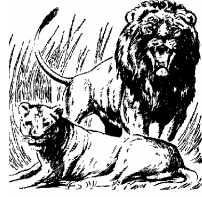


**CHAPTER SEVEN***THE KINGDOM OF THURRHEMA*

The stories in this chapter are about an imaginary kingdom where animals talk. Though there is more symbolism than in chapter six and it is harder for children to understand the meaning and application, this format deals with some subjects better (for example, God as a benevolent king). Children are also fascinated with these stories. Under some of the lesson titles there is a holiday or other kind of special day listed. Each story with such a sub-title can be read on that day of the year so that special days of the year can be used more effectively as training tools. There is an index at the end of the book which will help you locate lessons for special days of the year.

## "BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US"



Sunday dashed from her front door and ran as fast as she could go down the lane in front of her house. If someone would have been sitting on her front porch in the land of Thurrhema, they would have thought that a big juicy mouse or perhaps a bird was in sight, one big enough for supper. Yet this was not the case. What she did see was her husband, Bendigo, slowly hobbling toward her with crutch under arm and back paw bandaged.

"Oh, Bendigo, Bendigo," the Gray cat meowed. "You're home!" The black male cat only placed his arm around his wife and purred, acting as if all the strength he had he was using to make it to their house. He finally said, "Sunday, I'm so glad to see you and to be home." "I'm so glad to have you home," was her reply. "What happened to you?" "Well," he began, "it's a long story...."

And here is where we had better break off with our story and let you know why this large brave feline is coming home hurt, having to lean on his wife.

It all started about six months ago when this young couple decided to move into the kingdom of Thurrhema because an evil pack of wild dogs had been raiding some of the isolated country houses. A lot of crops had been stolen, houses burned, and some of the cats had been hurt badly. When the dogs hit just down the road from them, they knew it was time to do something. So, they packed up their things, sold their place and moved to this land of which they had heard so much from travelers.

Thurrhema was ruled by a very merciful, yet powerful, lion king by the name of Melek. Melek was the kind of lion whom, if you knew him as friend, you enjoyed his presence. Yet, if you were his enemy, you were in grave danger. There was no animal in Thurrhema who did not dearly love their leader. Sunday and Bendigo moved into their new home and all went well for a couple of months. But then one day the dogs struck a farm on the outskirts of the kingdom. Then they burned down the stable of the blacksmith

Peter. And they broke into the market and stole all sorts of food. And they were terrorizing travelers along the roadways.

Things got so bad that Melek finally called a meeting of all his citizens. He told them that because he loved them and because they were his people, he wanted to take care of them and protect them. He had done this before by himself. Most of the animals there, in fact, had come into the kingdom because of the protection or the kindness that Melek had shown them. Many of them had their lives saved at one time or another by the brave lion. Yet, as the king went on to tell them, he now desired their help. He wanted to form an army to go out and fight against the wild packs and protect their land. Many of the male animals volunteered. And thus began the adventure which had led to Bendigo's injuries. This brings us back to our newly brought-back-together couple.

Bendigo told his wife, "Well, we were in a pretty bad battle with the dogs over in the valley of Eminence. Things were rather bleak. Then all of a sudden, Melek appeared up on top of a knoll with a great roar. It inspired us so much because we knew the king's son, Christoff, had been killed as he saved the lives of many of our army. We all fought with greater fervor. We began to gain the victory, but before it was over one of the dogs bit my back leg and then I was able to take my sword to him."

"Oh, honey, you're such a hero!" "Not really. I was glad to do whatever I had to, not only to protect our home and our land, but also because of King Melek. He has done so much for us and loved us so. He even was willing to sacrifice his son for us. How could I do anything less than love him and give him my best. I want to serve him the rest of my life!" "Well, enough of war and battles," the wife responded, "let's get into the house. I will prepare a nice welcome-home-supper for you. You can relax while I do that."

The two went into their house and closed the door.

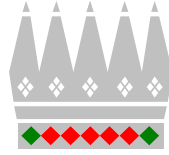
**Note To Parents:** Explain to your children that this story helps us learn that God has done a lot for us in sending his son to die for us and has taken care of us. Because he has done so much and has loved us, we should love him and serve him. A Bible passage which helps us is Romans 5:8: "but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Another one is Psalm 145:1-8: "I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless you... Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.... On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.... The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to

anger and abounding in steadfast love.”

**Prayer:** God, help us to love you, to serve you, to obey you in all we do. We want to do this because you have loved us so much and done so much for us. Help us show how great you are in all our thoughts and actions.

**Activity:** As a family, think of a ministry that you can do together because you love God. Some ideas might be: 1) Write some missionaries regularly; 2) Support a missionary or a child through an organization like *Food For The Hungry*; 3) Visit a nursing home every month; 4) Adopt an elderly person in your community, visit them regularly and make some cookies for them. 5) Befriend an unbelieving neighbor and tell them about the good news of Jesus Christ. \*You might even think of some other things.

