

## **Story Time with Jesus\_Bible Stories 1-150**

### **Introduction to “Story Time with Jesus”**

#### **To You—From Jesus**

Come here, children! Big children, little children, medium-sized children, children from the country, children from the city, children who live in little villages, or on the mountains cold and windy, children with a family, children who are alone, children who are sad, children who are happy, children who have lots to spare, children with hardly anything at all.

I’m like your big Daddy! Do you have a Daddy? Maybe you don’t, but even if you do, all children miss being with them at some time. Daddies can’t be there all the time if they have lots of work to do, or need to travel. But I’m a Dad that never, ever goes away from you.

If you ever feel alone, or scared, or like something is too hard for you, or others don’t understand what you are feeling, or you don’t have a friend you can talk with, remember that I want to be right there beside you, taking good care of you, talking with you, being your friend, and helping you throughout your life.

You can’t see Me like you can see others, but that doesn’t mean I can’t see you! I know just where you are. I know what colour clothes you are wearing right now. I can see into your eyes and tell not only what colour they are, but what you are feeling.

I know what you dreamt last night. I know what someone just said to you and how you feel about it. I know what you are going to eat next. I even know your name—all your names! The good and friendly names others call you, and other names that you’d rather not be called.

Maybe you wonder, if I know everything and I love you so much, why don’t I change things and make them just perfect so everyone will be happy, feel loved, and have all the things they need?

Well, even though it seems that it is taking a longer time to do that than you or others would like it to take, I am going to do just that! One day I am going to make the world all wonderful, beautiful, and a place where people are happy and well cared for.

There is something that I need to do first though, and I need you to help Me. I’m going to tell you a story, a long story. Actually, it’s made up of many little stories. In fact, this story has been going on for several thousands of years. It won’t take that long for Me to tell it to you though!

I want to tell you the important parts of this long story, and I need you to listen very well. Through this story you will get to know what I am like, and perhaps understand a bit why things are the way they are in the world now, and best of all, what’s going to happen next. That’s the best part!

Can you do that for Me? Can you listen to Me now while I talk with you, learn from this long story, and tell it to your friends? Because the more people that hear about this, and most importantly, the more people that get to know Me and what I’m like, the sooner I can come and change things for the better.

If you listen carefully, I may even whisper secrets to you while you read. We’re going to have fun, and best of all, things in your life will get better.

Maybe not everything will change that you'd like to have different, because things take time. But I want to make your heart happier, and give you hope that before too long everything will be more wonderful than you have ever dreamed possible.

I love you! You! Every one of you—yes, even you! You with the curly hair. You with the freckles on your cheeks. You without the use of some part of your body. You who come from a rich and wealthy family. You who have lost everything—your home, your family, your brothers and sisters.

I love you who live in faraway places. You who are crowded in a large city with so many others. You who live without a house. You who live in a fancy place, but feel so lonely. You who struggle to learn things, and find most things difficult. You who know many things, but haven't had the chance to get to know the most important thing of all: That I love each one of you!

I love you when you are sad, or mad, or indifferent. I love you when you are happy and joyful, and filled with a pleasant nature. I love you when you don't know what you are meant to do or be. I see and I know you and I want to help you find the answers to your questions and bring peace to your heart.

I have the answers and solutions to each of the world's problems, and I am here to help you—yes, you!

I'm here to be your friend, whether you have a lot of friends, or seem to have none at all. I will be the friend that stays the closest to you, that laughs when you laugh, that cries when you do, that has all the cool ideas for any situation you might be in. I just love to be with you. I will never, ever leave you, but always stay by your side. Would you like that?

Ask Me to be that friend to you. Ask Me to wipe away the sad memories of your past. Ask Me to forgive you for your wrongs and mistakes, and I will. I can do that, you know. Then ask Me to help you to build your new and wonderful life, with Me beside you, helping you, and teaching you My loving ways of living.

Just say to Me, "Dear Jesus, I want You to be my friend, to forgive me for the wrongs that I have done, and to make my life new. Please fill my heart with Your love and joy!"

That's all you have to do! I will come to your side, and I will be in your heart and involved in your life. We'll be the best of friends ever, and I'll love you forever.

Of course there will be failures, you will still make mistakes, or do things that you will regret. It's just part of being on Earth. But with Me at your side, I can help you to keep going and to keep trying to do what is right and good, and to find the reasons why you are here in the first place.

As you love Me and are My friend, and as you try your best to show love to others, caring for their needs and being a friend to them, beautiful and wonderful things may start to happen. So listen to this story that I want to tell you. I'm right there, beside you, telling you these things. I so enjoy this time with you.

With love, Jesus

## Bible Stories

### Chapters 1-12

- 1-God Creates the Earth
- 2-God Creates the Universe
- 3-Animals Are Made
- 4-The First Man on Earth
- 5-The First Woman on Earth
- 6-God Rests
- 7-God's Garden, and His Gardener
- 8-Trees and Choices
- 9-Enoch and Methuselah
- 10-A Good Man for a Great Job
- 11-Rain and a Rainbow
- 12-The Tower of Babel

(Jesus speaking: )

### **God Creates the Earth**

The first part of the story starts with My very first friends on Earth. Can you imagine a time when the Earth had only two people on it? Well, even before that, there weren't any at all! Let Me tell you about it.

Before people were made and began living on Earth, it was a mass of nothing. Nothing but darkness and water, but that was going to change, and in only one week's time it was a thriving, beautiful planet.

God made the world, the sky, and then, to fill them, He created everything else. With just the word of His mouth, everything was formed. He took six days to make the planet we are on, as well as the surrounding stars, planets and Sun which contribute to life on Earth.

What do you think was the first thing that God created?

What makes things grow and brings beauty? Light! God said, "Let there be light!" and that was all it took. Right then and there, light was created.

So, on the first day of His creation project He made light, and all the amazing aspects of light. Light makes it possible for people to see colour, it gives energy and helps things grow, and there are many other things light can do.

God, of course, doesn't need it in order to look around; the Bible says He can see in the light and in the dark (Psalm 139:12). It's not as if He had to turn on a light in order to see what He was doing, but God loves light! He's called "the Father of lights" (James 1:17). Wherever He is, in whatever He's doing, He brings light.

On the second day of the world's creation, another very important thing was made—air! Air to breathe, the atmosphere, the sky. God put a layer of air all around the world. He divided the water and put some down on the Earth, and a layer of water way up above the atmosphere or firmament, as it was called.

On the third day things really started to get fun, because that's when Earth started to take shape—like the way you do with a big mud pie, or Play-Dough! God formed the land, the islands, the mountains; He chose where to put seas and oceans, and where to place the continents, and what shape the land should have.

He didn't just leave it all brown, though. God turned it into the most amazing art project! He added new beauty to the planet, covering it and decorating it with plants, trees, flowers, bushes, vines, grass, waterfalls, trickling streams, forests, meadows, beaches, grassy hills, orchards, and on and on.

Of course, the vegetation did more than just look pretty. God knows how to make anything look beautiful, since He loves beautiful things. He's like an artist, and can make each thing that is useful and needed look wonderful, colourful, and perfect. Trees, grass, plants, and all sorts of greenery would provide food, shade, and shelter for the people and animals He was about to create.

What kinds of food did He make? Fresh, juicy fruits like oranges, mangos, pineapples, watermelons, and strawberries. Crunchy coconuts, cashew nuts, walnuts and other nuts. Grains like rice, corn, oats, wheat and many more. Beans of many types and colours. Vegetables of all sorts, like carrots, beets, cucumbers, tomatoes, lettuce, zucchini, bell peppers and countless others. He made food that grew rich and full of the nutrients and vitamins that Earth's new inhabitants would need.

There was still something to do before man and animals could live there, though. (We'll learn about that in our next story!)

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### **God Creates the Universe**

On the fourth day, God took a look at the area surrounding planet Earth, as it glided so gracefully through space, supported, amazingly enough, by nothing. If God wants planets to float or move around without anything physically holding them, then that's what happens!

This was the day to make the surrounding neighbourhood for Earth, and to hook up its power—as someone would for a town in need of electricity. God made the Sun, Moon, planets, and stars, giving each one important jobs to do—things that would help to support life on Earth and make Earth what it needed to be. He created each one to have special functions.

God made the Sun to give light, as well as to bring growth to plants and heat to the planet. The Sun's position in the sky can tell us what time it is. Did you know that the first clock invented was based on the shadow that the Sun's rays made? A sundial!

Some other things God placed in space were the Moon, stars, and other planets. There were so many reasons for these. The Moon and stars give light.

The Moon is also like a big calendar in the sky. Because of the way God made it to work together with the Sun, it can help people know what part of the month they are in, or how long a week is. Months and years can be measured and counted with the help of the Sun and Moon.

The Moon has many other uses and jobs. Of course the most obvious reason for the Moon and the stars is that they are also like beautiful night lights in the sky, giving a silvery light.

Maybe the stars don't seem so bright where you are, but if you were to go out to a place in the countryside where there are no city lights, you might be surprised at the light they can give. You might also be amazed at how many stars you can see—so many more than you can see at night in a place where there are electric lights.

Did you know that when God created the Earth, the Sun, and all the other stars and planets, He gave them something called gravity? Without gravity, people and animals would have a hard time doing much of anything. Even the Earth is held in place by the gravity of the Sun. Without it, Earth would go wandering off and become cold and dark somewhere far away from the Sun.

Imagine trying to walk down a pathway, and instead of going forward you start to float, and turn upside down, and twirl around in the air. Now, that probably sounds rather fun, and it is fun! But if you want to do anything, it's not easy if everything you need to do a project with also starts flying around and moving out of your grasp.

"Now where did I put that hoe? I need to plant something ... Oh, there it is! It's somewhere up in the top of that tree! It must have floated there." That wouldn't help you, would it?

Animals, too, needed to stay in certain places, so they could have what they need. Some often need to be in the air or up high, while others need to stay near the grass, or even in the dirt. Some need to be on rocky mountains, others in trees, and yet others near or in rivers or lakes or the ocean.

To make everything work well in this creation, there needed to be order, organisation, and a way for everything to have what it needs. Gravity helps to provide this.

Though God made other planets, Earth is the one that's fit for life! He made it to have all the things needed to sustain the life forms He was going to create. Learning more about the planets would be an interesting study, and many of their uses and qualities are not yet known to man, but it's fun learning and finding out more about them.

Sometimes you can even see a planet in the sky, shining like a big star. There is so much to be discovered, and it will take a long time until man on Earth learns about even a small part of the wonders of the universe. There is a lot to be learnt and discovered—probably more than you or others will ever come to know. Isn't that fascinating?

Life on Earth and the surrounding universe hold so many things of interest that you and others will never discover all that there is to know! But isn't it fun learning things? I like watching when people finally figure something out, or when they make a discovery.

Sometimes the first time someone says they have “discovered” something, it's not exactly the way they think it is, and they've barely started to understand it. It takes some time before they know it fully, and after a while, more and more is understood.

The whole universe is one big, enormous school! It's full of fascinating wonders to learn about, things to see and do, and a multitude of all sorts of learning experiences, both in nature and among people.

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### **Animals Are Made**

On the fifth day the living environment was ready for God to begin placing creatures in it. Everything they needed to enjoy and survive was there. On this day He started with the fish and sea creatures, then created birds of all types. These were the first animals created.

God told these first birds and fish and all the creatures that lived in water to “multiply”—that means to make more! God wanted more and more of them to fill the sea, the air and the trees.

He liked to see the happy creatures having fun in His new world. He enjoyed hearing the songs of the birds, and the sounds of many sea creatures too—sounds you seldom know about or rarely hear.

He liked seeing the fish exploring the pathways of the seas and rivers, discovering all that they do down there. It was marvellous to Him. God liked them all, and was ready to do the same with the land—fill it with life!

On the sixth day God added lots more! He created many types of animals on the Earth: animals that would walk, crawl, hop, leap, climb, hang, jump, glide, wiggle, creep, stand, trot, and so forth.

What a lively world it was becoming! Some animals were in forests, others on the mountains, some in trees, some under the ground, others on the wide-open plains, some on plants, others in jungles. And so the world was filled.

God saw it and thought, “This is good!” He liked each one. They each added something unique and special to the world. Each one was different. Each one was

special. God told them what to eat: grass, plants, and herbs. Those were to be the food for all the animals to eat.

What a peaceful world it was, with curious and gentle creatures living on it. Now the world was finally ready for His best and most wonderful creation of them all. He could now place mankind on Earth.

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### **The First Man on Earth**

Now the world was ready with everything that was needed for the next and best part of creation—people! It was a wonderful and fun place for a human to live in, and there was plenty that would keep him interested and active.

I knelt down, running My fingers through the mud; I cried a tear, which blended with the moist soil. It was as if I could feel what people's hearts would feel, the hard times, and the difficulties that would be known and felt by mankind when they were created.

Yet My face brightened. The laughter and joy that would also be known would more than make up for the difficulties.

We would be friends, and no matter how hard things would get on Earth, I would be around to help, to protect, to secure, and to enjoy each person's journey on Earth, alongside them, although from a divine dimension.

There would be tears, pain and hurt, for such is life, but many joys would fill the lives of those who made Me a part of their existence. There would be hard times too, yes. It wouldn't be easy. But the love that would be felt would more than make up for it. Yes, God would make a man.

This man would learn as he lived and experienced things on Earth. He would take care of the world, —or so God would ask him to, but he'd have to make the choice to do so on his own.

It wasn't something that God would force on people. They would have to decide to do what was right, to obey, to make choices to love, to benefit others, or to live life as they wished. Choice! That would be a key element of their life on Earth.

God could have made all mankind to be as the animals, or as the little creatures who just do what they are programmed to do: build a nest, search for food, sleep, raise young, and so forth—always the same thing in the same way, and doing only the things that they were meant to do.

God made something different though, something unique. He made people to resemble Him, to be made in "His likeness". God created people to have personality, to have the freedom to choose, to have feelings, to know love, to communicate in many different ways, to create, to design, and to live a long time.

Yes, He made them to live a long time. Things are very different now, of course, because of the choices made by mankind, and changes that happened as a result. People don't live as long anymore, and some of the experiments and creations of man haven't helped to make the planet better.

God still loves each one anyway, and hopes that each one will communicate with Him and recognise that He's the One that made them, and most of all to know how very much God loves them—no matter who they are or where they are.

In time, God will help to bring all things back to the beauty of creation, back to the way things were when Earth's time began. It will take a while, but things will eventually be made new again.

At that time people will come to know more about God's love, just as He's always hoped for—and live lovingly too. People will learn to be more like Him, the God of love, the One they were fashioned after when they were first created.

People were made for love, and by love, and in love, and when they reflect His love in their personalities and ways of operating, they can make Earth a marvellous and special place to have the privilege of living on.

So God, using the dirt, the soil of the Earth, formed His best and most special creation of all—for whom everything else was created. God made a man! He then put breath and life into him. He was now an alive, breathing, thinking, amazing man!

Ah! God smiled to see Adam, the first man ever made. God laughed, and enjoyed watching him wake and discover where he was. Adam had lots to learn, and God would be the One to teach him, like a loving father with his son.

God gave him a job to do. God had created the world and all the creatures that filled it. But he'd saved a fun job for Adam, something that he could do.

Adam couldn't make things from nothing and make them live, but God gave Adam a smart and thinking mind. He could use that and come up with names for each of the animals that had been created.

Imagine what a brilliant mind Adam had! He named each creature, remembered what he called them, and was able to teach his children. He got to be a part of the creation of the world in this way. It was fun for him.

As amazing as each creature was, there was nothing on Earth that was made just like Adam. He was the only person around.

Can you imagine being the only person on Earth? Maybe it would be nice for a while. No one to take your things, no one to give you a hard time, no one to disturb you, no one to mess things up. But also no one to talk to who really understands what it's like being on Earth. No one to help you. No one to love or to be loved by. No families, no children—just you. So Adam was feeling these things as he did his special new job of naming all the animals. He felt lonely.



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## The First Woman on Earth

Isn't it amazing how important love is? You could be in the most beautiful paradise, like Adam was. You could have everything that you want, as much of it as you want, and have everything to yourself, and still feel sad. People want to know they have friends.

God was Adam's friend, but it was different. He was more like a heavenly Father to Adam. God would talk with him, teach him, and help him, but Adam felt he needed more. He wanted to have a friend in human form. Someone to talk with, to enjoy exploring the world with, who would laugh with him at the things they found funny, someone to wonder and be amazed with the discoveries made, together. He wanted someone to be close to, someone he could care for and who would help care for him, and to have a family.

God wasn't done creating. There was more to be made. And because Adam had to wait a while to have a close friend on Earth, he now would appreciate having one more than if he'd had someone there with him all the time.

God put Adam into a deep sleep and did the most amazing thing. What God did next showed why He didn't make a man and a woman at the same time. Since He wanted to make the woman extra special and dear to Adam, God wanted to make her out of a part of Adam.

So when Adam was in a special deep sleep, God took a rib bone from Adam and with it created a wonderful present for him. Imagine Adam's surprise, after waking from a nice refreshing nap, that the thing that he'd most wanted—a friend, a companion, a woman—was there for him.

It felt better than waking on Christmas morning and seeing presents there. He was so, so happy. Adam realized that God knew his heart's wishes, the thoughts he had, the feelings he felt, and his needs. God truly knew it all.

Even though God wasn't in human form, and wasn't there in the same way that others on Earth are, He knows everything, down to the tiniest feelings and thoughts of each person on Earth.

When Adam saw this new human being, this person that God had made to be his companion, someone made much like him, he loved her! She was perfect for him. God even let him name her. "She will be called, 'woman'", he said, and her specific name was "Eve", which meant the "mother of all living".

The two friends—Adam and Eve—were so happy to not only have a wonderful place to live and to know that God loved them and would give them all they needed, but to now have each other to live and learn with.

The adventure of life had begun for them, but God still wanted to create more. He has more ideas of new things to make all the time, more ideas than your mind can ever even imagine!

He wanted to make more people; he wanted to make children. He liked Adam and Eve so much, and thought they were just the greatest creations He'd ever made! They could talk to Him, and He would listen. God would be as much a part of their lives as they let Him—as much as they included Him.

God would love to let them also feel a bit of that joy—the joy of seeing new creations and new people learning and growing and loving each other. He wanted Adam and Eve to have the joy of having children. God knew how fun this would be. God would form a new little life, a new person, inside of Mother Eve when the time was right. He'd choose how the baby would look, what he would be like, and what job he would do on Earth.

Each person on Earth is there for a reason, you know. Each one that is made comes with a job. Just as God gave Adam a job to do when He was created, so do you and others on Earth have a reason to be here and a job to do.

Do you think God stopped creating after just those six days? Are you kidding? Look at all the types of people on Earth! So many different kinds. More animals, fish, bugs and creatures are being discovered all the time. And each kind of animal has several types, with varied appearances, sizes and colours.

God loves the world and is continuing to be involved and trying to make things the best He can. Even as the world changes, or some places get ruined, or the deserts grow, or the rain forests get smaller through being cut down, or some animals go extinct, or the environment isn't what it used to be, there are still many more animals and creatures on the planet than there were when the Earth was first made. After all, that was part of His plan and His job and commission to those first creatures. God told the creatures of all kinds, from fish to birds, from large animals to tiny bugs, and to Adam and Eve: "Fill the Earth".

God wanted them to make more, to have children that would grow and have families too, and on and on the creation would grow. God has helped animals adapt and learn to live in all kinds of places and climates. Climates change, mankind builds and invents, and the world keeps changing in different ways that affect the creatures.

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### **God Rests**

On day seven, after all was said and done, God took time to enjoy life—the life that He created, the thriving and beautiful planet filled with wonderful and amazing things. God rested from His work, and He asked the people that He made to do the same—to take time to rest, to enjoy what they've worked hard for.

Having time for work and play and rest helps to keep your life balanced as well. It's not enough, however, to just be sitting down for long hours and think that you're resting, if what you are doing isn't reviving you, refreshing you, giving you strength of body, heart, and mind to tackle the next challenges that come your way.

To truly live this principle laid out by the Creator of the world, your life needs to contain balance and time to restore itself, restock and be strengthened. Your body needs sufficient sleep. You need time to rest in order to be healed. You should not strain your eyes by looking at a computer or TV screen for too long.

You need time to step away from things that are difficult to get a fresh new perspective, to get a break from whatever you normally deal with each day. You need time to laugh, to enjoy life, to enjoy friends and family. You need time to play. You need time in nature to refresh you in body and mind. You need time with God, the Creator, to listen to His Word, to listen to His voice, and to talk to Him.

Why do you need to have balance, and time to rest in these and other ways? Because although your body was made in the image of God and is the most amazing machine that was ever made, it can still wear out, just as machines do. Humans can't go on and on without consequences for lack of sufficient rest, care and fun.

Besides, God didn't just make people to be work machines. He made men and women to enjoy the world He created. So it's more fun for Him, and you, when you do just that: Enjoy a happy life, and at the same time enjoy Him as your friend.

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### **God's Garden, and His Gardener**

The whole world was beautiful, but God chose to make a special place, His own special garden, His special creation, made with all the wonders and beauty that He had planned. Adam and Eve were put there, to live in it and enjoy it, and also to take care of the place. They had a job to do, but it was fun and easy, and very inspiring and enjoyable.

It wasn't just work, work, work. These caretakers of God's garden had time to play, to watch the animals, to see the sunset, to run and to enjoy all that was there. They didn't have to worry about stepping on thorns, or about mosquitoes or any bugs biting them, nor about poisonous plants, or anything that troubles people nowadays. It was perfectly beautiful then.

They didn't have to worry about what to make for dinner, or fret if the crops didn't produce enough food that season. Food was plentiful and easy to find. God grew the food for them on the trees and plants that He had created.

It was as fun as picking whatever fruit you wanted and enjoying it. There were no restaurants in those days, just fast foods—the right kinds, filled with only the best kinds of ingredients: fruit from trees, berries from bushes, and foods from plants.

This garden, which God had formed specially for Adam and Eve, was better than any place you've ever seen. More splendid, more imaginative, more varied than any nature reserve, jungle or botanical garden. There were so many species of plants and flowers, trees and vines, and breath-taking views all in this one place. It truly was a spectacular place of splendour and wonder, beautiful in every way.

When God does something, He does it better than anyone else could—and far surpasses anything that you could ever dream up. Can you imagine waking up, after sleeping on a bed of soft grass, or perhaps in a nook of a large tree, and breathing in heavenly beauty from morning till night? You could just eat along the way as you explored and helped to care for this magnificent garden.

Everything that you thought looked fun to eat, you could eat. There would be no poisonous berries, only tasty treats growing here and there on trees, bushes, vines, or along the ground, and even under the ground.

What if you never had house chores or clean-up to do, and there were no dishes to wash? What if laundry and dirty clothes were never a part of life? And what if you never got too cold or too hot but felt perfectly comfortable and healthy all the time?

Can you imagine a place where all the worrisome things, the things that cause troubles, the things that get you down, the things that harm health and add to unhappiness were completely eliminated? Wouldn't that be the best place in the world to be?

And what if all the people who lived there only had good ideas, kind thoughts, and were friendly and gentle—people who took care of the surroundings, never hurt you or others, and lived just to make sure things stayed pleasant and well taken care of?

Well, that gives an idea of what it would be like to be living in the Garden of Eden—God's special garden—at the beginning of Earth's history.

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### Trees and Choices

In His beautiful garden God placed some special trees. These were unlike any placed in any other part of the world. Besides making a beautiful garden and setting, these were trees that contained fruit of a special kind.

These were God's special trees, with unusual fruit. You won't find these anywhere in the world today. One tree gave knowledge of all kinds—good and bad—and the other gave life and healing.

The only rule given to the gardeners—Adam and Eve—was to stay away from the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” As long as they obeyed this, they knew total beauty and led a happy life in that amazing place. The day they chose to disobey,

however, and listened to the Evil One rather than God, that's when things started to change.

One day, sadly, they tasted that fruit, and had to bear the consequences of difficult changes in the world, as well as their departure from that special garden. The tree of life was guarded by angels, and mankind would no longer have access to it. It was time to move on and learn new things in a new place.

God loved them so much, and never left their side. God continued to take care of them and help them as they gained experience and knowledge, invented-and built things, explored and discovered new territory, while all the time having to bear with the new troubles that their disobedience had caused.

Thorns, poisonous plants, sickness, sorrow, pain, ugliness, loss, and even death had entered the world. Food was now harder to come by, and required a lot of hard work to grow in gardens and farms. People began to wear clothing, which, of course, had to be made and washed. And in many other new ways, people were kept busy.

Furthermore, instead of thinking thoughts of goodness and beauty, now thoughts of badness and ugliness began to invade people's minds. These had to be pushed aside if people did not want their lives to get worse than they already were.

Even though Adam and Eve made that mistake and ate the fruit that they weren't supposed to, they have not been the only ones to disobey God. People still have to decide every day what they are going to choose—the good or the bad, the beautiful or the ugly, the helpful or the harmful, the humble or the proud, belief in God's Word or belief in what others say that is contrary. On and on the choices go, every day, for each person in the world.

Choice is what was granted to men and women, and not only do people's choices affect their lives, but also the lives of many others in the world—and sometimes the whole world. Adam and Eve's choices in the garden resulted in a change in the world, in difficulties becoming a part of the world—things that affect people today.

Choices are still made today that affect many others. Did you know that you can affect others around you, and even the whole world, for good or for bad by your choices? Because of bad choices then and today, the world is not the way it used to be. Today there is pollution, animals are losing their habitats, and bugs and pests and germs are giving people a hard time. Many people aren't living happy lives. There is poverty, sickness, and plenty of sorrow the world over, but it won't be like this forever.

There is a plan, and it's a wonderful plan. Perhaps you will even help to bring this plan about! There will be a time when things will change back to their former state of beauty, without the pests and troubles, poisons and ugliness that have spread through the world today.

Remember that in spite of the thorns on the rose bushes, and other imperfections and even harmful things around, there is a lot more beauty than bad and ugly things.

Every night, all around the world, a new and beautiful sunset is painted, with unique designs. Even frost can shine in scintillating, sparkling ways, making a view in winter look better than peering through the finest jewellery shop window.

Tall majestic trees, balanced perfectly, each leaf beautiful in form, are amazing to gaze up at. The vibrant colours and hues that flowers display are so cheery and can look more beautiful than a set of fancy clothes, and their scents give you a pleasant feeling.

Glassy lakes reflecting the autumn trees can keep you gazing for a long time, appreciating such artistic quality. Looking at a sparkling stream gurgling its way around the rocks has a relaxing and refreshing effect. Fields of grass and wildflowers in the sunshine can brighten anyone's day if they stop for a minute to look and take in the beauty. Running through them can be a wonderful experience.

As beautiful as things are, I'm sure the imperfections and problems can get you down at times. However, one day it will be made wonderfully perfect again. Won't that be great?

Until that time, though not everything is perfect, you can still decide to do your best to do the things God wants you to, and to take care of the world the best you can, and to live in peace with others. You can also look forward to the time when all will be beautiful again, without the things that mar the loveliness of nature.

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### **Enoch and Methuselah**

The world was made around six thousand years ago. And can you believe it? The people who were first on Earth, the great-grandchildren of Adam and Eve, and those who followed after that, sometimes lived to be nearly a thousand years old! Bodies were made strong, the world was a fresh and health-building environment to live in, and aging was much slower.

There was one man, however, who was only on Earth for a bit more than 300 years. His name was Enoch. He loved God so much and wanted to please Him, even though most people in the world were getting pretty ungodly by then.

All people on Earth had the choice to do right or wrong, and God saw that the thoughts people had and their actions had reached the point where they were nearly always making the wrong choice.

God was so sad. It hurt Him so much to see the wrong way people were going. It was no longer fun to watch what people were doing and to gaze at His creation. They'd

turned away from Him for the most part, and the world was such an unhappy, unkind place.

There were a few people who loved and chose God's way. One of those people was Enoch. He'd talk to God, hear from Him, and try to tell people what God had to say. He spent lots of time alone with God. Then one day when the time was right, God just took him out of the world to be with Him. Enoch didn't die, but simply was taken to be with God.

Unlike everyone around him who lived to about 900 years of age, Enoch, at around 300 years, was taken to be with the One he loved more than anyone or anything—God, His creator. He was taken away from all the evil of the world in those days.

Enoch had a son called Methuselah, who, amazingly enough, lived longer than anyone else on Earth—969 years! He was the grandfather of a very important man. Methuselah's grandson was named Noah.

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### **A Good Man for a Great Job**

Noah was one of the few people on Earth who had chosen to follow God's way, and he made God glad. So he was chosen out of everyone on the Earth to do a very important job.

Have you ever cried a lot, I mean a whole lot? So much that you felt you could hardly stop, and your face was all wet with tears, your nose was running, and you were sobbing, thinking there was nothing that could cheer you up?

Perhaps you lost something or someone that was really special to you? Or something that you'd worked so hard on got totally ruined? Or something that you'd been looking forward to and planning for a long while didn't work out, and your hopes and dreams were smashed?

Well, that was a bit how God felt when things on Earth started to go so wrong. The people He had lovingly created now made Him feel so sad with their poor choices and bad behaviour. The world that He made wasn't the happy, thriving, beautiful, loving place that He had made it to be.

After all He'd put into it, it was now ruined and soiled with the wrongs that people were doing. He cried and cried, and the whole world was going to be washed and cleansed with the water that He'd send.

Maybe that's how many tears He felt He had. The old things were washed away, and He could start again. He chose Noah to help Him during this time, to salvage what good was still left in the Earth.

Noah had learned to hear and obey God's voice. And he had learned to hate the terrible things that were going on in the world. He didn't want anything to do with evil. He

just wanted to live God's way. God was able to speak clearly with him. Noah was eager to do things God's way, even if they had never been done before.

If God told him, "Cut down trees and build a floating vehicle, fill it with animals and food, and go in it with your family," then Noah would do it—and he did, because that is what God said.

There was a lot of work to be done, and it took over a hundred years to do it! It all had to be done right, so that the ship would be safe and sturdy, and would last—staying strong and stable until the washed new world was dry again.

It needed to be built well so it would shelter, house, keep, and save Noah's family and the land animals. After this "ark" was built, it was time to fill it with the creatures that were to be on it. Every type of animal was put in the ark—a male and female of each kind.

There were only two of most animals on the ark, but 14 of those animals that mankind would need plenty of in the new clean world. For example, there needed to be lots of sheep for wool for clothing, and cows to give milk and pull ploughs, and so forth.

The task was enormous, and there weren't many people to do it. It's one thing to want to do a job, to be willing to do what God calls you to do.—But then to stick with it until it's done, and to do the hard work, day after day until it's completed, that takes determination and vision. Those are two things that Noah and his family had to have.

They also needed to have unity and teamwork, and to be willing to help each other, and to work very hard. They needed each other. They had to talk together, listen to each other, work things out together, encourage each other, pray and get the right ideas from God in order to make it all just right, to do things in the best way.

It took years and years of working towards a goal and not giving up, and not giving in to those who were trying to stop them and make things difficult. Their minds had to be on the job and their hearts set on God's ways.

Finally they did it! They won! The ark was built, the animals were safely inside, and all the things they'd need for their long voyage were packed and ready! Their destination was a new clean world.

Imagine the excitement, the anticipation they must have felt, with the job all done and everyone and everything that was meant to be in the ark safely there. God shut the door tight, and then they just had to wait.

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### **Rain and a Rainbow**

It was time for the world to be washed, and the ark was finished and ready to float. It wasn't a frantic time, however, with rain pouring down and Noah's family trying to shove animals in and get into the ark themselves. No.



They brought the animals into the ark when God told them to, and then they waited, safe and dry within the ark for a whole week before any rain started. Can you imagine what they must have felt? “Father, when did you say the rain would come?” his sons may have asked Noah.

“God said the rain would come. We must be patient, and tend carefully to the animals. They need very good care,” Noah may have said to his family. Sure enough, it not only rained, but poured down huge amounts from the sky, and water gushed from fountains deep under the ground. The world had never been so wet.

When the ark started to float, it must have been an unforgettable experience. They had never felt anything like that before. They were rocking, floating, bobbing, swaying and bumping. They had to have a lot of faith, as well as try to keep their animals calm and well cared for. With so much to do, that family must have been extremely busy. They certainly weren’t on a fancy cruise ship, sitting around with lots of time on their hands, expecting to be waited on.

Noah and his family were grateful and in awe at the miracle of God’s love, and how He loved them so much. And God was also thankful for their love for Him, so He gave them the privilege of being the only ones from the old world to cross over into the new.

God could have just started it all over again and remade everything from scratch, but in His love and mercy He gave mankind one more chance, and let good Noah and his family enter the new unspoiled world.

The journey was tiring and long, and not easy in the least. It probably didn’t smell very nice most of the time, with so many animals all in one place. Imagine being on a stinky boat for a very long time, without being able to run and play outside—because there was no grass to go on. They worked very hard together as a team to keep the animals fed and well, and to care for themselves. At last they made it through that time, and with great joy they entered a fresh, new, clean world.

The ark first landed on a rocky mountain. A while later, Noah sent a raven and a dove to fly around and see how things were going in the watery world outside. When the dove returned with an olive leaf in her mouth, this was a clue for them that the waters had gone down a great deal. It gave them hope and patience to wait until the land would be dry enough and safe to walk on. When the time was right, God released the door He’d shut tight, and the family could make their great exit.

Ahh!—Air, light, land, and nature! It was cause for a celebration and time of worship. Noah called his family together to praise and thank God for bringing them safely through.

A beautiful rainbow painted the sky, as God’s promise that this difficult event, so sad, so hard to live through, would never happen again. They didn’t have to worry the next time it rained that they would have to dash back to the ark. Rain was just a part of watering the world, and God wouldn’t create a worldwide flood again.

People's life spans also changed. Instead of living for several hundred years, God changed things on Earth and the average age became much shorter. Because of people's choices, often to go the wrong and unkind way, God made things be such a way that they were not permitted to live as long as before.

The choices are the same for everyone around the world: What will you do today? Will you use your time and strength to make the world and your surroundings a happy and loving place to be, or will you choose what's wrong?

The choice is as much yours today as it was for those people of old. What will you do with your life while you are on Earth, for however long or short your life might be? What you do may affect more people than you realise. God knows if you love, obey and respect Him. He knows not only what you do, but your heart and thoughts as well. And He will bless, protect, and give privileges to those who want to do the things that make Him glad, just as He did for Noah.

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### **The Tower of Babel**

Sometime after Noah and his team had made it safely through the flood, the world was getting more populated again—just as God had asked of them. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. They and their wives began to have families, and their children grew up and had families too; and on it went, until there were many people living on Earth again.

Since everyone spoke the same language they could all understand what everyone was saying, but what they began to do now was not pleasing to God. Because of their proud thoughts, they were attempting a new project—to build a tall tower that would reach the sky. They thought this would make them equal with God.

People weren't exploring too many new places in the world. They weren't trying out new good ideas and learning new things. Everyone was influenced easily as one nation, all speaking the same thing, and motivated to all go the same way. If people had been doing good and wonderful things, following God's ways, this would have been fine. However, since they weren't, they were all speedily going in the wrong direction.

So what was the best way to get people to explore more of the world and discover new things—and not be influenced to follow the wrong ideas of others? God gave new languages to people. Each family suddenly spoke a different language! The work on the Tower of Babel came to a halt.

Everyone being able to talk and understand each other is what made that big project possible, but now it had to stop since people couldn't understand each other and communicate effectively. Instead of progress, they now had confusion. Each family moved, travelled, and explored where they wanted to. That confusion was such a big event. Such a change!

There are so many languages in the world today. The people who have tried to count them say there are between 6,000 and 9,000 languages. So there are plenty of languages people can speak nowadays in countries all around the world.

Learning to speak other languages can be a challenging and fun experience—sometimes hard, but also rewarding when you can finally communicate with people you have not been able to talk with before. It provides new opportunities and friendships.

It's easy to notice if others who are trying to speak your language say things somewhat differently than you do. The efforts of others to speak a new language should be admired. They have learned not only their own language—one that you might not know—but yours too.

Instead of noticing the imperfections, according to the way you think words and sounds should be said, you can appreciate the fact that they have learned so much. Think how much more difficult it would be if they hadn't learned to speak any of your language, and you had to guess what they were trying to say, and they didn't understand what you were trying to ask. It would be difficult. Be glad for their effort, and make your own effort to learn to speak other languages.

Story Time with Jesus 13-24\_text

## Story Time with Jesus

### Bible Stories

Chapters 13-24

- 13-A Man on the Move
- 14-Living Peacefully
- 15-Three Special Visitors
- 16-Isaac
- 17-Patience, Faith and Rebekah
- 18-Isaac and the Wells
- 19-Dream of Angels
- 20-Hard Work and a Family of His Own
- 21-Being Friends Again
- 22-Comparing and Coats
- 23-Joseph in Egypt
- 24-Food in Egypt

(Jesus speaking: )

### A Man on the Move

It's not easy to move, to leave friends and relatives, houses or places that you've become accustomed to, things you like and enjoy. Have you ever had to say good bye to

loved ones, pets, or friends, and to give away many of your possessions? It can feel pretty difficult, especially when you wonder if you'll be happy in the new place you are going to move to, since you've never been there before.

Or perhaps you've lost everything you own in a flood or fire or other disaster, or a bad or sad event, and you feel sad and in despair. Well, if you are choosing now to do things God's way, you can be encouraged by what He told Abraham one time. God said, "I am your exceeding great reward."

If you follow God's plan for your life, then you'll sense the richness of God's presence and the joy He can give you. You'll experience His help and friendship, and the amazing things He can do for you when you pray.

You'll enjoy the wonderful reward of the Heavenly life to come while living with God in a beautiful paradise land. It will surpass all you could have gained on Earth if you were to just gather possessions and earn rewards on Earth.

Abraham loved God more than having things, or staying in a certain country, or having a family with children of his own. He had confidence that if he just kept doing what God told him to, good things would eventually work out for him. So when God told Abraham to travel from where he was living and go see a new land, he did it. He and all those that were with him, including his nephew Lot, moved.

They lived in tents, looked for water, found grass and food for their animals, and were a travelling team for many years. They didn't have trailers with a fridge and stove, or fold out beds, or camping lights. Through the hot days and cold nights they stayed in tents.

They were campers, travelling here and there, as God led them. God took good care of Abraham. He became a very rich man with many animals and people to help him. God kept him safe all his life till he was old.

When there was a famine in the land, and not enough food around, they were allowed to stay in Egypt, and had all that they needed there, until they could leave to go to their next place.

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### **Living Peacefully**

One time when there wasn't enough grass for all the sheep, cattle and animals, Abraham showed his faith and kindness.

Abraham had a nephew called Lot, who was travelling with him as part of the big team. It wasn't just Lot, but all his many animals and herdsmen: everyone was having a hard time finding enough greenery around. There wasn't enough grass for the sheep and cattle, where they were camping at that time.

Has it ever happened that you and your brother or sister or friend both wanted the same thing? You're both very focused on wanting just that one thing that you both happen to want at the same time, and there is only one, and you are having a hard time letting the other have the first turn with it?

There could be several other things to do and to play with, but you sort of forget, while thinking only about the one item or game or whatever it is that you very much want. Then you don't act kindly or react patiently with one another, because all you want is that one thing!

Well, when Abraham's and Lot's herdsmen and shepherds started to only focus on the grass they needed for the animals, they started to quarrel. They wanted to take good care of the sheep, goats and cattle, and make sure that they had all that they needed. But they forgot that there were other places to travel to, new places they could go to.

Abraham reminded Lot to look around and see all the other areas that had greenery and whatever would be needed for their animals. He gave Lot the first choice.

"Where would you like to be? Choose any place around the country. If you go to the left, I'll go with our team to the right. If you go to the right, we'll go to the left."

So the teams split, and Lot chose to go to a place very well watered, and beautiful—almost as nice as the Garden of Eden it seemed. See, if he had just stayed there, quarrelling over what little bit of grass he and his team needed, he wouldn't have had a very nice time.

Maybe you can try that too. If you and someone else are both wishing for the same thing, try looking around, exploring new ideas and possibilities. You might even have more fun than just getting the one thing you wish you could have.

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## Three Special Visitors

The camping team felt the heat as the sun shone down on them. Sitting in the doorway of his tent Abraham had shade and a bit of fresh air. But on this day there was to be a special surprise.

God sees you all the time. He never sleeps. He knows not only what you choose to do each day, but what you are feeling, and what you think about too.

The Bible says, “The Lord preserves (*keeps from harm, protects, saves, maintains, helps to carry on*) the faithful, and plentifully rewards the proud doer.” – He rewards greatly those doing an honourable, good job. (Psalms 31:23)

Sometimes you just have to keep going and doing what you are meant to do, even when no big fun surprises or rewards come your way. Day by day you just keep making the choices to do what is best, and then you are very glad when the results of those good decisions catch up with you.

Travel took a of lot time in those days. The only way to get around was either walking with your own two feet, or using animal transportation—horses, camels, donkeys, and so forth. (Or you could go by boat if you were travelling over water.)

So if you had travelled far, and were camping out away from the cities, and someone showed up to visit, it was something special! You knew they’d had a long journey. You knew they were tired, hungry and thirsty.

Water is heavy to carry, and was often hard to find. Sometimes wells could be dug and water found then, but that took days to do. So it was the custom to be kind and friendly to visitors, offering them food and water, and time to rest from their travelling.

Abraham knew what it felt like. He often felt hot or cold, hungry, thirsty and tired from the journey. But on this day, they weren’t travelling—they were camping out. It was a very hot day and the sun was shining down brightly. Abraham looked up, and to his surprise three visitors were approaching his tent. These weren’t just any visitors. By the looks of them, they were sent straight from God.

You never really know when angels are going to show up. Some think angels only come looking all shiny and bright, proclaiming a message from God. But there may be times when they are disguised, look just like anyone else, and are right there when you need them.

So on this hot day, three very important visitors came to see Abraham, and he was delighted. When Abraham spotted them, he greeted them, and invited them to stay and rest in the shade. He then had his wife cook them food, while he chatted with the visiting angelic team—the Lord and two important strong angels.

One thing they told Abraham was that he and his wife were finally going to have a child, a son, the one that God had been promising them. It seemed impossible, because both Abraham and Sarah were very old by then, but it was so exiting to hear!

Have you ever been camping in a tent? The walls of a tent aren't like the walls of a house, and you can hear just about everything that is going on outside, right?

So while Sarah was cooking she could hear the visiting angels telling Abraham the wonderful news about their coming child. It made her smile, and she had a chuckle inside about it, thinking how old they both were.

The Lord knew she thought it was kind of funny, imagining having a child at their age. "Why did Sarah laugh?" the visitor said. "It's true! It really is going to happen!"

What happy news this was. They were both delighted and hopeful, and continued to look forward to this promise becoming a reality.

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### Isaac

At last the wonderful, long-awaited event took place! Baby Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah—just as God had promised. They must have been the happiest parents around.

They'd waited so long, and at last held their precious little son. He made them laugh, smile, and enjoy doing the things that parents get to do — tell bedtime stories, teach him new things, explore, celebrate, laugh, look at the stars, and have fun.

Isaac was such a joy for Abraham and Sarah! He was the promised son. The Lord promised that he'd have many descendants, and that eventually there would be so many people they'd fill the Earth.

The more children people had, the richer they felt. Having a big family was their greatest treasure, something only God could give them. People were special.

There weren't shopping malls filled with all the latest gadgets and trinkets, or tons of super-fancy houses around to buy, or fast speedy cars to wish for, or whatever some people think makes them feel rich and comfortable. Those who loved God wanted to have children, friends, brothers, sisters, grandchildren, fathers and mothers, more than just being alone with a bunch of riches.

Nowadays there is a lot less love in people's hearts. People focus more and more on acquiring things and getting possessions — thinking that will fill their heart's need for happiness.

So why do you think that Abraham was a happy man? God did bless him with a lot, but compared to today's standard of living, he really didn't have that much to make his life comfortable.

As he followed what God told him to do, day after day, year after year, he was blessed with plenty of animals and a very big team of helpers. But he had no house to keep him cool in the summer or warm in the winter.

He didn't have a car or van to take him on his journeys. He didn't have a stove to turn on and cook food quickly, or a refrigerator to keep supplies in, filled with a variety of foods, fruit and vegetables.

They had what they needed, and learned to make the foods last as long as possible, and cook them as best as they could on the fire.

They were grateful for their simple meals, and that they had food to eat. But there was nothing fancy about it. No spaghetti, no frozen desserts, no delicious fruit salad with exotic fruits, no bags of mixed nuts from all kinds of countries around the world, no strawberry jam, no freshly-squeezed orange juice on a hot day, or ice to put in their water.

There were no blenders or grinders or food mixers to make things fast and easy to prepare. And there were probably less dishes to wash as well!

At night there was no shower to step into, with warm water and soap to refresh them. A bucket of cold water from the well provided a good wash.

If they needed anything, there wasn't a shop or mall to go into to find it. They either had to do without it, or make it themselves, or get it from someone else who made it, or invent a way to fix things up.

Clothes weren't easy to come by, and it took a lot of work to make even a small part of cloth to use in a garment. Garments did last much longer than today's clothing.

Everything was made by hand, and usually from scratch, which means you not only make the item needed, but come up with the supplies for it also.

To make clothes out of wool they needed to have sheep, care for them, raise them, have the tools needed to shear them, take that wool and make thread from it, then weave it, and sew it into something to wear.

So it wasn't possessions that were making Abraham happy. And he didn't have lots of children, like he would have so enjoyed having.

But his time talking to God gave him the happy feeling of knowing that he was doing just what God had asked him to.—And seeing things work out for the best in the end helped give his heart joy.

God took good care of them, and they had all they needed to survive. His heart was happy and full of faith.

You can be that way too. You could be in a situation where you have little or no possessions, be away from your family, loved ones, or friends, and still be happy, if you know God and talk with Him as a friend. He can do the most amazing things for you, in ways that you know only He can. As you love and obey Him, you can trust Him to bring the best things your way.



When Abraham and Sarah finally held and played with their little son, their wonderful treasure, given to them from God, it was worth the wait. That child received the very best care his loving parents could give.

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### **Patience, Faith and Rebekah**

Abraham's son Isaac had to learn all the same lessons as his father and mother did! — To obey God, trust Him, wait for the best, be kind, and talk with God. He saw things working out for good for him too.

It may have taken years and years of waiting, but it wasn't time wasted, as in all the waiting he was learning faith and patience. These were two things he needed more than anything any shop has to offer.

Having these qualities will help you accomplish what you need to. They will help you to endure hardship, and learn skills that you'll need to know in order for you to be able to provide what you and your family need:

Faith in God that He's going to make all things right in the end; patience to wait, to keep going, to live peaceably, to be kind to others, to not lose your cool or temper, to try again and again when you most feel like giving up, to not feel you have to have all you need right away, but to wait for the best time. These are things that Isaac also learned.

Isaac waited till he was about 40 years old until it worked out for him to get married. But he'd learned to talk with God, and so he wasn't alone. He'd spend lots of time outside, praying and communicating with God. One wonderful day as he was outside, having quiet time in thought and prayer, he looked up to see that Eleazar's team of camels had returned. And he was in for a wonderful surprise!

Eleazar was Abraham's most trusted helper and had just returned with his team of helpers and all their camels. Abraham had sent him on a mission to try to find a wife for his son Isaac—someone who knew God and would follow Him too. It wasn't an easy job and the journey was tiring.

Sitting at last by the well of the place they'd travelled to, Eleazar had prayed: "Let the woman who is right for Isaac be the one that offers water to me and also to give water to the camels."

Giving water to the camels which were very thirsty from the trip would take a long time, and a lot of strength too, lifting bucketful after bucketful—as the camels needed to drink a lot! But then the miracle happened!

A sweet woman called Rebekah—God’s chosen wife for Isaac, just the one He knew Isaac would really love—came and did just as Eleazar had prayed. After she gave water to the camels, Eleazar gave Rebekah golden jewellery, telling her that he’d explain more later.

The travelling team of men needed a place to stay, and dinner, as well as a place for the camels to rest and food for them to eat. Rebekah and her family said there was room and food at their house for the men and their camels to eat and stay the night.

It was then, while they all sat down to eat in Rebekah’s house, that Eleazar told his story to her and her family, and asked if Rebekah would return with him to be Isaac’s wife.

That was a big question to think about! What would she decide? She made up her mind and chose to go—the very next day. What a memorable day that was. From one day to the next her life was very different.

She said good bye to friends and family and packed up her things and left with Eleazar and his team to return to their home. As the camels came closer to Abraham’s camp, Isaac was watching, wondering if they came back with only those servants who left on the trip, or if...Could he dare to hope?

Then he saw Rebekah, though her face was covered with a veil. Isaac knew he loved her, right from the start. Rebekah loved Isaac too. They got married and were happy together.

Their journey of faith and patience continued — this time together, as a couple, and in time as parents of two lively, talented twin boys—Jacob and Esau, Abraham’s grandsons. That was the beginning of the “many descendants” that God had promised. It had started, and it just kept on going.

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### **Isaac and the Wells**

Isaac had learned many things both from his father Abraham, and also from his times alone with the Lord. He’d learned a lot about faith and patience. One particular event that’s recorded about his life shows how this helped him.

Water was hard to find at times, and to get it often a deep well needed to be dug. This was hard work, and took a long time. There were no big building tools and machines to help make it fast and easy. So by the time a well was dug, and contained plenty of water for their big team to use, it was a great accomplishment and very helpful. Not only helpful, but it was essential. They needed it daily for drinking, for washing, for their animals, and so many other things.

However, others in the area needed and wanted water too. But there were those that didn't know and love God and who just wanted things to be theirs. When they saw Isaac and his team's well, they didn't say "Ah, there's water around here, let's dig a well too!" But rather, "That well is useful to us, let's take Isaac's well!" And they did.

They said that they were the only ones that could use it, and would push away any of Isaac's team who tried to use it.

So what did Isaac do? He moved. He moved to a new place and dug another well. But can you believe it?! What do you suppose happened next? Those greedy guys came and took over the next well too! So what did Isaac do? Did he say, "That's enough of being gentle and peaceful!" and try to be pushy to keep his hard-worked for well? No. He moved again.

He was probably feeling rather discouraged. But for the third time they dug a well. And this time no one took it, and they used it till it was time to move again.

You never know who is watching you when you are trying to behave well and act kindly. So something wonderful then happened. Isaac's team moved again, and when they were in the middle of trying to dig another well to use in their new place a visitor came.

There was a king from an area nearby, who hadn't wanted Isaac to live in his country. But he noticed how Isaac and his team had behaved, and also saw how God had blessed him with much as a result of his obedience.

The king knew that God was with Isaac, and realised that he wanted to be friends with Isaac and his team. He saw they were good people and that God gave them all they needed, and took care of them because they followed God's way.

Isaac was surprised. "I thought you didn't like us?" he wondered. But the king said he wanted to change. They had a feast and promised to be friends and help each other. That was the first miracle.

Then right when Isaac forgave the king and his people—all those ones who had taken away their wells before—and after Isaac and the king promised to be kind to one another, a man came and told Isaac some great news!

The new well they were just digging was complete, as there was a spring of fresh water in it now! Great! Things were working out wonderfully! It took time and patience, and trying again and again, and not getting angry, and then forgiving others.

It worked out far better in the end for Isaac and his team, when doing it the kind and patient way—even though it seemed to take a while to see the good results. They had a place to stay, and friends who would be there for them, and lots of water!

Isaac had learned to hear from God, too, just like his father Abraham had. God told him where to go and where not to go, and as he obeyed things went well.

Isaac and his team not only had all that they needed, but more than most others around. It didn't happen all in the first day, but after years of patience and following God's voice and doing what He said to do, day by day, month after month, year by year, they saw how blessed and cared for they all were.

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### Dream of Angels

Have you ever behaved in a way that made things real tough for you? Perhaps it was something that you felt you needed to do, but then the results were difficult, made people sad, and caused problems?

Well, that seemed to be happening to Jacob, Isaac's son, when he was a man. He'd taken something that belonged to someone else, something that was special to his brother Esau.

Even when it was time to be born, and the twins were just little tiny babies, they were wiggling and trying to be the first one born. Imagine that! Then when they were much older, as young men, Jacob the youngest convinced the older one, Esau, that in return for a bowl of food to eat right then, to promise that he, the youngest of the two, would get the benefits of being the oldest one.

Esau was too hungry to care about it at the time, and so he said it was okay. Jacob got the promise of the benefits of being the oldest, given to him by his brother Esau, in return for food. Then, when they were older, their father was to bless the oldest, giving a prayer and message about the good things that would come in their life. Jacob, pretending to be Esau, took this blessing before Esau went to his father to receive it. It made Isaac, his father, very sad, and Esau very mad.

Jacob could no longer stay there, as he'd upset Esau too much, and had some things he needed to learn. He was sent away to his uncle Laban—his mother's brother. Jacob must have felt like it was the end of his old life, and wasn't quite sure what was to happen next.

When you are really discouraged, sad, at a loss for what to do, feel alone, don't know what is going to happen next, have made others upset, made big mistakes, can't seem to behave right, and keep making the same wrong decisions, you can be sure that God is still around and that He cares about you.

Jacob, on his journey away from home to go and live with his uncle, felt pretty low and like a failure, not knowing what would happen next in his life. But God can change anyone, teach them new things and help them do great things for Him, if they are willing to follow Him. Sometimes it takes a long time of learning difficult lessons before we are ready to do a new and great job.

While travelling, and it was night time, Jacob didn't have anything but a rock for a pillow to sleep on. In his sleep God encouraged his heart so much. He saw a dream of

angels and described it as a ladder going from the ground where he was, up into Heaven. Angels were ascending and descending on it, and God was at the top of it.

God spoke to Jacob in the dream and said somewhat the same message that he had given to Abraham, and to Isaac—that he would bless him, and give him many descendants.

He said there would be so many in their family, and those that would yet be born, that they would be in number as the dust of the ground—too many to count! God also told him of the land that would be theirs, in the future.

These men and their families had to believe, one day at a time, one year at a time, that these things promised to them and to their children were going to happen in time. Things didn't happen right away. It takes a lot of time for some things to happen.

Abraham and Isaac both had to believe God's words and promises to them, and make the right choices—but they didn't see it all happening just then, in their lifetime. They had to do the right thing in order to pave the way for God to bring about just what He had promised in the future.

Can you do that? That surely takes great faith to obey and follow God even when you can't see Him, and even when the things that He promises will happen as result of your faithful obedience aren't seen right away.

In some ways it's like the pilot of an airplane. His job is to get those in the airplane to their destination. He may never see any of the great things the people on board do from there, the countries they travel to next, or the work they do in that country to help others. But if he didn't fly them there, it wouldn't happen.

So it is with each one of you, on Earth. If you believe the things your Heavenly Father, the one Who cares for you more than you'll ever know, tells you—and you do what God knows is best for your life, then good things can happen next.

Even if you don't see the results and effects of your choices to do things God's way, right now, today, and you don't see everything working out to your liking, immediately, don't fret! Don't worry, or give up. "Good things come to those that wait."

When Jacob woke from his dream, he was very amazed, and felt so happy and in awe. It seemed to him that the very door of Heaven was right there! He made a pillar with the stone he used as a pillow, to mark that spot.

He also made some promises—that if God helped him, protected him, provided food and clothes and all that he needed, that he would obey and follow God.

Also Jacob promised that anything he got, he would give one tenth of it to the Lord. And that is what happened. Jacob had all that he needed as he followed God's plan.

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## Hard Work and a Family of His Own

It had been a tiring journey for Jacob as he travelled to try to find where his uncle Laban was living. Without a map or telephones or internet, or anything that most people could use today to find out information and find out where a relative lives, it was difficult, and he really didn't know what to expect.

Jacob came near a well at last and saw some shepherds going there to give water to their sheep. Seeing that one who was approaching was a lady, he offered to help her lift the heavy rock from off the well.

Jacob was so glad to find out that at last he had reached his destination, for it was Rachel, Laban's daughter who was the one with the sheep. He loved her right from the start, and was invited by Laban to live with them.

He didn't sit around doing nothing, but saw what needed to be done and got to work right away helping in all the ways he could. When Laban asked Jacob what he'd like to receive in return for his hard work, caring for and guarding the many animals, there was only one thing he asked for.

He loved Rachel so much, that he worked for seven years, day after day, in order to be able to marry Rachel. Time seemed to go by quickly, and before he knew it, a big wedding feast was held.

Though God was caring for and helping Jacob to have all that he needed, and he was happy he was going to get married to a woman he really loved, being there with Laban also proved to be a time of learning lessons for Jacob.

Laban didn't always keep his word. He said he'd do one thing, and then wouldn't stick with it and would change things later on. He was dishonest and not trustworthy. Perhaps Jacob could understand a bit how his brother Esau had felt, when he himself had been dishonest and upset Esau so much. Now it was Jacob's turn to feel bad at times, and learn how not to be deceitful.

Finally, after seven years it was time for Jacob's promised wedding to Rachel whom he loved. But suddenly, Laban made Jacob marry Leah instead, the oldest daughter. This upset Jacob, but he was able also to marry Rachel, if he promised to work yet another seven years. Leah was a gentle and kind woman, and God chose to give her children first and also the most children.

God had blessed and helped Jacob to acquire lots of flocks and animals. He got many of those animals in an interesting way. When Laban said that only the speckled patterned ones could be Jacob's, then the new lambs and baby goats that were born were speckled.

When Laban quickly changed and said that only those with ring patterns and stripes could be Jacob's, those were the kinds that were born next. God made it be so. So all those grown sheep would be part of Jacob's flocks. And bit by bit he had more and more.

After Jacob had been living there with Laban and his family for about 20 years, God told him it was now time to move, and take his large family and all their cattle and flocks with them. It was a big job, but they packed up and were off on their journey back to the place where Jacob grew up.

Because Laban wasn't very dependable, Jacob chose to leave with his big family at a time when Laban wasn't home. He had gone away for several days at the time of year when the sheep were sheared. When Laban found out that Jacob and his family had left, he travelled for a few days to catch up to them to find out why they had left.

He hadn't been very nice to Jacob, especially towards the end of Jacob's stay there, when he noticed how large and strong Jacob's flocks were. But God gave Laban a clear message in a dream, about what not to do or say to Jacob when he did see him again. So Laban obeyed the warning dream, and told Jacob about it. He camped with them for a day, and then said good bye to everyone and left to return to his home.

Jacob's team continued on travelling, till they made it to their destination. Jacob had new challenges to face, including what to do about Esau, his brother, whom he'd offended and made very sad and upset. He'd need to make things right between them again.

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### **Being Friends Again**

Do you remember how Isaac, the father of Jacob and Esau, spoke words of blessing to Jacob, thinking it was Esau? And how it had made Esau so angry, that Jacob could no longer live there in peace?

Well, Jacob had to leave, and he had a difficult time living with Laban. However, Jacob had been blessed and had a great abundance of things considered important to people back then.

Jacob and his team, and all the animals—their wealth—were moving back again to his former living area. But there was one thing that needed to be smoothed out. Jacob was extremely concerned and uneasy. What would Esau be like? Was he still upset with him? Would he forgive Jacob for what was done so many years ago?

Jacob knew he was meant to move back there again, but just because the Lord wants you to do something doesn't mean it will all be easy or problem-free. Jacob needed some encouragement as they travelled nearer to the place where his brother lived. God sent angels to Jacob to show him that he was not alone. That helped give him the courage to keep on going.

Jacob realised that the only reason why he was rich and had so much was because God had blessed him. It wasn't something he could have made happen himself. So he had an idea—to give to his brother a large gift, since he felt he'd made Esau miss out a bit.

Jacob chose many camels, sheep, goats, cows and donkeys to give to his brother. He then sent messengers to tell Esau that he, Jacob, was coming back, and that he had gifts to present to him.

The messengers returned with the news that Esau was coming to meet Jacob, and not just him alone, but with 400 men. This got Jacob pretty worried, wondering what would happen next. It seemed Esau hadn't forgiven him.

Jacob was very desperate for God to bring peace between him and his brother. He wanted them to all live in peace. Jacob knew only God could do such a miracle and change Esau's heart to one holding forgiveness and kindness, and wanting friendship with him. Prayer that was determined to see the answer become a reality was his only hope now.

He prayed with all his heart, in humility, and quoted the promises God had made to Abraham and to Isaac, that they'd be blessed with many children and grow into a great nation. In prayer he expressed to God that he was only returning to this land because He had told him to, and had promised it would go well.

When Jacob rose the next day he chose what the gift to his brother was to be, and sent it with his messengers.

Gifts back then were different than they are now. He wanted to give Esau 220 goats, 220 sheep, 30 camels and their colts, 50 cows, and 30 donkeys. That was a big gift!

Next he sent all his possessions, and teams of his family and children, and the rest of his animals on ahead. Jacob needed time alone. While everyone else travelled, and prepared to meet Esau, giving the gifts and being friendly, Jacob stayed back for a little while to pray and talk with God alone.

An angel met him once more, and Jacob begged for a victory in this matter. He wasn't going to just pray a little mild prayer, one that he didn't really expect anything to happen. But he held on to that angel, he wrestled, he pleaded, he wouldn't let go until the answer was granted.

He was all night struggling, praying, pleading. Finally when it was dawn, the angel asked Jacob to stop, and let go of him. But Jacob still wouldn't give up. He said he wouldn't let go until he got God's blessing to make things go well in this next part of his life. Then the blessing was granted.

Jacob then had the courage and faith to travel on to meet with his brother. Jacob had the gifts sent on ahead, to be brought to his brother. Next came the teams of children and mothers. Finally Jacob approached, walking in humility.

As was the custom of showing respect, Jacob bowed down to the ground, not just once, but seven times, before he stood in front of Esau his brother. The miracle he prayed for had happened. The brothers hugged, talked, and were friends again. Esau forgave Jacob, and they parted again, each going their own way—this time happily.



So if you have something that isn't going well between you and someone else, this story holds some tips for you: be patient, pray, be humble, give generously, pray some more, do what God's asking you to do, ask for angels to help you, and be kind. You'll most likely see things change for the better, though some changes may take some time.

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### Comparing and Coats

Seeds of jealousy and pride can be dangerous if you are trying to live in love and harmony with your brothers and sisters. Jealousy and negatively comparing with others can show up in all kinds of ways. Perhaps your brother or a friend seem to always be the first to get things they'd like, or it seems your parents do nice things for them that they never did exactly the same for you.

It's a dangerous thing to let that little ugly feeling start to stick around, like a plant taking root. Because once you do, things in the garden of your life will only get you down more and more, and soon you may feel angry and upset all the time. You have to stop those thoughts right when they first start.

Perhaps it's true, that someone got something nice today that wasn't given to you before. But the feeling and thought that tries to creep in, that "it's because you aren't special or loved", will make things so much worse! That thought tries to not only take away your happiness right then, but ruin the friendships you could have and the happy times you could be having.

Every day there will be things that others get that you never did! That's because every day is different for each person on Earth. Something new—or many new things—happen to each one on Earth each day, to help them learn something.

But there's not only sad or difficult things that happen—but good things also, or else people would get too discouraged trying to learn all of the lessons their life might be teaching them.

So sometimes great things, happy things, happen to others—or at least things appear that way to you, as you observe what gets given to others, or an event in someone else's life. Then there are the hard things too—really hard.

When you see someone get something you wish you could have had, and never got, it's good to remind yourself that it's like a little bit of encouragement for the many other difficult things they are having to learn and experience, or will yet have to .

Not everyone can have all the good things at the same time. Each one's day is different from anyone else's on Earth. Think of it like fruit trees, or gardens and plants. Each different type grows best, and produces fruit best at different times of the year, and in different parts of the world. And each type of plant can manage to hold what is best for them.

If the mango tree was feeling bad that its fruit was much smaller than the watermelon, and the watermelon vine was sad that it couldn't stand tall and strong and have as many pieces of fruit on it as the mango tree, it would be silly! Watermelons wouldn't do well if they were on a tree. So each one has the things that happen in their lives that seem different—some good, some not so good—but all are for a purpose.

If you use the things you learn in life to do good for others, and you don't waste your time or thoughts on trying to notice how others seem to be getting more and better things first, then you'll be much happier. In time, when things change, and it's your turn to get the better things, and others are having a harder time, you'll see how things really do all balance out.

When others are feeling bad and thinking that you have better things than they do, it doesn't help them if you tell them how great you think you are. Walking in loving humility, and not always talking about everything wonderful that you feel is happening to you, might help.

Put yourself in their place and say things that are kind, thoughtful and encouraging to them. Give them hope that things will get better for them too. Show love and kindness, and bring to their attention the good things that they might have forgotten or failed to see, due to their looking at the present lacks or losses. Point out the things that they are better at than you. Lift them up with your humble way of speaking.

One boy learned this the hard way. He was Jacob's son Joseph. Jacob had many sons, but one day he made a special coat just for Joseph. Isn't it nice to sometimes be the only one to get something special that's just for you? It can feel better than just getting something that's the same as everyone else has received, right?

Everyone wants to feel that cosy feeling of being loved as an individual. It's good to remember that. So when someone seems to be the only one getting something nice, remember that you like it when that happens at times to you too, and you wouldn't want people to get sad about that. Don't you want people to act glad that you are enjoying something? It shows love when you can be glad that someone is happy.

Now, making coats back when Jacob was around was no simple thing. It took lots of time and effort. First they had to raise sheep, care for them and provide all that they need to grow strong and healthy and to grow good thick wool. Then came the job of sheering the sheep, and washing the wool. Then the thread had to be made from the wool.

To colour the thread, and not just leave it brownish-white, was a whole different process than it is today. There were no shops where they could buy clothing dye. They had to figure out how to make the dye, and do it themselves. Then came the long task of weaving and sewing it into clothes, one thread at a time. So, when Jacob gave Joseph a coat made of many colours, it was a big gift.

It would have been very hard for old Jacob to have made 12 coats—one for each boy, right? He wouldn't have had much time to do anything else, and it would have

taken a very long time. But Joseph's brothers allowed those weeds of feeling angry towards Joseph into their heart.

Then, adding to it all, Joseph began to have some special dreams. Perhaps it would have been better not to have told his brothers about them. The dreams seemed to be telling how important Joseph was going to be, even more important than his brothers and parents—that they would bow down to him one day.

The reason for the dreams wasn't to make Joseph feel proud and important, nor was it to make his brothers feel upset. God gave those dreams, and that special coat, and all the things that seemed to be going better for him, as a preparation. He was about to have the most difficult life of all of them.

The brothers may not have had a coat like Joseph's, but what happened next didn't happen to them either. All things work together for good to them that love God—and this story shows that clearly.

Joseph had been sent to check on his brothers, who were older and taking care of the flocks at quite a distance away. The brothers felt they'd had enough of having Joseph around. Some of them decided to send him far away, to live in Egypt, with some travellers who were passing through right then on their way to Egypt.

They thought if he wasn't right there with them anymore, then they'd be happier. But that really didn't make them feel better. The brothers felt sad and afraid in their heart for so many years, because of the wrong they'd done, and their daddy missed Joseph so much. It didn't make their father all of a sudden do all of these nice things for them. In reality things were worse, because their father was so very sad all the time.

The Lord was with Joseph as he began to work in Egypt, doing his best, even though the work was hard, the language was new for him, and he was there without his family. Eventually, things worked out for good, as you'll find out when you read on. But there was a long time of difficult feelings for everyone as a result of the choices those older boys made.

So the way to change that bad feeling when you are comparing and jealous, thinking someone else is getting all the best things, and that you aren't, isn't to just not have them around, or to try to make things hard for them.

Instead do as Jacob did with Esau—pray for peace and friendship, share and give what you can, be humble, think of others as better than yourself, and realise that God has a plan for each person, and things won't always be the best all the time for everyone.

Each person will have their turn-of-events, and hard times, maybe even harder than you've ever had or will have. If it's going rough for you now, you can be encouraged that things will get better one day, or special things will happen as time goes on, as you keep choosing God's way and loving Him more than anything and anyone else.

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## Joseph in Egypt

A change in your life can happen overnight sometimes. You can be doing the same thing for a long time, and then all of a sudden, BOOM, everything changes. Things don't always look so great after a sudden change. But good things can happen like that too.

So if things aren't going that great, and it just seems like it will never end, don't give up hope—good things that affect your life positively, in a big way, can happen any time, when you least expect it to.

You never know what will happen that day when you wake up in the morning. But one thing you can be sure of is that if you are diligently working hard and doing what's right, in the best way—God's way—wonderful things will happen. Maybe today, maybe tomorrow, maybe a week from today, or maybe it'll happen a year or two from now.

But don't give up hope and don't stop doing things in the best way you can. It happened to Joseph. Maybe it'll be your turn soon. Just keep doing your best, what you know to be right, and soon enough it will pay off.

Joseph had found himself suddenly in Egypt, away from his father and home. One day it seemed he was getting all the best things, and the next he was a servant, working very hard for a man called Potiphar. But even though it seemed wrong to Joseph to be there instead of back home, the Lord was with him, and he did the best work he could.

Potiphar noticed that everything Joseph did worked out well. The crops grew well and things flourished. He was so trustworthy that Potiphar put him in charge of his entire household and all his business. He wasn't lazy, and though it wasn't his favourite place to be, or his favourite job, he did the best he could and worked diligently. God blessed all that he did. People noticed that things were different with Joseph around. He made a difference for the better.

No matter where you are or what happens to you, you can have a positive effect on the situation and the people around you, if you love God, pray, and let Him help you to make things better. Rather than just getting down and despondent about what's going on, or what you miss or how bad things seem for you, with you and God as a team you can have a positive effect on any situation, and good changes can happen.

Well, as nice as it might sound to say, "And they lived happily ever after," that's not what happened next. More sudden change was around the corner. God had new things for Joseph to learn, in a different and seemingly worse situation.

It's a good thing to remember that when things are going well, it's really God who is making it all work out well for you—and to thank Him for it, and to remind others that it's really Him doing it. So the next stage of Joseph's life gave him a fresh reminder of how things can change. Only God is constant and the same.

Things might be difficult for you, but things could also be worse. It's good to think about the good that you do have, reminding yourself how it's better than a situation someone else might be in.

So things seemed to change for the worse again for Joseph, and he learned a lot in the next part of his life. One day he was in charge of Potiphar's household and business, and the next day he was put in prison for no good reason. Potiphar's wife was unhappy with her life and the things she had. She then told others things about Joseph that were not true.

She wanted Joseph to help make her happy and fix the problem she was having with feeling she wasn't getting all that she wanted. She didn't like a lot of things that were happening in her life, and wanted more and better things.

She wanted Joseph to do sneaky, dishonest things in order to get the things she wanted, thinking that it would make her happier. But when Joseph refused, choosing to only do what he knew was right and best, she was upset and told people that Joseph did something wrong—that it was his idea to try to do something naughty that Potiphar wouldn't like.

Potiphar loved his wife and believed her made-up story. It made him upset to think that Joseph, who he trusted, might have done the things his wife falsely reported. He didn't want Joseph around anymore, so he was put into prison.

Joseph chose once again to make the best of the situation. Things probably looked like they couldn't get any worse. Has that ever happened to you? But when things look like they are at their worst, be encouraged, things can only get better then, right?

The man in charge of the prison was impressed with Joseph and saw he was a good man and did things well. Joseph was kind to people, and whatever he did God blessed. Pretty soon Joseph was well-trusted and put in charge of a lot of things. He didn't just think about the way he felt, or that he missed his father and home, but he talked to people, finding out what they were feeling, and tried to help encourage each one that he could.

It was his caring about others, as well as his ability to hear from God to get solutions and the right things to say to people, that eventually made the next positive turn of events take place.

Joseph noticed that Pharaoh's butler and baker, who were also put in prison for a while, were feeling rather sad. They said it was because of the dreams they'd both had the night before. Thinking there was no one who could tell them what the dreams meant, they were despondent. Joseph had faith in God and knew that anything that people need to know, God could show and tell them.

Joseph prayed and God showed him what the dreams meant. And amazingly enough, they came true! The dreams told of how long they'd be in prison, and what Pharaoh would decide about them. What Joseph said the dreams meant came true! In

three days the butler and baker were released from prison. One got to go back to his job, and the other wasn't allowed to work for Pharaoh again.

Joseph's caring about them and getting the meanings of their dreams from God was a key to the next very good change that happened. No matter where you are, or what situation you are in, you can choose to show kindness and thoughtfulness to others; to pray and hear what God wants to tell you; to say what He wants you to say; and do your best in what you have to do.

Sometime later it was Pharaoh's turn to have some important dreams. He desperately wanted someone to tell him the meaning of them. It's a good thing that Pharaoh did try to find out, as they were dreams from God, telling him of what was to come.

Something he needed to do something about. It really was very important. But who could help him? Pharaoh didn't know how to hear from God like Joseph could, and neither could his advisors. The butler remembered all of a sudden about what happened when he told Joseph his dream, while they were together in prison.

Now for the big and wonderful change! Can you imagine what it would feel like to be in a foreign country, without your family, to be in prison because people said untrue bad things about you, and then from one day to the next, to be in charge of the whole country, nearly as important as the king?

Well, that's just what happened to Joseph. As soon as Pharaoh heard that there was a man who could possibly tell him the meaning of his dreams he wanted to see Joseph immediately!

So on a day that seemed very much like any other, down in that dreary prison, all of a sudden the king's men came and took Joseph out of prison. They helped him get all cleaned up, shaved, in nice clothes, and brought him to the king. Just like that. But if Joseph hadn't been practicing all that time, day by day, to hear from God, to work well and wisely, he wouldn't have been ready and fit for what was needed.

Before he knew it he was standing before Pharaoh, telling him that God had given Pharaoh the dreams to tell him what was about to happen—dreams about seven good ears of corn and seven fat cows; dreams that ended with seven bad looking corn, and seven very skinny cows. There were to be seven very plentiful years in Egypt, followed by seven severe and difficult years of famine, where food would be hard to come by.

A plan and a man were what was needed. A plan to set aside extra food from the plentiful years to store up for the years of difficult times, when food wouldn't grow—and a man to make it happen and be diligent and in charge. A wise man was needed.

Pharaoh thought for a minute about who could do it. It didn't take long until he realised, "Oh, you! Why not you? I think you'd be the best one for the job!" And he chose the man standing in front of him, telling him God's words. That's how Joseph was

chosen, and given the job and responsibility of ensuring that food would be available all throughout the time of famine.

It would be seven years until they would see it come to pass. But no time could be lost. They had to work like they knew it would happen—all because God said it would. Boy, were they glad when those difficult years did indeed happen, that they had believed God's warning, took diligent action, and weren't lazy or complacent, thinking everything would always be nice and fine and plentiful.

It probably looked like it would always be great, for a long, long time. But Joseph and Pharaoh chose to believe that forewarning, and Joseph worked hard, getting people to grow lots of crops and to give the extra to be stored up.

So on that day Pharaoh gave Joseph a big special job, Pharaoh's own ring from off of his hand, a golden necklace, fancy nice clothes, a royal chariot, a wife, and a new name: Zaphnathpaaneah. Pharaoh made Joseph the most important man in all the country, besides himself.

Everyone had to listen to him and obey him. And when the seven difficult years of famine and crops not growing happened, they were so glad they'd all listened, obeyed and did their best to work hard, save up and do just as God had told them to.

Joseph and his wife had two sons, and he felt so happy then with a family of his own, and keeping busy helping the king and the whole country. Good things can happen suddenly. And so can difficult times. But if you are praying, talking and listening to God, and doing your best, you'll be ready for it. You can help to make things better, no matter what kind of situation you find yourself in.

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## Food in Egypt

A time of famine, a time when the corn and other crops didn't grow, finally came. It happened just as Pharaoh had dreamt. Everyone was grateful that so much food had been stored up in Egypt during those years of plentiful harvests. But it wasn't just in Egypt that there was a lack of food. All the surrounding lands were struggling as well, and the people were very hungry.

Jacob and his sons and their families needed food. News spread that there was food in Egypt, and so off to Egypt the sons travelled—all except for the youngest. Benjamin stayed back with Jacob. He was Joseph's special brother—the only two children that Rachel had. Jacob still missed Joseph so much that he didn't want Benjamin to leave on a trip—just in case something happened to him, or he had to stay in Egypt.

By this time Joseph looked very Egyptian in the way he was attired, and he could speak the Egyptian language well too. So when his brothers come to buy food from Zaphnathpaaneah, the man who was in charge of all the saved corn in Egypt, they didn't

recognize him at all. Although Joseph could see right away that they were his brothers, he kept it a secret for a while.

Joseph realised when his brothers bowed down before him—as he looked like a powerful Egyptian governor—that this was the meaning of those dreams he'd had so long ago. He'd dreamt that their sheaves came during a harvest and bowed down before his sheave.

It seemed like such an odd dream at the time, but he saw then his brothers bowing down to him as they came to get food. Sometimes things happen to us that we really don't understand at the time, but they all make sense later on, and we realise that it had helped to prepare us for what was to come.

At first it was hard for Joseph to let his brothers in on the secret—that it was really him, that he was the one people were calling Zaphnathpaaneah. He looked different, he spoke a new language, and he had been through a lot of difficult times and hard work as a result of their actions towards him. Joseph realised then that it was ultimately God who made things work out the way they did, and that He placed him in charge, so his whole family could have food.

It's hard to go through difficult times, especially when you don't know or see the good that can come from it. But it's a wonderful moment when it all makes sense, and you can see that it has worked out better in the end. You are so glad for it after all, because it's helped you and others in some way that wouldn't have been possible if things were to have only been as you originally wished them to be.

Joseph saw the good in it all now, and showed his brothers love, kindness, and forgiveness in spite of all that had happened. He even returned to them the money they spent buying the grain, arranging to have it hidden in their sacks of grain.

The food they bought from Egypt didn't last forever, so after some time they were compelled to return to buy more. The second time the brothers came to Egypt, they brought Benjamin with them as well. Joseph had missed him so much that he insisted the next time they came that Benjamin, their youngest brother, needed to be with them.

Joseph was so glad to see him! He made a feast in his own house for all his brothers, though he continued to keep his identity unknown to them all. But when it was time for them to leave and his brother Benjamin was going back home with them, it was hard for him to see them go.

At last he told them all who he really was! It was very unexpected news for the brothers to hear. They had no idea what had become of Joseph. They were worried what would happen.

Would Joseph forgive them, or was he still very upset with them? To their relief, Joseph, who had chosen to see the good in the situation, forgave them and still loved them.



In fact he loved them all so much that Joseph and Pharaoh then invited them—all of them along with their families and father Jacob—to come and live there in Egypt where there was food.

The famine continued on for quite some time, and this way they didn't have to make the long trip again and again to get food for their families. Joseph made sure they all had what they needed while living close by.

It was a great, wonderful, exciting, change—on the move again! Wagons were sent from Pharaoh, to help load up their belongings and to carry the children, as well as their ageing father, all the way to Egypt.

Hearing the news that he was going to get to see Joseph again made father Jacob very happy. Suddenly he found new energy to travel yet again, even though he was very old and tired.

Isn't it funny how just thinking of something can change the way that you feel? Has that ever happened to you? Something can seem like a difficult job, and you feel too tired to do it, but then you hear that something is about to happen that you are really looking forward to, and all of a sudden you are buzzing with energy, and are able to do the job quickly.

Even the opposite can happen too. You'll be happily going along doing what you need to, and then a discouraging thought comes to your mind, or someone says some unkind words, and the more you allow yourself to think about it, the more it gets you down. You then find yourself unable to finish the job very well. You feel tired, uninspired and want to quit—all because of a negative thought, or because of something someone said.

Thoughts are very important, as all these brothers found out. But words and thoughts of kindness and encouragement can be like fuel in a vehicle which help us all to get where we need to go much more quickly, with renewed energy.

It was a wonderful moment when Jacob finally got to see his son again, and Joseph his father. They hugged and cried for a long time. Though those years had been tough for all of them—they'd each learned many lessons, and in the end it worked out better than if things had only gone seemingly well for them.

Difficult times come to everyone, but if we choose to believe that good will come in the end, if we are following and trusting the Lord and having faith in Him, it will not only help to make things easier for us but also help to bring good things our way.

God knows what is happening to each one, and those who love and trust Him, and try to do the things He asks, will find that in the end things are much better than they would have been if things had only been easy, and only as they originally wanted them to be.

God has a way of turning things around for good for those who love and obey Him, no matter what ends up happening, no matter what difficulty or hardships they face.

*“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28)*

Story Time with Jesus 25-36\_text

## Story Time with Jesus

### Bible Stories

#### Chapters 25-36

25-A Palace, a Prince, and Preparation

26-The Burning Bush

27-Brave Brothers

28-Woeful and Wonderful

29-A Path to Praise About!

30-Wilderness, Water and Wells

31-Amazing Food

32-Water Out of a Rock

33-A Blazing Mountain, a Blasting Trumpet, and Tablets of Stone

34-The Mercy and Light of God

35-The Cloud of the Lord

36-Aaron’s Almonds and Moses’ Song

(Jesus speaking: )

#### **A Palace, a Prince, and Preparation**

Ever since the time of famine, when Joseph and Pharaoh invited Jacob (who God also called “Israel”) and all his sons and their families to live in Egypt, they had stayed there. Years passed and now there were many, many people in Egypt. Too many—or so the Egyptians thought! It was getting to be a worry for them. The Egyptians wanted to have full control over the country.

God had promised to Abraham, and to Isaac, and also to Jacob, that if they obeyed Him, their descendants would be many—eventually too many to even count. Now it was coming true.

A new, ungodly Pharaoh, who was in charge after the time of Joseph, wanted to control the people, and to use them to build great things for him. Pharaoh made things pretty tough, and not nice at all for those people living in Egypt, making them work way too hard.

He thought if he made them just work real hard, this would keep them from becoming strong. He didn’t want them to start taking control of the country. Pharaoh didn’t want any more people, either. He was afraid of there being more than he could handle. But it was God’s plan for more and more people to be born.

It was time for God to send someone to help them and lead them out of Egypt. He wanted and needed someone who was just right for the job. Can you imagine what kind of things someone would need to know in order to do this special job? What would they need to be like, in order to do a good job of helping to get everyone on the move again—to go to the place that God had promised to their forefathers, that their descendants could live in?

It would be an enormous task to get that many people mobile. It would need to be someone who was one of them, understood them, spoke their language—but yet also knew a lot about Pharaoh and how things worked in Egypt.

They would need to know how to care for people, lots of them, and take good care of them, helping them to move on—like a shepherd cares for his sheep, and brings them to new pastures.

God would need someone with a lot of patience and faith, because it wasn't going to be a fast job, that from one day to the next everyone would be living happily and peacefully in a new country. God needed someone who loved Him and knew how to pray and hear Him speak.

God needed someone real obedient, who would do whatever He asked them to do, because it was going to take being willing to try out a lot of new ideas to make this big move work, and for the people to have all they needed while travelling.

God isn't in a big hurry when He wants a job done right, and this was a very important job—leading and caring for a huge amount of people, while taking a long journey. First God chose a good family, one that loved and obeyed Him, and that taught their children about Him too. Then He gave them a child, the one chosen for the job. It was going to take a long time till that child was not only grown up, but had learned many important lessons, making him fit for the task.

Pharaoh's idea to make the large amount of Hebrew people—Jacob's descendants—more manageable, and not keep increasing, was for people to simply stop having more babies. That just didn't work, because God's plan was exactly the opposite. But it did make it hard for those who had them to take care of them well.

God told one mother—the one He'd given this special child to—to do something unique. A type of mini boat-basket was made, real good and water-proof, made out of reeds from the river bulrushes and tar. Next, Miriam, the baby's sister, was told to watch over him, while he slept in that little basket bed, floating close to her on the water of the river.

