

foundations[®] for Kidz!



20 Day Devotional for KIDS

Lessons on Ministering to Family and Others



**SOUTHLAND
CHURCH**

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Versions of scripture quotations are noted.

Welcome to...

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.

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

For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home...And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'
Matthew 25:35, 40 (NLT)

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!



Day 1

Cassie sighed as she watched the boys run off to go have fun and have a “secret” meeting. She was left out - again! Even if she tried to follow them, she wouldn’t be able to keep up; she would lose their trail quickly, for they were a lot faster than she was.

So she turned around and started walking home. All she wanted was to be with her friends! Why would they leave her out like this?

When she arrived at her home, she walked straight into the cave. It was neatly tucked away out of sight in the thick trees. You could barely see the hill it was hidden in from the old forest path, which made it a nice safe place to live.

When she came into the living room, Cassie found her mother sitting by the fireplace stirring something in the big black pot. It smelled very good, but Cassie wasn’t in the mood to think about food.

“Hi Cassie,” Ma Cougar said with a smile, “you’re home early. I thought you were going out to play with your friends?”

“None of the girls came,” Cassie moaned as she walked towards her room, “and all the boys ran off together to play by themselves.”

Ma nodded in understanding. “I’m sorry that none of your friends were there to play with you Cassie,” she said sweetly.

“Ma, it’s not fair!” Cassie suddenly whined as she turned around to look at her mother. “Why do the boys always leave me out?!”

Ma cougar looked up at her daughter from where she stood and smiled sadly. “I’m sorry that they won’t include you sweetheart. Why don’t you come and help me pack lunch and we can talk about it?” she asked with an encouraging smile. Cassie sighed as she moved slowly towards her mother, dragging her paws as she went.

What do you think? Have you ever felt left out, like Cassie? Can you remember a time that your friends didn’t invite you, or someone forgot your birthday – maybe something else?

Pray. Tell Jesus about that time. He is listening! He never forgets about you. He always invites you to join Him! How cool is that?!

Day 2

“What are you packing a lunch for?” Cassie asked in curiosity.

“Well, Grandma Cougar is sick, so I thought I would go visit her and bring her some stew,” Ma Cougar said. “Why don’t you come along with me? It’ll get your mind off the boys’ meeting.”

“But Grandma is so old and boring! That’s not fun like going to a secret meeting!” Cassie whined.

“That may be, Cassie, but Grandma is all alone. It would be the right thing to do to go and visit her while she’s sick. And the Creator calls us to take care of our family, especially those who don’t have anyone else to be with them,” Ma Cougar said a little more seriously.

Cassie sighed. “Yeah I know - it’s just that, well, I really wanted to go to that secret meeting.”

“Well, what’s better Cassie: sitting around here and moping about a meeting you weren’t invited to or visiting your grandma who I’m sure would be delighted to see you?” Ma asked gently.

Cassie sighed again. “Ok if you put it that way I guess I’ll come,” Cassie muttered, still disappointed about not going to the meeting.

“Thank you, sweetie. Grandma will be very happy to see you,” Ma said as she continued packing the meal for Grandma.

“What are you making Ma?” Cassie asked, deciding she should get her mind off of the boys and onto something else to put her in a better mood.

Ma smiled at Cassie’s effort. “I made a fish stew, its Grandma’s favourite,” Ma replied as she packed away the stew.

“Alright, I think we’re ready to go,” Ma said cheerfully. Cassie forced herself to smile and nodded.

Read Ruth 1:6-10.

Build a fort out of blankets and pillows and chairs! Pretend to have your very own cougar den. Is it dark and warm? Is it cozy? Is it big? Is it small? Invite someone to join you in your den.

Day 3

"Ok, let's go see Grandma," Cassie agreed, her mood lightening ever so slightly. Ma smiled and together the mother and daughter left the den and headed off into the forest. It was a long walk to Grandma's house, it was nearly on the other side of the forest!

However, Cassie was still confused from what her mother said. Her mother had said that the Creator felt it was important to take care of your family, especially when they were alone. But why? What was so important about taking care of an old cougar who slept most of the time anyway? She thought on this idea for a long time, so confused and never quite understanding it.

