THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD

Our God is one God, but there are three persons in the Godhead. There is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. That is why we sometimes refer to God as the Holy Trinity.

In today's passage, we learn that the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. In the work of creation, all three persons of the Godhead were working together. God the Father was there when heaven and earth was created. We hear His voice saying, "Let there be light: and there was light "(v. 3). In John 1:3, when referring to Jesus, the living Word, "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." Thus the Bible teaches us that the Holy Spirit is God, just as Jesus is God.

As God, the Holy Spirit is in substance, equal in power and glory with the Father and the Son. No one should say that God the Father is more powerful than God the Son or God the Spirit. The Bible teaches that they are not only equal in power but also equal in glory.

In church, after the offering has been collected, we stand to sing this hymn. Notice that we praise the Triune God.

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

Praise Him, all creatures here below;

Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;

Praise Father, _____ and _____ _____.

Because we usually pay less attention to the Holy Spirit, we sometimes forget about Him. This month, we will learn more about this third person of the Holy Trinity, and hopefully we will be more conscious of the ministry of the Holy Spirit then.

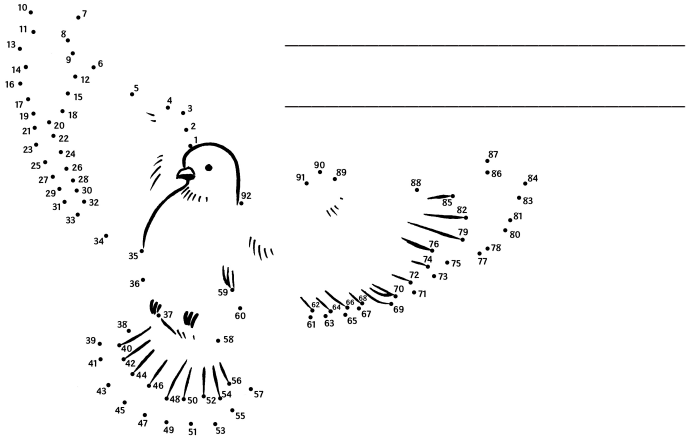
Thought: The Holy Spirit is God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the reminder that the Holy Spirit is an important and equal member of the Godhead. May I learn to appreciate His ministry and to love Him as much as I love You and Jesus. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GENTLE

John the Baptizer in today's Bible reading tells us about the baptism of Jesus. John knew that Jesus was, "The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (v29). The Holy Spirit was working in John to reveal the deep things of God. It was also the Holy Spirit that descended from heaven like a dove and rested upon the Lord Jesus Christ. So not only was John bearing record, the Holy Spirit was also telling us that Jesus is the Son of God.

Complete the dotted outline of the dove and write these words, "The Holy Spirit is like a dove."



_____

_____

Why did the Holy Spirit come down the form of a dove, and not another type of bird, perhaps one more powerful like the eagle or hawk? Although the Holy Spirit is as powerful as God the Father or Jesus, his gentle side is to be considered here. If you are a believer, the Holy Spirit will be in you. He will then guide you and prompt you gently in life.

Sometimes when you are naughty or rude, do you feel the Holy Spirit prompting you to change? Or when you have been selfish or proud, do you feel Him gently nudging you to repent?

Thought: May I be sensitive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, fill me with thy Spirit, so that I may be more sensitive to Him, and eventually have a closer walk with Thee. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

LIFE-GIVING POWER OF THE SPIRIT

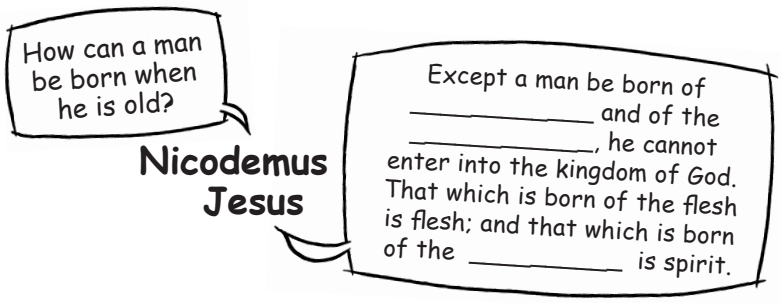
The life-giving power of the Spirit is taught in Christ's conversation with Nicodemus. No one can enter into the kingdom of God by his own efforts. No matter how good one is, or how hard one works, he or she is still not good enough to enter God's kingdom.

Only the Spirit of God can bring about new spiritual birth to a person. The Holy Spirit works in a quiet, non-showy way, making a man repent of his sins, recognizing he is a sinner, and having him put his faith and trust in Jesus. A child like you can also come, if the Holy Spirit so chooses and works in you.

Another time Jesus told someone the Holy Spirit is needed for conversion is when he spoke with the Samaritan woman in John 4. In that passage, he mentioned that whoever drinks the water He gives shall never thirst again. What does that mean?

This water from Jesus is not water we can see or touch. It is the powerful work of grace, the invisible life-giving power of the Spirit that gives eternal, everlasting life to the believer.

Complete this conversation that Jesus had with Nicodemus.



Thought: Do I have this water of spiritual life?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the blessed Holy Spirit that I may be born into Your eternal kingdom. I pray that not only will I have eternal life, but I will have abundant life through Him, that I may live life the way You will want me to, in a happy and blessed way. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

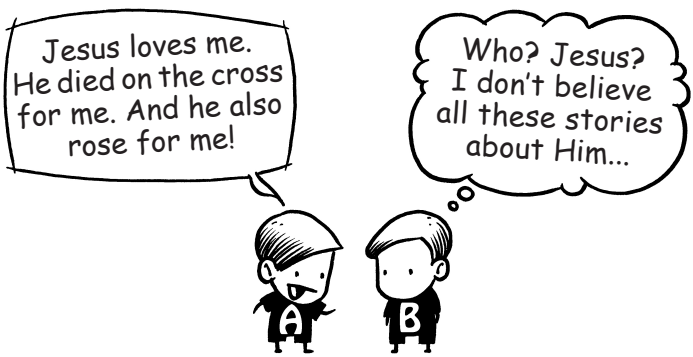
THE HOLY SPIRIT IS OUR TEACHER

We all have teachers. Some are nice and some, nasty , but most will like a teacher who can teach well in a gentle way. Today, we shall learn the Holy Spirit is exactly that – a wonderful teacher who is gentle at the same time.

These two verses teach that all spiritual knowledge is given to us by God through His Spirit. We ourselves are unable to know spiritual truth unless God through His Holy Spirit reveals them. The Holy Spirit has infinite knowledge of all things. He is all knowing, as He is God, and God is all knowing.

This does not mean the Holy Spirit teaches you about Science or the languages. For that, we have our school teachers and tutors. What he will teach us are the deep things of the Lord. For anyone to know he is a sinner and to repent, he has to be taught by the Holy Spirit.

Two boys go to school. How does one boy know about spiritual things and the other does not?



This is because A is saved and _____ (norb) again of the _____ (itirsp) which reveals to him of the _____(pede) things of God.

Thought: Man on his own cannot know the things of the Spirit of God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please give me a deeper understanding of the things of God. Help me to understand them with the help of the Holy Spirit so that I can learn and apply more truths in my life. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

THE HOLY SPIRIT PRAYS FOR US, AND HELPS US PRAY

The Holy Spirit comes into us the moment we believe in Jesus, and He strengthens believers along the way. He helps us when we are sad, perhaps when our friends reject the gospel or even laugh at us. We are often "infirmed" or weak and we cannot take suffering or disappointment but the Holy Spirit will console us and enable us to bear with our trials. On top of that, the Holy Spirit prays for us, and helps us pray!

Sometimes we are so lost or in such trouble that we do not know how to pray, or what to pray for. Left to ourselves, we are often unable to bear the burden, nor sometimes, even know what to ask from God. We want to pray, but we do not know what words to say. Our hearts are heavy, but our lips are empty. In times like these, the Holy Spirit comes and assists us to pray.

How does the Holy Spirit help us pray? He may remind us of certain things to pray for. He may also prompt us to pray for some loved ones who may not be saved. At times, He could also pray for us when we do not even say anything. These could be times when we are not able to express our difficulties or troubles.

Thank God we, Singaporeans, live in a safe and prosperous country. However, many children in the world do not have this privilege. Think about children in war-torn countries, places where hygiene standards are low, or where the crime rate is high. At times, children like these may not know what to say when in fear. If you have ever come across a very difficult situation, be assured that the Lord fully understands, and the Holy Spirit will help you pray, as well as pray for you!

Thought: What a wonderful prayer partner in the Holy Spirit!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of the Holy Spirit. For such a wonderful companion and faithful prayer warrior who aids me in my spiritual life and prayer life, I am grateful. In Jesus' name, amen.

GRIEVE NOT THE HOLY SPIRIT

We grieve our parents when we are disobedient. Despite their many reminders to us, we sometimes do not study hard, and want things our own way. How then do we not grieve mummy and daddy? Simple – obey them and do what they tell us, or do what we know they would like us to do.

Like our parents, the Holy Spirit has feelings and can be hurt. We grieve Him when we sin and do anything against what He wants us to do. What can these be? Well, many! Being angry or unreasonable when we do not get what we want is something all humans do, adult or children. Or lying. Or being unkind to others. Or gossiping. There are just so many ways we may grieve the Holy Spirit. May the Lord teach us to live such a life that will not grieve Him.

The Holy Spirit in the soul of a believer is God's seal, set on his heart to testify that he is God's property and belongs to God. To sin against God is not only to pollute our souls but also to rebel against the Spirit of God.

Take a minute and pray about the things you may have done that grieved the Holy Spirit. Ask the Lord for forgiveness, and commit these areas to Him, trusting that He will help you overcome them.

Write down 3 things you have done that would have grieved the Holy Spirit, and ask God to help you overcome them.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Thought: With God's help, I will try not to grieve the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I commit to You these weaknesses in my life and ask that You be merciful to help me fight them, and to avoid doing them again. In Jesus' name I ask – amen.

THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE GIVER

When we love someone, we want to give good gifts to that person. Your parents love you dearly, and they would have given to you the gift of time, attention, love, care, on top of the physical items they have showered on you in the past. And when we receive gifts, we are grateful, should we not be?

The Holy Spirit is no different – He loves to give gifts to those He loves! He gives to all as He pleases. However, he does not grant the same blessings to all, as all of us need and can use different gifts.

Thus to some, He gives the gift of teaching (pastors, Sunday School teachers), others the gift of drawing (do you know who has been drawing the beautiful illustrations for the Junior RPG?), and yet to others the gift of generosity and perhaps singing. The Holy Spirit knows that different gifts are needed for different occasions.

There are three things to note today.

Firstly, all Christians have been given gifts. You too, in other words, have been given at least one gift. What is that gift? You should find out and use it. If you are not sure, ask your parents or friends what you are strong in.

Secondly, as these gifts are given by God, we should never be proud or conceited. Some may think it is their merit that they are able to accomplish certain things. That is both dangerous and foolish thinking, and can cause Christians to forget the Giver.

Thirdly, if we are not to be proud, we must be grateful to the Lord. Gratitude is a neglected virtue, but it is a very important one. But how can we demonstrate gratitude? Use these gifts for the glory of God! And if people praise us for whatever gifts we have, tell them they are from the Lord!

Thought: Use your gift wisely and humbly.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, first of all please let me discover the gift You gave. And then please Heavenly Father, teach me to use it for Thy sake and for Thy glory. In Jesus' name, amen.

THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In this passage, Jesus talks about the personal presence of the Spirit in every believer. His invisible presence, although not seen, can be felt in a powerful way if we maintain a close walk with the Lord.

Jesus made it clear in verse 15, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." We must love God and show that by keeping his commandments. Should we do that, the ministry of the Holy Spirit will be a powerful one in our lives. And just as Jesus was the comforter of the disciples when He was on earth, the Holy Spirit will be our Comforter today!

The Holy Spirit indwells the believer, and that means He is always there to comfort, counsel and guide the believer. Since He abides in us, He will always be there for us. He will not forsake us or abandon us even when we sin. What we must be aware of is that He is in us, and that we must be sensitive to His teachings and promptings. When we sin, we must feel bad and miserable for we would have grieved the Holy Spirit. Then He will work within us to change us, to move us away from the ways of sin to the ways of righteousness. This is the work of the Holy Spirit.

This passage tells us 3 times the Holy Spirit lives in the hearts of believers. Write them down:

1. v. 16 _____

2. v. 17 _____

3. v. 17 and _____

Thought: Is the Holy Spirit in you? If yes, do you feel His prompting and ministry?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, what a precious gift and blessing that we have the ministry of the Holy Spirit to help and guide us. In Jesus' name, amen.

HOLY SPIRIT WILL CONVICT YOU OF SIN!

"I didn't mean to scratch your skateboard, Karen! You don't have to get so mad!" Jared defended himself. "I told you to leave it alone!" sputtered Karen.

"Well, a skateboard is meant to jump and ride rails and stuff," muttered Jared. "All you do is coast down the street on it. Why don't you try out this ramp I built?"

Just then, their father came. "Look, Dad!" exclaimed Karen. "Jared got all these scratches on my new skateboard. I told him not to take it on that ramp, but he wouldn't listen. He messed it all up!"

"I couldn't help it, Karen-I didn't fall on purpose," said Jared quickly. "Besides, look what happened to my shirt when I fell off the board. There are grass stains all over it!"

"Well, Karen," said Dad as he examined the skateboard, "the other day, you showed me a bunch of decals you've been collecting. If you use them to cover most of those scratches, the board will look great! I'll help you with it, okay?" Karen looked relieved. Then Dad turned to Jared. "Do you want some white paint to put over those stains on your shirt?"

"Paint!" exclaimed Jared. "Of course not! These stains will have to be washed out-not covered up."

"I agree," said Dad, "but do you know that you shouldn't cover up the wrong things you have done ? You shouldn't have scratched Karen's skateboard, and we're making the best of it with the sticker idea. But instead of accepting your responsibility and apologizing, you made excuses. You even made yourself a victim by complaining about your shirt. You were trying to cover up the wrong thing you did, weren't you?"

"Well, I… I guess so," admitted Jared. "I… I'm sorry, Karen."

Thought: When you've done something wrong, do you accept responsibility?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please teach me never to look for someone else to blame when I do wrong. Give me the courage to obey the Holy Spirit's guidance to confess my sins and to admit my mistakes. That's far better than making excuses or blaming others for what I've done. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

LOVE - THE FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

What is your favourite fruit? In a tropical country like ours, it is easy to find a large variety of fruits. And with modern technology and transportation, fruits grown in cold countries may also be readily found here.

Today and the next 8 days, we will spend some time talking about a fruit. However, it is no ordinary fruit for it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. This is one fruit, but it has many components to it, all good, all different, yet all linked. We will also concentrate on just 2 verses for these nine days and learn in depth what they mean.

The fruit of the Spirit happens when the work and word of God is effective in your life. The completion of this fruit will take time, but the end result is beautiful. But what is this fruit? The verse tells us clearly, it is love. Love has 8 parts, each of which we will examine on a daily basis. For today, let us focus on love.

This word "Love" is from the Greek word "Agape". This is not the nice temporary feeling some may feel, or the romantic kind of love one may see on television. Agape love is the purest form of love, a tough and wonderful love that can only be seen and tasted if a person first experiences it from God.

This type of love is the highest and greatest kind of love. At the point a person experiences salvation, he will first experience true love from God. This forgiveness comes at a tremendously high price, for Jesus had to die on the cross to secure that forgiveness. That describes in a way what agape love is. Agape love is sacrificial, kind, and generous.

Do you have this kind of love? Are you able to love others in that way? Frankly, it is not easy to have this kind of love. In fact, it is impossible to have this kind of love, unless it is the Holy Spirit that empowers you to do so. That is why it is called the fruit of the Holy Spirit, not the fruit of the believer.

How then would this kind of fruit be reflected in our lives? By the careful growth and nurturing of the various aspects of this love. And it will take time! Remember, the fruit is the evidence that the Holy Spirit is in you. Do you see such a fruit in your life?

Thought: May I have this wonderful fruit of agape love!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the fruit of the Holy Spirit. May I learn how to slowly grow and nurture this fruit by constantly learning more and more to be like Jesus. In His name I pray, amen.

JOY - PART OF LOVE, FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The first aspect of love, the fruit of the Holy Spirit, is joy. Real Christians can always have joy in their hearts because of what the Lord Jesus has done for them, and what the Holy Spirit can do through them. This joy is not a sense of delight when things turn our way. It is the awareness that God, who gave us the guarantee of His enduring presence, is always there for us.

Real joy comes from knowing who you are – that you are the child of the Almighty God. And that you can turn to the Holy Spirit for help anytime.

Real joy comes from loving the Lord, from communion with Him, from spending time on digging into his word, from not being unhappy by things of earth.

Are you joyful? Take a look at the people around you: your family, schoolmates, teachers, and friends. Are they joyful people? Sadly, many are not. Unfortunately, a lot of people are burdened and weighed down with the problems of this world. As believers in Jesus, we have the Holy Spirit and He will grant us joy as the first aspect of the fruit He can bless us with. So be a joyful you!

Many in the world cannot be joyful because they are without Jesus. And some, even believers, do not have the right level of joy because they may forget to trust God for all they need.

The secret of real Christian Joy – is to keep our eyes focused on Jesus. That does not mean looking at a picture of what Jesus may look like from some children's bible or painting. Keeping our eyes focused on Jesus means to always think of Him, to be a prayerful child, to trust Him to provide for you and your family, and to live a life for Him. In turn, that will keep us happy in the things that will make Jesus happy, and surely one of the things that makes Jesus very happy is the fact that we have eternal life through Him! You will recall the chorus, "Turn your eyes upon Jesus – look full in His wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of his glory and grace."

Thought: May I turn my eyes upon Jesus, and be a joyful child!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for teaching me that joy is such an important part of my life. I know that at times, I may not have been as joyful as I ought to be. Perhaps it is because I do not commit all my problems to You. Perhaps it is because I lack a little faith. So Heavenly Father, please teach me to surrender my life to You, and then I will be able to experience joy. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

PEACE - PART OF LOVE, FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

There is this true account of a very wealthy and powerful American called Sandy Weill. Mr. Weill was the head of a big international bank for many years. When he retired in 2006, he revealed he has not been sleeping every Sunday night for almost 50 years! Asked why, he said he was thinking of the next day when he had to go back to work, and was fearful of what could go wrong in his large empire.

If a person has peace, he would be able to sleep well. Clearly Mr. Weill did not have peace, at least not on many Sunday nights. Psalm 127:2 tells us it is the Lord who grants good sleep, "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep."

Is it strange that such a wealthy man does not possess peace? No. Real peace comes only from God, not from possession of money or power or position in life. The richest man in the world may not have the peace a child like you have, because you may have what he does not have – the Holy Spirit!

Would you like to have this peace? It is simple – commit yourself to the Lord and ask Him to grant you more of that! God doesn't even want you to try to obtain peace in your own strength. He wants to grow peace in you, and He does that when you spend time with Him. Just as you are influenced by other kids when you spend time with them and become kind of like them, you are influenced by God when you spend time with Him and become like Him.

You can spend time with God by reading the Junior RPG and the Bible, and listening to what He wants to say to you. You also spend time with Him when you pray to Him or during family devotions. Knowing more of God's Word and will for us can only give us more peace as we will then be better able to trust Him and know He cares.

