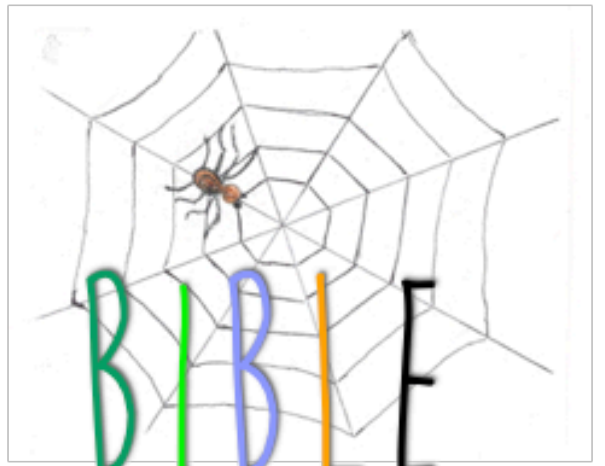


... FOR THE BIBLE



TELLS ME SO...



BOOK 1 - CREATION



*In order that those who are not more familiar with it
may have instruction and guidance
for reading the Old Testament with profit,
I have prepared this preface to the best of the ability God has given me.*

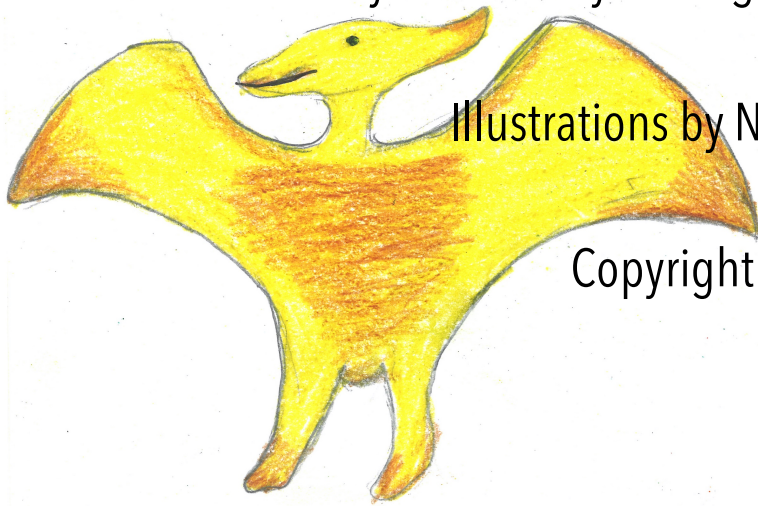
*I beg and really caution every pious Christian
not to be offended by the simplicity of the language
and stories frequently encountered there,
but fully realize that, however simple they may seem,
these are the very words, works, judgments, and deeds
of the majesty, power, and wisdom of the most high God.*

*For these are the Scriptures
which make fools of all the wise and understanding,
and are open only to the small and simple,
as Christ says in Matthew 11:25.*

*Therefore dismiss your own opinions and feelings,
and think of the Scriptures as the loftiest and noblest of holy things,
as the richest of mines which can never be sufficiently explored,
in order that you may find that divine wisdom
which God here lays before you in such simple guise as to quench all pride.
Here you will find the swaddling cloths and the manger in which Christ lies,
and to which the angel points the shepherds [Luke 2:12].
Simple and lowly are these swaddling cloths, but dear is the treasure,
Christ, who lies in them.¹*

¹ Luther, M. (1999). [Luther's works, vol. 35: Word and Sacrament I](#). (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.) (Vol. 35, p. 236). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Devotions by Pastor Tony Pittenger, Bethany Lutheran Church



Illustrations by Nancy Ulman

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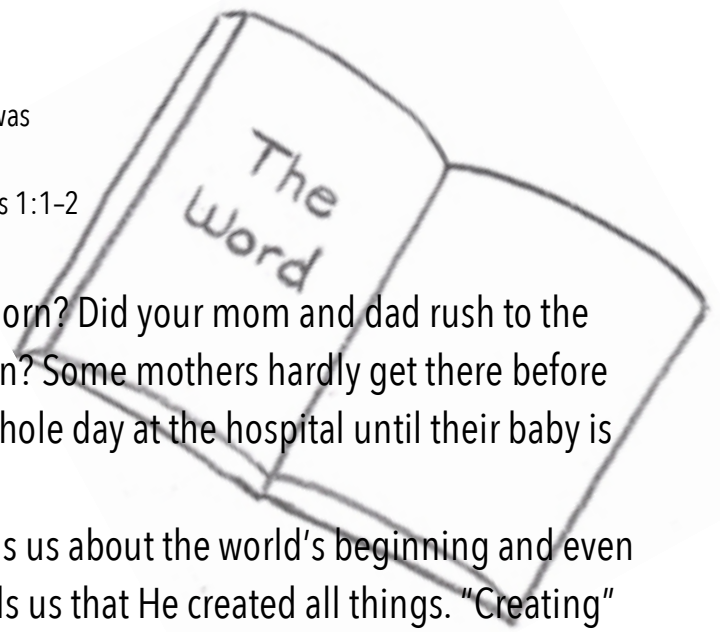




1. God Creates the World THE WORD
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6. Seas
7. Mountains
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10. Forests/Maple Trees
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God Creates the World

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Genesis 1:1-2



Have you ever asked about the day you were born? Did your mom and dad rush to the hospital because you were going to be born very soon? Some mothers hardly get there before their baby comes. Other moms spend more than a whole day at the hospital until their baby is ready to finally be born.

As we open the Bible to the very front, God tells us about the world's beginning and even about our beginning. In these very first verses He tells us that He created all things. "Creating" something is different than "making" something. We can "make" a cake with flour and sugar, we can "make" a drawing with paper and crayons. (In fact, you should add your own drawings to this book! Really!!)

God created everything out of nothing. This means that when He created the oceans He also created the water and when He created the mountains He also created the rocks that mountains are made from.

As we'll see in some of the other stories, God created all things with His Word. He spoke and the thing He was speaking about suddenly existed. God's Word does what it says.

But now, listen to this: **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made. John 1:1-3** The Bible also tells us that somehow, in some way, Jesus is the Word of God. It says that Jesus was there in the very beginning and that all things; the oceans, the mountains, and even you; were made by Him. So, Jesus is also God's Word and when God's Word says something, that thing happens.

This is still hard to understand but it is very important. Because you see, this is about knowing if we can believe Jesus or not. When Jesus says that His Kingdom is even for children, can that be true? Or what about when Jesus says our sins are forgiven?

YES! Yes because God's Word does what it says it does and yes, because Jesus' Word does what He says. *Yes, Jesus loves me—the Bible tells me so!*

Light from Darkness

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. Genesis 1:3-5

The very first thing that God created was light. Modern scientists say that "light" is everything from the cooking power in your microwave to the radio waves bringing music to your car radio. We usually think of what comes from the sun or from a light bulb.

But God hadn't yet created the sun or other stars and Thomas Edison wouldn't invent the light bulb for many thousands of years. On this first day there was just "light."

Imagine yourself in your bedroom closet. When you turn off the light and close the door, why does it get dark? Because there is no light. Open the door, do you see the light coming in? How about this, look just outside the closet, you won't see the darkness from inside the closet spilling out into the room.

That's because darkness is nothing while light is something. Light is energy and waves and little things called "photons"; but darkness isn't anything at all. There is no energy or waves or little dark things...

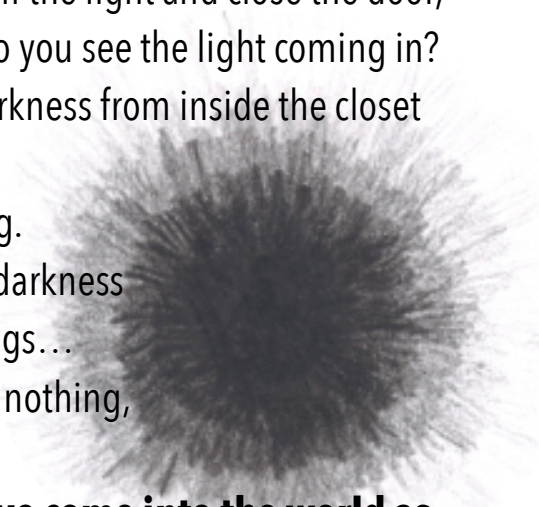
The Bible describes both sin and unbelief as darkness. It is nothing, an emptiness.

But Jesus says that He is the light of the world, listen: **I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in Me may not remain in darkness. John 12:46**

What do those words mean? Remember from the last devotion how the Bible said that Jesus is God's Word and the source of life? Well, because He is God, Jesus is also the one who shines light in this world.

Light is the first thing given to creation. Light is what is needed for life to exist; in darkness there is only death. Jesus is the best thing given to a fallen creation. Jesus is what we need for our lives with God. He is the one who has brought us back to the Father (more on that when we get to Adam and Eve and everyone else). He is the source of faith and lives of faith.

If we were plants we might say, "give us more of the sun." Because we are God's children we pray, "give us more of Jesus." Amen.



Sky

And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." ⁷ And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. ⁸ And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. Genesis 1:6-8

On the second day God created a space between waters up above us and the waters here on earth; He created the the sky. (Scientists call it the "atmosphere.") When I was a kid I always thought that this must have been an easy day for God; but there is more to the sky than meets the eye.

The sun sends radiation to the earth. Radiation is a kind of light we can't see but which can make us very sick, even kill us. The sky keeps that radiation from getting to us; scientists call it the "stratosphere." Another part of the sky is one which scientists call the "troposphere," this is where the air warms up during sunny days and cools off at night. All that warming and cooling makes clouds and rain and wind; our weather comes from God's troposphere.

It isn't until the third day that God will create plants but look at how He already has protection and water for them. God cares for all the things He made.

Listen to this Bible verse: **For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My Word be that goes out from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. Isaiah 55:10-11**

This tells us that God's Word makes faith grow as surely as rain makes plants grow. God's Word; like you hear in church, like Mom and Dad read from their Bible, like at the beginning of each of these devotions is what makes faith grow.

We may not understand exactly how this works but that's OK, God says it does and He makes sure that it does. The faith which God is causing to grow is faith in His promise, it is faith in Jesus who lived and died and rose again for you. Just as a rain shower is cool and refreshing for a thirsty plant, these stories, His Word and the promised Word who became Jesus will give our faith exactly what faith needs. *This I know, for the Bible tells me so.*

Lakes

And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so.
¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together He called Seas. And God saw that it was good.
Genesis 1:9-10

Have you ever been to a lake? Have you ever been swimming in one or gone canoeing on one? Have you ever seen people fishing on a lake?

It is now the third day. God has already created the material, the stuff, with which He will make the earth. But it seems that so far it is mostly like a giant blob of mud. There are waters above all this, that's part of the sky, but as morning came on this third day came, all the water on earth was still mixed up with—and mixed in with—the ground.

On the third day God separated water from ground just like how yesterday He separated the clouds and the sky; and as He separated the earth's water from the earth's ground, He collected and organized the waters into lakes and rivers and seas.

Some lakes are small, like the icy blue ones we see in the mountains. Some lakes are very big, there is a lake in Russia that is more than a mile deep. In some places a lake will freeze with enough ice that your parents could drive their car across it!

What are your favorite lakes? Some of mine are Wildcat Lake, Sylvan Lake, Lake Tahoe, and Lake Huron. These places are special because of all the fun I've had with family and friends.

In the second Bible reading today we see Jesus using a lake as a place to teach. **Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, He asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the people from the boat. Luke 5:3**

Because of the way God made lakes, it is easier to hear people speaking than if they are in a field. So, Jesus went a little way out in Peter's boat and told the people about God's love and about Heaven from that boat on that lake.

Now that's a lake I would love to have seen (and heard)!

Jesus doesn't teach from boats on lakes anymore. He is in Heaven where He watches over all people. But He does send pastors to tell the world about Himself. The next time you are in church imagine that the place where the pastor is standing as a boat on a lake and then listen to hear about God's love in Jesus.

Rivers

And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so.
¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together He called Seas. And God saw that it was good.
Genesis 1:9-10

When God separated water from land, not only did He create lakes (as we saw in the last devotion) but He also made rivers.

Rivers are water in motion, water moving from uphill to downhill, and from one place to another. Today, we usually get from one place to another on roads and in cars but for thousands of years rivers were used in this way. Canoes, ships, and even boats powered by steam would carry people and things up and down rivers just like cars and trucks on roads.

Rivers also bring water to places that need it. The Columbia River, in the northwestern United States, brings cool water from mountain snow to fields and orchards all over Washington and Oregon. Some of that water travels more than 500 miles from mountains in Canada, Montana, even Wyoming! Without the Columbia River, those fields and orchards would dry up and become like a desert.

God created rivers to move people and to move water; this world would be a very different place without them.

Once, when God's people were worshipping in the temple, Jesus shouted out that He could give them what they were thirsty for. **On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" John 7:37-38**

Jesus knew that sin has made our soul like a dry lifeless desert. Jesus also knew that His Words are the Water of Life. His Words are the Bible, the story of God's love for lost people. This story—*these stories*—bring lives of faith to us. Rivers bring water, Jesus brings forgiveness, life, and salvation.



Seas

And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so.
¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together He called Seas. And God saw that it was good.
Genesis 1:9-10

Sooner or later rivers empty their water into the sea. When God divided the water from the land He made seas. Seas, or oceans, are giant areas of our world completely covered in water. In them God would make all sorts of fish and other types of creatures to live.

