

Be the Best You
Can Be



Learning & Growing
STEPS
Learning & Growing



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Do all the good you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
For all the people you can,
As long as ever you can.

By Amber Darley and Agnes Lemaire

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Flying Feet

The sun was rising and my mother called to me, "Moses, bring the other bucket of clothes to the river." I rolled over in my bed and rubbed my eyes. I knew Mother was already on her way to the river to wash clothes. I climbed out of bed and went to the door to see how far down the road she was, because I knew I'd have to start running before she got to the big tree. She was almost past the tree, so I pulled my shirt over my head, grabbed the bucket of clothes and started running.

The river was quite a long way away, but it was easy for me to run the whole way without stopping. I was used to running everywhere. I ran along the path to the river, jumping over the tree roots and the rocks in the way. Today I stopped to rest on a big rock under a shady bush by the path, because I was carrying the heavy bucket of clothes, but I still arrived at the river before my mother. I rested and dipped my feet in the water until Mother arrived, with her bucket of clothes on her head.

"Moses, God has given you flying feet!" Mother said smiling, as she began to pull some dirty clothes out of the bucket. I looked at my feet, thinking that it was good that they could run so far.

"Did God really give me my feet, Mother?"

"Yes, He gave you your feet," Mother smiled again.

"Why didn't God give Jan two healthy feet? She only has one good foot. Does that mean He is mad at her?"

Mother looked down at the clothes she was rubbing against a stone, "God loves Jan, my son, and He is not mad at her. You have two good feet, but that doesn't mean that God loves you more. It just means that God wants you to use your two feet to run and do things to help others. You can help Jan and get things for her."

"But isn't she sad because she can't run?" I asked Mother, frowning. "How does she know God loves her?"

"God knew she might be sad, so He gave her something else to make her happy. He gave her a song in her heart that no one else has."

I looked at the river and thought about what Mother said. It was true. Jan had music in her heart. Everyone in the village listened to her songs. She was the one who we all wanted to sing for us because she had a beautiful voice. She knew all the songs that told of our ancestors, and hunting and everything. It was wonderful to sit and hear her sing. Suddenly I thought of another question.

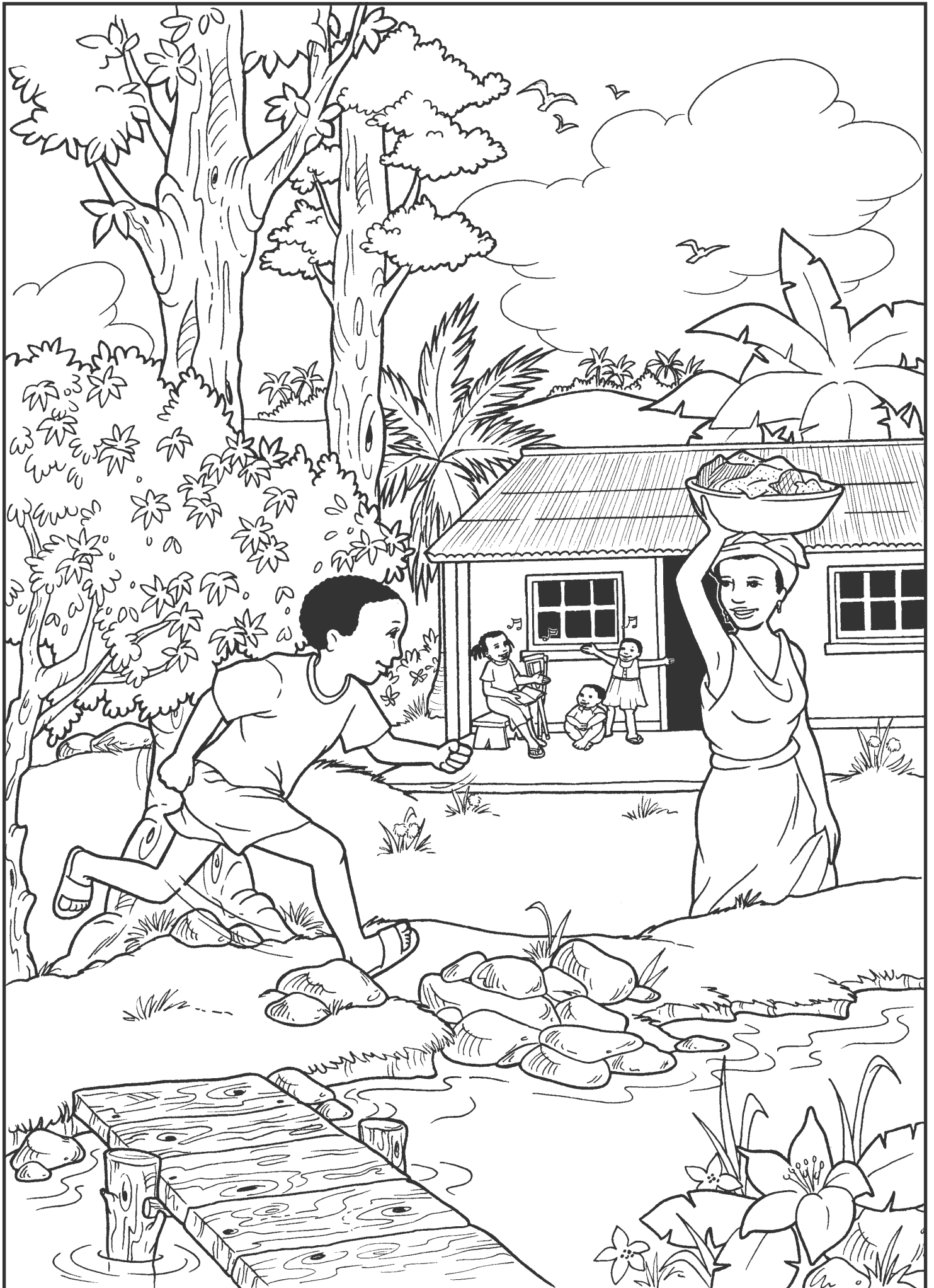
"Why can't I sing, Mother? Is God mad at me?"

