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Little Owls' Big Day

READ: MATTHEW 10:29-31

Mom, look!" Ava pointed to a tree in the backyard. "The two owls we've seen have owlets. There are two on that limb and one in the tree hollow. They're so cute!"

"It looks like they're fledging, or learning to fly. We should go inside."

They went into the house and watched from the window. "Oh no!" Ava said. "One of the owlets is hanging upside down and flapping its wings."

"It's trying to get back on the branch," Mom said.

"Oh, now it's only hanging by one foot. Hang on, baby owl!" Ava grabbed binoculars but couldn't find the owlet on the branch. "Where are you?" she whispered. Finally, she spotted the owlet. "Now it's on the ground looking around. Maybe it's scared. Can I go out and make sure it's okay?"

"No, we need to leave it alone." As Mom said that, an adult owl flew to a nearby branch. "See, the parents are staying close to their babies."

Ava watched the owlet move on the ground. It came onto the deck and leaped off out of sight. She looked outside every few minutes, hoping to see it again.

"Mom, it's been a while. Can I go look outside?"

"Let's go together."

They went outside and looked around, but there were no owlets in sight.

"I see one of the parents in that tree." Ava pointed.

"It knows where the babies are, so let's leave them alone," said Mom.

"The way the mama and daddy owls are watching the owlets reminds me of how God watches over us," Ava said as they went back inside.

"That's right," said Mom. "God's Word tells us that He watches over sparrows, and not one of them falls to the ground without Him knowing. And He also watches over us. Because Jesus died to save us, we're always safe and secure in Him, even when bad things happen. He's always with us and watching out for us."

When Dad came home, Ava brought him outside to show him where the owlets had been during the day.

"Look," Dad said, pointing up at the tree. "Two owlets."

Mom joined them. "I just saw an owlet sitting on a branch high above the tree hollow."