Did you know that oceans and seas are so big that it wasn't until just a few hundred years ago that people found a way to safely travel across them? That means that for thousands and thousand of years people could not cross them; seas were too large, it was too hard to know where you were, and the waves were too strong for the boats.

Today ships sail back and forth across the seas, submarines and scuba divers even travel around underneath the waves. But in many ways, God's seas are still a mystery; scientists say that we know more about the moon, which is more than 400,000 miles away, than we know about the ocean (some of which is less than a mile from my house).

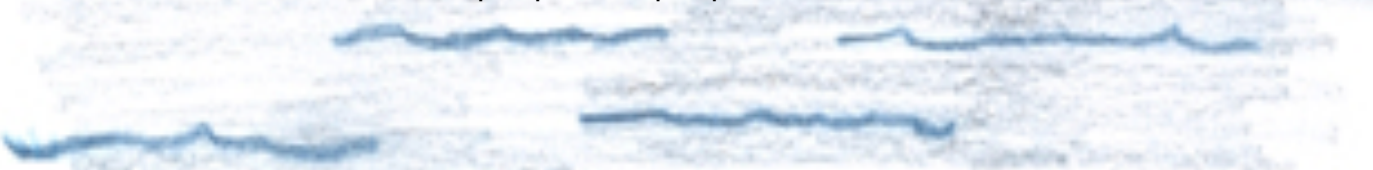
God created the seas very deep. The deepest spot we know about is called "Challenger Deep" and is so deep that if you could pick up the world's tallest mountain and drop it there, you would never see it again.

Pretend you are on a ship, floating over that place. Now pretend that in your pocket are rocks with all your sins written on them; the times you haven't told the truth, times you haven't been kind, and all the other times.

If you could take them all out of your pocket and drop them into that spot called Challenger Deep you would be saying goodbye to them forever. No one would ever see them again.

In the second Bible reading God promises to do exactly that. **You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. Micah 7:19** Except He doesn't take us on an ocean voyage, instead He sent His Son Jesus. In Jesus God promises that are sins are gone even more than if they were dropped into that deep spot in His sea. In Jesus God will not even remember them.

And so in Jesus we are new people, His people, *for the Bible tells me so!*



Mountains

And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so.
¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together He called Seas. And God saw that it was good.
Genesis 1:9-10

On this third day of creation God gathered all the waters into lakes and rivers and seas. The places where there now wasn't water He called "dry land". Some of this dry land is in the form of mountains.

Mountains can be very beautiful. Because they are high in the air, some of them even have snow on them in the summertime! Mountains are places where people like to camp and hike. Some people ski down the mountains and some people climb their ice and snow.

But mountains are hard places for people to be. Most people around the world don't live in the mountains because the weather can be very cold, very little food grows in the mountains, and because some are so high that there isn't enough air for people to live there.

The mountains God made can also be very very big. Some scientists say that Mount Rainier, in Washington State, has a mass of more than 1 trillion tons. That's just one mountain!

Could you imagine waking up one morning and finding something that big is gone; finding that the entire mountain has been removed and sunk in the ocean?

Or imagine what kind of terrible earthquake it would make to move a mountain that big! Would any of our nearby houses and building still be standing?

The second Bible reading talks about God's faithfulness and His care. **God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea. Psalm 46:1-2**

He won't change His love even if something so bad happened that all the world's mountains were destroyed. How do we know if this is true?

Because of Jesus. Because God gave us His Son. God loved us that much, that Jesus would come to earth to be born and live and die. Then Jesus rose from the dead. If He is stronger than death, that is God's guarantee that all believers will have a refuge in Him.

Valleys

And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so.
¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together He called Seas. And God saw that it was good.
Genesis 1:9-10

Along with the mountains, God also made valleys on the third day. Some valleys are broad and wide, some are steep and narrow. The bottoms of valleys often hold the beds of rivers and streams as water flows down the mountains towards the sea.

The way things work now, it would take a river a very long time for it to carry away enough dirt and rock to make a valley, but on the third day of creation, God just made them by saying that they should be there.

Some valleys can seem lonely and frightening, this was especially true in olden days. Valleys are not as bright and sunny as other places and because they have lots of trees and bushes they also have lots of places for danger to hide.

We still talk like that today. When grownups are sad or afraid or when bad things happen they talk about being "in the valley of despair."

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me. Psalm 23:4

Our second Bible reading talks about a very very dark valley, the shadow of death is there. But that verse from Psalm 23 is a comforting one. It says that even when we are in that terrible place that God will be with us.

God is with us in Jesus, in fact one of His other names is "Immanuel" which means "God with us." Remember, Jesus has been that shadowy valley before and He knows the way through to Heaven. In Psalm 23 He promises to be with us when we have to walk through that valley.

If we have the tall beautiful mountains we will also have the dark shadowy valleys. Remember, Jesus made them all and He has promised to be with us always.

Plains

And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so.
¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together He called Seas. And God saw that it was good.
Genesis 1:9-10

We are still talking about what God created on day number three, He sure did a lot on that day, didn't He? Lakes, rivers, seas, mountains, valleys, and now today; plains.

A plain is a flat place, or at least mostly flat. Before people built houses and farms, the Great Plains of America went from Texas into Canada, that's more than 1,600 miles long and larger than most countries in the world!

Before all the houses and farms and roads were made, the Great Plains were home to 30 million buffalo, maybe even 50 million! Millions more birds and prairie dogs and antelope lived there. When God created plains He made them to be very good places to live.

Plains are also good places for traveling. There aren't the steep cliffs of mountains or the dark shadows of valleys, paths and roads across the plains are gentle and easy.

Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed. Isaiah 40:4-5

The second reading for today was written about the time when Jesus would come. His coming would lift people out of the darkness of sin and death. His coming would level and flatten whatever would stand between people and Heaven. When people see and know Him they see and know the glory of the Lord.

If you had to travel across plains in olden days you would find food and water for yourself. Things that might be dangerous would have had a hard time hiding or sneaking up on you. You wouldn't have to carry your things up up up the mountains.

Because Jesus came, in a way it is like He has brought us to the plains. We don't have to climb into Heaven like someone trying to climb a tall and dangerous mountain. We aren't in constant darkness and danger from the devil. Jesus has done all that needs to be done for us to one day be in Heaven, all our sins are forgiven. Jesus has promised to guard and protect us.

Maple Trees

The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Genesis 1:12

It's still the Third Day and God is still creating. He is still speaking His Word. His voice is still calling things into being.

After He gathered the waters into the lakes and ponds and streams and oceans, and after He made mountains and valleys, then He created plants to live in all those places. He created tall grasses for His plains and He created trees.

Trees are a wonderful blessing! Can you think of some of the kinds of trees God created? Which is one of your favorites? Why?

Trees are made of wood and we use wood to make and to build things. Can you think of something that people make using wood? (Houses, ships, jewelry boxes, tables, etc.)

Under the bark of trees there flows a liquid called sap. Sap inside a tree is kind of like blood inside a person. Some of God's trees have a sap that is sweet. God made these trees so that a person could drill a small hole in the tree, gather some of that sap in a bucket, and as long as you don't take too much it doesn't hurt the tree.

Then, when that sap has been cooked for a long time it becomes even sweeter. People put this "cooked-tree-sap" on pancakes and waffles. Do you know what it is called?

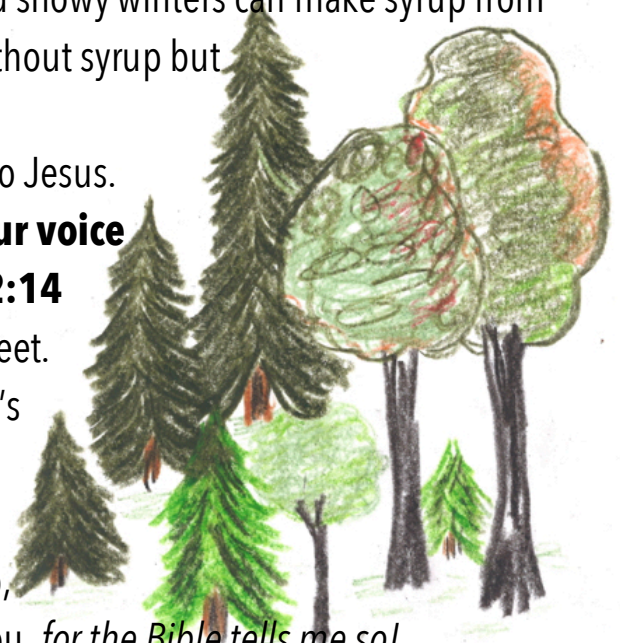
Syrup. People who live in parts of the world with cold snowy winters can make syrup from God's maple, walnut, and birch trees. No one would die without syrup but isn't it nice that God created this special treat for us?

Listen to the second reading today, a lady is talking to Jesus.

Let me see Your face, let me hear Your voice, for Your voice is sweet, and Your face is lovely. Song of Solomon 2:14

She wants to hear His Word, she says His Word is sweet. She says that because in His Word Jesus tells us about God's love, He tells us about mercy and forgiveness, He tells us about Heaven.

The next time you taste the sweet gift of maple syrup, remember how sweet it is to hear about Jesus who loves you, *for the Bible tells me so!*



Seeds

The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Genesis 1:12

That maple syrup from the last devotion sounds good doesn't it?

If you wanted to make your own from your own maple tree, you'd have to plant a maple seed. You won't get maple syrup from an apple tree and you won't get a maple tree from an apple seed.

Each seed will make the kind of tree or plant that it came from; this is how God created them. This means that I never have to worry that my apple tree will grow green beans! (Yay!!)

Plants and trees and flowers and fruit are all things that God created on the third day and they are all things that make more of their own kind. This is a new idea we haven't seen in creation yet. Until this third day God has created things that aren't alive. Now that He is creating living plants He also must create a way for them to make more of themselves.

Usually this is done with seeds. (Not always, but usually.) While plants and trees grow they make seeds. You see this all the time. Do you know what dandelion seeds look like? Do you know where the seeds are for Christmas trees?

When we plant a seed it might seem like it dies. We bury it in the ground and for a long time nothing happens, it seems like we've lost the seed forever.

But then new life sprouts up and grows and eventually the plant from that one seed will make many many seeds.

A man named Paul says that something like this will happen to us some day. He says **So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. 1 Corinthians 15:42** Even though we are buried like a seed we will be alive again to live in Heaven.

How can that be? How can people who have died ever be alive again? Paul knows that it is because of Jesus. Paul knew Jesus, they once met face-to-face. The amazing thing is that they met years after Jesus had died.

Because Jesus is God and life comes from God, Jesus rose again and was alive again. Through His friend Paul He tells us that one day we will be alive with Him in Heaven.

Yes Jesus loves me! Yes Jesus loves me! Yes Jesus loves me, the Bible tells me so!

Fruit

The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Genesis 1:12

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Galatians 5:22-23

Our last devotion pointed out that as God created plants on the third day. He said that they were to make more of their own kind. That devotion also said that God's plan for this was by using seeds.

Some seeds of plants and trees are found inside fruit. Fruit is something God made to be food for birds and animals and also for people. What a great food it is too! Fruit can be eaten fresh or it can be saved for later. If you want to save it for much later fruit can be dried. It can be made into juice or wine and it can be made into jams or jellies.

Most fruit is easy to carry for your lunch or a snack. What is your favorite kind of fruit? How many different kinds of fruit can you name?

Fruit trees take an especially long time to mature, or grow old enough to make more fruit. If a kindergartner plants an apple seed she might be in high school before she has enough apples from her tree to share with her friends.

Faith is often like that. When the Bible reading from Galatians talks about fruit from the Holy Spirit it is talking about our lives of faith. It lists a lot of nice things doesn't it? Don't we all want to be more joyful and more kind?

Remember, these are fruits; which means we may have to be patient while we wait for them to grow. But how do we do that? How can we help fruits of faith grow in our lives?

Well, how would that kindergartner help her apple tree to grow? She could make sure it is in a place where it gets lots of sun and she could make sure to water it when there hasn't been any rain. If she does these things the tree will grow stronger and one day that tree will give her fruit.

Faith grows by hearing and reading God's Word. Going to church and doing our best to listen helps our faith grow. Reading devotions like this help faith to grow too. Paul said in Romans 10:17 "Faith comes from hearing the Gospel." As faith grows in young and old, those fruits of the Spirit will come too.

Flowers

And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so. Genesis 1:11

The seed is in the fruit and the fruit is on the stem or the branch. Many of the plants and trees which God created on the third day also have flowers. And usually the flower comes before the fruit and so it comes before the seed.

Flowers are pretty, aren't they? Can you think of the names of any flowers? (sunflowers, tulips, roses, daisy, apple blossoms, etc.) Which flowers are your mom's favorites? Ask her why that one is one of her favorites. Have you ever smelled flowers? Purple and white lilacs smell like spring.

So, what are flowers? Well, they are the bright, and pretty, and smelly (usually good) parts of the plants which help the plants make fruit and which help them make seeds. Remember seeds are where new plants are going to come from. Some animals, some birds, and many insects see the pretty flower or they smell the flower's scent and they come toward it to get a taste of that sweet-smelling stuff. (Nectar)

And when they move on to the second flower to get a second taste, sometimes a bit of the first flower sticks to them and rubs off onto the second one. Soon after that happens the flower usually withers up and falls off. God designed the plants so that this would be how new fruit and seeds would grow. The nectar feeds the bugs while the fruit and seeds feed the animals and people. And if just one seed gets planted then later there will be a new plant with new flowers.