Without the peace of the Holy Spirit in your life, you can become easily shaken and disturbed. Dear child, seek the Lord and ask Him to grant more peace to you, your family, and other loved ones.

Thought: Only God can give real peace.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, giver of peace and restful sleep, I thank You for granting me the Holy Spirit. May I continue to be faithful in reading and obeying Thy word so that I will be able to get more peace. Praying too for my family and loved ones, that to them You will also grant peace. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

LONGSUFFERING - PART OF LOVE, FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

What is longsuffering? The word longsuffering in Greek is made up of two words, "long" and "anger." Together, it means the ability of a person to hold one's anger for a long, long time. In other words, such a person is said to be long-tempered. He is slow to anger. This is directly opposite to a person who is short-tempered. A person who is longsuffering shows patience, forbearance towards others and will not avenge wrongs. Longsuffering is thus that quality of self-restraint when in the face of provocation does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish. It does not give tit for tat when hurt or angered by others. We need to be longsuffering in our interaction with people.

Longsuffering is part of God's character. Both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, whenever God is said to be longsuffering, the context often deals with man's repentance and salvation. It has to do with God's mercy towards men. In the Psalms, God is often described as being slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. There are many examples shown in the Bible of God's longsuffering towards men. God is our example of longsuffering.

Are you facing difficult people in your life? They may be your classmates in school who do not like you and do things that irritate you. Should you react in anger and shout at them? Certainly not! The Bible tells us to be longsuffering. So what should we do? Turn to the Lord. You see, because we are Christians, we have the Holy Spirit in us. Having the Holy Spirit, we will also have the fruit of the Holy Spirit which includes the virtue of longsuffering. When we pray and turn to the Lord, He will give us strength to endure difficult people in our lives.

Thought: Longsuffering is part of God's character.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be longsuffering when I face difficult people. Help me to bear a good testimony by not retaliating and reacting in anger. May I follow your example of being longsuffering. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

GENTLENESS - PART OF LOVE, FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Have you heard people quarrelling? I am sure you have. But have you heard people quarrelling softly? That is unlikely to happen. When people quarrel, they usually raise their voices and are anything but gentle! Through their raised voices, they may irritate each other, and raise their voices further! If people remember to speak softly even if they disagree, the frequency of quarrels will decrease!

Today we examine an aspect of the fruit of the Holy Spirit that is not often pursued as a virtue or strength to have – gentleness. Gentleness is submission to God's will. It is when our selfish nature is tamed by the Lord Himself, when we learn how to show appreciation to the Lord bv demonstrating his goodness to others. When we are aware that we have to represent God on earth, we will want to put on the best behavior for our Savior. We do not want to be the opposite of gentle – that is to be rude, or rough, or mean, or unkind, or cruel. You may have come across classmates who are like that – rude or mean. Imagine one of them trying to witness for Jesus to a non-Christian child. What a bad testimony that would be!

Another aspect of gentleness is to be considerate of others. When you love someone, you will be considerate of this person. See how gentle mothers are to infants, carrying them and whispering to them in soft, kind voices. We are taught to love each other and thus, we are also to be gentle to each other. Many people mistake gentleness for weakness. Nothing is further from the truth. Jesus was gentle to children and the poor and seeking, but He was and still is the almighty God who created heaven and earth!

Do you speak gently to your friends, especially to those who are slower than you, or not as smart as you, or do not understand as many things as you do?

Dear child, learn and love gentleness. Through gentleness, you will avoid unhappiness. Through gentleness, you will know what real strength is.

Thought: May I learn and love gentleness.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, perhaps I have not been a gentle child in the past. Please teach me gentleness that I may be a better witness for Thee. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

GOODNESS - PART OF LOVE, FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Goodness is a quality in us that will put a smile on others. In turn, this goodness given by God will lead sinners to repentance if they see that in you.

This particular quality has a real drawing power to it. Spirit-filled believers who possess goodness are like a magnet. Many people who have been saved through an individual believer say that what drew them was the love and goodness they saw shining through that believer.

Christians can effectively witness to others by just living right and being a good example and role model for others to follow. Many nonbelievers carefully observe Christians because they know there is something different about them.

Goodness in a person gets deep down into the core of a believer's personality. To those who really have this quality, you can tell that it is something operating deep down inside of them. You can see it, and feel it when you get around people filled with goodness. We are not talking about someone who is nice on the outside but not nice inside. There are many people like that. These are hypocrites who pretend to be nice and good. Or they are nice only to people who are important or useful to them. That is not the fruit of the Holy Spirit; that is fruit of someone selfish who plans to be good only to selected people they can use. That is not what the bible is teaching; we are to be good to all around us.

Being good also means we are ready to do good, not just talk about doing good. There are some who talk more than they do; the idea here is for believers who are filled with the Holy Spirit to do what they say, instead of just saying the right things.

Are you a good child? Do you show to your parents, siblings, teachers and classmates you have this quality in you? Are they pleased with your behaviour? Do you speak kindly and are you an unselfish child?

Thought: May others know me as a good child!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I confess that at times, I have not been good. At times, I have been naughty or unkind or just not nice. But Heavenly Father, You know I want to be good. So please forgive me of my sins and help me to learn to be a good child. I pray that as I transform and improve, others can see the changes in me. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

FAITH - PART OF LOVE, FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

What is faith? One way is to think of "faith" as 5 words, each beginning with the letters of the word faith: **For All I Trust Him.** Of course, the "Him" refers to our precious Lord. That essentially is faith, for faith is belief in God and what He promises. Do you have faith? Do you really believe in God and have this simple trust in Him? Do you trust Him for all things? Faith is trusting in Him even if things go wrong. Faith is, as the classic chapter on Faith in Hebrews 11 teaches us, the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

The closer we are to God, the more we read the bible and maintain our Quiet Time, the more faith we will have. Dear child, the Christian walk is a wonderful thing but we must have faith. Even if we cannot see God, we know He is real. Although we may not know a lot of the bible since we are young, all children have what it takes to be close to God, and that something is this quiet confidence in God that He will take care of us. Do you have faith in God? Do you pray to Him and really trust Him to help you?

There was this story of a village in Korea that was invaded by enemies who were haters of God. They rounded the villagers, known for their belief in Jesus. The enemy then made a crude wooden cross and placed it in the center of the circle where the villagers gathered. Then they announced: "If you want to live, you will have to renounce your faith in Jesus, then come to the center and spit at the cross!" No one moved. Then the leader of the enemies had an evil plan – force the pastor to first do it and that will break the will of the people. Turning their attention to the pastor, they pointed a gun at his head and told him to betray Jesus. Confused and lacking confidence in God, the pastor did the cowardly thing and spat at the cross. The crowd was shocked! How could the pastor do it! But one by one, the others followed. If the pastor could do it to save his life, the rest could too.

It was the children's turn next. A little girl proceeded to the cross and did something that stunned the rest to silence, then tears. Instead of spitting at the cross, she cradled it in her arms, and wiped it clean with her clothes. It was told that act of faith so touched the enemies they released the entire village.

Thought: Would I have the faith of this little girl?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know my faith in You may be small. But please teach me to grow in my faith. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

MEEKNESS - PART OF LOVE, FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

What is meekness? It is strength under control; it is submission of ourselves to God. Many may associate meekness for weakness. However, that is not accurate.

Guess who is the meekest man in the bible? It was the great leader of the Jews – Moses. As leader of 2 million of God's people, he was in a powerful position and yet the bible tells us he was very meek. Why? Because a believer knows that on his own, he is nothing. And because his reliance is completely on God, he cannot but be meek. Moses knew that although he was made leader of the Jews, he did nothing to earn that.

Meekness is very similar to humility, and humility is such a rare virtue. Many are proud. Some of your classmates may be; I hope you are not. When you do well in a test or examination, do you go around asking others how well they fared? Even if you do not mean to be proud, you may appear to be so. In times like these, you have to be sensitive to weaker students and be meek and humble about your achievements.

Do you know how tall the tallest building in Singapore is? 280 metres is the answer. There are 3 buildings in Singapore that are 280 metres tall: UOB Plaza, Republic Plaza, OUB Centre. But which building in Singapore has the deepest piling? Do people know about this less-popular aspect of buildings? Do people care about how deep pilings go? Very few? Why? Because buildings are seen and admired for their towering presence than for their deep pilings. In a way, meekness is like piling. No one really cares about it. But we all know that if a building does not have deep piling, it cannot be built tall. Likewise, if we are not meek, our "spiritual piling" will not be deep enough for us to build strong Christian characters for ourselves.

The true believer knows that he is a sinner bound for hell and would go there had it not been for the grace of God through Jesus. He would have the faith (remember "For All I Trust Him") in Jesus, and not in himself or herself. Therefore, a true believer cannot but be meek and humble.

Thought: How deep is your "spiritual piling"?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please remind me that on my own, I can do nothing. I know all I have and am is from Thee, so to Thee I must be grateful. Help me also to have meekness, for it is part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

TEMPERANCE - PART OF LOVE, FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Temperance looks like a big word. What is it really? Temperance is the self-control and self-discipline you can see in a Christian as a result of the Holy Spirit's control of him. This aspect of the fruit of the Holy Spirit is placed last not because it is least important. It is placed last as it is the crowning glory of a Christian. It is the ability of the believer to be balanced; to be humble in victory, and strong in defeat. That is when the believer knows his life is in the hands of God, and that as he follows God's will, there is nothing the Father in heaven will not take care of. That is temperance; that is a complete faith in the gracious God!

How can we see temperance? Perhaps when you do well in school, you will be balanced and not show off your grades to everyone. When you do not do well, you will not be disappointed, but trust in the Lord, and work extra hard for the next round. You are at peace, whether circumstances around you are positive or negative. Temperance is not something that just happens out of the blue. Temperance is a result of the Holy Spirit filling, and is often what a Christian will be after he has the other aspects of the fruit of the Spirit. These are aspects we have studied in the past week. You see, when you have joy, and peace, and long-suffering… you will have temperance.

Temperance is also a sign of a maturing Christian. It does not mean that you, as a child, cannot have temperance. Temperance can be yours when you grow slowly in the faith as a child of God, when you slowly cultivate the fruit of the Spirit. Think of it as growing an actual tree. There is no way one can speed up the growth of the tree even if the best care is given. Likewise, temperance is the result of a long and stable relationship with the Lord.

The opposite of temperance is seen in people who are easily affected by things or events around them. Like waves tossed about in strong winds, these people may swing from elation to extreme sadness, always subject to the situation around them. Dear child, pray for temperance, that the Lord will grant you the inner balance that is there because you trust in God and know your life is in His hands.

Thought: May I be a child with temperance!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for granting the fruit of the Holy Spirit to Your children. I know I fail many times to demonstrate these different aspects of the fruit, but Lord, please help me to always remember to try to have them. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

THE CONVICTING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (1)

Imagine there is a junior worship Christmas celebration where new friends are invited. The Gospel is preached and two boys hear the same message. One believes but the other does not. Why is this so? It is the convicting work of the Holy Spirit on the one who believes; the Holy Spirit will help that person to understand how great and grievous his sins are. The other boy, heart hardened, will not be convicted of his sins because he refuses to believe he has sins or that his sins will condemn him.

For the first boy, the Holy Spirit will open his spiritual eyes and give him faith to believe. Faith is a gift of God. Faith will enable him to realize the love and sacrifice of God's only begotten Son on the cross. He will then come humbly and give his heart to the Lord who loved and died for him. There might be tears, tears of repentance for his bad behaviour and tears thinking of Christ's great love for a sinner such as he is. All this is the convicting work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit also convicts believers of sin and wrong-doing when we are close to Him. Sometimes, when you pray or read the Bible, are you not touched by the grace of our Lord? When you are moved to be a better Christian, to have a more consistent Quiet Time, to be more like Jesus, all these are the convicting work of the Spirit.

Write T for True and F for False against these statements.

1. Our hearts are hard and we cannot by ourselves choose Christ. _____

2. Our spiritual eyes may be opened by the Holy Spirit to see the truth and glory of Christ. _____

3. The Holy Spirit may be rejected by some and accepted by others. _____

Thought: What a glory to be chosen and convicted of our sin by the Holy Spirit!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, let me be always thankful that I am chosen by Thee and help me show by my life how much I owe to Thee. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

THE CONVICTING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (2)

The Bible clearly teaches that the special convicting work of the Spirit will lead to the salvation of the soul. This saving work of the Spirit is wholly mysterious to us. It surpasses our human understanding and reasoning. And whether a person is wealthy or educated has no bearing on his salvation at all.

The writer thought that her educated father would first come to believe in Jesus when the gospel was brought to him, but it was her illiterate mother who joyfully came to put her trust in Christ. Though Father came later to the Lord, Mother's faith had always been much stronger.

You may have heard of the American hymn lyricist Fanny Crosby. Although she became blind shortly after birth, she penned almost 8,000 hymns and choruses for the Lord. Though blind, she led many to "see" God in the beautiful words of her compositions. One famous hymn is entitled "Pass Me Not" and the words remind us of today's lesson – the convicting work of the Holy Spirit.

Pass me not, O gentle Savior,
Hear my humble cry;
While on others Thou art calling,
Do not pass me by.

Chorus
Savior, Savior, Hear my humble cry;
While on others Thou art calling, Do not pass me by.
Let me at Thy throne of mercy, Find a sweet relief;
Kneeling there in deep contrition; Help my unbelief.
Trusting only in Thy merit, Would I seek Thy face;
Heal my wounded, broken spirit, Save me by Thy grace.

Thought: Pass me not O precious Saviour!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for choosing me as your child. Help me to understand it is such a blessing to have been convicted of my sins and to be able to now cast all my burdens unto You. I pray for some of my loved ones who are not saved that Thou O Lord will also be merciful to convict them with the Holy Spirit. This I pray, in Jesus' name, amen.

HE CAN GUIDE YOU!

Life can bring us challenges and difficulties that throw doubt along our way. Although our parents are wise and lead us in many ways, even they can be confused and not know what to do at times. That is why it is so wonderful to have the Holy Spirit because He will guide believers. He will teach them to make right decisions, He will guide them to understand His Word.

However, the Holy Spirit's guiding is not through dreams or visions, but by His convicting of our hearts and minds when we are close to God. It is crucial that the believer remains close to God for otherwise, he may think he is guided by the Holy Spirit when in reality, he is led by his own senses and priorities!

For us children, how can the Holy Spirit guide us?

You have to continue to do the basics: be faithful in reading the Word and doing your Quiet Time, value His precious Word and not treat it like some book written by human authors, go to the Lord daily in prayer seeking His blessings and protection, learn to shun evil or naughty friends who may lead you astray.

Dear child, may the Lord watch over and guide you!

There is a hymn of the US Navy asking God to guide and protect them. Entitled "Eternal Father, Strong to Save", some of the verses are below. Underline all sentences that call upon God to guide and protect His own.

Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who biddest the mighty ocean deep, Its own appointed limits keep,
O hear us when we cry to Thee, For them in peril on the sea.

O Trinity of love and praise!
Your children shield in danger's hour,
From rock and tempest, fire and foe, Protect us wheresoever we go;
Thus evermore shall rise to Thee, Glad hymns of praise from land and sea.

Thought: The Holy Spirit is our wonderful Guide.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, guide us, so that we may know what You want us to do. Help me to continue to keep close to You by the daily reading and obedience to Thy precious Word. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

YOU ARE THE TEMPLE OF GOD!

Should a hotel owner know a very important person is going to be his hotel guest, he would ensure the whole hotel is cleaned up, and repairs made, to ensure it is in the best state to receive this very important guest. Why is this so? Because it is a great privilege to host this guest!

When this important guest comes, he must be given the best, and will surely be offered the most impressive suite available.

The same logic applies to us. When we say "We are the temple of God", it means the Holy Ghost dwells in our body in the spiritual sense. Like the hotel owner who keeps his hotel clean, we have to ensure our body is kept in the best of condition, cleansed meticulously, so that it will live up to the honor of having the Holy Spirit live in us! In that case, we will become the "temple of God".

Also, we invite the Holy Spirit to the most important "room", and that is our heart! We invite God to stay there as the heart directs our lives and will affect all other organs of our body. If the heart is right, the entire body will be too. If the Holy Spirit is in our heart, we will allow Him to take control of our lives, and to live it the way He would have us to.

Should we be the temple of God, we will want to ensure we live to honor Him. The tongue is part of our body. If we use it to utter bad or unkind words, that would dishonor Him. Our feet are another part of our body. We should not join classmates or people who do not bring glory to God's name by what they do.

There is this popular children's song:

O be careful little eyes what you see, O be careful little eyes what you see
There's a Father up above, And He's looking down in love
So, be careful little eyes what you see
O be careful little feet where you go, O be careful little feet where you go
There's a Father up above, And He's looking down in love
So, be careful little feet where you go

Thought: I must keep myself, the temple of God, clean for Him!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to keep my whole body pure and holy. I am so privileged to have You to be my Guest and I ask that You will please guide and protect me. This I pray in the precious name of Christ, amen.

THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

It is increasingly popular for people to drink wine or other alcoholic drinks. Wine appreciation courses are seen to be classy and fashionable. It is a fact that consumption of wine affects a person's judgment and emotions. So it is not surprising to read of drunk-driving accidents and how people get into fights and other kinds of trouble when drunk. All these result from people not taking control of themselves but allowing themselves to be controlled by alcohol.

The verse today warns believers not to be filled with wine but with the Holy Spirit. Clearly the idea is that Christians are to be filled with and controlled by the Holy Spirit and not be like drunkards who are controlled by alcohol.

To be filled with the Spirit, we must first be empty of ourselves. Think about it - before we can fill a bottle which is already full with Liquid Y, with Liquid X, the original content must first be emptied.

Likewise for us, we have to let ourselves decrease and let the Holy Spirit increase in our lives. That will mean we must confess and repent of our sins. Day by day, as we read God's Word, as we pray, the Holy Spirit will bring to remembrance the things we have done wrong. As soon as we know about them, we must quickly ask for forgiveness. No matter how big or how ugly the sin is, the Lord is faithful and just to forgive for He loves us.

Have you confessed these sins? Do it now.

- Telling lies about your homework, studies, results…
- Getting angry, scolding or being unkind…
- Being selfish and caring only for yourself…
- Being lazy and playing instead of studying and helping parents…

Thought: I must empty myself of sins so the Holy Spirit can fill me.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know I have sinned and for the Holy Spirit to fill me, I must first empty myself of sin, and wrong thoughts, and anything that will draw me away from Christ. Help me Heavenly Father, for I ask humbly in Jesus' name, amen.

FEEDING ON GOD'S WORD

Have you been to a delivery ward? Besides the faces of happy parents and excited relatives, you will also see and hear newborn babies crying. Why do they cry? Perhaps because their diapers are wet, or they may feel too cold or hot. There is one other possibility, and this happens to babies very often. What is it? All newborn babies crave milk. When they are hungry, they cry.

What is the most yummy meal you have had? What is your favourite food? We are blessed to have so many types of food in Singapore; every culinary fantasy can be had: Italian, Indian, Korean, Nepalese, Turkish… the list goes on. All children like you will want to eat yummy food.

All humans will need and want food. Likewise, if we are spiritual children, we will crave spiritual milk or food, won't we? Do you feel the need to read God's Word and if you miss it for a day or two, will you feel something is not right? If so, that is good – you are clearly a child of God. But if not, why not? As a child will feel hungry without food for 2 days, a spiritual child will feel "hungry" without spiritual nourishment for a few days. To be a Spirit-filled Christian, we must also read the Bible daily and attend Sunday School.

