

Children's Readings

BY CHARLES MILLS

FIRST SABBATH

Words of Love

"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go" (Gen. 28:15).

A Home for God

It was kinda scary. Even my horse seemed to be just a little bit nervous as we stumbled and clumped down the narrow gorge between the high rock cliffs towering on each side. But I had come to this part of the Middle East to see some interesting houses, and I wasn't about to let any silly fear turn me around.

Suddenly we were there. The narrow gorge opened up and deposited my horse and me at the base of a tall, beautiful structure some call "The Treasury"—a building complete with stately columns, statues, and perfectly cut awnings. But this wondrous marvel wasn't made of brick or wood or steel. This building, and the hundreds of others I'd see in this extraordinary valley, was cut into pure rock—carved into the very face of a cliff. When you walked through the tall front door of The Treasury, you didn't enter a room. You entered a cave.

Petra was a very worldly place when it existed as an occupied city. The people there worshipped many gods, some of whom, they insisted, demanded human sacrifices. I know this is true because I saw stone altars high on the hilltops surrounding the city where people were killed in the name of one deity or another. I wasn't too sure if I wanted to live in Petra, among those stony houses and stony hearts. It was a city without God.

The Home in the Garden

Before God made Adam and Eve, He built them a home. He didn't exactly visit the local building supply store and stock up on lumber, nails, paint, and window frames. But Adam and Eve seemed to be perfectly happy with their *garden* home—at least, for a while. The Creator loved to walk and talk with them, showing them the beauty of their amazing world.

God has always wanted to live with us. He's always wanted to move into our home and set up housekeeping right in the middle of all of our stuff—whether that stuff happens to be a simple table and cot in a hut, or stacks of video games in a modern, Internet-accessing, cable-ready, richly appointed, brightly painted bedroom. He just loves settling in, putting on His royal slippers, stretching out on the couch, and saying, "So, what's for supper?" He wants to eat with us, sleep with us, play with us, even laugh with us when we hear a funny story. He just can't get enough of us!

That's why, when Adam and Eve listened to the evil serpent and disobeyed God's direct order to NOT EAT OF THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT, God's mighty heart was broken. His children chose to move from God's house to Satan's house.

The Home in the Desert

Many years later we find Moses and a multitude of complaining, angry ex-slaves living in the middle of a hot desert after escaping from Egypt. The people are confused, uneducated, and totally fed up with wandering around looking for some "Promised Land."

So what did God do? He decided to move in with them!

God told Moses, "Have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8).

It was the first time that God had actually lived with His people since Eden. "Then," the Bible says, "the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Exodus 40:34). In other words, God moved in. "So the cloud of the Lord was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel during all their travels" (verse 38). In other words, God moved in . . . *to stay*.

What's it like to have God living with you? We'll find out this week.

share

Draw a picture of the type of sanctuary you'd build for Jesus today. Decide what materials you'd use and what design would show your love for Him to the world. Keep in mind that Jesus loves nature and would want you to enjoy worshipping Him there. Title your drawing "My Sanctuary for God."

Children's Readings

SUNDAY

Words of Love

“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Heb. 13:5).

“Where’s My Mommy?”

I could see the terror in her eyes, and I knew that if I didn’t do something fast, she would go absolutely wild with fear.

Anyone who has ever been to a General Conference session of the Seventh-day Adventist Church knows what a huge gathering looks like. This was the scene in the Georgia Dome not too long ago. I was sitting off to one side watching the tide of people flow by when I caught sight of a little girl—probably about 6 years old—moving in the opposite direction of the crowd. There were tears streaming down her flushed cheeks, and her hands were trembling as she stumbled along. I heard her call out in a hoarse voice, “Mommy? Mommy, where are you?” but her words were swallowed whole by the noise and commotion.

I hurried after her, trying to determine the best way to offer help. I knew she’d probably been taught not to trust strangers. But desperate times call for desperate measures. “Excuse me,” I said, kneeling beside her, “have you lost your mommy?”

She nodded between sobs.

“Well, if you’d like, I can help you find her.” I motioned for a woman passing by to join us. The lady took one look at the little girl and knew immediately the situation. I smiled and pointed. “This kind woman will be happy to take you over to that security guard, and together you can find your mommy. Would that be OK?”

The lost girl looked at the woman, then at the security guard, then at me. “OK,” she whispered.

