WE MUST OBEY, LIKE ABRAHAM

For this month's readings, we will focus on the history and future of Israel. You will be led through selected Bible passages that show you Israel's triumphs and failures, as well as victories and defeats.

Israel plays a crucial part in God's plan of salvation for a lost mankind. When God called Abraham, He began to set in motion a plan to raise a group of people that will know Him, obey Him and serve Him. These people were the seed or descendants of Abraham, first called the children of Israel, the Israelites, and later, the Jews. When they conquered the land of Canaan and began to have rules and laws for governing their people and land, Israel as a nation was born.

It all began when Abraham obeyed God's call to him. Abram, as Abraham was known at the beginning, was called when he was living in a country called Ur in Mesopotamia. He was living a comfortable life when God called him to leave his country and his father's house to travel to a land that God will show him. God promised to make a great nation out of him, bless him and make his name great. God will protect him. For all those who curse him will be cursed.

Down the centuries to this day, all families are blessed if they believe in Jesus Christ, the Saviour born of the line of the father of the Jews, Abram (Abraham). Abram, full of faith, obeyed the LORD. That is how it must be with us, too. God speaks and we must obey.

Thought: May I obey God like Abram did.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, it is amazing that Abram would leave a life of certainty for a life of uncertainty, to a land he has never been. I know this is possible only because he had great faith. So teach me, Heavenly Father, to be like Abraham, to have faith and complete trust in you. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

THE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM

In today's verse, we have the record of the everlasting covenant that God made with Abraham – that God will multiply his descendants. Was the promise of God easy for Abraham to believe? We will not know the answer to this question until we know how old Abraham was when this promise was given to him.

Why don't you make a guess? Was Abraham in his 30s, or perhaps 40s? No! Verse 1 of Gen 17 tells us Abraham was 99 years old! Verse 17 of Gen 17 further tells us that Abraham would be a 100 years old and his wife Sarah 90 years old by the time the child was born. How old are your grandparents? It is unlikely they would be as old as Abraham and Sarah then. Can you imagine your grandmother pregnant! What if you came home from school one day and mummy tells you that grandma is pregnant? You would think that was a joke!

For Abraham to believe God was no easy task. The usual child-bearing age of a woman is about 15 to late 40s. Sarah was almost twice the age of the oldest mothers around! People would be laughing should they know of this. But Abraham believed.

Abraham's faith was so strong and so early on in human history that believers today are called children of Abraham! We will see in the passages of this month that although Abraham was a man of God and had great faith as today's reading tells us, he was not perfect. He would fail at times, needing the grace and forgiveness of the Lord. That is the case for all believers. There is no Christian out there that is perfect.

So at times, when you fail, at times, when you sin, do not be discouraged. Look to the Lord, as Abraham did, and trust in the God who will never forsake or leave us.

Thought: May I learn from Abraham!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the great promise You have given to Abraham, and thank You he believed. To me You have also given many promises, and I pray I will be granted faith to believe them as well. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

THE RICHNESS AND GOODNESS OF THE LAND

Irrigation is vital to farmers and those who live off the land, and the Lord knows! Thus, the land that the Lord promised Abraham is a "good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills". It will be well-watered and fertile, allowing farmers to grow crops abundantly. It will have no lack of rivers for fishing, washing, transportation etc. In the hills and valleys, farmers could grow a variety of crops and keep cattle and sheep, so that the people will always have plenty on the table.

Many of us may not appreciate the need for fertile land as we can easily buy fruit, plants and food off the shelves of so many stores and supermarkets in Singapore. But in those times, and in many parts of the world today, people still rely on the land they live in for livelihood.

Not only was the Promised Land of Canaan productive above ground, it was filled with goodness below the surface! From beneath the ground, the descendants of Abraham could produce iron and brass. How blessed were these people!

Thought: How good is the God we adore!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the abundance You have promised Abraham's seed. Thank You too for what You have given us. I pray I'd learn to be grateful for my parents, my family, my school, and my church. And for the fact that I'm able to read Your holy word everyday. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

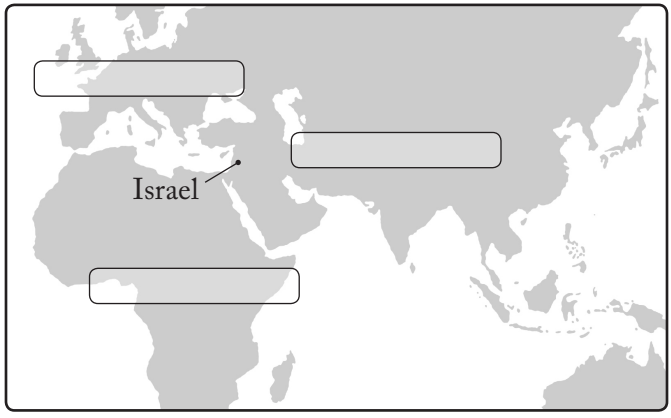
THE PRE-EMINENT LOCATION

Another verse in the Bible, Ezekiel 5:5, states, "Thus saith the Lord God; This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her."

Israel is at the centre of three continents. To the north is Europe, to the east is Asia and to the south-west is Africa. Commercially, this means that it is at the crossroads of the world. People and especially merchants who travel from one country to another will have to pass through Israel and bring not only their merchandise but also news of faraway lands.

In the future when Jesus reigns on earth for 1,000 years, the pre-eminent position of Israel will be even clearer as all will want to worship at Jerusalem. It will be the joy of the whole earth. Its "mountain of His holiness" makes it beautiful, for holiness is beauty. It will be the city of the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ who will reign the whole earth from this very city.

Study the map below and write Europe, Asia and Africa over the correct places.



Thought: How great Thou art!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we marvel at Your wisdom as you plan for Jerusalem. May I be reminded to trust in Your plans for me too. Although I am only a child, teach me to start committing my future into Your hands, for You are keen that I trust and obey. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

GOD'S TIMING IS THE BEST

Abraham, with his son Isaac and grandson Jacob, dwelt in the land of Canaan as strangers because the land was not yet theirs. It was occupied and owned by various tribes sometimes collectively called the Canaanites. One reason the patriarchs had not gained possession of Canaan, their Promised Land, was that the iniquity of the Canaanites was not yet full (Genesis 15:16).

God is the Judge of all the earth. It was not until 430 years after Abraham's children had sojourned in Egypt that Canaan would then be ripe for judgment and the land transferred to them (Genesis 15:16). Indeed we are reminded in another Bible verse that "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

When God's hour of judgment came, the Lord instructed Moses with these words, "Turn you, and take your journey…to the land of the Canaanites. Behold I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give unto them, and to their seed after them". Eventually, the Israelites successfully conquered the land of Canaan.

As children, sometimes we allow our desire for fun or food to control us. Not many children can refrain from an offer of yummy ice-cream and wonderful cookies. Or for an afternoon of fun with friends. But at times, our parents do not allow us to indulge further in fun or food. Why? Perhaps it is because we are not well, or are already too tired, and we know too much ice-cream and games can be bad for us! Mum and Dad know better than us, love us, and so we have to abide by their timing. Likewise, God's timing is not the same as ours, but is always the best.

Thought: To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.

Prayer: Teach me, Heavenly Father, the importance of waiting on You for Your perfect timing. Often I am impatient but help me Lord to wait on You, for this I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

FOLLOWING GOD ALL THE WAY

When we become a believer, we are to trust God. How much and how often should we trust and follow Him? There are many accounts of the Israelites not getting full blessings because they selected when and where to trust and follow God. Although the Promised Land is a land promised to the Israelites already, they were to follow specific instructions – God made it clear that Israel would possess the land on condition of absolute obedience. If Israel refused to obey and do all God's commandments, then Israel must be prepared to be punished. They would find that their prosperity would be taken away. Their land would be barren and the number of their sheep and cattle would not increase. Their enemies would become stronger than they. They would be struck down with all sorts of diseases.

In today's text, you will read that they would be cursed – a very strong word indeed. Who would like to be cursed? Clearly none of us; clearly none of the Israelites. However, the way with which many of them lived their lives demonstrated they did not heed God's warnings. And eventually, as we will discover in this month of reading, there will really be hardship and pain for the Israelites.

You might have heard the story of Fanny Crosby. She was an American lyricist known for penning many beautiful hymns. She became blind shortly after birth and was a faithful Christian. One of her most famous, was "All the Way My Saviour Leads Me".

All the way my Saviour leads me; What have I to ask beside?
Can I doubt His tender mercy,
Who through life has been my Guide?
Heav'nly peace, divinest comfort, Here by faith in Him to dwell!
For I know, whate'er befall me, Jesus doeth all things well;
For I know, whate'er befall me, Jesus doeth all things well.

Thought: All the way my Saviour leads me, what have I to ask beside…

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am so glad I have You always to lead me. Help me to learn how to follow You all the way. In Jesus's name I pray, amen.

A STIFF NECK

Have you ever suffered from a stiff neck? Probably not, since you are still young. But go ask your parents – they might have experienced it. Like back pain and headaches, the problem of stiff neck belongs to the list of more common complaints adults have. This illness occurs when a person suddenly experiences terrible pain when he or she moves his or her head.

Let me tell you a secret – many Israelites had stiff necks. Their problem was not a physical stiff neck; theirs was a spiritual stiff neck. Now what does that mean? It means they were stubborn and refused to obey the Lord. Their necks were "stiff" as they refused to turn towards the Lord. Their necks were "stiff" as they did not want to turn away from their own sin and set ideas.

Moses warned the people – that if they continued to have stiff necks when he was alive, they would have even more serious problems when he was not around to guide them! In a way, does not that apply to us? We have Sunday School teachers or parents to guide and warn us, but when they are physically not with us, do we forget their teachings and refuse to obey God?

There is a popular song called "Trust and Obey". As you read the words, pray that the Lord will touch and convict you that there is no better way but to trust and obey Him.

When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will, He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.
Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

Thought: May I not have a stiff neck!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to obey You in all things so that I find happiness and peace in Your will. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

ARE YOU A COMPLAINER?

The Israelites were held as slaves in Egypt for many years. What is slavery? Slavery is a form of forced labor in which people are considered to be, or treated as, the property of others. Slaves can be held against their will from the time of their capture, purchase or birth, and deprived of the right to leave, to refuse to work, or to receive compensation for their work. Whilst there are different forms of slavery, what is clear is that slavery was very cruel and destroys lives. For a slave who has the chance of freedom, he would probably fight for it, and may even be willing to die for it. For a slave to be granted freedom, you can imagine the great gratitude he must have for the one who liberated him!

Now consider this – the Israelites, slaves to the Egyptians for years, had been freed from the Egyptian masters. They had seen the hand of God in bringing about their escape and exodus (name of the second book in the Bible, and this word means a movement of a very large group of people), been given a new lease of life, but were now complaining! What is the meaning of the word "complainer"? A complainer is someone who laments and finds fault with things, and not happy with what he or she has. Such a person is usually not contented with his or her lot in life. It is amazing the Israelites forgot how terrible it was when they were slaves in Egypt and actually yearned for the food they had there. It seems they were almost willing to sell their freedom for food!

God has done so much for us as He has for the Israelites. Are we grateful, or are we like the Israelites who were complainers?

God has done so much for you. List two blessings the Lord has given you, and thank Him for them!

1. _____

2. _____

Thought: May I never be a complainer!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be grateful for Your kindness and never to be a complainer! This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

ARE YOU SET FOR FAILURE?

The Israelites were now at the border of the Promised Land. Instead of bubbling with excitement at the prospect of entering and possessing the land God promised, they were afraid. Instead of looking to God for help, they looked to their weaknesses and failed to see how God can work through them despite their weaknesses. In other words, they looked set for failure. Their motto became "We are not able" (verse 31), and no amount of pleading and reasoning could help them. Why was this so? They did not look to God. They could see nothing but failure and obstacles in front of them. They believed the enemies were much stronger and bigger than they (verse 31), that the land was one that would "devour people" (verse 32), – that it made life very difficult for them, and they were so afraid they referred themselves as "grasshoppers" (verse 33).

God's assurance of divine help were buried beneath a pile of exaggerated fears and doubts. All they could see was the word FAILURE. For these Israelites, failure was not a possibility; it was a foregone conclusion. Because of that, they grieved like people who have been defeated, even before they fought the enemies! Were they defeated? Physically, no. But in reality, they were because in their minds they had already lost. They were set for failure. Are we sometimes like that? When problems come our way, do we use a magnifying glass to examine them and fear them such that our faith melts and the word FAILURE stares straight at our face?

Dear child, whatever problems you or your family might face, remember you are NOT set for failure. The Lord has promised that He would guide and guard you, and He will keep His promise!

Thought: Look to the Lord for help, and not at my weaknesses in despair.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to trust You in all things. I know trouble and problems will come my way, or my family's way, but Heavenly Father, help me to commit them into Your hands for You care for me. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

TRIPLE M

For the first part of this month, we have been looking at the selected history of the Israelites. One simple way to remember is to look at three Ms – Misery, Mercy, Mission.

Misery is about the more than 400 years of Israel's time in Egypt, where after the Egyptians had forgotten who Joseph was, how he helped the Egyptians tide over the seven years of famine, and how he helped Pharaoh rule well. The people of Israel were enslaved and treated badly until the Lord sent Moses to free them. The next M is **Mercy** – the Lord granted mercy during their 40 years in the wilderness despite their complaining and grumbling. The Lord eventually led them to the border of the Promised Land. The last M stands for **Mission.** Their mission was clear – to occupy the Promised Land and drive out the enemies who were there.

Who did they have to guide them? Moses was now dead and the new man in charge was Joshua. And God knows it was a very difficult task, thus God gave to Joshua a very important command – "Be strong and of a good courage". Because Joshua was a general, we can expect him to be a brave and athletic man. But is this the kind of strength and courage the Lord is talking about? No. God is talking about spiritual strength. He is more concerned with our ability to withstand the world and its influences.

Your friends in class and school may think it silly of you to go to church, to believe the "stories" in the Bible, to believe there is no evolution, that the Lord made the entire universe in six days. What would you say to that? Would you be able to withstand their laughter and scorn? Or would you be like Joshua – a strong and courageous child of the Lord?

Thought: May I be a strong and brave child for the witness of the Lord!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to lean on you for strength and courage. On my own, I am weak and sometimes fearful. So Heavenly Father, grant me the strength I need, and the courage necessary to always follow Jesus, for in Jesus' name I pray, amen.

DOING THE IMPOSSIBLE!

Do you know how many rivers there are in Singapore? Most of us will think there are only a handful. In reality, there are almost 90 rivers, but most of them are very small and unknown to most people. The largest is the Singapore River, but compared to major rivers of the world, the Singapore River is still very small. Do you think it is easy to swim across this river? Some of you who are better swimmers might not find it a problem but others will. For the Israelites, to fight for the Promised Land, they have to first cross River Jordan. This is the first and one of the most difficult tasks for them. Remember they have been wandering in the desert for 40 years and there were no swimming lessons to be had there! So most, if not all, of them of fighting age were non-swimmers. How then could they overcome such a great obstacle?

Crossing River Jordan on their own would have been impossible if they relied on their own strength, and God knew that. Sometimes, there are things beyond our control. There are sometimes difficulties that are way too tough for you to handle. What should you do then? Pray. And remember yesterday's lesson – be strong and of a good courage. If God knows there is something beyond your ability, He will enable you to accomplish it. Crossing the river at that time was also very dangerous for it was swelling and raging at that time of the year. If we were there, we would be able to not just see the rushing river, but hear the roar of the waters, experience the splashing of the waves upon the banks. It must have been a frightening sight.

But what happened after that? Look at the scripture text for today. As soon as the priests' soles touched the waters, the river stopped flowing! How wonderful that was! It must have taken a lot of courage for the priests to step into the waters, especially as they were carrying the Ark! What if they fell, or sank? Is it not brilliant that the Lord stopped the waters such that no harm could come near His people?

Dear child, if there is some obstacle you think is too difficult for you, commit it to the Lord. What is impossible for you might turn out to be an opportunity for you to see how God can work in your life.

Thought: For with God nothing shall be impossible.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You so much that I have a God with whom nothing is impossible! Teach me, Heavenly Father, to cast all my burdens upon You, for this I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

HUMILITY IS THE BEST POLICY

In Joshua 1, God told Joshua when he assumed leadership of the Israelites to be strong and of good courage. Joshua was faithful to the end and as we come to the close of this book, we read in today's text that Joshua was now an old man. He had been successful in occupying the major cities in the Promised Land. Although there were still pockets of resistance, the major battles have been fought and won.

He called for the leaders and elders and gave them a farewell message. In this message, did he talk about his achievements and how great a leader he had been? Was he boasting of how wonderful a general and leader he was to the people? Not at all. Joshua made no mention of himself, but pointed them to the Lord, and how God was the power behind their conquest of the Promised Land. In such a great leader, we see profound humility. That is surely something we can learn today!

If we were to ask your friends and your parents whether you are a humble child, what do you think the answer would be? Dear child, humility is one of the most important though least sought-after trait a Christian should have.

Perhaps one reason for Joshua's humility was that he remembered the meaning of his name – "Jehovah is salvation". He remembered that it was God who saved and enabled, and thus, he should not have any desire to aim for glory of any sort.

While Joshua is a wonderful example of humility, the best example is Jesus. He as King of kings came to suffer humiliation, betrayal, and the terrible death on the cross. Philippians 2:5-8 sum it up well:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Thought: May I be a humble child.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please help me learn to be a humble child and to remember that all that I have and am comes from You. This I pray in Jesus' name. amen.

FAITHFUL ALL THE WAY

What are some of the fastest times taken for a man to run 100 metres? These world-class sprinters take less than 10 seconds to complete the 100 metre run and it is amazing how fast these athletes are!

Is our Christian life like that of a 100-metre sprint? I am afraid not. Instead, the Christian life is more likened to a marathon. It is a long endurance test. There are ups and downs in our Christian life, much like a physical marathon. Even the best marathoners take more than two hours.

Coming to our text today, we see the consistency and faithfulness of Joshua. Near the end of his life, he still asked the people to look to the Lord, to be courageous as commanded by the Lord of him when they were about to enter the Promised Land. This is another important lesson for us – to be faithful to the end. Many can be faithful when the battle begins, but how many will last?

