

# How to get the most out of your **KEYS FOR KIDS:**

1. **If you miss a day, don't panic! Try to keep up with each day's reading**—but if you miss one, you can do two pages the next day! (If you really get off track and miss quite a few, you can always pick up on the current date and keep going.)
2. **Use your Bible and be sure to read the verses for the day.** They're listed right under the title. If you read them both before and after you read the Keys story, you'll get more out of it.
3. **Now you're ready for the story!** See if you can tell how the story helps you understand the verses you just read.
4. **Really think about the questions that follow each story.** If you can, talk about them with your parents or your Sunday school teacher or a friend.
5. **Read the Key Verse.** Then read it again a few times! Try to repeat it with your eyes closed (no peeking). Later, try to repeat it during your prayer time, and ask God to help you keep His Word in your heart.

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**Make your time with God something you do every day!**



# Keys for Kids

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© 2012 CBH Ministries  
 Box 1001  
 Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501-1001

Printed bi-monthly in the USA

# Mountains and Jesus

Read: John 20:24-31; 1 Corinthians 15:3-6

January

1

Paul and his dad got up early to hike the valley below the Grand Tetons where they were spending a week of vacation. As Dad paused on the trail to take a picture of the towering peaks, Paul looked up at the snowcapped mountains glistening in the rising sun. “What a wonderful God we have!” Dad exclaimed. “He created all this beauty for us to see!”

Paul was quiet a moment. Then he said, “I wish my friend Ben were here. He says he doesn’t think there even is a God. Ben says if there is one, we should be able to see Him.”

“When we get back home, you can show him our pictures of the mountains,” Dad suggested as they began hiking again. “You can remind him that even though he doesn’t see the actual mountains, it doesn’t mean they don’t exist. And . . .”

“And it’s the same with God, right?” interrupted Paul eagerly.

“Right,” agreed Dad. “The mountains are here even when we’re at home and can’t see them. And God is real even though we can’t see Him.”

“Yes, but . . .” Paul hesitated and pointed to the camera. “I can show Ben pictures us of the mountains we saw,” he said, “but we don’t have pictures of Jesus.”

“No, we don’t,” agreed Dad, “but we have the Bible, which tells about many ways God dealt with people way back to the beginning of time. It also tells about Jesus—and Jesus *is* God. The Bible tells how He came to earth in human form long ago. He lived a perfect life, was crucified and buried, but He rose from the grave.”

Paul nodded. “Many people saw Him, didn’t they? Both before He died on the cross and also after He arose from the dead.”

“That’s right,” Dad replied. “Since He returned to heaven, people on earth can’t see Him anymore, but we have the accounts from those who did see Him.”

“I know what to tell Ben when we get home,” Paul said thoughtfully. “I’ll tell him he can learn about our trip by looking at our pictures and listening to me because I’ve seen the mountains. And He can learn about Jesus by reading the Bible and finding out what people who did see Jesus say about Him. We can’t see God, but we know He still exists. He’s real.”

## Jesus (God) is real

### Key Verse

Blessed are those who have not  
seen and yet have believed.

John 20:29

### **Do you realize that Jesus is as alive today as He was when He was here on earth?**

He’s now in heaven, so He can no longer be seen by people on earth. But you have the Bible, which tells you the things Jesus taught, and you have the record and testimony of His disciples and many other people who saw Him after He rose from the dead. You also have the reports of many whose lives were changed after they heard about Him and believed in Him. Yes, Jesus is real, and He is alive today.

“I wish I could live up here,” said Emma with a sigh. “It’s so peaceful.” She twirled around in the mountain meadow grass.

Grandpa grinned. “After living with those five little brothers of yours, even an erupting volcano would probably seem peaceful,” he said.

Emma laughed. “Sometimes the boys do just about drive me crazy,” she admitted. “But Mom needed me to help when she was sick. I’ll help again when I get back home.” Just then Emma spotted snow on a clearing ahead. “Look, Grandpa! There’s still some snow up here!” she exclaimed as she ran ahead. She crouched down to take a closer look at yellow flowers that were poking up through melting snow. “These flowers are growing right out of the snow!”

“Those are called glacier lilies,” explained Grandpa. “They grow from bulbs buried deep underground, so they’re able to survive the cold. When the sun starts to melt the snow, it also warms up the bulbs and they sprout.” Leaning over, Grandpa touched one of the long pointed leaves. “God designed these sharp leaves to cut right through the snow so they can make their way out into the sunshine.”

## God gives help with problems

### Key Verse

Count it all joy when you fall into various trials . . . the testing of your faith produces patience.

James 1:2-3

“Cool!” exclaimed Emma.

“They’re pretty special, aren’t they? And you know what, Emma?” Grandpa asked. “You’re something like them. God may send snow to cover you, but He also designed you to be able to cut through it.”

“Snow to cover me! What are you talking about?” asked Emma. She grinned. “Is there a great, big snowstorm coming?”

Grandpa smiled. “No, I’m talking about the tasks God has given you lately. Snow can be overwhelming, and helping take care of all your brothers must be, too,” he explained. “But I saw you cut through all that difficulty by using the creative mind God gave you. You thought of ways to keep the boys busy.”

“It was a lot of work,” said Emma with a smile, “but I have fun with them, too.”

“I know you do,” Grandpa said, giving her a hug. “The sun warms the bulbs, and God has warmed you with wisdom and patience and love. The flowers are beautiful, and you are, too. God has given you an inner beauty that’s all your own.”

Emma smiled as she reached down to pick a glacier lily.

**Do you ever feel “snowed under” by all the things you have to deal with?** Do problems that have piled up seem ready to smother you? God designed you, and He has given you what you need to get through any situation He allows you to face. Ask Him to help you grow spiritually, to give you wisdom to handle your problems, and to let your special abilities shine through.

The holidays were officially over. Several Christmas trees with forgotten bits of tinsel had been placed along the sidewalks, waiting to be hauled away. On a drive home from their grandparents' house, Morgan and her brother Max counted them. "Eight," Morgan announced.

"Nine," Max corrected her. "A man back there just tossed out another one." Morgan glanced back and nodded.

"You know what, Mom?" asked Morgan. "Hayden says her family doesn't believe in Christmas or in God."

"That's too bad!" exclaimed Mom. "I feel sorry for her."

"I don't!" Max blurted out. "She's rich!"

Morgan nodded. "Yeah. Hayden has a lot more clothes than I do, and she has all kinds of toys and other stuff, too," she said with a twinge of jealousy.

"She may have lots of stuff," said Mom, "but people like her remind me of those withering Christmas trees we're seeing along the sidewalks."

Morgan couldn't believe her ears. "Don't you think Hayden's pretty?" she asked.

"Sure I do," said Mom. "Our Christmas tree looked pretty, too, but it was actually dying. It began to die the moment it was cut off from its roots. From what you say, it appears that Hayden's family members have cut themselves off from God."

Mom turned into the driveway. "Unbelievers are something like Christmas trees," she added. "Their lives may look great, but life on earth lasts only a little while. Believers, on the other hand, are more like sturdy trees that keep growing year after year." As they got out of the car, Mom added, "Let's pray that Hayden's family will learn to love God, too."

Max nodded. "I'd rather be like a *Christian* tree than a Christmas tree."

"Me, too," agreed Morgan. She shook her head thoughtfully. "I was jealous of Hayden instead of feeling bad for her," she admitted.

Mom opened the door. "We should never be envious because of things unbelievers have," she said. "Instead, we should pray that they will want what we have—God."



**Don't envy  
unbelievers**

### Key Verse

The righteous shall flourish  
like a palm tree.

Psalm 92:12

**Do you know unbelievers who seem to have many good things**—maybe much more than you have? Does this make you think it's possible to do well without God? Don't be deceived. There is no lasting prosperity or happiness in having good things apart from God. Don't envy those who cut themselves off from Him. Pray for them instead.

“Casey’s family is weird,” Michael told his mom as they hopped in their minivan to head for school. “Casey’s mom and dad flew all the way to Africa to get him a new sister, and she’s not even a baby. She’s three years old!”

“And you think that’s weird?” his mom asked.

“Well, yeah. They don’t even look like a brother and sister,” Michael replied.

“You and I don’t look so much alike either,” said his sister Zoe.

“No,” agreed Mom. “You have blue eyes, Michael, and Zoe’s eyes are green. You have brown hair while her hair is red. You don’t have big dimples in your cheeks like she does, and she doesn’t have a little dimple in her chin like you do. So . . . do you really think looking alike is an important part of being a family?”

“Well . . . I guess not,” Michael replied, “but . . . why would someone want a kid who belonged to a different mom and dad? And why would a kid want to go live with a family he doesn’t even know?”

“What if we lived in a poor country without clean water or a high standard

### **God loves all kids—including orphans**

#### **Key Verse**

Visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

James 1:27

of living? What if we didn’t have good hospitals and doctors and medicines like we have here, and what if your dad and I got sick and died? That would make you an orphan. Do you think you’d be lonely?” Mom asked.

“Well . . . yeah, but . . .” Michael was silent for the rest of the drive to school as he thought about how alone and scared he would feel if he had to live without his mom and dad. *Who would pack my lunch? he wondered. Who would take me to school? Who would rub my back at bedtime?*

By the time they pulled up to Ballard West Elementary School, he had decided that it must make God smile when families adopt orphans. After all, he had learned a long time ago in Sunday school that Jesus loves *all* the little children. Not just the ones with moms and dads.

“Maybe we should go to Africa and get another sister for me,” said Michael as he opened the car door and grabbed his backpack.

“You don’t think that would be weird?” his mom asked with a smile.

“No more weird than having Zoe,” Michael teased. He laughed as Zoe gave him a playful swat and they ran together to the school playground.

**Do you think it’s weird when families adopt children?** Maybe you were adopted or have a sibling who was adopted, and you know firsthand how wonderful it is to grow a family in that way. God loves all kids. He loves those who have lost their parents and who need help and care. Today’s reading from Deuteronomy is an example of many verses in which God indicates that we are to reach out to the fatherless—to orphans—and do what we can to help them. They are precious in His sight.



Michael pointed. “Look, Zoe,” he said as he and his family arrived at the home of his best friend, Casey. Through the window, they could see little Sophie, who had been adopted from Africa several months before, twirling around the room.

When Sophie’s mother opened the door and Sophie saw the dinner guests, she giggled and fell onto the couch. “It looked like you were having fun, Sophie,” said Michael’s mom as Zoe took hold of Sophie’s hands and spun around with her.

