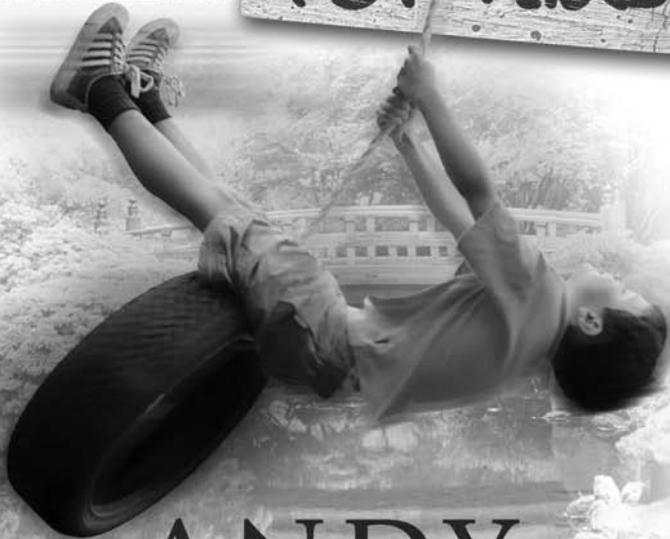




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HEAVEN

for kids



RANDY ALCORN

WITH LINDA WASHINGTON

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Heaven for Kids

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Note to the Reader

How many times have you thought about Heaven in the last week? Have you brought up the subject or asked anyone a question about Heaven? Unless a person or a pet close to you has died (or is dying), the topic of Heaven may not have crossed your mind. Still, since you have this book in your hand, you're already *beginning* to think about Heaven. Good for you!

This book has questions many people have asked about life after death. As you read it, you might find some of the questions *you've* asked. You'll probably also find some questions you've never *thought* about asking. But I think you'll find most of them very interesting. I've tried to base my answers to these questions on what God tells us about Heaven in the Bible. (There are a lot of wrong ideas about Heaven, but we can always depend on what the Bible has to say.) At the beginning of each chapter, you'll find two quotes—one from the Bible and one from *The Chronicles of Narnia*—that will start you thinking about the ideas in the chapter.

But now it's time to turn the page and take a look at the first question and answer. You may want to read just one at a time, or you may read several in one sitting. You'll probably want to look up some of the Bible verses too. You and your family could do that together. It's always fun to talk with your friends about the things you're reading, so you could bring up what you're learning with them.

Enjoy exploring life in Heaven. After all, it's a place where *you* can live forever someday—a place without fear, anger, sadness, or sickness. And it's not just a place without bad stuff. It's a place full of *great* stuff: beauty, joy, fun, lots

of activity, and rest when you need it. We'll have endless adventures together with Jesus and each other. It's a place where you can live with the wonderful and fascinating God who created you. And it's a place where you can hang out with all sorts of kind and interesting people who will be your friends forever.

Cool!

Anyway, I really hope you enjoy this book!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randy Alcorn". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal tail stroke.



WHY SHOULD WE LOOK FORWARD TO HEAVEN?

*We are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives.
And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior.*

PHILIPPIANS 3:20

[Jewel the Unicorn] cried: "I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now. The reason why we loved the old Narnia is that it sometimes looked a little like this. . . . Come further up, come further in!"

C. S. LEWIS, *The Last Battle*

Do I really need to think about Heaven?

Suppose your dad or mom told you that you were moving to a new place. What's the first thing you'd do? Ask questions, right? You'd want to know the *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *why* about the place where you were going to live.

Now pretend you're part of a NASA team preparing for a five-year mission to Mars. After a period of heavy-duty training, the launch date finally arrives. As the rocket lifts off, one of the other astronauts says to you, "What do you know about Mars?"

Imagine shrugging your shoulders and saying, "Nothing. We never talked about it. I guess we'll find out when we get there." Think that would happen? Not likely, right? Part of your training would have prepared you for where you would be living for the next five years. You would have talked about Mars 24/7, wouldn't you? *After all, that's where you were headed!*

Maybe at some point you've said, "I believe Jesus died for the wrong things I've done" (more about that in chapter ten). Perhaps you've already asked for his forgiveness and placed your trust in him. If so, the Bible promises that Heaven

will be your future home. Jesus said so himself. “There is more than enough room in my Father’s home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am” (John 14:2-3).

