

foundations[®] for Kidz!

20 Day Devotional for KIDS!

Lessons on Preparing for End Times and Eternity!



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
Middle School Pastor
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.

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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

God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful.

1 Corinthians 1:27 (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!



Calvin Cougar was lost in thought. He smiled wistfully as he remembered being totally absorbed in what Ravi had been teaching the Animal Underground. They had been gathered in the clearing just outside their headquarters, enjoying the warm sun shining on their backs...*ahhh, the heat of the sun sure felt good*, Calvin thought as he recalled that day. He mulled over the words that Ravi had said, which seemed to really hit home today...

"...the Creator reminds me regularly that a time will come where we will be tested – and He wants us all to be ready. He wants us to be faithful to the very end," Ravi finished, then paused and looked each of them in the eye. "Are you ready to be faithful to the end?"

Calvin felt a pang of guilt as he remembered that he had mumbled a half-hearted, "Yes," he really wasn't sure if he would be strong if he ever was tested.

Ravi had repeated again, "Are you ready?" his eyes were piercing like an eagle's talons into their souls. As he looked at all the boys and Cassie Cougar, he received no reply – everyone was frozen, wondering how they should answer.

Ravi relaxed his posture and continued, "I know this is a difficult question to think of. You all love the Creator and serve Him, I have seen proof of it in all of you. But your life won't always be easy and you have to think about these things now before you are face to face with a difficult situation," then Ravi proceeded to pray and dismiss them for the day...

...that was about 24 hours ago. *Wow, a lot has sure happened since then,*

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Calvin thought to himself as he leaned his head against the iron bars of the cage that held him prisoner. *Creator, please send help,* he cried out in his heart.



A deep, gravelly voice chortled, “Like catching fish in a barrel. That was almost too easy, Warwick.”

Warwick didn’t look at his fellow dog, Gillen, who had spoken. It was true, they had a very detailed plan that was well thought out from top to bottom. They had, after all, three months to brood in anger and hatred for the Animal Underground. It hadn’t mattered that it was the Creator who kicked them out of the Southern Forest, they placed the blame squarely on the Animal Underground and specifically on Ravi Raccoon.

Warwick thought of the events of yesterday. A slight grin tugged at the corners of his mouth as he recalled the days and days of preparation. Warwick and his fellow dogs, Gillen and Miller, had created a specific pathway that would funnel the fleeing Animal Underground straight into their trap. Over the last month Warwick had recruited a number of animals, most of them dogs, to help set this up. When they had been finally ready, they launched an attack when the Animal Underground had been gathered together. As Warwick had predicted, they fled down the only exits that they had opened up, allowing all four of them to land right into the pit that they had dug – a raccoon, a wolf, a lynx and a cougar. Jackpot!

Now the four of them had been moved to a metal cage that Warwick had “borrowed” from Willy Walters. It had taken them a while to move it to the ravine especially since they couldn’t be seen having returned to the Southern Forest as it would have put the Animal Underground on high alert.

But all had gone according to plan. He was going to have his revenge, but he was going to have a little fun first. *I’ll show them who holds true power in the forest!* Warwick thought to himself. *Some Creator! This little band of misfits is going to see who is really in charge!*



A small knock was heard at the door of Ma and Pa Cougar’s house. Cassie shouted over her shoulder, “I’ll get it!” as she reached forward and opened the door. It was Milton Mouse.

“Oh, hi Milton,” Cassie smiled a weary smile. “Any news? I am so afraid that something really bad has happened to them!”

Milton hung his head, “I was kind of hoping you had heard something. Are your mom and dad back yet from looking around?”

“No, they might be gone for quite a while. I was just about to go out looking around again myself,” she replied.

“Me too!” Milton said. “My mom and dad are out looking too, I’m not sure where they are right now – but before they left I told them I might come get you and go looking myself.”

“Aren’t you supposed to stay home and watch your brothers and sisters?” Cassie asked.

“No, Molly, Christopher and Macon are watching the rest of them. Mom and Dad know that the Animal Underground means far more to me than anyone else in our family – so they said I could go if I wanted to.”

“Well, what are we waiting for?” Cassie replied, “let’s go!”

With that, Milton scurried up onto Cassie’s back and grabbed on tight – and not a moment too soon as Cassie was swift as the wind and nearly knocked Milton over.

“Creator,” Milton whispered into the wind that rushed past him, “please help us find our friends!”



Wil Wolf was curled up in the opposite corner of the cage across from Calvin. Being the ‘thinker’ of the group, it was natural for him to be lost in thought as well. His mind turned to a time from a couple of weeks ago...

