

foundations[®] for Kidz!



20 Day Devotional for KIDS!

Lessons on submitting to Jesus!



SOUTHLAND
CHURCH

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Versions of scripture quotations are noted.

Welcome to...

foundations[®] for Kidz!

Dear Parents,

The short booklet you hold in your hands is a devotional tool that we hope will help your children to connect with Jesus and develop a regular devotional walk with Him. These devotions are based on stories called "The Animal Underground" which follow Ravi Raccoon and his friends on many adventures. Each week there will be five days' worth of devotions; the first day is always a story followed by 4 days of activities to reinforce the message.

Our desire is that elementary school children of all ages will *enjoy* the booklet and grow to enjoy spending time in the Word, in prayer and with Jesus! Our desire is that, for the younger kids (grades K-2) the stories help create a meaningful family time, and that if your kids are bit older (grades 3-4) they will be able to do the reading and activities on their own as they grow increasingly responsible for their personal walk with Jesus.

In Him,



Thom Dick
Pastor of Resource Development
Southland Church

We welcome any ideas you have to make *Foundations for Kidz* better. If you want to offer some feedback or have questions about how to use *Foundations for Kidz* effectively talk to the pastor in your child's ministry area or email Pastor Thom Dick at thom@mysouthland.com.

Foundations for Kidz is also available for download at www.therenewedfamily.com.

A message from Ravi Raccoon!

Hey Kids!

My name is Ravi Raccoon and I am looking forward to telling you some of the amazing adventures that I have had with my crazy friends! I hope that as you read these stories you will learn lessons about Creator-God and you will also avoid making some of the silly mistakes that my friends and I made growing up. But MOST of all...I hope that our stories help you meet with Jesus! Jesus is my friend and I have come to love Him so much! He is the most important person in the world and He has a special plan for your life!

We are going to write a booklet like this every month and inside you will find there is one story and four activities you can do every week. Try them all! The story you read is an adventure with ME! And after that, come four more days of activities you can do to grow closer to Jesus. If you miss a day, don't worry, you can do it on the next day! Remember it's all about getting to know Jesus!

If you want to *read* more stories or *listen* to some of my adventures, your parents can download them at www.therenewedfamily.com. And if you EVER have a question about God that you want to ask someone, ask your parents to help you email me, at RRaccoon@mysouthland.com and I will be sure to email you back!

In Him,

R. Raccoon 

Ravi Raccoon



Memory Verse

I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you.

Bless those who curse you.

Pray for those who hurt you.

Luke 6:27-28 (NLT)

Day 1

Not far from here at the end of a dusty road is an old country farm. In almost every way it's a regular farm with animals, gardens, barns and fields; owned by a mean old man named Willy Walters. Lying beyond the farm is a pasture, and beyond the pasture is a fence, and that fence is the boundary between the human world of fields and farms and the animal world of the forest.

If you were to go through the pasture and over the fence into the forest you would find yourself walking into a very different world! It's not that the trees are so different, or the rocks and boulders are different, or the moss or creeks or smells or sounds are all that different from what you would expect, but the animals, well they are just a little bit different. Because this forest world, is the world of the Animal Underground!



Milton mouse darted through the grass, zipping this way and that with great skill. He was practicing, again, trying to be even sneakier so that he could impress his friends. He knew they would say he didn't need to and that he had nothing to prove, but he felt so small, he constantly felt like he had to prove something. Milton sighed and pushed aside these thoughts, it didn't matter anyway, and he enjoyed practicing. And so he continued on, zipping through the grass, up and down the trees and in between the rocks. The day was practically perfect, the sun was shining and warm, as a cooling breeze swept through the forest, it seemed that nothing could go wrong. Milton jumped down from a tree branch and landed softly on his little feet and smiled proudly as he looked back up at the tree branch he just jumped from. He smiled and looked forwards again, prepared to burst off into a sprint, but was met with a rather terrifying view: Warwick and his pack of hunting dogs were bounding towards him! Milton squeaked in fear before ducking behind a rock as the dogs came barging into the clearing, the poor little mouse praying silently that the hunting dogs would not pick up his scent.

"Come on boys! There is supposed to be a storm tonight and I want to check on the masters traps before we get caught in the middle of it," Warwick shouted as he stopped right on top of Milton's hiding place. This was one time where Milton wished he was smaller still, for all Warwick had to do was look down and then Milton would be mouse meat! The dogs all barked and howled in agreement and excitement, they could hardly wait to see if they had trapped any animals.

Milton shook with fear at the howls and barks as he slunk further back into the shadow of the rock he hid under. The dogs began to racing over him heading towards Mount Guardian and the traps most likely set there. Once Milton was certain the hunting dogs were gone he crept out of his hiding place and watch them run off to their next location.

"I have to go warn the others!" Milton gasped as he turned and began sprinting off towards the Animal Underground headquarters. Everyone needed to know that Warwick and his pack of hunting dogs were around and that Beverly had traps set up on Mount Guardian! Milton rushed forward only to crash into a large set of paws. Milton squeaked in shock before he looked up to see none other than one of the hunting dogs!

