



Story Mates

December 2024
Volume 56, No. 4
Part 1 for December 1



All Alone by Janis Good

Based on facts from long ago

Jenny stepped off the school van and opened the door to her house.

“Mother?” she called.

No answer. Only silence. Where could Daddy, Mother, and her little sisters and brothers be? She looked in the garage but there was no car.

Jenny placed her lunch box on the kitchen counter and snapped on the light. She wandered into the living room

and sat on a chair. How quiet everything seemed. No children squabbled over toys. No dishes rattled in the kitchen, and the washing machine sat silent. Daddy wasn’t even outside working in the yard. Where was everyone?

She had never been left alone—never, ever. Whenever she came home from first grade, the family always was there making noise. Jenny thought about her

Listen to God

by Jean Knabbe

Look forward, backward,
up, and down to find the
following words from
John 2:5.

Q D P C O T N U O Y

P E V I D S A I T H

W H A T S O E V E R

WHATSOEVER HE SAITH UNTO YOU, DO IT.

sister Sarah who sometimes got into her books and puzzles. Sarah sometimes dog-eared the pages of her books or lost pieces to her puzzles. And Danny broke a pedal on her bike when he wrecked it while learning to ride. But right now, Jenny wished Sarah and Danny were home with her.

She went outside and sat on the porch. Sprinkles, the dog, barked and wagged his tail. She patted his head. Where was the family? She heard a car coming down the road. Maybe they were coming home after all. But the car sped past.

She was alone. What if someone came to get her? No one was here to protect her. Jenny scooted off the porch chair and went into the house. She climbed on the couch and looked through the window while two big tears slipped down her face.

Why didn't Mother tell her she was going away? Where was Daddy? The tears fell faster. Then she heard a car

door slam. What if someone had come to take her? She ran to hide in a closet.

She heard the door open, and in tumbled all the children and Daddy and Mother. Jenny crept out of her hiding place.

"Why did you leave me home alone?" she asked.

"I'm sorry," Daddy said. "We thought we would be home before you were. But there was an accident, and all the traffic had to wait and wait. I hope you were all right."

Jenny's lips trembled. "I was scared, and the house was so quiet."

"We'll try not to let this happen again, but I prayed for you," Mother said, giving Jenny a comforting hug. "I knew Jesus was watching over you."

"I should have remembered that," Jenny said.

"Whether we are here or not, God is always watching over you," Daddy added.

“Maybe you can learn this verse to help you when you are afraid,” Mother said as she took items from the grocery bag. “‘In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid’ (Psalm 56:11).”

Jenny repeated the verse several times as she helped Mother put away the groceries.

“God was watching me, Mother, wasn’t He?”

