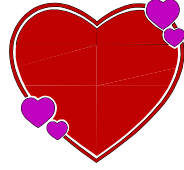


**CHAPTER SIX***THE MILLER FAMILY*

The stories in this chapter are about a family by the last name of Miller who lives on a farm. There is a mom, a dad, a teenager, a nine year old girl and a seven year old boy. 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.

"OUR FOCUS"  
BACK TO SCHOOL



Dennis Miller was not one who cried a lot. He would certainly not let anyone see him shed tears at school. But in his bedroom by himself it couldn't be helped this afternoon. He kept thinking about all the things that had happened the last few weeks in second grade. He was not doing as well on some of his work as his two best friends: Brian Fowler and Eric Bailey. They got 100's and 98's and 95's on almost all that they did. Dennis hardly ever did that well on his papers. He did o.k., but he was the first one in his family to do just o.k. You see, not only were his best friends good students, but so were his older brother and sister: Mike (who was 15) and Julie (who was 9). Dennis felt like something must be wrong with him. He must be the only one in the world not always to have the good grades or the *Great Job* written with the smiley face at the top of his assignments.

So, here he was sprawled across his bed, ignoring his **Colorado State University Rams** bedspread along with all his football, baseball, and basketball posters on the wall. His back was heaving up and down as he sobbed.

No one would have known what he was doing had it not been for his mom who had come upstairs to bring some of his laundry into his room. Since his door was closed, she knocked before entering. Dennis quickly wiped his eyes and nose and tried to act like nothing was wrong as he said, "come in." But as soon as his mom heard his voice she knew that all was not well in the life of her youngest child. "What's the matter?" Lisa Miller asked with concern filling her voice. "Oh, nothing, mom," came back the reply. "You've been crying," said his mom as she put the laundry on his dresser and sat down by him on the bed while placing her arm around him. At this, Dennis couldn't keep playing like all was well and the tears flooded out of his eyes again. It was only after the initial rush of crying let up that mom asked him again, "Honey, what's wrong?"

"Oh, mom, I'm so stupid! You and dad made good grades in school, Mike and Julie make good

grades in school, and so does everybody else in my class except me. I just wish I could be as good as everyone else!" With this the sobbing returned. Dennis buried his head in his mom's shoulder as she held him close. "Dennis," she said, "let me share some things with you...."

**Note To Parents:** Ask your children this question: What do you think that Mrs. Miller should say to Dennis? Give them some time to think about the answer. After they've had time to give as many answers as they can, take them to the following Bible passages and see if they can come up with how these could help:

1. Psalm 8:5-6: Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. [6] You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet.

What this teaches:

\*God has made each person very valuable. His love is not based upon what we can or cannot do.

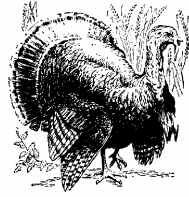
2. I Corinthians 12:4,5,6,22,27: "Now there are varieties of gifts...there are varieties of service...it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone...On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.... Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."
  - a. God has made each one of us different. Each have different things we are good at.
  - b. Even though we are different, we are not less special or important than others.
3. Read 1 Samuel 17. Dennis is handling his situation much like David's brothers handled the threat of Goliath. They focused on what they could not do, rather than on what God could do. David, on the other hand, focused upon what God could do (his greatness) and not on what he could not do. Dennis' problem was that he had placed too much emphasis upon his own abilities or lack of abilities. He also had placed too much emphasis upon his own wrong view of himself, rather than upon God's view. God's view is that we are important persons to him and he has gifted us with different gifts and abilities. Yet, we are in need of his help at all times. To be skillful in life we must trust God in all things. This is what honors him!

**Prayer:** God, thank you for making us in your image and with such worth in your eyes. Thank you for the gifts and talents you have given us. Help us not to trust, though in our own abilities or in what we can and cannot do when facing situations in life. Help us to trust you always and remember that you can do all things.

**Activity:** Act out the story of David and Goliath as a family.

## "GIVE THANKS"

### THANKSGIVING



"But mom!" Julie argued, "Tammy Bergman's parents bought an iPod for her. And lots of other kids at school have one. I'm probably the only one at school who doesn't have one." "Honey, we have been over and over this a hundred times. Your dad and I have told you that we will help you get one, but you have to save and buy most of it. We simply can't afford to buy a gift that costs that much."

This was not the first time that the just-turned-fourth grader, Julie Miller, and her mom had argued this week. Today it was over an iPod. Yesterday it had been a new pair of shoes like Donna Finley had brought to their Physical Education class. The day before it had been a new pair of roller-blades she had seen. It seemed that Julie had picked up a bad case of feeling sorry for herself because she didn't have just everything she wanted, nor everything that other kids had. It wasn't that Julie and her parents were poor. They lived in a nice house, had plenty of clothes, ate good food, drove a nice car, and had whatever they needed. They just didn't have money to buy absolutely anything they wanted.

As Julie and Lisa Miller finished their little conversation, it was time for breakfast. Before they ate, Julie's dad, Randy, prayed and thanked God for their breakfast. He also prayed for Chandra Majumbar of India, a boy whom the family sponsored through **World Relief**. Mr. Miller prayed that God would watch over Chandra, that he would convert him and his family, that he would provide enough food for him and his family, and that God would provide needed medicine and clothes. As the prayer ended and mom began passing out the oatmeal, sugar, and the milk, Julie was silent. She was thinking about the prayer and how thankful her mom and dad seemed to be for what they had. She also began thinking about how little their friend in India had--especially compared to her. She began to feel bad for the way that she had been acting the last few days.

If you were Julie's friend and you noticed that she was kind of down at school that day and she told you what had happened at her house that morning, what would you say to her? What do you think Julie should learn from this? What should we learn?

**Note To Parents:** Discuss with your children the importance of thanking God for what we have or don't have. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:18: "give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." Read Psalm 147. What things can we find in this psalm for which we can thank God?

**Prayer:** God, teach us to be thankful to you for all that you give us and even for what we don't have. We thank you for our family, our home, our health, our clothes, our friends, our things we do well, for the things that you allow to happen that teach us and help us grow. We especially thank you that you love us and sent your son, Jesus Christ, to die for us so we can be changed and can be in heaven.

**Activity:** Since Thanksgiving is a time when we often thank God for what we have, sit down with your children and have them draw a picture of a turkey and place feathers on it. Each feather should have something written on it for which they are thankful.

## "THE GOOD FARMER"



Randy Miller had decided that in all his 37 years he had not heard so much crazy talk as what he was now witnessing in the *Road Stop* cafe where he often came for coffee. Most of the other farmers and retired men who came into the small restaurant to visit and catch up on all the news of the day were up in arms. It all started when the conversation turned to the new meat-packing plant which had moved into Cartersville, the county seat 30 miles away. In the eyes of the men assembled around their coffee cups it was good that the plant was providing jobs for people in the area. But it was bad, so they thought, that many people from Mexico had moved into the town to work also. "Those Mexicans," as they were often called, "are nothing but trouble," chided Brian Mosier, the owner of the hardware in town. "Why, there's no way that I'd want to go to Cartersville at night," piped up Eric Bridges, a mechanic who ran a garage next to the *Road Stop* cafe. "Crime has gone up 100% since those people moved into the area. It's just not safe to be out anymore!" "I sure hope that none of their kind move up here, we don't want 'em around us!" Mike Bowman angrily spouted. Randy didn't really hear what else was said as he sat turning his cup in his hands. All the noise seemed to melt together to form a chorus of anger and hatred. It was clear that these people did not want those who are different living around them.

Randy knew that in his heart he had some less-than-loving thoughts about some of the Hispanic people he had seen while shopping at stores in the county seat. They looked different, they talked different, they sometimes smelled different, their cars were often different, and he could not dismiss the truth that more bad things were happening in the town and the police were busier since the plant opened. Yet, he knew in his heart that this kind of hatred was wrong.

One of the things that was making this so hard was that his hired man on the farm, Harold Brill, had recently quit. Randy knew that he could not finish harvest and keep up with his chores through the winter without hiring someone else. He had met a Hispanic man in Cartersville the other day who had lost his job

at the plant. He had experience doing farm work and because he had five children could desperately use the job that Randy needed filled. Randy was now struggling with what he should do. He knew if he hired Juan Gomez that other people in town would be mad at him, since it would mean that Juan and his family would move onto Randy's farm. Yet, he also remembered Pastor Zack Turner's sermon last week out of Luke 10 and how the "Good Samaritan" in Jesus' parable had helped the Jewish man, even though Jews and Samaritans often hated each other. Jesus had told the story to teach what it means to love other people-- even those who are not like us or who may not love us back. Randy knew from this that God would not be pleased with him, if he did not give the job to Juan just because he was different.

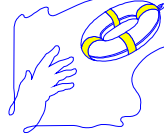
That night at supper he told his family about the problem and about how he was having a hard time knowing what to do. Should Randy do the easiest thing and not give the job to Juan so that people in town will not get mad at him? Or like the "Good Samaritan" in Jesus' story, should he be a "Good Farmer" and help Juan?

**Note To Parents:** Ask your children: If you were Randy's children (Mike, Julie, Dennis) what would you tell your dad to do? Read the parable of the *Good Samaritan* in Luke 10:25-37. Do you think that other kids at school might give you a hard time, when they find out that Juan's family is moving to your farm? How would you handle this? How would you feel if you were Juan's kids and people didn't like you just because of the color of your skin or how you talked? \*Emphasize to your children that God loves all kinds of people no matter what race they are (Rev.5:9) and he wants us to do the same. We should not dislike other people just because they are different.

**Prayer:** God, help us to love other people, even if they are different and to remember that this does not make us better than them. We also want to thank you for not making all of us the same.

**Activity:** Draw a picture of your family and color it with your children. Compare the pictures and see how many things you can find that are different. If you have more than one child, have them compare with each other. Point out that the differences do not make one picture better than the other. They are only different and each is special in its own way. This is the same as the different people God has made. If you have an older child, you might want to have him draw the pictures of the family for each child and then the children can color them.

## "A LIFESAVER"



Lisa Miller, 36 year old farmer's wife and mom, stood in the front of her church with her arms around her husband and their daughter Julie. All three of them were crying and other people in the church were beginning to make their way up to the trio. The stream of fellow church people (most of whom were family and neighbors and friends) all had smiles mixed with tears. What in the world led to such a scene? The best way for you to find out is to let Mrs. Miller herself tell you. You will have to excuse her, though, if she begins crying before the story is finished. She is very happy right now.

Well, I guess in order to tell you what has just happened, I need to tell you about our daughter Julie. You see, Julie is nine years old. From the time that she was born her dad (Randy is his name--that's him hugging Julie over by the steps leading up to the platform at the front of the church) and I have wanted Julie to love Jesus and receive Him as her savior. Yet, she never seemed to be interested. We never thought too much about it when she was younger. But when she was 8 she had told us she hated church. It just broke our hearts.

