NEW YEAR; NEW YOU?

Blessed New Year! It is always good to start afresh, and today is the first day of a brand new year. What blessings God has in store for you this year, only He knows! As we start the year, may we start it right. Look again at today's text. When we believe in Christ, we are "in Christ", which means we belong to Him. And all who belong to Him are renewed by Jesus – meaning we are made new and different from the old sinful self we were before.

Are you a better Christian compared to last year? Are you closer to the Lord? Do you pray more consistently? Do you read and meditate on the Bible more regularly? Dear child, you have experienced how good the Lord was last year. This year will be no different – our precious Lord will continue to be gracious. Although the Lord will not be new, may we be? What does that mean? Why do we have to be new? All of us sin. And all of us are weak. May this year be different as we become spiritually stronger and grow closer to the Lord.

Have you heard of the word "resolutions"? A resolution is a commitment you make to yourself to do things differently, to make a change for the better in your life. Resolutions are made so that we can improve ourselves in a way we may not have done so the previous year. An example of a resolution for a Christian child may be to read his bible and complete his RPG reading everyday. Perhaps last year you did not do this everyday. If you like, that could be your resolution too!

Three resolutions I have are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Thought: May this new year bring a new you!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to commit this year into Your hands, that I may grow to be a better Christian. This I pray in Jesus' name - amen.

MALACHI, THE LAST PROPHET OF THE OLD TESTAMENT (1)

Who was Malachi? He was the last Old Testament prophet who lived probably during Nehemiah's time. That was the time when the Jews returned from exile in Babylon, rebuilt the temple and the walls surrounding Jerusalem. This could be around the year 430 B.C., a time when things were easy and life was good. This can cause the hearts of man to grow cold, and lose interest in the things of God.

The sins that Malachi wrote about are the same as those that Nehemiah faced: absence of personal obedience to the Lord, especially amongst the priests who were supposed to be closest to God and living the most holy lives (Malachi 1:6-8). There were marriages with foreigners which led many men to idolatry and to have many wives (Malachi 2:10-12), as well as robbing of God of funds that were to be used for God's temple (Malachi 3:7-10). Can we see such sinful things happening now, where men care more for things that attract them than the love of God? One of the most common things that can cause men to fall is also what we see everyday – money or the things it can buy. Many use money for their own desires than for God's work or to help others. Do you have pocket money? Do you give some to the Lord?

Both Peter and John won $100 in a contest.
Who is greedy in the way they manage their money?

Peter tithes $10. He uses another $10 to give to a missionary family. He spends $50 to buy presents for his family. He puts $30 in the bank.	**John** spends it all on himself buying an expensive toy.

Answer is _____

Thought: God wants us to be good stewards of all His blessings

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to use the blessing of money and wealth wisely and not selfishly. Although I am still young, help me to start right. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

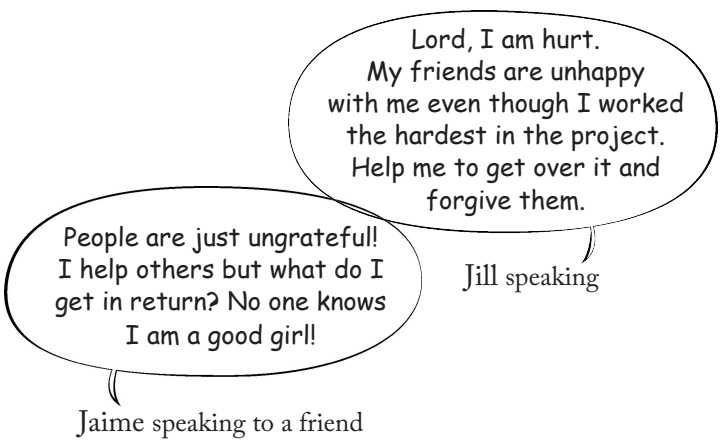
MALACHI, THE LAST PROPHET OF THE OLD TESTAMENT (2)

Even Bible scholars do not know much about Malachi. He himself did not mention who his parents were, his birthplace or his occupation. Perhaps Malachi did not want to be known and preferred to be hidden from public view. Yet he probably had a great part in the efforts to change the people and their sinful ways. As Nehemiah took the lead as the governor, Malachi helped and applied God's Word to the wayward people.

John the Baptizer said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). These words must always be in our mind as we look at the good example of Malachi. Do as much good as you can for the Lord, and always give glory to God. At the same time, be content to stay in the background, hidden from the public eye. To be praised by man is not important; to be praised by God is.

Which girl is pleasing in God's sight?

The answer is _____



Thought: What God thinks of me is more important than what people think.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to honour Thee above all others, and to want Your praise more than the praise of others. In the precious name of my Saviour I pray – Amen.

IN THE DAYS OF MALACHI

As mentioned two days ago, the days of Malachi were pretty good times. There were no wars to ravage the land and no invading troops to steal crops. There were no plagues or diseases to weaken the people. In fact, law and order in the land would be established soon. Peace would bring prosperity and economic progress to Israel. Yet all was not well in Israel.

When people become prosperous, the love of money, greed and covetousness may begin to take root in their hearts. If it becomes what is most important to them, they will grow spiritually cold and neglect their spiritual life. They may then claim to have no time for the things of the Lord. Money and profit become their idol. We may say such people worship money. With money comes worldly pleasures that so easily tempt us. That is one way people become more worldly and love the things of the world. God's Word is clear, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2: 15).

There is nothing wrong with being rich. But it is wrong when the wealthy use their money without thinking how God would want them to spend it, and forget that it is actually God who gave them the strength and ability to make it in the first place.

What are 2 ways you may not spend your money wisely?

_____

_____

Thought: Control money, or it will control you.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to use my pocket money wisely so that I'll be able to glorify You even in the way I use it. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

GOD'S LOVE (1)

God Himself speaks of His love for the nation of Israel. This love is such a wonderful love as it is part of God's salvation plan for His people. It began in eternity, and continues today. God still loves Israel and will always love Israel. The love God has for Israel, God has for us, the covenantal love that God has for His people, those who trust in His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. What are the tokens of God's love for Israel? Remember how they were delivered from the bondage of Egypt, where they were all slaves? God's love was shown to them throughout the forty years in the desert wilderness where He guided them with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Because the desert is such a barren place with no natural clouds to shield them from the sun by day, the pillar of cloud God sent was a real comfort to them. Further, it was a visual and immediate source of guidance to them – just follow the cloud and they would be right!

If you have been to a desert in the night, you will know it is both cold and dark. Unlike modern cities like Singapore where there are street lamps all around, deserts are unpredictable and unfriendly, especially at night. Creeping poisonous insects, sudden drops in sand dunes can cause serious injuries or even death. But God knows the problems Israel would encounter, and provided them with a pillar of fire. Imagine – this huge pillar of fire for them to follow, their light to lead, their warmth to enjoy! How good God is!

The many blessings from God are tokens of His love.
Can you count your many blessings?
They are:

_____

_____

Thought: How good is the God we adore!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You so much for Your love, and please Father, teach me to be thankful for all Your love to me. In doing so, I pray I'll strive to be a better Christian each day. This I pray in Jesus' name - Amen.

GOD'S LOVE (2)

The Lord told the Israelites that their ancestor Jacob was chosen, and from Jacob, his twelve sons became the twelve tribes of Israel. Jacob was God's choice, and not his brother, Esau, who was the father of the Edomites. By choosing Jacob to be the father of the Israelite nation, God has shown His love for them. This love is further shown by all the care God showered upon them. Edom was left poor, gloomy and a place of wilderness. Compare this with the Jews whom the Lord brought back after they were captured by the Babylonians and enabled them to rebuild their country again. Surely, they should give the glory and honour to the Lord. But with all God's love for them shown through various ways, God's people were ungrateful, they ignored and forgot God's past and present mercy and grace.

Fill in the blanks with these given words:

return	Babylon	bloom	wilderness

God showed His love for the Israelites by:	God showed his disfavour for Edomites by:
Promising that their land would _____ again. Allowing them to return from _____ to build up their desolate places.	Making their land and mountains a _____. Not allowing them to _____ and set up their desolate places.

Thought: May we be thankful to the Lord.

Prayer: Thank You Heavenly Father, for choosing me, a sinner, to belong to You. I have done nothing to deserve so great a salvation, and for that I am thankful. Help me to be a grateful child, so that I may have the joy of salvation as I go about everyday. This I pray in the wonderful name of Jesus – Amen.

DO YOU GIVE YOUR BEST TO GOD?

Every child must honour and respect his father. He will seek to please his father and obey all that he has commanded. This is so as the godly father would have the best interests of the child in mind, and the child must always submit. Likewise, a servant must also obey and respect his master, for it is his master who is the superior one in their relationship. However, the people of God failed to honour God, who is both their heavenly Father and Master. What is worse, even the priests, the spiritual leaders of Israel, were not doing the right things! The offerings they brought before the Lord were not the best they could afford - they brought the blind, the lame and the sick animals. This shows that they did not give of their best to the Master.

How about us? Do we give our best to God? In what way can we give our best? Make sure you put aside enough time each day to read God's Word, to learn from Him when reading your Junior RPG. Give your tithes and offerings to Him, give your time to help friends and make an effort to be kind and forgiving, for that is what Jesus would do. May we learn from the words of this hymn, Give Of Your Best To The Master.

Give of your best to the Master; Give of the strength of your youth;
Throw your soul's fresh, glowing ardor, Into the battle for truth.
Jesus has set the example, Dauntless was He, young and brave;
Give Him your loyal devotion; Give Him the best that you have.

Refrain:
Give of your best to the Master; Give of the strength of your youth;
Clad in salvation's full armor, Join in the battle for truth.

Give of your best to the Master; Give Him first place in your heart;
Give Him first place in your service; Consecrate every part.
Give, and to you will be given; God His beloved Son gave;
Gratefully seeking to serve Him, Give Him the best that you have.

Thought: Do I give my best to God?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know I've not been perfect, but, do teach me to learn how to give more and more of my life to You, for that is my reasonable service. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

DO YOU GIVE YOUR BEST IN YOUR STUDIES?

As a Christian, you must show others you are one by living a life that pleases God. We are to give of our best to God in every area of our lives. As a Christian student, you must also show others you live a life that pleases God by studying hard. What does studying hard mean? Does it mean you have to do well in class? Does it mean you skip church activities when exams are coming? Does it mean you study everyday, including every Sunday? The answer to all these questions is "No"! Some of us can do well in class; some of us may not be able to. For Christians, it is not about doing well, but trying your best. You MUST try your best, and study hard, for that is your duty as a child. Now that is easier said than done. Many students do not try their best, and because of that, their parents want them to study on Sundays too. You must really put in effort on weekdays to study and complete all assignments, then only, should you play your games or watch your favourite television programmes. And always, pray before you study, that God will help you with the work, so that you can better understand and remember.

Although we are to give our best to the Lord in studies, we should not skip church or JW activities because of exams. Neither should we study or have tuition on Sundays. However, we do not want to have a fixed and fast rule on this. If you were sick the whole week, and there is a test or exam on Monday, it would be alright to study that Sunday, but that is not your usual practice. You would normally have already studied hard through the week, and therefore you should devote Sunday to the Lord, and not study that day. Why? Because God commands that the Sabbath (our Sunday) is to be kept holy, to be reserved for Him and to do activities related to glorifying Him.

Thought: Do I give my best to God in studies?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know sometimes I've been lazy and because of that, my parents have been unhappy with me. Teach me Heavenly Father that it is my duty as a child to study hard, and teach me to commit this area of my life to You. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

LOOK DEEP INSIDE YOURSELF!

God told Israel they had given Him second best. The more worrying thing is that they appeared to be doing the right things – bringing animals to the Lord, going through the motion of making offerings , etc. Are you guilty of this as well – appearing to be holy, but deep down inside, you are not willing to please God? Most of us go to church, dress up nicely for it, attend Sunday school classes, give thanks before meals. But deep down inside, are you really what you appear to be on the outside?

Do you go to church unwillingly, or unhappily, because your parents go and make you tag along? When you are in church, do you behave in a way different from your real self? Are you a Christian only on Sunday mornings, but when others see you outside church or on other days, you are back to your true self? If you answer "Yes" to even one of these questions, be very afraid! "Afraid of what?" you may ask. Afraid that you are a hypocrite. What is a hypocrite? A hypocrite is a person who pretends to be what he is not. Do as I say, but not as I do! God will not want us to be a hypocrite. He wants us to go to Him in a sincere and willing way. If you have been pretending, or have been putting on a show to please parents, you really have to stop, think, and repent. That seems like a harsh thing to say but it is true – you will need to repent for being a hypocrite. Remember, although those around you cannot see deep inside you, God can. Come before the Lord and confess your sin of pretending to be a good Christian. Worse, we can be deceived into believing we are really Christians, when we are not even saved! Are you saved? This is a question that only you can answer. You can seek help from your parents, or your Sunday School teachers to make sure of your salvation. Dear child, this is the most important question of your life - make sure you know the answer!

Thought: Hypocrisy is pretending to be what you are not.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to examine myself and see that deep inside, I am a real Christian, and not pretending to be one. This is such an important thing so Heavenly Father, please help me to be serious and to pray as I search myself. This I ask in the wonderful name of Jesus – Amen.

FROM THE RISING OF THE SUN…

You may have come across this chorus, "From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, the Lord's name is to be praised…" That is a song that encourages us as believers to praise God for the many wonderful things He has done for us. In today's text (vs 11), we are shown another thing– that even among the Gentiles (non Jewish people – like us), God's name is great. This is the greatness of God extending to the whole world for He is the Creator of heaven and earth. And after creating the universe, God did not abandon it, but continues to look after it.

If God is good even to non-believers and non Jews, imagine how much better is He to believers! How we need to be thankful for this wonderful God and Lord!

Going back to the words of the song, do you praise the name of the Lord? Do your actions and words bring about praise to God's name? Perhaps by simply obeying your parents or being friendly to the new kid in school, or the shy boy in Junior Worship class or trusting in God when he places difficult situations or people in your life to test or strengthen you. These are some of the ways we can glorify God, and bring praise to His name.

What other ways could I bring praise to God's name?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Thought: May I bring praise to the name of God!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to examine myself and see how I can glorify Your name every day. This I know is tough, but with the help of the Holy Spirit, I shall be able to improve bit by bit. In Jesus' name I pray – Amen.

GOD IS THE GREATEST KING!

Imagine one day your dad comes home all excited about an important meeting. He talks about the preparations with your mum: what to wear, what to say, when to arrive etc… Then you ask him who he is meeting. He tells you it's the President of America, the most powerful man in the world! Wow – would that not be a privilege? Not just anyone can meet with the President of America. You need to be someone important or useful to the President. Also, that person has to go to meet him at his home - The White House, or some other special location. He would have to go really early as there would be many security checks and tests. He would also need to know where and how to stand, what to say and what best not to say. Whilst the President of America is the most powerful man in the world, he is but just a man. He falls sick. He makes mistakes. He has weaknesses just like you and me. Most of all, he is a sinner like any other. Our God is by far a greater and mightier King. For the chance to meet a man, whether it is the President of America or some other important person, many would do great things. But for Christians, when we meet God, often we do not seem to care. God is available to meet us in prayer, anywhere, and yet we seldom take that privilege seriously. When we are able to go to church, some of us may go sulking and grumpily. Beware, dear child. If you do not think it a privilege to pray or go to church to worship our great King and God, something is not right with your spiritual walk and your relationship with God.

Today, we may show reverence (respect and love) to God our great King by:

1. Dressing our _____(estb), to worship God.
2. Paying full attention to _____ _____(oGd's ordW) when it is preached or taught.
3. Giving our tithe and _____ (ginoferf) cheerfully to the Lord.
4. _____ (ginhepl) and serving our friends/others whenever they need us.

Thought: The great King deserves the greatest attention!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to be humble and grateful when I come before You as the great King. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

HEART VERSUS HEAD KNOWLEDGE

God's message to the leaders is one of strong condemnation. This is rightly so as they were the ones who ought to know better. They studied God's law and they taught God's law. Yet they were the very ones who have led the people astray by their bad example. It is possible to have head knowledge without heart knowledge. This would mean the person knows what is right and wrong, but does not embrace it with his heart. He may understand the truth of God, but he may not necessarily love God or take Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

It is only when God's Word is received in our hearts that we can be saved. When that happens, God's wisdom will also be given to us for we will not only know, but love and practise God's truths.

Satan also knows God's Word. Evil people in the world may also know the bible. In fact, many of them may know the bible better than you and me! But knowing God's Word alone is not enough; believing and doing God's Will is needed!

I know what is right and wrong but do I…

1. Refuse to share my toys and games with friends?
2. Get angry easily and not keep my temper under control?
3. Talk back to my parents?
4. Waste time playing too many computer or other games and am lazy?

If any your answers to the above is "Yes", repent!

Ask the Lord to forgive you and to give you the strength to do what you know is right.

Thought: May I have both head knowledge and heart knowledge.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to not only know what is right, but to do it. This is the beauty of being a Christian, and although it is not easy, I know I can depend on You for help. In Jesus' name I pray – Amen.

HEART VERSUS HEAD KNOWLEDGE – JEALOUSY

All believers have sinned; you and I are no exceptions. There have been times we have sinned knowing what we were doing is wrong. Take the example of Allan.

Allan has always done well in school and his mum was proud of him. Allan would also do better than his younger sister – Alice who was two years younger in Primary 3. Alice was clever but lazy. Seeing her older brother do well, she was encouraged by her mum to work harder. She did not like it at first, for she was lazy! But slowly, she committed her studies to the Lord, and eventually she did the right thing – studied hard, prayed hard, and disciplined herself not to watch too much television and play too many computer games. Eventually her results improved.

Everyone in the family was happy for her. Everyone, except her brother, Allan. Why was Allan not happy for Alice? Because he was afraid his mum would love him less as his sister's results improved.

Is that the right thing to do? Surely we all know that is wrong. But does that happen? Sadly, yes, and often. Dear child, never be jealous should someone else do well, or better than you. Be happy for that person. On your own, you do your best in studies to honour God and to repay the kindness your parents have showered on you.

How do you feel when your brother, sister or good friend does better than you? Are you happy for them and encourage them to try even harder? Dear child, as Christians, we must encourage each other on to better things for the Lord.

Thought: Are you a jealous person?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me never to be jealous of others, but instead, be happy for others when they do well, or better than me. That is not easy, but Heavenly Father, with the help of the Holy Spirit, I will be able to do it. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

HEART VERSUS HEAD KNOWLEDGE - ANGER

Kam Seng was uncomfortable at last Sunday's JW lesson as the message by Mrs. Tan was just spot-on for him. What was the message? It was on anger: how we need to control anger, or anger will control us.

Three days ago he was in the MRT train with his younger sister Mei and Mum. Mei has always been an active child, and her family was pretty much used to her behaviour. That fateful day, Mei was her usual energetic self on the MRT. However, Kam Seng was in a bad mood. Earlier that day in school, he had been scolded by his teacher for not bringing his textbook and also had been caught chatting. As punishment, he was asked to stand and face the wall for a while, and that was the last thing he wanted. He disliked being scolded publicly and felt a loss of face.