...Ravi had arrived at the edge of the ravine first, followed next by Calvin and Milton, Luther, Cassie and finally Wil.

Ravi turned to look at the group. He pointed over the cliff with his paw and spoke, “Which one of you would gladly jump over this cliff if I asked you to?”

All of the gang just stood there, not understanding what Ravi was trying to say. Calvin and Wil peered over the edge at the steep drop to the distant bottom below – it looked like this was the deepest part of the ravine. Wil’s fur bristled at the thought of jumping off this cliff, “What do you mean, Ravi?”

Ravi scanned the group with his eyes and then slowly began, “Of course you wouldn’t jump off. But what if it wasn’t just me simply *asking* you? What if an enemy threatened to push you off unless you said that you would stop following the Creator?” He let that sink in for a minute.

Milton squeaked, “Yes, but Ravi, why do we have to think about that? I mean, I know not everyone *loves* the Creator, but who would even do a thing like that?”

And Warwick and his dogs have been kicked out of the forest anyway.”

Ravi smiled, “Ahh, yes, Warwick – I know only one thing for certain in all of this, there are always enemies who *hate* the Creator and *hate* those that follow Him – if it’s not Warwick, then it will be someone else. And while the Creator *can* protect us from them, He may not always choose to!” Ravi’s smile disappeared as he changed his tone and asked again, “What would you do...?”

...*What would I do, indeed?* Wil asked himself as he recalled Ravi’s questions. Here it seemed so much more real – their prime enemy was back and it was very obvious to Wil that Warwick and his dogs *hated* the Creator.

Ravi shifted his position and looked up from where he sat in the middle of the cage. Wil, too, looked up – he saw someone coming towards them, it was Warwick.

Warwick came up to the cage and barked, “Listen up, you so-called ‘Animal Underground’. The time has come to rid the forest of this nonsense about your little ‘Creator’. Either you get rid of your silly ‘Creator’ ideas, or we will get rid of you!”

What do you think?

Do you think there is a reason that Cassie and Milton were not there when the Animal Underground was captured? Who do you think arranged that? Also, why do you think that the Creator allowed the others to be captured?

Day 2

Read: Daniel 1

Summary: The king of Babylon captured Jerusalem and took away many of the people to his own country. The king took many of the strongest and smartest young men to be trained so that they could be servants in his court. Among them were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. Although Jerusalem was conquered because of the sin of the people, these 4 were godly and righteous men.

They were determined to follow the laws of God even in a foreign land, even refusing the impure food from the king’s table at the risk of their own lives. God proved to everyone that their determination to stay pure was the right decision and they were found to be ten times better than anyone else.

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

- When God punishes nations because of their sin, there are often good people that are affected too. Do you think God will take care of people that love Him even though they are caught up in the middle of a nation's punishment?
- Just like Warwick attacked the Animal Underground and took them away, King Nebuchadnezzar attacked the people of Jerusalem and took them away too. Daniel and his friends got good jobs in their new home – but they were still the king's slaves. How do you think they felt?

Day 3

Play a game of hide and seek with your siblings, either outside (if it's nice enough) or inside if you can. After playing for a while, discuss with your parents about how many Christians around the world are running and hiding from people that want to hurt them just because they love Jesus! When they are 'found' they can be thrown in jail, or even killed. Say a prayer for these Christians that God would keep them strong and that they would be faithful.

Day 4

At the end of the world, many people will hate Christians and not treat them very nice – in fact, this is already happening all around the world. Jesus asks us to be ready for the end. Pray and ask Him to make you ready for tough times and problems.

Prayer: "Jesus, thank You that no matter what happens, You love me very much! Please help me to get ready so that when hard times come, I will still love You and follow You with all my heart!"

Remember that Jesus is always with us, even when things are hard. You can remember that in any problem that you have!

Day 5

Work on memorizing 1 Corinthians 1:27 (NLT) *God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful.*

Day 6

If it wasn't for the seriousness of the situation, Milton would have loved everything about this ride. Several times he had ridden on Cassie's back and found that her run was much more fluid and smooth than Calvin's and made for a much easier, and therefore more enjoyable, ride. The thrill of adventure and the mysterious unknown were drowned by worry for the rest of the Animal Underground.

Cassie was busy whispering prayers for success and for the safety of Ravi and the gang. She had learned in her short time as a member of the group that though they were a special team with special training, they were ultimately helpless without the Creator's help. Her run had a steady rhythm that lulled her into a bit of a day dream as she thought of a special meeting that they had had a while ago...