"Well hello there little mousy," the dog laughed mockingly. "Fancy meeting a nice little snack on the run like this."

"YIPE!" Milton cried as he took off running as the dog's jaws snapped shut behind him. The dog laughed as he chased aimlessly after the mouse before stopping and laughing as the little mouse scampered off. Then he turned tail and ran head on into the strengthening wind towards his pack.

"What took you so long, Derrick?" Warwick asked gruffly as the greyhound approached.

"Just giving a little mouse a good scare," the greyhound said with a smug look on his face.

"Well come on, let's go check the edge of the ravine. I don't want to get caught in this storm," Warwick muttered as they took off towards the edge of the ravine to check the traps.



Milton tore through the forest as fast as he could, he didn't care if the dog wasn't chasing anymore he was terrified! Plus he needed to hurry, Warwick and the dogs were out, and not only that, but Beverly had set traps on Mount Guardian! Milton began to worry as the rain started to fall, he didn't want to get caught in the storm and he didn't need anything else to make his day worse. He couldn't have felt more relieved to find himself nearing the Animal Underground headquarters, he needed to warn the others. Milton rushed into the hideout seeking frantically for Ravi, or anyone.

"Ravi, where are you? Are you here?!" he cried as he raced around until he bumped straight into Ravi.

"Goodness Milton what is the matter?" Ravi said with a kind smile and an amused chuckle.

“Ravi the, the-the dogs...they’re...they’re...”

“Milton slow down and breathe for a moment,” Ravi instructed softly.

Milton did as he was told and calmed himself down before he took another deep breath and started again. “Warwick and his pack of hunting dogs are on Mount Guardian! And Beverly and the hunters have set traps up there!” Milton cried in fear.

“Oh dear, we shall have to tell the others,” Ravi said thoughtfully.

“What’s going on down here?” Luther’s voice echoed as he approached Ravi and Milton.

“Sounds like something exciting!” Calvin said with intensifying curiosity.

“Beverly has set traps on Mount Guardian!” Milton blurted out. “And Warwick and the hunting dog are up there now!”

“Oh no!” Luther cried. “That’s terrible!”

“Now everyone stay calm,” Ravi told them, “we need to go and inform the others about the situation, and make sure they all stay safe and out of sight.”

The cubs agreed and they quickly moved out of the hideout and into the forest to warn the other animals that lived there.



The dogs bounded up the mountain side, running at a rapid pace to beat the storm. The rain was already starting to fall harder, making the slopes of the mountain slippery and dangerous. Thunder rumbled in the distance and lightning lit up the sky, making the dogs nervous and quite anxious to leave.

“The traps are empty Warwick,” said a dark hound as they meet up again at the edge of the ravine.

“Alright,” Warwick replied, “let’s get out of here before the storm gets any worse.”

No sooner than the words left Warwick’s mouth, a lightning bolt shot down and struck the bald top of Mount Guardian.

Thunder crashed, the dogs all howled in fear and tore off blindly in all directions.

Derrick realized too late that in his blind terror he had been running right towards the ravine’s edge. He quickly tried to turn around, but the slope of Mount Guardian had become too wet and slippery. Fear pounded in his chest as he slid right off the edge of the ravine and plummeted down towards the bottom!

He tumbled head over heels until he crashed into a small tree that was growing in the side of the cliff. It slowed his fall before he hit the bottom of the

ravine with a solid thud!

As Warwick was gathering the dogs back together, he realized that Derrick was missing. Then he heard it, a desperate howl rising up from the depths of the ravine.

Cautiously, Warwick moved to the edge and peered over the cliff. At first he couldn't see anything. But when a dangerously close lightning bolt lit up the sky, he saw Derrick laying on his side at the bottom.

"Warwick!" Derrick rasped. "Warwick I can't get up! Help me!"

However, the wind howled threateningly and the lightning increased, causing the dogs to back away slightly from the edge of the ravine.

"Derrick, it's too dangerous to help you now. We will come back for you after the storm," Warwick shouted over the edge of the rising wind, as he and the pack backed away.

"Wait no!" Derrick cried in protest. "You can't leave me here!"

But the pack had already gone.

Derrick growled in frustration and pain, but tried to relax his aching body. He would never admit it, but he had never felt so afraid or alone in his life.

His eyes closed in defeat, completely unaware of the great snowy owl soaring overhead.



Ravi and the boys re-entered the Animal Underground hideout, shaking the rainwater from their fur.

"Good job boys," said Ravi, "I believe everyone will be safe tonight."

"Man, oh man," Luther said peering out at the storm. "We're lucky we didn't lose Milton to the wind!"

For once Milton could not argue. What he said was almost true and might have happened if he had not been holding onto Calvin's fur as he had rode upon his back.

"Come on boys," Ravi said as he gestured deeper into the tunnels. "Let's build a fire and warm up before we all catch a cold!"

As they began to move further into the tunnels, a snowy white owl landed in the entrance of the Animal Underground. They were all stunned into silence at her arrival and before they could react, she was already speaking.

"Ravi, I come to you with an urgent message from the Creator; Derrick the hunting dog has fallen into the ravine and his pack has abandoned him there. They will not come back until the end of the storm. But Derrick will not last that

long, for the creek is rising dangerously fast. He needs your help to get out of there in time.”

