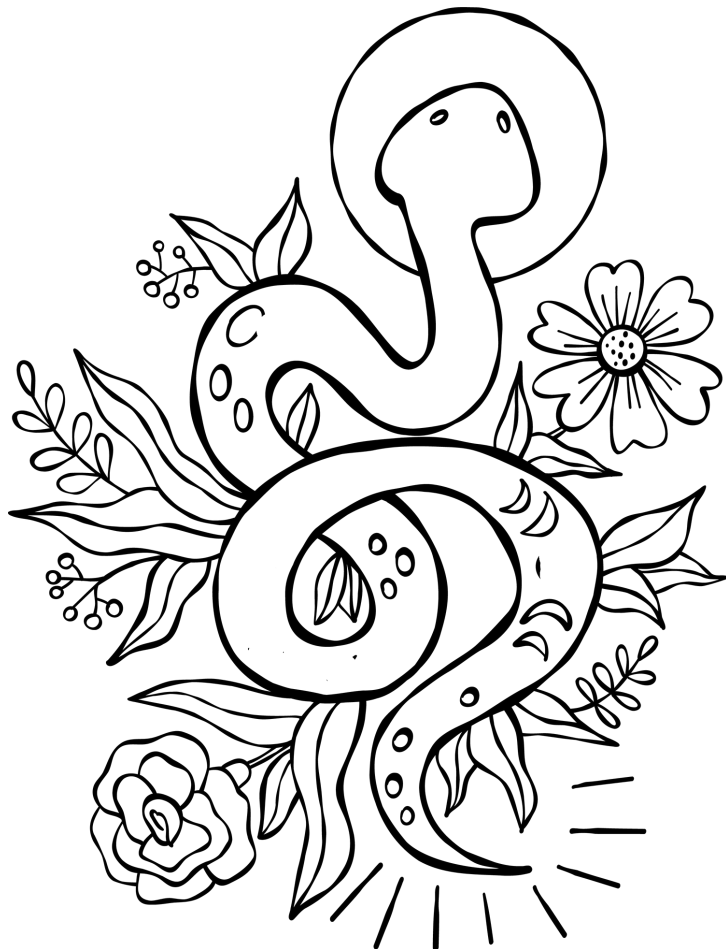


An Activity Journal and Study Guide from:
The Chronicles of Ascalon

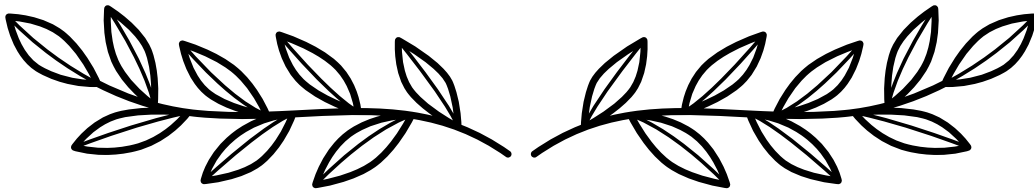
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a story from the Chronicles of Ascalon

The spirit stood in the dark woods edging the meadow and studied the silent abode. He smiled, but it didn't reach his eyes. Slowly, he transformed himself into a mottled grey viper and slithered through the grass beneath the silvery moonlit mist.

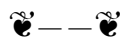
The moonlight was waning, but he didn't need the light. He had taken the viper form to avoid detection when he visited the creatures the previous two nights. Tonight, his task would be complete.

He flicked his tongue and tasted their scent. It was deliciously innocent and trusting. The feeble light filtered through the trees. He moved between the shadows like a wraith and approached a simple structure carved from the rock in the hillside. It had no door to prevent him from entering.

The single room held few furnishings: a simple table was strewn with fruits and vegetables, wooden plates and cups, and a large bowl for washing. In the corner, on a luxurious pile of soft, fragrant pine boughs, two creatures slept together, unaware of the danger lurking in the darkness.

The serpent crawled between them, its pupils round and relaxed. It moved to the female's face, raised its head, and considered the delicate features. It flicked its tongue, kissing her cheek, then it casually slipped through the long folds of her hair and coiled like a caress around her neck. He tipped his head, opened his mouth, and leaned closer. The spirit snake whispered in her ear, each word tickling its way into the woman's unconscious mind.

