

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

We Are New Creatures in Christ

Key Verse

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

Ear Check (Story Comprehension)

- Q: What did The Club and Paw Paw Chuck celebrate the completion of?
A: *Their clubhouse, "The Fort"*
- Q: What did Opa and his family hear that made them afraid?
A: *The sound of Paw Paw Chuck's roar*
- Q: What name did Opa call Paw Paw Chuck?
A: *Goliath*
- Q: What did Chuck and his friends cover themselves with so they would be invisible in the fog?
A: *Ashes from their campfire*
- Q: What does Paw Paw Chuck want the kids in The Club to become?
A: *To become like Christ*

Heart Check (Spiritual Application)

Q: Paw Paw Chuck asked each member of The Club to forgive him. Why did he need to do that if he didn't do anything wrong to them?

A: Paw Paw Chuck was afraid because many, like the raccoon Opa, could not believe that someone who did the things Goliath had done could ever really change. This is actually a valid fear. To completely change from a past of doing wrong—from what the Bible calls sin—is impossible, except through the power of God. Many people do not truly change. They simply alter a few outward behaviors. Yet, when pressured, they usually fall right back into their old patterns. There is another way—God's way—and it is called *transformation*. Paw Paw Chuck had given his life

Questions for Cubs Page 2

to Christ, and the kids knew this to be true. By asking for their forgiveness, he was really asking them to trust him in the future in spite of his past. By telling the kids his story and asking them to respond, he took the risk that they might reject him. But in the end, their relationship was closer and stronger than ever (Colossians 3:12–13).

Q: Paw Paw Chuck said his new mission is to encourage the kids in The Club to become new creatures and disciples of Christ. What do these phrases mean?

A: When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we are transformed into a new creature—something entirely new—similar to the change that takes place when a caterpillar is transformed into a butterfly (2 Corinthians 5:17). Our souls instantly change, and we are saved from hell. We are free for the first time to become what God wants us to be (Romans 6:4). However, our transformation does *not* happen instantly. In fact, it will take a lifetime and more. Much confusion swirls around this point. Salvation is not the end of the road; it's the beginning of the journey.

If we stay on the right path as a disciple of Christ, we will begin to develop godly habits, such as studying the Bible, getting involved in a good church, and surrounding ourselves with more mature believers. God will slowly transform us by changing the way we think and what we believe in, as well as deepening our conviction of beliefs. We will begin to enjoy peace, joy, love, and a sense of purpose far beyond we could ever have imagined. We will begin to experience a new freedom with discernment that enables us to recognize and avoid destructive behavior. In essence, we will begin to find our place in God's plan (Colossians 3:1–17). This is the transformation that Scripture reveals to us. This is the path of a disciple of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). But, sadly, many do not heed such a new way of life (Romans 12:2).

“I” Check (*Personal Application*)

1. Have you ever discovered something that surprised you about someone? Did it change the way you thought about that person? Did you struggle to accept him or her with this new information?
2. Secrecy and isolation are tools and traps of Satan. Do you have behaviors that you have kept secret from others because you fear what they will think of you?
3. Paw Paw Chuck had been going through a spiritual change for years when he told his story to The Club. He had proven his transformation hundreds of times. Under what conditions should you adopt a “wait and see” attitude when someone says that he or she has changed?
4. Explain in your own words what you think it means to be a disciple of Christ.
5. Have you ever heard someone tell his or her testimony, the story of how he or she became a Christian? In what ways was his or her life changed since coming to know Christ?
6. If you have accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, the Bible says that He lives inside you to make you more Christlike. In what ways do you think you have changed to become more like Christ? What changes still need to be made in your life?

Director's Notes

I was very excited to begin telling Paw Paw Chuck's story. I have been developing it from the very beginning of Paws & Tales, and *Goliath* is the first leg of his journey. Though this series confronts several life and spiritual issues, I will only tackle two here. The first is the destruction of a soul, and the second deals with helping parents talk about the past with their kids.