When you are truly sorry for your sins, confess it to the Lord who will be merciful to forgive you. You must do it daily or regularly as we sin so easily. Confess, and then your heart will be cleansed and made pure and the Holy Spirit will fill your heart with joy and power. Isn't that wonderful?

To be filled with the Spirit, feed on God's Word. Your daily devotion of reading the Junior RPG and Bible will help you understand how to live a holy life pleasing to the Lord. That will in turn start to put in you the teachings of God's Word. The more of the bible's teachings you have in you, the more you will be filled with the Spirit as you will then tend to think the way God would.

Thought: Have you been having your daily spiritual feast?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to love to read the Bible everyday. There are times when I forget or get plain lazy to read the Word, so please forgive me. Help me to be more serious about reading Thy Word so I can be strengthened. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

SEALING OF THE SPIRIT

Have you ever been in an airport and noticed the difference between passengers who hold confirmed tickets and those who are on standby? The ones with confirmed tickets read newspapers, chat with their friends or sleep. The ones on standby hang around the ticket counter, pace back and forth and are clearly uneasy. The difference is a matter of confidence. The people with confirmed tickets have the assurance they will take the plane and reach their destination. This is similar to those who truly believe in God, and place their trust in Jesus, and today's verse reminds us, these will be sealed or guaranteed redemption. If we are tempted and stray from God, God is faithful to bring us back to Him one day. We will never lose our salvation if we are truly His. That is why people say, "Once saved, always saved." It is like you being a son or daughter of your parents, you will always be their child, no matter what you do. Likewise, once we accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, we are sealed the moment we become Christians.

However, although we are saved and sealed forever, we are told not to grieve the Holy Spirit. What does that mean? It means we cannot sadden the Holy Spirit by living a life of continuous and deliberate disobedience to God. There are some people who abuse the doctrine of "Once saved, always saved.", thinking they can still go to heaven while continuing to live in sin and disobedience. People who think like that are probably not saved in the first place. Why? Because a true believer, a real Christian, will be convicted of his sins and will want to please Jesus. Such a person will want to live a new life of victory over sin, and will not want to indulge in continuous and deliberate disobedience to God. Thus, it is very important that as we understand the concept of salvation, we must not grieve the Holy Spirit.

Write T for True or F for False against these statements.

1. If we sin occasionally, we will lose our salvation. _____
2. The Holy Spirit seals us to show that we belong to God forever. _____
3. We are sealed the moment we believe. _____
4. True believers will not want to grieve the Holy Spirit. _____

Thought: We are forever safe in the arms of Jesus!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for giving us eternal security when You sealed us with the Holy Spirit. It is so wonderful to be given this gift of eternal life! In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

THE BEST INHERITANCE!

An inheritance is a possession or asset given to children when their ancestors pass away. Wealthy people can leave a lot of material wealth to generations after them, but, however much they leave behind, these possessions or vast sums of money would be used up one day, sooner or later. These inheritances are also not free from theft, or fraud. Whether your parents are wealthy or not, our heavenly Father is wealthy beyond degree! And guess what, He has an inheritance for you and me!

Turn to 1 Peter 1:4. This verse reminds us of yesterday's lesson, that our salvation is guaranteed or reserved. On top of that, we learn something else, that our spiritual inheritance has a few characteristics. What are they?

What our heavenly inheritance is not?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

All earthly inheritances can be corrupted. The richest people in this world can leave behind millions to their sons and daughters when they die. The father loves his children and has the means and money to save and invest so that his children may receive riches out of his hands. God is also such a loving Father but His inheritance is infinitely and immeasurably better.

Thought: God has promised us a rich inheritance.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for Your rich inheritance of salvation, which I do not deserve. I pray I will treasure this most precious of all inheritances, more valuable than any can boast of! Help me to live my life knowing that I have this wonderful guarantee of eternal life from Thee. This I ask in Jesus' name, amen.

THANK GOD FOR HIS GIFTS!

When was the last time you had such a wonderful gift that caused you to grin from ear to ear? Whatever that was, you must have been elated (very happy). Today, there is more reason to grin! God loves to give us gifts and He is a generous heavenly Father!

All true believers in Christ will be blessed with at least one spiritual gift. In today's passage, we read of some of the gifts bestowed to the people in the time of Paul the Apostle. However, not all gifts are needed all the time, so some of those you read about would not be given today; these include miraculous healing, speaking in and interpretation of tongues, and prophecies. But many other types of gifts remain!

Why does God give gifts? For one, He wants to bless us. With the gifts He bestows, we are expected to use them to bless others. Imagine you give your mummy a lovely bookmark. You have put in a lot of effort making this bookmark and want to give it to her as a surprise. However, after she receives it, strangely she does not use it. Instead, she puts it in some corner and totally forgets about the bookmark. How would you feel? Would you like that feeling? Of course not! Your mummy will not do such a thing because she loves the giver of the bookmark, and as she loves you, she will also treasure what you give.

Do you love God? Are you thankful to Him for His gifts? If you love God, you will also love His gifts. And when you love His gifts, you will use them. We shall examine four different gifts over the next four days. But for today, there are two main lessons: firstly to be grateful to God for His gifts and secondly, that we may learn to use and strengthen these gifts!

Thought: Thank God for His gifts!

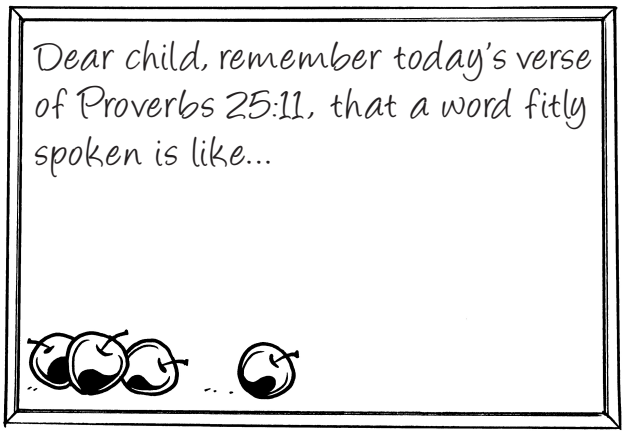
Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am so thankful that despite my sin and disobedience, You have given me gifts. I pray I will understand what they are and use them to glorify Thy name. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

GIFT OF GODLY SPEECH

One gift of the Holy Spirit is the word of godly speech. A person given this gift will be able to speak carefully and wisely, with guidelines learnt from God's Word. Now usually, kids your age are not associated with wisdom. But dear child, if you are a child of the Lord, and if you really want to honour God in your life, one way to demonstrate that is to have godly speech! The Lord Jesus himself indicated clearly the tremendous significance of a man's words when he taught that evil words and good words should not come from the same person. His illustration was simple but true - a tree is known by its fruit and it will only bear one type of fruit; good or bad.

How to have godly speech? First of all, you must want to have that. Secondly, pray that God will help you understand the importance of godly speech. You may hear phrases like, "Oh, my goodness!" or worse, "Oh my God!", or other such phrases. Please do not think they sound "cool" in any way and therefore adopt them. Many who use such phrases may not even understand what they mean!

We are all very careful what goes into our mouth. We prefer to eat what we like and not what we do not wish to. If we are so vigilant about what goes in, how about what comes out of our mouth?



Thought: May my speech bring glory to God!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to control my speech so that others can be encouraged by what they hear from me, and give me the courage to examine myself to see how I can improve in this area. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

GIFT OF KINDNESS

We want to continue with the lesson on "Gifts of the Holy Spirit" today. Today's verse is a wonderful reminder that we are to be kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving. But we will only concentrate on the first aspect: kindness.

When was the last time someone said you were kind? Or has anyone ever said that? If not, why do you think no one has done that? Examine your heart – are you a kind child? We are often told as Christians to witness for Jesus, to be a good example for God. In fact, if we are kind children, a lot of friends may be drawn to Christ because of that. Kindness has converted more sinners than zeal or eloquence.

When should you be kind? Every day! Every day is a good day to be kind. The kindness we want to have is not only the outward appearance of niceties. It is not putting on an artificial smile or saying something nice but not meaning it. Real kindness comes from a heart cleansed by God. It is knowing how good God has been to us, and that in turn, we can learn to be like God in this aspect. It is another gift of the Holy Spirit!

But how do we show our kindness? These are a few ways:

1. When you don't agree with someone, do not quarrel or argue. Instead, talk about the problem calmly like friends! This makes God happy.

2. If someone is being mean to you, do not be mean back. Instead, show them God's love by smiling and using kind words.

3. Share the things God has blessed you with others. Let your sister or brother play with your toys. Give your old clothes and toys away to someone else who needs them.

4. If you see someone who needs help, try to help them in the best way you can.

Thought: Kindness has converted more sinners than zeal or eloquence.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, at times I have been an unkind child. Please forgive me for I know that is wrong. May I learn kindness, kindness only the Holy Spirit can give, and in turn, that I may spread this kindness to the people around me. This I ask in Jesus' name, amen.

GIFT OF A TENDER HEART & FORGIVENESS

Seven-year old Seng Soon was excited to shoot hoops (play basketball) with his dad. "Ready dad?". "Sure!", said dad as they drove to the nearby basketball court. When they arrived, dad said, "Just one more minute, son. I have to make a phone call, you go on out there and practise and I'll be right out." "Okay" Seng Soon answered as he trotted to the basketball court. A few minutes passed and he had a great time shooting hoops, though none of them actually reached the basket. He pretended he was a famous basket ball player and the outcome of the game depended on him. So he threw this next one with all his might! "He shoots, he… uhoh…", the ball slammed through the window of dad's car with a loud crash! Seng Soon ran to the scene. He saw the stunned face of dad, and started crying for fear of punishment from father.

What happened next? Do you think Seng Soon deserved punishment? How would you prefer this story to end?

Often, we are like Seng Soon. We have done something wrong, are really repentant about it, and confess to the Lord. And we know that our gracious God is always ready to forgive, if we confess our sins. As forgiven sinners, as someone who has experienced the wonder of a wrong forgiven, should we not also be of a tender heart and forgive others when they wrong us? The idea of a "tender heart" is to be compassionate, to be able to feel with and understand how someone who asks for forgiveness may be experiencing. It is really an extension of yesterday's lesson–to be kind. If we are kind, we will be tender-hearted. If we are tender-hearted, if we do not bear grudges, we will also be a forgiving people.

Forgiveness is such an important aspect of a Christian's life. If there were no forgiveness, there would be no Christian faith for without the forgiveness of God, Jesus would not have gone to the cross to bear our sins.

Has anyone hurt you? Has anyone been unkind to you? Dear child, learn how to be tender-hearted and forgive that person. You will be able to do it with the strength of the Holy Spirit for a forgiving heart is a gift from the Holy Spirit.

Thought: Only the strong forgive; be strong in the Lord, and forgive!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may you give me a tender heart and a heart of forgiveness. In Jesus's name, amen.

IS THERE A GIFT OF GIVING?

Today's text reminds us there are various types of gifts from the Spirit. For our devotion, we shall focus only on one: the gift of giving.

Some of you might already have been given the gift of giving. What does that mean? It means that God will enable you to give to His work cheerfully. This can be in the form of money or offerings to support church or missions. However, it is not confined to church or missions; you could help some classmate or friend who may be less privileged than you by sharing your possessions. If there is anyone reading this devotion and not giving to the Lord, know this gift of giving is something you should have! You should want to give to the Lord, for He has given you and me so much! Whatever we return to Him through tithes or love-gifts is nothing compared to what He has sacrificed for us.

Are you a generous child? Do you like to share things? Do you share things at all? To give simply means to give without anybody knowing or announcing it to anyone. Just do it, and do it quietly. That is the way of blessed giving.

When you first start to give, you may not be used to it. It may even seem painful to you for the sin nature in us tells us to be selfish, teaches us to hold back good things and reserve them only for ourselves. Dear child, but when you let the Holy Spirit take control of your life, when you ask God to help you, you will slowly be able to realize that it is in giving that we find joy.

Dear child, how much pocket money do your parents give you? Do you give a portion of this to the Lord on Sundays? Learn from John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, who used to say "Make all you can; save all you can; give all you can". Although he was rich, he gave a lot to the Lord. When he died, he only had about the equivalent of SGD50 with him. This man knew what it was to give cheerfully.

Thought: What is the opposite of a generous child? Would you like to be that?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the lesson today, that I must be a generous child. Help me overcome any initial resistance to giving to Thee and sharing what I have with others. I pray this in the precious name of my Saviour, amen.

GOD NEVER MAKES MISTAKES

As Emily and Nina started home, they ran into Weng Leong-a school bully. "Hey, Nina, where'd you get this red bag?" asked Weng Leong as he grabbed the bag and tossed it down on the sidewalk. Nina stared blankly at him. "Stop that!" commanded Emily, darting toward the bag. She returned it to Nina. "You leave her alone," ordered Emily, glaring at Weng Leong.

Weng Leong walked away, grinning broadly. When the girls reached Nina's house, she smiled at Emily. "Want to walk to school together tomorrow?" she asked.

"Sure," said Emily, and she hurried on to her own home. "What's up?" asked Mom when she saw the expression on Emily's face.

"I'm just thinking about Nina," said Emily glumly. She plopped down onto the couch. "She's not very smart, and some of the kids tease her." She sighed. "Why did God create some people with problems like hers? Did he make a mistake?"

"A mistake?" echoed Mom. "Well… it doesn't seem like life can be much fun for her," said Emily. "She has to work so hard to learn even simple things."

"Yes, she does," agreed Mom, "and because of that, Nina's parents are extremely proud of all she can do. Nina is the joy of their lives."

"Yes, but…" Emily paused. "Think of her," she added. "She can't be having much fun."

"I am thinking of Nina," said Mom. "Her mom tells me how much Nina looks forward to going to school each day. She's so easily pleased and proudly shows her coloring papers to everyone. Nina is a happy girl who loves all the kids-and I'm glad to tell you that she often talks about her friend Emily."

"Really?" asked Emily in surprise. Mom nodded. "Always remember that God has made each one of us, and He has a purpose for all He does," said Mom. "Even if we don't understand His purpose, we can be sure He knows what He's doing. God never makes a mistake."

Thought: God never makes mistakes.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me never to think that Thou may be mistaken in allowing what happen in my life. Help me to really trust and always go to Thee for help. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

WATCH YOUR WORDS…

"Did you see the clothes Ron was wearing today?" asked Zoe, holding the phone close to her mouth. "He looked like a real nerd."

"His whole family is like that," replied Whitney. The girls giggled. "What about Kelly-that new girl in our class?" continued Bee Lin. "Did you notice that when she laughs she sounds like she is snorting? She sounds like a pig."

"Gross," said Zoe with a laugh. "Maybe she grew up on a pig farm." Just then they heard a clicking sound on the phone. "What was that?" asked Bee Lin. "Is someone else on the line? Your brother, maybe?" "No, it's me, girls." Zoe's mother was speaking. "I'm sorry to interrupt you. I was going to make a call and I didn't realize you were using the phone. I'll wait until you're finished." Zoe heard the click as Mom hung up. "What were we saying?" asked Whitney. "I don't remember-but what if my mom heard us talking about Ron and Kelly?" gasped Zoe. "What if she heard some of the stuff we said?"

"She didn't," said Bee Lin confidently. "We would've known if she were listening." "Yeah. Well, I better go anyway," replied Zoe, so the girls said goodbye. "Mom, we're off the phone," Zoe informed her mother after they had hung up. She hesitated. "Did you hear what we were saying when you picked up the phone?" she asked.

"No. I didn't listen," replied Mom. "So you didn't hear the things we were saying?" repeated Zoe. "I mean… well, we were just… just kind of joking about some stuff and some of the kids at school."

Mom raised her brows. "I didn't hear you," she said, "but does the fact that you're worried about it mean you were saying things that shouldn't be said? You need to remember that even though I didn't hear what you said, the Lord did. He always hears all you say." Zoe was silent as Mom picked up the phone and began dialing. Then…"Mom," said Zoe hesitantly, "when you finish your call, I need to make one, too. I want to call Bee Lin and tell her I'm sorry about some things I said. Okay?"

"Okay," said Mom. "Definitely okay!"

Thought: May what we think and say be acceptable to God!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, forgive me for I sin often in thoughts and words. Help me not to bring shame to Thy Name. In Jesus' name, I pray, amen.

OBEY YOUR PARENTS!

"Jeff! Stop playing that video game!" Mom's voice was stern. "Where did you get it? It's full of shooting, murder, and all kinds of evil. Turn it off."

"C'mon, Mom," complained Jeff. "It's the most popular game around, and everyone's talking about it!"

"Sorry, Son. Not in this house," Mom said decidedly. Despite grumbling, Jeff did as he was told. As he angrily left the room, he heard his mother's familiar words, "I'm only thinking of your good, Jeff."

"I know what's good for me," Jeff muttered as he shut his bedroom door. His small dog, Lion, was lying curled up at the foot of the bed. Seeing his dog reminded Jeff of something else he didn't like. Dad had told him they'd have to get a chain for Lion and keep him tied up when he was outside. Jeff sighed. Lion was going to hate being tied up.

When Dad came home from work, he had a collar and chain with him. "Here you go, Jeff," he said. "You can fasten this chain to the clothesline. Lion will be able to roam quite far that way."

Just as Jeff expected, Lion did not like being tied up, and he struggled to break free. He yelped and ran in circles, round and round and round. At last Jeff gathered his dog up in his arms. "Please try to understand," he pleaded. "If you're running loose, you'll be picked up by the dogcatcher and maybe I'll never see you again. Trust me, Lion, I'm only thinking of your good."

Jeff suddenly realized he was repeating his mother's words. He sat there and thought for a moment. She had frustrated him when she told him to turn off the video game because, like Lion, Jeff wanted his freedom. He knew he had acted like Lion-angry and resentful. But I know Mom loves me, too, he thought, and I know that's why she made me turn off the game.

Thought: Do you have a hard time listening to and obeying your parents?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, sometimes it seems like my parents may not understand me. Sometimes it appears they want to take the fun out of everything. But I know they really mean well when they restrict me from doing things. So help me to obey them and know I must honour them. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

GOD IS THE MOST WONDERFUL ARTIST!

Dad rowed the boat to the edge of some lily pads. It was the best place in the lake to catch fish. As Alex sat in the boat with his father, he watched his red and white bobber closely, waiting for it to go down because a fish had taken the bait. The calm water reflected the sky and trees along the shore. Birds were singing, and a frog hopped off a lily pad and splashed into the lake. The bobber wiggled as the ripples spread under it, but it didn't go down.

"The fish don't seem to be very hungry today," said Dad after a little while, "but it sure is nice out here with the blue sky and water and the green grass and trees. It's all so peaceful. It makes me forget all about the office."

Alex turned to his dad. "We've been studying about colors in school," he said. "Some scientists say that blue slows down the heart rate and green helps prevent eyestrain. That makes them restful colors."

Dad smiled. "Do you suppose that's why God made so much blue and green in nature?" he asked as he checked his line. The bait was still there. "Just imagine what it would be like if the sky were bright red and all the leaves were black."

Alex laughed at the word picture Dad had painted. "We learned that red is supposed to cause people to be more active. Some say it can even cause blood pressure to rise," said Alex. "I don't think it would make people feel very good to have a red sky all the time." He paused. "It sure looks pretty when the sun is setting, though," added Alex. "God sure is smart."

