

WHAT IS A PROMISE?

“Darren, I want you to complete these before school opens. Your PSLE is coming. You need to work doubly hard,” said his mother, while thrusting a stack of assessment books onto his study desk.

Darren lets out a loud groan and said, “Mom, you’re torturing me. I am going to explode with this extra work. Look at the piles of homework the teachers have already given me!”

“Alright. Alright. I know you are under a lot of pressure. You must still work hard. No point arguing. I tell you what. If you work hard and do well, I promise to take you to Disney World in Florida.”

“Do you really mean it? Thanks Mom! I will work really, really hard.”

Darren’s mother has just made him a promise. Darren trusts his mother. So far, she has kept all her promises. He is encouraged to work hard.

A promise is normally an agreement to give or do or be something. In Darren’s case, his mother has agreed to give him a vacation overseas if he does well. It is to encourage him to work hard. The Bible says God has made “covenants” or agreements with His people to encourage them to walk in His ways.

This month, we will study the Bible to find out what promises God has made. Knowing His promises will help us know more about God. The first promise God made to mankind is the promise of ETERNAL LIFE through faith in Jesus.

Have you received eternal life? Do you believe that Jesus Christ died for your sins, was buried and rose again the third day and is now in heaven with our heavenly Father? If you believe that Jesus is your Saviour, you are a child of God and no more a slave to sin. You will receive all the precious and great promises of God that our heavenly Father gives to whoever believes.

Let’s do a simple equation:

Faith in Jesus = E _____ L _____

Thought: God’s first promise is eternal life to those who believe.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I believe all your promises are true. Thank You for your promise of eternal life. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

BELIEVING IS RECEIVING

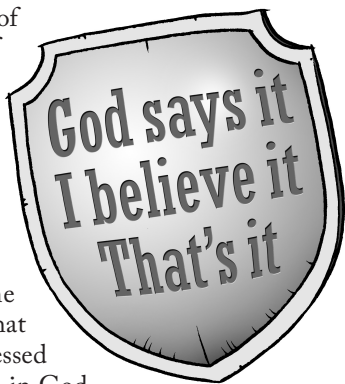
Darren believes that his mother will keep her promise. That is why he resolves to work very hard. Suppose he doubts his mother's word. Would he still have the motivation to work hard? To him, his mother has so far never gone back on her word. He has faith in his mother.

The Bible says that God promised Abraham that his descendants that will be as many as the stars in the sky and the sand on the beach. Abraham believed God who truly made him the father of many nations. Although both Abraham and Sarah were too old to bear children they continued to believe God would do as promised. In man's thinking, it was against all odds that a 100-year-old man and a barren ninety-year-old woman can bear a son. But whatever doubts man may have, Isaac was born! Abraham had faith in God's promise. Abraham is known as the Father of Faith and all of us who believe in God are children of faith.

As children of God, we should never doubt God's Word. If we do, we are effectively saying that God is a liar and His promises are not worth believing in. But God is truth, and everyone who disbelieves Him is a fool. Once God has spoken, whatever He has said will come to pass. We cannot receive God's promises if we do not believe in Him.

Charles Spurgeon, a great preacher of the 19th century, compared a promise of God to a cheque. It is a promissory note to be exchanged for hard cash through a bank. If we do not believe in the value of the cheque and do nothing about it, we cannot enjoy the use of the money given to us. The experience will be the same with the promises of God.

What did Abraham do with the 'cheque' God gave to him. Believing that God will honour it, Abraham lived a blessed life of trust and obedience. He has faith in God, our Heavenly Father. He believed and therefore received.



Thought: Faith means believing that God will do what He says.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to believe in Your Word so that I will receive all the blessings that You have promised. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

GOD'S PROMISES ARE MADE FOR HIS CHILDREN

Who are God's children? Only those of us, who have believed and accepted Jesus as our Saviour, can be called the children of God. No unbeliever can be called a child of God. As His children, we have the privilege to call God "Heavenly Father" or "Abba", which is a special and close way of addressing one's father. Our relationship with God comes about "through the righteousness of faith".

Yesterday, we learnt that without faith, we cannot enjoy the benefit of God's promises. Today, we learn that those without faith are not children of God and therefore cannot appropriate His promises. The children of God are justified by faith. It means that we are considered righteous in God's eyes because of our faith in Jesus. God's promises are meant for the children of faith only.

When a man writes a will, who do you think will be the first to be named as heirs to his money and assets? Naturally, it will be his closest next-of-kin. That will be his children and his relations. He will not name a stranger. It has to be someone he loves. Do you know what? The Bible says that as children of God, we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Isn't that wonderful? God will give us a share of the inheritance in the Kingdom of heaven. God's many precious and great promises are especially reserved for us for we are His children by faith.

Fill in the blank

The promise of righteousness was not
to those who keep the law but to those
who believe by _____

Thought: We are made right with God by faith and not by doing good works.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for opening my eyes to Your truth. All the promises written in the Bible are for me. Help me to keep on believing. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

GOD'S PROMISES ARE ALWAYS TRUE

God is truth. God's Word, the Bible you hold in your hands, is perfect and unchanging. According to His word, every promise of God will be fulfilled. In fact many have already been fulfilled. Do you know some of them?

Let us name a few of the promises in the Old Testament:

To Abraham

Father of many nations
and descendants as countless
as the stars in the sky
and sand on the beach.

To Abraham, Moses and Joshua

The Promised Land flowing
with milk and honey.

To King David

The kingly line of David
will be forever.

To mankind

A son of woman will bruise
Satan's head.
A saviour will come to save sinners.

Fulfilled:

His wife, Sarah conceived and gave
birth to Isaac at the age of ninety.
Jacob, his son gave rise to twelve
tribes. All children of faith are also
included as his descendants.

Fulfilled:

Moses led God's people out of
Egypt the land of bondage. Joshua
succeeded in conquering Canaan.

Fulfilled:

Jesus who will be the King of kings
came from the lineage of King
David. He will rule forever.

Fulfilled:

Jesus came and conquered death by
rising the third day after his death
on the cross.

Jesus says He will come again and has promised to prepare a mansion in heaven for every Christian (John 14:2). That means He will prepare a mansion for you and for me. Have you been to a mansion? It is a wonderful and large home, and that is what awaits us in heaven!

Thought: God is faithful and keeps every single one of His promises.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for your faithfulness. Help me to obey Thy commandments and keep me from evil. They are for my own good. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

PRECIOUS PROMISES

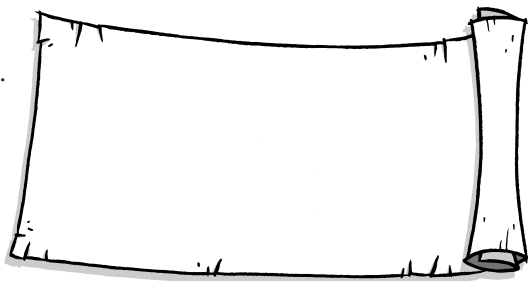
Need a drink of water? Just turn on the tap! It is so easily available in Singapore, isn't it? That is why we don't really bother about how much water costs. Let's look at another scenario. Imagine a man, perspiring and thirsty, staggering in the hot and dry desert. How much do you think he would give in exchange for just a sip of water? To this suffering man who is in great need of water to survive, water is precious as he needs it desperately. Similarly, as sinners, we are in great need of the Saviour whom God has promised. As the penalty for sin is death, we need Jesus to save us from sin. Is Jesus precious to you?

The Bible says God's promises are precious. We must all know John 3:16 very well by now. Because God loves mankind, He will save whoever believes and receives Jesus as his Saviour. Salvation is free for us because we do not pay anything for it. It is a gift., but it is the most expensive gift because it cost Jesus His precious life. Is God's promise of salvation precious to you?

When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, we are no more condemned. Not only do we have eternal life, God has promised to make us more and more like Jesus. Jesus is sinless but Christians are not yet so. God now looks at us as though we are sinless only because the blood of Jesus covers our sin. In this corrupt world, we still sin for it is so easy to give in to our own selfish desires or weaknesses. But God is merciful and gracious. He has promised to forgive our sins when we confess and repent of them. He will also give us faith to overcome temptations in this world.

Too often we find ourselves sliding from the path God wants us to take. It can be so easy to be carried away by the many problems in life. But what does the Bible promise in 1 Peter 5:7?

Write the verse
down in this
scroll...



Thought: Escape temptation through God's promises and strength!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to keep your precious promises in my heart so that I will not yield to the temptations of this corrupted world. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

EXCEEDINGLY GREAT PROMISES

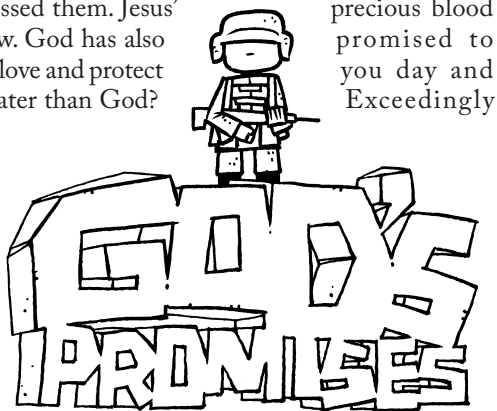
Remember Darren's mother who has promised him a trip to Disney World if he were to do well in his PSLE? Compared to a trip to Sentosa or an ice-cream at Swenson's, that was a great promise. While many parents cannot afford to promise their children such a costly vacation, they will give them the best things they can afford. To some of us, a trip to Sentosa is great enough and that is the right way to view rewards from parents.

Now, the Bible says that God's promises are not just great but exceedingly great! He is taking us to a place much better than any wonderful destination on earth! He is taking us to Heaven! Can you think of a greater promise than this? Why are God's promises exceedingly great?

Our God is great! He is omnipotent. That means he has power over everything. Nothing is impossible for God to do. God is omniscient. That means He knows everything from beginning to end. God knows even your thoughts, be they past, present or future. God is omnipresent or everywhere all the time. God is supreme in glory and His promises are great in power and wisdom.

Do you know what the word 'exceeding' means? It means far more than what we can expect. Did you expect your sins to be washed away as though you have never sinned? There will be no trace of them in God's record once you have confessed them. Jesus' precious blood will wash you white as snow. God has also promised to love you with an everlasting love and protect you day and night. Is there anybody greater than God? Exceedingly great are God's promises.

Colour this picture.



Thought: Only God has the power to make such great promises in the Bible.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for Your great promises to save me and keep me from all sin and shame. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

“I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS”

Imagine Darren had done very well in his PSLE but, due to unforeseen circumstances, his mother was unable to honour her promise while his father was also tied up with his job and not able to take leave to accompany him. His mother then bought Darren an air ticket, booked a guided tour with a hotel stay of 7 days in Florida and sent him off at the airport. Do you think Darren would enjoy the trip without his parents? Of course not!

God will never leave His children to fight their battles alone. He promised Moses, “My presence shall go with thee...” and it did happen. Moses experienced God’s presence throughout his 40-year-long journey to the Promised Land. God assured His people of His presence in many ways. There was a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire at night to lead the way. Supplies of manna and all daily needs were met! It was an overwhelming task to lead two million murmuring people through the wilderness, but God was always with him giving wisdom and counsel on how to handle all the problems. Joshua succeeded Moses. He was also given the promise of God’s presence. Wherever Joshua went, God would be there with him.

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He promised to send the Holy Spirit to comfort the Christians. Jesus was called Emmanuel, “God with us” and in His own words had said, “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

Do you believe that God is always with you?

Are you afraid of the dark, perhaps?

Do you feel that at times, no one is able to understand your problems?

Don’t be. God has promised that He would be with you, and take care of you. He will keep His promises!

Thought: God is always watching over me.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for promising to be with me always and comforting me whenever I am sad and disappointed. In Jesus’ name, I pray. Amen.

“I WILL NEVER LEAVE OR FORSAKE YOU”

You have parents who love and take care of you. This is a privilege not all children enjoy. There are children who are abandoned by their parents at birth. There are centres set up by some kind-hearted people to take care of these children until some childless couples come to adopt them. That is a happy ending for these kids, is it not?

Unlike the abandoned children, we are not given up for adoption by our earthly parents, but we can be adopted too – not by other earthly parents, but by God. As Christians, we are children of faith, and we receive God’s precious promises. We recently learn that He promises to be with us always. Today, the Bible confirms that He will never leave us or forsake us.

Today’s verse teaches us not to covet – that is not to desire things that do not belong to us. In other words – do not be greedy. We are already well-fed, well dressed and well equipped with study materials and toys. Yet, we sometimes wish we have our friends’ newer mobile phones and computer games, fashionable outfits, or even their parents who can afford posh homes and cars.

The Bible tells us not to be covetous, pining for things that are not meant for us. God will take care of our every need. Therefore, we have no fear that we will go hungry or be short of anything. Given God’s wonderful promise, we ought to be truly contented.

A. Write down the number of times that:

- a. you feel that God has abandoned you. _____
- b. you wish to have the nice things that your friend has. _____

B. Add the two numbers together.

- a. If the sum = 0, pray and thank God for giving you faith.
- b. If it is more than 0, read Hebrews 13:5 again,
and ask the Lord to teach you contentment.

Thought: God will never abandon me.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me understand how much You love and care for me. Thank you for not leaving or forsaking me. Help me not to wish for things that I don’t need but to be happy with the things I already have. In Jesus’ name, I pray and thank You. Amen.

DO YOUR PART

Let us recall the promise Darren's mother made. If Darren works hard and does well in his PSLE, she will take him to Disney World. There is a conditional "IF" in this agreement between her and Darren. Unless Darren does his part, he will not receive the reward offered to him. We too have to do our part by believing in Jesus, in putting our faith in Him, before we can become children of God. As His children, we will receive all his promises.

In the Old Testament times, there were no hotels or houses in the wilderness. Travelers dwelled in tents in open and unprotected places where enemies, thieves and wild animals could easily intrude, especially in the night, so someone must stay awake to guard the tents. Psalm 34: 7 says, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." Notice that God promised protection and safety to only those who fear Him. What does it mean to "fear God"? It is to be afraid of making Him displeased, and that means we are to obey God. He promised to protect only those who love and obey Him. So, unless we do our part, we have no part in His promises.

Do you have faith in Him? Do you really commit your worries or problems to Him? How is your prayer life? Do you set aside a time everyday to pray to Him, to do your QT?

Dear child, I know that is not easy. Perhaps your house is a little crowded or there may be too many distractions, but you must try.

Fill in the blanks

To be happy in Jesus, we must

_____ and _____ Him.

There is no other way!

Thought: I must do my part to please God by trusting and obeying Him.

Prayer: Our heavenly Father, thank You for today's reminder that I must do my part and exercise the responsibility that You have given to me. This I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

GOD WILL PROTECT AND KEEP YOU SAFE

Whenever someone travels overseas, the adults in church will pray for safety and God's mercy journey for the traveller. Even at home we pray for safety especially for our children. It is because we are surrounded by danger all the time. We hear news of plane crashes, road accidents, tsunamis and fires that do kill up to hundreds. Some are natural disasters and some are caused by equipment faults or human error. Whatever they may be, Christians are assured that God is in control. That is why we pray for protection.

God has given us His promise of constant protection and preservation wherever we are. The traveller (as described in Psalm 121) looked to the hills for help and comfort. His journey was treacherous and the hot sun, the cold nights and wild animals all posed threats to his life. He could stumble anytime and die. His body could even be a feast for vultures! So, he wisely looked to God. No one but God is able to watch over him all the time. God "will not suffer thy foot to be moved." God would never doze off or sleep for a moment. He is constantly watching over us.

Does God care only to protect us from bodily harm? The psalmist says, "The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil". God cares for our souls even more. He has promised to keep us from evil. When pride, envy, greed and hate attack us, God's Word will defend us. His Word is sharper than a two-edged sword and is our best defence weapon. Don't forget to pray for God's protection.

Complete the boy's prayer by writing verse 2 of Psalm 121 in the speech bubble.



Thought: God will keep me safe, so there is nothing to fear.

Prayer: Thank You Heavenly Father, for Your promise to protect me. Keep me from yielding to evil temptations. Keep me safe both indoors and outdoors. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

GOD WILL FORGIVE WHEN YOU CONFESS

Have you ever told a lie? Be careful with your answer. If you answer “Never”, you have just told another lie! Lying is a sin. Do you feel guilty after telling a lie? If you don’t, then there is reason to worry. Your conscience is seared. Even the Holy Spirit cannot make you see you have done wrong and have sinned against God. He may not be in you.

What is the right thing to do if you realise that you have told a lie? Tell the person or persons you have lied to that you are sorry. A Christian who has lied will feel disturbed until he repents. For example, you denied copying your classmate’s answers when in reality you did it. Or you had broken your neighbour’s window and put the blame on your friend. This may result in your friend or classmate not forgiving or trusting you ever again. This is the consequence of sin. Sin always results in suffering and pain.

More importantly, you need to confess your sin to the Lord who has given us a wonderful promise. Unlike your non-Christian friend or classmate who may or may not forgive you, God will forgive you and forget your sins.

Form the verse, 1 John 1: 9, from the scrambled phrases.
Write down and memorise the verse.

He is faithful and to cleanse us If we confess our sins,
from all unrighteousness. to forgive us our sins, and just

Thought: Always seek the Lord’s forgiveness

Prayer: Our heavenly Father, thank You for the verse, 1 John 1:9. Help me always to repent and seek Your forgiveness when I sin. In Jesus’ name, I pray.

OUR RESURRECTION TO GLORY

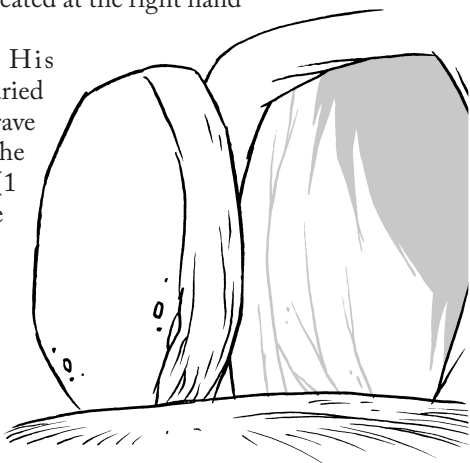
Christians believe in a living Saviour. If Jesus had not risen from death, our faith would be a fake one. God's promises would not be true and we would be the most miserable people on earth! Let us study the Bible to see what happened to Jesus after He was crucified. This must be important to us for the Bible says that we will also experience the bodily resurrection like our Lord Jesus.