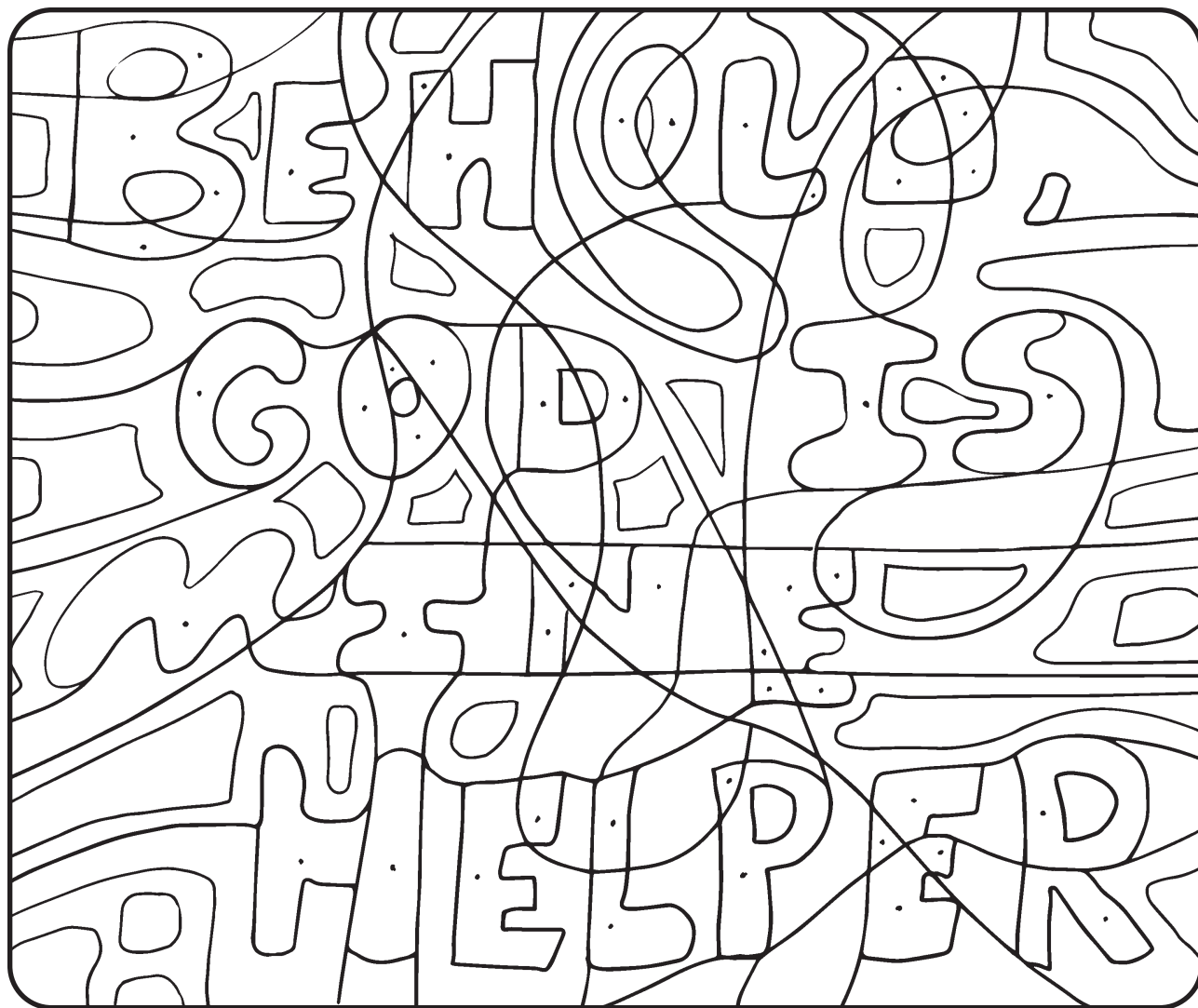
“Yes. When we know and really believe that, we are trusting Him.”

“I will try to remember to trust God when I’m afraid,” Jenny said.

Then she took the baby and rocked her in the rocking chair. She whispered, *Thank You* to God for bringing her family back home. And she thanked God for keeping her safe when she thought she was all alone.