"God is very wise," agreed Dad. "We see a great deal of His wisdom in nature-even in the colors He chose. Restful greens and blues much of the year, but pretty reds and oranges and yellows coloring the sky at sunrise and sunset!"

"Right. And lots of color in flowers." Alex looked at his fishing line. "You know what else scientists say?" he asked. "They say orange makes you hungry." He grinned at his dad. "I wish God had made these bobbers. Instead of making them red and white, I bet He would have made them orange to make the fish more hungry. Then maybe they'd come over to see them and grab the bait, too!"

Thought: What a wonderful artist and creator God is!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, how manifold and beautiful are Your works! Thank You for giving us so much beauty in nature! Help me to appreciate what You have done and to be grateful to You for them, as well as other blessings in my life. In Jesus' name, amen.

DO IT ALL FOR JESUS!

"Put the blue block here, Sandi," Saul suggested as he helped his four-year-old sister build a tower with blocks. When the structure was almost finished, Sandi pulled out a green block near the bottom of the tower. The tower wobbled, and toppled over. "Look what you did! You ruined it," scolded Saul. "Why did you do that?"

"I wanted this pretty green block at the top so I can see it," replied Sandi.

Just then the telephone rang, and Mom answered it. "Saul, it's for you," she said, handing him the phone. "Hi. This is Saul," he said. A few minutes later, he told his mom, "That was my JW teacher," he said. "He wants me to come to a rehearsal for that skit they're doing on Promotion Sunday. There aren't any parts left in the skit, but they need somebody to help move props between scenes." He frowned. "I'm not good enough to be in the skit, so they want me to help move the props!"

"The production won't be nearly as effective if the props aren't in the right place," said Mom. "Moving them may not seem as glamorous as acting in the play, but it's a very important job." She paused, then added, "It's like the block Sandi took out of the tower you were building."

"What do you mean?" asked Saul. "Sandi took out just one block that didn't show very much anyway," said Mom, "so why did the whole tower tumble down?"

"Because the blocks at the bottom support the rest of the tower," said Saul. "So the bottom blocks are as important as those on top?" asked Mom. "Sure," said Saul. "The top ones can't just rest on air!" Mom nodded. "It's like that when work is done, too," she said. "Each 'block' - each worker - is needed as much as any other. They're all equally important. When we work for God, each servant is as valuable as any other."

"You make it sound like moving furniture for a skit is reaching people for Jesus," murmured Saul. He sighed. "Well, I… I guess you're right. I better go for the rehearsal."

Thought: Do you feel like an important part of your church, or JW class, or contact group? Hopefully you do because you are!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please remind me that if I put You first in what I do, then whatever I do is important because it is for Your sake. Even if the tasks I'm given are things nobody sees very much, please remind me I'm important in Your eyes! In Jesus' name, amen.

FANTASTIC INHERITANCE!

John came into the living room where his parents were watching the news. He heard the end of a report about a man trying to collect a large inheritance. "If that man's parents died, why can't he get the money that was left?" asked John after Dad turned the TV off.

"He ran away from home when he was 16," Dad explained. "That was 30 years ago, and he never contacted his family again. They searched and searched and realized that he'd moved to another country. They made repeated efforts throughout the years to contact him, but he wouldn't even speak with them."

"But he's back now, so won't he get at least some of the money?" asked John.

Dad shook his head. "Apparently not. His parents didn't include him in their wills. According to other relatives, they gave up trying to get a response from him and decided not to leave him anything."

"But now, after they've both died, he's finally shown up and thinks he should have the inheritance?" asked John. "Yes, but now it's too late," replied Dad. "He contested the will, but the courts upheld it. They said he's not entitled to any of the money."

"Wow!" exclaimed John. "That man claims he always intended to come back. I'm sure he's sorry now that he didn't come sooner." "I'm sure that's true," agreed Dad. "He learned a hard lesson-and a very common one. Do you realize that something similar happens every day?"

"It does?" asked John in surprise. "You mean there are lots of people who leave home and ignore their parents, and then they try to get some money, but it's too late?"

"That happens often enough," said Dad, "but what I really meant is that God offers an inheritance to everyone who comes to Him through Jesus, but many ignore Him. They're too busy doing their own thing. When the end of life comes, they're going to want the inheritance God had offered, but He's going to say, 'Sorry, but it's too late to receive an inheritance. Your name isn't in the will-the Book of Life.'"

Thought: Do you have the heavenly inheritance of salvation?

Prayer: Gracious heavenly Father, thank You this heavenly inheritance is available to all who trust in Jesus. Although I am only a child, teach me that this is serious stuff, and help me be very sure I will be able to claim the great inheritance You offer. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

DO ALL THINGS WITHOUT COMPLAINING

"Hey, Shelly! Don't forget to get the wastebasket from my room," said Tony as he opened the door to go out.

Shelly scowled at him. "I hate taking out the trash," she complained. She turned to her mother. "Tony always gets the easy stuff to do, while I have to tramp around the house collecting smelly old garbage."

"You chose that job for this month," Mom reminded her. "You said you were tired of dusting and folding laundry and that Tony always got the easy jobs-like emptying the trash." Shelly muttered to herself as she left to start collecting wastebaskets.

A little later, the back door squeaked loudly as Tony pushed it open and came back in. "That squeaky door is driving me crazy," grumbled Shelly crossly. "Quit going in and out, Tony."

Tony only grinned and turned back toward the door. "I think I left something outside," he teased. "I'll be back in a minute." He swung the door back and forth.

"Mom, make him stop!" whined Shelly, covering her ears. "Enough, Tony," said Mom. "Quit teasing." Just then Dad opened the squeaky door and came in. "I guess it's about time for me to oil those hinges," he said. "They're complaining pretty loudly." He paused, then smiled. "Remember the Bible verses we read in family devotion last night?" he asked. "The ones about the Israelites after they left Egypt? They complained a lot-like this screen door does."

"Okay… sorry for grumbling. Now… who has trash they'd like me to get rid of? I'm… ah… glad to be at your service!" Tony clapped, and Mom and Dad both smiled. "Good for you!" said Mom, putting an arm around Shelly's shoulder.

Thought: Do you complain about things you're asked to do?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I be a helpful child. Instead of murmuring, may I praise you for all You have done for me. In Jesus' name I ask, amen.

THANK GOD FOR SALVATION

Andrew ran down the street toward the bus stop. When he heard the long blast of a horn, he knew the bus was already there, and he hurried even faster. But as he approached the corner, he saw the bus driving away from him. There was nothing he could do but run back home. "We missed the bus," he told his sister Lyn, who was just coming out the door.

"This is the third time this month that you've missed the bus," scolded Mom as she drove the kids to school a little later. "From now on, please be ready on time!"

"Well, I was way ahead of Lyn," said Andrew. "I just missed it by a hair." "Sometimes being close doesn't help a bit," replied Mom.

"Yeah, Andrew. You still missed the bus, same as me," put in Lyn. After a moment, she added, "It's just like my Sunday school teacher said."

Andrew frowned as he looked at her. "Your teacher said we'd miss the bus?" he asked. "I don't believe it." Lyn laughed. "No, silly. What Mrs. Peck said is that people who attend church faithfully and try to be good may seem to be closer to God than other people, but being close doesn't help them," she explained. "Their good works won't save them. They need to accept Jesus just like everyone else. Without Him, they're going to miss heaven."

"Hm-m-m," murmured Andrew, "sounds like my friend James. A bunch of guys at school swear and lie and disobey the teachers. James doesn't do those things, so he thinks he's a lot better than they are."

"Maybe he is better," said Mom, "but being better isn't good enough to get him to heaven. Make sure he knows that he needs to trust Jesus as Savior."

Andrew nodded. "Maybe missing the bus was a good thing," he suggested, "because now I have something to tell James." Seeing the look on his mother's face, he quickly added, "But of course, that's no excuse for being late any other day!"

Thought: Do you think you'll go to heaven because you behave better than other kids?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know salvation is only by grace through faith. Please remind me that good behavior is nice, but even my best behavior isn't good enough to get me to heaven. Help me to have faith in and trust Jesus, for it is in his name that I ask, amen.

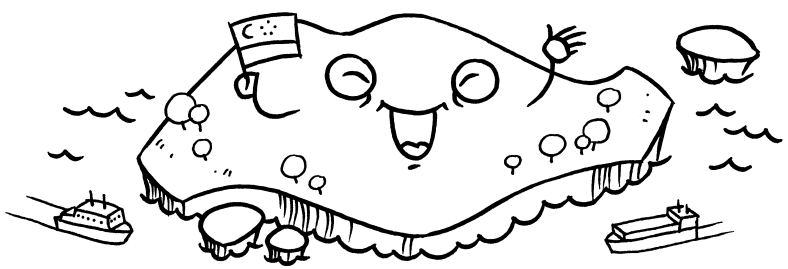
SINGAPORE'S NATIONAL DAY

With a land area of about 710 square kilometers, Singapore is one of the smallest countries in the world. It is also one of the most blessed in terms of living standards and good government. However, it has not always been a pretty picture in the island.

During World War II, Japan invaded Singapore on 15th Feb 1942 and ruled the island with great cruelty for three and a half years. Those years were unkind ones. Many thousands were killed, families torn apart and lives scarred. Some of you may have grandparents who lived through that sad episode of Singapore's history. Ask them, and you will understand a little of how terrible it was to live under the oppression of the Japanese invaders. If we know how dreadful it was during the war, we would be very grateful for what we have today.

Yet the Lord was merciful to Singapore. Japan lost the war and on 12th September 1945, returned possession of the island to the British. Then on 9th August 1965, Singapore gained her independence. It has been years since then and God has blessed us with good leaders and remarkable progress for an island with little resources.

> What should our response as Christians be this day? Be grateful to the Lord, be thankful for the government, and as the verses remind us, pray for the government!



Thought: I must be grateful for my country.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for protecting my country. May I learn to be grateful for her, and to pray for the continual peace. And may the government of Singapore be blessed with wisdom from Thee to rule in justice and equality. In Jesus' name I ask, amen.

BE PATIENT

"Oh, Sean, don't cry," Suzy comforted her little brother when he showed her his damaged toy train. "Let's go see if Grandpa can fix it." They took the train to Grandpa. "No problem," he said after checking it over. "I'll make it good as new."

When Grandpa started bending a wheel on the train, Sean protested. "Grandpa, don't do that!" he exclaimed. "You'll break it for good."

"Don't be silly, Sean!" said Suzy. "Grandpa's fixing your train, not breaking it!" Grandpa smiled and nodded.

"But you're not doing it right," Sean informed Grandpa a moment later. "That piece has to go onto the engine… like this." He reached for the train.

"Sean!" warned Suzy. "Stop trying to tell Grandpa what to do!" "Why don't you go outside to play a while?" suggested Grandpa, setting the train down. "This is going to take some time, Sean."

"But I want my train now," said Sean. He grabbed it and headed for the door.

"Sean, come back!" scolded Suzy, but he went on. "Silly kid!" she said. "He gave you his train to fix and then took it back without letting you fix it." "He'll probably bring it back soon," said Grandpa patiently. "We all do things like that sometimes."

Suzy shook her head. "Not me!" she said firmly. "You're sure?" asked Grandpa. "You told me last week about a problem with one of your classmates. You said you prayed and committed it to God, right?" Suzy looked puzzled. "Yes. Why?" she asked. "Well, you brought it up again just today," Grandpa reminded her, "so did you leave it with God, or did you take it back?"

"I… I guess I took it back," admitted Suzy. "I hate to think I'm as silly as Sean, but I guess I am."

Thought: May I bring my problems to God, and not worry about them after that!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, sometimes when I commit my problems, worries, and needs to You in prayer, I still worry about them. I know this is not the right thing to do. Teach me patience and please grant me the faith to trust You will handle all of my problems. This I ask in Jesus' name, amen.

CHRIST SUFFERED ON OUR BEHALF!

The whole family was already eating dinner when Jack got home. "You're late!" Dad scolded. "Sorry," mumbled Jack.

"Eat your dinner now, and we'll talk about it later," said Mom. Jack had been late many times before, and he'd been warned that if it happened again, he'd be disciplined. He felt bad about that because Grandma was coming over after dinner, and he loved to spend time with her.

Just like he had expected, Jack was sent to his room after dinner. He felt lonely there, but he knew he deserved the punishment. As he was trying to decide whether to read a book or listen to a few songs, his older brother Joe appeared in the doorway. "You can come out now," Joe said quietly. "Did Mom and Dad say I could?" asked Jack.

"Yes," replied Joe. "I'm taking your punishment for you, because I know how much you like to play games with Grandma." As he turned to leave, he said, "I'm going to my room for the rest of the evening."

Jack was stunned, "Yeah, right! he thought. That's too good to be true. He's probably playing a trick on me, and if I leave my room, I'll just be in more trouble."

Half an hour later Grandma came to Jack's room. "Why didn't you come down?" she asked. "I was waiting for you, but now I need to leave soon."

"Grandma, is it true that Joe's taking my punishment?" Jack asked. Grandma nodded. "Oh, no!" groaned Jack. "I missed all the fun just because I didn't believe him."

Grandma looked serious. "This reminds me of someone else who took punishment for you," she said. "Jesus died for your sins. Have you believed Him and accepted what He did for you?" Jack nodded and Grandma smiled. "I'm so glad of that," she said. "Many people don't believe that Jesus took the punishment they deserve, and then it does them no good."

Thought: Did you know that Jesus took the punishment for your sin? Do you believe He died for you?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for reminding me of the great sacrifice Jesus made for me. Help me to both accept this gift of eternal life, and to be grateful to You. And please help me to show my gratitude by being a good Christian child. In Jesus' precious name I pray, amen.

DISCIPLINE IS GOOD FOR ME

"Siew Hoon, please stop interrupting me," Miss Lim said loudly and firmly. Siew Hoon scowled. Several times that day Miss Lim had scolded her for the same offense.

That evening, Siew Hoon complained to her parents about her teacher. "Miss Lim just likes to pick on me," she grumbled. As she talked, she noticed her puppy messing up the flower pots. Quickly she grabbed a newspaper, and… Whap! "Ow-wow-wow!" yelped the puppy.

"Oh, Tiger, that didn't really hurt you," said Siew Hoon, reaching a hand out to the little dog. "I've told you a million times not to be naughty, and I've punished you for it often enough, too." She headed back to her parents. "Sometimes I think he'll never learn!" she told Dad.

"He'll learn," Dad assured her. "It's just going to take time." With a thoughtful smile, he asked, "Do you suppose Tiger ever wonders why that newspaper is always punishing him?"

"I'm afraid he knows it's not the newspaper punishing him; it's me," said Siew Hoon. "But I hope he still likes me."

"I'm sure he does," said Dad, "but you're right-you're doing the punishing and just using the paper to do it, right?" Siew Hoon nodded. "Now suppose God needed to 'punish' you," said Dad. "Don't you think He'd probably use something-or someone-to do that?" Siew Hoon frowned. "What are you getting at, Dad?" she asked.

"Well," said Dad, "God sometimes uses people to discipline us, and sometimes the things He wants to teach us are tough lessons to learn. Did you ever wonder if He might be using Miss Lim to tell you something?" "I… I…" Siew Hoon didn't know what to say.

"Think about it," said Dad. "Perhaps God wants to change you in some way and has been talking to you all this time through Miss Lim, but you haven't been hearing Him. Maybe you should stop and figure out what it is He's trying to say to you."

Thought: Can you think of times God has used someone to discipline you? Were you angry with that person?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to understand that discipline is good for me if I am wrong. Teach me to grow in wisdom and to be grateful when You send someone, whether it is my parents or siblings or teachers, to teach me. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

INCLINE YOUR EARS TO GOD

"We have a new girl in our Sunday school class today," announced Tiffany one Sunday noon. "Her name is Lauren, and she's deaf. She has to read lips."

Mom nodded. "I've met her mother," she said. "The family migrated to Singapore recently." Mom set a dish on the table. "Just last week I read an article that said a few thousand people in our country are totally deaf," she added, "and even more can't hear as well as they should."

"Nolan doesn't hear as well as he should." Tiffany grinned at her brother. "He hears only when he wants to," she teased. "Like… he hears just fine when somebody mentions dessert, but he doesn't seem to hear when someone mentions chores that need to be done." Nolan grinned, too. "Speak for yourself," he said.

"I guess we're all guilty of that once in a while. We call that selective hearing," Dad told them. After a moment he added, "Sadly, some of us who have perfectly good ears are deaf in another way-we're spiritually deaf."

"Spiritually deaf?" echoed Tiffany. "What does that mean?"

"It means failing to hear what God has to say," explained Dad. "He invites everyone to trust in Jesus and be saved, but many people don't seem to hear Him. God warns of coming judgment, but people are so busy with their own interests that they don't pay attention. It's as though they're deaf to what He's saying."

"Even we who are Christians often don't hear God as well as we should," said Mom. "After accepting His gift of salvation, we sometimes stop meeting with other Christians and neglect Bible study and prayer. We seem to quit listening-especially if we're afraid we'll hear something from God that we don't like."

"I guess that would be like what Dad said we're guilty of," suggested Nolan. "Selective hearing."

"That's correct," said Dad. "We need to keep our spiritual ears open all the time and be listening when there's something God wants to tell us."

Thought: Do you have trouble hearing what God has to say to you?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please show me the things You want me to learn from the Bible. I pray I'll never turn a deaf ear to You, but be always ready to listen and obey. In Jesus' name, amen.

TRUE WEALTH

Jimmy put down the wood for the campfire and hurried to see why Ranger, his puppy, was barking. The little dog stood at the edge of the stream, looking down into the clear water. "What is it, Ranger?" asked Jimmy. He also looked down, and then he began to laugh. Just then Dad came up. "What has Ranger found, Jimmy?" he asked.

"Himself!" said Jimmy. Sure enough, Ranger was barking fiercely at his own reflection in the water. "Silly dog!" teased Jimmy. "Now come with me, and I'll get you a treat." The magic word was "treat"-and Ranger immediately left the "other dog" and scurried along to the tent. Soon he had his treat and was stretched out near the stream.

"Jimmy, this reminds me of an old fable about a dog and a bone," said Dad as he added wood to the campfire. "As the dog carried his bone across a bridge, he thought he saw another dog in the water below, and he bristled."

"Just like Ranger!" exclaimed Jimmy. "Yes, and this dog wasn't going to let that other dog get his bone," continued Dad, "so he began to bark to make the other dog go away. I'm sure you can figure out what happened when he opened his mouth to bark."

"Greed makes us want to hold on to things," observed Mom as she prepared the meal. "We need to remember that we really can't keep things in the end. Besides, things don't really bring us happiness anyway."

Dad nodded. "That's right," he agreed. "True happiness and true riches come from knowing Jesus Christ as Savior and serving Him. Money and possessions will all disappear, but salvation is forever. Sadly, many people don't realize that."

Thought: Are you concerned about having all the things your friends have? Do you feel well-off only if you have money in your pocket, a new I-pod, or maybe a new bike?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me that true wealth is not in having things, but having Jesus and the peace He can bring. I pray for my parents as well, that they will also realise this wonderful truth. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

SERVE GOD WITH ALL THY HEART

Kim Pong stared at a painting in an art store window. It was a picture of two hands clasped in prayer. "Why would an artist paint hands, Mom?" he asked. "I think there are many more interesting things to paint." Mom smiled. "That's a well-known painting," she said. "I recently read an article about it. The artist's name is Albert Durer, and the hands are those of someone very special to him. Not everyone agrees on whose hands they are, but this article said they're his brother's."

