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FRIENDS FROM THE TALES OF BUTTERCUP GROVE

—FINGER PUPPETS—

1. CUT 2. WRAP 3. TAPE 4. PLAY

2



An Activity to Do with Your Child

Making Maracas

Supplies

White or brown rice
Empty plastic Easter eggs
Plastic spoons
Tape

Steps

1. Pour the rice into one half of the empty plastic Easter egg.
2. Close up the Easter egg.
3. Wrap a piece of tape around the egg to secure it.
4. Place the heads of two plastic spoons on either side of the egg.
5. Wrap tape around the spoon heads and egg, securing them together.
6. Tape the bottom of the spoon handles together.
7. Let your child shake it and make music!



An Activity to Do with Your Child

Ashley's Amazing Chocolate Chip Cookies

Ingredients

- 2¼ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 T. baking soda
- 1 cup butter, softened
- ¾ cup packed brown sugar
- ¼ cup white sugar
- 1 (3.4 ounce) package instant vanilla pudding mix
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 2 cups semisweet chocolate chips

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Sift together the flour and baking soda; set aside.
3. In a large bowl, cream together the butter, brown sugar, and white sugar.
4. Beat in the instant pudding mix until blended.
5. Stir in the eggs and vanilla.
6. Blend in the flour mixture.
7. Stir in the chocolate chips and nuts.
8. Drop cookies by rounded spoonfuls onto ungreased cookie sheets.
9. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes in the preheated oven. Edges should be golden brown.



6 days of creation

On the first day, God made light and dark.

On the second day, God made the sea and sky.

On the third day, God made the land and plants.

On the fourth day, God made the sun and moon.

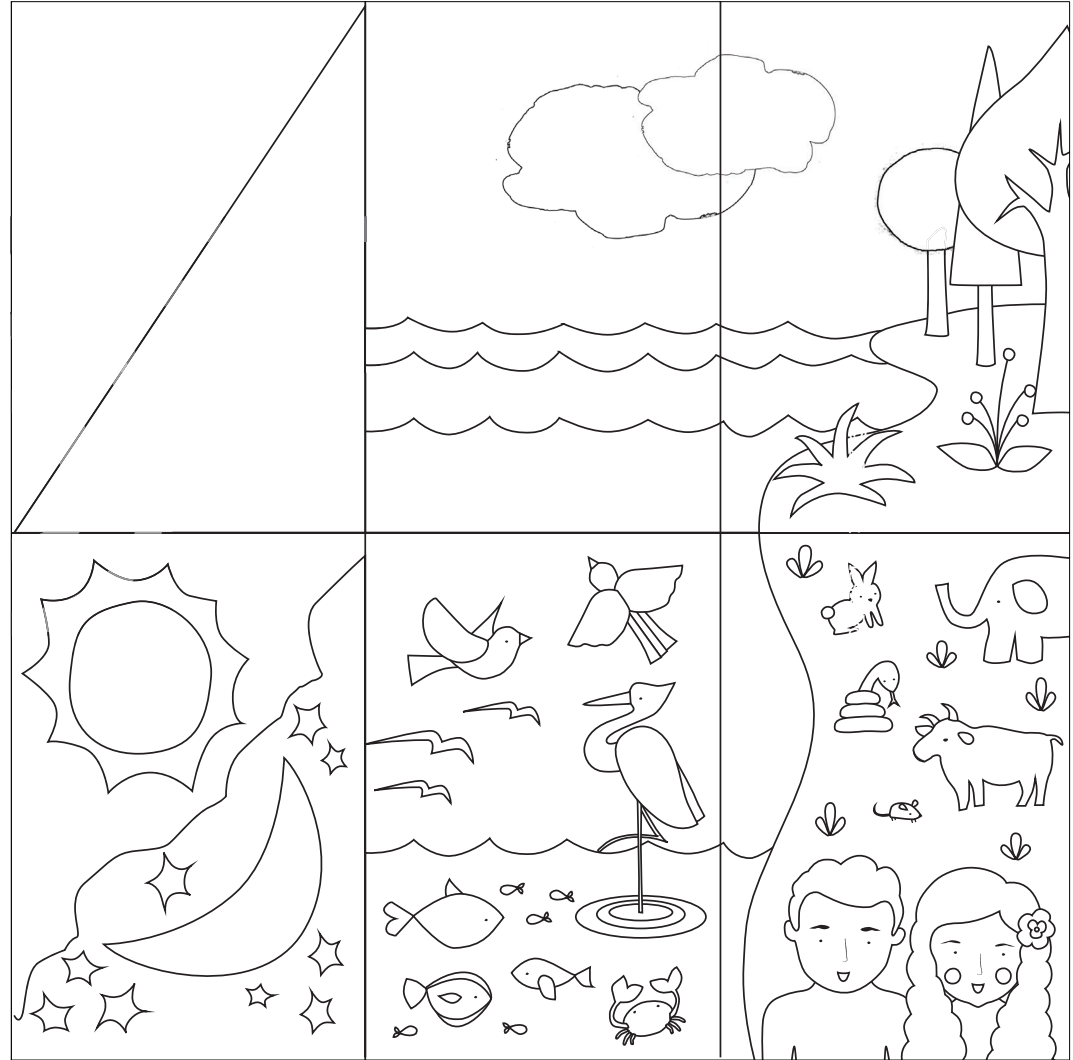
On the fifth day, God made the fish and birds.

On the sixth day, God made the animals and man.

“And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.”

Genesis 1:31-2:1

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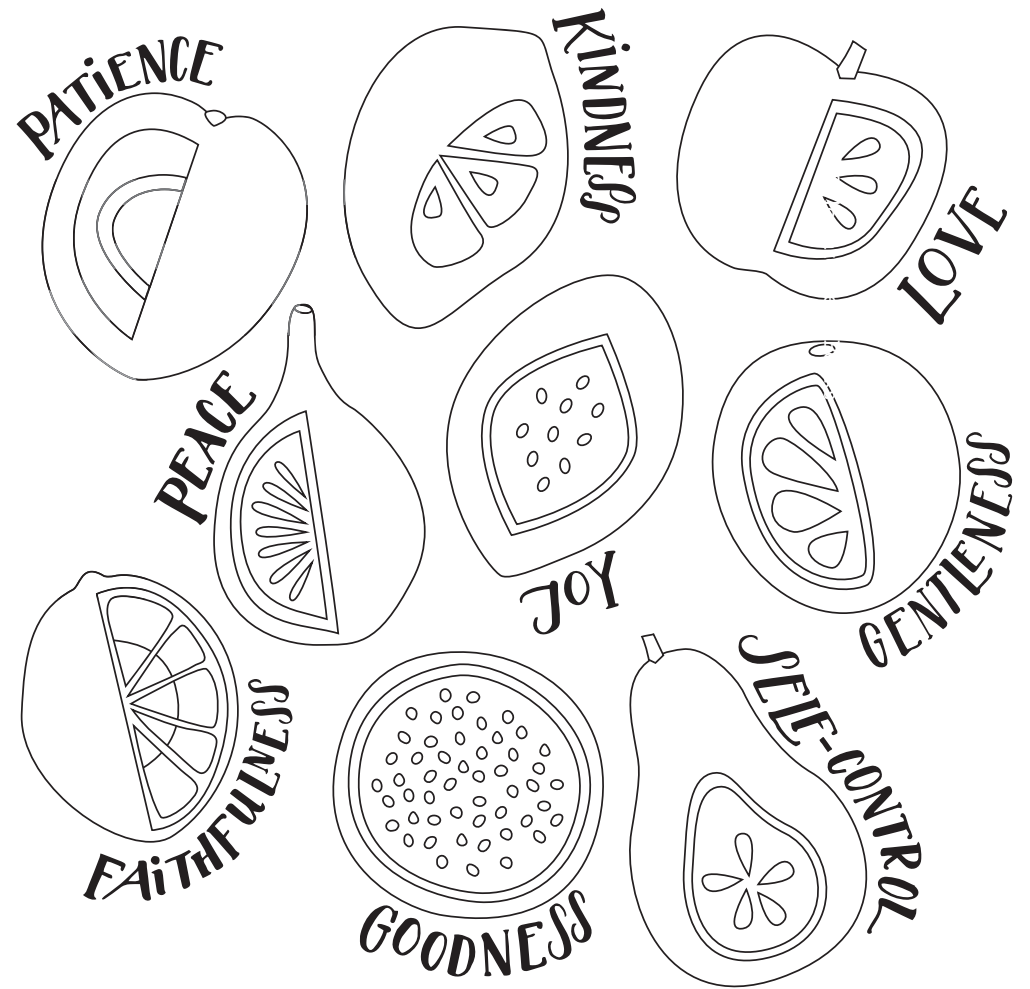


9 fruits of the Spirit

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

Galatians 5:22-23

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OUR STORY: FAMILY TREE DIY

Tell your family's story with this create-your-own family tree. Print it and then make it your own using one of these suggestions:

USE THUMBPRINTS:

Using an ink pad, put each family member's thumbprint on the tree, making its leaves.

DRAW YOUR OWN:

Have each member of your family draw a picture of themselves on the tree.

SIGN YOUR NAMES:

Get each family member to sign their name on the tree.

PASTE PHOTOS:

Cut out small photos of each family member and glue them on the tree.

...OR DO WHATEVER ELSE YOU CAN DREAM UP!

Enjoy this Family Tree DIY and don't forget to tell your child,

“WE CHOSE YOU.”





TELL YOUR FAMILY STORY

Use this activity as an opportunity to share your family's unique story with your children and make them feel loved, special, and chosen.

HERE ARE SOME DISCUSSION TOPICS TO GET YOU STARTED:

What do you remember about the day you first got your child (through birth, adoption, or foster care)?

Where did our family come from? If you know, tell your child where their ancestors originated from or research it together as a family.

What is one special trait about your child that no one else in your family shares?

Tell your child about a relative that made a special impact in your life.

What do see in your child that reminds you of yourself?
How is he/she different?

Share a special memory with your child of when you were their age.

Tell your child about your faith. How did you come to accept Jesus?



AUSTIN'S AWESOME FOOTBALL WORD SEARCH

AUSTIN	FLAG	PROUD	TIGERS
BRICE	HONEST	REFEREE	TONY
CARSON	HUDDLE	SIDELINES	TOUCHDOWN
FOOTBALL	PLAY FAIR	THROWING	WINNING

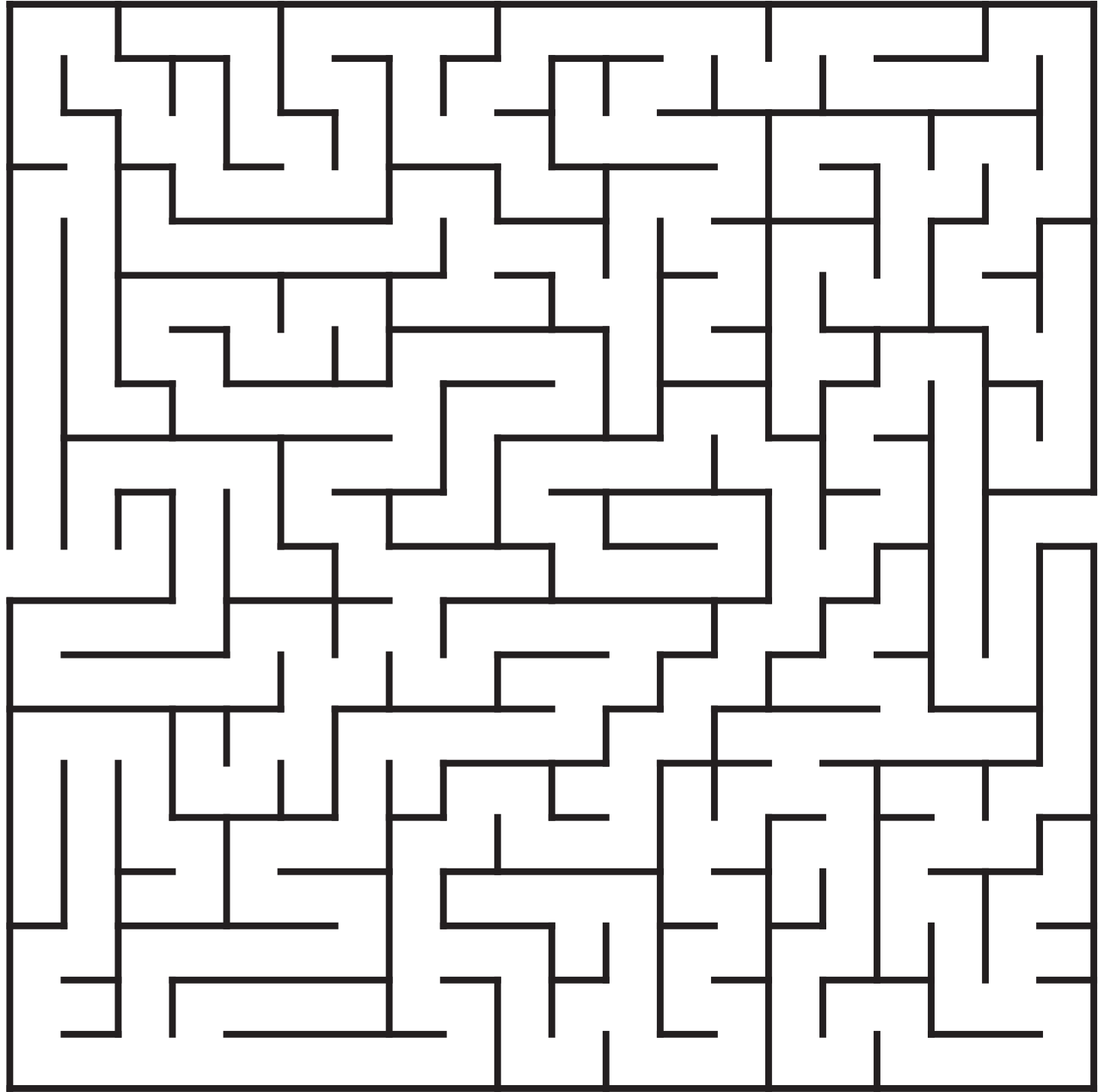
Y T C N P W J
 E F V B H D C R V W Y D F
 B A U H L W C B N O R W N I D Y
 I R M J O V A X T O U G H D O W N T
 O Y Z K R M S O G N N D T O Y O W V F D
 G R H U D D L E V X J X F Q N Q N I P B T O
 J X K E V O A U U E F U B W E T D E C W H H Q
 O F D W E A P J J P W Q Z B S Q M M U F C N L
 G O L C L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



MARIA'S SOCCER SKILL DRILL

Help Maria kick her ball all the way through this A-MAZE-ING obstacle course!

