. David did not want to fight his son Absalom and so he fled from Jerusalem. _____

Thought: Never be like the ungrateful Absalom!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to be grateful to my parents and to pray for them. If they are Christians, that they will be stronger in the Lord. If they are not, that someday soon, they will join me in the family of the Most Holy God. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

A LOYAL FRIEND

David was now on the run from his son, Absalom. In times like these, many may not want to help David. Why? Because they may feel that there is no way David can retain his crown and he will soon be killed by his own son. Why help someone who cannot benefit you?

As David fled from Jerusalem, many who supported David and went with him were foreigners – Cherethites, Pelethites and Gittites. Among them was a man by the name of Ittai, a Gittite. Ittai who had not spent a long time serving David in Jerusalem, wanted to follow David to continue serving him. But David thought it was not fair for Ittai to follow him given that the future for Ittai was uncertain. So David told Ittai to return to his people.

Ittai, although a foreign soldier in David's army left no doubt with regards to his loyalty to David. Ittai could have accepted David's advice to return to his people. After all David was on the run, and in following David, Ittai will also face danger as a fugitive, just like David. Absalom had sought after David's life and will not hesitate to kill any men who followed David and stood in his way.

But Ittai swore an oath before the Lord to stay with David. Ittai vowed that he will continue to serve David and protect David, even if it means losing his life for David's sake. Ittai meant every word he said. If we compare Ittai with Absalom who had received so much undeserved kindness from David his father, Absalom's treatment of his father was shameful. Ittai was a loyal friend to David.

What does it mean to be a loyal friend? A loyal friend is someone whom you can count upon through thick or thin. This means that he or she will not abandon you when you are in a difficult situation. Instead the loyal friend will stay by your side to help you and encourage you. For example if you are bullied by someone, your loyal friend will stand up for you. A loyal friend will also have the courage to speak with you to correct you when you disobey God. As Christians, God calls us to be loyal friends to each other.

Thought: Are you a loyal friend?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be like a loyal friend like Ittai. Help me to love and care for others. In Jesus' name I pray – amen.

STRENGTH IN ADVERSITY

David left Jerusalem in a haste, escaping the wrath and evil plotting of his son Absalom. Although he knew what his son did was wrong, he accepted it as the will of God for he had sinned against God. As his entourage travelled down in the fierce heat of the Jordan valley, a ruthless accuser suddenly appeared on the rocky slopes above them. Shimei shouted at the king, hurled abuses at him and even threw stones at the king. David's followers like Abishai wanted to take action against him but the king would have none of it. "Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him." As he suffered, David looked to the Lord to have mercy on him. He did not blame anyone. He knew that God was with him even in the midst of his sorrows. This is strength in adversity!

What was David's strength based on? He had to learn the painful lesson that he cannot rely on himself, and can only depend on God. David was the most powerful man in the land, and yet he could not save himself. He realized that real strength is dependence on the Lord. He knew he had failed in the past because he had perhaps gloried in self-confidence, in his power, in his empire. That is why he took time off battle, eventually leading him to see Bathsheba, to lust after her, which then started the chain of sinful and painful events in his family. Now that he was being ousted by his son, he knew it was his own fault. He blamed no one, for he knew he brought it upon himself.

Whether adversity is our doing or otherwise, the key thing is to commit ourselves to the Lord. We do not need to learn it the hard way King David did. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and come what may, He will see us through.

Thought: Strength in adversity is dependence on God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, keep me trusting in You even though I may face adversity. Teach me not to just want happiness and good times from You, but to be able to accept difficulties and trouble when You think it is useful for me to learn from them. I know it is not easy to withstand such problems, so to Jesus I will cling, and in His name I pray – amen.

A SPY THRILLER?

Hushai was a good loyal friend of King David who returned to Jerusalem to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. Ahithophel was among the conspirators who plotted against David and took side with Absalom. Thus Hushai was planted in the enemy's palace to help David.

This shrewd move of David was wise. True enough, when Ahithophel advised Absalom to attack that very night, Hushai shot the idea down and said that it was better to gather all Israel and attack David later. God was with David as Absalom preferred Hushai's idea to Ahithophel's. This inside information was then passed on to David through the sons of Zadok and Abiathar the priests. In this way, David and his entourage crossed river Jordon safely to escape to the other side.

What do you think are the right answers?

1. Who betrayed David? _____
2. Who was the spy? _____
3. Whose advice was accepted by Absalom? _____
4. Who were the two messengers? _____
5. Whose sons were they? _____

Thought: God can control even kings.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thou are great and greatly to be praised. I am reminded today that You are above all kings and governments. Help me therefore to trust in You for things in my life, both big or small. Through Jesus my Saviour I pray, amen.

A SPOILT CHILD, A FATHER'S REGRET

David had spoiled his son Absalom who grew up to be proud, covetous, and as we have read on 14th April, an evil man who was ready to kill his father! We read today of the battle scene, but we see again the love of David for his son as he told his generals to spare Absalom's life. In the midst of the battle, Absalom, riding on a mule, met a body of David's men; and perhaps, while trying to escape them he was caught by his hair in the branches of an oak tree. He had thick and magnificent hair, the source of pride in the past, now the cause of his problem. Eventually, Joab and his men made him a target and killed him. Thus Absalom, a murderer of his brother (Amnon) and conspirator (against his own father David) died.

Absalom was a spoilt child. Although his name was a good one – it meant either "father of peace" or "peace of a father" – he brought no peace to the father and the land. Your parents love you a lot and would have given you a meaningful name. Whatever your name is, do you live up to the expectations of your parents? Or are you a spoilt child? Do you always need to have what you want? Do you throw tantrums if mum or dad restricts you or your activities?

If you are a spoilt child, your parents may regret the way they bring you up. I pray you are not spoilt and that you will bring honour and not regret to your parents.

Thought: May I not be a spoilt child.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be a good child and to bring joy and honour to my parents, not regret and pain. Heavenly Father, it is not easy as my nature can be unwilling, so please help me to always turn to You for help. This I ask in Jesus' name, amen.

GOD IS OUR ROCK!

The largest rock in the world is Mount Augustus in Australia. It is 2.5 times the size of the more popular Uluru, which is often mistaken as the largest rock in the world. How big is Mount Augustus? Well, think about Bukit Timah Nature Reserve. Bukit Timah hill is not big, but the entire reserve surrounding it is not small, at about 160 hectares. Mount Augustus is 30 times bigger than that! Think about it – one rock 30 times the size of the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve!

How tall is Mount Augustus? The tallest buildings in Singapore are 280 metres, and three buildings share that honour: Republic Plaza, UOB Plaza, and OUB Centre. Mount Augustus is 1,105 metres above sea-level, which means it is about 4 times as tall as the tallest skyscraper in Singapore. Imagine, one rock 30 times the size of Bukit Timah Reserve, and 4 times as tall as the tallest building in Singapore! It must have been one massive rock!

Now, we do not measure God in physical terms. When we say God is our Rock, what we mean is that God provides us the stability, the strength, the unchangeableness that we need in our spiritual walk.

Sometimes we make the mistake of not relying on God. Instead of depending on this wonderful and powerful "Rock" that God is, we may turn to others for help and by comparison to the Rock, they will be small pebbles.

Photograph of Mount Augustus by John D

Thought: God is our Rock of salvation and life.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You so much for the reminder that You are my Rock. It is so comforting to know that I have You as the rock of my salvation and life. Therefore, help me to always turn to You for help and strength. In Jesus' name I pray – amen.

GOD IS OUR FORTRESS AND DELIVERER!

God is our fortress and deliverer, but what does this mean?

A fortress is a place of security, and a place where one can obtain refuge from one's enemies. Fortresses were built not just for size, but have to be suited for the needs of the occupants. A deliverer is one who gives deliverance or freedom or relief. Here, the idea of God being a fortress to our souls, shielding us from the darts of the Evil One, blends with the concept of God being a deliverer, granting us peace and freedom from sin and the power of sin. Verse 2 is an interesting verse as it tells us that God gives protection (fortress) and is Himself the protector (deliverer).

These are big words – fortress and deliverer. To a child, what would they mean in day-to-day living? To any child of God, whether that child is your age or someone the age of your grandparent, they mean the same thing: that in God we can find all that we need to fight against Satan.

On a daily basis, Satan attacks us. But we seldom sense it. Now Satan is smart enough to camouflage his attacks. When does he attack us? The very second you feel angry for a wrong reason, you feel proud, you feel like you do not want to help others, you feel like you do not want to obey parents – that is when Satan attacks. How do we fight him? The first and most important thing to do is to recognize it is an attack from him and that we need God's help to overcome them.

When troubles and temptation come our way, go to God. Like the hymn goes, "I need thee every hour, Most gracious Lord, no tender voice like Thine can peace afford." Remember, if you go to God, He will surely be able to help you for He, the almighty God, is our Fortress and our Deliverer.

Thought: How blessed to have God as fortress and deliverer.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to have a thankful heart for the help that I can have in You. Teach me also to always turn to You for help first, not as a last resort. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

MAGNIFICIENT PSALMS

David acknowledged that it is God who had been his strength and he continually thanked the Lord for blessing his life. God had been his shield and high tower throughout all the sufferings he endured at the hand of Saul. David saw God's omnipotent power in all the affairs of men. David penned many psalms. The Psalms have been such a blessing to generations of believers. Many have found peace in times of trouble reading the precious words. Others have met beauty when the psalms remind of the wonder of God. But perhaps of all these wonderful psalms, none is as loved and memorised as Psalm 23. As a former shepherd, David knows how important it is for sheep to have a capable and caring shepherd. David himself was capable and caring, for he had fought off wild animals, large predators that threatened his flocks.

Read Psalm 23 and try to memorise it, it will bring much comfort to you. Also, try the following…

How have you been blessed with this Psalm?

1. I know that my heavenly shepherd provides for my needs.
2. He will give me green pastures and still waters – calm and peace.
3. God will direct my steps.
4. God will protect and comfort me in dark times.
5. God will show goodness and mercy to me all the days of my life.
6. All these show me that I am greatly loved by my heavenly Father.
7. I am thus strengthened to trust and love Him too.

Do you agree with the above? YES / NO

Add one more blessing here.

_____

Thought: God's blessings are countless.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to have a thankful heart for all Your blessings. I am so glad for Thy goodness, and I want to thank you through Jesus' name, amen!

DAVID'S PROUD ACT - A CENSUS

A census is an official headcount of people in a country. Here David decided to have a headcount of the fighting men. Perhaps he wanted information about the military might of Israel. Perhaps he was lifted up with pride. From God's perspective, it was evil. Israel had been ruled by a theocracy governed by God. It was He who led them, won their battles over their enemies, and eventually endowed them with prestige and power in their land of plenty. Now, David was counting his men, in a way leaders of the other nations around them would.

After Joab gave the census to David, David was convicted of his sin in doing the census. He quickly confessed his sin and asked the Lord to remove his iniquity. The Lord sent the fearless prophet Gad to David to reveal to him the message from the Lord. He was asked to choose one of 3 options as punishment – 7 years of famine, 3 months of attack by the enemies, or 3 days of pestilence. David cast himself upon the mercy of God and chose the 3 days of pestilence. As a result, 70,000 people died. Sin is always grave and demands a heavy price. Don't treat sin lightly.

Match the consequences of sin for these people.

The Sin	The Consequence
Achan disobeyed God and took things that were cursed by God.	He and his family were stoned to death.
Jacob tricked his brother out of his birthright.	Fled from Pharaoh's presence for forty years.
Evil living of people during Noah's time.	The fire of the Lord burnt and consumed them.
Moses killed an Egyptian.	Sent away from home for more than fourteen years.
Israelites who continually complained in the Wilderness.	Destroyed in a global flood.

Thought: May I not fool around with sin.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, cleanse me and keep me from sin and temptation. Help me to realize that sin is not fun and that I'd be a fool to fool around with sin. In Jesus' name, amen.

DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

Have you ever wondered why David was called the "Man after God's Own Heart"? Wow – that is a super title for a Christian! What special thing did David do to earn that title? How holy was David to deserve that accolade?

Was he more holy than the other great Old Testament characters? At first glance, he would appear to be worse than many Old Testament characters. Why? Well, we have already read earlier this month that David committed adultery with Bathsheba. On top of that, he committed murder by plotting the death of Bathsheba's husband. Imagine someone in your church who has committed these sins – would you want him to be your Junior Worship teacher? No! In fact, this person would have been jailed!

Why then was this most precious accolade given to David? It was because of his sensitivity to sin when pointed out to him. Whilst he was not perfect, he was very ready to repent. When Nathan the prophet pointed out he sinned against God by snatching Uriah's wife, he was repentant. He did not argue and he did not give excuses.

Many believe that David wrote Psalm 51 after he was convicted of his sin by Nathan. In this sad and personal psalm, it is clear from verse 10 David was completely repentant – he wanted a new heart. It is this quality in David – the humility to accept chastisement and repent readily – those were perhaps some reasons why David is called the man after God's own heart. Are you a child after God's own heart? Do you repent when someone points out your mistake? Are you grateful when someone is willing to show you where you have made a mistake?

Thought: May I be a child after God's own heart!

Prayer: Teach me Heavenly Father to be after Your own heart, to be willing to repent, and like David, to ask for a new heart that loves You more and more. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

YOU CAN SERVE GOD TOO!

You will recall from the reading on 7th April that when God did not want David to build his temple, David accepted the Lord's instruction humbly. What we read today is that he was unselfish, sparing no effort in preparing for the temple although he will not have the honour of building it.

This generous attitude and gracious spirit of wholehearted support stands as a great and noble tribute to the greatest king of Israel. He spent seven years gathering large quantities of building materials e.g. stones, iron, brass, and timber. Can you imagine spending seven years to collect materials for a project? Such was the dedication of David. He even prepared a lot of gold and silver, as well as hiring workmen of all sorts. He also reminded Solomon his son of the great honour the Lord had bestowed upon him and that he should remain faithful to keep the law of the Lord, seeking Him always for wisdom and understanding. That is also what we should do, in any work for the Lord!

Have you been asked to serve God in any way? If yes, please say "Yes" if you are able to help. It is so wonderful to serve God who gave us His only begotten Son! What better way to say "Thank You" than to serve Him? Service to God need not be in some "big job". And we can serve God anywhere: could be at home in helping with clearing the tables or praying for the family; could be in school being kind to a new classmate; could be in church arranging chairs just before Sunday School starts. Let us learn from David about service for God: he was dedicated, and detailed, and totally unselfish. This is true service. Some boys and girls may prefer to serve God in areas only where they can be seen or where others know about. This is not service to God; this is service to themselves!

