

June 1

Solomon

1 Kings 3:16-28

Whose baby is it?

After King David died, his son Solomon became the new king of Israel, and God gave him great wisdom.

One day, two women came to Solomon with a big problem. They were living together in a house and each one had a baby. That morning, when they woke up, one of the babies had died. Both women argued and said, "The living baby is my baby!"

Then Solomon said, "Bring the baby here so that I can cut it in half, then each of you can have half a baby."

When the real mother heard that Solomon was going to kill her baby, she said, "No, please don't kill my baby—rather give the baby to the other woman." Then Solomon knew that she was the real mother—because she wanted the baby to live—and he gave the baby to her.

How can a sword help me know the truth?

Imagine if you were a king trying to get someone to tell the truth. Perhaps you could use your sword to threaten the person. But what if the person insisted that he was telling the truth; would you be convinced? Without God's wisdom, a sword is only a weapon—not a lie detector!

God has given us a different kind of Sword. It is so sharp that it can pierce right into the heart of a person (without making him bleed). The truth of God's Word can show up a person's lies and deceit. "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword—it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" Hebrews 4:12.

By reading the Bible we, like Solomon, receive wisdom from God, and because God's Word is Truth it helps us recognize the lies of the devil more easily.

Verse for today

Take the ... sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Ephesians 6:17

June 2

Solomon

1 Kings 4:20-34

Solomon prospers

During the reign of King Solomon, there was peace throughout Judah and Israel. Solomon had thousands and thousands of horses and many servants, and his twelve governors supplied him with the best food.

The Lord gave Solomon unusual wisdom and understanding. He knew so much that it was almost impossible to test the limits of his knowledge. He wrote three thousand proverbs and over a thousand songs. He knew all there was to know about plants and trees, and about animals, birds, reptiles and fish.

Solomon ruled over a very large country, and the kings ruling in nearby countries had to pay taxes to him.

Will God also bless me with wealth if I follow Him?

The Bible gives many examples of how God blessed those who honored Him. In Old Testament times, God often blessed people with wealth. He also blessed people by giving them many children and allowing them to live a long life. Can you think of some men in the Old Testament who were very wealthy? Here is a clue: Their names start with A and J.

Jesus said that we should not only think about getting treasure (wealth) here on earth where thieves can steal it, and where moths and rust will destroy it. We should rather store up treasure in Heaven—where it is kept safe for us to enjoy when we get there.

God blesses us in so many ways—not only by giving us things on earth (that don't last anyway). He is going to give us a share of all His riches (Romans 8:16-17). And He not only gives us long life on earth, but eternal life so that we can enjoy all those treasures for ever and ever.

But for now, we have a sign of God's promise: the Holy Spirit who lives in us. The Spirit gives us peace and joy so that we can be truly happy now, and for all eternity!

Verse for today

*How much better to get wisdom than gold, to choose understanding rather than silver!
Proverbs 16:16*

June 3

Solomon

1 Kings 5:1-5, 6:11-14

The Temple is built

King Hiram had always been a friend of King David. When he heard that David had died and that Solomon was King, he sent some of his men to go meet with him. Then Solomon sent a message back with the men, saying: "God did not allow my father to build the Temple, but He did promise that his son would build it. So I have decided to build the Temple. I need the help of your men to bring me cedar wood from Lebanon."

King Hiram was pleased to help. He got his men to chop down trees, which they floated down the coast. From there, the wood was carried to the building site. Solomon built the Temple with strong stone walls lined from top to bottom with cedar wood on the inside.

And the Lord said, "If you obey all My laws and commands, I will do what I promised. I will live here among My people in this Temple and I will never abandon them."

What has happened to God's Temple?

The Temple that Solomon built was not only beautiful; its walls were made of huge blocks of stone. It was built to last! Yet, we read in 2 Chronicles 36:19 that the Temple was completely destroyed by the Babylonians.

Although the Temple was rebuilt many years later, it was never as beautiful as the Temple Solomon built. Many who had seen the first Temple wept when they saw how much smaller the new Temple was going to be (Ezra 3:12). And even this Temple was destroyed (Luke 21:6).

Are you also sad that God doesn't have a beautiful, big Temple to live in anymore? God doesn't need a Temple built with stones. He lives in the most beautiful Temple of all—in the hearts of those who love Him (1 Corinthians 6:19).

Verse for today

"We heard him say, 'I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.'" Mark 14:58

June 4

Solomon

1 Kings 10:1-10

A queen comes to visit

As Solomon's fame spread, the Queen of Sheba heard about his wisdom and traveled to Jerusalem to meet with him. The queen was amazed when she saw Solomon's palace, all his servants and the loads of tasty food. "Praise the Lord your God, for He has shown just how pleased He is with you," she said.

The queen asked Solomon the most difficult questions she could think of—yet there was nothing too difficult for him to explain. Then she gave Solomon the gifts she had brought along, including heaps of gold and jewels. Solomon also gave the queen everything she wanted, as well as many other gifts.

Where can I go for words of wisdom?

It is good to seek wisdom! (Proverbs 3:13). Many wise words have been spoken since time began, and some wise sayings may be helpful in certain situations. However, wisdom from the Bible is more than good advice. God's treasure of wisdom in the Bible leads to everlasting life. When you store the pearls of wisdom from God's Word in your heart by learning verses from the Bible, you can use those truths over and over, whenever you need God's wisdom to make a decision.