START HERE



FINISH HERE

CARSON'S FILL-IN-THE-BLANKS BASKETBALL CHALLENGE


TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF BASKETBALL AS IN YOU FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. IN A STANDARD GAME OF BASKETBALL, THERE ARE _____ PLAYERS ON EACH TEAM.
2. WHEN A PLAYER MISSES A SHOT OFF THE RIM OR BACKBOARD, EVERYONE TRIES TO CATCH THE BALL TO GET THE _____.
3. PROFESSIONALS IN THE US PLAY IN THE NBA WHICH STANDS FOR _____.
4. IN AN ACTUAL GAME, WHEN A PLAYER PASSES TO A TEAMMATE WHO IMMEDIATELY SCORES A BASKET, THE PLAYER WHO PASSED THE BALL EARNS AN _____.
5. WHEN A FOUL IS COMMITTED AGAINST A PLAYER WHO WAS TRYING TO SHOOT THE BALL, THE PLAYER WHO GOT FOULED GETS TO SHOOT _____.
6. A BASKETBALL TEAM IS MADE UP OF PLAYERS WHO PLAY ONE OF THESE THREE POSITIONS. THESE ARE: _____, _____, AND _____.
7. AT THE BEGINNING OF THE GAME, THE REFEREE THROWS THE BALL UP IN THE AIR BETWEEN A PLAYER FROM EACH TEAM WHO EACH JUMP TO GET IT. THIS IS CALLED THE _____.
8. PLAYERS WHO AREN'T CURRENTLY IN THE GAME WAIT ON THE _____ UNTIL THEIR COACH PUTS THEM IN.
9. WHEN YOU TAKE MORE THAN TWO STEPS WITHOUT DRIBBLING THE BASKETBALL, YOU HAVE COMMITTED A _____ VIOLATION.
10. WHEN A PLAYER JUMPS UP HIGH AND PUTS THE BALL DIRECTLY IN THE HOOP WITHOUT ACTUALLY SHOOTING IT, THIS IS CALLED A _____.
11. THE LOS ANGELES _____ AND THE BOSTON _____ ARE TWO PROFESSIONAL TEAMS WHO PLAY IN THE NBA.
12. A _____ IS WHEN A PLAYER GETS AT LEAST 10 POINTS, 10 REBOUNDS, AND 10 ASSISTS IN A GAME.
13. WHEN A PLAYER'S SHOT IS DEFLECTED OR KNOCKED OFF COURSE BY AN OPPOSING PLAYER, CAUSING THE BALL TO MISS THE BASKET, THIS IS CALLED A _____.
14. WHEN A PLAYER MAKES A SHOT RIGHT BEFORE THE GAME CLOCK HITS ZERO, IT IS OFTEN CALLED A _____.
15. A PLAYER SETS A _____ BY STANDING IN THE WAY OF AN OPPOSING PLAYER, SO A TEAMMATE CAN GO AROUND THEM.

Read Genesis 9:12-17


COLOR ME!

DOODLE OTHER RED ITEMS GOD HAS MADE




DOODLE ORANGE CREATED THINGS.

(A Fleet of Navels?)




YELLOW...




(SO APPEELING!)

GREEN...




BLUE...



(DON'T BE BLUE!)

INDIGO AND VIOLET...

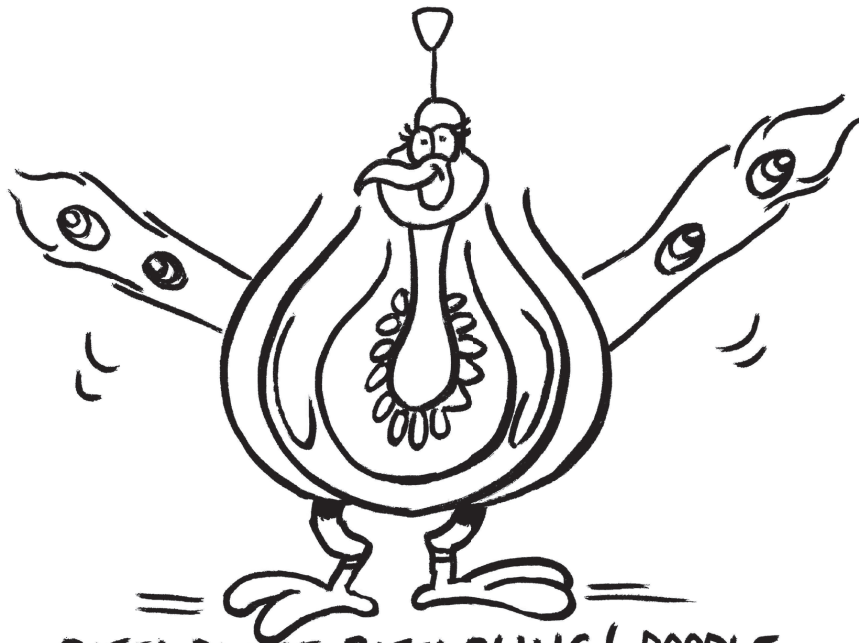


(NOT YOUR HAIR!)

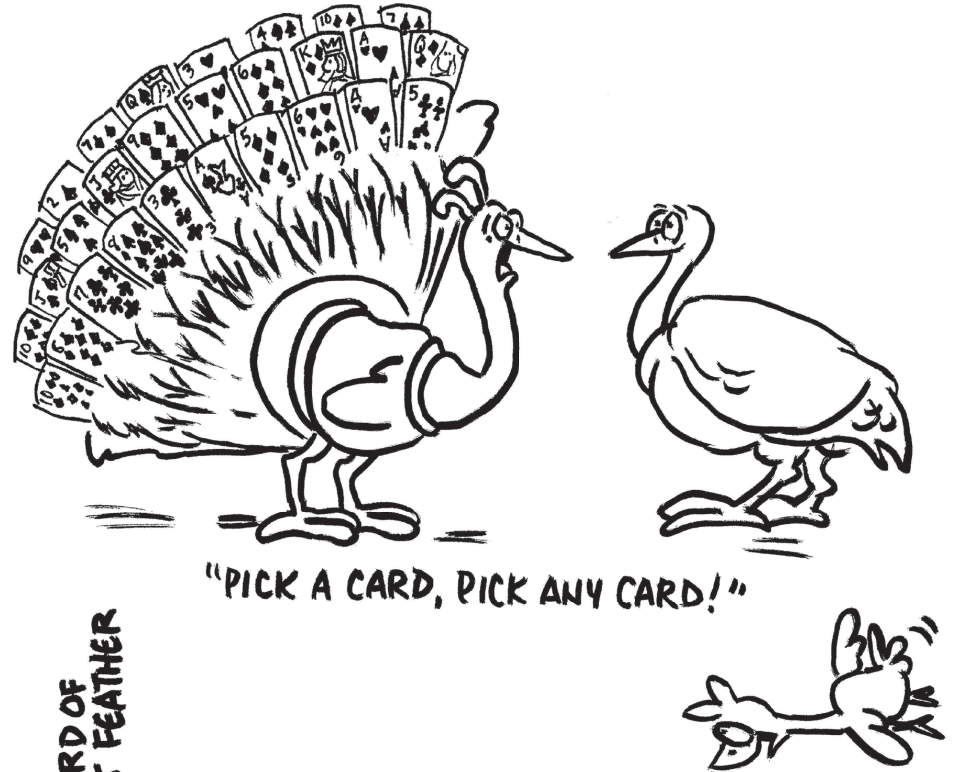
LIST FIVE FAVORITE OTHER COLORS GOD HAS MADE!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Read 1 Samuel 16:7

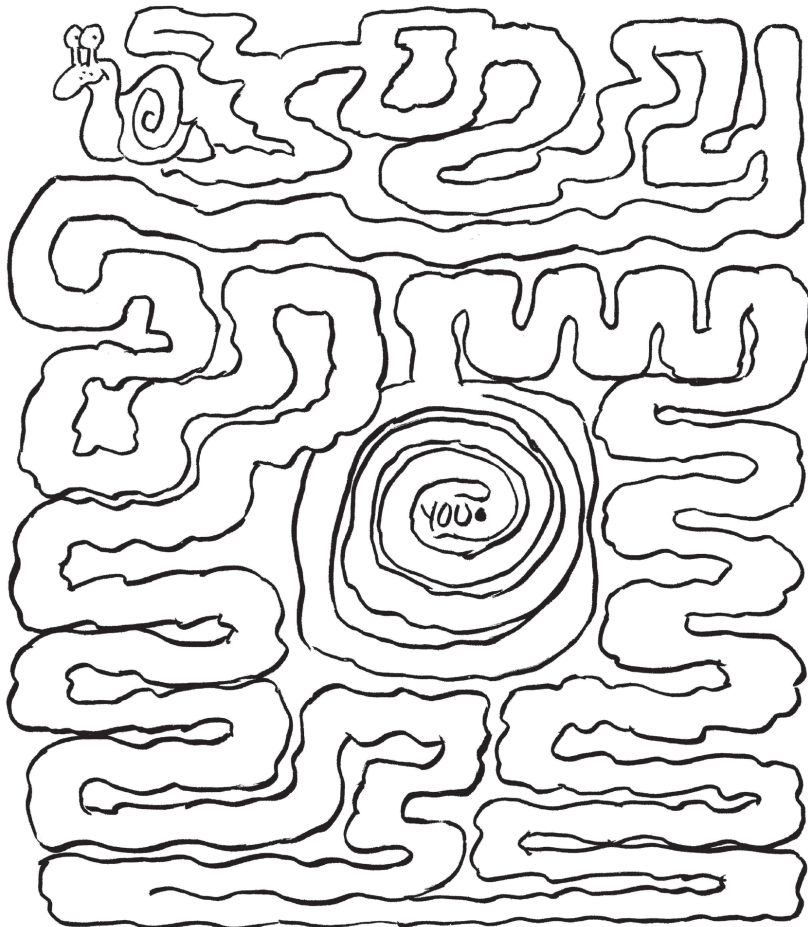


**BOTTA PLUME, BOTTA BLING! DOODLE
THE REST OF THE PEACOCK, FEATHERHEAD!**



**DESIGN A BIRD OF
A DIFFERENT FEATHER**

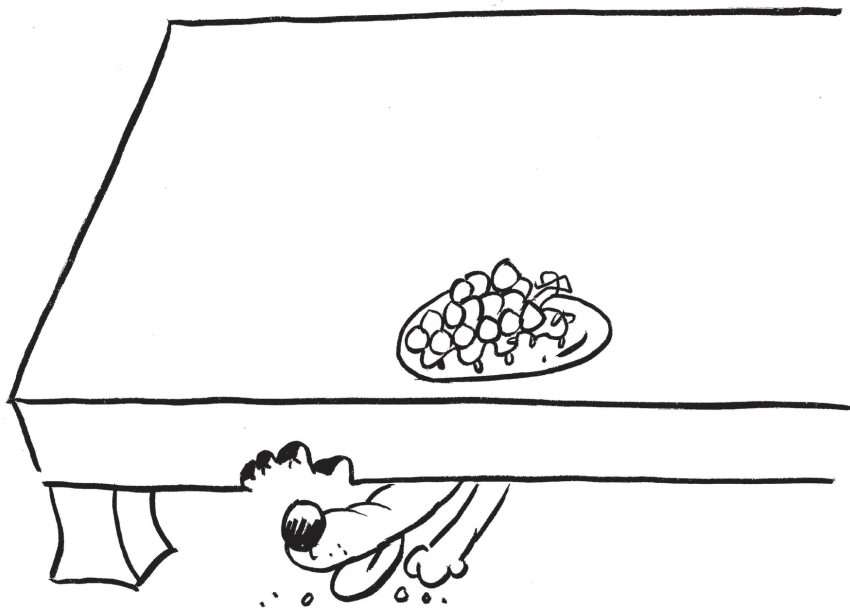
**BEAUTY, LIKE THAT OF THE PEACOCK, SHOWS GOD'S
COLORFUL SIDE. BUT ONE MUST ALWAYS BEWARE OF PRIDE.**



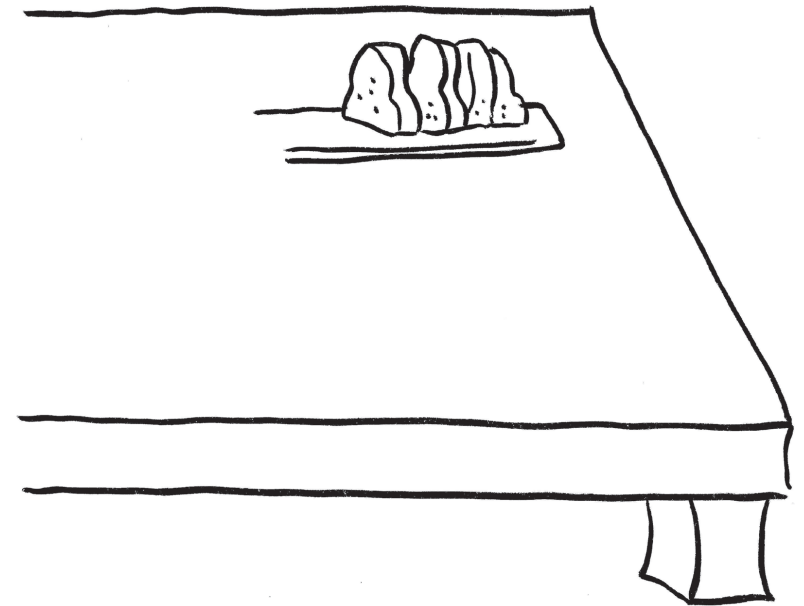
PICK UP YOUR PEN AND FOLLOW THE SNAIL TRAIL
STARTING AT "YOU!" DON'T SNOOZE TILL YOU REACH
THE WIZARD OF OOZE.



CAN YOU DES'GN AN AMAZING MAZE WITH
SLUG SLIME? OOZE IT OR LOSE IT!



FEAST YOUR EYES ON DELICIOUS DELIGHTS!
TO DOODLE FOOD'LL SHOW HOW GOOD GOD IS!



CAN YOU DOODLE A POODLE? OR OTHER
DOGS BEGGING FOR A BAGEL? (LIKE A
BEAGLE!)

