

Obedience



Learning & Growing
STEPS
Learning & Growing



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Obedience comes before the blessing.

By Amber Darley and Agnes Lemaire

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Faithful Men Listen to the Voice of God

Albert Schweitzer was a great musician and doctor who went to Africa to be a missionary and help the sick. One time he was traveling up a river with a boat loaded with supplies for a hospital he had built. As they were traveling up the river, he noticed a big tree had fallen in the water. If they hit it, the boat would sink and they would drown.

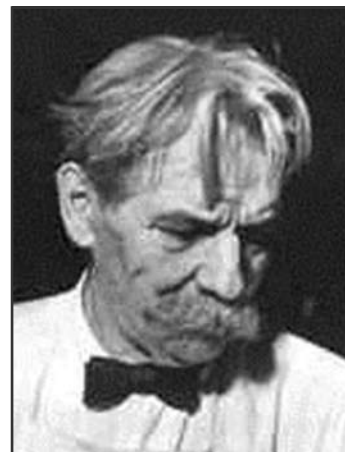
After his visit to the hospital, Albert returned back down the river. It was late at night and very dark. He warned the men not to go too near the bank of the river but to stay out closer to the middle. Suddenly the Lord gave Albert a check in the spirit that they were getting too close to the shore. All the men said they weren't and that it was fine where they were, so Albert sat down again.

I guess they know best, he thought. After all, they go up and down this river all the time and their eyes are trained to see into the dark forest. My eyes are not as good as theirs!

Suddenly the Lord spoke again to Albert's heart, this time with a much stronger warning, "You need to obey Me or you'll all drown!"

Albert jumped up and commanded the men to instantly move the boat farther out to the middle of the river. They had no sooner obeyed when suddenly they saw the huge dark mass of a giant tree that had fallen in the water. Had they not turned aside at that instant, the boat would have been dashed to pieces!

Albert once wrote a message to the boys and girls in England: "God's love speaks to us in our hearts and tries to work through us in this world. We must listen to His voice when we are young so that we can become the children of God. Happy are those who listen and obey."



Albert Schweitzer
1875-1965
Missionary doctor in Cameroon and French Equatorial Africa (now called Gabon).—Can you find these countries on a map?



- What do you think would have happened if Albert had not said anything? Have you ever escaped danger by listening to a warning? Talk about it.



The Harvest

My name is Irene. My mother always said I was a very lively girl, and loved excitement! I was curious and wanted to try new things. I thought that I was smart and knew so much, and I didn't like other people telling me what to do. I thought I knew best. I want to tell you a true story that helped me realize that I was not always right and that it's wise to listen to and obey those who warn you about things.

The sun was shining and it was a warm, bright day. I awoke with joy in my heart, as I had anticipated this day, and the days that were to follow. It was harvest time—the time when the fruit trees bore their delicious crop, and the bushes were alive with color and were covered with berries. Everything was beautiful! Everything seemed alive and full of wonder, and today was the day when we would begin the much-loved chores of collecting fruits, berries and nuts.

For the previous weeks, my friends and I had worked hard to weave new baskets in preparation for this season. This was something we did every year. It was our favorite part of the year. The boys from our village would hunt and the girls would collect fruits, berries and nuts, as well as help our mothers cook and prepare the food. Some of the men would harvest the honey, and we girls would dry some of the fruit in order to preserve it for the months to come.

"Come, come, children. Let us wash up in the river and prepare ourselves for the busy day ahead of us," Mother said, as we all scrambled out of bed and ran to the river's edge. This was our daily routine, but we rarely performed this simple task with such excitement. We ate breakfast and cleaned up our hut quickly, eager to begin the day's work.

The village square consisted of a little monument made of stone and a few rocks surrounding a simple garden containing a few plants and flowers. I met up with my friends there. Each of us brought along our treasured collection of new handmade baskets. After a quick greeting we made our way to the area where there were a lot of fruit trees and berry bushes.

"I'll start over here," one of the girls said. "I'll begin over there," another chimed in. We all made our way to different trees or bushes, and began the picking. "I'll start with the berries," I said to myself, as I made my way over to the bushes that spread almost as far as my eye could see.

There were certain fruits and berries that were good to eat, and others that Mother told us not to eat. Some of the plants, berries, and fruit around were quite poisonous. In the beginning, our mothers used to come with us to show us what to pick and what not to pick, but now that we were a little older they trusted us to do the job on our own.



My mother had told me that most of the berries were good, but that there was a certain black shiny berry that we should never eat. I'd often wondered what they tasted like, and I didn't think they would do me any real harm, because they seemed to look so good. Mother had told me that they would make me very sick if I ate them, but being the curious girl that I am, I sometimes had to find out for myself.

I was picking all the good berries I could find when I came to a bush full of little shiny black berries that Mother had warned me never to eat. What if I just try one? I thought. Mother will never know. Then if they taste good, and I don't get sick, which I'm sure I won't, everyone will be able to enjoy them too. They look so delicious, and every year I am tempted to eat them. Maybe nobody has ever really tasted them; maybe we're missing out on a delicious berry. I picked one of the berries, studied it for a moment then I tasted it. It didn't taste so bad. I decided to eat another, and then another, and another. I didn't tell any of my friends what I had done.

