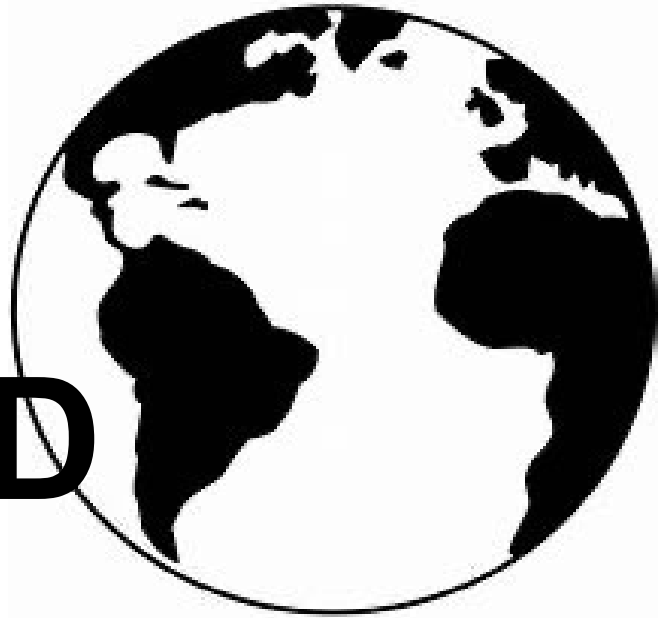


The Story

of

GOD



and

Man

**Narrations from God's Word
For building a solid foundation of faith.**

The Children's Storybook Edition

by
Ron Moore

This Children's Storybook Edition was prepared by Ron Moore.
612 Thornton Drive, Franklin, TN 37064

Many thanks to Steve and Carol (deceased) Lyons for their book
The Story of God and Man, 2009

and

The privilege given me to work with Steve on editing and expanding that work
from 37 to 40 narrations in 2025-26

The Scriptures used in this storybook have been paraphrased from
The King James Version to a 6-year-old's comprehension level.

The Story of God and Man: The Children's Storybook Edition
Copyright © 2026 by Ron Moore

CONTENT PAGE

INTRODUCTION

Preface

How to Use the Children's Storybook

STORIES

1. The Most Amazing Book Ever!	1
2. The Big Battle in the Sky	3
3. The Voice That Made the World	5
4. The Best Day Ever.....	7
5. The Biggest, Badest Lie Ever	9
6. Two Families, Two Paths.....	11
7. The Floating Zoo.....	13
8. The Sky-High Blunder.....	15
9. Abram's Big Move!.....	17
10. God Will Provide!	19
11. The Ten-Camel Test!.....	21
12. Trouble between the Twins.....	23
13. A Long Journey Home!	25
14. When Dreams Come True!.....	27
15. The Baby in the Basket!.....	29
16. Blood on the Door!.....	31
17. The Great Escape.....	33
18. Broken Stones and a Golden Calf	35
19. God Comes to Live Next Door.....	37
20. The Angry Splash and the Slimy Snakes!.....	39
21. Big Walls and a Bright Red Cord	41
22. Giant Fruits and Scary Giants.....	43
23. Victory with Shouts and Sunshine	45
24. Trumpets and Torches.....	47
25. From Sadness to Super Joy	49
26. A Voice in the Dark of Night.....	51
27. The King Who Rewrote the Rules.....	53
28. The Boy with a Brave Heart.....	55

29. A Secret Tunnel and Whispering Trees	57
30. King David's Heart.....	59
31. Fire from the Sky	61
32. A Fish in the Sea, a King on the Way!	63
33. The Farmer and the Crooked Wall.....	65
34. Cold Hearts and the Coming King	67
35. The Fire That Met Its Match.....	69
36. The Angel's Big Surprises	71
37. The Forever King is Born!.....	73
38. The Wild Desert Preacher	75
39. The Showdown in the Desert.....	77
40. Building the King's Team	79
41. Spooky Spirits Shiver and Shake!.....	81
42. Sickness and Sin Defeated.....	83
43. The Bread, the Boat, and the Big Storms	85
44. Four Days Late, but Just in Time	87
45. Born All Over Again!	89
46. Caught in Their Own Trap	91
47. Rocks and Rules.....	93
48. A Fig Tree and Temple Thieves	95
49. Fluffy Sheep and Dangerous Wolves	97
50. A Gift Fitting for a King.....	99
51. The Forever King Betrayed.....	101
52. Heaven's Lamb Is Slain.....	103
53. Just Like the Old Stories Said!.....	105
54. The Ending That Never Ends!	107

Preface

The inspiration for this work comes from three primary sources. The first is the privilege of having collaborated with Steve Lyons on the update of The Story of God and Man (2009). Shortly after I met Steve, he gave me a copy of that book, which reflected his ministry as a missionary for over 35 years. I was very impressed with its purpose, content, and evangelistic approach. As a retired missionary, I asked for permission to translate the material into French and to develop a leadership training program for my former field of service, Côte d'Ivoire. That is how I got involved in the editing process. From the beginning of that process, I had the vision of one day expanding the narrations to 52 and then creating a children's storybook from them.

The second inspiration came after the Côte d'Ivoire project expanded to include Kenya. That is a bilingual country that speaks Swahili and English. The original book written by the Lyons was in Swahili. Since Tanzania borders Kenya, where the Lyons served for more than 25 years, I invited Steve to join me in expanding the training program to include all three countries. It was during this mission trip that I learned more about Pastor David Wafula's ministry in Kitale, Kenya, where the Kenyan training took place. It was there I learned how their church was built around reaching families through ministry to children. They now have the opportunity to minister to thousands of school-age children several times a week. While there, it became my burden to write a children's storybook version of the narrations.

The third inspiration, however, is the one that caused me to make this project a top priority NOW. After Steve finished his part of the training program in Tanzania, he received a text from one of his former students. In that communication, he said he was using the evangelistic narrations in the English as a Second Language (ESL) class he was teaching. WOW! I thought. What if I could develop an ESL teaching program based on these narrations? How powerful that would be both abroad and here in the States! All the stories in the children's storybook edition are between 500 and 575 words. For an ESL program, the content needs to be under 300 words to be effective. Knowing that, I got to work on the children's storybook immediately to get it out to the field as soon as possible, especially to Kenya. I am now almost ready to begin trimming those stories to create an ELS ministry focused on evangelistic outreach.

I know you may be thinking there must be a zillion children's Bible storybooks and ESL Bible-based programs, so why reinvent the wheel? Wouldn't it be easier just to use them? Yes, it would be easier, but none of them are structured or designed to present the gospel as effectively as these stories are. I'll explain this in much greater detail in the "How to use this Storybook" section. But very simply, these stories all revolve around the one overarching theme of the Scriptures (redemption); they are connected one to the other (like links in a chain); and they are chronologically based (beginning with Creation and concluding with the Lord's return). This method has proven extremely effective in evangelistic ministries worldwide.

It is my prayer that you will get a vision and burden for these ministries. I invite you to follow us on our website, www.Project2-2.com, to stay up to date with these and other projects. May God bless you with every spiritual blessing from on high through His Son and our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ!

How to Use the Children's Storybook

Its Audience. This storybook can be used in any number of ways. When it was written, the primary focus was on providing age-appropriate, biblical stories for families and teachers in schools. As you will read below, our audience shapes how these stories are told. Also, we are developing a team to adapt these stories for use in church ministries like Sunday School, Children's Church, and Bible Clubs. We will add graphics, fun games and activities, songs, and various other teaching aids. As mentioned in the Preface, we are also working on adapting them for an evangelistic ESL ministry. In fact, we are always open to new ideas, so do not hesitate to share them with us.

Its Purpose. We are keeping the same purpose as the original book written by Steve and Carol Lyons, The Story of God and Man. That purpose is simply stated on the cover page: "Narrations from God's Word for building a solid foundation of faith." That's how the stories are designed: to build a solid foundation for faith through (1) evangelistic efforts -- preparing unbelievers to receive Jesus Christ as their Savior and Forever King; and (2) discipleship training -- for teaching believers how to follow Jesus as His faithful disciples. The enormous need for these faith-building efforts, at home and abroad, cannot be overstated.

Its Methodology. As mentioned in the Preface, these stories are structured to facilitate evangelism and discipleship efforts. All the stories revolve around three very specific concepts:

1. We are determined that every story must, in some way, advance the overarching theme of the Scriptures, which is God's plan of redemption for all men. Before including a story in the series, one simple question was asked: *How does this story advance that theme?* We made every effort to ensure the theme was evident in the story. If it wasn't, we would either omit it or rewrite it. We did not want another Bible storybook that simply told interesting and exciting stories about biblical heroes.
2. We also made a concentrated effort to make sure that every story connected to the one that came before it and the one that followed, much like links in a chain. The first paragraph connects to the previous story and introduces the story to be presented. Then, we tell the story. The last paragraph summarizes the story just told and adds an intriguing "hook" to build anticipation for the story that follows. We believe that if you break this link by not connecting the stories one to the other, you essentially break the chain of the main story, God's plan of redemption for mankind.

3. The stories are chronologically based, beginning with Creation and concluding with the Lord's return. Think about it. All stories have one central, uniting theme with a beginning and an ending. So it is with the Word of God. It is one continuous story with many chapters. Our storybook tells that story to children one chapter at a time, stories that are both exciting and sometimes very sad.

It is our conviction that God's marvelous grace and profound love for the world cannot be fully appreciated without knowing the whole story from beginning to end. It is this belief and methodology that separates our Children's Storybook from virtually all others that are available today, as good as they may be.

Its Implementation. As they say, this is where the rubber meets the road. No methodology is any better than its execution. The telling of these stories is designed to differ from that in the original book, The Story of God and Man. There, it focused on oral storytelling with nothing but the Word of God in hand. They are designed to reach people in oral tradition countries, where storytelling is the main way people learn. This is true for both adults and children. But the reason for the changes in how we suggest presenting our stories is rooted in our audience: children! So, here is what we recommend.

1. Read the stories! Do not try to memorize them. They are written using words and phrases that kids will understand. Because they are not "adult" words, if you try to memorize them, you will subconsciously begin to substitute your words in place of the words designed to capture the attention of the children. Holding the printed story in your hand while reading it will not distract the kids from enjoying it.
2. Practice makes perfect! All of these stories are around 400 words. They are written on one page and can be read in about 3 minutes, more or less, depending on the reader! Practice your intonation and rhythm. Practice speaking using a voice appealing to children. Practice where you put pauses and on which words and phrases you place the emphasis. If you do not enjoy hearing the story as you read it, the children will not enjoy it when they hear it! You can easily tell if you are doing it right by the look on the children's faces.
3. Do not be afraid to animate! Everyone is more or less "gifted" in this ability, but everyone can learn to become an effective storyteller with practice. Practice using your voice, hands, and arms, and even your whole body to tell the story. By raising or lowering your voice, you can place emphasis where it's needed. For example, if the story says they shouted, raise your

voice; if it says they whispered, lower it. If it says they picked up stones, bend over as if you're going to pick them up. But if you don't practice doing this, your motions and changes in voice (or lack thereof) will seem unnatural and distract from the story.

When animating these stories, there are two pieces of advice that you should carefully consider. First, try standing while you read. This is absolutely necessary for larger groups of children, like a classroom. If, however, you are telling the story to just a few children, like in a family setting, it's ok to sit. However, always sit slightly forward in the chair so you can animate your body effectively. Secondly, do not get carried away with animations. If you do, that will distract from the story, and the children will remember how you acted more than what you shared.

4. Keep the questions simple! We have written age-appropriate questions and responses for each story. You may use those or create your own. The important rule to remember, however, is to keep them simple. That means stick with questions that relate to the story. Do not get into long discussions, doctrinal or theological issues, or preach a Sunday sermon. These are children, and you want the stories to be a fun experience for them. Don't allow missteps in the question-and-answer time to detract from the story you just shared.
5. Review from time to time! Since these stories are short, you can take a few minutes every five to ten stories to ask what they remember about some of the previous stories. Remember, we are telling one story that has many chapters. So, taking time to review and make sure the whole story is being remembered. Remembered, not memorized! A good way to do the review is to set up a specific time and ask the children to tell you what they remember. If you do this, however, do not expect perfect memory. Be kind and encouraging in your comments. Do not feel compelled to correct every mistake or omission. Remember, they are children!
6. Let the stories do the evangelization. The primary reasons for this storybook are evangelization and edification. We encourage you, however, to let the biblical stories and the Holy Spirit do their work. After all, it's only His Word and His Spirit that can penetrate and change the heart. We have the firm conviction that if you let Him do His work, children will come to you asking how to become a Christian. We also believe that if they come to

you, their decision to accept Jesus as their Savior will be more likely to be genuine and lifelong.

If you are presenting these in a government school system, this is especially important to remember. In many countries around the world, there is a wide-open door of opportunity for this kind of ministry. The government, however, sees it as a special privilege for us to present the stories. They can revoke that privilege at any time if they believe we are overtly proselytizing. So, let's use this opportunity for the Lord but not abuse it and lose it.

Obviously, when they are used in churches, Christian Schools, church-sponsored Bible Clubs, or in families' homes, the restraints are far less of a concern. But even here, we must remember that children are easily persuaded to make a profession of faith before they really know what it means to be a Christian. The most important thing we can do to reach children is to pray for them and to prepare ourselves faithfully to be an instrument in His hand.

It is with great joy in the promise of the Lord that we present to you the Story of God and Man: the Children's Storybook Edition.

"Whenever I speak, My words (and stories) never get lost, they never fail, and they never come back empty. They always finish the job they were sent to do, and they always make good things happen!"

Isaiah 55:11

The Most Amazing Book Ever!

Get ready! We are about to go on a giant, super-duper adventure. This adventure is full of the coolest stories ever. Do you love stories? I do! But where do these stories come from? They come from a very special Book, the Word of God. It is a wonderful, beautiful Book. So, let's find out how God made it and why it is so different from any other book in your bedroom!

The Word of God is amazing because God wrote it Himself! But He did not just drop it from the sky like rain. No, He did not do that. Instead, He used a big team of helpers, and He took a very, very long time to finish it.

Imagine a friend whispering a secret in your ear. Or imagine seeing a bright, glowing angel! That is how God talked to people long ago. He also sent helpers called prophets to speak His words. Once, God even used His own finger to carve ten rules into two large, heavy stones. Tap, tap, tap! Back then, people did not have cell phones, computers, iPads, or notebooks. People wrote on long sheets of paper called scrolls. To read them, you had to roll the ends back and forth. Roll, roll, roll!

God's Book took a super long time to make. He chose about 40 helpers over a period of more than 1500 years to write it. Some were grand kings with shiny crowns. Some were fishermen catching slippery fish. Some were kind doctors. And they all lived at different times. But guess what? All their stories fit together perfectly. They are like pieces of a giant puzzle!

Special helpers, called scribes, copied God's Word over and over, year after year. They were so careful. They counted every single letter. If they made just one tiny mistake, oh no! They threw the copy away and started over.

The coolest thing about the Book is that it tells the future. It has over 300 special clues about a Savior who would come to help us. Every single one of those clues came true! God knows everything, even the future. So, we can trust His every word.

One day, a shepherd boy lost a little lamb. He looked inside a dark cave to try to find it. Instead, he found a bunch of old clay jars. Inside those jars were ancient scrolls! They had God's words from long ago written on them. And, guess what? Not one word had changed. God kept His Word, and all these stories safe for us.

Why did God give us this special Book? Well, it is like a shiny treasure map! It helps us know what is right and wrong, and teaches us how we should treat others. Now, get ready! Our next story starts before the world even began.

Questions to Ask:

1. Who wrote this special Book? *God did, with the help of His friends.*
2. What did God use to write the 10 rules on 2 big stones? *His own finger.*
3. What did people write on before we had paper or iPads? *Long rolls called scrolls.*
4. How do the stories in the Book fit together? *Like puzzle pieces.*
5. What did the helpers called scribes do if they made a mistake? They throw it away and start over.
6. The Book is like what kind of helpful map? *A treasure map.*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

Thank you for your holy Word,

And the greatest stories ever heard.

Your Book is like a shining light,

That guides my steps to do what's right.

Help me hear your voice today,

In all I do and all I say.

Thank you that your words are true,

I want to learn them and follow you.

--Amen.

The Big Battle in the Sky

Get ready! Remember how we learned that God's special Book is like a shiny treasure map? Well, it is time to open our map and start our very first adventure! This story happens at the very beginning, before God made the dirt, the trees, or the deep blue oceans. Let's roll open our scroll and see what happened in heaven!

Long, long ago, before God made the earth, He made the angels. Angels are special helpers to God. They do not have bodies like ours, so most of the time our eyes cannot see them. God made millions and millions of angels! There are so many that nobody can count them all. They were perfect, wise, and very strong. They lived in heaven and served God with big, happy smiles.

God gave some angels jobs as leaders. We know the names of three of them: Gabriel, Michael, and Morning Star. Morning Star was the most beautiful angel of them all. He was super smart. He wore spectacular clothes covered in shiny, colorful jewels and bright gold! God gave this angel a special job as a helper in a beautiful garden.

At first, the angel followed all of God's rules. But soon, he looked in the mirror and got very proud. He thought, *"Look how beautiful I am! I want to be the boss instead of God!"* Oh no! He started making bad, selfish choices. He became mean on the inside. Because his heart was so full of pride, God took away his special job and told him he had to leave heaven.

When Morning Star stopped obeying God, some of the other angels followed him. Since God does not allow any bad things in heaven, He told all the bad angels they had to leave, too. God changed Morning Star's name to Satan, or the devil. The angels who followed him became evil spirits, or demons. Today, Satan and his followers do not live in heaven anymore. They are constantly working against God and His plans for the world.

But the good angels are still there! They sing happy songs to God, and serve Him every day. Sometimes, God sends them to help us, even if we cannot see them. But they are there, always working for God and for us!

Well, what an amazing start to our treasure map adventure! Now we are ready to see what God does next. So, get ready, because in our next adventure, we are going to watch God build the whole wide world from scratch, in just six spectacular days!

Questions to Ask:

1. What do we learn about God in this story?
 - *He is the Ultimate King: He created millions of powerful angels, and He is much stronger than all of them.*
 - *He is Perfectly Good: God is holy, which means He loves what is right and does not allow bad choices or pride in His heavenly home.*
 - *He is Always in Control: Even when Satan tried to rebel, God easily handled the situation and kept His good plan on track.*
2. When did God make the angels? *Before He made the earth.*
3. Can our eyes usually see angels? *Not usually, because they are spirits without physical bodies.*
4. What are the names of the three angel leaders we know? *Gabriel, Michael, and Morning Star.*
5. What bad choice did Morning Star make? *He became proud and wanted to be like God.*
6. What is Morning Star's name now? *Satan, or the devil.*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

Thank you for your holy angel team,
They shine with joy and bright, bright beams!
They serve you happily each day,
And always listen and obey.

Even though they're hidden from my view,
They protect me while they work for you.
Please help me follow you each day,
Just like your angels up away!

--Amen.

The Voice That Made the World

Last time, we saw the amazing world of heaven. God's good angels still serve Him with great joy! Even though the proud angel tried to make his own rules, we learned that God is the most powerful King ever.

Now that heaven was full of happy, singing angels. God was ready for His next big project. He looked out into the dark, empty space. He decided to build a brand-new world in just six days. He used nothing but the power of His words! Here is how His big building project happened:

Day 1: The light switch was turned on! God looked into the darkness and said, "*Let there be light.*" Boom! Instant brightness! God called the bright light "day" and the darkness "*night.*"

Day 2: The giant blue sky appeared! God separated the waters. He pulled some water up high, leaving the deep oceans below, to make the big blue sky in between.

Day 3: Land, trees, and yummy fruits were made! God gathered the oceans together so dry land could rise up. He turned the brown dirt into a beautiful paradise. He made green grass, lovely flowers, and giant trees loaded with delicious apples and mangoes. Yum! Yum!

Day 4: The sun, moon, and stars hung in the sky! God decided the sky needed some decorations. He made the blazing sun for the daytime, the glowing moon, and millions of sparkling stars to light up the night.

Day 5: Animals began splashing and flying! The oceans and skies were way too quiet. So, God made swimming creatures. He made tiny goldfish and massive blue whales. Then, He filled the air with flapping wings--like eagles, parrots, and bumble bees!

Day 6: The best was saved for last! God made all the land animals. Fast cheetahs began to run, monkeys climbed trees, and cows chewed grass. Then, God made the very first man from the dust. He breathed life into him, and the man's eyes popped open! He was alive!

Day 7: A special day of rest! God's big project was finished. He looked at the world and smiled. It was absolutely perfect, just like Him. Then, God stopped His work and made this a day for rest and worship.

God had also made a beautiful home for man in a gorgeous garden called Eden. Get ready, because next time, we will see how much God cared for the man He had created!

Questions to Ask:

1. Does God need tools to make things? *No, He is so powerful that He built the whole world using just His words.*
2. How does God feel about the things He makes? *He loved them and smiled because they were perfect and good, just like Him.*
3. Is God messy or organized? *He is perfectly organized, placing the sun, moon, and stars in their proper places like a giant clock.*
4. What does it mean that God was alive before He even made time on Day Four? *It teaches us that God is eternal, which is a big word that means He has no beginning and no end! He was already there before anything else existed, and He will be there forever and ever.*
5. Why did God make people last? *Because people are His most special creation, and He wanted their beautiful home to be completely ready for them.*
6. Where does life come from? *Life comes from God! He breathed His very own breath of life into the first man to make him alive.*
7. Why did the most powerful God take a day to rest? *To show us that resting and taking time to thank Him is the right thing to do.*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

Thank you, God, for being so strong,
Making the world with a word and a song!
Thank you for sunshine, deep oceans of blue,
And all of the animals made by You.

You live forever, eternal and true,
And I am a special creation to You!
Help me take care of this world I see,
And make You so glad that You made me.

--Amen.

The Best Day Ever

Imagine a world that was brand new, totally perfect, and sparkling clean. That is what God just made! He spent six days making the blue oceans, the shiny lights in the sky, green trees, and every animal that swims, flies, and runs. It was a beautiful paradise.

