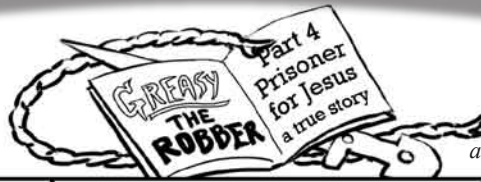


# Treasures of the Kingdom

Casting Up a Highway for the Children of This Generation



The robbers are put in jail after confessing their wrongs. How can Pasha serve Jesus as a prisoner?

This testimony from Russia is also available online in the complete text and audio at [library.timelesstruths.org](http://library.timelesstruths.org)

**Top Left Panel:** A year passed before a public trial was held. A judge says, "Consider their honesty and have mercy!" and "Your sentence is ten years of hard labor." The prisoners respond, "I only wish that I had not done wrong to others." and "I praise God for a new life to live for Him!"

**Top Right Panel:** Pasha and Yuri were sent to eastern Siberia. At every transfer prison they shared their testimony... Yuri says, "It is wonderful... God will forgive even me?"

**Middle Left Panel:** One desire still filled Pasha's mind. Pasha thinks, "There's been no word from home or trace of my family. I wish I could tell Shura about my new life!"

**Middle Center Panel:** In the labor camp Pasha and Yuri shared the Gospel with the other prisoners. Many listened eagerly... Yuri says, "You are happy and peaceful. I want to live for Jesus, too!"

**Middle Right Panel:** Several years passed. One day an announcement rang through the camp. "We're released?! Free to go home?" A man replies, "God bless and keep you, dear brothers!"

**Bottom Left Panel:** On the long trip home everyone was interested to hear their story. "What an amazing change!" "The power of the Gospel is real." "Praise God!" "I need God to change my life, too!"

**Bottom Center Panel:** "It is miserable to live in sin and selfishness. We thank God for making us free!" "God is truly faithful. He has a plan for your lives - trust Him in everything."

**Bottom Right Panel:** One afternoon in spring they arrived at a small railway town. "Reminds me of where I lost my family." "Are there any believers in town?"

# Tommy's Kitten

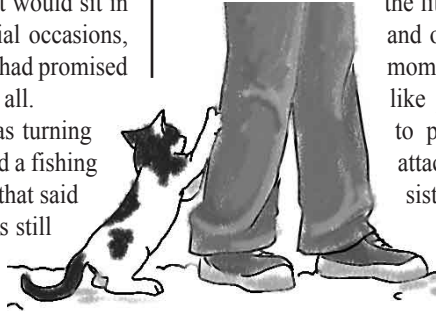


Tommy wanted a cat very much. His big brother had goats and his sisters had rabbits, but Tommy had always wanted a cat. Grandma Beth had a cat that sat in her lap and purred. Tommy loved the sound of purring and Grandma said that cats were easy to take care of. "Can't I have a cat?" Tommy asked his parents. "A little kitty won't eat much food and I will take good care of it." But Mom and Dad said, no, they had enough pets. "Hold the rabbits," Mom suggested. But the rabbits didn't purr, and Tommy didn't like how they scratched. Instead he sat in the swing and wished for a cat that would sit in his lap and purr. And maybe, on very special occasions, they would go on fishing trips together. Dad had promised to take him fishing – and cats like fish, after all.

Then Tommy's birthday came. He was turning seven and there were balloons and games and a fishing pole. But best of all was the box on his bed that said "Love me and I will love you." Tommy was still reading the message when the box began to wobble and a little voice inside said, "mew!" In the next moment the lid was off and Tommy was staring at a little black and white kitten with golden eyes. "Oh, a kitty! Is it for me?" He cried. And at that moment the kitty jumped up and scrambled onto the bed. "Yes," said Mom with a laugh. "How about setting up a box for her on the porch?" Tommy reached out his hand and the kitty sniffed it. The next moment she