When Jesus was on the cross, the Roman soldiers wanted to break his legs to speed up his death. However, they found that Jesus had already died (John 19: 33). Then His followers, Nicodemus and Joseph came to receive Jesus' body for burial. His body was bound in strips of linen with spices according to the Jewish custom and laid in the tomb of Gethsemane. (John 19: 40-41).

On the third day of Jesus' burial, Mary Magdalene and some ladies came to visit the tomb. To their surprise, they found the stone rolled away! When Peter was told about the empty tomb, he ran into the cave and found only the burial linen but no body. Later, Jesus appeared to Mary and his disciples before he ascended into heaven. (John 20:14 - John 21:14). Our Saviour is living today and is seated at the right hand of our heavenly Father.

God has promised His children that their bodies buried at death will rise from the grave to meet our Lord Jesus in the air on the day of rapture. (1 Thessalonians 4:15). Those will be their glorified bodies and what a sight it will be!

Write the words "JESUS
IS RESURRECTED!"
to the right of the
picture



Thought: Believers will be resurrected!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the new body that I will receive when I die. I am not afraid to die anymore because of Your promise. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

ANSWERED PRAYERS

Jeremiah 33:3, is sometimes known as God's "telephone number". Of course, it is not a literal one, but is a wonderful reminder that God is available to us day and night. In modern day language, some call it 24/7. However, our sin will interrupt this communication line. Sometimes, when we disobey our parents, pick fights with our brother or cheat in a test., God will suspend our line. To restore the line, we need to first repent and ask God for forgiveness.

The Bible says we ought to pray always. This means we can freely tell God our feelings and problems and seek His help anytime and anywhere. In today's verse, we see God telling Jeremiah to call upon Him because He wants to show him 'great and mighty things". God wants us to know Him and His desires. Just as fathers love their children and want to 'bond' with them, God delights in our fellowship with him. Unless we read God's word and pray, how else can we have heart-to-heart talks with our Lord?

God has the power to do all things. He can give us courage to do things according to His will and to trust in Him. When you need courage to tell your principal that you cannot take part in the inter-school badminton competition because of the family church camp, what would you do? When you are prompted by the Holy Spirit to speak to your staunch idol-worshipping grandma, do you pray, believing that God can change her heart? Remember Jesus' promise: "Ask and ye shall receive".



Dear child, turn to the verse and write it in the speech bubble.

Thought: I need to pray as much as I need to breathe!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I need You all the time for I am weak but You have the power to do things so great that I can never ever imagine. So teach me heavenly Father to always turn to You. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

PEACEFUL SLEEP

David wrote Psalm 4 when he was a fugitive in the wilderness. For years, he had been running away from King Saul who wanted to kill him. King Saul felt threatened because God had chosen David to be the next king. How disturbing it would have been to have an army hot in pursuit of you. Will you be able to sleep well when you know someone wants to harm you?

Yet, David enjoyed peaceful sleep out in the open. How could he sleep so soundly when he was such an easy target of harm? It is an open secret - he has confidence in God's protection! If God had said he would be made the next king, he knew for sure he would be protected for a dead man cannot be king!

Sleep is a gift from God. We learn it from Psalm 127:2, "...He giveth his beloved sleep." The next time you toss and turn in bed because you're afraid or worried about something, take God at His word. Hand your fears and problems over to God and exchange them for a peaceful sleep.



Who is sleeping more soundly and peacefully? _____

Why? _____

Thought: God gives His beloved sleep, and I am one of His beloved!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for giving me a good sleep every night, If I am worried and cannot rest well at night, please take my worries away and let my mind rest on Your promises. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

DON'T BE LIKE A DOOR!

Are you a hardworking child or the slothful, as described in today's verse, who likes to laze in bed?

Look at any door in your house, and you'd understand the wisdom of this verse. The door is opened and closed so often, but it remains fixed to the wall because of its hinges. Likewise, the lazy child who turns and tosses in bed will remain in bed without getting out to do something useful because his back is always on the bed!

In what ways can you be hardworking? Let's focus on three areas:

1. Clearly as a student, you've to study hard. Try your best in your work and honour God in that way. Don't wait till examinations are round the corner before you put in effort to study. The secret is to be consistent in your schoolwork.
2. Work hard at being a good student of God's Word. Be faithful in reading the Bible and doing your daily QT. When reading His Word, do so with a humble heart, asking God to teach you as you read.
3. Help out at home. Some of you may have the privilege of a maid at home, but it would be a wonderful Christian testimony if you make an effort to help lighten the maid's workload.

It is finished!" These 3 words which Jesus uttered just before he died on the cross marked the end of his work on earth. He had worked hard right until the last moment. At the age of twelve, he was already diligently doing God's work. He said to Mary, his mother, as he was teaching in the synagogue: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" He was busy with God's work. In fact, He is the supreme example of a diligent man, wasting no time at all. Jesus put up with all the jeers and pain. Without a murmur, He fulfilled God's salvation plan for man.



Thought: May I be diligent, just like Jesus!

Prayer: Help me Heavenly Father, to be diligent always. This I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

GOD WILL GIVE YOU COURAGE

God appointed Joshua to lead two million people into a new land called Canaan. However, that land was occupied with people who hated God and the Israelites. In order to bring his people in, Joshua had to wage war against the inhabitants.

Oh no! Joshua looked at the people of Israel who were so weak and untrained in warfare. How could they stand against the Canaanites, who were such seasoned warriors? It was such an uphill task. How could Joshua not be afraid?

God understood Joshua's fears. Let us see how God gave Joshua confidence and courage to carry out the war campaigns. First, He encouraged Joshua in words, "Be strong and of a good courage." God promised to go with Joshua wherever he would go and would never leave or forsake him. He promised Joshua victory. Joshua faithfully obeyed God and was strengthened.

Secondly, God encouraged Joshua by the miracles He had done. He showed Joshua that He has power to do the impossible. You may remember the account of the waters of Jordan standing still as walls to let the people cross as well as the walls of Jericho tumbling down at the sound of the people's shouting. These were impossible by man's thinking but by God's might, nothing is impossible. As long as the people exercised faith by acting in accordance to God's commands, victory was won. Aren't we afraid sometimes when homework, exams or school duties seem so difficult? Recall all the great things God has done for you and pray for courage.

I need courage to:

1. own up to Mom that I played computer games instead of doing home work.
2. _____
3. _____

Thought: The Lord will give us courage to do what is right.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give me courage to do what I have written in the list above. I know it is difficult, but with Your help, I can do them. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

GOD WILL SUPPLY OUR EVERY NEED

“Can you buy me that badminton racket? I really want to use the best brand for my competition.” You might have heard someone saying this to his father or your sister saying to your mum,” Mummy! Can I order that outfit online. It is this year’s trend. I want to wear it to my friend’s birthday party.” What is the common term found in both these requests ? It is the word “want”. Do they really need the things they asked for?

Food, water and shelter are our basic physical needs. Of course, our needs do change with time. For example, some adults nowadays may not be able to keep a job without a car , a computer or a mobile phone. These items that were once considered luxury items have become necessary items for some people. Nevertheless, whatever our needs are, God has promised to supply them.

Most children in Singapore are very blessed as they have never experienced poverty and hunger. Perhaps you were last hungry when mum was late in preparing a meal, or your family was not able to get to the fast-food restaurant on time. Are you aware of the millions of children in poor countries who face real hunger everyday?

Guess the number of people in the world who are hungry as you are reading this? The kind of hunger they are experiencing is not what you’ve experienced. Theirs is due to a serious lack of food and nutrition. What is your guess? The estimate is about 850,000,000 people. That is a lot of people! While we thank God we are not in this group of people, we want to remember that all the wonderful things we have are from God. Remember, God has promised to fulfill all your NEEDS, but NOT all your wants.

God knows we have spiritual needs as well and will supply them. He has promised us gifts of faith, peace, joy, love, mercy and grace. Look at how He has given us Jesus Christ as our Saviour, and the Bible that contains all His precious promises, and the Holy Spirit of truth.

Sometimes, a father may lose his job, but God will never leave the family hungry. He will provide somehow. Whenever we are tempted to doubt, God will provide a way for us to escape. How much will God provide? According to His riches in glory. The infinitely wealthy God will provide!

Thought: God will provide.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, glory be to Your name. You never fail to supply all my needs. I thank You for what I already have, and continue to trust You for all my future needs. In Jesus’ name, I thank You. Amen.

GOD'S PROMISE OF GRACE

Apostle Paul was plagued by an undisclosed disease or weakness. It was described as “a thorn in his flesh”. Causing him tremendous distress and pain, he prayed three times for God to remove it. However, God’s answer was “No”. Why? Because God wanted Paul to experience weakness so that he can continue to rely on God. That is why God gave these beautiful words in today’s text for Paul’s encouragement, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”

What is God’s grace? It is unmerited favour from God. It means what we do not deserve yet God gives it to us. God loves us and by His wisdom will always give us what is best for us. What? You mean the illness or weakness was best for Paul? Yes, in God’s eyes, it was and it ought to be for Paul and us. Why? This is to teach us to rely on God always as it is so easy to forget and forsake God if we never have any weakness or problem.

Why didn’t God heal Paul of his weakness? Paul was so actively serving God preaching, teaching and establishing churches. Won’t it be better for Paul to be in a perfect condition to carry on with his work? In man’s eyes, Paul was doing a great job! Well, the Bible says all glory belongs to God. He loves Paul and does not want Paul to be puffed up with pride. Pride will lead to a fall.

God wants Paul to continue to depend fully on Christ and not on his own strength. God’s grace is sufficient to strengthen Paul to do whatever he was commanded to do. Others may then look at Paul’s life and praise God for His grace.

I need God’s grace so that:

1. I will not lose my temper easily.
2. I will learn to share my games with others.
3. I do not hit back at those who hurt me.

4. _____

5. _____

Thought: God’s grace is sufficient.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me for I need Thy grace each day to be obedient to You. In Jesus’ name, I pray. Amen.

ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD

To those who love God, all things will work out good. In other words, a Christian's life will turn out for good eventually, even though bad things happen. To understand more, let us look at the life of one famous Biblical character named Joseph.

Out of jealousy, Joseph's brothers threw him into a pit and then sold him to some merchants. He was brought thousands of miles from home to Egypt and sold to Potiphar as a slave. Joseph fled from Potiphar's adulterous wife but was falsely accused of molest. That landed him in prison. If you were Joseph, would you have continued to trust God?

Although Joseph has lost family bliss, a familiar lifestyle, and his freedom, he did not stop believing in God or His justice. As God had, in a dream, promised him a high position in life, he continued to believe and shone for God even in prison. God then gave him the gift of interpreting dreams. This gift got him promoted to be the Prime Minister of Egypt. In his high position, he was able to save his father and his family from starvation. In fact, he had saved the ancestors of the nation of Israel.

Man may do wicked or bad things to Christians, but God will always make them work together to achieve good. Let us keep His promise in our heart.

Have you ever wanted something you think is good but God did not give it to you immediately? Let's say you wanted to do well in Mathematics. Instead of doing well in the first test, you did badly. Because of this failure, you put in a lot more effort and, if it is God's will, you may score very well.

Was the first failure pleasant? Definitely not. But God in his sovereignty permitted it so that you could learn the good qualities of humility and diligence which you may not have developed if you had done well the first time.

Next time you have a problem, remember this verse.

Thought: God's will for us is always the best.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You are in full control over everything. No matter what happens to me, help me to understand it is for my good in the end. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen

BE CHEERFUL GIVERS!

We are taught to give to the Lord by tithing a portion of our pocket money to the church. There may be some of us who may do so unwillingly. Today's verse teaches us that when we give, we are to do it cheerfully.

Generosity does not require giving a large amount but to give out of charity and kindness. God will never overlook even the smallest gift as long as it is given out of love. If you give a large portion of what you can afford, do it cheerfully as a token of love for God and He will be pleased with you.

When Jesus saw a poor widow offer her last two mites to God, He said that she was far more generous than the rich men who cast their gifts into the treasury. Why? Surely their gifts are worth much more than two mites. That is true, but what Jesus wanted to point out is that the widow gave all she had to live on out of faith, so hers was a true sacrifice compared to the rich men who gave out of the abundance of their wealth.

Money is not the only thing you can give. You can give of your talents and time to serve God and others. All our talents are gifts from God. Whether in singing, playing a musical instrument, drawing or speaking, you can always find an opportunity to use them to help others. Or just in sharing. The next time you have something – whether it be food or a toy – learn to share with others. And do it happily.

Now, we know that there are so many forms of giving. What is important to do is to give with a cheerful heart!



Thought: Be cheerful givers!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be a cheerful giver. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

GOD'S PROMISE OF COMFORT

There is an exciting game named 'Persecution' that some children enjoy playing in our church camp. It may sound scary but it is actually a 'hide and seek' game that involves the police seeking to arrest the Christians. There is also a marked place called 'Home' where they can hide safely. A place where we can hide safely from danger is called a refuge. God is our refuge in times of danger and trouble.

What are some of the troubles that disturb us? We may have difficulties in schoolwork or face bullies in school who instill fear in us. At home, our parents may often be quarrelling or we feel they love our sibling more than us. All these can trouble us. Who can we turn to during such times except God?

He has promised in today's text that He is a very present help. That means He is always there for us. The trouble with us is that we do not go to Him in our fear and trouble. We may seek advice from a friend. We may SMS a classmate about it. We may describe our fear and frustration on a Facebook post, but we do not tell it to the Lord.

Dear child, remember this promise of God and use it!

Illustrate this verse with a big, colourful and decorative G for God.



**od is our refuge
and strength,
a very present help
in trouble.**

Thought: God is our hiding place from all troubles.

Prayer: My heavenly Father, be Thou my strength and comfort every single day. I know You will help me in times of trouble. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

EVERLASTING LOVE

There have been newspaper reports of youths who join gangs and eventually land up in trouble. Some of these include fighting, vandalizing, and other forms of wrong behaviour. Why do these young people join gangs? These youths or kids may come from “good” families, with parents who are well-educated or wealthy. Why then do they join gangs? It is often because they do not find love at home.

Do you have love at home? I hope the answer from most is “Yes”. But some of you may come from difficult backgrounds and may think you do not have love at home. If you then think nobody loves you, you are **WRONG!** Today’s verse tells us that God loves us. And more than that, His love is everlasting.

“Jesus loves me, this I know. For the Bible tells me so” Do you remember this song? We know God loves us because He told us so. But, do you know when God begins to love us and whether He will ever stop loving us?

God had shown His love for all mankind before we even came to know Him. That includes you and me. You mean God loves me even before I became a Christian? Yes, God loved sinners so much that He sent His precious Son Jesus to die for them. God’s salvation plan speaks of God’s love. His love is true and is put into action as He has planned.

But more than that, God’s love is everlasting! What is everlasting? That is to last forever! Will God still love me when I misbehave and fall into temptations? Yes, but do not confuse His love and His blessings. When you continue to sin, God still loves You but He hates your sin, so you may miss out on His blessings. However, if you repent and return to Him, the blessings will resume!

The strongest of human love will end one day. Friendship may break up over some misunderstanding; Grandma and Grandpa may die of old age, so they cannot love us anymore, but God’s love, unlike human love, has no beginning and no ending. God’s promise is: “I have loved thee with an everlasting love.” God will never stop loving you.

Thought: Jesus loves me more than words can ever tell.

Prayer: Our heavenly Father, thank You for Thy everlasting love. Help me to learn to love You more. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

GOD'S PROMISE OF TRUE WISDOM

Do not confuse intelligence with the wisdom mentioned in today's verse. Intelligence is the ability to learn fast and remember well. It is to be able to understand difficult concepts, to quickly reason, or plan or solve problems. The smartest child in your school may be intelligent, but that does not mean he is wise. A child who knows and obeys the Bible is wiser than an intelligent child in school who does not know the Bible.

This wisdom is the ability to understand the things of God. For example, the smartest man who is a non-Christian would not be able to understand the Bible if he has no guidance from the Holy Spirit. He may read it as it were any other book. That is not the way to read the precious Word of God! We need godly wisdom from above. We need the Holy Spirit to show us the truth.

Read the verse again. What does it say about action on our part? We must ask! But before we ask, we must desire to have this wisdom. Dear child, pray that the Lord will give you the desire to have godly wisdom so you can understand more of God's Word and will for you. The more you read His word, the more you will like to do so. And the more you'd like to be a better Christian.

Write T for True and F for False in each of the stars:

1. All clever men are wise in the sight of God. ()
2. God will give us wisdom when we ask Him. ()
3. We don't need wisdom from God to live in this world. ()
4. If we are smart and intelligent, we won't need to depend on God. ()
5. The wealthy and sinful have the wisdom of God. ()

Thought: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may Thou grant me a desire for godly wisdom so that I will seek to do things according to Thy will. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF ALL YOUR WORRIES

Have you ever thrown a ball! After you've thrown it, is the ball still in your hands? Of course not! Think of this "ball-throwing" exercise as you read this verse. We are told to "cast" or throw our cares to God. If we do it, would these cares or worries still be with us?

Stress and pressure are part and parcel of life. Everybody will experience them at one time or another, whether at home, at work or in schools. People have come up with all sorts of ways to manage stress such as meditation, exercise, spas and sports. Far back in history, the Greeks were already using worry beads to relieve stress. In today's text, we learn that Christians also worry and Peter tells them NOT TO!

Should Christians worry? Actually, we have no reason to. The Bible has the foolproof formula on how to deal with worry. When Jesus died on the cross, He has already freed us from the greatest worry – eternal punishment in hell. Sin carries the death penalty and Jesus has already taken care of that for us. Will Jesus not bear all the other cares of the world for us?

God will take care of us as He has promised. He takes care of even the sparrows in the air and the beautiful wild flowers in the valleys. You are far more precious than all these. Nothing is too small to escape His attention. He cares when you have a headache or a cut on your finger. He cares about your heartaches over your classmates' teasing and the red marks in your report card. He knows of your fears of bedwetting, stuttering and pimples. You can share all your problems with Him. Cast all your cares upon God for He loves and cares for you.