During the train ride, as he was reading a book his sister suddenly snatched it away. Was the sister right in doing so? Of course not. But what Kam Seng did next was far from right, too – he shouted at her! Mum was shocked, and so was Mei. She cried quietly and moved away from her brother, refusing to look at him or in his direction for the rest of journey. Mum was wise, and softly but firmly told Kam Seng that though what his sister had done was wrong, what he did was also wrong. Although it was actually a short MRT ride, for all three, it seemed like one of the longest rides they ever had. The uncomfortable silence was broken only by MRT announcements, and the occasional cries of a baby a few seats away. Upon reaching home, both children were called to Mum's room where they were told of their wrong-doings. They were made to apologise to each other. After that, Mum, as usual, would pray together with them and asked the Lord to watch over her precious children, and their temper.

Dear child, do you get angry easily? Do you get irritated by someone at home or school often? Before you jump to think about how "terrible" this person may be, look at yourself. Think of others better than yourself, humble yourself, and control your temper, before it gets the better of you!

Thought: Control your anger or it will control you!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I learn how to control my anger, and how not to get angry over things that are not important. If someone irritates me, teach me to learn to commit things into Your hands, for You will help me overcome anger that is wrong. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

HEART VERSUS HEAD KNOWLEDGE - SELFISHNESS

Although brothers, John and James could not be more different. John is tidy and neat; James is careless and leaves things all over the place. John's nickname is Mr Tidy; James' nickname is Mr Piggy, for his things are nearly always in a mess.

The fact that the two brothers share a small room does not help. Although both have been taught by their parents to give in to one another, you can imagine the conflict between these 2 boys. To be fair to John, he had been the one doing more of the cleaning and tidying in their room. But to James, these things were not important. He was happy to leave things where he last used them, and also did not mind if his brother did the same, except of course his neat brother would never do that. In their tiny room, the one small study table they both used could get very messy and be a cause for fighting. One day, John had had enough. He tied a long string across the room, drew a line across the table and pushed all of his brother's stuff across. James was not allowed to cross the line and had to keep his things on his side.

So who was right, and who was wrong? Well, both were wrong, and both were selfish. James should have been more considerate in keeping his things and not making a mess. John should not have divided the room into two, for after all, their parents made them share a room to teach them how to cooperate and work with each other!

Dear child, are you selfish at times? Do you put yourself before others? I know it is not easy, but God has taught that we esteem others better than ourselves, which means to put others before ourselves. That means we cannot be selfish. The next time you feel selfishness in you, tell yourself that is wrong, and pray that God will help you control your selfishness before it controls you, like it did John and James.

Thought: Control selfishness or it will control you!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know that at times I have been selfish. In fact, I have been selfish very often. Help me Heavenly Father to put aside selfishness, and to learn from Jesus, for He always put others before Him. In Jesus' name I humbly ask – Amen.

IDOLS IN YOUR LIFE?

"To deal treacherously" is to betray God who has loved and taught His people to walk uprightly. It is a terrible sin for it shows that the people were not only forgetful of God's goodness, but totally disinterested in turning to God.

To worship idols is very offensive and an abomination to God. The Jews were guilty of idolatry when they placed and prayed to the idols in the temple of God while claiming that they were worshipping the living and true God.

Does this in a way apply to us? Although we say we worship God, there are idols in our life. What kinds of idols can there be in our lives? Idols can be anything or anyone that takes the rightful place of God, being first and the most important thing in our lives. Examples of idols can be as simple as the computer games when we focus so much time and energy on them. Or it can be your television, where you just cannot do without that favourite programme. Or for older girls, it can be the latest fashion or beauty product; for older boys it could be soccer or the latest computer gadget. For adults, it could be money, position and power.

These idols are very real. They can seem so important and necessary that we as Christians think we cannot live without! Such is the danger and power of idols.

Do you think you have any idols in your life? How about your brothers and sisters, or parents? Are your parents working too hard and too long? Are they out early in the day and back late, sometimes not even seeing you for days on end? Pray for them, especially if they are Christians, that they will realise God is in charge of their lives and they must put Him first.

Thought: May I have no idol in my life!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I pray for forgiveness for I've sinned and done wrong. There have been idols in my life, but Heavenly Father, thank You for today's lesson that reminds me it is very wrong to have them. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

FAKE PIETY (1)

The sins of the men in taking idol-worshipping concubines led their Jewish wives to weep at God's altar. God regarded their tears and thus would not accept the wicked offerings brought by their husbands. This is a case of fake piety. Even though these husbands sinned, they acted all innocent and continued to give offerings to the Lord. Although they knew they were wrong, they pretended to be right.

Why were they wrong? Firstly, they had more than one wife. This cannot be right! Then they took concubines who were idol-worshippers. That also cannot be right! Even after these serious sins, they continued trying to worship God, and continued pretending to be holy! That is fake piety – which is someone pretending to be godly or holy. Fake piety was a problem then. Is it now? Of course! There are many who may go to church, attend JW or adult bible classes, but outside of church, they return to their sinful lifestyles. Are you one of them? Do you live a "Christian" life on Sundays, or appear to be a good child in front of parents and teachers, but deep down, you are not what you appear to be?

Dear child, think carefully. The Lord does not want us to have fake piety. What He wants is a genuine relationship with you as your Heavenly Father. He knows you are not perfect. He knows you still sin. But what He does not want is to see you pretending to be who you are not.

If any of the below is true of you, you have to repent and ask the Lord to forgive.

1. Behave better when parents or adults are around.

2. Nice to animals only when others can see.

3. Share toys and games when others can see and praise you.

Thought: God hates pretenders.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be a genuine child of Yours. Even though I am imperfect, please never let me be a pretender. In humility I come to You to forgive and to strengthen me to be a Christian who will try my best to be close to You. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

FAKE PIETY (2)

As we consider again the important topic of "Fake Piety", do not look at others around you; think about yourself.

Rebecca was a model child in Junior Worship. For quizzes, she would usually have the right answers; for class, she would always be early; for memory verses, she would have them perfectly recited. It was like she was too good to be true. And sadly, indeed, she was. You see, although Rebecca looked like a good child, she was putting on a show. Rebecca had a strict dad who loved her very much, and expected her to be like him: a leader in church groups and bible studies. He had always wanted Rebecca to be a leader in JW, and had encouraged her to know God better. Rebecca obeyed, not so much because she loved God, but because she feared and respected her dad too much to disagree. But deep down, she knew she was putting on a show.

Nobody knew Rebecca's innermost thoughts, except her trusted diary. One day when Rebecca was in school, her toddler brother wandered into her room and playfully opened Rebecca's drawer. His eyes gleamed when he saw the beautiful leather-bound book. It was Rebecca's diary, a book no one else knew existed. He took it in his still unsteady hands but dropped it soon after, right in the path of his waiting mum. You can imagine how surprised and saddened mum was when she accidentally read the first few lines of the diary. Closing the pages, she said a silent prayer for Rebecca, and talked to her that very night.

Dear child, are you in danger of being a "Rebecca"? Do you pretend to be a good Christian boy or girl only because you want to show someone you are "holy" out of fear or to please them? Remember, even if you can fool everyone all the time, God is not mocked; God cannot be fooled.

Thought: Be truthful to the God of truth.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I pray that You will help me to be a genuine believer. Help me to realise that being a Christian does not mean I am without sin, but rather, that I must try to be holy and do the things You would have me do, not because of others, but because I love Jesus. For it is in His name that I pray – Amen.

GOD IS THE SPIRITUAL REFINER

Have you ever missed someone you love? Perhaps it is a good friend who has moved to another country, or a brother or cousin who has gone overseas to study for a few years. Those we love, we miss. The same is true when we talk about God. Those who love God will look forward to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to earth with excitement and joy.

Today's verse teaches us that unrepentant sinners who do not love the Second Coming will shudder in fear and suffer when Jesus comes again. Why is this so? Because unlike His first Coming when Jesus came as a helpless baby, He will be a King and Judge at the Second Coming. And for the unrepentant, they will not be able to stand at the Second Coming.

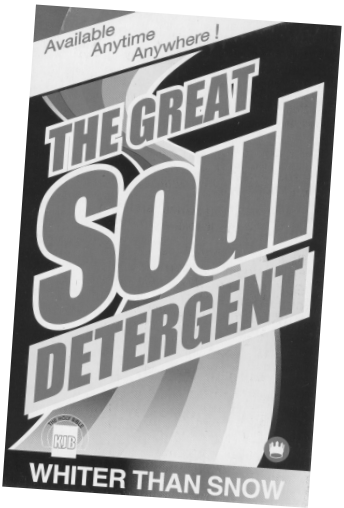
God will be like a refiner's fire. I have been to a goldsmith and have seen how skilled craftsmen use a powerful torch of fire to burn away dirt or dross when making gold products. The heat is intense. If you think boiling water is hot, you would shudder when you know the fire that refiners use is at least a few times hotter than the temperature of boiling water! For the dirt and dross, coming under the refiner's fire burns them; for real gold, coming under the refiner's fire purifies them. So at the Second Coming, the non-Christians will fear and shudder whilst the true believers will rejoice. Why would true Christians rejoice? Because they love God, miss Jesus, and believe in the Bible' teachings that one day Jesus will return for His beloved saints: you and me! And when Jesus finally appears, Christians know their wait is over!

Something to remember is even though gold does not melt when the refiner's fire is on it, it still feels the great heat of the torch. Whilst pure gold will not melt under the refiner's fire, it will be tested and tried. So, as Christians, even though we will eventually stand the test of the Refiner's fire, we have to be brave and withstand any difficulties and tough times God may allow us to have.

Thought: Those the Lord loves, He purifies.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for reminding me the Refiner's fire, though hot, is good for me. I pray I'll have the perseverance to press on and to be prepared for any difficulties You my Heavenly Father may allow my way. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

GOD IS THE SPIRITUAL CLEANSER



Do you know what brand of washing powder or detergent your mother uses to wash clothes? There are so many brands available and should you walk down the aisle of a big supermarket, you would be spoiled for choice. They come in all sizes, colours, and fragrances. Most will say they are the best money can buy to fight the toughest stains. However, there are stains which some of these detergents cannot clean. Especially tough to remove are oil stains, or dark and large stains on white materials.

That brings us to today's verse, which mentions the word "fuller" – an old English word for a laundryman. At the Second Coming, God will cleanse us the way detergents clean clothes. However, there is one major difference - God's cleansing removes ALL sins and spots.

Imagine you are that piece of cloth that mum washes. Because you are dirty, you need to be scrubbed, rinsed, and soaked for some time before she washes again. Would it be fun for that piece of cloth? In fact, it would be painful to be scrubbed and rubbed vigorously.

That often can be the same when God cleanses us.

It may not appear fun at all. In fact, it would be painful. Sometimes God sends trials to test and strengthen us. No one likes trials, but some of us need them.

Thought: Nothing cleanses like God's power!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to keep close to You daily, and be cleansed always by the faithful reading and following of my Bible. And when trials come my way, help me to remember. You have sent them to help me. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

MODERN DAY SORCERY

In today's verse, we read of how God will judge and punish a few groups of people, starting with the sorcerers. Sorcerers are those who practise witchcraft. Although we do not read much of witches today, the art of witchcraft is not dead, just disguised as innocent ideas or worse, fun and attractive. Today, we will talk about three ways the concept of witchcraft may be introduced to children, and how we need to stay well away from them.

Firstly, many of you love computer games. There are some fun and good ones out there, but be careful - many are not good for you. Many have lots of violence and other sinful acts. There is one group of games that is about sorcery, or witchcraft. Do not indulge in such computer games for they will pollute your mind and fill your memory with wicked and harmful thoughts and ideas.

Secondly, there are tarot cards, or the ouija board. NEVER play such games. These are card and board games that can actually be used by some people to communicate with supernatural forces – in other words, demons. As a Christian, we must be very clear such games are not to be played by a child of the Living God.

Thirdly, there are books with stories involving witchcraft. Authors of such books are clever enough not to promote witchcraft, but to spin fun and interesting storylines with the use of witches and the like. One famous example is that of the "Harry Potter" series. Stay away from such books.

Thought: May I be alert and on guard against disguises of witchcraft.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, let me be true and faithful to Thee, and to stay clear of modern day witchcraft that may come in the form of attractive games and books. Give me wisdom Heavenly Father, that though young, I may know how to apply what I have learnt today. In the precious name of Jesus I pray – Amen.

MODERN DAY SLAVERY

God has blessed Singapore materially and today, many of you may have a maid. How do you treat the maid? Do you order her around, and expect her to do all the dirty work without complaining. Do you ever stop and consider how she may be tired, sad, or lonely, needing someone to talk to?

In the place where I live, there are employers who make their maids wake up around 5 am everyday to clean their cars. And this happens everyday. To such people, clearly their cars are more important than their maids. To such people, maids are modern day slaves. What do you think God will say to that?

Well, God indeed said something about rich people or employers who mistreat and take advantage of others. The verse tells us God will punish those who "oppress the hireling", the "hireling" being an old English word for worker.

So to you who are privileged enough to have a maid at home, first of all – thank God. I learnt from my mother how to treat maids – treat them as you would like your sister or child to be treated. Better still, treat them how you yourself want to be treated! Sure, they are employed to work hard, as all employees are. But it is sad to see the many cases of maid abuse in Singapore. I hope you and your family treat your maid nicely.

Remember, she may not be a Christian and this is God's way for your family to witness and bless her. Remember, she is a beloved daughter of her parents. Also remember, she is loved by the Lord, and she is someone for whom Jesus died on the cross. Forget about sending offerings or going to overseas missions when a maid in your house is ill-treated. That would be what we discussed a few days ago – Fake Piety!

For those of you without a maid at home, how do you treat the cleaning lady who washes the toilet, or the old man who clears the hawker centre tables? Are you kind and courteous, or do you look down on them?

Thought: If you were a maid, how would you like to be treated?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to appreciate the people around me, especially those who are in a less fortunate situation than me. Help me never to be mean or look down on them. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

THE LORD DOES NOT CHANGE

What do you most like to eat, drink, and wear? Whatever the answers are, chances are, you will have different views when you are an adult. As humans, we change. But God is different, and today's verse teaches us that God never changes. God is forever omnipotent (all-powerful), omniscient (knows all things) and omnipresent (can see what happens everywhere). Likewise, His goodness, love and mercy are everlasting. Isn't it wonderful that God remains the way He is? He is also a covenant-keeping God, which means He will keep His promises and stay faithful to His words.

The verse also mentions that because God changes not, the "sons of Jacob are not consumed". That is God's way of telling us that He will continue to be a forgiving and merciful God, that even though the sons of Jacob (meaning the nation of Israel) are unfaithful, He will remain faithful. You know what – that applies to us too! Even when we fail Him and sin, God is always ready to forgive and bring us back to His fold.

That He is unchangeable also means God's views of sin and evil do not change. He will punish those who rebel against Him. On the other hand, He is a generous rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. In both instances, He will remain true, for He had spoken and it will be so. Though God is patient and longsuffering to those who sin, yet He is the Lord and He will judge.

Dear child, if you keep sin in your life, if you still have pride, selfishness, disobedience to parents and teachers, pray that the Lord will help you get rid of them.

Thought: God's love and grace changes not.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, even as I praise You for Your unchanging love and grace, I pray I'll know You will always want me to be a good Christian, that after I read the Bible, I must put it into practice. In Jesus' name I pray – Amen.

DO YOU ROB GOD OF TITHES?

It is a very serious offense to rob anybody. To rob is to take something that is not yours by force or in secret. How shameful it would be for a mother if she found her child had robbed someone. It is possible to rob man, but how is it possible to rob God? We rob God when we do not give to Him what is His. What is His are the tithes and offerings we are commanded in the Bible to give Him. Can a man be so daring as to rob God? Yes, as seen from today's verse! This has been done in the past, and continues today. The important question for us is – do YOU rob God?

As a child, you receive pocket money from parents. Whatever the amount, you should give a portion to the Lord. Each Sunday when the offering bags are passed round, you may put your tithes in. How much to give? Start with 10%. That means if your pocket money is $5 a week, you ought to give 50 cents every Sunday. However, do not be fixated with the 10% number. God looks at your heart, not at how much you give. And if for that week you need 50 cents for something urgent, or forget to bring it, that is alright; God understands. You can put $1 in the offering bag the next week. It is necessary to learn to tithe now for if you do not do it as a child, you will probably not do it as an adult. What is the difference between a tithe and an offering? Think about it this way – a tithe is 10% of your pocket money; an offering is any amount over and above the tithe.

Remember it is God who gave us everything. For us to give 10% to Him is but a small sign of our love. Also remember God loves a cheerful giver. All the wealth in this world, and in all the universe, belongs to Him. He does not need tithes from anyone. The reason we tithe is because He is teaching us to trust Him. When we give some of what we have, we learn to depend on Him and not rely on ourselves. Finally, it is for us to learn how to show our appreciation to the wonderful Father in heaven who gave His only begotten Son. If He could give His Son, what shall we not give in return?

Thought: May I not rob God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, search me and see if there have been times when I have not given my tithes. Teach me to trust in You, that even though I do not have a lot, I will still obey for there is much blessing in following Your Word. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

DO YOU ROB GOD OF TIME?

It is unlikely you have ever stolen anything from someone or from a shop. But many of us rob God. No not in the way we discussed yesterday. Some of you may tithe and give offerings but we still rob God. How is that possible? It is possible if we rob God of time. Now what does this mean?

Nicky was a Primary Four student who went to church regularly. Dad always taught him to tithe and so Nicky did exactly that – every week without fail. But when Nicky left church, he soon forgot about God. He is what some will call a "Sunday Christian" – a Christian only on Sundays or in church, but totally back to his own sinful self on other days and times.

He will spend a lot of time in studies, does very well in school, but hardly turns to the bible or uses his Junior RPG. He devotes time to improve himself: he takes tuition classes, he learns the piano, he goes for advanced swimming class. But he does not improve himself spiritually.

What is Nicky guilty of? Besides being a Sunday Christian, he is robbing God of time. One of the reasons he is a Sunday Christian is because he robs God of the time he ought to spend reading and thinking about God's Word. If he did that, he will be convicted by the Holy Spirit and become closer to God. You see, the bible is not just another book. The bible is the Word of God, and its words contain power that no other book nor man has. God's Word changes lives and to change his life, Nicky must spend time with God daily, doing his Quiet Time ("QT") and reading the Junior RPG.

Dear child, are you regular in doing your QT and reading your Junior RPG? Do you go to Him in prayer daily? God will understand if occasionally you forget or are too tired to do so. But if you consistently do not have regular QT, there is no way you will grow spiritually.

Thought: Do I do my QT every day?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know I may have been lazy at times but please help me to try my best to have my daily QT and prayer. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

GOD'S AMAZING BLESSINGS!

Jack was born into a family not considered wealthy, but at the same time, Jack did not lack in the necessities (food, a home, clothes). Pocket money was a small amount from mummy. It was enough for him to take bus to school, buy the occasional lunch and soft drinks, and with a little to spare, Jack could save a little. Jack came to know the Lord but was never taught to tithe until he was a teenager.

That year, there was a series of nightly messages at an auditorium, and Jack made up his mind to go every night as he knew he could benefit from the messages. But he feared one thing – should he tithe every night? If he did it, he may not have enough money for himself! But you know what? Jack prayed, and he committed this matter into God's hands, and so he tithed $5 every night, a large sum in those days, for 3 nights in a row. Although he expected not to have enough money, somehow, he managed to go through the week without any trouble. At the end of it all, he knew it was God who somehow provided! There was no miracle, but somehow, he just managed to be able to pay for the usual basic things that week.

