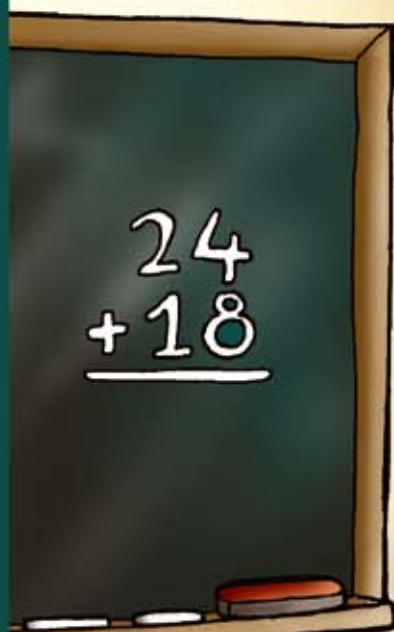


Overcoming Difficulties



Learning & Growing
STEPS
Learning & Growing



Contents:

The True Life Story of Fanny Crosby . . .	4
Our Father Knows	9
Amy's Prayer	10
Footprints in the Sand	12
Prayer and Memory Fun	14
Overcoming Difficulties	15
A Bridge for Progress	16
Special Bookmarks	17
From Jesus—with Love	19



Life is not a cloudless journey,
Storms and darkness oft oppress,
But the Father's changeless mercy
Comes to cheer the heart's distress.

By Amber Darley and Agnes Lemaire

Copyright © 2006, Aurora Production AG, Switzerland.
All Rights Reserved.

The True Life Story of Fanny Crosby

On March 24, 1820, Fanny Crosby was born to poor parents in a humble house in New York State.

"Congratulations, Mrs. Crosby! You're the mother of a beautiful baby girl!"

Father added, "May the good Lord bless this child and use her life for His glory. Look, she has beautiful blue eyes just like her mother."

But when Fanny was only six weeks old she became very sick. The doctor came to their house to see Fanny.

"W-will she recover, Doctor?" Father asked.

"Yes, but because of her sickness her eyes have become very weak. I... I'm afraid that... that... in a few weeks she's going to be blind."

"Blind! Oh God, dear God!" Mother said as she cried and buried her face in her hands.

One year later the Crosbys suffered another seeming tragedy. Fanny's father was taken suddenly ill.

"Please don't weep for me, dearest, I will soon be with Jesus. My only concern is for you and Fanny," Father said weakly from his sick bed as mother sat holding his hand close to her heart. "Please ask my mother to come and live with you. Mother would be good to help take care of Fanny. Please, take... take good care of her... she's such a... special child..."

"Oh dear John!" Mother cried as she lay her head on his chest. John passed away quietly into his Heavenly Father's arms.

After Father's death, Fanny's grandmother came to live with them.

"I've wanted to spend more time with Fanny and be her 'eyes' for her!" Mother said. "I'd like to tell her how everything looks. But I'm going to have to work so we all can eat."

"Don't worry, my dear! I will be little Fanny's eyes!" Grandmother said.

As Fanny grew older, Grandma spent so much time with her, telling her about the beauties of God's creation. Together they would explore the woods and listen to the birds, or sit on top of a hill.

"What are clouds, Grandma?"

"They're beautiful!—Like fluffy white puffs in the sky that, as if by magic, keep changing their shape and form."

"What else did God put in the sky, Grandma?"

"Well, after the storm you can see the beautiful rainbow, a magnificent arch that sweeps across the sky. God painted it with seven glorious colors. Sit on my lap and I'll tell you the story of Noah, and how God made the first rainbow as a sign that He would never again cover the Earth with a flood."

Fanny liked the times that Grandma read to her out of the Bible best of all.

"The stories are so beautiful, Grandma! Oh, how I wish I could read them too."

"Fanny, I have a splendid idea! Since you can't see to read the verses in the Bible, I'm going to help you memorize them."

"Oh, yes please, Grandma! Then I can have the Bible with me always in my heart."

