

# Stories of Faith – 7

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# The Big Bang Theory

Some people believe in the 'big bang' theory. That is, that somewhere out in space, billions of years ago, there was a big explosion of particles coming together. This led to the formation of the universe as we know it.

Some people also believe that somewhere in the middle of that big bang, the correct substances for the formation of life came together by accident. The first living single cell was formed. Eventually, the single cell divided in two, then in two again and a new living thing was formed. As cells kept dividing and changing over millions and millions of years, more and more new living creatures were made.

When a person believes that the world began this way, this person is believing in the theory of EVOLUTION. A theory is an idea which has yet to be tested and proved. It is not scientific fact, and yet so many people accept it as fact. Have you ever watched programs on T.V., or read books which claim that rocks or certain species of animals are millions of years old? This information is based on evolution. The theory of evolution is very different from the account on creation written in God's history book, Genesis.

The person who invented the theory was Darwin, who lived in England over a hundred years ago. At that time, people in Britain believed that God created the universe. However, as Darwin studied the similarities between animals he came up with a new idea. Instead of each species being created after their own kind, as the Bible says, maybe one form of life developed into another, and that one developed into another, and so on. It would take a long, long time for this to happen, so we would have to say then that the animals as we know them took millions and millions of years to form, and not just six days as the Bible says. It also meant that instead of a perfect creation, as God made it in the beginning, the creation would have been imperfect, because a lot of death and suffering had to be involved. According to the theory, the weaker animals died out and only the strongest survived.

While Darwin tried hard to make the theory work, there were many problems with it. To begin with, it was opposite to what the Bible says, and besides, there should have been discoveries of skeletons like 'half-fish-half lizard', or 'half-lizard-half-bird' or even 'half-ape-half-man'. But no skeletons like this had ever been found.

However, many scientists decided they liked the theory. To believe in evolution meant that there was no God who created the universe. If there was no God who set rules to obey, then there was no such thing as sin. People could do as they wanted to without having to obey God. If there was no God, then people could do as they pleased! Yes, people liked the idea. Evolution was here to stay.

## Activities – The Big Bang Theory

### PART A

1. What is the 'big bang' theory?
2. What is a theory?
3. What is the theory of evolution?
4. What might an 'in-between-species' look like?
5. What does the Bible say about 'in-between-species'?
6. What kinds of fossils are actually found?
7. Why wouldn't death be part of God's original perfect world?
8. Why would death necessary if living things evolved?
9. When did death come into the world?
10. Why do people want to believe in evolution?
11. How can I help others believe that God did not create the world through evolution?

### PART B - God is creator

#### Read:

Read Genesis 1, then go back and look at Genesis 1:24 again.

If God created animals to reproduce after their own kind, then an elephant could not develop from an amoeba.

#### Think:

Think about the design and order in some of the complex aspects of the creation.

Think about the marvellous design of these:

- birds, and their amazing ability to fly.
- the human body

Such complex design and order could not happen by chance.

*God is Creator – Themes for Christian Studies 7*

## When Wonjuna Made the Great Flood

Many people groups, like the Chinese, the American Indians and the Australian Aborigines told stories about a great flood long before they had any contact with Christianity. Here is one. It is an Australian Aboriginal Legend. Try to pick out the similarities with the Biblical account.

There was once a medicine man called Tanjilli. There was also a man called Umbirri who did not like Tanjilli. He was jealous because Tanjilli was such a famous medicine man. Umbirri was a bad man. He did not belong to Tanjilli's tribe in the first place. He had come to live with them after being chased out of his own tribe for stealing.

Well, Umbirri was a real trouble maker. He decided that he would make Tanjilli look really foolish. There had not been any rain for a long time, so Umbirri suggested to the tribe that Tanjilli should try to make it rain. Umbirri didn't think for a minute that Tanjilli could do this. He only made the suggestion so that Tanjilli would look like a big failure.

Well, Tanjilli went to a secret place and tried to make rain. Soon drops of rain began to fall until everything was soaked. Tanjilli was very proud of himself. He walked around boasting about what he had done.

It rained and it rained. It did not stop raining and the great flood began to flow over the land. The tribe were very frightened for soon they would all be drowned. Tanjilli tried to stop the rain, but he could not. It kept raining for forty days and forty nights. One evening Tanjilli and Umbirri were both washed away. The people were frightened. Then an old man in the tribe called Oolpa called out, "Oh, Great Spirit, tell the rain to come no more." Almost at once the rain stopped falling, and soon after the blue sky showed through.

The tribe was puzzled.

"We know that it was not the medicine man who made the flood," they said, "or he would have not been washed away. Who did send the flood?" they asked.

"Perhaps Wonjuna did," answered one of the members of the tribe. (Wonjuna was the name they gave to the great spirit who made everything.)

They were not really sure, but they all agreed that the loss of Tanjilli and Umbirri was a good thing. Tanjilli, after all, was very proud, and Umbirri was really wicked.

Think about it...

Was the Great Flood really true?

Because people chose to listen to Satan in the Garden of Eden, rather than God, the original plan for a perfect world was destroyed. As time went on, more and

more people populated the earth. Fighting, killing, stealing, idol worship and other evils became so bad that God had to destroy the world with a flood. Only one family obeyed God. Only Noah and his family, along with two of each kind of animal, were saved.

God made a new start, and the earth started populating again. In the geography of every continent, there are signs that once the entire world was covered by a great flood. This evidence helps us to realize that the Bible is true.

Many of the great fossils found today exist because the original animals were buried quickly in soft mud. They were covered over and pressed down by the huge weight of the earth above them. Just as you can preserve a plant by pressing it, so too can animal bones be preserved. Because of the great flood described in the Bible, many fossils were formed as the rushing waters caused land-slides, and the earth beneath the waters became a churning mass.

*God is Creator – Themes for Christian Studies 7*



## Activities – When Wonjuna made the great flood

### PART A

1. What similarities can you see between this story and the Biblical account?  
Comment on:
  - a) the extent of the flood
  - b) the duration of the flood
  - c) what happened to the sinful people
2. If people all around the world have stories of the great flood in their historical records, what does this show us?
3. If the story of the great flood is true, then what should we believe about the rest of Genesis?
4. Why is it important to believe that the events in book of Genesis happened exactly as God said?
5. 5. Many people think that the story of Noah's Ark is a fairy tale. How could you convince others that the Great Flood really happened?

### PART B - God is creator

#### Read:

Because people chose to listen to Satan in the Garden of Eden, rather than God, the original plan for a perfect world was destroyed. As time went on, more and more people populated the earth. Fighting, killing, stealing, idol worship and other evils became so bad that God had to destroy the world with a flood. Only one family obeyed God. Only Noah and his family, along with two of each kind of animal, were saved.

God made a new start, and the earth started populating again. In the geography of every continent, there are signs that the entire world was once covered by a great flood. This evidence helps us to realise that the Bible is true. Many of the great fossils found today exist because the original animals were buried quickly in soft mud. They were covered over and pressed down by the huge weight of the earth above them. Just as you can preserve a plant by pressing it, so too can animal bones be preserved. Because of the great flood described in the Bible, many fossils were formed as the rushing waters caused land-slides, and the earth beneath the waters became a churning mass.

# The Mice in the Piano

## *Introduction*

**Person A:**

Come on now...you don't really believe in that fairy tale about Adam and Eve and all that!

**Person B:**

It's not a fairy tale. I believe it is the only true explanation for not only HOW the world was made, but also WHY.

**Person A:**

What kind of explanation can there possibly be in that fabulous Adam and Eve story! There is no scientific proof that they ever existed. Besides, science has proved that man descended from the ape. We are all products of evolution.

**Person B:**

Science hasn't PROVED evolution. It's only a theory. There is even scientific evidence which casts doubt on whether it is in fact true.

**Person A:**

O.K. O.K. So it is a theory. But I'm sure in time it will be proved.

**Person B:**

Where did you say man evolved from?

**Person A:**

The ape.

**Person B:**

What about the ape. Where did he come from?

**Person A:**

Oh! Right at the start of course, all living creatures evolved from single cells. These cells came together accidentally at first, but gradually, through progress of time, these cells have formed, grown and changed, and grown and changed, and they adapt to their environment, until here we stand.

**Person B:**

So that's it.

**Person A:**

Well, that's it in a very simplified form. Anyone with any education and intellect knows these facts.



**Person B:**

Oh! We are to assume that we, the whole human race, were formed by accident.

**Person A:**

Sure. You don't have to hang on to those old religious ideas. Science is the answer. Who needs God?

**Person B:**

Let me tell you a story.

**Person A:**

O.K. But don't take too long. I've got important things to do you know!

### ***The Grand Player***

A long time ago there lived in a magnificent grand piano, a whole family of mice. There were brother and sister mice, cousins, uncle and aunt mice, as well as a very old, very wise grandfather mouse. The mice had made this piano their home for many years and they loved the beautiful music which was part of their everyday life. Even the oldest of the mice could not remember a time without music. All the mice worshipped the Grand Player who, in his kindness, provided them continuously with the rich and beautiful music which made their wonderful world of sound.

One day, Grandpa Mouse was sitting in his old rocking-chair talking to Thomas, his grandson. Thomas didn't believe that there really was a grand Player because he had never seen him. He asked Grandpa whether he had ever seen the Grand Player.

"No," said Grandpa, "but I know he exists because I hear his music, and I live in the beautiful world of sound he has created for us."

But Thomas still couldn't believe that there really was a Grand Player. He wanted to prove it for himself. Thomas had a cousin called Darwin. He didn't believe that the Grand Player existed either, so the two of them decided that they would go on an expedition in search of the Grand Player.

Well, it took the little mice two weeks of perilous climbing and trekking until finally they arrived at what they were sure was the real solution to the mystery...the true source of the sound. In front of their eyes were big wooden beams. They watched them move, sometimes together, sometimes apart, crashing down upon wires just above them. Although frightened, they were very excited. Here then, was the real source of the sound...not any person, such as the Grand Player, but merely the mechanical motion of wooden beams. The two mice ran home to announce their discovery to the rest of the family.

But Grandpa tried to convince them:

"Those sounds don't just come together by accident. There has to be a Grand Player who created the beautiful sounds we hear."

So, to prove to Grandpa just one more time, the two little mice went back to try and bring home some evidence.

"Maybe I could take my axe and try to chop off a piece of one of those wooden beams," thought Thomas.

Once again the two adventurers left home on a journey of discovery. This time there was a lot more interest shown in their trip. Some of their relatives already believed in the Grand Player.

Well, eventually Thomas and Darwin returned, weary after their long climb, nearly to the top of the grand piano. Immediately the whole family of mice crowded around to see what the two mice had found.

