

# Tropinkka

The Little Path

Christian Magazine for Kids



Exploring Faith  
With Friends  
Around the World!



How can  
you have a long  
and happy life?

Honor  
your parents!



# PRECIOUS TREASURE

Starlight brought the Magi  
From a distant land,  
Led them to Judea,  
To little Bethlehem.

There they found the Christ-child,  
Perfect King of kings.  
Bowing down they worshipped,  
Gave him precious things.

Their gifts cost a fortune –  
Gold, incense, and myrrh.  
What they gave was special,  
Valuable and pure.

But Mary looked in wonder  
At her baby boy.  
God's most perfect treasure  
Filled her heart with joy.

Illustrated  
by Victoria DUNAYEVA

# MORE THAN JUST OBEYING

Part 6

Elena MIKULA

“What’s wrong?” Mary asked, as soon as she saw Peter walk into the classroom. “Yesterday you didn’t come to Sunday School. Did something happen at your house? Why do you look so sad?”

“My dad won’t let me come to church,” Peter said with a scowl. “He says there are more important things for me to do at home. Yesterday, I had to help him put new cupboards in the kitchen.”

“It’s too bad you had to miss Sunday School, but it sounds like your dad needed your help.”

“Yeah, but he could have put in the cupboards on a different day!” Peter argued. “It’s always like this. On Saturday, he spends all day working in the garage. Then, on Sunday, he works on fixing things around the house or at the cottage. I told him the Bible says people are supposed to work for six days and have a day to rest. Then he gave me this huge lecture and reminded



me of everything from my grades, to soccer and the three months of summer vacation...”

“Don’t get upset. We’ll talk about it after class,” Mary said to her friend.

“No, there won’t be time after class. My dad gave me a whole list of things to do – get some medicine from the store, visit Grandma, pick up the dry-cleaning, and so on. I won’t have time to go to your house today.”



"That's okay. I'll go with you on your errands. We'll go to the store and visit your grandma. Actually, all these things will help us understand the next commandment. Do you know what it is?" Mary asked.

"Yes, 'Honor your father and your mother.'" Peter answered.

"There's more to this commandment. It also says, '...so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.' This is a commandment with a promise. God promises a long life to those who obey their parents and honor them," Mary explained.



"It's easy for you to say that," Peter grumbled. "You have Christian parents and your dad never punishes you. Your life's not like mine."

"We don't get to pick our parents. It's because of your parents that you're here and you're alive. They take care of you, feed you, and give you clothes to wear. If your dad punishes you, it's because he loves you and wants you to grow up to be a good person."

"I understand all that, but sometimes it's hard for me to obey."

Just then the bell rang, and they had to break off their conversation. After class, Mary and Peter went to the store to buy medicine for Peter's grandma and started walking to her house. Mary suddenly stopped at one of the little shops along the road.

"Wait a second," she said, and walked up to the door of a brightly colored flower shop. "Let's buy some flowers for your grandma!"

"Why? It's not Mother's Day. Why does she need flowers?"

"Are you only allowed to give your grandma flowers on Mother's Day?" Mary laughed.

"No. There's also her birthday."

Mary gave Peter a look and bought a bunch of chrysanthemums.

Peter's Grandma greeted the kids with a smile and invited them to sit down and have some freshly baked chocolate chip cookies. She loved the flowers and kept looking at them and hugging Peter and Mary.

After they said goodbye and left Grandma's house, Peter said, "You know, she usually grumbles and complains about



everything, but today she was so nice and kind. Was it because of the flowers?"

"No, it was because of honor. You had to bring your grandma medicine. That was obeying your parents. They gave you that job and you had to do it. Giving flowers, saying nice things to your Grandma, or just going with her for a walk in the park – that's showing honor. It honors your parents and your grandma." Mary smiled and continued, "And that's what leads to a good life. Didn't you have a good time visiting your grandma?"

"Wait, Mary. I'll be right back," Peter said as he ran back down the street.

A couple minutes later he returned holding a bunch of asters.

"I bought these flowers for my mom, she loves asters. And this is for you, Mary, even though you're not my mom or my grandma." With an embarrassed shrug, Peter pulled several flowers out of the bunch and gave them to his smiling classmate. "Why do you women love flowers so much?"

(To be continued)



Illustrated by Victoria DUNAYEVA



# The Fifth Commandment

The main part of God's law (the Ten Commandments) can be divided into two parts: commandments about our relationship with God and commandments about our relationships with other people. We've already studied the first four commandments, which talk about our relationship with God. Now let's look at God's commandments about how we are to treat other people. Guess who God talks about first in these commandments? That's right, our parents! He says:

**"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you" (Exodus 20:12).**

# 5

No one in the whole world loves us the way our parents love us. We're a part of them. They're willing to give up just about anything for us. When God calls himself our Heavenly Father, He reminds us how much He loves us. There are lots of songs about mother's love for her children, but God's love is even greater.

Maybe you're thinking, "Why do we need this commandment if we already love our parents?" That's a good question. The commandment says, "Honor your father and your mother." There's a lot more to this command than loving your parents the way a little child loves those who care for them. For example, God makes it clear we're not supposed to yell at our parents and be disrespectful. As for those who would lift up their hand to harm their mother or father, God commanded that they be put to death. There's one more very important thing that God expects from us when it comes to our relationship with our parents – obedience! I know obeying Mom and Dad isn't always easy, but God commands it. The Bible says that the people who rebelled against God have become, "slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy" (Romans 1:30-31). Did you notice the words "they disobey their parents"? Disobeying your parents is a very serious sin.

The fifth commandment tells us to honor our parents and take care of them when they grow old. One day, the parents who took care of us will need us to take care of them. Even when you have your own family, you have to take care of your parents. How do you do that? Call them, ask how they're doing and whether they need anything, visit them, look after them, and make sure they have what they need. God cares for the elderly, that's why He gave us this commandment.

Do you want God's blessing in your life? Do you want your life to be interesting and meaningful? Then you need to follow God's Word. In his letter to the Ephesians the Apostle Paul wrote, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother' – which is the first commandment with a promise – 'so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth'" (Ephesians 6:1-3).

Do you want the best for yourself and your future children? Then follow the fifth commandment of the Lord your God.

Waldemar ZORN

**Father and Son**

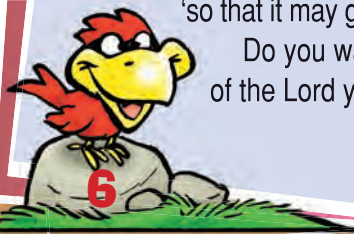
Write down all the red letters and you'll find out how Jesus Christ, the Son of God, honored his Father.

Check your answer on page 31.

Illustrated by Victoria DUNAYEVA

START

PAGE 7





# DAVID AND ABSALOM

Waldemar ZORN

The Bible tells us about the history of different nations, kingdoms, and people. Some of the stories are light and happy, others are dark and sad. Both kinds have a lot to teach us. After all, we're talking about the Bible — the Word of God! It describes real life. Today, I'm going to tell you one of the sad stories. It happened to our favorite hero, King David. You can find all the details of this story in the 15th through 18th chapter of 2 Samuel.

King David had many sons and daughters. When David grew old, some of his sons started claiming the throne. They wanted to be the next king of Israel after the death of their father. According to the rules of that time, only the person chosen by the king could become the next king. One of David's sons — a man named Absalom — knew his father would never name him king because he had quarreled with his father. That's why he decided to use tricks and force to take the throne and make himself king. Over time, he got chariots, horses, and men. Every morning, while it was still early, he would go and wait near the city gate. Whenever someone came to court to have the king hear his complaint, Absalom would take that man aside and say, "You need someone to speak to the king for you. If I were the king

I would make sure you got justice." Through tricks like these, Absalom said bad things about David, his father. In time, people started to listen to what Absalom said and assumed he would make a better king than old David.

The day came when Absalom went to Hebron and gathered an army of supporters. He told his secret messengers to wait until a certain time and then announce throughout the whole country that Absalom was now king of Israel. By doing this, Absalom rebelled against his father.

When David found out that an army had gathered against him, he decided to leave Jerusalem. He didn't want a war to be fought in this city. King David and the people loyal to him went east. He had good friends there who gave him and his people shelter.

