

FRIENDS WITH GOD

STORY BIBLE

Why God Loves People Like Me



WRITTEN BY Jeff White

ILLUSTRATED BY David Harrington

FRIENDS WITH GOD STORY BIBLE

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DEDICATION

Thank you to all the Sunday school teachers who made Bible stories come alive to me as a kid. I still remember.

Thanks to the world's greatest team: David Harrington, Jan Kershner, Michael Paustian, Stephen Caine, and Joani Schultz. You're the reasons this book is so amazing.

And thank you most of all to those I love the most: my wife, Amy, and my kids, Luke, Daisy, and Cooper. You give me my words and leave me speechless all at the same time.

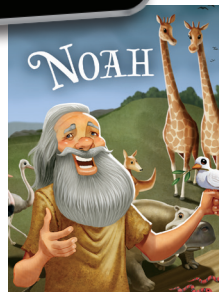
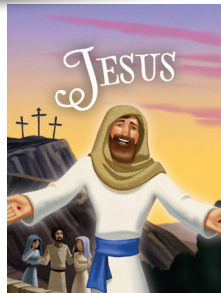
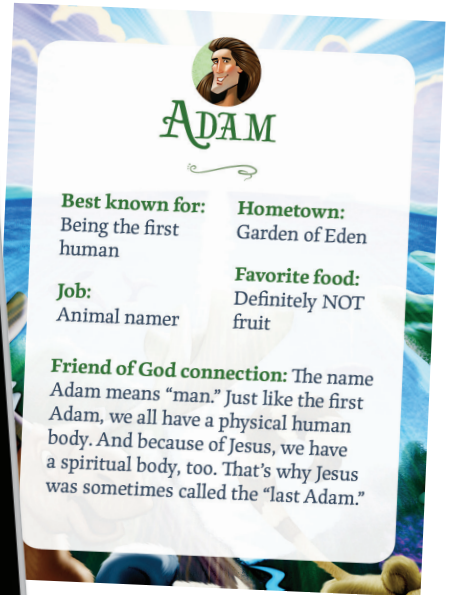
J.W.

I want to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus for his love and grace and for allowing me to work on this book, which has been a labor of love.

To my beautiful wife, Sidney, and our wonderful children, Chase, Nick, and Emma: I love you more than I could ever express in words.

D.H.


BRING YOUR BIBLE TO LIFE WITH THE



FREE FRIENDS WITH GOD APP!

Come face to face with Bible-times friends of God. Scattered throughout the pages of the *Friends With God Story Bible*, digital triggers unlock mobile games so you can win virtual collectible cards with entertaining facts about Bible characters. Plus, you'll get a devotional card with a fun idea you can talk about with your family.

► Get started in three easy steps:

1. With your parents' help, download the free app available in iTunes and Google Play.
2. When you see this icon , scan the page with your mobile device.
3. Play the games to win all of the collectible cards!
4. Visit **MyLifetree.com/Kids** for more fun, faith-building stuff for kids!



INTRODUCTION

You've never seen a story Bible quite like this one. It has the classic narratives we've all come to know and love over the years: Noah's ark, Joshua and the battle of Jericho, Esther saving her people, and so many more.

But this book is different.

Every story is told from the perspective of a Bible character. Eve tells us what it was like to be tempted in the Garden of Eden. Moses talks about his nail-biting escape from Egypt and parting the Red Sea. We feel David's confidence up close as he recalls facing down one of the biggest bullies of all time.

Yet these first-person chats aren't the only thing that makes this book special. Every story reveals **God's personal relationship with people**. We get straight to the heart of each person and see firsthand how each of their lives changed through their friendship with God.

And at the end of each chapter you'll have a **face-to-face encounter** with the storyteller. He or she will reveal how God was at the center of the story, as well as how it relates to your life today.

Best of all, the *Friends With God Story Bible* will help you dig deep into what faith is really all about: **a one-on-one relationship with the One who loves you the most**.

So circle up your family and get ready to encounter God—and his beloved friends—like never before.



FRIENDS WITH GOD

STORY BIBLE

Why God Loves People Like Me




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WOW! JUST, WOW! THE DAY GOD MADE ME

GENESIS 1-2:24

BY
ADAM




W^{OW}.

I mean, WOW!


I can't believe what happened to me today.

I was *created*. And it was AMAZING!

God had been very busy the last few days. First there was nothing. Then every day God made something new. Light, the ocean, the sky, the sun and moon, plants, trees, flowers, fish, birds—you name it. Everything was made for a reason, and it was good.

