

Selfishness/Unselfishness



Learning & Growing
STEPS
Learning & Growing



Contents:

The Tug of War	4
The House that Glowed	8
The Little Newsboy	11
The Selfish Chief	12
Prayer and Memory Fun	14
Love Cups	15
Find the Differences	16
Unselfishness Wheel	17
From Jesus—with Love	19



A candle loses nothing of its light by lighting another candle.

By Amber Darley and Agnes Lemaire

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

The Tug of War

Deep within a park, there grew a tall and leafy oak tree. On one of the lower branches sat a new nest. Two robins had chosen this place to start a home. Mama Robin had laid four beautiful blue eggs. Day and night she covered them with her body so they would stay cozy and warm.

Finally, one day, the four little eggs cracked open and out came four little baby robins. They didn't look much like robins to begin with, but in a short time they had fluffy feathers and had all opened their eyes for a look at the big, wide world around them. Mama and Papa Robin gave them all names. They called the two boys Billy and Reddy, and they called the two girls Cherry and Chirpy.

They often fought among themselves over who would get the best or the most food, and they never said "thank you" to Papa or Mama Robin, who worked very hard to find food for all of them. No matter how much their parents talked to them and tried to help them get along, they were becoming quite naughty little birds, quarreling and teasing and pushing and shoving much of the time. Then one day something happened that changed all that.

Mama and Papa Robin were getting ready to fly out to search for some breakfast for everyone. This particular morning everyone was extra hungry. "Papa, can you bring me a nice, fat, juicy worm?" pleaded Billy. "Oh, I don't like worms," whined Chirpy. "Papa, can you just bring us some bugs?" "No way," piped in Cherry. "I'd rather have some nice fresh berries."

"Children, remember your manners," Mama Robin gently reminded her hungry brood*. "When you ask for things, you need to be kind and polite and say something like, 'Please, Mama and Papa, could you bring me a nice worm?' When there is food you do not like, you should still try to eat it with thankful hearts because God has supplied it and helped your father and me find it for you."

The young birds listened for a moment, but soon forgot all about what Mama Robin had just told them.

"You know what I would really like? Some nice, crunchy seeds!" demanded Reddy. "Papa," said Billy, "why don't you just get what everyone wants so we will all be happy?" "Yes, get us all the things we want!" echoed the others. "That will make us happy!"

"Oh dear, what can we do?" whispered Mama Robin to Papa Robin.

"We could try to give each one just what they want. We will have to do a lot of extra searching, but if it will make them happy, it may be worth it. Come on, let's go and see what we can find," Papa Robin said at last.

Papa and Mama Robin flew off to the far side of the park. Papa Robin was the first to spot a very large earthworm wiggling his way up to the surface and into the grass.

With great speed he flew down and grabbed the worm in his beak. The worm was very large and very strong and was still partly in the ground. The worm resisted with all its might, and Papa Robin pulled and pulled. Mama saw the struggle so she joined the fray and together they pulled and pulled, and at last, the great big worm gave up and the happy robins flew back to the nest with their very large catch.

"Oh look! Papa found my worm!" Billy chirped. "It looks like I'm going to get my breakfast first!" Billy opened his very large mouth expecting Papa to drop the whole worm in.

"Billy," Mama Robin told him, "this worm is big enough for all of you. Papa and I will keep looking, but it takes quite a long time to fly across the park and back. You children will just have to share this worm until we get back." Mama and Papa Robin flew away again to continue their search for more breakfast, but... well, you guessed it ... Billy didn't want to share.

"Sorry, guys, this is my worm! You all ordered something else for breakfast. You'll just have to wait your turn." "But what if they can't find any crunchy seeds anywhere?" Reddy fretted out loud. "Please, Billy, let us have some of the worm too!" "No, no, no! No way! This is my worm, and I'm going to eat it all by myself!"

That is when the great tug of war began. Billy grabbed one end of the worm and Chirpy, Cherry and Reddy grabbed the other end and started pulling. Billy climbed up on the edge of the nest to get better footing and yank the worm away from the rest of them. Billy was now almost completely out of the nest. He was standing on the edge of the nest and all that was holding him was the worm. Billy yanked the worm with all his might, and Chirpy, Cherry and Reddy lost their balance and fell forward. Suddenly Billy fell backwards out of the nest! He opened his beak in fright and lost hold of the worm. Down, down Billy fell. It was a long way down, and he landed with a "plop" on some soft grass.



"Oh no!" squawked Reddy. "Look, Billy has fallen all the way to the ground. Is he hurt?" "I don't think so," said Cherry. "See, he's getting up and hopping around. But he can't fly yet and he is too big for Mama and Papa to try to lift, so how will he ever get back in the nest?"

Their eyes scanned the woods in every direction to see if help could be found, but there was none.

"Oh no!" cried Cherry. "Look over there! Coming across the lawn this way! It's that big mean old tomcat that Mama and Papa and all their friends have to keep chasing away." "Oh dear, this doesn't look too good. Let's all pray for Billy!" said Chirpy. "Dear God, please keep Billy. Rescue him from the terrible tomcat, and somehow, help him to get back up here in the nest."

Down below, little Billy was having a few troubled thoughts of his own. He was all alone on the ground, the most dangerous place in the world for baby birds. Billy peeked up over the grass and looked around. His eyes spotted a large black tomcat making its way towards him. His heart froze. "I'm in serious trouble," he said to himself. Billy decided to pray too. He prayed harder than he had ever prayed before.

"Please dear Jesus, I am so, so sorry for being a bad, selfish, grabby and unthankful bird. I promise I'll do my best to learn my lesson. Oh, please keep me safe. Hide me so the tomcat doesn't see me. And please, somehow help me get back into the nest."