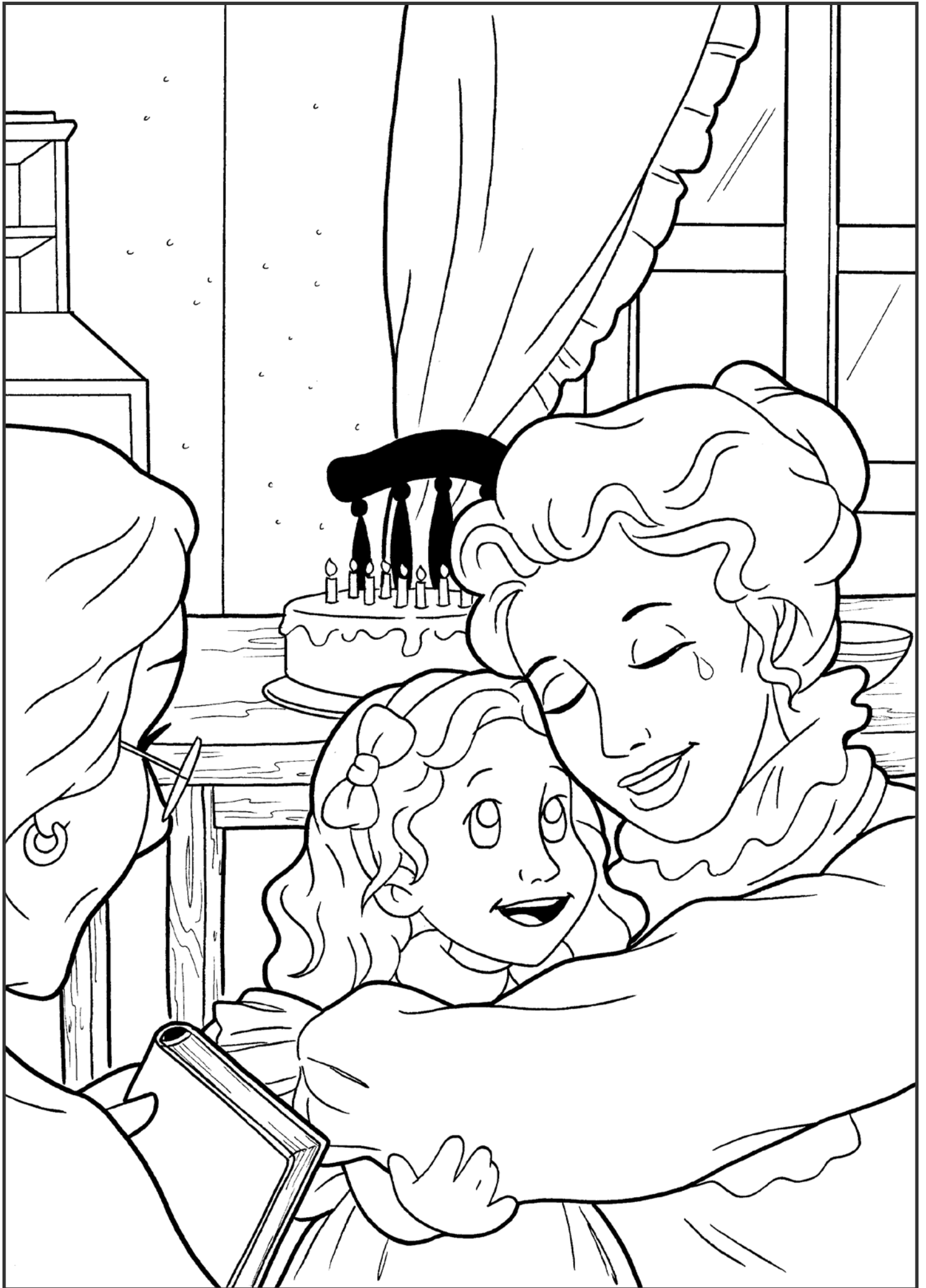
Soon little Fanny Crosby had learned many verses, Psalms and Proverbs, and the whole book of Ruth by heart. On her eighth birthday...

"Happy Birthday, dear Fanny!" Mama sang as she brought out a chocolate cake with eight candles on it.

"Thank you, Mama. May I help light the candles please?" As Fanny lit the candles with mother's help she said, "Oh, if God would grant me one wish for next year, it would be that I could see."

Mama put her arms around Fanny and hugged her tight, "My sweet one! So many nights we've prayed for your blindness, and now we must trust the Lord. Although now you do not understand why God has let this happen, one day you surely will."

"Did you know, Fanny," Grandma said, "many famous people of the past were blind, like John Milton. He was one of the greatest poets that ever lived. In fact many of the world's most famous people



had serious handicaps. Beethoven composed his greatest symphonies when he was completely deaf. You see, Fanny, sometimes God takes away one gift, in order to give us a better one."

The next day:

"Good morning, Mommy!"

"Good morning, Fanny! You look so happy today!"

"Mommy, last night I was thinking about what Grandma said about Beethoven and John Milton, the poet, and I decided to compose a poem. Would you like to hear it?"

"Oh, that's sweet! Yes, please, dear!"