When my family goes on a trip, we like to know in advance what it’s like where we’re going. If we’re planning a vacation, we look at the brochures and maps and Web sites. We learn about the attractions—all the things that make it a place we want to visit.

Finding out in advance about the Grand Canyon or Disney World or summer camp helps us get excited and look forward to going there. The Bible says, “We are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world filled with God’s righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13). But we won’t really look forward to that place unless we know something about its attractions before we get there, right?

So if Heaven—or as that verse calls it, “the new heavens and new earth”—will be your home someday, wouldn’t it be great to learn all you can

about it now? That way you can spend your whole life looking forward to the place that will be your home forever!

That's what this book is all about.

Isn't it enough just to think about being with Jesus?

Each of us is made for a person. And we're also made for a place. Jesus is the person. Heaven is the place.

Jesus lives in Heaven and is getting a place ready for us there. So if we look forward to being with Jesus, that's the same as looking forward to Heaven. Why? Because that's where we'll be with him. So whenever we think about being with Jesus, we're thinking about Heaven. And whenever we think about Heaven, we should be thinking about Jesus.

What do I look forward to?

But let's be honest. Are you *really* looking forward to going to Heaven? Maybe in seventy or eighty years, right? After you've done all the things you want to do.

Think about some things you do look forward to:

- Christmas or another favorite holiday
- Your birthday, your sister's birthday (well, maybe not), or even your dog's birthday
- Going to your favorite place (like a water park, the beach, the woods, the river, or maybe SeaWorld or Six Flags)
- The last day of school and the start of summer vacation
- Seeing a movie you've been told is really, really good
- Getting the next book in your favorite series

Why do you look forward to those things?

“Duh,” you might say. The answer is obvious. Because of what you already know about these things, you use your God-given imagination. You can almost taste, feel, smell, hear, and see all of the wonderful things you expect.

For example, if your birthday's coming up, you might taste, feel, smell, hear, and see chocolate cake with thick frosting, the laughter of friends,

and presents. Maybe you're looking forward to seeing cousins, aunts, and uncles you haven't seen in a while. Or perhaps you're counting on getting lots of cool presents.

But guess what? Looking forward to Heaven is no different. In fact, looking forward to Heaven is even better than looking forward to Christmas or your birthday! Yet many people find that hard to believe because they don't know how to picture Heaven. They don't know how to look forward to it.

Does that describe you?

What do people believe about Heaven?

Speaking of describing, what are some words you would use to describe Heaven? Would *fun* and *exciting* be words you'd use?

It might surprise you to discover that many people find no joy at all when they think about Heaven. Wondering why? They don't look forward to going there because of what they believe Heaven is like.

Gary Larson showed a common view of Heaven in one of his *Far Side* cartoons. In it a man with angel wings and a halo sits on a cloud, doing nothing, with no one nearby. He has the expression

of someone stuck on a desert island, bored because he has absolutely nothing to do. A caption shows what he's thinking: "Wish I'd brought a magazine."

Is that your view of what Heaven will be like? Or is it what someone you know thinks? Many people fear that Heaven will be . . . well, boring.

When you were younger, maybe you saw the movie *All Dogs Go to Heaven*. Think w-a-a-a-y back. Charles B. Barkin (Charlie), a German shepherd, goes to Heaven because, of course, everyone thinks "all dogs go to Heaven"! But Charlie doesn't want to be in Heaven. Why? Because there are no surprises—no exciting ones anyway. Everything is predictable. Even the temperature is a steady seventy-three degrees Fahrenheit, which sounds boring to Charlie. He prefers the excitement of life on Earth to an eternity of floating on a cloud, wearing wings and a halo. So he ditches Heaven to return to Earth.

In the sequel (*All Dogs Go to Heaven 2*), Charlie explains his frustrations with Heaven when he sings, "It's too heavenly here. It's too peaceful and paradise-like." In other words, Heaven is too dull for him.

Predictable? Boring? Endless years of the same old, same old? No one would look forward to that!