Time continued on like this and soon Cassie's paws began to get sore...and so was her brain! She was so confused by what her mother had said, so she decided it would soon be time to ask her about it. However, she was distracted by the soreness of her paws again.

"Ma! How much further is it?" Cassie whined. "My paws are hurting..."

Ma chuckled again. "I just told you, it's going to take about twenty more minutes. And it will only feel longer if you keep complaining. But be careful, don't be too loud. We're not far from Farmer Willie Walters' farm. That old farmer would not be very happy to see us."

"Ok Ma," Cassie replied with a little quieter tone, now feeling a little bit nervous.

Ma Cougar saw her daughter's fear and smiled sweetly. "It's ok dear. We will be just fine. Just don't start shouting or anything."

The young cougar sighed in relief. "Ok, thanks Ma."

Think about how Cassie felt. She's tired and sore from the long journey and now she is a little scared about being so close to Willie Walter's farm! Have you ever felt scared before?

Thank Jesus that He is always with you! Say, "Jesus, thank You that You love me so much that I don't have to be afraid. You are always with me – thank You!"

Day 4

It didn't take long until the young cougar was falling behind. She huffed and ran forward to catch up with her mother again. "Why is this so important?" Cassie asked, mildly confused. "I know the Creator tells us to take care of each other but why doesn't everyone look out for themselves? Isn't that much easier?"

"I suppose it would be simpler," Ma agreed as she walked. "If we only looked out for ourselves there would be much more time to do what we like. But, there would also be no time spent with friends then. No goodnight kisses. No one to comfort you when you get hurt. It would be a very lonely life," Ma continued thoughtfully.

Cassie was silent as she took in this idea. She had never thought of it that way before...

"The Creator tells us to look out for each other because we are family. It's what family does for one another. Mothers and fathers take care of their children and each other. It's another way of showing love for each other like the Creator tells us to do. Does that make sense?" Ma asked softly. Cassie frowned.

"Yeah I guess..." Cassie said, unsure if she truly understood or not. She wanted to understand what her mother was saying. She sighed and looked away from her mother and said to herself, *I don't think I'll ever figure out why I really **need** to take care of anyone besides myself!*

Think about how Cassie feels. Is it easier just to think about yourself? Would that be better than showing love to other people? It might feel that way sometimes, but what if everybody only thought about themselves? That means no one would show love to you! Yikes!

Pray and ask God for a way that you could show love to a family member or friend. Draw a picture below of what He showed you (or write it down):

Day 5

Cassie's thoughts were drawn away from her mother's words and were distracted by a very pleasant smell. She stopped walking and took in a deep breath. It smelled like fish. Where was that beautiful smell coming from? It wasn't from Ma's stew. This smelled very much stronger...

Cassie looked to her left, on the side of the path. Sure enough there was a fish there, laying on its side in the snow. Smelling Ma's soup all morning had made Cassie hungry. Very hungry. She supposed Ma wouldn't mind if she quickly grabbed a little snack.

Quietly she ran over to the fish and started sniffing it from a few feet away. It smelt so delicious! But she had to wonder, what was a fish doing out here anyway? She really couldn't care, she just wanted to eat it!

Just then Ma Cougar noticed that Cassie had become rather quiet. When she looked back and saw she was gone, she understood why. Urgently she scanned the path searching for her, worry stirring in her heart for her cub. When she saw Cassie sniffing the fish on the side of the path, she knew she had to take action NOW!

Reacting like only a protective mother could, she rushed towards her cub. "Cassie get back!" she cried urgently. The cub looked up in surprise to see her mother racing towards her. Cassie froze, not sure which way to go.

Her mother reached her, and quickly, but carefully tossed her to the side with her paw. The kitten rolled through the snow, and landed on her back. As she got to her feet she heard her mother snarl in anger and confusion.

Cassie looked up to see her mother hanging upside down, with a rope wrapped tightly around her back leg. The fish had been a trap!

Imagine that! Cassie's mother is hanging in a hunter's trap! What do you think is going to happen to her?

Work on memorizing Matthew 25:35, 40 *For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home...And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'*

Day 6

"Ma!" Cassie exclaimed as she ran to her with her ears flat in worry. Her mother was hanging with her nose a few inches above the ground.

Cassie ran right up to her and looked up at her in fear. "Ma, are you ok?"

