

## Snake Oil

### QUESTIONS FOR CUBS

#### NOTE TO PARENTS/TEACHERS:

The goal of this questions-and-answers section is to initiate interaction between you and your kids. Please do not just read the questions and answers to your kids. These answers are given for you at an adult level to think about and to process. Once that is accomplished, you can then translate them into appropriate answers for your kids.

#### LESSON

Becoming a disciple of Christ

#### KEY VERSE

**"If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." (Jn. 8:31-32)**

#### EAR CHECK (STORY COMPREHENSION)

- Q: What were C.J. and the rest of The Club looking at on the hill?  
A: *Clouds, then a fight between Hugh and Snaggle*
- Q: Name one of the titles Dr. Theron had on his wagon.  
A: *Pharmacist, philanthropist, alchemist, phrenologist*
- Q: What does Dr. Theron ask C.J. to become?  
A: *His apprentice*
- Q: What do the initials "C.J." stand for?  
A: *Chancellor James*
- Q: What was really in the bottles?  
A: *Cough syrup and water*

#### HEART CHECK (SPIRITUAL APPLICATION)

**Q: C.J. wanted to be rich and famous, and he was willing to work hard to get there. Is striving to become rich and famous wrong?**

- A: *No and yes. Being rich and famous is not bad or wrong in and of itself. "Why do I want to become rich and famous?" is the critical question. If I want to become rich so I can feel powerful, secure, and dependent on no one but myself, these are bad motives. (See the Director's Notes and Questions for Cubs from The Honey Buzz Principle for further discussion of this topic.) If I want to become famous*

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*so that people will love and admire me, these are also bad motives (Jer. 9:23-24). It is not that these things are necessarily bad, but the cold, hard truth is these things cannot bring you real security, real love, or real affirmation. They are illusions. Real love, security, and affirmation are simply not available except from the hand of God. If you are trying to get them from any other source, you are trying to replace God in your life, and you are headed into failure and frustration.*

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**Q: Dr. Theron had lied and cheated the people of Wildwood and a hundred other towns before Officer Hunt caught him. However, he had already been suffering from his sins long before he was sent to jail. How?**

**A:** *Anyone who cheats and lies routinely begins to suffer in a dozen different ways. Dr. Theron was a desperately lonely fellow. If people believed his lies, he disrespected them as idiots, and if anyone was smart enough to see him for what he truly was, Dr. Theron feared and hated them. Even when he had lots of money hidden in his wagon and snuck out of the last town he had visited, he lived in constant fear of getting caught. The longer people live in sin, the further they will find themselves from peace, genuine love, and security, the very things they want most. Dr. Theron robbed himself far more than anyone he cheated and lied to (Prov. 17:20).*

### “I” CHECK (PERSONAL APPLICATION)

1. What do you think it means to be a disciple? Look up the definition of “disciple” in a dictionary. Compare it with Jesus’ definition in the key verse above. If we want to be a disciple of Jesus, what do we need to do?
2. Have you ever been deceived or misled by someone? How did it make you feel when you found out the truth? What are some things we can do to protect ourselves from people who would try to mislead us?
3. Dr. Theron made some pretty outrageous claims about what his snake oil elixir could do. Many people believed him without exercising much common sense. Others tried the elixir and thought that they were experiencing benefits, even though it was clear that they were not. What do you think the people should have done instead? What would you have done? Can you think of an example of something in your life that turned out to be too good to be true?
4. The Bible tells us we should use wisdom and discernment to distinguish what is truth from what is a lie. The book of Proverbs in the Bible is an excellent way to gain wisdom. Read the second chapter of Proverbs to discover the amazing benefits of acquiring wisdom from God’s Word.

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### DIRECTOR'S NOTES

This episode is another one of my favourites. Though I admit that the theme is a bit more adult than is usual for Paws & Tales, I think there are plenty of lessons for kids to glean. C.J. is prone to visions of grandeur, and the mesmerizing performances and promises of Dr. Theron cast a virtual spell over the poor cub. Themes of deception, duplicity, and charlatanism are present, but I believe that the most important issue in this episode is the use or misuse of the things God has given us.

How we must grieve our Lord when we take a valuable gift He has given us for the purpose of serving and ministering to others and instead use it to cheat and manipulate for our own gain. Dr. Theron had wonderful powers of persuasion and a great sense of the dramatic, but he squandered it all for quick cash. I wanted C.J. and, by extension, the listener, to feel the pain of being deceived as well as the struggle of choosing which path to follow.

Choice is an amazing power—a “super power,” if you will. With it we can change our fate and affect the lives of everyone around us. Why God gave us such power is a mystery. It is part of our jobs as parents and teachers to instruct our kids on the use of this power, not to withhold it from them. I would suggest that making all of a child’s decisions for him or her until the child moves out of the house is a dangerous practice. As a parent, I believe that teaching my kids how to make good choices is far more important than just teaching them to obey me without thought. Once they are out from under my protection, they will start making a lot of choices on their own. They will need to have had practice making decisions on their own, or they will one day be tempted to choose the wrong things just because I’m no longer there to keep them from them.

Once C.J. understood what Dr. Theron was proposing, he quickly gave up his visions of riches and fame because he knew what following Dr. Theron would cost. He was able to determine that he would be harming himself as well as the town he loved. He made a wise choice because this situation was not his first time to choose. Kids need to be able to think through the ramifications of their choices, analysing whether the outcome will be good or bad. They need to be able to evaluate the price of instant gratification versus long-term rewards. I don’t want my kids to simply choose what I chose; I want them to know 37 reasons why they should choose what is right. I’d like to offer a few suggestions that might help you launch into this process.

1. As early as possible, allow your kids to make some decisions on their own. Wouldn’t it be better for them to learn by failing in small things that have little or no consequences?
2. Be prepared! Sometimes they will not choose what you want them to. We need to be open to a sphere of acceptability and not demand exact conformity. My kids are different from me. They like different things. As long as they are not “wrong,” I need to let them make their own decisions.
3. Allowing your kids to make their own choices will be more work and cause more stress at first, but it will make life dramatically easier, more peaceful, and more fun later. It’s worth the work.



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