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## PREVIEWS OF JESUS

READ: 1 JOHN 4:16-17

**G**abe watched his tablet with rapt attention. This new game looked so cool! It had everything: monsters, sword fights, pirate ships...this had to be the best game he would ever play.

“Dad, check out this game that’s coming out! The preview looks so cool. Do you think we can get it?” Gabe asked eagerly.

Dad took the tablet and watched a few moments of the trailer. “I’ll have to check it out a little more, but it does look fun. You know, game studios often show amazing trailers for games, but then the actual game doesn’t measure up. It’s not always a good preview of what’s coming out,” Dad remarked.

“Maybe, but I still want to try it.” Gabe kept thinking about the new game as he put away his tablet and got ready to go to the hospital. His family volunteered to visit sick people who didn’t get many visitors.

As they stepped off the elevator, Gabe asked his dad, “Why do we come and talk to people here at the hospital? Don’t they have family who can visit them?”

“Sometimes they do, but a lot of the patients who stay at the hospital a long time don’t get many visitors, and they get lonely,” Dad said as they walked down the hallway. “When we come say hi, we cheer them up, and that can help them feel better. It’s one way we can show the love of Jesus to them.” They turned into a hospital room and chatted with a man recovering from surgery.

Back at home, Gabe was still thinking about what his dad said and the video game trailer he had watched earlier. He realized something and ran to his dad. “You know what? We’re just like that trailer I showed you earlier, but we’re trailers for Jesus! When we visit people in the hospital, we’re showing a little bit of what the kingdom of God will be like.”

Dad smiled at Gabe. “You’re exactly right! I never thought of it that way before. When we care about those who are sick and help them feel better, we’re showing them what Jesus is like and point to His promise to heal all sickness one day. I just hope we’re more accurate previews of God’s kingdom than some of the games I’ve played!” ♥ NICOLE KRAAYENBRINK

**SHOW OTHERS THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

**KEY VERSE:** HEAL THE SICK, AND TELL THEM,  
“THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NEAR YOU NOW.” LUKE 10:9 (NLT)

Do you think the way you act and treat people matters? If you’re a Christian, the way you act should reflect what God’s kingdom looks like. That means treating people with love and kindness as Jesus did, because He died and rose again to make us part of His kingdom. What are some ways you could be a preview of God’s kingdom?

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## NO TAKING BACK

READ: TITUS 2:7-8, 11-14

**E**den makes me so mad! Melanie fumed as she walked home from Eden's house. The two friends had argued, and now Melanie thought of more things she wished she had said to Eden—and they weren't nice. *Well, I'm not going back there. I'll text her and tell her what I think of her*, she thought. All the way home, Melanie planned what she'd say.

"That'll fix her," Melanie muttered after sending an angry note to her friend. But as she headed for the kitchen, she felt bad. Eden was her best friend.

Mom was making dinner when Melanie sat down on a stool at the kitchen counter. Mom glanced at her. "Problems?" she asked. "You don't look happy."

"I...I..." Melanie began, and the story tumbled out. "I shouldn't have sent that message," she said. "Maybe she didn't see it yet. How can I get her to not read it?"

Mom shook her head. "Sorry, honey, but I'm afraid you can't."

"Maybe I could call her and ask her to delete it without reading it," Melanie suggested.

"Do you really think that would work?" Mom asked. Melanie sighed and shook her head. "Once we send something, we can't take it back," said Mom.

"But, Mom!" cried Melanie. "What can I do?"

"Calling her is a good idea, but call to apologize and tell her you're sorry."

Melanie blew her nose. "Okay," she said. "I will."

"And let this be a reminder the next time you're tempted to say—or text—something hurtful to someone," said Mom. "Remember that, just like you couldn't take back that message, we can't take back any of the words we say once we say them. That's why the Bible tells us to choose our words carefully—and also our thoughts and actions. We can't live any part of our lives over."

"So we have to be careful about what we say and do from the start, right?" Melanie said thoughtfully. "Much more careful than I was today. I'll remember that."