“Now, don’t be afraid,” I told her. “I’m sure your mommy is looking for you right this moment, and she’ll be so happy to see you.”

I hurried back to my post beside the stream of people and waited. If I knew mommies—and I think I do, because I grew up with one of the best—I’d soon be seeing a desperate woman stumbling in the opposite direction of the crowd with the same look of panic on her face that I’d noticed on the little girl.

Sure enough, about five minutes later, there she was, bumping into people, her hands trembling, searching the crowds, hoping to see the most precious person in the whole world to her. “Excuse me, ma’am,” I called out. “Are you looking for a little girl with brown eyes and a yellow dress?” I thought she was going to faint.

“Yes,” she said. “Have you seen her?”

“She’s just around the corner out in the quiet hallway waiting with a security guard and a kind woman. She’ll be so happy to see you!”

I wish you could have been there to witness that reunion. There were tears of joy, words of love, and plenty of tight, tight hugs. The nightmare was over. The separation had ended. Happiness returned to two hearts that day in the Georgia Dome.

The Fall

When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, they did more than choose Satan’s way of life over God’s way of life. Because of their sin, Adam and Eve had to move out of God’s garden home. Sin and rebellion can’t live where God lives. It would be like trying to mix oil and water.

Immediately our heavenly Father was hard at work, organizing a plan to bring them back—they and everyone who would want to live again in God’s house. God wanted the nightmare to be over. He wanted the separation to end. He longed for happiness to return to all sin-sick hearts. But there would be a price to pay to end the separation.

share

Sometimes, when people can’t find their favorite pet, they put up posters around the neighborhood asking others to look for the missing pet and call if they find it. Divide up into groups and have each group create a “missing persons” poster that God would put up if He were looking for your group. Include a picture (or drawing) of each person in the group. Remember, you are God looking for you. What would you say on the poster?

Children's Readings

MONDAY

Words of Love

"Do what is right and good in the Lord's sight, so that it may go well with you" (Deut. 6:18).

God's Laws of Love

Near my grandparents' home was a community swimming pool with lots of sparkling waters and laughing kids. It was divided into two sections—shallow end and deep end. I found that the shallow end was where most of the action was, with boys and girls playing games, tossing big inflatable balls around, and standing on their heads under-water with their feet sticking out in the air.

However, there was something amazing waiting at the far edge of the deep end. It was a high dive unlike any I'd ever seen. It towered up, up, up into the blue sky like a ladder to the clouds.

My grandfather would drive me to the pool, drop me off for the afternoon, and before leaving say the very same thing: "Have fun, Charlie. Play nice, be safe, and don't jump off the high dive."

But this particular day, my eyes kept wandering to the deep end, to the towering high dive, and the breathtaking sight of screaming bodies hurling through space before splashing down majestically in the cool waters.

Grandpa has no idea how much I've grown since last year, I thought to myself. It's time for me to experience new adventures reserved only for boys who are almost men.

The High and the Mighty

I made my way along the side of the pool until I stood at the base of the towering dive. Slowly, steadily, I climbed the stairs leading up the structure. In my world, with my rules, I was the bravest, most daring person alive. I was about to show my grandfather and anyone else who happened to be watching that Charlie Mills was the servant of no one, and a force unto himself.

With a nervous smile on my face, I raised my arms and stepped out into space.

Down, down, down I fell, feeling the wind whistling by, unable to breathe, unable to move, unable to do anything but fall.

Seconds before I slammed into the water, some boy decided that he needed to be swimming right where I was going to land. I saw his body approaching fast, but there was nothing I could do. **CRASH-SPLASH!** I hit the water and the boy at the same time.

I apologized as best I could with gallons of water sloshing in my mouth and hurried to the ladder at the edge of the pool. I stumbled back to the shallow end and dove into its welcoming waves.

When Grandpa returned, I took my place beside him on the front seat of his car. "Did you have a good time?" he asked.

"Grandpa," I gasped, "how did you know what would happen?"

He looked at me for a long moment. "Charlie," he said, "did you jump off the high dive?"

"Of course I did!" I blurted. "That's why you made the rule. You knew I was going to land on someone, didn't you?"

Grandpa shook his head as a look of love and understanding shone from his eyes. "Charlie," he said softly, "I didn't know you were going to jump off the high dive. I made the rule because I thought you might."