"That's all three," Ava said. "It's been a big day for little owls!" ♥

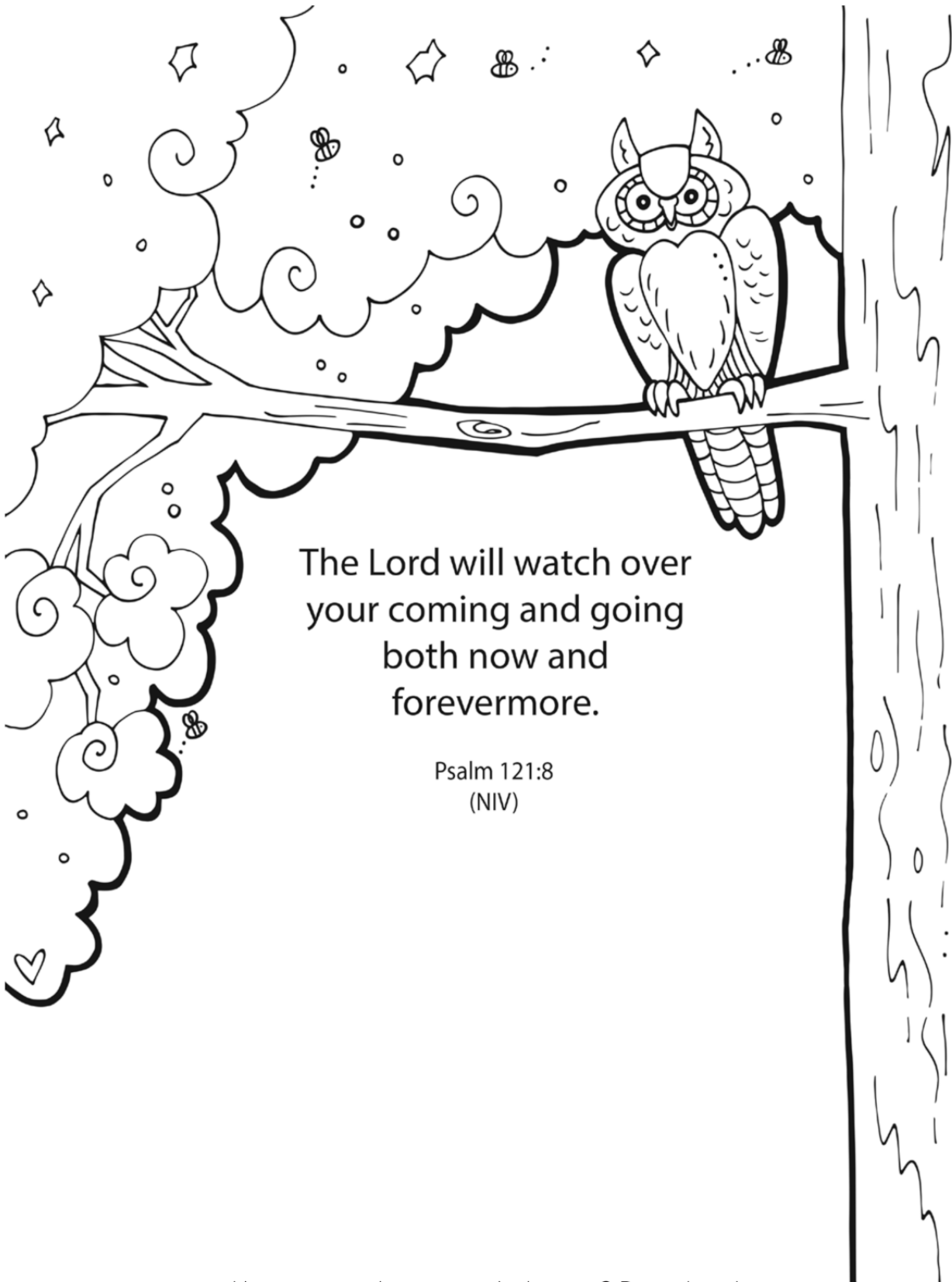
LYNDA BOUCHER

GOD WATCHES OVER YOU

KEY VERSE: THE LORD WILL WATCH OVER YOUR COMING AND GOING BOTH NOW AND FOREVERMORE. PSALM 121:8 (NIV)

Have you ever watched a baby learn to walk? Or a baby bird learn to fly? They need someone to watch every move they make to help them learn and to keep them from getting hurt. Jesus watches over us in the same way. He's always with us and helps us through difficult times. Trust Him to watch over you and keep you safe.

Color!



The Lord will watch over
your coming and going
both now and
forevermore.

Psalm 121:8
(NIV)

How many owls are in today's story? Draw them!

Lemonade, Anyone?

READ: ROMANS 8:18, 28-31

Aiden tried to stay out of the movers' way as they carried furniture into the apartment, so he stood in the corner and frowned. "Why the long face?" asked one of the men who was helping.

"I don't like this apartment," said Aiden. "I don't get my own backyard." He didn't add that he didn't know anybody in the neighborhood and would have to go to a new school.

The man nodded. "Well, you know what they say—when life hands you lemons, make lemonade."

"Lemonade?" asked Aiden.

The man smiled. "You know, make the best of whatever happens. It may seem like a sour lemon, but it can turn into something sweet. You'll see."

Aiden sighed. *He sounds like Mom*, he thought. *She's always saying God works things out for good.*

Aiden went outside and noticed a boy sitting on the steps. "Hi," Aiden said, and the boy glanced up. He looked like he had been crying. "What's wrong?" Aiden asked.

"I don't like it here," the boy replied. He had a strong, musical accent. "Things were bad in my country and we had to leave. But everything is so different here, and I have trouble speaking English. The kids at school laugh when I talk."

Aiden sat down on the step beside his new neighbor. "I haven't moved as far as you, but I'm new here too. I have to start school on Monday, and I don't know anyone. I don't think I'm going to like it."

The boy looked at Aiden. "I can show you around school and eat lunch with you," he said.

"Really?" Aiden smiled. "And I can help you with English and anything else you have questions about."

A smile spread across the boy's face. "Want to play ball?" he asked, pulling up a soccer ball from the side of the step.

As they kicked the ball around, Aiden thought his new home might not be so bad after all. *Maybe Mom and the moving guy are right*, he thought. *Maybe God is making lemonade out of the lemons I got—and the ones my new neighbor got too. At least both of us now have a new friend—and maybe God wants me to show him that he can have Jesus as a friend too.* ♥ MATILDA H. NORDTVEDT

MAKE THE BEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES

KEY VERSE

ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THOSE WHO LOVE
GOD. ROMANS 8:28



IS THERE A LEMON IN YOUR LIFE—SOMETHING THAT'S HARD FOR YOU? Are you whining and complaining about it, or are you trusting God to use it to make lemonade? God isn't allowing that circumstance into your life in order to hurt you. Trust Him to use it for good and ask Him to help you accept it and use it to show others His love.