Reading the Bible increases your knowledge; doing what it says leads to godliness; applying the truths in the right way at the right time shows wisdom. We can only be truly wise when our relationship with the Lord is right. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding" Psalm 111:10. If you want to be wise, start by using the handbook that was written by the One who created you.

Verse for today

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. James 3:13

June 5

Solomon

1 Kings 11:3-12, 41-43

Solomon turns from God

Solomon became unfaithful to God and sinned against the Lord by worshipping the heathen gods of his wives. He even built special places to worship the gods.

The Lord appeared to Solomon twice and warned him not to worship the foreign gods, but he did not listen to the Lord. So the Lord said to Solomon, "Because you have deliberately disobeyed Me, I will take the kingdom away from you. However, for the sake of your father David, I will only take a part of it away and it will only happen after you have died." Solomon ruled Israel for forty years, and after he died, his son Rehoboam became king.

Why would a wise man do something foolish?

At what age did you start walking? By now, you should be quite good at walking. Yet even as you grow up, you slip and fall or trip over things. It doesn't matter how long you have been walking or how good you are at walking, when you take your eyes off the path, you are likely to stumble.

Solomon must have been pretty confident that he was wise enough to solve any problem. He knew just about everything there was to know about the world around him, and he owned more than he could use in a lifetime. What would have made the wisest person on earth do something as foolish as worship silly gods thought up heathen people?

There is a danger of knowing, but not doing; knowing what is right, but not doing it. Wisdom is only useful if it is put in to practice. Jesus said, "But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand" Matthew 7:26.

Verse for today

When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom. Proverbs 11:2

June 6

Job (Jobe)

Job 1:1-12

A good man

Long ago, there was a man named Job who lived in the land of Uz. He was a good man and worshipped God. Job had seven sons and three daughters. He also had thousands of camels and sheep, donkeys and many servants.

One day, while the angels were presenting themselves to God, the devil went with them. The Lord said to Satan, "Have you noticed my servant Job? There is no one on earth as faithful as he is."

Satan answered, "Job only worships You for what he gets out of it. You have always protected him and everything he owns. If You took everything away from him he would curse You to Your face."

How can I convince others of my motive?

"You're only helping mom so you can get something out of her!" Does that kind of talk sound familiar? Job was a good man just minding his own business. He was careful not to do anything that was wrong. The Lord had been watching Job, just as He watches everything we do. This is what the Lord said about Job, "There is no one on earth as faithful and good as he."

On the other hand, the devil immediately found fault with Job, accusing him of being good only because he wanted the Lord to bless him. (The devil is called the accuser and he tries to make us look bad - Revelation 12:10b). One way in which God could prove that Job's motive was pure was to allow the devil to take away everything he owned.

You don't have to convince others of your motive for doing what is right. Your love and faithfulness will show that your intentions are pure, and the Lord who sees your heart knows all things... and that's all that matters!

Verse for today

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. 1 Peter 2:12

June 7

Job

Job 1:12-22

Disaster strikes

Job was a good man and the Lord blessed him. The devil had been talking to the Lord about Job and was given permission to test Job's faithfulness, but not to harm him in any way.

So the devil went off to start his attack against Job. One day, raiders came and stole all of Job's oxen and donkeys. Then lightning struck and killed all the sheep and shepherds. Other raiders came and stole all Job's camels and killed his servants. And, while his children were having a feast at the home of the eldest, a storm swept across the house and made it collapse, killing all his children. When Job heard what had happened, he got up and tore his clothes with grief, but he did not sin by blaming God.

Will I ever be tested in a way that I cannot handle?

Do you hate tests at school? Are you sometimes nervous as you wait for the test papers to be handed out, afraid that it will be too difficult or that you won't remember everything? Tests are not much fun! However, once you have written the test and received your marks, you can see just how well you did.

Similarly, we can only know how strong our faith is if it is tested. Through trials, hardships and temptations, our faith is tested and strengthened. The devil doesn't know whether we will pass or fail the test—but God does!

Jesus knew that his friend Peter was going to face the toughest test of his life. He knew that although Peter would fail this test by denying Him, he would not lose his faith completely. Jesus said to him, "I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail" (Luke 22:32a). Jesus does not keep us from facing problems, but He does make sure that we will never face anything bigger than we can handle.

Verse for today

And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

1 Corinthians 10:13b

June 8

Job

Job 2:1-10

Another test for Job

Once again, when the angels came before God, the devil appeared there with them. The Lord asked him, "Have you noticed my servant Job? The last time you came, you persuaded Me to let you attack him for no reason—and yet he has stayed faithful."

The devil replied, "The only reason Job hasn't cursed You is because he is completely healthy."

And so the Lord allowed the devil to make Job sick. The devil made sores break out all over Job's body. Yet, even though his body was terribly sore all over, Job did not sin or turn against God.

Does sickness come from God?

