



—Imaginary Stories—

...Or, what would you do
if He showed up to see you today?

Typed by: Chariane Quille
Art by: Rocky Rumble

What would Jesus do?

—Imaginary Stories—

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Introduction

Dear Children,

Thank you for wishing to make Me happy by trying to do the things that please Me—even if it's not the easiest thing to do at the time. I love to have you as My followers.

Perhaps you read about Me in the Bible, or your parents try to explain how to be more like Me. But I want to make things even easier for you to know what to do in situations that are pretty common to most children your age. —How you can follow Me and show My way of doing things in your day.

Just because I am not living on this Earth now, in the flesh, it doesn't mean that I don't know what is going on. I am aware; I see all things. I have been keeping in touch with every bit of change the world has gone through since I was last there. I'm all updated and can relate.

Sometimes to make things easier to “do things My way” a story can really help you understand just how to do it. I'm going to put Myself “in your shoes”, understanding what things are like for you, on Earth, right now.

I'm going to tell you what I would do if I were there, in some of the situations you might find yourselves in.

And if these types of scenarios haven't yet happened to you, they just might happen to your friends, or they can give you more of an idea of the kinds of things that please Me.

Thank you, My young followers, for trying to do things in a Heavenly way—My way—though not always the easiest way, it is always the best way.

Forever your best friend and play buddy,

Jesus



1—Jesus on the Soccer Field

Turbie and Troaden were both trying to get at the ball—even though they were on the same team.

Their coach had tried to teach and instruct them about working together as a team, passing the ball between them, and supporting each other’s manoeuvres. But they just couldn’t get the idea.

“I want to be able to play it my way. I know how to kick it real well. If I let someone else have the ball, they may not be able to do it the way I think it is best!” Turbie had a problem.

He thought he was indeed the best on the team. But you’re not really the best until you can work as a team, and notice and use the talents of the others.

Troaden on the other hand didn't think he was that great. He just wanted to play. He was bothered when he had to wait for a turn with the ball.

"I'm here to play!" he pouted. "I don't just want to watch a game! If I wanted to do that, I would sit on the bleachers. I want to have the ball as much as I can."

"Tweet!" The whistle blew. The coach called for a time out. He motioned to the team to gather around.

"You're good players, and know how to kick a ball. But what we are here for is to learn to work as a team to get the ball into the goal. It's going to take more than one person to do it. Pass it. Work together. And when it's your turn, give it your best shot—and then let someone else have a turn."

It sounded like so many other times in Turbie's day when he and his brother wanted to do the same thing at the same time. "Take turns," Mother would say. Or, "You're not the best just because you can do something well. It's always the best when you are loving, kind, and thoughtful of others."

As the coach blew his whistle to start the game again, the boys noticed a new player coming on to the field. He was strong. He was smiling. He knew the game. The name "Jesus" was written on His shirt.

Quickly He took his place on the team. He seemed to know what to do. It was easy now for Turbie and Troaden to know how to play.

They watched the smooth way He took the ball from the other team, and then kicked it over to Troaden with a smile.

He could have just kept the ball and tried to get a goal, but He didn't. Instead He let others have a go at it, if they were in a better position to kick it in.

Sometimes it took passing the ball three or four times before the final attempt to kick it into the goal. When a goal was scored, even though this amazing player didn't personally kick it, He shouted with joy! He was glad for the one that kicked it in—and glad for the point their whole team scored!

Turbie and Troaden started to have more fun as they followed His style of playing. They started letting each other have more turns. They stopped thinking that were the best on the team. They started appreciating the quick reflexes and cool manoeuvres of the others on the team. They started to smile more, laugh, and even have fun when they lost a goal.

They were together, learning, getting stronger, being friends, and having fun anyway.

“Jesus is the coolest!” Troaden exclaimed.

“He's awesome!” Turbie agreed. As Jesus passed by they both gave him a high-five!

“We're a team! Yeah!”





2—A True Friend

It was a nice but cool autumn day. The children were off for a trip to the park. They had their scooters, wagon, soccer ball, and best of all, their dog, Skippy.

It was going to be fun playing in the fallen leaves, enjoying rides on the wagon, playing ball games and so forth. But there was just one thing missing. Arnold. He was the youngest of the family.

He's just recently recovered from a bad cold, and still needed to take it easy. Uncle Eddie had work to do at the house, so was also going to help watch over Arnold, while the other children and their friends when to the park with Mom and Dad.

“I feel bad staying back, like I’m really missing out on some fun and games,” he told his Uncle. But what could he do? The air was too cool for him still, and made him feel unwell.

“I’ll tell you a story and show you some pictures as well, from when your mother and I were children. We used to go to the very park that the others are at today.”

“Really?” Arnold looked up with surprise.