"Good," said Mom. "You should also remember that we can ask Jesus to forgive us and help us change our ways when we're not as careful as we should be and fail to show others His love. And we can ask those we hurt to forgive us too." ♥

SHERRY L. KUYT

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### LIVE EACH DAY CAREFULLY

**KEY VERSE:** [GOD'S GRACE] TEACHES US...TO LIVE SELF-CONTROLLED, UPRIGHT AND GODLY LIVES IN THIS PRESENT AGE. TITUS 2:12 (NIV)

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Have you said or done things you wish you hadn't? You can't take back those words or actions, but you can tell people you're sorry and ask their forgiveness. You can ask Jesus to forgive you too. He will, and He'll help you change your ways so others can see His grace and love in your life. Consider each day a gift from God, and trust Him to help you live it carefully.

## LIGHT NEEDED (PART 1)

READ: PSALM 119:105, 127-130

It's so dark out," said Cora as she and her brother Josh stumbled along the path through the woods. They had been visiting some friends who were camping just a short distance from their own campsite.

"At least we don't have far to go," said Josh. "We're almost—" His words cut off as he caught his toe on a tree root and fell. "Ow!" he yelled.

Cora reached down to help him up. "Are you hurt?"

"Not much," Josh replied. "But I think I skinned my knee. It hurts." He began to brush himself off. "We'd better not go quite so fast." Cora agreed, and the two of them moved slowly and carefully along until they reached the campsite where their parents were waiting for them.

"We could hear you two coming," said Mom. "We heard a yell. Are you okay?"

"Josh fell," said Cora, "but he's not hurt much. It was so dark, we couldn't see when there was stuff in our way."

"You had your pocket flashlight with you," said Dad. "Why didn't you use it?"

"My flashlight!" Josh reached into his pocket and pulled it out. "I forgot I had it." Everyone laughed.

"Can I have a bandage for my knee?" Josh asked.

"Sure," said Mom. "I'll get one for you."

"You kids remind me of myself," Dad said while Mom cleaned and bandaged Josh's knee. "I have a light for my path, but sometimes I forget to use it or just don't bother."

"Really?" asked Cora. "Are you talking about the flashlight on your phone?"

Dad shook his head. "I'm talking about my Bible," he said. "God says His Word is a light to our paths. It tells us about Jesus, the light of the world who died and rose again to save us from sin. The Bible helps us get to know Him better and encourages us in our walk with Him. But it doesn't do us any good if we don't use it." Dad held up his phone. "Gather 'round now," he said. "It's time for our family devotions—and since it's so dark, I'll read the Bible on this."

Josh grinned. "I guess that means you have two lights on your phone!" ♥

HAZEL W. MARETT

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### READ YOUR BIBLE

**KEY VERSE:** THE TEACHING OF YOUR WORD GIVES LIGHT,  
SO EVEN THE SIMPLE CAN UNDERSTAND. PSALM 119:130 (NLT)

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Do you read your Bible regularly? Do you listen when it's being taught at church? It contains the truth and promises God wants to share with you. It tells the story of Jesus, who loves you and died for your sins. It offers encouragement and comfort in hard times and guidance in how to live your life. But unless you use it, it can't help you. Don't stumble along in the dark. Use your Bible and follow the light it gives.

## LIGHT NEEDED (PART 2)

READ: PSALM 119:4-8

Can you sleep at our campsite tonight?” Josh asked his friend Ben after spending the evening with Ben’s family. “My mom says it’s okay with her.”

“Can I, Mom? Then I won’t wake you when I get up early to go fishing.”

Ben’s mom nodded. “Okay, but it’s already dark, so take your sleeping bag and get going.”

As they started out, Josh snapped on his flashlight. “Last night I left this thing in my pocket all the way home. I’m not gonna make the same mistake twice!”

When they came to a narrow stretch of the path, Josh led the way and Ben followed behind him. “Can you see okay, Ben?” Josh turned back to light Ben’s path. As they walked along, Josh continued to leave the beam of light on the path behind him, making sure Ben could see. “Last night I fell over a tree root,” Josh said, “and I don’t want—oops!” Down he went, and the flashlight went flying into a bush.

After the boys recovered the light, Josh turned to Ben. “Walk up here with me so we can both see where we’re going.”

