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The One Year Classic Family Devotions

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January 1 GETTING FIT

Read 1 Timothy 4:6-13.

Ryan came inside after jogging a few miles. His face was covered with sweat. “Wash up, Ryan. Dinner is ready,” Dad said.

After supper Ryan announced his plans for the evening—more running. Dad frowned. “You’ve been spending more than enough time training for the track meet,” he said. “As a matter of fact, Son, you’ve been neglecting your other responsibilities.”

“Yes,” added Mom. “I’m concerned about your devotional life. Weren’t you going to spend more time reading the Bible this year?”

Ryan looked down at the floor. “There’s nothing wrong with wanting to have a strong body, is there?” he asked quietly.

“Not at all,” Dad replied. “But a healthy body is only part of a complete person. In the Bible Paul wrote often of running races and training our bodies.”

“He did?” Ryan looked up, his eyes wide with interest.

“Yes. He wrote to Timothy that physical exercise is important but that spiritual exercise is the most important,” replied Dad. “Just as you work hard to get physically fit and build up your muscles, so you must work at living God’s way to build up your Christian life. You need to practice such things as reading the Bible, praying, and telling others about Jesus. It takes hard work.”

Ryan thought about his dad’s words. Then he nodded and smiled. “Okay, Dad,” he said. “I’ll try to balance my devotions, chores, homework, and track.”

GET SPIRITUAL EXERCISE.



HOW ABOUT YOU?

Is there a special activity that takes too much of your time? Perhaps you play sports, watch TV, or have a pet with which you spend your free time. Maybe you spend a lot of time with your best friend. Whatever you do, be sure you don’t neglect your time with God.

TO MEMORIZE:

Physical exercise has some value, but spiritual exercise is much more important, for it promises a reward in both this life and the next.

1 TIMOTHY 4:8



January 2 STILL THE SAME

Read Psalm 119:89-91.

Dad just walked out on us. No reasons, no apologies, Andy thought. *I wonder why.* His mom tried to help him understand, but he knew she didn't really understand it herself.

One day Mom said, "Our house costs too much, Andy. We're going to move into an apartment. It will be a big change, but we'll get used to it."

Moving was not something Andy had planned on. As long as he could stay in the same neighborhood and go to the same school, he could pretend things were still the same. But now—a new school and all new kids?

Moving day came, and with it all the changes Andy dreaded. The only thing that didn't change was their church, but even there people acted differently.

In Sunday school one day, Mr. Robinson called on Andy to recite the memory verse. "I am the LORD, and I do not change," Andy quoted. "Malachi 3:6."

Mr. Robinson nodded. "Even if the whole world seems upside down, God is always the same," he said. "God loves us and will be with us, just as He was with Abraham in his journeys, with Daniel in the lions' den, and with Jonah in the big fish." As Andy listened to Mr. Robinson, he realized that God had been with all of His people throughout the changes they experienced.

Andy breathed a quiet prayer, just between himself and God. *Thank You for staying with Mom and me. I'm glad You're just the same as when Dad was with us. Please help me remember that even though things change, You will never change or go away.*

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Are you discouraged when changes come? The Bible gives many examples of people who had to learn about God's care during changing times. God promises to care for you in difficult times just as He cared for them.

TO MEMORIZE:

I am the LORD, and I do not change.

MALACHI 3:6



GOD NEVER CHANGES.

January 3 A SPECIAL GIFT

Read Psalm 122:1-9.

“I told you to get up long ago, Matt. Now hurry!” Matt’s mother spoke from the doorway of his room. “We’ll be leaving for church soon!”

Matt sleepily opened his eyes. It was so hard to get up in the morning!

The next time Mom checked on him, he was fast asleep.

“You’re going to have to get to bed earlier,” said Mom with a sigh.

The following day was Matt’s birthday, and as soon as he heard his dad and mom get up, he jumped out of bed too. He threw on his clothes and ran downstairs.

“Hmmm,” Mom said. “Strange how easy it was for our sleepyhead to get out of bed this morning.”

“Today’s a special day, Mom!” said Matt, eyeing the big box on the table. “Can I open my present now?”

Dad picked up the box. “I don’t know, Matt. You don’t seem to like gifts very much. You seemed to ignore one you got yesterday.”

“*What?*” exclaimed Matt. “You had a gift for me yesterday? You never gave it to me!”

“Oh, it was given to you—you just didn’t open it. And it wasn’t from us. It was from God.”

Sundays are a gift from God. He sets Sunday apart for us to meet with other believers and learn more about Him. But, just like any other gift, you’re not going to get anything out of it unless you *open* it. You can only get the gift of a new day by opening your heart—and getting out of bed in the morning.

Matt smiled as Dad handed him his present. “I guess I’ll have lots more gifts to look forward to after this one, huh?”

SUNDAY IS A SPECIAL DAY.



HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you have trouble getting up for church on Sundays? Church is a gift, but it’s one you have to *open*. Treat Sunday as a special day and be ready to see what gifts God has in store for you.

TO MEMORIZE:

This is the day the LORD has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.

PSALM 118:24

January 4 THE OLD MANSION

Read 1 Samuel 16:6-12.



“I can hardly wait to see the old mansion!” exclaimed Ashley. She and her family were on their way to visit Grandma and Grandpa, who had recently become caretakers of a large estate. As they drove, Ashley talked about her day. “There’s a new girl in my class—her name is Addie—and her clothes are totally not with it!” declared Ashley.

“What does it matter if she doesn’t wear the latest fashions?” her brother Aiden asked. “What she’s like is more important than what she wears.”

“Oh, you just—” began Ashley, but Mom cut her off.

“Aiden is right, Ashley,” said Mom.

Several hours later, Dad turned down an overgrown lane that led to a large old house. Ashley frowned. “This can’t be the right place!” she exclaimed. “This looks more like a dump than a mansion!” But when her grandparents welcomed them inside, Ashley could hardly believe her eyes. The floors glistened, and carpeted steps curved up to the second floor. “Oh, wow!” she exclaimed. “I can’t believe how nice this is! The outside looks so run down.”



DON'T JUDGE BY APPEARANCE.

“Yes,” said Grandpa. “The place is being restored, but the firm that was hired for the outside work can’t

begin until next month.” He smiled. “This house is a good example of why we shouldn’t judge by appearance.”

“We talked about that on our way over here,” said Mom. “We sometimes forget that God says the heart of a person is much more important than how they look or dress.”

Ashley looked around at the beautiful house and then out the window to the overgrown front yard. *Mom’s right*, she admitted to herself. *I did judge Addie by the way she looks on the outside, and that was wrong. When I get back to school, I’ll try to find out what she’s really like.*

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you reject people because of the way they look? Remember, God says it’s the inside that counts. Think about someone you know who’s left out because of their appearance. Will you be a friend to that person? Do it for Jesus.

TO MEMORIZE:

Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly.

JOHN 7:24, NIV



January 5 GROWING TWO WAYS

Read Colossians 1:10-12.

It was time to measure again. José was eager to see how much he'd grown. For four years now, Dad had marked the new height on his closet door.

"When Aunt Carmen comes home from the mission field," José said, "she'll be surprised by how much I've grown!"

"Four years make quite a difference," his dad agreed.

José remembered the day Aunt Carmen had left for the mission field. He had just asked Jesus to be his Savior. Aunt Carmen had been so pleased. She'd hugged him when they saw her off at the airport. "You'll be practically grown by the time I come home," she had said. "I'll pray you grow to be more like Jesus, too!"

And now Aunt Carmen was due to return. José knew she would notice his physical growth. But would she see spiritual growth as well? He decided to ask Dad about it.

