

foundations[®] for Kidz!



20 Day Devotional for KIDS!

Lessons on speaking and listening to Jesus!



SOUTHLAND
CHURCH

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Versions of scripture quotations are noted.

Welcome to...

foundations[®] for Kidz!



foundations[®] for Kidz!

Dear Parents,

The short eBook 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!

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 an eBook 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

Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.

James 5:16 (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!



Rain, rain, rain. I really am not liking this! The old raccoon looked out of the doorway to the Animal Underground headquarters. Of course, he wouldn't say that to the boys, but he still felt that way. *After all, five days of steady drizzle is enough to make anyone itchy for a little sunshine.* Ravi smiled as he thought of the cubs who were holed up in their homes, likely going crazy from not being able to go outdoors.

Then he looked up and spoke a soft "Thank You" to his Creator. Ravi knew a secret that many did not, he knew that the Creator was in charge of the weather and that He always had His reasons, so Ravi would whisper prayers of thanks to God even when things were not pleasant.

*Hmmm...thinking of 'not pleasant'...*Ravi's thoughts turned to the trouble the forest had been under lately. Beverly and his fellow hunters had been setting a lot of traps in recent weeks...a LOT. Even though the Animal Underground had been busy from morning till night sabotaging the traps, the hunters had been getting smarter and making the traps harder and harder to find. They had also been setting way more than normal.

Ravi's brow crunched together with concern as he wondered how to deal with this problem. So many animals had been captured and taken by the hunters and their dogs. The only relief they had was this miserable rain. It had kept the hunters away for a few days, letting Ravi and the cubs catch up a little bit.

But Ravi had been praying. He knew that all the hard work that he and the cubs could do would be useless unless the Creator was helping them. So he prayed, he prayed *hard*.

Then he thought of the forest animals. Even though a number of them believed in the Creator, many more did not. Ravi had spent a lot of time talking with deer, mice, foxes, rabbits, birds, porcupines, hedgehogs and gophers trying to get them to trust in the Creator for help against the hunters and their dogs. Some politely listened, but said nothing, some were convinced by what he had to say, but many more would throw rocks, sticks or just rudely walk away from Ravi. He thought of yesterday, standing in the drizzle outside Hanson Hedgehog's hole while Hanson just sniffed at him and turned, kicked his hind legs and showered Ravi in dirt and mud.

"God, what are You doing here? Why aren't You answering our prayers? Animals are having a hard time believing You care when the hunters are being so successful," a single large tear ran down his whiskers and plopped on the dirt beside him. Ravi continued, "But I thank You, my God, for sending the rain to stop the dogs. I know that even now You are in control."

From behind him Ravi heard an "ahem" as a small animal cleared his throat. Ravi smiled and turned. "Hello Milton," he said.

"Hi Ravi," Milton Mouse replied, a bit of a scowl on his face as he shook the rain off. "I will sure be happy to see some sunshine again soon!"

"You and me both!" Cassie Cougar said as she came into the room just then, followed close behind by Calvin Cougar, Wil Wolf and Luther Lynx. Ravi held up his paws to shield himself from the spray of water that filled the room as all the animals started shaking the water out of their fur all at once.

"Yechh!" Ravi exclaimed as he wiped the water from his face.

Wil nudged his way forward and got straight to business, "So why the urgent message to meet here today? I thought we were getting a break from looking for all the traps."

Ravi looked around at the cubs. "Thank you guys...and girl..." he winked at Cassie, "I wouldn't ask this of you if it wasn't absolutely necessary," he hesitated, uncomfortable with what he was about to say, "but I really need you guys to look for a couple of animals."

"Who are we looking for? Are they lost? And how will we find them in this never ending rain?" Milton squeaked.

"Not to mention how *cold* the rain is! I mean, it is November after all, it should really be snowing by now!" Calvin chimed in.

Ravi waited for the muttering and comments to quiet down. Shortly, all eyes were on him. "I need you guys to look for...Jakob Chipmunk and Sophia the Owl," Ravi eyed the cubs for their response.

After a few seconds of silence, Wil spoke up, "Is it OK if we know why we are looking for them?" He cleared his throat and continued, "I mean...it's alright if you don't...you're in charge, but it sounds serious..."

