



*Awakening
the Kingdom*

By Tiffany Beavers

Inside each Christian is a discovery that will change your life! A kingdom with a King that is beyond imagination.

When we become a Christian we start a life long journey of understanding the riches that this Kingdom represents.

Awakening the Kingdom is about 5 children who leave the town of Chaos for something better. In the end they find something beyond their greatest dreams—a true kingdom where peace and a fabulous King lives.

Awakening the Kingdom describes the journey that every Christian can take which will also awaken something Unimaginable in you.

Come join Aiden, Isabelle, Christopher, Ethan and Autumn in the greatest adventure a Christian can take.

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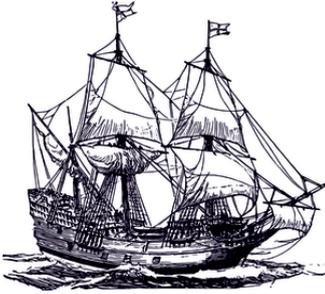
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1 The Beginning

Look, I am about to do something new; even now it is coming. Do you not see it? Indeed, I will make a way in the wilderness, rivers in the desert. Isaiah 43:19 (CSB)

Chaos reigned in the small town. Creatures of many kinds scurried to and fro through the streets. Mischief was on every mind and heart. Sin abounded as rainbow colored creatures stole candy, bullied others, and destroyed public property. Everyone appeared to love this life. Laughter filled the air as each considered his next vile act. However, each also moved in fear of evil acts from others. There was no trust in this place. Each was out to consider the next great idea of harm before he himself befell harm from another. When observing the town rapidly it appeared as a wonderful dwelling full of jolly good fun. Brilliant lights flashed with great speed from the scurrying of mischief. Searching a little deeper one would observe the real pain and fear all the mischief was causing in the hearts of the residents.

If one rummaged even deeper a mystery was awakening. In a town of many, a few children were becoming restless. They were tired of the pain caused. They were even growing tired of causing the pain. They wanted something different, a different life, one they had never known or seen modeled for them. They wanted a change. Inside each of them a seed had been planted for something they desired more than the shallow fun they had always experienced. At first, there had been only one with such strange ideas growing inside. Then, there became more. After time, several found each other. They observed a similar heart to live a different way, but how and what would the change look like?

Thoughts were rising and whirling inside them. Thoughts they hadn't been taught and hadn't carried before. They were uncertain of the source from which the new ideas had come, but they were inviting the children to seek something new.

"Being hurt doesn't give me permission to cause hurt again

It gives me determination to change the pattern

Being hurt doesn't make me a victim for life

It gives me the drive to refuse that road

Being hurt doesn't mean I can sit down

It gives me the strength to keep walking

Being hurt doesn't make me less than

It gives me the passion to be greater

Being hurt doesn't mean I am to blame

It gives me the wisdom to understand choice

Being hurt doesn't mean I will stay in pain

It gives me the opportunity to be healed"

The words didn't necessarily make sense, but they stirred hunger for more than they had known. Hope was given. Recognizing only evil in their small town the special group chose to set out on a mission. Out of anticipation to change patterns and become greater, they found the strength to walk. In an attempt to find an opportunity to be healed, they began a journey. It would be a search for treasure. None knew what the treasure would hold or look like, but their hearts were ablaze with a desire they had never experienced.

For such a quest, it only made sense to take a treasure ship. One set, apparently abandoned, many years on the outskirts of town. An eerie air filled the atmosphere surrounding the vessel as it rested quietly in the water. Although available, few had boarded. To board meant to forsake the familiar. It meant leaving all the excitement behind. The ship was known to all who lived in town. They were also aware that any who took it would sail away from the cheery colors of self-satisfaction into a dim lit unknown. It was accessible to all, and yet none entered as long as any could remember. It was the center of the town's ghost stories. Through many generations, it had been told to hold certain death for any who dared to seek treasures aboard the ship of change.

Such longing had been stirred in the young hearts of these treasure seekers that, for the moment, the fear of the unknown was pushed aside and a decision was made to approach the ship. It would take many days to journey through town before arriving at the dock. At first, no one paid any attention to the travelers. This was a town, in which everyone looked out for himself seeking only his personal pleasure. Groups were never formed, because no one could be trusted. Before long, it was noticed that a group was moving through town. A group? No one had ever observed a group before. A great fear began to sweep through the residents. What terrible plot could be devised that would need a group? Fascination grew as they were observed, not participating in wrong doing but instead simply making their way to the edge of town. The fascination gave way to irritation, because although they were hurting no one, they were daring to do the undone. The rules in this town had long ago been established. This was a settlement of chaos! What right had these travelers to march to the beat of another drum? Soon, rather than the town mischief being random, the residents, instead, began using all their plots to stop the youngsters from reaching the ship.

Having become the focus of much evil the trip was much more difficult. It was tempting to stay back, to separate again returning to the lives they had always known. However, the seed growing in each caused a pain just sharp enough to keep them walking. A hunger had grown for something different. A fire had kindled a need greater than even the hope of preserving their own safety. They had to reach the ship. They had to set sail into the unknown in search of the treasure their hearts had begun to burn for, so through the onset of attack they pursued the ship. Shocked at their determination, the town grew bored. Few had sailed the ship of change before, so a decision was made to allow the strange travelers to go as they wished. All expected a quick, devastated return. The town released them to their journey and instead began to look forward to how they would mock them upon their homecoming.



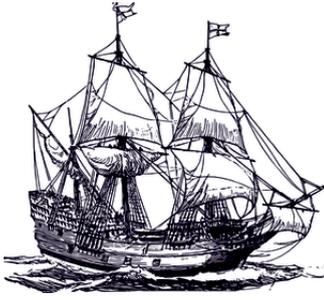
1. Like the children in the Town of Chaos, are you able to observe cruelty and evil in the world surrounding you? How does it make you feel?

2. What would you desire to be different in your life?

3. What cost are you willing to pay to change?

4. How have you seen people repeat to others what was done to them?

Many, who have been hurt, hurt others. Many also give up on life due to the pain they feel. You don't have to do as others do. You don't have to accept less for your life because of anything you have experienced. To your level of pain, God provides a level of grace and gives everything you need to live the life He created you for.



2 Introductions

Oh yes, you shaped me first inside, then out; you formed me in my mother's womb. I thank you, High God—you're breathtaking! Body and soul, I am marvelously made! Psalm 139:13-14 (MSG)

Having been left by the town commotion, the journey became quieter. The travelers had never met before and had only grouped together because of the strange desire they each felt. The remainder of their voyage to the ship gave them an opportunity to get to know each other. They were a group of five, five very unique individuals.

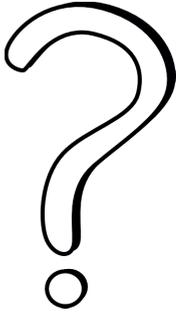
It seemed the first to be seen or heard was always Christopher. He was indeed the talker. He was cheerful and optimistic. He appeared to enjoy everyone and enjoy the attention he could get from everyone! He had frequent ideas to make their trip more jovial, although at times such exciting excursions would have taken their focus off the journey to the ship. His continual thrill for adventure provided the others a tool to pull his attention back to their desired destination.

Autumn was full of questions. She was truly curious about every incident, place, and person. While Christopher was busy planning exploits, she was inquiring the value of each one. She also examined and pondered the details they would soon encounter on the ship. "What will the ship be like? Where will we go? How do we know we will find the way to meet this desire we have?" she challenged frequently. The others had no answers, so she would regularly be lost in thought trying to determine solutions on her own. Autumn was driven by a fascination to know...everything!

Ethan seemed to hold the group together. If any were tempted to quit before reaching the ship, he gave a prompt reminder why they had banded together to begin with. He was strong, steady, and always equipped to give a word of encouragement to any who became tired or discouraged. He diligently kept them close. He had also come prepared with food and water. He had even enough to share with the others. They had learned to go to Ethan for any needs they encountered. They enjoyed being with him, because he was kind and gentle.

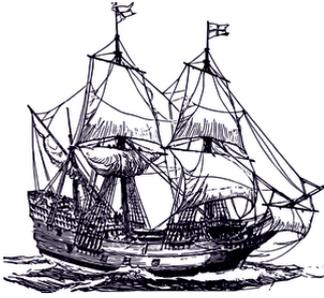
Quietly in the background, journeyed delicate Isabelle. She spoke very little, but seemed more aware of their surroundings than any of the others. She was always observing. She watched everything from the way they walked to the way they treated each other. Occasionally, she would express concern that they needed to take a different path than was already chosen. She would vehemently argue that although the route they were on appeared safe, she was convinced of some threat the others didn't perceive. She frequently frustrated them with these unseen dangers. The path she argued for looked to always be the one with greater difficulty. However, when set in her mind she was actually quite stubborn.

There was no question who was truly driving this little group. Aiden quickly became the chief leader. He was confident and bold. He was so decisive it was easy for the others to trust he had all the answers. Admittedly, he didn't hold as many answers as he himself believed, but he did keep them traveling. It would not have been off target to consider him bossy and unsympathetic. The group would stop for rest or food, but it was never long before Aiden was impatiently demanding they return to the forward march. Although they often resented the momentum, this tenacious mover led them valiantly.



1. Are you aware every person, including you, has a special personality created by God?
2. For what purpose has God created gifts and strengths inside you?
3. Can you name some strengths you have personally?
4. What will happen if you don't use the strengths God has given you?

If any of these children had been missing, the others would have suffered from their loss. If you don't use the strengths you have been given to minister to those around you, their journey will be harder as a result. If you are absent...you ARE missed. You can seek God to observe the strengths He has placed inside you, and you can learn to walk in them.



3 His Unfailing Kindness

I alone know the plans I have for you, plans to bring you prosperity and not disaster, plans to bring about the future you hope for. Jeremiah 29:11 (GNT)

For nearly a week they journeyed toward the ship. None knew exactly what it would contain or if it would indeed lead them to the treasure they were seeking. All they did know was each had a kindled desire for something different. This ship was the only place they had never visited with their chaos. It was the only hope they knew that could possibly lead to change.

They could tell when they were drawing closer. Signs were posted along the trail trying to scare them.

One read, “Turn back. Run from the ship that brings death!”

Another dramatically declared, “All will be lost to those who enter.”

Still another, “No one has sailed aboard this ship, except that they returned so changed they were unrecognizable.”

Chills ran up and down the spine of each traveler. It was certain those in the town did not want anyone to board the vessel. What was to be expected from such a place?

It was indeed unnerving. They had traveled considering only the hope of a change they greatly desired. Now they began to fear the unknown and the words threatening them from those who appeared to have some experience with the ship. What if the threats were true? What if the ship did bring death, or loss, or change so revolutionary they would never be recognized? What if... The five didn't like the sound of such a fierce dwelling. However, they were still pressed by the pain of the small seed growing inside. When the seed wasn't persuasive enough, they found themselves stimulated by Ethan or half pushed by Aiden. Altogether, they proceeded until they could see the ship.

They were shocked. The ship didn't look forbidding at all. It was much smaller than they had imagined and had a sweet smell that reminded them of honeysuckle. The threats still had their emotions stirred, but the ship itself looked peaceful. Surrounded by calm water, it rested softly by the dock. They questioned their considerations to go back, but the ship seemed to wrap them in a gentle warmth. As though alive, it was drawing them closer and closer. Not even their alarm was strong enough to discourage their continued movement toward the ship.

When they finally arrived, they could read clearly the name proudly displayed on the ship's side, *His Unfailing Kindness*. Confusion filled them. What fear and destruction would come from unfailing kindness, and who was He? What touch had drawn them so powerfully they lacked the strength to flee? They walked cautiously toward the ship. Arriving, they were greeted by a cheerful woman, who obviously worked as part of the crew. "Welcome, may I invite you aboard?" she gently requested. Still very uncertain, Autumn rushed in with all her questions, "Is it okay for us to board? Will we be harmed? Who owns this ship? Where is..."

The lady politely but firmly interrupted, "I realize there is much you don't understand. I will answer your first question. Yes, it is okay for you to board. This ship is *His Unfailing Kindness*. Only those He invites are drawn, and only those who are drawn find their way to the ship. Because you have come, I know you have been invited, and He desires that you be here. We have a small crew, but we are delighted to serve you. We are here to minister to any needs you may have. We have provisions for each of you."

Confused, Ethan probed, "How can provisions be made? We have never been here before, and no one knew we were coming."

"His eyes are upon the ways of a man, and He sees all his steps. He knew you were coming. He knows your needs before you ask."

"How is this possible?" demanded Aiden.

"With man this is impossible, but with Him all things are possible."

Unable to remain quiet any longer, Isabelle lifted her voice to inquire what they all had become very curious to know, "Who is He?"

Obviously thrilled, the entire crew suddenly rushed to see who had asked such a beautiful question. Who was He, indeed... It was for this very question they devoted their lives to labor aboard this ship.



1. What threats have you experienced that attempt to scare you away from embracing God's plan for change in your life?

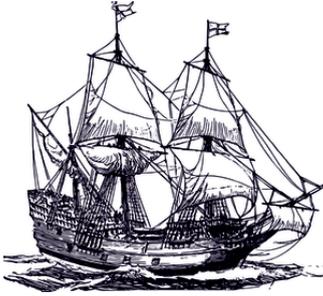
2. Are you willing to ignore the signs posted by the world and instead listen to God's Word?

3. Do you know God's eyes are ALWAYS upon you? He sees your steps. He knows your needs before you ask, and He is making preparations for you. How does

this make you feel?

4. Do you know Him? Do you want to?

God created you. Without walking with Him, you will always journey with a hole in your heart, because you will never be what you were created to be. The world and enemy will always try to hold you away from God. I encourage you to ignore all the threats and instead choose to trust your Creator. If you want to know Him, you only have to reach out and ask Him to be a part of your life. He is eagerly waiting for you to say, "Yes!"



4 Who Is He?

Grace mixed with faith and love poured over me and into me. And all because of Jesus. 1 Timothy 1:14 (MSG)

The crew treasured moments when this singular question was asked. They waited in fervent anticipation for any opportunity to discuss Him. As if they lived for nothing else, they had swiftly dropped their present tasks to encircle the curious group. All enthusiastic to speak at once, it was easy to observe their difficulty in controlling themselves. They did, however, exercise such control as one after another made their thrilling announcements.

“He is the King...the Creator of everything, including us and each of you!”

“He created you special for a relationship with Him!”

“He is perfect!”

“He is glorious!”

“He is EVERYTHING you could ever desire!”

The group was astonished. They had never even heard of such a King and had certainly never experienced such excitement from anyone. Only Autumn had ever even questioned where they came from. She had asked once and was made to feel so senseless she determined to never ask again. A special relationship? No one from their town had any relationship other than being the predator or victim of trouble. To be perfect or glorious was far beyond the reach of their imaginations. Particularly, the last statement jolted each one. Why had this journey even begun? For what had they banded together? It was a desire! A desire burning in the seed planted in each heart. The seeds almost seemed to quiver within them. Could this King be the answer? Could it be Him who started their quest?

The eager crew, again, invited them to board the ship. The children hadn't realized they were still standing on the dock. Overwhelmed with delight, the crew had bolted to them, rather than waiting for them

to enter. Overjoyed with the adventure, Christopher began to rush forward. However, before he could move far, Ethan grabbed him by the nap of his neck.

“Not so fast!” he demanded, “We don’t know enough about this ship or the crew.” With keen eyes, one could tell Isabelle was concerned as well.

“If we board the ship, will we be trapped? Are you prisoners?”

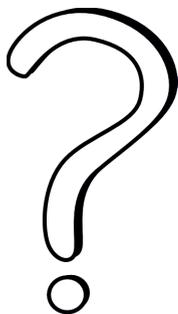
Even Aiden was surprisingly rattled. He usually felt in control, with most of the answers, but now he realized he knew nothing. He did want to go...but go where? Now that was an important decision and one not to be taken lightly.

Autumn was equally prepared with a dozen questions with which to assault the tender crew. Just before she pounced, the cheerful lady they had met first gently interrupted.

“Let’s sit here a while. You don’t need to come aboard until all your questions have been answered and until you know you want to. There is never any pressure. No, we are not prisoners aboard the ship. We are here, because we joy in serving our King. It is His gift to us that we are assigned to work here. Any who enter can leave if they want.”