Her face scrunched then, and she moaned. Her mouth puckered, and her eyebrows pushed together in a frown. The words had taken root. The viper slipped away.



A chuckling river flowed from the distant mountains as a lone figure walked along the riverbank. Karkryan munched on a piece of fruit, then sat on the grass in the hot sun, and dipped his foot into the water, and, just as quickly, yanked it out. The mountain water was ice cold. He tossed the fruit core into the swift current. It lodged in some stones at the river's edge further downstream.

He stayed there for a while, his arms wrapped around his bent knees, and watched the water rush past. His work was hard but satisfying, and he needed to rest his sore muscles. The sun rose higher, turning the day significantly warmer. He splashed water on his face, cupped his hands, and took a swig of cold water.

“Karkryan!” The man stood, then saw his wife, Ari Eva, running across the meadow toward him. Laughing and skipping, she hurried through the grass and flowers, carrying several luscious-looking pieces of fruit. The fruit was unfamiliar to him.

“Darling!” said Ari Eva. “You must taste this fruit. It’s delicious! I brought enough for our dinner tonight.” She raised a luscious round pink fruit to her lips and took a bite. “It’s exquisite,” she murmured. Her eyes closed as she chewed slowly, a smile of contentment dimpling her cheeks.

“Ari Eva, where did you get this fruit?” asked Karkryan, taking a large, fragrant fruit from her and studying it. He sniffed the sweet fragrance and rubbed his hand over it, feeling the firmness of its rosy flesh.

“From the middle of the meadow garden. Orphedian said it would be the most delicious we ever tasted,” said Ari Eva, waving a hand. “Go ahead. Take a bite.” She watched as her husband hesitated, his head bowed. Then, he took a bite and munched. His eyes opened wide as the sweet-tart flavor burst into his mouth, overwhelming his senses.

“Oh my, this is delicious,” he said as a satisfying languor stole over him, seeping into his very bones. He devoured the fruit and reached for another, chomping into the fruit with vigor.

A spirit casually strolled from between the trees and followed the path to where Ari Eva and her husband stood. Karkryan recognized the entity and stepped forward to block his way. The entity, known to the couple as Orphedian, was dressed in a simple tunic and sandals.

“Where are you going, Orphedian?” said Karkryan. He wasn’t too fond of the spirit. There was something about this entity that rankled him.

The spirit, feigning innocence, observed the man for several moments, noting the partially eaten fruit in his hand with amusement. He smiled benignly.

"The High King has given me to this world to care for it. I tend the fruit trees, plants, and shrubs. I till the soil on the hillside for vegetables and seed-bearing flowers, and I care for all the living creatures," said Karkryan. "You, however, upset the animals whenever you are around, and you always seem to have an ulterior motive. Moreover, you distort the truth. I think you need to leave. Now, please."

"Why do you think I distort the truth? Tell me, Karkryan, how do you know what truth is? Is it because the High King has told you never to question him, nor to consider another way?" Orphedian folded his hands behind his back, his gaze on Karkryan's face.

"It is because the High King has given us an inherent, transcendent truth, written on our hearts from the day we were first formed. It is our measuring line by which we determine all things, whether they are good or bad."

"But why is something bad? Couldn't it just be different?" said Orphedian. He continued to smile benignly. "I don't understand your reasoning, Karkryan. You are being disagreeable again." He leaned against a tree and raised his chin.

Karkryan pursed his lips, walked to another tree, and picked a ripe fruit from its branches. He held it out. "This fruit is newly ripe, and its flavor will be at its best." He took a fallen round of fruit from the ground. "This fruit is bad. It is decayed. You can clearly see the difference between them. It may taste sweet and juicy at first, but the inner core has decayed, and soon the whole flesh will be corrupted. It's useless," he said, tossing both fruits into the river.

"Karkryan, I don't feel so good," whispered Ari Eva, feeling faint. The fruit she carried slipped from her arms and fell unnoticed to the ground. Her face was pale, and perspiration beaded her forehead. She grasped her husband's arm to steady herself. "What is happening?" Her head lolled side to side.