"O, what a happy soul am I;
Although I cannot see,
I am resolved that in this world
Contented I will be!

How many blessings I enjoy,
That other people don't!
To weep and sigh because I am blind,
I cannot and I won't!"

"Mama, I can hear you crying. Did I make you sad?"

"Oh no, my dear! I'm just crying because it's so beautiful."

"Mommy, last night I promised God that I will never again be bitter about my blindness, but rather accept it as a special gift from Him!"

It was not until Fanny was 15 that her mother had saved enough money for her to be able to study at the Institute for the Blind in New York. It was here that she began to write more poetry. At first her teachers and friends tried to discourage her. But one day a doctor named Grover Cleveland came to examine all the blind students:

"Fanny, it says here that you like to write poems. I'd very much like to hear one."

"You would? This one is called... well, I don't have a name for it yet. It says,

"If I knew that a word of mine, a word not kind and true,
Might leave its trace on a loved one's face,
I'd never speak harshly, would you?"

"If I knew that the light of a smile might linger the whole day through,
And lighten some heart with a heavier part,
I wouldn't withhold it, would you?"

"You've got a real poetess here," the doctor exclaimed as he clapped his hands in praise for her good work. "You should give her every possible encouragement. You will hear great things from this lady one day."

This praise and encouragement was just what Fanny needed.

"Fanny," the doctor said, "I'd like to help you by writing your poems down for you."

"Thank you! I've just composed another 40."

"Forty poems??!! You mean all at once?! In your mind?! Without writing them down?" the doctor exclaimed in wonderment.

"Yes. God took away my sight, but He gave me other gifts, like a good memory."

Fanny Crosby spent 23 years at the Institute, first as a student, then as a teacher. She married a blind singer named Alexander Van Alstyne. God gave them a little baby who soon went back to be with Jesus.

"The Lord knew that it would be very hard for us to take proper care of him!" Fanny's husband said.



"I'll miss cuddling him in my arms, but I know that he's safe in the arms of Jesus now. The Lord gave me this poem for our departed little one:

"Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast,
There by His Love o'ershaded
Sweetly my soul shall rest!

"Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe from corroding care,
Safe from the world's temptations,
Sin cannot harm me there!"

"Safe in the Arms of Jesus" was to become one of Fanny's best known hymns.

One day Fanny received an exciting letter!

"My dearest Fanny,

When I left the Institute, I went into politics and am now a Congressman*. I've arranged for you to recite your poems before all Congress. Please come!

Your old friend,
Grover Cleveland."

As the Congressmen listened to her beautiful poems, they had to wipe away their tears.

"On behalf of the US Congress, I'd like to thank you for inspiring us all with your wonderful poems. It's amazing how you've managed to overcome your handicap," said Mr. Cleveland.

"Thank you, Mr. Cleveland! But really it's no handicap. I am thankful for my blindness, because it gives me so much time for prayer and quiet thought. There will be time enough in Heaven for me to see everything."

As a result of her visit to Congress, Fanny Crosby made many important new friends, and how thrilled she was when her old friend Grover Cleveland became President of the United States.

The gifted poetess was always busy. When she wasn't writing, she was busy witnessing in missions and churches. Many of her hymns were inspired by her witnessing experiences—great hymns like "Rescue the Perishing" and "Behold Me at the Door."

On the evening of her 90th Birthday, Fanny's friends had a party in her honor.

"Fanny, I think it's a great misfortune that the Lord did not give you sight when He showered so many other gifts upon you," said the pastor.

"Not at all!" Fanny answered, "You see, Pastor, God has the power to transform all 'misfortunes' into Godsend. In fact, do you know that if before birth I had been able to make one request, it would have been that I should be born blind?"

"But why?"

"Because when I get to Heaven, the first face that shall every gladden my sight will be that of my Savior, Jesus!"

On February 11, 1915, at the age of 95, Fanny Crosby went to be with the Lord.



- What are some of the reasons Fanny was thankful for her blindness?
- How do you think Fanny's life would have been if she had been bitter and angry about her blindness?
- How did Fanny overcome her difficulty?
- Do you know anyone who has learned to make their handicap their strength like Fanny Crosby?

***Congressman:** an important politician in the United States government

Our Father Knows

Our Father knows what's best for us,
So why should we complain?
We always want the sunshine
But He knows there must be rain.

We love the sound of laughter
And the merriment of cheer,
But our hearts would lose their tenderness
If we never shed a tear...

Our Father tests us often
With suffering and with sorrow;
He tests us, not to punish us,
But to help us meet tomorrow...

For growing trees are strengthened
When they withstand the storm,
And the sharp cut of the chisel
Gives the marble grace and form...