In Isaiah 40:8 the Bible says: **The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.** Here, the prophet Isaiah talks about flowers withering away but what did he say would remain forever? God's Word.

God doesn't change His mind and so He doesn't change what His Word says. That's good news for you and me because in God's Word, we learn about Jesus and in Jesus God's love remains forever!

Jesus love me! This I know, for the Bible tells me so!!



Deserts and Cacti

And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so. Genesis 1:11

We're going to look at one last part of the land and one last plant; God created both of these on the third day. The kind of land is called "desert" and the kind of plant is called "cactus." (We say "cacti" when there are more than one cactus.)

Deserts are very very dry. They get hardly any rain. They get very hot during the day and sometimes very cold at night. There is often very little water to be seen for miles and miles. Deserts seem to be the last place on earth where you would find life.

But God created life to live in deserts. One of the plants He created to live there is the cactus.

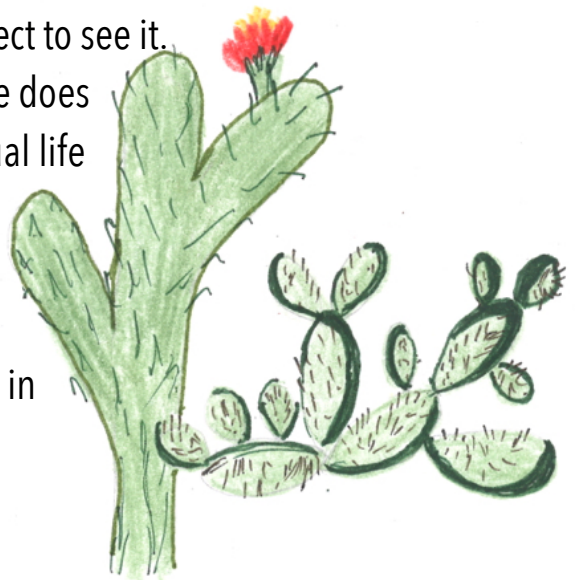
You might not see any water for miles and miles but if you see that prickly cactus you are looking at lots of water stored inside! On a hot day in the desert you might not see any life but when it gets dark and cools down, you might see birds and bats and foxes and rabbits, and even big beautiful moths. You might even see flowers blooming on a cactus...at night!

In Isaiah 35:6 the Bible says **For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.** It talks about waters and streams suddenly appearing in the middle of a desert. But what the prophet Isaiah is actually talking about is God bringing life out of the last place anyone would expect; bring life out of a grave!

This is Jesus. When He died and His friends buried Him, they thought it was all over. When Mary Magdalene went there on the next Sunday morning, a living Jesus was the last thing she expected to see. But that is exactly what she saw.

God is very good at creating life where we wouldn't expect to see it. He does it every day in deserts. He did it in Jesus' tomb and He does it in our own hearts as well. On their own there isn't any spiritual life in our heart or soul. But that's before God does His work of faith. Your faith is like a cactus in the desert; our minds might say it shouldn't be there but there it is anyway, alive and well.

The life of faith we have is a miracle and gift just like life in the desert because nothing is impossible with God!



Sun

And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. Genesis 1:16

On the fourth day God created the sun. Isn't that weird? The first thing He made was light but for three days the light wasn't coming from the sun, it was coming from somewhere else. Now He gives the light places to come from; most of ours comes from the sun. This is the reading up above.

God gave the sun jobs to do: It helps mark seasons, it helps us keep track of days and years, and it rules the day.

The sun is a star just like other stars but because it is so much closer to us it is more than a star for us. I like to think of it like this: Your mom is a lady like many other ladies but her connection to you makes her more than just another lady. Our sun is kind of like your mom!

The sun brings warmth. It melts ice. It heats ocean water enough to make currents (like rivers in the ocean). Did you know that the sun also makes weather? It does this by heating up water and air to make clouds and rain and wind.

Without the sun plants wouldn't grow, they would all die and then so would all other living things. Ever since God made it we need the sun in order to live.

Except in Heaven. In Heaven we won't need to sun to give light or warmth or life; in Heaven Jesus will provide everything. That's what the second reading is talking about. **And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. Revelation 21:23**

Because Jesus loved us, because He died for us, and because He rose from the dead we will be with Him in Heaven one day. Up there we won't need jackets because it won't get cold. We won't need the military because there won't be any enemies we need to be protected from, and up there we won't even need the sun!

Jesus, the Lamb, will provide everything. He's already provided all we need to get there, when we finally are there, we will find that He's done everything else.

Jesus loves me, this I know!

Moon

And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. Genesis 1:16

I see the moon and the moon sees me. God bless the moon and God bless me. Have you ever heard that little rhyme? The moon is in lots of rhymes and songs and stories.

That makes sense, after all, we see it almost every day.

But what does it do? In the first Bible reading God tells us that it helps tell time, keep track of days, and that it rules the night. The moon makes the tide go in and out, and without the moon we wouldn't have seasons; some places would have summer all the time while other places had winter all the time!

Did you know that the moon is like a mirror? It doesn't make its own light like the sun does. The moon reflects, or bounces, light from the sun onto us. It is so high up in the sky that at night, when the sun isn't shining on us, it is still shining on the moon. The light we see from the moon is sunlight bouncing off the moon back down on us.

A full moon is when we can see all of the moon that is being lit up by the sun. A half moon is when we can only see half of the part that is being lit up. The amount of moon we see being lit up changes everyday because the moon rises about 50 minutes later each day. A "new" moon is when it is in the sky during the daytime, so it is "gone" all night just like the sun is.

The moon is very important to us on earth. Many planets have moons, in fact Jupiter and Saturn have over 130 just between the two of them! There may be millions and millions of moons out in space, but none have been found that are anything like our moon. They are much smaller than their planet and orbit much farther away. Our moon is unique just like our earth is!

Luke 15:4 What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?

Jesus says that He is like a shepherd who has a hundred sheep and if just one gets lost He is the kind of shepherd who would go looking for that lost one because it is so special to Him.

You are like our moon and you are like that one sheep because you are special to Jesus! He would give Himself just for you. He loves you! *For the Bible tells me so.*

Day & Night

And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, ¹⁸ to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. Genesis 1:17-18

When God first began creating He made a division of morning and evening. The first three days had day and night just like we do but what's amazing is that they didn't have a sun or a moon. No sunrise or sunset those first three days!

All that changed when the fourth day came along. On this day God created the sun and the moon so that now day and night would come just as they still do today.

During the day we have light and we can work or play. Day is the time we usually do the things God has given us to do.

Night is the time for rest. While we rest our bodies grow and heal so that we are ready to face the new day when it comes again. Night is also the time for darkness which can sometimes be scary.

If you hear a noise in the bushes during the day you look to see what is making it; maybe it was a dog or a squirrel. When we hear the same noise in the dark of night it sounds scarier, doesn't it? Even though it is the same noise, when we can't see it is easier to forget that God and His angels and our mom and dad protect us.

Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. Psalm 121:4

This Bible verse promises us that God doesn't rest from the work of keeping us. When it is dark and when we are afraid, He can see clearly. When we are tired and can't keep our eyes open, He can and does.

When Jesus lived on earth, He slept just like you do. Now that He has risen from the dead His body doesn't need to rest anymore and now that He has ascended into Heaven He watches over you day and night to keep you in His care.

King David wrote the last words for today's devotion, lets repeat them with him: *Psalm 4:8*
In peace I will lie down and sleep; for You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.

Stars

And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years. Genesis 1:14

God sure made lots of things on the fourth day! He said "Let there be" about the sun and the moon and it was so. He also created all the other stars by saying "Let there be lights..." Our sun is a star just like the stars you see at night but our sun is also special because it is *ours*.

The other stars are very far away. After this fourth day now it takes a long time for their light to travel all the way to our earth and it would take our best space ships hundreds of years to travel to them!

Did you know that you can write and draw and color in this book? Try that right now. In the space below, write down the number "1" and then write 24 zeros after it. (Mom or Dad might have to help.) Do you know what that number is? That's how many stars scientists think that there are in the universe.

Stars help people know which direction to travel and they help people keep track of the seasons. In the times before electric lights the moon and the stars were the only way people could see at night. Back then people would look at the stars and find shapes of people and animals (like a dot-to-dot). Then they would make up stories about those people and animals. Do you know what these shapes are called? Constellations.

When I look at Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars You have set in place, what is man that You are mindful of Him, and the Son of Man that You care for Him. Psalm 8:3

In Psalm 8 King David asks a question. He wonders why God would care about someone like him when God created so many amazing things like stars. But as David asks, he answers his own question. He answered it by talking about "the Son of Man."

Do you know who this is? It is Jesus, another book of the Bible makes that clear. (see Hebrews 2:5-9) Even though He created all those stars, Jesus is how God proves He loves you. Jesus didn't die and rise again for the stars. He did do that for you.

Our song says it very well! *Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so!*

Planets

And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years. Genesis 1:14

Do you know the names of any planets? Starting from the closest to our sun there are: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, & Neptune. Eight in all.

When I was a kid, scientists only knew about the planets listed above. Today we have telescopes which can see further into space and today scientists think that there are many more than eight.

How many? They think that there might be as many planets as there are stars! (Did you write that number out in the last devotion?) Scientists find more and more all the time; trillions and trillions of them!

So what do all these other planets do? Only God knows why He created each and every one but we do know some of the things which other planets do for Earth.

For example, do you know how a soccer goalie's job is to stop balls from going into the net? Well, the planet Jupiter acts like a goalie for Earth. Jupiter's gravity is so strong that it pulls stray rocks toward itself, where they crash without hurting anything else.

If Jupiter wasn't there doing what God made it to do, so many of those stray rocks could hit the earth that everything living here might be killed! Scientists agree that without Jupiter there would probably be no life on Earth.

As planets go, Earth is very very special. It seems that the more planets we find and the more we learn about them, the more unique—or special—our Earth is. When I was a kid the earth seemed to be one planet out of eight; now it seems that it is one out of billions!

You did not choose Me, but I chose you. John 15:16

In today's second Bible verse Jesus told His people that He chose them. He chose you! Before you ever knew Him or loved Him or heard about Him, He promised to save you. Jesus has done everything you need to do. He paid all punishments you should pay. Jesus is alive and has promised to have a place ready in Heaven just for you!

Little ones to Him belong!



Comets

And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years. Genesis 1:14

Some of the more interesting things God made on the fourth day are comets. Scientists say that a comet is a lot like a dirty snowball, it is made of ice and rocks and other stuff like that. Of course, it is much bigger than any snowball you or your dad have ever made and because it is up in space it flies (orbits) around the sun just like our own earth does.

As comets travel around the sun they run into stuff which is coming out of the sun, stuff you and I can't see. That stuff (we call it "solar wind") makes the snowball glow and leave a trail (tail) as it flies around the sun.

Comets are a treat to see, though without the help of a telescope they usually just look like a blurry patch in the sky. Usually, but not always. Sometimes comets are big enough and/or close enough that you can even see them during the day when the sun is out. It has been a long time since that happened but who knows, maybe it will happen while you are alive!

Because it is so hard to know when comets will be seen, and because we are still finding "new" ones today, many people have thought that comets bring bad luck. Imagine it: a bright fuzzy streak appears in the sky and then your favorite toy breaks or your pet runs away.

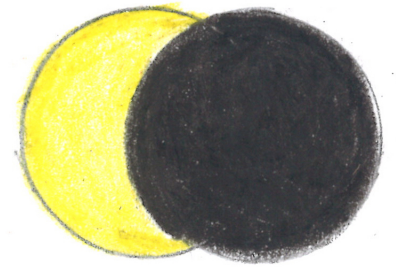
In the Bible God promises us that there is no such thing as bad luck like that. Bad things happen because of sin, not because of a comet or an eclipse. The Bible also tells us of God's promise to watch over us in all things. Because He gave His son Jesus He will either protect us or He will take us home to Heaven. Either way we are always safe with Him.

You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.

Psalm 91:5-6

Eclipses

And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years. Genesis 1:14



Everyone look at the light or at the lamp in the room right now. Then, hold your hand out as far as you can and move it so that it is in the way of the light. Notice that the light is still all around the room but it is not shining on your face. Your face is in the shadow of your hand!

That's what happens in a solar eclipse. The moon that God made moves right between us and the sun. The sun is still shining but we are in the shadow of the moon just like your face was in the shadow of your hand!

When this happens there are a few minutes where it gets dark again. You can see stars in the daytime sky. Without the sunshine it gets colder. And it gets quiet; the animals and bugs and birds don't seem to know what's going on, they usually all stop making noise.

If we didn't know what was going on we might get very scared during an eclipse. We might wonder if the sun will ever be back, if it will ever be warm again, or if the moon will block out the sun for the rest of time.

"IF we didn't know..." But we do. The sun and the earth and the moon all move through space in exactly the way God designed them, in fact it is so exact that we can tell when the next eclipse is going to be.

Hide not Your face from me. Turn not Your servant away in anger, O You who have been my help. Cast me not off; forsake me not, O God of my salvation! Psalm 27:9

In the second Bible reading David asks God not to hide, or cover His face from him. How scary that would be! What would life be if God's goodness and love did not shine down upon us? It would be a very dark life indeed.

