

foundations[®] for Kidz!

20 Day Devotional for KIDS!

Lessons on Confessing our Sins!



**SOUTHLAND
CHURCH**

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Requests for information regarding Southland Church's ministry should be addressed to:

Southland Church
190 PTH 52 W
Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada
204.326.9020
info@mysouthland.com

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

*Then if my people who are called by
my name will humble themselves
and pray and seek my face and turn
from their wicked ways, I will hear
from heaven and will forgive their
sins and restore their land.*

2 Chronicles 7:14 (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!



"Mom, mom, mom, mom, mom!" Milton Mouse came scurrying in the front door of their house and scampered through the entrance leaving a trail of fresh snow across the kitchen floor.

Mom frowned, "Seriously! Haven't I told you to wipe your feet off before coming into the house?!"

Milton looked back, "Oh...sorry! I'll clean it up, I promise!" just as quickly he changed the subject again and said, "Mom! Ravi just told us about a special mission he wants us to go on! He wants us to go to the bear country to the north!"

Mom just raised an eyebrow and turned back to making lunch. Milton twitched expectantly and then impatiently blurted, "So? Can I go?"

Milton's mom simply cleared her throat and said, "Two things first. Clean the kitchen floor...and get Mr. Ravi to send me a note or stop by to give us some details of this mission. You know the rules," she didn't even look up from her work.

"OK mom!" Milton turned tail to leave and froze in his tracks as his mom loudly, and obviously, cleared her throat. "Oh yeah, sorry. I'll clean that up right now."

"See that you do...thank you."



Milton was playing with some of his siblings. He and his brother, Christopher

(who was 5 years older than he was), were the only two children of his parents. But not that long ago they had adopted an orphaned family of mice, nine in all. For the most part they all seemed to get along OK, like today as they played hide-and-go-seek in the clearing next to the Animal Underground headquarters.

After a while the rest of his siblings got very frustrated with Milton since he was sooo good at hiding and sneaking around. Milton had a gift for being stealthy and he spent a lot of time practicing and honing that skill. He once even stole Mr. Ravi's glasses right off his nose without him even noticing! Of course, Milton was more than willing to remind his brothers and sisters again and again of his special skills and how he was specially chosen to be part of the elite Animal Underground!

Finally Christopher, his oldest brother, pulled Milton aside and said, "You know, Milt, you really should stop making such a big deal about yourself. The rest of the kids actually really hate it when you do that!" Milton simply roll his eyes and half-heartedly grunt in agreement.

"Milton, Christopher!" A familiar voice interrupted. The boys looked up, the other boys and girls stopped too. Their mom, Sara Mouse, came into the clearing waving a piece of birch bark in her hand, "Look what I got from Aunt Clara and Uncle Mo!" the boys gathered around, as did the other mice. She was holding in her hand what looked to be a note written on a piece of birch bark. She held it up and began to read aloud, "Dear John and Sara, hope you are doing well! I am hoping that you can spare Christopher and Milton for a few weeks this winter. Grandpa Mouse's field of fruit and grain has been buried under way more snow than we usually have and it came a lot quicker than it usually does. So we would love to have the boys to visit and to help our families forage for some winter food stores. Love, Aunt Clara."

As Milton listened to this, his face fell. Christopher's eyes lit up with delight – it was always fun going to see Grandpa Mouse. But then, Christopher remembered something and then his face also dropped. Mother Mouse noticed this and asked, "What's wrong boys?"

Christopher was the first to speak, "I really want to go, but I can't. I am leaving with Dad on our trip in a couple of weeks!"

She remembered this too and replied, "Oh! That's right! I forgot it was coming up so soon," turning to Milton she asked, "And why do you look so sad?"

Milton glanced over at the AU headquarters and sighed, "I was actually hoping that Mr. Ravi would have sent a note already today, he said he was going to, he's just away for most of the day today. I'm really looking forward to this mission. I don't want to go to Grandpa's field to work!"

Mom put her paws on her hips and said, "Well, I haven't heard from him yet and I asked you to get him to come talk to me about it. I think it would be a

good idea for you to go to your Aunt and Uncle's place. But, if he said he was going to send a note today, then I know he will. But while we wait for him, it's time for you and Christopher to come home and get washed up and help me get supper ready." She turned and called out to the rest of the mice, "Kids, I want you to finish up your game and come home for supper in about twenty minutes."

The six mice out in the clearing squeaked back saying they would (the three youngest were at home right now). Very soon there was no one left in the clearing but the six of them.

"I thought he would never stop!" Molly Mouse, the oldest of the six remaining, said to the others. The rest wriggled their noses in agreement.

Molly's brother, Macon, chimed in, "I know he's our brother, but when he goes on and on about how good he is at being sneaky and how amazing he is because he's a part of the Animal Underground..." he paused to roll his eyes "...well, I just want to go and bite his tail!!" The other mice giggled. Then Macon muttered, half to himself, "I wish someone would teach him a lesson!"