Thought: Be diligent for the Lord

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to serve You in whatever way possible. And please Heavenly Father, teach me also to serve You with the right attitude. I can learn from David in being unselfish in service, and the best example for me to follow is Jesus, for He gave the ultimate in service; He gave His life willingly. This I pray in the precious name of my Saviour, amen.

PRAY FOR CHURCH LEADERS

David was a king much blessed by God. Besides his deep spiritual knowledge and understanding, God gave him musical talents, military might, financial acumen to amass wealth and able governing and administering of his nation. In today's reading, we see how he organized people in the service of the Lord. David cannot do everything himself and thus had to delegate and guide.

Do you think his task was easy? Surely not for he had to lead the entire nation to serve God. Although he had capable men to help manage different areas of his kingdom, the ultimate responsibility was his as he was king. Likewise in today's context, the task of leading the church is not easy. God has appointed over our church, pastors, elders and deacons. They cannot do everything themselves, they need church members to rise up and volunteer to help in various fellowship groups, committees, contact groups, etc. But as David was responsible for Israel then, our church leaders are responsible for the spiritual well-being of the people in our church.

How may we help the leaders of our church, knowing that their responsibilities are great? One of the best ways is to pray for them. You see, you are too young to shoulder a lot of work or responsibility in church, but you are not too young to go before God and seek His help to guide and strengthen our leaders. And it is so important our leaders are guided by God so they in turn can lead us in the right way! Say a prayer for your pastors and other leaders. Ask the Lord to protect them from the traps of Satan. Pray they will be men of prayer, that daily they may be found in prayer and communion with the God who will continue to be faithful. Pray they will serve with humility and a willing heart. And as you pray for them, pray also for their families, also that they will be kept close to their families as well.

Thought: Serve the Lord by praying for his servants!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I pray for the leaders of my church and ask that You will be so merciful to them, to their loved ones, and to my church. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

WHY WAS DAVID SO HAPPY?

By now David may be in his late 60s. He had wisely handed over the throne and crown to his son Solomon. Still, he was greatly respected, honoured and loved by his people. As he publicly announced building preparations for the temple and that his son Solomon was chosen to lead in this project, he also challenged the people to give to the Lord's work and service.

David's abounding joy was that the people responded with great gladness of heart. The leaders from every level of the nation joined hands to give willingly to the Lord's work. Gold, silver, brass, iron, jewellery, and precious stones were given to God Almighty. It was a day of great honour and praise to God. This caused David to burst into a psalm of praise and honour and majesty to God. Beginning from verse 11, it is a great psalm of praise, showing the great love that David had for God.

What makes you happy? Many kids like to play computer games, watch cartoons, play with friends, be involved in other past-times. There is absolutely nothing wrong with the above things that make a lot of kids happy, as long as they are done in moderation.

But should there not be other things that make you, a Christian boy or girl, happy? If you are truly saved, you should be happy reading God's Word. Having family devotion where you can share with loved ones should be a time of rejoicing where we can encourage each other. And serving God by serving others should bring joy to us too as we know God will be pleased.

One thing that should bring great joy to a Christian would be the salvation of loved ones. Do you have parents, grandparents, or other loved ones and friends who are still not Christians? If so, pray for them faithfully. The writer of this sharing prayed for his mother for years and God finally answered his prayer when mum was almost 80!

Thought: Be happy at what God would be happy with.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I delight in the things that You would be happy with, and learn also to pray for the salvation of loved ones and friends who may still be outside of Thy kingdom. Through the precious name of my Saviour I pray, amen.

ADONIJAH'S PLAN OVERTHROWN

In his old age, David's fourth son, Adonijah rose up to challenge Solomon as the heir to the throne. He too, like Absalom before him, prepared himself chariots and horsemen to go before him to exalt him. Two persons betrayed David and sided with Adonijah – Joab and Abiathar. God's Word says that David "his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?" and so we can conclude that Adonijah was totally spoiled.

As he was gathering his supporters, Nathan the prophet informed Bathsheba of the impending danger and urged her to tell David. So she went and told David of the rebellion by Adonijah. Nathan also stepped in at this appropriate time to ask the king whether he approved of what Adonijah had done. At this juncture, the king asked Bathsheba to come before him again and in the presence of Nathan, he assured her that Solomon would sit upon his throne. Then he called for Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet and Benaiah the military commander to cause his son Solomon to ride the mule to Gihon. There Zadok and Nathan will anoint him king over Israel, with blowing of trumpet and a shout of "God save king Solomon." Thus it was done and all the people rejoiced. Adonijah heard the noise and knew that his plan had failed.

God had already planned for David to be succeeded by Solomon. For Adonijah to try to go against God's plan was both foolish and futile; God will protect his appointed king of Israel – Solomon.

None of us will probably live a life as dramatic as the one we have just read about. We are not princes or princesses. But the God of Solomon is the same God who watches over us and He will extend His hand to protect and guide us. Do you need help? Do you want guidance? Turn to God today.

Thought: God will take care of me.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I turn to You now for guidance and help that I may do the right things in my life. I also pray for help in my studies, that I will be diligent and fulfill my responsibilities as a student, knowing that I must study not only for myself and parents, but also for You. In Jesus' name I pray – amen.

DAVID'S CHARGE TO SOLOMON

As David lay on his death-bed, he was concerned both for his son and for Israel. He called for Solomon to come and gave him a charge to rule the country well.

First, Solomon was to walk in all the ways of God, to keep His commandments. This is the most important. If he honours the Lord, the Lord will honour him and the kingdom would endure. Next, Solomon was given wise advice concerning the enemies. He must be careful of Joab who had killed and shed much blood. Shimei was another dangerous person that Solomon had to be careful of. If necessary, they would have to be put to death. But he was to remember Barzillai kindly for the good deed he had done to David. These steps would ensure that Solomon ruled wisely and powerfully.

Another similar charge is from Paul to his spiritual son Timothy. It is found in 2 Timothy 2. Read it and answer these questions. Clues are in the verses given.

1. Like Solomon, Timothy must _____ God's commandments to faithful men (verse 2).

2. Like Solomon, Timothy must be careful of his enemies, who are the false teachers who have _____ from the truth (verse 18).

3. Like Solomon, Timothy, as the servant of the Lord, must be _____ unto every good work (verse 21).

Thought: May I learn to be faithful like Timothy.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I be faithful to whatever responsibilities You have given me; be it studying, being a nice brother or sister, lending a kind ear, not being bossy to others. I know I will still fail at times but Heavenly Father, do please help me when I fail. In Jesus' name I pray – amen.

DAVID'S ENDURING LEGACY (1)

For seven years after David's death, the construction of the magnificent temple went on steadily. At long last the final cedar board was covered in gold leaf. The Lord appeared to Solomon a second time. He assured him that He, the Most High, had hallowed (made holy) the sanctuary and that He would be pleased to reside there among His people.

Here, as in 1 Kings 3:5 when the Lord appeared to Solomon the first time, there is a superb accolade and tribute from God Himself to David. It shows how highly God esteemed David – how he was a man of incredible integrity and uprightness of heart. In verses 4-5, God said that all of Solomon's glory, all of his power, all of his achievements must be measured in terms of whether he walked as David his father walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness. In fact, the future kings of Israel were also judged according to whether they "walked as David did".

David, the humble, gifted, great Shepherd King had lived before God in utter faithfulness. As children of God, we too need to follow David in the way he loved and served God too.

According to today's reading, what was king David's most enduring legacy? Circle the right answer.

1. His magnificent psalms
2. His preparation of the temple
3. His military conquests
4. His integrity of heart and uprightness before the Lord

Thought: Our lives must magnify the Lord.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, make my life one that is like David's, walking in integrity of heart and uprightness before the Lord. This I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

DAVID'S ENDURING LEGACY (2)

The glorious temple of God was finally completed. Solomon appointed a day for the dedication of the temple. It was a great day of rejoicing. All the people, from the highest to the lowest in the land, assembled to witness the bringing in of the ark and all the holy vessels from the tabernacle to the temple. They also offered sacrifices of sheep and oxen, a great multitude which could not be numbered. There was also wonderful music by the singers and the blowing of trumpets in praise and thanksgiving to the Lord.

Solomon also prayed for the people. He asked specially that God will be merciful to the people. If they should sin, he asked the Lord to hear from heaven and forgive the sin of His people. After he had made an end of praying, fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house. The consumption of the sacrifices by fire was an indication that God accepted the offerings. That night, the Lord spoke to Solomon and again reminded him to walk as David his father walked, and do according to all that the Lord had commanded him. Thus again David set the excellent example for Solomon.

In today's reading of 2 Chronicles 7:17, we read of David being mentioned as the measure of godliness for his son Solomon. Can you recall how David walked? Give three examples of his godly behaviour.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Thought: May I learn to be a child with a heart for God, as David the king was.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I walk with Thee day by day and learn Thy godly ways. May I learn to have a heart for You, to be a child after Thine own heart. Thank you for the lessons on David, and I pray these lessons will change my life. This I humbly pray in Jesus' name, amen.

INTRODUCTION TO PROVERBS

King Solomon was said to be the wisest king in Israel. He wrote most parts of the book of Proverbs. Proverbs are wise sayings and they teach us how to live a blessed and godly life. If we understand, and more importantly, do what the Proverbs teach us, we will be wise in so many areas of our life: sin, money, our speech, our friends and family.

In this world, it is important that we do not listen to the people who tell us wrong things, or messages from TVs, Internet, books, magazines… However, Proverbs is a book we can trust. Proverbs is God's Word, "a lamp unto our feet and light unto our path." It will guide us so that we grow up to be upright children of God.

Put these words in the right column.

wisdom greed understanding knowledge evil sinful

A Wise Man	A Foolish Man
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Thought: Learn from the wise, and be wise.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me how to live wisely every day. I thank You for Proverbs, and I especially want to live my life according to Proverbs 1:7, that I may fear and love Thee. In Jesus' name, amen.

THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS KNOWLEDGE

Cain and Abel were two sons of Adam and Eve. One day, Cain came to worship God by offering some fruits and grains. Abel brought sheep and cattle to give to the Lord. Cain's gift was rejected and the brother's was accepted. God accepted the one who had obeyed Him. Abel had the fear of the Lord when he gave God the sheep and cattle for that was the way God's people were told to worship. Cain didn't care. He had no fear of the Lord, did things his way, and so he disobeyed God.

To come to God with great respect and worship is to fear the Lord for He is the all-knowing and all-powerful God.

Cancel the other offering that God did not accept.

Cain's offerings

Abel's offerings

Thought: Those who truly know the true God have great reverence for Him.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, make me to know more of Thy power and love. Help me to worship You in the correct way, by keeping quiet and paying attention during Junior Worship and other Christian children programmes. In Jesus' name, amen.

OBEY YOUR PARENTS

Have you seen children who don't obey their parents? You can see them perhaps at shopping centres, losing their temper and crying when their parents refuse to buy any toys for them. They would make a lot of noise and create a scene hoping their parents will give in to them.

The obedient child will simply obey when their parents say "No" to their request. They know their parents' word is to be obeyed. When Mother wants you to stop watching television, switch it off. If you are asked to keep your room clean, obey her. God wants children to obey their parents. Those who honour their father and mother gladly do what their parents want. Their homes will be happy homes! And when you obey, do it willingly and immediately – not grudgingly and with hesitance.

Circle those pictures that show a happy home.

Thought: Happy the home where parents are honoured.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give me an obedient heart to please my parents, that they may know that I obey Thy Holy Word. In Jesus' name, amen.

BE CAREFUL WHEN CHOOSING FRIENDS

There are friends who are good and friends who are bad. Some friends you have, and these could be good friends of yours, may have bad and foolish habits. They could be lazy and refuse to do homework. They could be dishonest and take things that don't belong to them. They may use bad words. They may tease and bully the weak.

As a Christian, you must be careful when you choose friends. You can be friendly to everybody but not everybody can be your good friend. Don't go anywhere with people who are troublemakers and have bad habits. These people will not help you to be what God wants you to be. Neither will they teach you to be honest and kind. Choose your friends carefully.

Draw your best friend.
Write down three of his or her good qualities or habits.

Thought: True friends are treasures, precious and rare.

Prayer: To have a true friend, help me to be one, Heavenly Father. And I thank Thee the best friend of all, is Jesus Christ my Lord, in whose name I pray. Amen.

THOSE WHO DO NOT FEAR THE LORD

Have you gone on a hike up Bukit Timah hill? I'm sure you had a leader who led the way up for your group. It could be a teacher or an adult who had been up the hill before. He will walk in front and help everybody to climb up the slippery steps safely. Nobody will get lost and all will successfully reach the top and come down safely.

God is like a leader or guide. The path He wants us to take is the path laid out in His Holy Word. There are instructions and commandments for us in His Book. They will guide us and lead us safely in the way we should go.

What do you think will happen to a person who does not let the words of the Bible guide his life?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Hint: The answer is in the Bible verses you have just read.

Thought: How can a person hate knowledge?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I love Thy Word, the true knowledge, and apply it in my life. In Jesus' name, amen.

TRUST IN THE LORD

You may have heard from your parents that the economic situation is bad. Your parents may be out of a job or facing financial problems.

Imagine this scenario… Once a family sat down to dinner. The father was worried as he had very little savings left.

"Jesus can help us," said little Joel, one of the sons. "Jesus once made a boy's lunch enough for thousands of people."

"You're right, Joel," said the father, "let's ask God to help us." So he, his wife and his children prayed.

That evening the phone rang. It was the man who owned the provision shop. He had some canned food to give to the family. The rain had spoilt the paper wrapping round the cans and although the food is still edible, he couldn't sell them. Imagine the joy of this family!

Joel was right. Jesus always has a way to help us. There is no trouble in which He can't help us, so trust in the Lord always!

Match the person to the faith and trust in the Lord.

Gideon	able to heal the lame man at the Temple gate.
Daniel	able to fight the enemies with 300 soldiers.
Joshua	trusted God to deliver him from the lions.
Peter & John	trusted God to conquer Jericho by walking round it.

Prayer: Our Father in Heaven, it is wonderful to know that we can always depend on You. Help us to remember this when we're in trouble. We thank you and love You for saving us from sin, our worst trouble. Please keep us in Your Kingdom and bless us. Amen.

GIVE TO THE LORD

Some children gave 10 % of the money they receive as pocket money to the Lord. That is pleasing to the Lord. Imagine a child who received a prize of $100 saying," I give my parents some money, bought a shirt, a present and a few more things. There isn't much left for God."

