

The Explorer

Free



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Puzzles

Young folk are encouraged to complete the various puzzles in the magazine and send them in to:

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Younger readers who find the questions too hard may like to do a drawing based on one of the articles and send it to the same address.

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Skipper's tales



SKIPPER BURIES THE BALL!

Do you like it when grown-ups come back from the shops with something for you? I am sure you do! It may be a small toy or some sweets and you can't wait to see what is in the bag. Perhaps they have been to town or away on a holiday.

Well, Skipper is not any different. He loves when I come home from work to sniff round my bag and see if there is a doggie treat or bone. He jumps up and down and gets very excited. Of course, he doesn't get something every time, otherwise it wouldn't be a treat. I am sure you are the same. You don't get something every single time they go out.

Skipper has very strong teeth and jaws and loves a bone or a doggie chew, but most balls or dog toys are destroyed in no time as he just loves to chew them to bits. Well, last week we saw a toy we thought would be just the thing. It was a ball shape, so he would like that, but it was made up of strips of strong rubber and looked as if it would survive serious chewing.

Skipper was delighted with it. He rushed out into the garden as soon as we gave it to him. If you give him a bone he immediately rushes into the garden and buries it. Then he just leaves it for a couple of weeks until it looks disgusting and digs it up! He's never done that with a ball so, when he didn't bring it back later, we just assumed he had left it in the garden.

Two or three days later I said to him, 'Where's your ball?' Off he went into the garden and came back with the ball, but OH DEAR! It was filthy. He had obviously buried it in a plant pot or maybe one of the molehills: the centre was filled with mud!

Despite the mess it was in, Skipper didn't want to give it up and we had to wrestle it off him! Then we had to poke the mud out with a stick and give it a good clean before we could let it into the house, where he immediately hid it under a chair.

Well, what do you think happened the next time we let him out? He took the ball and immediately did the same thing again! Dogs often do that if you give them something; they will go and hide it for a while and then bring it back all dirty, play with it and then hide it again.

It made me think that that is just like the naughty things we do, especially the things we know are wrong. Because we are sinners we enjoy them and don't want to give them up! Sometimes we think we have stopped and we feel good and clean, but then we do it all over again and we feel like Skipper's ball, as if we have got covered in mud again.

The Bible tells us that when we sin we are not clean; in God's eyes we are very unclean but if we are really sorry for our sins and ask God to forgive us, he can cleanse us and make us completely clean again. In fact the Bible says we can be whiter than the snow! I am sure that some of you, like us, will have seen a lot of snow recently and can't imagine anything whiter.

Ask someone at home or your Sabbath school teacher to help you find some verses that speak of being cleansed from sin, but more importantly, when you are truly sorry for doing bad things, ask God to wash you and make you clean and help you to follow him.



From The Editor

Dear Friends

I wonder if you have ever heard of a book without words? It sounds very strange, doesn't it? Probably all the books you have at home or in school have some words in them. However you can buy some books with no words. In these books, pictures or even colours tell us the story. The other day I came across one of these books. It is called The Wordless Book. It has no words or pictures and tells us about God's way of salvation using only colours. Each page is coloured differently and each colour has its own special meaning.

We have to be careful with this kind of book. God has spoken to us through words: the Bible, and not through pictures. We are not to try and present the Gospel through art or drama. The reading and preaching of his Word is God's way of speaking to us. Having said that, those who are not yet able to read might find a book like this helpful.

The first page in this book is totally black. Why do you think it begins like this? This is its way of reminding us that we are sinners. We are black in the eyes of God. We break his law and deserve his punishment. The next page is red. Because we are sinners we need a Saviour, and God sent his Son to die on the cross in the place of his people. The red reminds us of his death and of his blood.

Then there is a change as the next page is white. This is what God can do for sinners. For Jesus' sake he is able to forgive their sins and make them, as David says in Psalm 51, "whiter than snow". What colour would you put on the next page? The writers have gone for gold. This tells us that his people are precious to the Lord. He loves them and has promised to care for them in this world and bring them to be with himself when they die. The last colour is green. I had to think about that one! Green is the colour of spring, isn't it? It's the colour of growing, and those who are saved by Jesus grow to be like him. What colour are you? Which page of this book are you on?