“Can you tell me what used to happen?”

“Sure can,” replied Uncle Eddie. “In fact, the story I’ll tell happened on a day much like today.”

And his memory took him back.

“Eddie, Eddie! It’s your turn to kick the ball.

“Get it Ed!” called out Margret, his sister, as they played kick-ball.

But as he was running to get it, something made him trip, and he cried out in pain. “Ahhh!”

He’d stepped wrong, and needed to stop playing. He couldn’t put his weight down on that foot without it hurting.

“Oh, how I cried!” Eddie continued telling the story to Arnold. “For not only was I in pain, but I was missing out on the rest of the game. Afterwards the others went on to the playground and other fun things. But me, I just had to sit for awhile.



“In fact it took about two more weeks of not fully participating in the active sports until I felt all the way healed. It was hard.”

“But what did you do then? If you couldn’t play, and everyone else was gone? There must have been something you could do?” asked Arnold.

“Well, yes there was. Glad you asked, because that’s getting to the best part. I started to invent; to dream up solutions; to imagine things that could be made to make things around the house or in the city easier or safer. In fact I even constructed a few of those things when I got older, that I’d thought of when I was young. And best of all, I learned how to pray.

“You see, before that I was always running here and there, and doing this or that. I didn’t really know how to stop all that activity to just talk to Jesus, hear from Him and to make Him the best part of my life. Now I know it was because of our talk times—Jesus and Me—that I was able to get all those ideas. You can do the same!” encouraged Uncle Eddie.

Arnold was happy about the idea, but didn’t feel he knew how—to talk, or to listen to Jesus very well. But still he would try. Getting new, cool ideas seemed like a fun thing.

So while Uncle Eddie went to continue fixing up things around the house, Arnold took some time alone with the Lord.

“Jesus,” he started off. “Why did you let me get sick, and have to miss the fun at the park? I’m sure You must have a reason.”

Just then he thought he heard someone coming into the room. He looked up to see a smiling young man—about in His late teens. He had a ball under one arm, and looked as if He had been playing in the big field nearby.

“Hi! Just thought I’d drop by and have a chat. I was nearby and thought you needed some company here,” He said, and continued.

“My name is Jesus, and I heard you were having some recovery time. I know what it’s like to miss out on fun ’n’ games, and do something else. I’ve had to do that lots, you know. I didn’t want you to feel alone, so I came to keep you company.”

Arnold was happily surprised to have such a wonderful guest in his house. He motioned for Jesus to come and sit down on the chair next to him. They chatted, laughed, told jokes and stories. It was a very memorable afternoon.

“Thank You for visiting me. I really needed a friend,” said Arnold.

“Any time, just call on me!” Jesus replied.

“I’m going to remember this forever!” Arnold exclaimed, and added, “and I will remember to do the same for others too. You made me feel happy and loved. I hope to be just like You.”

He gave Jesus a hug. “You’re the best example of a friend—I want to be that kind of friend too. Not just there to have fun with others, but ready to stop my play to help someone else to have fun in the way they need it right then.”

“Good for you!” commended Jesus. “You’ll have close and good friends that way—“A friend loveth at all times.” (Proverbs 17:17)



3—Always Around

“Carlos, can you please help me?” It was Joe calling down the stairs to his younger brother.

Curious, Carlos went up to see. Joe was on a ladder, trying to change the light bulb.

“I just can’t put the glass light cover down. Can I hand it to you? I didn’t want it to break.”

“Sure, hand it to me!” Carlos said.

But just as he was taking it, the ladder wobbled and he reach over to help secure it, so his big brother wouldn’t fall down.

And now the glass light cover slipped and fell to the ground. It hadn’t broken completely, but it had a bit of a crack in it, and a large chip.

It was still somewhat useable, but noticeably had taken a fall. Carlos felt bad. He had so wanted to be a help, and now felt like he'd only made things worse.

"Thanks for catching me and securing the ladder," his brother Joe said. "I guess I should have been more careful. It was my fault."

Carlos felt better now, but still wished that the light cover hadn't cracked.

"Let's go for a bike ride," Joe suggested. It would get their minds off the present situation. "It's a wonderful afternoon. Let's not miss it!" he said, grabbing his helmet and jacket.

Fun! Time with his big brother was something he liked. This was going to be great. But just as he dashed to get his own bike-riding gear, he knocked over the pretty flower vase, spilling water all over.

"Oh, boy. I guess I was just going too fast," Carlos reprimanded himself.

"Don't worry about it Bro," Joe said. We can get that cleaned up in no time. I've done that too, you know."



Fifteen minutes later they were off for their ride. It felt good to get out. The fresh air and warm afternoon sunshine was great.