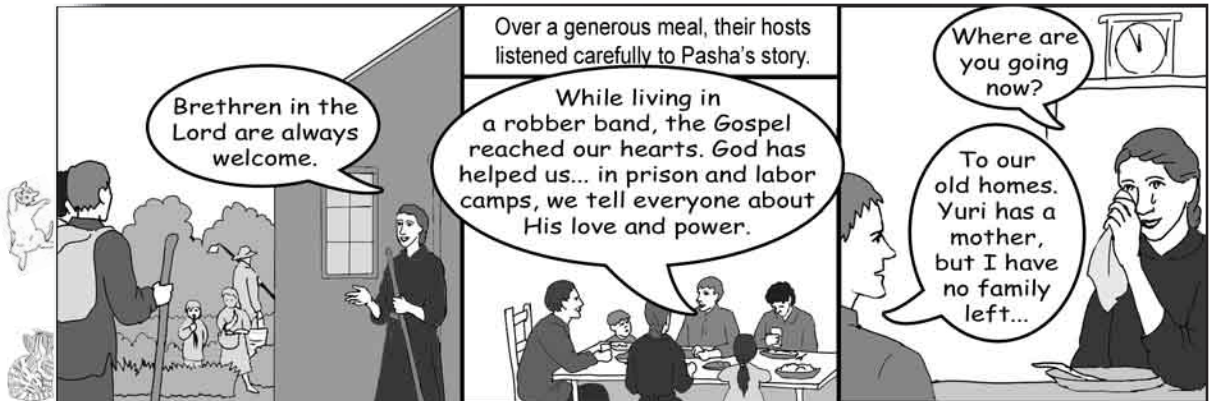
had tumbled to the floor and was batting at the fishing line. "She's ready to join you on a fishing trip, I guess," Dad chuckled. "But first let's show her the back yard." Tommy carried her to the porch and sat down to watch her explore her new home. "I didn't know kittens were so playful," Tommy told Mom when he came in. "My kitty chases everything – even her own tail!" He laughed. "I think I'll call her 'Chase.'"

Tommy soon found out that the kitty liked her name quite well. Except it wasn't always so fun. "Mom," he complained the next afternoon. "Chase is being very naughty. Every time I want to hold her, she runs away and hides. And when I tried to pick her up, she scratched me." Tommy looked at the red marks on his arm and sighed. "I wish she would curl up and purr like Grandma Beth's cat." "She's only little and full of energy," Mom encouraged him. "Be patient and make friends with her."



All that week Tommy tried to be patient with her, but the little kitten didn't like to sit still and only wanted to be petted for a moment. In fact, she didn't seem to like people at all – unless it was to pounce on someone's feet or attack their legs. Soon Tommy's sisters were afraid to go in the back yard, and even his big brother began to complain. "You need to make that kitty behave!" he said. "I'd get a water bottle and spray her so she won't jump on people." He rubbed the back of his pant legs. "Her claws are sharp!"

Tommy sat on the porch steps and felt sad. Why wasn't Chase friendly? He watched as she scampered across the grass and crouched in some fallen leaves. Her



tail twitched and suddenly she leaped high in the air and came down rolling. Tommy had to smile. "You are cute, you silly little thing. If only you would curl up in my lap and purr. Come kitty, kitty!" But she only tipped her head at him and stared with her golden eyes. When he walked toward her, she jumped up and ran over to the tree. She was part way up the trunk when Tommy pulled her off. But instead of laying in his arms, the kitten bit his hand and sunk



her claws into his shirt. "Owe!" Tommy yelped, dropping her to the ground. "No, Chase! Stop it!" The tears came to his eyes as he watched her scamper away.

"Chase isn't nice at all," Tommy told Mom that evening. "I don't know how to make her friendly and no one likes her." Mom was quiet a moment. "I know Chase hasn't been the cat you wished for, but do you want to make her a good cat?" "How?" asked Tommy. "Chase is a wild and selfish kitten right now," Mom replied. "But if you get mad when she is naughty, she will be frightened of you. You must work to win her trust." Mom smiled. "If you take time to love her, she will learn to love you." Tommy thought about it as he went to sleep. How could he be Chase's friend when she was so naughty? If he squirted her with water, she would be frightened. But if he gave her something she liked, maybe... By the time he fell asleep, Tommy had an idea.

The next morning Tommy went outside with a cup of milk. Chase liked milk. He poured a little in a dish and called her name. No kitten appeared. Tommy walked

around the corner of the house and suddenly he felt claws in his pant legs. He was about ready to kick when he remembered what Mom had said. He stood very still and looked down at the kitten. When he moved his arm, she bounced off into the grass. "Come Chase," Tommy said quietly. "I have a treat for you." She turned her head. He wanted to pick her up, but instead he walked to the porch. Chase followed him. As soon as she saw the milk, she began drinking hungrily. Tommy stroked her fur slowly. She arched her back and waved her tail in the air. But when he tried to pick her up, Chase growled. "Silly cat. I'm not going to take your food," Tommy said, petting her again. Chase liked that. But how could he teach her that sitting on his lap was nice, too?

It was that very evening that Tommy's opportunity came. Except you would've thought it was a nightmare instead. As Tommy's family was finishing dinner, sudden loud barking came from the back yard.

"It's a big mean dog by the rabbit cages!" Tommy's sister called from the window. "Hurry, Dad! It might bite them!" Tommy hurried to follow Dad and his brother outside, but the next sound he heard almost made his hair stand up. A yowling scream followed by excited yelps could be only one thing. "My kitty!" Tommy yelled, as he dashed out the door. But Chase was nowhere to be seen. The big dog jumped over the fence when Dad yelled at it, but the yard was empty. Tommy hunted and called until it was too dark to see. "She got frightened and is hiding somewhere," Mom tried to comfort him. "Wait awhile and she'll probably come." But Tommy could only think of that terrible scream.