What is wrong with that? He did not remember very well how much the Lord loved him. He put the Lord in the wrong place; he put the Lord last. In the Old Testament, God told His people to give the first fruits to Him. Being farmers, when they harvest the ripe grains, they set aside the first and best crops for the Lord first. God does not need these grains or lambs but He wants us to think of Him first, and He wants us to love Him more than anything else.

Tick ☐ and choose the better way of spending your money if you have $10 a week.

Buy food in the canteen	$6
Buy drinks	$2
Buy snacks, pens	$2
Offering on Sunday (from Mummy)	$1

☐

Offering on Sunday	$1
Buy food in the canteen	$6
Buy snacks, pens	$2
Buy drinks once (Bring water-bottle)	$1

☐

Thought: It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me the blessing of giving. Help me to be a generous child, for in doing so, I am only following my Heavenly Father, for you gave the most generous gift of Jesus, in whose name I pray, amen.

A GOOD DEED EVERYDAY

Are you good at a subject in school, perhaps in English, Chinese or Maths? Do your friends come to you for help? If you are helpful, good for you. If you are not, and say," I'm busy. Don't bother me," it's time to change.

When God gives us talents and gifts, we are to use them for good. We are to help others. We are not to be selfish. Teaching your friends how to do the problem sum is a good deed. You are showing love and patience. Our great God is always ready to help us. We must also be ready to help others.

Circle those good deeds you have done before.

telling others about Jesus

arranging chairs

caring for a new classmate

sharing lunch with poor classmate

helping to do the dishes

not being impatient

not wanting to take revenge

Thought: One good deed a day is a good way to spend any day.

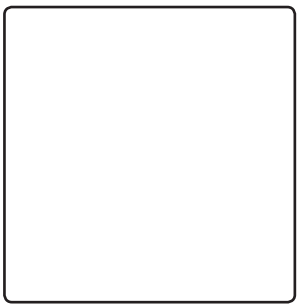
Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be a good Christian, and to do at least one good thing a day. In Jesus' name, amen.

KEEP YOUR HEART FOR JESUS

One of the most terrible and painful ways to die is by stoning. And one great Christian who died that way was Stephen. You can imagine what happened that day just before his spirit was lifted to heaven. Rocks were flying. People were throwing them at him for saying that he believed in Jesus. The rocks hit his chest; they hit his face and his back. Pretty soon Stephen would be dead. Just before he died, he prayed. Did he ask God to punish his enemies? No! He said, "Lord, please do not punish them for this sin." After he had said that, Stephen died.

Stephen did not quarrel with his enemies. He had no hatred for them. He did not sin even though they were nasty to him and even killed him. His heart was pure

Complete the verse Proverbs 4:23 by drawing out the answer.

Keep your  with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life.

Thought: I must not let evil thoughts enter my heart.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, king of my life, keep my heart pure for Thee. In Jesus' name, amen.

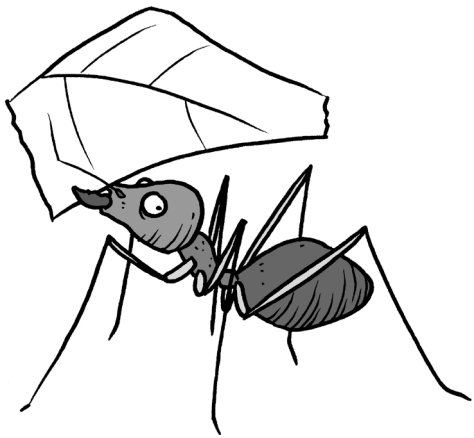
LEARN FROM THE ANTS

"She is as busy as an ant." Have you ever heard anybody saying that? Watch the ants as they hurry to and fro. They seem to be working non-stop.

A sluggard or lazy person can learn much as he watches the ants in their labour. Not only are they hardworking but they also prepare for the future. They prepare for winter when there will be no food. Summer is therefore the best time to gather in the food.

In the same way, every child of God can be useful. We can learn to be good workers. We will not be useful if we don't learn to work. Little children can pick up their own toys and help around the house. Are you a such a child, or do you procrastinate or even complain when you are asked to help?

Here is a giant ant. Draw many small ants hurrying in a line.



Thought: I must be better than the ants!

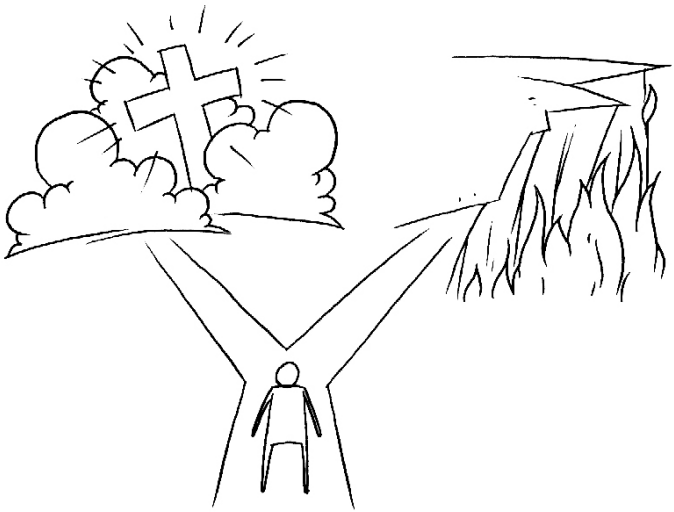
Prayer: Heavenly Father Jesus, thank you for legs and hands to do your work. May I be a hardworking and helpful child for Thee. In Jesus' name, amen.

LOVE LIFE AND HATE DEATH

God has set two ways for everybody in this world to choose to walk in. One way leads to Life and the other way leads to Death. Nobody is so foolish as to love Death at the onset. Yet many people are choosing it without knowing it. Why? Because that road looks attractive, and one would naturally prefer it. These people do not love God; they do not believe the Lord Jesus Christ; this is sad but is a common sin.

Wise people want to seek the right way and find favour with God. This means to believe in what the Bible says. We are not talking about the wisdom of the world, or about people who may have studied a lot and have secured advanced degrees. Instead, we are talking about the wisdom that only God can give. The Bible clearly states, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" Acts 16:31.

Which path would you prefer? Why do you choose that path?



Thought: To find Jesus is to find life everlasting.

Prayer: Our Father in heaven, help me to be faithful in sticking to the path that leads to heaven, and make me love Jesus more and more. In Jesus' name, amen.

BE A WISE SON

In Israel, the farmers harvest their wheat before and during summer. During this time there is much work to be done. Although modern farms use modern technology to lighten the workload of of planting, harvesting and the like, such machines were not available in the past. Then, many hands are required to work on the huge farms.

A farmer's son who sleeps or idles at this time will be a disgrace to his father. When everybody is working hard, no one wants to be seen "folding his hands", which means he is not doing anything productive to help in the farming process. It shows that he doesn't care for his father, for his family.

Likewise, a child of God should not bring shame to our heavenly Father. We should be working hard for the Lord. We can help our parents, brothers, sisters and friends. We can tell others of Jesus and His love. We can bring them to church. There is much work to do before Jesus comes again.

Proverbs 10:5

_____

_____

Thought: Now is the summer time of God's time-table.

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, help me to be that wise son/daughter. In Jesus' name, amen.

LOVE COVERETH ALL SINS

"You are stupid and ugly," said Lydia to Adelene.

"Maybe I am," said Adelene," but in many ways you are very nice."

Lydia was stunned! She was so unkind to Adelene, and how could Adelene be so nice to her after the mean and untrue remark! She looked up and smiled. "You really aren't ugly and stupid,"she said. So, the two girls reconciled and became friends again.

Adelene wasn't stupid or ugly. Let me tell you what she was – she was a godly and wise young girl. She knew how to get around a quarrel and stay friendly. Jesus told us to be kind like Adelene. When somebody says mean things to us, we are to say good things back to them. "Love covereth all sins."

God's children are to act that way because God acts that way. When a man prays to idols, God still brings the rain to water his garden. Does God tell the sun not to shine on his house? Oh, no, God is kind and good even to those who do not love Him.

Jesus showed his love for us by:

1. _____ for our sins.

2. _____ on the cross for us.

3. _____ for us in heaven.

4. _____ the Holy Spirit to comfort and teach us.

5. _____ us the Bible to guide us.

Thought: Love is nothing without action.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to know the real meaning of love, and to apply it in my life. In Jesus' name, amen.

ALWAYS BE JUST AND FAIR

There was once a provision shop owner. He sold all kinds of foodstuff. e.g. rice, sugar, salt, beans and canned food. However, he hid a secret for years. What was his secret? It was his habit to mix the expensive rice with cheap, broken bits of rice. This he sold as expensive rice.

One day a customer bought two kilograms of rice. When he reached home, he decided to weigh it. He was suspicious. True enough, his scale showed that the rice weighed only 1.8 kilogram!

The shopkeeper had cheated on two counts. Not only did he mix the rice but he also used false weights. The Lord does not like such unfair practices that cheat the poor and innocent. His delight is an honest person who is fair and just.

Talk to mummy and find out whether she knows of people e.g. in the market, who cheat when they are buying or selling. Or your father, because he must have met people who cheat in the place of work.

Thought: Nobody may see us cheating but the Lord knows.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be honest even when nobody is looking. I pray I will also not cheat and copy in class and school. In Jesus' name, amen.

DON'T BE PROUD

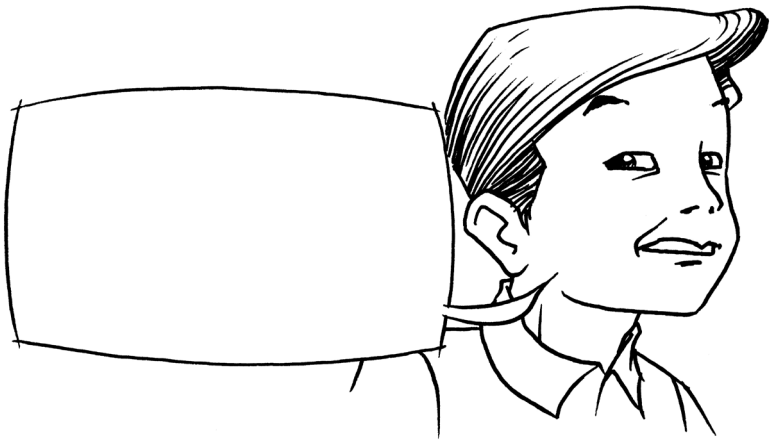
John was always winning prizes in Art competitions. Once he won the top prize when he drew a picture of an exciting dragon boat race. He was very happy when his name was announced at the morning assembly; the principal congratulated him as everybody clapped.

As days went by, his friends became disappointed with him. Pride has gone into John's head! Whenever the teacher praised someone else's art piece, he would say," It's not that good." or "He coloured the sea with the wrong colours. Mine is better!" He was proud. He was selfish. He praising himself.

In the next On-the -Spot Art competition, John did not win any prizes. Oh, how sad he was! He was sure he would win. With no victory, John became ashamed of himself.

Dear child, remember that God loves the humble and lowly. Everything that we have, our talents and abilities, come from God. As He gave, He can take away.

In the illustration of the proud boy,
write the boastful words he spoke.



Thought: It is disgraceful to boast.

Prayer: May I walk humbly with Thee, Heavenly Father. I remember that Jesus, the Son of God in Heaven, came down to earth to live as man, and I thank Thee for it! In Jesus' name, amen.

BE A FAITHFUL FRIEND

What are talebearers? Nobody likes them. They carry tales of people behind their backs. They report to others and to you of things that other people say about you, usually unpleasant things.

"I'm not going to talk to Tammie anymore. She's lazy and borrowed my Maths book to copy. Now she's forgotten to bring it. She cannot be trusted," Candice complained to her friend Linda. The next thing Candice knew was Tammie charging angrily at her.

Tammie looked at her fiercely and said, "You don't have to tell everybody unpleasant things about me. I borrowed your book once but how many times have I lent my book to you?" With that she stormed away. To be a good and faithful friend, never do what Candice did. Don't be a talebearer.

Here are some examples of tale-bearing. If you are guilty, confess your sins to the Lord who will forgive you.

1. "MinLi, don't make friends with Joy because she is very greedy. She took two buns and she is still taking two more."
2. "She took my pencil box. She is a thief. She is so dishonest."
3. "My friend is very lazy. Teacher punished her because she didn't do her work every day. She told me that she likes to sleep".
4. "My cousin told me that she lied to her teacher when she didn't do her homework. She said that she forgot to bring her book. She always tell lies."

Thought: Be a faithful friend, not a talebearer.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, set a watch over my mouth. Help me control what I say, that I will not be a talebearer. In Jesus' name, amen.

BE A CHEERFUL GIVER

Andrew is a cheerful giver. When he heard that his friend was in hospital, he gave him a big Bible storybook to read. On Missions Sunday, when he heard about the needs of missionaries and their mission work, he put a good sum of money in the offering bag. He even bought an extra gospel CD to give away to his classmate because he wanted he wanted his classmate to hear the gospel. Andrew had learnt from the Bible that all that he has comes from the Lord. The Lord had provided for his needs and also enabled him to be a cheerful giver to others in need.

Andrew is also faithful in giving his tithes to the Lord.
Do you know what happens to the money collected during the offering on Sunday?

1. They help to pay for water and electric bills of the church
2. They help to support the pastors and the people who work in church
3. They help to pay for the activities and events in church.
4. They help to support missions and missionaries.
5. They can be used to buy Bibles for churches.

Thought: Am I a cheerful giver?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to give cheerfully and willingly. In Jesus' name, amen.

BE A SOUL WINNER

Mary Slessor was a famous missionary who went to Africa to win souls for Jesus. Friends told her that the jungles there were filled with lions and other wild animals. The natives there would kill her and eat her up.

"I've heard that," brave Mary replied. "But I know the Lord won't send me to Africa just to be eaten by a wild animal or fierce native. I'm going there to bring them the message of salvation. I firmly believe that God will protect me."

Mary Slessor was a soul winner. She wanted people to know the Lord Jesus Christ. "He that winneth souls is wise." All who know the Lord Jesus must be soul winners too. Have you ever witnessed for Jesus? You need not go to Africa. You can invite friends to church, give tracts, gospel tapes and tell them how Jesus saved you.

Circle the things you should do to be a good witness.

gossiping

telling lies **reading Bible**

teasing weaker children **arranging chairs & tables**

paying attention in class **helping others in class**

doing Junior RPG

Thought: Souls are very precious to the Lord.