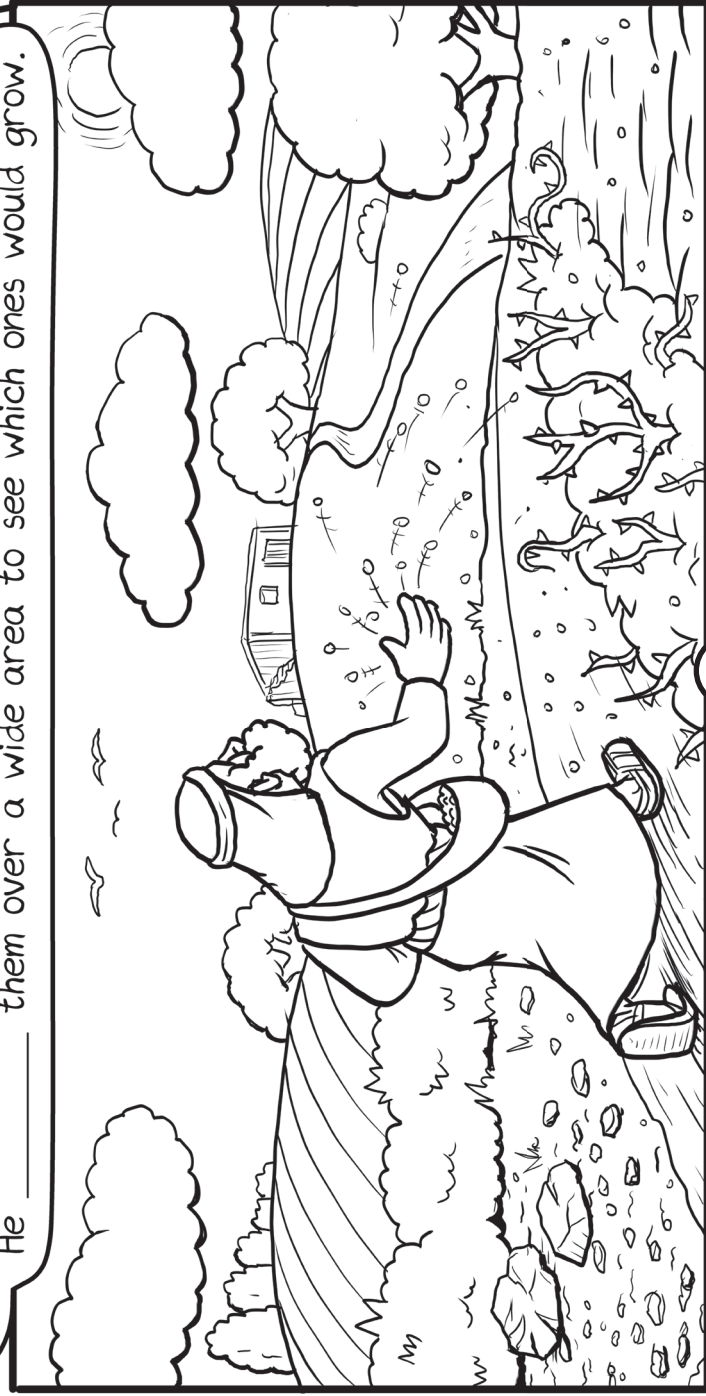
THE SOWER AND THE SEED

As a crowd gathered around Jesus, He told them a story.

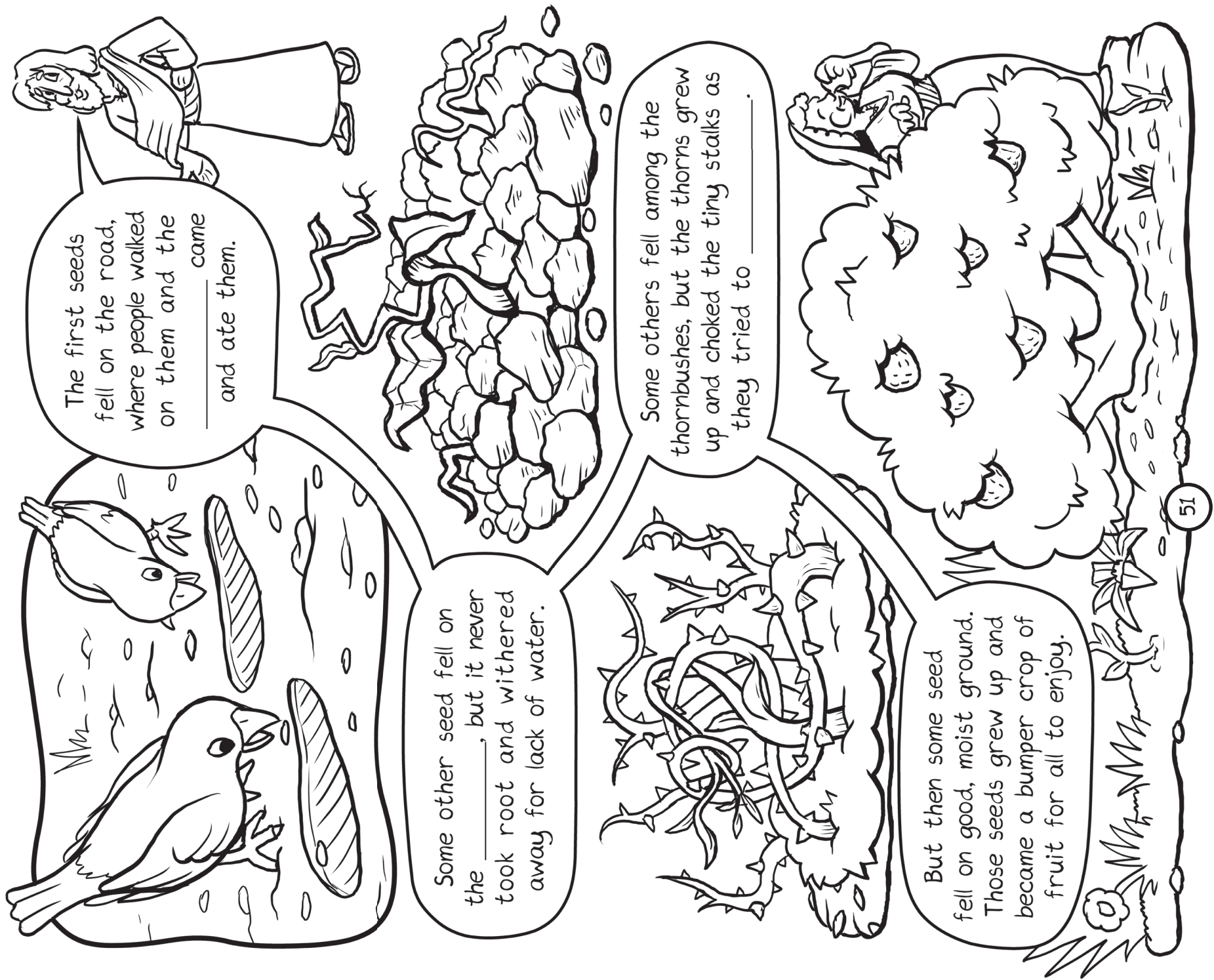


A farmer went out to the _____ to plant seeds.

He _____ them over a wide area to see which ones would grow.