Ravi sighed and said, "That's OK Wil. I will gladly share everything with you once Jakob and Sophia are here. Let's just say that I believe the Creator is asking me for a really tough assignment and I need some wise council to make sure I'm not making a mistake."

"Uh, Ravi?" Cassie spoke, just barely above a whisper. She could be bold one on one, but in a group setting she tended to stay quiet. Everyone looked over at her. "May I ask why you need Jakob and Sophia? Why can't the Creator just tell you Himself?"

Ravi smiled, he loved questions like these, "Well, then we couldn't get to know the Creator really well if He always made it that easy!" he replied. But Cassie was still puzzled and her face showed it. Ravi took a deep breath and continued, "I wish I could have clear answers every time I asked for them. But it seems that when we have to ask, and search, and get help, and be patient, and wait, well..." he paused with a twinkle in his eye as he looked up, "...that's when we get to know Him best. You see, He doesn't just want to give us answers, He wants to give us Himself."

As Ravi looked around at the cubs, he could tell that they 'kind-of' understood, but not completely. He continued, "You're going to have to trust me on this one, the Creator wants me to have other, wise animals help and not have me go-it-alone."

That seemed to satisfy Cassie and the others for now.

Milton piped up, "Where should we start?"

Hmmm, where indeed, Ravi thought to himself. Unsure of exactly where they would be, he proceeded to split them up into two groups and sent them off to where Ravi thought they might be hiding out during a long period of rain. After praying together for safety and success, the two groups left in the drizzle as the clouds brightened with the morning's light.

"Creator above all," Ravi whispered, "give me wisdom. You are asking me to do a very BIG thing. Please give the cubs success in finding Sophia and Jakob quickly!"

What do you think?

It might seem strange for someone as wise as Ravi to want to double check his ideas with some other people. After all, he is *Ravi*, leader of the Animal Underground! But God actually **LOVES** to speak to us in many different ways, and one of His favorite ways to speak to us is through other people. Did you know that God will actually hide some things from you that He wants you to

know until you ask for help from other people? That's why it is so important to talk to your parents and church leaders and to go to church. He made it that way so we can depend on others and not just ourselves.

Day 2

Read: Read 1 Kings 17:1-5

Summary: Elijah told the King of Israel that there would be no rain for the next few years unless he said so. God did this because the Israelites were so evil. Of course, King Ahab did not like this, so Elijah hid from the king while ravens fed him at a small brook, which dried up after a while from the lack of rain.

I'm sure Elijah wondered why the famine had to affect him. He wasn't the one being evil, the Israelites were, yet he had to run and hide and drink from a dirty stream and take meat from ravens who likely picked it off a dead animal carcass somewhere. Yet God had a plan and a purpose; just like in our story, God had a plan and a purpose for all the rain that has been falling for the last several days too!

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

- Do you think Elijah prayed to God about the brook drying up? Do you think God is going to take care of him? In our story, animals were praying about all the traps that Warwick and his gang set up, do you think God is going to answer their prayers too?
- Is there something in your own life that you wonder sometimes if God is going to take care of and help you with? What is that thing? Discuss with your parents.

Day 3

Think of 4 different ways to "tell" or "show" someone that you love them. Now write them down on a piece of paper. Can you think of more than 4? Hint: it's not just speaking, it's also writing or showing. Once you have thought of a bunch of them, now practice them on a sister or brother or a parent. I'll give you one to start: how about a big hug? That definitely shows love!

Now think about how God speaks when we pray to Him. He doesn't always speak in words we can hear with our ears, but He speaks in many different ways – some we hear, some we feel, some we think, some happen to us...

Day 4

We all go through hard things in our lives. Some of them might seem so hard that we wonder if even God can (or will) do anything about it. Pray the following prayer to God and write down what He shows you.

Prayer: “Dear Jesus, is there something hard in my life that I have a hard time believing that You can (or even *want* to) help with?”

Day 5

Work on memorizing James 5:16 (NLT) *Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.*

Day 6

It was only about an hour later that Ravi heard wet shuffling in the entrance to the AU headquarters. A chattering conversation was heard, and though it was muffled, Ravi smiled with recognition of Jakob’s voice. “Jakob!” Ravi smiled warmly, “it’s been a while.”