...Ravi had hauled out the big human book from his bookshelf. "This is the Creator's book that He wrote for humans. I want to read you something from it I found the other day." Ravi clawed through the pages with a furrowed brow until he found what he was looking for. His face relaxed and a smile broke out as he said, "Ahh, here it is! The book says, '*Unless the Lord builds the house, the work of the builders is wasted. Unless the Lord protects a city, guarding it with sentries will do no good!*'" Ravi put the book down and looked up, "This is extremely important to our success in doing the Creator's work!"

Cassie remembered asking, "So...is the Creator saying that we are wasting our time helping people?" she was genuinely confused.

Ravi chuckled, "Oh, not at all Cassie! He is just saying that if you try and do it on your own without His help and direction, you may as well not bother, because you won't be able to accomplish anything of lasting good," he paused for a moment and continued, "He longs for us to work with Him to help others – but it has to be done His way!" Ravi closed the book with a thud...

...Cassie refocused back on her run through the forest, stopping suddenly. Milton squeaked, "Why are you stopping?"

She looked back at him and said, "Milt – we need to stop and ask for His help! Remember what Ravi said about our work being wasted unless the Creator is involved in it?"

Milton jumped down and said, "Cass, you are absolutely right!"

With that the two of them took turns praying and asking the Creator for His help. When they finally opened their eyes, Milton said, "I think He is saying that we are on the right track."

Cassie's eyes opened wide as something caught her attention. Milton turned his gaze to see what she was looking at. "Do you see that?" she asked.

"What?"

She trotted about 20 feet to the side where a narrow pathway led away from a bit of a clearing. She stopped by the path and looked around, "Look at all these footprints in the snow! They seem to be leading down this pathway," she said as she began to trot slowly down the path.

Milton scurried after her, his short legs a blur trying to keep up.

After a few minutes the footsteps dropped into a large hole that was surrounded by many broken branches. Cassie whistled a long, slow whistle. Milton stopped at the edge, eyes wide with recognition. "Wow," he said as he realized what must have happened here, "I think some animals were chased down this path right into this pit – and it must have been covered with branches and snow to hide it!"

Cassie was looking closely at the paw prints leading up to it, "Look at this, Milt," she said, pointing a paw at a set of prints, "these prints are smeared because I think they belong to the animals that were being chased. These ones over here look just like my prints, only very slightly larger – I would say that's Calvin's. These ones over here are most definitely Ravi's – it's hard to miss his. These two sets here look somewhat similar, I would say that's Luther's and Wil's prints." She paused for a moment and pointed out some very clear prints that weren't smeared but were all around the hole, "And I'm guessing these must be the animals that were chasing them because they aren't smeared and they seem to be pacing all around – likely after the others fell in."

Milton stood beside one of the prints and twitched his whiskers, "Something seems awfully familiar about these prints here. I wonder who these could belong to?"

Cassie stared very hard at the prints, she had seen these somewhere too, but where? She whispered a quick prayer asking for help. In a flash she had it. In a trembling voice she whispered, "Warwick! It's Warwick!" she said turning wide-eyed in fright to Milton whose own eyes were nearly popping out in shock as well, "he's back!"



Warwick barked menacingly at the limp form of Ravi who lay against the rocky wall of the cave – held tight by Gillen and Miller, "You getting tired of this? You are just a tired and worthless old 'coon. But I'm right about you, aren't I, *Mister Ravi Raccoon*? I said you were a trickster, and I was right!" Warwick's eyes were

filled with hate. Ravi winced at the stench from Warwick's breath. He had been pummeled, grilled and beaten. Ravi knew that on his own, he would have given up and given in long ago – but he knew where his strength was found.

Warwick backed off a little, giving Ravi some relief from his horrible dog breath. Warwick's tone softened a little and he sat back on his hind legs, "You know, Ravi, this could all be over – it's really your choice. Just show me how you did your little trick with the lightning and rain and snow storm. That really was something, I must admit, I'm impressed," he said, referring to the Creator's confrontation of Warwick back in November. He paused and looked up at Ravi, "It's pretty simple actually and it's a win-win for everyone you know."

Ravi felt so weak that he nearly fell unconscious. Warwick's words swam about in his head and he felt very dizzy. But slowly Warwick's voice faded to the background and a peace came over him as a soft, white light filled the cave in which he lay. His head began to clear and he sat up, Gillen and Miller were nowhere to be found – nor was Warwick for that matter. Ravi's strength began to return and he got up and crawled over to the mouth of the cave and stood there looking out over the ravine. It was dark and cold and a bitter wind blew down the length of the ravine, chilling him to the bone. Without warning a reddish light reflected off the rocky ravine walls and Ravi looked up to see an immense fireball come slamming down into the ravine wall off to his left. The cave shook and trees split and shattered and tumbled down all around him. Ravi stood still, watching this awe inspiring display of power, but as he watched, he sensed an emptiness inside of him. Though there was power here, God wasn't in this.