Dear child, you are still young and many are the years ahead of you. Commit your ways to the Lord and remain faithful, for great are the rewards and wonders of a life surrendered to the Lord. Begin in small ways: Be faithful in doing your Quiet Time, be faithful in being kind and helpful, be faithful in obeying and honouring your parents, and be faithful in giving of your best in school work.

Thought: May I be a faithful and consistent child.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I learn to be faithful and consistent for You. Help me to understand that my Christian life is not so much a short sprint, but a long run that can be filled with twists and tumbles, and I need to remain close to Jesus all the way. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

ONE SIN LEADS TO ANOTHER

After Joshua died, problems started to appear. You will read in verses 28 to 30 that the tribes were disobedient as they did not drive out the Canaanites. Instead, they made the Canaanites their tributaries – it means these people were allowed to live but had to pay taxes or give regular food or other supplies to the Israelites, who were more powerful than they.

Against God's revealed Word, the Israelites preferred material goods and earthly comfort to obeying the Lord. Why would they do it? It benefitted them in having the Canaanites work for free, or have the Canaanites pay them sums of money or supply food regularly. However, if what benefits us is against the command of the Lord, we should never be lured into it.

Worse, one sin leads to a greater one. Instead of driving the Canaanites out, they were allowed to live with the Israelites. Then the problem got worse – the Israelites began to leave their own and live among the Canaanites! We are all affected by people and circumstances around us. If we have friends who use vulgar words, defy authority, refuse to study hard, spend hours everyday on computer games, we are likely to behave like them. If we surround ourselves with children who are boastful of their academic excellence, or even of their spiritual standing, we are likely to be influenced by them.

What we see in them we may want to follow because we may be lured to believe it is not so bad after all. Furthermore, our fleshly nature makes us want to do more than they might have done. This was the problem of the Israelites for the sins of one tribe led to the larger sins of another tribe.

Thought: May I view sin seriously, and stay far from it.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You know I am weak and can easily be led into sin. So Heavenly Father, help me to stand firm and to keep close to the Word that I might draw strength from Him. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

WHAT IS A SGC?

The period of the Judges is a sad one for Israel – it would be about 350 years of degeneration before the Monarchy (that is, when Israel is ruled by kings) took place. Israel now had a new generation – a generation after Joshua and the leaders who fought alongside with Joshua. The main problem was that this people strayed.

In a way, this group of people is similar to the "second-generation Christians" (SGC) we see in church. Are you a SGC? If you are, chances are you came to church when you were very young; you did not ask to be in church; you might sometimes not like coming to church; you might have heard many Bible stories; and perhaps sometimes, you think you know a lot already.

If you are in this category, be careful. Be careful of the sin of knowing about the Bible but not knowing the Jesus of the Bible.

Not all SGCs are saved. They might be church-going and Bible-carrying, but what is much more important is that they must know Jesus as their personal Lord and Saviour.

Are there times when you would rather not go to church but your parents drag you there anyway? Or perhaps you do not see your parents living the Christian life that you or your Junior Worship teachers teach you and thus, you might be discouraged?

Remember that your parents are not perfect; they have weaknesses and failings because they are also human. Pray for them. Look to the Lamb of God, our precious Lord Jesus, who is the perfect example for all of us.

The repentance of the SGC in the times of Judges was NOT real, for they went back to their old ways of sin even after showing outward remorse or sadness. Let us not be like them.

Thought: Is my repentance real?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be really sorry for the sin I have committed and teach me to have genuine repentance, especially if I am an SGC. Please help me to examine my life and to ensure that I am Your child. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

DO NOT JUDGE BASED ON HOW PEOPLE LOOK

Because King Saul had disobeyed the Lord, the Lord rejected him. The Lord then sent the prophet Samuel to anoint a new King in Saul's place. Samuel was sent to the house of Jesse at Bethlehem to anoint one of Jesse's sons to be the next King. When Jesse and his sons stood before the prophet Samuel, the prophet looked upon one of Jesse's sons called Eliab and said "Surely the LORD's anointed is before him." Perhaps, the prophet was impressed with Eliab's tall stature and Eliab was good-looking. Samuel thought that Eliab was fit to be the next king. But the Lord said to Samuel, "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature, because I have refused him:for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance but the LORD looketh on the heart." Later on, the Lord instructed Samuel to anoint David whom the Lord had chosen to be the next King, in place of Saul. David turned out to be a man after God's own heart. David was obedient and faithful to the Lord. Although at times David fell into sin, he always repented and sought the Lord's forgiveness.

While there is nothing wrong with being good-looking, or tall, or beautiful, we cannot judge people based on their external looks. But do we?

What would your reaction be if a visitor who looks very different, joins the Junior Worship? Perhaps he could be from a different culture. Would you be kind to him, say "Hello!" because he is new, and try to make him feel at ease? Or would you shun him, or worse, tell others how funny he looks?

Do you think the Lord Jesus, as a child, would laugh cruelly at new kids who look different? God will only judge a person's heart and not the person's outward appearance. What is more important to God is whether the person has a heart that obeys God and is faithful to Him. Let us all learn not to judge a person based his or her external appearance.

Thought: May I not judge others based on their looks.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, sometimes I fall into the sin of judging others by their appearance. Help me not to do that again, but to be a kind and humble child myself. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

ARE YOU A TRUE FRIEND?

All of us have friends. Some are kind and generous. We love to be with friends as we play with them, have fun together, and as Christians, hope to learn and grow in the faith together. That is why it is important that you mix with the right type of friends, because they will influence you to a large extent.

Have you ever imagined how others view you as a friend? Do they think you are a nice boy or girl, whether you are selfish, or whether you behave well only when adults (in particular your parents) are around? How can we learn to be a true friend?

Jonathan was a true friend. The meaning of the name "Jonathan" is "Gift of God". Indeed, the biblical Jonathan was a gift of God. Although he was the son of king Saul, and that Saul wanted him to take over the throne, Jonathan did not want it because he knew it was God's will for David to be king.

This is a rare friend, for he could easily have the most powerful position in the land, and yet willingly made way for his friend David. In Jonathan, we see the beauty of sacrifice, of humility, of selflessness, but most of all, of someone who seeks and follows God's will.

Are you like Jonathan? When you play with friends, do you always seek to win? If you are playing shooting games, do you prefer to have the most powerful gun? If you are playing "dressing up the dolls", do you want the most glamorous dress for your doll? When you sit down for food and drinks, are you gracious and allow others to begin before you help yourself to the food and drinks? Above these, do you care for others?

Think about some areas you can improve as a friend to others, and commit them to the Lord:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Thought: May I be a true friend.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, it is wonderful to have friends, and I pray I will be a faithful and true friend to those around me. Teach me to be more kind, more considerate, and more helpful. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

BRAVE KING – BUT NOT PERFECT

Imagine you read in the newspapers that there is a murder case – X plotted to kill Y. X is a very powerful man and through his connections, got Y killed. It was the perfect murder, because Y, a soldier, was killed in his line of duty and it was legitimate for X to have commanded Y to fight. But the plot thickens – before X sent Y to die in battle, X had coveted Y's wife, and that is the main motive for the murder…

How would you feel about X? Would you think X is a good man? What would your reaction be should your father invite X for dinner at home? Who is this X we are talking about?

It is King David, Israel's brave warrior-king who was a courageous general who led God's people into many victories. Why then did David do what he did? Like all of us, David is a sinful man.

We read the word "sinful" so often we may not fully understand. "Sinful" means "full of sin". David was, like all of us, full of sin. But David was also different. He was a man who when corrected, would not argue or give excuses. He was a man who dared to repent and to return to God. That is why he penned the words in the scripture text for today – for he wrote this psalm after his sin was pointed out to him.

How about you? If someone points out your mistake, what is your first reaction? Would you be angry and blame someone else? Would you deny it was you who made that mistake? Or would you learn from King David to accept your mistake, learn from it, and try not to do it again?

Thought: May I learn from my mistakes, not shy away from them.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know I sin but what is more important is that I learn from my mistakes and not repeat my sins. So Heavenly Father, give me a heart that will learn and not push away responsibilities from my mistakes, for this I pray in the name of Jesus, amen.

WISEST KING – BUT NOT PERFECT

In the history of Israel, Saul was the first king, followed by David, and then Solomon. After Solomon died, Israel split into the Northern and Southern kingdoms. We shall continue learning about Israel's history of the divided kingdom.

The Northern Kingdom consisted of 10 tribes and the Southern Kingdom had 2 tribes. Both kingdoms were later invaded by external armies. The Israelites were then exiled before they re-gathered. We will then talk about the founding of the modern state of Israel as it is today and see how God's almighty hand was on this nation all along. But for today, we will look at Solomon, the last king of the united kingdom. He was often called the wisest king. Solomon was much blessed. As we can read from today's text, God gave him not only wisdom, but also riches, wealth and honour such that no king before or after him had! Wow, what a great promise that is!

Solomon was so smart and his memory so good that he was like a walking library: If someone needed information on biology, or other sciences, he could help; if someone gave brain-teasers, Solomon could answer all of them. Yet, although he was a great king endowed with immense abilities and wealth, he was not perfect.

To have peace and good relations with nations around Israel, Solomon did something he was not supposed to do – he married non-Jewish wives. And yes, he had many wives and concubines. Guess how many he had? 1 Kings 11:3 tells he had 700 wives and 300 concubines! How many wives should he have? Only one, of course! Despite the intellect he had, he sinned by having so many wives. Worse, his wives lead him astray and introduced many false religions to Israel.

No one is perfect; everyone needs the Lord. If even the wisest king can go astray, how much more will you and I?

Thought: May I trust not in my abilities but only in the Lord Jesus.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, sometimes I do not place my full reliance on You and I know that is not the right thing to do. Help me, Heavenly Father, to always turn to You for help. If even the wisest king on earth can fail, surely I can too. So please teach me, Heavenly Father, for it is in the majestic name of Jesus that I pray, amen.

THE NORTHERN KINGDOM DISPERSED

The Northern Kingdom departed from the one true and living God when their king Jeroboam introduced worship of the golden calf. Then it got worse – under King Ahab, God's people worshipped Baal. In fact, the Northern Kingdom was ruled by kings that were wicked from beginning to end.

God had to judge His wayward people. They served idols that they placed everywhere. They rejected God and His commandments. They even sacrificed their sons and daughters in ceremonial fires! God raised the Assyrian kings to invade Israel time and again until she was taken into captivity in 722BC. The warning by Moses of foreign invasion and Israel's dispersal first took effect in the Northern Kingdom.

Although Israel sinned, did God give them up? No, but they had to be punished. Likewise for us, if we are truly saved and yet sin against the Lord, God will punish us because He disciplines those He loves. But the Lord will never give up on us.

Even after we become Christians, all of us are affected by sin. It is how we fight sin that is important. How do we fight sin? Firstly, we must read the Bible everyday for this will help change our thinking and life. We might be proud. Or you might be a critical kid, always commenting unkindly about things and people. If you are touched with God's word, you will know that is not right in His eyes.

Secondly, we must pray consistently. Pray not just before meals, or before bedtime. Commit your day to the Lord; commit your homework to the Lord; commit your playtime to the Lord.

Thirdly, have good Christian fellowship. Mix with children who are able to have a positive influence in your life. You see, we all influence each other and should you hang around with children who are bossy, you might learn to be like them. If you are always with children who play a lot of harmful computer games, chances are, you will learn to be like them.

Thought: May I learn to fight sin!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I always learn to do the three things mentioned above – read Your holy word everyday, pray consistently, and hang around with friends who bring glory to You. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM DISPERSED

The Southern Kingdom continued for a longer period. God wanted her to learn from what happened to the Northern Kingdom. Sadly, the people did not learn from the mistakes of others, and so had to eventually learn from their own mistakes.

Although good kings such as Hezekiah and Josiah led in removing idols and teaching the people the commandments of the Lord, the people very soon returned to idolatry and immorality.

God sent many prophets to warn Judah what would happen if they continued to reject God. It was to no avail – the people did not listen. Judah was doomed to destruction. In 586BC, Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, destroyed Jerusalem and burnt down the Temple, set fire on the king's house and carried the third and final batch of Jews to Babylon.

Some say that mistakes are stepping stones to success. Is that true? Do we have to make mistakes to ensure we have success? There are many things we can learn from the mistakes of others, and one main lesson is – do not make the same mistakes! The people of the Southern Kingdom saw what happened to the Northern Kingdom, yet fell into the same trap of sin against God.

Perhaps they were not teachable. Are we teachable? Are we able to learn lessons from the Lord, or do we have to bear the pain of the consequences of our mistakes in order to learn.

Thought: Be teachable and learn from the mistakes of others.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I have a tender and humble heart to be teachable when I have done wrong. Sometimes that is difficult but may I learn to always turn to You for help, for this I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

PURPOSED IN YOUR HEART = ?

Many of us are familiar with the account of Daniel. It is mentioned in today's text that Daniel purposed in his heart he would not defile himself with the food given to him. What does the phrase "purposed in his heart" mean?

That phrase means Daniel had the intention and determination not to defile himself. Was eating what must be yummy food from the palace of the king sinful? It must have been so, because Daniel rejected it. Although we are not told what food it was, it was likely things that God forbade the Jews to eat, and perhaps it was food already offered to the Babylonian gods.

Now think about it – Daniel was a slave whose life was in the hands of his masters. We do not know how old Daniel was when he took that step of faith, but he was likely a teenager then. You see, the Babylonians would take young teens and inculcate them with the customs of their nation, and give them Babylonian names and identities. People around Daniel must have thought how good it was to be chosen to eat such wonderful food, yet this slave boy refused to eat it! How dare he disobey the kind gestures of his masters!

What are the possible outcomes of his stand? Daniel could have easily been killed; there were many other Jewish male slaves the Babylonians could have as a replacement. Even if Daniel was not killed for his stand, he could have been jailed or punished in another way. However, none of these happened. Instead, his request was amazingly granted!

God honoured what Daniel purposed in his heart, which was to please God by not eating of the king's food.

What have you purposed in your heart? Some of you may think, "I am too young to purpose anything in my heart." You are not too young to purpose in your heart to honour God in your life. Daniel would have been a few years older than a Primary Six child, yet he had the faith many men do not possess!

Thought: May I purpose in my heart to honour God always.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the example of Daniel. May I learn to be more like him, that I'll stand up for Jesus, that I'll stand up for the truth. I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

GOD HATES SIN

The Bible in Psalm 5:4-5 tells us that God hates sin. Sin has two aspects. First, the inability to meet up with God's standard of holiness. Second, it also includes the breaking of God's commandments. God is Holy and He will not let sin go unpunished.

God views sin seriously. The first part of Romans 6:23 tells us "For the wages of sin is death." Every person will die eventually. If a person dies in his sin without accepting the Lord Jesus, he will end up in hell and the Lake of fire. Man is unable to save himself from sin. But thank God that the second part of Romans 6:23 says, "but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." God has provided the way for men to be saved and to have eternal life. Because man is unable to save himself, God the Father had to send the Lord Jesus Christ, His own beloved Son, to save us from our sins. The Lord Jesus Christ is 100% God and 100% man. He is perfectly sinless. While on this earth He lived a perfectly sinless life and obeyed God's commandments perfectly. The Lord Jesus then died on the Cross for our sins. He was the perfect sacrifice and was a substitute for our sins. After He died on the Cross, on the third day He rose again. God the Father accepted His sacrifice for us. The Lord Jesus now sits at the right hand of God the Father.

Sin is so serious that God the Father had to send His Son to die for our sins. Why did God the Father send His Son to save sinners? John 3:16 tells us, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It was because of God's love for us that He sent His Son to die for our sins.

Dear child, have you accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour? God loves you and is waiting for you. All you have to do is to confess that you are a sinner and that you need God's grace. You need to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for your sins and that He rose on the third day. Will you pray to God and accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour today?

Thought: Am I thankful to God for sending His Son to die for my sins?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I realise the seriousness of sin and thank God for sending the Lord Jesus to die for my sins. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

APPLE OF HIS EYE

Today's verse tells us the Jews were the apple of God's eye – that the Lord protected and watched over them in the wilderness. What does it mean when the phrase "apple of one's eye" is used?

The word "apple" is translated from the Hebrew language and that word can mean black. This phrase "apple of one's eye" thus means the pupil of one's eye – that portion of your eye that is so sensitive and so important to sight. Would you ever let someone touch your pupil? Of course not, unless of course it is an eye doctor who needs to examine you, but you will also tend to flinch.

Why do we not allow others to touch our pupil? First of all, it is instinctive. When someone moves his hand quickly towards your eye, you will instinctively blink or close your eyes to protect your pupil. Secondly, we do not allow others to touch our pupils because they are so sensitive. If our pupils are affected, our eyesight may be harmed. Lastly, our pupils can easily be injured. These three reasons help us better understand the meaning of the phrase "apple of one's eye".

Is it not wonderful that the Jews are the apple of God's eye? That is why even after the Northern and Southern Kingdoms were destroyed, the Jews remained the apple of God's eye and eventually, God restored the nation of Israel.

The same applies to us – we too are the apple of God's eye because Jesus washed away our sins when He died in our place for our own sins. Since we are so precious to God, He will protect us. Is that not wonderful? We know we are the apples of our parents' eyes, and that they will provide and protect us. The same applies with our Heavenly Father!

Thought: So grateful to be so loved by God!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You so much that I am the apple of Your eye. May I always remember how precious this privilege is, and how I must treasure it by being true and close to God. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

WHO IS JESUS TO YOU?

Do you recall yesterday's lesson – that we are the apple of God's eye? Because God loves us so much, He sent His only begotten Son to be born a helpless baby. This is the grandest of all events in history, as recorded for us by the Apostle Paul, "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law…" (Galatians 4:4).

But even before Jesus was born, the king at that time who knew that Christ was to be born, wanted to kill Jesus. To the king, Jesus was a potential competitor to the throne. He hated that idea and ordered that all Jewish baby boys be killed so that there would be no chance of Jesus escaping. Of course, in God's marvellous timing and providence, Jesus was protected.