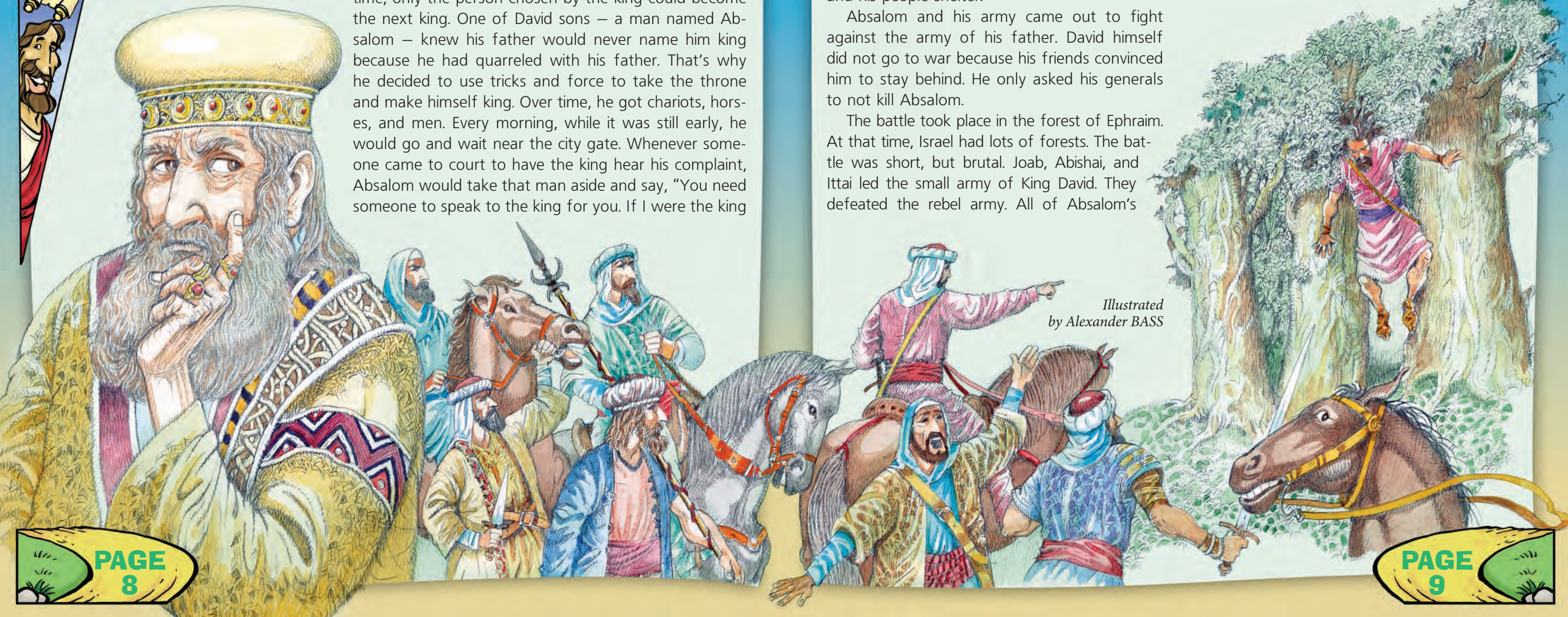
Absalom and his army came out to fight against the army of his father. David himself did not go to war because his friends convinced him to stay behind. He only asked his generals to not kill Absalom.

The battle took place in the forest of Ephraim. At that time, Israel had lots of forests. The battle was short, but brutal. Joab, Abishai, and Ittai led the small army of King David. They defeated the rebel army. All of Absalom's

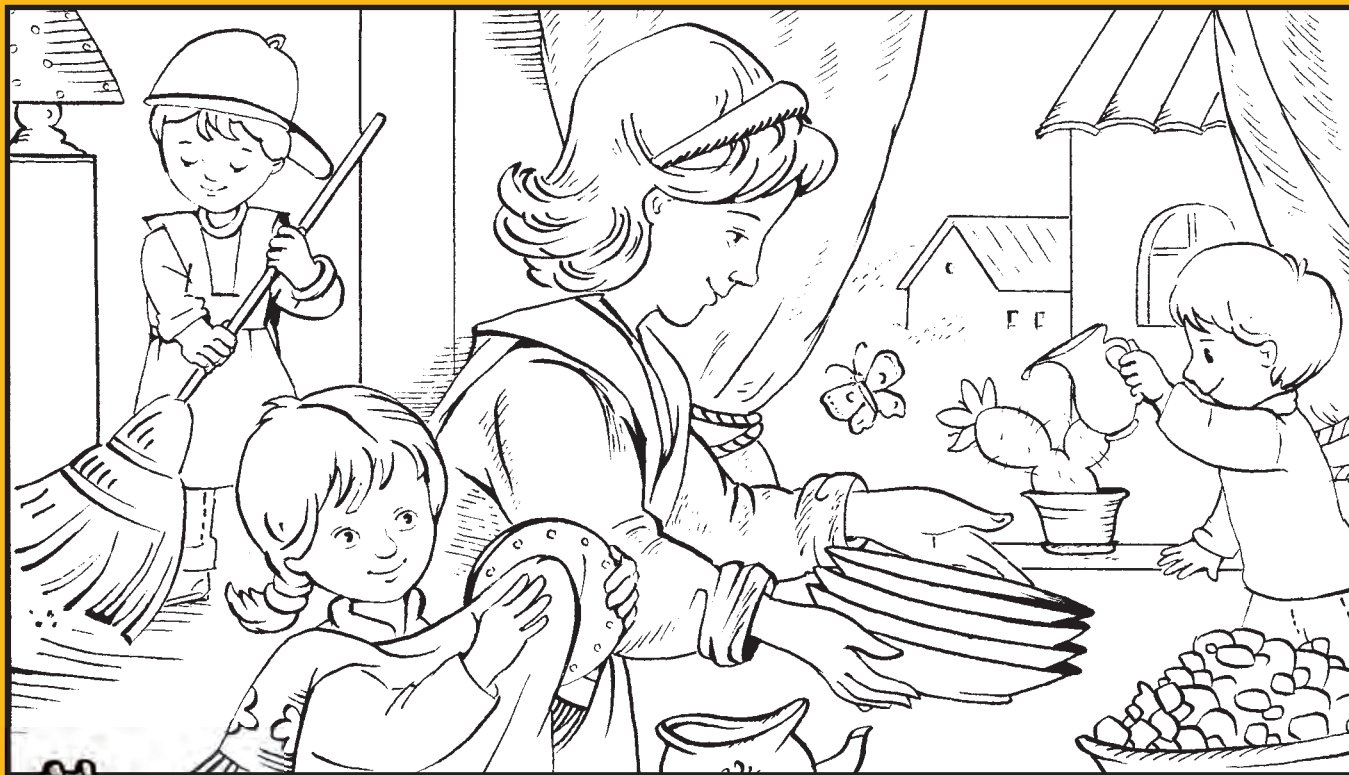
supporters scattered. Absalom also had no choice but to try to escape. He rode his mule through the forest, but he had such long, thick hair that when he passed under an oak tree, his hair got stuck in its branches. His mule ran away. That's how they found Absalom — hanging by his hair from an oak tree. Joab didn't follow King David's command and had Absalom killed. Then they took Absalom and threw him into a large pit and piled a heap of stones on top of him.

That's how the life of Absalom, son of King David, came to a shameful end.

When David learned about the death of his son he wept bitterly. He was very sad that his son had received such a harsh punishment for turning against his father and against God.



Illustrated  
by Alexander BASS



Illustrated by Victoria DUNAYEVA

Find 9 differences between the two pictures and color the second picture.