After a moment, the shaking stopped and all grew calm and cold once again. As Ravi stood there wondering what had just happened, something caught his eye in the sky. There were breaks in the clouds and the breaks were lit up by a full moon revealing that the clouds were racing by at incredible speeds. Suddenly a howl echoed down the chasm followed by a roaring wind of tremendous power. Rocks were torn loose and tumbled and crashed along the walls of the ravine cracking open large holes in the walls. Ravi took a step back, afraid he would get sucked out in the wind, but as he watched he felt the same emptiness deep inside. Again, there was incredible power, but God wasn't in this either.

Finally, the wind died down and all was quiet and calm once again. Then, almost so slight as to be unnoticeable, a light and gentle breeze tugged at Ravi's whiskers and whispered in the cave walls. Ravi felt an incredible peace fill him from head to toe and he stooped low and stepped to the very edge of the cave. He looked up at the sky and the clouds had cleared, replaced by stunning beauty of a million stars. *God is definitely in this!* Ravi thought to himself. Ravi

bowed low, overcome by a sense of the awesome presence of his Creator.

A Whisper filled his heart, “Ravi, what are you doing here?”

Ravi replied, “Creator, we have been captured by Warwick and he is working against You! I don’t fear for myself, but I fear for Luther, Calvin and Wil. Will you help us?”

The Whisper replied, “Warwick desires a display of incredible power, but he will not see it because he is blind. Instead, you, Luther, Wil and Calvin will see how I will rescue you, not through something big and powerful, but through something small and familiar – and I will baffle Warwick once again!”

As Ravi puzzled over this the soft light faded and he realized that he was still in the cave with Warwick sitting in front of him, awaiting Ravi’s reply to his demands.

Ravi struggled to his feet. As he did so the room seemed to spin a little from being so dazed. Once he steadied himself, he pointed a claw at Warwick and said with a strength he didn’t know he had, “Warwick, you want to see power? Then you will see it! But you won’t know it, because He will use something so small and familiar to rescue us that you wouldn’t believe that it was from God above! But even if He doesn’t rescue us, know this: we will never betray our Creator!”

Warwick snarled and lurched forward, grabbing Ravi’s neck in his mouth and dragging him to the mouth of the cave and dropping him at the edge, “I should push you over the edge right now!” he snarled with his teeth bared. After a moment he calmed down and stepped back, watching Ravi warily. A smirk crossed his face as he chuckled, “But that would be no fun later,” he turned to Gillen and shouted, “put him back in the cage!” then to Miller he growled, “prepare the death trap!”



As Milton and Cassie stood around the pit in shock at the realization that their enemy had returned a steady snow began to fall around them tickling their ears, noses and eyes.

“We have to go back and get help!” Milton squealed.

Cassie was about to agree, but instead shrieked, “Wait, Milt, we can’t!”

“Why not?”

“Look around you, Milton, it’s starting to snow...hard. In half an hour we are going to lose all these tracks and have no way of finding them unless we follow this path...*NOW!*”

Milton stood frozen, unable to decide what to do for a moment. Then, as if a

switch had clicked in his brain, he leaped onto Cassie's back and squealed, "What are we waiting for? Let's go!"

Cassie launched herself over the pit and raced down the patch following the tracks which led away to the north in the direction of the ravine.

What do you think?

Everybody seems to be running out of time! Ravi and the boys are awaiting this 'death-trap', Cassie and Milton have to hurry before they lose the tracks that they are following. Do you think that Ravi and the gang should just give in to Warwick? Maybe he would let them go. What do you think? What is the right thing to do? Discuss with your parents.

Day 7

Read: Matthew 24:1-31

Summary: Jesus is telling His disciples about what will happen at the end of the world. It will be a tough time for everyone, both for Christians and non-Christians; but praise God! At the end of all that, Jesus is coming back to take those who love Him to live with Him in peace and joy...*forever!*

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

- When you think about the end of the world, does it make you afraid? Talk about that with your parents. It's not an easy subject. But think about this: those that love Jesus have the Almighty Creator of the Universe on their side watching over them – that's the important thing to remember!
- Why do you think Jesus was telling His disciples these things? Was it so they would get scared? Or was it because He loved them so much that He wanted to make sure they were ready for it?