But sometimes it feels that way, doesn't it? Sometimes life feels darker than usual. Something sad happens, we feel like we don't have many friends, or we get hurt. It feels like an eclipse has happened in our life.

But God has promised to never ever leave us and He proved that promise will always be true by sending Jesus to die and rise again. Eclipses in life come but they also go. God has promised that He never ever leave us.

For the Bible tells me so!

Salmon

And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." ²¹ So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." Genesis 1:20-22

Do you know where you were born; which hospital and even which room you were in? Do you think you could find your way there again?

On the fifth day God created all the things that live in the sea and that fly in the air. Some of those things He created are fish.

There are many different kinds of fish with many different and interesting characteristics. I suppose a whole devotion book could be written just about fish! (And then another just about birds, another about land animals, insects, etc.)

One kind of fish that lives where I live are salmon. Salmon are amazing! First, they hatch from eggs their mothers laid far up in mountain streams, but when they are old enough, they will follow that river out to the ocean where they will live for years, swimming all over. Sometimes that stream and river are more than 1,000 miles long!

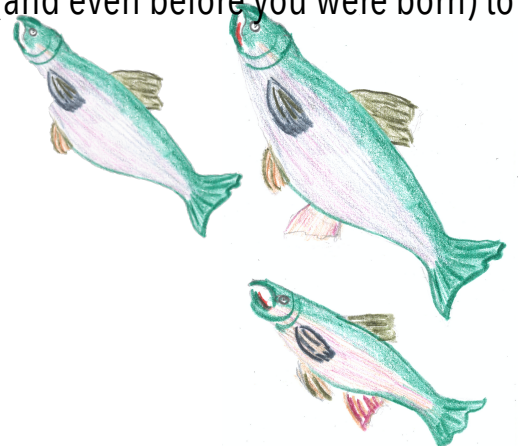
But then the amazing part happens! When it is time for them to lay their own salmon eggs, that salmon will swim back to the very same river and up that very same stream where it came from and lay eggs for the next batch of salmon in the same place!

How do they know? How do they remember something from when they were babies and which is so far away?

God must somehow tell them just as in the second Bible reading God somehow told the fish to go into His disciples' net. Here, listen to that: **He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. John 21:6**

How do they know? God controls all things, even where fish swim. He also knows that you belong in your home in Heaven and He will work all your life (and even before you were born) to make sure that's where you end up.

Little ones to Him belong!



Sharks

And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." ²¹ So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." Genesis 1:20-22

Another kind of fish God created on the fifth day are sharks. Sharks can be ferocious! They can bite their food (their prey) so hard that they lose some teeth! But that's OK because they grow new teeth throughout their whole life.

Another interesting thing about sharks is that they don't sleep like we do. They can only breathe by moving through the water. That is how they get oxygen to their heart; so while they do sometimes slow down and rest, they never completely stop moving and lay down to sleep like you do.

I need to get some sleep every night or else it is hard for me to think but because God made them that way, but they probably don't feel any more tired than you do after you play outside. Isn't it amazing how different God's creatures can be?!

Listen to this Bible verse, it has some really good news for you and me: **Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. Psalm 121:4**

God never sleeps; never, ever. Nothing ever happens without Him knowing about it and without Him knowing what it's going to do to you. He also knows how He is going to take care of you.

God's not like us, He doesn't need to close His eyes and rest. He is perfect and He is all powerful. When you lay down to sleep tonight you don't have to worry. God and His angels will be watching you all night long.

They are weak but He is strong!

Crab



And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." ²¹ So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Genesis 1:20-21



Have you ever seen a crab? Where I live we can find them pretty easily, we can even pick the little ones up and hold them! The first couple of times you do this it can be scary, you might be afraid that his claw (pincer) might pinch you!

Crab will use their pincers to do just that if they are trying to protect themselves but do you know what they use them for most of the time?

To pick up garbage. That's right, crabs are the sanitation workers, or garbage men, of the ocean floor. On a normal day they crawl around finding bits of food, maybe food that fell out of a shark's mouth, and they clean it up by grabbing it and putting it in their mouth.

God knew that His sharks would be messy eaters and because He did not give them hands to clean up after themselves He made crabs; they clean up, or scavenge, after many sea creatures, not just sharks.

Do you ever have to clean up the garbage? Do you ever have to empty it in the big can outside? How do you feel about that? Does it ever seem too stinky or gross for you? Does it ever seem like a job that someone else should do?

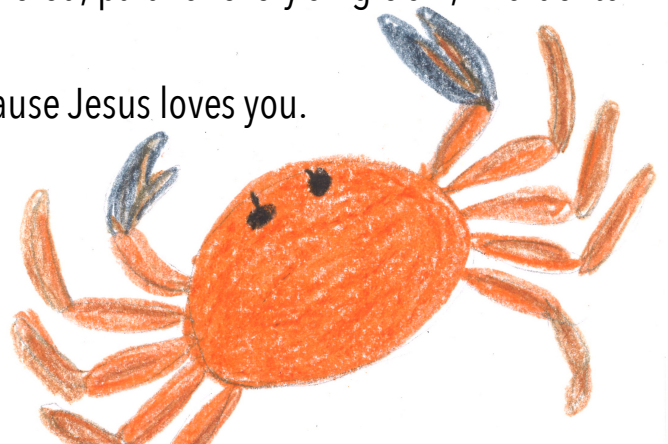
Though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. Philippians 2:6-7

The second Bible reading talks about Jesus. It tells us that even though what Jesus was supposed to do would be hard and terrible and would hurt Him very very much, that He didn't turn away from it.

No, He suffered all the things that had to be suffered, paid for every single sin, in order to save you and me.

No job was too low for Him. Jesus did it all because Jesus loves you.

For the Bible tells me so!



Octopi

So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Genesis 1:21

Did you know that the Bible speaks a little differently than we do? When we talk about animals we talk about how they breathe and whether their babies hatch from eggs or not. But when God talks about animals He talks about where He made them to live. On the fifth day He made things that live in water.

And one of those "water-things" is the octopus. It isn't exactly a fish; it's mouth resembles a bird and it's eight arms are like the tails of monkeys, but it does live in water and so we do know that God created it on the fifth day.

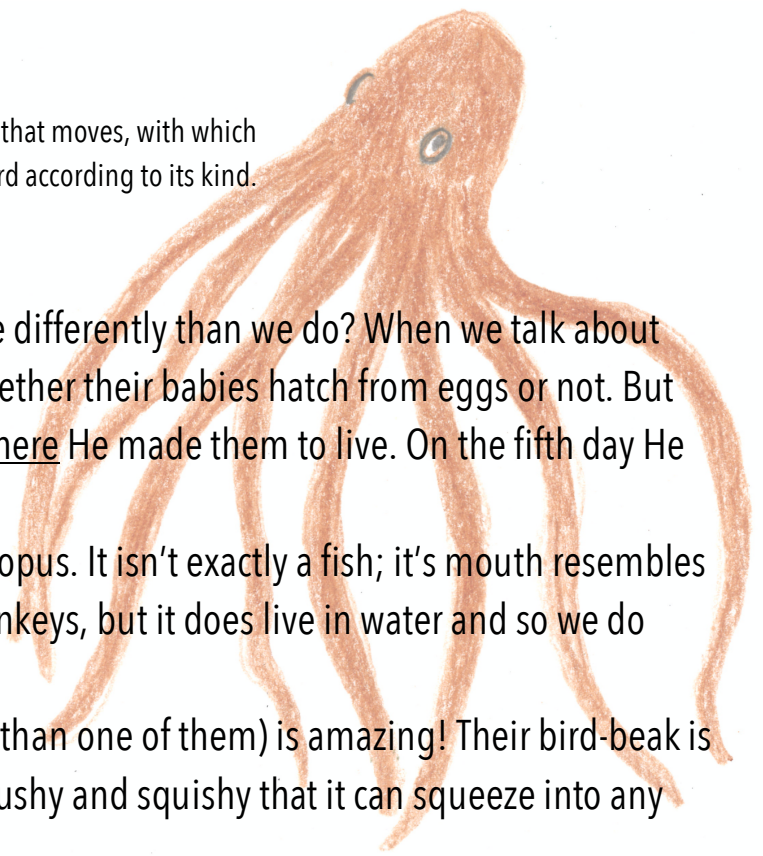
The octopus (or "octopi" if there are more than one of them) is amazing! Their bird-beak is the only hard part of their body. The rest is so mushy and squishy that it can squeeze into any hole that it's beak can fit through.

Did you know that octopi have three hearts? They do! Did you know that they are smart enough and skilled enough to open up child-proof-medicine bottles? They can! They can use their eight legs to walk on the ocean floor or they can suck-and-push water through their body like a jet engine to speed through the water. They can change the color and patterns of their skin to blend in with rocks or coral and if they are scared they can fill the water with a cloud of black ink.

The octopus is amazing but then so is the one who created it. In Psalm 104 the writer sees many of the things that God has created and he says: **O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom have You made them all; the earth is full of Your creatures. Psalm 104:24**

Only God could design and make a creature with three hearts, eight legs, and such amazing abilities. That's how wise God is! After all, when Adam and Eve sinned and made it so that they and all their children had to die, only God could answer that problem by sending Jesus to die too. But because Jesus was also God, His death pays for the sins of the whole world.

Know what this means? It means that when you die you will go to Heaven because *Jesus loves me, this I know. For the Bible tells me so.*



Killdeer

And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." Genesis 1:20

Stand up. Flap your arms in the air. Did you fly off the ground? Of course not, you don't have wings, but birds can flap their arms and do something amazing: They can fly!

Let's try naming some of God's birds. What's the big brown one with the white head? How about small and brown with a red chest and tummy?

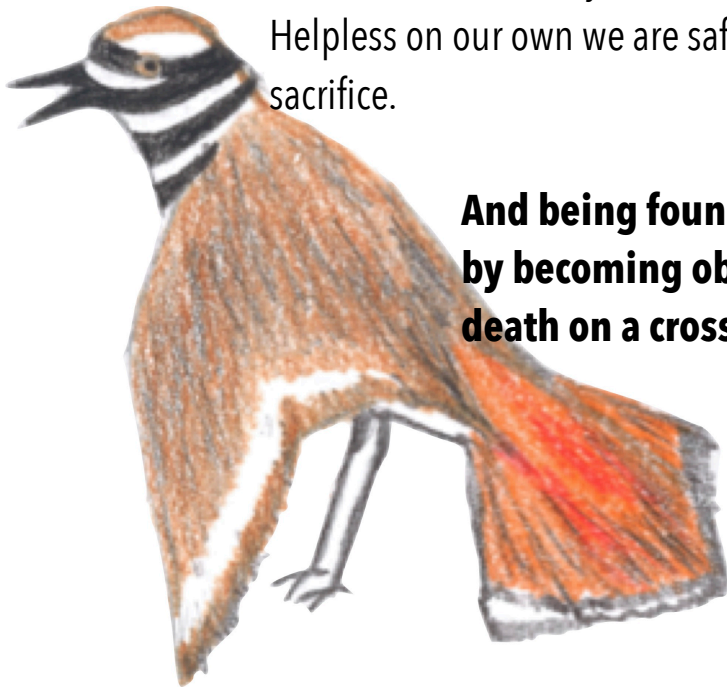
Another kind of bird is called a Killdeer and this bird is as amazing as all the others. Killdeer mothers build their nests on the ground. This can be a problem if a dog or cat or some other animal wants to eat her eggs. In order to protect them, the mother will fly down near the other animal and chirp loudly to get its attention. Then she will pretend like she has a broken wing and limp away to lure the animal toward herself and away from the nest.

She will do everything she can, even put herself in danger, in order to keep her children safe. Once she sees that they are safe, she will fly back to them.

When it comes to the devil we are like the helpless eggs of the Killdeer. We can't get away from him, he could do anything he wanted to us.

Except he can't because we have Jesus. Jesus came to put Himself between the devil and between us. As the second Bible verse says, He became a person like you in order to save us.

Helpless on our own we are safe for eternity because of Jesus and His sacrifice.



And being found in human form, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Philippians 2:8

Pelicans

So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Genesis 1:21

Do you know what kind of bird weaves spider's web into its nest? Using only their beaks, some hummingbirds weave spider's web into their nest so that as their babies grow bigger the nest stretches to fit them.

Do you know what kinds "peck" holes into trees in order to find little bugs living there?

Do you know what kind of bird has a beak, or bill, that stretches out like a bag in order to catch fish? That's a pelican.

Not only do pelicans have special beaks but they also do something very special for their children. Sometimes, when there are no fish to be caught, the mother pelican will use her beak to pluck the feathers off of her chest. Then she will use her beak to pinch, or cut herself so that she is bleeding. She will give that blood to her children to keep them alive.

That might sound kind of gross but isn't it also kind of neat? She will suffer pain, she will even give her own blood, in order to save her children.

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all. 1 Timothy 2:5-6

Long ago, when Christian artists were painting Jesus on the cross, sometimes they would paint a nest on top of it. In that nest would be a mother pelican with drops of blood on her bare chest. She would be keeping her babies alive by suffering for them.

Can you guess why the artists would paint pelicans on the tops of their crosses? Because the mother pelican reminded them of Jesus and what He did for you. The second Bible verse says it: who gave Himself as a ransom for all. A ransom is the price someone pays to rescue another person. The ransom Jesus paid was Himself and the one He rescued was you!