Jakob twitched his tail and grinned, “Indeed! Indeed! So it has been – and I see you called on Sophia as well?”

Ravi nodded and looked up as the owl followed Jakob in, hopping in awkwardly – followed closely by the cubs. After a few minutes of chatting and retelling of how they found the two guests, the room suddenly got quiet. Ravi cleared his throat and looked up at the owl and then down at the chipmunk, finally he looked at the cubs. “I am very grateful to you two,” nodding to the new guests, “for coming to see me on short notice,” turning to the cubs he added, “and thank you all for being willing to look for them in this dismal weather.”

Ravi paused for a moment and then dived right in, “Sophia, Jakob...I believe the Creator is asking something very big of me and I want to make sure I have heard Him right. So I called on two of the wisest animals that I know of to hear what I have to say,” he looked at them and continued, “the hunters and their dogs have been setting numerous traps and are catching many animals. I have set my heart on praying very hard for the Creator to stop them, but so far He hasn’t answered. However, the day after I started praying about the traps I started having the same dream night after night.”

Ravi settled back on his haunches and explained, “My dream is exactly the same. I am standing on the edge of Willy Walter’s farm looking down at Beverly’s camper. Beside me is a big pile of snowballs, which seems odd because it is raining while I’m standing there and the snow isn’t melting. I pick up the snowballs and start throwing them at the camper, but every snowball I throw suddenly flies straight up and disappears into the clouds. I continue throwing the snowballs and every one of them flies straight up. Finally, all the snowballs are gone, but then the clouds clear and the sun comes out. As I’m standing there wondering what just happened, the forest seems to come alive and I look around and I see many animals peeking out from behind trees and bushes to see what is going on. Then suddenly, a huge ball of water falls from the sky and as it is falling it turns into a big pile of snowballs (I think it’s the same ones I was throwing). All the hunters and dogs look up and scatter out from under it as it lands on top of the camper and totally crushes it. All the individual snow balls roll all over the field where the hunters and dogs lived and fill it full of snow and ice. Then I wake up.”

Ravi took a deep breath and continued, “The Creator seems to be speaking to me in other ways too. Everywhere I turn, He seems to be confronting me with what He wants me to do – and this dream seems to be related to it somehow,” then he looked directly at Jakob and Sophia and said, “and that’s where you two come in.”

The cubs sat to the side, wide eyed and wondering what the Creator could be up to. All eyes turned to the guests to see what they would say.

Jakob sat up and spoke loudly in a chattering voice, “Creator help us! Ravi needs wisdom! Show us what You want him to do with all of this!” Then everyone fell silent for a few minutes. There was a holy presence in the room and the cubs hardly dared to breathe, much less say a word!

Sophia broke the silence. “I too, have seen the misery of the animals and the problems the traps have brought. I too have prayed hard about this. Now it seems clear. Ravi, it seems the Creator wants you to confront Warwick the hunting dog.”

“I agree. I agree,” Jakob chattered. Then he bounded up to Ravi’s feet and looked him straight in the eye and said, “and I think He is saying to do it soon!”

Ravi straightened up in front of them all and said, “Thank you, my friends. This is exactly what I felt Him saying to me too. Then there is only one thing to do.”

Milton almost dared not to ask, but he timidly squeaked in, “What’s that, Ravi?”

Ravi looked at Milton with a slight smile under his whiskers and simply said, “I am going to face Warwick tomorrow and trust the Creator with whatever becomes of it!”

What do you think?

Ravi had been listening to God in many different ways. I wonder if you noticed that when you read the story? He had a dream, but not only that, he had the same dream over and over and over again – seems like God was trying to get his attention, huh? In addition he had a strange “feeling” that God was talking to him. Finally, he took his concerns to wise, godly animals he could trust and it seems that God spoke through them as well. So after all that, do you think God is going to help Ravi and do something big and amazing when he meets Warwick? Discuss with your parents what you think might happen.

Day 7

Read: 1 Kings 17:8-24

Summary: Elijah’s food ran out at the brook, so God sent him to a poor widow to live there. The problem was that the widow had almost no food left and she didn’t know that she was supposed to feed a full grown man yet too! Yet she trusted the Lord and He provided every day until the famine was over.