## "THE GOOD KING"



It was a very sunny warm summer afternoon. Rachel, the niece of the cats Bendigo and Sunday, sat in the back of her uncle and aunt's wagon and looked out over the grassy meadows as they made their way along the bumpy road behind their Shetland pony, Hank. The usually playful cat was pretty quiet as she felt the warmth of the September sun and heard the birds singing in the trees. Her uncle and aunt noticed that she was quieter and calmer than normal. They were somewhat surprised after what they all had just seen in town. The whole village and much of the surrounding farm animals had turned out for the trial and sentencing of a criminal. They figured she would be full of a hundred questions. They didn't realize that the wheels were turning between those fuzzy pointed ears.

"Uncle Bendigo," she finally broke the silence, "I thought you said that King Melek was a good, kind, king." "He is, Rach (which was what he often called his favorite niece). Why do you ask?" "Well, I was just wondering how he could have been so cruel to that beaver this afternoon...what was his name?"

"Randal," responded the older cat as he spurred Hank on with the reins. "Yeah, how could the king be good if he's making Randal spend the next five years in prison?"

"Well, Rach, Randal has done some things the last few months that were very bad. First of all, he has been stealing firewood from some of the dogs down near Edgewood. Many of those dogs have young pups to care for and keep warm through the long cold winter. If their firewood is stolen, it might cause them to run out before the spring gets here and that could be dangerous! He's also stolen some corn out of nearby fields. And that's not to mention all the dams he's built which have flooded out some of his neighbors--and all because he was mad at them! No, honey, King Melek cannot let behavior like that go unpunished. What would you feel like if someone came to your mom and dad's place and stole your firewood so you would be cold this winter or took some of your milk so that your saucers would be empty for breakfast the next morning? "Why (Rachel begins to get a little angry)...why, I wouldn't like that at all!" Uncle Bendigo

continued, "You see, if Randal is not punished, then he might go on hurting others and that wouldn't be fair to them. And it might even encourage every sort of ruffian and criminal to take whatever they wanted. What kind of kingdom would Thurrhema end up being then?" "I guess it would be a pretty bad place to live," The young cat answered.

"You see, Rach, if King Melek did not punish wrong, then actually he would be a pretty cruel and bad king because the whole kingdom would be a bad place to live. We can be thankful that, because Melek is a loving and good king, he sets forth rules for us and does not let animals break those without being punished." "I guess you're right, Uncle Bendigo."

"We're almost home, Rachel," Sunday began. "Would you like to make some cookies before supper?" "That would be great Aunt Sunday!" As she said this she bounded out of the wagon and started for the house which was now in sight. "I'll beat Hank back to the house and start getting everything out." "Now that's our little Rachel," Sunday laughed. "Indeed it is, indeed it is," smiled Bendigo. "Come on Hank, gitty up, boy!"

**Note To Parents:** This story helps children learn that it is because God is a good and holy God that he teaches us how to live and how not to live and often disciplines us. This is also the reason why those who do not receive Jesus will not be in heaven. Talk to your children about this and read the following passages: Hebrews 12:5-6: "And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? 'My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. [6] For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.'" And, Matthew 25:41: "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'"

**Prayer:** God, thank you for teaching us how we should live and for not allowing people to get away with whatever they want to do. By this we know that you love the world, you want to take care of us, and you want what is best for us. Help us to know you as savior so that we can obey you.

**Activity:** Make some cookies together with your children. Set aside some dough (enough to make one cookie for each child) out of the whole batch and leave one or two ingredients out of those cookies (example: leave out sugar and chocolate chips). When the cookies are done, have each child eat one of the

cookies missing the ingredients and one that has everything in it. Ask them which they like the best.

Explain that the recipe helps make better cookies. This is like God's teachings in the Bible. If we follow them, it will be better for us in the long run. If not, then it only brings trouble.

## "COMING FOR THE SICK"

(Christmas)



It was pretty safe to say that Dr. Barry Piler was *as busy as a beaver*, for Dr. Piler was a beaver. Though he was a little chubby, this did not slow down the physician as he scurried around the small building used for a hospital in Thurrhema. The building which usually held no more than 4-5 patients at a time was filled with around 30 now. The busy beaver, who had given up dam building a few years ago to devote himself to helping animals-in-need, went from bed to bed. He was trying to help all the dogs, cats, lions, tigers, beavers, squirrels, and other animals who lay dying and in great pain. Over fifty had died in the last 1 1/2 weeks and it seemed that there was little hope of losing any less the next 1 1/2 weeks--that is until three days ago.

What happened then was not only the first sign of hope for the weary doctor and his exhausted nurses, but it was so shocking that people in Thurrhema were certain never to forget it the rest of their furry little lives.

