

REGRETS ON AN
AFRICAN
RIVER AND OTHER
ADVENTURES

J E F F S C O G G I N S



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Fleeing From a Kidnapper

When I was about five years old and my brother four—we decided we were definitely old enough to make a trip into town. I don't remember how far we lived from town, but it was several miles. Our family lived near Atmore, Alabama, just above the west corner of Florida's panhandle.

My brother, Mitch, and I needed nails. We had dreamed up a grand vision of building an ark. What fun it would be to play in such a huge boat. We had trees on our property that we could cut down and saw into boards just the way they did in the *My Bible Friends* books. My dad had a hammer and saw in the shop, but we couldn't find any nails. Not straight ones anyway. We had already pounded all the nails we could find into a telephone pole.

I had a few quarters saved in an envelope, so the simple solution was to buy more nails in town. Following family worship one drizzly morning, I asked if Mitch and I could go to TG&Y to buy nails. I don't know if TG&Y exists anymore, but as far as we were concerned, that store was the premier town destination. It sold everything one could imagine. Most importantly, it had toys, and nails, we presumed.

My mom, assuming we were pretending, thought that TG&Y was probably the woodshed or pump house and gave us permission to go. My dad left for

work as we busied ourselves for our very first trip to town all on our own.

Clutching my envelope of quarters, we set out. Our long, wooded driveway ended at a four-lane highway. We thought town was to the left. The road was nearly deserted, but we stayed near the tree line anyway so that every time the occasional car drove by, we could duck into the bushes and hide.

At the bottom of the hill, we came to the river, so we were forced to abandon the trees to cross the bridge. By then, the misty rain had soaked my envelope, and in the middle of the bridge, the quarters fell through the bottom, a couple of them disappearing through drain holes into the river below. I quickly gathered up the remaining coins and shoved them into my pocket. We then raced to the other side of the bridge.

As Mitch and I neared the top of the hill, we became bolder and stayed on the shoulder out of the wet grass. We still had time to take cover when we heard cars coming toward us from the other side of the hill—at least we thought we did. A pickup truck surprised us as it crested the hill. We dove for cover, but it was too late. We had been spotted. We hoped he would just drive on. Not everyone was a kidnapper, after all.

Unfortunately, this one seemed to be a kidnapper because the minute he saw us, he slammed on his brakes and pulled to the shoulder. We were perhaps a quarter mile from home by now. “Run!” I screamed to my brother. We wheeled around and sped back down the hill toward the bridge as fast as our little legs could carry us. Having a year on my brother, I easily outran him. The large, bearded man in the pickup followed us in his truck. Finally, he pulled in front of my brother, stopped, jumped out of the truck, and grabbed him.

I wanted to keep running, but I couldn’t let this stranger take my brother, so I stopped. The man deposited Mitch in the seat beside him and then pulled up to me and opened the passenger door. “Get in,” he ordered. I climbed into the cab, trembling.

“Where do you live?” he asked. We pointed to our driveway, which we could still see. My terror diminished as he turned into our driveway. He was taking us home. He honked as he rolled to a stop, and my mother came out of the house. I can’t remember the expression on her face, and I probably couldn’t describe it if I did. I just remember her profusely thanking the man over and over as we scrambled out of the truck.

Sometimes as Christians, we develop confidence in our own abilities and set off on our own. Even though we would never say it in so many words, we live

as if we do not need God. We too often commence our day without asking God to accompany us, though He is eager to do so.

When the devil finds us wandering alone without God, he is never as kind as the man in the pickup. Satan is a kidnapper, and he will do all in his power to prevent you from finding your way home. He will convince you that you haven't the time to connect with God. He will argue that it makes no difference anyhow. He will assure you that just this once is no big deal, you can spend some time with God later.

Thankfully, the devil cannot force you to climb on board with him. In fact, you don't even have to run away from him. The Bible tells us that if we simply resist him, he will do the fleeing (James 4:7).