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# The Mop Room Missionary

Students, Silver Hair,  
and Shunned Scripture

An Eduventure

Leader Guide  
Book 1

## Introduction

**Z**eb's every muscle screamed to rescue these young lives and down deep attitudes to the Glory of God with the same zeal as do the trucks and teams and ear bursting sirens. His loving words made up no pep talk or spotlight speech. Peace, comfort, and purpose are found by the mop room kids in the seemingly annoying repetitious words of **Numbers**, the 4<sup>th</sup> book of the Bible.

If you are one who easily shuns reading these portions of God's Precious Word... you'd better keep reading...



words 'south side'? Now look at verse 18 and 25. You'll see 'west side' and 'north side'."

"What happens is that God is telling all the tribes where they are always to camp around the Tabernacle. On the east side of this tabernacle square we'll write "Judah, Issachar, and Zebulon". On the south side down here we'll write "Reuben, Simeon, and Gad." He then continued on with writing the remainder of the 12 tribe's names being sure to have just 3 tribes on each side of the Tabernacle square.

"Now look in verse 9 to see the total stated for the 3 tribes on the east side of the tabernacle. Does this verse jive with the sum of the individual totals of those three tribes? Now look at verses 16, 24, and 31. These verses also give the totals for each group of 3. Now here's the frosting on the cake. Look at the number representing the sum of the totals of the 4 groups. Frankie, what does it say?" Frankie was not a very big fella and not all that lively but he shouted so loud it got Smokey to barking. "Zeb. It says 603,550! It matches everything. Nobody had a bad hair day writing all these names and numbers down! God's Word is true... no mistakes... I can feel good and comfortable about reading every inch of it!"

A couple of the boys rubbed Frankie's back to calm him down and make Smokey quit barking. Two of the rescue squad team ran in to the mop room and were ready to put a cold wash rag on Frankie. Norma said, "its all right fellas. Frankie just got real excited when he saw that God's Word is true and we can trust it to comfort us and keep us safe."

Zeb told the mop room gang, "It actually gets better than this, but I don't think Frankie and Smokey can take any more today. Let's have closing prayer thanking God for all the great things we learn about Him and His love for us. I've had about all the excitement this ol' ticker will take in one day."

them to pause for just a minute, and asked, “Now suppose one of you were not feeling well or were not paying attention to your work and you wrote down a wrong number? Would you and I ever know it as we read God’s word these many years later? Wouldn’t we start questioning God’s Word and not be sure if what we were reading was correct?”

“OK Norma you’re next. You come up and write your tribe’s information as we continue.”

A few minutes later Zeb counted the tribes written on the board to make sure there were the 12 tribes of Israel. As he began adding up the tribe totals the gang corrected him once when he carried 9 and it should have been 7. With confirmation from the gang he wrote down the grand total of 603,550. The gang all clapped for Zeb and he took a silly bow toward them.

“Zeb said, “Now we’ve all done our best but can’t really be comfortable that there hasn’t been an error someplace. But now look and the words God put into His word, in Numbers 1 verse 46. It’s right there in black and white for us all to see. God’s word tells us the total number of males at least 20 years old is 603,550!”

“Gang, doesn’t that just smoke your socks?! The grand totals match! God’s word is correct! We can trust His word even after all these years!” Zeb slapped his leg in excitement.

But that isn’t the half of it!

Clearly excited Zeb told the gang, “But that isn’t the half of it! Look at chapter 2. It repeats the totals for each tribe and its head person and his father’s name too! Do they match with chapter 1? Absolutely!” Next Zeb drew a big box on the blackboard and wrote the word ‘Tabernacle’ inside of it. Then he told the gang, look at verse 3 of chapter 2. “Do you see the words ‘east side’? And down in verse 10 do you see the

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made comments that they thought that was a neat kind of double checking.

Norma raised her hand to ask her question. “Buddy, I suppose you’re going to show us that God’s Word actually teaches us Cross-Foot Checking.” With a big grin Tom exclaimed to Norma, “And I’ll bet he’s gonna do it using the book of Numbers to do it too!” Zeb (that’s Buddy) clapped his hands at Norma and Tom. “Gang, you all are just getting too smart for me.”