What happened next was part of a wonderful plan. Can you believe it, but none-else but the King's own daughter who came to bathe in the river, found this basket, and the baby in it?! The baby of course cried seeing a lady he'd never seen before pick him up. But Miriam was there in a flash to offer to get the princess someone to nurse and care for the baby. — She got their mother!

What an amazing miracle took place that day! The princess loved this baby so much, just after seeing him once that she wished he could live with her. But he needed to get a bit older first. So she gave her royal permission for the mother to take good care of him, and even gave their family money to do so. Then when he was old enough, he lived in the palace, as a prince. She called his name, "Moses".

Moses grew and lived in the palace, getting to know the Pharaoh, and the Egyptian way of doing things. But God's plan for him wasn't to become the next Pharaoh, and to live the rest of his life with the comforts of life, and riches, and all that he wanted.

God placed him there to learn what he needed to. And when the time was right, there were new lessons in new places for him to experience, making him just the kind of person that was needed for the big job he was yet to be called to do.

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## The Burning Bush

When Moses was young he had no idea what the future held for him. As he grew to be an adult, and then became a more mature, older adult, he saw things that upset him very much. He greatly disliked the way he saw the Egyptians treating the Israelites, or “Children of Israel” as they were also called, making them work so hard, and causing them great difficulty and sorrow. Moses got very upset, and tried in his own way to stop them from acting so roughly.

Although it was a good idea to stop people from harming others, just getting upset and angry about things, and trying to stop one person’s wrong actions wasn’t the best way for him to do it. God had a bigger plan and idea. He didn’t just want to make the Egyptians behave more nicely; He wanted all the Israelites to not even live there anymore—to get on the move once again.

So the next part of training for Moses began. He left Egypt, the palace, and all that he’d known all his life so far. He began to live far away in a place called Midian, where a man called Jethro was living and camping out, with his family and flocks.

When something goes wrong or others are doing wrong, we often want to fix things immediately. But doing something quickly, in haste, right then and there, can be like putting a band-aid on the outside of the skin, for an injury that is deep inside.

We may want things to happen right away, but sometimes the best and more long-lasting solutions take time. God likes to make sure to give people enough time to learn, and to experience what they need to on Earth, and to learn to make the right choices themselves.

The next part of Moses’ training and preparation took a long 40 years, as he lived a completely different lifestyle, as a shepherd. He also married Jethro’s daughter, Zipporah. When the time was right at last, he was ready to be called to do the big job that God had been preparing him for all along.

While caring for the sheep in the mountainous area, Moses saw something that caught his attention. It seemed to be a bush that was on fire, but the bush wasn’t burning up. This indeed was strange. It just kept on glowing and shining. He’d never seen anything like that.

The only way he knew to make light on Earth was using fire. There wasn’t electricity back then. So to see a bush filled with a fire-like light, that wasn’t burning up, seemed very odd. Moses went to get a closer look at it. All of a sudden he froze in his tracks as he heard God speaking directly to him. Moses quickly removed his sandals, as God’s voice told him to.

Next he found himself having a long conversation with God himself, Who was commissioning Moses to now go back to Egypt, and to speak to Pharaoh, telling him to let all the people leave the country. That was no easy task! Moses of course felt completely unable to do it, and wondered if people would even believe that it really was God who had sent him.

Often the jobs that God calls people to do, can seem too big and hard, and there’s lots of opposition from people who don’t understand or see things God’s way. Additionally, Moses felt unable to speak well. He made all the excuses that he could, trying to get out of the job.

It was a very hard one indeed, and would take nothing less than the great power and miracles of God to accomplish it. But if God wants something done, and you're the one He's prepared for it, and who He's called to do it, He can do whatever it takes to help it all happen. With Him helping you, you will be capable and qualified for the job.

After God gave Moses a few examples of some of the types of miracles that He could do, to help Moses convince Pharaoh to let the people go—like turning a stick into a snake, and back into a stick again—Moses was starting to gain faith that with God helping him it would be possible.

He just needed to obey and give this new job a try. It wouldn't be easy, but God would do most of the job anyway. God just needed someone to be there, to speak His words to Pharaoh and to the people, someone to pray, and to lead the people on their long journey.

Moses' brother Aaron was still living in Egypt. God called him too, to come and see Moses and be his helper. Aaron could do the talking for Moses, who would tell Aaron what God had said. Together they would make a good team for the job.

So Moses at last agreed to do the very big, long, tiring, and difficult task. He and his wife and child then left Midian. On the way in the wilderness they met Aaron and they returned to Egypt, in obedience to God. The answer to the people's prayers to be free had been answered. They would soon be free of the hard work for Pharaoh and the very difficult times in Egypt. At last the person He'd prepared for the job was ready, and had agreed to do it. The victory was right around the corner now.

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### **Brave Brothers**

Moses knew it would be a very tough task, to not only convince Pharaoh to let all his workers go—the Israelites who he had now made to be his workmen, whether they wanted to or not, but even getting the people themselves to follow in God's way would also be hard.

Of course they wanted to be free from the sad and difficult situation they were in, but not too many of them really knew God personally. They hadn't learned to talk much to Him as a friend, as a Father, as someone they knew who could and would help them if they called on Him.

It was hard enough being in Egypt at a time like that, when so much work to make bricks was required of the people. Then for a while it looked like things were getting even worse. Pharaoh was not pleased to hear the new idea that Moses and Aaron presented from God—that of letting the people leave. He had no interest in letting the work on his big buildings and great city stop or even slow down. All he could think about was being great.

Pharaoh was about to find out that things only get worse for those who think their plans are more important than God's. You can't stand in God's way, trying to slow down what He's doing. You have to either get going following His plan, joining in and gaining the positive results, or things may go bad for you. God gives people a chance, however, and some time to think things over, and to make up their minds, choosing which side they are going to be on—God's good side, or on the wrong side.

When Moses and Aaron first arrived in Egypt, ready to do what God had asked them to, they first of all gathered the elders, those Israelites who were in positions of responsibility

and authority. They talked to them, and told them the plan, and what God had said. Moses and Aaron even showed the miraculous signs to them that God had showed to Moses when He talked with God at the burning bush. Moses demonstrated to those elders that God was serious, and He was there with them, and ready to do miracles to pull them out of that troublesome place.

Thankfully, that first team of people who heard, believed and gained faith that it wasn't just a nice idea, to be delivered from all the troubles in Egypt at that time, but it was a reality! Relief from their hardships was soon to come. However, Pharaoh had quite a different reaction. He completely refused to give permission for anyone to leave—even for a few days.

The original request presented to Pharaoh was for the people to have permission to leave for a short while to have a time of worship and prayer and praise and feasting, and taking time to honour God. Pharaoh was upset, and totally denied them any such trip. On top of that he ordered that things be made even harder for the workers, telling them to do an impossible amount of work, without sufficient building supplies.

“Make bricks without being given any straw to make them—just try and find something else to make them with—but you must make the same amount as before!” he ordered.

Of course he knew they couldn't really do that, but he was trying to make a point—that not only could no one leave, but that if they even thought about it, he was going to make things more difficult and unbearable. He was just trying to control the people in his own way. However it wasn't going to work, because God is the one in charge, and it would soon be Pharaoh's turn to have things get tough.—God getting tough with him!

So things seemed to be going pretty rough, right from the start. Although God was willing to take them out of that place and relieve the hardship, He also had to wait for people to make decisions in their own hearts and minds.

The people were having a very difficult time believing that this idea could ever even become a reality, after Pharaoh said “no”. They had a hard time speaking faith and being supportive of the plan to move, as at first it seemed to make things tougher for them all, since Pharaoh was very unwilling to let them go.

Have you ever been trying to get your own way about something you know is not right, but when someone or something tries to stop you, to help you make a better choice, you don't like it? Rather than changing and doing things the right way, you instead got upset and angry and tried to push your way, and make things difficult for others, making others feel bad?

It would be so much better for someone in that situation to just admit they were going in the wrong direction, and then stop and change. Many people can't do that very easily because it takes something special to be able to do that. Can you guess what it is? Humility is needed to admit you've been on the wrong track. Being yielded is also needed. That is, being willing to give up what you think you want, in preference for others or for what others know is best.

Unfortunately those two qualities are some of the hardest for humans on Earth to possess. Why? Because of arrogance, pride, feeling you know what is best, wanting to be

well-thought of, thinking you are better than others and that you deserve better or more than others.

Having those wrong feelings and traits inside your heart only makes the opposite happen. You lose friends. You lose your sense of joy. Most of all you make God unhappy—because you start to do things that are unloving and unkind, and you only focus on yourself. You choose to do things that you think will boost you up and show others how great you are, while making others feel they are less important than you.

So Pharaoh had a large dose of the wrong things in his heart, and that's why he couldn't bear to change, to show kindness, to give, to help, to treat others well, to make others happy, or to think of their good above what he wanted to have.

The poor, overworked and hurting people now began to lose hope that good change was possible. They were upset that Moses had even come—as it seemed that he was the one that started the next part of their troubles, with Pharaoh making things even harder for them.

If you were Moses, what would you do now? Well, he learned fast that the best way to succeed is through serious prayer. “What do I do now?” he prayed, almost wishing he hadn't come. It seemed things might have been easier if he hadn't talked to Pharaoh and told him the words of God, since the immediate results weren't so great. However, that was just because it was the beginning of great things. Great things, that will truly bring good into your lives and to others, are always tough at the start, but you just need to push through that first barrier and keep at it.

If God ever tells you to do something, don't be surprised if others oppose it and even try to stop you, and make things hard for you. Just do as Moses did and really pray. Pray and ask God if what you are doing is what He wants, and in the way He wants you to be doing it. Then just keep on doing what He shows you to do, and don't give up!

Doing things God's way may seem pretty tough at times, especially when not everyone else wants to join in and do it too. In the end you and others will be so glad at the good results of doing things God's way, regardless of the difficulties. There's no reward given for doing things only the easy way, or the way many people say it should be done, which is often the wrong way. Doing things God's way, however, will bring enormous rewards and benefits, as well as eternal compensation, from the One Who is really in charge of things.

You'd be glad to know that Moses did not give up, even in the face of great opposition. He had God, he had God's Word, and his brother Aaron to help him also. So together, following God's next instructions, they both went before Pharaoh again—this time to show signs of God's amazing power.

As Aaron's rod became a serpent, the other ungodly men tried to prove their power. But God's special snake-rod took away all the other snakes. “Oops—now we don't have any rods!” Pharaoh's magicians must have been thinking. God's power was stronger than anything they could try to imitate.

Did that make Pharaoh choose the way of humility, and at last say he was wrong, and let the people leave, giving up his own ideas, and saying “yes” to God? Read on and find out.

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### Woeful and Wonderful

As Pharaoh walked to the river for his morning wash, he was about to find out that it would be another week before he got to do just that. His heart had hardened and he had told Moses and Aaron, “No!” He had refused to let the Israelites go into the wilderness to make their feast and prayers to the Lord.

“Ah, now for a nice refreshing swim!” Pharaoh might have thought as he neared the river bank. He was surprised to see Moses and Aaron were there to say good morning to him. It wasn’t a very nice way to start the day, however.

Have you ever really needed water, and found that nothing came out of the taps? Have you ever been real thirsty and there isn’t any good, clean, safe drinking water around? Or have you been real sticky from summer sweat, and had dirty feet, felt kind of itchy and uncomfortable, but there was no way to wash up? It’s very hard to make it without water. It’s one of the most important human needs.

Pharaoh usually had all the water he needed and wanted—he had a whole river full of it. No one could take that away from him. Or could someone? Could God? The morning after he refused to say yes, he found things started to get real difficult for him.

God told Moses and Aaron to stand near the water, in the place Pharaoh was trying to go, and to tell him that because of his refusal to obey God, the water would no longer be as water! The whole river, the little ponds, the streams, and even the pots and jugs of water that had already been drawn from the river would be changed.

Pharaoh was shocked, and very appalled! As Aaron stretched forth his rod and touched the river, it was all transformed into a red, stinky, slimy, and terrible looking, flowing river. There was now nothing clean or nice about it. It looked like blood—yuck! And it stayed that way for the next week, until Pharaoh at last begged for it to be changed back again.

God was merciful, and gave Pharaoh a chance. The water was nice once again. Sweet relief was felt! Good refreshing drinks of water could be enjoyed. Cooking, baths, laundry, dish washing, cleaning houses and so forth finally could happen. Everything had been getting pretty stinky and dirty, and everyone had been feeling extremely thirsty.

Once Pharaoh had his bath, however, and got a good drink of water, he changed his mind as fast as the water had changed back again. Wrong decision! It was hard not to have water—but there were worse, longer-lasting type of troubles that would come to Pharaoh and his palace, and to all the Egyptians, if he wouldn’t let the people go.

He could choose the easy way—though it seemed hard for his pride—and say “yes”. Or he could continue to say no, to have a tough and stubborn heart that resisted, and then find out what hard times really were! Many things then followed things that caused him and his country hardship, sorrow, pain, lack of food, destruction of farms and goods, and so forth.

All kinds of things happened, like zillions of frogs hopping everywhere in their houses and yards, a hail storm with huge hail stones pelting down, millions of locusts feasting on their crops, painful sores and boils on the Egyptians’ skin, tons of swarms of flies—more than you’ve ever had bothering you while camping—and on went the troubles.



Each time Pharaoh did as he did before. He begged for mercy and for a positive change, promising to let the people go right afterwards, but then he always changed his mind again, and said, “No,” refusing them permission to leave.

One of the last difficult consequences was a darkness that God put over the country—but it was only on the side where Pharaoh and the Egyptians lived. The side where the Israelites were living was as light as day. For three days and nights it was totally and completely dark for Pharaoh and his people!

There was no light at all. No sunlight could be seen, or starlight, or moonlight! Not even torches or candles or fires helped to bring light to Pharaoh’s palace. Imagine trying to cook in pitch darkness, or find your way down a street, or do anything at all! It was like they were all blind all of a sudden, that’s how dark it was!

The Israelites now had faith that leaving Egypt was really going to happen—God was going to make sure it did! So while the Egyptians groped their way through pitch blackness, the Israelites could use those days to pack, to prepare, and to gear up for their big, long journey.

They were looking forward to soon being finally free of the burdens and great hardships they’d had to endure at the hand of Pharaoh over the past while.

After 10 great difficulties and lesson-teaching consequences, Pharaoh looked around at the poor condition of his country, and looked into his sad heart that was still grieving over the loss of his son—as death is something that happened in nearly every household, as the last trouble. Pharaoh heard what his troubled people were saying, and he at last relented. He would let the people go—everyone, and all their animals too. They were to leave right away.

No time was lost—the Israelites, or “children of Israel” as they were also called—knew how quickly Pharaoh could change his mind. They were up and off as quickly as they could go, without even time to finish baking their bread. The dough was just packed up and cooked later on, when they were safely out of Egypt, and stopped for their first picnic.

There were countless people by this time, oh so many! Plus there were all the animals, bags, food, and some other goodies that they asked some of the Egyptians to give them.

Many Egyptians were happy to help them get on their way, and to treat them well after all that had happened. They gave the Israelites some golden jewellery and decorations, and treasures to make their feast time special. It was quite a big and excited team that headed off that wonderful day!

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### **A Path to Praise About!**

A few days after all the Israelites had left Egypt, news came to Pharaoh saying the people he’d allowed to leave were continuing to travel further away. They showed no intentions of returning. It was more than just a “feast in the wilderness.” It was a start to a new life. It was good that they had decided to obey God and leave right away when they were told to, as Pharaoh had changed his mind again and wanted the Israelites back in Egypt.

How did they know where to go, and what was the best route to travel? God took care of that. During the day He placed a big cloud ahead of them to lead the way. The big team followed the cloud. When it stopped, so did they. God was right there helping them and leading them through each part of the journey. At night God placed a pillar of fire instead of a cloud. It gave light and warmth, and a wonderful sense of God's close, loving care and protection.

Pharaoh and his team, who came to find the Israelites, discovered that God could do even more amazing things than they imagined possible. At first the Egyptians thought they were strong and could have whatever they wanted, but when met with the power of God, their abilities were nothing in comparison.

God told Moses to stretch out his hands and rod over the Red Sea. What would happen this time? A strong wind began to blow, and kept on blowing, and after awhile the sea was no longer in their way! Instead, there was a dry, large pathway all the way through it to the other side. The water stood upright like walls on either side. It was like one very big, long and wide amazing hallway or corridor! The travelling team, surprised and delighted by this wonderful solution and way of escape from their pursuers, got going and walked on and on through to the other side, on the very seabed!

Then Pharaoh's men decided to do the same, but things didn't go so well for them. Have you ever tried to pull a wagon without any wheels? Well, as they were galloping down this amazing new pathway, God slowed them down by simply removing their chariot's wheels.

All the children of Israel made it safely to the other side of the Red Sea. Then it was time to close up God's specially made passage way, and the waters returned to their former place. The Egyptians never reached the other side. They got very, very wet for sure.

Someone looking over the Red Sea then, who didn't see what had just happened, may never have guessed that there had been dry land there just a while before. It looked just like it always had before—just one big sea.

Moses and all the people burst forth into a jubilant, triumphant song, telling of the power of God and how He had helped them and protected and provided for them. Some of the words of the song said, "The Lord is my strength and song! The Lord shall reign forever and ever!"

Moses' sister, then in her 80's, was still pretty lively, and inspired many to pull out their instruments and sing, dance, and praise the Lord for the amazing miracle that had just transpired. All the people were in awe at how great the power of God was. If God could do that, He could do anything!

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### **Wilderness, Water and Wells**

Having too much water to get across, like the Red Sea, wasn't the only difficulty this massive team of Israelites encountered on their long trek through the wilderness. Their trip wasn't just to get from one part of the land to the other. A big part of the reason for the journey was what was going on inside their hearts.

They needed time to learn to follow God, to learn about His new and better way of doing things. They needed to learn faith not only in His power to help, heal, supply, protect and provide for them, but faith to do just what He said to do, and to do it when He said it was the best time to do it.

It was like a travelling training camp. The Israelites had been in Egypt for so long, and were used to being ordered around by earthly men and rulers. Even if they had wanted to do things differently, they couldn't. That was one of the main reasons for them to now be free—not so they could do things their own way, but so that they'd be free to follow God's plan.

It was going to take a lot of time and training to teach them that they couldn't just do as they pleased, but that they needed to obey God and listen to what He told them to do—if they wanted things to go well. Speaking of “well,” that's what they needed. They were thirsty and needed water. That was the first and biggest need. After a few days of wearying travel they at last reached some water, but it tasted terrible.

Can you imagine how you'd feel, if after a hot time in the sun you came into the house to drink a nice glass of water, and found that the only water around is a pitcher of terrible tasting water? The water in the place the Israelites called “Marah” was like that, and it was a grumbling bunch of people that complained to Moses about it.

Good things were about to come their way, and fresh water to drink too, but there was a lesson to be learned first. Their experiences were all part of the training they needed.

Moses had the right reaction to this dilemma. He prayed and asked God what to do. He knew that the way to receive what they needed from God was simple: Tell Him of their need, listen to Him, and obey what He said to do.

“Throw that tree into the water!” was God's instruction to Moses when he asked God about the water problem. No further questions and pausing were necessary. If God wanted a tree in the water, Moses would do just that. As soon as that was done, the water became fresh and drinkable.

While they were all being refreshed, and their animals were getting a good drink also, God explained why He had allowed that to happen. Remember the Egyptian's first lesson, when they were not obeying God's instructions to let the people go and Pharaoh had continued to say “no”? They had bad water too.

So if the travelling team wanted to have a good trip, and not to suffer those difficulties like the Egyptians did, and wanted the blessing of good health and healing, they needed to listen to God and do what He said.

It was a pretty new idea for a lot of them. But the sooner they formed that new habit, the better things would go for them. The next place they went to was a wonderful one, a place with 12 wells of good water, and many palm trees for shade.

After a bit more than a month of travelling their food supplies had run out. Now what could be done? Did they say, “Oh, I know! Let's all stop to praise God for how wonderful He is, and how He can give us all that we need, if we will just ask! Then let's pray for food to be given! We don't see a way for us to get any food at all, but impossible things are never a problem to God. We'll just praise Him and pray, and let Him do the providing. Whatever He says to do then, we'll do!”?

Well, that's not quite what they said. If they had learned that lesson right away, you can be sure they wouldn't have had to wait so long to get more food. Instead, they waited until they were so very hungry, and then rather than praying for God's provision, expecting His help, they turned to Moses, whining about their needs, almost feeling sure that things would never get better.

The people were acting like Moses was some sort of food shop, with shelves that had run out of supplies. They grumbled to him to come up with food for them. Complaining to Moses showed a lack of faith in the Lord's care for them. God heard all that they were saying, and wished they'd just say, "Please can I have some? Thank you!", as children learn to do. Murmuring and getting upset wasn't a fast way to get what they needed.

Moses couldn't do a thing to make food appear out of thin air. Or could he? Well, in a way he could, the same way anyone who loves and is following God can—through prayer, asking the One who can do just that, to provide. The people could have easily done the same, but it was taking them time to form the new habits, and to learn a new way.

After Moses prayed, God told a wonderful thing to all the people. The next morning was to be the first day to receive something very special, that God would give them for many years from then on. God said He would, "rain bread from Heaven."

He'd make a delicious type of food appear all around, to be gathered and eaten. God was providing and caring for them as they learned to let Him be their King and Leader. He knew what was best, they just needed to follow Him, pray, listen to Him and obey His instructions.

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### Amazing Food

Since the travelling team couldn't plant crops and wait for them to grow while on the move going to a new country, God sent it to them. It was a lot easier to harvest food now! It was ready made, delicious and edible, right from Heaven. All the people had to do was to gather it off the ground each morning.

It was white, and looked like small seeds, and tasted sweet, like it had honey in it! They called it "manna." This manna could be eaten just like that, or baked, or cooked. They came up with many different ways to prepare this miracle bread from Heaven, and it always tasted great!

Well, there was one time it didn't—if it was left over from the day before. The manna was fresh on the day it was gathered, but the next day it would be smelly, and bad! That was part of their next lesson on obedience. God was trying to teach them faith—that He would send more food, fresh each day, and they didn't have to worry whether there would be some again the next day. They also needed to learn obedience.

If God said, "Only gather enough manna for today, and don't save any for the next day," they learned that He meant it. Some people, however, just didn't listen and learn, until they discovered the results through consequences. The easy way is to "believe, remember, and do". The hard way is to go a different way than God is asking you to go, and then you find out why you shouldn't have, by experiencing things that you wish you didn't.

"What's that terrible smell?" some of them awoke saying. Someone had done exactly what Moses had told them, from the Lord, not to do. They'd saved some of the manna from

the day before, and put it in their tent. Maybe they liked it so much and wanted to save some just in case God forgot to send down more to them the next day.

Would God forget? No! There was an abundance of fresh new manna, all around the next day! The old stuff that was saved stank, and had worms in it. It was a very unpleasant way to wake up, and showed that they didn't have faith in God's care. They probably felt rather embarrassed, but they learned through it that it's better to obey what God said to do.

It wasn't, however, just something that always happened with the manna. It didn't always go bad. God specifically let it go bad the next day as His gentle way of trying to get them to listen, believe and obey Him. Why was it important to learn that? They were soon to start living in a new country, and if they wanted it to be a good one, there was only one way to do that—to do things God's way, as people had been learning ever since the Garden of Eden.

There's the right way, and the wrong way. God knows what is best, what is right, what is fair, what is loving, what is going to bring about good things in people's lives, and what will work out for the best in the end. God already knows what will happen, right from the start. It pays to do it His way—as these travellers found out, time and again.

The next instruction, regarding this amazing "bread from Heaven", was to collect and save extra for the next day. Yes, you heard that right. They were supposed to get double the amount of manna on the sixth day of the week, so that on the seventh day of the week, their rest day, they could have a nice day and not have to do that collecting job.

Wasn't that thoughtful? See, the God of Heaven, the God of the whole Earth, wasn't at all like the Pharaoh they'd been forced to work for. God wanted them to save a day each week for rest, just like He set the example of when first creating the world.

His solution to making a country peaceful and to have the people doing what they should was not to make them work harder and harder—like it was in Egypt. God wanted them to realise that it was very important that they take time daily with Him. He wanted them to take time to stop, to listen, to enjoy, to praise, to pray, and to be refreshed. He also asked them to do something new, to help them form new habits for good health and happiness.

God asked them to take a full day each week to rest and relax. To help make it easier for them, and to help them remember to do it each week, He allowed them to gather twice as much food the day before their rest day. Then the food would remain fresh and good—but just on that day! This wasn't just amazing food, it was an amazing God! He knew what each one was doing, when they were doing it, on what day of the week they were doing it, how many people were in their family, how much food each one had or needed, and what they were thinking and saying. He knew it all!

He brought things into their lives day by day, with each new part of their journey, all with the same purpose that He still does things in your life even today: To teach each person about His love, His care, and that following His words and His way is really the best thing to do.

Moses had faith in God's words, and depended on His instructions to get them out of each tight spot. He simply did as God said! When God said to take a portion of the manna—manna that usually went bad after being kept for one day—and told him to save it for years

to come, so they'd remember what it looked like many years later, Moses obeyed. As surprising as it sounds, it didn't go bad. It wasn't the bread that was so amazing, but the God who made it and was giving out the instructions.

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## Water Out of a Rock

It might be hard to understand why the people didn't stop to praise and pray and get God's instructions, when yet again there was no water to drink in the next camping place. It was taking them a long time to learn, but do you always ask nicely for everything you want all the time? Even though you know your parents love you and want to take good care of you, don't you still complain sometimes when you are feeling really hungry, or tired, or thirsty, or sick, or hurting?

It was pretty difficult to be travelling for so long, especially for people who were used to living in one place, and having water available when they needed it. It was hard for them to all of a sudden, from one day to the next, not have a house and to be moving all the time. It wasn't easy to have to carry all their things around and lead the animals onward, and not always having even the most basic things they thought they needed. They no longer had gardens to grow their vegetables in, or plenty of water around to drink. It wasn't easy.

In so many other ways it was better than what they were enduring through all the hard times in Egypt. However, when you feel you really need something, it can be rather hard to start thinking of all the good things that you do have. It's human nature to focus on just that one thing that is hard, or the one thing that you don't have right then.

Learning to react to difficulties with faith, with words of thankfulness on your lips, and with a prayer, is a good way to bring wonderful things in your life. People don't always think of doing it, because they often don't feel like doing it at the time. You can start to see things in a warped way. Your thoughts can lead you to believe that things were better for you before, or that others must have things much better than you do, or to think that "everything is going wrong." That's not how to bring fast, good results your way.

When dealing with the people's negative reactions when being faced once again with the need for water, rather than giving up, Moses took the situation to the only one who could, and would, make things better for them. He brought it to God in prayer. King David, who lived many years later, wrote in Psalm 23, "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." That is what happened on that day in the wilderness. God told Moses to take the rod of Aaron, and to go with the elders of the people, to a certain rock.

Moses was instructed to hit the rock. God said His spirit would be right there on the rock, making water come out of it for the people to drink. That's how it happened! Water came gushing from the rock, giving them all that they needed. Everyone knew how real and close God was to them, providing for them what was needed, even in a seemingly impossible situation.

There were other times when the need for water became a cause for complaint. One time, the lack of trust in God's care caused unkind words to be said again to Moses and Aaron about the need for water. Moses didn't take it very patiently. It was hard for him to hear all the harsh words of others. His sister also had recently passed away, so things were extra difficult for Moses.

God wanted to do an amazing miracle, to prove to the people how real and powerful He was, and to help encourage everyone. He wanted them to think more about Him and all the

great things He could do, rather than getting too down and discouraged about their problems. He told Moses the plan.

Rather than hitting the rock, like God told him to do the first time, Moses was to just speak to the rock, and the water would come out of it. That would look pretty impressive, don't you think? Someone just speaks, and water gushes out of a rock with great force, pouring and rushing down like a stream until it forms a big pool!

As Moses stood before the rock he saw and heard all the upset people, grumbling and blaming him for every problem they were facing. He got his mind on them rather than God and His tremendous love and great care, and the marvellous way He was going to answer their need for water. Moses then went ahead, in a spirit of angry impatience—which was rare for him—and he hit the rock twice, speaking to the people angrily.

God was kind and still made water come out, and plenty of it! Everyone got all the water they needed, and were glad. However, God wasn't too pleased with Moses' and Aaron's disobedience to His plan, and how they showed a poor example. It wasn't the right way to react.

God told them that as a result, when at last they did reach the land that was promised to them, that neither Moses nor Aaron would be allowed to go in. God needed to let the people know that it is wrong to not follow His instructions, and that reacting in an angry way isn't right either.

Everyone makes mistakes; even great leaders do at times. Only God is perfect. You can follow others' good examples, if they are following God's way, while you continue to look to God most of all for the right example. How do you do that? Study the Bible, and receive My Words to you while praying and getting quiet, taking your problems and needs to Me—Jesus. You'll be amazed with the solutions I can give, and how I can work things out—without you getting all impatient and forcing the situation in your own way. Trust Me to take care of things, and listen to My thoughts.

Later on, when the Israelites needed water again, the people remembered that the right way to get things from God was to hear from Him, obey His Words, and praise Him! God instructed Moses to gather the people together, as He was going to give them more miracle water. God told Moses where to direct the princes and noble men to just dig into the ground with their staves. Then the people sang! Yes! They sang a song, a song of prayer and praise, for the water to spring up.

Even if you are in the middle of the wilderness and have nothing but dry ground and a stick, if you are talking to God in faith, and hearing what He wants you to do, and singing and praising Him, He can make a spring of water come up right out of the ground if you need it. With faith, prayer and praise anything can happen, if God is helping you out!

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### **A Blazing Mountain, a Blasting Trumpet, and Tablets of Stone**

One day God made a very special announcement to Moses and all the people. He was going to come for a visit! Well, God isn't seen in the way we see people, at least not now. God is quite a bit bigger and contains lots of power and light. He was going to visit them in a visible way, but in a different form—not as a man. The cloud of His presence and the wonder of His power were going to come very close to them on a certain mountain.



God wanted them to honour Him and demonstrate how they respected Him by getting ready. The people all prepared, as God told them to, for this special event. They washed their clothes, took a bath and got all clean. Then the awaited-for time arrived.

The people were curious and wanted to see what God was like and to be able to get as close as possible, so God gave Moses some instructions. Have you ever seen a worksite where construction is going on, and there are fences around it, and signs for pedestrians to keep away, as it is dangerous?

Well, God's Heavenly power, His Spirit's energy was so strong, that He knew humans, those He created and made out of the clay of the Earth, couldn't handle being so physically close to the way He chose to visit them. Everyone was forbidden—people and animals too—from even touching the mountain, but they could all stand near and watch what was to happen. It was an amazing show!

All of a sudden there were bright flashes of lightning and powerful thunder, and a thick cloud on the mountain. Then there was a very loud sound of a trumpet announcing God's visit. The trumpet sound was so loud that everyone in the area could hear it booming, like they'd never heard a trumpet blasting before!

Moses called the people to come to meet God at the foot of the mountain. God was to be their guide, their king, their ruler. They needed to know how real He was, and how He was to be respected, followed, and listened to.

When God began to show His presence in a visible way, the mountain looked like one large-sized "burning bush"—like Moses had seen years before. There was a big fire on the mountain, and tons of billowing smoke.

The whole mountain shook like a big earthquake was happening—that's just how the mountain reacted when just a little of the power of God was on it. It was a good thing the people stayed off of it! It was very dramatic! The loud trumpet blast continued to blow, and grew yet louder and louder! Moses talked with God, and God answered him. Moses knew God. He loved and followed Him, and would do whatever God asked. Moses wasn't afraid to be near to Him, but knew he must always obey.

God wasn't there to cause harm, just to show a powerful display! Like when fireworks are set off on New Year's Eve or other special events. They are powerful and filled with light and wonder, but you better not get close when the fireworks are making a display of light with a blast! So God was doing a show, and it just wasn't safe for people to get too close.

God then called to Moses, telling him to come up to the top of the mountain! He had permission to go, and he did. God spoke with him for awhile, then told him to go down quickly again, to talk with the people, as some of them might try to copy him and climb up the mountain too, just to get a closer look.

Moses obeyed and came and told the people what God had said to him. These were instructions that Moses would write down for them later on, rules that have been known as "the 10 Commandments", as well as other words of counsel and rules for them.

God said that since the people had seen Him visit them, they knew how real He was, and they were to worship Him only. While Moses told them these and other words from God, the mountain continued to be ablaze. Smoke rose from it, the loud trumpet blasted, and the ground shook. The people were glad that it was just Moses talking with them face to

face then. God's display of power on the mountain made them realise how strong God was, and they felt humble and weak in His presence.

God called Moses close again and gave more instructions, which he came and told everyone. Later he wrote down all the instructions from God—His guidelines, rules and guidance for the people to follow. God made the rules easy to understand. These rules gave specific examples for them to know how to be kind, what was a loving reaction to problems that came up, how to treat others well, what to do when problems occurred, and what was God's way of doing things—for that time in history, for the Israelites.

A special ceremony was held to commemorate their obedience to God's words. Moses read aloud to everyone the many rules that God told him to write down. Everyone promised to obey. Then one day they all saw the glory and light of God in a bright, fiery cloud that came on to that special mountain for a whole week!

On the seventh day Moses was once again called up to talk with God. Some others were permitted to come a bit closer and they got an amazing and beautiful glimpse of a part of God! Wow! They were amazed and in awe. And Moses was called to go right into the cloud and up the mountain.

Since the people had some of God's words and instructions written down by then, which they promised to obey, God left other people in charge of them for a while, because Moses was to take a special "vacation". It wasn't really a holiday, but it was a rest and a break from his usual very big and tiring job each day of counselling and leading the people.

God let Moses be with Him there on the mountain, just hearing His words and speaking with him for 40 days and nights. As amazing as it sounds, just being there with God was enough for him at that time. He needed no food or water—just the nourishment of God's words. It was a wonderful time.

The main purpose for that time was that God said He had a special gift to give to Moses, for the people. With God's own finger He wrote on tablets of stone 10 of the most important and main rules that they were to all obey.

It would be easy to understand just what they were to do. Nowadays you might hear that expression "written in stone" meaning something that is a sure and solid rule that is meant to be obeyed. It probably comes from this event, with Moses and the people of Israel.

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## The Mercy and Light of God

After such a wonderful time alone with God, hearing from Him and getting His plans, it was startling and troubling for Moses to be suddenly faced once again with the trouble in the camp. God told Moses to go down and check on everyone, that they were up to no good.

Moses could not believe it! Everything that God had told them to do, and not to do—things that they had all promised to obey—had so quickly been forgotten. Many had turned back to their old ways, their bad ways, doing the things that greatly displeased God.

It was easy to say, “Yes, I’ll obey God’s rules,” when God was showing His power to them on the mountain, and there was thunder and lightning and fire, and they felt afraid to do their own bad ideas. But when Moses was gone for such a long time, and had seemingly disappeared into the cloud, and they didn’t hear from him for so long, they might have thought they were now on their own, with Moses long gone. There was no one telling them what to do. They forgot that the whole point wasn’t to just do what was good and right because there was a person right there with them watching them and making them do it.

God’s whole lesson that He was trying to tell them when He visited them in that special way on the mountain was for them to know that He is there with them all the time. God wanted them to love and follow in His ways. He knew about each and every one of them, and it mattered to God what each person decided to do on Earth.

When Moses came down from the mountain and saw what was going on, he had one of his few angry reactions. He was usually so calm, so patient, day after day, year after year, but this time he felt it was just too much. In a moment of anger, sadly, Moses threw down those precious tablets of stone that he was carrying down from the mountain.

Those were the ones that God had just made for them. Now they were broken. Oh, dear! Moses regretted that he had gotten so upset to the point that it made him feel like giving up trying to help the people, thinking that even these rules on stone wouldn’t help to change the people from doing wrong. He had thought they had made good progress in their lessons, and were ready to do things God’s way. Moses had been so glad for that step of progress in their training. But not everyone had changed—at least not in their hearts.

You have to do more than just say that you will do what God knows is best. You have to choose to do it no matter what—even if others tell you to do something differently than what God, in love, has asked you to do or not do. You have to choose to obey whether or not there are people leading you, helping you, and instructing you in the right way.

God was upset too. He was so upset that He didn’t even want to continue allowing these people to be part of the promise He’d made to Abraham, and then to Isaac, and yet again to Jacob. If they weren’t going to willingly obey and follow in His way, He’d have to start again, from the beginning, with another child, and let them grow and have children, and on and on till there were again many descendants choosing to follow in His way.

It was a very difficult time, and a hard but good lesson was learned. People had to choose that day whose side they were on—God’s side, or following in their old, ungodly ways. Moses prayed with all his heart. He begged for God to give them another chance to do better, and God said yes. He is so merciful, kind and forgiving. So those that really

wanted to be a part of this team and wanted to follow in God's way were allowed to be there. Anyone who wanted to continue doing things in their bad, ungodly way would not be allowed to be part of the special team anymore.

It sobered the people when Moses explained that God was so unhappy with their repeated disobediences, that He nearly took away their place as being part of this special chosen team. They were very sorry, and took off any fancy jewellery and decorations. They showed in their sombre actions and words on that day that they wanted to belong to God, and have Him bless them and care for them.

God gave those ones who chose the right way a second chance—and gave Moses a second chance to make a new set of stone tablets. Thankfully, that time, when Moses was called up on the mountain for another 40 days alone with God, the people tried their best to do things as God wanted them to, while Moses was gone. They knew that no matter what, God was still there with them, watching and listening to all that was going on.

God told Moses to cut out the next stones for the new "Ten Commandments" tablets, as well as to make a wooden box or "ark" to keep them in, once they were finished. Moses went up to the mountain early in the morning, taking the new stone slabs with him. He was ready for God to write the words on them, once again.

Moses took time to hear from God on the mountain. Once again God's rules were written on the new tablets of stone. When he came down from the mountain he placed the new stone tablets in the wooden box for safe keeping, as God had told him to do. This new set was taken care of very well, and even many years later people still had them.

Moses had some wonderful times with God while on the mountain, seeing a bit more of God than he'd ever gotten to see before. Moses gave all his time and focus to just sitting there, praying and listening to God's Words.

That is a very important thing for anyone who wants to lead others in the right way and accomplish positive goals with their lives. Maybe you can't all have 40 whole days alone, doing nothing else but praying or reading God's Word, but how about 40 minutes today?

Can you spend that time alone to hear from Me, to tell Me you love Me, and to get your instructions for your day? You can pause to listen and to hear My solutions to your problems! You can take the time to read some of My Word to give you faith and courage for whatever you have to do today.

*When Moses came down from the mountain after his time alone with God, he didn't feel anything real different had happened to him, physically. However, because of his time spent in the light of God, Moses' face was shining—so brightly that people couldn't even look at it. He had to put a covering over his face! That was an example to them that time spent with God—the Father of Light—can make you filled with God's light too.*

*Your eyes, your smile, your face and your reactions will show My love and light, peace and joy, if you take time, like Moses did, to talk with and hear from Me. If you listen to My words it will make a wonderful difference in your life and in your reactions with others.*

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The Cloud of the Lord

God wanted to keep showing the people that He was there with them—showing Himself in more ways than you usually see nowadays—as they were all just starting to get to know Him and what He was like. God let a bright cloud appear in the day time, and at night it changed into a fiery pillar. It was God’s way of saying that He was there.

This cloud displaying God’s presence was with them right from the start, as they left Egypt. It was not only God’s way of showing He was there with them, but also how He chose to lead and guide them. It showed them when to go and where, as they travelled through the wilderness. Wherever it stopped, they stayed for as long as it stayed still there—whether it was for a day, or a week, a month, or even years!

The cloud would come nearby Moses too at times, when he would go into his special prayer tent to talk with God. All the people could see that Moses was there taking time with God and hearing Him speak. Moses talked with God as close as friends talk—with God’s voice speaking to Moses in his heart and mind and ears—and the cloud was the part of God that was visible.

One of the things God had instructed them to do was to make a large, fancy, special prayer tent, called the “Tabernacle”. Everyone got very excited to help build it. People gave all kinds of things to Moses and those helping to make it—cloth of all kinds, gold, jewels and so forth.

A wise and diligent man named Bezaleel helped to make the “Ark of the Covenant”—a very special box for holding special things, and he built and made many other things too that God asked Moses to have made. He was good at making things out of wood, carving things, stone work, making things out of gold, silver and brass, and making all sorts of things. He was very careful to do each thing in just the way God told Moses to have it done.

The special cloud would then rest on this tabernacle, showing God’s presence was there, telling the big team of travellers where to stop and camp, and when it was time to move on. There was no TV telling news of what was going on in the surrounding areas, nor the internet to look up camp sites, or phone services to find out the information needed to make the trip a safe and good one. But God knew everything! And He made it simple by just telling and showing them where and when to go, using this bright cloud of light and fire.

Finally, after quite some time of not just travelling, but learning all kinds of lessons, with God helping them all to know and follow Him, He led them to the place of their destination. At long last they were right nearby the land they were to live in, build houses, raise their families, grow crops, and so forth.

Men were chosen from each of the main 12 families or “tribes” as they were called, the descendents of the 12 sons of Jacob. These men had a very exciting mission: to be the first ones to go into the new land, the place that had been promised would be theirs. These men were to check things out, to see what it was like, discover who lived there, and come back and tell everyone what they had found out.

Joshua (who was also called Oshea, and was a descendant of Joseph) and another God-following man called Caleb, were filled with faith and courage. When they saw the place, they thought it was just terrific! Crops grew well—and some of the large grapes and fruits of the land were brought back to demonstrate this to the people. The animals would have plenty of grass and shrubs to graze on. There was water and all that was needed for the people to make the new country their home.

However, not everyone came back with a good report. There is always a good side to each situation; even things that seem difficult can work out good, if you see things in God's way. Joshua and Caleb believed God would work it out for them, and make it all a great place, but the others had noticed something that seemed way too hard. There were some people that lived there that were very, very tall! Giant, in fact! They worried that those giant men would make things too hard for them, and not allow them all to move in.

Problems can seem big to you, or they can seem small, according to how big and powerful you think that God is. If you realise that God and His power and ability to help are bigger than the universe, then something like a tall person on Earth is so very small in comparison. It wouldn't even trouble you. You'd know that God could make that person not bother you.

However, if you think that a giant person or giant problem is even bigger than what God can do, then you feel there is no way a solution can be found. You just feel like giving up. And that's what some of those pioneers and explorers felt like—and not just felt like it, but they expressed those discouraging, despairing, doubtful words to all the people, convincing them all that what they'd hoped for all this time was impossible, and would never happen. So sad!

Joshua and Caleb tried to tell the people the truth, and explain how God could do anything, that there was nothing too hard for Him, that He would work it out, and they'd all enjoy living there. They knew that with faith in their all-powerful God He would make it all right and a good place for them to live. The people however gave place to fear and worry and despair. They chose to listen to the negative words, rather than the positive, so no one wanted to go and enter the new land. It was a sad day.

What a pity to not feel that God would complete His plan, finish what He had begun, and come through with His promises. It was a shame they felt that God wasn't able to make all things work out well. They didn't believe that He was strong enough and capable of doing whatever needed to be done to help them. And so began the next long and tiresome part of the journey.

Since they didn't have the confidence in God to go ahead into the new land and take on the challenges it presented to them, they had to go back into the wilderness, live there, and travel around for the next 40 years. Do you think when their next chance to enter the promised land came after all those years, that they were finally ready to give God a chance? You bet! Those who had been children at the time were now adults, and were eager and full of faith that God would help them.

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### **Aaron's Almonds and Moses' Song**

It's good if you can believe what I say by faith, but if I choose to do a little something extra to encourage your faith, it can be real special. Sometimes it is just what is needed to help you to keep going in the right direction.

Many of the travelling Israelites were often having a hard time trusting and believing that God was leading Moses and Aaron and showing them what to do. They thought that because things weren't always so easy, it was because things weren't right. They often complained and grumbled to Moses and Aaron, saying they weren't doing things right.

This was very difficult for Moses and Aaron, and made God upset too, as He was the one actually leading the people by telling Moses and Aaron what to do, and they were trying their best to follow God and lead the people in His way.

God wanted to show a sign to the people that Moses and Aaron were indeed the right men for the job, and were the God-appointed leaders for that time. God gave the instruction for one prince to represent each of the 12 tribes of Israel. Each of those 12 princes was to bring their rod or walking stick.

The princes were to write their name on their stick. Both Moses and Aaron were from the tribe Levi. Aaron's rod with his name on it was one of the 12 rods collected, as God had said. These rods were placed in the special tabernacle over night; they were put where Moses usually prayed and talked with God. God said that He would make the rod that belonged to the person that He wanted to lead the people bud with blossoms!

The next morning the most unusual thing happened. When Moses went into the tabernacle to check on the rods, he saw that the rod representing him and Aaron had buds on it, had grown blossoms and yielded almonds! —All this growing out of a very old stick that they'd used for many years! It was of course something only the one who created the world could do, the one who could make a plant grow over-night without any roots or nourishment.

It was God's gift to Moses and Aaron, given as a sign of encouragement to everyone that they were his chosen leaders. They could all rest with assurance that even if not everything was easy, things would work out and God was really the one in charge of this whole big team anyway.

Have you ever heard a song and found it was hard to forget its catchy lyrics? The words would just keep repeating in your mind and it was hard to get it to stop? If it's a good tune and song, then it serves as a great reminder of a helpful message. If it's not a good song, then it can be a real problem.

It's real important to guard the tank of your mind, so that it's only filled up with things that will make your life's motor and the things you do to be powered in the right way, going in the best direction. If you've got a strong diesel engine in your truck, you don't fill it with sea water. Not only would it not make it drive to where you are trying to go, but it would cause all kinds of trouble in the engine, right?

Your mind and heart are like motors that are constantly on the go, learning, doing, experimenting, thinking, feeling, imagining, remembering and guessing. You need fuel—and not just food for your belly. You also need to feed your mind and heart with something. What you choose to fill it with will make a difference, giving you either success or failure; gladness and joy, or despair and despondency; light and Godliness or darkness and bad things; hate and anger in your heart, or love and inspiration brightening your life.

God could read the thoughts of each one of the Israelites, and each one on Earth. He knew that on their own, without His loving and wise guidance, they wouldn't have the wisdom and the determination to always do things His way, and to shun the evil that would surround them in their new country from all the other people that knew nothing of God's love and ways.

Moses had talked with them. He taught them everything God told him to. They had the rules written down on scrolls, as well as on the tablets of stone, and God had one more thing to give to them.

There was one new idea that God had for Moses to try, in an effort to help the Israelites remember to follow God when Moses had passed away and they were in their new country. Shortly before it was Moses' time to leave, God told him to write a song, and teach it to the people. So he did, in just one day! It was a long song too!

It was to be a reminder song for them, a song that God and Moses hoped would stick in their minds, to help keep them going God's good way—or to convict their hearts when they were off doing their own wrong things and seeing that it was bringing nothing good their way.

Moses had lived a long life, obediently doing as God had asked of him. By the time they reached the new land they were to move into, Moses moved up to His new place—with God—to rest and be rewarded for faithfully doing his job, day by day, year after year, decade after decade. Aaron had also been taken to Heaven some time before, when God called him up onto a mountain, from where he too went on to his Heavenly reward.

Before Moses left, he got to see the view from the mountain of the land all the people were moving to shortly. It was time then to give the job of leading the very big team of Israelites to someone else, and God had just the right person in mind. He chose a man with lots of faith, and who had helped Moses for many years.

Joshua was the new leader that God chose who was filled with His spirit and ability to do the job. Most of all, he was very eager to listen to God's voice and to obey whatever He said to do. Joshua knew that this was the only way to succeed with such a big responsibility. God said to him, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." (Joshua 1:5)

The travelling team of Israelites had learned many lessons through their experiences. They'd had difficulties, loss, sickness and trouble as a result of wrong decisions. They knew what God said was true, and they saw that whatever He promised would happen. They had seen marvellous signs of God's power working among them, and had seen Him doing all kinds of amazing things to prove His reality, His presence and His ability to do anything for them. God had fed them day after day, year after year, miraculously, with "bread from Heaven."

However, even with all that training and all those years of learning lessons of all kinds, and having God's instructions written down to remember and to teach others His way, still God knew that "people are people." In their own power and strength they wouldn't be able to always make the right decisions and to keep doing things His way. They would need many more reminders and instructions, and yes, even hard times, to keep them going God's happy way.

The song was one more gift of God's love and words to them, to help them have a good time in their new country. But God knew that the song, together with all the other things He'd done for them would not be enough to keep them always living according to His way, and obeying Him. God knew things would be difficult for them again, one day, as they would stray away from what He'd said to do.



When I was with My disciples on Earth I told them a secret, a key or a tip to make it easier to follow in My way. I said, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.” (John 14:21)

Did you notice the secret in these words? It’s all about love. If you really love someone you’ll want to do things that please them. You think about them, you try to make things nice for them, you want to do things together, you enjoy each other’s friendship, and you trust each other.

If there’s someone you love, and who you know loves you, and they tell you to do something good that would make things better and nicer for you, you want to do what they say, right? God gave the laws and the rules to the Israelites, but that wasn’t enough to make them want to do it.

He tried everything He possibly could to try to get them to believe and follow Him with their heart, for His sake and for their own sake, to make things better for them all. However, for it to really work, each one needed to love God with all their heart and soul, because this would help them to follow Him and obey Him. Love makes you remember things that ordinarily you might forget, as it changes from being a fact or rule or detail in your mind, to being something you are motivated to want to do from your heart.

I love each one on Earth so much, and am doing all I can to help each one to get to know Me and to embrace the right and loving ways to be. But each one needs to save a large place in their heart for Me. They need to take the time to get to know Me, and to see how very much I love them.

Then they need to take the next step to try to do the things I tell them to, because I know so much better than they do, what will truly be good and work out well for them and their loved ones, as well as for everyone else on Earth. So love is the key. If you don’t feel that big feeling in your heart that you love or like Me better than some other people or some other things you like doing, well, don’t give up trying to spend time getting to know Me.

Once you get even just a glimpse of how much I truly care about you, your welfare and each one on Earth, it may start to open your heart up to want to know more and more about Me and My love. You’ll be so glad to be My friend. Don’t you want to be a friend with the guy who can do anything at all that you wish for, if it’s good for you; the guy who owns the universe, who can hold the sun in His hands if that’s what is needed?

As you take the little steps of faith towards Me and do what you can to obey what I show you and what My Word tells you to do, you’ll start to see wonderful things beginning to happen. Not everything will go just the way you want it to. In fact lots of things in life will seem to be going wrong for you and others—because life is just one big learning challenge with endless new opportunities! But with Me on your side, the guy who can blow away clouds and storms with the breath of My voice, you’ll know you are in safe hands, and you’ll get to experience a joy in your heart, happiness of soul that many others could only dream possible.

When it all comes down to it, people just want to be happy, and to feel they are important and loved by someone. When you are with Me, loving and obeying Me, I provide all these things for you, and so much more. If you have let Me into your life, and have

received My gift of salvation, and are trying to talk to Me and do what I say, you will be a very special friend to Me, and I will take good care of you.

Story Time with Jesus 37-49\_text

## Story Time with Jesus

### Bible Stories

#### Chapters 37-49

- 37-Joshua, Jordan and Jericho
- 38-Gideon and the Angel
- 39-A Pitcher, a Torch, and a Trumpet
- 40-A Strong Man
- 41-Kind Ruth
- 42-Hannah's Prayer and Promise
- 43-Little Boy Samuel
- 44-Listening to God Speak
- 45-A Faithful Judge and Prophet
- 46-Samuel and Saul
- 47-King Saul
- 48-A Thundery Demonstration
- 49-A Good Heart

(Jesus speaking: )

#### Joshua, Jordan and Jericho

Before it was time for Moses to go to Heaven, God said for him to put Joshua in charge—a faith-filled, God-following man. He was to take over, and lead the Israelites into their land of promise. Joshua had been a helper to Moses for many years, and had learned many things as a result of his training.

It was going to be a big job for Joshua, but God was just as close to him, and would powerfully help the Israelites, just as much as when Moses was their leader. The first challenge they faced, in order to get to the new country, was to find a way to cross the Jordan River—without boats, or rafts, or airplanes.

How were they going to do that? God had a plan. Remember that special box called “the Ark of the Covenant”? It was the box that held special things in it, especially the 10 commandments that God wrote on the tablets of stone. God told the priests—the chosen men of prayer—to carry it out to the river's edge. Joshua told everyone that when they would see the priests carrying the ark, that it was to be their cue, and time to cross over the river. So when they saw it happening, everyone packed up and got walking.

Then the miracle happened! As soon as the feet of the priests who were carrying the ark barely touched the water's edge, the water parted making a dry path through to the other side! Everyone could then just walk across.

They had to demonstrate their obedience and their faith that God was going to help them, even without any big sign that the water was going to move out of the way. It wasn't until they did what God said, and put their toes in the water, that the miracle happened.

Sometimes, I, Jesus, want you to wait for the right time to do something, and other times you just need to jump in and start to do whatever it is that I asked of you, even if it seems completely impossible. Then as you do it, I will make a way and do the impossible for you.

All the people in the surrounding lands heard about this event—that the water parted for the Israelites, God's travelling team. It made the people living around there realise whose side God was on, and just how powerful He was.

Joshua had to pray and get his instructions from God for each thing they needed to do. He could have said, "I know what to do!" But that wouldn't have brought on the power of God in their lives, and would have just made a mess of things.

Joshua was very ready to listen, to pray, and to then do exactly what God told him to. The people had also learned that things always worked out best when they obeyed God's Word and instructions.

A visitor from Heaven came to speak with Joshua. He was a powerful, strong-looking man. When Joshua asked him who he was, and whose side he was on, the visitor said that he had come from God and was in charge of many angels—he was the "Captain of the Lord's Host!"

Then the same instruction was given to Joshua as was given to Moses long before, when he spoke with God at the burning bush, to "remove his shoes." Joshua did that quickly, and was ready to hear whatever this powerful visitor from God had to say.

In the land they were to live in, there was a very strong wall around its main city, but those that lived there had not learned to love and follow God's ways. God wanted His new, trained team to move in and live there instead. But to get past that wall would take a big miracle of God!

As Joshua prayed, God told him the plan—and it was something so completely different than anything they'd ever heard of, or seen done before. If you only do the things you know or think might work, when you are faced with problems—maybe problems that seem as difficult as a tall, thick and strong wall—you might not find the right solution by just using your own brain.

If you stop however, to pray and get God's insight, thoughts, and ideas, you might get a totally new, great, amazing, cool idea that really works! And God makes sure that it works by helping to do the things you can't do, because you showed your faith in His help and your willingness to do things His way.

God had instructed Joshua to have some priests carry the Ark of the Covenant, and others blowing trumpets, and a large team chosen from the Israelites to simply walk around the wall—the entire outside of the walled city of Jericho. They were to do this once every day for six days, and return each day to the camp for the night.

Then on the seventh day they were to rise extra early and do the same thing, but on that day to do it seven times! After their final walk around the city of Jericho on that last day, they were all to shout very loudly at just the time Joshua would instruct them to.

Everyone did just as God had planned and followed Joshua's instructions. Then the most amazing thing took place! The walls fell flat!

Whoever heard of that happening? The walls didn't just crack or break a bit, but fell so flat that each one could just walk straight in from where they were standing!

Talk about the power of God working for those that chose to obey all that He'd said, no matter how crazy it seemed or contrary to the "normal" way of doing things.

God can do things that are usually thought impossible! Men and women of faith can do amazing things, as God can do anything for them, if it's within His will, and brings about His plan of helping people to know about Him and His love and Word.

I can use you to do wonderful things, if you'll just do as Moses and Joshua did: Get quiet, pray, hear what I, Jesus, have to say, and then do what I tell you! I'm there with you too, and will help you out regardless of how difficult the situation or what stands in your way. If you've got Me on your side—and you are on Mine—nothing is impossible.

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### **Gideon and the Angel**

Have you ever had to miss an activity or couldn't receive some promised reward, due to misbehaviour or failure to heed some important instructions? Perhaps you didn't follow some safety guidelines or you forgot to bring the proper gear, and so you weren't permitted to enter into a certain area or enjoy some activity. Or maybe something else has happened that made you experience the feeling of missing out on something you wanted to do, because of not following instructions and rules.

That is what began happening to the Israelites who had been living in their new country. Remember all those instructions and rules that God had given them and that Moses had written down for them to follow?

Well, the people started to disobey, and instead of only doing things God's way and worshipping Him above all, they started to do things their own way and were doing the things that the ungodly people in the surrounding countries were doing.

Their job was to be an example of God's way and to be an influence for the better. But rather than persevering in that job, they started to do whatever strange or ugly ideas others were getting.

People didn't have access to books and reading material as easily as you do now, and many people didn't even know how to read anyway. When someone is working towards getting a driving license they have to read and study, to learn and remember the rules of safe driving in their country. Just one quick reading of a driving manual isn't enough to help them know it well and remember it for years to come.

When God gave the laws and rules to Moses for the people to follow, He also gave them some tips on how to remember what He said. In order to remember His words, they needed to not just hear the Lord's words read to them once in a while; they would need to

memorize portions, and teach them to their children. They would need to commit God's Word to memory.

King David, who lived much later on, said he hid God's Word in his heart. He kept it inside of him and made it a part of his thoughts, memorized it and let it be what guided him. He said that was the way to not sin, or do things contrary to what God had said. (Psalm 119:11) If you will do the same, it will make obeying and following God's Words and instructions on how to live a happy life so much easier.

You can do it every day, if you like! Choose a new verse from the Bible that you'd like to remember for a long time. Read it through, make sure you understand each word, and ask someone about the meanings of the words you don't understand. Then take one phrase at a time, and quote it again and again until you know that little portion of the verse.

Move on to the next portion of the verse, repeating and quoting—or singing it, or adding actions if you like—to help you learn it by heart. In just a few minutes you'll probably be able to quote it without looking at the page. Review it from time to time, to make sure you keep it fresh in your memory.

Now, that is one good way to "hide the word in your heart!" You'll start to experience something wonderful, once you have stored away many verses in your heart and mind. God's Spirit can remind you much more easily about a Bible verse that you are very familiar with and have committed to memory.

Perhaps you'll find yourself in a difficult moment today, and you'll be lacking faith and courage to face the situation; but then as you stop to pray, all of a sudden a Bible verse you have learned comes to mind. It might feel like your heart just got stocked up with a full tank of spiritual petrol. With the verse of God's promise empowering you, you'll feel like you can handle the problem and know what would be the right thing to do. So those are some tips for you living in the world today; the way to keep following God's ways; and some tips on how to remember God's words and instructions.

The Israelites didn't always stay on track, and at the time of this story the people weren't going God's way. Some people weren't obeying because they forgot His instructions and hadn't committed them to memory. Others never heard it because those who knew God's laws hadn't been diligent to teach them. And some people chose to go their own way, or other ungodly people's ways, stubbornly, sinfully and wilfully.

It was very sad for God to see. It hurt Him, and it was hurting the whole country too. Not only were they not doing as God wanted, but they weren't helping the countries around them to learn of God and His right ways either.

So as night follows day, so do bad and sad times follow those who disobey God. If you are obeying Him as best as you can, things still won't be perfectly easy. That isn't the way it is on Earth, but at least you have Me, Jesus, there to help pull you out of the difficulties and to give you the courage to face them. And I'll do the miracles you need when you pray. However, if you are doing things contrary to My will and not obeying what I've asked you to do, then things will get tough, and just keep getting worse—until you decide to change, and go God's way.

There was a large team of ungodly people called the Midianites. They were the ones that God allowed to cause the disobedient Israelites trouble, for seven years. These unkind

people took food and whatever else they wanted, away from the Israelites, whenever they wanted or needed something. It made for a very difficult and troublesome time. People had to hide their food, and thresh their wheat in secret.

One man, whose name was Gideon, was doing just that when he had an unforgettable, life-changing encounter. He was hiding out by his father's winepress near a big oak tree, trying to thresh the wheat without any of the Midianites noticing him, so that his family would have food to eat. It wasn't easy. He wasn't a big or important man and he felt like there wasn't anything he could do to change the difficult situation. But he loved God, and that's why he was chosen for a great job.

An angel sent from God suddenly appeared and told Gideon that God was with him, and called him a "mighty man of valour". Gideon didn't feel like he was, but it was nice that God thought of him as a big, brave, and strong winner! He needed encouragement to do what God was going to ask of him. Have you ever found that true in your life, that when someone says you are good at something or encourages you in something, it makes you feel more confident that you can do it?

God knew that, with His help, Gideon would be a powerful and strong leader, helping to chase out those bothersome folks. God also knew that Gideon felt pretty low, and unable to do much good at all. He felt like everyone else in his family was better, in some way, than he was.

God wasn't interested in strong men, or well-thought of guys, or good-looking people, or those considered the most important around, or those that had lots of riches. He needed someone who loved Him and would do whatever crazy thing God told him to do—even if no one else was doing it, or it had never been done before. He needed a wholehearted, obedient guy to carry out some pretty new ideas.

God saw the heart of Gideon. He knew that just a bit of encouragement would be like the spark to light his flame of faith, and Gideon would then get going and do whatever God said. He just needed some encouragement and faith, to know that God was really with him and was indeed the one calling him to do the job. It seemed quite unbelievable to Gideon that he would be chosen, rather than the people who seemed to be better and stronger than he was. But God saw his heart, and knew that Gideon was just perfect for the job.

Gideon liked to be totally sure of God's will, and wasn't going to run off and do anything unless he was absolutely convinced it was God's will for him to do it. If God was calling him to do a big and important job—to save Israel from these troublesome people—well, he was willing and was certainly glad for it to happen, but he wanted to be convinced that it really was God calling him.

The first thing he wanted to do was to make sure that this really was an angel sent from God. He begged the angelic man to not leave, but to wait for him to bring some food. The angel agreed, and waited. Now it wasn't just a quick "grab something out of the fridge" dash, while the angel waited a moment. It took some time, as he had to build a fire and cook the food first. However, when Gideon returned with the food, the angel had kept his promise and was still there.

The angel instructed Gideon to put the meat and bread on a rock, and to pour the broth all over it, making it very wet. Does water burn? Well, when this angel then touched the

food with the tip of his staff, fire came bursting out of the rock below it and burned everything up—the food and the watery broth!

This looked pretty impressive, and was a clear sign to Gideon that indeed this was an angel sent from God. It humbled him and made him desperate to be right with God, and to be sure to obey Him too. So Gideon chose in his heart to take on the job that God was calling him to do; but he still wanted to just double and triple check that it was indeed God's will for him to be the one to do it.

When talking with God later on, Gideon humbly asked if he could have another supernatural sign shown to him, to give him an extra boost of faith. So Gideon took a fleece of wool and placed it on the ground, and asked God to do something that was normally impossible.

He said to God, "If in the morning the fleece is wet from the dew but the ground all around the fleece is dry, then I'll know that I am meant to be the one to save Israel, as You have said."

God honoured his prayer, and the next morning the fleece was so wet that Gideon squeezed a whole bowl full of water out of it! –And the ground? Yes! It was totally dry. How did God stop the normal falling of dew on that area of land and make a whole lot of water soak into the wool? God knows tricks!

Gideon was getting excited! He was just about ready to blast off and get going on his new mission, but he thought to triple check. He knew the job wouldn't be easy, and people could make things pretty tough for him, if it was just little him out there trying to chase away multitudes of people. But he knew that if God was the one calling him, then he had nothing to worry about.

"Please don't be upset with me," Gideon prayed, "but can I ask you, God, for one more sign, so I can be totally sure that it's me that You want to use to do this job?" Then, Gideon asked God to do the request from the last time, in reverse. He asked for the sign of God confirming His will to be that the wool would be totally dry, and the surrounding ground all wet.

Have you ever left your laundry on the line outside over night, in a place where plenty of dew falls? Even if the clothes are dry before the sun sets, by morning, they are all quite wet again. So for the ground to be wet and show the evidence that dew had fallen all around, but the wool left outside on the ground to be dry, would again take a miracle.

God wanted to do all He could to give Gideon the faith to take the plunge and get on with the very needed job of getting people to start going His way again, and to start changing the situation for the better. God did, once again, just as Gideon had prayed, and the ground was wet, but the wool on it was totally dry.

Gideon had all the faith he needed, and was committed to doing everything that God asked of him, no matter what it was, to bring relief to the land of Israel.

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**A Pitcher, a Torch and a Trumpet**

To realise how challenging the situation was, and just what Gideon and his team were facing, take a look at this verse from the Bible describing how many people were causing the Israelites trouble:

*“The Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude.” (Judges 7:12)*

Knowing this will help you to understand why Gideon chose to gather such a large team of 32,000 men when he first started out. Even that didn't seem like many, compared to the large number of Midianites and the many others with them.

However, if there was a very big team of Israelites helping, God knew it would be easy for them to give themselves the credit for doing the job. They might rely on their own strengths and abilities, rather than depending fully on God. God's plan was for them to know for certain that it was Him who was helping them.

If they depended only on their own abilities, the miracle may never have happened. God needed a team that would give Him a chance to do the impossible through them. Gideon's team showed through their obedience to Him, that they had the faith that He could do anything. This is what would make the miraculous become a reality.

God can do things with many or with few. In this case, He wanted to use just a few, to show His power. He wanted to encourage the Israelites that He was still their God of miracles, and was still there with them. He wanted them to turn to Him, to believe on Him, and to love and follow Him.

So who would Gideon send home? How would he make the team smaller? God gave the first instruction. Whoever didn't have the courage needed, and wasn't filled with faith that God could do the miracle, would no longer be a part of this team. When Gideon told this to his large team, 22,000 men left and returned home. That was a lot! Now, their team was less than one-third the original size it had been!

Gideon might have felt that it was sufficient, and definitely a small enough team! But no! God wanted the team to be much smaller than that, so His next instruction was given. Gideon did just as God said. The men were taken to the water to drink. (Remember, they didn't have running water at home, they drank from the stream.) They didn't have cups or water jugs to drink from on that day, just their hands and mouths.

Have you ever tried to drink like that? You can cup your hand and drink a bit at a time like that, or you could just put your mouth right into the pool of water and drink it directly. These were the two ways the people were drinking from the river that day.

When your head is up and your hands are bringing the water to your mouth, you are much more aware of what is going on around you, and you can see more than if you drink with your face very near or in the water.

God said that whoever used their hand to scoop up the water and drink it that way, was to be called out and set aside in one area. Everyone who bowed down to drink, with their mouth right in the water, was to be sent home. Those watchful and more careful guys were chosen to be on the team. However, most people didn't drink that way!

There were only 300 men that used their hands to drink. So that meant that all the rest of the remaining 10,000 men were no longer with them. Did God realise that this would



happen? That there wouldn't even be 1,000 men left, not even half of 1,000 left—just 300? Yes, God was completely in control and aware of it. This was just the amount He was happy with.

Why didn't God just tell Gideon at the very beginning to only have 300 men on his team? Well, He did it this way for many reasons. As the team got smaller and smaller, Gideon's faith got bigger and bigger! It helped him gain the faith, as he kept following God's Words and instructions to him. Sometimes, the things God needs His people on Earth to do for Him sound quite challenging, and at first it seems like it wouldn't work. --And it wouldn't, if God wasn't the one doing it.

It was a stretch of Gideon's faith already, to say yes and to do what God had asked him to do. If he had been told right at the start that not only was he meant to chase away countless people from the land of Israel but also to do it with a team of only 300, that might have been a bit too much for him to understand, and he might not have had the courage to do it.

So God led him one step at a time—first with many people, then with fewer, until at last it was the right amount. Gideon had the faith that it was good and right, and that God would do miracles for them and with them.

Also, starting off with a much bigger team gave many people a chance to be part of the team, at least for a while. They had the opportunity to choose to have faith and to be good members of the team. But God didn't just want 300 men; He wanted 300 obedient and faith-filled people.

When at last the team was ready, the small and courageous team, God gave them their next instruction.

The Midianites were peacefully sleeping, after many of them had filled their bellies with food taken from the Israelites, and were snug in their tents. All of a sudden, a tremendous, loud sound woke them! It sounded like a zillion people yelling, and like just about the whole world was there, waking them up.

These 300 men did their part. They broke the clay pitchers that God told them to bring, blasted out their trumpets as loudly as they could, and yelled at the top of their lungs. Then God made those sounds, in the stillness of the night, to be amplified in the Midianite's ears. They all awoke with a start, and got jogging!

"Let's get out of here!" they yelled, and made a rushed and scared dash for it. If they had only known that it was such a small team that had made all that noise, they would have just laughed and gone back to sleep. It was crazy to think that such a huge multitude could be scared off by just a few hundred guys!

God made it so very startling for the Midianites, and put it in their hearts to be really afraid and to want to get out of there in a hurry. If you do what God tells you, then He'll do what you can't do and fill in all the rest.

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**A Strong Man**

This is a story about a man, who with God's strength was able to tackle anything he needed to. He has been known as the strongest man that has lived on Earth. His name is Samson. But even his strongest acts are nothing compared to the strength of God.

Anything is possible to those who believe and obey what I tell them to do. Just because something is impossible, or is thought to be so, is never an obstacle for Me. I can do anything for you and through you and with you, if it's the best thing, and you are praying for My help.

Samson was the man sent to help at a time of great difficulties, when yet again the people of Israel had strayed away like a lost sheep from a shepherd. God wasn't pleased at what His people were doing and their continued disobedience, and this time they had trouble with a group of people called Philistines, who were doing very wrong and bad things at that time.

Since the Israelites were no longer staying close to God and choosing to do things His way, God couldn't protect them and do great miracles for them. This went on for many years, and at last many of them were ready to listen and to change, and were eager to find relief from the troubles that they were having at that time.

God's plan was a new and interesting one. He was going to send the Israelites someone to be a judge and a helper to them, and begin to stop the wrongs that the Philistines were doing. This time God wanted the person to start out as a baby, and to be trained in just the right ways, in order to do the job that God had in mind.

There was a man called Manoah, and he and his wife loved and respected God, but had no children. God chose them to be the parents of this special person He was sending to Earth. To announce it and bring the message from God to this couple, God sent an angel to speak with the woman. He told her that not only was she to have a child, but also let her know a few important things.

There were special instructions that needed to be followed, in order for God to give them the gift of this special son. The angel told this woman that she was only to eat good food, and not to drink any wine, or strong drinks like that. The child also was to never have his hair cut. It would be as a symbol that He belonged to God, and was a sign of their obedience and commitment to do things His way.

Manoah, her husband, wasn't there at the time, but soon heard about it from his wife! He was very eager to know more about this unexpected and special news that the angel told his wife.

Manoah very much wanted to meet this angel also, as he wanted to make sure they knew what to do, and how to care for this child in the way that God wanted him to be raised and trained. If this son of theirs was to do the big job of helping the Israelites in their time of trouble, Manoah wanted to do just as God wanted them, as his parents, to do. Manoah prayed for the angel to return—and it happened!

Manoah's wife was outside sitting in the field when the same angel came again to speak with her. Knowing how much Manoah wanted to talk with him, she ran as fast as she could to call her husband. The angel waited there, and when both Manoah and his wife returned, he spoke to them together, explaining God's instructions to them.

It's very important for parents to pray and ask for guidance in the care and training of their children. As a result of these parents' careful attention to God's instructions, their son Samson was well prepared to face the difficult job he had.

Things weren't easy at all in the land of Israel, and many sad and disappointing things happened throughout his life. Samson knew however, that God was with him and was taking care of him, and he just needed to do the best he could to obey God's instructions.

God gave him amazing strength of body at the times he needed it, and strength of skill, and speed, and quick reflexes to do things others hadn't done before. Samson loved, and respected, and chose to obey God. He kept his hair long also, as God told him to do.

Samson's heart was guided by the Lord, and he did some amazing things, and saw some incredible miracles occur. One time he caught 300 foxes on his own! Another time when he was very thirsty and there was no water around, he prayed and God made water pour out of an old bone on the ground.

Samson had tremendous strength at just the right times, as God gave it to him. One time those troublesome folks were trying to stop him, and locked the huge and heavy gates of a city, to try to keep him in there. Samson was given the strength to pull up the gate posts and walk away carrying the weighty gates! Any type of rope or cord he could break. One time God even gave him the strength to push down a whole building, as it was used by the ungodly people, and God wanted it taken away.

Whatever God needed him to do, he could do. When Samson prayed God did the miracles needed, and Samson knew it was God who was helping him. Samson helped to teach the Israelites God's way, and was a faithful judge in the land of Israel for 20 years.

God gave him strength in many different ways. Samson was given strength of heart, to bear with sad times and heartbreaks and all the things that didn't work out as he wished they would in his life. There was nothing easy about his life. Many things went contrary to the way he would have liked them to be. People disappointed him, some were unkind, others deceived him, and people mistreated him. Yet he stayed true to God no matter what.

God gave him strength of will, also, to not give up but to do whatever he set out to do, as he felt God leading him, and to complete the tasks. Even though some things didn't seem to others like the best thing to do, he stayed focused on the job and on the leading in his heart from the Lord, and wasn't swayed by the opinions of others.

God gave him strong faith in spite of all the hardships that were going on around him, and having to be often around people who had little or no faith in God. Samson kept believing, praying, obeying, following, and depending on God throughout his life. When he prayed, God answered, and that was the true source of his amazing strength in all ways.

Samson had strength to keep secrets—some he kept for years and years! He didn't just say everything that was on his mind to whoever happened to be around. He knew his life belonged to God, and that he had an important job to do. He was careful with his words, and knew that words can affect people and situations.

One secret he kept was that his long hair was special. Everyone knew he had long hair, but they didn't know why, and how his obedience in never cutting it was connected to God blessing him with strength. He may have been asked all kinds of questions many times as he grew up, and as a man, why his hair had never been cut, and what was the secret to his

strength. But some things are important to keep between you and God. Only Samson and his parents knew this secret.

Sometimes it's best not to say things, if it's to the wrong people who won't help you in your mission for God. Once, towards the end of his life, someone he loved pressured him so much to tell her this secret. He didn't want to see her acting so sad, as he loved her. At last he told the secret, and soon after that she wanted to try it out, and cut his hair.

It is a very sad and hurtful thing to do, to betray someone's love and trust, and it made Samson so very sad. It also removed God's special strength from him for a while, and during that time he was no longer able to do his job of helping to teach and protect the Israelites.

However, God has a way of working things out in the end, and later after he prayed with all his heart, he was given new strength again to put a stop to many of the Philistines as a result.

Samson's life is an example that with God helping you, anything is possible. Though some people say that it was his hair that gave him strength, it was really his obedience and dedicating his life to God that brought on the blessing and the miracles.

Even the cutting of his hair and the temporary loss of strength was an example to the people of Israel of what they had been doing, in a way. They had not kept God's instructions, and stayed special and dedicated to the Lord, and thus had lost His blessings and help for a while.

The example of Samson then praying and receiving new strength after his time of weakness and difficulty showed the Israelites that if they, too, would pray for help, and turn to God, wanting to do His will again, He could do miracles for them.

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### Kind Ruth

Elimelech, his wife Naomi and their two sons had hit hard times. A famine was in the place where they stayed, in the land of Judah, so they moved elsewhere. This was to be a special family, and God was watching over them, and they had what they needed in Moab.

Sometimes things seem very difficult, or like they aren't going just the way you imagined that they would, but for those who love Him and are following Him, God can do some wonderful things for you in the end. Sometimes things seem to get worse at first, but that's just because it's paving the way for the best things that are yet to come.

There is also something that is hard for people who are still on Earth to see any good in, and that is when those they love pass away, and are no longer around to be a friend, a help or a support. Often things can seem harder without them around, and it makes people sad.

It is good to realise that this life on Earth is just a very small part of your real life! It's just a little trip, or like a life study course. Your spirit and eternal soul lives on forever. So when people naturally pass away, it just means that their trip is over, and they can finally return home—to live with Me in Heaven!

For those that don't know Me when they pass away, well, God loves them too, and still looks after them and puts them in the place that is best for them. They can still learn about Me and learn whatever lessons they need to, even after they pass from this earthly life. Isn't that amazing?

Of course those who have learned about Me and have received My gift of love and forgiveness while on Earth will have the free entry into Heaven's open doors right away. So that's why it's very important that as many people as possible are given the chance to be told about Me and My wonderful love, and to be taught how to accept Me, Jesus, as their Saviour and way to Heaven.

When those you love and are close to are no longer in this world with all these hard times and troubles, you can be glad for the peace and beauty that they can have at last. It's easy to just think about your loss and how sad you feel, but for them, it may be the happiest day of their life!—Especially those who love Me and have done their best to use what time they had on Earth to do as I wanted them to, and showed love.

Those who were generous will receive a generous reward. Those who were mainly trying to gain things for themselves while on Earth will see in the end that it didn't bring as many wonderful things their way in the Heavenly life to come.

This story tells of a time of sorrow and loss, but ends with the very wonderful results of a life lived in love, to help others.

Elimelech and his family lived in the land of Moab for several years, and there his grown-up sons got married. God wanted a kind lady from that land to be a part of their family, and she married one of Elimelech and Naomi's sons. Another nice lady called Orpah married the other son.

Then the clouds of sorrow came, at least that's the way it felt for this family, as some of them passed away—the father and both the adult sons. There was only Naomi, Ruth and Orpah left. What was meant to happen then?

Naomi had heard that the famine was over and there was food again in the land of Judah, and since she had relatives there as well, she decided to move back there. Naomi told Orpah and Ruth to return to their families and parents. After much convincing, Orpah did that. But Ruth couldn't imagine leaving Naomi alone and she was determined to stay with Naomi, who was like a mother and friend to her. She wanted to take care of Naomi, since she was getting older.

Naomi and Ruth travelled to Bethlehem, and it was at the time of the harvest. There was a tradition that the poor could pick up any scraps and bits and pieces that the harvesters dropped. So Ruth went to where a field was being harvested and began to gather the bits and pieces that were left over. That way she and Naomi would at least have some food to eat.

Boaz was the name of the man who owned the field, and he asked the reapers if they knew who this woman was. When he found out that she was Ruth, the kind woman who had chosen to take care of Naomi, and that she was actually a relative of his, he was glad to meet her.

Boaz wanted extra kindness shown to Ruth. He even told the reapers to drop extra barley on the ground for her to gather, so that she and Naomi would have what they needed. When it was time for the harvesters to stop for lunch he invited Ruth to come eat with them, and said that during the day as she gleaned and picked up the grain, she could drink water from the water jars that were filled for the reapers. Ruth was so very grateful and also surprised, as she was from another country, but was being treated so well.

By the end of the day she had gathered a lot of grain to bring home and cook. Naomi was so pleasantly surprised and wondered what great field she had gathered grain from. When Naomi found out that it was the field of Boaz, her relative, she was very encouraged. God had led them to just the right place and was providing for them. And every day of the harvest Ruth was allowed to gather grain in the field of Boaz.

Boaz loved Ruth and chose to marry her. They were blessed with a cute little baby who they called Obed. Naomi was a happy grandmother to the little one, and loved holding baby Obed and caring for him. They were a happy family. God had cared for them well and given them the best. And there was something extra special about this family as well.

Ruth was to be the great-grandmother of King David—for he was Obed's grandson. And they were also the ancestors of My father on Earth, Joseph the carpenter. So Ruth was like My Earthly great-great, and many more greats, great-grandmother! A humble and kind woman was chosen to be that.

So you see, the people whom I consider important and who I use to do noteworthy jobs aren't necessarily those that are big and famous and rich and well-thought of in the eyes of the world. I look on people's hearts, and choose who to give honour to according to the choices of love and faith and obedience that they make.

People who did wonderful jobs and are well-thought of today, or were well thought of in the Bible times, weren't well-thought of or rich or famous or strong or important at the time.

Most of the time things weren't so glamorous and they were given quite a bit of trouble by those who knew them at the time, as they led difficult and humble lives. But they chose to obey My call to them, to do what I needed them to do, no matter what others said or did and in spite of how hard things were for them at the time.

Who knows what your acts of simple faith in My words and love for others will lead to, and what you or your children will be called on to do later on as a result.

When Olympic champions are training all those years before they take part in the Olympics there are no shining gold medals given day-after-day for their hard effort. There is no big announcement and great acclaim made across the world about how they worked hard that day to gain strength and stamina. It's just a bunch of tough work, while they keep focussing on the goal in mind.

If they happen to win the gold or silver or bronze medals at the final competition then many people hear about them. But if it wasn't for all those years of training and keeping up the hard work they would never have received it.

What loving deed do you think I want you to do today? Who do I want you, personally to help? It will never make you feel very glorious, nor will you be famous for it—not yet. But for those who have the faith to love Me anyway, to love and care for others anyway, to have faith that what I say is true no matter what, then one day I, Myself, will give you a spectacular heavenly reward, and many will eventually hear about your wise and wonderful choices.

Can I count on you to be a winner, in the end? I hope so! Just do the little jobs, the kind and humble deeds; pray the little prayers; give others the best, and love Me with all your

heart and strength. Then greater joy will be yours—more than you ever dreamed was possible. I know you'll feel it was worth it.

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### Hannah's Prayer and Promise

Parties, celebrations, festivals, feasts, trips to visit relatives, barbeques and get-togethers can be fun! But happy times are only happy if there is love among those taking part in the activity. If someone is making things real hard for you and causing you to feel sad and bad it can ruin the whole experience. That's what a woman named Hannah felt like.

"Oh dear! It's almost the time of the feast again," Hannah's heart would say, for each year she and other relations would travel and meet together in Shiloh. The Priest Eli and his sons were living there. Hannah and her husband, Elkanah, would go to that place to pray and worship. They'd eat a big meal, see friends, and then travel home again. This happened once a year.

It was a time many people enjoyed—but not Hannah, because of someone's unkind words to her every year at the feast and time of worship in Shiloh. Even after being married for a long time, Hannah had no children, and this was very hard for her.

This alone was enough to sadden her. But to add to her sorrow a lady called Peninnah, who was also the wife of Elkanah, had lots of children. This woman, instead of showing kindness and sympathy to Hannah, instead would say discouraging words to her, making her feel very bad and sad.

One time it was just too much for Hannah and she went to get alone to pray. Priest Eli was sitting down and watching what was going on around him, and saw Hannah kneel in fervent prayer. She was telling God all that was on her heart. She knew He was the only one that could help her. There was not a single person on Earth that could help her suddenly be able to have children, but God could, so she prayed for that miracle.

Hannah prayed a very special prayer. Sometimes when you really want something, you are willing to give up something in order to get it, right? Hannah knew that if it was God's will for her to have a child, and if she was doing the things that pleased Him, then it would become a reality. She prayed an "extreme prayer" and promised God that she would do something very special and unusual—if He would give her a little boy.

"If you give me a little boy, I promise to let him serve You, Lord, all his life," Hannah promised. She desperately wanted to do God's will and wanted to be worthy of His gift of a child. Those were like the magic words and decisions of her heart.

God was waiting for a mother and father to give a special child to—but they would have to be parents that would let their child learn God's ways most of all. Not people that would just try to have their child only do whatever they thought the child should do, or teach the child whatever skills or trades they wanted their child to grow up and do.

But who would be willing to let their child learn God's ways? Samson's parents were willing, and raised their child according to what God wanted, and he was used of God to be a good judge. Hannah was a woman who was also willing. She wanted a child, and promised that if she had a son, he would be dedicated to God. Similar to what Samson's mother was told to do about not cutting Samson's hair, Hannah said she would not cut her child's hair either, as a promise that he was God's special child.

Hannah had been praying with all her heart, but her words weren't heard out loud, only her lips moved. Priest Eli saw her praying but didn't know what she was praying for. At first he started to reprimand her, as it looked like she was acting rather odd.

Since it was the time when people were drinking wine for the feast, he wrongly concluded that she'd had too much to drink. However, when he talked with her, she explained that she was just very sad and was praying. Eli then encouraged her saying that God had heard her prayer and would answer.

