

TOOLS FOR PARENTS



The Scarlet Stain

QUESTIONS FOR CUBS

NOTE TO PARENTS/TEACHERS:

The goal of this questions-and-answers section is to initiate interaction between you and your kids. Please do not just read the questions and answers to your kids. These answers are given for you at an adult level to think about and to process. Once that is accomplished, you can then translate them into appropriate answers for your kids.

LESSON

Repentance

KEY VERSE

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 Jn. 1:9)

EAR CHECK (STORY COMPREHENSION)

- Q: When Ned left his friends behind, to what location did he walk?
A: *To an old, abandoned mine*
- Q: Who startled Ned inside the mine?
A: *Timothy Owl*
- Q: What happened to the stain on Ned's arm overnight?
A: *It grew bigger, going up his arm*
- Q: What happened to Staci and Gooz when they tried to help Ned wash the stain off?
A: *They got the stain on their hands*
- Q: After Staci and Gooz repented and prayed, what happened to the stain on their hands?
A: *The stain went away*

HEART CHECK (SPIRITUAL APPLICATION)

Q: What caused Ned to stick his hand into the ore cart?

- A: At first glance, the answer seems to be Timothy Owl, but be careful. The culprit was actually Ned's selfish pride. Selfish pride is, perhaps, the most dangerous tendency we have as humans, and yet we are typically unaware that we struggle with it. Selfish pride tells us that we should be offended by a comment that was not meant to be offensive. It tells us that others are trying to undermine us and that we are completely justified in our anger or aggressive behaviour. And selfish pride is deceptive; it doesn't tell the truth (1 Jn. 1:8; Jas. 4:6). So we have to be on guard against it by recognizing who we truly are in Christ, cultivating a right perspective based on His priorities, and deliberately focusing on others rather than on ourselves. Take a look at Philippians 2:1-5. It's a great place to start.

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IMPORTANT NOTICE TO CUBS:

If you are ever with a friend who utters such words as, “No one tells me what to do,” get away from that person as fast as you possibly can! This kid is filled with foolish pride and is most likely headed for frustration, heartache, and disaster (Prov. 16:18). Unfortunately, these bad consequences will not only happen to him or her, but they might spill over onto everyone in his or her life—including you! Run fast and run far!

QUESTIONS FOR CUBS

Q: What happens if a Christian won't ask for forgiveness?

A: Many bad things happen in an unrepentant heart. First of all, our relationship with God is damaged (Isa. 59:12). Once we are out of step with God, we have begun to walk outside of His will, and we will be exposed to things that we would not have experienced otherwise—things like greater temptation, hindrances to our prayers, frustration, more fear, and well, chaos. As children of God, we will never lose our salvation (Jn. 10:27-28), but when we refuse to repent, we can be in danger of encountering things that God wants to protect us from.

“I” CHECK (PERSONAL APPLICATION)

1. Name a time when you did something you weren't supposed to do. Why did you do it? Did you get caught? What was the outcome—did you receive some sort of punishment? Have you ever prayed and asked God to forgive you for something you have done? How can someone know for sure when they ask for forgiveness that God forgives them? (Hint: Read the key verse.)
2. Timothy Owl was a terrible influence on Ned. What do you think Ned should have done when his conscience began to bother him about Timothy Owl?
3. Look up the word repent in a dictionary. What is the difference between *saying* that you're sorry for doing something and actually *repenting*?

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DIRECTOR'S NOTES

I was both excited and nervous in the process of creating this episode. You'd think that for all the experience we have with sin, we would understand it better. Sin is like a disease that numbs the very pain it causes. As a result, we ignore what should cause us to panic. We are often not bothered by sin unless it is what we consider "a big one." Even then we come up with ways to minimize it. We don't cheat on our taxes; we "fudge a little." We don't lie; we "misrepresent." And the numbness spreads. To complicate matters, we often seem to get away with our sin. If we get away with it for very long, we become accustomed to it, and it begins to feel normal. The numbness goes deeper. The next thing that happens is that we begin to lose our ability to even recognize sin. This is the beginning of the end. Because the effects of sin can be so stealthy, so annoyingly invisible, I chose to explore what it would be like if there were an instant, physical ramification of sin. That's the experience of Ned, the beaver, in this episode.

Ned is a complicated little fellow. He is arguably the smartest of the bunch, but he is also a poster child for pride. The amazing author Andrew Murray, in his book *Humility*, says, "Pride—the loss of humility—is the root of every sin and evil."¹ Wounded pride pushes Ned to go into the abandoned mine shaft, and it is not Timothy Owl that gets him to stick his arm into the ore cart; it's selfish pride.

I'd like to take a moment here to talk about Timothy Owl. He is an interesting character who allows us to get inside of the heads of our other characters. He allows us to hear the arguments that Ned might have with himself. Timothy Owl is a worldly, wise owl who never brings new information to the argument. He simply articulates the best case for doing what Ned wants to do anyway. When Ned pulls his arm out of the ore cart, he is physically stained, and his reaction is, understandably, horror. This is the appropriate response. We often have the same experience, but unfortunately, we can get over the initial alarm that accompanies our sin. It is possible to get to the place where we are not shocked by our sin or the sin of anyone else. This may even feel like freedom or power, but in reality we are merely numb, nearing the final stage of the disease of sin. Ned is at the beginning, though, and he panics both from fear of what's happening to him and from fear of getting caught. He tries to scrub the stain off, to hide it, to make accomplices out of The Club. He tries everything except repentance. He is so unfocused on the condition of his soul that he doesn't ever consider his sin. He would confess perhaps to "fudging a little" but nothing more. And he thinks that "fudging" is not really bad enough to repent anyway.

As the episode ends with the other kids repenting and getting healed, Ned chooses to remain stained. He really doesn't want a scarlet red arm, but he is not willing to humble himself before God. By default, he remains marked by sin, as we all are, as long as we resist the truth and the forgiveness of God. I hope that this episode will help you begin a discussion with your kids about how we are all marked by our sin. Even when we are not caught, unrepentant sin always leaves us stained. Ned's descent into the disease of sin has begun.

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