Their beloved mop room leader with the silver mustache and warm smile asked, “Are you guys like me? I mean do you ever have a yucky day... one of those days that you get confused or discouraged to the point you start making mistakes? Do you ever have a sort-of ‘bad hair day’ where you just can’t figure out how to do a part of your math homework? Maybe you see that you can’t spend any more time on it, so you just put in answers that might be right?”

“Do you know that because our Bible was ‘God breathed’ that means that God Himself had written exactly what He wanted written and even protected the words and numbers all down through the centuries. And right here today, in front of God, Smokey and all of you, we’ll prove it. Are you ready? Good! I want you to all turn in your Bibles to Numbers chapter 1.”

“There are 12 tribes of Israel and the Bible names the name of the head of each tribe starting in verse 5. I want this first 12 of you to pretend you are the head of that tribe and I want you to come up in order and write on the blackboard the name of your tribe, how many men that are at least 20 years old in your tribe, and what verse tells it.”

Marty needed just a bit of help getting started as he wrote “Reuben... 46,500... vs. 21.” Then Tom wrote “Simeon... 59,300... vs. 23.” A few more boys and girls added their tribe name, number, and verse number. Zeb asked

## 7- Cross-Foot Comfort

As the mop room gang took their seats, Norma locked her wheelchair in place and Smokey took his usual place among the old firemen's boots and gave his wagging tail a rest. The so-important prayer was spoken by Brock with special emphasis on thankfulness for the military service people and even the emergency response teams and their shiny trucks just outside the mop room door.

Zeb walked to the blackboard with a piece of chalk and said, "Gang. We'll start with some Cross-Foot math." He wrote two columns of three numbers. He drew a line below each of the three columns and added each column putting its total below the line. He looked around at each of the gang to see if all of them were watching. They were, so he continued by adding each of the column totals to give a grand total, which he wrote on the board separately.

"Now watch carefully guys." He then added just the first number in each column and put the total across from the row of numbers he had just added. The explanation came next, "Now I'll add the 2<sup>nd</sup> number in each column and wrote its total across from those numbers." The same process was done with the 3<sup>rd</sup> number in each column. He then showed the gang how he then added each row total to give the grand total.

"OK so now we have two grand totals. One was from adding all the numbers up and down and putting the total at the foot of the column. The other grand total was from adding all the numbers across. Trudy exclaimed, "Hey look gang! Both of Buddy's grand totals are the same!" Buddy asked, "Well Trudy, does that give you comfort and assurance that your adding was correct?" The reply was, "You bet!" Others

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exclaimed, “I love it! I love it! Gang, they were saying, ‘This is a piece of cake.’ ‘It’s easy as pie!’

When you see trouble ahead all you have to do is remember God’s promises and what He’s already done for you, and those giant problems will tumble just like David learned with his sling against Goliath the giant. 

‘Promised Land’. Well, God had Moses send out 12 spies to check out the land, people, and how high the walls were, around their cities. Just so they could be prepared.”

“It turns out that 10 of the 12 spies came back and gave scaredy-cat reports about what they had seen in the land God had promised to them. They were so afraid of the giants that the scaredy-cat spies thought of themselves as little grasshoppers.”

Zeb told the boys and girls, “Now the reason I’m teaching you this lesson is because I believe there are some days that you are really scared by the people or problems you see out in front of you. But down deep in your heart you already know God has promised that He would never leave us or forsake us. Remember? He’s given you young people a guardian angel that’s always on watch.”

“The two spies that were not scaredy-cats were Joshua and Caleb. Listen to what they told the people... it’s right here starting in Numbers 14:7:

*And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defense is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not.*

“Joshua and Caleb were telling the people that God is with us when we obey Him and we shouldn’t be afraid of things out there. Gang, let’s read that again because I want to show you what I call ‘comfort cake’,” Zeb said with his warm grin. They read it again and emphasized the six words, ‘for they are bread for us’.” Slapping his leg in joy Zeb

## 1- Smokey and the Mop Room

**Y**ou won’t see the precious gold on the regular fire house tour, even though the tour is a whiz-banger for sure. The children all get special treatment on the tour. They get to wear a real fire hat and sit in the driver seat of the hook and ladder truck that’s bursting with gauges, levers, and buttons. As you tour you can easily see all the boots, fire hats, and other fire clothes all set in order for a hasty but proper exit from the fire house to save lives.