Laws of Love

When God moved in with the children of Israel in the desert, He brought with Him a suitcase full of rules and regulations.

Why did He do that? Because the children of Israel were a bunch of bad people who wanted to do bad things all the time? No. He knew that some might want to follow Satan and his rules, which would bring them great pain and suffering. He did it because of what they *might* do, because He loved each one of those desert wanderers, just like He loves us.

share

What type of laws would you make for your group in order for each one to enjoy worshipping God together? Come up with a list of 10 suggestions and write them on the board. Be sure to include why you made that law and how that law would improve your worship of the Creator.

Children's Readings

TUESDAY

Words of Love

"Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows" (Isa. 53:4).

The Big Double Doors

Four-year-old Bobby wasn't used to being sick. He was used to running around the house and yard playing fort with his older brother, Billy.

"Bobby?" his mother said as she watched her normally hungry child push away from the supper table. "Are you OK? You didn't eat much."

Bobby shook his head. "My throat hurts."

Mother gathered her young son in her arms. "I'm taking you to see Dr. Rue," she announced.

The warm evening air felt good on Bobby's face as the car hurried along the road leading to the Seoul Sanitarium and Hospital on the outskirts of Seoul, Korea. Mother and Father served as missionaries in a beautiful country filled with wonderful people.

Dr. George Rue took one look down Bobby's throat and shook his head. "I can see the problem clearly," he stated. "A simple operation and he'll be fine."

"No!" Bobby said, crossing his arms over his chest.

"But it's a simple operation," Mother reasoned. "You'll be asleep and won't feel a thing."

"NO!" Bobby repeated, even though saying the word hurt his throat.

Older brother Billy was standing nearby listening to the conversation. He knew that Dr. Rue was a good man and could help his brother stop hurting. He knew that Bobby wouldn't get well if he didn't have the operation, so he stepped forward and said something that shocked everyone.

"I'll go with you, Bobby," he announced in his best big brother voice. "I'll let Dr. Rue operate on me, too. That way you won't have to be afraid."

Bobby studied his brother for a long moment. "Really?" he asked.

Billy nodded. "I'll be right there with you."

Through the Big Double Doors

The very next day, Dr. Rue walked into the hospital waiting room smiling broadly. "You ready, Bobby?"

"Ready," the little boy stated. Then he paused, "Billy's coming too."

"I know," Dr. Rue said. "We've decided that since Billy will someday need the same surgery, we have a bed all ready for him. You'll wake up right beside him after the operation."

Confidently Bobby and the doctor walked through the big double doors of the operating room. The little boy's fears were gone. His big brother was going to share the experience with him.

When it came time for Billy to walk through those big double doors, it took every bit of courage he had to rise to his feet. Making a promise was one thing. *Keeping* that promise was proving to be a very, very big challenge.

At long last those doors swung open again and a smiling Dr. Rue walked out with the older boy held snugly in his arms. "Here's your brave child," he said, handing the sleeping form to his father. "You can carry him to his room and put him right beside Bobby. They'll both be fine in a few days."

Father smiled and glanced down at his firstborn son. But what he saw made him feel suddenly weak. There were tearstains running from Billy's eyes, over his flushed cheeks, and back into his hair. The bravery. The confidence. The courageous words. They'd all been an act! In truth, his son had been terrified of the surgery, even though he'd made his younger brother believe all was well.

"Thank You, God," the man whispered. "Thank You for giving me a son who showed me what Jesus did for me."

Substitute in the Desert

The children of Israel were instructed to offer daily, weekly, and yearly sacrifices at God's desert sanctuary. These sacrifices were designed to remind each man, woman, and child of a terrible sacrifice to come. Eventually it wouldn't be a lamb or goat that died. It would be Jesus. He would pay the price for our sins so that we could live forever with Him in heaven.

Jesus walked through His own big double doors so that, someday, we could walk through the pearly gates of heaven.

share

Think about the neighborhood around your school or church. What are some ways that your group could help that neighborhood? Choose one project and do it together with the adults in your school or church leading the way.

Children's Readings

WEDNESDAY

Words of Love

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses" (Heb. 4:15).

Mediator

You're in your favorite sporting goods store, checking out stuff that interests you. Since you're into bird-watching, the binocular display catches your eye.

