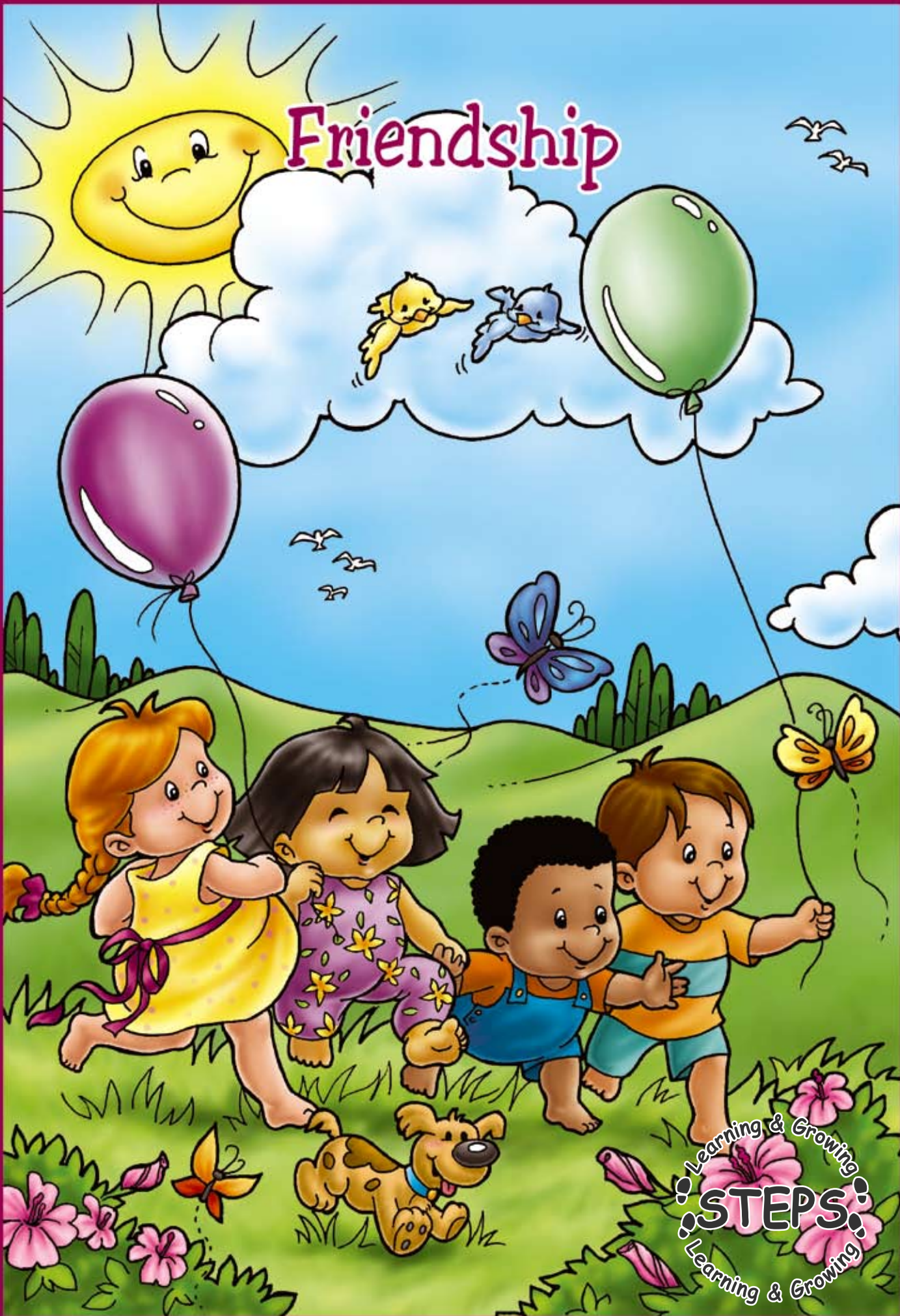


Friendship



Learning & Growing
STEPS
Learning & Growing



Contents:

Jimmy and the Street Boys	4
The Greatest Gift	8
The Snapping Turtle	10
Someone Needs You	12
My Special Friend	13
Prayer and Memory Fun	14
A Garden of Friends	15
Be an A-maze-ing Friend	16
Friendship Picture Frame	17
From Jesus—with Love	19



If you plant love, you're going to reap love. If you plant friendship, you're going to reap friendship. A friend is a person who goes around saying nice things about you behind your back.