Ma's brown eyes were wide with concern and fear, but she lovingly nuzzled her worried cub. "I'll be just fine sweetie. It's one of Willie Walters' traps. Now listen sweetie I need you to keep calm alright?"

"B-but Ma you're in a trap!" Cassie cried in fear.

Ma smiled as she spun slowly on the rope. "I know sweetie," she said lovingly to keep her kitten calm. "But I'll be alright. I need you to listen carefully."

Cassie's eyes were wide with fear and sparkled with tears, but she nodded and waited for her mother's instructions.

"You need to go to your grandma," Ma explained. "She might be old, but she is very smart. She has seen lots of traps and I'm sure she can help me get out of this."

"Ok...I'll go. But...Ma?"

"Yes dear?" her mother responded.

"I'm scared. I don't want to leave you!"

Ma smiled and nudged Cassie with her nose. "That is a good, caring heart. You want to take care of your family. That's what the Creator made us to do. But the best way you can take care of me now is by going to your grandma. She can help us. Now go! You can do it!" Ma encouraged.

Cassie sniffled before she nodded and turned to run up the trail towards Grandma's home. She had walked this path many times, but never by herself before, it was frightening. As she ran she prayed that the Creator would keep them both safe.

Think about how Ma Cougar was really brave to save Cassie from that trap, but also Cassie was very selfless in agreeing to follow Ma Cougar all the way to Grandma's. In fact, there is a story similar to this one in the Bible.

Read Ruth 1:16-18...This is part of the story of a girl named Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi. In the beginning of the story Ruth and Naomi's husbands die. Naomi decides to go back to her home in Bethlehem and Ruth promises that no matter what she would follow her. However, once they get to Bethlehem they have nothing left and Ruth went to collect grain in a field. They were stuck in a pretty tough situation, a little like Ma Cougar and Cassie.

Day 7

She ran quickly but quietly, scared that perhaps Willie Walters would suddenly show up! Everything she saw now worried her. Was it a trap? Was he hiding there in waiting?

She was crying while she ran. She had never been so afraid in her whole life! Because her sight was blurry with tears, Cassie didn't see the little tree root sticking out of the ground in her path. Her paw got stuck under it and she tripped. She fell and rolled through the snow. She curled up in a ball and cried. She didn't know what to do! She was so scared that she was panicking!

She heard a "whoosh" overhead and looked up, startled. But instead of the scary farmer, she saw a big white owl land on a low tree branch.

"Calm down Cassie. Everything is going to be alright."

"But...everything is going wrong!" Cassie exclaimed. "First my friends don't want to play with me and then my mother got caught! And...I'm all alone out here..."

"But you are not alone, the Creator is with you! He is in your heart. He is always with you taking care of you. He always looks out for his children. Now look around. Why are you afraid of this forest? This is the forest you have lived in your whole life! It's not scary or dangerous. It's your home and it is very beautiful. Look at the snow and the trees, the blue sky and white clouds. The Creator made it all. He made it for you! Because He loves you and He wants you to enjoy it!" the owl softly replied.

Cassie looked around her, her brown eyes now full of wonder. *He made all this... for me? For all of us to enjoy...? Wow! It really is very pretty,* Cassie thought to herself, *Why was I so afraid anyway?*

"Thank you," she said looking back to the owl. But when she looked the owl was gone. There was only an empty branch.

Think about how cool it was that the owl was serving the Creator by being an encouragement to Cassie when she was sad and scared. One of the greatest commands in the Bible is "*to love your neighbour as yourself.*" (Lev 19:18) God wants to bless other people by using...you!

Read Matthew 25:31-40.

Write an encouragement card to someone in your family or in your school. It would be a good idea to ask Jesus who you can write a card to. Maybe there is a teacher that kids don't like or another kid at school that always gets picked on. It's good to bless others, especially those that aren't very popular.

Day 8

For a moment Cassie was afraid. She was alone again. But she remembered the owl's words: *"The Creator is with you. He is in your heart."*

"Creator..." Cassie whispered in a prayer, "thank You that you are with me. Please keep me and Ma safe. And help me to get to Grandma's home soon."

Cassie ran again, this time with hope in her heart. She was going to make it! And she was going to get help!