Sometimes after a real good time of praying you can feel that peace and faith in your heart and be just as happy as if you had gotten what you were praying for, right then. Then to have Eli also encourage her, and say that he knew God would grant her request, made her smile and go happily on her way—even though she didn't yet have a child. She had faith in her heart after praying and making things right with God.

It wasn't long before Hannah and Elkanah received the special child—the prayed for child that she named Samuel, meaning "God has heard." His name reminded people that he was an answer to prayer.

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### Little Boy Samuel

Different people are called to serve Me in different places and in different ways. If you learn about the lives of those who have served as missionaries around the world there is a lot of variety in what each one was called to do, according to what jobs needed to be done and where My love needed to be shown.

Before someone who's called to do something particularly special or unique for God, they need training. Just like anyone who does a job in this world has to learn the skills that will enable them to do the jobs. What if a baker had never even touched a raw lump of dough in his life, would he be able to run a bakery and be able to tell people how to make good bread?

Or what if an engineer wanted to design a big building, but he had never learned how to build and all the many things that went into safe and strong construction work and how to make buildings that would last? Everyone needs training and preparation in order to do a good job and make a positive difference, and not just make a mess of things instead.

Well, God had an important job for someone to do. Things weren't going so good in the tabernacle. There were some disobedient and disrespectful men that were causing trouble. The priest Eli did the best he could to help people to get closer to God, but not everyone was making the right choices, and Eli was getting older too. Someone needed to be around to point people in the right direction.

After praying desperately for a child, and being given one, Hannah was so very happy! She loved her son Samuel very much, but didn't forget her promise. She wanted him to be a special child and to follow God all his life.

Instead of attending the yearly feast, when Hannah was caring for her new little baby, she stayed home each year, until Samuel was old enough to live with Priest Eli. When the time was right, Hannah and Elkanah brought their young son along with some gifts, and went to visit Priest Eli at the feast in Shiloh.



“Remember me?” Hannah said, “I was the woman who was praying here, and you said God would answer my prayer. And He has! This is the child I was praying for. I’d like him to learn the Lord’s ways and live here.”

So Priest Eli took care of Samuel, and even let him be dressed in some special clothes—child-size ones of the same style that Eli would wear. Because he was in training for an important job when he was older, he was given special privileges that no other child received.

It wasn’t always easy for him to be away from his mother and father and family, but he was able to learn things that none of the other children had the chance to learn. And just like My promises say to you in the Bible, I was very close to him and made sure that he had all that he needed.

When Hannah brought Samuel to stay and live with Priest Eli and learn of God’s ways she offered praise. She was so glad for the miracles—the miracle of finally having a son, and the miracle that he would get to be a special servant of God and be trained in God’s ways and with His words.

Samuel grew year by year and gained strength and wisdom, and each year Hannah would bring him a new coat that would be big enough to fit him for the next year. Priest Eli prayed for God to bless Hannah and Elkanah with more children, and that’s what happened. They had five more children—three boys and two girls.

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### **Listening to God Speak**

Samuel was faithful day by day to do what he needed to do. It was a great help for Eli, who was also the judge of the people of Israel, to have Samuel’s help. Eli was getting older and couldn’t see very well and needed help with things like making sure the special oil lamp was always shining and had enough oil.

Samuel knew about God and learned His ways as Priest Eli taught him, but for the first years as he grew and gained strength and wisdom he didn’t know or talk to Me personally as a friend. He didn’t learn to hear God’s voice and words right from the start, but when the time was right he was given the special gift of being able to hear God’s words clearly.

This is what he would need in order to do the job he was called to do—to be the next judge after Priest Eli, and to be a prophet passing on God’s Words and instructions.

As Samuel grew and learned things, one of his jobs was to sleep at night in a very special place—he was near the Ark of the Covenant, that special box that God had instructed Moses and the travelling team of Israelites to make, and it was a sign of God’s presence.

He was very quick to help, as well as to obey when Eli had a need or called for him—even if it was night time. That helped to prepare him for the most important responsibility of all—obeying Me and My words. For it was when people stopped doing that, that there were troubles. This is what Samuel needed to be strong in if he was to do his job well.

It can seem like you are only listening to and obeying your parents on Earth, but if what they are saying to do is the right and Godly thing, then obeying them helps you get good practice at following the instructions and words from Me, your Heavenly Father.

Samuel had to give up being with the rest of his family, and sometimes it was lonesome. Often the most important and special jobs that are needed feel rather lonely at times, as they are jobs that are difficult in some ways, and not everyone on Earth is eager to rush and do them. And some jobs can only be done right if those doing it have plenty of time alone—like Samuel’s job of one day being a prophet and judge; it required lots of quiet time in prayer and hearing God speak.

One night Samuel was sleeping as usual but something unusual happened—it was the first of many times in his life that he heard God talking to him. He heard a voice clearly calling him. Sure that it was Eli calling for help, Samuel got up and ran quickly to him. Eli was surprised to see Samuel showing up there and told him to go back to sleep and that he hadn’t called.

Samuel knew that he’d heard someone calling his name, but if it wasn’t Eli then who was it? There wasn’t someone else around right there. Obediently Samuel tried to go back to sleep, but he was again clearly summoned.

“That was definitely someone calling me. I heard it with my own ears!” Samuel was thinking, and ran to see what Eli needed. Again Eli told him that it wasn’t him calling. This then happened a third time. Eli realised that something special was happening, and that God had chosen to introduce Himself personally to Samuel through talking to him in an audible way, as He had something to tell him.

“Next time you hear the voice, say, ‘Speak Lord, for Your servant is listening.’” Eli told Samuel.

And that’s just what happened. So when Eli didn’t see Samuel showing up by his side again that night he knew God was talking to him, and he was eager to find out the next day what God had said.

Things weren’t perfect and there had been some very troublesome people that weren’t respectful and obedient to God’s Words and ways and it was making it very hard for people in that place to know clearly what was the right thing to do. Sadly, it was Eli’s grown sons who were making God and Eli and many others very sad.

People make mistakes and have to learn the right way to do things, but because these naughty guys weren’t given enough training and discipline and told to stop doing the things that were wrong, that is what was very displeasing to God.

If people do the wrong thing and then are allowed to keep doing it, and those who know that it is making God unhappy and making others unhappy don’t do anything to stop them, then it just makes things get worse. Those people just keep going down the wrong way and soon others start to follow them instead of following in God’s way. They then begin to think that it must not matter, until some big and difficult consequences have to happen to get everyone back doing things the good, loving, and Godly way again.

Fathers and mothers need to teach their children the right and loving and Godly way to be, according to what God has said. This is what will make things go well, and help people, families, towns and countries to be happy and pleasant.

If the parents are the ones responsible for leading the people in God’s way—like Eli was—and if they don’t teach their children to do things according to God’s Word, and don’t give consequences for choosing the wrong or hurtful ways, then others think it must not

actually be important to obey God. And that's a big mistake that will have bad consequences on many people.

What happens when drivers don't stop at a red light or they start driving on the wrong side of the road where the cars are coming the opposite direction? Trouble, danger, harm, accident, and sorrow too!

Samuel didn't have his parents there with him, and he needed to know clearly what was the right thing to do in order to be prepared for his job of telling everyone God's Words, rules, advice and instruction. God didn't want him to be misled by those other bad examples.

So on that night Samuel began to hear the voice and Word of God speaking and talking with him. It helped to encourage him and bring him closer to God and help him to know the right way to be.

The message that was told to Samuel made it clear to him what was right and wrong about the situation with those disobedient and foolish men, so that he could choose to do things God's way. Samuel was very still and quiet, and respectfully listened to every single word that was told him—and he remembered it well.

When Priest Eli asked him the next day what God had said, Samuel told it all to him. It wasn't a fun message, and Samuel didn't even want to tell Eli, but Eli loved God and wanted to hear whatever it was—even if it was a difficult, correction type of message from the Lord. God wanted Samuel to know that there would be consequences and negative outcomes for those men, Eli's sons, who were setting such a bad example.

Eli believed God's words and humbly accepted the lesson God wanted to tell him and all the people: that it's important to teach children God's way and to stop them from setting a bad example that leads others astray.

Even if parents are very busy helping others—like Eli was for 40 years—they need to make sure to take time with their children, talking with them, teaching them God's Word, helping them to memorize it and to live it; and to give guidelines, training and correction for doing things that are wrong. If they don't, then it just makes things sad for everyone.

When Abraham followed and obeyed God he was blessed with a son, Isaac, who followed and obeyed God—and so did his son Jacob. After many years there were many descendents, like God had promised. The people living in the country when Samuel was there came from those original "fathers of faith" and their descendents. Everyone knew about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and those men were good examples of obedience to God's word and doing the things God asked them to do.

However, because Eli's sons didn't go God's way—even though their father Eli was showing the example to them and others, and because Priest Eli didn't discipline them for doing things that weren't good or when they showed great disrespect for God, there wasn't that same blessing for them. They didn't have many descendents, and Eli's sons were not to be the next judges. This is what was explained to Samuel that night, when he first heard God speaking to him.

From then on Samuel was a prophet, a called and chosen one who loved hearing from God and wanted to always follow what God had said. People knew that he was a prophet of

God, and Samuel loved hearing and reading and obeying God's Words so very much. It was the most important thing to him, and he wanted others to do it too.

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### **A Faithful Judge and Prophet**

When Samuel started out as God's prophet and the judge of the Israelites, he noticed that many people hadn't been obeying God and His words. Because of this there was trouble from other nations who were giving the people of Israel a hard time. Then one day something shocking and troubling happened. Some of the Israelites got the idea that God would help them if they just had the Ark of the Covenant with them, so they went and took it out of its very special place and carried it away to the place in the land where the Philistines were giving them the hardest time. Priest Eli was very shaken and upset by this.

Was that what was needed? Was a box going to help them? They might have thought so because, "when the priests carried the Ark of the Covenant over the Jordan river it parted; and the walls of Jericho also fell down when it was carried around the city; and..." They remembered the amazing miracles the Lord had done.

But was it really the box that did it? No. It was God who was with them and as they heard from Him, worshiped Him and obeyed Him then He did the mighty miracles. So what was needed was for the people to put God first in their lives and to obey Him. Samuel was the one God had chosen to help them do that.

When the Ark of the Covenant was brought to the place where the Philistines were causing so much trouble, the people of Israel were so excited at first and made such a great noise together that it seemed like the ground shook! The Philistines found out the reason and began to be afraid.

"Oh no! It's the Ark of the Covenant! We are losers! We are so weak compared to God's power!" they were thinking. And it's true, they were. But God likes to use His power to help those who love and obey Him, and most of the Israelites, even though they were happy for the Ark of the Covenant being there, just wanted some relief from the troubles.

Their hearts weren't sorry for their wrong doings and how far they had walked away from God's ways. The country hadn't changed; they just wanted the difficult consequences of their bad choices and wrong doings to go away. They weren't desperate and praying to follow God's Word again—but they would be soon, after the next troubles came.

The Philistines got an idea. "Let's stop being afraid of this Ark of the Covenant! That's silly! Let's just go and take it away from the Israelites!" and they did! Everyone was shocked and very displeased. That had never happened before. Wasn't God strong enough to stop such a terrible thing from happening? Yes, He was, and it would be returned later on—after both the Philistines and the Israelites had learned a few things.

From the time the Philistines took the Ark of the Covenant terrible troubles began for them. In all their cities around people were getting terribly sick and having lots of painful afflictions, and there were so many mice it was very disturbing. Every place they brought the Ark of the Covenant it seemed to bring with it the punishment of God for being the ungodly people that they were, and for taking the Ark of the Covenant. God needed to show them that He was real and alive and could do amazing things.

One time the Philistines put the Ark of the Covenant in the same room where there was a big statue-idol. They didn't worship or love God and had this statue that they chose to worship instead. It was silly, and angered God very much. He felt perhaps a bit like you might if you had invented and created a very complicated machine that could do all sorts of great things, and instead of people complimenting you on the good job and asking you how to operate it properly, they ignored you and started saying the materials that the machine was made of was what had created it. You wouldn't be too pleased and you'd think those people weren't very smart at all.

So these unkind and ungodly people had this statue for years and it looked strong and big. But not strong enough when compared to even a tiny little bit of God's spirit. When that Ark of the Covenant was placed near it something shocking happened that made them feel nearly the same as the Israelites had felt when the Philistines took away their Ark of the Covenant.

The big and strong rock statue fell over and broke, without anyone but God doing it. He showed them who really was to be worshiped. It looked as if even the stone idol fell on its face and bowed down before the Lord. And this happened not just once, but twice!

After it fell the first time, they propped it back up again. However, when it fell down in the presence of the Ark of the Covenant the second time, it broke. It would have been good if the Philistines had learned from that, and changed and began worshiping, following and obeying the true and all-powerful God. If they, as bad as they had been, had humbled themselves in prayer to the God of Heaven and said they were sorry and wanted to learn His ways, things would have been so much better for them.

If they would have gotten rid of their false gods and ugly practices and instead said to the Israelites, "Your God is the true God and the best, teach us about Him", and if the Israelites had been the good examples that they should have been, they could have helped to change things for the better. But since that didn't happen things got real unpleasant and hard for anyone who kept going their own, ungodly and proud ways.

Samuel the prophet, who was then a grown man and the new judge, came to talk with the people and tell them that the way to make things right again and to not have these troublesome folks bothering them was to get back to doing things God's way. Samuel said to the people of Israel, "If you return to the Lord with all your hearts, and serve Him only, He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines."

Everyone really listened and decided that they had had enough bad consequences for doing things the disobedient way. They chose to follow and love and obey God, and wanted to be able to get His blessings and protection. Samuel prayed and so did everyone else, and God showed His love and power to them and answered their prayers for help and relief from the troubles that were going on.

The Philistines had enough of their own problems that came when they took the Ark of the Covenant, and so they decided to return it. Then, after Samuel and the Israelites had prayed, God sent a powerful thunder display to help chase away the Philistines. God then did the miracles it took to make the country pleasant again. During the time that Samuel was the prophet and judge there was peace and rest from those bothersome folks.

People decided they liked doing things God's way, and chose to love and obey and worship Him. Samuel travelled around to different areas to talk to people and pass on God's

words and instruction. He prayed lots for everyone to keep making the right choices and for God to help, bless and protect them all.

That was one of his most important jobs and it had a wonderful effect. Prayer changed things for the better. It was the key to Samuel's success in helping people go God's way, and to keep them following God's Word.

Samuel didn't just read the words of the Lord, nor did he just tell them to others, but he lived them and showed by example what the right thing to do was. Living God's Word is just as important as reading or studying it, because if you can't put it into practice then it doesn't do you or others any good.

So when Samuel showed an example to the people of what it meant to pray and to follow the Words of God it made an impression and people began to change, one step at a time, doing what Samuel showed them as an example.

He lived what God said to do. And when there were people that weren't going in the way they should he didn't try to work it out in his own might or try to push people to go this way or that way. He started with the first step which is prayer, because prayer can change things in ways that is beyond the help of people.

Prayer works the miracles that are needed. When he prayed, then people started to change from the heart, and that is where the change was needed. Their hearts needed to follow God, and they needed to get to know God's ways and to see why it was best to do things His way.

When they did and things improved, the people saw that it was really the best thing to do. When things got worse when they only did whatever came into their minds, it taught them it would have been better to do as Samuel said—to pray and love and follow God's Words.

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### **Samuel and Saul**

In the time when judges, like Samuel, were the only rulers of the people of Israel it was like God was the king. Other countries and nations had kings ruling over them, but the Israelites didn't. These judges would pass on God's Words and instructions to the people and remind them of God's ways.

It was the way that God wanted it to be. He wanted humble rulers to help the people; rulers that wouldn't try to take control of things themselves and lead people in their own ways and with their own ideas, instead of God's.

Samuel was a faithful judge and prophet and heard clearly from God. People would go to him to find out things that they needed to know—things that only God knew. After many years however, of being instructed and taught by Samuel to do things God's way, the people wanted something different, they wanted a change.

They liked Samuel, but they felt that they couldn't just do as they wanted, anymore. Samuel was helping them to be obedient to God's Words, and after the country had been peaceful for awhile, because of the good choices they'd made because of following God's ideas, then the people started to forget what it was like when things were real difficult before. They then seemed to have the time to start complaining.

“We want to be like the other countries! Everyone else has a king, and we want one too—instead of a judge or prophet instructing us!” people began to say.

It’s a shame that it takes things getting real difficult for people to want to stay close to God and to obey His Words. Isn’t it odd that when things are going well that it is the easiest time to start being discontent and complaining and starting to think you can do whatever you want without there being consequences?

When things are going pretty well, and you feel rather comfortable, it’s easy to then start focusing on new things that you wish you had and begin to look around and see what others have that you don’t. When things are real hard, you are thankful for any bit of peace and good that comes your way, but when things are going smoothly and you have what you need, it’s sad that people then use their time to think up new things to complain about.

So people at that time were wishing for a king to rule over them. God told Samuel it was not because they didn’t like Samuel, but because they were starting to turn away from God and wanted to be ruled by a person instead of God alone.

God told Samuel to warn the people and explain what would happen if they had a king. The king could do whatever he wanted. He could take the best things; make everyone work very hard for him; make them give him a lot of their food and animals—and they would have to obey the king if they didn’t want him to be mad at them. Even though Samuel warned the people of all these things, they said it didn’t matter; a king is what they wanted.

When someone is only thinking about the one thing that they want, it’s not a good way to make a wise choice. To know what would actually be the best in the end, and to find out what would truly make them happy, someone needs to stop thinking for a moment about what they want and to instead think about the consequences of getting what they want.

They should ask questions like, “How will this affect me later on? Is it something I actually need? Is it even good for me? I know I really want it now, but will I regret it later?” And most of all, people need to talk with Me, Jesus, about it, in order to get the best advice.

If there is something that you are really wanting and it seems that it wouldn’t be the best to get it or to have it right then, what can you do? You can pray for you to instead begin to want something else that would make you happier in the end. You can think for a minute what the true need or problem is that is making you want something. Maybe there is a better way to fill that need or wish.

The people of Israel didn’t take those steps, but when Samuel passed on God’s Words to them, telling them what would happen and how they would regret the decision later on, they just kept on saying that they still wanted a king. Samuel talked with God about it and God said to go ahead and let a king rule over them then. God, who knew this would happen, already had someone in mind and would tell Samuel who it was.

One day, God told Samuel that the man who was to be the first king would be coming to see him the next day, and to have the cooks prepare a special portion of the meal for him to eat with this man. Samuel obeyed and gave the instructions to those who would be getting everything ready. The next day, two men came to Samuel asking where the prophet lived, as they had a problem.

Saul was the name of one of the men, and he was travelling with a servant of his father trying to find their missing donkeys. They’d been gone for quite a while looking here and

there all over the place and still hadn't found them. Saul suggested that they just go home, as instead of worrying about the donkeys their father would start to think that they were lost now too!

The servant then got an idea, "I heard about a prophet that lives around here. Why don't we go and ask him to tell us where the donkeys are. God could tell him that for sure." And so they went looking for Samuel, and the women who were drawing water told them just where to find him.

When Samuel saw Saul approaching, God told him, "This is the man I told you about. He's the one that is to be the king."

Samuel surprised Saul by inviting him to come and eat with him that day, and then told him two more amazing things. Samuel said, "And don't worry about the donkeys, they've already been found." He said then to Saul, "You are the one that everyone has been wanting and asking for."

Even though Saul was tall and good-looking, strong and able to do things well, he was also humble. He didn't think proudly about himself. He didn't think of himself as anything particularly special or important at all.

"What do you mean?" Saul said. "I'm nothing great. I'm from the smallest tribe of Israel, and there is nothing exceptional about my family either."

But he would find out soon what Samuel meant.

Saul was invited to sit in the best place in the dinner area where about 30 other people were having a special meal, and Samuel called the cook and said to bring the specially saved food that he had asked to be set aside for a certain guest—before Samuel even met Saul.

God knows what's going to happen to people, and He knows what will work out best. If you stop to listen to Me, Jesus, today and get My thoughts and advice on problems that come your way, and hear what I want to say about things that haven't even happened yet, things will go so much better for you.

What would have happened if Samuel hadn't been listening to God that day when he was told that the person who was to be the king was coming, and to prepare for it? Even if God had it all set up, and had Saul on his way to meet Samuel, if Samuel had been so busy trying to work things out on his own that he didn't have time to stop and pray and listen to God, he might have missed the whole plan.

Samuel could have felt very stressed and under pressure and instead of praying and trusting God to work things out, he could have frantically tried to come up with solutions. "I need to find a king! Who should it be? There are so very many people to choose from! How will I know who's the best one? There's no time to lose! Maybe I should just go on a long journey around the country and start searching!"

If Samuel had made the wrong choice to do that, he wouldn't have been at home at that time when Saul arrived. He wouldn't have heard God telling him that the solution, the man, was already on his way there! God was bringing the king to him, right at that moment. He just had to wait patiently for one more day.

I work in your life to bring different situations and solutions your way, and have good ideas how you can cope with the problems and difficulties. If you stay calm and pray for My



plans to be shown to you, and you listen to what I want to tell you, it will save you so much time and effort.

Samuel had learned the best way to help people was to pray for them, and hear from God and put His words into action. So as he followed what God showed him step by step he saw things were working out with the new job of finding a king.

So after the special meal Samuel invited Saul to stay at his house, and on the flat rooftop they sat and talked for a long while. Samuel got to see what kind of a man he was. He could tell that Saul was the right one for the job—he was humble and meek, and his heart was right with the Lord. If he stayed that way, he would be a good king. He also had the skills and abilities to face the troubles that would come again from the Philistines and their harmful, selfish and ungodly ways.

In the morning, Saul and his servant began the journey home and Samuel walked with them for awhile. Samuel asked if the servant could go on ahead, as he had something that only Saul was to hear. When they were alone then Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it on Saul's head and said, "The Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over His inheritance."

The oil in a way represented the power of God giving him the strength and faith and ability to do the new job he was to do. He wasn't the king yet, and no one knew about their conversation and the fact that God had called and chosen him to be the king, but getting God's special power from above was the first step in starting a new and important job.

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### King Saul

When you have a new big job that you are about to do, that God is calling you to do, it helps to have something that confirms to you that it's God's will for you to do it. If you know it's going to be a tough job and it will require effort and perseverance to stick to it and complete it, sometimes a special sign from God can be a great encouragement.

After Samuel had spent that time with Saul explaining things to him and after he'd anointed Saul with special oil, demonstrating that he would receive God's help for the job, Samuel then told Saul what was going to happen next.

God told Samuel some specific details of people Saul would encounter on his trip back home—what they would say, and what Saul was to do. Samuel said to Saul that when he saw each of these things happening, just like God showed him they would, that this was to be a sign to Saul that he was to be the new king.

Samuel said that Saul would meet three men, each bringing something—goats, bread and wine. The men would offer Saul and his servant two loaves of bread that they were to accept. Samuel said that Saul would also encounter a team of prophets with four different

types of musical instruments—a psaltery, a tabret, a pipe, and a harp, and Saul would receive a prophecy then too, when he met them.

Samuel also said that they would meet some people who would explain to them that the donkeys had been found and that Saul's father was indeed missing his son and would be very happy to have him return.

After Saul listened to all these things that Samuel prophesied would happen on their journey home, he said goodbye to Samuel. As Saul turned to walk down the path, God changed him on the inside! God's Spirit was on Saul and the Bible says that God gave him another heart—a heart and spirit filled with new feelings, new ideas, and new strength!

As Saul and his servant walked on, one-by-one each thing that Samuel said would happen, did happen! It was a clear sign to Saul that God was the one who was calling him to be the king.

When they met up with the prophets who were making music with the very types of instruments that Samuel told them they would have, Saul then felt the power of God on him, and he began to prophesy too! It was the first time that had ever happened to him. People, who knew him from before, saw and heard him prophesying, and were very surprised. "Is he one of the prophets?" they were saying.

Just because you have "always done things a certain way" or have "never done that before" or you think you aren't talented or skilled in a certain thing, doesn't mean you will always be that way! God can change anyone anytime and help them be whatever is needed to match the job they need to do—if it's His will. This was a situation where that happened.

To be the king required a much larger boost of power from Heaven than it took for Saul to just care for animals and do the work on the land. He needed new wisdom and inspiration and help. He would have to lead the people in wise ways and make good decisions that would affect the whole country.

When someone is just living and working with their family, the things they do will affect them and their family. But when someone is looked up to and depended on to lead many others it's a very big job and responsibility that affects many people.

God was still the one in charge, and if the king or ruler remembered that, and never made decisions without talking with God about it and making sure to say and do whatever God knew was best, then things would go well. But if not, then things would get difficult.

God, Samuel and Saul were the only ones that knew about Saul being chosen to be the king at that time. No one else knew then, and it wasn't just announced either. It was to be told to everyone at a special time and in a special way.

When the time came, Samuel called everyone together and said God would give them a king. First, God showed them that the king would be from the tribe of Benjamin. Next, that it was from the family that Kish, Saul's father, was from. Then God showed them all that it was Saul, Kish's son, who was to be the king. When it was announced that Saul was to be the one, he was nowhere to be seen! People were looking around for him and didn't know where he was. Samuel prayed and God said that Saul was hiding by the stuff. Sure enough, there he was.

When Saul stood up and everyone got to see who their new king was, they saw that he was very tall. He was taller than everyone else; head-and-shoulders above everybody. "God

save the king!” the people shouted. A team of men were glad he was their king and when everyone else went home, the team of men travelled home with Saul to help him.

Some people that normally chose to not follow God’s ways grumbled and weren’t too sure about Saul being the ruler. It seemed there really wasn’t any way to please the type of people who only wanted to do the wrong things and kept choosing to go in the opposite direction that God was leading in.

At first they wanted things to be different and not have a prophet and judge showing them God’s ways, and to have a king instead. Then when they got the king, who was God’s choice at that time and was someone who wanted to follow in God’s ways when he started out, those grumblers didn’t like that either.

When people are set on doing things their own ungodly ways, no matter what you do to try to help them and to please them, you’ll never make them really happy. They will never be content until they put their will on God’s side.

Until then, things will just get worse and be very difficult for them. God’s ways will always seem contrary to what the troublemakers want, because they are choosing to walk the wrong way. Things just won’t seem right enough to them—until they choose to do what is truly right and learn to believe and trust in God.

But no matter what any of them felt at that time, Saul was their new king. And later on when they saw some of his good choices and the ways he was helping the country, they learned to accept him as the king.

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### **A Thundery Demonstration**

God’s first choice for the Israelites was for them to follow in His ways and listen to the prophets and judges He gave them, and make good choices. God wanted the people to do things according to His instructions because they loved Him and wanted to please Him. But since they were insisting on having a king, then Saul was the best man around for that job, right then.

Saul wasn’t perfect and wouldn’t always make the right choices—but no one does all the time. But at that point in time Saul was who God wanted to be the king. It was the second best choice in the situation.

Later on, when they saw that Saul had God’s power helping him and that he had made some wise decisions and helped to protect the country when troubles started up, people started to accept his leadership fully. Samuel was still around and would help to give God’s words and instructions at different times.

King Saul needed to listen to Samuel and obey what God said. Just because he was the king didn’t mean that he knew everything and could just do whatever he alone thought was best. These people belonged to God, and Saul needed to let God be the main one leading them.

When the prophet Samuel told him some instruction from the Lord, Saul, just like everyone else, would need to obey what God said. Everyone needed to know that God was still around, and in charge, and it was very important that they all follow Him respectfully.

After Saul had been king for a short while, Samuel gave an important message and lesson talk. He gave instructions to everyone, because God wanted to get them going in the right direction. God wanted them to be off to a good start, so things could go well in the country.

Samuel reminded them that it would have been better for them not to have demanded to have a king, and that it wasn't what God knew would be best for them. He said that now that they had a king they needed to make sure to follow in God's ways and respect Him, if they wanted things to go well.

The people felt sorry that they had insisted on their own ways. Sometimes when you feel you want something, but it's not good for you to have it, then when you get to have it, your heart feels a bit sad. You thought it was something that would make things better, but then there is this emptiness in your heart instead; a bad feeling that makes you wish you had never pushed to get your way.

Sometimes people pray for things they wish they had, but I, Jesus, know what will really be best. If people love Me and trust in My loving care, then when the answer to some prayers is "no" or "wait" they can praise Me anyway, trusting that I'm only going to allow what is truly best for them. But sometimes people are so focused on what they want that they think it is the only thing that will make the situation better.

When they refuse to look up to Me with faith, putting their trust in Me, the only way I can get them to not be so focused on their own plans, but to trust in My wise planning and care is to give them what they want. Then they see that it wasn't all they'd hoped for. They wish they hadn't gotten it, but it's too late to rewind and make the right choice to not be so demanding and insistent, but to pray in faith and then to rest and let Me do what I know is best, and deny them what isn't for their good.

So now they had a king and when Samuel was talking to them on this day they were feeling bad for pushing their own way. But God, through Samuel, encouraged them that if they made the choices to do things God's way and to follow Him, then things would be alright.

Samuel then called on God to do a miracle to demonstrate the power of God and to show the people that He was around and still in charge. It was a bright sunny day, and no clouds were in the sky. Samuel said he would pray for thunder and rain to come right then. And it did! Right then there was a very big thunder storm and pouring rain!

Everyone believed that the best thing to do was to obey and follow God. They were reminded that He was right there with them and knew just what was going on. With God's almighty hand he could do anything He wanted to, in an instant! God was to be loved, and respected and obeyed. The people saw that clearly on that day!

Samuel loved the people and wanted things to go well for them, and he knew that if they respected and did things God's way things could go well for them. Samuel promised that he'd always be faithful to pray for them. He knew prayer was the best thing he could do.

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### **A Good Heart**

If I see that a person loves Me with all their heart, that is the most beautiful thing to Me. I love those that love Me. I'm near to those that are near to Me. It doesn't matter how

many mistakes you make or what you look like, if you love Me with your heart, your mind, and your soul, and you love My words, then to Me you are the most beautiful or handsome person you could be.

God loved King Saul and wanted him to be close to him. But it was hard for Saul to respect and put God and His will above what the people were saying and pressuring him to do. He wanted to be well thought of and respected.

However, in this world where you now live, that just doesn't work. Either I, Jesus, will be first in your life and you will choose to please Me most of all, or you will try to please others and give their ideas preference above Mine. It can be real tough at times to make those choices to obey what I say to do, when others aren't supportive of your decisions and are trying to get to you to do something different.

Saul was having a hard time. He was trying to please both God and the people. He was trying to do a good job, but when there was a choice to do what Samuel the Prophet told him that God wanted him to do, or to do what people were pressuring him to do, then he chose to please the people.

When he started off being the king, he wasn't very confident in himself and not everyone was pleased that he was the king. So, to try to make people glad to have him as their king, he sometimes would do what they wanted, even when God, through Samuel, said to do something else. He obeyed part of the way, but not all the way. However, part-way disobedience is still disobedience and doesn't bring the full blessing.

It's like someone telling the police who stopped them for driving too fast, "But I was driving on the correct side of the road, and I even had my seatbelt on!" Well, that's good, but it wouldn't be good enough and could cause a bad accident if they were still going faster than the speed limit. Full obedience to God brings full blessings.

Saul needed faith—faith to not let the stress of the difficult situations that the people were in, to affect him to the point that he just made sudden decisions and quickly did whatever seemed good at the time. He needed faith that God was in control and would work things out for them.

If he listened to God's instructions and followed through on them, no matter what was going on around him, things would be much better than if he just did what seemed good at the time. He needed faith that God would let him continue to be the king if he followed and obeyed God's words, rather than worrying that the people wouldn't want him to be the king if he didn't do what they wanted him to do.

Because Saul chose to listen and do what the people said he should, rather than staying true to God's Words, this made him unable to be the kind of king God needed him to be. At first he started off in humility and was much more obedient to God's ways and His instructions. However, later he began to listen more to the words of the people and chose to do what he thought would make them like him better, instead of doing what God said to do.

One sad night God talked to Samuel about it. Samuel was a man who put God's Words and his closeness with God above being liked by people on Earth. He spoke the truth and passed on God's Words no matter how difficult it was. Samuel knew and realised that he

wasn't the one in charge, but was as a servant, doing things the way God wanted them done. He was to be a voice to say what God wanted the people to hear.

The situations that people got themselves into weren't easy, and the solutions weren't easy. So even if some of God's Words and counsel was hard to receive, to tell people about, and to do, putting God's Words into action was a lot easier than experiencing the problems that would come to those who chose the proud way of the world around them.

God told Samuel that a new king would need to replace Saul. It was clear that Saul was no longer a suitable king as he wasn't making the right choices. Samuel cried for a long while and his heart was aching with sorrow as he talked with God about the situation. God was sad that Saul wasn't following Him, and Samuel felt the sadness of God's heart too.

It's disappointing when someone could do something great for God, but then miss their chance because of pride. Saul was proud and thought he could do a better job than doing what God said to do. He was proud when things went well and took the credit to himself. He thought it must be because he was a great guy.

Saul let pride and other sins into his heart and this made him lose the anointing for being a good king and ruling well for a long time. And his children and grand-children would not have the chance to become kings after him either, due to his wrong example.

Getting proud thoughts when something goes well for you, instead of thanking Me for helping you, will make it go poorly for you the next time. It's like if a hose that sprayed out water began to think that it was amazing on its own. What if the hose broke away from the tap and said, "Look what a great job I did watering the garden! I don't need to be hooked up to that tap all the time. It stops me from moving too freely and going to all the places I'd like to go!"? Well, that would be the last time water came out of it, right? The gardener needs the hose to help spray the water all over, but it will only work if it's hooked up to the tap, and water can pour through it.

That's a little example of what it was like for Saul. When he knew he couldn't do anything without God helping him, then he was the right one for the job. However, when he allowed pride and disobedience to God into his life then he couldn't help the people in the ways God needed him to.

Samuel travelled to pass on a message from God to Saul, and to let him know that he'd gotten too off track. Samuel explained, "When you were humble and didn't think greatly of yourself, that is when God called you to do a very important job. However, because you kept choosing to do things your own way and have been disobedient to His instructions, God will choose someone else to be the king instead."

Saul was very sorry then for his disobediences and wanted to make things right with God again. He and Samuel had some time to pray together. Saul was still the king for quite a while longer, until it was the right time for a new king to take the throne. God needed to prepare someone else for the job, and that would take time.

However, those next years of being a king were very hard, as his heart was sad, and he no longer had God's special power helping him. He'd missed being what he could have been. There was one more important job that God had for Saul however, and unbeknownst to him, he was going to help play a part in training the new king a little while later. God had things all planned out.

God told Samuel where to go to find the person who was to be the new king—to Bethlehem. On the hillsides of Bethlehem was a humble shepherd boy. A young person who loved God and spent lots of time talking with Him and listening to His thoughts, would make a good new king.

Samuel was instructed by God just where to go and what to do. He held a feast and time of worship there in Bethlehem, and a man named Jesse and his family were invited. Before they ate the food, Samuel had a job to do. He held in his hands a horn of oil and was to anoint, or pour it on the head of the one that was to be the new king. God told him that one of Jesse’s sons was to be the king, but exactly who it was to be, wasn’t told to Samuel yet.

“Have your sons come stand before me, one-by-one and I’ll see which one God wants me to anoint,” Samuel told Jesse. “We’ll have the feast after I do that.”

Starting with the oldest, they passed in front of Samuel. The oldest was good looking, tall and strong, and it reminded Samuel of Saul who was tall, and God had chosen him. But this time God had someone completely different in mind.

“No, he’s not the one. I look on the heart, not on the outward appearance,” God told Samuel.

Samuel motioned for the next son to come, and the next, and the next, until there were none left. Samuel was puzzled. He was to anoint one of Jesse’s sons, but when they stood in front of him, God said none of them were to be the one.

“Do you have any other sons?” Samuel asked.

“Yes, the youngest, David. He’s watching the sheep on the hill,” Jesse said.

“Please call him! We won’t eat until he comes here,” Samuel asked.

Young and energetic David came as fast as he could, and as soon as Samuel saw him, God said that he was the one to be the new king.

David knelt down and Samuel poured the special oil on his head, and from that moment on God’s Spirit came on him. Eventually he would be the king; later on when the time was right. A person with a good heart who loves God is better than the tallest, strongest, smartest or most good-looking person around.

Story Time with Jesus 50-61\_text

## Story Time with Jesus

### Bible Stories

#### Chapters 50-61

50-David’s Harp

51-Psalms and Supply

- 52-King David and Dancing
- 53-Instructions and Supplies for Solomon
- 54-The Temple is Built
- 55-A Wise King
- 56-A King's Proclamation
- 57-God Cares for Elijah
- 58-Fire and Water
- 59-Heavenly Food and Encouragement
- 60-The Boys Who Were Kings
- 61-Hezekiah's Healing

(Jesus speaking: )

### **David's Harp**

David had been a shepherd boy for as long as he could remember. And being a shepherd wasn't just a slow-moving and peaceful job. He learned many things that would help him later on in life with the big responsibility of being king. At times there were wild animals that he had to chase off. The weather wasn't always balmy and warm and pleasant, and he had to be strong and put the needs of the sheep above his own wishes for comfort.

David was also a musician, and was good at playing the harp. He practiced playing it often and sang songs of praise and prayer to Me. He used his times of peace to practice this skill, and to pray. Those were good uses of his time, and things that were to benefit him and others.

When David was anointed to be the new king, even though Saul was still the king for quite some time afterwards, David received My Spirit on him and he gained strength and wisdom. However, Saul no longer had that special empowerment anymore. He often got in a very bad mood and was easily upset and angry about things. Saul acted very differently when he didn't have God's Spirit on him as he'd had before.

Someone got an idea that it would help Saul if he had someone play music for him, when he got into a bad mood. I had a plan for David, and part of his training to be a king later on was to live close to King Saul and be a helper to him. When those around Saul wanted to find someone to come and play music for him, someone thought of David. David was known for his musical talent and skill with the harp.

David was called to come and stay with the king and to play music for him with his harp, when King Saul was in need of encouragement. And it worked! Saul felt so much better when David played his beautiful songs of praise and prayer and faith. You never know where your skill of playing songs—or whatever skill I have given to you—may lead you. Learn well whatever skill you have, and it may provide you with new and exciting opportunities.



Jonathan, Saul's son, was a good friend to David. David needed that encouragement. He was away from his family, and King Saul wasn't pleasant to be around most of the time. Jonathan made sure that David was safe and cared for and had all that he needed.

I gave David wisdom and knowledge about what to do and how to do it. He didn't act proudly and try to get attention for himself. He was prayerful and trustworthy. He made good decisions as I led him. Things were getting more difficult with the Philistines, and David helped to boost people's faith that God was more powerful than anything else on Earth.

People began to like David and were glad for what he was able to do to help them. David wasn't doing things out of pride, or because he wanted people to follow him. David wanted people to be true to King Saul, and David was doing all he could to be a help to him too.

However, it was hard for Saul to hear people saying how much they liked David, and what a good job he was doing. Saul's pride is what had made him unable to be a good king anymore, and it was making him unable to act wisely and he began to feel upset most of the time. His heart was no longer filled with My Spirit.

Jonathan told David that it would be better if he left the palace and moved somewhere else, as his father, King Saul, was too upset with him. There wasn't anything wrong that David had done to cause this, but it was hard for King Saul to not have people saying as many wonderful things about him as he heard people saying about David.

David had learned a lot when living and working there with King Saul, and then it was time to move on. It was part of David's training, and it would help him to be a good king later on. He saw that the most important thing was to love Me and follow My Words, and to stay humble. These were the things that would make someone a good king. Having My Holy Spirit and My help was the only way to success.

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### **Psalms and Supply**

David could no longer live around King Saul, as Saul was too easily angered about the fact that David was more liked than he was. It was King Saul's pride that caused him the most trouble. He no longer had normal and calm reactions, but was difficult to be around and made some very wrong choices that he regretted.

David had to leave, and a team of men wanted to work with him and help him. David and his team had to travel and live outdoors for quite a while. A large cave was their home for some time. Can you imagine what that might have been like? David had to be brave and strong and have lots of faith. He had been anointed to be the new king of Israel, but now he didn't even have a home to live in. His brothers and family came to see him in the cave, and so did many others.

People who had grievances and had suffered in some way due to Saul's unwise reactions and decisions, came out to be with David and join his team. They weren't living comfortably at all. They had to trust God to supply food for them and to take care of them. David spent a lot of

time in prayer and wrote songs and psalms to the Lord—which you can find in the Book of Psalms. He learned that as he praised and trusted in Me to work things out that he felt better and solutions were found.

There were many difficulties and challenges that David and his men had. One time when Saul felt very angry about David and came with many men to try to stop David and his band of followers, Saul lay down for a rest—in a cave! It just so happened to be the cave that David was in at that moment. David respected Me and knew that I had made Saul the king for that time, and even if he wasn't always making the right choices and was causing David a lot of hardship and sorrow, David wasn't going to do anything wrong to stop Saul from being the king.

David was patient and kind, and when Saul woke up and David told him that he had been right there in the cave with him, Saul was amazed. Saul realised that David wasn't someone who was trying to do anything wrong, or trying to take the leadership of the country away from Saul. David wasn't angry with Saul and wasn't trying to cause him trouble. Saul cried and said he was sorry for being so upset with him, and left to return back to his home.

Later on, Saul again let the feelings of the Enemy get him thinking that David was up to no good, and set out to find him and cause him trouble. But David proved once more that he was wise and kind, and Saul had nothing to worry about.

King Saul and his men were all sleeping on the ground and I made them sleep very deeply. David and one of his men went quietly to Saul's side and took a couple of his things and crept away. In the morning, from a nearby hill David yelled out to Saul and the others that he had been there in the night. David showed everyone the things he had taken from Saul to prove that he was gentle and respectful he didn't even wake Saul up—much less cause any trouble at all, even though he had been so close.

When Saul heard David's voice he recognised it and realised once again that David didn't mean to do any harm to him at all. The things David had taken for a short while as a demonstration, were returned to Saul, and Saul was sorry for his unkind thoughts and actions once again, and left peacefully.

Sometimes that can be the best way to put an end to someone's angry thoughts and actions towards you—to do something kind and to prove that you are not any trouble at all. Another time this lesson was shown, but this time it was in a different situation.

David and his team of several hundred men needed food to eat, and they'd heard of a very rich man called Nabal, who had plenty to spare. David sent some of his men to ask Nabal if he could share some food with them. They were very hungry and had nowhere to get food. The rich man was someone who had too much and still didn't want to give anything away. He spoke unkindly to David's messenger men and sent them away without giving anything to them or their team.

David and his men had been very kind and they didn't go on to that ungodly man's property grabbing what they needed. They had just politely asked, even though all of them were tired and of course very hungry. David was feeling under pressure to provide what was needed for

his faithful and hungry men. When David's men weren't treated hospitably by someone who had more than enough, it really upset him.

When Abigail, who was Nabal's wife, heard about the situation she took quick and kind action. She was a good and generous woman. She was very unhappy to hear that David's men weren't treated well, and while the rich, selfish man was feasting and getting too drunk to care about anyone but himself, she got to work to help David and his men.

Abigail immediately got her servants to help, and they loaded up donkeys with all kinds of yummy treats. She gathered whatever foods they had that were prepared already and could be given right away—like some fig cakes, loaves of bread, corn, meat, raisins and wine. When she met David and presented her gifts of food, her kind words and thoughtfulness changed David's feelings from anger into thankfulness.

Abigail said that she had heard that David's men were very polite and didn't take anything that wasn't theirs, even though they desperately needed it. She was glad for how well they had behaved and wanted to show kindness to David and his team. Abigail said she knew that one day David would be king, and wanted him to not do anything wrong now out of anger that he would regret later on. She knew he would make a good king if he kept acting wisely and following in My ways.

Abigail asked David to please forgive them and not be angry anymore. She said that she knew it was a difficult time for David, as King Saul was making things hard for them. Abigail encouraged David that I, the Lord, would take good care of him and protect him.

David listened to her wise and kind words and answered humbly. He praised Me for sending her and thanked Abigail for her counsel. He was glad that her words and gifts came just at the right time. Her words had helped to calm David's heart and stopped him from letting his anger and their needs cause him to act roughly, taking matters into his own hands, rather than letting Me work things out. David accepted the apology and forgave those who treated them unkindly, and was very thankful for the food gifts.

Later on, David heard that Nabal was no longer around, as he had passed away unexpectedly. David remembered how kind Abigail was to him and to his team. He went to find her and asked if she would like to live with him and travel with them. Abigail became David's wife, and helped to take care of him and encourage him. Abigail loved God and loved David and was very glad to have a godly man to live with, even if it meant no longer living in a fancy house with many comforts and luxury. She was glad to be with someone who loved Me. David had other women too, who he invited to be part of his family team and bear his children.

As time went on, more people joined their band, and I used them to help put a stop to many of the ungodly and bothersome people who were making things difficult for the Israelites. Even though things were very difficult for David, because he trusted in Me to help him, and he talked to Me about all their troubles, and heard from Me about what to do, he had the strength and the peace and the faith to make it through those tough times.

The Book of Psalms in the Bible has many of David's prayers and thoughts and feelings written down. Those prayers and words from his heart give a glimpse into some of the situations he was going through. David cried a lot, he had sickness, he felt forsaken by some who used to be his friends, he felt afraid and in danger. The Psalms show us also the key to his victory and how he managed to make it through those very difficult years. David learned to praise God no matter what. He believed that I was going to keep My Word and would always be with him.

Reading or memorizing verses from the Psalms can be a great encouragement to you, too. I'm sure at times in your life you have felt, or will yet feel sad, lonely, sick, in pain, without friends, afraid, or in dangerous situations. The Psalms tell of David's great love for Me and for My Words. He loved My Words and thought about them as often as he could. It was his remembering God's Words that gave him the courage and strength he needed to keep on going when things were real hard for him.

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### **King David and Dancing**

At last the time came when David was crowned king. He was 30 years old, and ruled for 40 years. David loved Me so much, and would always pray and ask for My advice and counsel. He knew he could not succeed in anything unless I was the One helping him. I protected him and blessed him and provided for him and those helping him.

David had not had a comfortable house to live in for a long time, but when he was the king some people made him a strong wooden house, and he was happy with it. One day when he was sitting in his house, thinking how nice it was and how much he appreciated it, he wished he could build a fancy, beautiful palace for God. Ever since the Israelites had been travelling through the wilderness, the special Ark of the Covenant had been in a tent. David wished he could do something special for Me and make a wonderful building.

David told Nathan the prophet his idea. Nathan prayed about it and heard what I, the Lord, wanted to say about it, and then came and told David. The message said that it was a good thing to do, and that David's son, a new child that had not yet been born, would help to make it.

I said that I was pleased with David, because he loved Me so much, and David would be able to be the king for a long while. His son would also be able to be the next king, too. David was real happy to hear the message from God, and he made plans for building the temple in the future.

The Ark of the Covenant had been kept at someone's house for many years, and it was time for David to bring it. David was so happy and thrilled that at last he could have it near to him.

It reminded him and others how very close I, the Lord, was, and how I was watching over them. A big musical parade announced the moving of the Ark of the Covenant, with songs and all kinds of instruments.

When it neared David's place he was so happy! It felt like one of the happiest moments of his life. Riches and friends and everything else that people might have thought a king wanted was nothing compared to his great love for Me, his Lord and God; and this Ark of the Covenant made David feel that I was near and would bless and keep him and the country. David sang and danced with all his might. He did the best dancing he could do, as a praise to Me.

He wasn't just raising his hands to praise, or singing a song, or playing an instrument, or jumping up and down with joy a few times, but he danced so freely and with such enthusiasm that everyone saw how happy David was to think that I was so close to him.

A few people thought he was being a bit too wild as he freely and enthusiastically danced. However, he wasn't dancing for people to watch; he was just thinking about the Lord and wanting to please Me. That's all he cared about! Everyone else loved seeing such a happy king praising God with dancing, and celebrating this wonderful event. David made a big barbeque and gave everyone a generous portion of food and drink, so that they all could enjoy this very special day.

When he did what I told him to do, things went well and he was a happy king. King David wasn't perfect though, and I knew he would make mistakes, but as he prayed for forgiveness and tried to keep his heart right with Me, then he was forgiven.

Sometimes there were sad and difficult consequences for the things done that displeased Me. When someone is a king or ruler the consequences don't just affect them, but can affect many others, so that all will learn the lesson too and realise that what was done was wrong. Everyone makes mistakes and has lessons to learn—even those in charge of many others. And sometimes the lessons are harder and have worse consequences for those that have lots of leadership responsibilities.

Some of the consequences for wrong choices and decisions by him, or by Saul previously that hadn't been made right again, were things like a famine in the land for a few years, or real bad sickness affecting many of the Israelites, or those he loved no longer being near to him. But as David prayed with all his heart and chose to change and make things right then I sent My comfort and encouragement.

David's life was a difficult one, and there were many hard times and troublemakers. He had sickness and pain. He often had to live outdoors and travel around without comfortable places to live—even when he was the king he didn't always get to stay in the palace. Sometimes those he loved and depended on weren't trustworthy and disappointed him. His children didn't always make the good and right choices and this made him real sad. But King David didn't give up. He was strong in heart and mind and body as he chose to get his strength from Me, his Lord. He spent lots of time in prayer telling Me what was on his heart

and mind, and he listened to My words. David learned how to survive through hard times and sorrow, through difficulties and tough jobs.

The Book of Psalms, that is a collection of prayers, praises and psalms from King David and others as well, contains some tips that can help you and others when faced with things in your life that seem too hard for you. Most people feel that at some time in their life, and these are some good things to remember that are mentioned in that book:

- Praise and pray first thing in the morning, before you start your day! (Psalm 5:3)
- Happiness comes from Me, Jesus, and can be in your heart even when things aren't as nice as you'd like them to be. (Psalm 4:7)
- Those that love Me and My words and think about them will be strong and succeed. (Psalm 1:2-3)
- I hear prayer and help those in need. (Psalm 138:3)
- I think about you and know everything about you, (Psalm 139:1-18)
- When you feel very sad and discouraged, it helps to remember all the great things I have done. (Psalm 143:4-5)
- Find out what I want you to do, and I can help you to do it. (Psalm 143:8,10)
- Praise and thank Me daily and always, and teach others to do the same. (Psalm 145:1-4)
- Put your trust in Me, and not just in people—even important and strong people. (Psalm 146:3; Psalm 118:8-9)
- Memorize God's word; hide it in your heart. (Psalm 119:11)
- Those who spend special time and are close to Me will have My protection. (Psalm 91:1-2)
- God has the whole world in his hands. (Psalm 95:4-5)

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### **Instructions and Supplies for Solomon**

Bathsheba was a beautiful woman and King David loved her. He married her and they had a son, who was to be the next king after David. I said to name him Solomon, to remind them of the peace the country would have. It was a wonderful thought that the country would have peace when he was the king. He was a special son sent to King David and Bathsheba. I loved Solomon very much and put My Spirit on him.

Solomon loved his father David, and listened when his father taught him about God and told him many things that would help him to be a good king one day. Solomon grew up to be a wise man who respected and loved Me when he was crowned to be the new king. Solomon was the son I promised to give to King David, the son that would build a magnificent temple dedicated to Me, later on when he was king after David. It would be where the Ark of the Covenant would go, rather than in the tent that it had been in for so long. People would have a special place to meet for prayer and praise and worshiping.

When King David was getting real old it was time for a new king to take the throne. One day one of King David's other sons decided that he wanted to be the new king, and had a

celebration inviting some people to it, telling people that he was the new king. But he wasn't meant to be, and King David didn't even know about it.

Solomon's mother, Bathsheba, and the prophet Nathan came to talk to King David about it. Old King David who was resting on his bed said that Solomon was to be the new king and could be anointed for the job, right away. King David gave the instructions of what to do. Solomon rode King David's mule and was anointed by the priest to be the king. The people that were there were very happy and cheered and the trumpet was blown, and everyone played music loudly and joyously. It was a loud and happy celebration!

When Solomon's brother that was off doing his own thing and trying to announce himself as the new king heard all this noise—so much noise that the ground was rumbling—he asked what was going on. When he heard that Solomon was made the king, then he realised he needed to stop trying to make himself the new king, so he and everyone else stopped their out-of-step party, and returned to their homes. When old King David heard that Solomon was anointed and was now the new king, even he showed respect and bowed down, setting the example to others that Solomon was the one to be now followed and listened to and respected.

King David took some time to talk to and instruct his son with tips on what would make him a good king, and help things go well. He told Solomon the most important thing was to do what My Word says and to follow My instructions. King David also talked to Solomon about the plans for building the temple, and gave him the special job of getting it built.

Much work and planning and preparations were made for it before Solomon was king and began to build it. King David prayed a lot about it, and I told him what to write and draw and how it should be. I was the one giving the plans. It was something new that King David wanted to do and that I said he could. But with prayer and listening to My instructions he was able to do something new that he'd never done before, even though he was getting older. I told him how to make the blueprints for it, as well as lots of other details of things that were to be used in the temple and how they should be made.

Just being smart and capable of doing things won't make you able to do the best jobs. But if you are willing to do whatever I, Jesus, need you to do and you let Me tell you what to do and how to do it, and if your greatest skill is being able to ask Me about your jobs then you can do some amazing things—as I'll be helping you and making it easier for you.

King David did all that he could to ensure that the temple would get built. Even though he was old and tired and sick he worked as hard as he could to do as much preparation as he could to make it easy for his son to do it. He got Solomon off to a good start. If he had left all the work and all the planning to his son it might have taken so much longer and would have been harder to get started, as not only did Solomon have the job of building it but learning to be a new king and ruling the country as well. Those were some big jobs to suddenly be in charge of doing.

When someone helps get you off to a good start and even has some of the needed materials all ready and available then it's easy to jump in and get started and do the job. It's the

starting of big jobs that can seem the hardest. So helping someone get started on their jobs, or making it easy for them by making sure they have what they need for the job is a big help.

Doesn't it make it easier for you if instead of someone saying, "Please clean the table" they handed you a clean cloth to wipe it with and gave you a tray to help make clearing the dishes go fast? It can also help when you put some time and thought and preparation into a project before the time comes to work on it. You'll get more done that way.

For example, let's imagine that you and your brothers or sisters were going to spend time making Christmas cards one afternoon. Rather than waiting until it was time to start to begin gathering the items needed, if you collected the art supplies ahead of time you'd be able to just get to work right away when it was time to do it. If you also thought beforehand about some artistic ideas or marked pages in a book that give examples of types of cards to make, it would be easy to just start on the project right away, rather than spending half the time just getting the materials needed and getting started.

Thinking ahead and preparing for things makes it easier for you and makes you be more productive at the time. It saves time and makes it more enjoyable. Teachers and all kinds of people learn this tip, that things go much better if they think and pray and plan and prepare in advance.

Also, if there is a big job that you are asked to do, don't worry about how big it is. Just focus on getting the first part of the preparation done, and once you make the plans and gather the materials and think about how to do it in the best way, then you are off to a good start.

King David was able to collect a lot of building materials, like cedar wood from Lebanon was sent to him for this project, gold and silver was gathered, brass as well, and iron for the nails and door hinges. People were employed to cut big stones to be used in the building. He collected many beautiful precious stones of many colours, as well as marble to be used.

A lot of work was put into it, and lots of preparation. King David asked Solomon to build it, and made it easier for him by gathering many materials needed for it, and getting many people to help do the work of constructing it.

Most great works are a teamwork effort, and David was the first one to start on work towards building the temple, and then passed it on to his son to do. You don't have to feel bad if you aren't the one to do a wonderful job from step one until the last finishing touches.

Even though it might seem like you'd feel great being able to say, "I was the one to do it ALL!" well, the extra work and effort, and the extended amount of time it might take you to do it from beginning to end with no help at all from others probably won't feel so great.

Be glad when others can give you a short cut and lend you a hand, you'll be able to get even more done that way and have time to learn things you wouldn't get to if all your time was spent on just one project, while you struggled to do it alone.

When King David told everyone about the project of building the temple and asked if anyone would like to help build it, or offer any gold and silver, brass or onyx stones and other



precious stones, the people were real glad about it and gave all that they could. It was an inspiring project and they promised to help Solomon build it. It made King David so very happy to see how eager and willing people were, offering to help. It was a happy time and King David prayed a praise prayer, saying,

“Thine, O Lord is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all.

“Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all.

“Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name.”

There were other things King David helped to organise in the last part of his life. People were chosen to do each of the important jobs that would be needed for the temple as well. King David made sure that each of the Levites, who were to help with the temple and jobs of serving God, knew what their jobs were. There were thousands of them, and each one had something special they were to help with. Most of them were going to help build the temple and make what was needed for it, many were to be the overseers and instruct the others, and others would to help with the daily jobs in the temple.

Do you remember something that was special about King David, something that he especially liked to do? He was a musician and wrote many songs and psalms. He liked music and knew it was a wonderful way to praise, and he realised that praise was very important! So there were thousands of people that he gave that job to—to be the praise musicians! To sing and play musical instruments, and some were to hear from God too, prophesying and receiving His words as they sang and praised.

When King David was telling everyone about the temple and its preparation, and announcing that Solomon, who was now the new king, was to be the one to build the temple, Solomon was then anointed with oil for a second time and sat on King David’s throne. Everyone there felt so happy and had a feast to celebrate the new things that were to happen.

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### **The Temple is Built**

King Solomon worked on building the temple that his father asked him to build. With the plans drawn up and with many supplies already on hand he could get to work right away. Building fancy buildings took quite some time back then. There were no factories to order the supplies from, and they would need more wood and stones to construct with.

King David had a friend called Hiram, who was the king of Tyre. It was a nearby country, and he had charge over the cedar and fir trees in Lebanon. This country was famous for its great cedar trees. When Hiram heard that Solomon, King David’s son, was the new king he sent messengers to him. Solomon passed on a message to ask King Hiram if his clever people who knew well how to cut down and transport the trees, could help him.

King Solomon said that he could send many people from his own country to join up and help King Hiram's workmen and together they could do the job. King Hiram was so glad to hear this message from King Solomon, and he was so happy that King David had a wise son. He wanted to help, as he loved David and wanted to be a help to his son then too.

So the workmen cut down the trees that were needed and floated them along the sea to transport them to the place that King Solomon needed them. In return for these trees King Solomon gave wheat and oil to King Hiram and his household, which is what he most needed.

Many thousands of builders and workmen helped King Solomon build the temple. There was all kinds of jobs to be done. There were jobs like wood work, stone cutting, working with metal, silver and gold, carving designs, sculpting, and making beautiful coloured cloth. King Solomon wanted to make this special place where the Ark of the Covenant would be, as fancy and strong as it could possibly be. It wasn't like houses nowadays that can be built in a short time, with a team of workmen. The work of building the temple was shared by many thousands of people! And it took seven years until it was complete.

There was a very special room in the temple that was built for the Ark of the Covenant. In this room King Solomon had two big gold covered wooden angels placed. The wings of these angels, called Cherubims, together reached from one side of the room to the other, and between them is where the Ark of the Covenant was to be placed.

The day the temple was at last finished was a great day of celebration and honouring God. It had been more than four hundred years from the time the Israelites had left Egypt until they had a palace or temple to place the Ark of the Covenant in. Everyone wanted to come and see it and to celebrate together. There were countless people who came, as far as the eye could see!

The Ark of the Covenant was placed in its special new room in the temple, and everyone rejoiced! King Solomon prayed a beautiful and long prayer during this celebration of dedicating the temple to God. He prayed that everyone would always remember to pray and turn towards God no matter where they were or what was happening to them. He prayed that God would always have mercy and forgive people whenever they prayed and asked Him for forgiveness.

King Solomon knew that the people in the land that he was now a ruler over wouldn't be perfect and would make mistakes and at times stop following the instructions that were given to them. He wasn't praying for them to be perfect. He wasn't praying that their country would be the most important and rich and powerful. He wasn't praying for people to admire him and to think that he was the greatest King around. King Solomon's prayer was for people's hearts to turn to Me, their Lord, and to pray and follow Me, and for Me to give them peace and blessings when they did that. He knew that when God forgives sins that it makes things better, and the difficult consequences of disobedience are changed into blessing.

After King Solomon offered this prayer, I did a wonderful thing that amazed and surprised everyone. Fire came down from God on the altar! And that wasn't all! I wanted to do these amazing things to show the people that I was there and was glad that everyone wanted to

love and follow Me. Remember that heavenly cloud that was sent to show Moses and the travelling Israelites in the wilderness that God's Spirit was there? Well, that amazing and marvellous, thick cloud from God filled the new temple during that celebration, and the priests couldn't even stand in there it was so overpowering!

It was a wonderful time of not only dedicating the temple, but re-dedicating themselves to God, and choosing to once again do things My way. The real temple that My spirit lives in is you—each one of you that know and love Me and have accepted Me into your life and heart and mind. There is no one certain place where you need to be in order to pray and to be heard and answered. If you have invited Me to come into your heart and be a part of your life and to give you forgiveness and salvation so that you can one day come and live in heaven forever with Me, then you have God's spirit with you, and you can pray anytime and anywhere! Isn't that great?

### **A Wise King**

What would you say if the One who owns everything came and asked you what you would like Him to give you? Now when God offers to give you something, you know He can do anything. He has endless power, He owns everything, He can give absolutely anything to you that you need.

God came and spoke with King Solomon while he slept, appearing to him in a dream, asking him, "What would you like Me to give you?"

Because Solomon didn't think highly of himself, nor think that he could do the job all on his own, that made him answer wisely. You can make smarter and better decisions if you realise you aren't smart on your own, and you ask for the wisdom and help of the One who made you and can do anything.

"I am just like a little child. I don't know what to do. What I want most of all is to have understanding, and to discern what is good and bad." Solomon requested.

Good choice! He won the gold medal for the best choice of the day! As not only did he receive what he asked for, for the gift of a wise and understanding heart and mind, but he was made very rich with gold and all kinds of treasures as well as time went on.

As a result of this gift that I, the Lord, gave to him, King Solomon wrote a thousand songs and quoted and spoke three thousand proverbs! He also learned and knew a lot about plants and animals and all kinds of things. People came from all over just to talk with him and hear the wise things he would tell them. It wasn't something he could do himself. Only I could give him that good of a memory and the ability to talk with people of all sorts, about all kinds of things, and to know what was the best thing to tell them in answer to their questions and to give helpful advice.

Some of King Solomon songs and the proverbs and words he spoke are written down in the Book of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon. There is helpful advice and beautiful poetry recorded in those books, which God gave to him.

One day an important visitor arrived to talk with King Solomon. It was a queen from another country—the Queen of Sheba. She had all kinds of questions to ask, and wanted to see if it was true what she had been told. People had said that King Solomon was very wise and rich and things were going well in his country.

The Queen of Sheba came with a very big team of helpers on many camels, carrying special and expensive gifts. One of the gifts was spices from her country. She brought more spices than anyone had ever brought before. She brought gold and precious stones as well.

King Solomon took time to talk with her and surprised her by being able to answer all her hard questions wisely. She found out that King Solomon and the success of his country was even more amazing than she thought it would be, from all that she had heard. King Solomon also gave gifts to her and offered her anything she wanted. She returned to her land a happy queen with a glad heart and her questions answered.

King Solomon became one of the most magnificent kings there ever was. He was dressed in costly and fancy clothes. Gold and silver were abundant in the city of Jerusalem. His throne was covered in gold. He had thousands of stalls for his horses and chariots. Everyone knew it was because he was following in God's ways like his father King David had taught him, and because he was listening to God's words in his heart and mind. He couldn't have done a thing on his own, and would have made a mess of things if he had tried in his own strength and knowledge to make things in the country better.

It was all God's doing—to make him successful and to let there be peace in the land, to cause the other countries around to be friendly or to not cause them trouble. And anything he said that was good and right and helpful was all because of God's gift of wisdom that was given to him.

Each one doing a job for Me needs to have wisdom, and one just needs to pray to receive it and to listen to what I tell them in their heart. It's not something that was only for a fancy king, and it doesn't mean that you will be rich and famous just because you are given wisdom from God. But that was what was right for him. If you are wise and doing and saying what I, your Lord, know is best, then you'll also get what is right for you and for your life.

Maybe your job isn't to be a king or to sit on a golden throne, and you can be glad. Do you think King Solomon got to run and play with his children very much, or even with his dad, King David, when he was young? Probably not very much. A king's life requires a lot of work and giving up doing many of the things that most people get to do for fun and relaxation. So you can be glad that you are who you are and where you are. And those who follow and do what My Word says is right, will grow up strong and wise and able to do whatever it is that I have for them to do.

Remember when I, Jesus, came to Earth? I am the King of all Kings, the One Who made the stars and universe, and all that was created on Earth. But was I dressed in royal

robes and walking around with a bag full of gold? No. Remember I said one time that I didn't even have a place to sleep sometimes? It wasn't My job while on Earth to have a palace like kings did, nor to be dressed in fancy clothing. My job was to show God's love, to speak God's Words, and to bring salvation and to give forgiveness and healing to all who asked for it.

So if your job and place on Earth is a humble one, like Mine was, then do it with all your heart and most of all do what pleases God, for that is what will really matter in the end. When you get to heaven you can then receive wonderful rewards and live in a more fancy place than you ever thought of, wearing shiny and good-looking clothes, and helping to ruling as a king and queen—because you didn't give up and you gave your life to love Me and showed others My love.

Do you remember what I told people about King Solomon? I looked at the flowers and told everyone something that was surprising. I said the flowers were more amazing and more wonderfully dressed than he had been! So if you feel you are humble, small, and don't have a lot, well, just be like a pretty flower that looks up to the light of God's love and smiles and makes the world a bit nicer, like flowers do wherever they are placed.

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### **A King's Proclamation**

In the time when King Solomon chose to do things My way things were going real well, but sad to say things didn't stay that way. There was a lot of nonsense and terrible things that the kings who reigned after him did, all because they didn't have My Word in their hearts. As King David said, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." (Psalm 119:11)

That was King David's secret to staying on track, and it's what helped him to choose My way, and choose Godly women to marry. Bathsheba was someone who loved Me and raised their son Solomon in My ways, and King David was faithful to teach him My Word too.

King David also used music as a way to remember My Words and the great things I had done for the people. He even had many harps made out of wood so that the musicians who had the job of singing and praising God would have plenty of instruments to use. King Solomon remembered the things his father taught him, and he also wrote songs when he was a king.

However, towards the end of King Solomon's reign people were starting to get very off track again. There were many new kings after Solomon, and one king after the next didn't following in My ways. They were totally disregarding all that I had said to do, forgetting the miracles that had been done to bring everyone close to God. Instead, they chose to do whatever wrong things I said not to do. Oh dear! It was a very sad and difficult time.

There were prophets and I would give warnings through them to the people, trying to get them to change their ungodly and bad ways of doing things. But people didn't make much of a lasting change, and so the result was a country that was no longer nice like it could have been if the rulers and everyone were following and respecting God. When not only the people were doing the wrong things that those who didn't know My ways were doing, but also the new kings were following in those ungodly ways, it made things real rough.

You can be powerful and in charge of something big and great, but if in your heart there is greed, ugly ideas, stubbornness against God's laws, and hate rather than love for others, you'll never be anything great.

Eventually, everything you try to do will collapse and fail. If you want the things you do on Earth to last and benefit you and others for a long time, and if you want to have your name be listed among the great people that lived—on My list of well-respected people who get wonderful things in return for all you do—you have to build your life with the good things that last.

One of the kings that reigned over the people of Israel was King Asa. He made the right choice to follow in My ways with his whole heart. He realised that it was the best way to have a happy country and to make things go well.

King Asa had heard and read that in times past the people and kings that did what I said to do, had My blessings and help, and those that chose their own way had lots of trouble. He decided he wanted things to go well during his reign.

A prophet called Azariah came to King Asa with a message from Me, telling him that I, the Lord, would be with them and help them if they were on My side. The message also said that it had been a long time since the people had been taught and instructed in God's Words, and they needed to know what I had said and what had been written down for everyone.

Since he was the king he could tell everyone in the country what to do. He didn't worry about whether people would like to stop all their wrong deeds, or if they would still like him if he insisted on obedience to God. King Asa made it a strong rule that while he was king that's what they needed to do. From that time on everyone was to obey My Words. He declared to all that the way to success and prosperity was obedience to Me and My Word.

Everyone agreed and cheered and shouted and blew trumpets promising their loyalty to God. I blessed them as a result and things went well and they prospered. They all had a chance then to make their cities nice and strong, and grow their crops, and take good care of their families.

When there was trouble beginning to stir, King Asa turned to Me for My help, and their country was kept safe and peaceful. I was pleased that King Asa depended on My help and commended him through a message given by the prophet Azariah.

One time a king from another country was trying to cause problems, and decided to build a city that would block travel to Asa's country. King Asa got very worried and rather than just depending on Me to help him, and praying to see what I wanted him to do in that situation, he just asked the king of Syria to help them. Well, they got help and the construction work stopped, but I was rather disappointed. You see, when there is a dangerous or difficult situation for those that love Me, well, maybe you feel scared or worried or bothered and angry. But I get excited about the wonderful opportunity for a miracle to happen. I like to do far-out, amazing things. And when people are following Me and obeying Me, and they run into troubles, it's My pleasure to work for them and bring them victory.

Everyone gets very thrilled then to see the marvellous things happening—things that were thought impossible. But if people don't pray and don't ask for My ever-ready help, then I am somewhat limited to help them. Even though I am the God of all things and have the power to do anything, I don't just push My way around. You who are on Earth get to have free choice of what you want to do and when you want to do it. If you choose to please Me and to obey My instructions then things go well. If you go your own way then things are difficult. But when hard times come and you are in My will doing what I want you to do, then I still want to let you choose what you will do in that situation. If you call for My help, then I'll help you. If you choose to go a different way or forget about praying, then I can't work the super-natural miracles for you. I choose to let you do the calling, the asking and the deciding. If you need My help, I am more than happy to be of assistance, and there is absolutely nothing that is too hard for Me. The more you pray, the more wonderful surprises you will get. You'll never know what great things I can do until you ask.

So, anyway, the king of Syria did help them out for awhile, but just think what cool miracle could have happened if only King Asa had had more faith when that new trouble came and remembered to pray with all His heart for God to help. The Prophet Hanani came to bring a message from Me for King Asa. Since the king was in charge of the whole country the only way for him to be instructed and to learn lessons was for God to speak to him through a messenger. The message told him that I, the Lord, wished that King Asa had depended on Me rather than just another king on Earth, and that God was always on the lookout, watching over those that loved and followed Him, to see who needed miracles and help.

When King Asa chose not to use the full power of heaven by continuing to ask for My help, from then on things weren't so easy. Not only were there more troublemakers who caused them problems, but King Asa also got real sick, and sadly, again, he didn't call out for My healing but chose to trust in doctors only, and found that the sickness just got worse. He learned that it was not only important to obey My words and instructions in order to bring good things in his life and in the country, but when problems came that he needed to pray with all his heart and trust that I was able to do anything to help them.

I, Jesus, hold more power in my hands that you will ever imagine and am just waiting to use it to benefit you in your service to Me and in your time on Earth learning what you need to learn and helping others come to know Me too. I like to see your desperate hearts praying fervently for Me to come and help, and I love to hear your prayers and everything you tell Me. But it's not like you have to try to convince Me and make me want to do miracles, because I very much want to do amazing things for you. I'm happy every time I get the chance! I'm eager to do them. I am ready and willing to work the impossible, and you just need to do the praying. That's your part of the problem-solving, and of course doing whatever I tell you to do to bring about my solutions and miracles.

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### **God Cares for Elijah**

Famines are no fun—they are terrible in fact. As the result of an ungodly king and the people going their own wrong ways and not following what God's Word said, this is what

happened. Maybe if you live in a place where there is plenty of rain or abundant food it's hard to understand why it would make things so very difficult to have no rain fall for a few years. However, without rain, crops don't grow and so people and animals don't have food to eat.

Elijah the prophet received a difficult message to pass on to a king and queen who weren't going God's way. He told them that they would experience the consequences for their wrong doing. The trouble this time was there would not be any rain for quite a while which would cause a famine in the land.

Prophet Elijah was a brave and faithful messenger and told the King and Queen that it would not rain again until God said so, and would only come when Elijah prayed for it to. There was nothing anyone could do to bring the rain. When troubles come and people realise that unless I, the Lord, help them they really are completely helpless, this gets people desperate and back on track again listening to Me and obeying Me.

Even if it would make things hard to not have enough food and water for awhile, the prophet Elijah loved Me and respected Me, and he loved the people too and wanted them to turn their hearts back to Me—the God who made them! If that happened as a result of this rainless lesson time, then it would be worth it, he thought.

The King and the Queen were very unhappy to hear that message, however, and from that day onward for the next three and a half years there was no rain or dew on the land. The ground got very dried out and food was scarce. With no crops growing, food supplies ran low very quickly. However, I took good care of prophet Elijah and others who loved Me and obeyed My Word.

There was a brook called Cherith and I told Elijah to stay there for awhile. He had water then, but what about food? I told some ravens to bring Elijah bread and meat in the morning and in the evening. It really isn't hard for Me to do whatever those who love and serve Me need. If I have to send birds to feed them, I will!

After a while the brook dried up and it was time for him to move on. I told Elijah just where to go and what to do. He was instructed to go to a place called Zarephath, and there to find a woman who would help him. I had prepared her heart to be the one to feed and care for Elijah while he stayed with her. If she obeyed what I and Elijah said to do, then she would see a wonderful miracle take place.

When Elijah showed up at the gate of the city and saw her, he knew she was the one that I, the Lord, had told him about. Elijah was very thirsty and hungry from the long walk in the hot sun and he asked her for some water and some bread. She brought him water, but said she had no food at all to give him. The woman explained that she was finding wood to make a little fire and bake her very last bit of flour into a little loaf for her son and herself to eat.

I told Elijah to tell this woman that if she baked that little bit of bread and gave it to him first, sharing with Elijah her last bit of food rather than eating it together with her son, then for the rest of the time of famine she would always have enough flour and oil to make bread. The containers would simply never get empty!



The woman realized that this man talking with her was a prophet of God and she wanted to obey. So with a spark of faith she took the tiny bit of oil and handful of flour and made her last little bit of bread and gave it to the prophet. The woman and her son were so very hungry, but for some reason they felt glad to have given to this man who spoke My Words. Giving to God's prophet was like giving to God! She believed the words of the prophet and was ready and expecting the miracle!

Instead of just feeling sad and hungry, the woman felt a sense of excitement as she went back to the place where she had just baked every last crumb and drop of food. Her and her son's eyes were wide with surprise as they saw that the container of flour and the jar of oil were not empty after all! How could that be? I know how to do the physically impossible! And so it was that day-by-day, as they continued to cook and eat, and as the woman fed Elijah each day as well, that there was always something to cook with. Every day they all had food to eat! —Miraculous and marvellous food.

I knew what was going on in each one's lives and I knew who was making the right choices to put Me first. I took good care of those that loved Me, and that were helping My messengers.

Later on, another miracle took place that showed the woman just how powerful prayer is and that I can do anything. Her son got very sick and to her great shock and sorrow, he died! She was holding her son and crying and felt so very sad. She went to prophet Elijah expressing her distress. Elijah carried the boy to his room and placed him on his own bed. He prayed with all his heart for Me to restore him to good health and give him his life back again.

The boy then opened his eyes and was alive and well! Elijah brought him to his mother and she was so glad! She realised more than ever that Elijah spoke My Words and was a faithful prophet. The woman also felt My special love and care for her and her son.

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### **Fire and Water**

The Word of the Lord came to Elijah telling him that it was time for the refreshing rain, for cleansing of the sins of the people, for healing of hearts, and for Me, the Lord, to demonstrate His power. It was a time for the famine to end and for there to be an amazing display of My power and reality.

As Elijah walked to find the king he first met Obadiah who was searching for any bits of grass that could be found growing, to bring back and feed the king's horses and animals. He was a good man that loved and respected Me, even though he had to work for a very ungodly man—the king. Obadiah was very surprised to see Elijah, as he hadn't been around for quite awhile and was in hiding from the king.

With courage Elijah told Obadiah to go and tell the king that he was there and wanted to talk with him. At first Obadiah didn't know about doing that. The king was very upset about the famine and the fact that Elijah told him the truth and gave him correction. Obadiah wondered if perhaps by the time the king came to see him, that Elijah would be off on another mission and would be hard to find again, and the king would be upset that he didn't

get to see him after all. Elijah promised Obadiah that he wouldn't leave but would wait there and talk with the king.

When the king came to see Elijah he said, "Are you the one who has been causing us all this trouble?"

Elijah responded that he wasn't. "It is you who has been," he said to the king. It was the ungodly king and queen who were really the cause of many problems! Their waywardness and choices to do things opposite to what God had said to do is what actually brought on the famine as a lesson.

I loved everyone and My heart was so sad that people were turning away from Me and doing things that were wrong and hurtful. I tried anything I could to get their attention and to get them to make a change for the better. Some of the lessons were real tough, as the people wouldn't eagerly and readily listen to Me, so it took some difficult things to get them to stop and change.

Elijah told the king to call all the people of the country, as well as for the king and his ungodly team who were not following God's ways, to gather on Mt. Carmel. Elijah would meet them there and they would hear what he had to say.

Everyone, including the king, was eager for the rain to come and did whatever prophet Elijah said to do, and listened to what he had to say. He asked the people why they weren't believing in and serving God with all their hearts. No one knew what to say. Then he told them that God was going to do something to demonstrate His power, and so they could all know for sure who was in charge and who they should be worshiping and praying to and respecting.

"Get me four barrels of water," he said, while building a stone altar for prayer. He dug a trench all around it and placed wood on the altar. Getting water for him wasn't as easy as turning on a tap! They were on a mountain after a long time of no rain falling, so it took some time.

Elijah told them to pour it on top of the altar and get the wood, the stones, the dirt and everything very wet! When they poured the four barrels all over altar it was too wet for anyone who might have tried to light the wood to make a fire. But it was not wet enough for Elijah!

"Do it again—and again!" Twice more the four barrels were filled and poured out until everything was soaking wet and the trench all around the altar was filled with water.

Why was he doing this? You see, he wanted to make it very, very clear to everyone just how amazing and powerful I am. He didn't just want Me to do an amazing miracle, he wanted it to be something that was normally completely impossible, so that everyone would respect and choose to worship the God who loved them and made them, and get to see in a powerful way just how real I am.

Elijah had told everyone that they would see who the true God was when He answered Elijah's prayer with a fiery show of power and lit the wood of the altar on fire without Elijah doing anything else but praying! The people were listening and watching and very interested to see just what was going to happen.

The King's and Queen's ungodly men and false prophets tried to make fire come out of the sky to show everyone that the false gods they believed in existed and would come to help them. Elijah told them to build an altar and give it a try first. So they did, and all day they were yelling and calling out to some made-up false god of their ugly imagination to bring down fire. It looked so very silly to Elijah. Of course nothing was going to happen. Elijah let them just go on and on until they were tired of trying. He joked with them that the reason no fire was being sent to them was because their false spiritual god was sleeping so they need to yell louder to wake him up, or that he was on a journey, or perhaps busy.

At last towards the end of the day it was time for everyone to come near to Elijah and watch while he offered a simple yet sincere and powerful prayer. He called for Me, the Lord of all, to show to everyone that I am the true God, Who am all-powerful and able to answer the prayers of those that believe in Me and followed Me with all their hearts.

A short prayer is all that it took. I wasn't deaf or sleeping. I had been eagerly waiting for this special moment when I could remind everyone in a powerful way that I am to be loved, obeyed and worshiped. As soon as the prophet Elijah prayed, I, the true God, sent fire! And it was no ordinary fire either. The fact that everything was very wet on the altar was no hindrance. My special fire instantly burned not only the wood and all that was on the altar, but the stones, the dirt and the water in the trench around the altar as well. All of it was completely burned up. Poof! Now that was a clear and powerful answer!

All the people were in awe and shocked and a bit afraid too! They felt they had better get things right in their hearts and lives. They all knelt down on the ground, bowing their heads low proclaiming, "The Lord is God! The Lord is God!"

With people's hearts turned towards God it was now time for the next miracle—for rain to fall on the land once again. Elijah told the king to go home and eat and drink because plenty of rain was on its way. So the king got in his chariot and began to ride home and tell the queen all that had just happened.

Meanwhile on Mt. Carmel prophet Elijah knelt down to pray desperately for God to now send the rain. After praying he asked his servant to look and see if there were any clouds forming, but there was nothing yet, so he knelt to pray a second time. The servant was sent again to look for any signs of clouds. However, there wasn't even a hint of a cloud yet. Seven times Elijah prayed, and at last on the seventh time the servant said that there was a tiny little cloud that looked about as big as his hand when he held it up to the sky.

That was it! Elijah knew it would rain a whole lot! He then ran and ran, and with amazing speed he caught up to the king's horse chariot and even went beyond it! Elijah made it to the entrance of the city before the king got there! And the rain came pouring down! What an amazing day that had been!

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## Heavenly Food and Encouragement

Elijah had obeyed what God told him to do, but it wasn't easy and the ungodly king and queen were upset with him. He was helping the people in the country to follow God's Word and counsel, so now it was harder for the king and queen to continue to do their own wrong things and they wished they could stop Elijah.

If God was the one that everyone respected the most, then the people wouldn't think well of the ungodly king and queen. So, once again Elijah needed to go somewhere that those who didn't like him telling them the truth couldn't find him and try to stop him.

Elijah found a quiet place and rested under a juniper tree. He was feeling rather discouraged and like he was one of the only ones left in the land that loved Me with all of his heart and mind. He felt if people weren't going to eagerly change, and if My prophets and followers were going to be in the minority, and have the ungodly people making it hard for them, then he didn't know if he wanted to keep on doing his job as My prophet. He just wanted to live in a place where everyone loved and obeyed Me and did what was right and good.

Elijah fell asleep under a juniper tree, until he felt someone waking him up. He was pleasantly surprised when he saw that it was an angel who was there to encourage him and feed him. There was a little fire with coals and on it was some bread that was freshly cooked and delicious. The angel told Elijah to wake up and eat the heavenly bread and to drink some water that he offered him as well.

Prophet Elijah ate and drank and felt much better. He lied down and went back to sleep, until the angel woke him up again with more special bread and water. He told Elijah that he needed that nourishment, as the next part of the journey would be long and tiring. Elijah was very glad to eat Heaven's special and empowering-food and water.

When it was time to keep travelling, Elijah felt so much energy and was strengthened from the food the angel gave to him. He felt so strong that he was able to travel and not feel like he needed to eat for the next 40 days! Imagine that! He was amazed!

The rain had come and crops would be able to grow again, but since it just rained for the first time shortly before there probably wasn't a whole lot of food around yet, as it still needed to grow. So this was a great solution—to be fed from the bread of Heaven by an angel. Elijah was empowered and good to go for a long time. At last after travelling for several weeks he reached Mt. Horeb and found a good cave to call his home for a little while, while talking with Me and getting his new instructions.

There was much that could be done and should be done, and I had many plans for Elijah. He wasn't the last one left that still believed in My Word and followed in My ways—like he had felt he was, but there were many others. Every one of God's servants—like Elijah the prophet—are very valuable to Me and there are special jobs I need each one to do. For Elijah, his primary job was to receive the Words of God in prophecy and to pass them on.

When Elijah was in this cave I, the Lord, spoke with him and asked, “What are you doing here?”

Elijah hadn't been too eager to continue on with his job as a prophet. He loved Me so much and it bothered him very much to see that not everyone around felt the same way, and he knew that it hurt Me, too. He wanted everyone to love and please God. But he'd felt it wasn't safe to keep trying to do his job, and it seemed it wasn't making much of a difference anyway.

Have you ever very much wanted to do something, and you are eager to do it, but then when you try and things don't work out like you wanted it to and no one is helping to make it possible, you just feel like quitting?