By Amber Darley and Agnes Lemaire

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Jimmy and the Street Boys

There once were four orphan boys: Tom who was 13, Jack who was 12, Max who was 11, and Johnny, who was...well, nobody knew when he was born, but he must have been around the same age as the others. These four boys wore ragged clothes and lived in the hallway of a broken down abandoned building.

These boys were poor, but they had something very special. Yes, they were all best friends! They had each other and this made them rich in love and happiness, comfort and care, for they loved one another deeply and were always there for each other during hard times.

Every day this gang of four would go downtown and beg for money or food. Then they'd go out on the streets and play kick-the-can, tag, or hide-and-seek.

Sometimes when things were difficult for them they would pretend that they lived in a beautiful palace, with rich foods and lush gardens, and parents who gave them everything they wanted. They thought that all of this would make them truly happy. But one day they met a boy who would change all that.

"Hey, boys," Jack said, "Look at that rich boy over there. Here's our chance to pay for our lunch! Maybe he'll give us some money for food."

"Hi there, what's your name?"

"Uh... it's Jimmy," he replied with a little hesitation, being taken back by so many street boys coming up to him all at once.

"It must be so wonderful to be rich," Max said. "You must be so glad. We're poor, but I wouldn't say we're sad, because we have each other, right?"

"Right!" they all chorused.

"Well," Jimmy said sadly, "Just being rich doesn't make you happy if you have no friends and no one to play with. Why, I look at you and I see that you have something that I don't have—you have each other. I have things, but I'm all alone most of the time. I wish I had good friends like you, I think friends are more important than riches."

"Really, do you think so?" Jack said in surprise.

"No," Johnny added with a giggle. "That couldn't possibly be so. If I was rich I would be so happy with all my things, and I don't think I'd need any friends."

"I don't know," Jack added. "I couldn't imagine my life without all of you, but I'd sure like to try being rich for a while!"

And so the boys discussed the matter back and forth. Then Jimmy had an idea.

"Hey, Jack," Jimmy said. "You look just like me, why don't we try it? Father is so busy, he hardly talks to me. I'm sure he wouldn't even notice the difference."

"Oh boy, that would be so great!! I'd get to sleep in a nice warm bed, eat delicious food, be in a beautiful house..." Jack said softly, his excitement dying down. "Are you sure you want to stay out here, Jimmy? Are you sure you'll be alright?"

"I'm sure I'll be fine," Jimmy said. "I could use some adventure in my life!"

So Jack and Jimmy traded places. This was lots of fun for the boys. Jack couldn't wait to try out being a rich kid; and Max, Johnny and Tom were excited about showing their new friend what life on the street was like, and telling him all their exciting stories.

Now, let's let Jack tell us the story:

We all got aboard the trolley car*, and headed to Jimmy's home. On the way, Jimmy explained to me everything that I would need to know to pass myself off as Jimmy.

When we arrived, they all stood around a corner as I went up to the gate. They watched with bated breath as I approached the door, with my head hanging low.

When the butler opened the door, he greeted me, "Ah, young Master Baker, supper is waiting for you."

I walked in, trying to act as casual as possible, following the directions that Jimmy had given me. I sat down at one end of the table, doing my best not to stare at everything. Jim's father sat at the other end of the table, and as Jim had said, he hardly seemed to notice me. At the end of the meal, as he stood up to leave the table, he simply said:

"Jimmy, I know it's the weekend, but I have a very busy day tomorrow with business to take care of. You can have one of the servants drive you wherever you want to go. I'll see you at dinner tomorrow."

"Thank you, Father," I replied. "I'll be fine!"

Without saying goodnight or anything, Jimmy's father walked away from the table. Well, that didn't bother me; in fact I was quite relieved that I didn't have to talk much, as it would probably have given me away. I headed off to where I knew Jimmy's room would be.

I walked into the room and saw this king-sized bed with silken covers and fluffy pillows. A warm bath had been prepared for me, so I sank into the tub and enjoyed it to the full. That night I slept just like a baby. I'd never slept in a bed before.

The next morning I wondered how Jimmy was doing. After breakfast I headed out to a toyshop, and bought a train set, like I had always dreamed of. I had it delivered to the house and spent the afternoon building it. After setting the whole thing up and letting the train run a few rounds around the track, I got bored. It really isn't all that fun playing with the train set by myself—it just isn't the same without someone to share the fun with, I thought.