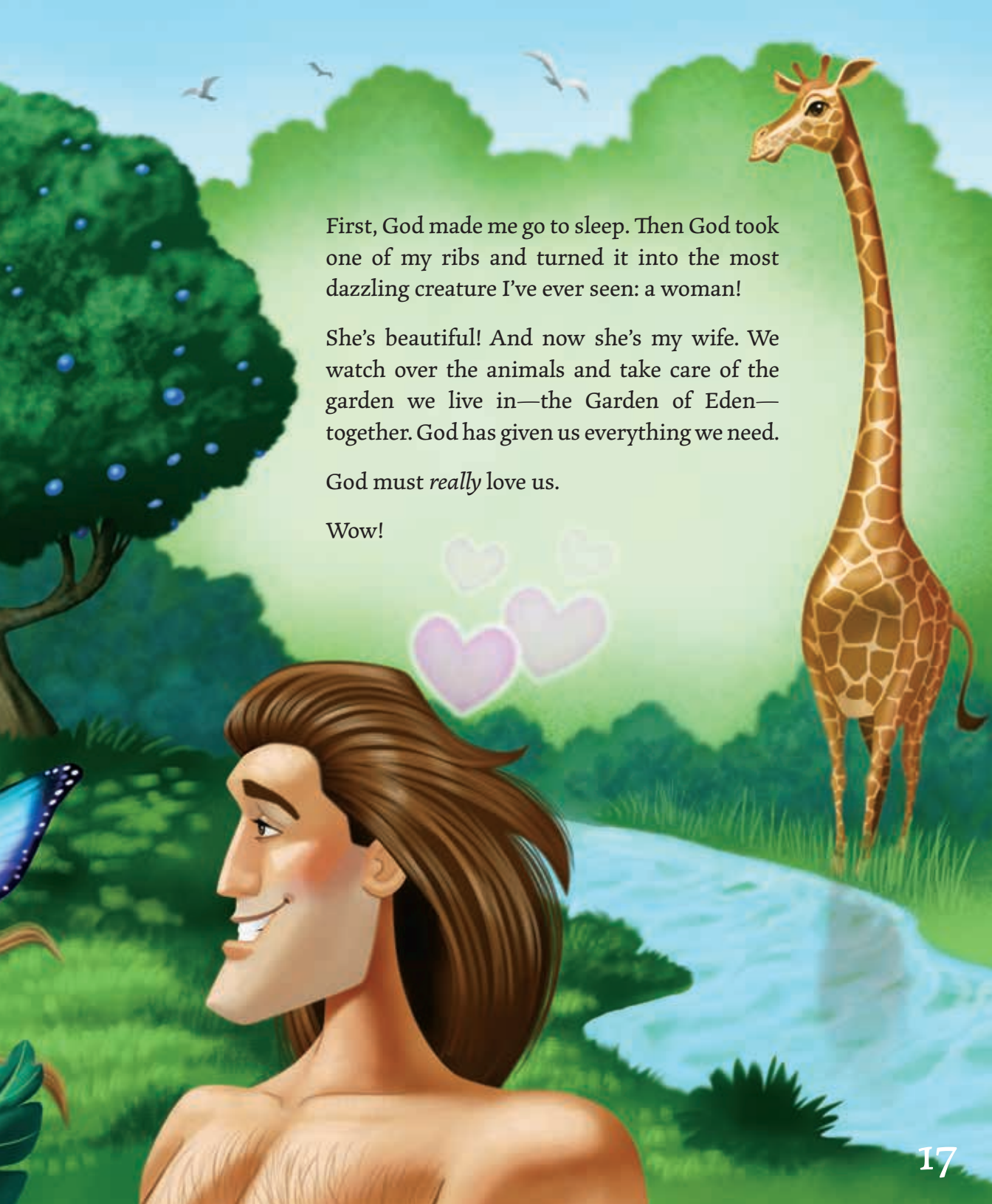


Yesterday God made these things called animals. They're wonderful creatures! Big ones and small ones. Furry ones and tough ones. Spotted ones and striped ones. Some have long necks, others have sharp teeth. Each one is unique. God is so creative!



AND then God made something extra special. God made ME. God took some dirt from the ground—the freshest dirt you’ve ever seen—and shaped me into the first-ever, brand-new, pleased-to-meet-you human being!

God’s world is awesome. I love breathing the crisp air and eating the delicious fruit in the garden. But the thing I love most is what God made just for me.

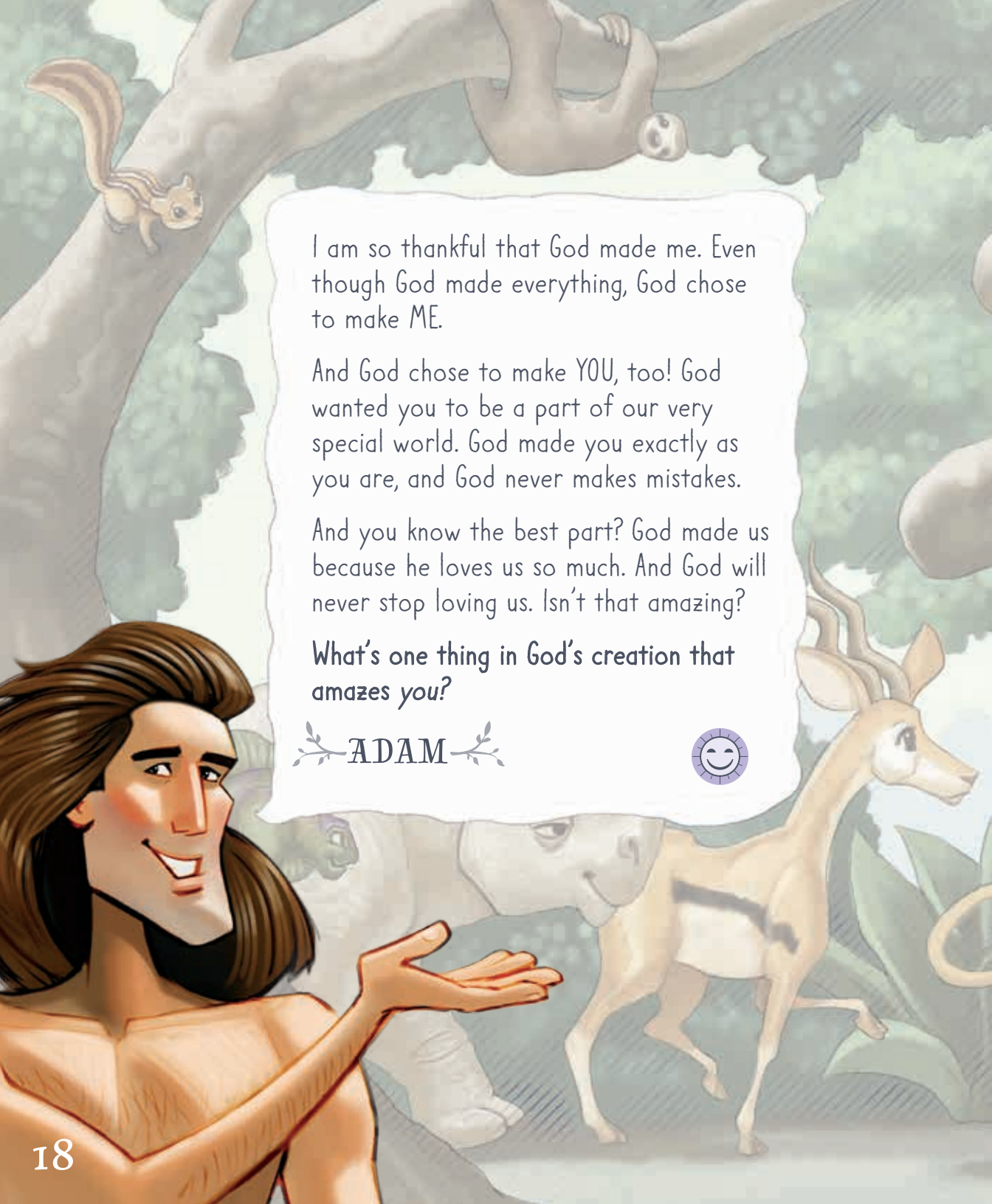


First, God made me go to sleep. Then God took one of my ribs and turned it into the most dazzling creature I've ever seen: a woman!

She's beautiful! And now she's my wife. We watch over the animals and take care of the garden we live in—the Garden of Eden—together. God has given us everything we need.

God must *really* love us.

Wow!



I am so thankful that God made me. Even though God made everything, God chose to make ME.

And God chose to make YOU, too! God wanted you to be a part of our very special world. God made you exactly as you are, and God never makes mistakes.

And you know the best part? God made us because he loves us so much. And God will never stop loving us. Isn't that amazing?

What's one thing in God's creation that amazes you?