Karkryan was beginning to feel unwell too. The sweetness of the fruit had turned dry and bitter tasting in his mouth. He felt as though worms had invaded his stomach, twisting, and turning inside him, leaving him cold and empty.

Orphedian took the partially eaten fruit from Ari Eva's hand as it rolled from her fingers. He grinned and held it aloft like a trophy. Throwing his head back, he laughed.

"Oh, you are so right, Karkryan! Soon all flesh will be corrupted and worthless, thanks to you." Orphedian took a gleeful bite of the fruit and immediately spit it out. It burned his tongue. He flung the fruit into the river and glared at the two creatures.

"Karkryan! What does Orphedian mean? Please, tell me!" said Ari Eva. Her gaze searched her husband's downcast face, and his expression frightened her.

"My beautiful Ari Eva," he said, cupping her cheek with his hand. "It means the trees in the middle of the meadow are the High King's measuring line, and we have been found wanting. We were never meant to eat this fruit." His head dipped and swiveled side to side. "The High King asked us to trust and obey him. You were deceived, but I disobeyed."

Ari Eva crumpled to her knees and wept in despair. Karkryan knelt and held her in his arms, cradling her head against his shoulder. Anguish rolled over him, stealing his breath. He gulped for air.

The entity observed the creatures as they held each other, trying to comfort one another in their grief. He laughed menacingly. Suddenly, the simple tunic and sandals he wore transmuted into a gleaming gold breastplate with jewels signifying the highest rank of the spirit legions.

"I am the Dark Prince, Darnathian, and I will be exalted," said the spirit. Then he sauntered down the path and disappeared.

Dear reader,

I hope you enjoyed this story from the Chronicles of Ascalon. A similar story appears in our own Holy Bible. It's the story of Adam and Eve and how their disobedience, (sin) corrupted everything good that God had made.

You can read about it in Genesis, chapter 2:15-25, and chapter 3:1-6.

Discussion Questions:

1.) What are some element(s) in this story that resonated with you?

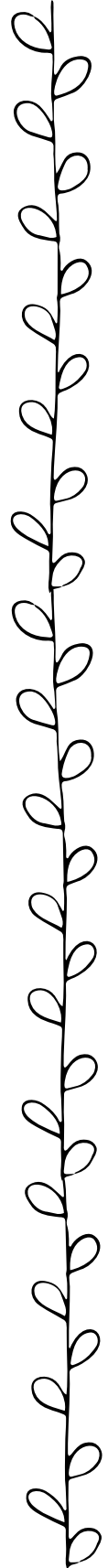
2.) What did Karkryan do in the meadow?

3.) How did Karkryan explain the measuring line? What was its purpose?

4.) What was Karkryan's reaction when he realized his disobedience?

5.) What is the significance between the fruit and the measuring line?

6.) The fruit was sweet at first, but then it turned bitter. Why?



A Short Devotional

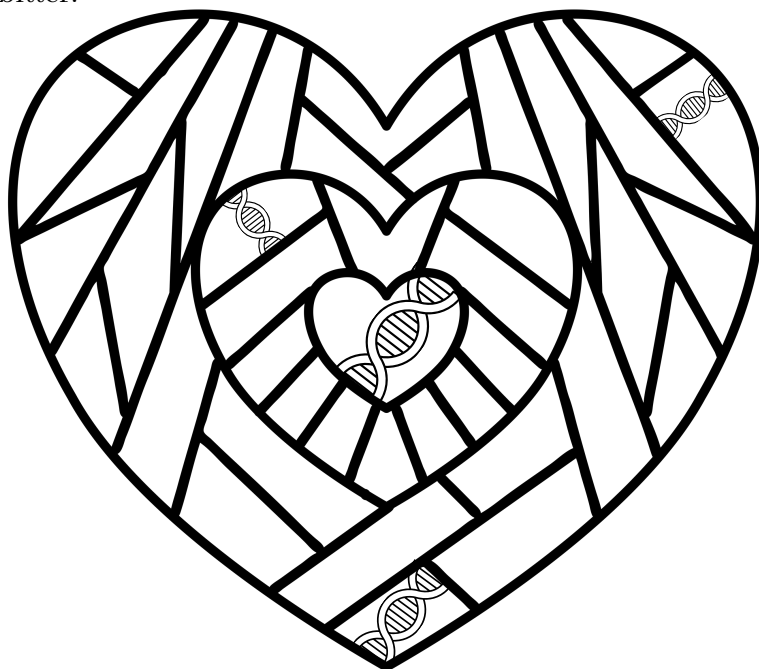
When we were building a house, the carpenter would often use a plumb line. It is a simple string with a heavy nonmetallic weight attached to the end. The carpenter allowed the weight to swing freely, giving an exact rendering of a straight line. Carpenters and plumbers use a plumb line to be sure their work is straight and square with no deviations in it. If something is crooked, it affects the entire project.