God Helps Us

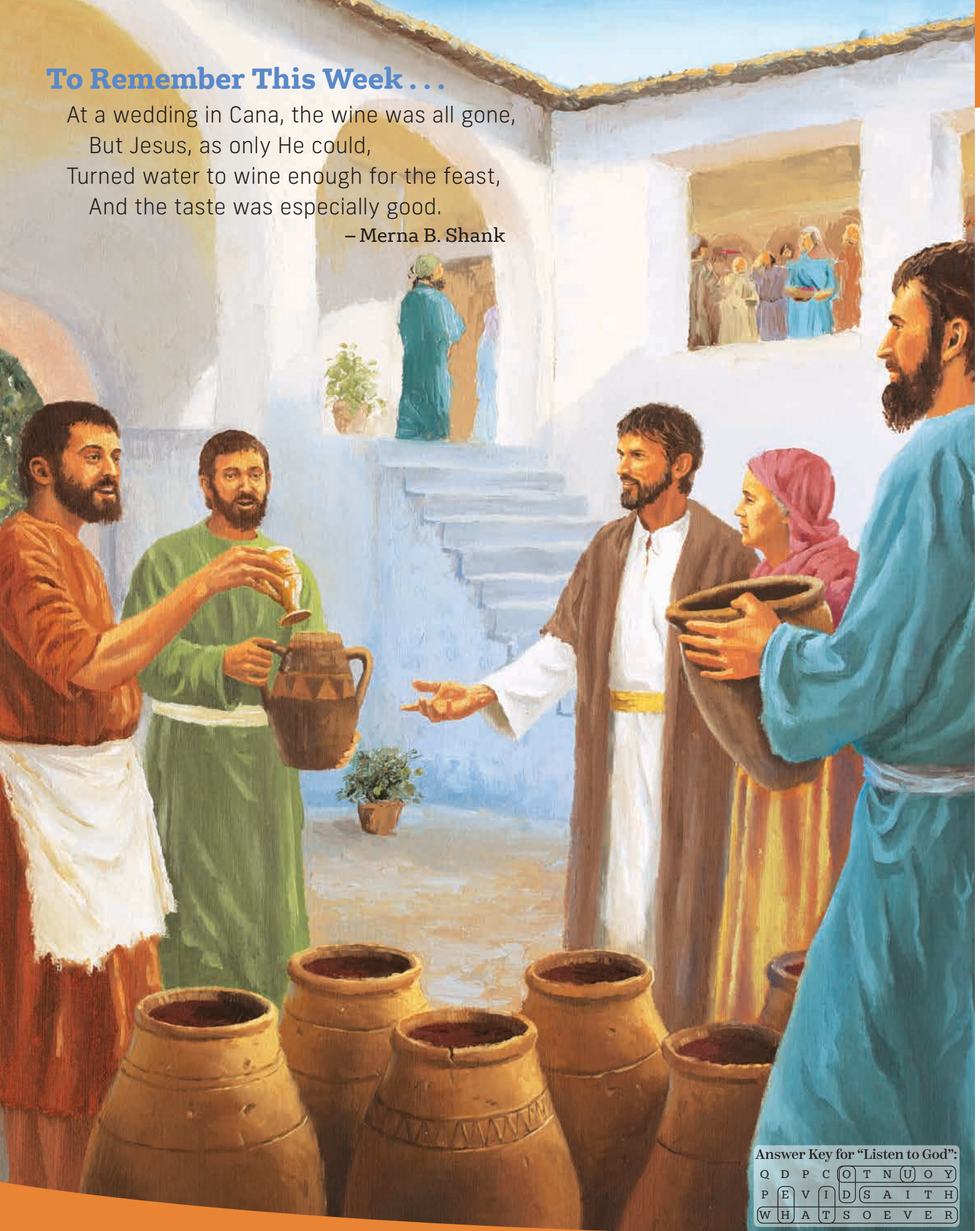
Color each section that has a dot to discover a verse from Psalm 54:4.



To Remember This Week . . .

At a wedding in Cana, the wine was all gone,
But Jesus, as only He could,
Turned water to wine enough for the feast,
And the taste was especially good.

– Merna B. Shank



Answer Key for "Listen to God":

Q	D	P	C	O	T	N	U	O	Y
P	E	V	I	D	S	A	I	T	H
W	H	A	T	S	O	E	V	E	R



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Part 2 for December 8

Tonya's Tonsil Trouble

by Sara Martin

Based on a true story

Tonya sighed with relief as the door closed behind the last of the company. "I'm going to bed," she announced.

Mom turned to look at her. "What's wrong? Does your throat feel worse?"

Tonya shrugged. "I'm just tired."

"I'm afraid our company this evening was too much for you," Mom said when she tucked Tonya into bed. "Sleep as long as you like in the morning. I don't think

you'll go to school tomorrow after all."

Last Wednesday, Tonya had surgery to remove her tonsils. On this Sunday evening, some friends had stopped by to visit. She was happy they came, but she didn't feel like playing. It felt good to be in bed, and Tonya fell asleep right away.

When Tonya woke up the next morning, she didn't really hurt, and yet, she didn't feel quite right. She swallowed



To Remember This Week . . .

Jesus offered life to all—
Samaritans or Jews.
Just like today, all can be saved,
Depending how they choose.
— Merna B. Shank

a few times and then swallowed a few more times. Every time she swallowed, something didn't seem right. *I'm going to spit into the bathroom sink instead of swallowing. Maybe that will help*, she thought.

How surprised Tonya was to see blood in the sink! “Mom, Mom!” she called.

Mom and Dad both came to check on Tonya.

“The incision in your throat must have opened a little,” Dad guessed. “We need to call the doctor. Would you like to try sucking on some ice chips, Tonya? Would that feel good? Some cold ice?”