Prayer: Teach me Heavenly Father, to win souls for thee too. Help me to start at home and in school, to tell someone about Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen.

ALWAYS TELL THE TRUTH

Check your dictionary for the meaning of the word "abomination." My dictionary says," horror and disgust." What fills God with horror and disgust? Yes, lying lips.

"Wei Ming stole the money, I think," said Fu Long. He knew it was not true, but since he did not like Wei Ming, he wanted to harm him that way!

"He did?" asked the teacher. "If it's true, I'll have to ring his parents."

Fu Long felt very sorry. He didn't mean to say what he had said, and he knew it wasn't true. Now it was too late!

Poor Wei Ming was in deep trouble. Nobody believed him. His parents really thought he was a thief. At last Fu Long told the truth, but the harm had been done.

Lies hurt people. They make people think wrong things, then they do wrong things and there is much trouble. People who lie do not love the way Jesus wants us to love others.

Describe in your own words what "lying" means:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thought: We lie sometimes because we are afraid of trouble.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I learn to always tell the truth, even if I may suffer or be punished for the truth. Help me to be a brave boy / girl. In Jesus' precious name, amen.

WHAT HAPPENS TO LAZY PEOPLE

Do you notice that hardworking children are liked and respected? The lazy children are the ones who are scolded by their parents and teachers. On the other hand, the diligent are often chosen to be monitors and prefects. Best of all, the diligent pupils may top the class as they have more knowledge and understanding of the lessons.

The Bible says the diligent shall rule. They are the ones who will be put in charge of important jobs. The lazy shall be under them. They will be the servants of the diligent.

Name some Bible men/women who were diligent.

1. J _____
   (He became Prime Minister of Egypt)

2. D _____
   (He became Prime Minister in Babylon)

3. M _____
   (As leader, he served 2 million people in the Wilderness)

4. R _____
   (She worked long in the fields to feed herself and her mother-in-law)

Thought: To be a leader, we must be diligent.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me the importance of working hard all my life. In Jesus' name, amen.

LOVE THAT TEACHETH

Weiwen's father was surprised when he came home and could not find his son. Weiwen was nine and always asked permission to go out. When he came back, his father became angry when he discovered that he had gone out with his neighbour to sell some comics to get enough money to buy new ones. Weiwen had foolishly heeded the words of his neigbour to do things without his parents' knowledge. He was caned that night.

Have you been disciplined? Do you like it?

It is very painful to be caned. But your parents have to discipline you for disobeying them. Furthermore, in disobeying parents, you are also disobeying God! Discipline is what the Bible teaches, for it shows your parents love you and teach you to be good.

This mother canes her son when he is disobedient.

She _____ him.

This mother does not cane her son when he is disobedient.

She _____ him.

Thought: A good parent teaches by using the cane sometimes.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I thank you for loving parents who teach me. Even when they discipline me, I should remember they are doing it out of love. In Jesus' name, amen.

ARE YOU BAD-TEMPERED?

God said, "Let there be light, and there was light," the Sunday school teacher was teaching and Jenny was listening. She was also thinking. She thought not only about how great and wonderful God is, but how fast God is in making Day and Night and the millions and millions of plants and animals of the world. God made all things just by speaking and it was so.

But God is slow about one thing. He is slow to anger. Even though we sin everyday He doesn't punish us as we deserve right away. No, He is very patient with us. For Jesus' sake, He does not treat us as we deserve, but He forgives us all our sins. The next time you get angry and lose your temper, think of God who is slow to anger. Be of great understanding.

Can you think of how ugly it is to be bad-tempered?

1. A bad-tempered person is (hsifles) s _____ .

2. A bad-tempered person will soon have very few (sdneirf) f _____ .

3. A bad-tempered person will get into (elbuort) t _____ .

Thought: A bad-tempered person is not pleasing to God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be gentle and good tempered. I know it may not be easy, but with Thy help, nothing is impossible. In Jesus' name, amen.

PLEASANT WORDS

Grandma was feeling lonely. Then Elaine, her granddaughter, came to visit her and talked to her. "Grandma, may I get you a cup of water?" "Grandma, here's a cushion for your back." With each kind thought and action from Elaine, Grandma felt better. They were such pleasant words to hear. They cheered her up very much.

Once, there was a grouchy school helper cleaning the classrooms. A friendly pupil in Primary 4 went up to her and spoke to her in Mandarin, "Thank you, Auntie. You make our class so clean. You work very quickly too." The school helper smiled. She had not heard such words often. For many weeks those words were like medicine for her. They made her feel so good.

What pleasant words can you use to cheer up Mummy or Daddy when they are sick or tired or had a bad day at work? Do you even ask them how their day was?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thought: Use your tongue to glorify God!

Prayer: Father in Heaven, help us to make the hearts of other people glad, especially by telling them about our Saviour Jesus. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

HOW TO HAVE FRIENDS

Do you like to have many friends? Friends gladden our hearts and everywhere we go is a much friendlier place if we have somebody to talk to and play with. School becomes a happy place when you think of your friends there. Church is a great place too when you have many good friends there.

The secret of having many friends is to be friendly yourself. You must be willing to greet, welcome and talk to others first. Go up to someone new and smile and make him or her feel comfortable and at home. Every child of God must be friendly. We want as many people as possible to know Jesus. We are so glad we belong to Jesus and we want others to be saved.

Complete the words of this famous hymn:

What a friend we have in _____ .
All our _____ and griefs to bear,
What a privilege to carry,
Everything to God in _____ .

Thought: The secret of having friends is to be friendly.

Prayer: Thank you, Heavenly Father for the many friends You have given me. Help me to treasure them, and be a good friend to them. In Jesus' name, amen.

GOD IS IN CHARGE!

Which is the longest river in the world? It is the Nile River, and it is more than 6,000 kilometers. That is a monster of a river! When we compare the Singapore River to the Nile, it is like comparing a toothpick to a big tree. And when the waters of the Nile rage, they can be fearsome.

The Nile could bring life or death. Its waters quench thirst, it is a wonderful way of transportation, it facilitated trade. However, its roaring waters can also cause drowning or capsizing of boats.

Today's verse teaches though that we need not fear man, for even the greatest of man - the king – is controlled by the Lord! God can change the heart of the King just like he can change course of rivers.

Is there something that you are worried about or frightened of? Is your family having financial problems? Or maybe your parents are not getting along well and are quarrelling bigtime? Or someone you love dearly is in bad health?

Dear child, remember that God is in charge! And when He is in charge, it is to Him that we must turn to for help.

Photograph of River Nile

Thought: Everything is under the control of our Lord!

Prayer: Teach me Heavenly Father, to trust in You at all times. Although I or my family may have problems, I know Thou will watch over us. In Jesus' name, amen.

SAFETY COMES FROM GOD

Which is the greatest military power today? It is America. America has the largest number of aircraft carriers, the highest number of missiles and also the best technology of the latest tanks and fighter planes. Wars today are also fought from far away, with new technology in self-guiding missiles able to attack targets thousands of kilometers away.

During the days of King David, battles were fought in close combat. Each army would have thousands of soldiers wearing armour, and carrying shields and spears. Thousands would also be on horsebacks. Horses were used as they were fearless and had great speed. Thus, an army with more horses was considered more powerful.

The Bible tells us that our trust should not be in horses for safety but in the Lord. Kings can be killed even as they lead armies on a chariot drawn by horses. In modern times we can travel in the best airplane, flown by the most skilful pilot, but our safety is in the Lord's hand. Big birds sucked into the plane's engines have been known to cause air disasters. This was what happened to a plane that crashed in Hudson River of New York on 15th Jan 2009, just a short while after it took off. That's why we pray for journey mercies for those who are travelling.

Safety is of the Lord!

1. A horse is very strong in battle but _____ .
2. We can drive slowly on the road but _____ .
3. We can wear safety shoes but _____ .
4. We can look where we are going but _____ .
   (You can ask your parent or Sunday School teacher for help)

Thought: Safety comes from the Lord, not from our cleverness.

Prayer: Teach me Heavenly Father, to trust in You at all times. Although I or my family may have problems, I know Thou will watch over us. In Jesus' name, amen.

A GOOD NAME

"Do you know who was caught shoplifting? Jonathan, of course."

"Jonathan stole books and was punished by the principal."

"Jonathan borrowed money from many boys and didn't return the money."

Everybody in school knew about Jonathan. He was known as the greedy and dishonest boy who always gets into trouble. He was always taking other people's things. He certainly didn't have a good name. For he had given himself a bad name. You do remember, a good name is better than riches.

A Good Name	A Bad Name
Draw a bottle of perfume.	Draw a can of rubbish.

Thought: A good name is better than riches.

Prayer: Help me Heavenly Father not to do things that bring shame to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

HOW TO TREAT MEAN CHILDREN

One day Jane said," Mother, I don't like Helen. She is very bad."

"Well, my little girl wants to be a good Christian, doesn't she? said mother.

"But Mother, you don't know how Helen hates me," replied Jane. "Everyday she is mean to me. She always hits me when nobody is looking, and then she says she didn't do it."

"What have you tried to do to help yourself?" asked Mother.

"What can I do? She's bigger than I am," said Jane.

"Why not try doing what Jesus said?" asked her mother.

"What did he say we should do?" asked Jane.

"He said," Do good to them that hate you." Why don't you try that?" her mother told her.

So Jane took Mother's advice. She knew that Helen was collecting stickers, so she hunted for a real good one and gave it to Helen. She also told Helen, "Your hair is very pretty," and it really was.

Then as time passed, Jane and Helen became friends.

Complete the sentences.

1. When your enemy is hungry, give him _____ .
2. When your enemy is thirsty, give him _____ .
3. When your enemy falls down, help him _____ .
4. When your enemy is injured, give him _____ .

Thought: God wants us to be kind and good, even to our enemies.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, only You can help me to be kind and good always. In Jesus' name, amen.

WORDS CAN WOUND

"Ouch!" Andrew had cut himself on the finger as he was peeling the apple skin. He felt pain and saw some blood coming out. He felt a little frightened. Nobody wants to be hurt with a knife. Neither would you want to hurt someone with a knife.

However, words can also wound us like a sharp knife can. Ronnie was so mad at his mother that he shouted loudly," You don't care for me. You are always scolding me. You never listen to what I say. You're unfair." With that he went to his room to sulk. His poor mother broke into tears. She had just bought him a new computer. She had thought it would show him that she loved him.

Like the words of a talebearer, words of anger can also wound. Think before you speak. When you are angry, don't use words like "always" and "never". God will give us grace to speak kindly always.

Examples of sentences that can wound:

1. Mummy, you always don't care for me.
2. Your dress makes you look very ugly.
3. You can't buy. You have no money.
4. Why is your house so messy?
5. You are so lazy! You are good for nothing.

Now you try to give some examples of encouraging sentences.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Thought: We must be careful with our tongue.

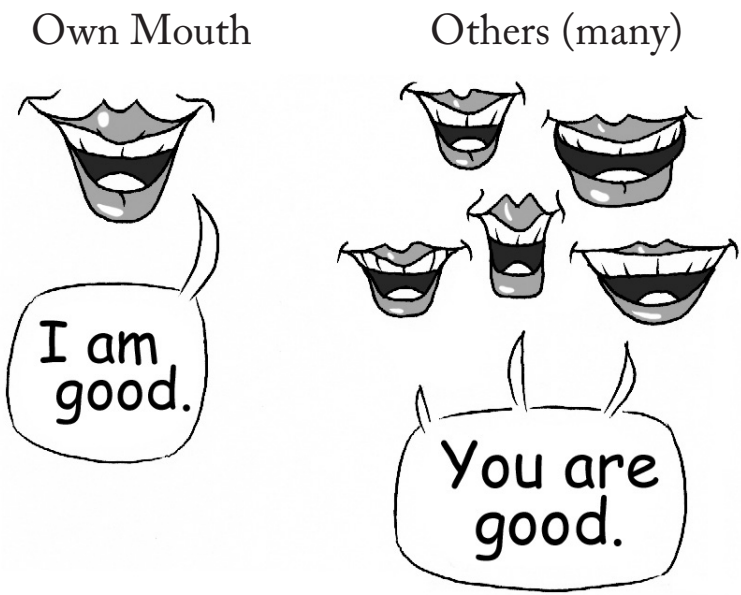
Prayer: Forgive me Heavenly Father, for using hurtful words. I am sorry and I promise to try my best to be much more careful with my words. In Jesus' name, amen.

DONT BLOW YOUR OWN TRUMPET

Jesus once told a story to people who thought they were better than others. It is called the story of the Pharisee and the Publican. The Pharisee prayed something like this:

"I thank you God that I am better than other people, better than cheaters, better than unfair people, or people who aren't decent. I do more good things than I have to. I often go without eating. And I give God ten cents out of every dollar I get."

God did not like his prayer. It wasn't really a prayer at all. He was just telling others around him what a good man he thought he was. He was praising himself. God doesn't want a person to say how good he is. "Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth," says the Bible.



No self praises! Let others praise you!

Thought: Lord, keep me from being boastful.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, let others praise me, not myself. Help me to be like Jesus, a wonderful example of humility. In Jesus' name, amen.

CONFESS OUR SINS TO GOD

"What are the hardest words to say?" asked Johnny.
"Which words?" the others all wanted to know.
"The words ' I have sinned,'" said Johnny.

Do you know what Johnny meant? Is it really hard to say, "I have sinned?"

Suppose you and your friends played with matches and started a fire. Would everybody say, "I did it."?

In a Bible story, a man's son left home with much money and thought he was smart. It took a long time and a lot of trouble before he said, "I have sinned."

But it is good to say, "I have sinned." When we say these words to God and mean them, He forgives us for Jesus' sake.

Say a prayer to ask God to forgive you of your sins.
It could be:

1. Drinking Coke when Mum says you are not to do so
2. Telling a lie about your homework to the teacher.
3. Stealing the money in the drawer
4. Bullying/scolding your little sister
5. Watching something on TV that you are not supposed to see
6. Wasting time when you could use your time more wisely

Thought: Keeping quiet about our sins is not good.

Prayer: Thank you Heavenly Father for forgiving me when I confess my sins. As I pray, I want to really confess and mean every word I say. In Jesus' name, amen.

WHO POWERS YOU?

"Can I skip my Bible study group tonight?" asked Ryan as he got up to help clear the table. "I didn't have time to do my lesson this week, and I know Uncle Frank really doesn't like it when that happens." Ryan sighed. "Actually, I don't have time to do all those assignments," he said. "I've been thinking about quitting."

