

Tropinkka

The Little Path

Christian Magazine for Kids

$18 + 18 = 36$



Exploring Faith
With Friends
Around the World!



Speaking
the truth

Issue #4
2012

FIGURE IT OUT!

Sam and Janet both learned a verse in Sunday School. Janet's verse is Proverbs 12:22 and Sam's is Zechariah 8:16. They decided to share the verses with their friends, Vicky and Paul. If you look carefully, you'll be able to write out these verses in the spaces below. As you do, you'll find out which picture shows which kid.

Sam

Vicky

Janet

Paul

For answers, see page 31.

Created and illustrated by Elena MIKULA

_____ (Zechariah 8:16)
 _____ (Proverbs 12:22)



Story Time

A BEAUTIFUL TRUTH

Part 10

Elena MIKULA

Peter was excited. The model of the stone tablets was almost done! Mary had taught him to draw 3D letters that looked like they had been chiseled out of stone. The model of the stone tablets looked nice, but it was more than a craft project. As they studied the Ten Commandments, Peter knew he and Mary were starting to understand what God wanted to tell people by giving them the Ten Commandments.



"Okay, Peter," Mary said as she opened the Bible. "Today we're on the ninth commandment. Go ahead and read it."

"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor," Peter read. "What does that mean, Mary? God doesn't want us to lie about other people?"

"God doesn't want us lie at all! I think we should write 'Do not lie' on the stone tablet model," Mary answered.

"But it only talks about false witnesses against others," Peter argued. "Being a false witness would be saying that you were the one who broke the window in the science lab on Friday..."

"Well, well, Peter, this is getting interesting. Please be a little more specific," Mary said. "Do you know who broke the window?"

Peter started to turn red. "Umm... well, you have to understand... No, I can't! I promised."

"If you're trying to protect the person who did it and you don't say anything, you and that person





are both lying and breaking God's commandment."

"If I tell you who broke the window, I'd be a traitor and a tattletale!" Peter cried.

Mary silently continued coloring the letters on the model. Peter couldn't stand it.

"Fine," he said, "Tim Andrews broke it. It was an accident. We were the first ones in the classroom. Tim took the yardstick and started swinging it around, pretending he was on a buffalo hunt. Then he tripped and instead of just swinging it through the air, the yardstick hit the window. We ran away and I promised not to tell on him."

"And when Mrs. Acher asked who broke the window, you didn't say anything. Then, when she said it was probably Mark Jones because he had already broken two windows, you still didn't say anything. When Mark tried to explain himself and started to cry, you still didn't say anything. What do you think your silence meant?"

"I didn't say anything, and that was giving false testimony against my neighbor," Peter sniffed. "Mary, what can I do?"

"Tell Tim he has to admit that he broke the window. Tell him you won't help him cover up what he did. If he won't admit to breaking the window, you'll have to go talk to Mrs. Acher yourself."

"That's easy for you to say..."

"I know it's not easy," Mary agreed. "But sooner or later lies always come to the surface."

"It's true," Peter nodded. "I've seen it happen a hundred times."

"I have too," Mary nodded. "Sometimes I like to exaggerate. As I'm telling a story, I don't even notice that I'm changing the details. That may seem small and innocent, but it's still a lie. It's only a matter of time until the fact that I lied comes out and I'm so ashamed."

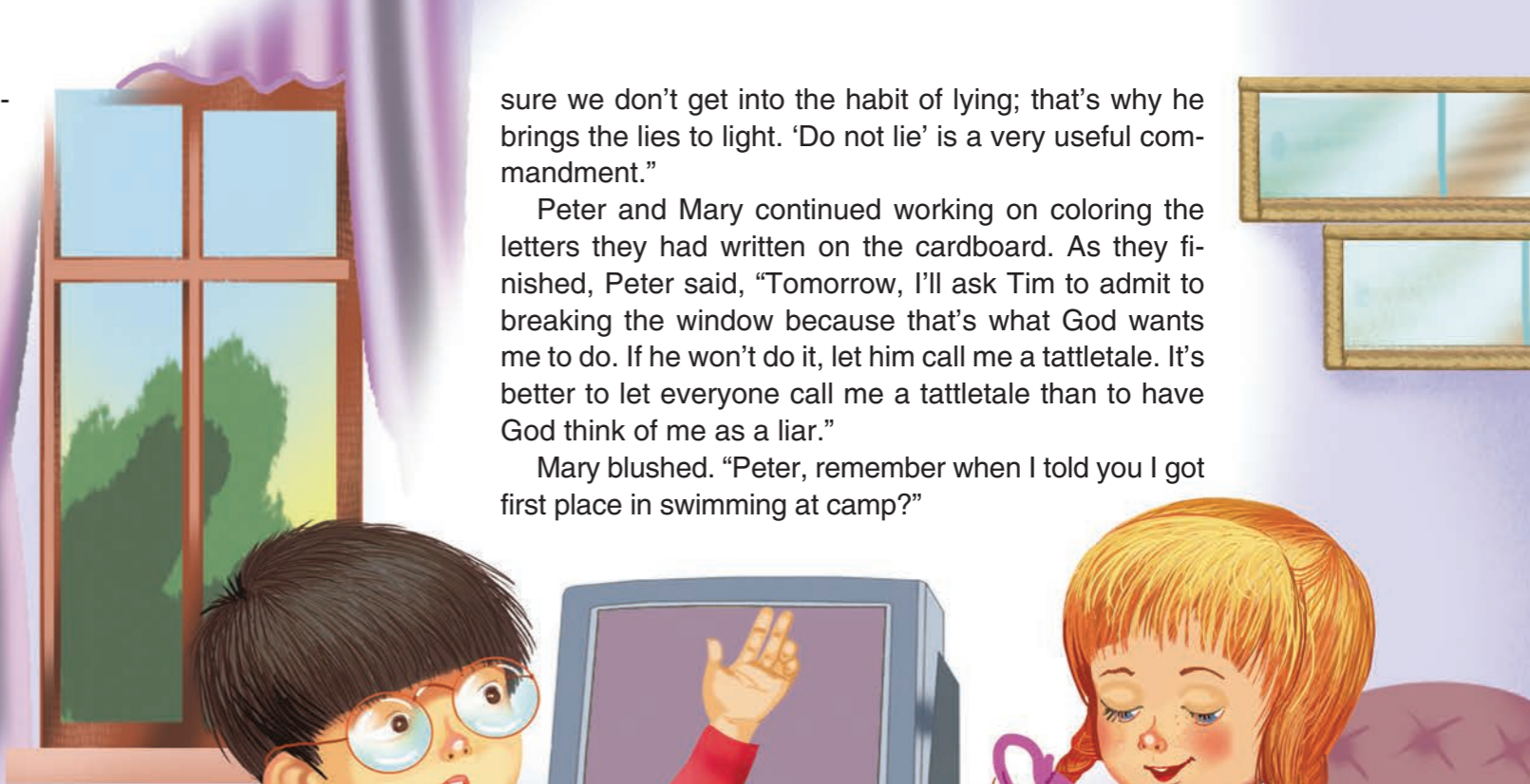
"Yeah, the same thing happens to me. Maybe it's God's way of making

sure we don't get into the habit of lying; that's why he brings the lies to light. 'Do not lie' is a very useful commandment."

Peter and Mary continued working on coloring the letters they had written on the cardboard. As they finished, Peter said, "Tomorrow, I'll ask Tim to admit to breaking the window because that's what God wants me to do. If he won't do it, let him call me a tattletale. It's better to let everyone call me a tattletale than to have God think of me as a liar."

Mary blushed. "Peter, remember when I told you I got first place in swimming at camp?"

Mary blushed. "Peter, remember when I told you I got first place in swimming at camp?"



Illustrated by Victoria DUNAYEVA



"That was a lie?"