Ilya VEZIKOV

# HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER



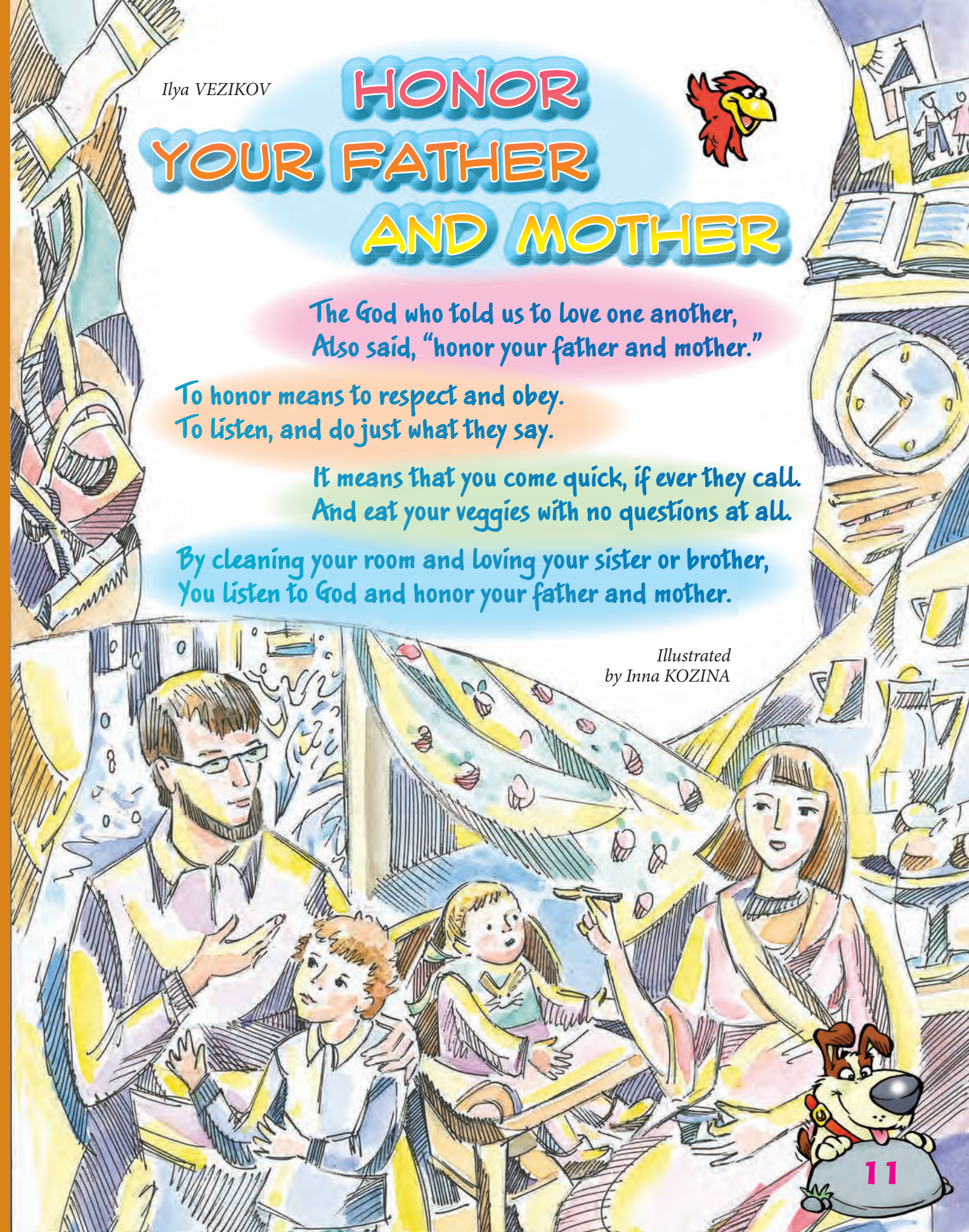
The God who told us to love one another,  
Also said, "honor your father and mother."

To honor means to respect and obey.  
To listen, and do just what they say.

It means that you come quick, if ever they call.  
And eat your veggies with no questions at all.

By cleaning your room and loving your sister or brother,  
You listen to God and honor your father and mother.

Illustrated by Inna KOZINA



# THE MOST WONDERFUL GIFT

Based on a story  
by Oliver HSU

Once, in a distant village in China, there lived an old peasant. He had three sons. The eldest son was very smart. When he grew up, he went to the big city of Shanghai and became a businessman. The second son also left his father's farm. He moved to the city of Nanjing and became a government official. The youngest son was tall and strong. He enjoyed farming. The father gave the son a plot of land some distance away from his own farm, and so the youngest son became a farmer.

The journey to Shanghai and Nanjing was long. Even the youngest son's plot of land was far away. That's why the father hardly ever saw his sons. He missed them. For his 80th birthday, his friends planned a special celebration. The dinner at that celebration would include very long noodles. Long noodles are a symbol of long life in China. All three sons received an invitation to the celebration and promised to come.

The day for the celebration finally arrived. The father was filled with joy. Today he would see his sons! He waited impatiently at the door of the house. At last, he saw someone coming. "It is my eldest son!" he thought but, when the traveler got closer, he realized it wasn't his son. It was a woman, the wife of his eldest son. "Where is my son?" the old father asked. His daughter-in-law answered, "Your son is very busy.

He cannot leave his work to come here today, but do not worry. Your eldest son has a wonderful present for you. He built a new house for you in the city and soon you will move to the city." The father looked at his daughter-in-law with a sad smile. "How nice," he finally managed to say in a choked voice.

Again, he stood at the door and waited. A little later he saw someone else traveling up the road. The old father hoped it was his middle son but, when the traveler came closer, he saw it was his middle son's wife. "Your son is very busy with the affairs of the government and cannot come," she said, "but he has brought you a valuable present – a brand new automobile and a driver who will take you wherever you want to go. "That... that is very nice," the father replied hesitantly.

Guests continued to arrive, but the youngest son still had not come. The father anxiously watched the road. Off in the distance, he finally saw a man walking down the road. He was dressed in plain Chinese clothes. Right away, the father recognized him as his youngest son. Behind him was his family. The old father was so happy he hurried to meet them. As was the custom, the youngest son bowed to his father and said, "Father, forgive me that we came so late and that we could not bring you a gift. The harvest was very bad this year, but we wanted to see you and to tell you that we love you."

The old father wept from joy. He did not want a house in Shanghai or an automobile with a driver. What mattered most were his sons and their love. The father wiped his tears away. "You gave me the most wonderful present by coming and saying you love me," he said.

*Did you know...*  
that prairie dogs are not related to dogs at all, although they can bark like a dog. They're actually related to rodents, like squirrels. They are very social and live in large colonies in underground tunnels and passages on the plains of North America. There's a very strict order in each colony and each family has its own area. The prairie dogs are hostile to strangers, but social and affectionate to members of their family.

Illustrated by Elena MIHAILOVA-RODINA



# WHAT TO GIVE?

Skit

**Cast:** Olivia and Katie, shop keeper, pastor, 4 wise men, 3 shepherds

**Olivia:** Hi Katie!

**Katie:** Hey.

**Olivia:** What's wrong? Why do you look so sad?

**Katie:** I don't have a birthday present for my best friend and I can't think of what to give him.

**Olivia:** When is his birthday?

**Katie:** Tomorrow.

**Olivia:** Tomorrow? That means your friend's birthday is on Christmas day! I think it'd be kind of nice to be born on a special day. Let's go see what kind of present we can find at the store for your friend.

**Katie:** Don't you know who I'm talking about? You don't know my friend? You don't know who was born on Christmas day?



**Olivia:** Nope. Now that I think about it, I'm glad none of my friends were born on Christmas. Then they'd have to celebrate two holidays in one day.

**Katie:** No, not two holidays, just one... *(The girls arrive at the store.)*

**Shop Keeper:** Hello! How may I help you?

**Olivia:** We want to buy a present, we just don't know what kind we need...

**Katie:** We need a present for Jesus.

**Shop Keeper:** For Jesus! I'm sorry, but I don't have anything like that.

**Katie:** That's too bad.

**Shop Keeper:** Good-bye!

**Olivia and Katie:** Good-bye!

**Olivia:** You want a present for Jesus? Isn't He the one we heard about in some after-school program a church group started?

**Katie:** Yes, that's Jesus. He left heaven and was born as a baby when He came to earth. That's why we celebrate Christmas. It's the birthday of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Olivia:** The Lord Jesus Christ? You're starting to sound like one of those church-going people.

**Katie:** Church! That's a great idea! The pastor at church can help us think of the perfect present for Jesus. *(The girls arrive at the church.)*

**Pastor:** Hello girls! What brings you here? The service won't start till 6 p.m.

**Olivia:** We wanted to ask for your advice.

**Pastor:** Of course, go ahead.

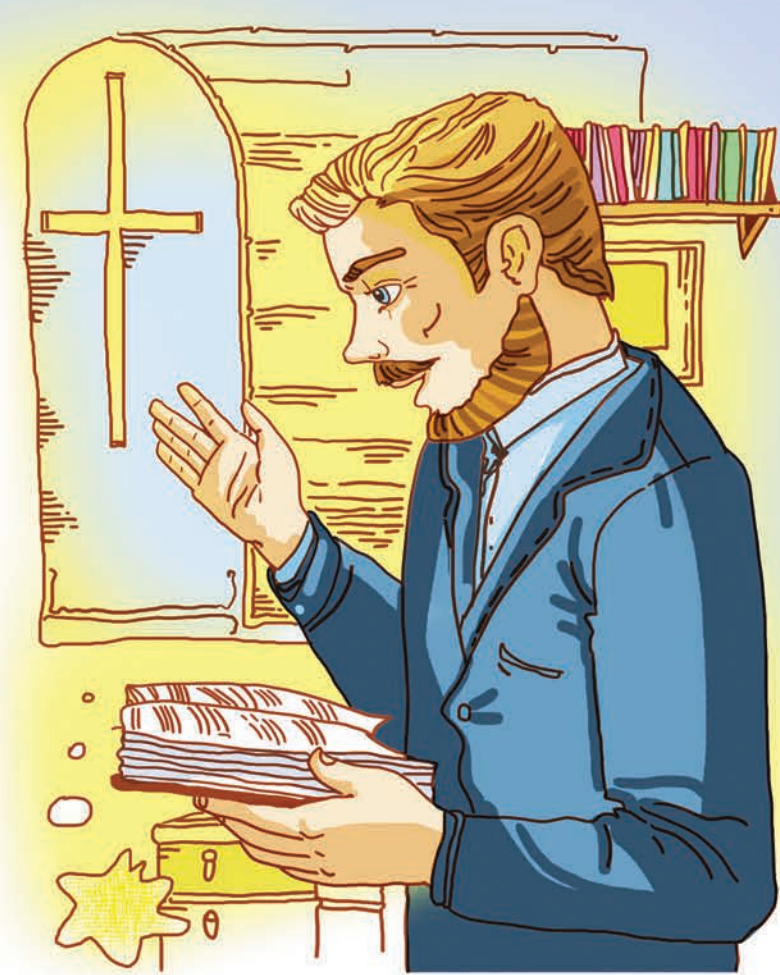
**Katie:** You know that tomorrow is Jesus' birthday. I know He loves all the people of the world, but He's also my best friend and He's so good to me. He was born as a baby, lived on earth, and healed many people. Then He was crucified, but He rose from the dead and He's alive today. He helps me when I'm at school, He protects me...

