

Jesus, The Friend of Children

A fictional story based on Biblical themes



Written by Sis. Kimberly M. Hartfield, B.S., M.S.
Illustrated by her son, Rock Hartfield
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This publication, *Jesus, the Friend of Children*, which is a fictional story based on Biblical themes, is designed to give a therapeutic approach to prevention and healing of child abuse in all its forms, whether physical, emotional, or sexual. It employs the use of art therapy somewhat, and has room for the child who is using it to illustrate the story line and draw pictures from their own life, which are related to the themes presented in this book. It also includes a resource in the back of the book for adults who are dealing with issues related to childhood sexual abuse.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work in general to all survivors of experiences of sexual and domestic violence, but especially to victims of childhood sexual abuse. As a victim and survivor myself, I hope to give insight into a Biblical perspective of these issues. When my youngest daughter was victimized, as well, I also experienced childhood sexual abuse from a parental perspective. I dedicate this book to her, the bravest little survivor I know. I hope it is an encouragement to every survivor and a warning to all abusers, to repent and turn from their evil ways. I do want to emphasize that it is against the law for adults not to report any known or suspected child abuse. If you suspect or know that your child or someone else's is being abused or has been, you must report it to the proper authorities and get the child the help they need to heal. I thank my God and my Savior, Jesus Christ, for the insight into scripture that made this little book possible.

Jesus, The Friend of Children

It was a warm spring day and all the trees were budding and the flowers were in full bloom. All the people in town were excitedly talking about Jesus, the one who had healed many sick people. We had been hearing about him over the past several months. I walked along the dusty road from town down to the Jordan River with my mother and my brothers and sisters. We were following the other mothers and children who were also going to see Jesus. I thought about all the stories I had heard as we walked. Jesus had made blind people see, deaf people hear, and made people that couldn't walk able to walk again. Surely this one was the Christ, for no one who had come before had done miracles like these. It was even said that God must have rained down bread and fish from heaven once, when Jesus had blessed a small basket of two fish and five loaves and fed over 5,000 people. So I was very excited as we came to the place at the river's edge where we were told we could see Jesus.

Draw a picture of this scene or a time when you were happy and excited here.

Draw a picture of this scene here or a time when you were disappointed or sad.

Some of the mothers in the town were bringing their babies and little children out to Jesus, hoping that the Christ would pray for us, and lay hands on us and bless us. But just as we all got there, the followers stopped us and told our mothers not to bother Jesus with a bunch of children, because the Christ had more important things to do. We were all sad then and started to walk away. But seeing what the followers were doing, Jesus was very unhappy with them about it. The Christ came over and called us back. Jesus said to the followers, "Let the little children come to me, and don't hold them back; for the heavenly kingdom of God is filled with little ones like these." Then Jesus brought each one of us little ones up close, laying hands on top of our heads and blessing us all.

I tried to wait my turn patiently as I glanced behind the crowded opening just up from the shore line over to the gently flowing river. It was surrounded by the newly green trees and shrubs of spring time. Just as I thought my turn would never come, I stepped forward into the arms of Jesus. I have never seen someone so kind as this, I thought, as I was feeling very ashamed and different from the other children. But as I looked up into the eyes of Jesus, the Christ, all my feelings of shame were gone. I'll never forget the way Jesus took the time to bless each one of us and the way the eyes of God's Chosen One chased away all the guilt and shame I had been feeling.

After all of us had been blessed, we went a little way back from Jesus and the followers, who were still a little upset by the attention the Christ had given us. As we left the inner circle, we children wondered why all our mothers were crying so much, but then we knew they were crying joyful tears, because they all smiled at Jesus as they led us out of the crowd.

Draw a picture of this scene or a time when you were scared or ashamed here .

Draw a picture of this scene or a time when you were relieved and peaceful here.

Later that day, as we all sat a little distance away while eating our lunch, we quietly listened to the great stories Jesus told. Then after a little while, the followers came up to Jesus, asking, "Who will be greatest in heaven?" So Jesus called one of the littlest children over, and set the child in the middle of them, smiling at her with loving eyes and patting her on the head.

