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Bernadette McCarver Snyder



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INTRODUCTION

Do you like stories of adventure, intrigue, excitement? Do you like to hear about foreign lands, strange customs, and secret messages? Do you like to be surprised?

Well, you'll find ALL of these things in one book. What book? Surprise! It's the Bible!

No, it's not boring. No, it's not only for "scholars."

Yes, it's for YOU!

And to give you a few clues about what kind of stories you can find in the books of the Bible, THIS book is jam-packed with fun facts and surprise information.

Read on. And be surprised — by the Bible!

1

Do you like riddles? Well, how about this one: What's old AND new...two but one...before and after? You've got it! It's the Bible! There's an old part and a new part — the Old Testament and the New Testament. So there are really two books but they are often put together to make ONE book. The Old Testament tells all about things that happened BEFORE Jesus was born. And the New Testament tells about things AFTER Jesus came to earth.



Now that we've got THAT settled, how about the old and new — before and after — parts of YOUR story? Does your grandma or somebody in your family sometimes tell you stories about what life was like BEFORE you were born? It can be fun to hear what things were like on earth before YOU got here! Ask one of the OLDER members of your family to tell you what life was like in the past — even waaaay back before television was invented! Then say a little prayer to tell God thanks for all the new AND all the old things that make life on earth exciting!



Did you know moldy bread and old shoes were once used to save a nation? Well, it's true! Even though it was a sneaky thing to do!

In the Old Testament, God helped Joshua fight the battle of Jericho and he won. After that, other cities and nations of people were afraid of him. But the Gibeonites — who were rich AND sneaky — decided they would trick Joshua into making a peace treaty with them, and then they wouldn't have to be afraid to fight him. So what did they do?

They dressed some of their people in raggedy clothes and old patched sandals and put some crumbly, moldy bread in their packs. These people went to Joshua and told him they had come a long way from a distant country because they had heard about his famous battles. They said they had traveled so far that their shoes had worn out on the journey! They said the bread had been fresh from the oven when they left home, and now it was all moldy. (Actually, they were neighbors of Joshua and had only traveled a short distance!)

Since Joshua thought they were from a faraway land where his people would never need to journey, he agreed to sign a peace treaty with them. Later, when he learned he had been tricked, he stood by his word and did not fight them.



What if somebody tricked YOU? Would you get so furious that you would want to fight — even if you had given your word? Pretend today that you are Joshua. How do you think he felt when he found out he had been tricked with some moldy bread and old shoes? He probably felt furious; but he still kept his word. It's not nice to trick someone. But it IS nice to always do what you promise to do.

Which are you more like — the Gibeonites or Joshua?

Read Joshua 9:3-15.



Did you know there's a story in the Bible about a man who got so sleepy at a meeting that he fell from a window?

He slept, he slipped, he slid right out the window!

One night the apostle Paul was going to speak, and many people had gathered in a third-floor room to hear him. There were a lot of lamps lit and it got very late — about midnight — and a young man named Eutychus began to get drowsy. Since the room was crowded, Eutychus was sitting on the window sill and pretty soon his head dropped to his chest and he dozed off — and he fell right out the window. Everyone got all excited because he had fallen a long way down, but Paul went to the boy, picked him up, and held him tight. Paul said there was still life in him, and his friends should not worry. And Paul was right — Eutychus lived!



Did you ever fall asleep at a meeting or a party — or at church? Well, if you did — you better not sit in any windows!

When you're NOT feeling drowsy today, sit by a window and look out. Look up, look down, look all around. What do you see? Do you notice all the things God made to make YOUR world interesting — the sky, the ground, the wind's howl, the bird's chirp? How many things can you count?

Read Acts 20:7-12.



Do you think you could get water from a ROCK? Well, that's just what Moses did — with God's help, of course!

The Israelites had been wandering in the wilderness and they camped at a place where there was no water. They began to grumble and complain to Moses that God was going to let them die of thirst. So Moses prayed and asked God's help; and God told him to take his walking stick and strike a rock and water would come from it. Now, that was a strange thing to tell Moses. SOME people would have thought, "God MUST be kidding!" But Moses loved God and trusted him completely. So he went to the rock just like God told him and struck it with his walking stick! And do you know what happened? Well, of course you do! Water gushed forth, and the people had all the water they wanted to drink!



Do you ever feel like Moses must have felt that day? Do you ever have people complaining and telling you to do something that you think is IMPOSSIBLE to do? When that happens, do you pray for help like Moses did? Today, think of the hardest job you have to do this week and then pray for God to help you. No matter what it is, it won't be as hard as getting water from a rock! And no matter how hard it is, you can DO IT — with God's help, of course!