Christ came as prophesied, to save His people from their sins. But when Jesus began to preach the gospel to His own people, He was not only rejected but chased out from his community! To the Jews, Jesus was a weakling who could not help them fight the Romans.

Most people in the world do not believe in Jesus as the Saviour and Lord of the world. Many believe Jesus as a good man, as someone they can admire, or as someone whose moral sayings they can agree with.

What about you? Who is Jesus to you?
Write down 3 things that Jesus means to you…

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Thought: Is Jesus the world to me?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to really understand who Jesus is. Although I am young, I pray I will be able to know that in Him I can find everlasting safety in salvation, and a Friend in whom I can depend upon in good or bad times. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

THE SAVIOUR WAS REJECTED

Not only did the Jews reject "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world", but they also killed the Son of God by demanding that He be crucified. They even went so far as to bring a curse on themselves!

And so it came to pass that in the next generation, the curse upon the diehard Jews fell. In 70AD the Roman general, Titus, set Jerusalem the holy city on fire. Countless perished in the flames and by the sword! A large number of Jews were also sold into slavery or exiled to other countries.

As persecutions occurred during the reigns of different Roman emperors, the scattering of all Jews became complete. This is now known as the Diaspora. What happened to the land of Israel, the Promised Land that God had given to the Jews? The people had been judged and scattered to the four corners of the earth. Jerusalem was subject to conquests by foreign powers. After the fall of the Roman Empire, it was ruled by the Arabs, Crusaders, Ottoman Turks, and finally the British from 1918-1948.

It appears that wherever the Jews went they had a hard time. The curse they had brought down upon themselves and their children bursts forth with hellish fury when Hitler, during World War 2, put six million Jews to death! They were tortured in concentration camps and/or gassed. It is scary to know that over a million of those who died were innocent children.

However, the physical terror the Jews suffered would pale in comparison to the sufferings in hell. For those who reject the loving grace of God through Jesus, an eternity of suffering awaits them. That is most serious punishment anyone can ever have.

Are you saved? And if you are, do you not have loved ones or friends who are not saved? Pray for them. Ask the Lord to open the eyes of these loved ones so that perhaps, they can see the love of the Saviour, and not reject Jesus as the Jews did.

Thought: May my loved ones and I not reject Jesus!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to pray for those I know who are still outside of Your kingdom – my classmates, my family members, or other friends and relatives. I pray that in my small ways, I may show them a little of Jesus so that they can turn to the Saviour. For this I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

WHAT IS THE HOLOCAUST?

The Holocaust is one of the saddest and most wicked periods of human history – that was when six million Jews were killed and persecuted by Germany during World War 2. There were 39 concentration camps in total where the Jews were to die. The worst time was between December 1941 and the end of 1944 – during this period, more than four million people were killed. The total of six million Jews killed represented about two-thirds of the entire Jewish population in Europe then.

Why would men do such evil to the Jews? The answer to this question is SIN. Sin had so possessed the minds and hearts of the Germans when they were mesmerised by a man called Hitler. He and his trusted innner circle planned the mass-murder of the Jews. Initially, many of them did not know they were sent to be killed. They were told they were to be housed in these camps, and then they were asked to go for a "shower". In fact, what came out of the shower taps above them was not water but poisonous gases.

Should the Jews today take revenge? Of course not. Two wrongs do not make one right. The Germans have sinned greviously, and to their credit, they have confessed their wrongdoing. Today in Germany, they have memorial halls that showcase the horrors of the past and how their people have been such a cruel and mindless war machine. Some war criminals have also been tried in court. Those found guilty were jailed or executed.

Has someone wronged or hurt you? Is there something anyone has done to you that you find difficult to forgive? Or perhaps it is someone you are very close to, such as your parent or sibling.

Learn the lesson of forgiveness. Christ is willing to forgive us of our sins when we confess them to Him. Forgiveness also heals the forgiver. So the next time you think someone has done something wrong to you and you get very angry, be willing to forgive, my young friend.

Thought: Do I have a forgiving attitude?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me the lesson of forgiveness. If the Jews today should not take revenge for the Holocaust, so must I learn the lesson of how to forgive. Remind me that forgiveness is in line with the nature of my Heavenly Father, who has forgiven me for the sins I have done. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

THE SMARTEST PEOPLE IN THE WORLD?

What do people such as the scientist Albert Einstein, the musician Isaac Stern, the inventor of the famous jeans brand Levi Strauss, the movie-producer and director Steven Spielberg have in common? They are all Jews.

There are about 14 million Jews in the world, a very small percentage of the world's population. However, the number of Jews that have achieved prominence is very high.

For example, a very high percentage of Nobel Prize winners for the sciences are Jewish. Nobel Prize for the sciences are given only to those at the top of their field, whether it is Chemistry (20% of the world total), or Physics (26% of the world total), or Economics (42% of the world total).

The Jews are a special people, for they were chosen of God. Are they the smartest people in the world? Well, many think so and from what we see, it does appear to be.

But the smartest people in the world, if without God, are dangerous. You might have heard of an American man called Bernard Madoff. Of Jewish descent, Madoff has been convicted of the single largest fraud the world has ever seen. Over many years, he cheated thousands of investors of billions of dollars. On 29th June 2009, he was given the maximum sentence allowed – 150 years!

The smartest may not be the wisest. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The Jews too need salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us that 144,000 Jews from the twelve tribes of Israel will be saved in future (Revelation 7:4). The smartest people might not have spiritual discernment. Are you wise in spiritual matters? Do you know that God wishes for you to be a wise child, and that you would pray and rely on Him every day? If you have not done so, begin today.

Thought: May I be a wise child!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I thank you I can have the wisdom from You when I read Your Holy Word, and practise it! So Heavenly Father, help me to persevere in my daily Quiet Time with You. This is my prayer in Jesus' name, amen.

ISRAEL'S RESTORATION

From the four corners of the earth, the Jews have returned to their homeland. In 1914, at the outbreak of World War 1, the Jewish community numbered 90,000. By 1921, there were 180,000. When Israel achieved Independence in May 1948, there were 650,000!

After Independence, immigration became a flood. The first ones to come were 25,000 survivors of the Nazi Holocaust. By 1985, Israel's population hit the four million mark as 300,000 Russian Jews arrived in Israel. Hundreds of thousands of Ethiopian Jews also arrived from Africa. Jews from all parts of the world were attracted to return, despite the difficulties and dangers. Today the population of Israel stands at more than seven million.

It is amazing that Israel even exists. As a small country situated among Arab nations that are not friendly towards it, many believed that Israel will not survive. But what God prophesies, He brings it to pass.

Since her independence, Israel has had more than her fair share of wars. The armies of the surrounding nations attacked her when she was a new country. Time and again, the Israel Defence Forces, although poorly armed and vastly outnumbered, managed to repulse the enemies. After a temporary ceasefire, the Sinai War started in 1956 and Israel was able to defeat Egypt. In 1967, another war erupted when Egypt and other Arab states moved their armies towards the Israeli border in Sinai. Fighting for their nation, the Israelis were able to destroy enemy forces.

Today, the nation of Israel is a powerful country but she is not blessed because of her own strength. She may not recognise it, but she is what she is only because of the promises of God.

Thought: The birth of modern Israel is a miracle that only God has brought to pass.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give us receptive eyes and tender hearts to see Your hand at work around us. I pray that I will put my trust in the God who can move the world, so that I will not be afraid of anything, or what anyone can do to me or my family. Please accept and honour this simple faith of mine, for I pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

THE LAST DAYS

We are living in a sobering moment in history. We are people who would probably see the last days – the days before Jesus comes and meets believers halfway in the air – something we call "The Rapture". But before that takes place, what will happen? What are the signs of the last days?

The scripture text gives us clues. The Bible foretells wars, pestilences, earthquakes. Indeed, after World War 2, there have been many smaller wars. Thank God none of them has been near Singapore, but these wars are very real and have made many homeless, and have killed thousands where they occurred. Iraq and Afghanistan and Eastern Europe are just some of the places where war has hit.

As for pestilences, we are still affected by H1N1, one of the fastest spreading viruses in modern times. Again, thank God H1N1 is not as deadly as SARS. Otherwise, thousands more people would have died.

Earthquakes are becoming more devastating, and more of them are occurring as the days go by. The largest in recent memory erupted on 26th Dec 2004. The earthquake triggered a series of deadly tsunami along the coasts in the Indian Ocean, killing nearly 230,000 people in 11 countries, and flooding coastal communities with waves up to 20 metres tall (as high as a 15-storey building)! With a magnitude of between 9.1 and 9.3, it is the second largest earthquake ever recorded. And there was the Japanese earthquake and tsunami in March 2011 which killed about 16,000 people.

For Christians, we thank God we will be raptured before even worse things happen. To be raptured means to be caught up to meet Jesus in mid-air, and He will usher us into heaven! This is not a science-fiction story but it is what the Lord has planned for those who love Him.

Do you love Him? Are you prepared for the Rapture?

Thought: Am I prepared for the Rapture?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the reminder of the Rapture. Help me to be a good Christian child, and to live by what Your holy word teaches. In that way, I shall be fully prepared to meet Jesus in mid-air when He comes to take me home during the Rapture. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

EXAMINE YOURSELF…

We have spent this month looking at the history and account of the Israelite nation. Much can be learned from her mistakes, trials and failures. We see that despite the blessings and protection of the Lord all these years, many Jews today still do not accept Jesus as their personal Lord and Saviour.

As we examine the history of Israel, may we examine ourselves. Have you accepted Jesus as your Saviour? If yes, let me ask you three important questions:

1. Has your life changed for the better?
2. When you sin, do you have this nagging feeling that gives you a lot of discomfort?
3. Do you desire to read God's Word?

I hope your answer to each question is "Yes". We will never be perfect until we reach heaven, but if we are Christians, our lives must be different from when we were not believers. Also, although we will continue to sin as Christians, there will be this uncomfortable feeling when we sin because we will grieve the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. Lastly, if you are a child of God, you will want to read the Word of God for it has the power to change those who read and meditate upon it.

Going to church and attending JW classes are good but they are not enough. We need to read and put into practice God's word – it helps us examine what we are, what we do, what we like, in the light of Scriptures. James 1:23-24 make it very clear, "For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."

Thought: May I examine myself through God's Word.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I examine myself through Your holy word and I pray I will not just be a hearer, but be a doer of Your word. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

GOD RESTORES MY SOUL!

"Don't these old cars look funny, Grandpa?" asked Chris when he and his grandfather visited a vintage car exhibition one day.

Grandpa smiled. "Well," he said, "they look a bit funny to us now, but they were pretty fancy in their day, you know." He pointed to one of the cars. "That is like the one my grandfather drove when I was about your age. It came in any color you wanted, as long as what you wanted was black."

Chris laughed. "Some of these old cars look brand new!" he exclaimed, peering through the window of one of them. "This one doesn't look like it's ever been out on the road."

"Oh, but it has," said Grandpa. "It's very old and must have travelled many miles, but it's been restored."

"Restored?" asked Chris. "That means it's fixed up so that it looks just like it did when it was new, right?"

Grandpa nodded. "Worn out parts have been replaced," he said. "The old paint was removed, and the car's been repainted with shiny, new paint. It's just like brand new again." After a moment he added, "It's kind of like what Jesus does for us when we confess our sin to Him. He takes it all away and makes us clean again. The Bible says He 'restores' our souls. It's like He refreshes us and makes us new again."

"When an old car is restored, it must look way different than it did when it was worn out," observed Chris, "but Jesus doesn't make us look different."

"Well… I'm not so sure about that," said Grandpa. "I was thinking about changes He makes in attitudes, not in physical appearance." Grandpa paused. "But now that you mention it, I think we often look different, too," he added. "When we've had our sins forgiven-when we're restored, we might wear a smile instead of a scowl and have a happy, cheerful outlook on life! Don't you think?"

Thought: Do you need to be "restored"? Perhaps you've trusted Jesus as your Saviour and had your sins forgiven, but you've done something you know is wrong. Your fellowship with God is broken. When you're sorry for your sin and confess it, God will restore you to fellowship with Him.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know I need your help in cleansing me. I know I can be refreshed and clean in Your eyes again. When that happens, I will let it show in my smile, so others can see Jesus in my cheerful, helpful spirit. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

A FRIEND LOVES AT ALL TIMES

"Have you ever heard people use colours to describe their feelings?" Miss Lee asked her class. David waved his hand to make sure she saw it. "Like green with envy?"

"How about purple with rage?" Katie offered. "Or blue, like when they're sad."

"All good examples," Miss Lee agreed. "Now, people don't actually change colour, but some animals do. A chameleon, for example, can quickly change its skin colour in response to light, temperature, or other things in its environment. Other animals change colour to blend in with their surroundings. The ability to do that is an animal's defence against enemies."

That evening, David talked about the day. "People use different colours to tell how they feel," he said, "but animals really do change their colour. Isn't that cool?"

"Very interesting," agreed Dad. "Sounds like you had a good day."

"Pretty good," replied David, but he frowned. "Marc and I always play together at recess time, but today he acted like he didn't know me!" added David. "A bunch of guys were looking at his new iPod when I came up, and he wouldn't let me look at it or even speak to me. I think he just wanted the other kids to think he was cool." David paused. "You know what, Dad? I think Marc was a 'chameleon friend' today!"

"I guess you could use that term for people who change their behaviour toward others," agreed Dad. "It's a good thing when an animal can do that, but it's not what God wants for people. You've probably learned some Bible verses that tell you how you should treat other kids. Can you remember any of them?" David nodded. "We had a good one in Sunday school just last week," he said. "It's Proverbs 17:17, and it says friends should love each other most of the times."

"No, not most of the times." Dad shook his head. "At all times," he said. "Keep that in mind, son, when you think of Marc and see him again.

"Okay," agreed David. "I'll remember!"

Thought: Have you encountered a "chameleon" friend? How did you feel? Have you been one yourself?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I learn today's lesson so my friends will find me reliable and trustworthy, just like a child of God should behave. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

WHITER THAN SNOW

Adam's eyes widened in horror. His elbow had knocked a bottle of paint off the table, and he watched it slowly topple to the floor. Blue paint spread in a growing blob across his kitchen floor. Adam jumped off his chair and quickly picked up the paint bottle. "What am I going to do?" he wondered. "I've got to clean this up before mum and dad see it."

Adam rushed for some rags. Coming back to the kitchen, he used a rag to soak up the paint on the floor. A large stain remained behind, so he got a bucket of soapy water and began scrubbing, scrubbing, scrubbing the paint spot. This isn't going to work! Adam thought frantically. I can't get the paint off my hands, either! He knew he would have to tell his parents what had happened.

Dad frowned when he came in and saw the stain, but he knew it had been an accident. "Well, I'm just glad the floor isn't carpeted!" he said with a wink. "I have some special cleaner, and I think it will work on this." Dad went to get the cleaner, and soon all trace of the paint was gone.

"You know, Adam," said Dad as they washed their hands with the same cleaner they had used on the floor, "maybe we can both learn a good lesson from what just happened."

Adam looked up at him soberly. "Not to fool around with paint in the kitchen, right?" he asked. Dad smiled. "Well, yes," he said, "but I was thinking of an even more important lesson. You couldn't wash the paint stains away by yourself, could you?" Adam shook his head. "The Bible tells us we're all stained by sin, and no matter how hard we try, we just can't clean it away by ourselves," added Dad as he dried his hands. "But the Lord Jesus died and rose again, making it possible for our sins to be washed away."

Adam dried his clean hands, too. "I needed that special cleaner to use on the floor and on my hands," he said, "and I need Jesus to clean my heart, right?" Dad smiled and put his hand on Adam's shoulder. "Right," he agreed. "That's exactly right."

Thought: Have your sins been washed away?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for today's reminder that I can't clean my heart and life by being good or doing good things. It won't work. I need the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only one who can make my heart clean and free from the stain and guilt of sin. I pray for forgiveness for my sins and ask that You cleanse and make me whole again. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

PEACE OF GOD

More than an hour after Lisa went to bed, she still had not fallen asleep. She tried everything she could think of to relax her mind, but nothing worked. Finally, she slipped out of bed and went to find Mum.

"Mum, I saw an ad on a website about sleeping pills," said Lisa. "Do you have any? Can I have some?" "I don't have any, and I don't think it would be good for you to take anything like that anyway, Lisa," said Mum.

Lisa sighed. She had thought Mum might say something like that. "But I just can't get to sleep," she complained. "You're probably worried about the exams tomorrow, aren't you, honey?" asked Mum, giving Lisa a big hug.

Lisa nodded. She felt better just having Mum close. "It makes me nervous," she said, wishing she could tell her mummy exactly how she felt. But Lisa couldn't put her emotions into words. "I'm afraid of what may happen," she added.

"Commit the exams to the Lord," Mum told her. "We need to keep praying, and after you have done your best, just leave the rest to the Lord."

"Sleeping pills might make our bodies go to sleep," said Mum, "but let me suggest a much better kind of 'medicine' for our nerves. At times like this, I know of only one place to go for help." Mum picked up her Bible and opened it. "I'll read one of my favorite passages to you. It's Philippians 4:4-9, and I think it will help both of us."

As Mum read out loud, Lisa noticed that the Bible verses encouraged her to pray. Most of all, Lisa liked God's promise of peace.

Mum prayed when she had finished reading. She asked God to quiet their nerves and give them rest.

"I think I can go to sleep now," Lisa said as she hugged her mother. "Thanks for reading those Bible verses to me. That was good nerve medicine."

Thought: Are problems upsetting you? Are you afraid of exams, or of the dark? Where do you go when you need help? The next time you have trouble sleeping, remind yourself of God's everlasting love and watchful presence.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, there are times when I cannot sleep because I worry about things. Help me, Heavenly Father, especially during those times to lean on You, to remember the verse that the peace you can give will calm and keep my heart and mind in Christ Jesus, for it is in Jesus' name that I pray, amen.

WE ARE ALL IN CHRIST

The Tan family drove up to one of Malaysia's parks for holiday. As they were near the campground in a forest, the sun shone brightly through the canopy of trees. Everyone exclaimed in awe when they drove over a bridge near a gushing waterfall.