"Not exactly. I was the best swimmer because none of the other kids knew how to swim. It seemed like that meant I was in first place, but really that was a lie. There was no contest and I didn't win anything. I've already asked for God

to forgive me. Now I'm asking for your forgiveness."

"Of course I forgive you. How about we go to the pool this Saturday?" Peter smiled. "Then we'll race and find out who comes in first!"

(To be continued)



You shall not give false testimony
against your neighbor

Exodus 20:16

Watch Your Words

Natasha BOYKOV

Rumors, all the dirt on friends and neighbors
Spreads like wildfire up and down the school.

Rumors, secret whispers
Passed behind the backs of others,
Secrets filled with harsh and hurtful words.



When God looks down,
I think His heart is breaking
over everything that's seen and heard.
Do not bear the rumors. Don't say harsh things.
Do not fill your mouth with hurtful words.

Shut your mouth if it is hurting others.
Let God's kindness fill your heart
And rest your itching tongue.
Pray for God to fill you with compassion
Speak the truth in love. Speak healing words.

When you fall, pray! Ask for God's forgiveness.
Say "I'm sorry" often. Watch your words.



Illustrated by Larisa GOROSHKO

The Ninth Commandment

Today, we are going to talk about something everyone is used to – lying. God gave the commandment:

“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor” (Exodus 20:16).



This commandment seems pretty clear, right? Should I explain it anyway? Okay, basically this commandment means don't belittle, don't exaggerate, and don't lie. Maybe you, like many others, think, “A little lie isn't so bad. It's not stealing or killing or committing adultery.” Remember, one of the Ten Commandments very specifically tells us not to lie, especially if that lie slanders another person. Slandering others means saying things to make them look bad.

Why do we sometimes tell lies? Say you did something bad and were afraid to admit it. You think telling the truth is scarier than lying. Sometimes – and this is especially bad – you blame someone else. Does this sound familiar?

Remember what the first people did in the Garden of Eden? God commanded Adam and Eve not to eat the fruit of only one tree in the garden saying, “When you eat of it you will surely die,” but Satan told Eve, “You will not surely die...you will be like God (Genesis 2:17; 3:4-5). Eve believed Satan's lie. Jesus said Satan was “a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44).

What did Adam and Eve tell God when He asked them if they ate the forbidden fruit? Adam said, “The woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” What did Eve say? “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” Each one of them tried to blame someone else.

One of the stories in the book of Acts clearly shows the danger of lying. Ananias and Sapphira, a husband and wife, decided to lie to the apostles. As soon as they did, they died. Of course this is an exceptional case, but it's worth thinking about. If we want to live with God, we need to always tell the truth. The person who lies is following Satan, but the person who tells the truth pleases God. When Jesus described Himself, He said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

“What about half-truths?” you ask. Let me answer with an example from the Bible. On two occasions, Abraham said his wife, Sarah, was his sister because he was afraid he might be killed if people knew the truth. Sarah was his half-sister but, because he told a half-truth, he almost lost his wife – twice!

Lies and half-truths are the same. God can't stand lies. He gave us a commandment that clearly tells us not to lie. Let's ask God to help us always be honest and not say bad things about others, especially if those bad things are lies.

Waldemar ZORN

HAMAN

Waldemar ZORN

THE SLANDERER

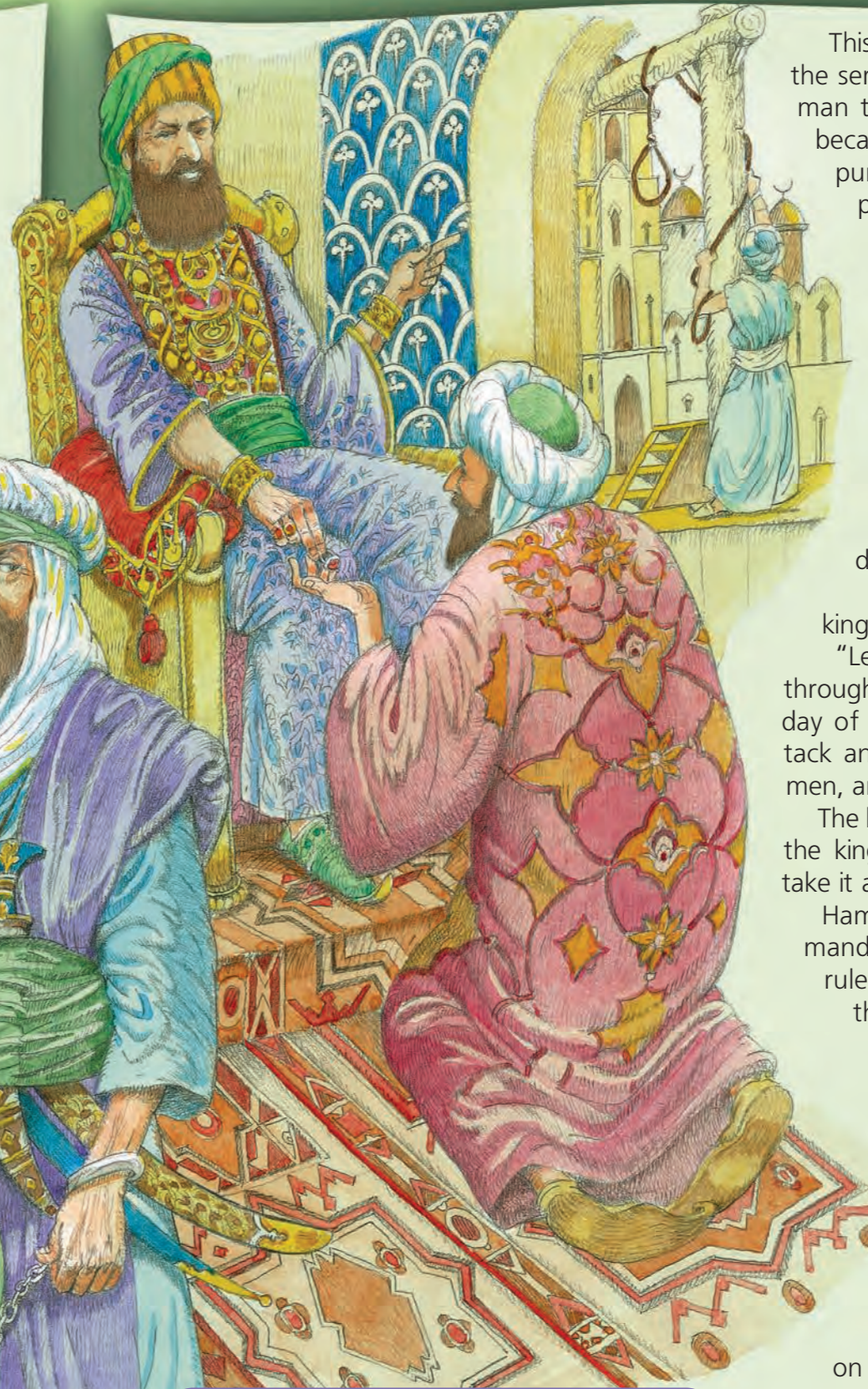
During the reign of Artaxerxes, the Persian Empire included almost the entire known world of that time period. The people of Israel were scattered all over that world and very few of them lived in their homeland of Israel. Why were they scattered? The Bible tells us the Israelites had worshipped idols and listened to those who practiced witchcraft instead of serving God. To punish the Israelites, God allowed them to be scattered all over the world. After they had been scattered, they started to seek God and turn away from their idols. They finally decided to worship God alone and not bow down to anyone else.

At that time, a man named Mordecai lived in Susa, the capital of the Persian Empire. One day, he heard about a plot against the king and warned him. As a result, Mordecai had special privileges. Also, the cousin he had raised – a girl who had neither father nor mother – was the wife of King Artaxerxes, which made her the queen.