People have different ideas about the reasons and causes of sickness. While it is not always clear why someone gets sick, there are a few things about sickness we can learn from the Bible:

- Before Adam sinned, creation was perfect in every way. Sin brought sorrow, pain and death into the world; and we are a part of that imperfect world (Romans 8:22).
- At times, God has used sickness as a punishment for sin. Gehazi, a servant of Elisha got leprosy because he sinned (2 Kings 5:26-27).
- God may use someone's sickness to bring glory to Him—often by healing the person (John 9:3).
- Our body is like a flimsy tent (2 Corinthians 5:1-3). Sometimes we get sick because our bodies have a weakness, and some people get sick because they don't look after their bodies.
- Jesus died to bring healing. He is the One who heals our diseases (Psalm 103:3).

We cannot understand God's ways and His purpose. However, when you are sick, you can be sure that Jesus cares for you—He feels a tender compassion for those who are sick (Matthew 14:14).

Verse for today

Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." John 11:4

June 9

Job

Job 2:11-13, 11:13-17

Friendly advice

When three of Job's friends heard how he was suffering, they decided to go and comfort him. Job's children had died, all his animals had been stolen, and now his body was covered with sores.

At first, Job's friends didn't even recognize him, but when they did, they tore their clothes to show how upset they were. They sat in silence with him for seven days. Then, one by one, each of them started telling Job why all this had happened to him. One said that Job had sinned against God, while another said that he was being punished for something his children had done. However, Job could not think of any wrong he, or his children, had done.

How can I encourage someone who is feeling down?

We all go through times when almost everything seems to go wrong. Perhaps you have noticed your mom or dad looking upset, or a friend who seems down in the dumps.

Have *you* been discouraged or worried lately? If you have, you can feel and understand what the other person is going through. That makes it easier to say the right thing to them because you can say what you would have like to hear when you were down. "The God of all comfort, comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God" 2 Corinthians 1:4.

Rather than trying to point out possible reasons for what happened, like Job's friends did, ask your friend to tell you how she feels. If your friend seems to become more upset as she talks to you, it is only because you are listening and allowing her to get rid of her frustration and anger.

Verse for today

*Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.
1 Thessalonians 5:11*

June 10

Job

Job 38:1-15, 40:3-4

God speaks

After Job and his friends had had long discussions about the likely cause of his problems, the Lord Himself spoke to Job out of a storm.

God said to him, "Who are you to question what I do? Where were you when I made the world? Who waters the dry land, and who hung the planets in space? The Lord asked Job many such questions and then gave him a chance to speak.

But Job said, "I have said foolish things. What can I answer? I will not say anything else because I have already said more than I should."

Can we ever really know God?

If it were possible for you to talk to an ant, think of some questions you would ask the ant. "Do you know how to tie a shoelace? Are you able to take the dog for a walk? Do you know how to add and subtract?"

Maybe God smiled as He looked around at His creation and asked Job about things that are so obvious and easy for Him to do.

As humans, we sometimes think we are very clever and very powerful. We can work out how far the moon is from the earth, and we can make powerful bombs to destroy big cities. But who keeps the planets spinning at the right speed and in their right paths? And who keeps the sun shining with the heat of a million atom bombs?

We will never be able to know and understand God fully. Paul puts it like this: "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!" Romans 11:33.

Verse for today

For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. 1 Corinthians 2:16

June 11

Job

Job 42:10-17

More than before

After the Lord had finished speaking to Job, He said to Job's friends; "I am angry with you because you did not speak the truth about Me. Now go make a sacrifice to Me! Job will pray for you and I will answer his prayer."

The three friends did what the Lord told them to do, and after Job had prayed for them the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.

Job had children again; seven sons and three beautiful daughters. Once again he owned thousands of camels, sheep, donkeys and cattle. He lived to a very old age—long enough to see his grandchildren and his great-grandchildren.

Will my problems ever come to an end?

As surely as spring follows winter, and morning follows a dark and lonely night, so God will bring you through your time of trouble. David said this in one of his psalms: "Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning" Psalm 30:5.

God had not left Job, even though it seemed—for a while—as though he had been abandoned. Little by little, God started putting Job's life together again. Job could not have done this by himself because he had absolutely nothing left.

God rewards faithfulness! God had kept a record of everything the devil had taken away. The devil had used his chance to turn Job's heart against God, but Job had passed the test! God was so pleased with Job that it seemed as though He couldn't wait to give Job back all that had been taken from him. In fact, the Lord gave Job a lot more than he had before!

Verse for today

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 2 Corinthians 4:17

June 12

Elijah

1 Kings 17:1-7

Not a drop!

After the death of King Solomon, his kingdom was divided and ruled by two kings. Jeroboam ruled the ten tribes of Israel in the North, while Rehoboam the son of Solomon, ruled Judah's two tribes in the South.

After a number of kings had come and gone, Ahab became king of Israel. He sinned even more than the kings before him and married a wicked woman named Jezebel. Ahab and Jezebel worshipped the heathen god Baal.

Elijah, a prophet of God, said to King Ahab, "In the name of the living God of Israel, I tell you that there will be no dew or rain for the next few years."

Then the Lord told Elijah to go east and hide near the brook Kerith. "You can drink from this brook," the Lord said, "and I have commanded ravens to bring you food."

Elijah obeyed the Lord and went to the brook. There, the ravens brought Elijah bread and meat every morning and every evening.

Can one leader cause everyone to suffer?

