



The forest animals invite you into their world of challenges through a series of ten "Character Builders" books. These books will inspire children and have a positive impact on their lives. The purpose of this series is to provide parents and teachers with the proper tools to develop healthy character traits in children. The blessing of starting while they are young is seeing established strong, solid fundamentals, developed values and shaped character in your children when they become young adults.

The first volume in the series, *The Crucial Task*, is focused on work ethics. Each of the forest animals has its own unique character and values. Through their attitude and choices their character is revealed which affects their work and their accomplishments. This story helps children see the effects of different attitudes and values when dealing with responsibilities.

Each volume also contains guidelines for parents and teachers. Discussion questions are provided which link the story with biblical principles. This will help to shepherd the child's heart enabling him or her to think through situations and to make wise decisions.



Justyna D. Wacławik is a very talented and imaginative author who is admired by children. With her special sensitivity, she can easily visualize a child's world. Her stories captivate the attention of young readers and cultivate ethical morals as well as the best traditional Christian values. In a compelling manner, her books aid parents to help develop individuality and positive character in their children. Justyna resides in Phoenix, Arizona.

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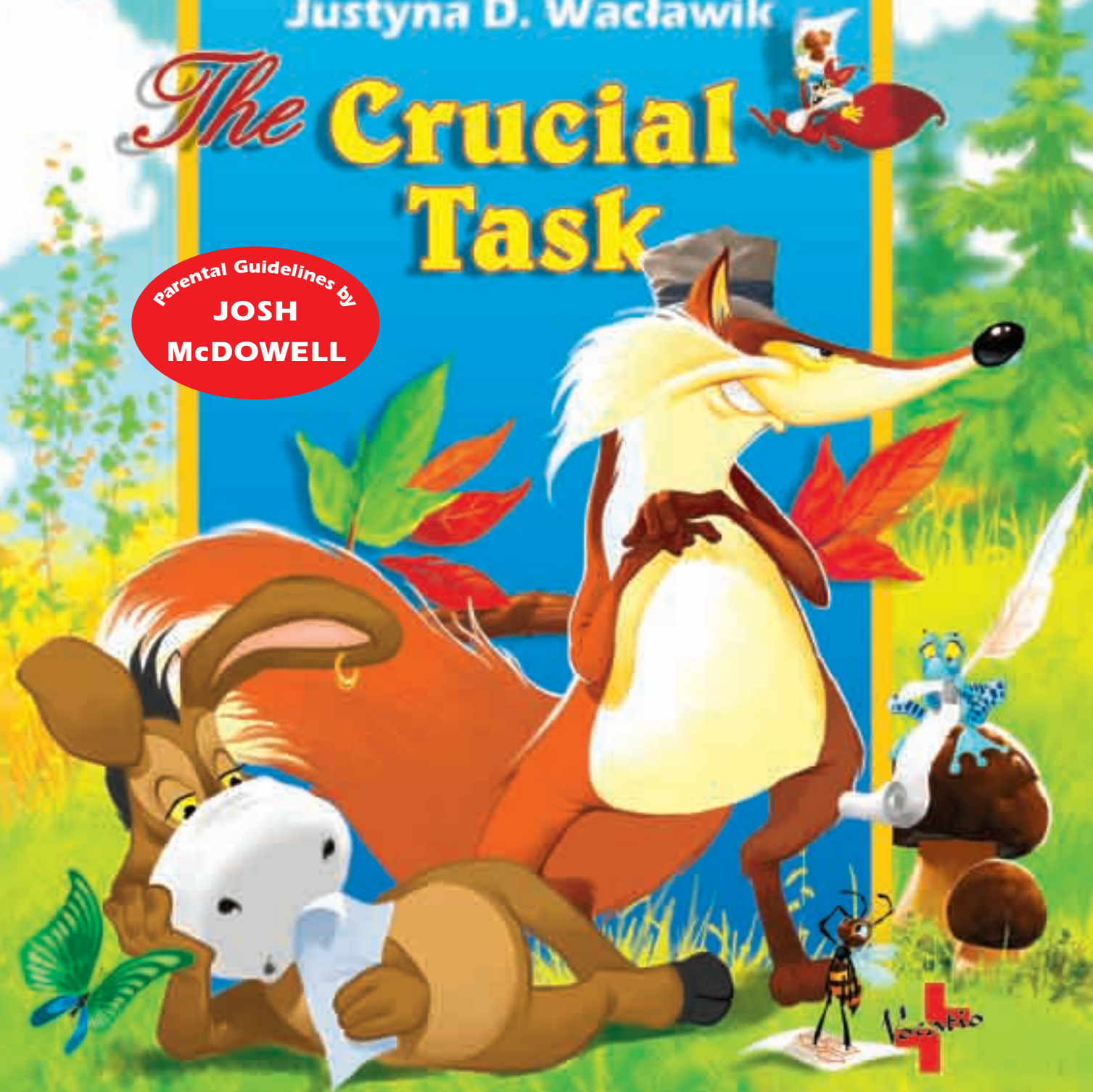
The Crucial Task