“Hi!” Casey dashed into the room and greeted his friend. “Are ya hungry? Mom’s got pizza all ready for us.”

Soon they were enjoying their meal of pizza and root beer floats. When they finished, Sophie took up her spinning routine again. The adults laughed as all the kids—even the boys—held hands and spun in circles. It was a fun evening for everyone as they visited and played games.

“You know what, Dad?” said Michael as his father tucked him into bed that night. “I thought it was really weird when Casey told me he was getting a sister from Africa, but now it seems like Sophie was always supposed to be a part of his family.”

“I noticed that, too,” Dad replied as Michael nestled under the quilt. “It’s plain to see that they all love her a lot.”

“Yeah, and she seems really happy, too,” Michael observed. “They love her, and she loves them.”

Dad smiled. “Adoption is an incredible thing, isn’t it? You go from not knowing someone to dancing around the room together, loving each other, and all being part of the same family,” he said. “And you know what? That’s something like our relationship with God.”

“You mean . . .” Michael hesitated, then began again. “You mean because when we ask Jesus to be our Savior, we go from not knowing Him to being a part of *His* family?”

“Yes,” replied Dad. “The Bible says He adopts us as His children. He loves us so much, and we love Him in return.” Dad tucked the quilt snugly around Michael. “I think it’s great of God to use a giggling, twirling little girl to give us a picture of how much He loves us, don’t you?” Laughing, Michael agreed.

## Adoption is a picture of God’s love

### Key Verse

As many as received Him, to  
them He gave the right to  
become children of God.

John 1:12

**Do you know anyone who has been adopted?** Through adoption, God gives a beautiful picture of His love for us. When you trust Jesus as Savior, God adopts you into His family. And His family is the place you were meant to be. Adoption into a family—especially into God’s family—is not weird. It’s wonderful! Accept Jesus as your Savior today and become a part of the family of God. (See the ABCs of Salvation at the end of this book.)

Rico tried not to laugh when Joe made a funny face, but he just couldn't hold it back. Other kids were grinning, too. Mrs. Smith, their Sunday school teacher, gave them a stern look. *Nobody's listening to the Bible story anymore*, thought Rico, *and no wonder. We've heard this same story lots of times before.*

Rico was surprised to hear Mrs. Smith ask, "Do you kids like fresh berry pie?" Nearly everyone nodded. "Well, I brought some blackberry tarts along today," said Mrs. Smith. She pointed to a box she had set on the table. All the kids—even Rico and Joe—were listening now. "I went berry picking last summer," continued Mrs. Smith. "At first, there didn't seem to be many berries on the bushes, but as I began to pick, I saw that some were hiding under the leaves. I picked those berries, and then I noticed still more. The more I picked, the more I found. Soon I had enough for berry pies and other things." Mrs. Smith smiled. "So . . . we'll have these for a treat a little later."

Mrs. Smith paused and held up her Bible. "Hearing God's Word is a little like picking berries," she said. "When you first hear a Bible story, it may seem like just a nice story. But if you think about it and look for lessons it teaches, you find that it helps you know God better."

## Find God's lessons

### Key Verse

Open my eyes, that I may see  
wondrous things from Your law.

Psalm 119:18

Mrs. Smith looked from one child to another. "Sunday school is one place you hear Bible stories. Over the years, you probably hear each one several times. Maybe you think there's nothing more to learn from them since you've heard them all before. So you're bored and don't pay much attention."

Rico fidgeted and looked down at his hands as Mrs. Smith continued. "Actually, the more time you spend with Bible stories, the more you learn from them," she said. "Most likely, you haven't really learned *all* the facts of the stories. And they also contain *lessons* you probably haven't yet learned—lessons that were hidden by your lack of attention, just like some berries were hidden by leaves." Mrs. Smith smiled. "Let's go over today's Bible story again and see how many 'berries,' or lessons, we can find. We'll talk about them as we enjoy a berry tart."

As Mrs. Smith retold the story, Rico and Joe listened with the others to figure out what new things they could learn.

**Do you get bored when you hear a Bible story you've heard often before?** How many lessons are you missing? In this new year, listen carefully and see how many "berries"—how many new things—you can find in your Sunday school lessons or in Bible stories you read for yourself. Think of ways you can apply what you learn to your everyday life.

# Journal It!



Are you familiar with a lot of Bible stories? What is one of your favorites?

Where in the Bible is that story found? \_\_\_\_\_

Turn to it, read it, and then briefly tell the story in your own words.

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What is the lesson that is generally mentioned when that story is told in Sunday school or in a devotional book? \_\_\_\_\_

Now carefully read that story again. See if you can find at least one more “berry”—one more lesson—as you read it and think about it. What did you find?

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How can you apply that lesson to your life? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Ask an adult:** What is your favorite Bible story? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Does it teach a lesson that people often miss? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Our Key Verse** is a prayer we should make as we read the Bible or listen to pastors, teachers, or parents explain verses from it. God has wonderful things in His Word for us to learn and use. He shows us things we should do or not do. He gives us promises, encouragement, and comfort. He often uses interesting stories to teach us—and they never really grow old. They have new thoughts and lessons for us each time we read them. So let's read them often—read some verses every day.

**Read the Bible and . . .  
find God's lessons**

Derek quickly stepped into his classroom when he saw Jason coming down the hall at school. *He's a big bully*, Derek thought. *He's always so mean to me! He makes fun of me every single day! And it's always about something different.*

Derek was right. One day Jason had teased him about his haircut. "You look like a shaggy dog," said Jason. The next day it was Derek's shirt. "I wore shirts like that, too—when I was a baby," Jason jeered. He even made fun of Derek's lunch. "Aw, your mommy put teddy bear cookies in your lunch," Jason murmured. "How cute." Derek tried to ignore him but it was hard to do.

"Jason's so mean," Derek complained to his dad one evening.

"I'm sorry to hear that," said Dad. "I guess you'll have to remember that Jesus tells us to love our enemies. I know it's hard, but try to be nice to Jason. Pray for him." Derek sighed and nodded.

The next day, Derek and Jason were assigned to work together on a history project. Derek wished he could run away and hide. He glanced over at Jason.

## Be kind to everyone

### Key Verse

See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good.

1 Thessalonians 5:15

To his surprise, Jason looked nervous, too! *What's his problem?* Derek wondered. But he picked up his history book and walked to Jason's desk.

"You want to read first, or shall I?" Derek asked.

"You," Jason said. He put his head on his desk.

"Jason, open your book, please," their teacher said. "Turn to page 37. I want *you* to read the first page." She smiled at Derek and walked away.

Jason's face flushed, but he turned to the correct page. It was about the fishing industry. Derek's eyes widened as Jason started to read . . . very

slowly. "The f-f-f," he began. He stopped and started over. "The f-f-f-st . . ." Jason stopped again, and Derek grinned. *Pay back time!* thought Derek. *I never paid attention to Jason's reading group. I didn't know he couldn't read!* As Jason continued to stumble over the word, Derek chuckled. He opened his mouth to tease Jason, but his dad's words came to mind: *Jesus tells us to love our enemies.* As Jason struggled with words, he didn't look mean or scary. He looked scared.

"Sound it out, Jason," Derek whispered. "Keep the 'f' sound, and then make the 'sh' sound instead of 'st.' I'll help you sound out the words." Derek couldn't believe what happened next. Jason looked up at him . . . and smiled!

**Have you had a difficult time getting along with someone at school?** Do you know a bully? If so, you probably feel like getting even or maybe just having nothing to do with that person. But sometimes you can't avoid him or her. That's okay. Jesus says to love your enemies and pray for them. Look for opportunities to share Jesus' love. Be kind to everyone—including those who mistreat you. Perhaps they'll see Jesus in you. They may even become your friends.

# The Right Nose

Read: Isaiah 45:9-12

January

8

“I hate this ugly nose!” wailed Lana as she looked in the mirror. “Why can’t I have a nose like Sara’s? Hers is just perfect!”

“Oh, honey, your nose looks just fine!” said Mom. She picked up her purse. “We’ve got to get going if we want to stop at the zoo today. Are you ready?”

“Yeah, I’m ready—but I’m gonna have my nose fixed some day, Mom,” replied Lana, “and then it will look much better.” Mom just smiled.

It was a beautiful, sunny day, and Lana and her mother enjoyed a leisurely stroll through the zoo. “The elephants have such long trunks,” commented Mom as they stopped to watch the great beasts. “I’m glad my nose isn’t that long.”

“It wouldn’t look so good on you,” agreed Lana, “but I like it on the elephants. That’s one of the things that makes an elephant an elephant!”

At the rhinoceros’ cage, Mom laughed as she pointed to the horns on their noses. “Oh, dear! That kind of nose would be even worse!” Lana laughed, too.

When Mom continued to make comments about almost every animal’s nose, it began to irritate Lana. She gave her mother a curious look. When they reached the baboons, Mom turned to her. “Their noses are much too stubby, don’t you think?” Mom asked. “Wouldn’t they look better if their noses were more like the tigers’?”

Lana was annoyed. “No, they wouldn’t,” she snapped. “I like them just the way they are. Besides, you’ve told me yourself that God made everything. He knows how they should look.”

“Exactly.” Mom nodded. “And who made you, Lana? And your nose?”

“Oh!” exclaimed Lana as she clapped her hand over her nose. “God did. I . . . Okay, Mom. I guess I shouldn’t compare or complain. I get the message.”

Mom smiled. “Good,” she said. “I think we often worry too much about the way we *look*. Perhaps we should be more concerned about the way we *act*. I’m afraid our attitudes often stick out a lot more than our noses do, so let’s make sure our attitudes and actions are pleasing to other people—and especially to God.”

## God made you special

### Key Verse

The Spirit of God has made me,  
and the breath of  
the Almighty gives me life.

Job 33:4

**Are you happy with the way you look**—or do you wish you looked like someone else?

Perhaps you think your ears or your feet are too big. Maybe you wish your hair, eyes, or skin were a different color. It has been said that looks are only skin deep. In other words, the way you look is not as important as the way you act. And don’t forget—God made you special, and He loves you just the way you are. Your family and friends do, too.

“It sure is dark tonight, and I don’t like going past all these trees just before we get to our yard,” said Jordan nervously as he and his brother walked home from their youth meeting. Their country home wasn’t far from the church, but the last stretch was rather lonely with only one house besides theirs.