Just as she was calming the panicked group, another friendly gentleman spoke, “My name is Jonathon. If you are hungry, I can prepare a picnic. It will only take a few minutes. After such a long trip, you must be ready for some nourishment.” Receiving a slight nod, he rewarded them with a smile before returning to the ship. As quickly, a lady stated, “I am Emily. I have some blankets and pillows. May I get them for you to rest on while we eat?” Again, the group nodded and away she dashed. Christopher, Autumn, Ethan, Isabelle, and Aiden didn’t know whether to be more overwhelmed by the activity surrounding them or by the kindness they have never before experienced. They stood stunned and motionless until each had a comfortable pillow on which to sit. In a flurry of graceful activity, soon a blanket was positioned beautifully on the dock and what seemed to them like a feast was covering nearly every inch. Not knowing a better response each submissively sat on the pillow provided and began to eat. In a kind voice, the cheerful lady introduced herself as April. Then, the crew began to share in the meal. They didn’t prod or force answers. In fact, they didn’t even contribute information. They began to talk. They asked questions about the trip and each of the travelers.

They seemed truly interested as no one ever had before. They discussed the beauty that surrounded them daily on the ship, the pleasant weather they had recently enjoyed, and occasionally sprinkled in a comment about this King they so obviously adored.

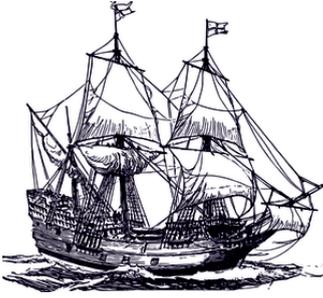


1. Is there a true King who created everything? Who is He?

2. Why did He create you?

3. How does it make you feel to know He created you special for Him?

Jesus is the true King! He fashioned every person in His image for a special relationship with Him. He is the craving of your heart. Many times, you may believe you want things based on what your emotions or senses are saying. Having created you, God knows in your deep inner being what you truly desire. He is your true longing and need because it is for Him you were created.



5 Aboard the Ship

*How precious is your lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of your wings.
Psalms 36:7 (NKJV)*

True to their words, the crew never pressured the children. They simply spent time getting to know each of them. They sought to learn their personalities and hobbies with a deep attentiveness. Any need the children had was quickly met with thoughtfulness. Before long, the alarm was forgotten and the youngsters had an eager yearning to get an even closer look at the kindness they were now experiencing. After all agreed, the crew cleaned their spontaneous meal and together they turned toward the ship.

The sun was beginning to set with hues of deep orange when they climbed aboard. A calm washed upon each of them. They suddenly realized they were very tired. A gentle peace came to rest on the children, and they began rubbing their sleepy eyes. Until now, their journey had been so full of threats and fear they had not the freedom to feel the exhaustion that had actually been plaguing them for days. The fatigue had been pushed to the back of their existence. Their necessity to press toward the ship had taken precedence over their physical requirements. Aware of their need for sleep, Emily suggested she take them to their rooms. Still intrigued to have rooms prepared, they followed quietly.

Nothing could have equipped them emotionally for what they witnessed as they twisted down a candle lit hall. Huddled closely together stood five elaborate doors. Each obviously opened to a room. Astounding each child was the writing upon the doors. The writing had not been prepared speedily without care. No, each entry held a name plate, carved with skill, bearing the names: Christopher, Autumn, Isabelle, Ethan, and Aiden. The children stood and stared. They were too stunned to even respond. How? Very tenderly, Emily reminded them of the words April had spoken earlier, "His eyes are upon the ways of a man, and He sees all his steps. He knew you were coming. He knows your needs before you ask."

They were still too overwhelmed to process what they were experiencing, but they lacked the strength to fight for more understanding now. Even Autumn was willing to release her appetite to know to be able to find sleep she had so long been refused. Approaching the doors that held their names, the children observed something else delicately engraved, "He has loved you with an everlasting love, and drawn you with unfailing kindness." For the first time, the seed inside each heart felt warm as though embracing them from within. A new hunger had suddenly enveloped them. They didn't now have just the desire for a change that was unknown. They began to hunger to know this King. They wanted earnestly to meet one who could love with an everlasting love and draw with unfailing kindness, one who could perceive steps from afar when the observed wasn't even aware, and one who would make such extravagant provisions for children who had never before been involved in anything but trouble.

Each door opened to still more luxury for the children. Decorated as though they had called and made arrangements themselves, the rooms were full of their favorite things. Beloved colors adorned every space. They were even greeted with smells that brought particular comfort. Autumn's room came complete with an encyclopedia set appearing to hold all the world had ever researched. Aiden's room contained a large table full of building blocks, his chosen interest when not pulled into mischief. Maps filled every inch of Christopher's room. Isabelle's resembled a secret garden. It drew her in with flowers so delicate one would expect a touch to damage their velvety blossoms. Ethan entered his room and was immediately comfortable in a place organized to meet every need.

Pulled into the embrace of *His Unfailing Kindness*, each slowly approached plush beds overflowing with comfort. Climbing in, they wrapped thick blankets around their tired shoulders and drifted into sweet slumber.

Although the sun rose early the next morning, the snuggled travelers did not. Having pushed their bodies passed exhaustion they slept nearly to the afternoon hour. When they did sneak out of bed, they admittedly spent time enjoying the rooms so incredibly prepared. None had ever had such treasures provided especially for them. Eventually, their stomachs did begin to announce another physical need yet ignored. One by one, they exited their rooms where they were again greeted by the pleasant crew. As if he had been waiting for nothing else, Jonathon escorted the excited group to the kitchen

and to a cordially set table. A very late breakfast promptly arrived. It seemed to vanish as quickly as it had appeared into the hungry children. After seeing that they were well served, the crew left them to handle other responsibilities on the ship. This gave the children some time to discuss...well, everything.

They talked about the crew, the kindness, the rooms, and the elaborate names carved into each door. They talked about the possibility of meeting one who had created everything and everyone, and who, according to the crew, had created each for a relationship with Him. There were so many questions, but enough curiosity was stirred to have at least given hope.

In the mist of such excitement, one thing had begun to upset the children. Having come from the Town of Chaos, they had only ever encountered others who also dwelled there. They all, including this group of five, had such horrific characteristics they had always been known, not as people, but as creatures. Some were even referred to as goblins. They had been so tired, afraid, and overwhelmed the day before their eyes had not really focused on the crew of *His Unfailing Kindness*. However, after an excellent night's sleep and in the brilliant day's light, the difference was beyond obvious. April, Jonathon, and Emily had characteristics they had never observed before. Yes, they had the same head, nose, mouth, two eyes, and two ears held by others, but they weren't twisted and warped. Their eyes seemed to almost sparkle with joy. Their mouths formed smiles. Their skin was soft and smooth, not covered in boils and warts. They stood and walked with a grace that gave them the look, not of a lowly ship crew, but of royalty.

Once the topic had been discussed, the horror of their own ugly condition became all they could think of. The food they had just recently so enjoyed began to turn in their stomachs. They had never before realized how terrible they looked. They were just like everyone else, but not here on *His Unfailing Kindness*. Here they were different, and they were grotesque.

They suddenly were overwhelmed with shame. Making them more terrified, they wondered if the crew had not yet noticed. They must have not grasped. Somehow, the darkness must have covered everything they were. They began to panic. They wanted so incredibly to stay aboard the ship, enjoy their rooms, experience this kindness, and also have the opportunity to meet the King, but they were so traumatized by realizing their condition they were certain the crew had

mistaken all their words from the day before. It could not be possible the King would have created them for a relationship. A King would desire those of royal beauty like the crew aboard *His Unfailing Kindness*. He could never want the trash they now recognized they were. Soon, the crew would return. They would see!

In alarm, they jumped from the table with such aggression they knocked it to the floor. All the dishes crashed into shattered pieces. With tears beginning to stream down their faces, the children raced to any place they could find where they thought their ugliness may not be found. Under stairs, into boxes, behind supplies... They dashed. They tripped. They fell. They hid. Never satisfied their ugliness was hidden well enough, they had no rest. Repeatedly, they searched for another spot... one that was adequate enough to cover them, completely and totally to make them cease to exist. Instead, new wounds were formed on their already broken bodies. Blood began to trickle down their legs and arms as they desperately tried to clean themselves. Being similarly distressed, the kitchen was quickly becoming ruins. Observers would have considered the children as disastrous tornados, throwing and tossing everything they determined insufficient to provide shelter. In little more than a flash, a beautiful cozy room had been twisted into a disaster.



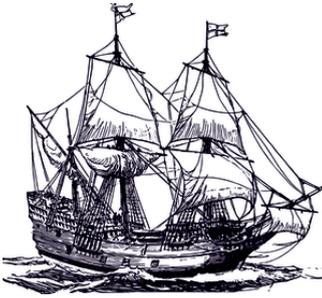
1. Are you aware that in *His Unfailing Kindness*, God has provided amazing gifts especially for you? Can you think of treasures He has provided?

2. It is easy to feel ugly. This can be physically, but it can also be in your personality or weaknesses. In what ways do you ever feel this way?

3. In what behaviors do you hide so others won't see your problems or heart, so they won't know everything that is wrong with you?

4. Can you believe that although you do have undesirable characteristics the King truly did create you, especially for a relationship with Him?

Generally, your amazing gifts from God won't come equipped with your name engraved, but they are very present. They come in the form of people who love you, your home, possessions, pets, etc. Making a list of things the King has provided especially for you can help you begin to thank Him. Thanking Him frequently for the gifts He's given will help you discover other gifts and will open the door for you to experience great joy.



6 Hidden

You'll be a stunning crown in the palm of GOD's hand, a jeweled gold cup held high in the hand of your God. No more will anyone call you Rejected Isaiah 62:3-4a (MSG)

Exhausted from the emotional and physical activity, each child finally accepted a hiding place where he stayed buried and silent.

Returning, the crew found the kitchen destroyed. They weren't quite as unaware as the children believed them to be. They actually expected this or something similar to happen soon. They had worked this vessel many years. Those who were new to the ship and who had never met the King always had such struggles. To carry the beauty of the King, one had to know Him. The crew understood this well. Once upon a time, each of them had awakened to find himself dreadful, covered in filth and wounds. They remembered the horror and pain they felt when their eyes had been opened. They never knew exactly how to best help, but their hearts were always seeking the King for knowledge to know how to comfort and express His love. They held a deep compassion that only comes from having walked a similar road.

Realizing how troubled and upset the children were, the crew was careful to be very gentle in all they did. The young ones, now frozen, expected only the worst. They were bracing themselves for angry words and strict retribution for the mess in the recently charming room. Knowing the crew would recognize their horrific condition, they were unsure if they would have a greater interest in having the kitchen restored or of purging the ship of the children altogether. Christopher, Autumn, Ethan, Isabelle, and Aiden were stunned when the crew tenderly entered the kitchen. They showed no reaction at all. In fact, if anything, they still appeared pleased with all that surrounded them. No furniture was left standing providing no suitable place for them to sit. Incredibly, they each chose a spot on the floor, admittedly attempting to avoid broken glass. As though the crude planks were designed for royalty, they sat. Somehow, they maintained their pleasant demeanor and looked as though they found luxury on the hard wood surface.

Much time passed. The children crouched awkwardly, and the crew patiently waited. When it was evident they were unable to stay jammed in their hiding spaces any longer, Jonathon softly asked if they would like to come out and join them on the kitchen floor. Confused but needing to, at least stretch their cramped legs, they agreed. Staying as far from another as was possible, they found a place to rest. Realizing they must also be growing hungry, April offered them some finger foods that could easily be eaten without requiring a table. The children eventually understood the crew wasn't going to explode in fury or disgust. Without allowing their little faces to be seen they sheepishly began to communicate.

"We are very sorry we destroyed the kitchen. We never meant to."

"We didn't realize we are ugly. Everyone from our town looks the way we do, but you don't. You are beautiful. Why? We were afraid when we realized how terrible we look. We didn't want you to learn the truth. We understand the King won't want to meet us. We hid, because we didn't know how you would treat us when you saw."

With incredible kindness, Emily replied, "Would you like to hear more about our King?"

Confused, Aiden answered, "What does the King have to do with any of this?"

"Our King is the answer to every question. Right now, you are overwhelmed, because you are seeing and focusing on yourselves. How did you feel yesterday, when you were learning about Him? When you were excited about meeting Him, what were your thoughts?"

Isabelle was fast to respond, "Oh, we were so very thrilled. He sounds amazing, and you said He made us for a relationship with Him. You said He loves and wants us. That began to make me feel special, but now I realize it can't be true. Of course, He wants and loves you, but you are beautiful and move royally. We don't." With her last words, each small face dropped as additional tears surfaced.

The crew showed more mercy than the children had ever experienced. They displayed the concern and love that had already begun to grow in their hearts toward these Precious Ones. "May we hold you as we tell you more about our King?" requested April.

The children were incredibly torn inside. It was as though two worlds threatened to rip them apart. They were so filled with shame they didn't want to be touched, let alone held. At the same time, they desperately wanted to taste the love they could see was available from the crew. The tug-of-war pulled and strained as they considered both directions. Through the struggle, the crew waited without complaint. There was a stubborn resolve for survival that plagued each heart causing them to want to run and hide again. However, they had already savored an unfailing kindness that was drawing them with such intensity they were unable to turn away from the outstretched arms. One after another, they finally approached the warmth they had been offered. Each child found a special place in gentle arms. Considering the crew was outnumbered, some laps held two children.

After ensuring each was as snug as was possible, Jonathon began to speak, "We serve a King like no other. He did create the world and everything in it. He did create you, and He does love you. He is a holy King, perfect and beautiful, so full of glory we will never be able to experience His full wonder. There was a time when only He existed. I don't mean to puzzle you, but you need to know the uniqueness of our Master. He is just one, and yet, He is also three; three in one. In His completion is the Father, the Son our King, and His Spirit."

Moving along April continued, "Our King could not be improved, but He had a desire for more. He was so full of love He wanted others to pour His love into. He wanted the pleasure of relationships with many. He also wanted to be loved. Like parents desire children who resemble them, the Father wanted children to look like Him. So, together the Father, the King, and His Spirit began a lovely work. They created a world full of amazement. Then, they created man. Our King easily could have created robots, who would have been programmed to serve, but this would not have met His desire, so He created man with a choice. Each one could choose to love Him or not. Loving the King meant trusting Him enough to believe He is good and therefore, obey Him. From the beginning, that choice came at a high cost. Disobeying the King meant death. Having spent only a short time on earth, man disobeyed."

Eyes wide in disbelief, the children gasped at what they were hearing. "The creation was going to die?" half demanded and half interrogated Ethan.

“Well, yes,” came a sad reply. They sat in silence for a while until Emily began to speak again.

“Man was condemned to die for disobeying, and the relationship was destroyed, but Father had a plan. Because of His plan, man can still meet the King. We have met Him. It is Him who made us beautiful and dressed us royally. Many don’t want to meet Him, because they don’t understand His ways. He never forces them. He is available, but He doesn’t demand.”

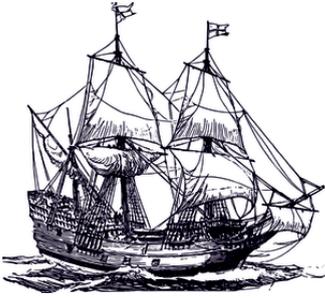
The children had heard all they were able to process. It would take a while for them to begin to wrap their minds around such a King. Even the idea was completely foreign. The day had begun and ended in the kitchen. While continuing to embrace the children, the crew gently wiped their tears. The Precious Ones were so lost in thought, they weren’t even aware their wounds were being cleaned and bandaged. April left briefly and returned with a warm dinner. After they had eaten, Jonathon gently teased, “We can bring blankets and pillows into the kitchen, or if you’d like we can walk you back to your rooms.”

Remembering the rooms, their eyes brightened. They laughed and pulled themselves up off the floor. Following Jonathon, they again walked down the hall each to his own room. Entering, their eyes took time to breath in the incredible gifts provided. Too tired to devote much attention, they were soon found snug in their soft beds again. The night fell upon children uncertain of their world. They deeply believed what they observed with their physical eyes. They were dreadfully ugly. That fact was not one that could be dismissed. Yet, what of this King? What of the Father’s plan? Drifting to sleep their minds wandered back and forth between the profound disgust of their present condition and the possible hope of meeting the King.



1. Without knowing the King, can you make yourself beautiful? Why?
2. What happens when you focus on yourself, your ugly characteristics, and your weaknesses?
3. What do you think will happen when you change your attention to Jesus?
4. How can you be made whole and healthy? Who will you need to focus on? Who will you need to live like?
5. Do you surround yourself with people who will not only love you, but will also point you to the King?

All people have characteristics that are not beautiful. People are born without God's Spirit. If you focus on yourself, it is easy to become overwhelmed and depressed. Focusing on Jesus will give you hope and comfort. As you learn how much He loves and cares, you can learn how treasured you really are. It is only God, who can make you beautiful and royal. He is your hope of change.