It seemed that she was different than our oldest child (Mike who is 15). Even before he received Christ as his savior, he had not put up such a fuss about going to church. Julie seemed to try every excuse in the book to get out of going: her stomach hurt; she had the sniffles; or sometimes on Sunday nights she wanted to watch a favorite T.V. show. It wasn't the church attendance as much as her lack of interest in Jesus that troubled us. We also were concerned by her quick temper and grumpiness.

Well, at the beginning of this week our church had a special speaker come in from a Christian college in our state. His name is G.T. Chesterfield. I guess he is a former professor there and now mostly what he does is travel around and preach in churches. This week he has been talking about what it means to be a Christian and what will happen to a person after they die, if they do not receive Jesus as their savior. He said that they will not be in heaven.

I could tell last night that what he was saying was making Julie think. After we came home from the service, she did not make her usual comments about how boring it was or that she was sure glad to be home. She was very quiet and went up to her room. Then tonight she actually wanted to come to church. Randy and I couldn't believe it! I could tell that she was really listening to all that Mr. Chesterfield was saying. He preached on Ephesians 2:8-9: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast." (NIV) He explained that it is not attending church that saves us or makes us a Christian, it is not reading our Bible or being good that helps us to be in heaven after we die. The only way we can be forgiven of what we have done wrong and know that we will be with Jesus in heaven is to receive him as our savior.

Mr. Chesterfield explained that receiving Jesus means that we are sorry for our sins and we believe that only Jesus' dying for us on the cross (in our place) can make us a Christian. When we decide we want to believe in what Jesus has done, be forgiven, and when we want to do the things that Jesus wants us to do, this is what it means to receive Jesus.

After he was done preaching Julie went up to Mr. Chesterfield and was sobbing terribly. I was crying too because... (she cries)... I knew...(sniffle, sniffle)...that she wanted to follow Christ and I was so happy. (She begins crying again) Julie said that all she could think about were the bad things that she had done, that she had not loved Jesus, and that she would not be with him if she died. Now she says that she feels like someone threw her a lifejacket when she was drowning--she has been saved!

So, that is why Julie and her family are all crying at the front of the church and why everyone is so happy. I hope that those of you listening to this story have received Jesus as your savior. If you haven't done so, you need to repent and believe on Christ as your savior.

**Note To Parents:** Talk to your children about the need to receive Jesus Christ as savior. Do not push them if they are not ready. But do pray for them that God would help them understand what it means to be a Christian. Pray also that God would give you the wisdom to be able to explain salvation to them. When they are ready to receive Jesus it often helps for them to pray. This prayer does not save them, but it does often help focus their faith. You might pray the following with them:

*Dear Jesus, I am sorry for all the bad things I have done. I want to be your friend and I want to*

*do the things that you want me to do. I know that the only way I can be your friend and go to heaven is if I believe that you died on the cross to help me be a Christian. Thank you for hearing my prayer. Amen.*

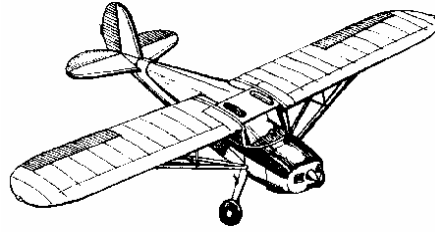
\*If they pray this, then you need to continue to pray as a parent--that they would understand what salvation is.

**Prayer:** Dear God help us know if we have never received Jesus as our savior. Help us see how important this is. If we have received Jesus, help us tell other people about Jesus so that they can receive Him too.

**Activity:** Share your story with your children of when you became a Christian. This not only helps them see the importance of receiving Christ, but it also can help them understand what it means to do so.

## "DOWN TO EARTH"

(Christmas)



"Lisa, that was very good supper." Martha Gomez' English was spoken with a very heavy Hispanic accent and was at times hard-to-understand, but it was improving. "Thank you, Martha. I have to say, though, it was not near as good as the enchiladas you fixed for us last month. Randy says he's still sweating from those." Martha began to laugh. "I'm sorry his mouth is soft." "Oh, come on now," Randy began to defend himself (with a smile on his face), "there's no use both of you women ganging up on me. Lisa usually does a good enough job picking on me by herself. Hey Juan, you better get over here and help me out with these women!" Juan makes his way back from the bathroom off of the kitchen to the dining room. He smiles, and holds up his hands, "I not get involved, boss. You have to get out of dis one by yourself!" "Well," Randy began, "at least get back over here to the table and get the subject changed. The kids have been dying to hear your story every since I told them a little of it after you began working for me.

Juan Gomez came to work for Randy Miller on his farm just a couple of months ago. He and his wife Martha have five children (Ricardo: 11, Cristina: 10, Elizabeth: 9, Andres: 7, and Zulema: 4). Even though Juan really needed the job and Randy really needed the help, many people in the area were angry at Randy and his family for hiring the "different" family. All that happened brought the two families closer together.

"Oh, I can't tell it." Juan shyly responded. "Sure you can," Randy encouraged him. "Tell them about what happened to you when you were young and how you ended up coming to the United States."

All the kids and parents took seats around the table or comfortably on the floor. Juan cleared his throat and began. "When I was young my family lived in Reynosa, Mexico and we were very poor. There were

eight children in our family and my father worked at a large factory which had been started by an American. He made many metal things: key rings, bottle openers, and things like this. But he did not make much money. When I was about fifteen I met the man who owned the factory. He had flown in to see how things were going. For some reason he took a liking to me. The next time he came back to Reynosa he looked me up. Each time he would visit, I would talk to him. When I was seventeen he asked me, 'How would you like to learn to fly an airplane?' I didn't know what to say at first. When he asked me again I knew that he was serious. He wanted to help me come to the United States and take flying lessons and then I could be a pilot for him and some of the people who worked with him. They were one short. You can't imagine how excited I was. It seemed that possibly I might be able to get a good job and make more of a living than what I would've working at the factory."

"So, two months before I turned eighteen I moved to Edinburg, Texas and began taking lessons. Five months after I finished the lessons and began flying for Mr. Gish, my father died of a heart attack. There was no one else in the family who was able to take care of the family, so I had a hard decision to make. If I kept my job, my family may not make it--even though I made good money and could send some to them. You see, my mom was very sick and someone needed to be there to care for her and help with the children. Yet, if I left the job, I would be leaving what may be my only hope to get out of the poverty we were in. I thought many times to myself: How can I leave my pilot job and go back to the factory and to my family? Yet, I knew that is what I must do because I loved them very much."

"So, I told Mr. Gish that I must go back to Reynosa. He was sorry to see me go, but he understood. He hired me back at the old factory. That is much of my story. My mom died in a couple of years; I met Martha, we started our family, and now I have come back to the United States. I hope to become a pilot again someday. Maybe now that I have a job with Randy I can."

"Wow, Mr. Gomez, that's some story," seven year old Dennis Miller said. "That reminds me of what my Sunday School teacher, Mrs. Smock, told us this past Sunday. She told us how much Jesus gave up and left behind when he left heaven to become a baby on the earth. He was God and very powerful and there was nothing he couldn't do. Yet he humbled himself and became man because he knew we needed him and because he loved us." "You're right, Dennis," Lisa Miller said. "That is what Christmas is all about. Jesus,

for a while, humbled himself and became poor so that we could be made rich through all he did for us.

That reminds us we should be thankful for him!"

**Note To Parents:** Read 2 Corinthians 8:9 to your children: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich." Ask your children:

1. What do you think some of the things were that Jesus had before he came to earth? (John 1:1-14; Colossians 1:15-20)
2. What do you think he gave up when he came down to earth? (Philippians 2:6-8)
3. Why did he do this? (Rev. 1:5-6)
4. How should this make us feel? (Rev. 5:9-14)

**Prayer:** Jesus, thank you for all you gave up when you came to earth. Thank you for loving me so much that you would do that and you would go through a lot of bad things so that I could be your friend, so that I could be forgiven of my sins, and so that I can be in heaven with you someday.

**Activity:** This is called a "Coin Hunt". Hide coins around your house (or even outside if weather permits). Have children find them just like an Easter egg hunt. When they are all done, help them count their money. Allow them to keep it, but ask them: What are some things you would like to spend your money on? Explain to them that these are things they would be willing to give up their riches for (like Jesus did for us) and that Jesus wanted to give up riches even more for us than we do for the things we like. Ask them if they would be willing to give some of their money to Jesus because He had done so much for them. Then help them remember to put whatever part of it they want to in the Sunday School or church offering next week.

## "A CHRISTMAS LETTER"

(CHRISTMAS)



The second that Randy Miller finished praying all the kids at the table started grabbing dishes and bowls. You would have thought that they believed they only had about 10 seconds to get some food on the table before it was all taken away or that they hadn't eaten in two weeks. "Pass the bread, please, Julie." "May I have the spaghetti Mom?" "Hurry up with the sauce!" "Would you pass the parmesan cheese please Dad?" "Can I have Pepsi instead of milk Mom?" "Hey, Dennis, don't take all day with the salad." Clank, bang, chatter, clatter, thump. It was noisy as the family of five sat around the supper table along with 15 year old Mike's friend, Jay Penner. Jay, who was in Mike's class at school, had become friends with the older Miller son because they played football and basketball together. He was a pretty nice kid. One of the things that set him and his family apart from the Millers was that they did not go to church and didn't really believe that much in God.

When all the bowls had been passed around and everyone had food on their plates and had settled down to eat, Mike addressed his dad, "Hey, Dad, Jay and I got into a pretty awesome discussion today at lunch." "Oh really, what about?" asked the father. "Well, I said something about God helping me on my English test this morning and Jay here said to me, 'How do you know God helped you? We don't even know what God is like, if there even is a god. Maybe He's some monster.'" "Oh come on Mike," jumped in Jay, "I didn't say that. I just said maybe God isn't really all that great. Maybe he doesn't love us--after all we never really see him--how do we know what he's like?"

Jay half expected someone to get mad at him for even saying something like this, because he knew that all the Millers were, as he put it, "very religious people." But, to his surprise, no one did. In fact, Randy's response caught him by surprise. "That's a good question, Jay. You're right that we have not even seen

God. In fact, the Bible even says that no one has really seen God. But there is a very helpful way that we can know what he is like." "How's that?" asked the puzzled young teen. "Let me explain with a little story," said the dad as he set his bread down, wiped off his mouth and took a drink of water.

