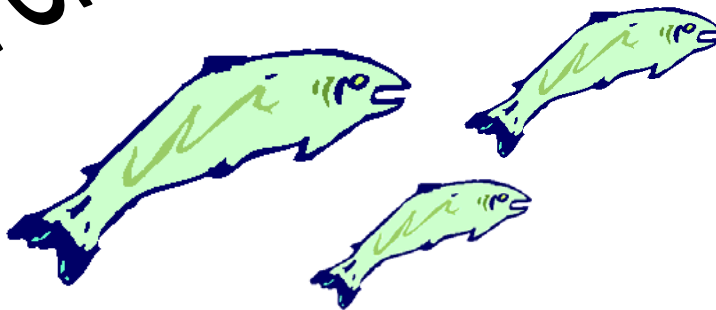


# UP THE CREEK

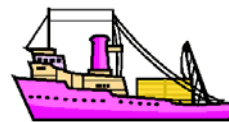


You probably love to eat **Sockeye Salmon**, a fish from the West Coast that is **very tasty and nutritious**. But have you ever wondered: **Where do salmon come from?** They have a fascinating life history that takes them through four years — from birth and growth to maturity and death.



Salmon lay their eggs in shallow clear-running streams where they scoop out rocky nests called "redds". In the spring, the eggs hatch and tiny **fry** (baby fish about an inch long) emerge. They drift downriver into a lake, where they spend the next year growing in size. But **three out of four will be eaten** by predators before the end of the year!

In the fall, the young salmon (now called **fingerlings** or **smolts**) are about 3-4 inches long as they



begin a 300-mile journey to the coast and head for the North Pacific Ocean. Once in the ocean, they face many dangers — not just bigger fish, but **killer whales, seals, and commercial fishing fleets**.

*When the salmon reach maturity — after about four years — a genetic signal tells them it is time to head home to spawn (lay their eggs). And this is where things get really interesting!*

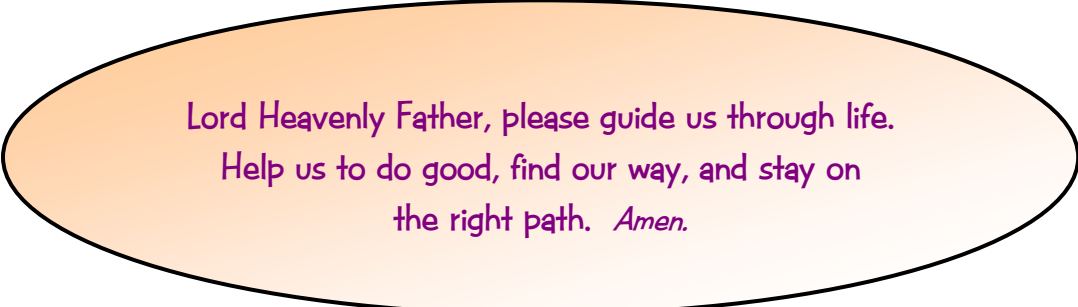
*The salmon must return to the very same stream where they themselves were hatched.*

The returning salmon must avoid getting caught by fishing nets and sport fishermen as well as by eagles and grizzly bears — all the while swimming upstream and fighting against mighty currents. **How many fish do you think make it?** Only a few of the millions! For every 4,000 eggs that were laid four years ago, **only two adults** arrive at the spawning sites to lay their eggs and start the cycle again. And **they too will die** once they have spawned.

If you've ever walked along a river, you've probably noticed that one place looks pretty much like another. All creeks must look alike to the salmon too! **So how do they find their way back to their birthplace?** Salmon have a keen sense of smell and discernment to find exactly the right path home to their spawning beds.

We need discernment in our lives too, to find the right path in life and to find our way "home". **And where is home?** It is where God lives and where the Lord Jesus has been calling us since the moment we were born.

**Jesus is the only way home.**



Lord Heavenly Father, please guide us through life.  
Help us to do good, find our way, and stay on  
the right path. *Amen.*