Read Exodus 17:1-7.



5

Did you know that a great king of the Old Testament once escaped from his enemies by pretending he had gone crazy?

Crazy as it sounds, it's true.

The great King David was once among enemies when certain people thought they recognized him and said, "Is that not David, the king?" But just then, David crumpled down, fell against the wall, made his face all twisted and strange, and began to act like a madman. No one thought this madman could be a king, so they left him alone and when no one was looking, he sneaked away and escaped!



Have you ever made funny faces and acted crazy? That can be fun sometimes, but it ISN'T fun for someone who really has a medical problem and CAN'T HELP looking or acting in a different way. So never make fun of someone who isn't perfect. Think today of how it would feel to have someone else make fun of YOU for something you couldn't help. And then say a little prayer for all the children who have physical or mental problems and ask God to show people how to treat them with kindness and respect.

Read 1 Samuel 21:12-16.

6

Did you know that God once "opened the doors of heaven" and rained down manna — "heavenly bread" — to feed his people?

That's what happened in a story in the Old Testament. Those same people who were complaining to Moses about being thirsty also complained about being hungry! And God sent them food from heaven!



Do you ever whine and complain when you're hungry and dinner isn't ready yet? God helped the Israelites because they were in a desert and couldn't run to the kitchen for a snack. But maybe — just maybe — your folks would appreciate it if you'd quit whining and start HELPING! Ask if you can help fix dinner tonight or promise to stop whining for a whole week. Then take a minute to remember how often God has opened the door of heaven and sent YOU nice things!

Read Psalm 78:23-24.



7

Did you ever hear of a stubborn snake that would not listen to the chant of a snake charmer? Well, in the Book of Psalms, the “wicked” are compared to snakes that make themselves go deaf so they can’t hear what they don’t want to hear!



Did you ever “turn off” YOUR ears so you couldn’t hear your mom or dad telling you to do something you didn’t want to do? Hmmmm... you wouldn’t want to feel like a stubborn snake, would you? The next time you’re **PRETENDING** not to hear something you **SHOULD** hear, ask yourself if maybe you’re being a little bit “wicked” — and then turn on those ears! Who knows! When you’re not listening, you **MIGHT** miss hearing something good!

Read Psalm 58:4-6.

Did you know Jesus once accused somebody of having dirty feet? Well, that's what it sounded like anyway.

At the Last Supper, Jesus told his apostles he wanted to wash their feet; and then he said to them, "You are not all clean." Jesus wasn't really talking about dirty feet though — he meant that one of his friends was not "clean of heart." He knew that one of them, Judas, was not "clean" because that very night Judas was going to betray Jesus.



Did you ever betray a friend? Did a friend ever betray you? Sometimes it's hard to be a true friend. Other people might ridicule or laugh at one of your friends — and then try to get you to do the same thing. It's not always easy to be a REAL friend — but HAVING a good friend is worth BEING a good friend!

Read John 13:11.

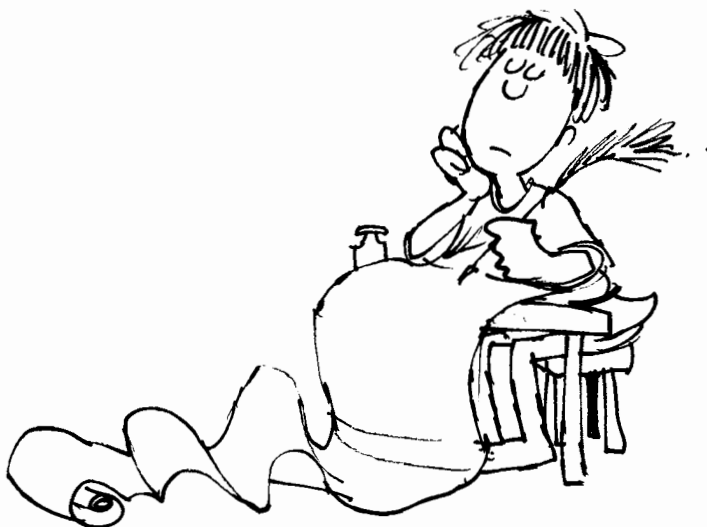


When it's time to do your homework, how would you like to have to do it by writing on a weed? What's that? You say you'd rather not DO homework at all? Well, homework's a dirty job, but somebody has to do it — and that means YOU. Did you know that in the days of the Bible, students didn't have the kind of paper you use today — no notebooks, tablets, OR computer paper? Instead, they wrote on something called PAPYRUS, which was made from the pith (the inside of the stem) of a weedy-looking plant that grew in marshy land or in mud by riverbanks. Papyrus was also used to make boats — so MAYBE some folks put their writing on a weed and also wrote on a boat!



