



Burrowing Deeper:

Discussion Questions for Adults & Teens


FROG'S RAINY-DAY STORY and OTHER FABLES

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These discussion questions are provided free as a resource for facilitating discussions in classroom, home school, small group, and family settings. Have fun “burrowing deeper” into the personal and cultural applications of the fables!



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael James Dowling". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of the name.

Michael James Dowling

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Frog's Rainy-Day Story

Thought-Provoking Questions for Adults and Teens

*We're made for a much larger story,
which we miss when we seek our own glory.*

In the beginning of the fable, the letters of the alphabet are clearly unhappy.

- ✦ What do *they* think is their problem?
- ✦ What do *you* think is their problem?

The letters say they want fame and fortune.

- ✦ Why do you think fame and fortune are so important to the letters?
- ✦ What are some blessings of wealth and fame?
- ✦ What are some problems caused by wealth and fame?

King Solomon of Israel, who was world-renowned for his wealth and wisdom, wrote the following words sometime between 970 and 931 BC:

Anything I wanted, I would take. I denied myself no pleasure. I even found great pleasure in hard work, a reward for all my labors. But as I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless—like chasing the wind. There was nothing really worthwhile anywhere. (Ecclesiastes 2:10-11)

- ✦ What might the letters in the fable learn from King Solomon's experience?
- ✦ What might we learn?

The letters in the fable clearly are feeling restless and discontented.

- ✦ Why do you think they feel this way?
- ✦ Saint Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430 AD) wrote, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you." Explain this in your own words.
- ✦ The Bible tells us that God created all the stars in the sky (Genesis 1:16), and that he knows every hair on our head (Matthew 10:30). How do you feel about the truth that such a huge God knows us so intimately?

In the fable, **a** wants all the letters to be equal.

- ✦ Why do you think *equality* is so important to **a**?
- ✦ What point do you think Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., former Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court, was making when he said, "I have no respect for the passion of equality, which seems to me merely idealizing envy"?
- ✦ Compare and contrast the type of equality Holmes was talking about with the idea expressed in the *Declaration of Independence* that "all men are created equal."

Frog's Rainy-Day Story

Thought-Provoking Questions for Adults and Teens

God has made each of us different in wonderful ways.

- ✦ What gifts has God given you that you are most grateful for?
- ✦ How can you use these gifts to serve others?

In 2 Corinthians 5:21, we read the following words of the Apostle Paul:

For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

- ✦ If you are a Christian, how does it feel to know that because Jesus Christ took your sins upon himself on the cross, God sees you as having the righteousness of Christ?
- ✦ Christians do good deeds in response to God's favor rather than to earn God's favor. Explain the difference.
- ✦ Explain why trying to earn our own righteousness by doing good works is a denial of the finished work that Christ has done for us on the cross.

In John 13:3-5 below, we read about Jesus' actions on the night before he was crucified:

Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.

- ✦ What can we learn from Jesus' actions about God's love for us?
- ✦ What can we learn from Jesus' example about how we should live?

What inspiration and guidance do you draw from the following passages of Scripture:

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. (The Apostle Paul—Ephesians 2:10)

Shout with joy to the LORD, all the earth! Worship the LORD with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy. Acknowledge that the LORD is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. (Psalm 100:1-3)

Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever is the least among you is the greatest."

- ✦ Why would anyone want to be the least?
- ✦ How does faith in Jesus Christ help us put others ahead of ourselves?



Duck's Wrong Turn

Thought-Provoking Questions for Adults and Teens

*If there's only one way, It's foolish to say
Another way is okay.*

In the fable, Duck disregards Beaver's advice.

- ✦ Why do you think choosing his own way is so important to Duck?
- ✦ How important is freedom of choice to you?
- ✦ How important is freedom of choice in our culture?

Jesus said, *"For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do my own will" (John 6:38). Speaking of his heavenly Father he said, "I always do what pleases him."*

- ✦ Why is it important that Jesus always did God's will?
- ✦ How important is it for us to do God's will?
- ✦ How difficult is it for us to do God's will?

In John 14:6, Jesus is quoted as saying, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."*

- ✦ Explain what Jesus is saying in your own words.
- ✦ Why do you think Jesus' statement irritates some people?

Jesus said, *"You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life." (John 5:39-40)*

- ✦ What do you think Jesus meant by the phrase "come to me"?
- ✦ Why do you think so few people come to Jesus?