One particular pair grabs your attention. Lifting them to your eyes, you begin to scan the store's nooks and crannies.

You discover your friend Justin standing by the fishing reels and are about to call out to him when you see him take a small box of lures from the counter and slip them into his coat pocket. Across the aisle you see your other friend Dave look around the store for a moment, then hide a pair of leather gloves in his schoolbag.

You can't believe they actually did it. They'd been talking about how easy it would be to steal stuff from Mr. Larson's sporting goods store. You thought it was just talk.

Now, through those powerful binoculars, you witnessed your friends making good on their word to help themselves to some merchandise. They stare back at you expectantly, waiting for you to make your move. You know stealing is wrong; however, you want them to like you and think you're cool. So you glance around and see that Mr. Larson is helping another customer by the cash register, then sneak the instrument into your schoolbag.

Sleepless

That night you can't sleep. You've committed a crime and you feel awful. That's when you decide to return the binoculars first thing in the morning.

Mr. Larson greets you with a smile as he unlocks the front door of his place of business. "What brings you out so early?" he asks.

You laugh self-consciously and make some excuse about wanting to see if the canoes are still on sale.

Once inside, you move quickly to the binocular display and, while Mr. Larson is unlocking his cash register on the other side of the store, you slip the binoculars out of your satchel and return them to their rightful place on the counter display.

Then you hear Mr. Larson calling, "I've got to go upstairs to the store office for a minute. If you need anything, I'll be right back. Gotta turn on the video surveillance system I installed last week. Oh, and the canoes are over there."

The blood drains from your face as your hands turn suddenly cold. Mr. Larson has videotape of you and your friends stealing his merchandise. What he doesn't have is videotape of you putting the binoculars back just moments ago.

A minute later Mr. Larson returns from the store office and finds you waiting by the cash register. Approaching him with head bowed, you say, "Sir, I need to tell you something."

Evidence

Eventually the videotape of the day you stole the binoculars is reviewed by the town's sheriff. He sees your friends pocket the loot. He sees you slip the binoculars into your schoolbag.

But then Mr. Larson turns off the video player and points at the tape. "There's something you didn't see, Sheriff," he says. "The boy who stole the binoculars brought them back the very next morning. He asked me for forgiveness."

The sheriff grins broadly. "Oh, that's good news!" he says.

Mr. Larson became your "mediator"—someone who represents you to someone else.

In the Desert

In the desert sanctuary, the children of Israel had mediators called "priests."

Today we have just one mediator between God and humankind: Jesus Christ. He's constantly in the presence of His Father working shoulder to shoulder with Him making sure that when you ask forgiveness for a sin, that request blots out the evidence of that sin.

share

Divide into groups of two and have each member learn about their partner: what fun things do they like to do, what are they afraid of, what do they want to become later in life, what talents do they have? Then have each member stand before the group and introduce their partner, explaining how they are going to be an effective worker for God and how they will share God's love with others, taking into account their skills *and limitations*.

Children's Readings

THURSDAY

Words of Love

“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit?”
(1 Cor. 6:19).

Cleaning Inside Out

Saul wrapped his headdress tightly around his forehead and squinted into the brilliant glow of the sun. He was behind schedule and knew it. “Faster,” he told his traveling companions as horses’ hooves and chariot wheels crunched over the rocky soil. “I want to reach Damascus by sundown.”

The group’s pace quickened as animals and men continued their journey northward, leaving a trail of dust to mark their passage.

Their leader, Saul, was on a mission—a mission to silence those who dared preach about the man Jesus. He’d heard about this supposed “savior of mankind.” He’d listened to people talk about His supposed miracles and how He rose from the dead after being crucified. Saul chuckled to himself. Imagine believing such nonsense—normally smart people wanting to worship a god who could be so easily killed.

Suddenly Saul noticed that the desert seemed to be brighter than it was a moment ago. It was as if the sun was moving closer, its burning glow intensifying with each second. Then the light became blinding and Saul found himself slipping from his saddle and onto the ground as he shielded his face from the mysterious, brilliant glow. “What’s happening?” he called out.

“Saul,” a voice echoed from within the light. “Saul, why do you persecute Me?”

“Persecute You?” Saul responded, his voice trembling with fear. “I don’t even know You. Who are You?”

