

I Will Go

BY: CHARLES MILLS



The author of this year's children's readings is **Charles Mills**.

Illustrations: Xuan Le



All the World

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).¹

Sarah watched the traffic move slowly past the window of her dad’s truck. *How is it possible?* she thought with a frown. *There are so many people, and I’m just one little girl.*

Dad opened the driver-side door of the pickup truck and dropped a bag of groceries onto the seat beside her. Then he climbed in and buckled his seat belt. “Are you hungry for vegetable stew?” he asked with a smile lighting his work-tanned face. “Your mom asked me to pick up lots of yummy carrots,

peas, and broccoli at the store, so I’m thinking delicious vegetable stew with freshly baked bread for supper. I even bought some apples and bananas for dessert.”

He started the engine and eased the vehicle into the stream of traffic. Sarah smiled. “Yes, I like stew,” she said quietly, then turned back to the cars and people slipping past the window.

“You OK?” her dad asked, glancing in her direction. “You look serious. You’re not your usual talkative self.”

Sarah shook her head. “I’m fine. I just don’t understand.”

“Understand what?”

The girl looked over at her father. “The preacher at church last Sabbath said that we should take God’s love to everyone in all the world. Remember? He said, ‘Go to *all the world!*’” She paused. “But I’m just one little girl. I’m just *me*. How am I supposed to do what the preacher said?”

Dad nodded slowly. “Good point,” he stated. “The world is

a pretty big place, with millions and millions of people in it. Everyone is busy going here and there, working hard, trying to stay alive, fighting diseases, protecting themselves and their families from harm. How are we supposed to help that?”

Suddenly Dad steered the truck to the curb. “I’ll be right back,” he said. Sarah watched him grab a sack of apples from the grocery bag and hurry away to a man standing by the road with a sign that read, “I’m hungry. Please help.”

A few minutes later Dad stopped the truck again and jumped out. He hurried to a woman in a wheelchair waiting to cross the street. He guided her from one side to the other, making sure she arrived safely.

Then he waved and smiled at a man sitting on a park bench with a sad look on his face. The man smiled back with a wave.

When Dad returned to the truck, Sarah grinned, “OK, OK, I get it,” she said. “The world includes the people all around us, right? I can help the people just beyond my window.”

Dad smiled. “And you know what goes good with loving service?”

Father and daughter spoke together with smiles lighting their faces. “Vegetable stew!”

GETTING READY TO GO

Start a list this week of how you can help people. Then get busy taking God’s love to them. Remember, no act of kindness is too small. In their world it may be huge!

Fishing for People

“Then He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’” (Matthew 4:19).

“I want to be a disciple,” Sarah announced at the supper table.

Mom’s and Dad’s spoons paused halfway between their bowls and their lips.

“OK,” Dad responded.

“That’s nice,” Mom said with a smile.

The scent of freshly baked bread and steaming vegetable stew filled the kitchen as the little family enjoyed their meal together. Both Mom and Dad knew that when their daughter made an announcement such as this, she’d given it much thought, and something important was about to happen. “Can you start being a disciple after supper?” Mom suggested. “I don’t want your soup to get cold.”

Sarah grinned. “OK,” she said, taking another big bite of her warm slice of freshly baked whole-wheat bread. “But I’m kind of excited about it.”

Dad winked at his wife and nodded. “My daughter the disciple,” he said with a grin. “I like that!”

Later that evening Mom found her little girl curled up on her bed, reading a chapter from a picture book filled with Bible stories. Just a few years back she’d read those same stories to Sarah. Now the girl was reading for herself, thanks to the patient work of her teachers at school.

“So,” Mom said, seating herself on the edge of the bed. “What do disciples do?”

Sarah grinned. “Oh, it’s very exciting,” she enthused. “First, they learn all they can about Jesus. Then they go and show other people what Jesus was like.”

“That does sound exciting,” Mom responded.

“And they tell stories from the Bible—like these.” Sarah held up the book. “And they help people who are afraid and worried. Sometimes they travel here and there to make sure that poor people have food to eat and sick people have doctors to care for them. They even sing songs about Jesus. I know at least three great Jesus songs.” The girl paused. “Oh, and they cast out demons.”