That night I began to feel a little bit lonely. I wondered if this was what Jimmy had meant, about it being better to have friends than riches. I wanted to go back and be with my friends. That night, it took me a long time to go to sleep. I kept wondering what they were doing, and how much fun they must be having together.

When I woke up the next morning, I decided to go find Jimmy and my friends. Before anyone noticed it, I was up and out of the house. I headed down to the old building, and sure enough, by the time I got there, they were all gathered on the floor playing a game. Jimmy was laughing and smiling! Boy, was he changed!

"Jimmy, I want to switch back! I don't want to be you any more. You're right, it's really not that much fun. There's nobody to talk to, no one to play with. I wanna be myself again—even if it means being poor."

My friends looked the most surprised. "You want to be poor again?"

I laughed at myself. It sounded funny, but I knew that it was what I wanted.

Jimmy reluctantly* said that he would return to his own house, and his father. We decided to go with him. As normal, the butler answered the door, and was quite surprised to see Jimmy standing there with us four rag-tag orphans behind him. But Jimmy said we were his friends and was pretty insistent, so the butler reluctantly let us in.

Jimmy told his dad everything that had happened, and how for the past two days he had not even been at home, and how his dad had never even noticed.

His father listened with stunned surprise, and then began to get angry, scolding him for being so foolish as to stay on the street with nothing but beggar children.

Then, to add to his father's shock, Jimmy motioned for Tom, Jack and the others to enter the room. "Father, I don't want to live here any more. You're so busy that you don't even know

me. I'd rather be with these kids, my friends. I want to be able to feel happy and loved, and cared for. These boys care for me." One by one he introduced us by name.

His father's face suddenly grew sad. It looked as though his father would start to cry. I guess he had just been so busy that he never realized how lonely Jimmy really was. He thought that by giving him all that he wanted, Jimmy would be happy, but he wasn't.

"Jimmy," he said with a shaky voice, "I... I love you, perhaps more than I have shown you, and I'm so sorry that I haven't been here for you like I should. And as for your new friends, why don't we invite them to stay with us for awhile?"

"Do you really mean that?" Jimmy exclaimed.

"Sure, Son. We have plenty of rooms in the house, and I'm sure it's a lot better than what they have now."

Tears came to Jimmy's eyes, as he rushed over to embrace his father for the first time in years. "Thank you Father, I love you, too!" Jimmy exclaimed.

And that's how it was that Mr. Baker took us all in that day, and cared for us, as well as for Jimmy, just like he was our own dad. He got us all cleaned up, and even sent us to school where we learned a lot of useful things. But we also went out and did fun things together with Jimmy, and his father, and the other neighborhood kids.



- What gave the street boys true happiness?
- When Jack (the street boy) traded places with Jimmy (the rich boy), what did he experience? What did Jimmy experience?
- What was the thing that both of the boys valued the most?
- How do you feel about your friends? Talk about why friends are more important than money.
- What can friends give you that money can't?

***abandoned**: deserted, forsaken

***reluctant**: not sure, to hesitate

***trolley car**: a bus powered by electricity from overhead wires



The Greatest Gift

The story is told by the Persians of the great Shah Abbas, who reigned magnificently in Persia, but loved to mingle with the people in disguise. Once, dressed as a poor man, he descended the long dark, damp, flight of stairs to the tiny cellar where the fireman, seated on ashes, was tending the furnace.

The King sat down beside him and began to talk. At meal time the fireman produced some dry, black bread and a jug of water and they ate and drank. The Shah went away, but returned again and again, for his heart was filled with love and care for the lonely man. He gave him sweet counsel, and the poor man opened up his heart and loved this friend, so kind, so wise, and yet poor like himself.

After many days the great King thought, I will tell him who I am, and see what gift he will ask.

So the King said, "You think me poor, but I am Shah Abbas, your King."

He expected a petition for some great thing, but the poor man sat silent, gazing on him with love and wonder.

Then the King said, "Haven't you understood? I can make you rich and noble, I can give you a city, I can appoint you as a great ruler. Have you nothing to ask?"

The poor man replied gently, "Yes, my lord, I understood. But what is this you have done, to leave your palace and glory, to sit with me in this dark place, to partake of my water rather than your fine wine, to share my dry bread, and to care whether my heart is glad or sorry? Even you can give nothing more precious. On others you may bestow rich presents, but to me you have given yourself; it only remains to ask that you never withdraw this gift of your friendship."

Friendship is a priceless gift
That cannot be bought or sold,
But its value is far greater
Than a mountain made of gold.

