

GOD IS IN CONTROL

We will experience many struggles in life, but we can always face them knowing that God is in control. There is nothing too big for him, and he has already won the battle against evil. Because he is loving and compassionate, we can go through each day knowing that God is walking with us no matter what we are going through.



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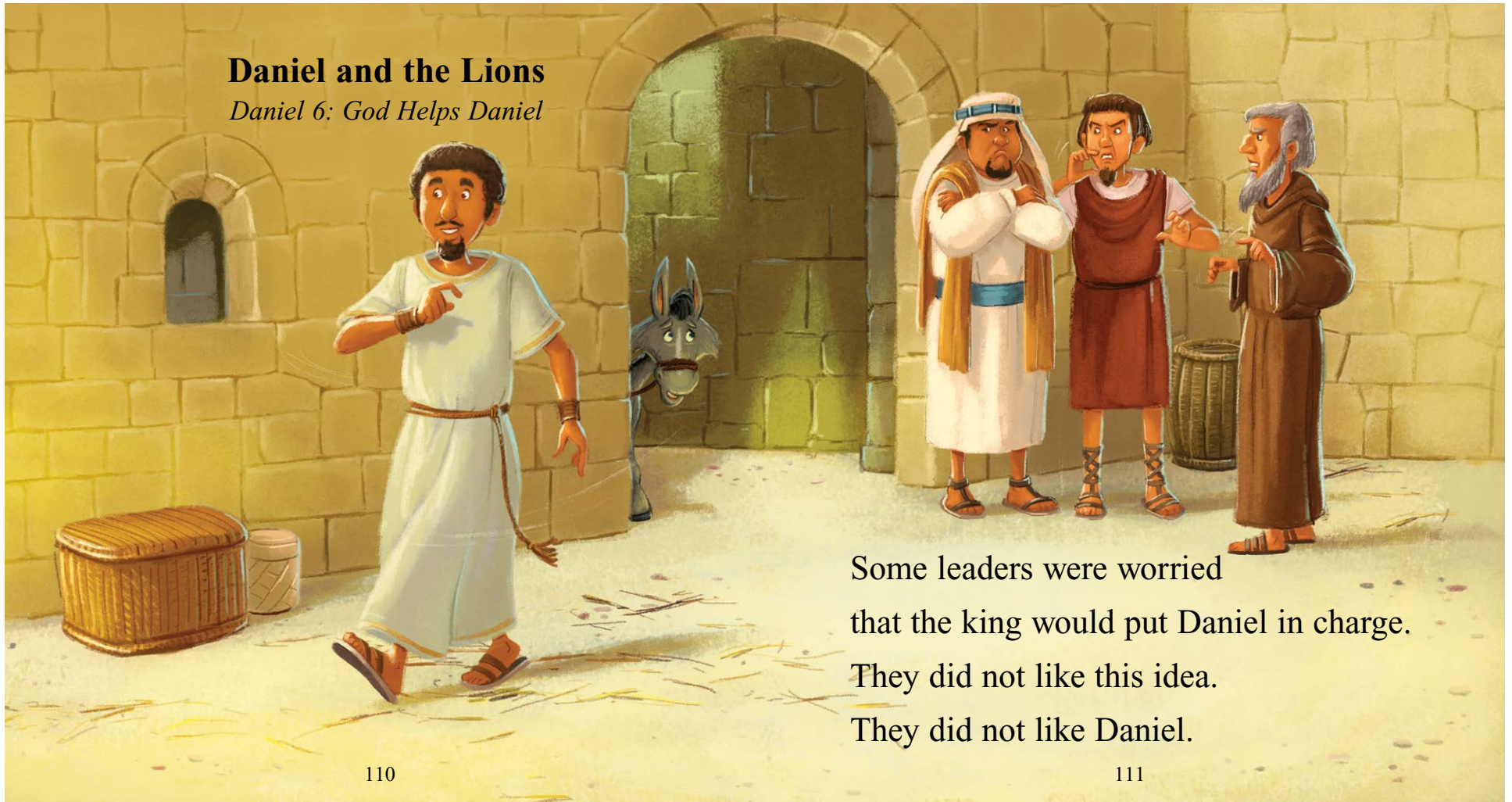
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This story tells us about how Daniel relied on God for help when he was thrown into the lions' den.

Daniel and the Lions

Daniel 6: God Helps Daniel



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Some leaders were worried that the king would put Daniel in charge. They did not like this idea. They did not like Daniel.



The leaders said, “Make a new rule.”
The new rule said no one could pray to God.
If he does, he will be fed to the lions.

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The men knew Daniel talked to God.
They knew he would not stop.
Soon they saw Daniel praying to God.
The men ran to tell the king.

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The king liked Daniel.
He did not like what these men had done.
But the king had to follow the new rule.
Daniel must be fed to the lions!
The king said, “Your God will help you.”

114



The next day the king went to the lions’ den.
Daniel was safe.
The king was happy.
Daniel was happy too.
God had helped him.

115

The disciples were afraid when they were caught on a stormy lake. They forgot that God is so powerful that even the wind and the waves obey him. Read about it in Mark 4:35–41.

1170

Mark 4–5

¹³Then Jesus said to them, “Don’t you understand this story? Then how will you understand any stories of this kind? ¹⁴The seed the farmer plants is God’s message. ¹⁵What is seed scattered on a path like? The message is planted. The people hear the message. Then Satan comes. He takes away the message that was planted in them. ¹⁶And what is seed scattered on rocky places like? The people hear the message. At once they receive it with joy. ¹⁷But they have no roots. So they last only a short time. They quickly fall away from the faith when trouble or suffering comes because of the message. ¹⁸And what is seed scattered among thorns like? The people hear the message. ¹⁹But then the worries of this life come to them. Wealth comes with its false promises. The people also long for other things. All of those are the kinds of things that crowd out the message. They keep it from producing fruit. ²⁰And what is seed scattered on good soil like? The people hear the message. They accept it. They produce a good crop 30, 60, or even 100 times more than the farmer planted.”

A Lamp on a Stand

²¹Jesus said to them, “Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a large bowl or a bed? Don’t you put it on its stand? ²²What is hidden is meant to be seen. And what is put out of sight is meant to be brought out into the open. ²³Everyone who has ears should listen.”

²⁴“Think carefully about what you hear,” he said. “As you give, so you will receive. In fact, you will receive even more. ²⁵If you have something, you will be given more. If you have nothing, even what you have will be taken away from you.”

The Story of the Growing Seed

²⁶Jesus also said, “Here is what God’s kingdom is like. A farmer scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷Night and day the seed comes up and grows. It happens whether the farmer sleeps or gets up. He doesn’t know how it happens. ²⁸All by itself the soil produces grain. First the stalk comes up. Then the head appears. Finally, the full grain appears in the head. ²⁹Before long the grain ripens. So the farmer cuts it down, because the harvest is ready.”

The Story of the Mustard Seed

³⁰Again Jesus said, “What can we say God’s kingdom is like? What story can we use to explain it? ³¹It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed planted in the ground. ³²But when you plant the seed, it grows. It becomes the largest of all garden plants. Its branches are so big that birds can rest in its shade.”

³³Using many stories like those, Jesus spoke the word to them. He told them as much as they could understand. ³⁴He did not say anything to them without using a story. But when he was alone with his disciples, he explained everything.

Jesus Calms the Storm

³⁵When evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, “Let’s go over to the other side of the lake.” ³⁶They left the crowd behind. And they took him along in a boat, just as he was. There were also other boats with him.