“Why on earth should we help him!?” Luther exclaimed. “He already terrorized Milton, and could have hurt him! That dog does not deserve our help!”

The owl responded calmly, despite the cub’s outburst. “Luther, I know Derrick has caused you all harm, but the Creator tells us to love our enemies, and not wish harm on them. Does he not then still deserve the Creator’s love?”

At this Luther said nothing, but stared at the floor.

“I trust you will obey the Creator and I know you will do what is right,” and with that the owl turned and departed.

“Then that is what we must do!” Ravi exclaimed. “Calvin and Milton you will come with me to gather supplies in case Derrick is hurt. Luther, I want you to run ahead of us to make sure he is ok.”

“Why me?!” Luther protested.

“Because you have the best sense of hearing,” Ravi replied. “And you will be able to hear what’s going on around you in the darkness, allowing you to get there faster than this old raccoon. We need to make sure there is someone there to watch over him.”

“But... what if he is dangerous?”

“He very possibly could be. But we can trust the Creator. His plans are not to harm us. And we might not always like them, but we can know it’s for the best. Besides, I don’t think the Creator would send us if Derrick wasn’t in need.”

Luther hung his head and looked at the floor in silence. But finally he agreed. “Alright Ravi,” he said. “I’ll trust the Creator and I’ll go to Derrick.” But he could not stop the niggling feelings of fear and anger in his heart.

What do you think?

God calls us to love our enemies no matter the consequences. In this story today Luther Lynx was having a hard time wanting to help Derrick because Derrick could have hurt his friend! And who could blame him? Do you think he was right in his feeling? Do you think he should have tried to forgive Derrick even though it was hard? Let’s see what God has to say about that!

Day 2

Read: Read Jonah 1

Summary: Jonah was a prophet of the Lord and loved being able to spread the word of God. But when God called Jonah to Nineveh Jonah was scared and

angry. This was because the people of Nineveh had hurt his people and they were ungodly, cruel people, so he ran away! What do you think he should have done? Discuss it with your parents.

Questions to ponder / discussion questions (choose one of the following)

- What do you think Jonah should have done?
- Imagine that God asked you to tell a bully about Jesus. How would you feel? Would you want to run away from that? That's how Jonah felt!

Day 3

Grab yourself some Popsicle sticks, some paper, and some glue! Sit down with your parents and try gluing the Popsicle sticks to the paper to make a boat like the one Jonah ran away in. Feel free to colour it afterwards and make sure you have fun with it!

Now draw Jonah on the boat. What do you think? Is he happy or miserable? Discuss with your parents what you think. Keep in mind, when we run away from obeying God, it never leads to true joy and happiness.

Day 4

Sometimes it hard for us to love someone, especially if they hurt you. But God wants us to love our enemies and to pray for them. Let's do some listening prayer. Ask God if there is anyone in your life that you haven't loved well. Once someone comes to mind, ask God for some ideas of how you can love this person better. Write down what God gives you and then go discuss this with your parents and get them to pray with you.

Prayer: "Dear Jesus, remind me of someone I have a hard time loving. Please give me an idea how to show them Your love!"

Day 5

Work on memorizing Luke 6:27-28 (NLT) I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you.

Day 6

Luther Lynx kept on running, even as the rain poured down around him. It was soaking into his fur and making him shiver. He kept running to stay warm, but his heart inside was cold.

“I hate rain,” he muttered bitterly to himself. “Why do I need to go check on Derrick? He doesn’t need our help. He doesn’t deserve it.”

He jumped up onto a fallen tree that was laying in the middle of his path. But when he got on top he saw that the path split. The path on the right lead to Mount Guardian where the ravine was. And the other path lead deeper into the forest.

“After all that those dogs have done to us, Ravi still wants me to help Derrick. Why should I do anything good to him? He has never done anything good to us.”

Luther looked at the path on the right. But he jumped down from the log and ran down the path on the left instead. “I don’t care about Derrick and those awful dogs. If he is hurt that is because he deserves it. I’m not helping him.” So Luther ran away down the path and went to find a place to hide until the rain would stop.



Ravi and the boys trekked through the forest, their heads bowed against the rain as they went.

“Why do we have to do this, Ravi?” Milton shouted, trying to be heard over the rain. “It’s cold and miserable, and those dogs really don’t deserve our help anyway!”

Ravi stopped under a low tree branch to hide from the rain and the cubs gathered around him. “Because, dear boys, the Creator has called us to help him, regardless of what Derrick has done to us. And I know it might not make sense to us now, but the Creator has a purpose for everything...even Derrick.”

“But why would the Creator want us to risk our lives for Derrick?” Wil asked. “I don’t understand.”

“Because the Creator loves all of us. Even when we don’t love him or obey him, He loves all of His creatures.”

“Even the dogs?!” Milton exclaimed.

“Even the dogs,” Ravi said patting him on the back.

But Wil was still confused. “But why would the Creator send us if He knew this was so dangerous? That doesn’t sound very loving to me.”