After a long, hard, fun day's work and shortly before the sun was beginning to set, we were on our way home. But I was beginning to feel quite sick. Maybe I shouldn't have eaten those berries after all, I thought. I'm feeling awfully sick, and it seems to be getting worse. I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. I hope that Mother won't be upset with me.

Mother wasn't upset with me when I told her what I'd done. I started feeling worse and worse. I was sick with a fever and couldn't eat any food. I had to stay in bed for a few days after that. I didn't get to enjoy the beginning of the harvesting season, because I had disobeyed and hadn't listened to my mother when she told me not to eat the berries.

Being sick in bed during some of the happiest days of the year was a big price to have to pay for thinking that I knew better than my mother did. I did learn my lesson, and I try to remember that day whenever I am faced with a decision of whether to obey, or whether to go my own way. I learned that those who are older and wiser usually know best, and they don't tell us things just to make life difficult. They warn us of danger and try to guide us because they love us.



- What was Irene's mistake?
- What did God allow to happen so she would learn her lesson?
- Why is it better to obey our parents and teachers?
- Will we be happier if we obey? Why?
- Have you ever done something you shouldn't have and then regretted it afterwards? Talk about it.

The Photograph

Mother was dressing up, and Johnny was greatly interested. Where was she going? Why was she so excited? He waited expectantly, and soon heard, "Son, I want you to be a good boy. I am going out on special business, and I want you to promise to stay in the house with Aunt Mary. Will you be a good boy?"

"Yes, Ma'am."

"You really promise? You will not go out until I return?" Johnny nodded.

His mother called good-bye to Aunt Mary in the kitchen, prayed for Johnny and went down the front steps. Johnny climbed to the window to watch her. He was so interested by all this mystery. Where was she going? With his nose pressed against the window he watched until she passed from sight. Then he ran to the steps, and saw her disappearing around the corner at the bottom of the street. This was very exciting.

Where was she going? Hurriedly he looked to the kitchen where Aunt Mary was busy with the dishes. Then he ran down the street to see his mother entering the big gateway of a large house. The boy felt like he was a detective about to solve a great mystery. He listened and heard voices. A strange man was saying something, and his mother answered quietly.

He looked for a foothold in the wall, and skillfully climbed up and looked into the garden. His mother was sitting with her back toward him, and in front of her was a man who crouched behind a funny box on legs. He heard the man saying, "Now!" and a click followed. Now, this story took place many years ago, and at that time cameras like the man was using were very new. Johnny had never seen one before. He couldn't imagine what it was.

Then his mother stood and shook hands with the stranger and began to leave. When she turned toward the gate, Johnny dropped to the roadway and ran as fast as he could to get around the corner before his mother reached the street. He was quite breathless when he reached his home, but by the time his mother arrived he was sitting quietly reading a book.

"Well, Johnny, have you been a good boy since I left?"

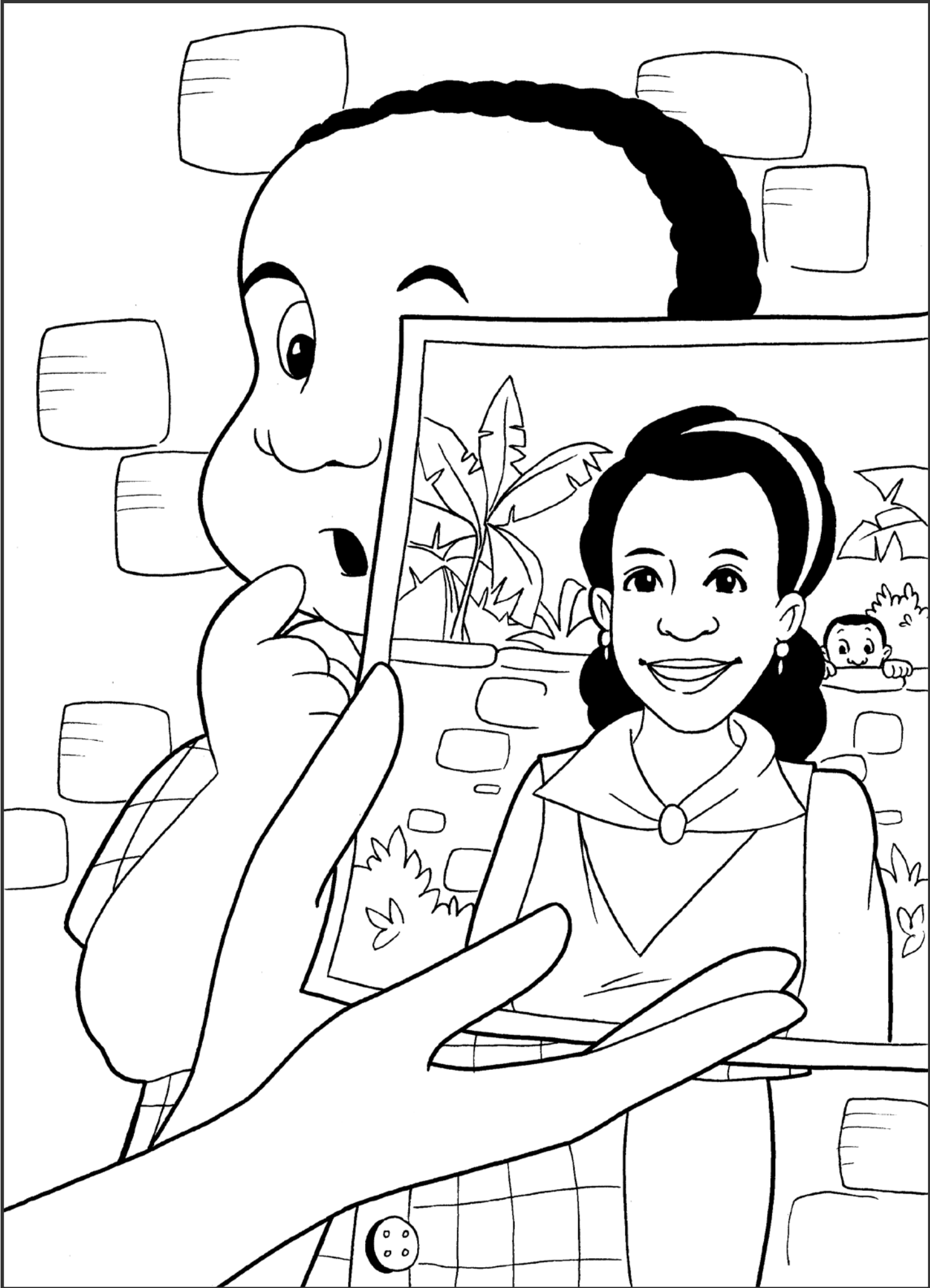
"Yes, Ma'am."