On the sixth day, God made His most important creation of all. He made man! God gave the man an invisible superpower: a soul and a spirit. This meant the man could think, make choices, and feel big emotions like joy and love. He was completely good, with zero mistakes!

God looked at the man and said, *"It is not good for him to be all alone."* So, He brought a huge parade of animals to the man. Picture it! Lions, elephants, and monkeys all marching by. The man gave every single one of them a name. But he realized that none of them were like him. He was still lonely.

God knew exactly what to do. He made the man fall into a super deep sleep. While the man was dreaming, God gently used a tiny part of the man's side to make a woman. When he woke up and saw her, he was so happy! "Woowooow!" he said. "She is just like me!"

Their names were Adam and Eve. They did not wear any clothes, but they were not embarrassed at all because they were innocent and good. God smiled at them and gave them an important job. He said, *"Have children, fill the earth, and take care of all the animals."*

God put Adam and Eve into a spectacular garden called Eden. It was the perfect home! They never had to worry about anything. God gave them every delicious fruit and vegetable they could ever want. They trusted in God for all their needs. And God took care of them.

Right in the middle of this beautiful garden stood two very special trees — the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God gave Adam and Eve only one rule. He said, *"You can eat from any tree in the garden. But you must never eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil. If you do, you will die."* This meant their close friendship with God would be broken.

Well, God looked at His world, and everything was perfect. But get ready, and put on your bravery caps! Because next time, we will see how a very big mistake changed everything.

Questions to ask:

1. What do we learn about God in this story?
 - *He knows everything. He saw that the man was lonely, so He made him a perfect best friend.*
 - *He is loving and Incredibly Generous. He gave Adam and Eve a beautiful garden paradise, tons of delicious food, and a big mission to rule over the earth.*
2. What invisible superpower did God give people that animals don't have?
A soul and a spirit so we can think, make choices, and love.
3. How did God make the first woman while the man was in a deep sleep?
He used one of the man's ribs.
4. What special job or mission did God give to Adam and Eve? *To take care of the earth and all the animals.*
5. **How many rules did God give them in their beautiful garden home?**
Only one rule! They were not allowed to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
6. What did God say would happen if Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit?
God told them they would die. This didn't mean their bodies would stop moving right away, but it meant their hearts would be separated from God, and their perfect, close friendship with Him would be broken.

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

God, for this world so grand,
And the perfect home that Your love planned.
Thank You for my soul and spirit too,
So I can think, and love, and talk to You!

Help me remember Your rules are right,
To keep me safe both day and night.
I'll hear Your Word, make choices good,
And care for Your world just like I should.

-- Amen.

The Biggest, Badest Lie Ever

Adam and Eve were living the best life ever in the Garden of Eden. They had everything they needed. They trusted God completely. But do you remember the bad guy who hates God? Yes, his name is Satan, and he wanted to ruin God's plans.

One day, Satan used a sneaky snake to trick Eve. *"Did God really say you cannot eat from these trees?"* the snake whispered. Eve told him God's rule. But the snake laughed and lied! He said, *"You won't die! If you eat it, you will be just like God!"*

Eve looked at the fruit. It looked so delicious. Instead of listening to God, she believed the snake. She took a bite! Then, she gave some to Adam, and he ate it too. Oh no! Instantly, everything changed. They felt deeply ashamed. For the first time ever, they felt embarrassed. They quickly made clothes from large leaves to cover themselves.

Later, they heard God walking in the garden. *"Where are you?"* God called. Adam and Eve were terrified, so they hid in the bushes. God asked, *"Did you eat from the forbidden tree?"* Instead of saying *they were sorry*, they started pointing fingers. Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the snake!

God was very sad and angry. But He made a wonderful promise. He said that one day, a special Deliverer would come to crush Satan and save the world! This gave them hope. But still, because they disobeyed, things got hard. The ground grew sharp thorns. Adam had to work very hard to grow food.

God saw their clothes and knew they were not good enough. So, He made them better clothes from animal skins. And for the first time, Adam and Eve realized that making bad choices brings sadness and death. They knew they really needed that promised Savior to rescue them.

Because they had sin in their hearts, they could not stay in the perfect garden anymore. God sent them out. At the entrance, He placed a powerful angel with a bright, flaming sword that spun round and round. God did not want them to eat of the Tree of Life, because if they did, they would live forever in their sin.

Even though they had to leave, God still loved them very much. He gave them a brand-new family. But get ready! Next time, we will see just how much the world changed outside the garden.

Questions to Ask:

1. What animal did Satan use to trick Eve in the garden? *A sneaky snake.*
2. What lie did the snake tell Eve about the fruit? *He told her she would not die and would be just like God.*
3. What did Adam and Eve do when they heard God walking in the garden? *They were scared and hid in the bushes.*
4. Instead of saying "I'm sorry," what did Adam and Eve do? *They blamed each other and the snake.*
5. What secret promise did God make to crush Satan's power forever? *He promised to send a Savior.*
6. What did God place at the entrance of the garden to keep them out? *A powerful angel with a flaming sword.*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

Thank you for your loving grace,
Even when mistakes take place.
Help me turn from sneaky lies,
And trust that your rules are good and wise.

If I make a bad mistake,
And see the trouble that it makes,
Give me the courage to be bold,
To say "I'm sorry" and not scold.

Thank you for your secret plan,
To send a Savior to our land,
To rescue us and make us new,
And fix our broken hearts for you!
-- Amen.

Two Families, Two Paths

After leaving the beautiful Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve started a brand-new family. God blessed them with two boys. The older brother was named Cain, and he became a farmer who grew plants in the dirt. The younger brother was named Abel, and he became a shepherd who took care of fluffy sheep.

Their parents taught them how to show love to God. They learned that when people make bad choices, they need to bring a special gift to God by presenting to Him the sacrifice of a lamb.

One day, both brothers brought a gift to the Lord. Abel followed God's rules and brought a little lamb. But Cain wanted to do things his own way. He brought a basket of veggies instead. God was happy with Abel's gift, but He did not accept Cain's basket.

This made Cain very angry! God spoke gently to Cain, encouraging him to do what was right. He asked, *"If you choose to do what is right, won't you be happy?"* But Cain was too jealous to listen. He told his brother, *"Let's go out to the fields."* When they were all alone, Cain killed Abel and buried him.

Later, God asked Cain, *"Where is your brother Abel?"* Cain lied to God! *"I don't know!"* he said. *"Is it my job to look after my brother?"* Cain never said *"I'm sorry"* to God. He just walked away. He got married, and his family grew fast. But sadly, Cain's family did not care about God.

They did some cool things, though! They built the very first cities, played musical instruments like flutes, and made tools out of metal. But even though they were smart, they completely ignored God and His rules.

Meanwhile, Adam and Eve had another son named Seth. Eve was so happy! Seth grew up and had a family, too. His family was completely different from Cain's. Seth's family loved God, talked to Him, and wanted to please Him.

So, the world was now split into two families. There was Cain's family, who did not care about God, and Seth's family, who loved God very much.

What do you think will happen next? Better get ready and put on your raincoat! In our next adventure, the world gets so full of bad choices that a giant storm is coming!

Questions to Ask:

1. *What does this story teach us about God? He sees everything. Cain tried to hide his mistake, but God knew exactly what happened because nothing can be hidden from Him.*
2. *What were the jobs of the two brothers, Cain and Abel? Cain was a farmer who grew plants, and Abel was a shepherd who took care of sheep.*
3. *Why was God happy with Abel's gift but not Cain's? Abel followed God's rules by bringing a young animal, but Cain did things his own way.*
4. *What big, bad feeling did Cain let grow in his heart? He became very jealous and angry.*
5. *What lie did Cain tell God when God asked where Abel was? He said, "I don't know!" and asked if it was his job to keep track of his brother.*
6. *What was the name of Adam and Eve's third son whose family loved and followed God? His name was Seth.*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

Thank you for my family,
And all the people who love me.

When I feel angry and want to shout,
Help me stop and breathe it out.

Help me listen to Your gentle voice,
To tell the truth and make a good choice.

I'll use my hands to be kind today,
Instead of hurting in any way.

Thank You for watching from above,
And always giving me Your giant love!

. -- Amen.

The Floating Zoo

The world was getting very crowded. Remember those two families? One family loved God, and the other family ignored Him. Well, something went very, very wrong. The good family started marrying the women of the bad family and began copying them. Soon, almost everyone forgot about God!

God looked down, and His heart was broken. He saw people doing mean things all the time. It made Him so sad. God knew He had to wash the earth clean. But because He is kind, He gave people a long time to change how they were living. But nobody listened except for one man named Noah. Noah loved God very much.

One day, God told him, *"I am going to bring a giant flood to wash the earth clean. But I will save you."* God told Noah to build a huge boat called an Ark. He told him exactly how to build it, with three decks, a window, and one great, big door. Noah believed God and started building! For years, Noah hammered away. He warned his neighbors to listen to God, but the people just laughed at him.

When the Ark was finished, a miracle happened! God guided the animals right to the boat. Two of every kind, a male and a female, marched right up the ramp. Lions, giraffes, penguins, and little beetles are packed inside this floating zoo! Then, Noah and his family walked through the door. God reached down and closed that big door Himself, locking them safely inside.

Suddenly, the sky turned black, and it started to rain. It had never done that before! And for 40 days and 40 nights, the water poured. The flood grew so high that it lifted the giant Ark right off the ground. Everyone outside was lost, but inside, Noah's family and the animals were completely safe.

Finally, the rain stopped and the ground dried up. God told Noah, *"Step out of the Ark!"* God opened the one heavy door, and everyone ran out onto dry land. Happy freedom! The very first thing Noah did was say, *"Thank You, God, for saving us!"* God was very pleased. He gave them the same mission he had given Adam and Eve: *"Have lots of children and fill the earth!"*

Then, God painted a spectacular, bright rainbow across the sky. He promised, *"I will never destroy the earth with a flood again."* But get ready! In our next adventure, we will find out if Noah's grandkids listened to God or made the same old mistakes.

Questions to Ask:

1. What does this story teach us about God?
 - *God is patient and kind. God didn't bring the flood right away. He gave the people years to change their ways, but they refused.*
 - *He keeps us safe. Just as God closed the big Ark door with His own hand, He always protects and keeps His people safe under His care.*
 - *He keeps His promises. Every time we see a colorful rainbow in the sky, it proves that God always does exactly what He says He will do.*
2. Why did God decide to wash the earth clean with a flood? *Because people were making bad, mean choices all the time.*
3. What was the name of the one good man who loved God? *Noah.*
4. Who closed the big door of the Ark to keep everyone safe inside? *God Himself reached down and closed it.*
5. How many days and nights did it rain? *It rained for 40 days and 40 nights.*
6. What did God paint across the sky as a promise never to flood the earth again? *A bright, beautiful rainbow.*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

Thank You, God, for my family,
And all the people who love me.

When I feel angry and want to shout,
Help me stop and breathe it out.

Help me listen to Your gentle voice,
To tell the truth and make a good choice.

Thank You for watching from above,
And always giving me Your giant love!

-- Amen.

The Sky-High Blunder

Remember how God told Noah and his family to have lots of kids and spread out to fill the whole wide earth? Well, they had lots of kids and grandkids! And they started to move around the world. But then, they found a giant, flat piece of land. Suddenly, they changed their minds. They decided to stop moving and stay right there.

They said, *"Let's build a massive city so we can stay together forever!"* But that was not all they wanted to do. They also planned to build a giant tower! They wanted it to reach all the way up into the clouds. They did not build it to say thank you to God. Instead, they just wanted to show off. They wanted to prove how strong and smart they were. They wanted to make themselves famous and draw all men to them like a giant magnet.

But that was the exact opposite of what God told them to do!

Now, at that time, everyone in the world spoke the exact same language. This made it very easy for them to work together on their plan. But God is the One who has all the power, not man. He looked down and saw their proud hearts and said, *"Let's go down and mix up their words. Then they won't understand each other anymore."*

Suddenly, God changed their one language into lots of different languages! Can you imagine working on the tower and shouting, *"Hey, pass me a brick!"* But to your friend, it just sounded like funny noises and silly babbling! Nobody could understand a single word that anyone else was saying.

Well, that put a stop to everything. Because of all the confusion, the people had to drop their tools. They had to stop building the tower. Families who spoke the same new language grouped together. Then, those groups packed up and moved away to different parts of the world.

I know it's not funny, but they ended up doing exactly what God wanted them to do in the first place. They spread out and filled the whole earth! Even though the people were now scattered all over the world, God never forgot about them. He still had a massive plan to show His love to every single family.

So, get ready to use your waiting muscles! In our next story we will see this amazing plan start to happen!

Questions to Ask:

1. What did you learn about God from this story?
 - *God is in charge of everything and everyone. He will always finish His plans, and nothing can ever stop Him!*
 - *He is a mind reader. God knows exactly what we are thinking and planning because He knows everything!*
2. What did you learn about people from this story?
 - *They are stubborn and disobedient. The people didn't listen to God. Everyone makes mistakes and seems to put themselves first.*
 - *Because we are like that, we all need a Savior to rescue us.*
 - *The people tried to reach Heaven their own way, but we can only reach God by following His rules, not our own.*
3. Why did the people want to build that big city and tower? *They didn't want to spread out all over the earth as God told them to! They wanted to try to reach Heaven using their own power.*
4. How did God make them finally listen and spread out? *God mixed up their languages so they couldn't understand each other anymore.*
5. What did the people do in the end? *They packed up and moved to different parts of the world, just like God told them to do in the first place!*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

You are so big and strong,
You control all things, all day long!
Please help my little heart to see,
Your plans are best for you and me.

Instead of doing things my way,
Help me to listen and obey.
Thank you that nothing blocks your view,
Or stops the love I have for you!

-- Amen.

Abram's Big Move!

Remember how God mixed up the words and spread people all over the earth? Well, a large city named Ur grew up out of that movement. But most of the people living there stopped praying to the one true God. They prayed to made-up gods instead. But there was one man named Abram who still loved God.

Abram and his wife, Sarai, were very old and sad because they never had any children. Abram was 75 years old when God told him to pack everything up and move to a brand-new land. God made him a giant promise: *"I will make your family into a great nation. I will bless you, and through your family, every country in the world will be blessed!"* WOW! What a promise!

It had to be hard for an old man to leave his cozy home. Plus, Abram probably thought, *"We are too old to have babies!"* But Abram trusted God! He and Sarai packed their bags and followed God to a new place called Canaan. When they arrived, God promised that this new land would belong to his family forever. He said, *"Your family will grow so big, you won't even be able to count them! They will be like the tiny grains of sand on the beach or the sparkling stars in the sky!"*

God did, however, warn Abram that his future family would be trapped as servants in a faraway land for a long time. But He promised to rescue them. Abram believed God, and God was very pleased with him. But waiting was super hard. Sarai looked in the mirror and thought, *"We are way too old to have a baby."* So, she tried to fix things herself. She told Abram to have a baby with her servant girl, Hagar. They ended up having a baby boy named Ishmael. But Ishmael was not the special baby God promised!

To show He meant it, God gave them brand-new names! He changed Abram's name to Abraham. He changed Sarai's name to Sarah. Many years later, when Abraham was super-duper old, God visited him again and said, *"Next year, Sarah is going to have a baby boy!"* Sarah was listening, and she laughed to herself. She thought, *"No way!"* But God knew her thoughts and asked, *"Is anything too hard for God?"*

God kept His promise! Next year, Sarah gave birth to a beautiful baby boy named Isaac, which means *laughter*. Abraham and Sarah loved their little boy more than anything. But get ready and put on your trust cap! Because next time, God will ask Abraham to do something very hard to test his faith.

Questions to Ask:

1. What did you learn about God from this story?
 - *Nothing is too hard for God. He can do anything, even things that seem impossible!*
 - *He always keeps his promises. God has a giant plan to fill the world with people who love Him, and He always keeps His word.*
2. What did Abram do when God told him to pack up and leave his home?
He trusted God, packed his bags, and moved to a brand-new place.
3. God promised Abram that his family would grow as big as what two things? *The stars in the sky and the sand on the beach!*
4. What happened when Abram and Sarai got tired of waiting for God's plan? *They tried to fix things their own way and had a baby named Ishmael.*
5. What new names did God give them to show He was serious? *Abram became Abraham (Father of many nations), and Sarai became Sarah.*
6. Why did Sarah laugh when God said she would have a baby next year?
She thought she was way too old to be a mommy!

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

You are the strongest King of all,
You hear me every time I call.
No job is ever too hard for you,
Everything you say is good and true.

Help me to wait with a happy smile,
Even if it takes a little while.
I give you my hand and trust your way,
Thank you for loving me every day.

-- Amen.

God Will Provide!

Remember how Sarah laughed when she heard she was going to have a baby? Well, guess what? Our God always keeps His promises! He turned her doubt into the biggest, happiest laughs ever. Exactly one year later, old Sarah gave birth to a beautiful, giggling baby boy! And oh, how they loved him with all their hearts! He was the special child they waited twenty-five long years to hold in their arms.

But after Isaac grew up into a young man, God gave Abraham a very hard test. He told him to take Isaac up on a high mountain. He asked Abraham to offer Isaac as a special gift to God. Abraham was sad, but he remembered God's big promise. He knew God would make his family huge through Isaac. So even though Abraham did not understand God's plan, he trusted God. He knew that God was always good and faithful to His word.

Abraham and Isaac packed up some wood and started walking up the big mountain. On the way, Isaac looked around. He asked a very smart question: *"Father, we have the wood. But where is the lamb for the gift?"* Abraham looked at his son and confidently said, *"God will provide the lamb, my son."*

When they got to the top, Abraham built an altar out of stones. With a sad heart, he tied up Isaac and placed him on top of the wood. He lifted up a big knife to show God that he would obey no matter what. Suddenly, a loud voice called out from heaven: *"Abraham! Stop! Do not hurt the boy. Now I know that you truly love God!"* Abraham's faith was counted as righteousness.

Abraham breathed a huge sigh of relief! And just then, he heard a rustling sound in the bushes nearby. He looked over and saw a big sheep caught by its horns in a prickly bush. It was absolutely perfect! God had sent the sheep to take Isaac's place! With so much joy and big smiles, Abraham untied Isaac. He gave him a giant hug! Then, they offered the sheep to God instead. Abraham learned that God is the One who rescues us!

Whenever we are in a tough spot, we can trust our big God to give us exactly what we need. But remember, God promised Abraham a giant family. Right now, there was still only one son, Isaac! How could one boy turn into a family as big as the stars?

Get ready and pack your wedding bags, because our adventure is about to take a giant leap forward!

Questions to Ask:

1. What did you learn about God from this story?
 - *God always provides a way to save us when we trust Him.*
 - *God kept His promise and gave Abraham and Sarah a baby boy, even though they were very old!*
 - *Nothing is Too Hard for God, who can do things that seem impossible to us!*
2. What was the name of the special baby boy God gave to Abraham and Sarah? *His name was Isaac!*
3. What super hard test did God give Abraham when Isaac grew up? *God told Abraham to take Isaac up on a mountain and offer him as a sacrifice.*
4. When Isaac asked where the lamb for the sacrifice was, what did Abraham tell him? *Abraham said, "God will provide the lamb, my son."*
5. How did God stop Abraham, and what did He say? *God told him to stop! He said He now knew that Abraham truly loved and trusted Him.*
6. What did Abraham find caught in the bushes to use for the sacrifice instead of Isaac? *God provided a wild sheep (a ram) to take Isaac's place.*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

You are the King so big and strong,
You keep us safe all the day long.

When I am scared and do not know the way,
Help me to trust You and obey.

Like Abraham on the mountain high,
I know You hear me when I cry.

Keep my family safe tonight,
Until the morning sun shines bright.

-- Amen.

The Ten-Camel Test!

Last time we climbed a high mountain with Abraham and Isaac and saw an amazing miracle! Abraham learned that God will always provide exactly what we need. But remember, God also promised that Abraham's family would grow into a giant nation as many as the stars that hung in the sky! Right now, there was still only one son, Isaac. But he had no wife or children. So, how could one boy without a wife become a massive family? Let's find out!

When Isaac grew into a man, his father, Abraham, was very old. He wanted Isaac to marry a kind girl who loved the one true God. But none of the neighbors living around him did. Abraham told his oldest helper to travel far away to find a wife for Isaac. So, the helper packed up ten big camels with gold jewelry, beautiful clothes, and expensive gifts. Then, he started his long, dusty journey across the desert.

After many days, he stopped his camels by a water well. He prayed a very specific prayer: *"Dear God, please help me. When a young woman comes out, I will ask her for a drink. If she says, 'Drink, and I will give water to your camels too,' let her be the chosen girl!"*

WOW, giving water to ten big camels is a lot of hard work! They drink tons of water. The girl would have to carry heavy jars back and forth over and over again. But before the helper even finished his prayer, a beautiful girl named Rebekah walked out. The helper ran to meet her. *"Please, can I have a little sip of water?"* Rebekah smiled sweetly and said, *"Drink, my lord."* Then, guess what else she did? She looked at the tired animals and said, *"I will get water for your camels too!"*

The helper was shocked! He watched quietly as Rebekah ran back and forth, getting water for all ten camels. God had answered his prayer exactly! He was so happy that he gave Rebekah a sparkling gold ring. Soon, her family happily agreed to let Rebekah marry Isaac because they saw God's plan at work. Rebekah took a brave breath and said, *"Yes, I will go and marry Isaac."*

One evening, Isaac was walking out in the fields. He looked up and saw the camels coming! He welcomed Rebekah, and she became his beloved wife. God had perfectly provided the right helper for him!

But guess what? Just like Sarah, Rebekah is going to have a hard time having babies. Do you think God will perform another miracle to keep His giant promise alive? Buckle up, and let's see what happens next!