Murdo A N Macleod

WHO AM I?

Every year they came. We would plant our crops and just as they were growing nicely the Midianites would come. They would steal our harvest and bring their animals to eat up what was left. After seven years of it we were poor and tired and hungry.

Some of my people complained bitterly and tried to blame the Lord. Deep down I knew that all of this was our own fault. We had turned away from the Lord and begun to worship idols of the Canaanites. No wonder things weren't going well and that the Lord was allowing the Midianites to attack us. Surely he was calling us to repent and return to him?

I hated these idols. That's why I broke down the altar of Baal that night. Some people were angry and said I shouldn't have done it but I only did what God commanded. I began to understand that the Lord was calling me to lead my people against the Midianites. The Lord was going to deliver us from our enemies.

Now I have to say that I'm not really much of a soldier. So I wanted to be sure before going into battle and the Lord was very patient with me. He gave me the sign I asked for with the fleece.

And he gave it to me twice! To begin with we had a big group but the Lord showed me that he was going to defeat the enemy with a small group so that everyone would know that he had done it. Those who were afraid were allowed to go home and twenty-two thousand walked away! Well, that left ten thousand but still the Lord was not finished. The men went to get a drink of water at a river and those who bowed down to drink also went home leaving us with, wait for it, three hundred! Yes, that's right, three hundred.

The Lord then showed me that we were to take trumpets, a torch and a clay jar. We went down to the camp of the Midianites and when we blew with the trumpets and broke the jars you wouldn't believe the way they ran away. I can still hear our men calling out, "The sword of the LORD" I haven't finished that quotation but when you look up the Book of Judges you can see it in full. In a wonderful way the Lord had given us a great victory.

Who am I? I'm sure you've worked it out by now and you'll be ready to complete the puzzle on the next page.



PUZZLE PAGE

I asked God for 2 signs, describe each of the signs using the words below



1. _____

2. _____

| | | | | |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| T = 1 | S = 2 | G = 3 | D = 4 | H = 5 |
| E = 6 | W = 7 | A = 8 | O = 9 | R = 10 |
| I = 11 | F = 12 | L = 13 | N = 14 | |

Use the code to find out the answer to these sums.

$1 + 5 + 6 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

$2 + 7 + 9 + 10 + 4 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

$9 + 12 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

$1 + 5 + 6 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

$13 + 9 + 10 + 4 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

$8 + 14 + 4 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

$9 + 12 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

$3 + 11 + 4 + 6 + 9 + 14 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

Use the story to work out these **sums**.

How many soldiers were there to start with? _____

How many soldiers were afraid? _____

How many did this leave? _____

How many drank with their hands cupped? _____

How many went back all together? _____

February entries

As Anne has, as yet, received very few entries for February the names are being held over until next month.

In the meantime get puzzling!