³⁷A wild storm came up. Waves crashed over the boat. It was about to sink. ³⁸Jesus was in the back, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him up. They said, “Teacher! Don’t you care if we drown?”

³⁹He got up and ordered the wind to stop. He said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down. And it was completely calm.

⁴⁰He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Don’t you have any faith at all yet?”

⁴¹They were terrified. They asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

Jesus Heals a Man Controlled by Demons

5 They went across the Sea of Galilee to the area of the Gerasenes. ²Jesus got out of the boat. A man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. ³The man lived in the tombs. No one could keep him tied up anymore. Not even a chain could hold him. ⁴His hands and feet had often been chained. But he tore the chains apart. And he broke the iron cuffs on his ankles. No one was strong enough to control him. ⁵Night and day he screamed among the tombs and in the hills. He cut himself with stones.

⁶When he saw Jesus a long way off, he ran to him. He fell on his knees in front of him. ⁷He shouted at the top of his voice,

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Reading
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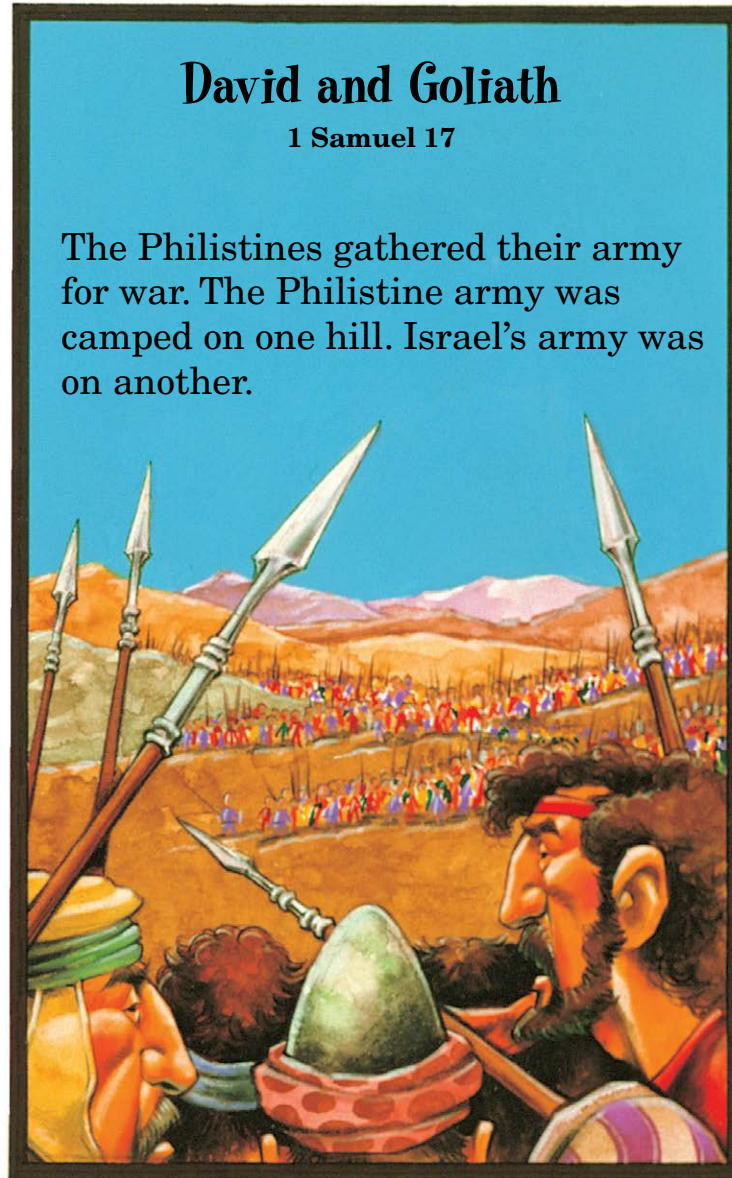
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This story from 1 Samuel tells us about how God helped a shepherd boy defeat a giant soldier.

David and Goliath

1 Samuel 17

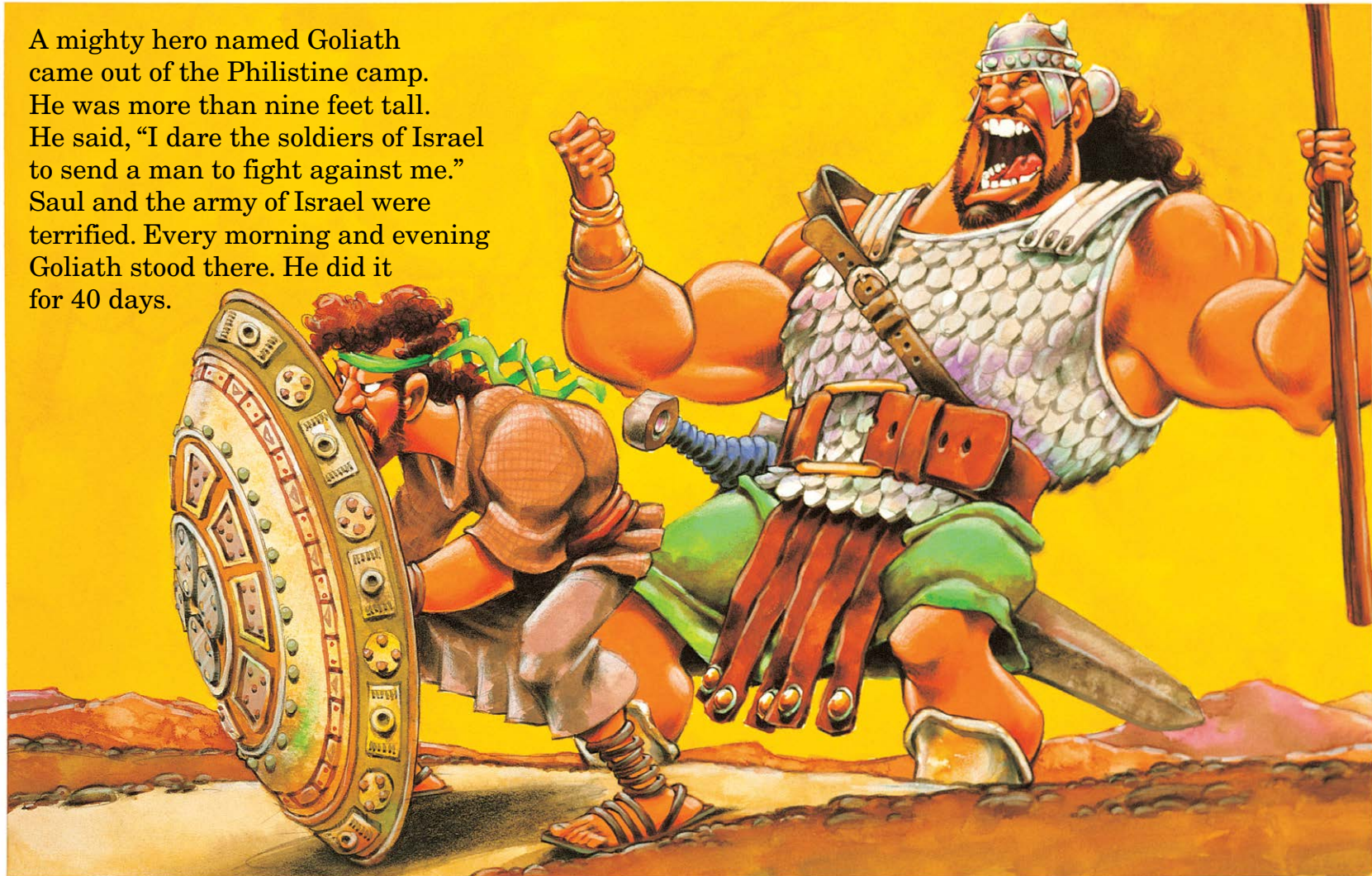
The Philistines gathered their army for war. The Philistine army was camped on one hill. Israel's army was on another.