After the king, the most important person in Persia was Haman. People honored Haman and bowed to him whenever he went through the gates. Everyone bowed to him, except for Mordecai. Since Mordecai was a Jew, he didn't bow down and worship other people.

Illustrated
by Alexander BASS

**PAGE
8**



This went on for a long time. When the servants at the king's gate told Haman that Mordecai wouldn't bow, he became very angry. He could have punished Mordecai, but hurting one person wasn't enough for his evil heart. When Haman learned that Mordecai was a Jew, he decided to get rid of the entire Jewish nation.

One day, Haman came to the king with a report. "O King, there is a group of people scattered throughout your kingdom," he said. "They have their own laws and customs, and they don't obey your laws."

"What do you suggest?" the king asked.

"Let me write to all of the rulers throughout your kingdom. On the same day of the same month, have them attack and destroy the Jews – men, women, and children!"

The king believed Haman and gave him the king's signet ring. "Here is my ring, take it and do what you need to do."

Haman wrote and sent out commands in the king's name, telling the rulers the day they were to destroy the Jews in their cities and villages.

Haman sealed this command with the king's seal.

That's how Haman slandered a whole nation. For Mordecai, his enemy, Haman prepared a gallows. However, God used Esther to upset Haman's plans and save the Jews. In the end, the

evil Haman was hung on the gallows. God protected His people. Slandering them had severe consequences for Haman.

You can read the whole story about how God saved the Jews from Haman and established the holiday of Purim in the book of Esther.



PUZZLE PAGE

QUEEN ESTHER'S BANQUET

Find the hidden words.

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

QUEEN

BEAUTIFUL

FOOD

ARTAXERXES

KING

REQUEST

ORPHAN

ISRAEL

HAMAN

RING

SUSA

ESTHER

MORDECAI

JEWS

BANQUET

PERSIA

FRUIT

PURIM

DRINK

Check your answers on page 31!

Solve the crossword.

WHO?

Across

- Who is able to approach the mighty behemoth with a sword? (Job 40:15-24)
- Who asked the angel for his name and didn't get an answer? (Genesis 32:29)
- What was brought by the east wind and carried away by the west wind? (Exodus 10:12 -19)
- Which king prayed and cried before God after hearing he was going to die? As a result, God healed him and extended his life by 15 years. (Isaiah 38:1-6)
- Who among Jesus' disciples had been a tax collector? (Matthew 10:1-4)

Down

- Who was the first priest among the Israelites? (Exodus 28:1-3)
- Who saved the king's life by telling his wife about the plot against him? (Esther 2:21 -23)
- What is the "mother" of sin and the "grandmother" of death? (James 1:15)
- Which king was killed while he was getting drunk? (1 Kings 16:8-10)

Adapted from crossword by Pavel SHAPOSHNIK

						1		2	
3			4			5			
6									
						7		8	
9									

Answers on page 31!

Illustrated by Alexander VOLOSENKO

TONGUES AND TOOTHPASTE

Catherine MARSHALL

Franklin's father heard his son talking to his friends about how Gary, the newest member of their group, cheated while they played the game. Franklin's father had watched them play and knew Gary had behaved honestly. That evening, he talked to his son – man to man. However, the fact that he lied about his friend didn't really bother Franklin.

"Okay, maybe he didn't cheat. I take back what I said," he answered flippantly.

"Truly?" his father asked in surprise. "Did you know that it's very hard to take back the words you say? Come with me."

He led Franklin to the bathroom and gave him a tube of toothpaste. "Squeeze some toothpaste into the sink," he told his son.

Franklin thought that was strange, but he did what his father said.

"Now, son, try to put the toothpaste back in the tube."

Franklin tried. First he used a toothbrush, then toothpicks, and finally he tried using his mother's nail file. It didn't work.

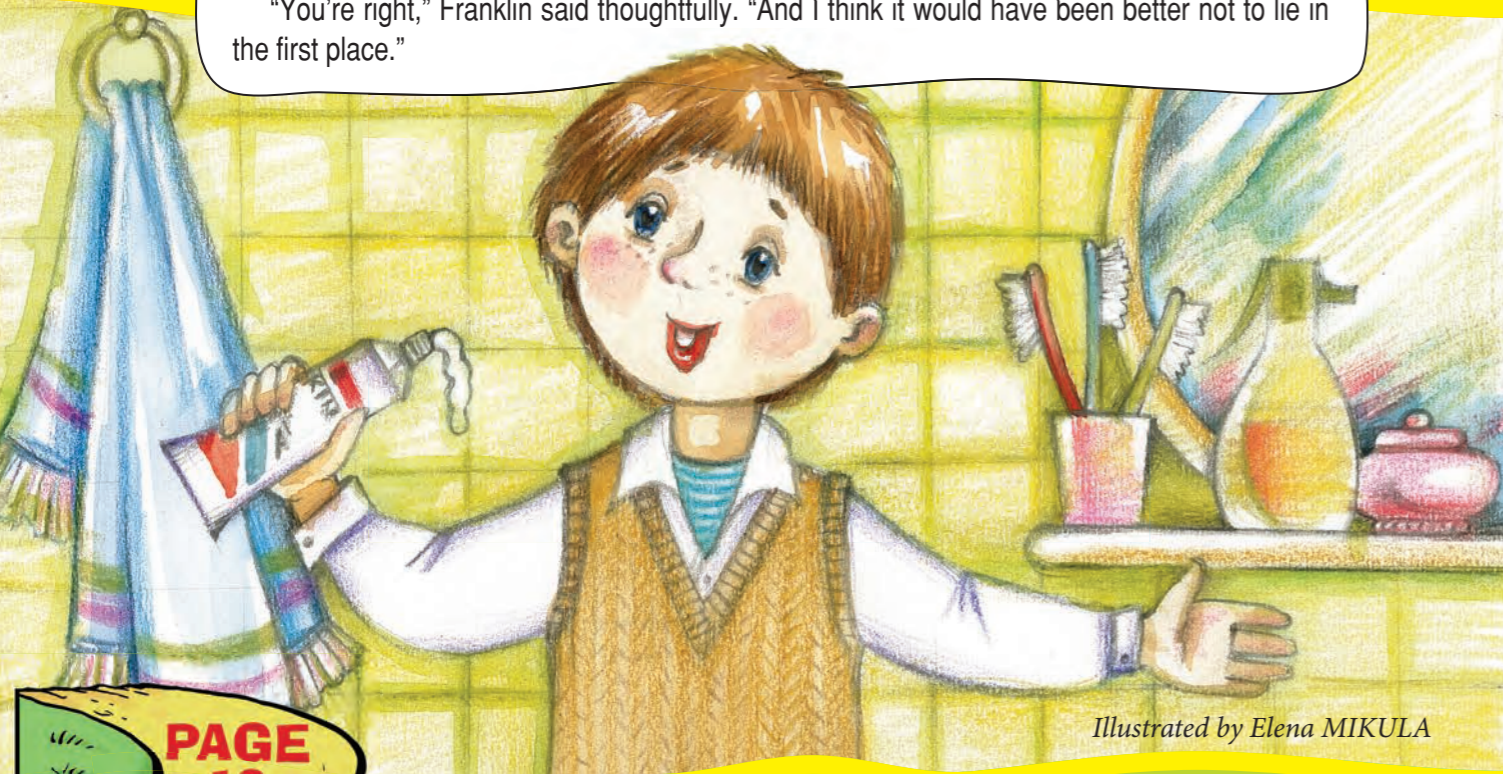
"You see, Franklin," his father explained, "You told a lie. You don't know how many people have heard this lie by now. Just as you can't put the toothpaste back in the tube, you also can't take back your words."