God never hurts us needlessly,
And He never wastes our pain,
For every loss He sends to us
Is followed by rich gain...

And when we count the blessings
That God has so freely sent,
We will find no cause for murmuring
And no time to lament...

For our Father loves His children,
And to Him all things are plain,
So He never sends us pleasure
When the soul's deep need is pain...

So whenever we are troubled,
And when everything goes wrong,
It is just God working in us
To make our spirit strong.



Amy's Prayer

Amy loved Jesus, and God's Word had taught her what to do in time of trouble. Jesus loves to hear children pray and ask Him for the things they need. He will answer the prayer of faith, for Jesus said, "Whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive" (Matthew 21:22).

One day Amy was sent to the bakery to buy fresh bread, but on the way her shoelace came undone. She stopped at a doorstep, put her money down on the step and tied her shoe. Then she ran off on her way, forgetting the money. Not until she got to the store did she remember she had left the money on the doorstep. When she went back for it, it was gone!

What could she do now? Amy remembered that God had said, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me" (Psalm 50:15). So she found a quiet little place and poured out her heart to God in prayer, asking Him to help her. And Jesus heard her prayer and answered it. In fact, He had already taken care of her problem, for He has said, "Before they call, I will answer" (Isaiah 65:24). Amy dried her tears and went on her way home, feeling sure that God would make it all right for her.

Now God had put it into the heart of a kind gentleman who, seeing the money, picked it up and left it with a grocer* close by, telling him to watch because someone must have left it and would soon be coming back for it. When the grocer looked out of his window and saw Amy looking for her money on the doorstep and stopping to pray, he knew the money must be hers. So when Amy passed by on her way home, there was the kind grocer waiting to give it to her.

How pleased Amy was to find that God had answered her prayer so soon, and how she thanked and praised Him for His kindness. How light and happy was her heart as she returned to the bakery to buy the bread!

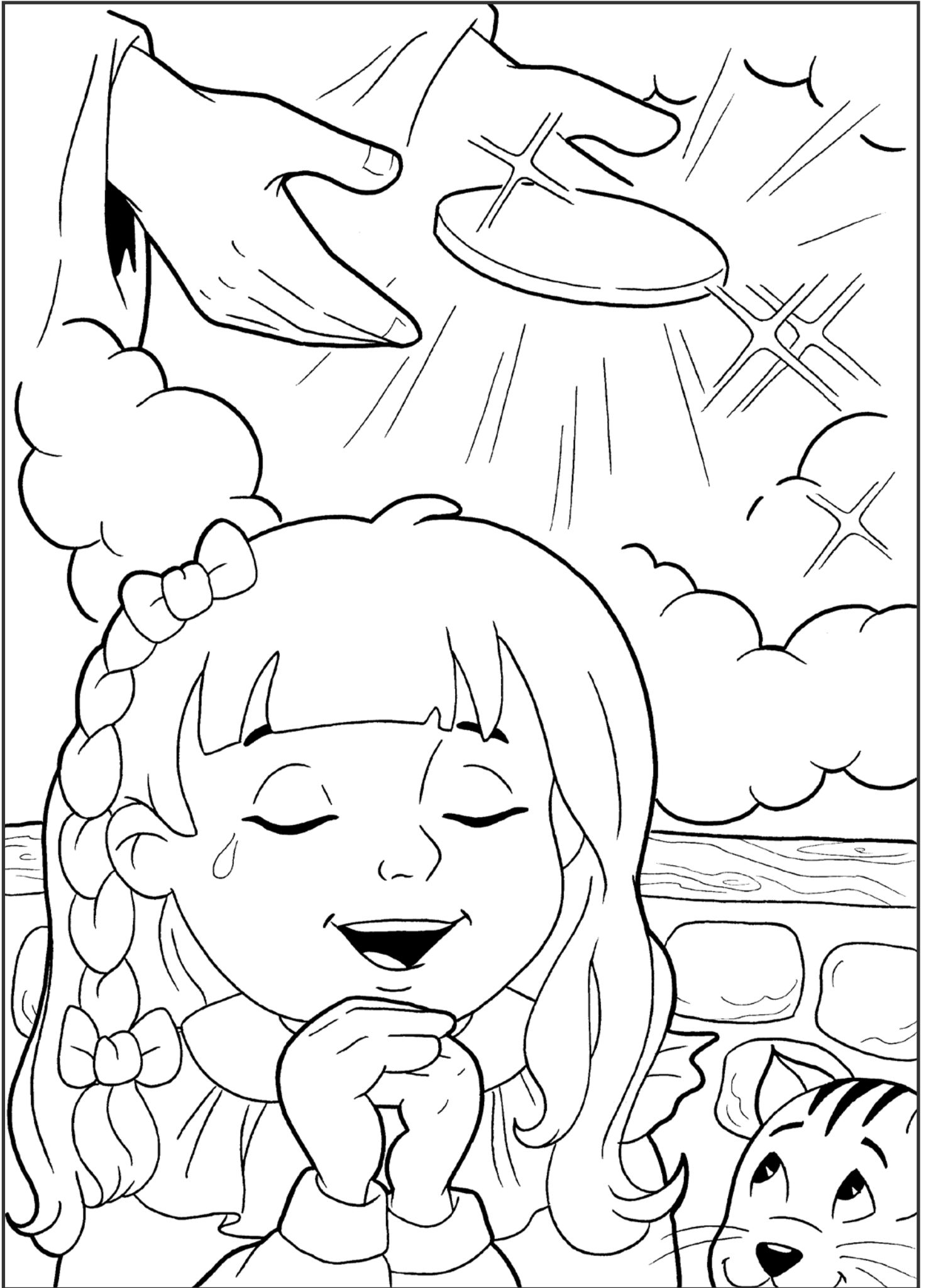
Dear Jesus, please help us to take everything—our joys and our sorrows—to You in prayer. Amen.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1).

"Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me" (Psalm 50:15).



- What had Amy learned to do that helped her not get fretful when she was in trouble?
- Has the Lord ever helped you find something you lost? Tell about it.
- Tell about some difficulties you have prayed and asked God to help you overcome.



Footprints in the Sand

One night a man had a dream. He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the Lord. Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand, one belonging to him and the other to the Lord.

When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand. He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in his life.

This really bothered him and he questioned the Lord about it. "Lord, You said that once I decided to follow You, You'd walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why when I needed You most, You would leave me."

The Lord replied, "My son, My precious child, I love you and would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."

When you walk through a storm
Hold your head up high,
And don't be afraid of the dark.
At the end of the storm
Is a golden sky
And the sweet silver song of a lark.
Walk on through the wind,
Walk on through the rain,
Though your dreams
Be tossed and blown.
Walk on, walk on, with hope in your heart
And you'll never walk alone.
You'll never walk alone.



- Talk about the meaning of the dream.



Prayer and Praise

Thank You, Jesus, that I can always come to You when I'm in trouble. Thank You for helping me to overcome the difficulties I face in life. Help me to put my trust in You.

Amen.

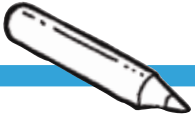
Memory Fun



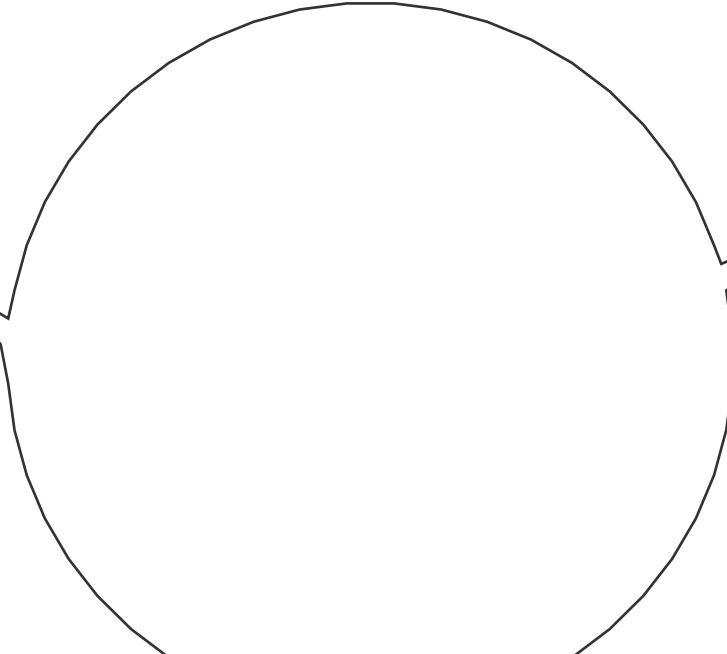
God is our
refuge and
strength, a
very present
help in
trouble.
Psalm 46:1

Pencil Page

Overcoming Difficulties

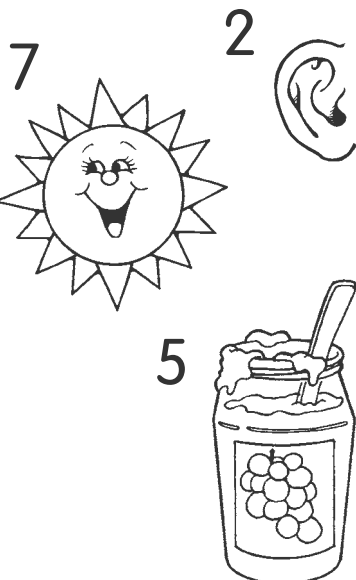


Write about something that you may be having a hard time with, or something that you feel is too difficult for you to do.

