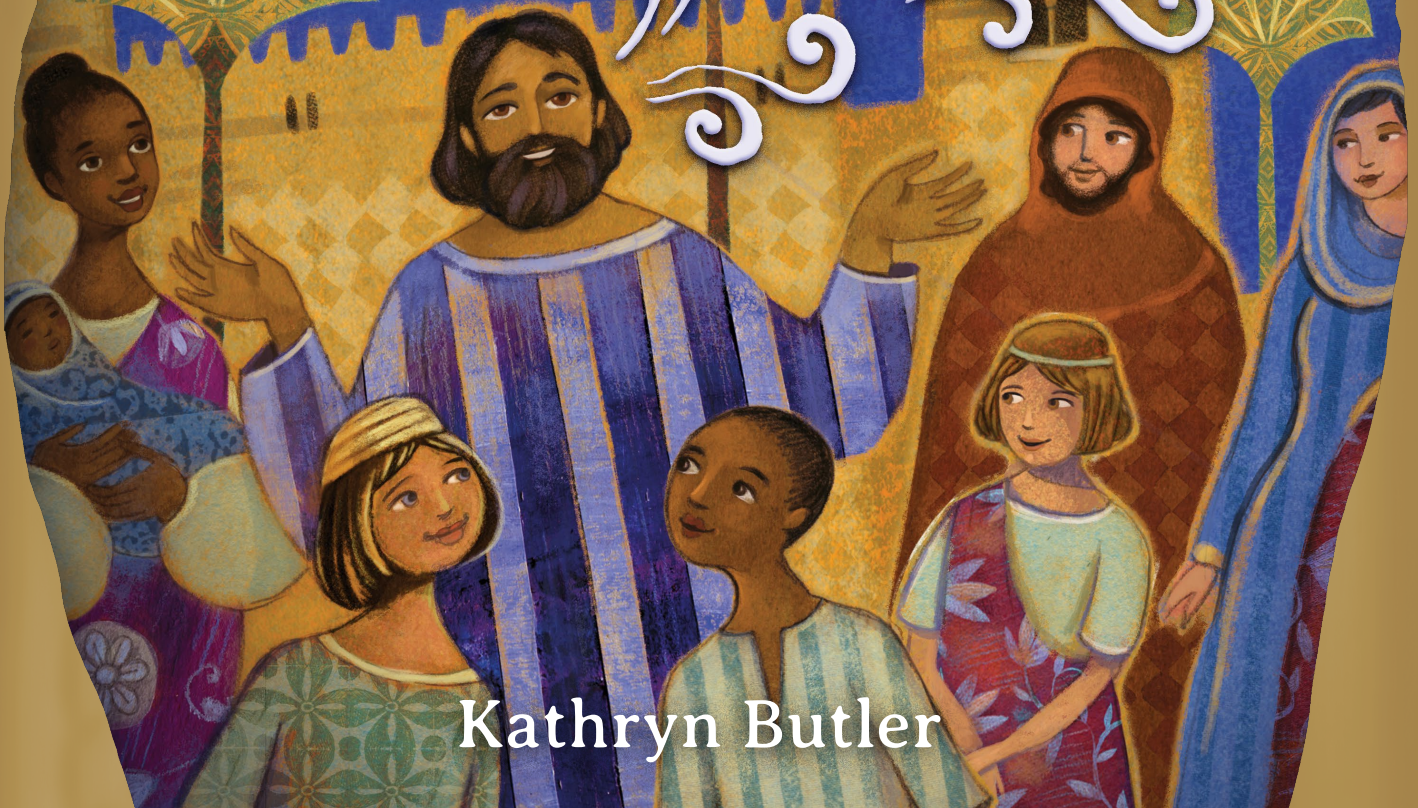


A Bible Storybook Celebrating the Greatest Storyteller of All

THE STORYTELLER'S BIBLE



Kathryn Butler

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*To Jack and Christie—
Harbor the Story in your heart, always.*



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Note to Grown-Ups

Something wondrous occurs when we read stories to children.