Randy began: "Last week we sent out family Christmas letters to all of our family and friends. Many of these people we have not seen this past year and some we haven't seen for a couple of years. As much as we would like to visit many of them or call them on the phone, it seems like we just don't get it done very often. So, every December we send out these letters telling about each person in our family. We tell them about how the kids are doing in school, what's going on around the farm, where we've been on vacation, and things like that. We also always include a family picture. We feel like this letter helps people to know about us and to keep updated with how we are changing. In some ways, it lets them know all over again who we are."

"Yeah, I know what you're talking about, Randy," responded Jay with a puzzled look. "But I don't see what this has to do with God."

"Well, let me explain," Randy said. "The Bible says that God has spoken to us in many different ways throughout history. He's given dreams and visions to prophets, he's performed miracles, he's given commandments. In other words, he has sent us lots of letters or little notes, we might call them, in the Bible. These let us know what God is like. But, the Bible also tells us that God has spoken to each one of us through an even greater way: In His Son, Jesus Christ. You see, Jay, just like our family Christmas letters tell people who we are and remind them of what we are like and just like you know a lot about our family and me just from getting to know Mike, in the same way one of the best ways that God could tell us about who he is was by giving us the Bible and sending his Son to show us what he is like. If you want to know what God is like, just look at what Jesus was like, because he is God."

"Yeah, Jay," Lisa (Randy's wife) chimed in; "that's part of what Christmas is all about. When you celebrate it in a couple of weeks and receive gifts, what you are really celebrating is that God sent his Son to be among us. Part of what that means is that we can see first-hand what God is like by looking at Jesus. He is God's greatest Christmas letter to us."

"I guess I see what you're saying, but this is kinda' new to me," Jay said. "That's o.k.," Randy

encouraged him. "Just think about it."

"Hey, could somebody quit talking and pass me some more spaghetti and sauce?" Dennis asked. "I'm starving over here!" With this wisecrack, everyone started laughing at the seven year old who had spaghetti sauce on his mouth and the front of his shirt. And Julie passed him the bowl.

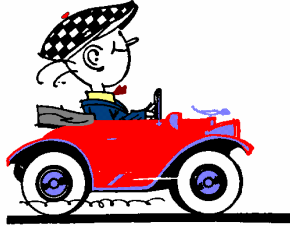
**Note To Parents:** Read Hebrews 1:1-3: "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, [2] but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. [3] He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Explain to your children that Jesus helps us to know what God is like: He loves us, he wants us to love him, he wants us to do what he commands, he is strong and can do many powerful things. He also wants to help us and forgive us from our sins so we can be in heaven.

**Prayer:** Dear God, thank you for sending Jesus into the world so that we can be your friends, so that we can be with you in heaven, and so that we can know what you are like. Thank you that you love us and have taught us in the Bible and through Jesus how you want us to live.

**Activity:** Write a letter to a friend or a family member telling them what God is like. You might even want to look in the Bible books which tell about Jesus the most (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). Find places where it tells what he is like and put these things in the letter. For kids who can write and read you can let them write their own letter. You might need to coach them on what kinds of things to include. For the child who can't read and write you can ask them questions about what Jesus is like or read to them and see if you can help them give a few answers which can be added to a letter. If you have a computer, it would be fun to write the letter on this, using some clip-art to "spruce it up" a bit. Most children will enjoy this. Younger children could also draw and color pictures on the letter. This could even be a good way to witness to someone.

## "THE NEED FOR A ROAD MAP"



It was Monday morning and Julie Miller was riding with her mom (Lisa) to do some last minute Christmas shopping. The nine year old had been looking forward to this day for a couple of weeks. Friday had been her last day of school before Christmas vacation. Her mom had said that they could go into Cartersville and see if there were any specials.

"So what did your class talk about in Sunday School yesterday?" Lisa asked her daughter. "Oh Mr. Harney (Scott Harney was the teacher for the 4-5 graders) talked about how much God wants us to read the Bible and how important it is we listen. Mom, he told a pretty cool story about going to King's Castle Amusement Park to help us understand what he was saying. Do you want me to tell you the story?" "Sure," replied Mrs. Miller. "It sounds like something you would've enjoyed, especially since we plan on taking a trip to King's Castle this summer."

"Well," Julie began, "Mr. Harney wanted us to pretend that our family was taking a trip to King's Castle. On the day that we were to leave we were supposed to imagine that we all got in the car to go and dad had the address of where the amusement park was. But, as we left home and got out on the road we didn't have a map, we didn't have any directions how to get to King's Castle, dad didn't pay any attention to the road signs, and we didn't pay any attention to whether or not we had enough gas to get there. He then asked the class, 'How many of you think that you would get to King's Castle?' We all answered that we didn't think we'd get there. He asked us why we thought that. Jill Shelley told him that we wouldn't make it because we would probably take a wrong turn and end up out in some corn field. We all laughed.

Mr. Harney then told us that when we don't read the Bible it's like not reading a road map and road signs when we are on a trip. We all have certain things that we would like to have or be when we grow up (like being a husband or wife; having kids; and being happy). That's kind of like knowing where we want to end

up: just like we knew in the story that we wanted to get to King's Castle. But, if we don't listen to how God wants us to think, how he wants us to treat other people, how he wants us to love him, how to love and forgive other people, then we are probably not going to be too happy. It would be just like going on a trip and not paying attention to a map or directions. He told us that the Bible is God's map for teaching us what to do. And, since God made us and the world, he knows what things we should do that will help us find the greatest joy."

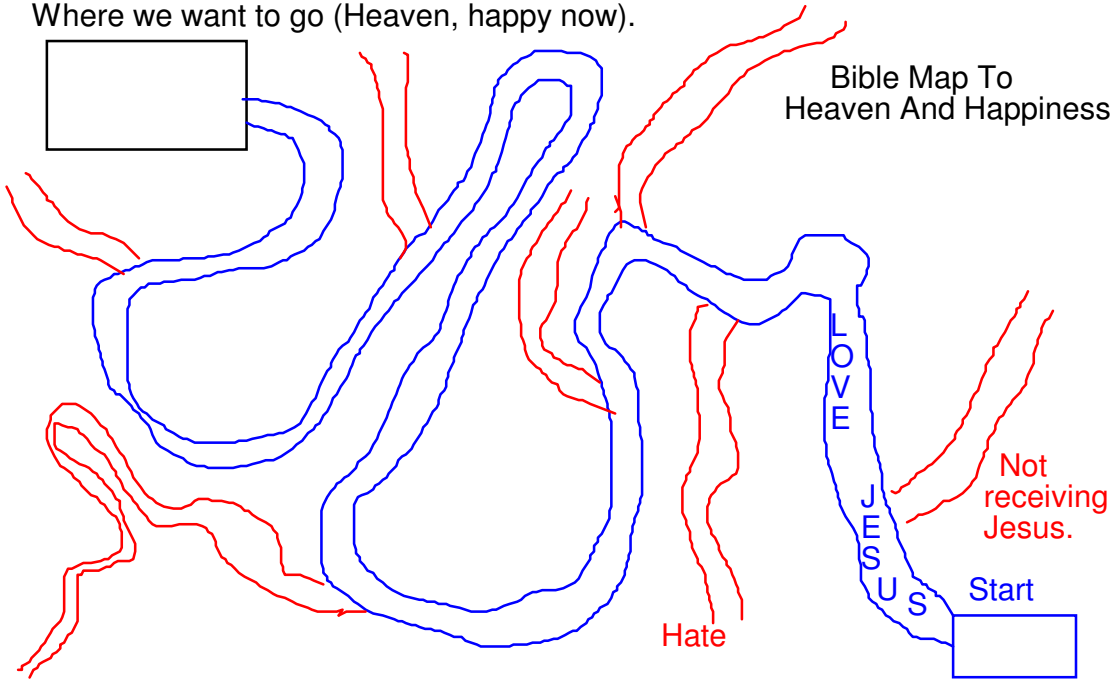
Julie stopped talking for a few seconds and then said, "that's the whole story and what we talked about." "So," Mrs. Miller responded, "what do you think you should do with what you learned?" "I don't know," said Julie.

**Note To Parents:** Ask your children: So what do you think Julie should do with what she learned at Sunday School? What do you think you should do? Why is it important to read the Bible? Help your children with ways that they can read the Bible. You might need to sit down with them and help or suggest a book of the Bible for them to read on their own. If they can't read well yet, you might read a children's Bible or Bible story book with them each day. Read the following verses to them now: 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work."

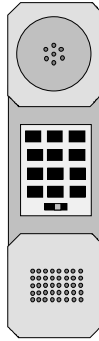
**Prayer:** God, thank you for teaching us how we can be in heaven and how we can live good lives in this world. Help us to read and listen to your Bible and to obey it.

**Activity:** Complete the following map with your children. Help them to put down some things on the main road God teaches in his Bible which will help us not only be in heaven, but also be happier now. Also help label some of the wrong roads which would be things that would hurt us and/or lead us away from heaven.

Where we want to go (Heaven, happy now).



## "THE TELEPHONE CALL"



*Riiiiing, Riiiiing* sounded the Miller's telephone in the kitchen. "I've got it," shouted Julie, "It's probably Donna Finley!" "No!" bellowed Dennis. The brother and sister collided with each other before getting to the phone and each shoved the other so they could be first. But before either one picked up the receiver, their mom had answered it in her bedroom. Both children went back into the living room where they were watching a movie on T.V. with their dad and older brother. It didn't take long for them to forget the call as they were again glued to the screen.

It was about 5 minutes later that Lisa Miller hung up the phone and came into the living room in tears. "What's the matter?" Her husband Randy asked with concern in his voice, looking up from the set. Between her tears and sniffles, Mrs. Miller managed to get out, "That was mom and dad on the phone...." She began to cry again. "Oh no, what's wrong now?" 15 yr. old Mike questioned. Both Julie and Dennis got up off the floor and went toward their mom with a look of concern mixed with fear on their faces.

Everyone was worried because 4 weeks ago Grandma Dee (that's what the kids called their 63 yr. old grandma--Dee Chambers) had gone to the doctor. For some time she hadn't been feeling well and grandpa Richard (Richard Chambers) had finally talked her into going into the clinic. What was found out through that visit and a couple of visits to the hospital was that Grandma Dee had cancer. There was a big tumor growing inside her. The whole family was concerned because they were afraid she might die. Now they were standing in the living room looking at Lisa Miller with tears in her eyes and thinking the worst. They were afraid that Grandma Dee's visit to the doctor earlier in the day had brought some kind of

bad news that the cancer was spreading and she was getting worse. Oh, how they did not want to lose Grandma Dee!