"You stayed here with Aunt Mary?"

"Yes, Ma'am."

She smiled, gave him a kiss and said, "Okay, now that I'm back, we can bake those cookies we've been planning on." Johnny's eyes sparkled with delight. He had the best mother in the world. He felt a little guilty because he had deceived her, but he tried not to worry about it. After all, he thought, no harm has been done and I didn't get caught.

As the days passed by, his mother seemed to be expecting a very special letter. When it arrived she was excited, and once again Johnny wondered what had happened. He saw her carefully removing the wrappings, and behold, there lay some shiny pieces of paper with his mother's picture on them!



“Look, Johnny!” she said excitedly, “Do you want to see a surprise for Daddy? These are photographs. I went the other day to have them taken so I would have a special present to give Daddy for his birthday today!”

So that’s what it was all about! Now Johnny understood. That’s what the strange box was.

Mother studied the photographs for a moment, and then slowly turned to her boy. Most of the pictures she laid aside, but one remained in her hand. Johnny looked at it, and saw his mother sitting on a chair in a beautiful garden; she was beautiful and smiling. He looked up into her face, but she wasn’t smiling now.

She seemed upset. She turned him around to face her and asked, “I thought you told me you stayed with Aunt Mary the other day.”

“Yes, Ma’am.”

“Oh, Johnny, I’m afraid you’re not telling the truth now, and that you disobeyed me then.”

Johnny looked shocked, and mother continued, “Look at this!” She showed him the final photograph—and there, behind the chair on which she was sitting, could be clearly seen a little boy looking over the wall. Her finger slid over the photo until it rested beneath the place where his eyes were peering into the garden, and she asked, “Isn’t that you? You followed me to see where I was going. You climbed the wall and looked into the garden just when the gentleman was taking my photograph.”

Mother looked like she was going to cry. She was so disappointed in Johnny, and sadly told him that she would not be taking him to the playground that afternoon after all as they had planned.

And Johnny was very sorry. He had discovered the message of the Bible was true: “Be sure your sin will find you out” (Numbers 32:23).



- Have you ever been caught in a lie? Tell us about it. What lessons did you learn from it?
- We certainly do not always get our picture taken while we are doing something wrong or disobeying, but Who always see us? Discuss the verse “The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good” (Proverbs 15:3).

Milky, the Calf

Hello! I am a little calf called "Milky"! I was born after the rains came, and I lived with a herd of cows that was cared for by a real herdsman.

"Oh, you are such a special little calf!" the herdsman declared. "I am sure you shall grow up to be a big fine cow one day! When that happens, you will provide milk both for my family to drink, and also for us to sell at the market to buy food. So I have decided that I shall call you 'Milky,' because of the important job you will have when you are fully grown!"

When I was very small, I did not understand everything about the big world around me, so I stayed very close to the bigger cows, and also to the herdsman. I followed them wherever they went, and the herdsman always provided for us by leading us to lovely fields full of green grass, where we loved to graze.