— ADAM —

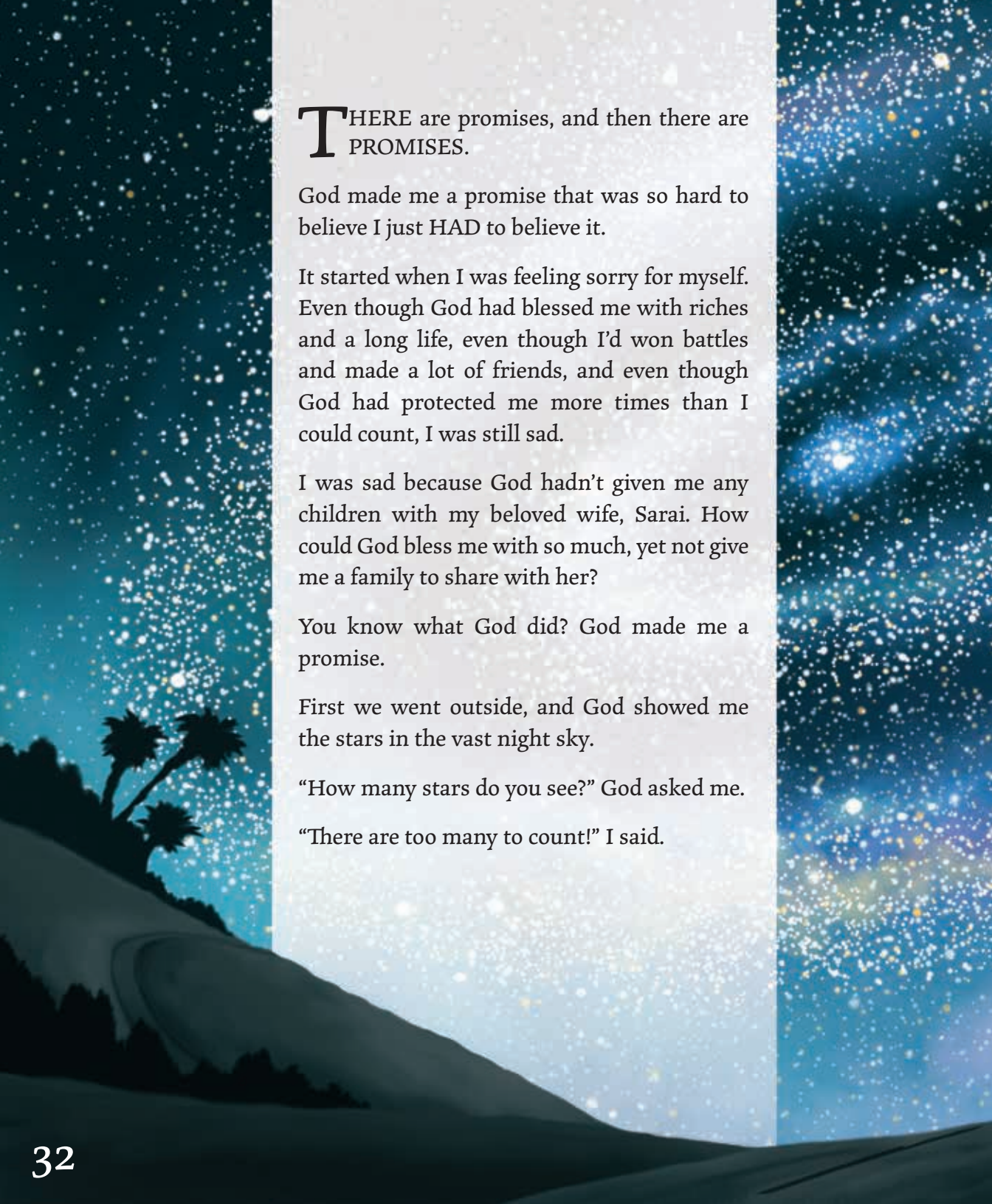


STARS IN MY EYES

GENESIS 15

BY
◉ ABRAM ◉





THERE are promises, and then there are PROMISES.

God made me a promise that was so hard to believe I just HAD to believe it.

It started when I was feeling sorry for myself. Even though God had blessed me with riches and a long life, even though I'd won battles and made a lot of friends, and even though God had protected me more times than I could count, I was still sad.

I was sad because God hadn't given me any children with my beloved wife, Sarai. How could God bless me with so much, yet not give me a family to share with her?

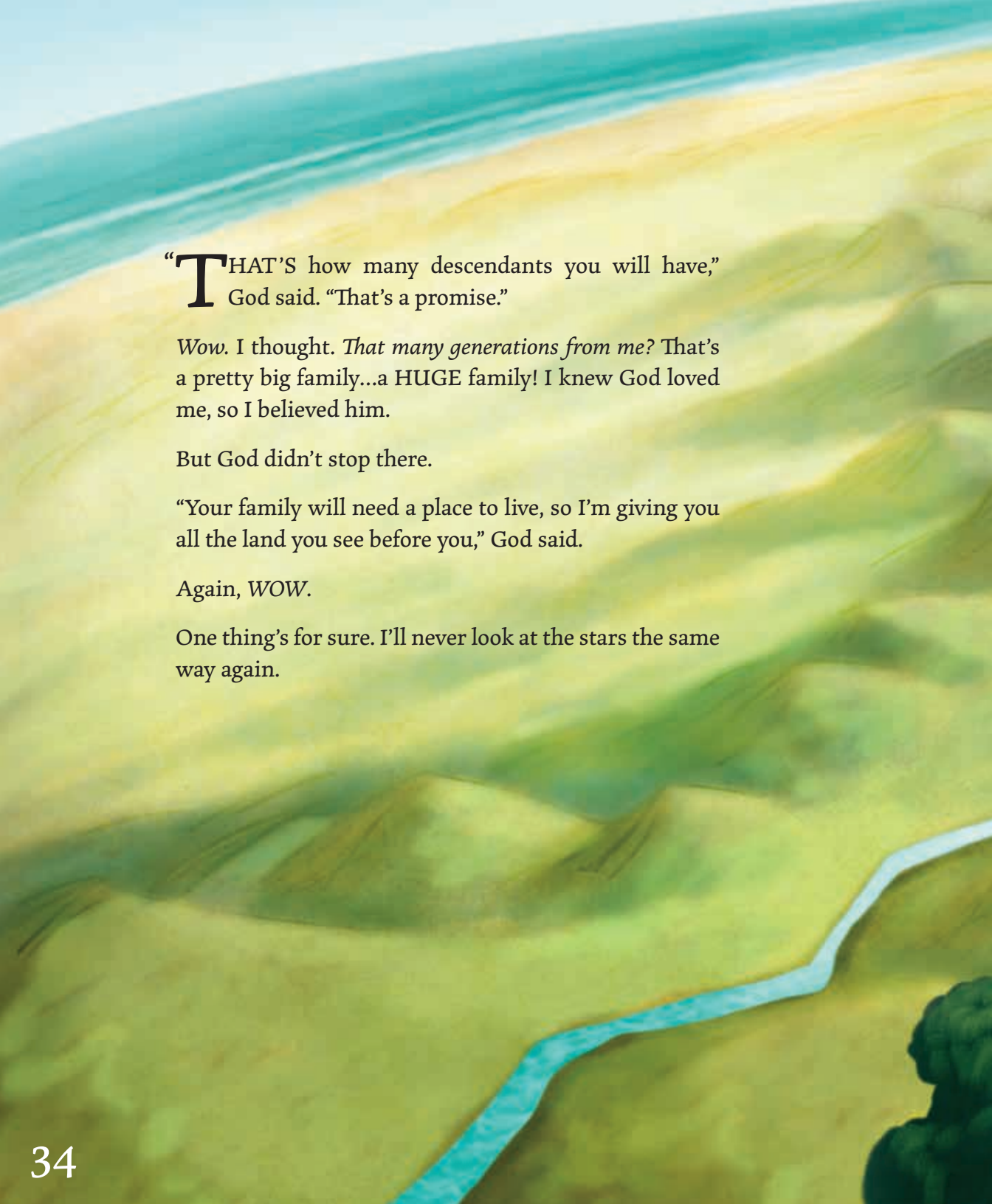
You know what God did? God made me a promise.