Today's verse teaches us something that Jack learnt and understood that week: that if we trust the Lord, and cheerfully give to Him, somehow He will provide so much that we cannot even contain or count his blessings! Isn't that true? Has not the Lord been so good to us? Yes, when we put God first, God will pour upon us such blessings that there is not enough room to receive the abundance.

When you first learn to tithe, it may be difficult. In fact, it may even be painful, for you are giving what little money you may have as pocket money. But remember this verse – that if you trust Him, He will prove to be faithful to bless your faith. This is not in the form of money somehow appearing under your pillow or in your piggy bank. God's blessings are far better than just money. He will grant you the shield of faith, the blessedness of contentment as you trust in Him.

Thought: God's blessings are beyond measure!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give me that faith that believes there is nothing that God cannot do. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

ACCUSATIONS AGAINST GOD

Do you sometimes see children or adults who disobey God still getting ahead in life? Does it seem to you that sometimes those who cheat, lie, disobey God get away with it and even prosper? In school, perhaps you have seen naughty kids pretend to be good in front of teachers and prefects, and get away with some prank. Your father may tell you that in the office, some people are just nasty, evil, and still manage to do well in the eyes of the world. Also, there are many who use the name of God in vain, and swear using the name of our precious Lord. Worse, some of them, as was the case in Malachi's time and described in today's text, go around discouraging people, telling them it was useless to obey God!

This is so unfair! Why doesn't God see such injustices and punish those who go against Him? Of course God does. And God will. But God's timing is not our timing. Only God knows what is the best time for everything. Be sure, no sin will go unpunished.

Dear child, God keeps an account of what men say and do. Although it may appear that those who go against God or accuse God go scot-free, one day, their sin will find them out. Dear child, do not fret when you see such people. Most of all, do not believe them when they say or tell you that God is not able to punish them. Instead, pray for them so they will understand what they do is wrong, and that one day, they will repent, and turn to God. That is not impossible, for nothing is impossible with God. That friend of yours who seems a very unlikely person to be saved – he may be by fervent prayer, and it starts with YOU. Put the name of such a friend in the blank below…

Gracious Lord, I want to pray for _____
that he will understand what he is doing is wrong
and that one day, he may come
to know you are his personal Lord and Saviour.

Thought: May I always pray for some friends who are not saved.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know there are many out there who do not yet believe in You. I pray You may use me to witness to them, and to pray for them that one day, they may also know You as their Saviour. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

THOSE WHO FEAR THE LORD

Yesterday, we talked about a group of people who go against God. Today, we read of a different group of men - the godly men. God also takes notice of their wise conversations when they praise and thank God for His goodness and mercies. They also encourage each other in the Lord. This will be the case in every generation: even if the majority are not Christians, there will always be some godly people.

I want to ask you two questions. Firstly, are you one of these godly people? Secondly, do you behave in the same way as they do? I pray your answer will be "Yes" to both questions. But exactly how did these Christians behave?

These people who love the Lord do not complain against God. Instead, they are filled with praises for God. On top of that, they always encourage each other. This means they share with each other the goodness of the Lord; they also share God's Word and how they can grow stronger in the Lord.

Of such Christians, God speaks lovingly and calls them His treasure or jewel. Wow – what a privilege it is to be considered precious in the sight of the Holy God!

Write down how godly people ought to speak…

1. They _____ (ecranugoe) each other in the faith.

2. They _____ (psiare) the Lord often.

3. They _____ (atnhk) Him daily.

Thought: A godly child ought to praise and encourage others to live a life pleasing to God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know I may not have been the best Christian, but help me to try to improve. Help me also to encourage my friends so that all of us will grow to be stronger Christians for Jesus, and it is in His name that I pray – Amen.

DO YOU REALLY FEAR THE LORD?

The devotion yesterday was about people who fear God. Let us look at another aspect of people who fear God – they will hate sin. Why? A person who fears God is one who wants to obey God, one who is afraid of making God unhappy. And God is most displeased when we sin. Jim is a Christian boy who has been to church since he was in Primary Three. He has been taught lessons from the bible but somehow, the lessons never stuck. One day, his school organised a trip to the zoo. Jim loved nature, so he was very excited. It was a nice sunny day and everyone had a good time. Walking by the different enclosures of the animals, he came across one that he had never seen before – the Malayan Tapir. It was a medium sized animal, with a grey-coloured "saddle" which extends from its shoulders to its rump. The front of its "saddle" was black, except for the tips of its ears which were rimmed with white. This pattern is for camouflage, so it could not be recognised easily.

Looking at the resting tapir, a naughty thought crossed his mind. How about throwing stones to wake the animal up? Making sure no one could see him, Jim threw a stone at the tapir, which stirred. Then he threw a larger one which hurt the poor animal. As he was about to throw the third stone, his classmate suddenly appeared and asked Jim what he was trying to do. In that awkward moment, caught in the action, Jim lied that he was just looking at the stone as it has a nice texture and colour. Would a child who fears God behave in that manner? You see dear reader, one sin leads to another. Jim was unkind in throwing the first stone. Then he threw the second. And before he threw the third, God intervened by sending his classmate but Jim committed a third sin – lying.

Fearing the Lord means to NEVER do anything you know will make God sad.

Thought: Do I really fear the Lord?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to obey Thee always. In Jesus' name I pray – Amen.

THOSE THAT FEAR GOD'S NAME

Those that fear and love the Lord will look forward to the Second Coming of Jesus. It will be a wonderful day because to them, Christ is a reviving and rejoicing light. As the rising sun brings light and life to earth, so will Christ!

Christ is indeed the light of the world. As the Sun of righteousness, He comes upon this dark world to save those that are lost in the darkness. He saves and He comforts with his healing beams ("arise with healing in his wings"). Once saved, they will be healed and will be able to know the joy of salvation. That is why in the second part of today's verse, it speaks of believers "as calves of the stall", which are cared for by the Lord and are happy and carefree.

Do you want to be happy and carefree? Are you looking forward to the great day of the Lord's Second Coming?

What are the blessings of Jesus coming as the Sun of righteousness?

empower	light	save	heal	grow

Answer using the above words.

1. He will bring the _____ of the knowledge of the glory of God.
2. He will _____ the sin sick soul.
3. He will _____ those who call upon Him.
4. He will cause them to _____ in Him.
5. He will _____ them to overcome evil.

Thought: Jesus is my Sun of righteousness.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am so happy for I know that one day, I will be able to see Jesus in all His glory and splendour. Please help me to live a life that will please Him, and I humbly pray this in Jesus' name – Amen.

SUMMARY OF THE BOOK

This last book of the Old Testament ends with a warning from God, "…lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." God's love for Israel should have made them respond with love in return, but through Malachi, God charged the people with their failure to return His love.

Is this the same for you and me? Having learnt and understood the lessons for this month, are we the same or have we really changed and live a better Christian life? How have we responded to His love? Have we believed in Him and trust Him? Have we obeyed Him? If not, we are just like the people who lived during Malachi's time. We will also fall under the curse.

God has an answer to the curse. The New Testament opens with the words, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1). Yes, there is hope in Jesus. Though we sin and reject God's love, there are still the open arms of God and His love waiting, if only we return to Him. The minute we come in humility and respond to God's love and grace, there is forgiveness and everlasting hope in Christ.

Thought: May I not only know, but do and love God's Word.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the lessons learnt in the study of this book. I pray most of all that I'll put them into practice, that I'll not just be a hearer, but a doer of Thy Holy Word. In Jesus' name I pray – Amen.

ARE YOU ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL?

"Wouldn't it be exciting to live like the early Christians did-meeting secretly in homes and caves?" asked Nathan as he and Siew Leng walked home from their neighborhood Bible club.

"It'd be more dangerous than exciting," said Siew Leng. "Back then, Christians were often thrown in jail or put to death because of their faith. They had to meet in secret to stay alive." She tucked her Bible in her bag and waved to a girl on the other side of the street. "Hi, Olive," Siew Leng called.

"Hi," responded Olive. "I just got out of my gymnastics class. What have you been doing?"

"Oh, just hanging out," said Siew Leng with a smile. "See you in school tomorrow." Siew Leng turned back to her brother. "I'm glad we don't have to meet in caves and be secret Christians nowadays," she said. "It looks to me like you are one," Nathan observed. Siew Leng frowned. "What are you talking about?" she asked.

"You didn't tell Olive you were coming from Bible club," replied Nathan. "Why not?"

"Are you kidding?" asked Siew Leng. "Olive is the most popular girl in my class. I want her to like me. She'd think I am crazy to go to a Bible club." "So that's why you hid your Bible in your bag?" asked Nathan.

"Like I told you-I want her to like me. I don't want her to tell everybody that I go to a Bible club. All the kids would make fun of me!"

Nathan shook his head. "I still think you act like a secret Christian," he insisted. "I think you're ashamed of being one at all." Siew Leng's face turned red. "I… I…" She couldn't think of anything to say.

Nathan sighed. "I know it's hard to be a witness," he said, "but if the early Christians were willing to die for Jesus, I guess the least we can do is put up with a little teasing." Siew Leng was silent for a while. Then she nodded. "You're right," she admitted, "but what can I do about it now?" A minute later, she smiled. "I know what to do!" she exclaimed. "I'll invite Olive to come with me to Sunday school this weekend."

Thought: Are you a secret Christian?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, sometimes I am embarrassed to let people know I am a Christian. I do not really know why, but what I know is this – that it is wrong. I must be willing to let others know I am a believer, and that I love Jesus. Help me never to be ashamed of Jesus or my faith in Him. This I pray in His name – Amen.

DARE TO APOLOGISE!

"Sara's mad at me," Mandy told her mother as they drove into Jurong West Avenue 2. "When she got an 'A' for our spelling test, and I got only a 'C,' I… I said she must have cheated. I know I shouldn't have said that."

"Why don't you call and apologize?" suggested Mom. "Yes, and I will, but… not right now," Mandy decided. "I think I'll just wait until she's in a better mood." As Mom turned down a side road, Mandy looked at her in surprise. "Why are we turning here?" "This is a shorter way to the supermarket," said Mom. "I'm not sure of the way, but let's try it." That did not seem like the right way. "I think we should go back," said Mandy.

"I think you're right," agreed Mom. "We'll have to find a place to turn around." "How about there?" Mandy pointed to Jurong West Avenue 6. Mom slowed down, but shook her head. "No," she said, "I think I'll go up to Avenue 7 then turn back."

A little later, Mandy motioned toward the direction of Avenue 2. "How about here?" she asked. But Mom passed by it, too. "That's not exactly the perfect spot, either," she said.

"Mom!" Mandy protested after a few minutes. "If you ask me, the first possible spot is the perfect spot!"

"I'm beginning to think you're right," agreed Mom as she slowed down and now turned to the right direction. "I guess we'll turn around right here."

When they were on their way again, Mom turned toward Mandy. "Waiting for a perfect spot was foolish, wasn't it?" asked Mom. "We made a mistake in coming this way, and the first chance to correct that mistake was the best chance. That's true when we make other mistakes, too, and need to apologize for something. It's foolish to wait for a better time to do it."

Mandy looked thoughtful. After a moment, she asked, "Mom, can I use your cell phone? I'll give Sara a call."

"Good idea," approved Mom. "I'm glad to hear that, and I'm sure God is, too."

Thought: When you find it hard to apologise, seek God's help!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You know I am stubborn and sometimes do not apologise when I know I am wrong. Help me to grow up and do the right thing, and to know the best time to apologise is to do it immediately after I realise I am wrong. In Jesus' name I pray – Amen.

GOD'S VIEW IS THE BEST

As Alex, Mark, and Brenda waited for their father after church, they looked out at the parking lot through the stained glass windows near the back of the auditorium. "I see our car," said Mark. "It's green."

Brenda disagreed. "No, it's not," she said. "It's yellow." "Well," Alex said importantly, "I say you're both wrong. It's blue."

Just then, Dad came up. "What's the big discussion about, kids?" he asked. "We're talking about the colour of our car," explained Alex. "It's blue, right?"

"No, green!" and "No, yellow!" were quick responses from Mark and Brenda. Dad laughed. "Looks purple to me," he said, joining in on the joke. It was time to leave, so they went out and got into their white car. Dad chuckled. "Okay, kids," he said, "let's think about something. Mark, why did each of us see our car as a different colour even though it was white all along?"

"Because we each looked at it through different coloured glass," answered Mark.

Dad nodded. "Right. Each of us had a different view of the car, but we all were wrong. That can happen in other areas of life, too. We think of something in a certain way, but we're wrong because we're not seeing it the right way."

"Remember the time I complained and thought you were unfair and mean for letting Brenda and Mark go to a party without me?" asked Alex. "I guess I was seeing you through colored glass-probably black glass-but you saw things as they really were. You knew I deserved to stay home because I hadn't washed the car like you told me to."

"One time Mom warned me that a game I wanted was for younger kids, but I insisted I had to have it, so she let me use my own money to buy it," Brenda said. "Mom was right. I think that's called looking through rose-colored glass."

Dad smiled. "Good thinking, kids," he said as he turned into an estate at Ang Mo Kio. "Another thing we need to remember is that God isn't looking at our lives through a colored window. He sees things exactly as they are, and that's why we can trust Him. We know He's always fair."

Thought: God's view is always the best and most accurate!

Prayer: Help me Heavenly Father to always trust in You. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

DEATH HAS LOST ITS STING

Jonathan ducked as a bee buzzed by, barely missing his head. He watched the bee settle on a flower before moving on. "That bee was so close to your head, he almost gave you a buzz cut," joked Dad as he came up behind Jonathan.

Jonathan didn't laugh. He had something else on his mind. "Dad," he said, "can I ask you something?" He hesitated, and Dad waited quietly. "Grandma died weeks ago, but I'm still sad about it," Jonathan said at last. "Is that bad? I mean… aren't Christians supposed to be happy all the time?"

"It's natural to feel sad," replied Dad. "We all loved Grandma very much. We miss having her with us, and that makes us sad." Dad put an arm around Jonathan's shoulders. "Death came when sin entered the world, but for Christians, death is not the winner. Even when we're sad, we can feel good about the fact that death can't really hurt us."

Jonathan looked up. "What do you mean… it can't hurt us?" he asked.

"Let's see… how can I explain it?" Dad thought for a minute, then asked, "Why were you afraid of the little bee that flew by a few minutes ago?"

"Because I could have gotten stung!" said Jonathan. "That hurts!"

Dad nodded. "If it didn't have a stinger, would you still be afraid of that bee?"

"No," replied Jonathan, taking a quick step backward as the bee zoomed by again. "At least, not as much," he added.

Dad smiled. "That's how it is for Christians," he said. "Death is like a bee without a stinger. It's still scary, and we don't like it, but we really don't have to be afraid of it. Grandma loved God and has accepted Jesus as her Saviour, so she is now free of pain and sorrow and death. She died on earth, but she'll live in heaven forever."

"So it's okay to feel sad because I miss Grandma," said Jonathan, "but at the same time, I should feel glad because I know she's not really dead. She just went to live with God." Dad smiled and nodded.

Thought: Through Christ, Victory Over Death!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us victory over death. Even if I am sad that a loved one has passed away, if he or she is a Christian, then I know I'll see him one day when I go to heaven. Thank You for this blessed assurance. And I thank You in the name of Him who conquered death for us – my precious Jesus. Amen.

WE ARE WONDERFULLY MADE!

"Hey, Dad, look at this ugly white lizard," Daniel called as he peered into the darkness of a tank in the reptile house at the zoo. "It doesn't have any eyes." Daniel watched as the lizard crawled off a rock and slid into the pond. "Actually, that's not a lizard," said Dad, stepping up beside him. He pointed to the sign on the tank. "It's a Texas blind salamander," he added as he opened his zoo brochure to the reptile section. "Look, Daniel. It says here that Texas blind salamanders are born with tiny, sightless eyes, but they lose them as they grow older." Dad paused, then added, "God made them that way for a reason-they don't need eyes. According to this, they live in complete blackness in caves, and eat fungi and bits of plants and insects that wash into the caves."

Daniel studied the salamander. "I guess I can understand why God doesn't give it eyes," he said. "If it lives all its life in darkness, there's nothing for it to see." Daniel pointed. "What are those little feathery wings on the sides of its head?"

Dad looked at the brochure again. "Let's see… oh, those are its gills," he said. "Blind salamanders spend most of their time underwater and breathe through gills, like fish." Leaning forward to get a better look, he dropped the brochure. Daniel snatched it before it landed on the ground. He handed it back to his father. "Thanks, Daniel," said Dad. "You certainly can move quickly."

"It's simple," said Daniel with a shrug. Dad smiled. "When you were younger, you used to complain that you were too small and had thin arms and bony knees," he said. "You even asked God to give you a big, strong, muscular build. Do you remember that?" Daniel nodded. "I still wish He would," he said. "Well," said Dad, "I think God knows that what you need right now is good coordination, so that's what He gave you. You've found it very useful in the activities you like."

As Daniel looked again at the little white salamander swimming contentedly in the pond, he glanced at his own arms. The salamander doesn't need eyes, and I don't need huge muscles, he thought. That's okay. I guess God has a reason for making us just the way we are.

Thought: Do you wish you were taller, prettier, or stronger? God has a reason for making you you!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that I am fearfully and wonderfully made. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

WHAT IS THE TRINITY?

After dinner one evening, Teck Ling picked up a church bulletin from the coffee table. "It says here that Pastor is going to preach on the Trinity next week," she said. "I don't even know what 'the Trinity' means."

"It means that God the Father, God the Son-that's Jesus-and God the Holy Spirit are three persons, yet they are one God," explained Mom. "The word 'Trinity' isn't found in the Bible, but the idea of God in three persons is found in several places. I'll show you a few of them."

Just then Dad hurried into the room. "Honey, could you help me?" he asked mom. "A button just popped off this shirt."

"I'll have that fixed in a jiffy," said Mom, so Teck Ling had to wait.

Feeling a little impatient, Teck Ling frowned. But as she waited, she thought about the explanation of the Trinity her mother had given her. By the time Mom bustled into the room again, a smile had replaced Teck Ling's frown.

Mom reached for her Bible. "Now," she said, "let's see if I can find some verses to help you understand the Trinity."

"1 John 5:7, says "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one" This is the clearest proof of the doctrine of the Trinity. In Matthew 3:16-17, the Bible also clearly describes the three distinct persons of the Trinity in action at the baptism of Jesus: (1) God the Son on earth, going through the waters of baptism, (2) God the Father in heaven, commending His beloved Son, and (3) God the Spirit descending from heaven to earth in the form of a dove.

The Bible tells us that there is only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). Thus, in this oneness, there is a threeness. There are three Persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three Persons are not divided but distinguished; the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit, the Spirit is not the Father; but the Father is God, the Son is God, the Spirit is God (i.e. the same living and true God who is only One). One God in Three Persons."

Teck Ling thanked her mother for helping her understand the doctrine of the Trinity.

Thought: Trinity is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the doctrine of the Trinity. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

ALL THINGS WORK FOR GOOD…

Robert shuffled through the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. "Wow! I've never tried to do a puzzle with so many pieces before!" he exclaimed.