Questions to Ask:

1. Why did Abraham send his helper on a long journey to find a wife for Isaac? *He wanted Isaac to marry a kind girl who loved the one true God.*
2. *What animal did the helper bring on his long journey across the desert? Ten big camels.*
3. *What special prayer did the helper pray by the water well? He asked God to send a girl who would offer to give him water and all his camels.*
4. *Why was watering the camels such a big deal? Because ten camels drink a lot of water, so it took a lot of kindness and hard work.*
5. *What was the name of the kind girl who helped the helper? Rebekah.*
6. *What did Rebekah do when she was asked to go to the new land right away? She took a brave breath and said, "Yes, I will go."*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

Thank You for being so good to me,
And answering prayers so faithfully.

Just like Rebekah at the water well,
Give me a heart where kindness can dwell.

Help me to see when others need aid,
Like people or animals Your hands have made.

Give me a smile that is happy and bright,
When sharing or doing my chores day and night.

-- Amen.

Trouble between the Twins

Now that Isaac and Rebekah were married, it was finally time for that giant promise God gave Abraham to grow! Soon, a double surprise happened. God blessed Rebekah with twin baby boys! Even before they were born, God knew all about them. He told Rebekah, *"The older brother is going to serve the younger brother."*

When the twins were finally born, the oldest brother came out first. He was super hairy, so they named him Esau. As he grew up, Esau became a hunter of wild animals who loved roaming the woods. He did not care very much about God's special promises, though. The youngest twin was named Jacob. He was a quiet lad who stayed close to home, helping his mom around the tents. And Jacob really wanted to receive God's special blessings.

One day, Esau came home from hunting, and his tummy was growling! Jacob was busy cooking a big, yummy pot of stew. Esau looked at the stew and yelled, *"Give me some of that food! I am starving!"* Jacob looked at his brother and said, *"I will give you the stew, if you give me your birthright."* A birthright meant the oldest brother got the largest share of the family's treasures, plus the blessing of the promise God had given Abraham. But Esau did not care about the future. He just wanted a full stomach right then! So, he traded his giant blessing for a single bowl of stew. Yummy, but oh no!

Many years later, their father Isaac became very old and blind. He called Esau and said, *"Go hunt some wild meat and cook it for me. Then I will give you my final, special blessing."* Esau ran into the woods. Rebekah heard the plan and quickly told Jacob, *"This is your chance!"* She cooked a delicious meal. Then, because Esau was super hairy and Jacob was smooth, she tied fuzzy goatskins onto Jacob's arms and neck. She put on Esau's smelly clothes and sent him into the tent. Old Isaac was tricked! He felt the fuzzy goatskins and believed it was Esau. So, he gave Jacob him the giant blessing.

When Esau came back and found out, he was absolutely furious! He was so mad that he wanted to kill Jacob. To stay safe, Jacob had to pack his bags and run far away. One night, while Jacob was sleeping outside, God appeared to him in a dream! He promised to protect Jacob and give him a great family, just as He had promised Abraham and Isaac.

But do you think these two angry brothers will ever see each other again, or become friends again? In our next story, we will learn about a wrestling match, a promise, and an unexpected family reunion—all waiting for Isaac!

Questions to Ask:

1. What did you learn about God from this story?
 - *God knew all about the twin brothers before they were even born!*
 - *Even when people make mistakes or trick each other, God still finds a way to keep His promises and accomplish His plan.*
2. How were Esau and Jacob different from each other? *Esau was a hairy hunter who loved the outdoors, but Jacob was a quiet guy who liked staying around the tents.*
3. What did Esau trade his special family blessing for? *A single bowl of stew!*
4. How did Jacob and his mom trick blind father, Isaac? *Jacob wore Esau's smelly clothes and tied fuzzy goat skins to his arms and neck so he would feel hairy!*
5. Why did Jacob have to pack his bags and run away? *Esau was super angry that his blessing was stolen and wanted to hurt Jacob.*
6. What did God promise Jacob in his amazing dream while he was running away? *God promised that He would always be with him and give him a great family, just as He had promised Abraham and Isaac.*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

Sometimes I get angry, or jealous inside,
And finding Your sweetness makes me hide.

When my heart starts to feel a bit mad or upset,
Please help me to stop, breathe, and reset.

I'll choose to be kind and tell what is true,
And bring peaceful days to my family for You.

Thank You for watching and keeping me near,
And loving me always through errors and fear.

--Amen.

A Long Journey Home!

Remember how God made that giant star-sky promise to Abraham? And that to stay safe from his angry brother, Jacob packed his bags and ran away into the dark night? During his long trip, Jacob slept outside. He had nothing but a hard rock for a pillow! He had a dream about a giant ladder reaching all the way up to heaven with angels walking up and down it! It was then that God made the same promise to Jacob. *"I will give you this land. Your family will be huge!"*

Jacob stayed away in that faraway land for twenty whole years! While he was there, he got married. He had a large family with 12 sons and 1 daughter. He also became very rich. He had lots of fluffy sheep, goats, and tall camels. God kept His promise to make Jacob's family big!

Then God spoke to Jacob: *"It is time to go back to your homeland."*

Jacob was terrified. He remembered how angry Esau had been. *"What if Esau is still waiting to kill me?"* Jacob thought. To make things scarier, helpers came back with news. They told Jacob, *"Esau is coming to meet you! He has four hundred men with him!"* Jacob was so scared, He knelt down and prayed, *"God, please save me from my brother!"*

That night, Jacob stayed all by himself in the dark by a river. Suddenly, a mysterious man appeared out of nowhere! He started wrestling with Jacob. They wrestled all night long, until the sun started to come up. The man was actually God appearing as a man! He touched Jacob's hip and hurt it, but Jacob would not let him go. He gasped, *"I won't let you go until you bless me!"* The man smiled and said, *"Your name will no longer be Jacob. Your new name will be Israel."*

The next morning, Jacob looked up. He saw Esau marching toward him with his 400 men. Jacob bowed down to the ground seven times as he walked closer. But Esau did not lift his sword! Instead, he ran right toward Jacob. He threw his arms around his neck and hugged him tight! Both brothers started crying tears of joy. Esau forgave Jacob, and they were finally friends again. God not only protected Jacob, He also brought the family back together!

Get ready, because Jacob's big family is about to start a brand-new adventure! But oh no, look closely! Jacob is about to repeat the exact same mistake his own parents made. And, oh, what a mountain of trouble that will cause!

Questions to Ask:

1. What was the big surprise about the babies before they were born? *They were twin brothers!*
2. What did Esau love to do, and what did he look like? *He was a wild hunter, and he was super hairy!*
3. What did Esau trade his giant family blessing for? *A single bowl of stew.*
4. How did Jacob trick his father into thinking he was hairy Esau? *He tied fuzzy goatskins onto his arms and neck.*
5. What did God show Jacob while he was sleeping on the road? *An amazing dream with a giant ladder reaching to heaven.*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

You are so big and strong,
You control all things, all day long!

Please help my little heart to see,
Your plans are best for you and me.

Instead of doing things my way,
Help me to listen and obey.

Use my words for things that are kind,
And helpful hands to those I find.

Thank you that nothing blocks your view,
Or stops the love you have for us too!

--Amen.

When Dreams Come True!

Well, Jacob finally made it back home, and God had given him a brand-new name, Israel. Because his family was getting so huge, all of his kids became known as the Israelites! Although Jacob had twelve sons, he loved one special boy, Joseph, more than all the rest. Jacob gave him a beautiful coat with lots of bright colors! This made his big brothers super jealous.

Then one day, Joseph had some wild dreams. He dreamed that the sun, moon, and stars all bowed down to him. That upset his brothers and made them very angry! They did not want Joseph to be their boss. So, they sold him to some travelers who took him far away to a country called Egypt.

In Egypt, a mean woman told a bad lie about Joseph. Even though he did nothing wrong, the guards locked him up in a dark, scary prison! But guess what? God did not forget about him! Joseph still trusted Him, and God stayed right by his side and blessed him. Joseph was given the job of being a helper and leader over all the other prisoners. While there, he helped several people understand their strange dreams.

A few years later, the King of Egypt had a scary dream. No one knew what it meant! A servant said, "*Joseph can help!*" So, they brought Joseph out of prison. With God's help, Joseph told the King, "*Your dream means that lots of food will grow for seven years. But after that, a big hunger drought is coming for seven years.*" The King made Joseph the number-two boss in all of Egypt! He wisely saved up extra food during the first seven years so no one would starve during the second seven years.

Back home, Joseph's family ran out of food, too. The brothers traveled to Egypt to buy grain. When they saw Joseph, they did not recognize him because he looked like royalty. They bowed down to him, just like in Joseph's old dreams! When Joseph saw that his brothers were sorry for being mean to him. He cried happy tears and said, "*I am your brother, Joseph!*"

The brothers were terrified because they thought Joseph would get even with them for what they did to him years ago. But Joseph just smiled and said, "*You tried to hurt me, but God used it for good to save lives.*"

Wow! God used Joseph to pull off a great rescue mission. His whole family safely moved to Egypt. But get ready! In our next story, we find that a new King rises to power who doesn't know Joseph, and he treats the Israelites very badly.

Questions to Ask:

1. What does this story teach us about God? *He is Always with Us. God stayed with Joseph in prison and in the palace. He Makes Good Plans. God can turn a bad thing into a wonderful thing.*
2. Why were the big brothers so mad at Joseph? *Because Israel loved Joseph best and Joseph had dreams about them bowing down.*
3. What did the brothers do to Joseph? *They sold him to people going to Egypt.*
4. Why did Joseph go to prison? *A woman told a bad lie about him.*
5. How did Joseph become a boss in Egypt? *He told the King what his scary dreams meant and helped save the food!*
6. What did the brothers do when they met Joseph in Egypt? *They bowed down to him, just like in his dreams.*
7. What sweet thing did Joseph say to his scared brothers? *He said, "You tried to hurt me, but God used it for good!"*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

When I feel sad or scared,
Remind my heart that you are there.
When lonely days feel quite unfair,
I know I'm always in your care.

You stay right next to me each day,
Just like in prison far away,
Where Joseph sat inside the dark,
But still you kept his faithful spark.

Please fill my little heart with peace,
And help my trusting love increase.
Your love is like a bright light,
That shines through any dark night!

--Amen

The Baby in the Basket!

Many years went by, and Joseph and his brothers died. But their families grew and grew until there were Israelites everywhere! Then, a new, mean King became the boss of Egypt. He did not know about Joseph. He looked at all the Israelites and got scared. He thought, *"They are too big and strong!"*

So, the mean King made the Israelites his slaves. He forced them to work hard all day. But God kept blessing them, and the families grew even larger! This made the King furious. He made a terrible rule that all new Israelite baby boys must be thrown into the big river to drown.

During this scary time, a sweet baby boy was born. His mommy hid him at home for three months. When he got too big to hide, she made a special little basket boat and placed her baby inside. She let it float in the tall grass by the river. When the King's daughter came to the river to take a bath, she heard a baby crying! She looked in the basket and fell in love with the sweet little boy. She decided to raise him as her own son. She named him Moses.

So, Moses grew up in a big, beautiful palace with the best of everything. But when he was older, he saw how mean the Egyptians were to his people. After he had killed one of them for being so mean to an Israelite, Moses got scared and ran far away to another country. He lived there as a quiet shepherd for 40 years. But God had not forgotten His promise to deliver the people!

One day, Moses was watching his sheep when he saw something wild. A bush was on fire, but it was not burning up! It just kept glowing. Suddenly, God called out from the bush: *"Moses! Moses!"* God told him to go back to Egypt and rescue the Israelites from that mean King.

Moses was terrified. He asked, *"What if the people ask for Your name? Who should I say sent me?"* God answered with a mighty voice, *"Tell them I AM sent you. I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."* But Moses was still worried and made more excuses. He said, *"I am not a good speaker!"* So, God gave Moses special miracle signs. Moses threw his walking stick on the ground, and it turned into a real, wiggly snake! When he picked it up, it turned back into a stick. God also said that Moses' brother, Aaron, would go with him to help him speak.

Finally, Moses listened. He took his special walking stick, went back to Egypt, and told the Israelites about God's big plan. Get ready! The mean, stubborn King is going to say, *"No way! I will never let your people go!"* There is a big showdown coming in the next story, and you don't want to miss it!

Questions to Ask:

1. What does this story teach us about God?
 - *God never forgot His people while they were sad slaves.*
 - *He is Powerful. God can speak from a burning bush and change sticks into snakes!*
2. Where did Moses' mommy hide him to keep him safe from the mean King?
In a little basket boat in the river.
3. Who found baby Moses and raised him in a palace? *The King's daughter.*
4. How did God speak to Moses while he was watching his sheep? *Out of a bush that was on fire but didn't burn up!*
5. What happened to Moses' stick when he threw it on the ground? *It turned into a snake!*
6. Who did God send to help Moses speak to the people? *His brother, Aaron.*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

Sometimes I feel worried and ever so small,
Just like brave Moses when hearing Your call.

When I get scared, please whisper right here,
And remind my small heart that You always are near.

Thank You for being the great **I AM**,
Who is much Stronger than all my jams.

Give me a brave heart to hear what You say,
And follow Your wonderful footprints today.

--Amen.

Blood on the Door!

After Moses met his brother Aaron, they returned to Egypt. They told the Israelites about God's big rescue plan. Then, they marched into the big palace to see the mean King. They told him, "*God says: Let my people go!*"

But the King had a hard, mean heart. He snapped, "*No!*" He even made the slaves work twice as hard. But God told Moses, "*Do not worry. I hear my people crying, and I will rescue them.*" So, Moses and Aaron went back to the King, but he still said no. So, God started sending plagues. Plagues are big troubles to show the King that God is the true boss of the universe. God sent nine of them to Egypt but kept the Israelites completely safe from all of them. Look at what happened to Egypt:

- Water turned into red blood!
- Slimy frogs hopped on tables!
- Biting gnats buzzed everywhere!
- Flies covered everything!
- The cows got sick.
- The Egyptians got painful bumps.
- Ice fell from the sky!
- Bugs ate every green plant.
- Spooky darkness covered the land!

Every time trouble came, the King got scared. He cried, "*Make it stop, and I will let the people go!*" But as soon as God stopped the trouble, the King changed his mind. He laughed, "*Just kidding! You have to stay slaves.*" He did this nine times!

So, God sent the tenth and final trouble. It was the scariest one of all. God said that the oldest child in every Egyptian family would die. But He gave the Israelites a special plan to keep their children safe. Each family had to choose a perfect little lamb. They had to paint the lamb's blood on the outside of their front door. Then, they had to stay safely inside their house all night.

God promised, "*When I see the blood on your door, I will pass over your house. No trouble will touch you!*" The Israelites trusted God and did as He said. That night, the trouble passed over them. But in every Egyptian house, the oldest child died—even the King's own son. The King finally screamed, "*Get out! Leave Egypt right now! Go!*"

Wow! The Israelites were finally free to leave. They packed their bags and started marching out of Egypt! But will the mean king really let them go this time, or will he chase after them? Get your running shoes ready for next time!

Questions to Ask:

1. What did you learn about God from this story?
 - *The Only Real God. He is stronger than the mean King and all the made-up gods.*
 - *God heard His people crying and kept His promise to rescue them.*
2. What did the mean King do every time Moses asked him to let the people go? *He said "No!" and made the slaves work even harder.*
3. What did the mean King say as soon as God made the troubles stop? *He said, "Haha, just kidding! You have to stay slaves."*
4. What was God's plan to keep the Israelite children safe from the last trouble? *They had to paint a perfect little lamb's blood on the top and sides of their front door.*
5. What did God do when He saw the blood on the door? *He passed over the house and kept all the children completely safe!*
6. What did the sad, crying King finally scream at the very end? *"Get out! Leave Egypt right now! Go! Go pray to your God just like you asked!"*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

Thank You for being so mighty and strong,
And keeping Your people safe all the day long!
I never have to feel scared of the night,
Because Your love is my shield and my light.

Watch over my house and my family tonight,
And tuck us all in till the morning is bright.
Help me to trust in Your rules and Your way,
Remembering how much You love me each day.

-- Amen.

The Great Escape

After the mean King of Egypt screamed, "*Get out!*" the Israelites packed their bags. They were finally free! They had lived in Egypt for 430 years. Their rescue kept God's great promise to Abraham from long ago.

During their escape, God made sure they never got lost. All day long, He made a giant, fluffy cloud to shade them from the hot sun. All night long, He turned that cloud into a bright pillar of fire so they could see in the dark!

But back in Egypt, the King looked around. His workers were gone! He stomped his foot and shouted, "*What have we done? We don't have any workers left!*" The mean King changed his mind and chased after them with his whole army! The Israelites looked back and saw thousands of soldiers, horses, and shiny chariots coming fast! The people were absolutely terrified. They forgot God was right there with them. They yelled at Moses, "*Why did you bring us here to die?*" But Moses stood tall and calm. He said, "*Do not be afraid! Today, God is going to fight for you!*"

Then, God told Moses to lift his walking stick over the Red Sea. The water split right in half! A giant wall of water stood on the left, and another stood on the right. The middle became dry, safe ground, and the Israelites walked right across to the other side!

When the King's army tried to follow, they got into big trouble. The ground became so muddy that their chariot wheels began to fly off! The soldiers screamed, "*Let's turn back! Their God is fighting for them!*" But it was too late. God's giant walls of water came crashing down, and the whole army drowned. The Israelites started dancing, singing, and giving thanks to God!

After walking for a long time, the people got very hungry and started to complain. Even though they grumbled, God was so kind. That evening, He sent little birds for them to eat. The next morning, He sprinkled yummy white bread all over the ground! It tasted like sweet honey and was called manna.

When they got super thirsty. God told Moses to tap a giant rock with his walking stick. BAM! Out poured cool, fresh water for everyone to drink!

Even though God did amazing miracles for them, the people still had a hard time trusting Him. So, for our next story, put on your climbing shoes. We will follow Moses up a smoky mountain where God meets with him. We will also see the people down below make a horrible mistake!

Questions to Ask:

1. What did God put in the sky during the day to shade the people from the hot sun? *A giant, fluffy cloud!*
2. What did the fluffy cloud turn into at night? *A bright, glowing pillar of fire!*
3. Why did the mean king of Egypt change his mind and chase the Israelites? *Because he realized all his workers were gone and there was no one left to do the work!*
4. What did the king's army use to chase them super-fast? *Fast horses and shiny chariots!*
5. What happened to the king's chariot wheels when they tried to follow the Israelites? *They started flying off in the mud!*
6. What did the Israelites do to celebrate when they safely reached the other side? *They danced, sang, and gave thanks to God!*
7. What did the special morning bread taste like? *It tasted sweet like honey!*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

Thank You for making a safe path for me, Even when things look as hard as can be!

You are my giant cloud all through the day, And bright fire by night as You lead out the way.

When I start to worry or grumble inside, Help me stand still where Your promises hide.

I'll take a deep breath and look up at the land, Remembering Your love keeps me safe in Your hand.

Thank You for food and for guarding my feet, Your care is so perfect, Your blessings so sweet.

--Amen.

Broken Stones and a Golden Calf

God led the people to a giant mountain called Mount Sinai. He wanted to make a special promise with them. He said, *"If you listen to My voice, you will be My favorite treasure!"* The people were so happy that they promised, *"We will do everything the Lord has said!"*

Suddenly—BOOM! Thunder crashed! Lightning flashed! A loud trumpet filled the air. Out of a dark cloud, God gave them ten important rules to keep them safe and happy:

1. Put God First: Do not pray to any other.
2. No Fake Gods: Do not worship statues.
3. Respect God's Name: Always use His name nicely.
4. Take a Rest Day: Keep one day a week to worship God.
5. Listen to Parents: Honor your mom and dad.
6. Do Not Hurt or Kill Anyone: Be kind to others.
7. Be Faithful: Keep your marriage promises.
8. Do Not Steal: Never take things that belong to others.
9. Tell the Truth: Do not tell lies.
10. Be Happy with Your Own Things: Do not covet your friend's toys.

God used His own finger to write these rules on two flat stones!

Moses stayed up on the mountain for 40 long days. But down below, the people got tired of waiting. They thought that Moses was surely dead because he went up into the mountain and did not come back. Instead of waiting, they melted their gold earrings and built a shiny statue of a golden baby cow! They danced and said, *"This cow rescued us!"* Can you believe it? It was just 40 days ago that they promised to do all the Lord said.

Moses hurried down. When he saw them dancing around a gold cow, he got so angry that he threw the heavy stones on the ground—SMASH! They broke into tiny pieces. He knew God was also angry, so he prayed and begged Him to show mercy. Then, he melted the gold cow, crushed it into powder, mixed it into water, and made them drink it! Talk about a yucky experience!

God's rules are like a mirror. They show us the dirty parts of our hearts. We can see that we need His forgiveness every day. To give them another chance, God lovingly wrote the rules on a fresh set of stones. But do you think the people will finally listen now? Well, put out the welcome mat. God is going to move right in the middle of their camp! So, we will see.

Questions to Ask:

1. What did the mountain look and sound like when God came down? *It had loud thunder, bright lightning, thick smoke, and an earthquake!*
2. How did the people feel when they saw the shaking mountain? *They were terrified and shook with fear!*
3. What did God use to write the Ten Commandments on the stones? *His own finger!*
4. Why did the people make a golden baby cow while Moses was gone? *They thought Moses was dead!*
5. What did Moses do to the stone rules when he saw them worshipping the gold cow? *He got super angry and smashed them on the ground!*
6. Why are God's rules like a mirror? *Because a mirror shows dirt on our hearts and lives!*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

Thank You for giving Your ten rules to me,
To keep me as safe and as loved as can be!
They show me the way to love others each day,
In all that I do and in all that I say.

But sometimes my heart gets all dirty inside,
Like mud on my face that I wish I could hide.
Your rules are a mirror that helps me to see,
The times when a choice wasn't good for poor me.

Whenever I mess up and do something wrong,
Please wash my heart clean and keep making me strong!
Forgive me and help me to follow Your way,
With smiles and kindness all through the day.

-- Amen.

