



WHERE THE RIVER BEGINS

An adaptation of *Where the River Begins* by Patricia St. John
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Adaptation: Karen E. Weitzel
Illustrators: Vernon Henkel, Debbie Saint Computer Graphic Artist: Joshua Day
Proofreader: Sharon Neal
PowerPoint Presentation, Download, Typesetting and Layout: Patricia Pope

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Phone: (717) 859-1131 www.biblevisuals.org

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Chapter 1

Aim of the Chapter: To help your students understand that God loves them and will help them love others.

Memory Verse:

If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.
(1 John 4:11)



Show Illustration #1

Francis, breathing hard, pedaled madly out of the gate. He had made it! He looked back at his house and wondered what was happening. Probably Mum would have gone to bed with her headache, and Dad would be with Wendy and Debby because it was Saturday afternoon. He would take them to ride their bicycles in the park and buy them ice cream.

And, no doubt, right now he was walking up to Francis's bedroom to tell him that if he would behave like a ten-year-old and say he was sorry to his little sister, he could come too. But Francis was not going to say he was sorry to Wendy or ride his bicycle with little girls.

As he pedaled away, he remembered what took place at the table that noon. It wasn't wholly his fault there had been an argument. Wendy *had* kicked him first. And when he had tried to explain, Dad believed Wendy. He always did. Then Francis had been sent to his room. But instead he had sneaked out the back door, crept through the long grass behind the apple trees to the cherry tree at the very end of the yard.

The cherry tree was Francis's hiding place. Nobody had discovered it. Halfway up, the big fork in the trunk made a kind of seat and a hollow large enough to contain a tin box. There Francis had climbed. He had checked the tin box first. It was all there—three little cars, 50 baseball cards and a bag of mints. Then, he spied on everyone's backyard. When he grew tired of that, he looked beyond the yards to where cars and trucks roared along the main street and on to where the woods began and little hills arose. The river was somewhere between two hills.

It was March. The river would be flooding its banks in some places and nearly reaching the bridges. Francis had seen the river like this before. A wild idea had surged through him. He would go to the river and have an adventure. Clambering down the tree, he had wheeled his bike cautiously from the toolshed and pedaled furiously down his street.

Now, out of breath, Francis braked his bike and stopped. He had a vague idea of getting to the river, but he had never been so far by himself. He wasn't sure if he really wanted to go

alone. Looking around, he realized Ram lived down this street. Perhaps he would go. Ram was from India and didn't speak much English, but he had a bicycle. He would be someone with whom to share an adventure. Francis skidded to a stop in front of a small house. Soon both boys were pedaling along the grassy edge of the main road out into the open country.

They turned off the main road and coasted along a country lane. The big river had risen almost to flood level, but there was a smaller river farther away from the village. They hid their bicycles behind a hedge and trotted up a path past a farm.

"I think the river is down the other side," said Francis. "Hurry up, Ram."

Francis flung out his arms like the wings of a plane and made off down the hill as fast as he could run. "There's the river," he shouted.



Show Illustration #2

He ran to a tree that sloped out far over the river. When he reached the roots he stopped suddenly and shrieked with excitement, "Ram! Look!"

They stared down at a little inlet where a small boat had been beached and tied to a post. The flood had lifted it so that it rocked with the current. Francis slid down the bank and climbed into the boat. The oars had been removed and there was no rudder. He worked at the knots and shouted at Ram to get in.

Ram stood in the mud, tense with fear and indecision. He knew that to launch the boat was dangerous. He knew, too, that he could not control Francis and that he could not desert him.

"No, Francis," he cried. "Come back—not good—I no swim—Francis!"

The last knot slipped, and the boat, caught in a sideways swirl of water, headed for the main river. Ram, who didn't want to be left alone, jumped and landed in the boat beside Francis. In another moment they were in the middle of the big river.



Show Illustration #3

The boat pitched along through the foaming currents. Francis clung to the side and tried to think, but the boat was moving so fast he couldn't think at all. Ram was sobbing.