Cassie ran as fast as her paws could carry her across the grassy clearing. She could see her grandma's den now only a hundred feet ahead. It was a den that had been dug out many years ago between two huge rocks. It looked small on the outside, but most of the small hill was hollow, and there was tons of room in between those two boulders on the inside.

Cassie raced to the mouth of the cave and hurried inside. "Hello?" she called out. "Grandma? It's me, Cassie!"

"Oh Cassie!" her grandma's old frail voice returned from deeper in the cave, "Come on in!"

Cassie hurried down to the deeper part of the cave. It was mostly dug out of dirt here, but you could still see the huge rocks that made up the ceiling.

"There you are sweetheart!" Grandma Cougar said as she came walking around the corner. "Welcome here!"

Cassie ran straight into her grandma's arms and curled up close to her.

"Oh!" Grandma exclaimed, rather surprised. "It's good to see you too! But where is your mama, and...why are you crying child?" she asked in concern.

Imagine what Cassie is feeling right now. Have you ever felt like your world was coming to an end?

Draw a picture of a time in your life that you were helping someone who was sad or scared. Was it a friend at school? Was it a brother or sister? Maybe you gave your mom or dad a big hug when they were having a hard day. Now take that picture and tell Jesus about it. Describe it to Him. What were you feeling? What was happening? If you have time, ask Jesus to tell you what He thought of what you did. Remember that when we comfort and help others, we are really ministering to Jesus!

Day 9

Cassie looked up and blinked away her tears. "Ma got stuck... she's in a trap. She told me to come to you for help."

"Your ma got stuck you say?" a different voice called from deeper within the cave.

This new voice surprised Cassie. It was far too deep to be her grandma, and it came from their left. She turned to see another cougar standing beside them. He was tall and just by looking at him Cassie could tell he was very strong.

"Who are you?" Cassie asked timidly.

"This is your Uncle Caleb," Grandma Cougar explained. "He is my son."

"And I'm also your mother's brother," Caleb explained as he sat down beside them. "Now, tell us exactly what happened."

Cassie took a deep breath and began her story. She told them about the fish, and how she went after it not knowing it was a trap. She also told them about how her mother had pushed her out of the way in time, but had got trapped herself.

"Now there's a good mama!" Grandma Cougar exclaimed. "Looking out for her little one just like the Creator does."

"The Creator has little ones?" Cassie asked, amazed.

"Of course darling!" Grandma said with a smile. "All of us are His little ones! The good word says that not even a sparrow falls to the ground without Him noticing. And if He watches over the sparrows so carefully, will He not surely be watching over us too?"

Cassie was amazed. "Wow! So He's watching over my mother right now too, right?" she asked hopefully.

"That's right," Caleb answered with a smile. "Just like a good papa always does. And we are going to go help your ma too."

Read Matthew 10:29-30

Read Psalm 139:1-18 – I know it's a bit of a long chapter to read, but as you read it, think about how amazing it is that God is watching over you so carefully. Remember that much of how God shows His love is through other people who are listening to Him and obeying Him. Think of how you can be used by God to show them that He loves them. Say "thank You" to God for how much He loves you!

Day 10

"How can we help her?" Cassie asked, looking up at the two older cougars.

"She's caught!"

"Yes..." Grandma Cougar said thoughtfully. "By a rope you say? It must have been attached to the tree...that rope needs to be broken. Then we can get her out."

"How do we do that?" Cassie asked.

"We will figure that out when we get there," Grandma told her. "For now let's get moving." Grandma got slowly and shakily to her feet. "This could take a while. I don't move as fast as I used to."

"You stay here Mama," Caleb spoke up. "I will go. You've told us what we need to know; now we can take care of that rope. Right Cassie?"

Cassie nodded in wonder. She was rather surprised. Her family really did watch out for each other. Ma wanted to take care of Grandma. And Caleb wanted to take care of Ma. And he was going to help instead of Grandma so she could stay home and rest.

"Well thank you, son," Grandma Cougar said laying down again. "I'll be waiting here for your return. Now go, and may the Creator protect you."

Cassie and Caleb crawled out of the cave and into the sunlight. "Alright Cassie, you lead the way. Which way to your mama?"

"She's that way!" Cassie explained. "Follow me!"