Yes, Jesus loves me!



Barn Swallows



And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." ²³ And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day. Genesis 1:22-23

If you and your parents moved to a different country just six months after you were born, would you be able to find your way back; back to where you were born, back to the very same house you lived in, on your first birthday?

Of course not! That's impossible, isn't it?

Well, what's impossible for you is very ordinary for birds. We call this "migration". This is when birds fly to a different place for the winter, many times a different country, and then come back to where they were born for the summer.

Some birds migrate over 40,000 miles every year! And some birds, like the barn swallow, return to the exact same neighborhood, even the exact same nest! Isn't that amazing?

On the Fifth Day, when God said "let birds fly above the earth, across the expanse of the heavens" He created some incredible things.

Barn swallows snatch bugs right out of the air, turning faster than any jet fighter ever could. When autumn comes they fly thousands of miles away for the winter. When the time and the weather is right, they'll be right back where they were born, buzzing and skimming over the same fields and yards where they learned to fly just one year before.

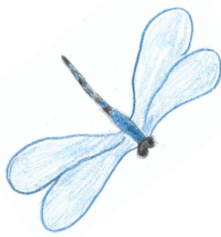
Scientists aren't completely sure how they find their way back. A number of things probably help them; smell, seeing familiar sights, constellations, even a built-in compass in their beaks!

Listen to this: **Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. John 14:5-6**

Jesus had just told His disciples about our eternal home in Heaven. Thomas says he doesn't know the way there, after all it must be a very long way away from here, so how could Thomas ever hope to get there?

Jesus told Thomas that He is the way. Jesus is the way to Heaven because He took all our sins away and because He will give us eternal life. *This I know, for the Bible tells me so.*





Dragonfly

And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." Genesis 1:20



At some point we have to admit that we don't know exactly on which day some of the animals were created. God doesn't see them the same way that we do. One example of that is the dragonfly.

Many people think of insects as being created on the sixth day because they "creep on the ground" like Genesis 1:25 says.

On the other hand, God created flying things on the fifth day. Do you think that means just birds or does it also mean the flying insects?

But did you know that a dragonfly spends almost its whole life swimming in water? That would still be Day Five but we would see it more as a fish than a bird!

That's right, we don't always know the exact day on which God created some of these animals but we do know that it was on the fifth or the sixth day.

And that's also right that dragonflies spend most of their life in the water. We call them "larva" or "nymphs" during that part of their life and they live like that for about a whole year. When their wings grow and they start to fly, they only live for about one more month before new dragonfly eggs are laid and they die.

The next time you see a dragonfly, watch what great fliers they are, they can go up and down, sideways and even backwards! Just like a helicopter but a while lot faster.

And the next time you see one, remember how short their life-span is.

Sometimes people's lives seem very fast and very short, don't they? Some children die very young and even old people will often say that their life has seemed to go by very fast.

In Psalm 37:28 David says this about God: **He will not forsake His saints. They are preserved forever.** No matter how short, or how long, our life here on earth, life in Heaven with God lasts forever. When Jesus died and rose again for you, God set aside your place in Heaven with Him. That's a promise that we can count on.

For the Bible tells me so.



Butterfly

And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." Genesis 1:20



Most people think that dragonflies were created on Day Five of creation. After all, as nymphs they swim and as dragonflies they fly...

But what about butterflies? Before they become butterflies they are caterpillars and during this time they "creep" on the ground and on leaves and branches. And usually, the caterpillar stage of their life lasts longer than the butterfly stage does. (Not always, but usually.)

What do you think? When do you think God created butterflies? On Day Five or on Day Six? We have to wait until we are in Heaven to find out for sure, until then this is one of those things we just can't know for certain.

What we do know for certain about butterflies is how they change from a caterpillar; and this is really cool! When the time is right they make a "cocoon", or "chrysalis" around their entire body. From the outside it looks like the caterpillar must just be sleeping, like in a sleeping bag. But inside lots is happening.

The caterpillar's legs and body turn into liquid. If you opened its chrysalis right now a bunch of goo or slime would pour out. But don't do that! Wait for a few more days as that liquid reforms into a butterfly body (thorax), antennae, and beautiful butterfly wings. When it comes out of its chrysalis it looks like a completely different animal; no more crawling on the ground, now it can time to fly!

Did you know that something like that is going to happen to you? 1 Corinthians 15:54 says **When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."**

"Perishable" and "mortal" mean the way we are now, we grow old and we get sick and we wear out; one day we'll be buried. "Imperishable" and "immortal" means the way we will be in Heaven. Just as a caterpillar enters the chrysalis and comes out changed, one day we'll come out of the grave changed.

This victory over death is given to us in Jesus. Thanks be to God!



Spider

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. ²⁵ And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Genesis 1:24-25



We may not be able to say for sure which day butterflies were created on but it seems pretty certain that spiders, and other creatures that would live on dry land, were created on the sixth day.

Lots of people don't like spiders and are afraid of them even though God made people on the same day as He made spiders! One of the most amazing thing about the spider is its web.

How does the spider know to make six or eight straight line that all cross in the same middle spot? How does it know to make that pattern going around and round until the perfect trap is set for flies and mosquitos? How come they can make web come out of their own body and I can't? And how come the other bugs get stuck in the web while the spider doesn't?

And when they do get stuck that is the end of them, isn't it? The spider wraps web around and around the bug until it is all covered up, then it saves the bug to eat later. If you were a fly or a mosquito, you might be more scared of spider webs than people are scared of spiders!

In one spot in the Bible it sounds like King David is talking about being caught like a bug in a spider's web. He says **The cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me. 2 Samuel 22:6**

"Sheol" is a word for "grave." Cords and snares are like web, but these aren't from a spider. These things were the plans and tricks of a man who wanted to kill David. We'll read about them later. David called to God for help and God did that. A little later David writes about how God rescued him from the sticky webs of that other man.

This is good news because one day we will be wrapped up in the snares of death and in the cords of the grave. We'd be trapped there forever because just as the fly can't escape the spider's web, we can't escape from death.

But Jesus did and Jesus will. He did escape from the snares and cords of His own death and grave and Jesus will rescue you from your death and your grave. And it doesn't matter how young or small you are! Know what? Even if you were no more important than a fly, *little ones to Him belong. They are weak but He is strong!*

Snake

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. ²⁵ And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Genesis 1:24-25

Of all the animals made on this Sixth Day, even all the animals in the Bible, the snake must be one of the most well-known (and one of the least popular). A few pages from now we'll read about the devil appearing like a snake so for now we'll just talk a little bit about God's creature: the snake.

Snakes don't have teeth to chew their food like you do. Instead, they swallow it whole and the whole thing digests while it inside the snake's stomach.

Because snakes are reptiles, they keep their bodies warm from the sun and the air around them. If the temperature is below 50° the snake's life may be in danger!

The largest kind of snake in the world is called the anaconda. Imagine five people like your dad lying in a straight line; that's how long God's anacondas can grow! (30 ft.)

Your skin can stretch as you grow but a snake's can't. Every so often they have to "shed" or wriggle out of their outgrown skin while a new one underneath takes over.

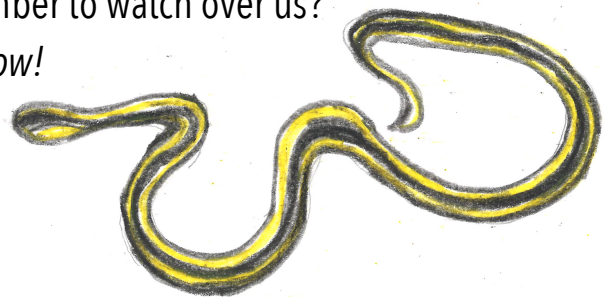
One of the important jobs for snakes to do in the natural world is to eat rats and mice. Without snakes, those other animals would spread germs all over!

Hundreds of different kinds of snakes are "venomous." That means they will inject poison into you if they bite you. Like I said: snakes are not only a well-known animal but are usually unpopular.

They were unpopular even in Jesus' day. In Matthew 7:10 Jesus says if a child turns to his mom or dad and **if he asks for a** (bite of) **fish, will** (mom or dad) **give him a serpent?**

Of course not! Mom knows what's good for us! Dad knows how to take care of us!! By God's grace they do, and Jesus promises that our Father in Heaven knows even better how to feed us and protect us. Jesus Himself is the proof. If God the Father sent His Son Jesus to be our Savior, doesn't that mean that He will also remember to watch over us?

Of course it does! *Jesus loves me, this I know!*





Lion

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. ²⁵ And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Genesis 1:24-25

Time to guess...

- I am an animal created by God on the Sixth Day and I sleep up to 20 hours a day.
- I walk on my tiptoes; my heels never touch the ground.
- Our females catch almost always catch the food but we males always get to eat first.
- You can guess how old we males are by the fur around our face. The darker the fur, the older we are.

Can you guess what kind of animal I am? I am a lion.

When God created lions on the Sixth Day He sure made an amazing animal didn't He?

They can sprint up to 50 mph but can weigh more than 400 pounds!

Lions have always been dangerous to humans. If you lived where lions lived, you would always have to be on the watch. They might be hiding behind bushes, they might be waiting in the dark shadows.

Jesus' friend Peter once compared the devil to a lion. Peter wrote: **Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 1 Peter 5:8**

Peter certainly knew how the devil could prowl after someone. On the night that Jesus was captured and put on trial, Peter thought he'd be really brave but the devil cornered him in a place where Peter said he had never even heard of Jesus.

Wouldn't it be sad if Peter's words had been true, if Peter really hadn't ever heard of Jesus? It is a good thing for Peter that Jesus had heard of him. That night, Jesus even promised that He'd pray for Peter then Jesus died to forgive all of Peter's sins. With all of his sins forgiven, the devil never would be able to pounce on Peter to devour him.

Jesus did the same for you. He died for you, protects you, He even prays for you.

Elephant

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. ²⁵ And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Genesis 1:24-25

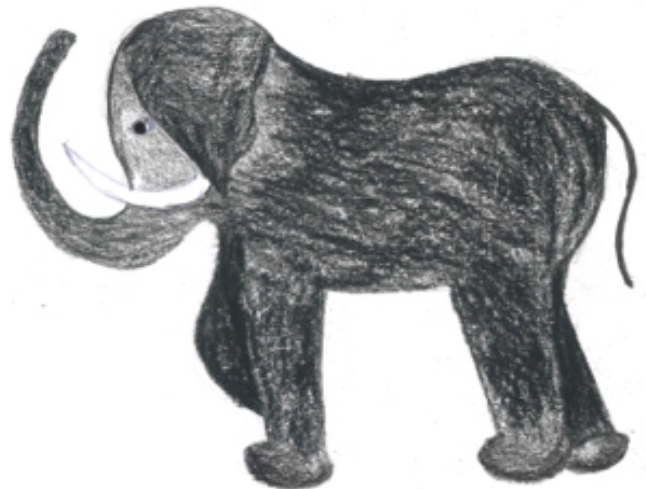
The largest animal that God created on the Sixth Day is the elephant. As big and as amazing as they are, they got here by God saying "Let there be." That's how all the animals got here!

When He created them, God gave elephants 40,000 muscles in their trunks! We don't even have 1,000 in our entire body!! Did you know that elephant tusks aren't horns? Those are just two of their teeth! They only grow like that on the male elephants and they can use them to dig for water and help the herd get through droughts. Elephants also use one of their tusks more than their other they way you use your right or left hand more than the other.

Elephants hear with their big ears and they also hear with their feet! Some sounds travel through the ground and God gave elephants very soft feet which lets these "ground sounds" come through their feet, up their legs, and into their ears!

God gave elephants amazing hearing but that's nothing compared to His own. In Psalm 17:6 David says this: **I call upon You, for You will answer me, O God; incline Your ear to me; hear my words.** David knows that no matter how small or weak his voice seems that God can and will hear him.

God can and will hear you too, no matter how small or weak you are. Like everything else about Him, His hearing is perfect; and remember why He will hear you. It's because of Jesus. God doesn't care how small you are, or how weak. Because of Jesus He loves you and because of Jesus He will hear you.



Little ones to Him belong. They are weak but He is strong!

Bear

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. ²⁵ And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Genesis 1:24-25

If His elephants are the largest of all the animals God created on Day Six, then His bears are the largest meat-eaters from that day. At 600 pounds, Grizzly Bears from North America are larger than lions and polar bears are 400 pounds heavier than that!

Grizzlies don't only eat meat, scientists call grizzlies and most other bears "omnivores" which means they will eat anything; bugs, berries, fish, even garbage. But polar bears only hunt other living things. They mostly eat seals but will also eat caribou and they will even hunt for people if they are hungry enough. (Don't worry, I doubt any of them live near you!)

One of the things bears are known for is hibernating. That's when they eat lots of food in from summer through fall and then they sleep all through the winter. It's funny that they are known for this because most bears in most places don't actually hibernate all winter. They will sleep for a few days at a time, even longer if the weather is very stormy, but they wake up and even come out of their den and wander around.

Do you ever have a hard time falling asleep? Do you ever wake up in the middle of the night? One night Jesus and His disciples were in a boat and while He was sound asleep, the disciples couldn't sleep. They were scared because there was a terrible storm. They woke Jesus and said this: **"Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" And He awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. Mark 4:38-39**

When you go to bed tonight you will be safe because just as Jesus was with His disciples that night, He promises to be with you this night.