"This time," said Thomas and Darwin, "we have found the real source of the sound. The proof is with us." Darwin brought over a piece of wire and stretched it between two sticks. Thomas hit the wire with a piece of wood.

"Hear that sound!" he said. "You see, we have made a revolutionary discovery. Darwin is going to write a book about it. Yes! It will be called 'The origin of the music'".

Grandpa was very disappointed that the two mice did not actually discover the Grand Player. If they had met with the Grand Player himself, then they would have believed.

## ***Conclusion***

**Person A:**

Well that was a nice story, but what does it have to do with God?

**Person B:**

Don't you see the point? Instead of trying to prove their theory, the two mice really needed to meet the Grand Player. That's like us. We need to put our trust in God, and not just believe in the things we can see. God is a person. He wants to meet each one of us personally. He loves us all you know.

**Person A:**

Well, I must admit you have given me something to think about. I suppose it does take a lot of faith to believe that someone like me came about by accident.

## Activities – he Mice on the Piano

### PART A

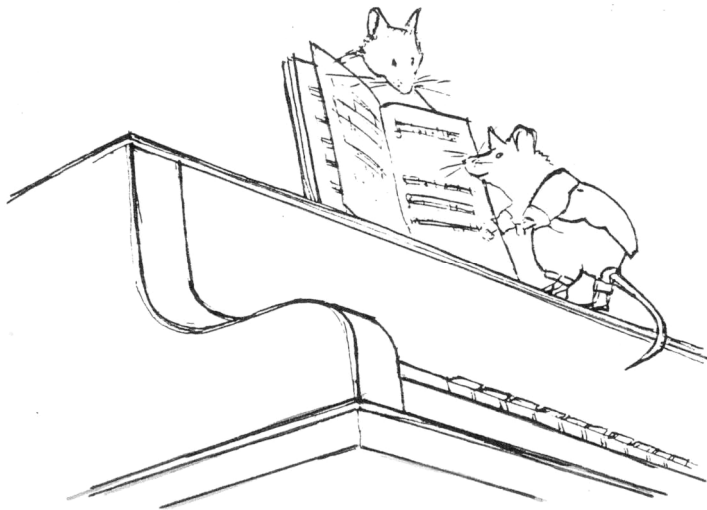
1. Who does the Grand Player represent?
2. What does the piano and the music represent?
3. Why didn't Darwin and Thomas believe in the Grand Player?
4. Why is it that some people will not believe in God?
5. What do we need to have in order to believe in something we can't see or understand? (Hebrews 11:3 & 6)
6. What is faith?
7. Why does evolution say that the earth is millions and millions of years old?
8. How old is the earth according to the Bible: thousands of years or millions of years?
9. Are most nature programs on T.V. based on creation or evolution?
10. What did God mean when He said that people were to be in charge of the plants and animals?

### PART B - God is creator

#### Read:

Even the most intelligent person in the world could not understand how God created the world. God is so much more intelligent and powerful than any human being. That is why we must have faith in what He says.

When God created people, He made them to be His friends. When we know God as our friend, then it becomes easier to have faith in Him.



# Korea's First Missionaries

We don't have to go to a far away place to tell others about Jesus. We can show Christian love in the place where we live. Some people, however, do go to far away places. It is important for Christians who go to foreign lands, to try and understand the people in that place. Here is a story about the first Christian missionaries to Korea. Find Korea on the map.

In the 1880's the first Christian missionaries came to Korea. The Korean people accepted the missionaries because they showed the love of God. The missionaries did not come with a proud attitude. They did not say to the people, "You know nothing about God." Instead, they found out about the Korean's belief in God. To their surprise, they found that the Koreans actually knew something about the true and living God, even though no Christian missionary had ever been there before! The Koreans knew that there was one true God who had created the universe. They called Him by the name 'Hananim'.

The missionaries explained to the Koreans that Hananim had sent His Son to forgive all those who wanted to be forgiven. Hananim's son was born into the Jewish people, not because they were better than any other peoples, but simply because God needed to choose one group. Hananim then asked messengers to go into all the world to call all people to Jesus, the Son of Hananim.

Koreans by the thousands listened to the missionaries with awe. "Here are men and women who know so much more about the true God than even our own king," they thought. "Here are people who pray freely to Hananim in the name of His Son, and get answers!"

Soon there were hundreds of Korean churches being run by their own people. Today, Koreans are still becoming Christians at an amazing rate.

*God is Love – Themes for Christian Studies 7*

## Activities – Korea’s First Missionaries

### PART A

1. How was the gospel spread in the days of the early Christians?
2. How do we spread the Gospel today?
3. If you were a missionary going into a country where the gospel had never been preached, how would you tell the people about Jesus?
4. Why do you think the Korean people listened to the first missionaries?
5. Describe the Christian church in Korea today.
6. What does Jesus command all Christians to do? (Mark 16:15-18)
7. Read about Paul's call to go to Macedonia, from Acts 16:6-15.
8. How obedient was Paul in obeying God's call? (verse 10)
9. How did the Lord help Paul? (verse 14)
10. How can I share God's love with people who do not know Him?

### PART B - God is love

#### Read:

Jesus has told us that we must be willing to give everything we have to follow Him. He has also told us to go into all the world to preach the Gospel. Going to other places to share God's love may mean that we have to give up certain things. Why would we want to do that? Loving God is obeying His call. When He calls us, then we must be willing to go.

# God Protects the Israelites Again

We remember how God protected the Israelites as they came out of Egypt, and as they travelled those forty years through the desert. Now, after forty years, it was time for them to enter the land that God had promised to them. Moses was no longer leading the people. Moses, being very old, had died, and Joshua was now the leader.

Joshua was faced with two problems. The land across the Jordan River, which God promised to the Israelites, was occupied by enemies. The second problem was how to get a huge group of people, including young children and animals, across a huge river. Joshua knew that God would somehow solve these problems. He knew what God was saying, and he told the people.

"Be strong and brave," says the Lord. "I will go with you."

Joshua chose two men to cross the river, so that they could investigate the city on the other side. It was the city of Jericho. The men were strong swimmers, and made it safely across the river. Then they waited for their chance. When the guards were not looking, they made a run for it. They entered the city unnoticed, quickly looked around, then ran to a house built on the wall of the city. Pressing themselves against the wall, they peered in the window. Inside the house was a woman. They went into the woman's house and asked whether they could rest a while before attempting the strenuous river crossing again. The woman's name was Rahab. The woman allowed the two men to stay and rest. It was night time by now. They would have to spend the night there and cross the river in the morning.

However, trouble lay ahead for the two men. The king heard that the two men had come to spy on their city, and he also heard that they were staying with Rahab! The king ordered that the two men be brought out from Rahab's house.

"Where are the men!" demanded the king's messenger.

"Some men did come to my house," she said, "but I do not know where they were from. They left at sundown before the city gate was closed. I didn't find out where they were going, but if you start after them quickly, you will catch them."

So the two men hid safely in Rahab's house while the king's soldiers went looking for them down by the river. As the two men talked to Rahab they found out that the people of Jericho were afraid of the Israelites. This was important information. They could plan their battle tactics accordingly.

Rahab knew that the Israelites were planning to take the city. She made a deal with the two men. She asked them to save her, along with her family, in payment for the protection she had provided. It was agreed.

Rahab lived in a house built into the city wall, so she was able to let the men down from the window by a rope. She told them to hide in the hills for three days, so that the king's men would not find them. Before parting, the men told Rahab to tie a red cord onto the window they had been let down from, so that they would know which was Rahab's house, next time they came back to invade the city. They would make sure that Rahab and her family were kept safe.

After three days, the two men went back to Joshua and reported, "We are sure that the Lord has given us the whole country. All the people are terrified of us!"

Now Joshua was confident that they could enter the Promised Land. But how could they cross the river? It was in full flood. God did another miracle. As soon as they stepped into the river, the water stopped flowing. The flow downstream to the Dead Sea was completely cut off, and the people were able to walk across on dry ground.

Seeing the Lord do this great miracle made the people of Jericho even more afraid of the Israelites. The Israelites took the city after marching around the walls seven times. After seven times they gave a great shout and blew their trumpets. The city was theirs!

*God is Protector – Themes for Christian Studies 7*

## **Activities**

### **PART A**

1. How long had the Israelites been walking around in the desert?
2. What had God promised them?
3. What were the two problems Joshua faced?
4. How did God protect the two men who went to investigate the city?
5. What did Rahab say to the king's messenger?
6. What did the two Israelite men promise Rahab as a reward for her kindness?
7. Why was Joshua confident that the land would be theirs?
8. How did they cross the river?
9. What can you do when you are facing serious problems?

### **PART B - God is protector**

#### **Read:**

God is a shelter for us when we are in trouble. Whenever we have a problem we can go to Him. Just as a castle provided shelter and protection for people in earlier times, God provides protection for us. He is a strong tower; a mighty fortress.

# Esther, the Beautiful Queen

Many years ago, in the country of Babylon, lived king Ahasuerus. Many of God's special people, the Jews, were living in Babylon at the time of his rule. There was someone in the kingdom, of notable position, who did not like the Jews, and was devising a wicked plot to get rid of them. It was the king's high servant, Hamaan.

Hamaan was a very proud man. All the people of the kingdom had to bow down to him. He had a lot of influence, even over the king.

Now the king was looking for a new queen. He had dismissed the previous queen Vashti, because she had displeased him. For his new queen, the king wanted the most beautiful young lady in the whole kingdom. The king held a beauty contest. When the king had seen all the beautiful young ladies in the kingdom, he chose Esther. The king did not know it, but Esther was a Jew.

One day, Esther's father, Mordecai, found out that two men were planning to kill the king. He told Esther, and Esther told the king. The two men were caught and put to death. The king was pleased with Mordecai for saving his life.

Hamaan was jealous of Mordecai's favour with the king. He knew Mordecai was a Jew. That made him hate him even more. He asked Mordecai to bow to him but Mordecai refused. This made Hamaan very angry. He decided that now was the time to put his wicked plan into action. He planned to have all Jews in the kingdom killed.

The first step in his plan was to influence the king. (The king still didn't know that Esther and Mordecai were Jewish.)

Hamaan bowed before the king:

"The Jews who live in your land do not obey your rules, O King," he lied. "They are of no good to you. Why don't you have them all killed?"

As well as being proud, Hamaan was also rich. He promised to give the king 10,000 pieces of silver if he would make the new rule. The king agreed. Soon, word of the new rule was around the kingdom. When Mordecai found out, he was very distressed. He wrote a letter to his daughter:

"You must go to the king," he wrote. "You must talk the king into abolishing the new rule. You must save your people!"