The two emergency medical trucks were lined up all ready to race to where someone needed first aid and a fast ride to the hospital. There was nothing about them that made you think of the people that drove them and all their study, practice, and rules they had to follow.

The kid’s tour always involves lots of lovin’. That’s right. No kid with any heart at all could ever pass up loving Smokey the fire dog and all his enthusiasm. From the tip of his tail wagging in high gear to a big red tongue and sparkly eyes he says, “I need some huggin’. How about you?” Smokey thinks he is in doggy heaven every time he’s see a big yellow school bus stop outside and lots of excited school kids head toward the fire house.

But to see the real gold, that golden service at the fire house, you have to visit around 4:30 pm every Thursday. And then you won’t notice anything unless you enter the fire house mop room. There really isn’t anything special about the mop

room either. The walls are all lined with rows of hooks for hanging things and enough cobwebs to make a rug. Two worn out mop pails were turned upside down and a heavy board set between them made a bench for the kids to sit on. High on the wall a banner hangs by one corner among those cobwebs. Left over from a parade long ago it still says, "Freedom Fire Department Gives Aid and Comfort." Maybe that's the purpose of this old firehouse mop room... comfort. That could be it. While the trucks, firemen, and Smokey give aid to people in danger, this mop room gives comfort to others in a quiet way. That must be the golden service provided at this Freedom Fire House.

Ol' Zeb has as much or more loyalty to the fire house and the men and women that run it than possibly anyone else in this small town called Freedom. A few years ago he came into the fire house with chest pain worse than ever before. All the response team went right to work as they'd trained, to check his vital signs and get him to the nearby hospital. If they hadn't, Zeb might be a lot worse off than just the slight limp in his walk and a left hand that doesn't always do what is asked of it.

Usually a few minutes after 4 each Thursday the dozen or so 11 to 16 year old boys and girls begin showing up and head straight for the mop room. Every Thursday Zeb would already be there in the 'comfort corner' already praying for the children and the things they'd talk about this day. Everyone that knew anything about the Thursday mop room meetings began calling it "The Comfort Corner". Even Smokey sensed that the Comfort Corner was no place for horse play. He would always lay quiet between some old boots with his eyes always staring into the eyes of children that truly need a Comfort Corner far more than we may sometimes realize. 📺

## 6- Scaredy-Cat Spies

**A**fter this Thursday's Mop Room meeting was opened with prayer and a welcome to a visitor the leader of the gang, Ol' Zeb with his silver mustache, spoke to everyone with a big warm smile. "Oh am I excited to share this lesson with all of you. I absolutely love spy stories from God's word." He said caressing his old worn Bible. But this story is even juicier because it's about scaredy-cat spies."

"You know I can enjoy comfort and peace even reading true stories about scaredy-cat spies," he said to everyone. "Let's jump in. You look in your bibles so you know I'm not joshin' ya!" Another big grin for all the gang that needed smiles and comfort they certainly weren't going to see at home.

"Gang, we've been learning to find comfort and peace for our own hearts by seeing in His Precious Word how God takes care of us. But today I want to show you that our comfort and peace also comes from our obedience to God, even when our eyes and ears tell us not to."

"Now the Israelite nation had just been freed from being slaves in Egypt and crossed the Red Sea when God parted it for them. Do you remember? Well they were given lots of rules on how to build and operate their portable church they called the Tabernacle. But that wasn't the best gift God had for them. He gave them a whole big land with lots of food and animals and a lot of room to grow."

"But there was one problem. Other people were already living there. And worse than that, some of the people were giants who certainly didn't love the true and living God or anyone else who did!"