For gold is cold and lifeless,
It can neither see nor hear,
And in the time of trouble
It is powerless to cheer.

It has no ears to listen,
No heart to understand,
It cannot bring you comfort
Or reach out a helping hand.

So when you ask God for a gift
Be thankful if He sends
Not diamonds, pearls or riches,
But the love of real true friends.



- What was the very special thing that the King gave the poor fireman?
- Why was the King's friendship more important to the poor man than riches and honor?
- Explain how you would feel if a person gave you wonderful things, but didn't love you or care about you as a friend. Would you rather have their love and friendship instead of their gifts?
- Tell about a friend who means a lot to you. Can you imagine what life would be like without a friend?
- How does having friends make you feel rich?



The Snapping Turtle

Lindy lay on her bed, sniffing. "Please don't disturb me!" she called out when someone tapped on her door.

"Don't you want to go fishing with me?" asked Dad.

Quickly, Lindy jumped to her feet and brushed at the tears with her fingers. "Oh, I do! Wait for me!"

Later, as they sat on the riverbank waiting for the fish to bite, Dad asked, "Has something been bothering you, Honey?"

"Oh, Daddy," said Lindy, "nobody wants to be my friend anymore."

"Do you have any idea why?" Dad asked.

"No!" snapped Lindy. "They're all so mean!"

"Everybody?" Dad raised his eyebrows.

"Yes, everybody!" Lindy declared. "I... oh! Get away! Get away!"

"What is it?" Dad rushed to her side. A few feet away a turtle was glaring* at her and snapping furiously. "Not a very friendly fellow, is he?" laughed Dad. "Leave him alone, Lindy, and he won't hurt you."

Lindy shuddered, "I don't like snapping turtles. Let's move. The fish aren't biting here anyway."

"Lindy," said Dad, when they were settled in a new spot, "could it be that everyone is leaving you alone because you've been acting like a snapping turtle, glaring and snapping at anyone who dares to cross your path?"

"But, Daddy," Lindy began, "I..."

"No, let me finish," Dad interrupted. "When that turtle started snapping at us, what did we do?"

"We got out of his way," Lindy answered.

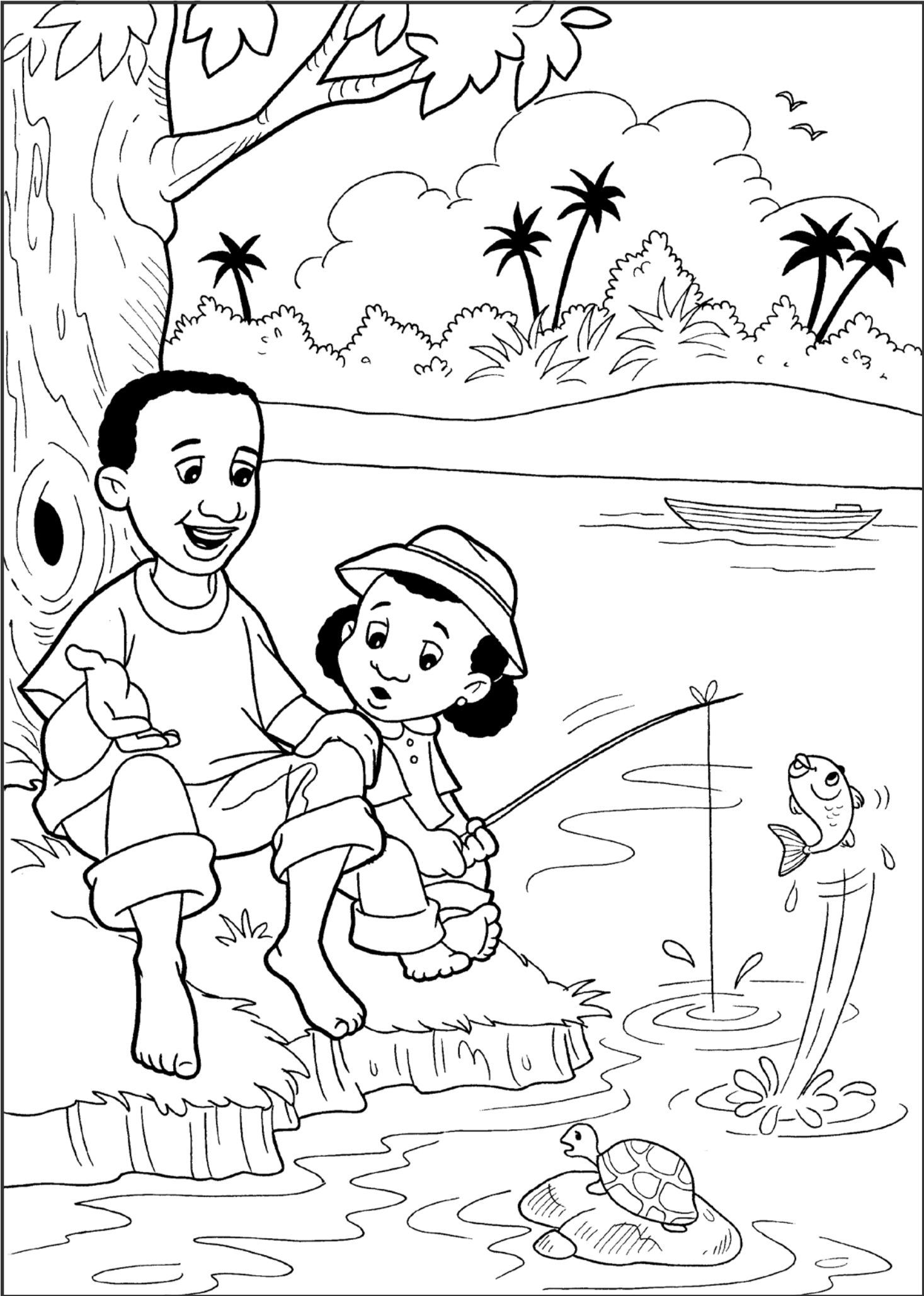
"Maybe that's what your friends are doing, getting out of your way and leaving you alone," Dad replied. "The Bible says that to have friends, you must be friendly" (Proverbs 18:24).