Recite the verse that can help you before you start looking like the boy in the picture!



Thought: Jesus has taken away my sins at the cross of Calvary. May I cast all my cares upon him.

Prayer: Thank You Heavenly Father, for listening to all my problems. Sometimes, my head aches and sometimes my heart aches. But I always feel better when I remember You are near. In Jesus name, I pray. Amen.

JOY TO THE WORLD JESUS HAS COME

Very often, we sing this carol without knowing how meaningful the lyrics are.

*Joy to the World. The Lord is come. Let earth receive her king.
Let every heart prepare Him room, And Heaven and nature sing;
And Heaven and nature sing, And Heaven and heaven and nature sing.*

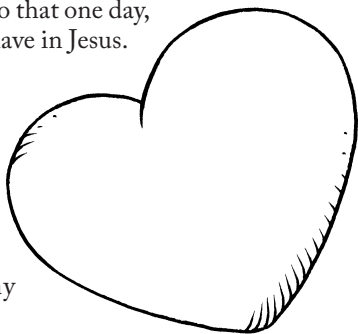
To us, the coming of Jesus to earth is the fulfillment of the exceedingly great and most precious promise. If Jesus was not sent to save sinners, we will perish because of our sin. At the first Christmas, God's promise of a saviour for fallen man was fulfilled. There were certainly glad tidings of joy. It was good news. Great is the rejoicing!

The context of John 15:11 is in the 10 verses before that – that his disciples were to abide or stay close to Jesus. That also means to love God with all their hearts, their souls, their minds and strength. To show their love, they must keep His commandments. He has promised that His joy will remain in them and their joy can be full. Without Jesus, we can do nothing. In Jesus, we can ask for anything and will receive it if it is in God's will. In other words, if we continue in faith and keep His commandments, our joy will be full.

No other love can be greater than the love of Jesus. But I guess many still do not know Jesus. These could include your parents, other family members, many friends and classmates...

If you make a short list of those who still do not have Jesus as Saviour, you can pray for them so that one day, perhaps they can also have the joy you have in Jesus.

Write the word "JOY"
where you want it to be:



Thought: The joy of salvation is my strength.

Prayer: Our heavenly Father, thank You for sending Jesus to be my Saviour. Thank You for peace, love and joy. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

GOD WILL EXALT THE HUMBLE

The Lord Jesus Christ is the supreme example of humility. He is God but left His Father's glorious throne and took the form of man to live modestly on earth. And not just any man, but a poor man for he was born into a humble carpenter's family. And where was he born? Often we see pictures of baby Jesus in a beautiful manger on Christmas cards. That is not how a real manger looks like. Real mangers are filthy and smelly. Also, he grew up in the lowly home of Joseph, a carpenter, not some rich businessman. When He had His preaching ministry, he had no place to rest His head. He was worse off than the foxes which at least had holes as home.

Jesus was truly meek and righteous. He kept all the commandments of God. Though He is equal in power to God, He was obedient to His heavenly Father. He endured man's mocking and suffered the most painful death on the cross. On the third day, Jesus rose from the dead. He appeared before His disciples and then returned to heaven's glory. The day will come when He will come to earth again. At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow. He will be exalted high as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

How do we follow Jesus' example? Do we have to leave our comfortable homes to be a wanderer? Or hide our music and singing talents to show humility? Let us not do any of that because it is false humility. Let us truly be humble in our heart. Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." It means to truly know that we can do nothing without God and we are totally dependent on Jesus to save us. A humble heart will show in our speech and action. If we are humble, the kingdom of heaven will be our inheritance. Jesus is exalted and in Him we will be promoted, too.

Underline the right answers:

- a. The humble will be brought down.
- b. The humble will be promoted.
- c. The humble will please God.
- d. The humble will be rewarded by God.

Thought: God will exalt the humble.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to remember that everything I own belongs to You and without You I can do nothing. Teach me humility and help me never to be proud for I know I am nothing without Jesus. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

I AM THIRD!

Jason, blessed with great manners, a good mind and a happy personality, is very popular among his peers. He is also well-liked by his Junior Worship teachers because he is kind and helpful. Furthermore, he is an excellent leader in his school.

One of his friends visited him and saw a homemade plaque in his room with the words "I Am Third" on it. His friend asked Jason what it meant. What do you think it meant?

Jason's reply was, "It is the motto I try to use in my life. It means 'God is first; others are second; I am third.'"

One may think that Jason, with his popularity and blessings, has reasons to be proud, but no, he is not proud at all! Why? It is because he is a Christian, and he firmly believes that Jesus and others must come first before self. That is why he places himself as "third".

How about you? Do you place yourself lower than God and others? Or do you always put yourself before others? If you do, then you can be described as self-centred or selfish.

There are many people who have the "Me First" mentality. When they go for a buffet, they take a lot of what they like without caring if there is nothing much left for others. What they think and want is more important than any other consideration.

The driving force in our lives should be to please God. We should take into consideration the needs of others. With our own wants controlled and submitted to Jesus, we will truly know what it is like to be humble servants of God.



Thought: Are you third?

Prayer: Our heavenly Father, thank You for the story of Jason. Although he was blessed with so much talent, he was a humble boy. May I learn to be like him and to always think of Jesus and others before me! Heavenly Father, give me, a humble heart. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

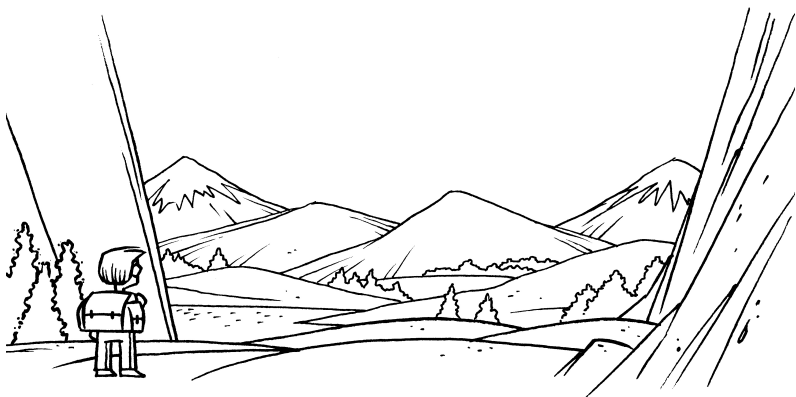
GOD WILL NOT LEAVE ME ALONE

When Jesus was praying in Gethsemane, His disciples fell asleep. He prayed alone. As he was carrying the heavy wooden cross to Calvary, His disciples abandoned Him. Their faith was weak and they were fearful. Jesus was nailed on the cross, bearing pain and shame. Did Jesus feel lonely then? He felt forsaken.

There may be times when you are deserted by friends. It may happen because you want to obey God and take a stand for Him. Suppose you become a school prefect and your duty is to take down the names of latecomers and breakers of school rules. You may even have to take down the names of some of your close friends. Being a good Christian, you need to be honest and carry out your duties faithfully. But, you may begin to find your friends giving you the cold shoulder and not being as friendly with you as they used to be. They may shut you out of their games and conversation.

We feel lonely because there is no one to talk to, discuss schoolwork or play games with. Well, cheer up. Jesus has promised, "I will be with you always." He is always near you to hear your prayer. Remember – God is always available to you – just go to Him in prayer!

Write this verse over the picture.



Thought: God is always just a prayer away!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for Your promise that You will always stand by me hearing my every prayer. Sometimes I do feel lonely, so teach me heavenly Father to always turn to You. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

GOD WILL COMPLETE A GOOD WORK IN US!

Children, do you sometimes think that you can lose your salvation because you have sinned? You may have that feeling but the Bible does not teach that. In fact, once you become God's child, you will forever be His child. Nothing can change your relationship with God. No man can pluck you out of your Father's hand. Every one of us is weak and make mistakes and sin sometimes. This is why God's promise of forgiveness in 1 John 1:9 is so dear, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Look at the Apostles. See how weak they were. When the Roman soldiers caught Jesus, all of them ran away. They were afraid of being identified and caught by the Roman soldiers. Even Peter, the most daring apostle denied knowing Jesus thrice! However, they repented later. Filled with the Holy Spirit, they grew in faith and became very bold preachers of God's word. Their acts of faith are all recorded in the Bible. God made them faithful and He completed a good work in them. That means God will keep them and guard them until the very end – that once they accept Jesus, they will be saved forever!

Will He do the same to us? Yes, God has promised in today's text! However, we have to be very careful here. A naughty child or an evil man may think that he can live his life in any way he wants since God has promised eternal life that can never be lost to any person who accepts Jesus. Do you think that is right?

A real Christian will never think in that way. A real Christian will be so grateful to the Lord that he'll try his or her best not to do anything to displease God. This is not to say he or she will not sin. Because we are in the flesh we sometimes do yield to temptation and sin, while we are on this earth. But the desire to sin will dim as we become more and more sanctified. We'll love God and His Word and His people more and more.

What is the GOOD WORK that God has started in us and will bring it to a perfect end?

S _____ N

Thought: God will complete His salvation work in us !

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I pray that I may grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ till I see Him face to face. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

JESUS WILL COME AGAIN

Let's say you had a very good friend when you were younger – call him Luke. He was a great guy, but unfortunately, his parents decided to migrate to another country. One day, you get news that he would be coming back. How would you feel? Excited and happy, of course!

In the same way, I hope you will be happy to know Jesus is coming again. Doesn't this promise thrill your soul? This time, Jesus is coming to bring you with Him. Where to? When? How? I am sure you are curious to know. I don't know how, but I know Jesus will do it!

The Bible also speaks about the glorious manner in which Jesus will return. Jesus will come first to meet all His saints, who will be caught up in mid air. The event of flying bodies is known as the Rapture. He will then bring us to heaven! What is heaven like? Would we be singing hymns and choruses all day long? Would there be food to eat? Would we suffer pain? The Bible does not tell us a whole lot about heaven, but we know there would be great rejoicing in heaven for we would be so grateful to God for saving us! There would also be food – for God has said there would be celebration and joy! And I am happy to tell you – there would be no pain or suffering in heaven. Why? Because where God is would be freedom from pain and suffering!

We may not know the exact day Jesus will return but He had told us to look out for signs. The signs are the prevalence of evil in the world, and the falling away of many churches. All these events are happening now. Dear child, I am sure Jesus will come soon to bring you and me to heaven!

Jesus is coming again soon. Are you watching and waiting for the flight with Jesus? Is He the Captain of your life?

Thought: The Second Coming of Jesus' is a Christian's blessed hope.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I praise You for all Your promises are true. Help me to be a good child of Yours, and to live my life in a way that will please You. And thank You that Jesus is coming again for me. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

THE GIFT OF GOD

Hey, Mom!" exclaimed Abby. "Wouldn't it be nice to have a doctor like the one in this book I just finished reading! Instead of making people come to his office when they were sick, he went to their houses."

Mom smiled. "That's the way it was done a long time ago-before I was born," she said.

"Dr. Lim was a medical missionary," said Abby. "He worked in an African village where they didn't have a doctor. This book tells about a girl he helped. She was my age, and she was really sick. Her family was very poor. They didn't have money to pay for a doctor, but Dr. Lim took care of her anyway, and got food for her family too. He said they didn't have to pay for anything. It was all free!"

Abby's brother, Tom, looked up. "Free? Hey, you're right, we should have a doctor like that!" he said with a grin, and Abby laughed along.

"I don't get this next part though," said Abby. "The girl's mother said it was good that not everybody in that village was sick, because most doctors refused to treat people who couldn't afford to pay the fees. Dr. Lim, however, told her that everybody actually is sick - sick with sin. He said they needed something to make them well spiritually, but there was no way they could buy what they needed." Abby paused. "I don't really get what it means to be sick with sin," she added.

Well, I would think he meant that everyone is born a sinner and can't help doing wrong things," Mom explained. "It's like they have a sickness that won't go away. Nothing they do or buy will take away the disease of sin. Only God can do that, and His remedy for sin is free for the asking."

Tom nodded. "I get it!" he said. "We can never pay for our sins, but when we believe in Jesus and ask Him to forgive us, He does. It's a gift." "Oh!" Abby exclaimed. "Just like the doctor's treatment of that little girl was a gift. Without it, she would never have gotten healthy on her own."

"Exactly!" Mom agreed with a smile. "And speaking of getting healthy, we're having chicken soup for dinner, so you'd better go wash your hands!"

Thought: Do you want to be forgiven for your sin?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know that nothing I can do will ever be enough to pay for my sins. Thank You that Jesus has paid the price for my sins. In Jesus' name I pray - Amen.

YOUR BEHAVIOUR REFLECTS CHRIST!

Darren's father slammed on the brakes when a van sped by and then cut in front of him. "That van almost got my front fender!" Dad exclaimed. "I've been watching him in the mirror - he's been darting in and out of traffic like a maniac."

"He's driving a truck from a plumbing company," said Darren as the van sped away from them. "Look! On the back it says, 'Call us for fast, courteous service.'" Darren laughed and gathered his books, which had fallen when Dad applied the brakes suddenly. "If that plumbing company runs their business the way that guy drives, their service may be fast, but the people are probably not very polite!"

At the dinner table that evening, Darren told the rest of the family about the van he and Dad had seen on the way home. I think the way the driver drives gives people a bad impression of their company," concluded Darren. "People who see him on the road won't want him to work on their plumbing."

"I guess not!" Mom agreed. "He probably doesn't even realise that his driving is a bad advertisement for the business." She shook her head. In the same way, I think all of us sometimes forget that we reflect Jesus everywhere we go," she added. "We reflect Him in our actions and the words we say."

Dad nodded. "We're Christians, and people are watching us. When people know that we are Christians, our behaviour gives them an impression of who Christ is. If we are kind and Christ-like, they develop a good impression of Christ. If we are unkind and inconsiderate, they may get a bad impression of Christ."

A little later, Mom asked "How was your test today Darren?" Darren frowned. "It was tough but what's worse is that some students had a plan to cheat and it sounded like everyone joined in to cheat except for Mike and me. So we will probably get the lowest scores in the whole class," he complained.

"Really!" exclaimed Mom. "Well, this time we'll be proud of you even if your grade is low. It's more important to live by your Christian convictions than to get good grades."

"That's right," Dad said.

Thought: Do your words and actions reflect Christ well?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be a good testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name I pray - Amen.

SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

May San had a gloomy look on her face as she entered the kitchen. "Is something wrong May San?" Mom asked.

"Oh, I am tired of Marie bossing me around!" complained May San. "Sometimes I wish I hadn't bothered to be her friend!"

"She's the new girl in your class, right?" asked Mom. "I think it's nice that you were friendly to her. You should help new kids feel at home."

"I know," said May San, "but ever since I befriended her and made sure she was included in our games, she decided to become Director of the Playground. She's been bossing everybody around ever since." May San scowled. "The girls tried to be nice and play her games, but they're really getting sick of it. Most of them won't even play with her anymore."

"But you still play with her?" asked Mom.

"I did," said May San, "but when she complained today about the girls playing silly games instead of her games, I said I kind of felt like joining them. She got mad." May San sighed. "I... well, I really wanted to tell her off, but I didn't say anything more."

"I think that was wise, but the Bible does say to tell the truth," said Mom.

"You mean I should go ahead and tell her she's selfish and bossy?" gasped May San.

Mom smiled. "Not exactly," she said, "but go look up Ephesians 4:15."

May San got her Bible and returned to the kitchen. She found the verse and read it slowly. "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." May San frowned. "Speaking the truth in love," she repeated. "How would I do that?"

"Your attitude when you talk with Marie should be loving, not grouchy and accusing," Mom replied. "Try to calmly explain to her why she's losing all her friends, and help her realise that everyone wants a turn at deciding what to do. Okay?" May San nodded thoughtfully. "It won't be easy," added Mom, "but ask God to help you say the things He wants you to say in the way He wants you to say them. Dad and I will be praying for you, too."

Thought: Do you know someone who needs to be told the truth about himself?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know it is not easy but if there were a child who needed to be told the truth, may I tell it in love. I know it is not going to be easy – so help me to pray and ask for Your help even before I talk to him or her. In Jesus' name – Amen.

DO YOU RESPECT AND TREASURE GOD'S WORD?

"Hi, Grandpa!" said Angie as she entered her grandfather's living room after church one Sunday. "Mom says to come home to have lunch with her." She carelessly tossed her Sunday school book and Bible onto a chair and walked to the bookcase. "Grandpa, do you have any books I could borrow to read this afternoon?"

Angie saw Grandpa frown as her Bible slid to the floor. He quietly picked it up and joined her as she scanned the book titles. "Here's one you might like," Grandpa suggested, drawing out a thin volume. She took it, and they left for lunch.

That afternoon, Angie read the book her grandfather had chosen. It was the story of Mary Jones, a girl who lived in England in the 1700s. Angie learned that Mary's most earnest prayer was that she might have a Bible and be able to read it. "Wow!" thought Angie, "I wonder if she got one." She read on and found that when a school was started near her home, Mary was able to attend school and learn to read. But she still did not have a Bible of her own.

The story went on to say that when Mary was sixteen, she heard of someone who had Bibles for sale in a town twenty-five miles from her home. "How can I get one?" wondered Mary. "I know! I'll walk." She begged her parents for permission to go. When they finally gave the permission, she took all her money, walked to that town, and bought a Bible. The twenty-five mile return trip seemed short as she happily carried her Bible home.

Angie looked up when her grandpa came into the room. "How's the book?" he asked.

"The girl in this book walked twenty-five miles to buy a Bible, and then she had to walk back home!" exclaimed Angie. "She walked fifty miles for a Bible!"

Grandpa nodded. "How far would you walk for a Bible?" he asked. Angie didn't know what to say as she looked at her Bible lying on the table. "We have so many Bibles that I'm afraid we don't appreciate God's Word like Mary did," Grandpa added. "We take it for granted and handle it carelessly and often don't read it as we should."

Thought: Do you respect and treasure God's Word?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of Your Word. Please help me to cherish it and read it diligently every day. In Jesus' name I pray – Amen.

DO NOT SORROW AS OTHERS WHO HAVE NO HOPE

“Grandpa, could you take me home?” asked Emily. “I’m so tired.” She and her sister Ling were at their grandparents’ house making cookies.