Franklin bowed his head.

"What do I do now?" he asked.

"You can tell God you're sorry for what you did, and then go ask Gary to forgive you."

"You're right," Franklin said thoughtfully. "And I think it would have been better not to lie in the first place."



Illustrated by Elena MIKULA

FAITH'S CHOICE

Angelica BLUM

When Faith's classmates saw how often she lied, they didn't want to listen to her or be around her. At first, life was normal. No one noticed that she lied whenever a lie was more convenient than the truth. Then one day, the teacher caught her in a lie. A few days later, it happened again, and then a third time. The other kids noticed and soon no one wanted to talk to Faith.

At first, Faith was surprised to find herself alone at recess while the others played kickball or other games. When she went up to the girls and said she wanted to play with them, Zoe shook her head and said, "There are already too many of us for this game." Faith was hurt and walked away. She pulled out a sandwich and started eating it.

"Why doesn't anyone want to play with me?" she thought angrily.

This continued until a new boy, Eugene, joined the class. Faith liked Eugene right away. He was open and always said what was on his mind. Talking to Eugene was fun. All the kids liked him.

When Eugene noticed that Faith lied, he planted himself in front of her, thrust his hands into his pockets, and said, "Actually, you're a nice person. It's too bad you lie so often. I can't stand lies." Then he turned around and joined the other students.

Faith understood everything. She felt ashamed and disgusted with herself. Eugene's words echoed in her thoughts and she finally decided not to lie anymore. A few days after making her decision, Faith realized telling the truth was a lot harder than lying. However, her classmates once again started playing with her and she wasn't

lonely anymore. Each time when she wanted to tell a lie, she remembered Eugene's words and told the truth.

One day, Zoe ran up to her at recess. "Faith, want to play on our team?" she asked. Of course she did!

You can read more about this topic in Proverbs.



Illustrated by Julia PRAVDOHINA

Indeed, not those who are wronged, but those who do wrong deserve our tears. For the covetous man and the slanderer, and the man guilty of any other wrong-doing injure themselves most of all, while they are of great benefit to us, if we do not avenge ourselves.



John Chrysostom

WHAT MADE THE LITTLE SQUIRREL LAUGH



The day promised to be a hot one. Hot, sunny days are perfect for splashing around in the water. Squirrel and his friends grabbed their inflatable toys, towels, toy buckets and shovels, and ran to the pond.



With a running start, Rabbit jumped into the water, getting wet up to his ears. "The water is so warm!" he shouted. "It's warm like the milk my mother gives me at night before I go to bed," Hedgehog added.



Picking his way through the water, he dragged a huge inflatable ball over to Rabbit. Meanwhile, Squirrel climbed onto a branch that hung over the water, tucked in his tail, and jumped in.



Bear liked Squirrel's jump and he decided to jump in, too. His jump made huge waves that almost knocked the animals over.



The friends swam, dove, played catch with the ball, and took turns jumping into the water from Bear's shoulders. Suddenly Rabbit said, "Everyone freeze! Don't move!"



"Did you know that if you wait until the water is calm, you can see yourself in it?" Following Rabbit's suggestion, the friends froze and stood as though rooted to the ground.



When the water grew calm, they saw themselves on its smooth surface. They stood, watching the "water portraits."



Squirrel interrupted the stillness. "Ha, ha, ha!" he laughed. "I never noticed it before! Just look at Rabbit's ears, they're so long! Ha, ha, ha!"



"And Hedgehog! Why do you have such long needles? You should get a haircut and have them trimmed." Rabbit, Hedgehog, and Bear stood, silently looking at their reflections.



Squirrel kept laughing. "Bear! You should eat less honey! Look, your reflection takes up almost half of the pond! Ha, ha, ha!"



The friends stood silently for a few more seconds, then Bear looked up and mumbled, "I have to go, my mom is probably waiting for me."



Squirrel laughed, but his friends grew sad and quiet. Lowering their eyes, they didn't say anything.



Rabbit followed him to the bank. "Wait for me; I'm coming too!" Hedgehog called as he climbed out of the water. Soon Squirrel was alone in the pond. He didn't yet realize what he had done.



"What about you?" Hedgehog asked Rabbit Squirrel in a serious voice. "Are you going to say anything about yourself?" "What about me?" Squirrel asked. "Just look at my beautiful tail. No one has a fluffy tail like mine."



When Squirrel came home, his mother was surprised to see him. "I thought you wouldn't be home 'til dinner time! Did something happen?" Squirrel told his mother everything.



"I don't understand why they got upset," he added. "I told them the truth! I didn't lie." Mother came and sat beside her son.



"Oh, my dear," she said, "It is very important to only tell the truth, but some words can deeply hurt our friends."



"For example, Rabbit does have long ears, but this is a good thing. Because of his long ears, he can hear a wolf trying to sneak up on him!"



"The Hedgehog's needles are great for protecting him from predators. No one except old Uncle Porcupine has such wonderful protection."



"A fox may try to attack Hedgehog, but she will leave him alone after being pricked by his sharp needles. And Bear's large size gives him strength to help fight against an enemy."



The sun shone down and a cool breeze blew as Squirrel carefully listened to Mother's words.



Mother continued, "In the forest, the animals face many dangers. That's why everyone needs their own way to defend themselves."



"Imagine a skinny bear, a hedgehog without needles, or a rabbit without ears." Squirrel giggled, even though he didn't feel like laughing.



He understood how much he had hurt his best friends, and wondered how he could fix what he had done.



However, Squirrel wasn't very good at drawing so he decided to label his pictures. To my friend, Hedgehog, who has the most beautiful needles.



To my strongest friend, Bear. To my friend, Rabbit, who has the beautiful ears and incredible hearing. When the pictures were ready, he rolled them up and bounded down the trunk of the tree.



He found his friends in a shady spot at the edge of the meadow. They always went there to hide from the rays of the blazing sun. This time they didn't look very happy.



"Also, my dear," Mother continued, as she gave her son a harsh look, "Do not brag about what you have."



Squirrel felt ashamed and lowered his eyes. "Don't brag even if you have something others don't," Mother added. "Or if you can do something better than others..."



"Like jumping?" Squirrel interrupted impatiently. "Yes, like jumping," Mother said. "But that does not mean you are better than anyone else."



When Squirrel ran into the meadow, they didn't smile. "Friends! I'm sorry! I was so mean."



"You are the best and most wonderful friends a squirrel could have," he said in a loud voice. Then he paused and added,



"I'll try not to say things that will hurt you. Please forgive me!" He remembered the pictures and handed them out to his friends.



"Trying to notice the good in others, instead of ourselves, is always best. If you do that, you'll have lots of true friends."



Squirrel's eyes shone. He ran up the tree trunk and disappeared into the tree hollow.



He had forgotten to thank his mother, but she didn't mind because she knew her youngster had just figured out how to fix his mistake and ran off to try his idea.



Bear, Hedgehog, and Rabbit smiled as they looked at their pictures. "Why do I have such a big nose?" Bear wondered.



"Hey, my right paw is bigger than my left paw in this picture," Rabbit laughed. "Did you forget about my ears?!" Hedgehog joked. "Why aren't they in the picture?"



Squirrel frowned and answered, "It's because I'm not good at drawing yet. As soon as I learn to draw better I'm going to give you really, really good pictures!"



Once inside the tree hollow, Squirrel pulled out three sheets of paper and a box of crayons. He started drawing.



"My pictures are going to show my friends all the wonderful things I see in them!" Squirrel thought.



With great care, Squirrel drew Rabbit's long ears. He gave Hedgehog lots of needles, and he drew such a large Bear that the picture hardly fit on the page.



All four friends laughed because of the funny pictures, and because of the rays of the sun that shone through the branches warmed and tickled their fur.



And, most of all, because they were happy to be together again.