Esther sent back a reply:

"Don't you know that a person cannot go into the King's presence unless he is called for? The penalty for disobeying is death. However, if he were to hold out his golden sceptre to me, then I would know that it is alright to go."



Esther was afraid to go, but finally she decided that she must. She asked her father to gather all the Jewish people together and to do nothing but pray for three days. They were not even to eat.

On the third day Queen Esther dressed herself as beautifully as possible and presented herself to the king. The king held out his golden sceptre to her. She came and touched the tip of it. Then she invited the king to a special banquet.

"What do you request?" asked the king on the second day of the banquet.

"Please save me and my people from being killed," Esther pleaded.

"Who would dare touch you?" asked the king.

"Hamaan has lied to you, O king. The Jewish people, of whom I am one, do not disobey your laws. It is just a wicked plot,"

Esther replied.

The king was filled with rage. He commanded that Hamaan be hanged, and a new rule was made to protect the Jews from death. Then he gave Hamaan's place of honour to Mordecai. Because of Esther's bravery and obedience to God, all Jews in the kingdom of Babylon were saved from death.

*God is Protector – Themes for Christian Studies 7*

## Activities

1. Where were many of the Jews living, when this story took place?
2. Who was devising a plot to get rid of the Jews?
3. Describe Hamaan.
4. Why did the king choose Esther for his new queen?
5. Did the king know that she was a Jew?
6. Who was Mordecai?
7. Why was the king pleased with Mordecai?
8. Why did Hamaan hate Mordecai?
9. How did Hamaan plan to get Mordecai, and all the other Jews killed?
10. How did Esther save her people from death?
11. Why was it such a risk to go to the king without being called for?
12. Why would you say that Esther showed great courage?



# God's Smuggler

Many people today show bravery in serving God. Some people face dangers as they take His word to places where it is forbidden. They must trust God to protect them. Brother Andrew is a person who has served in such places.

Andrew, son of a blacksmith, grew up in a typical Dutch town. Living in Holland, a free country, Andrew had great concern for people in countries where the gospel could not be preached. Some of these countries were Russia, Hungary, Albania and China. In those days, the Socialist government did not allow religious freedom.

When Andrew grew older he conducted missions to these countries. With his car packed with Bibles, concealed in all sorts of secret compartments, he would drive his car through border crossings. As he did, he prayed that the Lord would 'close the eyes' of the border guards. God did it time and time again.

Here is a story about one of Andrew's experiences. He had just made it through the Hungarian border without being caught. God had again made seeing eyes blind. He drove on through the beautiful country side which followed the River Danube. He started to feel hungry so decided to stop for some lunch. He drove down a sandy lane and stopped at a little clearing at the water's edge. In order to get to the camp stove, Andrew had to move several boxes of gospel literature that the guards had just overlooked. No sooner had he opened the can of peas and carrots when he heard the roar of a speed boat approaching. The boat was heading towards Andrew at full throttle. In the bow, stood a soldier with a drawn machine-gun. At the last possible instant the boat swerved and coasted to a neat landing at the river's edge. Andrew now saw that there were two other soldiers in the boat. The man in the front leapt ashore followed by another one.

"Lord," Andrew prayed, "help me not to be afraid."

The first soldier kept the machine-gun on Andrew while the other ran to the car. Andrew kept stirring the peas and carrots as he heard the car door open.

"Well," said Andrew, "it is certainly nice to have you drop in this way. Would you care to join me?"

Andrew reached into his picnic box and drew out two extra plates. He motioned to the soldier to come and sit down. The soldier stared stonily and shook his head, as if to say, "I'm not going to be bribed." Andrew could hear the other soldier poking around. Any moment now he was going to ask about those boxes.

"Well," said Andrew, "if you don't mind, I'm going to go ahead and eat while the food is hot."

Andrew bowed his head and prayed. Then an amazing thing happened. While he prayed there was no sound from the soldier inspecting his car. Just as soon as

he had finished praying, the door slammed. Andrew heard the sound of footsteps coming rapidly towards him. He picked up his fork and started to eat. For a moment both soldiers stood over him. Then abruptly they whirled around. Without looking behind them, they ran down to their boat, jumped in, and roared off in a spray of white. That was the last he saw of them.

*God is Protector – Themes for Christian Studies 7*

### **Activities**

1. Name some of the countries that Andrew went to.
2. Why did he want to go to these countries in particular?
3. What miracles did God do for Andrew, to enable him to get Bibles into these countries?
4. Why would you say that Andrew showed great courage?
5. What do you think could have happened to Andrew if he had been caught?
6. Write about a time when God has protected you, or someone close to you.

## Fifth Man in the Flight

I was quite comfortable in the cockpit of my single-seat jet fighter when God intervened in my life in 1976.

I was a major in the United States Marine Corps. I was content with my lifestyle and career as a naval aviator. My church upbringing had taught me that there was a God and I knew about the historical Jesus, but I had long since ignored this training. There was no room for God in my life.

God was soon to change that. For thirteen years I had been a jet pilot, flying missions throughout many countries in different types of aircraft and in all kinds of weather conditions. I had experienced much combat in action.

In 1970 I was one of sixteen pilots selected by the Marine Corps to fly a uniquely new jet, the vertical takeoff-and-land AV8A Harrier. My squadron, VMA 513, was stationed in Japan, preparing to "transpac" seven Harriers from Japan to the United States. They would fly in two divisions one hour apart. This "transpac" (trans-Pacific flight) was a very extensive mission. Thirteen large aerial refuelling and maintenance tankers were needed to service the Harriers.

I was looking forward to the flight, and to the re-union with my wife and two children. My wife had recently become a Christian, but I had no time for her Christianity.

We were soon soaring over the ocean. The aerial refuelling, which is a precise and sensitive manoeuvre, went well. We were now past Hawaii, en route to San Francisco, unaware of what lay ahead. Approximately 1000 miles east of Hawaii we encountered unexpected thunderstorms. We tried to find an area that was less difficult for refuelling. We 'plugged' into the refuelling basket just as we entered the storm. The next 100 miles turned out to be one of the wildest rides I had ever experienced. After what seemed like an eternity, we broke out of the storm into a thick layer of greyish cloud. Our visibility was limited to about two miles. We proceeded to re-establish our formation. While rejoining my flight, however, I lost my formation airspeed by deflecting my nozzles a fraction of a second too long. I began to fall behind the other three aircraft.

They couldn't pull their power back since they were climbing. I was rapidly becoming a flight of one. The three aircraft ahead became small dots as I continued to fall further behind.

"I'll be able to catch up with them later," I thought to myself, "when they have reached the necessary height. Then they'll be able to level off and pull their speed back."

Suddenly I sensed a presence to my left. I looked over and to my astonishment I saw another Harrier flying next to me. But one of us was upside down.

I was looking down on the pilot, canopy to canopy. His face, turned toward me, couldn't be seen because of his helmet visor and oxygen mask. Nevertheless, I saw that his gaze was calmly fixed upon me. He was flying rock-steady, perfect wing position, only a few feet away.

There couldn't possibly be another aircraft of any type in my vicinity...Did I over-fly my flight? Am I flying through their formation? Are we going to have a mid air collision?

As these questions flashed through my mind I fixed my eyes on the altimeter. Until now I had neglected my instruments. To my utter disbelief, the altimeter showed that I had lost more than a mile of altitude. I thought I was climbing, but in reality I was diving full speed toward the ocean. I had been experiencing something called vertigo, and had unknowingly rolled to a near-inverted position.

I righted my position then looked for the other plane, but it was nowhere in sight. My heart was pounding. I couldn't deny what I had just seen: another Harrier that wasn't supposed to be there. After joining the other three Harriers it slowly dawned upon me that something supernatural had just happened in my life. The appearance of that fifth aircraft, which caused me to check my instruments, had saved me from a fatal crash into the Pacific. And the timing was perfect; had I lost even one more mile of altitude, I would have insufficient fuel to fly the remaining distance to San Francisco. When I finally landed at San Francisco I had approximately four minutes of fuel left.

Reunited with my family, I didn't share my experience right away with my wife. For months I went through an inner struggle, knowing that God wanted me to give my life to Him. Finally, I asked Jesus to forgive me for my sins and to become Lord of my life. Jesus was now fully revealed to me as the One who had saved me out over the Pacific. In church one Sunday, I heard about the three men who were thrown into the fiery furnace for not bowing to an idol. In the fire there appeared to be four men. The form of the fourth was like the Son of God. The three were unharmed. I realized that the fourth man in the furnace had been the fifth man in my flight.

*God is Protector – Themes for Christian Studies 7*

## Activities

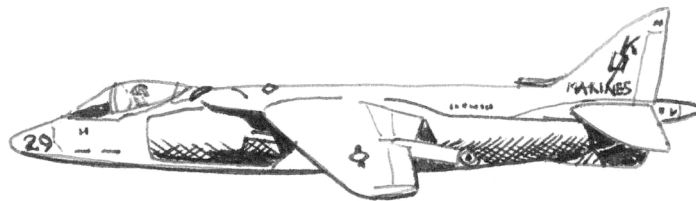
### PART A

1. What was special about the AV8A Harrier?
2. Where did the flight take place?
3. How did the harriers refuel?
4. What made the pilot look at his instruments?
5. What is an altimeter?
6. What did the altimeter show?
7. What is vertigo?
8. How many harriers were there in the original formation?
9. How did the appearance of the fifth harrier save the pilot's life?
10. Where do you think the fifth harrier came from?
11. Find out what happened in the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. (Daniel 3:8-25)
12. Why was the fifth man in flight similar to the fourth man in the fiery furnace in the Bible story?
13. How did this miracle of protection cause the pilot to become a Christian?

### PART B - God is protector

#### Read:

Nothing is impossible with God. God can save us from situations that look impossible. God also prevents us from walking into danger. We may never know how many times God has saved from a dangerous situation, without us even knowing it!



# Miracles in Indonesia

In Indonesia, in the 1970s, amazing things happened as God's Spirit moved throughout the land. This true story tells us about one of these miracles.

The story took place in a mountain village. Life in the mountains was not always easy. The flimsy palm huts were no match for the cruel winds. The huts contained little furniture. The bed, for instance, was nothing more than four notched sticks stuck in the dirt in the shape of a bed. The pillow was a small log placed at the end of the bed. There were no blankets. A fire was built in the middle of the house, filling the room with choking smoke.

In one of these huts lived a man named Stefanus Toto. For him, his house had become a grimy prison. He couldn't run outside in the morning to take a breath of fresh air. Nor could he see the smile of the sun. Stefanus was paralyzed.