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” The voice in the light continued to speak. “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

Then, as quickly as it had come, the light faded, leaving Saul kneeling on the ground, surrounded by questioning eyes. Those traveling with the man had heard a noise, but had seen no person or recognized any words. They just noticed that their leader had fallen to the ground and was talking to the air.

As Saul was helped to his feet, he opened his eyes. But now, instead of a brilliant light, he saw only darkness. “Help me,” he gasped. “Please help me.” Then, trembling with fear, blind Saul was led, groping his way toward Damascus.

Changed Person

In Damascus Saul met a man named Ananias. Ananias told Saul that God had sent him to heal Saul’s eyes of their blindness. And not only were Saul’s eyes healed—his heart was healed of the anger and hatred he felt against God’s people. Saul was so affected by his encounter on the road that he even changed his name. He would no longer be known as “Saul, the persecutor of God’s people,” but rather “Paul, the *leader* of God’s people.”

Something happens to people when they come face to face with Jesus. That meeting is seldom as dramatic as having a brilliant light shine down on you on a desert road or hearing a voice talk to you. It’s usually more like a quiet voice echoing in your thoughts, making you realize things you never realized before, understand things you never understood before, and helping you deal with troubling situations at school or home.

Here’s an interesting idea. If God wants to live in our hearts (that means in our thoughts and actions), what does that make us? That’s right. We become a “house of God”—a temple; a walking, talking, ball-playing, bike-riding, iPod-listening temple of the Most High God.

This means two very important things. One, we have to make sure our “temple” is a fit place for God to live, and, two, we have the privilege of representing (mediating—remember?) God’s love to others.

Thank You, Jesus, for wanting to live in our hearts!

share

Turn your room into a restaurant called “The New Earth Restaurant.” Then create a menu on the board with only food items that you’ll find in heaven. Ask someone to draw the dish of food on the board beside its name. Remember, nothing will hurt nor destroy animals in heaven. Create fun foods like “New Jerusalem Stew” or “Pearly Gates Grillers.” Don’t forget dessert!

Children's Readings

FRIDAY

Words of Love

"Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come" (Rev. 14:7).

FRIDAY

Cleaning From the Inside Out

He was small both in stature and in character. As chief tax collector, he went around forcing his neighbors to pay taxes to the despised Romans who forcefully occupied their land. Not only that, he wasn't honest, and often collected more than necessary, making himself very wealthy. Is it any wonder that his neighbors hated him?

One day as Jesus was entering Jericho, Zacchaeus was in town doing what he did best—cheating people out of their hard-earned money. Hearing about the famous rabbi who healed the sick and—most amazing of all—actually spoke to the poor and needy, taxman Zacchaeus decided he wanted to see this Guy.

Being someone who never let his lack of height interfere with his tall plans, the tax collector glanced around and discovered a sycamore-fig tree just down the road. It had sturdy branches and enough leaves to hide his curiosity. So up he went, until he had an unrestricted view of the road on which Jesus was traveling.

Along came the Master Teacher surrounded by attentive disciples, a group of recently healed sick people, the gaggle of questioning admirers, and even a few hecklers. Zacchaeus smiled inwardly. He'd found the best seat in the house.

Reaching the tree, Jesus stopped. Slowly, with a smile spreading across His rugged, sun-tanned face, He looked up—right at Zacchaeus. The taxman grinned self-consciously. "Hello," he called down.

"Hello, Zacchaeus," Jesus responded.

The taxman blinked. *He knows my name. He probably knows what I do for a living. He probably knows that I've been cheating people out of their hard-earned money. I'm going to get it now!*

"Zacchaeus," the Master Teacher continued, "come down immediately. I must stay at your house today."

What? Did He just say what I think He said?

Amazed, the short man made the long journey from his tree limb to the ground. "You want to come to *my* house?" he gasped. Christ nodded.

"This way," Zacchaeus stammered, pointing down the road.

The people couldn't believe their eyes. "Look at that," they said. "Jesus has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

Later, after Zacchaeus and Jesus had spent some time together, an incredible thing happened to the little man. He grew up. Not in height, but in character. "Look, Lord!" he announced: "Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount" (Luke 19:8).

That day in Jericho, Zacchaeus the tax collector met Jesus the judge face to face, and a sinful life changed forever.