7 Cleaning the Kitchen

God is doing what is best for us, training us to live God's holy best. At the time, discipline isn't much fun. It always feels like it's going against the grain. Later, of course, it pays off handsomely, for it's the well-trained who find themselves mature in their relationship with God. Hebrews 12:10b-11 (MSG)

The children surfaced at a more reasonable time the next morning. From their rooms they cautiously escaped into the corridor and headed to the kitchen. They were not certain what to expect. The night before, they left a destroyed room that had begun to resemble the Town of Chaos. Except that they couldn't determine another appropriate place to fill their now rumbling stomachs they would have likely never returned. Forgetting the incident had occurred would have been an easier path. However, they were hungry and so, to the kitchen they cautiously strolled.

They entered to find everything exactly as they had left it. Jonathon, Emily, and April had arrived earlier, but they weren't repairing the damage. They were working to construct means to eat breakfast amid the rubble. Uncertain how to respond, the children allowed themselves to be served and picked at their meal in an awkward silence. While they ate, Jonathon expressed some thoughts.

"Well, our kitchen is obviously in need of some care." Although he didn't speak with any disappointment or frustration, the children still dropped their heads feeling the weight of knowing they had indeed caused the problem.

"We have worked here many years, and I don't remember the kitchen ever looking different than it did upon your arrival. We wondered if, perhaps, you would enjoy helping us give it a new look," Jonathon cheerfully continued, "The process, of course, will begin with a deep cleaning, but then we can have a lot of fun. I bet each of you have some special ways you can help the process."

The children didn't receive the news with the same fervor Jonathon was expressing. In the Town of Chaos, they only generated

destruction. They never returned to clean the mess! They were unable to even conceive how it could be fun. Fun? No, fun was causing trouble, right? Despite the truth that they weren't completely convinced with the brilliance of Jonathon's plan, they couldn't determine a way to get out of it. They did want to continue eating, and although the floor sufficed, it wasn't nearly as pleasant as the table and chairs had been, so as soon as breakfast was finished, for the first time ever they began to clean. Experience was not on their side, and they were clumsy with all the tools; brooms and mops were actually difficult to direct. The crew very patiently trained the youngsters in the way of housework. It took several hours to clear the debris away.

After resting a moment, the children noticed April toting a dry erase board into the empty room. She began to write. Evidently, it was a list of all that was needed: ideas, supplies, a plan... April turned to the captive audience, "We don't know you all well, but I believe we can find a part you will each enjoy. To get started, we need some ideas. We want a bright, cheery room."

Ethan had a very organized way of processing information. He had experienced very little order, but his mind quickly focused on how to shape the room to be efficient for those using it. He began to express his ideas, "We need a table large enough to accommodate a lot of people so there will be plenty of room!" Aiden approached the board and requested a marker, so he could draw plans for the table.

Observing quietly, Isabelle was concerned with the procedure. Building the table as it was being drawn would not make it sturdy. "We have to build it right!" she declared, "Surely, we can determine and learn the correct way..."

That brought Autumn up in a flash, "Oh, my encyclopedias are full of information!" Off she ran to her room to retrieve her treasured books.

Christopher was drawn into the adventure as he always was. Before long, he was suggesting ideas to add a splash of fun to every feature.

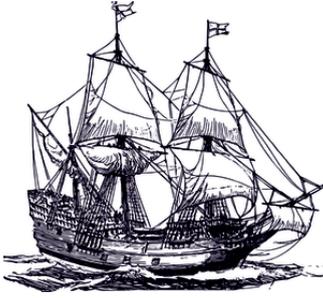
One would not have recognized the children as they began to pour themselves into the business of working hard. Together with the ship crew, they labored the day away, stopping only when needed to eat or get new supplies. As the day was drawing to completion, so was the newly refashioned kitchen. With everyone's part, it was fantastic. They circled the cozy table and ate a simple dinner. More than each other's

company, they spent the meal admiring a job well done. Muscles drained but emotions still soaring, they eventually willed themselves to leave their paradise to prepare for bed. The satisfied crew beamed as they observed the drowsy children exit.



1. When God's children make messes, does He clean them up? Who needs to clean the mess?
2. Why is it important for God to not rescue you from the consequences of bad choices?
3. How can cleaning your own messes help you down the road?
4. What should your attitude be when you are having to work hard to solve a problem you caused?

When a mess is made and there is repentance, God forgives immediately, but you are responsible to experience the consequences of your behavior and decisions. Dealing with life consequences is frequently God's style of discipline in the lives of His children. It is important to remember Hebrews 4:10 shares, "My dear child, don't shrug off God's discipline, but don't be crushed by it either. It's the child He loves that He disciplines; the child He embraces, He also corrects." (MSG) Many times, it is through unpleasant projects that you can learn special interests and talents God placed inside you. When you find ways you can best help, you are frequently learning who He created you to be. When you learn who you are, you can begin to enjoy your work.



8 We've Gone So Far...Right?

The Life-Light was the real thing: Every person entering Life He brings into Light. John 1:12 (MSG)

After an excellent night's sleep, all awoke refreshed. With the rising of the sun announcing a new day, the children realized they had not visited the upper deck in a while due to the excitement in the kitchen. They expected to be far out to sea by now and decided to go and observe their new surroundings after breakfast. Full of anticipation, they marched together.

They were shocked speechless when they met the morning air and discovered they had not moved at all. Still anchored to the dock, the ship had not progressed out to sea. They were no closer to meeting the King and no closer to the change they had become hungry for. In fact, they were no closer to anything. They stood huddled together mouths gaped open.

Observing from a distance, April decided to check on them. "You appear quite confused," she noted as though there shouldn't be a cause for any misunderstanding, "Is something wrong?"

"Of course we are confused," raged Aiden, "We came aboard the ship to GO somewhere, and yet, here we sit, right where we began!"

Even Isabelle appeared ready to cry; she was so disheartened by the disappointment.

Recognizing their agitation, Jonathon jumped in, "Your frustration stems from not understanding the ship. This is *His Unfailing Kindness*. It is here for you to have a taste of who He is. You were welcomed to come aboard to give you an opportunity to decide if you want to meet the King. Remember, we promised before you came. This isn't a trap. You can leave, or you can choose to move forward. He has given you free will. That means you have to decide. You won't be forced. The ship's entire purpose is to express *His Unfailing Kindness* to all. The ship will never move until you have chosen. As the crew, we wait in eager anticipation, for any who embrace His kindness and desire to

journey to meet Him. We are ready to set sail anytime. We are waiting to hear from you. Do you want to meet our King?"

Although the youngsters heard Jonathon's words clearly, their minds were still tangled. They had to decide? They had full authority to say yes to move forward, to stay aboard and rest in His kindness, or even to forsake the ship altogether and return to the Town of Chaos? Never before had they been allowed to make such an important decision. They had been lucky to choose anything. In the Town of Chaos everyone tried to control everyone else. They were amazed to have felt such tender kindness, to hear it came from a royal King, and now to be told they controlled the direction of the King's vessel.

One would have expected them to immediately rush to exclaim, "Yes! Let's get this ship moving!" However, they were suddenly overwhelmed. Realizing the choice was theirs, they felt an unexpected responsibility to consider it carefully. Did they trust the crew, and would they be able to trust the King? Was He truly kind, or was this all a trick? Did they even want to completely leave their familiar Town of Chaos? They even remembered and measured the threatening signs they encountered when they neared the ship:

"Turn back. Run from the ship that brings death."

"All will be lost to those who enter."

"No one has sailed aboard this ship, except that they returned so changed they were unrecognizable."

These words still shook their emotions. They were frightened. Before the last few days, they had never experienced kindness or love. They had never been given a gift that didn't come at a greater cost than its worth. They had existed only as a target for cruelty and as a predator to those they could attack themselves.

Dazed and unsure, they sat on the deck of *His Unfailing Kindness* to ponder their direction. They discussed the Town of Chaos. It was strange how a place they knew as evil still had a comforting pull on them. They knew it was a terrible dwelling full of horror and yet leaving, possibly forever, was very difficult. There were friends they would be leaving behind. True, these friends couldn't be trusted, but they had fun memories terrorizing the town together. Weren't they abandoning them by departing? What if they didn't like this King? Worse yet, they were still very ugly. They had been distracted by the

crew gently drifting their attention from their horrific condition so they were concentrating instead on the King, but they remembered now. They remembered their shame. Although those who manned the ship assured them the King loved and wanted them, they could never believe a Royal King would desire them. Does one leave all he has ever known to meet a King who could never welcome such filth as they were?

They clustered in silence well passed the lunch hour. The crew left them alone, understanding the importance of this time. It was crucial they not be disturbed or persuaded. This was their decision. April, Jonathon, and Emily knew to not interfere. The children found themselves, again, believing they'd be torn. Fear to leave the known ferociously battled their hunger for hope in the unknown. In the Town of Chaos they were like everyone else. There were not challenges to change or the desire to be changed. Considering this truth, they remembered the tiny seeds planted in the heart of each one. They peered inside with penetrating eyes to locate the tender seeds. Yes, they were still present and yes, each seed still held the influence to prick their consciences enough to drive them toward the desire for something different. Quietly, they considered their last week. They remembered leaving town, the cruelty of those attempting to prevent their departure, and the amazing peace they felt upon first entering the ship of His Unfailing Kindness. As though they were watching a movie, they peered at the doors to their rooms beautifully carved with their names. Moving around each space, they observed the treasures delicately prepared. They remembered the gentle crew's response to the destruction they caused in the kitchen. Memories of being held instead of rebuked prodded their minds gently. Then, the excitement of remodeling the kitchen came rushing to mind. Each had given a special part making the room amazing. They had worked...hard, but they weren't rewarded only with aching muscles. They were rewarded with having accomplished something wonderful. Then, their minds drifted to the words spoken about the King.

"He is the King...the creator of everything, including us and each of you!"

"He created you special for a relationship with Him!"

"He is perfect!"

"He is glorious!"

“He is EVERYTHING you could ever desire!”

In spite of their determination that such a King could never desire them, they had already been touched too deeply to turn away. They simply had to know. They had to meet this King. The warmth they felt from their seeds upon first reading the words, “He has loved you with an everlasting love, and drawn you with unfailing kindness,” returned with a greater intensity than they had felt before. It was as though the seeds inside were rekindling the flame of desire. The children couldn’t leave to return to the Town of Chaos. They could never be satisfied to just stay aboard the ship of *His Unfailing Kindness*. They had to choose. In fact, they had chosen.



1. Can you name people God has provided around you to offer a taste of His love and kindness?

2. Can you name times you have not made the progress you expected in your life?

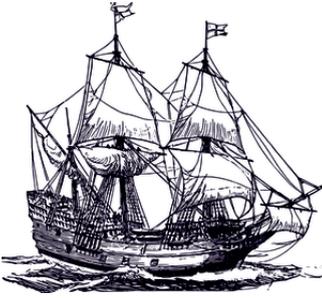
3. Will your life begin to change before you choose God? How does choosing Him activate the process?

4. Is there a larger journey beyond your initial step into His arms? What does this look like?

5. How many times do you expect to have to choose God's way over your own?

6. How important are your choices? In what ways will your choices impact your life, healing, and growth?

God will provide people in your life through whom you can experience His love giving an opportunity to choose Him. He will never force you. Unless you choose God, you will not experience desired change or healing. When you choose Him, you give Him permission to work in your life. Without choosing, you will stay where you are, or you will stray further from His kindness. Salvation is the first and most important choice you will ever make. However, to grow in God, you will have to choose Him over and over again. YOUR choices have the authority to place you in or out of His embrace! Your choices determine whether you walk into your destiny or continue in the life you have known. Those around you can never hold you away from anything God has for you. The adventure into the Kingdom of God is a life time journey of many good choices.



9 Off to Meet Him

We who have run for our very lives to God have every reason to grab the promised hope with both hands and never let go. It's an unbreakable spiritual lifeline, reaching past all appearances right to the very presence of God where Jesus, running on ahead of us, has taken up His permanent post as high priest for us, in the order of Melchizedek. Hebrews 6:19-20 (MSG)

It wasn't necessary for the children to use words to move the crew. Their eyes spoke for them, and with great celebration April, Jonathon, and Emily prepared the sails. In a flash, they were out to sea. Considering they spent the morning and part of the afternoon choosing a direction, they were all famished. None, however, desired to travel below deck. They wanted to breathe the fresh air with the wind dancing through their hair. Arriving at a solution, several of the children accompanied Emily downstairs to prepare a late lunch they could transport to the deck. They returned shortly, and together they dined.

It amazed the children when after only a short time had passed, they began to see land. Surely, this wasn't the destination. Wasn't there much further to travel? They had expected a long journey. Jonathon explained they had never been far away. They were held back only, because they had not yet chosen. Now, they would be taken without delay. He explained, "When you draw near to the King, He draws near to you, lessening the travel time. We, aboard the ship of *His Unfailing Kindness*, will introduce you, but then you must go with the King."

Panic filled the eyes of the children. They had grown to feel safe with April, Emily, and Jonathon. It was the crew who had shown kindness even when their behavior had merited discipline. They didn't understand, and immediately began to believe the crew had not cared for them as they had begun to trust. Pain swelled in their hearts as they determined the crew must truly have grasped their horrendous condition and desired to rid them from the ship. They felt betrayed. They expected the crew to take them to the King and stay with them. They were convinced the crew did not love or want them.

Before an explanation was given, the children fled to their previous behavior known to them in the Town of Chaos. They were reacting wildly. Unrestrained, every evil thought bolted from their tongues with fervor. They accused the crew of all forms of wrong doing. They kicked and hurled anything they could reach that wasn't anchored down. Emotions were driving the children, and they were completely out of control.

Jonathon, Emily, and April stayed nearby but did dodge flying objects. They patiently waited until the children lost their strength and could fight no more. After they collapsed into sobbing wrecks on the floor, the crew cautiously approached. The children were so devastated their bodies shook as they gasped to catch each breath. Only a short while earlier they had been excited and searched the horizon with anticipation. Now, they felt so betrayed by the crew they refused to lift their faces and kept their eyes tightly closed to prevent any contact. They had dared to trust and had now been crushed and completely broken. They wanted terribly to return to the Town of Chaos. At least there, they knew to expect trauma. They knew they were detested and despised. They wanted to be themselves before the seeds were planted in their hearts. How could one remove a seed so life could return to what it had been? The children didn't know and realistically believed it couldn't be done. Knowing they couldn't return to who they had been, they felt even more trapped in their very real pain.

With a quivering voice, Isabelle faintly whispered, "Why? Why are you leaving us? Why don't you want us?"

Pulling her into a gentle embrace, Emily responded, "Precious Isabelle, we aren't leaving you, and we do want you. We love you very much. We will be here, working the ship of *His Unfailing Kindness*, where you can always visit. We will have many more special projects and we look forward to them all. However, we know how important it is for you to know the King. The King can provide you with everything you will ever need. Because you were created for Him, you will never be complete without Him. He is more than you can ever imagine. Without Him, you will never live. It would be wonderful for you to be with us always, but more than that, we want you to live. To live you must desire the King more than any others. You must be willing to leave and forsake everyone you love to be with Him."

With the children's permission, the crew pulled them close. Each was gently embraced. Christopher, Isabelle, Ethan, Autumn, and Aiden weren't completely comforted. They had heard the explanation.

Although it made sense in their minds, their emotions didn't respond to logic. Their emotions still responded to the pain that was raw from the news they had just digested. They still felt abandoned and deceived. The rejection was threatening to overtake their ability to choose well. Before they lost control altogether, they submitted themselves to continuing the journey. In almost silent voices, each expressed their commitment to forsake all others to meet the King. Joy penetrated the crew, because they knew the life the children were choosing. The youngsters, however, remained buckled and weak without even the strength to lift their bodies off the floor. Although they had just chosen abundant life, complete with every amazing gift, they felt only the throb of pain surging through their broken hearts.

Remembering the sign they first encountered on the path to the ship Ethan remarked, "The sign said this ship would bring death. I feel like I am dying."

Tenderly, Emily answered, "It is true. One who wishes to save his life will lose it, but one who loses his life for the King's sake will find it."



1. Do you realize that although you can find comfort and receive love from those God has placed in your life Jesus must be the most important to you? Is it ever hard to make Him your King instead of those you have experienced kindness from?

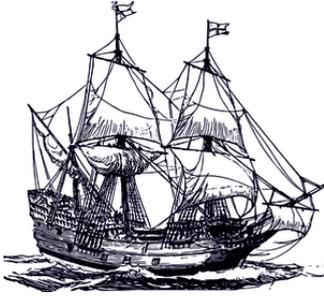
2. Is it scary for you to trust Jesus to be your safe place? Who does every gentle touch, kind word, and expression of love you have experienced in those around you truly stem from?