Dad smiled. "That's a good question," he said. "Now, let's see—I know that you used to have a terrible temper. Do you think you're controlling it better now?"

"I yelled at Nathan last week," José confessed. "But I apologized later."

Dad nodded. "I'd say that's progress. And what about those boys you've been inviting to church? I think you've made progress in helping others learn about Jesus. What about Bible knowledge? Do you know more about God than you did when Aunt Carmen left?"

José nodded. "Yeah. I've learned a lot in Sunday school."

"Then Aunt Carmen ought to be pleased—like I am," said Dad.

GROW SPIRITUALLY.



HOW ABOUT YOU?

Have you taken inventory to see if you've grown spiritually? Are you more friendly, kind, and loving than you used to be?

TO MEMORIZE:

Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2 PETER 3:18

January 6 DON'T HARVEST THE EDGES

Read Leviticus 19:9-13; 23:22.

Tony liked to hang around his father's repair shop and watch as Dad worked. One Saturday Dad was fiddling with a broken toaster. Finally he set the toaster down. "All finished," he said. On a card he wrote, "Labor, one hour—\$10.00." Then he cleaned the toaster.

Tony frowned. "Dad, you counted wrong," he said. "I know you worked on that thing for over an hour, besides the time you spent cleaning it." When his father just smiled, Tony continued. "Whenever you round off the amount somebody owes you, I know you always make it lower, not higher. How are you ever going to make money that way?"

"Oh, I'm managing," Dad replied cheerfully. "I believe that if I give my customers good service and don't charge any more than I have to, they'll keep coming back. Besides, the Bible teaches that we shouldn't 'harvest the edges.'"

Tony looked confused. "Huh? I don't get it."



**BE GENEROUS,
NOT GREEDY.**

"Well, in Leviticus God told farmers to leave some of their crop behind when they harvested it, so that poor people could take what they needed. I figure that

the principle applies to my business, too. It means I shouldn't try to squeeze every nickel I can out of my customers."

"If the farmer did all the work, he should keep all the harvest," objected Tony.

"But it's God who gives us the strength to work, and He blesses our efforts," Dad reminded Tony. "You've got a good head for business, Son, but you need to learn to be more generous. Even if nobody else notices, God will!"

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you cheat others in little ways—skipping chores when you think Mom won't notice, doing a sloppy job on your schoolwork? Begin making an effort to do a little more than what is required.

TO MEMORIZE:

*Some who are poor pretend to be rich; others
who are rich pretend to be poor.*

PROVERBS 13:7

January 7 DOGS OR CATS?

Read Psalm 104:24-31.

“Which do you like best, Grandma?” asked April. “Your dog or your cat?”

Grandma put Ashes, the cat, on her lap, but Ashes jumped right down. “Well, Ashes can be quite aloof. Dusty, on the other hand, always accepts my attention.”

“I think I’d rather have a dog like Dusty,” April announced.

“Both animals can teach us lessons about God,” Grandma continued. She picked up a ball and threw it. “Fetch, Dusty,” she said. Dusty chased after the ball, brought it back, and wagged his tail, waiting for the ball to be thrown again. “He wants to do what pleases me.”

“And we should want to please God, right?” asked April, as Ashes rubbed against her leg. “What do you learn from your cat, Grandma?”

Suddenly a ball of gray fur landed on Grandma’s lap. Grandma stroked the cat’s head. “When Ashes does jump on my lap, it’s special, because it’s her choice to come to me,” said Grandma. “Do you remember the robots we saw at the science fair that did whatever they were commanded to do? Would you like a hug from a robot?”

“No,” giggled April. “That wouldn’t mean much.”

“We aren’t robots either,” said Grandma. “God created us with a free will. He is pleased when we choose to come to Him.”

“So your dog shows us we should want to please God by doing what He wants,” April said. “And your cat shows us that God wants us to willingly give Him our love. But which do you like best?”

“I like them both,” Grandma said with a smile.

**EVEN ANIMALS
CAN TEACH.**



HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you like animals? God often teaches lessons through them. Treat all animals with kindness and watch their behavior. Maybe the Lord will use an animal to teach you an important lesson.

TO MEMORIZE:

*All the animals of the forest are mine,
and I own the cattle on a thousand hills.*

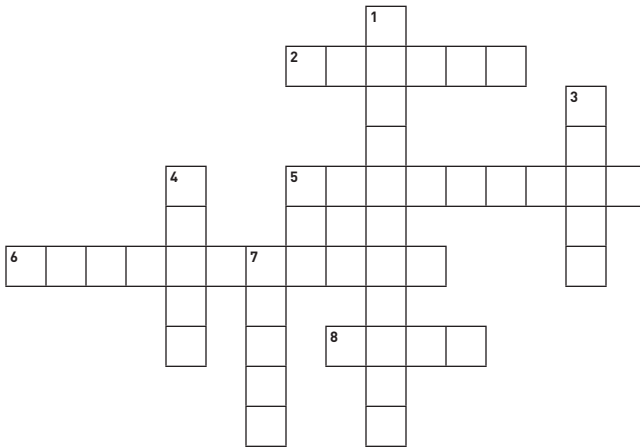
PSALM 50:10

A New Start

For God loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

JOHN 3:16-17, NKJV

The beginning of a new year is a good time to think about new beginnings and a fresh start. Jesus came to this world to give us a new start. We ask for His forgiveness of our sins. We invite Him into our hearts. And He offers us salvation and a new beginning. As you think about the new year this week, thank God for sending His Son. Thank Him for saving you and the world through this great love. Use John 3:16-17 to solve the crossword puzzle.



ACROSS

2. One who saves; a redeemer
5. The new beginning offered in Christ
6. We ask for God's _____ of our sins.
8. The opposite of death

DOWN

1. Forever or without end
3. Jesus died on the _____ for our sins.
4. Belief and trust in God
5. An act of breaking the law of God
7. Our world

ANSWER KEY
ACROSS: 2. savior; 5. salvation; 6. forgiveness; 8. life
DOWN: 1. everlasting; 3. cross; 4. faith; 5. sin; 7. earth

January 8 FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Read Psalm 139:1-5, 23-24.

“Mom, can we buy this cereal?” Stephanie asked, giggling at her mother’s raised eyebrow. “Just kidding, Mom,” she said. “I know this one has a ton of sugar.” She replaced it with a different kind. Then, with a grin, she parroted Mom’s often repeated words, “You are what you eat.” Mom smiled.

When they arrived home, Stephanie flipped on the radio and began humming the melody of a popular song. But Mom turned off the radio. “The words of that song encourage a life that isn’t pleasing to God,” she said.

“But it has a nice tune,” Stephanie protested.

“Listening to that kind of music is like eating food that isn’t good for us. Our minds eat up the words whether we pay attention to them or not,” Mom said.

As Stephanie helped her mom put away the groceries, she thought about how she often listened to the radio at Cheri’s house. She and Cheri were usually doing something else while they listened, but she could still sing all the words to the songs they heard.

“We are what we think about,” said Mom. “We need to fill our minds with thoughts that are pleasing to God so we’ll grow spiritually.”

**FEED YOUR MIND
GOOD THOUGHTS.**



Stephanie put the box of cereal she had chosen in the cupboard. “From now on I’ll choose music like I choose cereal,” she decided.

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you listen to certain kinds of music or do anything else that encourages an unchristian way of life? What you hear or look at gets into your mind whether you are aware of it or not. God is pleased when you focus on things that help you grow spiritually.