Journal It!

Have you ever tasted a lemon all by itself? Did you make a face when you put it in your mouth? You probably did. But do you like lemonade? It takes a very sour fruit to make that sweet, refreshing drink. So even though lemons are sour, they're good! Mixed with other ingredients, they can be used to make things that taste good.

That's the way it is with life too. Some things that happen to you are sweet, like getting a good grade, meeting a new friend, or spending time with loved ones. They're the things that are fun or that make you feel good.

Write down some things about your life that you really like. _____

Other things that happen seem sour. They're the hard things you go through. Some are really sour—like getting sick, moving, or dealing with the death of someone close to you.

What are some sour things you're going through right now? _____

Now comes the challenge—how do you see God making lemonade from your circumstances? Think about both the sweet and sour things you listed, then use the space below to finish the following sentence.

Because of what's happening in my life, God is helping me to... _____

(For example: share Jesus with a classmate, help a neighbor, encourage a friend, improve my reading, make new friends, learn how to do something, etc.)

Ask an adult:

As you got older, did you learn to appreciate some of the lemons in your life?

What are some ways God has turned them into something good?

What helped you see what He was doing with the lemons?

Think about our Key Verse (Romans 8:28). When we truly believe that everything God allows us to go through will be used for our good, it's much easier to accept the sour things along with the sweet ones. We can take comfort in knowing—even in the most sour of struggles—that He is with us, making lemonade from all our experiences according to His good plans (see also Romans 8:38-39 and Matthew 28:20).



Cockatoos and Goannas

READ: PSALM 119:9-16

The Australian landscape sizzled in the heat as Jackson joined his sister on the porch. “Will you pour me some juice, please, Jackson?” Emma asked, pointing to the pitcher on a table. She put down her Bible. “I’ve been trying to learn a verse, but it’s too hot. The words won’t stick in my head.”

Jackson poured juice into two glasses. “What verse do you have to learn?”

“Psalm 19:1. ‘The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky,’ uh . . .” Emma paused. “I can’t remember it.”

As Jackson handed Emma a glass of juice, a pink bird with a tuft of red feathers on its head suddenly shot into the air, screeching in distress.

“What’s that cockatoo’s problem?” Emma asked.

Dad had come out to the porch, and he pointed to a dark shape that was silently clawing its way up the gnarled trunk of the tree in the front yard.

“That big lizard with the evil-looking eyes is a goanna,” said Dad. “It’s hungry for lunch, and it likes baby cockatoos. Watch what happens.”

Slowly, relentlessly, the goanna hauled itself upward. It was near the nest when the cockatoo swooped. The reptile turned and lost his balance. He clutched frantically at the tree but lost his grip, then crashed to the ground and skittered away.

“Cockatoos prepare for enemies,” said Dad. “Notice how the branches and rough bark are cleared away from the area around the nest. The goanna couldn’t get a toehold there. He didn’t have firm footing, so he fell.” Dad motioned to Emma’s Bible. “Christians need to prepare for their enemy too,” he added. “Do you know who our enemy is and how we can keep him from getting a toehold in our lives?”

“Our enemy is Satan,” said Emma.

“We keep him away by remembering that we belong to Jesus and He defeated Satan when He died on the cross,” added Jackson.

“That’s right,” said Dad. “And God’s Word helps us remember that. It prepares us for enemy attacks.”

“I guess that’s why I need to learn my Bible verses!” said Emma.

Dad nodded. “Satan may try to discourage us or get us to sin, but when we look to Jesus and remember that we belong to Him, Satan loses his grip.” ♥