Hang on Ma! Cassie thought to herself. *We're coming!*

Work on memorizing Matthew 25:35, 40 *For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home...And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'*

Day 11

Cassie scampered forward into the forest with her big Uncle Caleb racing along behind her. *I hope we're not too late!* Cassie worried to herself. *How long can Ma hang upside down like that?*

With troubling thoughts like these Cassie pushed herself to run faster to lead Caleb to the trap. But as she was running, Cassie suddenly had her tail pulled. She looked back and saw that Uncle Caleb had caught her with his paw. And just like that he pulled her backwards into a bush with him.

"Ouch, what are you-"

"Quiet!" Caleb hissed to her. But then he softened his tone. "Hush now. Watch..."

Cassie looked up out of the bush they were hiding in. At first she didn't see anything. Then she saw a sparkle, something shining in the sun light. It was the metal twin barrels of a shotgun. Being carried by Farmer Willie Walters!

Cassie felt a cold shiver as the big man walked closer towards them, but Caleb whispered to her, "He can't see us. We're hidden in here. But don't move, and don't make a sound..."

So Cassie waited there nervously as the farmer stepped closer and closer...

Remember a time when you were scared of something about to happen? Did you have somebody looking out for you, perhaps? Like a parent, brother or sister, grandparent or teacher? Did you know that no matter what difficult thing happens to you, Jesus is always there: watching, helping and loving you? Let's do a little exercise – you may want to have a parent to help you with this...

Pray to Jesus and ask the following questions:

1. "Jesus, remind me of a scary time in my life." (Now be quiet and listen in your heart for what God will remind you of.)
2. Once He has reminded you, then ask Him: "Jesus, where were you in that scary time?" (Again – be quiet and listen for a thought from Him – you may get a picture or some words – write them down.)

Day 12

The farmer came closer and closer...and walked right past them!

Cassie let out a deep breath as the farmer disappeared into the forest again. She had been so afraid he would hear her breathing that she held her breath.

But now as she started breathing again she began to shake. Her breathing came with gasps, and she started to cry.

Caleb heard her gentle sobbing and stopped watching for the farmer. He looked down at Cassie where she was crying beside him.

Without saying a word, he lifted his big paw and pulled Cassie close to him. She cried in his fur until her tears ran out.

"It's going to be just fine Cassie," Caleb told her. "He didn't see us. And he is walking away from where your Ma is. She's going to be just fine too."

But Cassie was too afraid to answer him. She just sat quietly.

So pulling her close again, Caleb prayed, "Our dear Creator, please watch over us. Thank You for hiding us from Farmer Walters. We know we can trust Your protection and we know You are watching over Ma too. Please give us peace in our hearts as we go to help her."

Cassie felt the cold fear in her stomach get lighter and soon it was replaced by a warm peace. The Creator had been good to them. Very good! Cassie had made it to her grandma, Caleb had come to help and they had stayed safe from Willie Walters.

"Thank You Creator," Cassie whispered at the end of Caleb's prayer. "Please help us make it to Ma. Amen."

"Amen," Caleb agreed in his deep voice. "That was a very nice prayer Cassie." He said smiling.

"Thanks," Cassie said looking up at him with big sparkling eyes, "let's go save Ma!"

Caleb smiled bigger. "Lead on!"

Think about how brave Caleb was when that farmer came around, and Cassie was really afraid. Can you think of a time when you had to be brave? How did it make you feel?

Pray and ask God to show you a picture of how He was with you. Draw it or write it in your journal.

Day 13

Again they ran off into the forest, following the trail back to Ma. They raced around the last corner in the path. They had finally made it back to Ma!

But as soon as she came around the bend in the path she skidded to a halt. Ma was still hanging from the rope, but she was swinging and kicking at the rope as hard as she could. Even so she still could not get free. But standing ten feet away from her was Willie Walters! The farmer had found Ma! He was calmly loading his shotgun as he watched her thrash. He must have come back on a different path!

Just then a blur of fur shot by, right over Cassie's head. Uncle Caleb raced down the path. He never hesitated when he saw the farmer, in fact he ran faster!

The farmer heard him coming, and turned around with his gun loaded. Caleb ran and jumped roaring loudly.

The farmer levelled his shotgun at his waist and fired. The gun boomed to life, and made Cassie's ears ring!