3. How will it change your response to Jesus if you begin to recognize Him in every treasured person you have learned to experience love through?

4. How do you feel when those you have learned to trust try to push you closer to Jesus instead of only pulling you to themselves?

5. It is easy to feel rejection. Can you choose to see passed your pain and fear of rejection to know they are loving you by encouraging you to run to Him, who alone can release you to experience abundant joy?

James 1:17 tells us, *“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”* This means all the kindness and gentleness in your life has come from God. Jesus is the only one who can complete you. Only He can provide healing. Only He can whisper secrets that will set you free. Those around you can help by pointing you to Him.



10 The King

Let my whole being bless the LORD and never forget all His good deeds: how God forgives all your sins, heals all your sickness, saves your life from the pit, crowns you with faithful love and compassion, and satisfies you with plenty of good things so that your youth is made fresh like an eagle's. Psalm 103:2-5 (CEBA)

The ship was drawing close to land as the children were wiping their tears and greatly attempting to stand erect and tall. Resolving to walk out their commitment to leave the crew and proceed to meet the King, they tried to maintain control of their emotions, which were continuing to swirl inside them.

On the shore, they observed a man standing and waiting. He had a presence so intense it was changing even the atmosphere around Him. His eyes were focused and His vision appeared to pierce deep into each of them, causing them to again hesitate leaving the ship. Searching the crew for a reaction, they were calmed by the anticipation Jonathon, Emily, and April were expressing. They were obviously thrilled to see the King. A close bond was unmistakable, as they appeared to have difficulty waiting for the ship to dock.

When the ship pulled close, the man granted a big smile and waved. The kindness the children had experienced on the ship felt mild compared to what they sensed in His expression. Although He carried a gentleness, it was evident He was also a man of great authority. Around Him, the flowers and trees appeared to bow in respect and honor. The birds were hushed in awe.

Jonathon, Emily, and April left the ship first and rushed into the man's waiting embrace. They laughed and talked as though being together was a great joy. After a few moments, the crew motioned for the children to join them on land. With all the boldness and determination they could muster, the Precious Ones marched off the ship. They left fragile and weak, but their feet touched down on the dock with a new strength they had never displayed. Their backs straightened, their heads were held higher, and from a distance one would be convinced they had grown many inches. In spite of such progress, the children

weren't allowed the privilege to appreciate or feel their own growth. Not recognizing a change, they proceeded to the crew and the King, who were all rejoicing. They knew what the children did not.

Thrilled with exhilaration, Emily pulled them closer. "These are the children you have been waiting for." She beamed as one by one she introduced them, "Christopher, Autumn, Ethan, Isabelle, and Aiden." Next, the crew bowed in devotion as Emily exclaimed, "This is our King. Getting to know Him will bring abundant life. On the journey, He will share with you His story. He has paid a dear price to walk with you."

"Stay close to Him as you travel. He has much to show you, and you have much to learn." With those last instructions, the crew of *His Unfailing Kindness* hugged the children and the King. They then reloaded the ship and watched as the children were led down a trail.

The King spoke, "Come and follow me. I want to teach you the ways of my Father. I feel certain the crew has already expressed to you the truth of your creation?" The children nodded as He recounted that they had each been created for a special relationship. Confirming the relationship had been destroyed by rebellion, He added, "For the wages of sin is death. We didn't want to lose you to the death you deserve. Father had a plan. We have done our part, but you also have a part to play. Walk with me. I want to show you something."

They hadn't strolled far when they came to a clearing. Walking from the canopy of trees, they observed a hill. On the hill stood a cross. From a distance, they weren't able to perceive any details, only the hill and the cross. They continued. The scene captivated the children. They didn't know what they were witnessing, but they couldn't take their eyes off the cross. They were suddenly horrified. On the cross was hanging the King!

"It can't be!" argued Aiden.

"It had to be," countered the King.

"I don't understand. Why?" asked Autumn.

"None of our creation are righteous. The price of such rebellion is death," He soberly replied.

“Are you like us? You rebelled too, and that is why you were hung on the cross?”

“No, not at all. I have never sinned.”

“Then why were you killed?”

“I died that you may live.”

They had continued walking closer to the cross. They were perceiving in greater detail. What they observed brought deep anguish to each. On the King, they witnessed the ugliness that had devastated them so deeply. They saw their cuts, their twisted and gnarled traits, their boils and warts... Blood poured freely over open wounds. He was horrifying to look at. They wanted to look away, to refuse to accept the truth, but they simply couldn't. Their gaze was held securely by the scene before them.

“How did this happen? What about your Father? He would allow this?”

“The price for rebellion is death. Someone had to die. I was chosen to take the place of our beloved creation. Instead of you paying the price, I paid it for you. My Father so loved the world, He gave me so any who believes will not die, but have eternal life.”

Backing away from the trauma they were seeing, they refused to look any longer. “We won't. We won't allow you to carry our pain. We won't allow you to pay this price,” Isabelle declared boldly.

“I have already carried your pain and already paid the price for your rebellion. You can't stop it. The choice you make is whether you choose to accept the gift of life I offer. If you don't accept the gift, you will die. You will never live. If you will accept my gift, you will inherit eternal life. The relationship you were created for will be restored. You will begin the great adventure toward your destiny. Unless you repent, you will perish.”

Autumn looked up in curiosity, “What does it mean to repent?”

“There are two parts of my Father's plan to rescue our creation. One part is grace. It is what you can't do for yourself. You can't save yourself from death. Only one who has never sinned could take your place. That is the gift you can never pay for. It is a gift given freely. The second part of Father's plan is humility. That is your part. To be

saved each person must admit he has done wrong. He must believe his only hope is in me. He must ask me to remove his sin, and by grace I will.”

Uncertain what to do, Isabelle softly inquired, “What will happen to us if we do repent?”

The King knelt on His knee so He could look the children straight into their fragile faces, “Precious Ones, if you repent, you will become new. Your spirit will come alive.”

“What about you?” Ethan asked pointing to the King on the cross before them, “If you died, aren’t you dead? How are you here with us now?”

“I haven’t yet told you a very exciting part of my journey. I am the Creator, and I am without sin. My Spirit is alive within me. I did die. I felt intense pain and paid a high price. However, My Spirit within me is powerful enough that after three days I came out of the grave. It is because I came back to life that I can give you new life. I brought you to this place so you could see the hill, perceive the cross, and understand the price I paid. However, I am not still on the cross. I live in the royalty I am offering you now.”

The children still had questions. There were many things they didn’t understand, but they were ready to say yes to the King who had paid such a high price to give them life. They were ready to repent. Circling Him, they knelt. Tears streamed down their faces. It wasn’t too difficult for them to admit they were evil. They were born in the Town of Chaos. They had been involved in every wicked intent they could dream up. It was hard to admit they needed help. They wanted to be able to solve their own problems. They had made it this far, right? As these thoughts penetrated their minds, the seeds within them stabbed. It was the painful reminder they needed to acknowledge how very much they did require help. All together and yet easily heard by the Father, the King, and His Spirit each child repented and received the gift so beautifully offered. From deep in their spirits, a song poured out,

“Heal us O Lord and we will be healed.

Save us and we will be saved

We worship you, Oh Adonai

For you are the one we praise

We worship you, oh Adonai

We lift your name today

We worship you, oh Adonai

For you are the one we praise

Our healer is here; He's Adonai

His wounds bring hope for today

No death, crying, mourning or pain

The old order has passed away”



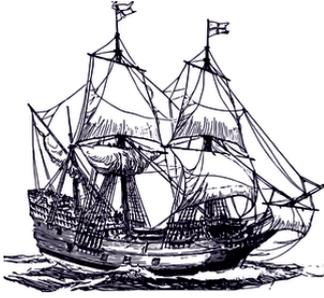
1. How do your emotions try to control your choices and behavior?

2. How can you choose to grow in Christ? Will you choose to submit to Him even when it is painful? Will you frequently ask Him to show you things you need to know?

3. On the cross, Jesus carried on Himself all your sin and pain. Every twisted, gnarled, and ugly experience that has broken your heart, He allowed to break His. How does it make you feel to know He completely understands everything, because He has experienced it with you?

4. What does it mean to repent?

Emotions are very strong, and although they can be wonderful allowing you to experience joy and love, they can also try to control your choices. It will take great effort to make good choices when your emotions don't agree. Choosing to submit to Jesus may be very painful, because fear frequently prevents trust. You will seldom realize your own growth. However, because it is so hard, you can be very aware of the number of times you say, "Yes!" instead of, "No!" You can be certain you have grown every time you respond in submission to your King. Humbling yourself to Him always takes you higher.



11 The Celebration

In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents. Luke 15:10 (NIV)

Very timid, they quietly raised their heads. They were uncertain how the King would respond. They were excited to receive the gift offered and were relieved to know the price was paid for their rebellion. But...what now? They knew very little of the King they had just received.

When they opened their eyes, the King's face was glistened with tears flowing freely. Full of concern, Aiden asked, "Have we upset you?"

"Not at all," replied the King, "You have touched my heart. My heart is so full of love for you, I am overwhelmed by your choice to accept my gift and begin a journey to live in my Kingdom. I am so thrilled for the relationship we will have." With those words, He sat humbly on the ground close to them. His desire was to pull them into a tight hug, but He knew the children carried wounds and fears. Their relationship had only just begun. They wouldn't feel safe enough yet to be held by the King, so for now, He was satisfied to be near those He adored and rejoice in knowing they had chosen well. Being the King, He could also rejoice in all He knew was to come. He didn't live only in the now. He lived in the yesterday when their wounds were formed. He lived, also, in the future when all the wounds were healed and they would dance in the warmth of His embrace. The joy from this knowledge penetrated His very being. The children were puzzled, because they couldn't see what He did, but even so they did feel His joy and they experienced it with Him.

Motivated with the possibility of a great exploit, Christopher inquired, "Did you say, 'Begin a journey?' Are we going somewhere?" He could barely contain the excitement rising in him.

"Oh absolutely! You have just launched the greatest adventure known to man. Your choice was only the beginning. Every day, you will get to know me more. You will learn more about yourself and all I created you to be. You will grow to trust and grow to love. It will never be boring as you journey to a life in my kingdom!"

“For this moment, however, those aboard the ship of *His Unfailing Kindness* are waiting for a special celebration. They have prepared a time of rejoicing because we are all so thrilled. There is even great joy in the presence of the angels because today you have changed your heart and life.”

Aiden, Autumn, Christopher, Isabelle, and Ethan could not believe what they were hearing. They realized their decision mattered to them but couldn't imagine how it could impact others, let alone the angels. They had learned to trust the crew of *His Unfailing Kindness*, but is it possible they actually cared? Why would they celebrate? Unable to comprehend the information, they followed the King as He led them back on the wooded trail that led to the ship. They were excited to be close to the crew again and looked forward to the party, even if they didn't fully understand.

As the King had foretold, they were greeted with lights, music, and merriment when they arrived. This time, they boarded without hesitation and rushed into the waiting arms of Jonathon, Emily, and April. Excitement filled the air. They were enveloped with a sound they had never heard before. Swirling through the atmosphere encircling the vessel were praises to the King. These praises came from those aboard the ship, but not from them alone. All of creation appeared to join in the worship of one who laid down His life so these children could live and not die. The trees, flowers, birds, and even the now visible moon joined the song and dance. If one listened closely enough, he would even hear the sound of angels bowing in reverence to the one true King.

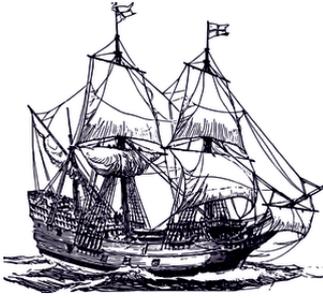
Together with the King and crew, the children relished the celebration until the sky was filled with shimmering starlight. Eventually, the music quietened, the food was gone, and everyone was resting on the top deck. Snuggled again in the arms of the crew, the children were beginning to drift into a slumber. Jonathon, Emily, and April gently led them to their rooms for a restful night's sleep.



1. How does Jesus feel about you? What promises from His Word do you have to know this is true? How does He feel when you choose Him?
 2. If you are afraid to pull close to Jesus, how does He respond to your fear?
 3. How does Jesus feel about your future?
 4. What is the purpose of your time on earth?
5. How important are your choices? What impact do they have on Jesus, the world, and you?

Jesus is incredibly passionate about you. When you choose Him you are choosing freedom and healing. It touches His heart deeply, because He wants time with you more than you can ever imagine. However, when you are afraid to pull close, Jesus will wait. He will put your desires above His own desire to be intimate with you. He is willing to wait, because you are worth waiting for. Jesus sees and rejoices in your future. Your time on earth is an opportunity to get to know Him, look more and more like Him, and to get to know yourself as He created you to be. Your choices matter significantly. Your good choices are celebrated by Jesus, the body of Christ, and the heavenly host of angels.

12 Expectation



3:9 (GW)

The Lord isn't slow to do what He promised, as some people think. Rather, He is patient for your sake. He doesn't want to destroy anyone but wants all people to have an opportunity to turn to Him and change the way they think and act. 2 Peter

The sound of a new day stirred the sleeping children, so they rose from their beds of comfort early the next morning. Almost immediately they remembered all that had taken place the day before. Thrilled that they had met the King and received His gift, each was excited to start the day. They were also full of expectation.

Residing concretely in the back of their minds was the promise of change. They had been previously convinced the King would never want to meet any who were so ugly and broken. Amazingly, He had. They were certain it must be the change meeting Him would bring. They remembered the words spoken by the crew when their beauty had been questioned, "It is Him who made us beautiful and dressed us royally."

Full of zeal, each child rushed to the mirrors that hung above their dressers. Prepared to bask in the splendor they felt certain the King had provided, they nearly skipped across their rooms.

"What?" The children were filled with horror when they beheld not beauty, but the same ghastly faces they had carried all their lives. Emotions were threatening to take control. The only thing holding them away from another tantrum was the confusion reigning in each. They didn't know to be angry or crushed. What had gone wrong? Perhaps, because they weren't special, they couldn't experience the change of the King. Did they not repent well? Possibly, they weren't good enough, or the King wasn't strong enough to cure such repulsion.

They were again smothered by shame. Seeing only their condition, they lost the wonder of the new day and were unable to leave their rooms. Too humiliated to climb upon their lush beds, they collapsed into curled positions on the cold, hard floor. Tears spilled from their

faces. They felt no hope. If even meeting the King could not make them lovely, there was nowhere for them to turn and nothing they could do. Obviously, they were too bad. They were too ugly. Meeting the King had worked for the crew of *His Unfailing Kindness*, so this problem must be their fault. The weight of blame now threatened to suffocate the children. Their breaths were labored as each worked hard to pull oxygen into their desperate lungs.

The children were growing more and more depressed. Attention fully focused on their circumstances, they recognized nothing more. Thoughts rumbled to and fro throughout their minds. They considered how broken they were, how miserable they were, and most important to each, how unloved they were. Saturated with pain, they wished death would come to rescue them. Suddenly, they began to hear a sound through their sobbing and thoughts. It seemed distant and was very quiet. It was a voice they had never heard before. It was so delicate they had to quieten themselves to understand the words. With greater discipline than they had ever mustered they worked hard to become silent. They stopped their thoughts, stilled their tears, and even slowed their breaths. They were being beckoned, "*Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" The voice echoed through the ship and into their rooms drawing their attention. "Come to me, come to me, come to me..."

The voice was filled with a love so deep the children were found pulling themselves off the floor. Before they were truly aware what was happening they were seeking the voice. Following the summons, they found themselves leaving the ship and entering the shade of the forest. Walking into the valley, they found the King.

"You are the source of the voice we hear?" questioned Isabelle.

"You were hearing my Spirit speak gently inside you. He was drawing you to life and love. He was restoring your hope. Your hope will never be found in your circumstances or emotions. Your life and hope are anchored in me," He tenderly responded.

"We assumed meeting you would change our condition! We don't want to be what we are. We want to be different. The crew of *His Unfailing Kindness* are beautiful. They walk and dress with royalty. They told us that came from meeting you. We expected it and are now disappointed," challenged Ethan.

“Come and sit. You have much to learn,” invited the King motioning to a grassy area beside a brook. Eager to hear His explanation, the children quickly assembled. “Jonathon, Emily, and April spoke well to you. Change does come from me. However, you have misunderstood some crucial truths. Change doesn’t come immediately, and it isn’t a free gift to you as the gift you received yesterday. The price for rebellion I paid and give freely. One only must believe and repent. However, change comes as a result of cooperating with me as you travel to my kingdom. Do you remember the great adventure I spoke of yesterday? It is on this journey you will be changed.”