"Why didn't he paint his brother's face instead of his hands?" asked Kim Pong. "What's the story?"

"According to the article, Albert Durer was born into a very poor family. Both he and his brother dreamed of becoming artists, and they made a pact-one would study art while the other worked to support him. Then they would trade places, and the other would study art. They tossed a coin to see who would study first, and Albert won. His brother worked hard-probably in the mines-while Albert studied. By the time Albert finished his studies, he was already becoming well-known."

"Cool!" said Kim Pong. "Did his brother get to be a good artist, too?" Mom shook her head. "His fingers had been injured often as he worked," she said. "They were stiff and rough, and he was suffering from arthritis in his right hand. To Albert, those sacrificial hands were beautiful, and he lovingly painted them to pay homage to his brother."

"Wow! I hope he helped his brother in lots of other ways, too!" exclaimed Kim Pong. "After all, his brother really sacrificed his own dream by supporting him."

"Yes," agreed Mom. After a moment she added, "I'm thinking of some other hands-hands of Someone Who made an even greater sacrifice, and it was for us."

"You mean Jesus, don't you?" asked Kim Pong. Mom nodded. "He gave His life for us. He actually bore our sin for us so that we could have our sins forgiven," she said. "His hands bear the print of the nails that held Him to the cross. Surely we should do all we can to honor Him."

Thought: Are you willing to do anything for Jesus? Will you tell others about Him? Have you?

Prayer: Gracious Father in heaven, for all that Jesus has done for me, I pray I'll be able to do something for Him, for it is in His name that I pray, amen.

ARE YOU A HELPFUL CHILD?

Look, Mom," said Mark as he handed her his report card. "I got all A's this time."

"Good," said Mom, but she sighed as she looked at the card and saw that Mark's teacher had praised him for being helpful. When he was asked to help at home, he often said, "I'm too tired." Other times it was, "Can't Lana do that?" Sometimes he simply said, "I don't feel like it." He helped only because his parents insisted on it.

One day when Mark again resisted helping his mother, she told him to go outdoors with her. "Bring a cookie along," she said. "We need some crumbs." Mark looked at her in surprise, but he did as he was told. "Do you see any ants?" asked Mom as they stood in the playground.

Mark looked around. "I see a few over there," he said, pointing to a crack in the concrete. "Put some cookie crumbs down there," directed Mom.

"Why are we feeding the ants?" asked Mark as he put several crumbs on the pavement. As he watched, an ant found a large crumb, lifted it up, and carried it away. "Wow! That ant carried a crumb three times its size," said Mark.

Mom nodded. "Do you know that ants can carry things up to 50 times their weight? And that they'll continue working as hard as they can until they've gathered as much as possible?" she asked. "They don't seem to ever think about themselves, but only about the colony. If they could talk, I don't think you'd hear them say things like, 'I'm too tired-can't somebody else do it?' Or, 'I don't feel like doing this!' The Bible says we can learn from the ant by noticing how hard it works."

Mark grinned sheepishly. "Do you have anyone special in mind?" he asked, knowing she meant him.

Thought: Are you hard-working and helpful at home as well as at school?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me not to be a lazy person, a sluggard. I pray I'll be a helpful child wherever You place me – in church, in school, at home, or anywhere else! In Jesus' name I ask – amen.

ARE YOU GROWING, SPIRITUALLY?

Amanda held a ruler at the top of Jessica's head. "Hold still," she ordered as Jessica stretched up and leaned against the growth chart. "Almost 1.4 metres," announced Amanda, drawing a line on the chart. "Your turn. Take off your shoes!" demanded Jessica. Amanda giggled and removed her shoes. She stood with her back against the chart. "1.5 metres," said Jessica, and she marked the chart with Amanda's height.

Grandma smiled as she watched the girls. "You two have really grown a lot this year," she said. "The verse at the top of the chart says, 'Grow in grace,'" observed Jessica. "What does that mean?" "Well, just like your body grows each year, you should grow to be more like Jesus," explained Grandma. "Have you measured that growth lately?"

"We can't measure how much we grow to be like Jesus, can we?" asked Amanda. "Not in inches or centimetres," agreed Grandma, "but we can tell a little bit about our growth by changes in the way we behave." She smiled. "Would you like to make a spiritual growth chart?"

"Okay," said Amanda, "but how do we do that?" "First, think of things you shouldn't do," suggested Grandma. "What would some of those be?" "Being unkind," said Jessica. "Telling lies." "Not being helpful," added Amanda, "or talking back to Mom and Dad."

"Okay," said Grandma, "and what are some things you should do?" Amanda spoke first this time. "Obey our parents and teachers and do chores without complaining." Jessica nodded. "Do homework the first time we're told. And… how about reading the Bible?"

"Good," said Grandma. "Let's get some poster board, and you can make columns for these things and others that you think of. Make other columns to record how well you do each week. Ask God to help you become more like Him as you depend on His power to do that. Then check your chart with your improvements to help you see how much you have grown in a month's time."

Thought: Can you see differences in the way you used to act, and the way you act now?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, as I grow physically, may I also grow spiritually and become more and more Christ-like. Help me to make changes when I learn new things from Your Holy Word – for this I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

DO WE REALLY COME FROM MONKEYS?

Just as Kai picked up his science book, there was a knock at the door. He peeked out. "I'll get it," he called. "It's Brent. He said he'd come over tonight so we can study science together."

In the hall, the two boys silently read the assigned pages and answered the questions. "This doesn't make much sense," mumbled Kai. "Animals coming from something in the sea!"

The boys looked up as Kai's mom came into the room with a bag of apples. "Would you like an apple?" she asked. "I just bought them from the market."

As Kai and Brent helped themselves, Mom continued. "I heard what you were saying," she said, "and I agree with you. It doesn't make sense to think that one kind of plant or animal evolved and changed into another." She picked up an apple, cut it in half, and pointed to the seeds. "If you planted those apple seeds, would oranges come up?" she asked.

Kai laughed. "Of course not, Mom," he said. "You know the answer to that question."

"Well, when fish lay eggs, do turtles hatch out?" asked Mom. "Or when chickens lay eggs, do ducks hatch out?" Both boys laughed at that idea.

Mom looked at the apple seeds again. "In a way, the seeds speak to us," she said. "They tell us that what God said in His Word is true. That He created all things, and He has placed within plants and animals and human, the ability to reproduce after their own kind."

"So this book we're studying on evolution not only doesn't make sense compared to what the Bible says," said Kai. "But it also doesn't make sense compared to what happens in nature, either. I'm glad I know the truth."

Thought: Do you believe that man's theory of evolution is just that, only a theory?

Prayer: Father in heaven, I know many today do not believe in the bible, or what the Bible teaches in the book of Genesis about the creation account. Help me to know evolution is but a theory, and that it cannot be proven, but the truth of Your Holy Word has been proven again and again. And all of nature is evidence that I have a wonderful Creator! In Jesus' name I ask – amen.

INCLINE YOUR EAR TO GOD

The telephone rang, and Mollie ran to answer it. It was her friend Claire. The girls hadn't seen each other for a long time, and they talked quite a while. After they had hung up, the phone rang again. This time it was a very important business call for Mollie's father. After several other calls came that evening, Mollie laughed. "It's a good thing we have a telephone," she said, and everyone agreed.

"You know," said Dad when they were all gathered for family devotion that evening, "those phone calls remind me that God often calls, too, and He expects us to listen and obey what He tells us."

"God calls? Does He have a telephone," asked Bobby, Mollie's little brother. Mollie laughed. "No, silly," she said, "but He has other ways to call us, doesn't He, Dad?"

"How?" Bobby wanted to know. "Uh-h-h-h… yeah, how?" asked Mollie.

"One way is through His Word," suggested Mom. "Sometimes He uses it to show us things that are wrong in our lives. Other times He uses it to tell us things we should do or to offer comfort or encouragement."

"Right," agreed Dad. "He may also use people-a parent or a pastor or teacher-to speak to our hearts. Sometimes He teaches us something special about Himself. He likes to talk with us."

"Like when Claire called me today," said Mollie. "We just wanted to talk to each other."

"That's right," said Dad. "Your call was pleasure, and my call was business. In each case, we were available to listen to and talk with the caller."

Mollie thought about that. "And is that what God wants us to do, too?" she asked after a moment. "Be ready to listen to Him?" Dad and Mom both nodded. "To listen to Him and to talk with Him," said Dad. "God's call is the most important one we can get, so we'd better be listening for it!"

Thought: God speaks to us through His Word.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I be faithful in reading and applying the truths in Your Holy Word in my life. And help me to take time each day to talk to You in prayer, too! This I ask in Jesus' name, amen.

THE BEST ARMOUR!

Sarah was going with her mother to take her baby sister for an appointment at the doctor's office. "Does Sue have to have shots today?" asked Sarah. Mom nodded. "A checkup and shots," she said. "I don't think she's going to like those shots!" exclaimed Sarah. "No," Mom agreed, "but she needs to have them to help keep her from getting sick. It's easier and safer to get a shot now than to suffer from a sickness later."

"I guess so, but I'm glad I don't need one today," said Sarah. She paused. "Why are some shots called booster shots?" she asked. "Like the one I had when I stepped on a nail last year?"

"You had had a shot for tetanus, but it had been a while, so you needed another shot to make sure the medication was still effective," explained Mom.

"Well, I'll be glad when I outgrow shots," said Sarah. "Even adults need shots sometimes," said Mom. "And think of this… Christians need booster shots regularly, too." She smiled at Sarah's startled expression.

"What do you mean, Mom?" Sarah wanted to know. "To guard against the attacks of Satan, we need protection before he strikes-before our resistance is worn down and we give in to his ways," Mom explained. "What things might help protect us from him?"

Sarah thought for a moment. "I think reading the Bible would," she said. "It tells us whether some things are right or wrong. We can memorize verses, too."

"Good," approved Mom, "and how about staying away from the people or places that could tempt us to sin? Can you think of anything else?" "Ah… how about prayer?" suggested Sarah. "We can ask God to help us, and we can trust Him to keep us safe."

"Very good." Mom smiled. "We need to use all of the 'armor' God offers-faith and truth, His Word. Becoming familiar with all these things ahead of time, helps prepare us for Satan's attacks."

Thought: Are you prepared for Satan's attacks?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please help me to have my "booster shots" of reading the Bible, memorising verses, and avoiding friends and places that may cause me to sin. In Jesus' name I ask – amen.

FLEE YOUTHFUL LUSTS

Mark's mother was shaking him gently, and he struggled to wake up. He sat up and opened his eyes wide. "I had to run!" he said in a shaky voice. Mom sat beside him on the bed. "What were you running from?" she asked.

Taking a deep breath, Mark said, "I was dreaming, and… and soldiers were shooting at me. I had to run!" Mom frowned. "Mark, what did you watch on TV at Kevin's house last night?"

"I… I don't remember the name of the movie," he said, "but it was scary. I shouldn't have watched it, Mom, but everyone else was watching. What could I do?"

Mom looked at him thoughtfully. "Do you remember hearing Grandpa tell us how Jesus helped him stop drinking?" she asked. Mark nodded, and Mom continued. "Remember what he said he did whenever he had to go near a bar after he was saved?"

Mark thought for a moment. "He said that whenever an errand took him near a bar or liquor store, he'd cross the street to avoid it," said Mark.

Mom nodded. "Jesus had helped him quit drinking," she said, "but he knew it would be difficult to resist temptation if he went to any place where there was alcohol."

"I guess being around alcohol would make it a lot harder not to drink," agreed Mark. "Yes," said Mom, "and Grandpa never went into a bar again as far as I know. He stayed sober for the rest of his life."

"Well… are you saying that I shouldn't go to Kevin's house anymore?" asked Mark. Mom shrugged. "You've watched bad programs at Kevin's house a number of times, so it might be a good idea not to go there-unless you have definite plans to do something other than watch TV." She was quiet for a moment, then added, "You might invite Kevin over here more often, too." She tucked the blanket around Mark. "If you let Him, Jesus will help you make the right choices, but you need to do your part, Mark, and not put yourself in the way of temptation."

Thought: May I stand up for Jesus!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to stand up for You and not associate with people or things that may bring me closer to sin than to You! Please help me for I am often tempted and weak, but with Your strength, I shall be able to overcome these temptations. In Jesus' name I ask – amen.

REMEMBER TEACHINGS OF YOUR PARENTS

Ryan watched his father pull out the stake that had been wired to a sapling ever since it had been planted. "What was that stake for?" asked Ryan. "Saplings often don't have the strength or ability to stand alone," Dad said. "The stake acted as a support for this plant." "Then why are you taking it out?" asked Ryan.

"The tree is big enough now to take any winds that come along," said Dad. "It's growing tall and straight because it was held in that position by the supporting stake." He stood back and looked at the tree. "That's pretty much like our lives," he added thoughtfully. "Like our lives?" asked Ryan. "What do you mean?"

"Well, take you, for instance," said Dad. "When you were very small, either your mother or I generally held your hand when you tried to walk. Then as you grew and got better at keeping your balance, we let you go by yourself."

Ryan nodded as he thought about it. "I still need help for other things, though, so I'll probably always be bugging you," he said with a grin. "We'll be glad to help whenever we can," Dad assured him, "but when the time comes that we're no longer here, you'll be ready to go on without us."

"So that's how I'm like the tree," commented Ryan. "When it was small and weak, it needed the stake, but now that it's bigger, it doesn't need that support. I still need you a lot now, but when I'm bigger, I'll be able to manage by myself, too."

"You've got it," said Dad. He smiled. "There's a verse in the Bible that encourages your mother and me as we raise you."

"Which verse is that?" asked Ryan curiously.

"Proverbs 22:6," replied Dad. "'Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.' We're teaching you now to honor the Lord, and we're trusting Him to keep you walking in His way in the future, because you'll never be so big that you don't need God."

Thought: Do you get annoyed when you're restricted by the rules your parents make? Don't be.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for giving me parents, and even if I sometimes rather not have the rules they give me, I know they are for my good. I pray You will bless them, and protect my family, making us close to You and to each other. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

JESUS IS THE ONLY WAY

Bob's mother pulled up to the curb in front of the church. "How was the JW group today?" she asked as Bob climbed into the car. "Good," replied Bob. "We had a missionary speaker. He showed us how to witness to someone."

"Well, don't start preaching to me," said Mom. "I don't want to hear it." She eased the car into the traffic. "I'm doing fine on my own," she added. "But, Mom," said Bob, "the only way to heaven is through Jesus. We need to have our sins forgiven." Mom turned a corner. "Bobby, if God is a good God-like your Bible says-then He'll let good people into heaven. That just makes sense. Life hasn't been easy for me: your dad lost his job; your grandma just died; and I have just been diagnosed with kidney weakness. It seems unfair. I've not harmed anyone, I'm a good housewife! That should count for something!"

Bobby sighed. "Mom, what counts is what God says. He says nobody is good enough for heaven and that you need to believe in His son, Jesus." Mom sighed. "I told you-I don't want to be preached to," she said. She was quiet for the rest of the drive home.

It was raining when Bob and his mom got out of the car. They ran in the rain to their ground-floor house. Mom grabbed her keys and headed for the door. "Hurry, Mom. I'm getting wet!" exclaimed Bob as she fumbled with the keys. "I can't get the key in the lock," said Mom. "Here, hold my purse." She handed her purse to Bob and tried to stab the key into the lock again, but it didn't fit. "Mom, do you have the right key?" asked Bob. Mom looked at the key in her hand. "Oops! This is the wrong key!" she exclaimed. She found the right key and turned the lock.

When Bob and his mother were warm and dry again, she laughed. "I can't believe I was trying to open the door to my own house with the wrong key!" she said. "Mom," said Bob quietly, "you're trying to do the same thing with God. You're trying to get into heaven by your own goodness. That's the wrong key!" Mom was startled. This time she didn't protest as Bob again told her that she needed to trust in Jesus.

Thought: Perhaps a loved one – a parent or close relative – is not saved? Fret not – pray and ask God for wisdom how to witness to this loved one.

Prayer: Teach me Heavenly Father how to witness to a loved one. Remind me never to use my own strength or wisdom, but to pray a lot before I even start to talk about You. This I pray in Jesus' name – amen.

THANK GOD FOR SALVATION

"What are we giving to Mrs. Lee today?" asked Kim as she and her mother left home. When Kim went with her mother to visit the elderly widow, they generally took with them canned food, cakes or other baked goods.

Mom smiled. "I learned that her doctor called in a prescription for her, but she hasn't got it done," replied Mom, "so I picked it up to take as a gift for her." "Cool!" exclaimed Kim. "She'll be glad to get that!" When Mom took out the medicine, Mrs. Lee drew back. "I don't have money to pay for that right now," she said. Mom smiled. "Kim and I brought it today to give to you as a small gift of love," she said. The elderly woman shook her head. "Oh, no," she argued. "I can't accept it unless I can pay for it." Mom's voice was soft and kind. "Please, Mrs. Lee," she said, "we want to give this to you. We love you and want to see you get well again. Please take it."

The elderly woman looked up at her. "Well… well, alright." She smiled. "Thank you! Thank you so much." As they talked together, the conversation turned to things of God. "Mrs. Lee," said Mom, "have you ever made the decision to trust in Jesus as your Saviour?"

Mrs. Lee shook her head. "No," she said, "I… I never felt like I had anything to offer God-and I certainly have nothing to offer Him now." "None of us do," Mom answered. "Salvation is free." "Free?" Mrs. Lee repeated. "That sounds nice, but it just seems to me that it should cost something."

"It did! It cost Jesus His life," explained Mom. "He died willingly because He loves us, but He also rose again. Now He's offering the gift of eternal life to all who will trust Him as Saviour."

Kim could not be quiet any longer. "It's just like the medicine," she said excitedly. "That's a gift for you-so you can't pay for it. You can't pay for God's gift, either. It's free to you. You have to just accept it."

After a few moments, Mrs. Lee nodded. "I will," she said. "Thank you for showing me that eternal life is really free. I never understood that until now."

Thought: Thank God for salvation, provided by Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for salvation so rich and so free. I know although it cost me nothing, it cost Jesus His life. May I learn to be ever grateful, and to also share the wonderful gospel message with others. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

HOW PRECIOUS GOD'S WORD IS!

Randy did not enjoy family devotions. "The Bible is about people who lived thousands of years ago," he had once complained. "That's boring! Things are way different now."

His parents didn't agree with that. "The Bible is about yesterday, today, tomorrow, and forever," Dad often said. Mom encouraged regular Bible reading, too, so Randy had to sit through family devotions every day.

One day Dad announced that he was going to Australia on business, and, best of all, his family could go along. Randy was excited. He told all his friends and teachers about the coming adventure.

As Dad picked up the Bible for devotion one evening, Randy showed him a book and map he had brought home from school. "My teacher loaned me these," said Randy. "Mr. Tan's been to Australia, and he told me all about it. Lots of things are different there. This guidebook suggests things to do and good places to go."

"That's great, Randy," Dad said.

Randy laughed. "Mr. Tan says he'll tell me about some mistakes he made when he was there-he says that should help me not to make those same mistakes. He says this book lists things we shouldn't do, too. I'm going to start reading it tonight. I think it will be interesting." Dad nodded. "A guidebook is a good idea," he agreed, "but since you never seem interested in reading the guidebook for your most important journey, I'm a little surprised that you're interested in this one." Randy stared at Dad. "What journey?" he asked. "What guidebook?"

