

A NOTE TO PARENTS

The Bible is a story, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. For Christians, the Bible is the story of God's people, but its plot development may also be experienced as the story of each one of us. God makes us; we are alienated from him; he tirelessly pursues us, choosing us, loving us, helping us, disciplining us, calling us into the wilderness and then into the promised land. We experience betrayal, exile, loss and pain; God comes, in person, into our lives, bringing judgment, grace, and new life; he asks us to carry that grace into the world; and, at last, he comes again, finishing his work in us and bringing us home to himself in glory.

Rarely, however, do we convey the *wholeness* of this story to our children. We treat the Bible as a jumble of little stories, which we package as "lessons." We belabor them; we ask children to apply them intellectually to their own lives and experiences, and to do this for our approval. They learn that what we want is for them to draw some nugget of meaning from the story: "This is what the Bible tells me about God," or more often, "This is how God wants me to behave (which is also how the grownups want me to behave, though they don't behave that way very often themselves)." Bibles and Sunday School materials for children today rarely include the end of the story: the end of the world, the end of our own lives. Yet all children crave endings—especially happy endings, where the prince marries the princess and everyone lives happily ever after. The Bible has such an ending, and we celebrate it in our worship, as we speak of Christ's coming again in glory; but with children, we act as if it did not exist.

Suppose we treated other stories the way we treat the Bible? Suppose we told the story of Cinderella in separate installments, in the wrong order, without the ending, and then asked our children to tell us what it meant for them—what they learned about life from this story? Would we be surprised if they were first baffled, then bored, and finally scornful? We need to stop being so solemn about the Bible, and let ourselves and our children meet it as the powerful story it is—beginning, middle, *and* happily ever after.

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Year B
PROPER 28
TRACK 2

"At the end of the world, after great troubles,
the dead will rise ...
they will shine like stars
for ever and ever"

DANIEL 4:3

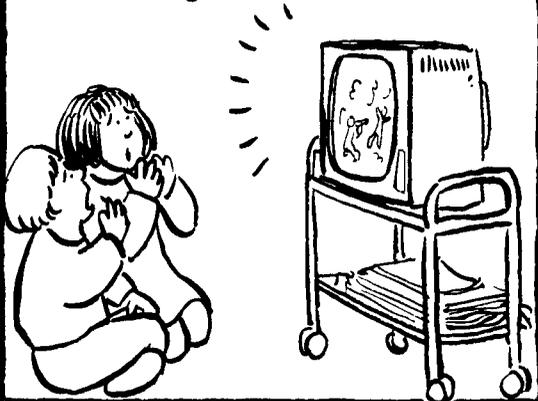


When people think about God, they remember that he made the world ...

...and they wonder how the world will end.



When sad and scary things happen, people sometimes say the end is coming near.



The Bible does not tell us when or how the world will end. But it says that God will always care for us.



Jesus's friends wanted him to tell them all about the end of the world. Jesus said, "Those things are God's secrets. No one can tell them."

Jesus promised to be with us always. He promised to give us life that will last forever. So we do not need to be scared about the end of the world, or the end of our lives.

The LORD is at
my right
hand
I shall
not
fall



You
will
show me
the path
of life
and joy for
EVERMORE PSALM
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Draw yourself, walking with Jesus in the light of God's love.