“When you repented and received my gift, the spirit within you became alive. You, like me, are made of three parts: you are body, soul, and spirit. Now alive, your spirit connects with mine. My Spirit now lives in you. Because I have a body, I can’t be in all places at once, but my Spirit can. He lives in all who have chosen me. He is a treasure. As you develop a relationship with me, you will learn to hear Him speak. He will teach you and guide you along the right path. He will also comfort you when needed. He is vital to the changes you desire. As you behold my glory, you will show it. You will be changed to be like me. This change brings greater glory, which comes from me, because it is my Spirit who now dwells inside you,” explained the King, “It was His voice that drew you to me today.”

Attentively listening for greater understanding, the children barely moved as He continued, “This change will not come easy. It is hard work, because you must learn to walk according to my heart instead of listening to your own soul. With your mind, you have found solutions that make sense to you. You must learn to accept my mind to reason as I do. With your will, you are used to making decisions you want. You must learn to submit to the will of my Father. With your emotions, you are driven by hurt, anger, or jealousy. You must learn to be moved by the emotions of my Spirit within you as He connects with your spirit.”

“Many times it will be hard for you to discern what I would do. That is because you have only just met me. You must get to know me. You need to recognize who am I and how I respond to my Father and those around me. Every time you choose to obey my Spirit, you will grow to look more and more like me. You will show the beauty you truly hold that I designed to display myself in a way no one else ever can. You will make mistakes, because you are learning and maturing. The key is to not allow your mistakes to become your focus. Keep

your eyes on me, and you will experience the change you desire as you become an expression of my beauty.”

“Beauty is walking when your feet hurt

It is learning from experiences you prefer to forget

It is taking negative things you’ve been given

And handing them to me so I can turn them into gifts

Beauty is knowing you are loved by a Father

Who is diligently working things together for your good

It is giving to others what you receive from above

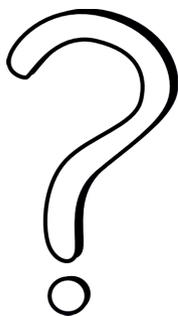
Because alone you have nothing to give

It is choosing to believe when your vision is clouded

Beauty is what I create and I see best”

“Many tools have been provided to help you. My Spirit within you is to be cherished. He is with you always and waits with eager desire for you to turn your attention to Him with any questions, concerns, and hurts. He wants, also, to know everything that excites or challenges you. It is for this relationship you were created. Draw close, listen, and learn. The crew aboard the ship of *His Unfailing Kindness* can also assist you. They have journeyed with me many years.”

With those last words, the King stood and the children followed as He walked them back to the ship.



1. How will an intimate and personal walk with Jesus change your life? Have you ever felt change didn't come as quickly as you expected or desired?

2. Can you name times God hasn't moved or answered a promise the way you expected? Does this mean He didn't keep His promise?

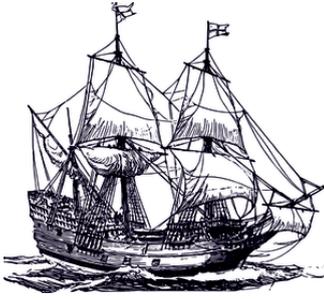
3. How do you respond to God when He doesn't move how or when you expect?

4. How does God speak? What must you do to hear His voice?

5. What does the process of becoming beautiful like Jesus look like?

6. What kind of effort does it take to look like Jesus? Can you just sit by and allow Him do the work?

The process of becoming beautiful like Jesus is very real, but it isn't immediate and it isn't easy. Most of the time, God will work in a way you never expect. This doesn't mean He isn't keeping His promises. He is completely faithful and will do everything He says He will. However, His ways are so different than yours, you will frequently be surprised when you realize how He has worked. When your surroundings don't make sense, you can become offended with God, or you can choose to trust His promises are true and will happen His way and in His time, which is always better than you could have worked it out for yourself. Because God speaks in a still small voice, you may need to frequently quieten your soul: mind, will, and emotions, so you can hear Him speak. Being changed is HARD work. Your flesh will want your way, but as you submit your flesh to the work God is doing in your spirit, you will grow in exceeding beauty. It is worth the journey!



13 The Library

With your very own hands you formed me; now breathe your wisdom over me so I can understand you. When they see me waiting, expecting your Word, those who fear you will take heart and be glad. Psalm 119:73-74 (MSG)

Reunited with the children, Jonathon, Emily, and April were prepared to set them on the track toward growth. “We want to show you a room you will need to become very familiar with. This will be especially enjoyed by Autumn. However, it is significant for all of you. It is our library.”

It was true; Autumn was thrilled with the idea of a library. A room especially devoted to books was one she had only heard of, but had never the privilege to visit.

“Our King has explained your great need to know Him and how He lives and responds to life and others. The library is full of His story written down. It can teach you all about His experiences and the experiences of others. It is also full of promises He has made to all of us. The library can teach you how to live and love. Unlike other books, these books are not just written by men. Although men may try hard, we are not perfect. We make mistakes, and books written by men cannot be trusted as absolute truth. The books in this library are very special. They are the very words of our King. They are Him written down. You can trust every word. You can stand on the promises He has given. Through these books you can learn and grow,” explained Emily.

The crew steered the children to a part of the ship they had never visited before. It was obvious *His Unfailing Kindness* was much deeper than they had known. They arrived at a simple, yet elegant entry. Arched above the door hung a banner that read, “Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in your instructions.”

Curiosity drove the children to open the door and enter the great library. Books were lined beautifully on shelves. They appeared to be separated into two groups. One group contained many more books

than the other. Above it a label read, "Old." A smaller collection of books followed the, "Old". A label above it stated, "New."

"As Emily expressed, these books contain our King written down. The group labeled "Old" tells the story of people from the very beginning. It conveys our King's love and our fall into rebellion. It can teach you the laws of the kingdom and how to live in covenant with the King. It is full of stories of those who breathed by the King's laws and how their lives were blessed and protected. It also contains many stories of those who marched in rebellion and how their revolt harmed or killed them and others around them. These books are full of adventure. Some of the exploits end in celebration and victory, while others conclude in devastation and destruction," explained Jonathon.

He took a book from the shelf. It was titled Deuteronomy. He very gently turned the pages. He was obviously searching for something in particular. Satisfied, he stopped searching and began to read, "This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live." He turned and peered deeply into the eyes of the children, "By accepting the gift of the King, you have received eternal life. Your spirit is alive. However, as you have all noticed, you don't yet carry the beauty of our King. You will, but it will come as you choose life and blessing over death and the curse."

April approached the second cluster of books. She carefully retrieved a volume titled Hebrews. Opening it, the children could tell she had read it many times before. She easily found what she was looking for. She also began to read aloud, "All things came into being through Him, and without Him not even one *thing* came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

Delighted with the treasure she found in these words, April began to explain, "This set of books will tell you more about our King. As you study, you will begin to know His life as He lived it and as He is living now. You will study His character. You will learn of His love for you."

Gracefully, she returned Hebrews and embraced another book labeled 1 Corinthians. From it, she began to read, "You say, 'I am allowed to do anything'—but not everything is good for you. You say,

'I am allowed to do anything'—but not everything is beneficial. Don't be concerned for your own good but for the good of others."

"Remember the King created us with the ability to choose. As this states, we are allowed to do anything, but there are things that are healthy for us that will bring us life, and there are things that are unhealthy that will make us slaves and ultimately bring death. The books in this library will help you identify what is healthy and what is harmful. The book of Hebrews tells us we can be mature enough to know the difference between good and evil."

"We encourage you to come frequently to the library. Read, study, and learn. The books and words here are life."

With these final instructions all the books were returned to the shelves. The room was filled with a profound reverence. The library was alive, and it was holy. As the group quietly left, the children heard the voice that had drawn them to the King when they had fallen into a deep depression, "So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

Unlike other rooms aboard the ship, when the library was left empty the light wasn't turned out. In fact, they children realized a light had not been turned on upon their arrival. This room was lit, not by torches or electricity. It was lit by the very words on the pages of each book.

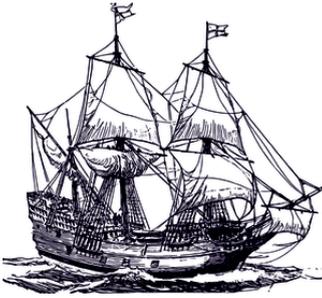


1. How valuable is God's Word? How can it change your life?

2. Are the verses in His Word absolute truth, or does His Word change?

God's Word has value beyond measure. To grow with Jesus you need to know Him and His promises. These insights and answers are positioned in His Word. Although, God used the hands of man, the Bible is

Jesus Written Down. He spoke through men, but the words are absolute truth. You can trust every word and promise, even when you don't understand.



14 Discipline in the Library

I can see now, GOD, that your decisions are right; your testing has taught me what's true and right. Oh, love me—and right now!—hold me tight! just the way you promised. Now comfort me so I can live, really live; your revelation is the tune I dance to. Psalm 119:75-77 (MSG)

In the days to come, the children visited the library regularly. As had been expected, Autumn treasured the library most. She stayed hours devouring word after word, page after page. She was seeking answers many times before she even considered the questions. Sometimes, after everyone was sound asleep, she could be caught tiptoeing down the hall to the library. Even the need for rest had difficulty holding her attention away from her hunger to learn.

Ethan was very interested in learning how the King's heart was captivated by those He created in His image. He, himself, cared deeply for others. He was particularly drawn by the King's description as a shepherd for the people. "He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in his arms, holding them close to His heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young." Ethan couldn't help but believe if he and others from the Town of Chaos had experienced this care from a loving shepherd, they wouldn't be hurt or behave as they did. It created a desire for him to be able help others know the shepherd too.

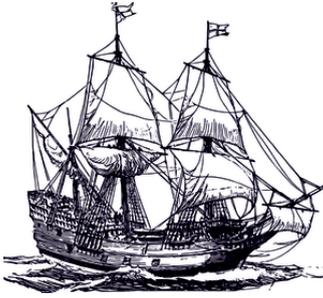
For some, it was admittedly a chore. They didn't understand much of what they were reading. Aiden, in particular, considered it a much better use of his time to be building something for the King, than simply reading books. It was hard for him to remember these weren't just books. They were the King, alive and powerful. Christopher was intrigued when he read of great exploits, but he also became frustrated at times wishing he instead, was the great adventurer.

The crew diligently encouraged them to be faithful and disciplined to study. They explained the importance of pushing through frustration and boredom for the sake of learning, growing, and most importantly, knowing the King.



1. With what frequency and commitment do you read God's Word?
2. How important is it for you to discipline yourself to read even if it is a struggle or boring to you?
3. What will happen in your life if you commit time and study in His Word?
4. What will happen in your life if you don't commit to time and study in His Word?

Because God's Word is alive, it WILL accomplish all God has purposed it for. However, like everything else with your King, it will not be forced upon you. You get to choose life or death. As you commit to reading and studying, ask Him to open the eyes of your heart. Even when you don't understand He is still using His Word to do amazing work in your journey. One day you will be able to look back and appreciate your growth.



15 His Spirit

I'll give you a new heart, put a new spirit in you. I'll remove the stone heart from your body and replace it with a heart that's God-willed, not self-willed. I'll put my Spirit in you and make it possible for you to do what I tell you and live by my commands. Ezekiel

36:26-27 (MSG)

One day, Isabelle realized she had not seen or spoken to the King directly in quite a long time. Her heart deeply cried to know Him. Although, she was learning a lot about Him, she wanted more. She wanted time with Him personally. Frustrated, she asked, “April, why is it we haven’t seen the King in many days? If we were created for a special relationship with Him, why isn’t He here? How can we be close to Him if He is seldom around and can’t be found?” Concerned with the answers to her questions, the other children gathered.

Delighted with their interest, April sat as she began teaching, “Remember when you were depressed, and you were drawn to the King by a voice? The King identified that voice as His Spirit. He, also, told you His Spirit now lives inside each of you. His Spirit came when you first believed and repented. The book of John tells us, ‘I didn’t say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. But now I go away to the one who sent me. None of you ask me, ‘Where are you going?’ Yet because I have said these things to you, you are filled with sorrow. I assure you that it is better for you that I go away. If I don’t go away, the Companion won’t come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you.’”

“It is true we aren’t able to walk and talk with the King as may feel comfortable to us. His body prevents Him from being with all of us at once. We may have special encounters with Him in which He is very real physically. However, for our daily journey, He has sent us His Spirit. We enjoy being able to see, hear, and feel with our physical senses. The King wants us to learn to walk by faith, believing in what we don’t see but know is true, because we trust His word and His Spirit.”

“You have thrilled the King with your desire to be close to Him. Now, you need to learn how to get there. It isn’t through your physical

senses that you can experience Him. It is through His Spirit. His Spirit knows all things, even the deep secrets of the King. No one automatically knows how to relate to His Spirit. It is part of growing up in Him, and it is through relationship. He does speak, but He doesn't speak loudly. It takes practice and effort to know and hear His voice. It is still and small. He doesn't want to command or force your attention. He is gentle and kind. Our King will be found by those who seek Him with all their heart. It is important to desire Him more than anything else. As you have been encouraged to spend time in the library, you also need to spend time in a quiet place where you rest in His presence. He is with you always, but many times He is unnoticed, because we are busy with other things. Take time to get away from everything else. Talk to Him and ask Him to sit with you. Tell Him how special He is. Visit Him with an open heart expecting Him to share His direction and passions. Believe He will, and you will be amazed as you begin to hear Him. If He gives you an instruction, obey quickly. Be willing to ignore your own desires and submit even to things that don't make sense to you. His ways are higher than ours, so we can't expect to understand."

"Many don't recognize His voice, because they aren't familiar with the numerous variations in which He speaks. It is possible to hear a tangible voice, but much more frequently, He speaks from within you. He expresses Himself through thoughts and ideas. When you have an idea you know didn't come from you, but is amazing or exactly the answer you needed, it has come from Him. Thank Him for speaking. The more you recognize Him, the more you will hear Him. He may speak through a feeling you have when you suddenly believe you should do or not do something. If you feel something like this, begin to seek Him more deeply and ask Him how to handle the situation. Never ignore His voice! He speaks to some through dreams and visions. He has many ways of sharing His heart and plans with us. We must never be satisfied, but always need to keep pulling closer to Him."

"He may also communicate to you through people. Family, friends, or even strangers may sometimes be used to teach or give instruction. As you walk more and more closely with Him, you will begin to recognize when He is speaking through others."

"When we are learning to hear His voice, we can easily misunderstand. People aren't perfect, so even those who walk with Him many years still make mistakes some times. Because of this, we must remember to always consider the words in the library. This is

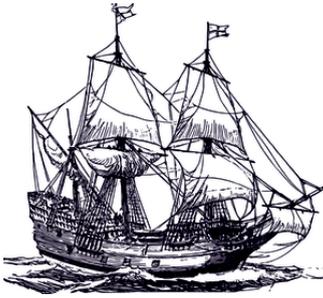
one reason studying frequently is so important. When you believe you have heard Him speak, you need to know if what you have received agrees with His words written down. If they do, you can move forward to obey what you have heard. However, if you have heard something that goes against any word in the library, you can know it isn't Him speaking."

"His Spirit will be a great help to you as you read books from the library. When you read, ask Him to help you understand. He will open your eyes to amazing things."



1. Do you ever feel you would be more successful walking with Jesus if you were able to see, touch, and hear Him with your physical senses?
2. When you repented and accepted Jesus, what happened?
3. What part of your life does God's Spirit want to experience with you?
4. Can you hear Him speak? How do you respond?
5. What are some ways He communicates?
6. Can you ever misunderstand what God is saying, even if you are working hard to hear clearly? How do you respond if someone doesn't agree with what you believe you are hearing?
7. How do you feel about the Holy Spirit? Is He valuable?