Well, I wasn't ready for Elijah to give up yet. He had done a great job and there was lots more that needed to be done. My love and patience isn't like what people have on Earth. I wanted to keep giving everyone a chance to come to know Me, and I wanted to keep sending My messengers around to help turn hearts and minds back to Me. I so much wanted to be able to make things in the country nice again, but that would only happen when people chose God's way.

Elijah listened to what I had to say to him there in the cave, and received his new instructions. He decided he wouldn't give up, but keep on going doing whatever I needed him to do—whether it seemed to make a big difference or not. If it was what I asked him to do, he'd do it!

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### **The Boys Who Were Kings**

If you think you aren't so big and important, I want you to know that what goes on inside your heart is what makes the biggest difference.

Those who look around them to see what's going on in the world and who try to copy what everyone else is doing, instead of getting their instructions from God, are going to have a crash landing. Things won't work out well at all. It's like a fancy building made of cards. Have you ever seen a house of cards? Even if it's made of shiny gold-coated cards that are stacked up in an impressive design, it's not going to stay standing when a strong wind blows.

Trying to build your life with the materials of this world and what things have come into the world through sin—starting from the Garden of Eden until now—is going to leave you in a heap of trouble. If you leave aside all that seems to be considered worthwhile and as good as “gold” now in the world—the things people consider worth a lot—and you build with God's everlasting and invisible building materials, there's nothing in this world that can ruin your life or cause your efforts to be worthless.

Do people think that it's the best thing to have everyone think well of them, or to have the best car in town, or to be the richest, or to have the nicest clothing? People who are tricked

into thinking that those things are tops, are like those who are collecting shiny gold covered paper cards to make a house or a life with.

Those who instead grab the paper of the Bible and ask Me, to change it into invisible building materials of the gold of faith, obedience, love for others, doing good for others, and telling people about God's love will have good and lasting results forever.

Those who act in humility and are hard-working as servants of Heaven bringing a bit of God's love and peace to those they meet on Earth will find out something wonderful! When they get to the end of their life and come to meet Me, Jesus, I will show them that they built their lives with the best materials ever!

All the good that they did will be rewarded to them again and again. Their name will be listed for all to see for all eternity as someone who made a positive difference for Me. Will you be one of those people? I hope so, as I'm so eager to reward you in all the best ways, more than you can even imagine.

So, back to our story about those very young kings.

There were two good kings that made a positive difference, and as amazing as it sounds, they were each crowned as the king when they were children! One boy was seven years old, and his name was Joash. He was cared for and taught God's ways by a good priest named Jehoiada.

When Joash was made king everyone was glad and they hoped he would make things better for them. He loved and followed My ways, and Jehoiada helped to instruct him and gave him wise and Godly advice. Young King Joash was wise because he listened to and obeyed what My Word said to do, and did the good things that Jehoiada suggested.

One time King Joash had a plan to fix up the temple again, as it was getting run down. So a new idea was tried to raise the money needed to do the job. Joash and Jehoiada set up a wooden chest with a hole in it. People were encouraged to come and drop coins in it. It was something new and interesting, and people were glad to help. The chest was filled many times with coins and emptied into bags. The money was used for fixing things up again.

Maybe he didn't have a lot of riches and gold and he was just a young person at that time, but because he wanted to please Me and do something that would help turn people's hearts and minds back to God, then a good idea came to him, and it worked! Just one little coin at a time given for the project is all it took, until eventually it added up to be enough. Workmen were given money to work, and the materials they needed to fix the temple were bought.

That happens today to those trying to do something for Me. I might give an idea of a project to someone, something good that they can do to help others but they might feel they can't do it, because they don't have the money needed. But all it takes is having the determination to get the project done, and praying for the supply of what is needed to do it.

I can then show them what to do that will make it all possible, and help people want to give to them. You don't have to have all the money you will need to do what I say to do, right when you start. If you wait for that you may never get started. Just step out by faith and do what I tell you to do and keep praying and asking and soon, bit by bit, you'll have what is needed. If it's something that I want you to do, I'll help you do it, and you don't have to

worry.

Many years later there was another boy who was crowned king, and his name was Josiah. He was eight years old. After several years he instructed teams of people to fix up the temple and its surrounding buildings, as well as make more wooden harps as King David had told people to make when he was king as well.

One day there was a discovery made when work was being done to fix up the temple. One of the books that Moses had written that told of the Laws that they were to follow was found by Hilkiah the priest. He gave it to Shaphan the scribe who knew how to read and write.

Shaphan came to tell the king the progress and how things were going on the temple project, and told the king about the book that was found. Shaphan read the book to King Josiah, as he wanted to hear it right away. When King Josiah heard what the book of the Law said, and he realised how disobedient everyone in his country had been, and how most people weren't following in God's ways, he was determined to change things. He was desperate to get things right with God again, and was enthusiastic, and he wholeheartedly got busy.

Josiah realised that the troubles they were having was a result of people not doing what that book of God's Words given to Moses said. King Josiah knew that if they wanted God's blessings and for things to get better, the first step was to stop everyone from going their own ways, and to turn their hearts back to loving and respecting God.

King Josiah called a meeting and had people listen while the book was read to them. He then expected a change in the whole country. He wanted each one to begin right away doing just what it said to do. It didn't matter to him if those living in the area of land were from other nationalities. King Josiah travelled around and got everyone making the steps towards obedience. He said whoever was living in the land that was given to the Israelites needed to serve and worship God.

When it was time for the Passover, the time when they used to have a special dinner to celebrate God's care and deliverance during their time in Egypt hundreds of years before, King Josiah declared that everyone should have that special meal and time of prayer, just like they were meant to do. It was their way of remembering My love, care and power to help those who obey Me.

There was a prophetess called Huldah, and messengers of the king, including Hilkiah the priest and Shaphan the scribe, went to her to receive a prophecy for the king. She spoke My Words for them to pass on to King Josiah. The message confirmed that all that was written in that book of God's Words would come to pass. Those that hadn't and wouldn't follow and obey My Words would have more troubles. However, because the king was eager to instantly obey Me and was desperate for My forgiveness and was repentant, then I would bless and keep him while he ruled as king.

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### **Hezekiah's Healing**

An announcement was made throughout the country that King Hezekiah ruled over. People were invited to a special get-together with the king! It would be the best festival they'd ever

attended. It wasn't for a time of partying and doing whatever people wanted. There was a reason for this meeting. Many chose not to come, but many did come, and when the day arrived for the meetings and ceremonies to begin there was quite a big crowd.

King Hezekiah knew what was written from Me in the books of Moses and wanted to do what My Word said to do. During this time together he talked with the people and he spoke from his heart in a way that made everyone want to listen to what he had to say. He told them how much he wanted everyone in his country to believe in Me and follow in My ways, and how important it was that they do so. He told them what My Word said, so they would know what to do and make the needed changes.

The king then prayed for the people, and the priests offered prayers to God for forgiveness for everyone. People were sorry for their waywardness and confessed that they needed My help and forgiveness.

It felt so good to get their hearts clean and to be forgiven. They had a new start to begin once again going in My way. The meetings and prayers and time of instruction in God's Words was meant to be for one week only. But everyone wanted to keep going. They were getting to know how much I loved and cared about them. They realized that it made a difference to Me what they did or didn't do. I loved them and wanted to be close to them.

Everyone felt My love and spirit so close alive, and they just didn't want to stop! So they all decided to have another week of this special time in fellowship and communion with God and each other. They were having great times of praise and singing using loud musical instruments. It was the best time of their life. The people felt so glad, rejoicing in My wonderful love and power!

King Hezekiah wanted there to always be music and singing praises to God while he was king. It wasn't just at this time together when they sang and played instruments. He commissioned those who served Me in the temple to sing songs of praise with instruments like cymbals and harps. He wanted them to sing the psalms of King David and also of Asaph who wrote many psalms as well, and he had the words of those psalms and the skill of making music taught to others.

When it was time to go home, the people didn't just go back to their old ways of doing things, forgetting what they'd learned and the decisions that they made. Instead, they went throughout the country telling everyone else to follow in My ways and help to make a positive change all throughout the land. After they had done that, they then returned to their houses.

Because King Hezekiah led everyone in doing things God's way, things went well in the land and they prospered.

One time, he got a painful sore and was very sick. When he heard that he would soon die from it he chose to pray with all his heart, crying out for the miracle of healing. Prophet Isaiah had just been talking with him and was leaving the property when God told him to stop and go back to the king and tell him the good news. Since King Hezekiah's reaction was to pray



and believe that God could heal him, God chose to do that miracle. Prophet Isaiah said to the king that God saw his tears and heard his prayer and would heal him!

King Hezekiah wanted to have some encouragement that it was indeed going to happen, as just a short while before he was told he would never recover. God gave the king the choice of what sign he wanted to have, to prove that it was true, that he would be healed. Did he want the shadow on the sundial to move forwards or backwards 10 degrees?

The shadow always goes forward each day on this olden day clock—the sundial. Of course if God made it jump in one second to the place on the sundial that it normally took the shadow much longer to be at, that would be quite amazing. But Hezekiah had lots of faith and asked for something that would seem far more impossible. He said he wanted the shadow to go backwards, to back up to where it was earlier! And God did it, much to the amazement of everyone!

When people are asking Me, Jesus, about their health problems, I can give personalized instructions to them. Sometimes I will just heal them instantaneously, without them needing to take any action at all in the physical. But more often than not, as was the case with King Hezekiah, as you'll find out, I show them or those helping them, what they can do to remedy the problem. This shows them that I, the Lord of the whole Earth, haven't left people without solutions while they live in a world filled with the effects of the curse of sin and all the ills that befall the world's inhabitants. Built into the natural world and all that I created, there are aids for good health.

After the promise of healing was granted to King Hezekiah, prophet Isaiah received the specific instructions from Heaven, for what natural remedy would be appropriate at that time for his very painful sore, a boil that was not healing. Isaiah immediately told the king what was to be done to bring healing, and without hesitation it was done. A lump of figs was placed on the boil, and the healing properties that were released at that time from those figs, were just what was needed.

What if the king had not prayed for healing, asking Me for his life to be extended? Do you think healing and a lengthening of the years of his life would have miraculously been given to him, even if he grabbed the best and biggest lump of figs around? It's not the food, the water, or the natural health properties available in the world that have the magic touch to restore physical health in themselves alone, but in the God that made them and grants the healing to those that ask Him.

Some things are made as part of the natural course of a person's body—scrapes and scratches heal, and proper health care of the needs of a body make it function well, for example. But when something isn't working right, and it's time for some extra intervention, then asking Me, Jesus, for your healing, and following through on what action is best to take to gain that healing, is a winning combination.

King Hezekiah did recover, just as I promised, and lived for another 15 years.

King Hezekiah chose to believe and obey God. Do you? A life built on faith in Me and in My Words, and faith put into action by doing what you know I want you to do is going to make your life a strong and lasting one. What does that mean?

Does it mean that everyone on Earth will like you and honour you and bring you gifts and always do whatever you tell them to do, and no one will ever do things that hurt or trouble you? Is that the kind of strong life I'm promising to those who follow Me and live for Me? No, that's not. But you can be strong in faith and believe in the promises I said in My word, and you will have the courage and the bravery to face any situation.

You can be strong no matter how hard something is, and do your best and not give up. You can be strong to show love and compassion to others, even those that try to do you wrong. You can be strong and forgive others and not let yourself get too down about things or let anger ruin your joy. You can be strong to endure through hard times and accidents and sickness claiming My healing power for you and others and see the positive results and feel your faith strengthened as well.

## Story Time with Jesus

### Bible Stories

#### Chapters 62-74

- 62-Elisha is Called
- 63-A Heavenly Ride on a Fiery Chariot
- 64-Amazing Water and Oil
- 65-Elisha's Room, and a Special Child
- 66-Food for Hungry Men
- 67-Humility and Healing
- 68-The Axe that Floated
- 69-The Fruit
- 70-Abundance and Obedience
- 71-Amos, Joel, and Hosea
- 72-Jonah's Trip
- 73-Warnings and Forgiveness
- 74-Obadiah and Micah

#### Elisha is Called

When Elijah was staying in the cave on Mount Horeb he learned something interesting from his time talking with Me. I showed him that the most important thing that he, as God's prophet, could do, was to stop and listen to the "still small voice" of My spirit.

Elijah had been used by Me to do some pretty amazing things—like calling down fire from heaven, and then praying down the rain that ended the time of famine. But after all that was done he felt disappointed and was discouraged. All that dramatic display hadn't made him a hero, and here he was hiding out in a cave wondering what he was supposed to do next.

The king and the queen and many of the people in the country didn't stop over-night and start to believe and follow in God's ways. There was still lots of work to be done to lead people in the right ways. People needed to hear what My Word said to do, and they needed time to learn that loving and respecting Me most of all would bring the best results. I needed

Elijah to be My servant and go here and go there and do whatever needed to be done to continue to bring people back close to Me.

I told Elijah to stand at a certain place on the mountain, and so he did. He saw then a dramatic display of My Spirit passing by. There was a great wind, so strong it cracked mountain rocks! Then there was an earthquake, and after that there was fire. But My voice wasn't heard in the wind or the earthquake or the fire. It wasn't until I made everything quiet again that Elijah heard My voice speaking very softly and in a peaceful way.

Everyone likes to be able to do wonderful and amazing things for Me, Jesus, and to be able to call down fire from heaven to shock everyone might feel pretty cool! But there was more to being a prophet than that, and not everything was going to be wild and exciting. Most of the time those serving Me on Earth aren't going to have so much excitement and far out thrills and see a tremendous impact on many others as they are choosing day-by-day to listen to My voice and follow in My footsteps.

The best and most important job that anyone who wants to be My helper and follower is to take the time to stop and listen. I'm not usually going to boom down from Heaven with big and loud instructions, but rather I'll speak to you gently and in a soft voice right to your heart.

Do you know why you can't hear from Me out loud most of the time? Well, it takes faith to hear My voice in prophecy, and when you are quiet and listening then I can talk to you. If I spoke out loud all the time to you, you might miss something, as you wouldn't get as quiet and focused to hear My "still small voice" as Elijah did.

Getting quiet before Me shows that you have faith that I am there and will speak to you. This faith pleases Me and is what helps you to grow strong in spirit as well. Faith brings on My blessings.

So anyway, Elijah was listening to the softly spoken voice of My Spirit. He talked with Me about the way he was feeling, and I encouraged him and gave him a new mission or job to do. He wasn't meant to just stick around in the cave for the next long while. Elijah chose to obey and to get going doing what I had asked him.

One of his jobs would be to go and anoint two new men to be kings for two of the countries in that area—Syria and Israel. He also had one more commission, and it was one that would be a real help and encouragement to him. He would have a friend and companion to work together with. Elijah then wouldn't feel so alone in doing his big job. He was to call a man named Elisha to come and travel with him, and learn from him about being a prophet. Elisha would be his helper then, as well as the next prophet after Elijah was to be taken to Heaven.

Prophet Elijah was encouraged and his heart was strengthened after his time talking with God, and he was ready to get going on his next job. He travelled and anointed the new kings, and then found Elisha.

Elisha was in a field having a very tough time. He was trying to plough the field to plant crops, now that rain was falling normally again. The ground was still quite hardened and the oxen

weren't strong either after so long of not having much to eat. Rather than just a team of two or four oxen to work the plough, Elisha had 24 yoked and working.

He wasn't afraid to do some good old hard work, and he had faith that as he worked hard on the dry ground, that eventually the crops would grow. Elisha also knew and loved God, so he was just the kind of man who was needed to help Elijah, and to be a prophet too. Being a prophet and helping the country to get closer to Me would in some ways be like that field he was working on ploughing.

Sometimes people's hearts are hard and they are not so eager to hear what you have to say to them, even if what you are saying is good for them—just like the ground was hard to plough. And maybe you feel weak or like you aren't in top condition or don't have all the things you need either—just like the oxen who were being used for the job weren't the best in the world, but it was the best Elisha could do. I can still use you to do the best job you can, and eventually good will come from your efforts.

Isn't it wonderful when you are going through a difficult time, and at first you think it will go on and on, but then something new happens and you are surprised? Something fun comes your way, and the troubles end? Well, Elisha was faithfully working hard and not giving up, no matter how hard it was. He had faith and courage.

Then surprisingly, one day, without advance notice, he got a new and important job—something he would much rather do! He was going to get to not only hear God's Words, but live and work together with a prophet of God. It seemed too good to be true! He was eager and excited to do it.

Elijah called him by throwing his mantle (cloak) over Elisha shoulders, and then Elijah kept on walking while Elisha thought about it. He knew what it meant, but it didn't take long to choose. He wanted to go with Elijah and be his helper and learn about hearing My voice. Elisha ran to Elijah and told him that he would do the job.

It would mean saying goodbye to all his loved ones and relatives there, and moving out of his house, and to just live trusting Me to supply all that he needed. He wouldn't be a flashy and amazing person, but just a servant of God's prophet for years. He would need to be humble and do the little jobs to be a help.

Elisha told Elijah that he just wanted to say goodbye to his parents and tell them where he was going, and then he would come right after that. He was very quick to drop everything when I had a new job for him.

Elisha cooked a farewell dinner for his parents and their team, and then was off on his new commission, following and helping, Elijah and learning to be God's prophet too.

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### **A Heavenly Ride on a Fiery Chariot**

After several years of travelling and working together, it was time for Elijah and Elisha to part ways. Elijah was to go on to be with Me in Heaven and to receive his reward for a job well

done, and Elisha was to continue on as a prophet of God in Elijah's place. He had received much training and was now ready to take over and do the job he had been called for.

As Elijah and Elisha walked together to various places for the last time, they met up with others who were in training to hear from God as prophets—the “sons of the prophets.” These young men knew also that Elijah wasn't going to be around for too much longer and mentioned it to Elisha.

“Did you know that Elijah is going to be taken from you today?” they said.

“Yes, I know!” he responded, sadly. He didn't need to be reminded as it was hard enough thinking about how he'd miss Elijah, and then would also have to take on the big job as God's prophet, alone. He wasn't alone, of course, and I would give him all the help that he needed!

Elisha wanted to spend every last second with Elijah, and certainly didn't want to miss seeing the event when I took him up to be with Him. When Elijah would suggest to Elisha that he part ways and leave him alone, Elisha said he wanted to stay with him right up until the end. So they travelled on until they reached the River Jordan.

They were meant to cross over, but without a boat or bridge they needed a miracle to do it. I told Elijah what to do. He took his coat or mantel as it was called and hit the water with it. Immediately the water parted and there was a dry path through it to the other side. Problem solved! When they were across, the water returned its normal flow again.

They spent time walking and talking, and Elijah asked Elisha if he had any last requests before he was gone, something he could do for him, or give him. Well, Elisha had his mind on the job and responsibility that was about to be his, and he knew that Elijah could pray and ask Me for anything—and if it was good for him and would be good for others, it would be answered.

What did he most need, as a prophet? Did he ask for a new set of clothes, or a house to live in, or perhaps a bag of gold coins to get all the food and things he'd need and not have to worry about how I would provide for him? Or perhaps a good wilderness survival kit with first aid supplies and water purification tablets and a tent, for all his travels? Would those have been the biggest help?

After all those years of seeing God provide for them all that they needed, he knew he would be taken care of. All he really needed was the Spirit and power of God to do the job. That would be something that no one on Earth could ever give him. But he didn't just want a bit of power from Heaven—he asked for double the amount that Elijah had! He had a tough job ahead of him, helping people in a country who were often choosing to go the wrong way, and prophets of God weren't always listened to and respected.

Elijah thought and prayed a minute and said, “If you see me when I am taken from you, then you'll get your request granted. But if not, then you won't get that.”

More than ever Elisha was determined to stick real close and continue talking and learning all that he could from Elijah and hear whatever it was that God wanted to pass on to him. Others wished they could have been there with Elijah too, but they were at the other side of

the Jordan river, in Jericho, trying to peer over and see all that they could of Elijah and Elisha. They were waiting for their return.

All of a sudden, when they were in the middle of talking, a chariot of fire with fiery horses pulling it comes swiftly riding right where they are, galloping between them, separating them! Next, Elijah is taken up to Heaven in a whirlwind! That was one amazing way to catch a ride up to Heaven! How'd you like to go for a ride on a flying, bright and powerful chariot, and fly with the wind? Pretty wild!

When Elijah disappeared, his earthly garment, his mantel, fell down to where Elisha was. He knew that Elijah was gone, and it was at first real hard for him. But he had a job to do, and couldn't just sit around feeling sad and missing his friend and companion, and the one who had told him My Words. Elisha then picked up the mantel of Elijah bravely, and with My power now on him in a wonderful way, he began his mission as the new prophet, taking over where prophet Elijah left off.

The first challenge would be crossing over the Jordan River again. As he held the old prophet's garment, he called out loudly for My help, and as the first sign that My Spirit was with him, the first miracle of his life as a prophet happened!

"Where is the God of Elijah!" Elisha bellowed out with all his heart, while striking the river with Elijah's mantel.

Right away the river parted, and once again he was able to cross over it, to meet the sons of the prophet who were eagerly waiting to find out what was going on with Elijah.

It's not that the piece of clothing had something special in it, but it was necessary for Elisha to get back over the river in a safe way, and it was what his faith needed right then—a miracle sign to give him the faith he needed to start his new job. Also, Elijah's followers, who were to then listen to and learn from Elisha, wanted and needed some sign of confirmation that God's Spirit was now with Elisha. If someone had just picked up the nearest coat, or even Elijah's coat, and began hitting the water with it, nothing would have happened, besides the coat getting very wet. It wasn't "the clothes that made the man." It was not the mantel that was special and made Elisha able to then be a prophet that could make miracles happen. No. It was all God's love and will and His help and ability coming to help the helpless!

Prophets knew more than ever that anything that worked out well, was all a work of God's Spirit. They depended on My help and My provision and knew they could do nothing without Me. If they would have thought they were anything great on their own, without My Spirit, they would have truly been a nothing then! As long as they prayed desperately for My help, and as long as they found out what My will and plan was and then obeyed Me, then the miracles and the Words from heaven were there for them, and made their ministry possible.

When the sons of the prophets saw Elisha coming towards them they could tell something was different. They exclaimed how it seemed the same power and Spirit of God that was on Elijah was also was on Elisha! They bowed down to the real presence of My Spirit being there.

It was real hard for them to understand however, that Elijah was completely gone! That had never happened before. Whenever people left this world, only their spirit was taken, while their body remained and was buried. It was a way to remember those that had lived and what they had done.

The young men begged Elisha to send them around to look carefully all over the area to see if somehow he had fallen off that chariot, while only his spirit went to be with God above. Elisha told them it would be a waste of time! He had gone on to his reward in a new way—all the way up. They wouldn't find him down on Earth if they looked. However, it seemed it was so important to them to at least get to look and see, just in case, so at last Elisha let them go look around.

When they came back they confirmed what Elisha had told them all along—I had taken Elijah, in his complete form, up to be with Me. Nothing of him remained to be seen on Earth.

People were glad to have Elisha there with them, and could feel My encouragement and love, and hear My Words through Elisha now.

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### **Amazing Water and Oil**

Some of people's biggest needs were for things like food, water, and money too. The prophet Elisha was there to bring God's power into their lives. He helped to teach new prophets how to hear from Me, and he told people the Words I told him too. Also, he was there to bring the My solutions to practical everyday life problems and needs. He didn't just sit around, but got involved and prayed down miracles to make people's lives better—especially those that loved and wanted to obey Me, their Lord.

The city of Jericho had a problem. There was bad water coming to the city, and causing the plants to not grow well, and making things real unpleasant. It wasn't good to drink, and wasn't suitable for animals either. Water is a real important commodity, and if you don't have good water in the place you live, it can be nearly impossible to live and get the things you need to survive.

God's word is like water, and just as essential to happy living. My words give inspiration, faith and joy, as well as help you in our everyday life to know the best ways to do things. Just like there wasn't a good water supply in Jericho, the people were in need of My refreshing and life-giving words. People chose the right solution—to go to the prophet who would bring My help and Words to them as well.

The things I say to do can be simple or odd at times, but those who obey and follow My instructions are blessed with the results.

“Bring me a new jar, and put salt in it,” Elisha instructed.

He took the jar of salt to the source of the water, where the spring was, and poured the salt in. He told them what God said, “I have healed these waters!”



From that moment on, the water springing out was fresh and clean and good to drink! It showed people how I, the Lord, cared about their everyday needs, and that when they pray for solutions and listen to My Words, I can and will make things better!

Another time where a solution was needed was for one of the wives of the men who were learning from Elisha how to listen to and obey God's words—one of the "Sons of the prophets." Well, he had passed away and his wife and children were in need of a miracle. The man had owed money to someone, but since he was no longer around he could not pay it back.

Rather than forgiving the debt, the greedy person came to the wife and said she had to give him the money instead—or else there would be trouble, and he'd make her sons have to work hard to pay back the debt. She was so poor that all she and her children had left in the house was a jar of oil! She went to Elisha, who knew her late husband, and asked for his advice.

When Elisha found out the only thing that she had in her house—the small amount of oil—he prayed and told her what to do.

"Have your sons collect many jars and pots from the neighbours around, and go into your house and shut the door. Then start to pour your little jar of oil to fill up all the jars and pots."

These were the instructions passed on to her. It seemed like a very interesting thing to do, but she was willing to obey whatever was told her if it brought the miracle that she needed. It was her faith and obedience that brought God's amazing power into her life and gave the solutions in what seemed like an impossible situation.

She poured and poured and kept on pouring, filling every container that her sons had collected.

"Get me another jug please," she called out.

"That was the last one, mother, they are all filled!" her sons told her. There were so many jars and pots of oil filled using only one small little jar that had a bit of oil left in it.

The amazed woman went back to the prophet to receive her next instruction. She wanted to do just what I, her Lord and God had in mind.

"Sell the oil now, and use the money to pay back the debt, and keep the rest of the money for your family to live on," Elisha told her.

She believed in God and in His prophet, and did whatever God said to do—no matter how new or amazing it seemed. It changed her situation from a sad and difficult one, to having the joy of seeing a supernatural miracle happen, as well as having all that she and her children needed.

What if she had just cried and thought there was no solution, rather than asking for My advice from the prophet? Or what if she hadn't obeyed all that he said to do, or gone back to get the rest of the instructions? She wouldn't have experienced the miracle and abundant

supply. Yet, because she had faith, she went to the right person for help—to Me, through the voice of His prophet—and she was brave enough and willing to do whatever I asked her to do.

I see what you have and what you can do and will only ask you to do things that I know you can, to show that you are willing to listen and obey. When I see that someone is ready and eager to follow what I tell them to do, then that brings on My blessings. It pleases Me! I didn't say for her to do something that was impossible, but to do something that allowed Me to do the impossible for her.

Pray, obey, and then watch Me, Jesus, do the miracles for you—no matter what situation you are in. I love to work in your life and bring wonderful things your way.

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### **Elisha's Room, and a Special Child**

One day Elisha travelled to Shunem, where there was an important and wealthy woman. She invited him to eat a meal in their house. From then on as often as he passed that way, Elisha was always welcome at their table, to come and eat and be refreshed.

The woman said unto her husband, "I think he is a special man, a holy man of God, which passes by us often on his travels." She then told an idea she had.

"Let's make a little room on top of our house, and we can put a bed, a table and a stool, and a candlestick in it for Prophet Elisha. Then whenever he comes to visit us he will have a place to rest."

So that kind couple worked on their plan and at last a nice-looking room was built, and set up nicely for the prophet. The Shunamite woman didn't just let it be a good idea, or something nice to do one day, but made sure it happened.

Eagerly she looked out over the road from time to time to see if he was travelling that way again. She had a big surprise for him and could hardly wait to give it to him. At last one day she saw him coming down the road, and invited him in to eat with them as usual. Then with great joy she showed him his new room.

Prophet Elisha was so very grateful. Now instead of just eating and needing to continue on their long walk, he could stop to rest and sleep. It felt so good to be out of the hot sun and to lie down and rest after walking all day.

As he was enjoying his rest in his new room, Elisha talked with his servant about ways to thank the woman for her kindness. He suggested that he mentioned to the king about this woman, and ask him something for her. But she wasn't interested in that. She was happy with living there and didn't need a big deal made of her to the king. She wasn't into being famous and well thought of by many others. She was glad to live quietly with her family and relatives.

What could be done? Elisha was thinking and praying. Then his servant mentioned that she had no children, and her husband was old. Perhaps it had always been a desire for her to have a child. Good idea! She had wished for one for so long and been disappointed for years that it never happened. Now it was the right time for it to become a reality.

Elisha told his servant to call the woman to come. When she stood at the door of his room he said, "About this time next year you will be hugging a baby boy."

She couldn't believe it and didn't want to get her hopes up for something that might not happen.

"Are you serious? Please don't tell me something that won't really happen."

But it was true. He wasn't joking. And a year later the generous woman was holding her precious little baby boy. He was better than anything she could imagine receiving. It was really the best gift—her own child! She loved him very much and cared well for him.

One day when the boy had grown up a bit he was out in the fields with this father where the reapers were harvesting the crops. All of a sudden his head started to hurt real badly. His father asked a strong young man to carry him home to his mother.

His mother held him and comforted him, but in a few hours he passed away. She took her son and put him on Elisha's bed. She didn't know what to do, but desperately needed God's help. The woman got a servant to go with her and they saddled up some donkeys to go and find Elisha.

Her husband wasn't sure how they'd find Elisha or how this trip would work out, as it wasn't a special time of gathering or a feast. But the woman had faith that it is what she needed to do and she told her husband that she was sure it would all work out well.

"Ride fast! And don't slow down just because I can't keep up with you—unless I ask you to slow down," she told the man travelling with her.

Elisha was on Mt. Carmel and noticed a woman he recognized. "Look there! It's that woman from Shunem," he told his servant to go and greet her and find out if everything was alright.

"How are you? How is your husband? Is your child alright?" Gehazi, Elisha's servant asked her.

She didn't break down in tears and say that the saddest thing just happened. Instead she said, "It is well." The woman knew that things would be better soon and she had faith that if she just talked to Elisha and he came to pray for her son, all would be well.

When she came to Elisha she held securely on to him, in desperation, pleaded for his help. At first Elisha sent his servant to go on ahead and place his own staff on the child, and to go swiftly, not stopping to chat with friends along the way.

The woman wanted Elisha himself to go, as she knew a big miracle would be needed, and she wanted Elisha to pray for her son. It was more than the child just being very sick—I, the Lord, would need to give him life back again! Just having the staff of a prophet on him didn't restore him.

Elisha went into his own room above the woman's house where the boy was lying on his bed. He prayed for the child to be healed and alive again. Then he warmed him up, as he'd been lying there lifeless for awhile. It took awhile and lots of prayer, but at last the boy was warmed up and I gave him his life back! He sneezed seven times and opened his eyes, happy to be alive again!

The woman was called in and she gratefully took her child in her arms rejoicing! I had

given her a child—twice, it seemed. She had faith that it wasn't too hard for God to give life again. I am the creator of life, after all!

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## Food for Hungry Men

Prophet Elisha travelled with his team to a place called Gilgal. However, they discovered that due to a lack of rain there, food was scarce and hard to grow. The sons of the prophets that he taught were sitting down and needed food. Prophet Elisha said to his servant, "Put the big pot on to boil, so we can cook some food for the sons of the prophets."

What should they add to the pot to make a good meal? Some people looked around in the fields to see what kinds of herbs and food were growing in that area that they could eat. Someone found a wild vine and there were many gourds growing on it. He was so glad, as it would be plenty for everyone and could be added to the soup. This man had never seen this kind of plant and gourd before, but it looked like it was a good type of vegetable to eat. They cut it up and added it all to the pot and cooked it.

The food started to get served for the hungry men, but to their dismay and surprise it was discovered that it was bad. The gourd they found ended up not being an edible type that had been added to the soup. It would be poisonous to eat! Oh dear! What could they do? Everyone was very eager to eat, but the only thing they had was a big pot of food that would make them terribly sick!

Prophet Elisha prayed about what to do. They needed a miracle! I told him to ask for a handful of flour. He took that and threw it into the pot.

I, the Lord, said the food was then good to eat! They served it up and it was just great! Nothing was harmful about it anymore. The happy men praised God for their miracle soup.

Another time Elisha and his big team of men needed something to eat. There was a man who had a farm and had harvested his first crops. He loved Me and wanted to give a gift to Me. He took some of his freshly picked barley and made it into flour. From that he baked 20 small loaves of bread. He took the loaves along with some of his recently harvested corn and travelled to where Prophet Elisha was.

God had led his heart to give this special gift, of the first food that had grown, to Prophet Elisha and his team. Rather than making a feast for his own household and selling anything extra, he gave it for free to those who were serving God every day, and who were in need of food.

There were one hundred men on Elisha's team, and they all needed to eat. Now it doesn't take long to realise that 20 small buns of bread won't be enough for one hundred hungry people to eat and all get enough.

"What should we do?" someone asked Prophet Elisha. "Should I set out this small amount of food for them to eat?" He was imagining the problem that only some people would have food, and the rest would be left hungry.

Elisha listened to My instructions and amazing promise. I told him that they should set the food out for all the men to eat, and not only would they all have enough, but there would be extra left over in the end.

Prophet Elisha's helper obeyed those instructions, and by faith set out the food for the men to eat. Eagerly they ate until each one had eaten enough and left. When everyone had finished, the servant was happy to see it was just like I, the Lord, had said. There was still food left over!

It's good they chose to pray and to have faith. I took that kind and generous gift from that godly man and made it enough for everyone. If that man had had much more he probably would have been able to bring enough for everyone to eat. But he did the best he could, sharing all that he was able to and then I blessed him for it, and blessed the food and multiplied it!

I'm glad that he didn't think it wasn't worth sharing his food with them, seeing that it wouldn't be enough for everyone. He just gave what he could, and then prayer, faith and obedience brought on the miracle that was needed for everyone to have not just enough, but plenty!

I loved them and would do whatever needed to be done to care for them. I was glad that these men were learning to follow Me and do things in My way. It made their faith grow strong to have situations where they didn't have all that they needed right away, but then were rewarded with getting to see amazing gifts of My love in the form of miracles and abundant supply.

When things are always easy, and you always have everything you need, whenever you need it, you won't get to see miracles! If you were always totally safe, and never had anything hurting you, you wouldn't experience the joy of receiving healing and protection through some miraculous ways.

If you trust Me and believe My word, I will help you through all the things that happen in your life. Follow Me and live your life doing My will. I, Jesus, will bless those that serve and love Me, with gifts of My special care.

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### **Humility and Healing**

Naaman was one of the most important men in Syria. The king depended on him. He was strong and successful. However, not all was well with him. He didn't have too long left to live, and the time he had left would be difficult and painful—because he had a disease called leprosy. His skin was filled with sores and was a terrible sight. There was nothing anyone could do to cure him. It was sad for him and for his family.

His wife had a servant who had grown up in the land of Israel. This young servant girl loved God and knew about Prophet Elisha. One day when she saw Naaman's wife despondent and feeling hopeless about her husband's health condition, she offered a solution.

"I wish Naaman were with the prophet that is in Samaria! He would help him to recover!" she said.

With this ray of hope and new idea that Naaman's wife told him about he was interested to find out about this prophet that could bring God's power and healing to him.

Naaman talked with the king about it, and the king wrote a letter for him to take to the king of Israel, explaining the purpose of Naaman's visit to his country. But somehow the wording in the letter wasn't quite right, and didn't explain things properly. When Naaman visited the king of Israel to get permission to be there, so he could find the prophet and get healing, and handed him the letter, what it said only made the king of Israel very upset. It sounded like the king of Syria was asking the king of Israel to heal Naaman! Of course, that was completely impossible.

The king was very distressed and thought that the king of Syria was trying to stir up trouble. He did what people did sometimes back then when something was very emotional and upsetting for them and that they were desperate about. The king rent his clothes! He tore his garment! He felt like he was in a very difficult situation, that if he didn't heal Naaman that the king of Syria would give him and his country a hard time and would be very upset with them.

Word got to Elisha about the situation and the reason for the king's distress.

"Send him to me," Elisha said in a message to the king.

So, big and proud, powerful and brave Naaman showed up at Elisha's door with his team of helpers, riding in his fancy chariot. He had brought with him silver and gold, and 10 brand new sets of clothes to give as a gift to Elisha in return for getting healed. He had faith that it would happen, and already had his "Thank you" present ready.

Did Elisha walk out and talk with him respectfully and in awe at this great man from the land of Syria, and then call with a loud voice and touch Naaman's skin and suddenly he was healed? Well, that's what Naaman was imagining might happen and he was looking forward to it. It would be powerful and dramatic and make him feel great!

However, the servant of Prophet Elisha came out to talk with Naaman and told him the instructions that Elisha had received from God.

"Go wash in the Jordan River seven times, and you will be healed," the servant said to Naaman.

That was it? There was to be no great amazing demonstration—not even a chat with Elisha? Nothing but to go and have a wash-up? That was just a bit too much. He couldn't handle the humiliation. Off he rode in his chariot with his team going with him. The trip hadn't been easy, and being so sick was very tough, too. He was upset and felt so disappointed. Not only was it not what he was hoping for, but the Jordan River wasn't the nicest one around. If he was going to bathe in a river he would much prefer to go to the nice ones in his country. He'd just ride on home, sad, mad, sick and discouraged.

But our story doesn't end there, as one of Naaman's servants got an idea. He wanted Naaman to be healed and they had faith that miracles happen when people did what Prophet Elisha told them to do—because it was an instruction from Me to them.

“If Prophet Elisha had told you to do something very difficult, in order to be healed, wouldn’t you have done it? Why don’t you do this easy thing he’s asked you to do? Just give it a try.” Naaman’s servant urged him.

Thankfully, Naaman listened and decided to follow that advice. Off they then rode to the Jordan river. Naaman took off all his clothes and armour, got in the water and washed, not really enjoying himself to be sure. But anything would be better than being sick with leprosy. Again he dunked down and washed. And yet again and again, until he’d washed seven times.

Out of the water he came, but something was very different about him. He was filled with joy and wonder! The miracle had happened. He was healed! His skin was so smooth and clear and spotless, it was like when he was a young child. I looked like baby skin! His skin was beautiful and felt so good. There wasn’t a sore left on him. With a heart full of gratitude he rode with his team and a load of gifts to offer to Prophet Elisha, to thank him for the gift of healing.

Naaman stood before Prophet Elisha with all his team and said, “Now I know that your God is the only real God. I will only pray to God now, and will not worship anything false. The God you serve is the true God!”

Then he offered his gifts to Prophet Elisha—a whole lot of silver and gold and fancy clothes. It was worth a whole lot! But Prophet Elisha said he would not take a single thing, no matter how much Naaman urged him to, for it wasn’t he that healed Naaman, but it was only My doing.

You thank people who do things for you. So for Prophet Elisha to take the gifts was the same as saying to Naaman and everyone else who heard about it, that Elisha was taking the credit to himself. Of course, he couldn’t heal people. All he could do was pray and tell others what I said, and obey My instructions. If a human took the credit for a supernatural healing and miracle, I wouldn’t be pleased at all. I wanted the miracle to turn many more people’s hearts to Me, the Lord, and if I was given all the credit that I deserved, then it would have a good effect not only on the land of Israel, but also on Syria, helping more people to learn about Me and My love.

So with a very happy heart and healthy body Naaman rode on home, very eager to tell his family and the king of his country the good news of how I, the true God, had healed him! It was a victorious day after all. Humility and obedience to My simple instructions had brought positive, life-changing results!

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### **The Axe that Floated**

Have you ever had to borrow something? It’s not as easy as using your own things, is it? You have to take very good care of it and make sure it is returned to the person or place you borrowed it from. Some things, like books from a library have a time limit on them, and you have to return them by a certain day, or else you have to pay money as a consequence of being late in returning them.

The sons of the prophets had a need, and it was an axe that needed to be borrowed. They didn't own one, but they needed a bigger place to live in as they learned from Elisha about being prophets of God. There were many of them, and it was too tight to all fit comfortably in the place they already had.

To make a building they needed trees, and there wasn't a big shop to go to and buy nice cut boards of wood to build with. Everything had to be done from start to finish by them. First they needed to come up an axe—and had to borrow it from someone. Next, they needed to find a place that had trees they could cut down and use to make their new building.

There were trees down near the edge of the Jordan river, and the men asked Elisha if they could go and cut down trees there, and they asked him to please come with them. So together they went and started the big job.

Part way through cutting down one of the trees, something happened that made the man's heart sink in dismay. The heavy iron axe head flew off and landed right in the river! It wasn't a crystal clear river and it would have been impossible for them to find it.

"My Father, My Father," the young man called out to Prophet Elisha. He was desperate for help. "It was a borrowed axe! What can I do?" He felt so worried. If he didn't return it then the man would be upset, and unable to do his jobs that he also needed it for. Perhaps it was used to make a living for his family. It was something that the owner depended on and it wasn't easy to come up with another one. It would cost lots of money for those poor men to try to buy a new one to replace it. They couldn't have afforded it. So it was a problem. But what's great about impossible problems? They are the perfect opportunities for God to do miracles.

"Where did the axe head fall?" Prophet Elisha asked, and the man pointed the place out to him.

Prophet Elisha prayed and asked God what to do. God said he was to cut a stick off a tree and float it on the river in that spot. When he did, the most amazing thing happened. To the pleasant surprise of all who were watching, that heavy, iron axe head began to also float! It was floating like a light stick on the surface of the water!

The man quickly grabbed it out of the water and was so very relieved and overjoyed! It feels so good when you are able to recover something that you think you have lost forever. This was a time when it was really needed. They weren't being silly and acting unwise, but were working real hard and doing something important. If they had a big enough house to be in they would be more comfortable and able to learn things better. Maybe there would be room for others to join them as well, others who also wanted to learn how to hear from God.

They were doing all that they could to do what I wanted them to, and when there were problems and there was something that nearly stopped them from finishing their project, then I was there to take the delay and hindrance out of the way.

If you are doing your best, then you can trust Me to help you and do what you can't do. No matter how good your project is, and no matter how much I want you to do it, there will



nearly always be problems that come your way and that make it hard for you to make progress. But with Me on your side—and you on My side—you can be victorious. You can be a winner. Things won't always go smoothly and just be a bucket of joy. There will be hard times and things that disappoint or trouble you. But as you ask Me to help you, I can do the impossible and move away what is making things tough and help you to succeed and accomplish the goals that you have for Me—the things I want you to do.

So if things are a bit rough, take heart and have courage. Things might look hard or impossible at the time, but nothing is too hard for Me. And just like they called Prophet Elisha their father, so am I your heavenly Father and am eager to help you as you stop to pray and talk to Me about the solutions to the troubles you face.

Sometimes when something hard to handle happens it can feel like your heart sinks down about as low as the axe did, down to the bottom of the muddy river. But I'm right nearby to lift you up and help you to feel at peace as your heart and feelings are floating above the sadness and worry of the problems, super-naturally, and you won't feel too low and down about things. I'll work things out for the best, and make you so glad that you are working together with Me as a team. I love you and together we'll be a winning team.

Are you feeling down about something, or very worried about something you did or an accident you caused accidentally, or a mistake you made, or did you do something that you regret? I know about it anyway, but as you talk it through with Me you'll feel better and I'll be able to bring solutions and joy your way again. I can smooth out the rough things and give you and others peace. The things I tell you to do might be simple or unusual, like when Elisha was instructed to throw a stick on the water. But as he did it, then the answer came. What little thing do you feel Me speaking to your heart, telling you to do? Do you want to give it a try? Just a little step of obedience can bring a big load of blessings your way. I love to make things better for you!

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### **The Fruit**

There was to be a time of famine for seven years and God had told Prophet Elisha about it in advance. Elisha went to talk with the kind woman who had given him a room to rest in whenever he visited, and whose son he'd prayed for.

Prophet Elisha told her that it would be better for her to move somewhere else for the next seven years, so that she and all who lived with her would have what they needed. The famine would make things very difficult. She was a woman who I wanted to bless and care for, since she had helped My prophet many times.

Sometimes I helped to give those who loved and obeyed Me food in miraculous ways during the times of no rain. Other times, I provided for them in different ways. This time My way of caring for this woman was for her and all her household to make a big move for several years.

Did she look around at her nice property and the abundant food that they usually had, and all her fruit trees growing and think, "I'll be fine here! I don't want to move. It will take too much

work and effort. It's comfortable here. And what will happen to my house and my fruit trees while I'm gone?"

No, she didn't react with worry and choose to hold onto all that she had, hoping things would be alright. She instead was wise and listened to what I had told Elisha. Even though it wasn't a famine yet, she knew if God said there would be one, that it was going to happen. So she got packing—her and her family and everyone that lived and worked with her.

They travelled to a different country where things were a bit better—at least there would be food to eat. It wasn't their most favourite place however, as it was the land of the Philistines. Thankfully, people there didn't give them too much trouble, but it wasn't the most inspiring place to be, since the people of the country didn't believe in and follow God's ways. Even though the woman would have rather been in her house and have her nice orchard with fresh fruit growing, she obeyed and moved, and as a result she and her son and all those with her survived through the time of famine.

When the seven years passed and the famine was over she was eager to move back again.

"We'll be home soon!" She felt happy to be travelling home at last. However, when she arrived she was greatly disappointed.

"What's happening here?" she thought. What was she to do? Other people had moved into her house and were farming on her property and eating and selling the fruit from her trees. Where could she live now? And how would she provide for her family and all that were with her?

She had been gone for so long that people didn't know if she'd ever return, so they moved in and were glad to have fruit and food to eat. But she was ready to live there now. She decided to go tell the king about it and see if he could help them.

The king was having a talk with Gehazi, Prophet Elisha's servant. The king was interested in hearing about the miracles God had done, and the amazing events that happened for Elisha the prophet. Gehazi told the king about the boy that Prophet Elisha prayed for, whose life was restored.

As he was in the middle of telling this very miracle, a terrific, God-planned coincidence happened! Right at that moment the woman—the mother of the boy who was raised and brought back to life again—came in to the room to present her situation to the king.

Gehazi knew her well, and said to the king, as surprising as it was, that this woman who just walked in was the mother of that very child he was mentioning! It was a wonderful encouragement to the king to hear of the great things God had done, and to see the proof of it right in front of his eyes—at that very moment.

The woman then explained what happened to her house and property and farm and all her fruit trees. The king, feeling filled with faith and inspiration at the miracle that had happened for this woman, appointed one of his men to go with her and help her get all set up again in

her house, and to work out the situation. And not just that, but he said that the amount of fruit that grew on the trees while she was gone should be given to her also!

In the end she gained so much more than she would have if she had chosen to stay in her house and not move like Prophet Elisha suggested to her. As a result of her obedience and faith she and her team survived through the famine, and gained back anything that had been taken while she was gone. They got to have both—supply during the famine, as well as get back all that she lost while living elsewhere.

The difficult time of her son being so sick and then passing away for little while, ending up being the key to unlock new rewards later on also. I can bring good out of any difficult situations. Hearing about that miracle at just the right time was what touched the kings' heart and made him want to help her all that he could. It seemed like such a terrible situation with nothing good about it at all when it was happening, but because of the woman's faith and continuing to obey My word and My prophet, and her generosity to those serving Me, she was given back to many more times over in return. Everything worked out so well in the end.

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### **Abundance and Obedience**

King Jehoshaphat ruled over the land of Judah and he did all he could to teach the people of the land My ways. He knew that reading God's Word is what would help to change people's hearts, and inspire them to want to do things right. He knew it took more than just making rules or telling people once what to do. He knew that no matter how good he, as the king, tried to be, it wouldn't have as great an effect on the country as the Word of God that was passed on to them and was written down for them to follow.

The king thought of a plan. People didn't have Bibles in their homes like people do nowadays, nor could they even all read like many people can today. So how could he help people to know what My Word said in the books that were recorded for them to learn and follow and obey? He gathered a trustworthy team of princes and priests that knew My Word well and knew how to read and teach. They were commissioned to be travelling teachers! Their job was to teach My Word to people all over the country. That was the king's most important commission to them! They read God's Word aloud to people, they talked about it, they explained it, and they helped everyone to have a chance to know what My Word said to do.

Jehoshaphat was a good king. He was the son of King Asa and was the next ruler after his father. The people of the land of Judah were glad he was their king, and they showed their respect by bringing him gifts. I blessed this king for making My Word known and obeyed, even though all the other places around weren't doing that. He was bold and strong and respected Me and wanted to please Me. His heart wanted to be filled with God's love and word and ways. As a result he had abundant riches given to him and was honoured by all.

The land of Judah was peaceful then, because they were praying for My help and obeying what I wanted them to do. Other countries around didn't stir up trouble or try to take things from their land, in fact other rulers brought gifts to King Jehoshaphat instead. Some of the Philistines brought him presents and silver, and the Arabians brought him many thousands of sheep and goats.

King Jehoshaphat had castles built and cities built and set up to keep all the extra supplies in, as it was a time of abundance and plenty. This was one of the ways I rewarded them for loving and respecting Him and My Word.

One time a miracle was needed, and Prophet Elisha was called on to pray and ask God what to do. There were three kings meeting together with their big teams of helpers and all their animals, too. King Jehoshaphat was one of them. They discovered then that the area they were meeting in didn't have water—no river or wells or streams. What were they to do?

When Prophet Elisha came and saw who was there, he wasn't too happy to talk with the other two kings that were at the get-together, as they weren't followers of God. He said he wouldn't even have looked at them or spoken to them at all, no matter how great and fancy they thought they were—if it weren't for King Jehoshaphat who was also there.

To Prophet Elisha, anyone who loved Me and wanted to do things My way was worth his time—whether it was a poor woman or a child, or a young man building a house, or whoever it was. They were more respected in his eyes, than a rich king that didn't want to obey God's Word.

Since King Jehoshaphat was there, and he was a Godly man, then Prophet Elisha talked with them and found out what the problem was.

"Bring me a musician," Prophet Elisha said. He wanted some songs of praise and prayer and good music to listen to. Good music can help you to hear from Heaven. It can help you to stop thinking so much about what is going on around you that you can hear God's voice in your heart more clearly, sometimes. So as the musician played, My Spirit spoke to Prophet Elisha and told him what to say.

"Make this valley full of ditches. Dig big holes in it. God said that without a rain storm coming, the ditches you dig will be filled with water. You and your animals will be able to have water to drink."

These were My instructions. It was something they could do. Would they choose to obey and then get the blessing of miracle water? It wouldn't be an easy job to dig and dig in the hot sun. But they chose to do it anyway.

The next morning when people met to pray, they looked down to the valley where they'd worked hard and dug ditches, and there was water pouring into it, like a river overflowing on to that part of the land. The ditches were all filled up with water, like little pools in that valley. With wonder and rejoicing they went to drink the refreshing miracle water.

No matter where you are and in what situation you find yourself in, or how impossible it looks, miracles can happen for those who pray and obey My Word.

Maybe you feel sometimes like you are working real hard doing what you know I want you to

do, but you are lacking the inspiration and it doesn't seem to do much good—like the men digging holes in the dry ground in the hot sun. But if they hadn't done their part to prepare the way, the miracle couldn't have benefited them. The refreshing water that was sent would have just washed over the land and they wouldn't have had pools to drink from.

You have to do your part and dig, or whatever it is that I've asked you to do. Then afterwards you see the reason for it, and you have made the way to receive the blessings. Maybe you are learning a tough new language and you don't see what good it will do. But you believe that I want you to learn it anyway. Then one day, because you know how to speak that language something happens that makes you glad you worked hard and learned it. Maybe a free ticket to a new country on a mission trip is offered, and because you can speak that language you are given the chance to go first.

A lot of times in your life for Me you may not see immediate results and it may seem pointless to tirelessly labour. But because of your obedience I can then amaze you and bring things into your life that wouldn't be possible if you hadn't done the work you did, and first did your part.

I have so many things to give you and to bless you with, but first I want to see if you are willing to do what I show you to do. When you take the step of faith and do what you can, then I do what you can't do and will make you so glad you did!

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### **Amos, Joel, and Hosea**

I asked Hosea to demonstrate to the people that I, the Lord, loved them. I told Hosea to marry someone that others didn't like very much, as she was often doing things wrong. But through it I wanted to show how I loved them anyway. Just like Hosea showed love to that woman anyway, I loved My people even though they had often disobeyed Me. I wanted them to be sorry for their past mistakes and to ask for My forgiveness, and I would show My love to them and take care of them.

Hosea named his three children the names I, the Lord, told him to, as even the names of his children spoke a message to people. He not only received the words of God and told them to the people, but was willing to make his life an example of the message God wanted the people to remember.

A prophet by the name of Joel gave wonderful message that promised of My spirit being given to those who love and follow Me. I promised that later on it would not just be certain prophets that would be able to hear Me speaking to them, but anyone could receive the gift of prophecy. It didn't matter who they were or what age they were, if they loved and believed in Me and wanted Me to speak to them, they could receive My words.

That time of the outpouring of God's spirit that Joel's prophecy spoke of has already happened! Anyone can stop and pray and listen to Me. I want to talk to you no matter who you are or where you are living. It doesn't matter if you are young or old, weak or strong, sick

or well, struggling or living in luxury, fast or slow, great or small, I want to be near to you and I want to talk with you.

There are many ways I can speak to you! Sometimes a dream will help to give you the answer that you are praying for. Sometimes a vision or picture in your mind will help to direct you or teach you something I want you to know or to show you something that answers your question or brings a solution to a puzzling situation. Other times I can whisper to your heart and your mind with words and thoughts and ideas.

The more you take time to stop and hear from Me in prophecy, the more chances I get to encourage you and guide you to the best things for your life. I want to be a part of your life and to make things easy for you. It may not seem as easy to you to talk with Me and to hear what I have to say as it is when you are talking with your brothers or sisters, friends or parents. But the good thing is that I know all that you are feeling and thinking and I can give you answers to your problems and solutions that make you really happy. Just knowing how well I know you and that I love you so much anyway, will make all the difference in the world to you.

The need for the words of God was spoken of by the Prophet Amos. He said people not being able to read and hear God's Word was like having a famine in the country. People get hungry if they don't have food to eat. But when people don't have the encouragement and joy and faith that My Word gives them, as well as the direction and guidance, they can get very weak and sick in heart and mind and spirit. That is what it is like in much of the world today.

Many people have come to know Me, Jesus, and the Bible has been translated in many different languages. People can access the Bible easier than people of old could back then. So why is there a "famine" for God's word nowadays? It seems odd, doesn't it? Well, there are also so many other distractions and rules and religions and rulers that hinder people from receiving, believing and benefiting from My Word. There are so many lies being told, and children aren't permitted in many places, to be taught God's Word anymore in schools.

Will you be someone, like Amos, who will bring the food and water of My Word to the hungry people? Will you find ways to feed people with what they most need? There are lots of ways for My Word and thoughts and love to be passed on. Maybe you'll get an idea of a new way that you can be a part of the solution and being God's messenger.

Amos wasn't a rich man, and he wasn't a son of a prophet. He was a herdsman and cared for the flocks and cattle on the hill sides. He also picked fruit from sycamore trees as part of his job. Then one day he was called by God to be a prophet. It was a very new job for him, but he was willing to obey, and helped to warn people of the troubles that would come if they didn't follow and serve Me.

One time someone asked him to stop saying those words of warning, but he said he wouldn't stop. I had called him and asked him to do it, and he was going to be faithful and do what I wanted him to do. It wasn't a fun and easy job, but I loved the people and wanted them to know how to make things right so they could once again receive My blessings and help. Amos was willing to be God's messenger and to pass on My Words to the people.

## Jonah's Trip

I had a job for Jonah to do, and it wasn't something he was eager to do. First of all he was meant to go and take a visit to one of the worst and most corrupt and terrible cities around. —Not a good place to spend a vacation or any type of trip. These people had gone on way too long doing things that were very displeasing to Me. They needed to be stopped and were due for trouble. However, before punishing them, I, in My love, wanted to give them all one last warning—a chance to change, and to be forewarned that trouble was on its way.

Jonah knew it would be a tough job, and nothing seemed easy about it at all. He pondered possible scenarios. He could go there and warn them of God's coming punishment, and if they didn't listen to him, they might not treat him well. Or he could warn them, and they could be real sorry and want to change, and then God might forgive them and not punish them after all—after all he did to take the trip there and warn them of coming trouble, and then what he said wouldn't even happen.

Either way didn't seem very appealing, and made Jonah feel real uncomfortable.

"Maybe if I was somewhere else, doing something else, I might not need to do that job after all." Jonah pondered and proceeded to make preparations for a trip in a ship to go off to a place called Tarshish. I knew where he was and still needed him for the job. But a lesson was to be learned first of all.

Even your mistakes and wrong turns in the journey of life can bring about good things, as you'll see. When Jonah got in the ship he knew pretty much right away that he was in the wrong place at the wrong time, but he was stuck out in a ship on a very rough and tempestuous sea. What could be done then to get back to where he was meant to be?

Well, even though he went the wrong way, I had something in mind. All those men on the ship didn't know and believe in Me like Jonah did, but they were all going to get a chance. When they wondered why the sea was so rough and the trip was dangerous, they played a type of game that would select someone's name as being the reason for the storm.

At first Jonah was sleeping in the ship, but the frightened sailors woke him up to pray and to find solutions to the wild storm. When it seemed that the storm had come as a result of Jonah's wrong choices it taught the sailors something important—that the God in Heaven, the one that Jonah followed and obeyed, was powerful and real and each person mattered to Him.—And that disobedience to God made a difference in people's lives and made things hard for them.

The sailors learned about Me and prayed and were changed. Especially when they saw what happened as soon as they did what Jonah suggested. At first they very much did not want to do what Jonah said was the only solution—to let him swim, and to not be in the ship at all. But as soon as Jonah was in the sea, the waves were calm once again. All those on the ship realised that the God that Jonah told them about was real and powerful and worth listening to and obeying.

I knew all this would happen, and I was glad that it gave a chance to all those on the ship to learn about Me. But there was the challenge of how to get Jonah back to the land to give him another chance to do what he was called to do.

There were no rescue helicopters or lifeboats back then, so it was animal transportation time—this time with a sea animal! A fish so big that it could hold a person inside of it was sent to give Jonah a ride. The trip took three days, and what days of prayer those were. Jonah prayed and praised Me, and I heard him and took care of him.

At last when the time was right it was time to exit and on to the dry land he was spit out by this massive creature sent by Me to help come to the rescue in an impossible situation. But when I want a job done, I can do whatever needs to be done to bring it to pass, especially if someone is praying as much as Jonah was.

When Jonah was ready, I gave him his second chance to go and warn the city of Nineveh that trouble was on its way, for all the wrong things they were doing. When thinking about the difficult job it would be, and remembering the last time he tried to get out of it, and the rough journey it was, he realised that doing what I said to do was the best and easiest option.

Off on his journey to Nineveh Jonah went, and began to tell everyone what I said for him to say. He was brave and stuck with the job, not giving up. He made sure that everyone heard the message.

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### **Warnings and Forgiveness**

When Jonah told the people of the city of Nineveh God's message—that because of their wrong doings there was going to be trouble and hard times for their country—people had a different reaction than expected. The message was that in 40 days God would punish their city and make things very difficult for them.

When the king heard what the prophet Jonah was saying he took it seriously. He proclaimed to all in his country that everyone, no matter who they were, should have a few days of desperation and prayer. The king said that everyone needed to show they were very sad and sorry for the wrongs that they did. He said there might be a chance that if everyone was real repentant and asked Me for forgiveness, that perhaps the trouble that Jonah warned them of wouldn't happen.

Everyone responded and took off all their fancy clothes and put on sackcloth. They chose not to eat or drink for three days and only pray for Me to forgive and save them. As a result of everyone's prayers and repentance I said that I would give them all another chance. Everyone was glad for that, and very relieved.

It was a wonderful thing, and I was happy. But surprisingly enough Jonah wasn't feeling too great about it. He'd been through so much to bring this message to everyone. To have the punishment just not happen after all, made him wonder if it was worth it. To help Jonah understand things a bit better, and to be glad that they were given another chance, I did



something special for him. This mission had been one filled with many lessons for Jonah—and good lessons that many others have been able to benefit from, as it's written down in his book.

Jonah had been sitting in the hot sun with not much to shade him, only a little booth he'd made that gave him a tiny bit of shade. But then in the night I, the Lord, made a vine to grow real fast and to make a better shade for him. He was so glad for it and felt My love and care for him. However, that next night a wormy creature came nibbling on the vine's stem and made it wither away by the morning. When Jonah woke up and the sun was burning down with its heat, he missed his miracle plant and was upset about it getting eaten by a bug! But it was all for a reason, to help Jonah understand a bit what God felt like.

I explained that if Jonah could feel bad for the vine getting withered and ruined, and not having something that he liked, for him to imagine what I, the Lord, felt like about people that I made and loved and wanted to have as My friends.

I didn't want to cause them a whole lot of trouble and sadness with all the punishments that would have needed to come to their city. I was much happier that they all chose to change and to be sorry and to do things the right way. I loved each one in Nineveh, from the oldest to the youngest, and even cared about the animals too! I was glad that I could give them all another chance.

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### **Obadiah and Micah**

The prophet Obadiah prophesied about the troubles that were to come to a certain team of people. It warned of the dangers of pride that caused them to go the wrong way. The people that the message from Me was talking about lived in rocky homes, many of their houses were carved out of the rocks in the mountains. They had strong homes and felt they could get along just fine on their own. They weren't desperate for My help, and they didn't choose to do things My way. They thought proudly of themselves and how great they must be.

But the only rock house that makes people lasts for a long time is the one built on the rock of My word. If you do things that are in obedience to My words and you stay close to Me by listening to Me, then you will be safe and strong.

Are those people still here today, all wise and strong, living where they used to be? Can you go and see them? No, time and history has moved things along. The ruins of some of the places they lived can be visited, perhaps as reminder that nothing lasts forever—no matter how great you think your accomplishments are and how wonderful your buildings are. Everything eventually passes away. However, the words spoken from Me to the prophet Obadiah are still around. God's words last forever. Millions today have read those words written down thousands of years ago.

Walk in humility, using God's words as your guide to know what to do and how to live. The things you do and the words you pass on to others from Me, Jesus, will be repeated and

remembered for many years to come. Those who seem to be strong in their own self today, and those who are famous and seem to have all that they need, will be long forgotten.

Obadiah was remembered by countless people, because he chose to listen to My voice and was faithful to tell others My Words. He wasn't rich and famous and thought of as the most important man around when he was on Earth doing the humble job of a prophet. But now he's the famous one, as people all over the world hear about him when they read the words in the Bible that he was faithful to write down. The others who put their own pride first are long forgotten and the memory of anything they did that they thought was great has passed away too, as time went on.

Another prophet who was faithful to write down the messages God gave to him was Micah. The book of the prophet Micah contained an important verse—it told of the place that I, Jesus, would be born when I came to Earth. It told of Me, the Saviour, being born in Bethlehem.

There are some other wonderful and hopeful verses and promises written in his book. In the prophecies of the book of Micah there little was a little peek into what the coming world of God's Kingdom reigning would be like.

People would live in peace. Countries would help and support each others. Everyone would have all that they needed. When I am fully in charge one day, and the Earth is filled with the knowledge of My love and everyone is motivated to do things My way, things are going to be so wonderful!

I know it seems to be taking a long time for it to happen, but when the time is right, those promises written down by the prophet Micah, will come to pass. You can be encouraged that great things will come one day, and the world will be beautiful and at peace, when I return to make things right again.

Story Time with Jesus 75-87\_text

## **Story Time with Jesus**

### **Bible Stories**

#### **Chapters 75-87**

75-Nahum and Habakkuk

76-Ezekiel the Prophet

77-Wings and Wheels

78-Isaiah the Prophet

79-Jeremiah the Prophet

80-Tough Times

81-Wise Young Men

82-Job's Lessons

83-Queen Esther

84-King Cyrus and King Darius

85-Ezra

86-Nehemiah

87-Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

(Jesus speaking: )

### **Nahum and Habakkuk**

The prophet Nahum was shown something interesting and very futuristic for his time, when he stopped to receive a message from God. For thousands of years people only used simple and slower forms of transportation. But in this modern day there are so many ways of travel, and people are inventing ways to go faster and faster. There are so many cars and traffic jams all over the world, and getting enough fuel for them, as well as car accidents, is quite a problem. It's a sign that this world as it is now, is coming to its end soon. And that's good news—because then I can start to make things right and nice.

Prophet Nahum saw a vision of what things are like now on the roads. It was a very different sight than what he saw around his town and country. God showed him a bit what things were going to be like. Prophet Nahum tried to describe it, but could only use the things he knew about and could relate to. He said the vehicles on the road in his vision from God looked like torches and lightning going very fast.

The "chariots" as he called them were jostling and raging in the streets and broadways. Doesn't that sound like a modern day highway, especially at evening traffic time—with zooming headlights and tons of cars, all rushing to go here and there?

One day things will be peaceful, as many prophets wrote down and foretold, from the words and visions that God gave to them. Not only did the messages given to the prophets back then talk about how the world was going to be nowadays, and all its troubles, but they told of the good and happy ending, and how wonderful things will be once again, when I, Jesus, come to rule and reign. And all you who have learned to live in My ways and to treat others

with loving kindness, will be on My team, doing the important job of helping to change things for the better.

Many are doing all that they can now, and it's wonderful, but when the time is right, and God's love will be what rules in people's hearts and lives and homes and all over the world, it will be so much easier to bring lasting and marvellous change. Don't give up hope! That time is on its way.

The prophet Habakkuk wrote of it too. He said that the Earth would one day be filled with the knowledge of the Lord—everyone would come to know My ways and live in love. I can hardly wait until that time! I'm as eager and ready for peace and love to reign on Earth as you might be. Thank you for being patient and giving as many people a chance as possible, to chose to believe and to follow in My ways now, and to then be blessed with a wonderful rewarding future.

Things won't always go well, during this time of learning and waiting for that time of peace and love worldwide on Earth. But Prophet Habakkuk wrote of a wonderful attitude to have during times of troubles—which everyone will have while they are on Earth, at some time in their life.

He said that even if things were not going well, and his crops didn't grow, and he didn't have a nice farm and all that he needed, that he would still rejoice. He would praise God no matter what was happening.

You can be glad and have words of praise on your lips even if things aren't going well yet, as you have faith and know that one day things will be made right again, and you know that I will love and care for you through even the toughest situations. I'm always with you.

Many things were hard for Habakkuk in his time on Earth, and his book in the Bible only told of some of the things that were hard for him. But you can be sure that he's having a great time now. He's never hungry or tired or thirsty or in need of supplies now. He's having a heaven of a time, because he chose to keep believing in God's love and he was faithful to pass on the words God told him to.

You can be as happy as he is now too, when you get here, if you choose to do like he did and follow Me and listen to Me and do what I say in My Word to do. And when things don't work out right and you are having a hard time while still on Earth, if you keep in mind that it's just for a time, and then all will be wonderful one day, that will help you to have faith. As you praise God no matter what hard times you are living through, you'll have an easier time, and you can be sure that He will bless and reward you for your faith and patience.—Just like He did those prophets who lived long ago.

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**Ezekiel the Prophet**

Ezekiel was a man who was willing to do whatever was needed to get a message across. He did whatever God asked him to do, and some of the jobs were pretty unusual.

Sometimes he had to make model displays to show people what the future held for them, other times he had to sit or stand or lie down in a certain way as a type of skit to demonstrate a point to people. It helped to make the messages clearer and easier for people to remember than just hearing the words from him.

Sometimes I told him to eat certain foods and drink water in certain amounts and at certain times. Other times he was to make and show props as a way to show people what I wanted them to know. He had whatever type of hairstyle I told him to, and cut it when and however I instructed him. Ezekiel let every part of his life—his time, his actions, his words, his appearance, his diet and everything, be used by Me to help tell others the important messages that they needed to hear.

Because of his willingness to go and do and say whatever was needed, I also gave him the privilege of being shown some amazing things in the Spirit. He got to see powerful heavenly beings, talk with angels, travel into the future to see what things will be like.

It was no easy task to be a whole-hearted prophet. Sometimes the experiences and messages and trips I would take him on left him so amazed it took him days to recover, as he sat in awe thinking about what he saw and heard and what was revealed to him.

There was a promise given in the 34<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Book of Ezekiel that talked about God's people being like sheep, and in need of a shepherd, lost and needing to be gathered, fed and cared for. The promises in that chapter told of the day when I would send those who would lead and care for My people, and be as shepherds to them.

Ezekiel was shown visions and given messages that were similar to what was shown and told to the apostle John, My disciple on Earth, about heaven. The tree of life and the river of life were written about in the book of Ezekiel. It told of the wonderful tree of life that bore many types of fruits—every month a new type of fruit grew on it. It always had fruit on it. And the leaves of the tree were ever-green and had healing powers and when used would bring health to the sick or hurt.

I didn't promise to Ezekiel that when he warned people with the messages I gave him to pass on, that people would always listen and obey. I said that Ezekiel didn't need to worry about whether or not people would follow My instructions that he passed on to them. His job was to tell God's words, even if people didn't listen and change.

It would be better to give them all a chance to do things in My way and to let them know what I had to say, rather than not bothering to tell them at all. If he did his job and passed on My Words to the people then that was what he was meant to do. If it didn't result in a big and wonderful change in the hearts of people in the country, then at least he tried and God would be pleased that he did his best and gave the people a chance.

Ezekiel got to see amazing visions in the spirit that I showed him, but he didn't see these things all the time, and it was special when it did happen. Most of the time as a prophet and

priest, living in a foreign country, things were rather difficult. But he was willing to obey, to listen and to follow.

He was able to write down all that I wanted him to, and the book of Ezekiel has many interesting and mysterious words, visions and messages. There is lots that his book talks about that is yet to come! It's not a history book of all that has happened many centuries ago. Isn't that neat? You can find prophecies in his book and in other books of the Bible that tell of things that haven't even happened yet!

Some prophecies from some of the books of the prophets have been fulfilled, and some things are yet to happen. See, things are all planned, and there is a right time for each thing to happen. This world won't go on endlessly as it is. There is a time for learning and choosing between right and wrong, and a time for people to be given the message of My love and salvation—and that time is now. When the way things are now comes to an end, ending first in a real tough time on Earth for everyone, then at last the best will be ushered in, and the loving Kingdom of God will be on Earth. The best is on its way!

The fact that so many events that the prophecies in the Bible say would happen, did happen, can give you faith that the rest of the messages and promises and predictions written of will also happen. Some things just take time—some events took thousands of years before they came to pass. But the fulfilment of the messages of My return to Earth is getting closer and closer each day.

Be a faithful witness, as Ezekiel was. Pass on the Words of Heaven and the truth of My love and care, and the message of salvation that is offered to all, and you will be greatly rewarded!

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### **Wings and Wheels**

One of the amazing visions that the prophet Ezekiel had, was hard for him to describe it using only the things he knew about and could relate it to while on Earth. God showed him a vision of a powerful and amazing vehicle with angelic beings, unlike anything you have seen or heard about. This vehicle had special types of wheels, and looked like it was made of bright light and shiny jewels and fire, and all sorts of heavenly things.

The angelic beings with big wings looked like a combination of different types of creatures—a man, a cherub, an eagle and a lion, with wings and many eyes. They could look straight from all angles and so didn't need to turn to look this way and that way to see here and there but could always see straight ahead on all sides, and would walk or move straight in any direction they needed to go.

The wings of these heavenly beings made a special sound when they were used and when they were folded. The sound of their wings was like the voice of God. There was a type of wheel that each of these beings travelled with, that moved in whatever direction the angelic being needed to go, without the use of any machines or gears or things that Earthly vehicles have today.

There are so many far-out and unique creations of God in the world beyond your world there today. If you do like Ezekiel did, and take time to listen and to think about My Word, who knows what amazing things I will show to you? I can show you things that no one on Earth has even thought of before.

People on Earth try to think of amazing things, and many things people write about or create pictures of, aren't so great and most of all aren't true. Ezekiel got to take a trip to God's movies—real movies of things that are going on around you in the world of God's heavenly realm. If you love and believe in Me, Jesus, the true things going on in the land you will one day get to enter, are really going to surprise and astound you.

Even the wildest ideas on Earth are nothing compared to what is reality here with Me. Wait till you see what I can show you—even here and now!

If you feel you want to take a spirit trip, like Ezekiel did, and you want to get a glimpse of things that will really amaze you, stay close to Me. I can show you things in visions and in your dreams and when you are praying, that will thrill you and surprise you! Not even the best picture film on Earth will compare to what I have to show you.

The messages given to Isaiah have given hope and inspiration to many for thousands of years. When God first called him to be a prophet he didn't feel capable of doing the job well. He felt like he wasn't perfect and made mistakes and couldn't say the right things. He saw an awesome vision of Me, the King of kings on a Heavenly throne, and some angels, called seraphims, were flying above it. When the seraphims spoke words of praise the posts of the door of that Heavenly room shook and the room was filled with smoke.

Each one of the seraphims had six wings. Two to cover their feet, two wings to cover their faces, and two wings to fly with. When Isaiah was feeling so in awe and humbled to be in My presence and to get a glimpse into the world of the spirit, he thought that his weakness and his human nature made him too dirty to even speak God's Words.

He was the man I wanted to use to speak My Words to many others. He wasn't saying no to My call and job for him, he just felt so low and unclean compared to these glorious Heavenly beings, and when seeing the King of all.

The vision continued, and next Isaiah saw one of the seraphims take a spiritual coal of fire from the Heavenly altar with tongs and bring it near to Isaiah's lips. He heard the words said that now his lips and spirit were clean. I, the Lord, had cleansed him and made him ready to speak My Words to the people.

Then Isaiah heard Me saying, "Who can we send? Who will go for us?"

I needed someone to do what We here in the invisible spiritual realm couldn't do. We needed someone on Earth to be Our messenger and pass on the Words of Heaven to those on Earth. Isaiah volunteered right away and responded, "Here I am. Send me!"

Are you eager to help Me do what I need you to do while you are still there on Earth? You may not be as amazing and fast and strong as My mighty and bright angels are, but you can

do something they can't—and that even I can't do yet. You can talk with others face-to-face on Earth, as a human, and pass on My words to them.

Can you imagine what kind of a reaction someone would have if they were just walking along and all of a sudden one of those six winged angels appeared to them? They would be so amazed and probably a bit too surprised to hear and understand much of what was being said.

Besides, if a strong angel appears and tells you something it's different than if you have to believe by faith, and choose to do things My way just because it's written in My Word. Believing by faith and obeying now without the strong beings of Heaven coming down to make sure you and everyone obeys, is the way it's meant to be for now. One day, everyone will get to see Me and get to see the angels too, when the time is right.

Does it make you feel special to know that you get to do a job that even the most powerful heavenly beings can't do all on their own? They are here to help you, to protect you, to help make it possible for you to do your job, but without those on Earth who are willing to pass on My Words and the truth of My love and salvation to others, nothing much will happen—at least not in the way I want it to. I need you! —Just like I needed Isaiah back then to be the one to speak the words to others that I needed to tell people.

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### **Isaiah the Prophet**

The Book of Isaiah contains many promises and faith-building words. Isaiah was a prophet who helped instruct some of the kings that ruled the Israelites who came to him for advice and My Words.

King Hezekiah spoke with him about the problems that came up in the land, as well as about his boil and sickness. Isaiah gave king Hezekiah the option from God asking what sign he wanted—the sun dial to go back 10 degrees or forward 10 degrees. And as I, the Lord, instructed him, a lump of figs were placed on King Hezekiah's sore and he did recover, as I said he would. There were other times and with other kings that Isaiah was around to pass on messages from Me.

His Book is a collection of many of the messages that I gave to him. In it are prophecies about My coming to Earth and giving My life for the salvation of everyone who believes in Me, Jesus. There are wonderful messages written down of how wonderful the world of the future will be, when I make all things nice again on Earth. The animals will be calm and peaceful. Nothing will hurt or destroy. The world and all nature will be at peace and lovely.

One message written down in the Book of Isaiah spoke of how very different are your thoughts—you on Earth—from Mine. I see things very differently. I think very differently than people do. I know and see the whole picture. I am all wisdom and all knowledge. I know what will happen. I know what everyone thinks and feels and what will happen as a result of each choice and decision. When something seems wrong to you, but it's My will for it to happen,



it's because there are things that I know that you don't know or see, and one day you'll find out that I did things in the best way.

Even the smartest person on Earth knows nothing compared to all that I know. How far is the starry sky from the ground? Space is quite wide and goes for a long distance, right? As high as the starry sky is from the ground, that's how much higher and bigger and better My thoughts are. It pays to stop and listen and let Me tell you some amazing things! I have lots to say, and you'll enjoy getting to know all I have to speak to you about, just as Isaiah loved hearing My words too, and had them all written down carefully.

I don't ever just ramble on with nonsense and forget the next day what I said. I never make empty promises. I say what I mean and I mean what I say. I do what I promise. Everything I say is for a reason and brings good in the end. Isaiah wrote how just like rain that comes down and waters the ground and causes the plants to grow, so is My Word. My Words bring life and strength and refreshing. They accomplish something.

In another verse it talks about how wonderful and beautiful are the feet of those that spread the good news and Words of God—words of peace and salvation. I so appreciate everyone that passes on My loving words of truth to others.

Some people think that to please Me they have to go without certain things, or only eat certain foods, or none at all at times, or put themselves through hardship. They think that giving things up that they might even need is a way to make Me glad. But that's not what I'm interested in. I look at people's hearts, and I want to see My love given and shared with as many people as possible.

Isaiah wrote about what pleases Me—to give to and help others. To help feed the hungry, to comfort the sad, to clothe the poor, to give to those in need, to soothe those in pain or sick, and to make things easy for others who are having a hard time.

My Words written in that passage say that wonderful things will happen to those who give to others in these ways. Many of the rewards for living as I did and helping others in love will be rewards that aren't tangible—that is things that you can't hold in your hands or buy in a shop. I will give you things that only I can give. Some of the blessings listed in the message given to Prophet Isaiah are:

--Speedy healing

--God's Spirit with you, surrounding you and protecting you

--Answers to prayer

--Guidance from Me

--Supply of all you need, physically and spiritually

--Your spirit will flourish and be refreshed

Prophet Isaiah was humble and did whatever I asked him to do. One passage reminds people that I listen to and am close to those who are meek and humble. I don't just hear those that are in a fancy building, but I look at people's hearts. I made all things on Earth, and even if people collected the best building materials to make a house for Me to live in, still it has been made with things that I created.

No one could ever make something on Earth for Me to live in that would really amaze me—as everything that it's made of I already created and made available for humans to use. But the place that I most like to be is near you—you who walk in humility, you who are poor, you who think you aren't fancy and famous, you who respect Me and want to do the things that I say. If you are that way, yet you open your life and heart to Me and invite Me to be near to you and to live in the spirit with you, then I am there, and love being very near to you. (Isaiah 66:1-2)

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### **Jeremiah the Prophet**

For many years prophets had delivered messages to the Israelites, telling them the importance of doing things God's way, and at times there were messages of warning and instruction given to other nations too. The book of Jeremiah talks about a time when some foretold troubles finally came.

When I called the prophet Jeremiah to give My Words to the people he was a young man, especially compared to some other older prophets, and he felt very incapable. "I am just a child," he said. But I knew he wasn't too young. He was a young man and could do the job well.

I told Jeremiah that before his mother even became pregnant with him, that I knew him! I had created and made Jeremiah for a purpose. Before he was even born he was destined and called to be a prophet of God.

When he was then old enough to be able to pass on God's Words and messages to others, then God told him about his reason for being born on Earth. When he said he felt inexperienced, young and not able to do a good job, God touched his mouth and said, "I've put My Words in your mouth."

With My help he could do whatever I asked him to. I would protect him and keep him safe. He didn't need to worry about people's negative reactions, and no matter what troubles came, I would be near to him and help him. Good for brave Jeremiah! He chose to do what I needed him to do, even if it wasn't easy and some people made things hard for him.

Jeremiah never stopped telling people what I told him to say. He just kept on persevering. The things he warned people would happen if they made the wrong choices ended up happening. If people had only listened to and obeyed God's instructions things would have been easier for everyone.

Jeremiah had a helper called Baruch. He was a scribe and knew how to read and write well. When Jeremiah needed to write down the messages from God to be read to people, Baruch would write it down on a scroll, while Prophet Jeremiah would pray and listen to Me and tell Baruch just what to say. He was a good scribe and diligent to write everything correctly. Baruch helped read the scrolls so people could hear what the message said.

Once, when some people were upset about what Jeremiah was passing on to them from God, they tried to stop him. But there was a good man who respected My Words and My prophet, his name was Ebedmelech and he was a dark skinned man from Ethiopia. Together with a team of helpers they quickly went to rescue Prophet Jeremiah and brought him where he would be safe and have food to eat. Jeremiah had bread to eat each day even though there wasn't much food left in that area of the country. Food was getting scarce because of the troubles that were coming as a result of everyone's disobedience to My Words and instructions.

Because Ebedmelech helped My prophet and believed My Words, I told Jeremiah to tell Ebedmelech that when the troubles came, and others would be having a very sad and difficult time, that Ebedmelech would be kept safe because he trusted in Me. He would have God's extra blessing of protection and safe-keeping.

At first when the king heard the messages that Prophet Jeremiah was passing on to them from Me, he wasn't motivated to do much about it, and he didn't like what was being said. The King wasn't happy to hear the warning messages that were read to him from the first scroll that was written, and even though people begged him not to, he went ahead and burned it. However, I told Jeremiah to make a new one, and told him what to say, while Baruch the scribe wrote it down again—and this new scroll had even more messages and words added to it from Me than the first one.

However, later on when the hard times started to come, he knew that he needed God's help, and he went to meet with Jeremiah to hear what My instructions were. Others also came to Jeremiah asking him what they were supposed to do. But sadly, even though they promised at first to do whatever I said to do, when Jeremiah received the message from God to pass on to them, they weren't eager to follow through and do it after all. As a result of their reluctance to obey, things only got worse.

Other countries were causing them all sorts of troubles, and the king of Babylon—King Nebuchadnezzar—ended up forcing most of the Israelites to leave their country. Instead of living happily and peacefully as they had been able to do during the times when everyone was honouring and obeying God's Word, now they had other kings in charge of them and making them move wherever they wanted the people to go.

It was very sad and difficult for everyone. God had warned the people for many years about this happening, and through the prophet Jeremiah told the people what to do to make things easier and to make King Nebuchadnezzar treat them better. But no one wanted to listen, so things were very difficult, confusing and tough.

When the people were travelling and being taken to Babylon, the man in charge, amazingly enough, told Jeremiah that he didn't have to go to Babylon after all but could go wherever he wanted to go. If he wanted to go there he could, or if he wanted to stay in his country and be with the person that was made in charge of the small amount of people that were left, he could. Prophet Jeremiah chose to live in his country and help the people there.

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### **Tough Times**

Jeremiah is called by some people "the weeping prophet" as he was around to speak God's Words to the people at a very sad time. It hurt his heart so much to see the waywardness of everyone, and to see the very sad results of their continued disobedience. Most everyone in the country he was in had to leave and move far away, and do as kings of other lands ordered them. It was not an easy time at all. There was so much sorrow and disruption to their lives. Nothing was the same. It was a time of much change and many difficult lessons. People wished then that they had listened to the many prophets and countless messages that God passed on to them, so this sad turn of events could have been avoided.

Jeremiah wrote another book for Me called, "Lamentations." One verse says, "For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water." (Lamentations 1:16) The country was so empty and sad, compared to what it used to be like before everyone was forced to leave and to serve other kings.

Jeremiah thought about the situation, and prayed and wrote down the words that came to him, he wrote: "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." (Lamentations 3:26) They would need hope and faith in that very difficult time, and they would need patience until it was time for things be made right again and they could return to their land.