Ling, who was mixing the ingredients in a bowl, looked up. “I don’t want to go home yet!” she exclaimed. “We just got here.”

“But I don’t feel very good,” replied Emily as she sat down with a sigh.

“I’ll take you home,” said Grandpa. “Ling can stay longer, and when she’s ready to leave, I’ll drive her home, too.”

Grandpa and Emily started out. They had gone only a couple of blocks when a car ran a red light and hit them squarely on the passenger side. “Honey, are you okay?” gasped Grandpa. He wasn’t badly hurt, but Emily was taken to the hospital. “Will Emily be all right?” Ling asked tearfully when her parents took her to see her sister.

“We pray she will,” answered Mom. However, Emily died the next day.

The following weeks were very difficult for Ling. She couldn’t sleep or eat, and she cried every day. “I miss Emily so much!” she sobbed into her pillow one evening after again refusing to eat anything.

“I know,” said Dad, sitting by the side of her bed. “Mom and I miss her too - only God knows how much! But, honey, Emily is so happy with Jesus now.” He gave Ling a hug. “We feel sad,” he added, “but we also have a comfort that people who don’t know Jesus never have.”

Mom nodded. “Remember last year when Emily went off to camp?” she asked. “At first, I worried about her. Do you know who made me feel better, Ling?” Ling shook her head. “It was you,” said Mom. “You reminded me that Emily always had lots of friends and loved outdoor activities. ‘She’ll love this camp,’ you said, and I knew you were right. When I realised Emily was happy at camp, I felt better.” Mom paused. “It’s a little like that now,” she said. “I know Emily is happy in heaven, and that does help me feel better when the sadness just gets to be too much.”

“But camp was only a little while,” cried Ling. “We knew we’d see her again.”

“Yes, but that’s true now, too,” said Mom. “We’ve said goodbye for now-but because we have Jesus as our Saviour, some day we’ll be with her in heaven.”

Thought: Do you feel sad because someone you love has died and gone to heaven?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for your assurance that all believers will meet in heaven one day. In Jesus’ name I pray – Amen.

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HAVE NOT SEEN BUT YET BELIEVE

“Mom! My arm!” gasped Boon as he stumbled into the kitchen. “It’s bleeding badly! I fell off my bike.”

Mom looked at the arm. “My car is at the service station, but don’t worry. We’ll get help for you,” she said as she reached for the phone to call for an ambulance. While she talked, she hurriedly got out some towels and pressed one tightly against the cut on Boon’s arm.

Soon they heard a siren, and the ambulance arrived. Accompanied by his mother, Boon was rushed to the hospital. A doctor examined the wound, and almost immediately, ordered a blood transfusion for him. “You lost a lot of blood, young man, but you’ll be fine,” the doctor said with a smile as blood flowed into Boon’s arm through a tube. “This blood saved your life.”

In the following days, Boon often thought about what the doctor had said. “They gave me someone else’s blood, and it saved my life,” he told his mother one day. “I wonder whose blood it was. Did the doctor tell you?”

“No. I wish I knew. I’d like to thank that person,” replied Mom, “but the blood they gave you came from the blood bank. It seems strange, doesn’t it, to know that blood from someone you’ve never even seen saved your life?”

Boon nodded. As he thought about it, he remembered the day he had gone to Sunday school with his friend Matt. This is something like what Matt’s teacher was talking about, thought Boon. “It’s Jesus who saves us,” the teacher had explained. “His blood washes away our sins. If it weren’t for Jesus and His death on the cross, we’d have no hope of going to heaven.”

“I don’t get it,” Boon had told Matt after class. “How could the blood of Jesus help me? He lived years and years ago. I’ve never even seen Him!”

“You can believe without seeing Him,” Matt had replied. “I do.”

Matt’s right! Boon thought now. If the blood of someone I’ve never seen can save my life here on earth, I guess the blood of someone I’ve never seen can save me from my sins too. I can believe in Jesus even if I haven’t seen Him. Boon thought about it a little longer. I’ll talk to Matt about it again, he decided, and I’m going to tell Mom about it, too.

Thought: Do you wish you could see Jesus?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, although I can’t see Jesus, I can know Him through the teachings of the Bible. Please give me the faith to believe in Jesus. This I pray in Jesus’ name – Amen.

LET US NOT BE WEARY IN WELL DOING

"I'll never invite John to Sunday school again!" Kevin shouted as he slammed the door behind him. "He's so mean-and he thinks he's so smart!" Kevin wiped his eyes with the back of his hand and choked down a sob. "When I invited him, he laughed at me and said I'm childish to go to Sunday school every week. He told the other kids I have to go because I'm just a baby."

Mom sighed. "I'm sure John doesn't realise..." She was interrupted by a sharp howl of pain.

"That's Mitsy," Kevin cried. He found his puppy crouched on the ground, her paw pricked with a nail. Every time she moved, the nail jabbed her flesh. "Oh, poor baby," Kevin crooned as he knelt beside her. He reached for the trapped paw. "Gr-r-r-r!" growled Mitsy, baring her teeth. Kevin drew back in surprise. "Mitsy! Why are you growling at me? I only want to help you."

The puppy again growled angrily as Mom knelt beside them and reached for the paw. "Hold her head, Kevin, and talk to her gently," said Mom. "I'll see if I can help."

As Kevin talked softly and patted the whining puppy, his mother carefully freed the paw and examined it. "There's a little cut here," she said, "but she'll soon forget it." As Mitsy's wet tongue reached for Mom, she laughed and drew back. "I guess she's thanking me, but I can do without dog kisses." She patted Mitsy's head. "Kevin, what if we had walked off and left Mitsy when she growled at us?" Mom asked.

Kevin blinked. "We'd never do that!" he exclaimed. "Mitsy didn't mean anything when she growled at us. She just didn't realise we were trying to help her. She was scared and hurt."

"Mitsy reminds me of John," Mom said gently. "When he laughs at you for inviting him to Sunday school, he doesn't realise what he's doing either. Don't stop trying to help him just because he snapped at you."

"Yip! Yip!" agreed Mitsy as she ran around their feet.

Kevin grinned at the puppy. "She's still saying thank you," he said. "Who knows, someday, maybe John will thank me for trying to help him too."

Thought: Have kids "growled" at you when you invited them to Sunday school?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for today's lesson. Sometimes classmates may laugh at me and try to make me feel foolish in front of others. And frankly, I am tempted to stop inviting them, praying for them, or telling them about Jesus. Help me not to give in to that temptation. Teach me to be a faithful witness for Jesus. In Jesus' name I pray – Amen.

THE GIFT OF SALVATION

“Look, Dad!” exclaimed Leah when Dad stopped at a traffic light on their way home one Saturday afternoon. “That sign says ‘Free car wash.’”

As Dad opened his mouth to reply, a young man leaned toward the open driver’s side window. “Wash your car, Sir?” he asked eagerly. “It’s free!”

“Oh, sure... sure it is,” said Dad. He chuckled. “Free for a donation, right?”

“No! It really is free! Honest!” insisted the young man, but Dad was sure there must be a catch somewhere, so he drove on home.

Leah got out and looked at the car. “This car does need a washing,” she said. “Yes, it does,” Dad agreed. “Let’s get out the hose and rags and get at it.”

When Mom saw what they were going to do, she had a suggestion. “Take the car up to the junior college up the road,” she said. “They’re giving free car washes.”

“You fell for that line, did you?” asked Dad with a smile. “There’s got to be a catch to it.”

“No, there isn’t,” Mom assured him. “I heard on the radio that several businesses have pledged money for every car the kids wash. The money goes to a charity fund for the aged. The more cars they wash, the more money the charity fund will get, but it won’t cost you a cent.”

“Really?” exclaimed Dad. “Come on, Leah. Let’s go and put those kids to work.” They quickly got into the car and hurried back to the school.

As Dad pulled into the parking lot, there were only a few people standing around. A man approached the car, and Dad rolled down his window, expecting to hear some instructions. “I’m sorry, Sir, but we’re closed,” said the man. “If you had come a little earlier, we’d have been glad to wash your car, but now it’s too late. The students have left and the equipment put away.”

“Too late! I don’t like those words!” exclaimed Leah as they drove away. “You missed a free car wash just because you wouldn’t believe it was free.”

Dad sighed. “You’re right,” he said, and then a thought struck him. “This is the way it is with God’s gift of salvation,” he told Leah. “Many people think there’s a catch to it - that they must in some way pay or work for their salvation. But God says it’s a gift - it’s free. We must accept Christ as Saviour before it’s too late.”

Thought: Do you know that eternal life is a gift?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of salvation. In Jesus’ name I pray – Amen.

LIVING AS CHILDREN OF THE KING OF KINGS!

Melissa curled up on the couch with her new story book. “I’ve almost finished reading this book”, she said as she opened it. “The story is about a princess who didn’t even know she was a princess for quite a while.”

“How come?” asked Melissa’s brother, Aaron. “If I were a prince, I would know it!”

“She was kidnapped at birth” explained Melissa, “but even after she found and reunited with her family, she did not behave like a princess. The king and queen wanted her to live in their palace, but she was scared even to talk to them. She wanted to stay with people she knew, so she continued to live in her dilapidated shack. The king bought her pretty, new clothes, but she did not take care of them and soon they became dirty and raggedy like her old ones.”

“Interesting,” said Mom. “But we sometimes act and live that way ourselves.”

“We do?” asked Aaron. “I don’t wear raggedy clothes,” protested Melissa. “Besides, I’m not a princess.”

“You are one, in a way,” said Mom, “and Aaron is a prince.”

Melissa giggled. “Is Dad a king in disguise?” she asked. “And are you a queen?” Mom smiled. “No, but I’m a princess and Dad is a prince. This is made possible because we have trusted Jesus as our Saviour, so we are now adopted into God’s family,” she said. “We’re His children, and He is a King - not just any king, but the King of kings!”

“Oh, yeah!” Melissa exclaimed. “We had a Bible lesson on that.”

“As children of God, we’re His heirs,” continued Mom. “We have a wonderful future in heaven in addition to the blessings and promises He offers us here on earth. But sometimes we forget that we also have responsibilities. We act as if we don’t know we’re children of the King, and we live as though we still belong to the world.”

“Well... just how is a prince or princess supposed to act?” Aaron wondered.

“You will find the answer in the fifth chapter of Galatians where Apostle Paul taught about developing the fruit of the Spirit. Go look it up!”

Thought: Did you know that if you trust in Jesus as Saviour, you’re a child of the King of kings?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the reminder that I am your child. This I pray in Jesus’ name – Amen.

CONFESS YOUR SIN!

“My baseball glove is missing!” exclaimed Philip as he stormed into the kitchen. He scowled. “Derek probably took it. He’s always taking things that don’t belong to him.”

Just then Derek entered the room. “I heard that, Philip,” he said. “You make me sound like a thief!”

“You don’t have Philip’s glove?” asked Mom. “I have it,” admitted Derek, “but it’s not like I stole it. I just borrowed it. It’s no big deal!”

“Well, it is to me,” said Philip. “I’ve told you lots of times to ask if you want to use something that’s mine. Don’t just take it like you own it!” Mom nodded. “Get your brother’s glove and return it to him,” she ordered.

Silently, Derek did as he was told. When he came back with the glove, Mom had left the room, so he didn’t bother to say he was sorry.

As his mother was putting clothes into the washing machine later that day, Derek hurried in with a shirt. “Can you wash this for me?” he asked. “It’s dirty. Look!” Mom inspected the shirt. “It is pretty bad, but I’ve already got a big load,” she said. “Why don’t you just wear something else? It’s no big deal, is it?”

“Yes! Our basketball team is having our picture taken tomorrow, so I need this shirt,” replied Derek.

Mom looked at the shirt again. “All right,” she said. “I guess there’s room for one more shirt.” She looked thoughtful as she threw it into the washer. “You know, Derek,” she added, “waiting a few days to wash your shirt didn’t seem like a big deal to me. But it did to you. A lot of times what seems like no big deal to one person is a big deal to somebody else. Like the glove incident. That was a big deal to Philip, remember?” Derek sighed and nodded. “The most important thing to consider is how God sees it? We may think a wrong thing we do is no big deal, but God hates all sin.”

Derek sighed. “I... I’ll try to remember to ask permission to use his stuff after this,” he promised. “And I’ll tell him I’m sorry about the glove.”

“Good,” said Mom. “You need to do that, and I hope you’ll tell God you’re sorry, too.”

Thought: Do you feel like your sins are no big deal? Think again!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to remember that You hate sin. Help me also to confess my sins always and seek Your forgiveness. In Jesus’ name I pray – Amen.

ARE YOU RUSTY?

“Bee, you left your watch at the edge of the sink,” said Alan one morning. “I didn’t see it, and I knocked it into the water.”

Bee took her watch from her brother’s hand and put it on. She looked to see what time it was. “Oh, no!” she moaned. “It’s not working!”

“Mom and Dad gave you a watch, but you don’t even take good care of it,” Alan scolded. “You better learn not to be so careless!”

“Relax, little brother! I just forgot it,” retorted Bee impatiently.

Just then Dad appeared, and Bee showed him the watch. “Get me a hair dryer,” he said. “I’ll remove the caseback and see if we can dry it out.” He worked on the watch for a while, and to Bee’s relief, it started running. “You know, Bee, your watch reminds me of you,” said Dad as he handed her the watch.

Bee laughed. “How is that so?” she asked. “It can’t be because you took the back off and saw the inside. We already talked about how you can’t do that with us.”

“No, but if we hadn’t dried it, your watch probably would have gotten rusty inside,” Dad said. “That could happen to you, too.” “It could?” asked Alan in surprise.

“Yeah, Dad,” added Bee. “Metal objects rust, but people aren’t made of metal, so how could anybody get rusty inside?”

“No, you’re not made of metal,” said Dad with a smile, “but . . . yes! In a different way, you could get rusty. You’ve both accepted Jesus as your Saviour, and now you need to guard yourself against getting rusty spiritually by forgetting about God and how to live for Him.”

“I see what you mean! And we probably guard against getting rusty by going to church every week, don’t we?” asked Bee.

“And to Sunday school,” suggested Alan, “and to Bible club.”

Dad nodded. “Those things help. They’re important, but daily devotions are, too,” he said. “You should set aside some time each day to read your Bible and pray.” He smiled. “Let’s all be sure to do that.”

Thought: To prevent spiritual rust – read and obey God’s Word each day!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I confess there are times when I forget my quiet time and let several days go by without reading the Bible or praying. Please help me fight spiritual rust by being diligent in studying of the Bible! In Jesus’ name I pray – Amen.

CONFESS YOUR SINS

“Where did I leave my watch?” wondered Bee, when she couldn’t find it one day. “I thought I put it right here on the table. Maybe it’s in my room. She went and searched her room without success.”

A week later, Bee’s brother came into the house and handed her the watch. “You did it again,” Alan scolded. “You didn’t take care of your watch. I found it near the toy box, and it has stopped working again.” “I hunted all over for it,” she said. “I don’t remember taking it off near the toy box.” She looked at the watch. “Maybe Dad can fix it again.”

Dad checked the watch. “It probably needs a good cleaning,” he said. “We had better take it to the jeweller but you’ll have to pay for it yourself.”

“Okay. Can we take it to him right now?” Bee asked hopefully, and Dad agreed. The jeweller listened as Bee explained the problem. “There’s probably a lot of dirt in here, but we’ll take care of it,” he said. “We’ll have it ready for you in about a week.” He gave Bee a receipt, and she and Dad headed home.

“So... did you get your watch fixed?” asked Alan as they sat down to have dinner that evening. “The jeweller will get it done,” Bee replied. She turned to her father. “Hey, Dad!” she added with a twinkle in her eye. “Remember those lessons you taught us using my watch for illustrations? Like how it has an important part that can’t be seen, just like our souls are important and can’t be seen? And how I should keep my watch dry so it doesn’t get rusty, and that we shouldn’t get rusty spiritually, either?”

“Sure, I remember,” said Dad. “Why?”

“I thought of a new lesson myself,” Bee said with a smile. “When my watch got dirty, we took it to the jeweller to be cleaned, so when we do something wrong, it’s important that we go to the Lord and ask Him to clean us up.” Dad smiled. “Great thinking,” he said. He reached over and gave her a hug. “That watch sure has taught us a lot, hasn’t it? How about we all go out for ice cream after we have dinner, as a reward for everything we’ve learned? My treat.”

Bee grinned and Alan answered. “Yes!” he exclaimed. “Good job, Bee, but I still think you ought to be more careful with your watch.”

“I know,” Bee replied, “and I will be. I really will!”

Thought: Do you confess and admit you are wrong when you are indeed wrong?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, every time I fall into sin, help me to repent and seek Your forgiveness. This I pray in Jesus’ name – Amen.

ALL WE HAVE IS FROM GOD

“Oh, Max! You’re always bragging about your good grades,” complained Kai. He stuck his nose in the air and mimicked his brother. “I got an A in this! I, and I alone, got 100 in that. I’m so smart!”

“Well, I am the smartest kid in my class,” boasted Max.

“Boys, that’s enough!” said Dad sternly. Then, taking out his wallet, he removed some bills. “What do you think of this, Max?” he asked.

Max’s eyes opened wide. “Wow! A fifty dollar bill! And a hundred!”

“Yes,” said Dad with a nod. “Remember the watch Brother Jeffrey asked us to sell for him when he moved to study overseas? Well, I sold it this morning, and the man paid me in cash. This should come in handy, don’t you think?”

“Yeah, but... you’re not going to spend it, are you?” wondered Max.

“Why not?” asked Dad. “The man gave it to me.”

“But it’s not yours,” said Kai. “It belongs to Brother Jeffrey, doesn’t it?”

“Yeah, Dad. The watch belonged to him,” said Max, “so if you keep the money, you’ll be stealing, won’t you?”

Dad smiled. “You’re right. I would be stealing,” he agreed. “The buyer handed the money to me, but he was really paying Brother Jeffrey. I’m just the go-between. Like you, Max.”

“Like me?” asked Max. “What do you mean?”

“What I mean is that all the abilities and talents you have, great or small, come from God,” replied Dad. “He’s letting you use them, but they really belong to Him. Sometimes people will compliment you on them, but you’re just the go-between. God loaned you those abilities so that you could use them to glorify Him, not yourself.”