When they arrived at the campsite, Josh’s family was waiting. “We saw your light and heard a crash,” said Mom. “What happened this time?”

“Fell again even though you were using the flashlight, didn’t you?” teased Cora. “Maybe you need glasses.”

After hearing the story, Dad smiled. “Do you know who you remind me of tonight?” he asked. Josh shook his head. “You remind me of myself—again!” Dad said. “You were using your flashlight this time, but you were pointing it on somebody else’s path. I’ve done the same thing with the light of the Bible. There have been times when I’ve heard God’s Word preached at church and thought, *I hope so-and-so is listening. They really need to hear this.* Or times when I’ve read something in the Bible and applied it to another person’s life instead of my own.”

“So,” began Cora, “we need to shine the Bible’s light on our own paths and lives.”

Dad nodded. “God’s Word sometimes contains hard truths, but it also tells us the good news of Jesus and what He did to save us. We need to apply everything it says to our lives. That’s the way to keep from falling!” ♥ HAZEL W. MARETT



### APPLY BIBLE TRUTHS TO YOURSELF

**KEY VERSE:** YOUR WORD IS A LAMP TO MY FEET AND A LIGHT TO MY PATH.  
PSALM 119:105

As you read today’s Key Verse, did you notice the word *my*? Read it again, and emphasize that word. Whenever you read the Bible, apply what it says to yourself. Each of us must check our own heart when we hear the truth of God’s Word instead of pointing to others. Trust Jesus to help you shine the light of His Word on your path by applying its truth to your life.

## CHRISTIAN SAYS

READ: 1 JOHN 3:16-18

To start our game, I will be Simon,” said Miss Elwood, Kennedy’s teacher. “And remember, you must always do what Simon says, not what Simon does.”

*All right!* thought Kennedy. *I’m going to be really careful this time.*

“Simon says, ‘Thumbs up,’” called Miss Elwood, turning her thumbs up. Kennedy and her classmates did the same. “Simon says, ‘Step forward.’” As Miss Elwood spoke, she stepped forward. The kids followed her example. “Simon says, ‘Snap your fingers.’” But Miss Elwood clapped her hands instead—and before Kennedy could stop herself, she clapped her hands too.

“Oops! I goofed!” Kennedy grinned and sank to her seat. She was out.

That evening, Kennedy’s family sat down to do devotions together. “Today’s verse is First John 3:18,” said Dad. “It says, ‘Let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.’ Do you know what that verse means?”

“I know,” said Kennedy’s brother Tatum. “It means we shouldn’t just say we love God or people. What we do should go along with what we say.”

“Right,” said Dad. “If Jesus has changed our hearts, it should show in both what we say and what we do.”

Kennedy laughed. “Simon should learn this verse,” she said. “At school when we play Simon Says, I always goof if the person who’s Simon says one thing but does another.”

“That brings up a good point,” said Dad. “Sometimes we may act as though we’re playing a game like that—maybe it could be called Christian Says. Sometimes Christians say one thing and do another. Can you think of examples of that from your own life? I’ll start. Christian says, ‘Love your neighbor,’ and then I act in my own self-interest.”

“Christian says, ‘Love your enemies,’ and then I spread rumors about a coworker who’s been treating me poorly,” offered Mom.

“Christian says, ‘Share with others,’ and then I don’t let my friends touch my things,” said Tatum.

Kennedy found this interesting and wanted to add something too. “Umm... Christian says, ‘Be helpful,’ and then I sneak out of doing the dishes.”

“You’ve got the idea,” Mom said. “Let’s trust Jesus to help us make sure our actions match our words.” ♥ HAZEL W. MARETT

## ACTIONS SHOULD MATCH WORDS

**KEY VERSE:** DEAR CHILDREN, LET US NOT LOVE WITH WORDS OR SPEECH BUT WITH ACTIONS AND IN TRUTH. 1 JOHN 3:18 (NIV)

Do you play Christian Says? You can probably think of times when you said one thing and did another. But Jesus doesn’t play that game. He tells us He loves us in the Bible, and He showed it by dying on the cross for our sin so we could be His children. His actions match His words. That’s how we should love others too. Trust Jesus to help you show others His love in both what you say and what you do.