Closer and closer came the old tomcat to where Billy was, still hiding in the grass. Any moment now the cat would discover Billy. Suddenly, Chirpy spotted Papa flying towards them and Mama behind him. Chirpy cried out in her loudest voice, "Hurry! Hurry! Billy is in trouble and there's a cat coming!"

Papa's sharp eyes soon spotted the cat and could see he was nearly to where poor Billy was trembling in the grass. Papa let out a loud, angry cry, dove straight down at the cat and pecked his head, flapping his wings noisily. Then Mama swooped in for a quick peck and escaped before the cat could catch her. The cat was so surprised by this sudden attack from the air that he raced off across the park.

His brother and sisters heaved a sigh of relief. Billy was safe for the moment. He wouldn't starve because Mama and Papa would find him and feed him on the ground. But the ground was still a very dangerous place and it would be some time before Billy could fly.

Then the miracle happened. A kind old man came strolling by the oak tree and, hearing Billy chirping, he came over and discovered him hiding in the grass. "Don't worry, little fellow," the man said. "Jesus loves little birds and so do I. He knows you have fallen to the ground and are in trouble, so He brought me along to help you."

The old man knelt down to pick him up. "Is your nest nearby?" Then he heard little Chirpy chirping loudly up in the tree. She was so worried about Billy.

"Look," said Cherry. "The old man sees our nest and is bringing Billy back to us! Oh, thank You, dear Jesus, for answering our prayers!"

"There you go, little fellow," said the old man, as he put Billy back into the nest.

"It's so good to be home!" said Billy. "I'm sorry, everyone! I was so selfish and unloving. I surely learned a lesson the hard way today!"

"We all learned a lesson today," said Chirpy. "I feel almost like we grew up in one day."

"Come on, everyone," said Reddy. "Look, we still have a nice big worm to eat."

So they all shared the worm. Mama and Papa Robin looked on proudly and were so pleased to see them all behaving so nicely. From then on, the young robins made a big effort to be kind to each other and were very polite to their parents. Whenever they were given some yummy food, they all chorused a big "Thank you!"



- In the beginning of the story, what were the little birdies doing that was not good?
- What happened to little Billy to help him learn his lesson? Do you think the other birdies learned something as well?
- Talk about situations where you might be tempted to be selfish and how this story helped you to learn to be unselfish.
- As we grow up and become more mature, we learn to become more unselfish. What do your parents do for you that is unselfish? How can we show love to others by being unselfish?
- Jesus said that if we give to others we are showing love to God. What can you give to others? (Your time, a word of encouragement, sharing a toy, giving them a special portion of a treat, etc.)

*brood: a group of young birds hatched at one time and cared for by the same mother



The House that Glowed

It was Christmas Eve, and poor little Johann, an orphan with no home or family to go to, was trudging wearily through the snow.

His coat was ragged, and sodden* with melted snow. His shoes were worn and split at the seams, so that his feet were numb with cold. His cap, pulled well down over his ears and forehead, had a great tear that let in the ice cold wind.

Night was falling, and the gathering darkness found the homeless little boy still plodding on his sad and lonely way.

If only I could find some shelter, some place where I could get warm, and the wind would not chill me so, he thought to himself. If only someone would give me some food to eat, and something hot to drink!

Coming to the edge of the forest, he caught sight of a little village nestled in the valley below, with several fine, large houses on the hillside all around. Lights were twinkling in the windows, while the smoke from many chimneys, curling upward, blended with the murky* sky.

A great new hope sprang up in little Johann's heart. Here at last, among so many lovely homes, he felt he would find someone to care for him. He walked more quickly, so sure he was that his troubles were almost over.

Soon he came to the entrance of a fine, big mansion. There were many lights in the windows and a very bright one over the front door. Surely, he thought, people who could live in such a house must have lots of money and would be only too pleased to help a poor, hungry, little boy.

Very bravely he walked up to the front door, and by standing on tiptoe, managed to catch hold of the handle of the bell. He pulled it hard, and there was such a noise inside that it frightened him. But he was more frightened still when the great oak door was thrown back and a big man dressed in the finest clothes looked out at him.

"Did you ring that bell?" asked the haughty* butler, frowning.

"Y-y-y-yes," stammered Johann, "I-I-I'm very cold and hungry, and I thought you..."

"This is Christmas Eve," snapped the butler, "and the house is full of guests. I'm sorry, but we haven't time to bother with the likes of you just now. Good night."

And the door was shut.

"Oh!" said Johann to himself, "I never thought anyone would do that. But perhaps they are too busy here. I must try somewhere else."

So he walked on down into the village itself, passing by the other big mansions for fear the people inside might also be too busy to care about hungry little boys on Christmas Eve.

From the first house he reached there came sounds of music and laughter, and feeling sure that there must be very friendly people living there, he knocked gently on the door. But there was so much noise inside that he had to knock again and again, each time louder than before.

At last the door swung open, and a young man wearing a funny paper cap looked out.

"Excuse me," said Johann, "but I wondered if you could..."

"Sorry," the young man answered, "we're having a Christmas Eve party in here, and we can't stop now."

"But please, please!" pleaded Johann.

"Sorry, good night!" said the young man. And bang! The door was shut.

Terribly disappointed, Johann went next door. At the next house, a crabby old gentleman merely told him to run home and not bother the neighbors. Run home? thought Johann. How can I do that?

At another house he was told to call again another day. They would help him then, perhaps, the people said. But he needed help now!