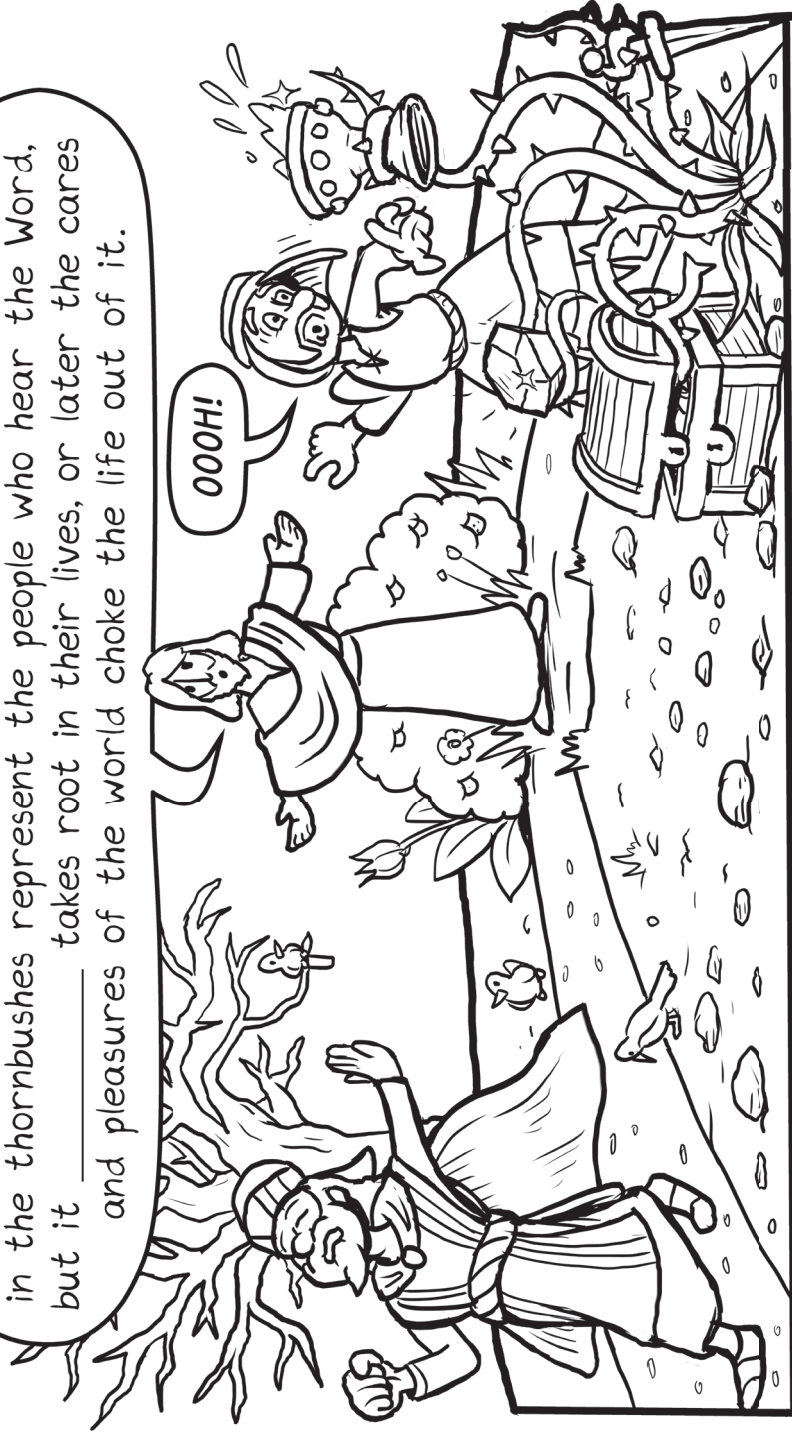


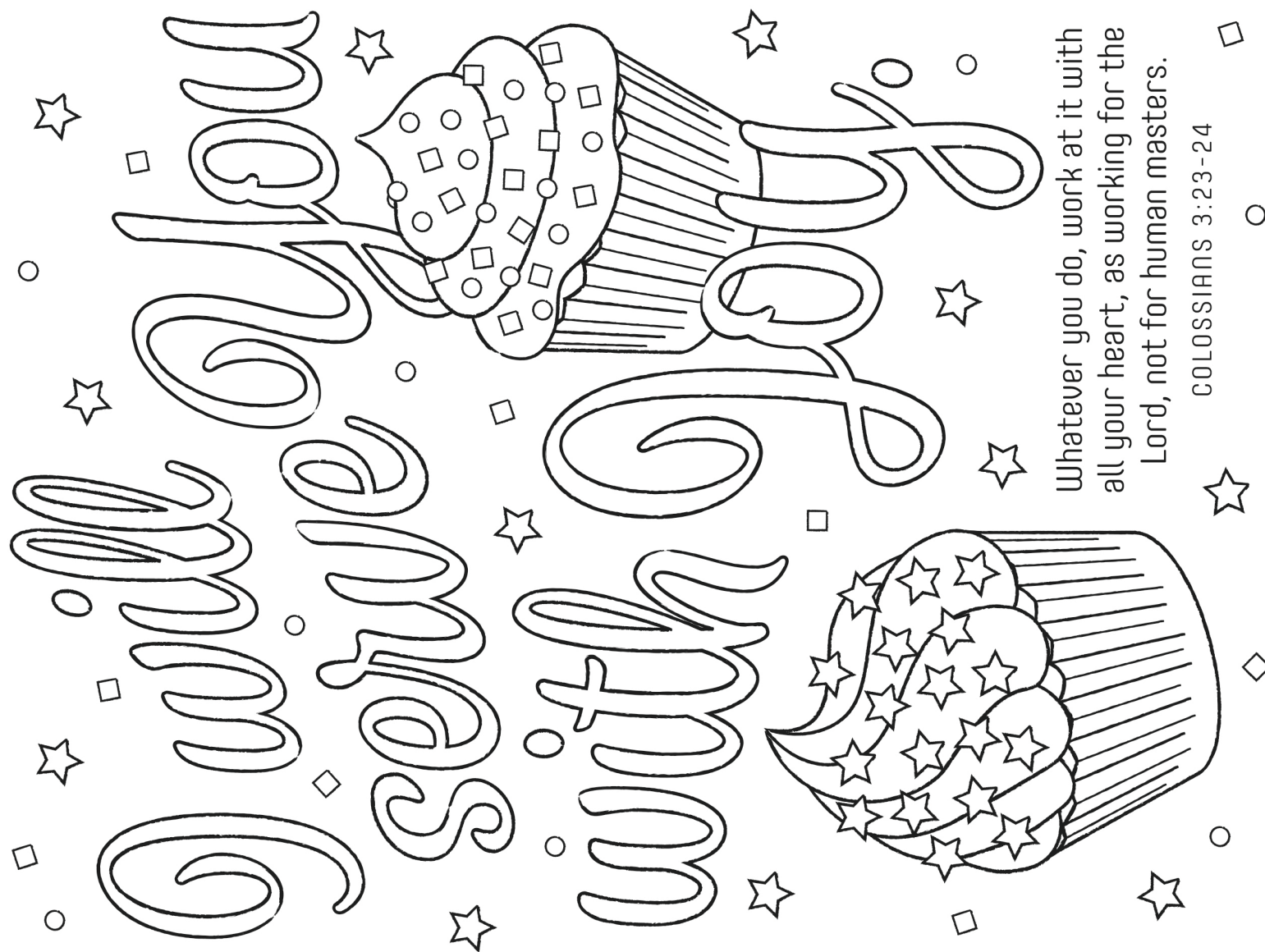
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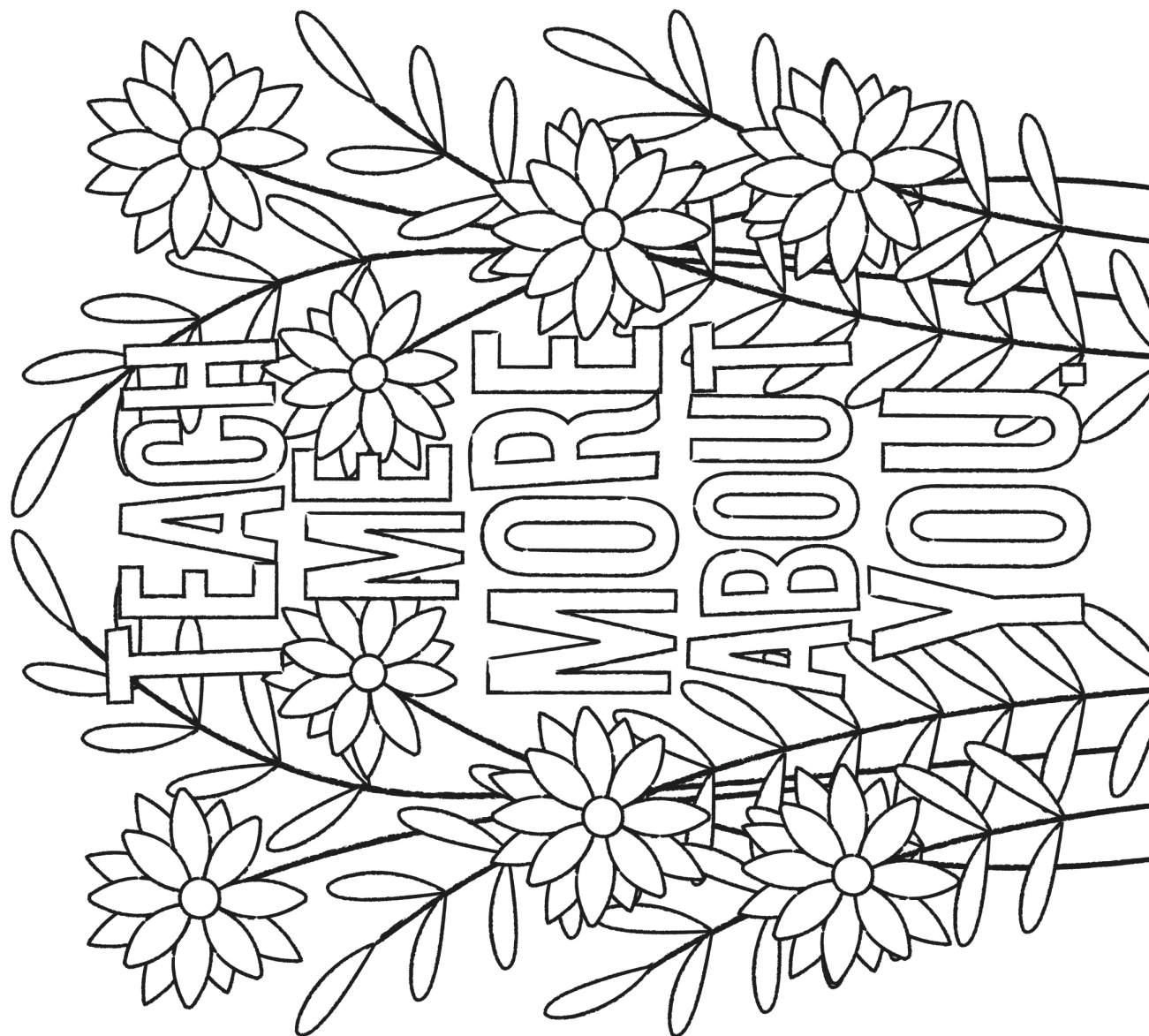
The seeds that fell on the road, among the rocks, and in the thornbushes represent the people who hear the Word, but it _____ takes root in their lives, or later the cares and pleasures of the world choke the life out of it.





Whatever you do, work at it with
all your heart, as working for the
Lord, not for human masters.

COLOSSIANS 3:23-24



I am the way and the truth and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through me.
JOHN 14:6

NOAH'S ARK

HOW BIG WAS IT?

GENESIS 6-8

The Bible measures the ark in cubits.

HOW BIG IS A CUBIT?



The water from the flood covered the tallest mountain peak by

22 FEET!

The water would have stood over

29,050'

above sea level! That's a depth of

5.5 MILES

555'

Washington Monument

450'

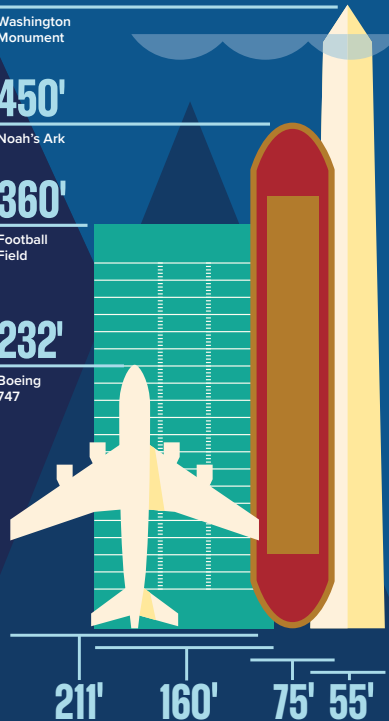
Noah's Ark

360'

Football Field

232'

Boeing 747



The ark was big enough to hold

55,000

SPECIES OF ANIMALS

That's the same volume as

7,453,506

SOCCER BALLS.

If you laid each soccer ball next to each other, they would stretch

1,030 MILES!

That's like driving from
LOUISVILLE, KY, TO AUSTIN, TX.

NOAH'S ARK
100,000
SQUARE FEET

vs

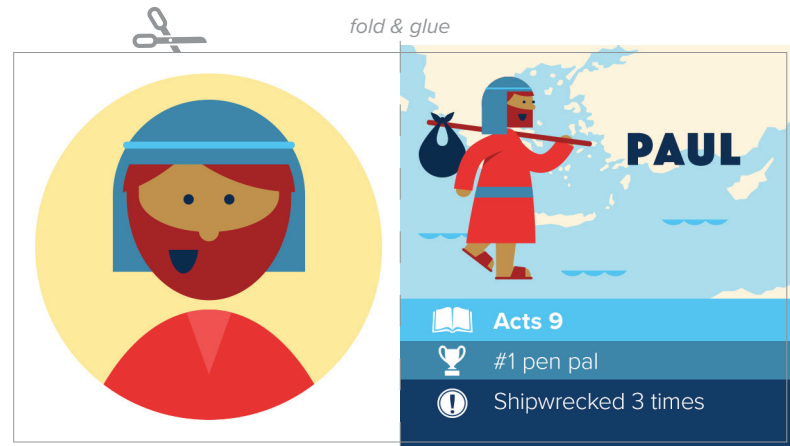
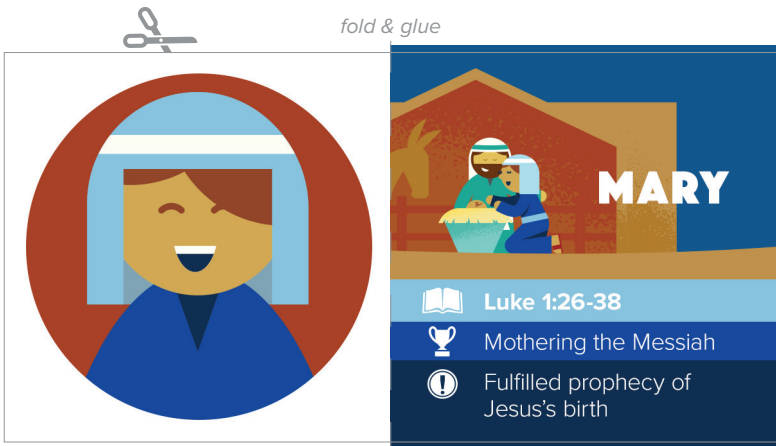
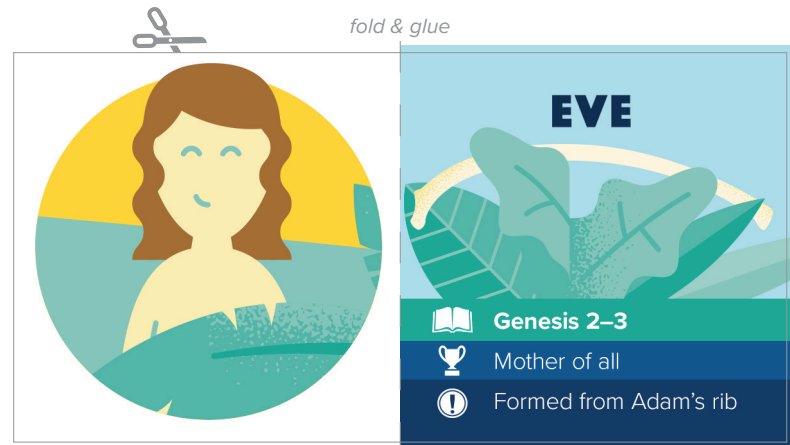
WHITE HOUSE
55,000
SQUARE FEET

For the same square footage, that's

71,620 PIZZAS,




which would be a pizza a day for over

196 YEARS.





FIND THESE HIDDEN OBJECTS

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

Q: WHO HAS THE ANSWER?

No need to raise your hand. This journey of questions is made just for you. Every day for the next three years, you'll have a question along with a prayer or Bible verse to explore. Along the way, you'll discover more about yourself and God's love for you.

There's only one rule—every answer is correct! That's right. So let the surprising, interesting conversation begin. You'll be so glad you asked, "What's the question of the day?"

IDEAS TO STRETCH THE FUN



PARENTS

Read the question with your son or daughter. As one of you writes down the answer, let the response and the conversation unfold naturally.

KIDS

Do the questions with your family and then write down some of your favorite ones to ask friends whenever you're wondering, "What is there to do around here?"

At the end of the three years, you'll have a keepsake time capsule of ideas, opinions, hopes, happenings, and prayers.

A: YOU HAVE THE ANSWER!

MAY 13

If you could declare a national holiday, what would your day celebrate, and what would you call it?

20__

20__

20__

Jesus, when I get too serious, please help me have fun with You. You have given me so much to be happy about!

MAY 14

What is your greatest strength?

20__

20__

20__

*God, I am still discovering the ways that I am unique and strong.
Teach me more about who I am and who I can become.*

MAY 15

What is your favorite Bible verse or story?

20__

20__

20__

*God, help me to understand the Bible and to learn
more about Your faithfulness and strength.*

MAY 16

When have you put someone else's needs ahead of your own?

20__

20__

20__

"Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow." —ISAIAH 1:17

MAY 17

Do you ever have something important to say
but choose to be quiet instead? If so, why?

20__

20__

20__

God, please help me not to be afraid to share my ideas and faith.

MAY 18

If you could design a school building, what would it look like?

20__

20__

20__

Lord, help me to learn quickly and to share my knowledge.

MAY 19

What kind of car or vehicle do you like?

20__

20__

20__

“Say to Daughter Zion, ‘See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding
on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”—MATTHEW 21:5

MAY 20

What is your prayer for your family?

20__

20__

20__

God, thank You for watching over my family. Help us to support one another and to share Your love with others.



Greek Yogurt Popsicles

During the summer, my kiddos become popsicle-obsessed...like, to the point where we whip up these fun frozen treats *daily*. My kids love the rich taste of these Greek yogurt creations, and I love that they're getting a little protein too. What a fun frozen treat...so creamy and flavorful. Our two favorite versions have been Peanut Butter Chocolate Chip and Toasted Coconut Cream. You and your kids can let your imaginations run wild as you discover other yummy creations. Happy summer!

To make popsicles: The popsicle molds should be at room temperature before assembling. Spray the inside of each mold with nonstick cooking spray. Set them aside.

Pop the molds into the freezer and freeze for 1 hour. After 1 hour, place a wooden stick inside each mold. Continue to freeze at least 7 hours before removing.

When ready to serve, run your sink until the water is very hot. Holding the mold, place the bottom portion under the hot water for about 20 to 30 seconds. After that, you should be able to grab the sticks and easily remove each popsicle. If they're not coming out easily, run the bottom of the mold under hot water a few seconds more. Remove, serve, and enjoy.

Peanut Butter Chocolate Chip Popsicles

This recipe makes ten popsicles.

INGREDIENTS

3 (5-ounce) containers vanilla-flavored Greek yogurt (I use Dannon Oikos single serve)
1½ cups creamy peanut butter

1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
10 wooden popsicle sticks

In a mixing bowl, combine the Greek yogurt and peanut butter with a spoon. Stir in the chocolate chips. Pour the mixture into the molds, leaving an inch on top.

Toasted Coconut Cream Popsicles

This recipe makes ten popsicles.

INGREDIENTS

3 (5-ounce) containers coconut-flavored Greek yogurt (I use Dannon Oikos single serve)
2 cups toasted coconut (see below)

10 wooden popsicle sticks

To toast the coconut, add sweetened, flaked coconut to a clean, dry skillet and toast for about 1 or 2 minutes over medium-high heat. Remove from the skillet and cool for 1 or 2 more minutes.

In a mixing bowl, combine the Greek yogurt and 1½ cups of toasted coconut with a spoon. Pour the mixture into the molds, leaving an inch on top. Lightly add the rest of the toasted coconut to the tops of each mold. (When you invert them, the toasted coconut will be at the bottom as pictured.)

☀ Hint: If you can't find coconut-flavored Greek yogurt, you can use vanilla Greek yogurt and add 1½ teaspoons of coconut extract to the mixing bowl when you're combining the yogurt with the toasted coconut. This is what I did!



Soda Pop-sicles

Yep, we're popsicle crazy around here! One hot day we got the inspiration to take three bottles of soda...and turn them into yummy frozen treats! Grab your favorite soda and some fun add-ins, and you're good to go. This is like a science experiment and an art project all in one. We love to combine cola with cherries, orange soda with white chocolate chips (tastes like a Dreamsicle!), and vanilla cream soda with chocolate chips (my favorite). We also want to try root beer and butterscotch chips, and lemon-lime soda with lemon zest. Easy. Fun. Fast. Frozen. The perfect summer treat!

This recipe makes ten popsicles.

INGREDIENTS

2 (12-ounce) bottles of your favorite soda
10 wooden popsicle sticks

A few little add-ins (we added 3 cherries per pop-sicle or about a tablespoon of chocolate chips)

The popsicle molds should be at room temperature before assembling. Spray the inside of each mold with nonstick cooking spray.