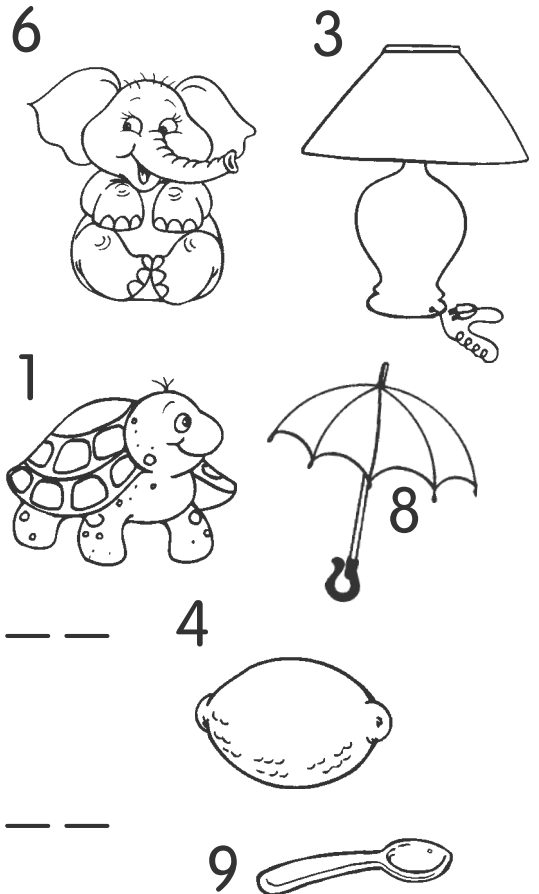


ANSWER

Now what should we do when we find ourselves in a fix like this? To find out the answer, write out the words from the appropriate pictures then read the word made from letters 1-9.



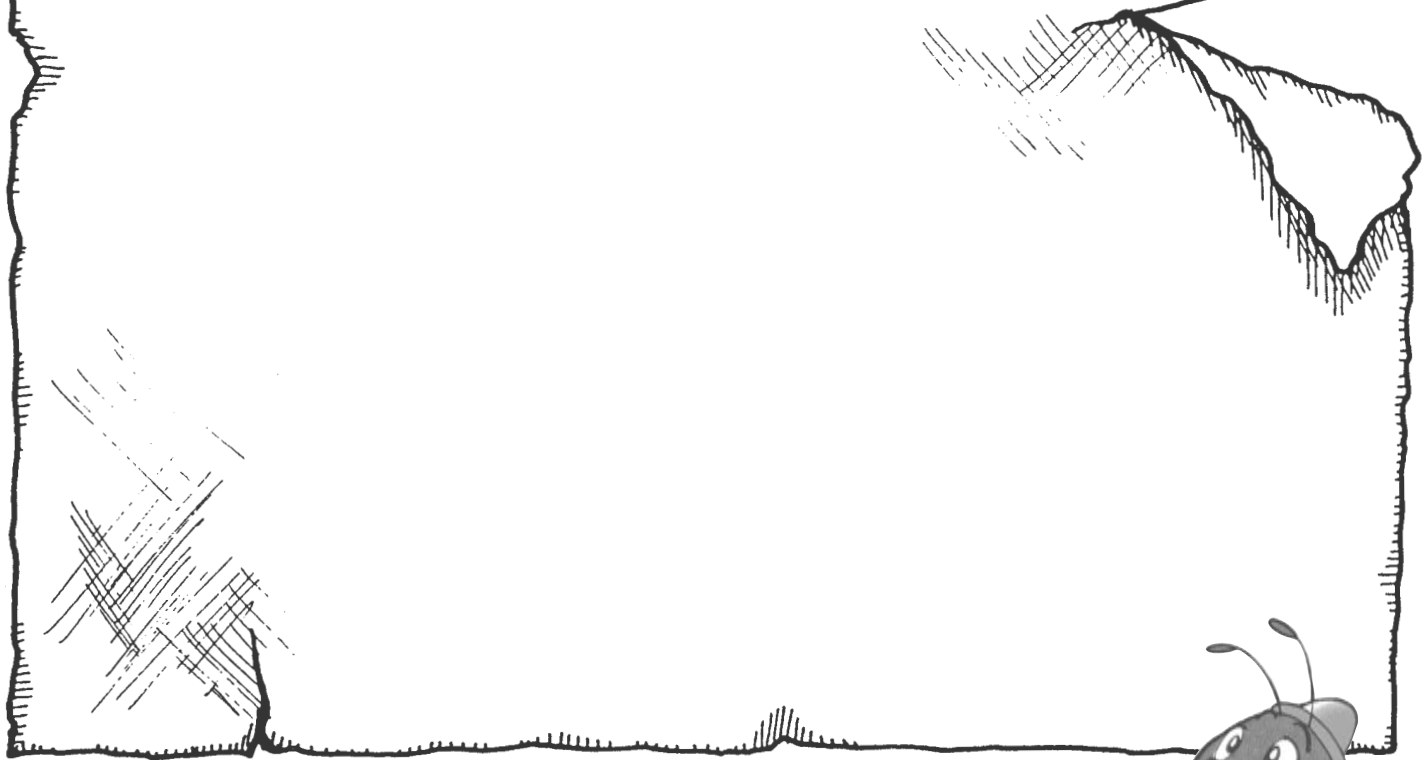
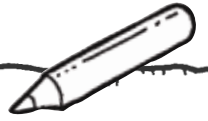
1	<input type="text"/>	_____
2	<input type="text"/>	_____
3	<input type="text"/>	_____
4	<input type="text"/>	_____
5	<input type="text"/>	_____
6	<input type="text"/>	_____
7	<input type="text"/>	_____
8	<input type="text"/>	_____
9	<input type="text"/>	_____



