

A Prayer for Grandpa

Mom was sitting on Jason's bed when the telephone rang. "Go ahead and say your prayers," she said. "I'll be right back."

Jason finished his prayer and was making a practice cast with his fishing pole when his mother returned. She leaned his pole against the chair and pulled down the blankets.

"That was Grandma. Grandpa's sick and an ambulance is coming to take him to the hospital. I've asked Mrs. Cepeda to come and watch you. Dad and I are going to the hospital. Try not to worry." She kissed his forehead and hurried away.

Jason pulled the covers up to his nose and looked around in the dark. He noticed that the photograph of himself holding two brook trout was peeling off the wall beside his bed.

Hopping up, he rummaged around in his dresser drawers until he found a roll of tape. He taped the picture back to the wall, remembering the teamwork it took to catch those two whoppers. He'd reeled them in while Grandpa held the net. If only he could help Grandpa now.

Then he remembered Jesus' promise: "Ask and it will be given..." (Luke 11:9).

Jason prayed a new prayer, "God, please take care of Grandpa and don't

let him die." Over and over he whispered the words. The only other sound in the room was a tiny click each time a number turned over on his alarm clock. Jason felt sure God heard his prayer.

The clock read 9:14. *Mom and Dad must be at the hospital by now*, he thought. Grandpa would be glad to see them. When the numbers turned to 9:30, Jason yawned and curled up on his side.

When he woke up the sun was shining through the blinds, making golden stripes on the blue carpet in his bedroom. *Wow, it's a perfect fishing day*, he thought, leaping out of bed. He'd better hurry. Grandpa liked to get an early start. He was taking the stairs two at a time when he remembered.

"Hi, Sweetheart," said Mom, coming to meet him. Her hair looked kind of messy.

Jason noticed that Mrs. Cepeda was still there. He wished he had changed out of his pajamas before coming downstairs.

"I have sad news for you, Jason," said Mother, as she hugged him. "Grandpa died last night."

"But, he . . . he . . . he couldn't have," stammered Jason. "How could he die?"

by **Aline A. Newman**

illustrated by **Richard Wahl**

"The doctor said he had a stroke."

"No, I mean—how could he die?" asked Jason, twisting out of his mother's arms.

"I don't know what you mean, Honey," said his mother, looking confused. She didn't know that Jason expected God to protect his grandfather from death.

"It's not fair. He broke his promise," yelled Jason, as he turned and ran back upstairs. Sitting on the edge of his bed, he thought about how he and Grandpa were supposed to go fishing for bullheads today. Grandpa would clean and fry them for breakfast. And Grandma wouldn't even taste them. She always said the only thing she liked with whiskers was Grandpa. Jason's eyes rested on his fishing pole. He jumped up and grabbed it with one hand. Laying it across his knee, he pushed down with all his might. Craaa-ck! The pole snapped in two.

He was lying on his bed staring at the ceiling when Dad came in. Jason thought Dad's eyes looked funny, like he'd been swimming in the city pool. Had he been crying? Jason had never seen his father cry.

If Dad noticed the broken pole, he never mentioned it. Instead, he said, "Mrs. Cepeda will take you to her house while Mom and I take Grandma to the funeral home. You can play with Caesar."

Jason didn't want to go with Mrs. Cepeda. And he certainly didn't feel like playing, not with Caesar, not with

anyone. But the look on Dad's face told him not to object.

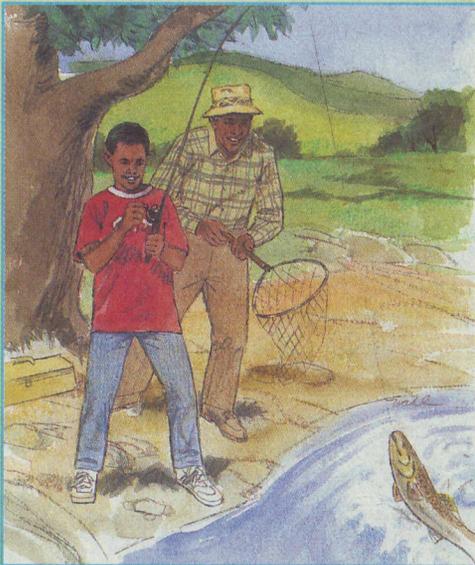
Downstairs Mom stuffed Game-boy, comic books, and his ball glove into a plastic bag and handed it to him as he left with Mrs. Cepeda. Jason waved from the driveway. Dad smiled back, but his smile looked kind of lopsided, like maybe he had a toothache.