We have many examples of how one person—a powerful leader—can cause much suffering and hardship in a country. Many of the great wars have been started by the decision of a single person, and thousands of people have been killed because of the stubbornness and greed of one person. King Ahab's sin caused many to follow his bad example of idolatry and this brought on a drought and much suffering.

In some cases, the people themselves chose their leader—not knowing how he would turn out. We should remember to pray for our leaders so that they will let God lead them (1 Timothy 2:1-3).

Verse for today

Do any of the worthless idols of the nations bring rain? Do the skies themselves send down showers? No, it is you, O LORD our God. Therefore our hope is in you, for you are the one who does all this. Jeremiah 14:22

June 13

Elijah

1 Kings 17:8-16

The widow's last meal

The stream where Elijah had been getting water had dried up because it hadn't rained for a long time. So the Lord told Elijah to go to a certain town. When Elijah got to the town, he saw a widow gathering firewood and said to her: "Please give me a drink of water, and could you give me some bread as well?"

The woman answered, "Believe me, I don't have any bread. All I have left is a handful of flour in a bowl and a drop of olive oil in a jar. I am gathering firewood to make one last meal for myself and my son before we die."

"Don't worry," Elijah replied. "The bowl will not run out of flour, neither will the jar run out of oil until the Lord sends rain again." So the widow went to prepare a meal for Elijah; and for as long as the drought lasted, the flour and the oil did not run out.

Who looks after missionaries and evangelists?

Most adults either work for somebody or they have their own business. They are paid by the firm they work for or live off the money they make from their business.

Missionaries and evangelists work for the Lord, so who pays them? Although the Lord does reward them they still have the everyday expenses of food, clothes and other things. Elijah had no money to buy food, yet God had a plan in place.

God uses those who have money (or food) to give to those who spend their lives telling others about Him. You too could be part of God's plan to help missionaries! You could give some of your pocket money to missions or donate used books and other things to missionary kids.

Verse for today

In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel. 1 Corinthians 9:14

June 14

Elijah

1 Kings 17:17-24

A mother sees God's power

The widow and her son now had enough food for themselves and for Elijah. God was taking care of them in a special way. One day, the son of the widow became very ill. He got worse and worse, and finally died. The widow said to Elijah, "Did you come here to remind God of my sin and cause my son to die?"

"Give me the boy," Elijah said. He took the boy upstairs and laid him on his bed. He asked the Lord why He had done this to the widow who had been so kind to him. Then he prayed, "Lord, bring this child back to life again."

So the Lord answered Elijah's prayer and the boy started breathing again! Then Elijah took the boy downstairs to his mother and said, "Look, your son is alive!"

Where do small children go when they die?

It is especially sad when a baby or a young child dies. It seems as if he or she has missed out and didn't get the chance to live life fully. Death is very sad for those left behind. We miss the joy of showing our love and care, and we miss the closeness of that special relationship. Happy relationships bring joy to our lives, and when someone is taken from us, it feels as though a chunk has been ripped from inside us.

Although life feels like a very long journey, we are actually on earth for just a short while compared to the time we'll be together in Heaven. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" Matthew 19:14. All those who have a heart (an attitude) like a child will go to Heaven to be with their Heavenly Father, and Jesus will be there to welcome them and spend time with each one as He did on earth (Mark 10:16).

Verse for today

*By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.
1 Corinthians 6:14*

June 15

Elijah

1 Kings 18:18-39

Baal cannot hear

It had not rained for three years, just as Elijah had said. Then Elijah went to King Ahab and told him to get the prophets of Baal and everyone else together on Mount Carmel. Elijah told them, "Take a bull and put it on an altar with wood. But do not light a fire. I will do the same. The God who answers by sending fire is the true God."

The prophets of Baal spent all day praying to their god. By the end of the day, when Baal had not answered their prayers, Elijah said, "Come, gather around." He built an altar and dug a trench around it. Then he prepared the bull, laid it on the altar, and told the men to pour water all over it. So they drenched the altar until the water filled the trench.

Elijah prayed, "Answer me, Lord, so that these people will know that You alone are God." When he had finished praying, God sent down a fire that burnt up the sacrifice, the wood and the stones, and it even dried up the water.

How should our lives be different from those of unbelievers?

Imagine if players from two opposing teams wore the same colors. That would be confusing for the team players and the spectators.

God wanted to make it clear that His people could not serve two gods. They needed to make up their minds, once and for all, whose side they were on.

Our thinking should not be shaped by the popular ideas of the world that go against God's Word. "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). In other words, don't become like the ungodly people of the world by fitting in so perfectly that no one would even know you are a Christian. Remember that you can't be on both sides.

The Lord has chosen you to be on the winning side, so let your colors show!

Verse for today

Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." Joshua 24:15

June 16

Elijah

1 Kings 19:4-14

A whisper in the desert

King Ahab went back and told his wife Jezebel about how Elijah's God had sent fire that burned up the whole altar; and how that Elijah had ordered the prophets of Baal to be killed. Jezebel was furious! She sent a message to Elijah; "May the gods strike me dead if I don't do to you what you did to the prophets of Baal!"

Elijah was afraid and fled for his life. He found a cave where he could spend the night. Suddenly, the Lord spoke to him and said, "Go out and stand on the mountain, for the Lord is about to pass by."