In 2 Timothy 4:3-4, we read the following words of the Apostle Paul:

For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. They will reject the truth and chase after myths.

- ✦ When it comes to religion, why is it so tempting to follow our own desires?
- ✦ What are some possible consequences of wrong choices about spiritual issues?

In *"Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pa. v. Casey (91-744), 505 U.S. 833 (1992)"*, the Supreme Court of the United States issued a ruling that contained the following statement:

At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life.

- ✦ What are the spiritual implications of this statement?
- ✦ What are the practical implications?

Thought-Provoking Questions for Adults and Teens

Compare and contrast the following three quotations:

We all have the same God; we just serve him differently. Rivers, streams, lakes, ponds—all have different names, and they all contain water. So do religions have different names, but they all contain truths—truths explained in different ways and forms and times. It doesn't matter whether you're a Muslim, a Christian, or a Jew. When you believe in God, you should believe all people are part of one family. For if you love God, you can't love only some of his children.

Mohammed Ali, boxer

Quoted at the memorial service for Ali on June 9, 2016, by Ambassador Shabazz, daughter of Malcolm X

Jesus is bigger than any one religion. He didn't come to start a new religion, and he continually disrupted whatever conventions or systems or establishments that existed in his day. He will always transcend whatever cages and labels are created to contain and name him, especially the one called "Christianity."

Rob Bell, American author, speaker, and former pastor

Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see—such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him. He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together.

The Apostle Paul (Colossians 1:15-17)

What can we learn from the following passages of Scripture about God's sovereignty and man's responsibility:

Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.

The Apostle Paul (Ephesians 1:4-5)

You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name.

Jesus of Nazareth (John 15:16)

What joy for the nation whose God is the LORD, whose people he has chosen as his inheritance.

Psalms 33:12

For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature.

So they have no excuse for not knowing God.

The Apostle Paul (Romans 1:20)



Pig's Unpopular Play

Thought-Provoking Questions for Adults and Teens

*Rules are sometimes hard to obey,
But they help keep us from going astray.*

In the fable, Hen claims to be open-minded.

- ✦ What does she mean by this?
- ✦ What is good about being open-minded?
- ✦ What is not good about being too open-minded?

In the fable, Goat says that it is only fair that Cow should feel good about her dress.

- ✦ What do you think Goat means by fair?
- ✦ In the barnyard, who gets to determine what is fair?
- ✦ How can the concept of "fairness" be used to control others?

In the fable, Cow, Hen, and Goat are opposed to the script.

- ✦ How do you think Cow, Hen, and Goat feel about authority?
- ✦ What kinds of "scripts" (i.e., rules, laws, standards, and beliefs) impact your life?
- ✦ What can happen when people don't follow scripts?
- ✦ Identify some conflicts in our culture that are caused by competing scripts.

Tolerance is a big issue in the fable.

- ✦ How do Pig, Cow, and Hen feel about tolerance?
- ✦ How tolerant are Pig, Cow, and Hen?
- ✦ How is intolerance viewed in our culture?
- ✦ How can tolerance become an idol that undermines obedience to God?
- ✦ What is the difference between tolerating others and loving others?

How would life in the barnyard be different if the animals in the fable decided to live according to the following passage of Scripture:

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. (The Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 13:4-7))

Just as a railroad locomotive is made to run on tracks, we are made to live by God's rules. In Genesis 3 we read about the first time that mankind "jumped the tracks" and began trying to live apart from God's rules.

- ✦ Why did this happen?
- ✦ What was the result?

Thought-Provoking Questions for Adults and Teens

In the fable, Cow accuses Pig of disturbing the peace.

- ✦ What kind of peace is Cow talking about?
- ✦ Why is there so little peace in the barnyard?

Peace is an important theme in the Bible. Compare and contrast the four types of peace discussed in the following passages of Scripture:

Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

The Apostle Paul (Romans 12:18)

For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross.

The Apostle Paul (Colossians 1:19-20)

I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid.

Jesus of Nazareth (John 14:27)

Don't imagine that I came to bring peace to the earth! I came not to bring peace, but a sword. I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. Your enemies will be right in your own household!

Jesus of Nazareth (Matthew 10:34-36)

In the fable, Cow, Hen, and Goat want the freedom to do what they want.