And Jesus answered the followers, saying to them, "Truly, I say to you, unless you change the way you think, and have faith like little children, who believe all I say and never doubt, you will not come into the kingdom of heaven. So the ones who put themselves in the place of a little child, like this one," Jesus said as he hugged the little girl, "they will be greatest in the kingdom of heaven." As Jesus put the little girl down and she ran off to her mother, the Christ continued to say, "And whoever accepts one little child in my name will be accepted by me and also by God, who sent me."

Draw a picture about how you feel when someone really loves you here.

Our mothers were overjoyed when they heard Jesus speak of us with such love. They knew that Jesus was the Christ, but some people in our families weren't so sure. Some of our fathers and grandfathers had seen others who had claimed to be great preachers, and even claimed to be the Christ, but these men had all gone away now. So even with all the stories of the miracles that followed Jesus everywhere, it was still hard for some of them to believe in the Christ. They had told us and our mothers not to believe everything we had heard. Some of them came with us to hear for themselves what Jesus had to say, but others stayed home. I guess they just didn't want to get their hopes up. But we children all believed in Jesus anyway.

We listened as Jesus continued talking to the followers, saying, *"But whoever hurts one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for that one to have a large stone hung around his neck, and that he were drowned in the deepest part of the sea. Sorrow comes into the world because of the terrible things they do! For it is to be expected that these kinds of things will happen; but those who hurt any of my children will be very sorry when they are punished!"*

I listened to these words as I thought about all the times I had been hurt. I had told my mother what happened, but she just didn't seem to know what to do. I felt better knowing that the things that had been done to hurt all of us at least wouldn't go unseen by God, who would punish the one who had hurt us so much. But even so, we still hoped and prayed that he would come to believe in Jesus and stop hurting us all, so God could forgive him, too.

Draw a picture about how you feel when someone does something wrong and is punished or forgiven for it. Tell your parent what your picture is about.

Draw a picture of something you wish you hadn't seen or done here.

It seemed as if Jesus knew exactly what we had been going through, so I sat listening as he began again, saying, "*So if your hand does something it shouldn't or your feet take you places you shouldn't go, stop yourself any way you can, because it would be better for you to stop yourself, rather than doing whatever you want to, only to be cast into everlasting fire. And if your eyes look at things you shouldn't, don't look, because it would be better for you to never see again, rather than having eyes that see evil things, only to be cast into hell fire. Be warned, so that you don't hate and offend one of these little ones; for I tell you, in heaven their angels are always near the face of God.*"

I thought about what Jesus was saying, and I knew what the Christ meant. The one who had hurt my family and me was bigger and stronger than all of us, and even though he said he wanted to be with us, he had often hurt us. And whenever he was at our house, he had always said he loved us and tried to make us think he cared about us, but he still kept hurting us. He was always going off somewhere, and then when he came back to our house, he would do things that hurt us. So I promised myself that I would try not to ever hurt my children like that when I grew up. I really wanted to be kind and good, just like Jesus.

Draw a picture of a time when you were hurt or felt hurt here.

And then Jesus told us the last story that day, which was about how God saves people, even when they do bad things, like running away from him and doing things they shouldn't. He told us: *"For I, the Christ, who was born a human being, have come to save those who were lost. So what do you think? If someone has a hundred animals in a herd, and one of them gets lost, won't the Keeper leave the ninety-nine safe ones, and go and search for that one, which has run away and is in trouble? And if the Keeper finds it, truly I say to you, that Keeper will be happier about that one little animal, than about the ninety-nine which didn't run off. And so it's not the will of God in heaven that even one of these little ones should be harmed and led away from their faith by anyone. And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, only in the name of a follower of Christ, truly I say to you, you won't lose your reward in any way, because you have built up their faith."*

Draw a picture of a time when you wanted to run away here.

Draw a picture of someone who helped you here.

I am old now, and I write this story to help you who have been hurt like I have been to know the truth. So, little children, let no one lie to you: only the ones that truly do good are good, even as Jesus is good. You are of God, little children, and have overcome those who lie, because greater is the One who is in you, than the evil one that is in the world. So let us love, not just with the words we say, my little children, but let us truly love others by the things we do.

My little children, I write these things to you, so you won't sin as they do. But if any one of you do sin, you know that we have a helper with our Savior, Jesus Christ, the One who is truly good. I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for Christ's name's sake. And now, little children, keep believing in Jesus; that when Christ shall appear again, we may have faith, and not be ashamed when we stand before our Savior God.