Well, I've got some good news for you. Charlie got it all wrong. Heaven is not like that at all. *No way!*

Have you ever read any of the books about Peter Pan and wished you could live in a beautiful, magical place like Neverland—but without Captain Hook and all the mean pirates? Well, Heaven is a better place than Neverland any day. How do I know? From what the Bible says about it.

That's why this book provides another view of Heaven: as a place worth thinking and talking and dreaming about. In fact, once you understand what the Bible really says about Heaven, *you can't help but look forward to living there!*



WHAT CAN WE KNOW ABOUT HEAVEN?

He showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God and sparkled like a precious stone. . . . The city wall was broad and high. . . . The twelve gates were made of pearls. . . . And the main street was pure gold, as clear as glass. . . . The glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its light. The nations will walk in its light.

REVELATION 21:10-12, 21, 23-24

"I bet there isn't a country like this anywhere in our world. Look at the colours! You couldn't get a blue like the blue on those mountains in our world."

"Is it not Aslan's country?" said Tirian. . . .

"Those hills," said Lucy, "the nice woody ones and the blue ones behind—aren't they very like the southern border of Narnia?"

"Like!" cried Edmund after a moment's silence. "Why, they're exactly like. . . ."

"And yet they're not like," said Lucy. . . . "They're more . . . more . . ."

"More like the real thing," said the Lord Digory softly.

C. S. LEWIS, *The Last Battle*



Is Heaven a real place?

Before I answer that question, let me tell you a story. Starting in AD 1271, an explorer named Marco Polo traveled from his hometown of Venice, Italy, to China and didn't go home for twenty-four years. Talk about a l-o-o-n-g trip! When he returned to Venice, he described a world that the people of Italy had never seen. Although China was a real place, it was very different from Italy. So Marco Polo had to use word pictures and ideas that people in Venice knew in order to describe what he saw.

In *The Travels of Marco Polo*, he described the city now called Beijing by saying, "It is walled

around with walls of earth. . . . There are 12 gates, and over each gate there is a great and handsome palace. . . . All the plots of ground on which the houses of the city are built are four-square, and laid out with straight lines. . . . Each square plot is surrounded by handsome streets for the traffic. Thus the whole city is arranged in squares just like a chessboard.”

Think about what you would do if you were trying to describe a place you’ve seen but no one else has. You would probably compare that place to other familiar places, saying, “It was like . . .” or, “It reminded me of . . .” That’s what John, one of Jesus’ twelve disciples, and other writers of the Bible did to help their readers understand what Heaven is like. They describe Heaven as a garden, a city, a country, a kingdom, and “paradise.”

But many people still aren’t sure that Heaven is a real place. They even believe people in Heaven are ghosts floating on clouds. The Bible tells us that Heaven *is* a real place—just as real as planet Earth. In fact, God calls the place we’ll live forever the “New Earth.”

We’re human beings. We’re not made to live as ghosts in a ghostly place—especially on clouds!

(No one can live on a cloud anyway. If you've flown in an airplane, you've seen clouds up close. They're made of water!)

If we know Jesus, we will enter Heaven when we die. And some time after Jesus comes back to Earth, God promises he will bring us to live on the New Earth—a world with ground, trees, and water: “Look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth, and no one will even think about the old ones anymore” (Isaiah 65:17).

This place will be beautiful beyond our wildest imagination. (But that doesn't mean we shouldn't use our imaginations when we think about it now!)



Where do we get our ideas about Heaven?

What would you call someone who lies to you, steals from you, and is mean to you all the time? You'd call that person an enemy. (No, this isn't a description of your cousin or the kid who keeps annoying you at school.)

As you may know, Christians have an enemy.

He goes by different names: Lucifer, Satan, and the devil.

In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the White Witch is like the devil.

“She is a perfectly terrible person,” said Lucy. “She calls herself the Queen of Narnia though she has no right to be queen at all. . . . And she can turn people into stone and do all kinds of horrible things. And she has made a magic so that it is always winter in Narnia—always winter, but it never gets to Christmas.”

Maybe you like winter. I do. But not one that lasts a hundred years! That’s how long it has been winter in Narnia because of the Witch’s spell. Most creatures have never seen another season. I’d hate to have winter without Christmas, wouldn’t you? That’s the best part about winter. But Satan doesn’t want us to believe in Jesus or think about him. Just like the White Witch doesn’t want anyone to believe in Aslan or think about him.