The next day when Lindy came home from school, she was smiling. "You were right, Daddy," she said. "When I stopped snapping at people, they stopped getting out of my way."



- Why didn't Lindy have any friends?
- How did she fix this problem?
- What about you? Are you a kind and loving friend?
- Talk about the kind of friends you like. Then try to be that kind of friend yourself.
- Try to imagine what Lindy said or did at school to make friends. Asking questions is a good way to find out about someone else and show interest. Everyone can take a turn to think of one question to ask the person next to them to get to know him or her better. Try not to repeat the same question, but think of new and interesting questions to ask others.

***glaring**: staring with anger, fierceness, or hostility



Someone Needs You

Someone needs your smile today,
Your hug, your listening ear.
Someone needs encouragement
And gentle words of cheer.

Someone needs your helping hand,
A letter—or what's more,
Someone needs your cheerfulness
To make their spirits soar.

Someone needs affection
When they are feeling blue.
Listen, someone's calling—
For a special friend like you.

—Jacqueline Schiff



My Special Friend

This morning when I wakened
And saw the sun above,
I softly said,
"Good morning, Lord—
Bless everyone I love."

Right away I thought of you
And said a loving prayer
That He would bless you specially
And keep you free from care.

I thought of all the happiness
A day could hold in store,
I wished it all for you because
No one deserves it more.

I felt so warm and good inside
My heart was all aglow,
I know God heard my prayers for you,
He hears them all, you know.

—Author Unknown



Prayer and Praise

Thank You, Jesus, for giving me special friends. Help me to appreciate each friend I have and show them that I love and care about them. Friends are such a special gift, thank You for being my friend too, Jesus!