“Dad said he’d come and get us, and I guess we should have waited for him even though we got out early,” said Dave. “But let’s run!” So the boys took off.

As they ran toward home, they heard a loud rustling in the underbrush at the edge of their driveway. “R-r-run f-faster!” sputtered Jordan.

The boys raced into the house, slammed the door, and locked it. “Whoa, boys!” exclaimed Dad as they rushed into the family room with a look of panic on their faces. “You’re early. Is there a problem?”

“We got out early so we walked. But you know those trees at the edge of our yard?” Jordan asked excitedly. “We heard something there. It was coming after us!”

Dad put his book down. “Some of the neighbor’s chickens got out earlier tonight,” he said, “and the kids were rounding them up. Maybe I’d better go see if they missed any. Where’s my flashlight? Want to come along?”

Dad headed out the door with two scared boys cowering behind him. Reaching the trees, they stopped and listened. “That’s it!” exclaimed Dave when a rustling sound reached their ears. Dad turned the light toward the sound, and they saw a small bunny scamper away.

“That’s probably the mysterious something that was after you!” said Dad.

“I wouldn’t have been so scared if you’d been with us,” said Dave as the trio headed home. “Jordan wasn’t much help.”

Dad put an arm around each boy. “I’ll sure do everything I can to protect you,” he said, “but I want you to remember that it’s God who keeps you truly safe.”

“Bad things still happen, though,” murmured Jordan.

“Yes,” said Dad, “but a Christian doesn’t need to have the terrible fear some people experience. We should always be careful, of course, but we don’t need to be fearful! Even if something we would call bad does happen to us, we can still trust the Lord, because He knows what’s best for us.”

**Are there times when you’re afraid?** Maybe dogs, the dark, strange sounds, or bullies in the neighborhood frighten you. It’s true that things we consider to be bad do happen sometimes, and it’s important to be very careful. Avoid dangerous situations as much as possible. Whenever you feel afraid, talk to God about it. Remember that He is greater than anyone or anything. Be careful, and then trust Him to help you.

**Be careful ...  
not fearful**



**Key Verse**

You alone, O Lord,  
make me dwell in safety.

Psalm 4:8

The bobber on Cameron's fishing line dipped into the water. "Dad! I've got a bite!" he shouted, and he began reeling in the line. Soon a little sunfish was lying on the sand. "Aw, it's too small to keep, isn't it?" Cameron asked. Dad nodded, so Cameron reluctantly put the little fish back into the water.

"Aren't you forgetting something?" Dad asked as Cameron tossed his line back into the lake. Cameron looked up with a question in his eyes.

"The bait," Dad explained.

Cameron laughed. "Oh, yeah!" he said, pulling his line back in. "I guess no fish would be dumb enough to bite on the bare hook, would he?"

Dad grinned. "Not likely," he said. "Disguise the hook with a nice, juicy worm and make it look good."

"I will," said Cameron, reaching for the container of worms. With a grin, he put fresh bait on his hook and returned the line to the water.

"The bait hides the danger and makes the hook look good to the fish," mused Dad as he checked the bait on his own line. "That's how Satan works, too."

"What do you mean, Dad?" Cameron asked.

"Well, we do our best to make the hook look attractive to the fish, and Satan does his best to make sin look attractive to us," Dad explained. "Sometimes we're uneasy about something. Maybe we've been warned that it's wrong, but it still looks good to us. Or it feels good. Or our friends are doing it, so we don't see any danger in trying it. Does that ever happen to you?"

Cameron made a face and nodded. "Sometimes," he said.

"Satan is a master at disguising sin," Dad told him. "He knows how to make bad things look good to us. So when you're tempted by a questionable activity, remember the fish. He wouldn't have gotten caught if he had stayed away from the attractive looking hook."

"Right. I'll remem—" Cameron stopped mid-sentence and quickly reeled in his line. "I made that hook look really good to this fish!" he exclaimed. "And this one's big enough to keep!" He grinned. "I'll remember him and the things you said, too. I don't want to get caught like he did!"

## Avoid Satan's bait

### Key Verse

Satan himself transforms  
(disguises) himself  
into an angel of light.  
2 Corinthians 11:14

**Does Satan use TV to get you accustomed to hearing bad language?** Does he cause you to become careless about what you watch by allowing just a few immoral standards to be part of a good movie? What other methods does he use on you? Be careful. Pray daily for help to stay away from the attractive bait Satan uses to lure you away from God.

“Hey, sis,” Amos greeted Ariana as she came up the driveway after school, “Mom invited a girl—a missionary kid—to come for supper and go with you to the school talent show tonight. Her name’s Lauren, and her family works in Africa. They’re visiting Pastor Burns this week, and Mom thought Lauren would like to meet some kids her own age.”

“What a bother!” exclaimed Ariana. “I just know I’ll be embarrassed to have her with me. After spending all that time in Africa, I bet she doesn’t have the slightest idea of what she should wear here.”

“Oh, come on, Ariana,” scolded Amos. “You girls are so silly!” He left to go shoot hoops with a friend across the street.

Frowning, Ariana went into the house. Her mother smiled at her and repeated the information Amos had given. “But, Mom! What will I talk about with a strange girl from a strange place?” whined Ariana.

“Don’t worry about it, honey” said Mom. “She’s just an ordinary girl like you.”

## Missionary kids are like you

### Key Verse

As we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Galatians 6:10

Ariana doubted that. *Missionary kids must be . . . well . . . different*, she thought.

When Lauren arrived, Ariana had to admit that her outfit didn’t look “different.” In fact, it was really cool! And she didn’t act “different,” either. When Mom explained that they’d be eating at a fast-food place before the talent show, Lauren smiled. “That’s my favorite. There’s one of those in Nairobi,” she said, “and every once in a while we get to go there.”

While they were eating, Mom and Dad asked Lauren about her school and her life in Africa. Soon Ariana found herself eagerly joining in. It was fun to hear about a new place and another way of living. Ariana was surprised to find that Lauren’s thoughts and reactions were much like her own.

“That was fun,” Ariana said after dropping Lauren off. “You know what, Mom? When Lauren goes back to Africa, we’re going to email each other.”

Mom smiled. “Great!” she approved. “Then the next time she comes to our church, she won’t be a stranger. She’ll be your friend.”

**Are you friendly to missionaries when they visit your church?** If there are children your age, talk to them as you would to a friend. Why not write to them when they go back to the mission field? They most likely have an email address just like you do, making it quick and easy to keep in touch. They’re just ordinary kids like you and will enjoy hearing about your experiences. And they will probably have interesting things to tell you. Thank the Lord for missionary friends.



# A Mistreated Child

Read: Ephesians 6:1-3

January  
12

*I don't see why Dad has to be so strict!* Dana thought. *Why can't he just trust me?* She had asked if she could go to an overnight party with several friends from school. When Dad heard who would be there, his answer was a definite no. In Dana's opinion, his reasons for refusing to let her go were not very good ones.

As Dana settled down on the back steps, she saw Elsa sitting out on the steps of her home next door. Dana jumped up and made her way over there. *Elsa will understand*, she thought. *I know her dad can be unfair, too.* But when Dana sat down next to her friend, she forgot all about her own problem. "What happened to your eye?" Dana asked, staring at Elsa.

Elsa quickly covered her eye. "I . . . I bumped into a door," she murmured, somewhat upset. "It happened last night."

"Bumped into a door?" Dana repeated. "Then how'd you get scratches on the other side of your face?" As soon as she had spoken, Dana knew what must have happened. "Did your father hit you again?" she asked.

At first Elsa didn't answer. Finally she nodded. "But he didn't mean to," she said defensively. "He was drunk, and he didn't know what he was doing."

"But . . . you don't hate him for it?" Dana asked in wonder.

"No," Elsa replied. "He's my dad." She swallowed hard. "Please don't tell anyone. I don't want other people to hate him, either."

A surge of guilt flooded through Dana. *Here I am—mad at Dad for doing what he believes is right*, she thought, *but Elsa defends her dad even though he hit her!* Feeling ashamed, Dana quietly breathed a prayer of thanks for Christian parents, and she asked God to show her how to help her friend.

"Oh, Elsa," said Dana, "I know you love your dad, but he needs help. Let's go talk to my parents about it, okay? They won't hate him, and they'll know how to get help for him and for you." She waited breathlessly for Elsa's answer, knowing she must somehow persuade her to tell.

## Respect and obey your parents

### Key Verse

Honor your father  
and your mother.

Ephesians 6:2

## Do you honor your parents? Or do you think they don't deserve your respect?

If you're truly mistreated, you need to tell someone so you can get help. If you're simply annoyed that your parents or caretakers don't let you have your way, remember that God says you are to obey them—even when you think they don't understand you. They have much more experience than you do and generally have good reasons for their decisions. Honor God by honoring them.

“I’ve got bad news for you,” announced Mom one morning when Kim and her brother Darrin came down to breakfast. Mom tried to look sad, but her eyes were twinkling. “I heard on the radio that school is canceled today because of the snowstorm. Too many roads are closed.”

“All right!” squealed Kim. “Let’s hurry up and have breakfast, Darrin, and then go play in the snow.” Darrin nodded eagerly, and they sat down to eat.

After breakfast, Kim jumped up. “Come on, Darrin!” she said. But it had started to storm very hard again, and the kids had to stay in the house.

There still was no school the next day, although the blizzard had stopped. Soon Kim and Darrin were making snow angels, jumping in the huge drifts, and having snowball fights. Then they decided to join several neighbor children playing in a nearby empty lot. They laughed as they made their way through the deep snow on the unplowed sidewalk.

They had been playing with the other children only a few minutes when they heard a small voice. “Hi, Kim! I play, too.”

Turning, they saw the little girl who lived next door to them. “Shelly must have followed us over here!” exclaimed Kim. “I’ll have to take her home.” She took Shelly’s hand and they headed back.

Shelly’s mother had been looking for her. She was relieved to see them, and Kim explained what had happened. “I step where Kim steps,” said Shelly happily. She giggled as she demonstrated, taking long strides in order to step in Kim’s footprints. “It’s fun.”

As Darrin and Kim ate lunch that noon, they told their parents about the fun they’d had in the snow and about little Shelly who had followed them, stepping in Kim’s footprints. Dad nodded. “Someone usually is following us,” he said. “That’s a good thing to remember.”

“What do you mean?” asked Kim. “Shelly never followed us before.”

Dad smiled. “Shelly followed your footprints in the snow, and others will follow your footprints in life,” he explained. “Your example may lead others to live for God—or to do things that will displease Him.”