You see, the story began two weeks earlier when a young dog by the name of Lance came into the hospital with a terrible fever and he was swollen under his front and hind legs. He also couldn't keep any food down. His parents had to carry him in to see Dr. Piler. Three days later he died. By then there were ten more patients in the hospital with the same problems and it just kept getting worse and worse. All of those working in the hospital by the end of the first week knew that a terrible plague (a sickness) had erupted in the kingdom. Even some of the nurses in the hospital had gotten sick and died and the doctor was tired and felt like he was losing the battle. Adults and little ones alike all over town could be heard

crying uncontrollably through windows because parents, sons, daughters, aunts, uncles, grand-parents, and friends had been lost. One little kitten by the name of Timmy had lost his whole family.

Dr. Piler knew that somehow someone needed to get to the land of Stauros to get the only medicine which would cure the terrible disease. But who could go? To get there someone very strong, very quick and very brave would have to travel through the valley of Thanatos, with its vicious and mean Grizzly bears, to get the medicine and bring it to the hospital. No one had ever made it through alive.

Just when Dr. Piler had all but given up, into the hospital walked King Melek, the brave, strong, and kind Lord of Thurrhema. When the lion walked into the building with his majestic mane and long tail animals gasped. "What's he doing?" Peter the blacksmith asked. "I don't know," chimed in Gene the owner of the dry goods store next door. "I've never known a king to risk his life by going into such a place." "What if he gets sick and dies?" Peter shot back.

"Dr., what can I do to help?" asked Melek in his strong voice. "Your Highness, there is nothing. Please leave before you get sick and die. Our kingdom could not bear that," said the tired beaver as he pointed toward the door. "But I love all these who are suffering. I want to do something. I have heard that there is some medicine in Stauros which can cure the plague. I will get it for you." "But your Majesty, there is not time. Stauros is two weeks journey. By then it would be too late." "But it is not if I were to go through Thanatos. I could be back in 3 days." "But King Melek, you can't go through there. The bears have never let travelers pass without tearing them to shreds." "But Doctor Piler, you forget my speed and strength. I believe I can make it. In fact, I shall be off at once. I will see you in 3 days."

For the next three days everyone in Thurrhema was very sad. Not only was a plague threatening to wipe them all out, but now they may have lost their king. So, you can imagine the excitement when they saw Melek running very quickly into town just this morning, muscles bulging in his legs and chest and mane blowing in the wind--oh yes and the medicine strapped to his back. He had made it!

So, there was now hope as Dr. Piler, the few nurses who were left, and King Melek went from bed to bed administering the remedy and comforting the sick. The rumor down at the town cafe was that Melek would stay there throughout the night to relieve the doc and to make sure that all were getting better. It was also rumored that generations to come would remember the time when the great lion risked his life by

coming to the sick, getting their medicine, and helping to care for them. No one had ever heard of such love in a king!

**Note To Parents:** Explain to your children that this story helps us understand what Jesus did when he was born in Bethlehem the first Christmas morning. Because people were sick with sin and needed help, he came (even though it would mean going through some hard things--such as becoming a man, being poor, being made fun of by people, dying on the cross and being in the grave for three days). Read Mark 2:17: "When Jesus heard this, he told them, 'Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call sinners, not those who think they are already good enough.'" (NLT) He was willing to come where people needed help. Read: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15) You might ask the following questions:

1. What did Jesus do that helped make us better (or save us from our sins)?
2. Why did Jesus come and face scary things to help us?

**Prayer:** Dear Jesus, thank you for being born. I know that it was because you loved me and to save me from my sins. I also know that you had to give up a lot and face a lot of scary things. I love you so much because you have done this for me!

**Activity:** Make a Life-of-Jesus Frieze (sounds like "freeze"). A frieze is a series of pictures that tell a continuous story. Take several pieces of paper for each child. On each piece of paper have them draw a different picture of the life of Jesus from the time he left heaven to the time he went back. The following pictures may be included: 1. Jesus as a king (2 Cor.8:9). 2. Jesus as a baby (Luke 2:7). 3. Jesus working as a carpenter with Joseph (Mark 6:3). 4. Jesus teaching his disciples (Matthew 5:1-2). 5. Jesus healing someone who is sick (Matthew 8:1-4). (You can include any other events from Jesus life such as calming the storm or feeding the 5,000) 6. Jesus on the cross (John 19:17-37). 7. Jesus going back to heaven (Acts 1:9). 8. Jesus as king again in heaven (Philippians 2:9; Hebrews 1:3-4). Tape the pictures together in order. This may take a couple of nights to complete. If you want to complete it in one night, then just do pictures #'s 1, 2, 4, 6, & 8.

## "I DON'T WANT TO"



**ATTENTION, ATTENTION!** read the poster outside the general store in Thurrhema. It went on: **For the betterment of our great kingdom and in order to take care of the needs of the poor among us, as well as the repair of roads and supply of the army of Thurrhema, our great Melek, the ancient and wise Lion, has henceforth declared that all citizens of Thurrhema will pay a small tax upon the monies they do make. This tax will begin the first of this January.**

The decision to begin charging people a tax (a small payment to the government) was a hard one for the kind-hearted king Melek. He had not wanted to put a burden upon those in Thurrhema, yet he knew that there were some things which needed to be done that they just couldn't afford. The poor needed help, roads needed fixed, supplies were needed for the army so that they could continue to protect all the animals in Thurrhema. Most of the citizens of the kingdom who knew about the tax and who knew Melek realized that he had acted in wisdom and for their own good. Yet, there were a few who did not agree and did not want to pay any tax.