Before the Judge

There will come a day when you and I will stand in judgement before the King of kings and Lord of lords. This will happen in order to reveal to the universe who is king of our hearts. Like the dishonest tax collector Zacchaeus, we're going to stand before God the Father and God the Son. It is important for us to invite Jesus now into our hearts so that in the judgment He may grant us what He granted Zacchaeus: permanent fellowship with Him.

I like what Saul—who became Paul—says about that moment. He writes: "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

The judgment? Bring it on. We're ready. Because God is living in us!

share

Ask someone in your group to be the father of everyone in the group (that would make everyone else brothers and sisters). Then have each member make up a sin that they have committed (lying, cheating, making fun of someone, being violent, etc.) and have each member come to their "father" and admit to that sin. Have the "father" deal with that sin as a real father—one who loves Jesus—would. That's how God judges us.

Children's Readings

SECOND SABBATH

Words of Love

"They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain" (Isa. 11:9).

Reunion

We'll be happy to give them a home," we told the girl from our church who stood looking up at us expectantly. "We don't have snapping turtles in our pond, and we'll do our very best to keep the foxes and dogs away."

That's how Daisy—a young, white, energetic duck—and her sister came into our lives. It was late autumn in West Virginia, and many of the creatures that inhabit our property had already left for the winter, so we were happy to have some new ones join us.

But death stalked the two guests on our property as well. One night a fox grabbed Daisy's sibling and injured Daisy badly. I quickly built a safe enclosure in our backyard. We had to keep her alive long enough so she could grow up and face the world without us.

On Her Own

The day finally arrived when we felt Daisy was ready to live on her own. We carried her from the enclosure to the side of the house where I placed her gently on the ground. Then my wife and I climbed the steps to our side porch, and I sat down on the bench to see what would happen.

Daisy took a few steps into the gathering darkness and stopped. Then something happened that I'll never forget. She turned around and began running—*running!*—back in our direction. She climbed the steps, clambered right up onto my lap, and pressed herself against me as tight as she could.

I realized that this wasn't just a hug. It was a message to me from one of God's creatures. Daisy was saying, "You've been the only kindness in my life, and I'm more afraid of living without you than living with you."

The Homecoming

Weeks later I happened to drive by the home of a very nice man who lives in my town. His name is Mr. Visco, and on his property is a large, tree-lined, *fenced-in* pond filled with ducks of all kinds. This would be a very safe place for Daisy!

"Sure," Mr. Visco said when I asked him if he'd like one more duck.

Later that day I placed Daisy on the ground just beyond the fence surrounding the beautiful pond. She hadn't seen the pond or the ducks living there yet.

Slowly Daisy began to climb the small hill overlooking the pond. When she reached the top, she saw it . . . water sparkling in the winter sun, and ducks swimming, playing, moving about, enjoying the abundant food waiting on the shore.

That's when it happened. That's when I saw what heaven will be like. That's when the ducks in the pond caught a glimpse of Daisy.

With a joyful chorus of quacks, squawks, and flutters, dozens of ducks hurried in Daisy's direction. They welcomed our little friend into their family like a father welcomes a long-lost son, like a mother embraces a long-lost daughter, and exactly the way God's people will welcome you and me to the courts of glory. They surrounded Daisy with affection and walked with her to the edge of the pond. They ate together, swam together, and played together. For Daisy the long months of separation from her kind was over. At long last she'd found a safe home.

Someday Up There

Someday Jesus is coming back to this world. Just as His sacrifice on the cross erased the need for an earthly sanctuary for God's people, His coming will erase forever the need for Him to live in our world, because we'll begin living in His.

When we reach that Promised Land, you and I will walk along the beautiful sea of glass. Then, we'll see them—our families, our friends, our loved ones. They'll see us and run to greet us, and we'll all hurry away together to be forever with Jesus, living in a land where there's no fear, death, or crying.

THE SON OF MISSIONARY PARENTS, **CHARLES MILLS** OWNS AND OPERATES CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATIONS, A MEDIA PRODUCTION SERVICE BASED IN BERKELEY SPRINGS, WEST VIRGINIA. HE'S AUTHOR OF MORE THAN 45 PUBLISHED BOOKS AND HUNDREDS OF MAGAZINE ARTICLES.

share **Bring a pair of binoculars into the group. Pretend that these are very powerful binoculars that can look all the way into heaven. Then invite all the members of the group to look through the binoculars and describe what they see in detail.**