"Now God promised His Israelites that the land and animals would be theirs. That's one reason it's called the




to look for Remembrance Ribbons in the Old Testament of the Bible. So let's turn to Numbers chapter 15.

We'll begin at verse 38 where God is giving Moses instruction on adding a special blue ribbon on the bottom of their clothes. Boys and girls use your Bibles and let's read this wonderful passage:"

*Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue: And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring: That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God.* Numbers 15: 38-40.

"Now gang, this is super important. Listen to 'Ol Zeb close. God has not made us robots with electric computers for brains. But He expects us to make choices based upon all the powerful truths He has shown us. He gave the Israelites (and us too) the responsibility to remember His blessings AND His directions for our good health, safety, and spiritual growth. We can certainly take great comfort in His watch care and provisions for us."

"Now if you still think it's ok to do just what you want and not what God has told you, you may want to read what happened to a fellow that was gathering firewood when he wasn't supposed to. The description is in the same chapter starting with verse 32."

Zeb told the mop room gang, "You and I get to make lots of choices each day. But we must also obey our parents, teachers, policeman, and pastor. But most of all we must learn God's will for our lives and do it cheerfully." 

## **Zeb the Leader**

You'll appreciate being forewarned that Ol' Zeb's ways of giving comfort may be somewhat surprising to some, but always God-approved. Before each meeting began with prayer, Zeb would read the eyes of each of the youth from across the room. He had so much love for them he could read their hearts like one of those electronic heart monitoring machines they carry in an ambulance. The problem was that he almost never forgot the hurt, hate, confusion, and sometimes hunger he'd see in their eyes.

Zeb had long since retired with no outstanding skills that would put him in anybody's spotlight. He had a medium sized silver mustache that could use a trim and was bald as a beach ball except for a narrow band of silver hair that wrapped around the back of his head from ear to ear.

Long ago he'd wrestled with God's Spirit trying to get out of forming and leading the Comfort Corner. After all, he'd say, "I didn't go any farther than the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and I sure don't know about computers and all that kid stuff. But the old gentleman saw there was no getting out of it as the Spirit reminded him of his great love for children that are hurting and even more love for God's exciting infallible scripture.

With the same level of energy Smokey and his firefighting pals sift through collapsed buildings on fire searching for people; Zeb searched God's precious word for kid-sized promises, comfort, and His plans for them. Like a volcano about to erupt, Zeb told the Lord that from this moment forward there would be nothing more important to him and his heart than giving Mop Room Kid Comfort.

All heads were bowed and eyes closed as the kids heard Zeb almost beg God to give him the words to help bring comfort and order to the hearts of every young heart in the room. Even before the "Amen" was spoken the young

people realized they were in an oasis bathed in calm and surrounded by mops and old boots. If any would ask themselves if they'd rather be anyplace else on Earth right now, all answers would be a definite, "NO." The closing "Amen" was spoken and everyone quietly looked to see what the old gentleman would say first.

Without saying anything Zeb picked up his Bible that was next to him. With his left hand (that's the one affected by the stroke) he struggled to move his hands across its cover, with a slow caressing motion. His eyes stared at the old book as though it was talking to him through his finger tips. Its pages were ragged and the cover looked as though it had been everywhere the old boots had been, and still ready to serve needed hearts.

Zeb looked at the children and then spoke, "Because some of you are first timers my first name is actually Zeb, but I want you each to call me Buddy. As you call me Buddy you'll be reminding yourself that I want to be just that... your buddy. I'm extra good at just listening. I get skittish around computers and technical stuff and I've got hugs I haven't used yet," he said with a warm smile.

"So, I'd like to start by telling you why we're here. There are two answers. The 1<sup>st</sup> is that I just love telling kids like you lots of the fun stuff in God's Precious Word here and the 2<sup>nd</sup> is that I like to give comfort... lasting comfort... where I can." With a bit of a smile he pointed to the word "Comfort" on the old banner over his head.

He continued, "Now I can waste your time and mine trying to list all the places that don't give comfort. But I'm sure most of you have already been making disappointing discoveries of promised peace that instead delivers nothing desired." With slow gentle motion Zeb opened his old Bible to Romans 15:4.