But with time, as I started to grow bigger, I became more curious to discover other places where I thought the grass would be greener. I could run about a lot faster than the other calves, and so I often tried to lead the way for them to follow, instead of letting the herdsman lead the way. I would often walk ahead in a different direction; thinking that I knew better than the herdsman did and he often had to call me back to his side:

"Milky! Come back!" he would say. "I first need to count the whole herd to make sure that none get lost! You must not keep running ahead of me, otherwise you may get forgotten!"

Even Mother Cow would remind me to stay close to the herdsman:

"Now remember, Milky, our herdsman knows what is best for us, so we all need to stay together and follow him very closely!"

"Yes Mother," I would say. But although my words agreed, my heart and thoughts were often far from her wise words of counsel, and one day I made a very bad mistake:

This path up the hill is difficult to follow, I thought to myself. These other calves only follow the herdsman because they cannot think for themselves. But I am much more clever than they are, so I shall take this other road. I am sure I can find a shortcut around this steep hill!

So off I went by myself down a different road, thinking that I knew better. I was so sure of what I was doing, until suddenly a great big truck came around the corner at very high speed, and almost ran me down! The driver saw me in the road and skidded to a stop right next to me, and a lot of people came running and shouting. I was very afraid, but because of all the commotion, the herdsman was alerted and came running back to save me.

"Milky! You see what can happen if you don't stay close to me?" he said.

"Yes, I can! I'm so sorry!" I replied. "Thank you for coming back for me!"

"Now, don't ever disobey and run away again, or something worse may happen to you! Don't you know that some people will catch a stray calf and take you away?" he warned. "I'm sure you don't want that to happen to you, so you had better not do that again!"

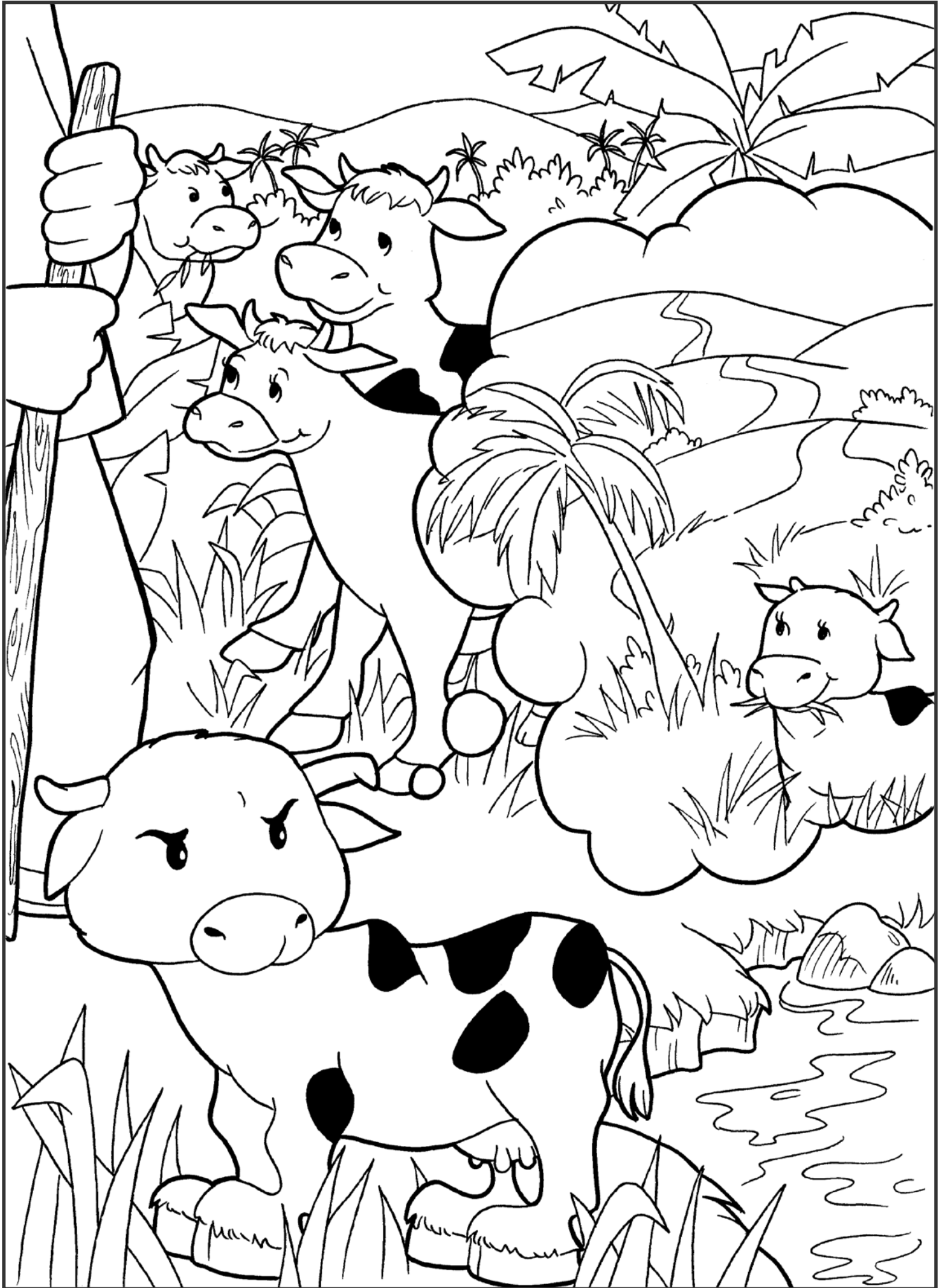
Sure enough, later that day, some naughty boys tried to come and capture one of the calves from our herd, but the brave herdsman was there to scare them all away. I was so glad that I had learned to stay close to the herdsman.