Research tries to quantify the magic. Just twenty minutes of read-aloud time a day, studies proclaim, nurture literacy and cognitive development.¹ Yet those of us privileged to crack open a book with a child see something more. Something enchanting.

We glimpse it as kids plead for one more chapter, or as they snuggle closer when the hero plunges into danger. We see it as they lean forward in anticipation, wondering if Charlotte will save Wilbur, or if Eustace will ever escape his dragonish fate. When we read stories to children, before our eyes we see truths inspire their minds and shape their hearts. As author Kate DiCamillo so poignantly states, “We let our guard down when someone we love is reading us a story. We exist together in a little patch of warmth and light.”²

The Storyteller’s Bible invites grown-ups and children to linger together in that warmth and light through a retelling of the greatest story of all—the true story. The story of how our loving, all-powerful God took on flesh, dwelt among us, and laid down His life so we might live.

The following pages include thirty-five Bible stories selected to offer kids a cohesive retelling of the gospel narrative. Each story takes about five minutes to read, intentionally brief for sharing during the lull before Sunday school dismissal or in the drowsy minutes before bed. You can pluck out stories in isolation, but because the book is written as one overarching narrative, children might glean the most if they hear the stories successively, like chapters from a children’s novel.

As you read, you’ll find call-out questions in bold that can prompt discussion with your listeners. “More of the Story” questions at the end of each story prompt kids to look up Bible verses for those moments with older listeners eager to learn more. If time allows, pause in your readings to elicit kids’ thoughts and invite them to ponder and delight.

May these stories spark wonder in children’s hearts, engage their minds, and point them to the greatest Storyteller of all—the Storyteller who, through Christ, offers us the brightest and most beautiful of happy endings.



Kathryn Butler

¹ John S. Hutton, Tzipi Horowitz-Kraus, Alan L. Mendelsohn, et al. “Home Reading Environment and Brain Activation in Preschool Children Listening to Stories.” *Pediatrics* 136 no. 3 (2015), 466–478.

² Meghan Cox Gurdon. *The Enchanted Hour: The Miraculous Power of Reading Aloud in the Age of Distraction*. Harper Collins (New York), 2019, xiii.



Let Me Tell You a Story . . .

Do you have a favorite story? What makes it so special?

Does it feature a brave hero who triumphs against overwhelming odds?

Do monsters and marvels spring from the pages?

Do characters trek through mysterious lands dappled in color and mist?

Do valiant warriors fight against the powers of darkness, or do knights clad in gleaming armor save damsels trapped in towers?

Does your heart thrill when you read or hear of such glittering things?

There's a reason great stories linger with us long after we've read "THE END." Stories teach and inspire us. They invite us to consider what may be and to remember the wonders of old. They train us to run toward what is good, beautiful, and lovely . . . and to run *away* from what lurks in the shadows.



And best of all, the *greatest* stories point to the most wonderful story of all: the story of a terrible curse that gripped a once shimmering land. The story of a people desperate for rescue and a radiant, all-loving Hero who gave up everything to save those He loved.

Read on, and journey into the greatest story. The best story. The story that belongs to you, to me, and to every person on every corner of this shining, windswept earth.

This story has the power to change minds and hearts. And best of all, this story is TRUE. It is the story of the depth and breadth and height of God's love for you.



Read on, dear friend.
Read on, delight, and
hold tight to the
wonders that
unfold.



In the Beginning

Genesis 1-2; Job 38; Psalm 104; John 1:1-5; Acts 17:25

Many great stories begin with, “Once upon a time.” *This* story starts before time began.

It begins before you were born, before your parents met, and even before your great-great-great-great grandfather took his first breath.

It begins long before peanut butter and storybooks, swing sets, hot cocoa, and sandcastles at the beach. Seahorses didn’t yet bob in the ocean. No porcupines nosed through brambles, and no sparrows yet graced the air with their song.

No mountains arched up their backs like cats after a long nap. Rain didn’t glaze any rooftops, rivers didn’t flow, and no sunshine or moonbeams set the sky aglow.

In the beginning, all was dark and empty. Nothing that we now see or touch or hear existed.

Close your eyes. Can you imagine what this must have been like?