Day 8

Cassie and Milton came upon tracks which they were able to identify what animals they belonged to. What kind of crazy tracks can you come up with? Get dressed up and head out in the snow and see what kind of strange tracks you can make! Imagine what kind of weird animal would make these tracks. For added fun, come inside when you are done and draw a picture of the animal that would make those tracks.

Day 9

When you read a chapter like Matthew 24 it's easy to forget that Jesus is telling us these things because of His INCREDIBLE love for us. Here's another passage of the Bible to read that fits right in with the end times. Have your parents read it along with you to help explain it to you – it's a promise of His love for you.

Read Romans 8:28-39

Day 10

Work on memorizing 1 Corinthians 1:27 (NLT) *God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful.*

Day 11

Cassie ran like the wind, following a meandering path through the forest that was littered with dog paw prints and a pair of unusual deep prints like two snakes slithered in a straight line beside each other. She didn't question it, but ran hard. She could feel Milton hanging on to the scruff of her neck for dear life, desperate to just hang on. As she ran, the snow continued to fall steadily, filling up the footprints and the 'snake-prints' on the path. She knew that the ravine was only about a half hour ahead, so if the tracks led there, maybe there would be other clues when they got there.

With lungs burning and her legs feeling like rubber and just about to give out, she finally left the forest and skidded to a stop just a few feet from the ravine.

Milton loosened his grip and tumbled off her back onto the frozen ground. He shook his fur and looked around. The tracks appeared to veer along the ravine and around a tree and then just stop. Both Cassie and Milton appeared puzzled.

Milton had an idea, so he told Cassie, "Wait here," and went to scurry up the tree on the edge of the ravine. Cassie watched, bewildered, as he scooted along a long branch that hung at least fifteen feet over the edge of the ravine. From his perch on the edge of the branch he could see very clearly: there was a rocky pathway that led from the edge of the ravine down to a small cave in the cliff side about 40 feet down. Milton noticed that the path was not snow covered like the rest of the outcroppings from the cliff, but looked like the scuffing of many feet had brushed most of the snow off.

As Milton was wondering about this, movement in the cave caught his eye. Instinctively he flattened down on the branch as two dogs exited the dark hole

and headed up the path to the top of the ravine. Milton froze. These were Warwick's dogs! Now what to do? If he shouted at Cassie they would notice him, but if he said nothing then Cassie would be discovered! "Creator! What do I do?" Milton whispered in a panic.

Suddenly Milton noticed a sharp rock sitting wedged on a branch next to him. In an instant he knew what to do: grabbing the rock he flung it at the lead dog with all his might, praying desperately in his heart, *Creator, make my aim true!*

The dogs didn't see it coming and the rock pelted Gillen straight in the eye making him yelp and bark in shock and pain. Milton looked at Cassie and she returned his look and in an instant knew that she should run and hide. Cassie bolted for the forest and Milton relaxed a little. *Thank You Creator!* he said in his heart.

After a few minutes of Gillen whining about his eye while Miller looked around for where the rock came, but seeing no one, the two dogs finally moved forward again, concluding that a rock had simply come loose on its own.

As they drew near, Milton strained his ears to catch their conversation while he laid low on the tree: Miller was speaking, "...so why are we having to do all this on our own? You know, since we left the farmyard after the snowstorm Derrick has been acting funny. When was he supposed to get here?"

Gillen grunted, clearly also unimpressed at Derrick's absence from this mission, "Huh? I dunno. Why should I care. We did it, we get the glory. Derrick's just going to have to miss out."

"So, is the death trap all set up? Are we actually going to be finally rid of these ridiculous animals? Maybe now we can finally rule this forest!" Miller said.

"Yeah, yeah, it's all ready – I saw to that a couple of days ago. We've tested it – twice - and it works perfectly. I guess Warwick just wants us to make doubly sure everything is hooked up properly."

Milton wondered what they could be talking about as his eyes followed the dogs. They walked past the tree to a pile of rocks on the edge of the cliff. The dogs pulled out a rope from under the pile of rocks and began to stretch it out. Milton then realized what he was looking at and the best that he could describe it later was this: in front of the cave was a large and wide ledge that extended about 20 feet to the right of the cave opening. Directly above this extended ledge, at the top of the ravine, was a pile of big, heavy rocks sitting on top of a thick plank which was supported by a small metal pole. The rope that the dogs were stretching out was attached to the top of the pole. It appeared that pulling on the rope would dislodge the pole, causing the plank to drop and the rocks to roll down directly on top of the extended ledge.