"Not a good idea," said Mom as she turned on the radio. She clicked the on/off button a couple of times. "I wanted to listen to music while I clean up the kitchen, but this radio isn't working."

As Ryan looked at the radio, he noticed the cord lying loosely on the counter. "Here's your trouble, Mom," he said with a laugh. "You need power to run this thing, you know. No power, no music." He plugged the radio into the outlet.

"Oops!" Mom laughed, too. The music she wanted came on, but there was also a lot of static. Mom moved the radio to different positions till she found a spot where it played without the annoying, crackling sounds. "I don't want you to become like this radio," she said with a frown.

"What do you mean?" asked Ryan. "Well," replied Mom, "like the radio, Christians need to be 'plugged in' to their power source so they can live for God and witness for Him. One way to 'plug in' is to spend time in Bible study."

"You mean if I drop out of my Bible study group, I won't be plugged in?" asked Ryan. "That sounds like I wouldn't be saved anymore!"

"Wow! That's not such a good comparison after all," said Mom. "Okay . . . you are plugged in to God-your source of spiritual power. But things you read and hear may be like 'static' and keep you from hearing God clearly. I'm suggesting that your Bible study group is one way to help keep a clear line to Him. You've said it's tough to be a witness at school, and that you feel like you're the only Christian in class. You need to depend on God to help you in those situations."

Ryan sighed. "Okay, I'll go to my Bible study group." He grinned at his mother. "As if I really had a choice anyway!" he added. "But I don't mind. If it helps me be a better witness to the other guys, it's worth it.

Thought: What are you doing to help keep in close touch with God-your power source?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for reminding me that although I know Jesus, I still depend on myself for strength at times. In Jesus' name I pray – amen.

BE RECONCILED WITH GOD

"Oh, no!" groaned Maria. "I'm counting the money for our Young Adventurers' Club, and I just can't get it to balance. I'm treasurer, and Miss Soh gave me the money to keep until tomorrow after school when we'll put it in the bank. This paper says I'm supposed to have SGD27.75, but I have only SGD22.25. I've counted it six times!"

Dad came over to the table. "Let me count and see if I get the same thing," he suggested. So he counted the money, and his total was the same as Maria's.

"What if I get blamed for the missing money?" worried Maria. "Miss Soh trusted me. Maybe I better put in some of my own!"

The telephone interrupted them, and Maria answered it. After she hung up, she smiled! "What a relief!" she exclaimed. "That was Miss Soh, and she called to apologize. It slipped her mind that she paid SGD5.50 for stuff used at our party. She'll give me a copy of the bill tomorrow. That means this comes out just right! What I have here is the correct amount!"

Dad nodded. "Good," he said with a smile. "So how do you like being responsible for reconciling the money with the recorded amount?" he asked.

"Reconciling?" asked Maria. "Seems like I've heard that word before… in church maybe? But I don't remember what it means."

Dad smiled. "When it refers to money, it means to check one account against another for accuracy. The money you had didn't add up to the amount you should have, so those two amounts had to be reconciled. They have to balance-be the same," he explained.

"But what does that have to do with church?" asked Maria. "Well, another meaning of the word is to restore to friendship or harmony," said Dad. "As a result of Adam's sin, we are all born sinners and aren't friends of God. When we accept Jesus as Savior, we receive His righteousness, which is required for salvation and a home in heaven. Friendship and harmony with God is restored." Dad smiled. "As you reconcile your club accounts from now on, it can be a reminder to you that you're also reconciled to God."

Thought: Are you reconciled to God? Or is your sin still separating you from Him?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know it is far more serious to not be reconciled to You. I accept Jesus as Savior and Lord and ask Him to come into my life. And if I am already a Christian - help me to live life with His strength and not mine! In Jesus' name I pray – amen.

UNITY IS THE BEST!

"Well, if that's the way you're going to be, I'll just find someone else to do my science project with," Jeff angrily told Nathan and Tim. He crossed his arms, and walked away.

At dinnertime, Jeff was still angry. "Nathan and Tim won't listen to me," he grumbled. "They want to change the whole science project. I don't care what they say; I like the way I planned it."

Dad frowned. "Sounds like you're having trouble flying in formation."

"Huh?" grunted Jeff. "What are you talking about?"

"Remember when we went to see the Airforce's flying team perform at the air show last week?" asked Dad. Jeff nodded. "How far apart were those six jets?"

"They were really close!" exclaimed Jeff. "I think the announcer said they sometimes were within three feet of each other." His eyes sparkled as he remembered the thrill of watching the shiny blue and yellow jets. "When the leader moved in a certain direction, they all moved that way," he added. "If they didn't, they'd be in big trouble."

"Yes, they would!" agreed Dad. "Flying in formation like that takes real teamwork! But it occurred to me that doing a good job on any group project requires teamwork-and that includes your science project. In a sense, you boys should be 'flying in formation' as you work on that. To do a good job, you need to work together as a team."

"But they won't listen to me," objected Jeff.

"Well, they should listen to your ideas," said Dad, "but you should also listen to theirs. Have you done that? Have you considered which ideas would work the best?"

Jeff sighed. "I… I guess not," he admitted. He hesitated. "I'd better call Tim and Nathan and see if they'll still let me work with them," he added.

Thought: Do you sometimes resent suggestions that are not your own ideas? Do you have a hard time working as part of a team? Remember that God wants Christians to work together with others in unity.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me not to always insist on having my own way. Give me the wisdom to share my ideas in a polite way, and also to listen to the suggestions of other people. This way, my friends and I can be happy playing or doing projects together! In Jesus' name I pray – amen.

BOASTING NOT WELCOME!

"I can't wait to get home and show these pictures and autographs to all my friends at school!" squealed Amy as she climbed into the car. She and her family were enjoying a winter vacation trip and had gone to see an ice-skating show. After the show, some of the skaters signed autographs and allowed audience members to join them in having their pictures taken. Amy's parents took a picture of her with a famous figure skater.

A week later, Amy rushed into the kitchen after her first day back at school. "Mom!" she exclaimed as she reached for a cookie. "I had so much fun telling my friends about our vacation!"

Mom laughed. "I'm sure you did," she said. "What did you tell them? Let's see … maybe I could guess." She pretended to think. "I've got it!" she exclaimed. "I'll bet the whole school knows that you met a famous skater!"

Amy nodded. "You should have seen them when I showed them the picture of me with her," she said with a giggle. "They could hardly believe I actually talked to her. Good thing I had the picture to prove it or they probably wouldn't believe it, yet!"

"It was fun meeting her, wasn't it?" said Mom, "and it's fun telling other people about it, too. I told the group at my cooking class today that we had talked with her." After a few moments, Mom added seriously, "I wonder-do the ladies in my class know the Lord Jesus? Do your friends know the Lord Jesus?"

"I… I don't know," said Amy. "I'm sure some of them do, but I guess some don't."

"We like to brag about the important people we meet, but sometimes we're embarrassed to even mention the most important person in our lives," said Mom thoughtfully. "If we really believe Jesus is Lord, and if we believe He loved us enough to die for us, we should want to share that news with our friends." She smiled at Amy. "Let's both try to do better, shall we?"

Solemnly, Amy nodded.

Thought: Have you accepted Jesus as your Savior? If you have, do your friends know about it?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the reminder that I must witness for You. give me the courage to tell friends and classmates what You have done for me. And to let them know they can meet You, too! In Jesus' name I pray – amen.

GOOD TO ASK QUESTIONS!

Kevin looked up with a frown on his face. "You don't look very happy," observed his twin sister, Jenni. "What are you thinking about?"

Kevin hesitated. "About God," he said after a moment. "I've just been wondering if God really hears us when we pray."

"Of course He does!" exclaimed Jenni. "Another thing… my Sunday school lesson says God is everywhere," added Kevin. "How can that be? And how can He have no beginning?"

"I can't believe you're questioning God," scolded Jenni. "Better not let Dad hear you do that!". "Do what?" asked Dad as he joined them. "Come on-out with it."

"Oh… it's just that sometimes I don't understand things about the Bible and God," mumbled Kevin. "I have lots of questions I'd like to ask, and Jenni thinks that's wrong." "Well," said Dad, "it's perfectly okay for you to have those kinds of questions."

"It is?" exclaimed the twins in unison. "It's by asking questions that you learn," said Dad. "For example, Jenni, you made macaroni and cheese for our lunch yesterday, right?" As Jenni nodded, Dad continued. "How did you learn to do that?"

"I heard her ask Mom a ton of questions," Kevin chimed in. He turned to his sister. "You saw Mom make it a million times, Jenni, but you didn't know anything when you tried to do it yourself."

"Well, I could do it now," replied Jenni. Dad smiled. "I think you could," he agreed. "Asking questions helped you learn what to do. And that's one reason God doesn't mind when you ask honest questions-He knows it helps you learn. You've watched Mom and me try to follow God and live for Him, and you've imitated what you've seen us do. But as you grow older, you may have questions about God and living for Him. Getting answers to your questions will help you really know what you believe."

Thought: Are there things you don't understand about God? You're not the only one, and it's okay to ask questions. Ask your parents or Sunday school teachers.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I pray that even though I will never know many things about You, that I will dare to ask them. And even if I still do not understand after that, that You will give me the faith to trust in You. This I pray in Jesus' name – amen.

DO NOT BEAR GRUDGES

"Let's go get an ice cream cone at Island Creamery, Dad," said Kai Lin. "We can be back long before Mom gets home from her committee meeting."

"Good idea," agreed Dad, so they went out to the car.

As they drove along, Kai Lin and Dad saw a couple of Kai Lin's classmates playing together. "I can't stand that girl with the long braid!" exclaimed Kai Lin.

"Really?" Dad sounded surprised. "Do you know her well?"

"No, and I don't want to know her, either!" grumbled Kai Lin. "She's the one who beat me at the tryouts for a place on the volleyball team."

Just as Dad started to reply, there was a loud bang, and the car veered to the right. "Oh, no!" groaned Dad. "Flat tire!" He pulled over to the side of the road and got some tools and the spare tire from the trunk. Soon he had the car jacked up. He and Kai Lin chatted as he worked. "Kai Lin," said Dad, "I want to hear more about why you don't like that girl we saw. The fact that she got the place you wanted on the team is not a reason to dislike her. I'm sure you know that."

"Well, my friend Alicia knows her, and she doesn't like her, either," mumbled Kai Lin. Dad frowned as he removed the wheel with the flat tire and replaced it with the spare one. "I'm glad we have this spare to use," he said. He paused, then asked, "Don't you think your attitude needs to be changed-like the flat tire needed changing? Maybe it's time for you to find a spare attitude to replace the grudge you're holding against your friend."

"She's not my friend, She… she's an enemy!" "I see," said Dad, putting the flat tire in the trunk. "Well, do you remember what Jesus said about the way you should treat your enemies?"

"I remember," Kai Lin murmured. "He said we should love them." Dad closed the trunk. "Shall we see if those girls are still outside and invite them to join us for some ice cream?" he suggested. Kai Lin hesitated only a moment before she nodded.

Thought: Do you have an unkind or unforgiving attitude toward someone-are you holding a grudge? Do you really have a good reason to dislike anyone? Stand back and take a good look at the entire situation. Think about your attitude.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the reminder that I cannot hold grudges. It is just so difficult at times, but Lord, with Thy help, I will try until I succeed. In Jesus' name I pray – amen.

DO GOOD WHEN YOU CAN

"How about a break?" asked Dad. He stopped pedaling, leaned his bike against a tree, and then sank on the park bench beside the bike trail.

"Good idea!" agreed Sam, resting his bike against the end of the bench. "I'm tired and thirsty!" He and his dad took water bottles from their bikes. Dad also pulled two granola bars from his bike bag and handed one to Sam.

As Sam removed the wrapper, a piece of granola fell to the ground. A tiny ant appeared and tried to whisk it away. Sam watched as the ant tried again and again, but the piece was just too large for it to handle. After a moment, a mass of scurrying ants appeared. They worked together, lifting and dropping the chunk several times until it fell apart. Then each ant seized a small piece, and they all ran off in the same direction.

"Did you see that?" asked Sam. "That ant needed help-and he got it!" "He sure did," said Dad. "That's a good example of how we should behave." Sam looked at Dad. "You mean we should help each other, right?" he asked. "Yes," agreed Dad. "It's what God wants us to do."

"Like when we needed to repaint the house and a bunch of guys from church helped us," suggested Sam. "With all their help, it didn't take very long before it was done. A big job became a small one-just like this one with the ants." Dad nodded. "I'm sure the men from church didn't think about it at the time, but they were actually demonstrating to our neighbours the love Christians should have for each other."

"But we're supposed to show God's love by helping unsaved people, too, aren't we?" asked Sam. "Anyway, that's what my Sunday school teacher says."

"That's correct," replied Dad. "Helping unsaved people can be a strong witness for Jesus. Helping other Christians can, too." Dad got up and put his helmet back on. "Mr. Loh, next door, was so impressed by what our Christian friends did, he wanted to know more about it," he added. "I explained that we love one another because of Jesus. I'm praying that he'll soon know Jesus, too." He grinned at Sam. "Come on. Let's finish this ride and get back home to Mom's good cooking!"

Thought: Can people see that you love God by the way you show His love to others? Do you show love by willingly helping your mother clean the house or your room?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help to show love to others especially fellow Christians. In Jesus' name – amen.

GET A RECHARGE ON STRENGTH!

Lisa softly sang a Scripture song. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles…"

"Time to go," called Dad. Reluctantly, Lisa turned and followed her parents to the car. Usually she loved going to church retreats, but this year, Julie, her best friend, wouldn't be there. Julie had died just two weeks ago. A tear trickled down Lisa's cheek, and she hastily rubbed it away as she slid into the back seat of the car, closed the door, and fastened her seat belt.

"All set?" asked Dad. Lisa nodded. "I like the song you were singing," said Mom. Biting her lip as another tear escaped, Lisa whispered, "That song was one of Julie's favorites."

"I remember hearing her sing it," said Dad, and as he began singing the song again, Mom and Lisa joined him.

"Dad, just what does it mean to 'mount up with wings as eagles'?" asked Lisa when they finished singing. "We can't really fly."

Smiling, Dad replied. "The eagle is a unique bird, dear. Other birds try to avoid high winds and storms, but I read that the eagle flies straight into them. He uses the violent winds to lift himself up high above the storm clouds."

"Does that help him fly better and be safe?" asked Lisa.