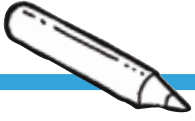
Memory Fun



A friend loves at all times.
Proverbs 17:17

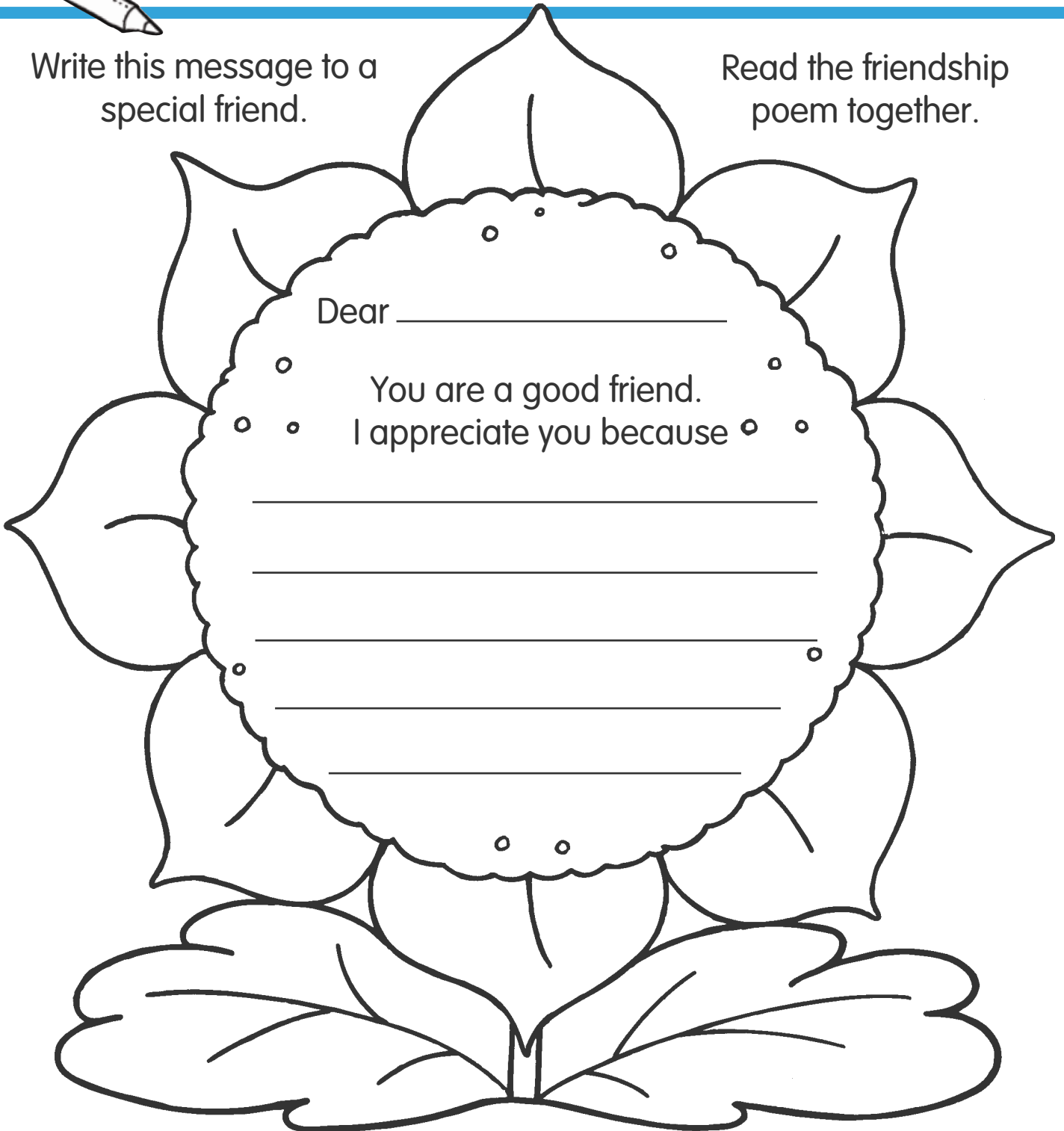
Pencil Page

A Garden of Friends



Write this message to a special friend.

Read the friendship poem together.



Friendship is like a garden,
Of flowers fine and rare,
It cannot reach perfection,
Except through loving care.

Then, new and lovely blossoms
With each new day appear,
For friendship, like a garden
Grows in beauty year by year.