First, the Lord sent a furious wind that shattered the rocks, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. After the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he covered his face and went and stood at the entrance of the cave and God spoke to Him.

Does God speak with a voice of thunder?

God spoke—and all of creation came into being. By His words the earth was formed and every creature was given life. To do that, God's voice must be very powerful!

When we hear a loud clap of thunder roll across the dark sky, we get an idea of how it would sound if God were to speak (see Joel 3:16).

However, God does not want to scare us by using His loud voice when he speaks to us. Elijah may have expected God to speak through the powerful wind or the earthquake, but instead, God spoke in a gentle whisper.

When God speaks to us, He doesn't shout at us from heaven. He uses the quiet voice of the Holy Spirit in our hearts to speak to us, just like the gentle whisper Elijah heard. In fact, if we don't get away from the noise of life and quietly spend time with Him, we may not even hear His voice.

Verse for today

"...How faint the whisper we hear of him! Who then can understand the thunder of his power?" Job 26:14

June 17

Elijah

1 Kings 19:19-21

A helper

The Lord had appeared to Elijah. He told him to anoint Elisha as the prophet who would take over from him. So Elijah went from there and found Elisha plowing with oxen. Elijah took off his cloak and put it on Elisha as a sign of God's Spirit of power on him.

Elisha asked if he could first say goodbye to his father and mother. Elijah replied, "All right, go."

So Elisha went to say goodbye to everyone. He killed his oxen and used the wood from the plow to make a fire to cook the meat. After giving the meat to the people, he went off to become Elijah's helper.

Do I have to leave home to follow Jesus?

"Come and follow me!" Jesus said, as He called the men who would make up His team of disciples (see Mark 1:17-20 and Mark 2:14). The call was so strong that none of those chosen for the team asked Jesus how long they would be away or where they were going. God had been preparing their hearts, and when Jesus called them, they just left everything and followed Him.

God had been watching Elisha and saw that he was the right person to take over from Elijah. Elisha did not seem surprised or confused, almost as though he had been expecting God to do something big in his life.

When you hear people talk about following Jesus, it doesn't mean that you must wait outside for Him with your suitcase packed. What it means is that you must follow the *example* of Jesus, living the way He did. And as the Lord prepares your heart, you too will be ready to serve Him if He needs you for a special task somewhere.

Verse for today

Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age ... and in the age to come, eternal life." Mark 10:29-30

June 18

Elijah

2 Kings 2:7-14

A chariot of fire

Elijah knew that his time on earth was almost up. God had told him to coach Elisha to take over his task as a prophet. As they stood at the edge of the River Jordan, Elijah took off his cloak, rolled it up, and struck the river with it. The river parted and they crossed over on dry ground. As they walked together, Elijah asked Elisha, "What can I do for you before I am taken away from you?"

"Let me have even more of the Spirit's power than you had," Elisha replied.

Elijah said, "You have asked a hard thing, but if you see me when I am taken from you, God will give you what you have asked for."

As they walked together, a chariot of fire pulled by horses suddenly appeared. Elijah was taken up to heaven by a whirlwind and Elisha saw him go up.

Is it possible to get to heaven without dying?

Most people want to go to heaven, but few think about how they would get there. To get to heaven, our bodies have to be changed. God must give us new heavenly bodies (1 Corinthians 15:53), and for this to happen, our old bodies must die. Elijah went to heaven without actually dying. What a way to go! If you had a choice, you would probably like to go that way too!

Jesus said that He is coming back in the clouds to take us up to heaven. He will come at a time no one expects, and all those who love Jesus will meet Him in the air. We will be changed in an instant and be with Him forever (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). So, be ready at all times because you may be one of those who will go straight to heaven without actually dying.

Verse for today

After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

1 Thessalonians 4:17

June 19

Elisha

2 Kings 2:19-22

The test

Elijah had been taken up to heaven and now Elisha was on his own. Because Elisha had seen Elijah as he was taken, he knew he had been given an extra portion of the Spirit's power. But now everyone wanted to find out whether he was really a prophet. The people from Jericho came to him and said, "This is a wonderful city, but the water makes people sick."

So Elisha said, "Get me some salt in a bowl." Then he took the salt and threw it in the spring, saying, "This is what the Lord says, 'I have made this water pure and it will no longer cause people to die.'" And the water was pure from that day on.

How can I know that the Spirit of God lives in me?

One way a prophet could show that his message was truly from God was by doing miracles. When God works in amazing ways through His servants, it gives them the authority to speak as though God is speaking.

The people of Jericho had had this problem with their water for some time. Now they had a chance to get their water problem sorted out, and to find out whether Elisha was for real.

How do your friends know that your belief in God is for real? The only way someone can tell that the Spirit of God lives in you is by seeing your fruit. Just as you can tell a fruit tree by its fruit, people can tell what is in your heart by the fruit in your life. The Spirit lets fruit appear as you live out the goodness that God has put in your heart. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" Galatians 5:22-23.

Verse for today

*(Jesus said): "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. ... You know him, for he lives with you and will be in you."
John 14:16-17*

June 20

Elisha

2 Kings 3:14-25

The morning glow

When King Ahab of Israel died, the king of Moab rebelled against Ahab's son Joram, the new king.