Such was the blacksmith, Peter. Peter was a very strong bulldog who was also a hard worker. Whenever a horse needed to be shod or a wagon wheel needed fixing, all knew that Peter would do a fine job. The blacksmith's problem, though, was that he had a bad temper. On the morning that the poster was put up Peter was stomping up and down main street, growling and complaining to all who would listen (and even to some who didn't want to listen).

"What's wrong, Peter?" questioned Gene (the mild-mannered collie) as he opened up his general store. "Rrrrrrr," growled Peter. "I'm not going to pay the king this money. He doesn't need to charge us taxes!"

"But Peter," Gene came back, "The king and his other leaders have spent a lot of time talking this over and looking at how to raise money to help the poor and fix roads and buy supplies for the army to defend us. They've decided this is best for all of us." "Well, it's not best for me!" the bulldog yelled. "I work hard for my money and I'm not going to give it to other people! I won't have enough for myself!" Gene, while standing up on his hind legs, crossed his hairy front legs and paws, looked up in the air, rolled his eyes, and asked, "Peter, who began this kingdom?" "King Melek," the smaller canine answered with a puzzled look. "But what does that have to do with anything, Gene?" "Peter, just hold off with your questions, cool down your hot head and listen to me for a few minutes." The blacksmith didn't say anything, but settled back and listened to the store owner.

"You know," the collie began again, "that Melek has been here longer than anyone. He's the one who not only began this kingdom, but the one who brought us here and the one who has set up its laws for our own good. He's the one who taught us how to live. This is his kingdom and he has proven himself to be wise and to lead us in a way that is best for all. Not everyone was excited when he started an army, but we wouldn't be here today if he hadn't. Many people were frustrated when he challenged all of us to learn how to use our weapons to defend our families and to build protective fence around our city and the country homes. Yet these have saved many lives. He often does not have us do what is easiest or what each of us thinks is best for ourselves. But his decisions and commands always end up being for our own good. So, Peter, don't you think that these taxes are for our own good?" "I don't know," replied the blacksmith.

"Come on, Peter, you're being stubborn. I've been concerned about you for sometime now. All you have done lately is complain and say that you don't want to do anything the king or his leaders ask of us. I think that is dangerous when King Melek is the one who knows best how we should live in Thurrhema. Don't you?" "I don't know," responded Peter. "Just go home and think about it," Gene advised. "Just think about it."

**Note To Parents:** Ask your children: What might happen to the animals of Thurrhema if they do not pay taxes? Do you think the taxes are for their own good? Then discuss with them: God is the one who has made our world and us. He is the one, like Melek in the story, who knows best how we should live. This is why he has given us his commandments and teachings in the Bible. Can you think of some things God

wants us to do (or not do) which are for our own good? Are these sometimes hard? \*Remind children that we need to remember it is always best for us to listen to and obey our wise and loving God. Read Proverbs 3:5-6: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. [6] In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”

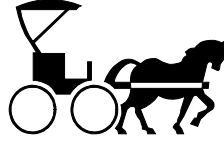
\*These verses just read speak to us about the need to listen to God and trust in him. The next verse reminds us that if we try to do things on our own or in our own way, it can hurt us. Proverbs 14:12: “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.”

\*Make sure that children understand that ultimately we want to obey God because we love him and enjoy him and want to please him. However, it is significant that obeying God is also the best way for us to live.

**Prayer:** God, help us to always listen to you, even when your teachings are difficult. Help us to remember that your teachings always tell us about the best way to live.

**Activity:** Play *Simon Says* with your children. Then when you are finished, remind them that this is how we need to listen to God. If *God says* (if he teaches us something), we need to listen and do it.

## "BRIDGE OUT!"



The whole kingdom of Thurrhema couldn't believe the news. Wendel, the German Shepherd dog and his wife Mary had plunged into the James river ravine in their buggy and died! This couple had just seen their last pup leave home and they were looking forward to running their cafe in town and also doing some of the things that they had always wanted to do together, but never had the time. One of those things was travel. So, one day they got their horse and buggy out, left the cafe in the hands of some of their trustworthy help, and took off through the country side.

It was a beautiful spring day. The birds were singing, the sky was a wonderful blue with hardly a cloud in it, and the smells of spring were in the air. Both Wendel and Mary lifted their noses in the air and smelled the scents which they had missed so during the long winter months. They thought to themselves, "What a day to be out and taking a ride!"

They had decided to go west out of town and go through the winding roads which led to the James River ravine. Once across it there were some of the most beautiful rolling hills in the land. They had always enjoyed seeing these hills--especially this time of year as trees were turning green and flowers were putting on their summer clothes.