Yet, when I grew a little older, I forgot that lesson I had learned, and began to start straying from the herdsman once again:

"Milky! You are a very naughty calf! I told you never to stray from me again! Don't you remember what happened the last time? Also, it is the time of year that the rains shall come again, and I don't want you to get caught out in a storm! So you must not wander off by yourself again!"

But as before, I thought that I knew better than the herdsman.

Hmmm. The rains are coming soon, I thought to myself. When that happens, I won't be able to wander off by myself, so I shall do it today while I still have a chance! I know of some very tasty fresh



grass down by the stream, which is much nicer than the dry grass in this field! I'm sure no one will notice if I sneak off by myself for a while!

So off I went down into the valley by the stream and began eating the nice fresh grass. I was enjoying myself so much, that I hadn't noticed the dark, almost black clouds rising on the horizon. The herdsman had warned me that the time was near, but I didn't want to listen to him. All of a sudden I heard a rumble of thunder, and the rain began pouring down upon the nearby hills. Even though I could see that everything was changing all around me, I still thought I had time to play around in the valley where the green grass looked so good.

But after a short time, I suddenly heard a roaring sound, and a torrent of water came rushing down the stream! I tried to climb up the banks to safety, but the water came so fast that I didn't have time to move out of the way, and the flood of water swept me away! The stream had become a raging river, and I was swept along until the river turned a corner and I was pushed up onto the riverbank. I was so frightened because I didn't know where I was, and I was all wet and cold. I thought that some of those naughty boys would come and take me away, so I hid myself and wished that the herdsman was close by, and that he would find me. Surely when he would count the herd, he would know that one of his calves was missing.

But the rains were so hard, and the storm was raging, so I doubted that our big strong herdsman would even risk his life in such a terrible storm. Why should he want to save me after all? I had been so bad and disobedient, and I'm only one small calf, which is probably not worth much to the herdsman.

So on and on the rains poured down, and I felt so weak that I thought I would surely die. But then I heard a voice:

"Milky! Milky? Milky! Where are you?"

It was the wonderful voice of our strong herdsman. He had come to find me! All I could manage was a pathetic groan, but it was all that was needed to get the herdsman's attention, and he came running to save me.

"Let's go home," he said. "Everything will be alright now!"

I felt so bad that my herdsman had gone to so much trouble to search for me. He was so cold and wet and muddy from his search. I really wished that I hadn't been so selfish and disobedient.

Finally we arrived at the herdsman's home, and he made a place for me where I was able to get warm. He went to all of his friends and told them to come and rejoice with him, for the lost calf had been found!

That night I felt really grown up like Mother, because I knew that I would never, ever run from the good herdsman again!

"But why did you leave all the rest of the herd to go and search for that one lost calf that went astray?" his friend asked.

"It is because it is not the will of God, our Heavenly Father, that one of these little ones should perish!" the herdsman replied.

"You are a good herdsman who gives his life for his little ones!" his friend declared.



- What important lesson did Milky learn?
- What do you think Milky did next time the herdsman told her not to do something?
- Do you obey your caretakers?
- Have you ever gone where you were not supposed to go? What happened?
- How is Jesus like the herdsman in this story? Read John chapter 10 from the Bible, and discuss it.

Prayer and Praise

Dear Jesus, please help me to be obedient so I can stay safe and out of trouble. Help me to listen to my teachers and caretakers who You have given to care for me. Amen.