"It is loving and because we know that the Creator loves us, we also know that He will take care of us. It might not be safe, but we know that His plan is for our good. The Creator will not hurt us." The boys remained silent for several moments before they all nodded in agreement. They all trusted the Creator to know and do what was best for them, but sometimes it was hard.

"Alright," Wil said calmly, "I trust the Creator and His plans." Wil stood up confidently. Ravi smiled.

"Now that's the spirit, now come on boys let's get going, Derrick needs our help."

"Ravi, do you think that Luther will be safe?" Calvin asked with a concerned tone in his voice.

Ravi looked to him compassionately. "I am sure he will make the right decisions, but why don't we pray for him?" Ravi stated with a small smile.

"I'd like that," Calvin said softly, the other cubs slowly nodding in agreement.



Luther ran further into the forests, his steps starting to become frantic as the storm seemed to get worse and worse! He had never seen such a bad storm in all his life! Lightening cracked loudly across the sky causing him to cry out in fear as he ran further and further away from the ravine.

"Stupid storm," Luther muttered, "I HATE storms!" Luther continued to grumble as he turned off the path and ran straight into the forest, he needed to find somewhere to hide, both from the storm and from Ravi. Even in all his anger, Luther could not stop the small hint of guilt that resonated through his conscience. Deep down he knew what he was doing was wrong, but the anger within him was far stronger than his guilt.

Luther tripped and fell hard in the mud making his anger flare! Luther growled as he lunged up from the mud and sprinted blindly through the forest, he just wanted to get out of this storm already! Luther quickly ducked his head under a low branch and kept running, not even thinking about where he was going. As he darted around a large tree, prepared to race across the coming clearing, he was suddenly stopped by a row of metal bars!

Luther gasped as he suddenly collided with the metal bar before he looked behind himself and saw a metal door snap closed behind him. It was one of the hunter's traps! A big smelly skunk trap! The hunters had covered it with branches to hide it. And in his reckless running away, he had run straight into it! He tried to hold his breath because the trap smelled so badly like skunk, but there was only so long one could hold his breath for. He pushed against the

door and tried to bend the bars to get out. But nothing would move. It was far too strong.

Panic flooded Luther as he stared out at the moon over head, peeking through the storm clouds. What would happen to him now? The hunter would find him! He lay down in the floor of the cage, as tears began to fill his eyes. What had he done?

"I never should have come out here, I should have just gone home in the first place, and then I never would have gotten myself into this mess!" Luther grumbled as his glistening tears continued their trek down his wet muddy fur. Luther sighed.

"No, Ravi would not have liked me going home, he probably would have been disappointed in me for choosing not to help," Luther mumbled as he rested his chin on his paws.

"Well he will probably be even more disappointed in me now, if they ever find me," Luther said with a small sob as he once again was reminded that he was stuck in a hunter's trap.

Maybe I should ask the Creator for help? Luther thought hesitantly, that was what Ravi had always taught him to do whenever he was in trouble.

"But I don't deserve the Creator's help!" Luther growled as he became angry with himself. He had disobeyed the Creator in a very serious matter, there was no way he deserved any help from the Creator.

Luther sighed in frustration as he continued to lay on the bottom of the cage crying. He was wet, cold, alone and afraid. Then he felt a short rush of wind sweep over him. He looked up curiously to see the great snowy white owl landing on a nearby branch. She sat in silence and watched Luther with large, dark eyes that were filled with sadness.

"Will you help me?" Luther asked, feeling hope inside again.

"Why should I help you, Luther?" She asked him. "Can you give me a reason? Did you do as I asked?"

Luther felt the guilt in his heart suddenly get heavier and he hung his head. "No... I didn't..."

"You did the wrong thing," the owl told him. "You do not deserve my help."

But as Luther sat in silent shame, the cold rain stopped falling on him. He looked up to see something that shocked him. The beautiful snowy white owl was standing on top of that smelly cage and was spreading her wings over him, like an umbrella.

"The Creator loves you Luther. Even when you do the wrong thing, He will always love you. And He is always ready to forgive us for the bad things we do if we repent."

"I am really sorry for what I did," Luther said to the owl. "Do you really think the Creator will forgive me? What I did was so wrong I don't think I could ever be forgiven."

The owl smiled softly to herself at his words. "He already has Luther. Why don't you pray and ask Him yourself, I am sure He would love to tell you."

What do you think?

Sometimes we get stuck in a trap of our own anger and sin, just like Luther did. But God knows what we need and even though we might disobey Him, He will still always love us and we can always turn around and come back to him!

Day 7

Read: Jonah 2

Summary: Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights, gross! But while he was in the whale God found him and there he repented of his sins and told God that he wanted to try again. Our God is a God of second chances!

Questions to ponder / discussion questions (choose one of the following)

- Imagine yourself locked into a closet for 3 days and 3 nights – it's completely dark. So dark, in fact, you can't even see your hand in front of your face. If you were stuck, like Jonah, how would you pass the time?
- Have you ever felt stuck? Maybe a problem at school that wouldn't go away. Maybe some hard homework you just couldn't figure out. Maybe a friend was being mean to you and you didn't know how to change it. Can you tell your parents about a time you felt 'stuck'?