Darrin nodded thoughtfully. “So we’d better be careful how we walk in life, right? We need to be the right kind of examples for other kids.”

## Be a good example

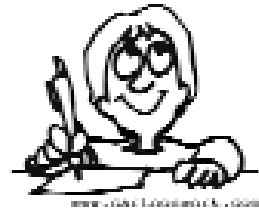
### Key Verse

In all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works.

Titus 2:7

**What kind of example are you setting for others to follow?** If you tell a lie, are always late, or neglect your duties, someone will notice. If you wear a smile, do your best work, and willingly help others, someone will notice those things, too. You are being watched by other kids—and by adults as well. Ask God to help you be the right kind of example to anyone who is watching you.

# Journal It!



Have you thought about the fact that someone—perhaps a brother, a sister, a neighbor, or a kid at school—is watching you and following in your footprints. Who are a couple of people who might be watching and following you? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



What kind of footprints are you leaving? If others copy your actions, will they be doing the things that please the Lord?

What are some characteristics you and God would like others to see and copy when they follow you? Write one in each footprint you see on this page. (See the suggestions on the other side of the footprints.) Then think about them in relation to the people you named on the lines above.



honest            obedient  
cheerful        helpful  
respectful      kind  
generous        unselfish

Add any others you'd like to have someone copy.



**Ask an adult:** Who do you think might be following in your footprints? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you see things I should stop doing because someone might copy me? \_\_\_\_\_

**Our Key Verse** speaks of a "pattern of good works." A pattern is a plan or model to be followed. When we make or build something, we often use a pattern. Sometimes we forget that people also follow a pattern as they build their lives, and sometimes that pattern is *us*. God wants us to be a pattern of good works. Then as others follow our example, they will do things that honor the Lord.

**Others follow you, so . . .  
be a good example**

“Come on, Aaron. Step on it!” Blake urged his older brother. “You can make the light.”

“Okay. Hang on!” Aaron grinned, and with a burst of speed, they zipped through the traffic light just after it turned red. But almost immediately, Aaron groaned as he glanced in his rearview mirror and saw a police car with lights flashing. Blake turned and saw it, too. He felt guilty as he remembered how he had urged Aaron to go through the changing light.

They pulled to the side of the road in response to the flashing police signal, and the officer approached their car. Soon the policeman was driving away, leaving the boys staring at the traffic ticket in Aaron’s hand.

When their parents learned about the ticket, Aaron made excuses. “I don’t see why that policeman couldn’t have just overlooked it,” he said. “All I did was go through that one little red light when no cars were coming anyway! It’s not like I robbed a bank or murdered somebody. Besides, if the light was red, it

had only just turned!” Blake nodded.

Mom shook her head. “It was both foolish and dangerous to not stop for that light,” she said.

“You broke the law, and now you have to pay.”

“That’s right,” agreed Dad. “You seem to think what you did wasn’t so bad, but the truth is that it was wrong.” He shook his head, and after a minute, he added, “Your excuses remind me of Walt—one of the guys I work with at the office.”

“Did he get a ticket, too?” Blake asked.

“No, but like you boys, he doesn’t think the things he does are so bad,” replied Dad. “Walt doesn’t think he’s bad enough to go to hell. That sounds harsh, doesn’t it? But he needs to realize that’s what will happen unless he trusts in Jesus and is saved from his sins. He may be pretty good in the eyes of the world, but everyone who is honest has to admit to having done at least one wrong thing. That makes everyone a sinner—a person who has broken God’s law—and the fine must be paid.”

Dad handed the ticket back to Aaron. “You’ll have to pay this fine yourself—but thank God, Jesus already has paid the penalty for our sins. I pray that both you boys understand, and that Walt will soon understand, too.”

## Everyone is guilty of sin

### Key Verse

Whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.

James 2:10

**Do you think you’re good enough to go to heaven?** Have you ever told a lie? Disobeyed at least one time, had even one bad thought, or done some other wrong thing at least once? Of course you have, and God says you’re guilty—you’ve broken His law. There’s a “fine”—a penalty—to be paid. Only Jesus could pay that penalty for you and make it possible for you to go to heaven. Accept Him as your Savior today. (See the ABCs of Salvation at the end of this book.)

# Unwashed Hands

Read: Psalm 24:1-5

January  
15

“Hi, Joelle,” said Mrs. Powers when Joelle arrived at her Sunday school teacher’s home. “Ready to help make submarine sandwiches for our party?” Joelle nodded eagerly, and Mrs. Powers pointed to the table where ham, salami, cheese, and submarine buns waited. “Everything’s ready, but I need to pick up Becky,” she said. “You’re the first one here, so would you let the others in?”

“Sure,” agreed Joelle, and Mrs. Powers left on her errand.

*I might as well start,* thought Joelle. She washed her hands, then opened the package of buns and uncovered the other items. After putting a sandwich together, she carefully wrapped it in plastic. *This is fun,* she thought.

As the other girls arrived, Joelle let them in. “I’ve already got a couple done,” she said, showing them the sandwiches she had finished.

“I didn’t expect you to start before I got here,” said Mrs. Powers when she returned, but she looked pleased. Then her expression changed. “Joelle, didn’t you wash your hands before you started working?” she asked.

Joelle looked at dark spots on her hands. “I did wash them,” she said. “That’s ink I got on my hands when I was making a poster. It won’t come off. But shall I go try again?”

“Ink, is it?” Mrs. Powers laughed. “Well, I guess we don’t have to worry about that coming off on our sandwiches.” She looked at the other girls. “Okay, if any of you haven’t washed your hands, go do that, and then let’s get these sandwiches made.”

Soon the girls were laughing and chatting as they worked. “Tell me, girls . . . did anything today remind you of the lesson we had just last Sunday?” Mrs Powers asked.

“Ah-h-h . . .” murmured Joelle, thinking back to the lesson. “Oh, I know! It was about serving the Lord with unclean hands.”

“That’s right,” agreed Becky. “Mrs. Powers, you told us that when you were a kid, you argued with your brother and disobeyed your mother one Sunday morning. Then at Sunday school, you offered to help teach a new song, so that was like trying to serve God with unwashed hands.”

Mrs. Powers nodded. “And that’s no good. We need to prepare to serve God by first getting rid of the dirt—the sin—in our lives.”

## Serve God with “clean hands”

### Key Verse

Cleanse your hands, you sinners;  
and purify your hearts.

James 4:8

**What do you do to serve the Lord?** Perhaps you do your chores at home, help pick up your Sunday school room after class, or work in the nursery. While doing those things, do you hang on to anger, disobedience, lying, or some other sin you know you’ve committed? If you do, it’s like trying to serve God with unclean hands. You want your food to be prepared with clean hands, and God wants what you do for Him to be done with “clean hands”—clean hearts.

Samora squirmed uncomfortably as she sat in her usual place in Sunday school. It wasn't that she didn't like her class; she did. But the week before, the lesson had been about the man known as the Good Samaritan, and someone had suggested that each class member try to be like him by doing something special for someone else in the coming week. *Now I suppose everybody will be talking about what they did, and I have nothing to report,* thought Samora.

Just like Samora expected, the kids were excited about what they had done. James was the first to bring it up. "On my way home from school, I saw an old man trying to shovel the snow off his sidewalk," said James as they waited for the class to begin, "so I stopped and did it for him."

"Cool," responded Brenda. "Our neighbor is in the hospital," she added. "She doesn't have any relatives living in this area, so I went twice to see her."

Mrs. Peters, the Sunday school teacher, nodded at both James and Brenda. "I'd say you certainly acted like good Samaritans last week, wouldn't you?" she asked the class. Everyone agreed.

## Be helpful at home

### Key Verse

Inasmuch as you did it to one of  
the least of these My brethren,  
you did it to Me.  
Matthew 25:40

James turned to Samora. "Did you do something special?" he asked her.

Samora shook her head, somewhat embarrassed. "I had to hurry home after school every day," she replied. "My mom was sick all week."

Mrs. Peters smiled sympathetically. "Oh, that's too bad! Who took care of your little brother and made meals?" she asked.

"I did," Samora said. "I just made sandwiches and salads—easy things like that."

Mrs. Peters nodded. "And did you stack the dishes in the sink to wait until your mother can do them?" she asked.

Samora looked puzzled. "No," she said. "I washed them. It didn't take long."

Mrs. Peters looked around. "All who agree that Samora was a 'good Samaritan,' raise your hand." Every hand was raised. "The things you did this week, Samora, were every bit as important and special as those done by the others," Mrs. Peters told her. "You helped in the place that's easiest to neglect—home. God is pleased when He sees you helping your family."

Surprised, Samora felt a little smile on her lips.

**Is it more fun to help a neighbor or a friend than to help at home?** Both kinds of help are needed. Think of ways you can be a "good Samaritan" at school or church, in your own neighborhood, and especially at home. Can you shovel snow? Wash the dishes? Dust? Take out the trash? There are many ways to help. Will you do it for the Lord?

Tim scuffed the toe of his shoe in the playground dirt. He didn't feel very good inside. *Some of the jokes these guys are telling are bad, Tim thought. I don't even think they're funny. But I don't want to be called a sissy or a baby, and that's what will happen if I walk away.* Tim wanted those boys to like him, so he remained standing in a small circle with them. When they laughed at the jokes, he sort of smiled or pretended to be busy with something else—like tying a shoe—hoping they wouldn't notice him.

During family devotions after dinner, Tim's father read several verses from John 12 (see today's Scripture reading). Tim was startled when he heard Dad read verse 43. It said, "They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." After hearing that verse, he scarcely heard anything else his dad said. *That's just like me today, thought Tim. I cared more about what the other guys thought than I did about what God thought.*

All evening, the words of the verse ran through Tim's mind. Finally, he went to his room and knelt down beside his bed. "Dear God, I'm sorry for laughing at words and jokes that are wrong," he whispered. "Help me walk away the next time the kids talk like that, no matter what they say about me."

At recess the next day, Tim and several other boys decided to have a ball game. "My dad would throw a huge fit if he heard me telling this story, but here goes," said one of the boys as they prepared to play. "There was this hot girl . . ."

Quickly turning, Tim walked away. "Hey, where you goin', Tim?" someone called out to him. "Looking for your mommy?"

Tim continued to walk, each step becoming a little easier. He heard footsteps behind him, and then Bob was walking along with him. "I don't really like that kind of joke, either," said Bob.