"No, my son, God loves you, but He knew Jan would not tire of singing to us, so He gave her the gift of song, and you the gift of running."

I helped Mother finish scrubbing and wringing out our clothes. Then we put them in our buckets and turned toward the path to go home. My mother balanced her bucket on her head, holding it steady with one hand, and she put her other arm around my shoulders. We walked quietly together for awhile. My bucket of wet clothes was heavier than before, and I was still thinking about Mother's words. Suddenly I looked up at Mother and said, "I think I'll run home and see if Jan needs anything today!" Mother smiled and patted my back before I raced up the path toward home.



- Was Moses better than Jan because he could run so fast?
- How were Moses and Jan each a help in their village in a different way?
- What are you good at?
- Do you do your very best with the abilities God has given you?
- Take a piece of paper and draw a line down the middle. Make a list of your strengths on one side and your weaknesses on the other. If you are not sure what your strengths and weaknesses are, ask your friends or family members for suggestions.



How Johnny Saved His Daddy!

Johnny lived with his family in a tiny farmhouse in a remote area in the state of New South Wales, Australia.

One day after doing his chores, he came to his mom and asked, "Mom, I'd like to help Daddy with his farm work, but I'm still too little to do much except feed the chickens."

"Now don't you worry. You'll be big soon enough. And Johnny, there is something big you can do."

"What's that, Mom?"

"You can always pray for things to happen."

"I know that, but still, ...I'd like to be big enough to do all the fun things that my older friends can do."

"You will, Johnny. You will."

The days and weeks went by and Johnny tried his best to do his jobs faithfully. Some distance from the tiny farmhouse ran a river, which was usually calm. But sometimes after heavy rain, it overflowed its banks and did a great deal of damage.

Johnny's dad looked out the window and was beginning to get worried, "Well, it has been raining and raining for days now. I wonder when it is going to stop."

"Will the sun ever shine again, Father?"

"It always does, Son. The question is, when? I just hope that the river doesn't flow over the top of the banks. That would be a disaster."

"I wish Mom were here," Johnny said.

"So do I, Johnny," his father responded, "but she had to go away to help care for a sick friend."

"I know, but somehow things always seem better when she is around."

"She'll be back after the rain stops. But that leaves just you and me, big buddy, to wait and watch and pray."

All of a sudden Father looked out the window and cried, "Oh no! Look, Johnny! It's over the top!"

"And it's rushing right towards us!" Johnny shouted.

"We've got to help the cattle, the sheep and the chickens get to safety before the flood hits us. There's not a moment to lose. Stay on the veranda*!" cried Father to Johnny. "I'll be back in a minute."

And off he dashed in a desperate effort to reach the barns.

Crash! Splash! The water had reached the farmhouse and swept beyond it.

Johnny stood on the veranda, breathless with excitement, and very frightened.

Johnny looked out into the driving rain trying to see his father. "Daddy! Daddy! Can you hear me?" Oh no, Johnny thought, what has happened to him?

"Ah, there he is! I can see him now. The water is up to his waist, but... the water is still rising. He's being swept off his feet!"

"Hold on, Dad!" Johnny called. All kinds of things were floating in the water from the flood upstream. Johnny felt hopeless and terrified! He was worried about his dad. I hope he doesn't get hit with any of that debris that's floating down the river—wood and tin from the barns, even animals. Isn't there anything I can do to help him?

Then in that awful moment Johnny remembered Jesus, and how Mother had taught him to pray in every time of need. Could Jesus help now?

"Jesus!" he cried, frantically. "Jesus! Don't let Daddy drown! Please, please, don't let Daddy drown!"

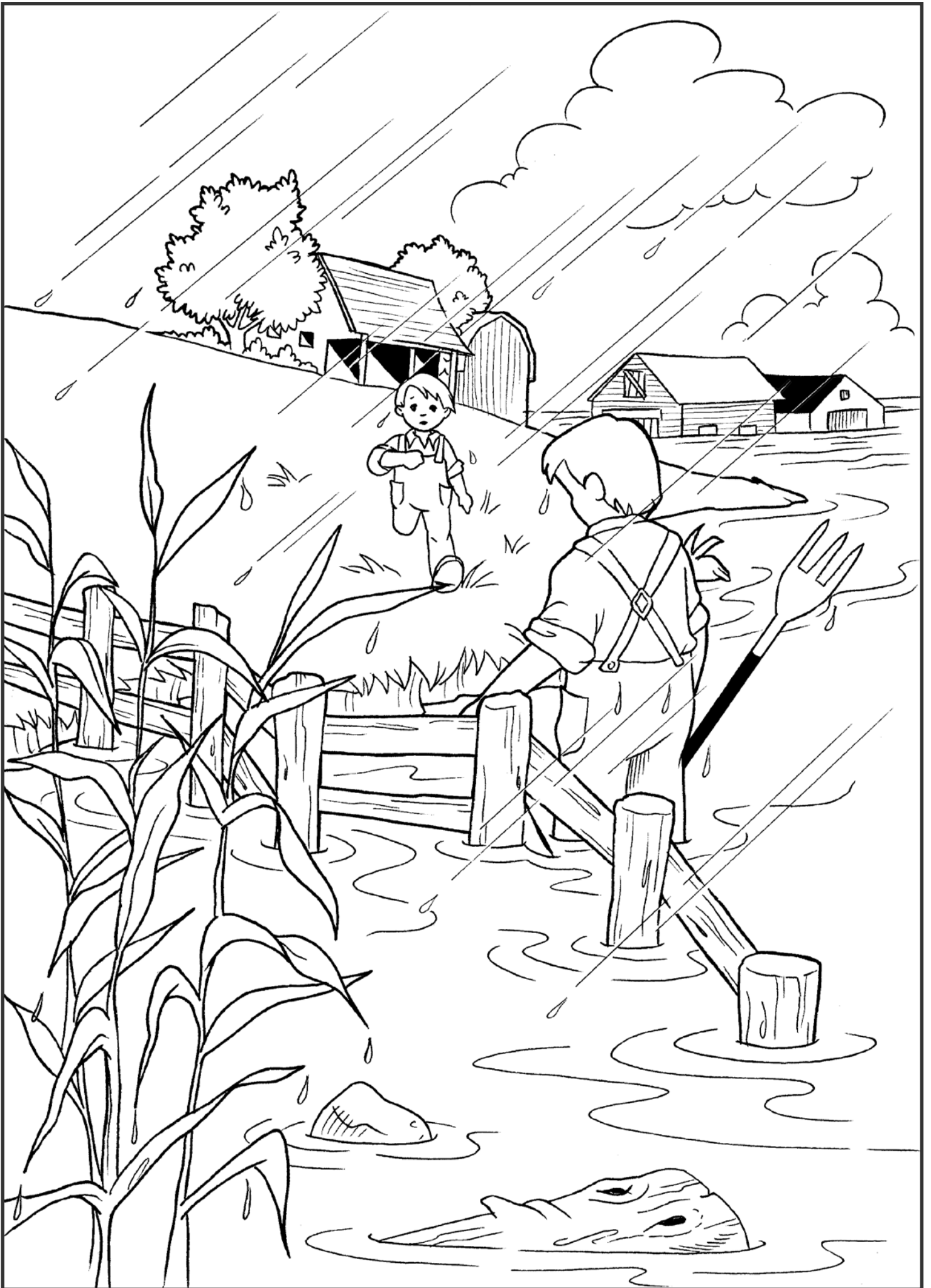
Tears started to fill his eyes as he sobbed. Then a strange thing happened. At that very moment, when all seemed lost, a long-handled pitchfork, of all things, came floating toward the spot where Daddy was fighting desperately for his life. Eagerly Johnny's dad grabbed the pitchfork. Driving it deep into the ground, he held on to the handle till the worst of the flood had passed. Then, making his way to a fence, the top of which was just sticking up above the water, Johnny's father managed at last to find his way back home.