TO MEMORIZE:

*Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon me, and he told me to say, “This is what the LORD says to the people of Israel:
... I know every thought that comes into your minds.”*

EZEKIEL 11:5



January 9 A SURE GUIDE

Read Psalm 18:24-33.

The Johnsons—Heather, Brad, Mom, and Dad—had spent the past few days with Grandpa and Grandma. Mom had driven the family car while Dad drove a truck they'd borrowed so they could take along some items to store in the grandparents' attic.

The family treasured the long talks, funny jokes, and delicious food. It was hard to say good-bye, because it would be four years before the Johnsons would come back from Peru, where they were going as missionaries. As they prepared to go home, fog settled in. "Oh, dear," moaned Mom. "John, how will I ever see the way home?"

"The fog lights on this truck will pierce through the mist, so I'll lead the way," said Dad. "Just follow me and keep your eyes on my taillights."

Mom nervously gripped the steering wheel, but as the children prayed and sang, she gradually relaxed. When they safely reached home, they all thanked God.

"As I was driving, I couldn't help but think that God was using this fog to pre-

pare us for Peru," said Dad. "Because we're going to an unfamiliar country, the future seems foggy to us. The people, customs, and language are relatively unknown

to us, so we don't know exactly what's ahead. But God knows all about it. He'll take care of us."

"That's right," agreed Mom. "I had your taillights to guide me, and we all have the Lord to guide us as we go to Peru. We can trust Him."

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you worry about a different school, an unfamiliar town, a new family or step-parent, or a new challenge? God knows your fear and your future. Read His Word for instruction and encouragement. Then ask God to guide you—He will!

TO MEMORIZE:

*For that is what God is like. He is our God forever
and ever, and he will guide us until we die.*

PSALM 48:14



JESUS WILL GUIDE YOU.

January 10 A FINE-FREE DAY

Read Romans 6:18-23.

“Oh boy! This is my lucky day,” Steve shouted. “Listen to this, Mom.” From the newspaper he read, “Wednesday has been declared Fine-Free Day at the local library. All overdue books may be returned without paying a fine.”

Mom smiled. “The librarian will be sorry when she sees you coming!”

Soon Steve was on his way to return his overdue books. As Steve pedaled toward the library, his neighbor, Mr. Burns, staggered out of his house. *Drunk again!* Steve thought.

“Hi ya, Steve,” Mr. Burns slurred. “Where ya goin’?”

“To the library to return overdue books.” Steve stopped his bike. “Today is Fine-Free Day.”

“Sure wish they’d have Fine-Free Day at city hall.” Mr. Burns’s blurry eyes stared at the boy. “Hey, yer a Christian. Ya suppose God has a Fine-Free Day?”

Steve blinked, then replied, “Sure He does, Mr. Burns. Today is Fine-Free Day with God, too. Jesus paid our fine at Calvary. If you’ll turn your life over to Him, He’ll forgive you!”

Mr. Burns shook his head. “Ya only have a few sins. I’ve got a pack of ’em.”

Steve pointed at his backpack, crammed with books. “It makes no difference to the librarian if I have one overdue book or ten. I don’t have to pay a fine today. And it makes no difference to God if I have a few sins or a whole pack.”

“Ya really think so, son?” Mr. Burns asked. “I’ll have to think that over.”

JESUS PAID YOUR FINE.



HOW ABOUT YOU?

Are you carrying sins for which you need to repent? Whether they’re a few little sins or a lot of big ones, they must be paid for. To find out more, talk to a trusted Christian friend or adult.

TO MEMORIZE:

For God says, “At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you.” Indeed, the “right time” is now. Today is the day of salvation.

2 CORINTHIANS 6:2

January 11 STRONG AS AN EAGLE

Read Psalm 28:1-3, 6-9.

Kevin and Jessica were having a great time on a weeklong visit to their grandparents' home. The ground was covered with snow, and they would stay outside for hours, building snow forts and walking on the ice-covered lake. Then they would come in and sip hot chocolate in front of the fire.

One afternoon they persuaded Grandpa to go for a walk with them. They took off down the road, laughing and talking and occasionally throwing a snowball at each other. Suddenly Grandpa whispered, "Hey, kids! Don't move. Look over there!" Kevin and Jessica looked where Grandpa was pointing. A huge bird sat on the branch of a tree. "It's an eagle," whispered Grandpa. Suddenly, with a powerful flap of its wings, the eagle took off over the treetops.

"Wow!" Kevin said. "That's one strong bird!"

"You're right," agreed Grandpa. "You can be strong like that too," he added.

"How?" Kevin asked.



GOD GIVES STRENGTH.

"Those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles," replied Grandpa. "That's in Isaiah 40."

"I've heard that verse, Grandpa," said Jessica. "But I never thought about what it meant before."

"It's a picture," said Grandpa, "a magnificent picture of the strength we have when we put our trust in the Lord."

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you have problems at school? Do you live in a tough home situation? Is it hard for you to make friends? Trust Jesus to help you. He doesn't promise to take problems away, but He does promise to give you the strength needed to handle them. The next time you see a picture of an eagle, think of God's promise.

TO MEMORIZE:

I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.

PHILIPPIANS 4:13

January 12 THE CORNERSTONE

Read Ephesians 2:19-22.

Jeremy and Samuel watched as the construction workers built a new apartment complex on the corner of their street. “It sure is tall,” commented Jeremy. “I wonder how they get a tall building so straight.”

“Let’s go to the mall and ask Mr. Cohen,” said Samuel. “He knows a lot about buildings.”

The boys raced down the street to the mall. “So you want to know about buildings,” said Mr. Cohen, who was their Sunday school teacher. “Tell me, do you know what a cornerstone is?”

“No,” Jeremy replied. Samuel shrugged his shoulders.

“The cornerstone is a special stone or brick,” said Mr. Cohen. “Accurate instruments are used to lay the cornerstone. All the other bricks in the building are lined up with it. If the cornerstone is laid straight, the rest of the building will be straight because the other bricks are laid one by one, using the cornerstone as a guide.”

“Hey, that’s cool!” said Samuel.

Mr. Cohen smiled. “The Bible tells us that Jesus is our cornerstone.”

The boys looked surprised. “We aren’t buildings,” laughed Samuel.

“No, but the Bible uses the word *building* or *house* when referring to the church—that is, all the people who have trusted Jesus as their Savior,” answered Mr. Cohen. “It says that Jesus is the cornerstone of His church. Our actions and attitudes must line up with His.”

“So if we act and think like Jesus, we help to build His church the way He wants it, right?” Jeremy asked.

“Right!” replied Mr. Cohen. “Always let Jesus be your guide.”

LIVE AS JESUS WOULD.



HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you look to Jesus as your example when you are deciding how to act or think? If you line your actions up with Jesus, you’ll be helping to build God’s church His way.

TO MEMORIZE:

We are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself.

EPHESIANS 2:20

January 13 SURPRISE DESSERT

Read Revelation 21:3, 18, 21-23.

Zach took a bite of his meatloaf. “We learned about heaven in Sunday school today,” he said. “I know heaven is supposed to be wonderful, but won’t it be boring, just walking around singing hymns?”

“I’m sure we’ll be doing more than that,” Dad said with a smile.

“Yeah, well . . . that’s what Mr. Davis said too,” admitted Zach. “The Bible doesn’t tell us a lot about it, though, does it?”

“No,” replied Dad, “but we do know that it’s a wonderful place. And the best part will be finally being with Jesus.”

Zach ate his last bite. “Why didn’t God tell us more about heaven?”

“Well, it would be impossible to understand all the good things He has planned for us,” said Dad. He looked over at four-year-old Bobby. “Finish your carrots, Bobby,” he said. “We’re almost ready for dessert.”