(By the way, in some stories, like *The Wizard of Oz*, white witches are good. But in Narnia the *white* in “White Witch” represents the coldness

and death of sin. In fact, there is no such thing as a good witch in Narnia . . . or in the Bible. Deuteronomy 18:10-14 is a warning against witchcraft, fortune-telling, sorcery, omens, mediums, psychics, and anyone attempting to talk to the dead. God wants you to stay away from those things, including Ouija boards and tarot cards, because he hates them. If friends try to talk you into these things, you need to tell them *no* and talk to your parents, and maybe even find other friends.)

The White Witch is always lying. If you've read the book or seen the movie, you'll remember how she lies to Edmund and makes him think she is going to be nice to him. And she tries to get him to betray his brother and sisters. The Witch lies about Aslan. In the same way, Satan lies to us about Jesus. And he lies about God's home—Heaven.

Jesus said of the devil, "When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44, NIV). Some of Satan's favorite lies are about Heaven. He doesn't want you to know what an awesome place it really is! He doesn't want you to love Jesus or go to Heaven or look forward to it.

The devil was thrown out of Heaven for trying to make himself equal with God (Isaiah 14:12-15). He became bitter, not only toward God, but also toward people and Heaven itself. He had tried to take over Heaven but was kicked out. Maybe this sounds like a made-up story, but it's true. The Bible says it really happened.

We're told this about the White Witch: "It was part of her magic that she could make things look like what they aren't." Satan is always doing that. He's always doing it about Heaven, and unfortunately it has worked. He has made Heaven look boring. Satan doesn't need to convince us that Heaven isn't real. He only needs to make us believe that Heaven is a place we wouldn't enjoy. It's like planning a trip to Disney World or some other fun place and being told by a kid who has been permanently banned from there (because he tried to set it on fire or something), "Oh, you'll hate it at Disney World. It's boring."

If we believe what Satan says about Heaven, we won't want to live there or even think about it. But since we know that Satan is really good at telling lies, we should remind ourselves how important it is to look at what the Bible says. Then we can

ignore the thoughts Satan puts in our heads about Heaven not being an awesome place to live.



So how can we know what Heaven is like if we've never seen it?

What's your favorite fantasy book? *The Hobbit*? *The Lord of the Rings*? *A Wrinkle in Time*? What's your favorite fantasy series? The Chronicles of Narnia? The Pendragon series? In many fantasy books, you can "see" the world described, because of the author's vivid imagination. Yet places like Middle-earth and Narnia don't really exist. (Don't you wish they did?)

Heaven isn't a fantasy world based on someone's imagination. It's a real place created by God. Yet many people believe it's impossible to know anything about this place.

When I mentioned to a friend I was writing a book on Heaven, he told me, "God's Word says that 'No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.'" (He was quoting a Bible verse, 1 Corinthians 2:9.)

"So what will you be talking about?" he asked.

“We can’t really know what God has prepared for us in Heaven.”

Maybe you’ve thought about the same thing. How *can* we know anything about Heaven—a place we can’t see? It’s this simple: God tells us about Heaven in the Bible. My friend stopped quoting too soon, because verse 10 of 1 Corinthians 2 says this about what we haven’t seen or heard: “But it was to us that God revealed these things by his Spirit.” So God has revealed unseen things to us in his Word, including things about Heaven.

God doesn’t want us to shrug our shoulders as if there is no point in trying to learn about Heaven. Instead, he wants us to pay attention to what the Bible says about this amazing place so we’ll look forward to what he has for us.

Of course, there are many things about Heaven we won’t know until we get there. That’s cool, don’t you think? On Earth there are good surprises and bad surprises, but in Heaven God will give us only good surprises. And he has a lot of them waiting for us. I’m looking forward to them. How about you?



If we're good, does that mean we'll go to Heaven someday?

Many people believe that everyone who is good will wind up in Heaven. But the Bible says no one can be good enough to get there. We've all messed up (this is called *sin*). Like Edmund, who is addicted to the Witch's Turkish Delight in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, we get addicted to sin. It becomes a habit for us to do wrong things to get what we want, even though these things don't satisfy us. (Just like the Turkish Delight doesn't satisfy Edmund, but he keeps wanting it anyway.)

