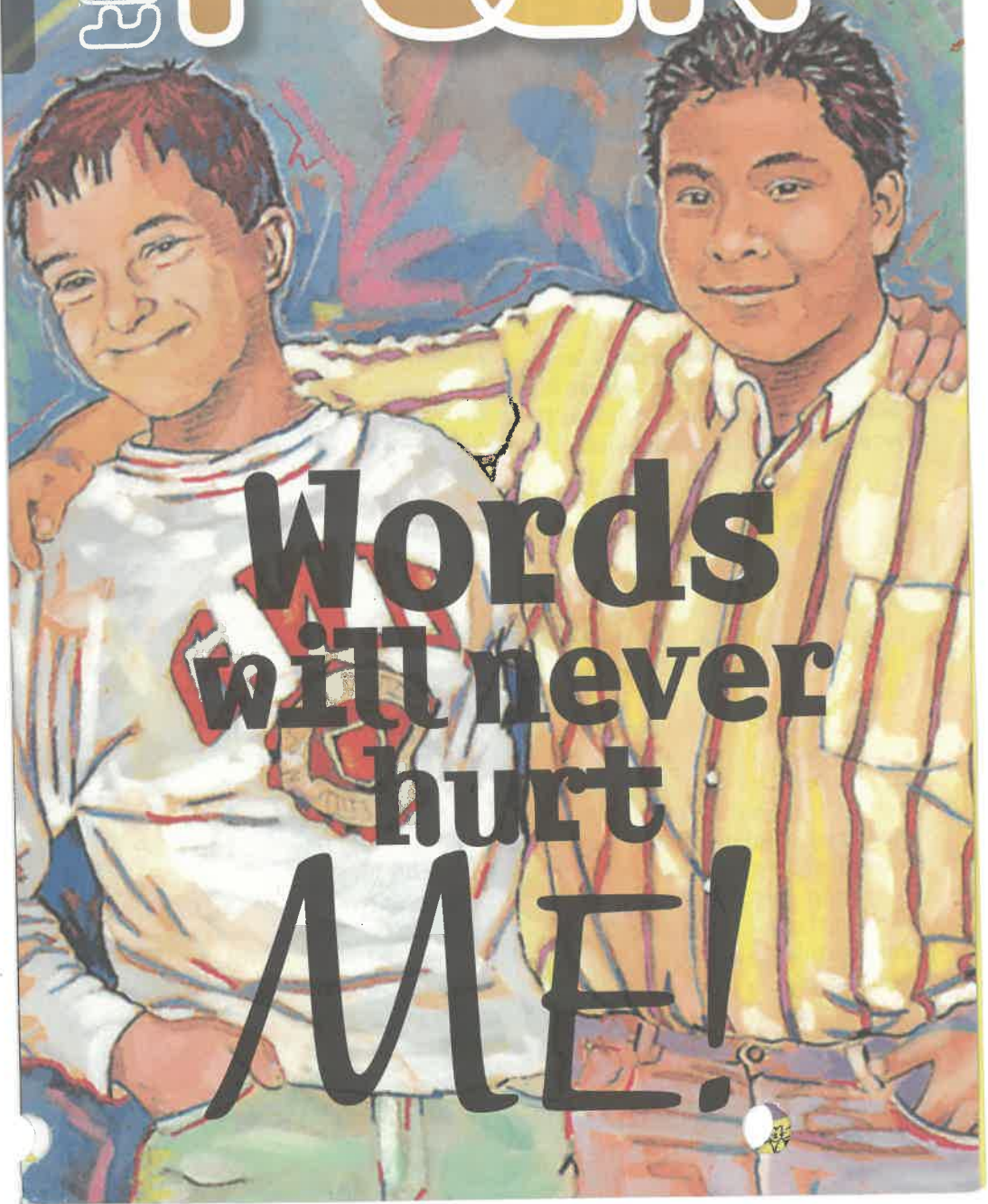


# the rack



**Words  
will never  
hurt  
ME!**

# Words will never hurt ME!

**Loud voices swirled around in Adrian's head as he lay across his bed. Adrian's too slow! We don't want him on our soccer team.**

He winced as he remembered the taunts. *Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me. Right, Adrian thought. That's the biggest lie I've ever heard!*

Dragging himself from the bed, he plodded to the kitchen. Maybe food would help to silence the voices.

As he passed the living room, he saw two visitors sitting on the couch. Beside a woman about his mother's age sat a thin, freckle-faced boy. Adrian thought the boy looked a little older than he was.

"Adrian, this is Mrs. Duncan and her son, Tony," his mother said with a smile. "They're our new neighbors."

Adrian and Mrs. Duncan greeted each other. Tony rocked back and forth.

Adrian immediately felt uncomfortable. He told his mom that he had lots of homework and headed back upstairs.

In his room, Adrian flopped on his bed. Closing his eyes, he thought about what happened in gym class that day. Roberto had announced, "Adrian is on your team, Anderson. We got stuck with him last week." *Stuck with him.* The ugly words still rang in Adrian's head. He turned on his back, hoping to turn away the memory.

"God," he found himself saying, "You can make the teasing stop. Do something!" But as soon as the words left his lips, Adrian knew he wasn't going about things the right way. *It's how I react to those kids that matters, he thought. How else will they know I'm different because I have Jesus?*

Later, Adrian saw Tony sitting on his front steps, rocking back and forth and singing. Adrian watched him for awhile.

The next afternoon, Adrian's mom asked him to take some freshly baked bread to the Duncans. She explained that Tony is mentally disabled. "He goes to a special school. His mother says he'll reach out to you if you meet him at his level."