"Really?" asked Tim. "Hey, Bob—do you collect baseball cards?"

"Sure do," answered Bob, pulling some out of his pocket, and soon the boys were comparing and exchanging cards. They had a great time together.

*I sure feel better today than I did when I was trying so hard to make the other guys like me, thought Tim. When we please God, I guess we please ourselves, too!*

## **Do you care more about what other kids think of you than what God thinks?**

Which seems more important—having other kids like you or having God be pleased with the way you behave? Do you dare to be a friend to someone most kids seem to consider odd? To not laugh at dirty jokes? To pray before you eat? To let others know you believe in God? Honor Him and trust Him for strength to do the right thing in everyday situations like these.



## **Seek God's praise**

### **Key Verse**

They loved the praise of men  
more than the praise of God.

John 12:43

At lunchtime, Stephanie watched in amusement as her little brother Kyle sat in his high chair, stubbornly shaking his head and refusing to eat the strained peas Mom was offering him. “Maybe you should give him some applesauce,” suggested Stephanie. “He always likes that.”

“Yes,” said Mom, “but he needs other things, too. He has to learn to eat them.” She took Kyle out of his high chair and set him on the floor. “Maybe we should let him get good and hungry before we try feeding him again.”

“Maybe,” agreed Stephanie. “May I have a banana for dessert?”

“Sure,” said Mom as she went to answer the phone.

Stephanie helped herself to a banana and put the peeling in the trash can. *Mom said to empty this right after lunch*, she remembered, so she set it at the door and went back to the table to eat her banana. When she turned around, she saw that Kyle had found the banana peel and had it clenched between his teeth. “Kyle!” exclaimed Stephanie as Mom came back to the kitchen. “Look at him, Mom!” Mom smiled and shook her head as she took the banana peel out of Kyle’s mouth.

## God provides for needs

### Key Verse

My God shall supply all your  
need according to His riches in  
glory by Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:19

“Shame on you refusing the good lunch Mom made for you!” Stephanie scolded. But little Kyle didn’t understand. He wanted the banana peel back. “Silly baby,” said Stephanie fondly. “Don’t eat peelings from the trash can! Eat the nice food Mom fixes. She makes all kinds of yummy stuff.”

“That’s right,” said Mom. “I’ll give him all he needs and only what’s good for him.” She paused, then added, “Too often we’re like Kyle ourselves.”

“Not me!” protested Stephanie. “Not the rest of our family, either. Nobody likes everything, but none of us would eat from the garbage can.”

“No, not physical food,” agreed Mom, “but I was thinking how easy it is to forget that God will supply everything we need. We neglect the things He has provided for our happiness and growth and try instead to fulfill our needs through earthly possessions and amusements. Those things are only garbage compared to the things of the Lord. They’re like peelings, not peas.”

“I know what you mean,” Stephanie replied, “but I think I need you to remind me when you see me going for garbage instead of getting what I need from God.”

**Do you have a need in your life?** A need for friends? Spiritual growth? Happiness? A sense of achievement? Do you try to get those things from spending time with popular kids, texting lots of friends, or playing internet games? Those things are not necessarily bad, but don’t expect the things of this world to truly satisfy all your needs. Turn to God—read His Word, talk to Him, meet with other Christians. Whatever your need is, give God the chance to satisfy it.



# Deadly Bite

Read: 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 7:1

January  
19

A blast of rock music hit Mom's ears. "Matthew! Turn that off!" she called. "Off, not down!" Mom waited until she heard the radio click off, then returned to her work. "Matt, I wish you could understand the damage that kind of music can do to you," she said when he came into the family room.

"Aw, it's not hurting me," objected Matt. "I can think of only one or two bad words in that whole song, but you make it sound like a big, terrible sin. Can't Christians enjoy life?"

"You know they can," Mom replied, "but they shouldn't enjoy wrong things. Songs with bad words are the wrong thing for Christians to listen to."

"You'll never understand," complained Matt. "You belong to a different generation. We just . . ." The telephone interrupted him.

"That was Aunt Linda," said Mom when she returned from answering the phone. "Uncle Tom is in the hospital. They think he has the West Nile virus!"

"West Nile!" exclaimed Matt. "One of the teachers at school had that disease quite a few years ago. He said it was from a mosquito bite, but I didn't think anybody got it anymore." He frowned. "Uncle Tom will be okay, won't he?"

"It's too soon to be sure," said Mom. "So far he seems to be doing all right, but that disease can be very serious."

"That's what I heard, and it's all because of such a little thing as a mosquito!" exclaimed Matt.

"Little things can be just as dangerous as big things—sometimes more so because we tend to overlook them," Mom replied.

"I guess so," agreed Matt. "I know I'm more scared of a rattlesnake than a mosquito, but a mosquito bite can be just as bad, can't it?"

"Yes," said Mom. "It can cause West Nile, malaria, and other illnesses." She looked directly at Matt. "It occurs to me that little things can cause spiritual sickness, too," she added. "Little things like magazines with immoral pictures or programs that use God's name in a wrong way. We think such little things won't hurt us, but they can have a serious effect on our fellowship with God."

"I know what you're really thinking of—music with a few bad words," Matt said. He sighed, but he nodded. "Okay, Mom. I get the point."

## Avoid little sins

### Key Verse

Let us cleanse ourselves from all  
filthiness of the flesh and spirit.

2 Corinthians 7:1

**Are little things that weaken you spiritually creeping into your life?** What about the music you listen to, the jokes you laugh about, the internet sites you look at, the words you say? You don't have to hang around with thieves or murderers to be in danger of spiritual sickness. Check your life now for little temptations and so-called little sins that you need to avoid.

As Rachel stood and looked around the mall, she cried as if her heart would break. “Are you lost?” someone asked her.

“Y-yes.” Rachel sobbed as she nodded her head.

She knew the man talking to her was a security guard—her mother had pointed him out to her. “If you ever get lost,” her mother had said, “ask a security guard for help. Don’t go with anyone else!”

“Will you take me to the lost and found?” asked Rachel through tears.

“Something like that,” said the guard with a smile. Rachel clung tightly to his hand as he led her to the information center. Then her description was given over the loudspeaker.

Rachel’s mother soon came hurrying down the hallway, tears in her eyes. “Oh, honey,” said Mom as she knelt down to hug her daughter, “I’m so glad to see you! I’ve been looking everywhere for you!” She turned to thank the guard for his help, then taking Rachel’s hand, they left the mall.

## Be found forever

### Key Verse

The Son of Man (Jesus)  
has come to seek and to save  
that which was lost.

Luke 19:10

“I’m like the little sheep you read about in my Bible storybook last night,” decided Rachel as they drove home. “We both got lost, and that little sheep must have been scared, just like me. I was so scared all by myself.”

“I know,” said Mom. A moment later she added, “You know what? Everyone is a little like you.”

“Is everybody lost?” Rachel asked.

“Until they know Jesus, they are,” replied Mom. “The sheep strayed away from the shepherd, and the Bible says everyone has strayed from God—

everybody does wrong things. The shepherd went to search for the lost sheep, and Jesus came to earth to find and save lost boys and girls and men and women.”

“After Sunday school one day, I told Jesus I was sorry I was naughty and I asked Him to save me,” said Rachel soberly, “and He did, didn’t He?”

“That’s right,” agreed Mom.

“And He was glad, wasn’t He?” asked Rachel with a smile. “Just like you were glad when you found me!”

Mom smiled, too. “Oh, yes!” she replied. “There’s joy in heaven whenever a lost sheep is found.”

**Have you thought of yourself as someone who is lost?** That’s what you are if you don’t know Jesus as your Savior. But He came to this earth to find you—to “seek and to save” you. Will you sincerely confess your sin and trust in Jesus as your Savior? Then you won’t be lost anymore, and you’ll never be all alone because God will never leave you. Put your trust in Him today. (See the ABCs of Salvation at the end of this book.)

# Journal It!



Are you still lost like the sheep you read about in Luke? The shepherd went out to find that lost sheep, and a shepherd came to find you. In the puzzle, write the correct letters above the matching numbered lines and you will find who that shepherd is and what He did for you.

16	2	8
U	A	O
13	9	4
L	D	T
5		11
H		P
14	3	6
V	M	E
17	1	15
F	I	J
12	7	10
R	G	S

\_\_\_\_\_ " \_\_\_\_\_

15 6 10 16 10 10 2 1 9 . . . 1 2 3

\_\_\_\_\_

4 5 6 7 8 8 9 10 5 6 11 5 6 12 9

\_\_\_\_\_

4 5 6 7 8 8 9 10 5 6 11 5 6 12 9

\_\_\_\_\_

7 1 14 6 10 5 1 10 13 1 17 6

\_\_\_\_\_ John 10:7, 11

17 8 12 4 5 6 10 5 6 6 11

Who is the Good Shepherd? \_\_\_\_\_ Who are the sheep (see Isaiah 53:6)? \_\_\_\_\_

What did Jesus do for the sheep? \_\_\_\_\_

Read the ABCs of Salvation at the end of this book again and make sure you are no longer lost. If you're not quite certain, ask your parents, pastor, Sunday school teacher, or other Christian adult to help you.



**Ask an adult:** What does Jesus mean when He says He gives His life for the sheep? \_\_\_\_\_

Why did He have to do that to save us? \_\_\_\_\_

**Our Key Verse** tells why Jesus left heaven and came to this earth. It was to find and to save the lost "sheep"—lost men and women and boys and girls. That's each one of us because we have all strayed from God. Jesus died to take the punishment we deserve. He rose again and is now in heaven. When we trust in Jesus, He saves us from our sins, and we will someday be with Him forever.

**Accept Jesus and . . .  
be found forever**

January  
21

## Tell-Tale Chocolate

Read: Psalm 139:1-12

*Ice cream bars!* thought Rick when he spotted the chocolate-covered treats in the freezer. He hesitated, then took one. *If Mom notices one is missing, she'll think Dad ate it,* he thought. Mom had gone next door to care for an elderly neighbor, but Rick still looked around to see if anyone had seen him before he took a bite.

Suddenly the outside door opened, and the sound of his mother's footsteps told him there wasn't time to put the ice cream back. *Why is she coming home so soon?* Rick wondered in panic. He quickly folded the wrapper around the bar and stuffed it into his back pocket.

"I don't have to stay with Mrs. Cook after all," said Mom, as she came into the kitchen. "Her granddaughter just came, and she'll be there all day."