**Olivia:** I wouldn't mind having such a friend.

**Katie:** ...I can talk to Him about anything. Tomorrow is His birthday, but I don't have a present for Him.

**Pastor:** It's great that you want to give Jesus a present. The Bible can help you. It has wonderful advice in it.

**Katie:** The Bible, of course! Why didn't I think of that sooner? Come on Olivia. Now I know where to look! The Bible talks about wise men who came to Jesus and brought him gifts. Let's ask them to help us. *(Turns to the wise men)* Hello! We're looking for



a present for Jesus. Could you help us figure out what we can give Him?

**1st Wise Man:** When I first saw the star in the sky, I had the same question.

**Olivia:** That star appeared because Jesus had been born, right? This friend of yours must be pretty important!

**2nd Wise Man:** Here is what happened: we saw the star in the sky and right away we understood that the king of the Jews had been born.

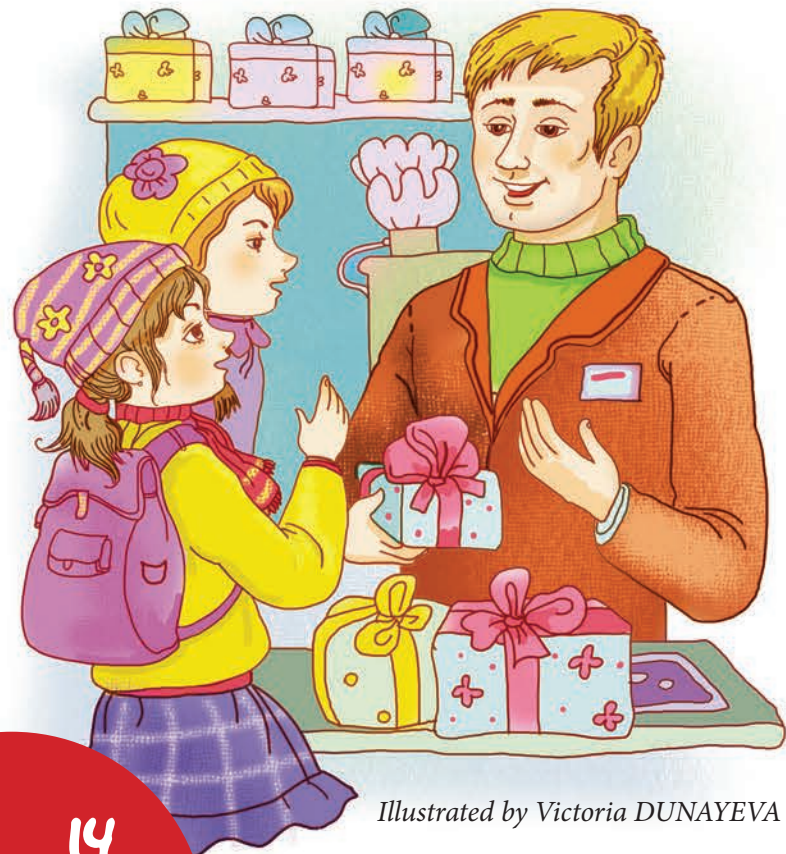
**Olivia:** He was a king?!

**3rd Wise Man:** We came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who was born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

**4th Wise Man:** When King Herod heard this he was troubled, along with the whole city of Jerusalem. He gathered all the priests and scribes to find out where the Christ was supposed to be born.

**1st Wise Man:** They told him, "In Bethlehem in Judea."

**2nd Wise Man:** When we heard this we went to Bethlehem. The star which we had seen in the east went ahead of us until it stopped above the place where the child was.



Illustrated by Victoria DUNAYEVA





**3<sup>rd</sup> Wise Man:** When we saw the star, we were filled with joy. We went into the house and saw the child with Mary, His mother.

**4<sup>th</sup> Wise Man:** We fell to our knees and worshipped Him. And, opening our treasures, we gave Him gifts of gold, incense, and myrrh.

**Katie:** Those sound like very expensive presents. Of course He deserved them, but I can't give something like that. I'm not rich like you wise men. I'm poor like the shepherds... That's it – shepherds! They didn't have a lot of money and they also visited baby Jesus. I think they'll be able to help us. You know, Olivia, the shepherds were the first people on earth who heard the news that Jesus had been born. They were the first to see Jesus. I'm sure they know what I can give Jesus. (*Turning to the shepherds.*)

**1<sup>st</sup> Shepherd:** You here to see us?

**Katie:** Yes, we wanted to ask you a question. Do you know what Jesus wants for His birthday? What would make Him happy?

**1<sup>st</sup> Shepherd:** Happy, eh? Yeah, the angel talked about happiness that wonderful night when we were out in the fields. It was so dark and quiet. Suddenly, we saw a bright light and an angel appeared before us and the glory of the Lord shone around us. We were terrified. The angel spoke to us.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Shepherd:** He said, "Don't be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. Today



in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in clothes and lying in a manger."

**3<sup>rd</sup> Shepherd:** Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom is favor rests."

**1<sup>st</sup> Shepherd:** When the angel left us, we said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

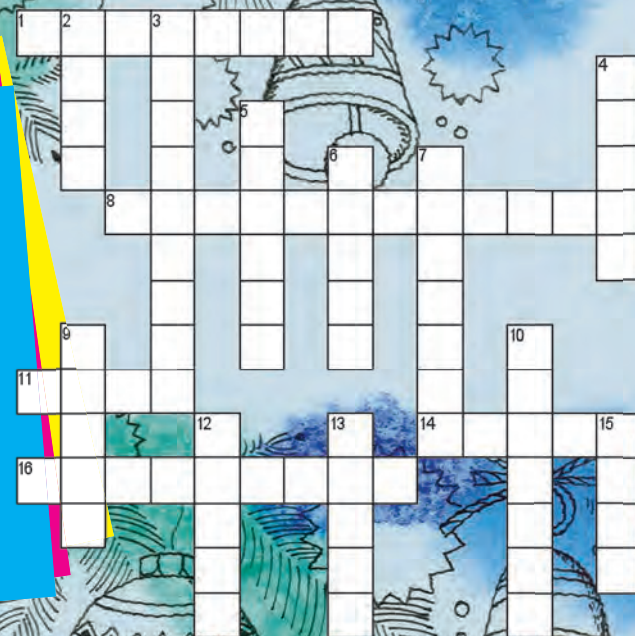
**2<sup>nd</sup> Shepherd:** And, hurrying there, we found Mary and Joseph, along with the baby lying in the manger. We praised God for everything that we had seen and heard.

**Katie:** Now I know! I know what we can give Jesus. This is a gift He will definitely like! We can give Him our worship, our songs, our joy, our holiday!

**Olivia:** Yes. I also have a present for Him. I want to give Him my heart. I want to believe in Him and have Him as my best friend.

# Crossword

Did you know...  
that the starfish is an echinoderm? It has five (sometimes up to 40) rays or arms. Most of them live on the ocean floor and feed on clams. Starfish can be anywhere from 1 inch to 1 yard in length, but most are no longer than 10 inches.



## Across

1. City where Jesus grew up (Luke 2:39-40).
8. Before Jesus fed a crowd of 5000 people, He and His disciples had been sitting on a \_\_\_\_\_ (John 6:1-15).
11. What was the name of Joseph's wife? (Luke 2:5)
14. This king ordered all boys two years old and younger to be killed in and around Bethlehem when he found out about Jesus' birth (Matthew 2:16).
16. Joseph and his wife had to go to this town to be registered because of the census (Luke 2:4-5).

## Down

2. This prophetess praised God when she saw baby Jesus in the temple (Luke 2:22-38).
3. "He was given \_\_\_\_\_, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him" (Daniel 7:14).
4. Who told the shepherds about the birth of the Savior? (Luke 2:8-11)
5. What was used as a cradle for the newborn baby? (Luke 2:7)
6. "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in \_\_\_\_\_ with God and with men" (Luke 2:52).
7. City in which the followers of Christ were first called Christians (Acts 11:26).
9. This man was an apostle and a brother of Jesus (Galatians 1:19).
10. City where a man had to climb a tree to see Jesus in the crowd (Luke 19:1-4).
12. "\_\_\_\_\_ to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men..." (Luke 2:14).
13. What was the baby named? (Luke 2:21)
15. "Surely goodness and love will follow me all the \_\_\_\_\_ of my life" (Psalm 23:6).