*Meet him at his level, thought Adrian. Sure. As soon as I deliver this bread, I'm out of there!*

Instead Adrian found himself sitting in the middle of the living room floor with Tony surrounded by blocks. Adrian could hardly believe that this kid who was taller

than he was would be playing with blocks.

"Building the tallest building in the world!" Tony said. "Help me."

The boys took turns stacking the blocks. Soon all the blocks were part of the tall formation. Is this what his mother had meant when she told him to meet Tony at his level?

"Now you knock it down, smash!"

"What?" Adrian questioned.

"Down smash!" Tony cried joyfully. With a quick swipe of his hand, he sent the blocks flying across the living room floor. He burst out laughing and repeated, "Down smash!"

To his surprise, Adrian found himself laughing too.

In the weeks that followed, Adrian and Tony ended up spending a lot of time together. Adrian would bring over an electronic gaming device, and Tony would watch him play or would play with his own stuff alongside Tony. Just hanging out together was good. No expectations, just being.

As he and Tony laughed together about a funny app on Adrian's screen, Adrian felt content; he hadn't felt that way very much lately.

One day Adrian and Tony went to the nearby park.

Adrian noticed two boys on bikes. When they headed in their direction, Adrian's heart skipped

a beat. It was Roberto Estevez and Keith Anderson.

"Hey it's Adrian. And who's your

friend?" Roberto called as he jumped his front tire into the curb attempting a crazy stunt. Roberto stared at Tony. "What's wrong with him?" Roberto asked.

Adrian wondered how Tony would respond to the comment. But Tony didn't seem to have heard, or if he did, he wasn't letting on that he was bothered.

"Hey, come here!" Roberto called to Keith, who was checking his bike chain. "Loser and this weird kid are hanging out." Then to Adrian, Roberto repeated loudly, "What's wrong with him?"

It was obvious Roberto would not be satisfied until he got an answer. Slowly and clearly Adrian said, "Tony is mentally disabled." Only then did Tony seem aware of the two boys. He looked at Roberto and Keith.

Then he smiled and said, "Hi!"

Even though Roberto and Keith cracked up, and made

rude faces back,

Adrian was proud of Tony.

Tony was genuine and he wanted to include everyone. "C'mon, Tony, let's go back to your house. Your mom said she'd make popcorn." As they left the park Adrian breathed a sigh of relief. *Things are going to be OK, he thought.*

# Honest

**Bible  
Study**

**It's easy to think of men and women in the Bible as spiritual giants—people who never had doubts, questions, or second thoughts. But sometimes they did.**

**John the Baptist is an example of this. Despite the fact that he was Jesus' cousin and had announced the exciting news that the Messiah had come, John had doubts.**

**However, John the Baptist was wise. When he started doubting that Jesus was the Messiah, he said so. He didn't keep his doubts to himself.**

1. Why do you think Jesus didn't send John a simple yes-or-no answer?
2. What happens inside a person who has doubts about spiritual things but pretends he does not?
3. What do you think might have happened if John the Baptist had not admitted his doubts?
4. What happened because John *did* admit his doubts to Jesus?

## Today's Scripture

**Luke 7:18-23**

<sup>18</sup>John's disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, <sup>19</sup>he sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"

<sup>20</sup>When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?'"

<sup>21</sup>At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. <sup>22</sup>So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. <sup>23</sup>Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me."



# Animal Secrets

**B**ut ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you. Which of all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? — Job 12:7, 9

**Y**ou think you know an animal. Then you find out it has a secret. Keep score of how many of these animal secrets you already know. Compare your score with those of your friends.

... that koala bears aren't really bears? They're marsupials, mammals whose young develop in pouches after birth. Koalas look sweet but are known to be rather nasty. You can find koalas in Australia.



... that when snake charmers in India play music, they're not really charming the snake? Snakes hear only a limited range of sound; the music means nothing to them. Hearing the noise causes them to rear up and be on guard. This action tricks tourists into believing the snakes are being charmed.

... that dolphins are really whales? Dolphins are mammals, not fish. The largest species of dolphin is the killer whale. Most performing dolphins in amusement parks, aquariums, and zoos are bottle-nosed dolphins.

... that dad penguins, not mom penguins, are in charge of caring for the eggs? The egg sits on Dad's flippers, not on the ice. His belly covers it and keeps it warm. Dad can't hunt for food until the eggs hatch. That could take as long as two months.



Paula Becher

# The Rock

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# Every Day Devos

Actions Speak

# Louder...

**You can learn a lot about someone just by watching him or her. Take Jesus, for example. To discover more about His character, read up on what He did while He was on earth.**

**MONDAY** Read John 5:1-9. What does this passage say to you about Jesus? Choose one word to describe the characteristic Jesus displayed in this passage. Write it down.

**TUESDAY** Read Luke 8:22-25. If you had been there, how would you feel about Jesus after He calmed the storm? What words would you use to describe Him? Write them down next to Monday's entry.

**WEDNESDAY** Read John 11:1-44. This passage gives us a glimpse of Jesus' friendships while on earth. What do these verses tell you about Jesus' personality? Does anything about this passage surprise you? Write down your impressions.

**THURSDAY** John 6:1-15 explains how Jesus fed a huge crowd of people. After reading this account, decide what it says about Jesus. If you were part of this crowd, what would you think of Jesus? How would you respond? Write your answer.

**FRIDAY** Has God ever answered a prayer for you in a way that showed His great power? Write about or illustrate this situation.

**SATURDAY** Look back at the miracles you wrote about. Notice the words that you used to describe Jesus' characteristics. Use them during your prayer time to praise Jesus for His miracles and for the fact that He still works in our lives today.

**“Believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.” John 10:38b**

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