

# *Discovering the Real Me*

Student Textbook # 6  
A World of Choices

For children 10 to 12 years of age

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# Chapter 1

## The Voice

For so many years, Brian had been the ideal child. At least, that's what his mom told him! All through elementary school, he helped with chores around the house, took care of his growing baby brother, and showed respect to his parents. Whenever his dad came home from work and yelled, "Brian, get your bike out of the driveway!" he would run right away to remove his bike.

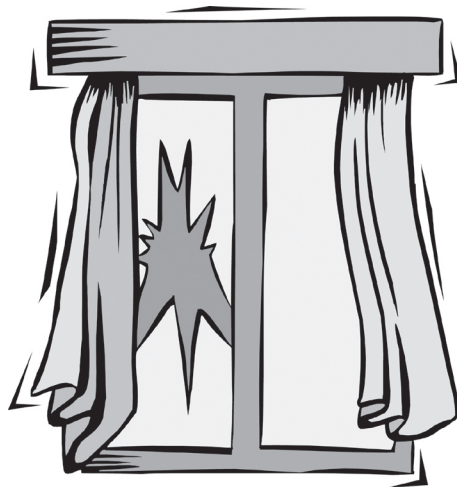
Brian knew of the long hard hours his parents put in working, and he also knew that being helpful was the right thing to do. He loved his parents, and he showed it by doing what he could to help them.

Brian also knew that if he lied, cheated, stole, or cursed, his parents would somehow find out about it. They always did. Then they would set him back on the right path. His parents did not need to spank their son, and they seldom grounded him. A strong talk was all that was needed.

You see, there was this little "Voice" in Brian's head that would remind him of the difference between right and wrong.

"Brian, stop looking at Mary's paper. Cheating is wrong," the Voice would say.

Or, "Brian, you know perfectly well that it was you who threw the baseball through the Johnsons's window. Go to their door and see what you can do to make up for it."



Without that pushy little Voice, Brian might have made some wrong choices or never corrected his mistakes. With it, he was one of the most liked and respected kids in the neighborhood and school.

But now that he was getting older, things were not so simple anymore. His friends were getting older too, and many of them were no longer content with being good. They wanted more "excitement" than that. Jokes, once harmless, silly and funny, now had to be at the expense of others, or dirty. Football was no longer for the sake of playing with your friends; you had to tackle the guy so he had a hard time getting up again. Even wearing clothes was more for showing off than just for feeling comfortable.

*Discovering the Real Me*

More and more, Brian found himself in situations where he had to choose between following what the Voice was telling him or just going along with whatever his friends were doing. The more he went along with the crowd and ignored the Voice, the smaller and softer it became.

Meanwhile, the crowd was taking more and more risks. One day, two of Brian's friends got together and asked him if he would join them in breaking into some lockers of kids they didn't like. Without really thinking it through, Brian agreed to the mean-spirited prank. But a vice principal making the rounds caught the three classmates doing their misdeed and called their parents. Thus began the worst day of Brian's still-young life.

"Why couldn't I hear the Voice when I really needed it?" wondered Brian sadly. He was sitting in the principal's office, his hands folded in his lap, fighting back tears about the threats of suspension.



When his parents finally showed up, all he could say was, "Dad, I'm so sorry; I will never do it again."

His parents were very angry and disappointed. That hurt worst of all—the pain in their eyes, and the note of mistrust that came into their voices when they spoke to him now.

He asked his dad about the Voice and why he couldn't hear it when he needed it most.

"The more you listen to the crowd, the less you can hear the Voice," his father said. "I think, if you look over the last couple of months, you'll find that you were listening to the crowd more than listening to the Voice. So it got smaller and smaller."

"How do I make it strong again?" asked Brian.

"We'll have to go back to the way we made it strong in the first place," said his dad. "You have to listen to your parents and do what we say. You have to think about how we would react to something you are thinking of doing. And to help you, we'll be keeping a very close watch on

you, and you won't regain your privileges and independence until we know we can trust you on your own again."

It was like being a little kid all over again! Brian sighed. All his friends were complaining that their parents treated them like babies. Brian guessed this is what they meant when they said that. But he also knew that the Voice inside him needed to grow some more again, and he vowed he would never let it go back to being small again.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. When is the last time your conscience—or an inner voice— helped you make the right decision?

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2. What feelings did you have, knowing that you made the right decision?

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3. Did you ever feel guilty for not following your conscience?

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4. What did you do to overcome those guilt feelings?

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5. Have you ever been in the position of not knowing whether something was right or wrong, good or bad? How did that feel? How did that situation work out?

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**EXERCISE**

Think about the following situations, and see if you can tell what your own inner “Voice” says is right to do.

You find a wallet in the grass. It has a name and address in it—the owner lives a block away from you. There’s money in it. What should you do?

You see some boys shoplifting CDs in the store. The manager has his back turned. What should you do?

You knocked over the vase on the teacher’s desk, breaking it. The teacher thinks Cindy did it. The teacher starts scolding Cindy. What should you do?