Max looked embarrassed. “So... you’re saying I shouldn’t be proud of being smart, right?”

“Right,” said Dad. “Thank God for the talents He gave you. When someone gives you a compliment, just remember it really should go to God.”

“Okay, Dad,” said Max. “I’ll try to remember. I don’t want to steal from God!”

Thought: Are you good at schoolwork or sports or music? Remember that all your talents are from the Lord!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the reminder today that all I have is from You. In Jesus’ name I pray – Amen.

DO YOU HELP OTHERS?

"I don't see why I have to go to the hospital to see Anne," grumbled Diana. "Even though she's in my Sunday school class, we aren't really very close friends, and I have other things that I want to do!"

"There must be lots of things Anne would like to do, too," said Mom, "but she can't do them today, either. We have told her we would visit her in the hospital, and this is the only day this week we can do that."

"Oh, all right!" agreed Diana, but she didn't look very pleased. She was still pouting when they left a little later. "I still think this is a big waste of time," she muttered under her breath. Mom was silent as she eased the car out of their home in Ang Mo Kio. After a while, she turned to Diana. "Do you remember what Jimmy said last month when you had a toothache?"

"I sure do!" said Dana. "He wanted me to play a game with him while I was suffering with that awful toothache! Brothers are so unfeeling!"

"But what did he say?" persisted Mom.

Diana frowned. "He said I wouldn't be playing ball with my tooth - only my hands and legs - so I should forget my toothache! What an insensitive thought!"

"Well, why couldn't you do that?" asked Mom.

Diana stared at her mother in disbelief. "Mom! Not you, too!" she protested. "When my tooth was hurting so badly, I felt unwell all over because my tooth is part of my body. That's how you explained it to Jimmy, don't you remember?"

Mom smiled. "Oh, I remember all right," she said. "I just wondered if you did. I thought you had probably forgotten."

"Why did you think that?" asked Diana.

"Well, you can't see why we should visit Anne," replied Mom, "but she's part of the body of Christ, just like we and all other Christians are. When she hurts, we should hurt, too. When you had that toothache, you would have done whatever you could to make it feel better, wouldn't you? When someone who is part of the body of Christ is hurt, we should do what we can to help that person feel better, too. Perhaps our visit with Anne will help brighten her day."

"I..." Diana hesitated. "Okay," she agreed. "Let's make it a good visit!"

Thought: Do you help others?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me not to be selfish or shy to help other Christians who may be having a hard time. This I pray in Jesus' name - Amen.

DON'T BE HOOKED LIKE A FISH!

Bee Hoon searched through the tackle box until she found the shiny, silver bait Dad had asked her to get. "Is this the one?" she asked.

Dad took it from her hand. "Yes." He grinned. "This is the one. As soon as Mr. Fish sees this, I have no doubt he'll gobble it up."

"Then we'll catch him and gobble him up, won't we?" Bee Hoon beamed excitedly. Dad nodded. "We sure will," he said. After tying the bait to the fishing line, Dad cast it into the pond. "Want to reel this in and see if we can catch a fish?" he asked.

"Next time," Bee Hoon said. "You catch one first."

"Okay," agreed Dad, turning the reel. "Hey! I think I've got a bite!"

"All right!" Bee Hoon clapped her hands as Dad reeled in a big fish. "Wow! Are we going to eat it tonight?" she asked as Dad reached for the flopping fish.

Dad nodded. "You have got that right!" he said. When he threw the line out again, he asked, "Do you know why that shiny thing you gave me is called a bait or lure?" Bee Hoon shook her head. "Not really."

"To bait or lure means to entice something, and that shiny thing entice the fish to attach themselves to the hook," Dad explained. "It looks good to them and tricks them into thinking it's good to eat, but when they grab it, they're caught." He handed Bee Hoon the fishing rod. "Do you know that Satan often uses lures to trick and trap people?"

Bee Hoon shook her head as she began reeling in the line. "He does?" she asked. "Yes, but not the kind we use," said Dad. "Satan often tricks people by making sin look attractive. He may get you to think that a sinful activity is harmless or even fun. He may call your attention to somebody who's gotten away with telling a lie, or shoplifting, and make you think you should try it, too. Or he may use a TV show to make things like drinking alcohol look attractive."

Bee Hoon finished reeling in the line. "No fish took the lure this time," she said as she cast the line out again. "I'm going to be careful not to take Satan's lures, either. I don't want to be hooked by him!"

"Good!" Dad nodded. "When Satan tempts you, ask God to help you resist by using Bible verses you've learned to remind you to do what's right."

Thought: Be aware and do not fall into Satan's lures!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please me grant the strength to resist the temptation to sin. In Jesus' name I pray – Amen.

FEAR THE LORD!

“Luke, are you afraid of God?” Tania asked her brother as they reviewed some of their memory verses.

“No-o-o, I don’t think so,” replied Luke. “Why should I be afraid of Him?”

“This verse says, ‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,’” said Tania. “What does that mean?”

Just then Jason, the neighbourhood troublemaker, came along. “Hey, Luke,” he called, “get your bike and come with me. Rick has challenged me to destroy the plants near our school. That is a bad thing to do, but I’m going to do it anyway!”

Luke’s eyes widened. “You’d better not, Jason,” he said, “since you know that is wrong.”

“Might be scary for little girls and babies, but I’m not afraid of anything.” Jason boasted. “You coming?”

Luke shook his head. “No. I don’t think that is a good idea! I certainly know what my Dad would say if I were to join you.”

“You are a scaredy-cat!” mocked Jason as he sped off on his bike.

Luke watched Jason leave, then ran off to tell his Mom. “Jason is neither afraid of anybody nor anything. That is why many boys admire him.”

Mom sighed. “Fear can be good as well as bad,” she said. “It’s smart to fear some things. Fear of the right things can keep you out of trouble.”

“Are we supposed to be afraid of God?” asked Tania. “There are several verses in the bible that teach about fearing Him.”

“We fear God in the sense that we respect, honour, and trust Him,” Mom explained. “That results in being afraid of His punishment of sin.”

“Like I respect and obey you and Dad?” asked Luke. “I’m not scared of you, but I’m afraid to disobey you.” He nodded. “So if we’re really smart, we honour and respect and obey God instead of just thinking we can handle everything ourselves.”

“Somebody better tell Jason that,” said Tania. “Tell him he needs to get smart.”

Thought: Do you have the fear of God?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for the reminder today that I have to fear You in the biblical sense. This I pray in Jesus’ name – Amen.

WHO DO YOU LOOK UP TO?

Eight-year-old Jon was sitting in front of the television, watching a cartoon show. His favorite character was Captain Midnight, and he often pretended to be Captain Midnight with his black cape and hood.

"Mom," said Jon's sister Cassie one morning, "I left a five-dollar note on my dresser yesterday but now it's gone!" "Are you sure?" asked Mom.

Cassie nodded. "100% sure!" she declared.

Mom turned to her son. "Do you know anything about that, Jon?" she asked. He was so engrossed in the TV program that he didn't realise she was speaking to him. She tried again. "Let's see..." Mom chuckled. "Earth calling Captain Midnight!" she chanted. "Come in, Captain!"

Jon loved this game, and he answered in his deepest voice. "Captain Midnight speaking. How can I help you today?"

"Cassie is missing some money," replied Mom. "Can you help us, Captain?"

"Can solve mystery easily," responded Jon. "Captain Midnight takes from the rich and gives to the poor. Money was given to the poorest boy in Captain Midnight's class." With this admission, he shouted, "Up, up, and away." He spread his arms to pretend he was flying to school.

"Hold on there," said Mom, catching hold of his arm. "We've played Captain Midnight with you because we thought it was a harmless game, but I'm afraid you've carried it much too far, Jon!"

"But I did something good with the money," protested Jon. "I gave it to Kok Lin. He needed it."

"But it wasn't yours to give," replied Mom. "You stole it." She shook her head. "It seems you've made Captain Midnight a pattern for your life. The Bible tells us to make Jesus our example. You know what God says about stealing. Would Jesus have taken what didn't belong to Him?"

"Well... no," mumbled Jon.

"Jon, you know I have to punish you," said Mom. "You will not be allowed to watch cartoons for a week. And you'll have to pay Cassie the five dollars out of your allowance. I hope you'll remember this lesson!"

Thought: Do you have a hero or person you especially admire? No one is better than Jesus!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to follow the example of the Lord Jesus always. In Jesus' name I pray – Amen.

ONLY JESUS SAVES!

“But we know lots of good people,” argued Dan one day. He and his sister Darcy were talking to their cousin Joel. “We know many people who are of different religions, or go to different churches and have different beliefs about salvation. Perhaps being sincere is all that is necessary.”

“That’s not what the Bible says,” replied Joel. “It says only people who trust in Jesus will go to heaven.” “Well, I can’t believe our friends won’t be there. They’re nice people,” insisted Darcy. Dan agreed with her, and nothing Joel said would change their minds.

That night, Darcy heard groaning coming from Dan’s room. She went to see what was wrong. “O-o-oh,” moaned Dan, “my stomach! What can I do?”

“You overate at dinner like I did,” Darcy said, “but I took some of the pink medicine when I got ready for bed. Why don’t you take some, too? It’s on the counter in the bathroom.”

Still sleepy and in pain, Dan headed for the bathroom, found a bottle on the counter, and took a spoonful. Then he tried to sleep again, but soon gave up. He called his sister. “I think that medicine made me worse,” he told her.

“Did you take the pink stuff?” Darcy asked. “Pink stuff?” Dan groaned. “I think it was white. It was on counter, just like you said.” Darcy quickly checked the bathroom counter and saw that what Dan had taken was hand lotion. She called her mom and explained what had happened. “I don’t think it will do much harm, Dan,” said mom, “but we’ll check with the doctor to make sure.”

Dan was very thoughtful the next day. “Now I know what you mean about people missing the way to heaven even though they’re sincere,” he told Joel on the phone. “I really thought that stuff I took last night would make me feel better, but it didn’t do a bit of good.” He sighed. “I can see that it’s silly to think it doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you’re sincere about it.”

“Yes, it is,” agreed Joel. “You were sincerely wrong about the medicine, weren’t you? That was bad enough, but it’s worse to be sincerely wrong about the way to heaven. Jesus is the one and only way.”

Thought: Do you think it doesn’t matter what religion you practise or what set of beliefs you follow?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the reminder that the only way to heaven is through the Lord Jesus Christ. In Jesus’ name I pray – Amen.

ARE YOU “SALTY”?

“Our memory verse today is Colossians 4:6. ‘Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man,’” said Chong’s Sunday school teacher. “What does salt do?”

Chong felt he knew a little about that! His hand shot up. “It adds flavour to food,” he said, and shared how his mother added salt to flavour her dishes.

“So what you’re saying is that Christians should add flavour to the lives of others by helping them,” commented Brother Mike his Sunday school teacher. “That’s great. Can anyone think of something else that salt does?”

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

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

Olivia eagerly raised her hand. “My dad said one of his colleagues asked him last week why he can be so patient even when things go wrong. Dad had helped him with a problem and had a chance to witness to him. That guy and his wife came to church with us today.”

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

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

All too soon, it was time for the kids to go home. “Okay. You’re dismissed,” said Brother Mike. “As you go, think about ways you can be like salt in the coming week.”

Thought: Are you “salty”?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be a good witness for Jesus Christ. In Jesus’ name I pray – Amen.

GOD'S WORD IS A LAMP

A sharp flash of lightning and a crack of thunder made Adelene jump. As she put down the book she'd been reading, the lights in her bedroom went out. "Mom!" she shouted. She waited a minute. "Mom!" she yelled again.

"I'm right here," Mom answered, coming into the room. "Where's D-Dad?" sputtered Adelene, as another crack of thunder rocked the house. "That thunder is so loud!"

"I know," said Mom. "Let's go and find some flashlights." Adelene and her mother made their way down the hall. As they turned to go into the store room, Adelene ran into something. "Oh!" she exclaimed in surprise.

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

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

"We haven't used them in a very long time, and the batteries are probably not working anymore," said Dad. "I'll pick up some new batteries tomorrow."

A flash of lightening lit up the room. "Well, after this, we'd better use flashlights more often and keep them in shape so we'll be ready when another storm hits," declared sister Amanda. "True," agreed Mom, "but for now I'll get out some candles. I know just where to find them-and matches, too. I'm prepared!"

"Good!" Dad approved. "Does this remind anybody of Pastor's sermon last Sunday?" Adelene shrugged. "Not me," she said. "He didn't talk about thunder storms."

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

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

Thought: Do you read the Bible every day?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the reminder to read my Bible regularly. I know Your Word is indeed a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. In Jesus' name I pray - Amen.

IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE ARE MANY MANSIONS...

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

Mom glanced at him. "And why is that so?"

Nathan squirmed. "Well, I know preachers always say heaven will be so great, but all that music and singing sounds boring to me," he confessed. "I like to be in church occasionally, but I don't think I'd like to be there all the time. Besides, this is a great world right and I don't want to miss my friends, games and television!"

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

Nathan was puzzled. "She's only two months old!"

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

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

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

"If she did that, she'd miss out on an awful lot," declared Nathan.

"I agree," said Mom. "We couldn't even begin to describe the sights, sounds, and tastes to her. She'd have to experience them for herself to understand." She smiled at Nathan. "I'm sure it's that way with heaven, too, Nathan. Our experience in heaven will be far greater than what we can ever imagine or understand."

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

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

Thought: Are you afraid heaven won't really be much fun-that it might even be boring? It won't be!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to look forward to the day that I will be with You in heaven. In Jesus name I pray - Amen.

CONFESS, AND RECEIVE FORGIVENESS!

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

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

“Oh-h-h-h,” wailed Hannah. “That would have been so much fun!” Mom felt bad. “Can you forgive me?” she asked. Hannah sighed, but nodded.

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

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

After dinner, Hannah helped Mom clear the table. “Honey, I do feel bad that you missed the excursion with Grandma,” said Mom. “Will you forgive me?” Hannah gave her mother a puzzled look. “I told you it’s okay, Mom,” she said, not noticing her mother’s smile.

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

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

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

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

Thought: Do you still feel guilty after you have confessed a sin to God?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for Your assurance that my sins are forgiven when I sincerely repent, confess and seek Your forgiveness. In Jesus’ name I pray - 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 colored cards. Mrs. Lin, the art teacher, tuned 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 color-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 color." "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 color?

During science class a little later, the subject of color-blindness came up again. Tai Loong was asked several questions about it. "Does it bother you that you are unable to tell what color things are?" asked one of the girls.

Tai Loong grinned. "It doesn't matter what color they are," he said. "Red apples taste good and so do yellow ones. Color 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 'color-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 color? Or their background? Or how they look? Don't forget that God made everyone special.

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

CAST YOUR CARES TO HIM

"We hate tests, Grandpa!" announced Sheila as she plunked down on the sofa. "Between Steve and me, we already had five tests this week!" she complained. Grandpa smiled. "I guess nobody likes tests," he agreed, "but we all have them." "You don't!" protested Steve. "You're done with school. Your last test was surely before we were born!"

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

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

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

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

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

"Might as well tell you," mumbled Steve. "Mom and Dad are getting a divorce." "I thought they loved us!" cried Sheila. "But they're splitting up. Why should I have to choose between my own mom and dad?"

"I know they are getting a divorce. I also know they do love you," Grandpa assured her. "And what makes you think you have to choose? You love them both, and you always will." "Yes, but ...but everything is all messed up!" Sheila said sadly. "I know, and I'm so sorry," Grandpa replied. "You're facing one of the hardest tests of your lives right now, but God will help you. He wants you to trust Him, even during this difficult time."

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

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

Thought: Are you facing one of life's tests? Loss of Dad's job? Illness? Turn to the Lord and seek His help.

Prayer: Teach me, Heavenly Father, to accept the tests and difficulties which will come my way. Please help me to learn to cast my cares on You, for You have promised that You care for me. In Jesus' name I pray – Amen.

GOD IS WITH YOU ALWAYS!

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

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

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

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

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

"That's good," said Tommy. "I knew you'd never leave me. I just forgot." "God won't leave you, either," Mom assured him.

"I'll thank the lady for helping me find you," said Tommy, turning to look for the sales clerk. "Do you see her?"

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

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

Thought: Have you ever gotten lost or felt scared or alone? God is always with you.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that You are always with me. Whenever I feel afraid, help me to remember to seek You in prayer and to trust in Your protection. In Jesus' name I pray - Amen.

OUR DUTY TO SHARE THE GOSPEL!

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

“Since it’s so important to you, you should have told me, your best friend, about it sooner,” said Mike. Joe blushed. “I should have,” he admitted. Mike patted him on the shoulder. “Well, I’m glad you finally did. I’ve been wondering about God lately. Maybe you can answer some of my questions.”

“Sure!” Joe felt a sense of relief, and the boys talked more about Jesus and His love for everyone. Before the evening ended, to Joe’s amazement, Mike asked Jesus to be his Saviour! “I’m sorry I waited so long to tell you about Jesus,” Joe apologised, “but I sure am glad you’re a Christian now, Mike.”

“Me, too!” Mike grinned at his friend as he looked at his watch. “Well, I’ve got to go home. You remember we’re going to Bali tomorrow and the family has to wake up very early to go to the airport! Am really looking forward to it!” With those words, the two boys parted as they both looked forward to the one-month school break.

The next day, Joe had a good time with his family as dad took the day off from work. They went to the zoo and were having lunch when they watched the news on TV from the hamburger stand. “Tragedy struck a family this morning,” came the voice of a news reporter. “A car with a family of five was hit when a truck ploughed into them.”

“Oh, no!” gasped Joe. “That looks like the car of Mike’s dad!” “All the members of the family escaped,” the voice continued, “except eleven-year-old Michael Tan, who lost his life in the crash.” Joe was first shocked, then broke down crying. “I can’t believe it!” he said between sobs. “I was talking to Mike last night, and now he’s d-dead!” “I’m sorry, Joe ... so sorry.” Dad put his arm around Joe’s shoulder. “I wish I hadn’t waited so long to tell Mike about Jesus,” Joe said slowly, “but just think... if I hadn’t told him yesterday, he would have been lost forever and I would never see him again! I’m so glad he became a Christian last night.”