"Your journey through life," answered Dad. He held up the Bible. "This is the guidebook for life-it teaches us a lot of things and tells us about people who have gone before us. Some of them made mistakes, and we can read about them and learn to avoid making those same mistakes."

Randy was quiet. He had to admit that Dad was right.

Thought: Do you read God's Word? Do you like to do it? Do you put into practice what you read?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to remember that as I journey through life, I need a guide, and the best guide is the Bible! Help me to read it faithfully, to practice it happily, and to love it sincerely. This I ask in Jesus' name, amen.

PERSEVERE IN PRAYER

"Oh, wow-a chemistry set!" exclaimed Kok Beng when he opened his birthday present. "It's just what I wanted!" His parents chuckled. "We know," said Mom. "How could we help but know, with all the hints you've given?" "Hints?" asked Kok Beng innocently.

Dad laughed. "Well, when I entered the bathroom last Monday, I found pictures of chemistry sets taped to the mirror," he said. "I kind of took that to be a hint."

"And when I went out to buy your present," Mom added, "I found a note in my purse that said, 'Don't forget the C.S.! Love, Guess Who.'" Kok Beng grinned. "I guess I have been kind of a pest," he admitted. "I hope you're not mad at me."

"Of course not," replied his father. "You weren't rude about it, just persistent. Actually, we like it when you let us know what you really want, even though we don't always give it to you right away-or at all."

"I can't wait to show this to Steve. Can I go call him?" Kok Beng asked eagerly. "That reminds me-you were praying for a chance to witness to Steve," said Dad. "How did that turn out?"

Kok Beng looked uncomfortable. "Well, I did pray about it for a while, but nothing seemed to happen, so I kind of forgot about it." "Speaking of prayer," said Mom, "you also said you were going to pray for ways to help the JW teachers. Are you still praying about that?"

Kok Beng shook his head. "I just sort of forgot about it and did not press on…" "Hmmm," murmured Dad. "You've learned to be persistent when it comes to asking your earthly parents for birthday presents," he said, "but apparently you haven't applied that principle to your heavenly Father. Too often we say a halfhearted prayer about something, and then we forget all about it. The Bible teaches us that God wants us to pray persistently, too!"

Thought: Is there something you have prayed about? A friend or relative who is sick? Someone who needs Jesus? Schoolwork? Whatever it is, be sure to keep on praying.

Prayer: Help me Heavenly Father to persevere in prayer. I ask that You will grant me more faith so that I will press on even if I need to pray long and hard for something. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

LAKE OF FIRE WILL BE REALLY HOT!

While Heidi and Dan were visiting their uncle and aunt, they went with them to Sunday school and church-but they didn't like it much. Why? The sermon was about hell! The pastor spoke earnestly of the pain and suffering that lost souls would experience there. Dan made a face. "Wow!" he whispered to Heidi. "Is he trying to scare us or what?"

As their aunt fixed dinner, Uncle Bob set a box on the table and lifted out a round, white object. "I bought this smoke detector yesterday," he said. "I meant to try it out, but I didn't get around to it. Let's see if it works."

"We have those at home, too," said Dan as Uncle Bob put batteries in place and then pressed a small, round button on the case. Immediately an earsplitting shriek filled the room! Heidi screamed and jumped back, while Dan covered his ears.

Uncle Bob laughed at the look on their faces. He took his finger off the button, and the noise stopped. "Whenever there's smoke from a fire in the house, the alarm will go off," he said. "It's awful!" said Heidi. "Why does it have to be so loud and scary?"

"It's supposed to be that way, silly!" Dan said. "Otherwise you might not hear it, especially if you're sleeping. Right, Uncle Bob?"

"Right," his uncle replied. "The purpose of this thing is not to scare people. It's to warn them of danger so they can avoid it." He paused, then added thoughtfully, "It's like the sermon this morning. Sermons about hell sometimes scare us-but actually they're meant to warn us."

Heidi and Dan looked at each other. "Well, that 'warning' this morning did scare me," said Heidi with a sigh. "I don't want to go to hell." "Me, neither," said Dan. "You don't have to," Uncle Bob told them. "Let's go over God's plan of salvation again."

As they sat around the dinner table, Dan grinned. "I'm glad I know Jesus now," he said. "That sermon this morning was the best scare I've had in my life!"

Thought: Have you been warned about hell?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know hell is a scary subject, but hell is for real! I pray I will trust Jesus as my Lord and Savior, and that my name will be written in the Book of Life. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

CONTROL YOUR ANGER!

Bang! Matthew's ankle hit the dining room chair. Crash! The chair toppled over as Matthew kicked it with his bare foot. "Ouch!" yelled Matthew as he sat down to rub his sore ankle and aching toes. "That dumb chair! It always gets in the way."

Dad walked over to the chair, quietly set it up, and asked, "Who are you mad at, Matt?" "At the chair," replied Matthew. "It hurt my foot!"

"I'm sorry you got hurt," said Dad, "but the chair didn't actually jump out in front of you, did it? So why take it out on the chair?" Matthew shrugged. "It's no big deal," he grumbled. "Who cares if I yell at the chair? It can't hear me."

"No, but God can," Dad replied. "Do you think He's pleased when you shout and kick the chair just because something doesn't go your way?" Dad shook his head. "You're responsible for your actions and for the words that come out of your mouth," he continued. "Displaying your temper won't make your anger go away. It only makes you, and everyone around you, more tense and unhappy." Matthew looked down at the floor. This was not the first time Dad had spoken to him about his problem with anger.

"Well… then what should I do?" mumbled Matthew.

"When you feel anger rising up, immediately ask God to help you get rid of it," replied Dad. "If you start to feel sorry for yourself, tell God about it." Dad grinned as he added, " And walk a little more slowly through the dining room. Then if you bump into a chair, it won't hurt so much."

Matthew and his father laughed together. "I'll try, Dad," agreed Matthew. As he turned to go, he immediately bumped into the corner of the table. "Ouch! You old …" He stopped and rubbed his leg. Then glancing at Dad, he added with a grin, "Sorry, Mr. Table. I hope I didn't hurt you."

Dad grinned, too. "Great!" he said. "This time I'm sure God was pleased with what He heard."

Thought: Do you control feelings of anger, or do they control you?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to realise that people who lose their temper can hurt and irritate those around them, and they displease You, too. Anger can easily lead to other sin such as fighting and bearing grudges. With Your help, please may I be able to control my temper! This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

BLESSED PEACE AND REST

Something was chasing Anna, and she ran as fast as she could. She couldn't see what was chasing her, but it was making all sorts of weird noises, and it was getting closer and closer. Suddenly the road seemed to end in midair, and she felt herself falling… falling… as if falling off a high cliff! She heard herself screaming as she fell! It was probably her own screaming that woke her up. Yes… Anna had been dreaming!

Anna's scream also woke her dad. He came into the room and sat on the edge of the bed. "What's the matter, babe?" he asked. With a shaky voice, Anna told him about the dreadful "thing" that had chased her.

"Calm down, Anna. It was just a dream," comforted Dad. "If you like, I'll stay here until you fall asleep again, okay?" Anna nodded and snuggled down in her bed. Soon she was once again fast asleep. "My dream last night seemed so real," Anna said the next morning. "Where do dreams come from?"

"That's hard to say," replied Dad. "Some scientists say they come from deep inside your subconscious mind and that they show some of the fears hidden there. However, what you think about just before bedtime could also affect your dreams. That's one reason why it's a good idea to read a good book or some Bible verses before going to bed."

"I read once that some people think God talks to them through their dreams," said Anna. "Does He?"

"In Bible times He often talked to His people through dreams," replied Dad, "but not now. Now we have the Bible to guide us. These days we're much better off trusting His written Word for direction in our lives, rather than trusting some dream we've had."

Anna nodded. "My dreams are mostly pretty silly," she said with a grin. "I don't think I'd care to count on them to guide me in any way!"

Thought: Are you careful about what you put into your mind just before bedtime? Do you play violent games, watch violent movies, or read books that may cause you unease? Stop these activities immediately!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to have the habit of reading a few verses from the Bible and praying just before going to sleep so I will have peaceful rest and sleep! Through the precious name of Jesus I pray, amen.

GOD SEES EVERYTHING!

"Oh, cool!" exclaimed Derek. He glanced around as he held up a miniature racing car. "I'm going to take it," he said. Derek was about to put the little car in his pocket when his brother David pointed to a nearby sign that read, "Someone is watching you." Derek shrugged. "They just put those signs up to scare kids," he said as he pocketed the toy. He held out another car. "Don't you want one?"

"No," replied David. "It's wrong to steal, and you know it! You better put that back." He turned and walked away. Derek just shrugged and laughed.

As the boys were leaving the store, an employee stopped them. "You'll have to come with me," he told Derek, taking a firm hold on his arm and leading him toward the manager's office. David watched in dismay and then turned to run home.

"Sit down, young man-I've got something I want you to see," the manager told Derek. He pointed to a TV screen and pressed a button. Derek was surprised to see pictures of himself stealing the toy car. He saw David shaking his head and refusing to take one. After sternly questioning Derek, the manager picked up the phone. "We'll see what your parents have to say," he said. Derek nervously stared at the floor in shame. He knew he was in big trouble!

When his mother arrived, Derek was too ashamed to look her in the eye. "Since this is the boy's first offence, I'll release him to you," said the manager. Derek was relieved to hear that, but he knew he would be punished at home.

"You thought no one saw you," said Mom sternly as they drove home, "but as you have discovered, someone did. The camera caught what you did and what David did too. It showed the manager both the good and the bad actions." She shook her head. "More importantly, you need to remember that even if the manager hadn't seen you boys, someone always sees-and that's God. He sees the good and the bad actions, and He'll reward or discipline us as we deserve."

Thought: Do you sometimes hope nobody sees a bad thing you do? Do you wish somebody would notice when you do something good? Someone does, and that someone is God!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You have promised to love me and want to reward me for doing the things that please You. But I also know You will discipline me when I do wrong. So help me to live my life in a way that will please You. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

DELIGHT YOURSELF IN THE LORD

"Suzy! Here's a treat for you," said Rick. He held out a dish of ice cream. Two-year-old Suzy fumbled over to her brother and held out one hand. Her other tiny fist was clenched tightly around the arm of a little doll Rick had given her earlier. "You need to hold this dish with both hands," said Rick. Suzy smiled sweetly, but she would not open the other hand. "Put your doll down so you can hold the dish," said Rick.

Suzy refused to unclench her fist. "Give me! I want!" she cried impatiently as she reached for the ice cream.

"Come on, Suzy, open your hand. Don't you trust me?" asked Rick persuasively. Suzy shook her head, and Rick frowned. "Mom, why won't she open her hand?" he asked. "I won't take her doll away-I'm the one who gave it to her in the first place."

"I know you can be trusted and that you wouldn't take anything away from her unless it would harm her," said Mom, "but she's afraid to risk the doll."

Rick sighed. "That's silly," he said. "We're all like Suzy sometimes," observed Mom. "No way!" objected Rick. "I don't do dumb things like that, and neither do you, Mom."

"What about times we refuse to trust God?" asked Mom. "Sometimes we insist on holding on to our little treasures-which we often forget are what God has given us in the first place. For example, some people are afraid to yield their jobs to God because they're afraid He'll want them to be missionaries. They think they'd be happier staying where they are, and don't realise that wherever God wants them is the place they'd be happiest." Rick was thoughtful. "I don't think I have any treasures to hang on to, though," he said.

"Well, let's see," said Mom. "How about your bicycle? That's kind of like a treasure to you, isn't it? Your brother asked if he could use it the other day for a few days. When you refused to let him use it, you didn't feel happy for a few days. You only felt better when you finally learned to share." Mom smiled. "I'm sure you have other treasures, too. Think about it."

Thought: Do you trust God to give you the desires of your heart?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to realise that You want the best for me. I know Your instructions are written in the Bible, so help me to read and enjoy the Bible so that I will know better what delights You have in store for me! This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

This book is named after its writer, the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah is known as the Gospel Prophet, as this book contains many wonderful prophecies concerning our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, from His virgin conception, royal birth, to His sufferings, death and resurrection.

The book of Isaiah is also like a little Bible. The Bible comprises 66 books; the book of Isaiah comprises 66 chapters. The Bible comprises of 39 books of the Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament. Like many books of the Old Testament that tell of God's coming judgments for the sins of the people, the first 39 chapters of the book of Isaiah also tell of God's coming judgments, not only on Israel but also on the other wicked and ungodly, pagan nations that are Israel's neighbours. The last 27 chapters of the book tell of God's divine plan to restore His people, just as the New Testament contains the good news of God saving His people from their sins through His Son, Jesus Christ.

The book of Isaiah paints a wonderful picture of both God's justice and His mercy. Just as He judges Israel for their sins, He will also judge our sins. However, God will lovingly restore Israel, just as He will lovingly restore us if we believe and trust in His Son, Jesus.

Fill in the table showing the divisions of the book Isaiah:

OLD _____	NEW _____
Chapters 1 - _____	Chapters 40 - _____
Tells of Old Testament's judgements.	*Tells of New Testament restorations.*

Thought: What a wonderful book the Bible is!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for both the Old and New Testaments. It is amazing that Your Holy Word is kept intact for me thousands of years after they have been written. May I treasure and read Thy Word daily, knowing it is such a wonderful treasure! This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

ISAIAH THE PROPHET

Isaiah was a prophet who served under a few kings of Judah, including king Uzziah.

The Jews, God's chosen people, were united under one kingdom during the reigns of King David and King Solomon. After King Solomon's death, the kingdom was split into two. The northern kingdom was called Israel and the southern kingdom was called Judah and the two kingdoms often could not get along well with each other.

What was special about Isaiah was he was a prophet, or God's messenger. In the days of the Old Testament, God chose various men as His messengers, to deliver His word to His people. Isaiah was chosen to reveal God's judgement on His people. As a prophet, Isaiah must declare God's word boldly, even if it is not what the people would want to hear. We, too, can learn from Isaiah's example and be steadfast in our obedience and devotion to God.

Colour the map of Israel: Colour the Sea of Galilee, Dead Sea and Mediterranean Sea blue.

Draw a red line separating Israel and Judah and colour the land areas brown.

Thought: May I learn to be like Isaiah not to fear man!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You know that sometimes I am afraid of offending my friends as they may then shun me. Help me to be more like Isaiah, to fear You and not be afraid of offending them, if I need to be different from them. This I pray in the name of my Risen Christ, amen.

ARE YOU LIKE JUDAH?

As God's spokesman, Isaiah charged Judah of rebellion, guilty of forsaking her God. It is unthinkable that children could revolt against a loving father who cared for and nurtured them. Not only did they not return His affection, they were totally ungrateful children who behaved worse than animals. "TThe ox knoweth his owner and the ass, his master's crib (stall): but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." (Isaiah 1:3).

During Isaiah's lifetime, foreign armies would invade Judah three times:
1. The Syrian-Israel Coalition (Isaiah 7).
2. The Assyrians under Sargon (Isaiah 22).
3. The Assyrians under Sennacherib (Isaiah 26).

Judah would have been totally destroyed if not for God's grace. Let us examine ourselves and ask whether we have been grateful to our parents and to God for all the good things we have received. May the Lord forgive us of the sin of ungratefulness.

These are what ungrateful children do at home. Are you one of them? Write the words "Be thankful" after each ungrateful action

1. Complain that the food at home is horrible when mum has spent many hours preparing it. _____

2. Being unhappy about having extra lessons in school or at tuition centers despite your parents paying the fees and sending you there. _____

3. Blaming your friends whenever you lose in a game, quiz or competition. _____

4. Not thankful for the love, care and protection you receive from God every day. _____

Thought: How happy we will be when we are thankful.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to have a grateful and thankful attitude. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

DOES GOD ACCEPT YOUR WORSHIP?

Israel was redeemed from Egypt to become "a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exodus 19:6). A full code of worship and ceremonies, sacrifices and feasts were handed down by God to His people through Moses. Priests were also appointed out of the tribe of Aaron to administer these holy rites in order to instruct the people in sincere worship.

The people thought that God would be satisfied if they just went through the motion of worshipping and religious rituals. Sadly, their lives were filled with sins. God, who knows our every thought, was not pleased with their sacrifices and did not hear their prayers. Outward show of religion without the right attitude of worship was not acceptable to God. God will not accept our worship if our heart is not right with Him.

Do we also have a show of religion without a heart? Do we go to church only because our parents want us to? Do we bother to learn God's Word wholeheartedly? And even as we give our offering to God, do we do it with a sincere and repentant heart? Remember that going to Church regularly by itself does not make us right with God. Have you repented of your sins and looked to Jesus as your personal Saviour?

How should we worship God?

Without our heart	With our heart
Go to school to have fun	Go to school with a teachable attitude
Pray for forgiveness but not really sorry	Pray for forgiveness and mean what you say.
Give a little and think you are giving a lot.	Give cheerfully of what you have, give to those in need, help spread the gospel.
Talking during Singspiration.	Sing with a thankful heart and praise Jesus who has saved you and is always helping you.

If you worship God like a robot, perhaps you do not know our wonderful Saviour and have not come to accept Christ…

Thought: May the Lord accept my worship!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to be serious in my spiritual life whether I am in church or at home. Teach me to learn from Your Word and apply them in my life. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

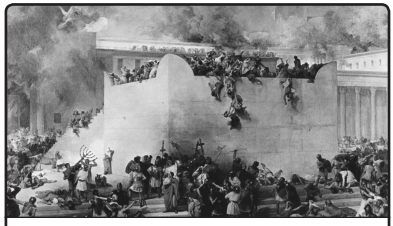
GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES!

In these verses, God Himself promised that He would restore Jerusalem again. As He is a righteous God, He had to chasten her and deal with her sins first. However, as He is a loving God, He will make her clean, and turn her into a "city of righteousness, the faithful city" (Isaiah 1:26).

Isaiah looked forward to this period of blessings in the future. Today, Israel is already in the land for 71 years. God had gathered His people back in the land of Israel in 1948 and Israel has blossomed. But Isaiah also looked to that golden age of Christ's millennial rule when Jerusalem would be thoroughly cleansed. Then Jerusalem would truly be the "city of righteousness, the faithful city."

But before that day comes, there must be a terrible reckoning, a time of judgment for the whole world., "destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed" (Isaiah 1:28). Even the strong will be destroyed. Jesus our Saviour is our only refuge! Have you sought refuge in Jesus?

Write the captions "Jerusalem the City of Righteousness" and "Jerusalem Under Destruction" under the correct picture.



Thought: God keeps His promises.

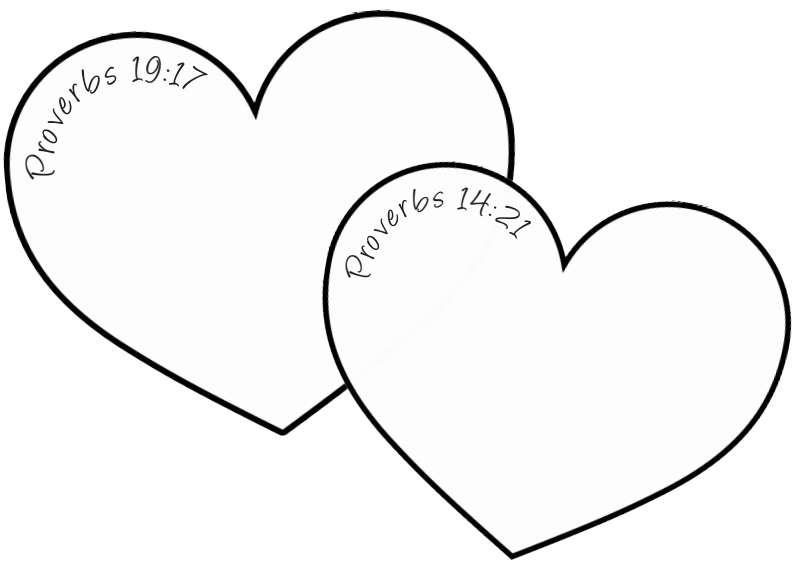
Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for restoring Israel as You said You would. Please remind me You are a God who keeps Your promises and helps me to walk the Christian way as a child of Yours should. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

BE KIND TO THE POOR!