"Yes," Dad agreed, smiling at his daughter. "With God's strength, you can be like an eagle. You can 'fly' straight into the storms of life instead of running away from them. That means accepting hurts and troubles-like the loneliness you feel from Julie's death-to help you grow as a Christian."

Brushing away her tears, Lisa nodded. "It still hurts, even though I know Julie's in heaven," she said, "but I do want to 'fly' the way God wants me to-and Julie would want that, too. Will you and Mom help me, Dad?"
"We surely will, honey," Dad assured her.

Thought: What problems are you facing today? Are you sad because your mom or dad is out of work? Because what's happening in your life makes it seem like your world is falling apart? Remember that God loves you and wants to help you face your problems.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to remember that sometimes You allow clouds and storms of life to develop my character and make me become more Christ-like. I pray for strength to go through the difficult times in my life, whether they be a lot of schoolwork or problems at home. In Jesus' name I pray – amen.

MADE BRAND NEW

A loud wail came from the family room. "Look at my poster," moaned Debbie tearfully. "I worked on this for two weeks, and now it's ruined! I was using a calligraphy pen to sign my name, and I accidentally knocked over the ink bottle."

Mom shook her head when she saw the smear of black ink on the poster. "Oh, dear! I'm so sorry," she said. "It was beautiful, and…"

"It doesn't look very beautiful anymore!" interrupted Debbie's brother as he eyed the poster. Then he grinned. "I know… have it cleaned," he joked. "I've read that they do that to famous paintings." "That's not funny, Jack," said Debbie, but knowing he was trying to cheer her up, she smiled faintly. "This picture isn't famous; it's hopeless. I won't have a poster to enter in the contest."

"Sorry, sis," said Jack, "but don't feel too bad. Someday you'll have a famous painting. I just know you will! You'll see." That evening, Jack talked about a new student in his class. "I can already tell that Ming Teck is going to be a pain," he declared. "He's brand new in school, but he acts like he owns the place."

"Well, don't judge too quickly," cautioned Mom. "Maybe he's just putting on an act-trying to be brave. If you're friendly and help him as he learns the ropes at his new school, his attitude may change. Give him a chance."

"Yeah-maybe he's like my poster," added Debbie. "It looks like a mess, but if you could get that black ink off, you'd see a pretty picture. Maybe Ming Teck is like that."

Jack looked doubtful. "He's a mess like your poster all right-and you said your poster is hopeless, remember?" "Ah!" exclaimed Mom. "But people are more like the famous paintings you were talking about! They can be made clean. God sees their potential beauty, He can change them."

"Well… okay," said Jack. "I'll try to remember that Ming Teck isn't hopeless."

"Good," said Mom. "As you accept him, maybe you'll get a chance to let him know that God changed you and can also change him."

Thought: Every Christian is a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for today's reminder that You can change a prideful, sinful person into someone wonderful. As I look at myself, there are also ways that I can change for the better – so help me Lord. In Jesus' name, amen.

DISCIPLINE MY EYES?

"Let's stop at the bookstore," said Mom as she and Diana walked through the mall. "I'd like to get a new cookbook."

"Okay," agreed Diana. She loved reading, and when they reached the bookstore, she decided to find a book for herself. Soon she was back at her mother's side. "Can I get this book, Mom?" she asked. "I have enough money for it." Diana held up a fiction paperback for her mother to see. Mom took the book and read the back cover. Then she opened it and leafed through the pages. "Honey," she said, "I've heard that the story line in this series of books deals with things that aren't honouring to God, and as I flipped the pages, I noticed bad language. I'm sorry, but no - you can't buy this book."

"Oh, please, Mom," begged Diana, but her mother shook her head. "Oh, all right," Diana grumbled angrily. She scowled and returned the book to the shelf. Diana didn't say a word when they left the bookstore, and she was still pouting when they sat down at a table in the mall's food court. Mom looked at her thoughtfully. "Did you see that, Diana?" asked Mom as she placed her packages on the table.

"See what?" asked Diana.

"The people that just left the table over there had quite a bit of noodle soup left over," said Mom. "I saw them dump it in the thrash can right next to that second post. I'm sure there's other food in there. I'll stay here and watch our stuff, and you can go get some of it." Mom smiled as she spoke.

"Mum, what!!" exclaimed Diana, giving her mother a puzzled glance. "I know you don't want to eat garbage, so you've got to be kidding. But what's your point?"

"Well, you don't want to feed garbage to your body, either, do you?" asked Mom. Diana shook her head. "But you apparently do want to feed garbage to your mind by reading things that are filled with bad language and evil ideas," Mom added. Diana didn't have an answer. "We're responsible to God for the things we put into our minds," continued Mom. "That's why I didn't let you get that book. I want you to give your mind good things to 'eat.'"

Thought: Do your parents set rules regarding what you may read and listen to? Do you wish you could choose for yourself? Remember, they are doing this for your own good.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, there are so many things that tempt me in this world. Help me to guard myself against temptations. This I pray in Jesus's name– amen.

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

Andy wore a frown as he hurried into the house. "Hi, Son, and happy birthday," Dad greeted him. "But you don't look very happy."

"You wouldn't look happy, either, if somebody always called you carrot-top!" grumbled Andy as he put his things away. "Some day I'll get even with Carl and call him elephant-ears, like some of the kids do." Dad began to answer, but was interrupted by his cell phone.

Andy stared when he spied the birthday cake standing on the cupboard. "Super!" he exclaimed. He grinned and gave his mother a hug. "What's for dinner?" "Your favorites," replied Mom. "Fried chicken-including drumsticks, sushi…" "Wow! Super dinner," said Andy. "Let's eat!"

After they ate, Andy again exclaimed over the super chicken, super sushi, super everything-especially the super cake. Mom laughed. "I'm glad you liked it," she said. "Now…" She handed him a package. "Ready to open your gift?"

"Yes!" Andy eagerly pulled off the wrapping paper. "Super! My very own binoculars!" he exclaimed. Andy took them out of the case and peered through them. "This is a super-good gift! Thanks, Mom and Dad."

"You're welcome, Son," said Dad. He smiled, then added, "You really like that word super, don't you? Do you know what it means?" "Sure. It means extra special," replied Andy. Dad nodded. "That's right, and it also means 'above the natural.' That's what God wants His children to be-supernatural," said Dad.

"How can we be supernatural?" asked Andy. "We're just human, you know."

"Well," said Dad, "when you came in, you were angry because Carl called you carrot-top, remember? You felt like getting even. That's natural. But… what would be supernatural?"

"Forgiving him, I guess," replied Andy with a sigh. "That would be hard to do."

"Yes," agreed Dad, "but God can help you. Like I said, He wants all His children to be supernatural." Dad stood up. "Come on," he said. "Let's go outside now, and I'll show you how to adjust those super binoculars."

Thought: Do you feel like getting even with someone? Are you tempted to push back when you've been pushed?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to love even my "enemies". This I pray in Jesus' name – amen.

DON'T BE A QUITTER!

As Carla played at the piano recital, she suddenly couldn't remember the right notes. Embarrassed, she stumbled through the piece as best she could. It's my first recital, and this happens, she thought as she returned to her seat. I'm quitting!

"Don't be discouraged," said her teacher after the recital. "You have a lot of ability, but it takes time to develop it." Carla's family agreed and praised her for doing her best, but she was sure she'd never want to play the piano again.

The next day, Carla persuaded her dad to take a bike ride with her. As they rode, Dad asked, "Do you remember when you were learning to ride a bike?"

Carla nodded. "I sure do! I fell a lot," she said with a giggle. Dad smiled. "Remember the time you hurt your knee and said you'd never get back on the bike again?" he asked. Carla nodded. "But I rode it again that same afternoon," she said. "Yes, you did," said Dad with a smile. "You know, honey, in some ways, learning to play the piano is a lot like learning to ride a bike. They both take practice. You were discouraged by what happened at your piano recital yesterday-but don't give up."

Carla said nothing, so Dad continued. "I wonder if the Apostle Paul ever felt like quitting. He suffered a great deal as he traveled to spread the Gospel, but he didn't quit. He said he wanted to forget the past and 'press on.' He wanted to keep on doing the things God called him to do." Dad smiled at Carla. "I think God is pleased when we work hard at developing our talents-especially when we go on to use them for Him.

"But maybe playing the piano isn't my talent," responded Carla.

"Well, as your teacher pointed out, you do have a lot of musical ability, honey. You need to keep practicing to see how it develops." Carla didn't like to admit it, but she knew her dad was right. When Carla and Dad arrived back home, Carla wasn't surprised to hear Dad say, "Go in and practice your piano lesson before you play any more this afternoon."

Carla sighed. She knew she could either practice and enjoy it, or she could practice against her will and be miserable. Quickly she made up her mind. "Okay," she said quietly. "I will."

Thought: Are you developing a talent God has given you?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me use my talents to serve you. In Jesus' name, amen.

NEVER PROCRASTINATE!

All week Bee Ling had been very busy-so busy that she couldn't seem to find time to study for her weekly spelling test. There was always something more interesting to do-reading a book, going to gymnastics, playing a game, or watching a TV program. "I'll study tomorrow", she told herself each night.

After school on Friday, Bee Ling slowly walked home, not at all eager to get there. She was sure her mother would ask about the spelling test. Sure enough, when Bee Ling finally went into the house, the question came. "How was your spelling test?"

"I failed," admitted Bee Ling, feeling embarrassed. Mom looked disappointed but didn't say anything. After dinner, Dad turned on the news. "Come and listen to this," he called. "A lion has escaped from the zoo."

Bee Ling and Mom joined him to hear the report. "Authorities are urging people who live near the zoo to stay indoors," the reporter said. "Children should not play outside as long as the lion is on the loose."

Bee Ling shivered. "I'm glad I don't live anywhere near the zoo," she said.

Mom nodded. "A lion on the loose can really interfere with things we need to do," she agreed. She looked thoughtful as she turned to Bee Ling. "Are you sure you haven't met any lions lately?" asked Mom.

"Me? Where would I see lions?" wondered Bee Ling.

"Well," said Mom, "I once read a story about a lion named Procrastinate. I thought maybe you had come across him. You see, to procrastinate means to postpone or put things off. The story I read warned that when 'Procrastinate' runs unleashed in our lives, he prevents us from doing what we should be doing-like studying."

"We certainly need to tame that lion," agreed Dad. "We have to decide which things are most important and take care of them before we take time for the things we do simply for our own pleasure."

Bee Ling blushed. "My teacher says anyone who did poorly on the spelling test may take it again next Monday," she said after a moment. "I'm going to go study hard for it this time."

Thought: Are you waiting for another day to do something that should be done now?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me not to be like Bee Ling the procrastinator, but to complete what needs to be done today, today! In Jesus' name – amen.

ALL HAVE SINNED

As the Chong family listened to the evening news, the TV reporter spoke about an oil spill where beautiful, sandy beaches were being smeared with thick, black goo. "In spite of massive efforts to stop the spread of oil and clean up the beaches and ocean, it looks as if Mother Nature may have to do the final clean-up job here," stated the reporter. "Environmentalists tell us that wind, sun, currents, and wave action will eventually disperse and evaporate most of the oil."

"Mother Nature!" said Dad in disgust. "People need to admit that only God can control the weather and the oceans."

"Wow!" exclaimed Noah as the TV camera turned to show an oil-soaked sea bird struggling to get free from the hands of a rescuer. "That bird doesn't look so good!"

Noah's sister Nicole shook her head. "Poor thing," she murmured. "I guess he doesn't know he'll die if he doesn't let somebody help him."

"It's sad, but…" Dad paused. "Last week I heard a message that a lot of people are like those sea birds. That's even sadder."

"People got caught in the oil spill, too?" asked Nicole in horror.

Dad smiled. "No," he said, "but the speaker pointed out that many people are caught in something worse-they're caught in sin. Those birds have to be cleaned up if they're going to live, and people who don't know Jesus as Savior need to have their hearts and lives cleaned up, too, or they will not be able to live forever with God."

"And Mother Nature can't help," observed Noah.

"No," agreed Nicole. "The name Mother Nature refers to nature in general, doesn't it? And that's why people are in trouble in the first place-they have a sinful nature."

"That's true," agreed Dad, "and like that bird, they often don't realize they're in trouble. They don't understand that they need help and only God can clean up their lives. People have to quit struggling and simply trust Jesus to do for them what they can't do for themselves."

Thought: Are you aware that you are a sinner and need help? Or are you struggling to clean up your heart and life by yourself? Are you doing your best to stop talking back? To obey your parents?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know I am a sinner. Help me to accept Your salvation grace and be really careful not to sin but to keep my life pure for You. This I pray in Jesus' name – amen.

SERVE THE LORD WITH GLADNESS

"I don't get it," Ai Ping sighed as she stroked her pet rabbit. "Bunnie loves to be petted, but when I want to pick him up, he tries to run away. Is he afraid of being high up?"

"He might be," said Mom. "Some kinds of animals need to be able to escape, because there's always danger of a predator coming to get them. Bunnie probably doesn't feel safe if he can't run away." "That's silly," protested Ai Ping. "If a predator comes near, he'll be safer if I'm holding him than he would be on the ground."

"Yes, but it's just his natural instinct," said Mom. "Now leave Bunnie alone and go get ready. We need to be at the hospital in an hour." Ai Ping sighed. "Do we have to go? I don't feel like playing with sick kids." "Then why did you sign up?" Mom asked.

"In Sunday school, Mrs. Lim said that a good way to do something for God is to do something for others. So when she said volunteers were needed for the children's hospital, I thought it would be a good idea," explained Ai Ping. "But hardly anybody else signed up, and I won't know anyone there."

"You'll be too busy to notice," said Mom. "But what do I say to the kids?" Ai Ping asked.

"Trust God to show you," suggested Mom. "But what if they ask me questions I can't answer? Can't I just stay home?" pleaded Ai Ping.

Mom smiled. "You sound a little bit like your rabbit at this moment." Ai Ping was confused. "You said Bunnie would be safer in your arms than anywhere else" asked Mom. "He loves you, but he doesn't seem to really trust you to keep him safe. Right?" Ai Ping nodded. "Well, aren't you acting the same way toward God?" Mom asked. "You volunteered because you want to do something for Him, but you seem to be afraid to trust Him to help you with this assignment."

Ai Ping looked at Bunnie who was eating in the safety of his cage. Then she gave her mother a little smile. "Well, I don't want to be a "scaredy cat"… or I guess I should say a "scaredy rabbit"," she decided. "Okay. I'll get ready to go to the hospital."