CONTENT PULLED FROM [READ WITH ME BIBLE](#), ISBN 9780310875833

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A mighty hero named Goliath came out of the Philistine camp. He was more than nine feet tall. He said, "I dare the soldiers of Israel to send a man to fight against me." Saul and the army of Israel were terrified. Every morning and evening Goliath stood there. He did it for 40 days.



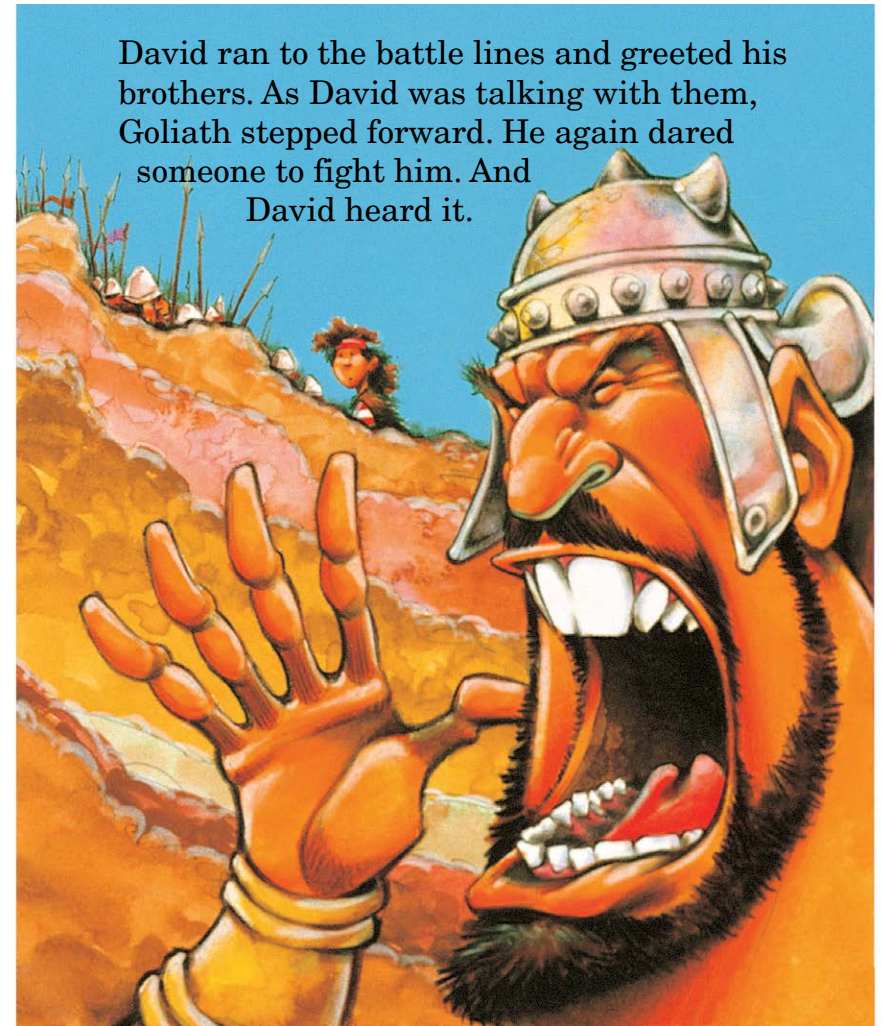
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Jesse said to his son David, “Get ten loaves of bread. Take all of it to your brothers. Hurry to their camp. Take along these chunks of cheese. Find out how your brothers are doing. They are with Saul fighting against the Philistines.” Early in the morning, David left his father’s flock, loaded up the food and started out.

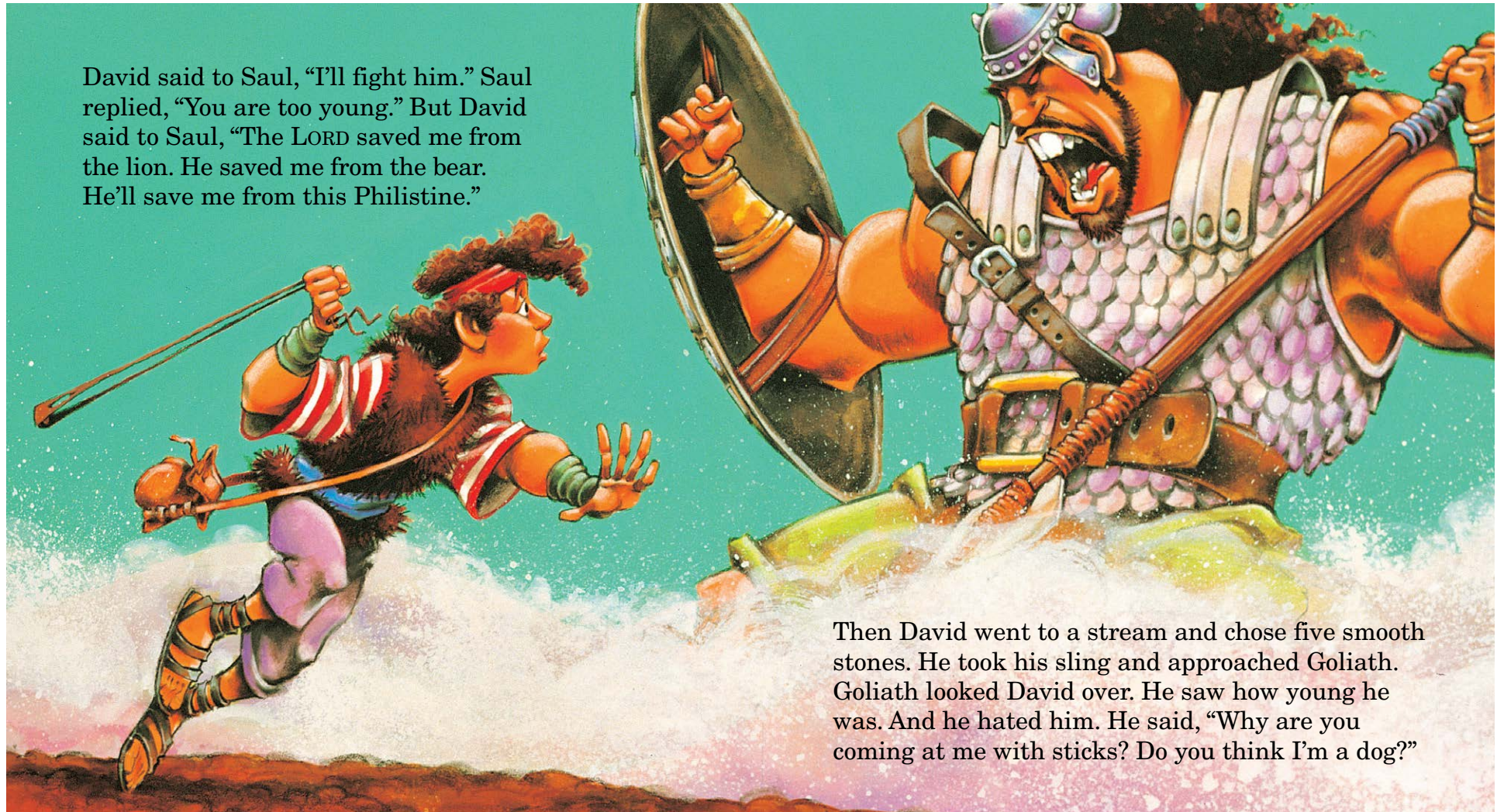
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David ran to the battle lines and greeted his brothers. As David was talking with them, Goliath stepped forward. He again dared someone to fight him. And David heard it.