"I know it looks hard, but I'm sure you can do it," said his father. "Want some help? I could turn the pieces right side up for you." "Okay," Robert agreed. "I'll work on the table." He started to sift through the jumbled pile, looking for red pieces. "Robert, do you know what this jigsaw puzzle reminds me of?" asked Dad as he turned pieces. "Uh-h-h… my room, I guess," answered Robert with a laugh. "A big mess."

Mom chuckled. "It does look a lot like the clutter I sometimes see under your bed," she said, "but I had something else in mind-our lives. Sometimes life is puzzling to us. It's confusing-filled with overwhelming problems, and we can't see how the pieces can possibly fit together. But God has a plan and purpose for everything that happens. He knows all the pieces will fit perfectly, even when we can't see how."

"Do you mean like the time I didn't make it to the school soccer team?" asked Robert.

Dad nodded. "Yes," she said. "You were so disappointed. You didn't see how that 'piece' of your life fit at all-you said you thought you might as well give up playing soccer."

"Yeah, but then the coach called," remembered Robert. "He was coaching his neighbourhood team, and he asked if I'd like to play the goalie position." Mom nodded. "So you joined that team, and you really, really liked it," she said. "You had a great time." "Yeah, it was fun!" agreed Robert.

"I think God wanted you on the other team so we could get to know the other guys," said Dad. "Some of them accepted our invitation to come to church and heard about Jesus." He glanced at the puzzle pieces Robert was putting together. "You have that table almost finished already!" he exclaimed. "Always remember-just like those pieces are fitting together to make a table, God fits all the 'pieces' of our lives together to make something good."

Thought: God will fit all the pieces in my life nicely together.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, sometimes when I'm in the middle of disappointment, life seems a jumbled mess that will never fit together. Often I can't see or understand how the things that appear to be hurtful to me could possibly be good for me. Help me Heavenly Father in those times to trust You, that You have a plan and purpose for all the things You allow in your life. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

LOVE OTHERS…

"I know the Bible says God loves the world and that means everybody, but I don't really see how He can love Hilary," May told her older sister as they raked leaves in the backyard. "Do you really think He does?" "Is she that girl in your class who cuts queues in the school canteen?" Kelly asked while she swept the floor. "Yes," said May. "She cheats, too, and she writes bad words on the walls in the restroom."

"Wow! She…" Kelly was interrupted by May's dog as he dashed through the dust she was trying to sweep and scattered them all over. "Pepper!" Kelly yelled. "Bad dog!"

Just as May and Kelly were sweeping the dust into a pile again, Pepper appeared with a dead cockroach in his mouth. "Oh, gross!" exclaimed Kelly, jumping away from the dog. "Get that thing out of here!"

"Let's take a break," said May, so the sisters plopped down on the floor.

Soon Pepper returned and lay down at May's feet. "Honestly, May," said Kelly, "I don't see how you can love that creature. Pepper looks weird, plays too rough, and he growls at Grandma every time she comes over." "I think he's cute! And there are a lot of good things about him," insisted May. She hugged her pet. "Even if there weren't, I'd still love him because he's mine!" she declared.

"I suppose you would." Kelly was thoughtful. "Do you think God feels that same way about Hilary?" she asked. "God made her, so in a way, she belongs to Him, doesn't she? So I guess He must love her, don't you think?" May thought about that. "I know you're right about God loving Hilary," she said at last, "but I can't love her."

Kelly got up and finished sweeping the floor. "You don't have to like the things Hilary does," she said, "but I think God wants you to love her like He does." Kelly grinned at her younger sister. "Tell you what, May. I'll try to find some good things about Pepper if you'll look for good things about Hilary."

Thought: Though tough, may I love the unlovely.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, sometimes I wonder how You can love some of the people You know. That is because they seem so bad and mean. I know You do not love the bad things they do, but just love them and want me to learn to love them, to be a good witness and to show them Your love. This is really difficult, but Heavenly Father, I'd try with the help of the Holy Spirit. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

GUARD WHAT YOU SAY

"Ouch!" Kelly stomped her foot. "I need new shoes! This one hurts me!" "You probably have your shoes on the wrong feet," said her brother Ben. "I do not!" objected Kelly. "This pair of shoes really hurts!"

"You don't know how to put shoes on correctly," insisted Ben. "You're just a baby!" Kelly frowned. "I'm seven years old," she informed her brother as he went outside. "I know which shoe goes on which foot."

"Let me see," said Dad, and Kelly lifted her foot for him to check. "It's the tongue of the shoe, honey," he said, untying it. "It's twisted and all bunched up. We'll just straighten it out." Dad pulled hard on the tongue and retied the shoe. "How does it feel now?" Kelly ran around the room and jumped. "That's better! It's all fixed!" "Did she have it on the wrong foot?" asked Ben, coming back into the house. "No! I told you I didn't!" said Kelly. "You don't know anything, Ben!"

"At least I know how to put my shoe on so it doesn't hurt!" said Ben. He grabbed the soccer ball and began bouncing it up with his knee. "Show off!" yelled Kelly. Dad caught the ball and held it up high. "It was the tongue in Kelly's shoe that was causing a problem," he said. "Tell me something else that causes trouble when it's not used correctly."

"Ah… that ball?" guessed Ben. "If it's used wrongly – like if we throw it around in the house – we could break a lamp or something." "That's true, but I was thinking of something smaller. Like the tongue in your sister's shoe, our tongues can give us problems" said Dad.

"I guess you mean we need to talk nicely to each other," Ben suggested.

"Yeah! You shouldn't have said I'm a baby," said Kelly. "Okay, and you shouldn't have yelled at me," replied Ben.

Dad nodded. "God's Word says the tongue is small but can do a great deal of damage," he said. "Words can hurt people a lot more than shoes can hurt the feet. Keep that in mind-especially when someone annoys you or makes you angry."

Thought: Control your tongue or it'll control you!

Prayer: Thank You Heavenly Father for today's reminder. I know there are many times I have said unkind things and have regretted them. Teach me to remember to say things You'd like to hear me say. For the sake of Christ and in His name I pray – Amen.

DO IT HEARTILY AS TO THE LORD

Sue plopped down on her favorite chair and looked over at her father, who was reading a sports magazine. "Dad," she began hesitantly, then stopped.

Dad looked up. "What is it, babe?" he asked.

"It's just… well, I wish I could be good at something," said Sue. "Mrs. Lee is always saying what great posters Rachel makes for our Sunday school committee. Saravanan always gets the solos in choir. And all the kids want Tommy on their team when we play kickball. Everybody's good at something except me. I just do stuff that doesn't matter." Sue slumped down into the overstuffed chair while Dad scratched his chin for a moment.

"I think you're being too hard on yourself," said Dad. "You are not bad at everything. Maybe you're part of the leg muscles." He turned back to his magazine. Sue looked at him curiously. "What do you mean?" Sue asked when he didn't say anything more.

Dad smiled. "I'm looking for an article I read a few minutes ago," he said. He turned a page of the magazine. "Here it is." He pointed to a medical report. "This says that when we walk, we use two hundred muscles." Sue was still confused. "So what does that have to do with me being bad at everything?" "Like I said, you're not bad at everything," Dad replied. "You may not be the best at some things, but that's okay. Just do your best wherever you're needed. When you do that, you're like one of those two hundred muscles the body uses to walk."

Sue thought about what her dad said. "Okay, all the kids need leg muscles," she decided. "Rachel needs me to help her think up ideas. Tommy needs me to… ah… to cheer him on. And Saravanan needs me to… I don't know…"

"To smile when he sings," said Dad. "You're great at that. And think about this. The Bible refers to Christians as the 'Body of Christ,' and every part of that Body is needed, too. Every Christian has something to do to help make things work right. So do your part with your whole heart as unto God-and you'll be just fine." Smiling, Sue nodded.

Thought: Do all things for the Lord's sake!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me not to murmur nor complain but to do all things heartily as unto You! This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

WALK BY FAITH, NOT BY SIGHT

"Look out!" warned Koon as his sister stumbled over a chair. "You must be blind as a bat if you didn't see that chair, Liz!"

Liz tossed her head. "Bats aren't blind," she said. "Yes, they are," said Koon. "We're learning about them in science class. Our book said they find their way around by listening to sound waves instead of by seeing things with their eyes." "Yes, but they can see," insisted Liz. "We studied bats in school, too." Dad smiled at the kids. "Liz's right," he said. "The phrase 'blind as a bat' is an expression people often use, but bats really aren't blind."

"Well, they must not be able to see very well," insisted Koon.

"That's true," agreed Liz. "My teacher said they fly at night and make squeaky, high-pitched sounds and then listen for the echoes. When sound waves bounce off something and the echo comes back quickly, the bat knows there's something close by. If the echo takes a long time, it knows the thing is far away."

"Very good!" said Dad. After a moment, he asked, "Did you know that, like the bats, you should depend on something other than just the things you can see?" "Like… ah… what?" asked Liz.

"I know," said Koon. "The bats use their ears, and we should use ours, too. A train whistle warns us that a train is nearby. Traffic sounds warn us to be careful crossing the street. Right?" "Yes," agreed Dad, "but I was thinking of something even more important than eyes or ears." The kids thought for a moment. "I'm sure you're going to mention something from the Bible," said Koon.

Dad smiled. "You're right," he said. "What you need is faith-faith in Jesus and in what the Bible says. Some people refer to it as 'blind faith,' but it's not blind at all. It's faith in a living God who knows all about the future."

The ears of bats help them fly safely at night, and faith in God helps us walk safely through life," she said. "It doesn't matter if we're blind as bats when we think about all the things that could happen, because bats aren't really blind."

Thought: Walk by faith and not by sight

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me not to rely on the things around me, for example, whether my father is capable or wealthy, or whether I do well in school etc. Help me to have faith in You only. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

WE HAVE BEEN SAVED!

"Oh, no!" moaned Megan. "I won't be able to mail this birthday card to Grandma until Monday."

"Why not?" asked Megan's little sister. Megan shook her head. "We're out of stamps," she said. "Without a stamp on the envelope, this won't go anywhere, Stacy."

Stacy looked thoughtful for a moment and then bounded off to her bedroom. She soon returned with her hands behind her back and a grin on her face.

"What are you hiding?" asked Megan.

Stacy's face beamed with pride as she held out a roll of her cute dinosaur stickers. "You can use one of my stamps to mail your letter," she offered.

Megan smiled at her sister. "Thanks, honey. That's so nice of you, but your stickers won't work," said Megan. "A letter has to have a postage stamp on it. Your stickers are nice, but letters have to have the real thing."

Stacy frowned, and Megan tried to explain. "Postage stamps are a special kind of stickers, Stacy. You buy them at the post office," she said. "When you stick one on a letter, it shows the mailman that you've paid for the letter to be delivered. Then he makes sure it goes on its way. Sorry, honey." Megan gave her sister a hug.

Stacy hesitated, then peeled off a dinosaur sticker and stuck it on the back of Megan's hand. "You can have a sticker anyway," said Stacy with a grin.

Mom was standing nearby, and she smiled as Stacy skipped away. "You know, Megan," she said, "your explanation of how payment has to be made for a letter to be delivered reminds me of salvation. Sometimes people try to make that payment. They try to pay their own way by doing good deeds, but that's like using a dinosaur sticker on a letter. To get to heaven you need the real payment-the blood of Jesus."

Megan nodded in agreement. "We can't pay for heaven at all," she said. "Only Jesus can. He died on the cross to make the real payment that guarantees our sins are forgiven and we have a place in heaven."

Thought: Did you know that the price for your salvation has been paid in full?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Jesus to give His life to purchase a place in heaven for me. Remind me that none of the good things I do can pay for heaven. Thank You so much, and this I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE

The evening was cool. The earthy smell of the park filled the air, as the Tan family started their dinner. This was a very special dinner for 2 reasons. The first – it was the Chinese New Year's Eve Reunion Dinner. Secondly, this was the first time they were having reunion dinner in a park and having BBQ at that!

After dinner, Kevin exclaimed. "The stars are really bright tonight." His brother Isaac looked up toward the sky. "They just look brighter because there are no other lights around," he said. "They stand out more against the darkness." "I see a firefly," said Kevin. "Look! Over there." He pointed toward a tree a few feet from the fire. The light of the firefly flickered in an on and off pattern. "Maybe he's sending a message in Morse code," joked Isaac. "Hey, Kevin, figure out what he's trying to say." The boys laughed as they watched the firefly blinking its ancient ritual.

Their granddad looked thoughtful. "Fireflies are interesting," he said, "and they have a good lesson for Christians. Can you guess what it might be?" The boys were silent for a moment. "Maybe it's that we need to let our lights shine for God," replied Isaac. "Yeah," agreed Kevin, "but we shouldn't let them flicker on and off like fireflies do."

"Why not?" asked granddad. "Well…" Kevin hesitated. "If my light is shining, it might help bring someone to Jesus," he suggested, "but if my light flickers, it might not be on when that person is looking. Then I wouldn't be a testimony for God at all."

"Good thinking." granddad nodded. "What things might keep our lights from shining?" "I think our lights turn off when we're unkind or selfish or do things we know are wrong," Isaac said quietly. "Like… lying to mom and dad, or cheating on a test."

"Or saying something mean to someone," added Kevin.

"You're right," said granddad. "Let's be sure our lights shine all the time. We never know when someone may be watching us. Especially as tomorrow is the first day of the Chinese New Year, remember when you visit relatives and friends that you are to be a shining light for Jesus!"

Thought: "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine"

Prayer: Heavenly Father, remind me as I visit relatives and friends, and in fact, at all times, that I am to be a shining witness for You! This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

THE WORD OF GOD IS POWERFUL

"Guess what, Mom!" exclaimed Bee Leng as she was leaning on her mother in the afternoon. "I got to witness to Kay today when we were at grandma's for the Chinese New Year lunch."

"Great!" exclaimed Mom. "What did you say to your cousin? It has been almost a year since you last saw her." "Oh, you know-I told her she had to get saved or she wouldn't go to heaven," replied Bee Leng. "What Bible verses did you use?" asked Mom.

Bee Leng shrugged. "I didn't use any, but that doesn't really matter, does it?" "Not necessarily, but it's a good idea to use Scripture whenever you can," said Mom. She was preparing some supper and said. "Would you please call Bee Tin for me?" Bee Leng leaned towards the bedroom. "Tin!" she yelled. "Come for supper!" A few minutes later, Mom asked, "Where's Tin?" "No idea!," answered Bee Leng. "I'll call her again." This time she went to her room. "Tin, I told you to come!" she scolded. "Fine!" replied Bee Tin impatiently.

Five minutes later, there was still no sign of Bee Tin. "That's strange," said Mom. "It's not like her to disobey me like this." She went to the back door and called loudly, "Tin, come right now!"

"Okay, Mom," was the sheepish answer. As Bee Tin came to the kitchen a few moments later, Mom asked sternly, "Why did we have to call you three times?"

Bee Tin looked surprised. "Bee Leng didn't say you wanted me. I thought she just wanted me to play a game or something," she explained. As Bee Tin left to wash her hands, Mom looked at Bee Leng. "Now there's an example of why it's important to quote the source of your message," she said. Bee Leng was puzzled. "What do you mean?"

"You said you didn't use any Bible verses when you talked with Kay about salvation today," explained Mom. "I'm glad you witnessed to her, but don't forget that the salvation message is God's, not yours. Give your testimony, and look for opportunities to tell people what the Bible says, too."

Thought: Do I share God's Word with others?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You have given me opportunities to share with friends about Your Word. Help me not to be shy but to be bold, and to share some Bible verses perhaps from memory. In Jesus' name I pray – Amen.

JESUS IS GREATER THAN SATAN

Peng Seng sat at his desk, which was covered with various parts and decals for his model airplane. I just have to get this propeller on, he told himself but suddenly, he heard a crunch. He had held the plane so tightly that he caused a large crack above one wing. Then, like so many times before, he gave in to anger. "Stupid!" Peng Seng muttered. "Silly" He flung the plane against the wall. Peng Seng felt hot tears of shame. He hunched over his desk, laid his head on his arms, and cried.

That evening, Peng Seng showed the plane to his dad. "I totally ruined it," said Peng Seng sadly. "Why do I get so mad about things? Will I ever get over that?"

Dad turned the mangled plane in his hands. "Are you familiar with the law of gravity?" he asked. Peng Seng nodded. "Then you know gravity holds everything-including airplanes-to the ground. So how can an airplane ever get up in the air?" "We talked about that in science," said Peng Seng. "A greater law- aerodynamics-overcomes gravity."

"Right." Dad nodded and moved the plane along the table top. "As the plane moves forward, air pressure under the wing pushes upward, creating lift. The faster the plane moves, the greater the lift. When the lift becomes greater than the force of gravity, you have…"

"Take-off," said Peng Seng. He sighed. "But what's that got to do with my getting mad about stuff?" Dad gave Peng Seng a gentle smile. "Peng Seng, with your temper, you're like an airplane stuck on the ground," he said. "The law of gravity might be compared to what the Bible calls the 'law of sin and death.' When you're controlled by the law of sin, you can't gain victory over that temper of yours."

"I… I guess not," murmured Peng Seng.

"You need help from a higher law-a force greater than the law of sin that pins you down," said Dad. "You've trusted in Jesus as Savior, so that greater force is available to you! You have the Holy Spirit. When you feel your temper rising, immediately ask for His power to help you 'fly above' your anger instead of giving in to it."

Thought: I shall overcome all my weaknesses through the strength of Jesus!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, by losing self-control, I hurt myself and others. Each time I feel angry, remind me to stop, and pray. And to ask for help in overcoming the temptation to respond with angry words and actions. This I pray in the blessed name of Jesus – Amen.

DO NOT GIVE IN TO TEMPTATION

"I got a new ring last week," Jane told her friend Anne, who had come to play. "I inherited it from my grandaunt after she died. Mom's keeping it for me until I'm older."

"Can I see it?" asked Anne. "Maybe when Mom comes back," Jane said. "I'm not supposed to get the ring out without permission." "Don't be a baby," said Anne. "You have such silly rules at your house! What good is a ring if it stays in a box?" After Anne had made several more remarks, Jane did something she knew was wrong-she got her ring from her mother's jewelry box. "Let me try it on," said Anne, and she slipped it on her finger. "I think I'll wear it awhile," she announced. Jane frowned but didn't object.

Mom had said the girls could go to the park across the street, so they played there for a while. "I need my ring now," said Jane as they returned home. "I've got to put it back before Mom sees it's missing."

"Oh, all right," grumbled Anne. She took the ring off and turned to give it to Jane. But as she let it go, she stumbled. The ring fell to the pavement, bounced once, and disappeared down a drain.

"My ring!" gasped Jane. The heartless Anne headed for her own home while Jane ran into the house and tearfully told her mom what had happened. "Anne said we have silly rules and that I was acting like a baby," said Jane. "I was afraid she wouldn't like me anymore if I didn't let her wear the ring. Now it's lost forever!" "I'm afraid you're right," replied Mom. "I'll check with the sewer service, but it's probably impossible to get it back." Mom shook her head. "Honey," she said, "soon you'll be a teenager, and more and more 'friends' will tell you that our rules-and also God's rules-are silly. If you listen to them, you may lose things more valuable than that ring."

"Like what?" asked Jane. "Well," said Mom, "if you do some things they want you to-use drugs or alcohol or bad music, for example, or lie or steal-your behavior could result in very serious and lasting consequences. Any time you're tempted to take advice that doesn't please God, remember what happened to Grandma's ring and say no!"