Illustrated by Julia PRAVDOHINA

Do you wish to receive mercy?
Show mercy to your neighbor.



John Chrysostom

SUMMER CAMP

Summer has always been a little slice of life filled with sunshine, flowers, and bright colors – a time of having fun and trying new things. As the summer began, kids from various neighborhoods gathered for the much-anticipated Greenville Summer Camp. Every year, the church of Greenville planned and organized this Christian camp for kids.

This year's camp theme was "Children from Every Tribe and Nation."

The camp counselors, also called "chiefs," gathered the campers and explained what it meant to be united as one tribe and led by one main chief – God, the Eternal One. Together, they set goals. During camp, they decided to learn God's Laws and get to know one another so they could be united as one family of children from every tribe and nation. The counselors spent a lot of time focusing on the Bible lessons. They rejoiced as the children asked good questions, memorized verses, and prayed together. In the Bible lessons, the children met the first brothers, Cain and Abel, and learned what happens because of jealousy. They ate lunch with Noah after dressing up as animals and marching, two by two, into a dining hall decorated to look like a ship's cabin.

Of course everyone remembered the day they studied the birth of the Eternal One's son. From the very beginning, everything was decorated with Christmas ornaments, wreaths, and garlands. Christmas music played in the background. That day, each cabin created its own manger scene and decorated a Christmas tree.

Summer camp gave the kids a chance to play sports, be creative with crafts, and show the talents given to them by their Creator, the Eternal One. Each day of camp was filled with excitement and included a prize-hunt. Another favorite activity for both campers and counselors was the daily swim time at the river.

In the evenings, they gathered around the big tribal bonfire, reviewed the events of the day, had skits, and sang songs glorifying the Eternal One. Each day had a special theme or idea. Using this theme, the kids wrote and acted out skits complete with costumes and songs. That's how they taught each other about values like trust, respect, and faith in times of trials.

One evening, they held a talent show. Everyone who wanted to could participate, and the kids enjoyed seeing all the different talents.

On their final evening together, the counselors released paper lantern-like hot air balloons that rose into the sky to show how Jesus had been lifted up. They reminded the campers that children from every tribe and nation would one day be lifted up in the same way to meet the Eternal One.

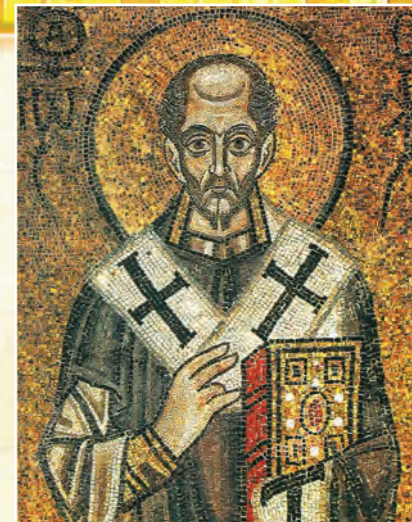
The kids had tears in their eyes when it was finally time to say good-bye, but the thought of meeting together next summer with children from every tribe and nation filled their hearts with joy.

Praise God for the opportunities He gives to share hope with children through summer camp.

Shukhrat OBIDOV

John Chrysostom

Born between 344 and 354 A.D.,
Died in 407 A.D.



John Chrysostom.
Mosaic at the St. Sophia
Cathedral in Kiev. XI century

"When you do some good work that you think needs to be seen by men and start to look for a witness to your deed, remember that God sees and you will wipe out any such desire within yourself."

John Chrysostom

Childhood

Antioch, a large commercial city in ancient Syria, bustled with activity. From early morning, porters scurried through the streets and city squares. The calls of street vendors loudly praising their products invited the customers to come and buy, and caravans of camels, belonging to weary merchants, slowly wove through the city as they made their way to the inn.

A boy named John squeezed his way through the crowd. He had to get to school. If he was late, his teacher, Libanius, would be very upset.

John was fortunate to learn from Libanius, a well-known philosopher and rhetorician (speech teacher),



A scene showing daily life in ancient Antioch.
450-475 A.D.

especially since John only had a mother. The boy couldn't even remember his father, who died when he was very young. His mother took care of him and devoted her entire life to her only son. That's why John studied so hard. He didn't want to disappoint his mother and he liked his studies, especially the study of Scripture.

Youth

The years passed quickly. The boy became a young man but his love of learning and the Word of God did not fade. At the age of twenty, he dedicated his life to God and became a member of the church of Antioch. John was active in the community and had many different ministries. The young Christian read God's Word and explained it, preached, taught children and adults who wanted to join the church, sang in the choir, and was involved in doing acts of charity.

The struggle for purity in the Christian doctrine

John continued studying God's Word under Diodore of Tarsus, a famous defender of Christianity during the harsh years of Julian II, the Emperor of Rome, also known as Julian the Apostate. Julian

He restored pagan temples and the practice of worshipping idols. He even promised great benefits to Christians willing to turn away from Jesus Christ.

During this time, many wavered in their faith and rejected the church or were led astray by false teachings. John, under the guidance of his teacher and mentor, joined the battle for the pure Christian teaching through some of his early writing about theology. His hard work and abilities were appreciated, and the young man found himself chosen to be lector at the church in Antioch. Shortly after that, he found himself facing a time of grief and trials when his mother, Anthusa, died.

The grief of losing his only loved one greatly changed John. This active servant in the church left the city to live in a cave. He lived in seclusion for four years, praying and fasting.

The harsh lifestyle of a hermit ruined John's health, forcing him to return to Antioch. Gradually,



An engraving showing Antioch. 1581 A.D.

the life of the Christian leader took on a familiar pattern as he resumed witnessing, teaching, and encouraging those who sought the truth and found it in the Creator. During these years, John wrote his main theological works, which included "On Providence," "The Book of St. Babylos, and Against Julian and the Pagans," "Letter to a Young Widow," and many others.

Preaching ministry

At the age of forty, John was ordained as a priest, which meant his main responsibility would be preaching the Word of God. A preacher usually spoke twice a week, but John was especially gifted as a preacher. He preached every day. All those childhood and adult years of diligent study had not been wasted. That's why crowds came from farther and farther away to listen as he preached God's Word.

John's fame grew, bringing him the nickname, "Chrysostom," which means "golden mouthed." Under this name, he entered the history of the Christian Church. His preaching ministry lasted twelve years. Many of John Chrysostom's sermons were written down and kept as commentaries to help people understand the Word of God.

In 397 A.D. the Archbishop of Constantinople died and John, the preacher at the church of Antioch, was chosen to take his place. When he arrived at Constantinople, the spiritual center of the



John Chrysostom. Mosaic of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. X century



Coins with the image of Emperor Julian II and Empress Eudoxia

Eastern Church, John saw priests who had forgotten the importance of preaching God's Word. They were trying to get rich so they could live comfortable lives. John Chrysostom began his service as archbishop by reforming the priesthood. He also used his own salary to build several hospitals and inns for travelers.

Banishment and Exile

The capital and especially the court of the ruler, Emperor Arcadius, struck the preacher of the Gospel with its sinfulness, cruelty, greed and envy. John could not remain silent and spoke out against the officials and nobles who called themselves Christians, but lived lives that did not follow Biblical teaching.

Of course, the court quickly grew to dislike the new archbishop. Empress Eudoxia, the wife of Arcadius, accused John of insulting the emperor and



John Chrysostom before Empress Eudoxia. Artist Jean-Paul Laurens. 1880 A.D.

demanded that John be executed. However, his popularity and influence was so great that Emperor Arcadius did not dare to kill the archbishop and instead sent him into exile. That same night a huge earthquake shook the capital, scaring Eudoxia. She quickly sent John a letter of apology, asking him to return. However, she could not live in the same city as the preacher and once again had him exiled.