Check out the answers on page 31



Illustrated by Julia PRAVDOHINA

Puzzle PAGE



# WORD SEARCH



Search and circle each word found in the message from the angel to the shepherds. (Luke 2:10-12)

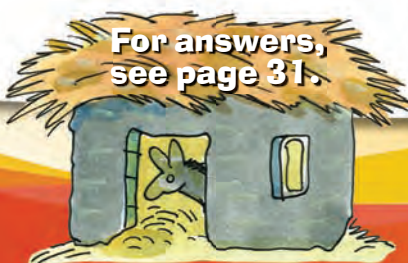
The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."



T	A	W	A	B	N	O	T	T	O	D	A	Y	N
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W	R	L	R	R	E	A	V	M	S	A	I	R	W
N	A	L	A	N	O	V	A	A	I	N	S	E	S
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I	E	N	T	A	N	G	E	L	T	H	I	S	I
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Illustrated by Victoria DUNAYEVA

For answers, see page 31.



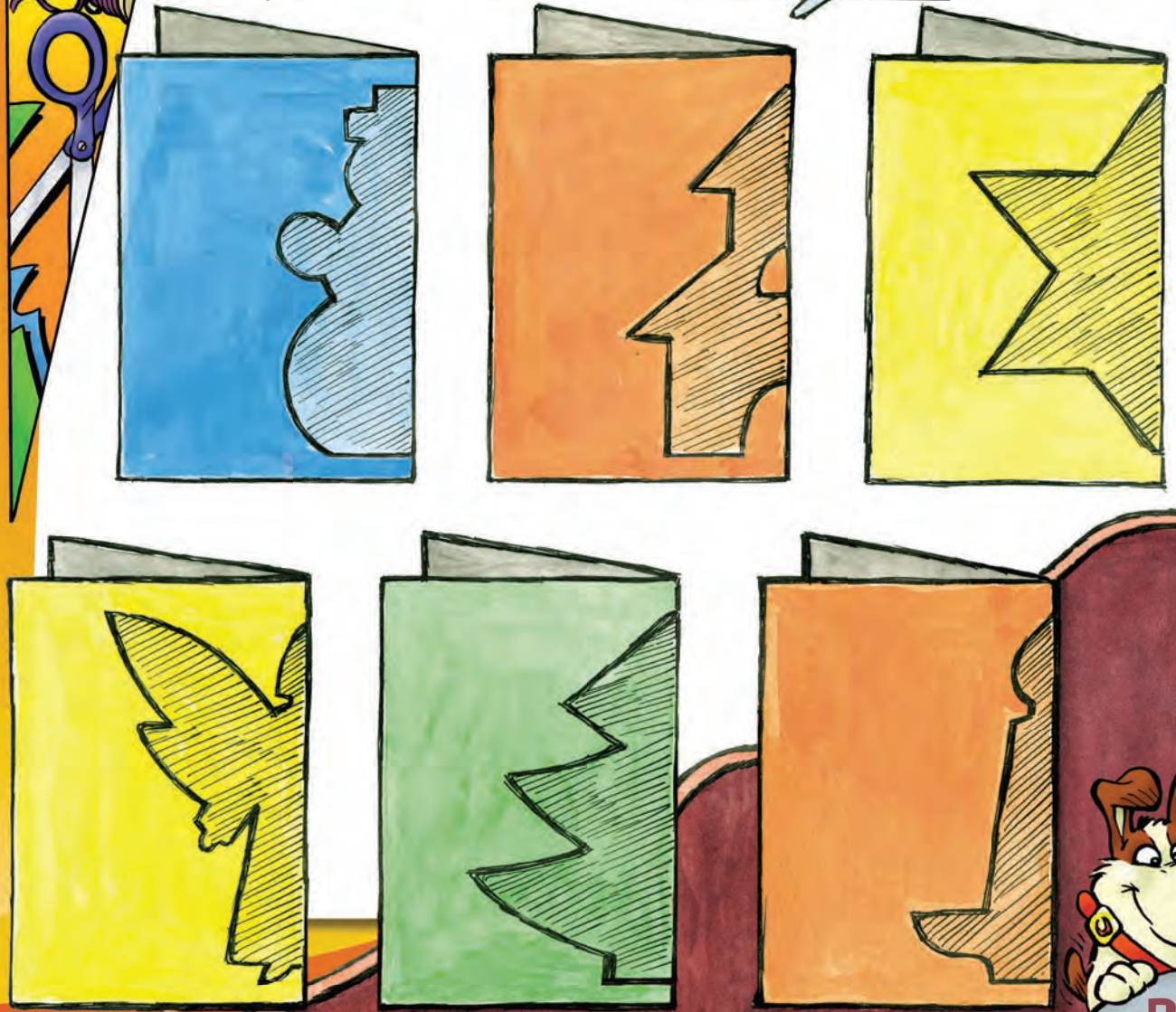
# CRAFT CORNER



# CARDS AND DECORATIONS

Take 6 sheets of paper and fold them in half as shown. Draw one of the suggested designs on each one and carefully cut it out. Glue a piece of tin foil or colored paper to the inside to make a card with a silhouette of your design. Take the design you cut out and tie a string to it. Now you have a card and a decoration to hang on the Christmas tree!

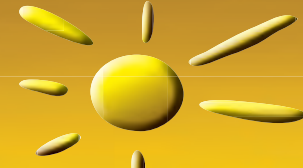
Irina ANTONOVA



Illustrated by Irina KOZINA



# Desert of Judea



Finally, the day came for the Jackson family vacation. They were going to Israel, which is part of an area known as the Holy Land – the place where Jesus was born and where He lived while He was on earth. The Jacksons flew to Tel-Aviv, rented a car, and drove to Haifa, where they met a guide who would show them the Holy Land. The head of the family, Mr. Jackson, had always been interested in Israel and knew about the country. He also knew what happened there during Bible times. On their first day in Haifa, they visited Mount Carmel. From that mountain, they had a great view of the Jezreel Valley and the city of Haifa. Mount Carmel is where Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal and set up a contest to show everyone whether God was real or Baal. There, Elijah told the people to choose which god they will serve. The Jackson family saw a monument of the prophet while sightseeing on Mount Carmel.



View of the Jezreel Valley from Mount Carmel

Early in the morning on the second day, the adventurous Jacksons set out to visit the Dead Sea. They saw many interesting things that day, like the majestic golden-pink hills of the Desert of Judea, which filled the landscape on both sides of the road. Sometimes they saw Bedouins grazing their flocks of sheep on the hillsides.



Dead Sea

“I feel like I’m in a story!” exclaimed 11-year-old Amber. “I can’t believe I’m seeing the desert with my own eyes. I can’t wait to tell all my friends about this!”

“Dad, what do you know about this desert? Can you tell us about it?” asked 13-year-old Brian.

“Of course!” Mr. Jackson smiled. He loved geography and the chance to share what he knew. “The Desert of Judea is on the western shore of the Dead Sea. When the land was being divided among the tribes of Israel, this area went to the tribe of Judah. That’s how this desert got



Desert of Judea in the Spring



Jordan River



Cave at Qumran

its name. The Judean Mountains are found in the eastern part of this desert – that’s the part we’re passing through right now. These mountains are known for the beauty of their deep canyons. Many streams start in the Judean Mountains. In the rainy season, they carry their waters over rocks and cliffs and, for a short time during the spring season, the desert is covered with beautiful flowers and grasses. Then it returns to normal. The western part of the desert is hard limestone, which lets water seep through the cracks until it reaches a waterproof layer. Eventually, the water is pushed up to the surface and comes out in springs over on the eastern part of the desert. Many plants grow in the western part of the desert. In fact, it has been farmed since ancient times. Hawthorn, pistachio, and carob trees grow

there. In the central part of the desert, soft limestone only allows water to penetrate a few inches into the soil. That’s why very few plants grow there – just enough for grazing animals. In the south, the Desert of Judea is bordered by the Negev Desert. After we stop in Beersheba, we’ll go to Eilat, which is in the south and we’ll see this other desert.”

“This is going to be a vacation I’ll always remember,” Amber said.

“The Jordan River carries its water through the Desert of Judea,” Mrs. Jackson added. “This river, which empties into the Dead Sea, is where John the Baptist baptized people. Jesus went into the Desert of Judea to be baptized by John. After being baptized Jesus spent 40 days in the desert, fasting and praying. The devil tempted Him during this time.”

“Today, we’re going to visit the monastery on the Mount of Temptation,” Father said. Then he told them a story. “From ancient times, the Desert of Judea was a refuge for hermits and rebels because of the many caves in its cracks and crevices. David hid there when King Saul was after him. He had spent time in the desert because, during his youth, he cared for his father’s sheep. In one of the psalms, he described this desert as an empty land, dried up and waterless. Look up ahead, you can see the Dead Sea! But right now we’re going to visit the caves in Qumran.”