What the couple didn't realize, though was that the king, Melek, had commissioned a herd of elephants and a construction crew of beavers to work together to replace the bridge going over the river. The bridge had seen a lot of use over the years and the king was concerned for the safety of those traveling the road. So, with the last of the cold winter days in the past, they had torn down the bridge and put signs up all along the road saying, **Caution! Bridge Out!** or **Stop! Go no farther!** But Wendel and his wife Mary didn't pay any attention to the signs. They just kept right on with their ride. What's more, the Thurrhema newspaper had carried a story telling about the bridge and its repair and cautioning people not to go down that road. But, poor Wendel and Mary rarely read the paper. They felt they were just too busy.

So, on they traveled, through the winding roads. It may have not ended in disaster for the couple if the road leading to the ravine was straight and flat or if the road descended down a hill overlooking the bridge. But that was not the case. The road led up to the bridge and wound through some trees until you traveled up over a hill and then you were right at the bridge. By the time they came up over the hill (and they always like to have the horse gallop at this point) it was too late to stop. Poor Wendel and Mary. If only they would have read and obeyed!

**Note To Parents:** Read Psalm 119:9: “How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. And, Psalm 119:11: “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.” Finally, Joshua 1:8: “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”

Explain to your children that God wants us to read his Bible each day, learn what it says, and obey it. If we don't, we are like Wendel and Mary in the story: We will eventually get hurt.

**Prayer:** God, thank you that you've given us your teachings in the Bible. Thank you that you've warned not to do things that will hurt us and you have taught us the things which will make us happy. Help us to learn what the Bible teaches and obey it.

**Activity:** Take a piece of paper (use typing paper, computer paper or notebook paper) and draw a straight race track on it. Have as many lanes as you have children. In each lane draw equally-sized squares. Then make a starting line at one end and a finish line at the other. Use a penny or even very small toy people for the game pieces. Each child gets a penny or person. Put them on the start. Then ask questions from the verses they have been working on to memorize. Each correct answer allows a child to move a square. The object is to see who can get to the finish line first. For younger children (or even those struggling with memorization) you might want to help them along with the verses some. Keep in mind that the object is not to discourage a child, but to help them work on memorization and hiding God's Word in their hearts in a fun way. If you have only one child, let them play against you.

## "YOU SHOULD MEET TOGETHER"



Melek, the Lion King of Thurrhema, had a problem. He had sensed for some time that the animals in his kingdom needed a boost. Most of them had to work very hard to put food on the table for their families. Each day was a struggle just to survive the many wild animals who tried to invade their homes and gardens. As he sat around the table in his palace along with his governors from all the districts of the kingdom, the mood was gloomy. Melek looked into the faces of the many lions, dogs, beavers, and other animals with whom he had labored for so long.

"My friends," he began with his deep voice. "Many of us have been concerned for some time that the citizens of Thurrhema have been under a heavy load. We need to help them. How can we do it?" "Your majesty," Frank the lion began. "I think that it would be helpful if we got the people of the kingdom together sometimes." "I agree," chimed in Ian (the Irish Setter). "Many of our subjects could be encouraged by getting together and lifting each other up from their hardships." "Not only that Sire, but I sense as I travel around," offered Scott (another lion who sat at the large oak table), "that the people need to be uplifted by the presence of their king." "What are you saying, Scott?" the king asked. "I think you need to be at the meetings. You know it always lifts up the citizenry to be with you." "That's so true," Frank added. "Not only that, but I have noticed that many need some guidance and teaching in how to raise their little ones and how to get along with their neighbors. It would be good if we had some teaching for them also."

"I think that you have all hit on something here!" King Melek said excitedly. "We will have our heralds blow their trumpets every first day of the week to assemble the people in our kingdom meeting rooms." He paused and thought to himself with his paw on his chin. Then he began once more--excited again. "We will give opportunity to encourage one another, to teach the citizens better skills for getting along in the

kingdom and we will rejoice together over all the wonderful things which have happened in our kingdom of which many know nothing." "There is one other thing," the often-quiet Phil the beaver said. "What is it Phil?" the king questioned. "The inhabitants of the kingdom need to be reminded occasionally of how your son, Christoff, died to save the kingdom. This is something that never fails to bring out the best in them and help." All around the table agreed. "All in favor of having weekly assemblies to encourage and help our great land, let it be known with the Thurrhema roar," the king instructed. "Roarrrrrrrrr!" came the hearty response of all.

Upon the first day of the next week the king's heralds went throughout the land blowing their trumpets and calling the people to come together. At first it seemed strange and new to all the animals. Many of them had never sat down and had a meal together before those meetings started. Now they did it almost every week. They sang together, they learned, they rejoiced in the story of the king's son Christoff and how he saved Thurrhema, and they were encouraged by one another. And one cannot forget that they have been greatly uplifted by being in the presence of the king. When the king's first order went through the land that the people would be meeting every week, part of what it said was this, "You should meet together and encourage one another." Now, months later, the animals would not even think about not coming. They have been so helped by these times!