Slowly pour the soda into the molds, leaving an inch on top. Carefully drop your add-ins into the molds.

Pop the molds into the freezer and freeze for 1 hour. After 1 hour, place the wooden sticks inside each mold. Continue to freeze at least 7 hours before removing.

When you're ready to serve, run the bottom part of the mold under very hot water for about 20 to 30 seconds. After that, you should be able to grab the sticks and easily remove each popsicle. If they're not coming out easily, run the bottom of the mold under hot water a few seconds more.

Remove, serve, and enjoy.

Chicken Salad Sandwiches

Heart-shaped crustless bread filled with chicken-salad spread makes a favorite sandwich for our grade-school-aged granddaughter, Anna.

Difficulty: 

Prep time: 15 minutes

Gluten-free option: Use gluten-free bread or serve the chicken salad in a cantaloupe ring or as a lettuce wrap

Gather with Grandma

2 cups cooked chicken, chopped fine (or canned, drained)
 1/3 to 1/2 cup diced celery
 1/3 cup mayonnaise (more if you prefer it moister)
 2 T. plain yogurt (or milk)
 Salt and pepper to taste
 Sliced bread
 Butter
 Heart-shaped cutter
 Lettuce leaves, washed

Make with Grandma

1. Mix together the chicken, celery, mayonnaise, yogurt, salt, and pepper. Chill the mixture for 30 minutes to blend flavors or until you're ready to make the sandwiches.
2. To prepare the sandwiches, cut the bread into heart shapes with a cookie cutter. Spread butter or mayonnaise on the hearts.
3. Spread on a thick layer of the chicken filling. Add a lettuce leaf and top with another heart-shaped piece of bread.
4. Wrap and refrigerate the sandwiches until you are ready to serve them. Refrigerate any leftover filling in a covered container.

Makes 2 cups filling and 8 or more heart-shaped sandwiches, depending on the size of the hearts

Sandbar Surprises

A cool ice cream treat with a hidden surprise.

Difficulty: 

Prep time: 30 minutes

Gather with Grandma

1/2 gallon ice cream (vanilla or a flavor you like)
 Blue food coloring
 24 vanilla wafers (1 cup crushed wafers)
 9 Swedish Fish candies
 9 paper umbrella picks

Make with Grandma

1. Slightly thaw the ice cream. If using a white ice cream, add 2 or 3 drops blue food coloring into the softened ice cream.
2. Put the vanilla wafers into a quart-sized, sealable plastic bag. Crush the wafers into "sand" by pounding them with a rolling pin.
3. Scoop the softened ice cream into an 8-inch square pan and smooth it.
4. Press the Swedish fish into the ice cream as a buried surprise. Put 3 across in 3 rows so 1 fish is hidden in each of the 9 servings.
5. Sprinkle cookie crumb "sand" over the top of the ice cream. Gently pat the "sand" down. Then freeze the sandbars for 1 hour or until firm.
6. To serve, cut the sandbars into 9 squares. Top each square with a paper umbrella poked in diagonally to look like a beach umbrella.

Serves 9

A Spoonful of Sharing

While eating Sandbar Surprises, talk about the foolish man who built his house on the sand and how we can be wise (Matthew 7:24-29). Wisdom is making smart choices that please God. See Proverbs 2:1-7 (NLT) for ideas on how to be wise.

Frozen Yogurt Bites

Preparation Time: 20 minutes

- 1 cup strawberries
- ¾ cup vanilla Greek yogurt

Line a large baking sheet or jelly roll pan with a silicone baking mat or parchment paper.

Using a blender, immersion blender, or food processor, blend the strawberries until smooth. Add the yogurt and gently mix by hand to combine. Spoon the yogurt mixture into a food-safe, plastic squeeze bottle, or use a quart-sized freezer bag with a very small hole cut at one corner.

Squeeze dots of the yogurt mixture the approximate size of a thumbnail (about ½ teaspoon) onto the prepared baking sheet and place in the freezer until completely frozen. When the dots are frozen, you can quickly and carefully transfer them to freezer bags or another suitable container to store for up to a month.

***Note:** These are fun to eat, and because each dot is so small, your kids will enjoy a sweet treat without going overboard.*

Yields about 50 to 60 yogurt bites

*Know your food, know your farmers,
and know your kitchen.*

JOEL SALATIN

English Muffin Pizza Buffet

Preparation Time: 20 minutes

- 6 Whole Wheat English Muffins (see recipe on page 28), sliced in half
- 1 (15 oz.) jar pizza sauce
- 1 (15 oz.) jar alfredo sauce
- 2 cups mozzarella cheese, shredded
- ½ lb. Italian sausage, cooked and drained
- 1 (6 oz.) pkg. pepperoni slices
- Onion, diced
- Tomato, diced
- Bell pepper, diced
- Mushrooms, sliced
- 1 (8 oz.) can cubed or diced pineapple, drained
- Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat the oven to 375°.

Let everyone top their English muffin halves according to their tastes; start with the pizza or alfredo sauce and the cheese, and go from there.

Bake for 10 minutes.

***Note:** Younger children especially love to make their own pizzas.*

Yields 6 servings, 2 pizzas each



I Am Yours

*The earth is the LORD's, and everything
in it, the world, and all who live in it.*

PSALM 24:1

Have you ever felt like something was a perfect fit for you? A moment when you realized you were in just the right place and part of something special? I'm not talking about really deep things, but simple things. Like when you played your first sport—soccer or softball—and you helped your team win. Or the time you acted in your first play or performed your first dance. You had that special sense of belonging. You fit in, and you had your own important part to play.

Nothing is wrong with wanting to be a part of something. All of us girls want to belong. Feeling this way is very human, and it's something we all desperately seek. The good news is, we will always fit in as far as God is concerned. If you believe in Jesus and have accepted His love and forgiveness, then you belong to Him and are an important member of His family!

As you read this book, I want you to pray the prayers and learn more about the truth you will find tucked in these

I Am Yours

pages. And I want you to test what you read—especially the Bible verses. See if what they say makes sense with the world you live in.

Start with the fact that you belong to God. Repeat these words out loud:

“I am Yours.”

Do it again, but this time say them like you are talking to God.

“I am Yours.”

Do it one more time, but this time, believe what you are saying. Speak it to God and be determined in your mind that you will believe these words for the rest of your life!

“I am Yours.”

I ask you to do this because believing this statement will have a really big impact on how you live your life and how you think about belonging. You will belong to a lot of groups in your life, and that’s great. But realizing that you belong to God *first* will help you keep your sense of belonging in everything else in the proper perspective. That just means that putting God first will help you understand how, when, and why you do everything else!

I’m going to ask you to pray a lot in this book because when you realize you belong to God, talking to Him becomes really important. God is real. He has thoughts and feelings, and He makes decisions and does things. He wants to get to know you really personally, so we are going

I Am Yours

to practice getting to know Him really personally! And prayer is a big part of this. Every devotional in this book ends with a prayer. You can pray these prayers exactly as they are written, or you can add some of your own words. You can even do some of each. Don’t worry about how you pray—just talk to God, and He will always hear you. Remember—you are His, and you belong!

Dear God,

*Thank You for thinking enough of me to create me!
Thank You for allowing me to belong and to be a part of
Your story. Please help me to really understand what
that means. Honestly, I don’t always feel like I belong.
When I feel alone, please help me to believe I belong to
You, and help me to base my feelings on what’s true.
May I know deep down inside that I am Yours, and may
I live a life of love that only belonging to You can bring.*

In Jesus’s name—amen.



- ¹ James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.
- ² Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds,
- ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.
- ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.
- ⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.
- ⁶ But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.
- ⁷ That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

- ⁸ Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.
- ⁹ Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position.
- ¹⁰ But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower.
- ¹¹ For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.
- ¹² Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

Don't you just love getting a letter or note in the mail? Sure, receiving text messages and emails is fun. But nothing is as personal and exciting as something written by hand on special note paper or a card in an envelope sent with love through the mail to you. Wow! That takes a lot of time, love, thought, and care...and even some money. That means someone *really* loves you and thinks about you a lot!

Well, my new friend, the book of James in the Bible was an actual letter. It was written by James to Jewish believers who were scattered in many countries. These folks needed LOTS of encouragement because they were suffering tough times.

Before you start reading James's letter, read verse 1 and meet the author. How does James, the writer of the book of James, describe himself?

“a _____ of _____ and of the
_____”

Just a note: Be sure to read Mark 6:3 in your Bible. There you will discover that James was Jesus' half-brother. Can you imagine growing up with an older brother who was perfect? Who never sinned? Who possessed all the wisdom of the ages?

Now that you've met the author of the book of James, what about *your* trials and tests? I'm sure you have your share of tough times! In fact, tough times are a fact of life. Jesus told us, “In this world you will have trouble” (John 16:33). Do you ever wonder, “What am I supposed to do in tough times? What am I supposed to do with my problems?”

Well, you'll be happy to hear that James has some lessons and great advice for dealing with your tough times and trials. Read on!

Learning to Count

In school you learned how to add up a column of numbers—and hopefully get the right answer! Well, as we read verse 2, James tells us, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds.” The New King James Version says “Count it all joy.” When you “count” or add up

your sufferings and problems and disappointments, what does James say is the correct answer in verse 2?

“Consider [or count] it _____.”

Read verse 2 again and think about the word “many,” as in “trials of many kinds.” No one wants to face and deal with even one trial! And yet James speaks of many kinds of trials. Maybe you have already experienced several kinds of trials, like...

a tough decision to do the right thing
a tragedy in your family
a serious illness or accident
facing a mean girl every day at school
struggling with a difficult subject in school
(like math or English)

Well, here’s some very good news! God does not ask you or any of His people to understand our trials. But He does want us to trust Him and His wisdom and His plan for us. When you do this—when you trust God with your problems—you will find joy in Him, joy in His promises, and joy in His perfect will for your wonderful, special, unique life!

Count Your Blessings

One reason I love the book of James is that it has a lot of lists that help us with our daily trials and challenges. In James 1:3-12 you’ll see a list of benefits or blessings or lessons that come from going through trials.

Blessing #1 (verse 3) Perseverance

“...you know that the _____ of _____
_____ produces [or develops] _____.”

“Perseverance” is a long word that describes the strength God is building in you when you face tough times. God is right there with you to help you! Perseverance gives you what you need to hang in there until you make it through your problem, until you make it to the end.

Do you know the children’s story called The Little Engine That Could? You probably remember that the engine had a tough time pulling the train up steep hills. But he persevered. As he chugged along, he kept saying, “I think I can, I think I can, I think I can, I think I can.”

My friend, God gives you His power and grace so you can say, “I *know* I can make it through this problem”—because He is producing perseverance in you.

Blessing #2 (verse 4) Spiritual Growth

“Let perseverance _____ its _____
so that you may be _____ and _____,
not lacking _____.”

Has anyone—maybe a parent or older brother or sister—ever said to you, “Why don’t you just grow up?” Or asked, “When are you going to grow up?” Or maybe they just teased you by saying, “Grow up!” Well, James is telling us that when

we let perseverance finish its work in us, we grow up spiritually. When you do your work chores over and over, or when you finish your homework over and over, or when you practice your instrument or sport over and over, you are experiencing the blessing of becoming

“mature and
complete,
not lacking anything.”

Blessing #3 (verse 5) Wisdom

“If any of you lacks _____, you should
ask _____, who gives generously to _____
without finding _____, and it will be _____
to _____.”

If you're like most people, you need wisdom just about every time you turn around! When someone says or does something that hurts you, you need wisdom to know what to do or say—or what *not* to do or say! When you are invited to go somewhere or do something that your parents would not approve of, or when you're not sure what to do, you need wisdom to know how to answer. You need wisdom for so many things—and you always will. And don't forget, you can always ask your parents what to do about your problems.

God knows you need help, and He enjoys giving it to you. As verse 5 tells you, all you have to do is

_____!

When you ask, your blessing will be wisdom that comes from God—which is always perfect.

Before you go on to Blessing #4, read the verses below and check when you are done.

_____ verses 6-8, which tell you to **believe God** and trust Him.

_____ verses 9-11, which explain that all Christians can **be thankful** that God loves them, no matter whether they are poor or rich.

Blessing #4 (verse 12)

Wow! We began with perseverance...and we are ending with perseverance. When you stand strong through your trials and tough times and don't give in when you are tempted, what happens (verse 12)?

“_____ is the one who _____
under _____ because, having stood the _____,
that person will _____ the crown of _____
that the _____ has _____ to those
who _____ him.”

Just a note: When James says we will “receive the crown of life,” he is describing heaven.



A LOOK INSIDE YOUR HEART

Glance back through the advice James gives you in the 12 verses included in this lesson about tough times. Think about the epic promise in verse 12. Isn't it amazing to realize that as a child of God, you have a rich heritage? As a child of God, you—yes, you!—can look forward to being with Jesus in heaven, where there will be...

no tough times,
no more death,
no sorrow,
no crying, and
no more pain.

In fact, God Himself will be with you and be your God. And God will wipe away every tear from your eyes. (You can read about this in Revelation 21:3-4 in your Bible.)

No matter what tough times and trials you are struggling with, you are special and loved by God! I really like these words and hang on to them in tough times:

“What you have in your heart...
matters to God and
endures for eternity.”¹



A HEART CHECKUP

Read verse 1 again. Do you think of yourself as a servant? (Circle one.)

Yes No Sometimes

Write down one thing you can do to be more like James as you serve God, serve Jesus, and serve those at home.

I can help... _____

Write a sentence or two that describes how you usually act when you have trials—when someone is mean and hurts your feelings, when you don't get what you want, or when you are sick.

What good advice do you learn in verse 5?

What exciting truth do you learn in verse 5 about God's response to your prayers?

After reading James 1:1-12, how can these verses help you live out your faith? Or put another way, how should you act when things don't go the way you want and you are tempted to act badly. Write them here.

I need to...



A PRAYER TO PRAY

Lord Jesus, You already know I've got problems! Help me to face them and to persevere through them. I want to grow up in my love for You and my family. Teach me how to find joy as I deal with my problems and bad attitudes. When I'm confused and worried about what to do, please remind me to pray—to just ASK You for wisdom! I love You, Jesus! Amen.



GEMS FROM JAMES

“Consider it pure joy...whenever you face trials.”

James 1:2

“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God.”