Although it must have been amazing to walk with Jesus in the physical world, He knew the Holy Spirit inside you is more valuable than His physical presence was. Inside a body, He can't be with you always. When you accepted Him as your Savior, His Spirit came to inhabit you. "And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" Galatians 4:6 (ESV) He desires to be an active part of your life. He wants to teach, to comfort, to share your joys and sadness, and to tell you secrets that are dear to His Heart. You can hear Him speak. As you hear, acknowledge, and obey you will hear Him more clearly and frequently. You will be more aware of His Voice within you. Learning always includes making mistakes. In this life, you will not always hear correctly. It is important to never believe the lie that you are above mistakes in hearing God. Surround yourself with others who are mature in God, and allow them to know what you are hearing. If they believe there may be confusion in what you are hearing, walk cautiously without being offended. Check with others to determine your direction. It may be a time to wait and pray to avoid making a mistake. The Holy Spirit is an amazing treasure. Frequently ask for His ideas, plans, and creativity. "But, as it is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him'— these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God." 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 (ESV)



16 Growing

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. 1 Peter 4:10 (NIV)

The children tried to maintain a routine, spending time each day in the library and also in His presence. The crew began including them in some of their daily activities. Jonathon, Emily, and April attempted to find undertakings they enjoyed, but some tasks were not appreciated by anyone, and yet, someone had to do them. There were several chores that were very distasteful. Cleaning the bathroom, scrubbing meal remains from the sink drain, and cleaning waste left by sea gulls on the deck were responsibilities everyone preferred to avoid. The children were not familiar with doing chores of any kind, let alone those as repulsive as these. Moving them in the direction of serving was quite an undertaking for the crew. They explained, repeatedly, that the King came as a servant and served in His life and in His death. This new concept was turning their worlds upside down. They couldn't make sense of it. Hadn't they, in part, desired to meet the King so they could wear the royal clothes worn by the crew? Weren't they searching for a higher place? Why, then, would they even consider working hard aboard a ship? It was very confusing.

The children rationalized with each other and then with the crew as to all the logical reasons the King would not desire this work from them. However, each time they presented their argument the crew was able to box them in. They would simply recite these words of the King, "Who would you rather be: the one who eats the dinner or the one who serves the dinner? You'd rather eat and be served, right? But I've taken my place among you as the one who serves. And you've stuck with me through thick and thin. Now I confer on you the royal authority my Father conferred on me so you can eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and be strengthened as you take up responsibilities..." After reciting these words, they would look deeply into the eyes of each child and ask a simple question, "Do you or don't you want to look like our King?"

Oh how they hated those words. The question frustrated them, because they really didn't want to accept the chores. However, their hearts were pierced anew every time they were asked, "Do you or don't you want to look like our King?" Conviction would wash over them. To not desire the face of their King crushed their spirits. Truly, they wanted that more than anything. Frequently, with a cranky expression refusing to even hold their heads up, they would stomp off to complete their undesired task. To encourage their souls they repeated these words,

"Letting go of all that I've known

Dancing here before your throne

Pushing away all that's my own

For you, Lord

What is your heart that I may pursue

More of your Spirit, Lord, more of you

Secrets untold, mysteries you keep

So much to learn just out of reach

You lift me up, searching my face

Your passionate love seals this embrace

Safe with you, Lord, allow me to see

Your hopes and dreams inside of me

Please draw close as I draw close

To you, Lord"

For a while, this struggle repeated daily. An assignment would be given, a child would rage, the question would be asked, and again,

the resentful yet submitted child would resign to humble himself rather than lose the prize of looking like the King.

After several weeks, the crew rejoiced as the tantrums were less and less. In fact, without even realizing what was happening, the children began to enjoy their work. The King's Spirit within them gave creative ideas to make the jobs more fun. Sometimes they combined their chores so they could work together. They learned to sing or share stories. Chore time was becoming a delight, and they were learning to serve one another, but ultimately they were serving their King.

In the evenings, as the sun was beginning to set and coolness rushed down upon the ship, the crew would gather the children. They would sit and listen while the crew shared stories of their adventures with the King. Like the accounts in the library, some carried the celebration of victory while others held brokenness. However, there were lessons to be discovered in each. One by one, the crew would share their stories and would include words from the King to teach the children His heart in all of it. They would explain how His Spirit had led them, how they stood tall, or even how sometimes they fell. Each time a fall was described the children's eyes grew wide in disbelief and anticipation, until with a smile like none other Jonathon, Emily, or April would share how the King had arrived to gently lift them. The children sat on the edge of their seats as a description was given of the King holding them in a warm embrace. Their hearts were touched as He wiped tears from the eyes of the fallen and dirt from wounded knees. The King would then apply His forgiveness with love. His strength would pour graciously over a more humbled and wise warrior. With greater authority, the warrior would then be ready to follow his King into the next adventure. The children loved this part of the stories so much they began to look more forward to hearing stories about failures than victories. They were taught the King's words, "My grace is enough for you, for my power is brought to perfection in weakness." The youngsters found greater delight in seeing the glory of the King's perfection than they did in the strength of the story teller.

Also during these times, the crew introduced the children to worship. Before and after their stories, they expressed wonder to the King. They would sing and dance. Musical instruments provided music to glorify His name. At first, the children only watched. In time, they began to join. As their voices reached heaven, the King's Spirit could be felt raining upon them all. Frequently, they reached a place so heavily drenched with His beauty they could only sit quietly and rest with Him.

Little by little, they were coming to love the King. All of creation spoke of His majesty. They were just now tuning in to listen and comprehend. Through words in the library, they learned of the fruit of His Spirit: love, joy, peace, kindness, gentleness, goodness, patience, self-control, and faithfulness. Through experiences of the crew, they began to trust all they were reading. They were tasting His grace and mercy in their own lives. His Spirit was opening their eyes to see and their ears to hear. They were becoming more than just educated. They were connecting with the King, and He was connecting with them. Before, they had been too afraid to draw near. Now, they were beginning to press in with a desperation to be closer. Each taste hungered them more. Drinks made them thirstier. Every moment in His presence made them more aware of how greatly they desired Him. Satisfaction was only found as they pushed deeper and deeper. Together they sang,

"I don't have to see...I don't have to feel

I know your word is real

I'm confident in what I can't touch

You're worthy of my trust

I will follow you, Lord, not things of this world

Closer and closer you're drawing me in

Claiming my heart as my body spins

I'm your favorite child, the one you adore

I worship you more, my cherished Lord

My true desire...what I will seek

Is to see and hear you speak

Swirling around in delicate rhyme

Complete in your design

I am my Beloved's...my Beloved is mine

Fully I'm resting in your embrace

Holding your hand searching your face

On me you've placed your holy ring

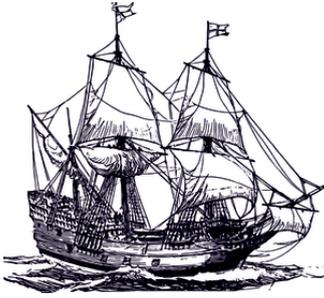
I worship you more, my cherished King.”



1. What has been your experience with true growth? Has it been fun to surrender to God and His ways rather than fulfilling your own desires?
2. How did Jesus treat the people around Him?
3. What jobs was Jesus willing to take? What jobs are you willing to take?
4. What happens as you begin to submit to God as a way of life?
5. How is the process of obedience possible?

Growing can be unpleasant. It is hard and may even hurt. You will enjoy the benefits of having grown, but not necessarily the process of growing. Jesus came to serve. He accepted jobs others didn't want. He was willing to accept gross, hard, and humiliating jobs. Are you? Every temptation you encounter can be ended by answering the question, "Do you want to look like Jesus ENOUGH to do what He wants you to do more than what you want to do?" Submitting to God's way is challenging, but as you do repeatedly, the process becomes easier. It will become a way of life so it isn't such a struggle. The process is only possible with God's help. You can't do it alone. This means He must be very close as you mature and grow. You will fall more in love with Him as you devote so much time in His presence.

17 Invitation



The LORD is compassionate and merciful, very patient, and full of faithful love. Psalm 103:8 (CEBA)

Early one morning just as chores had gotten under way, a messenger arrived. The children were unaccustomed to visitors, so they rushed full of curiosity. The messenger was obviously one of royal command. Dressed regally, he presented his message. It was from the King. It was an invitation. The messenger read aloud, “Dear Children, it is my desire to come to you tomorrow. Someone has been waiting eagerly to meet each of you. Will you join me on a journey to meet my Father? Yours Truly, the King.”

When they first heard the words proclaiming His visit, the children were filled with excitement. However, they soon realized the intent of the trip. It was to meet His Father. The books in the library told that when any receive the King, they are adopted by the Father. According to these words, He was their Father too. It may be expected for this to bring great delight, but not to children from the Town of Chaos. It must be remembered tremendous trauma was experienced there. Much of the horror came from fathers. Rather than cradling their infants in arms of kindness, they lived instead in fury, hatred, and cruelty. The children learned very young to race from the voice of their fathers. If a father was so fit he could not be out run, the children learned to hide. Never be seen and never be heard. This was the message seared into young hearts. Silence filled the atmosphere as each head dropped, too full of sadness to carry its own weight.

The messenger traveled on his way, leaving the crew to minister comfort to the children. “Our Precious Ones, will you come and sit, so we can talk? I can perceive fear in your eyes. I know you don’t want to meet our Father. May we share some things that may help?” offered April.

Not certain they were willing to cooperate at all, stubbornness was evident on each face. After a lengthy period of uncomfortable quiet, the children finally relented, recognizing they weren’t likely to get out of this discussion anyway. They plopped on the deck, but their backs

were straight with resistance. Positioning themselves as far from others as possible, they made a clear statement of their present attitudes.

“It is very common for us to judge some because of our experiences with others. I am so incredibly sorry you weren’t held by loving fathers in your homes in the Town of Chaos. The pain must be intense. However, the King’s Father is very different than what you have experienced. A book in the library tells us if we know the King we know the Father already. When we have seen the King, we have seen the Father. As you have learned the kindness of the King, you have already begun to experience the kindness of our Father,” explained Jonathon.

The children’s body language and sullen expressions spoke clearly that they were not at all convinced.

Emily joined the conversation, “Do you remember the King did not force you to meet Him? Neither will our Father force you to draw close. He is love. He is kind. This is an invitation not an order. May we hold you tonight? Tomorrow, the King is coming. He will share His heart, and you can decide.”

Comforted with the words that they would not be forced and also very much desiring to be held by the crew, they allowed the walls holding them apart to crumble into many pieces. They rushed into the open arms they had learned to trust. It was in these arms they first experienced kindness, love, and safety. Snuggled as close as they could get, they were held deep into the night when Jonathon, Emily, and April finally encouraged them to bed.

Awakening nervously the next morning, the children left their rooms to find the King already spending time with the crew. Laughter echoed down the hall as the children neared the kitchen. Stiffly, they entered the room. Immediately, their King rose to greet them. He offered a hug and was delighted when they timidly accepted His touch. “I hear you are struggling with my invitation?” he inquired.

The children didn’t respond, but an answer wasn’t necessary. He knew their hearts. He surprised them with this suggestion, “I understand you are afraid. I also know you have found a safe place with Jonathon, Emily, and April. Perhaps you will feel better if we invite them to journey with us. You can only get to my Father through me, but I am pleased to open our group to more travelers.”

Shocked, all five children looked up quickly. First, they looked to the King. Then they searched the faces of the crew. Would they be willing to go just for the sake of providing a place the children felt safe? The kindness in their faces showed they were not only willing, but were delighted with the opportunity to walk this way with them.

The children were still hesitant and uncertain. However, with the crew willing to go they were agreeable to travel with the King to meet His Father. The group immediately set out. It was a beautiful day. The trail was easy to travel, and they all immensely enjoyed the shade of tall trees forming a canopy overhead. Soon, their fears were eased as they fell into enjoying fellowship with their King.

As they neared the castle, they remembered the purpose of their trip and quiet again reigned in the group. They walked without sound up a majestic staircase and entered a stunning doorway. Following the King, they drew closer to the crew who was ready to provide the safe place they desired. Before approaching the throne room, the King turned to them and said, "I want you to remember it was my Father who created the plan to restore our relationship. It was Him who sent me, and Him who was willing to give me as ransom for your rebellion. I gave my life. He gave His Son. This is because of His great love for you." An awe of His words hushed their emotions.

Together the group walked into the throne room. The King walked up to His throne. Directly beside Him was another, who truly did favor the King so incredibly they could have been confused if they had met Him without the King nearby. The King invited them closer and introduced them to His Father.

Advancing toward the King, they still stopped a short distance away. They looked up into the eyes of the Father. From them, they sensed a great protectiveness they had never known. Although they were just meeting Him, He appeared to care deeply for each of them. He didn't pressure the children at all. He allowed them to stand where they felt comfortable. He was willing to meet their needs above His own desires.

Meeting their stare, the Father spoke, "As you traveled, did you see the birds in the air? They do not sow or reap or store away in barns, yet I feed them. You are so much more valuable to me than they. It will take time for your fear to be removed. However, there is no room in love for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear. It will not fail. In time,

you will draw near me, because you won't be afraid anymore. You are worth waiting for that time."

The children were amazed at His words to them. It was hard to conceive He would be so gentle and patient.

"As you spend time with the Spirit, remember He, the King, and I are one. By being with Him, you can begin to know me too. I very much desire time with you. I desire your heart. It was for this relationship, so I could have sons and daughters in my likeness, that we created you. Thank you for coming today. I am very pleased with you."

Although they were very uncertain, warmth flowed over them at the words He spoke. They spent much of the day there with the King and His Father. They had many activities planned. Frequently, the action ceased, and the group just sat and talked. Although they didn't draw near, the children did begin to relax. When it began to get late in the day, the King declared they would need to get the group back to the ship.

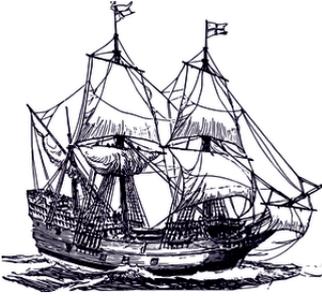
Standing to bid them farewell, the Father spoke these words, "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom." Astounded at His message, the children's minds were overwhelmed until they drifted to sleep back in their cozy beds aboard the ship of *His Unfailing Kindness* that night.



1. Can you think of an invitation or assignment from God that was unpleasant or scary?
2. Why does God give specific assignments?
3. What kind of relationship did or do you have with your earthly father? How has it impacted your relationship with God your Father?
4. What experience do you believe Father wants you to have with Him? Does He want you to be afraid of Him?
5. How does it make you feel to know every good gift in your life has come from Father? Does it help you desire a closeness with Him?

God gives invitations and assignments knowing what will minister deeply to your heart. He knows the healing you need and the growth necessary to walk in your destiny. You can trust every assignment from Him will minister. Each comes out of His extravagant love for you. Many have painful relationships with earthly fathers. A damaged experience with an earthly father can have a devastating impact on your relationship with God your Father. It will take a decision to remember He is perfect and is perfect love. He will never hurt or force you to be close. He will wait for you to draw near to Him. When you do, He can heal your wounds. Remember, it is Father who designed a plan to sacrifice His only Son to save your life. When you begin to give Him credit for every good gift, it can help you realize how much He loves you and how kind He is. It can help you to not be afraid.

18 Higher Heights



So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for Him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what He wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you. Romans 12:1-2 (MSG)

The summer was drawing near an end. Vibrant colors decorated the horizon, and a new crispness was in the air. Moments were moving with a graceful flow as the children and crew experienced each breath. They were continuing to learn and grow. Not all days were blessed with sunny skies. Some hours carried with them struggles. Falls aboard the ship resulted in the need for band aids. Sometimes, a quick temper brought the necessity for discipline in the fruit of His Spirit. Disagreements had to be negotiated. However, the children were developing character from their intense desire to be changed into the likeness of their King. More and more, they were able to know how He would respond if He were in their shoes. If they were uncertain, they knew to seek council from the crew, search the library, or go directly to Him in their special times. When they knew the right approach, it was usually very difficult for them to walk it out.

Doing as the King would do was never easy. The children always desired their own way. The King called them to live in humility serving and loving others more than themselves. He challenged them, giving assignments they didn't believe they were capable of accomplishing. He was very well aware of every weakness possessed, but He also held a clear view of treasures hidden within. He knew as they surrendered to His ways the gems would be discovered and polished. Sometimes yielding to the King felt like jumping off a giant cliff. They were scared they would fall to their deaths. Many times, they would refuse momentarily. When they refused, shame caused them to pull away from His embrace. Although they knew they couldn't truly hide

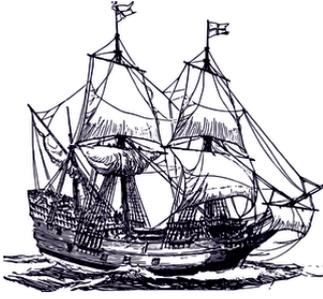
from Him, they attempted any way. Before long, they could no longer carry the grief provided by the chasm their rebellion was causing. More than the fear caused by the cliff, they felt a hunger to be as close as they could be. They knew living in obedience and faith would reignite the flame that drew them close.