He knew his poor kitty needed him. "I'll sit on the porch with a flashlight and listen for her," he decided.

The yard was dark with shadowy shapes of bushes and trees, but Tommy only thought of Chase. Had the dog hurt her? Would she ever come back? "Here, kitty, kitty!" he called softly. Far away a dog barked.

Tommy shivered. But he wouldn't give up. "Chase, kitty. Here, kitty!" Then he heard it. A faint "mew" from out in the darkness. Tommy jumped up and called again. The "mew" was louder now, coming from the tree. "Here, Chase, kitty!" Tommy called, following her cries. As he slowly swung the flashlight back and forth in the tree branches, two golden eyes shown down at him. "Mew, mew!" cried Chase. It wasn't long before Dad was helping him set up a ladder and Tommy's hands were around his kitten. "Poor Chase! Are you scared?" Tommy said, lifting her gently.

She clung to his jacket as he brought her down, and he stroked her back. "I'm so glad you are alright!"

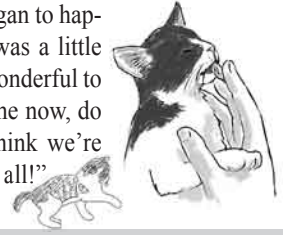
The next morning Chase was waiting for her milk. "Mew, mew!" she called, when she saw Tommy. He smiled at her. "Come, Chase," he said, patting his knee. He held the dish of milk in his lap and Chase climbed up. It hurt a little bit, but he didn't mind.



It was worth it to have his kitten on his lap. He softly stroked her back as she drank her milk.

When the dish was empty, Tommy brought out the treat he'd saved for last. A piece of smoked fish. Chase sniffed it all over and then bit off a corner. Soon the fish was gone and she licked Tommy's fingers again and again. "You sure liked that!" Tommy said. Her tongue felt scratchy, but it was so cute and pink that he smiled. "Some day soon we'll go fishing together." Chase closed her eyes and began pressing her little paws into his legs. Her claws felt prickly through his pants, but Tommy didn't complain. After all, she was only a little kitten. Instead he rubbed her head and whispered, "I love you, my own little kitty."

Then something wonderful began to happen. Chase began to purr. It was a little squeaky purr, but it sounded wonderful to Tommy's ears. "So you love me now, do you?" he laughed softly. "I think we're going to be good friends, after all!"



**Climb up in God's lap!** How do you do that? First, admit that you need Him. Instead of running off to do your own thing, sit down to read His words in the Bible and talk to Him. Tell God things that bother you and things that make you happy. Ask Him for help to obey. Thank Him for caring for you and loving you. That's how I start my day. When I think about His love and care for me, I just want to snuggle up and say "I trust You and want to obey You today. You are so good to me!" Don't you think our praises sound like purring to Jesus?



**Panel 1:** A group of people are gathered around a table. A woman is speaking. **Speech bubble:** "Dear Jesus, Thank You for bringing Uncle Pasha to us!"

**Panel 2:** A woman is sitting at a table, looking thoughtful. **Speech bubble:** "At breakfast the next day, the brother and sister talked about God's goodness to them. Once, when there was sickness around, a Christian lady took care of me. At fourteen, I gave my life to Jesus. God was surely taking care of you."

**Panel 3:** A woman is speaking to a man. **Speech bubble:** "Remember how you wanted to die on the train tracks, and I said that God would not forsake us?"

**Panel 4:** A man is speaking to a woman. **Speech bubble:** "And it's true! He never has."



# He First Loved Us

Jesus' Example:

Have you ever tried to make friends with a wild or shy animal—or a person that wasn't very friendly? Maybe, like Tommy, you tried to be kind and they didn't seem to care. Sometimes they even act worse and you wonder if it is worth it. But guess what? True love finds a way. It doesn't give up.

That is the wonderful story about Jesus. The Bible says, "We love Him, because He first loved us." (1 John 4:19) God created us to trust and love Him. What happens when we are selfish and naughty, like Tommy's kitten? We hurt others and separate ourselves from God. Without God's protection we will get into real trouble, because the devil is ready to destroy anyone he can catch—just like the big mean dog. But what can God do if we don't want to listen to Him and trust Him?

God loved us enough to make a way to bring us back to the safety of His arms. He sent Jesus to show us His love. Day by day, Jesus helped people and cared about their needs. He told them that God was good and His way was right. But many people didn't want to love God and obey Him, so they treated Jesus badly. Did He give up and stop loving them? No,

"while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8). Even though Jesus had never done wrong, He took the punishment of a criminal so that our sinful hearts could be changed. That's how much God loves us!