Just then, a shuffling noise was heard and they all turned and looked to see Ravi Raccoon crawling out of the Animal Underground headquarters at the edge of the clearing nearest to them. Ravi looked around, furrowed his brow and then relaxed into a beaming grin when he saw the six mice. "Ah, the Mouse family! Is your mom or dad around? Or Milton?"

Molly responded, "No, they just left to go home, we are supposed to head home soon too."

Ravi leaned heavily on his walking stick and pulled a rolled up piece of birch bark from behind his back. "Well, boys and girls, would you mind delivering this note to either Milton or your parents for me when you return?"

Macon, who was the closest to Ravi, reached out his paw and took the note, which was almost as big as his whole body, "You bet, Mr. Ravi, we can do that!"

"Thank you! I would deliver it myself, but I am late for an important meeting," he called out as he marched in the opposite direction, waving a paw over his head.

Six pairs of small, black eyes followed him as he made his way out of the clearing and around a bend where he disappeared from sight. Macon whistled lightly as he rolled open the note and had a look at it. He couldn't understand the writing, but he recognized Ravi's paw-print 'signature' on the bottom. Turning to his big sister he said, "Molly, can you read this?"

Molly retorted, "Roll that up, Macon! That's a note for mom and dad, not for us!"

"He said 'or Milton'," Macon said defensively. Molly hesitated and glanced at the note and finally blurted, "OK fine! Just a quick look," she gingerly stepped

around her brother and had a look at the note. She took a deep breath and started to read: “I need Milton’s help for a few days for a special mission, I hope you don’t need Milton’s help with anything...Signed: Ravi Raccoon.”

Macon and the other four siblings crowded around the note with Molly. One of the others muttered, “Why does he get to go on cool missions? I was kind of hoping he would have to go to Grandpa’s place to help out there; that would show him!!”

Macon just chuckled as a sly grin crept across his face. He turned to Molly and asked, “Can you show me which one is the word ‘don’t’?” Molly looked at him funny, but pointed a claw at a word on the bark. Before she even knew what was happening, Macon grabbed the paper in his paws and started ripping the paper in half! “Macon! What are you doing?!” Molly was shocked.

Macon just smiled and handed one half of the paper back to her. With an evil twinkle in his eye he said, “Now tell me what the paper says.”

Molly’s eyes widened as she read the words, realizing what this meant, “...don’t need Milton’s help with anything...Signed: Ravi Raccoon.”

What do you think?

What Milton’s adopted siblings did was very mean, even though they thought they had a good reason to be mean to him. Milton had been acting as if he were better than they were because he was a special member of the Animal Underground. If you were Milton’s brother or sister, how would you feel about Milton? Do you think you would feel like doing something mean like that too?

Day 2

Read: Genesis 37

Summary: Joseph had a number of dreams that seemed to say that he would be ruling over his family someday. His brothers didn’t take too kindly to his dreams or to the fact that their father seemed to like him best out of all the brothers. So they originally plotted to kill him – but ended up selling him into slavery instead.

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

- Do you think it was a good idea for Joseph to share his dreams with his brothers? Why or why not?
- It was God’s plan to send Joseph to Egypt, although his brothers sinned in what they did. Why do you think God allowed Joseph to go to Egypt in slavery when He could have sent him a different way?

Day 3

Make a ‘quick homemade jigsaw puzzle’. With your parents’ permission, take a colouring page or colour a new picture on a blank piece of paper. Now take and rip it into ten or twenty pieces (or more if you are up for a real challenge) and mix up the pieces. Now take a dark piece of construction paper and try to fit the pieces back together and glue the pieces onto the construction paper.

Was that easy or hard? Look at the paper, did you glue it back together perfectly so that you couldn’t see any rips or tears? Probably not. We can’t fix ourselves when we make a mess of our lives either – in fact, we can’t really do much of anything without God’s help. But the beautiful thing is, like our memory verse says, God **can** and God **will** heal us from the damage that sin does to our lives if we only turn to Him, seek Him and repent. What a VERY good God we have!

Day 4

God’s ways of doing things don’t always make sense to us, but He always knows what is best! Can you think of something in your life that you have a hard time figuring out why God is allowing it in your life? Take a moment to ask God if there is anything like that in your life and then pray the following prayer:

Prayer: “Lord Jesus, why do You let _____ happen in my life? What are You trying to do through it?”

Note: God doesn’t always tell us the reasons why He does what He does – but He does ask us to trust Him no matter what. Don’t be surprised if He says nothing or just shows you things He wants you to learn.

Day 5

Work on memorizing 2 Chronicles 7:14 (NLT): *Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land.*

Day 6

Milton had tried to argue with his mom & dad about the note, but it was no use; it seemed pretty obvious to his mom and dad that Ravi was not in need of Milton for some time. So Milton went off to find Ravi to ask him about it, but that, too, was of no help since Ravi had gone off to an important meeting some distance away. The six adopted siblings of Milton's that delivered the note kept giggling and laughing about this quietly amongst themselves – although Molly only joined in half-heartedly.