“What is it?” Bobby asked.

“It’s a surprise,” Mom said. “I promise you’ll like it.”

“Can I have mine now, Mom?” asked Zach.

“Let’s wait till Bobby’s ready,” Mom said. “If he sees it, he’ll get so excited that he won’t want to finish his carrots.”

Soon they were all enjoying strawberry shortcake. “I just thought of another reason God didn’t tell us exactly what heaven will be like,” Zach announced. “If we knew, we’d probably get so excited we wouldn’t be able to focus on what God wants us to do on earth now.”

Mom smiled. “Right—like Bobby wouldn’t have been able to finish his carrots if he knew what dessert was coming. We just need to obey God and trust that His ‘dessert’ will be just right!”

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you ever wonder what heaven will be like? The Bible tells some things about it, but you won’t really know what God has in store for you until you get there. In the meantime, keep busy doing God’s will on earth and telling others about Jesus so they can go to heaven too!

TO MEMORIZE:

You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever.

PSALM 16:11

BY SHERRY L. KUYT



**HEAVEN WILL BE
WONDERFUL.**

January 14
THE EMPTY COCOON

Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 40, 42-44.



“What’s that?” cried Lisa when her brother showed her a pale green object dangling from a branch.

“Isn’t it cool?” replied Nick. “It’s called a chrysalis, and there’s a caterpillar inside. Or at least, he used to be a caterpillar.”

Lisa frowned. “I don’t like caterpillars.” As she went into the house, she saw her mother wiping tears from her eyes. “What’s the matter?” Lisa asked.

“I just got a phone call,” Mom said softly. “Grandma Carter died.”

“Oh no!” wailed Lisa. “I don’t want her to die!”

“I know, honey, but Grandma is happy now. She’s in heaven.”

Lisa and Nick were a little nervous when they went to the funeral home and walked up to the casket where Grandma lay. “She looks like she’s asleep,” said Lisa.

The next day, they attended the funeral, and after the service, they all went to the cemetery where Grandma was to be buried.

Lisa was quiet as they sat on the patio that evening. “I thought Grandma was in heaven, but they put her in the ground,” she said at last. As she spoke, Nick came over, carrying the branch with the chrysalis dangling from it. He held it up.

“The caterpillar spun a chrysalis around itself. After a while, it burst open and a butterfly came out,” Mom said.

“I love butterflies!” said Lisa. “They’re prettier than caterpillars.”

“That’s like what has happened to Grandma Carter,” said Dad. “She has left her old shell—her earthly body—and now it’s like an empty chrysalis. The real Grandma has gone to be with Jesus.” He smiled. “God will give her a beautiful new body, too.”

Just then a butterfly fluttered past Lisa’s nose. “Look!” she squealed. “A caterpillar in its new body.”

**CHRISTIANS WILL HAVE
NEW BODIES.**



HOW ABOUT YOU?

Has someone you love died and gone to heaven? The Bible teaches that those who love the Lord go to be with Him when they die. Though their bodies were buried, they’re not in them anymore. God will give them wonderful new bodies someday.

TO MEMORIZE:

Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in glory.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:43

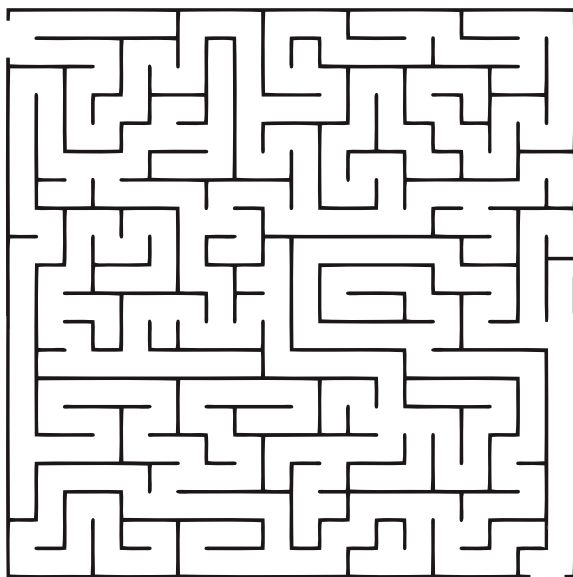
You Just Wait

Those who trust in the LORD will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.

ISAIAH 40:31

Waiting upon the Lord is a way to show patience. As we wait, our faith grows stronger. Do you remember when you learned to read? You had to build reading strength. First, you learned each letter and its sounds. You had to be patient as you practiced. You had to wait until you were able to go to the next step. In time, however, you figured out how to read words, sentences, and paragraphs. As we pray and learn to be thankful, we are waiting upon the Lord. This builds our spiritual strength. In time, we will find strength we never imagined.

Help the runner get through the maze and reach the finish line.



SEE ANSWER IN BACK

January 15 NO DIFFERENCE

Read Romans 3:10-12.

At a special service at Jenny's church, Derek, one of the roughest boys at school, surprised everyone by becoming a Christian.

After church, Jenny walked home with her friend Brittany, who had only recently started coming to their church. Jenny was surprised to hear her new friend's comments. "Maybe Derek's behavior will improve now that he's a Christian," said Brittany. "His family is very poor, you know, and his dad drinks. I'm glad I don't have a family like that. I'm glad I was born a Christian."

"Nobody is born a Christian," objected Jenny.

Brittany shrugged. "Oh, I know some people think that, but I don't agree."

The next week the circus came to their city. Brittany invited Jenny to go with her. The girls arrived just in time. "Oh no!" groaned Brittany as the gatekeeper waited for their tickets. "I forgot the tickets!" She explained the situation to the gatekeeper, asking if they could please go on in and bring the tickets later. As he shook his head, Brittany squared her shoulders and looked him straight in the eye. "Do you know who I am?" she asked haughtily. "I'm the mayor's daughter!"

"Well, Miss Mayor's Daughter, show me your ticket, and you can get in."

After walking away in silence, Jenny glanced at Brittany. "It didn't matter who you were, did it?" she asked quietly. "If the gatekeeper wouldn't let you into the circus even though you were the mayor's daughter, what makes you think God will let you into heaven just because you come from a Christian family?"

YOU ARE A SINNER.



HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you think you were born a Christian? You weren't. The Bible says it makes no difference who you are. Whether you're from the best home in town or the worst, you need to accept Jesus into your heart.

TO MEMORIZE:

Everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.

ROMANS 3:23

January 16 A HEAVY BURDEN

Read Philippians 4:6-7.

“Mom, I wish Dad still lived here,” said Kyle as he finished getting ready for school. “If I had just behaved better, maybe he wouldn’t have left.”

“Honey, Dad’s leaving had nothing to do with you. He loves you as much as ever,” Mom said patiently, putting an arm around Kyle. She and Dad had told Kyle this many times. He wanted to believe them, but he just couldn’t.

Thoughts of his dad often popped up at school between the sentences Kyle was reading. He finally got his mind off his problems when his teacher showed the class an interesting book on space travel. And he was thrilled when she said he could take it home for the evening.

Kyle tucked the heavy book under his arm and began walking home. As he walked, the book seemed to grow heavier and heavier. By the time he reached home, his arm ached.

Mom met him at the end of the driveway. “That book looks heavy,” she said. “Let me help you.” She reached down and took it. “Guilty feelings can also be heavy to carry,” she continued. “The feeling that Dad left because of you is a burden

too heavy for you to carry.”

“I wish I didn’t have that feeling,” Kyle said. “It hurts.”