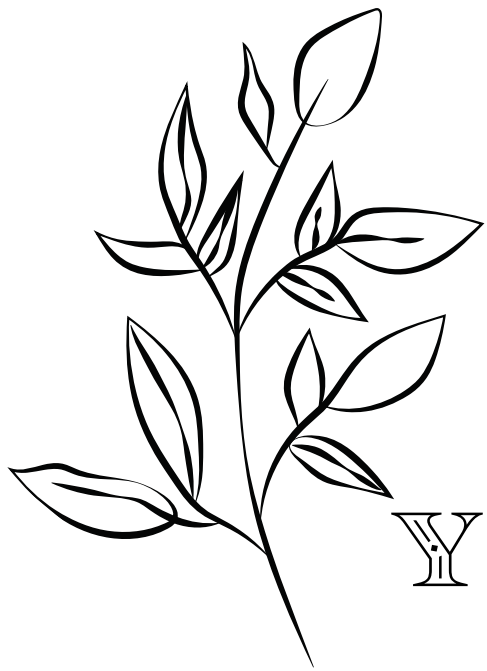
It is the same principle by which the High King in our story measured whether there were any deviations or bentness in his creation. The High King instructed Karkryan to not eat the fruit from the tree in the middle of the meadow. He gave the instructions—out of his love, not arrogance—as guidelines for how his people should live. By obeying the High King, Karkryan and Ari Eva would show their love and respect for their King. There is freedom in obedience.

Unfortunately, Ari Eva was deceived by Orphedian and she ate the fruit. When she gave the fruit to Karkryan, he *knew* it was wrong to disobey the High King, but he still ate the fruit. It was his disobedience that turned the desirable sweetness of the fruit into something bitter and sickly. Their disobedience may at first seem only a small thing, but anything that entices us to focus on worldly pleasures and not God is disobedience. God calls it sin.

What do you think? How do you know right from wrong? Could it be because we are made in God's image?

We are told in scripture that God has written his law on our hearts. Think of it as knowledge which is encoded into your very DNA. No one needs to tell you when you are doing something wrong, you instinctively know it. God has touched our hearts and it serves as *our* measuring line and a form of protection. Karkryan and Ari Eva briefly enjoyed the sweetness of the fruit, but their disobedience turned the event very bitter.





YOU BLESS
THOSE
WHO OBEY
YOU, MY
HIGH KING;
YOUR LOVE
PROTECTS
THEM LIKE
A SHIELD.

Corresponding Verse:
Psalms 36:5 NIV



think about it . . .

The High King keeps watch over you as you
come and go, both now and forever!

corresponding verse: Psalm 121:8 NIV



REFLECTIONS ON...



obedience

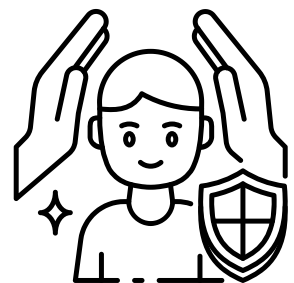


Father God, thank you for loving us so much. It is because you love us that you have given us boundaries designed to protect us not only from harm but from evil. You desire our willing obedience and, in that obedience, you give us freedom with joy and peace. What a blessing! Your Word describes our faith as a shield and it too offers protection. Father, draw us closer to you that we may have the pleasure of knowing you. How awesome are you God!

