

SWIMMING WITH THE POLAR BEARS

The foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom.

—1 Corinthians 1:25

INTRODUCTION

You're familiar with the story of how Joshua and the Israelites conquered the city of Jericho, right? Well, have you ever wondered what Joshua thought when he heard the battle plan that God wanted him to follow when they attacked that high-walled city?

"March around the city once a day for six days," the Lord told Joshua. "On the seventh day, march around it seven times, with the priests blowing on trumpets. When they sound a long blast on the trumpets, have all the people give a loud shout. Then the wall will collapse."

Joshua must've thought, "That's crazy! How in the world will *that* work?" But however Joshua felt about God's plan, he obeyed the Lord and did what he was told to do. And—amazingly—the wall of Jericho *did* fall down, and Joshua and the Israelites conquered the city. God knew what he was doing all along.

Today's devotion is based on 1 Corinthians 1:25, which says, "The foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom." The devotion is called "Swimming with the Polar Bears."

DEVOTION

It was New Year's Day, snow was falling, and Aaron and his sister were standing on the beach in their swimsuits. Many other people were doing the same. It was time for the Polar Bear Swim!

"I c-can't believe I'm d-doing this," said Aaron, his teeth chattering.

Shivering, Christina said, "D-don't wimp out n-now."

As a crowd of onlookers cheered, everyone ran splashing into the ocean. Aaron and Christina dove under the icy waves. They came up gasping and whooping, then raced back to shore to wrap themselves in towels.

A kid watching them shook his head. "You guys are crazy."

Laughing, Aaron replied, "W-we know!"

Naaman thought it was foolish to dunk himself in the Jordan River. But when he obeyed God and did it, he was healed of leprosy. (See 2 Kings 5:1–14.) Will you trust and obey God when he asks you to do something "foolish"? What if he wants you to tell the cashier she gave you too much change? Or to forgive someone who isn't sorry? Acts like these may not seem wise, but God knows they make you a better person.

PEOPLE IN BIBLE TIMES

One of Naaman's slaves, a young girl from Israel, believed that the prophet Elisha could heal Naaman. She may have thought it was foolish to try to give her master advice. But she trusted in God and did it.

QUESTIONS

1. Can you think of any other stories in the Bible where God told someone to do something foolish ... and it worked?
2. Some answers are: Gideon's battle against the Midianites, the story of the widow's oil, and Moses striking the rock to get water. There are many examples!
3. What do you think is the reason why God asks people to do strange things instead of sensible things before he does something wonderful?
4. One answer is: to test and/or build people's faith in him.
5. Has God ever asked *you* to do something "foolish"? Did you do it? What happened?
6. Which of God's commands in the Bible seem foolish to you?
7. Answers might include: "Love your enemies," "Forgive those who hurt you," and "It's better to give than to receive."
8. Are these commands really foolish, when you think it over carefully?
9. Which of God's "foolish" commands are hardest for you to obey? What good would they do you if you obeyed them? What could you do to obey God's "foolish" commands better?
10. One answer could be: ask God to help you understand why the commands are really wise and to help you obey them.