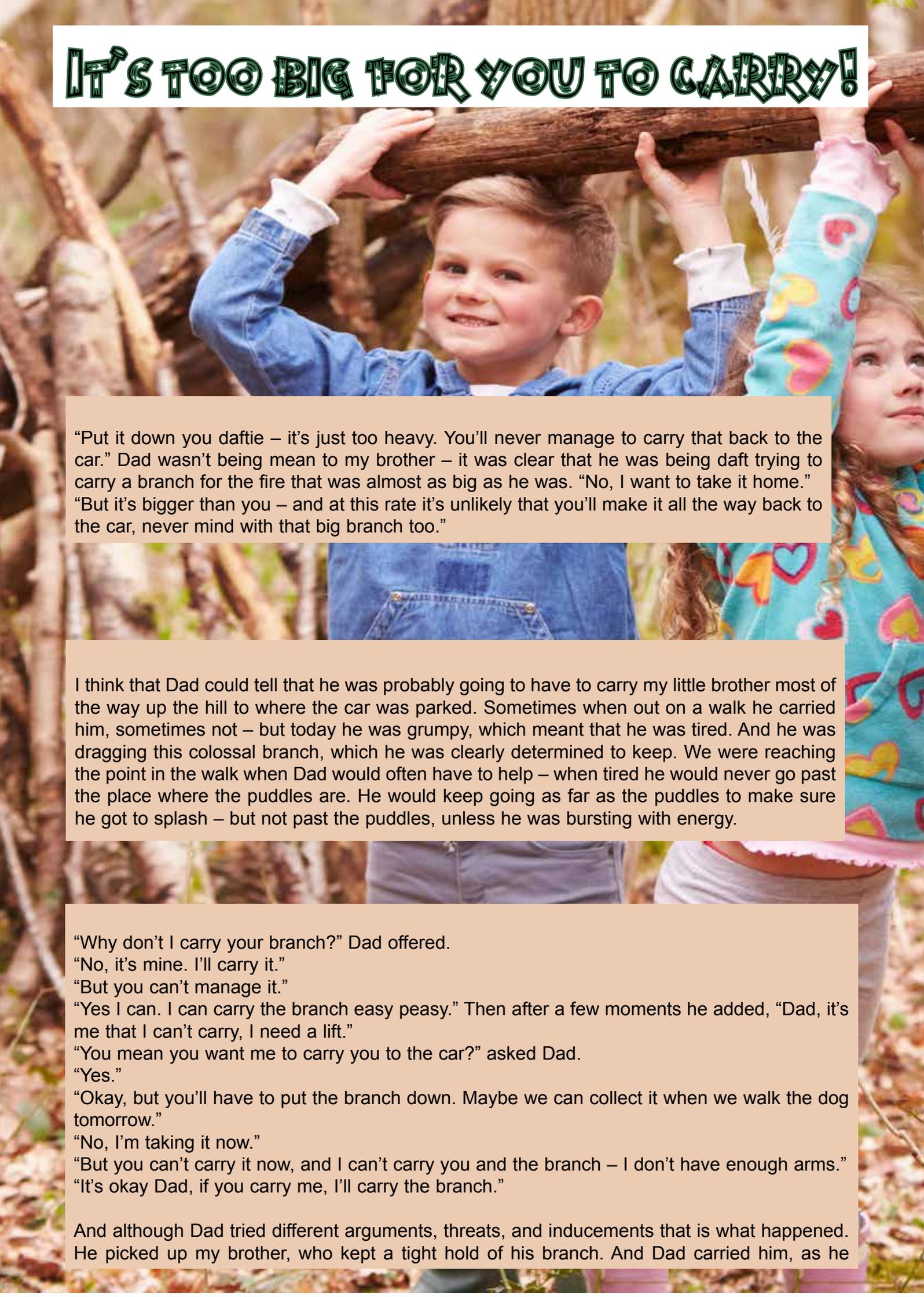
Name _____

Age _____

Congregation _____

Address _____

IT'S TOO BIG FOR YOU TO CARRY!



“Put it down you daftie – it’s just too heavy. You’ll never manage to carry that back to the car.” Dad wasn’t being mean to my brother – it was clear that he was being daft trying to carry a branch for the fire that was almost as big as he was. “No, I want to take it home.” “But it’s bigger than you – and at this rate it’s unlikely that you’ll make it all the way back to the car, never mind with that big branch too.”

I think that Dad could tell that he was probably going to have to carry my little brother most of the way up the hill to where the car was parked. Sometimes when out on a walk he carried him, sometimes not – but today he was grumpy, which meant that he was tired. And he was dragging this colossal branch, which he was clearly determined to keep. We were reaching the point in the walk when Dad would often have to help – when tired he would never go past the place where the puddles are. He would keep going as far as the puddles to make sure he got to splash – but not past the puddles, unless he was bursting with energy.

“Why don’t I carry your branch?” Dad offered.

“No, it’s mine. I’ll carry it.”

“But you can’t manage it.”

“Yes I can. I can carry the branch easy peasy.” Then after a few moments he added, “Dad, it’s me that I can’t carry, I need a lift.”

“You mean you want me to carry you to the car?” asked Dad.

“Yes.”