## THE GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

READ: MARK 10:6-9; EPHESIANS 5:31-32

**M**om, are you going to divorce Dad?" Charlotte asked, tears rolling down her cheeks. "What do you mean, honey?" asked Mom with surprise.

"I heard you and Dad arguing last night. I thought you were going to divorce him."

"Oh, Charlotte," said Mom. "It's true that we argued. We had a disagreement over holiday spending. But that doesn't mean we're getting a divorce." Mom gave Charlotte a hug. "Every couple has differences they need to work out sometimes, like Dad and I did last night. We managed to compromise and work out a solution. It gave us the opportunity to understand each other better and to be patient with each other."

"Phew!" Charlotte let out a sigh. "I'm glad you guys are still together."

"We took our marriage vows before God," said Mom. "We're trusting Him to help us honor those vows because marriage is a picture of Jesus's love for us as His church. For better, for worse—"

Charlotte jumped in. "For richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health." She stopped. "I can't remember the rest."

Mom smiled and continued. "To love and to cherish, till death do us part."

"That's beautiful, Mom," said Charlotte.

"Yes," said Mom. "In fact, this coming Saturday, we'll be celebrating our tenth wedding anniversary."

"Wow! That's great!" exclaimed Charlotte.

"And that's not all," said Mom. "Your grandparents will be celebrating their golden anniversary next month. That's fifty years of marriage!"

"That's half a century!" said Charlotte.

"That's right!" said Mom. "Grandpa and Grandma were high school sweethearts. They love each other and built a lovely family together."

"Do they argue too?" asked Charlotte.

"Sometimes, of course," replied Mom. "But they always make up and work it out. They've been together through good times and bad. When I was ten, Grandpa had a terrible car accident and Grandma took care of him. And five years ago, Grandma had cancer and Grandpa took care of her."

"They must really love each other," said Charlotte.

Mom nodded. "It's a blessing from God to be married, and the lifelong commitment of marriage is a picture of God's faithfulness toward us. Jesus will always love us and take care of us, now and forever." ♥ KELLY CHOY

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### MARRIAGE IS A PICTURE OF GOD'S LOVE

**KEY VERSE:** [MARRIAGE] IS A GREAT MYSTERY, BUT IT IS AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE WAY CHRIST AND THE CHURCH ARE ONE. EPHESIANS 5:32 (NLT)

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Do you know anyone who has been married for many years? In marriage, God wants us to love and cherish our spouses, just like Jesus loves the church, which is made up of all those who trust in Him. Whether God calls us to be married or single, it's important to know that all our relationships are an opportunity to share God's love with each other. We can love because Jesus loved us first (1 John 4:19).

## THE WRONG FINGER

READ: JOHN 3:1-7, 16

“Of course I’m a Christian!” Easton told his friend Micah. “I go to church with my mom and dad all the time. Dad’s on the church board, and Mom teaches Sunday school.” Easton paused, then added, “During the church service last Sunday, they both gave testimonies about how they were saved.”

“So what?” said Micah. “That doesn’t make you a Christian.”

“Does too!” Easton insisted.

A little later, Micah left to go home, and Easton came into the house. “Micah and I were tightening some screws on our bikes, and my hand slipped,” Easton told his mom. “My finger got cut!” He held out his hand to show her. “It still hurts.”

“Well, come on in,” said Mom as she inspected Easton’s finger. “Let’s go fix it.”

Mom got a small strip bandage from the medicine cabinet. She looked at it thoughtfully as she tore it open. Then she very carefully put it on her own finger. “There,” she said. “Does that bandage make you feel better?”

Easton stared at his mom. Then he laughed. “Mom! It’s my finger that’s hurt. I’m the one who needs the bandage, not you.”

“Oh?” Mom looked at him. “You mean the bandage on my finger doesn’t help yours?”

“Of course not!” said Easton.

“Well,” replied Mom, “a little while ago I heard you talking with Micah through the open window in the kitchen. You said that because Dad and I are Christians, you are too, right?” Easton nodded uncertainly. “Your dad and I had all our wrongs forgiven by God,” Mom said. “We trusted Jesus as our Savior, and He saved us from sin and gave us eternal life with Him! If that makes you a Christian too, then I think this bandage on my finger should also take care of your cut.”