John Chrysostom was sent to Armenia, where he wrote many letters in which he encouraged, supported, and taught his friends and followers. This irritated his powerful enemies, and they gave the



View of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. Artist Eduard Hildebrandt. 1852 A.D.

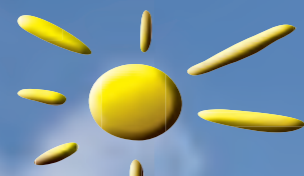
order to have John exiled farther away to the tiny, distant town of Pitiunt (now the modern city of Pitsunda, Georgia).

Banishment and exile further weakened John's health. The preacher could not withstand the hardships of the long journey. Despite these facts, the guards traveled with John Chrysostom for three long months, taking him to his new place of exile. John never arrived. He died in the village of Comana on September 14th, 407 A.D. with the words, "Glory be to God for all things!"

Nadezhda ORLOVA



Valley of Hinnom



area called Abu Tor. One of the gates in that region – the Zion Gate of Jerusalem – is even called the Valley Gate.

“The Valley of Hinnom is a narrow and deep ravine on the south and west side of Jerusalem. It has steep banks. During the rainy season, a small stream flows from this valley into the Kidron Brook. It’s a fertile valley. In the southeastern part, near the Pool of Siloam, it is covered with gardens and groves. In ancient times, it included a place called Tophet. Even during Solomon’s time, it had high places for worshipping Ashorah, Chemosh, and Molech. King Ahaz and Manasseh offered incense to idols at these high places. People even sacrificed their children to Molech. Josiah, a good king, destroyed the idols and ordered that the trash and filth of Jerusalem be brought to this valley and burned. Over time, the Israelites came to look at the place with disgust.

Joshua went to Greg’s house on Saturday. Greg’s parents had recently returned from a trip to Israel and Joshua wanted to hear more about that country. Greg’s mom was not home – she had gone to visit her sick mother – but Greg’s father gladly talked to the boys about the trip to the Holy Land.

“Two days ago, Mom told us about the Kidron Valley, which is by the Valley of Hinnom,” Greg said. “We want to hear more about the Valley of Hinnom. Why does it have that name, Dad?”

“People believe the valley got its name from the days when a son of Hinnom lived there,” Greg’s father explained. “The Valley of Hinnom is near the Old City, a part of Jerusalem between Mount Zion and an



View of the Valley of Hinnom (top right) from the Mount of Olives

“The Valley of Hinnom is called Gehinnom in Hebrew and the Greeks pronounced the name as Gehenna. That’s why, when Christ used this word, everyone understood what he was talking about. Gehenna was a symbol of punishment for the condemned. The location of the Potter’s Field, the place where Judas hung himself, and the spot where strangers were buried is thought to be south of the Valley of Hinnom.”

“What an interesting valley!” Joshua exclaimed. “There are many burial caves carved into the face of the cliff,” Greg’s father continued. “There’s no other place near Jerusalem where the tombs are so well preserved. They confirm the prophecy of Jeremiah, who said that this place would no longer be called Tophet or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter. We didn’t want to go there,” Greg’s father said at the end of his story.

Compiled by Victoria GAYDAEVA

WHICH ANSWER IS RIGHT?

1. ON WHICH MOUNTAIN DID GOD GIVE THE TEN COMMANDMENTS?

- a) Mount Zion
- b) Mount Sinai
- c) Mount Carmel

2. WHO COULD ENTER THE HOLY OF HOLIES ONCE A YEAR?

- a) The Prophet
- b) The Priest
- c) The High Priest

3. HOW MANY YEARS DID MOSES SPEND CARING FOR HIS FATHER-IN-LAW’S FLOCK?

- a) 39
- b) 40
- c) 42

6. WHICH PROPHET FORETOLD THE BIRTHPLACE OF JESUS CHRIST?

- a) Malachi
- b) Micah
- c) Zechariah

4. HOW MANY SPIES DID JOSHUA SEND INTO CANAAN?

- a) 2
- b) 12
- c) 20

5. WHO DEFEATED GOLIATH?

- a) David
- b) Saul
- c) Daniel

7. HOW MANY PLAGUES DID GOD INFLECT ON THE EGYPTIANS?

- a) 5
- b) 10
- c) 15

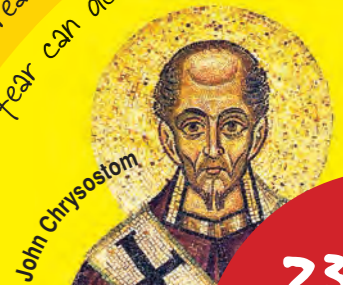
8. WHO WROTE MOST OF THE PSALMS?

- a) David
- b) Moses
- c) Asaph

For answers, see page 31.

Illustrated by Victoria DUNAYEVA

Words can create just as much as fear can destroy.



John Chrysostom

Sergei SANNIKOV

10. Universal Arguments and the Canon

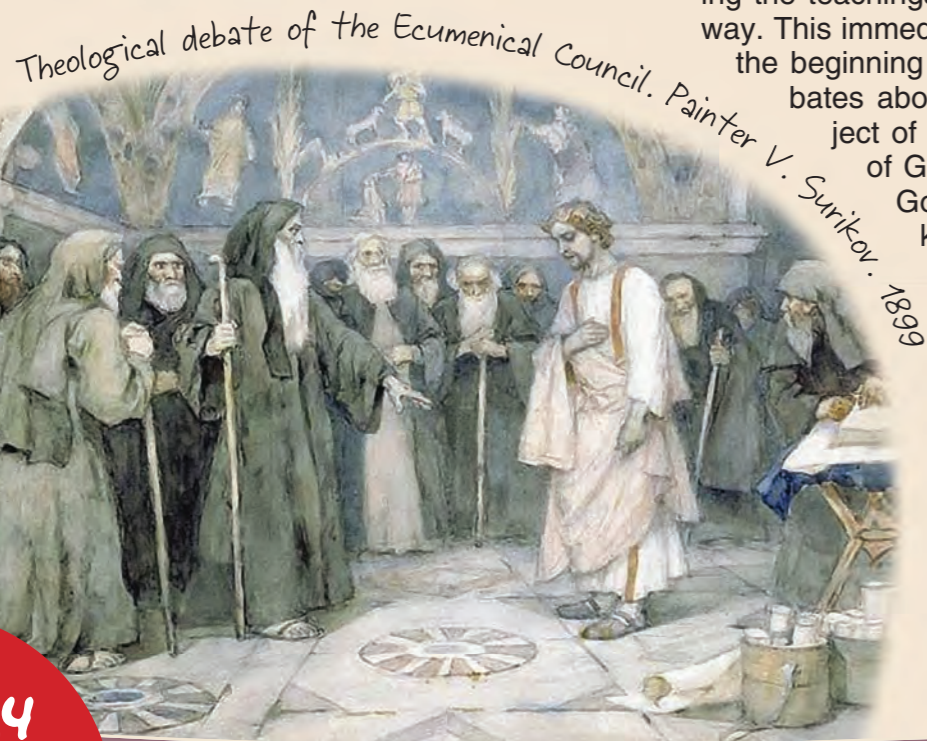


Leo Tolstoy wrote a story about three old hermits who met a missionary in the Far North. "How do you serve God? How do you pray?" asked the missionary. "We live very simply and serve God with what little we can do. When we pray, we say, 'Three of you, three of us. Have mercy on us,'" answered one of the old men. "You are not praying in the right way, brothers," said the missionary. "You have heard about the Trinity, but you don't know how to please God. I will teach you." The missionary started praying the Lord's Prayer. He didn't stop until he had taught them the entire prayer. In the evening, he said good-bye and sailed away on his ship. That morning, when the missionary got up and looked out over the water, he saw the three hermits. They came running toward the ship, running on water

as though it was dry land, shouting "Servant of God! Servant of God! We forgot what you taught us! Tell us again, how should we pray to God?" Weeping, the missionary said, "It's not my place to teach you, brothers. Pray as you know how. God obviously hears you."