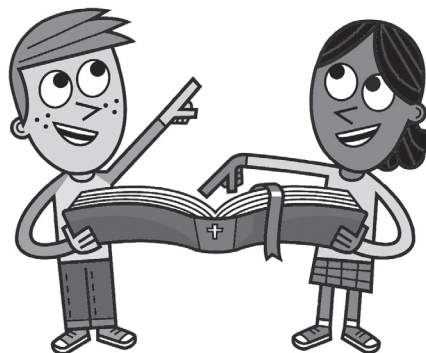
James 1:5

“Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial.”

James 1:12

Elohim

The Strong Creator God



If I say Starbucks, what comes to mind? (Coffee, right?) What about Speedo? (Swimming!) Apple? (Computers and technology.) Gatorade? (Sports drinks.) Levi's? (Jeans.) When a brand name is totally familiar, it's easy to get a mental image of the product.

It's kind of the same thing with the names of God once you get to know them. Of course, God isn't selling you a phone or a drink or clothing. He wants you to become familiar with His names because that's one of the best ways to get to know Him better and experience all He has to offer you—which is way better than coffee or even a new computer!

Your brand is your identity. It includes your reputation—what others think about you. When people refer to the Apple brand, they're not talking about an apple with a bite

taken out of it. They're talking about what the Apple company stands for—high-quality and innovative electronic devices, like phones and tablets and computers. As we get to know God by discovering His names in Scripture, we see that He has branded His names. They're not just words. Each of those names carries a lot of meaning.

God's names matter! Attached to each one is a set of character qualities, promises, and meanings. And when you know about these things, you discover more of the awesome things He has in store for you.

So let's get straight to the very first name God reveals to us in Scripture—Elohim. We find this name in the first verse of the Bible: "In the beginning God [Elohim] created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1).

When you introduce yourself to someone, the first thing you tell them about yourself is your first name. It's the main thing you want someone to know about you—the one thing that will make them feel like they know you right away. Same deal with God. It's as if in this verse, He's telling us, "Hello, I'm Elohim." And that name—Elohim—means "Creator." It's the first impression He wants us to have of Him.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

First impressions are often lasting impressions. Sometimes our first impression—what we think right away when we meet someone—is right, but sometimes it's wrong. Either way, it's usually lasting, especially if we don't continue getting to know the person.

- What were some of your first impressions of your best friend?

- Which of these first impressions were right, and which were wrong?

- What would you want someone's first impressions of you to be?

- What can you do or say so someone will have a correct first impression of you?

- When you think of God's creation, what's your first impression of Him?

One of the main reasons God introduces Himself to us as Elohim, the strong Creator God, is that He wants us to know He's distinct—or separate—from His creation. God is not a tree or a river or a butterfly. He created trees and rivers and butterflies, but He is above and outside of His creation. It's like when you create a painting or construct something out of Legos. You aren't the painting or the Lego creation—even though those things reflect who you are. You are their creator. You're the one who thought up the idea and painted the picture or put the Legos together.

Here, There, and Everywhere!

Another reason God introduces Himself to us as Elohim is to let us know that He is set apart from our ideas of time and space. This can get a little bit confusing, but what's important to remember is that God created everything. And that includes time. So when the Bible says, "In the beginning God created," it must mean that God created the beginning. And that God created time. And—hang with me here!—that if time didn't begin until He created it, then He must have existed before it.

That's a big, brain-stretching idea, isn't it? Think for a minute about the idea of eternity.

- What does the word "eternity" mean to you?

- We think in terms of what happened yesterday, today, and tomorrow. What happened to you yesterday?

- What's going on today?

- What do you have planned for tomorrow?

For God, it's a little bit different—a lot different, actually. God doesn't have a yesterday or a tomorrow. That's because He exists outside of our idea of time. Everything for God is *right now* because He has no past and no future. He's eternal—or always. He is the right-now, ever-present God. Which is really comforting to know. He's always there—always has been, always will be. Forever.

When we get to heaven, we'll understand this better. (Whew!) But for now, it's nice to know that God is always with us, no matter where we are. So that's the "time" part. Now about the "space" part.

You and I know and experience only the heavens and the earth. There's a lot to our heavens and earth—the oceans

and mountains, moon and stars, rain forests and deserts. Yet the Creator God—Elohim—is beyond all this. He is here, there, and everywhere. He created the heavens and the earth, existing outside of it. But He also fills the heavens and the earth, existing in it. He is everywhere. The word used to describe this is “omnipresent”—everywhere-present at the same time.

God is here, yet He is also there. Elohim—our Creator—is here, there, and everywhere at the same time. No wonder our world is so amazing—it was made by such an amazing Creator!

Take It Personally

With all of this talk about God being here, there, and everywhere, we might be tempted to think of Him as an energy source. Yet the name Elohim doesn’t mean God is like that. The Bible would never say, “May the force be with you.” God isn’t a sci-fi character. He’s not a robot that’s hard to figure out. He’s not an otherworldly being that we just need to accept and be amazed at—as in, “I could never get to know a God like that.” Not at all.

Yes, God is amazing, but what’s even more amazing is that He wants you to learn about Him and know Him. He’s not just a supersmart energy source; He’s your personal Creator.

When we read Genesis 1—the first chapter of the first book of the Bible—we see His name Elohim associated with some very personal characteristics:

Then God [Elohim] said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.

God called the light day, and the darkness He called night (verses 3-5).

Look back at those verses and see if you can find the verbs—the things that God did. (Hint: There are four words, and one of them is used twice.) Write them down here.

God said. God saw. God separated. And God called. Each of these actions clearly shows how God is personally involved with His creation. He’s not merely a spirit floating around in never-never land. Yes, He exists outside of our ideas of time and space (that brain-stretching idea again!), but He is also actively connected to His creation—to our world and to *us*. If we read ahead a little bit in Genesis, we find God walking with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, hanging out with them in the cool of the day and talking to them (Genesis 3:8-9).

So if we refer to God as an energy, a concept, a force, or an idea, we are not referring to Elohim. As Elohim, God personally interacts with His creation. Yes, God is an amazing Creator, but He is also a personal God who walks with us and talks with us. How awesome is that!

Creativity

God identifies Himself as Elohim 35 times at the start of Scripture. In fact, Elohim is the only name used for God from Genesis 1:1 to Genesis 2:3. Other names come later as God reveals more about Himself throughout His Word, but Elohim is emphasized in the beginning.

All names have a literal translation—an actual meaning. Do you know what your name means? (If you don't, look it up or ask your parents.) Do you think your name fits you? Why or why not?

God's names always fit Him. I believe that God first introduces Himself to us as Elohim, the strong Creator God, because He wants us to understand His power. The literal translation—or actual meaning—of the name Elohim is “strong one.” It has to do with His power, and that includes His power to create. The Bible uses the term “created” only when talking about God—never when talking about others. This is because only God has the ability to create something out of nothing. He has the ultimate creativity!

People can make incredible things, but only God has the ability to create something from nothing at all. Think about some different ways you can be creative. What are some things you can make?

Now, write down the materials or ingredients or resources you need to make these things.

If you're knitting a scarf, you need yarn and knitting needles, right? (And the knitting needles are made of metal or plastic, and someone needed fiber and dye to make the yarn.) If you're baking a cake, you need flour, eggs, sugar, and other ingredients. If you're building a bookshelf, you need wood and nails as well as a hammer and saw. Everything comes from something!

Anyone who designs, builds, or creates anything uses something in order to do that. Only God—Elohim—can make something out of nothing. Our own creativity has nothing on His! And want to know something else crazy? God didn't even need to use His hands to create—His mouth was enough. Genesis 1 says that all God had to do was speak the world into existence. Wow!

So God is not only a beyond-talented Creator, He's also capable of doing absolutely anything. In Luke 1:37, when the angel Gabriel tells Mary she will give birth to the Son of God, he adds, “Nothing will be impossible with God.”

Sometimes when we're having problems—whether we're frustrated with our homework or upset that our grandparent is in the hospital or scared that our mom can't find a job—we try to fix the problems ourselves. We attempt to create our own solutions without turning to God first. But we need to first remember that Elohim, our strong Creator God, can make something out of nothing. He's done it before, and He continues to do it to this day. He can create an entire world and universe, and He can create the answers to our problems. In fact, He already knows how He's going to take us through them. So we just need to have faith that He will get us there.

All-knowing. All-powerful. Ever-present. Beyond creative. That's our God.

In His Image

Want to know something else mind-blowing? Elohim, the strong Creator God, made us in His image. He did this because He wants us to reflect Him—His goodness, His glory, His strength, His power, and His love. Genesis 1:26 tells us one of our main purposes in life: “God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.’” An image is what you see in a mirror. In the morning when you go to the mirror to get ready for your day, your image flashes back at you from the mirror. It reflects you accurately.

When God made us in His image, He put us at a higher level than all the rest of His creation. He didn’t make the flowers in His image. He didn’t create the animals in His image. He didn’t set the moon and stars in the sky as His image. Only *people* were given this great and awesome privilege. Every other created thing testifies to God’s majesty, but only people mirror Him. And this is why we can have such a personal connection with our Creator.

The Bible says, “We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). This means that whatever God is going to do for you, He has already done. Whatever God wants you to do, He has already planned it out. Whatever you discover to be the purpose for your life, He has already purposed it.

Your job isn’t to try to figure out the map of your life—where you’re going to go, what you’re going to do, or who you’re going to be. God has already drawn the map of your life, and it’s a *good* life. And by the way, don’t freak out about this! If you really, really want to be a teacher or a scientist or a mom, there’s a good chance that God has put that desire

in your heart. This doesn’t mean that things can’t change, but He is never going to force you to do something if you’re tuned in to Him.

You don’t need to create your future. Elohim, the Creator God, has already created it. You can sleep peacefully at night because you are God’s beloved and He is the Creator of all good things. Elohim can make something out of nothing. His creation is wonderful—it’s beyond amazing. His is a great name because He is Elohim, the great and powerful Creator.

REMEMBER IT!

“Elohim” starts like “elephant.” An elephant is a pretty incredible creation, isn’t it? Its massive size, its big floppy ears and long trunk, its powerful walk...But elephants are also loving animals—and actually pretty cute. I’m not saying that God looks like an elephant, but elephants are part of His amazing creation. And if the word “elephant” helps you think of Elohim—the strong Creator God—then go with it!

Can you think of any other ways to remember Elohim, the name God uses to remind us He is the strong Creator God? Write them down here.

Some Key Old Testament Events

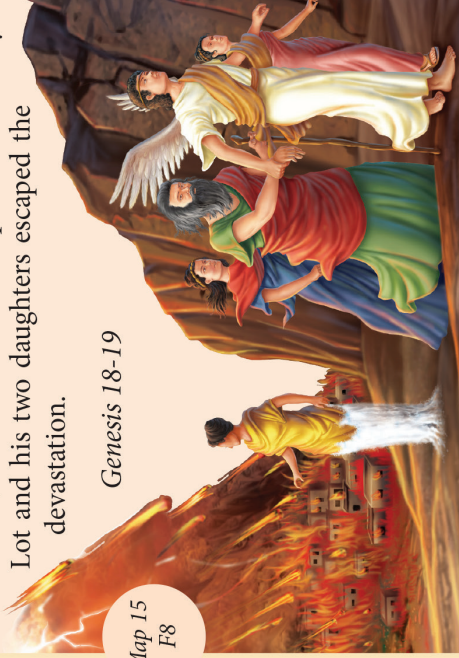


Key Old Testament Events

GOD DESTROYS SODOM

In the time of Abraham, the people had turned away from God and had fallen back into wicked ways. There were two particularly evil cities—Sodom and Gomorrah. God promised Abraham that he would spare Sodom, where Abraham's nephew Lot had made his home, if there were as many as ten good people in the city. But when he sent angels to the city, only Lot and his family were found to be worthy.

The angels led Lot, his wife, and his two daughters to safety, warning them not to look back as the Lord rained fire and destruction on the wicked place. But Lot's wife could not resist looking behind her, and as she did so, she was turned into a pillar of salt. Only Lot and his two daughters escaped the



Genesis 18-19

Map 15
F8

THE PEACE TREATY

The walls of Jericho had fallen to the might of God, and the people of nearby Gibeon feared for their lives. They decided to trick the Israelites into signing a peace treaty with them, by pretending they came from a far-off land, and sent messengers dressed in ragged clothes, with stale bread and leaking waterskins to show how long they had been traveling.

Joshua was taken in by the trickery, and didn't stop to ask for God's advice. Instead, he drew up a peace treaty with the men of Gibeon on the spot and swore an oath to keep it.

When they learned the truth, the Israelites were furious, but they had sworn an oath in God's name and could not go back on their word.

Joshua 9-10



Map 15
D5

THE SUN AND THE MOON STAND STILL

Joshua and his army of Israelites had come to the aid of their allies, the people of Gibeon. They had marched through the night and caught their enemies by surprise. Throughout the battle, God was on their side. He sent great hailstones to fall on the enemy, and soon Joshua knew that the Israelites were winning—but he also knew night would fall before they could finish the battle!

Then Joshua called out, "Sun, stand still over Gibeon, and you, moon, over the Valley of Aijalon!" and God listened to Joshua and made the sun and the moon stand still until Joshua and his men had won the battle!

Joshua 10



Map 15
C5

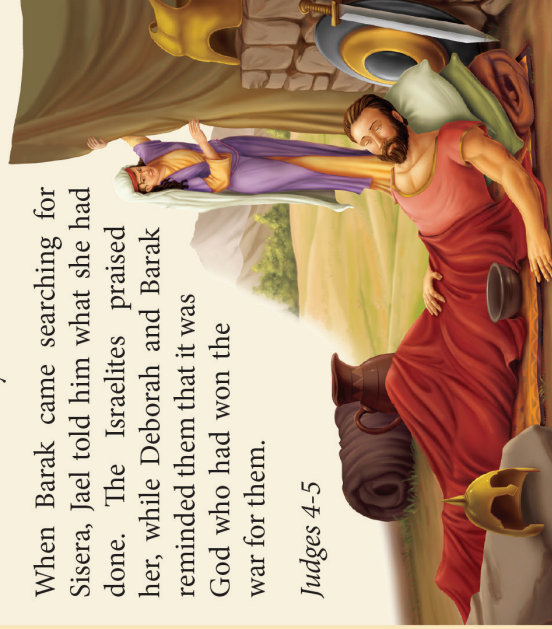
DEBORAH AND Jael

In the time of the judges, the Israelites came under attack from King Jabin of Hazor. A wise woman named Deborah told Barak, a soldier, to gather an army, for God had promised that Jabin's general and his soldiers would be delivered into his hands. Barak agreed to go, but only if Deborah went too!