Now, sometime later, her son dies and she asks Elijah for help. Elijah prays to God and He brings the boy back to life. Now the widow makes one of the most amazing statements in all of Scripture: *“Now I know for sure that you are a man of God, and that the Lord truly speaks through you.”* (1 Ki 17:24) God proves Who He is by what He does! Not only that, He proves that His servants are speaking the truth by what He does in their lives too.

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

- Have you ever had God answer a prayer in your life or in your family that just amazed you? Discuss with your parents.
- What is a really cool miracle that you would like to see happen in your family?

Day 8

Can you think of the craziest dream you ever had? Maybe God wasn't trying to speak to you, but it was a lot of fun to dream about. Make a full page poster of the best dream you can remember. Now try and explain your dream using the poster to a parent or a friend.

Day 9

Read James 5:16 (our memory verse this month) and ask God if there is anything you haven't confessed to Him. 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 James 5:16 (NLT) *Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.*

Day 11

The news had spread like wildfire: Ravi was going to face Warwick! All the Southern Forest was abuzz with the news. What would he say? What would he do? When was it going to happen?

Turns out, the forest animals did not have to wait long. The very next day dawned bright and sunny – not a single cloud in the sky, though it had rained a dreary drizzle most of the night. It truly was a wonder that there was no flooding anywhere, but that was likely because the rain was so light that the ground had time to soak it in.

Normally this time of year there would have been a couple of good snowfalls by now, but the Southern Forest was enjoying an unusually late warm spell. Today looked like it was going to be a wonderful day, perhaps an unusually warm one at that.

Ravi plodded out of his home and his feet went splash, splash, splash on the grass. *Hmmm, I guess the ground is going to be very wet for some time, he*

thought to himself. Today was the day he was going to face Warwick, and he knew that with this sunny day he had better do it soon before Warwick's dogs take advantage of the warm weather and go on the move looking for trapped animals.

Ravi scampered down the side of the hill that he lived on, heading towards the farm yard and the field that lay just beyond it. The hunters and their dogs had set up on the low section of the field next to Willy Walters' property. Before long, Ravi was at the tree line that marked the edge of the Southern Forest and the beginning of the prairie plains. He stopped, sniffed the air and looked cautiously around. He could see Beverly's camper off in the distance and the rough wooden fence that lined the property was positioned about a hundred yards or so from the edge of the forest.

Ravi ducked down and ran towards the fence line in the tall, brown grass. As he pushed the grass aside and approached the fence, Ravi wondered at how quickly this entire field would burn up from a lightning strike with the brown, dead grass everywhere. *Good thing everything is soaked and the season for thunder storms is long past!* he thought to himself.

When Ravi reached the first fence post, he poked his head up, looked all around him and then looked up to the sky and said in a loud voice, "Creator, You are in charge here! I am trusting You, do what You said You would do and show them who You really are!"

With that, he clambered up to the top of the fence pole, faced the camper and shouted at the top of his voice, "Warwick! Warwick! I must talk with you now!"

As he sat there, waiting for a reply, he noticed movement along the tree line and turned to look. Sure enough, he could see hiding behind trees and in bushes what looked like all the animals of the Southern Forest come to see what would become of Ravi. *I think most of them are likely expecting me to become a meal,* he thought, then added, *I sure hope not.*

Within a few moments the menacing, hunched shape of Warwick walked out from behind the camper. When he looked up and saw Ravi sitting on the fencepost his ears folded back and he bared his teeth. "Hey guys!" He shouted over his shoulder, "Come see this!"

As Warwick approached Ravi, 3 other shapes emerged from behind the camper. Warwick knew Ravi well enough to know that he was very crafty and was likely up to no good. He motioned with his head to the other dogs and they instantly responded by running off to the either side of Ravi a little ways down the fence line. Warwick was not about to let a prize like this get away!

Warwick stopped about 20 feet in front of Ravi, warily glanced around and then growled, "So if it isn't the infamous leader of the pathetic band of rebels

you call the Animal Underground!” He paused for a moment and then barked, “You’re on my land! What do you want, coming out here like this?” Then Warwick thought of something and then chuckled a little before continuing, “Come to think of it, you *live* on my land. But now you’ve come to my doorstep. That’s a pretty bold move, even for a trickster like you!”