Milton wondered why such a contraption would have been set up; he didn't have long to wonder as Miller spoke up, "So, if I get this right, we get to sit by

the cave, rope in our paws, and watch as the rocks drop down on those pesky critters and crush their cage?”

Gillen’s mouth twitched a wicked grin as he simply replied, “Yup – that about sums it up.”

Miller hopped around excitedly, “Oh what fun!”

Milton’s eyes went wide with panic. They had to do something! Milton waited impatiently for the dogs to finish their work while they continued to yip about how fun it would be to watch the demise of their enemies.

As the dogs went back into the cave, Milton scanned the contraption with his eyes, desperate for ideas. He thought about setting it off early, but then realized that the dogs would be on high alert and would simply just set it up again, or do something else to them that Milton and Cassie wouldn’t be able to control. *No, that won’t work*, he thought to himself.

In a few moments his eyes caught the glint of Cassie’s eyes from within a group of shrubs. Milton scurried down and raced over towards her. Within moments he had brought her up to speed on what Warwick’s plan was. They walked over to the pile of rocks resting on the heavy plank and looked them over carefully.

“These would be too heavy for me to move,” Cassie remarked, wondering how the dogs got them there, “It may very well be that we will have to set it off early and hope for another opportunity to rescue them.”

“No!” Milton squeaked, “It has to be today! It has to be now!”

“Then what are we going to do?” Cassie whined nervously.

Milton sat back, remembering his adventure to his Grandpa’s farm and how God taught him some important lessons there. Finally, he replied, “Cassie, we are going to talk to the Creator about it.”

So that’s what they did. Milton started off, then Cassie, both of them resting paws on the rocks and praying that He would stop the dogs from hurting their friends and that He would show them what to do.

After they were done, they sat back and looked out over the ravine for a moment. All of a sudden Milton sat bolt upright, turned to Cassie and said, “I think I have an idea, hang on a minute, I have to check something out,” and with that he was off in a flash dashing up the tree back to his branch where he could get a good look at the trap. From where Cassie was sitting, she could just barely see Milton’s small shape moving on the branch. After a few minutes, Milton was back, beaming from ear to ear.

“What? What is it?!” Cassie begged.

“I think the Creator has just shown us how to not only stop this trap, but to turn it against Warwick and his dogs as well! But we have to work hard, I don’t think we will have much time!”

What do you think?

Wow! A way to turn the trap against their enemies?! Do you wonder how they are going to do that? Discuss with your parents some ideas of how this might work.

Day 12

Read: Daniel 3:1-12

Summary: The king of Babylon has made a statue of himself and is commanding his subjects to worship it. If they don't, they die – in a blazing furnace of fire! The king quickly finds out that three of his subjects - Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego – are refusing to worship the statue!

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

- More than likely you know this story very well and likely know how it ends, but what kinds of thoughts do you think were going through their heads when they first heard about these plans? How about when they saw the statue being built? Discuss it with your parents.
- What would you have done if you were Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and you were in danger of being thrown into a blazing furnace?

Day 13

Time to make a fake fire, a little like the fire used in the blazing furnace in our Bible story:

1. Roll two sheets of brown construction paper lengthwise into tubes and tape them in place along the seam with clear tape – these will be your logs.
2. Cut a semicircle into one side of one of the logs with scissors and rest the other log inside the semicircle cut so they are crossed like campfire logs.
3. Now draw some flame shapes of different sizes and shapes on red/yellow/orange construction paper and fold the bottoms so you can easily tape them to your logs.
4. Now grab your marshmallows and roast them! Enjoy!

Courtesy of ehow.com

Day 14

Even though King Nebuchadnezzar was treating Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego unfairly – God still expected the three of them to treat the king with honor and respect – and that is what they did. They still called him ‘Your Majesty’. Did you know that even if parents or teachers or even government leaders are unfair and treat you badly – God still asks you to treat them kindly and with respect. Treat them the way you want to be treated. God loves the bad people as well as the good people – and who knows, maybe your respectful treatment of them is something that will help lead these people to God. Besides, God will RICHLY reward you for acting this way!

Prayer: “Dear Jesus, thank You for my parents, teachers and government leaders. Help me to respect them always, even if sometimes I don’t think they deserve it. Please forgive me for not treating them with respect sometimes.”

Day 15

Work on memorizing 1 Corinthians 1:27 (NLT) *God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful.*

Day 16

“Creator...” Calvin struggled weakly to get the words out as the four of them huddled together on the cage to pray. He gathered his strength and continued, “...we need Your help. Please send someone to rescue us from Warwick.”