"Well," Lisa Miller sniffled, "Mom said that the doctor took x-rays today..." "and?" Randy finally asked when she didn't finish. "...And the doctor said that the tumor is no longer there. She told me that the doctor said there was absolutely no explanation for it not being there and he couldn't understand it. But, she was *lucky* (she said this with emphasis) and mom should just be glad she no longer has cancer!" "Wooh, Yeeess!" Dennis and Julie said together. "That's great!" Randy said as he put his arms around his wife and kissed her.

"But mom, how could it just disappear?" Julie asked. "Honey, it was God. He took the cancer away from Grandma." "Yeah," her dad jumped in, "God is able to do all things. There is nothing that he desires to do and that is not contrary to his character that he cannot do. It doesn't matter whether it is sickness, problems at school, or needing a sea parted like the Israelites did in the Old Testament, God can do it."

"But, if God can do all things, Dad, Why didn't He help Grandpa Miller?" "Because, Dennis, God does not always choose to heal, even though we know that he is able. But we do know that because of his love and power he does what is best, even if we don't always understand it."

"Can we call grandma Dee up and talk to her mom?" Julie asked. "You sure can." Julie went over to the phone and dialed the number that she knew by heart. *Riiiiing, Riiiiing.*

**Note To Parents:** Read the following scriptures to your children which teach about God being all powerful. Genesis 17:1: "When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless.'" Matthew 19:26: "But Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'"

Ask your children: Why is it important to us that God is so powerful? Possible answers: We can trust in Him. We should remember that if God is so strong and powerful we should listen to Him and do what He teaches us.

**Prayer:** God, we think that it is awesome that you can do all things and are so powerful. Help us to remember that this should cause us to trust in you and want to obey you.

**Activity:** This activity is called a *Trust Fall*. Have 2 people stand facing each other behind a child who is

standing and looking away from them. Have the child fall backward without looking. The two people will catch him. This helps teach the child to trust in someone else. If there are more than one child, make sure each gets a turn. Also, it is better to have adults or older children do the catching. After each gets a turn, talk about how this is like trusting in God and how God is so much stronger than the people who did the catching in this *Trust Fall*. Then ask: What are some things that we are experiencing right now in which we need to trust in God who is very strong?

## "FISH AND MONKEYS"



*(Pre-story note to parents: If you have some toy trains around the house, it might help the telling of the story to have them nearby. But it is not necessary)*

"Dennis, you have to quit being so loud and rocking the boat if you want to catch any fish!" exclaimed Grandpa Richard. "You're gonna have 'em all swimming away faster than we can shake a stick at 'em. Then we won't have any for supper tonight." "Sorry Grandpa," Dennis responded, but he didn't seem to get the message because he was right back to "messing around" five minutes later.

Dennis and Julie Miller had spent the night with their grandma and grandpa Chambers. Now on this beautiful September Saturday afternoon they were out in Richard Chamber's fishing boat trying to keep 7 year old Dennis from chasing away their supper with his noise and they were also just enjoying being together.

"Grandpa," Julie said. "Yes, Julie." "Do you think that we came from monkeys?" The retired hardware owner let out a little chuckle. "Why do you ask that? Dennis isn't acting that badly this afternoon is he?" Grandpa laughed now. "No," Julie responded while cracking a small grin and playfully poking her brother in the back. "Mr. McDonald, my teacher, was talking yesterday about where people came from in our science time. He said that millions of years ago, before there was a world, there was some gas and particles just kinda floating in space and something happened so that there was an explosion and out of that the world formed. And then there were these little living things that formed into bigger living things and pretty soon there were fish and other smaller animals and those animals changed over many many years so that they could be stronger and formed larger animals like monkeys and apes. And then some of these changed

into people. Mr. McDonald said that we are just smarter forms of animals. Do you believe that Grandpa?"

Grandpa Chambers responded to Julie this way. "Well, I can see Mr. McDonald has been at it again. I remember having a talk with your brother Mike about this very thing when he was back in fourth grade. Julie and Dennis, you see that train bridge and track over yonder?" He pointed across the pond to where there was a track. He went on. "Many times you've been here with me and seen a train go by, haven't you?" Both kids shook their heads yes. "Well suppose we came out here to the pond one day and there was already a train going by on the tracks. Let's say you saw one of those flat train cars carrying a truck trailer on it." Grandpa paused and then asked: "What is pulling that train car along?" The two kids thought about it for a minute. Then Julie said with a questioning voice, "the car in front of it?" "Exactly," said Grandpa Richard. "So, if I then said to you, 'That tells us what is making that train car go over the tracks I'd be right?'" Neither child answered. "But suppose," the wise older man went on, "I asked you, 'But what is making that car (the one which is pulling the first car we saw)--what is making that train car move along the track?' You'd probably say the train car in front of it. Now I could keep asking you these questions about all the cars in the train and you could say the same thing: each car is pulling the car behind it and that is how each is moving along the track. Now let's just pretend that we can't see the front of the train. All we can see is a long line of trains pulling each other along. What has to be at the front of that train making all the other cars go?" Again each child looked at each other and shrugged their shoulders. Finally, Dennis realized the answer his grandfather wanted and excitedly said, "an engine!" "Very good, Dennis."

"But, what does that have to do with evolution or how the world got here?" Julie pondered. "Well, Julie, just like any train has to have a beginning, it has to have a source of power or an engine which can move all the train cars down the track, in the same way, the world had to have a beginning --something or someone who has always been, is smart enough, and strong enough to have made the world. You see, your teacher Mr. McDonald is a nice man, but he does not realize that all he is trying to tell you by teaching of gas and particles exploding and animals changing is just like our saying that train cars are just pulled along the track by the car in front of it and that car by the one in front of it and so on. But he never gets back to the beginning to talk about what has caused everything else to go. Mr. McDonald has forgotten that even if

there were gas and particles that exploded and formed the world, we then have to ask, 'but where did they come from?' 'Who or what put them there?' It's just like needing to ask 'but what is pulling all the train cars along.'"

"Oh, I kind of see, Grandpa," Julie responded. "Something had to be there always (a beginning) so that it (or he) could make everything else in the beginning." "Yes, that's it, hon! Very good!" Mr. Chambers said as he reached over and hugged his granddaughter.

"You see the Bible teaches us that God made the world and all that is in it. And he also made us. And we could not come from animals, because God made us special--we are different than animals because God made us like himself in ways that animals are not like him. That's why God has told us it is o.k. to kill and eat fish and other animals. But it's not o.k. to murder people.

"Well, at least most of us didn't come from animals." Dennis piped up. "I'm not so sure about Julie. I think she might be part monkey." "Why you little..." Julie started to say before Grandpa interrupted. "Now kids. Come on, let's get back to our fishing or grandma may have to thaw out some liver for our supper tonight." "Ooooooh!" the two young fishermen exclaimed. And both cast their lines back into the water.

**Note To Parents:** Read the following Bible verses to your children: Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Genesis 1:26-27: "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' [27] So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Genesis 1:31: "And God saw everything that he made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day." Ask your children, why is it important for us to know that God created (made) the world? (Give them time to respond). Possible answers: It is important because we are reminded that there is a God and we need to listen to him (there is right and wrong in the world). Also, if God created us and everything else in the world, he should know best how we should live. If God created us in his image and we are special over animals, we should treat other people as if they are special (for example, we shouldn't kill them). And we should take care of the world, because it is important to God. We should be thankful for God making all the wonderful things he has.

**Prayer:** God, thank you for making the world. Thank you for the different animals, for the sky, for the oceans, for the rivers, the streams, the lakes, and the mountains. Thank you for all the different plants, trees, and flowers. And thank you also for the food you cause to grow for us to eat and the rain that helps it all grow.

**Activity:** Make a creation-day-train to go along with the above story. Have children draw a train with seven cars and an engine. Have the first car represent the first day of creation, have the second car represent the second, and so on through car #7. Look at Genesis 1:1-2:3 for the different days of creation. When they are done, talk about what was created on each day and how that God started and made all this-- He's the *engine* for the world.

## "CAMPFIRE TALK"



It was a great way to end a very fun day. It was the first day of church camp for Julie Miller and her friend Jill Shelley. The camp was about three hours from home, so they had started at 6:00 that morning to make it there by the 9:00 registration. The rest of the day had been spent meeting new people. They had a new friend by the name of Sherry Lewis who was in their tent. They also had been horseback riding and swimming. And one of the boys' campsites had attacked them with water balloons after supper. Most of the girls acted like they were mad, but inside they thought it was fun and were planning a way to get them back (in fun of course). Now, they were finishing off everything with a campfire. They had roasted marshmallows, sang some songs, and had a short devotional from their camp counselor, Tricia Blackmore. Now, the group of about 20 girls was sitting around talking and laughing about the day.

Jill Shelley decided that this was a great time to ask Tricia a question that she had been wanting to pose to someone for a couple of weeks. As girls were starting to move away from the fire and others were messing around, Jill went up to her camp counselor. She waited while the 20 year old college student finished telling two other girls where the showers were located. "Tricia," Jill began. "May I ask you a question?" "Sure, Jill. What can I help you with?" Jill explained, "Back in the spring our Sunday school teacher, Mr. Harney, showed us a verse in the Bible." Jill took her Bible and turned to it. "Here it is, Matthew 21:22. It says, "And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith." Tricia looked at the younger girl almost as if she knew what she were going to say. "Yes, Jill, that's what it says. Did you pray for something and not get it?" "Yeah," she answered. "I prayed and believed real hard, but it never came. I was just wanting to know what's wrong?"

The counselor stood with her hands in her pockets for a few seconds and then finally responded. "Tell

me what you prayed for." "Well, Tricia, I have always wanted to go to King's Castle Amusement Park, but my parents never wanted to go. My mom and dad are divorced. Dad never has time to come and do it and mom says that we don't have the money. I just thought that if I believed hard enough and prayed, God would either give my mom the money or have my dad come and do it. Now it's been almost three months, the summer is over, and we haven't gone. Why didn't God answer my prayer?" Jill let out this last question with some emotion in her voice as she came up on her tip toes, lifted up her arms and let them fall to slap the sides of her legs.

"Maybe God has answered your prayer," Tricia answered. "What do you mean? We still haven't gone." "Here, Jill, let me see your Bible." She took the Bible and motioned for the younger girl to come back to the campfire and sit on a log in the circle where they had been singing earlier. "Here's what I mean Jill. God doesn't always answer our prayers with a *yes*. Sometimes He answers them with a *wait awhile* and sometimes with a *no*. Here somewhere in Luke...(Tricia holds the Bible toward the light of the fire so she can see and pages through the book of Luke)...yeah, here it is--Luke 18:1. It says this, "And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart." He then told 'em a story about this woman who came to a man for help and he wouldn't help her. Finally, she kept coming and he gave in and did what she wanted. You see, Jill, sometimes God does the same with us. It's not because he doesn't want to help us, but he may think it's best for us to wait awhile before he answers us with a *yes*. Maybe, He knows that there is some reason you shouldn't go to the amusement park this summer and it would be better another time. Or maybe he just wants you to grow and learn patience. Do you see what I mean?" "I think so," said the nine year old girl. "But what about the *no* part you were talking about?"