- ✦ How do their demands for freedom impact Pig's freedom?
- ✦ What happens when everyone insists on his own way?

What is W. B. Yates saying in the following stanza from his poem "The Second Coming," and how is this a picture of what is taking place in the barnyard:

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world*

Jesus' command in Matthew 7:12 to "do to others whatever you would like them to do to you" is called the "Golden Rule."

- ✦ How well do the animals in the barnyard obey this rule?
- ✦ How well do you obey it?



Turtle's Favorite Turtle

Thought-Provoking Questions for Adults and Teens

*Those who puff themselves up in their own eyes,
Are likely to have an unpleasant surprise.*

In the fable, Turtle is very interested in improving himself.

- ✦ Why do you think self-improvement is so important to Turtle?
- ✦ Would you rather have Grasshopper or Turtle for a friend? Why?
- ✦ What advice would you give to Turtle?

Turtle asserts that he is “on a roll and in control.”

- ✦ What really controls Turtle's life?
- ✦ How much control do you have over your life?

What does Jesus say in the following Scripture passage about our tendency to worry and seek to control?

Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you.

Why do you have so little faith?

Jesus of Nazareth (Matthew 6:27-30)

How does Turtle's boasting differ from the boasting described in the following three passages of Scripture:

This is what the LORD says: “Don't let the wise boast in their wisdom, or the powerful boast in their power, or the rich boast in their riches. But those who wish to boast should boast in this alone: that they truly know me and understand that I am the LORD who demonstrates unfailing love and who brings justice and righteousness to the earth, and that I delight in these things. I, the LORD, have spoken!

Jeremiah 9:23-24

Therefore, as the Scriptures say, “If you want to boast, boast only about the LORD.”

The Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 1:31)

*I will praise the LORD at all times. I will constantly speak his praises.
I will boast only in the LORD; let all who are helpless take heart.
Come, let us tell of the LORD's greatness; let us exalt his name together.*

David, King of Israel (Psalm 34:1-3)

Thought-Provoking Questions for Adults and Teens

In *Divine Living: The Essential Guide to Your True Destiny*, psychic Anthon St. Maarten writes the following:

You are one thing only. You are a Divine Being. And all-powerful Creator. You are a Deity in jeans and a T-shirt, and within you dwells the infinite wisdom of the ages and the sacred creative force of All that is, will be and ever was.

- ✦ In your own words, what is St. Maarten saying?
- ✦ What do you think Turtle would say about St. Maarten's statement?
- ✦ What do you say?

In his *Atlantic Magazine* article titled "The Meaning of Buddhism," Bhikkhu U Thittila writes the following:

The Buddha again and again reminded his followers that there is no one, either in heaven or on earth, who can help them or free them from the results of their past evil deeds. The Buddhist knows that the powers of his own mind and spirit are enough to guide him in the present and shape his future and bring him eventually to the truth. He knows that he possesses a strength which is ultimately unsurpassable.

- ✦ Compare and contrast the views of Buddhists as described by Thittila with the view of St. Maarten cited above.

Compare and contrast the two views above with the following three statements by the apostle Paul:

But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.
Romans 5:8

God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God.
Ephesians 2:8-9

My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
Galatians 2:20

¹ <https://www.theatlantic.com/author/bhikkhu-u-thittila/>



Owl's Problem

Thought-Provoking Questions for Adults and Teens

*Try to hold onto happiness, and it will surely slip away;
But delight yourself in the Lord, and true joy will come to stay.*

In the fable, both Mole and Owl are unhappy.

- ✦ What is Mole's problem?
- ✦ What is Owl's problem?
- ✦ What advice would you give to Mole?
- ✦ What advice would you give to Owl?

The Dalai Lama is quoted as saying, "The purpose of our lives is to be happy."

- ✦ What kind of happiness do you think he is talking about?
- ✦ What are some typical ways in which people strive for happiness?
- ✦ How well do these approaches work?
- ✦ Why is it impossible to find happiness by making happiness a goal?

John 15:10-11 records the following words of Jesus:

When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!

- ✦ What kind of joy is Jesus talking about?
- ✦ How is this joy different from happiness?
- ✦ Why does this joy never need to fade away?
- ✦ Why does worldly happiness always fade away?

German philosopher Frederick Nietzsche said, "I cannot believe in a God who wants to be praised all the time."

