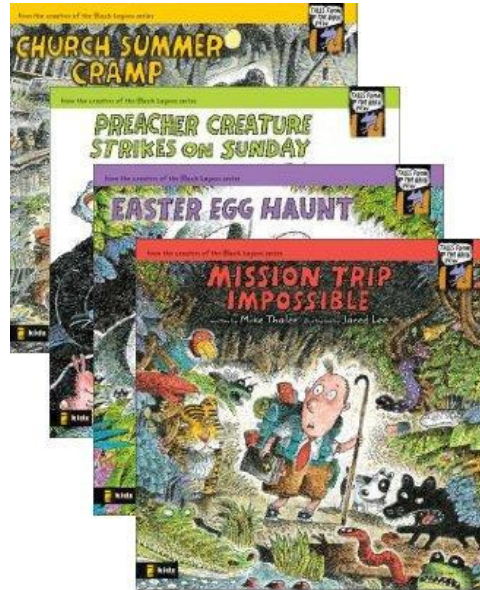


Author: Mike Thaler  
Illustrator: Jared Lee  
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I wanted to extend my thanks to Lindsey Rodarmer at Zonderkidz for giving me the opportunity to review the first four books in Mike Thaler & Jared Lee's Tales from the Back Pew series.

When it comes to church, kids sometimes think and say the darnedest things. The Tales from the Back Pew series takes a light-hearted look at some of the misconceptions our children may have about church.

In *Mission Trip Impossible*, the main character is a bit concerned about the mission trip his church is about to embark on. He's not quite sure how he'll deal with the wild animals, jungle, cannibals, bad weather, and other harsh conditions. Much to his surprise, this mission trip only goes as far as the other side of town. Even though his trip turned out to be much less exotic than he first thought, he still gets to tell his new friends about his best friend, Jesus.

In *Preacher Creature Strikes on Sunday*, the main character is wondering if church will be anything like the stories he's heard. There's obvious cause for concern when you consider the fact that you may get drafted into the service, be forced to sit on smelly benches called pews, and deal with the guy up front they call the sermonator. On top of all that, they actually make you pay to join in the singing. Fortunately all his fears are laid to rest when he finds that the people are actually pretty nice. Sunday school even ended with cookies and milk!

In *Church Summer Cramp*, the main character is trying to process all that the pastor has promised them about the youth group's trip to summer camp. He's not quite sure how getting lost, becoming a mosquito burrito, and sleeping in tents are anybody's idea of a good time. In spite all his objections he remembers that God took care of the Israelites when they were in the wilderness wandering around lost and sleeping in tents. If God took care of the Israelites, he can trust that He will take care of him too. Besides, canoodling, throwing horses, and possibly running into Bigfoot sounds like it might be fun.

In *Easter Egg Haunt*, the main character is heading over to the Easter egg hunt at church. In preparation, the kids paint all sorts of things on the eggs. After the kids finish the decorating, their Sunday school teacher tells them the real story of Easter. As it turns out, Easter is actually all about Jesus. Eggs and bunnies were added later, much like Santa Claus was added on to Christmas.

Children ages 4-8 and their parents will enjoy the light-hearted fun found in the Tales from the Back Pew series. As you complete each story, you'll be able to talk about the realities of "church life" and how it really isn't as bad as they maybe thought it was at first. Be on the lookout for two new titles in this series (*Walking the Plank to the Baptism Tank* & *The Three Wise Guys*), both scheduled to release later this year.

*Mike Thaler, known as the Riddle King of America, is the author of the popular Black Lagoon books and the Heaven and Mirth series. He lives in Portland, Oregon, and travels nationally, speaking in schools, libraries, and churches.*

*Jared Lee is an accomplished illustrator with experience working for the likes of L.L. Bean, Procter and Gamble, Hasbro, Scholastic, Simon & Schuster, and the U.S. Postal Service. He currently resides in Lebanon, Ohio.*