“Yes, just like your arm hurts from carrying the book. Wouldn’t you like Jesus to carry the burden for you?” Kyle nodded, and together they asked Jesus to carry Kyle’s heavy burden.

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you have a burden too heavy for you? If your parents are separated or divorced, do you wonder if it’s your fault? Or perhaps secret worries about school or friends constantly fill your mind. It’s important to talk about heavy burdens to an adult who can help you turn them over to Jesus.

TO MEMORIZE:

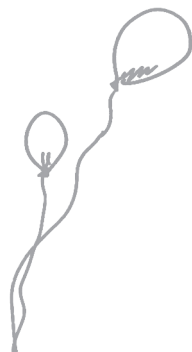
Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

1 PETER 5:7

BY KATHERINE R. ADAMS



**GIVE YOUR BURDENS
TO JESUS.**



January 17 PATTERN FOR LIFE

Read Ephesians 2:2-7, 10.

Mandy curled up on the sofa to read a book. Her mother knelt on the floor, surrounded by colorful fabric, pattern pieces, scissors, and pins. Mandy looked up from her book. “What are you doing, Mom?” she asked.

“I’m making a shirt for myself,” replied Mom as she pinned a pattern piece onto the fabric.

“I don’t see how you can make all those pieces come together and look like the picture on the pattern envelope!” Mandy said.

Mom smiled. “You could do this too, if you wanted to,” she said. “If I just follow the directions, my shirt will turn out like the one in the picture.”

As Mandy watched her mother stitch pieces together on the sewing machine, she asked, “Mom, do you think God has patterns for our lives?”

“Patterns?” asked Mom. “What do you mean?”

“Well, in Sunday school, Mrs. Crane said that God has a plan for each of us,” explained Mandy. “She also said we should do what God tells us in the Bible so we can become what God wants us to be. That might be like following the instruction sheet that comes with your pattern.”

“That’s a good illustration!” said Mom. “Yes, God is making each of us into something special, Mandy. Even when things look confusing or impossible—like these shirt pieces did to you—we have to keep following God’s instructions. Then He’ll make us into beautiful finished products.” Mom smiled at Mandy. “You’re a smart girl. I know you could learn to sew if you put your mind to it.”

Mandy grinned. “Next time you go to the fabric store, maybe I can come along,” she said. “It might be fun.”

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you know that God has a pattern for your life? Instructions are found in the Bible. As you learn and obey what God tells you through His Word, you will become more like Jesus, and the pattern, or plan, He has for you will become evident in your life.

TO MEMORIZE:

*We are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus,
so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*

EPHESIANS 2:10

BY JUDITH K. BOOGAART

**FOLLOW GOD’S
INSTRUCTIONS.**



January 18 THE ACTIVITY BOX

Read Matthew 11:28-30.

“We have a lot to do today,” said Mom as she put bread in the toaster.

“We always have lots of work on Saturday,” complained Jessica.

“Yeah,” murmured Justin. “Saturdays are no fun anymore!”

Dad poured a cup of coffee. “I don’t like them, either—not because of the work, but because they’re days of whining and grumbling,” he said. “I’m sure the Lord is not pleased with that. Maybe we can find a way to make our work more interesting.”

Justin scowled. “I don’t see how,” he said.

“Please find me a shoe box, Justin,” said Dad a few minutes later. “Jessica, you can bring me some paper and a pencil.” When the children returned with the items, Dad said, “Let’s write everything we have to do today on slips of paper and put them in this box.”

“Change sheets, vacuum, clean bathrooms.” Mom quickly named several tasks.

“Wash the car, wash the dishes, water the plants,” suggested Justin.

“Now,” Dad said, “we’ll take turns drawing out a slip and doing whatever is written on it.”

“Then let’s pack lunch and go to the park when the

box is empty,” said Mom.

“All right!” Jessica and Justin cheered. Jessica reached for the box.

Dad held up his hand. “We forgot something,” he said. “We need to give the Lord some time too.”

“Read a chapter in your Bible,” Jessica wrote on a slip of paper.

“Thank God for our family,” wrote Justin.

“Call Uncle John and invite him to church,” said Dad.

Then Dad held the box out to Jessica. “This is going to be the best Saturday we’ve had in a long time,” she said as she drew out a slip and looked at it. Then she groaned. “Even if I do have to clean the bathrooms!”

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Have your tasks become boring? Make your own activity box, and do your tasks cheerfully! You may be surprised by how enjoyable a work day can be.

TO MEMORIZE:

*Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were
working for the Lord rather than for people.*

COLOSSIANS 3:23

BY BARBARA J. WESTBERG



WORK CHEERFULLY.

January 19 GOD'S PLAN

Read Romans 11:33-36.

Brent never forgot the day his new baby sister, Emily, came home from the hospital. Dad and Mom had told him that her spinal cord was damaged before she was born and she would never be able to walk.

Brent couldn't quite believe it. *Maybe if we all take really good care of Emily, her legs will become well*, he thought. When Brent mentioned this to his mother, she shook her head sadly. "No, the doctor said that her legs will never work. Instead of thinking about that, let's remember that this is God's plan for Emily and our family."

"How can it be God's plan?" Brent asked.

Mom sat down next to Brent. "Emily is going to need special care because her legs have no feeling," she said. "She will not know if they are hot or cold or if they have been bruised. That's where you and I fit into God's plan for her," said Mom. "It will take time and love to protect her and to help her learn about her disability."

"Oh," murmured Brent.

"Will you help Emily?" Brent's mother asked.

Brent was quiet for a while. Then he said, "I wish Emily could learn to walk. But since she can't, I want to help her."

"Great!" said Mom, squeezing his shoulder. "God knew Emily would need a big brother like you."

ACCEPT GOD'S PLAN.



HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you have a brother, sister, or friend with a disability? God has placed that person in your life as part of His plan for you. As you love and encourage your sibling or friend, God will use you to be a blessing. Or perhaps you have a disability yourself. God wants to use you to be a blessing too.

TO MEMORIZE:

*Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of
those who are weak. Be patient with everyone.*

1 THESSALONIANS 5:14

January 20 CURIOSITY'S CAPTIVE

Read Luke 5:27-31.

“Uncle Jerry makes me so mad!” said Jana as she slammed down the telephone. “That was Cheri, and she was crying. The electric company will turn off their electricity if they don’t pay their bill by tomorrow. Uncle Jerry’s out drinking with his buddies again.”

Dad looked over the edge of the newspaper. “I feel sorry for Jerry,” he said.

Jana huffed. “I feel sorry for his *family*! Uncle Jerry is selfish and mean!”

“We need to pray for him. He’s in bondage to alcohol,” Dad reminded her.

“He could get loose if he wanted to! He just—” Jana was interrupted by a banging sound from the garage. “What’s that?”

“I don’t know,” Mom said, concerned. “We had better find out.” When they opened the door, they saw their dog with a plastic pitcher over his head, bumping into everything.

Mom gathered the frightened dog in her arms. Dad got out his pocketknife and carefully cut the pitcher from the dog’s neck.

“Rudy must have stuck his nose in the pitcher, then pushed it up against something as he pushed his head

farther inside,” said Jana.

Dad nodded. “Scolding him and telling him how foolish he was wouldn’t have helped him at all,” he observed. “He was caught and couldn’t do anything to help himself. He needed us to help him. You know, Uncle Jerry is like Rudy. He is caught in a trap so powerful he cannot break loose. God can deliver him. And if God wants to use us to help, He will show us how.”

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you know people who are caught in the trap of sin? It might be alcohol or drugs or other things. Ask God to give you compassion for them, and pray for them.

TO MEMORIZE:

Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters.

Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude.

