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About this Guide

This devotional guide is meant to accompany
Dangerous Journey: The Story of Pilgrim's Progress by Oliver Hunkin.
Published by Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 1985.
126 pages. For ages 9-up. A video version is also available at Amazon.com.
Pilgrim’s Progress, even the Dangerous Journey version, is a dense story. On the first real page of the book, I counted at least 14 words my kids didn’t know. But even if your kids are like mine, they will benefit immeasurably from reading it with you!

Two things that might help you and your kids enjoy this book. First, don’t be a slave to the text. Bunyan didn’t intend his book to be a dusty tomb. Instead, use it as a springboard to talk to your kids about what’s in your heart and theirs! Share your own story of faith, trials, and tribulations, and encourage them to share their own stories with you.

Second, when dealing with thick texts like this (or the Bible!), here’s a simple method for teaching kids to enjoy difficult books:

**READ**

Read a small section of the text.

**SUMMARIZE**

Tell your child in simple language what it means. In other words, give him the big picture of the passage.

**ASK**

And then ask him a question to help him engage.

I know it sounds simple, and it may take a little practice, but it has really worked for us. And now, enough dawdling...we're off to the Celestial City! As Augustine would say, “Tolle lege!” Take up and read.

- Emily Whitten
Chapter Summary: The Burden of Sin

Let's begin with the title page: a man reading a Bible with a burden on his back. Christian actually doesn’t start his journey until a few pages in, and the text itself doesn’t give much to help kids get oriented, so I think this image is worth dwelling on first. In fact, the original Pilgrim's Progress spends a lot more time drawing out Christian’s state prior to his journey, so I hope I’m in keeping with the spirit of the text.

Critical to this picture and the story, we see 1) Christian has read God’s Word, 2) he is now burdened by his sin, and 3) he’s worried because he is under God’s judgement. While there is more that can be mined (and I’ll go through some of it below), this will be my focus in the notes and the activities.

In the next chapter, I’ll focus more on “the journey” and teasing out how Christian is called to rid himself of the burden and find the Celestial City.

Devotional Application

When we read the Bible, it tells us of our sin. It also tells us that the punishment for sin, apart from Jesus, is death. But there is hope for Christian—and for us—because Jesus has already made the most dangerous journey, through death on a cross, to take away the burden of sin from His children.

Bible Verses

- **MEMORY VERSE For Chapters 1 & 2, Romans 3:23**: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”
- **Proverbs 1:7**: God and His Word teach us our true state: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.”
- **Romans 6:23**: The punishment for sin apart from Jesus is death: “For the wages of sin is death.”

Activities

- **Object Lesson for The Burden of Sin**: Find a heavy object in your home and let your children try to carry it on their backs. I chose a wooden chair turned upside down and helped my children try to walk with it propped on their backs. If they can hold the object themselves, give them some mission such as walking around the house or to their room and back five times. Then introduce the word “burden” and ask them, has sin...
ever felt like this to you? Has it ever made you sad or upset when you told a lie or hurt someone else? That’s just how Christian felt—“burdened” and sad because he had broken God’s law.

- **Drawing Activity:** Draw Christian’s burden on a piece of paper. Then ask your child to draw pictures of his own sin inside the circle. He might draw lips for lying, a toy he has snatched or coveted lately, food he has complained about having to eat, or the word “No” for times he has not obeyed or talked back when asked to do something.

- **Make-a-Book:** I’ll include one coloring page per chapter, so that if you staple them together at the end, you’ll have your own Pilgrim’s Progress picture book. For younger kids, a book without text may be best. But if you want to include text, you could have your child type a short summary or Bible verse, print it out, and paste it over the bottom of the coloring page. See the final Activities section on p. 38.

**Reading Notes**

These are notes to help you explain tough words or concepts to your kids. As an overall approach, I try to explain them with kid-friendly definitions as well as a stories from my own life or by asking the kids to supply a story. How have I been obstinate? How have they been pliable? Ever not cleaned up their room to play a little longer? I really want kids to see the villains as encapsulating some part of every man’s character.

- **City of Destruction:** I explain destruction as “tearing up something.” My kids are only 5 and 4, so I think it’s the best I can do within their vocabulary. Bible reference: Sodom’s destruction and Lot’s escape, Genesis 19.

- **Evangelist:** “Someone who tells people about Jesus.” Bible reference: One good, short example is Philip in Acts 8, “Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ.”

- **Obstinate:** Someone who is wrong but won’t change his mind, no matter what. Pharaoh is a great example. See Exodus. Ever been obstinate? Ever found it hard to forgive someone, even though God had forgiven you? A great point for sharing about your own sin, parents.

- **Pliable:** Someone who just does what is easy. (easily bent or swayed.) See Peter when he denies Jesus in Mark 14:66. He just says whatever is easy at the moment, and regrets it later. Ask your kids if they have ever gone along with someone even though they knew it was wrong.

- **The Slough of Despond:** Bunyan doesn’t give a lot of info on this one, but one online dictionary says despond is discouragement. My kids don’t know that word, so I told them it’s a place of despair and giving up. That’s something we know A LOT about at my house. Have your kids ever laid out on the floor in despair of having to clean their room? Ask them about how they felt. My guess is the pictures of Christian kind of sum it up. Bible Reference: Peter after he betrayed Christ is another good example of this. Mark 14:66-72.
- **Mr. Worldly Wiseman**: My littlest one says it’s someone who knows what to do when he cuts his finger, but doesn’t know about God. (ha) Perhaps a little more pointedly, he’s someone who despises God’s Word and offers some other way to God. A great question here is to ask your kids how they can go to heaven. Anything other than Jesus’ blood and righteousness is the answer of Mr. Worldly Wiseman. Bible Reference: Simon the Sorcerer who tried to buy spiritual gifts from the apostles. *Acts 8: 18-19.*

- **Mr. Legality**: Someone who offers to help Christian get relief from sin with more/better laws. If a horse doesn’t have wings, would it help to give him an instruction manual on flying? Of course not. Likewise, we need something besides the law to be saved. *Luke 18:9-14.* Also, the mountain represents Sinai where Moses received the Law, but I didn’t bring that out to my kids at this point.

- **The Wicket Gate**: a small door into the place Christian will find Christ and lose his burden. *Matthew 7: 13.* “Enter through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction...”
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