Jeremiah knew what it was like to lose everything, and to see all his loved ones and relatives going through hard times. He knew what it was like to cry and cry. He knew what it was like to feel that aching feeling in his heart where he felt it was breaking and hurting. He knew what it was like to suffer and go without help for long periods of time. He knew what hunger felt like. He knew what it was like to experience hard times as a result of other's poor decisions. He knew what it was like to not have a family with children and a loving wife.

He knew what it was like to feel so very lonely. He knew what it was like to be hurting all over and to be in need of healing. He knew what it was like to pray and pray and to wait for a long time for prayers to be answered, and to be left wondering when or if the answer would come. But no matter what he was going through in his heart and mind, deep inside his heart he still had faith and trust that I loved and cared and would eventually bring relief.

Here's a passage that expresses it: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. (Lamentations 3:22-25)

In the Book of Isaiah where there is the prophecy about My time on Earth, it says I was “Despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” (Isaiah 53:3) So I know what Jeremiah felt like, and I know what you or your loved ones feel when things are real difficult or seem to be going all wrong. If your heart is aching, come to Me. I can bring the comfort and soothing that you need, until the time is right to bring full healing and relief and joy and restoration.

There’s a memorable passage in the Book of Jeremiah. God told him to go to where the potter was making clay pots. The wet clay was formed into jars and pots of all sizes and shapes and used for so many things. Pots of clay were used by everyone in everyday life. Clay was probably about as common to use as plastic is today in this modern world.

As Jeremiah watched the potter at his work using a potter’s wheel he saw that something wasn’t right with the pot he was trying to make, so the potter started again and made it better the second time. I spoke to Jeremiah and said that I am like a potter, and My people are in My hands. He will care for them, hold them, and make things better for them—if they will be like clay, and easily yield to My hands that want to form their lives into something beautiful and good.

I, Jesus am like the potter of your life. I move you this way and that way, and I know what the future holds for you and what kind of a person you need to be, and what experiences will help to prepare you for the future and what you will be needed to do. If things aren’t right in your life, like the clay that wasn’t being formed right, and you let Me change you and teach you new things, and you say “yes” to My will and ways, then in the end you will see I have made something wonderful out of your life.

However, if you insist on doing things just the way you think you should and you are stubborn and disobedient when I show you a better way, then it’s as non-helpful for the success of your own life as it would be for the clay to refuse to be moulded. What would it be then? Nothing but a dry clump of clay that is unusable.

Sometimes the things that happen in people’s lives are difficult and they really don’t understand them at the time. But if they choose to use the situation or experience to change them for the better, and they pray for Me to make them a better person because of it, a “better vessel,” then they will be happier for it in the end.

You are in My hands and I have wonderful plans for your future—and even for you today. What will you choose to do? Will you listen to Me and do what I know is best for you to do? If you do, good things will come your way. Even if not everything goes well for you all the time—just like the prophet Jeremiah had many difficulties—you will eventually be very glad that you did things My way. Those people who didn’t follow the advice given in prophecy through Jeremiah didn’t let themselves be moulded and changed for the better, and things were much tougher for them.

The Prophet Jeremiah trusted that what God said, would indeed happen. Then when those hard times came he trusted that it was all for a good reason and I, the Lord, would make things better in the end, as people turned their hearts back to Me again. When Jeremiah told

people I words and they didn't like it and treated him unkindly, he trusted that I would take care of him, and he didn't give up doing whatever I asked him to do.

The prophet Jeremiah had difficulties, but it didn't feel as hard for him as it was for many others, because He was staying close Me. He was cared for by Me, and he had peace in his heart knowing that he was faithful to do what I said to do. As one of the promises in his book say, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." (Jeremiah 17:7)

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### Wise Young Men

When Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon took control of Jerusalem, he wanted many of the gold and silver vessels and items that were in the temple to be brought back to his country. There was something else that he thought would be a help to him. –He wanted some wise young men to be his counsellors.

"Bring me some of the young Israelite men, sons of kings and princes and those who could be a help to me as I rule."

King Nebuchadnezzar listed the qualities that he wanted those young men to have. Ashpenaz was the man who the king chose to do the job of finding the right people. He was to look for young men who were wise, smart; those who could study well and learn new things—like learn to speak the new language they would need to know in order to talk with the king. They would need to know things about science and clever things. They would need be skilled, and have the good character traits to act well in a king's palace. They would need to be in good health and look nice, have taken good care of themselves, as well as be likeable and pleasant to be around.

Ashpenaz looked around the country and gathered those he thought would be just whom the king needed. They came to live near the king and would have three years to be specially cared for, to study, to learn the language and to prepare before going before the king for him to see if they would make good helpers and counsellors.

King Nebuchadnezzar said that the team of young men being trained could have a portion of what was cooked and prepared each day for him and all those in his palace. They could drink his wine and eat some of his meat and all that was served. The king wanted these men to have the best, so they could be wise and strong. He thought what he ate was the best type of food, and would be just great. However, he didn't believe in and pray to God, and what was usually served wasn't blessed by God, nor was it the type of food that some of the Israelites had learned was the most nourishing.

Here was a situation where young people were suddenly not with their parents or family, and they had to make their own decisions and make wise choices without those nearby who had

patiently taught them what was right and wrong. They had to stand on their own faith and choose to do what pleased Me without anyone making them do it.

Some of the ones who were chosen to be helpers to the king of Babylon, that were from the land of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. These four friends were strong in faith and conviction. They were willing to learn and did the best they could in their new situation. They didn't sit around crying and whining that they didn't have all the things they used to. They were brave and wanted to make the best of their situation and try to make things better and more Godly.

Ashpenaz gave each of these young men a new name—a name in the language of Babylon. Daniel was named Belteshazzar, Hananiah was named Shadrach, Mishael was given the name Meshach, and Azariah was called Abednego.

So on top of everything else that was new for them, they weren't even called the same name they had been called all their life up until then. It was all a very big change and took lots of prayer and faith to make the best of their situation.

These young men loved God and had been taught to follow and obey Him. They had to choose what things they should obey when those who were now in charge gave them instructions, and what things they needed to not do.

One of the first choices they found themselves having to make was about the food they were served. Food is an important thing—what you eat can affect a lot of things about you. It affects your health and your appearance, your ability to think clearly and learn new things. It affects your moods and energy level. The food they were offered wasn't going to help them have clear minds to think and study, nor strong and healthy bodies, and it was against what they had been taught was right and healthy to eat.

Asking Me, Jesus, what to eat and what is best for you in your situation is very important if you want to be in tip-top shape. Sometimes you don't have much of a choice, because there are only certain things available, or it is all that can be afforded or what is in season. But when there is a choice, choosing to pray and ask Me about your food, and having self-control to stick to the good choices I present to you, can have a great effect on you.

In the situation the young men found themselves in there was a lot of pressure put on them to learn new things, to do well in their studies, to be physically fit, and to be the kind of men that could help and be wise counsellors to the king. It was a big responsibility. Daniel and his friends took it seriously, and knew that it was important that they learn whatever they needed to learn, and become what was needed.

Have you ever felt real tired after eating a big meal, or felt very lazy after eating certain foods, or felt buzzed after eating something, feeling that you couldn't sit or remain calm and learn things well, and just needed to wiggle all over the place? Daniel had been taught the importance of a good and wholesome diet, and he knew that it would be the key to good health, a clear thinking mind and robust body.

So when the king's food and wine was served to them, these Godly wise young men knew it was something of great importance to speak up about. They couldn't eat it with a clear conscience. It wasn't right for them, and it wouldn't help them achieve the goals that they needed to. So they asked Ashpenaz's permission to not have to eat it. They explained the type of food they would like to have served instead.

Ashpenaz was supposed to do as the king asked, and he was a bit worried that they wouldn't have good health and strength if they didn't eat the king's type of food. He wanted to make things as nice for Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as he could, but he was worried what the king would think, and he didn't know what to do.

Ashpenaz had put a man called Melzar in charge of these four young men, and Daniel presented an idea to him. Daniel asked Melzar if for ten days they could be given only water to drink instead of wine, and only pulse to eat—just vegetables and beans, and foods that grow in the ground. It was to be a test and Melzar agreed to try it. These four young men would be served their special healthful diet, and the other young men would continue being served the king's food.

Daniel told Melzar that after the ten days of food try-out, that he could look at all the young men and see which diet was best by how healthy the different teams looked, and then he could choose to feed them whatever he thought was best—the king's food or their requested healthful diet. At the end of the ten days they all were looked over to see what team was the healthiest and best looking. Daniel and his friends looked noticeably the best! They appeared strong and handsome, more so than all the others who had been served the king's meat. Melzar continued then to serve them the good food that they requested.

Daniel had reacted in a wise and respectful way, and yet didn't just do what was the easiest thing, or just what everyone else was doing. He knew that he and his friends were placed there for a reason—that God had put them there, in the very palace of the king, and he wanted to make wise and good decisions.

Because they chose to do things God's way and keep praying and staying close to God, He blessed them with special talents and skills. They were able to learn all kinds of things, they were wise, smart, skilled and they excelled in their studies. Besides this, Daniel was given the gift of understanding visions and dreams, and giving counsel to people about what their dreams meant.

After the three years of training and preparation it was time for all the young men to stand before the king, to talk with him, and to see if they would make good and wise counsellors.

The king knew that to make good decisions he would need to talk with others, get new ideas, find out information, and have solutions thought of. If he talked with people that weren't wise, then it would result in poor decisions that could negatively affect the whole country.

So the day of their big test came when they were to go before the king. They prayed a whole lot! Ashpenaz who was in charge of this project brought all the young men to King Nebuchadnezzar.



The king talked with them and asked questions. He realised that there were four special young men that seemed far wiser than everyone else in the answers they gave, and the way they came across. They were good looking, answered him well, were humble yet bold and had conviction. They said things that were helpful and wise. The king chose these men—Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—to be some of his special counsellors.

There were others that helped talk with the king—older wise men, astrologers, and magicians, but the king found these four Godly and wise young men 10 times better than any of the other wise men and counsellors. What made the difference? Was it just the food? Or was it the fact that they were connected to the God of all wisdom and were able to hear My and My angelic counselors speaking to them, telling them what to say and do?

They didn't try to just impress the king with their own witty or clever words, nor were they trying to use it as an opportunity to hold an important position in the palace, and be well-thought of in the country. They prayed with all their hearts and spoke as I, their Lord, led them to. They loved and worshiped Me and were My faithful servants, even in this new and challenging situation.

Daniel and his friends knew God's Word and were eager to hear any new things I had to tell them. They weren't afraid of people—even kings—if I wanted them to do something differently. They served Me and did what I wanted them to do. This is what made the difference.

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### **Job's Lessons**

There was a man called Job, and he was a good man who always tried to do what he thought was the right thing to do. He determined to always have faith and trust in God's wisdom no matter what happened.

One fine day, as he was praying for his family and enjoying having all their needs met, there was quite a different scene going on in the court of Heaven. God was talking with the angels and in walks the Enemy to ask God's permission to cause Job a lot of trouble.

God had put many angels all around Job and his property to protect him. All was going well for him, and he was very wealthy. Job liked to please God and to make sure that the words he said were good and true and right, and not proud or careless. It was important to him that he make the right choices and behave himself well, showing kindness and self-control.

The Enemy challenged God to test Job. He said that the only reason why Job was always praying, and was praiseful was because things were going so well for him, and God's angels guarded him well. If things were to suddenly go bad, and sad and difficult things were to happen to him, perhaps he wouldn't be so full of faith, and be trusting God through it. The Enemy thought that Job wouldn't be able to handle troubles, and would just collapse and throw away his faith. But he was wrong.

God then allowed Job to have everything that he had taken away in a single day. Now how hard do you think that would be for you if that happened to you? Houses fell down, animals were taken by others, fire and storms came and ruined things, and your dearest loved ones perished, suddenly?

How do you think Job reacted? He passed the test. He said, “The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.” He remembered that he was born having nothing—not even clothes to start out with, and when he would leave this life he wouldn’t be able to take anything that he owned on Earth anyway.

It was a big test, but he kept on loving and trusting God no matter what happened.

However, the Enemy wanted to give him more trouble. He is always looking for ways to get you to be discouraged and to lose your faith in God’s wise care. God only allows what will in the end help you. Things could be going wrong for you all the time, every minute of the day, but because you pray and because of God’s protection, safe keeping through the angels sent to protect and provide for you, and because God has a plan for your life, most of the time things go well.

When things then do go wrong, sometimes people act all surprised and shocked and upset, thinking how bad things are. They don’t remember then all the good that has been given to them day after day, year after year.

Job was able to handle losing everything he had, and kept his faith through it. It was very commendable. However, the next test seemed much harder. He got a very painful affliction. He had boils and sores all over his body. And oh how much it hurt. That was where he felt he couldn’t handle it any more. It was very hard to endure.

Some of his friends came and talked with him. They were puzzled by this sudden change in his life. First he was a good man that was blessed in every way, and suddenly he was a poor sick man. They talked and discussed and argued, and some unpleasant, untrue and unwise words were said.

“You must have done something wrong, and this is your punishment,” some were saying.

“No, I didn’t! I have been good all along. I think it’s wrong for God to have given me this hard time, when I’ve done so much good!” Job was saying.

To defend himself he started saying things that showed he thought he knew better than God what was right and good. If God always gives bad times to badly behaving people, then Job felt something was wrong, because as far as he knew, he hadn’t done anything that would displease God. But bad things do happen to all, no matter what they do, as a lesson, as a test, and as a way to train people while on Earth. It’s just the way things are, and none can escape being taught tough things at times.

“If I was God I wouldn’t have let this happen to me!” Job was feeling.

Some things can be so very difficult, and most people on Earth have something happen in their life that seems harder than they can manage. But those who love God can trust that everything will eventually work out for the best in the end—as dear Job found out.

At first it was hard for him to see what his lesson was—that he thought of himself too proudly, and thought he was so good on his own, and nothing sad or bad or hard should ever happen to him. But even the best of people can be bettered by hard times, if it teaches them humility, compassion and strong faith that all things will work out for good, one day.

I loved Job a lot, and wanted to teach him that to walk in humility, and to depend on Me to help him do the right thing was the best way to be.

The Bible says that I am “meek and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29), and that “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.” (James 4:6)

Things were all going to work out for Job again, but it just was a special time of lesson learning—not just for him, but for his friends and relatives too. He was well known by many people around, so what he learned he could teach and tell many others. They would be benefited by what he could tell them, as he was respected and listened to.

Before his time of trouble he was often counselling people and giving them hope and courage in their hard times. Now, with his new experience of knowing what it felt like, he could be an even greater and wiser counsellor.

After much discussing with his friends about what the problem was, finally one of them felt something in his heart, and he knew he was meant to tell Job. He told him with conviction that he believed the problem wasn't that he did something wrong, but that God wasn't pleased that he thought he knew better than God what was right.

Then I, the Lord, joined in on the conversation and made things clear. That really got everyone listening and learning the lesson in a hurry!

I asked him some questions like, “Where were you when the world was first made? Can you control the stars? Can you make lightning or control the clouds and rain? Can you make sure all the animals have food to eat? Do you teach them what to do to care for their young?”

Well, it was obvious to Job that God knew a whole lot more than he did, and had everything in control. Job apologized for his proud way of thinking and talking, and told Me that he now knew that I was the wisest and knew every thought and word of each person on Earth.

I told them all—Job and his friends—to be sorry for their wrong ways of looking at things and all the wrong things they had been saying while trying in their own minds to figure out why Job was having troubles. When Job prayed for his friends, as I, the Lord, asked him to do, then he began to receive healing.

His friends and relatives then came to see Job and give him gifts and encourage him after that difficult time. And I gave Job some very big gifts to encourage him too. I gave him back double the amount of everything that he had before. He was even wealthier than before—and much wiser too, after having learned all that he did.

Everyone has troubles and hard times, and it doesn't mean that they are behaving worse than you and are needing to be corrected. Everyone gets turns to learn lessons while on Earth. So if you or others are having a time of difficulty and having a chance to learn new lessons, trust that it can all work out for the best in the end. Try not to get too discouraged, but keep your faith strong, knowing that all things will work together for good, for those that trust and love Me. And try not to think negatively or critically of others when it's their turn to experience difficulties. Just pray for each other, and keep reminding one another that I am in control and will bring good out of even the most difficult times.

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### Queen Esther

King Ahasuerus ruled over a large area—27 provinces in the land that was between India and Ethiopia, which included parts of what is now known as Asia, the Middle East and part of Africa. The countries and lands were divided differently back then.

There were many Israelites or Jews as they were called, living in the area he ruled over, and many other nationalities and many languages were spoken throughout the land. Many people were scattered around in various places because of King Nebuchadnezzar making many of them move out of their home countries.

King Ahasuerus had just spent six months showing off his great city and palace and his wealth to many important men and princes and those in charge of the various provinces of this kingdom. Afterwards he made a feast and celebration for those who lived in Shushan, the place he lived. Everyone there was invited to attend the final feast, from princes to peasants, old and young.

Everything was decorated fancy for this feast that was to last for seven days and was held the court of the king's palace. There were white, green, and blue decorations hanging that were fastened on to silver rings, and pillars of marble with cords of fine linen and purple.

The places to sit, recline and relax on were made of gold and silver, and the ground was covered in all types of marble—red, blue, white and black. The glasses used were cups made of gold, each cup being a unique shape and style. Royal wine in great abundance was served, and people could freely drink all that they wanted to; or not drink if they so desired. It was to be the fanciest week-long celebration they'd ever had.

Queen Vashti also made a fancy celebration in one of the king's houses, for women to attend. So everyone was partying and relaxing, and getting drunk as well.

When people drink too much wine it makes them unable to think clearly and react wisely or the way they normally would. So when it seemed things were going real well and people were laughing and trying to have a good time, then things started to go sour.

In the middle of the party one day the king got the thought that he all of a sudden want to show off one more thing that he was proud of. He'd just spent half a year showing and telling

everyone who visited how great he was and how rich he was. But there was one more thing. He had a very pretty wife—the queen.

If he hadn't been so drunk and in the mood to boast he might not have done what he did next. He would have remembered that the queen was in the middle of hosting a huge party herself. And if she hadn't been in party mode, she might have remembered her manners and behaved more politely.

The king in a silly moment made a hasty decision and asked his most trusted helpers to go and get the queen, right then, and have her stop all that she was doing and come to be looked at and admired and stared at by many others. He wanted to continue to show things off, and this time his wife.

Now, it's nice that he liked how pretty she was, but it wasn't the best timing, and he might have planned it better if he hadn't had too much to drink.

Queen Vashti told the men who came to bring her to the king that she wouldn't come. That was a big mistake. No matter what was going on or what she was in the middle of, she should have dropped all that she was doing and obeyed, even if she wasn't in the mood for it. The rules of the land then were very strict and whatever the king said, had to be obeyed.

So the king was stuck with a very difficult problem. If he let it pass and just didn't say anything about it, and said, "That's okay, she can obey whenever she wants to, and when she doesn't want to she doesn't have to," then that would have caused problems in the country.

When you are a king or a queen or a leader or ruler, everything you do is watched and copied by others. The king could see that this refusal to obey could cause a whole lot of trouble all throughout the land. If the queen didn't do what the king asked, then many others would think they could also just do as they pleased when asked to do things. He could see that it would also cause husbands and wives to not get along well and each one trying to do their own thing also, and not listening to each other.

King Ahasuerus talked with his counsellors about what to do. They knew that word would get out and spread all over the land, from person to person, telling the story about how the queen didn't do what the king asked her to do. It was decided that Vashi could no longer be queen, and the king wouldn't ever call for her again.

Just that moment of one person acting on a sudden impulse, and the wilfulness and disobedience of another meant it was the last time they met. It was a tough time, and the king regretted what happened, and the queen was sorry. But for the good of the others in the country, and for the purpose of keeping peace and good relations in families all over, that's what they chose to be the consequence. Letters were published and sent all over the place, so people would know that it wasn't a good example of the way to behave, and that there was a consequence.

The king missed his wife, queen Vashti, and his counsellors tried to encourage him and came up with an idea. They would look all over the country for ladies, one of these who could

possibly be a new queen. These women would be brought before the king, one by one for him to choose one to be the new queen.

There was a man called Mordecai, and he had a cousin named Esther, and they lived in Shushan, where the palace of the king was. Mordecai had raised Esther and was much older than her. She was an orphan and so he had been like a father to her, and had taught her well. They both loved Me, the Lord, and respected Me. Mordecai was one of the people who had to leave their former land, when King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had made many of the Israelites move out. He and his cousin Esther, who was a grown young lady by then, were now living near to King Ahasuerus

When the king's men searched the land for fine young ladies she was also chosen and brought to the palace. The women wouldn't be shown to the king right away, but would have about a year of preparation first, to get all prettied up, eat good food, have nice baths, put on perfumed oil, get strengthened and healthy, and learn how to act and how to be around the king. They needed to learn the ways of a queen.

Mordecai came each day to talk with Esther and see how she was doing. She respected him and followed his wise advice even though she was a grown woman and no longer living with him.

When the year was finished it was the time for the king to choose one of the ladies to be the new queen. Esther was very pretty, but she also was kind, and godly, as well as humble. People noticed that she was a special woman. She had God's Spirit in her and this made her stand out from others, and she was liked by many.

When it was her turn to be presented before the king, she was wise and humble and asked for advice from the one who was in charge of her preparation. He knew what the king would like and he suggested to her what to wear and how to behave. She listened and followed his advice.

When King Ahasuerus saw her he was delighted with her, and loved her a lot. He chose her right away to be the new queen. The crown was placed on her head, and she had a new and big responsibility. A great feast was held to celebrate that Esther was the new queen.

God had made her be queen for a special reason. Why? Well, later on someone who often helped the king, tried to trick him into agreeing to allow a lot of harm to come the Israelites—or Jews as they were called then—that were still living in the land that King Ahasuerus ruled over.

This man, called Haman, was very proud and wanted everyone to bow down to him as he walked past them. Those who didn't serve and worship the true God didn't seem to mind bowing down, as they would rather do that than to make Haman angry at them. They feared him and what he might do. However, Mordecai loved and respected Me, the Lord, more than anyone else. He knew he wasn't to bow down to this man, who he knew had his heart filled with all the wrong kinds of things.

This showed up soon enough, as Haman's pride-fuelled anger thought that all the Jews should not be allowed to continue living in their kingdom, simply because Mordecai was one of them. He plotted an evil plan and tricked the King into promising that any of the Jews that still were in the land should be caused trouble, and put to death if they stayed around. Without knowing the full story, the king who trusted Haman thought what Haman slyly said was good. This evil plan would cause harm and trouble to so many people. I wanted this plan stopped.

Esther had heard about the plans against the Jews, started by Haman, since her cousin Mordecai had informed her. She prayed desperately for the Lord to help her and her people. It was urgent that she talk with the king, but the rules of the land were that one had to wait to be called on by the king.

For three days she and her maids, and Mordecai as well, fasted all food and water. They spent the time in prayer for the king to receive her into the court room, unrequested, and for a solution to be found. At the end of three days, Esther put on her most beautiful, royal queen's clothing and went to speak with the king. During her days of prayer, I had showed her the best way to get the king to listen and to want to change his mind and help her people.

When the king saw her standing there in the court, he loved the sight of her and held out his gold sceptre, giving her permission to approach him. Did she start weeping and crying and begging him to help, right then and there? No, she had faith. Instead she invited the king to do one of his favourite things—to attend a banquet of wine that evening, and served delicious food. It would just be with her and Haman. The king agreed and showed up that night for a nice time with his lovely queen and most trusted counselor.

King Ahasuerus however knew that there was more that she wanted to ask him, and that she was probably planning to say it at the banquet. But when the time of drinking and dinner was over and she didn't ask him anything special, he wondered about it. "What do you want to request from me?" the king asked Esther. "I'll say yes to whatever you want."

Continuing with the plan that I had showed her, Esther said, "I would like for you to come again tomorrow night to have another banquet. Then I'll do as you have asked, and will tell you what my request is."

Intrigued, the king agreed. He was wondering what was going on, and just what Esther was going to tell him. That night he just couldn't get to sleep. I was at work. I wanted to humble proud Haman and bless honest and faithful Mordecai.

Some time back some men had tried to take over the king's place as ruler and bring him harm, but God had helped Mordecai to find out their bad plans and to report them to the king. Things were safe in the palace again because of it. Mordecai had saved the king's life.

During the night after the first banquet with queen Esther, while Haman was fuming and planning what to do to bring harm to Mordecai, the king meanwhile just can't seem to go to sleep.

King Ahasuerus gets the idea to have the chronicles or records read to him of things that have happened in the kingdom and while he was the ruler. He heard the story read to him about about Mordecai and the good that he did for him, the king.

“What did I do to reward Mordecai for helping me?” the king asks.

“Nothing was done yet,” came the response.

Just then, Haman, the king’s trusted helper who was also having a rough night, comes to talk to the king about how he feels about Mordecai not giving him better respect. Not being allowed to come right into the king’s court without permission, Haman stands in the outer court, hoping to be let in.

“Who’s standing in the court?” King Ahasuerus asks that sleepless night.

When he is told that it is his trusted counsellor, Haman, the king lets him come in at once—not to talk to the king about his own problems, but to listen and help the king.

King Ahasuerus asks him, “What should I do for a man that the king wants to honour?”

Filled with pride and nearly only always thinking about himself Haman wrongly assumes that the king must be talking about him. So he lists all the best things that he, Haman, would love to have given to him—all the ways he could be given great respect and honour.

“A man’s pride shall bring him low” a proverb says, and so it happened.

Haman’s chest fills with pride while visions dance in his mind. He speaks to the king.

“To the man that the king wants to honour, let him ride on the king’s own horse, wearing the king’s royal apparel and the king’s crown placed on his head. Let one of the king’s most noble princes lead the horse through the city, calling out, ‘Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honour.’ ”

As he is saying this, his mental image shows him, Haman, on the horse, smiling, while everyone is bowing in respect. His thoughts are jolted suddenly when the king says,

“Quickly now, go and do this, just what you said. Don’t miss doing any of this. Do this for Mordecai the Jew.”

A worse instruction couldn’t have been given. Haman turns pale. He can’t imagine being asked to do this, to honour in such a respected way, his most bitter enemy. His pride brought him so low.

The next day, when morning came, Haman had to be that ‘most noble prince’ that led Mordecai around, giving him great honour. Being so near to a king, means you have to do whatever you are asked to do. So, of course Haman had to obey and do it, but when it was over he just about collapsed. He’d never felt so humiliated in all his life. He didn’t have long to think about how he felt, for the second banquet that he was invited to with the queen and king was happening that night. Just as he felt like he wanted to crawl into a cave from



embarrassment, the king's servants were there to summon him to the king and queen's banquet.

The wine and food was just as delicious as the night before, and Esther looked just as beautiful. When the king could not stand the suspense any longer, at last Esther revealed her request. She is in danger. She tells the king the trouble and dangerous predicament that she and her people are in—and says that it is Haman who is causing the problems. The king was shocked and outraged! From that moment on, Haman was no longer the king's counsellor. He was taken away to receive the same awful destruction that he was planning to have happen to Mordecai. Haman's job and the special ring from the king that he had, was given to Mordecai, someone the king knew he could trust.

There was more that needed to be done to fix the troubles that had been started by Haman, so once again Esther came before the king, this time weeping and begging for his help. Just having the proud man out of the way didn't stop the terrible decree that had been issued; what Haman had tricked the king into deciding and declaring. King Ahasuerus told Esther that she and Mordecai could write a letter, of whatever they wanted to say, to all people in the land. It could be sealed with the king's seal and approval.

So Mordecai and Esther did this, and wrote and sent letters all over the country, in all the different languages that were spoken. They had many translations done and copies made. It was a major publishing project as it was to go to so many places with people speaking all kinds of languages. The letters were sent out by the postmen of their time, riding mules and camels, going all around as fast as they could travel.

The king wanted the Jews all to be allowed to live safely in his land, and no harm to come to them. Esther was a good and brave queen that her people loved, because she loved and obeyed Me, her Lord and God. Her older cousin Mordecai was giving the place as the next most important man in the country besides the king. He started out as a man that loved, obeyed and respected God, and took care of an orphan girl. It was a humble beginning, but "he that shall humble himself shall be exalted". He didn't know that the little girl he cared for would be a queen one day, and be the one God used, along with him, to help all their people.

Maybe I, Jesus, have asked your family to just care for one orphan, or perhaps several. Who knows where your faithfulness in training them right will lead to. Every bit of love and kindness that you give to them, and all the good skills you help to teach them, will pay off one day. Most of all, the way you lead them to know Me, Jesus, their loving Heavenly Father, and how you help to instruct them in My Word, is the best thing you can do. Perhaps one day you'll see the huge and big effect this good training will eventually have on yours and other's lives, just like with Mordecai and Queen Esther.

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### **King Cyrus and King Darius**

I, the Lord, promised to the people of Israel, through the prophet Jeremiah, that they would be allowed to return to their home land again. So when King Cyrus ruled over many of the

lands where they were now living in, I moved his heart to want to allow them all to return to their home country. He wanted them to go back to Jerusalem and build up the temple again.

King Nebuchadnezzar had taken all the gold and silver vessels—the bowls and cups and all that was stored in the temple and put it in his own place. But when King Cyrus was the new king he decided to let the people return and fix things up again. He ruled over that land and had charge of all those treasures that had been taken away. King Cyrus said they could all be returned to Jerusalem. A man called Sheshbazzar, who was the prince of the land of Judah, took it all back—over 5,000 gold and silver vessels—with them that were travelling from Babylon back to Jerusalem.

Besides these treasures being returned, King Cyrus said that those living around the Israelites should give them supplies and help them in any way they could—with gold and silver, with animals, with goods and so forth, so they could have all they needed as they started to build up their cities and temple again. Everyone that was travelling back, along with their animals was listed and counted, and they all could return to the cities that they had come from.

It took a couple years from the time they arrived back in Jerusalem until they began the construction work on the temple. When they were ready to start, the priests Zerubbabel and Jeshua and others began organizing and appointing those who would start the work. It would be a big project to complete, so they didn't wait until it was all done to have their first celebration. After the foundation was laid for the new temple, the people got together for a big time of praise.

There were musicians playing and singers singing praise to God, doing it in the way King David had instructed and taught the people to do many years before. He had told those around, when he was king how to praise God in song, and now many years later they wanted to do it in that way again—as they wanted to follow King David's example of loving and pleasing Me.

People were shouting for joy! Their first focus after returning and settling back in their home land was to make the place of prayer, and to make times of worshiping and praising Me their priority. They had learned after all those years away and the troubles they'd been through, that loving and staying close to Me was what would make things go well in their lives.

Well, they were off to a good start, but everything didn't go smoothly. There were others that were living around in the area who weren't happy about the Israelites building up the temple again. They thought that those now in Jerusalem would then just be doing their own thing and not obeying and giving money to the King of Persia any longer, who ruled over all that area.

When Cyrus was no longer the king, a letter was written to the next king telling him to make them stop building the temple, and saying why they thought it shouldn't be built. The King of Persia at that time then agreed and told the Israelites that the work of building the temple needed to stop.

Haggai and Zechariah were prophets then, and passed on My Words and messages to the people. Everyone needed the encouragement during that time especially, as they were being

forced to stop building the temple that at that time I wanted them to build, as a sign of turning again to Me, and making their nation a God-respecting place.

While the new king reigned they weren't permitted to work on the building project. However, when Darius became the next king, Zerubbabel and Jeshua decided to get building again. No one could legally stop them, as the king that made the rule that they should stop building it was no longer in power. Zerubbabel and Jeshua knew it was what I wanted them to do, so the work began again, in spite of those who were still grumbling about it. But with the encouragement of God's prophets they found the strength to make good progress day-by-day.

The people who were trying to stop their project came snooping around to see what was going on and found the temple was being built quickly. They asked questions and tried to get the names of the leaders of the project written down so they could have, in writing, the ones in charge of the construction work to report them to the king, and make them stop.

However, rather than listing their names and trying to argue and answer each little question, those working on the building project decided to use it as an opportunity to tell the King the story of their lesson and the history behind it all. This would help the King come to know Me, the Lord, better, and realise that obeying and respecting Me is a wise thing to do.

So when the grumblers wrote to the king about it, informing him about the project, they also included the letter from the people working on the temple and what they had to say.

The letter told of how because of their disobedience to Me that I had allowed King Nebuchadnezzar to disrupt things, make them leave their land, and ruin the old temple and take all the special things out of it. The letter continued to explain how when King Cyrus was ruling he said everyone could return to their land. He gave back all the gold and silver vessels that had been in Babylon, that belonged to the temple, and he gave the order that the temple be rebuilt.

They explained that they were trying to rebuild it, since King Cyrus said they should. The letter suggested that King Darius see if that written decree could be found, the one given by King Cyrus telling the Israelites to start the temple rebuilding project. Then King Darius would know that it was true, and that they were actually doing what they were meant to do.

When King Darius read the letter and read where it suggested that he find King Cyrus' decree, then he made a decree for that scroll to be looked for. The search was made, and at last it was found in the "house of scrolls" in a palace!

After reading it, King Darius gave his full support to the building project. He said that no one should give them any trouble from then on, and the work should continue to progress. In fact, he said that the tax money from those living nearby should be given to help support the project.

King Darius ordered that all kinds of food be given to them daily, so they would all have what they needed to make fast progress. King Darius was glad that prayers would be offered, and asked that the priests pray for him and his sons too.

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## Ezra

At last, after several years and lots of hard work and perseverance, to the great joy of all, the new temple was finished being built! Everyone had a great celebration and rejoiced that they were at last together again, and able to pray and worship and sing and do what was written down in the Books of Moses and what I had told them through My prophets. They read and followed My instructions to them.

There was a man called Ezra and he was a scribe of the words of the God of Heaven. He would read and write and make copies of the books of Moses and other documents. He knew My Word very well, and the King liked that. So the King sent Ezra out of Babylon to Jerusalem with a mission—to go and teach the people God’s Words and instructions and to find others who could help do that job.

The King was very interested in having the people follow My instructions and he promised to Ezra that he could have whatever riches, food, gold, silver and supplies that were needed to do the job of helping people learn to do things My way.

He had permission to use and ask for all that was needed from the King’s treasures and from the land. If people didn’t follow and obey and do what My Word said, the king told Ezra to correct them and give whatever punishment as seemed best, in order to keep people going the right way.

The King wrote this in a decree that whatever Ezra needed from that part of the country to help the people follow in My ways and have all the things that were needed for the temple, that Ezra could have in unlimited amounts. He also said that the priests and Levites and singers and those who served Me would not need to pay any tribute or taxes. He made it a rule that they didn’t need to!

The King respected God and believed that good things happened to those that loved Me and prayed and worshiped Me. He wanted it to go well in his own life and in the lives of his sons and that’s why he was supportive and was encouraging people to follow in My way and gave all that he could to help them.

Ezra was fervent in prayer and dedicated to his mission of helping the people obey My Words to them. When there were problems that came up, or situations and things that needed My help right away, he would pray with all his heart, and I would hear and answer and bring victory.

Ezra knew it was by God's grace and mercy that they were kept safe and things were going well. He didn't take it for granted, but knew they needed to follow Me all the way, faithfully if they wanted My blessing.

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## Nehemiah

Different people feel My call to do something for Me in different ways. Some of the prophets saw visions of angels, other people were commissioned by Kings to do things that I led them to do. Some people had dreams from God and acted on them.

There was a man called Nehemiah, and his job was to serve wine to the King. He was just a humble servant, although he was a trusted and important one, who would often come into the presence of King Artaxerxes. Nehemiah's call came in the form of a deep feeling in his heart, after he heard some sad and disturbing news from his brother who was visiting. Nehemiah wondered how things were going in Jerusalem and was greatly saddened to hear that it was pretty rough. One of the main problems was that there was no wall and gates around the city, so the people who lived in the area that didn't like them could cause them distress and troubles.

The city didn't look all nice and fancy as it had many years before, when other good kings had ruled and they had all prospered. What could he do about it? Nehemiah was a servant and wasn't even free to go and travel and do this and that. Besides, he was just one person. What could he do?

However, he was overwhelmed with the feeling in his heart that something needed to be done in the situation and was deeply grieved about it all. The first step he took was to start with prayer—lots of prayer and getting things right in his heart with God. He asked for forgiveness for himself and others and reminded Me of My promises that if anyone turned again and was sorry and decided to do things God's way that they would be forgiven and brought again to the place they were meant to be.

Sometimes when people see the need for a job to get done and are praying for something to happen, sometimes the answer to the need is you! Instead of looking around for someone else to fix the problems, maybe you are who God wants to use to bring the solution. And so it was with Nehemiah.

One day as he was serving the wine to the King and Queen he couldn't hide his sorrow—it was shown on his face. Nehemiah had always tried to act pleasant around the King, but this time he just couldn't come across joyful. He felt the call in his heart, the great burden, that he was the one that needed to go and do something about the broken wall in Jerusalem.

Now, a wall around a city isn't a little thing to build, especially not with the tools and equipment that was available back then. It would be a huge undertaking, but in his heart Nehemiah was willing to go and tackle this enormous task, if God called him to—and if the king allowed it and gave him the help he needed.

When the king noticed that Nehemiah seemed very sad about something he asked Nehemiah what was troubling him. At first Nehemiah felt afraid, like maybe the king was unhappy about his servant coming into his presence all sad. But it was something that Nehemiah just couldn't hide. Nehemiah explained the reason for his sorrow—that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down, and things weren't going so well for those there. It was a place he had grown up in. It was his home country and city. It mattered personally to him.

The king surprised him and asked him what he would like. Nehemiah didn't dare just answer off the top of his head. He had prayed before that the king would help him in some way and here was the answer to his prayer. Whatever he asked for, the king would grant. He wanted to choose his words carefully and wisely. What would make the mission successful? What would he really need? Before talking he prayed with all his heart and then spoke.

Nehemiah asked for permission to be sent to build the wall.

"How long will you be gone for? When will you return?" the king asked, and then granted him permission to go. Nehemiah answered with a time he would come back by.

Nehemiah asked for letters to be written to the governors where he would be travelling, to give him permission to enter, and to be given safe travel. He asked for a letter of request from the king to ask the keeper of the king's forest to cut down trees for the timber he would need to use for the big gates of the city.

All these things were granted to Nehemiah by the king. Nehemiah had faith to ask for big things, and had great faith that he, just him, could go and start getting this huge project going.

I, Jesus, the King of the universe, enjoy hearing your prayers of faith when you ask Me to grant you big requests. It shows you believe that I am as powerful and wonderful as I am, and I like to answer you. And when I ask you to do a challenging job, and it seems too hard for you alone to do it and you ask for My help and begin obey in faith, this too makes Me very happy!

So the king was glad to not just see that Nehemiah was downhearted and in despair but that he was willing to be part of the solution and was filled with faith that things could be solved. The king was glad to give support to someone that had faith that it could be done.

Nehemiah and some others who went with him began their journey and their new challenge. When they arrived in Jerusalem some troublemakers were upset to see that someone had come to take care of things and check out the situation. It meant good news for the Israelites and something that would begin to put an end to the problem-makers' shenanigans.

The first part of the mission was done in secret. Nehemiah needed to see for himself the condition of his new construction site and building project. He and just a few others snuck around at night walking here and there getting a good idea of the state things were in. If he did this during the day no doubt there would be questions raised and people would wonder what he was up to. He needed to get the plans in progress before those trying to stop progress would hinder him.

Nehemiah then went during the day to talk with the rulers and noble men about his mission—to repair the wall; and he told them what the King had granted him. The men he talked with supported his plan and gave him their approval to begin work. Gates and walls began to get fixed as people worked hard together to make progress as quickly as possible. Not only was the work tiring, but it wasn't without its troublemakers.

There were those who seemed to have nothing better to do than to speak words of despair and discouragement, and they tried to weaken the teams working, through their words. Words can be a powerful thing and can make people feel strong and motivated, or feel weakened and like quitting.

These guys tried all that they could to stop the progress, but Nehemiah wouldn't be distracted or discouraged. Nehemiah and his team just kept the vision in their mind of the wall being finished. They focused on the end goal and just wouldn't stop no matter who was making it hard for them. It took a great deal of perseverance and helping each other.

When the job was half way done, those who thought they could discourage the workers and make them quit, got upset. Those troublemakers were quite proud and thought they could make happen whatever they wanted to. But this project was beyond any of their tactics. Those trying to hinder the work tried to get others in the area involved in causing the wall builders trouble. It didn't work however, because Nehemiah had something much stronger than they did—he had prayer and a God who listened to his wholehearted fervent prayers. This project was completed as a result of many prayers and by not giving up.

At last the wall was built, and there were gates and doors and locks all in good working order! Everyone around knew that it was a miracle for it to be completed, knowing the struggle that they had endured from all those trying to hinder it being built. People knew just by looking at it that God was the one behind it all and was making it happen.

Nehemiah was the governor for sometime during the building of the wall, and helped to instruct people to make the right decisions and do things according to the way My written Word to them had said to things. When the wall was complete he made his brother Hanani, as well as and Hananiah who was the ruler of the palace, to be in charge of Jerusalem.

Ezra the priest and scribe taught the people what was written down in the scrolls of God's Words. He read as well as explained to everyone what things meant. Everyone understood the instructions and knew what God wanted them to do.

On a day of celebration when they were reading the Words of God everyone was sad when they heard how much they had all been disobeying My instructions. They wept and prayed and were sorry. However, Nehemiah and Ezra told them to cheer up, that it was a day of celebration. They didn't need to get all down about past mistakes, just to try to please Me, the Lord, from then on. He said, "The joy of the Lord is your strength."

Instead of thinking only about their mistakes, they could instead praise God and sing and declare how wonderful He is. The joy I would give them as they praised and rejoiced in all that I had done for them would give them the strength to follow Me.

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### Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

Before all that disruption happened, and when the Israelites were still in their country, and king Nebuchadnezzar hadn't made them leave yet, the prophet Zephaniah spoke God's Word to the people. The messages spoke of warning and coming difficulties to those who didn't listen and follow in My ways.

In one of the messages in the Book of Zephaniah it says how I, the Lord, love it when people meekly and humbly come before Me and pray. It also says how good it is to "receive correction" and to change when I am trying to get you doing things the right way, and not just continue on the opposite wrong pathway of life.

It takes humility to receive correction. It's the proud that have the worst time. If you are humble and admit your mistakes and ask Me, Jesus, for forgiveness, then I can help you to change and I willingly forgive you. I love you and want to be near to you and want you to be near to Me. Being humble and listening to the ways My Word tells you to change in, is the way to a strong life. If instead of choosing the less self-glorifying things I might lovingly ask you to do, you are proud, obstinate and wilfully disobey, and choose your own self-image, this will bring worse things your way.

I am gentle with those who want to change, and who know they need Me and who aren't trying to prove that they are strong and wonderful all on their own. I love those who love Me and who have realised that I made them and I am the one that gives them life and the strength to do anything at all. Those that have a humble spirit and know they need My forgiveness and lovingkindness are the ones I will give special care to.

Though the prophecies in the Book of Zephaniah tell of the coming troubles, the things that ended up happening, the end of his Book tells a promise. It tells that the people would be allowed to return again one day. This also happened, after they were compelled to leave for 70 years. When they returned and began to set up Jerusalem again, and build the temple and walls of the city, they were much more eager and ready to listen to the prophets that I, the Lord, sent them at that time.

Things were off to a rather rough start and those in Jerusalem and in the area nearby weren't so welcoming and helpful to those working to build things up again. They were worried about what would happen if these Israelites were strengthened again, and what it would mean to the country. But I had a job for them to do, and they needed to stick with it and work hard to build things up again and start to have their special times for prayer and praise once again.

Two prophets that were sent to encourage the Israelites at that time were Haggai and Zechariah. These men received the messages from Me and were faithful to speak My Words. Through prophet Haggai, I spoke to Zerubbabel and Jeshua instructing them and encouraging them in their work of rebuilding the temple and setting things up again. Some people were very old and had seen the temple before it was broken down, and remembered how fancy it was, made with so much silver and gold and precious stones. They missed having it the way it



used to be and it made them sad that the first temple was gone and the new one was much simpler.

Through Haggai, I was able to encourage them and said that I didn't need people to give Me silver and gold—like a fancy place of worship, with all those precious metals and jewels adorning it. I told them that I was there with them and that was the most important thing. I said in the end, this more simply-built temple would be better than the fancier one that was built before. What would make their lives great wasn't merely the materials that a temple was made out of, but rather by how fervently and wholeheartedly they loved Me and how much they'd let Me be in their lives and thoughts and actions. What I most of all wanted was their hearts to follow Me and love Me.

Prophet Zechariah gives promises and instructions from Me. I promised that My spirit would be what helped them to accomplish what I wanted them to do. They didn't need to be the strongest and most powerful nation around. All they needed to do was obey Me and listen to My Word, and I would help them do what they were meant to do.

Other tips for a happy life, given to them through the Prophet Zechariah included:

- Show mercy and compassion
- Help those in need
- Think good and positive thoughts about your brothers and sisters
- Speak the truth and be honest
- Live in peace
- Do what you promise to do
- Be kind to neighbours and foreigners

The Prophet Malachi passed on God's wonderful promise of tremendous supply and God's care to those who gave to God—those who brought their "tithes." Those working in the temple were to receive the provision of their food and needs through others giving a small percent of their goods and wealth, as a gift to Me. Still today people can give to Me, Jesus, in this way. I don't need money in Heaven, but there's lots of people that do need help and mostly My Words to be passed on to them. If everyone who loves Me chooses to give a portion of all their earnings and let Me tell them how to use it and who to share it with, and most of all how to use it to reach people with My love and Words, so many more people can come to know about Me and will lead much happier lives.

Even if someone only has a small amount of funds or goods, and it's not even enough for them, if they will take the step of obedience and share whatever they can with others, in whatever way I lead them to, they too will find that I bless it and give back to them more than they gave up. There are so many ways that I give back to you when you share what little you

have with others, out of love and obedience to Me. I don't always give back just what you give away, or pour down heaps of money, but I might protect you from a debilitating accident for example, and you walk away from it unharmed. Or perhaps there's something that you've always been wanting to do, and out of My love for you I work it out for you to enjoy yourself extra with that special treat.

Those that go all the way for Me, I will do marvellous things for them. I love you and I love treating you to the best things for your faithfulness to love Me and follow in My ways.

Story Time with Jesus 88-100\_text

***Story Time with Jesus***  
***Bible Stories***

**Chapters 88-100**

88-Mary and the Angel

89-Baby John

90-A Dream and a Trip

91-Jesus is Born

92-Shepherds and Angels

93-A Star and Gifts

94-Simeon and Anna

95-Travel and Temple Talk

96-John and Jesus

97-First Followers

98-The Wedding Surprise

99-Fishermen

100-The Messenger and Miracles

(Jesus speaking: )

**Mary and the Angel**

In an old dusty town, called Nazareth lived a pretty young lady named Mary. She had been brought up to know God and His loving ways. She was engaged to be married to a good man, who also loved God. His name was Joseph.

The two of them planned to have a nice house one day, where they could raise a family and live like everyone else. They would bring up their children to know God's laws and instructions and would teach them all they knew about life and how to survive, as well as how to behave as good citizens.

They made many plans. Something most families wished for was to have a fine orchard and plenty of grapes that grew in a great big vineyard.

They hoped to have all that they needed for their future family. Nothing seemed unordinary about them and their situation. This was the dream of many, and they were no different. Does that sound like people today, somewhat, even though places and situations are different? Don't most people want to have a fine house and to have a good set-up and all that they need?

Well, these two had something new coming their way—something neither of them expected. Well, at least they didn't expect it to happen to them. In some ways what happened next was expected—as it had been foretold for thousands of years: The coming of the Messiah. The One who would free their country and their lives from the consequences of the sins of mankind.

Anyone who knew what the old scrolls said knew that one day, one joyful day, this event would take place. Just how or when or no one knew, but it was something that many were eagerly awaiting. But the hope of someone coming from God to take away the sins of the world, and to bring unity between God and people had been talked about for so many years, that it was often forgotten or it seemed like it might take many more years until it was time.

Now, Mary had something special about her. Ever since she was a little girl she knew that something different or unusual might happen in her life. She didn't mind that and was willing to often do new things just to see what would happen or what the consequences would be. Though she had faith in God's love and care, she had to grow to know Him more as the years went on.

At last the time was right when the special and different purpose for which she was made came to pass. Things weren't to go along day-by-day only in the way that she and her family and Joseph and his relatives assumed.

Late one afternoon, after she was waking from a rest, she looked up and could not believe her eyes. There in front of her was the most amazing being she'd ever seen. I won't say "person" as this messenger from Heaven was different than anyone on Earth.

"How did he get in here? And what's happening?" were some of Mary thoughts.

She didn't have to be left wondering and worrying for long, as the instant she realised that something unusual was happening, the being explained everything to her. Nothing would ever be the same again for her, for Joseph, for their plans, and for that matter for the world! And it was well time for something good and new and wonderful to happen.

Now, I, Jesus, could have come down to Earth and just appeared to people here and there, but that wasn't really the goal—just to talk to people. I did have a whole lot to say and had heaps of good that I wanted to do on Earth. But there was more, oh so much more that was part of the plan of Salvation. I was to be one very big gift of love from Heaven to Earth—and I arrived on the very first Christmas.

Dear Mary, the humble young woman, the ordinary woman, had a major change of plans. Was she ready for it? Nothing could have prepared her fully for it. It was completely Earth-shaking, plan-altering, and life-changing.

What she saw and heard was one of God's most trusted and powerful angels standing right there, in her room, talking with her.

Who was she to receive such a visitation?! Well, she might not have felt very special or amazing, but she was just the person that God had in mind. In fact He'd been thinking of her all her life and

watching over her very attentively. He was the one that spoke to her heart and mind as she walked in the fields and had questions. He was the one that answered her prayers. He was the one that guarded and kept her safe, day after day, year after year.

Yet never in her mind had she ever imagined such an event would take place and it was very surprising and a bit frightening at first. But she was put at ease as her angelic visitor, Gabriel the Archangel spoke to her. He told her there was nothing to be afraid of. And when an angel speaks to you, you can feel the power of the Almighty, the Spirit of Heaven.

Mary's soul was flooded with the love of the God of Heaven and all her fears and concerns vanished. The only thing that was present in her mind was the reality of the God that had made and formed her and who would do with her whatever He knew was best.

Gabriel the Archangel explained to her that she was being chosen to be My mother, to bear and care for and mother the son of the God of the whole Universe.

This of course would be normally impossible and certainly not the normal and done thing. People were to marry first, and then have a family, raising and caring for their children. Mary had a few questions on how this was to happen. It wasn't that she was doubting that it was possible, but in her young mind she was trying to figure things out and wondering if there was something that she was supposed to do to make it happen.

Well, she didn't have to do a thing. God would take care of it all. After all, if God could make her and form her, He could make and form anyone at any time that He wanted to. However, it wasn't an easy choice. To say yes to the request from God to become the mother of God's Son—Me, Jesus—meant a lot of things wouldn't happen in her life as she had planned and wished for, and new and special things would be a part of her life. To say yes, would mean a total change for her right then to suddenly be a mother.

To say yes, would mean there would be difficult times, lots of them, and she would have to eventually see Me leave this world, and that would be hard. To say yes, would mean she would also receive great rewards of the God of Heaven who would make sure that everything she gave in order to be My mother on Earth would be wonderfully rewarded.

Mary made the wise and humble and brave choice. She would put aside all her former plans and wishes for her life, and she would take on God's plans and wishes and do whatever He wanted her to do, at every part of her life as she raised and cared for God's special Son.

Gabriel the Archangel explained to Mary that God's Spirit would come on her and fill her and create a new little life inside of her—baby Jesus. For Jesus is the name I was to be called. And that's what happened. The sensation of God's amazing loving spirit filled her being from head to toe and all around her. She felt like she'd never felt before. And from that moment on she was My mother on Earth.

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### **Baby John**

When you are surrounded by the love of God—the One who knows everything about you and created you, it just feels the best! This is what Mary felt as God's Spirit came on her and placed His own Son in her as a little tiny baby. Mary would need the memory of every bit of God's love and care to make it through the next part of her life.

If word was to get out that she was not yet married and was about to have a baby no one would understand at all and it would cause a lot of questions. It was a major event in her life and she needed some time away, to talk with one person who would understand—her cousin.

Mary's cousin Elizabeth had something likewise very unusual happen to her. Although she wasn't pregnant with the Son of God, she was also with child, and was to raise a special son as well. All along throughout the years of the history of the Israelites, prophets had been sent to tell people what God was thinking and going to do, and what they needed to do as well.

Elizabeth was to be the mother of a very important prophet—John the Baptist as he was called. It wouldn't have been anything unusual for a couple to have a child. The thing that made this time so amazing is the fact that Elizabeth and her husband Zacharias were old enough to be grandparents—or great grandparents! Yet they were just the right age in God's timing to give them their own child at last.

An angel also appeared to announce this special child. It was Gabriel the Archangel who came to bring the news to Zacharias while he was serving as a priest in the temple and offering prayers. It was certainly the last thing on his mind at that moment and took him by surprise.

Zacharias had become old and somewhat set in his ways. He was settled down and didn't think he had much time left on this Earth. In his heart He was preparing to move on. He had lived his life the best he could and had been faithful in his service to God.

When the angel told him the news, that his wife was to have a child who was to be named John, and he would be the one to help prepare people for My coming, it was pretty shocking, and he just couldn't believe it!

Zacharias hadn't been so quick to believe that all things really were possible. It all just seemed a bit much for him. As a sign to Zacharias and to make an important point and lesson to him that it's very important to believe what God says—even if it seems impossible—Zacharias was unable to speak with words from the time the angel spoke with him until a week after his new little baby boy was born.

This sign—that he could suddenly not speak, and then suddenly speak again according to the will of God—made him realise two very important things. First of all that what God says, can and will happen. And secondly having faith and a believing heart is very important to God.

This happened months before the angel went to announce to Mary the news of her being chosen to be My mother on Earth. The archangel Gabriel had told Mary at that time that her cousin Elizabeth also was with child. So when Mary had accepted God's will in her life, and she needed someone to talk with, she went to stay with her cousin Elizabeth for a few months.

Mary journeyed to the hilly area where her elderly cousins lived. She was glad she made it safely to their house. But when she said hello and greeted her pregnant cousin Elizabeth they were both taken by surprise!

Elizabeth let out an "Oh!" as the baby, little John, had wiggled and kicked around so enthusiastically just at the sound of Mary's voice. Little babies can hear even before they are born, and they can sense the spirits of those around too and take on the moods of what is going on.

John knew in the spirit, as tiny as he was, that the mother of God's Son had just arrived. He was happy and excited. It would be many years before he would fulfil his mission on Earth, but he was happy that My arrival on Earth was soon.

Elizabeth and Mary both were filled with the Words of God and spoke wonderful messages and praises to God! It was a wonderful moment, and they knew God was with them both and would help them to do the important job of raising and caring for the children God had given them.

Elizabeth was grateful to have Mary there, as Elizabeth sure needed the help and encouragement as well, as old as she was. They could both help each other and talk with one another and pray together. Things weren't going to be all that easy for either of them, but if it was what God wanted them to do, and if it would most of all bring about salvation for all those who believed, then any difficulty was certainly worth it. Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months, and then returned to her home.

When little baby John was born, what happy parents he had! Then came the promised miracle to daddy Zacharias and he was suddenly able to speak! People were discussing what the best name was for the child, and some had suggested naming him after his father. But this was a child that had come with a very specific mission and he had already been named by God!—John was his name.

Zacharias was then able to speak—and could say what God wanted him to say. It was a wonderful time of rejoicing and celebrating—a miracle baby and the gift of speech again. God spoke through him a message, a wonderful prophecy, and the baby was named what he was meant to be called: John.

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### **A Dream and a Trip**

When Mary arrived home again she wasn't the same—she had learned lots and had her faith strengthened through all the miraculous and supernatural occurrences over the last few months. There'd been angels and prophecies and babies given. Things would not be the same normal way they had been, and it was time to let Joseph know what was going on.

With trembling lips and a voice that was filled with sincerity and a touch of courage she told her husband-to-be what had happened. She was now with child, a child from God. It was her mission from God to be a mother of a child that was to be called Jesus; the one that had been promised to come to Earth.

Mary didn't know if Joseph would understand it or not. It was one thing to have a bright and shining angel appearing to her to tell her the news. That was easy to believe. But would Joseph realise the truth and understand if it was just her trying to explain things? She didn't know.

Well, dear Joseph had never heard of such an unusual thing happening—God just putting a baby in someone's womb? And it was very amazing to think that this child was the Messiah! He needed some more information and confirmation about it all. He needed an angel to visit him too!

While he slept Joseph had the most vivid and powerful dream. An angel explained the whole thing to him as well. When he woke he was thrilled, in wonder, amazed, happy and willing to do whatever it took to care for this special boy—Me!

Mary and Joseph adjusted their plans and began to prepare to have a baby much sooner than they had expected. There was a lot to do and they were busy and happy, looking forward to this amazing gift from God to them.

Unbeknownst to them, in a King's palace other plans were being made that would change things even more for them. They weren't to settle down in Nazareth as they thought they would do, instead there

was a big trip coming up at a time that was the most difficult for a mother to travel—when she is about to have a baby.

The decree came to all, and everyone needed to go to the place where they were born and pay taxes. No one was exempt, and thus dear Joseph and Mary had to go as well, no matter how hard it seemed. But there was something that gave them hope—the prophecy! It had been predicted many years before that God’s Son was to be born in Bethlehem. So God’s hand was in it all and was working things out in the best way possible.

So off on their long journey they began. After a long and tiring trip they arrived in Bethlehem. A welcome sight, there at last! *Now for a bed to rest in!* But after searching and asking and knocking and looking, there wasn’t a spare place to go. No room at the inn or in anyone’s house!

No beds? Not even a corner of a proper building to stay in? Could that be right? It seemed too much for them at first. But they were too tired to care about much and were grateful for whatever they could find. The only place available was a stable—where the animals were kept.

Yes, it seemed odd that there wasn’t a fancy place being prepared for them to rest in, since it was God’s son that was about to be born. But God had a better plan, one that would help the people much more—the people He was sending Me, His only Son, to help.

If I was born in a rich man’s palace and had all the comforts provided, people wouldn’t have respected Me as much as they would have if they knew that I also came from a humble state, a poor family, and had to endure the difficulties of life—just like them.

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### Jesus is Born

Joseph did the best he could to make Mary, and later her little baby—Me—as comfortable as possible. The best he could do for a bed was to use some hay to make beds. There they rested and were grateful for a roof over their head. But the night was to be one of the most memorable ones in their lives. It was the night their little baby was to be born.

When I was born and they heard My first little baby cry and saw My shining eyes, they loved Me a lot. I was there as a weak and helpless baby, given to them straight from God. They knew that I deserved very good care and they would give Me the best they could. I had a big and important job that I came to Earth to do, and needed their loving care and help to provide for Me while growing up and preparing to be what God needed Me to be.

Things may have seemed somewhat quiet there in that lowly stable, with no one but the animals to keep them company. No royal servants bringing them dish after dish of delicious foods to eat and shiny kingly clothes for their new baby.

Though they might not have seen it right then, there was a major celebration going on in the land of angels, in the Kingdom of the Baby’s Heavenly Father. God was a pleased Father as He saw His little boy resting peacefully in the hay of the manger that Joseph had prepared for Him. How gentle and wonderful He looked. God wanted to tell the whole world about the gift that He had just given to them.

Is it always easy to give some of your most favourite things away to a friend? Well, you are glad to make them happy, but sometimes you miss what you gave a bit. So My Father in Heaven loved

everyone on Earth so much that He chose to share the one He loved with you all, to be for a while there on Earth.

He was glad that it would bring you love and joy and eventually salvation to all those who believed in Me. But it was a bit of a giving also. He missed Me being there in Heaven. However, He decided that He loved you just as much, and it wouldn't be as fun to only have Me in Heaven—and I wouldn't have very many friends there either, if no one else could come and join us.

So God thought it was worth it to share Me with you on Earth, to have Me come down and show you the way to Heaven by believing on Me and My gift of Salvation and forgiveness. Then we could all be together one day—you and Me and My Father and the angels. That's more fun! More friends! More love to go around too!

So although My Heavenly Father missed having Me in the Kingdom of Heaven for a time, He was real glad that I had at last come to Earth. So on the night I was born, in a tucked away stable where few knew that Me and My Earthly parents were resting, the angels had a concert and a choir and dance and lively show planned to announce this marvellous moment.

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### **Shepherds and Angels**

Faithful shepherds who probably wished they could have a nice warm place to stay in—even a stable would have been welcome—were out at night on a hillside. They were grateful for their warm coats while they were drowsily guarding over their sheep.

It wasn't a lazy man's job being a shepherd. It took a whole lot of patience and endurance through all kinds of weather. It took being real brave to defend the sheep and protect them and provide whatever they needed. It wasn't something for people who would rather sit around in a warm house and nibble on tasty treats. It took being willing to get a bit dirty, a bit tired, and being willing to watch over the sheep day and night and not give up.

So these shepherds who weren't anything fancy or thought of as great important men, were chosen to be the audience for Heaven's musical performance! God knew that the show needed a big sky to fit all the angels that wanted to be a part of the song and show. And who was out under the night sky but the hard-working shepherds?

And what a show they got to see! It was fabulous and stunned them. It was quite a surprise to say the least! When the first angel appeared to give the announcement leading up to Heaven's song and performance, they were quite unsure of just what was going on. At first they felt real scared, just not knowing what was going to happen! But then they relaxed as the angel put them at ease, and they sat back to enjoy a show so outstanding they never forgot it! A multitude of angels in a choir began to sing and declare the great, fabulous news to all who were watching and listening. The Messiah had at last arrived, and great was the rejoicing.

When it was over, the shepherds weren't just exclaiming how tremendous it was that I, Jesus, had at last come to Earth, and then settling down for sweet dreams. No! These men were get-up-and-doers! That's why God chose them to see Heaven's amazing performance.

"Let's go and see what the angels were talking and singing about! Come on!" they said.

Down the hill through the streets and right to the stable they went. And sure enough, just as the angel had explained, there was a baby sleeping in a manger! The shepherds knew it was the baby the



angels had told them about. They knew that I was the Son of God, and they loved and worshiped Me right there and then!

Their hearts were bursting with joy. This was the moment the world had been waiting for, for thousands of years! At last it was the very night that I, the Saviour, the Messiah had arrived! It wasn't something to be kept a secret and these men didn't stop spreading the news of My arrival until they had told everyone that they could about it.

Only after they had gone all around telling everyone in the town the news of the Baby from Heaven finally arriving, did they go back to their job again, to care for their sheep. It had been the best night of their life. Those shepherds weren't ones to keep the good news to themselves. They didn't care what people might think of the amazing story they had to tell about the angels and the baby. They were so enthusiastic! With great zest they spread the news to all they could.

When Mary and Joseph were visited by these shepherds it came as a total surprise to them as well. But it felt good to have others hearing and seeing angels—it confirmed it in their hearts that this baby, this tiny baby, was actually God's Son, born on Earth. They eagerly heard all that the shepherds had to say and asked them questions and found out the whole story. It was the first Christmas party ever!

And those are some of the same things that make a wonderful Christmas time today. Singing and listening to what I want to tell you—just like the angel told them God's Words. Talking and enjoying the friendship and stories of those who appreciate God's gift to the world—just like Mary and Joseph did together with the shepherds. Sharing the good news and message of love and salvation with others and telling them about Me, Jesus—like the shepherds did. And being faithful to do whatever God wants you to do—each one doing their job on Earth well.

Though the shepherds had to return to their job of watching over the sheep, they never forgot that God had given them the honour of seeing the angels, and with it came the responsibility to share the good news with others. It didn't really matter to the shepherds where I was born, anywhere that the Son of God was, was just great. With Me there, it made it a wonderful place to be. So no matter where in the world you are at Christmas, if I am there—and I will be, if you invite Me to be there—it can be a joyous time.

If you are travelling, or in a shack, or in a tall apartment building, or sitting on the side of the road, or visiting friends and relatives, or all alone with just You and I together, or in a huge crowd of people, or in foreign country, or in your own backyard, or in a stable or barn, remember that wherever I am, you can have joy and love and peace.

If I am all that really matters to you and you want to celebrate Christmas all over again—the wonderful event that God would send you all His own special Son—then the party in your heart can be the best one ever!

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### **A Star and Gifts**

Many miles away in another country there were others who were feeling called by God to pay a visit to His Son on Earth. God uses whatever He can use to speak to and to direct those on Earth to do what He knows is best, and God was calling some important men to do a special job for Him.

For those who studied the stars He placed a special star in the sky to tell them that something very special had happened—that a new king, a very important king, had been born.

After much discussion and contemplation, a team of wisemen decided to travel to see Me—bringing the most precious gifts they could. Bundling up the belongings and supplies that would be needed for the trip, they along with their travel companions headed off on what was to be a long and tiring journey.

It was no easy task to find one tiny child in a land they were unfamiliar with, whose people didn't have any clues for them either for quite some time as they travelled. Onward they searched never giving up, though the days and months passed. At last when I was two years old they were very close to reaching their destination—to kneel at My feet and offer Me the special gifts they had brought.

The star wasn't always seen, non-stop, and it took a lot of persevering and going as God led them to find right where I and My family were living at that time. We weren't still camped out in the stable—it belonged to someone else anyway. But we hadn't moved away from Bethlehem and I spent the first couple years of my life there together with My mother Mary and father Joseph.

These men, though continuing in their determination to find the new young king that they were convinced existed somewhere on the planet, were starting to get a bit weary. At last they arrived at the capital city--Jerusalem. Surely the town would be a-buzz with the news, eagerly waiting for the time when He, the Son of the King of the Universe was grown and could change things for the better in a country that was so riddled with problems.

Oddly the streets held no such excitement. Not even the current king had heard of such a person. He was alarmed and wondered what these travelling wisemen were speaking about. He was very concerned about keeping his place as the ruler, so hearing about a new king wasn't particularly welcome news.

The wisemen at last got some answers to their questions when ancient prophecies were remembered and read. The scrolls told that the coming One from God would be born in Bethlehem. That was all they needed to make their way to that small and humble town.

To their great joy as they began on the right road again, heading the right direction, that glorious star, the one that had started them off on their journey in the first place, appeared clearly for them in the sky. And not just in the sky, but it travelled to shine right above the very house that I, Jesus was in! Oh how they rejoiced! It was a wonderful and welcome sight indeed!

Delighted they dismounted their camels as they arrived at the house and knocked on the door. They and all their team travelling with them had caused no small stir. Everyone was wondering what they were doing there! News spread around and people came to watch and see what was going on.

As they entered the house, these important and humble men who loved God very much, came and knelt down to worship a toddler. But He was no ordinary toddler—for though I looked young in body then on Earth, in reality I was older than any and all of them put together—I was the Son of the Eternal God.

These men knew who I was, for My Father in Heaven had given them the understanding of it deep in their heart. They worshiped and bowed down to Me, the King of Kings—even though just a child in a regular body at that time.

The wisemen then presented Me and My family with the precious gifts that they had carefully brought with them for just this very moment—gold, frankincense and myrrh. These were costly and precious gifts. They had faith all along that they would find Me and would want to honour Me with the best gifts they could give.

God blessed them not only for their gifts, but for the gift of their long journey and their faith to believe that the Messiah and Saviour, the very Son of God was now there on Earth. He blessed them for the powerful example they were to everyone around, that I was to be honoured and respected and worshiped above all—the King of Love, who was there to help each and every one of them.

It felt so good to have their faith rewarded and to be given the opportunity to meet Me in person. How many people were on Earth then? If any others had had the faith and perseverance to travel and keep looking and following as God led, they too could have met Me as well. But it wasn't until many years later when I was grown that many people were able to believe that I was the One sent from God.

The biggest and most important gift that they gave to Me wasn't the gold, frankincense or myrrh that they presented to Me that day, but it was their gift of faith that served as a witness and testimony to many, many others, that I was Jesus, the Son of the God of love. Their example of belief in Me was the greatest of all gifts, for through it many others throughout the years, have come to know Me.

Nowadays gifts are often exchanged around Christmas time, and it can be a nice time of giving—not only to those around you, but to those in need as well. But too often, especially in modern places, the gift giving has gotten to be nothing more than a tradition, and holds little or no meaning anymore. I've been left to the side like the wrapping off a present. People have forgotten—or don't want to be reminded—about the true reason and meaning of this special festival and celebration. People would rather carry on in their independent lives and it hurts Me deeply.

I wish I could be the centre of every party. I wish I could light up everyone's homes with My spirit, like a tree is lit up with Christmas lights. I wish I could be given to others and My gift of love and salvation offered as freely and often as gifts are exchanged. I wish I could truly enjoy the celebrations along with everyone on Earth—through having songs sung that celebrate My birth and declare to all the great Love of God for each and every one.

Will you be one that gives Me away for Christmas and lets everyone get a chance to receive the greatest gift of all? —Free pardon from their sins, and free entrance into Paradise forever, to live with God and all those who have loved and followed Him faithfully? It would make Me so very happy if you would!

There's lots of ways to do this, and I'm sure as you pray—in whatever situation you are in—you and I, and your loved ones and family around you can come up with some ideas. You don't need to make real fancy or elaborate plans that cost lots of money, but just something that helps to make a positive difference in someone's life and brings a bit more of My love to them, and helps to bring them closer to Me.

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### **Simeon and Anna**

I lived a humble and quiet life, patiently learning and growing day by day. Nothing too dramatic happened to Me, but I grew in wisdom and knowledge and understanding. Every day I learned a bit

more—things that would help Me later on in My ministry with the people, and demonstrating God’s love to all in the ways I came to Earth to show it.

I never lived in a fancy building, and there were plenty of times when I was either too hot or too cold, and I knew what it was like to feel hungry or be in pain. My childhood wasn’t free of childhood challenges. Mary and Joseph had to work hard trying to keep us all—Me and all My brothers and sisters—clothed and fed and cared for. It was hard work back then and we learned to help each other all we could.

My mother Mary and father Joseph remembered well another outstanding event that took place when I was still very young—just a baby! It was yet another confirmation about Me being God’s Son and gift to the world.

Mary and Joseph went to the temple when I was a baby to offer prayers and praise to God for Me. They weren’t expecting anything unusual to happen, and there were many people around. But in the middle of everything that was going on, all of a sudden there was a very old man coming up to them.

This man, whose name was Simeon, had been told by God that within his lifetime he would get to see Me—the one God promised would come to Earth. The years were going by and he wondered just when this promise would come to pass. So it was a wonderful day when at last God told him that I was there, as a little baby. God showed him which couple holding a baby was the one he’d been waiting for years to see.

Old Simeon believed what God told him, and he walked up to Mary and Joseph eager to get a chance to at last see Me, as a baby and to hold Me in his arms. He praised God for this wonderful reward of his faith and that God had kept him going all those years so he would get this moment. Simeon proclaimed to Mary and Joseph that he knew who I was, and that he was so glad for this wonderful moment that not only he had been waiting for, but all those who knew God’s Word and the prophecies that foretold of My coming, were long waiting for.

Simeon was a faithful and dedicated servant of God for many years, and this was a special gift to him from God, to get to see and hold Me as a baby.

He wasn’t the only one in the temple that day who knew who I was. An elderly lady called Anna, who fervently loved God and eagerly awaited the arrival of the Saviour on Earth, approached Mary and Joseph. She also knew who I was, and was so glad to get to see Me. It cheered her so much. At last things could start to improve—with people’s hearts uniting fully with God again, as they learned about Him more through His Son’s visit to Earth.

One person coming up to Mary and Joseph was already amazing enough, and encouraged their hearts a lot. But then to have another person coming to tell them how glad they were to see God’s Son finally on Earth, and knowing that the baby in Mary’s arms was the awaited Saviour, really made them take notice.

All these wonderful signs were such an encouragement to My parents on Earth, who had the great responsibility of bringing Me up in the right way. They always remembered these unusual and special events and messages from all sorts of people. God was certainly at work and it was His Son that they were asked to raise. They did the very best they could and gave Me all their love and time and faithful care.

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## Travel and Temple Talk

After living in Bethlehem for a couple years we then moved to Egypt to fulfil other prophecies that were written about Me that told of Me being in Egypt. God knew what was going on in the various countries around and knew that at that time Egypt would be the safest place for Me to be. Through a dream Joseph was given a clear message to move, and he wasn't one to delay. He packed up and took Mary and Me to Egypt immediately.

That was another journey of faith. They didn't know anyone there, and didn't have reservations in a place to stay, nor work lined up for Joseph to do. But as they obeyed, one step at a time, one day at a time, God saw to it that they were well provided for and kept safe.

I wasn't to stay there, either, for more than a couple of years, for yet other ancient message from God had predicted that I would be also from Nazareth. So after two years in Egypt My family and I moved back to our original home town of Nazareth.

Things sure had happened differently than either Joseph or Mary had planned or anticipated, but it happened all according to My Father's will and in the ways He knew was best. They were, as Mary had said, God's servants, doing as He wished for them to do, and taking good care of Me, His Son on Earth.

Joseph worked hard at his trade—building and making things out of wood. He was good at it and worked diligently. He was able to provide for us all that he could, and Mary took loving care of Me and My brothers and sisters as they were each added to our family.

We had good times, sad times, happy times and rough times. We knew heartache and sorrow. We knew sickness and troubles. But I was there for a reason and through My faith in God My Father I was able to be an inspiration to My family and to many day-by-day.

People would see our family struggling—just like they were—and yet we had courage and joy and faith to keep on going and trusting in God, and it encouraged others to do the same. We prayed, we sang, we danced, we travelled, and we worked hard. We all lived under the same hot sun, but it's not the situation you are in that makes it easy or difficult for you. It's your faith and your prayer times and trust in God that makes the difference and lightens the load.

There was nothing outwardly different about Me and My family in those earlier years of My life, but in My heart God was working a great work. I was to be a living example that God is love. I was to teach and show and be an example of this to the whole world. I lived as they did, yet I was there for a special reason and this made Me different. Those that talked with Me knew that there was something in My heart that lit new faith in God in their own heart as well.

When I was declared a man at the young age of early teenhood, My family travelled to Jerusalem for a trip to celebrate one of the festivals. I was given the liberty to go on My own to look around, to talk with friends and to learn all I could.

When it was time to go home and people were all travelling back, it was very troubling to My mother Mary and to Joseph when they couldn't find Me. It took them three days looking and asking and searching, crying and praying to find Me. They knew just how special I was, and they were very committed to taking the best care of Me.

When at last I was found, I was just as surprised as they were! I was surprised that they didn't know I was right there in the temple all along. And they were surprised that I was still there and not travelling

back with everyone else! The teachers of the law were amazed at all that I could share with them—the things I'd learned from My heart-to-heart communication with My Father in Heaven. They were amazed and respected Me for all that I knew and could share with them.

When it was time to go home and My family had found where I was, I went home with them. I continued on patiently day by day, year by year, until it was time for Me to go and teach and preach the Kingdom of God in My later years.

I didn't make a big splash when I was younger, but learned all I could learn about people, about life on Earth at that time, about the true needs of people. I heard what people were saying and what they were afraid of, and what they thought. I learned practical life and survival skills that benefited Me and others later on during My journeys.

I learned to talk to My Father in heaven and tell Him all that was on My heart and all that I thought and wished for. And I learned to be patient and to wait until it was the right time to reach out with God's supernatural power to heal bodies, minds and spirits.

In some ways it was hard to wait, as the needs of people and their heartcries were all around us, every day. But those who turned to God and prayed with all their hearts in their time of great need would find relief. And when the time was right, those who had faith and trust in God and His plan to send someone to help them, were ready and eager to receive His love and care when I brought it to them. More than the healing of bodies or the occasional food I helped to provide, I was there to lead them back to God.

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### **John and Jesus**

My cousin John had started his mission for God too, when the time was right. With great enthusiasm he told everyone who came to listen to him the important news that I, God's gift to the world, was on My way, and that they should prepare for it. He lived in the wilderness, and ate what was available and good to eat—like wild honey and locusts. He too, didn't have a warm and soft bed nor comfortable clothing. His clothes were made from rough camel's hair. He certainly didn't look like anything fancy, but he sure could deliver a message that made people wake up and listen.

In some ways he reminded people of prophet Elijah! John was a fervent witness and told the people what they needed to hear—not always what they wanted to hear. But that wasn't his job. He needed to get people's hearts in the right position to receive the truth that I was bringing to them real soon. He was there to prepare the way, and told everyone who came to the banks of the Jordan river to hear him speak, that they needed to get ready.

How were they to prepare? Well, if you were going to have a visit from a king to your house, what kinds of things can you imagine doing to get ready? Would you change things in your lives and home that you knew the good king didn't like, or said not to do? Would you clean up and put on nice clothes? Would you make sure there was even room for him to sit down and talk with you?

Those things are much like the way John told the people to prepare for My arrival—only they were to prepare in their heart and mind and spirit. They were to be sorry for their wrong choices and the things they had done that were unkind and not pleasing to God. They were to change their ways to do what was right. They were to come into the water to be baptised as a sign of their cleansing of heart and the start of their new way of living, filled with God's spirit.

John the Baptist told them that when I came I would baptise them with the Holy Ghost! John had many believers and followers too. Many people of all walks of life came to hear him speak and were baptised.

Finally the day he had long awaited for arrived. As he was teaching the people about God's ways and telling them to change and to be baptised he looked up and saw the One he'd been talking about.

I was there, and had come to also be baptised! John was very surprised. He didn't expect that this would happen. —That the Son of God would come to be baptised! It was what those who were preparing for My arrival were doing. Why would I need to do so as well?

John felt if anyone, it should be he that was baptised by Me. But that's yet another of the humble and unordinary things that My Father in heaven had planned. I was an example to all those there, that being humble before God, and getting filled with His spirit was the best thing to do.

For Me, the baptism meant something a bit different than it meant for others. I didn't have sins that I needed forgiveness for, but I was about to start the next and most important part of My life. When I went into the water and John poured water on Me, all of a sudden some amazing things happened!

I was filled with the power of God to start the next part of My life's mission on Earth. My Heavenly Father's spirit filled Me and gave Me the strength, inspiration, faith and power that I needed. As a sign that His spirit had come on Me, God sent His Holy Spirit to Me—and showed it to Me and everyone around in bodily form, descending on Me like a dove. My Father also spoke aloud stating in His booming voice, in the language the people understood, that I was His son that pleased Him.

Before I could start My ministry on Earth I needed lots of time alone to pray and to talk with My Father. After I was baptised by John and filled with the Holy Spirit I went into the wilderness—much like John had been doing—and spent time alone. There wasn't a resort or hotel out there. It was a time of desperation and communing with My Heavenly Father. There was a big responsibility ahead of Me and I would need great spiritual strength to do all that I was meant to do.

My Heavenly Father was with Me, and I was not alone. I didn't eat, either, during that time of prayer and preparation and consecration before I was to launch into My active service.

I had to be strong in spirit and resist the thoughts and ideas of the Enemy too. He certainly wasn't glad about all the many who would receive My Words and come to know God's love. He wanted people to be stuck in the consequences of their mistakes and sins. He didn't want love and salvation spread around far and wide, so he tried to get Me to listen to him and to do things his way.

I wasn't going to give in or give up so soon or so easily. I resisted him and chased him away by refusing to listen to any of his thoughts and by quoting God's Word. The same thing works for you today as well—as the Enemy is still around trying his best to stop those who are following Me from doing their best and sharing My love with others.

If you get a bad idea or wrong thought in your mind that is clearly not from God, don't hesitate to do as did—remember the truth of God's Word and choose to serve and love Him above all. Determine that no matter how many times he tries to tell you to do this or that, or to think or say this or that, that you aren't going to do it or allow his thoughts to get you off track. Just shoo him away with a verse or a Godly song, or a prayer of faith. Get him out of there—just like I did!

After the 40 days of not eating, and preparing in heart and spirit for My coming ministry, as well as resisting the Enemy who was trying to get Me to not even start My work for My Father, then My

Father in Heaven sent angels to comfort and give Me nourishment. I was refreshed and strengthened and encouraged. I will send angels to your side as well, as you take the right steps to doing whatever it is that you need to in order to follow what I want and need you to do. Even if you can't see angels by your side, please know that they have been sent down to you the moment you call for help.

I was victorious and was ready after those 40 days alone in the wilderness, to begin teaching and telling others the good news and healing many. Things were never easy, but I knew what I was meant to do, and I determined to let nothing stop Me until I had completed and accomplished all that I came to Earth to do. I didn't want to disappoint My Heavenly Father and the host of angels who were cheering for Me. And I certainly didn't want to disappoint you and those on Earth back then either, by failing to complete My mission and leading you in love to Heaven.

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### First Followers

John the Baptist called Me the "lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world." He announced this to the people around that he was talking to when he saw Me one day. Then John encouraged some of his followers to catch up to Me and talk with Me and be My followers instead. —Andrew and John were the names of those men who then came up to Me and asked Me where I lived, and they spent the day with Me. This was their first step towards their new life and job.

These guys had been listening to John the Baptist and were just as eager for the arrival of the Messiah. So when John told them that after all this time of teaching them and telling them and others that I would be coming soon, that I was at last there, it was great and welcome news.

John the Baptist's mission and goal wasn't to have lots of people following him, but to lead people to Me. So when he saw I was ready he was glad to have some of his own disciples follow Me instead and help to change the world, one bit at a time, together with Me. And I would need all the help I could get. With a whole world to save, and people that needed to hear about and experience My love, there was an enormous job ahead of us.

After spending the rest of that day with Me, Andrew was convinced that John the Baptist was right—that I was indeed the Messiah. His first reaction to discovering this great news was to go and tell his brother Simon.

"I found the Messiah! The one we have been waiting for! The one that John the Baptist has been speaking about!" Andrew told his brother excitedly, and brought his brother Simon to Me, Jesus. Simon was to have a special ministry later on, and was going to be instrumental in leading many thousands of his day—and millions since then because of his obedience and the words written down—to believe in Me and eternal salvation.

When I saw him I gave him a new name that meant "Rock." In different languages it was said in different ways—Cephas was one, and Peter was another way to say it. So he was called "Simon Peter" by many. New names were often taken by people at the start of a new big change in their life. He and his brother and a whole lot of other people who were to follow and be My helpers were starting a new life and a new job—telling as many people as they could about Me and about My Father and the Kingdom of Heaven.

There was a man named Philip who was from the same area as Andrew and Simon Peter—a place called Bethsaida. He, too, was very happy to meet Me and he believed right from the start that I was God's gift to the world and ran to tell his friend Nathanael about Me.



“We found the man that Moses and the prophets foretold—and it’s Jesus of Nazareth!” Philip excitedly told his friend.

At first Nathanael was sceptical, and wondered how such an important person could come from such a small and humble town. But as his friend Philip urged him, to “come and see,” then he came to meet Me.

When I talked with him, I seemed to know little things about him that he didn’t tell me—like the fact that he had been sitting under a fig tree previously, and that he considered himself a good man and was an Israelite. Nathanael was surprised that I knew so much about him and this convinced him that I was who his friend was saying I was—the Messiah, God’s Son.

I told Nathanael that he’d get to see things far more amazing than that if he stuck around Me! One day he’d even get to see angels and Heaven!

So these were some of My first followers—John, Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip and Nathanael. They were eager to learn from Me all that they could. We talked and walked and spent time together talking about our mission—to tell many others about the way to Heaven!

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### **The Wedding Surprise**

My Heavenly Father gave Me the power of Heaven to work miracles and to help people in special ways. The first time I was presented with the need for a miracle was a rather unusual opportunity to do something supernatural. –At a marriage celebration.