God Comes to Live Next Door

Even though the people made a big mistake with the golden cow, God still loved them very much. He told Moses, *"Build Me a special tent so I can live right in the middle of your camp!"* This special place was called the Tabernacle. Because God is perfect and holy, the tent had to be built exactly right so the people could stay safe while God lived with them.

The Tabernacle was a giant tent made of beautiful curtains and soft animal skins. It had three main parts:

- The Big Courtyard: This was the safe, outside yard surrounded by high curtains.
- The Holy Place: Inside the first room was a golden table with bread, a shiny candle holder, and a sweet-smelling incense burner.
- The Most Holy Place: This was a private room at the very back where God's glowing presence lived! A giant, super-thick curtain hung in front of it to remind everyone that bad choices keep us from God.

Inside that private, holy room sat a beautiful gold box called the Ark of the Covenant. Inside the box were the Ten Commandments written on the stones. The lid of the box was called the Mercy Seat. Even though the rules inside showed the mistakes the people made, the Mercy Seat on top showed how much God loved them. God's special helper, called the High Priest, would sprinkle blood on it. That showed that God was wiping away all their bad choices.

Right above this room, the giant cloud of God floated in the sky. When the cloud stayed still, the people stayed where they were. When the cloud moved, it was time to pack up and follow it! God chose Aaron and his family to serve as the special priests. The back room was so holy that only the High Priest could go inside. He could only go in once a year on a special day.

On that special day, the High Priest did something amazing with two goats. He used the first goat to ask for forgiveness. Then, he put his hands on the second goat's head and whispered all the bad things the people had done. A helper led that "escape goat" far away until it disappeared into the desert. This showed the people that for another year, God was removing their sins far, far away!

Although the people were happy with God's tent, they soon started complaining again. So put on your boots and snake guards. In the next story, we will see a thirsty camp, water rushing from a rock, and a surprise visit from some nasty, wiggly snakes!

Questions to Ask:

1. What was the name of the special, giant tent that God told them to build?
The Tabernacle!
2. Why was the curtain in front of God's secret room so tall and thick? *To remind the people that their bad choices separated them from a holy God.*
3. What was the name of the gold-covered box kept in the secret room? *The Ark of the Covenant.* What was the special golden lid of the box called?
The Mercy Seat!
4. How did the people know when it was time to pack up the tent and move?
When the giant cloud in the sky lifted up and started moving!
5. What did the priest do with the first goat on the special day of the year?
He brought its blood into the secret room to ask God for forgiveness.
6. What did the priest do to the second goat before letting it go? *He put his hands on its head and shouted all the bad things the people had done!*
7. Where did the helper take the second goat? *Way out into the desert until it completely disappeared!*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

Thank You that I do not need to bring down,
An animal gift to a tent in the town.
You don't need a creature to fix my mistakes,
Or cover the errors that my little heart makes!

Thank You for sending a Savior so bright,
To wash my heart clean and to make it all right.
He takes all the bad choices totally away,
And brings back the sunshine to light up my day.

You promise that I get to stay by Your side,
Close to Your heart where Your promises hide.
Forever and ever I'll walk in Your grace,
And one day in heaven I'll look at Your face! --- Amen.

The Angry Splash and the Slimy Snakes!

Even though the Israelites were walking in circles in the desert, God still took care of them. But soon, they faced another big test. The people got very thirsty. Because there was no water, they started to complain again. They forgot that God always helps them! Moses and Aaron asked God what to do. God told Moses, *“Take your walking stick, go to the big rock, and speak to it. Then, cool water will pour out.”*

Moses gathered everyone around the giant rock. But he was very angry. He yelled, *“Listen up, you grumblers!”* Instead of just talking to the rock as God had said, Moses hit the rock two times with his stick—WHACK! WHACK! Uh-oh! Moses just made a big mistake!

But because God is kind, water still poured out so everyone and their animals could drink. But God was sad that Moses did not obey Him perfectly. He told Moses, *“Because you did not follow my rules, you will not get to lead the people into the promised land.”*

A few weeks later, the people forgot their lesson again. They began to complain about the long walk in the desert! To show them that complaining is bad, God allowed sneaky, poisonous snakes to come into the camp! Hiss! Hiss! The snakes bit the people, and many got sick and died.

The people were so sorry. They cried out, *“Moses, please ask God to save us!”* Moses prayed, and God gave him a very strange solution. He told Moses to make a snake out of shiny bronze metal. Then, put it up high on a tall pole, right in the middle of the camp! And remember, that is where God’s special dwelling place was!

Anyway, God promised, *“Whenever someone gets bitten, all they have to do is believe in Him, look up at the bronze snake, and they will be healed!”* It happened exactly like God said! Whenever someone got a boo-boo from a snake, they looked up at the pole, and poof, they were completely healed.

God’s people had been traveling for a very long time, and it was finally time for their biggest adventure yet! God was getting ready to lead them into a beautiful new land called the Promised Land. But to get inside, they had to face a giant city with super-duper tall walls! How would they ever get past those gigantic walls? We will find out in our next stories.

Questions to Ask:

1. What was Moses supposed to do to the rock to make water come out? *He was just supposed to talk to it!* But what did he do? Out of anger, he *yelled at the people and then hit the rock two times with his walking stick!*
2. What was the sad consequence for Moses not following God's instructions perfectly? *He was not allowed to lead the people into the Promised Land.*
3. What sneaky animals came into the camp when the people started complaining again? Creepy, slimy, *poisonous snakes!*
4. What old story from the Garden of Eden should these snakes have reminded the people about? *The sneaky snake that tricked Eve.*
5. Where did Moses put the shiny bronze snake so everyone could see it? *Way up high on a tall pole in the middle of the camp near the Tabernacle!*
6. What did a person have to do after getting a snake bite to be instantly healed? *They had to believe God's promise and look up at the shiny bronze snake!*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

When I am tired and not feeling spry,
Please help me not to whine or cry.
May I not to grumble when things go wrong,
But trust you to keep me strong!

When I mess up or make mistakes,
And see the trouble my choices make.
I will look up to your kind face,
And thank you for your healing grace.

As You lead me on to adventures new,
Help me to stay close to You.
No matter how giant the walls may be,
I will trust to give the victory! --Amen.

Big Walls and a Bright Red Cord

Remember how God cared for the Israelites in the hot desert? Even when sneaky snakes bit them, God had Moses lift a shiny bronze snake on a pole. Anyone who looked at it and trusted God was healed. God always protected them, and He always keeps His promises!

Many years later, God's people were finally ready to enter the Promised Land. But a massive city named Jericho stood right in their way! Jericho had huge, thick stone walls that went all the way up to the sky. No one could get in or out.

Their brave leader Joshua, picked two secret spies. He told them, "*Go sneak into Jericho. Look around carefully.*" So, the two spies slipped past the giant gates. When they needed a safe place to hide, God led them to the house of a woman named Rahab. Her house was built right into the giant city wall! Rahab welcomed them inside because she believed in God's amazing, awesome power!

Then, suddenly, knock, knock, knock! The King of Jericho found out that spies were in the city. He sent soldiers straight to Rahab's door. Rahab had to make a difficult choice: report the spies or hide them. She decided to trust God. She quickly led the spies up to her flat roof and hid them under big plants. After that, she opened the door to the soldiers. "*Bring out the men!*" they shouted. Rahab gave them a clever answer, though. She said, "*They left right before the gates closed! If you run fast, you can catch them!*" The soldiers believed her and zoomed away, chasing them down the wrong road.

When it was safe, Rahab ran up to the roof. She looked at the spies and said, "*I know your God is the true God. Please save my family when your army comes!*" The spies promised to protect her. They gave her a bright red cord and said, "*Tie this red cord in your window. Everyone inside this house will be kept perfectly safe.*" Rahab helped the spies slide down the outside of the wall using a rope. They ran back to Joshua to tell him the good news: "*God is giving us the land!*"

Rahab tied the bright red cord in her window. And guess what? When the army returned and the giant walls of Jericho came tumbling down, Rahab's house stood safe and strong! She and her whole family were saved, proving that the Promised Land belongs to anyone who believes God's word.

Get ready for the ultimate, top-secret mission! More spies will slip behind enemy lines to check out the land. Will they get caught, or will they pull off the most daring spy missions in history?

Questions to Ask:

1. What do we learn about God in this story? *God always keeps His promises and protects people who trust Him. He can use anyone, even a brave woman in a different city, to help His people do amazing things.*
2. What did the giant city of Jericho have that went all the way up to the sky? *Huge, thick stone walls.*
3. Where did Rahab hide the two secret spies when the soldiers came knocking? *On her roof under big piles of plants!*
4. What color was the special cord that Rahab tied in her window? *Bright red!*
5. How did the spies escape from Rahab's house on the big wall? They slid down the outside using a rope!
6. What happened to Rahab's house when the giant walls of Jericho came crashing down? *It stayed perfectly safe and strong!*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

Thank You for this sunny day,
Thank You for my time to play.

Help me to be brave and kind,
With happy thoughts inside my mind.

When things look scary or too tall,
I know You're bigger than them all!

Keep me safe and hold my hand,
As You lead me to Your promised land.

--Amen.

Giant Fruits and Scary Giants

Remember how God made that giant star-sky promise to Abraham a long time ago? God promised to give Abraham's children a beautiful new land. He also promised that Abraham's family would grow so big you couldn't even count them!

Well, look what happened! After lots of waiting and walking, God kept every single one of His promises. Abraham's small family grew into a massive family of over two million people! Now they were all standing at the border, ready to enter their brand-new home. God always keeps His promises!

Before everyone entered the Promised Land, however, Moses chose twelve men to serve as secret spies. He told them, *"Sneak into the land and see what it looks like!"* The twelve spies crept around the land for 40 days. They brought back giant fruits and said, *"The land is wonderful! It is full of yummy food and sweet honey! "BUT....,"* suddenly, ten of the spies started shaking with fear. They yelled, *"We can't go in there! Giant, scary people live in the cities! The walls are too big, and the people are way stronger than we are. We looked like tiny grasshoppers next to them!"*

But two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, stood up tall like brave lions. They were not afraid at all! They told the crowd, *"Don't listen to them! We can absolutely do this! If God is happy with us, He will walk right beside us. Don't be afraid of these giants!"* But instead of trusting God, the people started throwing a big tantrum. They threw themselves on the dirt and grumbled, *"We are all going to die out here! We wish we had stayed in Egypt!"* They were even about to throw rocks at brave Joshua and Caleb!

But suddenly—FLASH! God's bright, glowing light filled the sky. He was very angry because the people refused to trust Him. Moses prayed and begged God to be kind. God listened, but He said the grownups had to face a big timeout for not believing Him. God also told them, *"Because you did not trust Me, you must walk around the hot desert for 40 long years."* Every grown-up who complained had to stay in the desert. Only their kids, along with brave Joshua and Caleb, finally got to go into the beautiful Promised Land!

Forty long years is a lot of walking in the hot sand! But now, the children are all grown up and ready to enter their new land. In our next story, you won't believe how God uses loud shouting and music to make giant walls come tumbling down!

Questions to Ask:

1. How many secret spies did Moses send to check out the promised land?
Twelve spies!
2. How many days did the spies sneak around looking at the land? *Forty days!*
3. What sweet things did the spies say were flowing in the wonderful new land? *Milk and honey!*
4. Why were ten of the spies shaking with fear when they came back?
Because they saw huge giants living in the cities!
5. What were the names of the two brave spies who trusted God? *Joshua and Caleb!*
6. Why were Joshua and Caleb not afraid of the giants? *Because they knew God had promised them the land and would protect them!*
7. How many years did the people have to walk around in circles in the hot desert because they didn't trust God? *Forty long years!*
8. Who were the only two adults from the original group allowed to finally enter the Promised Land? *Joshua and Caleb!*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

When waiting feels so long,
And everything feels hard and wrong,
Please keep my mouth from grumbling words,
And help me trust what I have heard.

And though the road is long and hot,
You will never, ever leave the spot!
You walk right next to me each day,
And give me all I need, always.

--Amen.

Victory with Shouts and Sunshine

After Moses passed away, Joshua became the new leader. He was faithful and more than ready to guide the people into the Promised Land! With Joshua leading the way, the people listened to God and marched up to that giant city called Jericho. Remember? Jericho had super tall, thick stone walls all around it. The city gates were locked up tight! No one could get in or out.

Joshua wondered how they would ever get past those giant walls. But God gave him a very unusual plan. He did not say to use ladders. Instead, He said, *"We are going to go on a march!"* For six days in a row, the army did exactly what God asked. They marched around the big stone city once each day. Special priests walked in front, blowing loud horns. Everyone else had to be completely quiet. Shh! Not even a single whisper!

On the seventh day, Joshua told the people, *"Today, we are marching around the city seven times!"* So, they walked and walked all the way around seven times. On the very last lap, the priests took a deep breath and blew one super long, loud BLAST on their horns! Tooooooot! Then Joshua yelled, *"SHOUT! For the Lord has given you the city!"* Everyone opened their mouths and let out the biggest, loudest shout ever heard: *"HURRAH!!!"*

Rumble, rumble, CRASH! Those giant stone walls fell flat to the ground like a stack of toy blocks! The path was wide open, and Joshua's army won the day just by listening, marching, and shouting! When the walls fell, the brave woman Rahab and her family were saved, just as God promised. Rahab lived happily with the Israelites. Many years later, her great-great-grandson would be a little shepherd boy named David, who became a famous king!

After that big victory, Joshua's army had to fight five mean kings. Joshua marched his soldiers up a hill all night to surprise them. When the armies of the mean kings tried to run away, God sent down huge ice rocks from the sky to stop them! But when the sun started to go down. Joshua prayed for a big miracle and yelled, *"Sun, stand still!"* God made the sun stop right in the middle of the sky! The day lasted twice as long, and Joshua won the battle.

Finally, God's people lived peacefully in the Promised Land! But after the death of Joshua, the people started forgetting to listen to God, all over again. Now get your judge's robes on! In our next story, we will meet a scared Judge who gets chosen by God for a super-secret, scary mission!

Questions to Ask:

1. How did Joshua's army get past the giant stone walls of Jericho? *They just marched, blew horns, and shouted! God did the rest!*
2. What special rule did the army have to follow while marching on the first six days? *They had to be completely quiet with absolutely no whispering.*
3. What happened when everyone let out their biggest, loudest shout: "HURRAH!"? *The giant stone walls fell flat to the ground like toy blocks!*
4. What happened to Rahab and her family? *They were spared as God had promised and from her family came King David?*
5. What fell from the sky in the second battle during the storm instead of normal rain? *Giant, rocks made of ice!*
6. What did Joshua yell at the sky when it started getting too dark? *"Sun, stand still!"*
7. What did the sun do after Joshua prayed for a miracle? *It stopped moving and stayed in the sky twice as long, giving Joshua a great victory.*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

You lead me day by day,
And walk with me along the way.
When giant walls look big and tall,
I know that You are bigger than all!

Please help my heart to trust your plan,
To follow you the best I can.
I Know You keep your promises to me,
And will give me the victory!

--Amen.

Trumpets and Torches

Joshua was a faithful leader who believed God. That's why he was such a great warrior and why the people followed him. But after he died, something very sad happened. The people forgot about God! They started praying to pretend gods made of wood and stone.

Because they forgot God, big mean countries came in and bossed them around. Life became very hard. But whenever the people cried out, "*God, please help us!*", God sent a special hero called a Judge to rescue them. Then, everyone was happy again! But sadly, after the Judge died, the people would forget God again, and the whole problem would start all over. This happened many times. Let me tell you about one of those times!

A mean king over a nation called the Midianites came and made life very difficult for the children of Israel. Finally, the people cried out to God for help. God chose a man named Gideon to be their hero! Despite his fears, he gathered an army of 32,000 soldiers. But God had a different plan. He wanted the people to know that He was the one winning the battle, not a big army. So, God told Gideon, "*Tell anyone who is scared to go home.*" Guess what? A lot of men were scared! They left, leaving Gideon with just 10,000 men.

"*Still too many!*" God said. So, Gideon took his soldiers to a cool stream to drink water. God told Gideon to watch how they drank. Some knelt down like puppies, while others scooped water in their hands. God told Gideon to keep only the ones who scooped the water. That left Gideon with only 300 men! That was a pretty small army to face a very giant enemy!

That night, God told Gideon His plan. He did not give the men swords or spears. Instead, he gave every man a loud trumpet and a bright torch hidden inside an empty clay jar! They sneaked around the enemy camp. Then, all 300 men blew their trumpets. Tooooooot! They smashed their clay jars on the ground—CRASH! Then they shouted, "*The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!*" The enemies woke up in the dark. They were so confused and scared that they ran away and even started fighting against themselves. God helped Gideon's tiny army win without even a sword or spear in their hands!

Our big God does not only work in loud, smashing ways. He also loves to work quietly and gently! During these same wild years, God was preparing to undertake another amazing rescue mission. But this time, He uses the quiet, strong love of two sweet women!

Questions to Ask:

1. What did the people do after Joshua went to heaven? *They forgot about God and started following pretend gods made of wood and stone.*
2. How many men went home because they were scared to fight? *22,000 men went home, leaving Gideon with 10,000.*
3. How did God choose the final 300 men at the water stream? *He kept the men who scooped water with their hands and sent home the ones who knelt down to drink like puppies.*
4. What items did Gideon give his men instead of regular weapons? *A loud trumpet and a bright torch hidden inside an empty clay jar.*
5. What three things did the 300 men do at Gideon's signal? *They blew their trumpets, smashed their clay jars, and shouted, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!"*
6. What did the enemy army do when they woke up to the noise? *They got confused and scared, turned on each other, and ran away.*
7. Why do the people keep forgetting about God, getting into trouble, and then asking Him for help over and over again? *Even when we want to be good, our hearts sometimes want to do things our own way instead of God's way.*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

When I feel small and scared,
Remind my heart that you are there.
You take a regular kid like me,
To bring a great big victory!

I do not need to hide away,
For you are on my side today.
With noisy jars and trumpets bright,
You help me win the biggest fight!

--Amen.

From Sadness to Super Joy

This story also takes place during the wild days of the Judges. It was a time when God's people often forgot to obey Him. Just as God raised up brave leaders like Gideon, He also used the quiet love of two women to bring safety back to their family!

Our story begins with a kind woman named Naomi. She had to move to a faraway country because there was no food left in her hometown of Bethlehem. While she was there, her two sons married two sweet women named Orpah and Ruth. They were very happy, but then, sadly, Naomi's husband and both of her sons died.

Naomi was heartbroken and left all alone. One day, she heard wonderful news. Bethlehem had lots of food again! So, she packed her bags to return home. She looked at her two daughters-in-law and said, "*Go back to your own families. I am too old and sad to look after you.*" Orpah cried, hugged Naomi goodbye, and went home. But not Ruth. She held on tight to Naomi. She refused to let go home!

Ruth looked right into Naomi's sad eyes and made a beautiful promise. She said, "*Where you go, I will go. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God.*" Ruth left her old life behind to love and take care of Naomi. She chose to trust in the one true God!

The two brave women walked all the way back to Bethlehem together. When they arrived, Ruth went to work in the big, sunny fields to collect leftover grain for food. The owner of the field was a rich, kind man named Boaz. He saw how hard Ruth worked and how sweet she was to old Naomi. Boaz told his workers, "*Leave extra food on the ground for Ruth, and keep her safe!*"

Boaz fell in love with Ruth because of her kind, faithful heart. Before long, Boaz and Ruth got married! They had a sweet baby boy named Obed, and old Naomi was a happy grandmother. God turned their sadness into joy!

Many years later, a special baby boy would be born to Ruth's family in that same town of Bethlehem. He would be the One promised to Abraham--the One who would bless all the nations of the world!

Be sure to get a good night's rest. Because in our next story, we will meet a very special little boy. He is not going to get much sleep because he keeps hearing voices calling his name in the middle of the night!

Questions to Ask:

1. What do we learn about God in this story? *We learn that God cares about lonely people and can turn our biggest sadness into great joy.*
2. Why did Naomi and her family have to move away to a faraway country at the beginning? *Because there was no food left in their hometown!*
3. What beautiful promise did Ruth make to Naomi when Naomi told her to go back home? *She promised to go wherever Naomi went and make Naomi's God her God!*
4. What did Ruth do in the big, sunny fields to make sure she and Naomi had food to eat? *She worked hard collecting leftover grain to make bread!*
5. Who was the kind, rich man who fell in love with Ruth and married her? *Boaz!*
6. Whose special family tree did Ruth become a part of because she trusted the one true God? *The most important family tree in the world, leading to the special baby born in Bethlehem!*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

When days are wild and sad,
You can step in and make me glad!

Help me be loyal, sweet, and kind,
With helpful hands and a happy mind.

Just like brave Ruth, I want to see
How to love others and my family.

I'll trust in You and follow Your way,
And look for Your blessings every day.

--Amen.

A Voice in the Dark of Night

Young Samuel lived during the final days of the Judges. For many years, God had raised up brave leaders like Gideon to rescue the people. But by the time Samuel was a little boy, everything was messy and confusing. It was a dark time when people rarely heard messages from the Lord. But God was about to do something brand new!

Samuel lived in God's special house, the Tabernacle. His job was to help an old priest named Eli look after God's holy place. Samuel was a helper who always tried to do what was right.

One night, the Tabernacle was completely quiet. Old Eli was fast asleep in his bed. Samuel snuggled down into his own cozy bed and closed his eyes. Suddenly, through the quiet darkness, a voice called out: "*Samuel!*" Samuel sat straight up! He thought Eli was calling him. He jumped out of bed, ran into Eli's room, and said, "*Here I am! You called me?*" Eli rubbed his tired eyes and shook his head. "*I didn't call you, my boy. Go back to bed.*"

So, Samuel walked back and went back to sleep. A few minutes later, the voice called out again: "*Samuel!*" He leaped back up and ran to Eli's bedside. "*Here I am! You called me!*" Eli sighed gently and said, "*No, Samuel, I didn't call you. Go back to sleep.*"

Then, for the third time, the voice called: "*Samuel!*" He ran to Eli's room once more. This time, Eli realized what was happening. It was the Lord God! Eli told him, "*If the voice calls you again, say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'*"

Samuel went back to bed, his heart thumping with excitement. He waited in the dark. Then, the Lord came and stood there, calling out: "*Samuel! Samuel!*" This time, Samuel sat up and said bravely, "*Speak, for your servant is listening.*" God spoke to young Samuel and told him that He had a giant, important plan for his life. God chose him to be His special messenger to share God's true words with the whole nation.