Tonya nodded. It felt good to have Dad and Mom take care of her.

When Mom was finally able to get through to the doctor, he said they must bring Tonya to the hospital at once. Dad had already left for work. But Mom called him, and he agreed to meet them at the hospital.

“Hmmm,” said Dr. Ross as he examined Tonya's throat. “I think I can fix this

without putting her to sleep,” he said to Dad and Mom. “She looks like a brave little girl!” He smiled and patted Tonya's arm. “One of you may stay right here with her while I do the procedure,” he added.

“Why don't I stay?” Dad suggested. “I'll sit right beside you, Tonya, and you can hold my hand.”

And that is what she did. Tonya squeezed Dad's hand as hard as she could when Dr. Ross injected the numbing medicine. It hurt so badly! Dad began telling a story, but she didn't hear much. At last, her throat was numb, and the doctor could fix it.

When he was all finished, the doctor helped her sit up. “You are the bravest little girl I have ever seen,” he announced. He gave her a whole pack of stickers and a teddy bear. Tonya smiled a little but didn't say anything. She was eager to go home.

Dad helped with her seat belt, and Mom tucked a warm blanket around her. Dad waved goodbye as he left, and Mom began the drive home. In a few minutes, she glanced at Tonya in the rearview mirror. “Are you okay?” she asked.

Answer Key
for “Believe”:

B	E	L	I	E	V	E	T	H
P	N	E	V	E	R	M	A	E
V	O	J	P	L	L	A	H	S
L	K	T	S	R	I	H	T	C

Answer
Key for
“Drink”:

E	M	D	N	A	K
P	I	R	J	I	F
T	H	I	R	S	T
C	U	N	K	Q	E
L	N	K	P	M	L
K	T	Y	N	A	K
C	O	M	E	N	M

Respect

by William Schlegl

Use the backward code to learn who we should respect. Two letters have been done for you.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
Z	Y	X	W	V	U	T	S	R	Q	P	O	N

“*H* _____ *A* _____
S L M L F I Z O O

N V M O L E V G S V

Y I L G S V I S L L W

(1 Peter 2:17).

“Yes,” Tonya replied.

Several miles down the road, Mom glanced back again. Tonya frowned. *What if Mom wrecks when she looks back?* she worried. A plan formed in her mind. She kept her eyes on the rearview mirror, and the next time she saw Mom look at her, she smiled. *If I smile, she reasoned, Mom will know I'm doing fine, and she won't look back.*

Tonya kept her eyes glued to the mirror. When Mom's eyes met hers, she smiled broadly. It seemed to be working. Mom didn't glance back for so long that Tonya almost dozed off. Just then she saw Mom glancing back, and she stretched her eyes open wide and smiled warmly. Finally, finally they turned into their lane.

“What an ordeal!” Mom sighed when she had Tonya sitting on the sofa. “You were a brave girl. I think you were even braver than I was. You even smiled on the way home! Anyway, why did you keep

smiling at me like that?”

At her words, Tonya began to cry. Big hot tears slid down her cheeks.

“What's wrong?” Mom asked, sounding alarmed.

When Tonya could talk at last, she said, “Everyone's been saying that I'm brave. But it's not true. I was scared the whole time. I was afraid you would wreck on the way home when you glanced back at me. I smiled so you wouldn't look back so often.”

Mom pulled Tonya onto her lap. “Oh, Tonya! Being brave doesn't mean you don't feel afraid. It means facing your troubles with courage. And that is what you did. Dad and I were praying for you, and God helped you to be truly brave.”

Tonya thought about that. “God did help me,” she agreed, “but I'm glad you and Dad were with me too.” She snuggled down with a soft pillow and her new teddy bear. “Now I'm ready to sleep for a long, long time!”

Believe

by Jean Knabbe

Look forward, backward, up, and down to find the following words from John 6:35.

HE ON NEVER
THAT ME THIRST.
BELIEVETH SHALL

B E L I E V E T H
P N E V E R M A E
V O J P L L A H S
L K T S R I H T C

Drink

by Jean Knabbe

Find these words from John 7:37.