But his shot missed and Caleb crashed into the farmer. He knocked him to the ground, rolling through the snow as they fought.

Cassie quickly ran to her Ma and shouted, "Ma, are you ok?"

"Oh Cassie darling!" Ma exclaimed as she saw her. "Quickly, into the bushes, you need to hide."

"But I can help! Grandma told me what to do!" Cassie quickly studied the trap. "The rope is the problem..." she remembered. "Must be tied to the tree..."

She looked up, following the long rope with her eyes. Then she saw it, the big knot where the rope was tied to the tree-top.

Quickly, Cassie ran to the base of the tree. Using her claws, she quickly climbed up the rough bark. But as she got closer to the top the tree began to shake and sway much more and she had to hold on tight.

She heard the farmer yell and she looked over to see Caleb biting his arm! But the farmer threw the big cougar away with his gun. Caleb jumped back at him, but the farmer fired his second bullet. Caleb roared in pain as the bullet grazed his shoulder. And again Caleb tackled the farmer into the snow.

Cassie quickly looked back at the rope overhead. Carefully she climbed again between slippery snow covered branches.

Play a game of tag! Pretend you are Cassie and Caleb running through the woods. The person who's it is Caleb and the people running are Cassie. Whenever you tag someone say something encouraging, just like how Caleb played for Cassie when he caught her and hid her in the bush!

Day 14

Finally, she reached the knot. She sank her little teeth into the rope and started ripping it apart as fast as she could. The rope was very strong and tough, but Cassie wouldn't give up.

She heard part of the rope break, then another. Ma's weight and the damage she had done was breaking the cords! At last the rope broke with a sharp snap. Ma fell to the ground and landed head first in the snow.

But before Cassie could make another move, the bent over tree lurched backwards. With Ma's weight gone, the tree could stand up straight again. But when it swung back to its normal position, Cassie was thrown from the tree top, and sent sailing through the air.

For a moment she tumbled head over heels, watching the ground spin around as she flew. Then with a scream she landed in the deep snow. For a moment she didn't know which way was up. But she rolled to her feet and found that she was not hurt! The snow had been deep enough to break her fall!

"Thank You Creator!" she yelled in joy as she jumped up!

She heard Caleb growl again as he fought with the farmer. The farmer was on top of him, and was holding him to the ground with his shotgun on his throat!

Cassie quickly ran to them. She saw her mother laying in the snow trying to get up, but she was still too dizzy to walk and she fell again. At least she was ok.

Caleb growled again, but Cassie could tell he was getting weaker. He couldn't fight much longer!

Think about how Caleb is so wise and brave in this story, but also caring. He reminds me a lot of a man in the story of Ruth: A man named Boaz. He was a man who was brave and kind and loyal to his family, Ruth and Naomi. He made sure he took care of them and protected them. He understood the importance of family and taking care of them and protecting them and making sure they had enough food to eat. He even allowed Ruth to work in his fields safely and get extra portions of the wheat. Wow!

Read Ruth 2:1-11

Day 15

Cassie did the only thing she could: She ran up behind the farmer and bit his ankle! With that jolt of pain, the farmer jumped up shouting in surprise. Caleb quickly rolled to his feet and gasped for breath.

The farmer looked down at Cassie as she tried to bite him again. But the big man lifted his foot and shook himself free.

But now Caleb attacked again. Willie Walters didn't have time to block Caleb with his gun this time. Caleb grabbed the gun in his teeth and pulled it from the big man's hands.

The farmer quickly turned away from Caleb to run away, but when he saw Cassie he grabbed her instead. He held the cub in front of him, blocking Caleb from attacking again. Cassie could see the worry quickly building up in her uncle's eyes. What could they do now? *Oh Creator help us!* Cassie's mind cried as fear filled her stomach. What was going to happen?

Cassie heard another growl behind the farmer and she was suddenly thrown from Willie Walters' hands as the big man fell forward.

Again she fell through the air, but Uncle Caleb jumped up and caught her. "I've got you!" he yelled as he fell back first into the snow.

Farmer Willie Walters scrambled to his feet and turned around. And behold a very old, but very angry cougar now stood between him and Cassie's family.

Work on memorizing Matthew 25:35, 40 *For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home...And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'*

Day 16

Seeing all these cougars working together as a family scared the farmer and quickly Willie Walters grabbed his shotgun from the snow and ran away.