So, they jumped. Not once, not twice, and not even three times only. Over and again, the King carried them to higher heights. Once they were higher than they'd been before, another trial would be revealed. He was the solution to every problem and the answer to every question. Many times touching Him required that they not look for acceptance from others. His approval had to be all that mattered. Passion with undivided hearts pressed the children repeatedly to choose the King. They considered the cost frequently, and always determined Him worth it. He was their everything. He was their life, and although they were actually very unaware, they were His treasures. His Spirit not only indwelt them, but He hovered above the ship with sheer pleasure as He watched them leaping into His arms. The more afraid they were to jump, the greater thrill He experienced when they did. He delighted each morning when they awoke, knowing another day would bring greater intimacy with these Precious Ones He so adored.



1. Are you aware your life will always have rainy days with the sunny skies?
 2. What are the benefits of hard times? How do hard times push you into a deeper relationship with God? What can you learn during these times?
 3. Why is obedience to Jesus hard?
 4. How can you choose to allow hard times to build your faith and develop greater character as you grow in the fruit of His Holy Spirit?
5. Can you thank God for these difficulties because of all you will gain instead of growing bitter?

You will always have difficulty and struggles to walk through. As you journey through your life with God, you will have amazing adventures and joys, but you will also have times of sadness and challenges. You will be able to choose how you respond. You can become angry or feel like a victim, or you can celebrate the growth and increased faith you will gain as you embrace each challenge asking His Holy Spirit how to navigate each pain or problem.



19 Changing Heart

This is why we do not lose courage. Though our outer self is heading for decay, our inner self is being renewed daily. For our light and transient troubles are achieving for us an everlasting glory whose weight is beyond description. We concentrate not on what is seen but on what is not seen, since things seen are temporary, but things not seen are eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (CJB)

Growing did not only enhance fear. Many times, it exposed pain. The children had to fight emotional battles in their souls. From the Town of Chaos, they carried many wounds. Preventing the wounds from healing were lies. These lies coiled through their souls like serpents around the limb of a tree. They were deeply embedded and deeply believed. Condemning their value, the lies whispered against the love the King was so gently wrapping them in. Although He adored them profoundly, they believed they could never be special and never be beautiful. They esteemed themselves as worthless. These lies held great authority and power over the children. They were even damaging to their spirits. Constant flogging from these deceptions hindered absolute rest in the King. Jonathon, Emily, and April revealed to them many words in the library that countered these lies. In their minds, the children understood the truth of the King's love, but they lacked the ability to truly believe. They didn't know how to once and for all remove the talons piercing their fragile spirits, so they could dance in the love of the King. They treasured Him enough to lay down their lives. However, they were unable to feel His unconditional, absolute delight in them. They chased Him with all their strength, because they knew they couldn't live without Him, but they never knew how He felt about them. They still perceived only horrific brokenness. Rather than realizing His extreme gladness in their time together, they believed instead, that out of compassion He allowed them as beggars to come and taste the feast He prepared for others. They approached as dogs eating scraps from under the table, not as the beloved invited especially to the banquet.

Much time and effort was invested in their attempts to remove this pain from their hearts. Repeatedly, it felt like they were failing as the throbbing remained. They fought long, hard battles, but still felt the

same. They quoted words from the library and spent time in His presence seeking relief. Still, none came. Convinced the struggle was the result of something they were doing wrong, the deceit dug deeper and their breaths became increasingly shallow. They followed any advice given and did everything they knew to do. Pain surged through them, as it was easy to feel unloved by the King. They knew of His authority and power. The library was full of accounts of His healing touch. Yet, He hadn't taken their pain away. Exhausted from their labor, they were forced to answer a question, "Would they serve and love a King they couldn't understand? Would they worship one they couldn't control or even predict?"

In silence, they pondered this question. Could they really trust Him enough to release everything to Him? They desired to maintain control. They did want to do things His way, but didn't they have the right to choose some things? Shouldn't they be able to call some shots? All they wanted was for the pain to stop.

Finally, after a very long time completely crippled in their suffering, they made a decision He was worth everything. Even if the throbbing never stopped, to dance in His presence had greater value than a life without pain. They chose to serve and love Him without understanding. They chose to worship without the ability to control or predict. Each bowed before His throne,

*"Precious Lord...how do I walk this path I'm on?
Questions come, I find less flowers and more thorns
Confusion reigns in my world as I'm tossed by the storms
Lift up my face as I journey on*

*I will sing in your presence; I will bow at your throne,
I will dance for you alone
Drawing close to my Father and away from this world,
I will dance for you alone
Dressed for the banquet; my lamp is full of oil,
My desire is for you Lord
I will sing in your presence; I will bow at your throne,
I will dance for you alone*

*Mighty King...your hope is rising up in me
Changing heart, your eyes are all I want to see
Locked in this gaze, you've become my everything
Please be the joy inside of me*

Thank you, Lord, for this place, wrapped in your embrace, where I dance for you alone.”

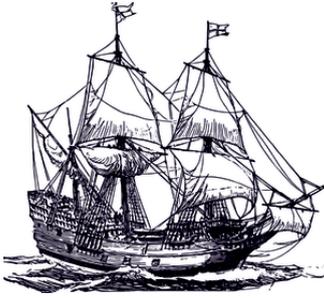
As they surrendered, the second sign warning them to not board the ship of *His Unfailing Kindness* returned to their memories, “All will be lost to those who enter.”

Standing nearby, the King watched. Tears streamed down His face. This was pain He never desired for His Precious Ones. He didn't choose this path. The pain was caused by wrong choices of others. Yes, it was true He allowed such choices. The ability to choose was worth all this hurt, because without it, He would never be able to experience the devotion these five had just lavished upon Him. None of creation would experience companionship with the King. None would know Him. However, His heart ached with them. He looked forward to the day He would wipe every tear from their eyes. Through the pain, joy sprang forth from His Spirit. He held absolute confidence that having begun a good work in them, He would be faithful to carry it on to completion. This was not the end. This was part of Him refusing to allow their pain to be wasted. He could heal the pain quickly with His power. If He did, they would not carry the authority of victory themselves. Because they were choosing to worship through the pain, they would walk in a mantle that would quake every enemy. They would stand in stability with roots so profound they could not be shaken. Then, through His Precious Ones His glory would be revealed. In joyous anticipation, the King, as a raging lion, thundered a roar that echoed throughout all the kingdoms of darkness.



1. What are some lies you have believed about yourself, others, and even God? What negative impact do they have on your life?
2. Some deceptions are, “I am not valuable,” “I am not loved,” and “God could never use me, because I am not good enough.” Have you believed any of these?
3. Can you remove lies yourself? Can you heal yourself? What experience have you had if you have ever tried to heal yourself?
4. How quickly does healing come? How have you felt while waiting for a desired healing?
5. Are you willing to serve and worship God when you can’t understand? Are you willing to walk by faith, trusting He is working in ways you can’t see or feel, but He has never abandoned you?
6. How does it make you feel to know tears stream down Jesus’ face when you are suffering?

You will experience pain in some form in your life. Some painful seasons will last longer and be more difficult than others. The enemy takes every opportunity to twist truth. He has spent your entire life attempting to get you to believe lies, because he knows how damaging they are. He knows they can hold you in bondage, in pain, and away from God. You can’t remove these lies yourself, but you can seek God to know truth. You can begin to believe what He says about you in His Word. John 8:32 (ESV) tells us, “And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” You may have to choose to believe over and over and over again, before truth begins to replace the lies. You can’t heal yourself. When the pain seems to never stop, you have not failed and neither has God. It is an opportunity to keep pushing forward trusting God is working. Jesus’ heart is broken as He perceives and experiences your pain with you. He is very present. Joy also surges through Him, because He knows the victory you will have as you don’t give up. He will complete the work He has begun in you.



20 To Have This Dance

But there's one other thing I remember, and remembering, I keep a grip on hope: God's loyal love couldn't have run out, His merciful love couldn't have dried up. They're created new every morning. How great your faithfulness!
Lamentations 3:21-23 (MSG)

Learning to live and thrive in the mist of their struggle was a struggle indeed. It required that the King truly become everything to them. His devotion had to be more important than any prize. Their emotional pain competed daily for attention. Earthly battles surrounded them. They frequently had to refocus their hearts and minds on the commitment they had made to serve and love without understanding.

In the months leading to this time, they had begun to learn about themselves. They had found some interests and had been assigned certain tasks balancing the work load with the crew so each had jobs to do. With everyone working together the ship ran smoothly. To maintain that flow, the children realized they would have to continue to do their part. It was hard. To be honest, they wanted to go to bed, cover their heads, and stay there until they felt better. It made sense to them. When you are sick with the flu, rest is required to bring healing. As the illness passes, you begin to feel a little better each day. You gain strength and then, you are well. Sadly, the emotional recovery the children needed didn't mirror the flu.

They had rested many days, but they weren't feeling any better and weren't gaining strength. For a while, the crew had gently brought meals to their rooms, because they refused to come out. Slowly, they began to require them to eat in the kitchen again with all the others. To the children, it felt callous. If they were loved wouldn't Jonathon, Emily, and April recognize how shattering this was? Wouldn't they minister more compassionately? In time, the children began to understand.

They started realizing the crew wasn't being cruel at all. They recognized all the years of evil and cruelty in the Town of Chaos had heaped many wounds and lies on them. Being healed from such

would resemble, not a case of the flu, but more like a terrible accident. The truth was their lives were wrecks. After experiencing great damage to one's body, physical therapy is required. Doctors and nurses begin as quickly as possible disciplining a patient to get out of bed and begin to walk through the pain. It is important for the patient to not be pushed too hard, but muscles have to be stretched. The patient has to grow toward health each day, or he will never walk again. To a patient, the doctor insisting he get up may appear harsh. "Don't you understand how bad this hurts?" he may exclaim. The doctor understands as well as he can having not actually been the person, but more than wanting him to avoid the pain now, he wants to see healing and restoration. He wants to see his patient walk and run. He wants to see joy and life continue. He doesn't want to leave his patient to survive from a bed or wheel chair.

To ever experience the life they had been created for the children would have to work through a parallel of emotional therapy. They would have to exercise the muscles of their character to get up and face the sun streaming in their windows. They would have to spend time with the King to gain strength from His Spirit to walk in His fruit rather than in the fruit of their flesh. They would have to leave their rooms to find nourishment in the kitchen, to spend time with others, and to work. Jonathon, Emily, and April weren't able to perceive as clearly as the King. He knew and recognized all He created each child for. Within His grasp was the destiny He planted. Although the crew didn't know everything that was to come, they did know the children were created for amazing life to flow in and through them. They observed glimpses of the potential buried beneath the struggle. They recognized the only way the children would ever experience this life was for them to get up and begin to walk. They loved them enough to not be willing to leave them to die on their bed of suffering. The King never forces growth and neither did the crew, but they weren't willing to aid continued illness by providing too much comfort in their bedrooms.

The children had bonded incredibly with the crew. They had shared the secret places they themselves had been afraid to visit. Jonathon, Emily, and April journeyed with them and held them. They always did their best to express the King's heart, His will, and His way in every situation. They continually reminded the children He was the answer to every pain. Unconditional love and kindness poured from the crew daily, but to taste and experience the closeness that provided such comfort, the children had to come out. They had to do the work of exercising emotional muscles that delivered healing pain. They had to

learn to live the life purchased by the King on the cross of His suffering.

Therefore, they came out. They found support in the arms of the crew. Even more, they found comfort in learning their King was always present and always truly did understand. They remembered the day He took them to the cross. They had observed their own pain and deep wounds embedded in His flesh. Their eyes beheld the blood as it poured, covering every part of Him. They knew it was personal. He carried not just His own struggle. He bore theirs. That brought incredible comfort as they forced their feet to take steps that felt too hard. He was completely faithful, even unto death. To encourage their progress, they determined to be faithful too. They sought His strength to be faithful to Him as He was to them. Each child desperately prayed for an intimacy with the King that was worth the struggle faced,

“Lord, I dedicate this time to you

I request a season of growth

but not in earthly things that can be seen or measured

It is my heart, Dear Lord, that you ask me to dance.

I want to learn to look deep into eyes of perfect passion

I want to rest in arms that are sure enough to know the steps

I want to be swept around the room by one who

knows me deeply and yet loves me even more

I want to hear the music that comes from your heart

I want to feel an intimacy with you that clears my vision

I want to smell the aroma of your delight

I want to experience the joy I bring you

because this dance is all I desire”

They set their hearts on being a gift to the King and a gift to the crew. To love Him and to love others became the goal of

every word spoken and deed accomplished. They couldn't make their struggle less, but they were unwavering in their determination to bring the King glory with every step they took. They wanted to dance with the King, to allow Him to lead, and them to follow.



1. To overcome, what place must Jesus have in your life? What steps have you taken to put your King on the throne of your heart?

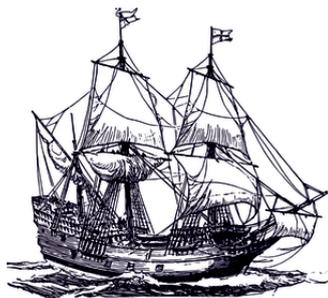
2. What do you want to do, when you feel overwhelmed by pain?

3. How must you live in the mist of such hardship to overcome and not become stuck where you are?

4. Do those who love you ever push you to get up and do something when it really hurts or is really hard? Why do they push you when it hurts? What is their intent?

5. Will you choose to stand when you want to sit, to get out of bed and care for your responsibilities when you want to die, and smile when you want to cry?

The enemy wants you to be stuck. He doesn't want you to overcome. Healing is hard work. Every person has wounds, and no one gains healing from staying where they are. Part of getting better is the excruciating work and pain of being willing to live a healthy life even when it hurts so terribly. This process feels too hard and too painful. At times, you may feel it will kill you. It won't. It will help you stretch the muscles needed for wholeness. One of the most painful things is to smile and laugh with others when you feel your heart is torn and bleeding. You may want those around you to know how ruthless your pain is. Every time you push through to live a healthy life and be who God created you to be, He will meet you. This process will bring healing, and it will become easier in time. Find comfort that although other people may not know how incredibly you are hurting, Jesus always understands exactly what you are feeling. Let Him hold you. Let Him become your comfort, and know how proud of you He is as you do this part of your journey.



21 The Creator's Design

More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. Romans 5:3-5 (ESV)

The autumn leaves were giving way to colder winds as winter was taking hold of the land. Rather than meeting on the deck for growth and study times together, the crew and children began assembling below. They took turns sharing their rooms with the group. It was scary at first. The children had never invited others into their personal space. They preferred to stay hidden and not be vulnerable to others. Fears crowded their thoughts. In the beginning, they worked hard to perfect all they could before their guests arrived. Extra time was granted for the details of bed making and dusting. Effort was invested to ensure nothing was sticking out of the closet or from under the bed. One could easily distinguish who was hosting by the steady concern located on the expression of the child. What if he wasn't good enough?

As one day led to the next they discovered not judgement at all. Instead, they realized the others actually enjoyed what they had to offer. They were fascinated by their interests and their treasures. The children began sharing projects they were working on or had completed. On occasion, they would experience a blast of excitement when their opportunity to host rotated around.

Jonathon, Emily, and April also shared in the hosting. They graciously invited the others to visit their rooms. The children delighted in learning more about them as they expressed their passions and personalities. One thing in particular truly stunned the children.

Sitting inside Emily's cozy room late one evening, a picture book was noticed. Interested, Isabelle pointed it out. Drawing the attention of the others, they sought permission to investigate the pages. Turning to

Emily, they observed an unfamiliar sadness in her eyes. She gently journeyed across the room and tenderly picked up the book. Returning, she sat in their mist and took a deep breath. The children were uncertain how to act. They were unaccustomed to seeing her struggle. A stab was felt in their hearts. She had become such a treasure to them. They were unaware she had hurt hidden behind her generous smile.

During the next few hours, she shared her story. She softly turned the pages in the book. On each page, she pointed to the faces they could tell she loved deeply. Tears slipped from her eyes as she was willing to be transparent and express loss she experienced in her life. Words poured out as she painted pictures of relationships she had expected to never lose. One by one she told how they ended. Some faces disappeared from her days, because they hadn't chosen the path of the King as she had. To walk with her treasured King had meant closing doors leaving them behind. Pain swelled in her voice as she told how others had abandoned or betrayed her. Before turning the pages, a deep felt prayer to the King was whispered over each one. A hushed sorrow saturated the room. The children never knew she carried such pain and loss. Not knowing how to respond, they children gathered around her as so many times the crew had for them. They offered their love and gently expressed their sorrow. Tables turned as they were allowed to provide comfort to one they cherished.