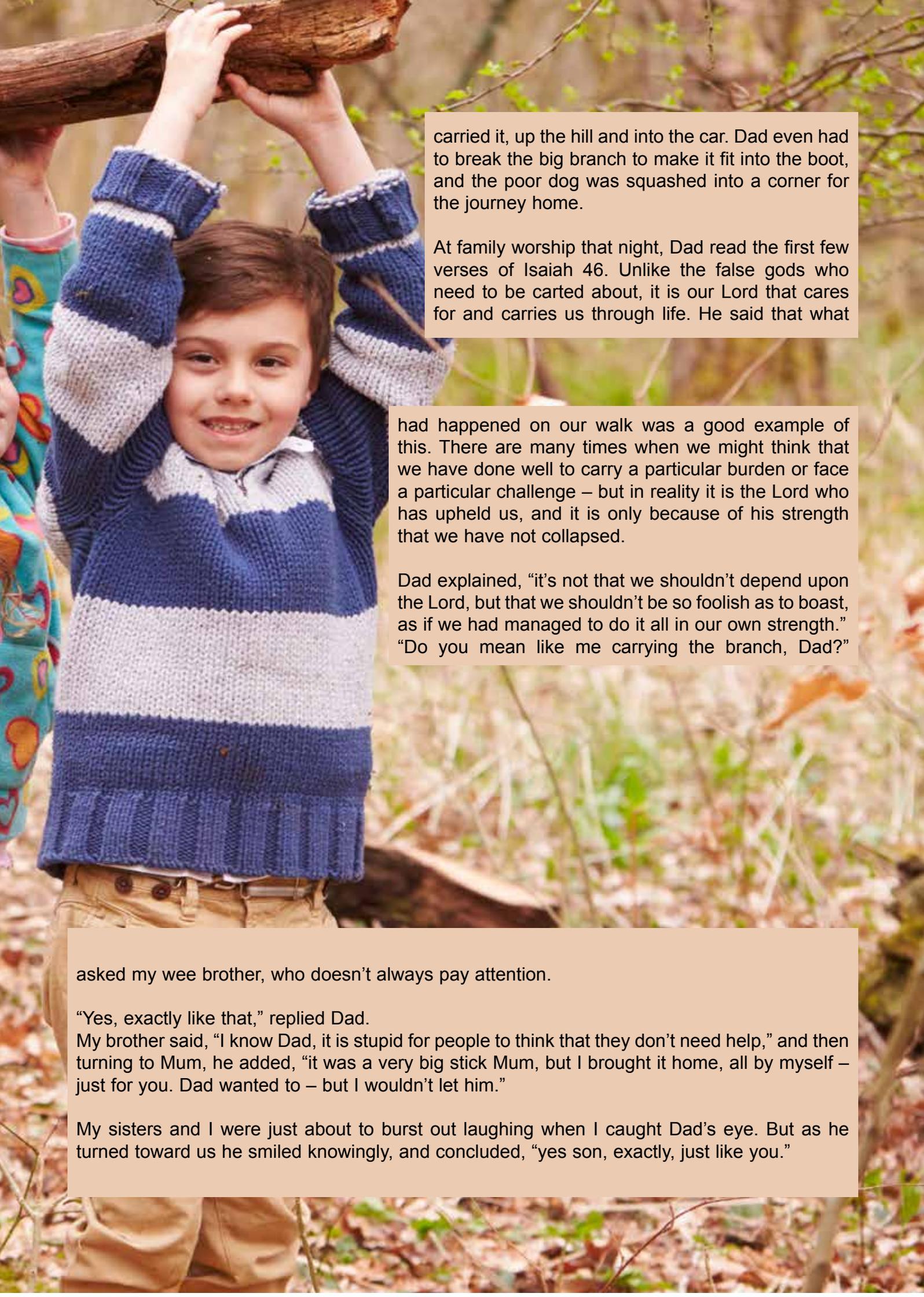
“Okay, but you’ll have to put the branch down. Maybe we can collect it when we walk the dog tomorrow.”

“No, I’m taking it now.”

“But you can’t carry it now, and I can’t carry you and the branch – I don’t have enough arms.”

“It’s okay Dad, if you carry me, I’ll carry the branch.”