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

Thought: Have you put off telling someone about Jesus?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for reminding me of my responsibility to share the Gospel with the unsaved. In Jesus’ name I pray – Amen.

IS YOUR MIND “TANGLED”?

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

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

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

“Let me help,” offered Shelby. She took the brush and started working on the snarls. “You should have strong arms after doing this so often,” she joked as she attacked another section of hair. “Am I pulling too much?” “No more than I do,” Marissa said.

A few minutes later, Shelby put the brush on the dresser. “That should do it!” she said. “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 Marissa, stuffing books into her bag. “Your hair doesn’t get in knots like mine does.”

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

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

“The Bible. I make sure I read some verses from it every day,” replied Shelby. “My thoughts seem to get tangled up all by themselves - just like your hair does - but I have to purposely put God’s Word in my mind. I make myself think about what He says. Doing that helps me straighten out my thinking.”

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

Shelby added, “You’re right, sis. You should try reading some Bible verses every day. Untangling thoughts can be even more important than untangling your hair.”

Thought: Do your thoughts get all mixed up sometimes? Turn to the Lord to untangle them!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to focus upon You and Your Word each day so that my mind may be free from anxieties. This I pray in Jesus’ name – Amen.

HATING = MURDER?

Abby woke up in a terrible mood. She had a report to write at school, and she wasn't well prepared. "Oh, no," she groaned as she looked out the window. "It's pouring rain! My hair will get all kinky and fuzzy!"

As Abby headed for the bathroom, she and her little brother reached the door at the same time. "Get out of the way!" ordered Abby, grabbing his arm and giving him a shove.

"Ouch!" cried Marc as Abby pushed him out of the way and went into the bathroom. Marc went to find his mother. "Mom, Abby hurt me! She pushed me against the wall!" he complained.

When Abby came out of the bathroom, Mom was waiting. "I'm ready to hear an explanation from you, young lady," said Mom sternly. "What did Marc do to deserve this?" She showed Abby the long scrape on Marc's arm.

"He got in my way, that's what!" exclaimed Abby. "I've tried to tell the fool that I should always be in the bathroom first, but he won't listen to me! Marc knows it takes longer for me to get ready to leave than it does for him. Dad always says 'Ladies first' anyway."

"Abby, I'm ashamed of your behaviour," scolded Mom. She frowned. "You know," she added, "you may not think that being angry for no good reason, or hating someone, or calling somebody a fool is so bad, but Jesus compared that to murder. It's very wrong."

Abby looked shocked.

Mom continued, "Getting angry for no good reason and bearing grudges for a long time are both dangerous because they can lead to hatred and hating someone is sin for 1 John 3:15 teaches us that it is like committing murder!"

Abby definitely didn't want to be a murderer! "Oh dear! I'm sorry," she whispered. "I didn't mean it."

Mom nodded. "All right," she said, "but the next time when you feel angry, remember that it can be a serious thing."

Thought: Remember what the Bible says about anger, hatred and name calling!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for today's reminder. I know that sometimes I can be unreasonable and get angry for no right reason. I pray You'd forgive me. Please Heavenly Father, give me the strength to control myself. I never knew hating someone can be so serious. In Jesus' name I pray – Amen.

CHEATING IS STEALING

When Beng Teck arrived home from school, he proudly showed his mother the result of his history test. All the questions were answered correctly. "Wow!" exclaimed Mom. "That's wonderful. I must admit that I'm surprised - I know you didn't study very much." She looked over the paper. "I used to know a lot of this material myself," she said. "Let's play a game. I'll ask you some questions, and then you can ask me some. We'll see who can do better."

"Aw, Mom," objected Beng Teck. "I want to go out to play." Mom, however, insisted that they play the game she suggested, and it was soon apparent that Beng Teck knew little or nothing about the content covered in the test.

"Son, have you been cheating?" asked Mom. "Well ...n-not exactly," stammered Beng Teck. "I mean, lots of kids exchange answers. That's normal."

"Perhaps they do, but that doesn't make it right," Mom answered sternly. "Besides, you say that you've accepted Jesus as your Saviour, so don't you think you should be different from the rest of the non-believing kids?"

"Yeah . . . well, I suppose, but I am human," Beng Teck defended himself, "and it's not really so bad. It's ...it's just kind of like ...like getting a little help, that's all."

"Beng Teck, would you steal?" Mom asked. "Of course not!" he replied. "It's wrong to steal. That's one of the commandments."

"Exactly," agreed Mom. "And what is stealing?"

"Well, it's taking something that doesn't belong to you," Beng Teck answered. "Correct again." Mom nodded as she held up his paper. "And you took these answers that did not belong to you. You stole them, Beng Teck."

"I... I..." Beng Teck didn't know what to say. "I didn't mean to steal," he said finally. Mom shook her head. "No," she said, "perhaps not, but you did. You'll have to take this paper to your teacher tomorrow and tell her about it and about any other times you've cheated. She'll decide what you must do about it. Right now, you might want to confess it to the Lord and ask His forgiveness. And then, instead of playing after school, you'll have to stay in every day and study until you know this material."

Thought: Have you ever cheated? Cheating is stealing.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for your reminder that stealing is a sin. Help me to obey You always. In Jesus' name I pray - Amen.

DON'T JUDGE BY APPEARANCES

Bee Lan watched eagerly as Mrs. Tan held up an ugly old stone. "This looks like an ordinary rock, doesn't it?" said Mrs. Tan. Then she turned it around. The rock had been cut open, and the class could see beautiful, sparkling crystals on the inside. "This kind of stone is called a geode," said Mrs. Tan, "and I have a small piece of a geode for each one of you." She handed a box to a boy in the front row. "When the box comes around to you, you may each take out a piece to keep."

Bee Lan was delighted – this would make a nice addition to the rock collection she had at home. She selected one of the pieces, then turned and handed the box to Claire, who sat behind her. Bee Lan had never been interested in getting to know Claire. Claire had big, crooked teeth and wasn't very pretty. She's almost as ugly as the outside of the geode, thought Bee Lan to herself.

As Bee Lan was running down the school steps at the end of the day, someone bumped hard into her. Her books and stacks of paper were strewn all over the place. The person who had bumped into her didn't even stop, neither did several other kids who were leaving. Soon almost everyone was gone.

Bee Lan was picking up her trampled belongings when she heard a voice. "Hi, let me help you." Bee Lan looked up and saw Claire kneeling beside her, gathering pieces of paper strewn all over.

"Thanks," mumbled Bee Lan. She was so surprised that she couldn't think of anything else to say as they gathered the rest of her things.

"Oh! Here's your stone!" exclaimed Claire. She picked up the piece of geode from the bottom step and handed it to Bee Lan. "Rocks are interesting, aren't they?"

Bee Lan nodded and took the stone. "People can be like geodes – not very pretty on the outside, but beautiful on the inside. Like Claire," she thought. I should have remembered the Sunday school lessons I've had – those about God seeing what's inside a person. Bee Lan smiled at Claire. "Would you like to come over to my house and see my rock collection?" asked Bee Lan.

Happily, Claire nodded.

Thought: Do you choose your friends by the way they look?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me not to judge people by their outward appearance but rather to treat every person fairly. This I pray in Jesus' name – Amen.

LIFE IS LIKE A VAPOUR!

“Grandma, may we buy some bubble solution?” asked Jessica as they selected grocery items at Cold Storage. She and her sister were spending a weekend with their grandmother as their parents had gone for a short trip to Bangkok. “Amanda and I can share a bottle.” “We could buy some, but how would you like to make your own bubble solution?” Grandma asked. “All it takes is a cup of water, a tablespoon of dish washing soap, and a teaspoon of corn syrup.”

“That sounds like fun!” exclaimed Amanda. “Let’s do that!” “But what about wands to make the bubbles?” asked Jessica. “I have empty spools you can use to blow bubbles,” said Grandma. “I’ll show you how they work.”

When they reached Grandma’s home, she helped the girls mix the bubble recipe. Then she got the spools, dipped the end of one into the soapy solution, and blew into the other end. A large bubble formed on the end of the spool. “Wow!” exclaimed Amanda. “Let me do that!” The girls went to the balcony, and soon there were bubbles flying everywhere.

“Look at that huge one!” Jessica called, pointing toward the large one that just flew away. Their eyes followed a big bubble as it lifted in the breeze, catching rainbows of color. Then... POP! The bubble burst and was gone.

“Aw-w-w,” they all moaned. During lunch, Amanda sighed. “This weekend is zooming by so fast,” she murmured. “Our May vacation would soon be over,” said Jessica. Grandma nodded. “I think the older you get, the more you realise how fast life goes by,” she said. “It reminds me of what God says in James 4:14, ‘Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.’”

“Like the bubbles!” exclaimed Amanda. “Right,” said Grandma. “They were beautiful and fun, but they lasted only seconds. I’m so glad you girls both know Jesus and will spend eternity with Him. Life is so short compared to eternity, so let’s spend our time wisely. Let’s live every day in a way that makes our lives beautiful for Jesus.”

Thought: Have you noticed that time passes by very quickly? How are you using your time?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for today’s reminder that life is short. Help me to spend my time wisely for things that count eternally. This I pray in Jesus’ name – Amen.

GOD CAN USE YOU

This month we will study two of Paul's earliest letters, 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Acts 17:1-15 tells us how the Thessalonian church was founded.

It all started one night, when Paul had a vision of a Macedonian man pleading for help (Acts 16:9-10). Without hesitation, Paul responded immediately! Together with Silas, Luke and Timothy, they hurried to Macedonia arriving first in the city of Philippi, followed by Thessalonica. There, Paul boldly preached the gospel to the Jews in synagogues. Over three weeks, many were converted but many unbelieving Jews also violently opposed them. It got so bad that they had to leave the city by night to Berea.

But the Jews from Thessalonica didn't give up. They followed Paul and his friends to Berea and caused havoc. Paul then departed to Athens and later Corinth,



while Timothy and Silas remained in Berea to carry on the gospel work.

So when did Paul write 1 Thessalonians? After Timothy and Silas reunited with Paul in Corinth, he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to encourage the Christians because he himself was hindered from going there (Read 1 Thess 2:17-18). Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians after he received Timothy's report of the

church and wrote 2 Thessalonians a short time later.

What have we learnt? God carries out His plans through people. He did not send angels to evangelise the Thessalonians. God sent Paul, a born again Jew, and his friends including Timothy, a young man. God still uses people today. If you are willing and obedient, God can use you for His divine purposes too.

Look around your social circle, God can use you to...

- ... be a friend to someone in need
- ... be a trustworthy help at home
- ... be serving in church
- ... be His missionary where He has placed you.

Thought: God can use me to be a channel of blessing.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You use people to fulfill Your will and to do Your work. Please use me to be a blessing to other people. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

IS YOUR LIFE CHANGED?

There is no such thing as a perfect church since churches are made up of human beings. Being human, we are still in a body of flesh. Instead of obeying God and living a holy life, our tendency is always to sin and do things our own way. However, there are churches that come close to the mark. The church in Thessalonica was one good example and their testimony brought joy to Paul's heart.

What was the church like? The lives of people changed after they accepted Jesus. Today's text tells us that they had work of _ _ _ _ , labour of _ _ _ _ and patience of _ _ _ _ (Fill in the correct letters). These are virtues that any true Christian must have. Do you have them? Let's find out what they are.

Faith – this is the faith that produces works. James tells us in his letter that if a person has faith but does not put his faith into action by producing good works, his is a dead faith (James 2:17). One of the works that the new Thessalonian Christians did was to throw away their idols (1 Thessalonians 1:9b). They stopped worshipping idols and worshipped only the living and true God.

Love – the greatest commandment of God. It is easy to love nice people but don't you think it's more difficult to love your enemies or those who seem different from you? Loving others is service to God. This is the 'labour of love'. No longer serving idols, the Thessalonians changed to serving God by showing love to people (1 Thessalonians verse 1:3a).

Hope – What do you look forward to and hope for? A Christian looks forward to the return of Jesus. Unbelievers cannot understand this joyous hope. They hope for the wrong things such as power, position and wealth. The Thessalonians shifted their hope to patiently waiting for the day when they would see Jesus face to face – the day when their faith would become sight! (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

A changed life is the result of genuine salvation. Your name may be on the church roll, but not in the Lamb's book of life. Dear child, have you accepted Jesus into your heart as your personal Lord and Saviour? Jesus is able to change your heart to have faith, love and hope.

Thought: A changed life comes from a changed heart.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please save and change me from inside out. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

CHRIST LIVING IN US

The Thessalonian church brought joy to Paul's heart because their lives reflected Christ living in them. When a person accepts Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Saviour, Christ lives in him and he becomes a Christian. Just because your parents are Christians, or you attend church regularly, doesn't automatically make you a Christian. You've got to make that decision for yourself! Only with Christ living in us, do we have the ability to live godly lives that are pleasing to God – just like the Thessalonian Christians.

With Christ living in them, they were able to:

1. Receive the W _ _ _ (verse 6). They didn't reject the Word but gladly received the message and the messengers. What is your attitude when the Word of God is taught? Do you receive it gladly or are you disinterested?
2. Follow their l _ _ _ _ _ example (verse 6). The Greek word for 'followers' is 'mimetes'. It's the root word for the English word 'mimic.' The Thessalonian Christians imitated their leaders' good example of godly behavior and conduct. Do you see good examples of Christians who follow Christ, whose footsteps you can also follow?
3. S _ _ _ _ _ for Christ (verse 6-8). In turning to God from idols, they faced great opposition and suffered persecution. Are you facing difficulties because you are living for Christ? Continue to stand firm! The Thessalonian Christians faced trials too but didn't waver. Their testimony was of great encouragement to the Macedonians and Achaians. God can use your testimony to encourage and build up someone's faith too!
4. Share the G _ _ _ _ _ with others (verse 8). 'Sounding out' the word of the Lord means to boldly declare the message of salvation. Will you give a tract to someone or bring a friend to church?

Thought: Does your life reflect Christ living in you?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be like the Thessalonian Christians. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

ENTRUSTED WITH THE GOSPEL

Imagine the President or King puts in your charge the most precious treasure of the nation. He then tells you that your duty is to guard it against enemies and ensure its safety. You are to guard it even with your life! How would you view your responsibility? Would you take it lightly or seriously?

Today's reading tells us we are entrusted with something even more precious than any national treasure. And the One who puts us in charge, is of an office way higher than any president or king in this world. The God of heaven and earth has allowed us, Christians, to be entrusted with the precious Word of Everlasting Life – the only Word that can make a difference beyond this life. Souls can be saved from an eternity in hell simply by believing in God's Word. But what does it mean to be entrusted, or to be 'put in trust' with the gospel? As Paul writes in verse 4, it is to share the gospel. This means to tell others about Jesus Christ –so that if a person believes in Him, he may have everlasting life! Unlike an earthly treasure that has to be fiercely guarded and cannot be shared, God calls His children to freely share His precious Word to all. In fact, to be entrusted with the Gospel is to be responsible to share it and not keep it to yourself.

To be 'put in trust with the gospel' also means that we do not take advantage or abuse the gospel. Verses 4-6 tell us that Paul never abused the gospel for selfish gain. His aim was not to be popular among men, or to make big bucks. Paul's desire was only to p _ _ _ _ God and make Christ known. Can you imagine what would happen if the guard of a national treasure only cared about himself and sold the treasure? He would be put to jail!

For us, being entrusted with the precious gospel, we must not sell it by exchanging it to gain favour with man. God knows our hearts.

Question: What does it mean to be entrusted with the gospel?

(Tick the correct answers)

- ☐ Tell others about Christ
- ☐ Make full use of it for personal gain
- ☐ Please God and not man
- ☐ Be a popular and wealthy preacher

Thought: What a great privilege to be entrusted with the precious gospel!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to tell others about Jesus Christ and to always please You in all I say and do. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

GOD GIVES US SPIRITUAL PARENTS

Yesterday we learnt what it means to be entrusted with the gospel. Paul never failed to share the gospel and tell others about Christ. He never expected anything in return and only wanted to please God. Wherever Paul went, the gospel was on his lips and seen in his life.

Today, we read how Paul not only shared the gospel with the Thessalonians, but continued to care for their spiritual lives. He didn't just leave them alone after telling them about Christ. Paul stayed with them to build up and strengthen them in the faith. Just like how parents look after their newborn child and pay special attention to the child's needs, Paul also tended to their spiritual health as a spiritual father.

The Thessalonian church was dear to Paul and he cared for them deeply. Paul kept nothing from them. He went all out to teach them God's Word, sparing no effort to encourage, comfort and share his life with the Thessalonians.

Just as a father cares for his children, so did Paul care for the Thessalonian Christians. The Thessalonian Church was a poor church and Paul didn't want to trouble them to look after him. He worked hard day and night so that he could pay for his own living while staying with them.

God continues to give His children spiritual parents today. Like Paul, these are people who care very much for our spiritual health. Aren't you glad that you have such people in your life? They spend much time and effort to teach us God's Word. Spiritual parents could be your own parents, Sunday School teachers, or a more mature brother or sister-in-Christ. These people encourage us in our spiritual walk and desire for us to 'walk worthy of God' (verse 12). We ought to be thankful for them and spend time to pray for them and their ministry.

My spiritual parents are: _____

I want to thank God for them because: _____

Thought: Spiritual parents are part of God's plan to draw me closer to Him.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for my spiritual parents who care for my soul. Help me to be a blessing to them too. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

GODLY BEHAVIOUR

Paul described the behaviour of his companions and himself as:

(UNSCRAMBLE!)

LOYH _____,

TJSU _____,

NMBAELUBALE _____.

What words would you use to describe your behaviour? Would you think of using these words, too? At first glance, it seems as though this is a very high standard for us to reach. It's like the description of a perfect person without sin! Not so! Let's take a closer look at what each of these words means.

Holy living sometimes gets equated to running away from the world, staying in an isolated place, and meditating all day long. This is a wrong understanding. Being holy does not mean to run away from the world. Neither does it mean to be sinless. Rather, it is to sin less and less in the way we think, talk and act.

To be just is to be righteous, or to do rightly. What is the measure of right and wrong? It's the B _ _ _ ! By reading and studying God's Word, we will know what the right decisions to make are. But to know is not enough; we must also do.