Make and Do

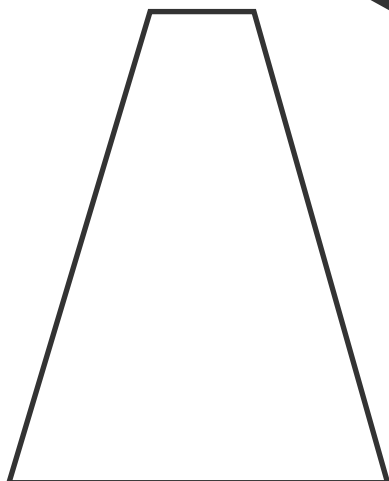
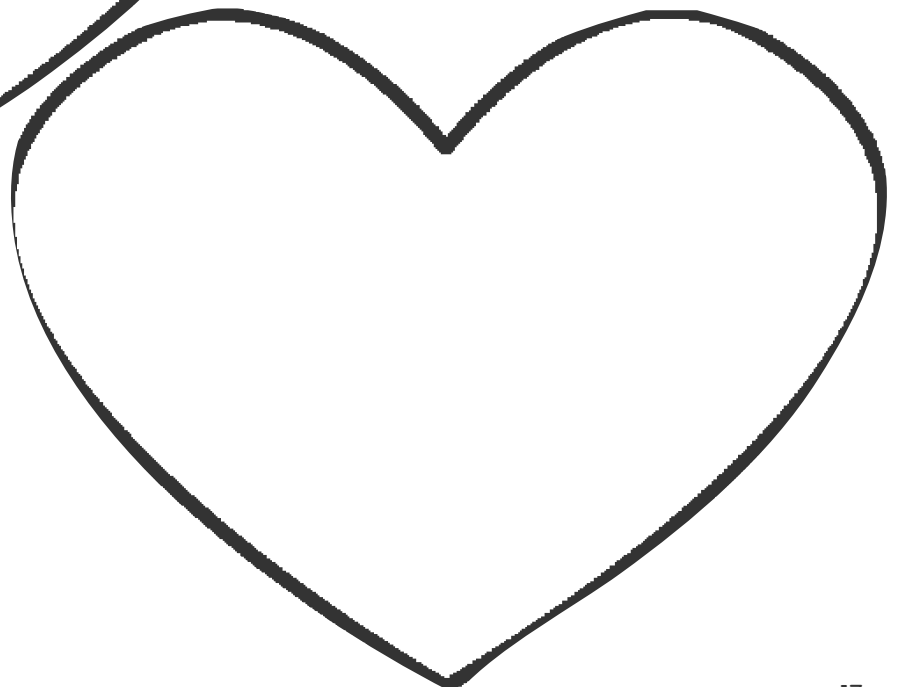
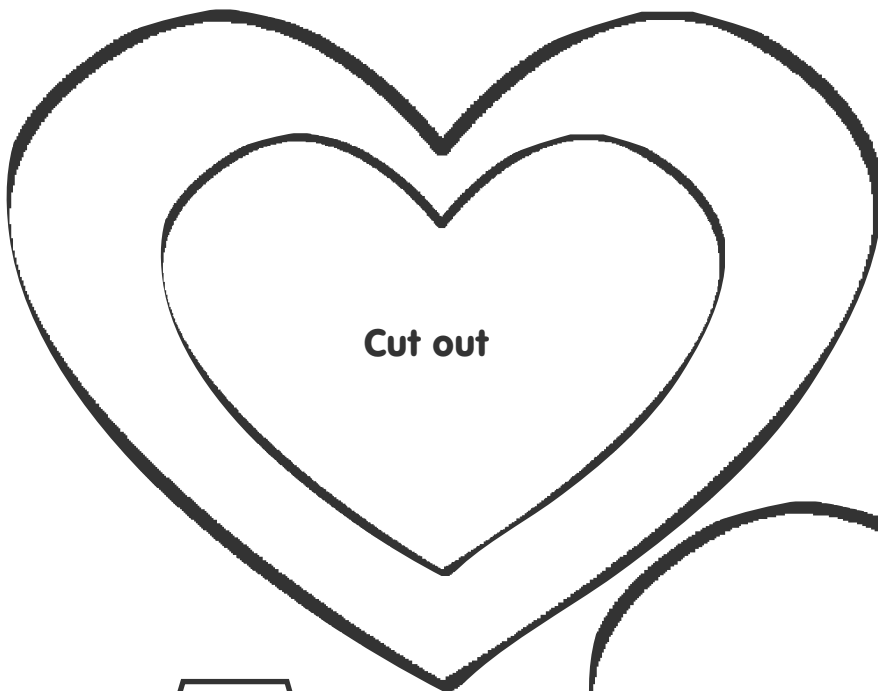
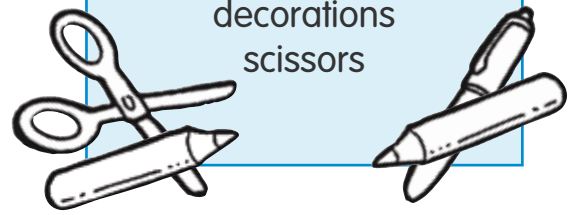
Friendship Picture Frame

How to:

- Cut out and mount the hearts on thick cardboard.
- Glue down or staple the sides of the heart to the back of the frame. Leave the top part open so you can slide your photo or picture in.
- Cut out and mount the stand. Staple or glue it to the back of the heart frame.
- Now, decorate your heart frame any way you like! You can use shells, dried flowers or leaves, crayola shavings, felt tips, etc.
- Cut out a photo of you and your friend and place it in the frame. If you don't have a photo, you can even draw a picture of yourself and your friend.