"Dad! You made it safely! Thank God for answering my prayers!"

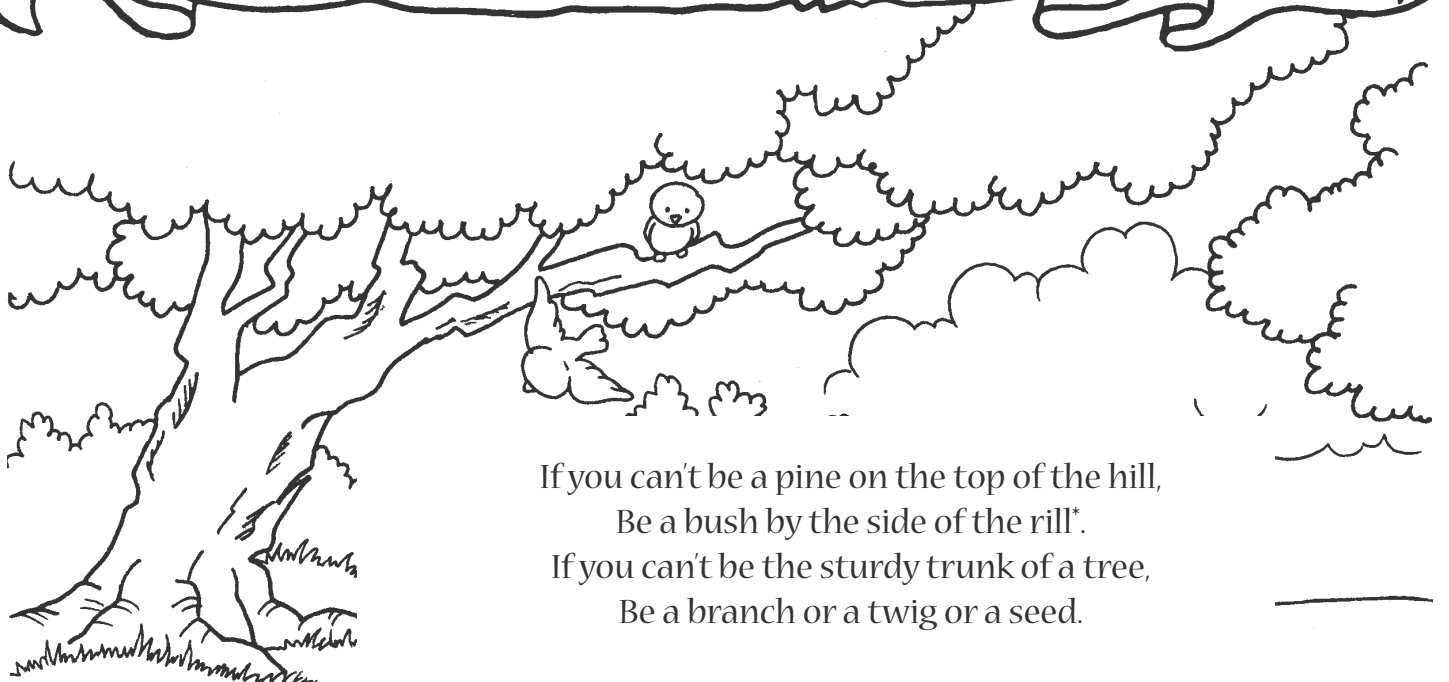


- How did Johnny do his best in this difficult situation?
- Was he too small for God to use him?
- No matter what happens, you can always do your best by praying even if you can't do anything else.
- Tell about a situation where you did the very best you could, despite whatever difficulties you faced.