Day 8

Grab your markers, crayons and some paper and draw a picture of Jonah in the whale praying to God.

Just for fun, imagine it's as dark as the belly of a large fish and try drawing the same picture on the other side – but with your eyes closed...*no peeking!* How did you do? Challenge a brother or sister or parent to draw the same picture blindfolded. How did they do?

Day 9

Read 1 John 1:9 and ask God if there is anything you haven't asked Him for forgiveness for yet. If something comes to mind, repent of that and then ask God to show you how much He loves you. If you're not sure how. Go ask your parents for help.

Prayer: "Dear Jesus, I confess that I don't always listen to You or my mom & dad. Please show me if there is any sin that I should confess to you."

Day 10

Work on memorizing Luke 6:27-28 (NLT) I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you.

Day 11

Derrick opened his eyes slowly. How long had he been asleep?

He looked up at the sky and saw the dark clouds still hid the stars from view. The rain poured down hard around him, making him terribly cold.

Shivering he tried to pull himself into a ball to stay warm, but his body hurt terribly! His front left paw was throbbing and his back right paw was so sore he couldn't move it. As he focused on his hurting legs he realized that he could feel water rushing over them. He looked back and saw that the creek was rising. All the rain was making it flood over its banks. Soon it would get too high and carry him downstream. He had to get away from the water!

He tried and tried to pull himself away, but his legs were hurting too badly to get up. He yelped in pain as he tried to lift himself up, but even with all of the big dog's strength, he was helpless now.

He lay his head down in the mud and whimpered in fear. His pack had left him and he could not help himself. He was hopeless. What was going to happen to him?

Slowly Derrick let his eyes fall closed, not wanting to see the hopeless world around him as panic slowly began to fill his chest.

My pack will never make it back in time.



The owl sat patiently on top of the cage as she listened to Luther pray for forgiveness and receive the Creator's love. When he went quiet, she smiled.

"Luther, do you feel ready to be let out yet?" the owl asked softly.

"Yes, I know the Creator has forgiven me and I am ready to try again," Luther stated quietly.

"Alright, then off you go, but hurry! The creek is rising due to the storm and Derrick is in danger!" the owl said as she lifted the metal door of the trap. Luther bolted gratefully out of the trap, thankful to not be surrounded by the offensive smell.

"Thank you so much great owl, I promise I will do better this time," Luther said in a humbled tone as he looked to the owl. The owl smiled compassionately.

"I know you will Luther," she said sweetly. "Now off you go, quickly, you don't have much time to waste."

"Right," was all Luther said before he took off running back towards the path, shouting one last thank-you over his shoulder as he went.

It took Luther awhile to find his way back to the path, but as soon as he did he spent no time in idle movements and sprinted towards Mount Guardian.

"Dear Creator, please help Derrick to still be ok, don't let my mistake hurt him." Luther prayed as he ran down the path. It felt like forever as he ran, like time had decided to stop, making him panic slightly. However relief and peace was delivered by the Creator to Luther's heart for he knew that the Creator was watching over both him and Derrick. Luther felt his heart jump with gratitude as the trees began to clear, exposing the bald top of Mount Guardian. Quickly Luther ran up one side and down the other to the wide mouth of the ravine. Here was where Luther hesitated and his fear caught up with him. What if Derrick wasn't as badly injured as he thought? What if the dog tried to attack him?

Luther took in a deep breath and mumbled a quick prayer before he slowly began to walk into the ravine. His paws made little sound as he walked alongside the overflowing creek which was now flowing incredibly fast. He kept his eyes straight ahead to where he knew he would eventually see Derrick. But he was not ready for when he did! As soon as Luther saw Derrick, he froze and his heart leapt in his throat. The dog was laying on his side and appeared to be sleeping, but Luther expected him to jump to his feet at any moment and attack him. However when the dog remained completely still Luther began to calm slightly and hesitantly walked forward.

He inched a bit closer and still the dog did not move. A bit closer. Still no movement! Finally Luther stood directly beside Derrick and still the dog did not stir. Realizing that the dog was most likely unconscious Luther took the time to

study the dog. Luther could tell by the way the dog was lying down that one of his back legs was hurt and he could clearly tell that he had also injured his front paw. Upon further study Luther came to the realization that Derrick was halfway in the freezing water of the creek that was about ready to drag him away!

Luther gasped and quickly lunged forward to grab Derrick by the loose skin on the back of his neck. Luther struggled and pulled as he tried to drag the full-grown dog from the water. It was made that much more difficult since he was getting no help from the dog. Luther pulled and pulled, painfully slowly moving the dog further from the water. He prayed over and over for strength to get Derrick away from the water as he continued to slip and jerk both himself and the dog across the mud. Finally Derrick's body began to move more easily along the mud and soon both were at a safe distance from the creek. Luther gasped for breath as he flopped onto the ground, exhausted from that great feat of strength. Luther let his eyes fall closed slightly, thankful that now both of them were safe.

"Who are you?" a sudden rough voice called weakly. Luther's eyes flashed open with fear as he jumped to his feet, his wide eyes locking on the dog before him.

Derrick was awake!