So, going from house to house through the entire village, he sought shelter and food, and found none.

Almost hopeless and heartbroken he trudged out into the night, leaving the twinkling lights behind him. He felt like he just wanted to give up, he was so tired, so hungry, so discouraged.

Just then he happened to look up and found himself passing a tiny, tumbledown* old cottage, so dark and dismal* that he probably wouldn't have seen it at all but for the white carpet of snow on the ground showing it up. Dark stained glass covered the one window, and faint streaks of light gleamed from under the door and through cracks in the woodwork.

Johann stood still and wondered what he should do. Should he knock here?



What would be the use? Surely if the people who lived in all the big houses—who had money for lovely parties and things—couldn't afford to help a poor boy, how could the folks in a house like this? No, it was of no use. Better not bother them.

Then he thought again. He had knocked at so many houses, there could be no harm in trying one more. So he turned from the road up the snow-covered garden path and tapped gently on the door.

A moment later the door opened cautiously, and an elderly woman peered out. "Bless my soul!" she exclaimed. "Whatever are you doing out there in the cold tonight?"

"Please..." began Johann.

But before he could say another word she had flung the door wide open and pulled him inside.

"You poor little child," she exclaimed. "Deary, deary me. You look so cold and hungry and wet through. Let's get those things off at once! Wait a moment while I stir up the fire and put the kettle on."

Johann looked about him and saw that the little one-room cottage was as bare as could be. The light he had seen through the crack came from one lone candle set on the mantelpiece. But he hadn't time to see much else, for the kind woman was soon stripping off his wet rags, wrapping him in a blanket, and setting him up at the table before a bowl of steaming soup.

Then she went back to stir the pot on the stove. As she did so she suddenly noticed something and looked up.

Was it a dream, or were her eyes deceiving her? The candlelight had given place to a warm and lovely glow that seemed to be getting brighter every minute, filling every corner of the cottage with a Heavenly radiance. Every drab piece of furniture seemed to be shining and glistening* like burnished* gold as when God filled the Temple with His glory.

And the rich man, looking down from his mansion on the hill, suddenly exclaimed, "There's a strange light in the valley. Look! Widow Greatheart's cottage is on fire!"

The news spread swiftly from house to house, and soon all the parties were abandoned as the people, wrapping themselves up in their coats and shawls, rushed out to see what was the matter.

They saw the light, too, and running toward the widow's cottage, beheld the poor tumbledown* old building glowing like a bright light in the darkness.

Peering inside, all they could see was the dear old woman caring for the very same little boy who had knocked that night at the doors of their homes, and whom they had selfishly turned away.

Then, as the light faded, they knocked on the door to ask anxiously what could have happened.

"I really do not know," said Widow Greatheart, with a smile of wondrous joy and satisfaction on her face. "I just seemed to hear a Voice saying to me, 'Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My children, you did it to Me'" (Matthew 25:40).



- Why did Jesus bless Widow Greatheart with His beautiful light?
- Was she the only one who had a chance to receive the blessing from the Lord?
- Read Matthew 25:35-40 and discuss how it applies to the widow. Then read Matthew 25:42-45 and see how it applies to the other people in town.
- When you are asked to do things to help others, do you think about doing it as unto Jesus?
- How do you think the people felt who refused to help Johann? What would you do if you were in this situation? With so much poverty around us, it is easy to get hardened to others' suffering. How can we keep a tender heart for others' needs? Jesus said that you would get a reward even if you just give someone a cup of cold water. Do you think God remembers acts of kindness, and rewards them?

***sodden:** thoroughly soaked

***murky:** dark, dim, or gloomy

***haughty:** scornfully and condescendingly proud

***tumbledown:** being in such bad repair as to seem in danger of collapsing; very dilapidated or rickety

***dismal:** causing gloom or depression; dreary

***glisten:** to shine by reflection with a sparkling luster

***burnished:** a smooth, glossy finish or appearance; luster

The Little Newsboy

A little orphan newsboy was selling his papers on the streets. A man stopped to buy a paper from him. While the man was searching his pocket for a coin he questioned the newsboy as to where he lived. The answer was that he lived in a little cabin way down in the dark district of the city, on the riverbank. The next question was, "Who lives with you?"

The answer was "Only Jim. Jim is crippled and can't do any work. He's my pal."

The man ventured* the remark, "You'd be better off without Jim, wouldn't you?"

The answer came with some scorn. "No, Sir, I couldn't spare Jim. I wouldn't have anybody to go home to. And say Mister, I wouldn't want to live and work with nobody to divide with, would you?" That was a short sermon, but it went home.



- Talk about the different things that you like to do or play with your friends.
- The Bible says that two are better than one. Can you think of some reasons why?

*venture: dare

Selfishness/Unselfishness

The Selfish Chief

"There at last, my well is finished. Now I will post my sign," the Chief said as his servant hammered up a wooden sign over the well, which read: "No one shall drink of this well except for my family. If anyone else dare to drink from these waters, they shall die."—The Chief

He looked at it proudly, "Now I will have all the water I need."

An old man stumbled down the path tapping his stick and bumped into the Chief. He held out his cup and cried, "Water, water! Please may I have some water?"

"Go away, old man, before I throw you into a very deep pit," the Chief said. "Can't you read the sign? This is only for me and my family!"

"I am so sorry! But, O great one, I am blind."

The Chief yelled at him, "That is no excuse! I will forgive you this time, but don't come back here again begging for my water."

"Yes, of course. Thank you for your mercy, O great one," the old man said as he stumbled on down the path.