Just then Carlos thought he saw something in the corner of his eye. He turned his head only for a second to get a better look, but it was gone.

So he kept on riding.

Then it happened again. This time when he looked he saw something that pleasantly surprised him. He'd never seen it before. There beside him, riding along, was a very friendly-looking dude—who looked like...yes!

“It’s gotta be Jesus, no doubt!” Carlos thought. And every time he looked over, there was this new bike buddy riding along with them. When they got to the park, instead of the three of them, it was just two again, his brother Joe and himself.

“Did you see anyone else riding with us?” Carlos asked his brother.



“No. Did you?” Joe responded.

“Well, someone for a while was there, I thought...”
Carlos said, unable to explain it fully.

“I’ll race you!” said Joe, when they had parked their bikes. And off they were for more fun and exercise.

Carlos was still intrigued about the friendly biker. Had it just been his imagination? He had to know. So while resting from their racing, he sat under a tree to have some time alone, while Joe was doing push-ups nearby.

Caught by surprise, there He was again. Jesus sat next to him and explained.

“I’m always with you, Carlos, though most times you just don’t see Me. But I know today has been extra tough, so I wanted you to know how close to you I really am.”

Carlos remembered all the mistakes and fumbles that day; all the times he’d lost his patience; the times he just felt he wanted to give up; the times he was tired. And then he thought of Joe. He’d been a kind brother, never making him feel bad.

“I wanted to be near to you like a brother today, Carlos.” Jesus said. “That’s why I helped your brother to be patient, helpful, and to have fun with you.

“You didn’t feel so alone, or bad about your mistakes when he was patient, forgiving and enjoying your company, did you?”

Carlos remembered the ways that his brother had been like Jesus to him. He had really appreciated it.

“Next time your brother is kind to you, is helpful, and makes things easy for you, think of it as Me being there,” Jesus told him.

“And then try to be the same to your little sister. You know she really loves you, and it makes a big difference to her whether you are nice to her or not. You are important to her. She looks up to you and wants to copy what you do.”

“Okay, Jesus,” Carlos said. “I’ll try my best. Thanks for being with me always, and for showing me how to be, through making my brother a bit like you.”

Joe waved that it was time to go.

“I think it’s time to go, but I’m not going to say ‘good-bye’, because I’m going with you!” said Jesus with a laugh, and then vanished from sight.

Carlos ran over to get his bike, put on his helmet, and they were off to ride home again.

“Thanks Joe, for the fun today—and for the way you were patient and kind to me,” Carlos said, as they put their bikes away. “I was thinking how it’s what Jesus would be like if He were here, as my brother.”

“Thanks Carlos! You’re a great guy.” Joe gave him a hug.

“I think I’ll see if Mom needs any help.”

And Joe was off.

Just then Jessica came by.

“Carlos! I missed you. Can we play together outside?”

“Sure, Sis,” he said, remembering Jesus’ words, and passed on to her the kindness that he’d been shown that day.

Then when blunders happened, like when she accidentally knocked over their cool sand castle that they’d built in the sand box, he was quick to forgive her.

“Come, I’ll push you on the swing,” Carlos offered.



Jessica had a smile from ear to ear. “Thank you, Carlos! You are my best friend!” she enthusiastically said.



4—The Boy Bob

The van was packed and ready to go. This was the outing everyone had been looking forward to for the past month.

A day at a lake in the town nearby. Coolers were filled with food, floats and water play toys packed in. Tents and mats for resting. Ropes and pegs for hanging wet swimming gear. Books and board games for those who wished for quieter activities. And everyone was in the van ready to drive off—well, nearly everyone. Bob was the last boy yet to come.

He hadn't looked forward to the event. He was a "homebody", he liked staying at home, in the house, and sitting most of the time.

He was usually the first one to get sick when there was a flu going around. His lack of fresh air and exercise made it easy for sickness to stick with him.

He was dragging his feet about the outing. His mother had tried to inspire him about it. His father had told of the fun they'd do together, but still it was hard for him.

He was looking around the house one last time for anything else to add to the overly packed van, that might make him feel “more at home” and have plenty to do while out in nature. He hadn't been out enough to realise that nature provides its own variety of activities and wonderful excitement just on its own.

“You don't need to bring the whole inside of the house on this trip!” his brother joked, while watching Bob tote one last bag out to the van.



Everyone was happy that Bob was finally there, so they did their best to accommodate the next piece of luggage to load up. It wasn't easy, and the bag had to be fit under the seat. But at least they could all finally go.

Even though Bob would probably not have the time to even use or play with all the things he brought along, if just having it all in the van made him feel a bit better, then the others allowed him to do so.

With a word of prayer the excited team was on their way.

The lake was a wonderful place; peaceful, serene, crystal clear. The weather was just perfect. They all were having a great day. Well, all except for Bob.