First we went outside, and God showed me the stars in the vast night sky.

"How many stars do you see?" God asked me.

"There are too many to count!" I said.





“**T**HAT’S how many descendants you will have,”
God said. “That’s a promise.”

Wow. I thought. *That many generations from me?* That’s a pretty big family...a HUGE family! I knew God loved me, so I believed him.

But God didn’t stop there.

“Your family will need a place to live, so I’m giving you all the land you see before you,” God said.

Again, WOW.

One thing’s for sure. I’ll never look at the stars the same way again.



I think there's something really interesting about God's promises. They often come when we least expect it. Just when everything seems hopeless, God comes through with a promise to take care of us.

That's what friends do. I should know, because people call me a "friend of God."

God is your friend, too. When you pay attention to God's words, you can hear many of God's promises to you. And the biggest one of all is that God will always love you.

Have you ever made a promise to someone? What was it? Was it easy or hard to keep your promise? When God makes a promise, he **ALWAYS** keeps it!

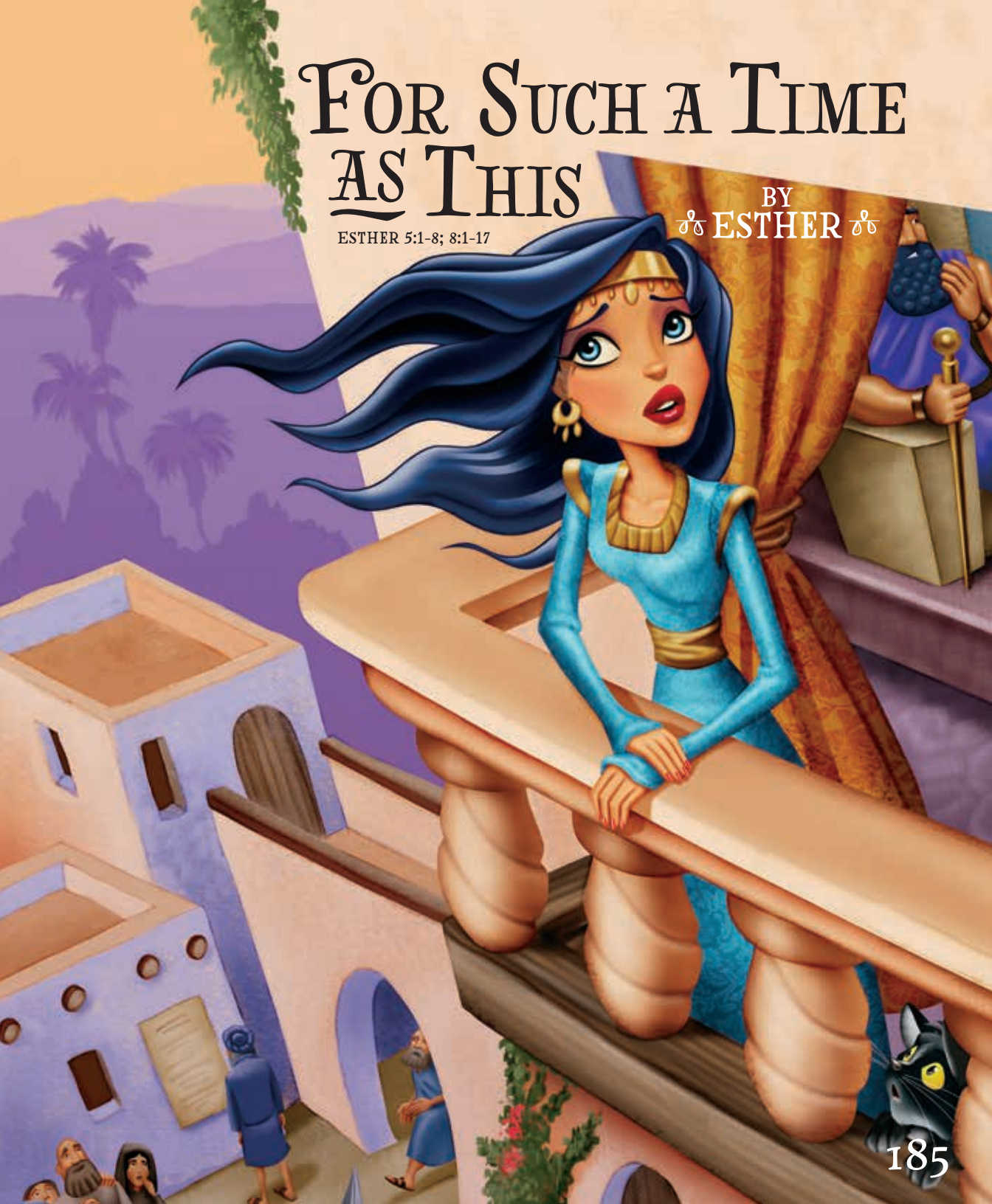
ABRAM



FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

ESTHER 5:1-8; 8:1-17

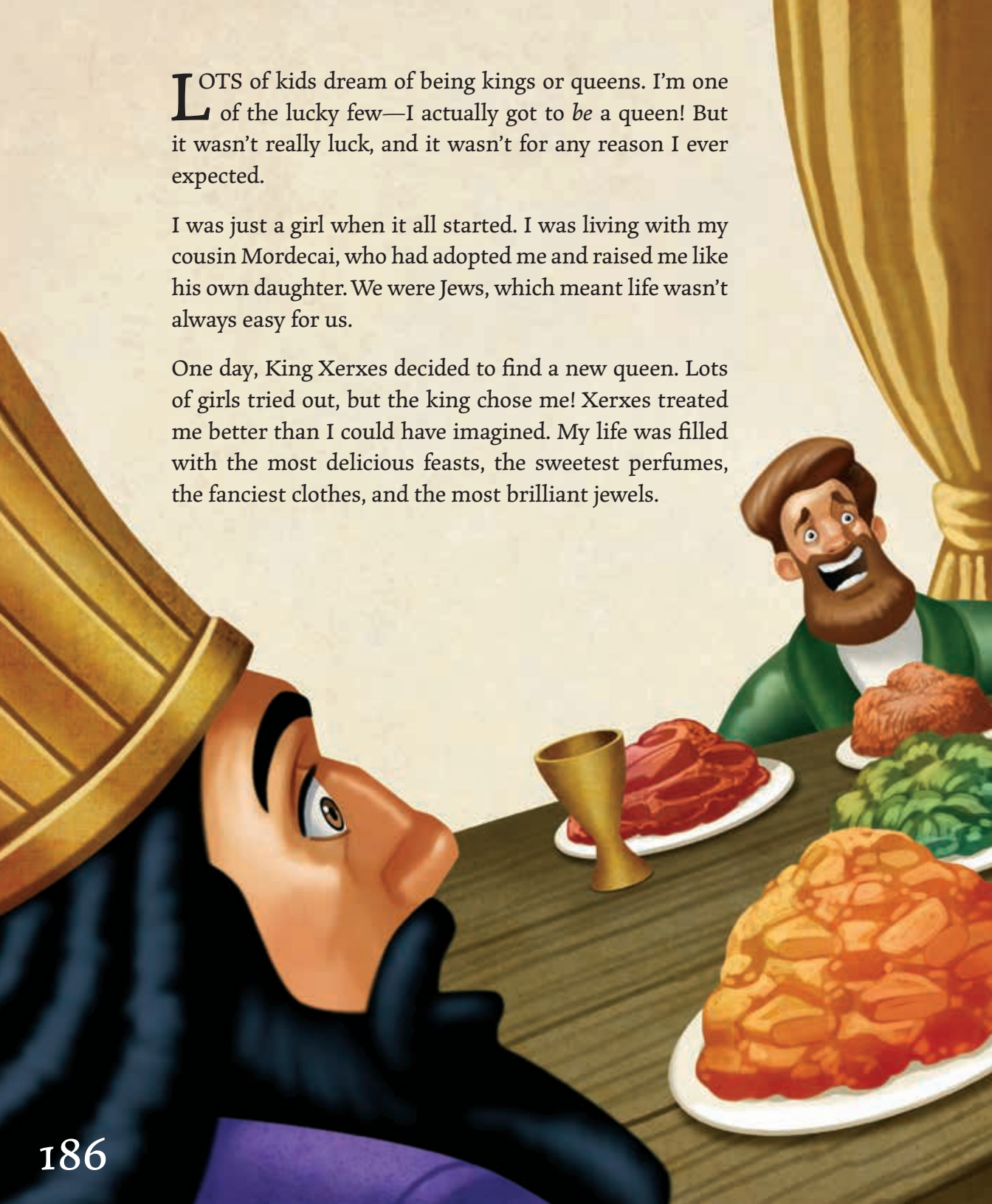
BY
✧ ESTHER ✧



