

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

Dying to Ourselves Is the First Step in Receiving the Blessings God Has in Store for Us

Key Verse

“For I know the plans that I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.” (Jeremiah 29:11)

Ear Check (Story Comprehension)

- Q: What happened to C. J. as he stood on a sandy slope?
A: *He slid down to a ravine.*
- Q: What is the name of Tiffany’s favorite cookie?
A: *Chocolate Crinkles*
- Q: What do the creatures C. J. meets do at 9, 2, and 9 o’clock?
A: *Drink water*
- Q: What does the doctor say Tiffany suffers from?
A: *Foolish Pride Syndrome*
- Q: Why do the brown bears in the ravine resist accepting C. J.’s invitation to climb up the rope to live a new life?
A: *They are afraid.*

Heart Check (Spiritual Application)

- Q: Why would anyone not want to have a better life?

A: The longer you live the more you will come to understand that people are very complicated. We often don't make the best decisions, and we may not even realize it when it's happening. An example of this might be a very lonely girl who tries to deal with her loneliness by being bossy and overbearing with all of her friends. Not surprisingly, this doesn't work very well. The lonely girl may feel just a little bit better because she thinks she's in control, but she's actually alienating the very friends she craves so desperately. She can't see the bigger picture. Sometimes we act the same way. We're too scared to take a chance; we're afraid of the things we don't know or understand. So we make bad choices to make ourselves feel better, and we end up settling for a life that isn't God's best for us.

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The key verse for this lesson teaches that God has a very special plan for our lives. He knows our needs, and He will take care of them according to His plan. We have to learn to let go of our fears and expectations; we don't have to control our own lives—He is in control. And we can trust Him to work everything out for our good (Romans 8:28).

Q: If God wants to give us something good, something that's even better than what we already have, why would He make us give up something that we like, something that makes us feel safe, in order to receive His blessing?

A: People often get too attached to material things. We sometimes get attached to things that make us *feel* safe even though they don't really make us safe. We occasionally get attached to things that make us *feel* good even though they actually harm us. As we grow to be adults, we learn that eating too much candy will make us sick. We learn that being mean and selfish causes us to be lonely and sad. And if we are wise, we learn that what God wants for us is better than what we want for ourselves. We must learn to trust Him because He will absolutely ask us to take risks as we grow to become more like Christ. It will feel scary to obey Him at times, because we will need to let go of something that makes us feel safe. But we must remember that He only gives good and perfect gifts to His children. We need to love and trust Him and be willing to take some risks to follow Him.

"I" Check (*Personal Application*)

1. In both stories, Tiffany and the creatures in the ravine were afraid to change their ways, even when something they knew was far better was being offered to them. How can fear become a form of pride? Are there any examples in your life when you resisted doing something you knew was good for you because you were afraid or proud?
2. What can you do to make sure that your pride never gets in the way of accepting God's best for you in the future?
3. In both stories, the characters had to give up something lesser in order to get something better. This is a powerful principle. Can you think of some examples of things God calls us to give up and things He gives us in return?

Director's Notes

There is a song made famous by the Eagles called “Desperado.” Its lyrics have haunted me since high school, “you got to let somebody love you before it’s too late.” They illustrate why we need artists and poets in the world. This writer knew in his soul (even if he was not a believer) that letting somebody love you can be one of the most difficult and terrifying things a person can do. He also knew that until we allow ourselves to be loved, we are all desperate and incomplete.

It is more than a little ironic that the characteristics we Americans value most, self-sufficiency and self-protection, combine to form a nearly perfect scourge that starves our souls of the things we need most. Even in Christian circles, we have let this train of thought infect the way we pursue Christlikeness. Deep down, we believe the best way to operate is to get really, really smart about God and the Bible. Once we are well equipped and have it all together, we assume that we can then turn around and show others how to follow our example of knowledge and virtue. It’s a subtle shift in our thinking, but can you see how it could play into our desire for self-sufficiency? The next obvious step is that we feel the need to be a good example to others, and since we’re not perfect, we begin to self-protect and to keep others at a distance so that they will not be disappointed by our failures. If this thought process is allowed to grow, it will become a full-blown infection of isolation and hypocrisy.

There is another way. The Bible is filled with directions; think of them as preventative prescriptions that will keep this scourge from infecting us. For instance, we are commanded to confess our sins to each other, to respect and obey our elders, to give sacrificially to those in need, and in turn, to accept blessings from others. We are commanded to love each other so well and care for each other so completely that unbelievers will be astonished. I would suggest that none of these things can occur in the presence of self-sufficiency.

So, what is so compelling about self-sufficiency? We believe that we will actually do damage if we let people see that we are scared, needy, and lonely. The funny thing—funny tragic, not funny ha ha—is that others already know all of these things. We are the only ones who think our deception is working, and by our actions we are teaching our kids to do the same. Let down your guard, and open up to God and to trustworthy people around you. Often these people are the source of God’s healing for your life. Your plan of self-sufficiency and self-protection hasn’t worked yet; why do you think it will suddenly start? Refuse to be a desperado.



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