He was sitting alone to the side of their "camp" for the day. Everyone seemed to be having such a great time, and it just made him feel all the more lonely.

"Why don't you come and play with us?" some of the kids called out to him.

"I think I'd rather sit here," he'd say. He didn't really want to just sit there, looking at the books and toys that he'd brought.

The real problem was that he felt he didn't know how to play the games the others were playing, as well as them. He thought he wouldn't do so well.



He hadn't played enough outdoors to gain his strength and skill in outdoor play. He wondered what they would think of him if he tried. Of course they would be happy to have him there. But still, he felt uncomfortable. Poor Bob.

He got up to help himself to a snack after awhile and look around at the trees surrounding them. There was a beautiful forest decorating the area. Then he got an idea.

"I'd like to take some quiet time alone near a tree. I bet it would be kind of fun." So he walked a short ways into the forest, where he could still be seen by the others, but was also surrounded by lovely, majestic trees.

Bob nestled down under the shade of a pine, and looked way up. It really was spectacular, breath-taking even.

“There is so much wonder, so much beauty out here. I could stay here for hours. It’s awesome!” he thought, forgetting momentarily about all the “things” that he’d brought to help him feel more at home here at the lake.

“Mind if I join you?” Bob heard a voice say.

Bob looked around and a boy about his age came and sat with him.

“I always liked being alone in nature,” this new friend said. “It helped me to cope with life’s problems.”

Bob’s eyes teared up. He’d always wanted someone to understand what he was really feeling like inside.

“I just can’t seem to make friends very easily,” he said with a snuffle. “Sometimes I try, but usually I’m too shy or worried what others will think.”

Bob knew by this time that this friend listening to him was none other than Jesus, the best friend he could ever have. He felt he could tell him all that was on his heart and mind, and that Jesus would understand him completely—and even be able to help him out a bit.

“The first step to having friends,” Jesus began, “is to make someone feel loved and accepted, and that you would be there to help them whenever you could.

“Later on comes the fun part of having others return the kindness, and being caring and appreciative of you. But you have to take the first step. The rest will follow.”

“So what do I do?” Bob asked.

“How can I make the children playing there right now, feel like I am their friend? What would You do, Jesus, if you were in my place?”

Jesus thought quietly for a moment then leapt up as a stray frizz bee flew over to them. He grabbed it fast and tossed it back. When the children looked to see who had thrown it back so fast they only saw Bob there, thinking that he’d done it.

“Thanks, Bob! You were right there when we needed you! Wanna come play?”

Bob thought for a moment, looked over at Jesus who gave him a nod of approval, and added,

“Looks like a friend is what they need now. I’m sure you’ll do just fine. You won’t catch every throw, but you can have fun trying along with them. Remember, all they need, that will make them want to be a friend to you, is to know that you like being with them, and are willing to help them when they need it.”

“Okay,” said Bob, “I’ll give it a try. It helps me relax more to keep that in mind: They don’t have to like everything about me—I am just going there to show them that I like being with them and want to help them have a nice time.”

And off he ran.

Soon all the children were laughing and playing and enjoying every last moment of their day at the lake.

All too soon it was time to go home. Bob wished they could stay longer. But with new friends now, the playtime fun wouldn’t end.

Tomorrow they would meet for some good outdoor play—Bob included. And each day that he joined in helped him to get more fit and healthy, and happier too.

He wasn’t sad and lonely like he used to be before. Jesus had helped him to overcome what was holding him back before.

“Thank You Jesus,” he said in his heart, “I’m enjoying life so much more now!”





5—The Doctor

Allen had been a healthy boy, playing happily on the hills of his country home, but recently had gotten unwell. The doctors didn't really know how to help him, besides having him receive good rest, proper food and nutrition.

One day while resting, after the doctor left, his mother sat beside his bed, stroking his forehead. A tear ran down his cheek.

He so much wanted to be healed, to be able to run and jump and play again. He wanted his head and bones not to hurt, and to be able to breathe without difficulty.

The phone rang and his mom went to answer it. It was Judie, the sister of Allen's friend. She was calling to see how he was doing, and if he was feeling up to a board game, or wanted some time to chat. She and her brother could come and visit, if he liked.

Allen was glad to have them visit. He really wanted something fun to do. They'd come over in a couple of hours. For now, Allen just needed to be patient through whatever he was feeling now.

While his mom went to get dinner started—always a fun thing to look forward to, a yummy meal—Allen was looking out the window, wishing a friend would be there just then, to help take his mind off his pain and the situation.

“Hello, Allen,” a voice startled him. Allen looked around and was surprised to see a doctor standing in the doorway of his room.

“I thought you—I mean the other doctor—left already.”