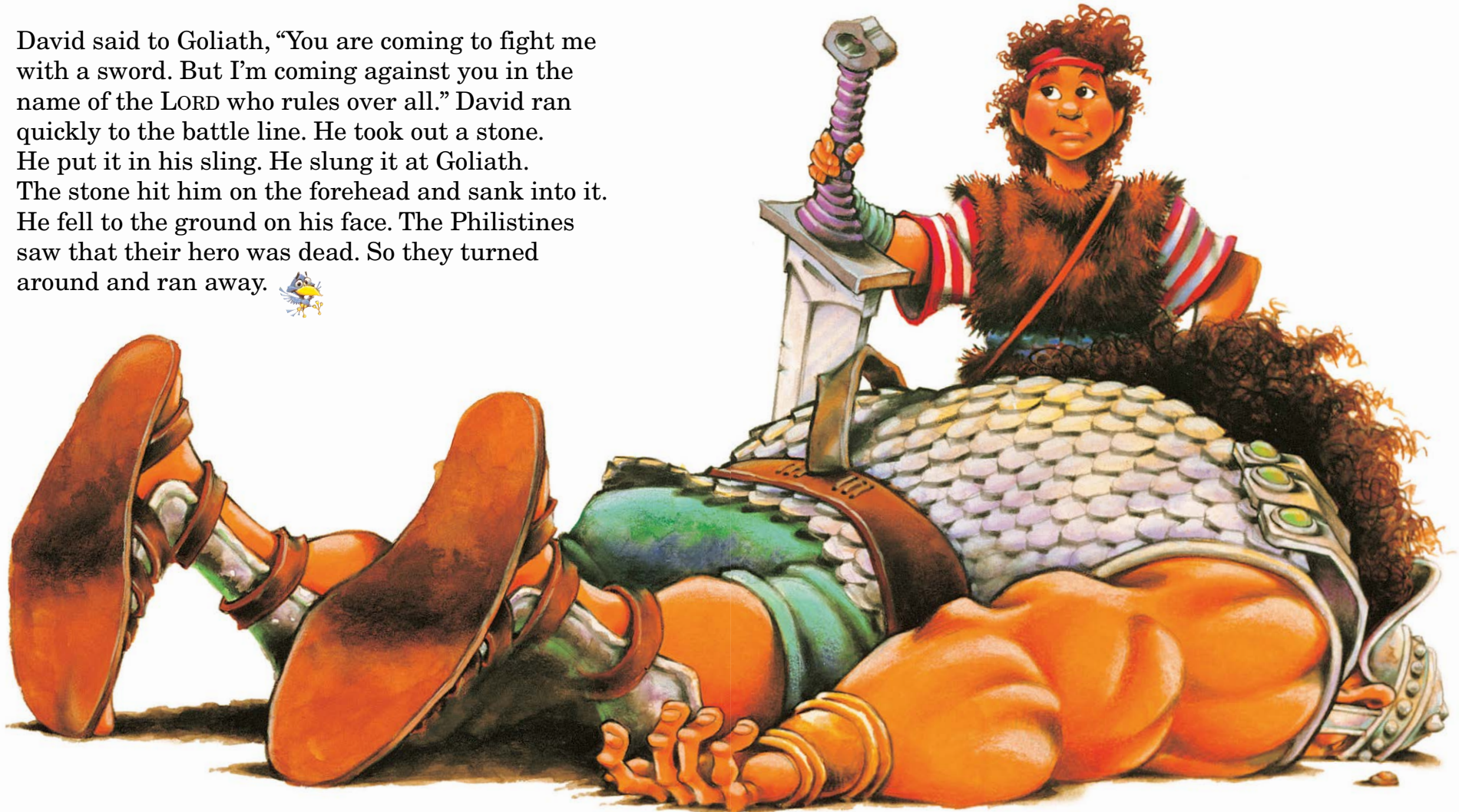
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David said to Saul, "I'll fight him." Saul replied, "You are too young." But David said to Saul, "The LORD saved me from the lion. He saved me from the bear. He'll save me from this Philistine."



Then David went to a stream and chose five smooth stones. He took his sling and approached Goliath. Goliath looked David over. He saw how young he was. And he hated him. He said, "Why are you coming at me with sticks? Do you think I'm a dog?"

David said to Goliath, “You are coming to fight me with a sword. But I’m coming against you in the name of the LORD who rules over all.” David ran quickly to the battle line. He took out a stone. He put it in his sling. He slung it at Goliath. The stone hit him on the forehead and sank into it. He fell to the ground on his face. The Philistines saw that their hero was dead. So they turned around and ran away.



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This devotional reminds us that God is always with us.

December 17

Proof

What had happened? Kids were crying in the cold, dark bus. Pastor Jon searched around until he found a flashlight. He pointed it around the bus that was now tipped on its side. “Okay, everybody. We’ve been hit by a snow avalanche, and it looks like we’re buried. First thing, I want to pray. Dear God, thank you for protecting us. Amen! Now, everybody who isn’t hurt, raise your hand. You help the people who are hurt. Do what you can to make them comfortable. I’ll help you. Sit close together for warmth. We’re going to have to wait for rescue.”

Hours later, the television cameras focused on the hole where the rescuers were working. Then one young girl was helped out of the hole. Then another and another. They were quickly wrapped in blankets and taken to an ambulance. The last two out were the bus driver and Pastor Jon.

A rescuer put a blanket around Pastor Jon and said, “It’s a miracle nobody was killed.”

“God was with us.” Pastor Jon gave a tired smile.

God is with us every day and in every situation.

Words to Treasure

The king said, “Look! I see four men walking around in the fire. They aren’t tied up. And the fire hasn’t even harmed them. The fourth man looks like a son of the gods.”

Daniel 3:25



King Nebuchadnezzar ordered Daniel’s friends to be thrown into a raging furnace because Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not willing to worship idols. The guys walked into the furnace sure God would protect them. And God did! Impressed, Nebuchadnezzar ordered that nobody in his kingdom could harm the Jews or talk badly about their God. (See Daniel 3.)

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We will face difficulties in life, but this devotional reminds us to rely on God to help us with our fear and sadness.