ANNE JOHNSON

GOD’S WORD PREPARES YOU FOR ATTACK

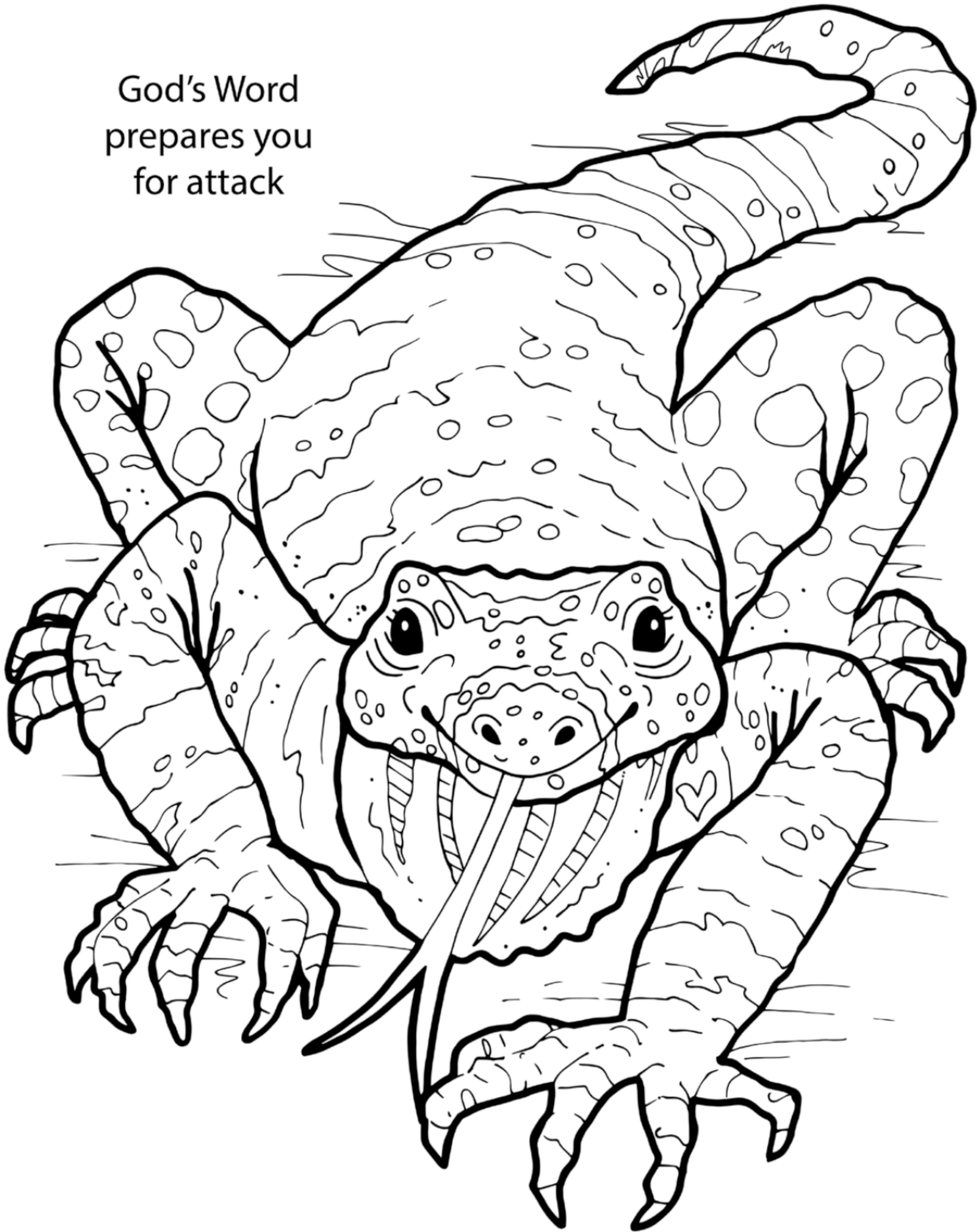
KEY VERSE: YOUR WORD I HAVE HIDDEN IN MY HEART,
THAT I MIGHT NOT SIN AGAINST YOU. PSALM 119:11

Do you take time to read the Bible and memorize verses? They can help you when the enemy tries to get a toehold in your life. When Satan tries to get you to sin, remember that Jesus gives you the power to resist (Hebrews 2:18). When he tries to make you feel guilty, remember that Jesus has removed your sin (Psalm 103:12). Prepare for enemy attacks by reading and memorizing God’s Word.

Color!



God's Word
prepares you
for attack



Goanna lizards can grow to be very large.
How big do you think they can get? Have an adult look it up.
Draw more scales on this lizard

Only God Can Do That!

READ: GENESIS 2:7; EPHESIANS 2:4-10

Look Max, I'm making a snowman!" cried Chloe, rolling a white blob of play dough into a ball.

But her brother didn't seem to be listening. Max was concentrating. He had spent the last ten minutes sculpting the face of a lion out of some yellow play dough. Chloe had to admit, Max's lion was pretty good. He had used a plastic knife to carve out the lion's features, and now he was working on a fiery mane.