"O.k., here it is...(once again Tricia held the Bible toward the fire)...2 Corinthians 12:8-9. Paul was talking about an illness he had and then he wrote, "Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me." In other words, God said *no*. Maybe there is a reason that God doesn't think this is best for you, Jill. I don't think you should quit praying or believing that God can answer this prayer. He may just want you to learn patience and to trust in him. But, if he doesn't choose to say *yes*, you need also to trust

him that he knows what is best for you. Does that make sense?" "Yeah, Tricia. Thanks for your help." "You're welcome," the counselor told her. "If you have any more questions or just need to talk to someone, you know where to find me." "Thanks Tricia." And with that Jill took her Bible and ran off toward her tent.

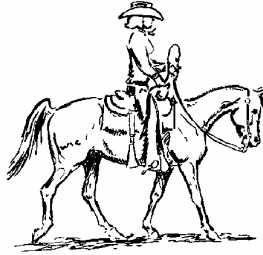
**Note To Parents:** Tell your children that you want to read another verse to them. I John 5:14: "And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us." Ask the children: What does this teach us about prayer? Answer: That God answers prayers with a *yes* only if they are for things that he thinks are best for us and what he wants.

**Prayer:** God, teach us how to pray. Help us to be patient when we ask you for things. Help us learn from the Bible the things that you think are good and important so that our prayers can be for those things which you want for us.

**Activity:** Make a prayer list with your children. Put down people for whom they want to pray and things that are important to them. Begin praying with them every night at bedtime and keep track of how God answers the prayers. As you pray with them make sure to do more than just ask for things. Praise God, thank him for things he has done for you, confess sins, and whatever else comes to mind.

## "THE STORY OF THE CIRCLE S"

### AN EASTER STORY



It was the Friday before Easter Sunday and Dennis Miller was excited. His mom had not had to work hard to get him out of bed as she often does when sending him off to his second grade class. This morning he'd gotten up on his own because he didn't have school and he was riding in the tractor with his dad while he planted corn. Dennis always loved this because he enjoyed learning about all the equipment and also just being with his dad.

By 11:30 in the morning, the dad and son had talked about everything from corn to school to sports. Dennis had quieted down now and just sat in the cab as he heard the hum of the powerful tractor engine. He finally broke the silence: "Hey, dad," "Yeah, son?" "Last week Pastor Turner was talking about Jesus dying for us on the cross and he said he'd be talking this Sunday about Jesus coming back to life. That reminded me of the story of 'The Circle S Ranch' you told us a few months ago. Could you tell me that story again?" "Well," Randy Miller responded as he looked down at his watch, "I suppose we have just enough time before we have to stop and go in for dinner." So, as the elder Miller kept his eyes on the soil of his field and his mind on the business of planting, he also told this story...

Theo Kurry was the largest rancher in his part of Texas. His ranch was so large that it would take most of the morning to get from one side of it to the other. Because it was so big he needed to have some good, reliable hired men helping him with his cattle. After all, he might go weeks at a time without seeing some of them. But occasionally he would have trouble with some of his men. And, that is where we pick up the story.

You see, Andy Thropes had come to the *Circle S* ranch looking for a job a few months back. He seemed to be a rough character, but since Theo was short on help, he decided to give him a shot and see how he worked out. But the easy-to-get-along-with boss had just found out that Andy wasn't working out very well at all. He was working with a group of hired men over on the far western side of the ranch and it seemed that some cattle were missing and that some of the men had been causing trouble for businesses which were in a small town that bordered the *Circle S*.

To take care of the problem Theo decided to send his son Jesse over to calm things down a bit and see what was going on. He told his son that by no means did he want any trouble when the son dealt with the men. Jesse had been back on the ranch about three weeks now. He had gone away to college and when his studies were completed he decided that ranching was still what he wanted to do. So, back came the very athletic, intelligent young man whose interests not only included cattle, but most sports--especially karate--a sport in which Jesse did very well.

So, the heir of the *Circle S*, having promised his dad that he'd handle things in a peaceful way, headed west. Since he knew that there might be a lot of work to do in rounding up some cattle and making repairs in the small town, he put on old clothes and hopped into his beat-up 12 year old pickup truck instead of the brand new one which he had just bought last week. With his old jeans, worn boots, faded sweat-stained cowboy hat, and rusting truck Jesse did not look like the son of the wealthiest rancher in those parts.

We shouldn't be surprised that when the peacemaker drove up to the motel where the men were staying, they not only did not recognize Jesse (most of them had never met him), but they didn't believe that he was Theo's son. Since he had promised his dad that he would approach this in a peaceful way, he pretty much let his guard down when walking up to the men and he paid the price. Once he allowed them to gang up on him, there was little the well-trained fighter could do. They hit and kicked him until police officers, who had been called by another person staying in the motel, arrived.

Andy and his rowdy friends ended up in jail for a couple of days--in no way sorry about what they had done. And Jesse ended up in the hospital for 3 days. The hired men laughed about Jesse when they recovered from their hangover. "Imagine," one of them laughingly said, "that guy actually claimed to be Kurry's son. What a joke!" "Yeah," another piped up, "I heard that Kurry's real son is a pretty bad guy to

mess with--one of those karate types. This guy was nothing." "And did you see the clothes and that truck he was driving?" Thropes sarcastically questioned. "Why he was no more Kurry's son than I'm the president of the United States!" They all laughed. "I doubt if his real son would be in the hospital bed right now with broken ribs!" And so their conversation continued.

One week later the men were back on their job and Jesse Kurry was back home. When he told his dad what had happened, the usually patient, kind man was angry. Once again he decided to send his son back to the small town, but now Jesse had the authority to do whatever it took to find out from the men what had happened. That was his main job. He brought several other hired men with him to work the cattle and take care of repairs in town. For that reason, Jesse came in his new truck, dressed in his regular clothes, and ready for action, if the need arose.

After the hired men began working on repairs, Jesse drove over to the motel. This time the figure which met the men seemed stronger. They knew it was the same man, but he was different. This man perhaps could be the son of Theo Kurry. Whoever he was, he was either incredibly brave or stupid for showing up again. Andy and his 4 friends decided that they would teach this young guy another lesson. But this time Jesse Kurry was ready for them. They were no match for his karate, speed, and skills. There were witnesses around who told the police when they arrived that Jesse did what he had to in order to defend himself. The five troublemakers were hauled off to jail, where they would remain for some time--especially once it was found out that they had stolen and sold some of Theo's cattle.

This time none of the men were laughing at Jesse Kurry. Though they thought that they had taken care of him when they put him in the hospital, he had gotten right back up and come back to show who he really was. You might say that he not only got to the bottom of the problem, but he also proved to the men that he really was Theo Kurry's son--a fact that they would not soon forget as they would hear about him helping to run the *Circle S*.

Randy Miller finished telling this story to his son, whose attention was glued to every word he said. "So, Dennis, that is a story that helps us understand what happened when Jesus died for us and then was raised from the dead. We need to head to the house, so maybe we can talk of how it teaches us about Jesus while we eat."

**Note To Parents:** Read Philippians 2:5-11 to your children: “Christ Jesus...though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, [8] he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. [9] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, [10] so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

**Prayer:** God, thank you for sending Jesus to die for us. Thank you also that he was raised from the dead to show the world that he really was your son and also to help us be raised from the dead some day.

**Activity:** Play a game with your children based upon the story Randy Miller told his son. If you have more than one child, they can play against each other. If you only have one to play, you can either have them race against the clock or see if they can get so many correct to win. Here are the questions:

1. Who in the story was supposed to be like God the Father?
  - a. Andy Thropes.
  - b. One of the hired men.
  - c. Theo Kurry.

\*c is correct.
2. Which man in the story was supposed to be like people in the world who need God's help to be forgiven and be his friend?
  - a. Andy Thropes.
  - b. Theo Kurry.
  - c. Jesse Kurry.

\*a is correct.
3. Which man in the story was supposed to be like Jesus who came into the world to save people from their sins so they can go to heaven and also to help them be his friends?
  - a. One of the hired men.
  - b. Theo Kurry.

c. Jesse Kurry.

\*c is correct.

4. Andy Thropes and his friends had gotten in trouble by stealing some cattle and causing trouble in the little town by the *Circle S*. In what way are all people in trouble and in need God's help?

\*Answer: We have done things God doesn't want us to do (we've sinned) and we will go to hell, unless we have God's help (Romans 3:23; 6:23).

5. Theo Kurry sent his son to help solve the problems of the hired men. When Jesus came into the world, what did he do to help with our sin problem?

\*Answer: He died on the cross to take the punishment for our sins so we would not have to (1 Peter 3:18).

6. If Andy Thropes and his men would have accepted Jesse's help, everything would have been o.k. and Theo would have forgiven them. What must we do to have God's help?

\*We must receive Jesus as savior (John 1:12).

7. The first time that Jesse went to the town to help he went in an old pickup truck and in old clothes. The men didn't think he was Theo's son. In what way was Jesus like this when he came into the world?

\*Answer: Because he was born to a man who was not rich and because he did not come in a great way (like a king), people didn't think he could be God's son and the savior (Isaiah 53:1-5; Luke 2:7).

8. When Jesse was beaten up and went into the hospital Andy Thropes and his friends were sure that he could not be Theo's son. This, they didn't think, could happen to Theo's real son. When Jesus died on the cross, people didn't think he could really be God's son and savior. Why?

\*Answer: Because they didn't think that God's son and the savior would die--especially on a cross (1 Cor.1:23).

9. When Jesse returned to the town the second time and showed that he had recovered and he beat up Andy and his friends, he not only finished dealing with the problem, he also showed them he really was Theo's son. How did Jesus' resurrection do the same thing?

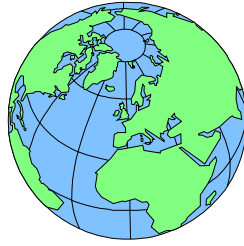
\*Answer: It proved who he was (Acts 2:36; Phil.2:6-11; Hebrews 1:6); completed his salvation work

(1 Corinthians 15:17); and made it possible for us to be resurrected someday (1 Corinthians 15:20-24).

10. Because Andy Thropes and his friends didn't welcome Jesse, they ended up in jail--not forgiven by Theo Kurry. What happens to those who do not receive Jesus?

\*Answer: They will be in hell (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; Revelation 20:14-15).