“Warwick,” Ravi took a deep breath while keeping a close eye on his dogs on either side of him, “I have a message from the Creator for you.”

Warwick hesitated briefly, not sure how to take that, then he burst into barking laughter, “Oh...oh...does He now?” He paused for breath, “OK, I’ll *bite*,” he bared his teeth, “what does this ‘Creator’ want?”

Ravi whispered a quick prayer for help under his breath. He knew that all the animals of the forest were watching from the tree line. This was it, God was going to be tested here, would He come through? Ravi cleared his throat and shouted as loud as he could, “The Creator wants you to stop setting traps...IMMEDIATELY!!!”

Warwick just grinned an evil looking grin, “And if I don’t? What is your Creator going to do about it?” Warwick spat out the words like they were rotten meat.

Ravi sat as straight as he could and calmly said in clear hearing of all the animals in the trees, “Then you will know who really is in charge in the forest. The Creator will *kick – you – out*,” Ravi said the last part slowly as if to help Warwick understand better.

The dog growled and barked back at Ravi, “Let’s see what your precious Creator does when I show you who is really in charge of the forest...ME!!” He advanced purposefully towards Ravi, looking like he was going to attack when he got close.

Ravi was unsure if he should run, but suddenly, deep within his heart he felt words say, *Stand still, Ravi, and let me take care of this!* As if on a sudden cue, a stiff breeze kicked up from the forest and blew hard over the grass, catching Warwick by surprise. Both Ravi and Warwick looked up at the same time to see dark black clouds just racing across the sky from the direction of the forest and blocking out the sun. Ravi looked at the tree line and saw the trees beginning to wave and bend in the fast increasing wind.

Warwick regained his composure, glared at Ravi and leaped forward to grab Ravi off the fence post. In that instant there was a blinding flash of light followed by the loudest “CRACK-BOOM” any of the animals had ever heard. Warwick, startled, collided into the fence post Ravi was sitting on and fell to the side howling. Ravi’s eyes caught the fading brilliance of a bolt of lightning that had struck the camper. Showers of sparks exploded in all directions as flames leapt up in response from inside the camper.

Before anyone knew what was all going on, a sudden downpour of heavy, heavy rain came down from the sky. The words *Now GO!!* nearly exploded in Ravi's brain with such urgency that he stumbled backwards off the fence post and raced towards the tree line. The rain was coming down so hard that Ravi did not see the tree line until he nearly ran straight into a tree. Animals everywhere were running for cover. Ravi, too, did not wait to see what became of Warwick and the hunters' camper but bee-lined it for the Animal Underground head-quarters, which was just up the hill a little ways.

When Ravi approached the opening into the hideout, he practically slid across the clearing into the doorway, ending inside with a thud. Soaked to the bone, Ravi stood up and after his eyes adjusted to the light he noticed that the main cavern was filled wall to wall with animals that dove into the AU hideout, looking for the closest shelter they could find.

Ravi shook himself off. Every eye in the room looked at him with the wonder of what they had just seen. Pa Cougar, in the corner, said, "Ravi, what just happened out there?"

Ravi, with a twinkle in his eye, turned towards the crowd and simply said, "I have a funny feeling that this is just the beginning of what the Creator wants to do. Just wait until tomorrow and then I think we will truly start to see the end of what He started today!"

What do you think?

Wow, what an action packed encounter that Warwick had with God! I don't think he's ever going to forget that. In our story God used the weather to do a miracle. Not all miracles are as obvious as the one God did for Ravi and the Southern Forest, but the small miracles are still miracles even if they aren't as big.

Day 12

Read: 1 Kings 18:1-40

Summary: The Israelites had suffered with no rain for over two years because of their sin. Now it was time for God to show His power and turn the Israelites' hearts back to Him; so Elijah made a contest – 450 prophets of the false god Baal would call down fire from heaven and Elijah would do the same with his God. The god that answered his followers' prayers would be proven to be the one true God. Of course, we know that Elijah's God is the only true God, and fire did fall from heaven!