"Looks like you guys are having fun!" said Mom, pausing at the table to view their creations. "I like your snowman, Chloe! And that lion's beginning to look quite life-like, Max. I love the way you've twisted all those strands together to make his mane. You're both so creative!"

"Creative?" asked Chloe. "I thought only God created things."

"Well, the Bible says God made men and women in His own image," said Mom, taking a seat at the table. "That's why we enjoy being creative. Some people like to paint. Some people like to bake. But while humans can only create things using materials that already exist, God created things out of nothing."

"Nothing?" asked Chloe. "How can you make something out of nothing?" She waved her hands around as though trying to shape a creature out of thin air. "It's impossible!"

Mom laughed. "God created light just by speaking!" she said. "And Psalm 33 tells us He created the heavenly hosts—all the stars in the sky—by the breath of His mouth."

Chloe gasped. "Wow! That's amazing!"

"But when He created Adam," Mom continued, "God fashioned him with His own hands from the dust of the earth and breathed life into his nostrils."

Max finally spoke. "Whoa! This lion I've been sculpting is just a model. It will never live or move. But God made a real man!"

"That's right," said Mom. "A living, breathing man. Only God can do that! And only God can give people new life. When we become Christians, it's as though God breathes His very life into an old pile of dust. Jesus makes us alive all over again!"

Chloe and Max looked at each other and smiled. "That's so awesome!" ♥

ANGELA JELF

ONLY GOD CAN GIVE NEW LIFE

KEY VERSE

FOR WE ARE GOD'S MASTERPIECE. HE HAS CREATED US ANEW IN CHRIST JESUS, SO WE CAN DO THE GOOD THINGS HE PLANNED FOR US LONG AGO. EPHESIANS 2:4-5 (NLT)



DO YOU ENJOY BEING CREATIVE? Are you good at drawing or writing stories? Or perhaps you enjoy making or building things. But God made the universe out of nothing! Isn't that awesome? And more than that, He's able to breathe new life into each one of us. Have you received Jesus and the new life He brings? If not, don't wait any longer. Trust in Him today!



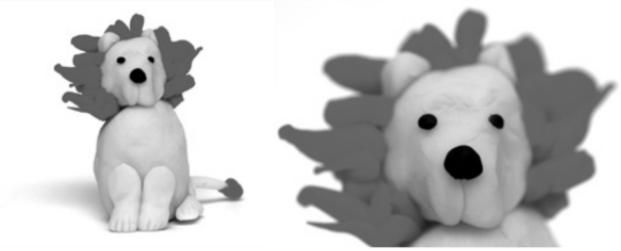
Activity

Want to make a lion sculpture like Max in today's story? RAWR—er, read—the instructions below to find out how!

NOTE: This project may get a little messy and involves some sharp or specialized tools, so make sure you have an adult's permission and supervision.

Things you'll need:

- play dough (yellow, red, and black)
- a plastic knife for sculpting
- a ruler



What you'll need to do:

1. For the lion's body, form an oval about 1 in. wide from yellow play dough. For the head, form a small yellow circle, gently squeezing the front so that a nose-shaped bump appears. Place the head onto the lion's body.
2. Roll another piece of yellow play dough into a long strand about 2-3 in. long and $\frac{1}{4}$ in. thick. Divide this into 4 pieces.
3. For the paws, take 2 of these pieces, making them round at the bottom and thin at the top. For claws, use a plastic knife to indent 3 lines on the round part of each paw. Press both paws to the front of the body, gently pushing them down to be flat on the bottom.
4. To make the lion's hind paw, form the next of the 4 pieces into a crescent shape. Then fold half of the crescent under. Squish the hind paw onto the side of the body, making sure it is flat on the bottom like the front paws. Etch 3 claws onto the hind paw.
5. Roll the last of the 4 pieces into a thin strand. Then divide it in half. The first half will be the tail, so attach it to the lion's back. The other half will be the lion's ears. Divide it into 2 pieces, molding them into triangle shapes. Attach them to the top of the head.
6. For the mane, form several small, thin strands from red play dough. Place individual strands around the lion's face in the shape of a sun, making them stick up and out. Fill in the back of the head with more red strands and wrap a red strand around the top of the tail. (NOTE: The mane will take some trial and error. Take your time and have fun. No two lions will be the same.)
7. For eyes, use black play dough, rolling 2 tiny circles to squish onto the face, just above the bump for the nose. For the nose itself, mold a small amount of black play dough into a triangle shape—just like with the ears. Gently squish it onto the tip of the bump on the lion's face.