“They what?” Mother gasped.

“Don’t worry,” Sarah giggled.

“It’s not as scary as you think. I learned in Sabbath School that when you pray for a person, any demons that happen to be hanging around will leave in a hurry. Teacher said prayer also chases away the demons of anger, sadness, and shame. Powerful stuff!”

Mother reached out and touched the girl’s face. “Wow. My daughter the disciple. I think Jesus will help you every step of the way, Sarah. He’ll go wherever you go and teach you what to say and do. When we partner with Jesus, we’re in good hands.”

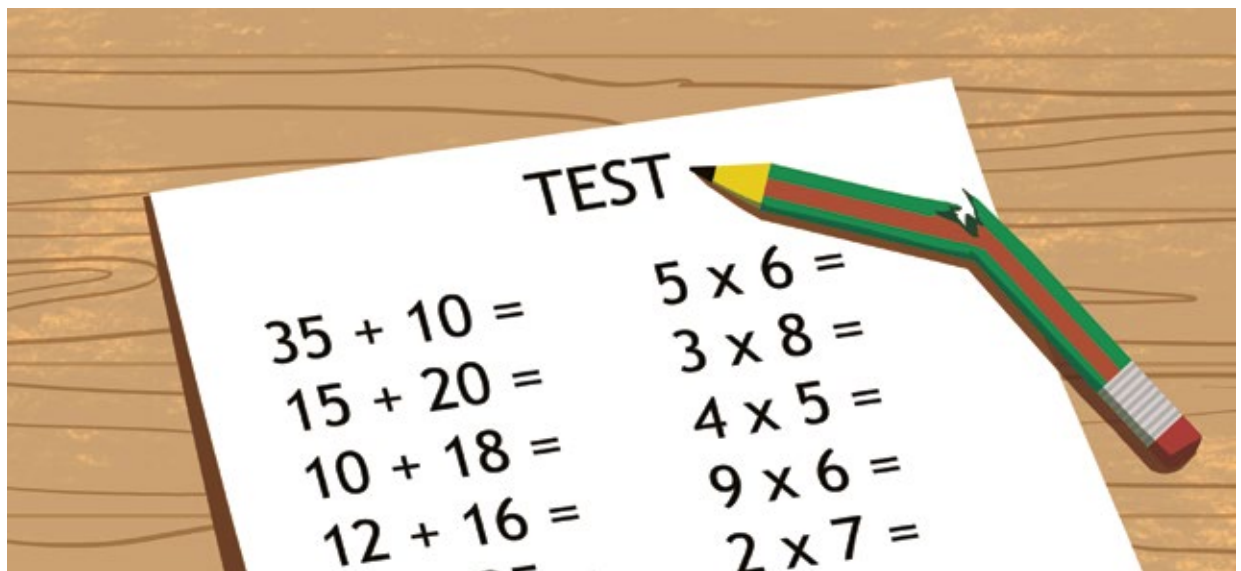
Sarah nodded. “That’s why I’m reading this book again. If I’m going to work together with Him, I need to know all I can about my Partner.”

GETTING READY TO GO

Think of your favorite Jesus story. What three things about Him did you appreciate the most?

In what four ways can you be like Jesus as you share His love with others?





They Hate Me

“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you” (John 15:18).

Sarah climbed into the pickup truck and leaned her head against the headrest as a heavy sigh escaped her lips. Dad studied her for a long moment. “What happened?” he asked softly. “Did you fail a test? Did your baseball team lose at recess? Did someone say something mean to you?”

Sarah watched the students hurrying by, heading for the school buses. “No, no, and . . . yes,” she said.

“You want to talk about it?”

“I just want to be a good disciple.”

“I know.”

“I just want to share God’s love.”

“I know.”

“So how come when I told my classmate Peter that he shouldn’t cheat on the math test and instead I would help him learn how to multiply numbers by nine, he said, ‘Leave me

alone. Just go away! I don’t need your help!’ Then he called me a bad name.” Sarah paused. “He hates me. He just hates me.”

Dad blinked. “Wow. That had to hurt.”

