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ISBN-13: 978-6-0002-0918-6  
ISBN-10: 6-0002-0918-5

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The Scoop Troop



Akaloo

# THE SCOOP TROOP

Akaloo 1, Grades 5-6

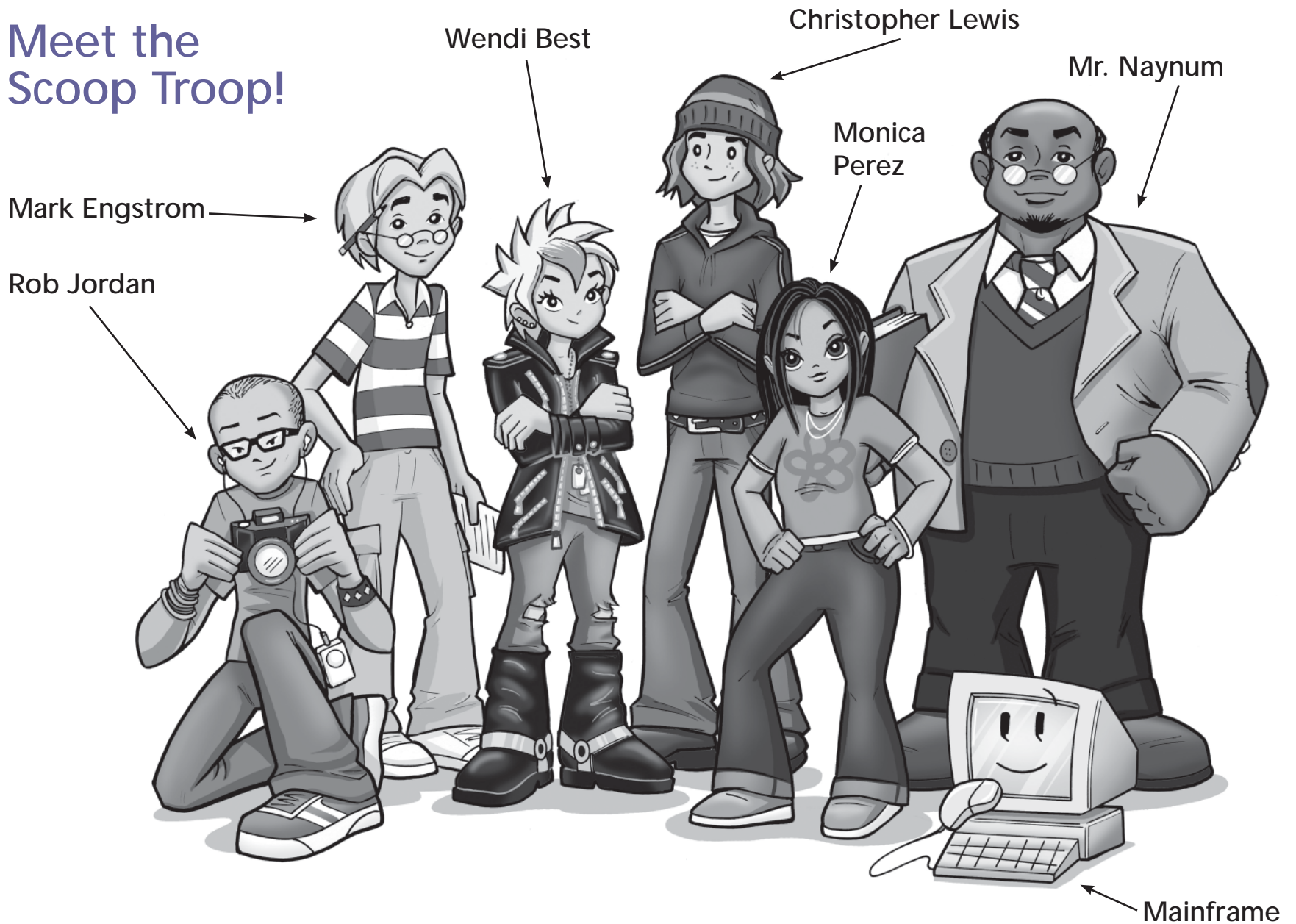
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Cover Design: Spunk Design Machine  
Illustrations: Shawn Finley

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# Meet the Scoop Troop!



# Chapter 1

## Let's Get (the Press) Fired Up!



It was obvious by the way he descended into the basement of Shorewood Park Church—his shoulders slightly stooped, a heavy sigh hissing like a deflated tire—that Christopher Lewis would rather be anywhere else than here, off to his first meeting to launch a radical experiment in journalism.

“I shouldn’t feel like this,” he mumbled to himself. “It was my idea. But I never thought when I blurted it out at youth group that anyone would take it seriously.” Then he considered all the possible reasons he’d suggested a weekly newspaper in the first place. To sound important. To impress the girls. To break the awkward silence in the room.

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He remembered what Mr. Naynum, the youth group leader, had said just moments before the youth group’s last meeting. “If nobody talks about the incredible stories and history and good news in the Bible, then how is anybody going to know?”

“You’d just assume everyone would know,” said

Mark Engstrom, who never let an opportunity to make a wisecrack get past him. “There’s this guy in an emo band at Parker Middle School, and at their last concert he was wearing this T-shirt that said, ‘Jesus is coming. Everyone look busy.’”