The Israelites met General Sisera on the slopes of Mount Tabor and, with God's help, killed his entire army! But Sisera escaped and hid in the tent of one of the king's allies. There a woman named Jael gave him a drink and a place to rest, but as soon as he fell asleep, she killed him, for she secretly hated Sisera and his army!

When Barak came searching for Sisera, Jael told him what she had done. The Israelites praised her, while Deborah and Barak reminded them that it was God who had won the war for them.

Judges 4-5



GIDEON AND THE THREE HUNDRED

Gideon was called by God to deliver the Israelites from the Midianites. Many thousands of men came to fight with him, but God said there were too many. He had Gideon send away all who were scared, and then he made him keep only those who drank from the river from their cupped hands. That left just three hundred men!

Gideon was afraid as he looked down upon the enemy camp, but God showed him that his enemy was just as scared as he was. That night Gideon gave all his men trumpets and empty jars with torches inside and led them down to the enemy camp. There they blew their trumpets, smashed the jars, and shouted out loud. The noise and sudden light startled the Midianites so much that the camp fell into confusion, and the soldiers fled in terror, turning on one another in their fright!

In this way, Gideon defeated the Midianites with just three hundred men! Everyone knew that the victory came from the power of God and not the power of men.

Judges 7

Map 15
D3



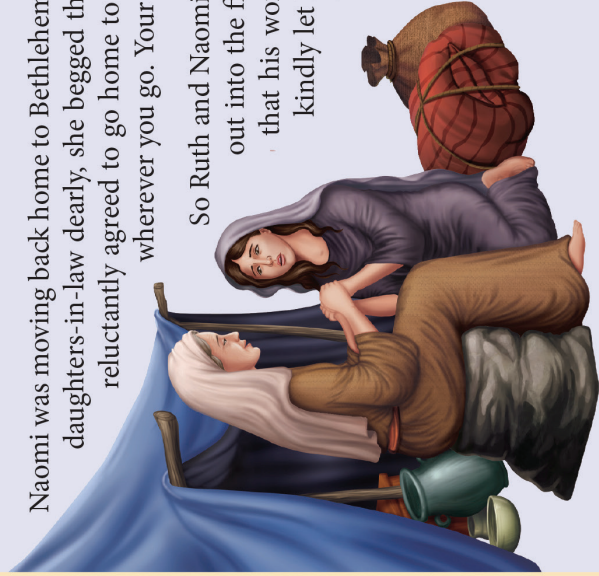
FAITHFUL RUTH

Naomi was moving back home to Bethlehem. Her husband and sons had died, and though she loved her two daughters-in-law dearly, she begged them to stay behind, for she knew her life would be hard. Orpah reluctantly agreed to go home to her mother, but loyal Ruth said, "Don't ask me to leave! I'll go wherever you go. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God."

So Ruth and Naomi came to Bethlehem. Soon they had no food left, and Ruth went out into the fields and asked the owner if she could pick up any of the barley that his workers left behind during the harvest. The owner was Boaz. He kindly let Ruth work in his fields and told his servants to share their food with her. When Ruth returned with a basket of food, Naomi knew that God was looking after them, for Boaz was a relation of hers.

In time, Ruth married Boaz, and when they had a son, there was no happier woman in all of Bethlehem than Naomi!

Ruth 1-4



SAMSON, THE STRONGMAN

Samson was the strongest man alive. Since his birth his hair had never been cut—it was a sign that he belonged to God in a very special way. One day Samson was pounced upon by one of the fierce lions that roamed the land of Canaan. Samson was filled with the Spirit of the Lord, and he became so strong that he was able to kill the beast with his bare hands!



Samson was a thorn in the side of the Philistines, who had enslaved the Israelites for forty years. Although he never led an army, he carried out many attacks against them. But when he fell in love with Delilah, a beautiful Philistine woman, they bribed her to find out the secret of Samson's strength.

Night after night Delilah pleaded with Samson to tell her his secret. In the end, she wore him down, and he said, "If anyone were to cut my hair off, then I would lose all my strength." When Samson awoke, it was to discover that the Philistines had come into his room and cut off his hair. Now he was powerless as they bound and blinded him and threw him into prison!

Over time, Samson's hair grew back. One day, the Philistine rulers were all gathered for a feast in a crowded temple. Samson was brought out to be made fun of. He was chained between the two central pillars of the temple. Then Samson prayed to God with all his heart: "Give me strength just one more time, my Lord, so that I can take revenge upon my enemies!"

Once more Samson was filled with strength. He pushed against the pillars with all his might, and they toppled. The temple crashed down, killing everyone inside. Samson killed more of his enemies with this final act than he had killed in all of his life!

Judges 13-16



SAMUEL, THE PROPHET

Hannah longed to have a child, but to no avail. One year, when visiting the temple, she wept in sorrow and sent a silent prayer to God, 'Oh Lord, if you bless me with a child, I promise to give him back to you to serve for all his life!' When Eli the priest saw Hannah, he sent her on her way gently, saying, "May God answer your prayer."

Nine months later she gave birth to a baby boy and named him Samuel. When he was old enough, he went to serve Eli. One night Samuel awoke with a start when he heard his name called. He rushed to Eli's room, but the priest sent him back to bed, saying, "I did not call you, child." But Samuel had barely pulled the covers back over him when he heard his name called again. As before, he rushed to the priest, but once more Eli sent him away. This happened one more time before Eli realized who was really calling Samuel—God! And so the next time Samuel heard a voice, he answered, and God spoke to him!

As Samuel grew up, God often spoke to him, and in time people listened to what Samuel had to say. He became a famous prophet and anointed the first king of Israel, Saul.

1 Samuel 1-3





ELIJAH AND THE RAVENS

Elijah was another of God's prophets, at the time when Israel was ruled by wicked King Ahab and his wife Jezebel. Elijah warned Ahab that God was angry and would send a drought to the land, and it happened as he said, but God sent Elijah east of the Jordan River to hide. There, ravens brought him bread and meat, and he drank from the brook.

1 Kings 17

*Map 15
F3*

ELIJAH AND THE WIDOW

When the brook dried up, God sent Elijah to Sidon, where a kind widow helped him even though she only had a handful of flour and a drop of oil left to make one last meal for herself and her son. Elijah told her to bake him a loaf of bread and promised that as long as the drought continued, the flour and oil would never run out, and it happened as he said—there was always some flour and oil left for the next meal.

But one day the boy became ill, and then he stopped breathing. The widow was distraught, but Elijah took the boy up to his room, and there cried out to God.

God heard Elijah's cry, and the boy's life returned to him. The widow was filled with gratitude and awe and said, "Now I know that you are truly a man of God and that the word you preach is the truth!"

1 Kings 17



The Canaanites worshipped Baal—a storm god thought to be in control of the fertility of the land, the animals, and people in the region.

ELIJAH AND THE PRIESTS OF BAAL

For years there had been no rain, and there was famine throughout the land. Elijah persuaded King Ahab to gather the people of Israel and the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel, and he proposed a test so that they could learn who was the true God of Israel. Both he and the prophets of Baal would prepare a bull for sacrifice. Then each would call upon their god to answer with fire!

The many priests of Baal prepared their bull and then called upon their god to send fire. They prayed and tore their clothes, but nothing happened. "Perhaps Baal hasn't heard you," mocked Elijah. "Try harder!" But try as they might, there was no answer, and at last they fell to the ground in exhaustion.

Now Elijah used twelve stones to build an altar, around which he dug a trench.

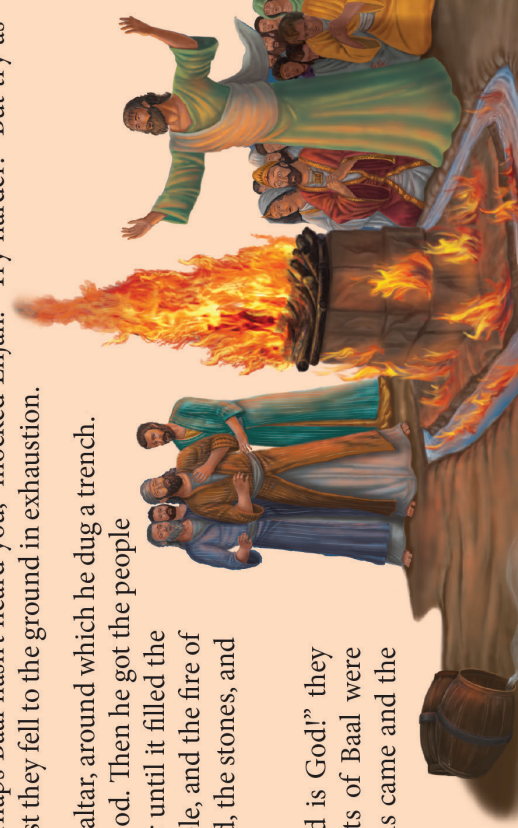
He prepared the bull and laid it on the wood. Then he got the people

to soak the sacrifice and wood with water until it filled the trench. He prayed to God before the people, and the fire of the Lord burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, and even the water!

The people fell to their knees. "The Lord is God!" they cried. Elijah made sure that the prophets of Baal were seized and slain, and by evening the rains came and the famine was ended.

1 Kings 18

*Map 15
C2*



ELISHA CARRIES ON THE TRADITION

When Elijah died, his disciple Elisha inherited his spirit and carried on his work. Once, a woman who had been kind to him was sad because she had no children. Elisha promised her that within a year she would have a son, and it happened just as he said.

But one day, the young boy became ill and died in his mother's arms. The woman left the boy lying on his bed as if sleeping, spoke to no one, and then went to Elisha. Filled with anguish, she approached him for ever having asked God to give her a son.

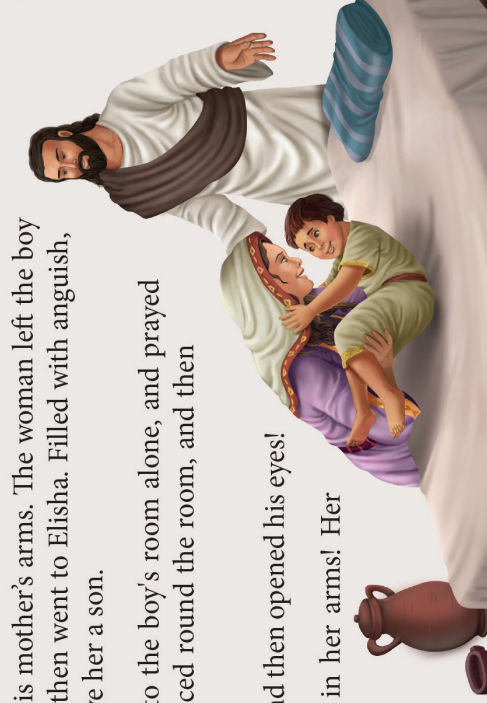
Elisha traveled with her back to her home, went into the boy's room alone, and prayed to God. He lay beside the boy to warm his body, paced round the room, and then warmed him again.

Suddenly the boy sneezed! He sneezed seven times and then opened his eyes!

Elisha called the woman in, and she took her son in her arms! Her gratitude toward Elisha and God was immeasurable.

Judges 7

Map 15
D3



JONAH AND THE BIG FISH

Jonah was a prophet, but when God sent him to Ninevah to tell the people there that he would destroy their city if they didn't mend their ways, Jonah didn't want to go. The people of Ninevah were enemies of the Jews, and he felt that they deserved to be punished. So instead, he boarded a ship in Joppa heading in the opposite direction.

But soon a dreadful storm sprang up from nowhere. Certain that they would drown, the sailors drew straws to see which of them had angered the gods. When Jonah picked the short straw, he had to tell them that he was running away from God. He realized how wicked he had been and insisted that the sailors throw him overboard—and as soon as they did, the storm ended.

Jonah sank below the waves but was swallowed whole by an enormous fish. He spent three days and nights inside the belly of the fish. He had plenty of time to think about his mistakes and to feel very sorry for having disobeyed



Map 15
B5



God. He prayed to God, thanking him for delivering him from the sea and letting him know how remorseful he felt.

After three days, God commanded the fish to spit Jonah up unharmed onto dry land. And when God once again asked him to take his message to Nineveh, Jonah was ready to do his will.

Jonah 1-2

In many ways, the story of Jonah and the whale prefigures the life of Jesus. In particular, the fact that Jonah emerges from the whale after three days foreshadows the resurrection, for Jesus rose on the third day.



35

Cool Stuff to Do with Your Brother and Sister

BOWLING ALLEY BATTLE

Chuck eyed the pins, took a step, and released the ball.

THUNK, THUNK... CLUNK!

“Ouch—gutter ball,” jabbed his brother Jeremy. “But you looked good out there anyway. Now watch how the game is really played.”

Jeremy fired his weapon down the lane. *SMACK!* Unfortunately, he clipped the edge with his ball, and only three pins tumbled over.

Chuck’s other sibling, Justin, nearly spit out a big gulp of Coke as he laughed. “Smooth, Jeremy,” he said. “That’s exactly how I want to play when I grow up!”

But after Justin released the ball, only one pin went down.

Chuck shook his head. “Face it—we suck at this.”

“But the shoes are cool,” Jeremy said. “And it beats sitting at home playing that bowling video game Mom and Dad bought us.”

Chuck agreed. “Maybe I can break my record. Maybe I can catch up with Justin and hit at least one pin!”

MINI-GOLF WARS

Micah, who had just tied a Hawaiian lei around his head (for “sun protection,” he claimed), gripped his putter like a pro and stroked the ball—hard. The ball bounced past a palm tree and a miniature castle—and then stopped just inches from the hole.

Leanor, his sister, burst into laughter. “I don’t know what looked more pathetic—your sun protection or your form!”

Micah folded his arms. “Hey, can you do better?”

Leanor lightly tapped the ball, knocking it into the hole. “That’s right—that’s how it’s done,” she taunted her brother. “I am a winner. You are a—” She formed the letter *L* with her thumb and index finger and held it up to her forehead.

Micah pulled off his Hawaiian lei and threw it at his sister.



Bowling and mini golfing aren’t exactly high-action sports, but they’re fast, easy to pick up, and filled with laughs...and they’re great boredom-busters during the summer. And if you’re lousy at these activities, who cares? Here’s an idea: Stop the sibling slug-fests, call a truce, and go bowling or golfing—or try one of a zillion other pastimes—and have some fun together.