The evil communist North Koreans captured the American electronics intelligence gathering ship named Pueblo. The eighty plus American sailors were put in a dismal prison and repeatedly subjected to mind-bending sessions that included confession sheets. In secret, the sailors all contributed Bible verses and lists of its books the best they could remember. They wrote the verses and lists on scrap paper. The only papers they could find were leftover confession sheets. How like God... though the enemy tries his best, still God's Word more than triumphs!

God's Word over and over tells us to remember all that He has already done for us. Whether it is a miracle or just providing a warm safe bed and a full glass of milk all our own He knows our needs and expects us to trust Him to meet them.

Zeb continued teaching the children, "To help us with that remembering He's given us a super powerful brain between our ears with two types of memory. One type of memory is short term and gets somewhat reset as we sleep each day. My silver hair somehow makes this short memory less dependable," he said with a smile. "The other memory is long term and lets me remember things I did when I was younger than you all."

"Gang, when you read God's word for yourself you catch sight of golden verses and principles you may have never seen before. How many of you have seen the "Remembrance Ribbons? Actually, it's pretty hard not to. They are on the sides of cars, trucks, and sides of buildings and signs. Most all of them help us to remember our military service people and their families at home that miss them."

"Did you know these are mentioned in the Bible? They sure are. God has all sorts of wonderful ways for us to remember how much He loves us and all the things He's already done for us. Like you can probably guess, I'm going

## 5- Our God-given Magnificent Memories

It's that wonderful Thursday and a chance to meet with the mop room gang meeting in the Freedom Fire House. All the boys and girls are seated with one new visitor. The visitor's wheelchair almost runs over Smokey's tail. The girl in the wheel chair hugs Smokey and all are friends.

She introduces herself, "Hi everyone, my name's Norma and I just heard of your mop room gang last Monday. I'd sure like to come regular to your meetings if you don't mind my wheelchair. My only friend at school said you all learn about having a happy heart, and I sure could use some of that." Norma slowly moved her hand over her right thigh that still gave painful reminders of the car accident almost two years ago.

When Zeb heard Norma's words, 'happy heart' he had to wipe his nose quick or he'd soon have to wipe his eyes. He told himself that being a kid is plenty tough enough, let alone having to do it all from a wheelchair.

Zeb asked Bradley if he'd open the mop room meeting with prayer and asked that he'd include prayer for the military men and women away from their families, giving their lives to protect our freedom. Bradley felt it was a privilege and did his best.

"You're all seeing that a couple favorite areas of the Bible I like to share with others like you all is in the book Numbers. It's just a shame that people only see some of the repetition and generations and decides to skip it all. But just like digging for gold that's just under the surface, you need to take a second glance... you, and I, need to dig in to find valuables.

I want to tell you about the Pueblo Bible, that few people know about.

Looking into each pair eyes he said, "I'll tell you that you can take a flashlight into a submarine and go to the deepest part of the ocean. It's called the Marianas Trench in the Pacific Ocean and it's over 7 miles straight down where no sunlight reaches and only a few brave men have ever gone. Now you won't find any there. Or you could take a rocket ship and look behind every star. You won't find any there either. The exciting thing about God is that He's placed tons of it right here in His Word. It's what we all desire each day of our lives... comfort and hope. Let me read the verse to you.

*For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

Buddy repeated the phrase 'comfort of the scriptures' and then repeated it a third time with more deliberate emphasis. Using the side of a large cardboard box and a marker that was just about dried up, the old gentleman asked one of the kids to write the verse on the box so everyone could really look at it. Each of the kids picked a favorite word or phrase from the verse but most everyone repeated in their own heart... 'have hope', 'have hope', 'have... hope'. From this point forward, Zeb never had to tell any of them to pay attention... far from it.

With great expression, hand motion, Zeb told the kids, "I want you to imagine you are in a gold mine with your miner's hat with its little light on your head. You have a pick and shovel in your hands and have been told there is real gold in front of you, just below the surface. You are certain that the gold is not going to jump out at you, right? If you want the gold to be yours you'll need to use your pick and shovel." Buddy got a yes nod from all his listeners except Smokey lying between the old boots.