Do you want to know God's love for you? Or, like naughty little Chase, would you rather keep doing your own thing? *It doesn't really matter how I live*, you might think. Really? God made you and He cares a lot about what you do and think. Every day He watches you and holds out His hands to you. Are you scratching Him with your selfish words and running away from His voice? Maybe you are afraid to trust Him – or afraid of missing out on something fun. But do you think that the God who loves you wants to make your life miserable? Don't wait until you are in real trouble to call to Him! He wants to protect you and be your truest Friend. Will you let Him?

**Find the right words from the box to fill in the blanks:**

**Isaiah 59:2** "But your iniquities have \_\_\_\_\_ between \_\_\_\_\_ and your \_\_\_\_\_..."

**1 Peter 5:8** "Be sober, be \_\_\_\_\_; because your \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_, as a roaring lion, walketh about, \_\_\_\_\_ whom he may \_\_\_\_\_."

**Romans 5:8** "But God commendeth his \_\_\_\_\_ toward us, in that, while we were yet \_\_\_\_\_, Christ \_\_\_\_\_ for us."

**1John 4:19** "\_\_\_\_ love \_\_\_\_\_, because He \_\_\_\_\_ loved \_\_\_\_."

you  
God  
love  
Him  
We  
sinners  
vigilant  
devil  
devour  
separated  
first  
adversary  
seeking  
died  
us

Together they returned to their old home town. Everyone was glad to see them.

What? No alcohol to celebrate?

I drink Living water now, Uncle. Let me tell you what God has done!

Jesus has changed our hearts, so we want to please God in everything.

Going to church has never given me peace. Pray that I will know Him, too!

The power of the Gospel started dealing with people's hearts...

I've been selfish and unforgiving - I need God's help to live holy!

Just do what I tell you. That Pasha is crazy!



# Perfectly Clean

I need help washing dishes. Do you want to wash or rinse them? *I'll wash!* you say. Good. Let's soak all the utensils while you start on the cups. This scrubbie works well on the sticky parts. I'll be the inspector, so be sure to do your best!

Scrub, scrub, swish! It's fun to be a cleaning team, isn't it? *I'm catching up with you!* you say. Good job – but watch out! There is some food stuck on this bowl. You rub it quickly. *Now it's clean! That food can't sneak away from us!* That's right – everything is going to be perfectly clean when we are done.


Watch out on that spatula. It will be hard to clean because egg is stuck on it. *Got it!* you say. Not quite – look again. See that white part right there? *Scrub, scrub. All done.* Nope, this part is still sticky. I told you it was hard. Do you want me to do it? *I can clean it!* you say. Good. Try feeling it with your fingers – this end needs more scrubbing. One more inspection check. One more spot to scrub. At last – *it's perfectly clean!*

I'm glad that you were determined not to give up. Bigger problems and difficult jobs need more courage, don't they? *Like when my room is all messy,* you say. That's right. What about the times you have another chore to do, right when you feel like playing? Should you complain and argue, or just do it? *Do it,* you admit. *But sometimes it seems like I always have to work.* That's why we need to have a goal. It helps us keep on track and not lose hope. *What's a goal?* Well, it's like saying “we're going to get all the dishes perfectly clean” or “we can have a break when all the clothes are put away.” Instead of giving up when we feel tired or think of something else to do, we can conquer the problems and win!



## Scrub Out the Bad Attitude!

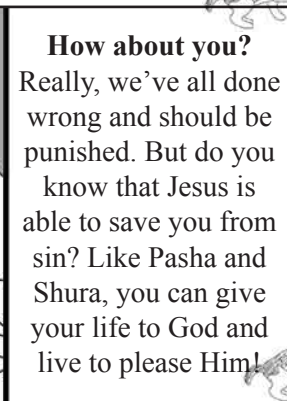
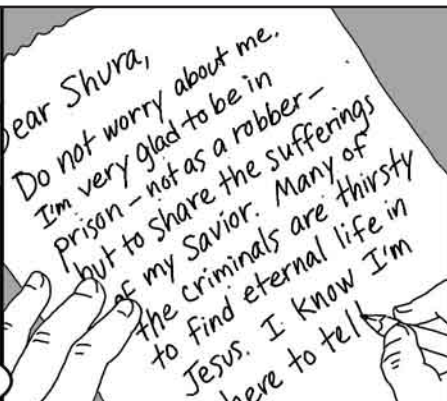
Can you help this child be cheerful and helpful by crossing off all the naughty words?