LOTS of kids dream of being kings or queens. I'm one of the lucky few—I actually got to *be* a queen! But it wasn't really luck, and it wasn't for any reason I ever expected.

I was just a girl when it all started. I was living with my cousin Mordecai, who had adopted me and raised me like his own daughter. We were Jews, which meant life wasn't always easy for us.

One day, King Xerxes decided to find a new queen. Lots of girls tried out, but the king chose me! Xerxes treated me better than I could have imagined. My life was filled with the most delicious feasts, the sweetest perfumes, the fanciest clothes, and the most brilliant jewels.



But there were some problems. I didn't tell the king I was a Jew because Mordecai told me to keep it a secret. On top of that, King Xerxes' right-hand man, Haman, hated my cousin Mordecai because Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman. So that scoundrel Haman hatched a plot to trick the king into ordering all Jews to be killed.

Every last one of us—including me.

Mordecai told me to talk to Xerxes right away and plead for the Jews. But it was risky. I could be killed. Yet if I didn't try, then all the Jews—my people—would die for sure.

I was so scared! I didn't know what to do. But Mordecai helped me make up my mind. He said, "Maybe you were made queen for such a time as this?"

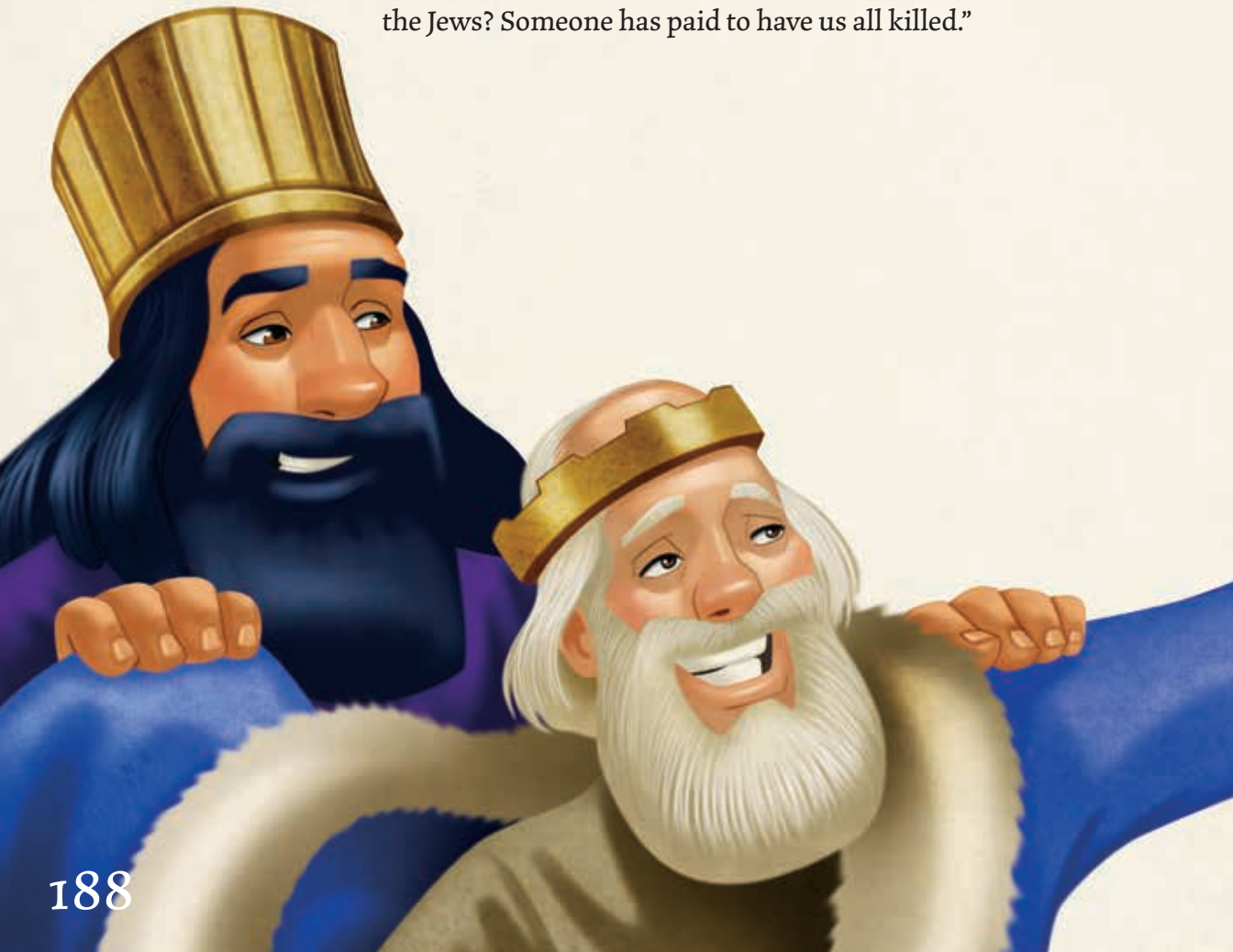
That was all I needed to hear. I had to try.