Thought: Dare to say "No" to Evil and Temptation.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know I can be influenced by others to do things that displease You. They may even encourage me to cheat in school, disobey rules, say unkind things, or share bad jokes. Teach me Heavenly Father to dare to say "No", and to obey God, not follow others. In Jesus' name I ask – Amen.

PRIDE GOETH BEFORE DESTRUCTION

"My English report is due tomorrow, and I'm going to have the best one in the class!" announced Mark as he and his father got ready to play a game of ping pong. "Most of the kids write really bad essays! Besides, I must be the smartest guy in my standard. I got the top score on our spelling tests for three weeks in a row. And math is so simple…" Dad frowned as Mark bragged about his schoolwork. "Let's start," said Mark, bouncing the ball on the table. "I'll soon have you begging for mercy with my smash!"

Dad grinned. "Well, you might, Mark," he said, "and then again, you might find you've bitten off more than you can chew. By the way, I know just the thing you should write about for your next report-the sinking of the Titanic."

"That big ship?" asked Mark. "I read about it. It was one of the greatest transatlantic passenger ships of all time!"

Dad nodded. "It had elegant-crystal chandeliers, velvet curtains, fine china, even a ballroom with its own orchestra. You might say it was the pride of its era. Everyone thought the ship was unsinkable. Only problem was…" Dad let his voice trail off. "It sank." Mark finished the sentence for him. "Why do you think that's such a good topic for me?"

"You remind me of the Titanic, Mark. In some ways, I'm afraid you're a little like it," said Dad, twirling his paddle. "I am?" asked Mark, looking pleased. "You mean because it was a great ship and I do great in school and stuff?"

Dad shook his head sternly. "No, I mean because you sound very proud when you talk about yourself. Just like the Titanic which people of the era were proud of sank, pride can also cause you to fall. God is the source of all your talents and abilities, and you need to be thankful for them and do your best, not to be proud of yourself. When you get puffed up and put others down, you're headed for trouble."

"I… I see what you mean," Mark admitted slowly. "Okay, Dad. I'm sorry, and I'll try harder to give God all the credit."

Thought: Humility is the best policy

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me always to humble myself. This I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

FOLLOW THE BEST RECIPE

"Oh, please, Mom," begged Sharon. "Can't I watch the Internet video Erika keeps telling me about?"

"No, you can't," replied Mom as she added chocolate to the cake batter. "It's not acceptable for a Christian to watch that kind of video."

"I'd watch it just this once," whined Sharon. "Erika says it's really exciting." She glanced at her mother. "She says you should let me watch a few things like that. She thinks I have such old-fashioned ideas." When her mother still didn't say anything, Sharon added, "Erika says this video gives her a taste of reality. Besides, we've never watched it, so why do you think it's so awful? Erika says some of the others are a lot worse."

"Please get a scoop of dirt from the garden and put it into this cake batter," said Mom, holding out the sugar scoop.

Sharon started to reach for it, but stopped as she realised what her mother had said. Sharon frowned. "Dirt from the garden?" she asked. "What for? You don't really want me to put that dirt in the cake!"

"You're right! It's way too dirty," agreed Mom. "Still… are you sure we wouldn't like it? We've never tried it. But let's not use the garden dirt. Instead, get a scoop of that nice, white sand from Ben's sandbox. That's new, so it's not very dirty." Sharon stared at her mother. "Dirt is still dirt!" she exclaimed. "And you don't want any dirt in this cake?" asked Mom. "Not even 'clean' dirt-just to give it a taste of reality?"

Sharon saw the twinkle in her mother's eyes. "Okay, Mom," she said with a sigh. "I get the point."

"Good," said Mom. "The recipe for this cake lists the things that should go into it, and it does not include dirt of any kind. Our recipe for life-the things we need to put into our lives-should not include any kind of 'dirt,' either. Everything we see and hear affects us, whether we think so or not, so we should do our best to make sure it's all pleasing to God."

Thought: May I always follow Gods' recipe, for it is the best!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know many of my friends may consider some things that aren't good as acceptable, just because they aren't as bad as many other things. Remind me that there's no such thing as clean dirt, and there's no such thing as acceptable sin. In Jesus' name – Amen.

TRUST IN GOD, NOT THINGS

A loud sound woke Jillian, and she lay trembling in her bed. "What's that noise?" she wondered as she pulled the blankets close around her. Then she quickly reached over to her bedside table and felt around for her little white ceramic cross. Picking it up, she felt a sense of relief, and she held it close. Now I'm safe. Nothing can hurt me when I hold my cross, she thought. Jillian relaxed and happily went back to sleep.

At breakfast the next morning, Jillian told her mother about the noise that had wakened her. "I'm so glad Aunty May gave me that cross for my birthday," said Jillian. "When I held it, I went right back to sleep."

"Well, dear, I'm glad you were comforted when you held that cross," said Mom, "but you do know that your little ceramic cross doesn't really protect you, don't you?"

"It doesn't?" asked Jillian.

Mom shook her head. "Do you know what the cross stands for?" she asked.

"Sure." Jillian nodded. "Jesus died on the cross for my sins," she said.

"That's right," said Mom. "I'm glad you understand the importance of that. The cross should remind you of what God did for you, but it's only a symbol. If you trust in the cross itself, you're really making it an idol. Instead, remember that Jesus is always with you, and trust in Him."

Jill slowly nodded. "Okay," she said, "but… it would be okay to look at my cross just to remind myself that Jesus is with me, wouldn't it?"

"Only if you're sure you're putting your trust in Jesus, not in the symbol," said Mom. "The cross should remind you of what God did for you. Let it remind you that He died for you, but remember that He's alive today. The cross can't take care of you, but Jesus can. When you're afraid or in trouble, He will comfort and help you."

"I'll remember," replied Jillian. "I'll remember He's with me all the time."

Thought: May I put my trust in God alone.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, some of my friends may think there's something magical about a cross, or perhaps some figurine or other item they associate with Jesus. Remind me, Heavenly Father, that those things are only symbols. Let them remind me that Jesus died for my sins, and help me remember that He's alive now! And because He lives and loves me, I need not be afraid. In His wonderful name I pray – Amen.

NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION

For the first time in his life, Jason really listened to the sermon. "Now is the time to come to Jesus," said Pastor. "Don't wait." Jason felt like he should ask God to forgive him, but he just didn't want to give in. He thought, "The other kids might laugh, and besides, I'm not so bad. I'm still young, there should be plenty of time later." The service ended, and Jason had not accepted the Lord. In school the next day, the kids played soccer, which Jason loved, as he was a good player. "This will be a piece of cake," he told his friend Peng after teams were assigned.

But to Jason's surprise, the other team won. The score was two to nothing with just over a minute left to play, when Peng came from nowhere and skillfully darted to the left, then to the right, and he made a goal. The score was now two to one.

Mr. Gan, their teacher, was looking at his stopwatch and holding his whistle in his mouth, ready to signal the end of the game, when Peng again made a terrific steal. This time, Peng passed the ball to Jason, who was standing right in front of the goal. "Kick it in!" Peng shouted.

"Come on, Jason! Tie the score!" another teammate yelled. Jason swung his leg and kicked, but he moved a little too late. The ball rolled off to the side of the goal just as Mr. Gan blew his whistle to end the game. "I noticed your timing was off today, Jason," said Mr. Gan.

"Yeah," mumbled Jason. He knew that with good timing, he could have tied the score. Suddenly, Jason thought of something else. What if I have bad timing, like Pastor said at the sermon, and wait too long to accept Jesus as my Savior? The other boys left the field, but Jason stayed behind at a quiet corner, bowed his head and quietly told the Lord of his decision to accept Him right away.

Thought: Have you accepted the Lord?

Prayer 1 *(for those who want to accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour now)*: Heavenly Father, thank You for reminding me I cannot wait anymore. I accept Jesus as my Lord and Saviour, and pray that You will forgive me of all my sins as I come to You. In the precious name of Jesus I pray – amen!

Prayer 2 *(for those who are Christians)*: Heavenly Father, thank You I am already saved. I know I must continue to live a life that will please You and so Heavenly Father, remind me to read the Bible and do my QT daily. In Jesus' name – amen.

HELP RESTORE AND PRAY FOR OTHERS

"Hi, Mom. Hi, baby." Wei Tern greeted his mother and little sister when he got home after school.

"Hi, babe," said Mom as she bounced baby Joy on her knee. "How was school today?" Wei Tern shrugged. "Is something wrong?" asked Mom.

"It's John," replied Wei Tern. "You know… the boy who's been going to JW class with me. He became a Christian a few weeks ago, and it seemed like he really did change. Well, then today I saw him peek under his desk twice during our spelling test. He cheated!"

Mom set Joy on the floor. "Did you talk to him about it?" Mom asked.

Wei Tern nodded. "John admitted that he looked at the words," he replied as he watched Joy reaching for some blocks. She knocked them together, then crawled to a chair and pulled herself up. She held onto the chair and took a few steps around it. She looked at Mom and smiled. Wei Tern chuckled, for a moment forgetting his annoyance with John. "I think you're showing off, Joy" he said.

Mom held out her hands, and Joy left the chair and took two shaky steps before falling into Mom's arms. Wei Tern clapped his hands. "All right, Joy!" he exclaimed. "You took your first steps! Can you walk to me?" He held out his arms.

Mom stood Joy in front of her and let go. Joy reached out, took one small step, and fell to the floor. She looked startled for a moment, and then her whole face scrunched up. "Don't cry, Joy," said Wei Tern as he picked her up. "They're just your first steps." He stood her on her feet again. "Everything new takes a little practice," he added.

"Like being a Christian," said Mom. "We all stumble and fall sometimes-and in the beginning, it's especially easy to do so. Remember that your friend, John is taking his first steps as a Christian." She paused and gave Wei Tern time to think about what she had said. "Maybe you could give him a helping hand," suggested Mom as she watched Wei Tern help Joy take another step. "Let John know you're praying for him, and if he needs help with spelling, perhaps the two of you could study together." Grinning, Wei Tern nodded.

Thought: May I not be critical, but instead help my Christian friends.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to restore, encourage others with a spirit of meekness. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

THE BEST DETERGENT!

Holding his dirty, greasy hands high in front of him, Dad went into the kitchen. "Please turn on the tap for me, Eric," he said. "I don't want to touch anything."

"Wow!" exclaimed Eric, quickly turning on the water. "How did you get your hands so dirty?"

"I've been working on the car," replied Dad. Eric shook his head. "You'll never get those hands clean," he declared. "Sure I will," said Dad, "but not with regular soap. There's some special hand cleaner under the sink. It's made for removing grease and oil."

Eric reached under the sink and pulled out the can of hand cleaner. Dad sank his fingers into the goo and rubbed it over his hands. He worked it in well, scrubbing between his fingers and around the nails with a soft brush. When he had finished, he rinsed his hands under the warm water. "What do you think?" asked Dad. He held up his hands for Eric's inspection.

"Awesome!" exclaimed Eric. "That's amazing! Those were the dirtiest hands I've ever seen! I can't believe you got them so clean!" Dad grinned as he dried his hands.

That evening, Dad and Eric listened to a news report about a prisoner who said he had turned his life over to Christ and was now totally changed. Eric turned to Dad. "Did you hear all the awful things that guy did?" asked Eric. "He can't just say he's sorry and be forgiven after doing all those horrible things, can he?"

"If he really is sorry for his sin and has put his trust in Jesus, God has forgiven him," Dad replied. "Jesus shed His blood on the cross for our sins, and that blood is powerful enough to cleanse even the most sinful of souls."

"So if a person truly repents and trusts Jesus, God will forgive him no matter what he's done, right?" asked Eric.

Dad nodded and held up his hands. "The blood of Jesus is far more powerful than the cleanser I used on my hands," he said. "Jesus' blood truly is an awesome, amazing detergent!"

Thought: Have I confessed my sin and used the best "detergent"?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please remind me I must go to You daily to be washed and cleansed. Sometimes I may think what I've done wrong is not very bad and shouldn't even be called sin. Remind me all sin is terrible in Your sight, and that I must confess and have it washed away. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

LOVE AND PRAY FOR YOUR ENEMIES

After school, Joshua walked to the nearby dentist's office where his mother worked as a receptionist. He was glad school was over. What a day it had been!

"Hi, Mom," he said as she looked up and greeted him. He plopped down on a chair in the waiting room while she got ready to leave. His bag slid to the floor beside him, and he gave it an angry little kick which Mom noticed. "What's wrong, Joshua?" asked Mom when they headed for the car. "I don't like Matt," said Joshua. "In fact, after what he did at school today, I think I hate him!"

"Hold it!" exclaimed Mom. "Hate is not a word I like to hear. What happened?"

"Matt threw an eraser and hit Stacey on the back of her head. Since I sit right behind Stacey, she thought I did it," explained Joshua, "and she told Mrs. Lim. I said I didn't do it, but Mrs. Lim didn't believe me. She made me stand in the hall just outside the door where she could see me. Matt should have admitted he did it! After school he tried to apologize-but it was too late!"

Mom looked at Joshua thoughtfully. "Sounds like you need a filling," she said. "A filling!" exclaimed Joshua. "Who's talking about teeth? Besides, I just had some fillings! My teeth are fine!" Mom nodded. "When you had cavities, what did the dentist do before filling them?" she asked. "Well… he drilled out the decay, of course," replied Joshua, "and then he filled the space with a special material. But why are we talking about fillings? What about Matt?"

"I was thinking of your problem with him," said Mom. "It seems to me that it's a little like problems with teeth. They both need drilling and filling. Matt was wrong, but I think you need to drill the decay-which is hate - out of your heart and fill the space with forgiveness."

"Drill out hate?" asked Joshua. "How can I do that?" "Well," began Mom, "you need to use a much more powerful tool than a dentist's drill. You need to use the tool called prayer. With God's help, you can get rid of the hate and forgive Matt." Joshua sighed and didn't say anything. "Pray for Matt, Son," added Mom. "I'll be praying for both of you."

Thought: Do you ever harbour hate or dislike? Use prayer to clear them away.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to love my enemies and pray for them. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

NEVER EVER DRINK ALCOHOL

At dinner one evening, Michael was eager to share what he had learned about ants. "I've read from a book in the library that says every ant has a job to do in the ant community," Michael told his family. "It says that some ants are nurses, and they care for ant eggs and baby ants. Some are builders; some are guards; some are farmers who harvest seeds and plant mushrooms."

Michael's sister, Emma, chuckled. "Do they ride horses, too?" she asked. Michael laughed. "No," he said, "but guess what else? The book says some ants have drinking problems! A certain kind of beetle comes to their nest and squirts an intoxicating liquid onto the hairs of their back. The ants lick the stuff off the hairs, and it makes them drunk."

"Drunk!" exclaimed Emma. "Ants get drunk? Really? Then what happens?"

"The beetles steal the ants' eggs and larvae," said Michael, "but the ants are so drunk, they don't notice. Sometimes their work doesn't get done for such a long time that their babies die and the ant community becomes a ghost town."

"Really!" exclaimed Emma, "I didn't know animals - especially insects - could get drunk! Those beetles must know how to make the stuff they squirt look really good."

Michael was startled. Emma's words made him think of the TV ads he had seen recently - ads that made alcoholic beverages look really good. His parents have always said that many problems and heartaches are caused by drinking alcohol, but it didn't look that way in the commercials on television. They showed pretty girls and good-looking young men drinking, laughing, and having fun. Furthermore, some of them come in innocent-looking cans that look like fizzy drinks. "Are those ads right?" wondered Michael, but he knew the answer. The ants were deceived by the beetles, and many people are deceived by the TV commercials and other ads for alcohol. "I'm not going to be one of them!" thought Michael, "Not me!"

Thought: Do you ever think drinking alcohol is "cool"?

Prayer: Although I am young, teach me Heavenly Father not to be fooled by TV ads and friends who may say drinking alcohol is alright. Remind me of the ant incident – I do not want to be like the ants! In Jesus' name I pray – Amen.

GARBAGE IN, GARBAGE OUT!

"Dad, can you help me with something on the computer?" asked Janet. She explained what she wanted done. "I heard you telling Uncle Bob that computers can do that," she added.

Dad smiled. "Yes, but our computer hasn't been programmed for that," he said. "I can fix it for you." Then he sat down at the keyboard and began to type. "I'll write a program to tell the computer what you want. It responds only to what it has been told." Soon Dad stood up. "Try it now," he suggested, and he showed her which keys to use.

The new program worked fine, and the computer did just what Janet wanted. "Wow, Dad!" she said. "That's amazing!"

"Not really," her father replied. "It's a basic law of computer science that you can only get out what you've put in."

"I think I know what you mean," said Janet. "At school we say 'garbage in, garbage out.' If we put good information into the computer, we get good information out."

"Just like life," commented Dad. "Like life?" asked Janet. "What do you mean?"

"Your mind is sort of like a computer that God has given you," replied Dad. "It's a fabulous data base that stores everything you put into it, and it responds to the instructions you give it. In a way, you're programming, or writing, your own future right now by what you put into your mind and life."

"So if I store up good things in my mind, it will result in good actions on my part, right?" asked Janet. "But if I store up a lot of junk, that's what determines how I act."

Dad nodded. "To a large extent, what you put into your mind determines what comes out in your life," he said, "so it's important that what you put in is pleasing to God. You do still have a will to make choices, however. You need a good data base to make those choices from, and you need to depend on the Holy Spirit to help you in making them."

Thought: Put only good things into your heart and mind!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me remember to only put wholesome ideas and thoughts into my mind. I am tempted often to think of naughty or selfish things, but help me to overcome that. In Jesus' name I pray – Amen.

HAVE YOU EVER MEDITATED ON GOD'S WORD?

"Ouch! Stupid hair", grumbled Mary as she yanked the brush through her thick hair. "You could cut it shorter, you know, or tie it up at night," said Shelly, her older sister. She was propped up on her bed with her teen devotional and Bible by her side.

"Well, right now I just want it to… untangle!" said Mary, gritting her teeth as she pulled on the brush. "Let me help you," offered Shelly. She took the brush and struggled to get it through her sister's hair. "You should have strong arms after doing this," she joked as she attacked another section of hair. "Am I pulling too much?"

"No more than I do," Mary said.

A few minutes later, Shelly handed the brush back to Mary. "There!" said Shelly. "Much better. Now I'd better finish untangling my head before I get ready for school!" She picked up her Bible and devotional book again. "What do you mean, untangle your head?" asked Mary, stuffing books into her school bag. "Your hair doesn't get in knots like mine does."

"My hair doesn't get in knots, but my mind does," said Shelly. "Sometimes I think sad, worried thoughts, even though nothing's wrong. Silly, isn't it?"

"So how do you get over it?" asked Mary. "I make myself look in God's Word every day," replied Shelly. "My thoughts seem to get tangled up all by themselves, just like your hair does, but I have to purposely put God's Word in my mind and make myself think about what He says. Doing that helps me straighten out my thinking."

"Maybe I should try doing that, too," said Mary, heaving her bag to her shoulder. "but since my bus comes so early, I think after school or just before bed would work better for me." She looked around. "Where are my shoes?"

"Over there," said Shelly, pointing to the corner. "You're right, sis," she added. "I think you should try reading some Bible verses every day. Untangling thoughts seems even more important than untangling your hair."