Justyna D. Wacławik

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The Crucial Task

Parental Guidelines by
**JOSH
McDOWELL**





This book is a gift for:

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From:

.....

For:

.....



I dedicate this book to my Dad who guided me to trust in the Lord and stay on the right path. He was the first who introduced God's Word into my life and demonstrated how to work hard and be responsible.



Thank you, Dad!

Justyna D. Waclawik


The Crucial Task

Parental Guidelines by Josh McDowell

Illustrations by Jakub Kuźma



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Once upon a time, several animals lived in a small community in the forest. The leader of the forest was known as the King of the forest because he was a wise, old Lion. Most of the other animals highly respected him and submitted to him because of his wisdom and his advice.



One day at the end of the summer, Lion called the animals for a community gathering and said, “We gather together to plan for our survival through the coming winter. As you know, it will be hard to find food when the snow covers everything around. Therefore, today I will give to each of you crucial tasks.”





*L*ion ordered Squirrels to gather nuts and seeds. Donkey's responsibility was to bring hay to the community warehouse. Fox was told to collect delicacies from farms located around the forest. Bee and his family were in charge of bringing honey.

"If you will start now and work persistently, we will be prepared and secured for winter. But there is not much time left to do this job," Lion said.





*T*he animals returned home and discussed Lion's orders. "I am not so stupid to listen to Lion's orders!" said Donkey. "What does he know about collecting hay? It is an easy and quick job. I can do this later." Then he lay down on the grass in the sun.





*T*he Squirrels greatly enjoyed the orders they received. “Lion always has enjoyable and fun ideas,” they said. Scampering up the trees, they looked for the best nuts, making a game of their work. The other animals saw them laughing and decided to join in on the fun and help collect fruits and vegetables.





*A*fter coming back home Fox, with a sly smile, said to his wife, “Oh, this is a great idea, but I will improve it even more! Let them work as much as they will and we will find a way to get all the food they collect. I am not so stupid. Why should I share delicacies I am collecting from the farms!” He rubbed his hands slyly.





*T*he Bees were just upset with the orders. “This will be an extra job for us; however, we will follow the orders.” Although they were not happy, they went ahead and made up a schedule for the assignment. They divided the forest into districts and planned who would do the extra work for the community.





After a month, the leaves on the trees burst into color. The heat from the sun didn't seem as warm now. The Squirrels had collected a lot of nuts and the Bees' hives overflowed with honey, but Donkey and Fox had nothing.





*S*uddenly, a winter storm came during the night. The harsh blizzard froze the water into ice and snow covered the forest. The animals came to Lion and asked, “What should we do now?” “Everyone should have completed their assigned tasks,” Lion answered. “Now is the time to bring everything you gathered to our community warehouse to share.”





The Donkey brayed, “I am not ready yet!
This stupid winter came too early!”

“Well, winter is not stupid,” Lion told him. “However, your choices were. Now you have to leave us. We cannot feed you since you did not do anything to help our community.”

Lion ordered the Wild Boars from the Royal Security Services to drive Donkey away from the forest.



