

MIRACLES, MAZES AND MEMORIES

by Dr. Roy Smith



THE CAMPFIRE GANG



BOOK #7



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ISBN: 978-1-942292-26-5

Published by LiveUp Resources
200 North 7th Street
Lebanon, PA 17046

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Illustrations and book design by Jory Kauffman

Printed in the United States of America

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*Dedicated to those who have great value
and God-given potential. (This means you!)
As you enjoy this series, may you discover
your greatness.*



*I am honored to be part of the journey of the following
young men. May you grow strong, have courage,
act wisely and change the world.*

*Silas, Jorah, Alexander, Nathan, Mason, William,
Lucas, Cody, Elijah, Kent, Colt, Ian, AJ, CJ, JJ, Gavin,
Ryder, Braxton*

*It is my privilege to be part of the lives of the following
amazingly gifted and powerful young women.*

May you make a difference in the world.

Remi, Reese, Alycea, Joy



CHAPTER 1

THE STRANGER

“Hey Cliff,” Toby said, elbowing his friend. “Watch this! I bet you didn’t know I can surf!”

Toby ran up a hill of stones as fast as he could. He threw a big piece of bark down on the ground and jumped on top.

“Rockboarding!” he yelled as he pushed off and slid down the hill.

A couple seconds into his ride, the stones shifted under Toby’s weight. He yelled in surprise and started swinging his arms wildly, trying to get his balance. Instead, he tumbled off the bark, rolled the rest of the way down the hill and landed at the bottom with a loud “OOF!”

Toby sat up and grinned. “That was awesome! I almost made it!”

Cliff and the Lizlards rolled their eyes and laughed. They were used to Toby’s crazy confidence by now. And it always made them feel happy to see Toby enjoying himself.

“You should try it, Cliff!” Toby said.

“Yeah right!” Cliff replied. “I’d probably break my neck. Then who’d save you from all the trouble you get into?”

“True,” Toby replied as he grinned.

“Now hurry up. We need to cover this drill hole,” Cliff added. “There should only be a few more left.”

Toby jumped up to help Cliff and the Lizlards. Together, they put everything they had into pushing a nearby boulder. Everyone let out a loud cheer and traded high-fives as it finally rolled over the top of the large hole.



Pushing giant rocks over drill holes was tiring, but Cliff and Toby didn't mind. They felt good inside about being able to make the Lost Canyon a little safer for anyone walking through it in the future. Plus, it kept their minds off the gang's biggest problem—Kerry fighting for his life.

Several of the boys had fallen into drill holes. Thankfully, BB, Sammy and their Lizard troops had rescued everyone. But by the time they found Kerry, he was barely breathing. He'd been in the drill hole for days with no food or water.

"I keep thinking about BB and Spencer," Toby said as they searched for the next hole. "It must be tough just sitting there and watching Kerry barely able to breathe."

"He was pretty banged up from the fall," Cliff replied sadly. "I hope he's getting better. He might not survive if he gets any worse."

Toby nodded. "Let's hurry up so we can get back there. I hate not knowing what's going on."

Even though all their friends had been found, Cliff and Toby continued to check the bottom of each drill hole before closing it up, just in case. They mostly found skeletons, which they left alone. It felt like they were giving these miners a proper burial by covering the holes.

The boys and the Lizlards worked their way through the canyon until they finally came to the very last drill hole.

“Guys, after this, no one will fall into another hole again!” Cliff exclaimed.

“Awesome!” Toby replied. “Do you want to check the bottom or should I?”

“You can. I did the last one,” said Cliff.

Cliff and the Lizlards held on to the rope tightly while Toby slowly scaled down the smooth drill hole wall. When he got closer to the bottom, he held out some of his glowing toothpicks to light up the floor of the hole.

To his surprise, Toby saw a young man kneeling at the bottom. He looked like he was praying.

“You’re not a skeleton,” Toby said.

The young man looked up and smiled. “No, I’m definitely alive. My name’s Joshua.”

Joshua’s eyes sparkled. Toby had the strange feeling he knew more than he was saying.

“I’m Toby,” Toby replied. “How long have you been down here?”

“Not too long,” he said. “It’s nice to meet you.”

Toby nodded. “This is a dangerous place. I fell in one of these holes too. My friends and I are covering the holes so no one else falls in them. Which reminds me, I should let them know you’re down here.”