The ravine came into view, with the creek running quickly out of it. "I cannot see Derrick or Luther yet," Ravi told them. "They must be deeper in."

"I hope Luther is ok," Milton yelled over the wind. "He must have been with that dog for a long time now. I'm scared for him."

"Yes," Ravi agreed. "That walk took longer than I had hoped. But we can trust that Luther will be alright. You know why, boys?"

"Because the Creator is watching over us!" Calvin exclaimed. "And He does not want to hurt us."

"That's right!" Ravi said with a smile. "But come now. Let's find our way to them quickly so we can help too."

But when they finally reached the wide mouth of the ravine they found even more trouble. "I don't remember the creek being that big!" Calvin told them. "Or that fast."

"It must be all this rain!" Wil exclaimed. "It's making the creek bigger!"

"You're right!" Ravi told them. "We have to get Derrick out of there before the creek gets too dangerous. Quickly now, let's go!"

Ravi and the boys rushed to the opening of the ravine and carefully made their way deeper inside, being careful of the raging creek.

“Luther, where are you?” Ravi called urgently over the storm.

“Ravi!” Luther’s voice called in excitement. “I’m further in, I’m with Derrick!”

“Alright Luther, stay right there we’re coming!” Ravi called as he and the boys moved further into the ravine. Ravi found Luther standing guard by the unconscious dog, both a safe distance away from the raging creek.

“Luther thank the Creator you’re safe, what happened? How is Derrick?” Ravi asked with great concern.

“He woke up for a moment before he passed out again. I’ll tell you everything later but for now we need to get Derrick out of here, the water is rising!” Luther said.

“Alright boys let’s gather around and we’ll all carry him together,” Ravi said. The boys all gathered around the limp animal and together they all lifted the dog and began to carry him out. It was not as easy as it could have been, for they continued to slip in the mud and the dog was heavy. But with the Creator’s grace and a lot of team effort they managed to get Derrick out of the ravine and to the shelter of some nearby trees. There they laid him down and Ravi began to treat the dog’s injuries.

“So Luther tell us what happened?” Calvin said excitedly, “Were you scared?”

“Yeah, I was scared!” Luther said as he sighed. “A lot happened actually,” he whispered. At this Ravi looked up from his work and eyed Luther, he knew that tone of voice.

“Would you care to tell us?” Ravi asked casually as he continued his work on Derrick.

“Well, when I was running to the ravine I was really angry. I didn’t want to help Derrick because he could have hurt Milton, and all those dogs have ever done was hurt us, so...so I ran away,” Luther said with shame in his voice.

“You ran away?” Milton asked incredulously.

“I did, and I ran straight into one of the hunter’s skunk traps!” Embarrassment rose within Luther.

“I was wondering what that horrible stink was!” Calvin laughed causing Luther to blush even more.

“Anyway, while I was stuck the great snowy white owl came and talked to me about the forgiveness of the Creator and that even though I had done something wrong, He still loved me and was willing to give me a second chance,” Luther exclaimed happily. “So I asked for His forgiveness and then the owl let me out of the trap and I came straight here where I found Derrick.”

“Luther I am proud of you,” Ravi said with a smile, causing confusion to him. “Even though you initially did something wrong, in the end you asked the

Creator for a second chance and now because of that you saved Derrick's life! Had you gone away we would have never reached him in time to save him from the water," Ravi said in a matter of fact tone.

"Thank you Ravi," Luther said in a slightly humbled tone.

"No Luther, thank you."

What do you think?

We are always called to obey the Creator even when it's hard or even scary. Luther chose in the end to repent of what he did wrong and God gratefully gave him a second chance. God is always willing to give us another go at things and that is one of many reasons He is such a loving Father.

Day 12

Read: Jonah 3

Summary: Jonah had spent three days and three nights in prayer to God and God decided to give him a second chance. The whale spit up Jonah and he went straight to Nineveh where he delivered God's message and the people instantly began to repent, and God forgave them.

Questions to ponder / discussion questions (choose one of the following)

- Think about what has happened to Jonah so far – storm, near drowning, 3 days in a smelly fish – ultimately to be spit up on a beach and told to travel to a far-away city. Of course we know God is loving in all He does; discuss with your parents how God was being loving towards Jonah – you will have to think about this one, it might be a little tough!
- God obviously has a lot of power – He can make a storm and then stop it. He can command ocean animals to obey Him. If He can do all these amazing things, why do you think He asked an ordinary man to preach to the evil city?

Day 13

Draw a whale and Jonah on a separate piece of paper. Cut Jonah out and tape a piece of string to the back of your Jonah and then attach the other end to the whale mouth. Now you can fling the whale around and see what happened when the whale spit up Jonah.

Day 14

Obedying is sometimes hard. So do you complain when your mom or dad ask you to clean your room or wash some dishes? God wants you to do these things without complaining. Pray the prayer below.

Prayer: “God, what do mom and dad ask me to do that I complain the most about?”

Whatever God reminds you about, write it down and say sorry to God for complaining. Next time, make sure you obey with a smile and a great big “You bet!”

Day 15

Work on memorizing Luke 6:27-28 (NLT) *I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you.*

Day 16

The storm was finally settling down and the clouds were vanishing to the east allowing sunbeams to stream through them.