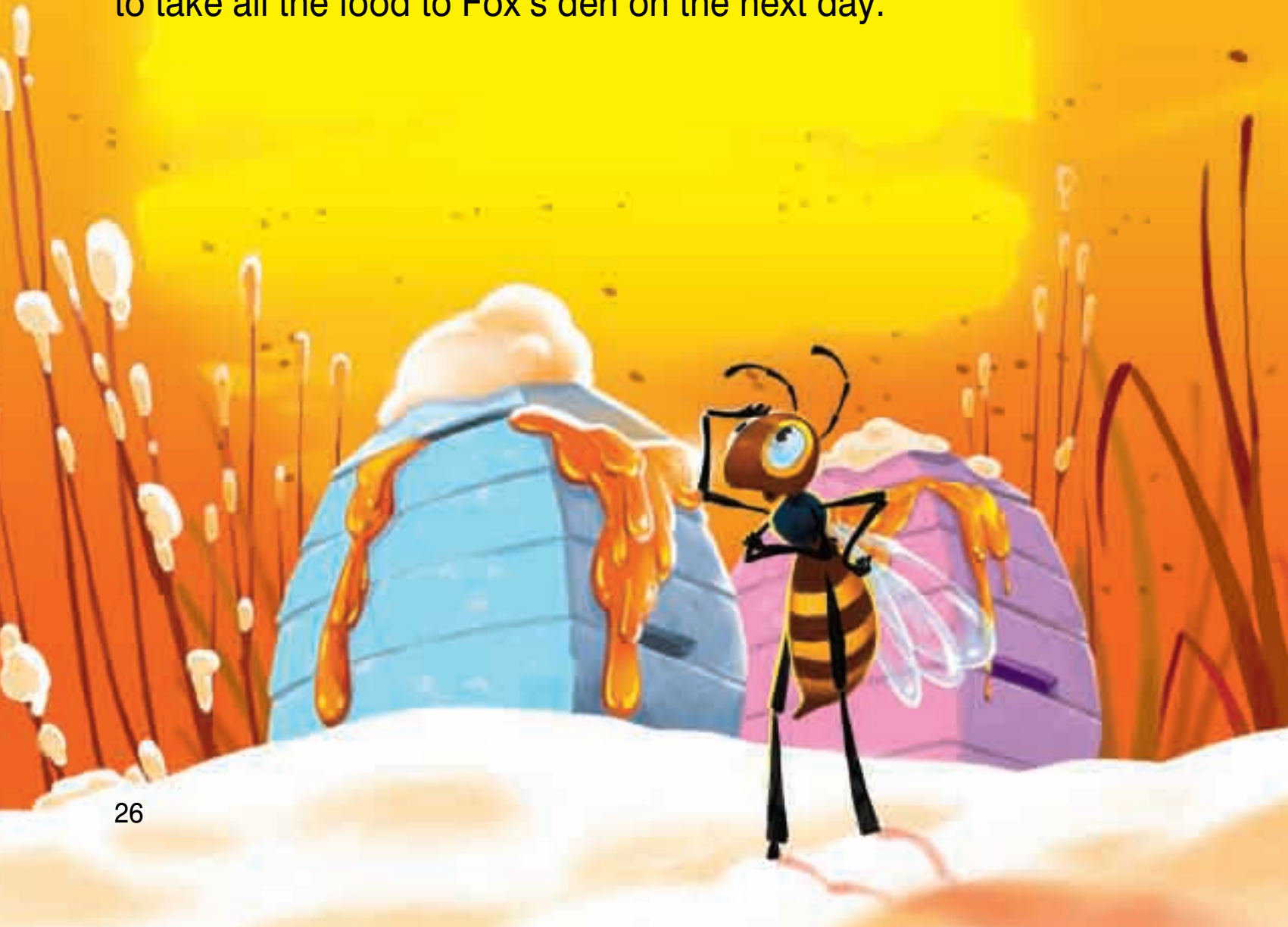


*T*hen the Lion looked towards Fox and asked, “How many delicacies did you collect, my friend?” With his cunning smile Fox answered, “Well, delicacies are very fragile so they need special attention while storing. It would be wiser to bring all the food to my den, and I will take care of it.” Lion gave a closer look at Fox and said, “Okay, it’s nice of you to offer to store the community reserves.”