I invited Xerxes and Haman to a fancy dinner. Haman thought it was quite an honor to be invited to eat with the king and queen. Little did he know what was about to happen.

The king started the meal by asking what I wanted. "I'll give you anything," he said, "even if it's half of my kingdom!"

"I have just one request," I said. "Would you please spare my life and the lives of my people, the Jews? Someone has paid to have us all killed."



Xerxes turned red with anger. “Who would do such a terrible thing like that?” he asked. “Who would dare to hurt the queen?”

I pointed at Haman. “*He’s* our enemy, my king,” I said.

Haman was dead before bedtime.

Not only were my people safe, but the king also made Mordecai his new right-hand man. Xerxes gave him a royal robe and a gold crown and put the king’s ring on his finger.

God made sure I became the queen at just the right time. Since God loves us, he put me in just the right place to save his people from disaster.



When the king chose me to be his queen, I had no idea what was going to happen. Xerxes thought I was beautiful, and he really liked me. It was a strange new royal world I was living in, and I wasn't sure what made *me* so special.

But God knew what was going to happen. God placed me there for one reason: to protect his people.

That happens to people a lot. They find themselves in situations where they're not comfortable, or where they feel they don't belong, or where they have no idea what's going on. But God always knows our future. God puts us in the places he knows we're supposed to be.

Who knows what God may have in store for *you*? You, too, may get the chance to do something special.

ESTHER



BECAUSE I LOVE YOU

MATTHEW 27:27–28:10

BY
JESUS



I'M going to tell you the most important story ever told. It won't be easy for you to hear. But I promise you this: It has the happiest ending in the history of happy endings.

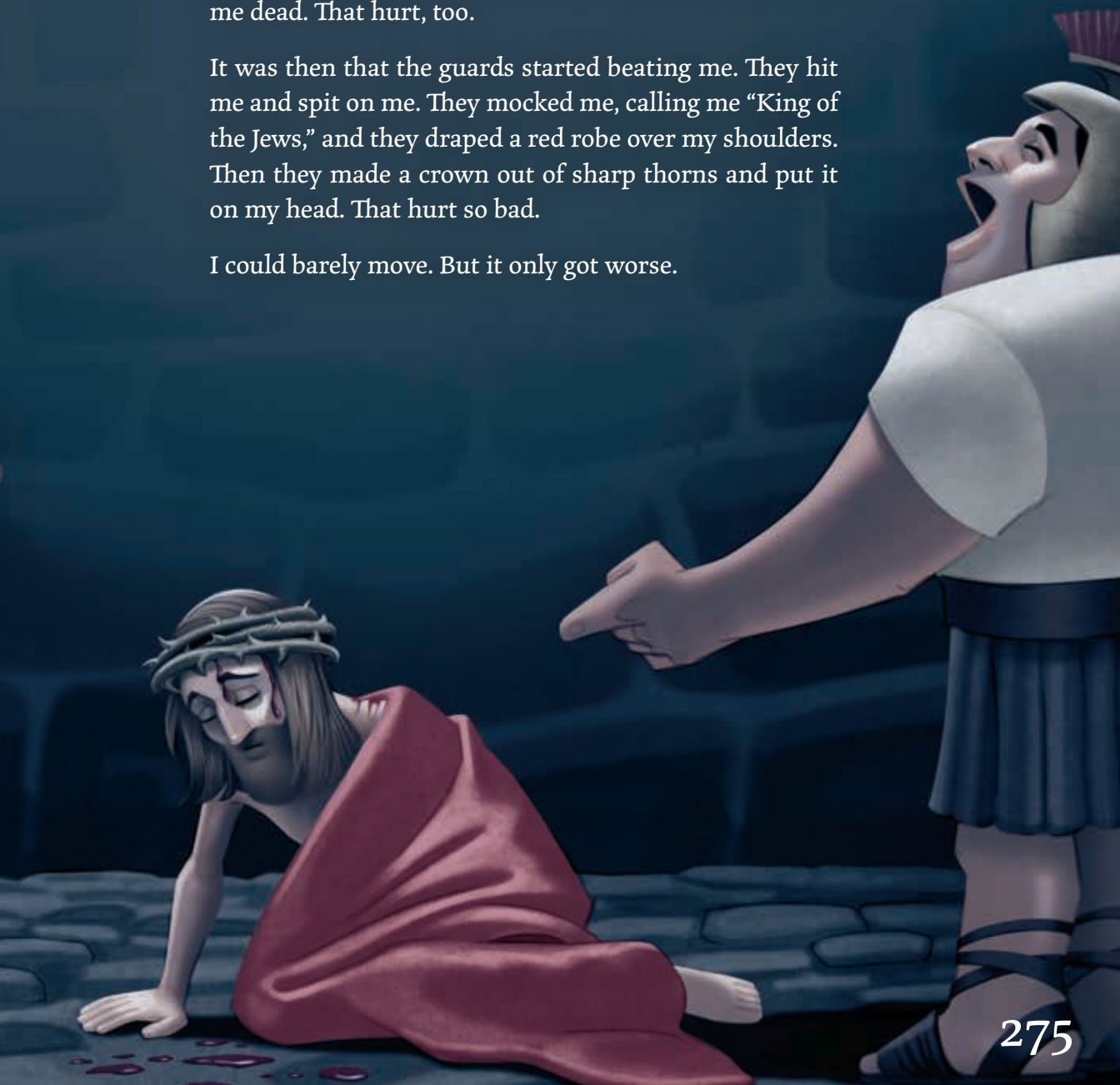
It started when the Roman soldiers arrested me while I was praying. One of my dearest friends had betrayed me to them, and all for a little bit of money. That hurt.