Thought: Untangle your thoughts by meditating on God's Word

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the reminder that reading and meditating on Your Word daily is important. Help me to really meditate – to think and pray for understanding, and not to rush through my QT. In Jesus' name I pray – Amen.

THE UGLY DUCKLING

"Mommy!" wailed Peggy one day. "Ducky's gone! Bob took him. I know he did!" Ducky was a stuffed toy, and although the little duck was no longer pretty, Peggy loved it dearly. She didn't care that its fluff was all rubbed off and it was limp and faded. Her brother, Bob, on the other hand, thought it was awful, and he called it "The Ugly Duckling."

Mom called Bob into the room and asked him if he knew where Ducky was. Bob grinned. "That thing is gone?" he asked. "Good riddance! But don't look at me, I don't know anything about it."

"Well, then we'll all help look for Ducky," said Mom, and the search was on. They looked everywhere but Ducky could not be found.

A couple of days later, Mom had a talk with Bob. "Have you noticed that Peggy is still very unhappy over losing Ducky?" she asked. "Yeah!" said Bob in disgust. "I never thought she'd feel so bad about that dumb old thing made of rags and sawdust. How can anybody love anything so ugly?"

Mom smiled. "We never can account for the things we love," she said. "Actually, Peggy's love for the Ugly Duckling, as you call him, is like God's love for us. In a way, all of us are 'ugly ducklings,' too, but God still loves us. We're all ugly sinners-for example, some of us tell lies."

Bob's face turned red. "I… I…" He didn't know what to say. "I… I lied about Ducky," he admitted. "I hid him. He's on the top shelf in my closet." Mom nodded. "I saw him there this morning," she said. "How do you think God feels about that?"

"I… I never thought about how He feels, or of myself as an ugly duckling," said Bob. He hesitated. "Do you think God loves me anyway," he asked, "like Peggy loves The Ug-I mean, like Peggy loves Ducky?"

"He loves you much more than that," Mom assured him. "He loves you so much that He sent Jesus to take the punishment for your sins. He wants to cleanse you and make you His child." She gave Bob a hug. "You don't have to be like an ugly duckling anymore."

Thought: Thank You Lord I am no longer unwanted and unloved

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for loving us and despite the fact that we have sinned, and that sin is ugly, You still love us. Help me to appreciate that love, and to return that love by being faithful to You. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

THE WOODEN EAGLE

Amy's science teacher didn't believe in the biblical record of creation. He told the class all animals evolved from the lower forms of life. Amy asked where the lower forms of life had come from. "We can't go into all the details," said Mr. Tan. "They… just happened. What I want you to remember at this time is that all life evolved from them."

Amy was frustrated. "Well, why did fish become fish? And birds become birds rather than something else?" she asked.

Mr. Tan shrugged. "That's just the way it happened," he said. "Some of you have been taught a lot of nonsense about a creator. You need to accept that life came about in the natural order of things-without any creator."

"I know God created everything, but how can I convince Mr. Tan?" wondered Amy. Then she had an idea.

After school, Amy hurried home. She went to her room, took an exquisitely carved eagle her uncle had made for her, and carefully wrapped the wooden bird in several layers of paper. The next day she took it to school.

When it was time for science class, Amy set the wooden eagle on her desk. The other students admired it, and even Mr. Tan came to where she was sitting. "Whoever carved this bird certainly knew what he was doing," he observed. "This is beautiful! Who did it?"

Amy shrugged her shoulders. "What would you say if I told you I woke up this morning, and there it was? It just happened?"

Mr. Tan frowned. "I'd say if you can get anybody to believe that, you should be a salesman. Don't you know who made it?"

Amy grinned at him. "Mr. Tan, you'd think I was silly if I really believed no one made this wooden eagle, yet you told me that no one made the real eagles," she said. "Isn't that even sillier?" Mr. Tan gave her a thoughtful look. Amy knew she hadn't convinced him that God created the world, but she silently thanked the Lord that she had at least made her teacher think about it.

Thought: God made all creatures big and small

Prayer: Heavenly Father, in school I may be taught some things contrary to the Bible. The Bible says You created all things, including all life, and I can see Your handiwork in the beautiful world around me. Give me courage to dare to be different and stand up for You. In Jesus' name I pray – Amen.

SHINE FOR GOD!

"Mom's calling," said Ruth as she and her sister, Sarah, played with neighbours in the common area of their flat. Sarah looked at her watch. "Wow!" she exclaimed. "It's dinner time already!" The girls said goodbye to their friends and hurried to their apartment.

"Guess what!" said Mom as they talked about their day. "I got a job offer."

Dad smiled. "Someone must have asked you to help to take care of their kids," he said.

Mom laughed. "You're right. I was out talking with other moms in our church today. Melissa Lee who lives near us asked if I'd like to watch Tanya and Bob when she goes back to work on Mondays and Fridays."

Ruth looked surprised. "Dad, how did you know that was what someone wanted Mom to do?" she asked.

"Well, it's not the first time that's happened," replied Dad. "The Choos wanted Mom to take care of their son one weekend when they had to be away, remember? And a few weeks ago, the librarian at your school asked Mom to baby-sit for a couple of days."

Sarah looked puzzled. "That's so weird. It's not like Mom has a sign saying 'I'll baby-sit.' In fact, she doesn't take care of babies regularly!"

Mom smiled. "No, but they know I'm a stay-at-home mom, so maybe they figure I'd like to earn a little money," she said. "And I think another reason they like to have me is because of you guys."

"Us? I don't get it," said Ruth. Mom smiled, "I think they look at you and say to themselves, 'Those are nice kids! I could trust my children to be in that home. I'll see if their mother would like to work for me.'"

Sarah grinned. "We're just such angels," she joked. "So thanks, girls," added Mom, "for being lights in our neighborhood."

Thought: Do your actions cause people to notice that you're different - different from the world in general? Your attitudes should shine as a light, pointing others to Him.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to shine for You so others can see changes in my life. I recognise that others will observe me so I pray that I'd be a good example for the sake of Jesus, and in His wonderful name I pray – amen.

THE BIBLE AND SCIENCE AND NATURE

The Bible is not a book on science or nature, yet it is scientifically accurate. In fact, the Bible has a lot of information about science and nature that comes from God. Some of these information concerns the origin of the universe and the world we live in. And some of these are things that science cannot explain. Why? Because no matter how smart man may think he is, he is but a man. God's ability, wisdom and power are infinite and so it is not surprising that God can do great things that men cannot understand or explain.

When the Bible mentions factual knowledge about science, it has been proven to be always true. In fact, it was only recently that men of science discovered that what the Bible recorded thousands of years before are all true. In the readings of this month, you will discover for yourself that the Bible's statements about the world around us are accurate. You will see for yourself some remarkable scientific principles described in the Bible, written thousands of years before they were proven to be true by science.

Dear child, all of us need much more faith so that we will believe that since the Bible is God's Word, everything in the Bible must be true.

Just take a look again at today's text. The heavens declare the glory of God, and indeed it is so. Think about the beauty of the skies, the amazing power of the sun when it rises, the beautiful sunset and its range of colours, and the stars that twinkle in the night.

As we begin this month, may we start it right by going to God and asking Him to grant us the faith that will believe whatever the Bible says.

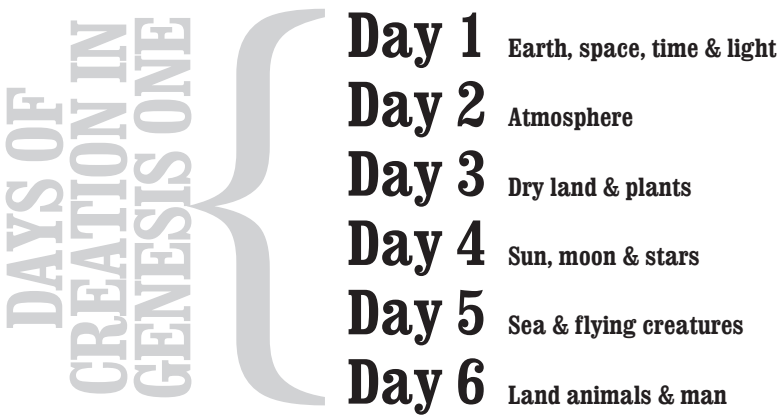
Thought: That I'll remember whatever the Bible says is true.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please grant me simple but strong faith to believe all that the Bible records. I am but a child, but please give me the wisdom to trust and obey. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

A CREATION VIEW OF THE WORLD

All Christians should believe that the world was created by God, as God has stated clearly in today's verse. We understand that the whole universe, including the earth and the things therein, was supernaturally made in just six days from nothing! Is that not amazing?

Many non-Christians and sadly, some Christians, believe in the theory of evolution - that life and animals and humans evolved through millions of years to become what they are today. Thus, they reject the idea that the world was made in six days. Such people think they are better than God, knowing what God said in the Bible, yet daring to go against God. They believe animals evolved from the lower species and that modern man evolved perhaps from ape-like ancestors years ago. The truth is that Adam was created by God and so were all the plants and animals. God designed, created and maintained this world and all mankind. It is indeed our Father's world!

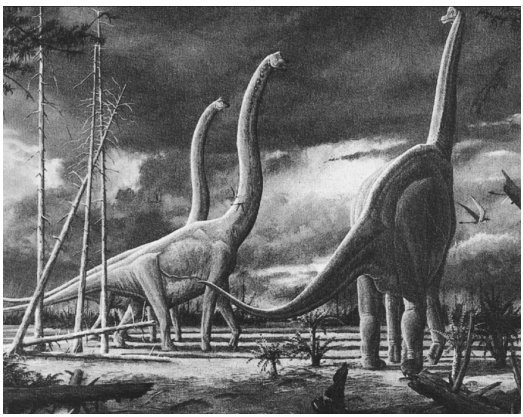


Thought: Thank You Heavenly Father, for creating this beautiful world, and my family, and me!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, like my prayer of yesterday, grant me the faith to be able to say. "If the Bible says it, I believe it." This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

ARE DINOSAURS MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE?

Dinosaurs certainly did roam the earth in the ancient past. What an awesome era that must have been, to see and hear those majestic animals God made! Most of you are familiar with popularly known dinosaurs such as the terrifying Tyrannosaurus Rex; the King of the dinosaurs. The T Rex could grow up to 4 storeys high, was a fierce predator that walked on two powerful legs, and had a huge head with large, pointed, replaceable teeth but surprisingly, had tiny arms, each with two fingers. On the other hand, there were dinosaurs a lot smaller, but still big by today's standards. One example was the Hypsilophodon, a 2-metre long, plant-eating animal that would possibly look like a big iguana.



In today's text, God describes to Job a great beast called a "behemoth", which means "a large four footed beast". Likely it refers to a gigantic plant-eating dinosaur as this dinosaur is the largest land animal God created. Impressively, the behemoth moved his tail like a cedar tree. Cedars are some of the most spectacular trees and thus, this dinosaur must be huge! What can it be? Perhaps it is the Brachiosaurus. The Brachiosaurus was part of a group of large, four-legged, plant-eating, dinosaurs with long necks, relatively small heads and brains, and generally long tails. It has long forelimbs and a very long neck with chisel-like teeth, well-suited to its herbivorous diet. When God created all animals, he created dinosaurs too!

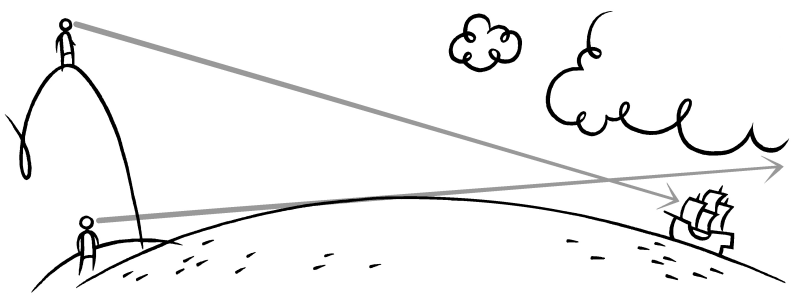
Thought: God made all creatures great and small, and that includes dinosaurs!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the wonderful world you have created. It is amazing that You also created those huge beautiful dinosaurs! Remind me Heavenly Father, to trust in You, for Thou art the great Creator of everything! In Jesus' name I pray – Amen.

HOW DO WE KNOW THE WORLD IS ROUND?

For a long time, man thought the earth was flat. People thought that if they sailed to the end of oceans, they would fall down into a bottomless darkness. But proof that the world was round came only during the naval expedition of Ferdinand Magellan. Ferdinand Magellan was the captain of the first ship to sail completely around the world. Today, we simply cannot believe that men could be so ignorant.

The Bible has recorded for us, even centuries before Magellan's voyage, that the world is round or more accurately spherical. In Isaiah 40:22, the earth is described as "circle of the earth" – not something flat or square. Then the majesty and glory of God is also seen as it is described as God "sitting" on the world. This is just another way of saying God rules as a sovereign or monarch, making the circle of the earth his throne. From thence, He beholds the children of men who are so tiny that they are described as "grasshoppers".



Look at the diagram above. On the ground the ship has disappeared but if we stand on a mountain, we can first see the mast of the ship appearing, then the sail, and finally the whole ship. This shows that the horizon is curved and the world is _____.

Thought: The Bible is always accurate and true.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to love the Bible more and more. As I read more of the Bible, the more I'll love it. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

HOW DO WE KNOW THE EARTH HANGS ON NOTHING?

If we were living 1,000 years ago, and someone believed the earth hangs on nothing as today's text teaches us, many would laugh at him. At that time, science was not able to determine that the earth revolves round the sun and as far as the learned men and scholars were concerned, this verse cannot be right. But this verse was written way before that. The book of Job was written more than a thousand years before Jesus walked on earth, and thus, it is at least about 3,000 years old. And yet, he wrote that the earth hangs on nothing! Was Job a genius? No, it is not so much Job was gifted, but Job was inspired by God who told him to write what he wrote. If you were living in the same era as Job and believed what he wrote in this verse, you would have been thought to be silly and unlearned.

Although we live in this modern world today, the same issue exists. There are things in the bible that we believe, but many around us say we are silly to believe. What are some of these? Well, they include the fact there is a heaven and a hell, that there is faith, that we must trust in Jesus and that on our own, we can do nothing to save ourselves from hell. Many in the world do not believe the bible because they may think they are scientific modern people who need proof to believe. Dear child, never be like them. The proof of God is clear, but not for those who do not want to see. The heavens declare the glory of God. How could this beautiful world have existed without a Creator. If we were to tell such skeptics the bus or car they see on the road just came together by chance, they will think we are mad. But isn't it strange they think the world, which is infinitely more complex than a mere car, came together by chance?

Dear child, trust in the Lord. Many will be those who cast doubt on your faith. And the older you grow, the more of such people you will see. What you need to do is not to lose faith, but to continue to put your faith in the Living Saviour, and to commit to Him your cares, and He will take care of you!

Thought: Only Believe and Always Believe!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please grant me the simple faith to believe all that You say in the Holy Bible. This is my simple prayer in the precious name of Jesus – Amen.

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF BLOOD?

Up until the year 1616, no one really understood how valuable and precious blood was. Sure, man knew blood was red in colour, and that blood flowed in the veins of man, but other than that, not much more was known about it. Then a scientist called William Harvey discovered, in that year, that blood circulation is key to life. But do you know something? The Bible had already revealed this fact years earlier. Today, we know from discoveries of medical science that blood carries water and nourishment to every cell, maintains the body's temperature, and removes waste material from the body's cells. That is what is meant by William Harvey's discovery of the value of blood circulation as a key factor in physical life. It is for this reason that God gave the law against eating of blood for Christians, because blood is the life of the person or creature.

In Leviticus 17:11, written more than 3,000 years ago, the value of blood is described for us. It is life. It gives life to the physical body. That is why in Jewish sacrifices, the blood of animals is used as atonement for the sins of the people. Of course, that type of sacrifice was not complete in themselves in the Old Testament, for it was looking forward to the day when God will send His only begotten Son to die and shed his blood for sinners. When his side was pierced, blood and water flowed out. Thus the blood of Christ was poured as substitute for the sins of the world. That is what is meant when we say Jesus died for us.

Look up Revelation 1:5 and fill in the blanks.

The importance of blood is shown in the death of Jesus Christ for us. "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness… Unto him that _____ us, and washed us from our _____ in his own blood."

Thought: Thank You Lord for sending Christ!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Christ to save me with His precious blood. I pray I'll be faithful and will stay close to Him who died for me. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

DISEASE OF LEPROSY

Leprosy is a feared disease. It causes severe skin problems that, if left untreated, can be progressive, causing permanent damage to the skin, nerves, limbs and eyes. Historically, leprosy has affected mankind for at least 4,000 years, and was well-recognized in the civilizations of ancient China and the Middle East.

In biblical times, leprosy was even more feared. It is a contagious disease for it could be transmitted by blood and secretions. It is a well-established fact that when leprosy has once gained a foothold in any area, it is apt to remain there and spread.

As the children of Israel moved in the wilderness, there was crowded living and a serious lack of clean water. This resulted in the need for proper hygiene practices as infectious diseases began to surface. In loving-kindness, God gave instructions here to stop the spread of such infectious diseases by separating those affected by leprosy – the lepers. Such persons must be easily recognized to protect the large population and thus their clothes were to be rent (or torn with holes); their hair not cut; the lower part of their faces covered –which is amazingly like wearing a mask nowadays! Moreover, they should signal to others that they were coming and so they had to shout, "Unclean, unclean" wherever they went. Furthermore, they had to live alone, apart from others. This is also a practice today. Do you remember when SARS and H1N1 hit Singapore, affected patients were kept in isolation wards? Although leprosy is a physical ailment, it reminds us of sin that ruins our lives and points to our need of a Saviour who can wash us whiter than snow.

Again, we see God's scientific approach to a serious disease thousands of years before man knew about contagious diseases and preventive medicine. Is our God not great?

Thought: Our God is above modern science!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for Your wisdom in dealing with diseases. It is amazing to know You have such careful plans thousands of years ago, and yet, some people today believe they know better than You and believe there is no God. I pray I will always be humble and trust in You and continue to seek You. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

CLEANLINESS NEXT TO GODLINESS!

Living in modern Singapore, you will not appreciate how different life was during the time of your grandparents when they were your age. That would have been perhaps 60 years ago, and Singapore was in the 1950s. The nice clean flats most of you live in were not even built. Another thing that was very different was the toilet system. You will not be able to imagine that the flushing system you and I take for granted now, was not in much use then. How then was human waste disposed? Go ask your parents or grandparents! If modern sanitation was not easily available in Singapore 60 years ago, it was surely not available to the children of Israel as they camped in the wilderness thousands of years ago.

Especially as they prepared for war, they had to stay healthy and fit, and therefore there was a need to practise personal cleanliness and good sanitation. The main camp where the people or troops lived was not to be contaminated, so God gave detailed instructions for them to prepare their toilet a good distance away from the camp.

Thousands of years before the flushing system was invented, God had already given instructions to His people to practise good sanitation for cleanliness and health. In this way, diseases would not spread and the people not fall sick and die. This is yet another way we clearly see how God knew about diseases way before man thought about them.