***veranda:** an open porch with a roof



Be the Best

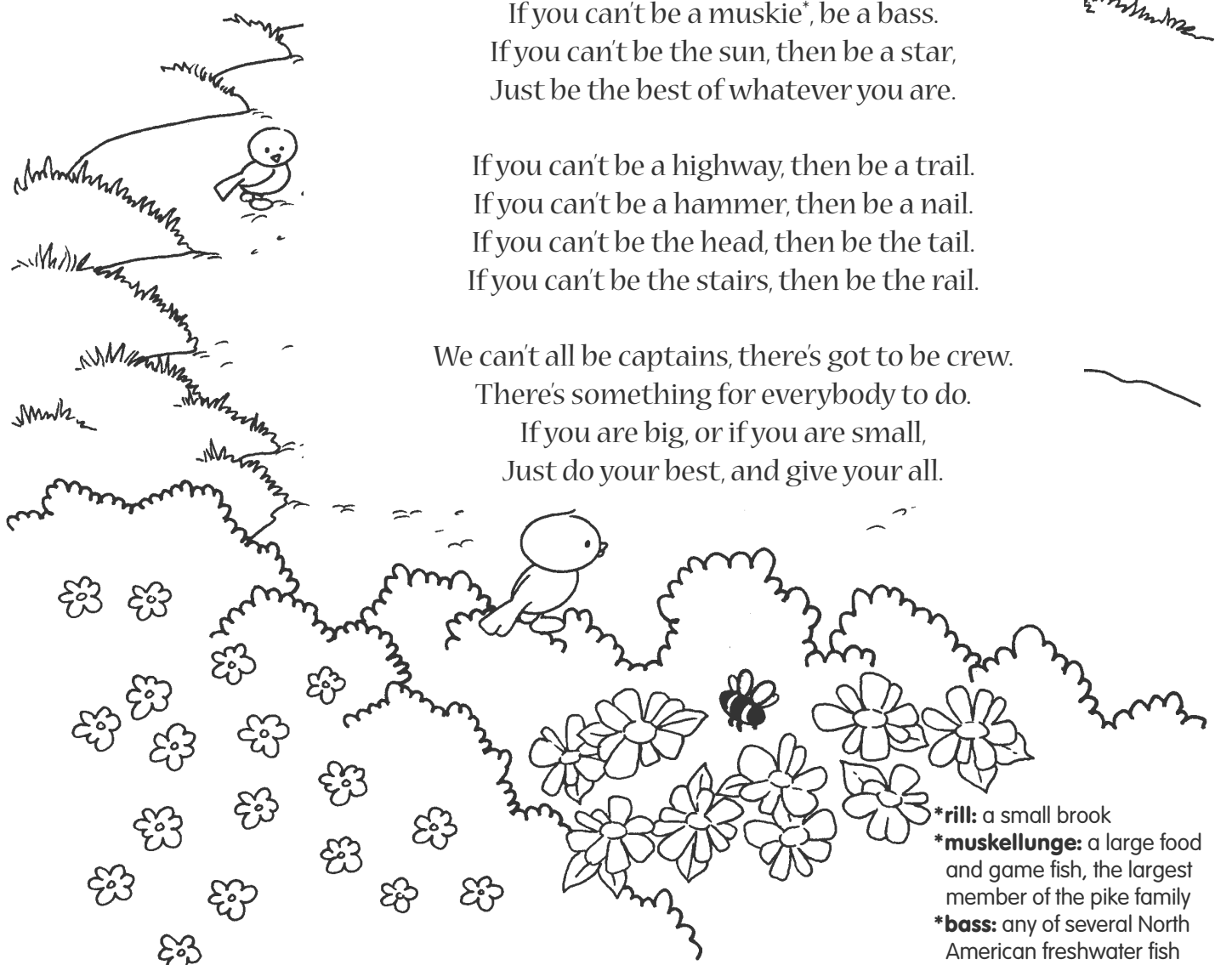


If you can't be a pine on the top of the hill,
Be a bush by the side of the rill*.
If you can't be the sturdy trunk of a tree,
Be a branch or a twig or a seed.

If you can't be a flower, then be the grass.
If you can't be a muskie*, be a bass.
If you can't be the sun, then be a star,
Just be the best of whatever you are.

If you can't be a highway, then be a trail.
If you can't be a hammer, then be a nail.
If you can't be the head, then be the tail.
If you can't be the stairs, then be the rail.

We can't all be captains, there's got to be crew.
There's something for everybody to do.
If you are big, or if you are small,
Just do your best, and give your all.



*rill: a small brook
*muskellunge: a large food and game fish, the largest member of the pike family
*bass: any of several North American freshwater fish

Little Drop of Troy

There was once a raindrop who lived in a great big cloud with a whole lot of other droplets. Let's call him Troy.

Troy was a happy little droplet, full of life and energy. But he was just that—little. Though he was usually cheerful, some days he would become sad thinking about how very small he was. He felt he was so small that he could never be much use to anyone. Troy didn't think about it all that much, though, and was usually happy to be able to laugh and play on the little cloud where he lived. Sometimes, while he was playing, the tip of an airplane wing would fly through his neighborhood. It would pass by so fast that it would make Troy spin around in the air.

Like all the other raindrops he lived with, Troy awaited his turn to fall to the earth below. Sometimes Troy and his friends would get together and talk about where they wanted to fall.

Some wanted to fall on a lake, where they could make new friends with all the other droplets of water that had arrived before them. Others wanted to be used to water someone's garden or a thirsty field.

It was at these times that Troy would feel sad. I'm such a very small raindrop, he thought. I could never make any difference in the world. Even if I get to fall down to the earth, just one little tiny drop like me isn't going to be much of a help to anybody.

Troy glanced over at his friends who were still chatting about their planned adventures. As he watched, he noticed that they were all so much bigger and older than he was. They all have bigger drops to offer the thirsty world than I do, thought little Troy.

Troy thought back to a time when one of his friends had teased him about how he was much bigger and stronger than Troy, and this only made Troy feel sadder. Just then, Troy thought he heard a whisper. It was Gentle Breeze blowing by, a friend who Troy knew well, and who he played with at times.

"Cheer up, Troy!" she said, "You may not be anything great all alone, but so what? None of the others are either! Did you know that all over the world, children spend hours looking up to the sky, trying to make out different images in the shapes of the clouds? And did you know that people marvel at the neat shapes you make? Scientists study clouds and make up interesting names for you guys like: cumulus, cumulonimbus, cirrus, and other funny names.