The next week, they visited April and Jonathon's rooms. They were amazed to learn the two of them, also, had experienced similar anguish. The children's eyes were opened to the truth that hardship had not chosen them alone. It apparently visited the lives of everyone. Lost in the intensity of their own pain, they had never realized storms brought destruction to others too. Many hours of quiet time in thought led them to look deeper into the experiences of even those left in the Town of Chaos. Light grew in their hearts as they were able to remember moments when pain was expressed, sickness was revealed, and scars were visible. They had just never perceived them before. They had been too caught up in their personal story to see with their own eyes.

Regret formed as they grasped cruelty they, themselves, had added to the pain around them. Their ignorance and selfishness had created wounds. When they felt anger rise inside, they had lashed out. When fear threatened to take control, they had endangered helpless victims to take the attention off themselves. When they experienced loss, they stole to refill the void. Their damaged hearts drove them to hurt

others. Uncertain how to carry their remorse, they fled to the King. Alone with His Spirit, they poured out their sorrow. Regret turned to repentance as each child chose to never collapse to the curse of being a hurting person hurting people again. They sought the King for strength to carry their pain and not attempt to pass it to others.

Observing how easily they had tumbled into the trap of being a predator, they had sudden compassion for those who had damaged them. Where before only fury had resided, they observed signs revealing brokenness in the faces of their enemies. Admittedly, they still lacked any desire to draw close to those who had brought them pain, but for the first time they felt mercy in place of a desire for vengeance. Experiencing forgiveness from their King captivated their hearts to bestow forgiveness. Bowing low to the ground, they wept furiously as years of anger, resentment, and offense washed from their souls. Forgiving all who had brought them pain, they entered the throne room requesting healing and help for those they had previously condemned.

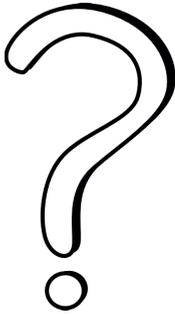
Crumbling from physical and emotional weakness, they fell at the feet of their King and rested in His presence completely humbled of pride that had provided control to the enemy of their souls. The King wrapped them in His loving embrace, and His strength filled the void. A song rose in the heart of each as he was held by the King,

*“The look in your eyes pierces my heart
When I see your love the waters part
The walls will fall down and healing begins
Where there was pain, I am letting you in*

*I’ll dance in your presence
Rush into your arms
Moved by your Spirit
Far past the stars
Into your throne room
Into your embrace
I’m passionate for you
I’m seeking your face*

*The longer you stay, the greater I know
Of a passion so deep and the seed you’ve sown
In care of your heart I’ll watch over your child
For a moment with you in your arms all the while”*

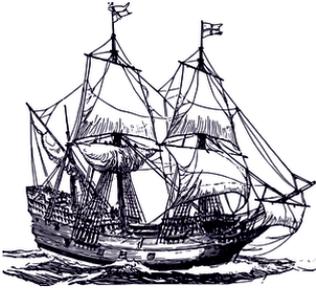
In the days that followed the children were careful to take notice of the crew. They were filled with concern now aware that they, also, had burdens to carry. They made a greater effort to help anytime assistance was needed. It had been so easy to keep their attention focused on themselves when they believed they had experienced greater damage than others. Now, they knew pain came from living in a world that had fallen from the plan of their Creator. It became their desire to restore at least what surrounded them and was under their influence to His design. This, they worked at by learning more of His beauty, rushing more to His heart, and surrendering more to His blueprint.



1. How do you feel allowing others to get to know you? How do you reveal your heart, personality, strengths, and weaknesses?
2. Are you ever afraid you aren't good enough and therefore want to keep others at a distance so they won't know or see?
3. How has God created you? What kind of characteristics has He placed in you?
4. Do you know others will enjoy getting to know you? Do you know they will be excited to enjoy your personality and interests?
5. Have you forgiven everyone who has harmed you? How will your life be changed if you forgive? How will your life be affected if you don't?
6. What painful experiences do see in those around you? Are you alone in the world of trauma?
7. How can getting close to others and allowing them to be close to you help?
8. Are you able to recognize ways you have hurt others or have not had compassion for pain they may be experiencing? Will you repent for causing pain?

Many times, you may not realize people around you are hurting. When we ache it is natural to only be aware of our pain. It can also be because people work hard to not allow others to get close enough to see. Even if you never do get near enough, you can be sure EVERYONE has pain. This is because you live in a fallen world, and pain is unavoidable. All people have struggles to process. Being willing to allow others into your personal life will minister to everyone involved. Many will delight in all the treasures God has placed in you. They will also see your pain and struggles. They may be able to help and can give the comfort of being close and loving you through the process. Many will celebrate God's amazing creativity in you. Forgiving everyone who has caused you harm is a huge part of your journey. If you refuse to forgive, you are holding all the anger and bitterness inside. It is only through releasing these bondages to God

through forgiveness that you give Him room to heal. Forgiveness isn't saying a person isn't wrong. It is simply releasing the pain and anger to God for Him to minister healing. You can trust Him to work out all the details.



22 Unrecognizable

The gifts are rivers of light cascading down from the Father of Light. There is nothing deceitful in God, nothing two-faced, nothing fickle. He brought us to life using the true Word, showing us off as the crown of all His creatures. James 1:17-18 (MSG)

The bitter cold of winter was expressing itself with harsh, icy conditions. The crew and children journeyed to the top only when necessary and quickly retreated to the warmth provided below. Cozy fires kept them all snug, as much growth was developing inside each one. Daily time in the King's presence and studies in the library brought revelation that was carrying change. The children and the crew were experiencing new joy as they learned to dwell in the shelter of the Most High. They were filled with His peace as they treasured Him rather than the absence of pain. Fear was losing its hold, because their confidence was not founded in the security offered by the world through earthly comforts. They boldly sought the King. He could never be taken from them and could never be lost. What had they to fear? Their roots were digging profoundly into solid ground. Although struggles and problems still dampened their mood at times, their faith was not easily shaken.

There was seldom a boring moment as much continued to need to be done. It was remarkable to watch lives arranged by the hand of the King. The children encouraged each other to awaken every dawn and invite the King's Spirit to direct their steps for the day. They made plans, but they reminded the King frequently that He had dominion to move or re-orchestrate any part. They desired His creativity and His point of view. They requested His ideas. What a difference it made.

Traveling through the day, they would have a sudden desire to do something they had never considered. Moving in step with the King's heart, they tried new things they found to deliver complete joy. Their skills were cultivated in areas only the King had known would carry life to them and others. When challenges and frustrations threatened their peace, they would rush to His presence and ask for His insight and solutions. He answered with such wisdom everyone was blessed and amazed.

As the King grew to truly live on the throne of their hearts, their pain mattered less and less. It was still very present. When they slowed down to look, it was found as it had been. However, it wasn't able to demand so much of their attention. The King grew brighter and brighter. The anguish was growing dim in the brilliance of His glory. Sometimes the pain carried a sting great enough to be felt deeply. In those times, the children learned to not scold themselves for feeling as they did, but instead to rush into His presence to be held by Love Himself. They stayed as long as was needed to bring hope. The King never condemned their time in His embrace. In fact, He delighted to hold them. He wept with them, because He knew and understood the weight of their grief. Together, they would sit until comfort had brought enough relief for the child to again tackle the adventures of life.

The children were coming alive. They were blooming, and beauty was being displayed. They were learning treasures had been deposited in them by Father. Special for each child, He had given gifts to minister. According to their personalities, He had given gifts to prophecy, serve, teach, exhort, give, lead, or to show mercy. Each gift was valuable not only to the child, but also to the Kingdom.

The King's Spirit also had gifts to contribute. His gifts were to break bondages and bring freedom. The children learned to seek His gifts. They knew to ask Him how to use them under His direction and power.

Aiden began to run as one who builds. All his years building with blocks were not wasted. He had a continual interest to move, go, and construct. He was always pursuing the King to know what He desired and had planned. Then, he would focus his heart on creating a structure that worked and would bring maturity. He was able to perceive potential in others, and strived to help them find their place. He worked well to build a strong team.

Isabelle became the ship's building inspector. She had an amazing eye to ensure things were built and kept in correct order. It was incredibly important to her that things be done EXACTLY as the King would do Himself. Therefore, she spent much time in His presence. Knowing His character and heart was essential to understanding His ways. She grew to hear Him speak clearly and was able to share His words with others. She observed what others missed and needed.

Christopher found himself very concerned for those not walking with the King. His heart began to cry for those who had never experienced

the love he discovered on the ship of *His Unfailing Kindness*. He wanted to tell them all there was hope of a different life that would bring righteousness, peace, and joy. It became his passion to speak the good news. Whenever it was possible, Christopher would voyage with Jonathon to cities similar to the Town of Chaos. There, he would speak the truth to any who would listen. Many lives were impacted by his words.

Ethan developed a heart for those already journeying with the King. He knew they had needs, and he sought to make sure they were met. He diligently spoke with the King on their behalf. He found ways to ensure they were all kept safe aboard the ship, that none were hungry, and all were cared for. It was his desire that they all stayed connected so they could learn and grow together.

Autumn continued to spend many hours in her beloved library. She studied. She learned. She asked many questions, and then would dig through the books until she was satisfied she had found the true and accurate answers. Then, delighted in the revelation she'd uncovered, she would share with others the details of each. She managed to find ways to make even complicated, deep subjects easy to understand.

Admittedly, each gift came with both strengths and weaknesses. They had to surrender their strengths to be used by the King and had to work through the weaknesses. For example, Autumn realized not everyone was as eager to learn as she was to teach. It became part of her growth to continually wait for questions to be asked before she began pushing answers. Ethan had to learn he couldn't control to keep others safe and ministered to. He could provide a pleasant place. Then he had to release them to choose to stay or leave.

They all learned the incredible need for teamwork. None of them had all the solutions. They needed each other, because they all had a valuable piece to give. There was occasionally strife as disagreements arose. The crew, who was very much involved in their progress, would gently teach them how to submit to each other. They daily had to humble their pride that desired to compete for control, attention, or their own way. It was a struggle, but they diligently paid the price to represent the King in the way they treated one another.

Late one evening, as they gathered to meet, they observed Emily carrying a large mirror. Intrigued, they sat quietly. Jonathon helped her mount it safely on the wall. Intimidation set in. The children had grown accustomed to simply avoiding mirrors. Their hearts were

hungry to look like their King, but glimpses into their reflection had so many times brought devastation that they refused to look any more. Eyes cast down they waited as the crew worked. When they were satisfied everything was ready and well, April gently invited the children one at a time to approach and look.

Hesitant, but obediently, they came. A holy hush fell in the room as they didn't observe the ugly and wretched images they expected. Instead, they were able to discern beauty in the very likeness of their King. None looked exactly like Him. They each displayed only a measure of the King they cherished, but love and joy rushed up from their spirits. He was truly IN them: living, breathing, and displaying His splendor. They simply stood with growing confidence as the last warning they had received before approaching the ship of *His Unfailing Kindness* returned to their minds, "No one has sailed aboard this ship, except that they returned so changed they were unrecognizable."



1. Can you name anything: job, home, spouse, children, or other relationships, that you recognize you have an unhealthy dependency on?

3. Can you choose to make Jesus the only thing you can't live without? Knowing He can never be taken, what will be changed in your life if you do make Him the most important?

4. Have you ever considered asking the Holy Spirit frequently to share His ideas and creativity with you? What impact could asking Him for His ideas and plans for each day have?

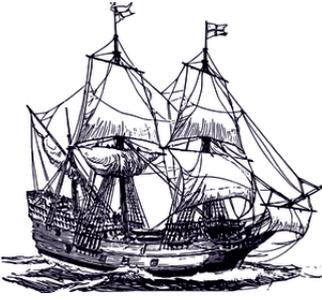
5. God has a very special destiny for you. What effect will walking in His plan have in your life and to His Kingdom?

6. What will happen to others if you don't do your part?

7. Do you perceive God's beauty growing in you? Are you able to look closely enough to observe parts of Him you are already revealing?

Living in the world, you will have many treasures. You may have a home and possessions. You may have relationships with people you value. You may have some sort of income. You are to appreciate these, but make Him the only thing you can't live without. Fear will melt away, because He can't be lost or taken. You will discover greater delight in God's ideas than you will your own. He knows of treasures in the deep places of your being that you haven't yet uncovered. Your walk with God will impact others as you share the resources God has placed in you. If you are growing with God, you are emerging in beauty. You may not be able to see it frequently or at all. If you ask the Holy Spirit, He can begin to show you His glory shining through.

23 Chosen



*Haven't I ordered you, 'Be strong, be bold'?
So don't be afraid or downhearted,
because ADONAI your God is with you
wherever you go." Joshua 1:9 (CJB)*

Spring was being welcomed into the air by the sweet singing of cheerful birds. Believing it was a dawn like any other the youngsters and crew were each about their tasks. The sun had already begun to heat the deck as it hadn't in many months, so they admittedly traveled to breath in the warmth as frequently as their chores allowed. After their morning responsibilities were complete, they opted to enjoy a picnic lunch to bask in the beauty of newly awakened flowers embellishing the coast nearby. As they enjoyed their break, they were suddenly aware of a visitor. The King had come!

Delighted, they nearly knocked each other over in an attempt to reach land first. They raced into His embrace. Incredibly, He managed to hug them all without losing His balance. Laughing, He teased them in reference to a possible lack of patience, but it was easy to perceive how thrilled He was in their desire to be with Him. Without much delay and with great anticipation, He gave an invitation to His throne room. Uncertain of His motivation, yet completely trusting His plan, they immediately accepted. Having concluded lunch, they were set to travel without any need for preparation, so they were off. The King, all five children, and the crew.

They had so much to share with Him. Conversation never slowed as they journeyed through the kingdom. What a joyous group they were. Spreading pleasure to the creation surrounding them, the animals, trees, and flowers appeared to celebrate as they passed. Due to their continuous chatter the travel time seemed shortened and they approached the castle in little time. Entering the throne room without hesitation, they were welcomed by the Father. He beamed His approval at their radiant faces. Also present was His Spirit. Joining them, the King took a seat.

It was obvious something was on the King's heart. In honor, the children and crew quietened and fixed their eyes on the three. They stood.

With the crew observing as pleased parents, The King began to speak to the youngsters, “Many are called, but few are chosen. My eyes roam to and fro through the entire earth to show Myself strong for those whose hearts are completely Mine. You have set your hearts on being entirely mine, and My eyes have rested on you.”

“You are a chosen people, a *royal priesthood*, a holy nation, my special possession, that you may declare my praises as I have called you.”

“You did not choose me, but I have chosen you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.”

“Aiden, you will build and bring maturity to my people.”

“Isabelle, you will speak revelation as you hear my voice.”

“Christopher, you will lead in unity as you bring the lost into my kingdom.”

“Ethan, you will care for and protect my children.”

“Autumn, you will teach, providing steps to victory, making clear my Word.”

Thunder shook the kingdom as all were moved. No longer were they located in the throne room. Instead, the five children were seen standing tall on the hull of the ship of *His Unfailing Kindness*. It was thrust forward as each traveled into the destiny of the King, to advance His Kingdom on Earth, to love and serve others, and most important of all, to cherish and worship the King. Hovering powerfully above, the King, the Father, and His Spirit spoke as one, “Arise, for it is your task, and we are with you; be strong and do it.”



1. How can you develop a faith in Jesus that will allow you to say, "Yes!" without knowing the details of a direction He is asking you to take?

2. Can you enter His throne room expecting Him to be pleased with you and have amazing things to proclaim? How does God feel about you?

3. Do you know you will not walk in your destiny just because God created you for that purpose? What price must you pay?

4. As you move forward into the call God has placed on your life, what part will God play?

As you grow with God, He will move you into greater exploits impacting your life and His Kingdom. He will only allow you to see in part. You will never know all that is to come. You will have to move by faith and submit to going where He directs without many answers to your questions. You will need to honestly and humbly search your life to determine if you are doing your best to listen and obey God's direction. You can boldly enter His throne room. He is delighted to be with you and has only good things to speak over you. God's eyes ARE searching the earth for those who are completely His. To be one who is not just called, but is chosen, you can determine yourself to be completely His. This will mean dying to your own desires and control, but what greater prize is there than to be chosen by your Creator God? What greater prize is there than to become the Bride of your King without spot or wrinkle? You have an amazing purpose, but your life will not just fall into place. To move forward into your destiny you must know God is always there, and you must repeatedly be willing to sacrifice all else to honor and cherish Him as the first love of your life.



About the Author

Tiffany Beavers is married to Jason and has three children: Veronica, Corey and Dezirea, and three grandchildren. She is a homemaker and a teacher in her Church.

Other Books by Tiffany

Faithful Pursuit Children's Lessons

Growing Reflections Children's Lessons