For a long time, Christianity did not focus on theology. However, by the beginning of the IV century, it began to concentrate on explaining the teachings of Christ in a logical, orderly way. This immediately led to arguments. It was the beginning of an era of councils and debates about Christianity. The main subject of these debates was the nature of God – His unity and the idea of God as Three in One. Another key subject was the nature of Jesus Christ and whether he was God, man, or both at the same time.

It is interesting that Christ himself did not leave any philosophical or theological formulas. His sermons and the messages preached by the apostles were filled with practical teaching. However, the arguments about Christianity, also called ecumenical debates, brought together



Theological debate of the Ecumenical Council. Painter V. Surikov. 1899

bishops from all over the empire. They met and discussed the issues in such lofty terms that ordinary Christians couldn't understand what they were talking about.

Sometimes it seems like the people who met for these religious discussions, also called councils, believed that the human tongue could perfectly express God's truth and that salvation depended on having the right words! However, the first Christians didn't create philosophies. They lived according to Christ's commands.

Despite the arguments, God used the Holy Spirit to guide the formation of the canon of scripture. This canon is the books of the Bible that make up God's Word. It is the basis for



The first Ecumenical Council of Nicaea. Fresco Vatican library. 1600

the Christian life and for the beliefs of Jesus Christ's followers. This time period in the history of Christianity appears to be filled with fighting, suspicions, and accusations since the church was in the middle of theological and political struggles. However, the fight was not about the biblical canon. None of the councils chose the books that would become part of the Holy Scriptures, although some did record what the church had already done in forming the canon. The formation of the canon through the selection of the books inspired by God happened simply and naturally. Over the course of three centuries, churches had accepted the books that were inspired by God and taught the truths of the Christian faith and rejected those books that did not. The books they considered to be inspired by God have become accepted as the biblical canon.

One of the priests defined the biblical canon very clearly and precisely. "The canon is that which is believed always, everywhere, and by all Christians." True Christianity is the result of a life that loves and has a relationship with Christ. It is not the result of philosophies and doctrine alone.



Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria

During the age of debates over theology, the church lost its ability to live out the Christian life, but created more and more theological and philosophical ideas. However, this era was still an important one for Christianity. It gave the world great preachers such as Basil of Caesarea, Athanasius of Alexandria, and John Chrysostom. Almost all of them faced hard times because of their beliefs. For example, even though John Chrysostom held the highly respected position of an archbishop, he was sent into exile and practically tortured because his sermons offended those who were doing wrong. Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, was exiled five times and spent fifteen difficult years in exile. At this time, the church leaders often exiled or executed those leaders who thought differently than the ruling majority.

FLOWER OF TRUTH

Hey, wait! Where are you off to? The flower shop? Then it's clear – you need a special bouquet! What? You haven't decided what message you want to send with the flowers? You should know that flowers have their own special language. You don't believe me? Just ask any florist! Yes, yes, all of us – meaning all flowers – know how to speak! We don't just whisper; sometimes we shout! We give people a subtle and symbolic way of expressing their thoughts, feelings, or ideas. Intelligent people call our language "Folography." For example, if someone wanted to use their bouquet to say, "I love you" they could give red roses, which are the symbol of true love. If someone wanted to give flowers as a sign of friendship, they should give yellow roses because yellow roses are a symbol of friendship. An olive branch is a symbol of peace and an elderberry branch is a symbol of sympathy. A daisy stands for modesty, the lily of the valley for reliability, and the dandelion for flirting.

Why am I telling you this? It's because I am an unusual flower! I am a symbol of truth! When I am given as a gift, it means the person who gives me away is talking about truth in all its forms. Such a gift expresses the truthfulness of the person to whom it is given and the sincerity of the giver. Now I'm sure you're interested, and want to know who I am.

Olga MARTYNOVA

I am a perennial bush 12–70 inches tall with creeping rhizome roots. I bloom from May to October. My flowers are usually purple, although sometimes they can be white or pink. My fruits are juicy, bright red berries that appear at the beginning of August, and my name is associated with the fruit. At first, the berries are very bitter but, as they ripen, they become sweeter. My taste is part of the reason I am considered a symbol of truth and faithfulness through difficulties.

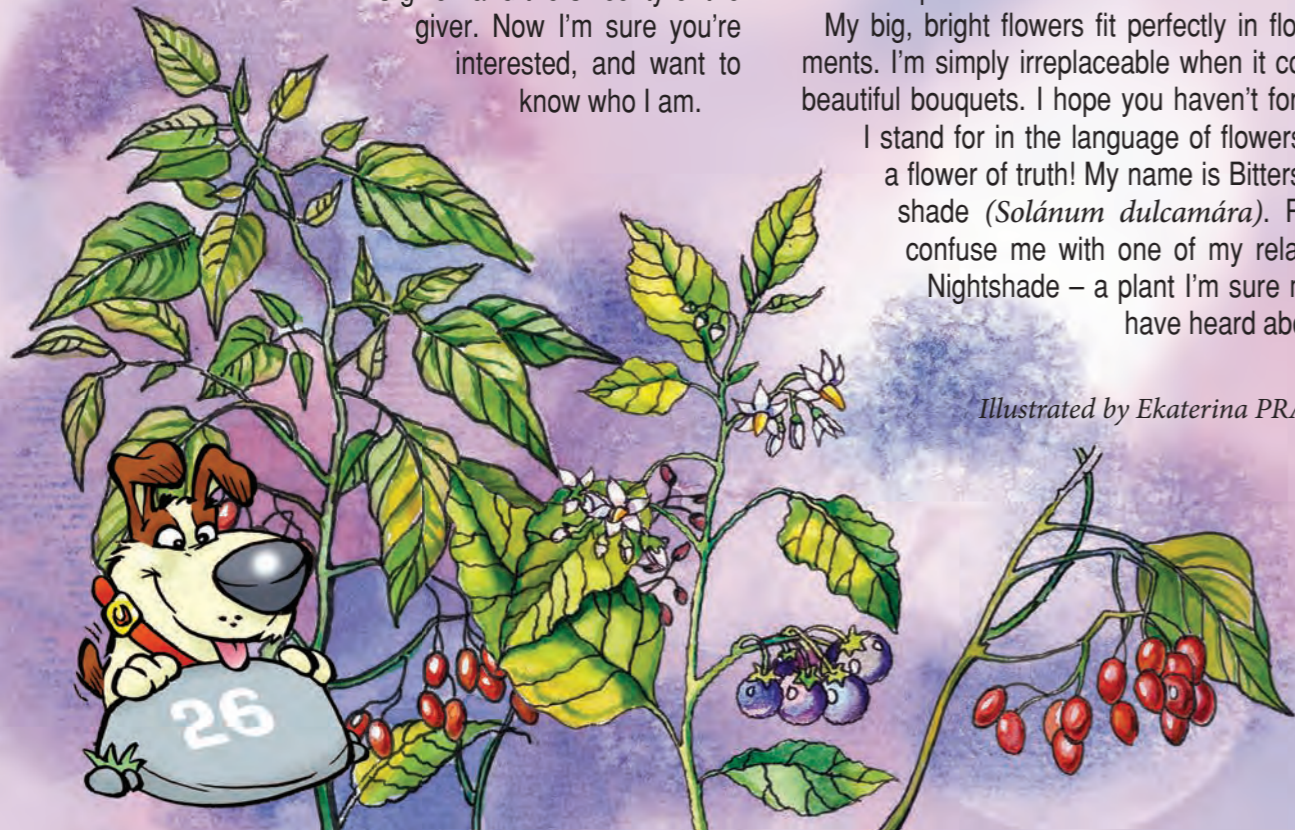
The oldest picture of me dates back to 1340 B.C. – the year the Egyptian pharaoh, Tutankhamun died. That picture was found in his burial place. Also, I was often included in medieval works of art.