And although Dad tried different arguments, threats, and inducements that is what happened. He picked up my brother, who kept a tight hold of his branch. And Dad carried him, as he



carried it, up the hill and into the car. Dad even had to break the big branch to make it fit into the boot, and the poor dog was squashed into a corner for the journey home.

At family worship that night, Dad read the first few verses of Isaiah 46. Unlike the false gods who need to be carted about, it is our Lord that cares for and carries us through life. He said that what

had happened on our walk was a good example of this. There are many times when we might think that we have done well to carry a particular burden or face a particular challenge – but in reality it is the Lord who has upheld us, and it is only because of his strength that we have not collapsed.

Dad explained, “it’s not that we shouldn’t depend upon the Lord, but that we shouldn’t be so foolish as to boast, as if we had managed to do it all in our own strength.” “Do you mean like me carrying the branch, Dad?”

asked my wee brother, who doesn’t always pay attention.

“Yes, exactly like that,” replied Dad.

My brother said, “I know Dad, it is stupid for people to think that they don’t need help,” and then turning to Mum, he added, “it was a very big stick Mum, but I brought it home, all by myself – just for you. Dad wanted to – but I wouldn’t let him.”

My sisters and I were just about to burst out laughing when I caught Dad’s eye. But as he turned toward us he smiled knowingly, and concluded, “yes son, exactly, just like you.”

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES - CHAPTER 4



**PREJUDICE -
PRAYER - POWER
AND PRACTICE**

Last month we read of Peter and John healing the lame man and preaching in the Temple. It didn't take long for the authorities to get wind of this and here in chapter 4 they are put in prison for preaching that Jesus was a living and powerful Saviour.

OPPOSITION (Verses 1 -22)

The religious leaders in Jerusalem were totally opposed to this message and felt threatened by it. It is amazing how little has changed over the years! Many in authority today respond to the message of the Gospel in exactly the same hostile manner as these men did. Many of them, just like these men in Acts 4, claim to follow the Scriptures but are really opposed to Christ and his claims over their lives! If you are a Christian you will meet with opposition in one form or another and you must pray to be ready for it when it comes. If on the other hand, you never experience any threats or even ridicule as a Christian, you should ask yourself why that might be.

However, despite the opposition they faced, the Apostles could not be silenced (v19) and the miracle of the lame man who was healed confirmed the truth of their words (vv14-16). The apostles made it clear that they were under a higher authority than mere men. How sad that these men saw all the evidence and rejected it and how sad that men, women, boys and girls continue still to do exactly the same thing. Knowing the facts many, like the rulers in this chapter, refuse to come to Christ and continue to try and find ways to disobey and defy God (vv21-22).

PRAYER (Verses 23 -31)

When news of their arrest spread amongst the church they prayed to the Lord. They were not surprised by what had happened because they knew that the Bible had promised opposition (vv24-28). It is very interesting that they did not pray, primarily, to be delivered from their persecutors but to have the strength and courage to go witnessing to Jesus as Lord of all. He is head not only over the church but over every nation and every government and the quote in this section from Psalm 2 reminds us of that.

They also prayed for God's power to accompany the Word as it was preached. They knew that without the power of the Spirit they would have very little success. As they prayed the Lord gave them a sign in verse 31 that he was hearing them and that his power was as unrestricted as ever.

PRACTICE (Verses 32 -37)

This chapter also reminds us that Christians are to show, by the way in which they live their lives, that God's work in their souls has been a real and genuine thing. Faith shows itself by works. In verse 32 we see the harmony and the mutual support there was amongst these believers. God's people did not just turn up at a worship service two or three times a week, say 'Hello' to each other and then go their own way; they helped one another. This was the result of Christ's power and grace (v33). The rich helped the poor (vv33-37). We still carry this principle forward when bigger congregations help the smaller ones. If you would like to know more about this you can see what you can find out about Rev Thomas Chalmers and the Sustentation Fund. In verse 36 we meet Barnabas whose name means "son of consolation" and the consolation he offered was more than just kind words; it was real self-sacrificial kindness. In Hebrews 13 verse 1 we are told that such love and kindness is to continue in the church in all ages.

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