“Yes, he did. But I thought you could use some company. You see I'm a special doctor. I know things about healing that others don't.”

“Really?” Allen was feeling hopeful.

“Let me take a look at you.” The new doctor felt Allen's head, checked his heartbeat, and asked some questions to see how he felt.

“Well, some healing takes time. There are two reasons for that. Number one—someone is not ready for healing yet. And number two—others have things to learn as well,” this doctor said.



“I feel very ready for healing, right this moment. I’m always ready. What does that mean?” Allen wondered, feeling eager for relief right there and then.

“It’s like an Olympic champion preparing for the final contest. He might feel very full of energy one day, and can even do some amazing feats. But there is more training and practice that he needs in order to be able to do the best when the time comes to compete with many others.

“And if he keeps practicing and working on his talent, then he’ll do even better and have more of a chance at winning a medal. Also, if he shows up on just any day for the contest, there also won’t be anyone else there to compete with. He needs to wait for the right time when the race is to begin.”

This special visiting doctor explained.

“I see,” Allen was starting to get the idea.

“While I’m sick now I’m learning things—things I’ll need to know later on, and will be glad that I learned. It will make me stronger in heart, mind and spirit, in faith and conviction and all that, and I’ll more easily be able to do a good job later on, with whatever I face.”

“Yes, Allen,” the doctor said with a smile, and kind eyes. “And those who are around you and love you are also learning things—just as much as you are.

“It may be hard to believe, but even your mother feels she is facing just as much of a challenge as you. When things are hard for you, it can be just as hard, or even harder for her, because she loves you so much. I’m teaching her patience and faith and all those good things through it, too.”

Allen knew there was something about this doctor that was special and different than any other doctor. He saw a twinkle in his eyes, and recognised who it was.

“Jesus?” Allen asked the doctor.

“Yes, I’m here with you.” Jesus replied. “I will never leave you. I am with you always—just like I’ve always promised. And even if it seems to take a long time until you and your family’s prayers are answered, it won’t take forever.

“When the victory comes, not only will I reward you for your faith and perseverance, but it won’t seem like it had been too long—longer than you could handle. I’ll make things all right. I’ll fix everything for the best. You’ll see.”

With that Jesus touched his head, and Allen felt drowsy and drifted off into a deep and wonderful sleep.

A few hours later when his friends arrived for some quiet play, he woke feeling refreshed—not just in body, but in his heart.

That time with Jesus was just what he’d needed. Jesus was there with him, he knew it. In time he would receive full healing, he just needed to be patient.



6—Jesus Jogged By

Rusty seemed to be upset about most things these days. Acting patiently and waiting for things to work out, was more than he could manage.

Jesus was watching. He knew how hurt and troubled Rusty felt inside. It was the fourth time that he'd been told "it's no use to try". It seemed no matter what new idea, creation, or invention he came up with, people told him it wouldn't work.

Wasn't there anything he could do, and do well?

Rusty just sat on the park bench, looking at the ducks waddling around. He was hoping to get a new idea, something that would work. Something that was right for him.

He wanted to feel like he was amazing, and that he could make a difference. There were so many needs, so many situations that would benefit from new ways of doing things.

Joggers, mothers with prams, bike riders, and a few scooters all passed by on the pathway that circuited this park. It was usually an active place, especially on the weekends.

One jogger waved as he passed by, and then did the most unusual thing: turned around, and came over to sit on the bench.

Rusty was shocked. Why would He care? But He seemed to take an interest in this young man that he saw sitting there alone, obviously in need of a friend who would listen, or for some encouraging word.

When this jogger spoke, it was almost like He knew what Rusty not only had been feeling, but what he had for breakfast, and what he did in his spare time, and who his friends were.

The kind look in this man's eyes, and His warm friendly smile told Rusty that He was someone who could understand what was going on inside.

Rusty knew at moment that it was Jesus there, ready to talk to him.

“Jesus,” Rusty began. “I just don't know how to succeed at things. I don't get much encouragement to keep trying.”

“People seem to be quicker to criticize what doesn’t work, than to give a kind word for my efforts at trying.”

Jesus listened to all that was on Rusty’s heart, and then began to tell a story of His own.

“I made an amazing machine too,” Jesus began.

Rusty looked up with surprise in his eyes, wanting to hear more.

“Sometimes it works properly; other times things break down a bit. Sometimes people criticize the way it works, or the things it can or can’t do. But it’s still very special to Me.

“See, I didn’t make it to be able to do everything right all the time. I made it with the ability to do new things. It was unlike any other invention and machine around.

“When it was complete, I watched it with interest to see just what would happen next. I liked seeing the things My creation would do. It was a machine with a mind of its own. It wasn’t a remote controlled one, nor could I make it do anything, but I was always nearby to help it when it needed help.