*T*he Bee declared,
“We are fully prepared. We have plenty of honey.
It will be enough for everyone!”
According to Lion’s decision they planned
to take all the food to Fox’s den on the next day.







When the time came, all the animals, led by Lion, arrived at Fox's home. However, the door was closed.

"Open the door, Fox!" Lion said.


"I am sick today," Fox answered. "I cannot get up right now. Leave all the food in front of my den.

Later when I feel better, I will bring it inside."

"Okay," Lion answered. "We will leave it here, but please take care of it."

"I will. I will definitely do that. Believe me!" Fox said with an impish smile. The animals left all of the food. Then they went back to their homes for the night.





*D*uring the night, when all the animals were asleep, Fox came out snickering and hauled all the food to his other, secret place. He swelled with pride, thinking how smart he was.



The next day the animals came to get their daily portions of food. However, they got nothing. Fox came out in front of his house with tears in his eyes and said, “A terrible thing happened. The food was stolen! When I felt better this morning, I went out to haul it to my den as I promised, but everything was gone! Some thief robbed us, because you left everything without any protection! Now will we starve!”





*T*he animals with their heads low turned and went back to their homes in disappointment. Their stomachs were rumbling from hunger.

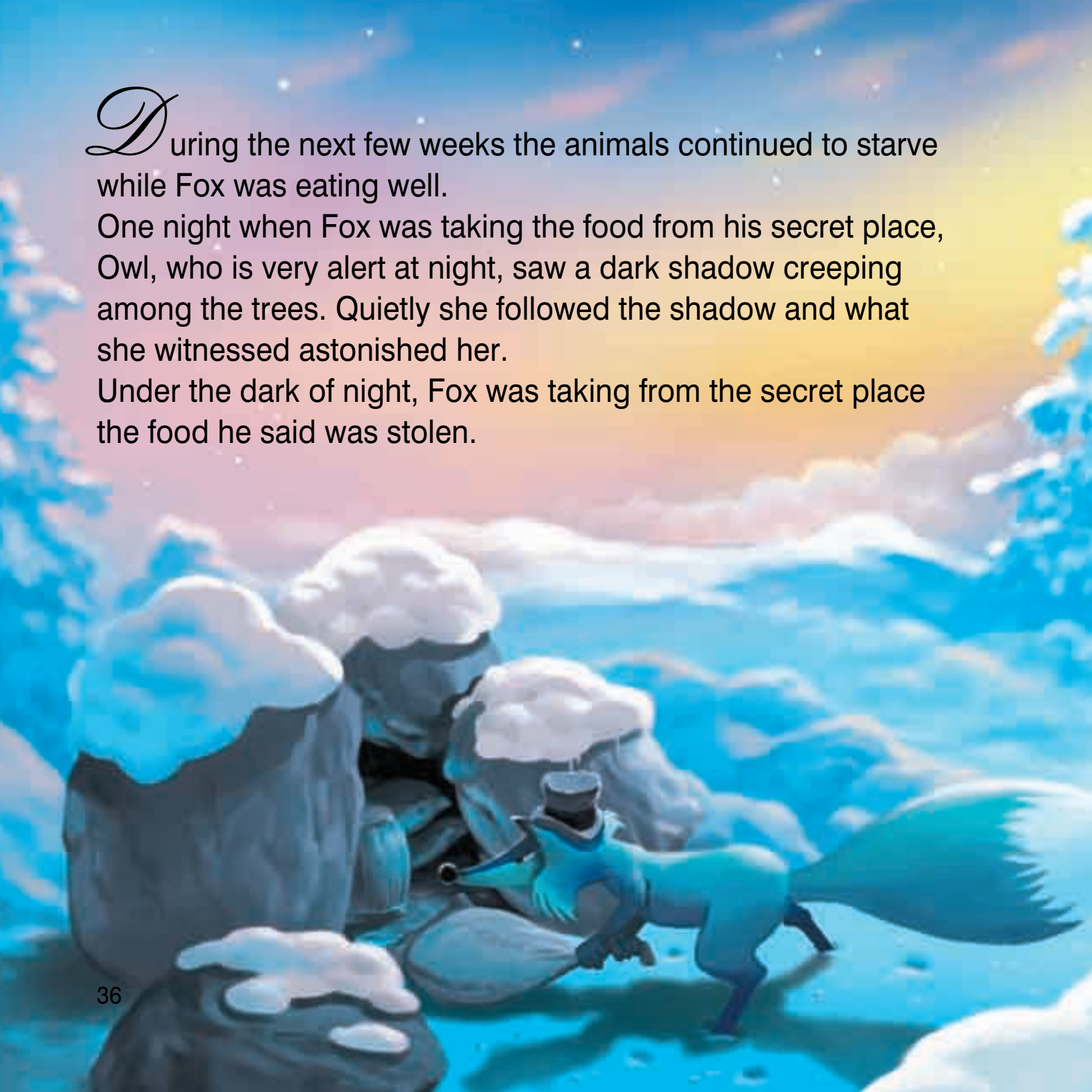
Fox, proud that his clever plan worked so well, sprawled on his sofa. With a grin, he started to enjoy himself with the nuts and the honey. “It’s so good to be smart like me! Those foolish animals got what they deserved!” He delighted himself with his slyness.