A Bridge for Progress



Read the story below. Then draw a picture.



One day, I watched an ant carrying a piece of straw which seemed a big burden for it. The ant came to a crack in the earth which was too wide for it to cross. It stood for a time as though pondering the situation, then put the straw across the crack and walked over upon it. Here is a lesson for all mankind! A man's burden can be made a bridge for his progress.



Make and Do

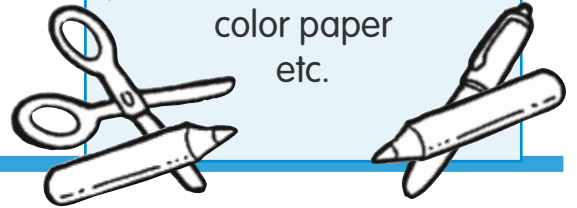
Special Bookmarks

How to:

- Make some special bookmarks to help you in times of difficulty. You can even give these as gifts to others if you like.
- Cut out and mount bookmarks on card paper to make them stronger.
- Use your imagination to decorate your bookmark. Try using pressed flowers or leaves, pictures, color paper or glitter.

You will need:

scissors
cardstock
any of the following:
color pencils or crayons
pressed flowers or leaves
color paper
etc.



Never Alone

When you walk
through a storm
Hold your head up
high,
And don't be afraid
of the dark.
At the end of the
storm
Is a golden sky
And the sweet silver
song of a lark.
Walk on through the
wind,
Walk on through the
rain,
Though your
dreams
Be tossed and
blown.
Walk on, walk on,
with hope in your
heart
And you'll never
walk alone.

A Rainbow of God's Love

Life is not a
cloudless journey,
Storms and
darkness oft
oppress,
But the Father's
changeless mercy
Comes to cheer the
heart's distress;
Heavy clouds may
darkly hover,
Hiding all faith's
view above,
But across the
thickest darkness
Shines the rainbow
of His love.

Be Glad of Rain

Is it raining, little flower?
Be glad of rain;
Too much sun would
wither thee;
'Twill shine again.
The clouds are very black,
'tis true;
But just behind them
shines the blue.

Art thou weary, tender
heart?
Be glad of pain:
In sorrow sweetest virtues
grow,
As flowers in rain.
God watches, and thou
wilt have sun,
When clouds their perfect
work have done.