Caleb rolled over in the snow and set Cassie on her feet. "There you go li'l squirt. Whew! That was a close one."

They both looked over to the fourth cougar who had joined the fight. She was now checking on Ma Cougar who was finally finding her feet.

"Grandma?" Cassie asked in surprise. "What are you doing here?"

"You didn't think I was going to let you face that old farmer on your own did you?" Grandma chuckled. "I've been around a long time and I know how that farmer works. I figured he would come this way. So I followed you to make sure you would all be ok. I came praying, and ready for a fight."

She sat back in the snow with a deep breath. "But next time...I might just stick with praying...I'm getting a little old for all this excitement, ha-ha!"

Ma sat down next to her and lay her head on her shoulder. "You are still a great mother, no matter how old you may be."

Cassie ran to her mother and curled up between her paws. "And you are the best mother the Creator could have ever given me!"

Caleb laughed as he licked his injured shoulder. "Where do I fit in with all of this?"

Ma got up and gave her brother a hug. "Thank you so much for taking care of my daughter. I have to say I was surprised to see you!" Ma said with a laugh before she turned to her mother once more.

"I'm sorry we couldn't bring you your stew," Ma said to Grandma Cougar. "It was spilled in the snow when I got caught."

"Oh, that's alright," Grandma replied. "Smells like it was a very nice fish stew. It is a shame that we couldn't enjoy it together."

"It might not be too late!" Cassie exclaimed. She ran over to the broken trap, and, after some digging, pulled a frozen fish out of the snow. "Will this one work? It's not bait anymore!"

Everyone laughed merrily. "That will work just fine!" Grandma replied. "Come along! Let's all go back to my home, and I'll fix up a nice stew for everyone."

Pray: Family is so important to God and keeping each other safe is important, but we are also in God's family and He protects us. Listen for a few moments and draw a picture of how God has protected you throughout the day. Maybe He looks like a knight in shining armour or maybe He just hugged you. The ways God protects us is very different every time. Let's see what He has to say.

Day 17

Cassie sighed in relief as they finally entered her grandma's den. It had been such a crazy day that all she wanted to do was sit down and sleep! At her ma's suggestion, she went and laid down, which she gladly did. It felt like barely a few minutes had passed before Cassie found herself being woken up.

"Wake up sunshine," Ma Cougar called softly. "Supper is ready." Cassie slowly looked up at her ma before she smiled.

"Ok," Cassie yawned as she stood up, stretched and followed Ma into the next room where Caleb and Grandma sat.

The meal passed rather quickly with light conversation, but Cassie was quiet the entire time, her mind so full of all the events of what happened that day.

Ma quickly picked up on her cub's silence and asked, "What's wrong dear?"

"Nothing Ma, I was just thinking about today and what I learned," Cassie said thoughtfully.

"What you learned?" Grandma Cougar asked, her curiosity aroused. "What did you learn sweetie?"

Cassie looked at her grandma and smiled. "I learned just how important family is, but also how important it is to minister to them. For instance, like when Uncle Caleb offered to go find Ma instead of you, or when you jumped the farmer to protect me or how Uncle Caleb prayed for me when I was scared. After today it's hard not to realize just how much we need these things," Cassie said thoughtfully as she licked her paws clean from dinner.

Caleb chimed in, "That's right Cassie, protecting our families and praying for them is important, we are called to do it, the Creator designed us that way."

"I like you Uncle Caleb," Cassie said with a giggle. It was true. During their short time together Cassie had grown fond of the older cougar and his wisdom.

Caleb laughed. "Well I like you too, squirt," he said as he rubbed the top of Cassie's head with his paw causing Cassie to let out a playful growl.

Think about how the Creator answered Cassie's prayer! In the same way God answered Ruth and Naomi's prayers. Because at the end of the story of Ruth, Boaz marries Ruth and together they are able to take care of and provide for Ruth's mother, Naomi. It's such a beautiful story that shows just how important it is to God that we take care of one another and minister to our families, whether that's helping your mom with the dishes when she's busy or praying for a relative who doesn't know Jesus, it is all important to God.