So it was off to Grandpa Mouse's field for a couple of weeks to help gather food for their clan of mice that had been hit especially hard by the huge snowstorm in November. Milton's dad went along to make sure he got there safely. All the way, Milton couldn't stop wondering why Ravi had said he didn't need him. Was the mission cancelled? Was the mission better off without him? After a while he began to feel almost hopeless, *I guess it's just better that I'm not around*, he thought to himself.

When they arrived, they were greeted very warmly by Uncle Mo and Aunt Clara, along with what seemed like a small crowd of cousins who were very eager to meet them. Milton just wanted to run away and hide – but he managed a half-hearted smile and a few words of greeting in return. After a hot meal of nut & berry stew, the family settled down for the night, bedding Milton down with his cousins while his dad visited with Aunt Clara & Uncle Mo late into the night. And finally after what seemed like an eternity, Milton managed to drift off to sleep.

His dad left the next morning only getting a grumbled, "good bye" from Milton – who clearly was still not pleased about all of this. But it was time to get to work, so he didn't have much time to wallow in his misery.

Uncle Mo took him to the edge of the small field that his Grandpa owned. He gestured with his paw over the field and said, "Here it is. This is where almost two thirds of our winter food comes from."

Milton blinked in disbelief. All he saw was a large, white blanket of snow that stretched almost as far as he could see with the occasional tree dotting the landscape.

He squeaked in surprise, "This is it?! Where does the food all come from? All I see is very deep snow."

"Good observation," Uncle Mo chuckled, "but all the food is buried under several feet of snow, so that makes gathering very difficult. All of our clan is struggling to make ends meet because the tunneling is going so slow."

Milton, wide eyed, exclaimed, "How do you know where to start?"

"Oh, that's the easy part, we know where all the food is. It's getting to it

that’s the tough part,” he pointed at the trees. “You see that over there?” his claw pointed Milton’s gaze at a hawk that sat on a tree in the middle of the field, “We are having a big problem with hawks this winter. We could easily just run over the snow to where the food is and start tunneling our way down from there, but there are so many hawks in the trees nearby that it’s far too dangerous. So we have to tunnel our way under the snow from the tree line. It’s slow, tedious and back breaking work – but it has to be done if we are going to survive.”

Milton thought about all the snow back home and how he took for granted how easy it was to find food. There were no enemies in the skies hunting them down there, besides there were way too many trees to give them cover from any predators anyway. He shuddered involuntarily thinking about all those hungry eyes watching them.

So over the next several days, Milton worked with a few of his cousins digging tunnels from the edge of the forest out into the fields. It was made that much more difficult for the fact that it was often impossible to tunnel straight to the food they were trying to find and sometimes those in charge of navigating their way through the snow got lost.

After a particularly long day, Milton sighed and thought to himself, *There has got to be a better way than this!* He thought about it for a while and then remembered the things that Ravi had taught him. He brought his problems to God and said, “Creator, I admit that I really don’t want to be here, but since I am here, I want to do the best job I can for You. We need Your help, these mice families are hungry and are having to work way too hard for their food. Would You help us please?”

Milton finished praying and a peace came over him as he began to drift off to sleep...a sleep that would give him a particularly meaningful dream.



Milton awoke from his dream filled sleep with a start. It was still dark outside, which didn’t surprise him – it was winter after all, it seemed to be dark most of the time. After a moment he recalled the dream he had. It was a particularly strange dream, but it had given him an idea and he was eager to test it out.

He scurried upstairs to the main floor where Uncle Mo and Aunt Clara were busy making wheat-cakes for breakfast. Milton scarfed down a couple of them, muttered a hasty “thank you” and before anyone could really say anything, he was out the door and racing towards Grandpa’s field eager to try out his idea.

As he got to the edge of the trees he slowed down and cautiously looked

around. He knew that in this darkness he wasn't going to see much of anything and certainly the hawks were going to see him before he saw them. So, mustering his courage, he breathed a prayer to the Creator for help and he put himself into 'stealth-mode' – or at least that's what Milton called it to the rest of the Animal Underground. Milton had a knack for being able to sneak around almost undetected. Yes, he was one of the forest's smaller creatures, but even most mice were like thundering elephants compared to the sneaky-quiet that Milton could muster up.

Slowly Milton crept up the side of a nearby tree, careful to stay in the deep ridges in the bark which cast deep shadows in the fading light of the full moon as it neared the horizon. He veered around knobs and small branches with skill, waiting for gusts of wind to move the branches in just the right way so that his movements would blend into the branch's movements. He did have a measure of safety in the tightly spaced branches. Most hawks wouldn't be able to sneak up to the middle of a tree and grab a mouse off a branch without a lot of noise and difficulty – but he wasn't taking any chances.