IF COME E M D N A K
ANY UNTO P I R J I F
MAN ME, T H I R S T
THIRST, AND C U N K Q E
LET DRINK. L N K P M L
HIM K T Y N A K
C O M E N M

Answer for "Respect":

"Honour all men. Love the brotherhood."



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Part 3 for December 15

Mousetraps, Hamsters, and Speed by Emily Ebersole

Kenton was a little seven-year-old boy with straw-colored hair and gray eyes. Kenton enjoyed animals. He helped to care for the family's flock of chickens. He liked to feed Pickles and Olive, the family dogs. He also had a fish tank with nine colorful guppies. But his favorite pets were Wiggles and Giggles, the two small hamsters his parents had given him on his seventh birthday. Kenton liked to stroke their fuzzy little bodies,

feeling their soft fur. He liked to watch them climb up the tubes on their cage or hop onto their exercise wheel where they traveled around and around, going nowhere.

Kenton liked all his pets, but he had a problem: he liked to do things fast. Too fast. He always seemed to be in a hurry. He never walked if he could run. He fed his pets quickly, scattering feed. He rushed through the henhouse, missing eggs.



Mom often made him do his chores over again so he would learn to do them carefully. He tried to remember to slow down, but he was forgetful.

One day he learned his lesson, but it was not easy. Mom asked Kenton to gather up the mousetraps that had been set around the large freezers in the mudroom. Kenton didn't know exactly how many there were, but he quickly found two and laid them on the steps for Mom. Then he raced outside.

That evening Kenton got ready for bed. He had borrowed a book from the school library, and he wanted to read it before bedtime. He speedily checked on Wiggles and Giggles. He quickly set their food bowl down into the shavings, dumping some of it in his haste. Then without making sure the small door was latched, the little boy in train pajamas dashed upstairs to his interesting book.

The next morning when Kenton looked into the hamster cage, there was

only Giggles rooting around in the golden shavings. *Where is Wiggles?* he wondered. He dug around in the shavings, but none of the humps proved to be the missing hamster. Mom wondered if he had closed the cage door before he went to bed last night. Kenton admitted he was in a hurry to read his book and hadn't made sure it was latched.

Kenton looked and looked for his lost hamster. He peered under the sofas and around the box of firewood. He looked in the broom closet and under the end tables. He moved the trash can and searched behind Dad's desk. But Wiggles was nowhere to be found.

After breakfast, a sad Kenton headed outside to feed the chickens and dogs. While he tugged on his chore boots in the mudroom, he glanced between Mom's two freezers. There was a fuzzy mound of brown fur sitting quite still. *Mice are usually gray, not brown,* Kenton thought. Then he realized what he was looking at: Wiggles!

To Remember This Week . . .

Jesus did something most helpful and kind
When He opened the eyes of the man who was blind.
And the man who was healed, without a doubt, knew
The one who can heal is the God for us too.

— Merna B. Shank

A Blind Man Is Healed

by Brenda Huante

Jesus had compassion on the blind man and healed him. Fit the following words from John 9:38 into the spaces. One word is done for you.

LORD, I

BELIEVE.

AND HE

WORSHIPPED

HIM.