The Chief came back the next day. He had his servant throw a bucket in to get water, but it only made a clunking noise. The Chief heard it and looked down into the well. He was very disappointed, "What? There is no water in my well? Why not? Maybe the water will come in a few days."

But every day he came to the well, it was always dry.

He called his wise man and asked him, "If you value your life, show me why my well is empty."

"O, Chief, live forever. The well will be dry until the day that you share it with your people," the wise man said with fear and trembling.

"Very well then, the people of the village may draw water from the well during the night. But I shall have it all day," the chief commanded, and so it was done.

The Chief came to the well the next day to see if the water had come, "What? Still no water! I will wait until nightfall and see what happens. But I will hide in this empty building and watch from there so no one shall see me."

As soon as the sun went down, all of the villagers came to the well with empty vessels to draw water.

"Praise be to God!" one man shouted as he drew up a pitcher of water and drank freely from it. Another woman filled up her jug. After she and her children had drunk, she gave them all a bath. All of the village children had a fun time splashing and throwing water at each other until everyone was thoroughly wet. The Chief went home quite puzzled and ... quite thirsty. For he was ashamed to ask the villagers for water after he had been so selfish.

The following day as soon as the sun arose, the Chief came down to the dry well. Behind him was a servant that held in his hand a bucket of paint and some paintbrushes.

"Paint what I have commanded," the Chief said in a little kinder tone than he had talked before.

"Yes, O great one. It shall be written even as you have commanded." The Chief looked back in pleasure to read the new sign, which read: Come, whoever is thirsty. Drink of these waters freely.

Before the paint was dry, the Chief could hear the pleasant sound of waters gurgling and bubbling up from below. Soon the well was full to the top and all the villagers came out to drink. Everyone was surprised to see the Chief drinking water, joking, and laughing with all of the villagers.

The well continued to give fresh clean sweet water—even in time of drought. It became known throughout the land as "the well that never runs dry."



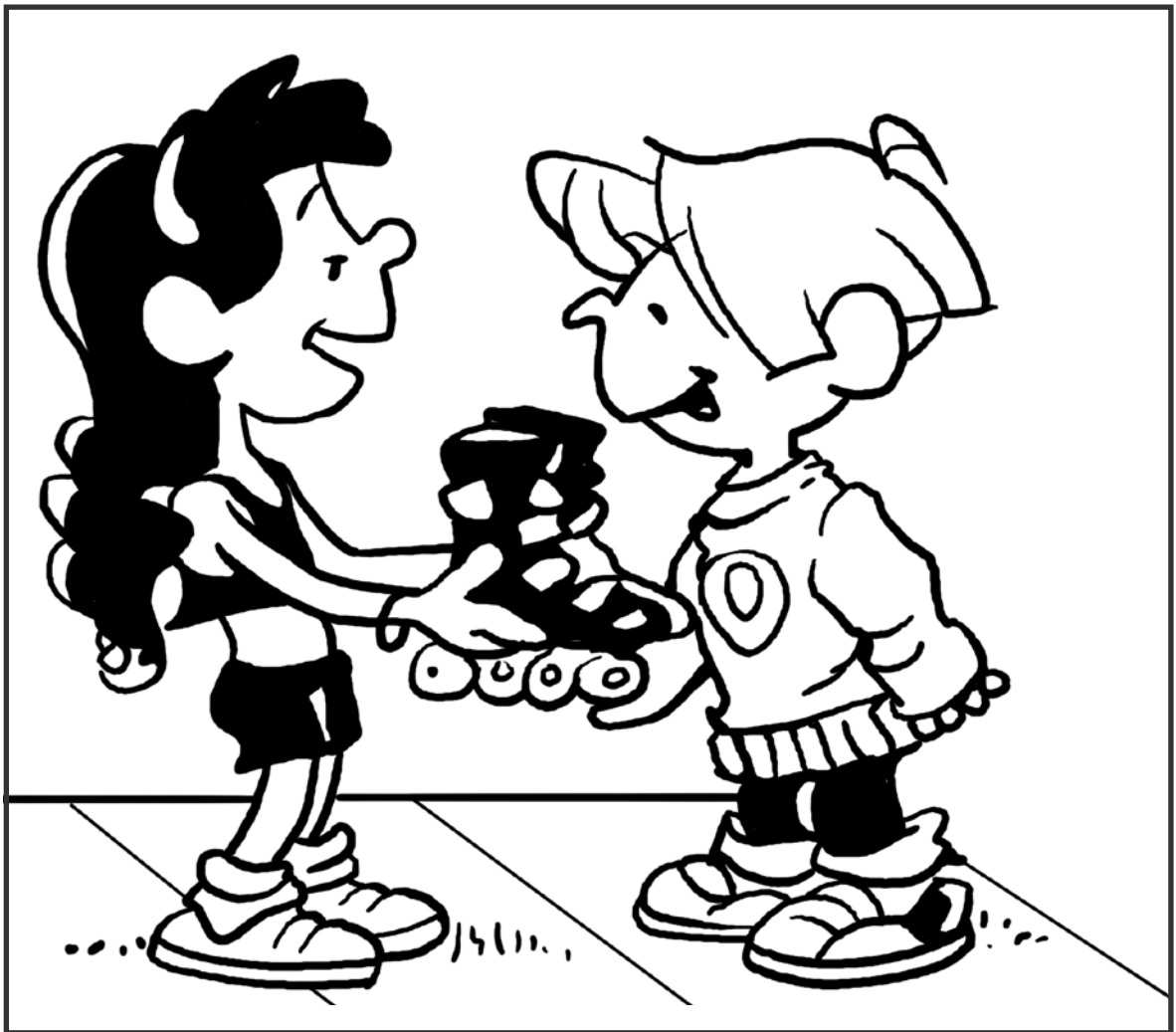
- Why do you think the Chief wanted the water from the well for himself?
- What happened when he kept it all for himself?
- When he started to share, what happened to the water?
- Talk about all the good things that happen when we share cheerfully with others.
- Have you ever held back from giving to others because you were afraid that there would not be enough for you? Talk about a time that you gave something to help someone. How did you feel?