Draw a picture about what it might look like to truly love others.

This story is based on a fictional character. **Words in red are paraphrases of Christ's words.** *Words that are italicized are based on these biblical passages:*

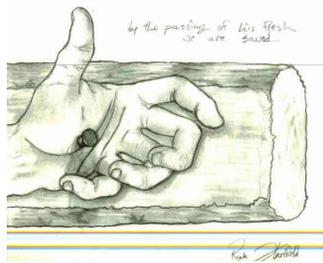
Matthew 19:13-14, Mark 10:13-14, Luke 18:15-16

Mark 9:37

Matthew 18:1-14, Mark 9:42, Luke 17:2

Matthew 10:42

1 John 3:7, 1 John 4:4, 1 John 3:18, 1 John 2:1, 1 John 2:12-13, 1 John 2:28



For Salvation in Christ (Authors Paraphrases)

God loved the world so much and gave the only true One from God so that whoever believes in Jesus will not be lost but be saved. **John 3:16**

Do not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God to bring Salvation to every one who believes . . . **Romans 1:16**

If you admit that Jesus is Sovereign with your mouth, and believe that God raised Jesus from the dead in your heart, you shall be saved. **Romans 10:9**

About the Author

Sis. Kimberly Marie Hartfield, B.S, M.S. is Christian Counselor and an ordained minister in the Evangelical faith, and a mom of eight children and two grandchildren. A graduate of William Carey College in Hattiesburg, MS., she has studied mostly in the areas of Psychology and Religion, and has received a Master of Science Degree in Counseling Psychology with a concentration in Christian Counseling. Her desire is to give of her abilities to the work of Jesus Christ. Kim has felt the healing hand of God in her own life, which has been a struggle to overcome the abuses she herself has experienced, and those of her daughter. Through God's merciful forgiveness of her own sins and the grace God has given her to forgive those who have been hurtful to her, she has overcome many of these difficulties. She claims II Corinthians 3 & 4 as her calling, which states: *"Blessed be God, the One our Savior Jesus Christ is from, the God of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforts us in all our troubles, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, by the comfort we ourselves have been comforted of God."* As she herself has received the gift of God's healing, Kimberly desires to bring peace to others with God's message of hope. Kim's love for the Lord and her love for writing has led her to write about this subject, and other commonly experienced issues of today with a tender compassion and understanding for God's hurting children.

Is Your Child SAD? (Sexually Abused Dependent)

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Sexual abuse of a child is any inappropriate exposing of a child to any sexual purpose by anyone who has influence on the child, without concern for the child's well-being. Young children need to be aware of the difference between *good* and *bad touching*. Hugs and kisses are fine if they want them, but they should be told they don't have to do *everything* an adult or another child tells them to do if they are trying to get them to do something that makes them feel "*funny*" or strange. They can say "*no*" to any touching or behavior that makes them feel uncomfortable; and should tell a trusted adult *as soon as possible* if something like this happens.

A child should never be forced or coerced against their will into sexual activities by anyone. When they say **no**, then their no should be respected. If they are abused or assaulted in any way, the abuser has committed **a crime** and should be turned over to the proper authorities (police). The first step in recovery is for the victim to understand that the abuser betrayed her (or him) and to **tell the secret** to a trusted adult. When the parents of victims, or the victims themselves keep the secret, it makes it possible for the abuser to repeat the crime against them or others. In order to stop the abusive behavior, victims and their parents must be willing to speak out and reveal the identity of the abuser to someone they trust in authority.

Children also need to understand that sexual abuse or assault is not always carried out by a stranger or by an adult. Sometimes **family members, close friends of the family, step parents, babysitters, and other children** close to the same age, can be sexually abusive. Sometimes it's those we should be able to trust the most who are abusive. Whether they are at home or at a *spend-the-night*, they should always be properly supervised to ensure safety. They should be told to never go into a room alone with someone, or secretly go away from those who are responsible for them.

Sexual abuse is a violation of trust, especially when the abuser is known to the victim. Sometimes when children are sexually abused by someone they know, the abuse may happen more than once. Other times the abuse may occur only once, such as a sexual assault (rape). Sometimes it may happen to young girls while going out with someone (date rape). If they are being abused, they need to know that they must tell someone they trust. A child can go to a **parent, teacher, doctor, pastor, youth director, Sunday School teacher**, or any other adult that they trust. A child should know as well that even though they can usually trust these people, sometimes even these adults, may be abusers. Just because someone is in a position of authority does not mean he or she can not be an abuser. If that is the case, then they need to find someone else who will listen and believe what they are telling them.