"Wow!" exclaimed Eric when at last they pulled into their campsite. "It's going to be fun camping here! I can't wait to go hiking!"

"I know," agreed Cara. "Let's get the camp set up so we can start exploring." She turned to her mother. "Can Jane and I get firewood?"

"Sure," agreed Mom. "I'll help you. We'll get some water, too."

"I'll help you get out all the gear and put up the tent, okay, Dad?" offered Eric. Dad nodded, and soon everyone was busy working.

"The girls can't do this hard stuff like I can," bragged Eric as he helped Dad pound tent stakes into the ground. "Good thing there are easy jobs for them to do, like carrying wood and getting water."

"Your sisters are younger than you, so maybe they should have easier jobs. But don't let them hear you say that," warned Dad. "I doubt they'd agree that their jobs are any easier than yours. Besides, every family member's job is important. What do you think dinner would be like without firewood and water?"

Eric thought about that. "Well," he said, "without firewood, we couldn't cook anything." He grinned. "If we're having hot dogs, it might not be so bad – they taste pretty good cold. I wouldn't like raw hamburgers, though." Dad nodded. "I'm looking forward to a nice, hot meal," he said. "And what would you drink if nobody got the water?"

"Hot choc..." began Eric. He laughed. "Oh, never mind! Without water and firewood, there wouldn't be any hot chocolate! You're right, Dad. Everybody's job is important." Dad smiled. "Everyone working together and doing his part is what makes a family run smoothly." Then he added, "You know, that's true in God's family, too. Every person, and every job, is important."

Thought: Do you think that in church, only certain responsibilities or people are important?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to realise that every Christian is a member of God's family, and each one is needed. May I learn we are all in Christ through the common faith we have. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

GOD DISCIPLINES THOSE HE LOVES

Naomi, a missionary kid, lived along the Amazon River in South America. She had a unique variety of pets. She especially loved Mickey, her kitten-sized monkey, but he was such a rascal! One day, he scampered to the bookcase and cautiously ran his hand across the books. Then he began ripping the paper jackets up and shredding them to bits.

"Mickey! What are you doing?" scolded Naomi as she entered the room. She scooped him up and ruffled his fur. He swished his long bushy tail in aggravation. "Stop ripping the books or you'll have to go outside," Naomi told the little animal, who understood a large number of words. Mickey calmed down – he didn't like to go outside – so Naomi set him down. As she cleaned up the mess, Mickey turned and picked up his tail, combing his fingers through the long, silky, black fur.

As soon as Naomi disappeared into her room, Mickey hopped back to the bookcase and resumed the shredding. The sound of tearing paper filtered down the hall to Naomi. "Naughty monkey!" she said when she saw what he was doing. She scolded him sternly, then set him down with his toys and played with him a little while before returning to her room. Mickey almost immediately scooted back to the bookcase. He was having a great time when Naomi suddenly lifted him into the air. He flicked his tail furiously and chattered his disapproval, but he couldn't pull himself from Naomi's grip.

"I don't really want to put you outside, Mickey, but you have to learn to behave!" said Naomi sadly as she opened the door and put Mickey lightly down onto the hot cement patio.

Suddenly Naomi thought of something. She remembered her parents had disciplined her for being disobedient the week before. Now I know how Mom and Dad feel when they have to punish me, she thought.

As Naomi went back to her room, she thought of something else. When we sin, it must really hurt God to have to discipline us, too, but He has to do it anyway. I guess I understand that a little better now.

Thought: Have you been disciplined by your parents lately? They love you, but they must sometimes punish you.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, remind me not to be angry if my parents discipline me, for they care enough to punish. I know You discipline those You love too, because You want to keep us from harm. When discipline comes, may I accept it and turn away from the wrong thing I've done. I know this is not easy but Lord, please help me, for I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

BE GENTLE & PATIENT

As Tat Boon and Tat Seng were studying, their father came to their room. He held up one of his hammers. "I told you boys that if you use my tools you must return them to my toolbox," Dad said sternly. "I found this down in the kitchen."

"We're sorry, Dad," said Seng quickly. "We won't leave them out again, will we, Boon?"

"That's right. You won't," growled Dad, "because you are forbidden to use them again!" Boon began to protest that it wasn't his fault, but Dad didn't seem to hear as he turned and went out to the garage. Boon glared at Seng. "Why didn't you tell Dad I wasn't using those tools?" demanded Boon angrily. "You're the one who took them and left them outside."

Seng shrugged. "You use Dad's tools as much as I do," he said. "Besides, you saw how angry Dad is! I'm not going to take the blame by myself." Boon began to raise a clenched fist to punch his brother. But at the back of his mind, he remembered a lesson from a recent camping trip with his Sunday school class. His teacher had knelt down beside their small campfire. "Guys, what happens when I place wood on the fire?" Brother Michael had asked.

"The fire gets bigger," replied one of the boys as the dry kindling started to burn. "That's right," agreed Brother Michael. "What will happen if no more wood is added?"

"The fire will go out," came the quick response.

"Right again!" Brother Michael nodded. "I want you to remember that in Proverbs 26:21, a fire is compared to a quarrel. If wood is not added to a fire, it goes out. And if angry words or attitudes are not expressed during a quarrel, it dies down. God doesn't want His children to quarrel. He commands us to be gentle and to love each other." Boon knew a big fight would erupt if he hit Seng or even continued arguing with him. It had happened many times before. In fact, he could see that Seng was braced for an angry confrontation now. Boon hesitated only a moment. Then he turned and walked away muttering quietly, "This time, I'm going to do what God says I should!"

Thought: How do you react if you don't like what someone says or does?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to control myself and to learn how to be gentle and patient when I feel like doing something opposite! This is my prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

AVOID EVIL

Kok Wan wasn't sure exactly what a stroke was, but his grandmother had one several months ago. Since then, she couldn't walk very well and her left arm hung loosely at her side. Mom said the stroke had partly paralysed one side of Grandma's body.

"I pray for you every day," Kok Wan told his grandmother one afternoon. "I've been praying that you'll get all better, Grandma."

"Thank you, Kok Wan. I've been praying, too," said Grandma. "I knew this old body would give out sooner or later. It happens to the best of us, you know." Grandma smiled. She always had a smile, even though she was unable to do many of the things she had done so often before.

"That stroke paralysed some of my muscles," she continued. "That's bad enough, but did you know that lots of people in the world are paralysed in a different way, and some of them don't even know it?" Kok Wan was surprised. "Really?" he asked. "How could anyone not know that he's paralysed?"

"I'm thinking about sin," explained Grandma. "Sin can work like a stroke and paralyse people."

After thinking about Grandma's words, Kok Wan shook his head. "I don't get it," he said. Grandma took a pair of scissors and gently poked her left arm with it. "When I poke my arm like this, it doesn't hurt anymore. My arm has lost both its strength and its feeling," she said. "It's like that with sin. Sometimes people just keep on doing something wrong until it doesn't 'hurt' any more. They lose the feeling of guilt for doing wrong, just like I've lost the feeling in my arm."

Kok Wan nodded solemnly. "My Sunday school teacher told me that Ephesians 4:30 says that we grieve the Holy Spirit when we disobey the Word of God and live unholy lives".

"That's right," agreed Grandma. "When you sin, you must repent and seek God's forgiveness. I pray daily that whenever you're tempted to sin, you will pray to the Lord for strength not to yield to temptation. I pray you'll never do a wrong thing over and over until it doesn't hurt anymore!"

Thought: Are you concerned when you do something wrong? Or have you become less and less troubled by a wrong thing you do?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me not to sin repeatedly but to seek strength from Thee to overcome the temptation. I pray this in Jesus's name. Amen.

JESUS IS WITH US ALL THE WAY!

Megan, I'd like you to put Matt down for his nap today," said Mom. "I need to make an important phone call."

"Okay," agreed Megan, smiling at her little brother. "Nap time!" she announced to the energetic little boy. Laughing, Matt toddled away, wanting his sister to chase him. Megan caught him quickly. "Sleeping time, boy boy," she said, taking him to his crib. She laid him down, and raised the side of the crib.

"Sweet dreams," she whispered, backing out of the room. "Blankee!" Matt protested. "Blankee!" He pulled himself up and began to shake the railing. Megan frowned. "Where did he leave his blanket?" she wondered. She checked the hall. She dug through the toy box. She searched the room closet. She looked under the dining room table and on the chair seats. Finally, she found the blanket in a lower cupboard in the kitchen. As soon as Megan handed Matt his blanket, he stopped crying. He clutched the blanket in his arms and dropped to the mattress. After a few shaky breaths, he smiled contentedly at Megan. "Sweet dreams," she said again as she left.

"Matt had to have his 'blankee' before he'd go to sleep," Megan told her mother later. "Good thing I found it, or he never would have settled down."

"That blanket is his security," said Mom with a smile. "I guess we all need security, even grown-ups! We need to feel comfortable and cared for and safe. What's your security, Megan?"

"My security?" asked Megan in surprise. She shrugged. "You, I guess," she decided. "I know you're here to help me if I need you." She grinned and added, "You're my 'blankee'. What's yours?" Mom smiled. "Well, we all find some security in family and friends, but a Christian's real security is in God and in His love and forgiveness," she said. "He cares for us and He's always available. We're safe in His plan for us, even when we go through difficult times."

Megan nodded thoughtfully. "He's better than a blanket any day," she agreed.

Thought: Do you have a favorite blanket, stuffed animal, or toy that comforts you? Is there an adult who is special to you-one you can count on to care for you and help you? It's great to know someone like that, but even parents can't be with you all the time. Only God can.

Prayer: Thank you Heavenly Father that you are the best security I can ever have for You are always with me! In Jesus' name I pray – amen.

GOD GIVES THE INCREASE

Wearing a big smile, Dad walked into the kitchen where Kate and her mother were working. "Hey, everyone!" he called. "Guess what happened!"

"What?" asked Kate eagerly. "Kate, do you remember when you and your Sunday school class went out for pizza after your lesson last month?" asked Dad.

"Sure," said Kate. "We had lots of fun."

"Well," said Dad, "Pastor just called, and he told me a man named Joseph rang him today. Joseph was in the pizza shop when you all walked in."

"How did he know who we were?" asked Kate.

"He saw the church name on the van you were using that day," explained Dad. "Anyway, at first he was annoyed when he saw all you kids go in. He was afraid you'd be too rowdy. But you weren't. The man said that when you all bowed your heads to thank the Lord for your food, he was reminded of the days when he was a kid in Sunday school."

"Really?" asked Kate. "That's good, isn't it?"

"It sure is," replied Dad. "Joseph told Pastor that when he went home that night, he couldn't stop thinking about God. He said he had strayed far from the Lord, and now he wants to come back. Isn't that wonderful?"

"That's great!" exclaimed Mom. "Kate, you kids were being a witness without even knowing it!"

"Yes, you were," agreed Dad. "The seed of God's Word was planted in Joseph's life a long time ago. You kids 'watered' it, and God made it grow. He brought the change in Joseph's thinking." Kate was delighted. "Do you mean we watered it just by thanking God for the pizza and behaving ourselves?" she asked.

Dad nodded. "That's right. We never know how God will use even the smallest act of faithfulness on our part to bring glory to Himself."

Thought: Do you witness for Christ by your life and your actions? A friendly word, a kind act, a prayer of thanks in a restaurant… God uses these things, and many more, to touch people's lives.

Prayer: Thank you Heavenly Father that I can be a blessing to others if I live a life that pleases you. Help me to be faithful, not only in big or obvious things, but also in small ways. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

DO YOU PRAY AMISS?

"Mom!" called Anna. "I'm making party invitations on the computer, and something's wrong!" Mom came and looked over her shoulder. "See?" Anna pointed to two words at the top of the screen. "It says, 'Invalid request'. What does that mean?"

"It means you pressed a key that asked the computer to do something it's not programmed to do," explained Mom. "Here, I'll get you going again." Mom helped Anna, and soon the invitations to her party were nicely printed.

Anna could hardly wait for the day of the party. She wanted everything to be perfect. When she prayed, she even asked God to make her party the best one ever! But it wasn't. It stormed on the day of the party. Some of the kids were sick and couldn't come (Anna's best friend was one of them). Her friend Patty spilled drinks on the carpet and went home in tears!

"What a flop!" moaned Anna when the last guest left. "All year I'd wanted a wonderful party, better than the one Gina had. I even prayed it would be!"

Mom stopped picking up plates and looked at her daughter in surprise. "You prayed that your party would be better than Gina's?" she repeated. "Well," Anna looked a little embarrassed. "It's just that I'm tired of hearing the girls talk about how wonderful that party was." Mom looked thoughtful. "Anna," she said after a moment, "do you remember the 'invalid request' you made on the computer when you were getting the invitations ready? When you made that request, you didn't get what you asked for. Now, I certainly don't mean to insult God by comparing Him to a computer, but I'm afraid your prayer was an invalid request, too."

Anna sighed. "You mean I shouldn't have prayed for a good party?"

"It was okay to pray for a good party," Mom said, "but I'm afraid you were asking for the wrong reasons. God's Word says that when we pray with wrong motives – for our own selfish reasons – we probably won't get what we ask for."

"Well… I know you're right," murmured Anna with a sigh. "I'll try to keep from making an 'invalid request' to God again."

Thought: Will the things you pray for bring blessings to others and honour to God? Or do you pray just because you want what you want when you want it?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to pray aright. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

LET US LOVE IN ACTION AND IN TRUTH

As Robert and his mother got off the ferris wheel, he pointed to a crowd of people. "Can we go see what's going on over there?" he asked. Mom nodded, and they walked over and joined the crowd. They saw a man with a white painted face acting out various skits. Robert was fascinated as he watched. He laughed with the crowd as the man pretended to be learning to ride a bike. But Robert wondered why the man didn't say anything. "Mom, why doesn't he talk?" asked Robert. "Because he's a mime," Mom replied. "They never talk, but you can tell by their actions what they're doing. Just watch; you'll see."

Next, the mime pretended to wash a window. He acted as though he bumped his head on the pretend ladder. Later, he appeared to be eating an ice cream cone and to be dismayed when the ice cream fell off. The crowd laughed and applauded as he acted out one scenario after another. The show ended with the mime making a sad face and waving goodbye to the crowd. Robert turned to his mother. "Wow! He never said a thing, but I could figure out almost everything he was doing."

"That goes to show you how loudly actions – even facial expressions – speak," said Mom. "It's good to remember that they really do speak louder than words."

"They do? Do my actions ever tell you anything?" asked Robert.

"Sure they do," said Mom. "For instance, just yesterday I told you to clean your room. When you agreed and then rolled your eyes, I knew what you were saying."

"Oh, Mom!" protested Robert. "I did clean my room like you said I should."

"Yes, you did," agreed Mom. "Your actions showed me two things. First of all, they told me that you didn't really want to clean your room. They also told me that you're an obedient son. I knew that because you cleaned it anyway." She smiled. "What I really want to point out is that we should be especially careful how we behave because our lives need to be a good testimony for God. Like I said before, actions..."

"Speak louder than words," Robert finished with her.

Thought: Are you aware that actions speaker louder than words?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to love in deed and in truth. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

SEARCH ME, O GOD…

"What's wrong with the car, Daddy?" asked five-year-old Nicole as the family drove along a side road on their way to the church camp during the June holidays. "It's jerking."

"It's sure running rough," agreed Dad. "It's been doing that lately, but it's never been this bad before."

"Are we going to make it?" Nicole peered through the window at the trees lining the steep drop at the side of the road. "Sure, we'll make it." Nicole's older brother, Kevin, spoke confidently. "We always do." The car slowly climbed a long, steep hill. Dad pushed the accelerator pedal to the floor, but the car refused to speed up. Dad frowned. He knew the road ahead had another steep hill. "I must say, I'm annoyed with myself for not checking this out sooner," said Dad. "I should have serviced the car when I first noticed it wasn't running smoothly."

"I think it's getting worse," observed Kevin. Mom sighed. "Well, at least we're close enough to civilization that we can walk to that petrol kiosk in the distance if we have to," she said, "but we'd have a long uphill hike."

"Hey! The car needs regular checkups just like we do," said Kevin with a grin. "Like Pastor always says, if you see a trouble-spot, take care of the problem before it gets worse." "Our car needs a check-up every day?" Nicole asked, puzzled.

Kevin laughed. "No, no, but we do. We need to check our lives every day to see if we're doing what Jesus wants us to do. If we're not, we need to do something about it right away."

To the relief of the whole family, the car kept going and they were to get to the petrol kiosk for help. "Well, I hope you'll remember this lesson about getting regular check-ups," said Dad with a grin.

Thought: How often do you check to see if you're living the way God wants you to live?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to read and meditate on Your Word daily, so that I can have my daily spiritual "check-ups" and live my life obedient to you. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

GOD WILL KEEP YOU IN SAFETY

Karen ran so hard that it hurt. She glanced over her shoulder. The lion was still chasing her and getting closer. Suddenly, she tripped and fell flat on her face! A huge roar echoed, and she could almost feel the hot breath on her neck. She screamed...and found that she was lying in her own bed. All the covers were kicked off. Her forehead was sweaty and she shook with fear.

Karen laid still, trying to calm her beating heart and go back to sleep. But every time she closed her eyes, she saw the lion chasing her. Finally, she got out of bed and tiptoed to her parents' room. "Mom," she whispered, "I had another nightmare, and I'm afraid to go back to sleep."

Mom got up, put her arms around Karen, and together they went back to Karen's room. "I know the dream wasn't real, Mom, but it was so scary," said Karen after Mom tucked her back in bed. "How can I get it out of my mind?"

Mom switched on the lamp and got Karen's Bible out of a drawer. "God's Word can help your nightmares go away, honey," she said as she turned the pages. "The book of Psalms is a good place to find verses of comfort and promises of protection. Let's read Psalm 4:8. Here , read it out loud for me."

Taking the Bible, Karen read, "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety." Then she read it again silently. She gave her mother a little smile. "I'm going to put a bookmark here to save the place," decided Karen. "I'll read this whenever I have a nightmare. Then I won't have to get up and find you."