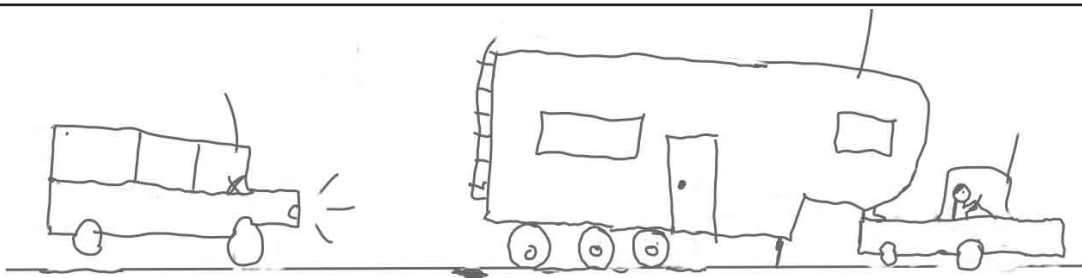
I ~~don't~~ like to be a helper. My parents hardly care what I do, so I never try to please them. I love pestering my family, and we don't get along well. I am not very happy.

Goals and determination are good for chores, but they are also important if we want to live for God. Do you know that Jesus has a goal for us? The Bible says that Jesus died to make us “without spot... holy, and without blemish.” (Ephesians 5:27) We all want our lives to be beautiful and happy, so we must let God inspect us! If you are stuck up with bits of selfishness and spotted with sins, like lies and hate, God knows how to make you perfectly clean. And He is determined to do it, if you'll let Him!

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Love  
Courage  
Gentleness  
Trust  
Kindness  
Faith



## Our Family Was Protected

We were in Wyoming traveling with our van and our truck and trailer. I was in the van with my brothers and my mom, following my daddy in the truck. All of a sudden Daddy jack-knifed with our trailer. I don't know how long our trailer is, but it is pretty long. It was swinging over all the freeway lanes. It was a very terrible stretch of road, full of ice and snow. In the distance I saw five semis coming toward Dad. Mom started to cry because she didn't know what was going to happen to him. I was wondering if Daddy would have to go to the hospital if he got hurt. I saw my older brother (he is 17) reach for his black coat, in case he needed to jump out and help Dad. But thankfully Daddy was able to pull over to the side of the road. He came walking through the snow to warm up in the van. "Are you okay?" I asked Daddy. "Yes, I am okay." I am thankful that no one got hurt. Here is a verse about how God takes care of us: "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about His people from henceforth even for ever." Psalm 125:2

God has good plans for us—even when we are in the middle of pain or trouble. These children found safety in danger, lessons from pain, and help to be kind. What about you?

*Buried Treasures*

I HOPE WE CAN PRINT YOUR STORY NEXT!

—by Hosanna,  
age 9, OR



Do you have an experience to tell? I will be sending an email notice\* before the next issue. I hope to hear from you!

\*email us if you aren't included

# LESSONS FROM BACK TROUBLE

Two or three years ago I had lots of problems. My back and stomach hurt, and it was kind of hard to

Patience  
Meekness  
Truth  
Goodness  
Peace  
Joy

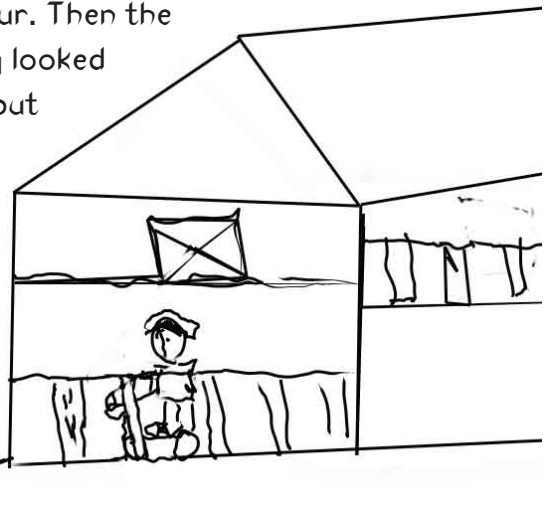
breath. We went to a couple doctors. The first time was kind of non-informative. Well, after a while, we figured out what was wrong. I had scoliosis. Scoliosis is a spinal issue where your spine is curved. Mine was very bad, and I had to wear a back brace to get my spine to straighten. I wear one until this day. A while ago I had an appointment. I was nervous. But you know what? My curve went down by about 1 degree on part of my spine, and 2 degrees on the other! The things I've learned is, one: I need to keep working at it, so I will get better. Two: God is always there.—Hannah, age 10, OH



## When I Broke My Thumb

One day I made a scooter ramp out of wood. It was really fun to make the ramp so I could ride up onto the porch. And Dad said not to ride my scooter down the ramp. But after dinner I went to put my scooter away, and I hit the ramp and flew off the porch and broke my thumb! That did not feel very good. I cried for an hour. Then the next day I went to the hospital and they looked at it and said it was broken. And they put a splint on my thumb. When we moved somewhere else, they put a brace on my thumb with a sling. Then I had to have a cast. I couldn't get in the water or swim, so I was very glad when it was off. I want to remember never to disobey my daddy again.