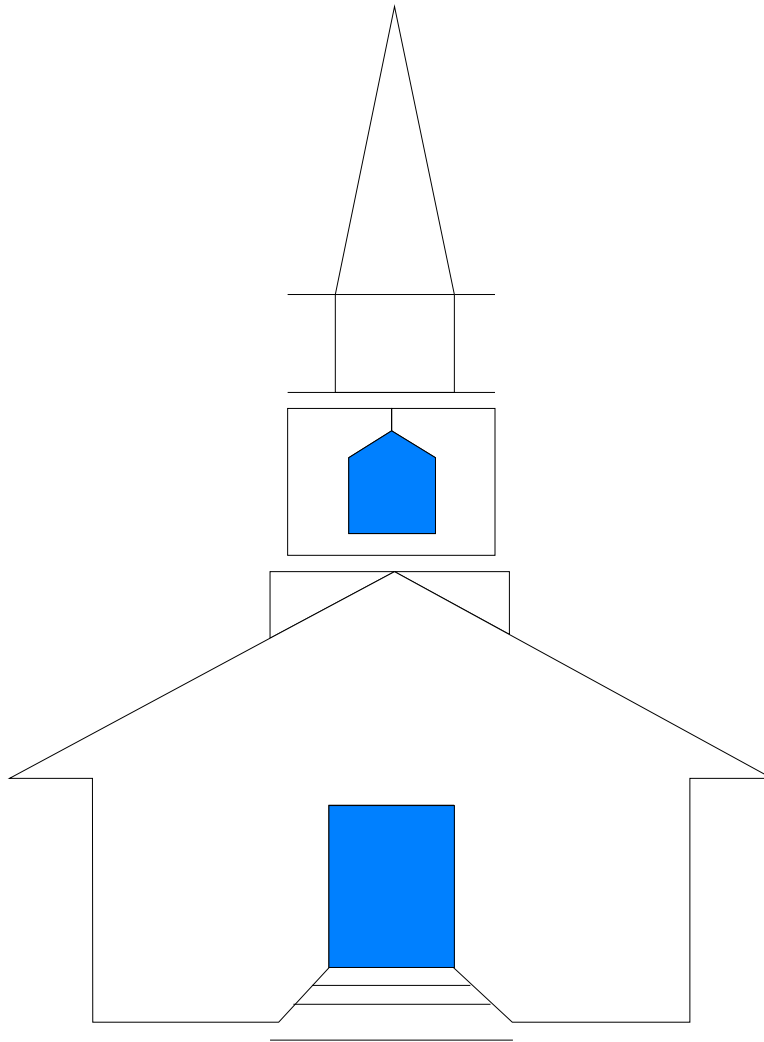
**Note To Parents:** Read Hebrews 10:24-25: "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, [25] not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

Explain to your children that this story helps show us know how coming together in church can help us and be an enjoyable time. It also shows us that God has made us part of the church because he loves us. When we come to church it should also be out of our love for God and that we enjoy praising him (Ps.26:8; 84:10; 122:1).

**Prayer:** God, thank you for our church. We thank you that we can learn from the Bible, encourage each other, and praise you for all the great things you do for us. Help us never stop coming to church and help us to love you and each other because we meet together.

**Activity:** Have your children see how many things they can write down in this church that they are

thankful for when they come together to worship and to learn in Sunday school. You can help younger ones with the writing, if they need it. They can color the church after they are done. \*Make sure they think of things that help them worship, grow, learn, and serve God.



## "LOVING A PUP"

FATHER'S DAY



Butch was a rambunctious little bulldog pup. He and his friends, Ronnie and Gus (Gus was also his cousin), loved to run through the woods behind Butch's house chasing birds, barking, and sniffing around every inch. Esther, Butch's mom, had told him that he was to come right home from school, because she, Butch and Bill (Butch's dad) needed to go into town and have uncle Peter fix a wheel for them at his blacksmith shop. But when school let out, Butch, Ronnie, and Gus took off through the fields and pastures like they hadn't been outside for years. These pups didn't like being cooped up in a schoolhouse learning about numbers, reading, and writing. They thought it all was a waste of time when there were birds to chase and trees and streams where they could play.

"Come on, guys," shouted Gus as they came bounding out the front door of the school. "Last one to the Walker woods is a cat!" "Or worse yet, Ronnie piped up, "a poodle!" "Bluuuuuh, ruff, ruff, ruff, ruff." They all three said. For nearly two hours the pups jumped, ran, rolled, and had the time of their lives. All of a sudden, Butch remembered that he was supposed to go home right after school. "Hey, Gus and Ronnie!" Butch exclaimed. "I was supposed to go home right after school. When class was over I didn't think it would hurt just to come out here for a little while. It's been two hours. I'm gonna to be in big trouble when I get home!" "Woe," replied Gus. Uncle Bill and Aunt Esther sure are gonna be mad. You are gonna be in big trouble!" "Oh man, I know," came Butch's response as he started running toward home. "See you guys later."