As Rick leaned carelessly against the wall, hoping his mother wouldn't suspect anything, he felt the ice cream bar smash in his pocket. Realizing the trouble he could be in, he turned and hurried toward his room.

### Sin will show

#### Key Verse

Be sure your sin  
will find you out.  
Numbers 32:23

"Rick," Mom called after him, "be sure you change into a clean pair of jeans. When ice cream bars melt, they become very sticky."

Rick whirled around. *How does she know what I did?* he wondered in amazement.

"You're wondering how I know, aren't you?" Mom asked before he could get the question out of his mouth. Rick nodded. "It shows," Mom said simply. "There's chocolate around your mouth, and guilt in your eyes. And there's a wooden stick poking out of the back pocket of your jeans."

At first Rick couldn't answer. Then he looked up at his mother. "I guess I thought you wouldn't know, Mom. I'm sorry," he said. "I really am."

"I am, too," she replied. "I plan to serve those bars to you boys at the Cub Scout meeting tomorrow. Now it looks as though someone will have to go without." Rick had no doubt who that "someone" was. "And Rick," added Mom, "I hope you know that even if I hadn't discovered what you did, God knew all about it. You're never out of His sight. He knows when you behave yourself, and He knows when you don't."

Soberly, Rick nodded.

**Are you aware that you are always seen by someone?** Perhaps you've sneaked cookies, broken a dish, or read a bad book, and you think nobody knows. You're probably not fooling Mom and Dad as much as you think you are. You're certainly *never* fooling God. He sees everything you do. Instead of trying to hide your sin, confess it and don't do it again.

“Look at that cool tree house!” someone said.

“Yeah. That’s Liam Patterson’s,” came the reply. “He says he built it all by himself, but I doubt he could have done that.”

Sitting on the carpeted floor of his new hideout, Liam heard the words floating up from the street. He recognized the voices. It was Nick and Brad.

“Liam’s dad is a carpenter, so he had all the tools and materials he needed,” Brad said. “Besides, his dad probably did most of the work.”

“I could do twice as good with half as many tools and a lot less stuff to work with,” Nick bragged loudly.

Liam shook his fist at the backs of the two boys disappearing down the street. *Could not!* he thought. *You couldn’t do half as good with twice as much!*

When Liam’s grandparents came the following week, he proudly showed Grandpa Patterson his tree house. “I built it all by myself,” Liam told him, “but some of the kids don’t believe me. They think Dad did most of it just because he’s a carpenter.”

“Try not to be too impatient with them,” advised Grandpa. “After all, there are very few things we can do entirely alone—without assistance from anyone else. In fact, I can’t think of any, can you?”

“How about . . . ah . . . driving your truck? You do that by yourself,” Liam argued.

“Oh, I have help with that, too,” Grandpa replied. “The company I work for provides the truck for me. The government builds the highways I travel on. And God gives me the strength and the ability to drive. So you see, I’m dependent upon a lot of others for my job. I could never do it all by myself.”

“Oh, well . . . when you put it that way,” said Liam. He grinned. “All right, Grandpa, you win. Dad taught me how to build things and loaned me his tools. God gave me the ability to learn and the strength I needed to do the building. And together we built this tree house.” He paused. “If I tell that to the other kids, do you think they’ll believe me or will they think I’m weird?”

“Well, they can at least see that you’re not proud because you think you did it all by yourself, so give it a try,” Grandpa said with a smile. “Give it a try.”

## Don’t be proud

### Key Verse

Those who walk in pride  
He (God) is able to put down.  
Daniel 4:37

**Do you take all the credit for things you do, or are you thankful for help?** King Nebuchadnezzar bragged about his work and refused to give glory to God. He wanted all the credit for himself, and God had to deal harshly with him. (Be sure to see today’s Scripture reading.) Don’t make the same mistake Nebuchadnezzar did. Take time right now to thank God for helping you. And today, be sure to thank some person who has helped you, too.

Shanna sighed as she shut the car door. “Why do we have to go along?” she asked. “I’d rather take care of Danny at home than in a waiting room.”

“I know,” Mom replied, “but like I told you earlier, we’re going to Grandma’s house right after we visit Aunt Ruth at the hospital. It would take too long to go back home for you.”

“It’s not that far,” muttered Shanna. “Why can’t I ever . . .”

“That’s enough, Shanna,” said Dad sternly as he backed the car out of the drive. Shanna didn’t say anything more, but she sat back and quietly pouted.

In the hospital waiting room, Shanna rummaged through magazines while her little brother played with a few toys they had brought along. *Wow!* she thought, looking at the cover of one of the magazines. *Mom and Dad would never let me read this at home.* She hesitated. *Well, they shouldn’t have brought me here if this is a problem for them,* she told herself as she opened the magazine. *It wasn’t my idea to baby-sit in this place!*

## Listen to warnings



### Key Verse

By them (God’s Word) Your servant  
is warned, and in keeping them  
there is great reward.

Psalm 19:11

Shanna became engrossed in her reading and paid little attention to her brother. She jumped when a voice at her shoulder said, “Time to go, kids.”

“Huh? What?” Shanna asked in confusion. “Oh, time to go to Grandma’s. Come on, Danny.”

Seeing Mom glance at the magazine, Shanna tried to slip it under the stack on the table. “How is Aunt Ruth?” she asked quickly.

“She has cancer, you know,” replied Dad, “but she’s doing fine. They found it early because she had a check-up at the first warning symptom.”

“Early warnings are important,” Mom added as they entered the elevator, “and frankly, I see some danger signals in your life, Shanna. Your attitude recently and that magazine you were reading both tell me that you need a spiritual check-up. Sin is like a dreadful cancer—in fact, it’s worse.”

“Paying attention to a physical warning symptom may have saved Aunt Ruth’s life,” said Dad. “Paying attention to warnings about sin in your life could save you from lots of trouble and unhappiness.”

Shanna didn’t reply, but as they left, she did think about what her parents had said. She knew she really needed to make some changes.

**Have you been warned about your attitude or actions lately?** Did you resent it or were you able to admit that you needed to change some things? Warnings from parents or other people—and especially from God—can be a blessing. They can alert you to bad attitudes or actions. Pay attention to warnings and work on any problem areas you discover. Do you need to be more helpful? More cheerful? More obedient? Listening to warnings could save you from trouble later.

“I wish I were funny like Evan,” Jake said as he slumped into a chair at the kitchen table. “Everyone likes him. Evan says things that make the whole class laugh. Whenever I try to tell jokes, nobody laughs. Dad, how can I be funny?”

Dad hesitated. “Well, now, let’s think about you for a minute,” he said. “You told me how great Evan is. What is great about you?”

“Me?” Jake shrugged. “I don’t know. Nothing, I guess.”

“Oh, I think there is,” said Dad. “I’ve noticed that you’re very helpful and kind to everyone. I’m very proud of who you are, even if you aren’t as funny as Evan.”

“Well, I’d rather be like Evan,” Jake muttered as he got up and walked away.

On Saturday, Jake was eager to play with his soccer team in the local youth league. Before the game began, the team gathered, and the coach explained that one of the starting forwards would be late. “You’ll play forward for a while instead of goalie, Jake,” said the coach. “Pete will be goalie to start.”

During the first quarter, the team did not play as well as usual. Jake struggled with his footwork as a forward, and the other team scored as the goalie fumbled. “Wow, Cole! I’m glad to see you!” exclaimed Jake when the missing teammate showed up. Jake gratefully returned to his regular position as goalie. During the rest of the game, he skillfully protected the goal, and his team celebrated a hard-earned victory.

“I sure didn’t like playing forward today. I’m so much better at goalie,” Jake commented on the way home. “I’m glad the rest of the guys like other positions and don’t all want to be goalies.”

“I’m glad, too. You’re definitely gifted in that position, but a team of *all* goalies wouldn’t be a good team, would it?” said Dad with a smile. After a moment, he added, “By the way, Jake, do you remember saying you wished you were like Evan?” Jake nodded. “Well, what if *all* of us were funny? It would be kind of like a team with all goalies. God created each of us different, and that’s a good thing. He created you to be *you*, not Evan. You’ll always shine most when you’re being you, not when you’re trying to be like someone else.”

Jake was thoughtful. “Okay, Dad,” he said. “I’ll work at being me instead of someone I’m not.”

**Be thankful  
God made you  
to be *you***

**Key Verse**

I will praise You, for I am fearfully  
and wonderfully made.

Psalm 139:14

**Do you ever wish you were more like someone else?** Do you want to be more athletic? Or more artistic and creative? Do you think you’re too shy? Or too talkative? God made everyone different, and sometimes you may wish He had made you more like someone else. Remember that God gave each person special talents and abilities. What are some things that are great about you? Thank God today for creating you exactly the way you are!

Megan hung up the phone and turned to her mother. “Our Sunday school class is taking cookies to the retirement home on Saturday,” said Megan, “but I am *not* going! I wanted to take cookies to the day care center—but no, we have to do what Amy wants.” Megan scowled. “After they’re done, they’re all going to Mrs. Lee’s house to play games—but they play such stupid games! Isobel’s always gotta be the leader. And Renee will probably come. She thinks she’s so cool because she always has new stuff!” Mom raised her eyebrows, but before she could say anything, Megan dashed out the door to get the newspaper.

When Megan came back in, she pointed to an article. “Look! This says, ‘Local Boy’s Hand Restored.’ That’s Eddie’s picture! I know him, Mom!” Together they read about the accident in which the young boy’s hand was severed from his arm. Doctors were able to reattach it, and they were quite sure he’d be able to use it again.

After a restless day, Megan yawned and told her mother goodnight. Mom looked at her watch. “It’s still early,” she said.

“Going to bed already?” Megan nodded miserably. “What’s the matter, honey?” Mom asked. “You seemed unhappy all evening. Can I help?”

“I’m s-s-so lonesome.” Megan’s voice shook. “Why can’t I get along with anybody?”

Mom thought for a moment. “Well, I’ve noticed that if the kids don’t do things your way, you refuse to play or work with them,” she said gently. She pointed to the paper on the table. “Maybe you’re a little like Eddie’s hand after the accident—cut off.

Cut off from friends. Not attached to them anymore—just left to yourself.”

“I feel cut off,” Megan agreed. “But Eddie’s hand was reattached. How can I get reattached to my friends?”

“To have friends, you have to be willing to give in sometimes,” said Mom. “You can’t have everything your way.” Megan sighed but nodded thoughtfully. “Talk to the kids tomorrow,” added Mom. “Let them know you feel bad about the way you acted. Let them see that you’re willing to do things their way, too.” She gave Megan a hug. “Put the Golden Rule into effect. That means to treat the kids the way you’d like to be treated.”