Toby called up, “Cliff, there’s someone still alive down here! Pull us up!”

Once they were out, Toby introduced Joshua to everyone.

Joshua smiled. “I’m impressed. You all seem to care a lot about making life better for everyone. It’s easy to sit back and wait for someone else to fix things. But it sounds like your team knows how to take responsibility for helping others.”

Cliff nodded. “We’ve been learning a lot about that recently.”

“My dad says loving God and others is what life is all about,” said Joshua. “You must’ve already learned the difference between people who treat others well and people who don’t. That’s what gives you such good hearts.”

“Well, I definitely didn’t learn that from my dad,” Toby said, shrugging. “He drank all the time, and he hit my mom a lot. He only thought about himself. I work hard not to be like him. He never would’ve bothered to cover these drill holes.”

“Life is tough,” Joshua said. “It’s even tougher when we have memories of bad things that happened to us in the past. The good news is that we can choose how we let those memories affect us. They can make us feel bad about ourselves, or they can make us stronger. Toby, I hope you can work through your painful memories of your dad. If you do, eventually they won’t hurt you anymore.”

“I hope I can too,” Toby agreed. “I still have nightmares about him sometimes.”

“It’ll take time,” Joshua said kindly. “Try to keep trusting Pops. That’s why I was praying down in that hole. I was asking God what He wanted me to do next. And I think He wanted me to meet you. Toby, I will pray that one day you’ll have a strong relationship with God. He wants to hear about the problems you have because of your dad. God is your spiritual Father. He’ll always take care of you.”

“You know, I’ve always felt like I have to protect myself,” Toby said. “So when I fail, I’m really hard on myself. Like when I fell into that drill hole. I think it’d be nice to have the kind of relationship you’re talking about. I just don’t know if I believe in God yet.”

“Listening to you talk makes me think about some of the bad memories I have too,” Cliff said. “Before I moved to Toby’s town, I lived in a big city that had all kinds of crime and gangs.”

“That must’ve been hard—and scary,” Joshua replied. “You probably never felt safe.”

Cliff nodded. “I didn’t want to go to school because I was so afraid of getting hurt. My cousin Steven helped me feel safer for a while. He even took me to my first baseball game. One time, he asked me how I was doing, and I told him I was scared a lot. Then he put his arm around my shoulders and told me that I was tough and could handle anything.”

Cliff looked down before he continued. “Then Steven went into the Marines. He got sent to fight in a war overseas—and he never came home.”

“Wow, Cliff,” Toby said. “I never knew that. I’m sorry you lost Steven.”

Cliff took a deep breath and said, “I can still remember how sad and scared I was at his funeral. And even though we’ve moved to a new town that’s a lot safer, I still feel afraid sometimes.”

“Talking about it is one of the first steps in facing your fears,” Joshua said. “I’m glad you could trust us enough to share that with us.”

“I don’t really bring it up a lot,” Cliff admitted. “You sure have a way of getting us to talk about things we don’t like to think about.”

“One way we show each other we care is by learning to listen,” Joshua explained. “I travel around the world. A lot of people tell me what they’re thinking about and how they’re feeling.

Sometimes I try to give them advice or tell them what Pops says in the Bible. But I've found that when I really listen, I learn a lot about them and about life. I can better understand the issues they've dealt with, which means I'm more able to help others with similar issues in the future."

"I definitely need to learn to listen better," Toby confessed. "I talk *a lot*. Sometimes I ignore people—even when I don't mean to."

Joshua nodded. "When you learn to listen well, you'll find that everyone just wants to tell their story. It helps them feel valuable and like their lives have meaning. I'm glad you both could tell me part of your story today. That was brave."

"There's a lot I still want to ask you," Toby said. "But we should make sure we cover this last hole."

"Let me help you with that," Joshua offered.

Toby, Cliff and the Lizlards found another huge boulder and started pushing. But Joshua seemed so strong, they didn't feel like they were really doing anything.

When everything was in place, Joshua said, "I think it's time to go check on your friend Kerry. It sounds like he's in pretty rough shape."

Toby and Cliff agreed. As they all started back to camp, Toby leaned close to Cliff.

"Did you tell Joshua about Kerry?" he whispered.

"No," Cliff replied. "Maybe he heard us talking when we were standing around his drill hole, before you went down."

"Hmm... maybe," Toby mumbled.

But he wasn't convinced. There was something odd about Joshua. He just couldn't quite put his finger on what it was.