You will need:

picture of you and a friend
cardboard
glue or stapler
decorations
scissors

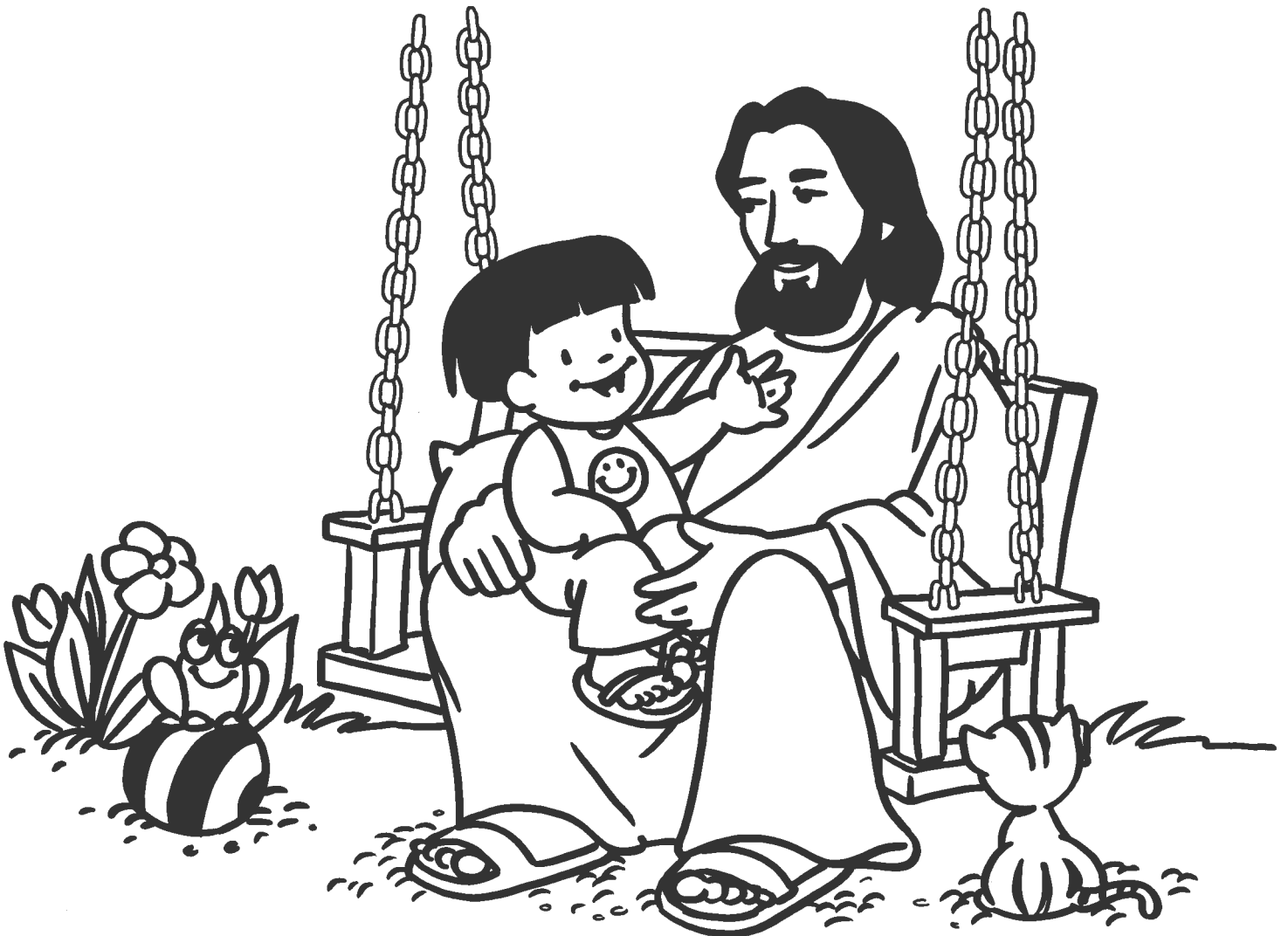


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From Jesus—with Love



What a special friend you are to Me. When I see that you're coming to spend time with Me, I give you My full attention. I love you in a very special way. I love to have you sit by Me and tell Me all your secrets, your thoughts, your dreams—everything about you. I love to listen, and I love to talk to you too. We're the best of friends!



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