My mother Mary, as well as My new team of followers, and I were invited as guests to a wedding. It was a time of celebration and fun. Most of the time days were difficult and there was lots of hard work to be done. Sorrow and sickness and troubles of all kinds filled people’s lives. That is why everyone was so looking forward to My arrival. Thinking about the good that I would do on Earth gave everyone the hope of relief and a bit of joy.

At one point in the wedding celebration the drinks ran out. The wine was gone and it would ruin the party and be terribly embarrassing to those trying to host it who were doing the best they could to provide adequate food and drinks for all.

My mother came to Me to tell Me about the situation. She knew that if it was God’s will, I could call on the power of Heaven to work a miracle that would change things for the better.

My Heavenly Father showed Me that it was the right time to start My work of helping people. I wasn’t to just go around throwing parties all the time and helping people have a good time for just a few hours. But there were all kinds of needs—just like you also will face all kinds of needs in the world, and you too will need to pray and find out what I need you to do in each situation.

There is a time to laugh, a time to be sober, a time to cry, a time to pray, a time to comfort, a time to focus on the needs of the heart and spirit, and a time to feed the hungry. This was the time to laugh and enjoy God’s Spirit of joy.

Mary took the step of telling the servants to be on call and be prepared to follow My instructions—whatever they were. So when I told them to please fill up the six large water jars with water, they did so immediately. As a result of their obedience and the faith of My mother, and the love of My Father to give the gift of joy to those there at the wedding, a miracle happened!

After the jars were filled with water I instructed them to serve some to the master of the feast. As they took that next step of obedience they saw with great astonishment that rather than water, it had all been transformed into wine! And not just any old wine, but the best they'd ever tasted before! The grateful guests had refreshments, and the celebration could continue.

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## Fishermen

As I was walking along the sea shore I saw the fishermen working—there was Simon Peter and his brother Andrew, John and his brother James. Their jobs were to go out and catch fish to be sold. It was a tough job and often required working at night. Sometimes the nets would tear so they needed to mend them.

I was ready to start travelling around and preaching to people and helping them. I didn't just want those helpers to be with Me for a few days, I needed some people who would stick with Me day after day, who would travel with Me and help to tell others the good news that I came to Earth to bring. There were so many sad people who needed to be encouraged and brought closer to Me.

I had started to teach and preach and tell people everywhere I went about My love and the truth I had come to pass on. People were sick and poor and often times hungry, but their biggest hunger was to hear God's Words. When I spoke they felt it in their heart and knew that it was right. The words I spoke encouraged them, motivated them, challenged them, and touched their hearts in a way that only My Words can do.

When people told their friends and families about the wonderful news of My arrival and the soul-stirring, heart-strengthening words that I was passing on to them from Heaven, they left homes and villages and crowded around wherever I was in order to get the chance to hear Me speak.

One time as people were pressing and crowding all around to hear Me speak near a lake, I spotted two empty boats near the water's edge. I got an idea. Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John often worked together and helped each other in their job of fishing. These men were on the shore washing and mending their fishing nets after using them for a long and unsuccessful fishing trip all the previous night.

I asked Simon Peter if I could sit in his boat and if he could push it out just a bit further into the water. This way I could talk to the people and they could all see Me and hear Me, without people crowding all around Me making it too hard to be heard by more than just the ones beside Me.

So Simon Peter agreed and into the boat I went. Everyone on the shore intently listened and drank in every word I had to share with them. When I was done preaching and talking to everyone I asked Simon Peter to take the boat out into the deep water to catch some fish.

Well, the fishing was usually best done at night. This was when it was the easiest to catch fish. But for some reason the night before they hadn't caught anything at all. It was discouraging for them and they were tired of trying. When I asked Simon Peter to do this, I knew it would be a bit of a test—a test to see if he had faith that what I said to do would bring good results. He wasn't eager to do something that would be hard work and wouldn't bring in any fish again—like his experience had just been.

Simon Peter felt the call in his heart and felt a bit of excitement inside. Maybe—just maybe—something special was going to happen. So he obeyed and took the boat out where the water was

deep and let down the net on the side I told him to. Simon Peter wasn't expecting what happened next at all. Immediately the net filled with more fish than he'd ever had at one time! It was a complete and supernatural miracle!

"Help us!" Simon Peter called out to his partners. He wanted them to bring the other boat and give him a hand. It was too heavy to pull in without some help. The fishermen had never experienced such an amazing catch. But was that why I performed the miracle—to help them get wealthy by bringing in lots of fish for them? Or was there something else they were to do?

Well, after that wonderful experience they were ready to do anything I told them to do. More than getting lots of fish and having things go well at their business, they wanted Me—the Son of God. They didn't just want the good things I could give them. They wanted to get to know Me and to help Me tell others about God's love. They wanted to learn all they could from Me.

After they had pulled in all the fish I called out those fishermen to come, leave their nets, leave their jobs and follow Me! I said to them that rather than catching fish and bringing them to land, they could come and help Me bring people to God and to His Kingdom—to be fishers of men!

That was the next test. Did they want to benefit from the big catch they just pulled in, or more than possessions and things, did they want to be with Me and get to hear My Words every day. What did they value the most? A life trying to get things for themselves and bring in as much money as they could while working hard at their jobs, or did they want to leave it all behind because God had something different for them to do?

These guys were very eager to do something different, if it was what God wanted them to be doing, and they were ready to be enthusiastic news spreaders! They dropped what they were doing. They left their boat and their father who could hire others to do their job. I called those men for a much more important job that I knew they were the right ones for.

They weren't the only ones that I called to leave what they were doing and to come and be My followers and helpers instead. Some of the people that I chose to be a part of My team were people not too many liked, or they were those who had plenty to learn and made lots of mistakes.

I didn't just call the well-liked folks, the rich, the famous, the nice-looking and the talented. I chose those whose hearts were ready for a change, and who had the potential to be a good and strong witness for Me—with a little time and training and a lot of God's Spirit.

As I travelled along telling people the good news that I came to preach I walked past a man called Levi who was later called Matthew. He was sitting at a table collecting the tax money from everyone. His job was to give it to the Romans, who would pass it on to the Roman leaders. These were the people that were trying to control the countries around and were tough and unkind, forceful rulers and nobody wanted to be ruled in that way.

So to have someone who collected money to give to those rulers wasn't a person well-liked. People were already poor enough, and having to give to the tough leaders rather than to their families wasn't something anyone wanted to do.

Matthew was sitting there, not really enjoying his job or anything much about his life at that point. When I came along he saw the spirit of God in Me. He wished he could have the joy in his heart that he saw Me smiling with. So many days he wished he could have something truly fulfilling and good to do with his life. Well, the day I walked past was the day his wish was granted.

“Leave the money and your job of collecting it, and come follow Me!” I asked Matthew.

There would be no guarantee of income, and nothing to count on anymore. There would be no salary or way to make money if he came along with us. But at that point he was so sick of the money makers and the way people were being treated. He was so grateful for the chance to at last make a positive difference in people’s lives. He didn’t want to miss this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity! Matthew jumped up and from that moment on became a faithful follower and wonderful witness.

He was the one to later on write the Book of Matthew—the first book in the New Testament, that has helped to win countless others to Me, for nearly two thousand years. He chose to use his talents and skills to talk about Me, to write about Me, and to do whatever I needed him to do.

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### **The Messenger and Miracles**

Our team then began to travel around telling people about My love and My ways. I talked in the synagogues where the elders and religious people met to read and pray. I talked to those in humble villages. Word began to get out that I was worth listening to—especially as there were many miraculous healings and miracles taking place wherever we went. Whoever came to Me in faith, asking for healing and believing in God’s power, received what they asked for.

As a result of the fame that was being spread, many people began to follow. Many came to listen to the words I had to tell them, and many were healed, too. There wasn’t any type of sickness or bodily ailment that was too hard for Me to heal. All those things that seemed impossible and incurable were in an instant healed, by simply My touch or word spoken because of someone’s faith to believe that I could do it.

It’s like that today—there is absolutely nothing that I can’t heal, cure or restore. Not always do you always receive the healing that you want right when you want it, but if you pray in faith and ask Me to heal you, I can and will do what is best for you right then and there.

Sometimes I give you the courage and the grace to endure the trouble a bit longer until the reason for it has been accomplished, and other times I heal you right away because I know that is best. But all who come to Me I touch and strengthen in some way.

Those who the Enemy had filled with a bad spirit and were causing to act very ugly, were also healed. I rebuked the Enemy and freed people from the troubling and ungodly spirits. I cleansed their hearts and minds and spirit, and gave them My loving, wonderful, pure spirit instead.

News began to spread from one person to the next, from one town to the next, and from one country to another. People began to travel very long distances often times carrying their sick loved one, to find where I was and to receive My healing and words of encouragement.

One time when I was called on to read a portion of the Old Testament in a synagogue I stood up to read a passage from the Book of Isaiah the prophet. I read a portion of a prophecy that was to do with My coming and the good things that would happen as a result of My arrival on Earth then, and the things I would do. After reading it with much conviction and authority I looked up to speak to those in the crowd.

I told them the wonderful truth and news that at that moment, right then, that prophecy had come to pass. I was saying that I was the one fulfilling the words in that message. Some people were a bit too shocked to believe Me and some just got angry, thinking I wasn’t speaking the truth. Not everyone,

everywhere believed in the wonderful things I was sent to tell them and instruct them in. Even though they wanted a Messiah they had a false idea in their own minds of just how they wanted things to be.

A man like Me, who was created to be much like them while on Earth, who grew up in a simple and humble family, and didn't have wealth, wasn't really who they expected to be God's Son sent to save them. Besides it hurt their pride that they didn't know it already. It made them feel humbled that I told them the truth, and didn't just go around saying that everyone was doing the right things.

I didn't shy away from telling them the truth when the situation warranted it. I spoke God's Word in love, but I didn't just try to make everyone feel good about themselves and to keep going on doing all the things they were doing. A good change was needed in most people's lives, and the first step to good change is to realise that it's necessary and important—and to know what God thinks about it.

It was hard for Me to see that some chose to refuse to believe in Me and in the message of truth I came to bring them. I loved them. My Father loved them and wanted them to change to doing things His way. It was a new thing that My Father in Heaven was doing—to finally send His own Son to help them find their way back to Heaven; to send a bit of Heaven down to Earth.

But just like many people didn't listen to and believe the prophets God had sent to Earth many years before, not everyone believed and loved Me and listened to the words I was telling them for their own good. It was sad in deed, but I had to keep reminding Myself about you!

If I did My job of coming down to Earth then and speaking the truth in love, that eventually those words and My example would carry on from one generation to another, until it eventually made it to you. And then I knew you would believe and one day come and have a great time in Heaven as a result.

There were countless many however who did believe and follow Me and who wanted to change and do things God's way, and this was wonderful. The healing stories of each and every one that was touched with Heaven's power would be far too many to list. One day you can hear about them—when you are here in Heaven.

Story Time with Jesus 101-112\_text

## Story Time with Jesus

### Bible Stories

#### Chapters 101-112

- 101-Choosing the 12
- 102-New Life and Living Water
- 103-Comforting and Restoring
- 104-Fever Cured Immediately
- 105-Four Men and a New Idea
- 106-Helping and Healing
- 107-Mountain Meetings

108-Stilling the Storm

109-Twelve Years

110-Power to Preach

111-Feeding Thousands

112-Walking on the Water

(Jesus speaking: )

### **Choosing the 12**

A night of solemn prayer was spent alone with My Father on a mountain. It was time to make some life-changing choices for some of My many followers. There were many who “enjoyed the ride,” who wanted the miracles and who were interested in what I had to say when they were around Me. And I was glad for those that wanted to learn more about the Heavenly way.

However, I needed to choose who I would have as close co-workers, travel companions and all-the-way followers—those who would give up the comforts of family and home and put the needs of the Kingdom of God first. Those who would help to create a large family with God as the Father, and wouldn’t be too focused on their own needs and wants.

It was to be a special time of lots of hard work, as well as getting to see first hand many miracles, and I needed those with a lot of faith who could help Me do the job—not just be there for the enjoyment of getting to hear and see wonderful things.

As I was on the mountain, alone, talking to My Heavenly Father, He spoke to Me about each of the possible men that could be chosen for the selected team. Others would still be followers and would go on trips here and there, and get to hear Me speak. The choice and question that I was praying about and getting My Father’s advice on was who should be on the close team of stay-with-Me followers?

As I listened to My Father’s voice I was given insight into what made each of these 12 men the right ones for the job. When the night had passed, I felt confident that the ones I’d talked with My Father about and chosen to do the job were the right team.

As I descended the mountain and looked around I saw many who were eager to hear what was on My mind. I then called and chose the special team of 12 men. Each one felt a mixture of emotions. Glad and relieved to be worthy of this honour and privilege, and also a bit scared and worried. Would they be able to live up to My expectations? Would they fail Me in this mission of reaching the world with My truth? Could they bear the loss and the troubles and the difficulties that they would face, or would they weaken and give up?

These newly chosen close-team of disciples came with Me apart from the multitude for a while, so we could talk and pray together. I encouraged them. I instructed them. I reassured them of My love and My Father’s love for each one of them. It wasn’t a contest to see who could be the best and the bravest or perform the most signs and miracles. It was just a matter of the heart. Would they choose to love Me with all their heart? Love Me enough to

put the needs of others, and the need of spreading the Good News to all, first and foremost in their lives?

How could they build such a strong love for God and for Me as their Saviour, a love that would enable them to go any distance to do whatever needed to be done to win people to the Kingdom of Heaven? It was simple. All they had to do was to pray for it, to want it more than anything else, and to not give up praying for this love to burn in their hearts.

There was nothing extraordinarily wonderful and extra special about these guys in the physical. They all had sins, problems, and human weakness. They made all kinds of mistakes. None of them had a spotless past, and all had done things that they weren't too proud of. But I loved and forgave them anyway, and gave them a chance at a new life. Just like I can do for anyone on Earth who comes to Me and likewise wants to be My follower.

These men made the right choice to stick with Me, even when things got rough, even when others were making things real hard for us, even when people didn't believe the truth we came to bring to them. It was very sad and hurt our hearts when those we came to help, rather than being grateful and wishing to learn more from Me and My disciples, spoke unkindly and rudely and called us names and made us leave certain places.

But those that did hear My Word and the message of My love and received the gift of healing that I and My disciples were offering, made all the tough times worth it. Those people that flocked to us just for a chance to hear something that would lift and encourage them, made us glad we were there giving our all to save them. And those that showed great faith in My power to heal and restore, received the marvellous answers to their needs and requests.

There were times of heartache as we saw some of the other followers leave us, when the going got a bit too tough, or people were filled with disbelief. But the beautiful times we had communing with My Father, and our times spent in prayer gave us the renewed strength to persevere and finish the job we set out to do.

Each of these specially called disciples had some things about them that were drawbacks, and some things that were real assets. For example, some of them had a hasty temper and would get moody and grumpy easily, but they also had great faith that whatever I said was the truth. As a result they received power from My Father to work wonderful miracles in My name and to preach the word to many.

Some were often sick and in need of the extra care of others, and this made them less buoyant and not able to work quite as hard or travel quite as far as some of the others. But this too had its good side and My Father allowed it to teach compassion and brotherhood. We were a team, and as long as we looked out for one another and helped each other make it through, then we would be successful.

It wasn't a success if just a few of the stronger ones could go and do all these amazing things in My name, if they didn't manifest real love and care and compassion for the one who was right beside them. This served as a practical example of how to show love and what I meant when I said, "love one another," and "as you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them."

As we travelled abroad sometimes we met those we wish we could have stayed longer with, as we would have enjoyed their company. But we all had to put the needs of the mission first. Each one of My disciples had their times of forsaking and feeling the hurt of giving up something or someone that was special to them. Not one of them escaped that trial. But because they chose to use those few years that I had with them on Earth to do My will first of all, as we had so little time to do it in, then they were wonderfully blessed.

I told them that whatever they gave up in order to help teach others My Word, and give My love to others, I would make sure that they got back 100 times more in return. –Rewards there on Earth, as well as in Heaven! If they had chosen to put their own wishes first, things wouldn't have worked out so well for them. But putting God's needs and wishes first, brought them more amazing payback than they ever could imagine.

Still today, thousands of years later, these faithful ones are continuing to receive reward after reward for all they did for Me—along with the many countless others who, down throughout history, put My calling and will first and suffered for it. Each one who chooses to love Me and follow in My ways above all, will be blessed many, many times over.

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### **New Life and Living Water**

As My disciples and I travelled around teaching, preaching and healing, we met many people from all walks of life. Some were considered real important, some were despised of others, some thought well of themselves, others were looked down on by most people, and thought little of themselves.

One night a Pharisee named Nicodemus wanted to talk with me. There were plenty of those he worked with during the day that weren't too sure if I was really who I and others said I was. He wanted to talk with Me privately without others disturbing him or giving him a hard time. Nicodemus came to see Me secretly and was able to get many of his questions answered. His heart was eager to know what I had to say, and how to get closer to God.

I explained that receiving My gift of salvation is like starting a new life. Just like a baby is starting their life on Earth when they are born, so it is when people receive Me into their life and are forgiven and are filled with God's Holy Spirit—it's like the start of a new life. They are then God's child and start to learn new things. At first Nicodemus didn't understand and wondered what I meant when I explained that it was like he needed to be "born again".

Did that mean he had to all of a sudden be a tiny baby on earth again? But I wasn't talking about his body—I was trying to give him an example to explain that receiving Me as His Saviour and believing on Me as God's Son, was like the beginning of a new life of faith and joy. He was an old man, and it was nice to think about being young again! And if He believed on Me and received God's gift of salvation, his spirit would feel so alive and fresh and young!

Just like a baby learns to walk and talk, people who receive God's gift of love can then learn how to do things in new ways—new, Godly, loving ways. The words they say, the places they go, the things they do are to be what makes Me happy. As they learn from My Word what to



do and how to be, it's like a child learning and studying things. And just as a child needs exercise, those who are the children of God can exercise their faith through prayer and belief in My loving care. Just like a child needs good food to grow, so do those who are born again into a new life in spirit need spiritual nourishment through reading God's Word and taking time to talk and listen to Me.

I talked with many people one at a time while I was on Earth. There was a time for healing and helping the multitudes, and a time to tell people individually about God's love and the words from Heaven that would change their lives and the lives of others they would have an effect on. To reach the people who were eager to know the truth of God's words I often had to do things contrary to the way they were always done. For example the day I spoke to a woman who had gone to draw water from the city well.

It was not the custom for just any man to be sitting around talking with any lady that walked on by. Also, it wasn't considered the normal thing for those called, "Jews" who were the Israelites that lived in one part of the land, to interact with those living in Samaria. At that time they didn't talk with them or even travel through their part of the country.

So it was very surprising to My disciples when they saw Me sitting by a well in Samaria talking with a woman! We had to travel through the land of Samaria and we hungry and thirsty. The well was outside of the main town. My disciples went to the town to find some food to buy, while I sat and rested by the well. I had a job to do there. While I was sitting alone then came a woman to get water from the well, and I asked her for some as she had a water pot to draw some with.

This surprised her very much that I would be doing something so unusual as to talk with her—since she was both a woman and a Samaritan. But I wasn't looking at her nationality or even her gender. I was looking on her heart. I knew that she had a rough life and things had made her sad. I knew also that she believed that a Messiah would come. She knew about the prophecies that foretold that I would come.

I spoke with her and she was so eager and ready to believe, I didn't have to say much and she was so excited and knew that I was the Messiah, and it made her so very happy. For her I used a different example to help her understand about receiving My Spirit and believing on Me. I said it's like drinking living water—that makes you never have to be thirsty again. Drawing water was a hard job and had to be done daily. It was heavy work to bring the water up from the well, and then to carry it all the way home, every day. Being thirsty without water was never nice, and it took a walk in the hot sun to go and get more water if it had run out. So to think about never feeling thirsty again was a nice thought.

But more than the discomfort of being thirsty, it was her heart that was in need of the life-giving waters of My words and love. She drank into her spirit and heart all that I had to say. And did you know that the word "believe" comes from the word "to drink in"? This is what I was talking to her about. To love God and to believe and receive Me as His son was like taking a big fresh glass of spiritual water, and she would never feel that sad feeling again of wondering if God loved her, and wondering if she'd ever be able to go to Heaven. I would

forgive her for her mistakes and wrong doings and clean her heart with the water of God's Word and love and she would feel just great!

As I was talking to her she knew something was special and different about Me, and then didn't want to wait a second more to tell others about My visit to their city. She ran so fast to the town—leaving her water pot there so she could go as fast as possible. She had the same enthusiasm as the shepherds who saw Me in the stable on the night I was born. She too, after meeting Me, went to tell everyone she could in her town about Me, telling them that she met the Messiah, and I was right there that day!

While I was talking with her, My disciples came back and saw her listening and getting more and more convinced that I was the Christ, the special promised one. After she ran to tell everyone, My disciples came and offered Me the food they'd bought, knowing how tired and hungry I was. But at that time I didn't feel hungry any more. I was focused on the needs of the hungry hearts of the people who lived there. It was hard to stop and eat. I didn't even feel real hungry any more. I was more interested in the needs of the people. It was wonderful to meet someone who believed and had faith in what I came to tell everyone on Earth. Food could wait. I had a job to do that was as inspiring and heart-filling as eating a good meal is reviving and stomach-filling.

People started to get interested when they saw how enthusiastic she was. They came to talk with me for themselves to find out if it really was true. They were so eager to hear what I had to say that the people of the village begged Me to stay with them, and not to just travel through quickly. So I and My disciples stayed for two days, talking with them and bringing them God's message of love and His words of truth from Heaven.

When it was time to move on we felt glad that we had done something that although it seemed odd to the people who lived around in the neighbouring areas, it was just what God wanted. As a result many people came to know God's love and received Me as their Saviour. It was worth it to take the time to talk with one woman at a well, and then to take the next steps to reach many more, as the opportunity presented.

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### **Comforting and Restoring**

When a loved one is hurting or sick it can be one of the hardest things to deal with. Your heart goes out to them in love and you wish you could make things all nice and better for them. You wish you could have fun times again, to do those things that you were able to do before, or things that you see others getting to do that your loved one or family member or friend may have never gotten a chance to do at all.

I knew what people were feeling and I had compassion. I wanted to heal them, and I especially was able to do wonderful miracles for those who had faith and believed that I could do it. Those that were believing received the gift of the healing themselves or their loved ones did.

There was a certain nobleman whose son became very ill. In his desperation to do anything to help his son, this nobleman went travelling and looking all over until he found Me. He told Me about his son and asked Me to please heal him. I told him something that would require faith. I told him to go home, and that his son was now healed. Would he believe that? Without Me actually being there in person and visiting his house? Well, this nobleman proved himself to be noble for sure, and countless people have heard the story of what happened as a result. This man chose to believe Me, and turned around to begin his trip home again. It would take about a day or two to make it home.

He was walking home by faith, not having seen the proof yet that his request to Me had been answered. But the next day in his travels he was met by some of his servants who joyfully told him the wonderful news. They said that the day before—the same time when this nobleman was talking with Me—that at that very hour his son began to recover. Everyone was happily surprised at how fast the boy had been healed.

It happened the second he believed what I said and started on his walk home. This made everyone in his home and those who knew the situation to also believe in Me. It started off as a seemingly bad thing—to have his son so ill that he didn't know if he'd ever see his son again as he walked all around trying to find Me. But due to his faith and trust to first of all ask Me for his son's healing, and then to take My word for it that it was true when I said he would be healed and return home without Me going to his house in person, many people were able to know God's love and believed in My love and care.

Another example of a person's faith was the time I was approached by messengers of a certain centurion. He was an important man, a Roman, and had many people he was in charge of. He had been nice to the people of the area, and had made things easy for them. When one of his trustworthy servants became real ill, this man cared about him, and sent some of the rulers to come and find Me. The centurion was requesting help and healing for his servant. Those who came to bring Me the message and request added their own words too, saying that the centurion was a nice man, unlike many of the other Roman rulers who weren't treating people well at all. They said that they considered him worthy of the miracle and healing.

I agreed to go to see this man and his servant, but as he was coming nearer, the centurion sent messengers to tell Me that I didn't need to actually come there to see him in person. The centurion felt too humble to have Me come to his house, but said that all I needed to do was to say the word and his servant would be healed. He knew I could heal instantaneously, without having to personally be there. I was so glad to hear of someone with such great faith. I told those around how pleased I was to hear of the unusually strong faith of someone like that.

Usually people feel they need to see and hear things in order to believe them. This man was used to telling people things and knowing that what he said to do would happen. He knew that if I told the sickness to depart, without even being there, that the healing would happen as well! And so I gave the word, and his servant was healed.

It's like that today, you know. Even though you can't see Me with your eyes, and hear Me with your ears, I can still heal you and answer your prayers. This man of faith didn't even need to see Me to believe that I could do it. He sent messengers to speak to Me. When you pray it's like a messenger has been sent to Heaven to bring your requests before Me. And then I can speak the word and give the answers that I know would be best.

Your faith is then made stronger as a result, when you believe that I can and will help you, and then you receive the help and healing and whatever is needed. It takes faith to ask Me to help you—as you can't see or hear Me and you don't know how I will do the miracle. But faith is like the gold coins of heaven, when you hand Me a prayer requests with faith, it's like giving someone a shopping list and also the money to buy what is on the list. When you ask Me to help you and you pray knowing that if it is what is best for your and others that I will grant it, then it gives Me what I need in order to do the miracle and to answer your request. Faith is like a key that opens a door of a big storehouse filled with all the things you will ever need. Prayer and talking to Me is like the hand that turns the key of faith, and then wonderful things begin to happen.

When I was travelling another time, I saw something that touched My heart and filled Me with compassion. There was a woman that needed her faith strengthened and needed encouragement. She was crying and crying. She didn't know about Me and didn't know that there was any hope in her sad situation. Her only son, who was a young man, had passed away. It seemed like there was nothing good left in life for her. She needed to know about Me and My love and the miracles I could do for those who ask Me to.

I went up to her and encouraged her, telling her that it would be alright. She was surprised, as everyone around her was expressing the opposite. There was just crying and sorrow and the feeling of loss and that she would never see her son again. To see Me having faith and encouraging her that all was not lost and good things were about to happen, made her heart feel very warm inside. A spark of hope came to her eyes as she saw Me go over to her son who was being carried right then in an open coffin. I spoke to the young man and told him to rise. To everyone's amazement and great surprise, this man just simply opened his eyes and sat up, healed and well! His mother was so very grateful and was able to be a good witness to many of how I healed, and how I showed love.

She wasn't a rich or famous person. I never met her before. That moment made her realise that she was special to God. He knows about each one on Earth and cares about what is happening in their lives. Not always it is the right time for people to come back to life again after they have passed away, as everyone has a time to be born and a time to move on from this Earthly life to the next life in the spirit, and to be with Me in heaven if they love and believe in Me. That can sure be a test of faith for those who see them go and miss being around them. But one day all tears will be wiped away, and loved ones and friends and family members can be reunited. This life won't last forever for anyone, and each one has a time when they will leave this life, but those with faith in Me can be glad that their loved ones are able to enjoy a nice time in heaven, where they will live forever—because I live forever!

However, there are those special times, such as with this young man, that someone passes away for only a little while and then is granted life again on Earth for a while longer—as an

encouragement, as a faith booster. This gives them a chance to help others to know about Me as they tell about the miracle of restored life. Either way I can wipe the tears and encourage the hearts of those that face the difficult moment when a loved one passes on into the next life, and you have to wait for a while to see them again. I can give the faith in your heart while you wait and are separate for a while, or I can bring them back to life again, if that is what I know will have the best results. I love you, each one of you, and have compassion and care about what you are feeling. I want to make things easier for you by letting you know that I am right there beside you, even though you can't see Me with your eyes—just with your heart, and your faith tells you how near to you I am.

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### **Fever Cured Immediately**

Have you ever had a fever or felt very unwell? I know what it feels like, as I was on Earth just like you, and experienced all kinds of things. Maybe I didn't have each and every kind of sickness that there ever has been, but I was given the understanding while on Earth to feel and know what people were experiencing, and I had plenty of times when I felt unwell, that I might understand you and know what it feels like.

Has it ever happened to you, that you have to miss out on something that is special, because you get too sick to enjoy it or to do the activity? There was one woman that what so sick and was nearly going to miss something that she enjoyed—getting to have Me visit her house and talk with her and her family, but I healed her just in time.

She was real sick with a fever when we arrived at the house. She was so very hot feeling and couldn't do anything but lie in bed feeling unwell. This woman was the mother-in-law of My disciple Peter. When she saw us there it was very difficult for her as she couldn't even get up. She would miss talking with us and enjoying our visit.

Normally, she would have been there to help serve the guests and make some food for us and help us to feel welcome. But there is a time to minister to others, and a time to receive the loving care of others yourself. This was the time when this woman who was usually quite active in her service to others needed the care of others. When I saw her sick with the fever and felt how hot her head was, I rebuked the fever in prayer and healed her.

Immediately she got up and felt so strong and energetic she was able to right away start preparing food and serving her guests. We would have been happy for her to keep resting if she felt the need, but this woman didn't want to miss a moment of this special time when I was visiting her. She knew it was rare and would have been sad to miss out. She wanted us to feel welcome and to enjoy our visit, and serving us as her guests was what she enjoyed doing.

Wherever I was, news was spread around and many people would come to find Me. The needs of the people were many. By sunset that day many people who needed healing were brought right to the door of the house we were in to be healed by Me. I cared about them and had compassion on them. I touched and healed each one that came to Me that evening.

We stayed there that night, but long before the sun was up the next day I decided to slip away for some alone time with My Father in Heaven. I found somewhere outdoors that I would be alone and undisturbed. I needed time to be refreshed and to pray for strength for the many things I was being called on to do.

I found that early in the morning was the best time to prepare for My day, and the best way to handle all the pressure and needs that were surrounding Me almost constantly. Even though getting up extra early in the morning was tiring at times, it wasn't as tiring as trying to just sleep as much as I could and then rushing into the day, trying to accomplish all that faced Me, without having that special time in prayer.

You may find that you are able to have better and happier days if you spend the very first moments of the day with Me, alone in prayer. Even if you just talk with Me in your mind before you get out of bed. Whatever you can do to get My help and instructions and refreshing will make all the difference in the world.

Even if all you have is three minutes alone you can make it quality time. You could start with thanking Me for all you can think to praise Me for, then take another moment to pray for whatever is on your heart and mind, and end with getting quiet and hearing anything that I might have to say or thoughts I might want to put in your mind and heart.

You can spend these special three minutes at other times throughout the day as well—like before you start a new project, or before you travel, or after you've had a difficult run-in with someone, or when you get hurt, or if you feel upset. Take these three or more minutes to stop and talk and listen to Me. It will make such a difference to you and things will start to go much better. Your day won't be as stressed, and you'll see some of the things you were concerned about getting taken care of.

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### **Four Men and a New Idea**

There were four men who were very determined to get help and healing for their sick friend. It was hard for them, because their friend couldn't even walk, couldn't do things with them, he needed lots of care and help for anything at all. He had to lie down on a bed or blanket all day.

When these men heard that I was in a certain house, they each held a corner of the bed blanket he was resting on and just picked it up and carried their friend down the road until they reached the house. They knew I could and would heal their friend, if they could just get him to Me.

However, when they arrived they found out that people from all around had also heard that I was there in that house, and there were many people crammed into that tiny area. It wasn't an auditorium or a theatre or even a very big house. There were more people in the house than had ever been in there before, all at one time.

Many of the teachers of the law and Pharisees wanted to talk with Me and ask questions. So there were all kinds of people squeezed into a small place. But these determined fellows weren't going to let the impossible get in the way. They decided to make a way. They weren't going to disappoint their friend or go away saying, "We just can't."

Up to the house roof they went, and then began to break away the tiling of the roof! Those in the house were wondering what was going on, and it was a funny sight to then see something coming down through the roof! It was a blanket with a man on it being lowered.

I knew that took a lot of faith and determination for those men to go to that length to get the help their friend needed. They were doing all that they could to get healing for their friend. They weren't going to let anything keep them away from Me. They knew I was their only hope of him ever being healed. I was glad to see such faith, and I told the man who was sick of the palsy that his sins were forgiven and he could be healed and get up now.

He needed healing of both the body and his spirit. He was enduring consequences for his actions and the way he had strayed for a while from doing the things he knew in his heart to be right. He wanted his heart to be clean again and right with God. His body needed healing to be able to get around again and enjoy the things others were able to do—even just being able to take care of himself.

When I told this man that his sins were forgiven, he felt God's love and felt healing coming into every part of his body, mind and soul. It was a wonderful moment—the best moment of his life! Some of those around were surprised that I would say his sins were forgiven. That was something they knew only God could do and they hadn't believed that I was God come to them—His Son, there to heal, there to save, there to also forgive people for their wrong doings and to help them start a new and better life loving God with all their heart and soul.

I told them clearly that this was within My power—to forgive sins, and I told the man to get up and take up his bed and walk home! And he did! –To the shock of everyone around. With a smile and joy in his step he did just that! How wonderful it felt to walk! He'd been unwell for so long. Healing felt so very good.

Another sickness that people were suffering from that also had no cure was leprosy. Those sick with it couldn't be around others or be touched, and they had to warn others if they were coming close, so people could run away and keep a distance, so they wouldn't also get sick with leprosy. It was a contagious and terrible sickness. Those who had it were very sad and had a very difficult time.

There was a man who was sick with leprosy and when I was visiting the area he lived in, he searched Me out and begged Me to heal him. I then did what no one else could do—I touched him and healed him. He couldn't remember the last time someone had actually put a friendly hand on his shoulder. I didn't look at his outward appearance and the terrible condition of his body. I was looking into his heart, and I saw faith in Me and courage. I healed him at that moment!

I touched him, before he was clean, because I knew the power of God would make things right again. I touched him to show that compassion is better than rightness. It wasn't

necessary or good in all situations, but I wanted to show those around Me what love could do if God willed it.

It was a touch that would have struck fear in anyone were they to have been compelled to do the same. But I wasn't afraid of catching his sickness, and I wanted him to know that he was loved by God. I touched him and the healing power of Heaven transformed his tormented body to a whole and strong man, who testified till his last day on earth, what the power of God could do.

I touched him to show that I loved and cared about the whole man—his heart, mind and body. I didn't just love the healthy and unsoiled ones. This touch of love transformed his heart and spirit and nature just as much as the power of God cleansed and transformed his afflicted and troubled body into one full of vigour and renewed strength.

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### **Helping and Healing**

Can you imagine not being able to walk or run or climb or dance or play ball games or anything physically active for a whole year, and instead only rest in your bed? Now imagine what that would be like to be in that condition for nearly 40 years. That would be a long time to wait until you could move properly again!

There was a man sick and unable to get around for 38 years. He was so desperate for healing that he was nearly always beside a special pool, it was called Bethesda and had five porches. It was a place where people sometimes were immediately cured. God would bring people relief at times there through sending an angel of healing to them.

At a certain time, when the water was filled with God's healing power, whoever entered the water first was cured. So this man thought this was his only hope of healing. He waited and he waited there in hopes of being able to get into the water at just the right time and be healed of God. The problem was that he couldn't just jump up and be the first one, even if he wanted to, as he couldn't move around on his own. He'd need help to get in the water, but there wasn't always someone there ready to help him day and night.

Patience was something he'd learned a lot about. When I, Jesus, walked past there I talked with him about his condition, and how hard it was for him to be unable to get into the water in time to receive the special healing. Being unable to move around and to be hurting and sick was a very difficult thing, and he'd endured it for so very long. It was time for healing and for the start of a new life.

I then healed him instantly and he had the faith to get up when I said to. As he obeyed he felt the healing and strength come all over his body. It was the best feeling he'd ever had. Every part of his body changed from being sick and weak, hurting and disabled, to being invigorated and filled with life and renewal.

This ill man was totally cured and could just simply stand up and walk away. Just being able to do that was a total miracle! It was more amazing for people to see this man just standing and



holding a blanket, than it is for you to watch someone win an Olympic contest. This man being instantly cured and moving around was something that was totally impossible for him to make happen on his own. It was a miracle only God could do, and proved to him and others that I was sent from God to show them His love and care.

Another man I healed had a problem with his hand. It couldn't be used and looked deformed. If you wonder what it might be like to only have one hand to use, play a game where you have to keep one hand behind your back and think of things to act out doing—things that normally require two hands. It will give you a bit of an idea how tricky it is to get by with only one good working hand.

This man, whose hand was shrivelled up and weak-looking was there in the temple one day when I was. I told him to stretch out his hand, and he did. At that moment it was made completely normal, like his other hand. He was so amazed and rejoicing! Think of all the things that he'd wanted to be able to do for so long, and now at last could!

He could now do things like, pick up a child and swing them around playfully. He could build something out of wood much more easily. He could do a hand stand. He could give a hug. He could hold the plough strongly to do farming. He could lift and help to carry big things. He could clap his hands!

Some of the people who were very interested in doing things very right according to the laws of Moses got their minds and hearts off the real reason for the rules I had given them long ago. It was like they nearly began worshiping rules and rule keeping, rather than getting to know what I, the Lord, wanted them to be doing at that time.

When I came along and did things that they didn't approve of, because these grumpy team of folks weren't filled with God's Spirit of love, it made them mad. If they were truly trying to do things God's way then something like Me healing a person would have been a wonderful thing. If they cared about the people around them, rather than just getting others to think of them as so righteous, they would have been glad for everyone that was helped.

The things I did showed God's power and didn't make those trying-to-be-so-perfect folks seem as great as they wanted others to think they were. When I showed love, it made it noticeable how they failed in showing true love. When I spoke of trusting in God and having faith for Him to supply all that was needed, it made their works and rule-keeping that were done without much faith seem in vain. God loved and cared for everyone, even the sinners, even those who weren't as perfect as these extreme rule-keepers thought they ought to be. This humbled them and put the focus back where it should be—on God, rather than on them, as being the best.

Many times when I healed people it was done on the day that I was teaching in the temple, and on a day when people were not supposed to work. When I healed someone, there were some of the proud folks around who wanted to stop Me and all the good that I was doing and tried to say that it was against the rules to heal on that day.

Imagine telling God that He couldn't help someone who was asking for help, because it wasn't on the right day of the week? That would be a bit out of place, wouldn't it? It would be presumptuous and proud, and would make God upset. And that is just what I felt.

It was deeply upsetting to Me when I wanted to help and heal and restore someone and I gave My healing power to them—and instead of hearing praises to God from the people around, there was complaint and grumbling that I didn't do it on the correct days of the week that they seemed to think it should be scheduled on. Well, there really wasn't a scheduled day of the week for miracles to happen—God could do them anytime they were needed.

I told these people who were trying to pull out whatever excuses they could to try to stop My work on Earth, that anytime and any day was the right day to do good. God said there was to be a day of rest once a week, so that people wouldn't overwork and wouldn't make other people, or their animals, be overworked either. It was to maintain health and strength and inspiration. And then they wouldn't be too busy to take time talking with God either. There was one day a week at least, put into their schedule to just stop everything and do something different. They weren't to sell things and make money on that day either.

But to heal and help someone that I met along the way, whom I would probably never get a chance to see again as I travelled on to new places, that wasn't against God's rules. To do good and help and heal when God put the opportunity in someone's way was a kind and loving thing to do. To show love and bring healing on the day of rest was a great thing to do. In fact these ungodly people's attitude of not caring enough about the needs of others, their unloving thoughts were very opposite to God's way of being, and made Him very sad and mad.

Most of the time when these people started to cause Me trouble, I just left and went somewhere else. I would go out to the wilderness areas and those who loved Me and were so glad that I showed true concern about them, would find Me and flock to Me and I healed them and talked with them.

Other times, before leaving the company of those who didn't want to see love in action and didn't choose to believe the truth I came to tell them, I would give them a good talking to. At times I gave them a chance to hear what was good for them to know, even if it was a tough message. I told them clearly how wrong and hurtful their actions and attitudes were. I told them that to do things in their unkind ways and only think about how to make themselves seem good rather than exalting God, was very ungodly and of the Enemy.

I came to bring an end to the devices of the Enemy and to make people aware of the things he would do to harm them. I came to save people and to get God working strongly in their lives. When I saw that the Enemy was putting thoughts in these complaining people's minds, I wanted them to wake up in spirit and look around and see that they were on the wrong pathway, harming others, and needed to have a change in their lives.

It's easy for people to want to be friends with everyone and have all people think well of them—something these critical thinking, self-righteous folks wanted. It wasn't easy for Me to

do the job of doing and saying what was truly right and having people upset at Me as a result. But that's what I came to Earth to do.

I wasn't there to just have a good time, but to do specifically what My Heavenly Father sent Me to do and needed Me to do. I wanted to make Him pleased most of all, even if it caused Me some troubles by those that didn't love God very much. In the end I was glad that I did the difficult job of telling everyone the truth and doing what would be best for the whole world—and eventually for you too!

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### **Mountain Meetings**

God's power was shown in wonderful ways, and many people were healed of the difficult and debilitating illnesses they had. When those who were healed travelled back to their hometowns they told everyone they knew about the miracle of healing. People were gathering in large groups all around Me when they heard where I was.

It was causing such a stir at times that I couldn't even go into some towns anymore, as it was disrupting things so much with crowds seeking Me out and going with Me wherever I went. It made those who didn't like all the attention I was getting even more unhappy, and worried about the commotion it caused.

Sometimes I told those who were healed, to not make such a big deal about it and to not go telling people right then that they had been healed, as it wasn't the best timing. But it was nearly impossible to stop those who had been so wonderfully cured from telling all those they knew or met about the miraculous occurrence. And from there the news just kept spreading.

I did come to heal the sick and to preach the gospel, but the way people were reacting to the healings was making things rather difficult for Me and My disciples to operate or even to go from one place to another. People can be very dramatic and desperate at times too, to receive relief from the aching pains of sickness and the hard times. I was the only hope of relief from their troubles that they'd known and felt so far, and it was a very big deal and wonderful happening in their lives.

Sometimes I would touch and heal people, other times they would crowd around or just lay in the street that I was going to be walking down in hopes of being able to touch Me, even the hem of my garment, just to barely touch the fabric of my clothes. They had such faith that they would be healed if they touched Me in even the slightest way. Their faith was honoured those who reached out to touch Me, believing they would be healed, were healed right then.

Of course, I couldn't just be a 24 hour healing and preaching service to the people. I also needed time to pray, to rest and to teach My disciples and talk with them. Sometimes we went on a ship to take a break and to travel to some other place. Other times we climbed up mountains, or went out into the desert or wilderness places.

Sometimes word got around that the ship that I and My disciples were on was heading to a certain area. By the time we arrived there, before we even set foot on the land, there was already a crowd of people waiting there for our arrival. People were desperate for healing, for encouragement and for Words from Heaven.

Things were very busy and the needs of the people kept us desperate in prayer and working together as a team to make the most of the short few years that I would have there on Earth, before it was My time to go back to My Heavenly Father, and work with you all in an invisible, omnipresent way. –That is being able to be everywhere at once, instead of how it was when I was on Earth in a human body.

One time, when many people were gathering to see Me and talk with Me, travelling from all around to come to the place that I was, after healing and talking with them, I climbed up a mountain with My disciples. We went up for a time of special instruction. Not everyone followed us all the way up. It was a hearty climb for those who were able to keep up. We sat together and I shared some special words from Heaven.

What I talked about there is referred to as, “The Sermon on the Mount.” It was in this place away from the thronging crowds and busy market places, the bustling streets and noisy towns, that I was able to teach some wonderful concepts from My Heavenly Father. The words I said at that time have been recorded and written down and have benefitted people ever since.

I spoke of faith and trust in God and His care—just as the birds and the flowers are provided for, so can you be as well. I know where you are and what you need, and as you ask Me for help, I will give you just what I know is right and will bring the best results, in time.

I spoke of the qualities of meekness and patience, of loving even those who try to do you harm, as God wishes for all to know of His enduring love. God wants His love to be at work in each one’s hearts, and through it to help people make good, wise and Godly choices.

I spoke of those that know Me and how they were to conduct themselves. They are to be as lights that shine out to others the truth and beauty that comes from a close relationship and friendship with the One who made each one.

I spoke of brotherhood, friendship and love. I said to work out disagreements and differences and to behave with kindness and camaraderie. I said to show love and care not only to those who are nice to you and whom you like, but even to those who don’t treat you well and who make it hard for you. It would then demonstrate My true love that can love anyone one, no matter who they are or what they have done.

Showing kindness to those who haven’t treated you well is a difficult thing that only I can help you to do, but it can also help to change people and help them to become a bit more like Me too, through your example of kindness, forgiveness and loving care towards them. I said that love would be rewarded, and I would see all that you did and would hear what you say.

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## Stilling the Storm

It was a stormy night on the lake that My disciples and I needed to cross. The trip had started out well, and we were making good travel time—until the storm hit. It was one of the rare times when I wasn't being called on by others to help them in some way. The days were busy and the nights were short.

My Father gave Me the strength day by day to do the miracles, to heal those in need, and to teach as many people as I could about God's love and His ways. When we got into the boat it was a wonderful chance to have a rest. I lay down and was nearly instantly asleep.

Even though I am the Son of God, I still had a physical body that needed the same sorts of things that you on Earth need. I know what it feels like to be too tired to keep on going. I know how good it feels to take a much needed rest. But as I was sleeping, those in the ship weren't having things so easy. I knew all was well, because God was watching over us. However, for these folks travelling with Me they wondered if we'd even survive the night. There was a very boisterous storm and wild waves. It was very unsafe for water travel.

I could rest, even in the midst of the storm, but My disciples were having a rough time, not knowing what to do and what was going to happen next. They couldn't believe that I could just be peacefully sleeping in the midst of this strong storm. They woke Me up pleading for help. I knew this was just a test and problem that needed to be prayed away.

I stood up and took action to rescue everyone from the difficult and dangerous conditions. I rebuked the storm, just like I rebuked and resisted the Enemy who tried to cause us troubles. I prayed for peace and instantly it was granted to us. A calm came over the water, and the wind was gentle again.

My disciples had never seen such an amazing thing. Even though they'd seen people healed miraculously, and food wonderfully multiplied, this was something they never had thought possible—that a person could talk to the wind and the waves, and the weather would instantly change and all would be calm. Those on the team who had been fishermen before I called on them to follow and serve Me, knew what it was like to have to be in submission to the boisterous weather conditions. If things were too stormy when out on a fishing night, then they couldn't raise their livelihood. So to have someone in their boat, who could instantly change the weather for them, was very helpful and astonishing.

It really amazed them and gave them proof that I was God's Son, and had the authority even over the waves and wind. What started out as something very frightening and causing them to waver in faith, ended up boosting their faith more than ever.

If they had never been in the storm, and had been only sitting serenely beside a cosy fire, sipping tea, would their faith be any stronger? Or was it when something difficult happened that was beyond their control, beyond anything they could manage and they were compelled to call on Me to help that it ended up making them greater men of faith?

It's not the easy things in life, and the times when you aren't worried and nothing is ever going wrong that give you faith and courage. It's when you find out that you can't fix things

and you can't manage, and it's too hard for you, that you then see how wonderful and powerful I am. You see then that I am well able to help you through. This then gives you the faith the next time something seems too hard for you to handle, that I just might be big enough and strong enough and great enough to get you through that one as well!

You never need to fear, as long as you stay close to Me, call on Me to help, and are in My will, doing as I know is best. I can give you My full safety and protection at these times. I love you and I love to come to your aid and rescue you from the most impossible circumstances.

Can you trust that I am able to care for you at all times? Sometimes you may feel like the disciples did, and wonder if I notice the hard time you are having—like the disciples felt when I was just sleeping, or so it seemed. But I was waiting for just the right time to work the miracle that brought about the best results.

The storm was allowed to go on just long enough to test their faith and to see how much faith they had in My power to help and in God's safe keeping. When they were ready for the miracle it was granted to them as they turned to Me in faith asking for My help. This taught them that I'm always ready to help, and that nothing is impossible with God. Calling on Me in all difficulties will bring the best things your way.

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## Twelve Years

If there is one thing that will bring parents to their knees in prayer before Me, it is for the needs and health and wellbeing of their children. It doesn't matter how rich or important you are, money is completely worthless when the life of someone's child is at risk.

When a child is incurably ill there is nothing in the world that can do anything to restore them—only the power of the God of love and life; the God who made them.

Jairus was a ruler of the synagogue, a man that people looked up to and who had authority. No matter how good he might have tried to be, or how important he was considered, he couldn't do a thing to heal his daughter—his only daughter—who had become very sick.

Well, there was one thing he could do, but he'd have to lay aside all his pride and image and feelings of importance in order to do it. But when someone's well-loved child is very sick, getting the help they need becomes the most important thing in the world to them.

Jairus made the choice to get help for his sick daughter from the only One who could help him. He came and found Me to plead for My help. He didn't just ask casually or in a proud way, but he asked with all his heart. He threw himself down at My feet, crying and pleading and asking in sincere desperation for Me to come and heal his one and only child, his dear daughter who was 12 years old.

I wasn't just sitting on a park bench wondering what to do next. This was one of those times when it seemed everyone wanted Me to help them all at the same time. The street was absolutely crowded with people all around, all needing and wanting something to ease their troubled lives and to bring relief. So if this man, Jairus, wanted Me to leave the crowd's needs

and help just him, he would need to make it known how desperate he was, and how important it was to him to have Me come to his house.

I could feel the pain in his heart. I knew what this little girl meant to him. He had done so much in his life to provide for her, to care for her, and to give her the best he could with the means that he had. He had lots of hopes and dreams for her. He wanted her to have the best life possible. She was their only child and these parents didn't care about anything else in the world at that point in time, except the wellbeing of their daughter.

I promised him that I would come and heal her, and this was a comforting thought to Jairus. So we slowly made our way to his house, through the throngs of the crowds around, some needing help, others just there in order to be close to Me, to catch a glimpse of the look of love and joy in My eyes. They could feel something special—a touch of God's love—when in My presence and it felt so good.

To have a bit of God's love so close to them and to absorb a bit of it into their hearts and minds was better than anything else on Earth to them. So those who walked around Me were so glad for this brief chance to be walking near or beside Me, but it took a while for Me to then walk down the road due to the crowds all around.

There was one other very desperate woman who needed a touch of healing, who was eager to touch even the hem of my garment, the edge of the robes I was wearing. She had the faith—like many others did too—that just a tiny touch is all that would be needed to bring her back to health.

She had been sick for 12 years, and had done absolutely everything she could to get healed. She had talked with doctor after doctor and done anything they had suggested, and wasted all her money to pay the large fees of the doctors. Instead of getting better, she only got worse as result.

I was her only hope, and in full faith and belief she pushed through with great difficulty until she could reach out and touch the hem of My clothes. Instantly she was healed and it felt so very good. But she wasn't the only one that felt something the moment that it happened.

In the midst of all that was going on, and all the people pressing and pushing all around Me, I stopped and asked, "Who touched Me?"

It seemed like a very odd question to My disciples, as there were many people who were closely walking around, even grabbing at Me to touch Me and try to get My attention so I could satisfy their need. I explained that it was a different type of touch—as I felt a surge of God's power being released from Me to someone at that moment, someone I wasn't aware was being healed.

The woman who had just been healed answered and explained it all—telling her story, and how now she had been wonderfully given strength and wellbeing again.

I encouraged her for her faith, and let her know that she was healed because of her faith in God's healing power and that I could heal her. It was a wonderful day and she was so very

glad to feel well again, and her heart was filled with God's touch of love to her personally, through being healed at last.

Meanwhile, Jairus' daughter wasn't doing so well, and he was as eager as ever to bring Me to his house. However, some people came from the house to let us know that it was no longer necessary for Me to go there, as healing was now impossible—or so they thought. His daughter had died, and they didn't think anything could now be done.

I saw how sad and troubled Jairus felt at hearing that news. I told him to not worry, and that we should still proceed to the house as planned, and that I would still heal her.

"She's sleeping," I said, as that's what it was like to Me. I could bring her life and strength just as easily as someone could be woken up again.

Well, that didn't go over so well with some folks who were around, trying to be weeping and making sad sounds to add to the feeling of sorrow and mourning. One moment they are trying to make mournful sounds, but as soon as I say that it will be alright, and said that she was just asleep they all started to laugh and mock Me.

Only those with faith were allowed to be there at that point. Faith is what brings on the miracles of God. So each one of those mockers and faithless folks were excused from the house. Jairus and his wife, and Peter, James and John were allowed to go with Me into the room where the girl lay and looked very lifeless.

"Rise up, young girl!" I said, and that's all it took.

Her eyes opened and her parents were so very glad. It was the most wonderful moment of their life! Their girl was well again and was given her life back.

I knew in the joy of the moment that it was easy to forget that though she was healed she needed some good nourishing food to gain her strength back. She hadn't been able to eat or drink due to her sickness, so I made sure that the first thing they did was give her something to eat.

It was such a happy moment! Nothing is too hard for Me to heal. There is nothing that is too far advanced for Me to restore. Even a life that has been taken away for a while can be given back, if God knows it will be best! Ask in faith, believe what I say, and watch miracles happen for you and your loved ones.

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### **Power to Preach**

I gave to My disciples a very helpful gift. Just like the firemen don't just run to help put out a fire without using the right gear and tools for the job, so did My team of special helpers need to be equipped to do their job of helping Me to tell others the message I was sent to deliver.

I had a meeting and important talk with My close 12 disciples one day. I was commissioning them to go and preach the good news of God's love, as well as to heal those that were sick,



and to have the authority in the spirit to rebuke and pray away any influences the Enemy had on people.

I gave them the power and gifts from Heaven to work miracles, just as I could, through the power of God. They were given the ability to do the job. I told them to go travel around to many cities and towns for a while to teach, to preach, to tell people about heaven and God's love and ways. They were to heal and help all those that they met who needed healing.

They weren't to pack the usual items for their trip this time, as it was to be a special time of seeing the power of God helping them. All that they would need would be given to them as they obeyed and did what I was sending them out to do. I told them not to bring all the usual items like a protective walking stick, spare clothes, money, food and so forth. They were to travel and teach and heal people in My name—and whatever they needed, like food and warmth, safe keeping and a place to sleep, would be provided along the way.

I gave them tips and instructions that would be helpful and make their trip successful. If there were towns that didn't want to hear the message, I told them to not worry about it and to not get upset, but to just leave the place and go somewhere else. I said that God would be the one to take care of the consequences of those that didn't receive them and listen to them.

I told them that being My disciple and telling people what I sent them to preach wasn't going to be easy. I wasn't always welcomed and liked by people, and neither would they be. People would tell them to go away and would cause them difficulty, and punish them at times for doing what God wanted them to do. The same things were happening to Me while on Earth, and it would be no different for them.

It's still the same today for those who love and follow Me and try to tell others the good news of My love and salvation. They find some people are eager to hear, and others aren't. Some people will love and respect you, and some will mistreat you and cause you trouble and hard times. But it's not here on Earth that you will be receiving your reward. You don't have to be liked by everyone—I never was and neither were My disciples and followers, and neither will you be. The Enemy will do all he can to get people to turn away from the truth that you and those who love Me are trying to give to others.

I told My disciples then not to worry about it and not to be too distressed when they weren't treated well by the very people they came to help. I said that they would receive a big reward in Heaven for doing the job God gave them to do—and the harder it was, and the more difficulties they encountered, and the worse things were, and the more trouble people gave them the greater their reward in Heaven would be. So when things were hard and people made them feel bad or were trying to stop them or cause them difficult times, they could rejoice and be glad, as it just meant their rewards in Heaven would be even greater. The difficulties weren't to stop them or discourage them, but were just the way things would be. They were to just persevere and keep trying to find those who were eager and interested in hearing the message of My love and salvation.

After fully instructing My disciples and giving them the power from Heaven in order to equip them to do the job, then My disciples obeyed and took the step of faith and went out as I asked them to do. They travelled around teaching and preaching and healing.

When it was time for them to return they had stories to tell! They were filled with joy at all the miracles that had happened on their mission trip. Even though they hadn't packed bags and carried needed supplies with them, because they had the power of Heaven with them, and they were obeying what God wanted them to be doing, they had all that they needed as they went.

I asked them if they lacked what they needed while they were travelling and teaching, and they said they always had what they needed. It all worked out! God made it so that whatever was needed was supplied for them as they prayed and obeyed and went out and got the job done.

They rejoiced and were thrilled at the miracles that had taken place. God's power in them and working through them amazed them. It had been a wonderful mission trip.

These weren't the only ones that I sent out either. I then later commissioned a team of 70 other followers to travel around, in teams of two. I also gave them the instructions and advice, as well as power from Heaven that I had given My close 12 disciples on their mission trip.

These 70 followers did as I asked them to, and were wonderful witnesses, teaching and preaching the messages that I told them to pass on. They prayed and healed many people and brought God's power into the lives of many. When they too returned they were very thrilled at the miracles God had done through them and for them.

With all these others helping Me to spread the news about Heaven and God's love around, many more towns and cities were able to hear about Me and to be healed and helped than I was personally able to do. And it's still like that today! I need helpers who are filled with My power from Heaven, those who have Me helping them and who are willing to do what I need them to do, so that many can come to know Me and will find the way to Heaven.

Things won't always be easy, and in some places on Earth there will be a lot of difficulty for those who try to tell others about Me. But I will always care for those who love Me, and will greatly reward those who follow Me and who do whatever I need them to do, even when it's not easy.

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### **Feeding Thousands**

My disciples and I travelled by ship to find a quiet place to be alone. We felt the need to rest and to take some time off. Things had been rather hectic, with hardly even a chance to eat. Off we sailed to a deserted place—or so it was, until people started spreading the word around that our ship was sailing for a certain shore.

By the time our ship reached the quiet place that was far from any towns, we were welcomed by a large crowd! So desperate were the people for My help that they were willing to travel long distances to reach this out-of-the-way place in order to have a chance to hear My words and to receive healing.

We all had needed some quiet alone time, but the needs of these poor and sad folks who had great faith in My love and care filled Me with compassion. Instead of having time away like we hoped, we were in full swing helping and healing. I loved each one of them. When I looked at an old man or old lady it was like it was my own parents or grandparents, and I loved them and wanted to help them. When I saw a child in pain and unable to move around, or suffering with some other physical or spiritual trouble from the Enemy, I loved that child as My very own and wanted to bring relief and joy to their life. When I saw men and women struggling, I loved them as a friend, as a brother or sister, as someone I wanted to be close to and help provide for. I couldn't turn these folks away. It would hurt Me too much to not help them in their hour of greatest need.

The lengths these people were willing to go in order to receive My help and healing made Me want to help them—and so I did, every single one of them received the healing and help and encouragement that they came asking for.

Towards the end of that day there was the need for these ones to get food, yet there were no shops or houses around. We were far out away from any town. What was to be done? I knew that these people had been travelling for a long time, some for many days, to find Me and come to Me for healing and relief.

I told My disciples to find something for all of them to eat. Of course with nowhere nearby to buy food that would be hard, and without enough money to get as much as was needed, it was an impossible situation, or so it seemed. There were 5,000 men, and plenty of women and children. No one could come up with dinner for this crowd easily.

The only food that was found was with a boy who had with him five barley loaves and two small fish. My disciples had done what I asked and found some food—they thought I wanted them to have enough for everyone right away, but all we needed was a step of faith and giving. My team took the step of faith and obedience and found this bit of food and the boy was willing to share it with Me. Once I saw that those important steps to receiving God's blessings were taken, then it was time for God to do the impossible.

“Alright, it's dinner time! Tell everyone to sit down in groups of 50!” I told My team.

They obeyed once again and organised everyone for the meal. The men could be counted as they were sat in groups. The children ran around or played and the women looked after them. It was the custom of the men to sit down to eat together, if there were people like these crowds that didn't know each other and weren't part of a family. So that's how we could tell how many men were there waiting to be fed, plus all the others—the women and the children.

I took that small amount of food that was shared in faith, and lifted it up for people to see and prayed for God's blessing on it.

Then I broke it and passed out to My disciples to begin giving it out to the people who were sitting and hungrily waiting for a miracle meal.

The food just kept being passed out. The baskets were never completely empty. Everyone got more than enough food that evening before needing to travel home.

When everyone left I told My disciples to search around and pick up any remaining food that was still around, so that nothing would be wasted, and to demonstrate the miracle and just how abundant the food supply had been that day. A surprising 12 baskets of food was collected—that was just the leftovers after several thousands of people had eaten until they were filled sufficiently.

This wasn't the only time there was a big free meal. Another time when the need was apparent was after crowds had been travelling and sticking around Me for three days. People that were blind, deaf, crippled and otherwise handicapped were instantly healed. People were amazed and excited! To see someone suddenly able to talk or see or walk who had never been able to before was a wonderful sight!

Some of these people had come from far away to receive healing and to hear My words, and after travelling and being with us for a few days they were very much in need of something to eat. However, we were up away from the towns, and there wasn't anywhere nearby for people to get food. If we had sent them away to go and find food it would have been too tiring for them. They wouldn't have had the strength to keep on travelling until they reached a town or city that might have something they could buy and eat.

I asked My disciples how much food they had on hand, and they had seven loaves and a few small fish. Once again, I was going to show them that it was enough. I can supply for people anywhere and anytime if there is faith and obedience—the main two ingredients to bake a miracle meal!

At that time there were about 4,000 men, plus all the woman and children.

I took the bread and fish and thanked My Father in Heaven for His wonderful unending supply. I broke it and passed it to My disciples who gave it out to the people. Everyone received sufficient food—and once again there was even extra food left over. Seven baskets of food were collected after everyone had eaten enough and left to travel back home.

News of these miraculous meals got around and people were pretty happy about it. If there was someone that could provide more than enough food for people to eat, and without having to buy it or make it or work hard to grow the crops, well, people started to think that this person should be the king! What a great country it could be, just think a king that can heal anyone who is sick, and feed everyone for free! —Right? Well, no, it was wrong at this point.

I didn't come to Earth to take over and to be an Earthly king and ruler as some thought I was going to be or perhaps thought would have been nice, according to their ideas and wishes. I came to Earth to prepare people's hearts for the Kingdom of Heaven that would rule over the

world one day, and to bring forgiveness and salvation so that those who believed on Me would be able to live forever in My Heavenly kingdom.

When I saw new crowds, later on, coming to find Me and who had it in their mind to try and make Me be their Earthly king then and there, I tried to explain things a bit more to them.

I explained that I, the satisfier, was the one they should be seeking after, My spirit, My words, and life eternal—not just the things of this world, and food to eat. I was the one they needed. My words would nourish their hearts and spirit and I would give them eternal life. Just getting lots of great food on Earth was not the goal and the way to a happy life.

I want people to hunger after My words and to want to have Me in their heart and to be filled with My Spirit. I want them to let Me be what gives them their satisfaction, and the One that gives them joy and strength. Those who want their heart and mind and spirit filled and satisfied with the Heavenly bread of My Words will find that it's better than anything on Earth, as they listen, receive and believe the words that I speak. I can fill your hearts with something better than the most delicious and nourishing meal is for your body. My Words give life and joy, and your spirit will live forever after having received Me into your heart and soul and life.

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### **Walking on the Water**

After helping and healing many people, and feeding them with the miracle loaves and fish, I at last took some time alone to pray. It was night time and I went up into a mountain away from the crowds. I told My disciples to go ahead and get back in the boat that we'd used to travel to this deserted place, and to cross back over the lake again—without Me.

In the quietness of the night I rested and prayed and communicated with My Heavenly Father. To do this great work and to help so many people I needed His help and strength and protection. The way to gain the strength and courage and grace to do the job was to depend on the power of Heaven to make it all possible.

As I looked down on the water I could see that it was not an easy time for those in the boat. A storm had set in and waves were rocking and rolling and it was very tempestuous. There was no physical way for Me to cross over the lake or to go to help My team in the midst of this stormy sea.

With God nothing is impossible, and if I was needed over there, I could get to where I needed to go. So it was like an invisible bridge or walkway was placed there for Me right on top of the water, and I could simply walk across the lake, as if it had been on dry firm land.

When the troubled disciples looked up and saw not only big and strong waves being stirred up with forceful winds, but a man walking on top of the water it just added to their worries and fears. What was going on now? But I came to bring peace and to give faith. I called out to them, telling them to have courage and to not worry. I said it was I who was walking on the water to them.

It was a very amazing sight, and something they'd never heard of happening before. It was a sign and proof to them that I really was God's son. Simon Peter asked if he could come and walk on the water too, as sort of a test to see what God's power could do. I invited him to join Me, walking where no one had ever set foot before—on the surface of the water.

With a bit of excitement and feeling rather puzzled and in awe at this whole situation Simon Peter stepped out of the boat and began to walk towards Me. It was something only God could help him do! Although he had the initial faith to step out and try something crazy that took faith, and that I allowed him to do, he found his faith wasn't strong enough to keep on going when he started to get his eyes on the wild waves that were tossing and rolling about.

With thoughts of doubt and thinking that it was too hard to keep on going, he then began to sink in the stormy waves. Peter called out for help and I lifted him and we both got into the boat. We were met with wide eyes and some very amazed disciples. Even though they had just seen and experienced the miracles of many people being healed of incurable sicknesses, as well as seeing the miracle of the loaves and fish being multiplied, in some ways it wasn't as big of a miracle to them as those events had been to the people who were seeing them for the first time. But this incredible event of seeing a man—Me—walking on top of very stormy water got them realising once again that I came from God and was His Son, and could do anything at all that was needed.

It was what was needed to give them a boost of faith and courage, that with God's power with us all things were possible—and that I am the Messiah and they were doing the best thing they could be doing, giving their time and lives and strength to help Me pass on God's Words to the world.

Story Time with Jesus 113-125\_text

## Story Time with Jesus

### Bible Stories

#### Chapters 113-125

- 113-Good Ground
- 114-See, Hear, Talk
- 115-A Coin in a Fish
- 116-Choosing What is Important
- 117-Rich Young Ruler
- 118-Love and Forgiveness
- 119-Faith and Freedom

- 120-Dinner Discussions
- 121-The Father's Love
- 122-Obedience and Gratefulness
- 123-A Good Shepherd
- 124-Lazarus
- 125-Heavenly Communication

(Jesus speaking: )

### **Good Ground**

I told many stories to the people who came to hear Me speak. To give an example of what it's like to hear God's Word and for it to have a good effect on someone's life and cause them to accomplish what God needs them to do I told a story about a sower of seeds.

Everyone knew what it was like to prepare the ground for growing crops, and to find the right kind of soil to plant seeds in. This was a down-to-earth example that they could related to.

I told of a man who scattered seeds on the ground. Some of the seeds were on the edge of the field, on the wayside where there wasn't good soil. However, the birds flew looking for a good snack and happily munched up all the seeds before they could grow.

Other seeds fell on stony ground, and the seeds weren't able to send down deep roots that would make a good strong plant. It looked like they were growing well at first, as they grew up quickly. But that was just because they weren't able to first send out deep roots into the good soil before growing tall. The rocks were preventing them from accessing enough soil to grow proper roots. Because they didn't have any deep roots to get the moisture and nutrients for the plants, then they easily withered away. The hot sun dried them and made them wither.

Some seeds fell on a place that had weeds and thorns, and these were unable to get the proper nourishment that was needed. The weeds and thorny plants used up the nutrients in the soil and caused the good plants that were trying to grow to not do well and to feel choked. Only the thorns flourished, and the good plants couldn't grow anymore and did no good to the farmer.

The seeds that landed on the good soil that was free of rocks and weeds, and could take root without birds taking them away, grew well. They grew strong and had good roots and proper nourishment. Those plants grew tall and eventually produced the food and fruit that it was meant to.

This wasn't just a nice little story about how to be a good farmer and to do well and prosper. My disciples knew that I didn't just sit around taking people's time talking about just this and that, and how to have lots of food on your farm and so forth. They knew there was a reason for this story and they were eager to know the meaning of it.

When we were alone I explained things to them, knowing that the story and the meaning would one day be written down for many to read about, and it would be a help to countless others.

I explained that the seed represented God's Word, and the ground was like the hearts of people—their minds, their thoughts, their souls and spirits. In order to be fruitful and to have things go well for you on Earth you need to have a good heart that can receive My Word. It's what will help you to do well.

In order to have My Word help you and to make your life one that bears good fruit and has good results and for you to be able to accomplish what I want you to do, My Words need to get past your ears and get into your heart. I need you to do more than just listen to or read My Words to you. I need you to make it a part of your thoughts and actions and to believe it deep in your soul.

There are things that will prevent My Words from causing your faith to grow, and to fully benefit you—just like the challenges the farmer faced when trying to get the seeds to grow and to produce fruit.

If you listen to the lies of the Enemy, or read things that are untrue or that steal away your faith in My Words, then the seeds of the Word that you read and were starting to grow are taken away before they even have a chance. You need to not only read and listen to My words, but you need to stay away from hearing and reading and watching those things that take away your faith.

If you are real glad and feel all happy to be a Christian and you are inspired by the Words of God that you read, you need to remember that it's not going to help you very much if you only go by the feelings of joy you get from your time spent with Me. You also need to build your faith through trusting Me in hard times, and being willing to go through difficulties and have times when people don't speak well of you, because you've chosen to do things My way. When you choose to listen to Me and obey My words, there will be consequences and not everyone will approve of your decisions. But if you are going back to Me to pray about the troubles that come your way, and you read My Words and memorize them and hide them in your heart and you let Me strengthen you through those hard times then you can grow strong.

Otherwise, you'll be so weak that at the first bit of trouble or contradiction because of your faith, you'll feel like withering away, and won't be able to do anyone any good and bring others to come to know Me. Your faith must be in the promises of God and not based on having happy feelings only nor on having others treat you nicely all the time. I can give you the strength you need to endure the hard times and help you to keep holding on to My promises and trusting that I will be with you always.

When people try to read and obey My Words and do things that they are meant to do, but then they allow distractions and worldly thoughts into their lives, it's like allowing thorns to grow up in the garden of their heart. It will do them no good at all. Perhaps they will want to sit down and read the Bible and have prayer time, but then they start to think about all the



material possessions that they wish they had, and it stops them from learning of the riches and treasures that are in My Word.

Perhaps when they stop to pray and talk to Me they feel My Spirit calling them to do something to give My Words and love to others, but then they realise that in order to do that it will mean they have to give up something in their life that they are attached to. If they don't want to give this thing up, then this makes them unable to do something real important for Me. They bear no fruit. The things of the world stop them from growing in faith and stop them from bearing fruit and being of much use to Me in helping to bring people to know about My love.

So if you want your life to be one of beauty, and your heart and spirit to be healthy and strong, and you want to do great things for Me and help to bring many others to know of My love, then you need to have a heart that is like the good soil on a farm. You need to take the time to read and memorize My Words. You need to hold on to Me in faith when things go wrong. You need to push aside the lure and attractions of the world that will hinder you from doing what I need you to do. You need to only listen to the true and good things and not to give place to any thoughts of the Enemy. You need to fill your mind and heart with My good Word. Then you will grow strong and well, and your life will bring about good things for you and others. You will be rewarded for the good job you did for Me and the ways you helped others and brought people closer to Me in whatever ways I asked you to.

When you sit down to read My Words and study your Bible you can pray for your heart to be like the good ground. You can pray to focus and not to be distracted by the unhelpful thoughts that might come to your mind. You can pray to understand what you read and for it to benefit you. You can ask Me to explain through My Holy Spirit what you don't understand. You can pray to put the lessons of what you read into practice in your daily life, no matter what others are doing. You can pray to please Me above all, and not to let other things or the comments or opinions of others hinder you from being the strong spiritually well-fed disciple that I want you to be. You can pray for the Word that you read to bring about the best results in your life and in the lives of others.

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### **See, Hear, Talk**

As I was passing by a street there was a blind man called Bartimaeus who was sitting and begging in that place. There really wasn't anything much else to do back then for those who were blind. They couldn't work and earn a living, but still had to come up with food and so on. Begging for money and gifts to be given to them was the way they were able to survive and be somewhat provided for.

There were no schools for the blind, and Braille—the method of reading for the blind—hadn't yet been thought up and invented, so they could never read. There were no records, tapes, CDs, MP3s or any other type of audios for them to listen to and learn from or be entertained by. It was a very difficult life being blind back then, and they depended on the help of others all the time.

Many of the things that people who can see take for granted would be a wonderful experience for a blind person to enjoy—such as the sight of fluffy white clouds in the sky, or even knowing what their own face looks like in a mirror. Seeing colours and shades and light would seem so amazing, as to them it's like everything is black or very dark.

Sometimes those who are blind get other gifts and abilities to make it easier for them in other ways—such as very keen hearing, or extra perception of things that are going on around them, or a very good memory, or some other ability.

So this man, Bartimaeus, who was sitting by the side of the road had a good sense of hearing and could tell something was going on, and that it wasn't just a normal day-to-day crowd passing by. He found out that it was I, Jesus, that was passing by. He'd heard that I could do miracles and heal any kind of sickness or ailment, and he had faith that I could make him able to see.

Bartimaeus was desperate for My help then and there. He knew that was his chance given by God to be healed by Me. When he knew that I was walking on the street near him, he wasn't going to just sit there and miss his chance for healing. With all his strength and voice he called out to Me for help—and just kept on calling until I heard him and responded.

There were plenty of others wanting and needing My help, and lots of noise. Some people started to be bothered by Bartimaeus' loud persistent calling out for My help and asked him to quiet down, as they thought it was just getting to be too loud and confusing. That didn't cause him to stop, however, but to cry out even louder to be heard above everyone one and get the help he was so eager for.

With all that was going on and that I was in the middle of doing I heard his cries and asked him what he needed. It was obvious that he was a blind man, and one could assume that it he wanted his sight restored. I asked him to tell me what he wanted, so that all around could see what he had the faith for, and just what he was praying to have happen. When he asked Me to give him the gift of sight it was his prayer of faith, and because of his belief in Me and My power to heal I was able to do the miracle.

For the first time as Bartimaeus opened his eyes he saw the face of a person—and it was Me. He was so thrilled so amazed, he was praising and worshiping God! There was nothing else he wanted to do in life but to follow Me and be around Me. His healing didn't make him want to start making a comfortable life for himself, but it caused him to want to be My friend who followed in My ways and encouraged others to believe in Me.

Once there was a man brought to Me that was deaf and had something stopping him from being able to speak also. Can you imagine what it would be like if you had never heard someone calling your name? Or you had never heard music or laughter or a story read to you? What if you could never sing or call out for help? Think of the way it would affect your life to never be able to either hear or talk.

Sign language, as it is commonly used and learned today enabling communication for the deaf, wasn't used then as it is now. Someone who was deaf couldn't express themselves well or at least be fully understood. It would be hard to do most things. Your ears teach you things

as you hear what people say or what noises animals make. Ears help to protect you as they can alert you to sounds around you so you can move out of the way. The gift of hearing can help entertain you and cheer you through hearing songs and stories and the sounds of nature and what friends are telling you. Ears that can hear make it possible to safely and capably do many jobs, as good communication with others is important to many jobs. Thus, being able to work to earn money would be difficult.

When I saw the deaf and mute man that was brought to Me I stepped aside from the crowd with him. I put My fingers in his ears and I then touched his tongue. I said, “Be opened!” At that moment he could both hear and speak. All of a sudden he was speaking perfectly and knew what to say! It shocked people and news about this miracle spread to many others.

I wasn’t doing the miracle to get acclaim or boost My pride and get everyone to follow Me. In fact for many people that I healed I asked them to not make a big deal about it or to go around telling lots of people about it. But those who were healed just didn’t seem to be able to stop talking about it. It was so wonderful to them, and others loved hearing about the miracles. But it made things hard for Me too, as the more people heard about it, the more crowds came to find me, and the more those who didn’t like Me tried to stop Me, as it would cause quite a disruption with huge crowds travelling and thronging wherever I went. I couldn’t walk in many towns as a result and had to stay out of town and in the desert and wilderness areas much of the time, in order to help the people of the town stay calmer and orderly and to not get us into more trouble, so that I would have the freedom to keep teaching and preaching and helping people without being stopped by those in charge at the time.

I set an example of doing the work I came to do in a humble way. I wasn’t trying to be famous and well thought of. I wanted everyone to know the truth and to know God’s love. I took every opportunity to give glory to God, My Father, who was making it all possible—just like you today as you see miracles happen and as you do what I need you to do, can give Me the praise and glory for the ways I am helping you. Acting and talking in humility can make it possible for you to carry on and do the jobs I need and want you to do. Whereas if you start to get lifted up in pride, thinking that things are going well because of your own greatness, and you start wanting people to say and think all these wonderful thoughts about how good you are—forgetting that God is the one Who is making it all possible—then things won’t keep going well for you. You need to do your work and the good you do humbly, not for the praise of Man, but for the praise of God. Because the more people think about the loving God that made them and Who wants to help them, and the more they choose to follow Him and do things His way in obedience to Him, the better and happier they will be—and the nicer the world will start to be.

Besides helping others and praying for them and making things easier for them to do the right thing, your job as My follower and friend, is to turn people’s hearts and minds and thoughts toward Heaven, and to think about Me and to involve Me in their lives. I love each one on Earth and can help them in the best ways as they learn to love Me, listen to Me and do the things I know will make them the happiest.

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## A Coin in a Fish

Money, money! What troubles it has caused in the world. So much poverty the lack of it seems to cause—but it's not the lack of money that makes people poor, but the lack of love in other people's lives that makes others poor and destitute. Lack of love comes from lack of God and doing things in His proper ways.

If all the money in the world was taken away, and instead replaced with loving deeds of kindness, what a very different world this would be. If those that had millions instead were to do millions of kind and helpful deeds for those in need it would change so many things for the better. If those who even had one coin instead did one kind thing that day it would make others feel loved and they would in turn give kindness to that person.

Instead of people having to do all that they do in order to gain the wealth or even just basic supplies for survival that is needed, people would all be helping each other, how wonderful things would be. If instead of working at jobs to get money, they worked on things that would be a help to others, what a happy place you would be living in now. When people's goal in life is to show God's love to others, it makes the world a bit more like Heaven.

However, sadly it's not quite like that yet, is it? Most people on Earth are pretty money minded, because that's the way the Enemy keeps people enslaved and working hard doing things for themselves and forgetting about God.

"Work hard to make more money—then you'll be happy!" he tells them. But those that try it and have lots of wealth find out to their great disappointment that they are no happier in their heart than when they were poorer. And those that are poor and hungry and cold and going without what they need have their eyes so focused on money on being the only solution to their problems and needs, that they often do all kinds of unkind things just trying to get what they need.

Oh, the lack of love for God and others that is prevalent in the world today hurts My heart so. Love has been replaced with lust, and giving has been replaced with greed. So that's why things are very messed up and mixed up today.

When I was on the Earth there were times when we had to come up with money for things, and God provided for us in different ways, as we focused on doing His will and shared God's love with as many as we could.

One time the tax collectors for the temple approached Peter, asking him if I paid the tax. He said I usually did. However, we didn't even have one spare coin at that moment to give to pay it then. When Peter entered the house he looked troubled. The stress of money can really ruin things, can't it? He was bothered and perplexed. What could be done? We were giving all our life and time to help people, and asked for no money from others in return. We gave God's love and help freely, and now we had a need.

Peter could have said, "I guess I just can't keep working with You, Jesus. I need to go back to being a fisherman, because it's the only way to get the money that people are asking for!"

But he didn't say that, he knew I could come up with a better solution. If I was his boss and he was working for Me I could support him and supply what he needed.

Well, you do need to work while on Earth, but you just need to make sure you are doing the right kind of work—whatever I want you to be doing. Sometimes people need to work at a job as it's what God wants them to do, other times they need to travel around, like My disciples did, to teach people about Me and My Word. Other people are to stay at home and work from there, caring for their children or doing other things that help to improve people's lives and bring them closer to Me.

When there is a need, and you pray for supply and funds, then you need to do whatever God shows you is best. Miracles usually require the steps of faith, prayer and action—according to what I show and tell you is best to do.

When Peter told Me about the tax collectors questioning him and asking for money, that was like his prayer. Then I told him what to do.

“Go let down a fishing line and catch a fish,” I told Simon Peter. “Take the first fish that you catch and open its mouth. There will be a coin in its mouth, that will be sufficient for paying both your tax and Mine.”

Simon Peter exercised his faith and did what I said, and then the miracle happened. A coin was in the fish's mouth, and sufficient for the money that was needed.

So if you are in need of finances, why not do as Peter did, and ask Me what to do about it. I can show you just the way to get the help you need. I can show you what job to do, or who to ask, or where to go, or I can just make it appear suddenly too! –Like it did in the fish's mouth after Peter did his part to obey what I told him to do. Pray, trust, and obey, and you're sure to have what you need, when you need it. I'll help provide what is needed. I love taking good care of you. Sometimes you need to wait to get something, but don't worry, it'll all work out, as you keep praying. And in the most difficult or impossible situations, that's when I like to do the neatest miracles. I'm always looking for a chance to do one in your life. Just pray, have faith, do what I show you, and then see the great way I provide your every need and help you carry on.

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### **Choosing What is Important**

A couple times when we went to the temple to teach and pray I was very upset at what I saw. On the day that people were to spend time praying and praising God and resting, they were using their time to try to make a bit more money. What was needed in their lives to make things better wasn't more money—it was more of God's Spirit and getting to know His Word.

If they had taken a special day each week to stop all their work and spent it in prayer and learning to rest in God's loving care, and to read and talk about His Word, it would have made a very big difference to them and their families.

Not only were they not doing themselves any good by setting up an entire marketplace on the day of rest and prayer, but it was making the whole temple very noisy, and distracting all the other people who were coming there to think about God and pray and read the scriptures. It wasn't doing anyone any good, and I told them so in a lively and strong way.

I very enthusiastically shook the place up and got everyone moving on out of there in a hurry. It wasn't day they forgot for a long time.

I was gentle and caring with the children. I had compassion on those who were sick and in need of relief. I rose to the aid of those in trouble in the mists of storms or troubled by the Enemy. But with the disobedient, rabble-rousers that were causing people to stray away from God I was a stern disciplinarian and told them to get going doing what they knew to be right. Their actions of being so money minded instead of heavenly minded and God-serving, was hurtful to themselves and others. They and others would be far better off without having this noisy racket and clamour that took the place of prayer and reading God's words—especially since those who were selling things were often dishonest in their dealings with money.

I loved people, but I hated the actions that would cause harm to others and made people feel separate from God. The greedy and dishonest tax collectors were very despised by the people. I loved them, but I often helped them to change their actions and taught them the loving way. Such as the time I met a man called Zacchaeus. It was rather funny the first time we met.

I was walking along the road with many people all around, slowing making our way, talking and healing as we travelled. Here was the chance this sad and lonely man had to finally get to see Me. I'd healed the blind and deaf. I'd even given people back their life! But it wasn't healing of the body that Zacchaeus was interested in on this day.

He was tired of his old life, his very sad life that was filled with nothing but riches, money and living for himself. What an empty house it is, when the house is filled with treasures and one's self only—without joy, love, friendship and fulfilling work to do.

He was desperate for a change, for something to bring relief to the sad and sorry state his life was. First of all, he was very short, so that made him feel different from others. But when there's love and friendship people can look past the outer difference. So that wasn't his real problem.

Second of all, he had the job of being a tax collector, and that was hard for others. His job was taking money from them, money that they had worked hard to earn and to give it to the harsh and unkind rulers of their country at that time—the Romans. But even that alone wouldn't have made him feel so bad inside. It was the fact that he turned to money to ease his heart of his sadness, and had taken more from people than he should have. He thought that the more riches he had the better he would feel, but that never happened. It only made things worse, and made people despise him and never want to be around him. When someone can only fit thoughts of themselves in their heart and mind it pushes away joy and friends and love and all the good things that they actually want.

When Zacchaeus heard and saw where I was walking he was very interested in seeing Me. The only problem was that he was too short to see over everyone else's heads to get a good view of the situation. And no one would be willing to move out of the way to let him—especially not him—come to talk with Me. There was only one thing to be done. He found the nearest tree and climbed up. It was a sycamore tree and was just right for climbing up and getting a good view.