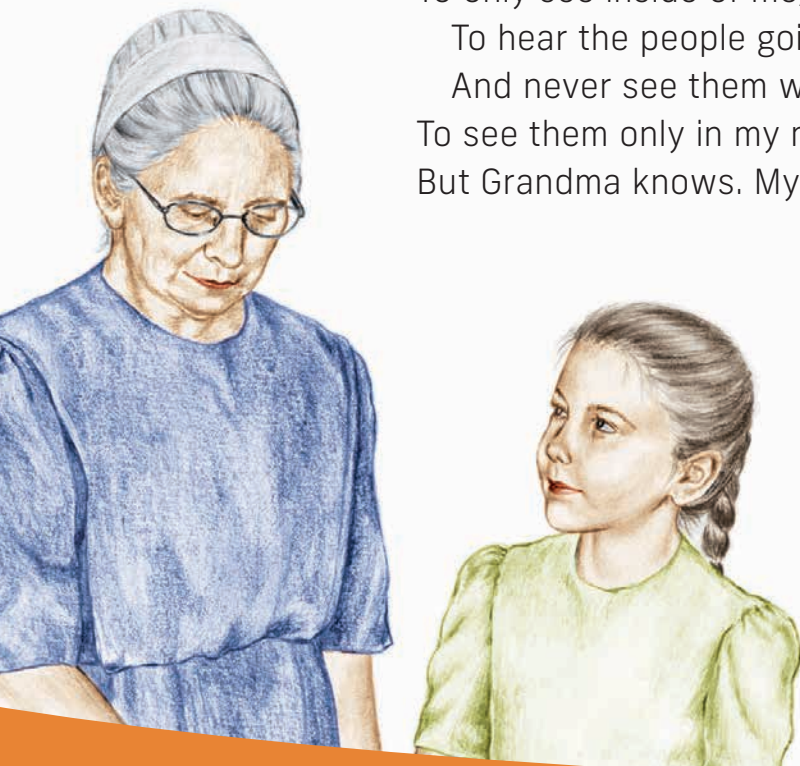
					H				
					I				
					M				

Grandma's Eyes

by Lucy A. Martin

I do not know how it would be
 To only see inside of me,
 To hear the people going by
 And never see them with my eye,
 To see them only in my mind.
 But Grandma knows. My Grandma's blind.

I often try to be her eyes.
 She's also mine because she's wise.
 The things my grandma shows to me
 My six-year eyes would never see.
 She shows to me the sort of things
 That living life with Jesus brings.
 If ever I am old and blind,
 I'll see like Grandma—in my mind.



Answers for "The Man Born Blind":

- 1. F, 2. T, 3. T, 4. F, 5. T, 6. T.



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Part 4 for December 22

A Change of Plans by Heidi Good

The tote was piled with cookies and fruit and ham biscuits. Caroline added a container of fudge, and Mom squeezed a carafe of hot chocolate next to a bowl of party mix.

“Are we ready to go?” Dad asked.

“Yes, I think so,” Mom said. “Why don’t you girls get your shoes on, and we can leave.”

Caroline and Olivia ran to their room to get their shoes. When they came back,

Dad was talking to someone on the phone.

“Mrs. Hudson is in the hospital,” Dad said when he got off the phone. “That was her daughter calling. She said Mrs. Hudson fell and broke her hip.”

Mom and Caroline and Olivia stared at Dad.

“But we were just getting ready to go to her house,” Caroline said.

“What about our party?” Olivia asked.



To Remember This Week . . .

Jesus' coming brought this
world light
And showed by example how
to live right.

— Merna B. Shank

Mom sat down in a chair.

“Well,” Dad said. “I don’t know.”

This was not how things were supposed to go. Every year close to Christmas, Caroline and her family took a party to Mrs. Hudson’s house. They ate cookies and drank hot chocolate and played games. They sang Christmas carols and rearranged the manger scene. Before they went home, Mrs. Hudson would give them a boxful of gifts.

“Have a wonderful Christmas,” she would say, giving the girls tight hugs. “You remind me of my girls when they were little.” And her eyes would fill with tears.

“Do we need to go to the hospital?” Mom asked.

“No, I think she’s going into surgery soon,” Dad said.

“I wanted to have a party,” Caroline said.

Mom and Dad and the girls looked at the tote overflowing with good things.

“Maybe we can take our party to

someone else,” Dad suggested.

“Yes,” Mom agreed. “We should do that, since everything is ready to go.”

“Who can we take it to?” Caroline asked.

“We could take it to Mrs. Park,” Dad said.

Mom thought for a bit. “She might like that. Should I give her a call?”

While Mom called Mrs. Park, Olivia and Caroline put on their coats.

“Mrs. Park said we can come,” Mom said after getting off the phone.

They climbed in the car and drove down the road to Mrs. Park’s house.

Caroline felt sad. Mrs. Park was not as nice as Mrs. Hudson. Mrs. Park never smiled, and she never gave gifts.

They got to Mrs. Park’s house, and Dad carried the tote inside. Olivia and Caroline trailed behind Mom.

“Hello, Mrs. Park! It’s so nice of you to let us come at the last minute,” Mom said. She started unpacking the tote and setting the good food on the table.

“Hello,” Mrs. Park said. She stood hunched over and watched Mom.

Olivia and Caroline helped set out the cookies and fudge.