Prayer and Praise

Thank You Jesus for all the people who give and share unselfishly with me. Please make me giving and unselfish too. When I start feeling selfish, please show me the right way to be. Amen.

Memory Fun



It is more blessed to give than to receive.

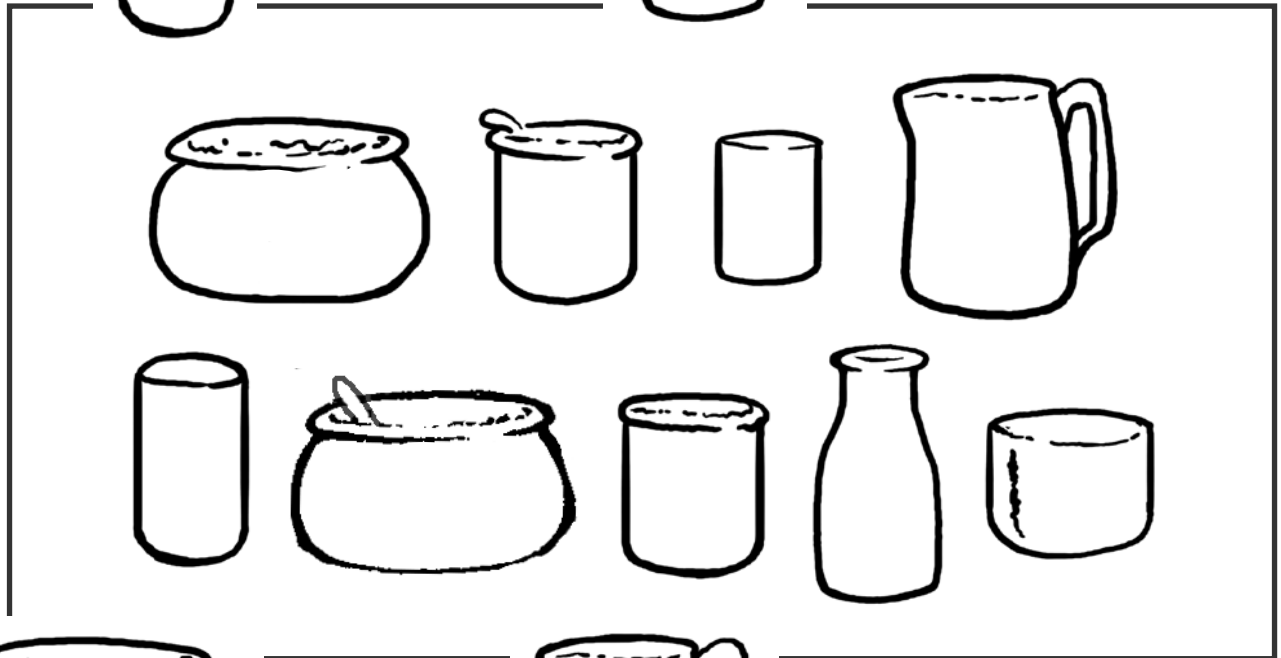
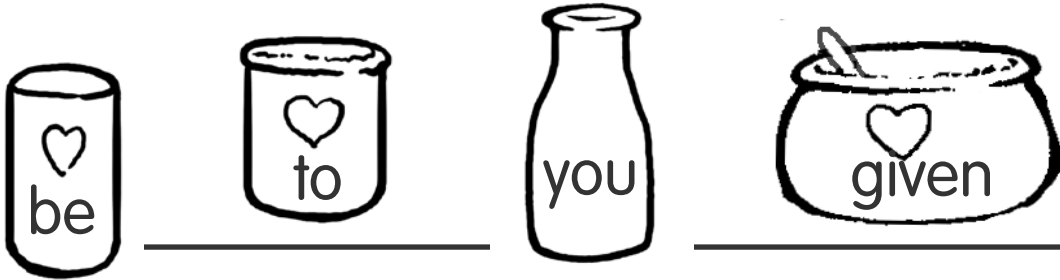
Acts 20:35

Pencil Page

Love Cups



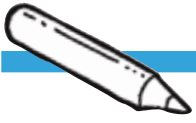
Match the love cups with the ones in the box. Write the words on each matching love cup and read what the message says.