At Mrs. Cepeda's, Caesar sat on the step. He was wearing a Mets cap backwards and oiling his glove. "Want to go out back and toss a few?" he asked.

"Might as well," said Jason, shrugging his shoulders.

"We just have to make sure the ball doesn't go into Mr. Amelio's yard," cautioned Caesar. "He's been real sick."

Whap! Whap! Whap! The ball flew



from one boy to the other. Jason caught most of the throws that came his way, and he tried to concentrate on Caesar's story about the little league shut-out. But it was hard. He kept thinking about Grandpa and God, and about how God had let him down. Jesus said all he had to do was ask. Well he'd asked all right, but a lot of good it had done. Grandpa was just as dead as if he hadn't prayed at all. He'd been so sure God would help.

"Whoops," said Jason, as he stretched for a long throw and fell flat. The ball landed behind him, bounced through the bushes and into the next yard. Jason scrambled to his feet and ran after it. He found it lying at the feet of an old man hunched in a wheelchair. A plaid blanket covered his knees.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Amelio," said Jason. "I fell down and the ball got away from me. It didn't hit you, did it?"

The old man turned empty eyes toward the young boy. A trickle of spit ran down his chin. "He can't answer you," said a voice from the porch. "He had a stroke two years ago and hasn't spoken since."

A stroke! That's what Grandpa had. So this is what a stroke was like.

"It's OK," the woman continued. "The ball didn't hit him." She walked over and wiped the old man's chin

with a handkerchief. "He was quite a ball player in his younger years. He played catcher for the old Coalyard Munny League. But he can't even watch the games on TV any more. Can't follow the plays. Most days he doesn't even recognize me, and I'm his daughter."

Jason looked from one to the other—the helpless old man and the sad-faced woman. "Yeah, well, thanks," he mumbled. Slapping the ball in the pocket of his glove, he walked back to Caesar.

"Let's not play any more," he said.

"OK. I'm hungry anyway," said Caesar. "Hey, my mom told me what happened. I'm sorry about your grandpa."

"Thanks," mumbled Jason.

Inside Mrs. Cepeda had eggs and tostadas waiting. After lunch the boys watched TV, played Game-boy, and read comics until Jason's parents took him home.

That night both Mom and Dad came to tuck Jason into bed. His father hugged him extra hard and said, "Grandpa loved you very much, you know."

"I know," said Jason.

Jason listened to his parents' soft steps on the stairs. Then he pulled the

He kept thinking about Grandpa and God, and about how God had let him down.

(continued on page 7)

A Prayer for Grandpa (continued)

covers up to his nose. Everything looked the same as last night except for his fishing pole, which lay in pieces on the floor.

"God, I'm not mad any more," he whispered. "Grandpa would have hated living like Mr. Amelio. He probably told you that himself. So, I guess you did take care of him after all." And for the first time that day, Jason started to cry. Big tears rolled down his cheeks, making wet circles on his pillow. He cried until his ears hurt and his nose was so stuffed he could hardly breathe.

Then while reaching for a tissue, his hand fell on a roll of black tape. Jason stared at it. It was the same color as his fishing rod. He picked up the pieces of his broken pole and butted the ends together. Stretching the tape around and around the break, he wrapped above and below the seam. When he was finished, it looked almost as good as new. *Maybe, he thought, if I did everything the way Grandpa had taught me, just maybe I'll catch another whopper.*



The Birth of Moses—God cares for Moses. Hebrew for draw out.

***Grades 3-4** Ephesians 4:31—5:2, *International Children's Bible*.

Grades 5-6 Exodus 20:3, 4, 7, 8, 12-17, *New International Version*.

R•A•D•A•R

Crew Flight Log

Daily Checklist

	Read My Bible	* Studied and Said Memory Verse	Prayed
SUN			
MON			
TUE			
WED			
THU			
FRI			
SAT			

Weekly Checklist

Good Deed Tell someone about Jesus



○ Nazareth

○ Jerusalem

○ Bethlehem