“And some of the other kids said I was only trying to impress Peter with my math skills. Now they hate me, too.” Sarah shook her head. “Being a disciple is the pits!”

Sarah’s father steered the truck out of the parking lot and headed toward home. “May I share a Bible text with you?” he asked.

“Sure, why not,” Sarah said without emotion.

“John 15:18: ‘If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first’ [NIV].”²

Sarah frowned. “Who said that?”

“Jesus.”

“Really?”

“Yup. In the very next verse He said, ‘If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you’ [NIV]. Some people hated Jesus when He wanted to help them.”

“Why?”

“Well, some folk don’t trust God’s love. They think it’s like

earthly love, where you need to pay it back. They think that if you’re kind to them, then you must want something in return, and whatever it is, they don’t want to do it.”

“Oh, that’s silly,” Sarah breathed. “I just wanted to help Peter pass the test and not get into trouble.”

“That’s because you’re demonstrating God’s love, not earthly love. Jesus cared for others simply because He loved them and wanted them to do what was right. But some people didn’t want to do what was right, so they rejected Jesus. And they hated Him.”

Sarah closed her eyes. “I have so much to learn about being a disciple.”

“Oh, I don’t know,” her dad said with a grin. “Sounds like God is teaching you wonderful lessons already. He’s helping you grow and mature. We can thank Him for that.”

And they did.

GETTING READY TO GO

Choose one way that you want Jesus to help you grow to be a great disciple. Be honest.

The Light

“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matthew 5:14).

“Why didn’t you get mad?”

Sarah looked up from her science textbook to find her classmate Justin Wilcox standing beside her. His face was streaked with sweat, and his dark, curly hair held the imprint of his baseball cap. “What did you say?” she asked.

“When Terry said that you punched him in the arm and you didn’t, and then Teacher made you come inside for the rest of recess and you just came inside without saying anything, why didn’t you get mad?”

Sarah leaned back in her desk chair. “I asked my mom why Terry is mean to me. She said he’s angry because his dad left and probably won’t be coming back. So he goes around saying angry things because he feels sad inside. I guess he wants other people to feel sad too.”

Justin frowned. “So you lost your recess because you didn’t want to cause a problem for the guy who made you lose your recess?”

Sarah shrugged. “I guess so.”

“You should have punched him right in the arm,” Justin admitted. “Hey, he already said you did.”

Sarah laughed. “That’s not what a disciple does.”

“A disciple? What are you talking about?”

Sarah sighed. “I learned at my church that I should be a disciple for Jesus. Sometimes being

a disciple means you have to think of others first—even when they tell lies about you. Terry is sad and angry, and I guess I don’t blame him. If I argued with him or told on him, he’d just feel worse. I didn’t want that to happen.”

Justin shook his head and headed for the door. “You’re weird, Sarah,” he called. “Good luck with the disciple thing.”

Sarah chuckled. “Thanks, Justin. I’ll need it.”

A couple of minutes later Sarah felt the presence of someone standing beside her, and looked up into the face of Terry. “I’m sorry,” the boy said. “I told Teacher what I did, and she said that I should come inside for the rest of recess. She said you can go back out if you want.”

Sarah thought for a moment. “What do you know about the moon?”

Terry frowned. “The moon?”
“Yes. I’m reading about the moon, and I don’t understand

how it can make the ocean tides go up and down. You seem to know a lot about science in class. Can you explain it to me?”