After visiting Qumran, where the Bedouins found ancient Bible scrolls – the greatest find in the history of the Jewish people – the Jackson family swam in the most salty sea in the world. The shore of the Dead Sea is the lowest land-surface on the face of the Earth. After their swim the Jackson family visited the botanical garden at Kibbutz Ein Gedi, where they got to see all sorts of plants and animals. That place had just about every kind of plant you can imagine! Then they went to see the fortress at Masada, a symbol of the heroism and steadfastness of the Jewish people in their struggle for independence.

“Look, there’s the monastery up on the hill!” Bryan exclaimed. “That’s where we’re going, right?”

“Yes,” answered his dad as he turned off the road and pulled into the parking lot.

Desert of Judea



Color it yourself!



## DAVID AND SAUL

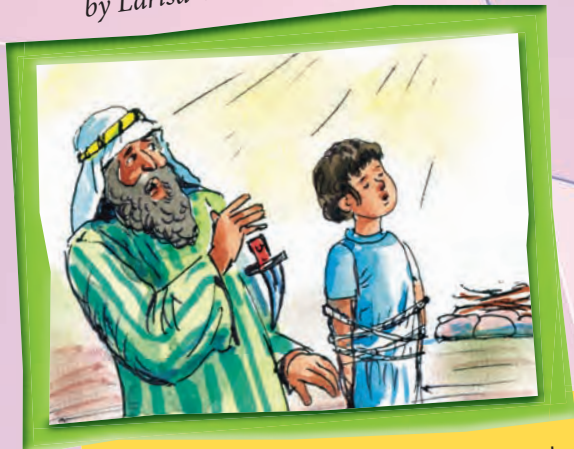
When King Saul wanted to kill him, David hid in the Desert of Ziph. This desert is part of the Desert of Judea. Once, in the middle of the night, David and Abishai crept into the camp of King Saul and took his spear and water jug. Saul and the men who were with him slept through the whole thing. David went to the top of the hill some distance away and called out to Abner, the commander of Saul's troops, to tell him that the army wasn't guarding their king very carefully. Saul recognized David's voice and understood that David treated him with respect because he was the king and the Lord's anointed (1 Samuel 26).

Illustrated by Elena MIKULA  
Colored by \_\_\_\_\_

Illustrated by Larisa GOROSHKO

# DO YOU KNOW THEIR NAMES?

Elena SAFONOVA



1

His name means *He Laughs*. He was the son promised by God to an elderly husband and wife. This man trusted God and His promises. Doing the will of his father, he humbly and courageously endured the trials of his life. His obedience to his father reminds us of the way Jesus Christ obeyed his Heavenly Father.

Answer: Genesis 21–28

You'll find their names on page 31.



2

This man was the founder of an entire nation. He loved his father and helped him, but he lacked a firm belief in the promises of God, so he sold his birthright. When his brother tricked him, he lost his father's blessing. At first, he was so angry he wanted revenge, but later he forgave his brother.

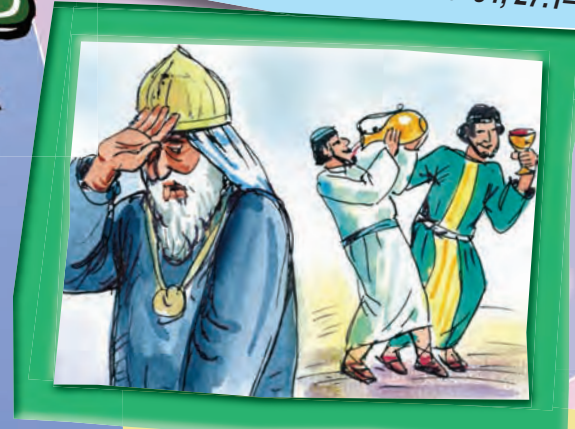
Answer: Genesis 25:19–34; 27:1–46; 33



3

His name means *May He Add*. He came from a large family. Since he was his father's favorite, his brothers were jealous of him and sold him into slavery. He became the most important man in Egypt, after the ruler himself, and saved his people from starvation. This man treated his father with love and respect.

Answer: Genesis 37, 39–50



4

His name means *God is High*. He was a high priest and a judge of Israel. The wickedness of his sons led to punishment from the Lord. This punishment included defeat of the Israelites by the Philistines, the ark of God being captured by the Philistines, and the death of his sons.

Answer: 1 Samuel 1:9–17; 2:27–3:18; 4:1–17



# 6. Christianity in power

When I was in elementary school, we had a boy in our class called Pona. We played together at recess and pretended we were spies. We'd shoot at each other with homemade slingshots and imaginary pistols. Once, Pona came to class and, in a loud voice, announced, "My dad now has an important job and we're moving to a better apartment." After that, Pona was never the same. We still chased each other around at recess, but now his father's official car brought him to school. One day, Pona's mother came to school and saw him aiming at me with his slingshot. "Stop that right now!" She shouted. "You have no business playing with these hooligans. You're better than them." We felt sorry for Pona. After that, he couldn't play with us at recess and by the next year, he was transferred to a different school. I always remember this story when I talk about how Constantine, the Roman emperor, became a Christian.

The army made Constantine the emperor in 312 A.D. He and Maxentius fought because Maxentius had also been named emperor. Maxentius had four times as many troops and he was safe inside the thick,



Battle of Constantine's and Maxentius's troops in "Battle of the Milvian Bridge" by Peter Lastman, 1613.



sturdy walls of Rome. Winning under such conditions was almost impossible for Constantine. One afternoon, while the troops were getting ready for battle, Constantine and his followers saw the sign of the cross in the sky and the words, "Conquer by this." Constantine was in shock. He was not a Christian, but many of his friends had told him about Christ. He saw the sign in the sky as a promise of victory if he and his men became Christians. At Constantine's command, flags with the sign of the cross were made and the Christian symbol (made up of the first two Greek letters in "Christ") was put on the shields and helmets of soldiers before they marched out to battle.



Emperor Constantine



Image of a banner with the symbol of Christ's name or a coin of Emperor Constantine

sturdy walls of Rome. Winning under such conditions was almost impossible for Constantine. One afternoon, while the troops were getting ready for battle, Constantine and his followers saw the sign of the cross in the sky and the words, "Conquer by this." Constantine was in shock. He was not a Christian, but many of his friends had told him about Christ. He saw the sign in the sky as a promise of victory if he and his men became Christians. At Constantine's command, flags with the sign of the cross were made and the Christian symbol (made up of the first two Greek letters in "Christ") was put on the shields and helmets of soldiers before they marched out to battle.



Emperor Maxentius

Christian bishops to be his advisors. Constantine even moved the capital of his empire – which included most of the known world – to a new city in the East and named the city Constantinople. There were no pagan temples there, only Christian symbols and shrines.



Warriors of the Holy Roman Empire with Christian symbols on their shields. Fragment of a church mosaic in Ravenna, V century.

Maxentius also wanted the help of the gods. The pagan priests of Rome predicted he would win the battle if he led the attack. He left the safety found behind the walls of Rome and put himself in a bad position. His entire army was destroyed and Maxentius was killed in battle. This convinced Constantine of the power of Christ and he made an announcement telling everyone he was a Christian. He stopped the persecution of Christians, gave them special privileges, and chose



The New Rome, Constantinople, Byzantium – ancient names for the modern city of Istanbul, a XV century engraving.

From that time on, Christians found themselves in a completely different position. Instead of being a persecuted minority, they became a large, powerful group. Now no one dared to threaten them. Christians started to destroy the pagan idols, temples, and shrines. Being a Christian meant you could get a good job or make good business arrangements because the emperor gave Christians many rights and benefits. That's why many were baptized and started to call themselves Christians, but they only looked like Christians on the outside. They didn't go to church services unless they had to and only acted like Christians when they knew someone was watching.

Sadly, Christianity's powerful position had a bad effect on the leaders of the church and other sincere Christians. They started thinking about their comfort and all the good things they had, instead of thinking about Christ and His Kingdom. For the first three centuries, Christianity was not associated with the government. Instead, it was the salt of the world. When it's in the food, salt can't be seen, but it gives the food flavor.

In the IV century, Christianity became popular. It mixed with the government and had to become what the government wanted it to be. Of course, it became rich and beautiful, but it lost its simplicity and, often, its faithfulness.