In this chapter, God describes the terrible reckoning that will face Jerusalem and Judah as He removes His blessings from His people. God will take away their able leaders and replace them with incompetent ones who will lead them astray. "O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths" (v.12).

These leaders will also treat the people badly. They will oppress and take from the poor to fatten themselves, "the spoil of the poor is in your houses" (v.14). They will beat up the people and "grind the faces of the poor" (v.15).

What is the right way to treat the poor and the weak of this world? God teaches us how in these verses. Check them out and write them in the space provided.



Thought: Be kind to the poor.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that I can help the poor and needy because Thou has given me enough. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

GOD'S INSTRUMENT OF JUDGMENT - THE ASSYRIANS

The Assyrians were a wicked and sinful people. Coming from the north of Israel, their motive for invading Israel was to plunder. However, God used them for His higher purpose of chastening His sinful people. God is seen in this passage as the One who gathers the forces. He is seen as One raising an ensign or banner to rally the invading armies. He is likened to one hissing or whistling, as beekeepers are known to do, when calling a swarm of bees. At His signal, the attacking forces will burst into action.

This passage describes the ferocious power of the Assyrians. They were like war machines that fought relentlessly. Their arrows were sharp and their bows bent and ever ready to shoot. Their battle cry struck terror like the roar of lions. There will be no escape from the mighty Assyrians. When the Assyrians come, the noise they make will be like a roaring sea and the hearts of the people will be heavy with hopelessness and sorrow.

Pray we do not fall into habitual sin and incur God's wrath. Indeed, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrew 10:31).

Untold sufferings will take place when there is a war.

Thought: Thank you Lord for peace in our time.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may we use the time of peace to be good Christian children and to serve You faithfully. This I will do in the power and name of Jesus, amen.

GOD CALLS ISAIAH

God calls men and women to serve him in different ways. Moses was called when he was shepherding flocks of sheep at the desert of Mt Horeb. There God spoke to him out of the burning bush.

Here, God showed Isaiah a glorious vision, involving both sight and sound. It was an awesome and unforgettable experience in Isaiah's life. When God reveals Himself to man, He humbles the creature to the dust. This is the experience of every servant called of God. Isaiah said, "Woe is me! … because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5). Then God sent a live coal and laid it upon his mouth. Immediately Isaiah was cleansed by God's act of grace and mercy and he answered the glorious call of God.

Isaiah confessed his unworthiness before the Almighty God. He acknowledged his hopeless condition and humbled himself. Only by confessing our sins before God, and humbling ourselves before Him can we be truly cleansed, through the precious blood of His Son, our Lord Jesus.

Cleansing love pardon

What is the meaning of the hot livecoal applied to the lips of Isaiah?

1. It shows the _____ effect on the prophet's mouth.
2. It shows also the _____ and acceptance of Isaiah the prophet.
3. It shows divine grace to rekindle the first _____ so as to fit him for the Master's use.

Thought: You can serve God too!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, although I am but a young child, may I serve You in simple ways such as being kind and courteous to others. May this behaviour come from a heart renewed by the love of Jesus, for it is in His name that I ask, amen.

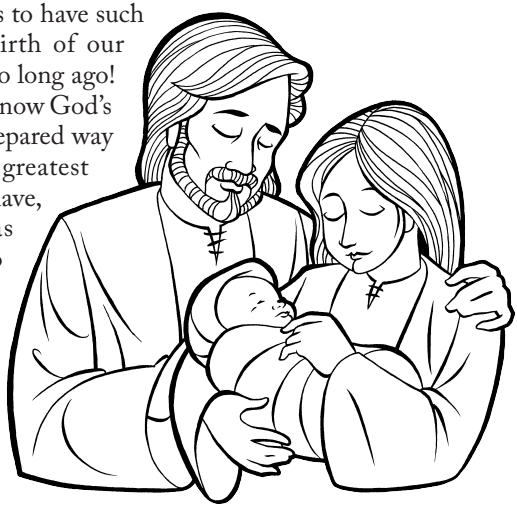
BIRTH OF JESUS FORETOLD!

King Ahaz did not seek God. Instead, he sought the help of the superpower of that time, the Assyrians, against his enemies. He trusted in men rather than God. Nevertheless, God wanted to give him a sign, a miraculous sign to show that God Almighty can do anything if only Judah will turn to Him and trust Him. King Ahaz refused to ask for a sign. He did not want God to confirm that He would protect Judah because he had decided to trust in the Assyrians.

The sign was the miraculous birth of a child born of a virgin. This earth-shaking event did not take place till 700 years afterwards but Isaiah saw this prophecy with sharp clarity. Furthermore, this child would be a son and He shall be called Immanuel which means "God with us". He would indeed be the Saviour who will redeem His people.

Only God can tell the future. Only God is almighty. Let us not be like King Ahaz and rely on men, who are God's creatures, rather than their Creator, our one living and true God.

How wonderful it is to have such a blessed event – the birth of our beloved Jesus – foretold so long ago! It is also so reassuring to know God's plan for us so lovingly prepared way in advance. This is the greatest news the world can ever have, that God Almighty was willing to send His Son to die for us so we may have everlasting life in heaven!



Colour this picture with whatever happy colours you prefer!

Thought: So wonderful that birth of Jesus was foretold long ago!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the birth of Christ. It is such a joyous event that even though we are in the month of September, it is not too early to thank You for Christmas! In his blessed name I pray, amen.

A FULLER VIEW OF THE VIRGIN-BORN SON

God graciously gave Isaiah a fuller view of the attributes of God's Saviour in this chapter. Isaiah begins by turning his view on the land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali in the region of Galilee. This region in the north was the first to feel the sting of the Assyrian invaders. But the people there will experience a great light when Jesus lived and ministered there. They will experience even greater glory and their joy will be full when Jesus comes again to reign on earth as their King.

In verses 6-7, the spotlight turns to the throne of David in Jerusalem. This Child to be born must come from the House of David! He will be the King of kings, ruling over the Jewish nation. He will be the hope of all Israel where Ahaz has been such a disappointment. He will be vested the highest honour and power. He shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. He will bring peace and justice in His kingdom in the golden age of the millennium. He is our Lord, Jesus Christ. Do you know Him? Is He your Saviour?

Verse 6 tells us that the child born of a virgin will grow to take over the government of the world. This Messiah has other glorious names. Write them down.

1. W _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
2. C _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
3. The M _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
4. The E _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ Father
5. The P _ _ _ _ _ _ of Peace

Thought: Jesus is a wonderful counselor to me.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for Jesus, a wonderful Counsellor to me. May I go to Him and seek His grace so that I will know how to live a life that will please You. With His wisdom, even though I am but a child, I will know how to handle the challenges that may come my way. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

PRINCE OF PEACE

On 11th Sep 2001 in New York City, something terrible happened. On that morning, 19 terrorists hijacked four commercial passenger jet airliners. The hijackers intentionally crashed two of the airliners into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, killing everyone on board and many others working in the buildings. Both buildings collapsed within two hours, destroying at least two nearby buildings and damaging others. The hijackers crashed a third airliner into the Pentagon – the military headquarters of the USA. The fourth plane crashed into a field, after some of its passengers and flight crew attempted to retake control of the plane, which the hijackers had redirected toward Washington – the capital of the USA. There were no survivors from any of the flights.

2,974 victims and the 19 hijackers died in the attacks. The overwhelming majority of casualties were civilians, including nationals of over 90 different countries. These attacks are now known as the "911 attacks".

If a relative or friend of yours had died in the above attacks, would you still be able to call Jesus "Prince of Peace"?

It is possible, but it will not be easy. The peace that Jesus brings is not the peace the world offers. The world's peace is dependent on the lack of tough times or difficult situations. For a person without Christ, he will not be able to experience peace in the 911 attacks. But for us, we can depend on the love and strength of the Lord, even when things appear terrible. You see, if we trust God, if we put our lives into his hands, we will then be able to have peace, come what may.

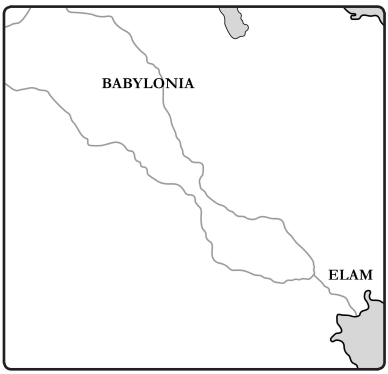
Thought: May Jesus be my Prince of Peace.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that in Jesus, I will have peace that the world cannot give. Sometimes, things do not work out the way I or my parents prefer. But Heavenly Father, do teach me to press on and continue to turn to You. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

GOD IS SOVEREIGN OVER ALL!

The God of Israel is also the God of all nations. God pronounces judgment on the nations around Israel, starting with Babylon. These announcements of doom are meant to console the hearts of the righteous in Judah so that they might set their hope in God, the ruler over the earth.

God would use the Medes, the "mighty ones for mine anger" (v.17) to conquer Babylon. At the time when Isaiah uttered this message of doom against Babylon, she was a vassal (nation weaker than and paying tributes to a stronger nation) of Assyria, being controlled by the kings of Nineveh. Later, Assyria became weak and was conquered by Babylon. Babylon lasted for 70 years. It was a mighty empire, a proud empire, but great was its fall when it was conquered. As in any war, there was great destruction, fear and trembling as the enemies entered their gates.



Our great God is sovereign over all nations. Let us rejoice that our loving Father is in control of all things which happen to us. No matter how powerful empires and their rulers are in their time, they fall. Past empires include those we have mentioned – where are they in the ranking of world powers? They are but a sad reflection of a glorious past.

Draw an arrow from Medes/Elam to Babylon to show that Babylon was conquered by them seventy years later.

Thought: The rise and fall of empires are in the hands of God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to remember all men are but dust, and that only You are the real sovereign over all. Thus, I want to be obedient and faithful to You. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

FALL OF LUCIFER

The 4 verses of today's text tell us the world's most tragic and poignant story, of how a powerful angel called Lucifer fell into sin. Who is this angel Lucifer? He was created as one of the most beautiful and powerful angels. To him, God was gracious and kind. However, he betrayed his Creator and wanted to be like Him! Who is he? He is none other than Satan!

When Lucifer sinned and rebelled against his Master, God cast him down from heaven, along with a third of the angels who followed him. How do we know Lucifer sinned? A hint would be for you to count how many "I" in these 4 verses. Have you done that? How many did you find?

In 4 verses, you find 5 "I will". Lucifer, due to pride of power and strength, challenged God and wanted to be like God. You see, Satan put himself before God and instead of worshipping God, wanted to be like God. In fact, he wanted to be better than God!

Pride is a most dangerous sin. Pride always starts with ourselves, with "I" or "Me" or "Mine". You know how to spell "sin" and "pride". What is in the middle of these 2 words? Again, the letter "I"!

Dear child, be careful of the letter "I". Many of us would already have fallen into the sin of putting ourselves before God and others. You must have seen how some children behave. They make demand of their parents, "I want to have that toy!" Some may tell friends, "I got such wonderful results!", or "Wow, I went to this exotic place for my June holidays!" The list goes on. Children who speak like that harbour pride. Dear child, may it not be said of you that you are like that.

Instead of pride, we must have humility. Even though you may be blessed with intelligence, musical talent, health and strength, never be prideful. Instead, be humble. How can you be humble? Just remember – all that you have is given by God.

Thought: May I be wary of the sin of pride!

Prayer: Thank You for being so merciful and gracious to me, Heavenly Father. I come before You humbly and ask that You forgive me for the pride that is in me. Please help me to remember all that I have is from Thy gracious hand. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

MAKING SENSE OF MIDDLE EAST TODAY…

Here, Isaiah is referring to the land of Philistines and warned them not to rejoice although "the rod of him that smote thee" which is the Assyrian king, is dead. A worse one would arise, "a cockatrice". Philistia was doomed but Zion, by God's appointment, shall stand.

You may not be aware but the Middle East today can be a volatile and dangerous area. Why is this so? Primarily because of the years of distrust and wars between Israel and her neighbours.

Today, when you read of Palestine, it refers to the lands around Israel which, during the First World War (1914 – 1918), under British rule, were populated by the Arabs. When the Jews returned to their homeland and became a nation in 1948, Palestine ceased to be used as a national name. It was changed to Israel. But the Arabs, now homeless because of the incoming Jews, clung to the name Palestine. They claim they are Palestinians, sons of the soil. Their mission is to liberate their country from the Jews. Hence, the unending war between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

Do you now understand the historical roots of the trouble in Israel?

	Arabs	Jews
Bible times	Lived outside the land of Palestine.	God gave the land around Palestine to the Jews and they lived there.
Before 1948	Lived in the land of Palestine.	God scattered them abroad all over the world.
After 1948	Became homeless as Palestine was changed to Israel.	God gathered them all over the world to begin building their nation Israel.

When do you think the fighting began between the Arabs and the Jews? _____

Thought: God will end all wars on earth one day.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, no matter what world leaders do, they cannot achieve what only You can. I am so glad I have so great a Saviour and I pray I will always remain faithful. Please help me Lord, for this I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

ARE YOU DISCOURAGED?

Damascus is the capital of Syria. Syria had joined forces with the northern kingdom of Israel against Judah, the southern kingdom. This is a sad case of brother against brother. Isaiah predicted a message of doom for Syria and the northern kingdom – Israel - for all their schemings.

Both Syria and Israel would suffer the same fate and be conquered by the Assyrians. Like the harvestman or farmer reaping ears of corn and leaving only that which he cannot reach, so also will the inhabitants and wealth of Syria and Israel be swept away. Yet, God is merciful and there will be a remnant. This is described in the gathering of grapes and of olives. After the "shaking" and the "beating" of the trees, two or three berries would be left in the top branches. This tells us that God will preserve a remnant for His own glory.

As you look around you today, are you discouraged because there is so much sin and wrong in the world? Are you discouraged because true Christians are so few in number? Do not be dismayed, God always takes care of His own beloved children.

Look at the picture of the farmers shaking the olive trees.

Draw the olives falling, some on the ground, and some into baskets and some remaining on the trees.

Thought: Though no one go with me, still I will follow the Lord.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, let me always follow Thee and Thy people. Help me not to be afraid of being in the minority if that means it is to be right. Help me to dare to be different, for Your sake. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

GOD IS IN CHARGE!

Egypt and Assyria were the two super powers in the ancient world. Whereas Assyrian power was growing stronger in Isaiah's days, Egyptian power was on the wane. This was working out according to God's plan for the nations. Egypt was an idolatrous land, and the time of its judgment was at hand.

God shall make use of the Assyrians to come into Egypt and conquer it. but before that, the country would be much weakened by internal strife - Egyptians fighting against other Egyptians. The economy of the country would also suffer, with waters of the River Nile drying up. In the ancient world, rivers were extremely important. We may not realize the importance of rivers but then, rivers could bring death or life. People used rivers for drinking, washing, irrigation, and transportation. And the powerful and long River Nile was the lifeline of Egypt; the country's fortunes rose and fell with the river.

You may recall how influential Egypt must have been in the time of Joseph and later, Moses. Under Joseph, Egypt was able to store up plenty to tide her through the lean years and when countries came a-begging, they must have given her a lot of precious stones and metals just to buy food. During the time of Moses, Egypt under Pharaoh was also powerful.

However, today's reading tells us that with God against Egypt, even the mighty Nile was useless and the wisdom of Egypt's wise men confounded. But not all is hopeless. God's arms remain wide open to all who will believe and today, many Egyptians would have accepted Christ as Lord and Savior and are believers themselves!

Thought: God is in charge over all!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the reminder that You are in charge over all. As I see how troubles can affect my family, my friends and myself, I want to commit to You all these problems. They may be difficult for us to handle but surely You are able to help us as You are in complete control of all. May I always look to Jesus for help and in His name I pray, amen.

END OF A WEALTHY AND SINFUL PEOPLE

In the days before air power, the ability to project power by way of ocean-going ships was something nations and cities were proud of. One such city was Tyre. However, to the sailors of Tyre returning from Tarshish (Spain), news reached them that made them sad and disappointed. They heard even when they were as far off as Chittim (Cyprus) that their precious and prosperous Tyre has fallen! She has become a wasteland. Because of her pride, Tyre could not escape judgment from the Lord; she would be taken captive to Babylon!

Like the Jews who were taken captive to Babylon for 70 years, so Tyre was doomed to the same fate (v.15). Isaiah prophesied that she would recover as "the Lord would visit Tyre" (v.17).

Tyre was a materialistic city which prospered by engaging in commerce for selfish ends, "fornication with all the kingdoms of the world". God is not pleased with ill-gotten riches and a life of pleasure that does not give Him the glory. Many in the world rely on riches. Many in the world rely on connections and power. Let us not be such. May our parents not be such as well. If we are born into a wealthy family, we are to be humble for God has given our parents wealth. If we are born into a family of more modest means, we are to remain thankful to God for whatever we have, whether it be more or less, everything comes from our heavenly Father.

There is no wrong in being wealthy; there is wrong in wanting to be wealthy or boastful of wealth. Learn a lesson from the people of Tyre – never be proud of things or assets you may have, whether they be your gifts, or intelligence. Instead, trust in God and keep relying on Him.

Thought: The rise and fall of cities and nations are in God's hands.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I depend on You and not on myself to solve problems that I may have. Help me to be prayerful and to also seek Your guidance. In Jesus' name I humbly ask, amen.

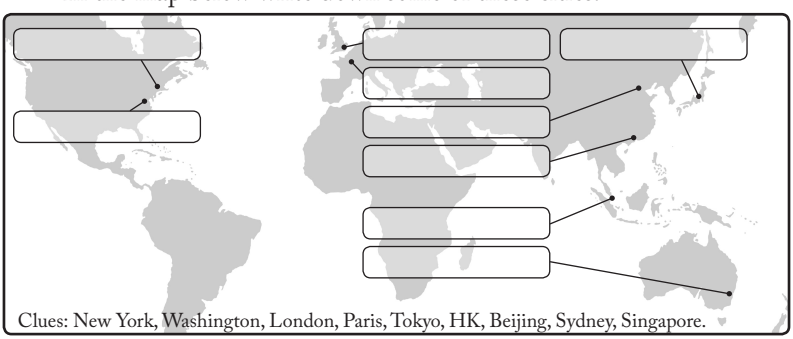
THE COMING GLOBAL CALAMITY

From chapter 24 to 27, the prophet Isaiah describes a coming global calamity. God would lay waste the earth as divine judgment (punishment from God) for the sin of the people of the earth. As the world was destroyed by the global flood during the days of Noah because of sin, the world will once again be destroyed, not by water but by fire, because man continues to sin and does not worship or obey God.