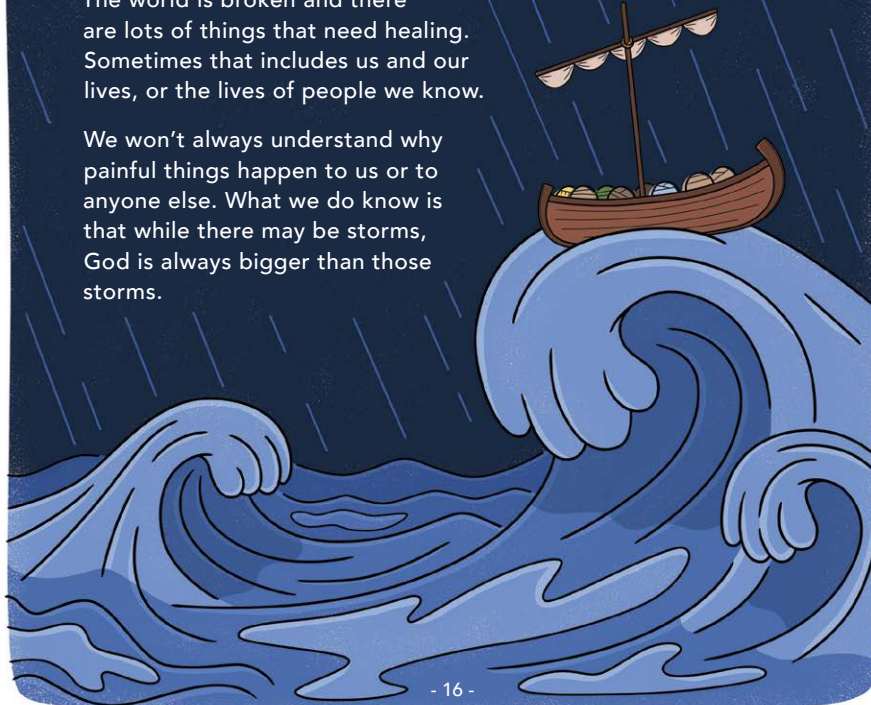
WHEN LIFE IS DIFFICULT

King David sang to God when he was happy and he also sang when he was sad. He knew that God was close to him when he felt brokenhearted or scared.

It's a brave thing to be honest about our sadness and our fears. It's important because difficult times, like storms, come to all of us.

The world is broken and there are lots of things that need healing. Sometimes that includes us and our lives, or the lives of people we know.

We won't always understand why painful things happen to us or to anyone else. What we do know is that while there may be storms, God is always bigger than those storms.



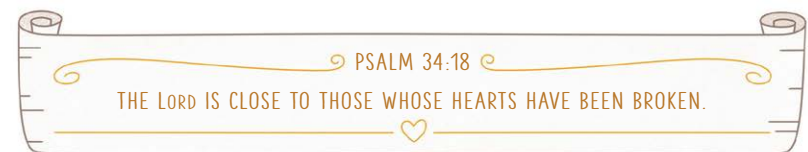
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God promises to be close to anyone whose heart is broken or sad. Although that might not change the difficult things, knowing it helps us get through them.



And we can help each other through difficult times. God has given us his love to share with one another.

Even in the hardest moments, we can remind each other and remember that God is with us. We are not alone, and we are loved.



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Read Deuteronomy 29:5–6 on this page, and then read this devotional that helps us understand why God sometimes waits to provide us with what we need.

Start Reading Here

End Reading Here

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DEUTERONOMY 29

hasn't given you eyes that see. He hasn't given you ears that hear. ⁵Yet the LORD says, "I led you through the desert for 40 years. During that time your clothes didn't wear out. The sandals on your feet didn't wear out either. ⁶You didn't eat any bread. You didn't drink any kind of wine. I did all these things because I wanted you to know that I am the LORD your God."

⁷When you got here, Sihon and Og came out to fight against us. Sihon was the king of Heshbon. And Og was the king of Bashan. But we won the battle over them. ⁸We took their land. We gave it to the tribes of Reuben and Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh as their share.

⁹Be careful to obey the terms of this covenant. Then you will have success in everything you do. ¹⁰Today all of you are standing here in the sight of the LORD your God. Your leaders and chief men are here. Your elders and officials are here. So are all the other men of Israel. ¹¹Your children and wives are here with you too. So are the outsiders living in your camps. They chop your wood and carry your water. ¹²All of you are standing here in order to enter into a covenant with the LORD your God. He is making

the covenant with you today. He's giving you his word. ¹³Today he wants to show you that you are his people and that he is your God. That's what he promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. ¹⁴I'm making this covenant and the promise that goes along with it. I'm making this covenant with you. ¹⁵You are standing here with us today in front of the LORD our God. And I'm also making this covenant with those who aren't here today.

¹⁶You yourselves know how we lived in Egypt. You also know how we passed through other countries on the way here. ¹⁷You saw the statues of their gods made out of wood, stone, silver and gold. The LORD hates those statues. ¹⁸Make sure there isn't a man or woman among your families or tribes who turns away from the LORD our God. No one must worship the gods of those nations. Make sure that kind of worship doesn't spread like bitter poison through your whole community.

¹⁹Some people who worship those gods will hear the promise that seals the covenant I'm making. They think they can escape trouble by what they're saying. They say, "We'll be safe, even though we're stubborn and go our own

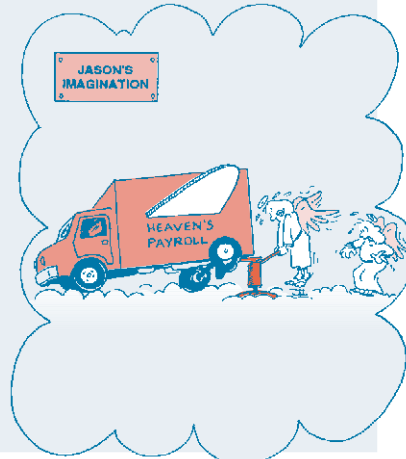
KIDS' Question

WHY DOES GOD SOMETIMES WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE TO SUPPLY OUR NEEDS?

Wandering in the desert was hard for the Israelites, but God gave them everything they needed. It may seem as though God waits until the last minute to supply your needs, but remember that God has a plan for you. Nothing can stop that plan. God always remembers you and hears your prayers, and he never gets tired of hearing from you.

Sometimes people wait until the last minute to pray. Instead, we should pray to God about every need. We can trust him to take care of us just like he took care of the Israelites in the desert.

CHECKOUT
Deuteronomy 29:5–6



Because God is the Creator and Ruler, he has control over all things, even a storm on a lake.



Jesus Calms the Storm: *Mark 4:35–41*

Key Verse: Don't worry about anything ... God's peace will watch over your hearts and your minds. —*Philippians 4:6–7*

Habakkuk was a prophet who was very saddened by the people who turned against God, but he was reminded that God is always in control. Here is a devotion and activities that help us understand that God is powerful and will always be there for us when we struggle.

HABAKKUK

Week 32, Day 1

Read About It

God is our only comfort and joy in hard times.



Maybe you've seen other kids cheat or fight. Or maybe you've seen a big kid bully someone. Maybe you've even seen someone take something from the store and not pay for it! Don't things like that make you upset? Don't you wish someone would do something about it?

The prophet Habakkuk was also upset. The people of Judah weren't living like God's people should live. They weren't treating one another fairly. They argued and fought all the time. They were living evil lives. It seemed to Habakkuk that there was no one to stop the evil people. He couldn't understand why this was happening. Why didn't God do something about it?

So Habakkuk asked God to do something. But God answered him in a way he didn't expect! God said he would punish the people of Judah. He would do that by letting the evil Babylonians win the battle over them. But that answer didn't make Habakkuk feel any better! Why would God use the evil Babylonians to punish his own people? But God told Habakkuk that he didn't need to worry about that. God said he would also punish the Babylonians in the future. Their kingdom wouldn't last. So Habakkuk was reminded that his comfort and joy should be in God alone.