In all that nothingness, God was there. God was *everywhere*, with His Spirit hovering over the darkness. And in the darkness and emptiness of the beginning, He drew up a plan to give us life and breath and everything. He wrote the very first story—*our* story. And all that He wrote was good.

“Let there be light!” God commanded, and at His word, light burned through the darkness. God gathered the light, called it day, and separated it from the darkness, which He called night. Upon His word the very first day blazed into being.



The Great Flood

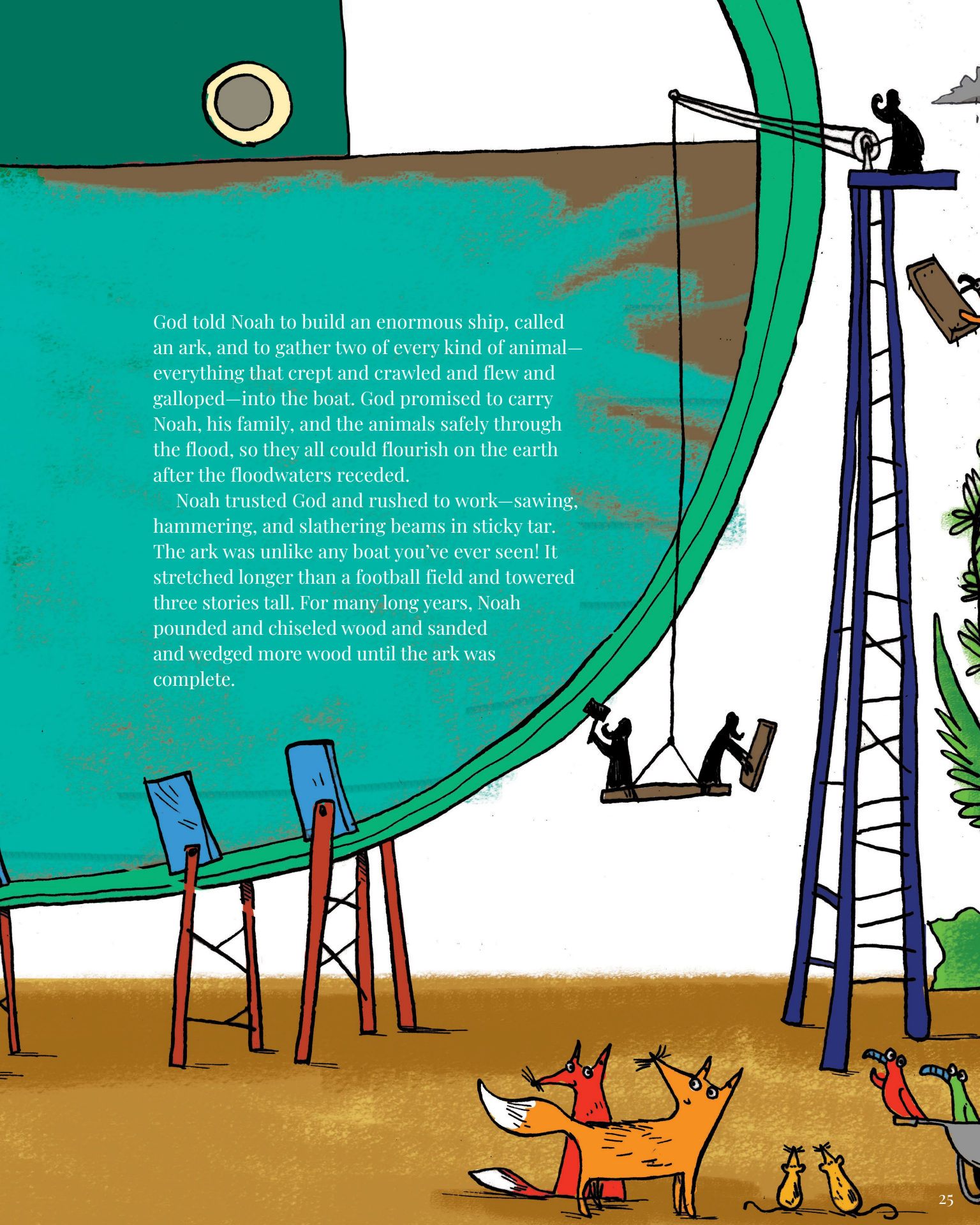
Genesis 6-9

After God banished Adam and Eve from the garden, He blessed them with children, who had more children, who had even more children . . . on and on and on, until people multiplied over the face of the earth. And the more people prospered, the more despicably they behaved. In every green valley, thirsty desert, and shady forest, people stole and lied, murdered and hurt one another. Their every thought turned toward evil.