# Siberian Pine Beauty



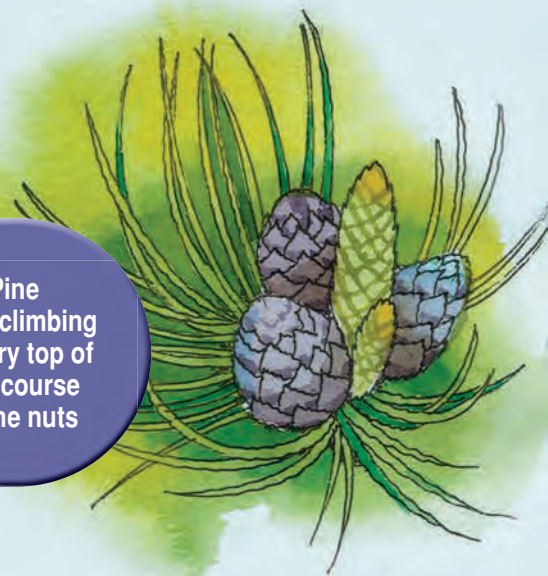
Did you know that the **Siberian Pine** (*Pinus sibirica*) is sometimes called the **Siberian Cedar**, but it's actually very different from real cedars like the **Cedar of Lebanon** (*Cedrus libani*)? Of course they're related, but they belong to two different groups. After Russia adopted Christianity in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the Bible became the most often-read book. Maybe that's why the Siberian beauty was named in honor of its relative mentioned in the Bible.

The Siberian Pine grows in Siberia, the Ural Mountains, Mongolia and northern China. In 1818, a famous writer compared the Siberian Pine and the Cedar of Lebanon in an article titled "Siberian Cedar." He said, "Rejoice, places favored by the sun. Take pride, O heights of Lebanon, in your cedars... but... in my eyes, the shady pines of rich Siberia will not give way to you in beauty or be replaced by you. What majesty in the bearing of this tree, what sacred shade in its thick forests." Songs have been written about the beauty of the Siberian Pine. The splendor of this tree reminds man of God's majesty and encourages him to pray and worship God. The Siberian Pine is especially beautiful in the spring when it is decorated by bright, raspberry-colored pinecones.

2

Did you know that there's a very dangerous profession: **tree-climbing pinecone gatherer**. The branches of a Siberian Pine begin at the height of a four-story building. Climbing the tree requires first climbing up the bare trunk. The pinecones are even higher. They're almost at the very top of the tree. Tree-climbing pinecone gatherers have to be strong, agile, and of course brave! In 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia, up to 200 thousand tons of pine nuts were gathered each year.

PAGE 26



3

Did you know that the **Siberian Pine** can live for almost 1000 years? Well, up to 800-850 years if you want to be exact. These trees can reach a height of 150 feet. Its needles grow in bundles of five (other pine tree needles are often in bundles of two). The Siberian Pine is famous for its pine nuts. They are tasty and very good for you. Pine nuts have more phosphorus than any other nuts. When it comes to nutritional value, they are a lot like soybeans. They contain trace elements like manganese, copper, zinc and cobalt. They are also rich in iodine. Pine nut oil tastes just as good as the best olive oil. Many famous artists use pine nut oil for mixing their paints.



4

Did you know that the buzz of the mosquito is not heard in a **forest of Siberian Pines**? That's because the scent of aromatic resin fills the air. Moths avoid cabinets made of nice-smelling Siberian Pine and milk doesn't spoil as quickly when kept in containers made from these trees. Siberian Pine is also used to make musical instruments. For example, it's part of the resonance board in a piano. When German merchants bought pine nut oil from Russia, they asked for the shipping crates to be made from Siberian Pine trees. That's because they earned some extra money by taking the crates apart and selling the boards to factories that made musical instruments.



Illustrated by Julia PRAVDOHINA



PAGE 27

# Nick and I...

Svetlana YAROSHEVICH



Dear Tropinka,

I thought I'd send you a letter about myself and my friend Nick. My name is Sean, but whenever I'm in trouble my mom calls me Sean Patrick Johnson.

Nick and I are inseparable. We're always together. Of course we disagree from time to time, but not often. We balance each other out. My mom even says if someone took some fat away from Nick and gave it to me you'd get two average-sized kids. Now I don't consider myself skinny. So what if I have bony knees and shoulders that stick out, at least you can see my muscles! They may be puny, but they're not covered by fat. Now Nick, you can't even see any of his ribs. He's all soft and puffy like one of my grandma's quilts.

Nick has no imagination. For him, everything is just what it appears to be. For example, you show him a stick and he sees a stick – nothing else. Now me, I take it

and start whipping it through the air pretending I'm a musketeer with a sword. Nick and I often pretend we're musketeers. Of course he's always Porthos and I'm D'Artagnan.

We live in the city and our parents are friends. We all go to the same church. Nick and I sit next to each other in Sunday School, since we're in the same class. We have a great time each Sunday. Our teacher tells exciting stories, but sometimes it's hard for me to concentrate. One day, a question started bothering me. Why do I want what I'm not allowed to have?! Here's what made me think of it...

We went with our parents to pick blueberries. My mom warned us ahead of time about how dangerous it was to eat strange berries. She said they might be poisonous. As we picked blueberries, we heard mom calling us. She showed us some nice-looking berries. They were bigger than blueberries and they looked plump and juicy. "These berries are poisonous," Mom explained.

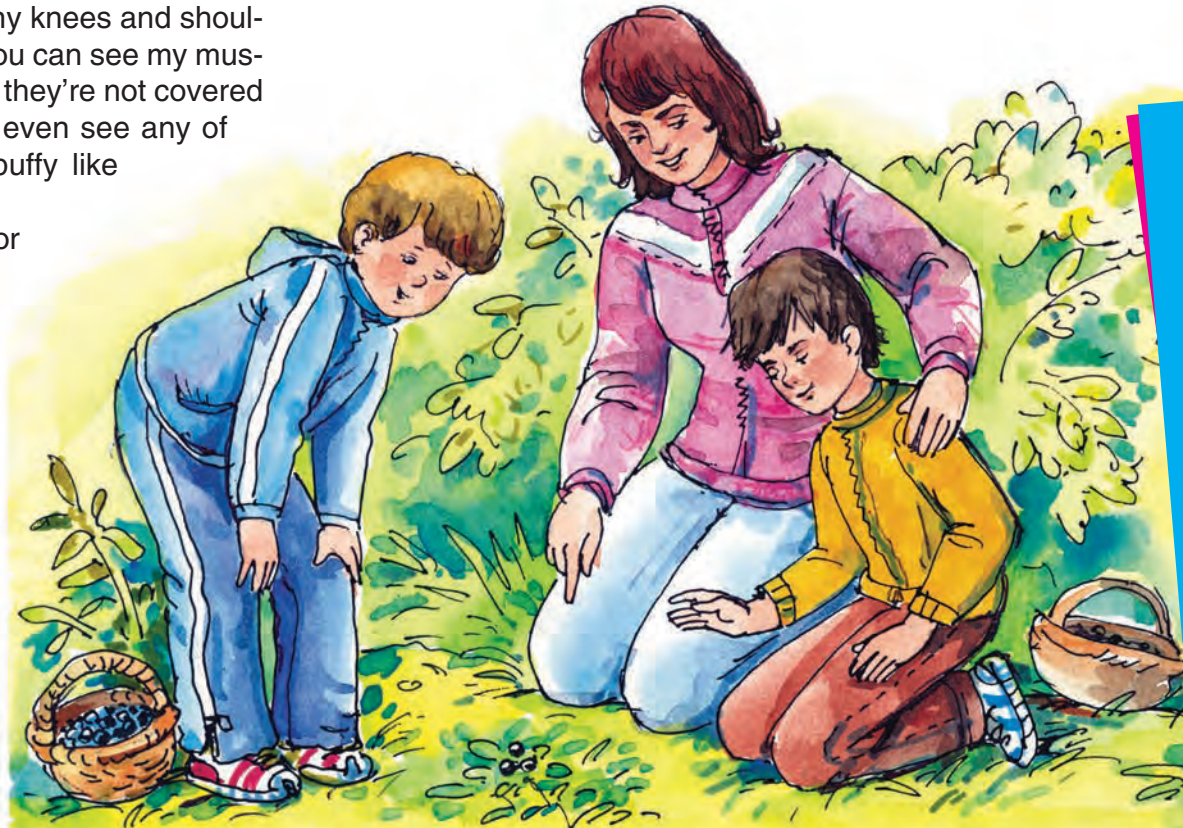
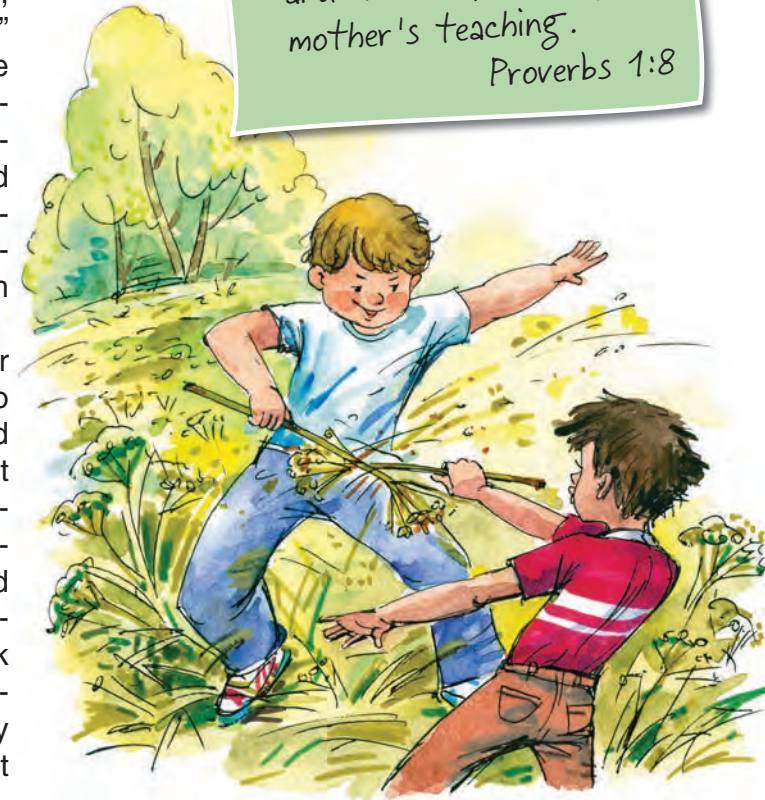
Nick just stood there looking down at the berries and licking his lips. They looked an awful lot like blueberries – just bigger and juicier. You'd almost expect them to burst with flavor if you popped them in your mouth. Why couldn't we