Ravi and the boys from the Animal Underground had stayed up all night, waiting for the storm to end and for Derrick to wake up. It had been a long, hard night, with the storm getting worse and everyone had become exhausted and cold. Yet now with the calming of the storm and the rising sun, their spirits rose as well.

“I don’t think I’ve ever been so exhausted in my life!” Milton muttered wearily.

“But Milton you slept half the night,” Luther said in confusion.

“Well still, it wasn’t enough sleep and I’m tired.” Milton whined slightly.

“I think we all are,” Wil mumbled from where he lay as he rested his chin down on his paws.

“Well I am very grateful for your boys’ sacrifice to help Derrick. Who knows what would have happened to him had we said ‘no’ to Sophia and gone to bed,” Ravi said with a thoughtful look as he leaned onto his staff.

“Yeah...” Luther muttered, the feeling of guilt welling up within his chest once again.

Ravi picked up the tone of guilt in his voice and he turned to Luther with a compassionate gaze, "Luther, did you ask the Creator for forgiveness when you realized what you did was wrong?"

Luther was somewhat confused by Ravi's question for he had told them last night that he had. "Yes, I-I did." He said with a still befuddled tone.

"Then there is no reason for you to feel guilt Luther, the Creator has forgiven you and you must do the same and forgive yourself," Ravi said seriously, yet there was an undeniably caring tone in his voice.

"Oh but, Ravi how can I forgive myself?!" Luther cried, "If I had ran away Derrick could have been seriously hurt or worse!"

"Nothing we do can ever ruin the Creator's plans," Ravi said wisely, "He knew your heart and he knew He would have to teach you a very important lesson before you could go to Derrick. He saw this moment long before the world was created and as such He knew that a lesson would have to be taught so that your heart could be made right before Him again. So He made sure that he could leave enough time for that so that Derrick would not get washed away. The Creator holds our lives in his hands Luther, He has everything planned out to the perfect timing."

"B-but how could I ever forgive myself for what I did, or the things I thought about Derrick, and my anger?" Luther pleaded.

"Well Luther what you did was indeed wrong, but the Creator has forgiven you. Therefore you do not have a right to not forgive yourself. Do you not think that the Creator's forgiveness is good enough?" Ravi asked quizzically.

"Well, of course His forgiveness is enough," Luther said, yet he still did not fully understand what Ravi was getting at.

"But by you not forgiving yourself means that you don't think that his forgiveness is good enough. The Creator paid the ultimate sacrifice so that you could be forgiven, but by not forgiving yourself you are refusing that sacrifice."

"Oh," Luther said sadly. "I don't want to refuse Him, b-but it seems so hard to forgive myself of something like this," Luther murmured as he looked down at his paws.

"Luther why don't you go and spend some time talking to the Creator? I think he'll want to tell you many things," Ravi said with a smile.

"Yeah, yeah I think I will," Luther said softly. "Thank you Ravi, is it alright if I go just a little ways into the woods to be alone with the Creator for a bit?"

"Of course Luther, I'll call you when Derrick wakes, I think you two should talk," Ravi said with a gentle voice.

"Yeah, I would like to talk with him....a-and apologize," Luther said softly.

"I think that is very wise," Ravi said with a slight smile and a knowing gaze within his eyes as he watched Luther walk into the woods.

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It was not more than an hour before Derrick began to stir and so Ravi called for Luther and the group prepared for the dog to wake.

Derrick woke up feeling a sharp pain in his leg. It was different because he had not been able to feel anything in his leg for a while. He opened his eyes to try and find out why he was hurting. And when he did he found himself surrounded by the Animal Underground. Right away he growled and tried to jump to his feet. But he hurt far too much and ended up just hurting himself more.

"Calm down." Ravi said peacefully as the others hid behind him. "We are not here to hurt you."

Derrick looked around quickly and realized that he was not in the creek or at the bottom of the ravine anymore but rather in the trees beside the mouth of the ravine.

"How did I get here?" he demanded.

"We brought you here. The creek was going to sweep you away. It's thanks to Luther that you are still alive. He got you to safety until we were able to get to the ravine and bring you here."

Derrick looked at Luther, with a slightly impressed look in his eyes, "You pulled me out of the creek? By yourself?"

Luther grinned. "Yeah... I did."

"You saved me... Why?"

"I...I didn't want to..." Luther admitted. "I was mad at you for what you did to my friends. The Creator told us that you needed help, b-but I ran away. I wasn't going to help you. But the great snowy white owl came to me and helped me understand why I needed to come help you."

"And why is that?" Derrick asked sarcastically.

"Because He loves us even when we don't love him. So... we came to help you. Even though you were not nice to us," Luther stammered. With that Luther remained silent and continued bandaging up Derrick's back leg.

But Derrick still did not understand. "And you, mouse."

Milton ducked his head and his ears lay down flat. "Y-yes?" He squeaked fearfully. "And my name is M-Milton, n-not mouse."

Derrick simply rolled his eyes. "What are you doing?" Derrick asked.