"Great idea," said Mom, returning the Bible to the drawer. "It's short, and you could even memorise it. That way you'll have it in your heart. You can repeat it to yourself whenever something scares you."

"Yeah," agreed Karen. "Then I won't have to get out of bed at all."

After Mom kissed her goodnight, Karen snuggled down deep into the covers and whispered, "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety..."

Thought: Do you have nightmares? Do you find it hard to go to sleep? Don't forget that God is with you all the time.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to remember Your presence and power, and any fear or concern of mine, compared to Your power, will be what it really is – much smaller! Please grant me peace of mind, knowing that You are in total control. In Jesus' name, amen.

PRESSING ON FOR GOD

"We're going to talk about stewardship today," Jeffrey's Sunday school teacher announced. "A steward is someone who helps take care of things for someone else. God asks us to be good stewards for Him, so we're going to do a class project to give you one way to do that."

Brother Martin held up a piece of paper. "I'll pass around this list of older people from church who need some help with their houses."

Jeffrey looked over the list of names. "I could help Mrs Koong," he offered. "She lives near me."

The sweet old lady was pleased to have Jeffrey's help. She asked him to sweep the floor because she couldn't do it properly anymore. "Sure. You can count on me," Jeffrey told her. "I'll do it every week." And for a few weeks, he faithfully kept his promise, but then he began to forget. There were other things to do.

"Hey, Dad, come see what I can make my train do," said Jeffrey when his father arrived home one afternoon. He placed two engines on the track several feet apart and pushed some buttons. The engines raced around the track. Then Jeffrey flipped a switch, and one engine ran onto a side track and stopped while the other one continued down the main track. "Did you see that, Dad? I sidetracked the one and kept the other one going," explained Jeffrey.

Dad nodded. "I see that," he said. He looked thoughtfully at the sidetracked engine. "It occurs to me that some Christians get sidetracked like that engine. In fact, I wonder if you're like that right now, Jeffrey." Jeffrey looked up. "Me? How's that?" he asked.

"Well, you said you'd help Mrs Koong every week," replied Dad, "but I think you've been forgetting to do it lately. Or maybe you've been too interested in other things. In any case, I think you got sidetracked."

"Uh oh! I did forget!" exclaimed Jeffrey. He looked at the two engines. "If I hurry, I can still get to her place and help her!" he said as he headed for the door. "I want to be like the engine that kept going."

Thought: Have you begun to serve the Lord by tithing, helping a needy person, or cheerfully working at home? Have you kept at it?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to press on and serve You in whichever capacity You have led me to. And help me to keep at it, to press on, for in this way I can be faithful. May I learn from Jesus, who was faithful to the end. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

THE LORD WILL HELP ME

Alvin slumped down in his seat, hoping his Sunday school teacher wouldn't notice him. Brother Joe had just told the class they would be putting on a play at the church anniversary, and Alvin did not want a speaking part! When Brother Joe handed him an entire page of the script, Alvin mumbled that he couldn't speak in public. But Brother Joe patted him on the back. "You'll do just fine, Alvin," he assured him.

On the way home, Alvin complained to his parents. "What if I mess up?" he worried. "That would be so embarrassing." He sighed.

"Oh, I'm sure you can do it," said Mom. "Dad and I will help you learn your part and practise it. This will be a way to help you overcome your shyness." Dad nodded. "We all need to gain confidence in one area or another, and the best way to do that is by actually doing the thing we find difficult," he said.

That afternoon, Alvin found his part interesting and easy to memorise. "But how can I ever say it in front of all those people?" he wondered. Alvin's mother interrupted his thoughts. "Look! Jessie is walking," she said.

Alvin turned to look. His father held little Jessie's hand as she took step after step. Then Dad carefully let go, and Jessie took several steps alone. Suddenly, she wobbled and sat down hard. With a big grin, she let her father help her up, and she stepped out again. Mom and Alvin grinned at each other. "The only way Jessie will learn to walk is by walking," said Mom. "She's a good example for you." She pointed to the script in Alvin's hand.

Thought: Is speaking or performing difficult for you? Do you have trouble witnessing to individuals as well? Don't be afraid to try it. God will help you gain confidence.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to remember that as You have promised, You will never leave me, but will help me when I speak up for You. With You by my side, I shall not fear. In Jesus' name I ask, amen.

LEARN PATIENCE

"But, Mom," pleaded Joey as he and his mother sat at the kitchen table, "it didn't cost so much." He came home with a video game that he had seen in a store window, and he was afraid his Mother was going to make him return it.

"It seems like you often spend your money on things you play with for a few days and then hardly use again," said Mom.

"But, Mom, this is different," Joey insisted. "I really want this game."

Mom sighed reluctantly. "I'd like to see you develop a little more patience when it comes to spending money," she said, "but we've talked about this before. It's your pocket money, so... okay."

Joey was elated. "Thanks a lot, Mom!" he exclaimed. Joey's excitement over his new game soon fizzled. It wasn't as much fun as he had expected. Before long, it lay unused on a shelf.

"I haven't seen you play with your new game lately," Mom said one evening. Joey fidgeted in his chair. "Are you mad at me for buying it?" he asked as he glanced at his mother.

Mom smiled. "No, Joey, I'm not mad at you," she said, "but I think God can teach both of us something through this." Joey was puzzled. "Both of us?"

Mom nodded. "Yes, both of us," she repeated. "You wanted that game so much that you didn't ask my advice, and you wouldn't listen when I gave it to you anyway. Sometimes I'm like that, too."

"You are?" asked Joey. Mom nodded. "I'm thinking of times when I knew something I wanted was too expensive or might not be good for me, so I didn't talk to God about it. There have also been times I wasn't sure whether something I wanted was a good idea, but I went ahead without asking for God's guidance. I wasn't patient enough to seek His will."

Joey looked at his mom in surprise. "Let's pray that God will teach us both an important lesson in patience, shall we?" suggested Mom. Joey smiled and nodded.

Thought: How much patience do you show from day to day? Patience is a virtue God wants to see in your life.

Prayer: Teach me, Heavenly Father, the beauty of patience. Even though I am still young, I want to learn patience, for without it, I'll probably grumble, criticise, and be unhappy about many things. In Jesus' name I ask, amen.

DESIRE THE PURE MILK OF THE WORD

Jon watched his baby sister greedily drink her bottle of milk while he ate chocolate pudding. "Can I give Sarah some pudding?" he asked.

Mom smiled. "No, I'm afraid not," she said. "Sarah is just a baby and the chocolate might give her a tummy ache."

"But all she ever has is milk!" exclaimed Jon. "I bet she's tired of that." "Milk is the only thing babies eat at first," Mom told him. "That's all you had at first, too."

"I eat all kinds of things now," said Jon. "Yes, you do," agreed Mom. "A little at a time, we added cereal, vegetables, fruit, and finally meat. And of course, chocolate pudding!"

Mom smiled at Jon. "We fed you very carefully," she added, "and look at what a strong boy you've become."

Jon grinned and sat up a little taller as Mom added, "Did you know, Jon, that your dad and I are also 'feeding' you God's Word – the Bible – in much the same way?"

"You are?" asked Jon. He looked surprised.

Mom nodded. "We're giving you more and more of God's Word, adding a few more verses and a little more teaching as you grow older," she said. "When you were very small, we began reading to you from a very simple Bible story book. After that, we read from the one Grandma bought for you. It had bigger words and gave more details than the one we had been using."

"You read stories to me right out of the Bible, too," said Jon, "and now I can read some of them from my own Bible. I like to read them by myself."

Mom smiled. "I'm glad to hear that," she said. "You're feeding yourself spiritually, and I hope you'll always do that. Your dad and I want you to love God's Word." Jon grinned. "As much as I love chocolate pudding?" he asked.

Mom smiled. "No," she said. "Even more!"

Thought: Have you learned to feed yourself spiritually? It's great to be fed from God's Word as you listen to your Sunday school lesson or do your own Quiet Time.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for reminding me it's important to learn to feed myself spiritually. Help me to not just speed through what I read, but to meditate and see how the lessons learnt can apply to me. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

TRUST GOD

Beth lay back on her inflatable raft. Her brother grinned at her. "I'm going to pop your float," he threatened. "You'll sink."

"No, I won't," Beth said. "My life jacket will hold me up." "What if I take the life jacket?" Dylan teased.

"It still won't matter," Beth insisted boldly. "This is the shallow end and the water only reaches up to my waist."

"I might pick you up and dunk you under," taunted Dylan. Beth grinned and pointed to Mom sitting at the side of the pool. "With Mom there, I'll be just fine," she said. As the kids played outside after lunch, Mom came out again. "Grandma's coming to stay with you for a while," said Mom. "You know Dad hasn't felt very good lately. He just called from work to say he feels worse, so I'm going to pick him up and take him to the hospital emergency room. You be extra good, okay?"

Beth and Dylan nodded. "Sure, Mom," Dylan answered. "We will." Mom was gone quite a while, and when she returned home, Dad was not with her. He had been admitted as a patient in the hospital. "What's wrong with Dad?" asked Beth anxiously. "We don't know for sure yet," replied Mom. "Hopefully, it's nothing serious." "I don't want him to be sick," Beth whispered. "I don't, either," Mom said, hugging Beth. Dylan felt nervous, too. "What if it's really serious?" he asked. "Are you scared, Mom?"

"Sometimes I am," admitted Mom, "but I'm thankful to know that Dad – and each of us – will be okay because we're in God's hands. We'll pray for Dad, and we need to trust God to take care of him." "If something's terribly wrong, how could that ever be okay?" asked Dylan.

"Earlier today, I heard you teasing your sister in the pool," Mom reminded him, "but Beth knew that no matter what you did, she'd still be okay because I was there and would take care of her. However I can't take care of you both forever, but we can have absolute confidence that God is with us and will take care of us. No matter how hard the circumstances, or even how painful the outcome, we can trust Him. We're safe in His hands."

Thought: Has something happened that makes you feel sad or scared? Is someone you love very ill? Has one of your parents lost a job? Trust God – for He will provide.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please remind me that whatever my troubles are, Jesus knows all about them. He's right there with me, and He loves me. And this I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

GOD WILL COMPLETE THE GOOD WORK IN YOU

"Can I get this?" asked Charlie, showing a model airplane kit to his mother. "It's like the one we saw in a movie at school. It would be so cool to put it together." "You mean you'd like to start putting it together," Mom corrected him. "Then you'd let it sit, unfinished, like all the other projects lying around your room."

"But Mom," protested Charlie, "I'm still working on those things!" "It sure doesn't look that way," said Mom with a frown. "But I am!" insisted Charlie. "Pieces of some of the models are waiting to dry before I do the next step. And my bike is still apart because Dad wants me to wait until the part it needs goes on sale. I'll get it all done."

"I hope so," said Mom just as some neighbours came along. Mom chatted with them for a while, but Charlie just looked down. "Why didn't you say hello to them?" Mom asked after their neighbours moved on. "I don't know," Charlie replied. "I never know what to say to adults." "Maybe you should work on learning to talk to them," suggested Mom.

"I've tried," Charlie said. "I've even asked God to help me, but I don't think He's going to." He sighed. "It's not wrong to be shy, is it?" Mom smiled. "No," she said, "but it would be nice to be able to greet people – even adults – in a friendly way. And I know you don't like to pray in public, but it would be nice to have the courage to do that and to tell people about Jesus." She looked at the model airplane kit Charlie was holding. "Okay, you may have that," she said. "I'll trust you to finish your other projects in your own good time. And let's trust God to finish the work He started, too."

"What work?" asked Charlie. "The Bible says that when you accepted Jesus as your Savior, God began a good work in you," explained Mom, "and He's still working. He's still shaping you in every area of your life, including getting over your hesitancy to talk to adults or to speak up in public. He's working in the time frame that He knows is best for you to turn out just right. So do your part by working on it, too, and trust God to do His part. He will!"

Thought: Do you feel discouraged when you're nervous about praying in public? Or when you're too shy to be friendly or are afraid to witness? Don't give up!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for the assurance that you will complete the good work you have started in me. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

JESUS CAME TO SEEK AND SAVE YOU

"HAVE YOU SEEN THIS CHILD?" The large print caught Caroline's eye as she poured cereal into her bowl. On the box, there was a picture of a cute little girl, along with information about who she was and where she had been seen last. "Wouldn't you love to find one of these missing kids, Ben?" Carolyn asked her brother. "It must be awful to be lost. And their parents must be so worried!"

"They definitely are," agreed Mom. "Remember when you went home with Lay Hoon after school one day and didn't call Mom?" asked Ben. "Mom called everyone we know, trying to find you."

"I was very worried," said Mom, "and very relieved when I finally found out where you were."

"I know; so relieved that you grounded me," said Carolyn, laughing. "But that taught me to check with you whenever I wanted to do something before coming home." She looked at the picture again. "Anyway, I'd like to find a real missing kid and keep other parents from worrying." Carolyn pictured herself patrolling the park, watching for little kids who looked like they might be lost. "I'd need a cell phone to call their parents," she said, "and I'd bring books for the kids to look at until their parents come." She frowned. "Or should I deliver the kids to their homes?"

Ben laughed. "You'd have to actually find a missing kid first," he said, "and there's not much chance of that ever happening!" Carolyn sighed. "Probably not," she agreed. "Well," said Mom, "I was just thinking that we probably know some missing kids already."

"What?" Carolyn's spoon clanged into her bowl. "We know some?" She looked at the face on the milk carton. "You haven't seen this girl, have you, Mom?" Mom shook her head. "Actually, I'm thinking of kids who are 'missing' from God's family," she explained. "We know lots of kids, but I wonder how many of them trust Jesus. We need to tell them about Him and let them know that He wants them to 'come home' to Him, to become a part of God's family."

Thought: Do you know if your friends have accepted Jesus? If they haven't, they are "lost". Would you want to show them the way to Jesus?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for sending the Lord Jesus to this world to save lost sinners. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

GOD WILL NEVER LEAVE OR FORSAKE US

Ryan helped his dad straighten the canvas of the tent that lay on the ground. "I love to camp," said Ryan. "Sleeping in a tent is so cool!"

Dad smiled. "I think so, too," he agreed. "Okay, let's get this one set up. Help me get the pegs through these tent loops. We'll pound the pegs in about half way at first and then secure them when they're all in place." Dad took one of the pegs and stuck it into a loop on the side of the tent. Ryan pounded it with the hammer. As Dad continued to put each of the pegs in place, Ryan pounded them down. Then they put the poles together and raised the tent. "I can't wait to go inside and get my sleeping bag rolled out!" exclaimed Ryan. "Well, don't try going in yet," said Dad. "It could collapse on you. We need to first pound the pegs deep into the ground, remember?" Ryan nodded, and they got to work. When the tent was finally secured, they put their sleeping bags inside.

"Cool!" said Ryan. "Now can we go fishing?" "You bet," agreed Dad. Grabbing their fishing poles, they headed for the river. The fish were biting, so they had fried fish for supper! Then after roasting marshmallows and enjoying their campfire, Ryan and Dad settled down for the night.

Around midnight, Ryan woke to the sound of distant thunder. He saw that Dad was awake, too. "Our tent won't blow down, will it?" asked Ryan. "The pegs will hold it in place, right?"

"Oh, I think so," said Dad. "The wind is pretty gusty, but I don't think it will get strong enough tonight to blow the tent away." He was right. The wind soon died away, the storm was past, and Ryan and Dad went back to sleep. "I'm glad we pounded those tent pegs in good and tight," said Ryan as they enjoyed a campfire breakfast the next morning. "Me, too," agreed Dad. "They kept our tent right in place during the storm." He grinned at Ryan. "Do you know who holds us steady through the storms of life?"

"Jesus does," said Ryan promptly. "If the wind got strong enough, the tent pegs might let go of the ground, but nothing could ever make Jesus let go of us, could it?" "No way," said Dad. "No matter how many difficult things come into our lives, we can always count on Jesus to hold us steady and help us through them."

Thought: Has your life been shaken up by some unhappy circumstance?

Prayer: Thank you, Heavenly Father, that You love me and will always stay with me. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

BE ANGRY, BUT SIN NOT!

"You know what Kok Leong did?" grumbled Tom as he came into the kitchen. "He pushed me and made me fall right onto the pavement. I got all scratched up. I'll get even with him..."

Mom sympathised when she saw his scratches, but said: "I can understand why you're angry, but remember that the Bible says we need to be very careful of our actions, especially when we're mad at someone. Even when you're angry, be sure to behave the way God would want you to."

The next day, Tom headed out to play football at his friend Kevin's house. "Have fun," called out Mom, "but if Kok Leong is there, too, make sure you don't do anything you might regret later."

Mom was making dinner when Tom returned home.

"I fell at Kevin's house – but Kok Leong got it even worse." He grinned as he thought about it. "I didn't do it," he said hastily when he saw the frown on his mother's face. "Kok Leong just tripped when he was running after the ball. I offered to help him get up but he wouldn't even talk to me. He's so rude!"

"Maybe Kok Leong doesn't know any better," said Mom, "but you do." She gave Tom a hug. "You know what God says about loving others, even enemies. I'm proud of you for being kind to Kok Leong even though you're still angry at him." "Well, I tried, but...you can't always be nice to everyone," protested Tom.

"If your heart is set to please God, you can," insisted Mom. "It's like roses and a pile of garbage. What happens if you fall into a pile of garbage?"

"I guess I would smell like a skunk," Tom replied, puzzled. Mom nodded. "Yes, because that's the odour that is deep down in the rubbish. It's quite different from the scent roses give off."

"I never smelled like a rose!" protested Tom. "No, but roses do give off a sweet scent because that's what they are deep down and God made them that way," said Mom with a smile. "You may have good reason to be angry sometimes, but God's love, deep down inside of you, should still be obvious. Today it was."

Thought: What "comes out" when you are knocked down or laughed at? Is it a desire to get even, or is it God's love?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me when I am angry, to sin not. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

GOD'S WAYS ARE HIGHER

Eric met his parents at the doorway. "Is Grandpa okay?" he asked anxiously. "Your grandfather isn't suffering anymore," Dad told him quietly. "He died this afternoon; he's home in heaven now." Eric swallowed hard, forcing back tears that choked his throat. He walked away while Dad was still explaining.