- ✦ Why do you think Nietzsche felt this way?
- ✦ What other reasons have you heard people give for not believing in the God that Nietzsche said he doesn't believe in?

Thought-Provoking Questions for Adults and Teens

The two passages of Scripture below instruct Christians about how to deal with trials:

Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

The Apostle James (James 1:2-4)

We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

The Apostle Paul (Romans 5:3-5)

- ✦ From the passages above, why are Christians able to rejoice in sufferings?
- ✦ What is the difference between praising God *in spite* of your sufferings and praising God for what He is doing *through* your sufferings?

Compare and contrast the following two points of view:

There are some laughs in life, provided by comedians and provided by fortuitous moments with your family or friends or something. But most of life is tragic. You're born, you don't know why. You're here, you don't know why. You go, you die. Your family dies. Your friends die. People suffer. People live in constant terror. The world is full of poverty and corruption and war and Nazis and tsunamis.

The net result is, you lose—you don't beat the house.

Woody Allen, American filmmaker

From an interview with Douglas J. Rowe, published by the Associated Press on March 25, 2005

Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence. So please don't lose heart because of my trials here. I am suffering for you, so you should feel honored.

When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him.

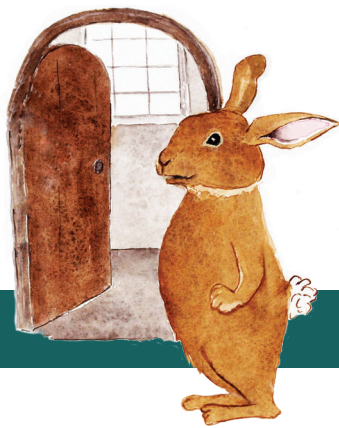
Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong.

And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully.

Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.

The Apostle Paul (Ephesians 3:12-21)



Rabbit's Foxy Guest

Thought-Provoking Questions for Adults and Teens

*Those who are wise
Love truth and hate lies.*

Hospitality is a godly trait, but Rabbit's hospitality to Fox does not work out well.

- ✦ What mistakes did Rabbit make?
- ✦ What do you think about Rabbit's statement, "If I'm nice to Fox, he'll be nice to me"?
- ✦ How important is it to be nice?

In the fable, Rabbit feels sorry for Fox.

- ✦ What do you think about Rabbit's sympathy for Fox?
- ✦ How does Fox use guilt and pity as manipulative tools to achieve his ends?

The Buddhist monk Walpola Rahula writes the following in *What the Buddha Taught*:

Truth needs no label: it is neither Buddhist, Christian, Hindu nor Muslim. It is not the monopoly of anybody. Sectarian labels are a hindrance to the independent understanding of Truth, and they produce harmful prejudices in men's minds.

- ✦ What do you think about Rahula's statement that nobody has a monopoly on Truth?
- ✦ What you think about the rather popular view that all religions are equally valid?

Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

- ✦ Compare and contrast these words of Jesus with the words of Walpola Rahula above.
- ✦ How can we know what to believe?

Romans 12:2 says, "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect."

- ✦ When making decisions, what can happen when we rely on our feelings and experiences instead of on God's Word?
- ✦ How well do you trust God's Word more than feelings?

Proverbs 3:5 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding."

- ✦ Explain this passage of Scripture in your own words.
- ✦ What do you think about the popular maxim, "Let your heart guide you"?

Thought-Provoking Questions for Adults and Teens

Which of the following popular views are familiar to you?

- ↪ "What's true for you is true for you, and what's true for me is true for me."
- ↪ "Truth is found inside each of us."
- ↪ "There is no such thing as absolute truth."

What is your opinion about the following three statements:

Even the truth, when believed, is a lie. You must experience the truth, not believe it.

Werner Erhard, American author and speaker

There is no basis for deciding what counts as knowledge and truth other than what one's peers will let one get away with in the open exchange of claims, counterclaims and reasons.

Richard Rorty, American philosopher

There is no God and there is no soul. Hence, there are no needs for the props of traditional religion. With dogma and creed excluded, then immutable truth is also dead and buried.

John Dewey, American educator & co-author of The Humanist Manifesto

Explain why the views of the authors and philosophers quoted above are incompatible with the three statements of Jesus below:

You are from below; I am from above. You belong to this world; I do not. That is why I said that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I AM who I claim to be, you will die in your sins.