He crept up to the end of a long branch that hung far over the open field. Slowly he pulled a stone from under his leg that he had dragged up with him and tossed it over the side into the snow. He watched the pebble as it simply disappeared into the soft, white blanket below leaving a small dark hole. Milton flattened himself down and stared at the sky, which had begun to brighten a little from the light of the dawn that was still a good hour away.

After a few seconds he heard the nearly silent whisper of outstretched wings as the shadowy form of a giant hawk swooped down on the pebble hole and dug its claws into the snow expecting to grab a tender morsel below. The giant bird lifted up and away with claws full of snow and likely a little pebble. Milton lost no time in dashing to the end of the branch just as the hawk was flying directly away from him and somersaulted into the deep powder below.



About an hour later, Aunt Clara and Uncle Mo were cleaning up the last of the younger cousins after their breakfast when Milton burst through the door dragging piles of frozen berries, nuts and seeds in behind him in several trips. His Aunt and Uncle just stood there in shock with their mouths hanging open.

“Uhh...what...? Where did you get all this, Milton?” Uncle Mo asked.

Milton felt a little proud of himself, but checked his attitude quickly remembering Who it was that gave him the idea he had. Milton explained the idea God had given him in a dream last night, “God helped me to realize that a

lot of the food we are looking for can be reached from the top and burrowing down to the food instead of blindly trying to find it under the snow.”

Aunt Clara interrupted, “Yes, but the hawks see us coming and keep us from getting at the food that way.”

“Yes, but – we have been assuming a few things: first, that we have to work during the day. Yes, I know we do this because it’s just too dark under the snow at night, but it’s only too dark if we are trying to find the food from far away! Second, we assume that there is no safe way directly down. Well, there is...we just have to climb the trees!”

“Climb the trees?!” Uncle Mo exclaimed, “And do what then, I wonder? I would think it’s easier for the hawks to see us in the trees. It would be like we are putting ourselves on a platter for them to get us easier!”

“Not really,” Milton countered, “not if it’s done right. There are ways to sneak up trees so that even the hawks can’t find you, at least not easily. And when it’s so dark out, even the great eyesight of the hawks is only good for detecting motion, but not for seeing what is actually moving. That can be used to our advantage.” Milton proceeded to describe his use of the pebble to confuse the hawks (if they were watching), but also to see if there was soft snow underneath him, “...otherwise,” he continued, “you might end up stuck on a hard patch of snow trying to break through while a hawk is swooping down to snatch you away.”

His aunt and uncle simply looked at Milton and then stared at each other in disbelief and said, “Milton, you may have just saved this farm!”

What do you think?

Maybe things are starting to look up for Milton. He gets a great idea from his dream which works brilliantly. Maybe here he will start to get more respect from his cousins than he did from his siblings. Do you think that things will go better from now on for him?

Day 7

Read: Genesis 39:1-6

Summary: Joseph has been sold to a very important person in the Egyptian court of officials. Instead of moping around and feeling sorry for himself, Joseph gets right to work and proves himself to be a very useful servant to his master. His master sees this and puts him in charge of everything he owns.

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

- The Bible doesn't say what Joseph's attitude was before he was sold into slavery, but we know he wasn't perfect. I think we can safely assume that Joseph had lots of time to think about how he treated his brothers and was able to repent of his attitude. Do you think that God was able to give Joseph the ability to forgive his brothers already at this point?
- Bitterness and unforgiveness are like dirt put into an open wound which causes the wound to get infected and spread, eventually creating a lot more sickness. But forgiveness is like clean bandages which allow a wound to heal, eventually restoring full use of the limb that was injured. From the way that Joseph is serving his master, Potiphar, does it look like he is holding a grudge, or does it look like he is practicing forgiveness?

Day 8

Let's do a little science experiment! With your parent's permission, take a couple of tablespoons of baking soda and put it in a bowl. Next take about a quarter cup of vinegar and pour it onto the baking soda. What happens when you do that?

When you combine those two things you get three completely new things out of it. Vinegar and baking soda go in and water, carbon dioxide and a chemical called sodium acetate come out of it. Pretty neat huh?

Sometimes God needs to do something like that in our lives. He adds in things that really bother us and can cause us pain sometimes. Just like the mixture you made bubbled and fizzled, so too you might complain and be bothered by what He allows. But when He does that, He can create some completely new things in your life. In Joseph's case it was humility, forgiveness, patience and perseverance.

Day 9

Ask God to remind you of someone that did something unkind to you that you did not deserve. Can you think of one? For some of you this will be easy, but for others this might be hard. Once you remember one event, pray the prayer below:

Prayer: "Lord Jesus, I choose to forgive _____ for what they did to me. I know it's very hard, but would You help me *want* to forgive them please!"

Day 10

Work on memorizing 2 Chronicles 7:14 (NLT): *Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land.*

Day 11

The next few days Milton spent showing his aunt and uncle and cousins how he outwitted the hawks and was able to get directly to the food. Milton's methods met with so much success that they were able to gather an entire day's worth of food in the twilight hours just before dawn and another day's worth just after sunset. His Aunt and Uncle put him in charge of their household's gathering operation, much to his cousins' dislike. Many of his cousins didn't like the idea of a younger mouse being put in charge of them, especially this visitor from far away.