He did nothing but lie on his scratchy bed all day. He couldn't move and he couldn't talk. In fact he couldn't do anything for himself. His wife and children had to feed and dress him. Stefanus was terribly depressed, until one day, a Christian lady named Ibu Marow came to pray for him.

She laid her hands on his head and prayed a simple prayer: 'Dear Jesus, I know you don't want Stefanus to be sick like this. Please heal him. We know you have the power. Thank you that you are going to give him a brand new wonderful life. Amen.'

Stefanus fell into a deep sleep. For the first time in months he slept like a contented baby. Sometime during the night, while his whole being was relaxed, God's magnificent power entered his body and healed him completely from the paralysis.

When Stephanus woke up he suddenly realized that something wonderful had happened. He sat up slowly, then swung his legs over the side of the bed. He walked towards the door, free from his horrible dungeon forever. He couldn't stop thanking God for the new life he felt in his body.

*God is Protector – Themes for Christian Studies 7*

## Activities – Miracles in Indonesia

### PART A

1. Where is Indonesia?
2. Describe life in an Indonesian mountain village.
3. Describe the life of Stefanus.
4. What happened when a Christian lady prayed for him?
5. Can we expect God to demonstrate His power today, or was it only demonstrated in Bible times?

### The Disciples Receive Power

1. Read the story from Acts 2:1-17 and verse 22.
2. In what way were the disciples more powerful once the Holy Spirit had come upon them? (See Acts 3:1-10)
3. Find out how Barnabas and Paul used God's power to put a stop to the work of Elymas the magician. (Acts 13:4-12).

### PART B - God is powerful

#### Read:

God is the sources of power. We see His power in the creation. When we look at the power of the ocean, the power in a storm, the power of the solar system, we know that only a powerful God could have created them. When we need power in our lives, we can look to God, and He will give us the power we need.

#### Think: How can I demonstrate God's power in my life?

Write down the ones you would like to ask God for. Add some more to the list if you can.

- ◆ Power to pray for those who are sick.
- ◆ Power to say 'no' when tempted.
- ◆ Power to overcome problems.
- ◆ Power to forgive.
- ◆ Power to control anger.
- ◆ Power in speaking the truth at the right time.





## How are Pearls Formed?

A pearl is born when something very tiny gets inside the oyster and irritates the animal. It may be a grain of sand. When the sand grain gets between the shell and the soft body of the shell-fish, the oyster protects itself by covering the intruder with the same pearly substance that lines its shell. Few pearls are large, and few are perfect in shape. As few as one in a thousand pearl oysters may contain a pearl of any value.

These days pearls can be 'farmed' or 'cultured' by placing tiny grains of sand in the pearl oysters. The oysters are then carefully fed and protected, in special cages. Then, at the right time, opened up and the precious pearls are removed.

In the olden days, however, people did not know how to culture pearls. To find pearls, people had to search for them. Divers would collect thousands of oyster shells. Sometimes they would open the shells on the boat. Sometimes they would take them to the shore and open them there.

Imagine that you are a deep sea diver looking for pearls. You know the type of shells which might contain the pearls, so you keep your eyes alert. When you have collected enough shells, you start to open each one carefully with your special tool. You patiently open one shell after another, but no luck. You throw them back into the sea. Then finally you find a shell containing a pearl!

Finding pearls is a bit like finding hidden treasure. Things of value are not always easy to find. This is also true with finding gold and precious stones. In mining, tons of earth must be extracted in order to find tiny portions of precious minerals.

Panning for gold is not easy either. If you want to pan for gold you would go to a stream that is likely to contain gold, then fill your pan with water and stones from the stream. Then swish and swirl the mixture, looking carefully all the time for any little lumps of gold that may be amongst the stones. In your pocket you would have a little container for your findings.

Searching for truth is a bit like searching for treasure because truth is something of great value. Like the gold panner or the pearl diver, we also have to be very careful in our search, because we don't want to overlook it. The Bible is the source of truth. Understanding what God has to say is like finding treasure because having God's word in our heart is so valuable.

*God is Truth – Themes for Christian Studies 7*

## Activities – How Pearls are formed

1. How does the oyster protect itself from the irritation of a grain of sand caught inside its shell?
2. How are pearls 'farmed'?
3. How did people get pearls before there were pearl farms?
4. Why do you think pearls are so expensive?
5. Read Matthew 13: 44-45. Why would you say this pearl is very expensive?
6. Read Matthew 6:33. What is the most valuable thing in the world?
7. Read Luke 11:9. Why is searching for a pearl a bit like searching for the truth about God?



# How Can I Find the True God?

In some countries it is not easy to find the truth about God, because people grow up learning to worship false gods.

Bindu lived in India and belonged to a Hindu family. Her father and grandfather and great grandfather before her had spent their lives as Hindu holy men. Another name for a Hindu holy man is a Yogi. To be a great Yogi you had to sit in a special yogi position day after day, meditating and reading the sacred book of Hinduism. Meditating in the Hindu way is to sit very still and allow your mind to think of nothing. In this way the Yogis would try to contact the many gods they worshipped. They would often experience the presence of these gods. Really they were experiencing the power of evil spirits. Although Bindu didn't really know her father, she thought that he was someone very special.

Bindu and her brother and sister were instructed in Hinduism each day. With their mother, they would sit in the prayer room, in front of the altar with its many little statues. They repeated certain prayers to these gods of clay, wood or brass.

From the age of five Bindu was taught to meditate. She would sit with crossed legs and stare at nothing. For a past-time the children would draw pictures of these gods and pin them up on their walls.

Some of the gods were terrifying, but the Hindus still worshipped them because of their great power. One of the gods, Shiva, was most fearsome. In fact his real title was Shiva the destroyer. Sometimes Bindu would have nightmares of Shiva, who presented himself as a huge cobra poised ready for attack.

One of the most sacred gods was the cow. All Hindus took great care of the cow, giving it prime place in family life. They were horrified at the thought of people who actually ate their god! In fact they were horrified at people who ate any living creature, for they believed in reincarnation. That is the belief that when something or someone dies, they return in the next life as another creature. You dare not tread on an ant, because it could just be your great grandmother.

Had the Hindus believed in the God of the Bible they would have realized that God created everything after its own kind, that people were far more special to God than animals, and that life after death was not here on this earth at all.

Bindu was taught to respect her father, the great Yogi, as someone so special that he could have been a god himself. "Surely the great creator of the universe is the only true God!" she thought one day. "Not the great Yogis, not Shiva, with his horrible evil eyes, not all the other gods. Surely there is only one true God, and surely He is a good God!"

"God, the true God and creator, please show me the truth," she prayed one day, to a God she had never prayed to before.

As Bindu grew older she met some Christians, who told her how she could meet the true God and know Him as a loving friend. Bindu knew what she must do. She opened her heart to Jesus, and at once felt such happiness and peace. She no longer experienced the terrible nightmares. She had found the God of love. She also knew that Jesus wasn't just another one of several million gods. He was the only true God.

Finding the truth about God is easier for some people than others. Some children grow up in Christian families. Others grow up in places where the name of Jesus is not known. However, even in these places it is possible to know the truth about God by looking at the greatness of His creation. The Bible says that God has shown His great power through the things He has made. God has placed within every person a desire to find out the truth about Himself.

*God is Truth – Themes for Christian Studies 7*



## Activities – How can I find the true God?

### PART A

1. Why is it difficult for people who grow up in a Hindu society to become Christians?
2. Is it impossible for them to become Christians?
3. Some of the false gods worshipped by the Hindus really had power. Where do you think the power came from?
4. How were the children taught the Hindu religion?
5. Why do you think Bindu had nightmares?
6. How can we recognise a false god?
7. Why did the Hindus take great care of the cow?
8. What does God say about worshipping false gods?
9. Can a person worship the true God and other gods at the same time?
10. How can we tell if a person is really a Christian?
11. Many people in our society today practise a form of exercise called Yoga, which is taken directly from the Hindu religion. Do you think Christians should practise Yoga?
12. Why do you think that God wants Christians to 'Go into all the world'?

### PART B - God is truth

*Copy these Bible verses and fill in the missing words. Look up the Bible to find them.*

You will \_\_\_\_\_ the truth and the truth will make you \_\_\_\_\_. (John 8:32)  
Jesus said, "I am the \_\_\_\_\_, the truth and the \_\_\_\_\_." (John 14:6)  
Jesus said, "Come and \_\_\_\_\_ me." (Matthew 4:19)

# Where's the Gold?

Early one morning a man was visited by his neighbour.

"Quickly, quickly!" said the neighbour. Someone's found gold in the river.

"How could that be?" said the man. "I've lived near the river all my life and there's never been gold in the river."

The man decided to go away for a few days. Meanwhile the news spread. People came with their pans. Sure enough, they were finding gold. There had been a landslide upstream. Part of the bank, which contained a seam of gold, had fallen into the river.

When the man returned, some days later, all the gold had been collected. Because the man did not believe the news about the gold, he missed out on finding any.

The Bible is like treasure. Because many people do not believe the Good News of the Bible, they miss out on finding true happiness in life. Knowing Jesus is the best treasure we can have.

*God is Truth – Themes for Christian Studies 7*

## Activities

### PART A

1. Why didn't the man believe there was gold in the river?
2. Why did the man miss out on getting any gold?
3. Why can people miss out on finding the truth about Jesus?
4. Why is the Bible like a treasure chest?
5. Jesus said " \_\_\_\_\_ and it shall be given. \_\_\_\_\_ and you shall find."  
(Luke 11:9)

### PART B - God is truth

#### Read:

Some people never think about *who* made the world and everything in it. They never think about what happens when we die. They just live their life without ever thinking about God. However, God has told us that we have no excuse for not knowing the truth. The creation tells of the wonders of God. If we seek, we will find the truth.

"For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities - His eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse." Romans 1:20

# The Doubters

After Jesus died, and rose again, there were some followers who could not believe that Jesus really had risen from the dead. Two of his friends were walking along a road when Jesus himself started walking along beside them. They did not recognize this person to be Jesus because they did not believe.

"Why are you so sad?" asked Jesus.

"Haven't you heard?" said the one called Cleopas. "Our best friend Jesus was crucified on Friday."

"But haven't you read the Scripture?" asked Jesus. "Doesn't the scripture say that He will come alive again on the third day?"

As Jesus started to explain the scripture to them they started to believe.

When they got to the town of Emmaus, two friends begged Jesus to stay with them. (They still didn't know it was Jesus). As they were having a meal together the two friends suddenly recognized Him. Then Jesus disappeared.

Now they believed that Jesus had risen. "Wasn't it exciting," they said to each other, "when Jesus talked to us on the road and explained the true meaning of the scriptures!" They went at once to tell the other followers.