“I called this unique creation, this one-of-a-kind invention, this amazing project of Mine: Rusty!”

“What?” Rusty wasn’t expecting that. But it was true, and it made him laugh a bit.

Jesus had made him special. Not perfect, not containing built-in knowledge of how to do everything. Not problem-free. But it was created for a purpose, and created to learn.

“Not everything works the first time you try! That’s not meant to make you give up, but to help you learn about new things that you wouldn’t have learned if everything had worked out just right when you got the first idea.

“Keep trying; keep learning! You can even learn from others’ words of discouragement to you—not to be that way with others! If you know how something feels, it can help to change and make you into a better and more encouraging friend,” Jesus told him.

Rusty stood up, smiling and ready to get on with life. With a friend like Jesus to help him along, he felt he could keep on going and keep on trying—however many times it took until he succeeded.

“Can I jog with you?” Rusty asked.

“Let’s go!” Jesus replied.

And off they went.



7—Sunshine Town

Sunshine, or Sunni, as she was called, lived in a small town up in the mountains. She'd learned to make cloth from wool, and how to sew simple clothes.

She was often seen making something or other with the bits of wool she was able to keep after her parents had sheered the sheep. They sold everything but the barest amount needed for their clothing necessities.

She was a happy and cheery soul. Well, most of the time. Now, not everyone can or even should be constantly smiling every day of their life. There is time to be serious too. But that's not what I'm talking about.

She would be cheery, unless her plans fell apart. It's easy to be happy and blithe when all is going according to one's plan. But to have resilience even when things are different than what was hoped for, that takes faith and grace.

One evening it seemed the sun had set in dear Sunni's heart and mind. Her thoughts were clouded over, and there were a few raindrops falling from her eyes. Even the happiest of souls need to be comforted and encouraged at times. And this was one such a time.

Her mother came to say good-night, made sure she was warm enough, and brought her a little snack.

"I see something is troubling you, Dear," her mother said. "Is there something I can do about it? Some way that I can help?"



Sunni told her mother much of what was on her mind—the things that were making her sad; things she'd hoped for that didn't look like they'd ever work out. The other feelings that she had a hard time finding words for, she kept in her heart.

After her mother left, Sunni tried to get some sleep. It had been a long and tiring day, and she needed a good night's sleep before the next day. There was always lots to do to help out. Things weren't easy. It took good hard work for her family to do all that they needed to, to keep each one warm, fed, and cared for.

But try as she could, Sunni just couldn't fall into a deep and restful sleep. She sat up and decided to pray.

“Dear Jesus,” her simple prayer began, “I feel sad inside. I feel disappointed. I just wish I could either have things be the way I was hoping for, or that I could not feel bad in my heart when things happen differently. Please help me.”

Just then a gentle breeze began to blow and she curled up in her wool blanket to keep warm, and soon drifted off to sleep at last. The dream she then had seemed to help sort things out for her, and give her some peace. In it she and her mom were making ponchos out of wool.



Usually when mother made clothes she used dyes of various colours to make coloured wool yarn, to weave it into pretty patterns, so that it looked nice.

But in this dream everything they were using was only grey. It seemed rather boring. Nothing colourful or special about it. Just all the same.

So in the dream she asked her mother about it, who then said: “When things only go a certain way, without any variety in life—like change of plans, change of situations, change in circumstances, unexpected events and so forth—it’s like this grey wool and cloth. But when things happen in new ways, it keeps things not only more interesting, but we are able to learn new things. It makes our life more colourful, and more beautiful to others—like the colourful patterns. Our hearts learn things that enable us to help others more.”

When Sunni awoke the next morning, she felt a bit better. She and her mother took a walk to the busy part of the little villager. They said hi to some of their friends.

Then as mother was engaged in conversation with a friend, Sunni spotted someone she didn't recognize at first. He was about her age, and was sitting off to the side. He looked over and waved. She thought to chat with him.

This young stranger offered her a piece of fruit, and they started talking. She told of her home and family; of her favourite things to do; of the skills she was learning, and some of the struggles they had in day-to-day life, trying to get the things they needed.



This new friend seemed to have a kind understanding beyond His years, and it made her feel comfortable and at peace talking with Him.

His words of sympathy and of faith gave her courage. She never saw Him again in the town, but strangely felt He was close when she needed someone to talk with who really understood.

In her heart and mind she would talk with Him, and it seemed He was there, listening, and sometimes responding with putting a thought in her mind too.

She had an invisible friend it seemed. Sunni knew or suspected just who it was that had appeared that day to be a friend—and be there with her always.

Somehow, after that encounter a change took place in Sunni's heart and actions. She seemed more at peace. Her friends even noticed it. She was a better friend and listener, and had helpful and encouraging things to say in return.