1 PETER 3:8



CARE FOR OTHERS.



January 21 HURTFUL WORDS

Read James 3:8-17.

“Am I doing this right, Grandma?”

Grandma examined the crocheted scarf Amanda handed her. “Looks good to me,” she said.

“What do I do next?” asked Amanda.

“Make the next row exactly like this one,” Grandma replied. “By next week when I go to stay with your aunt Denise and Darci, you should be able to follow the pattern by yourself.”

“We wish you could stay with us all the time, don’t we, Mittens?” Amanda brushed her bare toes over the fur of the cat at her feet. “Darci is so stuck up. In fact, Darci is nothing but a spoiled brat. She—”

“That’s enough, Amanda!” Grandma said sternly. “Remember, Darci is my granddaughter, and I love her as much as I love you.”

“But you don’t know what she did—” began Amanda.

“Dinner is ready!” Mom’s call from the kitchen interrupted Amanda.

After dinner, Amanda and Grandma returned to the family room. “I’m going to work on my—oh no! Look, Grandma!” Amanda pointed at the cat, who was playing with a mass of tangled thread. “Mittens unraveled all my hard work!”

Grandma smiled sympathetically. “It takes time and careful thought to crochet a scarf, but anyone—even a cat—can unravel one.”

“That’s for sure,” said Amanda, picking up the mess.

“It’s like that with everything,” Grandma continued. “It always takes more effort to build up than to tear down. It’s easy to be hurtful and find fault with people, but God wants us to help build people up.”

Amanda sighed. “I’ll try to do better, Grandma. Now, back to my scarf.”

BUILD UP OTHERS.



HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you say hurtful things about others? This would be a good day to start building people up rather than tearing them down.

TO MEMORIZE:

*Encourage each other and build each other
up, just as you are already doing.*

1 THESSALONIANS 5:11

BY BARBARA J. WESTBERG

Have No Doubt

If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone.

JAMES 1: 5-6

What if, every time you have a problem, you ask God for His wisdom about it? He doesn't want to "reproach" or punish you when you need answers. He wants to share His wisdom when you ask for it. Be still in your mind and heart when you pray. Don't think about what you *want* the answer to be. Don't think about the many answers there *might* be. Just ask in faith, and God will give you *His* wisdom.

Write about a problem that you haven't taken to God for answers.

List any doubts you have about how to solve this problem.

Now cross out all your doubts.

What if you did this with every problem? It's what God wants you to do when you ask for His wisdom. Erase the doubts in your mind and heart. Then just ask Him for help.

January 22 T-SHIRT DAY

Read Matthew 26:69-75.

Karin and her family spent a week at Mountain View Bible Camp, and Karin had a wonderful time. “Can I please buy a camp T-shirt?” she begged one day. “Everyone else has one.” Mom agreed, and Karin promptly put the shirt on. On the front was a picture of the chapel with the words “Proclaiming His Word to the World.” On the back it said, “Mountain View Bible Camp.” Karin wore the shirt almost every day that week, proud to be a part of the group.

Back home, Karin stuffed the shirt in a drawer and forgot about it. Mom didn’t forget, though. From time to time she suggested that Karin wear it, but Karin always refused. “I like it,” she insisted, “but it just wouldn’t look right.”

One Friday was declared T-shirt Day at school. Again Karin begged for a new shirt. “Not this time,” Mom replied. “Wear your camp shirt. It’s almost new.”

“I can’t wear that,” protested Karin. “It wouldn’t look right at school. Everyone else will wear shirts with cool sayings on them or they’ll be from exciting vacation places like Yellowstone.”

“Wasn’t camp exciting?” asked Mom. “You loved your shirt before.”

Karin bit her lip. “It was different at camp,” she said.

“Yes, it was,” Mom said. “It was comfortable to be identified as a Christian then, because others shared your faith.”

Karin bristled. “Are you saying I’m ashamed to let others see that I’m a Christian?”

“Are you?” asked Mom softly.

Karin thought about it. “I guess maybe I have been,” she confessed.

**DON'T BE ASHAMED
OF JESUS.**



HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do your friends and teachers know you’re a Christian? Do you pray before you eat, witness when you can, and speak up for your faith in the classroom? Don’t be ashamed of Jesus. Others need to know Him too.

TO MEMORIZE:

Never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord.

2 TIMOTHY 1:8

January 23 ALL-THE-TIME FRIEND

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-19.

“You’ve spent a lot of time texting your friends tonight,” observed Mom as Emily put down her phone.

“We don’t know what to do about Sierra,” Emily explained. “She’s being a . . . a *sometimes* friend. She wants to be friends when she needs help with homework, but she ignores us the rest of the time.”

“I’m sorry to hear that,” said Mom. “But no more texting tonight. It’s almost bedtime. Have you had your quiet time with the Lord yet?”

Emily yawned. “I’m too tired tonight,” she said. “I’ll read my Bible and pray in the morning.” She turned to go. “Night, Mom. ’Night, Dad.”

As Emily hurried downstairs the next morning, she tripped. “Mom!” she wailed. “My ankle!” Mom hurried to help. *Dear God*, prayed Emily silently while her mother wrapped her ankle, *this hurts so bad! Please take this pain away and make my ankle better.*

Unable to walk, Emily stayed home from school. “Emily,” said Mom after making her comfortable on the couch, “you told me about how it bugs you when Sierra wants to be friends only when she needs you for something, remember?”

Emily nodded. “Friends should be friends all the time.”

“I agree with you, and I thought about that last night,” said Mom. “Remember how you spent so much time texting your friends, but you were too tired to talk to God?”

“Well, I prayed this morning,” Emily defended herself.

“Did you?” asked Mom. “About what?”

“My ankle,” said Emily quickly. Then she blushed.

“So you prayed when you needed *help*. Does that remind you of someone?” Mom raised her brows. “God is an ‘all-the-time’ friend,” she added. “Don’t you think it hurts Him when we’re only ‘sometimes’ friends with Him? When we talk with Him only when we need help?” Thoughtfully, Emily nodded.

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you talk to God as you do to a friend, or do you pray only when you have a need? Take time to thank Him and praise Him for being your Lord. Treat Him like a good friend *all* the time.

TO MEMORIZE:

Never stop praying.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:17

BY NANCE E. KEYES



PRAY ALWAYS.

January 24 THE WRONG BOOK

Read Genesis 1:1-3, 6, 9, 14, 20, 24, 26, 31.



Getting out his science book, Scott sat down at the kitchen table to do some homework. *Wow!* he thought to himself after reading a few pages. *This sure doesn't sound like what it says in the Bible.* Feeling confused, he went to talk to his dad, who was replacing some spark plugs in the car. "Dad, my science book doesn't teach Creation like the Bible does," said Scott. "According to my book, many scientists believe that the earth and people and everything just 'happened' to come into existence."

"Well, Son," said Dad, "you might as well know right now that some books are wrong. People have written them, and people can sometimes make mistakes. But the Bible has no errors."

"Is that because the Bible was inspired by God?" Scott asked.

"That's right," Dad replied. "That's why we call it the Word of God—and it tells us that God created everything. In addition to that, our common sense tells us that people couldn't have just 'happened.' What if I told you this car just 'happened'—that nobody put the engine, the body, the seats, the wheels, and all the other parts of this car together, but they just all came together by themselves?"

Scott laughed. "I'd tell you that was crazy," he said.

"You'd be absolutely right," Dad replied. "And the human body is far more complicated than this car. We're not accidents. We are part of God's plan and creation."

GOD MADE EVERYTHING.



HOW ABOUT YOU?