Squirrel

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. ²⁵ And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Genesis 1:24-25



When I was a little boy I tried very hard to make pets of the squirrels in our woods to sit in my lap and eat out of my hand. I spent hours sitting as still as I could while they nervously approached, grabbed a peanut from my fingertips, and scurried off.

It never worked. They never became like pets; and when one of them bit my big sister's finger instead of the peanut in her hand, Mom said I wasn't allowed to train them anymore.

When God created squirrels (and chipmunks), He made an animal that stores up food for winter. My squirrels were taking the food I was giving them and burying it in the yard. Well, that doesn't seem so special, lots of animals dig holes.

But God gave squirrels the ability to remember. Months later, even under lots of snow, squirrels can remember where their food is buried. And because they can do that, they can eat even when food isn't growing.

Squirrels are one of the few kinds of animals that can do this thing but all people can do it too. Making sure we have enough food to eat, money to pay all our bills, and taking care of the place where we live is an important job that God gives us to do. But sometimes we can get so busy with collecting all these things that we start to think that those things are more important than knowing and hearing God's Word.

Jesus talked about this when He said: **Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. Matthew 6:20** When we get things mixed up and only think about money and food and stuff like that we forget about heavenly things which are much more important.

The good news is that God never forgot. He planned our salvation before He even began creating the heavens and the earth. That plan included His promise to send Jesus to be our Savior.

Heaven is our treasure and Jesus has made sure our place there has been saved!



Dinosaurs

And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Genesis 1:25



Tyrannosaurus Rex! Triceratops! Apatosaurus! These are all names of dinosaurs but what is a dinosaur?

Well, that word comes to us from the year 1841. Even though finding fossils and skeletons in the ground wasn't new, one scientist gave the bones he found the name "terrible lizard." But he said it in the Latin language, which is "dino-saur."

I can't tell you as much about dinosaurs as I've told you about pelicans and seeds and comets because we really don't know that much about them. We have lots of guesses but they are only guesses because skeletons can't tell us everything we'd like to know.

For example, some people think that the because Tyrannosaurus Rex skeletons have sharp teeth these animals ate meat. But panda bears and bats have sharp pointy teeth and pandas eat bamboo while bats eat fruit.

Some think that dinosaurs lived millions of years before Adam and Eve were around. But all over the world we find pictures of them drawn on rocks and in caves and even in books. How could these people have drawn pictures of animals if they'd never seen them before?

We even find dinosaur bones with blood still in them and we know that can't happen if those bones were millions of years old. But there are still lots of questions we can't answer, like; what happened to them all or how did Noah fit them on the ark?

In John chapter 3 a man named Nicodemus has lots of questions because there are lots of things he doesn't understand and lots of things that don't make sense to his way of thinking. But listen to what Jesus says to him: **No one has ascended into heaven except He who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life. (John 3:13-15)**

Dinosaurs, like salvation, sure can be confusing! It's a good thing that God has figured it all out for us, after all, He's the only one who truly knows these things. But that doesn't change what we can be sure of, and that's this: *Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so!*



Angels

"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. ⁵ Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? ⁶ On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, ⁷ when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Job 38:4-7

Today we will spend a little time talking about one last "creature" that God made before we talk about people. Today we will talk about angels.

With angels there are some things we know (because the Bible tells us so) and many things we don't know. We know that God created angels sometime during days one thru six, but we don't know exactly when.

We know that angels don't die, don't marry each other, don't have children, and we know that we don't become angels when we die. (As fun as that sounds, God has something even better in store for us! He promises!!)

Though the Bible always uses words like "him", "he", and "his" we don't know if angels are men. They normally don't have solid bodies like you do and the only ones which the Bible says have wings are the "seraph" angels mentioned in Isaiah 6. Of course, this doesn't mean that the other angels don't have wings, it just means we don't know for sure because God doesn't tell us.

The Bible tells us more about what angels do than it tells us about what they look like. What they do is serve God and protect God's people. God often uses angels when there are warnings to give or good news to share. When His people need protection He often sends angels as well. We'll hear some of those stories later on in this book.

One of the greatest messages that angels ever delivered was the message from Christmas Eve. That night one angel, then bunches and bunches of them, appeared to some shepherds to tell them that God had kept His promise: the Savior had finally been born.

Have you ever seen angels on top of Christmas trees? That's to remind us of that message on the first Christmas eve, a message we still have right there in our Bibles: **Fear not. For behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.**

Luke 2:10-11

Adam

Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. Genesis 2:7



After God had made all of the other animals, the swimmers and fliers of the fifth day and the creepers and crawlers and runners of the sixth day, then God did something different.

So far, for six days, everything God created has been made by the power of His Word. He says "let there be" and there they are; moons and monkeys, stars and sharks, blueberries and bald eagles.

But later, still on the sixth day, God did something different. The Bible says that now God "formed" the first man out of the dirt and dust and clay that God had already made. When I form something I use my hands but how does God do it? I don't know, but the Bible says He did.

God isn't like you and me in that He doesn't have two arms and two legs. He doesn't have brown eyes or blue eyes. The Bible tells us that God is spirit.

Except that Jesus does have two arms and two legs because when Jesus became Mary's baby He kept being God but He also became human.

It sounds confusing doesn't it? When God (the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) formed Adam from the ground, He didn't have hands like us. And while God the Father and God the Holy Spirit still don't have hands, God the Son—Jesus does. It sounds confusing but that's what the Bible says.

But speaking of hands, look at what this verse from Isaiah 49:16 says: **Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of My hands.**

This is God talking which means these hands are Jesus' hands. Engraving is using a sharp tool to make a deep mark. Does this sound familiar? Jesus' hands, sharp tool, deep mark? It's His cross and the nails!

In the verse from Isaiah God is assuring His people that He loves them by telling them that one day He would have hands and those hands would be engraved out of love.

God loves you. We know that is absolutely true because Jesus died for you. *Yes! Jesus loves me!*



Eve

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."...²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man He made into a woman and brought her to the man. Genesis 2:18, 21-22

You can tell that God made boys and girls different, you can tell that God made men and women different. They look different, their voices are different, some of the body parts are even different!

Just look at the two different ways God used to make them. Adam was made from the dirt of the ground but Eve was made from a bone out of Adam's side.

Eve was also a wife to Adam just like Adam was a husband to Eve. Both of them were different from each other and because they were different both of them could help each other. When God made Adam and Eve He made them both perfect. Even though both were very different, both were made in His image; both of them were holy, both of them were without sin, both of them would live forever.

Eve was made to be what Adam wasn't, after all, she could have babies and when she did, she could even make milk to feed her new baby! That's something Adam never could do.

Eve's name has to do with the word "mother" and because her children had more and more children, all people come from her.

Listen to these words from the Bible, **Isaiah 49:15-16 "Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. ¹⁶ Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of My hands."**

These words talk about Jesus because when Jesus was nailed to the cross we were engraved on the palms of God's hands. That means that Jesus loves you even more than your mom loves you.

Little ones to Him belong, they are weak but He is strong!

The Soul

Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. Genesis 2:7

Adam wasn't the biggest thing God had made; lots of things in outer space, made on Day Four are much bigger than Adam. Adam wasn't the strongest creature. Lions, elephants, bears and many other creatures are much stronger than people. Monkeys are better climbers, dolphins can hold their breath longer. Cheetahs are faster, eagles can see better and they can fly.

But Adam had something the Bible doesn't talk about in any of God's other creations. Adam had a soul.

What's a soul? That's a hard question to answer. Even though it really is a part of us, a soul isn't something we can see on an x-ray. Your soul is the part of you that makes you God's most special creation in the same way a wing makes a bird and a trunk makes an elephant.

Remember, God formed Adam from the dirt and the dust but it wasn't until after God breathed life into that "dirt-man" that Adam became alive. When God gave Adam his soul that meant that Adam would live forever just like God.

We talk a lot about sin in these devotions because, as we'll see soon enough, Adam didn't stay holy and sinless. Can you imagine an eagle giving up her ability to fly, a cheetah giving away his speed or that elephant no longer wanting his trunk? Well, when Adam sinned he gave away, or lost, his soul. And without God's help, he would never have gotten it back.

But He did get it back because God gave it back to him. Part of what a soul does is that it believes and trusts in God. Remember how God breathed it into Adam? Well, in John 20:22 Jesus comes to His disciples and the Bible says this: **"He breathed on them and said to them 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"**

Because Jesus died for their sin and rose again He gave His people new life that night. He gives the same new life of faith to us because He also died and rose for us. What Jesus did fixes all the wrong that sin has done to our souls. Now that special part of us is in His perfect care.

Image of God

So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Genesis 1:27

Have you ever seen twins or an older-and-younger brother or sister that look like each other? Do you have any friends that look a lot like their mom or like their dad?

We say that those people are the "spitting image" of each other. No, there is no spit involved, that is just an old phrase which means they look the same.

When the Bible says that Adam and Eve were made in the image of God it doesn't mean that they looked like God, it means that they were like God.

The Bible tells us that God is holy. He made Adam and Eve just like Himself; holy. The Bible tells us that God is perfect. He made Adam and Eve in His image; perfect. The Bible tells us that God has no sin and that He doesn't even want to sin. All His thoughts and desires are loving and unselfish. Adam and Eve were like that too.

But when Adam and Eve sinned, they were no longer like God. Their thoughts and desires were about sin. They weren't perfect or holy.

The worst part about this is that now there was a separation between them and God. God lives in Heaven, now they could not. God lives forever, now they would die.

Today's second Bible reading tells us about Jesus. Listen to these words from **Hebrews 1:3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature.**

Jesus is exactly like God because Jesus is God.

But Jesus is also exactly like us because He became a human being like us. Jesus has two arms and legs, He has hair (it is probably black or dark brown because that's the hair color of Jewish people).

Jesus became human like us and like Adam and Eve in order to save us. And if we have been saved do you know what that means? That means that one day we will be in Heaven with God, perfect and holy and without sin just like Adam and Eve used to be and just like God is.

Marriage

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." ...²² And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man He made into a woman and brought her to the man.²³ Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. Genesis 2:18, 22-24

Let's pretend that we want to build a tower out of wooden blocks. Let's build two!

We'll build the first one on a nice hard floor, like the kitchen or maybe you have wooden floors in your house. Then we'll build the second one on top of your bed, even on top of your pillow!

Which tower will be stronger? Which tower will you probably be able to build higher? Which tower will probably fall over the fastest?

It was still the sixth day of creation when God decided to build all the children of the world on a very solid foundation. Before Adam and Eve would become a father and a mother, first God had them become a husband and a wife. Their love and commitment for each other would be the solid start to building a family made of children, grandchildren, and all the people that would ever come.

When a man and woman get married they make promises to each other. They promise to love. They promise to honor and respect each other. They promise to stay together until one of them dies and goes to Heaven.

Sometimes families are more like the tower built on your pillow. They fall apart. Maybe you know families like that, maybe even sometimes your family seems like that.

Listen to what Ephesians 5:25 says: **Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for Her.**



Sometimes all husbands and wives and all moms and dads build part of their lives on things that aren't solid and some—or lots—of what we build falls over. Grown-ups sin as much as kids do and sometimes the results are much worse than when kids sin.

What good news for everyone; for moms and dads, husbands and wives, and even children that Jesus didn't sin, not even once. That means the promise of Heaven can't ever fall over because that promise is built on the perfect life and perfect love of Jesus!

Rest

And on the seventh day God finished his work that He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work that He had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all His work that He had done in creation. Genesis 2:2-3

God didn't rest because He got tired. No, He is all powerful and in our devotion on "Day and Night" and our devotion on "Sharks" we were told that God doesn't even sleep.

He rested from creating things because everything that needed to be created had been and because at the end of the Sixth Day everything was perfect.

He also rested as a pattern for us. We do need rest because we do get tired. Everyone does. That's how God made us.

And when we rest our muscles rebuild themselves while our brains sort through all the things we learned that day. God knew we'd need that and so He showed us how to do it. From then on His people were supposed to take a break, not work all the time everyday, but also enjoy the good things He has made for us.

Even Jesus rested. When He was on the cross working to take our sins away, He said **"It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. John 19:30.** Then when His disciples buried Him on Friday, He didn't do anything for the whole day Saturday. He didn't suffer anymore, He didn't rise, He didn't preach. Because He was dead, He didn't even eat that day. Back then, Saturday was the day of rest and so Jesus rested from all the work of saving us.

And because of what He did we find rest for our souls in Him. Our sins wear us out. Sometimes they make things hard with Mom and Dad or Brother or Sister. Sometimes we feel so bad that we cry and can't sleep.

And what can we do? We can't go back and undo sins that we've already Done, can we? No. But Jesus says this: **Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28**

By forgiving our sins, He takes them away from us. Those bad things we do to our brother or say to our mother are gone. He really does take them away.

Yes Jesus loves me, the Bible tells me so!



Perfection

And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Genesis 1:31

When God finished creating, everything was perfect. No one got sick. No one got in trouble because no one was naughty. There were no thorns yet. All the animals ate fruit or grass or vegetables...none of them ate each other because there was no death yet!

Everything was perfect.

This is really *really* hard for us to understand because none of us have ever had it like that. In fact it has been thousands and thousands of years since anyone ever lived like that!

We have always seen the "other way." All human history, even fossils and skeletons buried in the ground are part of the "other way." We are used to knowing that zebras have to run from lions and we have always had to wash our hands to help us not get sick. This "other way" of life and the world we know is "imperfect." That even means that animals and people die.