Warwick heard them whispering and came over and kicked the cage. “Hey! You miserable animals! You think you are planning an escape? Ha! Nothing and no one can rescue you from my paws! Not even this *Creator* that you talk about. Where is He now?” Warwick turned to the other dogs and barked some orders, “Gillen! Miller! It’s time that these animals get what’s coming to them. Help me drag this cage outside!”

That got the attention of the four of them; weak as they were, they sat up in the cage as the three dogs pulled and pushed and scraped the cage across the cave floor inch by inch. As they did, Luther’s mind was swimming with thoughts and memories. *Is this it? Is this the end? Will it all be over now? Will we see the Creator at last?* As these questions swam around in his mind, he remembered a time when he was asking Ravi about some of the same things...

...Luther had just finished asking Ravi how long the Creator would allow bad animals to hurt other animals. Ravi took a moment to process a very thoughtful reply. Finally, he spoke, “Luther – that’s a very good question. The quick answer is, ‘I don’t know how long, no one does,’ but God does want you to know some things about this,” he pulled up close to Luther and sat down beside him. With his claw he gestured to the forest around them and asked, “Luther, will this forest last forever?”

“No.”

“What do you think will happen to this forest over time?”

Luther wasn’t sure what Ravi was getting at, but he answered, “Well...I suppose that the trees will grow, animals will come and go, and eventually the trees will get old, branches will fall and finally trees will die and fall over.”

“And then what?” Ravi asked.

“Uhh...well, I don’t know really. I guess maybe the dead trees will pile up and eventually a fire will clean up the forest and new trees will start growing again after that?”

“Correct!” with that, Ravi got up and walked away...

...Luther’s body shuddered with a chuckle, remembering how confused he was when Ravi left. But he had spent a lot of time puzzling over that conversation. Whenever he had asked Ravi about it, Ravi had simply replied with, “Think about it some more, the Creator will help you understand it!”

Luther did eventually get it. He now knew that Ravi was trying to tell him that this world was decaying and falling apart just like the forest around him. Eventually there would be so much evil in the world that the Creator would send some very hard times on the world to ‘burn up’ the evil which would be followed by a time of incredible joy and peace. But no matter how much he thought of how long a time of joy and peace it would be, he could never wrap his mind around it. *Forever...that’s a big word*, he thought to himself.

The cage jerked to a stop, shaking Luther out of his thoughts. He looked around and saw that they were on a ledge off to the side of the cave opening. Luther dared a glance out of the cage over the edge of the ravine and a wave of dizziness washed over him, *that’s quite the drop!* He thought.

Warwick, Gillen and Miller stood in front of the cave mouth about 20 feet away. Gillen was holding a rope wrapped around his right paw. The boys looked up where the rope went and it seemed to disappear over the top of the cliff about 40 feet above them.

“Now listen here!” Warwick shouted. “This rope, when pulled, will release an avalanche of large boulders which will come crashing down right on top of your cage – and if that doesn’t kill you, the long drop to the bottom of the ravine

most certainly will! But, I will give you one last chance to escape your doom. I want every one of you to give up following this Creator of yours and say that you won't follow this nonsense anymore," Warwick paused for a minute to let it sink in and then continued, "well? Surely you can see you have no hope. If you do not give Him up, then I will pull this rope...then what 'god' can rescue you from my paws?"

The boys and Ravi just stared at each other for a moment and back up at the rope which was holding back their doom. After a moment of stunned silence, Luther stood to his feet and with a strength that he didn't know he had, shouted back, "Warwick! Listen to us! We've said all we need to say, not one of us has given in to your bullying. But the Creator that we serve is certainly able to save us from you! But even if He does not, we want you to know, Warwick, that we will **NEVER** turn away from following our Creator!" Luther surprised himself with the energy with which he spoke that. The other three were energized and stood up, paws around each other's shoulders and loudly agreed with Luther.

Warwick was furious! He shouted at Gillen, "PULL THE ROPE!" Gillen, startled by Warwick's rage, jumped back and yanked on the rope. With a rumble it seemed to all the animals that the entire cliff side must be collapsing. In an instant all the animals saw huge boulders roll over the top of the cliff above them. Luther, Calvin, Wil and Ravi cringed and braced for impact...

...but with the yelps of the dogs their eyes jerked open just in time to see them dash in fear back into the cave mouth as a pile of large rocks tumbled all over the entrance, blocking the cave opening. A rush of dirt and dust and loose snow billowed like a cloud and enveloped them, blocking out the sun temporarily.