How do you remind yourself that God is in control and all that you need?

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Week 32, Day 2

Think About It



HABAKKUK

Habakkuk had a lot of bad things to deal with. See how many bad things are listed in Habakkuk 3:17!

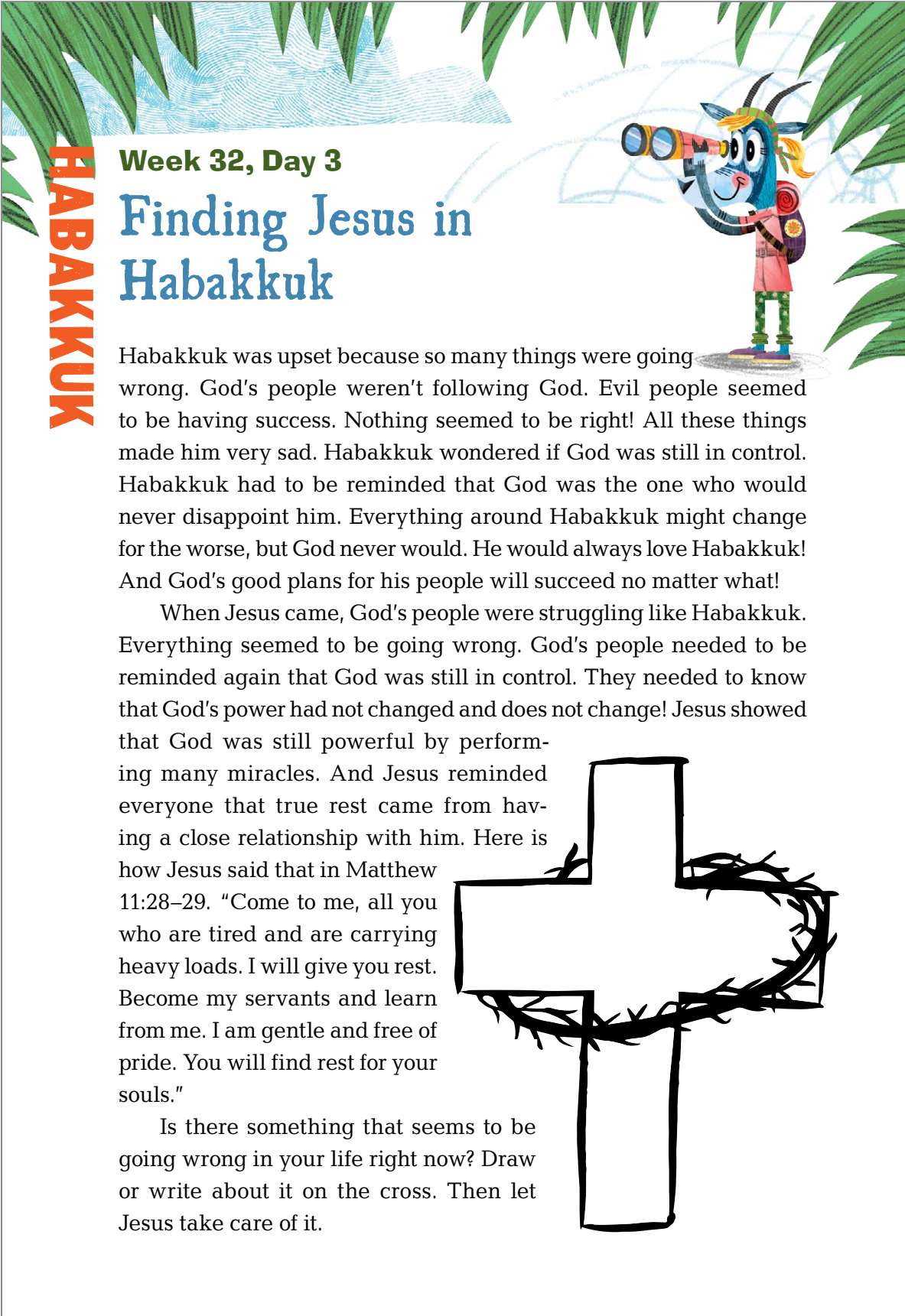
- The fig trees might not bud.
- The vines might not produce any grapes.
- The olive crop might fail.
- The fields might not produce any food.
- There might not be any sheep in the pens.
- There might not be any cattle in the barns.

All these things might be true, but Habakkuk could still have joy! How could that be possible? How could Habakkuk have joy when everything in his life seemed to be going wrong? Solve the puzzle below to see how. Count the letters in the verse above. Write the letter that matches each number in the puzzle blanks below. Count carefully. The first letter is done for you.

G 6 18 22 27 30 37 43 50 58 90 59 48 157 118 144 103 150 170 76



ANSWER KEY GOD IS OUR ONLY COMFORT



HABAKKUK

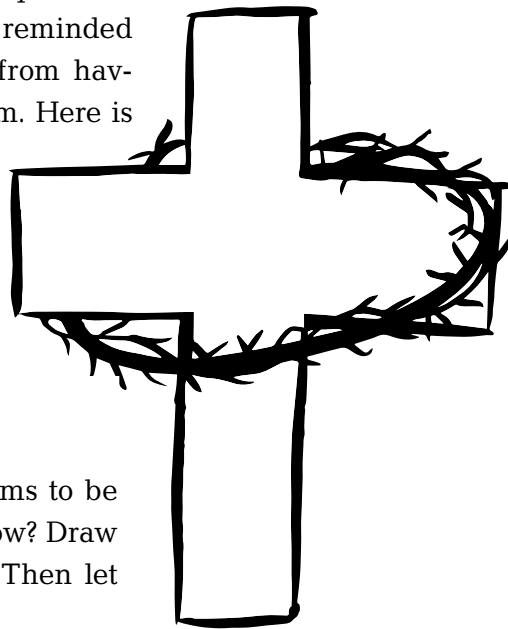
Week 32, Day 3

Finding Jesus in Habakkuk

Habakkuk was upset because so many things were going wrong. God's people weren't following God. Evil people seemed to be having success. Nothing seemed to be right! All these things made him very sad. Habakkuk wondered if God was still in control. Habakkuk had to be reminded that God was the one who would never disappoint him. Everything around Habakkuk might change for the worse, but God never would. He would always love Habakkuk! And God's good plans for his people will succeed no matter what!

When Jesus came, God's people were struggling like Habakkuk. Everything seemed to be going wrong. God's people needed to be reminded again that God was still in control. They needed to know that God's power had not changed and does not change! Jesus showed that God was still powerful by performing many miracles. And Jesus reminded everyone that true rest came from having a close relationship with him. Here is how Jesus said that in Matthew 11:28–29. "Come to me, all you who are tired and are carrying heavy loads. I will give you rest. Become my servants and learn from me. I am gentle and free of pride. You will find rest for your souls."

Is there something that seems to be going wrong in your life right now? Draw or write about it on the cross. Then let Jesus take care of it.





Week 32, Day 4

Write About It

HABAKKUK

Sometimes we are like Habakkuk. We feel that life is unfair and hard. That makes us sad! That's when we need to remember that God is in control and he cares for us. Write how knowing this makes you feel.

.....
.....
.....

Habakkuk worried about things and had lots of questions. So he talked with God about his questions. When you believe in Jesus, you have a close relationship with God. So you can ask God all your questions too! Write five questions you'd like to ask God.