Answer for “The Greatest Gift”:

“The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

Answer for “Jesus Is the Light”:

“Now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8).

“I can’t have sugar,” Mrs. Park said.

“Oh, that’s right!” Mom said. “I forgot that.”

“I can’t have bread either,” Mrs. Park said.

“I’m sorry,” Mom said. “We can pull some ham out of the biscuits for you. And I have some nuts and fruit. Can you eat that?”

Mrs. Park looked at the fruit and shook her head. “Just the nuts,” she said.

“Okay,” Mom said.

They all got plates and sat in the living room. Sweetie the dog ran everywhere, jumping and barking and trying to grab bites of food. Dad and Mom talked to Mrs. Park, but she didn’t say much.

Finally, they were done eating. “Can we sing some Christmas carols for you?” Dad asked.

“Okay,” Mrs. Park said.

They sang a few songs. Mrs. Park closed her eyes, and in a minute her head was nodding in sleep.

Mom started gathering up the plates. Dad scratched Sweetie under the chin.

Caroline leaned over to Olivia. “This house smells funny,” she whispered.

Dad gave her a look and shook his head. “Go help Mom pack up,” he said.

The party was packed into the tote, and they were all ready to leave when Mrs. Park finally lifted her head and blinked her eyes.

“I think we’re going to go,” Mom said, giving Mrs. Park a hug. “Thank you for letting us come.”



Dad picked up the tote, and the girls put on their coats.

“It’s way more fun to have a party at Mrs. Hudson’s house,” Olivia said when they were back in the car.

“Yes,” Caroline said. “We didn’t get to play any games, and she didn’t give us any gifts.”

“It was not the same party that we usually have,” Mom said. “But maybe we were able to help cheer Mrs. Park up.”

“Sometimes loving people is not fun,” Dad said. “It’s easy to love Mrs. Hudson because she does nice things for us and is so appreciative of what we do for her. But Mrs. Park needs love as well. Even if it’s not so enjoyable, we still need to be kind to her. You never know, maybe our party this evening helped her not to feel so lonely and sad.”

Caroline did not want Mrs. Park to be lonely and sad. Maybe sitting in her living room and eating together was not so bad after all.

The Greatest Gift

by William Schlegl

Write each backward word correctly.
You will learn of the greatest gift of all.

“

EHT TFIG FO DOG

SI LANRETE EFIL

HGUORHT SUSEJ TSIRHC

RUO DROL ” (Romans 6:23).

Jesus Is the Light

by Eugenie Daniels

Jesus is the Light of the world. How does Jesus want His children to walk? To discover the answer, solve the math problems and put the words in the blanks with the same numbers.

$$2 + 7 = \underline{\quad} = \text{ARE}$$

$$4 - 2 = \underline{\quad} = \text{THE}$$

$$6 - 2 = \underline{\quad} = \text{CHILDREN}$$

$$3 + 3 = \underline{\quad} = \text{WALK}$$

$$2 + 3 = \underline{\quad} = \text{IN}$$

$$5 + 3 = \underline{\quad} = \text{YE}$$

$$10 - 7 = \underline{\quad} = \text{LIGHT}$$

“Now _____ Lord:

9 8 3 5 2

_____ as _____ of _____” (Ephesians 5:8).

6 4 3



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Part 5 for December 29

Two Brothers and Peace

by Abigail Metzler Parks

“Can we get a cart with a car today?” Brendan asked he hopped out of the van at the grocery store.

“Yes, can we?” his brother Tyrell begged.

“We’ll see,” Mom said. “If they’re not already being used, we can.”

“Hooray!” Brendan cheered as they walked into the grocery store. “They have a blue car cart today.”

“I want the red one,” Tyrell said. “We

had a blue one last time.”

“No, we didn’t,” Brendan said.

“Well,” Mom said, “if you can’t agree, we’ll have to take a regular cart.”

“We’ll agree,” Brendan said quickly. He hoped Tyrell would say they could take the blue cart, but he didn’t. “We can take a red cart,” Brendan said at last.

Riding in a red car cart would be better than having a regular cart at least. Tyrell hopped into one side of the car,



and Brendan climbed into the other side. Brendan had so much fun pretending to honk the horn and turn the steering wheel that he forgot he wasn't in his favorite blue cart.