Have you heard of the phrase "Cleanliness is next to Godliness"? This means as Christians, we are to be physically clean and tidy, for it shows we are also clean spiritually. Of course, not all physically clean people are saved, and many Christians are untidy! But it is a good practice to adopt – so that all of us can learn to keep our rooms clean, pick up things where we left them, and make sure we help mummy at home in the chores we can be useful in.

You will help mummy, would you not?

Thought: May I be mummy's little helper!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me to be neat and tidy in my work and in all that I do. I ask that I'll also be a help to mummy so that in simple ways, I may show my gratitude to her, and live out my Christian witness. In Jesus' name I pray – Amen.

GOD OUR CREATOR!

Did you ever wonder why light was the first thing that God made, as mentioned in Genesis 1:3? Why not the animals, or man, or the sea or mountains? Because God knows that for life on earth to be sustained, light is needed. On the fourth day, God created the sun, moon and stars. Essentially light comes from one source, and that is the sun. The moonlight we enjoy at night is really a reflection of the sun from the moon, and therefore the main source of light is the sun. Is it not wonderful that God knew this? Of course it is. But we are not surprised because God is God! This sequence of creation recorded in Genesis is a very important fact to note as it shows that the record could not have been written by man since it was only in the last 100 years or so that modern man began to understand the logic of the creation sequence. If God created man and the animals and only in the last few days did He create light, sun, moon and stars. That would have gone against science, but as we know today, science is in agreement with the creation sequence.

Despite the above, many people still doubt the creation account in Genesis. They think God is not able to do what He says in the bible – create the world in 6 days. Or they think the 6 days were not the actual days we have today, but 6 long periods of millions of years each.

Dear child, what these people need is the simple faith that you and I should already have. Many may think they are smart or clever, but they forget that the wisdom of man is nothing compared to God. As we have seen in many of this month's readings, God revealed many things to His people thousands of years before science knew these things were beneficial. How good is the God we love!

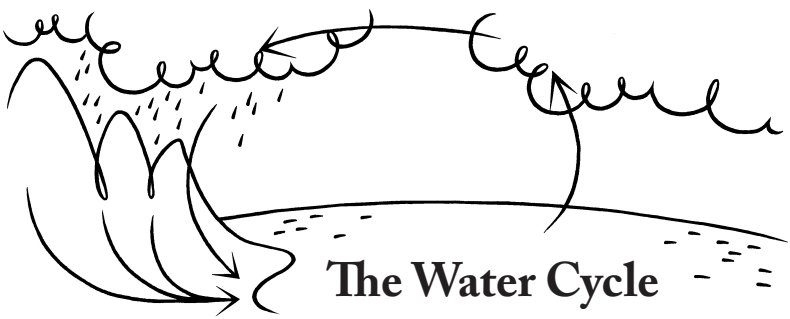
Thought: Thank You God for creating us!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for creating all of us. I pray I'll have the simple faith to believe what the Bible says, and to always obey Your precious Word. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

WHAT IS THE WATER CYCLE?

The water cycle describes the continuous movement of water throughout the environment. If you like, think about it this way…The journey begins with the water in lakes and oceans. Heat from the sun causes some of this water to evaporate upward to form water vapour and clouds. Water vapour cools the air and waters vegetation; clouds provide shade for man and animals. These are only some of the uses of these aspects of God's creation. The clouds eventually drop their moisture as rain, and of course when the weather is very cold, snow instead of rain falls.

Scientists have estimated that about 12% of rain or snow will fall in high ground and directly form or join streams and rivers. The rest of about 88% of the rain and snow soak into the ground as groundwater. This groundwater moves slowly downward into the soil. Here it may be tapped as wells for human use. Groundwater may also eventually appear as springs, or it may indirectly feed into rivers, lakes and oceans and possibly evaporate again. King Solomon described it accurately, "All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again."



Thought: Isn't it wonderful God taught about the water cycle so long ago?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for sustaining life on this earth through rain and snow In this way I am just reminded of today's text. You have made life on earth so beautiful And I thank You for being such a great Creator. In Jesus' name – Amen.

HOW IS WIND LIKE THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Leng Beng's father has been traveling a lot for his business. He misses the time spent with his wife and Leng Beng, so gave them a nice surprise by taking the day off. After a long and relaxing breakfast, they were wondering where to go. It was not a hot day, so they thought perhaps they could go for a walk at the Botanic Gardens. They have read about the new improvements to the gardens, and going on a weekday would also allow them to appreciate the peace and quiet without the weekend crowds. So to the Botanic Gardens they went!

Leng Beng commented it was a wonderful day, not only because they could be with dad, but the cool breezes made the garden stroll such a pleasant experience. The wind, noted his dad, was wonderful for not only was it cooling, it also gave life. It reminded him of the Holy Spirit. In fact, the bible uses "wind" as a metaphor for the Holy Spirit. What is wind? Wind is moving air. And this fresh circulating air is needed continually for life itself. Many forms of seeds require wind for dispersal. Without wind, much vegetation will die. Similarly, the Holy Spirit is the presence of God, the source of all life. Without the Holy Spirit coming into us, we will not be able to be born again.

Next, wind has no material shape or form. You and I cannot see wind as it is invisible. It may seem to be a mysterious, unseen force. Nevertheless, we know it is there when we see branches of trees moving and leaves flying. Although we cannot see wind, we can feel it. None of us can see the Holy Spirit, but all of us feel Him. The unseen Holy Spirit is experienced in the work He does in us by changing, encouraging and teaching believers.

Thirdly, wind can be a gentle breeze or a powerful force. It cannot be stopped or controlled by people. Likewise, the Holy Spirit is not subject to human control. The moving of the Holy Spirit is God at work. It can gently bring a person to Christ, such as a little child raised in a Christian home, or He may work in some dramatic way to bring conversion to a hardened sinner.

Thought: May the Holy Spirit renew and refresh us!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for the wonderful gift of the blessed Holy Spirit. I know He can renew and refresh us only if we allow Him to take full control of our lives. I ask that You will help me to submit myself to You, that the Holy Spirit can guide me in doing the right things. This is my prayer, in Jesus' name – Amen.

ARE YOU AFRAID OF STORMS?

Alice is a strong young girl, always ready to help and defend her little brother, Alan , against bullies in school. She is also tall for her tender age of eleven, and most people think that she is already a teenager. On the other hand, her younger brother looks younger than he actually is because of his puny frame.

Alice and Alan love each other very much. Because their parents are both busy working and have little time for them, they spend most of their time together and have grown very close to each other.

Most would think of Alice as a fearless child, protecting her brother all the way. That is true, but few know one aspect of her only Alan knows: Alice is afraid of thunderstorms. She did not want to share with others but the real reason is thunderstorms remind her of a fall she had when she ran for her pillow during one big stormy night. Since then, every time she hears a thunderstorm, she is brought back to that unhappy scene. Another thing that few know about these two siblings: Alan is not afraid of thunderstorms! In fact, he always tells his sister not to be afraid by referring her to Psalm 29:3 "The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the LORD is upon many waters."

Alan tells Alice that although storms can be terrifying, God's people need not fear because all nature even storms are God's creation (Psalm 29:3) and are under God's control (Psalm 107:29). And this is the God who loves them so much. This brings a lot of comfort to the two of them for they have less parental love than many of you.

Isn't it wonderful that the God who loves us so much is also in charge of all natural elements such as the terrifying sounding thunder and lightning? Even though we may be somewhat afraid of thunderstorms, remember – God controls even them, so there is really nothing to be afraid of!

Thought: May I never ever be afraid of storms!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, let me see Thy majesty in the storm, even as I hide in Thee so I will never be afraid of storms again. In Jesus' name I pray – Amen.

PLAYING IN THE RAIN…

John and his best friend , Teng Fai , loved outdoor games and they loved playing Frisbee most. Last Saturday was no exception – they were enjoying themselves playing Frisbee when rain clouds threatened and then after a short while, a light drizzle came. They enjoyed the light drizzle, for it refreshed their tired bodies. Then the shout from mummy came, "Come back home or into that shelter for you guys may get sick playing in the rain!" Some kids enjoy playing in the rain. In fact, some adults too! Guess we are talking about a little drizzle, not a heavy downpour when we talk about playing in the rain. The light rain falling down on one's face and body, and the beautiful sight of the raindrops falling down from heaven is a joy to behold. There is so much variety and difference in speed and size of raindrops and direction that the scene is like a delicate painting that only God can draw.

But why is there rain? First, storms or rain may be directed by God to correct or punish people. The worldwide flood described in Genesis is certainly one good example. It may sound scary but God does punish through nature such as violent storms etc.

Second, God sends rain to water His earth. If there is no rain, the earth will die a slow and agonizing death. Mankind, the animal kingdom, and all plants will suffer from and eventually die from lack of water. The surface of the earth would be like the moon: dusty and lifeless. Think about it - even the size of raindrops is important. God has planned it to perfection - if raindrops were larger, plant damage and erosion would result because they would be too heavy. And you and I would not like playing in the rain - it would certainly be very painful!

Thought: Remember God when it next rains!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that You take care of us even in everyday events like rain. And there is so much thought in Your planning rain drops to water the earth, and for us to enjoy! In Jesus' name I pray – Amen.

A RAINBOW…

From yesterday's discussion of raindrops, we move to rainbows today. A rainbow is one of the most spectacular light shows observed on earth. Its happy colours and how they blend together to form that glorious bow remind us of God's goodness as today's verses tell us. A rainbow occurs when raindrops and sunshine cross paths. Sunlight consists of all the colours of light, which add together to make white illumination. When sunlight enters water droplets, it reflects off their inside surfaces. While passing through the droplets, the light also separates into its component colours, which is similar to the effect of a glass prism. Each falling water drop actually flashes its colours to the observer for just an instance, before another drop takes its place.

A rainbow is usually seen in the opposite direction in the sky from the sun. If you travel toward the end of a rainbow, it will move ahead of you, maintaining its shape. Thus there is no real end to a rainbow, and no proverbial pot of gold waiting there. Higher in the sky there is usually another, dimmer rainbow with the order of colours reversed. This secondary rainbow results from additional reflection of sunlight through the raindrops. Have you seen this before? Look for the second bow high up in the sky the next time rainbow colours appear. It is not easy but sometimes you may be able to catch it! The rainbow is a gracious pledge that God will not destroy the earth a second time with a worldwide flood as recorded for us in Genesis 9.

Thought: See a rainbow, remember God's promise.

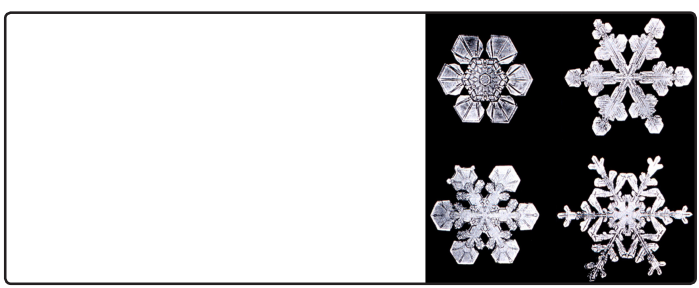
Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the beautiful reminder of a rainbow, that You will not send a global flood anymore. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

EVERY SNOWFLAKE IS REALLY DIFFERENT!

Today, there is much study on the beautiful pattern of snowflakes. The exact shape and size depend on conditions occurring right next to the tiny flake: air temperature, wind current, humidity, nearby snowflakes and others. There is a lot of advanced science behind all these, but that is not what we are going to talk about today.

What we want to consider today is why no two flakes are completely identical. In just one cubic foot of snow are about 20 million flakes. Every snowflake is different as they can be formed in endless combinations of ways. This is somewhat similar to having a stadium filled with thousands of people, and then calculating the vast number of possible seating arrangements. If any two or more people exchange seats in any way, it counts as a new arrangement. Similarly, every grain of sand and blade of grass, every person and star is uniquely different. Even in the falling down of raindrops, there is so much variety and delight! We shouldn't be surprised - creation demonstrates the infinite ability of God to design and also care for what He has made. God performs wonders that cannot be fathomed (Job 9:10).

Every snowflake is different. Design a snowflake of your own.



Thought: If God makes snowflakes unique, He also makes us so.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the things You have created – all of great beauty. And I see so much design, and thought put into Thy creation. Indeed, great is Thy power, and wonderful is Thy love to grant us such a beautiful world. Although I do not see any real snowflakes in Singapore, I know each snowflake is a work of art, reminding me of Thy goodness. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

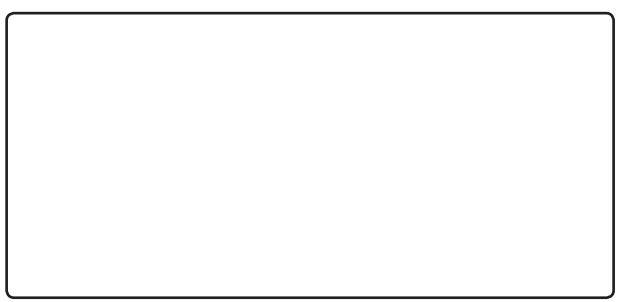
WHAT CAUSES THUNDER AND LIGHTNING?

Lightning is electrical in nature. In 1752, the American scientist, Benjamin Franklin, tried a dangerous experiment when he flew his kite during a thunderstorm. He noticed that sparks jumped from a key tied to the kite string, to his knuckles. Thunder results from the intense heating of air by the lightning. It creates sound waves, which eventually reach us and cause our eardrums to vibrate. And as light travels faster than sound, we see bolts of lightning before hearing thunder striking.

These first few verses of Job 37 beautifully describe a thunderstorm, where thunder is likened to the voice of the Lord (Job 37:2). We would be awed by the greatness and majesty of God as we hear thunder and see lightning bolts light up the sky. Although we see a fairly high number of thunderstorms in Singapore, you would never guess how many thunderstorms occur at any one given moment. What would your guess be? 100, or 500, or 1000?

It is estimated that at any given moment, at least 2,000 thunderstorms are occurring somewhere around the world, mostly in tropical regions. Only the infinite Creator could be in control of such powerful forces.

Draw a huge cloud with lightning coming out of it.
Add the word BOOM to show the thunder.



The fearsome lightning
and thunder show God's _____ (lorgy).

Thought: God's glory is wonderfully displayed in nature.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, when I hear thunder and see lightning, may I be reminded of Your glory in creation. In Jesus' name I pray - Amen.

IS YOUR LIFE LIKE THE SEA OF GALILEE?

Mark 4:37 records for us that there was a great storm and the waves beat into the ship, with the water smashing against and overflowing into the boat. The high hills to the north and east of the Sea of Galilee have cool, dry air. On the other hand, the air hovering over the Sea of Galilee is moist, and at the same time warm. When these two contrasting air masses meet, one dry and cool while the other moist and warm, the forces of nature collide in creating storms quickly and often without warning. Small boats caught out at sea are in immediate danger. Also the Sea of Galilee is shallow and shallow seas get "whipped up" by wind more rapidly than deep waters, where the wind energy is more readily absorbed by the deeper body of water. But do you know what? With Christ in the vessel, the storm was easily calmed! He commanded the wind and waves to cease and they obeyed Him.

Do you also have Christ in your life? If you do, Christ will calm the storms you meet. What are storms in your life? No, not physical storms, but difficult problems or major issues that crop up that threaten you or your family. Maybe your father has lost his job. Or perhaps your brother did not do well in school and has to be retained. Or granny is hospitalized. Turn to Jesus, and He will be able to calm the storms in your life. He may not calm them immediately for he wants us to learn precious lessons from them. Remember, he wants us to learn from them. But remember, he will want us to turn to Him for only He can help.

Thought: With Christ in the vessel, we can smile at the storm!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thou art a shelter for me in the time of storm. I pray I'll continue to trust in Thee and to always turn to Thee for help. This I pray in the precious name of Jesus, amen.

STARRY STARRY NIGHT…

In Genesis 22, God tested Abraham with a most severe test. God wanted to see whether Abraham loved Him more than his son, Isaac, and Abraham was found faithful because he was willing to sacrifice Isaac to God. Therefore God repeated the promise He made earlier that He would bless Abraham with a vast multitude of descendants. In Genesis 22:17, the Bible says that Abraham's descendants will number as the stars of the heaven and as the sand at the seashore. Genesis 22:18 further says that in Abraham's seed i.e. Christ, all nations of the earth will be blessed. The Lord Jesus Christ will bring the gift of salvation to all who believe in Him. Not just Jews but also Gentiles like you and me!

You must have walked along some seashore in our island nation – do you think we can count the number of sand grains on the beach? No, and that would be obvious even in the days of old. However, the fact that the number of stars is as countless as number of grains of sand – that was not something people knew then. Only in modern days do astronomers confirm this fact stated by God thousands of years ago.

God made the stars. He made so many that they cannot be counted. In ancient times, astronomers could only count about a thousand stars with their naked eye. Then came the invention of the telescope and people realised that the number of stars was huge - countless. Scientists are discovering more and more stars in the sky. Thus God has already revealed to us in the Bible that there are countless stars in the universe so that they can be compared to the sands of the seashore.

It's a pity not many stars are visible on a typical night in Singapore. This is because the skies in our country are often dirty, and the bright lights of our city will not allow the stars to be so visible. But if you were to look out for stars from a village in Thailand or a hill in Malaysia, you'd be much better able to see them.

Next time you see stars in the night, or the sand at the beach, remember God's goodness to Abraham, and to you!

Thought: How good the Lord is!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for giving me such a wonderful and easy reminder of Your love. The next time I see stars or sand, let me remember to praise You! In Jesus' name I pray – Amen.

HAVE YOU EXAMINED A FLOWER?

Imagine there is a young bee called Buzz, and his main job is to gather nectar from flowers to make honey. One day as Buzz was flying along, he happened to notice one particularly bright red flower which had a green base . He then landed softly on a big, fluffy-looking part of the flower. From there he dove straight into the flower and noticed a big green stalk right in the center of the flower. All around it were little stalks that waved in the breeze. They had funny little knobby things on their ends. Buzz was really curious what all these things were and decided to go ask his good friend – you! Would you be able to help Buzz?

Of course there are many types of flowers and therefore not all flowers look like what Buzz saw. But a lot of them would have essentially the same parts Buzz saw. There are 4 main parts we shall examine today. The first part we are going to look at is this pointy little green leafy part at the base of the flower. This is called the sepal. The sepal is important when the flower is young, because it helps protect the bud.

What is the big, red fluffy part Buzz landed on? It is of course the petal! God really did a spectacular job of making the flowers beautiful by giving the petals different colours. Well, He actually created them this way for a reason. The bright colours attract pollinators like Buzz to them. The flower needs bees to help it form new seeds.

Now going farther into the flower, down to the middle where the big stalk - that is the pistil. This is a very important part of the flower because this is where pollination occurs. That's a big word - but the idea is simple - pollination is the process of the little grains of pollen moving down the pistil where they form seeds. The last part we are going to talk about is the tall things with little knobby ends - those are the stamens which hold pollen on their ends.

Most of us don't spend too much time examining flowers, do we? To us, flowers just happen along the wayside, and are not something very precious. But if we think about how God has designed and shaped these natural beauties will we not marvel that He is a great Creator?

Thought: The Lord my God is the great Creator of the heavens and the earth!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, as I see the wonders of nature, may I praise Thy name and give glory to Thee. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

PRAYING FOR GOOD WEATHER

It was the one-week term break in March and the JW class had planned a picnic lunch at the East Coast Park. Everyone was excited, except James. James did not like the beach because he had always been afraid of the sound of the waves. Although he is now in Primary Five and that initial fear is gone, still he does not like to be by the seaside.