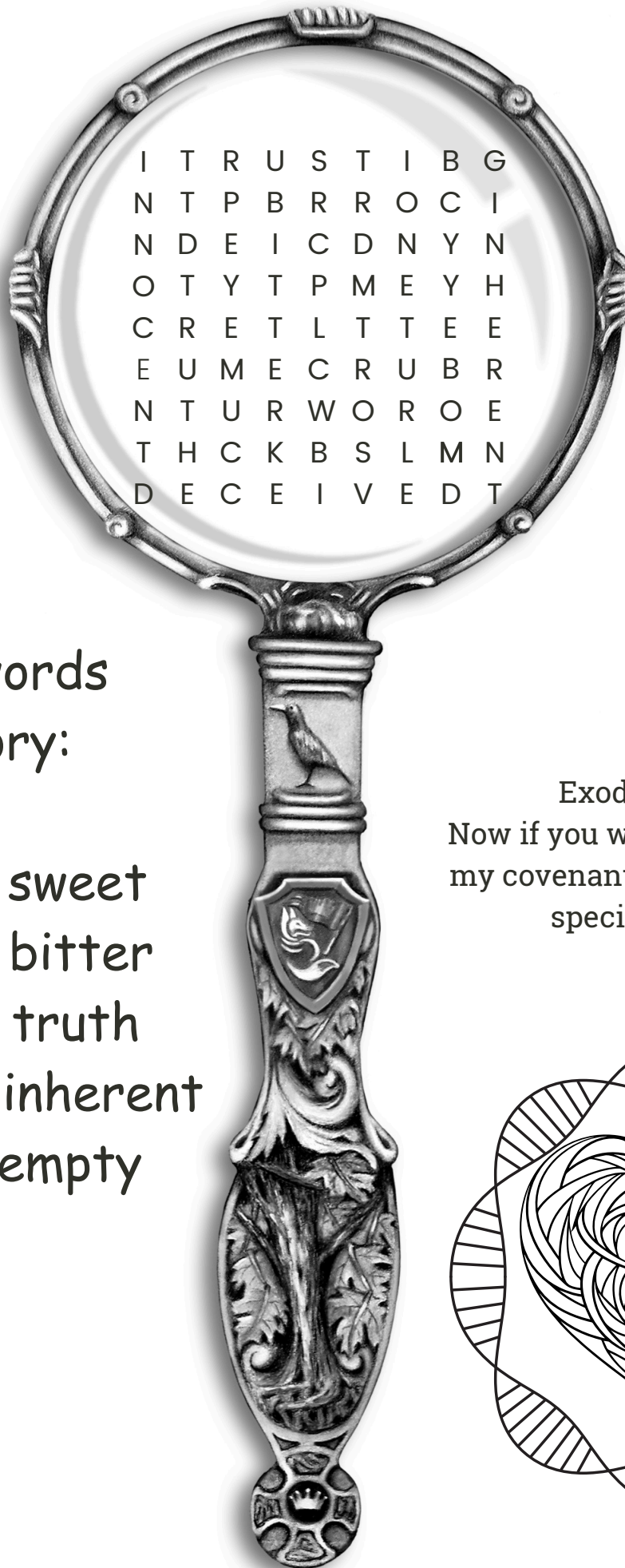
Psalm 128:1 ESV
Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways!

Psalm 84:11 CEB
The Lord God gives—doesn't withhold—good things to those who walk with integrity.

We all have pushed the boundaries and tested the rules to see if someone truly loves us. And perhaps it didn't end well. Can you think of a time when you disobeyed? It may have been fun for a while, but what were the consequences? Briefly tell your story here. What would you do differently if you could?