King Joram was being threatened, so he together with the king of Judah and the king of Edom, went to see Elisha the prophet. Elisha told him: "Dig ditches all over the valley, and even though you will not see any rain, the valley will be filled with water for you and your animals to drink."

When the Moabites heard that the three kings had come to fight against them, they got up early the next morning to prepare for battle. As the sun was rising, the pools of water looked red in the morning light and the Moabites thought it was blood. "The kings must have fought against each other," they said. "Let's go and raid their camp!" So they did; but the armies of the three kings defeated the Moabites and then destroyed their fields and towns.

How should I deal with nasty comments?

Are you being attacked with nasty comments that make you feel embarrassed, worthless and unwanted?

If God could use the glow of the morning sun to give the Israelites victory against attacks, He can shine His love into your situation too! If other kids are trying to make you miserable, the Lord can change your situation as He did for the Israelites. Pray until you feel the warmth of Jesus' love shine into your life and bring healing to your hurting heart.

Jesus is the best friend anybody could wish for. He will never leave you, no matter what! Remember that Jesus made you special and that is what you are. So enjoy being the person you were made to be!

Verse for today

But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall. Malachi 4:2

June 21

Elisha

2 Kings 4:1-7

Jars of oil

One day, a prophet died before he could pay back the money he owed a man who had lent him the money. The man told the widow that if she didn't pay back the money, he would sell her two sons as slaves to get his money.

When she told Elisha what had happened, he said, "How can I help you? What do you have in your house?"

"I have nothing except a little oil," she replied.

"Go ask all your neighbors for empty jars, as many as you can get," Elisha said.

"Then go inside, shut the door, and start pouring the oil into the jars."

The woman did as Elisha had told her, and as she poured the oil into the jars, it just kept flowing. She filled one jar after another until all the jars were full to the brim. The woman went back to Elisha and told him what had happened. So Elisha said, "Now go sell the oil, and with the money you make you can settle your debt and then live on the money that is left over."

Can I be joyful all the time?

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4). Is that actually possible? Is it possible to be happy all the time?

Usually we think of happiness as the pleasant emotion we have when everything goes our way. Paul, who told the Philippians to rejoice, was not having an easy time at all! He spent a lot of time in prison. Of course he wasn't happy about being tied up and beaten, yet he sang songs of joy to God.

Joy comes from inside us! Joy does not depend on the way others treat us, or what is happening around us. It comes from knowing that Jesus loves us and that He is with us in every situation. The widow's situation seemed hopeless, yet God saw her need and cared for her.

Whatever problem you may have, remember that God knows about it and He cares. Let that thought fill you with joy, and may that joy flow from inside you just as the oil kept on flowing from the small jar until it filled all the others.

Verse for today

Therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy. Psalm 45:7

June 22

Elisha

2 Kings 4:8-17

Enough room(s)

One day Elisha went to a town called Shumen. A woman who lived there with her husband invited Elisha to stay for a meal. She told Elisha that he should come and have a meal with them whenever he passed through their town.

One day the woman said to her husband, "I know that this is a holy man of God. Let's build a small room on the roof of the house, and put in a bed, a table and chair, and a lamp. Then he can stay with us whenever he comes this way."

One day, while Elisha was in his new room, he called the woman and said to her, "About this time next year, you will have a son." And the woman became pregnant and had a son the following year, just as Elisha had said.

What is hospitality?

Have your parents invited someone to stay in your home for a few days or even months? It may have been your grandparents, or a friend who needed a place to stay.

The Holy Spirit has given some people the gift of hospitality. People with this gift are really good at making others feel welcome in their home—be it for a meal or to stay for a while. Whether you have the gift of hospitality or not, you too can make others feel welcome. The Bible says, "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms" 1 Peter 4:9-10.

Although the woman and her husband did not have enough space at first, they made a plan and did what they could. You might not be able to invite others to your home now, but you can share what you have.

For example, you could show a new person at school where everything is, and introduce them to your friends. You can also be friendly to new kids at church so that they will look forward to coming again. Simply share what you have with others—even if it is your big smile!

Verse for today

Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Romans 12:13

June 23

Elisha

2 Kings 5:1-5

The faithful slave girl

Naaman was a commander in the Syrian army and was respected by the king because he had won many battles. But Naaman had a problem: he had a terrible skin disease which causes a slow and horrible death.

In one of their raids against Israel, the Syrian army had captured and brought back Israelites slaves. Among them was a little girl who ended up as a servant of Naaman's wife. One day she said to her mistress, "If only my master could go to the prophet in Israel he would be cured of his disease."

When Naaman heard about the prophet in Israel, he went to the king and told him what the girl had said. The king of Aram immediately wrote a letter to the king of Israel and said to Naaman, "Go to Israel, and take this letter with you."

Can my faith be strong even though I'm young?

Would you have dared to be as brave as the young servant girl? Naaman was a commander of a big army, and he didn't become commander by being nice! The girl probably didn't even know the name of the prophet in Israel or whether he would heal someone from Syria. She simply trusted God.