—by Ezra, age 7, OR





In my class at school there is a girl who has always been unfriendly to me. One day she kept telling me what I had to do and mustn't do, and threw paperballs at me. When I asked her to stop, she didn't listen to me.

During my devotions, before I went to sleep that night, I read in the Bible: "Do not let the evil

defeat you, defeat evil by doing good." (Romans 12:21). Then I prayed to Jesus to help me. On the next day I tried to be good by myself, but it didn't work. I was not able to be kind, and I was angry instead. In the evening I prayed again the same prayer: "Lord Jesus, help me to be kind to my classmate."

On the following day I was able to be kind to her, though she

still was unfriendly.

But in my heart I knew, "If God is for me, who can be against me?"

Now our fall holidays from school have ended, and I will see her again. I am a bit afraid that

she will still treat me unfairly and will continue to be unkind to me. Please pray that I won't quit being kind to her. I want her to see Jesus in me, and show her that the One who is in me is greater than the one who is in this world.

With the love of the Lord,  
Sophia, age 11, from Hamburg, Germany

## Never Stop Being Kind



Love  
Courage  
Gentleness  
Trust  
Kindness  
Faith

Patience  
Meekness  
Truth  
Goodness  
Peace  
Joy

*Do you know that God cares?*

*Whether our needs are big or small, God wants us to talk to Him and ask for His help. When good things happen, it pleases God that we are thankful. Let's remember to pray for each other!*

# A Place for Prayer

## REQUESTS

Please pray for my kid goats that they will be strong and healthy. Pray for me that I won't have bad dreams, but will think about good things.—AutumnGrace, age 11



I want to be a happy boy.—Thomas, age 3

Please pray that I won't have bad dreams and that God will protect my mom and dad.—Shannon, age 5



We are selling wood to get money so we can help Christian Aid Ministries. Please pray that more limbs will fall off the trees so we can cut them up and sell them.—Judah and Josiah, ages 5 & 3

## THANKSGIVING

Thank God for our paperwork going through so that we can go to Papua New Guinea sooner!  
—Judah, age 5

The Lord is faithful and keeps His promises. We have experienced several miracles. The oldest lady in the congregation here (at the Bible Center in Makindu) was healed from having swollen legs and other problems. Now she is sharing about God's goodness with other older people. Her mother, who is still alive, came and asked for prayer to be delivered from a demonic attack. The Lord delivered her, and we are so grateful. (See also [livingwaterbarrenland.blogspot.com](http://livingwaterbarrenland.blogspot.com))



Recently, a mother of several children lost her job and had nothing for her family to eat. Her young son prayed for her to get a job and told her to go out and search for it. She testified that she started out late in the day, but the first home she went to gave her a job and is now paying her daily. She came to church beaming with joy and gratitude to the Lord! (Look for the complete story in the next issue)—shared by brother Lawrence, a minister in Kenya



I am thankful that there is always a reason to rejoice in the Lord. Even when we have trials and troubles, we can be thankful that **God is able** to help us and use them for our **good**.

(Romans 8:28) When we trust God, we can look at our problems as an adventure—what will God do next? Let us remember that God wants to help us every time and there is **no reason** to complain or worry! Pray for me, and I will be praying for you.

—Miss Laura



# Where is Your God?

On a bookshelf? Up in heaven? When you think about God, you probably think that He is good and great and all-powerful. That's because you've been taught about the living God of the Bible. But where is He? Yes, everywhere. God isn't in one place, because He doesn't have a size or shape or gravity. That's because God is a Spirit. So how can you know Him or feel Him if you cannot see Him? Because He created you with a spirit to worship and love Him. He wants to be your God – in your heart.

God gives us a choice of what we will worship and obey. What fills your thoughts and seems most important to you? What controls your life? If you don't let the Almighty God of love rule your heart, then something else will. Your god might be money or friends. Or maybe you love horses or video games or movie stars the most. What's wrong with that? They cannot help you live right. You might think you are making your own choices and can do what you want, but without God in your heart you are becoming a slave. Only the living holy God is able to save you from sin and evil. He said, "Have no other gods before Me" because He knew that everything else would destroy you. Just like how worms ruin an apple – your life may look good on the outside, but the inside will be rotten.