*D*uring the next few weeks the animals continued to starve while Fox was eating well.

One night when Fox was taking the food from his secret place, Owl, who is very alert at night, saw a dark shadow creeping among the trees. Quietly she followed the shadow and what she witnessed astonished her.

Under the dark of night, Fox was taking from the secret place the food he said was stolen.







Early the following morning, Owl flew straight to Lion's home.

"My King!" she exclaimed. "I have to tell you some awful news. Last night I saw Fox with our provisions that he said were stolen."

Lion became very outraged.

"How could he do such an awful thing to us?!" he roared.

"He must be punished!"

He called the Wild Boars and demanded, "You have to go right away to Fox to arrest him and bring him to my court."



*T*hen he sent Woodpeckers to call all the animals to his court.

When everyone was present the proceedings started.

“Why did you do this awful thing to our community?”

Lion asked. “Why did you lie to us, and put our lives at risk through starvation?”

“It is not my fault!” Fox answered. “Everyone has to take care of himself. I did what every responsible fox would do.”

“You are a selfish creature!” Lion said. “Stealing and lying is not the way of being a responsible and caring animal!

We all should work and share our goods with those who have undue hardships. You will be punished for this sinful act by being banished from our forest.

The food that is left will be distributed to those who have worked hard and need it.”



All of the animals applauded enthusiastically, honoring Lion and his fair judgement.