Easton stared thoughtfully at his mother. “I guess you’re right,” he said. “I need my own bandage—and I need to trust Jesus for myself, don’t I?”

“Yes, you do,” Mom replied as she took out another bandage to put on Easton’s finger. “Want to talk about it some more?”

Easton looked at his cut. “Yeah. I’d like that.” ♥ HAZEL W. MARETT

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### TRUST JESUS FOR YOURSELF

**KEY VERSE:** JESUS REPLIED, “I TELL YOU THE TRUTH, UNLESS YOU ARE BORN AGAIN, YOU CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD.” JOHN 3:3 (NLT)

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Do you come from a Christian home? Do your parents, grandparents, or other relatives know Jesus as their Savior? If you answered yes, that’s great. But here’s the real question—have you placed your faith in Jesus? If not, you are not a Christian. In the Bible, even Nicodemus, a religious ruler, had to be “born again,” meaning he had to trust Jesus to take away his sin. You do too. Trust Jesus today so you can be a Christian too. (See “Have You Heard the Good News?” on page 102.)



# COPYCATS

READ: EPHESIANS 5:1-2, 8-10

**B**rynn tied her hair up in a ponytail. Turning away from the mirror, she bumped into her little sister Chloe. “Mom!” yelled Brynn, grabbing Chloe by the hand and pulling her to the living room. “Chloe’s driving me crazy! Can you keep her with you? She’s like a shadow. She follows me and does everything I do! She’s such a copycat!”

Mom smiled when she saw Chloe. The little girl was standing with one hand on her hip just like her big sister, and her eyes never left Brynn’s face. “You know, Brynn, you should be honored that Chloe wants to be like you,” said Mom. “It shows that she loves you.”

Brynn sighed. “I know, Mom. I love her too, but I’d like to be able to have some time to myself.”

Mom took Chloe’s hand. “Come on, sweetie. Let’s give your sister some privacy.” Relieved, Brynn returned to her room.

That evening during family devotions, Dad read from the fifth chapter of Ephesians. The very first verse said, “Imitate God.”

“Does that remind you of how Chloe imitates you?” Mom asked Brynn.

“Yeah,” said Brynn. “She always wants to follow me. She watches me and tries to do everything I do!”

“Yes,” said Mom, “and this verse says we are to imitate God. We need to follow and copy Jesus.”

Dad nodded. “Children learn by watching adults and imitating their actions, behaviors, and attitudes. Chloe spends a lot of time with you, Brynn, and she does her best to be like you. We need to spend time with Jesus—studying His Word, getting to know Him better, and learning how to be like Him. We need to copy the example He left us.”

“Right,” said Mom, “and He’s also given us His Spirit to help us. The Holy Spirit works to make us more like Jesus, and as we allow Him to guide our thoughts and actions, we can show the love of Jesus to those around us.”

“So, you’re saying we need to be copycats of Jesus?” asked Brynn. She grinned. “If I follow Jesus and Chloe follows me, then I’ll be pointing her to Jesus and His love for her, won’t I? Wow!”

“Wow!” Chloe echoed, grinning at her sister. ♥ MARY M. BRADFORD

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## IMITATE JESUS

**KEY VERSE:** IMITATE GOD, THEREFORE, IN EVERYTHING YOU DO, BECAUSE YOU ARE HIS DEAR CHILDREN. LIVE A LIFE FILLED WITH LOVE, FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST. EPHESIANS 5:1-2 (NLT)

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Have you ever had someone copy you? Did a younger child follow you around and say or do the same things you did? The Bible says that’s what we should do as God’s children—we should be copycats of Jesus! We need to imitate His love in our relationships with others. Study God’s Word to become familiar with how He responded to every situation. Then listen to the Holy Spirit as He helps you follow His example.

## GOD'S ROCKET

READ: MATTHEW 10:29-31

Judson locked his model rocket's engine into place. Next, he would connect the igniter. He looked across the field, where Mom and two-year-old Cassidy fed the chickens. Good. They were far from the launch pad. Dad was mowing the fence line, so he was in the safe zone too.