It looked rather funny to see this man who was the size of some children, dressed richly, peeking out from the branches of a tree to get a good look at Me. But I didn't laugh, as I knew he wasn't in the mood for it yet, as his heart was crying. He was so sad and lonely and in need of encouragement to make better choices in his life, choices that would lead him to God's ways.

"Zacchaeus," I called out to him as I stood near the tree. "Come down! I'm going visit your house today!"

Zacchaeus hardly knew what to say. It was beyond what he could dream of happening! It was what he would have wanted to happen, but thought it was impossible. A very fast little man zipped down from the tree and was delighted to have Me as his host.

To his house I went, and it was the first friend he'd had in a long, long while—that wasn't a tax collector or someone who was just there to get money from him. He could tell that money held no interest to Me at all. I only wanted to cheer him up, and teach him some tips to a happy life with God as the One that was the most important to him.

By the time I left he was a changed man, and before too long the town around him was changing too. He decided to be a giver, rather than a taker. Zacchaeus made some resolutions, and not just empty promises. He chose to give away half of all that he owned to the poor people around. In addition to that, he promised that anyone he had taken more from than he was meant to, those he had been dishonest and greedy with, he would not only give back to them what he taken, but would give them back four times what he took.

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### **Rich Young Ruler**

Once a very wealthy young ruler came to Me, as he had felt that sad and empty feeling in his heart. Why? He had everything he needed. He was well dressed, had plenty of food, had lots of land and animals and more than sufficient money to buy whatever else he needed. Isn't that what everyone wanted to have? Well, why do people think they want all that, what's the ultimate reason? Isn't it to feel happy and satisfied?

But what if you have all that, like this rich young ruler did, and then for some reason you still are unhappy and not feeling satisfied, and you feel like there is something important that is missing in your life? Well, this man had the idea that I might have the solution to his problem and the answers to his heart's questions. Not only had he attained to being an important man, but a rich man, and besides that he was a good man—or so he thought. He tried to obey the laws of Moses and do what was right. So why didn't he feel that joy in his heart? He

began to realise that there may be something that was missing that was to do with the things of the spirit, and he thought that I could help him. He wasn't sick in body, but he was just as desperate and in need, with a sad and sick, weak heart and spirit.

He came to Me asking Me how to have eternal life, how to go to Heaven, how to do things God's way. I could feel the sadness and loneliness of his heart. I knew that if he only had the chance to come and live for the things of Heaven, to hear My words, to use his life to help bring others closer to God, that he would find joy and fulfilment. So I invited him to come along and be My disciple too! I told him to give his riches to the poor and to live and work with us, living to bring God's love on Earth.

Oh! That was one of the hardest things he could imagine doing! He'd been trying to base his life's happiness on his riches and wealth and was depending on those to get him through the difficult times. If he didn't have those treasures and money to count on, then what would happen to him? Oh, it was just something he couldn't imagine doing. He could not bring himself to give it all away to the destitute people, for fear of losing what he had gained, and for fear of also becoming in want and need.

But did I let My disciples down and let them go without what they needed as they lived for Me during the whole rest of their life? No! Not even when I was gone from sight and they carried on spreading the good news to as many as they could throughout the world. When someone commits their wellbeing into My care, then I take full charge of supplying their needs, and I use whatever way I know is best. As long as you are seeking to please Me and do My will, are praying and asking for My help, and are willing to do whatever I tell you to do, then you are going to have just what you need to keep on going.

It was a sad choice that he regretted, that when this rich young ruler was given the opportunity to live and work with Me in person while on Earth, and to treasure the riches of Heaven, more than those on Earth, that he made the selfish and worldly choice to hold on to those things that can be seen and counted and felt.

Once some grown brothers came to Me with a dispute. One brother asked Me to tell his brother to give some of his wealth and to divide the inheritance with him. I told them what they needed to hear. I warned them about the dangers of coveting what others have, and wishing to get more and more things for one's self.

To illustrate the point I told a story about a rich man who had a great harvest one year. In fact he had so much that his old barns couldn't hold all the food his farm had produced. So what was he to do? It would have been the perfect time to give some of it away to the many who lived nearby that didn't have sufficient. The Heavenly Father had made it grow so that the people of land would have enough food. However, if the one who received this gift—the food that grew miraculously—wasn't filled with wise and loving actions, then those who God wanted it to be for would never benefit from it.

No matter how rich and wealthy you are while on Earth, not even a tiny grain can be taken with you to the next life! Isn't that amazing? The only thing you can take with you are the



people you have cared for who have come to know Me, and the rewards for the love you have given to others and the things you have done that have pleased Me, your Lord.

Well, this rich man had all that he needed and far more--on Earth, that is. But when it was time for him to leave this world, he found out that he was suddenly very poor. When he came to see Me in the next life and to have a chat about his decisions and choices and what he had done with the gifts God had given to him to share with others, he wasn't too proud of his actions and deeds.

I said that it's a foolish way to live while on Earth—to only stock up supplies for yourself. Your life could end in an instant, and you could be Here talking to Me face to face, and it's too late then to give away what I told you to share, or to help tell others about Me. All your stuff on Earth is no longer yours, but goes to others on Earth. And people on Earth can't see or hear you speaking clearly to them, so you can't do all that much to lead them in My ways, and to do those things that I wanted you to do.

Those who are rich in Heaven are those that lived lives filled with love for Me and others, and a life rich with faith in Me and demonstrated by praying and calling on Me for help. Those that you helped to tell about Me and are in Heaven as a result will be your friends forever! Your rewards for giving all you could to Me and to others on Earth will be so many more times over anything you gave in the first place. You'll eternally glad for the gifts of love you gave to Me and others for Me.

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### **Love and Forgiveness**

I took lots of time and used whatever opportunity arose to talk with My close disciples and to teach them things as we went about our days. Sometimes we were able to have long and peaceful times of discussion and communication together. Other times I was able to pass on My way of thinking and My thoughts about the day-to-day struggles they faced as things came up.

One day Simon Peter asked Me how many times he was to keep forgiving his brother or friend, if they kept doing things that bothered him. Simon knew that I had been teaching them about giving forgiveness rather than getting angry and holding bad feelings inside, or doing things back to the person. He wondered however, how many times was it right to keep forgiving others.

“Should I forgive my brother seven times?” Simon Peter gave as a guess at an amount that would be very generous and kind.

I surprised him and said that not just seven times, but rather seventy times seven! That's a lot of chances to give to a brother or friend or sister who keeps making mistakes, and is sorry for it and asks for forgiveness. Only God's love can help someone have that much love and kindness. But if you pray and try to not let things get to you so much, and you realise that you also need and appreciate the forgiveness others too, it helps you to not stay upset with others for their blunders.

I wasn't talking about allowing wrong doers to just keep on doing harmful and unkind things. Simon was talking about his brother, someone who is trying to do what is right, who loves you and who you are to care for. It's not right to allow yourself or others to wilfully and wrongly do things that you and they know are hurtful or displeasing to Me, and will harm themselves in the end too, if there is a good way you can make things better and change things. But if you and others are trying to do what is right, but sometimes mistakes are made, well, it's best to understand that humans will be just that—fallible humans.

Sometimes there are people who do things that are wrong and hurtful to you or to your loved ones, and there isn't anything you can do about it. There isn't a way you can help them to change or encourage them in the right way, nor have they apologized to you or others, or they aren't even sorry about it. In those situations it is still best to forgive them in your heart, and to not hold on to those angry and mad and very sad feelings. If you keep feeling upset towards others it will make things twice as hard for you. Not only will you have the difficult situation to recover from that they caused, but then your heart will also just keep feeling more sad each day, until you can't enjoy many of the things you normally would.

I told Simon Peter to forgive, to pass over it, to let it go, to not hold on to anger or bad feelings—because it wasn't God's way of dealing with troubles, and would only make things worse for him and for his loved ones.

If you realise that those who have done wrong things will be taught their lessons by Me, and you do your best to show love and kindness in your life, you'll have a much happier time and your heart will be filled with joy.

I told My disciples about a new rule, a new commandment, something that from then on they were to obey. It wasn't as long and complicated as all the many rules in the books of Moses, but in some ways it was going to be rather difficult to do—unless they prayed for Me to help them.

I said the main and most important rule for them to keep was to love one another. This would change the world for the better. This would be My presence on Earth. This would be the solution to so many of the world's problems. Love is the solution and what will help make Earth a bit more like Heaven. When people put loving others as their highest priority, then good things start happening, because God blesses it and makes both those who give love and those who receive kindness from others happier.

Showing love changes the world around you. Maybe not everything will change today or in an instant, but even if you can only do one deed of kindness or say one word of encouragement to someone who needs some cheer, things will be a bit better.

Not always do things go well and perfectly when you are trying to show love, just like nothing on this world is perfect—because it's not yet Heaven. Sometimes people misunderstand the kind deeds of others, or at times they don't return the kindness or it seems to make others bothered about what you tried to do—just like it was for Me when I was on Earth and some people were upset when I was helping and healing others. But you have to remember that I always bless and reward you for trying your best to share My love and do things in My way.

Maybe things won't go totally well on that day, but every time you choose to think about others and not yourself I notice and will reward you in the best ways. Love always catches up to you, and you'll be glad in the end that you chose to give rather than only take; that you chose to forgive rather than pay someone back with unkindness; that you chose to speak a good word about someone rather than saying discouraging words about them; that you chose to make others happier before getting what you wanted.

I told My disciples that this was one way that people would be able to tell that they were My followers—if they had loved towards each other. Working together and caring for each other, being like good brothers and sisters, and helping each other was the best sign to others that they were My disciples. It's the same with you today. Those who truly follow Me and My ways and want to obey My words will show it in their kind deeds and actions. It will be noticeable to others who see them. Those that choose to live selfishly will look just like many others in the world, and seem to present no solutions or extra power from Heaven or answers to problems. If you want people to know that you are special and that you are from Heaven and want to bring God's love and light down to Earth the best advertisement for Me and for the truth you are trying to give out is to show love in all that you do and say. This doesn't mean that you have to only say sugar sweet type of words or things that are untrue—as sometimes love is saying some difficult things and having conviction and telling people a message that might not be so easy to hear. But if in your actions towards individuals you show and tell them that I love them and that you love them, and that God cares about them, then this is the proof to them that you are a child of God!

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### **Faith and Freedom**

There was a man who was born blind. He had never been able to see anything at all from the time his life started until the day I passed by him, when he was about 40 years old.

Sometimes you wait for many years for a wish or a prayer to be granted. But I know just the right time. So this man was blind for many years, and it was a tough life for him. The best he could do was beg for food and goods and coins to be given to him. His parents had cared well for him as a child and young man, and taught him about God. This gave him courage and faith even when he faced hard times.

At last the time was right for him to be healed. He had been sitting in a certain spot so often that many people knew him. As My disciples and I were passing by they asked Me a question. A question many people still wonder about today when they see people who are handicapped in some way—they wonder why. So My disciples asked Me about it then too.

“Was he born blind because of his sins, or the sins of his parents?” I was asked.

There are many reasons why different people suffer illness or are handicapped or have accidents. Sometimes it is to help them and the people around them learn things they wouldn't have learned any other way. Other times it's something that God uses to make something special happen. Such as was the case with this man.

I wanted to show him and many others just what great things God could do, the types of miracles that I was capable of doing, to encourage many others to pray and get help in their times of need. People needed faith that anything was possible with God, and those that prayed and asked for My help could have anything they asked for, if it was good for them and others and pleased Me.

I answered that it wasn't at all because of sin that this man was born blind. It wasn't a punishment, but rather it was for a big demonstration, a real-life example to show people what I could do. Though it wasn't easy to be blind for so many years, this man loved God and had faith and patience, and because of it he was called on to be real famous! So if he looked back on his life later, I think he might choose to have been born blind after all, because the good results of being able to help many others have faith to pray for their healing, and being able to meet Me and speak with Me and to believe on Me was well worth it.

I talked with him and made some clay with spit and the soil on the ground, and rubbed it on his eyes. His eyes were shut and it didn't hurt them, but rather helped to clean away some of the build up of matter that was on his eyelids. And instead of it being just ordinary mud it was transformed into a healing balm by God's power. It soothed and restored and healed.

I told him to go wash the mud off of his eyelids. This was then his step of faith and obedience. When he did what I told him to do, he could suddenly see, for the first time ever in his life! He was amazed, surprised, and so very happy!

People started to notice that this man wasn't just sitting around like he had been all day, but he was walking around and able to see everything! He hadn't seen Me yet because he had sight restored at the pool of Siloam where I told him to wash his eyes. But later I met him and asked him if he believed on the Son of God.

This man said wondered who he was so he could believe. When I told him that it was Me, he believed I was His Saviour, and rejoiced and worshiped Me then and there. He was so very grateful for the wonderful miracle of being able to see, and the special honour of being able to talk with Me personally too.

Not everyone was too pleased about all this good stuff going on, and they even made it hard for the dear man who had just been healed. But he was a faithful witness and stood up and told people the truth, and said how He knew I was from God and he believed in Me.

I often healed people on the day of the week that those who were looking for reasons to stop Me said that I shouldn't. But that's the only day I could meet some people—when I went to the synagogue, as that's the only time some people showed up there, and our paths wouldn't have crossed any other time. With God, anytime is the right time to help the people that He says to help.

One time I was teaching in the synagogue and there was woman who couldn't stand up straight. It was very hard for her to walk. She was often in pain, and had been in this condition for 18 years. It was very difficult for her. She couldn't stretch out comfortably in bed. She couldn't look up and see the sky easily. She had to use sticks to try to keep her

balance as she walked around. She would have a hard time doing just about anything that required moving around.

This was my chance to bring her deliverance. I touched her and said she was loose from this ailment. Right then, for the first time in so many years she stood up straight and tall. She beamed a big smile and was filled with gladness, and tears of joy fell down her face. She felt so very good!

Of course, as always, when I helped people on the Sabbath day, the rest day, there were questions and criticism. It angered Me in My heart to see the lack of love and compassion in people's hearts. Why couldn't they rejoice at the healing and the miracle and be glad for this woman? She could now do so many things easily, and be free to care for others, and to get good exercise and sleep. And just the fact that she was healed would make her worship and praise God all the rest of her life—this was a very good thing!

Well, when I was questioned that time I gave the example of a donkey or sheep that was in its stall. I said, "Don't you loose your animals to go out and feed on the grass and get water to drink—even on the rest day? It's good that I loosed her from being bound up with her body not able to move freely. The Enemy had her bound, and I set her free!"

When the people heard My words, telling this truth to those grumpy folks and showing them up for their wrong ways of thinking, those listening rejoiced and were so glad that I had come to set people free from the ways the Enemy was trying to cause trouble. I came to bring life and freedom and joy and healing. I wasn't coming to make tons of rules, but to teach people to love God and others. I wasn't coming to give out punishments but to give forgiveness to those who wanted to change and wanted to believe in My love and receive My gift of life and salvation. I love freedom, when it's the right kind and in the right way—freedom from the Enemy's ways, and setting everyone free to love and obey God and live a life of joy and peace.

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### **Dinner Discussions**

Anytime was a good time to teach a bit more of the ways of Heaven, and to help bring My love into people's lives. People on Earth think so differently than I do, and I enjoy helping people know new ideas and come to grasp some of the ways of Heaven.

You'll never understand all that there is to know about how God operates and all that He thinks about, because you're human, and it's just not possible. But I love giving you as many glimpses into Our ways and thoughts as I can, and as much as your mind and heart are willing to receive.

I was never on vacation during My time ministering to others while on Earth. Even if I was invited to a nice dinner it wasn't a chance to just sit back and forget what I was there for.

Some well-off Pharisees and doctors of law, invited Me for a weekend meal one time, and I knew I was being watched carefully. Everything I did or said was being scrutinised and remembered. I could choose to forget My mission and why I was there on Earth and instead try to only do those things that the Pharisees would agree with, or I could be bold and brave and do what My Father in Heaven wanted Me to do, even if it wasn't what gave Me the praise of these stuck-on-themselves folks.

As I sat down to eat I noticed right away a man who was there and in need of healing. If I were to please My Heavenly Father and be true to My mission on Earth, My reason for being there, I would show God's love to him and heal him. If I was to try to please the proud people in the room who didn't like much of what I did or said, then I would just ignore this suffering man, and pretend that he didn't need help, as it was the day of the week they said I shouldn't do miracles on.

What would I do? Everyone was watching to see. I promptly healed him and let him go happily on his way. I turned to the dining onlookers and posed a question. "If your ox had fallen in a ditch on the Sabbath day, would you help him out?"

Their hearts all knew the answer. Of course they would rush to rescue their helpless animal. Animals were not only expensive but were very needed and the source of their survival and livelihood. How much better to help a person in need—no matter what time of day it is, what day of the week or year it is.

As we kept eating I told a few stories to do with mealtime, stories that would teach some good lessons and bring a bit more of God's thoughts into their minds. I was there to teach and to bring people close to God, no matter what we were doing. I was on duty all the time when I was around people. I was being watched and listened to constantly, and here while people were relaxing was the perfect chance to tell them something helpful and offer some tips through stories.

First, I told a story giving an idea of how to act in humility. If they were invited to a meal and there were several places set for the different guests—some places set up for the most important guest and some for the others—that they should first of all choose the place that looked prepared for the guest of lowest rank or importance. If they thought proudly of themselves, imagining that they were, of course, the most important person attending, they might be setting themselves up for embarrassment.

If there was a guest that was attending that was of higher importance, then the host would have to ask that proud guest to move and to sit in a more humble place. However, if they first took the humble seat when they arrived at the dinner and sat in a humble place that seemed to be set for someone who wasn't thought of as the most important, then it would be easier for them. If that was their correct place, then they could stay there and not feel embarrassed. And if they were actually meant to sit somewhere that was set up for the higher ranked guests, then when others saw the host telling them to sit in a better place, it would make them feel nice, and people would think well of them.

Doing the proud thing wouldn't make others think well of them and would just set themselves up for being humbled. Choosing to do the humble thing and sitting in the humble places and thinking of others as deserving more honour than they, would work out better in the end, and make them feel the happiest. Trying to prove that you are the best or better than others will only embarrass you. Making others feel more worth of acclaim and trying to give honour and acknowledgement to others more than yourself is a wise thing to do, and God blesses those who act in humility and preferring others above themselves.

Another story I told helped to give them some good advice on who to give their time and attention and resources to help. It's easy to give gifts to friends and people that you know are able to give equally back to you again. I talked to them of the example of a meal being prepared and the guests being chosen. I said if the only people being invited and given the nice meal that they've prepared are people who are rich, or their friends, or family members only, all the time, then that's not really the best. Because then they will feel they need to give back a nice meal at their house in return for the feast that was given to them. And what happens then? It's not really giving if it's just to people who will give back the same great things or even better things to you again, and you do it with that purpose in mind. Then it's just like a game of tennis, only it's being played with favours. Good things are just being given back and forth between people who aren't even in need, and the poor people who really needed a meal are left out and forgotten.

I told them a new idea. Instead, they should choose a new set of guests to invite when they want to do something generous. They could give to those who can't give back to them at all—those who are poor and in need. And to let My, the Lord, be the one that gives back to them the reward for their sharing, by the great meals He can invite them to in Heaven. Wouldn't that be more fun? My meals in Heaven are a zillion times better than any fancy and deluxe meal on Earth. If you please Me by sharing what you have with others who are in need then you'll get My paybacks which are the best!

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### **The Father's Love**

It's easy to think that because you are doing good things and seem to be making all the right decisions, that I must love you more than those who aren't quite as good or righteous as you think you are. But I love you and others with the same great love.

I don't love you any more because you do good things. I'm glad and will reward you for choosing what is right, and for doing kind deeds, and making decisions not to do things that are hurtful to others or to yourself. But those that are going through a time of waywardness and not following in My ways and are having a difficult time as a result, I love them as well, and it saddens Me to see them continuing on in their disobedience, because I know how much it hurts them, and I can't bless and reward them while they aren't choosing to stay close to Me.

However, when one person who has gone off and done their own thing for awhile, or even for a very long time, finally turns to Me and receives Me into their lives, and is sorry for their

wrong doings, this is cause for a great rejoicing! I am a loving Father and love My children forever. Even when they are naughty, I still love them. I love you always, and want to be close to you as My friends and companions.

When some people thought that they were perhaps just a bit more liked and loved by God, because they were very faithful to keep every rule, and they thought poorly of those who they didn't think were as good as them, I told them a few stories to illustrate things better, so they could get an idea of the way things really were, and what God actually feels.

I told of a woman that had a set of special and expensive coins. These she took good care of and never let any of them get lost. They were her wealth and treasures. However, one day she noticed that a coin went missing! She was very anxious to find it. It was worth a lot! She didn't say, "Oh, well, look at all the rest of my coins that I still have. I don't need to worry about that one missing coin."

Instead she searched and looked and cleaned and didn't stop until she found where it had fallen. When she found it at last she was so glad and told her friends! She could relax now. Her special set of treasures was complete.

You—each one of you—are like My treasures. You are greatly treasured and cherished and loved by Me. Just because I have many who know Me and love Me and are My friends and are going to be with Me forever in Heaven doesn't mean that it's enough and I just forget about the others who are still in need of My salvation. Those that are like the lost coin are a concern to Me. I think about them, pray for them, try to send people who know Me on Earth to find them and help show them that I love them, and help to tell them that I am the way to life, joy and love forever. When at last one of My lost treasures changes from their waywardness and lets Me hold them—just like the lady held her special coin—I am very, very glad! I'll only feel totally relaxed and happy when everyone has come to know My love and has turned and walked towards Me and is able to come home to Heaven.

I gave another example in a story that helped to emphasise the point I was making. I told of two brothers who worked with their father on a farm. They worked hard, but they had all that they needed. One day the younger brother, who was a grown man, decided he wanted to go away for a while and live a carefree life.

This young man asked his father to give him his half of the inheritance that he would have been given much later. But he wanted it then and there instead. So he took his money and went off on a long trip to visit other places and to do new things. He didn't invest his money in good and helpful things, but just spent it on wild parties with ungodly people. He bought all the fanciest things and wasted everything he had—all his inheritance that was meant to last him for many years. Once it was gone and he was no longer a rich man, those that had seemed to be his friends in order to get things from him and enjoy the things that he bought with his money, just left him and didn't help him out at all. There suddenly came a famine in the land and there wasn't food to eat either.

He was poor, hungry and very sad. He found someone with a farm who he decided to work for, but that didn't help him much. He was still just as penniless and hungry. As he was caring



for the pigs that were wallowing in the mud eating scraps and corn husks it looked like they had more than even he had, and it made him wish for a good meal.

Finally a new thought came to his mind. He thought about his father's farm and all the well-fed servants there. Perhaps he could ask to be hired as a servant—he didn't think he deserved to even be considered a son anymore. He'd made everyone so sad and acted very unwisely.

So back home he travelled. It was a long walk and he really wondered what his father was going to say. He was sure his father would be angry and want to send him away, so he planned what he would beg for—that he would be allowed to just be a servant that works hard. That's all.

However, when he was still a long way down the road, this young man's father happened to look that way—the road that the father often looked at to see if, maybe today, his son just might be returning. That day, to the father's great joy, he sees his son walking back. Oh, the father had wished to see this day for so long! He'd missed his son more than words could express.

The father ran all the way down the road to meet his son and hugged him tightly. He was so very glad that he had come home! This father's son was amazed and surprised. He told his father that he was very sorry for the way he acted, and didn't expect to even be considered a son any more. But if he could just work as a servant on the farm he would be very glad for that.

The father instead said that it was time to party!—And all the best things were ordered for this 'welcome home' party and feast. He gave his son the fanciest clothes to wear, and put a ring on his finger. The father asked for the best and most tasty food to be cooked. His son that was lost was found—and he was so glad his son was alive and there with them again!

That is how it feels when someone who has strayed away in heart and mind from Me finally comes back and wants to live their life with Me. I'm overjoyed and it's so wonderful I just want to party and give them the best things! I love each one on Earth so much, and when people turn their hearts to Me and choose to be close to Me and invite Me into their lives it really makes Me glad—more than words can express.

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### **Obedience and Gratefulness**

As I was walking along the road I heard a group of 10 men calling out for Me to help and heal them. These men were sick with leprosy. It was a very difficult affliction to have, and made things not only hard for them, but very sad too.

It was so contagious that those who had the skin disease of leprosy could no longer live around other people, or even stay in their house with their family. They had to move away and stay separate. If they needed to walk where others were, they needed to ring a bell and call out "unclean" announcing that they—who were considered the dirtiest people and

sickest people around—were approaching, so everyone could move away and not be near to them.

These men were all sick and stayed together as a team, helping each other the best they could. But there wasn't any hope for healing. It was to be a long, sad and difficult sickness that would last them for the rest of their lives. Not a condition or situation anyone wanted to have.

When these 10 men heard about Me and My power to heal, and then they saw that I was walking within earshot of them, they were so glad for this bit of hope! With all their might and strength they yelled out for Me to help them.

I heard them and wanted to heal them right away. Since they had faith in My power to heal, I could do it. I told them then what to do. In order to be allowed to live in the town normally again, once someone had leprosy, the priest would need to see if they were healed and to declare that they were clean and fine.

I told them simply, "Go show yourselves to the priest."

Now when I told them this they weren't yet healed, but that was their step of faith and obedience that they needed to take in order for them to receive the miracle of healing.

Without hesitation and in full faith these men started on the road to the town to meet the priest and to declare that they were healed. And as they began walking that direction they were healed! They had to start walking first, and then God's healing power was activated for them

What a great rejoicing was heard as they started running, laughing, yelling, and praising God!

One of them however, stopped walking, turned around and ran back to Me. Kneeling down he praised and thanked Me for giving him healing. He didn't get lost in the joy of the moment and forget to thank Me for doing the miracle that he'd asked for.

It's easy to remember to talk to Me when you are sick and in need of something. But do you remember to talk to Me and to thank Me for the many many things I do for you, and all the ways I do answer your prayers?

I was glad that the others were healed and happy and that they'd obeyed right away what I told them to do in order to be healed. That made Me happy. But when this man came all the way back, just to say "Thank You," it showed Me that I was even more important to Him than his health, than his family, than all the cool new things he was hoping to get to do. He treasured My love and care and concern for Him more than anything else.

It means a lot to Me to hear you speak words of praise to Me and to tell Me how glad you are that I've done something special for you. Please remember to tell Me about the things you like, the things you are glad for, will you? It will make Me so happy!

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## A Good Shepherd

I told a story to illustrate how I love and care for each one of you. I told a story about a shepherd that had one hundred sheep in his care. That may seem like a lot of sheep, and that perhaps if one is missing it might not even be noticed or make much of a difference. However, a good shepherd loves and cares for each one of his sheep and will do whatever it takes to see that they are well fed and healthy, and kept safe.

The shepherds in times of old had to go through a lot of difficulty to care for sheep, you know. No matter what the weather, they had to ensure that the sheep got the best of care, or they didn't do well.

The sheep needed safe places to feed and good water to drink. They needed a place to spend the night, and they needed to be kept safe in every way. It wasn't enough to just send the sheep out to pasture, while the shepherd sat around and amused himself. He had to be on duty and watchful and ready at all times to take care of anything that he was needed for.

I told the story of a good shepherd that noticed when he was counting his sheep and found out that one was missing. He still had 99 sheep, but that wasn't enough for him. He wanted all his sheep to be safe and protected and well cared for. Each and every sheep mattered to him.

What was he to do? Well, there was only one thing on his mind—he must find that lost sheep and bring it back into the safety of the fold. He set off right away, leaving the others in the fold and began his search. The shepherd didn't say, "Oh, I'll just take a quick look around, and then come back if I don't see it right away. I'm tired and cold and want to rest."

A good shepherd realises that his sheep is also tired and cold and isn't able to properly take care of itself. He knows that a lost sheep needs him to rescue him. So, the good shepherd just kept searching until at last he found his lost sheep. He wasn't going to give up until the sheep had been found. His fold and flock of sheep weren't complete until all, every last one of them, were there safely home with him again.

Did the shepherd get all mad at the sheep that had wandered away, and tell him that he shouldn't even be a part of the flock, or reprimand him for the trouble he caused when wandering away? No. The shepherd loved the sheep and missed it, and really wanted it to be a part of his flock. When the shepherd at last held it and brought it home he was filled with joy! He called his friends to celebrate the wonderful event. The shepherd was glad that the rest of the sheep stayed close and were still in His fold. But instead of being upset at the one that ran off, his joy at having the sheep home at last was great and filled his heart.

I'm like the shepherd, and you are like the sheep in My fold. I love and care for each one of you. I love you all very much. I'm so glad when you stay close to Me, because then I can take good care of you, and I enjoy your company too. But if you have wandered off and have gotten into the wrong things, please know that I'm anxious and eager for your return. I'll just love you and be so glad to see you again. I won't be mad at you, because forgiving and loving and caring for you is what I do!

Come to Me again, if you've gone astray a bit, or even a long ways away. I'll make you feel so glad that you came back, and just seeing you again will make My heart very glad and I'll smile so very big. Just having you near again and being able to care for you will make Me forget the sorrow I felt when you were gone. If you are sorry for your wrongs and want to make things right again, and you wish to be near to Me, I will be so very happy, because I love you more than you will ever know! You are very special to Me.

Sometimes people think that they have to be good in order for Me to love them, or that I love certain kinds of people more than others. But that isn't the case. I love those that love Me—and it's your heart that I look at most of all. If you are trying your best to please Me and then you make some mistakes along the way, or you aren't staying as close to Me as would be best for your own wellbeing, then please just come and talk to Me about it. I'll understand and do all that I can to help you get back on the right road again, and back into the safety of My arms, surrounded with My loving care. You mean so much to Me and I'll always be thinking about you, concerned about you, and wanting to make you happy—every single day, forever!

How about that? Can you find that kind of love on Earth? Only with Me can you find such full and complete and amazing eternal love forever! You'll be so glad that you stayed close to Me. I'll make you so happy and provide all that you need. Will you come to Me, please? It'll make Me so happy! We can party and rejoice that we are together forever. Want to party? I know how to make the best parties ever, and you can be the guest of honour, because you chose Me above others, and you chose to stay close to Me instead of wandering around all over the place. Stick with Me and I'll give you the best things. This life now is only a tiny part of what is ahead. In Heaven you'll get to enjoy so many new and wonderful things. I promise the best to those who stay by My side and let Me be their guide, their Heavenly caretaker, their provider, eternal friend and good shepherd!

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### **Lazarus**

My dear friend Lazarus and his two sisters, Martha and Mary, were going to be part of a display of God's amazing power—the power to heal and restore someone's life.

I hadn't seen them in a while and it was getting rather difficult to visit. The reason was that the people who lived nearby were stirring up trouble against Me and trying to put an end to My ministry. It was getting hard to even travel to that part of the country.

One day however, messengers brought to Me some important news—that Lazarus was very sick. His sisters wanted Me to come right away to heal him. God wanted to give the people in that area a good chance to believe on Me and in God's love and care. So this sickness was something that was allowed for a reason. It wasn't meant to be the end of Lazarus' life, but it was a chance for him and his family to be a part of letting God's power be shown to many.

When I was first told about Lazarus I didn't travel right away, as it wasn't the right time. I had to wait to go when My Father told Me it was best—best for My safety, and best for the miracle to happen that would inspire many others to believe in Me and be drawn closer to God.

After two days we began to travel and it took a few days until we arrived at the home of these three friends of Mine. And what a sad team awaited us there. By the time we'd arrived My dear friend Lazarus had already passed away four days before, and was in the special place carved out of the rock and ground where they put to rest their loved ones. A large stone was the doorway of this kind of tomb.

When I was still a distance from their property Martha found out that I was on My way there and came out to meet Me. Tearfully she spoke about what had happened. I told her that her brother would rise again, if she believed. I told her "I'm the resurrection and the life. He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." She told Me that she believed that I was the Son of God and that I could do this miracle.

She then ran to call Mary and to tell her I was there. When Mary came to see Me she was crying also. "If you had been here My brother wouldn't have died!" she lamented.

She had faith that I could have prevented it, that My healing power was strong enough to stop someone from dying even. But it was a very sad Mary that spoke to Me, and the people around her were all crying too. I felt her anguish of heart and the deep loss and sorrow that she and Martha and the others felt. It made Me cry to see how much they were hurting inside—all because they thought it was the end of their brother's life and that there was no longer any hope. Most of them were in despair and great sorrow. If they had only known that My Heavenly Father, through Me, was able to do absolutely anything—and that He could raise Lazarus and restore his life, they wouldn't have been so sad.

Well, it started off as a very sad time, but it was going to end in a wonderful way.

"Roll away the stone!" I told them. God was going to do the miracle, but they needed to do their part to show their obedience and faith. That's the part they could and needed to do for Me to do My part and restore this man to full and good health.

It was unheard of to do such a thing. They'd never heard of or seen someone's tomb stone being taken away after a few days of being buried so they can rise again. But they put aside their questions and did what I asked, as I reminded them that it was time for a miracle to take place.

I prayed a prayer of praise, and thanked My Father for hearing and answering prayer, and for this chance to show to many people that I was God's Son, who was there to help and save them. I then called out in a loud voice, "Lazarus come forth!"

To the shock and amazement of all standing there wondering what was going to happen next, they looked and saw Lazarus coming out of the cave! He was wrapped up a bit in his grave clothes and I instructed them to free him of those. They were no longer necessary. He was alive and well and could get dressed and enjoy a celebration and time of rejoicing!

Many people believed in Me because of that miracle. It was a tough time to go through, and it was hard for those there when Lazarus passed away, mostly because of their lack of faith that God had a plan and would work everything out for the best in the end. But when they saw the great miracle—both of Lazarus rising from the dead and being restored to full health, and when Martha and Mary and Lazarus saw the miracle of many people who had been sceptical of Me, change and have believing hearts, it was all worth it.

This was their gift to Me in a way—to let the life of their loved one be gone for a few days, and to let God's power be shown then in a powerful display, like a real-life drama to all around, that God loves and cares for them, and that I was His son sent to help them. It was what brought many to believe on Me and thus be granted the privilege of life forever with us in Heaven. Lazarus' life being restored helped many more live forever—through their belief and faith in Me.

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### Heavenly Communication

Prayer is your communication with Me and is your way to receive Heavenly resources and all that you need, of the things only God can give you. Prayer gives you faith that all is under My control and will be taken care of—because you've asked Me to, and with faith you believe that I'll do just what is best for you and others that you are praying for.

I gave lots of tips on prayer when I was on Earth to make our times of talking be on target and get the best results. Here are some things I mentioned and that are written in the Bible.

Your prayers don't need to be long to be heard.

You don't have to be seen when you pray and a big display made of praying. Simple and humble times of prayer, when just you and I talk together are great.

Have faith and believe that I will do what you are asking Me to do, if it's something that is good and My will to make happen.

When people gather together to unite in prayer, I am there with you.

Even if you are the only one that knows you are praying, the results of the prayers can be seen and noticed by others, as I reward you for your prayers and answer you.

It's good be humble when you pray, and realise how you need forgiveness and My help. If you come to Me and start proclaiming all your own goodness and think that that's what will make your prayers be answered, it won't. When you humbly admit that you make mistakes, that you can do nothing without Me, and you want My love and forgiveness, then I hear those humble prayers and answer.

The proud prayers of self-goodness aren't worth anything, and don't move Me to want to help you. It's as good as bringing a full bag to be filled at the market. Nothing more can fit inside. If you come to prayer full of your own good deeds and are thinking how great you must be, then to Me it's like saying there is no room for Me to fill your bag with My new and

wonderful things that I'd like to give you. Come to Me in prayer with an open and empty heart, showing your need for My help, and your humility. I'll hear those prayers far better and answer in the best way I can.

My disciples wanted to know more about prayer, and what to say. To make it easy and simple I taught them a short prayer they could say. Through it I showed many things:

--Prayers should start with words of praise. It's a wonderful way for any conversation to begin, and it shows faith in God's power and ushers you into His presence.

--Prayers don't need to be long to be powerful and well-meaning.

--Prayers are to be according to God's will and what He wants to have happen on Earth, and are to in some way help Him to change the world and lives for the better. It's not to make selfish things happen for yourself, or bad things happen for anyone else, who God wants to bless.

--Through prayer you have access to the supply of your needs. I am ready to hear and to give you all that you need.

--Your heart should be clean of sin by asking for forgiveness from Me, and by being willing to forgive others too for their failures.

--Prayer gives strength and the power to do what is right. Without My help you can't make wise and good decisions, nor stick to your good plans and commitments. It's Me that helps you do what you need to do, and through prayer you can reach your goal.

--Through prayer I can help you know what is right and wrong, and I can stop wrong doers and harmful situations from troubling you. Whatever problem you are having and whatever ways the Enemy is using to bother you can be overcome through prayer. My power that you can access through prayer is stronger than anything of the Enemy.

--Your prayers can end with more praise, and faith, knowing that the outcome of the situation prayed about is in My hands, and I have full control. In humility you surrender to whatever I will choose to bring about a result. You know that I am all powerful, and you are glad that I choose to do what is best. You have faith that what has been committed to Me in prayer will happen according to My will and what is going to be the best.

Here's the prayer I taught them, that illustrates these points that I was trying to teach:

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**MAT.6:9** After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

**MAT.6:10** Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

**MAT.6:11** Give us this day our daily bread.

**MAT.6:12** And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

**MAT.6:13** And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

## Story Time with Jesus

### Bible Stories

#### Chapters 126-137

- 126-Jesus and the Children
- 127-Generous Gifts
- 128-Important Things
- 129-Marvellous Moments on a Mountain
- 130-Hosanna
- 131-Love and Humility
- 132-In Remembrance of Him
- 133-Jesus' Gift of Love and Life
- 134-Jesus is Risen—He Lives Forever!
- 135-Walking and Talking
- 136-Breakfast on the Beach
- 137-Clouds

(Jesus speaking: )

#### Jesus and the Children

During a hot and tiring day, answering questions, healing, instructing and giving God's love, encouragement and Words to many many people, I looked up to see something that I nor others have ever forgotten. It was a beautiful sight as mothers with their little children were coming to see Me, to talk with Me, and to get prayer. These mothers had been through a lot.

I saw many children in my lifetime on Earth. Some of these children didn't have an earthly father any longer, some had had a brother or sister pass away through sickness or an accident. Some were very poor, and seldom had enough to eat. Others were from more well-to-do homes and families, but hadn't known what God's love was really like. Their life was just a bunch of rules and strict discipline, without much joy or encouragement. Others were crippled in some way, and didn't seem to have much hope for a happy life in the future. Things looked pretty bleak.



Some children were ridiculed and made fun of by others due to their personal looks, outward appearance, or strain of religious views and practices. Other children I met along the way in My travels seemed to be happy on the outside, but in their heart they so longed to have someone who really loved and accepted them for how God had made them.

I could see inside of people's hearts and minds, and I knew what they were thinking and feeling—this included the children. Sometimes I would just feel my heart crying for them. I so wanted each one of them to feel as loved as My Father wanted them to feel, and to know how much I loved them too, and wanted to be their Heavenly Father, their friend, their big Brother—whatever they most needed in their life.

One hot day as I was busy with the many who needed My Words, and needed to receive My healing touch, there was a team of mothers and children coming to see Me—just to have their children held in My arms, and to have Me pray for them and bless them.

It wasn't an easy thing to do, to get past all those other people, and it was even harder for some to come, while holding their tiny baby in their arms as well as help their other children make it safely over to Me. When they had nearly reached Me, as tired and weary as they were, something else tried to stop them.

There was then an opportunity to give more instruction and training in God's ways to My disciples. They were trying to keep away some of the many people, so I wouldn't be pressured too much, unable to even talk or help anyone. Then this team of mothers and children were also told to stay away, and not crowd around. I wanted to teach a special lesson to all. And people throughout the many years since then have learned from it.

Children are special. They need special love and extra care. Most of all I wanted them to know that I, Jesus, will never, ever be too busy to help a child that needs Me. I will never send any away. I will always open my arms wide and welcome each and every one of them.

My heart broke and ached as I saw the looks and feelings in the hearts of the little ones who were being turned away from coming to Me. It upset Me, and I quickly spoke, so all standing there could hear. "Allow the children come to Me! Do not forbid them!"

I was the solution to all their troubles. It wasn't going to be in getting new toys, or being the richest, or even in having perfectly good health and strength. In coming to Me, to be reassured of My love, this is what would most help them through the difficulties they faced—and there were many. It was a tough life in many ways. And things aren't easy for children these days either.

Although in most places there are some modern inventions that help to make some things easier, and shops that hold more food, not everyone has things like this available. Even in the most well-to-do family, each child faces things that are extremely difficult for them—especially those whose family does not love Me and know about Me.

I would like to say to each child on Earth, "Come to Me". My arms are and will always be open to you. You can tell Me whatever you are feeling and thinking. I can understand even

the hardest questions that you have. I know just how to make things right again for you—and I will, one of these days.

I didn't make things all perfect for those children then. They still had their difficulties to face and struggles to endure and sickness and hard times, just like you face troubles today. But because they had come to Me, and I was able to encourage and pray for them, and show them how special they were to Me and to My Heavenly Father, and how much I loved them, it made things so much better.

Did every child on earth then get to see Me and sit with Me and get a story, or get a personal healing touch? No. But today you can, as I am in My true form. I am no longer as man on Earth that can only be in one place at one time, seen by only a certain amount of people. Today, right now, I am and can be everywhere, all at once. Is this too hard to imagine? I can be sitting with you right now, while at the same time with a friend you care about, helping them too!

Just like the air is all around you, and every one can breathe it in, so am I able to be with each one. I give the breath of life. God's Spirit can be all around you. You can always "come to Me". Just talk to Me. I'll hear, and I am able to make things better for you. I can understand each thing you feel and need.

Even if things have to remain imperfect for the time being, I can make things easier for you to handle them, and even help you to be able to help others. I can give you ideas, faith, supply your needs, restore your joy, and heal you. I'll comfort you in whatever ways I can. Then, when the time is right, I'll make things all nice again. I'll take away the things that hurt you and others down on Earth. I'll wipe away your tears. I'll give you fun times like you've only imagined, and more than you thought possible.

There's a lot I can do to make things better for you now, if you come to Me, talk to Me, pray and ask for My help. Then later on, when it's time to take you to Heaven, you'll have so much love and thrilling times, it will help you even forget about the troubles you are having now.

One time when I was talking to others about Heaven and the Kingdom of God, some people were wondering what kind of people would be well-thought of, or the most important people to God. They asked Me, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?"

I wanted to give a clear example of what people should be like, and I also wanted to give a chance for people to take note of and appreciate, admire and love the ones who I thought were so wonderful—the children. I wanted the men to stop thinking about how to be rich and powerful, famous and proud. Those things were far from the way God wants people to be and what they should strive for. I looked around for the best example. I found a small child, cute and happy. His mother let her little one come and be the "show and tell" example.

Before I answered their question I placed this happy little one in front of Me, for all around to see. "Here is an example of a truly great person." That was very surprising for the people around Me. They thought you could only become great when you were older.

However, the truth is that sadly, as people got older and more acquainted and familiar with the ways of the world, the less they would act in the ways of Heaven. It was easy to think that “famous” meant “important” and that “able to do a lot of things” meant “God is happy with you”, or that “skilled and talented” meant “you are admired by God”. But it’s not so.

A child was all these things: Important to Me, made Me happy, and was admired by Me, the Lord. Those were just the things the people wanted to be. So why did children hold a special greatness about them? If a child loves God and others, is simple and believing, trusting and having faith, encouraging and kind to people, has joy and shows it to those around, aren’t these just the kind of things God would like people to be like in His new and Heavenly kingdom?

Can you imagine if everyone on earth, all of a sudden, was to become a bit more like these traits? How different things would be. The world would be a much happier place. Heaven isn’t going to be made of people who are just rich now, or famous, or powerful, or the leaders, or the smartest ones, or those who have made the most machines and inventions, or can do the most tricks.

Who do you really like to have as a friend, anyway? If you could choose between someone who had faith in you and believed you could do things, and encouraged you, and spoke words of encouragement to you, and liked to be around you, and made you feel needed in their life—or someone who others said were “important” but they acted so proud of themselves they hardly even noticed you, who would you choose?

I made it clear to those around that day, that those who enter Heaven and gain rewards would be those who were just those things: Had faith and believed in Me, who praised Me, who spent time with Me, and who weren’t thinking they were so good but needed God’s help. I explained that to get into Heaven you need to be humble and love God—just like a child is with a parent. If you accept God as your Heavenly Father, and become His child through believing in My gift of salvation and have humility to ask for forgiveness, then you’ll be an important citizen of God’s Heavenly Kingdom.

Little children can be wonderful examples of the qualities that God most wants people to have. I love children! I love you! You are great!

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### **Generous Gifts**

The best gifts given to Me are those that come from your heart, in your desire to please Me and do things that you think will make Me glad. Here are two examples of gifts that were given when I was on Earth.

A certain man, who had all that he needed, wanted to have Me and My disciples over for dinner. He prepared a great meal and had everything set just right. He’s not the one that gave the most precious gift that day, however. Just making a fancy meal and inviting an important person to your house isn’t the kind of gift that comes from the heart. Some people wanted Me to come to their house, but not all of them had real love and humility. This man

was pretty sure I would like to be there because he was also thought of as an important man. He had what he needed, and people said good things about him.

When I entered his house there wasn't a real warm and friendly atmosphere. He wasn't eager to hear about God and about Heaven, but wanted to see Me up close and judge if he thought I was actually the Messiah and sent from My Heavenly Father. He was watching Me, and seeing what I would do or say. He wasn't too sure he believed, and he was pretty proud.

The normal custom of washing the guests' feet didn't happen. We weren't greeted with a kind and welcoming hug. Instead, it was very formal. Then as we were eating, a very precious gift was given to me—by an unexpected guest.

A woman, named Mary, entered the room where we were all seated and eating, carrying something very costly and treasured in her hands. She came humbly over to Me, with tears running down her cheeks. The woman knelt down and washed My feet with the many tears she was crying, kissing My feet, and drying them with her hair. Mary then opened the special box—an alabaster box—that she was carrying. In it was a very precious and sweet smelling perfume oil, and she poured it on Me.

The oil was rare and costly. It was something people could save for years, as it was in special jar that was tightly closed up. To use it meant you had to break it open. It was a very special gift to be given. Mary chose to give it to Me to show her love. She knew I could forgive her for all that she had done wrong. She had seen the love in My eyes, she had heard the love and truth in My words, she had seen and heard of the many miracles that I had done to show love, and she knew that I held God's gift of love for her—forgiveness and the way to Heaven, and to live eternally.

This humble woman wanted to have a new start to life, a change, and to have My love in her heart. She wanted so much to be close to Me and show Me her great love, that she didn't even care what the other people thought who were sitting around.

Simon, the man who invited me to dine, noticed her, and criticized what she was doing, and the fact that I let her be there, giving Me her gift. Some thought she was too sinful to be in there, as they felt they'd kept all the rules better than she had—not realizing that love is the most important of all. Others thought she was just being wasteful, and instead of giving it to Jesus, they thought it should have been sold and the money given to the poor.

I knew what each one was feeling and thinking. I answered each one. I said to Simon that the reason I came to Earth wasn't to just sit around making fancy and good people feel better. I came to help those in need, to show God's love and way to those who hadn't gone the right way and needed My help and love and forgiveness to get them back into a close relationship with Us. Just like those who are sick are the ones that need healing—it was people like this woman, who knew she needed to change, that I was there to help and encourage.

I mentioned also, that she had demonstrated far more love than even he, Simon, had shown Me. She washed My feet—with tears, and gave the best kind of oil, far more precious

than was used back then for everyday life, for cleaning and as a type of lotion. He didn't give an embrace, but she hadn't stopped kissing My feet for the whole time she was there. That's a lot of love. I saw past what everyone else just saw, and realized the heart, and said love was the most important.

I told those who said that the poor should have gotten the gift instead, that there would always be a chance to help people; there were always those in need. However, I wasn't going to be there for too much longer. It was nearly My time to go to back to My Father in Heaven. It was good that she gave her gift of love to Me while she had the chance.

I looked at the woman and forgave her, sending her away so happy, knowing that she was loved and forgiven and part of God's family. Besides My gift of forgiveness to her, I had a special way I wanted to thank her for showing Me so much love—and showing Me that I was worthy of giving her most expensive and special things to. I promised that when the stories about Me were told around the world of My life on Earth, that the story of her gift and love would be told as well.

There were so very many people that I met and talked with in My time on Earth. In the Bible are some of the stories and accounts, but only a very small percent compared to the many I talked with and healed. There are many, many that you have never heard about, but perhaps can one day. However, the story of Mary and her gift of perfume oil is told around the world. Millions and millions have heard about her. Why? I wanted her to be set as an example to others, to show what I most appreciate: your love, the gifts of love from your heart, the ways you show Me that I am the most important to you, and also to demonstrate My great love and forgiveness to all, no matter who they are, or what they have done.

My love is for all, and My gift of salvation and forgiveness is for anyone who asks Me for it. I don't only like and want to be around those who are always right and do everything perfect. If you love Me and want My love and forgiveness, My arms and heart are open to you. The gift of the love from your heart is the most precious thing you could give Me.

There was another time when someone gave a special gift to God. A very poor woman, who loved God and tried to do what she felt in her heart was right, so much wanted to be able to give a gift to God—like most others were able to do. People would bring their gifts and offerings to the temple to help others in need, or to help with the work on the temple, or to help the priests. She did all she could to save as much as she could, so that on the day she went to the temple, she too could have something to share.

Some people gave money, others gave food or animals even. She was too poor to have much of anything. All she had in all her house at that time to spare was two little tiny coins, worth hardly anything. She took those two coins with her to the place where others were placing large sums of riches as their gift. Compared to them, her coins were nearly worth nothing. She didn't make a big deal about it, like many others were doing, making sure plenty of people saw how much they were giving, so they'd be thought of as a great person. Though she slipped quietly there, dropped in her two tiny coins and then walked away, I saw it. I then said something surprising. "She just gave the most of everyone here!"

Imagine the puzzled looks on people's faces. Then I explained—because I knew things that others didn't know. "She gave all that she had. Others gave lots, but still had even more than that left over for themselves and their families. She doesn't have anything else. That woman gave everything she had to God." She also was honored and made a good example of. Whoever reads the Bible hears about her. And do you think she went away without getting what she needed? When you love Me and share all that you can, you become a close friend to Me, and like a loving Father, God makes sure you have all that you need.

Those two coins she shared weren't the only ones she ever gave. She often tried to give, not just money, but in many ways to others. She lived and demonstrated her belief in God and in His Word by doing what she knew was pleasing to Him. When you give love, it comes back to you. It's a supernatural, amazing thing that occurs, when I do some amazing things for you, in return, when you give and share because of your love for Me, and in obedience to Me.

It's not that I need money, and want to take things away from you. In fact I am more eager to give to you, than you are to receive nice things! When you give to others, giving to those I want you to, it shows you have faith and love. Those are two very important things to have. You have faith that I will take care of you—and that makes Me want to do just that! I then take care of you better than you could have, if you had kept everything to yourself. You show love for Me, as well as for others, and that is what I am all about—love.

Great rewards will be given to those who have shown love while on Earth. Aren't those two qualities what makes friendships strong?—Love and trust? Be My friend, and demonstrate those qualities by sharing and giving to those I want you to.—In your house today, when you go out, when you are young, when you are grown, when you travel. Just look for opportunities to give and share—and you will see all that you gave away coming back to you many times over, in wonderful ways.

It's easy to criticize the way people express their love to Me, the Lord, if it's not just the way you think it should be done—such as with the perfume or the coins. It's easy, and the human thing to do to just look at what people are doing or what they look like. Our loving Father, however, sees the heart, and appreciates and rewards those gifts that come from the heart, out of true love for Him.

If you see someone praising or worshiping Me, or serving Me and telling others about Me, Jesus, in a new way that you have never thought of before, instead of thinking it's wrong or odd, and a bit too different, stop and think for a moment. Is there a way you can show your praise and love, from your heart, that will really please Me? Are you giving what you can to help others come to know about salvation?

That's all that really matters—if your heart loves Me, and you show it to Me in all the ways you can, and serve and follow Me as best as you, personally, can. The world and all that is in it will eventually pass away and change, but the God who made you and made each one in it will still be around. Make God happy most of all, and "Great will be your reward in Heaven."

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## Important Things

It was the custom to be very welcoming to guests, as well as for the women to prepare the food and serve. A family that I was always welcome to visit were some good friends of Mine in a place called “Bethany.” They were always very eager to hear My words, to talk with Me, and loved the times I could visit.

My main reason for visiting was to talk with them, to answer their questions and to get to know them better too. Through My times of individual ministering and communicating I got to know what people felt, what made them sad, what was special, what was difficult, what it was like to live on Earth. I also had special insight into people’s hearts and minds, so I didn’t only have to learn from talking. I could look at someone and instantly know what their heart was feeling.

One time as I was visiting this family of two sisters and a brother—Mary, Martha and Lazarus—Martha wanted to show her love and care for Me and My disciples by trying to make things as nice as she could. There was water to draw from the well, food to prepare and serve, hands and feet to be washed, coats to set aside, and so forth.

Her sister Mary got so enthralled and interested in talking with Me and hearing all that I had to say she simply sat down and listened, drinking in all that I was saying. I really wasn’t there for any other reason—besides friendship. I was there to spend time with them and to talk with them. I wasn’t there to just get fed and cared for and have people wait on Me like waiters and waitresses in a restaurant.

Finally, flustered and upset, with all that there was to do to make things as nice and hospitable as possible, and being the only one left to do it all, Martha begged Me to tell her sister Mary to do her job. She was meant to be helping, or so Martha thought. That was the custom, and when you have guests, of course you are to make them comfortable and cared for. It was true. However, I wasn’t just any guest, was I? And I wasn’t going to be on Earth in human form, for too much longer.

This was a time when it would have been best to forget the work for a while, and just sit and enjoy being with Me. Mary was doing that, and I wished for her sister to join us. So rather than telling Mary to get up and get working and serving, I told Martha that this was the best thing she could be doing. If Martha were to come and sit with Me and listen to My words, this would have been the best thing she could do. I really didn’t mind not having everything perfect for Me—but I did really want to talk with them, to encourage them, to tell them about Heaven, and about My and My Father’s great love for them. They had so many questions, and things were pretty tough on Earth.

It’s not enough to do nice things for God, just like it wasn’t enough to just do nice things for Me while I was on Earth. I want your time, your love, your mind, your heart. When I was asked by people what was the greatest rule to obey, I would say, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.” (Matthew 22:37,38) And loving others is the second most

important thing.

So, Mary choosing to spend that time with Me, to hear what I had to say, was doing the best. It was taking time to love Me with her heart and mind and soul. There will always be plenty of work to do, and lots of people to help, and there will never be enough time to do it all. Taking time to talk with Me and hear My words will be like getting your car filled with fuel, or eating a nice meal, it will energize you to then be able to do the work, the jobs, and to help others in the best ways.

There are always going to be choices to make—every day, every minute of your life. Will you choose to spend at least a little while talking and listening to Me today? It will make Me so happy, and will be like water to the garden of your life. Good things will come from it. You will be like a tree that has been well watered and can bear lots of yummy fruit.

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### **Marvellous Moments on a Mountain**

I wanted to do something special for those who were the closest to Me, and who I knew would need lots of faith-building experiences, to be able to be strong witnesses for Me. I wasn't going to be with them, as an Earthly human, for very much longer. We needed some time away to talk and pray and rest and be refreshed. We needed to be alone from the many multitudes for a bit, and so we hiked up mountain.

Have you ever seen snow? It's about the whitest thing known to people on Earth. Often there are pictures of Me drawn wearing white clothes. However, clothes on Earth were rarely made of pure white cloth, or rarely could stay white for very long, but soon became dusty and dirty.

There was one time where I appeared very differently, from the normal human way I usually looked. The Bible says I was "transfigured". During this time away on the mountain with Peter, James and John, something that really amazed them occurred. I was lit up with the light and radiance of Heaven. My clothes looked whiter than snow, and My appearance was bright, shining and radiant. They saw Me also talking with two men—Moses and Elijah. Both were visitors from Heaven.

The disciples were very glad to have seen such a special display, that not everyone got to see yet. It gave them more faith and reassurance in Me, as God's Son, as the Messiah come from God to Earth—something they were going to need in the years that followed, where I was taken from them, and it was going to be their turn to go and teach and preach the Good News that I had come to bring.

Peter got all excited about seeing such Heavenly splendour, and he suggested that they build some "tabernacles" or places of worship, right there on the mountain, to remember and honour that wonderful event, and the important Heavenly visitors as well. God however had a something to say. There was a different reason for them being allowed to see the supernatural vision that they did.



A mysterious cloud came over the area where they were all sitting and watching in amazement as I was there with Moses and Elijah, appearing more brilliant and glowing than they'd ever seen before. A booming voice then came from this cloud, and the disciples fell on their faces, very afraid. It was My Father in Heaven speaking to them. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

God was announcing what was truly important, and the whole reason they were allowed to see Me in a more Heavenly appearance. He was proving to them that I was the Son of God, loved by Him, doing His will. And the most important thing they could do to truly honour Me, was not to make a monument, or tabernacle, or place of worship in this special location—but simply to listen to My Words, God's Words that I came to tell them. They were to pay close attention to anything I said. I can pass on the thoughts and feelings and messages from God, the Father, to you. I'm the way He can talk to you. I'm His message delivery service—the "Word of God made flesh", as John later wrote in his book. (John 1:14)

They wouldn't have to be here on this mountain to do it, nor do you have to be anywhere special to read and listen to My words. It can be done anywhere and anytime—and it should be. As king David said, he liked to think about, or meditate on God's Words day and night. (Psalms 1:2; 119:148)

Peter learned from this experience and message from God about listening to My words, and wrote about it in his book too. He said that hearing My words—the words God wants to pass on to you—through prophecy, through the words and thoughts coming into your heart and mind directly from Heaven—is like having a light to make your way clear in the darkness. It's better even than just hearing the booming voice of God out of a cloud, like they did. He said to "take heed" to the voice of God, through the messages that I, Jesus, will pass on to you, through prophecy, if you want to do well. It will make things go so much better for you. (2 Peter 1:16b-19)

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### Hosanna

Do you like parties, and parades and celebrations? Well, there was one big and noisy praise party going on, one weekend, when it was nearly My time to leave—to die and to be resurrected alive forever. People had heard about some pretty amazing miracles—like when Lazarus was raised. News had spread quickly, and many people chose to believe that I was their Saviour, the Messiah, who had at last come.

"Go to the city, and you'll find a donkey and colt tied. Please bring them to Me," I instructed My disciples. "And if anyone asks what you are doing, tell them 'the Lord needs it', and they'll let you use it." The two disciples that I sent to do the job found out, that it happened just as I had told them. They returned to Me with the donkey and its colt, and placed some garments, or cloth and coats on its back to make it a more gentle ride.

This was to be the vehicle that I took to enter into Jerusalem at this special time. I didn't have a limousine, or fancy convertible car, or even horse and carriage. It was a pretty humble way to travel, and slow too. Did you know, though, that this event had been spoken

of by prophets many years before, telling that this would happen? So the time had at last come, and I was fulfilling those prophecies from long before.

**[Zechariah.9:9** Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.]

There were countless messages given in prophecy about My time on Earth, and what would happen. God gave people clues when He spoke to the prophets of old, and it was written down for people to read and to know. This was one of the events that had been foretold. See, the most important thing to do with your own special life there on Earth isn't what looks the most admired or praised, or comfortable, or fancy—but just what God wants you to do. Even if it's as humble as riding on a young donkey!

I started My life on Earth in a very humble way, born in a stable to poor parents. And I was still doing humble things. I didn't come to Earth to boost up My pride and inspire millions of fans to think I was great and that they weren't as good as Me. I came to Earth to show love, to show that I knew what it was like to live on Earth, that I was relatable, within reach, that I was there to be a friend, and would serve and give—until I gave all I could, to bring you all eternal life.

There were so many people who wanted to join in the parade. They shouted, they praised God, they yelled and cheered, they sang, and waved palm branches and placed them on the road for Me and My animal transportation to walk on. People even put their coats on the road to make it extra soft and fancy. Even having a donkey walk on their clothes seemed special to them—if I was the one riding on it!

I and the big team of followers at last reached Jerusalem. Some people there were excited and wanted to join in the fun and shout along with the children and others, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Hosanna in the highest!" There were some however, who weren't all that thrilled about all the attention that I was getting. It just made them upset. They wanted things to just be calm and under their control, and they didn't believe—or didn't want to believe—that I was their Saviour.

It would have been nicer, they thought, if I had been born in a king's palace, and had taken over the ruling their country, stopping all who caused them problems. They would have liked to have Me only telling them good things about themselves, saying how wonderful they were, making them be held up as an example of greatness—even though they knew in their hearts they had made many wrong choices. They just wanted to be well thought of.

That wasn't God's plan, however. I was to come to Earth in humility, be born poor, suffer difficulties, teach people about God and His love, and tell the truth to people, showing the way to Heaven.

Those who tried to stop Me weren't doing things right, as God wanted them to. Their hearts were filled with pride most of the time, and it was showing people the wrong way to be. I came to make things clear, giving a living example of what God is like, and how He loves everyone. I mingled with the poor, the sinners, those considered low in society. I talked with them to help bring them the light of God, to help them turn to Him. And many did!

It was those who thought they were so right, that were actually getting it wrong. Doing things perfectly doesn't make God love you more or make you get to Heaven faster. All have sinned, and all need His forgiveness, and the only way to get permission and forgiveness is to ask Him for it, and to receive Me, and believe in My gift of love and salvation for you. – The reason I came to Earth.

People came to be healed, and I healed them, and encouraged them. I told stories and parables to those asking Me questions. I was very busy that day helping and teaching. It was a loud and active day. There was so much commotion going on, that those in charge of the temple asked if I could make the people be quiet and stop all this celebrating and praising. But it was God's will for it to happen, and I came to fulfil just that. I wouldn't make anyone stop, since that's what was meant to happen.

It wasn't just Me, as a person, that they were praising, but they were praising God for fulfilling His promise to bring Me, God's gift of love, into the world. It was like a salvation celebration—shortly before I finished fulfilling the rest of the prophecies, and gave My life to bring eternal life to those who wanted to be with Me in Heaven forever.

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### **Love and Humility**

My last meal on Earth together with my twelve close disciples was held at the time of year when the "Passover" was kept. It was a time of year to remember God's care and deliverance and protection when the Children of Israel were leaving Egypt long ago.

We didn't have a big home to live in, and were often traveling around. So we lived knowing My Heavenly Father's day-by-day provision and supply. For the special meal together we needed to have a place that was quiet and cosy, but would fit us all; somewhere private in order to not be disturbed. We needed to spend quality time together, talking and praying, and enjoying each other's company. It was to be My last meal together with them. This made it an important occasion.

I told Peter and John to prepare things for the meal. "Where are we going to eat?" they asked. I answered, already knowing the place My Father had showed Me. "Go into the city and you'll meet a man carrying a pitcher of water. Follow him to the house he's going to. Then ask the master of the house where the guest chamber is, for us to eat our Passover meal together. He'll then show you a large upper room, furnished."

This was the place Peter and John were to get set up and make things ready in. It happened just as I had said, and the room was prepared. We all sat down to eat and talk. It was a solemn occasion, and we talked about important things.

For years I had been talking and instructing, demonstrating and setting an example for My disciples to follow. They were going to need to carry on the work of spreading the good news of Salvation to the whole world. It wasn't going to be easy, and they needed to be off to a good start, and begin showing others how to truly follow in My ways. They needed to

set the pace and be an example to the many who were going to believe in Me and follow Me, helping to also spread God's Word.

This was My chance to pass on some very important principles to them, for them to follow. They were to launch out in fulltime service—with the Holy Spirit to guide them, rather than them seeing Me in person. Did I sit there and say, "I am the King, and the most important..." in a proud way? No. not at all. But I did show them what the most important thing to do was.

I took on the role of a servant, and did what a servant did. I put my long coat aside, took a towel, and brought a bowl of water in my hands. Then I went to the disciples, one by one, and washed each of their feet. Feet were very dirty then, only having sandals to walk along the dusty and dirty roads, where animals travelled as well. This made feet be in great need of washing.

When I came to Peter he was quite surprised. He felt too humbled to have Me, the King of the universe, wash his dirty feet. But I said if he wanted to be part of My team, then he needed to be humble and let Me wash him. So he did. It took humility for Me to do the dirty job that no king would ever think of doing, and it took humility for them to allow Me to wash them. It proved that they weren't perfect, they were soiled, and they needed Me to help them.

After I put my garments back on, and sat down I asked them if they knew what I was doing—why I had washed their feet. I was giving them the most important lesson to remember after I was gone. If they were to truly be great and to be like Me, and to set a Godly example, they were to serve one another, help each other, care for each other. I was saying that love and humility were the most important things to have, to be a true disciple and for them to all be successful in reaching the world with the message of My love and forgiveness.

Being thought of as important wasn't going to do any good, if they didn't have love and treat each other with respect, making others feel more important than they. To be like Me you need to be humble and help others. Even being willing to do jobs you don't like or are considered dirty. A servant just does what needs to be done. If you do that, and just obey Me today, doing what I want you to do, and are willing to help others out of love, treating them with kindness, then you will be truly great, and great rewards will be yours.

If you go through the difficult times now, trying to follow Me and doing the things that aren't easy, then you too will rule and reign with Me in the next life, when Heaven is in charge and God is obeyed as King of all. Don't worry if you aren't well thought of now by those who don't know Me or don't have Me in their heart. One day you'll be treated as the truly important person you are—because you did the humble jobs, and gave love, and told others about Me, as I asked you to.

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**In Remembrance of Him**

During My last and special meal with My disciples, I showed them a simple skit or ceremony--something to help them remember My love and gift of salvation. It was something that they could do again and again, even when I wasn't with them, visibly, in person. It would be their way of showing appreciation for My gift of love and life for all, and a way to bring unity and strength to them, as the team of disciples.

I didn't require them to do anything fancy or that took a lot of time. I just demonstrated something that was simple and easy to do, and didn't take lots of money or anything else than what people often have on hand—a bit of food. On our table we had bread and wine. Those worked as a good object lesson. If you don't have those on your table, you can choose something similar or just what is available to you. Just because you don't have exactly what we had on hand, or if you can't eat them for some reason, then that doesn't mean you can't remember Me and My salvation in this way. Everyone who loves and believes in Me can follow My example.

I took a piece of bread and prayed, then broke it so that all there would get to have a bite of it. "This is like Me. I will go through some very difficult things, and give My life for you. Just like this bread is broken, so will I be hurt and give My life. But also, just like the whole loaf of bread is made up of lots of little pieces, so are you, all My disciples one whole team, as one with Me." It can help remind you all that each one that believes in Me is part of this one big team—like the one loaf of bread. I want you to love one another and live and work in unity one with another.

I gave healing to others, and I can give it to you, too, today. While you partake of the bread in this demonstration, or "communion" as some call it, you can claim and pray for My healing power to heal you also. Just like the loaf is whole, I can make you whole and healed, as you pray. I suffered for your sins, so you can claim forgiveness and healing as part of My gift of love to you. Sickness is often part of the consequence of sin, so through receiving forgiveness you can also be granted the right to healing.

Of course you'll never be completely healed of each and everything that troubles you on Earth, as that is what will happen when you receive your new body that will live forever. But I can give healing and relief to help you carry on and be My witnesses there on Earth.

For the next part of the special salvation demonstration at that last supper with My close companions and fellow labourers, I then took some wine. You can use whatever drink you have available or is appropriate for you. After I blessed it and prayed, I passed it out, instructing each one to have a sip from the large cup of wine. "This is the New Testament" I said, the new beginning, the new commandments, the new life. Giving My life for your salvation was the end of the old way and the beginning of the new. The wine celebrates salvation, Heaven and all the joys that will be yours, and Mine. Rejoice and be glad for all that is to come, and thank Me for all that it cost Me to bring it to you through being willing to tell others about Me.

I brought forgiveness to you, and I want you also to freely forgive others for the things they do that hurt or make you or those you love, sad. As you drink the wine, or whatever your drink is to remember Me by, you can pray for Me to forgive you for the things you have

done wrong lately, things that have made Me and others sad. I gave forgiveness to all mankind through My gift of salvation, but it's also good to regularly talk with Me and ask for Me to make things right in your heart, to clean your heart of sin.

I didn't take all sin out of the world or out of people's hearts. Through My gift of love I made it possible for you be allowed to live forever. It's good however to pray regularly for Me to forgive the things you have done, and to make your heart clean again. You are saved forever, once you ask Me to come into your heart and life. That gift of eternal life is yours, permanently. Making mistakes and sinning again won't take away My gift to you. You will always be making mistakes and doing wrong things your whole life. That's just human nature. And you can be assured that nothing you do will separated you from Me or from the gift of salvation that is yours. But I do say in My Word to "confess your faults...and pray for one another, that ye may be healed." (James 5:16)

So this time in prayer to humble yourself before Me, to admit that you've made mistakes, that you need Me and My forgiveness brings us closer together and helps you to have more of My spirit to give you the strength to try and do better, to live more like Me. And when you are sorry for what you have done, and I forgive you, I can help to take away some of the difficulties of the natural consequences of your failings. –Sickness, hurts, loss, disunity with others, and so forth.

It's a good time to ask others to forgive you, as well as to forgive them for what they might have done that calls for your forgiveness. To hold on to the anger and hard feelings towards others soils your heart, and hinders you from feeling My full joy of salvation. I want you to be filled with the "joy of the Lord". As you grant others forgiveness, and likewise receive Mine, then you can be like a cup that is filled to the full—you'll be like it says in Psalm 23 "My cup runneth over." You'll be bubbling over with blessings, and My Spirit.

After this time of commemorating My gift of salvation, and partaking of the bread and wine in this way, and talking together, it was time to leave the upper room. We weren't going to stay the night there. We took a walk out to a garden, a pretty and quiet place where we often went.

My disciples then settled for the night on the grass, under the stars. I chose a few to come with Me a bit away from the others. I needed some time in desperate prayer, alone. I was wishing that these few that I chose would be able to stay awake and pray as well, with Me not too far from them. It was the last bit of time with them, before I was to be taken from the world, in the way I had been with them so far. I needed the strength and support. But their eyes were just too tired.

I felt alone, and poured out My heart in fervent prayer. When I thought about those who didn't love and receive Me it made My heart hurt so much. I came to Earth to give love and forgiveness to each one—even those who chose not to believe and receive My love. I wanted everyone to know that I loved them.

It would have been nice if I wouldn't have to go through the hard time, as it made Me and My Father so sad. The sins of mankind however made Me need to take the punishment for everyone. That was the only way to grant each one life eternal and forgiveness for all.

Then as I prayed for My Heavenly Father's will to be done, for Me to do whatever was best, and to have the courage and strength to do it, a beautiful angel came to nourish Me and comfort Me. I was determined to finish the job that I came to Earth to do. I wouldn't give up. I could have said, "That's enough" and many, many angels could have come and taken Me back right then to Heaven. But then I would be lonely and even sadder. Because you, My dear children, and all people on Earth, wouldn't be able to join Me. I could set out a party, but who would be the guests? I could have the best music playing, but who would there be to join in and dance? I could make the fanciest mansions, but who would live there for Me to visit?

I chose to forgive you, and to take on Me the punishment that separated you from living life eternally. That is what would truly make Me the happiest. When it was done, and I saw My Father again, He was crying, He was so so glad that I had showed His love in the greatest way possible. His heart of love isn't happy and fulfilled unless it can show love to each one. He loves each one of His creations, each person alive on Earth this very second. No one goes unnoticed or unloved. I gave Him the biggest gift possible—to be able to love and be close to you, and all on Earth that chooses His way. I made a doorway for you all to come to Heaven.

My Father loves Me so much, and it was so hard for Him to see the pain that I had to go through in order to win you and give you salvation and eternal life. —The cost of sin, the consequences of mankind's wrong doings. But it hurt His heart just as much to think of you not being with Him and being far away from Him, not able to know how much He loved you.

My Father loves you just as much as Me, and wanted you to be His sons and daughters in Heaven too, as part of our big family. It was worth it to go through the pain, the sorrow, the heartache and the loneliness, because the joy that is ours in the end—the joy of having you, together with us forever, is worth it all. Your love in return is the best reward ever.

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### **Jesus' Gift of Love and Life**

I want to tell you a story, a story of love, one that will warm your hearts and help to take away the tears your heart cries. I too, know what it means to feel separated from the friendship of others, to feel rejected, to feel all the good that you've tried to do didn't work out as you so wished it would. I know what it is like to cry the whole night long, wishing that those you loved would understand how much you cared about them. I know what it feels like to give up the things that mean the most to you in the whole world. I know what it means to be hurt, to be wounded, to be harmed, and to be sad, really sad.

So I know what it means to be going through hard times, real troublesome times. I know what it's like to have your closest friends leave your side, or have those you thought

would be there to help you, to instead be making things really tough for you. I know what it feels like to hurt inside, to really ache, and to wish so much for all things to be at last peaceful and wonderful.

There's nothing that you've been through that I can't understand what it feels like. There is so much wrong in this world, and although I came to Earth long ago and came to bring My love and truth to all, not everyone has taken My message in the right way. Some who say they know Me, instead have used their knowledge of My visit to Earth to exercise their power and authority over others, and to harm many. Then there are others who have never heard about Me or My gift of love and salvation, and lead many others down the wrong paths, thinking salvation and forgiveness or atonement for sin comes some other way, through something a human can do for themselves.

There are so many that cause hurt because of pride or greed or anger or just plain foolishness, or not knowing the truth and being led by their own crazy or harmful ideas. So much of humanity is aching to know the real Me, the real Jesus, what I really stand for, what I really am, and what I came to offer to all those in the world.

If you have had a difficult go of things, and are in need of healing, in body or mind or spirit—healing in anyway—come to Me. Talk with Me. Believe Me when I say I know what you are feeling, and I truly do care. I might not be able to make everything in your life be all of a sudden the perfect way you would like it to be in this instant, because the time for that will come a bit later on, when I'll make things right for everyone at a last.

I'm right here, closer to you than you've ever imagined, and will comfort you, encourage you, and shelter you through the many storms of life. I will be your protector and provide for you all throughout your life, in the ways I know will be best.

All the difficult things that I experienced on Earth and what took place in My final days on Earth as a man, in human form, won't be all said here and now. In time you'll get to know more about what happened to Me as a result of some people's lack of belief in Me, and their rejection of Me as their Saviour. Some of it is written in the full Bible, and other things you'll get to know when you come here to be with Me in Heaven.

For now I want to tell you a parable, something that helps to describe to you why I came to Earth, and what I came to do for you. This story may help to give you more of an idea, or help to explain it in a way I hope you'll understand. Imagine this story as I tell it, and then let me describe things afterwards. I love you, My dear children.

A rich, powerful and very kind father, had many children and he loved each one so very much. They lived in a big and beautiful palace. However, there was a problem. Some of His children had gone out where He told them not to go. There was a sign over a certain door that said, "Do not go this way or you will be lost and unable to find your way back again. This door cannot be come back through again, for this palace is only for those who live here and do what the father says to do. Those who go out into the wasteland will not be fit to be here with us. Your life will eventually end, and you will not live forever here with us anymore."



The children, curious about what was out that door, went out anyway. Then it became dark all around them and the way uncertain, and they got lost immediately, unable to return to their father's house. Some had fallen down into ditches, and off steep edges, some were stranded in desert places without nourishment. Some were sure they knew the way back to their father's house and got many others to follow them, but they were only going around in circles and tiring themselves out, getting nowhere near to home again.

Some gave up trying to get home, and just decided to stay camped out in the rough jungle areas, though it was tough and many dangers were around them. Some tried to make themselves feel less lost and sad by telling themselves and others, that there wasn't even a home they belonged to, that it was just a made-up idea, that there wasn't anywhere they really belonged, and they had no father. That didn't help them feel better, but seemed easier than to admit they were wrong and needed the father's help.

The father sent a very special messenger, with a map to give to each lost one he found. He was sent out to find each one that had wandered off and made the wrong choices. The message he came to bring was to let the children know that the father had decided to forgive his wayward children, and make a special door in his palace that those who had gone the wrong way, could have a chance to return again, if they chose to. The only way to that special door way was through believing what the messenger said from their father, and following the map and instructions that were given.

Many were so glad at the chance to return, and were so happy to know that their father forgave them for being so naughty. They knew that their father loved them, when they heard he was giving them a second chance and a way to return.

Some were too proud to accept the gift of the map and the offer of a way to return, that they instead grabbed the messenger, and said, "We know what we are doing. We don't need you or anyone else telling us where to go. We can find our own way back. The father will let us come in to the palace when he sees us. We're smart and will find our own way back, and we're sure the doors will be opened to us again. We don't need you to tell us what to do!"

They didn't want him to continue on his journey either. The father knew what was happening, and rescued his special messenger. When those who weren't accepting the words of the messenger, and who tried to put an end to his mission woke up the next morning, to their surprise the messenger was gone from them! He had been instantly taken back to the palace.

"You've done well" the father told his messenger. "And because you have not only given my message to my lost children, but you suffered great difficulty from those who tried to stop you, you will be rewarded in many ways. You are given the permission to take down the old sign on the door that leads to the wrong paths. Rather than no one being allowed to return through it, it will have a new sign, one that says, 'I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the father, but by me.'"

“Because you have gone to the wastelands to give to others the way back to the palace, you can now be in charge of the doorway. Whoever you allow to come in, will be allowed in. You have left the map with many, if they make sure to tell others they meet about the way back, then they will all arrive here eventually. Whoever you allow to come through the door can come back in.”

So it began to happen, one by one, or sometimes in groups, the once-lost children began to find their way home again. The father was so very glad to have them home once again. They would never be lost again. The old door to the wrong way had been transformed, and was a beautiful doorway, lit with the light that the father and the messenger shone with. Even from far away some people could see the light and it attracted them to come nearer, and they too were safely back again.

After a while, the children of the palace, those who have found their way back and were given permission by the messenger to enter the father’s house again, will have a new and special job, helping their father to make all the surrounding country side a better and wonderful place to be.

And what of those that chose to not listen, and didn’t want the messenger or the message being around them? Well, the door is open to them too, if and when they choose to put aside their pride, admit they were wrong and ask for forgiveness. If they tell the doorkeeper they are sorry, and they believe that he really was sent from their father, they will be allowed to come in as well.

Will all the children make it home again? If those who received the map and instructions from the messenger when he was there with them will pass it on to as many as they can, and those people will tell others, then eventually all will get a chance to know the way back.

This story gives you an idea of why I came to Earth in the first place. Can you guess who each one in the story actually is? I’m sure you guessed that I, Jesus, am the messenger, and the father is God in Heaven. Through sin, those on Earth have lost their way and couldn’t be permitted to live on forever in Heaven. I came to Earth to show the way of Salvation, to bring forgiveness to all who believed in Me.

Not everyone accepted what I had to say, and some tried to put an end to the message that I was trying to give, through stopping Me from being on Earth, as a human. But even that was part of the plan. Because I was special, God gave Me permission to take the punishment for each one who had gone astray, out of the door to sin, and I did that through giving my life on Earth. I took the consequence for leaving through the doorway to sin, for everyone.

Now everyone would be allowed back in to God the Father’s house who believed that I took the punishment for sin, and who asked to be forgiven and allowed to come back in. I am the way now back to the Father’s house, back to Heaven.

So though my final days on Earth were very difficult, I willingly went through all that, in order to gain you, as My friends. Through belief in Me you are now able to live forever with Me in Heaven—your punishment taken for you, and forgiveness granted. Since I love you so much, it was worth it to Me. I'll be happy forever to have you as part of My Heavenly family.

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### **Jesus is Risen—He Lives Forever!**

“He’s alive!”

“We saw angels!”

“I saw Jesus!”

These were some of the joyful words that a team of women were telling some very sad disciples. My close team of followers, and many many others, had seen Me die, and be buried in a rock tomb. A rich man called Joseph of Arimathaea had given his own tomb for Me to be placed in it. The women had gone to this place where I was buried, first thing in the morning, on the first day of the week. The women went to the place carrying special spices that were to be used when someone had passed away.

“How are we going to roll away the stone?” they wondered. But they didn’t have to worry about that. Angels took care of it, and after rolling it away sat there, ready to talk and tell the women that I wouldn’t be found there. That was no place for Me, as I was alive! I had risen to life!

The angels instructed the women to tell the others the great news! Joyfully they ran quickly to do just as the angels had said. They were so excited and happy. Such news was sure to cheer everyone up they thought. However, to My dismay, not everyone believed what the women had to say. If they had, it would have lifted their sorrow, and turned it into wonderful joy.

Peter and John made a dash for it, running to go and check things out. If I was gone, and no longer in the place I was lain, then what was going on? If I was now alive and around, they were very eager to see Me. John was faster on his feet, and made it to place first, but Peter was braver and went right in to the tomb where I had been placed. John then followed. They found only the cloth pieces that had been wrapped on Me when I was placed there. But I was nowhere to be seen. Could it be true? Was I alive and around, or had I just been moved somewhere else?

I didn’t show up just yet, except to Mary Magdalene, who had been weeping so much. She’d looked into the stone tomb, and to her surprised found I was gone, and instead there were two angels there talking to her! When she turned around she spoke to the man who she saw nearby, thinking he was the gardener. He’d asked her why she was crying. “If you have taken away my Lord, please tell me where He is...” Mary said to this man beside her, still trying to understand or believe that I was alive and well!

“Mary!” I said to her. It wasn’t a gardener after all. It was Me who was standing right there, beside her. Mary was so very thrilled! I was there! She got to see Me again. Words could not describe how happy she was at that moment. She loved Me so much, and it had been the hardest thing for her to have Me gone for that time when I gave My life for the sins of all.

I told her I would be back, but I needed to go and see My Father first. I had been away for a long time—while on My mission to Earth, and I even went to a place inside the Earth while My body lay in that stone grave. I went there to tell the good news to the souls of people who had long ago passed away, to see who would believe and be allowed to come to Heaven. Now it was time to go for a bit to see My Father in Heaven. But I would visit again, and all My disciples would get to see Me with their own eyes, real soon.

Mary tried to tell My close friends and followers about her encounter with Me, but they didn’t really believe it was possible. I wanted them to be encouraged, and to have faith. This was hard for Me—to see them so sad, missing Me, thinking that I wouldn’t be there again—when I was alive and around and knew what they were doing and thinking and saying! Even though they couldn’t see Me just yet, I could see and hear them, and I knew what was going on.

What great joy they had when at last I popped in for a surprise visit! I didn’t need to use the door. I could be anywhere, anytime I wanted to! I was alive, and would be forever. I live to give love. I gave My life for love. I want to live together with you, because I love you! I want to help you to know and to show My love to others.

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### **Walking and Talking**

I like to surprise people, in good ways, to cheer them up. One of the first times that I appeared to some of My followers after rising again from the dead, was as a friend, or rather as a stranger, someone they didn’t know. I saw two of My followers—named Cleopas and Simon—walking down the road. They couldn’t see Me, and thought that I just wasn’t around. Little did they know that I knew where they were, and just what they were talking about.

I chose to appear and talk with those two men—without them realizing that it was Me, Jesus. I decided to walk with them and join in their conversation—but in disguise at first. I wanted to hear them talk to Me from their heart, to express what they were feeling, and then I could comfort them with scriptures.

I saw that the main reason for their sadness was their lack of belief. I told them I would rise again, and the scriptures and prophecies of old explained it too. But they needed a reminder. Sometimes when something real difficult happens, or you lose someone or something special to you, it’s easy to forget all the promises in God’s Word that would help to give you faith and courage. So they had forgotten about the promised good things, and were feeling pretty low.

