

A NOTE TO PARENTS

"These all died in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen and greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For ... they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one."

- Hebrews 11:13-16

For many centuries this passage from Hebrews would have been felt by most Christians as expressing the essence of their faith. It was this belief that gave meaning to their lives, and that they passed on, with great conviction, to their children.

But today we have almost ceased to speak this language. It surfaces occasionally in hymns and liturgy, but it is thoroughly out of fashion in most pulpits and in nearly all Sunday School materials, and many parents fight shy of emphasizing it with their children. We have become so wary of the notion of "pie in the sky" that we look only to the here and now for evidence of the goodness, love, and purposes of God. Whole curriculums are built on this idea: children are asked to look around at nature, family, friendships, their own bodies ... and conclude that God is loving and good. For healthy children leading untroubled lives in loving and attractive surroundings, this works fine. But what of the child with a disease or disability, the child in an abusive home, the child whose family is struggling with poverty or unemployment or violence? Or the privileged child who begins to realize that *others* are not as lucky? This theology of here-and-now happiness lays on them, and us, a tremendous burden, the major theological burden of our era: the burden of seeing a good God behind a universe full of suffering and injustice.

This problem weighed much less heavily on our ancestors, who knew that the greatest heroes, "though well attested, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better" for them (Hebrews 11:39-40). We need to grant our children the liberating permission to look to God for what he may yet give them, as well as thanking him for what he has given already. We need to rekindle the specifically Christian virtues of faith and hope, to give life to the "love" we so constantly commend to our children.

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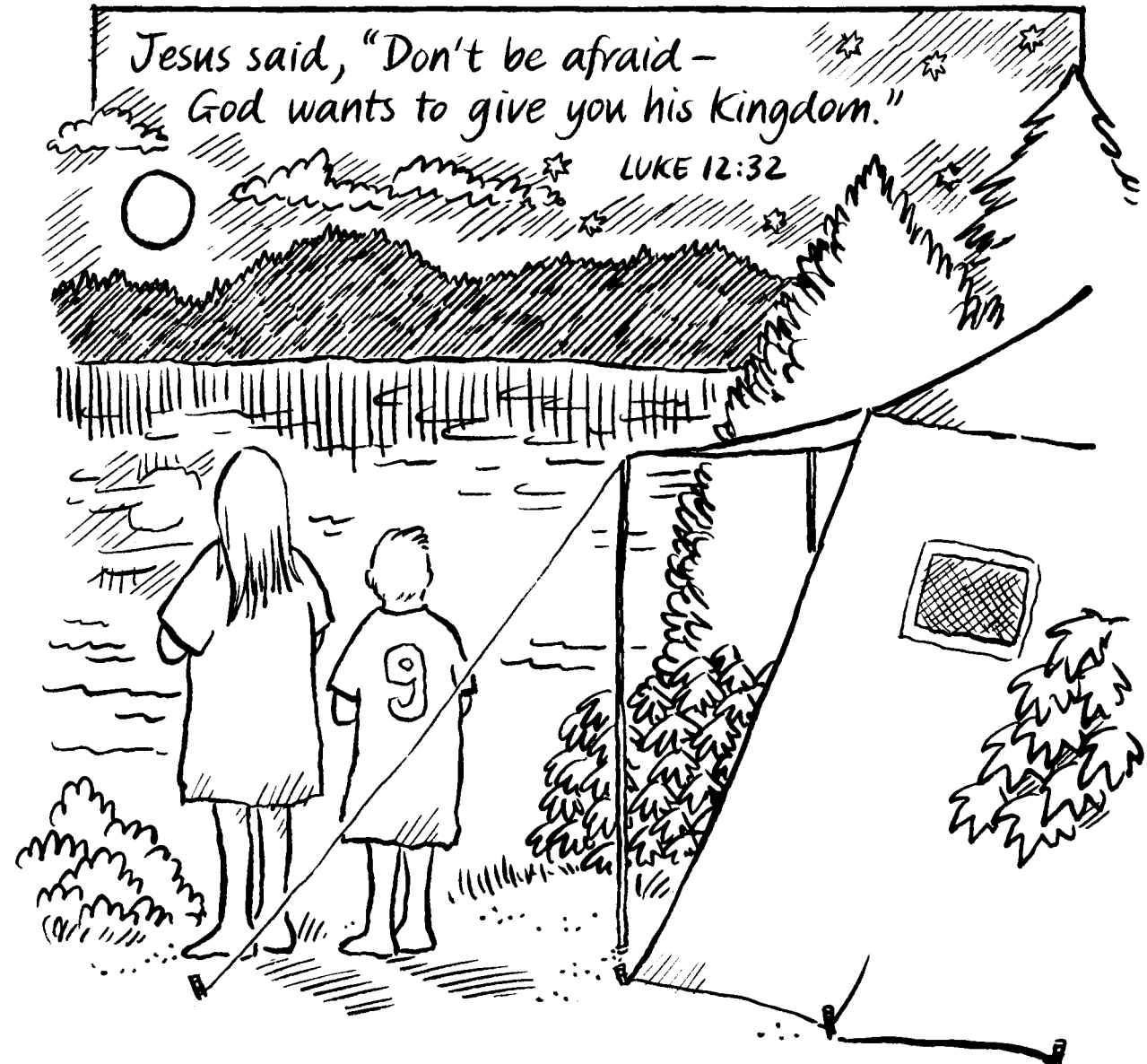
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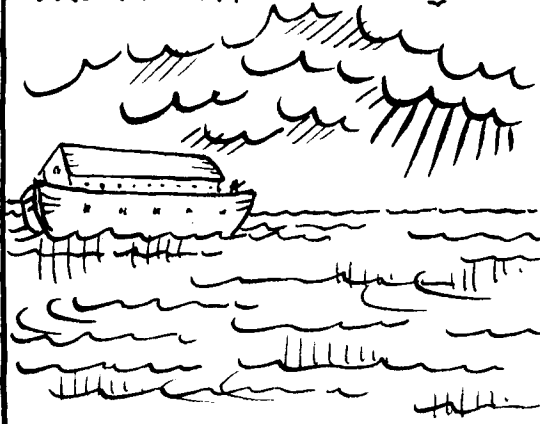