Read Ruth 4:9-17

Day 18

"Oh it is so good to have our family all together again. I just wish that Clarissa was here," Grandma said wistfully. This made Cassie confused.

"Who's Clarissa?" she asked.

"Clarissa is my older sister, Caleb's younger sister," Ma's face saddened slightly. "She doesn't visit often because she doesn't follow the Creator."

"But why does that stop her from coming here?" Cassie asked in confusion.

Grandma Cougar sighed sadly. "Because she is hurting. She does not recognize her need for the Creator and she does not like it that we follow Him."

"Oh," Cassie said sadly. There was silence for several moments as the cougar family pondered this. But it was Cassie first who perked up. "We could pray for her couldn't we?" Cassie offered cheerfully.

Ma smiled. "Why of course we can pray for her Cassie, what a wonderful idea," Ma said encouragingly.

Caleb smiled. "Looks like you're catching on to this ministering to family pretty well there Cassie," Caleb said with a grin.

Cassie smiled.

Pray: Seems like the cougar family is quite sad that Clarissa is not following the Creator – for good reason! As you read this, does someone in your own family come to mind that doesn't know the Creator? Maybe it's a brother or sister, or a mom or dad. Perhaps an uncle or aunt or friend? Draw a picture of that person below and then lay hands on the picture and pray for that person to get to know Jesus as a close friend.

Day 19

"Why don't you pray Cassie?" Grandma encouraged.

Cassie nodded eagerly and all the cougars closed their eyes, "Dear Creator, thank You for keeping us all safe today from Willie Walters and for teaching me about caring for my family. I pray for my Aunt Clarissa that You would keep her safe. Help her to see that she needs You. And please let her come visit soon. Amen."

"Amen," the older cougars repeated.

"Thank you for praying Cassie, the Creator always hears our prayers and honours them. I cannot wait to see what He will do next!" Grandma Cougar said softly. Caleb and Ma nodded in agreement.

There was a comfortable silence that followed this statement as all began to wonder what the Creator would do next. Little did they know it would happen so fast - for there came a sudden, soft knock at the den entrance. Grandma slowly stood up and moved towards the entrance with her children and grandchild following behind her. They came to the den entrance and there they saw the answer to their prayers.

Clarissa stood in the doorway!

Think about how great it is to know that God answers our prayers! And though they aren't always answered right away or in the way we might expect, He always answers.

Encourage a lost family member! Do you remember the family member (or friend) that you prayed for in yesterday's devotional? Spend some time making a special card letting that person know you are thinking about them. A good idea would be to ask Jesus what He would want you to say. You could invite them to church, write down a happy memory that you have with them in it – there are endless possibilities.

Before you send the card, make sure to have a parent read it. Can you pray together with a parent that the card would be an encouragement?

Day 20

"Clarissa!" Grandma cried in disbelief. "What are you doing here?"

Clarissa smiled sheepishly. "I-I was passing through this part of the woods and-and I thought I should come and say hi," she said softly, clearly a little uncomfortable.

"Oh well, you are always welcome here Clarissa, you are family after all!" Grandma Cougar said sweetly as she moved forwards and nuzzled her daughter. Clarissa smiled.

"W-would you like to stay for a while?" Cassie suddenly piped up from the back of the group.

Clarissa looked to Cassie and smiled softly. "A-alright, if that's alright with everyone else?" Clarissa said softly. Everyone nodded eagerly.

"Come on inside little sis', we got a lot to catch up on. It's been a long time since we've talked," Caleb offered.

"Yes, in fact there is something I have been wanting to talk to you about Mama," Clarissa said softly as she looked back to Grandma Cougar.

"What is that dear?" Grandma Cougar asked. Clarissa hesitated for a moment before she smiled, her blue eyes twinkling.

"I want to talk to you about the Creator. I have been thinking on this for a long, long time now and-and I would like to hear more about Him," Clarissa said.

Grandma Cougar's eyes widened before a beaming grin crossed her face. "Of course, of course, we can all talk about it!" Grandma Cougar said in pure joy as she guided her daughter into the house.

Cassie followed the adults back into the den, her eyes wide with disbelief. The Creator really did answer their prayers! *Thank You Creator!* Cassie's mind cried in joy! *Thank You, thank You, thank You!*

Work on memorizing Matthew 25:35, 40 *For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home...And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'*