Have you heard people talk about evolution as if it were fact? Don't believe it! God made the whole world and everything in it. He made you, He loves you, and He has a wonderful plan and purpose for your life.

TO MEMORIZE:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

GENESIS 1:1

January 25 JOY IN THE MORNING

Read 1 Corinthians 15:51-57.

“Dad!” cried Sara as she and her mom entered his hospital room. She ran to the bed and flung her arms around her father’s frail shoulders. “How are you feeling?” she asked.

Dad hugged her close. “I’m afraid the news isn’t good,” he said.

A lump jumped to Sara’s throat. “I’ll pray for you to get better, Dad.” Dad smiled and squeezed her hand.

A few weeks later, Sara woke up to see Mom sitting on the edge of her bed. “Mom! You’re here! How’s Dad?”

“Oh, Sara,” said Mom with a sob. “Dad is with Jesus now.”

Tears flooded Sara’s eyes. “What? No! I prayed that God would heal him, that he wouldn’t be sick anymore!”

“And he’s not sick anymore,” said Mom as she pulled Sara into her arms.

“But I don’t understand!” cried Sara. “How could God let Dad die?”

“I don’t know, honey,” said Mom. “Sometimes God allows things to happen that we can’t understand.” She brushed the hair out of Sara’s eyes. “But think of how

Dad must have felt when he opened his eyes and saw Jesus. There’s a Bible verse that says, ‘Joy comes with the morning,’ and today that came true for Dad. He woke up to find himself in the presence of Jesus, free of sickness and pain.”

“I’m glad he’s not sick anymore,” said Sara. “But I miss him so much already!”

“So do I,” said Mom, her eyes brimming with tears. “But someday we’ll wake up to find ourselves in the presence of Jesus, and when we do, Dad will be there too.”

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Have you experienced the death of a family member or friend? It’s natural to feel sad and even wonder how God could allow it to happen. But remember that for a Christian, death is passing from this life on earth to a life in heaven with Jesus. Ask God to give you comfort and peace, and remember that one day, He will wipe away all your tears.

TO MEMORIZE:

Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes with the morning.

PSALM 30:5



January 26 CAN RIGHT BE WRONG?

Read 1 Corinthians 8:8-13.

Darrell burst into the room. “Mom, guess what happened at Bible club!” he exclaimed. “Troy accepted Jesus as his Savior!”

“How wonderful!” Darrell’s mother responded. “I’m happy Troy’s a Christian, but I’m afraid he won’t get much encouragement at home.”

“I’ll help Troy,” Darrell said eagerly.

A few weeks later, Darrell wasn’t so sure about that. “I asked Troy to go with me to Don’s house to play pool,” he grumbled, “but you know what he said? He said, ‘Darrell, I thought you were a Christian!’ Then he walked away! What’s wrong with playing pool?”

Darrell’s mother was thoughtful. “Maybe Troy’s father plays a lot of pool in the bars, so Troy associates playing pool with drinking, wasting money, and being away from home too much—things his dad does. Troy probably doesn’t understand that a quiet game of pool in somebody’s basement can be okay. Darrell, I think you ought to stay away from playing pool so you’re not a stumbling block to Troy.”

“I don’t see why I shouldn’t play,” objected Darrell.

His mother thought for a moment. “Troy’s a baby Christian. Seeing you do something he considers wrong might hurt him spiritually. Joining you might lead him to play pool in the wrong place. As he grows in his Christian life, he’ll learn how to handle his actions. But right now, pool playing is a problem for him.”

Darrell nodded thoughtfully. “Okay, Mom. I’ll try.”

**DON'T BE A
STUMBLING BLOCK.**



HOW ABOUT YOU?

Are there things you think are okay to do but which bother other people? Remember, a Christian’s actions influence others. Do your activities draw people to Christ or turn them away? Refuse to be a “stumbling block.”

TO MEMORIZE:

*You must be careful so that your freedom does not cause
others with a weaker conscience to stumble.*

1 CORINTHIANS 8:9

January 27 DREW'S MOUSE

Read James 2:14-20.

School began in the usual boring way for Drew. *We need some action around here*, Drew thought. He peeked into his desk to check on the little mouse he had in a small box.

A few minutes later Mrs. Madden had to go to the office. She appointed Jennifer to be class monitor. Quietly Drew took the mouse from his desk and released it.

"There's a mouse!" Many of the kids screamed and jumped up on their chairs.

"Take your seats," Jennifer instructed. "It won't hurt you." The mouse ran right over Jennifer's shoe. "Ahhhh!" she shrieked. She climbed onto her chair.

"Everyone sit down," Jennifer ordered. "There's nothing to worry about." But she remained standing on her chair.

Just then Mrs. Madden returned to the chaos. She dismissed the class for an early lunch so that a janitor could remove the mouse.

After school Drew told his mom about Jennifer and the mouse. He told her everything except how the mouse got there. "It was pretty funny," he said. "Jennifer told the class to sit down because there was nothing to worry about, but

she stayed standing on her chair."

"That's a good example of what we discussed in my Bible study this morning," said Mom. "Just as Jennifer's actions didn't match her words, Christians' actions don't always match what they say they believe."

Drew felt guilty. He knew that Jennifer wasn't the only one whose actions didn't match her words. He would need to talk to his mother and his teacher.

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you say you believe in Jesus but carelessly lie, cheat, or treat others unkindly? Or do you act out your faith by living a godly life? Ask God to help you act according to your faith.

TO MEMORIZE:

So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.

JAMES 2:17



LIVE WHAT YOU BELIEVE.

January 28 TRUE FREEDOM

Read Proverbs 6:20-23.

Christina ran into her bedroom and slammed the door. How unreasonable could her mom be? Christina wanted to go to the slumber party at Sarah's house, but her mom wouldn't let her go. "You know the girls are much older than you are and rather wild," Mom had said.

But Christina yelled, "You never give me any freedom!"

She was still sniffing when she heard a sound at her window. Looking up, she saw a bird beating its wings against the glass. It seemed to be trying to get inside. As she watched, her mom knocked on the door. "I have some clean laundry, Christina."

As Mom set the clothes on the dresser, she saw the bird beating on the glass. "Christina," Mom said softly, "open the window and let the poor bird in. It's cruel to keep him out when he desperately wants to get in."

"Mom, he wouldn't know what to do once he got inside. He'd be trapped and scared and wouldn't know how to get out again! He might get hurt."

"But don't you want him to have his freedom?" Mom asked.

"He's got more space and freedom outside," Christina said grumpily.

Mom smiled and nodded. "So by saying no, you're really giving him freedom and protecting him," she said. "That's what I'm trying to do for you."

**TRUE FREEDOM
INCLUDES RULES.**



HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you feel that your parents are restricting your freedom by giving you rules and expecting you to obey? In love, they are actually protecting you from situations or things that could harm you. Trust their judgment and obey their decisions. True freedom includes living within bounds set up by God.

TO MEMORIZE:

*Their command is a lamp and their instruction a light;
their corrective discipline is the way to life.*

PROVERBS 6:23



BY JAN L. HANSEN

God Has Prepared

*No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what
God has prepared for those who love him.*

1 CORINTHIANS 2:9

Perhaps you want to be accepted by a certain group, such as a sports team or club. But it doesn't happen. Maybe you'd like to live in or travel to a certain place, but you can't. When you are disappointed, remember that God has His own plan for you. You can't imagine it—nobody can. When you are discouraged, just focus on your love of God. He has prepared things for you. His plan for you is unfolding.

Circle the words that mean “plan.”