And you're done! If you know Jesus, He is making you into His masterpiece as He changes you from the inside out (Ephesians 2:10). Let your little lion remind you that God created you to do great things for Him, carefully forming you just as He intended (Genesis 2:7; Psalm 139:13-14). Our Creator God is amazing!

Flower Clothes

READ: MATTHEW 6:28-32

Emma bent down and smelled a rose in her yard. “Oh, that smells so good! I’m going to miss our flower garden so much.”

“Me too,” Mom said as she took a picture of some flowers with her phone. The garden was in full bloom. There were two rose bushes, one with pink roses and the other with red. There was also a variety of other plants and flowers surrounding them.

“I remember how much you came out here to work each summer,” Emma said. “Your hard work really paid off. It’s beautiful. Too bad we have to leave it.” Emma began to walk to the car. “I wish we didn’t have to move. I’m scared of what’s going to happen next.” Emma’s parents had recently separated, and her dad had moved out. Her mom couldn’t afford to pay rent on their house, so they were moving to an apartment.

“Wait, Emma, come back here a minute before you get in the car. Did I ever tell you why I like flowers and gardening so much?” Mom asked.

Emma followed her mom back to the garden. “I don’t know. Because flowers are so beautiful, I guess.”

“Yes, they are beautiful,” said Mom. “Their beauty reminds us of God’s faithfulness in taking care of us. Jesus talks about flowers in the Bible. He tells us to look at the flowers and how beautiful they are. They don’t worry about what to wear—God provides for them.” She put her arm around Emma. “We are more important to God than flowers. Jesus died so we could belong to Him, and He will always provide us with what we need. I don’t know what our future holds, but I do know Jesus will be with us and take care of us, just like He takes care of these beautiful flowers.”

The two stood in silence for a minute. “Well, I guess we should head to our new place,” Mom said. They turned and got into the car.

As they drove to their new apartment, Emma silently prayed. *Dear Lord, as we start this new chapter of our lives, please help me remember that You will provide for my needs just like you provide flowers with beautiful clothes.* ♥

MELISSA YEAGLE

TRUST JESUS TO CARE FOR YOU

KEY VERSE: WHY DO YOU WORRY ABOUT CLOTHES? SEE HOW THE FLOWERS OF THE FIELD GROW. THEY DO NOT LABOR OR SPIN. MATTHEW 6:28 (NIV)

Are you going through a hard time right now? Do you know that God cares for you? No matter what you’re going through, Jesus will help you through it. When you look at a beautiful flower, remember that it did not clothe itself. God provided that flower with its petals, just like He will provide you with what you need in His perfect timing. Trust Him to be with you and take care of you.

Color!



Why do you worry about clothes?
See how the flowers of the field grow.
They do not labor or spin.

Matthew 6:28
(NIV)



Add a pattern to the butterfly.

The Puzzle

READ: EPHESIANS 2:10

You're still here?" asked Dad, descending the basement stairs to see his son sitting on the floor, surrounded by jigsaw puzzle pieces. "Shouldn't you be playing basketball?"

"I don't want to play," answered John. "It's not a fair game anymore. My friends keep getting taller, but I stay the same. I'd rather do this puzzle."

"Looks like you've already made some connections," said Dad, pointing to some clusters among the loose pieces. "Can I help?"

John nodded and cleared a place for his father to sit. "Here's what it's supposed to look like." John tilted the lid of the box to show his father the underwater scene filled with marine animals. "I've only got the starfish and some seaweed."

Dad examined a stiff clump of green pieces. "Does this seaweed look right?"

"The pieces almost fit, so I forced them together," John said.

"What do you think will happen if you join the wrong pieces?" Dad asked.

"My picture won't be the same as the one on the box."

"Right. Each piece has its own place so the picture makes sense." Dad detached the mismatched pieces and held one up. "This puzzle piece reminds me of you—you're both unique! Just like this piece has a special shape, God made you in a special way with talents all your own. He designed your height on purpose, but you want to be taller instead of embracing the way God made you."

"That's like pushing the wrong pieces together," said John. He reached over and freed some shapes that didn't quite fit with the others.