Thought: Do you want to serve God? That's good, but how do you act when He shows you something you can do for Him?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to really mean it when I say I want to serve You. It can be in something real small, but please help me to start somewhere. And when I do serve – that I'll serve with gladness! In Jesus' name – amen.

WHOSE TEAM ARE YOU IN?

Caleb and Colin watched as their little brother played soccer in the park. Their father soon arrived and took a seat on the grass next to them. "How's Charles doing?" asked Dad.

"Good," answered Caleb. "He got to move the ball a couple of times."

"I'm glad to hear that," said Dad. "Charles has been so excited about being a member of the soccer team." Dad smiled. "It's been a long time since I've seen that kind of enthusiasm," he added.

"Not me," Colin blurted out. "I see it all the time, but not over soccer. There's this boy in my class – Nick - and he's about as excited over math as Charles is over soccer. Can you believe it?" Colin shook his head. "Nick gets called all sorts of names," he added. "All the guys make fun of him."

"I hope you're not one of those guys," said Dad. Colin swallowed. "Aw, we're not really mean to him," he mumbled. Dad shook his head in disapproval. "We're?" he asked. "It sounds to me like you are one of the boys making fun of him."

"Well, you got to admit he's kind of . . ." began Colin, but he was interrupted by Caleb, who suddenly stood up and started shouting.

"Stop, Charles! Stop!" yelled Caleb. He turned toward his father. "Charles is kicking the ball toward the wrong side!" he exclaimed.

Colin jumped up, too. "Oh, no! Charles!" he called. "You're helping the wrong team!" Unfortunately, Charles didn't stop. He kicked the ball right into his team's goal, scoring a point against his own team. Colin sighed heavily as he dropped to his seat. "It looks like he forgot which team he belongs to."

Dad nodded. "Yes, and he's going to feel bad about that," he said. Looking thoughtfully at Colin, Dad asked, "You're sure you don't do that?" "Me!" Colin was shocked. "No chance!"

"I wonder," replied Dad. "Just remember that any time you team up with kids who are cruel to others, you're forgetting that you belong on Jesus' team. Your actions show whether or not you're scoring points for His team or for Satan's team. Okay?" Startled, Colin slowly nodded.

Thought: Do your actions show that you're on Jesus' team?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, remind me You want those who are on Your team to live the way You would. Help me realize it is necessary to stop doing things I know are not pleasing to God – that I may instead be kind and helpful. In Jesus' name – amen.

ARE YOU TROUBLED?

"Is Uncle Bob going to be okay?" asked Mark anxiously when his parents picked him up at his grandmother's house. They had gone to the hospital as soon as they heard about Uncle Bob's accident.

"We can't be sure yet, but at least he's stable for now," replied Dad.

"I don't get it," declared Mark as he climbed into the back seat of the car. "Uncle Bob is a Christian, but what difference did that make? God let that drunk driver hit him anyway." He frowned, then added impatiently, "Oh, I know he'll go to heaven if he dies, but God didn't stop the accident. So what difference does being a Christian make now… while we're living on earth?"

"Why, it makes a lot of difference, honey," began Mother, but Mark just scowled as his parents tried to explain. When they arrived at home, Mark noticed a box on the kitchen table. "What's in the box?" he asked.

"It's a can crusher," replied Mother. "It's supposed to make recycling a little easier. Shall we try it out? There are empty cans in that bag in the garage."

"Okay," agreed Mark. He opened the box and read the instructions. Then he took a couple of empty cans, set them in place, and pushed the lever of the can crusher. "Hey! This thing works great!" he exclaimed.

"Try this one," suggested Dad, handing him another can.

Mark gave him a puzzled glance when he felt its weight, but he pushed down on the lever anyway. "I can't crush this one – it's full," he said.

Dad smiled and nodded as he picked up an empty can. "People who don't know Jesus are often like this can," he said. "They can be easily crushed when bad times hit. On the other hand…" he held up the full can, "…we're Christians, so we should be like this one. We have the power of God's Spirit within us. We need to rely on Him. Then, even when hard things – such as Uncle Bob's accident – push down on us, we won't be crushed by them. "He gave Mark a hug. "What happened to Uncle Bob does trouble us, but we can trust God to help us and him even now."

Thought: Do you trust God when difficult things come into your life?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, remind me that if I'm a Christian, I'll not be empty; I have the Holy Spirit within. The next time a problem tries to crush me, I will choose to trust Jesus. This I pray in His holy name – amen.

DON'T BE JEALOUS

"You love Katie more than me!" Jennifer accused her mother one day. She scowled at her baby sister. "Katie gets more attention than I do, and more meals, and…" Jennifer pulled away as her mother tried to hug her.

"Honey," said Mother gently, "we need to talk about this. "She took a piece of paper and a pencil." Let's make a list. On one side of this paper, write the nice things you get to do. On the other side, list Katie's privileges." Jennifer stared at the paper, a frown on her face. Mother smiled and added, "For example, you get to go skating. Write that on your side." Jennifer did.

Just then Katie toddled toward the bookcase. "No, no, Katie!" warned Mother, but Katie grabbed a book. "You know you are not allowed to touch those books," said Mother firmly, putting the book back.

"Book!" demanded Katie, beginning to cry.

As Jennifer looked at her sister, she smiled. "I get to touch all the books -- and the TV and VCR remote controls," she said, adding them to her list. After finishing the list, she showed it to her mother.

"You didn't write much on Katie's side of the paper," said Mother. "Did you decide you have more privileges than Katie?" Jennifer nodded. "Now make another list," suggested Mother. "Write down the times you get attention and the times Katie does. See how that comes out."

Jennifer thought for a moment, then shook her head. "I get just as much attention," she decided." Katie takes two long naps, and I get to stay up and do things with you." She laughed sheepishly. "I guess I was being silly," she admitted. "Katie has baby privileges, but I have different ones."

Mother picked up Katie. "God knows what you need at every age," she said, "and He provides people – usually parents – to take care of your needs." She smiled at Jennifer. "Katie's privileges are all she needs right now, and I believe yours are right for you, too. They'll change and grow along with you."

Thought: Have you been jealous of a new baby or of a brother or sister? Or a new friend in church who has become popular?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to appreciate the deep love my parents have for me. Help me not to be calculative or to be jealous of others who may become more popular or surrounded by more friends than me. In Jesus' name – amen.

FORGIVENESS ALWAYS THERE!

Dave carefully felt the funny little hole with his tongue. "My mouth feels better," he told his mother, "but my tongue won't stay away from the empty spot. What did you say was wrong with my tooth? I want to tell Grandma when she comes this afternoon."

"There was an abscess at the root of your tooth – that's kind of like an infected sore," explained Mother. "It cleared up after you had those antibiotic pills, but the dentist figured it might come back. He extracted it since it was just a baby tooth."

When Grandma came that afternoon, Dave told her all about his tooth. Then he felt the empty spaces in the front of his mouth where other teeth were missing. "Pretty soon I won't have many more teeth than Baby Sue does," he said, watching his baby sister bounce in her high chair.

Grandma laughed. "You'll soon have new teeth," she assured him. "Your permanent teeth are almost through. It's good that the dentist pulled the bad tooth. If he hadn't taken care of it, it might have gotten worse again. The poison from the abscess could have made you sick." She patted Dave's hand. "You know," she said thoughtfully, "I think I'll use your tooth as an illustration for my Sunday school class, okay?"

"Okay," agreed Dave readily.

"You see," continued Grandma, "sin – such as disobeying or lying – is like an abscessed tooth. We need someone to clean it out and replace our bad thoughts with good ones – just like your bad tooth will be replaced with a new, good one."

"Jesus takes our sin away, doesn't He?" asked Dave.

"He surely does," replied Grandma. "We can't do it ourselves."

"He took my sin away, but I still told a lie the other day," Dave added solemnly.

"Then you need to confess that to God and ask Him to forgive you," said Grandma. "Ask Him to get rid of it for you and to help you do better. He wants to hear from you."

Thought: Is there sin in your life that needs to be cleaned away? Take care of it right now.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I confess I have lied, cheated, been unkind, gossiped. Please forgive, and please help me to control my tongue so that I will be better able to live a life that pleases You. This I humbly ask in Jesus' name – amen.

SEEK THE LORD!

Your science project is looking good, said Grandpa as he looked over Ern Wen's shoulder. "What will you call it?"

"Means of Communication," answered Ern Wen. He had written reports about the telephone, radio, TV, satellites, and submarine fiber-optic cables. Then he had found pictures and made diagrams to illustrate the project. He was just adding the finishing touches.

Grandpa studied Ern Wen's work for a few minutes. "Ah," he murmured, "you forgot something most important, boy." Ern Wen was startled. "I did? What's that?" he asked.

"Communication with God," answered Grandpa with a twinkle in his eye.

"I never thought of that," said Ern Wen. "In Bible times, God sometimes talked to people through dreams, didn't He?"

"That's right, and at other times He spoke to people directly," Grandpa said, "but He has a different way of speaking to us now."

"I know," said Ern Wen. "He speaks to us through the Bible, right?"

Grandpa smiled and nodded. "God also speaks to His children by putting thoughts in their minds-and desires in their hearts," he said. "That's the work of the Holy Spirit. And do you know how we can talk to God?"

Ern Wen nodded. "Sure. Through prayer." He looked at the chart he had made. "Hey, I've got an idea! There's still room on my chart, so I'll add a picture of heaven with a line running to earth where a man is reading his Bible. Then I'll have a line running to heaven from a man who is praying." He grinned. "It will be fun to see what my teacher says. He'll probably think I'm crazy, but I don't even care."

"It will be a good testimony," approved Grandpa, "and don't forget to make use of this means of communication yourself, too."

Thought: Is there regular communication between you and God? Do you read your Bible each day?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to seek You everyday, and to read the Bible and pray too! This I pray in Jesus' name – amen.

CREATION SHALL PRAISE GOD

"Listen to this, Kent." Douglas sat on the bed while his brother sat in front of their computer. "This magazine article tells about a computer that can scan the entire Encyclopedia Britannica in two seconds!"

Kent shook his head in amazement. "I bet the whole world will be run by computers ten years from now," he said. A crack of lightning and boom of thunder brought Douglas up off the bed. "That was close!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, no!" wailed Kent. "The computer's down! There must have been a power surge, and I lost the whole program! How could that happen? We have a surge protector."

"Yeah, but Dad said it could happen anyway, and he warned us not to use the computer when we were having a storm," remembered Douglas. "Let's hope it's not wrecked!" They stared at each other in dismay. Douglas headed for the living room. "Dad," he said, "that last big crack of lightning … uh… zapped the computer."

Dad hurried to the boys' bedroom and frowned at the blank screen. "These are sensitive machines," Dad reminded them. "They've got to be protected."

"And we were just talking about how they were going to run the world some day," said Kent. He sounded disgusted.

"Computers are amazing, but they need people to make them useful and to keep them in working order," said Dad. "They're just man-made machines, so they're imperfect. God created man to be a remarkable creature, but because man became flawed by sin, anything he produces is flawed, too. As advanced as a computer is, it's primitive compared to the mind of God."

"Yeah. He created the minds that invented the computer, didn't he?" said Douglas. "That's right," said Dad. "We can't even begin to understand God's wisdom and genius. Only He is perfect." He turned to leave. "We'll take this to the shop tomorrow and see if it can be fixed."

Thought: Are you so impressed with the great technical achievements of men that you begin to feel like you no longer need God? Remember that it's God who created man and given him intelligence.

Prayer: As I look around nature Heavenly Father, I see Your greatness. The beauty in the world, the stars and planets and the beauty all around, I thank you. Help me never to think that man will ever even come close to matching Your ability to create. In Jesus' name – amen.

REAL PEACE COMES ONLY FROM GOD

Why does God allow war? Beng asked after hearing a news report on TV.

"That's a hard question - It's one that men have been asking for centuries," said Dad. "It's hard to…" He paused as the door opened and Mom came in carrying Trina. Dad jumped up, took the little girl, and placed her on the couch. "What did the doctor say?" he asked. "She has a bad throat," said Mom. "Dr. Tan gave her a shot and this prescription." She handed Dad a slip of paper. "Could you get these medicines while I fix dinner?"

Beng reached for his sweater. "I'll go with you," he said, and he and Dad went out to the car.

When they returned, Dad smiled at Trina, who was very fretful. "I'll give her a dose of this medicine," Dad told Mom. "I don't want it!" Trina wailed. "My throat hurts!" "This will make your throat feel better," Dad said gently. He held a spoonful of medicine toward her.

Trina hid her face in the pillow. "No! I don't want it. It'll make my throat hurt worse." "It will make it feel better," Dad again said patiently. "I can't swallow," Trina wailed. "If you can scream and cry like that, you can swallow," said Dad firmly. "Now take this." The little girl obeyed, took the medicine and soon was sleeping soundly.

Later that evening, Beng returned to his question. "Why does God allow war, Dad?"

"I think I have an answer now," said Dad. "Think of war as a sickness caused by sin. When Jesus died on Calvary, this was the prescription, or cure, for sin. God invites all of mankind to trust in Jesus as Savior and then to follow His teaching each day. The doctor's prescription wouldn't have done Trina any good if she hadn't taken it, and the prescription God offers doesn't help people when they don't take it by trusting in Jesus. I made Trina take her medicine, but the Lord Jesus does not force anyone to accept His prescription."

Beng nodded. "I get it, because people refuse to follow Jesus' prescription, there is war."

Thought: Have you wondered why there is always war in this world?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, although I cannot stop war in the world, I can follow Jesus' prescription and have peace in my own heart. So even if I have problems at home, I will still be able to enjoy the peace that comes from praying and submitting to the Lord. In Jesus' name – amen.

MOST IMPORTANT THING IN LIFE IS…

There he goes, said John as he watched the plane take off. Mr. Sim, a friend of the family and a missionary to Africa, had visited John's family the past week. "He sure works hard, doesn't he?" added John.

Dad nodded. "Yes," he agreed, "but as Mr. Sim says, it's worth it all because many people are being won for Jesus."

As John and his family left the airport and headed back toward home, they came to a large, impressive home where many cars had pulled off the road and lots of people were milling around. Mom had read about this in the papers. "Mrs. Seetoh lived here-a very wealthy old lady who really clung to her possessions," said Mom. "She was always afraid people would steal them from her. She died recently, and I saw in the newspaper that there was going to be an auction. Her heirs are selling everything and dividing the estate."

"Let's stop and have a look," suggested John. "Okay," agreed Dad, so they stopped to look around.

"There are some lovely things here," said Mom as they moved through the rooms, "but even though they're used, most of them are still too expensive for our budget!"