Because God is so good and does only what's right, he cannot stand sin. The Bible says that "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Based on that verse, here's how the Narnia book puts it when Edmund sins:

"You have a traitor there, Aslan," said the Witch. Of course everyone present knew that she meant Edmund. . . . "Have you forgotten the Deep Magic?" asked the Witch.

"Let us say I have forgotten it," answered Aslan gravely. "Tell us of this Deep Magic."

“Tell you?” said the Witch, her voice growing suddenly shriller. “Tell you what is written on that very Table of Stone which stands beside us? . . . You at least know the Magic which the Emperor put into Narnia at the very beginning. You know that every traitor belongs to me as my lawful prey and that for every treachery I have a right to a kill.”

Every sinner deserves to die, and we are all sinners. When you read about Edmund or watch the movie, remind yourself that he isn't the only one who deserves to die for his sins. We all do.

One of the good creatures of Narnia challenges the Witch and her followers to a fight, to keep them from killing Edmund for his sin. Here is the Witch's response, followed by Aslan's:

“Fool,” said the Witch with a savage smile that was almost a snarl, “do you really think your master can rob me of my rights by mere force? He knows the Deep Magic better than that. He knows that unless I have blood as the Law says, all Narnia will be overturned and perish in fire and water.”

“It is very true,” said Aslan, “I do not deny it.”

The Bible tells us something very much like this in Hebrews 9:22: “According to the law of Moses . . . without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness.”

The magic written on the Stone Table is the same as the law of God written on the stone tablets given to Moses. Unless someone who is pure and righteous sheds blood, no forgiveness for sins may be granted and no one may go to Heaven. This is not the devil’s idea, just as it is not the White Witch’s. It is God’s holy character that requires it.

After hearing that Edmund has to die for his sins, his sister Lucy asks Aslan, “Can anything be done to save Edmund?”

Aslan’s response is powerful: “All shall be done. . . . But it may be harder than you think.” Then Aslan becomes very sad. Why? He knows the terrible suffering and death that await him. It is the only way to save Edmund.

Jesus experienced this very thing in the garden of Gethsemane. He told his disciples, “My soul is

crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me” (Matthew 26:38).

Those serving the White Witch roll Aslan over on his back and tie his paws together, cheering as though they’re being brave. Lewis adds, “Had the Lion chosen, one of those paws could have been the death of them all.” Jesus said when he was arrested that he could have called on God, his Father in Heaven, to send over 72,000 angels for his protection (Matthew 26:53).

If you had the power to do that, wouldn’t you have called on those angels in a heartbeat? I would have. But Jesus didn’t. That’s how much he loves us—because, remember, he went to the cross to save us.

Aslan makes no noise, just as Jesus didn’t (Matthew 26:63). Even though Aslan’s enemies tighten the cords so they cut into his flesh, he doesn’t fight them.

The soldiers who held Jesus mocked him and hit him (Luke 22:63). In the same way, the Witch orders that Aslan, their rightful king, be shaved. They cut off his beautiful mane, then mock him, saying, “How many mice have you caught today, Cat?”

Aslan is willing to give his life for Edmund in the story. Jesus went to the cross to die for us, not just in a story, but in actual history. And he loves each of us enough that he would have died for us even if you or I were the only one who needed him.

Do you feel like thanking him for loving you that much? Go ahead. You can do it right now. . . .

Fortunately, the story didn't end with Christ's death. He came back to life in his same body. (This is what is called the "Resurrection.") His resurrection is very important to our Christian faith. And it's the key that unlocks our understanding of Heaven and what it will be like.

Will we have real bodies in Heaven?

To understand what the Heaven we'll live in is like, it's necessary to understand what *we* will be like.

Fish don't live on land; they live in water. People don't live in doghouses or in gerbil cages. Your bedroom wasn't made for an elephant to sleep in—especially not on the top bunk.

Since Christ promised he is preparing a



place *for us*, we should expect Heaven to be perfectly suited to the kind of people we'll be.