**Do you cooperate even when things don’t go your way?** Or are your actions cutting you off from good times with your friends? Ask God to help you be a true friend—one who is willing to give in and do things the way someone else would like to do them. Today’s Key Verse is called the Golden Rule. Put it into practice and enjoy the friendships God provides for you.

## Follow the Golden Rule

### Key Verse

Just as you want men to do to  
you, you also do to them likewise.

Luke 6:31



Corey couldn't keep his leg from bouncing up and down with excitement as he sat at his desk. Mrs. Shears' whole 4th grade class was buzzing with enthusiasm as the students prepared for a field trip to the science center.

"Maggie, please come here for a moment," Mrs. Shears called to Corey's cousin who was seated at the back of the class. Corey picked up his backpack from the floor so Maggie's wheelchair had plenty of room to go by. "Maggie, you won't be able to ride on the bus because it isn't wheelchair accessible," said Mrs. Shears quietly, "but I've arranged for a special van to drive you to the science center." Maggie answered Mrs. Shears with a slight nod and half smile.

Corey noticed that as Maggie turned away from Mrs. Shears desk, she quickly brought her hand to her cheek and brushed away a tear. He felt a knot in his stomach. *Maybe I should ride with Maggie in the van so she doesn't have to ride alone*, he thought. He could almost hear his mom saying, "That would be the Christian thing to do." But Corey really wanted to be on the bus with the rest of his classmates. *One of the girls should ride with Maggie. Not me*, he decided. *I'll just sit next to her during lunchtime so she doesn't feel left out.*

Mrs. Shears had the class line up on the grass next to the curb while they waited for the bus. Everyone was laughing and talking eagerly about what they hoped to see at the science center—everyone but Maggie. Corey glanced over his shoulder and noticed that none of the girls were paying attention to her. He felt that same knot in his stomach again. He walked up to Mrs. Shears, tapped her lightly on the shoulder, and said, "Excuse me, Mrs. Shears. Is it okay if I ride in the van with Maggie?"

"Sure, Corey. That would be very nice," replied Mrs. Shears with a wink. Corey walked over and stood next to Maggie, but she didn't look at him. She looked down at the grass instead.

"Hi, Maggie. Is it okay if I ride in the van with you?" Corey asked. Maggie finally looked up from the ground, and Corey could see a wide smile on her face as she nodded yes.

## Do the right thing—the Christian thing

### Key Verse

Let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

1 John 3:18

**Have you found that it isn't always easy to do the Christian thing**—the thing Jesus would want you to do? Sometimes it's hard because it means you have to give up something you really want to do. But doing the right thing always pays off. It gives you a satisfied, comfortable feeling and a clear conscience. It's a testimony to others. And it also pays off in eternity—God rewards those who serve Him faithfully. So don't just *say* you're Christian. *Show* it with your actions.

Mom was taking chocolate chip cookies out of the oven when Grace got home. “Have a cookie and some milk,” invited Mom. “How was school?”

“Okay,” Grace answered, picking up a cookie, “except we have to do an oral book report in two weeks, and it’s scary standing up in front of the class.”

“You can practice on me,” offered Mom. “What book are you reading?”

“*Pilgrim’s Progress for Children*,” Grace replied.

“Good choice,” said Mom. “John Bunyan, the author of *Pilgrim’s Progress* was an interesting person. He was a preacher in England. At that time, they allowed preaching in only one main church, but he believed everyone should hear the Gospel. He preached wherever he had an audience, even though he was arrested several times.”

Grace bit into her cookie. “Was he ever sent to jail?” she asked.

“Oh, yes!” Mom replied. “And do you know what he did then?”

“No, what did he do?” asked Grace.

## Speak up for Jesus

### Key Verse

Daily ... they (the disciples) did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

Acts 5:42

“He preached inside the jail,” said Mom. She smiled. “That frustrated the jailers. They even offered to let him go if he would promise not to preach anymore, but of course he couldn’t do that. He said, ‘God called me to preach, and preach I must.’”

“He must have been brave!” exclaimed Grace.

“Yes, he was,” Mom replied. “His enemies kept him in jail for about twelve years. During that time—more than 300 years ago—he wrote many tracts and books, including *Pilgrim’s Progress*. That book is still being read by many, many people. Mr.

Bunyan preached to a greater audience through his books than he did in person.”

“Wow!” said Grace. “I can tell the kids that he believed in God and urged other people to believe, too, so in a way he’ll be preaching again, won’t he?”

“That’s true,” agreed Mom. She gave Grace a hug as she added, “And in a way, you’ll be preaching, too.”

“I will?” Grace asked doubtfully.

“Yes,” said Mom. “By using a book report to explain what John Bunyan preached, you’ll be telling about God and what He has done for us.”

“Cool! Witnessing for Jesus by giving a book report,” said Grace. “I like that.”

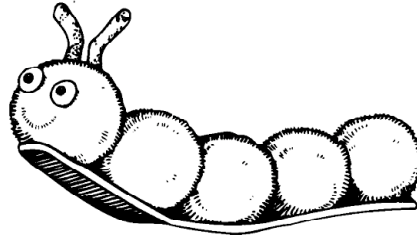
**What are some ways you can witness for Jesus?** An obvious way, of course, is to simply tell others about Him, and you should do that. Perhaps you, like Grace, could also make a report on a book by a Christian author. Maybe you could give the book to someone to read. Tracts, music, and invitations to Bible club are good ways to let others know you are a Christian. Think about what you can do—and then do it!

# Wordless Book Caterpillar

HERE'S A CRAFT IDEA, AND IT WILL GIVE YOU A WAY TO WITNESS.  
USE IT TO SHARE THE GOSPEL WITH A FRIEND.

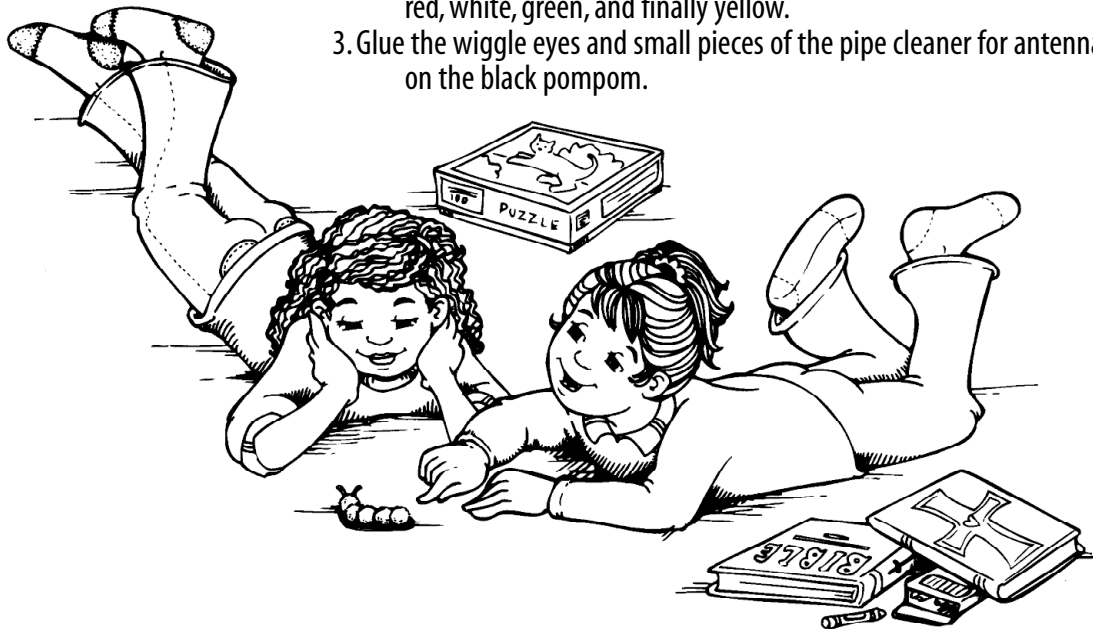
## Materials

5 medium pompoms  
(1 each black, red, white, green, and yellow)  
small piece of fun foam or felt  
2 wiggle craft eyes  
2 small pieces of pipe cleaner  
craft glue



## Directions:

1. Cut the base for your caterpillar out of fun foam or felt.
2. Glue the pompoms on the base in this order: black for the head, then red, white, green, and finally yellow.
3. Glue the wiggle eyes and small pieces of the pipe cleaner for antenna on the black pompom.



Here's how to use this friendly little caterpillar to share the Gospel with your friends.

The **BLACK** part of the caterpillar represents sin. Everyone is a sinner. (Romans 3:23)

**RED** stands for Jesus' blood, which He shed to take away your sins. (Colossians 1:14)

**WHITE** represents the heart of a believer after Jesus' blood has cleansed it and washed it "whiter than snow." (Isaiah 1:18)

**GREEN** represents new growth in Jesus. You live and grow in your faith as you read the Bible, pray, and meet with other Christians to learn more about God.

(1 Peter 2:2; Philippians 4:6; Hebrews 10:25)

**YELLOW** stands for the street of gold in heaven where believers will one day go to be with Jesus forever. (Revelation 21:21)

"What are you doing, Dad?" Ella asked as she entered the garage where her father was working on the car.

Dad looked up and smiled at Ella. "I'm putting antifreeze in the car's radiator," he replied.

Ella leaned against the car as she watched. "Why do you put that stuff in there?" she asked. "What does it do?"

"Antifreeze keeps the water from freezing," Dad explained. "I'm making sure the car is ready for the cold snap the weatherman says is coming."

There was silence as Ella's father finished working on his car. "You know," Dad said at last, "I'm preparing for cold weather, and I've been thinking—there's something you should prepare for, too."

"I should?" Ella looked up at him, a question in her eyes. "Like what?" she wanted to know.

"Like the future—eternity," answered Dad gently. "Both your mother and I have admitted we've sinned, and we've asked Jesus to be our Savior. We're trusting in Him, so we're prepared to be with Him forever. But what about you, honey? Where will you spend eternity?"

Ella was quiet. She had heard about eternity—in either heaven or hell—almost as long as she could remember. Her parents had talked about it, and so had her pastor and Sunday school teachers. But she was not at all sure what would happen if she died. *Would I go to heaven?* she wondered. *I hope so, but I'm not really sure.*

"Honey," Dad was saying, "how about getting ready for eternity right now?"