"Exactly. Each piece plays a role in bringing the whole picture into focus, and everything about you fits into the picture God has planned. He created each one of us differently so together we can reflect a clear picture of Jesus to those who don't know Him. Maybe you'll grow taller, and you can pursue your dream of playing basketball. If not, don't worry. Ask Jesus to help you discover your strengths so you can help bring His picture into focus."

"Okay," John said. "I'll start praying about it tonight—and I won't quit basketball just yet!"

Dad ruffled John's hair. "Now that we've solved your basketball problems, let's figure out this puzzle!" ♥ ELENA DEE

YOU ARE UNIQUE

KEY VERSE: I WILL PRAISE YOU, FOR I AM FEARFULLY
AND WONDERFULLY MADE. PSALM 139:14

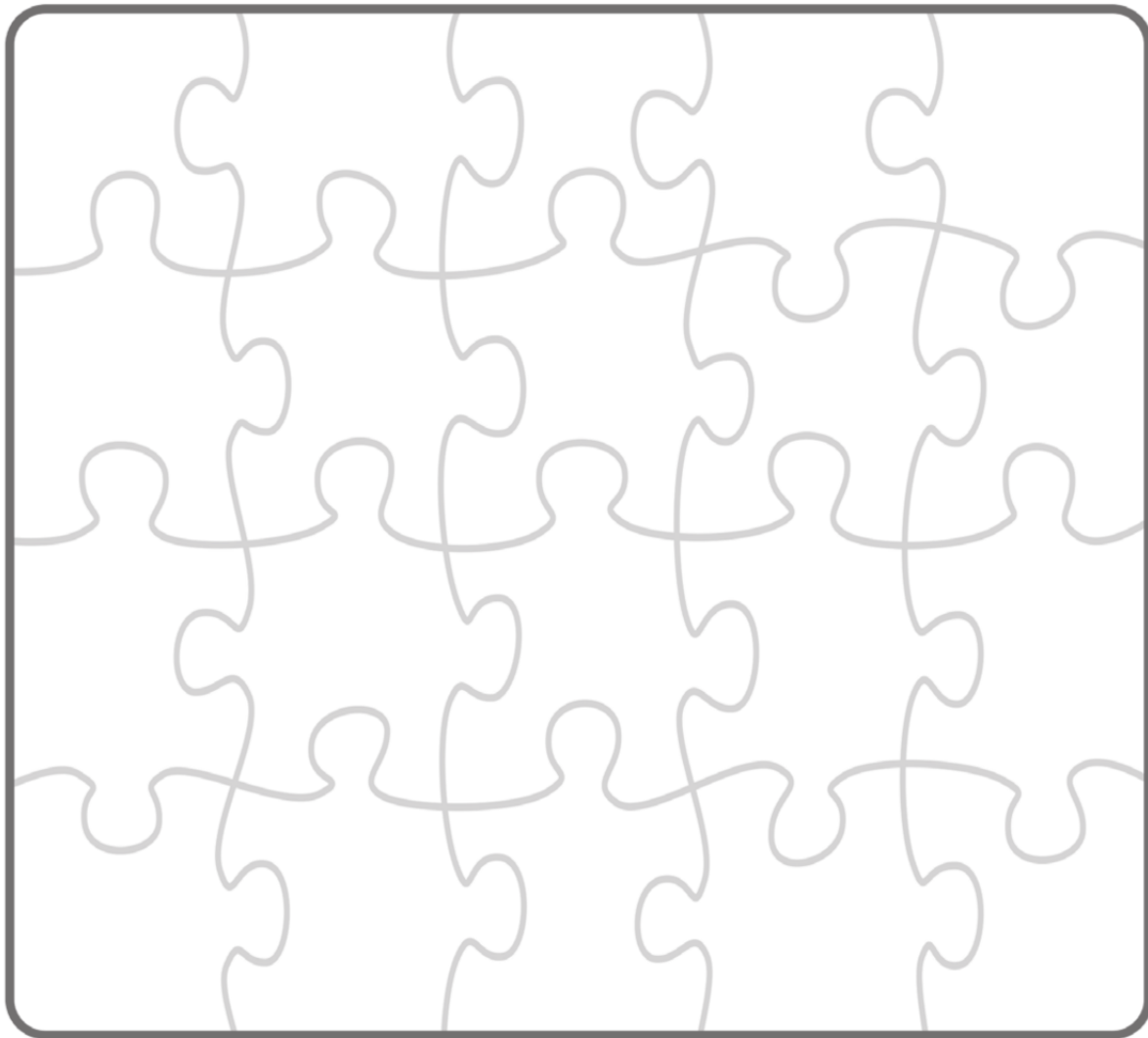
Do you feel confident being yourself? Or do you act differently to fit in with your friends so they will accept you? Jesus loves and accepts you just as you are, so you should accept yourself too! He created you with your own personality and gave you specific talents, and you fit perfectly into the picture He has planned. Trust Him to guide you in using your unique gifts for Him.