"So just remember that when they look up, they don't see the biggest raindrop or the smallest raindrop—they see all of you together. If you all floated around on your own, there wouldn't be anything to see; you'd all be too tiny. But as long as you stick together, you are a thing of wonder.—And do you know when you all look the most beautiful? When the sun sets every night, it casts a lovely glow of red, orange, pink and purple all over you.—It's awesome! On the brightest and sunniest days, when you look so white and fluffy and soft, it's all because of the sun reflecting off of you.

"So remember that none of us could ever make it without everyone else. And besides, who would want to be big and able in themselves, to where they didn't need anybody else? Wouldn't that be a boring life? Now, Troy, go play and just let Jesus do the worrying."

Troy realized that Gentle Breeze was right. Besides, look at her, Troy thought. Nobody can even see Gentle Breeze, except for us. But she's always so happy and content knowing that Jesus gave her such an important part to play in our lives, whether we see her or know who she is or not.

Why, if it weren't for her, we wouldn't be able to change shapes in the sky. I am going to try to do what she says and not think so much about what I am not, and remember the beautiful things that I am part of.

The weather changed and the wind picked up. Troy and his friends found themselves carried along on Windsor Wind's current, away from the sea and further over land. Troy watched another cloud pass by, that was being driven along on an air current a touch faster than his cloud.

A thought crossed his mind. Those raindrops will get to the earth first. By the time I fall I won't be needed. . . . Then he caught himself, remembering what Gentle Breeze had taught him.

Jesus, I would so much like to be a joy to someone. I'm sure You could work something out, so I'm just going to trust You and see what You have in mind.

The moment had arrived. "Guess what, you all?" Windsor asked with a satisfied tone in his voice. "I'm about to land you at your destination. Your purpose will be to make others happy, to water the thirsty ground and to revive* the drooping and dying plants, among many other things. Enjoy your trip and don't forget all of us up here." With that, he blew on the cloud and let all the raindrops fall.

Wow, what a thrill! thought Troy, as he fell through the air with his eyes closed tightly.

This will be quite a mission. Troy shuddered* as the ground came closer. I don't have much to offer, but since Jesus has chosen me to fall today, I'm going to do my best. I'm going to be the happiest little raindrop that ever splashed on the planet, even if nobody sees or notices me.

Splat!!! Troy lifted his head and looked around. It wasn't soil. It wasn't a field. It wasn't a lake. He forced a half-cracked smile as he realized that he had landed on a concrete courtyard. Now he could only sit and wait, quietly repeating to himself that he was determined to be the happiest little raindrop there ever was.

Soon he heard the creak of a door and happy voices coming closer. Tiny boots and colorful raincoats filled the courtyard, and in a moment several children were busy splashing in the puddles that the rain shower had left. Troy listened as they giggled and laughed, stomping and splashing in the puddles, one by one. They don't know who I am, but I'm glad that I have made these children happy today, thought Troy.

All too soon for Troy, a grownup who had been sitting quietly on the side stood up and called all the children in. Troy found himself splashed up on the last little pair of boots, as the children raced for the door.

Once the children were inside, the boots were taken off and lined up on a shelf on the porch. Troy felt himself rolling down the side of the boot, sliding through the wooden planks and landing in some soil below.

Oh, wow! I landed in soil! I wonder if anything is planted here? He wiggled to get comfortable between the grains of soil, and as he did, he began to sink deeper and deeper into the earth. He was suddenly hungrily sucked up by a root, into a flower that had been sheltered from the falling rain by the ledge of the porch.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you, for dropping by!" the flower rejoiced. "I have been so thirsty! I was just hoping for a drop like you to come by!"

Troy smiled. He was happy that the Lord had used him to be a blessing to so many others. How many children he had helped make glad that day he would never know.

With that lovely thought, he fell fast asleep. As he slept, he dreamt of Gentle Breeze and of his adventurous journey, of Windsor Wind, the children, and the flower. He didn't think once about how tiny he had thought himself to be not too long ago.

Our story ends here, but that was not the end of little Troy. He made many more trips back up as a cloud and then back down again as a raindrop. What a busy little raindrop!



- Did little Troy think he was much good on his own? Did that matter?
- What could he do to be the best he could be?
- Even though he was small, was he needed?
- Talk about what you can do to be the best that you can, even if you're only one little person.



The Hen and the Peacock

“Chrurooooo! Akkkk!” Peacock crowed as he walked proudly about the master’s garden with his rainbow tail feathers open wide. “Come, all you barnyard animals. You may now all admire my beeeaaautiful feathers.”

All the animals in the farmyard gazed on him with wonder. All except a humble hen.

“Look at that hen sitting there, not even noticing me. I wonder why? Maybe I’ll get some fun by teasing her.” The peacock strutted* over to the hen with all of his animal fans* following behind him.

“What have we here?” cried the peacock, looking down at the hen with disdain*. “Cluck! Cluck! Cluck! Just a lowly hen in the chicken pen.”

“Well, Peacock, I’m just doing what hens are supposed to do—sitting on my nest of eggs.”

“That’s about all you’re good for. You are the most ugly looking bird I have ever seen. Why, your feathers are nothing but a dull brown, and your face is all wrinkled and pale like this...” the peacock taunted, making funny faces trying to copy what the hen looked like. All the animals laughed at his show.

Spreading his beautiful feathers wide, he tauntingly* turned his back on the hen and showed them off in the direction of the rest of the farmyard animals that were looking on. Not quite done with his teasing yet, he flashed an angry glance down at the hen and said, “What would my master want with someone like you? If he had to choose between us, I bet he would choose me over you any day.”

The hen sat there without saying a word. She could not say that he was not beautiful, for it was plain for all to see. But no matter how much the peacock boasted and teased her, she remained calm and content. As the peacock finished his majestic prance*, he cast one last disdainful* look in her direction.

“Well, don’t just sit there. What have you to say for yourself?” he challenged.

“My feathers may not be as beautiful as yours,” the hen replied, “but I know that our farmer does not love me any less. I’m happy to know that he depends on me, for every day I lay for him three nutritious white eggs. You may be beautiful, but I am useful, and with that I am satisfied.”