Young Samuel grew up to be a wonderful leader because he always kept his ears open to God's voice. But as he got older, the people of Israel stomped their feet and said, "*Samuel, we don't want judges anymore!*" So, let's unroll our scroll and see what happens when the people get exactly what they asked for! You guessed it. It was a bucket load of trouble!

Questions to Ask:

1. What does this story teach us about God? *It teaches us that God knows our names and loves to talk to us! Even when we are little, God has a giant, important plan for our lives.*
2. Where did young Samuel live and work as a helper? *In God's special house, the tabernacle!*
3. Who did Samuel think was calling his name in the middle of the night? *The old priest, Eli!*
4. How many times did Samuel have to run to Eli's room before Eli realized it was God calling? *Three times!*
5. What special words did Eli tell Samuel to say the next time he heard the voice? *"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."*
6. What important job did God give to Samuel when he grew up? *To be His special judge and prophet and lead the whole nation!*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

When everything is quiet and still,
I want to listen and do Your will.

Just like Samuel in the night,
Help me hear and choose what's right.

Call my name and lead my way,
In my sleep and when I play.

My ears and heart are open wide,
I'm glad You're always by my side!

--Amen.

The King Who Rewrote the Rules

At the end of the time of the Judges, the people came to Samuel. They said, *"We want a real king with a shiny crown, just like the other countries!"* This made Samuel very sad. He told them, *"God is already your King!"* He warned them that a human king might boss them around.

But the people kept begging. So, God told Samuel to choose a tall, strong, handsome young man named Saul to be their king. At first, King Saul was a great hero! He won lots of battles and kept the people safe. But soon, he got a big problem. He stopped listening to directions! God gave him special rules, but Saul thought his own ideas were better.

One day, Saul's army was getting ready for a big battle. God's helper, Samuel, told Saul to wait seven days until he arrived to say a special prayer. Saul waited and waited, but he got too impatient. Instead of waiting like he was told, Saul decided to do things his own way. His soldiers were terrified of the massive enemy army. They began to panic, run away, and hide in dark caves and bushes! By the time Saul finished doing things his own way, he looked around and realized he only had 600 soldiers left. His small army did not even have real weapons like swords and spears!

Even though Saul had made a big mess of things, God still showed mercy to the people. Because Saul's brave son, Jonathan, had deep faith and trusted God completely, God gave them a victory anyway. But because Saul wouldn't wait and listen, the battle was much harder than it should have been.

Later, God gave Saul another clear rule before a battle. He told Saul to defeat the enemy and not keep anything that belonged to them. When Saul won the battle, he changed the rules. He kept the best, fluffiest sheep and strongest cows to take home.

When Samuel arrived, he heard the sheep go *"Baaaaa!"* and the cows go *"Mooo!"* He knew right away that Saul had disobeyed God. Samuel told him, *"Because you did not listen, you won't be king for long. God is going to pick a new king who truly loves Him."*

God's amazing plan was not over yet! He was getting ready to choose a brand-new king with a heart that truly loved Him. So, put on your walking shoes. In our next story, we are going back to visit a tiny town called Bethlehem. There we will meet a young shepherd boy and see how God turns a little kid into a giant-slaying hero!

Questions to Ask:

1. What did the people ask Samuel for that made him feel so sad? *They wanted a human king with a shiny crown instead of letting God be their King.*
2. King Saul started out as a great hero, but what big problem did he have later on? *He stopped listening to God and started doing things his own way.*
3. What did Saul's scared soldiers do when they saw the giant enemy army? *They panicked and ran away.*
4. How many soldiers did King Saul have left after he refused to wait for Samuel? *He only had 600 soldiers left, and they didn't even have real swords or spears!*
5. How did Samuel know right away that King Saul had disobeyed God after the second battle? *He heard the animals making noise, going "Baaaa!" and "Mooo!"*
6. Even though King Saul made a big mess of things, why is the most exciting part of the story still coming? Because God's plan wasn't over, and He was already preparing to pick a wonderful new king.

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

When things are a big mess,
Your plans are always still the best!
When people do not follow you,
You know exactly what to do.

Please give me a heart that has no fright,
To choose what's good and do what's right.
I want to love you more each day,
And follow you in every way!

--Amen.

The Boy with a Brave Heart

After King Saul stopped following directions, God told Samuel it was time to find a brand-new king. He told him to go to a small town called Bethlehem and visit a dad named Jesse because one of Jesse's sons was going to be the next king!

When Samuel arrived, Jesse brought out his oldest, tallest son. Samuel looked at him and thought, *"Wow! He is big and handsome. He must be the one!"* But God whispered to Samuel, *"No, that is not him. People only look at the outside, but I look at what is on the inside. I look at the heart."* So, Jesse brought out his second son. *"Not him either,"* God said. Jesse brought out his third son, his fourth, his fifth, his sixth, and then his seventh son. For every single one, God said, *"Nope, not this one either."*

Samuel was confused! He asked Jesse, *"Are these all the boys you have?"* Jesse said, *"Well, no, there is still my youngest son, David. But he is just a little shepherd boy. He is out in the grassy fields right now, watching the sheep."* Samuel smiled and said, *"Go get him!"*

When young David ran in, his eyes were bright, and his heart truly loved God. That very moment, God said, *"He is the one!"* Then Samuel poured special oil on David's head to show he would be the next king.

Not long after this, young David visited his big brothers who were in the army. A scary giant named Goliath was shouting at them! He stood taller than a tree, wore heavy metal armor, and carried a huge spear. All the soldiers hid from him. But David was not scared. He told King Saul, *"God helped me fight lions and bears to save my sheep. He will protect me from this giant too!"*

David refused to wear heavy armor. Instead, he picked up five smooth stones from a bubbly creek and grabbed his trusty sling. He marched right out toward the roaring giant. Goliath laughed at him, but David answered bravely, *"I come in the name of God!"* He placed a stone in his sling, spun it round and round, and let it fly! Whiz! The stone hit Goliath right between the eyes. The big fellow fell to the ground with a loud THUD!

Little David was a brave hero who won a great victory over this giant because he trusted God. This young shepherd boy grows up and becomes the Israelites' greatest king.

Grab your sword and spear because in our next story, we will walk alongside King David as he becomes Israel's mighty warrior king!

Questions to Ask:

1. When looking for a new king, what does God care about more than how tall or handsome someone looks on the outside? *God looks at what is on the inside—He looks at the heart.*
2. Where was young David when his seven big brothers were being interviewed to be king? *He was out in the grassy fields watching the sheep.*
3. Why wasn't David scared of the giant Goliath? *Because he remembered how God helped him fight lions and bears before, and he knew God would protect him again!*
4. What did David use to fight the giant instead of heavy metal armor? *He used five smooth stones from a creek and his trusty sling.*
5. Goliath had a sword and a huge spear. What did David say he came with? *David said he came in the name of God!*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

You chose young David when
He was a little shepherd then.
You look inside my heart to see
The happy child I want to be.

Please help my heart to love you more
Than anything I've loved before.
When giant fears come marching near,
And try to fill my day with fear,

Please help me to be brave and bold,
Just like the stories I am told.
Remind me you are right by me,
And stronger than the things I see!

--Amen.

A Secret Tunnel and Whispering Trees

After Saul died, David became the new king. Yes, he sometimes made mistakes, but he loved God with his whole heart! He won many battles and as a result, he brought beautiful peace to the land.

Before Jerusalem became the capital city, a mean group lived inside its strong walls. They laughed and shouted, *"You cannot get in here!"* But King David was clever. He found a secret underground tunnel where the drinking water bubbled up. David told his bravest soldiers, *"Climb up through the water tunnel!"* They scrambled up the dark, slippery tunnel and crept inside the city. The enemy was so surprised that David's army won the battle!

Later, a giant army came to fight King David. Instead of rushing in the battle, David knelt down and asked God for a plan. God gave him some strange instructions: *"Do not attack from the front. Hide behind the big mulberry trees."* Then, God told David to listen carefully to the leaves. *"When you hear the sound of marching feet in the tops of the trees, attack fast! That means I am going ahead of you."* David waited quietly. Suddenly, the wind blew, and the leaves whispered like marching feet! David's soldiers charged out, and again,, he easily won the battle.

Another great thing King David did was bring the Ark of the Covenant to the city. This was a special golden chest that reminded everyone of God's presence. David was so excited that he danced! He clapped his hands and leaped for joy all through the streets. He did not care if he looked silly because he loved God so much. The whole city joined in the fun! David wanted everyone to know that God was right there living with His people.

After King David brought peace to Israel, he wanted to build a magnificent stone house for God. But God told David that because he was a warrior king, he wouldn't build it, but his son would. Then, God gave him a spectacular promise: *"Your family will rule forever, and your kingdom will never end!"* WOW! This meant that a very special Forever King would one day come from David's family to save the whole world!

David loved celebrating God, but he still had to be careful with his choices. Sadly, one Spring Day, King David forgot to follow God's rules. He made a very big mistake that brought great sadness to him, his family, and the kingdom. So, put on your thinking cap! Next time, we will learn how important it is to say "I'm sorry" when we make very bad decisions and do something wrong.

Questions to Ask:

1. How did King David's soldiers sneak inside the high walls of Jerusalem?
They climbed up through a dark, slippery water pipe!
2. What did God tell David to listen for in the tops of the mulberry trees? *The sound of marching feet! That meant God was going ahead of them.*
3. What did King David want to build for God's special golden box? *A magnificent stone Temple!*
4. God promised David that someone from his family would be a King who rules how long? *Forever! A King whose kingdom will never end.*
5. What was the Ark of the Covenant, and what did it remind the people of?
It was a very special, golden chest that reminded everyone that God was right there with them!
6. What did King David do to show how excited he was to welcome God into the city? *He danced, clapped his hands, and leaped for joy all through the streets!*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

You are so big and strong,
You helped King David all day long!
Thank You for tunnels dark and deep,
And marching leaves while others sleep.

Please help my ears to stop and hear,
Your sweet instructions loud and clear.
Thank You for promises so true,
That I am always safe with You!

--Amen.

King David's Heart

King David did many wonderful things, brought peace to the land with great military battles, and ruled with kindness. But even a king, who has a heart that loves God, can make a big mistake. That's what happens in this story.

One day, David stayed home instead of helping his army. From his roof, he saw a beautiful woman named Bathsheba. David wanted her to be his wife, but she was already married to a brave soldier named Uriah. Instead of saying "no" to his bad thoughts, David made a selfish choice. He forgot God's rules and took Bathsheba to his palace. Then, he tried to hide his mistake. He sent Uriah into a dangerous battle and Uriah died.

David thought no one would ever know. But God sees everything. He sent a wise messenger, named Nathan, to talk to the king. Nathan told David a story: *"A rich man had hundreds of sheep. A poor man had only one tiny baby lamb that he loved like a pet. One day, a visitor came to the rich man's house. The mean rich man stole the poor man's only lamb!"* King David responded with anger and said, *"That rich man is wrong! He deserves to be punished!"* Nathan looked at David right in the eyes and said, *"You are that man! God gave you a whole kingdom, but you took Uriah's wife."*

Suddenly, David realized he could never hide his mistakes from God. David fell to his knees and cried, *"I have sinned."* He learned that bad choices always lead to bad results. David asked God to forgive him. God listened and forgave him, because God never stopped loving David.

Remember the spectacular promise God gave to David: *"Your family will rule forever, and your kingdom will never end?"* Well, when David grew old and went to heaven, his son Solomon became the next king. Solomon built a beautiful Temple for God! But Solomon did not live forever, either. After he died, the country split into two kingdoms. For many years, the land was ruled by many different kings. Every single one of them grew old and passed away.

While the people waited for that special Forever King, they grew farther and farther from God. The people forgot all about His love and started praying to fake idols instead.

But guess what? God still has His plan! He was getting ready to send a brave, powerful messenger for a giant showdown on a big mountain! So, get ready for our next story, where we will see crashing fire from the sky and find out how God showed the whole world that He is the only, true, living God!

Questions to Ask:

1. What did the mean rich man do in Nathan's story? *He stole the poor man's only baby lamb instead of using one of his own sheep!*
2. What did David do when he realized he made a big mistake and hurt people? *He fell to his knees and asked God to forgive him.*
3. How did God respond to David's confession and plea for forgiveness? *God listened to David, forgave his big mistakes, and never stopped loving him.*
4. What happened after King Solomon died? *The country split into two pieces.*
5. Why were the people waiting and waiting for a "Forever King"? *Because all the other kings grew old and died!*
6. While the people waited for the Forever King, what sad mistake did the other kings make? *They stopped listening to God and started praying to fake statues instead.*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

You see each thing I do,
And you always love what's true.
Thank you for your amazing love,
That showers down from up above.

When I make a bad mistake,
And see the trouble that it makes.
Please help me to be brave and bold,
To tell the truth and not withhold.

I want to say "I'm sorry" fast,
Instead of hiding what has passed.
Thank you for listening when I pray,
And washing all my sins away!

-- Amen.

Fire from the Sky

Do you remember that after King Solomon died, Israel was divided into two separate kingdoms? After this division, a mean ruler of the Northern Kingdom named King Ahab led the people to forget about the real God. Instead, they started praying to wooden and stone statues called Baal. They even began offering their children as sacrifices to this fake god. Uh, how horrible!

But God loved His people too much to let them stay lost, so He sent special helpers called prophets to tell everyone to *"Turn back to the one true God, or big trouble is coming!"* and to *"Get ready! The promised Savior is coming soon!"*

One of these brave prophets was named Elijah. He wanted to show everyone who the only true living God was. So, he came up with an exciting contest! He told the fake prophets to build an altar of wood for their pretend god, and that he built an altar of wood for the one true God. Elijah said, *"You pray to your god, and I will pray to mine. Whichever God answers by sending real fire from the sky, He is the true God!"*

They agree, and all morning long, hundreds of fake prophets danced and yelled, *"Send fire!"* But the sky stayed totally quiet. By lunchtime, Elijah teased them, saying, *"Maybe you should shout louder! Maybe your pretend god is taking a nap!"* They screamed louder and louder, even cutting themselves, but nothing happened.

Finally, it was Elijah's turn. He built his altar with twelve big stones and dug a ditch around it. Then, he did something super surprising. He poured giant jars of water all over his wood! He did it three times until everything was completely soaked and puddles filled the ditch. Now, it seemed impossible to start a fire! But not for the one, true God!

Elijah stepped forward and said a simple prayer: *"Lord, let everyone know today that You are the true God."* WHOOSH! At that exact second, a giant, blazing fire crashed straight down from the sky! It burned up the wet wood, the stones, the dirt, and it even licked up every single drop of water in the ditch! When the people saw this amazing miracle, they fell right on their faces and shouted, *"The Lord is God! The Lord is God!"*

That day, God showed everyone His spectacular power! But grab your fishing pole and get ready for our next story. We are going to meet a prophet who got a super-duper big instruction from God. He didn't listen to Him and had to learn a very fishy lesson!

Questions to Ask:

1. What were the two main messages that God's prophets told the people? *"Turn back to the one true God," and "Get ready, the promised Savior is coming!"*
2. What was the big contest that Elijah set up to prove who the real God was? *Whichever God answered by sending real fire down from the sky to burn the wood was the true God.*
3. What did Elijah say to tease the pretend prophets when their god didn't send any fire? *He told them to shout louder because maybe their pretend god was busy, traveling, or taking a nap!*
4. What surprising thing did Elijah do to his altar before he prayed? *He had the people pour water over the wood until it was completely soaked.*
5. What happened the exact second Elijah finished his simple prayer? *WHOOSH! A giant fire fell from the sky and burned up the wood, the stones, and all the water!*
6. What did the people do when they saw this amazing miracle? *They fell flat on their faces and shouted, "The Lord is God! The Lord is God!"*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

You are the one true King,
You made the stars and everything!
Your power is big, Your love is true,
There is no other God like You.

Just like You sent the fire that day,
I know You hear me when I pray.
Help me to listen and obey,
And follow You in every way.

--Amen.

A Fish in the Sea, a King on the Way!

The people of Israel often made bad choices, but God loved them anyway. He sent helpers called prophets to give them two messages: "Turn back to God!" and "Get ready, the Savior is coming soon!" But do you remember the promise God gave to Abraham--that from his family all the nations of the earth would be blessed? In this story, we learn that God loves all people of all nations. We learn that He sends messengers to them as well.

One day, God told a prophet named Jonah to go to a big city called Nineveh to tell the people to stop doing bad things. But Jonah was scared because they were some of the meanest enemies of Israel. So, he hopped on a boat and tried to hide from God.

You cannot hide from God! God sent a giant storm that shook the boat he was on. The sailors were terrified. Jonah knew the storm was his fault for not listening to God, so he told them to throw him into the water. The second Jonah hit the waves, the storm stopped! Jonah sank down, down, down.

Just then, God sent a huge fish to save him. **GULP!** The fish swallowed Jonah whole! He stayed inside that dark, slimy belly for three days. Jonah prayed and told God he was super sorry. So, God told the fish to take another big gulp and then spit Jonah right out onto the dry land!

This time, Jonah listened to God. He went straight to Nineveh and told the people to turn back to God, or they would be destroyed. Amazingly, everyone listened, said they were sorry, and God forgave them!

God's prophets also gave exciting clues about the special Forever King who was coming to save the world from sin. A prophet named Jeremiah said God would write His rules right inside people's hearts.

Another prophet, Isaiah, told them exactly how the Forever King would arrive. He wouldn't be big and loud—He would come as a tiny, sweet baby!

Isaiah also said the baby would have wonderful names, such as the *Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace*. He would bring a happy peace that would never, ever end!

While the people waited for that special baby King, those naughty northern kings kept making bad choices and ignoring God's warnings. OH-NO! Something really bad is about to happen! But guess what? God *never* forgets His children! Even in the darkest of times, His rescue plan is still moving forward.

Questions to Ask:

1. Why did Jonah hop onto a big boat to try to sail far away? *He was scared, so he refused to go to Nineveh and tried to hide from God.*
2. How did God stop Jonah from running away, and how was Jonah saved from sinking into the sea? *God sent a wild storm to shake the boat, and then He sent a giant fish to swallow Jonah whole and keep him safe.*
3. What did the people of Nineveh do when Jonah finally arrived and gave them God's warning? *Everyone in the city—even the king—listened, said they were sorry for their bad choices, and turned back to God.*
4. Where did the prophet Jeremiah say God was going to write His new rules instead of on heavy stone blocks? *God said He would write His rules right inside people's hearts.*
5. How did the prophet Isaiah say the great King of the whole world would arrive? *He said the Savior would arrive as a tiny, sweet baby.*
6. What are some of the names that Isaiah said this special child would be called? *Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

When you tell me what to do,
Please help me quickly follow You!
I do not want to run away,
Or hide from what you have to say.

Don't let me make a stubborn choice,
But help me listen to your voice.
Thank you that even in the sea,
Your amazing love can rescue me!

--Amen.

The Farmer and the Crooked Wall

Remember how the country split into two kingdoms? The top part was called the Northern Kingdom. It had nineteen kings, and sadly, every single one of them made bad choices! They forgot all about God, so He picked a very surprising helper to get their attention.

His name was Amos. He wasn't a king, and he didn't live in a fancy palace. He was just a simple country farmer who took care of woolly sheep and picked fruit from wild trees. But one day, God said, *"Amos, leave your sheep. Go tell the Northern Kingdom to stop doing bad things!"*

When Amos arrived in the big cities, he saw that the people were very wealthy. They lived in giant stone houses, slept on fancy beds, and ate delicious food all day. But they had become super mean and selfish! They didn't share with the poor, they cheated, and they stopped listening to God. They thought their money kept them safe, but Amos stood in the street and shouted, *"Listen up! God sees you. If you don't turn back to Him, your beautiful houses will fall down!"*

To show them what was wrong, God showed Amos a special picture. He held up a builder's tool called a plumb line, which is just a heavy string used to see if a wall is perfectly straight. God dropped the string next to the kingdom and said, *"Amos, My people are like a crooked wall. I built them to be straight and good, but they have leaned so far away from Me that they are going to fall over!"*

Amos begged the people to straighten out their hearts! But they just laughed and covered their ears. Because they wouldn't listen, a big army came and took their kingdom away, just like Amos said. But guess what? God was still working on His grand rescue plan!

No matter how crooked the people became, God was keeping the path clear for the perfect Savior to be born—the Forever King! Get excited because He is about to come straighten out everyone's hearts with His amazing love!

Questions to Ask:

1. What does this story teach us about God? *God always keeps His promises. God made sure the special family line of King David stayed safe in the south.*
2. What were the two outdoor jobs that Amos did before he became a prophet? *He was a simple country boy who took care of woolly sheep and picked wild figs from trees.*
3. What did the rich people in the Northern Kingdom have in their houses that showed they were wealthy? *They lived in giant stone houses and slept on fancy beds decorated with ivory.*
4. What special building tool did God hold up in a vision to show Amos how the kingdom was acting? *A plumb line.*
5. Why did God say the kingdom was like a totally crooked wall? *Because the people had leaned so far away from God and His rules that they were about to tip over and crash!*
6. Did the people listen to Amos, and what happened because they laughed at him? *No, they refused to listen, so a big foreign army eventually came and took their kingdom away.*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

You still are patient, kind, and true,
To show us what we ought to do.
You do not need a fancy king,
To go and change a difficult thing.

You use a simple farmer from the land,
To help them see your loving hand.
Please take my little heart today,
And use me in your own special way!

-- Amen.

Cold Hearts and the Coming King

Remember how the country split into two pieces? Both sides had a very hard time listening to directions! The Northern Kingdom covered their ears, so a giant army called Assyria came with a loud CRASH and scattered them everywhere. You would think the Southern Kingdom would learn, but they didn't!