Activity



The Puzzle

Just like John in today's story, you've been fearfully and wonderfully made too! In the box below, draw a picture of yourself using one of the gifts God has given you. Maybe it's painting, playing a sport, encouraging others, or making people laugh. Then cut out the puzzle, mix up the pieces, and put it all together again.



Sometimes it's hard for us to know how God is going to use our talents because we see only the little pieces. But God sees the whole picture, and He knows what your future holds. Trust Him to use your gifts for good!

The Tiger and the Bike

READ: MATTHEW 6:7-13

Dallas walked up the driveway, head down and shoulders slumped. Dad, who was working on the lawn mower, glanced up. “Something wrong?” he asked. “Yes!” Dallas said. “You know that new bike the library was giving away for their summer reading contest? Well, somebody else won it. I can’t believe it. I prayed so hard, Dad! I really did! My bike is so old—I needed that new one. Why did God let somebody else win it?”

Before Dad could reply, Dallas’s little brother came bounding out of the house. “I saw a tiger on TV, and he was so cool! Can I have a tiger, Daddy?” Corbin asked.

Dallas rolled his eyes. “You can’t have a tiger, silly. A tiger is a wild animal. He’d eat you.”

“He would not!” Corbin replied, frowning at his brother. “I’m going to get one, and I’ll ride on his back and teach him lots of tricks. You’ll see!”

“You can’t have a tiger,” Dallas said.

“Yes, I can!”

Dad held up his hand for quiet. “Corbin, why don’t you go play in the backyard and just pretend you have a tiger?” Still scowling at his brother, Corbin left, and Dad turned to Dallas. “You’re older than Corbin, and you understand things better. You know lots of reasons why he shouldn’t have a tiger for a pet, don’t you?”

“Of course I do,” said Dallas. “Tigers are dangerous, and they can’t live in people’s houses.”

“But Corbin doesn’t understand that. He just knows he wants a tiger,” said Dad. “Maybe that’s a little like God and you and the bike. You know you wanted that bike, but maybe God knows you winning a new bike isn’t what’s best. Perhaps He knows someone else needed that bike more than you, or that you’d learn and grow by saving money to buy one yourself. You don’t understand the reason, but that doesn’t mean God doesn’t have one.”

Dallas sighed. “So I should trust God because He knows what’s best, just like Corbin should trust you?”

Dad nodded. “Remember how much God loves you—so much He sent His Son to die for you! Trust Him to always do what’s best, even when you don’t receive the answer you were hoping for.” ♥ KAREN E. COGAN

GOD KNOWS WHAT'S BEST FOR YOU

KEY VERSE: AND WE KNOW THAT IN ALL THINGS GOD WORKS FOR THE GOOD OF THOSE WHO LOVE HIM. ROMANS 8:28 (NIV)

Do you accept God's answer to your prayers—even when it's not the answer you would like? You may not always know or understand His reasons, but know He loves you and is working everything out for good, even when He tells you no. Trust Him to direct your life in the way He knows is best.

Color!



God knows what's
best for you



What would you name a pet tiger? Write the name on the tag above.

PRAYER POWER



I would really like it if you will pray for me that God will show me what he has planned for me and help me to help others. – Dayton

Please pray that there are no bullies at my new school. – Norah

I would like a prayer for my grandma who is in the hospital and I'm really worried about her. She is not a Christian but I'm hoping she will get to know Jesus soon. – Bianca

I have Lyme disease...I am taking medicine twice a day like I'm supposed to. Just pray the Lyme disease will go away soon and I will survive it. – Emily

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

ENCOURAGEMENTS, TESTIMONIES, PRAYER REQUESTS

Send us your prayer requests.

Send mail to: Box 1001 • Grand Rapids, MI • 49501-1001

Or visit: keysforkids.org/Contact-Us