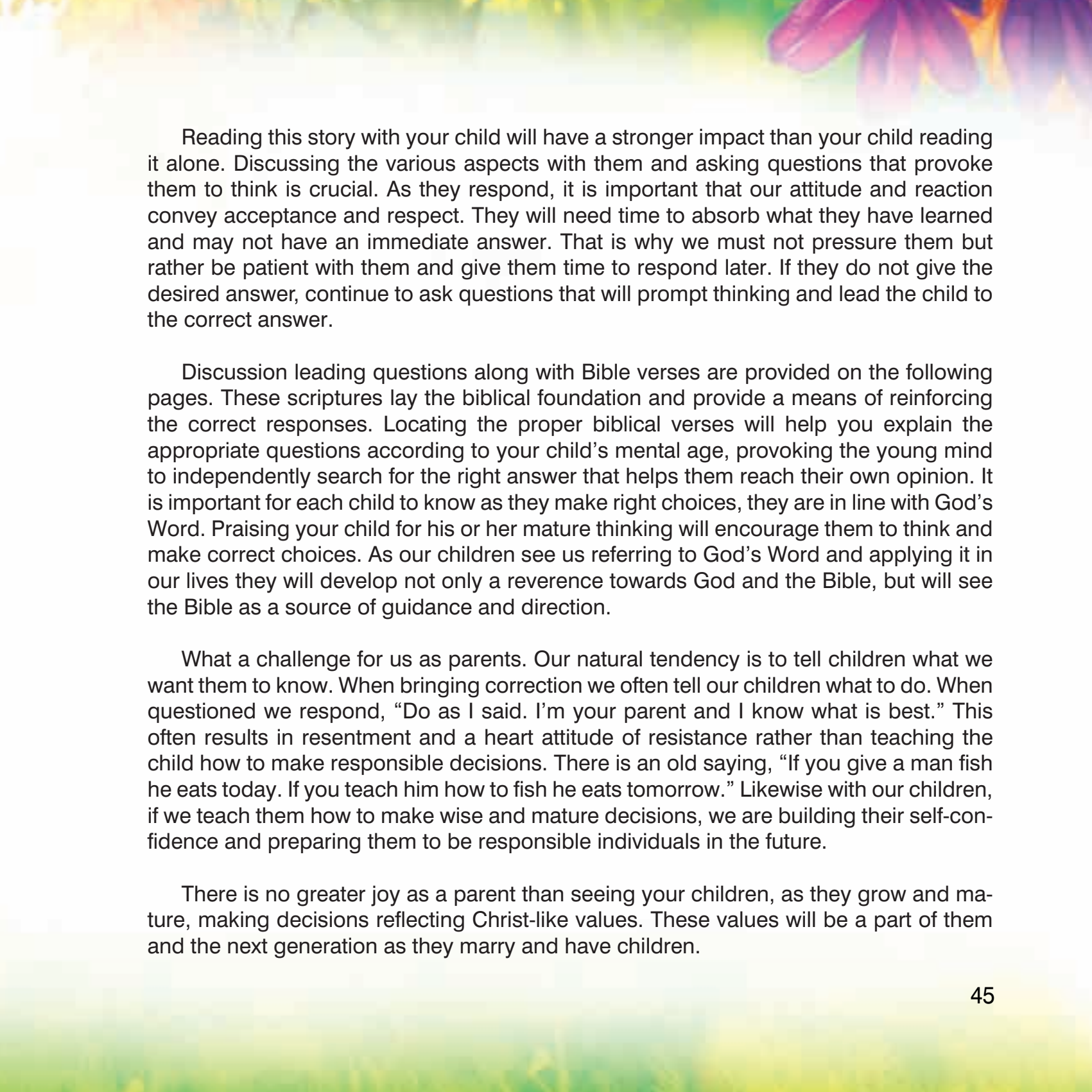
PARENTAL GUIDELINES

by Josh McDowell

As parents our desire is to raise our children to make correct choices by formulating their own opinions and conclusions in a mature and responsible manner. What a joy it will be to see them 10 or 15 years from now being self-confident, making wise decisions, living responsibly and influencing others in positive and healthy ways.

God has given us as parents the privilege of shaping our children's hearts and minds. He gave us the command in Proverbs 29:15 to "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it" (NIV). The latter part of this verse indicates that we may not expect immediate obedience. This training is cultivated through the years we spend raising our children.

Children enjoy reading stories about animals and talking about them. They provide a safe and non-threatening environment for discussion. The world of fables and stories is simply fascinating yet safe. They don't need to fear any consequences by possessing their own opinions, even the most surprising ones. The fables of the animals allow us to effectively develop children's imagination, even in this time of damaging television programs everywhere. This world of tales allows children to personify all kinds of animals and feel their emotions. Due to this phenomenon, they have a chance to build and develop empathy. Without having an opportunity to physically feel the state of others, it is very difficult to imagine a mature being. Empathy is the space of our soul, which leads the way to the intellectual love and sacrifice, a trait strongly possessed by Jesus Christ.



Reading this story with your child will have a stronger impact than your child reading it alone. Discussing the various aspects with them and asking questions that provoke them to think is crucial. As they respond, it is important that our attitude and reaction convey acceptance and respect. They will need time to absorb what they have learned and may not have an immediate answer. That is why we must not pressure them but rather be patient with them and give them time to respond later. If they do not give the desired answer, continue to ask questions that will prompt thinking and lead the child to the correct answer.

Discussion leading questions along with Bible verses are provided on the following pages. These scriptures lay the biblical foundation and provide a means of reinforcing the correct responses. Locating the proper biblical verses will help you explain the appropriate questions according to your child's mental age, provoking the young mind to independently search for the right answer that helps them reach their own opinion. It is important for each child to know as they make right choices, they are in line with God's Word. Praising your child for his or her mature thinking will encourage them to think and make correct choices. As our children see us referring to God's Word and applying it in our lives they will develop not only a reverence towards God and the Bible, but will see the Bible as a source of guidance and direction.