But Milton was enjoying his success and he kind-of liked being in charge. It was a good feeling. He was finally being appreciated for his special skills and talents. In fact, his aunt and uncle often spoke in glowing terms about Milton's expertise; they had even told him that if this new way of gathering food worked consistently, they would take his idea to Grandpa Mouse. Things seemed to be going very good for him, almost too good; at least, that is, until one fateful day.

Milton had been traveling from the tree house to the field to get an early start this particular day when he heard some talking in the distance. His curiosity perked up and he decided to go into "stealth-mode" and sneak over and see what was going on this early in the morning. When he arrived he hid behind a bush and was surprised to see several of his cousins gathered against the side of a tree and behaving as if they were having a secret meeting.

"...and so my idea is to prove that Milton's ideas don't work anymore – but we have to make this look convincing," one husky mouse was saying.

Another squeaked in reply, "I like the idea. Finally we can get rid of Milton Mouse! I bet mom & dad are going to either send Milton home for good, or at least put him on cleanup duty for the rest of this time here," he laughed a squeaking chuckle.

"But remember," the first mouse spoke up again, "it has to look real! We can't be caught in a lie or else we are the ones who are going to be on cleanup duty for the rest of our lives!"

The rest of the mice, about six of them, murmured their agreement.

"So we are in agreement then?" Another mouse spoke up.

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The entire group enthusiastically voiced their agreement with whatever plan it was they were making up. Milton wished he had stumbled upon this secret meeting a little earlier. He did not like the sound of whatever it was they were planning. He would have to talk it over with Uncle Mo and Aunt Clara at lunch. But for now, he had some extra work to get done before the rest of the cousins showed up.



About an hour and a half later, the sun was just starting to cast a slightly pinkish tone on the clouds on the horizon. Milton knew this meant that their food collecting would stop very soon as it would start to get too bright to continue their work and they would have to wait until sunset to finish the rest of it.

All of a sudden Uncle Mo came bounding up to the tree calling out, "Milton, Milton! Come quick, your cousin Frankie has been hurt! Hurry!" Milton ran down the tree and dashed after Uncle Mo. They zipped through the tree line a little ways until they came upon a terrible sight. Over to the side of a tree, just at the base of a thick bush, Frankie lay covered in blood. Milton stood in shock, wondering what had gone on. His eyes caught sight of a blood trail from Frankie out into the open field just below an overhanging branch. The trail stopped at a very large pit in the snow where it looked like a terrible fight had taken place as the snow was scattered all over the place.

"What...what...happened?" Milton choked out in disbelief.

Mo replied, "We're not sure, Frankie isn't able to say much. Aunt Clara is wrapping him up to help with the bleeding."

As he was saying this, another mouse burst into the clearing, "Mom! Dad! I went looking for you! I'm so glad you are here, I saw the whole thing!"

"Okay, okay Sammy, calm down...what happened?" Uncle Mo said.

Sammy took a suspicious look at Milton, took a deep breath and pointed a claw at him. "Milton happened, Mom! It's all his fault! He has been assigning us all the trees that are closest to the hawks while he takes the safer trees that are further away...and now this happens! It was bound to happen sooner or later! While Frankie was starting to dig into the snow under the tree, a hawk swooped down and grabbed him right out of the snow. I saw Frankie fight back, but he fell to the snow over there," he pointed at a spot in the snow where the blood trail started. "He barely escaped with his life!"

Uncle Mo looked at Milton, "Is that true, Milton? Are you purposefully giving them the dangerous trees to work from?"

Milton just stood there, stunned. He was unable to offer any reply. It was all just too much to take in all at once. He finally choked out a stammering reply, “Uhh...I didn’t know...I didn’t...” he paused for a moment to take a deep breath and then continued, “I didn’t give them trees close to the hawks! We don’t know which ones are closer to the hawks!”

At that moment two more of his cousins burst onto the scene. “Mom! Dad! We just heard...is Frankie all right?”

After assurances that Frankie would be OK, Sammy started accusing Milton again. To Milton’s surprise, the two other cousins joined in, saying all kinds of things about him that weren’t true.

It became quickly obvious that Uncle Mo was getting very upset listening to everything that was said. Finally he interrupted and yelled, “Enough! As of right now we are stopping this plan of Milton’s,” turning to Milton he said, “we are not going to risk anyone else getting hurt! Milton, until further notice, you are going to work cleaning the food tunnels while I try to sort out this mess.” Milton started to protest, but Uncle Mo wouldn’t hear of it and simply said, “I said, that’s enough!” and that was that.



Three days later Milton was still in a foul mood. He had tried talking to Uncle Mo and Aunt Clara about this, trying to explain that his cousins had lied about him, but Uncle Mo refused to talk about it and Aunt Clara would just sadly turn her head away and mutter that “Now was not the time.”