Rather than getting too down about situations that weren't what she was hoping for, Sunni was able to take things with more faith and an attitude of praise, and move on past them.

Talking with her special friend, in her heart and mind—who she knew was Jesus—helped to make things so much easier.



8—Always

The rainbow was spectacular. It had been a long time since Melanie had seen one. She stood there looking at it for as long as possible.

Soon it faded away, and she skipped happily off to play with her two younger twin brothers. They were pretending to build a fort, with anything they could find around the yard.

Melanie was to be the cook for the building team. She had collected all sorts of things for their “meal”. Every type of leaf she could find was used, as well as a few dandelions, grass, and a bit of sand. Each was representing a type of food in their make-belief game.

“Jesus,” she said, praying aloud. “It was so nice of you to stop the rain so we could play outdoors—and it was very special to get to see that rainbow. For some reason, I’m still a little sad.

“Even though I have brothers to be with, and we are playing a fun game, I just still miss my Auntie. She always had new and great ideas. Mommy is busy in the house, and Daddy isn’t here right now.

“I’m trying to think of fun things to keep us busy and happy, but it just doesn’t feel as nice as it was before, when she lived with us.”

Melanie was stirring her pot of pretend food, and she thought she heard a whisper. Was it just the leaves rustling in the tree?



“Hi, Melanie!” said a voice in a friendly way.

She looked up.

“Mind if I join you?” the older boy said.

She was about to ask, “Who are you?” but just one look at His face told her the answer. She knew it was Jesus dropping by, just when she really needed some encouragement.

“I know you miss your Auntie, and I came to bring you something to cheer you up. Every time you see this, I want you to remember how I’d like to be a friend to you, and that you can talk to Me anytime. — Just like you did today. You won’t always be able to see Me, but here’s something you can see,” Jesus said.

He held on His finger a little bird. It was so cute. Melanie hadn’t seen a bird up that close before, unless it was in a cage as a pet.

“I’ll send this little bird to fly into your garden every now and then. It will be a special reminder that I am there with you. And just like your Auntie had to fly away for now, you can still know that you are very special to her, and she loves you very much! I’m taking care of her too,” Jesus told her.

Melanie smiled.

In the months that followed she would often see her special little bird come into the garden. It cheered her every time.

She imagined it sitting on Jesus' finger, and remembered that He was really there with her too—not just when the bird was around, but all the time. She called the bird “Always”, like the words of Jesus that said, “I am with you always.” (Matthew 28:20)



9—Thinking About You

The day for the Olympics had arrived. Tony had been trying hard to focus on his good qualities, on the things that he could do, rather than thinking about all that he couldn't do.

His friend Alfred was part of an Olympic team that seemed to be the fastest, best, and most skilled boating team that Tony had seen.



It would have been nice for Tony if he could always do things together with his friend, but due to Tony's disabilities it just wasn't possible. He was hearing impaired.

Tony sat on his bed, watching the various contests that were being aired right then. Then scenes of the boating teams were being shown.

Tony watched intently for Alfred. He knew his friend well, and could usually tell by the look on his face what he was feeling.



Then, to Tony's surprise, Alfred looked towards the television camera's direction and did his special hand signal that he always used to say hi to Tony—their special sign-language greeting.

“He knew I would be watching! He is thinking about me! Imagine that!” exclaimed Tony, smiling.

“I can't believe in the middle of all that is going on, and all that he needs to focus on, he stopped to think about me and to say hi!”

That really changed Tony's feelings. Rather than feeling left out, he now was happy that he had such a great friend.

“I guess I don't really need to be able to do everything in the world,” Tony thought. “If I can just make people feel like they matter to me, and that I care about them, and am not too into my own life to notice others, then that's really about the best thing I can do.”

“And since I know what it feels like to not always be able to join in with everyone on everything, that should remind me how important it is to encourage others, and to be a friend.”

Tony drifted off to sleep, and had a special dream. In his dream he was taking a walk with Jesus and chatting about this and that. He could talk and hear, and it was so nice to have that time with Jesus.

Then Jesus said,

“Did you know, Tony, when Alfred waved to you right before his race, that it was My idea? I told him to do it, and I timed it right so that the camera caught it and aired it right then.



“You didn’t see Me, and neither did Alfred, but I put the idea in his mind. I know how to cheer people up. I wish people would listen to Me more, and do the ideas that I give them. If they did, then whole lot more smiles would be happening on people’s faces and in their hearts.”

As soon as Jesus finished giving that dream message, Tony woke up.

Now he not only felt that he had a friend who cared about him, but that Jesus also loved him so very much. This made him feel so happy that he nearly forgot about his disabilities!

“I want to do just that, Jesus,” Tony prayed.