That isn't the way it was when God first made everything. On the sixth day, when God finished creating the heavens and the earth and everything in them, everything was perfect.

Why isn't everything still like that? How did everything change? Sin. We've already talked about sin and we'll talk more about it in the devotions after this one but sin is the opposite of perfect and because God made the perfect world for Adam and Eve, once they sinned their whole world became imperfect; our whole world became imperfect.

The most obvious proof of that is death. Now lions eat zebras, now the ground is filled with fossils of animals who have died, and now we worry about getting sick. Now nothing is perfect.

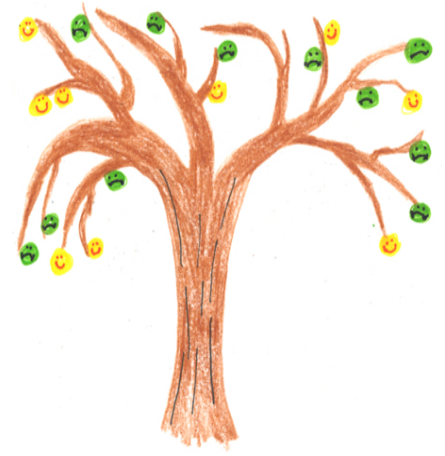
Except Jesus. Hebrews 4:15 says **For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.**

That verse tells us that Jesus is perfect, without sin, and that He is our high priest. That means He is the one who makes everything between us and God, and between us and Heaven, right again.

Because God gave us His perfect Son Jesus, now God sees us as perfect too. Sins are forgiven and Heaven has been prepared for us. *The Bible tells me so!*

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." Genesis 2:15-17



Do you remember when God created trees? It was on the same day He separated dry land from water; the Third Day. He must have made lots of trees, there were already enough fruit and seeds to feed all the animals.

The Bible tells us of two special trees that had names. One was called "The Tree of Life", the other was called "The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil." God said they weren't supposed to eat any of the fruit that grew on that second tree.

Why not? Well, the reason God named this tree and commanded them not to eat from it was so that they could have a way to show Him they loved Him.

How do you show your mom or dad that you love them? Do you ever pick your mom flowers? Do you ever draw a picture for your dad? When kids get older sometimes they surprise their parents by bringing them breakfast when mom or dad are still in bed! Those sure are nice things to do, moms and dads love things like that.

But God doesn't have a kitchen table to put your flowers on. He doesn't have a refrigerator or a desk to put your drawing on. He doesn't have a bed, need food, or even sleep.

Rather than do any of those things, the way He said Adam and Eve could show that they loved and trusted Him was just to leave that tree alone; just walk right by it everyday without asking about it or wondering about it.

As you know, a day came when they did eat from that tree, a day on which they allowed sin into the world. Since that day, many many sins have been committed, each and everyone of them separate the sinner from God.

But Galatians 3:13 tells us good news. It says: **Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree."**

That verse tells us about how God saved us by sending His Son Jesus to die on the cross. When Jesus did this, He saved us from the curse...from what God warned about way back in the Garden of Eden.

Jesus loves me, this I know! For the Bible tells me so!!

Satan

And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. Revelation 12:9

It was the devil who told Adam and Eve to eat from the tree in our last devotion. But if God is good and made everything perfect, where did the devil come from?

Well, the Bible tells us that he is a “fallen angel.” Like the angels in one of the devotions a few pages back, except that he wasn’t happy being the angel God had made him to be. He wanted more. He wanted to be in charge. He wanted to be God.

He talked many of the other angels into joining him. Together he hoped that they could fight against God and takeover all that God had made.

Of it was impossible for created things to be more powerful than the Creator, but that’s what Satan did and the first Bible reading tells about that day.

But notice that God doesn’t “un-make” anything that He had made, not even the devil. Instead the devil was cast out of Heaven but he still has the powers God first gave him. Now he uses his power for evil.

It seems that one of the first things he did was use a snake to go to Adam and Eve. Telling them not to listen to God, Adam and Eve foolishly listened to him and became sinful and separated from God just like he was.

Even though that day was long ago, we still live with the results today. The devil is still around, telling us not to listen to God.

But we should! We especially should listen to what God said to the devil on that same day. With Adam and Eve listening, God said **“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her Offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” Genesis 3:15**

We want to listen to that because that is God’s first promise of a Savior. “Enmity” means a separation, God will put a separation between the devil and between the woman and all her children, and that separation will bruise—even crush—the devil while at the same time the devil delivers a blow to Him.

Today’s devotion tells about a sad day for God’s creation. Thank God He told about Jesus who now separates us from the devil and even from our own sins.

Temptation

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Genesis 3:6

Have you ever wanted to do something that you weren't supposed to do? Maybe your mom told you that you could have one piece of candy or one cookie but these things tasted so good that you ate more than she said you could.

When things like that happen, you are being "tempted." The devil is showing you something you aren't allowed to have or telling you that you should do something you aren't supposed to do, just like he did with Adam and Eve.

Remember the devotion about the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil? Remember how Adam and Eve could show their love and trust for God by not eating from that tree and just walking by it everyday?

And do you remember how the devil, or Satan, came to them and told them that they should try it, taste it, eat it?

That was temptation. Just like when he tells you to eat more treats than you have permission to eat.

On the other hand, loving your mom and trusting that she knows what's best for you is when you just say "OK, and only eat what she says you can eat."

The devil is really *really* good at tempting us, isn't he? Everyday he gets us to disobey our parents, our teachers, and God. When we do, we sin.

When we sin, we can't go back and undo it. Just like when you eat more cookies you can't go back and un-eat those cookies. But when God said that sin separates us from Him He meant it.

That's exactly why God promised to send Jesus. In 2 Corinthians 5:21 we read: **For our sake He made Him (Jesus) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.**

Jesus "knew no sin" or "never sinned." Knowing how lost we would be without a Savior, Jesus came to be blamed and pay for our sins. That's what a Savior does, He trades places with you. Jesus paid for your sins so that you never have to. *Yes, Jesus loves me...the Bible tells me so.*

"Did God really say?"

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" Genesis 3:1

When the devil came to Adam and Eve, he asked them a question he already knew the answer to.

Did God say they couldn't eat from any tree in the garden? Of course not! God is good. He would not create all that food and then say that they couldn't eat it. The devil knew God didn't say that but in asking them about it, now Adam and Eve started talking to him.

"Did God really say?" The devil likes to ask us questions like that all the time. He even gets us to ask those kind of questions too. Here are some examples...

- Did God really say that I have to listen to Mom even when I don't want to?
- Did God really say that I have to be nice even to kids I don't like?
- Did God really say I have to clean up my toys when Dad says, can't I pretend to forget and keep playing?

Maybe Eve was confused when the devil asked her if God really said she couldn't eat anything. Maybe that's what the devil wanted. Anytime we listen to sinful ideas we can be sure that we are not hearing everything God has really said.

Once, thousands of years later, Jesus was teaching people about God. A lady who heard His words yelled out that His mother, Mary, was blessed to give birth to such a great son. Jesus responded in this way: **But He said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" Luke 11:28**

When we keep God's Word, when we treasure it, and learn it, and remember it, we are blessed? How? Well, what does God's Word show us that nothing else can?

God's Word shows us the same thing we keep singing in our hymn, that...

Jesus loves me, this I know! For the Bible tells me so!

Lies

But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Genesis 3:4-5

First he asked about what God *really* did say and once he had them talking with him, then the devil lied.

The devil lied when he told them that temptation was right because they were doing their own thing and the devil told them that sin was good because they weren't letting God tell them what to do.

When they believed the devil's lie they became liars themselves. We see that just a little while later. When God asked Adam if he had eaten from the tree he wasn't supposed to eat from, Adam tried to lie and blame his sin on Eve. Eve tried not to tell the truth by blaming her sin on the devil.

The truth was that their sin was their own doing, not somebody else's.

Because we are children from Adam and Eve we lie too. When brothers and sisters argue and Dad asks what is going on, they don't tell the truth about what they did, instead they lie and try to make it seem like it is all the other person's fault.

Lies are a very bad thing partly because they lead to more lies. In order to not get caught in our first lie, we usually have to make up a second lie. Then a third. Then more after that. When we get used to lying we also get used to not showing love for the person we are lying to.

Adam and Eve became liars that day. So have we. But listen to the second Bible reading for today; **John 8:31-32 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."**

Jesus' Word is where real truth is. Here is truth about God's love for liars and all other sinners, truth that frees us from the guilt of lying and even frees us to tell the truth. We will be forgiven our sins, we don't need to make more sin by lying.

The truth is that *Jesus loves me. This I know, for the Bible tells me so!*

DEATH and death

"You may surely eat of every tree of the garden,¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." Genesis 2:16-17

Somehow, in some way, when God first created everything there was no death. When Adam and Eve grew older they wouldn't have grown weaker. They wouldn't have needed hospitals or doctors. There wouldn't have been cemeteries.

But God warned them that sin would change all that. By sinning they would be going a different direction from God. Because life only comes from God that means that sin would lead to death. In death people would be separated from God forever and ever.

A man named Paul also wrote about this in the Bible. In Romans 6:23 he said "The wages of sin is death." "Wage" is something you earn, like how your parents get money for going to work at their jobs. The money is their wage, they earn it, or deserve it, because the work they do.

Death is what is earned, or deserved, because of sin.

But God would not have created us if He didn't want us to live with Him forever.

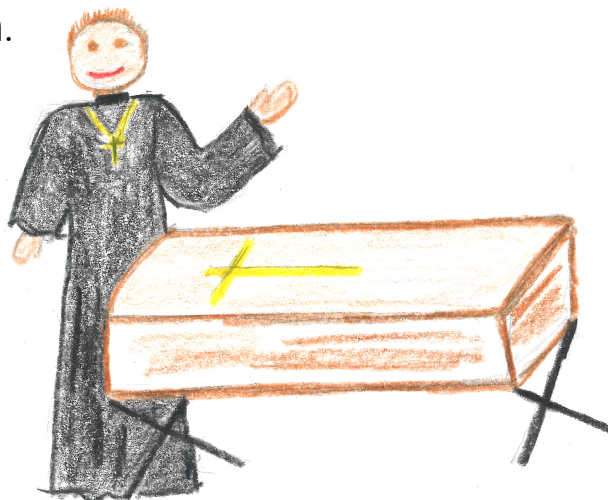
Do you know what He did so that He could keep His own words about sin and death but so that He could still have people live with Him forever?

The rest of that Bible verse from Paul tells us. All of Romans 6:23 says **"the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."**

Jesus suffered DEATH in all capital letters. God turned away from Jesus so that Jesus could suffer the punishments the sins of all people deserve.

When Jesus did that, He changed death into the way back to Heaven.

This is why we Christians aren't completely sad at funerals. Of course we are sad because we miss the person who has died but we believe God's Word and we believe in what Jesus has done. So we know that eternal life is a gift given to that person and we are going to see them again in Heaven.



Eating Dust!

The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. Genesis 3:14



Does your mom ever make you eat things you don't like? Can you name one of those things? I would name "green beans". I didn't like them but my mom made me eat them when they were served with dinner.

Do you know why our moms make us do that? Because these things are good for us. They help us grow strong and stay that way.

The devil has questioned God's Word and lied to Adam and Eve. In today's devotion, it is God's turn to talk again and before He talked to Adam and Eve, first God talked to the devil telling him that his punishment for what he did will be eating dust for the rest of his life.

Eating dust! That's really bad when you remember that dust is what people turn back into after they die!

As punishment for what he did to Adam and Eve, all the devil was and is ever going to have is death. That's quite a punishment for someone that used to be an angel and exist in Heaven! Dry dust, empty dirt, no life, just death.

When God called Adam, Eve and the devil, the first one He talked to was the devil. It seems God wanted Adam and Eve and the rest of us to hear what He had to say. That day Adam and Eve heard something we all need to remember; that the devil thrives on death, his words are empty and useless.

In John 6:68-69 Simon Peter said **"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, ⁶⁹ and we have believed, and have come to know, that You are the Holy One of God."**

The words of Jesus are true and they tell about eternal life. What a blessing that you and I have those words instead of just the devil's empty and dead ones.

Yes, it's true: *Jesus loves me, this I know. For the Bible tells me so.*

Consequence

"Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. Genesis 3:17-18

Have you ever tried to make snowballs without gloves or mittens? Do you remember how your hands felt after a few minutes? The consequence of playing with snow without mittens or gloves is frozen fingers.

Have you ever had someone step on a toy you left lying on the floor of your house or car? The consequence of not putting our things away is that they get broken.

In today's first Bible reading God tells Adam what some of the consequences of sinning will be. The ground is cursed, he's going to have to work hard in order to get food for himself and his family. As he works he is going to be scratched and poked by prickles.

Where I live, some of these consequences of Adam's sin are nettles. Others are the thorns on blackberries. When I walk in the woods I get stung by nettles. When I work in my yard I get scratched by blackberries.

Stinging nettles and scratching blackberries are some of the consequences of sin. These things weren't like that before Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil but they have been around ever since they did.

Listen to the second Bible reading for our devotion. **Matthew 27:29 Twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head and put a reed in His right hand. And kneeling before Him, they mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"**

Jesus came here to die for our sins so it wasn't by accident that His crown was made up of those painful things which came because of sin.