Ella nodded her head. "I want to, but I'm not sure how to do that. Will you help me, Daddy?" she asked.

Ella's father smiled. "I sure will," he answered. "Nothing would make Mom and me happier than to know that you will be with us through all eternity. Let's go in and we'll talk about it and look up some Bible verses, okay? You can know for sure that you're ready to spend eternity with us—and best of all, with the Lord Jesus."

## Prepare for eternity

### Key Verse

Prepare to meet your God!

Amos 4:12

**Have you heard often about eternity and the need to prepare for it?** Are you prepared? Your family prepares for changes in the climate, for food, and for work. You prepare for a test, for daily assignments, and for school games. Be sure to prepare for eternity, too. Admit that you have sinned and need a Savior. Accept Jesus into your life today. (See the ABCs of Salvation at the end of this book.)

"You know what Janelle did, Mom?" asked Ellen as she came into the house. Mom looked up from her work. "No, I don't. What did she do?" she asked.

"She swore at Colby when he bumped into her," replied Ellen as she hung up her coat. "I was so glad when Janelle became a Christian a month ago, but now she's getting tiresome! One day she acts like a Christian, and the next day she lies or cheats or uses bad language! I'm giving up on her."

"I hope you won't really give up," said Mom. "Instead, pray for her. Pray that as Janelle attends church and Sunday school and learns more about the Lord, she'll develop a desire to please Him in the things she does and says each day. Be a friend and help her all you can."

"Oh, I don't know," muttered Ellen with a sigh. "I think it's hopeless!"

As Ellen played with her baby brother after supper that evening, she stood him on his feet. "Mom! Look at Davie!" she exclaimed. "He wants to walk!" Sure enough, when Ellen let go of Davie, he took a tottering step toward her before falling down. "That's the first step he took alone, isn't it?" Ellen asked excitedly. "I'm going to help him take more."

Ellen gave Davie a hug, then set him back down. "Come to Ellen, Davie," she coaxed. "Come on, honey. You can walk!" Ellen put the baby back on his feet several times, but he was never able to take more than a step or two before he tumbled to the floor.

"Better give up," advised Mom. "He'll never be able to walk. He just keeps falling down."

Ellen looked at her mother in surprise. "Give up? You're kidding!" She picked up the baby. "He just needs more help and more time. Isn't that right, Davie?" Ellen put him down and again patiently encouraged him to walk.

Mom chuckled as she spoke. "You're exactly right, Ellen," she agreed. "Davie does need help and more time—and so does Janelle. She's a baby Christian. She's going to need lots of help taking those first steps as she learns to walk with God—to live the way He wants her to live."

As Ellen again coaxed Davie to walk to her, she thoughtfully considered what her mother had said. In her heart, she knew Mom was right.

## New Christians need help

### Key Verse

We then who are strong  
ought to bear with the  
scruples (failings) of the weak.

Romans 15:1

**Do you know a baby Christian**—someone who hasn't been a Christian very long? Does it annoy you when that person does things you feel a Christian should not do? Pray for new Christians and encourage them. Remember that they need the help—just like you do—of more mature Christians. Today's Scripture reading records some things the Apostle Paul prayed for new believers. Make them your prayer for the baby Christians you know.

Juan ruffled the collie's ears when he arrived at his grandparents' home in the country. "Shep," said Juan, "we're gonna have fun together this summer." Shep barked in agreement.

The next morning Juan was awakened by the smell of bacon. *Um-m-m—that smells so good*, he thought sleepily. But when he went to the kitchen, he frowned. "I don't see why we have to have breakfast so early!" he grumbled.

After breakfast, Juan heard about the chores he was expected to do. He reluctantly helped Grandpa feed the chickens and the animals in the barn. "Work, work, work," he sputtered as he and Shep took the cows out to the pasture. "Aren't we ever going to just have fun?"

When Juan returned, he saw that Grandpa had put on a special hat with a veil. "I'm ready to go and check the beehives," said Grandpa.

"Do I have to help? I hate bees!" Juan exclaimed. "All they do is sting!"

"Oh, that's not all. They're very busy little creatures," said Grandpa. "But for now, you can just play with Shep a little while."

## Be grateful; don't grumble

### Key Verse

Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing . . . these things ought not to be so.

James 3:10

That evening, the supper table was loaded with fried chicken, potatoes, and thick slices of homemade bread. "Please pass the honey," Juan said. "I love it with bread and butter!"

"I thought you said all bees do is sting," his grandpa teased.

"Did I say that?" Juan grinned. "I sure was wrong. I must have forgotten about the honey."

"We grumble about bees, but we love honey," said Grandpa. "We complain about chores, but we

like the food we get as a result of hard work." Juan knew Grandpa's words could be said about him. "We all tend to grumble, but the Bible says blessing and cursing shouldn't come from the same mouth," Grandpa added.

"I didn't curse!" protested Juan.

Grandpa smiled. "No, but I think we can apply that principle to grumbling, too, don't you? Thankfulness and grumbling don't go well together."

"Well . . . okay, Grandpa," agreed Juan. He grinned. "I'll remember this good food when I do chores tomorrow. I'll even help you with the bees—I'll keep thinking about the good honey they make for me."

**Do you enjoy the same things you complain about?** For example, do you like performing at recitals, but you grumble when you have to practice music? Do you let your friends know your mom and dad do special things for you, but then you're annoyed when your parents correct you? Do you enjoy a nice home and yard, but complain when you're asked to help dust the furniture, mow the lawn, or shovel the sidewalk? Thank God for the ability to work, and don't complain.

“Bees are really very interesting,” Grandpa said as Juan helped him gather honey one morning. “There’s only one queen bee but many worker bees and drones, and they need each other to make a hive run smoothly. They all have a special job to do. The workers gather honey, build and guard the hive, and feed the baby bees. And the . . .”

“Look, Grandpa!” Juan shouted, pointing at a bee that was swaying back and forth. “Is that bee okay? Or is it sick or something?”

“No, it’s doing a honey dance,” Grandpa said. “It’s also called a waggle dance.”

“The bee is dancing?” Juan asked in surprise. Then he laughed. “Oh, Grandpa,” he said, “quit teasing. I’m serious. What’s wrong with it?”

“I’m serious, too,” answered Grandpa. “A bee will often do that when she has found a good source of nectar. She comes back to the hive with pollen and nectar and then uses that method to call the others to help her. Watch! Soon other bees will follow her.” Juan watched in fascination, and Grandpa spoke again. “Watching the bees reminds me of the lesson I’m preparing to teach in my Sunday school class this week,” he said.

“Really? What is it about?” Juan asked.

“It’s about how God has work for each Christian to do,” Grandpa replied. “Some have what we might call big tasks—like preaching, singing, or playing instruments. Their jobs are the ones that are noticed. Others have tasks that are hidden—like cleaning up or printing the bulletins. Their jobs are like work done inside the hive.”

“I guess those jobs aren’t as important,” observed Juan.

“Oh, yes, they are!” exclaimed Grandpa. “Each one’s work is equally important. Take someone whose job is easily seen—a pastor, for example. Imagine what it would be like if he had to preach in a dirty, messy church that nobody ever cleaned.” Juan made a face at that idea. “God uses many of us to take care of the ordinary chores of everyday living, but each one has a job that is needed. Sometimes we forget that.”

“So we should all keep busy as a bee and do our share,” said Juan with a grin. “Okay. I’ll try to remember.”



**Your tasks are important**

### Key Verse

Those members of the body  
which seem to be weaker  
are necessary.

1 Corinthians 12:22

**Do you realize that all tasks, big and small, need to be done by someone?** Even the ordinary, everyday jobs are important. Doing your chores, practicing music lessons, and doing schoolwork are just a few of the things God has given you to do at this time of your life. Be faithful in performing them even if you don’t entirely understand their value right now. At each stage of life, faithfully do the work God gives to you, and never consider anyone’s work unimportant.

# Prayer Power

All over the world, kids just like you are asking us to pray for them.  
Here are a few of those prayer requests!

Please pray for  
my grandpa to be saved.

—Angel

I'm asking prayer for my grandma.  
She is not a Christian. —Hannah

Pray for my daddy to come to  
church more often with us and for him  
to stop drinking.

—Morgan

Please pray that my mom would  
safely have here twin babies. I'm the  
oldest of five kids already. Also, pray for  
my dad. He works at home, but he's so  
very busy. —Rachael

I would like you to pray for  
my great grandma. She is in  
a nursing home. Pray also for  
my unsaved family members and  
for a good school year for me.

—Jordan

My grandmother  
needs prayer. She had  
colon cancer and is now going  
through chemo. —Cole

My grandpa had surgery and can't walk.  
Pray that he will be able to walk again.

—Rachel

I'm requesting prayer  
because I have a weight  
problem. Some of the boys  
at school call me names  
because of that. —Soleil

I have a person  
holding a grudge on me.  
I opened her birthday gift  
by mistake because I was so  
excited. Please pray about this.

—Nate

My grandma broke her leg and had  
surgery. Pray she'll get better  
soon. —Madison

Pray for my aunt,  
uncle, and cousins to  
stop smoking.

—Izzy

I'm writing to ask you to be  
praying for my dad. He has God  
in his heart now, so he knows  
how to love us.

—Abby

Please pray that my brother and I will  
stop fighting so much. We used to fight almost every  
day. Also, I have a friend at school that is not  
saved, and another friend's parents smoke. Pray  
for them, too, please.

—Olivia

I'm asking prayer for our  
family because my dad is in  
jail and going to prison for a long  
time. That leaves my mom alone  
with 7 kids to raise and no job.

—Kaitlyn

**Send us your prayer request! Use the form on the opposite page.**



We want to hear from



you!

Encouragements!

Testimonies!

Prayer Requests!

Send mail to: CBH Ministries, Box 1001, Grand Rapids, MI 49501-1001

We can't wait to hear from YOU!



# On the Road Again?

Please keep us updated if you've moved so you will be sure to receive your *Keys for Kids!*

## My OLD Address was:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ID#: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

## My NEW Address is:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ID#: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Starting Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Order Keys for Kids Here!

Fill out and mail this form or call **1-888-224-2324** (or 1-616-647-4500)

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Head of Household: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

For quantity orders and requests for addresses outside the US and Canada, please see page 2.

### Mail your forms to:

CBH Ministries, Box 1001, Grand Rapids, MI 49501-1001

*Help with printing & postage is appreciated*