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

- Elijah's miracle was quite a big one! But many miracles can seem like ordinary 'coincidences' that we just assume were going to happen anyway. Can you think of one miracle that has happened in your life, even if it seems 'kind-of' ordinary? If you can't think of one, ask your parents if they have one to share.
- When you read about these amazing prophets it might be easy to think that God only listens to the spiritual people of the old days. But the Bible tells us that He listens to those that seek Him and He is especially fond of the prayers of children. Jesus said in Matthew 18:10 (NLT) *"Beware that you don't look down on any of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels are always in the presence of my heavenly Father."* How does that make you feel? Think about that for a while!

Day 13

Miracles are found all around you. Go for a nature hike with a parent and point out all the amazing things God has made: the many different snowflakes, how the moon hangs in the sky...and many more. What miracles do you see?

Day 14

I bet that God has done many miracles for you already, but maybe you don't remember them all. But He does really want to show You how amazing He is. Ask Him what kinds of things He wants to do in you and for you – He has many things in mind and He is excited to show them to us.

Prayer: "Holy Spirit, would You show me what is one really big thing that You want to do in my life?"

It's a good idea to discuss what you get with a parent.

Day 15

Work on memorizing James 5:16 (NLT) *Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.*

Day 16

It was a long day and night huddled inside the Animal Underground headquarters. No one dared venture out into the horrid weather that continued late into the night. Somewhere around mid-afternoon, or so Ravi figured, the rain slowly stopped, but the wind continued hard – but a strange pelting sound continued for a while – almost impossible to hear over the sound of the wind, but it was there. The cavern the animals huddled in was toasty warm from the combined body heat of at least twenty animals. Ravi at one point crept to the entrance of the hideout to have a look at what was going on and was shocked to see a raging blizzard of snow! *So winter has come at last*, Ravi thought.

After what seemed like an eternity, the wind seemed to die down. The animals stirred, some asleep, some just wide eyed and huddled in a corner, others thoroughly bored with the whole situation. It was decided amongst some of them that it was time to make an exit and see what had happened during the day and night that they were holed up there. After getting over the initial confusion due to the solid white wall that blocked the exit tunnel, some of the digging animals come forward and began burrowing through the snow to the surface. As animals spilled out onto the top of the snow, most were in awe of the heavy white blanket that trees and ground alike shared. And the cold! It was so very cold! It must have been quite the cold air that followed the thunderstorm through the Southern Forest yesterday morning – because the air had a bitter, piercing chill.

As Ravi looked around, another thought popped into his mind: *Take the animals to see what I've done for them*. He paused for a moment and thought it over – it seemed strange, but it also sounded like the Creator was speaking to him – so he obeyed. “Everyone, come with me. I want to show you something,” with that, he was off and running through the deep snow down the hill towards the farm yard.

Several minutes later, he and two dozen other animals emerged at the place where the great showdown had taken place the day before. Everyone’s eyes opened wide in amazement. There were no hunters, there were no dogs, there was simply a large frozen lake where the field use to be! The only thing that was different than the glaring white flatness was a black object sticking up a couple of feet from the surface in the middle of the lake with a huge pile of snow on top of it. Ravi wondered what it could be, then it hit him...*that's the top of Beverly's camper!* Ravi could do nothing but stare in absolute wonder and amazement at what had happened. Indeed, all the rest of the animals that came with him had no words to say either. As they stared in amazement, their

numbers grew as more and more animals came down to see what had happened overnight.

In the still winter air, Ravi's ears suddenly perked up to the sound of distant barking. Alarmed, he turned, looked and saw a dark figure struggling to run through the thick snow on the edge of the lake. After a few moments he realized who this was; it was Derrick, the same dog that the Animal Underground had helped in the ravine. Ravi relaxed a little, but still kept his guard up, unsure of what this dog might do to him if he wasn't careful.

After a couple of minutes Derrick stood several feet away from Ravi, apparently just as wary of this raccoon as Ravi himself was of Derrick. After catching his breath, Derrick started speaking, "Mr. Ravi, I don't know exactly what to say except that I have never seen anything like what happened yesterday."

Ravi smiled slightly and said, "I don't think any of us have."

Derrick lowered his head out of respect for the raccoon and said, "I really don't know this Creator, but I think I might just want to know Him. You showed me His love when I, your sworn enemy, was dying in the ravine. Then you showed me His power when you confronted Warwick."