When you are real discouraged, you can be sure that I am there with you—even if you can't see Me. I know what you feel and think, and I want to be a friend and to remind you of some important things that you have forgotten. I want to cheer you up and encourage you.

So as we were talking they went to go have a meal, and invited Me along. Then I chose to surprise them and show them who it really was they were talking with. As I held the bread and blessed it and break it and gave it to them, all of a sudden they realized who I was! They were taken by surprise. It wasn't what they expected at all—but it was so wonderful! I then vanished, leaving them to discuss this amazing encounter, and to run back and tell the others what had just happened. They couldn't contain their joy, and just stay there the night. Those two men walked all the way back, and found the others together and told them the story.

As they were talking about it and explaining it, then I chose to appear in the room for all to see Me. "Peace be unto you" I said.

At first the disciples were afraid to all of a sudden see someone appear without coming through the door. But I told them to not worry, that it was Me, Jesus. And to help them relax even more and feel at ease, I asked them if they had any food there. Some fish and honeycomb was given to Me, and I ate it then for all to see. I was Jesus, just with a new Heavenly body, who could do some amazing things.

One day you may get to do some of those things too. Would you like that? Would it be fun for you to get to appear in a room, just all of a sudden? Or be able to instantly vanish, and disappear from people's sight? Or to be disguised and talk with people without them knowing it was you?—And still be able to eat and enjoy the things that you can do now? Well, there's lots of fun things coming—after a while yet. Keep being faithful to Me, and doing as My disciples did, following Me and helping others to come to know Me as well, and even more amazing things than that will be possible to you.

And if things get tough or difficult for you at times, also remember that I can see and hear and know all that is going on. Just like I knew right where everyone was gathered together, or right where those other two disciples were walking, I know right where you are, right this minute. Just because I don't usually choose to appear on Earth in bodily form, and it takes more faith to believe when you can't see Me yet, keep trusting and know that I am near to you, I am with You, and know all that you feel and think. One day you will get to see Me and talk with Me and hear Me talking with you, just like you've always wanted to.

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### **Breakfast on the Beach**

Have you ever had something that was promised to you, but you had to wait for it? Perhaps you had tickets to a show, or a gift was promised for your birthday. Or maybe a relative or friend said they would visit later on in the year. When you knew it would happen, and were looking forward to it, that is having faith. It didn't happen yet, but you were sure that it would, because you trusted the one who told you about it.

When I rose again, bringing salvation and forgiveness to all, not everyone saw Me at that very moment. I had lots to do, and many people to encourage, as well as My Father to visit, and a host of angels to meet with. There was something pretty exciting and big that we needed to prepare for. Do you know what it was? There was soon to be an explosion of “going into all the world and preaching the Gospel”. I could see My beloved close followers, hear them, know their thoughts. I was focused on their needs, and helping to prepare things for the next part of their lives—bringing the news of My love all over the place.

Just because My disciples didn’t see Me right away, or every minute of every day after I came to life again, wasn’t because I was just off partying or forgetting about the world—or worse yet, that I wasn’t even alive at all, like some were starting to think.

Some started to worry, “He said He would rise on the third day, and it’s already the afternoon of the third day and we haven’t seen Him yet... maybe we never ever will...” Oh, dear! It made Me so sad to see the disciples doubting and in despair.

Has that ever happened to you? You are looking forward to something special happening, and then it seems like it won’t work out, and you start to fret, thinking your hopes are lost—and then when you least expect it, did you see it worked out for good after all?

When I appeared to Mary Magdalene in the garden, she believed and knew it was Me. But when she and the others tried to tell the good news of My resurrection to the other disciples, they didn’t believe it. They wanted to see proof of it right in front of their eyes.

Do you know why I loved and blessed Abraham so much? It was because of His faith to believe and obey, even though he never got to see, with his own eyes, most of the things I promised to Him. I loved the faith he showed anyway, by doing what I told him to do, and believing that all things would work out for good in the end.

When I finally did appear to all the disciples and they got to see Me in front of them, they finally realized that it all was true. Thomas, My faithful disciple, wasn’t there at the time, and he had the same reaction that some of the others had too, at first. He wanted to see Me and know for sure that it was actually Me, standing there, alive and well, risen and resurrected, before he would believe. No matter what the others said to try to convince him, he felt he just had to have it by sight—rather than trusting and believing by faith alone.

It was about a week later when I chose to show Myself again, in front of them all—and this time Thomas was there. I not only surprised them by dropping by for a sudden visit, appearing to them, but the fact that I knew what they had said and talked about, and that I knew exactly what Thomas had said about needing proof to believe, was pretty unexpected. I talked to Thomas and them all about the benefits of believing and having faith in God, even without seeing big proofs of what God says is true, right before your eyes all the time.

Having faith gives you joy, right? And having the opposite, having disbelief brings sorrow. When you know something that you like is going to happen, because someone you trust is telling the truth tells you about it, it’s exciting, it’s fun, it’s a thrill, it makes you happy. Sometimes even the feeling of looking forward to something can be nearly as fun as finally

doing it. Faith is like that—it is a gift of My spirit, and brings forth the fruit and result of more joy in your heart.

As one of My believers and followers you need to have faith for a lot of things. Have you been to heaven yet, and seen your lovely place being prepared for you? Most probably not. You can, however, know in your heart that such a place exists, as I said, “I go to prepare a place for you.” If you believe, even though you haven’t seen it yet, it will give you more joy and inspiration as you anticipate what awaits you for faithfully believing on Me, and doing what I want you to do while on Earth.

And a little secret—but you don’t have to keep it a secret: the more faith you have, the bigger will be your joy in the Heavenly life to come. So those who believe in Me—even though they have not seen Me, and those who ask Me to come into their heart and to be forgiven of their sins, even if they don’t see God coming to them and saying, “You are now My son or daughter”; and those who have faith to talk to Me and to pray, even if they don’t always see the answer to prayer right away, these people of faith please Me very much. –Just like Abraham and many many others did.

Seeing faith in the hearts of My followers makes Me so happy, as it means that you love Me, and I am able to do many wonderful things for you in return. Did you know that there were some places where I visited on Earth, but was unable to heal many people or do much good or show My miraculous power to help them—just because they didn’t believe in Me, and didn’t think it would happen? It was just their lack of faith that stopped God’s power from working in their lives. Sad, huh? Be a man or woman of faith, who knows I can and will do what needs to be done to protect and provide and to bring you at last to your Heavenly abode, to live with Me forever in paradise.

It was quite a change for My apostles to not have Me there with them all the time. It was their turn to reach the world with the message of My love. They needed all the help and encouragement they could get. One time during the weeks that followed My resurrection I chose to help supply their needs and encourage them in a way I knew they would really appreciate.

Peter and some others had gone fishing all night. They needed food and a way to get some support as well. They hadn’t yet blasted off to their fulltime ministry and witnessing, and finding out how, as they did, I would give them all they needed. So tired and spent from an all night fishing trip, cold and hungry they saw the sun rise. They felt so low, so discouraged, and didn’t know what they were supposed to do exactly. They needed encouragement and direction.

I built a fire on the beach, and cooked some fish and bread for them. Then I called out to them, asking if they had caught any fish in the night. They hadn’t. I told them to cast the fishing net on the right side of the boat. Thankfully they were willing to try one more time and obey this instruction. As soon as they did, they were flabbergasted! The net was instantly filled with tons of fish!

John, My dear disciple, knew instantly that it was Me, and told Peter, who promptly jumped into the water to get to Me as fast as he could. The boat was close to the beach, as they had just returned from their trip out. They hauled in the load of fish, and though it was real heavy, for some mysterious reason the net didn't break. That was another miracle for them, and showed My love and thoughtfulness.

I invited them to eat together with Me, while I talked to them more about their new ministry. To Peter I asked, "Do you love Me?" Of course he did. I told him then that if He did, to "feed My sheep" and to "feed My lambs". I said it three times. I wanted to make sure he'd never forget it. And he didn't. That was his job from Me—to give people God's Words, to take care of My followers, to make sure they knew the truth, and knew of My love. I wanted him to be as a shepherd, and really care for those who wanted to love and follow Me.

Because of his faithfulness to obey those words, and all the other disciples who went out as My witnesses, is one of the reasons why you, My sheep, My children, are here today. Will you help to feed and care for others who want to come to know Me and hear My words, who are hungry for the truth? "Feed My sheep", okay?

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### Clouds

My disciples, My followers had been prepared, and were now ready to take up the great and challenging task of beginning to tell the whole world about Me. It was an enormous job—and not something only they could do, on their own. So I had a plan. The only way for them to even have the boldness and strength and power to do it, was to have God's Spirit of love, the Holy Spirit, come and help them. I promised to them that they would get this power from Heaven. I told them to wait in Jerusalem until then.

At last it was my final day with them, before I disappeared from sight to work more from the realm of the spirit. We walked and talked till we got to a certain mountain spot. I told them to go and tell the world about Me—to "teach all nations". That's a pretty big job! I promised however that "I will be with you always." So with Me helping, strengthening and encouraging them, it would give them courage to do it, and to try their best.

I promised them that they would also receive special power from Heaven—God's Holy Spirit, assisting them, instructing them, empowering them, and comforting them in times of difficulty.

When I was ready, and the moment was right, to the astonishment of the disciples, I began to rise up from the place where I was standing. I rose higher and higher, till I reached the clouds and they could no longer see Me. I disappeared from their sight.

The disciples looked up for the longest time, but there appeared angels right where they were looking. This helped to encourage them. The angels said, "He'll be back! And the next time He comes, He'll be in the clouds!"



In the mean time they all had a big job to do, and needed to get busy. Their first instruction was to go to Jerusalem, and wait for Heaven's special power.

Rejoicing and praising God they went, eager and ready to obey all that I'd asked them to do. They knew I was the Christ, the Son of the living God! And My ascension into the clouds was another of My special signs to them, proving who I was. They were thrilled to be on My team, and to be called by God to spread the good news of My love and salvation to the world.

Are you? I'd be thrilled to have you on My team as well. This world needs all the help it can get. Then one day, to the surprise of most folks on Earth, I will make My appearance again. It's not that I'm gone, and don't see or know what is going on down on Earth. I am very actively involved and working steadily to bring as many into My Heavenly Kingdom as possible, even though I'm not usually seen with human eyes.

However, the world will one day see Me and know that I'm the King. I won't be born again as a baby, or be seen riding a donkey down on a dusty street. I will be seen in My glory and Heavenly power, and everyone will see Me when I come that time, at My second coming to Earth.

All who have believed and received Me will be very glad, as then instead of Me coming down to live as a man on Earth, in human form, you and all the believers will come up to Me, to live in Heaven, and have their body changed instantly into a Heavenly body, that can do those amazing things that I showed that I could do, when I was resurrected!

It won't be all that long now until the time is right for Me to show up again. But I want to give enough time so that all you, My present-day disciples, can tell as many as you can about Me, and the way to Heaven—and can teach those people to do the same. And then as many people as possible will be able to fly up to meet Me when it's time to come.

Will you do that for Me? It won't be long now. You'll be so glad you followed faithfully in My ways. I love you and will be with you always!

Story Time with Jesus 138-150\_text

**Story Time with Jesus**

**Bible Stories**

**Chapters 138-150**

- 138-The Power of the Spirit of God
- 139-Together
- 140-The Lame Man Walks
- 141-Power, Protection & Perseverance
- 142-Seven Wise Helpers
- 143-Philip's Amazing Trip
- 144-Saul is Stopped—Paul Preaches
- 145-Arise
- 146-Cornelius
- 147-Peter's Adventure
- 148-Paul's Adventures
- 149-Heaven
- 150-The Millennium

(Jesus speaking: )

### **The Power of the Spirit of God**

Can you put the power of lightning in a small cardboard box and keep it there? That gives a little idea of what it might be like if someone was silly enough to try to stop the power of God. He can do things a kazzillion times better and faster and more amazingly than any human could ever dream of doing on Earth. Sometimes God gives a bit of His powerful Spirit, His words, His thoughts, His strength, His ideas, His determination, His miraculous ways of doing things to those on Earth who need it and ask Him for it.

If someone has believed that I, Jesus, your Saviour and redeemer, have come to Earth, and that I am their ticket to Heaven; if they've let Me be a part of their life, and they love Me, then it's like opening the door to Heaven. Not only can they come here to live forever in the wonderful world of God's love, but some of Heaven can come through that door also into their lives, here and now.

When those who believed in Me were ready to do the massive job of starting to tell the whole world the good news that I had finally come to Earth, and was offering salvation and forgiveness to all who would accept Me, they needed a real boost to get it all started.

Ever seen a rocket taking off into space? How much of a powerful boost does it need to shoot it off high and fast? It's engine on its own can't lift itself, it needs special power. It takes more than just its own engine. There are booster rockets, and huge amounts of fuel in tanks. That's a bit how it was when My powerful spirit filled up My first team of followers.

These ready and willing followers of Mine had the job of not blasting up but out, all over the world, telling people the tremendous news that I had at last come to save them, and telling them about My love, and how to live happily and help others come to know Me too. I told

them where to go and what to do, to receive the very special gift that I had for them—A boost of power from the Spirit of God!

My instructions:

--The place to be: Jerusalem

--What to do: Wait

Then it happened one day—an amazing thing occurred while they were waiting at the place I told them to be in order to receive the powerful gift of My Spirit from Heaven. “What’s that sound?” they must have wondered, as they heard something that sounded like a mighty rushing wind, filling the whole house where they all were waiting. Next thing they noticed there was fire. No, the house wasn’t burning, but they were on-fire—in a way.

Remember Moses and the bush that had fire, a fire that was bright, but didn’t burn things? Well, some of that fiery part of God’s Spirit was seen on each one of them. They weren’t just looking at the light of God, and talking to Him, as Moses had done. They each had a bit of that spiritual fire on them and God’s Words were ready to burst out of their own mouths, to tell as many as they could the Good News they were commissioned to spread far and wide across the world.

Those that believed and did as I said to do, got this amazing spirit-charging, spirit empowering—better than the strongest battery in the world. Once they had been filled up with the very Spirit of God, they could literally do anything—anything I asked them to do. There was nothing that could stop them or hold them back. Not even the fact that the people they were to talk with spoke languages that my original followers had never learned. Was that a problem to God? Nope.

The many people visiting Jerusalem at that time needed to hear and know, right then, the Good News. They were visiting Jerusalem and would travel back to their home counties. If they had to wait to hear about Me, Jesus, till My disciples had learned to speak all their languages, they may have never had a chance to hear about Me. Think how wonderful it would be if all those who had travelled from far away, learned of Me, and then returned home to their country, spreading the Good News of My love and Salvation to those in their land!

So God’s unstoppable, wonderful, powerful Spirit of love did what was impossible, what was needed right then, to make it possible. Without learning any of the other languages, all of a sudden, each one of My followers could speak in all sorts of languages, just like that! There were so many people who wanted to hear what Peter and the others had to say about Me, and who decided to believe in My love and forgiveness! There were more than 3,000 just that one day who accepted My gift of eternal life, of forgiveness, of Salvation. Talk about power from Heaven at work!

God’s Spirit can do some pretty amazing things! And those that want to be used by Him in wonderful ways, to bring God’s love and message of salvation to others can ask Him to empower them with an extra dose of His Spirit, to do those amazing things. People who are

too shy to talk with others, can find boldness. People who are weak can find strength. Sick people can get immediate healing and be a help to others then and there. People can do things they haven't ever learned before. All these things and so, so much more, the Spirit of God can do for those who ask for it. Why not pray now, and get a Spiritual top-up, too!

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## Together

Things were getting pretty exciting around Jerusalem now that the disciples were filled up with God's wonderful spirit and power to do the job of telling others about Me—Jesus! It wasn't just talking that was going on, amazing miracles and supernatural healings and astounding happenings were taking place. The original disciples as well as all the new folks who chose to also believe in My gift of love and salvation for mankind, were amazed at the kinds of things God was doing for them and with them.

People who had been sick or injured for years were healed in an instant—the second they believed in Me and My power to heal, through these messengers, My disciples. People were walking who'd never walked before. Others were seeing for the first time. Some could talk and praise God for the first time ever. More wonderful happenings were going on than could even be written about. Everyone was busy giving the news of God's love and Salvation to others, and seeing daily miracles happening.

This expanding team of believers lived as a big family, helping each other. They had learned to have teamwork and communication. They prayed together, sang together, ate together as friends. Each one shared their things and money with each other, so all had what they needed. Instead of each person and family keeping all their own things or property, they chose to share things instead, and sell the extra things, and the money from selling things wasn't just kept by those who sold them, it was willingly and kindly divided between everyone.

They lived and worked together. They loved each other and wanted to make sure that each one had what they needed. If everyone had large water pots, for example, or a weaving loom, or olive press, or wagons, and each one tried to keep them, it would get pretty squishy. It worked better to live closer to each other, instead of having to travel by foot or donkey for half of the day to talk and pray with each other. So those that wanted to, chose to just live all together. They didn't need so many of each thing—they just kept what was needed, and shared it together. The extra things they sold.

They focused together on the one goal they all had in mind of doing the job to tell the world about God's gift of love and passing on His words. It was their daily goal, and their life's vision, and every day more and more people wanted to believe as they did, and also join the team.

The disciples taught the new believers God's ways and His Word that they'd learned and heard, and the new things He was telling them through the voice of His Spirit then. Each new team member did their best to follow and do things in the way they were taught. It was new. It was different. It was a time for radical change. My coming to Earth brought that to mankind: a new way, a new gift, a new life, and a new reminder of God's love.

These fervent and dedicated disciples of mine were determined to do things God's way, and give up doing things in the old ways, and in the ungodly ways that those around them in the world were living. They really didn't care what others were saying about them, or the ways others even tried to get them to stop preaching, teaching, and giving My message of love and life to the world. They had a job to do, and didn't let anything hold them back.

It was very tough, and still today those who try to follow in My footsteps and try to tell others about Me find it's hard to do. Not everyone is accepting of the truth. Not everyone likes to hear about it, which is very sad indeed. It's like wanting to give your most precious presents to some people you really loved, but couldn't go and see personally, so you passed it on to a friend to give it to them. But when your friend arrives there to give your gifts, some people won't believe it's really from you, or that you even are living at all. And to top it off they push your friend away and make fun of him, or forbid him to even talk to them. How would that make you feel? If it was someone you really loved and wanted to know how much you loved them, and you wanted to give your best gifts to, it would hurt you inside, right? You'd feel pretty sad. And how would you feel like treating your friend who was helping you to pass on the gift to them, but in the end was treated poorly at times? You'd feel like giving them even more wonderful rewards than before, because they were willing to give your gifts to those you loved. They loved you so much and wanted to do it for you, even though it was hard for them, and they encountered difficulties and sad times.

So, while My disciples, My messengers were on earth, doing just that job—passing on the gift of My Salvation to others—I was preparing a wonderful place for them in Heaven, just like I said I would. Tremendous rewards were being prepared for them.

It was a great and thrilling time, and many wonderful miracles were witnessed by them all. But it wasn't all just fun and games, and it had its difficulties, and people who didn't want to get that gift, and didn't want My messengers talking about Me either.

These wonderful men and woman and their children too, kept on going anyway. And those they taught told others, and they yet others. The years passed and more and more people have heard about Me—until even you have heard now! Isn't that amazing? Maybe you aren't living or doing just exactly the same things in the same way as they all originally did back then. But you can learn from them some things that you can do, to be a good follower of Me still today.

Can you share your things too? Can you help others? Can you tell others about Me? There's lots you can do, and should do, even if things are difficult at times. And I promise you that one day, when you come Up Here to Heaven, that you too will get a great reward for having lived in love, and for having told many about My gift of love to everyone. I'll have made ready the things you will most enjoy, I promise.

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## The Lame Man Walks

Why do people advertise? It's to attract you to get what they are offering, right? Well, the best kind of advertising comes from God, because the things He offers are for free, and they last a lot longer and are far better than anything you can find on Earth.

What does He offer? His eternal love, life with Him forever in a place of peace and beauty, forgiveness for wrong doings and joy in your heart. And why does He want you to have these things? Because He loves you so much, and wants you to be happy. He wants you to be a part of His family and to live with Him forever.

So, when it was time for the disciples to spread the news to many others all around, that I'd come to Earth, and there was forgiveness to all who believed, I wanted as many people as possible to hear about Me.

What's something that makes people really take notice? When God does something that is thought impossible, something that gives healing or protection or miraculous supply, doesn't that get people's attention? When He shows His love through giving someone something they've long wanted, it makes people want to listen and to believe in this God of love, right?

Many miracles were happening as the disciples were witnessing, teaching and preaching—for two reasons. For one, it helped to get people's attention and showed them something new and great was going on. Secondly, it helped to accomplish the main goal, that of not just providing immediate and physical healing, but healing of hearts, minds and spirits, helping to bring people's hearts close to God, and to gain faith in Me and My gift of love to all mankind.

There was a lame man—one of many around. He was someone that many people had seen, often. He was always there, sitting near the gate called "beautiful". He was there to collect alms or donations of those who had the privilege of being able to walk right in. He couldn't. Many people passed that way, so it was a good place to sit. He was then able to get food with the coins that were given to him.

One thing that My disciples weren't, was rich—in money that is. On the day when Peter and John went to the temple to pray, they didn't even have a single coin. Maybe that was good, as it made them realize they could give a lame man something far better. Instead of just rushing past him, or ignoring him, or apologizing that they had nothing to give, they stopped to talk with him.

"We don't have a single coin, but we'll give you what we have" they told the man. He may have wondered what it was—a coat, a piece of bread, some water? No, they were offering something better than anyone had dared to believe was possible to give to him.

"In the name of Jesus, rise up and walk" they told him. "Walk? Me? Walk?" He could have thought. But this lame man had had enough sitting around for a lifetime. He was ready to go! He didn't waste time trying to figure out if it was possible or not, he simply believed, stood up

and walked. In fact he was so thrilled he was jumping, leaping, just wildly happily going right in, at last, through that gate and into the temple together with Peter and John.

It was his faith in Me, Jesus, and the fact that it was God's perfect timing that he got the healing and was granted his great desire to walk! It wasn't just him that was amazed at what was going on. People flocked around to see him and to see for themselves if it really was true. Was the lame man really walking around now in the temple area? How could that be? They wondered.

Peter and John were quick to answer their questions, and used the opportunity to tell each one what was really going on. It wasn't them, the disciples, that could have worked that miracle. They knew that! But they gave God the credit, and gave a good talk about Me, telling as many as were listening and looking and standing there in awe, the truth. This was the reason behind this event taking place—it was to draw people to Me, to bring people in to a closer relationship and friendship with Me, and to know of God's love and forgiveness. The disciples were there for most of the day talking to those visiting the temple who wanted to hear what they had to say. Many listened that day, and many believed—over 5,000 people! What a great day it was.

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### **Power, Protection & Perseverance**

There were thousands who were listening to the disciples preach, after the lame man was healed. He was about 40 years old, so people had seen him unable to walk for a very long time. To all of a sudden get up and walk was very surprising. It was causing quite a stir in the temple area. The day was nearly over, and some of the elders and priests in the temple thought they'd had enough of all this excitement, and that the disciples were telling so many the good news of how I, Jesus, had been raised from the dead, and was God's Son, alive and ready to forgive them, as I loved them.

This bothered those elders and men in charge of things at the temple, as they were afraid in their hearts about what they had been responsible for. When I was still on Earth and had been brought before them, before I gave My life for the sins of the world, they chose not to believe that I, Jesus, was God's Son, and chose to condemn Me to death. So now to hear all this talk saying that I was not only alive again, but I was now everywhere, working miracles all over the place, and I couldn't be stopped, was troubling for them. They didn't have the peace, the joy, and the forgiveness and salvation of God. Rather they chose to try and stop others from believing too, thinking this was the only solution.

These guys called the disciples to come and talk with them, and told them strictly not to ever tell anyone about Jesus any more. But rather than agreeing, the disciples took that opportunity to tell even those ones the truth, and spoke it with such boldness and clarity, that everyone listening then knew these men had been living with Me and had personally experienced what they were talking about.

Everyone who had seen the miracle of the lame man being healed were praising God and knew it was His power alone that did it. The crowd was on the side of the disciples. Those

elders couldn't say or do much else but try to tell them to just stop talking about Me, Jesus. However, that wasn't going to work. "We can only say the things we saw and heard!" the disciples replied, before being allowed to leave and go home.

When they got back to the other believers they were staying with, what a story they had to tell! It was wonderful how many people were wanting to believe and follow Me, too. Though, now there was the added problem of those who told them firmly to never talk about Me again. So what did they do? Did they use their day to quickly pack and leave town? No, there were too many people who were eager to hear the truth and needed them to stay there.

They chose to do the best thing of all. A fervent prayer meeting was held, asking God to fill them anew with the power of His Spirit—to make them even bolder and to witness the good news even more than ever! As they prayed, the whole building shook, and they all rejoiced at the power they felt coming from God into their hearts.

Every day they continued to do as they were commissioned to—speaking to people everywhere, telling them about Me, and multitudes of people were hearing about and believing the news of My love and salvation. The miracles of healing that were taking place were amazing! People would even bring their sick people into the street where they thought Peter was going to pass by, believing that if even just his shadow would fall on their sick ones, they would get healed. It was a thrilling time, and so many were joining the team of believers.

Did those who tried to stop their mission give up, and decide to believe too? Well, maybe some of them did, but there were those that thought they just needed to try harder instead to put an end to all this talk about Me, Jesus, and all the miracles I was still doing, even when I was invisible! A team of disciples were taken and placed in a prison room, to stay for the night, and would be brought the next morning before the priests to talk to them about stopping all this preaching. Guards were placed on the door, and it was locked too.

That wasn't God's plan! He wanted them in the temple, talking to the many people who were eager to hear. So that night an angel came and opened the doors and brought the disciples out, telling them to go back to the temple and talk to the waiting people in the morning. And that's just what they did. As soon as it was morning time, they went right back again to the temple to preach and teach.

Can you imagine how astonished the elders and priests were to find that those they'd put in that place all closed up, had just vanished from that room, and were back again in the temple, talking boldly to all there?

One of the elders, Gamaliel, realized something new was happening, and that there just might be a chance that what all the disciples were saying was true—that I, Jesus, was indeed God's Son, and had risen again, and was the Saviour for all mankind. He counselled the other men to be careful, that they didn't want to be found to actually be trying to stop what God was doing.

So after warning the disciples roughly one more time to stop all this preaching, they let them go. And though it wasn't nice to be treated badly by those unbelievers, the disciples



were so filled with the power of God's Spirit, and they loved Me so much, they left the place happy! They were free again to preach, and they knew a great reward was being prepared for them in Heaven, for having done what I told them to do, no matter how hard it was at times.

And did they stop? No way! They just kept on going, no matter what.

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### **Seven Wise Helpers**

Those who had met and lived with Me, Jesus, while I was on Earth had an important job to do. Besides telling many others about Me, praying for the sick, and teaching others about My ways, they had the job of recording and writing down the things I'd said, and passing on My new words to the people as well. They had a job of giving out My Words in many ways.

It wasn't as easy as pulling out a laptop and typing a note, like it is these days. Writing things down took a lot longer and much more effort back then. Many of my original disciples needed help too, to write, as they'd mostly done other jobs before I called them to follow Me. They hadn't spent a lot of time learning to write and read. So it took time and help to make letters, books, and scrolls in order to record My Words and to tell people what My new ways of doing things were—how to live in love.

If all these new followers were going to do things in My way they'd need to know what it was. So these original chosen disciples were very busy taking time to pray and talk with Me and listen to what My spirit wanted to tell them. They also took time explaining, writing, studying scriptures, teaching, preaching, and telling people how to live in My ways. However, there were other needs too. People needed to hear God's Words, but also children needed care, poor families needed food and clothes, and so forth. So since these few men couldn't do all those jobs as well, a plan was made.

A team of seven wise and trustworthy, full-of-faith men were chosen to help look after the new followers, to see that needs were being met. That gave the main leading disciples, who had walked with Me, time to continue their job of prayer and giving My Word to others in all the ways they could.

These seven men were called in to a meeting with the disciples to talk about this new job and responsibility. They prayed together to be filled with special power from My Spirit to do their new and important job. Just being good at a job or being smart or rich or knowing how to do things wasn't what was needed for this job. The ones who were picked weren't those who were the best looking or tallest, or who had the biggest muscles, or could run the fastest, or who had the most friends around them all the time. No, not at all.

In fact if you were to meet any of these great guys who were chosen you might wonder when looking at them for the first time, what was so great about them. There was nothing too amazing to be noticed, outwardly that is. God looks on the heart. There were thousands of people to choose from. What made these ones get the job? What is needed to do the best kind of work for the Lord?

Let's list some things that they had. They loved God more than anything else or anyone else. They gave their whole life and time and everything to helping others come to know Me, Jesus. They didn't care what people thought of them, or who told them not to talk about Me, they were as focused and determined to do the job as an Olympic runner is while racing.

They depended on prayer, not on their own strength. They prayed for the Holy Spirit to empower them—not just once, but with each new job. They knew they needed God's power to work through them and with them and for them each day, in all they did.

Those men were willing to do what was needed, for the good of all, even if it seemed less glamorous as some others were doing. It was a humble job, to serve and help others, and they had the loving humility to do it for Me. They didn't lose their focus either, and get too into the physical work that needed to be done, but took time to teach and preach and pray for others, whenever they could, wherever they were.

One of the men's names was Stephen, and he was a powerful and faithful giver of God's message to others. He was filled with the spirit of God and told as many people as he could about Me, Jesus. Not everyone was so thrilled about the message all these disciples were preaching about, but many did believe—even many priests at the temple!

Stephen was faithful to talk about Me and to share the truth his whole life. Some people tried to stop him from talking by spreading lies about him, telling the elders of the temple that he was saying untrue and bad things, and that he should be stopped. But whoever believes on Me will never really be stopped all the way. People may seem to stop you for a while, but if you are telling the truth and living what you believe, even if they stop you, somehow it makes many others listen and believe what you were saying. So instead of just having only you telling others the truth, there are many more who take your place, when it's the time for you to go to your reward in Heaven.

So when some people tried to stop Stephen from telling them God's Word, it ended up being the most wonderful day of all for him. First of all it was great because many heard what he said with conviction, and some later on decided to give their life to preach about Me to even more people and in many other places than Stephen even could in that one city. Some people who heard and saw him speaking that day said his face shone like an angel, as God's Spirit was on him so brightly!

Secondly the day was great because while people were making things pretty difficult for him, he looked up right then and saw the most wonderful thing he'd ever seen. He got to see the Glory of God in Heaven, and Jesus standing beside Him. Wow! Can you imagine how marvellous that must have looked?

Jesus was calling him up to Heaven, telling him his job was done, and his reward was ready. He must have been so excited. Can you imagine if all of a sudden, while you are just going along doing your best one day, that the person you love most in all the world suddenly pops by for a visit and says they have the biggest surprise and gift for you than you've ever had in all your life?

But before he went to heaven he did one more thing. He said a prayer for those folks who weren't believing on Me yet. He prayed for God to forgive them for all the ways they had been making things rough for him. That showed what I truly came to do—I came to Earth to forgive each one who would accept My gift of love and salvation. This prayer showed My true Spirit of love and why I came down from Heaven and lived, and then gave My life in the first place.

My love and truth was shown to all, and Stephen had a great time receiving commendation and reward—for living his life for Me, and giving his life for Me too. Then as a result of his witness and devotion to My mission, many others eventually came to know about Me too.

Things weren't easy for My followers, and there were those who really gave them a hard time. But they had the faith and joy knowing that I was watching them, and they too would come to Heaven with joy one day, and get great rewards for being faithful to do their job for Me, right until the last minute of their lives!

Maybe one day you can talk with these ones, when you get to Heaven too, and hear some of their amazing stories, and you can tell them some of yours! We can all party and rejoice because God's Word and love was spread to as many as was possible.

I'm so pleased every time I see someone make the right choice to help others come to know Me more. What can you do today to help others know that I love them, and want them to receive My gift of eternal life and be able to come to Heaven too? If you do your best, great will be your reward as well!

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### **Philip's Amazing Trip**

Some folks were making things pretty tough for the disciples to continue to preach around Jerusalem. However it made something good happen next. What do you think it compelled Jesus' followers to do? –To travel to new places and spread the good news of salvation to many others.

No matter who you are, or where you are, if you are telling others the truth about Me, Jesus, you're going to have some people who try to give you a hard time. That's just the way it is. It has been like that since I was on Earth, and it's like that today—and may even get harder as things get more and more ungodly in the world. But if I want you to spread the good news anyway, you'll not give up, and may find new ways to do it!

The disciples were traveling all around, here and there, and getting good results. Philip travelled to Samaria. They really needed to know the truth there, as someone who lived there had been spreading false ideas around. This man who wasn't a believer or follower of God tried to trick people into thinking that he was so great and powerful, rather than God, and many had thought it was true. It was distracting them from knowing about Me, Jesus.

Even though I wasn't there, visibly on Earth, I knew what was going on, and was very upset about it. I loved those people and wanted to set them free—free to know the truth, free to learn about Me and the way to Heaven, free from their sicknesses and diseases, free from all the trouble that the evil one was trying to cause. So Philip was sent to be My messenger. These people needed to see My power in action and to see how wonderful God was.

When Philip came to visit he demonstrated the power of God in marvellous ways. Many were healed and freed from the power of the devil. As a result they chose to believe on Me, Jesus instead. It was wonderful! Finally they heard the truth and were eager to believe. Even this false teacher chose to believe and be baptized too. Great!

Peter and John then came to visit Samaria, and told them about the gift of the Holy Spirit. They prayed with the people who had received and believed on Me, and they then received the Holy Spirit too! The place was getting changed for the better. It was a much nicer place to be, filled with more love and joy, and new believers.

When Philip's job there was done, his new assignment that he received in prayer from Me was to go towards the south on a road that led to a place called Gaza. It was a desert area. Philip knew I knew best, and chose to do whatever I asked him to do. So in the hot sun he walked, not seeing many folks around, wondering what the reason was for being right there at that time.

Philip then saw a chariot—a fancy one, with a very rich and important man riding in it. He was an Ethiopian man who worked for Queen Candace, and was in charge of all her treasure. "Go to him," God told Philip. This at last was the reason for his needing to travel this way, on this road, right at this time.

Philip didn't hesitate and waste time or miss his opportunity. He quickly did just what was told him to do. As he neared the chariot he heard the man reading from the book of Isaiah—and it so happened to be just at the place in the book where Isaiah's prophecy is talking about Me, Jesus, giving My life for you!

Can you imagine? It was the perfect set up and opportunity to tell this important man about Me. Do you think I know what books you are reading? I not only knew what books were in this man's chariot, things he'd chosen to read to pass the time on his long travels, but what section he would be reading, and I had obedient, faithful Philip there at just the right time.

Did you know this happens all day long? I know where you are, what you are doing, and what will work out best for you today. If you take time as Philip did, to not only listen to instructions from God, but to do them, even if it's not something you'd normally choose to do, amazing things can take place. So many more miracles and answers to prayer would spring up throughout your day if you took more time to ask Me what I want you to be doing, and when and where.

So Philip was there right on time, and asked the Ethiopian if he understood what he was reading about. He didn't understand it, and wanted to know more about it. He was

reading from Isaiah 53. Philip was invited to then actually ride with this very important man, in his chariot, and explain the scripture passage to him.

The Ethiopian man was so thrilled to hear the news about Me, Jesus, and how this prophetic message had already come to pass. The prophecy had been fulfilled, and he could now be forgiven and find salvation through Me, Jesus! He was so eager that at the soonest sight of water, he ordered the chariot to stop and wanted to be baptized immediately!

However, it's not just about water, but about believing in your heart that I can save and forgive you. So Philip said he could be baptized, if he believed this truth he'd heard about Me with all his heart. The Ethiopian man replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

Off the chariot and into the water both men went, and the man was baptized and full of joy! Then to add to the wonder of it all, as they walked out of the water Philip completely disappeared, right before his eyes. How this man praised God then! There were so many miracles and special things happening to him that day, and the joy of knowing about God's special gift of love was making him so happy!

Why do you think it was important that this man be told about Me? Everyone on Earth is very important to Me, and I love each one. That's why it's important that those who are in charge, who have the ability to tell many others in their country the truth about My love, come to know about Me.

Do you think this man forgot about what happened that day? Not in his life! He was brimming with joy and could share this good news with so many others—in the faraway places that he was traveling to. Having something extra special happen, with Philip being suddenly taken—almost seeming like he was an angel or something—made the experience extra memorable. This man from Ethiopia was then responsible to share the news wherever he went, and the joy he felt at finding the way to salvation made him happy to do so.

Every minute is precious to Me, every minute in the life of those who are following Me on Earth and are actively giving My love and Words and gift of salvation to others. So when Philip had done his job, there was no need to have him there walking for hours down the dusty, somewhat deserted roads. I needed him elsewhere, where there were more cities and more populated areas.

In an instant he was transported to another place. He could get something to eat, and continue on his preaching mission in new places, without so much time and strength spent on travel—which took quite some time in those days. He went from city to city and told countless people about Me in the new place he suddenly appeared in. Pretty amazing!

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**Saul is Stopped—Paul Preaches**

There was a man who made it his personal job to stop as many of My disciples as possible. That's all he thought about and all he did for a while, as he actually thought it was right. But he was so very wrong. His name was Saul.

God saw his determination. He could use that. If someone that committed to acting on what they believed was to be told the truth in a way they would understand it clearly, and believe it, just think what a great witness he would be! If they were someone who didn't let anyone stop them from doing what they felt was right, if they were on God's side, what a great job they could do!

So God had a plan. Saul thought he was just going on another one of his trips. He wanted to not only have the disciples stop telling others about Jesus in Jerusalem, but he wanted them stopped no matter where they had travelled to. So he was off on a trip to Damascus.

He had heard people talking about Jesus. In fact he heard all the things Stephen had been telling people. For some reason however, he just didn't believe it yet. He needed something else to show him the truth, and to get his attention and to get him on the right track.

As he was going along, suddenly a bright light, much brighter than anything he'd seen in his life, shone on him so powerfully he was immediately blinded and fell to the ground. Perhaps he'd known in his heart that something wasn't right about what he was doing, and this was just the thing he needed to get his heart to wake up and pay attention. A voice then spoke to him, asking why he's doing what he's doing!

Saul didn't know exactly who was talking so powerfully to him, but knew real clearly that whoever it was, is in charge of things, and is to be listened to, respected and obeyed promptly, no questions asked. I, Jesus, told Saul that it was Me—the very One He hadn't believed to be God's Son. He was ready to believe that I was real, and was interested in him and knew exactly what he was up to.

Ready to listen and to follow My instructions, Saul asked what to do next. He was now blind, he was lying in the dirt. The things he was mixed up about before were starting to become clear to him—that I was indeed who My disciples said I was: God's Son! I then told him the next clue of what to do. It was kind of like a treasure hunt. "Go to the city, and it will be told you what to do next."

Saul wasn't going to argue. He was now under My authority, and was willing to do anything. He could not ride into the city on a big horse, meeting all the important men of the Synagogue like he had planned. He had to be led by the hand like a little child, humbly, blind, into a house in the city to rest.

For three days and nights he lay resting and waiting, thinking, praying and talking to God in his heart. He was given a vision, a picture in his mind of a man coming to pray for him and his sight being restored.

Ananias was living in that city, and was a man of prayer and a strong believer. He was that man whom God showed Saul was going to come and pray for him to be healed. I spoke with Ananias in a vision, telling him to go and pray for Saul, and told him exactly what street and in what house he was staying.

At first Ananias was surprised. Did I really mean Saul—as in the Saul who had come to that city to cause trouble? But I told Ananias about the change of plans, and how I personally talked with him as he travelled, in that shining light. Saul was now blind and ready to believe the truth, and he was chosen to be a great witness to many about Me, Jesus. He just needed to be prayed for.

So with faith in these words, Ananias took the step of courage and went to meet this man who none of the disciples wanted to have around, and who didn't want them around. It happened just as I said. There he was, this formerly proud, arrogant, unkind man, who was causing all kinds of difficulty for My followers, now weakly, meekly, lying on a bed, having not wanted to eat or drink for days, blind and praying for God to help him.

Ananias greeted him as if he was already a friend, and called him "Brother". Saul must have been surprised when further more Ananias told him that it was I, Jesus who sent him—the Jesus who appeared and talked with him as he travelled to Damascus.

"How did he know about that?" Saul must have wondered, as Ananias was speaking. It confirmed to him that something very special was going on. I wasn't just someone who lived on Earth before, that others were talking about—I was a powerful God, who was still alive, and knew what was going on, and could talk with people and tell them things they didn't know. I was everywhere, and knew everything, and could do anything.

Ananias then laid his hands on Saul's eyes in prayers, just as I told him to do. Immediately his sight was restored. It seemed like scales fell from his eyes, and he could see again. He rose up, was baptized, and received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Saul then ate and drank water, and got his strength back again. He then stayed with the disciples there for a while, talking to them, listening to them, and being one of them now too.

Now that he knew the truth, his job for Me and his focus was the same as My other followers—to tell others about Me and My gift of love and salvation. Saul was a new man in so many ways. His heart was filled with love for Me and for My disciples. His job and focus was now the complete opposite than it had been just days before. He was sorry for the way he had been acting before, and those that he'd caused so many problems for. Saul was often called "Paul" from then on. He was a new man and going to do new things with his life. He determined to be the best apostle he could possibly be, teaching and preaching in all the places that he could.

Paul went to the Synagogue to tell those there the truth about Me, Jesus, and how I was God's Son, and had come to Earth to save and help them, and gave My life for them, so they could have forgiveness and know My love. Because Paul knew the scriptures well, having had studied them before so much, he was able to be a powerful witness. He could quote and

read the prophecies that were written about My coming, and show those he talked with how those messages had at last come to pass.

Once Paul was on the right side, on God's side, God could use his knowledge of scriptures, and his determination to do what he knew was right, to tell many people about Me, Jesus. He used all his strength and time to do the best job he could.

Things weren't any easier for him, than they had been for the rest of the disciples. Some people weren't glad at all that he was now doing the opposite, and proclaiming strongly to others that I was indeed God's Son, the Christ, the Messiah they'd been waiting so long for. He was telling everyone that I had at last come, and there was forgiveness and life eternal for all who believed. Some tried to stop Paul and put an end to his new job for Me now, but he just kept on the move and travelled to new places and kept on going with what I called him to do. He never gave up, no matter how hard things got.

Nothing was easy for him, or any of My disciples back then, but the joy in Paul's heart of knowing Me, of receiving salvation, and of being able to share this wonderful gift with others made all the hardship and times of struggle worth it. Instead of a sad life ahead of him and only trouble from God, he would gain a wonderful reward that was being prepared for him, as he carried on doing his best, to tell others about Me, in all the ways he could.

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### Arise

Peter was on the go, traveling to as many towns and cities as he could, encouraging the new teams of My disciples, and telling many people about Jesus. When he came to a place called Lydda he met a man that had been in bed for eight years, sick and unable to get up. His family and friends had to do everything for him, and he couldn't join in on so many activities.

Can you imagine what that must have been like? Put yourself in his place for a moment. How old are you right now, and how old will you be in eight years? What if today you were stuck in bed, and unable to get up on your own until that birthday, eight years from now? It'd be pretty tough, right? It would be hard for you, and for your family too. What things would you miss out on being able to do?

You know from reading the story that eventually he did get healed. For him, however, he didn't know it was only going to be for a certain amount of time. He thought, every day, that it would go on for the rest of his life—and so did everyone else. Then Peter showed up, one wonderful and memorable day. He said to Aeneas, "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed."

A thrill of excitement surged through his whole being. *Healed, now?! Just get up and make my bed? I believe it!* Aeneas thought, and did it. He got up! From that moment on he was completely well again!



News spread of this amazing healing around the whole city and to nearby places as well. All who were in Lydda and Saron heard and saw this miracle, something thought to be completely impossible. Then the greatest thing happened next! The effect of Aeneas' healing was that everyone who heard and saw it chose to believe on Me, Jesus! That was an even greater, and more miraculous occurrence. For a heart to change, and to accept My love, and to believe in My power, and to want to follow in My ways, is even a greater happening than merely someone's body being able to move.

When people are bound in sin, that means sad and unable to be set free from the sorrows that their wrong doings are causing, and they are constantly worried about what will happen as a result of their mistakes and sins, it's like they are as immobile as Aeneas.

You can't freely move in your spirit, in your heart, and be free from the things that hold you back from following in God's way. This whole city of Lydda was immobile in spirit, sick with not only the diseases of their bodies, but also of heart and spirit and mind, and so very sad. When God's light and love from Heaven shone into their lives, and it was manifested or shown and made known to all, it was a great event in each one's life. Everyone chose to accept the freedom and forgiveness from sins that I came to Earth to bring. Each one was then set free to move with My spirit, to move with the motives of love and do as I wanted them to—and to get moving telling others about Me too. This brought so much more joy in their life, and better health **for their** spirit too—just like movement and exercise does for our bodies, and how great it was for Aeneas to get on the go!

My disciple John wrote: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." (John 14:21) So it's important to not only hear about Me and to know the truth and about My love, but to be on the go, too, doing what I said to do.

There was another place called Joppa, that was not too far away from where Peter was at that time. One day some messengers came from there to Peter, with an urgent request, to please come immediately back with them, as there was a woman who needed prayer and healing right away.

A kind woman, a disciple, called Tabitha (or also called Dorcus), had done so much for others. She was one of those who didn't just hear My words and know what I said about loving others, caring for people, but she was a doer! She spent all her time and strength doing as much as she possibly could to help others. Back then most needed items had to be handmade. There were no second-hand shops filled with clothes. If a poor family needed coats for the cold weather, they had to be made, and the materials for creating them had to be gathered and prepared.

Tabitha knew how to sew and weave, and made it one of her projects to show My love to others by making coats and clothes for those who didn't have others to help them, and who were poor. She was caring for all, and helped in many ways. She made that her work and her life's goal, to give loving help to as many as possible. Many people were touched by her care, and the way she showed her love for Me by doing kind deeds and giving to and helping others.

She became very sick at that time, when Peter happened to be close by. It seemed to all that that was going to be her last day on Earth. When Peter heard their desperate plea to come and pray for Tabitha, he agreed to go with them, right away.

As he arrived in the house where Tabitha was, there were lots of people there, weeping and so very sad. She had passed away. They showed Peter some of the clothes that she made, and told of how kind she was to all. Tabitha was very missed, and loved by all.

Sometimes it's good to think about that—when it's your time to leave Earth, and go to see Jesus at last, what will you be remembered for? Believe me, if your only goals in life included a long list that revolved around yourself, and only making yourself happy and having all that you could gather for yourself, you won't be remembered for anything really great. If you choose instead to do all you can for Me—helping Me complete My goal list, since I'm not there in body anymore and need your help—you'll make a good impact on all who know you, and your welcome up Here in Heaven will be spectacular.

What things are on My “get done” list? Well, why don't we talk it over today, and I can give you some hints. Just say, “Jesus, how can I help You today? I love you and want to make You happy.” I can give you some ideas that are easy to do, and maybe a few not so easy to do but need to be done just the same. And as you pray for My help you'll be able to check a few things off the list, and be given My great appreciation for all you've done to help Me, even though it wasn't always easy.

So Tabitha did that, she did what I wanted her to do, and was living to give My love and care to others. When it seemed like she was too sick, and like her life had ended, they laid her in a bed upstairs in the house. Peter was shown into the room, and knelt down to pray for her healing, and to be given life once again. And then what did he do? He had faith that I had heard, and turned to the woman and said, “Tabitha arise”.

Immediately she opened her eyes and saw Peter, who took her by the hand, and helped her to stand up. Peter brought her to the disciples, alive and well. The joy and wonder they felt was more than they could contain. That did more to spread the news about Me, Jesus, than anything had up until then. The disciples went telling everyone about it. Everyone in Joppa heard about it, and many turned their hearts towards Me as a result. Peter stayed there then for quite a while, as there were so many people eager to know more about Me and to learn of My ways.

Tabitha's heart's wish and prayers were at last fulfilled. She loved Me so much and wished that everyone in her city could come to know about Me. She didn't just want to do kind deeds herself, she wanted everyone to know God's love in their hearts, and to start spreading that love around too. She wanted the whole town to catch on, and get My love flowing all around. Then it finally happened! It happened differently, however, than she had thought it would. It took her first of all giving and showing love and kindness all that she could, and then the miracle of My healing power, being told all around in the city by My disciples.

It took her being willing to go through an experience that at first seemed like a terrible defeat, rather than a victory. Instead of being able to help others, she became very ill and unable to do anything for a while, and her life was taken, temporarily. It took her giving until the end of her life, so that many others would know about Me. But when she was granted life again, and she rose up she was so glad to see an even greater miracle begin to take place.

She got to see the change that came about in that city, and to know how many people were not only getting to see My love in action through her kind deeds, but to know My love in their hearts and lives personally, and being My followers, too. Are you giving all you can for Me, today? You won't be disappointed at the results that come eventually, and will be thrilled when you receive your personal reward from Me.

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### Cornelius

Have you ever had a funny dream about food, and woke to find you were actually really hungry? Sometimes dreams come as a result of what you are feeling, but many times they can be Me, Jesus, trying to tell you something. Well, Peter was actually very hungry, but the food wasn't yet ready. He decided to lie down while he waited. However, the dream or vision that he had wasn't just some odd happening. God gave him a special message—a message that would have a very large effect on all the disciples who were trying to spread the news about Me to others.

In the dream or vision or video that I showed Peter in his mind and spirit there was a large type of sheet, filled with all kinds of things that Peter had been taught all his life to never eat—things that were on the “unclean” meat list as far as what foods to use for cooking. I spoke to Peter and told him to eat them. Peter replied that he couldn't, that he wouldn't, and he'd never done so in his life. He'd always stuck to the rules of what to eat and what not to. I replied to Peter that whatever God makes clean is clean for sure. I then showed him this same scene and message three times in a row. Why three times? Every part of the dream was for a reason, and would make good sense as soon as Peter woke up.

“Is Simon Peter here?” Some men were downstairs inquiring about him. There were three men who had come to find Peter right away. When Peter saw who they were, he understood more what that mysterious vision and message meant. See, so far the disciples had only been telling the news about My gift of salvation to a certain kind of people—to the Jewish people, the descendants of Jacob, those who had left Egypt, those who followed the 10 commandments and all the other many rules that governed their lives, that were passed on to them from God through Moses.

The men who had arrived to speak with Peter were of another nationality and culture, though they too believed in God. Through that vision Peter was being prepared to do something new. He was to go with them, and talk with them about Me, Jesus. It was a very new idea.

When Peter heard their story, and what brought them to the house he was staying in, he had full confidence to do what I seemed to be leading him to. They told him of the man they worked for, Cornelius, and about the amazing event that had happened just the day before.

Cornelius loved God, but didn't know about Me, Jesus—yet. He would pray often, and all that were in his house too. He would give gifts to the poor and help others all he could. He was a good man. Being good and trying to do the best you can is great, and you should do that, but there is more that is needed if you want to go to Heaven, and be called one of God's sons (and daughters). He and all that were in his house needed to hear about Me, and My gift of salvation and forgiveness.

The time was right for many others to begin to hear about Me—not just those of the Jewish faith. So, I chose this faithful man, who loved God above all things, who I knew would obey what I said, to be the one to get the ball rolling.

As Cornelius was praying the day before, a brightly dressed angel appeared to him and told him a very specific and clear message. The angel told Cornelius about Peter, and said exactly where he was living. The message was that Cornelius needed to speak with Peter, who would tell him what he was supposed to be doing.

It was a bit like a treasure hunt. The first clue was the name and place where someone was staying. The next clue would be found out then. "There's something I'm supposed to be doing... I wonder what it is?" Cornelius must have thought. He always wanted to be doing everything that God wanted him to.

No time was lost. He wanted to obey right away, and know right away what this was all about. Immediately he told some of his helpers to ride to Joppa, to the house of a man called "Simon the Tanner" and to ask about a man called Peter. They were to ask Peter to come to Cornelius' house, and to speak with them there.

Peter, whose heart and mind had been prepared for this encounter, agreed. After giving the messengers a place to stay for the night, Peter and some other disciples from Joppa travelled back with them the next morning.

There were no phones for the team to tell Cornelius that it was true, that a man called Peter was at that very house, and was coming home with them now. He just had to wait, hope, and see what was going to happen next. As Cornelius saw his helpers approaching, with several others, he knew it was Peter's team. Quickly Cornelius called together his family and closest friends to also be in the room to hear whatever the special message was going to be.

Cornelius thought Peter must be an extra special and important man, and he went out to greet him by falling down at his feet and worshiping him. Peter wasn't Me, Jesus, but only My messenger, so he told Cornelius to get up, assuring him that he was just a man. They chatted as they entered the house, and Peter saw that there was quite a gathering of people, all eagerly waiting for him to speak to them. They had faith that Peter was going to give them the next clue in their treasure hunt of trying to find God's will for their lives.

It's a joy to have eager and willing listeners when you have something important to say, isn't it? So Peter began talking with them all, starting by explaining why he came so quickly there—it was God who told him to, through the vision or dream that he'd had. Cornelius and the others were so glad that he had come, and they readily listened and believed all that Peter then shared with them—the story of the gift of salvation, about Me, Jesus, and how they too could be saved.

An unexpected occurrence then took place, to Peter and the other disciple's surprise. God all of a sudden poured out His Spirit on each one there who was listening, just as He had done for the disciples when they were gathered and received the gift of the Holy Spirit. It was a wonderful and exciting meeting. Everyone was so happy! They all were then baptized, and became believers. What an amazing few days it had been. It had all happened so quickly, because each of these men were taking the time to pray each day, and were ready to do whatever God asked them to do.

This was a tremendous event—that those who were not meant to be mingled with, according to the Jewish law, were being saved and filled with the Holy Spirit and becoming disciples. Some of the disciples who heard about it wondered what was going on. When Peter met them he explained the whole story, and they understood that it was something new God was doing—and they were to follow in this new way too, speaking with all kinds of people about Me, Jesus! After all, I did say, to go into all the world, preaching the Gospel to “every creature” —that does sound like all types of people, doesn't it? Many more were able to receive the good news and joy of salvation as a result of this event, and the disciples' obedience to this new way I was leading them.

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### **Peter's Adventure**

Peter woke with a start! Something or someone had tapped him firmly. He opened his eyes, and saw to his surprise an angel standing there. “I must be dreaming” he thought, “and it's such a nice dream”.

What happened next to him was completely impossible to occur in ordinary life—so it had to be a dream, he guessed. This heavenly messenger was instructing Peter, and he did what he was told to do.

“Quickly now, put on your sandals, get on your coat and come with me.”

Peter wasn't sleeping in his house, or even out under a tree. He had been placed in a secure location—jail. For what? For obeying God. By whom? —The king. Too bad that those in charge at that time didn't realize who was really the king of their lives. Instead of trying to please those who didn't like what the disciples were doing, and how they were preaching, the king ought to have been begging Peter and the others to talk to him about Me, Jesus, and to tell him the way to Heaven, and the way of forgiveness and salvation.

As soon as people get their eyes only on those around them, and only want to do what is pleasing and admired by humans, that's when things get worse on Earth. For some reason, because there is so much around that is in opposition to God and to His ways, it takes great effort and determination to go in God's way. Those who had chosen to follow in My ways, and to do what I asked them to do, regardless of the trouble it seemed to cause them with those who tried to stop them, just kept on going, and got to see great miracles of God's help and power too!

Peter got to experience it that Easter weekend. King Herod wanted to wait to talk to Peter till after the special weekend that it was for the Jewish people—which happened to also be the same time of year that I gave My life for all, and rose again. Because My disciples had extra power and miracles were being done through them by the power of God, the king knew he had to be very careful. If he didn't want Peter to get away and to start preaching again, he'd need to make sure to put him in the most secure location, guarded by many guards, behind locked doors.

No one can stop God's plan or God's people, if He wants something else to be happening. Everyone has the ability to choose what to do, and people can make the wrong choices and cause difficulty to God's messengers. God's plan, however, will never be totally ruined. No matter what happens or what people try to do, with God on your side and with the power of prayer, anything can change for the better, in God's way, and in God's time.

God doesn't have a problem doing the impossible, especially when people were praying as much as all the disciples were, for Peter to be set free again.

Peter wasn't meant to be in there, nor to talk with the king, who wasn't ready to listen to what Peter could have been telling him about. So when the time was right, an angel was sent to escort him out, safely, quickly, and completely undetected. The angel woke him, told him to get up, put his shoes and coat on, and to follow him.

The final large iron door opened all by itself as the angel walked Peter out of there. They walked on down the street a while, then the angel left. At that point Peter realized, wonderfully, that it was not merely a dream after all. It was an amazing miracle that had really occurred! Quickly he made his way to a house where disciples were gathered together, praying desperately for him to be released.

When you pray, do you expect the answer? Or are you actually surprised if it happens? Well, if it's right and good for you, and what God wants you to be praying for, then you can have faith that it will happen—and not be too shocked when the answer comes! You can be jubilant, happy, grateful, thankful and praise God! But to be completely surprised that it happened at all shows you might not have realized how powerful God is, and able to do absolutely anything that is within His will.

When Peter arrived at the house he knocked, and waited, and knocked, and waited, and knocked, and waited. He nearly had to beg to be let in! The young lady who went to see who was at the door saw it was Peter—or at least that it looked like him. She got all excited

and couldn't believe her eyes! Rather than letting him in, she ran back to tell all the others who had been praying nearly non-stop for him.

Then, as the knocking continued on in the background, those in the house told Rhoda, the young lady, that she must be crazy! That Peter couldn't possibly be at the door. Can you imagine it? Here's Peter, who needs to be let in for his own safekeeping, having to make all this noise just to get people to believe that their prayers have been answered, then and there!

Finally at long last, the door is opened and Peter is let inside. He shares the wonderful account of the angel, and just how God chose to answer their prayers and free him to teach and preach again. With eagerness they all listen, and praise God together for the great miracle!

Peter then bids them farewell, and journeys on to continue his important job—a job that has made it a reality that here and now, you today, can hear the story too, of Me and My love for you, and My own journey to Earth. I brought the original message, and gift, and those who I commissioned to spread the news and offer the gift of My salvation to others, did so, and did it well. And that's why you today have heard about it. Will others know, as a result of your determination, to tell many about Me, too?

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### **Paul's Adventures**

Paul had quite an adventurous, difficult, and amazing time travelling around, and preaching to all that he could about Me, Jesus. His travels took him many places, and he used all kinds of transportation and ways of getting around.

Nothing stopped him from reaching his goal—to give his life and time, every bit of it that he could, to tell as many people as he could about the gift of Salvation, and to let people know that their Messiah, their Saviour, had at last come.

It was not an easy or comfortable life, many dangers and troubles came his way, but as he wrote, “none of these things move me” (Acts 20:24). He didn't let anything move him away from what he had decided to do, and knew to be God's will and plan for his life—his God-given job. If he was whole-hearted before his change, trying as hard as he could to stop My disciples, well now, with his priorities adjusted and made right, with the truth known, and with the Holy Spirit helping him, he was even more committed and determined to “finish his course” as a disciple. He said:

“But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” [Acts 20:24]

He knew there were rewards going to be given out by Me to the faithful ones, those who kept on going, and did what I commissioned and asked them to do with their lives.

Rewards would be given for those who chose My will for their lives, for those who told others about Me, for those who showed love and kindness and cared for others, for those who faithfully kept on doing, one day at a time, the jobs that needed to be done—whatever it was that I wanted them to be doing—and not giving up.

Paul wanted to win the race, to finish, and to get a gold-medal-level prize. You'd do well to gain encouragement from the life of Paul to keep on going, no matter what comes your way. To keep on going and doing what? Well, that depends on who you are, where you are, and what the need is for you to be doing.

Are you young still, and have lots to learn? Paul was able to talk to many different types of people, in several languages, and share the Old Testament scriptures with them, helping to prove that I was truly their Messiah. How was he able to do that? He had to study, lots, when he was younger. It was different than what you have available today. There were no CDs to learn from, or audios to listen to, or neat internet sites, or documentaries to watch or videos or computers that could speed learning for him. There weren't even books as you have today!

There were people who knew the things that he needed to learn, and he focused when they tried to teach him, he asked questions, he applied himself, he did the best he could with what he had. He set goals, little goals, and bigger ones too. He didn't let other things distract him from learning what he needed to learn. Maybe it seemed to be unnecessary at times, or that all the time he spent learning things wasn't put to good use, right then and there. When he was grown, however, he was able to use those skills and knowledge, and that's when it paid off.

Something that helped Paul a lot was what he learned about countries and geography, and places to go. He learned to speak a few different languages so he could talk with people in the different places he travelled to. He learned the Bible—as much as they had then. There was no “New Testament”, as he was one of the ones to help write it. Of course he had to know how to read and write so that he could do it, or instruct others to help him do it.

Are you using your time to focus on learning the things that will most help you as you are older? What is something you most want to learn how to do? Maybe it's something that I've put in your heart to learn.

If you can use your spare time doing things that will really benefit you later on, then it'll be like going uphill in a car, rather than on a bicycle. There's a difference, isn't there? What is it? One takes far more effort than the other, right? So if you learn the right kinds of things today, and use this time when you are younger and it's easy to learn things and you have the time and chance to do them, it'll make things so much better for you when you are older.

There are so many things I can help you do when you learn different skills: Can you sew? That can be used to help others in many ways. Can you read well? Then you can teach others the same, and teach yourself many new things from being able to study and read



about them yourself. Can you invent and problem solve? Try thinking up simple solutions to the difficulties you face today, and ask Me for ideas. I'll always help you to improve a situation if you give Me a chance to help, and give yourself some time to think and pray about things.

Can you draw pictures or play music? These can both be used to tell others the good news in fun, attractive ways. There are lots of people who are making noise with instruments and with their voices, but are they helping to change things for the better? Can you? Will you? There are tons of books in the world, with countless pictures drawn. Are they helping to bring love, joy, peace, inspiration, faith and a glimpse of heaven into people's lives? Will yours?

Do you know some verses by heart from the Bible? See how many you can learn in one day. I think it will surprise you to see how fast you can memorize verses. It will be much easier and faster for you now than it will be when you get older. Set a goal for yourself and have fun "hiding the word in your heart" as king David said. (Psalm 119:11)

Are you good at noticing when someone around you needs something? It's good to have your focus on the needs of others. It's a great distraction from those other thoughts and activities that get you down, when you are too involved in thinking about yourself only. Try today to see how you can step out and help someone else, even in a small and simple way. Even a smile is a help, or perhaps giving your time to cheer up your younger brother or sister.

Sometimes not doing something is a great help, like not talking loudly when others are resting, or not saying something that comes to mind if it's not something good and helpful or kind and true.

Even learning something like soccer or cricket can be a useful skill. Besides the benefits of the exercise, it helps you learn to work together as a team with others, and to get along with different kinds of people, and to appreciate how each one adds to the game, and you need each one on the team.

Can you cook yet? Well, the first place to start is to make sure to wash your hands before you eat, and to help clear your dish at the end of the meal. Starting with cleanliness is the best place to start, as cooks that aren't clean might cause the people who eat their food to get sick.

How can cooking help you later in life? Well, that's easy to see! You'll need to eat for the rest of your life. If you know how to take care of these needs of your body, you'll be able to make sure you are in good working order, making good healthful foods for yourself, and not just relying on others to always do it. That way you can make sure what you are eating is really what will keep you going strong. And not just you only, but your children, or family, or others who visit you, or who you visit.

A meal can be a wonderful way to meet with friends, and to share God's love and words with others. Everyone always wants and needs food. Learning to cook helps you be able to speak with people who you are cooking for, and eating with, giving you an

opportunity to tell them about Me or to encourage them in some way—even just through being a friend that they can sit and talk with.

Paul was able to use every bit of what he'd learned when young, while traveling for years, telling as many people as he could about Me, Jesus. So it helped make it easier in some ways. It was still pretty tough in other ways, however, but at least he had some skills to help him out.

Here are a few of the things that happened in the life of Paul the apostle:

--Paul had several opportunities to speak with kings, rulers, deputies, and those in charge. He spoke with boldness and clarity, winning their favour, and helping many to know the good news and way of salvation, both the rulers themselves, as well as those in their countries as a result.

--He often had to travel by ship, and the storms encountered were very difficult, some lasting for weeks, while being rocked around in a boat, hardly able to even eat, or see the sunshine. He was shipwrecked too, but all aboard the ship were able to swim to the nearby island and were saved. It was an unexpected place to visit, but since their ship couldn't be used any more, it gave him the chance to talk with all who lived there about Me, Jesus.

--He was bitten by a poisonous snake, and not harmed at all. Those who knew what normally happened were very amazed to see that Paul was completely fine, and it made them all take note of what Paul explained to them about God's power, and Me, Jesus.

--He lived through an earthquake, which shook the place he was being held in securely. It ended up freeing him and his partner. But rather than running off, he took the opportunity to speak with the prison guard and his whole family about Me.

--He was a tent maker, and at times worked with others to make tents, while still preaching to as many as he could, not forgetting his real job—to spread the good news to all around.

--He had a special gift of healing, and many were healed through Paul's prayers and the miracles done by My power through him. There was a time when people would bring to Paul even just a piece of cloth or a handkerchief from a sick person, for him to touch, and they'd be made well. They had such faith in My healing power and the prayers of Paul.

--He wrote many books and letters to the groups of believers all throughout the country and surrounding area. He didn't just talk to them once as he travelled and passed through if there was a way he could visit again or send another disciple to visit to encourage them. He also sent letters filled with God's Words and instructions to help them grow in faith and learn more about My way.

--He often felt alone or had large groups of people speaking against him and wishing to stop him. Paul didn't let that stop him, and God always rescued him and gave him new opportunities to spread the good news as he carried on.

--There were several years that he wasn't permitted to travel, and had to stay in one house, guarded. That gave him time to write letters, and to speak with rulers and governors who came to visit him, wanting to hear about what he had to say, and the way to salvation.

--He knew what it was like to be hungry, cold, sick, and in want. But he was more interested in making Me happy, and gaining Heavenly rewards and riches, than just being comfortable and having all he'd need on Earth.

There have been many others—too many to count or to mention here—who have lived their lives, or most of their lives, telling the Good News that I came to Earth to bring: My love for everyone, and My offer of forgiveness and Salvation to all who would believe. Each one will be wonderfully rewarded. And so will you, as you choose to do your best day-by-day for Me and for what you know in your heart to be right and according to My Word in the Bible. This life here now is not the end, but rather just a learning station, a grade in the big life you will live, forever. Learn what you can, love in all the ways you can, and do what you can, and I'll be so pleased—and so will you, too, as you find out what I have planned for you. Rewards are awaiting the faithful ones, I promise!

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## Heaven

Here's the beautiful ending—or rather the new beginning!

Can you count the tears you've cried? God did. Do you remember each time you got hurt, or that someone else hurt you? God saw and cares, and felt the hurt too, because He loves you like His own child. When a parent really cares for their children, they practically feel each sorrow and joy, hurt and sickness, and emotion along with their child. Isn't that amazing? They understand and care, and want to do all they can to make things the best they can for their child.

When I, Jesus, came to Earth, as a human, that was one of the goals—to go through that experience in order to understand you better, to feel what it's like, to know what you need, and how things are for you on Earth. I know what is fun for you, and what makes you feel happy and inspired, and what things you'd rather not have, and what is difficult for you and all who are on Earth.

I know what it feels like to be hungry, thirsty and tired. I know how nice a good meal feels after a long journey. I know how great it is to see a friend after a long while and finally be able to talk together again. I know what things make you feel just great, and what makes you feel special and loved. I know what things are wonderful to look at, or hear, or feel or experience. And best of all, I know how to create amazing things.

So now imagine a guy—Me—who knows just what kind of things are thought of as the most amazing, terrific, awesome, marvellous and stupendous by those on Earth, and who can also create such things and places and experiences even far better than you've ever

imagined. If you've got Me as your friend, I can let you come and stay with Me in My amazing world of love and peace and joy and plenty and incredible experiences and far-out thrills.

This Heavenly place isn't just an imaginary land, but really exists, and the best part is that you get to be there, when the time is right. Cool, huh? Maybe not today, or tomorrow, but when I've got your special nook in Heaven ready, then I'll call for you, okay? Can you be patient, and wait till that time? And while you are waiting, do you want to help Me make and build your place in Heaven? How can you, while you are still on Earth? Well, let me give you some clues.

When you go to the store or market you give money and then get what it is that you need, right? Or when a house is being built, the owner of the land pays the workmen to construct it, as well as gets all the supplies needed to put it together.

So how can you help to build your mansion and stock up rewards in Heaven? Imagine that there is a Heavenly way to pay—but it's nothing at all like what you have on Earth. The money on earth is dirty and makes people who are only interested in sad and do bad things. It can make people be selfish and greedy and not help others like I would really want them to. So don't get our mind or heart set on getting only riches and things for yourself on Earth—that is the first step.

If God sees you caring more about others than about acquiring more things or money for yourself and your own comfort, that is one great way to supply Me with building material for your place in Heaven, and you can be sure it will be more wonderful than you could ever have made for yourself on Earth. Giving love and caring about others makes your rewards in Heaven really start to take shape and look and be fabulous!

Another way to send up some building materials is through having faith—faith that God will take care of you, faith to do what God asks you to do while on Earth, faith to believe what God's Word says is true. —Trusting and believing in the truth of God's love and care, and not getting turned away by those who speak the untruths and lies and try to pull you into only thinking and doing things in the way of the world.

Faith pleases God very much—because it shows Him that you know He's there and cares and loves you. When someone you love knows that you are their friend, it makes you happy, right? It shows you that they trust that you really do love them.

Good friendship is made strong through the friends knowing that they love and care about each other. That's the way it is with Me too. I am happy when you demonstrate to Me that you know I love you, and you prove it through trusting that I am always there with you, and you don't worry or wonder if I am going to answer your prayers. You expect and know that He'll take good care of you, or work out for the best the things that are hard for you, and make it all right again.

Here is another example that might give you an idea of what it means to have faith. What if every year on your birthday your parents or a friend or brother or sister always tried to do something that was special for you—an outing or a snack or a present. Year after year they always remembered, and it was always something you enjoyed. What if, one year,

instead of looking forward to your birthday, and the special treat they would give you, you got all worried and thought, “I’m sure they won’t do anything nice for me this year...I think they’ll even forget that I have a birthday at all.” How would your friend or parents or brother or sister feel? It would make them feel you’ve forgotten that they’ve always remembered it before, and the whole point of them giving you treats and gifts was lost—they wanted you to know that they love you. You worrying about it, forgetting all the good things they’ve done, would make them feel sad. When you think they don’t care, it shows you don’t trust their love is true. So that’s what it’s like with God, and His friends—you and those who believe and have received Me, Jesus, as your Saviour.

Keep being thanking for all the many ways God’s love is shown to you, and trust that He will continue to love and care for you. I want to be a close friend to you, and it makes Me so glad when you know that I am near and that I will take good care of you. And the closer a friend you are to Me, the more fun you’ll have, and the more gifts I’ll give you as well!

Speaking of gifts, and the huge gift of Heaven that is being prepared for you, how would you like to hear how My disciple John described it when I allowed him to see a glimpse of it, while still on Earth? It was written down and is found in the very last book of the Bible.

Have you ever noticed how some people really like diamonds, and think they are special? They are pretty and very durable and when light shines on them they are very attractive. People put them in jewellery so they can be looked at often. Diamonds are rare to find, and are very precious!

Well, when the apostle John was shown a vision of this marvellous Heavenly city he described it as beautiful as a crystal clear huge diamond! He said it was so very beautiful! And it was clear, bright gold! Think of some of the cities in the world today—the smog, the smoke, the dirt, the sewage, the pollution, the noisy traffic and confusion. Then now think about a city that is made of pure and clear gold, like glass, all shining and bright. The walls made of jewels, gems and precious stones, the streets made of gold and are sparkling clean. A place where there’s no problem trying to travel around from one place to the next, and you don’t have to wait for a bus or train, or even pay a fair. You can fly where you want, if you like, or travel in other ways yet to be discovered by you when you get there.

John described the wall around the city, and told of its 12 layers made of precious stones and jewel. Imagine something like a beautiful emerald or amethyst, or sapphire, or diamond being longer and bigger than you can even see with your normal eyes today, if you were standing right up close to it. That’s a pretty big jewel! Now imagine a pearl so tall you can’t see the top of it. Around the city were 12 gates, not made of iron, wood, or even glass, but rather pearl! Can you imagine a more lovely building material to make a gate out of? How gorgeous.

There is no palace on Earth built for a king or queen that has been made that is even close to how beautiful God’s living place is. And the amazing thing is that you get to have permission to live there too! All who love God and follow God’s way, and have accepted Me, Jesus, into their lives and received My forgiveness, get to be there—forever! You’ll be a permanent resident of God’s Heavenly city. You won’t need a passport—just Me, I’m the

passport. Do you have Me with you, and in your heart and life? Have you prayed to receive My forgiveness and love? Then that's your passport and ticket to be in the most amazing place ever. You won't have to leave, unless you want to go for an exploring mission around the galaxies. Maybe I can take you for a guided tour, if you like. How's that for a "day in town"?—A trip through the universe.

You'll always be a citizen of Heaven, and can go and stay freely as you wish. Inside there is no need for the sun or moon to shine. The light from God is beautiful and bright enough to light the whole city in the loveliest way. And there is no night, just beauty and fun and inspiration.

And remember that special tree in the garden of Eden—the good one, the tree of life? The one that Adam and Eve and everyone else on Earth weren't permitted to eat from, after their choice to disobey and to allow sin into the world? Well, where did it go? You'll find the Tree of Life growing abundantly in Heaven, with all kinds of fruits on it, 12 different kinds! Fun! There will be something for everyone, and all the varied preferences of tastes.

The river of life also flows from God and through the city. You've never seen a river as clear and refreshing and sparkling as the flowing waters in the River of Life in Heaven! You can swim in it, sail on it, play in it, dive in it, picnic by it while tasting the treats from the Tree of Life. It will feel like Heaven—because it is! It will feel so good, so relaxing, so energizing, so thrilling, so amazing.

This is just the tiniest peek into what the Heavenly City is like. The full reality of it still waits to be discovered by you, when you get there! It will be more wonderful than you can imagine. It will be filled with love and Godliness. The citizens of Heaven—you and your friends, and all who have followed and loved Me, Jesus—will not live as some do in the world today, that are causing sadness and trouble. People in Heaven will take after My personality and nature and character; the way God is. And you don't have to wait till you get to Heaven to start being more like Me, either—in fact you shouldn't! Start today to prepare yourself to live as a citizen of Heaven, and act as one, in a Godly fashion.

What is that like? What are the "fruits" or results of God's spirit being somewhere? Love, joy, peace, longsuffering (or patience), gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (or moderation), are things mentioned in Galatians 5:22. What are some other things listed in the Bible? In Philippians 4:8 it says to think on things that are: True, honest, just, pure, lovely, good report, virtue, praise. In James 3:17 it also lists some Godly qualities: "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

Perhaps you can look up some of those definitions and talk about what each of these words mean in practical every-day life. Start your training to day, to be a top-notch, high-class citizen of Heaven.

Now when you think of your life being the most wonderful, what do you imagine? Let's list some of the things that most people would really enjoy, that Heaven will have. Maybe some of these things are important to you as well, and you'll be happy to know you'll get to have it one day—and if something good and wonderful that you really like isn't listed here, well,

remember, I know just how to make things special and perfect for you personally. I know just what you are thinking. There will be so much to look forward to. You don't have to get too down about things being rather hard on Earth now. It won't last all that much longer, and the good that comes afterwards for those who love and believe in Me, Jesus, will never end. Won't that be wonderful?

In Heaven you won't be sad and cry about things. You won't feel hurt or have pain. You will always be in perfect health and wellbeing. There won't be anything that hurts or destroys. All will be perfect and wonderful. You won't have to miss your loved ones and family or friends, you'll get to see them easily. You'll never be hungry or thirsty, but can eat all you want of whatever you want that is there, but won't feel discomfort. You'll never be too cold or too hot, but will feel just great.

Coming up with shoes for your feet or clothes to wear won't be a problem. Neither will sewing or weaving or washing clothes be a problem. There is nothing dirty there anyway. I will clothe you just right and provide all that is needed, and that makes you look just great, like a prince or princess of the King of kings! And there won't even be a need to protect your feet, the streets and grass and everything there will be totally safe and comfortable to walk on.

You won't get weary or tired or get headaches or backaches or blisters or bruises. You'll never get sick in anyway. Every part of your body will be in top good working order. You'll always have enough energy. You won't have to work hard. You can have fun and joy every day. You won't have to make money. There won't be some rich and others poor. All will have more than enough of the best things!

You will feel loved and special and important and appreciated, always—by others, and especially by the One Who made you. You'll get to talk to people who have lived before, that now live in Heaven, people you've always wanted to meet. Language won't be a problem, you'll be able to understand each other in new ways, and communicate with love and honesty.

The animals in Heaven will be the best you've ever seen, kind and gentle and fun to be around. There will be no pests and bothersome creatures. It will all be clean, without germs and disease. All will be amazing, yet gentle and lovely. The plants will grow beautifully, without weeds and thorns, or bugs that bother. The weather will always be perfect, Heavenly, really.

You'll be surrounded by love and beauty and get to try new and wonderful things. You'll get to learn new things you've always wanted to know how to do, or to learn about. The music in Heaven will totally thrill you, and make you feel so happy and inspired. You can have as many friends as you like, from all kinds of nationalities and families—since everyone is now one big family! You'll know love like you've never known before. You'll get to see God, our Heavenly Father, and talk with Him, and talk to Me, Jesus God's Son and all the angels! How's that for something really special?!

Heaven isn't just going to stay up high out of view forever either, but God's got plans to bring it down to Earth too, so not only those who live in Heaven can see it, but those who are on Earth too! However, the world is going to need to get quite cleaned up first, right? So

here's the plan, briefly, so you can know what is going to come. It will help you to remember these things when at first it seems things are just getting worse and worse. –Because at first they will!

I, Jesus, God's Son, will come back at the end of this world's time, when things seem they couldn't get any worse—they won't. I'll stop it all, and take you and all those who love and believe in Me, up and away to the greatest party you have ever had. We are going to feast and laugh like you have never done before. The games and fun that will be enjoyed will make you so filled with joy it will make you forget the hard times here and now, it'll be that good.

And it won't be just a party that ends and the laughs are quiet, and it's "back to work". Oh no! That's just the beginning of the joys that await you and others who are faithful, who are true, who are loyal to My cause, and who give Me their life and time and love now, here on Earth. The joys will just get bigger and better. You'll get to do things that you've always wanted to do, and be a part of Heaven and all its activity and excitement and projects and ideas!

One of the great projects is going to be finishing up what many of you are helping Me now with—changing the world into a new and better place.

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### **The Millennium**

After all that has gone wrong with people choosing the wrong ways of doing things, and making a mess of nature in many places, and hurtful actions causing so much harm, don't you think people will be ready to at last try to all do things in a new and better way? –God's way!

When the punishment was given to Adam and Eve and to all the world, there were plans made by God to once again restore the Earth to beauty and peace. God will change things down on Earth again to being pleasant and more beautiful, without the pests and troubles that are often part of life now. Growing food and raising animals will be so much easier. There will be peace on Earth again. And you, God's children and those who have learned to do things His way, and are citizens of Heaven, will help to be in charge then of teaching those still on Earth the better way to live. Though there will still be hurts and accidents and some sickness then on Earth, there won't be as much as there is now. The leaves from the Tree of Life will bring amazing healing and relief. People will live for a very long time once again. How fun!

Many of the prophets from long ago wrote down messages that gave glimpses into what this time on Earth will be like—the time when I am King, and things begin to be restored again to their original beauty. I want to give you a little "preview" in what is often referred to as the "Millennium" or the one-thousand years of peace and training for the citizens of Earth. Here are some of the things mentioned in the Bible, that were told to those faithful prophets of old who wrote them down, so that you and all the world could be encouraged now and have something to look forward to.



The wild and ferocious animals will be as pets and will be pleasant to have around. All the animals will get along wonderfully with one another. Animals and people will eat the food of plants, just as it was originally created in the Garden of Eden. So, both people and animals will be friends with one another and live happily.

There won't be thorns and thistles, nor any poisons plants anymore. Weeds and thorny plants won't grow up all over the place, so it will make it much easier to plant crops and enjoy a walk through a meadow. You won't have to worry about getting a rash or ill from some plant that now might grow and cause discomfort. Children can pick berries that are growing wild, and not have to worry about which ones might be poisonous. They will all be good and delicious then.

There will be so much more land available to live on, and all that people need to supply the needs of their families will be provided for, right from the land they are living on. The need for big, noisy, polluted, crowded and danger-filled cities will be eliminated. People can live happily in natural surroundings, together with their families and loved ones and friends.

Things will go at a much calmer pace. Things will slow down a whole lot more. There won't be the need to rush and live a stress-filled life. Instead of rushing through the day, and getting sick from all the pressure, people can instead enjoy life—not just on vacation, but every day. Just that alone will help to relieve so many illnesses that many people suffer today.

Transportation will take on new forms, and many of the vehicles that have been part of the world now for the past one or two hundred years, will change. People won't have to rush to get from one place to the next. They won't have to come up with tons of money just to travel here and there, and pay for petrol and car registration, or airfare, or to buy a new car, and all that. It will be so much easier and pleasant—and a whole lot safer—to travel then, in the new world that is to come. How will you get around? Animals were made to be a help to people. Using animals for transportation will come back in style then, and be an essential part of living.

The life-span of people on Earth will be many more times what it now is today—especially in a world where there is so much sickness and danger. The modern means of transportation alone causes so many troubles. The switch to safer and more enjoyable means of getting around will make people live a lot longer. Just eliminating the fumes from the oil burning vehicles will bring so much health and strength to those on Earth, along with a whole lot of other changes.

People who have made it to 100 years nowadays are considered very fortunate and rare. But in the new and beautiful way the world will be for that time, when someone has their 100<sup>th</sup> birthday they will still be considered young! Imagine that! A world where being 100 years old is young. You'll be good looking, strong and healthy for a very long time then!

These one-thousand years of peace on Earth, and a new and beautiful way to live will come to an end, making way for something else! Thus comes the final part in this storybook, that tells of a new and wonderful beginning!

Once those in the world get many years to learn God's new ways, and how to have a peaceful world again, and to live in love, God will give the Earth a "make over". He's going to take away anything that is left that shouldn't be part of the world—any remaining pollution, and any things that some naughty people might be trying to make and do that aren't Godly. The whole world will be made clean and fresh again—even the sky and atmosphere will be clean and beautiful again. And only the people who want to live in God's way will be allowed to stick around. Anything and everything bad, including the people who only wish to do bad continually, will be taken away from the Earth.

Then, like the surprise at a birthday party, the big and beautiful gift of the Heavenly City will come down to Earth, for all to see and wonder at, and be thrilled to see. Those who are citizens of the Heavenly City can go and come as they wish, and can visit those on Earth, and return to their special place in the shining golden City!

It's God's City, and He'll be the King of all. No one else will make the world the way they think it should be, or force others to do this or that. The King of Love will come down, and be totally in charge, and be with people, talk with them, be their God and their Ruler. Isn't that love? Doesn't that show you how much our Heavenly Father loves you? He loves people and wants to be with them, and realizes that people need Him around too, to make the World the best place ever.

Are you glad that you can be a part of His Kingdom? And you can look forward to a time when all the world will know and love Him, and be filled with His love! Who knows what will happen then? You'll just have to wait to find out! I'll see you soon, I promise! I love you so much, I can hardly wait to show you to your happy Heavenly home.