Kassidy's giggles carried over the lawnmower's engine. Judson smiled. His baby sister got into his stuff, but he didn't mind—too much. When he felt impatient, he remembered the cancer.

Swallowing hard at the thought of Cassidy's chemo appointment tomorrow, and how the doctors would put needles in her again, Judson grabbed the ignition switch. He put a safe distance between himself and the rocket.

"Ready to launch!" Judson called to Mom. She waved and gave a thumbs-up. He counted down from five and—*WHOOSH!* The rocket blasted into the clouds.

When the parachute swirled into sight, Judson tried to follow the rocket's path, but he lost it. *Where did it go?* he wondered. *In the back field somewhere? I might never find it!*

Judson hadn't noticed that Dad had shut off the lawnmower, but now Dad ran across the field, yelling, "I've got it!" Soon after wading into the tall grass, Dad lifted the rocket over his head like a trophy.

After supper, Judson helped Mom wash dishes. "I don't want Cassidy to get chemo," he said. "She cries and gets sick, and it's just bad."

Mom looked sad. "I know."

"Doesn't God care?" asked Judson.

Mom handed him a plate to dry. "God sees us, and He cares. Remember how you almost lost your rocket today?"

"Yeah, but Dad got it."

"Even when you watched it so closely, you didn't see where it landed. But Dad did. God sees us no matter what we're facing. He is always with us."

Judson looked down at the plate in his hand. "But Cassidy's still sick."

As Cassidy's giggles filled their small house, Mom hugged Judson. "Cassidy is God's little rocket. He won't let her out of His sight. Jesus is with Cassidy—and us—even during chemo."

Judson remembered Dad running after the rocket and pictured Jesus running after Cassidy. The thought made him smile. ♥ MAHALA VAN RUSSELL

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### GOD SEES YOU

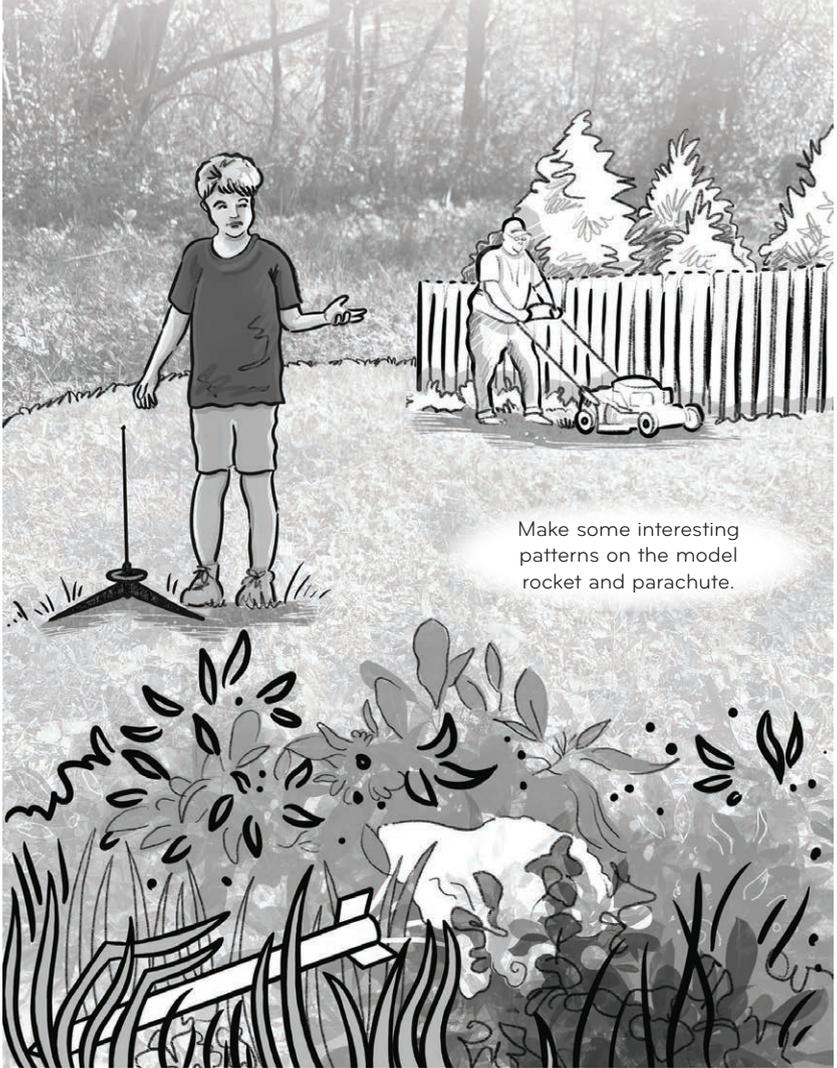
**KEY VERSE:** WHAT IS THE PRICE OF TWO SPARROWS—ONE COPPER COIN? BUT NOT A SINGLE SPARROW CAN FALL TO THE GROUND WITHOUT YOUR FATHER KNOWING IT. MATTHEW 10:29 (NLT)