One day a huge army called the Babylonians marched right up to their city, broke down the big walls, and burned King Solomon's shiny Temple. They took the people far away to a place called Babylon. But God took care of them! He even saved three brave friends from a hot, fiery furnace.

God had promised they would return back home after 70 years of captivity. He kept His promise! In 70 years, the people marched back home and rebuilt their Temple.

But guess what? After a while, they forgot about God all over again. Because they kept turning away, something very strange happened. For 400 years, God remained completely silent. He sent no prophets, no messages, and no warnings. Shhh! It was totally silent.

During this time, big, bossy empires like the Greeks and the Romans came to rule over them. The Romans put a ruler named King Herod over the people. Even though he built a new Temple, he wasn't a nice king. In fact, the people had no true king of their own, at least not one of house of King David.

It was a dark and silent time. Religious leaders seemed to multiply and get more and more control over people's everyday lives. But even their hearts grew further and further away from God.

But a few faithful people never stopped trusting God. They began to talk more and more about the old promises of God that a wonderful new King from David's family would come to rule forever!

But how could a new King arrive when a mean Roman ruler was sitting on the throne? It seemed totally impossible! But guess what? God *always* has a perfect plan, and nothing can stop Him!

Even though Jerusalem had fallen, this was just the beginning of God's amazing rescue plan. We are about to see how three young heroes showed everyone that no matter what happens, God is always right there with you. So get ready, because we will tell one more incredible adventure before all those God's promises of a Forever King begin to be fulfilled!

Questions to Ask:

1. What did the Babylonian army do to the beautiful Temple that King Solomon built? *They destroyed it, burned it down, and stole all the gold treasures.*
2. How many years did God say the people would have to wait before they could go back home? Exactly 70 years.
3. What happened to the people's hearts after they came home and rebuilt the Temple? *Their hearts grew cold again, and they started forgetting about God all over again.*
4. For how many years did God stay completely quiet without sending any prophets or messages? *For 400 whole years!*
5. What big empire came to boss the Jews around, and who was the mean ruler they put in charge? *The Romans came, and they put a mean ruler named King Herod in charge.*
6. Even though it was dark and quiet, what wonderful secret promise did a few special people keep whispering about? *That a wonderful new Forever King from David's family would come to rule.*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

When walls come crashing down,
And trouble spreads all through the town,
Help me to always stop and hear,
Your gentle warnings loud and clear.

Though 400 years is a super long wait,
Your promises are never late!
Thank you that even when things seem tough,
Your big, amazing love is enough.

--Amen.

The Fire That Met Its Match

During the 70 years of captivity in Babylon, four brave friends named Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were taken to live in the king's giant palace. The king wanted them to eat palace food that was against God's rules. But Daniel asked a guard, *"Can we just eat veggies and drink water?"* The guard feared they would get sick. But guess what? After ten days of eating the veggies, they all looked healthier and stronger than anyone else! God took care of them because they listened to Him.

Later, the king built a super-tall, shiny statue made of pure gold. He made a law: *"Whenever the music plays, you must bow down and worship my statue. Anyone who doesn't will be thrown into a blazing, hot furnace of fire!"* Then, all of a sudden, the music began to play. *Toot, toot, strum, strum!* Thousands of people fell to their knees to worship the fake idol. But not Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! They stood up straight because they worshiped only the one true God!

The king was furious! His face turned red with anger. He shouted, *"Bow down, or into the fire you go!"* But the three friends stood and said, *"Our God is able to save us, O King. But even if He doesn't, we will never worship your statue."*

The king yelled, *"Make the fire seven times hotter!"* But when the soldiers threw them into the roaring flames, the soldiers were burned alive. The king watched all this from his throne. But suddenly, his eyes grew wide open. He jumped up in surprise and shouted! *"Wait a minute! Didn't we throw three men into the fire?"*

Yes, Your Majesty," his helpers replied. *"Look!"* the king shouted again. *"I see four men walking around in the fire! They aren't burning, and the fourth one looks like an angel of God!"*

The king ran to the door of the furnace and yelled, *"Come out!"* The three friends walked right out of the roaring fire. It was a giant miracle! Their hair wasn't burned, their clothes looked perfect, and they didn't even smell like campfire smoke! The king bowed his head and praised the true God. He said that no other god can save people like this!

Now hold tight to your seats! God's rescue plan is now going to move into action! The 400-year-long, quiet years of waiting are finally over. The silence will be broken in a spectacular way. A bright, glowing angel is flying down from heaven with the most exciting news ever!

Questions to Ask:

1. What did Daniel and his three friends eat instead of the king's rich palace food? *They ate only crunchy vegetables and drank fresh water.*
2. How did the four friends look after ten days of eating their veggies? *They looked healthier, stronger, and smarter than anyone else in the castle!*
3. What did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego do when the music played and everyone else bowed to the gold statue? *They stood up straight because they worshiped only the one true God.*
4. What happened to the strong soldiers who threw the three friends into the furnace? *The fire was so wild and seven times hotter than usual that the soldiers burned up right away.*
5. Why did King Nebuchadnezzar jump up in surprise when he looked into the roaring fire? *He threw three tied-up men in, but he saw four men walking around completely safe, and one looked like an angel!*
6. When the three friends walked out of the fire, what did they smell like? *They didn't even smell like campfire smoke, and their hair and clothes were perfect!*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

When others bow away,
To fake old statues made of clay,
Please give me courage to stand tall,
And trust that you are the best of all!

You walk right with me through the fire,
And lift my fearful heart up higher.
Thank you for being strong and true,
I'll always place my trust in You!

-- Amen.

The Angel's Big Surprises

After those long, quiet 400 years, the Roman army ruled the land. In a small town, an old priest named Zechariah and his sweet wife, Elizabeth, loved and served God. But they were very sad because they didn't have any children.

One day, while Zechariah was serving inside God's holy Temple, a bright, shining angel named Gabriel appeared right next to him! Zechariah was so scared that his knees shook. *"Don't be afraid!"* Gabriel said. *"God heard your prayers. You are going to have a baby boy, and you must name him John!"*

Zechariah thought about his grey hair and didn't believe it. So, the angel said, *"Since you didn't believe me, you won't be able to speak a single word until he is born!"* And poof! Zechariah couldn't talk at all. He could only make silly hand signs!

Six months later, Gabriel flew down to visit a young woman named Mary. *"Greetings, Mary! God is with you!"* the angel said. Mary was super surprised! Gabriel told her, *"You are going to have a very special baby boy, and you will name him Jesus. He will be the Forever King whose kingdom will never end!"*

Mary asked, *"How can I have a baby when I don't have a husband yet?"* The angel whispered, *"This baby is a miracle from the Holy Spirit. Nothing is impossible with God!"* Then Mary smiled and trusted God's big plan.

Mary was engaged to a kind man named Joseph. When Joseph found out she was having a baby, he was confused and sad. But that night, the angel hopped right into his dream! *"Joseph, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife,"* the angel said. *"Her baby is a special miracle. Name Him Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins!"*

The angel gave the baby one more beautiful name: *Immanuel, which means "God is right here with us!"* When Joseph woke up, he felt so happy and brave. He took Mary as his wife and cared for her while they waited for the special baby to arrive.

But wait! Before the Forever King arrives, another miracle is about to pop out into the world! Remember old Zechariah, who lost his voice and could only make silly hand signs? Get ready, because his quiet house is about to get super noisy! Next up, we'll finally see their baby arrive. You won't believe what happens when Zechariah names the baby John.

Questions to Ask:

1. Why couldn't the priest Zechariah speak a single word? *Because he didn't believe the angel Gabriel's wonderful news that he and Elizabeth were going to have a baby!*
2. What did the angel Gabriel tell Mary the baby boy's name would be? *His name would be Jesus, and He would be the Forever King!*
3. What does the special name *Immanuel* mean? *It means "God is here with us!"*
4. How did Joseph react when he first found out Mary was going to have a baby? *He felt confused and sad because he knew it wasn't his baby.*
5. Why did Joseph change his mind about canceling the wedding? *Because a shining angel hopped into his dream and told him that the baby was a special miracle from the Holy Spirit sent to save people from their sins!*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

Thank You for sending your angels down,
To spread your news all through the town.

When things seem far too hard to do,
I know that they are small to you.

Nothing is ever too tough or high,
For the great God of the earth and sky!

Please give me a heart like Joseph and Mary,
To trust your plans when things look scary.

Thank you for Jesus, our Savior so true,
And *Immanuel*—God who is with us too!

--Amen.

The Forever King is Born!

God kept His big promise! Elizabeth had her baby boy, and Zechariah named him John. The very second he was named, his daddy got his voice back! He cheered and praised God because he knew John would grow up to help people get ready for the coming of the Savior.

Around this time, the bossy king ordered everyone to travel to their hometowns to be counted. Joseph and Mary had to take a long, bumpy walk to a town called Bethlehem. Mary's tummy was very big because the special baby was ready to come!

When they arrived in Bethlehem, the town was completely full. There were no beds left! So, they had to sleep in a stable with the animals. It was right there that the promised baby Jesus was born! Mary wrapped Him up and laid Him in a soft manger full of hay.

That night, out on the dark hills, some shepherds were watching their woolly sheep. Suddenly, a bright angel popped out of the sky! The shepherds shook with fear, but the angel said, "*Don't be afraid! I bring happy news! Tonight, a Savior is born in Bethlehem!*" Then, the whole sky filled up with thousands of beautiful angels singing praises to God! Then the shepherds raced into town and found baby Jesus, just like the angel said.

Later, some wise men called Magi saw a giant, shiny star in the east. They knew it was a clue for a new Forever King! They followed that bright star all the way to Bethlehem. When they found baby Jesus, they knelt down and gave Him expensive treasures that are fit for a true King—gold and sweet-smelling gifts!

There was a mean ruler named King Herod who wanted to kill the baby. But God is much smarter than any mean ruler! He warned the wise men to go home a different way. The angel also hopped back into another of Joseph's dreams and whispered, "*Wake up! Take Mary and baby Jesus and run to Egypt to stay safe!*" Joseph obeyed right away, and God protected the newborn King from danger.

Get ready, because our next adventure takes us right out into the wild, hot, sandy desert. We are going to meet baby John when he is all grown up! And what a sight he is to see! He had a giant message for the people by a big, splashing river. You won't want to miss it! The sky is about to split wide open; a beautiful white dove will fly down; and, we will hear God's booming voice shout from the clouds!

Questions to Ask:

1. Where was baby Jesus born? *In a warm stable in Bethlehem, because all the rooms were full!*
2. What did baby Jesus sleep in? *A manger, which is a cozy box where the animals eat their hay.*
3. Who told the shepherds the happy news about Jesus? *A bright, shining angel in the night sky!*
4. What did the wise men follow to find the new King? *A giant, beautiful, shiny star!*
5. What kind of gifts did the wise men give to Jesus? *Very special treasures fit for a king, like real gold!*
6. Where did Joseph take Mary and Jesus to keep them safe from the mean ruler? *They took a trip far away to the land of Egypt.*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

Thank You for the night,
You sent a star so big and bright!

Thank You for the baby King,
And for the songs the angels sing.

Thank You for the stable warm,
Keeping baby Jesus safe from harm.

Help me love Him every day,
As I sleep and as I play.

--Amen!

The Wild Desert Preacher

Remember the old priest Zechariah who couldn't speak? Well, God kept His big promise! Zechariah and Elizabeth had their special baby boy. The very second they named him John, Zechariah's mouth popped wide open, and he could talk again, and He began to praise God!

When John grew up, he didn't live in a normal house. He lived out in the wild, sandy desert! He was a very unusual guy. He wore itchy camel-hair clothes and a big leather belt. You won't believe what he ate! He didn't eat mac and cheese. He ate crunchy wild bugs called locusts and sweet honey from the bees. *Crunch, crunch, gulp!*

Thousands of people walked out into the desert just to see and hear him. John was God's first special messenger to the people in over 400 years! His job was to get everyone ready for the Forever King.

John stood by the big, splashing Jordan River and shouted, *"Turn back to God! Stop making bad choices!"* When people said they were sorry, John would dip them under the water. This was called baptism. It was a beautiful picture that showed their hearts had been washed clean from sin! That is why they called him John the Baptist.

One day, John looked up and saw someone walking toward the river. It was Jesus! John's eyes grew wide with excitement. He pointed his finger and shouted, *"Look! There is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*

Jesus walked right into the cool water and asked John to baptize Him. John was so surprised! He felt Jesus should baptize him! But, he finally obeyed Jesus and baptized Him, dipping under the water and lifting Him back up.

Right at that exact second, something spectacular happened! The sky split open, and the Holy Spirit came down from heaven looking like a beautiful white dove. It landed right on Jesus. Then, a loud, booming voice spoke from the clouds. It was God the Father! He said, *"This is my beloved Son, and I am so happy with Him!"* The wait was over! The Savior had come!

Now that the Forever King is grown up and ready to save the world from sin, what happens next? Remember the proud enemy of God? He still there, watching and lurking! He does not want Jesus to rescue the world, so he is planning a super sneaky trick to stop Him! Get ready! We are going to see how Jesus uses God's Word to fight back and win a giant battle over all the tricks and lies of the devil!

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened when Zachariah named his new born son *John*?
Zechariah began to talk and praise God again! Just like Gabriel said!
2. What did John the Baptist wear and eat while living out in the wild desert?
He wore itchy camel-hair clothes with a big leather belt, and he ate crunchy wild grasshoppers and sweet honey!
3. Why did John dip people under the water in the Jordan River? *To show a beautiful picture that their hearts had been washed clean from bad choices!*
4. What did John say when he saw Jesus coming toward him while he was baptizing at the Jordan River? *"Look! There is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*
5. What amazing things happened right after John baptized Jesus? *The sky split open, the Holy Spirit came down looking like a gentle white dove, and God's booming voice said, "This is my beloved Son!"*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

Thank you for your messenger, John,
Who worked in the desert from the early dawn.

Please wash my heart clean from each bad mistake,
Just like the soap and the bubbles we make.

Help me be ready to follow the Forever King,
And listen to Jesus in everything!

Thank you for sending the dove from the sky,
And speaking your love from the clouds up on high.

Keep me safe from the enemy's tricks every day,
Because you are stronger than him anyway!

--Amen.

The Showdown in the Desert

Right after Jesus was baptized, He went out into a big, empty desert. It was hot, dry, and full of dusty rocks. Jesus stayed there all alone for 40 days and 40 nights! He did not eat a single bite of food. Not a sandwich, not an apple, not even a tiny cracker. His tummy was rumbling and tumbling like a giant storm!

When Jesus was super hungry, the sneaky enemy crept out from the shadows. Yeah, it was Satan. You remember him. He is the proud angel who was kicked out of heaven because he wanted to take the place of God. He is the one who tempted Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit. And now, he is going to try to trick Jesus into making a bad choice. It is the perfect time, because Jesus is alone, hungry, and his body is weakened from not having eaten for 40 days.

First, he pointed to some round rocks and whispered, *"If you are God's Son, turn these hard stones into warm, yummy bread!"* Jesus was hungry enough to eat a mountain of bread! But He knew it was a trick. Jesus looked right at him and said, *"No! God's Word says we don't live on bread alone. We need His words!"*

Satan got mad and tried another trick. He took Jesus up to the very highest, tippy-top of a grand building. *"Jump off!"* he sneered. *"God's Word says His angels will catch you before you hit the ground."* But Jesus answered humbly and bravely, *"God's Word also says, 'Do not test the Lord your God.'"*

By now, Satan was getting pretty desperate. He took Jesus up a super-high mountain and showed Him all the shiny kingdoms in the world. *"I will give you all of this!"* he said. *"Just kneel down and pray to me!"* But he lied. Again, Jesus stood tall and strong. With a voice full of power, He shouted, *"Get away from me! God's Word says you must worship only the Lord your God!"*

Jesus proved He was stronger than the trickiest enemy in the world. Now, He is ready to start His big rescue mission! But guess what? A great King needs a special team to help Him change the world! He isn't looking for strong soldiers or rich bosses—He is going to choose regular, ordinary people! People just like us!

In our next story, we will see Jesus, with just the wave of His hand and two magical words, call men to join the most exciting team in history. So get ready to meet these men who will help the Forever King start His world-saving work!

Questions to Ask:

1. How long did Jesus stay in the hot desert, and how many snacks did He eat? *He stayed in the desert for forty days and forty nights, and He did not eat a single bite of food!*
2. What was the very first trick Satan tried to make the hungry Jesus do? *He tried to get Jesus to turn the hard stones into delicious bread.*
3. What did Jesus use every single time to beat Satan's sneaky tricks? *He used the powerful words from the Bible!*
4. What did Satan ask Jesus to do on top of the super-high mountain? *He lied and said He would give Jesus all the shiny kingdoms if Jesus would just kneel down and pray to him.*
5. Who came down from heaven to take care of Jesus after Satan ran away? *Angels flew down to take care of Jesus and feed His hungry tummy!*
6. What does this story tell us about who Jesus is?
 - He has the power to do anything, like turning rocks into bread, but He only uses His power to obey God.
 - He is the Strongest King and cannot be tricked by any sneaky lies.
 - He shows us how to use the Word of God to win against scary tests.

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

You are so big and strong,
You help me stand up against the wrong!
When sneaky tricks come to my mind,
And bad choices try to make me blind,

Help me remember Your Word,
The sharpest sword I've ever heard!
With your bright angels by my side,
I have no scary fears to hide!

--Amen.

Building the King's Team

After winning the big battle in the hot, lonely desert, Jesus was ready to start His grand rescue mission! He walked into towns shouting, "*The wait is over! God's kingdom is here. Stop making bad choices and believe the good news!*"

Big crowds followed Him, but Jesus knew He needed a special team to help Him change the world. He didn't look for kings or rich bosses. Instead, He chose twelve regular men to be His closest helpers and best friends.

One sunny morning, Jesus was walking by the big, splashing sea. He saw two brothers, Simon Peter and Andrew. They were fishermen, throwing a large net into the blue water. SPLASH! They had been working hard all night but hadn't caught a single fish.

Jesus smiled and called out, "*Come, follow Me! I will show you how to fish for people instead of fish!*" Simon Peter and Andrew didn't ask questions. They dropped their heavy nets right in the sand and followed Jesus immediately!

A little further down the beach, Jesus saw two more brothers named James and John. They were sitting in a boat, fixing their nets. Jesus called out to them, too. Whoosh! They hopped right out of the boat, said goodbye to their dad, and joined the team.

Next, Jesus saw a man named Matthew sitting at a table. Matthew was a tax collector who collected money from people. Nobody liked tax collectors because they were often mean. But Jesus looked at Matthew with love. "Follow Me," Jesus said gently. Matthew stood right up, left his piles of shiny coins behind, and became Jesus's helper.

Jesus kept searching until He had twelve special friends. They were all very different, and they made plenty of mistakes, but they all loved Jesus!

For three years, they walked everywhere with Him. They watched Him heal sick people, feed thousands of hungry crowds, and tell the wild wind and waves to stop. Jesus taught them how to pray, how to love their neighbors, and how to share God's amazing love with everyone they met.

With His team of twelve best friends by His side, Jesus was ready to show the world His spectacular power, beginning with Satan. But He wasn't done. Our next story will also demonstrate His power over all the evil spirits.

Questions to Ask:

1. What were Simon Peter and Andrew doing when Jesus first saw them?
They were fishermen throwing a large net into the blue water of the Sea of Galilee!
2. What exciting thing did Jesus say they would fish for instead of regular fish? *Jesus told them, "Come, follow me! I will show you how to fish for people!"*
3. What did James and John do the very moment Jesus called out to them?
They hopped right out of their boat, said goodbye to their dad, and joined Jesus's team immediately!
4. What was Matthew's job before he left his table to follow Jesus? *He was a tax collector who collected piles of shiny coins from people.*
5. What does this story teach us about the kinds of people Jesus chooses to do big things for God? *It teaches us that you don't have to be rich, famous, or perfect; you just need a heart that listens and follows Him!*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

You do not look at how big I am,
Or if I am strong like a full-grown man.

You look at my heart and You see my love,
And guide my path from heaven above.

When giants of fear or worry grow tall,
I know with Your help they will surely fall.

Like the friends of Jesus, I trust in Your power and might,
Please protect me and keep me all through the night.

--Amen.

Spooky Spirits Shiver and Shake!

After winning the big test in the hot desert, Jesus was ready to start His grand rescue mission! He walked into towns shouting, "*The wait is over! God's kingdom is here. Stop making bad choices and believe the good news!*" As Jesus walked from town to town, He showed everyone that He was the Forever King. He was way more powerful than Satan and any sneaky, spooky bad spirits!

Jesus picked 12 special helpers to be His best friends, and together they went to help people. One day, Jesus was teaching inside the Temple. Suddenly, a man with a spooky bad spirit inside him started yelling, "*I know who You are! You are the Holy One of God!*" Jesus didn't get scared at all. He used His kingly voice and said, "*Be quiet! Get out of this man!*" Zap! The evil spirit came right out, and the man was completely safe. Everyone was amazed at Jesus' power!

Later, Jesus and His friends got off a boat and met a poor man who was being bullied by many evil spirits. The man was so sad that he lived in the dirt and broke real metal chains with his hands! When the bad spirits saw Jesus, they started shaking with fear. They begged Jesus not to punish them, but to let them go into a nearby herd of pigs instead. Jesus said, "Go!" and whoosh, the spirits left the man immediately! The man was so happy and healthy again. He ran to tell everyone what Jesus had done for him.

Another day, a sad daddy cried out, "*Master, please help my only son! A bad spirit makes him scream and shake on the ground.*" Jesus smiled kindly and said, "*Bring your boy to Me.*" As the boy walked up, the spirit made him shake one last time. But Jesus spoke a powerful word, ordered the spirit to leave, and healed the boy completely! He handed the happy child right back to his daddy.

Jesus cared so much about people, and He showed a power greater than any king before Him!