At Butch's house his mom was both worried and a little bit upset. She hoped that nothing was wrong with Butch. The possibility that something could have happened to him is what had her worried. Yet, if he was just out playing and forgot to come home like he was supposed to do, she was upset. She had wanted

to go into town with Bill so she could do some needed shopping for the house. This was her only chance of the week to do it and now she had to stay home in case Butch came. Bill had gone without her since the wheel had to get fixed that day.

Two hours after he was supposed to get home, in came the panting pup with his tongue hanging out. "Hi... huh, huh, huh, huh...mom...huh, huh, huh...I'm sorry I'm late...huh, huh, huh, huh...I was out playing with Ronnie and Gus." "Butch, what did I tell you this morning before you went to school?" "To, huh, huh...come right home after school let out." "And you didn't do that, did you son?" "No." He was getting his breath now, but he was feeling badly because he felt like he knew what was coming. "I really needed to go to town today to get some things at the store. And now I couldn't go because I had to wait for you. You were not very considerate toward me, were you?" Butch's short tail was drooping and so was his head. He just managed to look up a little and get out a soft, "No."

Just then his dad came in and Esther filled him in on where Butch had been. "Son, you were not only very inconsiderate of us, but you disobeyed us. We can't have you doing that. If you don't listen, you might get out and get hurt someday. And if you just go out and do whatever you please, you'll cause all sorts of problems someday. No, you need to listen and hear what we tell you and teach you. I'm going to have to discipline you for the rest of the month. No more playing with Gus and Ronnie. You'll have to come home right after school everyday." "But, dad...", Butch started to say in protest. "Don't but, Dad me, Butch. You knew what you had to do after school and you chose not to obey. You're the one who brought this on yourself."

"Can I ask you one thing, though?" The sad little bulldog asked. "Sure, Butch." "How can you play with me outside one day and do fun things with me and tell me you love me and then tell me the next day that I'm disciplined for the rest of the month?" "Butch, I do both because I love you. It's because your mom and I love you that she cooks for you and cleans and holds you when you're sick. It's because I love you that we go fishing together and play outside and wrestle on the floor. But it's also because we love you that we have you do chores, clean your room, do your homework, and discipline you when you haven't obeyed. You see, son we love you so much that we not only want you to have fun, we also want you to learn and grow up to be the best bulldog you can be as you serve king Melek in Thurrhema. If we didn't

love you then we wouldn't care enough to discipline, because we don't like doing it. It would be easier for now, if we didn't, because we know it's not pleasant for you. But we know we need to do it. Do you see, son?"

**Note To Parents:** Ask your children: do you see what Bill is telling his pup? The Bible says that parents are to love their children (Matthew 22:39--"Love your neighbor as yourself"--which would include children and Colossians 3:21: "Fathers, don't aggravate your children. If you do, they will become discouraged and quit trying." NLT). What are some of the ways that parents love their children? Answers:

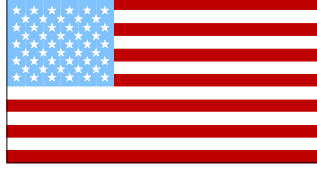
1. Take care of them. 1 Timothy 5:8.
2. Teach them about God. Deuteronomy 6:7-9; Ephesians 6:4.
3. Discipline when they are disobedient. Proverbs 13:24; 19:18.

**Prayer:** God, thank you for my parents and for their love and discipline. Help me to obey them. Help me also to be a good parent when I grow up and to teach my children about you.

**Activity:** Parents sit down with your children and tell them that you love them. Ask them to name some things that you do for them that show you love them. Then, you can mention some things you might do which show your love that they may have missed.

## "GOVERNMENT RULERS"

PRESIDENT'S DAY (In the USA)



"Hey George," Bendigo yelled. "Could you bring some more nails from the wagon? I'm about out and I need one more in this post." "Yeah, sure thing. Is there anything else you need?" asked the short dachshund dog who had been the neighbor to Bendigo and Sunday for several years now. "No, I can't think of anything," the large black cat responded. "Unless, it would be a short nap, some nice cool water, and a tuna sandwich." "I don't know about the tuna sandwich, Bendigo, but I could go for a rest and some water. Why don't we rest after we get this post done?" "Sounds good to me," the cat meowed.

After they got the wire nailed to that post they both went over by the shade of their wagon and sat down to rest. "Hey, what's all the uproar been about over in your region?" Bendigo asked of George as they drank some water. Though they were neighbors, each lived on the outer edge of his own region in Thurrhema. "Ah, it's that crazy governor, Leslie," the dachshund growled. He wants every adult male to serve five hours a week helping to keep the governor's palace and parks clean. I think it's just another one of his crazy and selfish ideas. That lion wants us to be his servants and doesn't really care about what we want. And I'm not going to do it!" On the last word George was so upset that he stood up on his short legs and half said it and half barked it.