What a challenge for us as parents. Our natural tendency is to tell children what we want them to know. When bringing correction we often tell our children what to do. When questioned we respond, "Do as I said. I'm your parent and I know what is best." This often results in resentment and a heart attitude of resistance rather than teaching the child how to make responsible decisions. There is an old saying, "If you give a man fish he eats today. If you teach him how to fish he eats tomorrow." Likewise with our children, if we teach them how to make wise and mature decisions, we are building their self-confidence and preparing them to be responsible individuals in the future.

There is no greater joy as a parent than seeing your children, as they grow and mature, making decisions reflecting Christ-like values. These values will be a part of them and the next generation as they marry and have children.

QUESTIONS:

1. **Was Lion right to tell the animals to save for the winter? Why?**
 - a. Proverbs 10:5 – “He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son.”
 - b. Proverbs 24:4 – “Through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures.”
 - c. 2 Thessalonians 3:11-12 – “We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat.”

2. **Which animals were happy to do the work? Why were they happy to do the work?**
 - a. Proverbs 14:23 – “All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.”
 - b. Proverbs 11:14 – “For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure.”
 - c. Hebrews 10:24 – “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.”

3. **Which animals were unhappy with the task they received? Why were they not happy to do the work?**
 - a. Ecclesiastes 11:4 – “Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap.”
 - b. Proverbs 26:12 – “Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”
 - c. Proverbs 10:17 – “He who heeds discipline shows the way to life, but whoever ignores correction leads others astray.”

4. **Was every unhappy animal disobedient to Lion?**
 - a. Ephesians 5:15 – “Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise.”
 - b. Proverbs 13:13 – “He who scorns instruction will pay for it, but he who respects a command is rewarded.”
 - c. Philippians 2:14 – “Do everything without complaining or arguing.”

5. Should our emotions decide about following the rules?

- a. Proverbs 3:5-6 – “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”
- b. Colossians 3:23 – “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.”
- c. Luke 6:31 – “Do to others as you would have them do to you.”

6. Which of the animals’ behavior made Lion happy and why?

- a. Proverbs 12:22 – “The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful.”
- b. 2 Chronicles 16:9 – “For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.”
- c. Philippians 2:14 – “Do everything without complaining or arguing.”