Abused children often do not trust anyone, which stops them from telling anyone about the abuse, sometimes for several years. The secret nature of childhood sexual abuse or a violent sexual assault is often the very thing that helps the abuse or assaults to continue. When anything is done in secret, children sometimes believe it is something they may get in trouble for themselves, and so they instinctively **keep the secret**. They often experience guilt and shame where there should be none, believing it was something that they did, too. The victim almost always feels that "*I'm different,*" "*Something's wrong with me,*" or that the abuse is somehow "*my fault.*" If a child becomes a victim, please understand that the abuse may continue and they will likely never completely heal if they continue to keep the abuse a secret. Because sexually abused children sometimes feel they can't tell any one, they often "forget" the abuse, withdrawing from a conscious awareness of it. The abuse may be vaguely remembered by the victim, but certain experiences may trigger very unpleasant feelings and snapshot memories of the abusive situation. Sexual abuse is not something a child can face alone and be completely healthy mentally. Even if they have good parental, community, and spiritual resources, if they keep the abuse to themselves, then they may still have difficulty relating to others in a healthy way.

Telling the secret is the most important part of a victim's healing process. The Bible tells us that "the truth will set us free." Once the victim shares her story with someone she trusts, then that person can see to it that she gets help and that the abuser is not in a position to hurt that victim or others. Responses to an account of childhood sexual abuse will vary depending on who the abuser is and who the victim tells. The hoped for response is one of understanding and support, but victims need to understand that this does not always occur. The shock sometimes causes people to respond in inappropriate ways. Some people simply may not believe their story if it is someone close to them. Even if they believe the abuse happened, some may tell the child to "keep the secret" if it is someone in or close to the family. Some responses will make light of the abuse as child's play or sexual exploration if the abuser is not of adult age. Children who are exposed to pornography or sexual abuse themselves, often repeat the behaviors they see with other children. Another response is to blame the victim for being unacceptably dressed or behaving inappropriately. Victims should understand that it is not any fault of their own. If they are a victim and someone tells them not to tell anyone or tries to place blame on them, then they need to keep going to someone else until somebody listens. Even if it has been several years, they should seek help in dealing with any issues they may still be facing. A child should never stay in the abusive situation or remain in close contact with the abuser. Victims can find healing; but this usually happens only after several years in safe conditions.

Many victims display an outwardly happy-go-lucky character, while others display clear signals of distress. Those who know a victim should not assume that they are "over it", just because the victim appears to be moving on with her life. Most victims feel *sexual guilt*, though they are not responsible for the actions of the abuser. With sexuality being an important part of the whole person, abuse or assault affects one's total self-concept. The victim often develops upsetting *emotions, beliefs, and conduct*. The effects of sexual abuse or assault include *low self-esteem, unexplained fear* of certain people and places, *anger, delinquent acting out, depression, suicidal behaviors, promiscuous sexual behavior, sexual disorders, substance or alcohol abuse, eating disorders, and difficulty in close relationships*. These may accompany feelings of *mistrust, indifference, and/or hatred*. If your child is a victim and they are experiencing any of these symptoms, you should seek help for them immediately.

If you or someone you love are a **sexually abused dependent** of an abusive parent, step parent, or other relative, then you need to immediately seek help. You can contact any rape crisis center listed in the local telephone directory, or tell someone you trust to help you out of the abusive situation. You may also email **Go Fish Ministries**, at christiancounselor@jesuslovesu2.every1.net to talk to Sis. Kimberly Hartfield, who is a Christian Counselor. Also you may see our website at <http://gofishministries.wordpress.com/>.

The State of Mississippi Child Abuse Hotline # is 1-800-222-8000. The National Child Abuse hotline is 1-800-4-A-CHILD, which is dedicated to the prevention of child abuse. Serving the United States, its territories, and Canada, the Hotline is staffed 24-7 with professional crisis counselors.



Go Fish Ministries, Inc.

Jesus said: Follow me and I will make you fish for the souls of others. Matthew 4:19

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