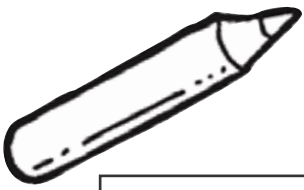
Memory Fun



If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.
John 13:17

Pencil Page

Unscramble and Draw

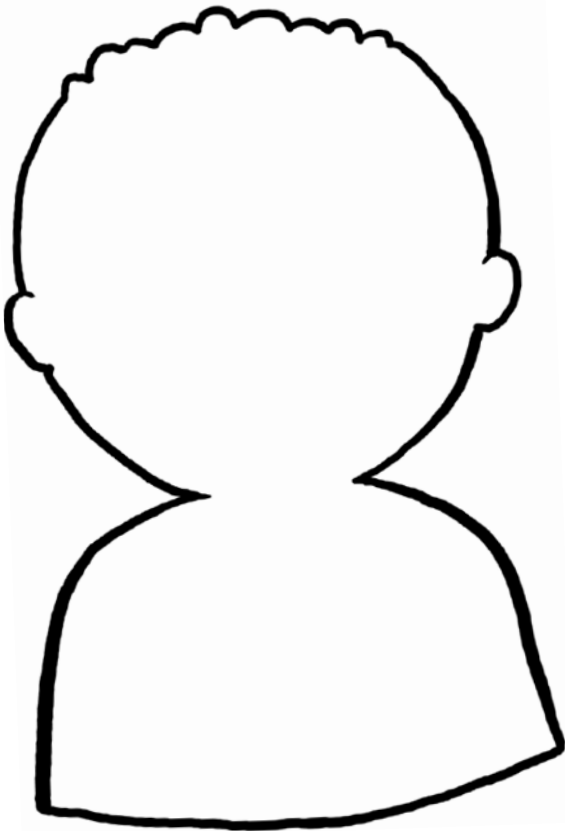


Unscramble these two words and write them in the blanks below.
Draw the faces in the shapes with expressions to match the quotes.

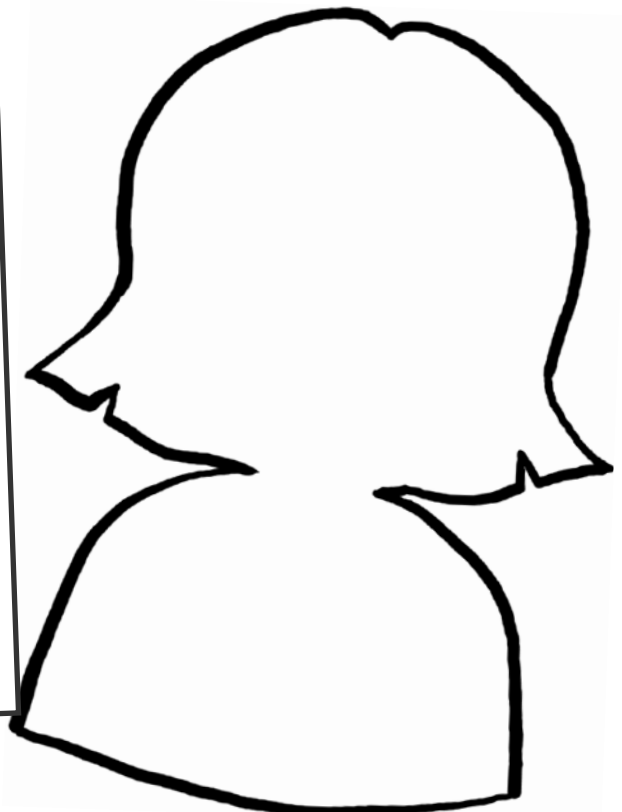
papyh

das

If you obey God,
you'll be _____.



If you disobey Him,
you'll be _____.



Pencil Page

Lost Sheep

Unscramble the letters and place them in the blanks above the scrambled ones to tell us Jesus' message.