“I want to know what Your ideas are, and to show love to those around me, at just the right time and in the ways that will make them feel the most encouraged.”



This whole experience really lifted his heart, and he could hardly wait until Alfred would return so he could tell him about it.



10—Eman Meets God

Eman was an artist, and his favourite place to draw was outside; in the field, the meadow, or better yet, in the forest.

He liked to draw or paint the close-up images, the zoomed-in appearances of natural items. For example the patterns on the bark of a tree, or the lines on leaves that had fallen to the ground.

Sometimes he'd even take a microscope out with him and get a really good view of some natural item, up very close. Then he could draw and paint for others to see what normally the eyes could not see.

It amazed him to see all that was not normally visible. He would think to himself:

“Such beauty, such design. The one who made these things must like art. He’s made so many interesting things to study with the eyes. Just think, most of what is really neat to look at, we have never even seen. –All the microscopic versions of all the things in the natural world around.”

One day as he got together the pens, pencils and paints that he would need, along with, of course, his sketch pad of paper, he heard a voice.

“Mind if I come along with you?”

At first he thought it was a neighbour, or someone he wasn’t well acquainted with at first. But when he turned around and saw no one there, he didn’t know what to think.

Yet as he started to walk into the woods that were towards the back of his house, then he heard it again, the voice that is. But this time the words said,

“I’ll be there with you. I hope you’ll notice me.”

This intrigued Eman, and he was starting to think it was someone not of this world. He was beginning to realise, from the feeling in his heart, that the one who was the best artist of all, the one who created all large and microscopic beauty, would be there.

“Sure. Come on. I do hope to meet up, if you are who I’m starting to think you are,” replied Eman aloud.

And so it was that when he was painting the next tree bark pattern that he’d discovered, that a hand was placed on his shoulder.

“Hi!” a friendly, nearly youthful voice, yet one totally reassuring. When Eman looked up, he knew he was face-to-face with Jesus, the creator, and said in a casual sort of way—for the One there made him feel fairly relaxed:

“So you’re the One who placed all this design and beauty in nature?”

Jesus sat down and nodded with a smile, and then said:

“I knew you wanted to get an autograph and chat with the artist, so I showed up. I really appreciate that you have noticed My signature on all this lovely creation around.”

Eman handed the paper and drawing tools to Him, and Jesus wrote on it:

“You are My designed creation. I enjoy seeing the beauty in you, like you do the items of nature.”

Eman looked on it and read it when Jesus handed it back to him. It touched his heart. But when he looked up again, he saw he was alone—or seemed to be.

Yet, somehow he didn't feel as lonely now as he used to. He had personal words of encouragement from the designer of all creation—the one who had made him too.

Now when he looked at the lovely, intricate and fascinating designs, patterns, and shapes, he felt a new closeness with the Creator.

He could almost feel the eyes of Jesus still looking into his soul, and saying, "You are beautiful and interesting and fascinating to Me."

He liked to know that he was special, and would treasure the words that Jesus wrote, every day of his life.

And it was good that Eman had made that connection with the designer and creator of all things of nature—including himself—for there were tests and trying times that came into Eman's life.

Many people tried to shake his faith and conviction that things in nature were made by the God who loved them. They tried in all kinds of ways to tear down this knowledge. But as long as he saw those words of Jesus, written specially to him, he knew what he believed was right.

Eman's own name took on new meaning. It reminded him of one of the special names of Jesus: Immanuel—meaning "God with us."

Just as he could see the hand of God the creator in what he tried to paint and draw, so was the hand of God on his life.

It was this eternal and creative being, filled with all power and majesty, who was sustaining his life on Earth. God was with him, in the form of Jesus being so near; so near that Eman could see and hear Him in special ways. He was not alone.

When it was time for Eman to go on to the next part of his existence, leave this world and meet the Lord face to face, he would not be ashamed or have to hide his face in embarrassment, like some will, for having believed silly idle tales about the natural world.

Instead Eman could say,

“You were with me, and I believed You, Jesus.”

To which Jesus would most likely reply,

“You believed, when so many others didn’t, and were put down for it at times, by their words and actions. Now will I honour you in the presence of others.”

Eman’s art was left for his family and friends to see. He hoped that through it each one would get to also meet, each in their own special way, this great God who created them, and promised to always be there with them.

Eman, while painting on Earth, could see so much in nature that taught a lesson or revealed a pattern to live by. It was his way of being educated in the best things, in clever ways.

Just looking at so many things while listening for a thought from its creator would calm so many troubles, and teach so many things.

Nature, plus a word from the Creator, would bring peace and wisdom to many a struggling soul. Eman learned this. For “God with us” brings a sense of hope to any situation. And what God makes in the natural world around us declares that He is around.