He then asked the kids to each pick a word out of the verse that might be a place to start digging for this gold called Hope. Buddy complimented each of them for showing the group where to start digging. Monte raised his hand and said he didn't know what that 'aforetime' word was. With a warm loving smile the old gentleman with the silver mustache began to dig.

"'Aforetime' is an old time word that means 'long long ago'. It kind of makes you think these things that were written long ago are still around and can be trusted even now in this age of computers and space ships." Buddy looked to see if each young person gave him an 'I understand' expression before he continued.

"Who picked the word 'learning'? We do that every day don't we? Never let your guard down because it's pretty easy to learn garbage stuff that only evil people will like. These things will actually lead you farther away from anything that pleases God. Learning is not just reading things any more than gold mining is just digging up the gold. We have to pick up the gold ore and put it in our bucket. We need to make it our own. Learning is information that goes in one ear and finds a home before it leaks back out our other ear. Ha-ha."

Zeb's heart was pounding like a jack-hammer as he heard himself faithful to God's call upon his life to uncover kid comfort using precious scripture. He almost dropped his Bible as he slapped his knee thinking of the word 'patience' and where he learned its meaning.

"Ol' Granny Nestum, bless her heart. She taught me that 'patience' is a TIME word. It takes time to say it. It takes time to learn to spell it. And it sure takes time to DO it right!" he told the boys and girls. He continued, "Just like back in her pioneer days, for some folks there was too much time to get

people every minute. Now if that doesn't put some grit in your gizzard... uh..I mean innards, nothing else will!"

Buddy then got a real serious look on his face and caressed his beloved Bible again. He told the gang, "We've just seen that God provides guardian angels with swords and sometimes talking animals to protect us, but that's only a small part of His love and care. The greatest gift of love to us is sending His only Son to the earth to teach us about love sent from heaven and to be a sacrifice for all our sins."

Buddy tapped his forehead saying, "But it's not enough just to know about God's only Son and sacrifice on the cross." Then tapping his chest he told the boys and girls, "We need to ask Him to come into our heart so He can become our Lord and Master. If any of you would like to know more about becoming saved the Bible way, let me know soon."

Zeb said, "For those of you who don't have a Bible at home, I suggest that you take a few minutes after the meeting and read all of chapter 22 of Numbers. Now let's see... where is the book of Numbers?" A couple girls said, "It's the 4<sup>th</sup> book of the Bible." They got a thumbs-up from Buddy. 📖

is one of the books that lots of people don't like to read. They think it has too much boring repetition in it. I guarantee there won't be one boring word in this amazing miraculous event that has ever happened only once... and WE get to read about it and share it whenever we want."

"As we go to chapter 22 verse 28 I want to tell you the word ass in the Bible is an old time way of talking about a donkey and is not a nasty way of talking. Trudy, will you read verse 28 for us?" Buddy asked. She did and gasped as did most of the other gang. "Wowwww" came from several of the gang too. "Yes, God made the donkey talk human talk. And it even counted too. But more wonderful is to learn WHY God made the donkey talk and count like a man." emphasized Zeb.

He told the gang, "All of God's chosen nation were down in the valley raising their families and never knew about what was going on, up on the hill above them. Up there were Balaam, his donkey, and God's angel guarding the Israelites from Balaam's attempts to curse them. Now gang, our wonderful God has angels to protect us from many evil people that want to say and do things against us. Isn't that comforting?" Zeb asked the question again for emphasis.

"Not only was God's angel, with sword raised, on guard duty but he even gave a lowly donkey the ability to warn a human that his actions, if carried out, might mean Balaam's death. God has all sorts of ways to protect us and help us to do things that please Him. Isn't it exciting to see that God uses mighty angels but also lowly donkeys to guard us and help everyone to honor God in heaven?"


"Buddy, doesn't that mean that I can pull my cover over me at night and know that God is watching over little me, even?" asked one of the boys. Buddy excitedly slapped his knee and said, "...sure does! In fact there's even a Bible verse that tells about the angels that watch over you young

into mischief and others there just wasn't enough hours in each day.