Brother Michael had assigned every student some responsibility. Whether it was to bring beach towels, or drinks, or games, or some sandwiches, everyone had to do something for that is what teamwork is all about. Brother Michael himself was going to bring a pot of honey-baked ham and of course, as the teacher, he was in charge of giving a short exhortation from the Bible.

After he had assigned everyone something to do, Brother Michael asked, "Children, is there anything else we need to prepare for the picnic?" There was no reply until James said, "We have to pray for good weather."

Brother Michael was very impressed, "Indeed James is right! We have to ask the Lord to grant us good weather otherwise we will not be able to have the picnic! James, do you often pray for good weather when your family goes to the beach?"

Sheepishly James replied, "Frankly, when my family plans for a beach outing, I often pray to the Lord about the weather, but it is not for good but for bad weather!" He then told them about his past fears but eventually smiled and said, " But for this outing, I'm going to pray for good weather, so that all of us can enjoy ourselves as a JW class! In fact, I'll try to like the beach and with the yummy food, JW friends, and interesting games, I think not liking the beach will be a thing of the past!"

Thought: May I commit even the weather into God's loving hands!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I'm so glad You are in control of everything, including the weather. I pray I'll learn to commit the different areas of my life into Your hands. When I go out, or when the family has any outing, remind me to seek You for protection and blessings. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

THE BEST AIR-CONDITIONING!

Singapore is a hot country. With temperatures above 30 degrees Celsius almost everyday, many Singapore homes use air-conditioning. In fact, air-conditioning is used in most commercial places such as the shopping malls, office buildings, MRT, buses, libraries, schools. Although air-conditioning is a wonderful invention especially for people like us who live in a hot climate, it is not a perfect invention for too much air-conditioning dries our skin. Of course, air-conditioning also consumes a lot of electricity.

When God made the world, He gave it the best air-conditioning with no bad side-effects as described for us in today's text. Not only was the temperature cool, it was nice and moist as there was a mist arising from the earth to water plants! That is why in those days, before the global flood of Noah's time, there was never any rain for there was no need for rain.

The climate before the flood was very different then. It was uniform and pleasant, like a tropical paradise. The temperature was cool throughout the day - a nice windy coolness with no colliding forces of hot and cold air to form storms, or destructive forces such as tornadoes and cyclones.

Adam and Eve lived in this beautiful pre-flood climate in the Garden of Eden. Had they not sinned, life would have been perfect, like the weather was. Today, we see the effects of sin not just in our spiritual lives, but also in the sometimes terrible weather conditions of the world.

When you have good weather, what are some of the things you like to do?

1. Have a p _____ in the park.

2. Enjoy yourselves in the p _____.

3. Have a b _____ game with my friends.

Thought: Thank God for good weather!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, let me be thankful for all that Thou sends my way. Especially for fine weather, so I can enjoy myself with friends and loved ones. In Jesus' name I pray – Amen.

LEARNING FROM ANTS

Ants are small social insects that live in organised communities called a colony. You may not know, but there are nearly 20,000 species of ants that vary in size, colour, and ways of life. Most are a dull, drab color such as brown, rust, or black. However some ants are yellow, green, blue, or purple. The largest ant species can reach over 1 inch in length, while the smallest is about 1/25 of an inch.

Ants are most numerous in warm climate regions, so we see a lot of them in Singapore. They could be thriving in some corner of your house carrying, storing and nibbling on some food leftovers or in your school garden. In fact, they live almost everywhere on land except for extremely cold locations. Ants have many different ways of life. Some ants live in underground tunnels or build earthen mounds. Other ants live inside trees or in certain plants. Some construct nests of tree leaves.

An ant colony may be small in number or reach into the hundreds, thousands, or even millions of inhabitants. Larger colonies have many queens whose chief responsibility is to lay eggs. Most colony members are workers.

But exactly what can we learn from ants? They are very hardworking, and also store food for the proverbial "rainy day". These are especially "harvester ants" which collect food and store them within their nests. Some ants can lift items 50 times their own weight!

Are you a hardworking child? Are you like the ants in being prepared for a "rainy day"? What is a "rainy day" anyway? It is not a day when it rains. Rather, it is a time of need or trouble. It could be your school assessments, or examinations, or some family problems. There are family problems that you would not be able to help for you are young, but there is someone who could help, and that someone is the person you call "Heavenly Father". So turn to Him for comfort. For rainy days such as your continual assessments or examinations which you can prepare for, do you study hard consistently or do you study hard only days before examinations? Do you think ants store food only when they think food supply is low or whenever there are opportunities to put more food into their store?

Thought: May I be hardworking like the ants!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I never be lazy, but instead be diligent in all that I do so that I will be a good testimony for You. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

TAKE NO THOUGHT FOR YOUR LIFE

All of us love ourselves. We value our own lives. We also love our own bodies. We eat and drink to nourish ourselves. We sleep to replenish our energy. We exercise to keep fit and stay healthy.

But the Lord Jesus in Matthew 6:25 says, "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"

The Lord Jesus is saying in Matthew 6:25 that we should not be anxious about our physical needs i.e. food, drink, clothing etc. The Lord Jesus is not saying that these physical needs are not important. We need these necessities for our daily lives. What the Lord Jesus means is we do not have to worry about these physical needs.

To the people during the time of Christ, physical needs were very important to them. Many of them were poor. They lived on what they could earn each day. If they did not work that particular day, they and their family will go hungry. In fact, many people in those days were also fearful for their livelihood for they were living under Roman rule and not treated well by their Roman masters.

Why does the Lord Jesus tell the people not to be anxious about their physical needs? In Matthew 6:33, the Lord Jesus says, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." The Lord Jesus promised to supply all their physical needs. He does not want them to worry. Instead, He wants them to seek first the kingdom of God. This means the Lord Jesus wants them to seek after the things that are spiritual. This includes studying the Word of God, obeying God, living holy lives, sharing the Gospel with others etc. Things that are spiritual are more important than earthly things.

Thought: May I learn to trust God to provide for my needs!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for reminding me not to worry about physical needs. Help me instead to seek after Thee and obey Thee. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

WHAT DID JESUS TEACH ABOUT BIRDS?

Keeping caged birds is a popular hobby in Singapore. If you go to neighbourhood parks you may be able to see ornate bird cages dangling from tall poles, swaying in the breeze. Perched in these cages above are chirping songbirds. At the ground below, the owners drink tea and discuss about their bird's singing abilities. These birds are from a variety of species which include merbok, chinese thrush, red-whiskered bulbul and shama. The owners pay huge sums of money to buy these birds. They meticulously care for these birds ensuring that they are properly fed and looked after. But have you wondered about the birds that are in the wild; that wander around freely and have no human owner? Who feeds them?

In Matthew 6:26a the Lord Jesus says – "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns;" The Lord Jesus affirms that these birds do not sow nor reap; neither do they gather food. So who feeds the birds? In Matthew 6: 26b, the Lord Jesus says, "yet your heavenly Father feedeth them." God provides food for these birds. The Lord Jesus did not end this verse on birds; but ends the verse by saying to the people whom he preached to, "Are ye not much better than they?" The lesson that the Lord Jesus was trying to teach the people was that if God is able to provide for the needs of the birds, surely He will provide for them, His children. The lesson learnt here is that they should not worry about their needs.

Thought: The Lord provides for my needs!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give me more faith to believe that since You can take care of birds, You will take care of me and my needs. Help me to trust in You always. In Jesus' name I pray – Amen.

WHAT DID JESUS TEACH ABOUT OUR HEIGHT?

The tallest man in the world today could be about 2.5 metres tall. That is 8 feet 1 inch, and if he enters your house, his head will almost touch the ceiling. But is that the tallest man ever in the world? No! The bible tells us Goliath was about 9 feet and 6 inches tall. Is that impossible? Well, we have to remember Goliath was in his military attire so it is possible that height included his boots, his helmet, and the tall central adornment on helmets of elite soldiers as Goliath was. But still, he was a very tall man for the bible to say he is 9 and a half feet tall. But we know that is possible, for the tallest man in modern history was Robert Pershing Wadlow from Illinois in America, born in 1918 and stood 2.72 m (8 feet 11 inches) at the time of his death in 1940.

In Singapore, the average height of men and women is a lot lower than 9 feet! In fact, the average height for Singaporean males is about 1.72 m which is 5 ft 8 inches. Women are about 4 inches shorter, on average. Is that tall compared to people of other countries? Unfortunately not. The average height of those in northern Europe is about the highest, with the average Dutch man about 6 feet tall.

Many of you will have parents who will tell you to jump, eat more, sleep better, exercise more – all in an attempt to make you grow taller. Would you actually be taller if you did all these? Yes, but there would be a limit. This limit is coded by your genes, for how tall or short you would be is determined by the genes your parents give you. You can sometimes see tall children born to short parents or short children born to tall parents, but generally, tall parents have tall children.

Today's verse reminds us that Jesus knew this long ago. He mentioned in the text that no amount of worrying or care can add a cubit (16 inches) to one's height. That is of course true! It is not important whether we are tall or short. It is a lot more important to trust God and to remember He is the one who determines who is tall and who is short.

Thought: May I commit everything to the Lord.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the reminder that the important thing is not being tall or short, but in knowing who determines our height and who can help me. I pray You'll continue to guide and help me as I read the Bible and Junior RPG everyday. This is my prayer in Jesus' name – Amen.

WHAT DID JESUS TEACH ABOUT FLOWERS?

Nothing is more beautiful than blooming flowers. Of the estimated 10,000 types of flowering plants, there are many contestants for the "Most beautiful flower". We may never know which is the most beautiful but we are aware that they are all wonderful and attractive. Especially when you walk along fields of wild flowers, both the loveliness of the individual flower as well as the splendour of the collective sea of flowers will stun you.

As Jesus was teaching the multitudes in Matthew 6, he was probably in the Judean countryside and probably near him were fields of wild lilies. It could have been springtime, and the flowers were bursting with colours. Here, Jesus teaches a very important lesson: that although the common flowers, the lilies do not labour to put on any special "clothing", they are in their natural self more wonderfully adorned than one of Israel's most wealthy and powerful king – King Solomon! When Solomon was king, he had great wealth and thus was able to wear the finest silk and material the kingdom had. But Jesus tells us in these 2 verses, that even Solomon in all his glory and splendour, was not attired like one of these wild flowers!

The next time you look at flowers – remember these verses. Jesus is telling us how great and caring our heavenly Father is to nature. Now if God is so loving to just flowers, how much more will He take care of you and me?

Thought: If God cares for flowers, how much more would He care for me!

Prayer: Thank You Heavenly Father for Your love to all your creation. I am so comforted because I know man is most precious to You, for You sent Your only begotten Son to die for us. Thank you Heavenly Father, for giving us Your Son, and it is in His name that I pray – Amen.

GENESIS FLOOD – WAS IT REALLY GLOBAL? (1)

Lily was very upset after school. The teacher told them that the Genesis Flood was not what the bible said it was! Lily was determined to find out more about the flood, so she talked to her dad that night.

Dad was calm and serious. Dad said that indeed, many schools and even Christian leaders claim that Noah's flood did not cover the entire Earth. Further, they claim that Noah and the animals floated on a shallow, temporary shelter. But that cannot be true for many reasons, and we will examine some of them today, and tomorrow.

1. All Mountains Covered. All mountains were at least 20 feet beneath the waters' surface (Genesis 7:19-20). If the tallest mountains were covered by water, clearly the rest of the world would be covered! Further, the waters remained at this height for five months! (Genesis 7:18-24, 8:1-5).

2. The Ark Was Huge (Genesis 6:15-16). The ark was necessary to prevent the extinction of humans and animals. Also, if the Flood was local, the ark was unnecessarily large. Until the first metal ships were constructed in modern times, the ark was the largest ship ever built.

3. Humans Populated The Entire World during Noah' time. After more than 1600 years of habitation on Earth, the planet's population was surely large. The Bible confirms that (a) Man had multiplied upon the face of the Earth and (b) Violence and corruption filled the Earth (Genesis 6:1, 5).

4. All Humans Were Killed in the Flood. The Bible clearly teaches that all flesh died… every man (Genesis 7:21) except Noah' family (Genesis 8:18). Only a global Flood will be able to destroy lives of all men and creatures on land.

Thought: Believe only what the Bible says!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may Thou grant me the faith to believe what the Bible says rather than the words of man. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

GENESIS FLOOD – WAS IT REALLY GLOBAL? (2)

Dad continued talking with Lily and said that the other reasons why the flood during Noah's time was global were…

5. All Land Animals Killed in the Flood. The world's entire population of land animals died, except those taken into the Ark (Genesis 7:21; 8:17). If only those animals in a specific location died, it would be unnecessary for God to save pairs in the Ark for the purpose of preventing their extinction.

6. God's Rainbow Promise. God promised never again to send a global Flood (Genesis 9:8-17). This promise is demonstrated by the symbol of the rainbow, a sign for God's promise to all the Earth. If this promise was about a local flood, then God has broken His promise. Local floods have repeatedly killed thousands of humans and animals since Noah's time.

7. Why Stay In The Ark A Year?! Noah was in the ark for more than a year, not just 40 days (Genesis 7:1-13, 8:14-20). 53 weeks is absurdly long to stay in the ark for a local flood since dry land would have been just over the horizon.

8. The Whole Earth Was Devastated. God said, "I will destroy them with the Earth" (Genesis 6:13b). The global extent of the Flood is referred to more than 30 times in Genesis 6-9 alone! Peter also delivered a clear global warning, confirming that God created the Earth, devastated it by the Flood, and will one day destroy it again by fire (2 Peter 3:5-7).

The Bible specifically teaches that the Flood of Noah's time was global in extent and that all land animals and humans were killed, except those saved in the Ark.

Thought: Never doubt God's Word

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to trust in your Word. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

BE YE A DOER OF GOD'S WORD

When was the mirror invented? It's difficult to nail down the invention of the mirror to any one man, or even a single culture. We have to start with a definition of a mirror, given that any naturally reflective surfaces may work as mirrors. Thousands of years ago in ancient civilizations such as Turkey, China and Rome, they already used shiny surfaces as mirrors.

However, for a more precise answer to the question of who invented the mirror – the type we see today - you need look no further than a German chemist named Justus von Liebig. In 1835, he created the first modern mirror by applying a layer of metallic silver to the back of a pane of glass. This created what was a template for the first mass production of the modern mirror. Mirrors come in all shapes and sizes; they're used for a variety of reasons.

How much time does your mummy spend in front of the mirror before she goes out for a nice dinner with dad? Probably a lot more time than your dad does. But why would your mum and dad, and for that matter – you – spend time in front of the mirror? To make sure you look OK; your hair is properly combed; your attire is neat etc…

Today's verse tells us the Bible is like a mirror (the word "glass" used in the KJV) which shows us the areas of our lives which need improvement. When we use a physical mirror to see ourselves, we will change what we do not like about ourselves. For example if there is dirt on our face, we will wipe it away. Likewise, the Bible is like our spiritual mirror. When we read the Bible, and when it convicts us of sin, we must repent, seek God's forgiveness, and change our lives. We need to be not just hearers but also doers of God's Word.

How often do you use the physical mirror? I guess every day. How often do you use the spiritual mirror? I hope you also use it every day…

Thought: May I be not just a hearer but doer of Thy Word!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me not just to look at the Bible, my spiritual mirror, but to change what is not right. In Jesus' name – Amen.

GOD LOVES CHILDREN WHATEVER THEIR RACE OR BACKGROUND

As Tai Loong waited to see what art project the class would be doing, he looked at the variety of coloured cards. Mrs. Lin, the art teacher, turned to the class. "Tai Loong, please come up here and take the red card," she said. Tai Loong rose from his seat and slowly walked to the front. He looked at the cards. Then he hesitantly lifted one of them, and everyone laughed. "That's enough, class," said Mrs. Lin. She turned to Tai Loong. "Take the red card, please," she said. "Not the green one."

Tai Loong frowned. "I'm colour-blind," he told her. "Oh!" said Mrs. Lin in surprise. "We'll excuse you then and let someone else help with this demonstration." So Tai Loong returned to his seat.

At recess time, Tai Loong played with Rick, a boy whose nationality was different from Tai Loong's. They were having fun together when another classmate spoke to Tai Loong. "Hey, Tai Loong," he called, "no wonder Rick is your friend. You can't tell that he's a different colour." "Ignore him," Tai Loong told Rick. I don't get it, thought Tai Loong. Why would anybody decide to not like a person just because his skin is a different colour?

During science class a little later, the subject of colour-blindness came up again. Tai Loong was asked several questions about it. "Does it bother you that lots of times you don't know what colour things are?" asked one of the girls.

Tai Loong grinned. "It doesn't matter what colour they are," he said. "Red apples taste good and so do yellow ones. Colour isn't what makes something good or bad." As he spoke, the incident at recess popped into his mind. He took a deep breath. "That's true of people, too," he added. "God made every person, and He made them all the same in value." He looked at the boy who had teased him at recess, and added, "I think everyone should be 'colour-blind' when it comes to seeing people."

"Good for you, Tai Loong," approved his teacher. "You're absolutely right."

Thought: Do you develop opinions about others based on skin colour? Or their background? Or how they look? Don't forget that God made everyone special.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me realise that outward appearance of a person - a person's size, or the colour of his skin, hair or eyes - does not make him any more or less valuable in God's sight. Help me to think like You, and never to be biased. In Jesus' name I pray – amen.

TREASURES IN HEAVEN

While the rest of her family swam and soaked up the sun at the beach, Joy moulded a huge sand castle. She made soaring towers and dug a deep moat all around her castle. When Joy noticed that waves were coming closer and closer, she quickly began to pile sand high up all around the castle walls. "Help, Dad!" exclaimed Joy after a moment. "The water's going to get my castle!"

Dad shook his head. "It's no use," he said. "The tide is coming in, and the waves will come a lot higher before they go back down."

Joy didn't want to believe that. She dug a wide trench all around her castle and continued to build a sand barrier to protect it. But water soon crashed over the barrier and filled the trench. The waves splashed against the edge of the castle, pulling it apart with watery fingers. "It took me a long time to build that, and now it's gone in no time," moaned Joy.

"Well, just be glad it's only sand," said her sister, Danielle. "Sometimes people lose real houses in catastrophes like fires and storms, don't they, Dad?"

Dad nodded. "Actually, all earthly possessions are a little like that sand castle," he said. "Many people work all their lives to get more and more things-things that won't last. It's too bad so many people are more concerned about their present life than their future one. They forget that there's something much more important than earthly things."

"Like doing stuff for God?" asked Joy. Dad nodded. "That's right. First of all, we need to make sure we possess eternal life through Jesus. And then we need to remember that nobody can keep earthly things forever. Soon they'll all be gone. Instead of worrying so much about them, we should store up treasures in heaven by serving God."

"When we're grown up, right?" suggested Danielle.

Dad smiled. "Yes, and right now, too," he said. "Kids can store treasure in heaven by being kind, helpful, and obedient. I'm sure you'll be able to think of many things you can do."

Thought: Where are you storing treasure-on earth or in heaven?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me remember the things I can buy and enjoy on this earth won't last. Help me to focus on things that will last, and that's treasure stored in heaven. In Jesus' name I pray – amen.

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