When God saw His people destroying each other, He grieved in His heart. He decided He would cleanse all the world of their wickedness in a great flood. And yet God would not forget His promise to Adam and Eve to send a Savior.

In those days, Noah was the only man who loved God and followed Him. To save Noah and his family,





God told Noah to build an enormous ship, called an ark, and to gather two of every kind of animal—everything that crept and crawled and flew and galloped—into the boat. God promised to carry Noah, his family, and the animals safely through the flood, so they all could flourish on the earth after the floodwaters receded.

Noah trusted God and rushed to work—sawing, hammering, and slathering beams in sticky tar. The ark was unlike any boat you’ve ever seen! It stretched longer than a football field and towered three stories tall. For many long years, Noah pounded and chiseled wood and sanded and wedged more wood until the ark was complete.

First, the people packed clay into molds—*SLOP*—to make bricks. Then they dried these bricks by blazing fires until steam *HISSED* from the clay and the blocks hardened like stone. They stacked the bricks, one after another, and sealed the cracks between them with pitch.

And they decided to build more than just a city.

What else do you think the people built with all these bricks?

Perhaps they built homes to shelter the wandering, to keep them safe from the cold and the driving rain?

Perhaps they built a temple to honor God, who had saved them from the floodwaters?

Oh no, friend. The seed of sin still lurked in their hearts.

“Let’s build a tower!” they said. “Let’s build a tower so high that its top scrapes the heavens! Then everyone who sees it will know how powerful *we* are.”

And so, they stacked bricks, one after the next, after the next, after the next, higher and higher, until the tower reached toward heaven.

Of course, God was watching. He saw the wickedness and selfishness with which the people built, and He grieved in His heart. If they continued, they would drift farther and farther away from Him, farther and farther away from everything good, true, and lovely.