Before you giggle too much about papyrus, what do you think TODAY'S paper comes from? Did you know a lot of it is made from trees? Yep, progress has taken paper from weeds to trees! So how would you like to write on a tree today? Think of someone you know who lives in a different city — or maybe just a different part of town — (like a grandma or relative or friend) and then write that person a letter and ask if you can become “pen pals”! (Pen pals are people who don't see each other every day, so they keep in touch and stay “pals” by writing letters!) Now what could you put in the letter? Well, you could write a joke or draw a picture. Or you could say that you're reading a book about the Bible, and you'll send your pal some of the fun facts you discover — like the idea of writing on weeds and trees!

Read Isaiah 18:1-2.



Did you know there is a sea monster mentioned in the Bible? Oh, yes, one of the psalms tells about God stirring up the sea and crushing the heads of a Leviathan! The heads? It sounds like a Leviathan must have been a many-headed sea monster! And you know what else it says? It says God made the monster into food for the dolphins! No one is really sure what a Leviathan was; but today, when you call something or someone a Leviathan, you mean something really huge!



Have you ever had a leviathan job to do at home? Or a leviathan stack of homework? Well, the next time you do, don't think about how BIG it is. Instead, remember that when the Leviathan was smashed into pieces, it became food for the dolphins. So take your big job and break it down into several smaller jobs and then just do one small part at a time. Before you know it, all the work will be done and you can be proud of yourself for slaying the leviathan!

Read Psalm 74:12-15.



Did you ever come to a creek — or even a deep mud puddle — that you wanted to get across without getting wet? Well, why didn't you just walk on top of the water? What? You don't think ANYBODY could or ever DID do that? Wrong! Saint Peter did! It's in the Bible! One time when Peter and some friends were out in a boat in the middle of a big storm, they looked up and saw Jesus walking toward them, right on the top of the stormy water! Were they glad to see him? Not really. They were scared to death and thought he must be a ghost! But Jesus said, "Don't be scared, it's ME, your friend." Then Peter said, "IF it's really you, Lord, let me walk on the water too." And Jesus said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, and Jesus gave him the power to walk on the water too!

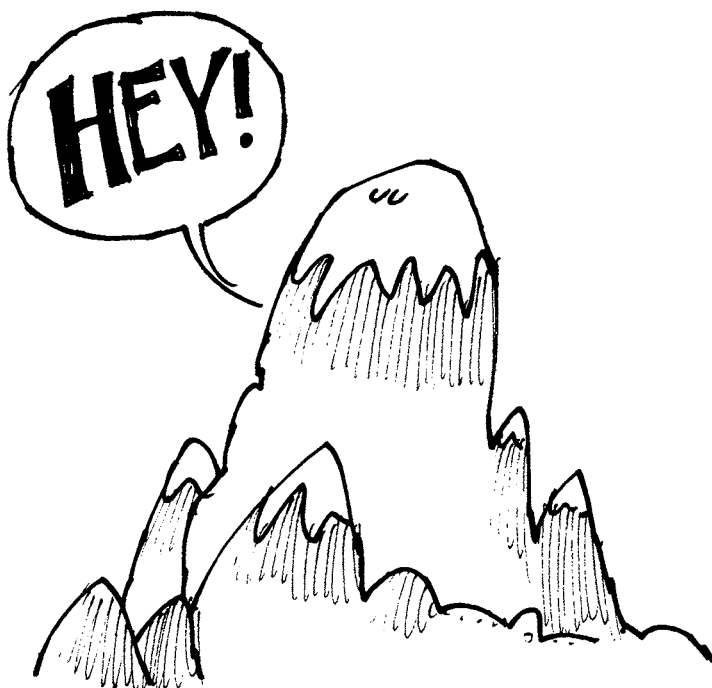


Would YOU have had the nerve to get out of the boat and try to walk on the stormy water? Do you REALLY believe in God's power enough to trust him to help you?

What ELSE happened to Peter after he got out of the boat?

Read Matthew 14:22-33.





12

Do you think a river could “clap its hands”? Or could a mountain “shout”? Well, in the Bible one of the psalms says that the earth should be so joyful about the Lord coming to it that the rivers should clap their hands and the mountains shout for joy!



But how could they do that? Welllll, did you ever watch the waves in a river, slapping against one another — sort of the way YOU slap your hands together to clap? And did you ever see a mountain so tall that it looked like it was stretching its neck up into the sky, just getting ready to shout? When YOU think of God, do you ever feel so good that you want to clap your hands and shout? You SHOULD feel that way! Because God is wonderful — AND joyful!

Read Psalm 98:8.