

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

Accepting God's Forgiveness

Key Verse

For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.
As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103:11–12)

Ear Check (Story Comprehension)

- Q: What food does Cindy make that her father says is terrible?
A: *Biscuits*
- Q: What do Pastor Flint and Paw Paw Chuck rebuild after it collapses?
A: *The Barn*
- Q: Who does the wolf say has been kidnapped by bandits?
A: *Children*
- Q: Who is the vulture looking for?
A: *The One*
- Q: What name do the men around the campfire call Chuck?
A: *Goliath*

Heart Check (Spiritual Application)

- Q: Chuck was haunted by the sins of his past. Why couldn't he just move on?
- A: When we roll in the mud, we get covered in mud. Sin has consequences, and some of them occur deep inside our hearts. Chuck was afraid of being hurt and of hurting others. When he was hurt again, he simply turned off his ability to feel anything at all. He thought this would protect him, but it actually made him more likely to be exactly what he feared—an angry, violent bear.

Questions for Cubs Page 2

Q: Chuck's struggle to accept God's forgiveness for his past sins kept him from growing closer to others as well as to God. What do we need to know about God's forgiveness? What can keep us from accepting the peace that comes from being forgiven?

A: Perhaps the most difficult concept to grasp within Christianity is the truth that God's forgiveness for our sins comes as a free gift that cannot be earned. We know how wretched we are compared to God who is holy, and we think that we must have to do *something* to earn God's forgiveness and salvation. But His love for us is so great that He freely forgives, yearning to draw us closer to Him. His forgiveness is complete through Jesus Christ. When God forgives, He really forgives (Psalm 103:11–13)!

Sometimes we might think, "I know I'm forgiven, but doesn't God know how bad I am?" Satan uses thoughts like this to convince us that we are not worthy of God's forgiveness—even after God has *already* forgiven us! This line of thinking keeps us from becoming Christlike. Make no mistake, we are unworthy of God's forgiveness in our natural, sinful state, but God has *made* us worthy by cleansing us through the blood of Christ. The more we doubt God's forgiveness and dwell on what He has already put behind us, the harder it is to move forward in our walk with Him. When God looks at us, He doesn't see the old decrepit shells of the people we once were. He sees holy, beautiful, new creatures growing into the image of Christ (1 John 1:7–9).

Having said that, we can do many things that will assist us in the pursuit of Christlikeness and keep us out of the trap of self-doubt. We should fill our minds and hearts with Scripture and seek God through prayer and study (2 Timothy 3:15–17). As we pursue what God has for us, we must leave behind the pursuits that will tempt us or drag us down. Finally, as tough as it may be to grasp, we must accept that God has forgiven us. He desires to transform us into something beautiful and holy. We need to strive to see ourselves through God's eyes (2 Corinthians 3:17–18).

Q: Instead of working through the pain of his past, Chuck decided to harden his heart. Pastor Flint said that this made Chuck a coward. How should a Christian deal with emotional pain?

A: Christians were never meant to go through life alone. Scripture says that we are all part of one body (Ephesians 4:15–16). The church, our community of believers, is one of the best tools God has provided to guide us, teach us, and heal us. Isolation and silent shame are tools of the enemy. We are weak on our own. God provided the church as a place where we could receive support, encouragement, and a challenge to grow in the Lord (Hebrews 10:22–25). In the body of believers, meeting each other's needs is not a humiliating experience; it is a blessing for all involved. Share your life, your fears, and the longings of your soul with trusted and more mature Christians—that is the path to healing (James 5:13–20).

"I" Check (*Personal Application*)

1. Chuck allowed his hate to affect his attitude, which in turn affected his behavior and relationships with others. In what ways does your attitude affect how you live your life? Why is it important to have a positive attitude? What can you do to improve your attitude?
2. Chuck refused to help the wolf look for the kidnapped children, but he later changed his mind and decided to help. Why should you go out of your way to help others? Can you think of a Bible story that is an example of helping others? What can you do to be helpful to the people around you?
3. The Bible says that if we ask God to forgive us, He will. Are there things in your life you need forgiveness for? Make a secret list for yourself and spend time asking God to forgive you for each item on your list. Then thank Him for forgiving you!

Director's Notes

In "Accepting God's Forgiveness," Paw Paw Chuck's wound has become a scar. Scars are interesting things. To some they are trophies of past acts of glory. To others they are a telltale sign of a past injury, something to be hidden in shame. When my son was three and a half months old, he had heart surgery. He will forever have a scar about a foot long down the middle of his chest. Without that incision, my son would have died. I love that scar. When he was a baby, I often kissed that scar. Today it is still a reminder of God's care and healing. Whatever your perspective, scars represent the footprints of healing. Chuck was healed of his physical wound. However, he still nurtured some open wounds in his soul that he refused to allow to heal.

A tender heart is required to survey one's own soul and admit it is a garbage dump. The irony is that often a tender heart cannot rise to accept the forgiveness and healing that is offered by our Savior. That's where Chuck is in this story. He is filled with self-loathing. He has done the math, and the sum of his life totals a failure. His soul is damaged and weak from neglect. If our physical body is damaged, it has some ability to heal itself. Our souls, on the other hand, have no such capacity. We have the ability to harm or malnourish our souls, but healing for them comes from a place outside ourselves. It comes only from the Creator of souls, and He doesn't force healing on us. We must want healing and come to Him humbly in order to receive it.

Chuck believes God can save his soul, but deep inside he feels he needs to be punished for his past. Because no one else is around to punish him, he chooses to do it himself. This reaction can only come from a tender and sincere heart. Yet it is a sick deception from hell. His response is dead wrong; Chuck believes a lie. His past and the resulting guilt weigh heavily on him like chains on a prisoner. He believes he is unfit to be useful to anyone, and he is too ashamed to lift his eyes to God. He has become morose and closed off to the good things around him. Cindy and Pastor Flint know that his chains are gone, but Chuck believes he still wears them. In the natural, fallen world, his perspective makes much more sense than Cindy and Pastor Flint's. He has a reasonable reaction to what he sees. However, there is more to reality than what we see.

I have come to realize that most spiritual truths are the opposite of what we expect in our natural, fallen world. We must die in order to live. We must be last to be first. Christ must conquer the power of sin and death by being killed. The list goes on and on. For Chuck to receive healing, he must release his guilt and lay it at the feet of Christ. Through a course of events, God calls out to Chuck to remind him of his purpose, his gifts, and who he is meant to be. These things seem like faint memories to him . . . things that are better and truer than the lies he has embraced. But the memories are still faint, and they do not seem as solid as the lies. Such is the illusion of a fallen world. As Christians, we often operate within a worldview that is deeply infected with these kinds of lies. But truth is always real, and lies are always smoke and mirrors. It is critical that we, like Chuck, learn the difference.



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