After they were finished at the grocery store, they drove to Grandma's house. "Can I ring the doorbell?" Tyrell asked.

"No, I want to," Brendan said. "We got the red cart like you wanted, so it's my turn to get what I want. I'm going to ring it."

But before either of them could ring the doorbell, Grandma opened the door. "Come on in," she said. She gave Mom and each of the boys a cookie. "I have something that's yours," she told the boys. She got two papers from the kitchen counter. "You forgot these last Sunday."

Brendan looked at the papers. They had brought their Sunday school crafts along last time to show Grandma, but they must have forgotten them when it was time to leave. One of the papers had a little splotch in a corner, like something must have spilled on it. "This one is mine," Brendan said, quickly reaching for the nicer one.

"No, the nice one is mine," Tyrell said. He reached out to grab the paper from Brendan. *Rrrrip!* went the paper.

"You meanie! You tore it." Brendan glared at the torn paper and then at Tyrell.

"Boys, stop fighting," Mom said.

Grandma picked up the two pieces of the torn paper and got some tape from the drawer. "Do either of you remember your verse from Sunday school?"

Both boys shook their heads.

Eternal Life by Cynthia Grabill

Unscramble the words. Put the right word in the space.

“

O D G H H T A G E I V N O T S U eternal

F I L E T S H I E F L I S I N I

S H I N O S ” (1 John 5:11).

“Live at peace with all men,” Grandma read from the paper.

“Oh, I remember now,” Brendan said. “I just forgot before.”

Grandma smiled. “Do you remember what it means?”

Brendan nodded. “It means that you should be nice to everyone.”

“Do you think that fighting is a good way to live at peace?” Grandma asked.

Brendan and Tyrell shook their heads. “I guess not,” Brendan admitted.

While Grandma and Mom talked some more, Brendan and Tyrell looked at Grandma’s books. They remembered not to fight when they wanted the same book. “You can look at it first,” Brendan said. “I’ll look at it when you’re finished.” He picked up a book about dogs instead and found that it was just as interesting as the cat book he had wanted.

After a while, it was time to go home. “Here, you can take these cookies with you,” Grandma said. She handed the cookie container to Tyrell. “And don’t forget your papers,” she said. She handed the papers to Brendan.

Brendan looked at the cookies. Then he looked at the papers. He wished he could carry the cookies instead, but he remembered what the papers said.

Answer Key for
“God’s Gift”:

	G	I	F	T							
				H							
	U	N	S	P	E	A	K	A	B	L	E
	N					N			E		
	T					K			F		
	O		H	I	S			G	O	D	
										R	

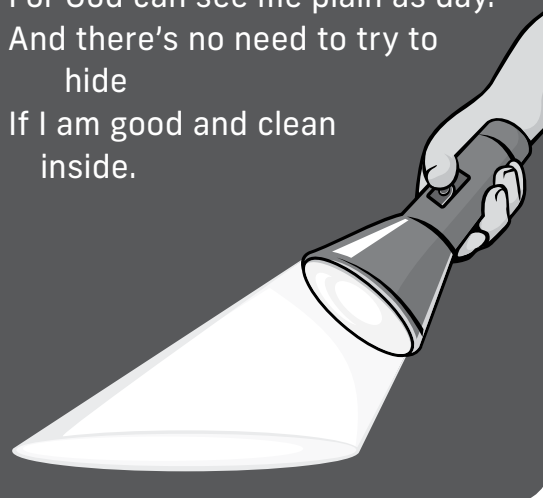
God Sees Inside

by Lucy A. Martin

Whenever I go out at night,
I always have to take a light.
It bobs along in front of me
To show me what I need to see.

God doesn’t even need the sun
To see inside of everyone.
He sees the thoughts inside my
mind.
He knows if I am mean or kind.

It never works to run away,
For God can see me plain as day.
And there’s no need to try to
hide
If I am good and clean
inside.



He carried the papers to the car and carefully put them on the seat beside him.

“Can I have my paper?” Tyrell asked.

Brendan looked at the nice paper and at the torn paper. “Here,” he said, handing Tyrell the nicer paper. “You can have this one.” He smiled at his brother, and suddenly he realized that being a peacemaker was much more satisfying than getting his own way.