They took me to stand trial in front of Pontius Pilate, the local governor. The people accused me of being a traitor, although Pilate couldn't find anything I had done wrong. But the people insisted on killing me anyway. Just a week earlier they had been cheering me on! Now they wanted me dead. That hurt, too.

It was then that the guards started beating me. They hit me and spit on me. They mocked me, calling me "King of the Jews," and they draped a red robe over my shoulders. Then they made a crown out of sharp thorns and put it on my head. That hurt so bad.

I could barely move. But it only got worse.



THE guards made a big cross out of wooden beams. Even though I had no strength left, they made me carry that cross, with people along the road yelling at me. It was so heavy. Every step was torture. When I finally couldn't go any farther, they made another man carry that heavy cross for me.

They marched me up a hill to a creepy area they called the Place of the Skull. The pain was unbearable. I could barely catch my breath. The soldiers tried to give me a bitter drink to ease the pain, but I wouldn't take a sip. I needed to endure every jolt, every stab, every sting. And there were so many.

I had nothing left.

Still, they kept mocking me.

"If you're the Son of God, why don't you save yourself?" they shouted.





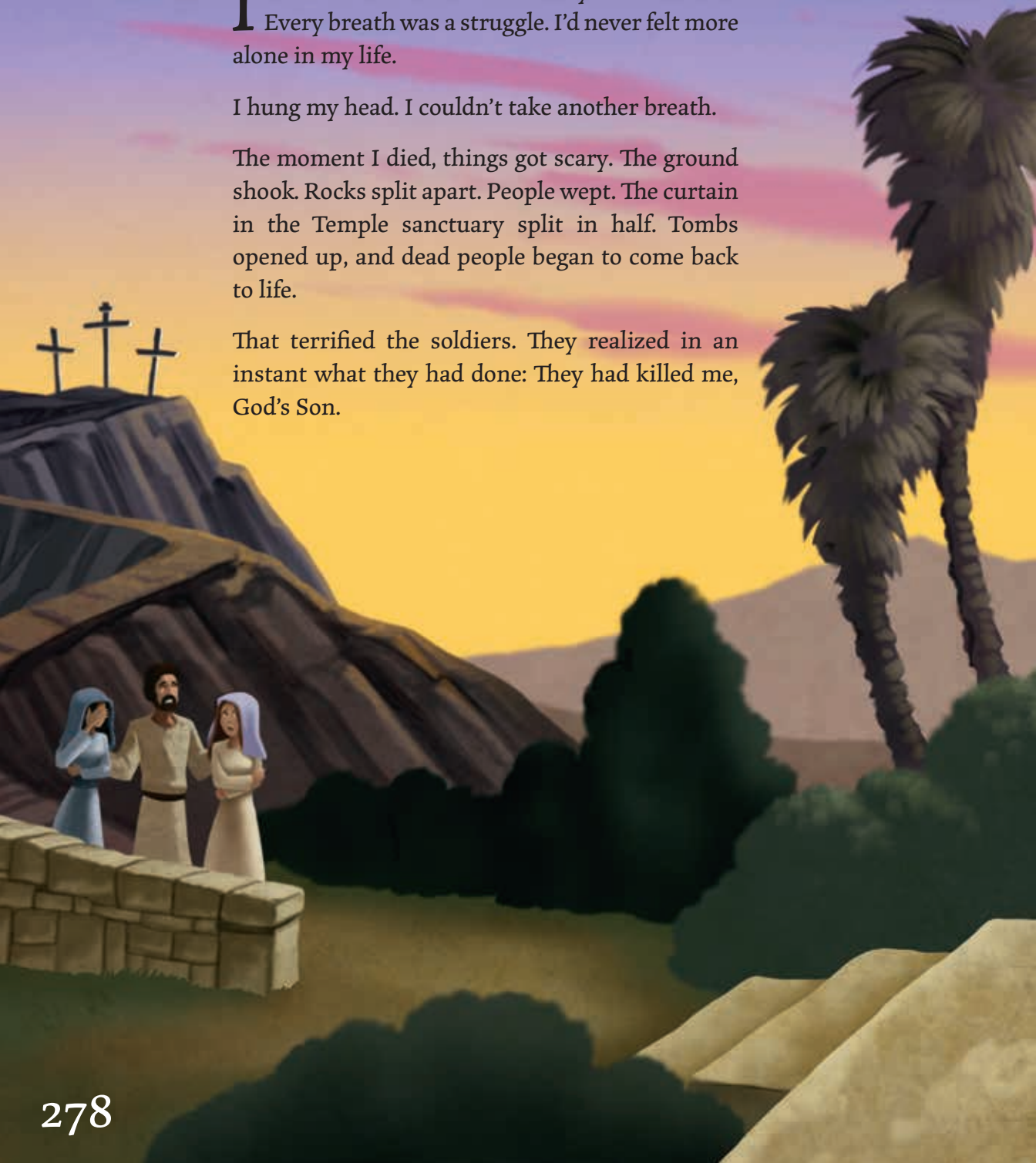
But they didn't know. They didn't understand that God wanted me to go through with this. They didn't know this was God's plan. Worst of all, they didn't realize how much I loved them. Every tear and every drop of blood was for *them*.

IT was almost the end. The sky turned black. Every breath was a struggle. I'd never felt more alone in my life.

I hung my head. I couldn't take another breath.

The moment I died, things got scary. The ground shook. Rocks split apart. People wept. The curtain in the Temple sanctuary split in half. Tombs opened up, and dead people began to come back to life.

That terrified the soldiers. They realized in an instant what they had done: They had killed me, God's Son.



Later, a rich man named Joseph took my body and wrapped it in cloths. Then he buried me in a tomb carved out of the rocks and rolled a big stone across the entrance.

Yet my killers were nervous. They'd heard me talk about coming back from the dead. They thought my followers might come to steal my body and claim I wasn't dead anymore. So they placed guards there to make sure nothing happened.

But something *did* happen.



THREE days later everything changed.

As soon as the sun cracked the morning sky, an earthquake rattled the tomb as one of God's radiant angels swept down and rolled the stone away. Then he hopped up and sat on it!

The guards were so scared they passed out.



Just then Mary Magdalene and my other friend named Mary came to visit the tomb. But when they saw the angel, their jaws dropped.