*God is Truth – Themes for Christian Studies 7*

## Activities

### PART A

1. Who was walking with the two friends?
2. Why didn't they recognise Him?
3. When did they start to believe?
4. Why is it important for us to read the Bible?
5. These two friends of Jesus were not the only ones who didn't believe the truth at first. Name another friend of Jesus who also doubted. Find out from John 20:24-29.
6. How can I help others to believe in Jesus, even though we can't see Him?

### PART B - God is truth

#### Read:

Perhaps it is harder for people to believe the truth about Jesus today because they cannot see Jesus. However, God has sent the Holy Spirit to help us believe the truth. Jesus told His disciples, "When the Holy Spirit comes, He will lead you into all truth." (John 16:13). The Bible tells us that we must trust God in everything, and not rely upon what we think we know. Proverbs 3:5 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding." Trusting God, and believing His word is having FAITH.

# A King Discovers the True God

In South America, over 5000 years ago, lived the king of the Inca people. His name was King Pachacuti. The king organized the building of huge palaces and forts, as well as a beautiful temple in honour of the sun god who the Incas called Inti. Inti, of course, was a false god, but the Incas didn't know that.

Then one day, the king fell upon a great discovery. If the light of Inti can be dimmed by clouds, then Inti cannot be all-powerful. He also thought about how restless Inti was, always moving across the sky. Surely such a great god would not be so restless. And why did Inti only give light some of the time?

Suddenly the king realized that he had only been worshipping a thing as a god. Inti was not a real god at all.

"If Inti is not the true god, then who is?" he thought.

The king realised that there was a more powerful One, the Lord, the Creator of all things. He called this God, Viracocha.

"A God who created all things deserves worship," thought the king. He called all his priests of Inti. He commanded that from that time forward, Inti be only respected as something created by Someone much more powerful. He also commanded that now all prayer be directed to Viracocha. The king wrote many hymns to Viracocha, the great God of the universe.

Unfortunately, the king thought that He would be more special if he was the only one worshipping Viracocha. He therefore decided to keep it a secret. Only his own priests and closest friends knew about the true God. The rest of the Incas went on worshipping Inti, the sun god.

Many years later, when Christian missionaries arrived, they found the hymns written by the king. They were amazed that the king had discovered the true God, without their help.

This true story shows us that God can reveal Himself to people who have never been told of Him, if they are truly searching with all their heart. Peter, one of the disciples of Jesus was another who searched for the truth. When Jesus called him to leave his fishing nets and follow Him, something inside Peter said 'Go!' As Peter spent time with Jesus, day after day, he knew that Jesus was a very special person. No one had ever told Peter that Jesus was God's Son, but somehow he just knew.

One day, Jesus asked, "Who do you think I am?"  
Straight away Peter answered, "You are the son of God."



## **Activities – A King Discovers the True God**

1. How did the king come to realise that Inti was a false god?
2. Why did the king not want others to know about the great God who had made the universe?
3. What is the key to finding the true God? (Deuteronomy 4:29)
4. What did Jesus say to Peter in Matthew 16:17?

*God is Truth – Themes for Christian Studies 7*

# What Happened to God's Perfect Creation?

Can you imagine a lion and a lamb lying peacefully together in the same field? It is hard to imagine but that is how it was in God's original perfect creation. That is how it will be in heaven where once again things will be perfect. Animals were originally made to live in peace with one another. There was no killing. All animals were vegetarians.

Can you imagine a world where people never fight or hate each other?... where people are never selfish or greedy? That is how it once was.

Can you imagine a world where no one gets sick or injured?... where no one gets old and dies? God originally made people and animals to have perfectly healthy bodies.

Can you imagine a world where there are no droughts or floods or earthquakes or other natural disasters? Can you imagine a world where there is no famine? The temperature is perfect and the vegetation is green and lush. There is no pollution to spoil the beautiful environment.

This is the creation as God made it. It was His plan. We know about the effects of Adam and Eve's sin upon God's perfect world. Suddenly, it was no longer perfect. The earth was now under a curse. Thorns and thistles started growing, choking the beautiful plants. Ugly creatures with bites and stings started emerging. Animals started attacking each other. The world started becoming polluted. Worst of all, the men and women, whom God had created to be His friends, started going their own way. They rejected Him and did the things that displeased Him.

Much of the pollution we see today is due to greed, selfishness and carelessness. The state of our world is due to the sin of mankind. If people were really God's caretakers, as God asked us to be, then people would think more about the consequences of the things they do.

Although we all sin, we can ask for God's forgiveness. Jesus made this possible. By becoming a man, He took the punishment that WE deserved. If we have received forgiveness through Jesus then we can be in right relationship with our Heavenly Father.

Some people blame God for the sin and suffering in the world. They can understand why a robber or murderer may suffer, but what about innocent children? God is not to blame for suffering. When He created people, He placed THEM in charge of the Creation. People were not created like puppets. They can think for themselves and make responsible decisions. That's the way God wanted it to be. He wanted people to CHOOSE to love and obey Him.

Unfortunately, mankind did not choose to obey God's laws, and as a result, the world is in a mess. In the beginning, God set a plan in motion. This plan could not be changed. Because sin was not part of God's plan, there had to be consequences for disobedience. Adam and Eve chose to allow Satan into the world. They chose to give Satan power. Because of this, the world must continue to live under Satan's influence.

One day, in God's perfect timing, He will make a new heaven and earth, where everything will be perfect once again and Satan will be completely destroyed. However until that time, God has provided special protection for those who love and obey Him. It is the armour of God. (Ephesians 6)

*God is Pure – Themes for Christian Studies 7*

## **Activities**

### **PART A**

1. How different is today's world from the original Creation? In your answer, consider:
  - ◆ actions of people
  - ◆ animal behaviour
  - ◆ disease
  - ◆ ageing
  - ◆ the environment
2. What are some of the environmental disasters that are occurring in today's world?
3. How does God feel about all the destruction of His beautiful world?
4. How does God feel about sin?
5. What was His first act of judgement upon a world destroying itself? (Genesis 6-8)
6. Is there anyone in the world who is perfect? (Romans 3:23)
7. God is not responsible for the sin and suffering in the world? Who is?

### **PART B - God is pure**

#### **Read:**

God is pure, holy and righteous. He is also a person; this means He has feelings, just like you and me. Imagine how He feels about pollution... not just pollution of His beautiful world, but pollution of people's hearts and minds.

# Jeremiah at the Potter's House

## **Scene 1**

Jeremiah is praying before the Lord.

### **Voice:**

Jeremiah! Go down to the potter's house. There is a message that I will give you as you watch the potter at work.

## **Scene 2**

Jeremiah is at the potter's house. There are pots all around and in the middle, a potter's wheel. Jeremiah watches the potter at work. The potter makes a bowl from clay, then smashes it, putting it back into a ball of clay.

### **Jeremiah:**

Hey! Don't smash it! That was good!

### **Potter:**

No Jeremiah. I only produce perfect vessels. This one wasn't round enough. However, with the same piece of clay I can make another bowl that is exactly how I want it.

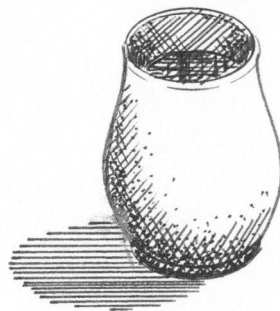
## **Scene 3**

Jeremiah is praying once again.

### **Voice:**

Jeremiah! Did you see the potter at work? Just as the potter requires a perfect vessel, I require people who are pure and holy. If they ask for forgiveness, I will take away their sin and start over again. If they give their lives to me, I can remove the things that are displeasing to me.

*God is Pure – Themes for Christian Studies 7*



## Activities – Jeremiah at the Potter’s House

### Part A

1. Who is the 'voice'?
2. Why did the potter smash his clay vessel?
3. The message is all about starting again. How did this message apply to God's people?
4. What kind of people does God want us to be?
5. Is anyone perfect? (Romans 3:23)
6. What is God's answer? (1 John 1:9)
7. How does God want us to live? (1 John 1:7-8)

### PART B - God is pure

#### Read:

Sin has spoiled God's perfect world. Sin has made us unhappy. God has an answer. His answer is forgiveness. When we ask God for forgiveness we are made pure on the inside. God wants us to be like the potter's perfect clay vessel. He wants us to do what Jesus would do.

# Mike

Once there was a boy called Mike. He had grown up in a Christian family, and had loving parents. However, when he was fifteen, he decided that he didn't want to be a Christian any more. His best friends were not Christians. In fact they laughed at the Christian values of Mike's parents.

When Mike was 18 he went to university. In his heart he started to question the Bible? He didn't believe it was true any more.

One day he was sitting on a train when the young man beside him struck up a conversation. Mike noticed that the young man was reading a Christian book. "Oh no," thought Mike. "Not a Christian."  
The Christian was going beyond Mike's stop, so had plenty of time to talk.

When Mike got off the train, he couldn't stop thinking about the conversation. He remembered a Christian friend that he once knew. Mike hadn't been in contact with David for three years. He decided to give him a call. Yes, he still lived in the same place.

Mike saw quite a bit of David over the next few weeks. Finally Mike knew what he must do. He knew that he had been the lost sheep over these three years. He knew that He must return to the Shepherd.

*God is Patient – Themes for Christian Studies 7*

## Activities - Mike

### PART A

1. Why do you think Mike turned away from the Christian faith?
2. Which two people helped Mike to return to the Lord?
3. Read Revelation 3:20. Why do you think Mike returned to God?
4. What might have happened if the Christian on the train didn't speak up about Jesus?
5. The Christian on the train would never know that Mike became a Christian. What does this show us about the importance of obeying God, even when we don't see results?

### The Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin

1. Read the story from Luke 15:1-10.
2. Why did Jesus tell this story?
3. What does this tell us about God's patience with people?
4. Were the Pharisees patient with people who didn't obey the laws?

### The Son Who Left Home

1. Read the story from Luke 15:11-32.
2. Who does the father represent?
3. Who does the son represent?
4. How do you think the father felt as he waited day by day for his son to return?
5. Would all fathers be as patient and forgiving as this father?
6. Read Matthew 18:21-22. How many times should we be willing to forgive someone?
7. Read Ephesians 4:32. Why should we forgive others?

### PART B - God is patient

#### Read:

God has shown more patience with people than any human being has ever shown. He was even willing to forgive those who killed Him. God wants us to be patient with others and to forgive them.