The girl knew that it is easy for God to do those things that seem impossible to do—she had faith! God gave her the confident assurance to tell her mistress about the prophet. Although she knew that she would be in big trouble if her master came back unhealed, she was obedient to God's voice in her heart. There was absolutely no doubt in her mind that God could heal her master! Faith is simply trusting God.

Verse for today

He (Jesus) replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you." Luke 17:6

June 24

Elisha

2 Kings 5:5-8

The king can't help

Naaman set out on a journey from Syria to Israel to find the prophet who could cure him of his skin disease. He took with some silver and gold, beautiful clothes and a letter that his king had written.

After a long journey, he arrived in the city of the king of Israel and handed him the letter which said: "This is my officer Naaman. I want you to cure him of his skin disease."

When the king read the letter, he was very upset and tore his clothes. "How can your king expect me to cure you? Does he think I am God? He just wants to pick a fight with me!"

When Elisha heard what had happened he sent a message to the king: "Why are you so upset? Send the man to me and I will show him that there is a prophet here who serves the living God."

Should I go to a doctor or pray for healing?

When you feel sick, your mom probably tucks you up in bed and gives you some horrible tasting stuff that makes you better. Some sicknesses are so bad that we need to see a doctor or even a specialist. God will not be upset when your mom takes you to the doctor even when you have prayed and asked *Him* to make you better.

Think of what you do when you have toothache. Do you ask God to fill your cavity or do you let a dentist fill it?

In most cases, God uses doctors and medicines to make us better. And when doctors don't have a cure for an illness, God still has the same power to heal in miraculous ways! So even if you go to a doctor, you can still trust God to help you feel better and make you body strong again.

Verse for today

... People brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. Luke 4:40

June 25

Elisha

2 Kings 5:9-14

The unbelieving commander

Naaman went with his horses and chariots to the house where Elisha the prophet was staying. When he arrived at the house, Elisha told his servant to give Naaman this message; "Go to the Jordan River and wash yourself in the water seven times and you will be cured."

Naaman was upset because Elisha had not even come out to speak to him and cure him right there on the spot. Then Naaman added, "Besides, aren't the rivers back home good enough? I could have washed in them and be cured."

But Naaman's servants said. "Sir, surely if the prophet had told you to do something difficult you would have done it. Why don't you just go down into the river and do what the prophet told you."

So Naaman went down to the Jordan River, and when he gone in and dipped in it seven times, he was completely cured and his skin became like that of a young boy.

How can I overcome my doubt?

From birth, children trust their parents completely, and as they get older, they slowly learn to trust others around them. But because we are human, we sometimes forget or cannot do what we have promised. As you have probably discovered, sooner or later, someone will let you down.

Because we think of God in a human way, we may wonder if He will also let us down—especially if He has not answered our prayers in the way we expected. But we should keep trusting God and know that He will never let us down; that He answers our prayers in the very best way. Naaman expected to be healed in a certain way but, when things worked out differently, he almost gave up. If he had gone home right then, he would have missed out on God's answer.

One way in which you can grow in your faith and learn to trust God more is to read the Bible. By reading about His faithfulness over thousands of years we are encouraged to trust Him completely. Remember, God has not changed and He will never change. He is able to do far more than we can ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20).

Verse for today

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. Romans 10:17

June 26

Elisha

2 Kings 5:15-27

The dishonest servant

Naaman was so grateful that he had been healed, he went back to Elisha and said, "Now I know that your God is the only God. Please take this gift as a sign of my gratitude."

But Elisha replied, "I will not accept the gift." And even though Naaman tried to persuade him to take it, Elisha refused. So Naaman went on his way. But Gehazi, Elisha's servant, heard them speaking and decided to get something out of Naaman for himself. Naaman had not gone far when Gehazi caught up with him. "My master sent me to tell you that two prophets have just arrived, and that he could use the gifts you wanted to give him," he said.

Naaman gladly gave Gehazi what he had asked for. When Gehazi got back, Elisha asked him where he had been. "I didn't go anywhere!" Gehazi lied.

Elisha said to him, "Is this the time to take money and clothes for yourself? Because you have done this, you will get the skin disease that Naaman had."

Does a little dishonesty really matter?

Gehazi may have thought to himself; "Seeing that Naaman really wants to show his gratitude and Elisha doesn't want the gift, I will take the gift and everyone will be happy." It seemed a sensible thing to do—and no one would know!

Dishonesty in 'little' things leads to dishonesty in 'bigger' things. When someone is dishonest, others lose their respect for that person and find it harder to trust them with other things. The testing ground for honesty is what you do when there's no one around. Let your heart and mind stay pure so that your Heavenly Father (who sees everything) can trust you with bigger things.

Verse for today

Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. Luke 16:10

June 27

Elisha

2 Kings 6:1-7

The axhead

One day, a group of prophets said to Elisha, "The place where we meet is too small for us. Let's go to the Jordan River and cut logs for a new building." Elisha was happy with the idea and went along with them.

As they were chopping down trees, one of the axheads came off the handle and fell into the water. "Oh sir," the man cried, "it was borrowed!"

"Where did it fall?" Elisha asked. So the man showed him the place. Elisha cut a stick and threw it into the water. As he did, the axhead floated to the surface and the man was able to lift it out of the water.

Why do things go wrong—even when we work for God?