just try one?! Well, we managed to restrain ourselves because we believed my mom.

Another time, Nick and I were visiting my grandma and we went to the pond where these huge umbrella-like things grow. I took out my pocketknife and, using the knife as a machete, we started hacking our way through the "jungle." My mom had told me something about these plants and how they were bad but I couldn't remember what she said. Besides, we weren't trying to eat them. Then Nick and I each chopped down an umbrella-plant and started sword fighting. We had a great time. The sun shone brightly, it was warm outside, and we had so much summer vacation ahead of us.

That evening, I got painful red spots all over my body. My mom got scared and took me to the hospital. Nick was already there. He had the same red spots. It turns out that we got burned by the "umbrella-plants." They're actually called Giant Hogweed. I'm writing this letter from the hospital. Nick is in the hospital bed next to me. (He says "hi!") I should have listened to my mom. I've had lots of time to think about what happened, since I can't go anywhere until I get better. I finally figured out why we need to obey our parents even if we don't

Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching.  
Proverbs 1:8



Did you know...

that the Giant Hogweed sap irritates your skin and makes it super sensitive to the sun. Giant Hogweed is found in the United States, but it's not very common. If you get its sap on your skin, wash it off with soap and water and stay out of the sun for several days. Pigs and cattle can eat this plant without being harmed.

Illustrated  
by Larisa GOROSHKO

agree or don't understand their warning. There are times when we really want to do the opposite of what we're told. Take Adam and Eve, they didn't listen to God because they doubted His words and didn't believe Him. They disobeyed and got kicked out of the Garden of Eden. Nick and I didn't obey or pay attention to my mom's warning. Now we're in the hospital waiting to get better, when there are so many interesting things we could be doing.

You tell all the other kids who read Tropinka to listen to their parents. It's very important! What's even more important is listening to God. After all, He's our Heavenly Father and He wants what's best for us.

Yours truly,  
Sean Johnson

PAGE  
28

**RIDDLES**

1. What kind of rope saved a whole family?

2. He found a pillow in the field, fell asleep, and saw a special dream.

3. He left a mansion of gold to come to a world dark and cold.

Sent by Alexandra ERMOLOVA, Russia



Anel ALIMOVA, 8 years old, Kazakhstan

**Dear Tropinka,**  
 I've been reading your pages for four years. Thank you everyone who has a part in creating this magazine! I really like reading the stories and poems, as well solving the crosswords. Even though I'm already 16 years old, I still like reading Tropinka. When my nephews come over they always ask me to give them some Tropinkas and want to know if I received a new Tropinka. I am sending you some money so I can continue to receive this interesting magazine next year. May God bless you for all your hard work! Even though we've never met in person, we're alike because we're children of God and have the same Heavenly Father. We live in different cities but we read the same book – the Bible – we pray, praise God, and go to church. This Christmas, as we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, I hope you experience God's abundant blessings.  
*When Christ was born in Bethlehem  
 Angels sang in the heavenly heights  
 They praised God in the heavens  
 Saying "Glory to God and peace on earth!"*  
 I wish you all the best!  
 Alena VARVARYUK, Moldov

Published and distributed six times a year thanks to voluntary donations.

Editor in Chief: Elena Bondar

To subscribe to this magazine or to send donation, inquiries and stories for publication, write to:

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Tropinka was translated into English by Natasha Boykov

Contributing editing by Northland, A Church Distributed

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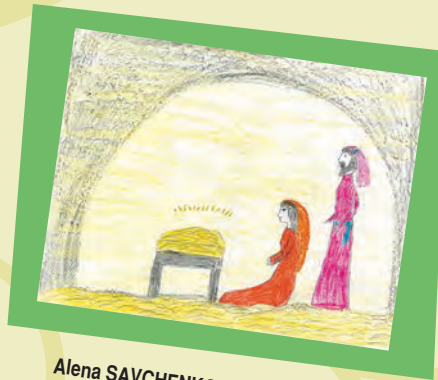
For elementary and middle school age children.



Olena GORBEI, 14 years old, Ukraine



Peter HAVELOV, 12 years old, Ukraine



Alena SAVCHENKO, 7 years old, USA



Angelina BURZHINSKAYA, 10 years old, Kyrgyzstan

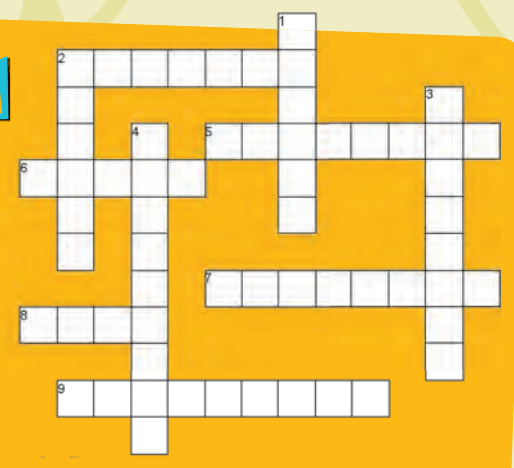


Anna MATULYAK, 7 years old, Ukraine

**CALLING ALL ARTISTS!**  
 Check out the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:3-17, and draw a picture about them. Then send it to our address below. We can't wait to see it!  
**Mail to:** Tropinka (Light in the East)  
 P.O. Box 214582  
 Sacramento, CA 95821

**Christmas Crossword**

Solve the crossword.



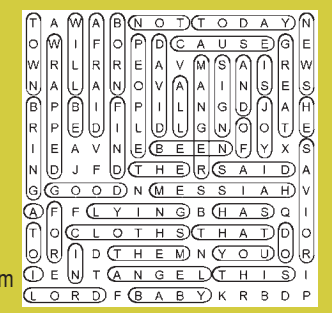
- Across**
- Son of King David (1 Kings 1:32-34).
  - God used this man to prophesy about King Herod killing children in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:16-18).
  - Holy One of God (John 6:67-69).
  - The psalmist says the lips of these praise God (Psalm 8:2).
  - This brought the Magi to baby Jesus (Matthew 2:7-10).
  - City where Mary and Joseph had to go during the census (Luke 2:1-5).

- Down**
- An apostle and brother of Simon (Matthew 10:2).
  - The second son of Israel (Jacob) (Exodus 1:1-2).
  - City where Jesus spent his childhood (Luke 4:14-16).
  - Jesus' disciples were given this over evil spirits (Matthew 10:1).

Adapted from crossword by Alena FILATOVA, 11 years old, Kazakhstan

**Answers**

- Page 7: **ASSIGNMENT:** "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do" (John 17:4)  
 Page 17: **CROSSWORD:** **ACROSS:** 1. Nazareth 8. mountainside 11. Mary 14. Herod 16. Bethlehem **DOWN:** 2. Anna 3. authority 4. angel 5. manger 6. favor 7. Antioch 9. James 10. Jericho 12. glory 13. Jesus 15. days  
 Page 18: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Page 23: 1. Isaac 2. Esau 3. Joseph 4. Eli  
 Page 30: **RIDDLES:**  
 1. Scarlet (Joshua 2:1-21; 6:19-22)  
 2. Jacob (Genesis 28:10-15)  
 3. Jesus (Luke 2:6-16, John 17:5)  
**CROSSWORD:**  
**ACROSS:** 2. Solomon 5. Jeremiah  
 6. Jesus 7. children 8. star 9. Bethlehem  
**DOWN:** 1. Andrew 2. Simeon  
 3. Nazareth 4. authority





Dear reader,  
We want to wish you a Merry  
Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Editorial Staff

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to hear from you!**

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and illustrations and much,**

**much more!**

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