

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

Our Choices Decide Our Character

Key Verse

We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. (Romans 5:3–4 NIV)

Ear Check (Story Comprehension)

Q: What is Ned and C.J.'s reaction when they find out they won't be sailing the Continental right away?

A: *Disappointment*

Q: Who shows up to help Paw Paw Chuck with the construction work?

A: *Dillon*

Q: What happens when C.J., Ned, Hugh, and the gang tear a big hole in the sail?

A: *They work together to sew up the hole in the sail.*

Q: What happens when Gus finally takes the boys out in the dinghy?

A: *Hugh, Mange, and Moltey jump out to swim and play.*

Q: Paw Paw Chuck offers to have Dillon live in his house. Why does Dillon say no?

A: *Dillon says no because he likes his freedom.*

Heart Check (Spiritual Application)

Q: Why does it seem like the things I want to do, God doesn't want me to do? Why is He such a killjoy?

A: The reason we are at odds with God is that we have sinful hearts. We instinctively want to do what we want to do. Much of what we want is bad and harmful to us. God knows this about us, and He wants only the best for us (Jeremiah 29:11). He wants us to want good things—godly things—but we need to *learn* to want them. He has given us rules and laws, and He wants us to say no to many things that look good but really aren't. We learn this through discipline, hardships, and corrections (Hebrews 12:6–11). God is not a killjoy at all. On the contrary, He is keenly interested in giving us only good and perfect things (James 1:17).

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Q: I have heard people say that it is wrong to try to work too hard to please God because He already loves us. This episode says just the opposite thing. What should we do?

A: A wise man once said that “Grace is not opposed to effort. It is opposed to earning.” What that means is that we cannot do “works” to get God to love us more. However, that is very different from us wanting to learn and grow and become more like Christ. If you want to become good at baseball, you do the things a major league player does. You practice hitting, running, and throwing. If you want to become more like Christ, you do the things He did (1 Timothy 4:7–8). You humble yourself before God, you obey what He tells you, and you serve the people around you. By doing these things you will change—you will start to think differently and feel differently. This is the way it is supposed to be. If you are trying to get God to like you more, you might follow rules and keep track of how well you are doing. You will soon become proud if you do these things well. And you might be crushed with guilt when you are failing. You may also start looking down on others who are not trying as hard as you are. You will not want to serve them; you will want them to start doing the same rule-following that you are. This is legalism. It is destructive. Jesus hated it two thousand years ago, and He hates it now. Trying to earn God’s love is really just dumb. He already loves His children fully and completely. He loves us because He wants to—not because we’ve earned it. That is the wonderful mystery of grace. So enjoy the fact that God loves you, and work hard to be like Christ.

“I” Check (*Personal Application*)

1. Think about what happened when Ned, C.J., Hugh, and his gang spent the whole day learning and preparing for their chance to sail in the ocean. It was challenging, and they spent some time doing things that they didn’t understand. Can you think of things in your life that challenge you and leave you wondering what their purposes are? Are there things that you do that teach you discipline and perseverance and build your character?
2. Read the key verse. Why do you think that character produces hope? What does hope mean to you?
3. Have you ever stopped to consider what life would be like without Jesus? Think about Dillon. He was without hope, without a Savior. There was something missing from his life. Are there people in your life to whom you can offer the hope of Jesus?

Director's Notes

This episode was my attempt to talk to third graders about existentialism. Now that may seem surprising since most adults don't really understand what this term means, but I assure you, as a culture, we are all existentialists to one degree or another. For the purposes of this episode, *existentialism* refers to the view that "I am my own person, and I can do whatever I want without concern for what it may mean to anyone else." Is this starting to sound familiar?

"No rules."

"Question authority."

"That may be fine for you, but I make up my own rules."

"No one tells me what to do."

These are just some of the catch phrases that come out of the mouth of an existentialist. These statements and others like them permeate our advertising, our music, our favorite movies, and even the attitudes of our favorite sports heroes and movie stars. We are so surrounded by this type of thinking that we don't even recognize it—it's just the way things are. But it's not the way it's supposed to be! As I was trying to write the script for this episode, it soon became clear that it was going to be hard—if not impossible—to tell a kid that living selfishly is bad or destructive. The biggest difficulty is that most of the time the bad things and destruction come some time after the selfish living has started. The feedback loop is lengthy.

The angle I took to handle this topic was to illustrate the concept that every day you are building the kind of person you will one day be. If you discipline yourself, train, and practice, you will one day be able to sail a dinghy, but if you won't accept some restrictions and sacrifices, you will only be able to splash around in shallow water. If you live only for yourself and do it for a long period of time, you will one day find yourself isolated, unhappy, and alone.

In contrast, Scripture shows us a different way, a superior way. It can certainly feel like obedience to the instructions of the Bible will be an intrusion to our pleasure—the fact is that it will! But it will give us other, deeper things that cannot be had any other way. God did not give us the Bible to spoil our fun. He gave us the Bible so that we would not be pathetic and lonely, splashing around in shallow water all of our lives.



David B. Carl
Creative Director
Paws & Tales