My

h e p e s

h a r e

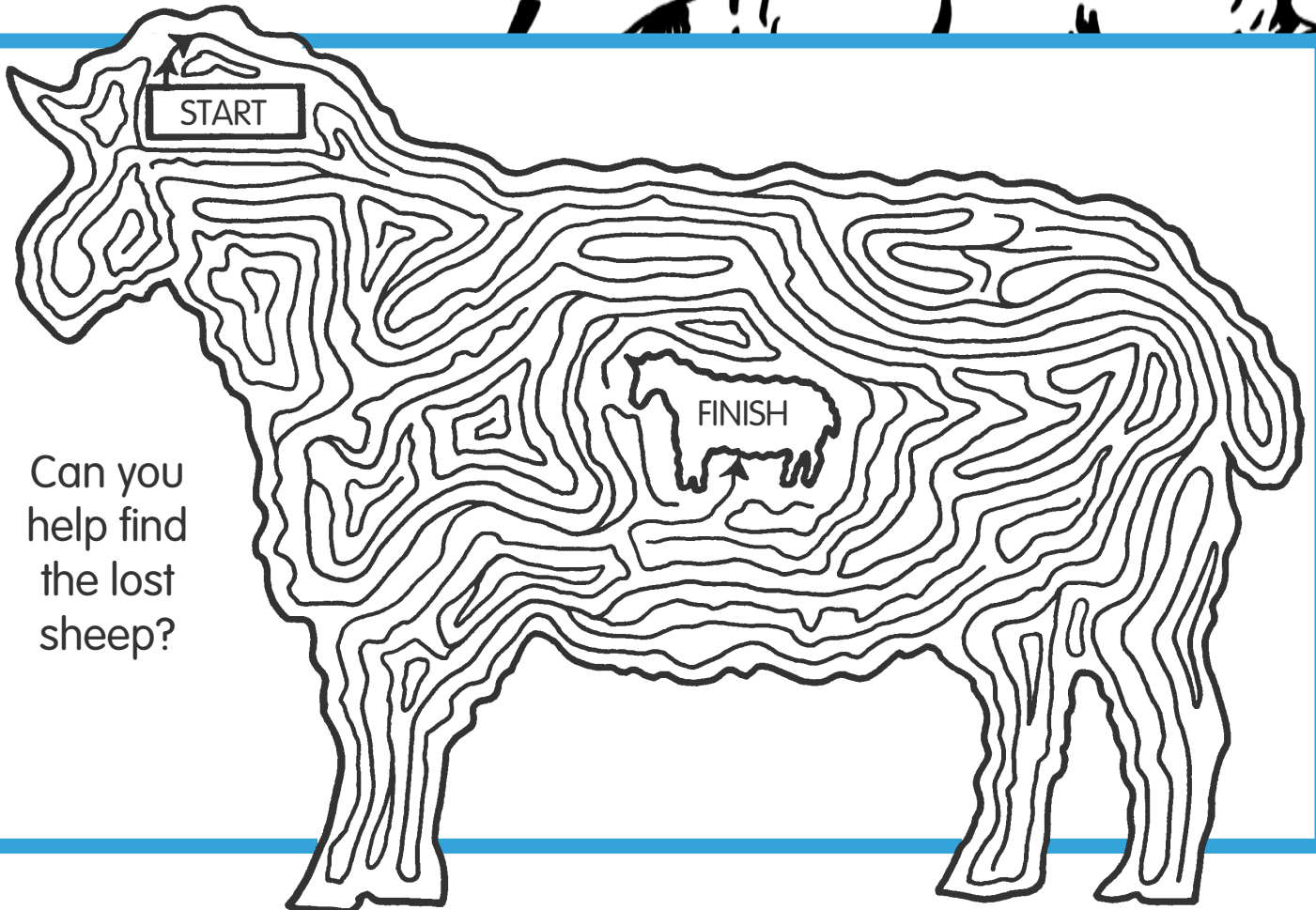
My

c o i v e ' d a n

they

T o w f o t

Me. John 10:27



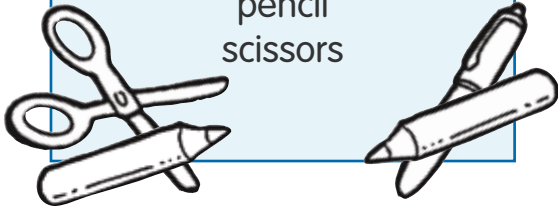
Can you help find the lost sheep?

Make and Do

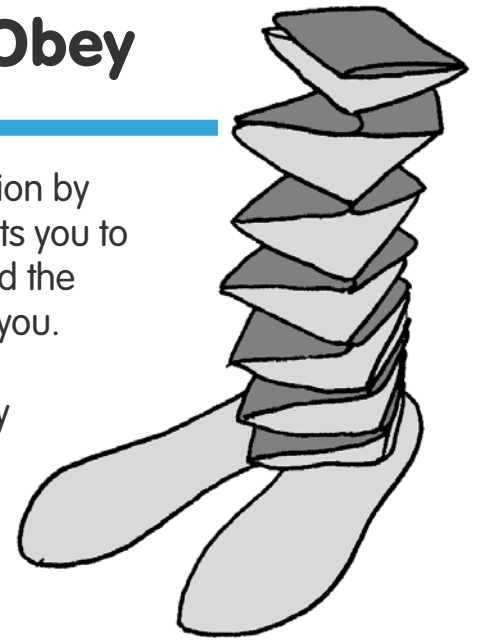
Springs to Obey

You will need:

- 4 strips of color paper
- 1 piece of cardstock
- tape or glue
- pencil
- scissors



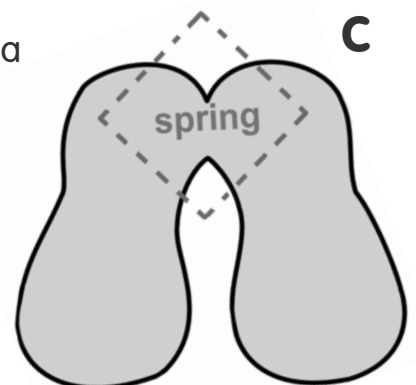
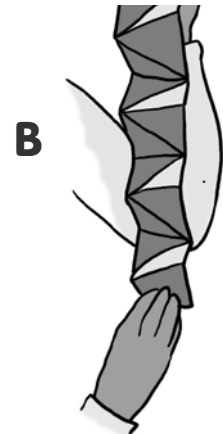
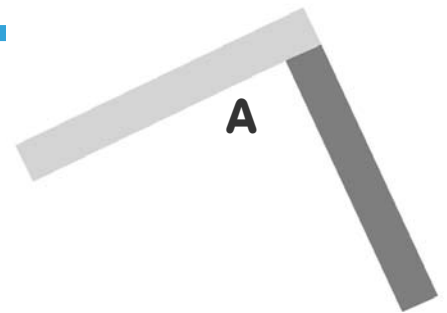
You can spring into action by doing what the Lord wants you to do, obeying His Word and the caretakers He has given you. Discuss and name some things you can do to obey (wash the dishes, do your job, clean up your desk, etc.).