Word Search

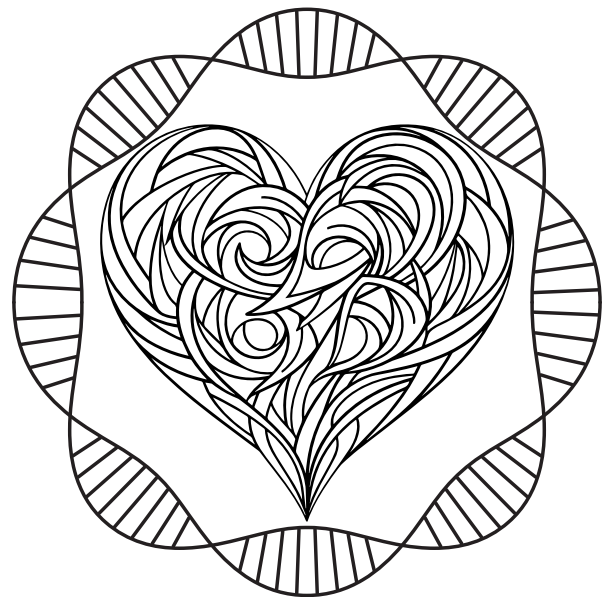


from
The
Chronicles
of Ascalon

Find these words
from the story:

innocent	sweet
trust	bitter
obey	truth
deceived	inherent
cold	empty

Exodus 19:5 NRSV
Now if you will obey me and keep
my covenant, you will be my own
special treasure . . .



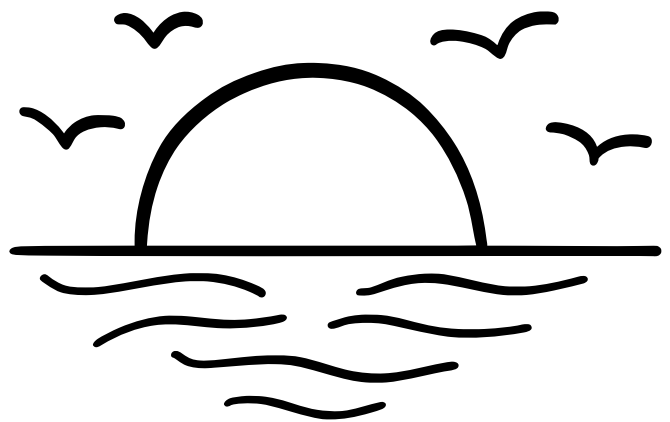
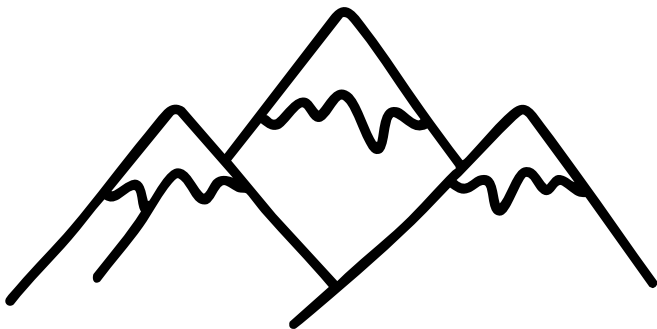
AUTHOR'S PERSPECTIVE:

There are no ordinary people. Everyone is unique with talents and life experiences which have shaped them into the people they are today. Everyone wants to be loved and respected with a sense of self-worth.

Our lives have meaning when we find our purpose in God, and filter our thoughts and decisions through God's word to develop a Christian worldview. God's word says I am his child, much loved and cherished. And so are you. (I John 3:1 and Ephesians 1:4)

These stories and activities are created especially for you, dear reader, that they might inspire your interest in the God of the Bible, help you to learn what the Bible says about Him, and challenge you to investigate the truths of the Bible for yourself.

I John 3:1 NIV See what great love the Father (God) has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!



Ephesians 1:4-6 NIV
For He chose us in him (Christ)
before the creation of the world . . .

Resources:

The Evidence Study Bible

Got Questions.org

CS Lewis Study Bible

Through the Bible Commentary, with J. Vernon McGee, Thomas Nelson Publishers

The MacArthur Bible Commentary, Thomas Nelson Publishers

Now, go serve your King!

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*AND WHATEVER YOU DO, WORK HEARTILY,
AS FOR THE LORD AND NOT FOR MEN.*

COLOSSIANS 3:23 ESV