Kids, remind me to tell you sometime how I thought I could churn the butter faster by rolling it down the hill." With another slap on the knee Buddy figured he'd better get back to business 'cuz it'll be goin' home time shortly.

He again said the phrase with great feeling, "comfort of the scriptures" and still repeated it once more. All the boys and girls could see a tired expression come to Zeb's face knowing he was thinking of difficult storms of life that he had weathered. The kids thought of themselves as being in the same boat with their beloved Buddy and cherished his every word.

"There have been times in my life so difficult I felt like a sailor thrown out of the boat and bobbing in the waves with nothing to hold onto except a life preserver. I would search the nearby waters for any telltale signs of vicious sharks and thinking my life was over. I somehow felt that God had turned his back on me because I had not been good enough in His eyes. It was then I read some words on the top of the life preserver around me. The words written in Heaven's blue color, "... have hope."

Zeb asked each kid to search his or her heart, "What do you have surrounding you, Satan's lies or Heaven-sent Hope?" 

## 2- Zeb's In Love

**Z**eb began, "I must tell you all of a great love of my life." The kids expected Buddy to pull some pictures of grand children or wife out of his wallet, but he didn't. He held up his battered well-worn Bible. "This is the greatest love of my life, second only to its Author, Jesus Christ," he proudly told his listeners.

Buddy slid a smaller cardboard box over between his 'Thursday night family' of children and himself. He began using it like a desk and then caressing the Bible as he spoke to the children. "Even before we open this treasure chest of pages and promises, it tickles me through and through to think that God has blessed me with being taught how to read, for one thing."

"And the other is that in this country we have a Bible, our very own copy sometimes, in our own language. You know, it just puts me to mind that God is up to something. Really. I look at this book here and then I see all your faces that seem eager to learn. Just as sure as there's a big shiny fire truck right outside that door, I believe God wants to give each of us a real blast of His Blessings. And don't you think for a minute that He doesn't know just what we each need." With great eye contact with each kid, "I sure hope each of you think that way too."

The old Bible was opened, pausing at this page and then going on to another page, and then another. What the young people saw were lots and lots of little notes in the margins of so many of the pages. The notes warmed Nancy's heart in thinking it was evidence that someone had been down this trail and that trail before with a mind to help later followers.

## 4- Only One Time in All of History

**A**fter the applause and hugs for Trudy finished, Zeb lead the whole group in prayer thanking Him for all His good gifts. He secondly asked God to bless the lesson about to be shared.

Zeb used a lot of body motion and an almost spooky tone to introduce the lesson for these troubled hearts. "I want to tell you about a historic event that happened long long ago, that had never occurred before or since. It's so strange many people don't believe it ever happened for real. Well, it did and you're all going to like it moocho."


The man's name was Balaam. He was supposed to be a preacher or prophet, but he didn't always do what God wanted, by a long shot. Down this narrow lane he went riding his donkey on one of his shameful tasks. This time an evil king had called Balaam to say super bad things about the nation of Israel. And we all know that Israel is God's chosen favorite nation."

"All of a sudden the donkey would go no farther. Balaam whipped him but he took off down into a field. More whippings and the donkey smashed Balaam's foot against a nearby wall, but the donkey would not go forward. The reason is that one of God's angels with a sword in hand was blocking the donkey's path." Zeb, who liked the gang to call him Buddy, paused to see that everyone was still with him. They were with greater interest.

Benny blurted out, "Well come on Buddy. What happened next? I love this story, I mean history event, so far... Tell us what happened next!"

Buddy asked all the gang to open their Bibles to the book called Numbers. "That's the 4<sup>th</sup> book of the Bible. This

“You come sit with me. I like new friends. You can share my Bible.” Before Tom left the mop room his eyes glanced at the old banner over everyone’s head that still proclaimed, “Freedom Fire Department Gives Aid and Comfort.” He turned and left the group thinking that it takes a whole firehouse to give aid. But to give comfort it only takes a caring friend that will share God’s Word.