John 8:23-24

I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die.

John 11:25-26a

You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.

John 20:29

What do the following words of the apostle Paul tell us about the importance of knowing the truth:

And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost! And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.

1 Corinthians 15:17-19



Miss Hen's Boyfriends

Thought-Provoking Questions for Adults and Teens

*Our minds invent reasons as places to hide
From ideas that threaten our comfort and pride.*

In the fable, Miss Hen turns down the marriage proposals of all three roosters.

- ✦ What does Miss Hen's final reason tell us about her prospects for marriage?
- ✦ What do you think Miss Hen wants more than marriage?
- ✦ Why is it sometimes easier to invent excuses than to tell the truth?
- ✦ How do you feel when people give you excuses instead of honest reasons?

We all like to be comfortable.

- ✦ How can an attachment to comfort sometimes cause us to miss God's best?
- ✦ Think of a time when you stepped out in faith to tackle a challenge. How did it work out?
- ✦ Think of a time when you failed to step out in faith. Was it because of pride, fear, discomfort, or something else? What was the result?

In its position statement on "The Teaching of Evolution," the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) says that since religious beliefs are not scientific, they should not be used in the classroom to explain creation and other natural phenomena.

- ✦ How does NSTA's definition of "scientific" rule out consideration of God as Creator?
- ✦ Discuss how the restrictions that NSTA establishes on the discussion of origins, which rule out considering God as Creator, function like the restrictions that Miss Hen sets on the kind of rooster she will marry, which rule out marriage.

In Romans 1:20, we read the following words of the Apostle Paul:

*For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature.
So they have no excuse for not knowing God.*

- ✦ In your own words, what is Paul saying?
- ✦ What do you think about Paul's statement that people have no excuse for not believing in God?
- ✦ What do you think would happen if Paul spoke at a NSTA convention?

Thought-Provoking Questions for Adults and Teens

Matthew 27:42 describes how people mocked Jesus while he was dying on the cross by saying, *"He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him."*

- ✦ Do you think these mockers would have believed in Jesus if he had come down from the cross?
- ✦ Do you think they gave honest reasons for their inability to believe, or did they simply make excuses?
- ✦ What are some reasons that people give today for not believing in Jesus?
- ✦ How can one discern the difference between reasons that are sincerely given in the quest to understand the Christian faith and reasons that are merely justifications for continuing in non-belief?

In John 1:9-12, the Apostle John says the following about the world's rejection of Jesus:

The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.

- ✦ Why do you think Jesus suffered such rejection?
- ✦ Compare the above passage with Jesus' parable of the tenants (Matthew 21:33-44).

The apostle Paul offered the following prayer for the believers at Colossae:

So we have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding. Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better. We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy, always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the light. For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.

Colossians 1:9-14

- ✦ How encouraging is it to know that in a very real sense this prayer is offered for every believer, including you?
- ✦ How accurately does this prayer express your desires?



Moth's New Friend

Thought-Provoking Questions for Adults and Teens

*God calls to us from the heavens above,
He speaks through every act of love.*

As Moth and Spider gaze up in night sky, they can see at most a few thousand stars. But according to scientists, the universe contains approximately 200, 000,000,000,000,000,000 stars!¹

- ✦ How do you think all those stars got there?
- ✦ How does the enormous size of the universe affect your view of God?
- ✦ How does the enormous size of the universe affect your view of yourself?

Jesus told his disciples that his Father, the Creator of this vast universe, knows the number of hairs on our head (Matthew 10:28-30)?

- ✦ How does this impact your view of God?
- ✦ How does this impact your view of yourself?

Consider the following passage of Scripture about Jesus' role in creation:

He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together (Colossians 1:15-17).

- ✦ What is your reaction to the astounding truth that Jesus, who walked the Earth as a man, was the creator of the universe?
- ✦ How much does the above Scripture affect your view of Jesus' teachings?
- ✦ How much room does the above Scripture leave for the view that Jesus is one prophet among many?

At the beginning of the fable, Moth wants nothing to do with Spider, but by the end of the fable he has changed his attitude.

- ✦ What do you think caused this change?
- ✦ What happened as a result of this change?