But get ready, because our next big adventure is going to be spectacular! Jesus is going to face some of the biggest, scariest monsters in the world: sickness, boo-boos, and heavy hearts. With just a soft touch of His hand or a single powerful word, He will do what doctors couldn't: heal the sick. But He is also going to wash away people's bad choices and completely fix their hearts! You won't want to miss it, because the Great Physician is on His way to heal the world!

Questions to Ask:

1. What did the evil spirit do right after Jesus told it to *"Be silent! Get out!"* in the synagogue? *The spirit came out of him with a loud cry!*
2. Where did the man with the evil spirits live before he met Jesus? *He lived out in lonely places and cemeteries with no clothes on.*
3. What did the evil spirits beg Jesus to send them into instead of the lake of fire? *They begged Jesus to send them into a nearby herd of pigs!*
4. What did Jesus tell the healed man to do instead of letting him come on the boat? *Jesus told him to go home and tell everyone all the amazing things God had done for him.*
5. What did the sneaky spirit make the father's only son do before Jesus healed him? *He made him scream, tremble, and foam at the mouth.*
6. *What does this story teach us about who Jesus is:*
 - He has Absolute Authority over the evil spirits.
 - Jesus doesn't run away from people who are hurting, lonely, or acting wild; He rescues them and gives them peace.
 - He Changes Our Lives and gives us an exciting story to share so we can go tell our family and friends how good God is!

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

You are the ultimate boss, Your power wins through every loss!
No spooky shadows, fears, or fright can ever stand against your light.

When things feel scary, wild, or loud, or spooky thoughts roll like a cloud,
You calm the shaking with your Word, the strongest voice I've ever heard!

Thank you for being my protector and friend, with a love that never ends.
Help me to go and tell my town, how your great power turns my fears around!

--Amen.

Sickness and Sin Defeated

Jesus showed everyone that He was the Forever King! He had power over Satan, the archenemy of God, and all his demons. But this is just the beginning. In this story, we will see that no boo-boos or sicknesses are too big for Him to fix. He has total power over our bodies and our hearts.

As Jesus went from town to town, He helped many sick people. Back then, there was a scary skin sickness called leprosy. People were so afraid of catching it that sick people had to live all alone outside the city. No one was allowed to touch them!

One day, a sick man knelt before Jesus and whispered, *"If You want to, You can make me clean."* The man had a sickness that caused him to be cast out from among the people. No one was permitted to even touch him. But Jesus felt so much love for him that He broke the rules. He reached out and touched the man! *"I do want to,"* Jesus said. *"Be clean!"* Zap! Instantly, his skin was completely shiny and healed!

Later, Jesus was teaching inside a house. It was so crowded that the door was completely blocked! Four brave friends arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a sleeping mat. Since they couldn't get through the door, they climbed up onto the flat roof! They worked hard and dug a big hole right through the ceiling. Dust rained down as they used ropes to lower their friend right in front of Jesus!

When Jesus saw their faith, he said, *"My son, your sins are forgiven!"* When he said this, some religious leaders in the room thought in their hearts, *"He is blaspheming God! There is no one but God who can forgive sin!"* But Jesus knew what they were thinking. Turning to the man, he said, *"That you may all know that the Son of Man has power to forgive sin, 'Arise!' and 'Take up your mat and walk!"* The man got up, picked up the mat he was lying on, and went home."

Right away, the man jumped up, grabbed his mat, and walked out the door! Everyone was completely amazed and cheered, *"We have never seen anything like this!"* Jesus proved He has ultimate authority over sickness and sin, but His incredible power as the Forever King does not stop there!

Get ready, because our next big adventure takes us out to a big, hungry crowd. We see Jesus perform another miracle when He provides them with much more than they could eat! After which, they wanted to take Jesus and crown Him as the Forever King, right then and there. Do you want to find out what happens next? Then grab your lunchbox, and let's join the hungry crowd!

Questions to Ask:

1. What does this tell us about Jesus? It tells us that Jesus has ultimate power and authority over everything. He has the power to heal broken bodies, the compassion to touch the lonely, and the divine authority to forgive sins.
2. Why was it a big deal that Jesus touched the leper? *People with leprosy were considered "unclean," and no one was allowed to touch them or even come near them. By touching him, Jesus showed that His love and purity were stronger than the disease.*
3. What did the four friends do when they couldn't get through the door? *They refused to give up. They carried their paralyzed friend up to the flat roof, tore a large hole in the ceiling, and lowered his mat right down in front of Jesus.*
4. What did Jesus do first for the paralyzed man before healing his body? Jesus forgave the man's sins first, showing that a clean heart was more important than a healthy body.
5. Why were the religious leaders upset when Jesus forgave the man's sins? They knew that only God has the authority to forgive sins. They did not believe Jesus was the Son of God or the promised Forever King.

A Child's Prayer:

Dear Jesus,

You have power over sickness and sin,
You heal us outside and You clean us within.
You touched the poor leper who knelt at Your feet,
And made the hurt man walk tall in the street.

Thank You for friends who are faithful and true,
Who lift up each other and bring us to You.
Please forgive all my wrongs and guide me each day,
And give me the faith to trust and obey.

--Amen.

The Bread, the Boat, and the Big Storms

Jesus proved He had total power over both sickness and sin, but His incredible power as the Forever King did not stop there! In this story, He shows that He also has power over the whole world He created.

One day, a giant crowd of over 5,000 people followed Jesus into the countryside to hear Him teach. Soon, it was dinner time, and everyone's tummies were rumbling! But there were no grocery stores anywhere. A little boy stepped forward and offered to share his tiny lunch—just five small loaves of bread and two little fish.

Jesus smiled and thanked God for the food. Then, He started breaking the bread and fish into pieces to give to His friends. Guess what? The food just kept growing and growing! WOW! It turned into a massive mountain of food. Everyone ate until they were completely full, and there were even twelve baskets of leftovers!

Later that night, Jesus told His friends to sail across the big sea while He stayed behind to pray. In the middle of the night, a scary storm zoomed in! Giant waves crashed against the boat, and the wild wind blew *whoosh, whoosh!* The disciples were terrified and thought they were going to sink.

Suddenly, through the dark storm, they saw someone walking right on top of the water! They screamed with fear, thinking it was a ghost. But a kind voice called out, *"Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."* It was Jesus! Peter shouted, *"Lord, if it's really You, tell me to walk on the water to You!"* Jesus said, *"Come on!"* Peter stepped right out of the boat and walked on top of the water!

But when Peter looked at the big waves, he got scared and started to sink. He shouted, "Save me!" Jesus reached out His hand, caught him, and pulled him up.

As soon as they hopped into the boat, Jesus spoke to the storm and said, *"Quiet! Be still!"* The wind stopped, and the sea became like glass. The disciples were amazed that even the wind and the waves obeyed the Forever King! They fell to their knees and cheered, *"You really are the Son of God!"*

But get ready, because our next big adventure is the most jaw-dropping miracle yet! Jesus is about to face the scariest thing of all. One of His dear friends gets very sick and dies. He is buried inside a dark tomb for four whole days. Is the Forever King more powerful than death itself? We will see!

Questions to Ask:

1. What does this story teach us about Jesus? *It teaches us that Jesus has amazing power over nature and creation. He can turn a tiny lunch into a giant feast, walk on water, and make wild storms completely stop with just His words.*
2. What did Jesus use to feed the giant crowd of over 5,000 hungry people? *He used a little boy's lunch--five small loaves of bread and two little fish.*
3. How many big baskets of leftovers were collected after everyone ate until they were full? *There were 12 big baskets of food left over.*
4. Why did Jesus quietly slip away to the mountains when the crowd wanted to make Him king? *The people only wanted a king to give them food and fight physical battles. They did not understand that Jesus really came to save their hearts from sin.*
5. Why did the disciples scream when they saw Jesus walking on the water? *They had never seen anyone walk on water before! They thought He was a ghost until Jesus told them not to be afraid.*
6. What did Jesus say to the wild wind and waves to make them stop crashing? *Jesus stood up and said, "Quiet! Be still!" and the water instantly became smooth as glass.*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear Jesus,

You can feed a crowd with just a little fish,
You give us everything we need and bless our daily dish.
You walk upon the stormy sea and tell the waves to stop,
Your power keeps us safe and sound from the bottom to the top.

Whenever I am scared at night or when the wild winds blow,
I will remember You are near and that You love me so.
Please keep my heart so full of faith and help me to be brave,
Thank You for being the Son of God, who came to love and save.

--Amen.

Four Days Late, but Just in Time

Jesus already proved He had total power over both sickness and sin, but now He confronts the most difficult problem of all. Jesus had a very dear friend named Lazarus. He lived with his two kind sisters, Mary and Martha. Lazarus became very sick. His worried sisters sent a messenger to find Jesus, saying, *"Please come! Your good friend is sick!"*

You might think Jesus ran to help right away, but He stayed where He was for two more days. He had a giant plan to show everyone His power! So, after a couple days, He told His disciples, *"Our friend Lazarus has died."*

When they arrived, the town was super sad. Lazarus had been buried inside a dark cave for four whole days. Martha ran out, crying, *"Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died!"* Jesus looked at her with kind eyes and said, *"Your brother will live again. I am the resurrection and the life! Do you believe this?"* Martha whispered, *"Yes, Lord!"*

Then Mary came running and fell at Jesus' feet, weeping. When Jesus saw His friends so sad, big tears rolled down His face, too. He cried right along with them because He loved them so much!

They walked to the tomb, which had a heavy stone rolled in front of it. Jesus commanded, *"Roll away the stone!"* Martha gasped, *"But Lord! He has been in there for four days! He will smell terrible!"* Jesus smiled, *"If you believe, you will see God's power."*

So, they rolled the heavy stone away. Jesus looked up to heaven, prayed, and then shouted with His loudest, most powerful king voice into the darkness: *"Lazarus, come out!"*

Suddenly, a shape started to move inside the dark cave! Walking right out into the bright sunshine was Lazarus! He was alive, healthy, and breathing! He looked a bit like a funny mummy because his hands and feet were wrapped up in white cloths. Jesus smiled and said, *"Unwrap him and let him go!"* What a happy day!

Many people cheered and believed in Jesus. But some pious and phony religious leaders got scared that everyone would follow the Forever King, so they started making a secret plan to stop Him. Well, get your flashlight, because in our next story, we will see Jesus has a conversation with one of those religious leaders during a sneaky night visit!

Questions to Ask:

1. What does this story teach us about Jesus? *It teaches us that Jesus is the Lord of life and has ultimate power over death! Even when a situation seems hopeless, Jesus can fix it because nothing is too hard for Him.*
2. Why did Jesus wait two extra days before going to help Lazarus? *Jesus had a giant, spectacular plan to show everyone His maximum power so that His helpers and friends would truly believe in Him.*
3. How long had Lazarus been buried inside the dark cave when Jesus arrived? *He had been dead and buried for four whole days.*
4. What did Jesus do when He saw Mary and her friends crying? *Big tears rolled down Jesus' face and He cried right along with them, showing just how much He loves His friends when they are sad.*
5. Why did Martha gasp and cover her nose when Jesus said to roll the stone away? *She was worried because Lazarus had been dead for four days, and she thought his body would smell terrible!*
6. *What did Lazarus look like when he walked out of the dark cave? He looked a bit like a mummy, with his hands, feet, and face still tightly wrapped in white burial cloths!*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear God,

I know that Jesus is Lord of life, and He is strong and brave,
You brought Your dear friend Lazarus right out of the dark grave.
You hear us when we cry to You, You feel our sadness too,
There is no problem in the world too big or hard for You.

When things seem dark and scary and I don't know what to do,
I will remember how much Jesus cares and put my trust in You.
Please fill my heart with hope and hold my hand each day,
Thank You for sending the Savior King who washes sins away.

-- Amen.

Born All Over Again!

Have you noticed that Jesus did a lot of mind-blowing miracles? He had fed thousands of people with one tiny lunch, walked on water, and even raised His friend Lazarus right out of a grave! Everyone was talking about His awesome power. But most of the phony religious leaders hated Him.

There was, however, one important leader named Nicodemus who wanted to know the truth about Jesus. Because the other leaders were angry and jealous of Him, he decided to sneak out in the dark of night to talk to Him in secret. He looked at Jesus and said, "*Teacher, we know God sent You. No one could do these amazing miracles without God!*"

Jesus looked back and told him a giant mystery: "*Unless a person is born again, they cannot see the kingdom of God.*" Nicodemus didn't understand this mystery at all. He looked at his wrinkled hands and asked, "*How can an old man like me become a tiny baby a second time?*"

Jesus smiled and explained that there are two ways to be born. First, we are born as little babies with physical bodies. But to enter God's kingdom, we need a spiritual birth in our hearts! This happens only when we trust in Jesus. Faith in Him cleanses the heart and makes us brand new. The spiritual new birth fulfills the old promise God gave to the prophet Jeremiah that He would write His rules inside our hearts.

To help Nicodemus better understand, Jesus reminded him of an old story about Moses. Long ago, dangerous snakes came into the camp. God told Moses to lift a shiny bronze snake up high on a tall pole. If anyone got bitten, all they had to do is believe what God said, look at that snake, and they would be healed!

Then Jesus told Nicodemus that He would also be lifted up high one day. Anyone who believes in Him and looks to Him will be reborn on the inside, enter into His spiritual kingdom, and live forever with God!

Nicodemus came to Jesus because he wanted to find the truth. But the phony proud leaders didn't care about the truth at all! Their hearts were so full of jealousy all they wanted was to destroy the Forever King, not follow Him.

Hold on tight! Our next adventure gets super intense! These sneaky leaders are about to try some mind-boggling trick questions to trap Jesus. They want to have Him arrested! We are going to see how the Forever King turns their tricks upside down and leaves them completely speechless!

Questions to Ask:

1. What does this story teach us about Jesus? *It teaches us that Jesus is the Forever King who changes us from the inside out through a brand-new spiritual birth, cleansing our hearts.*
2. Why did Nicodemus sneak out to visit Jesus at night? *He knew the other religious leaders were wanted to hurt Jesus, so he went in secret when it was dark to stay safe.*
3. Why was Nicodemus confused when Jesus said he had to be born again? *He was an old man, and he thought Jesus meant he had to shrink down and become a tiny baby in his mommy's tummy a second time!*
4. What are the two different ways to be born that Jesus talked about? *First, we are born physically as little babies with bodies we can see. Second, we are born spiritually on the inside when we trust and believe in Jesus.*
5. What did Moses lift up on a tall pole to save the people who were bitten by snakes? *He lifted up a shiny bronze snake. Anyone who looked at it and believed God's word was instantly healed!*
6. Who promised 600 years earlier that God would write His rules inside our hearts? The prophet Jeremiah long before Jesus came to fulfill it.

A Child's Prayer:

Dear Jesus,

You're the Forever King who makes my spirit new,
Please change my heart from the inside out and help me follow You.
Like Nicodemus in the night, I want to learn Your way,
And listen to the words You speak to guide me every day.

When I make wrong or messy choices, clean me from within,
Thank You for being the Savior sent to take away my sin.
I trust in You with all my heart, my King so strong and bright,
Please keep me safe and hold my hand all through the cozy night.

--Amen.

Caught in Their Own Trap

Wouldn't it be wonderful if all the religious leaders were like Nicodemus, who wanted to know the truth about Jesus? Sadly, they weren't. They were tired of Jesus teaching the truth. Every time He spoke, more people followed Him! So, they hatched a mean plan to trap Him. *"Let's ask Him a trick question,"* they whispered. *"No matter what He answers, it will get Him into big trouble!"*

They marched up to Jesus with fake smiles and said, *"Teacher, tell us, is it right to pay taxes to the Roman King, or not?"* Wow, what a dangerous trap! If Jesus said, *"Yes, pay the tax,"* the people would become angry because they hated the cruel Roman rulers. But if Jesus said, *"No, don't pay,"* the Roman soldiers would arrest Him for breaking the law! The leaders smirked, thinking they had finally caught Him.

But Jesus saw right through their sneaky tricks. He looked straight in eye and said, *"Why are you trying to trap Me? Show me a coin."* One of the men handed Jesus a shiny silver coin. Jesus held it up high. *"Whose picture and name are stamped onto this coin?"* He asked.

The leaders blinked and answered, *"The Roman King's."* Then Jesus gave the smartest answer ever! He said, *"Give to the king what belongs to the king, and give to God what belongs to God."*

Their jaws dropped! They were completely shocked and silenced. Jesus had escaped their trap perfectly! He showed everyone that while we should obey the laws, our hearts and our worship belong completely to God. The hateful leaders had to turn around and walk away with nothing else left to say.

Later, Jesus warned the crowds, *"Watch out for those proud teachers! They love to wear long, fancy robes and pretend to pray big prayers just to look good. But inside, their hearts are full of selfishness."* Jesus wanted everyone to know that God isn't looking for fancy clothes or fake smiles. He wants a heart that is humble and true. No matter how many tricky questions the proud leaders tried to use, they could never outsmart Jesus.

Are you ready for our next adventure? Jesus is going to confront these proud, phony leaders who are bragging about how important they are. They thought that just being part of a special family tree meant they deserved to get into God's kingdom. But guess what? Jesus tells them the truth! He shows them that God doesn't care about proud family names. He cares about loving hearts that actually listen to Him and accept His Son as the promised Forever King!

Questions to Ask:

1. What does this story teach us about Jesus? *Jesus is incredibly wise and can see right through fake smiles. He is always one step ahead!*
2. Why did the angry religious leaders ask Jesus a tricky question about paying taxes? They wanted to get Him into big trouble.
3. Whose picture and name were stamped onto the shiny silver coin? *The Roman ruler, King Caesar.*
4. What was the smart answer Jesus gave to escape their trap? *He told them, "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God."*
5. What did Jesus warn the regular crowd to watch out for? *He told them to watch out for the proud teachers who wore fancy robes and made long prayers just to look good, while their hearts were actually full of greed.*
6. *According to Jesus, what is God really looking for instead of fancy clothes or matching rules? God is looking for a heart that is humble and true.*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear Jesus,

You are wise and smart, You see right through a fake,
You know the thoughts inside my mind and every choice I make.

I do not need a fancy robe or great big words to pray,
Because You love me as I am, each and every day.

The silver coins belong to kings, but I belong to You,
Please help me give my life to God with love that's real and true.

Keep me away from sneaky tricks and hearts that boast and pride,
And hold me safe throughout the night, right by Your loving side.

Amen.

Rocks and Rules

Wow, things are getting super tricky between Jesus and the grumpy, rule-following leaders called Pharisees! Jesus looked them right in the eyes and said, *"If you listen to My words, you will know what is really true. And the truth will make you free, just like a bird flying in the sky!"*

The proud religious leaders puffed out their chests and said, *"Free? What are you talking about? We belong to Abraham's big, famous family! We are nobody's slaves!"* They thought they were safe just because of their family name. But Jesus saw right into their hearts. He said, *"Anyone who does bad things is a slave to sin."* A famous family name cannot make the heart clean. The leaders got very angry and shouted, *"Abraham is our father!"* Jesus shook His head. *"If you were truly like Abraham, you would love Me. Instead, you want to kill Me!"* Then Jesus told them something that made their jaws drop: *"Your father Abraham was happy because he knew I was coming!"*

They began to laugh. *"What? You aren't even fifty years old! How could you know Abraham? He lived a long, long time ago!"* Jesus stood up tall and said, *"Before Abraham was born, I AM."* Wow! I AM is the holy name God used when He spoke to Moses. Jesus was really telling them that He is, indeed, the true God! The leaders became so furious that they picked up big rocks to throw at Him. But Jesus quietly slipped away safely.

Jesus then explained that following strict rules, washing the outside of pots, or wearing fancy clothes doesn't make a person good. Bad thoughts and bad choices are what make the heart dirty. To help them understand, Jesus told a story about two men who went to pray. The proud religious man stood up tall in the church and bragged, *"Look at me, God! I am so perfect, I follow all the rules, and I am way better than everyone else!"*

He thought his fancy words and religious position made him special. But the other man was a quiet tax collector. He was so sad about the bad choices he was making that he couldn't even look up to heaven. He just beat his chest and whispered, *"God, please forgive me. I am so sorry I've sinned."*

Jesus said God loved the humble man's prayer because he was honest, but He turned away from the proud bragger. Keeping phony religious rules or belonging to special families cannot change a heart. Only Jesus can!

Get ready for our next big adventure, Jesus will not only show us just how serious He is about clean hearts, He is heading straight into the Temple in Jerusalem, where tempers are going to explode.

Questions to Ask:

1. What does this story teach us about Jesus? *It teaches us that Jesus is actually God, and He cares about what is on the inside of our hearts.*
2. Why were the people confused when Jesus said the truth would set them free? *They thought they were already free because they belonged to Abraham's famous family.*
3. What super special name did Jesus use that made the crowd pick up rocks to throw at Him? *I AM, the special name that God used for Himself when speaking to Moses at the burning bush!*
4. Why did Jesus say rules like washing pots or wearing fancy clothes cannot save us? *Because external rules cannot change a person's heart. Only Jesus can clean our hearts from the bad thoughts and choices inside.*
5. What did the proud Pharisee do when he went to the temple to pray? *He stood up tall and bragged out loud to God about how much better he was than everyone else.*
6. Why did God forgive the tax collector instead of the proud Pharisee? *He was humble, knew he had made mistakes, and he asked God for mercy.*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear Jesus,

Help my heart be humble, honest, clean, and true,
I do not need to brag or boast to show my love for You.
You look inside my heart, and You see me every day,
You forgive me when I'm sorry and wash away my sins.

Please keep me far from pride and rules that make me act unkind,
And fill my life with mercy and a gentle, loving mind.
Thank You for being the Savior King who guides me through the night,
And keeps me safe until the morning wakes up warm and bright.

--Amen.