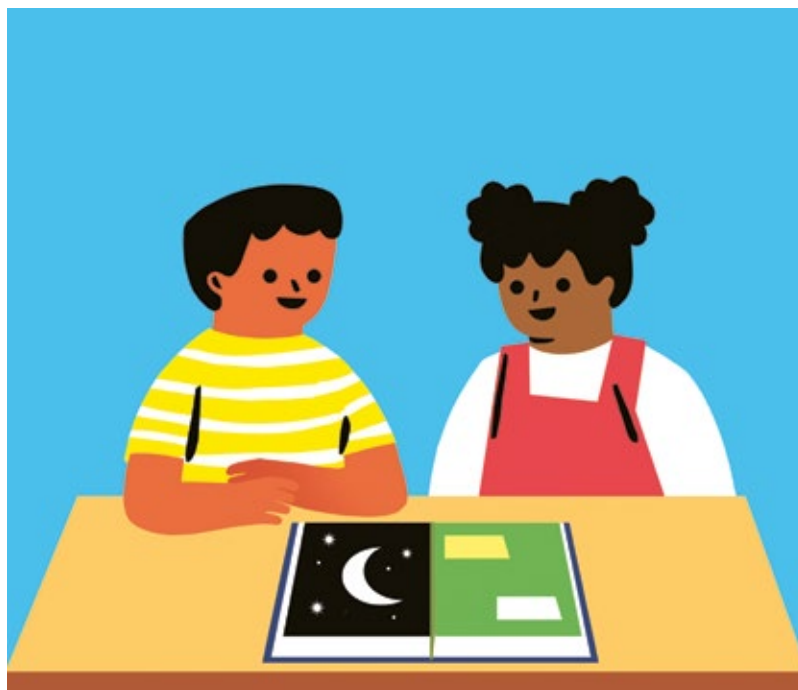
Terry grinned. “I love the moon,” he said excitedly, seating himself next to Sarah. “You see, there’s this thing called *gravity*.”

While their classmates played outside, the sad boy and the disciple talked about the secrets of the solar system.

GETTING READY TO GO

How do you think a disciple of Jesus would handle these situations?

1. A new kid joins your class at school.
2. A classmate who lives nearby is ill and can’t keep up with his or her schoolwork.
3. Someone calls you a mean name during recess.



School of Love

“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers” (Ephesians 4:29).

Pastor Miller looked up from his computer to see a visitor standing in the doorway of his church office. “Well, hello, Sarah,” he called. “What brings you to our beautiful church on a Tuesday?”

Sarah dropped her book bag by the big leather chair next to the window and sat down with a sigh. “Is there a school for disciples?” she asked. “I think I need to take a class or two.”

“On what?”

“On how to be a better disciple! Sometimes I do pretty well. Other times I get confused and mess up. Jesus is probably embarrassed by me.”

“Oh,” Pastor Wilson responded with a knowing nod. “Sounds like you need to attend the School of Love.”

“The what?”

“The School of Love. It’s where all disciples in training go for help.”

Sarah leaned forward in her chair. “Where is this place?”

“Well, it can be in church or Sabbath School or at home. I’ve even attended the School of Love in a prison.”

“A prison?” Sarah gasped. “I don’t understand.”

The man grinned. “The School of Love isn’t a place, Sarah. It’s an attitude. Disciples have a lot of love in their hearts, and they’re always looking for ways to use that love. They want to know how they can better serve their family, their friends, their classmates, even their country.”

“So,” Sarah said, “what do they do at this school?”

“They study their Bible, learn from each other, develop personal talents that will help them share God’s love even more—you know, like a singer who plays his or her guitar or an artist or photographer who creates beautiful images. I order encouraging books online to give to inmates at our local penitentiary. They appreciate it.

“You see, we learn more about God’s love when we *share* God’s love. All that training and studying and developing our talents makes us better at what we do. If we get confused or mess up, Jesus is happy to help us fix the problem.”

“So,” Sarah responded thoughtfully, “Jesus isn’t embarrassed. He’s just thinking, *Hey, that disciple needs a little more training.*”

“Absolutely!” Pastor Wilson said. “So my advice to you is to spend time with people, offer encouraging words on social media, take an active role in church services, and develop your talents. That’s all part of attending the School of Love.”

Sarah grinned broadly as she headed for the door. “Thank you, Pastor Wilson,” she called. “I’ll enroll today!”

“See you in class,” the man responded with a wave.

GETTING READY TO GO

Here’s your School of Love assignments. Circle the ones you want to complete this week.

Read one chapter in the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John) each day for a week.

Spend an hour in nature, asking God to show you something incredible.

Practice one of your talents until you’re better at it. Then share it with someone.



Scars

“From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus” (Galatians 6:17).

“What’s that?” Sarah asked as she sat by her grandfather on the couch. Across the small living room the fireplace shone brightly, sending beams of warm light over the rug.