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Have you ever had something bad happen to you? Sometimes, when bad things happen, we get mad at God or feel like He has abandoned us. When you feel this way, tell Him exactly how you feel. Jesus can take it! He loves us so much that He became human and experienced what our suffering is like, dying and rising again to beat sin and death. He is with us no matter what, and He promises to return to make all things new one day—free from sin, death, and suffering.

COLOR!

## God sees you



Make some interesting patterns on the model rocket and parachute.

What is the price of two sparrows—one copper coin?  
But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it.  
Matthew 10:29 (NLT)

## THE FALL

READ: ROMANS 14:10-13

“I don’t think Anna is a Christian,” Hunter said as he and his sister Sabrina rode their bikes up the driveway. “In fact, I’m sure she’s not. She lied to me!”

Mom looked up from her flower garden. “Whoa!” she said. “I heard that. Don’t you think you’re making an awfully hasty judgment?”

“Well, it’s not like this is the first time she lied,” said Sabrina.

“Yeah,” said Hunter. “She’s done it lots of times before!” He and Sabrina started back down the driveway before Mom could reply.

A moment later, Hunter’s howl pierced the air as he skidded on loose gravel, lost control of his bike, and fell. “My elbow,” he groaned. “It hurts so bad.”

“I’m sure it does,” said Mom, who had rushed over to help. “It’s all skinned. Come inside and we’ll fix it up.”

When Hunter and Mom went back outside a little later, Hunter got ready to ride his bike again. “Wait a minute,” said Mom, taking hold of the handlebars. “You’re not going to try to ride your bike again, are you?”

“Sure,” Hunter replied. “Why not?”

“But you fell!” said Mom. “Wait until Dad gets home. He’ll put the training wheels back on for you.”

“Mom!” Hunter was indignant.

“Just because he fell doesn’t mean he can’t ride!” said Sabrina.

“Really?” Mom asked thoughtfully. “You mean slipping and falling with your bike doesn’t mean you’re not really a bike rider?” She smiled at the kids. “Well, guess what? Slipping and falling in your Christian life doesn’t mean you’re not really a Christian either.”

“You’re talking about Anna, aren’t you?” Sabrina said.

Hunter seemed unsure of what to say. “I guess you’re right,” he admitted after a few moments.

“We all sin and fail to do what’s right sometimes, but that doesn’t mean we’re no longer Christians,” said Mom. “Jesus forgives us. Failing in your Christian life means you need to confess what you’ve done and trust Him to help you not repeat it, but we need to be careful not to judge people. Instead, we should pray for them and help them make good choices.”

The kids nodded. “I’m sorry I judged Anna,” said Hunter. “I know Jesus will forgive her for lying, and I’ll forgive her too!” ♥ HAZEL W. MARETT

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### DON'T JUDGE OTHERS

**KEY VERSE:** WHY DO YOU JUDGE YOUR BROTHER OR SISTER?...FOR WE WILL ALL STAND BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF GOD. ROMANS 14:10 (CSB)

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Have you been disappointed by the actions of someone who says they're a Christian? Don't judge the heart of a person who slips and falls into sin. We all fall in our walk with Jesus sometimes, but He always forgives us and picks us up again. Pray for that person instead, and leave the judgment to God. Let them know that God stands ready to forgive and that you'll forgive them too.