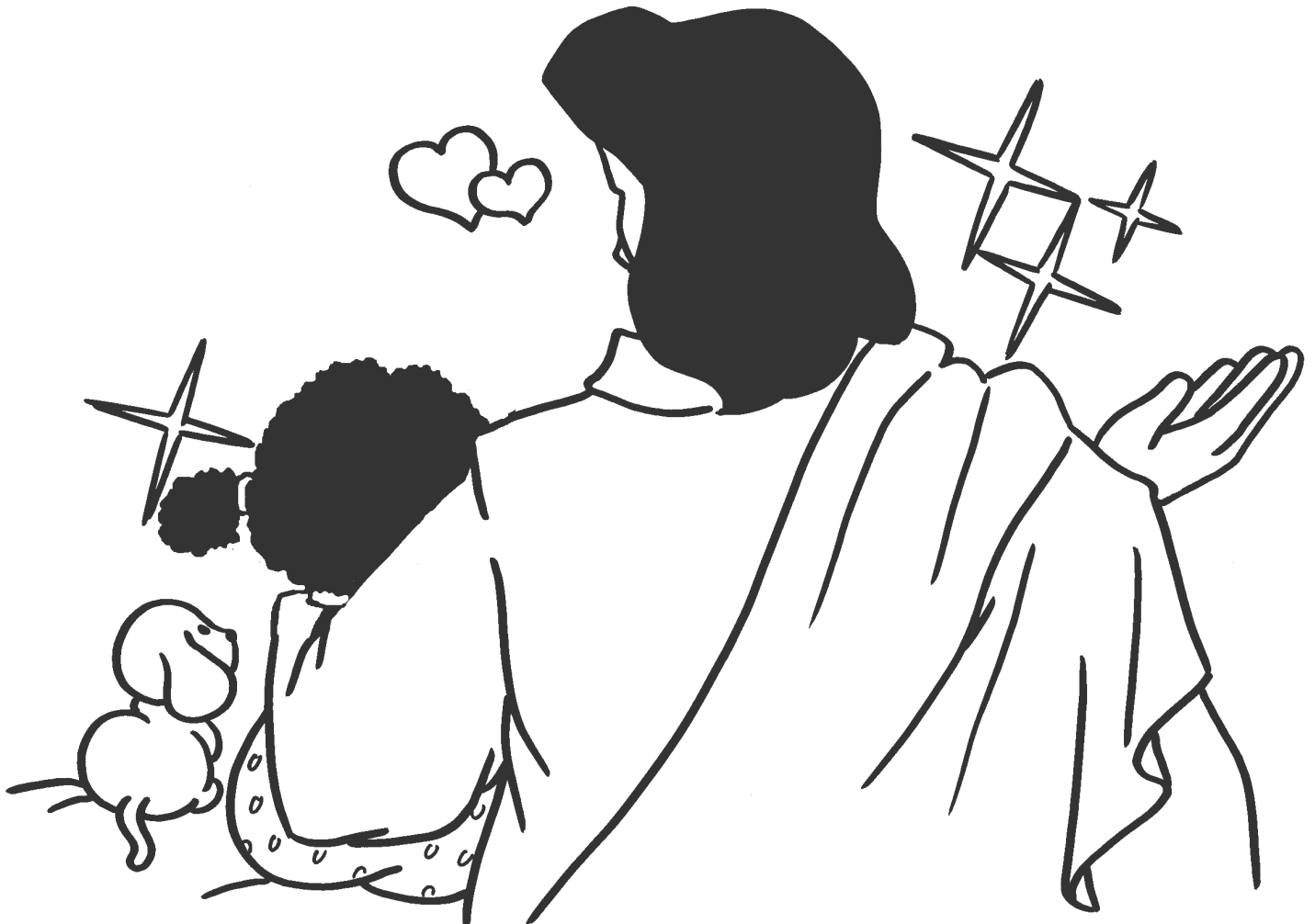
(This page intentionally blank)

From Jesus—with Love



Everyone faces difficulties in life at one time or another, but the important thing is that you know how to overcome those difficulties. Maybe you have a problem that you need to solve, or maybe you have a handicap or a physical problem that troubles you. Whatever your difficulty may be, if you have a little problem or a really big problem, you can ask Me, your Heavenly Father, for help, and I'll be right there to help you.

Did you know that having difficulties in life is not a bad thing!—Because they help to make you into what I want you to be. If everything was always good and perfect and you never had any troubles, you wouldn't learn much, would you? So don't worry about difficulties or making mistakes or having problems, because I'll be with you to help you overcome them and to learn from them. Whatever I do, I do in love, so trust Me, My dear children.



THE STEPS PROGRAM

Character Building Series

Help your children build character and sound values through the 20 *Character Building* lessons in this course.

The **STEPS** Character Building series is a unique life-skills learning program intended for use at home, camp, or classroom, by parents, counselors, caregivers, and teachers alike. Each booklet in this series focuses on developing a personal or interpersonal skill, social value, or quality of character necessary for positive self-esteem and to live a happy, rewarding, fulfilling life, in peace and harmony with others.



aurora

www.auroraproduction.com