GOD WANTS US TO HAVE FAITH.

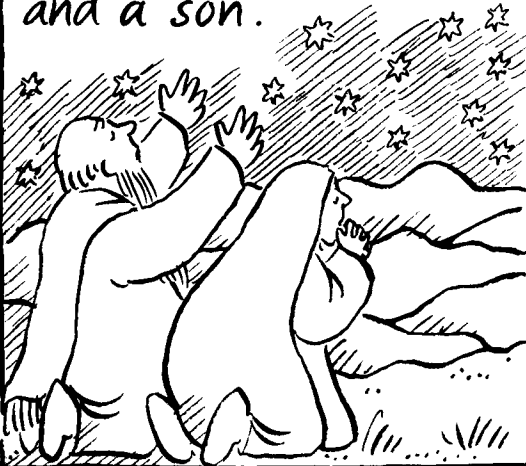
FAITH means believing in God, and trusting God's promises.



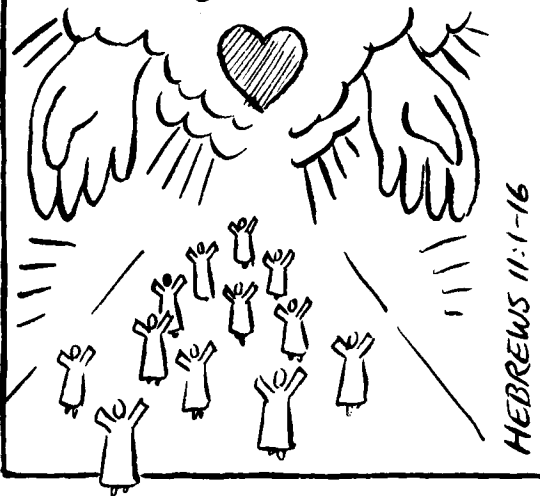
The Bible tells us about people who trusted God's promises. One of them was Noah.



Abraham and Sarah trusted that God would give them a new land and a son.



God has promised us an everlasting homeland, full of joy and peace.



Jesus said, "If you understand God's Kingdom, you will want it more than anything else. It never wears out, no one can take it from you, and you will never get tired of it. God wants you to have faith. That means waiting for God's Kingdom, and working and praying for it too."



This boy has faith in God's promises. Draw what he is hoping for, as he waits and prays and works for God's Kingdom.