In his room, Eric thought about all the things he and Grandpa had planned to do. "It's not fair!" he muttered. He looked up as Dad came in. "I don't get it," Eric said. "I prayed all day for Grandpa. God can do anything, can't He? So He could have healed Grandpa, but I don't think He even heard me."

"God always hears, but sometimes the answer to what we ask is no," said Dad gently. He paused, then added, "You know, Eric, it was time to let Grandpa go. He was missing Grandma an awful lot lately. They're together in heaven now, and someday we'll see them again."

Eric turned away from Dad's quiet words. He wasn't ready to give up his grandfather. Dad sat down beside Eric. "When you ask Mom and me for something we don't think is good for you, we tell you no," Dad reminded him. "You don't like it when we say no. You might be upset about it, maybe even angry sometimes. But you know we love you and want what's best for you, right?" Eric nodded. "We talk about what's happening and how all of us feel, and we go on loving each other. We're a family even though we disagree," continued Dad. "Well, that's how it is with God, too. When we don't get what we ask Him for, we're unhappy and sometimes get angry with Him. It's okay to tell Him how we feel, but we need to remember how much God loves us and wants what's best for us,and for Grandpa."

"But I'm going to miss Grandpa so badly," Eric said miserably. He rested his face against his dad's shoulder.

Thought: Has someone you love died? Is someone sick? Tell God about your hurts and fears. But remember that His thoughts and His ways of doing things are much better than yours.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I won't always understand what's good for me or for others, but You do. May I trust in Your goodness, even when I don't understand. This I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

THERE IS POWER IN GOD'S WORD!

Kam Tong held the headless clay animal in his hand. "Look, Mom!" he wailed. "How can I take this to school without its head?" He opened his other hand slowly. In it was a clump of deformed clay, hard and crusty. "This is all the clay I have left. It was going to be his head," he mumbled. "I didn't have time to finish it, and I forgot to put the clay back in the container to keep it soft!" "I'm sorry, Kam Tong," said Mom, "but it's too late to do anything about it now. It's time you hopped into bed. You need your rest."

"My animal project is due tomorrow, so now all this work was for nothing!" Kam Tong said with a groan. He dropped the materials onto his dresser, pulled back his covers, and slid between the sheets. He was still scowling when he said goodnight. Mom glanced at the Bible on Kam Tong's dresser. "Aren't you going to read a few verses before you go to sleep?" she asked. "I thought you did that each night." Kam Tong sighed. "Well, I've been so busy lately," he said. "Besides, I don't understand it very well." He pulled the covers up to his chin. "Do you think there's much point in kids reading the Bible?" he asked. "Wouldn't it be better to wait until I'm older and can understand it?" Mom picked up the animal Kam Tong had made. "Did you know we're a lot like clay?" she asked. "We are?" asked Kam Tong.

Mom nodded. "The Bible compares us to clay that God can shape," she said. "When you shaped this, it took time, didn't it? You kept working with it until it looked good. God does that with us." She picked up the hardened clay. "We need to stay pliable and not become like this clay," she added. "One way to help with that is to spend time reading God's Word – the Bible. Even though you don't understand everything, you'll learn more about God. As you obey Him, He'll be working with you and shaping your life into something beautiful."

Thought: Do you wonder if there's any use in reading the Bible at your age? Does it seem too hard to understand? Even though you don't understand everything, there will be many wonderful things you can learn.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, you have said Your word is able to sanctify me. So help me to trust that, and to spend time learning more about You each day. I know there is power in Scriptures, that as I read, I can be transformed to be more like Jesus. As I learn and obey, You will shape me into the person You want me to be. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

KEEP ON PRAYING!

"It's prayer time now," Mom said, closing the Bible she and Wei Ern had been reading. They were having devotions together, just the two of them, because Dad was out of town. "You pray," said Wei Ern. "Okay?"

"I'll be glad to start," agreed Mom, "but don't you want to talk to God, too?" Wei Ern shook his head. "Not today," he said. Then he squirmed while Mom prayed aloud. He wished she'd hurry up. He wanted to go out and play. Besides, he thought to himself, God already knows everything, doesn't He? Why do we have to tell Him all this stuff He already knows?

When Wei Ern was playing outdoors the next day, he heard the phone ring. He went on playing until it suddenly occurred to him that the phone call might be from his dad. Wei Ern rushed into the kitchen just in time to see Mom hang up the phone. "Was that Dad?" Wei Ern asked. "I want to talk to him. I want to tell him about our ball game and ask him if he's gotten over his cold."

"He wanted to talk with you, too," said Mom, "but there was another call coming in, so he had to answer it. But his cold is much better, and I told him all about the ball game." "It isn't the same as me telling him," Wei Ern insisted. "And besides, we haven't talked today. I want to talk to Dad." "Well, let's call him back a little later so the two of you can talk," suggested Mom. They did call Dad later that day, and Wei Ern talked with his father for several minutes. After hanging up, Wei Ern grinned at his mom. "Dad was glad we called back," he told her. "He said he liked having me tell him about all the stuff I've been doing, even though he already knew about it."

"Earthly fathers love to have conversations with their children," said Mom with a smile. "And now, before you go out to play again, let's have our daily devotions. After all, our Heavenly Father likes to have us talk to Him, too." Wei Ern nodded. "I guess He'd like me to tell Him all the same stuff I told Dad. He'd like to hear it from me even though He already knows about it, right?" "He surely would," agreed Mom.

Thought: When you pray, do you feel like you're repeating things God already knows? Yes, He does know all things, but He wants you to tell Him about the things going on in your life. He loves you and wants to be included in your daily routine.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be diligent in prayer. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

BE SUBJECT TO AUTHORITIES

Daniel was working with his wooden train when he heard his father come home. "How's the train project coming along?" asked Dad.

"Good!" exclaimed Daniel. "It's almost ready." "All right!" said Dad. "And how was school today?"

Daniel frowned. "Okay, I guess," he said, "but I'm getting tired of all the stupid rules we have. One dumb rule says you have to stay in at recess if you're late more than three times. They just don't want kids to have any fun."

"I take it you were late again?" asked Dad. "And had to miss recess?" "I was only a couple minutes late," said Daniel. "I don't see why that little bit matters. At least I was there!" He reached over to hook a section of the train track in place.

"Hmm," murmured Dad. "Well, Daniel, let's see how your train runs."

"Dad! What are you doing?" exclaimed Daniel as Dad reached over and pressed the start lever. The train began moving. "Wait! I don't have all the tracks down yet," protested Daniel. "It's gonna wreck!" As he spoke, the train rounded the turn and rolled off the track, falling on its side. Daniel sighed. "I knew that would happen," he said.

"So the train needs the tracks," observed Dad. "Tracks don't spoil things. Instead, they're helpful and allow the train to run smoothly, right?" Daniel nodded. "Sure," he agreed.

"Well, rules are like those tracks," said Dad. "When you follow the rules, they allow your life to run smoothly and even allow you to have fun. When you choose to disobey rules, you get off track, and everything seems a mess. God wants us to follow the rules of the people He puts over us, such as parents and teachers."

"I get the point, Dad," said Daniel as he picked up his train. "Tracks are good for trains, and rules are good for kids." "Right," said Dad, "and for grown-ups, too."

Thought: Do you get tired of rules? Do you wish you had none at all? Imagine the chaos there would be in the world if there were no rules to follow.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please help me appreciate rules, for I know that otherwise, everyone would do his own thing and wouldn't know what to expect from anyone else. Remind me that rules are made to help me, not to keep me from having fun. Also, that I obey parents and teachers in the Lord, but most of all, obey God. In Jesus' blessed name I pray, amen.

ANY SIN WITHIN?

Emily's sweater crackled with static electricity as she pulled it over her head. She wet a comb to tame her fly-away hair and hurried for breakfast. "What's so funny?" Emily asked her brother, as she took her seat at the table.

"There's a sock stuck to your back!" said Brian. "Oops!" said Mom as she removed the sock from Emily's sweater. "That's caused by what we call 'static electricity'. It makes things stick to each other in very dry places."

After breakfast, Mom picked up the family Bible. "Let's read a few verses before you go to school," she said. "And let's do a little checking to be sure there isn't sin clinging to our lives, kind of like that sock stuck to your back."

"I don't have any sin stuck in my life," Emily stated confidently. "Are you sure?" asked Mom. Brian smirked. "Yeah, Emily! What about the way you shove stuff under your bed when Mom tells us to clean our rooms?" he asked. "You do that all the time."

"Well… I don't really consider it sin when I do that. After all, I clean it up later," said Emily, scowling at Brian. "Besides, what about not helping your sibling?" Mom shook her head. "It's like the sock again," she said. Both Emily and Brian looked puzzled. "What do you mean?" asked Emily. "Like you said, the sock on your back was easy to see," replied Mom, "but it took someone other than you to see it. Sin can be like that – plain to see, but somehow we don't always see it in our own lives. Someone else often does. That seems to have happened just now."

"You mean because we both pointed out what the other one did wrong?" asked Brian.

"That's right," said Mom. "We need to ask God to examine our hearts and show us our own sin. Then we need to confess it and ask Him to help us overcome it." She raised her eyebrows. "Understand?" she asked. Both kids nodded.

Thought: Do you regularly ask God to examine your heart and reveal any sin in your life?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me not to look at other people to find out what sin they might be clinging to, but to look at my own faults, my own sin. Help me not to cling to sin or allow it to cling to me. This I ask in Jesus' name, amen.

DO NOT BE ENTICED BY SINNERS

"Yuck! What's that smell?" Jeffrey asked. "Smells like something rotten," said Dad, "and I think I know what it is."

He went to the larder and pointed to a bag of potatoes. "Just as I suspected," he said as he picked up a couple of them. "I figured these would be out of the way here, but we've left them too long. I guess we'd better not buy so many at one go, even if they are on sale." They checked more of the potatoes. "Let's sort these out and get rid of the bad ones," added Dad.

"Here are all the potatoes that are still good," Jeffrey announced, handing a bag to Mom. "The rest are yucky." He shook his head. "At first, I thought there would be more that we could keep, but it looks like the rot spread from the bad ones to a lot of the good ones."

Mom nodded. "There's an old expression that says one bad apple spoils the barrel, and I guess that works with potatoes as well," she said.

"And people, too," said Dad, coming into the kitchen.

"Yeah," said Jeffrey. "We catch stuff like the flu and colds from each other."

"That's true," agreed Dad, "and people 'catch' other things, too, such as bad habits. For instance, if you hang around with kids who show no respect for authority, you might follow their lead in that."

"I think you might also pick up bad habits from television," observed Mom. "On many programmes, God's name is thoughtlessly sprinkled into the conversations. If you hear that a lot, you could easily start using His name that way yourself."

"Which is why it's a good idea not to watch those programmes," said Dad. He paused, then added, "In the Bible, yeast is often a symbol of sin, and the Apostle Paul reminded the Corinthians that a little yeast affects the whole lump of dough. Like yeast, and like rotten potatoes, sin spreads. So avoid bad influences before bad habits spread to you."

Thought: Do you think you can improve a rowdy group of kids by joining them? Do you expect kids who swear to stop doing that if you spend enough time with them? Are you quite sure bad websites won't hurt you? Be careful!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know sinful habits spread. I know it's good to be friendly with everyone, but the kids I spend most time with should be those who love You and want to please Jesus. So Heavenly Father, help me to choose friends and activities wisely! This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

BE A GOOD WITNESS

"Look over there, May!" Sean pointed. "There's a parking space right by the door." Mom had allowed May, Sean's eldest sister, to take the car to school, and now they had to stop for some groceries before heading home.

As May drove toward the empty spot, she saw a blue and white sign. "We can't park there," she said. "It's reserved for handicapped people. We're not allowed to use it."

"Oh, come on!" whined Sean. "We're in a hurry." Just then another car pulled into the space. "That guy doesn't look handicapped," exclaimed Sean as they saw a man get out of the car and walk toward the store. "We could just as well have parked there!"

"You can't always see a person's handicap," said May, "and he does have a sticker." She drove on and soon found another place to park.

When they reached home, Sean told Mom about the parking spaces. "May wouldn't park there, but I don't see why we couldn't," he complained. "That man didn't look any more handicapped than I do. He didn't have a cane or a walker or anything!"

"Oh, Sean! You've been grumbling all the way home," said May. "Like I told you, there are all kinds of handicaps, and some don't show so obviously when he is walking." "That's true," said Mom. Seeing Sean scowl, she added, "There are other kinds of handicaps, too. Bad attitudes or actions, for example." "Bad attitudes?" asked Sean. "I don't get it."

"When Christians display bad attitudes and actions, they're handicapped in their testimony for the Lord," explained Mom. "It makes it hard for others to tell that they know Him. It's sad when that happens."

Sean knew Mom was thinking of him, so he tried to make a joke of it. "Maybe those people should have handicap stickers and special parking places, too," he said.

"I don't think so," said May dryly.

Mom shook her head. "It certainly would not be a sticker we'd be proud of," she said. "We need to tell people we're Christians, but we also need to show it by the way we live."

Thought: Do your actions and attitudes show that you love Jesus? Do you cheerfully put others before yourself and act unselfishly?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be a good witness for you. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

GOD HIMSELF BEFORE ALL THINGS

In all things, our great and mighty God must take first place. In every thing He has the pre-eminence. By His Word, God, who created, upholds and governs all things, has the right to rule. He has the sovereign authority to judge the world because He is holy and is the Creator of heaven and earth. When we open the sacred pages, and the first words we read are these: "In the beginning God…"

Some people think that there is no God. They are so wrong. The truth is, not only is there God, but also He exists independently of every being in the universe, for He is infinitely above the reach of all creation.

When we say that God is before all things we also mean that: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God (Psalm 90:2)." Before the world began, God already existed. He has no beginning and no end. He is eternal and everlasting. This month, we will learn from the book of Genesis how God created the world, and the beginning of man's history.

Who is before all things?

1. Your family or God? _____

2. Your best friend's friendship or God? _____

3. Your teacher's words or God's Word? _____

4. Your favourite toy or gift to missions? _____

Thought: Remember God is before all things.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may You always be first in my heart. I may be young but please help me purpose in my heart to put You first in my life. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

GOD'S POWER OF CREATION

The first two verses of Genesis speak of times and events that existed before the sun was created and before man dwelt on the earth. The subject of it is the beginning of time; it is God's first work – the creation of the heavens and the earth. The first great fact disclosed to us is that there was a beginning to the heavens and the earth. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Things did not evolve by themselves. Scientists are not able to explain fully the beginning of life as it is above their reach. They do not have divine and supernatural revelation.

It can be further calculated that the earth is nearly 6,000 years old. The theory that earth and the universe are millions of years is false. Creation is a miracle and scientific explanations such as the Big Bang theory, where details are largely based on educated guesses, simply cannot explain a miracle. The limitations and flaws of scientific knowledge are exposed by the brilliance of the Creator.

There is a beautiful song called "How Great Thou Art?" and the words have touched many lives. Do you know this song? Ponder these words…

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
consider all the works Thy hand hath made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed:

Chorus:

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God; to Thee,
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God; to Thee,
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

Thought: Our Almighty God is also our wonderful Creator.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, how mighty Thou art, to make everything good and beautiful. Help me to remember that You are the Creator, and that the theories of man about evolution are not true. This I pray in the precious name of Jesus, amen.

GOD'S CREATION IN SIX DAYS!

Here's another great truth – this world was created in six days! Modern geologists who study the rock layers of the earth to determine their age tell us that this is not possible; but we know that "With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27).

Geologists work on the wrong thinking that the many layers of the earth were formed through regular and steady build-up through millions of years. They do not take into account that there was a period when the global flood in the days of Noah caused great movements on the earth's layers. Thousands of animals died and were carried and buried in mountains and valleys by the floodwaters. So, many layers of rock formation contain the remains and bones of animals. If geologists do not believe in the flood, they will continue to have the wrong understanding of rock formations.

Is it possible that God created the entire universe in six days? Of course! How do we know? The Bible tells us so! Dear child, it is so important for us to have simple faith and trust.

Do you have faith and trust in the Lord? May the words of this hymn, "Trust and Obey", encourage you:

When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will, He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.

Chorus:

Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

Thought: We have a young earth.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to put the authority of the Bible above that which is taught in many schools today – that the earth and universe are millions of years old. Grant me the faith to trust, and to obey. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

THE FIRST MAN – PERFECT TIMING!

On the sixth day, the Lord God created man from out of the dust of the ground. Then God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man lived. That was how the first man was created.

Adam was created miraculously. He was never an infant, never your age; he just became a man immediately! Like the plants and trees, like the fish of the sea and the fowls of heaven, and the earth, he was created with the appearance of age. That is why many scientists think that the earth is much older than it actually is.

Why did God not make Adam a boy, then have him grow up and mature into a man? Answer – because God knows best that Adam needed to be a man to take on the responsibilities given to him. You see, God being God knows the perfect timing for everything. Had God made Adam a boy, Adam would not have been able to bear the responsibilities God gave to him.

Sometimes we fret about timing. Perhaps your father has lost his job and the family may be going through a difficult patch. God is aware of it, but He has allowed it. Perhaps your grandma or another loved one has been ill for sometime, and although you have been praying for recovery, it seems to be overdue.

Is God not able to hear your prayer? Does God not care? Sometimes, although it could seem so, remember that God's timing is the best. God cares and God wants the best for us. At times, although it may appear that God is slow to act, what He wants to do is to teach us patience and reliance on Him.

Remember the creation of Adam. If God knows Adam needs the strength and maturity of a man, He will make Adam a man, and not a boy. Likewise, if God knows you or your family needs something, He will provide.

Thought: God's timing is the best timing.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the reminder that Your timing is always the best. May I learn to depend more and more on You and to commit any problems and cares to You, my Creator and King. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

THE FIRST WOMAN

As Adam reviewed the animals and gave names to all of them, Adam realised that none could be an equal, a companion, and share his thoughts, his joys and his purposes. Genesis 1:27 tells us that "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them", and we understand that woman was made on the sixth day too.