Imagine being part of a team of workers building something for God's Kingdom. Surely God wouldn't allow anything to go wrong when you are doing your best for Him. Yet, even when a group of prophets were building a bigger place in which to meet, something happened to frustrate them and slow them down. What made matters worse was that the ax had been borrowed.

There are different reasons why things go wrong when we are serving God. The devil isn't going to sit with his arms folded watching people get excited about serving God. Although his power is limited, he will try his best to disrupt the work.

God also has reasons for allowing things to go wrong, even when we are doing something for Him. When we do things for the Lord, we may be tempted to become proud of what we are doing. God lets things go wrong to remind us to rely on Him. He wants us to follow His plans and do things in His strength. And sometimes, He just wants to slow down our busyness and remind us about Himself.

So, when things go wrong you can be sure there is a reason, even though you may not be able to see the good that will come from the situation.

Verse for today

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28

June 28

Elisha

2 Kings 6:8-17

The unseen force

The king of Syria was at war with Israel. Elisha was able to warn the Israelites about where the Syrians were making their camp. When the king of Syria found out that it was Elisha who was telling the Israelites about their movements, he sent his army with horses and chariots to surround the city where Elisha was staying.

Early the next morning, when Elisha's servant got up and saw that the enemy had surrounded the city, he cried out, "My master, what shall we do now?"

"Don't be afraid," the prophet replied. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then Elisha prayed; "Lord, open his eyes and let him see!" Immediately, Elisha's servant was able to see horses and chariots of fire all around them and covering the hillside.

Do angels really protect us?

Have you heard people talk about a guardian angel? How would you like to have your own invisible bodyguard? The Bible says, "For He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways" Psalm 91:11. Doesn't it make you feel special that angels have been given the responsibility of looking after you and keeping you from harm!

When you face danger or feel alone, you may not be aware of your helpers in the unseen world. Elisha's servant was not aware of the army of angels protecting them. He only realized how safe they actually were when the Lord allowed him to see the spiritual forces around them. Can you think of someone else in the Bible who was looked after by an angel? (Clue: D...n...el 6:21-22).

Verse for today

"See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven." Matthew 18:10

June 29

Elisha

2 Kings 7:1-11

A dying city

The king of Syria led his whole army against Israel and surrounded the city of Samaria. No one could go in or out! People inside the city became very hungry because there was no food, but Elisha told the king, "This is what the Lord says, 'By tomorrow there will be plenty of food again.'"

There were four men outside the city wall who had a sickness called leprosy. They said to each other, "We have nothing to lose. We are going to die anyway so let's go to the Syrian camp." They didn't know that the Lord had made the enemy troops hear the sound of a large army of horses and chariots, which made them run for their lives.

When the four men reached the camp, nobody was there. As they went into one tent after another they found gold, silver, clothing, and food. Then they said to each other, "Come, let's go tell everyone!" So they rushed back to the city to give the other Israelites the good news.

Is there a treasure inside me?

Don't you love those stories where the most unlikely character becomes the hero? Well, the four beggars lived outside the city for a reason—no one wanted them! They had an ugly skin disease and so they were thrown out of the city.

However, when they found the enemy camp empty with lots of treasure and food left behind, they were far better off than those starving inside the city. The beggars could have been spiteful and kept it a secret, but they went back to share the good news. The way they looked on the outside was no longer important—the message they had, was!

Our bodies, which are like fragile jars of clay, are not perfect. It doesn't matter what we look like on the outside, we have a precious treasure inside us—the good news of Jesus. Share it with others!

Verse for today

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 2 Corinthians 4:7

June 30

Jonah

Jonah 1:1-10

Go tell those people

One day, the Lord spoke to the prophet Jonah and said, "Go to the city of Nineveh and tell the people that I know all about their wicked deeds."

But Jonah didn't want to listen. Instead of going to Nineveh, he went to a coastal town called Joppa and boarded a ship going to Spain. When the ship was far out at sea, the Lord sent a great storm. The ship was in danger of sinking and the sailors were terrified. They started throwing the cargo over the side and praying to their gods for help.

Earlier on, Jonah had gone to his cabin and fallen fast asleep. When the captain of the ship found him there, he said, "How can you be sleeping? Get up and pray to your God to save us!"

Meanwhile the sailors were drawing lots to find out who was responsible for the storm. When it became obvious that Jonah was the guilty one, the sailors asked, "Is all this your fault? What are you doing here? Where do you come from?"

Then Jonah told them that he worships the Lord of Heaven, the Creator of land and sea, and that he was running away from the Lord.

Does God care about wicked people too?

God loves us because it is in His nature to love—not because we are good. God *is* love (1 John 4:16) so we do not need to *do* things to get Him to love us!

God loves every person on earth so much that He sent His Son Jesus to die for our sins so that anyone who believes on Him will not die in sin, but live forever with Him (John 3:16). Romans 5:8 tells us that God loves people even before they believe.

We don't have to do good deeds for God to love and accept us; all we need to do is believe in Jesus and ask Him to make us clean.

God loves sinful people, but He does not love the bad things they do. That is why He sent people like Jonah to tell them about His Way.

Before Jesus went back to heaven, He told His followers to go all over and tell everyone about God and about the way to heaven (Matthew 28:19-20).

Verse for today

Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Luke 5:31-32