I am commonly found in Russia, Central Asia, North America, and North Africa. I like moist thickets and the banks of lakes and ponds. I'm also a shade plant.

Since I am considered poisonous, I am often carefully dried and stored before being used as a decorative or medicinal plant.

My big, bright flowers fit perfectly in floral arrangements. I'm simply irreplaceable when it comes to big, beautiful bouquets. I hope you haven't forgotten what I stand for in the language of flowers. Yes, I am a flower of truth! My name is Bittersweet Nightshade (*Solanum dulcamara*). Please don't confuse me with one of my relatives, Black Nightshade – a plant I'm sure many of you have heard about.

Illustrated by Ekaterina PRAVDOHINA



Did you know?

Did you know that some plants smell nice, others have a foul scent, and many have no scent at all?

Tropical and subtropical plants usually have the strongest odors. For some plants, odor is a way of attracting pollinators. For others, odor is used to scare away enemies.



Did you know?

The **bay leaf** is more than just a valuable spice. This bitter, aromatic leaf improves appetite and encourages digestion. It can be used in medicine and has soothing properties.

Illustrated by Ekaterina PRAVDOHINA



Did you know?

Myrrh, a spice the wise men brought for baby Jesus, has a nice smell. It's tasty too! This spice comes from the resin of trees from the Commiphora family. These trees grow in Africa and Arabia. In ancient times, myrrh was used as a sweet fragrance and today it is used in medicines and perfumes.



Did you know?

Frankincense, another gift given to baby Jesus, is one of the most ancient aromatics. The essential oil of frankincense comes from the resin of Boswellia, a tree that grows in South Arabia. It is used in incense for church rituals, as well as in perfumes and aromatherapy. Incense symbolizes holiness and a pure life.

BLACKBIRDS

A family of Blackbirds made a home on our balcony (we live in Germany). They especially liked my boxes of geraniums.



In May there was a nice little nest with five eggs.



Blackbirds used to live in the woods, but man has squeezed them out of their natural habitat. These birds can be found throughout Europe and the European part of Russia. They also live in the forest belt of the Caucasus Mountains. During the winter, the Blackbirds that live in Germany fly south to France and Italy and the Blackbirds of Northern Europe fly south to Germany!

Some biologists told me that Blackbirds carry the eggshells away from the nest to avoid attracting predators.

After two weeks the eggs cracked and the charming little birds appeared! This is the first one.

Sadly, one of the eggs did not hatch, so the nest only had four baby birds.



Mama-Blackbird patiently sat on the eggs, warming them almost constantly. When they hatched she fed the little birds with all sorts of grubs and other insects.



He was black and had a yellow beak.



Papa-Blackbird also helped.

The baby birds looked quite different from their gray Mama.



The baby birds grew by leaps and bounds!



As they grew, fitting in the nest meant a tight squeeze.



After two weeks the chicks were supposed to be ready to leave the nest, but they sat on our balcony for probably about three weeks. Then, all of a sudden, all four flew off.



Mama and Papa Blackbird were very worried and continued teaching the chicks on the lawn and underneath the pines of our yard. The little birds would flap their wings – and fall to the grass, but they kept trying until they flew!

Have you heard a Blackbird sing? There are no words to describe it.

“Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young – a place near your altar, O LORD Almighty, my King and my God” (Psalm 84:3).



The teacher asked, "Why do you like the magazine 'Tropinka'?" Here is what the elementary students of Chumai, Moldova had to say:

It's an interesting children's magazine. It teaches kids lots of good things. I also like this magazine because it always has interesting stories, poems, puzzles, and information about God. My parents and grandparents also like "Tropinka." Mom says this magazine teaches kids to obey their parents and helps them understand right from wrong.
Olga DELIPEY

"Tropinka" has crosswords, poems, and stories with good lessons. I think kids everywhere love reading "Tropinka!" I know "Tropinka" is published in different languages. It is an educational magazine because all the kids at our school read it.
Darina MNYZHERYAN

"Tropinka" teaches all sorts of good things like kindness, honesty, and forgiveness. "Tropinka" is a very interesting magazine. I have many issues of "Tropinka." Every day I read the magazine, color the pictures, and solve the crosswords. The way it talks about God is very interesting.
Vitalina VARZARI

The magazine has nice pictures, very interesting poems, and stories with good advice. I never get tired of reading "Tropinka!"
Raisa BARADULYA

"Tropinka" has lots of stories and crosswords. It's golden! "Tropinka" is the very, very, very best! I love it so much!
Maksim KIZITSKIY

"Tropinka" has lots of poems, puzzles, and stories. And a lot of pictures to color! When I start to read this magazine I want to read more!
Irina BARADULYA

FRIENDS

Dear Tropinka, I am 11 years old and I hope you would consider putting the poem below that I wrote for my friends in your next issue of Tropinka magazine.

Friends are better than the sun,
'Cause they always have fun.

Friends are better than the sky
'Cause they never lie.

And if they ever lie,
they always always cry.

And when they think they are right,
they fight all through the night.

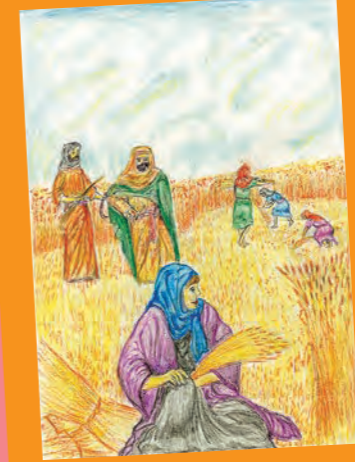
But smiles are their only files
to their friendship.

Because at the end,
you will always have a friend.

Your friend,
Sofiya Kuzmich, USA

"Tropinka" teaches us kindness. It tells different stories about God. There are puzzles, poems, and stories with morals. The stories show how much God loves us and that He forgives us. We need to grow up to be kind, polite, and well behaved. We have to help our elders. "Tropinka" has poems that teach us to be good and to love God. God is our Father and our Creator.
Timur GRUZDEV

"Tropinka" doesn't just have poems, crossword puzzles, and stories. It also has exciting games. Sometimes my whole family plays these games and sometimes I play by myself. I love doing the crafts in "Tropinka!"
Olga EMAN



Dmitry MAMCHUR, 12 years old, Ukraine

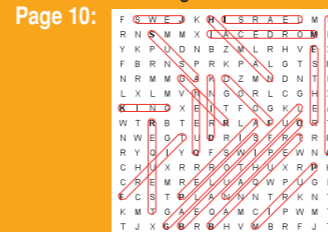
Esther, Xerxes, and Haman



Olga BYTKO, 11 years old

Answers

Page 2: "Speak the truth to each other" (Zechariah 8:16),
"He delights in men who are truthful" (Proverbs 12:22)



Page 11: **CROSSWORD.** ACROSS: 3. God 5. Jacob 6. Locust
7. Hezekiah 9. Matthew

DOWN: 1. Aaron 2. Mordecai 4. Desire 8. Elah

Page 23: WHICH ANSWER IS RIGHT: 1/B, 2/C, 3/B, 4/B, 5/A, 6/B, 7/B, 8/A

Page 32: "Do not give false testimony" (Luke 18:20).

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For elementary and middle school
age children.



Created by Alina ZLATOVA, 9 years old

A GOOD

FOUNDATION

Write out the red letters and you will discover the foundation for friendship and healthy relationships with other people.

→ M L A D G M T E D O X A P

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