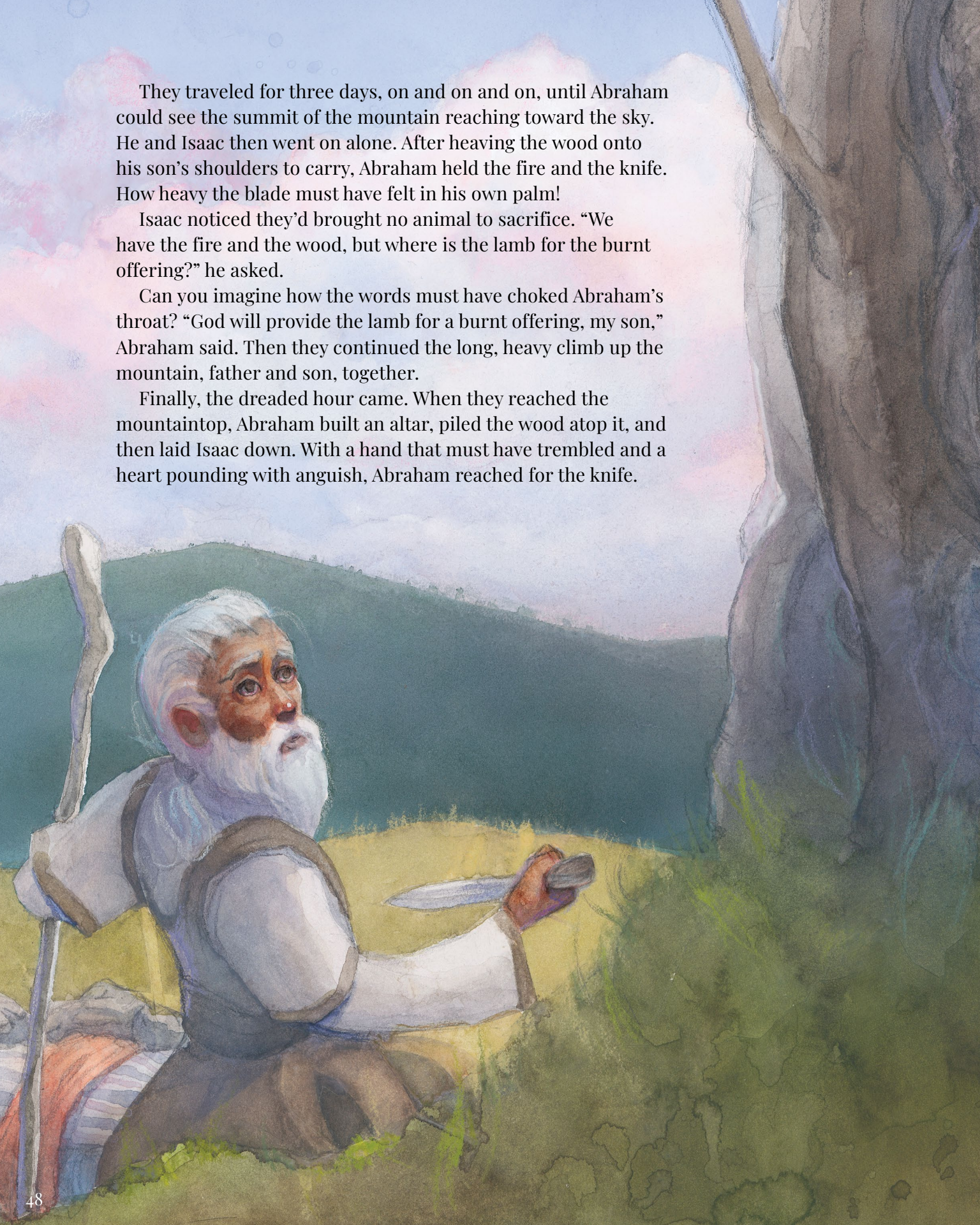


They traveled for three days, on and on and on, until Abraham could see the summit of the mountain reaching toward the sky. He and Isaac then went on alone. After heaving the wood onto his son's shoulders to carry, Abraham held the fire and the knife. How heavy the blade must have felt in his own palm!

Isaac noticed they'd brought no animal to sacrifice. "We have the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" he asked.

Can you imagine how the words must have choked Abraham's throat? "God will provide the lamb for a burnt offering, my son," Abraham said. Then they continued the long, heavy climb up the mountain, father and son, together.

Finally, the dreaded hour came. When they reached the mountaintop, Abraham built an altar, piled the wood atop it, and then laid Isaac down. With a hand that must have trembled and a heart pounding with anguish, Abraham reached for the knife.





Suddenly, a voice cried out from heaven! "Abraham! Abraham!" God said. "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." At the sound of God's voice, Abraham lifted his eyes, and through a sheen of tears he saw a ram caught by his horns in the thicket.

God had provided the sacrifice!

The Fire in the Bush

Exodus 1-3; John 8:34-36; Hebrews 11:24-26

After Israel's family settled in Egypt, they spread throughout the land and had children, who had more children, who had even more children . . . and on, and on, and on. And once again, sin threatened to destroy God's people.

After Joseph and his brothers died, a new pharaoh rose to power. He didn't remember how Joseph had saved Egypt from starvation. On the contrary, he saw how numerous the Israelites were in Egypt, and he didn't like it. Not one bit. "There are so many!" Pharaoh said. "What if war breaks out, and the Israelites join our enemies and fight against us?"

To keep them under control, Pharaoh ruthlessly made God's people his slaves. He forced them to work the fields beneath the blistering sun, heave bricks, and slather mortar, all while brutal taskmasters watched their every move. He even commanded the midwives, who helped with childbirth, to drown all baby Israelite boys in the Nile!

How could this happen? Had God forgotten His promise to Abraham? Did He forget to send His Savior?

Oh no, dear friend. God heard His people's cries. He heard, and He would raise up a leader to guide His people to freedom.