¹Scientists estimate that there are approximately two trillion galaxies in the universe. Extrapolating from the size of our galaxy, which has about 100 billion stars, they estimate that the universe contains approximately two hundred billion trillion stars.

Thought-Provoking Questions for Adults and Teens

Like Moth, we humans have an independent streak. We naturally want to go our own way and do our own thing. Since Adam and Eve, we have wanted to be God and serve ourselves rather than worship God and serve others.

- ✦ As you think about the world and our culture, what examples have you observed of this tendency?
- ✦ Can you cite some specific times when you experienced this tendency in yourself?
- ✦ What do you think causes this tendency?

When speaking to his disciples on the night before he was crucified, Jesus, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5)

- ✦ Explain in your own words what Jesus was saying.
- ✦ Why might people with an independent streak find this statement irritating?
- ✦ How would dedicated Christians feel about being connected to Jesus in this way?

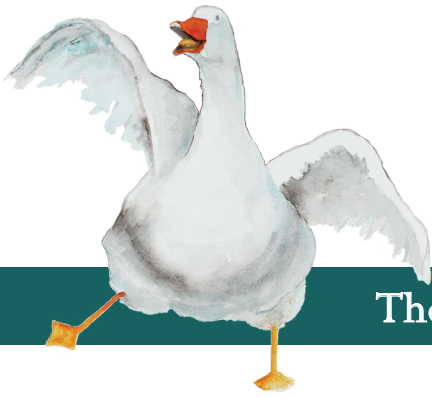
Although it is good to be alone at times, no one wants to be totally alone all the time. In your own words, what are the following two quotes saying, and what comfort can we derive from them? The first quote was spoken by Jesus, and the second quote is from a letter written by the apostle Paul to the church at Rome:

- ✦ *And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20).*
- ✦ *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I [Paul] am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35-39)*

The following verse is from *Aurora Leigh*, Book VII, by Elizabeth Barrett Browning:

*Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every bush afire with God;
But only he who sees takes off his shoes;
The rest sit around and pluck blackberries.*

- ✦ In your own words, what is the writer saying?
- ✦ How do her thoughts relate to the fable?
- ✦ How do her thoughts relate to Psalm 8:3-4?



Gander's Day

Thought-Provoking Questions for Adults and Teens

*All that amuses will soon be past;
The wise invest in things that last.*

Gander says, "Life goes better when you plan." How well does your approach to planning follow the instructions below:

Look here, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit." How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog—it's here a little while, then it's gone. What you ought to say is, "If the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that." (The Apostle James (James 4:13-15))

In Luke 14:16-18a, Jesus begins a parable with the following words:

A man prepared a great feast and sent out many invitations. When the banquet was ready, he sent his servant to tell the guests, "Come, the banquet is ready." But they all began making excuses.

- ✦ How is Gander's behavior in the fable like the behavior of the invited guests in this parable?
- ✦ Why are we often tempted to make excuses to justify our failings?

In the Bible, Jesus extends many gracious invitations. Below are three examples:

A man prepared a great feast and sent out many invitations. When the banquet was ready, he sent his servant to tell the guests, "Come, the banquet is ready." But they all began making excuses.

- ✦ How are the invited guests in this parable similar to Gander in the fable?

In the Bible, Jesus extends many gracious invitations. Here are a few examples:

I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. (John 6:35)

Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends. (Revelation 3:20)

I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. (John 11:25-26a)

- ✦ Why do you think so few people respond favorably to Jesus' invitations to receive these promised rewards?
- ✦ What can happen if we fail to respond to Jesus' invitations?

Life is full of "carnivals" that can distract us.

- ✦ How successfully do you guard against distractions and temptations?
- ✦ Are there activities in your life that you might want to cut out because, although they may be "good," they are not the "best"?

Thought-Provoking Questions for Adults and Teens

Below are three of the many passages of Scripture that reassure us of God's faithfulness:

*The faithful love of the LORD never ends! His mercies never cease.
Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning.*

Lamentations 3:22-23

*For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you." So we can say with confidence,
"The LORD is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?"*

Hebrews 13:5-6

What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself. Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us.

Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Apostle Paul (Romans 8:31-39)

- ✦ How does it feel to know that when you repent of your sins and come to God through Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, he will totally forgive you, adopt you as his own child, and give you his Holy Spirit, eternal life, and an inheritance that never perishes?
- ✦ What is your next step to know God better?