Make some "springs" as reminders of things you feel you need to work on in the area of learning to obey.

How to:

- Tape or glue 2 strips of the same paper together to make one long strip. If you don't have color paper, you can simply color or paint the paper yourself.
- Tape remaining 2 strips in the same manner.
- Place strips together to form an L shape (A).
- Fold the bottom strip over the top strip. Continue this procedure until strips are completely folded into squares. (B)
- Tape or glue one end of the folded squares to cardstock cut in the shape of feet, as shown. (C)
- Write the poem below on the feet, or you could choose another favorite verse on obedience.
- Tape the other end of the folded squares together to prevent the strips from separating.
- Hold the top of the "spring" and bounce feet up and down as a reminder to obey and spring into action.

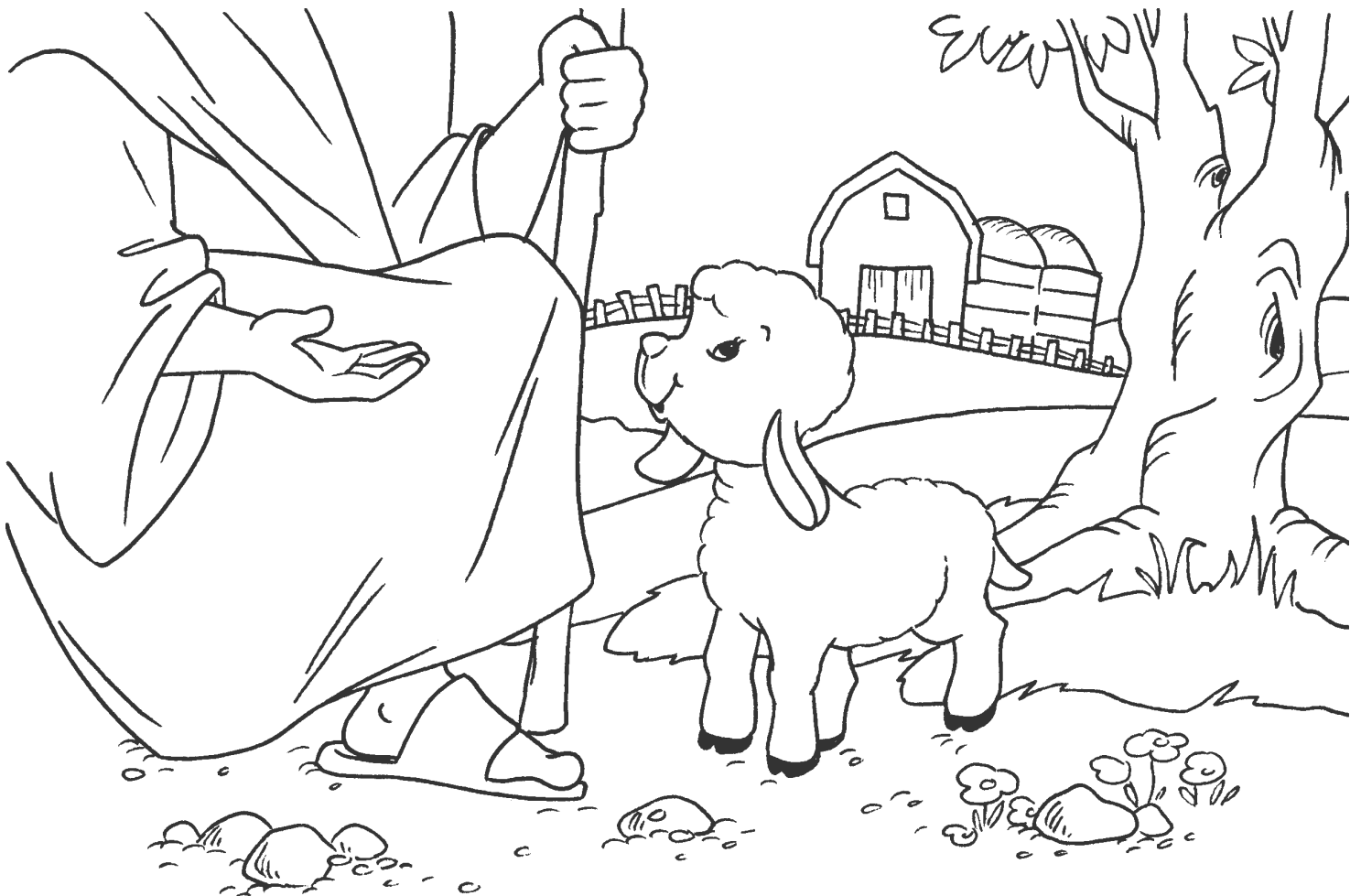


Let's pray and obey
So that we can all stay
Headed the right way
And not go astray.

From Jesus—with Love



Sometimes it's hard to understand why it's so important to obey. But if you just go ahead and obey, then afterwards you'll understand why it was important. Maybe you didn't see that there was danger up ahead when your caretaker called out and told you to stop running. I want to take good care of each of you, My precious children, but you must help Me by being obedient so you don't run into danger.



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