7. Which of the animals were blessed? Why?

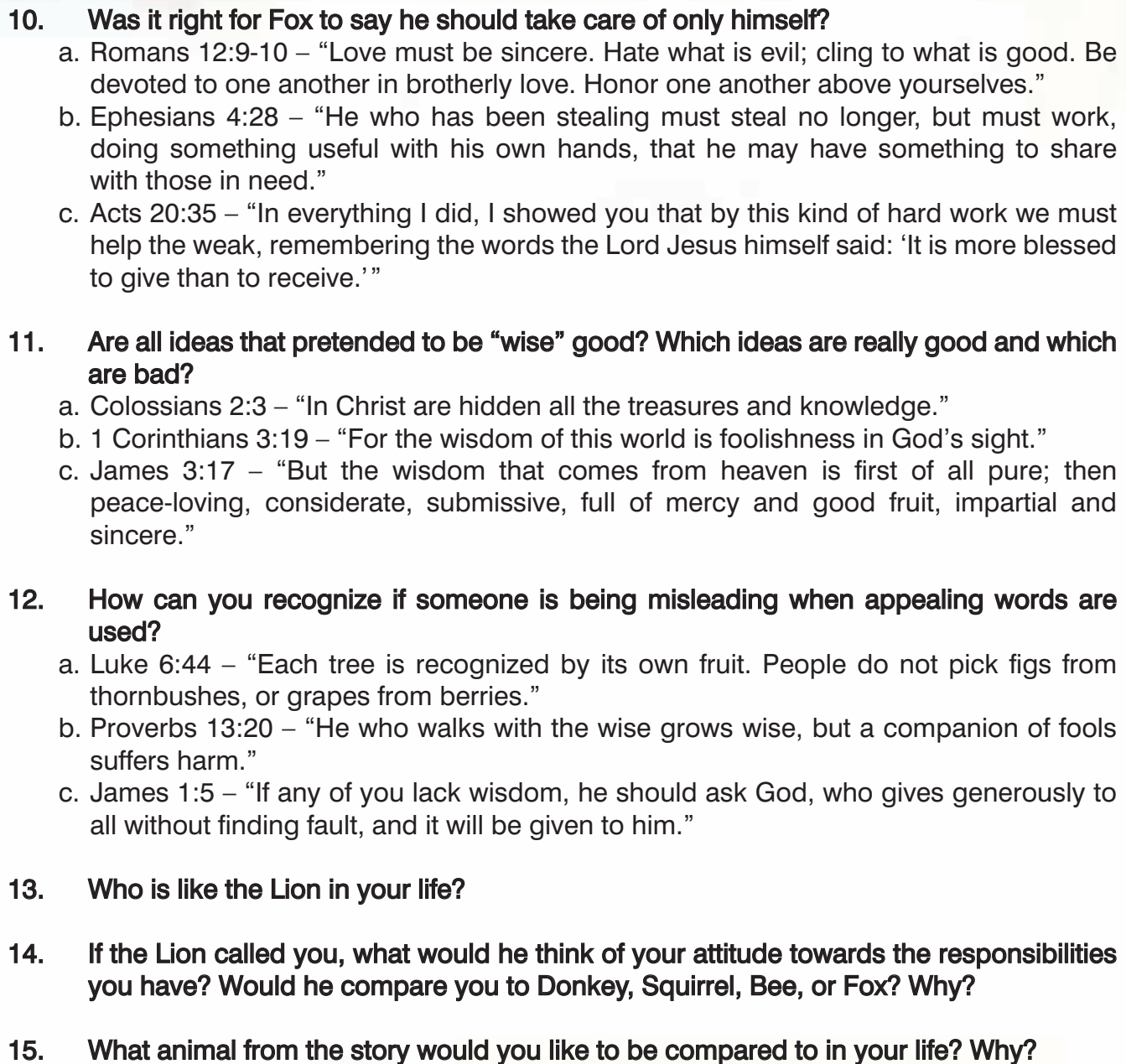
- a. Galatians 6:7 – “A man reaps what he sows.”
- b. 2 Thessalonians 3:10 – “If a man will not work, he shall not eat.”
- c. Proverbs 13:11 – “Dishonest money dwindles away, but he who gathers money little by little makes it grow.”

8. Was Donkey’s thoughts and attitude right?

- a. Proverbs 21:25 – “The sluggard’s craving will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work.”
- b. Proverbs 20:4 – “A sluggard does not plow in season; so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing.”
- c. Proverbs 6:10-11 – “A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.”

9. Was Fox’s plan wise?

- a. Proverbs 10:23 – “A fool finds pleasure in evil conduct, but a man of understanding delights in wisdom.”
- b. Proverbs 10:9 – “The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out.”
- c. Proverbs 13:11 – “Dishonest money dwindles away, but he who gathers money little by little makes it grow.”

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- 10. Was it right for Fox to say he should take care of only himself?**
- a. Romans 12:9-10 – “Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.”
 - b. Ephesians 4:28 – “He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.”
 - c. Acts 20:35 – “In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”
- 11. Are all ideas that pretended to be “wise” good? Which ideas are really good and which are bad?**
- a. Colossians 2:3 – “In Christ are hidden all the treasures and knowledge.”
 - b. 1 Corinthians 3:19 – “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight.”
 - c. James 3:17 – “But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.”
- 12. How can you recognize if someone is being misleading when appealing words are used?**
- a. Luke 6:44 – “Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from berries.”
 - b. Proverbs 13:20 – “He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.”
 - c. James 1:5 – “If any of you lack wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.”
- 13. Who is like the Lion in your life?**
- 14. If the Lion called you, what would he think of your attitude towards the responsibilities you have? Would he compare you to Donkey, Squirrel, Bee, or Fox? Why?**
- 15. What animal from the story would you like to be compared to in your life? Why?**