When the dust started to clear, the animals wiped their eyes to see none other than Milton Mouse and Cassie Cougar pulling at the stiff wire that held their cage door shut.

"Milton! Cassie!" they shouted, "Boy are we glad to see you!"

Within moments they tumbled out of the cage, joyful and exhausted. They didn't have long to enjoy their freedom as they were being hurried off by Cassie who said, "We have to go now! Warwick and his dogs will eventually get those rocks out of the way, but for now we have to hurry as fast as we can to get out of here!" So, weak as they were, somehow they managed to scramble over the rocks at the cave mouth with Cassie's help, over to the other side and up the path to the top of the ravine.

At the top of the path, Milton spoke up, "Guys, let's head through this thick bush here – we should be safe going that way since Cassie and I spent time already making false tracks heading elsewhere."

Exhausted, weary and bruised, Ravi and the boys didn't have the strength to argue, so they did as Milton suggested and crawled through thick tangles for a while until they collapsed into a heap in a small clearing for a short rest. After a few minutes, they got up again and slowly made their way through the forest again in the direction of the Animal Underground.



The news spread quickly among the animals of the Southern Forest – Ravi and the gang were back! Many animals tried to see them, but Cassie stood guard outside Ravi's home as often as she could, sending people away so he could rest. Luther, Wil and Calvin's parents did the same for their boys. It was the day after the next before they came out of their homes. Many animals saw Ravi walking in the forest and crowded around him, but Ravi pushed them aside and said, "You will all hear our story, but first we have to see Cassie and Milton."

Some animals ran to get them and within a half hour, Milton and Cassie stood beside Ravi with Luther, Wil and Calvin sitting in front of them. Ravi put his paws on Cassie and Milton and spoke, "Cassie, Milton, words cannot express how thankful we are to you for being there when we needed you. But before I go on, can you tell us what happened? How did you manage to sabotage Warwick's trap?"

Milton spoke up and said, "We can't take credit for it, it was the Creator's idea. But it was actually pretty simple. The idea I got was to take a small rock and stick it under the corner of the plank that the rocks were sitting on – that way, when Warwick pulled the rope, all the rocks slid off at an angle instead of straight down on top of you. The funny thing was that when I got the idea I had no idea how big a rock to use – too big and the rocks would slide too far, too little and the rocks wouldn't slide far enough. So when Cassie and I were looking around, we saw only one rock in the whole area, I heard a voice in my mind say, 'That's the one!' The rest of the time we spent hiding and praying like crazy that it would work."

"So it's true!" Ravi exclaimed. "I heard the Creator say that He was going to rescue us by something small and familiar! But I had no idea that it would be Milton Mouse and Cassie Cougar!"

What do you think?

Luther spoke boldly to Warwick, refusing to deny the Creator. He didn't know that the Creator had already arranged their rescue using something small and 'weak'. Why do you think that God chose to use something small and weak instead of using something big and powerful (like He did in November's story)?

Day 17

Read: Daniel 3:13-30

Summary: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refuse to bow down to King Nebuchadnezzar's idol. The king is furious with the three of them, so he orders the furnace heated seven times hotter! When it's ready, the king has them thrown into the furnace. The king, however, sees the three of them walking around in the furnace just fine along with another who looks like a 'son of the gods'. So the king calls them out and finds that they don't even so much as smell like smoke!

This prompts the king to issue a decree that anyone who speaks against the one true God will be killed and his house destroyed.

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

- Who do you think the Bible means when it says the 'fourth looks like a son of the gods'? Do you think it's Jesus? Why or why not?
- Do you think you could do what Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego could, even if it meant getting thrown into a blazing furnace? Discuss this with your parents.

Day 18

Time to draw! After reading through the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and the blazing furnace, take some paper and draw what you think the furnace would have looked like and how it would have appeared to King Nebuchadnezzar. Show your mom or dad when you are done.

Day 19

When you think about what kinds of big things God has for you, do you feel sometimes like you aren't big enough, or strong enough, or good enough? Maybe you feel way too ordinary and you think, 'God can't use regular old me, I'm just a normal, weak person'? Well then, you need to read James 5:17 and pray this prayer below.

Prayer: "Lord Jesus, I confess that I feel like I'm too ordinary, too young and too weak to do anything great for Your kingdom; but I forget that You came as a young, ordinary and weak baby! Help me to follow You step by step, day by day, trusting that You will help me to live exactly how You want!

Day 20

Work on memorizing 1 Corinthians 1:27 (NLT) *God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful.*