Ravi motioned towards the blackened stub of a camper in the middle of the lake. "What about the hunters and the rest of your pack? Where are they? What do they think of all this?"

Derrick snorted, "The hunters weren't around yesterday, I think they left for a while because of all the rain. Warwick is leading the rest of the dogs a long ways away. I think the snowstorm didn't hit in other places like it did here. He says that we have no place to stay here, so we are forced to leave..."

"So," Ravi said thoughtfully, "the Creator truly did kick them out."

"So it would seem," Derrick replied. Then after a pause he continued, "Ravi, you and your friends..." he motioned with his paw to the tree line where a hundred noses peeked out from bushes, "...they have no enemy in me. I'm going to have to really think about what I've seen here this last while," he turned to leave and then looked back and said, "oh, and please tell your Creator to be patient with me as I go back to Warwick and think all this over."

Ravi chuckled out loud and said, "Derrick, you can tell Him yourself – I know He would want to hear from you."

Derrick stood still for a moment while he mulled that over, "I might just do that," he said. With that, he turned and bounded off through the snow.

As soon as he had gone, the Animal Underground swarmed around him followed by a crowd of curious animals. "What happened here, Ravi? Where did the field go? How did this lake get here?"

Ravi smiled and clambered up to the top of the fence post so that all the animals could hear him, “Fellow animals, listen to me! What you see here was the Creator’s doing. He has forced Warwick and his gang to leave the Southern Forest just as He said He would. I’m sure many of you are wondering how this lake got here. Well, consider the week of light rain we had before yesterday morning. I believe God was preparing the land to answer our prayers. When the thunderstorm arrived the ground was so wet that the heavy rains had nowhere to go except towards the field where the hunters lived. So much rain fell that it covered the whole field, forming a huge lake which has since frozen solid in the cold winds. I don’t think the dogs could even think about returning until the spring!”

As Ravi said this, Luther was in the crowd of animals and leaned over to Wil and whispered, “I think I’m going to have to apologize to the Creator for complaining about all the rain – if it wasn’t for the rain we had the last few days, all this wouldn’t have happened,” Wil nodded in agreement.

Ravi paused for a moment and then continued, “Don’t doubt the Creator’s love for us! Do any of you wonder if He cares? Do any of you wonder if He has any power?” He gestured with his paw towards the vast frozen white lake behind him and continued, “Well, let this be the proof of His love *and* His power! The Lord over all creation is in charge, HE alone has real power, not a pack of dogs – created by Him just like we are.”

Ravi continued to speak, the animals soaking in every word he said. He continued to share about the Creator’s love and power to all the animals. Some shook their heads and walked away, determined not to follow anyone but themselves, but most of the animals gathered listened eagerly, while the Creator was at work turning their hearts towards Himself. None of them had ever seen anything like this. Not one.

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: 1 Kings 18:41-45

Summary: Elijah had just won a big victory over the evil prophets and now he tells the king to go home because a BIG rainstorm is going to come. Then after he tells the king that, he prays seven times for the rain to come and *finally* it comes! Elijah gets special power from God to outrun the king's chariot all the way to the city.

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

- Why did Elijah tell the king to hurry home to beat the rain but only afterwards get on his knees to pray for the rain? Discuss it with your parents.
- Why do you think Elijah had to pray seven times? If God wanted to bring the rain, why would he have to pray so much? Discuss it with your parents.

Day 18

Take blue construction paper and cut out a number of rain drops and glue them on to a regular piece of paper. Write on the raindrops (or beside) some good things you are thankful for. Now write one sad thing on one of the raindrops. Think about how God used the miserable rain to save Ravi and the animals from the hunting dogs. Try sharing it with a friend or parent.

Day 19

Read Luke 11:5-8. Then think about verse 8: *But I tell you this – though he won't do it for friendship's sake, if you keep knocking long enough, he will get up and give you whatever you need because of your shameless persistence.* Now pray the following prayer and write down what He shows you...

Prayer: "Jesus, I want to pray without giving up. What is one thing You want me to keep praying about until I see Your answer?"

Write down what He tells you and then commit to praying every day about this. Share it with your parents!

Day 20

Work on memorizing James 5:16 (NLT) *Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.*