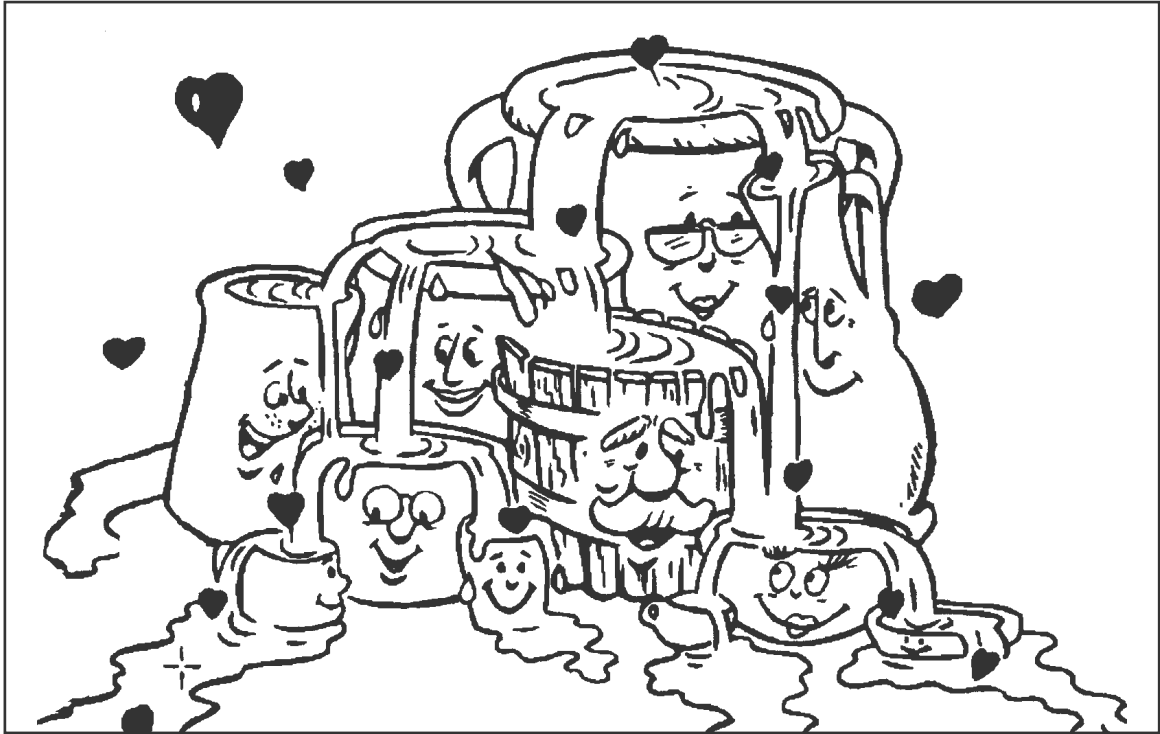
Write about something unselfish you can do for someone. Then draw a picture about it.

Pencil Page

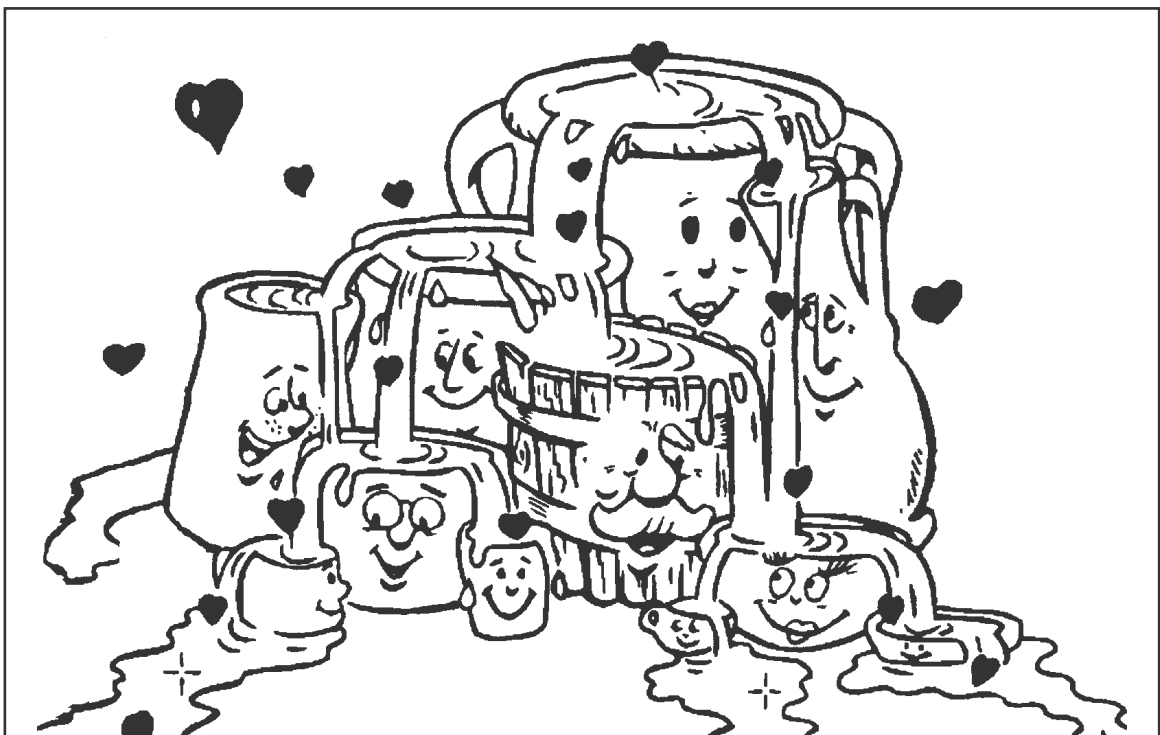
Find the Differences



Circle the differences between the two pictures. There are 10 in total.



Seldom can a heart be lonely if it seeks a lonelier still,
Self-forgetting, seeking only emptier cups of love to fill.