Early that afternoon, Milton was pushing snow out of one of the tunnels and piling it up around the entrance and stumbled a few steps away and collapsed in the snow, not so much out of exhaustion as out of frustration. After a while he opened his eyes and looked around. His eyes caught the curious stare of a Chickadee who had cocked his head to get a better look and had taken a couple of hops towards him. Milton paused and looked back, wondering who this was – as he looked familiar.

“Milton Mouse,” the Chickadee chirruped finally, “is that you?”

Suddenly Milton recognized the voice of Chuck Chickadee. “Mr. Chuck! It’s so good to hear a familiar voice from home again! Why are you here?”

“Oh, just passing through to visit family a little ways away. Your dad asked if I would stop in and see how you are doing. So, how are you doing?” Chuck made a few more quick hops towards him.

Milton sighed and plopped his head on the snow. “Not good,” he said. He then told Chuck about everything that had happened up to this point. Chuck

just listened, occasionally hopping to one side and then the other, tilting his head left and then right – but always keeping his gaze fixed on Milton.

“Well then you won’t like what I have to say,” Chuck admitted.

Milton slumped further, “Do I even want to know?”

“Well, you’re going to find out sooner or later, so I may as well tell you...your brother, Macon, he was supposed to deliver a note from Mr. Ravi asking for your help with a big mission,” Chuck took a breath to continue, but Milton interrupted.

“Yes, I know, but the note said he didn’t need my help with anything.”

Chuck twittered a little and said, “No! The note actually said, ‘I need Milton’s help for a few days for a special mission, *I hope you don’t need Milton’s help with anything.*’ Milton, your brother Macon ripped the note so it said what he wanted it to say.”

“WHAT?!!” Milton squeaked so loud that Chuck stumbled backwards a few feet in surprise.

Chuck then explained that his dad had found out about it a few days later when Ravi had come around to talk to John and Sara Mouse about letting Milton go on this mission. By then Milton and his dad had been long gone and his dad only found out about it after he returned. Then it was too late to do anything about it and his mom & dad had decided to leave Milton there until his visit at his aunt and uncle’s was done.

As Milton listened to Chuck share all this, his eyes got wider and his face got redder and redder. Finally he stamped his paws in anger, “First my brothers lie about me and get me stuck here, then my cousins lie about me and I get stuck doing cleanup duty! What did I do to deserve this? Aaaaaaaaaaaaaah!!!” he screamed. “I am SOOOO going to get back at them!” Milton got up on his feet and yelled, “They are SOOOO going to pay for this!”

What do you think?

Not a good day for Milton, huh? Wow. First his cousins set up an elaborate lie to get Milton in trouble, then he finds out about the lie that his siblings at home did to get him sent off to his aunt and uncle’s place! How would you feel if something like that happened to you? Would you feel a bit like Milton did? Do you think Milton is going to be able to get over this?

Day 12

Read: Genesis 39:7-20

Summary: Joseph prospers in Potiphar’s household, but Potiphar’s wife wants a romantic relationship with him. Joseph wisely refuses his master’s wife’s request and even stays away from her as much as possible. But her pride is hurt because of Joseph’s refusal to do what she asks, so she decides to tell a terrible lie about him which gets him thrown into prison.

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

- Why do you think God allowed Joseph to go through two horrible betrayals and lies about him? Wouldn’t one be enough? What are your thoughts? Keep in mind that God truly does know what is best.
- What we don’t realize from the Bible story is that in those days if a slave was accused of the kinds of things Joseph was accused of, he would be put to death immediately. Why do you think Joseph was ‘only’ thrown into prison? What do you think Potiphar was thinking when he decided to not kill Joseph?

Day 13

Get a cereal bowl and fill it about half way with water. This represents a life full of Jesus – it is clean and clear and we can see properly and think without being cluttered full of evil. Now sprinkle a lot of pepper on the top of the water. This represents sin that we have done and hurtful things done to us. If we let that just sit there, it clouds our thoughts and keeps us from seeing things clearly and we can’t make good decisions because our spiritual eyesight is blocked by all the junk in our lives. Now take a small dab of dish soap on the end of your finger and poke your finger into the water in the middle of the bowl; watch how the pepper races away from your finger! This represents God’s forgiveness.

When we forgive others for the hurts that they do to us and also get God’s forgiveness for the bad things we have done, it moves our sins away from us and makes us able to see clearly again. Take some time and talk about this with your parents.

Day 14

Anger is not a bad feeling. However, any anger that you have towards someone else which you don't deal with right away can very quickly turn into bitterness and hate. Like we said before, it's like dirt in a wound that keeps it from healing and can actually cause more damage to your body if it's not cleaned up quickly! God wants to bring healing and wholeness to your life, but first we have to deal with that bitterness!

Prayer: "Lord Jesus, is there anyone in my life that I am angry at? Please help me talk to my parents about it and help me to forgive that person."