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HABAKKUK

Week 32, Day 5

Pray About It

Dear God,

I know that you are in control. My comfort and joy are found in you. But sometimes life is hard. Sometimes I even see your own people doing bad things. That makes me sad! But I know I can talk with you about what makes me sad. Help me to focus on you and your promises to me. Then I can be patient and trust you completely. I know that when I do that I'll have real comfort and joy! I ask these things because I believe in Jesus.

Amen.

Color Matthew 11:28 to help you remember.

Come to me, ***
 all you who are **TIRED**
 *** and are carrying
HEAVY LOADS.***
 i will give you **REST.**

-MATTHEW 11:28

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Week 32, Day 6

Do Something About It

Habakkuk worried about a lot of things that were happening around him. Things weren't going as he would have liked. Habakkuk needed to be reminded that God was still in control. God knows what he is doing. We can trust him even when we're having hard times.

Imagine that you could write a letter to Habakkuk to cheer him up. You could remind him that his true joy in life comes from his relationship with God. And God will always be there for him, no matter what is happening around him! Write Habakkuk a short letter to encourage him. When you're done, put it in an envelope.

Maybe you know someone else who is having a hard time. They might need to be reminded that God is still in control and loves them too. You could give this letter to them. It would help them remember where they can find comfort and joy even in hard times. Or maybe *you* need to read your own letter the next time you begin to worry!

HABAKKUK



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Read Daniel 6 from your Bible and complete this fun game about the story.

BALL AND BOX ROLL

STUFF YOU NEED:

- Bible Story Strips Activity Sheet
- Three boxes
- Several medium size rubber balls
- Tape
- Scissors
- Paper
- Bowl or Basket

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Ahead of time, make three signs that say:
 - Scene 1: Officers Plot
 - Scene 2: Daniel Prays
 - Scene 3: Lions' Den
2. Set three boxes against a wall on their sides with the opening facing the play area.
3. Hang the signs above the boxes.
4. Cut apart the story strips on the activity sheet and mix them up in a bowl or basket.
5. Explain that the task is to organize the story strips into the correct scenes where they belong.
6. Children will pull a random strip, wrap it around a ball, tape it in place, and try to roll it into the appropriate box representing the scene where that strip belongs. It may take some experimenting to roll the ball into the box and not have it bounce back out.
7. For a competitive version, set up a double set of supplies and have teams. Race to see which team completes the story first.
8. For a cooperative version, simply take turns rolling the balls.
9. You or a volunteer can be stationed near the boxes to remove the strips and roll the balls back to the players.
10. After the game, talk about:
 - Summarize what happened in each of these three scenes from the Bible story.
 - Ask how the lesson learned from Daniel could affect your life?
 - Discuss how Daniel was ready to be loyal to God no matter what was going to happen. His relationship with God was the most important thing in his life.

Use these strips for the Ball and Box Roll game.

BIBLE STORY STRIPS

Darius appointed 120 rulers and three main officials, including Daniel.

The two other officials wanted to get rid of Daniel, the best official.

The officials watch Daniel to catch him doing something wrong.

The officials decide to trick King Darius into making a new law.

King Darius signs a new law that says everyone must pray to him.

Daniel goes home and prays with the window open.

Daniel gets down on his knees to thank God.

The officials watch to see if Daniel is going to pray.

The officials tell the king they saw Daniel praying.

The king sends Daniel to the lions' den.

The king seals the lions' den himself.

The king can't eat or sleep or do anything.

The king gets up early and goes to the lions' den.

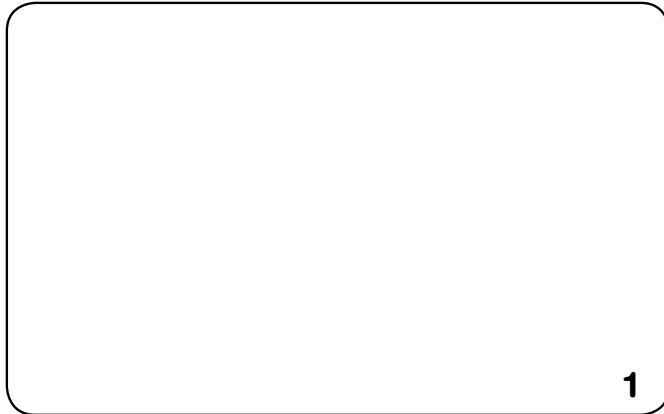
The king calls for Daniel in the lions' den.

Daniel answers the king and says that God saved him.

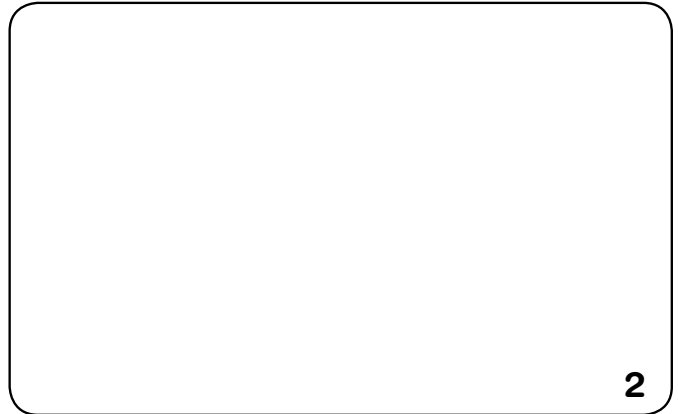
Read Daniel 6 from your Bible, and then choose six events from the story to draw in the comic grid.

SCENE BY SCENE

Think about the story of Daniel and his great loyalty and love of God. Create a comic story for the Bible story. Include words on the scenes.



1



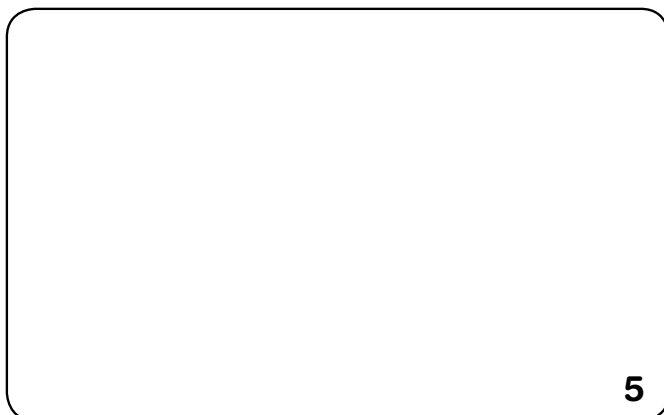
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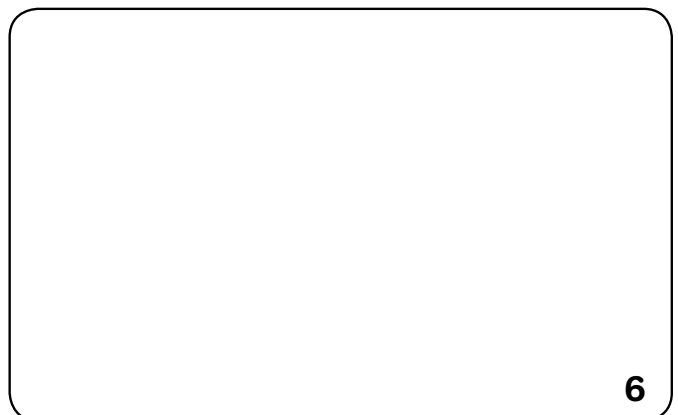
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6

God is powerful, and we can always trust him. This word search helps us learn the different ways that God works in our lives.