# We Are Sorry

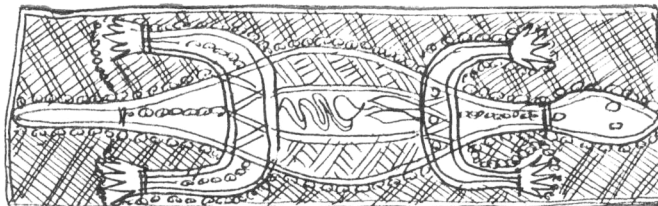
On June 10, 1838, a group of Australian Aboriginal people were murdered by some white settlers. While the men of the Aboriginal tribe were away working, a group of white settlers attacked the Werei tribe's camp. Women, children and old people were taken to a nearby cattle yard and killed. The event became known as the 'Myall Creek Massacre'. Later, seven of the nine men responsible were caught and hung. (Two had escaped). However, the memory of what the Whites had done would always remain with the Aboriginal people.

In May 1988, Australia's new parliament house was opened in Canberra. Christians from all over Australia decided to get together to pray for Australia outside parliament house. They encircled the building and prayed all day and all night. They prayed that Australia would continue to be a free country. Some of the white Christians decided that they wanted to say 'sorry' to the Aboriginal people for the great injustices committed by white people against them.

A rough wooden cross was carried by a group of white Church leaders. The cross was made from timber taken from the cattle-yard where the Aboriginals had been killed 150 years before. It was placed in the ground in front of the crowd who had gathered to hear speeches of reconciliation. One of the white church leaders addressed the group of Aboriginal People.

The Aboriginal people then performed a ceremony, which showed their forgiveness towards the whites. They placed leaves on a fire. The smoke represented purification. They also poured water from plastic buckets into small paper cups held by the white church leaders. This was another sign forgiveness and acceptance.

*God is Patient – Themes for Christian Studies 7*





## **Activities – We are Sorry**

### **PART A**

1. What was the Myall Creek Massacre?
2. How did Christians express how sorry they were?
3. Do you think it makes sense to say sorry, even if you didn't do the act?
4. How did the Aboriginal people show that they forgave the whites?
5. Do you think the whites deserved to be forgiven?
6. Do you think it would have been hard for the Aboriginal people to show forgiveness?
7. How were the Aboriginal people putting into practice the words of Jesus in Matthew 18:21-22?

### **PART B - God is patient**

#### **Read:**

When people from two different cultures live together in one community there may be difficulties because of the differences. In some places in the world there is fighting between different groups of people who live in the same country. God's love overlooks the differences. God's love can also help us to forgive one another.

# The Christmas Gifts

It was two weeks before Christmas. Stephen emptied his money-box and counted his money. Only five dollars. That wouldn't buy much at all. He needed money to buy presents for his Mum, Dad, little sister, and his grandparents.

All the next week Stephen worked as hard as he could to earn some extra money. He raked the grass, washed the car, unstacked the dishwasher, minded his little sister and vacuumed the carpet. Each job earned him another twenty cents.

At the end of the week he tried to think of suitable gifts for each family member. He still didn't have enough to buy all the things he wanted. Stephen decided that instead of buying all his presents, he would make some. For Grandma and Grandpa he made some coconut-ice and for his little sister he made a hand puppet,( with a bit of help from Mum.) That left enough money to buy some earrings for Mum and some chocolate for Dad.

Luke came from a wealthy family. He didn't have to earn money. Dad gave him \$2 every week. Luke had saved some of his pocket money, but most of it he had spent on himself. He emptied his money box. Only four dollars.

"Dad," said Luke. "Can I have some money to buy Christmas presents?"

"Sure, son," said his father. "How much do you need?"

"About \$50," said Luke.

Dad opened his wallet and gave Luke the money. The next day Luke went to the shops and bought Christmas presents for his family.

*God is a Servant – Themes for Christian Studies 7*



## Activities – The Christmas Gifts

### PART A

1. How did Stephen get enough money for Christmas gifts?
2. How did Luke get his money?
3. What does 'sacrifice' mean?
4. Why would you say that Stephen's giving was a sacrifice?
5. Luke's gift was not a sacrifice? Why?
6. What kind of sacrifices did people offer in the Old Testament? (2 Sam 24:22)
7. Why could only the best animal or produce be offered?
8. Why did God require sacrifices that were costly?
9. God does not expect these kinds of sacrifices any more. Jesus has made the greatest sacrifice. It cost Him his life. Explain how the giving of sacrifices changed when Jesus died on the cross. (Hebrews 7:27; Hebrews 10:1 & 10)
10. What sacrifices did Jesus make throughout his life time? e.g. a comfortable home
11. Name an apostle who made a sacrifice for Jesus.
12. Think of someone you know who makes sacrifices to do God's work. What sacrifices do they make?

### PART B - God is a servant

#### Read:

Jesus made the greatest sacrifice: His life. Jesus said, "Take up your cross and follow Me."

This means that we have to be willing to do whatever Jesus asks us to do.

We can get to know what Jesus wants us to do by reading the Bible and listening to others who know Him.

# The Faithful Shepherd of Eyam

In the centre of England is the tiny village of Eyam. On the green hillsides surrounding the village, white sheep graze. This is a true story retelling some events which took place during the 17th century, in the time of London's Great Plague.

In the spring, the sheep would be shorn by the shepherds and the farmer's wives spun the wool into yarn. The weavers of the village would weave the yarn into fine woollen cloth which would then be taken to London to be sold to traders from all over Europe.

In the summer of 1665, the terrible disease, the bubonic plague, struck London. The disease was carried by fleas which lived on the back of rats. It caused high fevers and black and pink swellings like huge boils all over the body. Very few people who contracted the disease recovered.

The disease did not spread to any great extent outside London because in those days few people traveled. However, one day the tailor in the village of Eyam started to show all the symptoms of the plague. In a few days he had died. Shortly afterwards his wife and children all became ill and died. Where had this family contracted the disease? They reached the conclusion that it had been introduced into the tailor's household when a package of patterns had been sent to him from London. Evidently the package had been handled by someone who had the disease.

The villagers were terror-stricken and many quickly packed their household goods and fled from Eyam. William Mompesson, a minister of the Church of England, and his helper, William Stanley, gave all their time caring for the sick as one by one, people fell ill with the plague.

Catherine Mompesson, the minister's wife, became fearful. She saw that there was no hope for any of the family to escape the disease, and she begged her husband to leave the village with her and their children. But William would not leave the people he cared for, so Catherine decided to stay with her husband, but they sent the children to stay safely with friends in another village.

After a few months the plague had the village in its grip. It became obvious to William that if any more people left the village, they would be causing the disease to spread to other parts of England. William explained the situation to the village people, who all agreed to stay in Eyam and isolate themselves from the rest of the population. They gave up their work, closed down schools and all trade ceased. The houses became hospitals for the sick.

For four months Eyam was left to itself without once coming into contact with the outside world. Day by day they saw the villagers become ill and die. Catherine

Mompesson was one who died. There were 259 deaths out of the 300 residents. Then, with the advent of colder weather in October 1666, the plague suddenly ceased.

The people of Eyam had given themselves unselfishly in order to save the lives of possibly hundreds of others. William and Catherine Mompesson followed the example of Jesus in giving themselves to help and encourage the village people, instead of running away.

*God is a Servant – Themes for Christian Studies 7*

## **Activities – The Faithful Shepherd of Eyam**

### **PART A**

1. Where did this story take place?
2. What was the main industry in Eyam at the time of the story?
3. How was the bubonic plague carried?
4. What were the symptoms of the disease?
5. How did the bubonic plague spread to Eyam?
6. As the plague grew worse, William advised people to stay in Eyam. Why did he do this?
7. Why would you say that the people of Eyam made a sacrifice?
8. When we think about giving, we usually think about giving money. However it is possible to give in other ways, just as William and Catherine gave of themselves to help others. Make a list of ways in which people can give without using money.

### **PART B - God is a servant**

#### **Read:**

Jesus served in the greatest way anyone could ever serve. He gave His life as a sacrifice for our sins. God tells us that when we serve by giving, we will receive back more than we have given. (Luke 6:38) This does not mean that we will always be given money or possessions. God can give to us in other ways. Acts 20:35 tells us that we receive more blessing from giving than receiving.

Giving does not have to be in terms of possessions or money. It can be time and effort. Think about how you can give to someone this week.

## Simpson and his Donkey

During the First World War, Private Simpson, a British soldier, served with the Australian Ambulance Corps. The Ambulance Corps was responsible for giving first aid to the wounded and for bringing them to safety as quickly as possible. Wherever the bullets rained thickest, there Simpson was to be found, bandaging the wounded, or holding a water flask to the lips of a dying soldier.

On the second day after landing, about one hundred donkeys were brought ashore to carry tins of water to the soldiers. 'Murphy' was among them. From the moment of their first meeting, Simpson and Murphy became fast friends, and were afterwards always to be seen together. Day after day the two did their noble work, setting out with a tin of water and bringing back the wounded. The animal seemed to know that he must tread carefully to avoid the bumps and jolts over a long and tiresome road. Had he not done so, the journey may have meant death to a badly injured soldier. Often a man would be lying wounded, and no one else would know until Simpson found him or the donkey scented him out.

For some time this life-saving work went on, but one day the animal was struck by a bullet, and had to be left behind. Then Simpson and some of his comrades half dragged and half carried the poor beast back to the lines. A few days later, Murphy, although slightly lame, was again at his work and as keen as ever.

One day, however, he came down the gully carrying a wounded man on his back, but his master was not there. As soon as he had delivered his burden, he trotted back up the gully. Not long afterwards he was seen sniffing at a form lying quite still on the ground. It was Simpson, who had been shot through the heart while returning slowly with a wounded comrade. The story of Simpson and his donkey will long be remembered among the bravest deeds of Anzac.

*God is a Servant – Themes for Christian Studies 7*

## Simpson and his donkey - Activities

1. Describe the work of the Australian Ambulance Corps during the First World War.
2. What work did the donkeys carry out?
3. How do we know that Murphy had a special love for Simpson?
4. Who made a sacrifice in this story?
5. What sacrifice was made?
6. What is the greatest sacrifice anyone can make? ( John 15:13)
7. Who made the greatest sacrifice for us?



# Father Damien, the Friend of Lepers

Joseph Damien was born in 1840 in the village of Tremeloo in Flanders, Belgium. He was the son of a Belgian peasant, and as a boy, often helped his father with the work on the farm. Because of this he grew into a strong lad, and being very handy with tools, was able to do all kinds of useful jobs.

.Joseph and his brother were brought up to understand the Christian message, and it was Joseph's brother, Pamphile who wanted to be a missionary to the Sandwich Islands.

However, Pamphile became seriously ill, and realized that he might never go to the Sandwich Islands and share the gospel with the people there.