When they were once again on their way, Dad spoke thoughtfully. "We've seen quite a contrast today. Mrs. Seetoh was known for her earthly possessions. Mr. Sim is known for his service for Jesus. Two different lives - two different kinds of treasure."

"Was Mrs. Seetoh a Christian?" wondered Beng Lee.

"Well, not as far as we know," replied Mom, "but we can't judge her heart, of course."

"She seemed interested only in hanging on to all her money and possessions," added Dad, "but all the riches and lovely things she had are of no use to her now. It's sad to see people more concerned about their earthly welfare than about their eternal destiny."

Thought: Do you or your parents want to have lots of money and possessions? Money and things will not save you when you're called to stand before God." Only Christ can save you.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, remind me that it is useless to have everything in the world but lose my soul. Help me to also share this idea with other people so they will know the truth. In Jesus' name I ask – amen.

WATCH YOUR WORDS!

Ashley looked in horror as her chocolate milkshake began to spread over the table. "Why can't you leave my stuff alone, Kristen?" she yelled.

"I didn't mean to spill it," said Kristen. Her lower lip was trembling. "I just wanted a taste."

Mom appeared at the table with paper towels. "Here, Kristen," she said. "Big girls clean up their messes." "No…wait," said Ashley. "I want to drink it! We've got to put it back in the cup."

"I don't see how you can do that," said Mom. Ashley grabbed a spoon and tried to scoop up the creamy drink. It was no use. "I bought this with my own money," she sputtered, "and you had no business touching it, Kristen."

"I… I'm sorry," murmured Kristen. "You're going to buy me another one the next time we're at the mall," Ashley said. "But I don't have enough money," wailed Kristen. "Then save up," growled Ashley, glaring at Kristen. "I wish I didn't have a little sister."

"Go to your room, Kristen," said Mom. "We'll talk about this later." After Kristen left, Mom turned to Ashley. "Kristen should have left it alone," she said, "but that's no excuse for saying unkind things to your sister."

Ashley looked up from wiping the counter. "It's not fair," she complained. "Kristen messed with my stuff, but you're lecturing me." "You need to understand," said Mom, "that having you wish you didn't have a sister hurts much more than having your drink spilled."

"Well… I was mad," mumbled Ashley. "I didn't mean it."

"We can be angry and still watch what we say," replied Mom. "When we don't, words can pour out and make a bigger mess than that drink. Taking words back is even more difficult than putting a milkshake back in a cup. In fact, you can never really take them back, but I think you'd better try to repair the damage, don't you?"

Ashley sighed, but she nodded and headed for Kristen's room to apologise.

Thought: Are you careful to not say angry, thoughtless words?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to control my mouth, for I should not use this same mouth to praise You and to say unkind things! Please, Lord, help me. In Jesus' name – amen.

JUST ONE MORE MINUTE…

I'll do it in a minute, said Luke when his dad told him to take out the trash. When Mom reminded him to clean his room, Luke answered, "Okay-in a minute." When asked to mow the lawn, his answer was, "Just a minute-I'm busy now." But the "minute" usually stretched to many more, and often Luke had to be told several times before the work was done.

After dinner one evening, Luke asked his dad to shoot a few baskets with him. "Sure will, Luke." Dad nodded. "Just a minute."

Luke went out and rode his bike up and down the driveway while he waited. Finally, he went to find Dad. "When are you coming out?" he asked.

Dad looked up from his newspaper. "Oh, in a minute," he replied, and he continued to read.

Luke waited a while, then asked again… and again. Each time he asked, he got the same answer. "But, Dad," protested Luke at last, "you've said that four times now. It's been thirty minutes already."

Mom smiled at Luke. "You know… we don't mind keeping others waiting," she said, "but we hate to wait ourselves, don't we?"

"What do you mean?" asked Luke. Actually, he was afraid he knew.

"You often tell Dad and me you'll do something 'in a minute,' but then you don't do it quickly at all," came Mom's unwelcome explanation.

Dad nodded. "I decided to give you a little dose of your own medicine today," he added. He paused. "Actually, there's a good lesson here for all of us. It's easy for us to ask God to wait, too. For example, I sometimes put off speaking to someone about the Lord for 'a minute' and then never get around to it."

"I'm glad God doesn't do that kind of thing," said Mom thoughtfully. "Wouldn't it be terrible if we needed Him and He said, 'Just a minute-I'm busy with someone else now'? Let's all be very careful to promptly do what He wants us to do."

"Yes," said Dad, "and that includes obeying your parents right away." He got up. "Get the basketball," he said. "Let's not wait any more minutes."

Thought: Do you like to put things off for "just a minute "-or do you obey quickly?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to obey my parents and You right away, instead of postponing and postponing. Please, Heavenly Father, help me to change. In Jesus' name - amen.

KEEPING HIS COMMANDMENTS

Sarah shut her eyes and ducked quickly when she saw the pencil flying through the air toward her. When she heard it bounce off her desk onto the floor, she sat up and glared at Bill, who was grinning. "That almost hit me in the eye." Sarah said crossly.

"Bill… Sarah… what's going on here?" Mrs. Neo asked as she walked up to their desks. "Bill threw a pencil and almost hit me in the eye!" said Sarah. "She needed a pencil, and I was just tossing one to her," said Bill quickly. "I didn't mean to hurt her."

"Did, too," accused Sarah. "Did not," insisted Bill.

"Bill," said Mrs. Neo sternly, "you need to be more careful. You could have hurt Sarah even though you didn't mean to." Bill nodded, still pouting. "Sarah, can you see that Bill didn't intend to hurt you?" asked Mrs. Neo. Sarah glanced at Bill and nodded.

Mrs. Neo looked thoughtful. "I think this may be a good time for a lesson on eyes," she said. "Class, take out your health books."

At home that evening, Sarah told her parents about the lesson. "We learned that we have a built-in instinct that tells us to shut our eyelids and move when something comes toward our faces," she reported. "That's because our eyes are sensitive and easily damaged. If we didn't do that, some people might even be blind today."

Mom nodded. "We all try to take good care of our eyes because they're important to us," she said. "Did you know that God sometimes refers to His people as the 'apple of His eye'?" asked Dad.

"That's a funny expression," said Sarah. "What does that mean?"

Dad smiled. "The 'apple of your eye' refers to something you consider very precious," he said, "so it means that God's people are precious and important to Him. The Bible also says we should guard His teachings as the 'apple of our eye.' We should consider God's Word to be precious and important. If it's important to us, we'll use it and obey it."

Thought: How do you treat God's Word? Is it important to you? Do you use it daily?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me that Your promises and teachings will become more precious as I read and obey Your Word more and more. This I pray in Jesus' name – amen.

YIELD NOT TO TEMPTATION

After his mother left, Sam patted his dog, Prince. "I didn't really lie when I said I was sick, did I, old boy?" asked Sam. "I really am sick-sick of Brad. Last time I was there, he beat me at every game we played. He thinks he's so good! I'm sick of him." He grinned to himself. "Yeah, I'm sick all right! I'm just glad Mom agreed to let me stay home while she goes over there."

Mom hadn't been gone long when one of Sam's friends came over. "It's hot!" exclaimed Garth. "Let's go for a swim."

Sam hesitated. "Mom said to stay home and rest - she thinks I'm sick," he said.

"Oh, come on," coaxed Garth. "We'll just go for a short while, and we'll get back before she's home." It seemed like such a good idea that Sam soon gave in.

The boys were having a great time when suddenly, with a muffled scream, Sam disappeared under the water. "Swim, Sam! Swim!" yelled Garth when Sam reappeared. And swim Sam did! Soon he crawled from the pool - scared, and soaked.

The boys hurried home, and when he got there, Sam was dismayed to find that his mother had already returned! She demanded an explanation. "I… I wasn't really sick sick," admitted Sam. "I was just sick… of Brad. He… he always beats me in everything." Mom frowned and Sam hurried on. "Garth and I meant to just play around the edge of the pool - just wade in the shallow water," he said, "but before we knew it, we were in the deep end."

Mom nodded. "That figures," she said. "That's how sin works."

"How sin works?" asked Sam uncertainly.

Mom nodded. "That pool is shallow at one end, but deep at the other." she said. "Sin may seem 'shallow' at first, too. It doesn't start with what we consider a big, deep crime. It starts with little things that don't seem important-like jealousy in your heart. That led to lying and disobedience."

Thought: Is there a "small" thing you know you should not do, yet it's attractive to you? Do you give in and do the thing you know is wrong? That's dangerous; confess your sins and stop it now.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I now know better that sin may seem small initially, but then it will grow bigger and the trouble I get into will grow deeper. Help me instead not to yield to temptation so I can stay away from trouble. This I pray in Jesus' name – amen.

DID YOU COME FROM MONKEYS?

"How was school today?" asked Mom when Tony got home one afternoon.

"It was okay, I guess," answered Tony. "You don't seem quite sure," said Mom. "Was it a hard day?"

Tony shrugged. "It's just that Miss Lee teaches that humans evolved from lower creatures," he replied. "I said that I believe God created the world, including people. Some of the kids think I'm crazy, and I'm sure Miss Lee thinks so, too. She says she believes in God and the Bible, but that we should just be concerned about important things. She says it's not important whether you believe in creation or in evolution."

"It is important," said Mom. "The very first chapters of the Bible tell us that God is the one who created all things-and as you said, that includes people."

"Yeah, but Miss Lee says that's just the first chapter or so. She says we should spend our time thinking about things like God's love and…" Tony paused as he looked out the window. "There goes Nick-that new kid," he muttered. "The first day I met him, he said he was going to sell his bike and asked if I wanted to buy it. I said I did, and he promised to hold it for me. I even gave him five dollars to hold it, like you said I could. But you know what he did? Today he told me he sold it to another kid! I really wanted it!"

"Well, that's too bad," sympathized Mom. "Did he give your money back?"

"Yeah," said Tony, "but I didn't want the money back. I want the bike. It's disgusting! See if I ever believe him again!"

Mom looked thoughtful. "You know, Tony," she said, "you can't believe Nick because some of the first things he said to you were a lie. Now what about God? If the very first words in the Bible are a lie, do you think we can ever be sure God is telling the truth in the rest of the Bible?"

Tony thought for a moment. "You're right, Mom," he said.

"The very first verse is important-and it's true," said Mom. "God never lies."

Thought: Has anyone tried to convince you that intelligent people don't believe such things as the biblical account of creation - that it's not important to believe that part of the Bible? Do not believe them, but trust in the Bible.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to trust that Thy Holy Word is completely true. In Jesus' name – amen.

WATCH WHAT YOU WATCH ON TELEVISION!

Julie stared at the television set, mouth ajar. Those pictures are terrible-they're wicked! she thought, but she didn't turn the TV off. I'll watch it just a bit more. Before she knew it, the show was over, and she'd watched it all. Oops! Julie felt a little guilty. Oh, well. I won't watch it again.

As Julie turned off the TV, her mother came into the room. "I'm glad you shut that off," said Mom with a smile. "So much stuff on TV has a bad influence on us, whether we realize it or not." As Julie nodded, the back door slammed, and little Benny came in crying. "What's wrong, Benny Boy?" asked Mom.

Benny raised his chubby little hand and showed his mother a large red welt. "I got stung by a bee," he sobbed.

"Come on-we'll go take care of that," said Mom putting an arm around Benny.

Julie watched as Mom checked to make sure the stinger was out and gently washed the sore spot. "My science book says bees put a little poison in your skin when they sting you," Julie told her.

Benny's sore was taken care of, and he went out to play, but every now and then, he came back in to say the sting still hurt.

Julie sighed. She was having problems, too - problems of a different kind. No matter how hard she tried, she couldn't erase from her mind the images she had seen on TV. They stayed with her when she went to play outside, when she did her chores, and when she sat down to read.

Benny scowled as he came back in. "That bee had lots of poison," he announced, "not just a little."

Mom smiled and gave him a hug as she spoke to Julie. "That reminds me of what we were saying about TV programs," said Mom. "The poison in a bee's stinger is like the influence of the world on a Christian. Just a little bad language or a few wrong pictures can go a long way to have a bad effect on a person's thoughts." Julie nodded. She'd found out how true that was.

Thought: Are you careful about what you see on TV? Be smart and turn the television off if there's nothing worth watching. Or what you read – be careful too!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be discerning and guard myself against the bad influences of media. In Jesus' name I pray – amen.

YOU WERE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE

"You won't believe what I saw at Karen's!" Sharlene was almost in tears. "She's selling my doll at her garage sale!" "Your doll?" asked Mom.

"Yes! My doll!" answered Sharlene. "The one Grandma gave me. I know it's mine: it has a scribble mark on one arm, and an eye that sticks shut." "How did Karen get it?" asked Mom. Sharlene shrugged. "I don't know if I left it over there or what. When I said it was mine, Karen grabbed it and said it was hers and she was going to sell it." Mom frowned when she heard how much Karen wanted for the doll.

"I'll check it out," offered Carla, Sharlene's older sister. She headed down the street. When she returned a few minutes later, Carla nodded. "That's Sharlene's doll all right," she said. "I told her mother it was. She said it was just too bad if Sharlene lost it, but 'finders are keepers.'"

Sharlene burst into tears. "But it's mine!" she protested. "She can't keep it." Mom sighed. "Well," she said, "I can talk to Karen's mother about it, too, but if she really feels that way, you may have to buy your doll back."

"She shouldn't have to pay for something she owns," protested Carla. But Sharlene ran to her room and began shaking coins out of her bank. She put the money into her pocket and dashed down the street. A few minutes later she came skipping back, the doll hugged tightly in her arms.

Mom smiled. "You redeemed her," she said. "I what?" asked Sharlene.

"Redeemed her - bought her back. You did for your doll what Jesus did for us," explained Mom. "He made us for Himself, but when Adam and Eve sinned, it put them-and all the people who came after them-under Satan's power. Jesus paid the price so that we can become God's children."

"He did that when He died on the cross, didn't He?" asked Carla. Mom nodded. "He bought us back with His own blood. When we trust in Him, we no longer have to be afraid of death and eternal punishment."

Sharlene smiled and spoke to her doll. "Now you'll remind me of both Grandma and Jesus!" she said "From now on, I'm taking extra good care of you!"

Thought: Do you realize that Jesus paid the price to redeem you-to buy you back from Satan's power?

Prayer: Thank You, Heavenly Father, for redeeming me. Thank You for giving me salvation. I want to praise You for all that You are and ask that I will live a good Christian life to please You. In Jesus' name – amen.

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