Eve was created out of one of the ribs of Adam. The Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and while he was sleeping, God took one of Adam's ribs and closed up the flesh. That was the first surgery on earth! When Adam saw Eve, he immediately recognised the woman as bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh. He knew that she was physically, intellectually and morally qualified to be his mate. They became man and wife. What a wonderful love story that was, and right in the beautiful garden of Eden!

Write 'T' for True and 'F' for False against these statements.

1. God gave Eve to Adam to be his helpmate and joy. _____
2. God made Eve out of the dust of the ground. _____
3. Adam did not feel any pain when God took out one of his ribs. _____
4. Adam fell in love with Eve when he saw her. _____

Thought: God always gives the best to us.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, all provisions for my needs come from You. Just as You provided a wife for Adam, You are able to provide for my needs. Help me to be thankful to You. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

THE FIRST SABBATH – THE LORD'S DAY

It is interesting to note that since the Creation, this world has always been blessed with the Sabbath. What is the Sabbath? Actually the Sabbath is the seventh day of the week, and since Sunday is the first day, Saturday is Sabbath day.

Why then do our churches meet on Sunday – the Lord's Day – and not on Saturday, the original Sabbath? It is because the "day of rest", which Sabbath was meant to be, was changed to Sunday in the New Testament times as churches met on Sundays. After Jesus was raised from the dead, Christians observe the Sabbath on the first day of the week.

The main lesson for today is that after God completed the work of creation, God instituted the Sabbath day. God set the example of working for six days and resting on the seventh to teach men that they too needed to devote one-seventh of his week to spiritual things that are of eternal value.

So, the purpose for Sabbath remains the same – a day consecrated to worship God and for His service. It is rest from worldly labours for all of us. It is to be observed with joy, rest and piety. How are you observing the Sabbath?

Cancel the things that we should not be doing on the Lord's Day.

going to the movies	**resting at home**
having Bible study	**visiting the sick**

Thought: Devote the Lord's Day for the things of God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I spend the Lord's Day wisely. Teach me to focus on You on Sundays rather than on my usual school work, or books or things like that. For all the time You have given to me, may I be willing to devote a day to You. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

THE FIRST GARDEN – WHAT A PARADISE!

Some say the largest and most beautiful garden in the world is a place called "Keukenhof" in Holland. Also known as the Garden of Europe, this place specialises in Holland's national flower, the tulip. Up to 7 million flowers can bloom there at the same time!

Gardens are a source of delight and comfort. In Singapore, we have the Botanic Gardens. In recent years, many useful and beautiful renovations have been made to it and it is thus not surprising the Botanic Gardens is a favourite destination for many. However, no matter how beautiful these gardens are, none would be able to compare with the Garden of Eden. If gardens are such wonderful places for all to rest and relax, then what a delight the first garden that the Lord God created must have been. First, the biblical record tells us that instead of rain, there was a mist that covered the earth. There would be no rainstorm or drought. Instead, the gentle mist enveloped the earth and made for cool temperature throughout the earth, day and night.

Adam was the first gardener in Eden. Appointed by God to keep the garden beautiful and green, he must have loved the job! In hot and humid Singapore, air-conditioners are popular. In the garden of Eden, it was natural air-conditioning all the way! Whatever your favourite fruit is, you could find it there! However, the earth of today has changed so much as mankind has abused the earth in so many ways.

Giving Eden's paradise to Adam, God gave of His best. Be thankful for the good things God has given. Perhaps when you next see a beautiful garden, recall the goodness of God and how He has been so generous with His gifts.

Thought: Thank the Lord, the generous Giver.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I thank You for the beauty of the gifts You give. May I learn to be more appreciative of things and in doing so, remember that You are the Giver of eternal life as well, for that is the most precious gift I can ever have. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

THE FIRST SURGERY

To be a doctor is an ambition of many children. It is wonderful to be able to save lives and help people, and that is why the medical profession is respected. There are many types of doctors: there are General Practitioners who run clinics where you go to for common colds and coughs; and there are specialists, among whom are surgeons. There are different types of surgeons, but all surgeons operate.

The Lord God put Adam into deep sleep, took one of Adam's ribs out and then closed up the flesh, just like a surgeon. We do not know how God was able to make a woman out of the ribs but since God is God – He was able to do it.

Choose a verse from Genesis 2:20-25 which tells us that Adam was happy to see Eve, and write it below.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thought: Man and woman were created, not evolved.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, our Creator, we owe You our thanks and praise and love for making us wonderfully and then saving us through Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

THE FIRST MARRIAGE

God, by His power made both Adam and Eve, and now, by His rule, made them one. This was a marriage made in perfect beauty. Marriage is honourable, and this was the most special marriage because this was the first couple! As her Father, God brought the woman to the man, a helpmeet for him. From God, as his Father, Adam received her with humble thankful acknowledgment of God's wisdom. "This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh."

The marriage bond between husband and wife is the strongest among humans. It is even stronger than that between parents and children. This is shown by the fact that a man must leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife.

However, it is sad that today, the number of divorces is rising. Fifty years ago, getting a divorce was often seen as a shameful act. Today, much of the shame has been removed, and sadly, many couples divorce over matters that perhaps could have been resolved with patience and mutual humility.

Thank God if your parents are having a good relationship with each other.

Sometimes keeping good relationships is not easy as there are many pressures in a fast-paced society like Singapore. We must all commit our various needs and difficulties to the Lord.

Should you see problems between your parents, pray for them.

Thought: Do I pray for my parents to love and care for each other?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I pray You will be merciful to my parents and continue to guide them in their marriage, that they will learn how to live in peace with each other. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

THE FIRST DECEIVER

Satan was a fallen angel who took the form of a serpent to deceive Eve. Making sure that she was alone, he tried to entice Eve into eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. His method was to make Eve doubt God's Word and then to tell Eve a blatant lie ("Ye shall not surely die").

True enough, Eve fell into temptation! She ate the fruit that God had forbidden Adam and Eve to eat. Satan was the deceiver. He entraps men and women as well as children by various ways. One most popular and powerful lie is that if they have money, they will have a happy life. There is nothing wrong with money on its own. But the love of money is a sin.

Satan does not reveal to us that the love of money creates greed, dishonesty, selfishness, lies and can even lead to murder. Beware of Satan the deceiver who continues to lie to people today.

Fill in the blanks to complete these scenarios where Satan is at work deceiving us to believe they are the right thing to do.

1. If I give away my money to missions, I will have _____ money left.
2. If my brother makes me angry, I will _____ him till he cries.
3. If I take the money from the drawer, _____ will not know.
4. If I lie about passing my exam, I will not be _____ for lying.
5. No one will know if I _____ my friend's homework.

(Clues: punished, copy, no, bully, nobody, some, Mummy.)

Thought: Beware of the lies and tricks of Satan.

Prayer: Heavenly Father help me not to be deceived by Satan. In Jesus' name, amen.

MAN'S FIRST SIN

Eve ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. She had disobeyed God's command not to eat it. She then gave the fruit to Adam and he ate it as well. So, both Adam and Eve sinned.

When our first parents Adam and Eve sinned, all of mankind was brought into sin and misery. From that moment, mankind became under God's wrath and curse. After that, man was due for death, and to the pains of hell forever. All people born after that are born in sin and are spiritually dead.

If we are to be reconciled to God and live with Him forever, we need to be born again. We have all inherited the original sin of Adam because he was our representative – "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12).

The representative principle is seen in these examples:

1. At the 2008 Beijing Olympics, when the table-tennis players representing Singapore won a match, the _____ is said to win too.
2. In inter-school matches, when the football team of a school wins, the whole _____ celebrates the victory.
3. In inter-class quizzes, when the team of four representing a class wins, that _____ is said to win too.

Thought: Adam represented all mankind.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, without Jesus, I am condemned. Please have mercy on me and remove my sins far from me. Help me to trust in the Lord Jesus, for it is in His name that I pray, amen.

THE FIRST INTERVIEW WITH GOD AFTER THE FALL

After their fall into sin, Adam & Eve were ashamed and they fled from the presence of God. Before their fall, they were delighted to hear the sound of His footsteps. But now they were filled with fear, and they hid from the Lord. They felt a sense of shame and hopelessness. They could not hope to escape the punishment of the sin that they deserved.

It was God who called to them. God's first aim was to convince them of their wickedness. He did it tenderly, preferring that they confess of their own accord, rather than to be forced to acknowledge their sin. After Adam confessed to his sin, he put the blame on Eve who had given the forbidden fruit to him. It is sad that the human heart was already "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked", because Eve also was quick to blame the serpent. So, the guilty pair did not at once come humbly to God to confess their sin.

But there is always mercy and forgiveness with the Lord. Genesis 3:15 foretells that a Saviour, born of the woman's seed, would crush Satan who had deceived them.

Write 'T' for True and 'F' for False against these statements:

1. God was full of anger against Adam and Eve for their sin. _____
2. Adam and Eve were full of shame and guilt. _____
3. They blamed others for their sin. _____
4. There is always mercy and forgiveness with the Lord. _____

Thought: Repent and confess and God will forgive.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please have mercy and forgive me of my sins. I know I need You every hour so teach me Lord to always depend on You. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

THE GOSPEL FIRST GIVEN

The first gospel given is also the first promise recorded in the Scriptures. It brought hope when our first parents were in despair after their sin. It was contained in this sentence: "I will put enmity between thee (Satan) and the woman, and between thy seed (mankind, evil by nature) and her seed (Jesus)."

This promise is also a revelation of God's mercy to the world. It speaks of a coming Saviour who would be born of a virgin. Note God did not say "their seed" – meaning the seed of both Adam and Eve. Instead He said "her seed", meaning that the seed is only of the woman. This promised seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head.

God, in His love and wisdom, sent the Saviour to conquer Satan and thus save mankind. Satan thought he was victorious when he beguiled our first parents. But this 'triumph' was short-lived for Christ would "bruise his head". From the seed of the woman, our Lord Jesus Christ is mighty to save and has everlasting victory.

Learn the verse Genesis 3:15 by heart and see if you can fill in the blanks.

And I will put enmity between thee
and the woman, and between _____
_____ and _____ _____.

It shall bruise thy _____,
and thou shalt bruise his _____.

Thought: God is always victorious.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to trust in You even if the future looks uncertain. Although I do not know what tomorrow will bring, I know You control tomorrow and the future and so in You I trust. In Christ's name I humbly pray, amen.

THE FIRST OFFERING

In the history of our first parents, the first birth must have been an event of great joy. Cain, the first-born, was after all the first baby in the world! When both children were born, the parents must have felt much tenderness, responsibility and joy. Eve showed her faith when she said, after bearing Cain, "I have gotten a man from the Lord!"

Adam and Eve were acquainted with God and must have nurtured and trained the two boys in the ways of the Lord. God had also graciously made them acquainted with the way of salvation by His Son, and with the only way of worshipping him acceptably and with godly fear. They must have also taught them that the Almighty God would only accept sin offerings of animals.

However, in disobedience, Cain brought of the fruit of the ground as offerings to the Lord. His brother, Abel, on the other hand brought of the firstlings of his flock and the Lord was pleased with Abel's offerings. But to Cain and to his offering, God did not accept. God cannot accept a bloodless sacrifice, but unbelieving Cain did not obey God's divine instruction. Cain did not have a believing heart.

Tick what God wants most from us today.

1. to be a keeper of sheep ☐
2. to bring offering to the Lord ☐
3. to bring the best of our animals to the Lord ☐
4. to have a heart that obeys Him ☐

Thought: How precious is a believing heart.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, above all things, grant me a believing heart. It is not easy and people around me may laugh, but Heavenly Father, please give me strength to press on in my faith in You. This is my prayer in Jesus' name, amen.

THE FIRST MURDER

Cain was downcast when God did not accept his sacrifice. God was pleased with Abel's offerings, but with Cain's sacrifice, God's disapproval was seen in its cold neglect.

Cain was greatly upset and jealous over God's preference to his brother's offering. Despite the Lord's words to him that if he repented, he would also be accepted (verse 7), Cain chose to be filled with hatred for his brother. As we shall see, this hatred developed into the worst kind – murder.

While the brothers were in the field, Cain rose up and murdered his brother Abel. The first-born of the human race showed that he was so wicked and hardened. His brother Abel, whom he had once played with and loved, lay on the ground. Cain stood alone in the field. God's eyes were upon him. Cain had done his evil work, and the voice of his brother's blood cried to heaven from the ground.

Although the Lord showed him the way to repentance, he chose to reject it. Such is the way of the world today. Many may know about Jesus, many may have heard of the salvation story. But few want to pick up the cross and follow Jesus.

Sin, if not properly dealt with, will cause us to stray further from God and to sin even more. Is there some un-confessed sin in your life? Are you harbouring some wrong thoughts, or done some wrong action, or had some wrong ideas? Turn them all to Jesus, and He can wash you and cleanse.

Is it not sad that the first child of the world turned out to be a murderer? Is it not sad that the first siblings in the world turned out to be enemies? Is it not sad the effect of sin has stained mankind?

Thought: May I not be stained with sin.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to deal with sin in my life.. When I sin, help me to confess and seek Your forgiveness. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

THE FIRST MAN WHO DID NOT DIE!

Genesis chapter 5 is a record of the family tree of Adam. Notice that all the patriarchs before the flood lived to a ripe old age; this is not possible today. Why so? Because the wonderful environment God gave then was conducive to longevity. Before the global flood, the world had never experienced rain. There was enough moisture in the atmosphere for plants and trees. That is why it was so difficult for so many in the time of Noah to believe there would be a global flood because there had never been any rain at all.

Enoch was 65 years when he begat Methuselah. Imagine – a new father when a man is 65! How old was your father when he became a dad for the first time? Likely in his 20s or 30s. But in those days, people lived much longer and perhaps a man about 65 years old is like a young man today!

Then it was recorded that Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah. The phrase "To walk with God" is to have close communion with Him and to be under His watchful eye. It is to make God's word our guide in life, and His glory our goal in all our actions. Enoch continued to walk faithfully with God for three hundred years and suddenly we read that God took him! He was gloriously removed to a better world. He was translated that he should not see death, and was not found. His excellent piety was crowned with exceeding great and precious honours.

Do you "walk with God" like Enoch? Do you talk to Him everyday? Do you love to read His word and put into practice what Scriptures teach?

Thought: May I walk closely with God everyday.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I joyously walk with Thee and talk with Thee day by day. Teach me to enjoy close fellowship with Thee, this I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

THE DISOBEDIENCE OF MAN

As we trace the family tree of Adam down the centuries to Noah, we notice that there was a degeneration of mankind as it grew more and more sinful. The fallen angels ("sons of God") possessed man and intermarried with daughters of men. They in turn gave birth to mighty men who brought about the violence and great wickedness in the world.

After giving ample warning, God, as a just judge, will mete out punishment on the unrepentant. In the days of Noah, God warned the people (through Noah) about the coming judgement. But, the people chose to turn a deaf ear; after many years of warning, God finally sent the flood.

What happens when man is determined to disobey God?
Circle the right answers.

men will seek God more

men pray and read the Bible more

men do not understand spiritual things

men will become more wicked

Thought: Are you obedient to God?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to obey You more and more each day and shun sin. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

GLOBAL DESTRUCTION OF THE EARTH

The world's worst flood in modern times took place in 1931 when China's Yellow River burst its banks and overflowed into its surrounding areas, killing up to 3 million people. The areas near the River are prone to floods because of 2 main reasons: the expanse of flat ground that lies around it and the melting of the ice dams in the north of the River, which causes a gush of water into the River. However, that flood cannot be compared with the global flood in the days of Noah, recorded for us in today's text. Not only were the humans and animals living in a certain area affected, God said that He would destroy "every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth".

Verse 19 also tells us "all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered". This clearly tells us that the floodwaters were so high that it reached the top of every hill in the whole world then. Everything was covered with water. No creature could escape; no place was dry. There was water everywhere. Because of the wickedness of the people of the world at that time, all living creatures died, except the eight humans in the Ark, and all the animals brought in by them.

God commanded Noah to build the ark. God gave Noah the specifications of the ark, its length, its breadth, its height and even the type of wood to be used to build the ark. Noah did all that the Lord commanded. Noah had faith in the Lord. In the end only Noah, his wife, and his sons, and their wives went into the ark and were saved from the flood. The Lord preserved Noah and his family but all others perished. People today are a little like the people then. No one living today has seen Jesus in the flesh and so they do not believe in Him. But God said "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Heb11:1) So, this is faith; to believe even though we do not see. We simply believe in God just as a young child believes in his parents without questioning.

Dear child, do you believe God, or the world?

Thought: May I always believe GOD and His word.

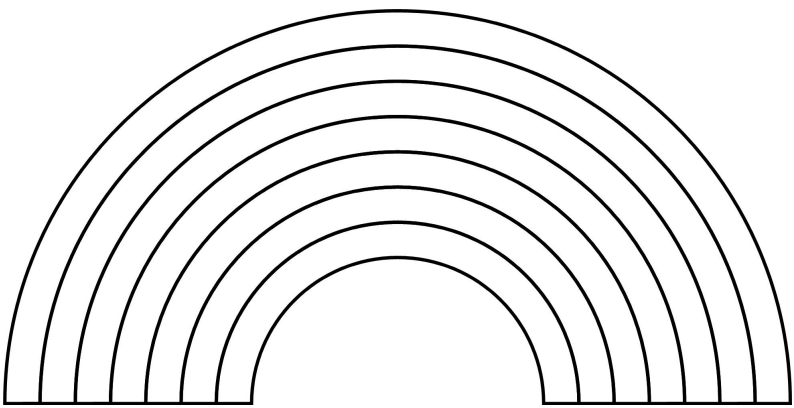
Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to learn lessons of faith from the global flood that covered the face of the earth in Noah's time. May I always put my whole faith in You, and this I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

THE FIRST RAINBOW

When the Flood finally subsided, Noah and his family were allowed out of the Ark. God made a covenant or agreement with Noah and his family and generations of mankind thereafter, that there will never be another global flood again.