“Oh, this little ol’ scar?”

Grandpa responded, examining the area of his upper left arm where Sarah was pointing. “I got that while I was on the police force. Somebody decided that he didn’t like the fact that I was trying to stop him from committing a crime, so he shot me.”

The girl frowned. “Did it hurt?”

“Yes. A lot!”

“What happened to the guy with the gun?”

“He went to jail.”

“I’ll bet you were happy about that!”

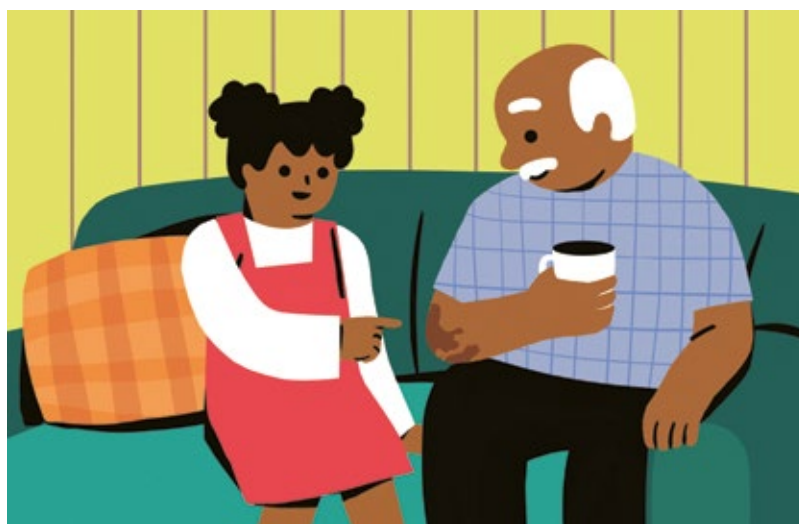
Grandpa shook his head slowly from side to side. “Not really. It made me sad to think that I couldn’t help him live a better life.”

“He shot you, Grandpa! He shot you! You’ve got the scar to prove it!”

“Well, yes. He did fire the gun. But I’d rather live in freedom with a scar than live in prison without one. Wouldn’t you?”

Sarah nodded slowly. “Why do bad people hurt good people? Why do they make scars?”

The man frowned. “I guess bad people don’t like good people,” he said. “Maybe they’re jealous. Maybe they think to



themselves, *That good person is making me look bad. So I’ll hurt him, and perhaps he’ll become bad like me. Then I won’t be alone in my badness.*

“Jesus has scars,” Sarah said softly. “The preacher at church said they are in His hands and His side. He got them when some evil people hung him on a cross. Someday I’ll see them.”

“I know,” Grandpa said sadly. “And the apostle Paul was whipped several times because He preached about Jesus’ love. His back had lots of scars.”

“Did he stop preaching?”

“Oh, no! He preached in even more places. Later he wrote, ‘I have scars on my body. These

show I belong to Christ Jesus.’ He wasn’t ashamed. Those scars were proof that he was a true disciple.”

“I’m trying to be a disciple,”

Sarah said thoughtfully.

“I know,” Grandpa responded. “Sometimes disciples get hurt by people who don’t like what they’re saying or preaching or singing or writing. Sometimes the scars come from hurtful words or mean actions. But true disciples know that those scars mean they are sharing God’s love.”

“I’m sorry you got shot, Grandpa,” Sarah said.

“That’s the price you sometimes pay for being a good cop,” the man stated.

GETTING READY TO GO

Circle which you’d rather have. (Please note that some choices will mean that some will make fun of you, try to embarrass you, or hurt you with their words and actions.)

A life filled with Satan’s evil deeds

OR

A life filled with God’s blessings

A forever life with Jesus in heaven

OR

A short life on this earth

A conscience loaded with guilt and shame

OR

A clear conscience and hopeful thoughts



Answering the Call

“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4).

Pastor Miller smiled down at his congregation as he repeated his words. “Is there anyone here who would like to dedicate his or her life to Jesus? Is there anyone who wants to stand and say, ‘I choose to be a disciple of Christ and follow Him wherever He leads?’”