During this dreadful time, an Israelite woman gave birth to a son. She hid the boy from the Egyptians for as long as she could, until finally, when he was too big to hide, she placed him in a basket and floated it among the reeds by the riverbank. She prayed that God would guard her dear son.

Imagine the basket bobbing on the water. What would happen to the baby?

How the mother's heart must have torn away and floated along with it! What she didn't know is that the basket she released so tenderly on the river held the hope for her entire nation.






Still Pharaoh chased after them! He brought his chariots screeching and his horses pounding across the ground.

Yet God provided a way! The heavy chariots sank into the mud of the ocean floor and lodged there, locked tight in the sopping, wet earth. Then when the last of God's people had stepped onto the safety of dry ground, God commanded Moses to lower his staff, and . . .

CRASH! The walls of water barreled together, and the Red Sea sealed up and swallowed Pharaoh's army. The soldiers disappeared into the depths. God's people rejoiced on dry land, free at last.


Free—exactly as God had promised!

- 
- The Passover foreshadows the Savior who would come to rescue us from our sins. What kind of Savior would this be?
 - Did the Israelites do anything to save themselves from slavery?

More of the Story—Read John 8:34, and now think about the last question. Israel needed God to save them from slavery. Whom do we need to save us from slavery to sin?

To whom can you tell this story today?





The instant Jonah struck the water, the ocean stilled. The wind calmed. The clouds melted away like snow on a spring day, and the sun beamed through.

Jonah gasped for breath in the water. Would God leave him to sink to the depths? Would he punish him for his disobedience?

Think about all God had done for His people. How do you think God would treat Jonah?

Jonah had run from God . . . but God wouldn't abandon Jonah! He sent an enormous fish to save Jonah as he sank down, down, down into the sea. The fish opened its gigantic mouth, and *GULP!* It swallowed Jonah whole!

For three days and three nights, Jonah wallowed in the darkness and dank of the fish's belly.

What might Jonah have smelled and heard?

Finally, while locked in that murk, Jonah prayed to God, who had shown him so much mercy. "Salvation belongs to the LORD!" Jonah said.

Temptation in the Wilderness

Psalm 145:15; Matthew 4; Luke 4

After Jesus's baptism, the Holy Spirit led Him into the wilderness for forty days. Just as God's people had wandered for forty years in the wilderness, suffered hunger and thirst, and then sinned horribly against God, so also Jesus would wander, would hunger and thirst . . . and would be tempted to sin. But would He give in?

What would He do, as He trudged through the dust beneath the unforgiving sun? Would He forget God's goodness, as God's own people had done so many times long ago, and so many times since? Would He grumble for food and water? Would He worship created things instead of the Creator of heaven and earth? Would He disobey God?

What do you think Jesus did?

For forty days and forty nights, Jesus ate nothing. As He wandered, His stomach must have twisted with hunger, and dizziness must have made the ground wobble around Him. Then, at the moment when He was most drained and weary, Satan tempted Him just as he had enticed Adam and Eve so long ago.

"If you are the Son of God," Satan said, "command these stones to become loaves of bread."

What would Jesus do?

As had been the case for His ancestors in the wilderness, His stomach groaned, and He felt faint. But Jesus remembered God's Word. "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone,'" He said, "but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Jesus knew that more than bread, more than meat, more even than the sweetest honey, He needed God. He needed the One who gives all people their food in every season.



*With
illustrations
from 32
artists!*

Each story is true, and you can tell it too!

A world being created from nothing. A boy facing a giant on the battlefield. A Savior giving all for the people He loves. The Bible is full of incredible true stories that not only enthrall listeners but also connect them to the original Storyteller—God.

This unique Bible storybook helps you excel as a storyteller too, by offering:

- Thirty-five engaging stories written specifically for reading aloud
- Illustrations from more than thirty visual storytellers from around the world
- Mid-story and follow-up questions to engage your listeners
- Extra content and tips on how to be a better storyteller

Each story takes about five minutes to read aloud, perfect for sharing at the end of class or at the end of a long day. Together, the stories offer a cohesive retelling of the gospel, pointing children's hearts and minds to the greatest Storyteller of all.