I’m an only child, so my slug-fests happen with my friends. But Mom and Dad have lots of siblings, which means our house is always filled with uncles, aunts, cousins, and extended family. Here are two things I hear them talk a lot about...along with their advice:

Sometimes older siblings grow distant. As that happens, remind yourself that older brothers and sisters need a little space and privacy. Honor that, but keep the connection open without smothering them. Ask your older sibling for advice from time to time.

Sometimes younger siblings get clingy. Remember that they look up to you, so spend time with them, even if you’re not into the same things anymore. Share advice with them and try to include them in your life as much as you can.

With my parents’ help, I came up with some other cool stuff you can do.

WINNING WORDS

“Suppose someone claims to love God but hates a brother or sister. Then they are a liar. They don’t love their brother or sister, whom they have seen. So they can’t love God, whom they haven’t seen. Here is the command God has given us. Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister” (1 John 4:20-21).

WINNING TACTICS

- *Share some crazy (kid-only) moments.* Check out my A-to-Z list of favorite boredom busters at the end of this chapter.
- *Laugh with them, not at them.* Having a brother or sister is something to be thankful for, even if they drive you crazy sometimes. And since you probably spend a lot of time around your siblings, make peace with them and try doing some of the fun things I mention below. The point is, work on building a closer relationship and have fun—laughing *with* each other, not *at* each other.
- *Be your brother’s keeper...and your sister’s.* The Bible says, “Carry one another’s heavy loads. If you do, you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2). In other words, look out

for your brother and sister. Help them, support them...even defend them.



Read Romans 12:10. Name some ways that you can live out this verse.

BOREDOM BUSTERS

Action sports—Hang out at a family spot that offers go-karts and climbing walls.

Biking—If you don't have a cool trail to ride on, set off on adventures in your neighborhood.

Cooking—Pretend you're on the Food Network and dream up some great dishes.

Dog sitting—Make some extra bucks together watching someone's pet.

ESPN—Be a kid commentator, narrating games on your street.

Fishing—Get a rod and reel and some bait and catch dinner.

Games—Pull out the board games and go old school.

Hose—Play tag with the hose in the backyard.

Igloo—Build one and see how many people can fit inside.

Junk—Gather old stuff from your attic or basement and then build something together.

King of the hill—See who rules in your neighborhood.

Launch a rocket—Buy a kit from a hobby store, build it, and then send it into orbit.

Movies—Grab some popcorn and binge-watch your favorites.

NASA—Discover their big plans for Mars.

Olympics—Host neighborhood games in your front yard.

Pool—Swim together every day.

Quit using your smartphone for a day—The person who lasts the longest is the winner.

Race—Pull out your Hot Wheels gear and have a competition.

Sugar—Make gourmet candy for your parents.

Tag—Create unusual versions of tag and invite your friends to play.

Undercover—Be spies for the afternoon.

Video game marathon—Go with a sports theme.

Water games—Fill up balloons and squirting devices and do battle.

X-games—Gather bikes and skateboards and challenge each other.

Yard—Camp out there during the summer.

Zoo—Enjoy an African safari in your town.

SECRET 1

Escaping Aggressive Mobs



My fingers and arms are a blur of activity. I just spawned into a brand-new game, and I don't have a second to spare. I stack block after block, trying to craft my shelter before darkness falls. Finally, the roof is attached.

Whew—that's a good start.

I race around my crude shelter, adding torches. Light is a player's best friend. I knock out some holes on each wall and fill them with blocks of glass. Eventually I'll add some cool details, like stained glass, a fancy corridor that will lead to my mine, and several more rooms—sleeping chambers, a crafting room, a big dining hall. But I can't worry about those things just yet. My number one priority is to protect myself from eminent danger.

Uh-oh, I see movement in the trees. Better hurry.

I tap into my resources and build some heavy wooden doors

to keep out the mobs. Yikes—I don't have enough weapons and food yet. I have to go back outside, but I'm losing time.

Here they come.

Moans, groans, and hissing sounds fill the air as an army of Minecraft monsters invade my world. There are fast-moving skeletons, lumbering zombies, and creepy spiders. They're definitely in attack mode. These aren't passive or neutral mobs. The creatures on my doorstep are aggressive! My best defense is shelter.

But I'm caught outside trying to gather more supplies for the night. I move as quickly as I can through the thick trees. Suddenly...creepers! They are spawning everywhere.

Quick—run!

This time my legs become a blur as I rocket home. I scream through the front door just in time and find a corner, where I hunker down for the night. (I haven't yet created a bed.)

I'm safe inside...for now.

After what seems like an eternity, nightfall covers my Minecraft world. I peek out a window. *Yep, the freak show is in full swing!*

But something even stranger catches my eye. I can almost see my friends among the monsters outside. I imagine a neighborhood kid named Eddie dragging his feet with the zombies. (He does a pretty good imitation.) Skinny Kyle is blending in with the skeletons. And the more I look, the more I realize that Minecraft mobs are like different groups at school. My best friends are creative and nice and fun to joke around with. Some kids are passive and move right past me as if I didn't exist. There are other kids whom I don't know that well but who are good to be with when the teacher gives us team assignments.

My smile quickly fades as I think about a not-so-fun group: the mean kids.

You know the types—those who love to make fun of people... otherwise known as *bullies*. And to be honest, that's who I'm up against right now.

At school, bullies walk around in groups, acting as if they own the place. And when one turns his attention on me, the rest of them seem to want a piece of the action. They say they are just joking around and I shouldn't get upset, but their hateful words spawn like a creeper mob.

GROWL...HHHHIISSSS...KABOOM!

That all-too familiar sound snaps me back to gameplay. I glance out the window again and cringe. The creepers are multiplying—and they're everywhere!

What else will the darkness bring?

GAMEPLAY SECRETS

Mobs (short for “mobiles”) are a fact of life in Minecraft. They include villagers, animals, and monsters. They can turn otherwise peaceful gameplay into turmoil. The aggressive mobs are the worst ones. They attack players on sight, and not just when they're provoked.

But I have a survival tip that can save your life...



Dragee90's Best Tip

Monsters cannot see through glass or ice blocks. So always build windows on your shelter. This way, you can spy on them without being detected.

REAL-LIFE SECRETS

Read It

“There are six or seven kinds of people the LORD doesn't like: Those who are too proud or tell lies or murder, those who make evil plans or are quick to do wrong, those who tell lies in court or stir up trouble in a family” (Proverbs 6:16-19).



Think It

When you're attacked by creeper-controlled “aggressive mobs,” do you stop and think before you speak? Or do you push back with anger, fueling the fire? Do you pray? How would Jesus want you to react?



Live It

There will always be mean people in the world. And since we can't always avoid them, it's a good idea to have a plan for when they attack. The best defense is to know that we are wonderfully and creatively made by God. We have a special set of skills that God wants to use to make the world a better place. Our identity is not decided by a few jerks who are just trying to look cool in front of others. So take a deep breath and resist fighting back in the same hurtful ways. Instead, find shelter. God has our back, and He has given us *real* friends. Step back and look at the troublemakers through the glass window. You'll quickly see their actions in a new light.



SECRET 2

Putting on Your Protective Armor



Go, go, go...and then *jump!* Downward I fly until I land safely on the glass ceiling of my dome. I don't see any danger, but I know it's just around the corner. I may as well go into the woods to see what adventures this world has to offer.

I race through the trees, dodging branches, cliffs, and the occasional animal. I move toward a warm orange glow just beyond the trees. Suddenly, I'm on the edge of flowing lava.

I can't go left, I can't go right, but I might be able to make it through the narrow passage straight ahead. It's decision time. *Never mind!* I play it smart and decide it's time to shop. So into the villager trader I go.

Sometimes we can just feel the danger ahead. It can be a group of kids who gather in the hallway at school. You know the kind—they find strength in numbers and make fun of people as they walk by. Or maybe it's a grumpy old man who

likes to let his barking dogs out into the yard every time someone passes by. Or even an older sibling who is annoyed by your every move.

These everyday dangers aren't always avoidable. There are times when we have to just walk straight through them. It's a good thing we have real-life armor to wear. I'm not talking about the heavy knights-in-shining-armor kind of gear that brave warriors strapped on long, long ago. I'm talking about the armor of God. God has given us armor that helps us do more than just survive. He has given us *truth, righteousness, justice, peace, faith*, and *His Spirit*. Best of all, it's free. We don't have to save up, purchase it, or even earn it. It's just a bonus of being a child of God. All we have to do is grab it, wear it, and walk through life's lava pits with confidence.

Back in the game, I notice that I have a lot of iron units to tap into as I trade for some armor. I choose boots, a helmet, and some trousers. Done. I jump back into the game and check my armor durability in the corner of my screen.

It's time to run for my life. I lean forward and run on the middle path right through the lava. For a moment, I can't even see what my next step holds. But I push through.

Wow...those trousers and boots saved me. There's no way I could have made it past that lava pit without them.

I check my armor level again, and I still have a lot of defensive points left.

GAMEPLAY SECRETS

Leather, gold, chain mail, iron, and diamond—each of these elements can be crafted into a player’s all-important armor. And wearing this kind of protection is essential for survival, especially in PVP (player versus player).



Dragee90’s Best Tip

I like to create my armor out of diamonds. They provide the greatest defense against attack, but they’re also the hardest to acquire. Also, *always* wear your armor (and bring a torch) when you head into a dark place, such as a mine.

REAL-LIFE SECRETS

Read It

“Be ready! Let the truth be like a belt around your waist, and let God’s justice protect you like armor. Your desire to tell the good news about peace should be like shoes on your feet. Let your faith be like a shield, and you will be able to stop all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Let God’s saving power be like a helmet, and for a sword use God’s message that comes from the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:14-17).



Think It

Are you wearing the armor of God? Exactly what is it? (Look at the verses above and identify each piece.)



Live It

I’d never face a hostile Minecraft mob without my armor...and it’s the same way in real life. So just as today’s Bible passage instructs, I put on my spiritual armor:



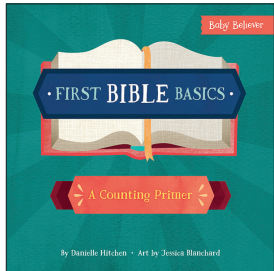
The belt of truth and the Bible, our sword. The better my grasp of Scripture, the bigger my belt buckle. So I read God’s Word.

The gospel of peace, our combat boots. If we’re not wearing our combat boots, it’s like we’re walking on thorny ground in bare feet. It’s a good idea to put them on before leaving the house. How? Connect with Jesus through prayer and share your faith through your very life—being kind and loving to others.

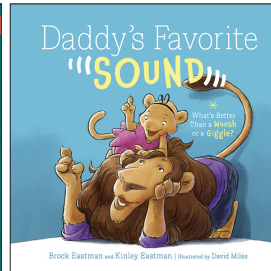
The shield of faith. Jesus is our shield (Psalm 84:11) and the source of our faith (Galatians 2:20). He protects us from the flaming arrows of the evil one.

The helmet of salvation. Salvation is all about a thrilling life with Jesus, which is His gift to us (John 10:10). Every minute we’re enjoying that excitement, our helmet is on. And with that helmet firmly in place, our minds are guarded from Satan’s lies.

Find these books at your favorite retailers!



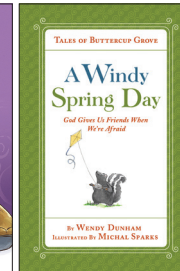
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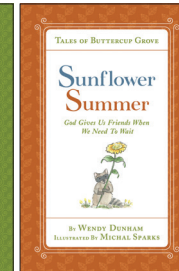
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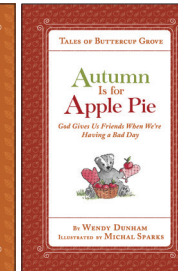
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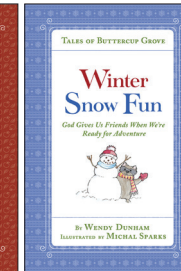
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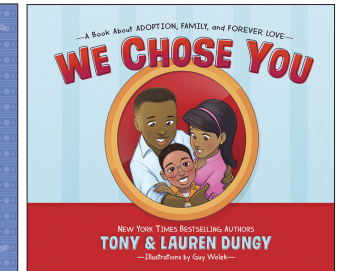
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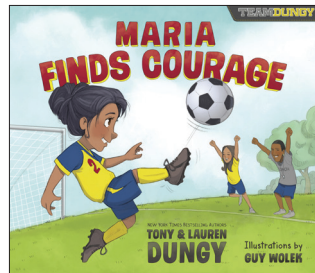
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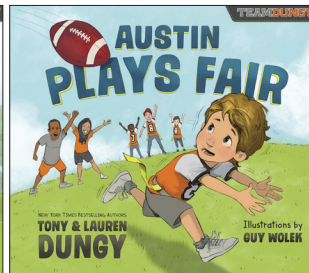
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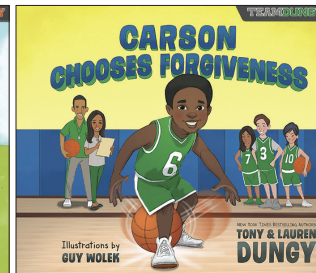
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ages 6-9



ages 6-9



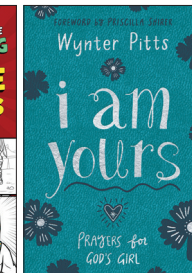
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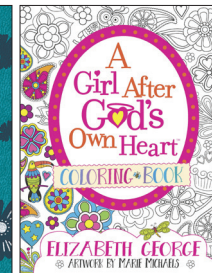
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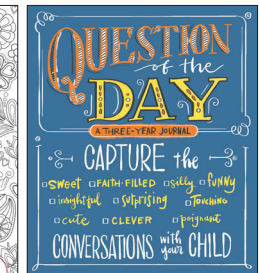
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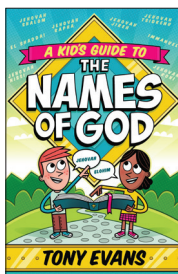
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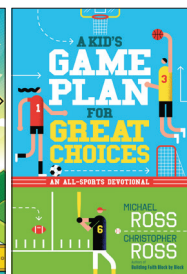
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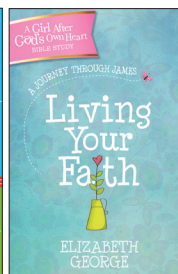
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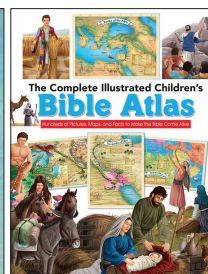
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ages 8-12



ages 8-12



ages 8-12



ages 8+



ages 8+



ages 8+



ages 9-12



ages 9-12



ages 12-18