Milton swallowed his fear, took a deep breath and replied, "I-I'm trying to bandage your paw... You hurt it when you fell."

"Why?" Derrick muttered. "Have you forgotten already what I did to you? I chased you and mocked you. I was going to eat you!"

Milton sat up as tall as he could and looked into Derrick's eyes, "The Creator tells us to love each other, even if others don't love us, we are told to love them. It's what the Creator did for us. We should do it in return."

Derrick squinted at the mouse, confused. He lay his head down on his left paw and growled, "What kind of creator would do that?"

Ravi stepped closer and squeezed Milton's shoulder. "Well done," he whispered. "I'll talk with him. Keep working."

"The cubs are right, you know, Derrick." Ravi said smiling at the big dog. "We came to help you because the Creator sent us."

"Why would He do that? I don't deserve your help."

"That's is the point, Derrick," Ravi told him, "none of us deserve His help, but because He loves us He wants to take care of us too."

"But... I have never known the Creator," Derrick told Ravi. "Why would he love me?"

"Because He is the Creator. And He created all of us. And He loves all of us, not because of what we do, but because He made us to love us. And He wants us to love Him in return."

Derrick thought about this and lay his head down again.

"W-well thank you," Derrick said quietly, suddenly feeling very humbled. He and the hunting dogs had hunted down the forest animals for years. And yet now the animals of the forest had helped him when his own pack abandoned him.

"Of course, Derrick," Ravi said kindly. Derrick was silent for several moments before he sighed, "And... Milton... I'm sorry for scaring you. Even if you are a little mouse. I am sorry."

Milton smiled up at the big dog. "I forgive you." Derrick once again fell silent before he looked up to the rising sun.

"Well the storm is over, I should be going, my pack will be coming soon," Derrick said calmly. "Thank you again." Then without another word Derrick limped off to the top of the hill to meet his pack.

"Ravi do you think he will ever turn to the Creator?" Luther asked in a quizzical voice.

"Well, Luther we have planted a seed in his heart, now we can only pray and believe that the Creator will do what's best." Ravi said wisely.

"I hope Derrick finds the Creator," Luther said with a hopeful smile. Ravi smiled down at him before he rested his paw on his shoulder.

"Me too Luther, me too," Ravi said thoughtfully.



Derrick grunted as he limped to the top of the hill, he could not get over what the animals of the forest had done for him.

“Who helps someone who hurt them?” Derrick muttered darkly, “that doesn’t even make any sense, it’s weak, and pointless, and-and.....and it’s kind.”

Derrick stopped for a moment, what kind of person did you have to be to do something like that for someone you clearly don’t like? He sighed before he continued walking again.

Derrick looked up and smirked as he watched a pack of hunting dogs appear over the hilltop, they had come back for him after all.

“Derrick you’re alright, what happened?” Warwick asked sternly. Derrick paused for a moment, trying to decide what to say. He supposed he should rat out the animals down in the tree line, but he couldn’t bring himself to say anything about it. All he managed to say was, “You wouldn’t believe me if I told you.”

What do you think?

People that don’t know God often don’t see a miracle the way someone who loves God would. Derrick knew something big had happened when the Animal Underground had rescued him, but he couldn’t figure it out. This is what the Bible means in 1 Corinthians 2:14 when it says *“But people who aren’t spiritual can’t receive these truths from God’s Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them and they can’t understand it...”* But a seed was planted in Derrick’s heart – do you think he will get to know the Creator later in his life?

Day 17

Read: Jonah 4

Summary: Even though Jonah did what was right and warned Nineveh he still wanted God to destroy the city and everyone in it. He sat and waited for a long time for God to destroy it; yet even though Jonah was angry and bitter towards the people and even God, God took care of Jonah. God caused a plant to grow up from the ground and shelter Jonah from the heat. But the very next day God ruined the plant and Jonah was angry about it. That’s when God showed Jonah how crazy it was that he was concerned about a silly plant, but didn’t care a bit about a huge city of 120,000 people!

Questions to ponder / discussion questions (choose one of the following)

- Do you think your family is more important to you than the things you like to do? If your little brother or sister wants to play with you, do you always say no?
- The whole city of Nineveh was full of people who didn't know God. Maybe there are some kids at your school that don't know God. Who do you think might need to hear about God?

Day 18

Go outside and grab a leaf or, if there is snow on the ground, grab a piece of lettuce from your fridge (ask your parents for permission first before using lettuce), then glue that leaf to a piece of paper and then draw a stem and a picture of Jonah beneath it. For an interesting change, lay a piece of paper on top of the leaf and hold it flat with your hand. Use a pencil and shade over the paper on top of the leaf. Now draw Jonah under the leaf.

Day 19

Read 1 John 4:19 and think about it! The Creator will always love us and forgive us no matter how many times we mess up. God even loves those who don't love Him yet (the verse says He loved first, before we loved Him!). Do you know someone who doesn't know who God is?

Get real quiet and pray the following:

Prayer: "Jesus, who is someone that You want me to show Your love to?"

Write down what He tells you and then say 'thank You' to God for reaching out to us in love first.

Day 20

Work on memorizing Luke 6:27-28 (NLT) *I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you.*