## "ALL AROUND ME"



"Today will be partly cloudy with a slight chance of drizzle turning to snow later on this afternoon. The high temperature will be around 35 with the low reaching into the lower 20's. The record high for this date was set back in...." Dennis Miller didn't really hear any more of the radio announcer's weather report. He had heard as much as he needed. He was glad that the weather was a little better than what his mom and dad had said it might be. When he had gone to bed the night before, he had thought that his first day of elementary basketball practice would be canceled. Since they only play five games and just practice three times, he didn't want to miss any. He had been looking forward to this all year.

So, he hopped out of bed on this Saturday morning at an unusually early 7:15. Normally, he would still be sound asleep then. But now, he was shutting off his alarm (which had been set to his favorite station) and started getting dressed. He had set his basketball shoes, shorts, shirt, and sweats out last night because he was so excited.

The excited seven year old was the first one to the breakfast table. He even had it set when his mom and dad came downstairs. They were shocked. After his dad had the Bible reading and prayer, they ate some cereal and then Dennis and his dad got in the pickup truck and took off for school.

As they pulled onto the road the older Randy Miller noticed that it was beginning to drizzle. He didn't think anything about it as he and his son talked about basketball. "So, Dennis, what position do you think you'll be playing?" "Probably either center or strong forward." "Strong forward?" the dad asked and slightly laughed. "Where did you learn about strong forwards?" "Oh come on dad, all the guys know about that." "Well," Randy began, "you should be a good center or strong forward, but with your height...." He never got the next words out. Dennis yelled, "Dad, watch out!" Just about that time Randy saw that a car

coming from the other direction had gone into a skid because the drizzle was unexpectedly freezing on the road. He tried to avoid the sliding car, but he couldn't. It hit their truck just behind where Randy Miller was sitting and knocked their truck off the road.

When the truck stopped Randy anxiously asked his son, "are you all right, Dennis?" "Yeah, I think so, Dad. My knee and eye hurt. But I think that's it." "I think my arm might be broken, son. I can't move it very well and there's quite a bit of pain." Just then, the driver of the other car came running up. His car ended up in the other ditch, but he was o.k. You could tell he was worried about the Millers who were still in the truck. "Are you o.k.?" he frantically yelled. "Yeah, we're o.k.!" Randy said. "I think my arm's broken, but my son is fine, except for some bumps and bruises." "Man, I'm so sorry. I just lost control of my car. I didn't mean to hurt you." "I know you didn't, son. Maybe you had better call for some help." "I'll get my cell phone out of the car and call the police and an ambulance," the young man responded. "O.k.," Mr. Miller said with a grimace and then a slight smile. "We won't be going anywhere."

The ambulance and a police officer arrived at the accident about the same time. As the emergency medical technicians were tending to and loading Randy and Dennis in the ambulance, the officer was also getting the story of what happened. The comment from the officer that they remember is, "From the looks of those skid marks and your truck, you guys are lucky that you were not killed. I don't know how you came out of this as well as you did!"

Both the father and son were taken to the hospital and checked over by a doctor. Randy did have a broken arm, as well as some bad bruises. Dennis just had some bruises which were going to be sore for a while. Lisa, Randy's wife, picked them up and took them home. On the way, Dennis asked his dad, "Dad?" "Yes, Dennis." "Do you think that we were lucky today?" "No, I don't. I think God took care of us. He is the one that kept us from getting hurt any worse or being killed." "Does that mean that he never lets Christians get killed?" "Oh no, son. There are plenty of times when Christians get hurt, have bad things happen, or are even killed. But we always know that God is with us no matter where we are. No matter where we go we can't get away from him. And that means that he can take care of us and we don't need to be afraid." "But how can God be everywhere all at the same time?" Dennis inquired. "I don't know," came his dad's reply. "I just know that he's powerful enough and big enough to be everywhere with

us and he teaches us that in the Bible." "I'm glad he was with us today, dad." "Me, too, Dennis; me too!"

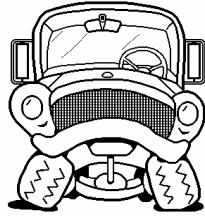
**Note To Parents:** Ask your children: What does this story teach us about God? Answer: That he is present everywhere and therefore we don't need to be afraid. Read the following from Psalm 139:1-10: "O Lord, you have searched me and known me! [2] You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. [3] You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. [4] Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. [5] You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. [6] Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it. [7] Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? [8] If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! [9] If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, [10] even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me."

This psalm teaches that God is present everywhere and an implication is that we need not be afraid (Hebrews 13:5). The primary implication in this psalm is something else. Ask your children: Why else is it important that God is present with us always? Answers: Because he knows all we do and therefore we should obey him (this psalm) and also he can help us tell other people about Jesus and minister to them (Matthew 28:20).

**Prayer:** God help me to remember that no matter where I am at, you are there. May I not be afraid and may I also try to obey you, because I know I can't hide actions or thoughts from you. Help me also to love others and tell them about you. Thank you for being with me no matter where I am in the world!

**Activity:** Play hide-and-seek with your children. Afterward, let them know that even though it may have been hard at times to find you, it is never hard to find God. He is always with us.

## "NO BATTERY, NO GO!"



Julie and Dennis Miller were pretty much like every 9 and 7 year old kid when it came to being in a church service. Even though both knew that church is important, they still struggled to sit still and listen. It always helped, though, when Pastor Zack Turner told a story. This was something that often got the attention of both children. Last Sunday morning he told a story that particularly fascinated them because it was about when he and his wife, Sue, got married. Pastor and Mrs. Turner had been at the church every since Julie and Dennis could remember. They thought it was fun to hear about when these two got married. Here was Pastor Turner's story and what it had to teach those at church that morning.

"When Sue and I got married," began the pastor as he introduced the sermon, "we had an unusual experience. You see, we had both just graduated from college three days before our wedding. We decided that the best thing for us to do was get married near where we had gone to school since we had so many friends who would still be in town. It was a fairly large wedding and we opened gifts afterward. By the time we got done and ready to leave it was almost 8:30 at night. We had to travel from Chicago through northern Indiana and up into Michigan where some friends of my family had a cabin we were using for our honeymoon. So, we were in a hurry to get away."

"But, as we got out to our car, we had a surprise waiting for us. I had just bought a brand new car with some inheritance from my grandfather. I certainly didn't expect to have any trouble with it starting. But that's exactly what happened: I turned the key in the ignition 2 or 3 times and it didn't even make a sound. I opened the hood to look at the engine and what I found was that everything was fine, except where the battery was supposed to be. There was nothing there! All that was there was a note that said, 'Look in the closet behind the platform in the church where the choir robes are.' It was signed, *T.S & J.F.* Tom

Sullivan and Jim Freerksen are two of my closest friends from college who also liked to play practical jokes. Needless to say, they had taken my battery. So, Sue and I went into the church and through the auditorium to the choir robe closet, fully expecting to find the car battery. Instead, what we found was another note. It read: 'Sorry, no battery, no go. You'll have to look some more. Try in the men's restroom by the church office.' It was signed *T.S. & J.F.* So I looked there and found another note on the mirror and it sent me somewhere else. After about 3 or 4 more of these notes, I finally found my battery in the church gymnasium--along with my two smiling college buddies. It's a good thing we were friends," Pastor Zack said smiling from the pulpit, "or I would have been just about ready to get my hands around their throats by that time."

"Now," the pastor continued, "I had a very nice car that, from the outside, looked like it could do everything it was made to do: Have the engine run, the wheels turn, windows go up and down, radio play, and, most importantly, to get us where we wanted to go. And, what's more, Sue and I wanted very badly to get to that cabin in Michigan. But you know what?" He paused for a few seconds. "None of that mattered because without the battery the car did not have the power to start and do the things it was made to do." Pastor Zack paused again and let that soak in. "We are like my car in many ways," the preacher went on. "Each one of us has everything, it seems, to do the things that God made us to do. We have arms to serve God, feet to carry his message to other people, mouths to share his Word, minds to think, a will to decide that we want to serve and love God and to love others. But there is a problem. Unless we have the power to help us do all those things we will never be able to do them. We need a battery and that battery is God's Holy Spirit. Without him, we are like a car that cannot run."

Pastor Turner went on to explain how that in order for a person to receive Jesus Christ as his savior, the Holy Spirit comes into that person. In fact, the Holy Spirit is the one who shows the person that he needs Jesus to save him in the first place. The Holy Spirit is the one who helps the person believe in Jesus. And then the Holy Spirit is the one who helps the Christian obey God. Without him, we just couldn't do anything God commanded.

**Note To Parents:** Share with your children the following facts about the Holy Spirit. You might also have them look up each of the passages and read them, if they are old enough to read.

1. Who the Holy Spirit is: He is God; the third person of the trinity. Acts 5:3-4. Mat.28:19.
2. The Holy Spirit is the one who shows people they sin. John 16:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:19.
3. The Holy Spirit is the one who shows people that they need Christ and helps them believe in him.  
1 Corinthians 2:14; Titus 3:5; John 3:5-8.
4. If a person has received Jesus Christ as savior, he has the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:9.
5. The Holy Spirit helps Christians obey God and live as a Christian should. Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 5:22-23.

Read Galatians 5:22-23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."

**Prayer:** God, help us to listen to your Holy Spirit and allow him to lead us in doing the things you want us to do. When he reminds us that something is wrong, help us not to ignore him. Thank you that you have worked things out where you can always be with us and help us.

**Activity:** Take your children out to your car or truck. Open the hood and show them your battery. If you want, explain to them how the battery works. Also, unhook the cables and try to start the car. Then reattach them and start it. Remind them that the Holy Spirit gives us the power to be a Christian and without him we couldn't do anything God wants of us.

## "THE BIBLE IS TRUE"



"Mike, I'd like for you to share with the rest of the family what happened at school today," said Randy Miller to his fifteen year old son. "I think they'd like to hear it." Once a week the Miller family had what they called family night. Unless something really big was going on at school, they all had to be home. No television was watched and they had a family meeting. At family meetings they got the chance to talk about things that might be bothering them or things that they wanted to do together as a family. Mr. and Mrs. Miller also talked about family rules. Sometimes they talked about how well the children were doing things and sometimes they had to talk about things that needed to be done better. Every week they spent time in prayer and often played some games afterward. If something special or exciting had happened to one of them, this was also shared. Just today Mike had an unusual experience which his dad wanted him to tell to the rest of the family.