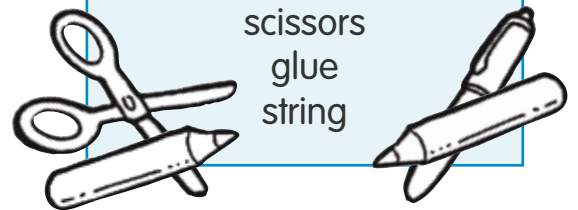
Make and Do

Unselfishness Wheel

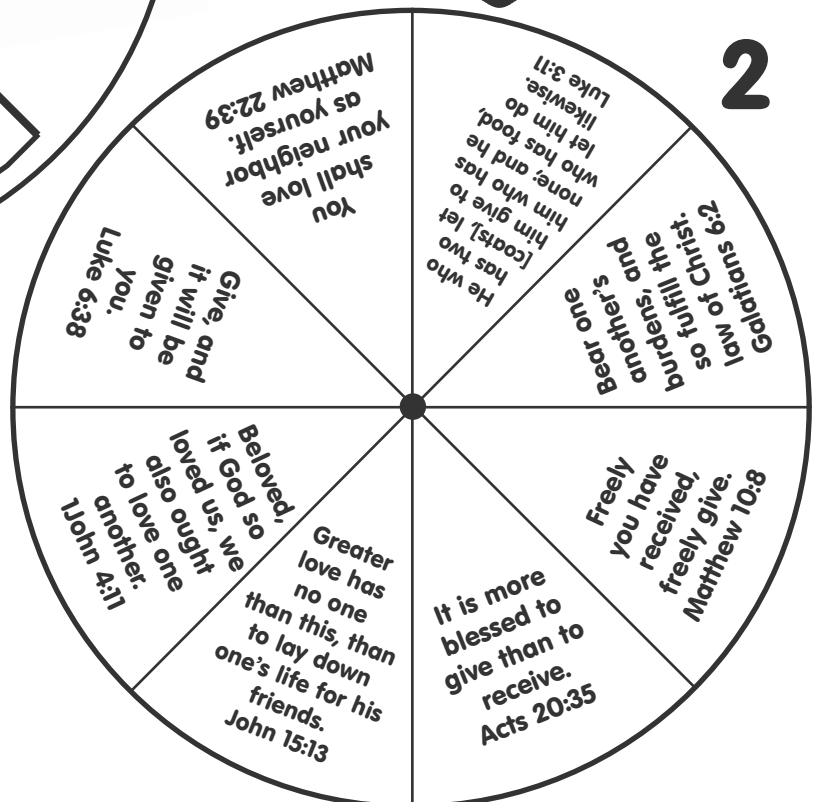
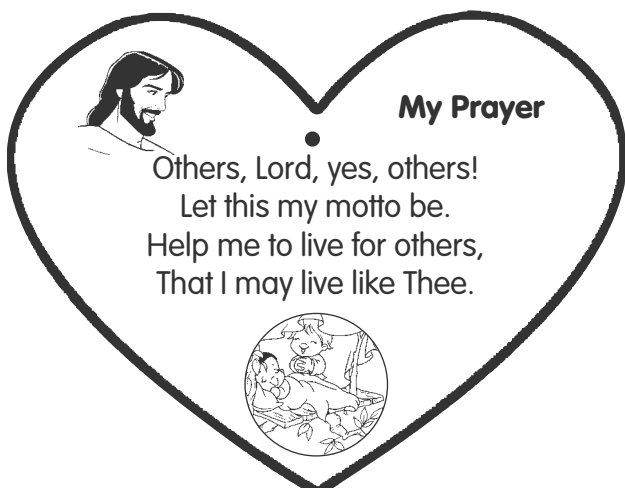
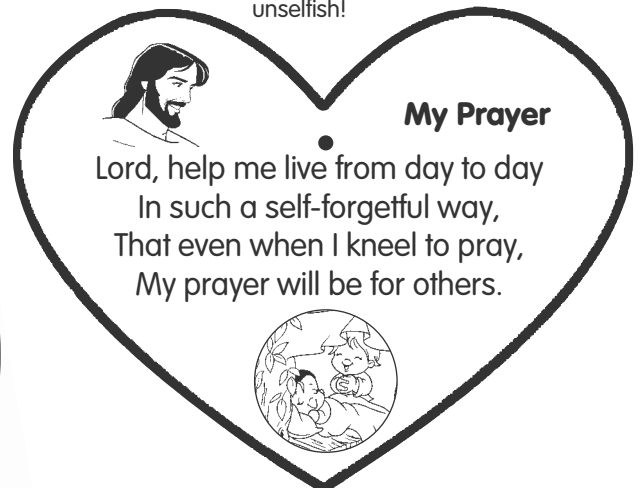
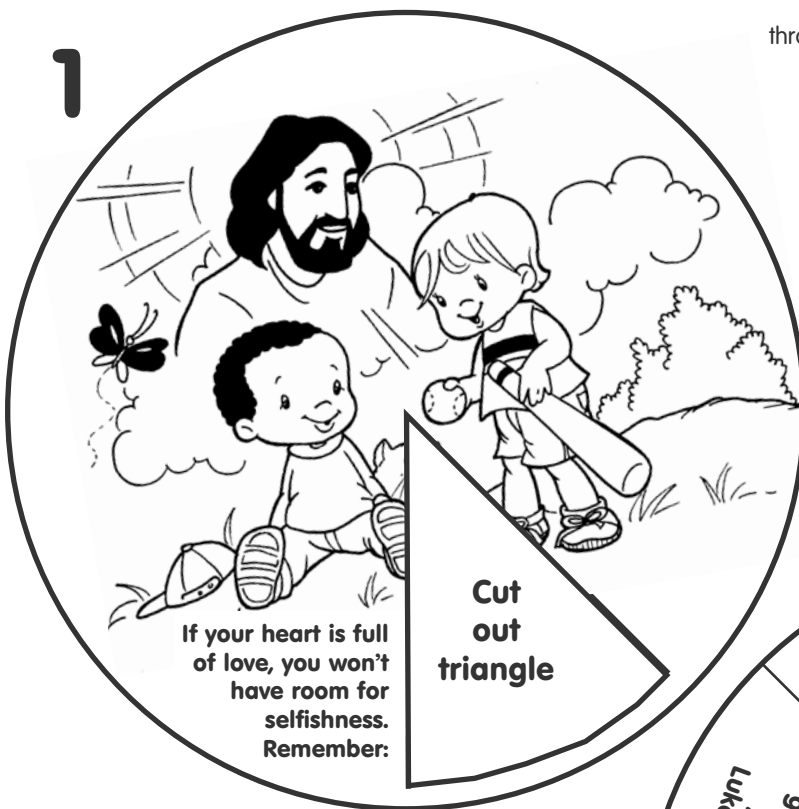
How to:

- Color in and mount the circles on card paper.
- Cut out the window on circle number 1.
- Place circle 1 on top of circle 2 and fasten in the middle with a paper fastener.
- Turn the circle and find Bible verses to remind you to be unselfish.

You will need:
 color pencils or crayons
 cardstock
 paper fastener
 scissors
 glue
 string



Extra: Cut out and glue the hearts back-to-back. Place a string through the black dot and you have a hanging heart reminder to be unselfish!



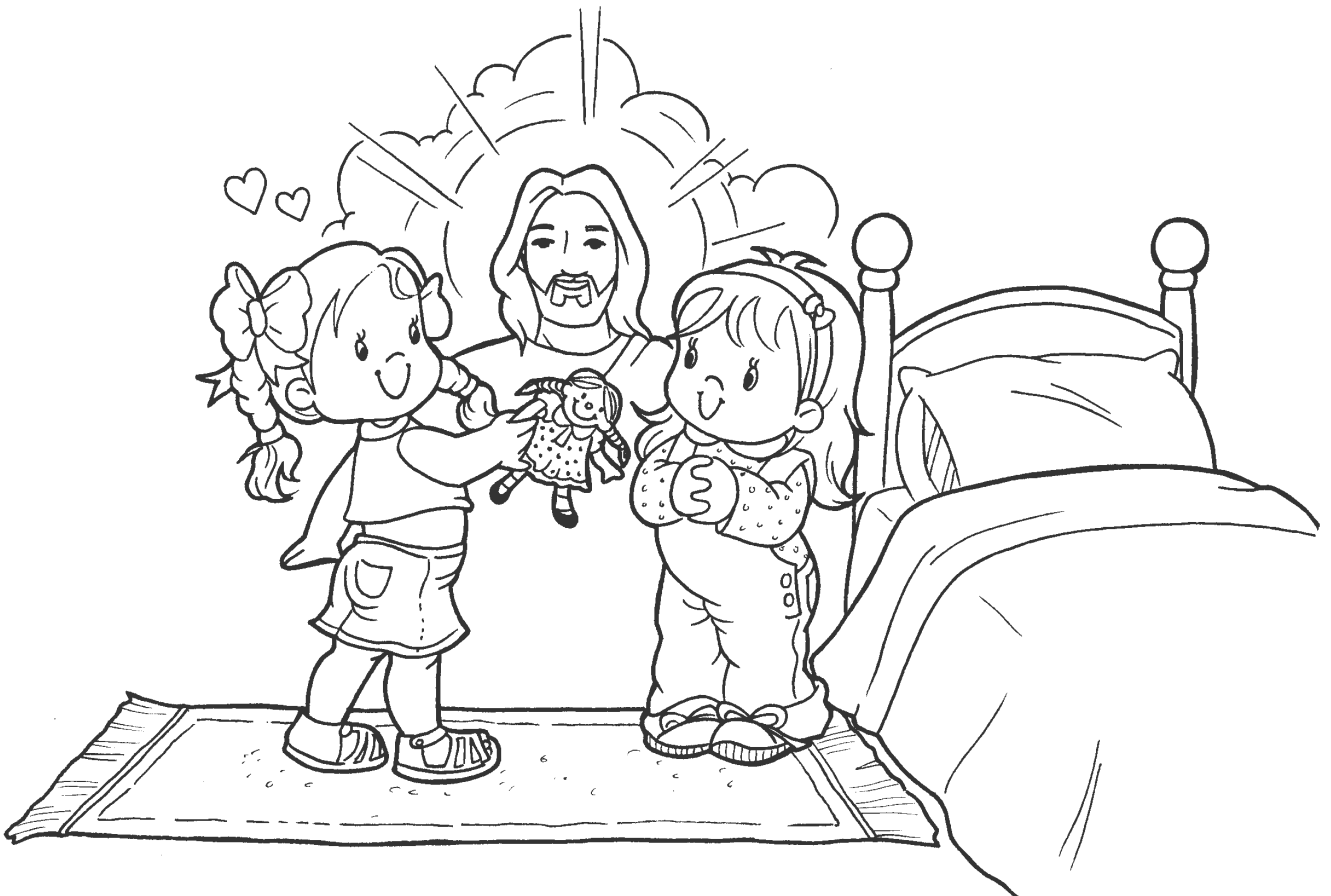
(This page intentionally blank)

From Jesus—with Love



Thank you for sharing your love with those around you. Thank you for being kind and thinking of others. The more you think of others and try to make them happy, the more you make Me happy. And the more I make you happy too!

When you're kind and unselfish with others, then they'll be the same way with you! Think about your friends; I'm sure you like the kind, unselfish ones more than the selfish ones, right? They're so much more fun and easy to get along with. So if that's the kind of friend you like, then try being that kind of friend yourself! Fill up your heart with love and you will be kind, loving, and unselfish, and I will bless you and all those you love will bless you with their love and kindness too!



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