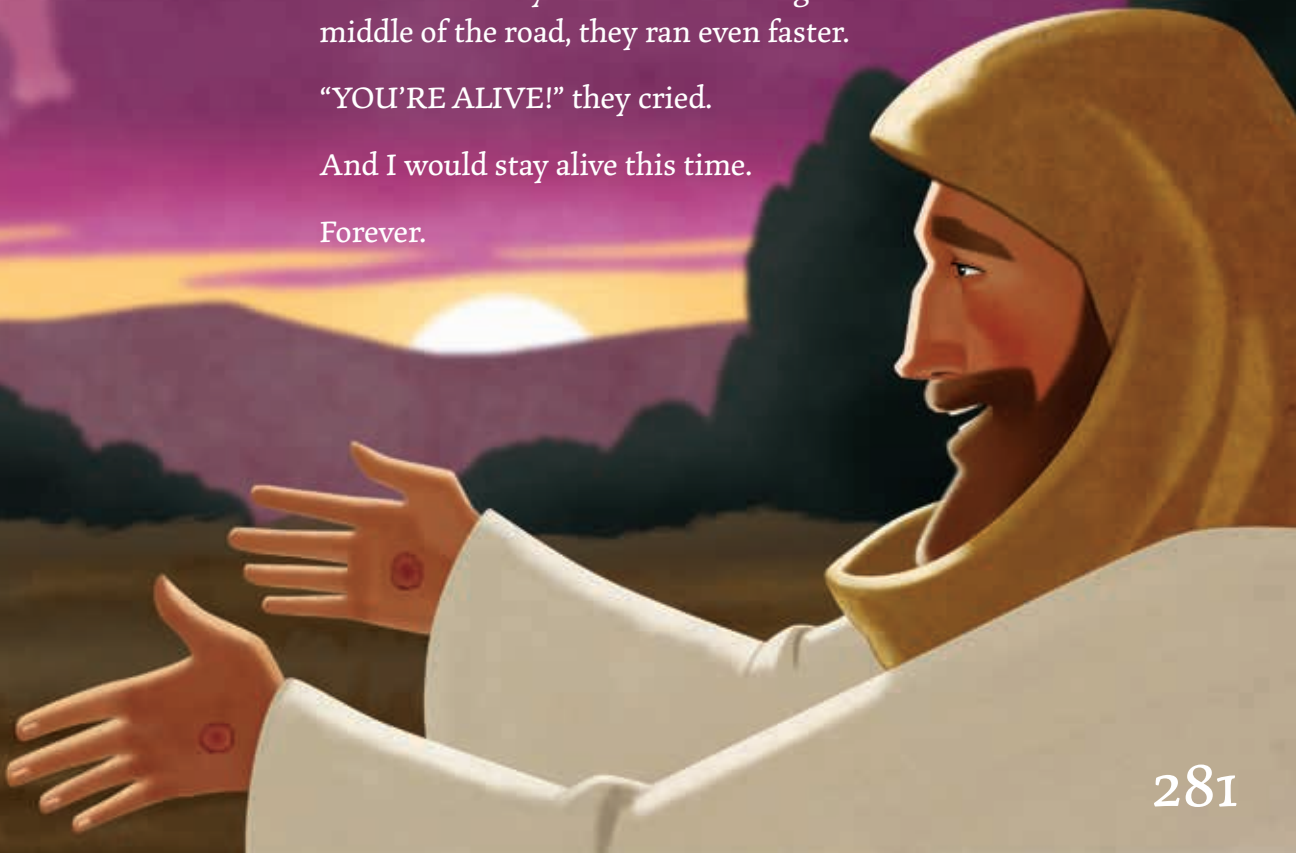
“Don’t be afraid,” said the angel. “Jesus isn’t here anymore. He’s alive again! Hurry and go tell his followers!”

Mary Magdalene and Mary took one glance at the empty tomb and started running fast! They were frightened and excited and shocked and thrilled all at the same time. And when they saw me standing in the middle of the road, they ran even faster.

“YOU’RE ALIVE!” they cried.

And I would stay alive this time.

Forever.



I didn't want to be tortured and killed. I dreaded it. Even so, I knew it was the only way to save everyone—everyone—from evil and help them find forgiveness for the wrong things they do.

I had to do it. And I wanted to do it.

And I did it because I love you. YOU. I can't say it enough. I love YOU, my friend.

All you have to do is believe it. Tell God right now what you think about me.

JESUS



An illustration of a group of early Christians in a room. In the center, a man with a brown beard and hair, wearing a white tunic, holds a large, round, golden-brown loaf of bread. He is smiling and looking towards a woman on his right. The woman has long dark hair and is wearing a blue garment. To the left of the man, a woman with long brown hair and blue eyes, wearing a white tunic and a pink shawl, looks up at him with a joyful expression. Behind her, an older man with a grey beard and hair, wearing a white tunic, looks on. In the background, a woman with dark hair and a pink headscarf is partially visible. The room has a grey wall and a dark wooden door frame. The overall style is a soft, painterly illustration with a warm, inviting atmosphere.

THAT'S *THE* SPIRIT!

ACTS 2

BY
EARLY
CHRISTIANS

YOU know that feeling you get right before you're about to go to your own birthday party? That's how we felt in those first few days when Jesus' church was just getting started.

So much had already happened since Jesus died. Not only did Jesus come back to life, but he also performed more miracles, healed the sick, and spent as much time with us as he could. What a wonderful forty days!

What in the world might happen next?

During a meal with us, Jesus told us to stay in Jerusalem until God sent us a gift: the Holy Spirit. What was *that* going to be like? After Jesus floated up into heaven (which was quite a sight, let me tell you), all his followers started getting together whenever we could.

One morning, more than a week after Jesus went away, we were together in a room when all of a sudden we heard a LOUD roaring sound, like some kind of hurricane hit us. Then, just like that, each one of us had flames dancing on the tops of our heads. Incredible!

We felt different. We felt...filled.

We felt empowered.



THEN we all started speaking different languages—languages none of us had spoken before—and we could still understand one another. Amazing! In fact, other Jews in Jerusalem were hearing their own languages being spoken by us. More amazing!

People in the city wondered what in the world was going on. They watched us, thunderstruck.

“How is this possible?” they wondered.

“What does it all mean?” they asked.



Some of them shrugged their shoulders and said, “They’re all just drunk!”

But Peter stood up and explained what was going on.

“What you’re seeing has never happened before,” Peter said. “Jesus, the Messiah himself, was killed and came back from the dead to save us all from the bad things we do. Now that Jesus is in heaven, God has given US his Holy Spirit. And now we’re going to do amazing things for God!”

We’re so excited! Let’s get to it!



That was quite a pep talk Peter gave. We added three thousand followers to our group that day alone, and our church family is getting bigger all the time.

I have a feeling we're going to change the world.

And being filled with God's Holy Spirit means we can do just that. It's up to us to help Jesus do his work, right here, right now. God's Spirit gives us the power to do it.

You can be empowered by God's Spirit, too, just as we were! All you have to do is believe in Jesus. Then you'll be able to show God's love to everyone you know.

Try that today. Do one thing to show God's awesome love to someone. What could you do to help others know Jesus?

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Help kids deepen their friendship with God *even more* by pairing this story Bible with the *Friends With God Devotions for Kids*!

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