Day 15

Work on memorizing 2 Chronicles 7:14 (NLT): *Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land.*

Day 16

Milton spent the next couple of days brooding in anger and absolutely miserable. He badly wanted to get revenge on his siblings for putting him in this place. As for his cousins, though he didn't know for sure if Frankie's injury was an elaborate plot to hurt Milton, he kind-of figured that the secret meeting at night that he stumbled upon must have been related to it – so he allowed himself to get angry at them as well. He grinned as he thought of the terrible things he would do to them...but...then he always felt guilty for thinking these things. Deep down he knew that what he was thinking was wrong. A few times he tried to stop thinking this way, but he was just too angry and too hurt.

On the third morning after meeting Chuck Chickadee, Milton decided he had to do something about this anger. He got up early in the morning and headed up to a private spot inside the thick branches of an evergreen tree. Milton sat on the top and looked at the crescent moon in the sky, shining with a cold white light. He sighed and called out, "Creator! I know You hear me. I need Your help!" Milton spent the next half an hour calling out to the Creator and pouring out his feelings of frustration with how he had been mistreated. As he continued to pray, tears welled up in his eyes and ran down his cheeks. After a while a warmth seemed to cover him like a blanket from head to toe. It felt like Someone invisible was giving him a gentle hug. Milton looked up at the sky and

whispered a simple, “Thank You,” somehow he knew that he had been heard and that the Creator had a greater purpose in all of this.

Over the next few days Milton made a point of getting up early and calling out to the Creator. He quickly discovered that the more he did that, the easier it was to keep from being angry at his cousins. In fact, his cousins started to wonder what was going on with Milton because he started smiling around them and being pleasant to them again, but this time Milton wasn’t trying to be bossy or make sure that his cousins knew that he was something important. The change in Milton wasn’t lost on Uncle Mo and Aunt Clara either, they took notice, they watched and they wondered...



Several days later, Milton was still working on cleanup duty – but by now he was okay with that. God had brought such an incredible change in his heart that he was willing to be wherever the Creator wanted him to be. He whistled while he pushed snow through the tunnels, widening the paths that had started to narrow under the weight of the snow on top. As he pushed the last of the snow out of this particular tunnel, he clambered out on the surface of the snow into the bright sunshine. As he blinked in the light he saw Uncle Mo and Aunt Clara standing in front of him. They had a strange look on their faces which froze Milton in his tracks.

“Milton,” Uncle Mo began, “we need you to come with us.”

“Where are we going?” Milton asked hesitantly.

“To Grandpa Mouse’s home,” Uncle Mo said simply. Milton opened his mouth to speak, but Uncle Mo simply held his paw up and said, “You’ll find out when you get there. Just follow us.”

Milton did as he was told and followed them to the edge of the tree line and then down through a network of new tunnels he had never seen before. All the time, Milton’s mind was spinning, *Grandpa Mouse? Why would I meet him? He’s in charge of EVERYBODY down here, what does he want with me?* He wondered if he was going to be sent away for even harder labor than what he had already been doing. A sudden chill went through his body.

After a while the tunnel went up the base of what seemed to be a giant tree. When they came close to the surface of the snow, a small opening in the tree allowed them into a giant hollow room carved into the tree. As Milton looked around the room, he saw almost a dozen mice inside gathered around a large rocking chair which held one of the oldest looking mice he had ever seen. *This must be Grandpa Mouse!*

Both his aunt and uncle looked visibly uncomfortable with being in this place, from what Milton could gather, this wasn't a meeting room for just anybody – the leaders of leaders were here.

As Milton was trying to sort everything out, a croaky, but strong voice interrupted his thoughts, "You must be Milton Mouse, come closer."

Milton snapped back to reality, surprised that the voice was directed at him, and stammered out, "...ahh, me?"

"Only if you are Milton Mouse."

Milton shuffled forward, head low. This old mouse had an air of power and authority around him. Though he was frail, his presence in the room seemed to command respect.

"Now Milton, look at me," Milton snapped his eyes up at the old mouse. "My farm has a problem and mice are going hungry, but of course you know all of this." Milton managed a slight nod. Grandpa Mouse continued, "But I am told," he nodded slightly to Uncle Mo and Aunt Clara, "that you are the mouse that has a proven plan that can save us all. So, let's hear it!"

Milton was caught off guard by all of this, but it quickly dawned on him what was all going on, so he launched into it, "Grandpa Mouse, sir, as much as I want to take credit for my idea – really the idea came from the Creator," at the mention of the Creator, several eyebrows raised. Milton continued, "I can't take credit for it, it's His idea, not mine," and starting with that, Milton explained everything from beginning to end. Finally he concluded with, "...but...sir? I don't know if you heard, but the plan didn't work so well at the end, my cousin Frankie got hurt really badly and he could have been killed."

Uncle Mo stepped forward, cleared his throat and raised a paw, "Ahem, uh, Milton – Frankie and his brothers already confessed that they had made all that up – we already talked to Grandpa Mouse and he knows all about it."