A person who is unblameable is someone that no one can find fault with, not even his enemies. Paul and his companions were good testimonies in Thessalonica. They conducted themselves honestly before God and man. Our friends don't just hear the gospel from our lips, they also observe if we practise what we preach. Let's pray that they will see Christ in us!

Godly behaviour does not mean that we have attained perfection. Sinless perfection will only be a reality when we get to heaven. Godly behaviour is the fruit of our salvation, of God working in our lives to change us. Can your friends tell if there is a difference in you? If yes, praise God for your good testimony.

Thought: Let others see Jesus in me.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, work in my heart so that I will grow spiritually and other people can see that I live a holy, just and unblameable life. I know that is very difficult, and that is why I need Your help! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

IS THE BIBLE IMPORTANT TO YOU?

How important is the Bible to you? Are you doing your Quiet Time out of an obligation to your parents, or has it become part of an everyday routine without much meaning or joy? You may be physically reading the Bible, but is your heart far away and your mind thinking about something else?

This was not the case with the Thessalonian church. When they received the Word of God, they received it as it is – the truth; God’s words speaking directly to them. Therefore, their attitude was to allow the words of truth to sink deep into their hearts. The Word of God started to work in them and its effects became visible to others.

When you read the Bible or hear it taught, what do you receive it as – God’s truth or the words of men? It will show in our attitude toward the Bible. The Thessalonian Christians received every part of God’s Word as truth. Thank God for preserving every inspired word for us today. It’s amazing! We have the very same words that the early church had!

Have you wondered what can make a greedy, lying, vulgar, sinful person repent? Man’s words, punishments, or attempts at counselling may only work for a short time. I remember when I was in school, no matter how many demerit points or detentions that the teachers threatened me with, I continued to break the rules! Lasting change can only come about through God’s Word working in us. This must start with receiving the Bible “not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God”.

Read slowly this extract of the hymn “Thy Word is like a Garden”. What a beautiful picture of what the Bible is!

*Thy Word is like a garden, Lord, with flowers bright and fair;
And every one who seeks may pluck a lovely cluster there.
Thy Word is like a deep, deep mine; and jewels rich and rare
Are hidden in its mighty depths for every searcher there.
O may I love Thy precious Word, may I explore the mine,
May I its fragrant flowers glean, may light upon me shine!
O may I find my armour there! Thy Word my trusty sword,
I'll learn to fight with every foe the battle of the Lord.*

Thought: “...Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Matthew 4:4

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to love and obey Your Word always. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

PERSECUTED FOR THE FAITH

The Thessalonian Christians were persecuted for their faith. But God supplied them with the necessary courage and grace to endure the suffering. Have you been teased by your classmates and friends for believing in Jesus? Does your family oppose your faith and threaten to disown you? Persecution could be in the form of hurtful words, threats, the breakdown of relationships, or it could even come in the form of physical aggression.

Dear child, if you are suffering because of your Christian faith, be assured that your experience is not new or isolated. Others have suffered before you (verse 1:6) and others are suffering with you. You're in the good company of the Thessalonian Christians and many others who live for Christ.

In fact, the Bible tells us in 2 Timothy 3:12 - "Yea, and all that will live _____ in Christ Jesus shall _____."

To go through persecution because you are a Christian, is a sign that affirms you are living a godly life. Be not afraid, but stand firm, for Christ is with you all the way. He will not leave you alone.

Another means of help is the support of like-minded saints. That's God's way of encouraging His people and showing His love. No man is an island. Everyone needs friends, and more so good Christian friends who understand the spiritual trials that you go through. Don't pass up on any opportunity to fellowship with brothers and sisters in-Christ!

Above all, the reason why the apostles, martyrs of the Reformation, and so many men, women and children were able to suffer persecution; and even die for their faith was because they desired heaven. Their eyes of faith looked past their present affliction to the certainty of a heavenly home with Jesus. Paul, who was greatly persecuted for the faith, testified -

(Write 2 Cor 4:17)

Thought: Am I prepared to stand up for my faith in Christ?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me not to give up when I encounter suffering caused by other people who persecute me for my faith in God. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

WHO IS THE ENEMY OF OUR FAITH?

There are no accidents in a Christian's life. God has a plan for each of His children. Anything that happens is appointed by God, even trials and testing. Verses 3 and 4 tell us that persecution is not uncommon to believers. Yesterday, we learnt how the Thessalonian believers faced great opposition to their faith.

Paul had repeatedly told them about persecution while he was with them (verse 4). As they were babes in Christ who were easily discouraged and defeated, he had to warn them from time to time.

But who is behind such persecution? Answer: S _ _ _ _ . He is God's enemy and ours, too. Verse 5 describes him as the tempter. What does he seek to destroy? Answer: Our F _ _ _ _ . That was why Paul desired to know the faith of the Thessalonian church by sending Timothy to them. Let's see how God's Word describes Satan.

1. A L _ _ _ (John 8:44). He is the father of lies; the master of deception. Satan has deceived many into worshipping idols and believing there is no God. In Gen 3:1-5, we read of how Satan's lie caused Eve to doubt God's Word. Satan uses the same tactic today to cause us to doubt God's truths. The lie of evolution is one of Satan's most effective tools in getting people to reject the Creator God.
2. R _ _ _ _ _ L _ _ _ (1 Peter 5:8) Satan is hungry and always on the prowl. He and his army of devils don't need to rest. They seek only to cause someone to stumble in their faith. Satan does this by seducing and persecuting. These methods have caused people to also waver in their faith. Paul was aware of this and in 1 Thess 3:3, he urged the Christians not to be moved when they faced such afflictions.

Faith in God is precious and that's why Satan wants to destroy it. Without faith in God, we are defeated.

Thought: Read 1 John 5:4. What overcomes the world?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, keep me close to You lest I succumb to Satan's lies and temptations. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

PAUL'S PRAYER

Sometimes when we want to pray for other Christians, we might not know what to pray for exactly. Should we pray for God to bless them, provide for their needs, or for good health and strength? These are all good requests. Today's reading shows us Paul's heart in prayer and gives us additional prayer vocabulary.

Paul had not seen the Thessalonian Christians for some time, and he missed them dearly. It was like a father missing his children and longing to be with them again. Are there times when your parents are away, and they call you to make sure you're doing alright at home? Similarly, Paul, as their spiritual father, cared for them with great affection. He showed this using his fervent prayers for them night and day.

Let's see what Paul prayed for the Thessalonians Christians. We can learn to pray for these for ourselves and others.

1. Grow in faith (v10). Our faith must not stand still but continue to grow. Where does faith come from? Read Rom 10:17. Faith comes by _____ the _____. Pray that we will grow in faith through the study of God's Word.
2. Love to increase (v12). The Greek word for love here is agape. Agape love describes God's love to us – unconditional and sacrificial. This is the greatest form of love because it's a selfless love in action. It doesn't need a warm fuzzy feeling in order to show acts of love. If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another (1 John 4:12). Pray that we will increase in our love for each other and those around us, like God has so loved us.

What is the goal of an increase in faith and love? It is so that God may establish us u _ _ _ _ _ able in h _ _ _ _ _ before Him (v13). This means to grow daily in our relationship with God and with man; that when Christ returns, He will be pleased with how we have lived our lives. Let's learn from Paul's prayer and pray the same for ourselves and others.

Thought: Prayer can change the one who prays.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the privilege of prayer. Help me to pray with conviction and according to your Word. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

PURITY THAT PLEASES GOD

Sexual purity is becoming a rare virtue in young people today. We read of an increase in teenage pregnancies, and young boys and girls engaging in sexually immoral acts. So many forms of media invade our minds and hearts that we start to think this is the norm! Youtube, Facebook, other websites on the Internet, TV dramas, pop music, all bombard us with the Devil's lie that wrong is right. It can be quite difficult to avoid such media influences, especially when your friends pressure you to be in tune with all the latest happenings and celebrities.

Turn on the TV and you can easily see kissing scenes. Once shunned, they are commonplace today. Is that the right thing? No! We are to live a life that pleases God, and God's Word teaches us how to do it.

The problem of sexual immorality was also present in Paul's time. What do you think can keep us from falling into this sin? Left to ourselves, we are helpless. That's why Paul exhorted the believers in the following way:

P _ _ _ _ _ God (v1). Pleasing God ought to be the motive of any Christian. Our actions flow from our motives. We must be aware of our motives and examine them. Do you desire to please God or your friends? When we set our motives right to please God, everything falls into place. We will start to pray to Him, read His Word, and apply it in our lives. God will be pleased that we walk according to His will.

By keeping God's commandments, we live holy lives. For example, the world loves to eat, drink and be merry – all of which lead to sin. But God has called us to holiness. We are to live differently from the world, from our unbelieving friends and relatives.

God's commandments guard His people against sin. It is very important to obey God. Will you resolve to have a purity that pleases Him?

A song to sing:

*Trust and obey,
For there's no other way;
To be happy in Jesus,
But to trust and obey.*

Thought: Purity starts in my thoughts and motives.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to keep my motives, thoughts, and actions pure before You. I know that on my own, I'd be unable to live such a life, so please help me heavenly Father. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

LOVE AND WITNESS

Christians not only have to love one another but also be good testimonies to the people of the world. Christians belong to the same family and have the same Heavenly Father; therefore we should love one another. In fact, God taught us how to love. When He gave His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us on the cross, it was the best demonstration of love.

Paul exhorted the Thessalonians believers to love more and more. Sometimes, God puts us in circumstances to give us opportunities to show love to others. For example, despite Saul's hatred of David, David loved him and mourned greatly when he learnt of Saul's death. How about you? You can show love to others by being friendly, helpful or offering a listening ear. How about showing love to someone who is not likeable? That is tough, is it not? Again, on our own, we would not be able to do it, and that is why we need the Lord to help us.

Write down one act of love that you can show to another person.

Although Timothy generally had a good report of the Thessalonian church, there were some who created problems in the church because of their idle behaviour. These new believers misunderstood the doctrine of Christ's return and gave up their jobs in order to wait for His coming. They were not busy with God's work but became busybodies instead. They spent their time interfering with other people's affairs and getting themselves into trouble. Their character and conduct were bad testimonies. Paul exhorted these new converts to work to provide for themselves and not to meddle with the affairs of other people. We need the same advice today, not to be caught lazy and idle, but to be busy in working and serving the Lord.

As a student, you should study hard, and give of your best in school. Trust in the Lord as you sit for tests or examinations. As a son or daughter, help out at home. Even if you have a domestic helper at home, don't be lazy but be responsible and be a good witness for Christ.

Thought: May our acts of love point people to the love of God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me be a good testimony at home, in school and in church. That is impossible on my own, so please help me God. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

CHRIST CONQUERED DEATH

Death is certain, none of us can escape it. For centuries, mankind has been puzzled by death and what happens after death. Man doesn't want to die. Despite advancements in science and technology, the search for an end to death has been futile. Unbelievers have no clue how to solve the problem of death. The prospect that it can happen at any time makes man fearful. As Christians, we need not fear because God has given us all the answers in the Bible.

What does God's Word say about death? Our Saviour conquered death using His resurrection. Therefore we need not fear death. Once we die, our souls will go to be with the Lord. Paul used the word 'sleep' to refer to death of believers. While the body sleeps, the soul is 'absent from the body, present with the Lord' (2 Corinthians 5:8). Therefore, it is a wonderful thing for a believer to die in Christ. He is immediately in the presence of God.

Those who die in Christ will have their bodies resurrected when Christ return (v14). This is the hope of a Christian. Without Christ there is a hopeless end but with Him there is endless hope. What comfort Paul brought to those whose loved ones had died in Christ - his words turned their sorrow into joy.

Let's echo the words of the Psalmist, saying, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." (Psalm 23:4)

A song to sing:

*Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast;
There by His love o'ershaded,
Sweetly my soul shall rest.*

Thought: For Christians, after death is life everlasting.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that because Christ conquered death, I am saved forever. I want to pray for some who may not have believed in You. Could be my parents, or grandparents, or friends. Please help me to be a good witness so that perhaps, they can be led to Jesus because of me. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

HE IS COMING AGAIN (I)

Have you spent a long time away from a loved one? If you have not seen a loved one for a long time, would you very much look forward to seeing him or her again? I'm sure you would. Their return would be a most happy event! Likewise, as the day of our beloved Saviour's return draws near, are we looking forward to this glorious event? It's not too far away!

The second coming of Christ is important for us to know so that we can grow in faith and live confidently with hope. Today's passage tells us about the first event that will herald the last 1007 years of this earth as we know it. This first event is called the rapture. We will study more about the rapture in the coming days.

For now, try out this quiz to get an idea of what we can expect when Jesus returns! Match the phrase to the correct verse.

The rapture is when we will be caught up and meet Jesus in the air

1 Thess 4:16

Wrath will come on the earth

1 Thess 4:17

No one know the exact time when Jesus will return

1 Thess 5:2

The dead in Christ shall have their bodies resurrected first

1 Thess 1:10

If you need help with the above, ask your JW teacher or parent.

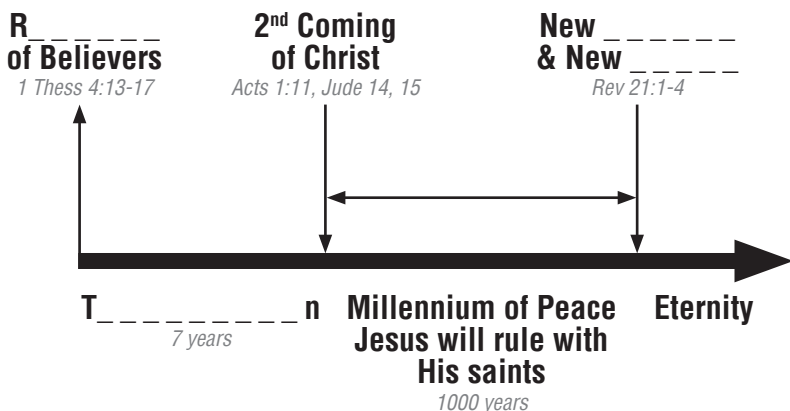
The Bible is a prophetic book. God planned the future. He knows every detail and reveals these key events to us through His Word. The world around us will keep changing, but Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. Our future is in His hands, and we have an eternal and wonderful hope in Him.

Thought: This world is not my home, I'm just passing through.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that my eternal future is safe in Your hands. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

HE IS COMING AGAIN (II)

Certain key events will take place before the second coming of Christ. When He comes again, it will not be as the meek and mild Saviour, but as King and Judge. Jesus will come again in full authority to rule the earth with the saints. Let's put these events – before and after Christ's return, on a timeline. Read the verses and fill in the blanks with the matching event.



The first key event is the Rapture. It can happen at any moment. All the signs (Matthew 24:3-24) are pointing us to the fact that Christ will come for us soon. Are you ready? We live each day as though there will always be a tomorrow. Children look forward to playing computer and iPhone games, or trips to overseas amusement parks. Parents want to see their children grow up and have successful careers and happy families. But do we look forward to the Lord's return and are we ready for it? Or have we grown to love the world more than heaven? We will learn more about the Rapture in the next few days.

Thought: Jesus is coming to earth again, what if it were today?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me not to love the world but look forward to the return of Christ. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

THE DEAD IN CHRIST WILL RISE

Can the body be resurrected once the body has already decayed and become dust? To many people, it is ridiculous. But to Christians, it is possible and brings hope based on the infallible Word of God and our Lord's experience. And what about Christian who may have been eaten by sharks? How about Christians who have died a long time ago? Well, verse 14 tells us that those who "sleep in Christ" – meaning people who died in the Lord as Christians – God will bring with him!

When Jesus returns in the air, He will give a 'shout' and command the 'dead in Christ' to rise first. Read John 5:28 and answer this question. Where are those people who hear His voice? Answer: _____. Those who rise shall receive glorified bodies, like the glorified body of Christ.

The doctrine of resurrection assures us that death is not the end. The grave is not the end. When the Lord returns, He will bring Christians with Him and raise their bodies in glory. Hallelujah! As 1 Cor 15:55-57 tells us, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Christ is resurrected. In the same manner, we will be resurrected when He returns.

Some of you may have loved ones who have passed away. Perhaps your grandparents or other relatives. If they were Christians, there is absolutely no need to sorrow for we know they will resurrect and we will meet them in the future!

If you have any loved ones who are not Christians, pray hard for them and share God's wonderful message of salvation with them. If they believe in Jesus, they too will be resurrected together with other Christians when Jesus returns for them!

Thought: Thine is the glory, Risen, conquering Son; Endless is the victory, Thou o'er death hast won.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I thank Thee that for giving me the hope of resurrection when Christ returns. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

WILL YOU BE LEFT BEHIND?

Those Christians living at the time of Christ's return will be raptured or caught up to meet Christ in the air. They will be caught up quickly – as fast as the twinkling of an eye. The twinkling of an eye is not the same as the blinking of an eye. When we blink, it is very quick, definitely less than one second. How fast is the twinkling of an eye? Much faster! You see, a twinkle is a reflected particle of light seen in the eye, and thus travels at the speed of light. And the speed of light is amazing – 300,000 kilometers per second! So that is how fast Christians who are alive will be taken up to meet Christ in the air.

Do you wonder why Jesus is to meet Christians halfway instead of waiting for them in heaven? Since the speed of their going up is so quick anyway, it would not make any big difference, some may think.

The reason Christ will come down halfway is possibly because He is so eager to meet us! He is in heaven as you read this material, and has been there since He was resurrected about 2,000 years ago. And because He has been waiting, He wants to welcome His people when they rapture!

When the Rapture happens, millions of people will disappear instantly. There will be great chaos and distress. The unsaved will be left behind and wonder what is going on. No Christians will be around. What about you? Will you be left behind?

If you're a Christian, you wouldn't be left behind. But if you're not, you would be. If you're not a believer, would you like to confess your sins and repent? Will you accept Jesus as your Saviour and Lord?

But if you're saved, thank God! A glorious future awaits you! There is a beautiful song that echoes the joy in a Christian's heart, and it goes like this:

*Thank You, Lord, for saving my soul,
Thank You, Lord, for making me whole;
Thank You, Lord, for giving to me
Thy great salvation so rich and free.*

Thought: Will I be left behind?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, forgive me of my sins and save me from death and punishment. I trust in Jesus as my Saviour and Lord. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

COMFORT EACH OTHER

What do you do when you need comfort? Some turn to friends, some to the Internet, some to no one. Christians are to turn to God, of course. But in today's text, we are taught that Christians are to comfort each other.