Chuck's story begins as we learn of his noble intentions, but it ends with him wallowing in anger and pride. This struggle is not the stuff of fairy tales; it happens all around us. The truth is, we fail more often in the areas of our strengths than our weaknesses. Chuck's strength and size were unique gifts from God. Disregarding God's will, he used them for his own pleasure—attacking bandits for revenge. From there, it was a small step from attacking for revenge to attacking in order to feed his lust for power. His soul became diseased; he was on a path of total destruction. Runaway consumption and the unrestrained pursuit of pleasure are signs that your fleshly desires have overthrown your mind and your soul. Paw Paw Chuck, then known as Goliath, was on this destructive path, and it led to meaningless suffering and self-hatred.

This episode also brings up the issues that surround discussing our past with our kids. *Goliath* begins with a triggering event that forces Paw Paw Chuck to reveal a part of his past. In this situation, he could have chosen to leave the members of The Club with a pat on the head and no explanation. Even worse, he could have just given the kids a simplistic and untrue explanation of the event they had witnessed. However, though The Club members are clearly not Paw Paw Chuck's biological children, they *are* his spiritual children. Out of love for them, he chose to wade on in, discussing his past with honesty and candor. The dangers in a situation like this are many. Ned exemplified one of them at the end. He largely missed most of the point Paw Paw Chuck was trying hard to deliver. Ned focused his attention on the wrong things—the battles, the body armor, and the power. The others, however, were ready to handle this painful subject, and Paw Paw Chuck told the story for them.

Upon imagining this difficult scenario, I have come to several conclusions:

1. I must be real with my kids. Once they reach a certain level of maturity, it is no longer good for them to hold an idealized image of me. If my kids believe that I have never felt what they feel, never feared what they fear, or never failed as they will surely fail, a deep and wide crevasse will form between our hearts. I will be reduced, in their ever-growing minds, to a simplistic "Poster Dad" who has no idea of what real struggles are like. They will come to the conclusion that I will respond to their problems or questions with platitudes and sing-song answers. Instead, they desperately need me to provide wise and practical advice earned from my life experiences. When they are ready and able to hear it, tell your kids the truth about your past.

2. I will *not* tell my kids stories from the tougher parts of my past if I am *even a little bit* proud of them. Kids can smell pride faster than a bloodhound can sniff out a rabbit. If they detect pride while I'm relaying past sins or failures, I will have done severe damage to my kids. I have to be genuinely repentant, and if my past is shameful, I need to let them see my shame. I am trying to guide them away from the stupid and selfish things I have done. I do not want them to wink at sin with me, giving them permission to go and sin in the same way.

3. I will *not* tell my kids things from my past that are not helpful or necessary. I will not be salacious or burden them with information they cannot handle. My kids are not an avenue for confession; I am trying to guide them toward God.

4. I will focus on preparing their hearts to love and follow God, not on dictating their behavior. If my kids behave well but are spiritually bankrupt, their lives will be disastrous. Good behavior is not the primary interest of Christ. He is more interested in the condition of the heart. If the interior life of love and devotion to God is rich and hearty, good behavior will result. Of course, we must seek to do right in order to have a rich and hearty devotion to God. This perspective does not mean that I'm a proponent of bad behavior; I'm just more interested in the condition of my child's heart than in his or her outward behavior.

Director's Notes Page 2

5. My stories will illustrate God's hand in my life and how I responded to it. Sometimes I responded in good ways, and sometimes I did not, but I need to be honest about the results. The focus of my sharing should be on God, not on me.

I want to encourage all parents to consider how to share the hard-won wisdom you have accumulated over your lifetime. Let's not make our kids start from the beginning, on their own, without the benefit of our personal successes and failures. With some preparation, we have the power to encourage our kids, to arm them for what's ahead, and perhaps even to help them completely avoid some of the pitfalls we faced. With these benefits in mind, isn't sharing your past worth the risk?



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For more of Paw Paw Chuck's story, listen to the following episodes in the Goliath: King of Shadow Valley audio series: "Shadow Valley, Part 3—Deep Healing" and "Shadow Valley, Part 4—Coming Home."