Grandpa Mouse leaned forward in his chair, with a wink he croaked, "Trust me, Milton, they are going to be working that one off for a very long time," he leaned back and then continued, "Milton – I want you to be my second hand mouse. Your plan...well, the *Creator's* plan...sounds better than anything we have come up with," turning to the rest of the mice around him he said, "I am hereby putting Milton Mouse in charge of the entire farm operations. I want you all to do whatever he says," he took his glasses off and rubbed his eyes. He put his glasses back on and looked around at everyone just standing there in surprise. "Well? What are you all standing around for? You have work to do!"



The next few days were a whirlwind for Milton. They somewhat resembled when he was in charge of his cousins, but on a far, far larger scale. There were literally hundreds of mice to coordinate. Milton went home each night absolutely exhausted, but the Creator was with him and gave him an ability to lead and coordinate the rest of the mice. Several of his cousins came to him and apologized, to which Milton gladly gave them his forgiveness.

After a few more days the mice had gathered most of the food that they needed for the winter. Coincidentally, it was about that time that Milton's dad arrived to bring him back home with him. All the mice got together and threw a big party in Grandpa Mouse's tree in honour of Milton, but as Milton kept telling everyone, it was really a party in honour of the Creator – since it all was His idea anyway.

The time eventually came to leave and Milton and his dad said their goodbyes and were told to come back anytime. The journey home seemed to go much quicker than the journey there – for one, Milton had learned to have a much better attitude – as there was a humility and forgiveness towards others that he did not have before. His dad had even noticed the change and commented on it several times.

As they neared the Southern Forest where Milton lived his dad was just finishing explaining the circumstances surrounding Ravi's note, "...and so it turns out that Mr. Ravi had wanted you all along, but your siblings had been trying to be mean to you."

Milton had been listening quietly while his dad had explained what had happened. He was quiet for some time as they walked along, rounding the last corner before their house. Finally he whispered into his dad's ear, "I have already forgiven them."

His dad didn't have a chance to respond for at that moment the very siblings who had caused all this to happen in the first place came scrambling around the corner and ran to meet him. There were hugs and kisses all around while each greeted the other. Finally Macon pulled back and got the others to quiet down as well, "Milton," he said slowly, lowering his eyes to face the ground, "I know dad told you about what we did to the note Mr. Ravi made...and I, well, I uh...I just wanted to say...I mean, we just wanted to say...we're very sorry. Can you forgive us?" Macon waited patiently for Milton's reply.

Milton thought for a moment and then brightened a little as a thought came to him. He looked them in the eye and spoke, "Don't worry about what I think, Macon. I wasn't exactly being very nice to all of you the way I acted either – and for that, I am very sorry and need *your* forgiveness. But you know, it's actually kind of cool what all happened! You meant bad things for me, but the Creator meant it all for good and I don't regret a minute of it."

What do you think?

So the Creator had a plan after all! Milton got his pride dealt with in his time with his uncle and aunt and the mice of Grandpa Mouse's farm were saved from starvation. Does this remind you of a particular Bible story? God's ways are truly the best ways. He knows what He is doing every time – and He knows it far, far better than we do. Take a moment to thank God that He is in charge of the universe and that you are not!

Day 17

Read: Genesis 41:9-44 and Genesis 45:1-15

Summary: A fellow prisoner of Joseph's tells about Joseph's special dream interpreting ability to the King of Egypt. Then Joseph is summoned from prison to interpret the king's disturbing dreams for him. As a result of his interpretation and wisdom in determining a good course of action to take, the king decides to put Joseph in charge of all of Egypt as his second-in-command. Some time later Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers after well over 20 years of separation from them. He forgives them and reveals that it was really God who sent Joseph to Egypt to accomplish the saving of many lives.

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

- If you were put in charge of Canada, what one thing would you change?
- Do you think that you would be able to forgive your brothers if you were Joseph? Why or why not?

Day 18

Take a blank piece of paper and tear it in half down the middle. Now put one half aside and draw 'half of a picture' on one side and then put it aside and draw the other 'half of a picture' on the other side without looking at the first picture. Try to draw the pictures so that when you put the tear back together it should match up as best as possible. How did they match up? Was it perfect? Or was the drawing tough to make so that it looks like one seamless picture?

When we try and fix broken relationships on our own without God's help, it's a little like that, we can't see the whole picture and don't have the skill or power to heal our relationships perfectly. But praise God! He does! Remember that God has the power and wisdom to restore and heal perfectly!

Day 19

Joseph's brothers had to apologize to their brother. Milton's siblings had to apologize to Milton as well. Spend some time praying and asking God if there is anything that you need to make right between you and a sibling (or a parent).

Prayer: "Jesus, would You show me if there is anything that I have done to hurt my brother, sister or mom or dad? Help me to confess it to them and make it right. I need Your help!"

Day 20

Work on memorizing 2 Chronicles 7:14 (NLT): *Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land.*