Sarah sat with her parents near the front of the church as the minister’s invitation echoed throughout the sanctuary. She felt happy inside because she’d already answered that call many months before. She’d chosen to be a disciple, and while it wasn’t

always easy, she knew it was the right decision.

From the moment she’d stood to say, “I want to be a disciple,” her life had been filled with many challenges and opportunities. Sarah had even spoken to some of her classmates at school and invited them to join her for special meetings at her church—programs filled with beautiful music and fun stories. Some had even taken her up on her invitation and enjoyed listening to Pastor Miller preach and various people share their talents. The young visitors especially liked the man who played the marimba and the woman who sang songs while strumming a ukulele.

Several of those classmates, along with their parents, were visiting the church at this moment and were seated beside her, listening to the organ play as Pastor Miller waited for a response to his call.

Suddenly Sarah heard the pew on which she was seated squeak as someone stood. She glanced up to see who it was, and her breath caught in her throat. It was Terry, the boy who had caused her so much trouble and embarrassment at school. He’d told lies about her, made fun of her, and made her life miserable. In time he’d become a little more friendly, but the pain of his past actions still lingered.

Now he was standing in front of a whole church filled with people and saying, “I want to be a disciple. I want to give my life to Jesus.”

Several others in the congregation stood in response to Pastor Miller’s invitation, but Sarah didn’t notice. She realized that Jesus had used her to touch the heart of another human being. In all her young life she’d never felt such joy and happiness.

As the minister prayed for those standing, Sarah felt tears well up in her eyes. Answering the call to be a disciple had changed her life, and she couldn’t imagine being anything else. No matter what the future held, she knew she would always share God’s love with everyone she met. She would always be a disciple.

When the pastor finished his prayer, Sarah called out an especially joyful “Amen!”

GETTING READY TO GO

Would you like to be a disciple? Simply pray this prayer every morning.

“Dear Jesus, I want to be a disciple for You. Teach me, train me, and guide me each step of the way. I belong to You. Amen.”

Never Too Late

“The joy, the success, the glory of your ministry, is to be ever ready with listening ear to answer the call of the Master, ‘Here am I; send me’” (Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 168).

Ellen White squirmed in her sleep. The dream seemed so real. She was watching her son Edson with a group of young friends playing at a beach. They were so focused on having fun that they didn't notice that they were moving farther and farther out from the shore.

Ocean waves rose higher and higher and silently rushed toward the group before breaking with a mighty roar. Ellen gasped. “You have not a moment to lose!” she shouted, trying to be heard above the wind, water, and waves. “The undertow! *The undertow!*”

Ellen knew that when the waves washed back out toward the ocean, they could carry those unsuspecting young men with them. They'd surely drown. Suddenly she heard Edson shriek in fear. Then she awoke, trembling.

But her son wasn't young. He was 43 years old, living far from home. He'd had a painful life, making many mistakes and lying about his situations. Ellen had even had to bail him out of jail several times.

Edson's father had died. So had two of his brothers. He was against everything that his mother stood for, and often told her so.

The same day of the dream, Ellen wrote him a letter and told him about her nightmare. “The undertow represents the power of Satan and a set, independent, stubborn will of your own,” she said. She reminded him that he needed to surrender his life to God.

That's when something amazing happened. Edson believed her. He said to himself, *I'm not on the right course to heaven. I need to change.*

And change he did! After much prayer he launched a brand-new ministry. He powered a little steamboat named the *Morning Star* down the mighty Mississippi River to the southern United States. He used it as a church and a school for African American people of that area, sharing the gospel with them. In time he helped establish 15 schools, a publishing house to create books for Black Americans to enjoy, and a sanitarium to address their medical needs.

The story of Edson White provides a wonderful illustration of two important lessons. First, parents should never give up on their children. Ellen wrote him many letters and always let him know that she loved him. And second, it's never too late to become a disciple of Jesus.

GETTING READY TO GO

Are you ready to go and be a disciple? Prayerfully consider these ideas.

Volunteer at a local soup kitchen. Serve kindness with the meals.

Create ways to raise funds for ADRA.

Make your pastor happy by offering to help out at church.

Write encouraging emails to people who are facing problems.

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