When I was a child I believed in God and wanted to be good so I could live with Him in heaven one day. But something else was controlling my life. Something I couldn't get rid of or change, no matter how hard I tried. God seemed great and good – but usually far away. I didn't know the God that could make me truly happy and free. That is, until one day... But I'll let you read about that in *The Story of Mariann's Heart* (next page). That's my story.

<p><b>What is Controlling Your Life?</b></p> <p>In this puzzle, color all the sections black that show wrong attitudes or actions. Color all the sections red that show things that might be good, but shouldn't be your god (control your life). There will be a few sections left with letters in them. Can you figure out the message and fill in the two missing letters?</p>	
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## Chapter One: The Snake Inside

Mariann was like any other girl. She liked to play dress up and read books. When the other children wanted to play, Mariann always had plenty of ideas. Yes, most of the time she was a fun big sister to have around. But she had a snake problem.

It wasn't that Mariann was afraid of snakes. Sometimes she and her brother, Bob, would catch little black garter snakes and hold them by the back of their necks. But her problem snake couldn't be controlled that way. That was because it lived deep in her heart. It was an invisible snake called SIN.

All children are born with the egg of sin inside their heart, which soon hatches into a little sin snake. Mariann's snake was still quite small when she first found it. She didn't know it was bad to play with, until it told her to bite little brother, Bob. "That's very naughty!" Mommy said, and put some soap in her mouth. It tasted so horrible that Mariann decided that she'd better keep that little snake shut up. She didn't like getting in trouble.

But the snake inside didn't like to be shut up in the closet of her heart. Being a slippery thing, it hid under the couch. It was at bedtime when Daddy discovered it. "Come, Mariann, it's time for bed!" he said, but Mariann

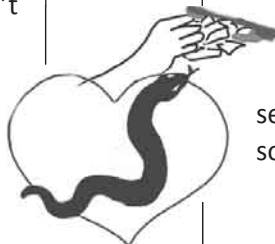
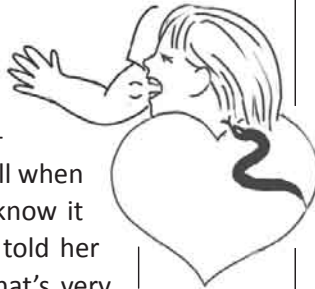
didn't listen. That snake had wrapped itself around her ankles and kept her from obeying! Daddy picked her up and shook it off. It seemed like a little naughty attitude to him, but he didn't know how fast it could grow.

Like all snakes, the snake in Mariann's heart did grow. It grew longer. It grew smarter. It grew stronger. By the time she was nine, it knew how to lie and argue and disobey very well. Of course, Mariann had learned that Mommy and Daddy didn't like what the snake did. So most of the time she kept the snake hidden. But when Mariann was in big trouble it would come out to rescue her. At least that is what Mariann thought.

Once, when she broke something in her grandpa's shed, the snake helped her shove all the pieces into a dark corner. Another time, when Mariann was in big trouble, the snake bit her and told her to tell a lie about it. "If you don't, I'll bite you again!" it hissed. Of course, Mariann told the lie as fast as she could. But when Daddy found out he was concerned. "Lying is wrong, Mariann. It hurts you and it hurts others," he said. "You must tell the truth!" Mariann was surprised to see tears in his eyes. Maybe it wasn't so safe to have the snake around.

Mariann worked harder than ever at being a good girl and not letting the snake out. Except when she was alone,

# The Story of Mariann's Heart



## Chapter 2: The Snake-Destroyer

or with a friend who wasn't afraid of sin snakes. Bertha had a snake that was bigger and blacker than Mariann's. But she wasn't afraid of it. When the girls played together, their snakes thought of some very bad things for them to say and do. It was like being dragged into deep, dark snake holes. At first Mariann's skin would prickle all over. She knew her parents wouldn't like it, if they knew. "We'll never tell," the girls promised each other.

Poor Mariann! She didn't know how dangerous the snake inside her heart had become. She thought that she could keep it hidden. But when she was alone it would come and coil around her mind, whispering evil imaginations. Sometimes the thoughts would be so interesting that Mariann would forget everything else, until a door slammed. "Oh, you must let go!" she would say, pushing it away. Usually the snake got mad and would bite her before it slithered off. The bite didn't hurt so much, but it began to poison Mariann's mind.

At last Mariann decided to lock the snake up. She found a large jar, called self-control, and stuffed the snake in when it was sleepy. She learned that it wasn't very active when she listened to Bible stories or obeyed her parents. "I'm done with you," she said, screwing on the lid. But the snake knew that Mariann was addicted to its poison. Sure enough, it wasn't long before she let it out again. "Just for a few minutes," she whispered. "But no biting!"



What was happening to Mariann? She thought she was in control of the sin snake, but really it was controlling her! Often when she tried to be good or nice, the sin-poison would give her bad feelings and thoughts. Slowly but surely it was taking her down a very dark path, full of trouble and misery. Mariann didn't see the danger. But I'm thankful that God did, and He had a plan to rescue her.