THIS IS A SAMPLE. SOME PAGES HAVE BEEN OMITTED.

LET'S THINK ABOUT IT

Good questions help us learn.

• • •

1. In Chapter 1, Toby makes up a game called rock-boarding. Would you ever go surfing in the ocean? What would that be like?
2. Toby admits he doesn't have a great relationship with his dad. What's your relationship with your dad like? How would you describe his strengths and weaknesses?
3. Do you have someone in your life who protects you, like Cliff's cousin Steven did? How do they help you?
4. Joshua says that listening to someone is one way to show you care about them (page 10-11). How well do you listen to others? What are some ways you can become a better listener?
5. In Chapter 2, everyone shares their favorite memories of Kerry. What stories do you think your friends and family would tell about you? What memories do you have of your friends that always make you smile?
6. In Chapter 3, BB and Sammy see something they can only describe as a miracle. Have you ever seen something so unusual that you couldn't explain why or how it happened? Try to explain it now.
7. How often do you think about God? What words would you use to describe Him? What kinds of challenges can God help you through?

8. BB shares Principle of Manhood #2: “A man is responsible for all of his choices” (page 38). What does it mean to be responsible for what you do?
9. Joshua explains how every child is born with amazing potential to contribute to the world (page 41). What skills and gifts do you have? How can you use them to help others and create good?
10. Have you ever been completely surprised by something? What did it feel like?
11. Principle of Manhood #15 says, “A man submits to an authority beyond himself.” What authorities do you agree to follow? Is it easy or hard for you to give control to others?
12. Principle of Manhood #11 states, “A man never stands alone unless he is taking a stand.” Who in your life supports you? How do you offer encouragement to your friends and family?
13. In Chapter 5, the gang gives their last hugs to the Lizlards before they start their journey home again. Have you ever had to say goodbye to a friend? What makes goodbyes so hard?
14. As they walk, the gang talks about everything they’ve gone through in the underground worlds. What are some adventures you’ve had with your friends?
15. Before they reach the center of the Life Maze, Toby has to leave to go through the Tunnel of Memories (page 102-103). Could you be strong enough to

choose to complete your responsibilities instead of doing what's fun?

16. Describe your favorite ride at an amusement park. Which ride in the Life Maze would you like to try?
17. The rock reminds the gang that the best part of the maze is spending time with each other (page 116-117). Who do you always have fun with, no matter what you're doing?
18. For their surprise, Pops gives the gang a huge table loaded with all their favorite foods! What foods would you want to see on that table?
19. In Chapter 9, Sammy has to face all of his worst experiences in the Tunnel of Memories. But Joshua helps him see what lessons he can take from them to help him grow. What's a bad memory you have? What can you learn from it?
20. At the end of the book, Sammy finds the courage to look for the good in his worst memories. Have you ever done something really brave? Who's the bravest person you know?
21. What's one verse the rock said that you want to remember? Write it down here:

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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After becoming a grandfather, Dr. Roy Smith was inspired to write a book series for his grandsons and for boys and men of all ages—so he embarked on a journey to creatively teach character development. Being a psychologist and counselor for more than 35 years, Roy understands how important it is for young men to develop and use their

full potential. Roy's goal is to help young men become mentally strong, address their emotions and develop social skills so they can have a powerful impact on the world. They need to meet God and integrate who He is and His Word into their daily decision-making. Another goal of Roy's is to help men grow and learn how to lead more effectively, contributing to the overarching goal of positively changing our culture. This goal led him to develop Knights of the 21st Century (www.K21.men), a ministry that produces books and DVD series for men. Roy has written and cowritten several books in the area of men's issues, including *Bull*, *Being God's Man*, *Basic Warrior Training*, *Manhood Journey* (Volumes 1-5), *Why Not Try to Hit the Real Target—Men* and *You're Not Dead Yet*. He has also consulted on and written several women's DVD series (www.realwomen21.com).

NO ONE SAID THE JOURNEY WOULD BE EASY

The Lost Canyon hasn't finished challenging the boys yet—and their latest obstacle may be the hardest one of all. But thanks to an unexpected stranger, the gang's starting to learn that things aren't always what they seem...

Through it all, the boys learn lessons about life and about God. They never stop fighting for each other—and sometimes for their own lives!

*FIND ALL OF THE CAMPFIRE GANG ADVENTURES AT
www.TheCampfireGang.com*