- How could the hen be the best she could be?
- How could the peacock be the best he could be?
- Did it matter who thought they were the greatest? What was most important?
- Is there ever any reason not to do your best?
- Has anyone ever teased you about something that you were not good at? How did you feel? How can we encourage each other to do better?
- Compare different animals. Isn’t it amazing how God gave each one of them different good points? Compare speed, smell, eyesight, hearing, means of survival, etc.

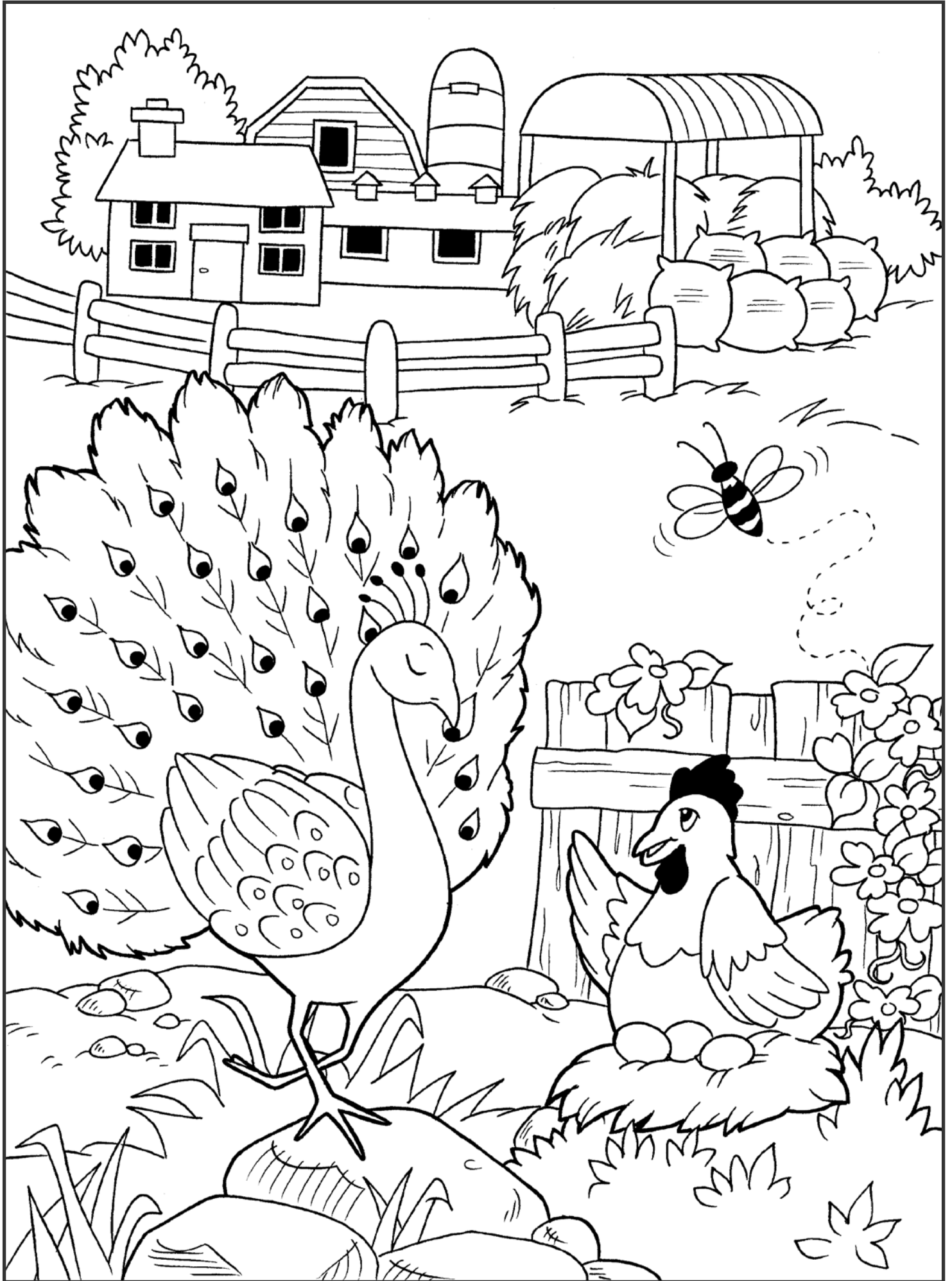
***strut**: to display in order to impress others

***disdain**: the feeling that someone or something is unworthy of one’s respect

***taunt**: to reproach in a mocking, insulting, or contemptuous manner

***prance**: to walk or move about in a spirited manner; strut

***fans**: admirers



Prayer and Praise

Dear Jesus, I don't feel very big or important, or even very good at many things, but I know that I can do my best in whatever I do. When I feel discouraged or sad, please help me to remember that there's always something that I can do. Even if it's not the same as something someone else can do, it's still important because it's my best. Amen.