God sealed the promise with the beautiful token of a rainbow in the sky. This is the "bow in the cloud" mentioned in verse 13. Previously, the earth never had any rainbow, as there was no rain. Rainbows are caused by the rays of the sun reflected from the falling raindrops at a particular angle to the eye of the spectator. The next time you catch a rainbow, recall the promise of God to mankind. Thank and praise Him too for His mercy not to destroy the earth by Flood again.

Colour the rainbow in all its seven colours.
Clue: Ruler of York gave battle in vain.



Thought: When you see a rainbow, remember the promises of God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for beautiful rainbows You make. May I see the truth in Your creation and remember to not be like the people in the days of Noah, but to put my trust in You. This is my prayer in Jesus' name, amen.

THE TOWER OF BABEL – PRIDE AND REBELLION

The Bible tells us the human race decided to make a permanent dwelling on fertile land they found. Using bricks and slime, they wanted to build a city and a tower "whose top may reach unto heaven". They also wanted to make a name for themselves, and this impressive tower was to be called the "Tower of Babel".

This tower is not just a tower that was high. There was pride and rebellion against God. This building they set out to create was probably a ziggurat, a multi-storied tower which they wanted to build to reach heaven. God wanted the people to populate and fill the earth but they went against God's desire. Instead, they wanted to build the tower so that they would not be scattered. This did not please God at all.

The meaning of the word "Babel" means to confuse, and it was clear that the Lord wanted to do just that. God confused the people's language so that they could not understand each other and after that, He scattered them all over the world.

The main sins then were pride and rebellion.

Thought: May I never be guilty of pride and rebellion.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please teach me humility from today's RPG reading. May I remember I am but a creature of Yours and so must give You all glory and honour. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

God called Abram from out of the country called Ur of the Chaldees, an idol-worshipping country. The Lord wanted Abram to get out of his country, away from his relatives and his father's house. The Lord did not tell him exactly where to go but assured him that He will guide him to "a land that I will show thee". The amazing thing is that Abram, whose name God later changed to Abraham, obeyed and left, and did exactly what the Lord told him to do.

But God knew how difficult it was for Abraham. He also made a promise or a covenant with Abraham. It was to be an everlasting covenant, as God would keep His Word forever. It would stand for thousands of years, as long as man exists on earth. This promise had two parts: the first was that Abraham would be the father of a great nation– the Jewish people; the second was that, Jesus Christ would come from the Jewish people to save the world from sin.

By believing in Jesus, sinners would be saved. They would become blessed through this covenant God gave to Abraham. The greatest blessing through God's covenant with Abraham, is the gift of eternal life through Jesus.

When you see the word "LORD" in capital letters in the bible, do you know what it means? The word "LORD" means the God of the covenant. So every time you come across that word – remember the covenant God gave to Abraham, and through it – the covenant God gives to you in Jesus.

Thought: God's covenant extends to me.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for blessing me through Abraham's covenant. I pray that I will not take this covenant for granted and learn to live my life to please you. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

BEING A GOOD TESTIMONY FOR THE LORD

In a wealthy country like Singapore, there is no lack of food and water. However, the situation is very different elsewhere. It is estimated that 800,000,000 people in this world go hungry or thirsty daily. Where do these people live? Most of them live in parts of Asia and Africa, where famines sometimes occur. Famines are the result of drought. The land becomes parched because of lack of rain. Crops cannot grow and animals die. People then die from lack of food and water.

Genesis chapter 41 tells us about a severe famine in Egypt during the time of Joseph. Before the famine, the Pharaoh who ruled Egypt, had two dreams. In his first dream, he saw seven fat cows and seven thin cows. The seven thin cows then ate up the seven fat cows. Pharaoh woke up and then fell asleep again. He had a second dream. He dreamt about seven thin ears of corn which devoured seven full ears of corn. Pharaoh called upon his magicians and wise men, but none could interpret his dreams. The chief butler who had remembered how Joseph interpreted his dream told the Pharaoh. The Pharaoh then had Joseph released from prison and asked him to interpret his dreams. Joseph said to the Pharaoh what the Lord had revealed to him. Joseph interpreted the dreams to mean that there will be seven good years of harvest in Egypt followed by seven years of famine. Joseph then advised Pharaoh to find a wise man to oversee the gathering and storage of grain during the seven good years of harvest so that the food stored will be used during the seven years of famine. What Joseph said was good in the eyes of the Pharaoh and his servants. Joseph found favour with men. The Pharaoh seeing how the Lord was with Joseph appointed him to rule over Egypt, second in command only to him.

The Bible records for us the Lord was with Joseph (Genesis 39:2; 21). The Lord blessed Joseph in whatever he did. Joseph was a good testimony to the people around him. Joseph had obeyed the Lord and kept close to Him.

Thought: Have you been obedient to the Lord? Have you been a good testimony for the Lord?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be obedient to Thy Word. Help me to live a life pleasing before you so that I can be a good testimony to others. This I pray, in Jesus' name, amen.

THE SIN OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH

In certain American states, a man is allowed to marry a man, and a woman is allowed to marry a woman. This is a very TERRIBLE sin. It is because of this sin of homosexuality and lesbianism that Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire and brimstone.

The world today is increasingly leaning towards the god of the world – Satan. Through Satan's lies, many believe homosexuality is acceptable. Fifty years ago, this would have been unthinkable. But today, what God calls an abomination is celebrated as "an alternative lifestyle", an individual choice for others. Why are so few people speaking out against homosexuality? Today, even churches agree to homosexuality. Worse than that – there are some so-called pastors who are homosexuals!

Homosexuality is a grievous sin in the eyes of God. The Bible also tells us in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." The "kingdom of God" means heaven. "Abusers of themselves with mankind" describe the homosexuals. Thus homosexuals if they continue in their sins and do not repent will not enter heaven. Instead if they die in their sins without accepting the Lord Jesus, they will end up in hell and the lake of fire.

Thought: The world today is growing wicked and becoming more accepting to homosexuality.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to recognize that homosexuality is a grievous sin. Help me to live a pure and holy life which is pleasing before you. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

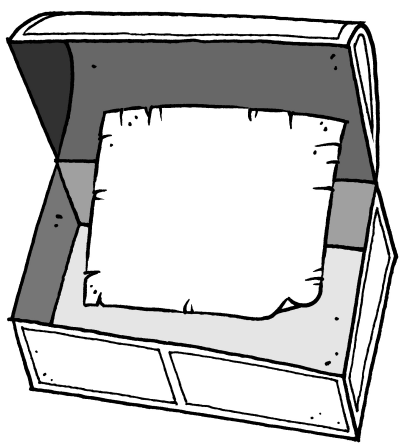
THE NAME ISAAC, AND YOUR NAME

Do you know the meaning of the name "Isaac"? It means "laughter". In one sense, it is the joy in laughter for Abraham and Sarah for they were very old when Isaac was born; they must have been filled with gladness and joy at the little bundle of life God gave! Another reason was that Sarah, when told she would give birth in her old age, laughed as she did not believe God could use her womb.

When our parents gave names to us, they did it with great care as names stay with us for life! Many of you have wonderful names, and many of these names have great significance.

You would of course know your name, but what is the meaning? If you are not sure, go ask your parents. There are some popular names and perhaps some of you may be called the same name. Some popular names are Angela, or Joy, or Grace (for girls) and John, or David, or Michael (for boys). But whatever names we have, there is one name that all of us reading this Junior RPG should have too. Guess what this is?

It is the name – Christian. All of us, whatever we are called, must be called Christian for that is more important than any earthly name our parents gave us. Are you sure you are a Christian? If you are, write your name in the treasure chest.



Thought: Lord I want to be a Christian!

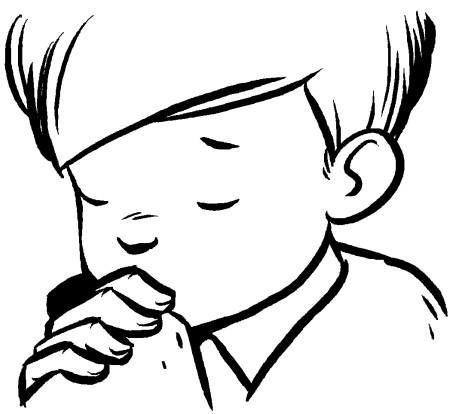
Prayer: Heavenly Father, when I say I am a Christian, may I realize what a wonderful privilege it is to be Your child. I pray I'll keep true to You and read Your Holy Word carefully each day. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

CHRISTMAS!

One of the happiest seasons in the world must be Christmas. Many go on holiday, students like you have their long school vacation, there is widespread exchange of gifts. Departmental stores will be packed with goodies and toys; people will go for parties and nice meals.

But what was it like at the first Christmas? We all know Christmas is meant to celebrate the birth of Jesus, so what was it like then? Oh, it would be nothing like today. Not many knew of the first coming of Jesus when it took place. The few who knew, some were the wise men we read about in today's text. Others were evil men like Herod, who wanted to kill Jesus because he was afraid Jesus will come to set the Jews free from the Romans. There were no bright lights and parties, there were no departmental stores giving special discounts.

What we have described in the first paragraph is the way many in the world celebrate Christmas. Is it wrong to exchange presents and have a special meal at Christmas? Of course not! After all, it is a joyous occasion because without Christmas, there would be no salvation for us. But have we celebrated Christmas? Are we so caught up with buying nice presents for friends that we forget about the true meaning of Christmas? Do we remember Jesus?



If we were to prepare a present for Jesus, what do you think Jesus would like to have? One of the best presents we can give Jesus is to love Him and dedicate our lives to Him. We could do this by reading His word, praying to Him, obeying Him, serving Him and loving Him.

Thought: The best birthday gift to Jesus is my dedication and love.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You so much for Christmas. May I dedicate myself to You this Christmas. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM

Every father loves his children. Abraham was no different, and must have loved Isaac a lot, especially as he waited so long for a child. But today's scripture text tells us he must have gone through a very tough time of testing as it appears God wanted Abraham to sacrifice his son!

Was God unreasonable? Did God really want Abraham to sacrifice Isaac? No. What God wanted to do was to test Abraham and through the testing, for Abraham to better understand his own faith.

The marvellous thing about this passage is the faith of Abraham. Although he was severely tested, his faith in God was never shaken. He never complained when God told him he needed to sacrifice his precious son. On the journey to the hill where he was to kill Isaac, Abraham did not show any sign of fear. In fact, when Isaac asked Abraham what offering they were to give God, Abraham was full of confidence in God because he told his son God will provide an offering Himself.

Has there been any case of a dead person coming back to life during or before the time of Abraham? No. But somehow, Abraham had the faith to believe. Such a faith is amazing. Faith can protect us from doubt; faith can shield us from straying from God.

Dear child, may you have the shield of faith mentioned in Ephesians 6:16 – "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

Thought: May my shield of faith be used well!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, grant me the simple faith that continues to trust in You and Your precious Word, for this I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

DECEPTION BY REBEKAH AND JACOB

Isaac and Rebekah had twin boys – Esau, and his younger brother Jacob. Though they were twins, their personalities and looks were very different. Esau was a hairy man who was also a skilled hunter. Jacob, on the other hand, had smooth skin and was not an outdoor person, preferring to live in his tent home. There was also a major problem in the family – the parents practised favouritism. Isaac loved Esau the first-born, but Rebekah loved Jacob the second child.

One day, Rebekah overheard a conversation between Isaac and Esau and realised Isaac was about to give his blessings to Esau. She then came up with a plan to cheat her husband who was old, and whose eyesight was failing. She asked her favourite son Jacob to pretend to be his brother and to feed his father with his favourite dish which she had cooked.

Did Jacob protest upon hearing his mother's plan of deception? Was he a young and gullible child led astray by his mother? No, Jacob at that time was already a man and should have known what his mother suggested was wrong. Instead of stopping her, he went along with the plot.

Write A for Agree and D for Disagree against the statements.

1. To deceive others is to do something that betrays the trust of others. _____

2. To deceive others is a sin. _____

3. Telling "white lies" and "half-truths" is a form of deceiving others. _____

Thought: When we deceive others we not only sin against the people whom we deceive but we also sin against God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to remember that deception is a sin. Help me also to resist the temptation to deceive others. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

JACOB AND ESAU RECONCILED

In Genesis chapter 27, Jacob had cheated Esau of the blessings of his birth right by pretending to be the older first-born son when he was the younger son. As a result, Esau became very angry at Jacob and threatened to kill Jacob. Jacob then fled from Esau and went to the land of Padan-aram. Many years later, Jacob decided to return to the land of Canaan but he was in fear of his brother Esau whom he had cheated of his birthright. Fearing Esau's wrath, he sent his wives and families to cross the river Jabbok. He also prepared and sent presents to Esau ahead of him to appease his brother.

Esau who then lived in the country of Edom, south of Canaan, then went up to the river Jabbok to meet up with his brother Jacob. Jacob must have been very afraid that his brother Esau would harm him. But to Jacob's surprise, Esau ran to meet him, embraced him and both of them wept. Esau had forgiven Jacob for what he had done. The two brothers were reconciled.

To "reconcile" means to forgive one another, to make peace with each other and to restore the relationship with each other.

Dear children, have you been in a situation where someone did wrong to you and made you angry so much so that you did not want to befriend that person anymore? Were you ever in a quarrel with a friend and did not speak to each other after the quarrel? The Bible tells us that we need to forgive one another (Colossians 3:13). Through forgiving one another, we can be reconciled to each other. God wants us to love and care for each other.

Thought: May I learn to forgive others even though they sin against me.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may Thou give me a forgiving attitude towards others when they sin against me and may I seek to reconcile with them. This I pray in Jesus' precious name, amen.

BEWARE OF JEALOUSY

Today's passage tells us that Joseph's brothers were jealous of him. Why? Their father loved Joseph more than any other child. He also gave Joseph a beautiful multi-coloured coat. Every time his brothers saw it, they were unhappy because they were not given such coats.

Do you ever feel jealous? Maybe you think your parents favour a sibling but not you? Perhaps you think they spend more time with another child and you feel a little neglected? Or perhaps you think a present given to you is not as precious as something given to your sister or brother? Jealousy may not only be towards family members but friends or even strangers. Some children like to compare the gadgets they have, the places they go to for vacations, the marks they get in school.

Dear child, beware of jealousy. The brothers of Joseph were jealous and that led them to do something terrible to their own brother – they sold him as a slave to strangers, not caring if he lived or died and hoping never to see him again. Jealousy is like a virus that cannot be seen but is very harmful. We have the most wonderful privilege of being a child of God and that must comfort us and give us more than enough joy.

When we see others do better than us in school, we should be happy for them instead of being jealous. God has a wonderful plan for all of us, and we must be contented with what He has planned. As students, try your best and study hard, and leave the rest to the Lord.

Do you still harbour jealousy in your heart? If you do, please pray that God will take that feeling from you before it hurts you more. You must remember that jealousy is a sin, and that you need God's cleansing and help to get rid of it.

Thought: May I avoid the "virus" of jealousy.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I pray I will not be jealous when I see good things happen to others, but instead be happy for them. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

GOD'S WONDERFUL PLAN

After Joseph was sold as a slave, his future was bleak. After all, what can a slave look forward to but daily toil and labour? But this was no ordinary slave. This was a child of the Almighty Lord, and God had a wonderful plan for him. No one could have imagined that Joseph the slave could later become the Egyptian Pharoah's trusted and most senior official. His life story is a wonderful example of God's mercy and grace. After being sold as a slave in Egypt by his jealous brothers, he worked in the house of Potiphar, an officer of the Pharaoh. Wrongly accused by Potiphar's wife for molesting her, he ended up in prison.

But God was at work in Joseph's life and God gave him the gift of being able to interpret dreams. He interpreted the dream of the butler correctly which was that the man would be restored to his butlership again. When Pharaoh had a dream, the butler remembered Joseph who could interpret dreams. So Joseph was called before Pharaoh and by the power of God, was able to successfully interpret Pharaoh's dream. On top of that, Joseph advised him on how to save during the seven years of plenty because they would be followed by seven years of famine. Pharaoh was so pleased that he appointed Joseph, whom he described as "discreet and wise" to oversee the work, being second only to himself.

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

1. Joseph finally became prime minister because he cheated along the way. _____

2. Joseph was part of God's plan to preserve the children of Israel from famine. _____

3. It is God who puts people in positions of authority. _____

4. It is God who puts people down in lowly positions. _____

Thought: God controls the affairs of men.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, remind me that You have a wonderful plan for all who trust in You. I may not be able to see what will come tomorrow, but I know that You control tomorrow, and so I want to commit myself into Your hands and ask that You grant me the faith to trust You more. This is my prayer, in Jesus' name, amen.

FORGIVENESS

We end this year's Junior RPG reading with a most beautiful passage about forgiveness. We continue with the account of Joseph.

He was a powerful official in Egypt when a famine affected the land of Egypt and surrounding countries. People from these countries had to seek Egypt's help to sell them food, and among these people who came were his brothers!

You will recall these were the men who betrayed Joseph and sold him into slavery years ago. When they saw Joseph, they could not recognise him. They did not expect him to be alive. They would have never imagined their long-lost brother would be the powerful official in front of them.

Do you think the 10 brothers were afraid when Joseph revealed who he was? Of course! They must have been so fearful because the brother they harmed is now such a powerful man. But Joseph was indeed wise and godly, and told them it was God's wonderful plan to have sent him to Egypt through his brothers. Instead of anger, Joseph had forgiveness and love.

Have you been hurt by someone? Do you have any anger in your heart against anyone? Do you think it is very difficult to forgive someone for the pain he has caused you? If so, learn from Joseph. If he could forgive the evil done by his brothers, we can forgive the pain others cause us. Remember it is not that Joseph was great; it is his God that is great.

The God of Joseph is also your God. If He can help Joseph forgive, He can help you too, if you are willing.

As we come to the close of the year, search your hearts to see if there is any unforgiveness or bitterness. If there is, please pray to the Lord to help you forgive and not be bitter about things.

Thought: He who is unforgiving and bitter hurts himself most.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I learn to be as forgiving as Joseph was, and also understand that nothing happens by chance, but by Your will. I thank You for keeping me this year and ask that You would continue to be merciful in the new year. Heavenly Father, I need Your help and guidance everyday so I pray I will continue to keep close to You. This I pray in Jesus' name, amen.