A Fig Tree and Temple Thieves

If you thought things were heating up between Jesus and the proud religious leaders, wait until you hear what happens next! One day, Jesus was walking with His disciples and felt very hungry. He saw a fig tree covered in bright green leaves. Usually, lots of leaves mean lots of sweet fruit to eat! He walked up looking for a snack, but guess what? There was nothing on it. The tree was a total phony! It looked beautiful on the outside, but it had no fruit! Jesus looked at it and said, "*May no one ever eat fruit from you again!*"

Then, Jesus marched right into God's holy Temple. It was supposed to be a quiet, beautiful place for prayer, but when Jesus walked inside, His jaw dropped. It looked like a noisy, messy zoo! Greedy bosses were shouting, selling animals inside the doors, and cheating people out of their money.

Jesus was filled with holy anger because they were ruining His Father's house. He made a whip from ropes and chased the noisy animals and greedy bosses right out of the door! Jesus flipped over the heavy wooden tables, sending shiny silver coins rolling across the floor! He knocked over benches and shouted, "*My house will be a place of prayer, but you have turned it into a hiding place for thieves!*"

The proud religious leaders were absolutely furious. They marched up to Him and demanded, "*Prove you have the right to do this!*" Jesus looked them right in the eyes and gave them a puzzling response: "*Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up again in three days!*" The leaders laughed, but Jesus wasn't talking about the big stone building. He was talking about His own body! He was giving them a clue about the future—that when the angry leaders killed Him, He would come back to life after three days!

The next morning, the disciples couldn't believe what they saw as they walked down the road. The fig tree was completely withered and dead, all the way down to the roots! "*Look, Master!*" they cried. Jesus smiled and explained that the empty tree was just like those phony leaders in the temple. On the outside, they looked fancy, but on the inside, their hearts were empty. One day, even their phony worship in stone temple would crumble away.

These religious leaders hated Jesus and wanted to kill Him. They were like scary wolves who didn't care about the people. Jesus is completely different from those angry, phony leaders. Grab your sleeping bag, because in the next story, we are going to spend the night outside with a Good Shepherd who protects and really cares for his sheep.

Questions to Ask:

1. What does this story teach us about Jesus? *Jesus has mighty authority over everything! He has the power to make trees wither with His words, and the holy courage to protect God's house from greedy phonies.*
2. Why was the big fig tree a total phony when Jesus looked for a snack? *It was covered in beautiful green leaves on the outside, but inside it was completely empty!*
3. What did the temple look like when Jesus walked inside? *It looked like a noisy, messy zoo! Greedy bosses were shouting, selling animals inside the doors, and cheating people out of their money.*
4. What did Jesus do to chase the greedy bosses out of His Father's house? *He made a whip out of ropes, chased the animals out, and flipped over the heavy tables, sending silver coins rolling all across the floor!*
5. What was the secret puzzle Jesus gave when the leaders asked for proof of His power? He said, *"Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up again in three days!"*
6. What was the *real* temple Jesus was talking about in His puzzle? *He was talking about His own body! He would come back to life three days later.*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear Jesus,

Help my heart to grow real fruit of love today,
I do not want to be a phony in the things I say.
You look inside and see the truth, beyond a pretty leaf,
You want a spirit full of faith, not matching rules and grief.

My heart is like a temple house where You can come and rest,
Please keep it free of selfish thoughts so I can give my best.
Thank You for Your three-day victory over death and grave,
You are the strong and mighty King who came to love and save.

-- Amen.

Fluffy Sheep and Dangerous Wolves

While the proud, phony leaders tried to trap everyone under a heavy load of strict rules, Jesus came to give us true freedom! He doesn't care about fancy clothing. He looks straight into our hearts and invites us to follow Him with simple love. To explain this, Jesus told a story about something children back then saw every day: sheep! He said that we are like little sheep, and He is our Good Shepherd.

Shepherds in those days loved their sheep very much. They didn't push the sheep from behind; instead, they walked out in front! They led their fluffy friends to bright green grass and quiet water. The sheep knew their shepherd so well that they recognized his special voice. When he called, they followed.

Finding grass meant shepherds had to walk far into the wild hills. Sleeping out there was dangerous! Hungry wolves and sneaky thieves hid in the dark. So, before the sun went down, the shepherd built a safe sheepfold. He piled up rocks to make a big circular wall with only one open gap for a door.

Jesus said, *"I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."* When night falls, the shepherd doesn't use a wooden door. He does something amazing. He lays his own body right across the open gap and goes to sleep! The shepherd *is* the door. If a wolf wants to hurt the sheep, it has to go through the brave shepherd first!

Jesus looked at the crowd and clearly said, *"I am the door to the sheep. Anyone who enters through Me will be saved."* Jesus is our only door to safety, forgiveness, and the kingdom of heaven. In fact, He said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."* There is no other way to enter God's kingdom!

Remember Noah's giant ark? There was only *one* door on that big boat. Because Noah believed God, his family walked through that one door and stayed perfectly safe from the big storm. Just as Noah's ark was our only means of escape from the flood, Jesus is our only door into God's family.

Jesus loves you so much, and He will always take care of you just like a good shepherd guards his little sheep! All we have to do is listen to the Good Shepherd's voice, trust Him, and walk right into His loving arms!

Now hold on tight, because our next story is about the kind, unusual gift given to Jesus. We will find out why this strange gift was a clue to how the Forever King would rescue the whole wide world from sin!

Questions to Ask:

1. What does this story teach us about Jesus? *Jesus is the Good Shepherd and the only door to safety. He guides us, protects us from danger, and loves us so much that He is willing to give up His life to keep us safe.*
2. Why do the fluffy sheep follow the shepherd so willingly? *Because the shepherd walks out in front of them, and they know his special voice.*
3. How did a shepherd make a safe home for his sheep out in the wild hills before nightfall? *He built a sheepfold by piling up heavy rocks and thorny branches to make a big circular wall with only one open gap to get inside.*
4. What amazing thing did the shepherd do at night to act like a real door? *He laid his own body right across the open gap in the wall so no wolves or thieves could get to the sheep without passing him first.*
5. What did Jesus say is the only way to go to God the Father? *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me."*
6. How many doors were on Noah's giant ark to keep his family safe from the big storm? *There was only one door, just like Jesus is our one and only door into the kingdom and to eternal life.*

A Child's Prayer:

Dear Jesus,

You are my Good Shepherd, gentle, brave, and strong,
You walk in front to guide my steps and keep me from the wrong.
I listen for Your loving voice, I know You know my name,
You watch over Your little lambs, each day and night the same.

You are the only door to life, the way, the truth, the light,
Your arms are like a circle wall that keeps me safe at night.
Thank You for laying down Your life to save me from the dark,
Please keep my heart as safe and sound as Noah in the ark.

--Amen.

A Gift Fitting for a King

In our last story, we saw Jesus as the Good Shepherd--the one who lays down His life for the sheep. In this one, we will follow Him as he goes to a special dinner with His friends a few days before the Passover.

When we enter the house, we see Lazarus, the man Jesus had brought back to life, eating at the table! His sister Martha was busy serving delicious food with a big smile. But their sister, Mary, was thinking about a special gift she wanted to give to Jesus.

She grabbed a beautiful white jar filled with very expensive perfume. It smelled like sweet flowers and cost a whole year's worth of money! Mary walked up to Jesus, broke open the jar, and poured the sweet-smelling oil all over His head and His feet. Then, she knelt down and wiped His feet with her own long hair. Suddenly, the whole house filled with a wonderful smell!

But guess what? One disciple named Judas frowned and grumbled angrily. He scoffed, "*What a waste! We could have sold that perfume for a giant pile of money!*" He didn't care about poor people; he kept the pouch and was just being greedy. The other disciples also started whispering, making Mary feel very sad. But Jesus stood up for her right away! He looked at the grumpy disciples and said, "*Leave her alone! She has done a beautiful thing for Me.*"

Jesus gave His friends a future clue. He told them that Mary was preparing His body for burial. Jesus knew that in just a few days, He would lay down His life to save the world. Mary's gift was a way of showing total love to her Savior King. Jesus smiled at Mary and said, "*Wherever the good news is told, people will always remember what you did today.*"

That's exactly what we are doing by telling this story now! The wonderful smell of Mary's perfume stayed on Jesus as He prepared for the most important week of His rescue mission. She gave Him her absolute best because she knew His love was the greatest treasure of all!

Get ready, because our next story takes us into a quiet upper room for a very special dinner called the Passover Supper. Jesus is going to gather His twelve best friends to share bread and drink from a cup. He gives them new clues about how He will save the world. But **uh-oh!** Danger is hiding right there at the table. One of His own disciples will slip out into the dark night to do something very mean and sneaky!

Questions to Ask:

1. What does this story teach us about giving our best to Jesus? *It teaches us that Jesus loves when we show Him how much we love Him, and the absolute best gift we can ever give Him is our whole heart!*
2. Who was sitting at the table eating dinner that Jesus had famously brought back to life? *His good friend, Lazarus!*
3. What did Mary pour all over Jesus' head and feet from her beautiful white stone jar? *Very expensive, sweet-smelling perfume called nard!*
4. Which helper became greedy and grumbled angrily, calling Mary's beautiful gift a total waste? *Judas Iscariot!*
5. What major future event did Jesus say Mary was preparing for His body? *For His burial after laying down His life to save the world!*
6. *What did the quiet dinner party turn into just a short time later as Jesus went to Jerusalem? A giant, shouting parade with people waving bright green palm branches!*

A Child's Prayer:

Thank You, Jesus, for being so good,
I want to love You just as I should.

Like Mary's perfume, sweet and rare,
I give You my love and my daily prayer.

Instead of keeping my treasures put away,
Help me to share them with others each day.

I want to give You my absolute best,
And trust in Your arms to find happy rest.

Thank You for loving me through and through,
My little heart belongs only to You!

--Amen!

The Forever King Betrayed

The angry leaders hated Jesus because He was a completely different kind of King than they wanted. They spent years trying to trap Him, but they didn't realize Jesus was using their mean choices to win the biggest battle against sin for the whole world!

Jesus rode into the big city of Jerusalem on a little donkey. A giant crowd cheered with joy! They laid down their coats and leafy palm branches on the road like a beautiful carpet. Everyone shouted, "*Hosanna!*" The people were cheering for an earthly king to fight the mean rulers, not knowing that Jesus came to rule in their hearts and save them from sin.

Soon, it was time for a special dinner called the Passover. As they ate in an upstairs room, Jesus broke bread and gave His disciples a cup. He explained that He would give up His life to save all people. Then, a helper named Judas, who took thirty shiny silver coins from the Chief Priests to betray Jesus, quietly left into the dark night.

Later, Jesus went to a quiet garden to pray. Suddenly, bright torches flashed! Judas arrived with an angry crowd carrying swords and clubs. When Judas kissed Jesus, they grabbed Jesus, and His scared disciples ran away.

The leaders took Jesus to a trial. Jesus had lived a perfect life and never did anything wrong, so they hired people to tell lies about Him. But when the High Priest asked, "*Are you the Son of God?*" Jesus answered bravely, "*I AM.*"

Next, they dragged Him to the Roman governor, Pilate. He told the crowd, "*I find nothing wrong with this man!*" But the angry religious leaders stirred up the crowd until everyone shouted, "*Crucify Jesus! Crucify Jesus!*" So, Pilate handed Him over to the guards to be crucified.

The guards marched the brave King away. They didn't understand that Jesus was the ultimate Forever King! He chose not to call down a giant army of angels to rescue Him. You see, He had a much bigger mission to finish.

Get you climbing boots ready! Our next story takes us to a hill outside the city, where Jesus will face the hardest part of His rescue mission. He will carry a heavy wooden cross and allow the soldiers to nail Him to it. Yes, it sounds like a very sad day, but it is actually the day the Forever King becomes the Lamb of God and makes the greatest sacrifice in history!

Questions to Ask:

1. What does this story teach us about Jesus as our King? *It teaches us that Jesus is a brave, loving King who always obeys His Father's plans to rescue our hearts from sin!*
2. What animal did Jesus ride on when He entered the big city of Jerusalem? *A little donkey!*
3. What did the happy crowds wave and lie down on the road for Jesus? *Their coats and leafy palm branches!*
4. Where did Jesus go to pray in the quiet dark before the guards found Him? *A garden called Gethsemane!*
5. What did Jesus stay completely quiet and silent when people told lies about Him? *Because He is strong and knew that dying on the cross was the only way to save the world!*

A Child's Prayer:

Thank You, Jesus, my Forever King,
For the joy and rescue that You bring!
You rode a donkey, meek and mild,
To save the heart of every child.

When people shouted words of hate,
You stood so strong inside the gate.
You stayed so quiet, brave, and still,
To follow Your dear Father's will.

Thank You for the cross You bore,
To open up salvation's door.
I love You, Lord, my shield and guide,
I'm glad You're always by my side!

Amen.

Heaven's Lamb Is Slain

The path to the cross had its share of sad and scary moments. It started when Judas betrayed Jesus, and His disciples ran away. Even though the religious leaders lied at His trial, the brave Forever King remained completely quiet. He knew this was all part of God's big rescue plan!

Before leading Him away, the soldiers treated Jesus harshly. They whipped Him and teased Him by placing a painful crown made of sharp thorns onto His head. But Jesus chose not to fight back. He stayed brave, taking all the hurt for the world's sins so we could be forgiven.

They led Jesus to a hill and nailed Him to a wooden cross. While Jesus hung there, mean people laughed and shouted, "*Save yourself!*" But Jesus stayed on the cross--on purpose. He never did a single wrong thing! Yet, He chose to suffer the punishment for our mistakes instead. While Jesus carried our bad choices, the sky turned completely dark in the middle of the day!

Right before He died, Jesus shouted with His loudest voice, "*It is finished!*" His rescue mission was totally complete. He closed His eyes and died, becoming the perfect Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world.

At that exact second, a giant miracle happened in God's Temple! Remember that thick, tall curtain that separated a holy God from sinful men? It suddenly ripped in two, from the top all the way to the bottom! God did this to show that the doorway to heaven is now wide open for everyone who places their trust in Him.

That evening, kind friends wrapped Jesus in clean cloth and laid Him inside a tomb cut into a rocky hill. Workers rolled a giant, heavy stone in front of the door. Soldiers stood watch outside because the Chief Priests were afraid Jesus' friends would steal the body and say He had risen from the dead!

The dark tomb was completely quiet. It looked like the story was over, and Jesus' friends were hiding, discouraged, and brokenhearted. It seemed that neither the disciples nor the pious religious leaders knew that you cannot trap the Forever King in a cave!

So, get ready. Our next story is the biggest, brightest, most spectacular, and celebrated event in the whole wide world! The Forever King is about to smash through death's door and win the ultimate victory over Satan, sin, and death forever and ever!

Questions to Ask:

1. What does this story teach us about Jesus as our King? *Jesus is incredibly brave and loves us so much that He chose to take the punishment for our mistakes so we can be close to God forever!*
2. What painful thing did the soldiers place on Jesus' head to tease Him? *A crown made of sharp thorns!*
3. What happened to the sky in the middle of the day while Jesus was on the cross? *It turned completely dark!*
4. What did Jesus shout out with His biggest voice right before He died? *"It is finished!"*
5. What giant miracle happened inside God's temple at the exact moment Jesus died? *The thick, tall curtain suddenly ripped in two from the top to the bottom!*
6. Why did the governor put guards outside the rocky tomb where Joseph and Nicodemus laid Jesus? *He was afraid Jesus' friends would steal the body and say He had risen from the dead!*

A Child's Prayer:

Thank You, Jesus, for Your giant love,
Sent down to save us from above.
You wore a painful crown of thorns,
On that very dark and sad Friday morn.

You stayed so quiet, brave, and strong,
To take the blame for all my wrong.
The sky grew dark, the curtain tore,
To open wide heaven's door!

Thank You that the grave could not stay closed,
And that my Savior, the Forever King, triumphantly rose.
Help me to follow Your good, true way,
And love You more and more every day.

--Amen!

Just Like the Old Stories Said!

Very early on Sunday morning, several kind women walked to the rocky tomb, feeling so sad. But when they arrived, they gasped! The giant, heavy stone was already rolled away! They stepped inside, but Jesus' body was gone. Suddenly, *flash!* Two angels in clothes as bright as lightning stood right beside them. The angels smiled and said, "*Why do you seek the living among the dead? Jesus is not here; He has risen, just like He promised!*" The women ran back and told the disciples the amazing news, but they didn't believe them.

Later that day, two disciples were walking along a long, dusty road to the village of Emmaus. They were talking sadly about how Jesus had died. Suddenly, Jesus came up and walked right next to them! But God kept them from recognizing Him. The friends sadly told Him all about the crucifixion.

Jesus looked at them and explained all the old promises that said the Savior would suffer, die, and then rise from the dead. When they sat down for dinner, Jesus took some bread, thanked God, and broke it. Instantly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him! But *boom*—Jesus vanished right out of their sight!

They ran all the way back to Jerusalem to tell the others. While everyone was talking, suddenly, Jesus appeared right in the middle of the room! "*Peace be with you,*" He said. The disciples jumped back, thinking He was a spooky ghost! Jesus laughed softly. "*Look at My hands and My feet. Ghosts don't have skin and bones.*" To prove He was real, He also ate a piece of yummy fish! He explained the Scriptures to them as he did with the two on the road to Emmaus. Then, He gave them a giant mission: "*Go tell all the nations that their sins can be forgiven in My name!*"

Forty days later, Jesus took the disciples up onto a big mountain. While they were talking, an amazing thing happened. Jesus started lifting right up off the ground! He flew up, up, up into the air until a big, fluffy cloud hid Him from their eyes. It took Him all the way back to His throne in heaven. The disciples stood there with their jaws wide open! Suddenly, two bright angels appeared and smiled. "*Don't worry!*" the angels said. "*This same Jesus will come back to earth one day in the exact same way!*"

His return to heaven completed the first part of His grand rescue mission. He had perfectly fulfilled every single clue and spectacular promise that God gave to Abraham, King David, and the old prophets. But this is not the end of the adventure! The Forever King left us with one last super-spectacular promise: He is coming back to earth one day to make everything new!

Questions to Ask:

1. What does this story teach us about God's power? *It teaches us that God is stronger than death itself!*
2. What did the kind women see when they arrived at the dark, rocky tomb early Sunday morning? *The giant, heavy stone was already rolled away, and the tomb was empty!*
3. What were the two followers doing when Jesus suddenly walked up next to them on the dusty road to Emmaus? *They were walking and talking sadly because they thought Jesus was gone forever!*
4. What did Jesus do at dinner that instantly opened the followers' eyes so they knew it was Him? *He took the bread, thanked God for it, and broke it into pieces!*
5. What did Jesus eat right in front of His scared disciples to prove He wasn't a spooky ghost? *A piece of yummy broiled fish! How did Jesus go back up to His throne in heaven forty days after coming back to life?*

A Child's Prayer:

Thank You, Jesus, my Forever King,
For the bright, happy morning surprise You bring!
The stone was rolled back and the tomb was bare,
Because You beat death and were no longer there.

Thank You for walking along the road,
To take away sadness and lift up our load.
You ate the good fish and You broke up the bread,
To show You were alive just like You had said!

You flew up, up, up past the clouds in the sky,
To sit on Your throne in Your kingdom on high.
Thank You for promising You will come back,
To keep my small heart on Your beautiful track.

Amen!

The Ending That Never Ends!

We have unrolled our giant scroll from the very beginning! We watched God turn on the light switch of creation, we cried when the sneaky snake brought the problem of sin, and we cheered when the Forever King Jesus won the biggest rescue battle and flew up into the clouds. But guess what? That is not the end of the story!

A helper named John had a special, glowing vision of the future. He saw that one day, Jesus would come back from the clouds! God will open His giant Book of Life. Anyone who loves and trusts Jesus will have their name written inside in bright, sparkly letters, and they will get to live with God forever and ever in a brand-new heaven and earth! Let's look at how in this new world Jesus fixes everything that sin destroyed:

- **No More Night:** We won't need a sun or moon! God's own bright glory will light up the sky, and King Jesus will be our giant, glowing lamp!
- **A Crystal River:** Right through the middle of the beautiful golden city will flow a river of life, as clear as crystal, showing that everything is made perfectly good again.
- **No More Tears:** There will be no more boo-hoos, no more scraped knees, and no more dying. God will gently wipe every single tear from our eyes! The old, sad things will be gone forever.
- **Wide Open Gates:** Remember when the garden door was blocked by an angel with a flaming sword? In the new city, nothing bad will ever enter, so the giant gates will never, ever be closed! We can walk and talk with God whenever we want.

Since we have this amazing hope, we can jump for joy today! We can love Jesus with our whole hearts, make good choices, and be super busy sharing this wonderful news with all of our friends. Get ready, keep your eyes on the skies, because our Forever King is coming back!

He says, *Look! I am coming back very soon. I am the God who started everything, and I am the God who will make everything perfect at the finish line! So, get ready, because I am coming back soon.*"

Amen! We love You, King Jesus,
Please come back soon!

Questions to Ask:

1. What does this story teach us about God's plan for the future? *It teaches us that God has a wonderful, brand-new world planned for us where everything sad will be gone, and we get to live with Him forever!*
2. What is the name of the special, golden book where God writes the names of everyone who trusts Jesus? *The Book of Life!*
3. Why won't we need a sun or a moon to light up the brand-new heaven and earth? *Because God's own bright glory will light up the sky, and King Jesus will be our lamp!*
4. What beautiful thing will grow on both sides of the crystal-clear river of life? *The Tree of Life, bursting with twelve kinds of yummy fruits every month!*
5. What will God do to make sure there are no more boo-hoos or sad days in our forever home? *He will gently wipe every single tear from our eyes!*
6. What did Jesus promise when He called Himself the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last? *He promised, "Look! I am coming back very soon!"*

A Child's Prayer:

Thank You, God, for Your wonderful book,
And the beautiful future where we get to look!
Thank You for writing my name in Your hand,
And making a place in Your brand-new land.

I'm glad there will be no more darkness or night,
Because Your big glory will be our bright light.
No more boo-hoos and no more sad tears,
No more scraped knees and no more scary fears!

Help me share this great news with my friends,
About the beautiful story that never, ever ends.
I'll keep my eyes looking up at the sky,
Waiting for King Jesus to come riding on high!

--Amen!