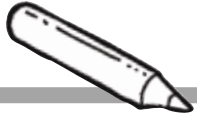
Memory Fun



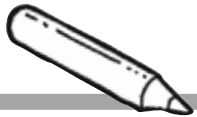
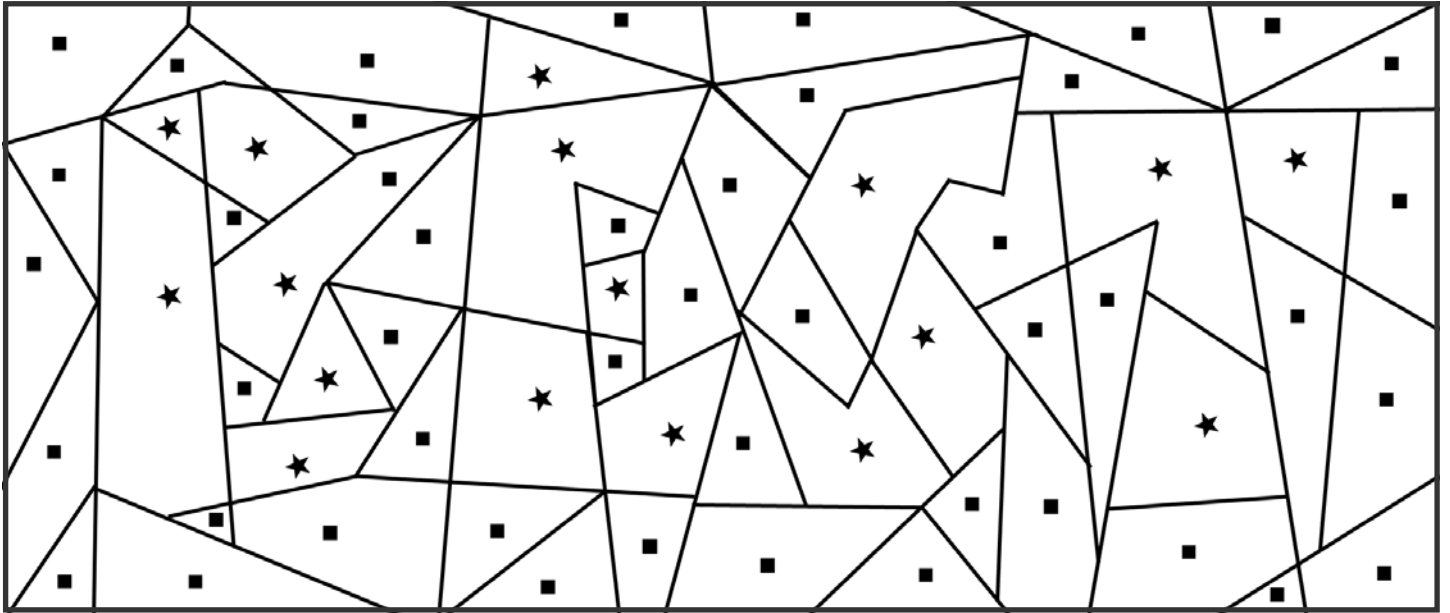
Whatever
your hand
finds to do,
do it with
your might.
Ecclesiastes 9:10

Pencil Page

Secret Message



Color the sections with stars red and the sections with squares blue, to find the hidden message.



Look and Match

Write in the speech bubbles below the word from this list that best fits each picture:

good - better - best



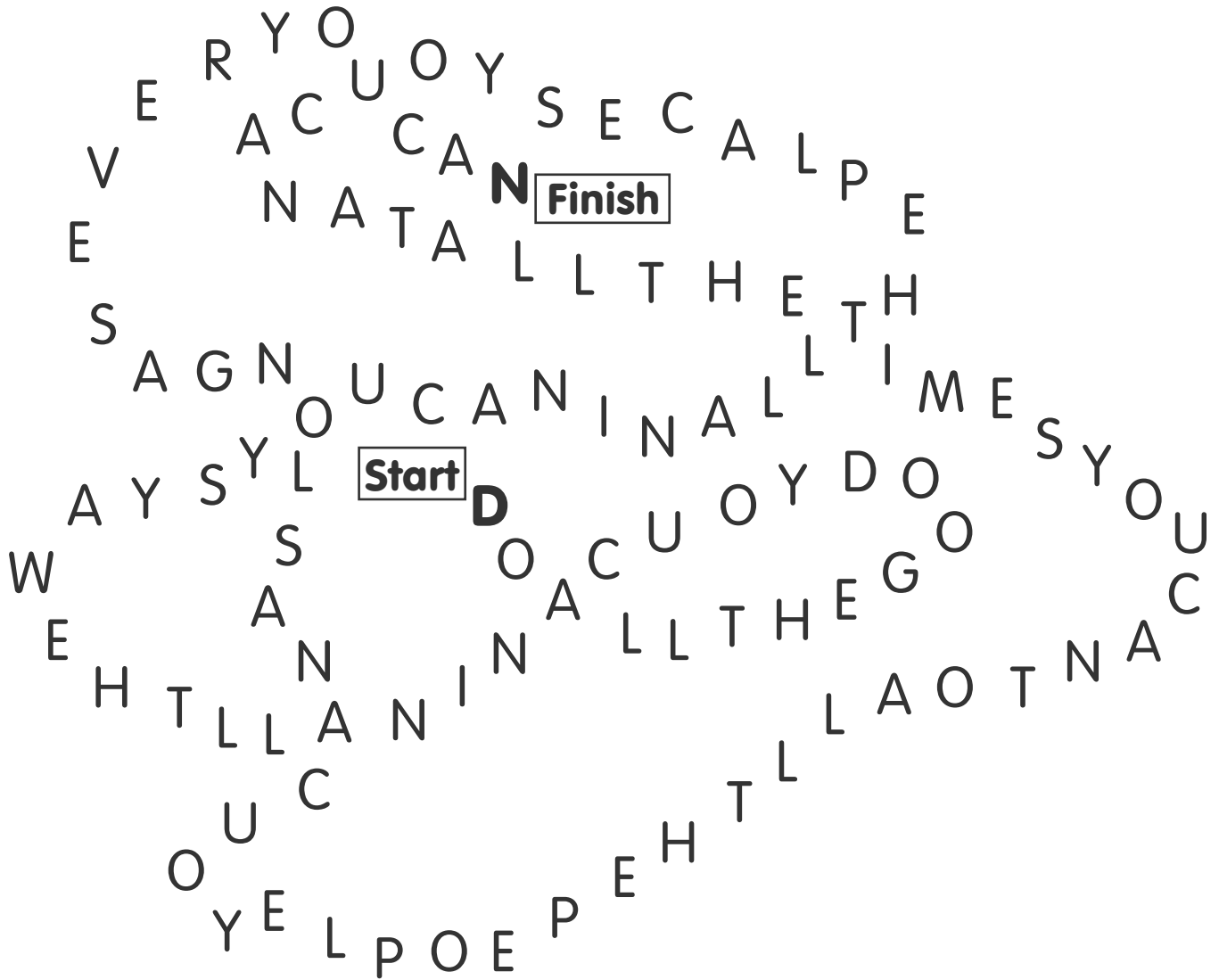


Pencil Page

Letter Maze



Find the hidden message by following the letters and filling in the blanks below. Begin at "Start," going all around, trying to make sense as you go.