"Well, I was in Mr. Wells' literature class and...." "What's literature class?" Dennis interrupted. "I'm trying to tell the story, Dennis. Don't interrupt!" "I just wanted to know what it is," the seven year old came back at his brother. "Mike is right, Dennis. You shouldn't interrupt," said Mrs. Miller. "Literature class," she went on to explain, "is when students read books and stories and talk about what they mean and how the authors wrote them." "Anyway, as I was saying," Mike began again, "I was in Mr. Wells' Literature class and we have been reading parts of the Bible lately. Mr. Wells thinks that the Bible is just literature and it's not true. Today we were going over the story of Jonah and the big fish. Mr. Wells said that this was an example of how the Bible is not true. It just tells stories which teach principles. He said that even if there was a man named Jonah, he couldn't have been swallowed by a big fish, stay in there three days, and then be spit up and live. It is not true, it is just a story."

"As the class talked about it," Mike kept telling what had happened, "there were a lot of kids who agreed with him. But I also knew that there were a few who didn't. I finally raised my hand. When he

called on me I asked if he would turn to Matthew 12:40 and read it. He did, out loud. "...Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish," is what it says. "So?" he asked me. I then asked him who said this? After looking at the verses for a few minutes he finally stated, 'Jesus.' I think he saw my point, because he went on to something else."

"What was your point? Julie asked. "My point was that if Jesus said what is in Matthew 12:40, then he believed that the account of Jonah in the Bible is true. I also stayed back with three other students and we talked to Mr. Wells after class about how Jesus believed the Bible was true and how it teaches that all which it says is true."

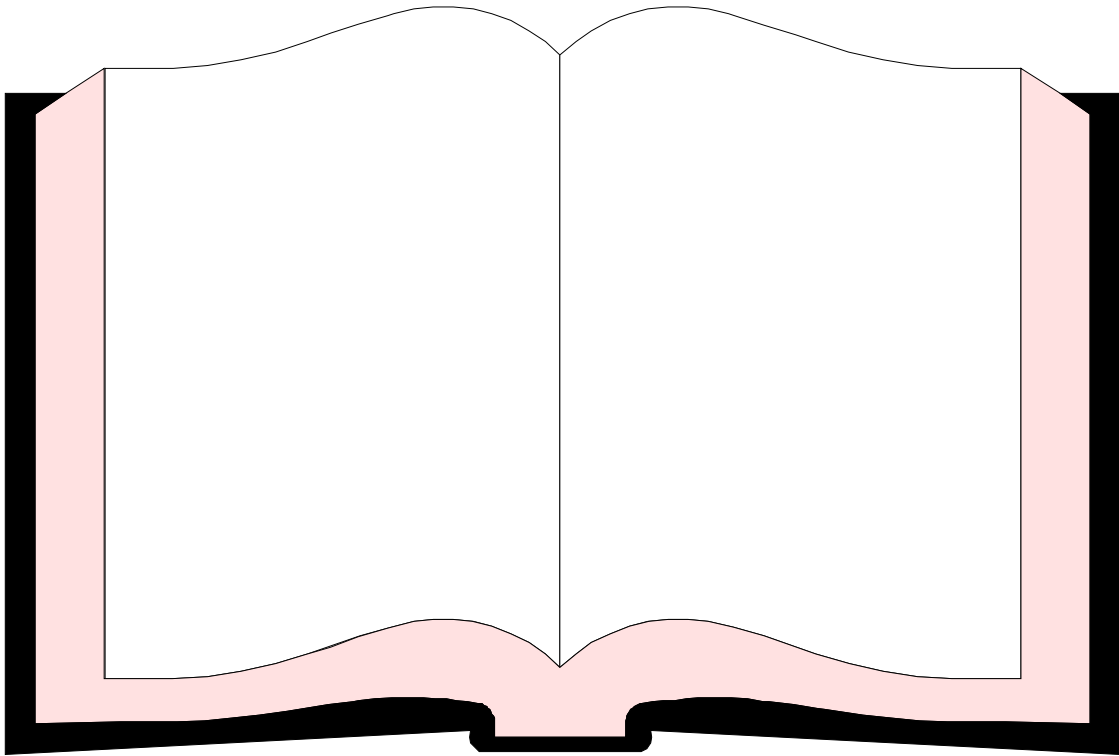
"Do you kids have any other questions?" Dennis raised his hand as if he did. "Yes Dennis," responded Mr. Miller. "Dad, may I have a snack?" "You may as we're playing a game later. But that wasn't the kind of questions I was talking about. Do you have any more questions about what happened with Mike?" No one did. "Well, Mike, your mom and I are very proud that you stood up for what you believed like that and also that you did it in a very loving way. Thanks for talking to Mr. Wells and not treating him unkindly for what he said. Perhaps, your life and what you have said might help him receive Christ as his savior someday." Mike was somewhat embarrassed and shook his head to acknowledge his dad's comments. "Why is it important that we know and believe that God gave us the Bible through those whom he had write it? Why is it important that it's true?" the dad asked his kids.

**Note To Parents:** Ask your children: If you were the Miller children, how would you answer these questions? Some possible answers: We can trust what it says; we should listen to what it says because it is true; we should read it and share it with others because it teaches us about what God is like and how to be forgiven of our sins and go to heaven--we can believe all this. Read the following verses from 2 Peter 1:20-21: "knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. [21] For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

Then read 2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is breathed out by God." Titus 1:2: "God...never lies...."

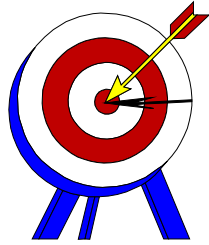
**Prayer:** God, thank you for the Bible and its true teachings to us. Help us to learn and obey what you say to us in it.

**Activity:** Your children have just learned that the Bible is true and this means that it is important and we should obey what it teaches. Have them write in the Bible (or you can write for them) some of the things the Bible teaches they should do and also some of the things it teaches about God . They can draw and color some pictures to go along with what they write.



## "MISSING THE TARGET"

MOTHER'S DAY



Randy and Lisa Miller had to go into Cartersville to meet with the man who does their taxes. So, they had told Dennis that morning he was to come straight home from school, do his chores, and they should be home by 4:30. They also reminded him that he was not to have any friends over to the house while they were gone--especially since Mike (his older brother) would still be at basketball practice and Julie (his older sister) would be at piano lessons.

After school Dennis got off the school bus and went into the house. He got some milk and cookies, changed his clothes, and went out to get his work done. It was only about twenty minutes later, though, that his best friends, Brian Fowler and Eric Bailey, came riding up on their bikes. "Hey, Dennis, let's play some!" Brian shouted as they rode up the Miller's lane. "Yeah, get your bike and we'll go riding around," Eric added. "I can't guys," came Dennis' reply. "I've got to stick around 'cause my parents are gone. But you guys can stay here, if you want." Dennis knew that he shouldn't have said that, but it would be a lot more fun to have Brian and Eric around than it would to be by himself and do chores.

"Hey, let's get your basketball out and play some," Brian stated. Both Brian and Eric loved the portable basketball goal which Mr. Miller had set up by their driveway. What was so cool about it was that he had lowered it to nine feet, so the seven year olds could more easily get the ball to the rim. By 4:00 Julie had gotten home and the boys had grown tired of basketball. They went into the Miller's garage to look around. "Hey, Dennis," Eric shouted as he saw the dart board over on the far wall. "Let's play some darts." As he was saying this, Julie was heading outside. "Dennis, you know that mom and dad don't want you playing darts unless someone is out here with you." After she left, Dennis told the two friends, "I don't see what it

could hurt. We'll play for a few minutes and then you guys better leave before my parents get home."

Everything was fine for the first two go-rounds. But on Eric's third turn he threw the dart wide to the right and it struck a can of black spray paint sitting on the shelf. The can began spraying paint all over the wall and ceiling. A couple of minutes later Eric and Brian were riding down the lane on their bikes as fast as they could go and Dennis was standing in the garage looking at the wall and ceiling, not able to believe what he saw! It looked like someone had come into the Millers' garage and painted a wild-looking black eight-point buck on their white paint. What was he going to do?

Well, Dennis didn't have long to worry about what would happen. Ten minutes later his mom and dad drove up. They told Dennis they were upset and disappointed with him for disobeying them. His discipline was that he had to call Brian and Eric's parents and tell them what happened, he couldn't watch television or have his friends over for two weeks, and he had to pay for the paint to cover up the new design in the garage. His dad also sat him down and talked to him about how important it is that he obey his parents. This is something that God wants him to do. He told Dennis that he and his friends not only missed the dart board target, he also missed God's target of obeying his mom and dad. And this can often lead to trouble.

**Note To Parents:** Read Ephesians 6:1-3: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. [2] 'Honor your father and mother' (this is the first commandment with a promise), [3] 'that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.'"

Ask your children: According to these verses, why is it important to obey parents? Answers: Because it is what God wants, especially of those who love him--and if we love him, we will want to please him; and also because most of the time things will go better in your life and you will avoid some problems like Dennis had. Also ask them, Why do you think God gives us parents and wants us to obey them? Answer: Parents are God's helpers to lead and teach their children what God wants them to do and also what he is like.

**Prayer:** God, thank you for our parents and for the help they give us. Thank you that they can teach us how you want us to live. Help us to think well of them and what they say and to obey them. Help us also to do the same with all adults whom you have given to help us, such as teachers.

**Activity:** Sit down and write out with your children reasons why each of you are thankful for your parents. This could include things they have done for you (or continue to do) and how they have helped you. (Your children are writing this about you and you are writing these about your parents.) Then, for added fun, see if you can take these things and make up a little song. A suggestion: Use the tune of "Jesus Loves Me" and substitute your words. Kids will enjoy playing around with this. When you are done you and the kids might even want to sing the song for their grandparents, letting them know that the song is written both about you and them.



**YOUR LIST:**

**YOUR SONG:**

## "WHAT IS A FAMILY?"

### VALENTINE'S DAY



"That's it, I'm out of cards!" shouted Julie Miller happily. "You little rascal," began her grandpa Richard Chambers who was sitting across the table. "That's the third game in a row you've won. I'm not gonna ever play Uno with you again!" he said teasingly. "Well, I just know how to win, Grandpa," she responded. "Can we play again?" her brother Dennis asked. "I want to win a game." "Honey, I want to take a break," Grandma Chambers broke into the conversation. "How about some hot chocolate?" Everyone responded with a "yes". "I'll help you, mom," Lisa Miller said as she and grandma went into the kitchen. "Well, I wonder how your dad and Mike are getting along with that new little calf?" he asked the two children who had remained at the table. "I hope they don't have to call in the vet on the first calf of the season." "When mom called over to the house a little while ago, Mike said that Dad was havin' trouble," Lisa informed them.

As all three were gathering up the Uno cards and began putting them back into the box, Julie spoke up, "Grandpa, we were looking for something to watch on T.V. last week--I think it was Valentine's day--and one of the programs had two women getting married to each other. Do you think that's right?" "What do you think?" was his response. "I don't know. I have seen on the news though that some places have said that two women can marry each other or two men can marry each other." "But that doesn't make it right does it?" Grandpa asked. Both kids sat and shrugged their shoulders. Finally Julie looked up, "I heard some older kids talkin' about it at school the other day and they said that we should accept people like that--they are families just like we are."