Of course, Mariann didn't want to be in trouble. "God wants us to live right," her parents told her. "Do you want to believe in Jesus and become a Christian?" Mariann thought about that. It was hard to keep the snake locked up so she could act like a good girl. Maybe if she said she believed in Jesus, the snake would leave her alone. She knew Jesus was always good and it never seemed like any sin snakes bothered Him.

So Mariann decided to "become a Christian" and be baptized. She decided not to play with Bertha and her snake anymore. A Christian wouldn't do that. Besides, those dark holes were creepy. And Mariann decided to read the Bible more. It had a lot of good things to say about God and Jesus. Mariann began to feel better about herself.

One thing still bothered Mariann, though. The snake was still there. "Don't worry," it whispered. "No one needs to know I'm here." But often, when she was alone, she would feel



the snake slithering up to coil around her mind. Would a Christian really have these bad thoughts? she wondered. Her heart was never really peaceful with a sin snake deep inside.

As Mariann grew older and learned more about God, she began to realize a wonderful thing. She learned that Jesus had come to destroy snakes inside people's hearts. Really, truly destroy them, not just keep them in a jar and try to control them. But Mariann was afraid to tell anyone her problems. "You don't want anyone to know about me," whispered the snake inside. "If you tell on me, you'll be sorry!" Mariann shuddered and didn't say a word. She was a captive in her own heart, and the snake knew it very well.

I'm glad to say that Someone else knew it, too. Jesus, the Snake-Destroyer Himself, had been standing outside Mariann's heart door. He had heard everything the snake inside had said. He knew all about every time it had made her lie or disobey, about the deep black holes it had dragged her into, and the poison in her mind. And Jesus loved Mariann. He had come to rescue her.

"Knock, knock!" Mariann heard the tapping at her heart as she lay in bed, and she was afraid. What if that Someone came in and saw the snake? "Knock, knock!" The knocking sounded louder. It must be important. "Mariann, I want to speak with you," a strong voice called. Was He stronger than the sin snake inside?

"Who is it?" Mariann asked. But she knew before He answered. It was Jesus.

"I have come to rescue you, Mariann." He sounded gentle, but did He really want to help her? "I know all about the sin snake in your heart," Jesus said. "I have come to destroy it. Will you let me in?" The snake began to hiss loudly, "You don't want anyone to know I'm here – remember, you are a good Christian girl!" Mariann felt her skin prickle. "Oh, I am afraid!" she cried, looking into its glittering eyes.

"Do you want to keep a snake in your heart?" Jesus' voice was quiet and calm. Mariann's heart throbbed with the great question. Did she want to keep hiding that horrid snake? She thought of all the black and evil things it had made her do. She was ashamed of them. Was it worse to have others know, or to keep the snake hidden? Mariann never felt safe anymore with the sin snake there. Wouldn't it be better if she let Jesus destroy it once and for all?

Mariann took a deep breath. "I want to get rid of the snake," she said, grasping the door handle. As she pulled it open, the snake inside coiled up to strike. There stood the Snake-Destroyer, Himself. How big and strong Jesus was! Mariann clasped His hand tightly as He stepped into her heart. The sin snake twisted into a knot and tried to hide its head. But it was no match for Jesus. With a mighty stomp of His heel, He crushed it.

(To be continued next issue)



# I Need God

"The LORD is my strength and my song, and is become my salvation." Psalm 118:14



*I'm as strong as a horse...I can run like the wind...I can sing like a bird...But I need God*



*I'm Dad's right hand man...I'm Mom's kitchen helper...I can take care of Baby...But still I need God*



*I share with my sister...I help out my brother...I pray for the neighbor...But inside I need God*



*I need God to obey...I need God to love...I need God to be patient...I need God in my heart*



Dear Reader,

Do you know the God that loves you? I hope this issue reminds you of His goodness and helps you understand more of what He wants to do in your life. Don't miss out!

**Do you have something to share or questions to ask?**

I'm glad to receive your letters and emails. You can also call by phone. Dial 503-769-7567 and ask for "Miss Laura."



For older ones who want to be challenged and encouraged in Christian living, *Foundation Truth* is published for youths and adults. Online issues and other literature are available at [timelesstruths.org](http://timelesstruths.org).



We are a God-fearing family that includes Rick and Krista Erickson, and their daughters still at home: Laura, Kara, and Amanda. The publishing of *Treasures of the Kingdom* is mainly done by Laura and Amanda, as we look to the Lord to provide content and direction.



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In the King's service,  
The Editors



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*How many kittens can you find?  
There are 100 including this one:*



**SEND TO:**