D _ _ _ _ _ G _ _ _ _ _ ,
 _ _ _ _ _ C _ _ _ _ _ ,
 _ _ _ _ _ C _ _ _ _ _ ,
 _ _ _ _ _ H _ _ _ _ _ .
 _ _ _ _ _ O _ _ _ _ _ .
 A _ _ _ _ _ V _ _ _ _ _ .

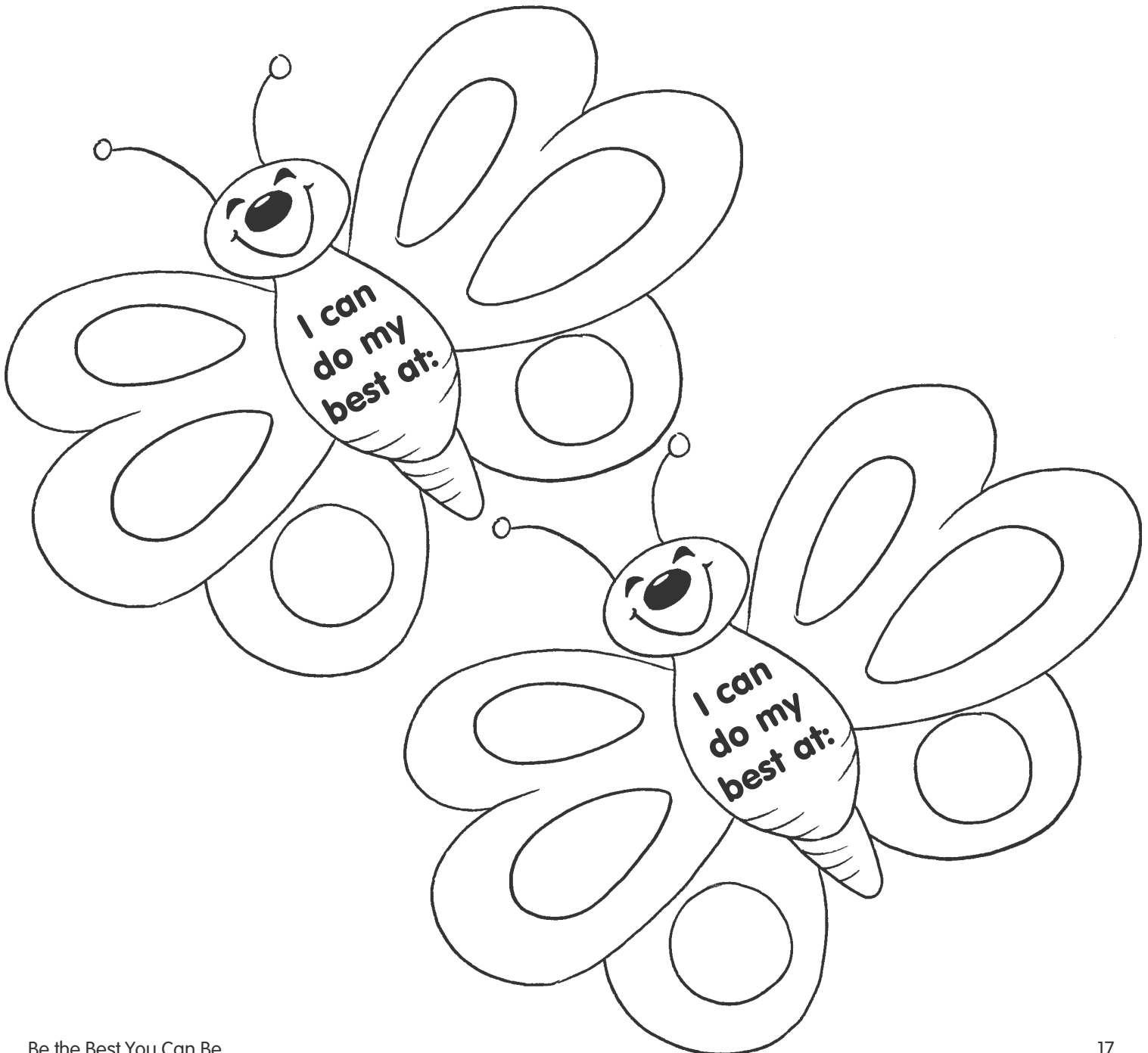
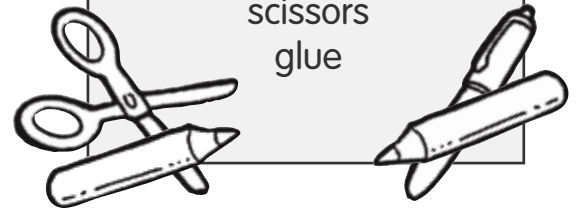
Make and Do

My Best Butterfly

How to:

- In the shapes on the butterflies' wings, use a black pen to list things you can do your best at.
- Color the butterflies.
- Cut out the butterflies and glue them back to back.
- Attach a thread to the butterfly head and hang it from your bedroom ceiling. This butterfly will help to remind you of all the things you can do your best at!

You will need:
color pencils
black marker
needle and thread
scissors
glue



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From Jesus—with Love



My dearest child, I know that sometimes you feel you're so small and that there's not much you can do. But did you know that all I ask of you is that you do your very best? Maybe you're good at drawing, but you're not so good at writing, or maybe you're a good singer, but you're not such a good dancer. But don't get discouraged. Just do your very best with the talents that I give you! It doesn't matter who you are or what you can or can't do. You can always do your best!

It makes Me happy when I look down and see you doing the best that you can. Maybe big brother or sister can carry a big pile of wood, but you can only carry a small pile because your arms aren't so strong yet, but does that matter? No, because you're both doing your best! So don't get discouraged and pout if you feel you're not good at everything. Just ask Me to help you do your very best.

Maybe your friend is far, far away, and you heard that he got very sick but you can't go and visit him. Then the best thing you can do is pray for Me to heal him, and maybe you can write him a letter and send him some verses on healing. See, there's always something you can do in every situation. So, be the best you can be in everything you do. This will make you and others happy. I love you!



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