Everyone laughed, except Wendi Best. After all, anyone with pink-streaked hair can sympathize with another outsider—emo, goth, marching band geek, you name it. “That’s sooo funny, Mark,” she said. Then she paused and added, “Why should any of this Bible stuff matter to anyone today anyway? I mean, I believe it. I grew up with it. But if I ever tried to discuss it with my friends, they would be like, ‘That was so yesterday.’ As in way, way thousands of years ago yesterday. Or they’d say, ‘When was the last time you saw anyone raised from the dead? Or a miracle?’”

“Great questions,” Mr. Naynum said. “So again, how do we get out the good news?”

No one seated in the circle had an answer—or wanted to offer one. Not Rob Jordan, who doodled in his sketch book. Not Monica Perez, who looked like she was going to say something, but drew a short breath and held back—not like her at all. Wendi just scratched her scalp until little flakes fell on her shoulder like flurries in a snow globe.

Christopher felt as if the tension rested square on his shoulders. And then: “How about a Good Newspaper . . .”

There are times in life when words fly off the tongue like spitballs from a straw, and they cannot be withdrawn. And like any good, gooey spitball, this question stuck.

“Excellent!” Mr. Naynum said.

The kids in the room buzzed and everyone nodded—everyone but Christopher. Rob dashed off a quick sketch of a nameplate design and held it up for all to see: *Good Newspaper*. And underneath, this credo à la the *New York Times*: “All the news that’s true, we do.”

“So when’s our first planning meeting?” Mr. Naynum asked.

And so it had happened. That quickly. That decisively.



“Impossible,” Christopher said to himself as he descended the church stairs. “We’re never going to pull this off. I’ve never written an ‘A’ paper in English, let alone edited a newspaper.”

“You’re right,” a voice inside him said. “You’ll never do it—not alone, anyway.” Christopher remembered what his uncle, a crusty editor at the *Detroit Free Press* had once told him: “A newspaper is a daily miracle.” Interesting choice of words for a crabby old skeptic with coffee-and-tuna-fish breath: “Daily miracle.”

Christopher chewed on that phrase like a comforting wad of cherry gum. And then he thought of something his mom always said, time and again: “God loves an impossible idea.” To which Christopher replied to himself, “I sure hope so.”

Christopher was so preoccupied when he entered the basement that he didn’t notice the time—2:10 P.M. Sunday—or that he was 10 minutes late for the first meeting of the Good Newspaper. He walked into the midst of an animated discussion.

“It’s not like I’ve ever seen it on Oprah’s book club,” Wendi said.

“And mine doesn’t have any pictures in it—no photos, no illustrations, not even a doodle space,” Mark added.

“What are you guys talking about?” Christopher asked.

“You’re late,” Wendi shot back. “How do you expect to run a newspaper if you’re late to the first meeting?”

“But it wasn’t my idea . . .” Christopher said.

“As I recall, it was your idea,” Wendi said.

“Okay, so the newspaper part was my idea—but it definitely wasn’t my idea to actually follow through with it,” Christopher replied a bit defensively.

“Maybe,” Mr. Naynum said, “we all ought to get back to the question.”

“Which is?” Christopher asked.

“What’s so great about the Bible?” Rob said.

“Are you asking me?” Christopher asked.

“No,” Rob said. “That’s the question. But actually yes—I am asking you.”

“And everyone else here ought to try to brainstorm an answer, too,” Mr. Naynum said.

“One great thing is that if there’s a strong breeze coming through the kitchen, it’s heavy enough to keep my homework from blowing off the table,” Mark said.

Monica wadded up a piece of notebook paper and winged it at Mark, grazing his left ear. Mark stuck out his tongue and grinned. “Very mature,” Monica said. Then she added, “I can think of lots of great things about the Bible. Maybe we should make a list.”

“Great,” said Mr. Naynum, stepping up to a dry erase board. “Let’s take down some ideas.”

### SCOOP TROOP ALERT

The Troopers need your help. Take a few minutes to write down some things you think are great about the Bible. When everyone in your group is done, discuss your ideas.

Mr. Naynum looked pleased. “I think we’ve got enough solid suggestions here to start a regular series for our newspaper. We’ll concentrate on one new idea every week for the next few weeks. But I still think we’re missing the big idea: the one that could kick off our first edition of this series.”

“You’re looking for something unique?” Christopher asked.

“That’s it!” Monica said. “You’re brilliant.”

Christopher looked more confused than ever: “I’m lost.”

“No, I think Monica’s right,” Mr. Naynum said. “You’re hardly lost; in fact you’ve found the right answer, even if you stumbled onto it. Care to explain, Monica?”

“Sure,” she said. “See, the Bible is unique. And it’s unique in so many ways that we could make that the basis for our first editorial. It’s a book made up of many books, written by many authors. It contains poetry, wise sayings, and history.”

“And it’s more widely distributed than any book in the world,” Wendi added. “It doesn’t need Oprah’s help.”

And from there, the ideas began to flow.

### SCOOP TROOP ALERT

What do you find unique about the Bible?

Consider categories such as:

- Longevity
- Influence
- Everyday expressions that come from its pages
- Anything you can think of!

Make your list the basis for a group discussion.