K A N C D X O A Y J G T Q P T
A S A K A Q O N X D N W C D K
G T R L K L R W E O T V A M L
R M R Y G Y C D J S W Y Z V E
M Y A Q Z V K U U T D O I A R
P G N L C X K Y L R U Q I S S
O F G L Y G A R Q A F B N C S
R V E A C M E V D T T R J H H
G B S T C R V M W E C E A E N
A U K B N H S F Y G Z U D M P
N T K Z H K A X B I Z A E E E
I P P R E P A R E Z T J S K A
Z D M F J M P G T E B U I B M
E S S H A P E Y R I K P G D X
J I F L H P M B O N X M N K D

arrange
calculate
chart
design
frame

organize
prepare
scheme
shape
strategize

SEE ANSWER IN BACK

January 29 THE BEST HAMBURGER!

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.

“Dad sure looks tired lately,” said Bonita to her brother, Stephano. It was Saturday morning, and the two children were playing catch in the front yard. Just a few minutes earlier, they had watched their dad slowly walk down the road to the bus stop. Even though it was Saturday, he had to go to the office.

“Dad’s tired because of that big report he’s writing for the convention next month,” Stephano said.

“Mom’s been busy too,” Bonita added. “It’s not easy teaching full time and keeping the house straight. I wish we could help them.”

“Well, we already helped Mom clean the house,” said Stephano, “but there are some jobs kids just can’t do!”

They threw the ball back and forth for a while, then Bonita spoke excitedly. “Stephano, how much money do you have?”

“I’m rich!” Stephano said, smiling. “All last week I helped Mr. Gonzales clean out the back room at his grocery store, remember?”

“I’ve got babysitting money saved up,” said Bonita.

“I thought we could take Dad and Mom out for dinner.

It would let them know we appreciate them.”

And that’s just what Bonita and Stephano did. Their parents were very surprised.

“You know,” said Dad as they were eating, “this is the best hamburger I’ve ever tasted!”

“I agree,” Mom said with a smile. “It’s terrific to know that our children care about us!”

SHOW LOVE FOR PARENTS.



HOW ABOUT YOU?

When was the last time you did something special for your dad and mom or told them how much you appreciate the hard work they do? Dads and moms sometimes become very busy and therefore very tired. Read 1 Corinthians 13, a chapter in which the apostle Paul talks about love. Then show that kind of love to your parents.

TO MEMORIZE:

*“Honor your father and mother.” This is the
first commandment with a promise.*

EPHESIANS 6:2

January 30 HER OWN DECISION

Read James 1:5-6.

“Come on, Sue,” Erika called. “It’s time for choir.”

Sue put her books in her locker and shut the door. “I decided not to go, Erika. It’s such a nuisance having to stay after school twice a week.”

“But, Sue, we planned on it,” Erika said, glancing at her watch.

“Erika, let’s forget choir this year,” urged Sue. “Let’s go to my house and play my new video game instead.”

Erika hesitated. She wanted to stay, but she didn’t want to go to choir alone. She knew Sue wouldn’t change her mind, either. “Well, okay,” she agreed slowly.

That night Erika’s mom asked how choir was. “Sue and I decided not to join this year,” Erika explained.

“Was that really your choice or Sue’s?” Mom asked.

Erika looked down.

“You have a talent, Erika, and you’ve always said you wanted to use it for the Lord. The training you get at school will help you develop your talent, and besides, you had a lot of fun singing at the concerts last year. The main person you’re hurting by not joining is yourself.”

Erika thought about her mother’s words. This wasn’t the first time Sue had discouraged her from doing something she wanted to do.

“Mom, I’ll join the choir next week,” she said firmly. “I’m not going to let Sue talk me out of doing things anymore! I’ll ask the Lord to help me make my own decisions.”

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you let others tell you what you should or shouldn’t do? Sometimes friends can sound pretty convincing, and if you’re not careful, they’ll make your decisions for you. God wants you to make your own decisions. Ask Him to help you have wisdom.

TO MEMORIZE:

I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.

PHILIPPIANS 4:13



BY LENORA MCWHORTEN



DECIDE WITH GOD’S HELP.

January 31 HE KNOWS HIS OWN

Read John 10:1-5, 11-14.

Gary settled back in his seat as his science teacher began showing a movie about Adélie penguins.

Gary watched the penguins swim toward the coast in the spring. They slid and waddled across the icy land, searching for a nesting place. How funny they looked! Soon they stopped at a rocky place, which was called a rookery. Large numbers of penguins would lay eggs and raise their young there. A million penguins could live in a single rookery, but each penguin family had its own nest.

When the lights came on, Gary had some questions. “If thousands of penguins live in one spot, how can a penguin tell which babies are hers?” he asked. “They all looked dressed alike to me.” The class laughed.

“That’s a good question, Gary,” his teacher said. “Each penguin has a different voice. The parents can pick out their own children from thousands of other penguins just by the sound of their voices.”

That evening Gary told his parents about the penguins. Dad smiled and nodded. “You know, God does the same thing for us,” he said. “There are millions of people all over the world, but God knows those who belong to Him. If they stray away from Him, God calls them back to Himself by His Word. He knows His own children, and He takes care of them.”

“I’m glad I belong to Jesus,” Gary said.

GOD KNOWS HIS OWN.



HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you wonder if God cares about you or your circumstances? If you’ve trusted Christ as your Savior, you belong to God. He knows you by name. He cares about every detail of your life. He has promised to care for you. Trust Him.

TO MEMORIZE:

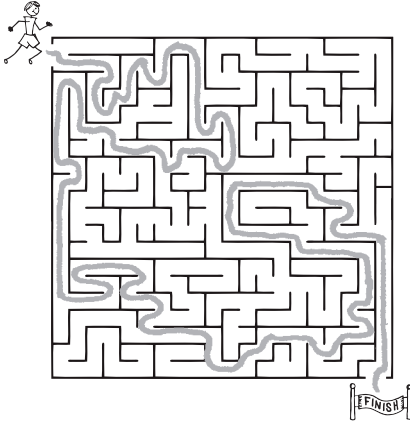
But God’s truth stands firm like a foundation stone with this inscription: “The LORD knows those who are his,” and “All who belong to the LORD must turn away from evil.”

2 TIMOTHY 2:19

ANSWERS

JUST YOU WAIT

JANUARY 15



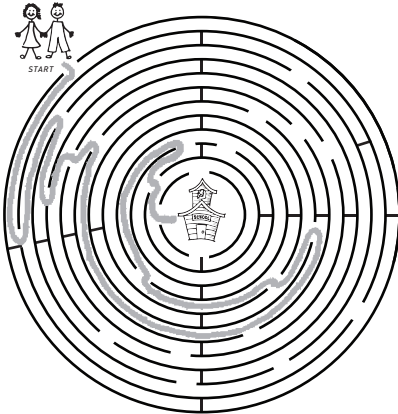
GOD HAS PREPARED

JANUARY 29



NEW PLACES

MARCH 18



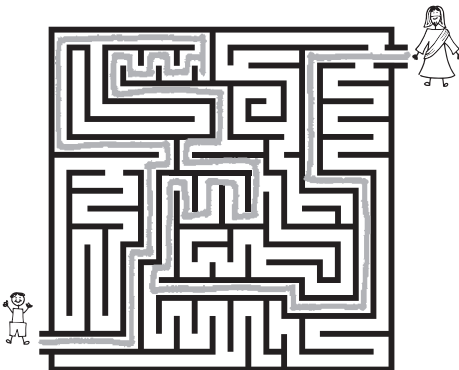
STAND YOUR GROUND

MARCH 25



YOU ARE CALLED

MAY 13



SPREAD THE LIGHT

MAY 20