Now when the mop room gang met the next Thursday there were three grocery bags of clothes with Trudy’s name on them. Can you guess what was on the very top? A brand new Bible with a note saying it is specifically just for her. That firehouse aid and comfort banner was certainly living up to its promise. You’ll agree that God is also. 

She was eager to follow. She had so many heart aches and questions that the mop room became to her a peaceful lake with clear refreshing water promising beautiful reflections of God’s provisions for her, here and now. Nancy decided that approaching God’s Word with the anticipation and expectation you’d have sitting down to a tasty strength-giving meal was the right thing to always do.

Zeb turned to one page and with a chuckle told the boys and girls, “See this verse I have circled with sun rays for emphasis? It always warms me every time I read it. Listen to the words. Try to see them in your mind as I read.

*“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” He ended with, “John 14 verse 27”.*

With another smile he caressed the pages once more. “Some of you have already gone farther in school than I have, but it feels good inside to know I don’t have to go very far till I read promises that comfort and calm me. This is what I want to show each of you as we begin traveling through this treasure chest of God’s gifts to us”.

Buddy asked his young listeners, “How many of you remember David the little shepherd boy that killed the giant and later became a king? He wrote what I call the juicy verse. He wrote, ‘*How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*’ (Ps 119:103.) Boys and girls, I can’t think of many tragedies worse than people in this country owning a Bible but never feeding on its sweet goodness each day.” 

### 3- Blessed Additions

Nobody knew where they were coming from or who was responsible, but each week there would be one, two, or three new Bibles sitting on the mop room's cardboard box desk. They were still in their cellophane wrappers and just itching to be opened up and used. This was a God-send to be sure.

Zeb had already noticed that only one of the kids had his own Bible. It appeared the kids were about all from families that didn't have Bibles or see the need to have one. But this was a challenge for Zeb of the highest order.

A left over roll of paper towels, the kind of brown ones that are used in wall dispensers, was found and often became the beginnings of wall banners. The banners contained choice phrases the boys and girls were being taught and reviewed each week.

About the first Thursday in April an old blackboard and a new box of chalk appeared in the mop room. The words written clearly in big letters almost brought tears to everyone in the group. It simply said, "We love all you kids and Zeb too!" There must have been a couple dozen initials all surrounding the statement.

One of the girls told the group, "Boy was I wrong. I thought the fire house teams just gave aid to people by saving their lives." A boy piped up with, "Well maybe that's exactly what they're doing by providing us the Bibles and the blackboard."

Something else that was a bit hard to explain. Each Thursday just after the mop room started, Tom the ambulance driver and Barney the pump specialist would quietly begin polishing Tanker truck #2, which is always parked just

outside the mop room door. It was actually possible to polish #2 and still be able to hear all the words spoken in the mop room. The Thursday words of comfort were sorely needed by Tom since his newborn baby was spending time in the nearby hospital. Do you suppose Zeb or any of the boys and girls ever realize how much others depend upon their words of comfort and promise based on scripture?

Last Thursday's meeting was soon interrupted by the loud clanging of the bell and loud speaker announcing the location and details of the emergency. Next commands said which trucks were to respond. All this was so startling and loud that in the following moments Zeb couldn't even remember what he had been teaching. He was sure of what his next actions were to be.

When the big garage doors all closed and everything got quiet, he told the mop room group they should all pray for the emergency. They needed to pray for the safety of the emergency teams and that God would help them to give aid soon enough to all the people at the emergency.

The fire was put out with no one injured, but the house and all its contents were destroyed. At the next Thursday meeting Tom stepped into the mop room doorway and gave more details of the fire to the group. Then he asked if the comfort corner group allowed visitors. Everyone gave a hardy "yes!" Tom held up 1 finger, said he'd be back in a minute, and disappeared."

When Tom returned, he had a girl standing beside him with the saddest look on her face you could imagine. He had an arm around her. Looking at the girl he told the group, "This is Trudy. Her house and all her belongings were all destroyed in the fire last week. Could she sit in your group for a while?"

Without another word one of the girls went right over to Trudy and took her hand with a smile. She told Trudy,