WHAT GOD IS LIKE

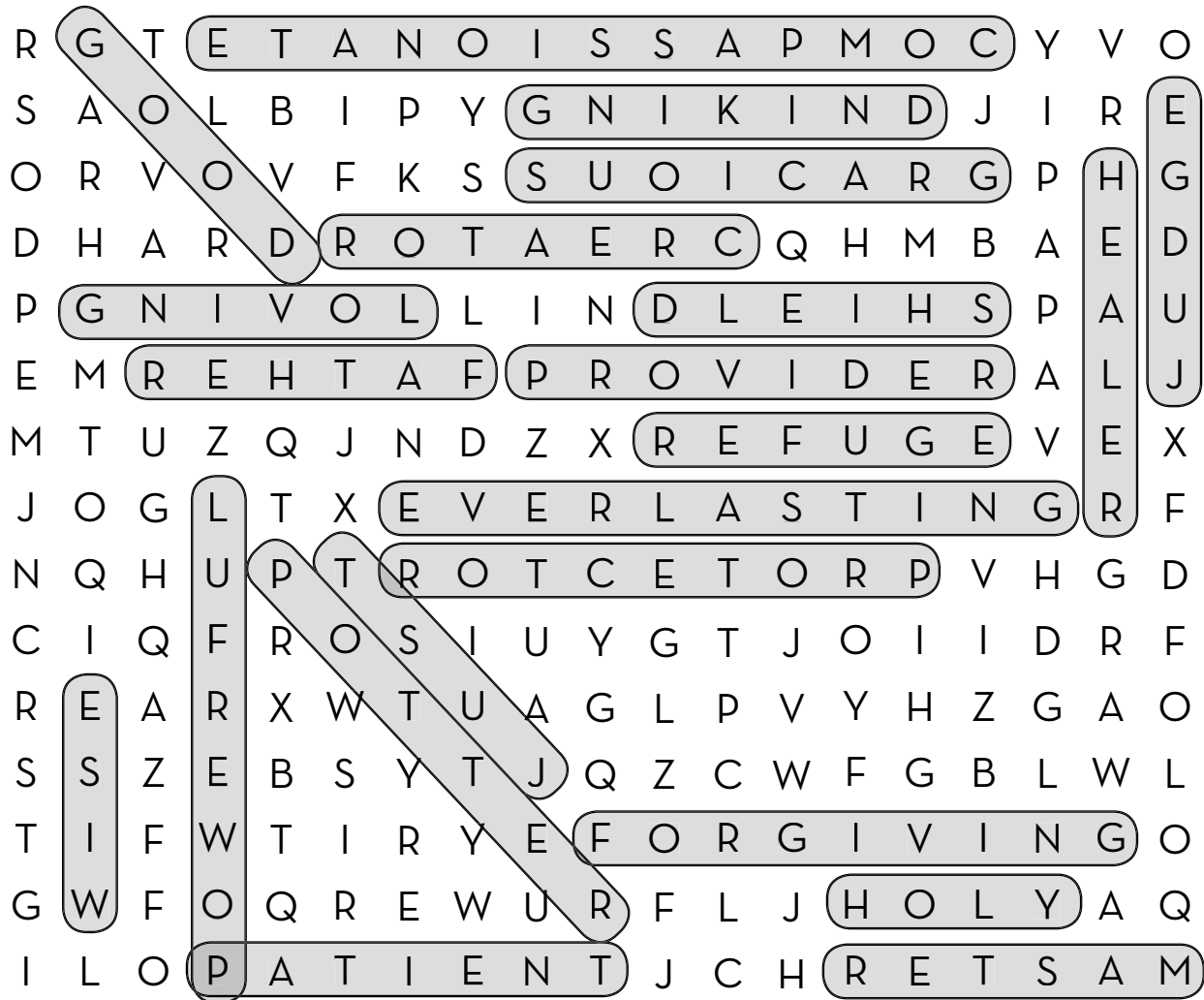
Can you find all the words in this word search?

R G T E T A N O I S S A P M O C Y V O
 S A O L B I P Y G N I K I N D J I R E
 O R V O V F K S S U O I C A R G P H G
 D H A R D R O T A E R C Q H M B A E D
 P G N I V O L L I N D L E I H S P A U
 E M R E H T A F P R O V I D E R A L J
 M T U Z Q J N D Z X R E F U G E V E X
 J O G L T X E V E R L A S T I N G R F
 N Q H U P T R O T C E T O R P V H G D
 C I Q F R O S I U Y G T J O I I D R F
 R E A R X W T U A G L P V Y H Z G A O
 S S Z E B S Y T J Q Z C W F G B L W L
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 G W F O Q R E W U R F L J H O L Y A Q
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- | | | | | |
|---------------|----------|--------|-----------|--------|
| compassionate | good | just | patient | refuge |
| creator | gracious | kind | potter | shield |
| everlasting | healer | king | powerful | wise |
| father | holy | loving | protector | |
| forgiving | judge | master | provider | |

WHAT GOD IS LIKE *Answer key*

Can you find all the words in this word search?



- | | | | | |
|---------------|----------|--------|-----------|--------|
| compassionate | good | just | patient | refuge |
| creator | gracious | kind | potter | shield |
| everlasting | healer | king | powerful | wise |
| father | holy | loving | protector | |
| forgiving | judge | master | provider | |

This matching game will help you learn some of the people who were helped by God in the Old Testament.

HEROES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

.....

For each hero on the left, draw a line to the matching deed on the right.

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| Samson (Judges 16) | led an army whose commander was afraid |
| Gideon (Judges 7) | destroyed a Philistine temple by pushing over pillars |
| Moses (Exodus 12) | saved many people from starving during a famine in Egypt |
| Joshua (Joshua 3) | led the Israelites into the Promised Land after Moses died |
| Joseph (Genesis 41) | defeated a giant warrior named Goliath |
| David (1 Samuel 17) | helped people and animals survive a great flood |
| Deborah (Judges 4) | used a tent peg to kill the commander of an enemy army |
| Abraham (Genesis 12) | helped the Israelite spies in Jericho |
| Noah (Genesis 6) | led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt |
| Jael (Judges 4) | left his country to go live in an unknown land |
| Rahab (Joshua 2) | defeated the Midianites by using jars and torches |

HEROES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT *Answer Key*

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For each hero on the left, draw a line to the matching deed on the right.

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| Samson (Judges 16) | led an army whose commander was afraid [DEBORAH] |
| Gideon (Judges 7) | destroyed a Philistine temple by pushing over pillars [SAMSON] |
| Moses (Exodus 12) | saved many people from starving during a famine in Egypt [JOSEPH] |
| Joshua (Joshua 3) | led the Israelites into the Promised Land after Moses died [JOSHUA] |
| Joseph (Genesis 41) | defeated a giant warrior named Goliath [DAVID] |
| David (1 Samuel 17) | helped people and animals survive a great flood [NOAH] |
| Deborah (Judges 4) | used a tent peg to kill the commander of an enemy army [JAEEL] |
| Abraham (Genesis 12) | helped the Israelite spies in Jericho [RAHAB] |
| Noah (Genesis 6) | led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt [MOSES] |
| Jael (Judges 4) | left his country to go live in an unknown land [ABRAHAM] |
| Rahab (Joshua 2) | defeated the Midianites by using jars and torches [GIDEON] |