Good news. The Bible tells us what we will be like when we live in Heaven forever. After Jesus returns, God will put back together the bodies of his people who died, even thousands of years earlier, and make them into strong and healthy bodies. Our bodies will be like Christ's body after he rose from the dead. The Bible says Jesus will change our bodies "into glorious bodies like his own" (Philippians 3:21).

So by knowing what *Christ's* resurrection body was like, we know what *ours* will be like. The risen Christ said to his followers, "Look at my hands. Look at my feet. You can see that it's really me. Touch me and make sure that I am not a ghost, because ghosts don't have bodies, as you see that I do" (Luke 24:39). Jesus had a physical body people could touch and see. He ate with his disciples and walked on Earth. We'll do those things on the New Earth.

In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, after Aslan is killed, he comes back to life and tells the children just what the risen Jesus told his disciples.

“Aren’t you dead then, dear Aslan?” said Lucy.

“Not now,” said Aslan.

“You’re not—not a—?” asked Susan in a shaky voice. She couldn’t bring herself to say the word *ghost*. Aslan stooped his golden head and licked her forehead. The warmth of his breath and a rich sort of smell that seemed to hang about his hair came all over her.

“Do I look it?” he said.

“Oh, you’re real, you’re real! Oh, Aslan!” cried Lucy, and both girls flung themselves upon him and covered him with kisses.

You can imagine how glad the children are that Aslan has come back to life. That should help you envision how glad the disciples were when Jesus came back to life! They could hardly believe it.

Aslan is a picture of Jesus, the true Son of the Great Emperor, God the Father. And Aslan dying for Edmund’s sins is a picture of Jesus dying for all

our sins. Aslan coming back to life is a picture of Jesus' resurrection.

Remember, the Bible says that just as Jesus came back to life after he died, we will come back to life after we die. Just like he had a real body his followers could touch, we will have real bodies.

Will we have a good time in our resurrected bodies? Of course! After he came back to life, Jesus ate and drank with his disciples. In the book *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Aslan leaps over the children's heads after his resurrection, then dives between them, then picks them up and tosses them in the air with his huge "velveted paws" and catches them. They roll and laugh.

Lewis writes:

It was such a romp as no one has ever had except in Narnia; and whether it was more like playing with a thunderstorm or playing with a kitten Lucy could never make up her mind.

Then Aslan warns the girls to put their fingers in their ears, and he roars ferociously, and all the trees bend before the blast.

That is a great picture of the power of Christ's

resurrection—and of how real and powerful Christ’s resurrection body is. Our resurrection bodies will be every bit as real!

After rejoicing at Aslan’s resurrection, the children are still trying to figure out what it all means.

“It means,” said Aslan, “that though the Witch knew the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still which she did not know. Her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of Time. But if she could have looked a little further back, into the stillness and the darkness before Time dawned, she would have read there a different incantation. She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor’s stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards.”

The words *magic* and *incantation* refer to God’s ancient laws. Christ not only died for our sins but conquered death for us by defeating it in his resurrection. So even when we die, death will not keep us from living forever with new, strong and healthy bodies!



Can we be sure we'll go to Heaven instead of Hell?

Think of Edmund in Narnia. He truly deserves to die. There is nothing Edmund can do to save his life. It is a gift from Aslan. No one goes to Heaven based on his or her good deeds. We get there only as a gift from Jesus.

In the Narnia story, do you see why Aslan's death on the Stone Table is necessary to save Edmund? In the real world, do you see why Christ's death on the cross was necessary to save *you*?

God gives us the opportunity to tell him, "I'm sorry for my sins." He allows us to choose whether or not to trust in Jesus. Repenting of our sins and trusting in Jesus and what he did for us is the only way to make Heaven our future home. Aslan's sacrifice for Edmund in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* helps us understand what the Bible says in Romans about us deserving to die for our sins and Christ dying in our place:

God has shown us a way to be made right with him . . . as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in

Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. (Romans 3:21-25)

Christ offers everyone the gift of forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life. "Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life" (Revelation 22:17, NIV).

Eternal life is living joyfully with God forever.

Do you know what *salvation* means? It's being rescued from eternal punishment for our sins. Because Jesus paid the price for our sins on the cross, we can be saved from Hell, and God can take us to Heaven.