"But George," said Bendigo in his calming voice. "Haven't you been going to the area meetings each week and learning what King Melek wants us to do with our leaders?" "What do ya' mean?" asked the dog. "Well, I mean, he has taught us that he is the one who has decided that we would have governors and other leaders because that is the best way Thurrhema can be run. And he has said that we should respect them and obey them." "I know that, Bendigo!" came George's sharp reply. "But why would King Melek let such a bad governor like Leslie remain a leader? You know enough about him to know what he's like.

Your governor, Eric, is not much better. You surely don't want to do some of the crazy things he asks of your region, do you?" "No, I really don't," answered Bendigo, as he stretched his front paws. "But, I also remember what King Melek has taught us about our leaders and I want to do what he asks of us. I need to remember that though I may not like everything Eric does, he is the leader that Melek has set over us. So, to respect him is also to respect Melek. You need to remember the same thing, George."

"Ah, I suppose you're right, Bendigo. But it's not going to be easy!" "King Melek never has taught us it would be easy. But he has promised that anytime we need help he will be there for us." "Well, I suppose we should get back to this fence, Bendigo. Martha's gonna be wanting me home for supper in about an hour or so." "Meeoooww," came Bendigo's reply as he stretched and yawned. "I wish we could rest just a little longer," he said as he slowly made his way to the fence. "You cats never cease to amaze me. You could probably sleep all day." "Well," Bendigo smiled back at his friend and neighbor. "It's just a talent we have--just a talent."

**Note To Parents:** Explain to your children: This story teaches us that God wants us to respect and obey the leaders of government whom he has placed over us. This means not only the good ones, but also those who are hard to obey and respect. This is good to talk about on President's Day. When Paul wrote the letter to the Romans, the Roman government was not always the easiest to obey. But, Paul still taught them and us this (Read Romans 13:1-4): "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. [2] Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. [3] For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, [4] for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer."

Paul also writes in 1 Timothy 2:1-2: "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, [2] for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way."

Ask your children: How can we respect our President (or Prime Minister) and other leaders? Answer:

Pray for them, don't say nasty things about them, and obey the laws they give us.

Ask them: Who are some other leaders we should respect? Help them name some of the leaders within your local and national government.

**Prayer:** Help the leaders of our country in the very hard job they have to do. Show them the importance of listening to what you have to say. Help them make decisions according to what you have taught, and may they lead us in a wise, loving, and just way.

**Activity:** Make a list of some leaders in our country. Begin praying for them as a family and also help your children write a letter to each one to tell them that they have learned they need to respect them and they are praying for them. You can get the addresses at the library or on the internet.

## "WORK THE BEST YOU CAN"

LABOR DAY (In the USA, September)



"Sunday, honey, have you seen Rachel?" "No I haven't, dear. I know that she was here about five minutes ago when we were working down by the creek." "I can't figure out where she could be," said Sunday's worried husband, Bendigo, with a frown on his face. "Maybe I'll go over the hill in the back of the park and see if she could be there."

Bendigo, the large black cat, took off to find his niece. She had come to visit her aunt and uncle while they were all cleaning the Thurrhema park for King Melek. Melek had asked his citizens to pitch in and help make the park beautiful for some spring activities they were having. Since they began working a couple of hours earlier, it seemed that Sunday and Bendigo were having a hard time keeping Rachel working. She would work for as long as they were watching her. But when they would turn their backs she would begin playing or would go off and rest under a tree somewhere.

"Rach, Rach!" Bendigo called out. He looked and looked and finally found her playing with another kitten in the woods at the back of the park. "Rach!" "Oh, hi, Uncle Bendigo. We were...just...uh...we were just...uh looking for some work to do back here." "Rach, don't make matters worse by lying on top of you're not working like you said you would. Every time your aunt and I have turned our heads you have stopped working. You must think that the only time you have to work hard is when someone is watching you. Don't you realize that our great, honorable, and loving king has asked us to help him by making the park beautiful for the spring?" "Well, yeah, Uncle, but I just..." She paused. "Rach, after all King Melek has done for us, we should want to do our best for him--whether someone is watching or not. It is a great privilege to work for him and serve him. It doesn't matter whether he asks us to rake leaves, clean out the restrooms, clean stones from the stream, tend to flower beds, or be part of his board of governors, all jobs

are important and should be done to bring honor to him. We should want to make him look good and do our best."

"Oh, I'm sorry Uncle Bendigo. You're right. I'm one of the few kittens my age who has gotten to help today. I should be happy about that. May I come and help you and Aunt Sunday?" "You sure can Rach. Come on with me."

**Note To Parents:** Explain to your children that this story teaches us how important work is to God. From the very beginning of time God commanded us to work as part of the way we are to love and serve him. Read Genesis 2:15: "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it." Read Colossians 3:23: "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men." Read 1 Corinthians 10:31: "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

**Prayer:** God, you have given us all kinds of work to do. Thank you. Help us to do our work to please you and not just to please other people. Help us always do our best.

**Activity:** Have your children help the workmen below complete their sign. They need to write some jobs on the sign and ways that those jobs serve God and help other people. Parents, don't hesitate to help your children, if they get stuck.