And what does the text tell us to comfort others with? The words of God!

Dear child, you and I would perhaps not know how wonderful the words of God are until we reach heaven and God shows the entire splendour and power of His words. But until then, let us do what God says, comfort each other with the words of the Bible.

With your friends, do you comfort each other? Or do you irritate each other?

Sometimes we think that being young, we are not in a position to comfort friends. That is not true. As long as you are close to God and have His words, share his words with others.

But to be able to share from the Bible would mean you have to first read the Bible yourself and be fairly familiar with it. You don't have to know it as much as your pastor or Sunday School teacher does, but you do have to be faithful in your QT and Bible study!

Colour the pictures below.



Thought: May I comfort others with God's Word.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for today's text that reminds me to help others, and to do so not with my own words but with words from the Bible. Help me to also be diligent in reading the Bible so I'd know more of it to use when I need to comfort others. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

WHEN WILL RAPTURE TAKE PLACE?

When will the Rapture happen? No one knows. Only God knows for He alone knows the times and seasons of future events. How then are we to live since we know that one day, we'll be raptured and will be with God in heaven?

Su Ling was a good girl who studied hard in school. However, she had not been doing well despite the effort put in. In particular, she was weak in Science, and failed in that subject in her final exams in Primary Five. Discouraged, she had been keeping to herself and wondered why God allowed her to have such bad results. Then she read about the Rapture. She thought to herself, "Since Jesus is coming again, I need not study so hard! There is no use in putting in any effort as I'd be going to heaven anyway!"

Is that the right way to think?

Some people may hope Rapture will take place soon for the wrong reasons; Su Ling is an example of that. That should not be our way of thinking. If we are not doing well in any subject, perhaps it is because of the way we are studying. Or maybe it is because there are a few important concepts we have not been able to grasp, and after understanding these concepts, the results would reflect the work we put in.

Instead, we should be looking forward to the coming of Jesus because we love to see Him. Because we want to thank Him in person for the great things He has done for us! However, because no one will know when Jesus will come, let us be faithful to whatever responsibilities God has given us, until He comes!

Thought: Work hard until Jesus comes!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to follow Christ wholeheartedly and not be found unprepared when He returns. In the meantime, may I be faithful in whatever responsibilities You have given to me. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

ARE YOU DIFFERENT FROM AN UNBELIEVER?

Are you no different from an unbeliever? If you are no different, then something is wrong. We should be very different from the people of the world. Our Lord said that He is not of the world, therefore His followers are not of the world (John 17:16).

What are followers of Christ like? They are a group of people who are alert to the coming danger in the last days. We are living in this period. We are children of the day, sober-minded having faith, love and hope. In short, believers trust God, love God and feel secured in God. We are well prepared for the perils in the last days before Tribulation comes and can live each day calmly.

We are to be children of light, not of darkness. What does this mean? Children of light have God as their heavenly Father; children of darkness have Satan as their ruler. As Christians, we are children of light, as we have God as our heavenly Father. That is why we are different from unbelievers.

These differences must come from inside. Some kids are nice and courteous, but only when their parents or guardians are around. They appear to be good, but inside, they remain unchanged. As children of light, we cannot be like that. We are to have the Holy Spirit inside, and the Holy Spirit is to change and guide us. Then slowly, these changes may be seen in our lives.

For starters, don't do what you used to do when you were not saved. If you were a selfish child before you came to know Jesus, change. If you were boastful in the past, be humble. If you used to want attention directed at yourself, you now know that is not right, so please ask God to help you change. It is a long process, but all of us must try with prayer.

Don't take God's words lightly. His Word gives you the truth and the truth will set you free.

Thought: Are you different from what you were in the past?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, convict my heart by Your Word and help me to rely on Jesus to live a life that will be different from unbelievers. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

BE SOBER!

The main idea in today's text is that we are to be sober, we are to be saved. Paul the Apostle writes that as children of light, we cannot do the things non-Christians do. That includes to "sleep" (v 6). Now, what is wrong with sleeping? All of us do that everyday!

The idea of "to sleep" is not a literal going to bed, but for someone to drop his guard. It also means the person is not careful, for one who sleeps would not be aware of things or situations around him. As Christians, we are told to be the opposite – to watch and be sober.

To be sober does not mean you cannot have fun. Kids love fun, and that is fine. But we should not be carried away and do silly things. This idea is not to follow whatever others do. If classmates are unkind, do we follow since "others are like that"? We are to be sober, and to be different. Again, I stress that to be sober does not mean we cannot laugh or share jokes. Whatever we do, we are to see if that is the right thing, from God's view. That is to be sober.

If we are sober, and obey God's Word, we will be saved from bad decisions and punishment.

Sometimes it would appear that being a Christian is "not fun". There seems to be so many things we cannot do. Do you feel this way?

Don't. If you are close to God, if you read the Bible faithfully on a daily basis, you'll find that slowly, you like to do the things God says! If you love your mummy or daddy, you'd want to please them. And how do you do that? Be an obedient child. Likewise, if we love God, we'd want to please Him and to do the things commanded in the Bible.

Thought: To be sober is not absence of fun but presence of joy in doing what God wants.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for today's reminder that I need to be sober. I can find fun and joy too, and I will find it while doing things Your way. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

CHURCH FAMILY

All of us have families. You have your mother and father, and possibly siblings. Of course, we have grandparents – thank God for them! And then there are uncles and aunties, and their kids – your cousins. A local church is like a family. Leaders in a church have authority over the members, as parents have authority over their children. Some members are rebels, some are quitters and some are weak in faith. How do leaders minister to them? Paul exhorted to reach out to them in love and in patience so as to preserve harmony in the church.

Paul also described the elements of a church family life; namely praying, praise, preaching and teaching of the Word of God and Christian fellowship. Do you see these activities happening in your church? Are they done properly and in accordance to the Bible?

Unhappiness and quarrels happen in families. You may have seen your parents disagree over something and then they would need time and space to solve the problem. You too may have disagreements with a sibling. Likewise, such things may happen in church.

Is there someone in church that you may not like? Someone in your JW class whose actions you may not like? Dear child, because we come into close contact with those in JW classes, there may be situations where differences arise. Please do not have any negative feelings towards others. No one is perfect, and you certainly are not. Because all of us have faults, all of us need each other to be kind and forgiving.

Remember, your church or JW class is like a “family” and you should love the members in that group!

Thought: A church is like a family.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank God for my church and my JW class. I pray that I will remember to be a good member of this “family” You have given to me so I can be a blessing to others. Help me be active in the family of God, to be kind and helpful. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

REJOICE ALWAYS?

Irene was a child who loved to brood. Although she was good in her studies, she was never satisfied. If she got high marks, she'd want higher scores. She would be unhappy at the slightest problem, and often pulled a long face. Her mum has been praying for her and one day, decided to share with her a verse. What verse was that? It happens to be today's text. What does today's text say? Rejoice evermore! Mum said – as Christians, we are to rejoice. And not just once in a while, but evermore!

When was the last time you rejoiced? What is the meaning of rejoicing? Is it to laugh and make merry? Is it to tell jokes and slap each others' backs? The idea of rejoicing is not making merry or telling jokes, but always joyful in our hearts because of the wonderful gift of love and salvation God gave us.

But how can we rejoice all the time? What about times when difficulties come our way? Or when we do badly in school? Or when our parents quarrel a lot? The idea is not to be happy because of the problems but happy that despite the problems, we trust that God will still be in control of all things. It is this quiet confidence in a faithful God who will abide and lead us.

Sometimes it is not easy to rejoice because we have problems. You see, God allows these problems to come our way. And that is why the next verse (for tomorrow's reading) teaches us what to do when we need God's help...

This face represents someone who has trusted in God and who is grateful to Him for His wonderful grace.

Colour the face with happy colours!



Thought: May I rejoice evermore!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank God for the reminder that I am to rejoice evermore. Teach me that rejoicing is possible even when times are hard, because I have You! This I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

PRAY WITHOUT CEASING?

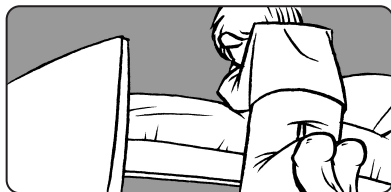
What is the meaning of “praying without ceasing”? Can that be possible? Does that mean we pray all the time? Can we pray when we are sleeping? Surely that cannot be possible? If you have asked these questions, you are right – there is no way we can pray non-stop. There is no way we can pray when we are sleeping.

So what does the verse “pray without ceasing” mean? It means to have an attitude of prayer, to have this dependence on God in whatever we do, all the way. That is how we are to live our lives – to know God is in control, and to always submit to Him and His will. This would mean that, in all areas of our lives, we are to seek His will – to see what He would want us to do. If we really live a life like that, we would be very blessed. We would be 100% sure that God would be with us. Is that possible? Yes, but it will not be easy.

Dear child, pray that the Lord will first grant you the willingness to depend on Him, and then it would be natural to pray more often.

Colour the 4 pictures. Then write the word “Yes” or “No” on top of the pictures, with “Yes” for the activity that you usually do with prayer and “No” for something you do not often do with prayer.

Perhaps this is a good time to consider to pray more when you do all of these?



Thought: May I have a prayerful attitude!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the reminder that I must always have a prayerful attitude and to naturally turn to Thee for guidance and help. This I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

ABSTAIN FROM APPEARANCE OF EVIL

We all would know the meaning of “evil”. That is to do or think or say something that is bad, something that God would be displeased with. In other words, that is to commit sin. But what is the meaning of the “appearance of evil”? It is to be so careful as to even not do anything is associated with evil or that may possibly turn out bad or sinful.

Is it wrong to dress up as imaginary characters and have some fun? No. But if these characters are scary or ghostly, would it still be OK? From what today’s verse tells us, it would be wrong. With the approval of parents, some children in Singapore celebrate Halloween. This used to be an American tradition, but with more foreigners living in Singapore now, Halloween is celebrated here in some measure. Halloween costumes are sold in supermarkets. The Night Safari had a “Halloween Special”. Some of you may find other children knocking at your front door and asking the “Trick or Treat?” question. Of course, many of these kids do not know better. They just do what their friends do and have some “fun”. But as children of God’s Kingdom, do you think that is acceptable fun?

Of course, not! Dressing up as ghosts or other ghastly characters is surely not what Jesus would expect us to do. Clearly, it would run against the lessons we learned in the last few days: on having a prayerful attitude, or rejoicing in tough times!

Or how about Harry Potter books? These are immensely popular among children, surely they are alright? I am afraid the answer is “No”, they are not alright. Harry Potter is a series of fantasy stories that incorporate wizards, magic, death, and forces of the dark. Worse, the books seem to have more and more of evil forces.

Dear child, let us all abstain from or not go near anything that has the appearance of evil. Halloween and Harry Potter are just 2 examples – so please keep away from them!

Thought: Abstain from the appearance of evil!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for today’s lesson which warns me to keep away from evil, even anything associated with evil. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

WONDERFUL GRACE FROM GOD!

How many girls with the name “Grace” do you know? Surely quite a few! “Grace” is a wonderful name for girls and that is why many parents choose it for their daughters. But what does “grace” mean? Some parents may want their daughters to be graceful and beautiful, and therefore give them that name. But is there a deeper meaning to that word? Of course. For Christians, grace is the pillar of their faith for without the grace of God, none of us would have the opportunity to know Jesus as our personal Lord and Saviour.

Grace may be defined as gifts or wonderful things God gives us, although we do not deserve them. Some of you are more intelligent than others; others excel in games; some of you can draw well; some of you are gifted in languages; some can tell stories well. The list goes on. All these are gifts from God – grace from the Lord. But the most wonderful example of grace of God has not yet been mentioned. What is the most wonderful example of grace of God? It is the gift of Jesus Christ from God the Heavenly Father!

Most of you would look forward to Christmas. Many of you would get gifts from friends and family. It is wonderful to receive gifts, is it not? But the greatest gift of all is the baby Jesus Himself. At Christmas, it is a time of rejoicing for Christmas reminds us that Jesus was given as a gift to all of us. That is true grace in its purest form.

Dear child, what is even more wonderful is that on top of the gift of Jesus, God also gave us other gifts. That is grace. Use whatever gifts God has given you to bless others. If your gift is kept for selfish purposes, God would not be pleased.

If you are good in your studies, help someone who is weak in that area. If you can play musical instruments, help out or volunteer in JW or school to bless others. In the use of these gifts, remember it is God who gave You so that you'd not be tempted to be proud in any way.

Thought: Thank you Lord for grace!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the wonderful gifts and blessings I've received. May I remember You are the Giver, and use them for Your glory. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

KNOW THE TRUTH

Truth is found only in God's Word because God is truth. When we do not stand on the truth, we will be easily swayed. Some Christians get easily discouraged when they face trials and temptations. This is one of Satan's tactics to discourage believers.

The truth of God's love and sovereignty can bring a discouraged believer back on track. When you are discouraged, know these truths:

1. (Verse 13a) – God _____ us. Paul described Christians as 'beloved of the Lord'. God saved us because He loves us. He proved this love at the cross where Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world.
2. (Verse 14a) – God _____ us. God prepared His people to respond to His Word. Those respond to His Word respond to His call.
3. (Verse 14b) – God gave us _____. In the future, we shall share in the glory of God. We are awaiting Christ's return, and then His glory shall be revealed and we shall be like Him.

Not knowing the truth in God's Word, one cannot be saved. Truth saves! The truth shall set us free!

There is an old hymn with beautiful words that I'd like to share with you. The words are figurative – meaning they symbolise ideas and things. Have you heard this hymn?

*Thou art the bread of life, O Lord to me;
Thy holy Word the truth that saveth me;
Give me to eat and live with Thee above;
Teach me to love Thy truth, for Thou art love.
O send Thy Spirit, Lord, now unto me;
That He may touch my eyes and make me see;
Show me the truth concealed within Thy Word,
And in Thy book revealed I see the Lord.*

Thought: May I learn and love God's truth.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that Thy Word is truth. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

BIBLE TRADITIONS CAN BE TRUSTED

Traditions are teachings and practices that our ancestors abide by and pass on to future generations. We know of many man-made traditions: no wearing of black clothes during Chinese New Year celebrations; no wearing of red attire during a funeral. Some traditions involve numbers: in Cantonese, the number “4” sounds like “death”; the number “8” sounds like “prosperity”.

In today’s verse, Paul exhorted the church to hold fast to the traditions which they were taught. These traditions were definitely not man-made. What were they? Traditions here were the doctrines taught by Paul, other Apostles and includes the Gospel. The Gospel was proclaimed orally by Christ and the apostles and later, was penned down in the Bible. God’s Word was handed from God to man and passed down to future generations. The Bible is thus an old Book of historic Faith that was passed down to us.

Deviating from Christian traditions is rejecting the old Book and the old Faith. When man wrongly interprets the Bible, like the Pharisees did, they twist the Word of God. What did the Pharisees do? They made their own interpretations and ideas more holy than God’s teachings. They had a ‘form of godliness’, which means they appeared to be holy, but our Lord called them hypocrites. The Pharisees tried to show off their ‘godliness’ but actually were spiritually dead inside; they were not true Christians. Today, this is common in many so-called Christian organisations such as churches, schools, charity organisations, etc. They try to do ‘Christian’ things but they may not be Christians.

A tradition based on the Word of God is a right tradition. Beware of man-made ones. Many have regarded the Word of God as old and obsolete and say it is no longer applicable today. But old is good. The Bible has encountered countless attacks and triumphed over them. It is tested and can be trusted.

Thought: Love the Bible!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to love the Bible, read it, keep it and live by it. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

DIRECT YOUR HEARTS

What we hold dear and precious to us will have a place in our hearts. Health, family and friends are some things that people generally consider very important to them. As children, what is important to you?

Answer: _____

Our hearts can harbour bad as well as good things. List some of the bad things you may harbour in your heart:

Answer: _____

This list is not complete. God regards these as sinful, and wants you to change.

A person is inclined to sin because his heart is evil. He spends his time thinking about evil things. He can only change when Christ occupies his heart to direct it. His affection will then shift to different things and his heart will now harbour good things. Paul describes two things that a Christian will set his affection on. They are the _____ of God and patient _____ for Christ.

Dear child, all of us must guard our hearts. We must direct it the right way. One of the ways is to think about the right things. What are the things we are to spend time thinking about? There is one verse that answers that question – and that is Philippians 4:8. What are the things we are to think about? Write them here...

Thought: Direct your heart to think and love good things.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I give my life to You and let You take control of it. I am but young and weak, and need Your constant help to think good things and love them, as You would love them. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

PEACE IN OUR HEARTS

After dealing with all the problems of the Thessalonian church, the Apostle Paul aptly ended the letter with the teaching that God will grant peace to rule their lives. Jesus Christ is the Lord of peace. If He is the Lord of our lives, then we will have peace in our hearts, and can help to encourage peace wherever we are. What have you done to encourage peace in church?

Answer: _____

There may be students or classmates you do not like. Some children can cause trouble, or be unfriendly or unkind. Are you like that? Or do you try to make peace? The book of James says that pride is the cause of many problems. Heart problems must be solved by dealing with the heart and very often, it is a very slow process. How do we overcome this? The antidote is given as follows:

1. Be humble - When you submit to God, God will enable you to overcome the pride and war in your heart (James 4:6,7a).
2. Be alert - Resist the devil and he will leave you alone (James 4:7b). If you carry on creating trouble with people especially in church, you are a friend of the world and Satan (James 4:4) and an enemy of God.
3. Be near to God - Draw close to God, be true and sincere in your heart for God has promised to lead and guide you (James 4:8). Read the Bible and pray everyday.
4. Be careful with your speech - What you say can hurt and break the spirits of other people (James 4:11).

God wants peace and order. Do you contribute to peace or are you responsible for causing unhappiness? You have a part to play! We have come to the end of the study of the two Thessalonians epistles (or letters). There are many lessons, and one of the main ones is that we must be ready, for the Lord is coming soon!

Thought: The Lord is coming again, and soon.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for helping me complete the study of Thessalonians and for all the spiritual lessons we learnt. Help me to love Jesus more and to be ready for His return. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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