Notice Jesus calls it a "free gift." That means we can't earn it: "God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it

is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Jesus came “so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death” (Hebrews 2:14-15, NIV).

What delivers us from the fear of death? Only a relationship with Jesus, who died in our place and has gone to prepare a place for us in Heaven.

Heaven is a very special place for people to go when they die. That is not true of the place called Hell. It’s a terrible place, and Jesus, more than anyone else in the Bible, warned about it. God doesn’t live in Hell and never will. Since God is the giver of all that’s good, nothing good will ever be there. No God, no good. It’s that simple.

People go to Hell because of their sins. The bad news is, because everyone is a sinner, Hell is the place where people automatically go when they die if they’ve never asked Jesus to forgive their sins.

The good news is that no one *has* to go to

Hell. Do you know what the *default setting* is in a computer program? It's what the computer will do unless something's done to change it. God loved us enough to make it possible to override the default setting of sin that would send us to Hell. Jesus died for us, taking the blame for our sins. He allowed himself to be given the death sentence on the cross so that we don't have to go to Hell. Instead, we can be with him in Heaven. That's how much he loves us!

But it's not enough to know these facts. We need to be sure we take God up on his offer of forgiveness. We need to accept—with thanks—his free gift of eternal life, so we can live forever with Jesus. Then we can know for sure that when we die, we will go to Heaven. (For more on this, look at chapter ten.)



What does it mean to store up treasure in Heaven?

Got a savings account, or maybe a bank in your room? You deposit money because you want to save for something important that you want to buy in the future. When you have a goal—something you'd like to do that's really important to you—your life is

affected by it. If you're saving for a bike or a digital camera, you probably won't spend money on other things until you accomplish your goal. You'll deposit your money in your bank or your savings account.

Did you know that you can make deposits in Heaven? Jesus said, "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal" (Matthew 6:19-20).

So, what's that all about? Well, many people work only to buy more and more things. But when we die, we won't be able to take any of our things with us to Heaven. Now, having possessions isn't *wrong*. But God wants people to be even more interested in the things that will last beyond this life.

What *will* last beyond this life? Our relationships with Jesus and other people who love him will be treasures that last forever. We also store up treasure in Heaven when we contribute to God's work on Earth.

God likes it when we do things for others, instead of spending all of our time and money on

ourselves. We can help older people, give money to assist the poor, buy Bibles for people in China, or give Christmas presents to children of prisoners. We can give money so missionaries are able to fly to different places and tell others about Jesus. We can also use our talents to share God's love with other people (like putting on a play to tell Jesus' story to our neighbors, our families, or a group of younger kids). If we do these things because we love Jesus, a treasure will be waiting for us in Heaven.

Remember how Jesus said that what we store up on Earth will be moth eaten and rusty, but what we store up in Heaven will be safe in God's hands? By giving and sharing and doing things for Jesus now, we can store up lasting treasures that will be waiting for us when we get to Heaven.

Since the things we spend money on here won't last, it's silly just to buy tons of things like computers and stereos and toys that we end up setting aside anyway. (They don't make us happy, and they just wind up getting sold in garage sales or on eBay.) It's not only right but it's smart to share and give money and food and other things to people who really need them.

In addition to giving money to our church and to missionaries, we can give to Christian groups that help feed people who are hungry or have gone through disasters like floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes. Jesus wants us to do these things, and he will reward us for all that we do.

I have a suggestion for a family field trip that you can discuss with your parents if you think it's a good idea: Visit a junkyard or a dump. The lines are shorter than in amusement parks, and admission is usually free! What's helpful is that you get to look at all the piles of "treasures" that were formerly Christmas and birthday presents. You will see stuff that people paid hundreds of dollars for, that children quarreled about, and that families went broke over. You might see arms and legs from battered dolls, rusted robots, and electronic gadgets lying useless and forgotten. You can be sure that much of the stuff you own will end up in a dump just like this.

Think ahead to a time when all that you ever owned will be in a junk heap. What will you have done that will last for eternity?

If you've learned to obey Jesus and store up your treasures in Heaven, the answer is exciting. Because if your treasures are in Heaven, then

instead of spending your life headed *away* from your treasures, you'll be spending your life headed *toward* your treasures.

The more treasures you have in Heaven, the more you'll look forward to going there!