Grandpa Chambers sat for a few seconds and said nothing, but both children could tell that he was thinking about what to say. Finally, he broke the silence. "Do you kids remember that old wood splitter that I put together behind the barn?" "Sure, grandpa," came Dennis' reply. "That's the one you put together from a bunch of old tractor and truck parts around the farm." "Do you kids remember when your dad was

here one day and he was trying to use it and couldn't figure it out?" "Yeah," Dennis laughed. "He was pretty upset because he couldn't figure it out. He called it a contraption!" Both kids laughed as they remembered the funny sight of their dad (usually pretty good with machinery) trying to figure out the homemade machine. "Why do you think I was able to run the wood splitter better than your dad?" "Because you made it, Grandpa," Julie blurted out after thinking about it for a few seconds. "You know how everything works and what to do to get it going and working. Dad didn't know all that until you taught him."

"That's right, Julie," Grandpa said with a smile on his face. "And that's just the way it is with God and families. You see, God made the world and he made families. So, he ought to know more than anyone else about what a family is and how a family can work the best. When people try to figure it out on their own, they're like your dad with the wood splitter. Because they didn't make the family, it's hard for them to know how it works the best. But God made the family--that's what Genesis tells us. And ideally, he wants a family to be a man and woman living together who are married. And if he blesses them with children, he wants those children to live with, to be loved by, and to be raised and taught by their parents. At least that's what we learn in Deuteronomy 6 and Ephesians 6."

"But," Julie interrupted, "there are kids in my class at school whose parents are divorced and one girl had her dad die last year because of cancer. Aren't they families?" "Sure they are, honey. The ideal for a family in God's eyes is for parents and children to be together. But sometimes one or both parents die. So kids live with one parent or they may even live with grandparents or someone else. Sometimes children live with adopted parents or with foster parents. Those are still families. The thing that we need to remember is that God has taught us the best way to live (just like I know the best way to run the wood splitter since I made it). We need to listen to him, whether it is a family with two parents and children who have been born to them or something else. But, people should not go against what God teaches. God doesn't want parents to get divorced, Jesus said in Matthew 19. And, as the Bible teaches us in Genesis 19 and Romans 1 people are not to marry people of the same sex. That is sin. So, two women who live together or a man and woman who live together without being married, are not real families in God's eyes, since that is not what he has taught us."

"But what do we do about families which are divorced or where the man and woman are not married, Grandpa?" asked the nine year old girl. "We love them, Julie, but that doesn't mean that we have to accept divorce as if it's no big deal or have to accept people living together without being married or anything else which God says is wrong. We want to love them and particularly with divorce realize that sometimes it happens and their lives have to go on and we want to help them. But we must never think that means divorce is the answer for problems in marriage or that it's o.k. for people to live together without being married. Do you see what I'm saying?" "Yeah, I think so, grandpa." "Good, let's go out in the kitchen and see if that hot chocolate is ready." "I'm for that, grandpa," Dennis said as he jumped up from the table and ran to where his mom and grandma were pouring the hot liquid into the mugs.

**Note To Parents:** Read some of the passages of the Bible which Grandpa Chambers spoke of when explaining the family to the children. Genesis 1:27-28: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. [28] And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." Matthew 19:5-6, 9: "and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.' [6] So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.... And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."

Ephesians 6:4: "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." Romans 1:26-27: "For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; [27] and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error."

**Prayer:** God, thank you for our family. Help us to remember that if we get married when we are older, you want us to marry Christians and to stay together for life. Help us to love people who have not listened to your teachings about the family, but also to remember that does not mean we have to think what they have done is right. Help us remember that not listening to you will make us get hurt.

**Activity:** Parents, read out loud Ephesians 5:21-6:4 to your children. See if you and they can find out what God teaches in this passage that each family member is to do. Write down what is said for each family member by the picture of that member on the next page and talk about what each instruction implies for your family. After you're done, the kids can color the picture.



## "SHAMROCKS AND SNAKES"

### ST. PATRICK'S DAY



Ian Crossley was a pastor in England. He, his wife, Cindy, and their two sons had come to the United States to visit Cindy's parents and also to speak in some churches. Ian himself was from England, so everyone in the church where the Randy Miller family attended enjoyed hearing Ian speak. Julie and Dennis both enjoyed hearing not only his accent, but also the story he told during the sermon.

"Many of you know," Mr. Crossley began, "that today is St. Patrick's day. People throughout the United States and also Ireland celebrate this day because it was on March 17 that a man by the name of Patrick died. Many people focus on some of the legends about his life. For example, some say that he chased away all the snakes from Ireland by beating on a drum. Others claim that he used shamrocks to teach people about the trinity of God and that's why it became so popular in Ireland. And now, today it is common to have parades in his honor and to share the stories about him. But many of you may not know the true story behind Patrick. Since it is a story which speaks of missions, since Patrick was originally from my home country of England, and since today is St. Patrick's day, I thought it would be good to learn about this man who lived 1600 years ago."

"Patrick," Ian went on, "was born in about 389 A.D. in England. His dad was a deacon in the church and a local government leader. He often went to hear his dad preach to people. When he was sixteen years old his village was attacked by a group of Irish soldiers. They took him captive and made him go back with them to Ireland. For six hard years he was a slave in this new land and was forced to work as a shepherd. Many days he had too little to eat or to wear to keep him warm. He finally escaped and made it onto a ship which got him back to England. Before making it home, he was taken captive again for a short time. When this happened, he almost starved to death. But, it was also during this time that Patrick received Jesus Christ as his savior. Patrick began to believe that God wanted him to go back to Ireland and tell those

people about God. Though he had little education and problems which made it hard for him to learn, he went back to tell them about Jesus. Though many of the people who lived in that land did not like Patrick because he loved Jesus, he served there for over 30 years. Patrick helped build over 300 churches in Ireland and to train many other missionaries to go to other countries."

Ian completed his story about Patrick and then he said: "I'd like for us to talk about what we can learn from this missionary to Ireland."

**Note To Parents:** Ask your children: What do you think we can learn from Patrick? Answer: How God can take care of us when bad things happen and also how that God wants us to tell other people about Jesus. Read Matthew 28:19-20: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

**Prayer:** God, help us to tell other people about Jesus. Help us also know how to pray for and to help missionaries who travel to other countries to tell people about Jesus.

**Activity:** Have your children draw a picture of a shamrock. Then think of three different things you can do to tell other people about Jesus and write one on each of the leaves. Try to include at least one thing you can do to help a missionary. Examples of things to write: Invite a friend to church. Pray for a missionary. Write a missionary. Send money to a missionary or inner-city mission.

## "PUMPKINS AND SAINTS"

HALLOWEEN/REFORMATION DAY (October 31)



"Grandpa Richard, Grandpa Richard! Are you out here?" "I sure am Dennis, come on out with me. I was just sharpenin' some of the blades off our lawn mowers and gettin' 'em ready for next year. Boy, I'm sure glad we don't have to mow the grass anymore. I was gettin' tired of that. So, what are you up to, Dennis?" "Oh, I just rode my bicycle down, Grandpa because I didn't have anything else to do." "You look a little down, Dennis. What's the matter?"

"Oh, mom's being totally unfair." "Oh, I see," said the grandfather as he put the blade down and turned off his grinder to give his full attention to Dennis. "Why do you say that?" "Well, Grandpa, she won't let me dress up like a dead man for Halloween. Eric Bailey, Brian Fowler, and I were all gonna dress up like we were dead people who had come back to life. We were gonna get some of that stuff you put on your skin to make it look real pale and then some of that stuff that looks like blood and some real scary masks. We were goin' out trick-or-treatin' and were gonna scare some of the girls." "So, your mom is saying you can go trick-or-treatin', but you just can't dress up like that. Is that what you're saying?" "Yeah, the seven year old responded. "I don't think it's fair. Eric and Brian get to dress up like that." "But why do you think your mom won't let you dress up like that?" "She says that it's o.k. to go out and get candy, but we don't want to make Satan and his demons look good by making light of bad things he does or by making some evil things look good, or something like that."

"Dennis, sit over here by me," Richard Chambers said as he pulled up a little bench and sat down in his garage. "Let me tell you a story. A long time ago in the lands now known as Ireland and England people used to have a holiday on October 31 which they thought of as the end of their year. November 1 was like New Years day for them. They believed that with the end or death of the year the god of death allowed the

souls of the dead to return to their earthly homes for the evening. So they honored this god of death on that night. It was in later years that some people in these same lands who had become Christians decided that they still wanted to celebrate this night, but in a different way. Instead of celebrating death and the god of death, they decided to be thankful to God on November 1 for Christians who had already died, but who had been very helpful to them or other people. They called November 1 *All Saints Day*. The service they had on the night before (October 31--the day of Halloween now) was call Allhallowmas. As a result, that night came to be known as Allhallow eve (or e'en) or just Halloween. But as years went by, Dennis, even though the Christian name *Halloween* was kept, some of the old things crept back in--celebrating death, the dead, and ghosts and witches. And now in modern times Halloween has become a very important time for witches and those who worship Satan instead of God. So, you see, Dennis, your mom doesn't want you or Julie to be pulled into any of that bad stuff or to make it look like it is fine or harmless, when Satan can hurt us very badly."

"What you should do, son, is be thankful to God around October 31 and November 1 for some of the Christians who have now died, but helped us and many others: People such as Paul, Peter, John. We can even be thankful for people such as Martin Luther whom God used to help tell many people about Jesus and stop listening to preachers who weren't telling them the truth. In fact we call the time that Martin Luther lived the Reformation and we celebrate it on October 31--the same day as Halloween. It might be fun to dress up like him or like Bible characters. But even if you don't choose to do that, Dennis, I think that you're mom's right--you should dress up like more fun and good characters and not bad evil ones."

"Well, I guess I'll have to think about all of this grandpa." "I tell you what, Dennis. Let's go inside and get some cookies and milk. I happen to know that Grandma got some Oreos at the store this afternoon. It's lots easier to think while eatin' those." "O.k.," said Dennis.

**Note To Parents:** Read Ephesians 4:27: "And give no opportunity to the devil." Also read Exodus 22:18: "You shall not permit a sorceress to live."

**Prayer:** God, help us not to do anything which would make evil look good or which would make us think that the devil cannot hurt us. Thank you also for many Christians who have already died but who have helped out a lot of people.

**Activity:** See if you can find out some information about Martin Luther--either at the library, in an encyclopedia, or on a computer encyclopedia. Dress up like people of that day and act out some of his life--especially that part which got the Reformation going.