"Would it make you happy if I took your place as a missionary?" asked Joseph one day. Pamphile's eyes lighted up for a moment and he squeezed his brother's hand, smiling.

Joseph wrote to the church for permission to be his brother's replacement on the mission. When permission was granted Joseph was very excited.

In 1863, Joseph Damien started out by sailing-ship for the South Seas. He was full of enthusiasm as he began his ministry on one of the Sandwich Islands. He worked there teaching and preaching for ten years. During this time, the disease of leprosy was detected among an increasing number of the local people. Because leprosy is contagious the authorities became increasingly alarmed for the disease was spreading at a great rate. The government decided to isolate all lepers on a separate island to prevent any further spread of the disease in the community. The island of Molokai was set aside for lepers and anyone banished to the island knew they had little or no hope of ever returning to their home and families.

Father Damien's kind heart was deeply touched by the sad plight of these poor people and he approached the Bishop of the church in the islands for permission to go to Molokai and minister to the neglected lepers. The Bishop agreed to his request and he made his way to the isolation from which he would never return.

On arrival at Molokai he was appalled at the conditions in which the poor people had been left to exist. They lived in makeshift houses, often with poor roofing that let the frequent rains in, creating mud puddles on the earth floor. They had no regular food supply and insufficient water for their daily needs. Some of the more fortunate had relatives who brought them food or clothing occasionally, but they would not venture on to the island and any such goods would be left on the beach without contacting the ones for whom it was intended.



As soon as he arrived, Father Damien set to work to supply the settlement with an adequate water supply. He asked the government for materials and, with the help of the strongest lepers, he built a reservoir in the hills and laid water pipes to the villages near the coast. His next task was to build better housing for the people. In ten years Father Damien had seen to the building of six hundred houses. There was the need for a hospital where the more advanced cases of leprosy could be treated medically. He nursed them, dressed their wounds, comforted them when they were dying and dug their graves when they were to be buried. As time passed, people in Europe heard of his unselfish work and sent out money and goods to help in the work.

One day as he worked in the hospital, he accidentally spilt some boiling water on his foot. "That's strange," he thought. "I can't feel anything. I should be feeling the burning."

Leprosy affects the nerves of the body and causes lack of feeling on the affected parts. The fingers and toes wear away because, without any feeling, the victim damages them on hard and sharp things. Because there is no warning pain, there is irreparable damage done to their limbs.

Father Damien went to a doctor. "Do I have leprosy, doctor?" he asked. After a thorough examination the doctor looked at him gravely and confirmed his suspicions.

Father Damien said that even if he could be cured by forsaking the island he would not desert the lepers. They were the people to whom God had called him, and there he would remain. He worked on as a leper among the lepers until his death. Father Damien's ministry is remembered around the world. He had lived out the life of Jesus among the outcasts of the islands, showing kindness and love to them, and brought many to know Jesus personally.

*God is a Servant – Themes for Christian Studies 7*

## **Activities**

1. What work did Joseph Damien do as a child?
2. Where are the Sandwich Islands?
3. Describe Joseph's work there.
4. Why were the people with leprosy sent to the island of Molokai?
5. How did Joseph Damien help the lepers on the island?
6. How did he first realise that he had leprosy?
7. Why do you think he chose to stay on the island, even after he caught the disease?
8. What do you think Jesus means when He asks us all to take up our cross? (Read Luke 9:23-26)
9. What did Jesus say about serving in John 12:23-26?

# Keryn's Story

The ambulance pulled up at the hospital, and Keryn, a drug addict in a critical condition, was admitted. Keryn had begun her habit using light drugs in her late teens. She soon started on heroin, an extremely addictive drug. Now, four years later, her body was paying the price. Her body was damaged by intensive use of the drug, and, as drug addicts often do, she had contracted hepatitis B.

Doctors stood around her, trying to save her life. Her heart was barely pumping, her lungs were flooding and her kidneys had failed. Keryn's family waited at the hospital for news of her condition.

"I'm sorry," said the doctor. "We are doing all we can, but she probably has only about two more hours to live. We really don't think she could survive a heart transplant."

Keryn's brother was a Christian, who believed in God's power to heal. He prayed desperately, and as well, asked others from his church to pray. As Christians stood around the bed-side and prayed, something miraculous happened. Two hours passed, and Keryn was still alive. In fact, she showed some signs of improvement. She was admitted to the coronary care unit where she continued to fight for her life. After four days her condition had improved a little more, but tests showed that the damage to her heart was so bad survival would be impossible. On the eighth day, as the heart was monitored again, doctors could hardly believe that it was the same heart. Keryn overheard a doctor speaking to some student doctors outside the room. "Yes, we do sometimes have miracles like this," he said.

Doctors now believed that Keryn might live, but if she did, she would be bed-ridden for the rest of her life. Keryn stayed in hospital another four months, still improving day by day. As she lay in the hospital bed she started thinking about God. Only now was she told how close she had been to death. Her brother told her about the prayers of Christians, and how God had miraculously saved her life.

'Why have you chosen to heal me, Lord?' Keryn asked. 'I know I am guilty of causing my own illness.'

Keryn was finally discharged from hospital. Although she was not bed-ridden as the doctors had said, her body was still in need of more healing. Although Keryn did not deny God's power to heal, she still did not know God in a personal way. She knew that God had saved her physical life, but could not comprehend God's power to forgive her for the past and give her a new life within. Keryn's brother continued to pray that she would fully accept God's love and forgiveness for herself.

It took one more miracle before Keryn finally asked Jesus into her life. Keryn had now married, and desperately wanted to have children. However, the damage to her body prevented her from having children. This time, Keryn cried out to the Lord herself. "Please, Lord, give me a child," she prayed. Keryn heard about a Christian meeting so went along with the intention of asking God to heal her fully. However, healing was really all she wanted. She still wasn't interested in a personal friendship with Jesus. As she went forward for prayer, she felt God's power to heal in every way. It was at that point that Keryn gave her life totally to God, and made Jesus her personal friend.

Keryn is now completely healed and has three beautifully healthy children. She is not proud of her past, but is thankful that the Lord chose to give back to her the life which she almost destroyed.

Many people turn to drugs because they need something extra in their life. They think that taking drugs will help to sustain them and help them forget about life's problems. But in fact, it has the opposite effect. A Christian knows that Jesus is the only true sustainer in life. He can help us with all life's problems and bring true happiness and joy. His joy is everlasting... not just momentary. This is a true story as told by Keryn herself. Here are Keryn's answers to some further questions:

**Question:** How did you first get into using heroin?

**Keryn:** I started using light drugs, then heroin, at a friend's place.

**Question:** Can you use heroin just now and again, so that you don't actually become addicted to it?

**Keryn:** Heroin is far too addictive for that. It doesn't take long before you're taking it regularly.

**Question:** How did heroin make you feel?

**Keryn:** At first you feel really great, and full of self-confidence. That's why they call it heroin...because it makes you feel like a hero or heroine. But when the effect wears off, you feel extremely depressed, and you feel that you just have to get some more.

**Question:** Why do you think you finally became a Christian?

**Keryn:** Because of the prayers of my brother and other Christians.

*God is Life – Themes for Christian Studies 7*

## Activities – Keryn’s Story

### PART A

1. Why was Keryn at the point of death?
2. Why did God perform a miracle for her?
3. Why would you say that God was patient with Keryn?
4. Why do you think people take drugs?
5. What other things do some people turn to instead of Jesus?
6. Why does Jesus say that He is the vine? (John 15)
7. For a Christian, what does being connected to the vine really mean?
8. What must we do if we want Jesus to give us true happiness in life?

### PART B - God is life

#### Read:

God is the sustainer of life. This means that He is with us *all* the time. In Old Testament times, God wanted to remind the people of His presence, so that they would remember the great miracles he had performed. He had opened the Red Sea and provided food and water in the desert. God asked Moses to organise the building of an ark. This was not an ark like Noah's ark. It was a small box which carried the tablets on which the Ten Commandments were written. The ark would be carried with them on long poles. They could never forget that God was present with them as long as they were carrying the ark.

These days, God does not ask us to carry an ark with us wherever we go to remind us of His presence. Instead, we have God's word, which tells us that Jesus came to give life. By accepting the life that Jesus gives, we can experience God's presence with us wherever we go. For a Christian, Jesus is the sustainer of life.



# George Muller

In the 1830s, George Muller was disturbed by the number of homeless children throughout England. Although he himself had no money to provide for these children, he prayed for God's provision, and proved the faithfulness of God. He prayed for enough money to set up an orphanage, and without telling any one of the need, started receiving funds from various Christian people.

On December 7th, 1835, he wrote in his diary:

'Today I received the first shilling for the orphan house. Afterwards I received another shilling from a German brother.

On December 9th, he wrote:

This afternoon, the first piece of furniture was given - a large wardrobe.'

On the evening of the 9th he addressed a meeting, announcing the planned establishment of the home.

"The home will only be established," he said, "if God provides the means and suitable staff to run it."... "Under no circumstances," he continued, "will any individual ever be asked for money or materials."... "The institution will be for truly destitute children and any orphan whose relatives are able and willing to pay for their maintenance will be ineligible. The children will receive a plain education. The chief and special end of the institution will be to seek, with God's special blessing, to bring the children to the knowledge of Jesus Christ by instructing them in the Scriptures."

As God continued to provide, George Muller eventually supervised the building of five large orphanages, housing thousands of children. This reminds us of the story of the loaves and fishes. The boy had only five loaves and two small fish. It seemed that the small amount of food was next to nothing compared to the amount of food needed. However, because the boy was willing to give, Jesus was able to bless and multiply the amount.

Sometimes Christians who decide to help the poor feel the same as the disciples did: so little food and so many to feed. However God can do great things when we are willing to give what we have. Something as small as a mustard seed can grow into a big tree.

*God is Provider – Themes for Christian Studies 7*

## Activities – George Muller

### PART A

1. George Muller did not receive money for the orphans by asking people for it. How do you think he received the money?
2. Describe the education that the children received.
3. Do countries such as Australia and U.S.A. produce more than enough food?
4. What often happens to the surplus?
5. What prevents poor countries from receiving the surplus?
6. Why is it that some countries cannot produce enough food for their population?
7. What do you think God would want people to do about the food crisis?
8. Has God provided enough food for the whole world?
9. Who is responsible for the hunger that many people experience?
10. What blessings are there when we share with people who are poor? (Proverbs 22:9)

### PART B - God is provider

#### Read:

Because God has given people a free will, He cannot change the hearts of people who are selfish and greedy. He cannot change the hearts of people who start wars and deliberately pollute the earth. However, Christians can do their part.