But can you see how this is a wonderful picture of love? People like Adam and you and me cause thorns to be here because of our sins but in love Jesus lets Himself be poked and scratched and pierced by them.

Jesus wore that awful crown for you because He loves you. *This I know, for the Bible tells me so.*

Promise!

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." Genesis 3:15

We've had lots of devotions now about sin and sinful things. We talked about Satan, lies, death and consequences. While these devotions haven't been fun like the devotions on planets or pelicans or stars or squirrels, they are important because they are like the floor, or foundation, of a building. We have to build the floor of a house before we can build walls and ceilings.

Sin and consequences and even death, make up the floor/foundation of the Bible's story. Now it is time to build on all of that.

The Bible builds on a promise. After Adam and Eve sinned God came to them with the promise in our first Bible reading. Let's look at it again:

God said "I will put," because He is the one who going to do something about what the devil had done.

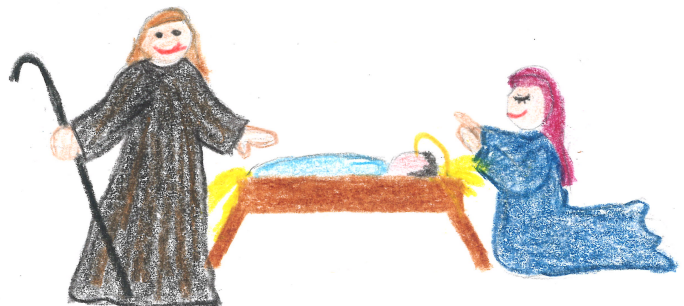
"Enmity". That's a fancy word that sounds kind of like "enemy," doesn't it? That's what God is saying. He is going to put someone between His people and between the devil who is going to make them enemies instead of friends.

"Offspring" means what the devil makes and what a husband and wife make. Husbands and wives will make more people, that's how God designed it to be. The devil makes more sin and death; remember, that's what he thrives on.

"He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise His heel." God says that a son will be made, or born, who will strike the devil right in the head while the devil, like a snake, gets that son in the foot.

This might sound kind of weird to you but this is about Jesus. He is the son who was promised and who destroyed the sin and death the devil had done. Here, listen to how the angel Gabriel said it: **"You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." Matthew 1:21**

That's Christmas! That's God's promise to save us, a promise He made way back in the Garden of Eden.





Coverings.

Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. Genesis 3:7

This is not a very good idea, it is? Leaves won't work, at least not for long! As soon as you pick a leaf it starts to die, soon it will be dried out and brittle and break apart.

If this is how Adam and Eve are going to try to cover up the bad thing that they have done it won't work. Every morning they will have to find new leaves. And what will they do in the winter when the leaves die on their own?

This is not a good idea at all!

But did you know that all people act in this same way, even you?

When we do something wrong we try to cover it up with a good thing, hoping the good will get rid of the bad. When we lie to our parents then we might clean our room without being asked, hoping that the good we are doing will make our sin go away.

But it doesn't, at least not for long. That good work of our own is like a leaf which hides the sin and shame for a little while but every day we have to come up with new ways to hide more and more sins!

When Adam and Eve sinned, God had a different plan, a shocking plan! First He provided them with better clothing than fig leaves; Genesis 3 tells us that He killed one, or some, of the animals He created to use their fur or hide to clothe Adam and Eve.

Imagine how sad that would make them feel! That animal hadn't done anything wrong and it had to give up its life to cover Adam and Eve's shame.

That first part of God's plan helped them to see and understand the second part. Our second Bible reading tells more about that. **Isaiah 61:10 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for He has clothed me with the garments of Salvation; He has covered me with the robe of righteousness.**

The garment of Salvation is Jesus. His perfect life in your place AND His death in your place is the robe of righteousness that God dresses you in.

Is it sad that Jesus died in your place? Yes it is. But it is also wonderful that He would love you THAT much! *Little ones to Him belong!*

Work/toil

By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread. Genesis 3:19

As we work our way through the story of the first sin we see that many of the things that are normal to us were not in the world before sin came be.

There were no doctors or nurses because no one got sick before sin.

There were no police or military because no one committed any crimes and because no one waged war.

No tow trucks or mechanics to fix broken down cars and no fire departments to rescue people in burning buildings.

But one thing they did have way back before sin was "work." God gave Adam and Eve muscles and brains and they were supposed to use them in His creation.

Work existed back then but after the fall into sin God said that work would be very difficult. People would work so hard to get food that they would sweat and grow tired. In many places work wears people out.

Sometimes moms and dads complain about work; about how early they have to get up, how long they have to be there, or how mean someone in charge is. While it isn't OK to be mean, it also isn't a surprise that work is hard. It has been that way ever since Adam and Eve first sinned.

What if you had to work to get into Heaven? Well that wouldn't even be possible because even if you never took a break or a day-off, that still wouldn't be enough. You have to be perfect all of the time.

No. We couldn't work to get into Heaven because none of us are even close to being perfect all of the time. But Jesus was. Jesus lived perfectly in your place and He also died in your place. Jesus did everything you need to do to get into Heaven.

And now listen to what He says: **Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28**

The job of getting into Heaven, of being perfect, was done for us.

Jesus loves me, this I know!



Children!

And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." Genesis 1:28

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD." ² And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. Genesis 4:1-2

Part of God's creation was that plants and animals and humans would make more of their "own kind." And even though sin had come into the world, God still wanted this plan of His creation to continue. He wanted apple trees to make apple seeds to make more apple trees. He wanted dogs to have puppies which would grow up to become dogs.

He wanted Adam and Eve to have children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

This is how God wanted to build all the people of the earth, through families.

Eve's first baby was a boy. She named him "Cain" which means "given" or "received."

Remember when God told Adam and Eve that one day a Savior would be born? Well, Eve believed that promise and hoped that the world's very first baby would be the Savior.

(Of course she was wrong about Cain, but that's a different story and a different devotion.)

Later, Adam and Eve had another baby boy. They named him "Abel" which means "puff of air."

What does your name mean? Ask your parents why they chose your name for you. Maybe it's because of the meaning, maybe you are named after someone else. That would be a good thing to know.

Eve was wrong about who Cain was. The Savior wouldn't come for thousands of years. **But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.**

That's Galatians 4:4-5 and there the Bible tells us that all who believe are adopted as children of God. Adopted means that even though we weren't God's children by birth, that He found us anyways and made us His own through Jesus.

What a wonderful family we have!

Little ones to Him belong!



Worship

In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground,⁴ and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. Genesis 4:3-4

The title for this devotion is "worship". Do you know what means? As Cain and Abel grew up they joined their parents in "worship" The verse above says that they brought offerings. Later in Genesis 4 it says that people "called on the name of the Lord." This means that they were telling their children about Him, about His promises and His commands.

When you need help you call for your mom or dad. When you are happy you call out to tell them why. When someone new is visiting your house you might tell them how your mom or dad want you to behave.

With God, all of that is worship. Praying to Him for His help, praising Him with our voices, sharing what He has given us with others.

Later on, after seeing all sorts of false worship in Egypt, God would give His people more instructions about worship, even instructing them about how to build a "church" (they called it a "tabernacle") and about how and when to worship.

Our worship nowadays is still very much like worship back then. Pastor's job is to tell us God's Word; His promises and His commands. Pastor is also supposed to lead us in praying to God.

In these ways we "call on the name of the Lord" just like Adam and Eve's family did.

We also bring offerings. In the days of Cain and Abel people didn't use money so instead they shared their work, Cain was a farmer and Abel was a shepherd.

Nowadays your parents share some of the money they earn at their jobs. They also might share their "skills", they might help others out by doing things they know how to do. In these ways we "give" to God by giving to others.

Why do we do all this? Our second Bible readings answers that when Paul says: **Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,⁴ who gave Himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, Galatians 1:3-4**

We call on the name of the Lord because He gave Jesus to save us.

For the Bible tells me so!



Envy

Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, ⁵ but for Cain and his offering He had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. ⁶ The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?" ⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted?" Genesis 4:4-7

Have you ever had a job, or a "chore" to do around the house and you knew that you were supposed to do it and so you did? Just like that, without grumbling or complaining you just did what your mom asked you to do because you love your mom?

Have you ever had the same job to do but you complained and made a fuss before doing it and only did it so that you wouldn't get into trouble and didn't even do your best when you finally did do it?

Same job but two very different ways of doing it.

Our last devotion talked about how Cain and Abel both brought offerings today's reading (text) tell us a bit more. God was not pleased with what Cain brought and that made Cain angry.

Later in the Bible, in Hebrews 11:4 we are told that Abel brought his offering in faith and love and his offering was the best he could give. Cain's offering was the opposite, more like the times you complain about a chore and then don't do your best to get it done.

Cain should have only been angry at himself for acting that way. Instead, he got angry at his brother because his brother did it the right way. This kind of anger can be called "envy". It is being mad or jealous at someone else when the problem is really with us.

Our second Bible reading is a longer one, listen carefully for what it says about envy and for what it says about Jesus. **Philippians 2:4-8 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**

Jesus did all of that for us, to forgive us our sins, even our sins of envy. Which means we can sing with all His people: *Yes! Jesus loves me...the Bible tells me so!*

Murder

But for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. ⁶ The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?" ⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it." ⁸ Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. Genesis 4:5-8

By following the story of Cain the Bible is showing us how quickly that first sin of Adam and Eve's grew to a terrible size: Murder! Sin becomes so powerful that a person kills his own brother because of envy, because he is mad at the brother when he should be mad at himself.

Isn't amazing that it can grow so quickly? Mom and Dad eat forbidden fruit and the kids commit murder!

No matter who the victim is, how old or young, how good or bad, murder attacks God's gift of life.

Because sin grows so quickly, from disobedience to murder, God warns about all of it.

Once, in a sermon of His own, Jesus said that making fun of someone and calling them names was as bad as murder in God's eyes. We think it is harmless, we even think it feels good, like Adam and Eve when believed the devil's lie that their disobedience was harmless and that the fruit would be good.

Do you remember how God warned Adam and Eve? Did you see how God came to Cain to warn him? How does God warn you about your sin? Does He ever have your mom remind you about what you are supposed to do? Does He ever have your dad give you a look that tells you not to do something?

God certainly knows how quickly sin grows and when He uses moms and dads and teachers and even friends to warn us about sin He is doing the same thing that He did for Cain.

Murder is the first sin the Bible tells us about one person committing against another. Isn't it interesting then that all our sins are forgiven through the murder of Jesus?

1 John 1:7 says **But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.**

Murder, and all sins are bad. They make us "dirty" in God's eyes. So what good news to know that Jesus has washed us clean from our sins.

For the Bible tells me so!



Parting ways with God

Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. Genesis 4:16



Have you ever been punished for doing something wrong?
Punishment is something that is done in order to teach.

(Sometimes "discipline" is a better word than "punishment".) When someone is punished we hope it will teach them and everyone around them that what they did should not be done again.



The punishment for Cain's sin was that he had to leave his father and mother. Even though he was grown up this would still be hard to do but God wanted everyone else to know that murder could not be excused or accepted.

But it seems that Cain still wasn't sorry for his sin. (Which is why it was better for him to leave. Can you imagine how hard it would be for Adam and Eve to see the person who killed their son while that person was excusing what he did?)

When the Bible says that Cain "went away from the presence of the Lord" it doesn't mean that he moved somewhere where God couldn't find him. That's impossible. What it means is that Cain stopped loving God and listening to God's Word.

Cain did the worst thing a person could ever do to themselves, he left God. The second Bible verse describes Cain and people like him with these words: **If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:8-9**

While we see a terrible and scary thing in the way Cain behaved, did you hear what God promised to do for the people who "confess" their sins, who believe what God has to say about their sins being wrong?

He promised to forgive and to cleanse. That's a promise He kept in sending Jesus to be our Savior. When we sin, we don't need to part ways with God. Instead, we come closer to Him by remember God's promise of love in Jesus and by confessing our sins.

Little ones to Him belong!

More children/families/communities/cities

And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, "God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him." ²⁶ To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of the LORD. Genesis 4:25-26

As the years passed Adam and Eve had more children and their children had more children. (The Bible also tells us that those who followed Cain also had more children.)

God was building all the people of the earth through families and more and more families became neighborhoods and communities and eventually even cities!

And when it says that they "began to call upon the name of the Lord," it means that they were gathering for worship and that they were teaching the children. Adam had told Seth about the problem of sin and God's promise of a Savior just as Adam had told Abel.

Can you imagine your neighborhood being made up of cousins and great aunts and great-great-grandpas? That's what these first communities were like. Everyone was connected to everyone else.

Now there are so many people living on earth that we hardly ever live next door to people we say we are related to.

"We say we are related to." In reality we are related to all people and because Christians call God their "Father," Christians are all connected by that common faith.

That's what the Bible is talking about in the second Bible reading. **Psalm 68:5-6 Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in His holy habitation. ⁶ God settles the solitary in a home.**

A father is supposed to protect and provide and love. God does that for people whose earthly father is gone and He does the same for widows whose husband has died. By faith He brings people who were once all alone into groups that are connected more by faith instead of by who their parents are.

Jesus is the one. By taking our sins away from all of us and taking them on Himself, Jesus is the one who brought us back to God the Father. In fact, Jesus is also the one who taught us to pray by calling on God as "Our Father who art in heaven..."

By faith Jesus has become your brother and God the Father has become your heavenly Father—for the Bible tells me so!