In the catastrophe to come, social standing will not make any difference, whether it is between priest and people, or servant and master, or maid and mistress. All will be equally affected. All will suffer pain, death, hunger and homelessness. All that is heard is crying and sorrow. However, there will be a small number, like the few grapes left behind in the harvesting, who will glorify the Lord in hard times like these. These will sing and cry aloud for Him. Truly a day is coming when the "LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem" (v.23) and that is the period we call the golden millennium.

If we lay up our treasures on earth, we will be brought to misery in the coming calamity. Let us heed the words of our Saviour when He said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." (Matthew 6:19-20a)

A global calamity that is coming will include all the cities of the world. In the map below write down some of these cities.



Clues: New York, Washington, London, Paris, Tokyo, HK, Beijing, Sydney, Singapore.

Thought: Jesus is a shelter in the time of storm.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for being my Rock and Fortress at all times. I pray that I will not fear when troubles arise, but lean completely on You, remembering You are my Rock and Fortress. In Jesus' name, amen.

GOD AWAITS OUR RETURN

There is a saying, "One with God is a majority". We might be one against many but in God's sight, we are the majority. God had told Israel before, "One man of you shall chase a thousand…" (Joshua 23:10). "And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight." (Leviticus 26:8). What an encouragement God was giving to His people!

But Judah refused to listen. Judah forsook the Lord and sought help from Egypt instead. Then this blessing was reversed. "One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one; at the rebuke of five shall ye flee…" (Isaiah 30:17). When we refuse to listen to our God, he will work through circumstances in our lives, giving us hardship and difficulties, to bring us back to Himself.

Have you experienced this? Perhaps you have not been close to the Lord. Perhaps you have neglected reading his Word daily. Despite encouragement from your Sunday School teachers and friends, you continue to remain cold towards God. In times like these, He may send you difficulties and trouble to remind you of your weaknesses and to bring you back to Him. He waits patiently for us to return to Him. And when we do, He will not withhold His generous blessings. "And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you" (v.18) and in v 19 "he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee."

Let us remain close to God. But if we ever stray, God is ever hopeful we return to Him. Remember dear child, God may have to allow tough times in your life to discipline you, as might a loving father disciplining a child he loves when he needs it.

Thought: May we always stay close to Him!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give me grace to be obedient to all Your commands. Help me to remain faithful and if I ever stray, remind me Your arms are always wide open for me. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

MAN'S EXTREMITY, GOD'S OPPORTUNITY

King Hezekiah was ruler over Judah but here we read of him in a sad and desperate state. Why? Under what circumstances would a ruler be so pessimistic?

The Assyrian king Sennacherib had raised raised a huge army to attack Judah. King Hezekiah's father, Ahaz, had faced a similar threat from the Syria-Israel alliance before. Instead of trusting God, he turned to Assyria for help, and disastrous results followed. Now, Hezekiah had to decide whether to trust man or God for deliverance.

Man's extremity is God's opportunity. Hezekiah made the right decision. He cast himself before the Lord. He had the spiritual understanding to seek God with all his heart and not to look to man. In earnest prayer, he spread the Assyrian king's letter of demand before the Lord. In deep contrition, he begged for mercy. That is a wise thing to do for God listens to every penitent prayer. Dear child, if you are sincere in your prayers, the Lord will hear and answer! Soon came the piece of good news that God would defend the city for His own sake, and for David's sake (v.35). The destruction of 185,000 Assyrian troops in one night saved the day. God had worked a miracle!

Do you trust God in times of adversity? Rest in His assurance that "… all things work together for good to them that love God". (Romans 8:28)

Below are examples of how God can work in miraculous ways,to deliver or to punish.

The miracle of the parting of the Red Sea

The destruction of Sodom & Gomorrah

The global flood during Noah's time

The miracles of Joseph being promoted to Prime Minister of Egypt

Thought: May I turn to the Lord in good or bad times.

Prayer: Great is Thy faithfulness, O Lord unto me. I am so grateful for You have been such a kind God. Help me to keep close to You, in good times or bad, for this I ask in Jesus' precious name, amen.

CAN GOD ADD YEARS TO ONE'S LIFE?

What is the average lifespan of a Singaporean? For a man, it is about 80 years, and for a woman, about 85 years. Many do a lot to try to lengthen their lives: pop vitamins, exercise, eat right, have a healthy work-life balance.

How old do you think King Hezekiah was when he was very ill? He was relatively young, at only 39 years old. That would be less than half of the average life expectancy of a Singaporean today! As king, he could do almost anything within his earthly power to improve his health and prolong his life. However, when he knew his life was near its end, he did not seek doctors or magicians; he prayed unto the Lord, crying his heart out to God. He believed God to be a merciful and kind Master.

Hezekiah wept as he prayed to the Lord. God was moved and granted him 15 more years. God also graciously added another blessing – that He will defend Judah from the king of Assyria.

To confirm His promise, God moved the shadow of the sundial of Ahaz (Hezekiah's father) ten degrees backward (vs 8), as a sign that He had extended Hezekiah's days.

Imagine your father is about the age of Hezekiah, and has suddenly been diagnosed with an incurable disease. The doctors are not hopeful; 3 months is all they give him to live. What do you do? What fears will occupy your mind? What will happen to the family without your father?

Dear child, do you believe in the power of prayer? God's word tells us that "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much", (James 5:16). Dear child, go humbly to the Giver of life that we may find help in time of need.

Thought: Do you believe in the power of prayer?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I confess that at times, I lack faith. Grant me the faith to believe, to be able to know that in Your hands lie my future, and that of my family. Therefore, I pray my family and I will continue to keep close to You. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

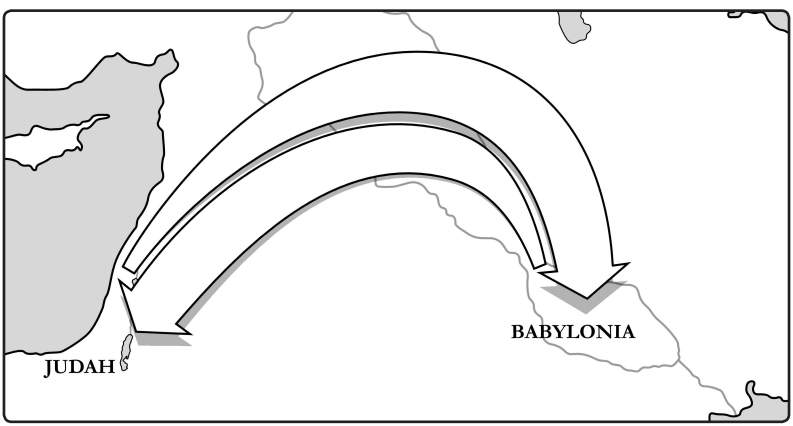
FROM CAPTIVITY TO RESTORATION

While chapters 1-39 of Isaiah tell of God's judgments for the sins of the people of Judah and the surrounding nations, chapters 40-66 tell of God's consolation and the restoration of Judah. Chapter 39 closes with Judah's coming conquest and captivity by Babylon. Chapter 40 opens with comforting words of their restoration and return back to their homeland.

God had covenanted with His people that He would love them with an everlasting love. He will chastise His people when they sin but He will also forgive them when they repent. God is faithful to His promises to give His people a glorious future, even as He deals with them for their sin and rebellion.

Do you trust in God's faithfulness? He is like a Good Shepherd who "shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom" (v.11). He will never fail to carry out His promises.

Write "Captivity" and "Restoration" at the correct arrows.



Thought: When we suffer, God knows and cares.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for being with us in all our sufferings. Thank You that the Lord Jesus being 100% God and 100% man, is able to know and understand man's weaknesses. Help me, Heavenly Father, to press on in my daily walk with You so that I will remain faithful. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

IS THE WORLD FLAT?

If you believe the world is flat today, people will laugh at you. They may ask what school you attend for if such a school teaches such a wrong notion, these people will not send their children there. However, do you know that for a few thousand years, most people believed the earth was flat?

Had these people read the 2 verses you read, and believed them, they would know the earth is not flat but round! You see, there were many people in the past, and still many today, who believe the bible is an outdated book written by a group of men who came together to try to mislead weak-minded people into believing a person called Jesus. Nothing can be further from the truth. Though man has tried countless times to destroy and discredit the Bible, the Precious Word of God has stood firm and undaunted.

Dear child, there is much gain from reading and believing the bible. Unfortunately, it is not popular to read the bible or go to Sunday school. Your friends may laugh at you, jesting that there is enough to read from school work. "Forget about the bible!", they may tell you. And they laugh at you going to Sunday School or Junior Worship. "Isn't going to school five days a week already enough?", some of them may scoff at you.

What do you do in times like these? Three things. Firstly, do not be angry with these friends or schoolmates. These people do not need our anger, they need our compassion and understanding. Secondly, we need to pray for them that God will be merciful to open their spiritual eyes to see spiritual truth. Thirdly, we pray for ourselves that God will grant us the courage to continue to treasure His Word, that we may press on in the Christian walk.

Thought: The Holy Word is never wrong, but the world often is!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for giving me Your precious Word. May I continue to treasure it by reading and obeying it daily. You know it is sometimes not easy to do so and therefore Heavenly Father, do grant me strength. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

OUR GOD IS THE GREATEST!

Our God is great and His greatness is beyond compare, and there is no searching of His understanding. The Lord promises to answer His people's prayers. He would provide for all their needs. When they are thirsty, He would provide them water, in the hilltops, in the valleys, and even in the desert. He would provide shade in the wilderness.

In contrast with the power of the living and true God, the gods of the nations are powerless. Most idols are carved from wood or forged from metal. "Behold, they are all vanity; their works are nothing: their molten images are wind and confusion" (v.29). There are shops in housing estates which sell such idols and it is somewhat bizarre to see shop-owners handling and cleaning such idols, selling them, and then claiming these same merchandise they put up for sale can protect them!

Let us not place our faith in idols. We have a powerful God who is ready to answer our prayers. I guess very few children like you would have physical idols but many of us have non-physical idols. What can these be? Perhaps you idolize someone and this could be your parent, or school teacher, friend, or even some TV character. Do not do that, for it is a sin. Or perhaps you idolize a strength you have, a talent you are blessed with. Dear child, do please be very careful.

There is a beautiful chorus that spells out the greatness and goodness of our heavenly Father. Do you know this song? Ask your parent or elder sibling if they could teach you…

Our God is far greater than words can make known

Exalted and holy, He sits on His throne

In infinite splendor He rules over all,

Yet He feeds the poor sparrow, and knows when they fall

Thought: The greatest God is my most tender Father.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that even though You are the powerful Lord of all, You are at the same time my gracious Abba Father. I place my trust in You, and ask that You kindly continue to watch over me. For the sake of and in the name of Jesus I pray, amen.

CHRIST THE SUFFERING SERVANT

The heart of the book of Isaiah is this famous chapter. It tells of the humiliation and suffering the Lord Jesus Christ would go through while on earth. Jesus left heaven's glory to take upon himself the form of a humble servant.

He was born "a root out of dry ground" for though he was of the royal lineage of King David, His heritage was not held in regard by the people. He was the son of a carpenter, not a king. He was born in a stable, not a palace. The stable is not a nice cuddly place that some of us may think it to be from Christmas cards depicting Christmas. On the other hand, the stable is a smelly and dirty place that few of you would rather be. In such a setting, the great God and King, our precious Lord, chose to be born.

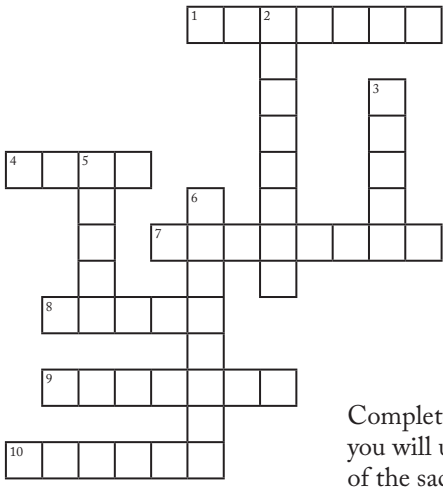
Jesus also did not come as a striking or handsome man with an attractive physical appearance that would draw people to Him. He was not what the Jews had expected of the coming Messiah. They were expecting their Messiah to come in pomp and power. Instead, the life of Jesus was like a tender plant, silent and unnoticed. He told his disciples that He had nowhere to lay His head as He went from town to town preaching the gospel. One of the most important places in everyone's life is his home. The home is also the favorite destination of travelers, especially those who go on frequent business trips. Some of you may have parents who travel a lot for business. If you ask them, they will tell you how much they long to come home to see you during those long trips!

Jesus was also acquainted with the sorrows of the people, their sicknesses and their deaths. We have never read that He jested or enjoyed life, but at times He wept. He came to save mankind but they rejected Him for they only saw His humiliation and sufferings. Of course, the greatest act of humility and love of our precious Saviour is his final and ultimate act of love, when he sacrificed himself on the cross. Dear child, this is the wonderful Saviour we have. For all the power He had, he came as a suffering servant for you and me.

Thought: O what a great Saviour I have in Jesus!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am awed by such a wonderful Saviour and Friend I have in Jesus. These few verses really remind me of how much He suffered and I want to say I love You Heavenly Father. May I be faithful, as I see how much You have suffered for me. This I pray in the dear name of Jesus, amen.

SACRIFICE OF JESUS



Complete the puzzle;
you will understand more
of the sacrifice of Jesus.

ACROSS

1 By his knowledge shall my righteous servant _____ many. Isaiah 53:11
4 He is brought as a _____ to the slaughter. Isaiah 53:7
7 He is despised and _____ of men; a man of sorrows. Isaiah 53:3
8 All we like _____ have gone astray. Isaiah 53:6
9 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was _____ for our iniquities. Isaiah 53:5
10 And with his stripes we are _____. Isaiah 53:5

DOWN

2 For the transgression of my people was he _____. Isaiah 53:8
3 And he made his _____ with the wicked. Isaiah 53:9
5 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his _____. Isaiah 53:7
6 He was _____, and we esteemed him not. Isaiah 53:3

Thought: What a great Saviour we have in Jesus!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for reminding me that I have such a wonderful Saviour. In Jesus name, amen.

FROM HUMILIATION TO JUBILATION

If humiliation is the key word for chapter 53, jubilation aptly characterizes chapter 54. As a result of the suffering of the Servant Messiah, exuberant life breaks forth for His people. We really do owe it all to Jesus. Think about it - because Jesus suffered and was humiliated, we could be saved and receive victory and jubilation (rejoicing and delight). However, for people who do not accept our suffering Saviour, they will not be able to have jubilation.

When there is real repentance, God is more than prepared to forgive and restore. That is why in today's passage, God expresses His love to Israel as a loving Husband would to a restored wife. Then, Israel will be blessed and become fruitful again.

In a way, the church today is like the Israel of old. If the church is cleansed and is repentant, she will be restored to God. Then only would the church be pure and growing again. Then only would she be jubilant and victorious again!

The same applies to you, dear child. If you want victory and jubilation in your life, you must receive the suffering Christ. By accepting the suffering Christ, it also means you must be prepared to suffer for Christ. It is not likely you will be called to be physically tortured for Christ, to be pushed and shoved around for the sake of Christ.

Perhaps what you may need to suffer for Jesus would be to "sacrifice" some sleep for Him as you press on in doing your devotion. Or perhaps standing up for Jesus in daring to be different from other children in school. Or maybe taking the extra effort to be kind to someone new, or even becoming unpopular, or bullied for your faith in Christ. If you commit to the Lord and dare to do these for Christ, He will fill you with joy and jubilation in knowing you did what you did in the strength of the Lord.

Thought: We shall eventually have jubilation.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for today's lesson. Help me to dare to suffer for You, so that I will be able to participate in the jubilation to come. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

FROM ONE TO ALL

Here, the prophet looks beyond Israel to the whole world, from one to all. This is the Gospel invitation to everyone who despairs of the futility of life without God, who begins to thirst and yearn after Him.

The Gospel is the good news of the Saviour Jesus Christ. He is the living water that gives everlasting life (John 4:14). From Him comes "the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). He is the Bread of life, "which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die" (John 6:50). The Lord Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice for us freely and our salvation is priceless; it cannot be bought with money.

Spiritually, to hearken diligently and eat that which is good is surely to hear the Word of God with our ears. When the Word of God is taught to you, do you listen carefully and thank God for His love and His goodness? That is to "eat that which is good."

In this chapter of Isaiah, the precious gospel of the love of the Saviour for sinners is also known as:

1. _____ for the thirsty.
2. _____ for the poor.
3. _____ and milk for those without money.
4. Wine and _____ that are priceless.
5. _____ that satisfies your hunger.

Thought: Men need the gospel, like they need water and food.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for Your grace and love that gives us Thy priceless Gospel, which is more than meat and drink to us. This I pray with thanksgiving in Jesus' name, amen.

WHEN JESUS COMES

When Jesus comes to reward His servants, we will be rewarded according to how we have served Him. We are to be honest and just in all our dealings. We are also to observe the Sabbath Day (Lord's Day in New Testament) as a test of our love, devotion and trust in the Lord. The blessing of keeping the Lord's Day holy is strength and direction from God throughout the coming week.

All who genuinely seek after God place their faith in Him. Even"strangers" and "eunuchs", will be accepted by Him. The Lord will bless them and give them "a place and a name better than of sons and daughters" if they come to Him. When they join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love Him, God will love them, too. What a wonderful God we have! Not only is He kind, fair and just, but he is also full of loving kindness to take in and care for the rejected and outcasts of the earth.

Write T for True or F for False against these statements.

1. God cannot forgive the murderers. ( )
2. The poor beggars can come to God but they are second class. ( )
3. God welcomes the lame, the blind and the dumb to His kingdom. ( )
4. Those with leprosy and other diseases cannot come to God. ( )
5. God does not love the terrorists even if they repent. ( )

Thought: How wonderful when Jesus returns!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to live for You, and to look forward to seeing You when You return in glory and power. This I pray in your Son's most gracious name, amen.

AFTER DISCIPLINE, RESTORATION

Have you ever seen cases of awful conduct from children? Perhaps they were rude, or inconsiderate, or unkind, or proud; the list goes on. One of the cases I have seen occurred in a supermarket. A lady was trying to push the trolley and get some marketing done, but her child was insistent on having something he wanted. When she refused, he started throwing a tantrum and crying loudly to embarrass her.

We know all of us have been naughty. When was the last time you were disciplined? Do you like being disciplined? Well, does anyone ever like being disciplined? I guess not. But we know discipline is good and necessary. Discipline can come in different ways; our parents may actually have to spank us for serious offenses, or scold us, or restrict our liberties, or have us stand in some "naughty corner". However, if and when we truly repent, our parents will lovingly embrace us again. Why do they do that? Simple - because they are our parents! Remember that parents do not like to punish their children, but it is a responsibility that they must fulfill.

God is like that, too. When we go astray or when we sin against Him, He will have to punish or discipline us for our own sake. God does not delight in disciplining us but when He sees us falling into sin such as mixing with bad company and not allowing the Holy Spirit to control our lives, He will intervene and bring us back to Him.

Don't assume that because you were raised in church , you are immune from all the temptations faced by other kids. There are many kids from families of long-time Christians who have rejected their parent's teaching and have made some terrible choices in life.

Always remember, discipline is good for you and after discipline, God will want to restore you to Himself, so that your walk with Him will be right again.

Thought: If ever disciplined, may I be grateful and return to the Father.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, do keep me close to Thee. Should I fall along the way and be chastised or disciplined, help me to accept it as from a loving Father in heaven and to try to walk close to Thee again. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.