# Panov's Christmas Story

*A traditional Russian folk tale*

A long time ago in a small Russian village lived an old shoe-maker. The people of the village knew him as Grandpa Panov. He was not very rich, but he had all he needed: his small house and his shoe making tools. One Christmas he started feeling lonely, and started to complain to himself. He sat down and decided to read from his old Bible. From the book of Matthew he read the story of Christ's birth. He thought about the gifts the wise men brought to Jesus. "I wonder what I could have given to Jesus," he thought. "I have no money for expensive gifts." Then as he glanced over at his shoe making tools he suddenly thought of what he could give. "I would make a tiny pair of shoes for the baby, from the finest leather," he said to himself.

Grandpa Panov turned the pages of his Bible and read from another part of Matthew.

"For I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you took me in. I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me..." He read no more as his head was nodding and soon he was fast asleep in his chair. As he slept he had a dream. In the dream he heard a voice speaking to him. The voice said, "Look out in the street tomorrow, for I will come to you." It was the voice of Jesus.

The next day Grandpa Panov remembered his dream. He looked out the window but did not see Jesus. Instead he saw an old road sweeper, so cold and lonely. Grandpa Panov asked him to come in for some coffee and to warm himself by the fire.

Then he saw a young woman carrying a baby. She looked so tired, and her clothes were worn. The baby had no shoes. Grandpa Panov asked them in and gave them some of the cabbage soup he had cooking on the stove. Then he remembered a little pair of shoes he had made some time ago. He had been keeping them because they were the best ones he had ever made. He looked at the baby's bare feet. "These are for the baby," he said.

Later in the afternoon he saw some children playing in the street. Their parents were poor and couldn't afford expensive presents. "I know something I can give them!" he thought. "Would you like to hear a story?" he asked the children. He told them the true story of Christmas.

By the end of the day Grandpa had been able to help quite a number of people. His day had not been so lonely after all. However he was disappointed. The most important visitor had not come. He continued to look out the window until dark. Finally he went to bed. As he slept he dreamed once again. In the dream he heard the same voice that he had heard the night before.

"Didn't you see me, Grandpa Panov?" said the voice. I was hungry and you gave me food. I was lonely and you invited me in. All the time you were helping others, you were helping me."

*God is Life – Themes for Christian Studies 7*

### **Activities – Panov's Christmas Story**

1. After reading the story of the three wise men, what did Panov think about?
2. How did Panov help the poor on Christmas day?
3. Why was he disappointed?
4. What did Jesus say at the end of the story?
5. Read Matthew 25:35-39. What does this passage mean?





# Joseph and his Brothers

Joseph was one of twelve brothers. His father was Jacob. Because Joseph was Jacob's favourite son, the brothers became very jealous, especially when Jacob would give Joseph special presents like the beautiful coat of many colours. The brothers plotted to kill Joseph. However, Reuben felt it was better not to kill him, but to sell him as a slave to some traders.

You would think that this treatment would cause Joseph to hate his brothers for the rest of his life. Joseph was finally sold to an important Egyptian called Potiphar. The Lord was with Joseph, and he became so successful that he was put in charge of many things. God used Joseph to warn the king of a great drought that would come upon the land. Joseph told the king how they must save up grain in the time of plenty to prepare for the great drought. When the great did drought strike the land, Joseph was put in charge of distributing the grain. People came from far and wide, even from his home country, to receive grain. Finally the day came when his own brothers came to ask for their supply of grain. Surely this would be an opportunity to take revenge. But Joseph didn't take revenge. He forgave his brothers instead. He wanted his whole family to come to be with him in Egypt. Through a clever plan he was finally able to get the whole family to come. He then told them who he was, and introduced them to the king. The family was brought back together again. The king gave them the best land in Egypt and all the food they needed.

The story of Joseph and his brothers shows us about making peace. When people have a fight, the bitterness and hatred they feel for one another continues until the trouble is settled. However, when they settle their differences and come into right relationship again, it is called RECONCILIATION. Reconciliation is making peace. To make peace we must forgive.

*God is Peace – Themes for Christian Studies 7*

## Activities – Joseph and his brothers

### PART A

1. Why were the brothers jealous of Joseph?
2. What happened after Joseph was sold to the slave traders?
3. What did God say to do, to prepare for the drought that was coming?
4. Why do you think that Joseph was given such a responsible position?
5. What important job did Joseph have during the drought?
6. How was the family reconciled?
7. What does this Bible verse tell us about making peace: Matthew 5:22.
8. What does the Bible mean when it speaks about is your 'brother'?
9. Write down one way that you can be a peace-maker.

### PART B - God is peace

#### Read:

Just as people's relationships with each other can be broken, so can people's relationship with God. Sin is the cause, and everyone has sinned. However, Jesus is our peace maker. Because of His death on the cross He can reconcile people once again to God.

Read about this in Romans 5:9-10 and 1Timothy 2:4-6.

# Peacemaker: Henry Williams

Henry Williams loved ships. He decided that when he was old enough he would join the British navy and go to sea. When he finally joined the navy, he found that his life became centred around battle. Although he still loved ships, he hated the fighting. "There must be a better way," he thought. After eleven years in the navy, William finally left and went to the far away country of New Zealand. In those days, few Europeans lived there, and the Maori people who inhabited the country, fought amongst themselves a great deal.

The Maoris came to accept Henry, because he had been a fighter too. They came to love and trust him. When they had arguments among themselves, which might have grown into battles, they used to come to Henry and he would help them to find ways of settling their quarrels without fighting.

Henry settled in New Zealand, and when he was quite old, he became ill. As he lay in his bed, dying, he heard about some of his friends who were about to go to war with each other. He knew how terrible Maori wars could be. The warriors used sharp spears, wooden clubs, stones and darts. They would continue fighting until all the members of one side were killed. Henry was too weak to talk to his Maori friends. He sent his sons to try to make peace. However the Maoris would not listen.

As darkness fell that evening, someone brought a message to the warring groups. Henry had died. The battle ceased. At once, both groups went to Henry's house to express their sorrow. Henry's death brought about reconciliation, and the two groups of Maoris made an agreement never to fight again.

*God is Peace – Themes for Christian Studies 7*

## Activities

1. Name one thing Henry liked about the Navy, and one thing he disliked.
2. Why did the Maori people accept Henry?
3. How did Henry help the Maoris?
4. Why do you think the two groups decided never to fight again?

# Peacemaker: Mary Slessor

Mary Slessor was born in Scotland in 1848. She came from a very poor family. Her father died when she was quite young, and her mother supported the four children through her job at the weaving mills. When Mary was only eleven, she started working at the mills with her mother. The family lived in one room, in a dirty street.

When Mary was a teenager she decided to educate herself. Mary's mother was a Christian, and while attending the Presbyterian church, Mary was challenged by the need for missionaries in West Africa.

Mary went to Africa and dedicated her life to helping the people of Calabar, (now in Nigeria). The hot, humid climate, and prevalence of malaria made life difficult, but she didn't give up. Mary is remembered for her work as a peace maker among the people. The slave trade, which had developed in earlier years, had made human life cheap. White people would arrive on African shores and offer black traders all kinds of gifts for capturing men, women and children, who would then be forced on to ships and taken to far away places to work for the whites. Although this practice was no longer in existence when Mary arrived, the bribery and corruption of earlier years had caused tribesmen of Calabar to become cruel and unconcerned for the value of human life. Fighting, drinking and cruelty to women were common. Mary rescued hundreds of unwanted babies, particularly twins. The tribesmen came to respect her and she convinced them of the need to talk about their troubles instead of fighting. She set up court cases and reasoned with the tribesmen.

She also set up schools and cared for the sick. She built a hospital and set up training centres for women. Mary never stopped working. She finally died in Calabar in 1915.

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## Activities

1. Describe Mary's childhood.
2. What were some of the hardships she endured in Africa?
3. What was the slave trade?
4. What problems arose after the slave trade ended?
5. How did Mary help?

# Martin Luther King

Martin Luther King was the minister of a Baptist church in Alabama, U.S.A. In 1955, a Negro woman called Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a white person. Although not the first incident of its kind, it stirred King and some others into action. King believed that he must take action against injustice in a non-violent way. He called for a boycott of the city's bus services by the whole Negro population. It was decided that on the Monday, no Negroes would ride on buses. That evening a meeting was held in one of the city's churches. Thousands gathered outside. It was decided that the boycott would continue, and a campaign would be launched. King delivered a speech which explained how the campaign would be run.

He told the crowd that love must be their ideal. 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you.' He believed that if they failed to do that, their protest would be meaningless, and only bring shame upon themselves. He told the people that in spite of the mistreatment they had received, they must not become bitter, and end up hating white people.

The campaign continued for over a year. As they were met with violence, King continually reminded the people of their non-violent stand. One night King's house was bombed while he was at a meeting. He spoke to the crowd who gathered at the scene. After assuring them that his wife and baby were alright, he told them to go home and put to down their weapons. He reminded them that the problem could not be solved through retaliatory violence. Remember the words of Jesus, he said: 'He who lives by the sword will perish by the sword.' King told the people again that they must love their white brothers no matter what they did to the Negroes. He believed that meeting hate with love was the only way.

Just before his death, Martin Luther King said:

*"I still have a dream today,  
That one day war will come to an end,  
That men will beat their swords into ploughshares  
And their spears into pruning hooks...  
With this faith we will be able to speed up the day  
When there will be peace on earth  
And goodwill towards men.  
It will be a glorious day  
The morning stars will sing together  
And the sons of God will shout for joy."*

Shortly before Jesus died, He was arrested. One of His friends reached for his sword, and cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest.

Jesus said: "Put back your sword, for all those who draw the sword will die by the sword. " Matthew 26:52

At His death Jesus said, *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” Luke 23:34*

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## **Activities – Martin Luther King**

1. Who was Martin Luther King?
2. Why was Rosa Parks arrested?
3. What does this tell us about the laws in the U.S.A. at the time?
4. If you were a black person, how would you feel?
5. How did Martin Luther King stand against the injustice without violence?
6. What is a boycott?
7. How did the boycott affect the government?
8. How long did the campaign go on for?
9. Why did Martin Luther King only believe in protesting in a non-violent way?
10. King told his people that they must not hate white people, even though white people had mistreated them. What did Jesus say about this? (Matthew 5:43-48)
11. How should a Christian react when someone does something wrong to them?  
Choose the correct answer:
  - ◆ ignore that person
  - ◆ stand up for the truth in a non-violent way
  - ◆ fight back with violence
12. How did Jesus put His own words into practice at His crucifixion and the time leading up to it? Read...
  - ◆ Luke 23:34
  - ◆ Matthew 26: 50-54
13. Find out more about Martin Luther King. Find out how he died.