## SURVIVING LIFE-STORMS (PART 1)

READ: PSALM 18:2; MATTHEW 7:24-27

The house groaned from the winds of the tropical storm. “Dad,” Kate said as she and Robby came up from the basement. “We heard noises when we were downstairs.”

“It’s the wind,” Dad said. “The tropical storm hasn’t been upgraded to a hurricane, but it’s still strong. I’ve already prepared by boarding up the windows in case it gets worse, and I put together an emergency kit in case we need it. Plus, we’ve got the storm shelter room too.”

Robby sat at the table. “Don’t hurricanes have girl names?”

“Yes—some do,” Dad said. “Years ago, the World Meteorological Organization started naming hurricanes girl’s names, and many years later they starting using boy’s names too.”

The house creaked from the strong winds. “How long have hurricanes been around?” Robby asked.

“A long time!” Dad said. “Two thousand years ago, Jesus talked about two houses in a hurricane-like storm. One house was built on rock, but the other was built on sand. Fierce winds blew and heavy rains came. The house built on the rock stood strong, but the house built on the sand crashed to the ground.”

“I don’t get it,” said Kate. “What’s the difference between building a house on rock and building on sand?”

“Strength,” Dad said. “Building a house on rock gives it a firm, solid foundation. Jesus was talking about building our lives on *the* Rock, which is God.”

Robby leaned forward. “Wait—how do you build your life on God?”

“Read the Bible and pray?” asked Kate.

“It’s more than reading the Bible and praying,” said Dad. “We need to have a relationship with Jesus. We need to trust Him to save us from sin and depend on Him to help us obey Him and grow in our faith. With Jesus, we can be strong.”

Robby grinned. “With muscles?”

“No,” said Dad. “He gives us spiritual strength. With Jesus as our strong foundation, we can stand firm no matter what problems blow our way.”

“Yeah,” Robby said. “Hurricanes don’t stand a chance!”

*Beep, beep.* Dad read the news alert on his phone. “The winds have increased to seventy-five miles per hour,” he told the kids. “This tropical storm has just been upgraded to a category one hurricane.” ♥ MATT SHOEMAKER

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### BUILD YOUR LIFE ON JESUS

**KEY VERSE:** FOR NO ONE CAN LAY ANY FOUNDATION OTHER THAN THE ONE WE ALREADY HAVE—JESUS CHRIST. 1 CORINTHIANS 3:11 (NLT)

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Have you built your life on the Rock—Jesus Christ? He is a strong foundation that will never fail you. He will help you through all the hurricane-like storms of life so that you can stand firm. If you haven’t yet built your life on Him, do it today by trusting Him as your Savior. (See “Have You Heard the Good News?” on page 102.) Then trust Him to help you stand strong in every storm.

## SURVIVING LIFE-STORMS (PART 2)

READ: PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

The storm is definitely kicking up,” Dad said as he finished charging his phone. “Dad!” Robby shouted over the sound of the raging wind outside. “Are you sure the house won’t blow away?”

Dad pulled Robby closer. “The house is groaning, but it was built to handle hurricanes—and with the windows boarded up, we’ll be safe.”

The howling wind smacked into the side of the house. Robby dove to the floor and grabbed the couch. “Right now I wish I was attached to a huge rock.”

“Spiritually, you are.” Dad got down next to him. “Remember the story Jesus told about the two houses—one built on rock and the other on sand? Anyone who knows Jesus as their Savior is like a person who builds their house on rock. He gives us strength to get through life-storms.”

“Life-storms?” asked Robby.

Dad nodded. “Trouble. Temptation. Anything that threatens to blow us away from trusting and obeying Jesus. When life-storms come our way, we need to remember His promises.”

“How do we do that?” Robby asked.

“Well, one way we can prepare for storms is to read the Bible and pray. When we talk to Jesus and listen to the truth of His Word, it helps us remember that He is our Rock. No matter what happens, He will be with us because He has saved us and given us eternal life.”

The house creaked from the wind. Robby gripped the couch tighter. “Is this the worst hurricane you’ve seen?”

“No,” Dad said. “Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans long before you were born. I’ll never forget it. Those winds topped 175 miles per hour, and it was the third largest hurricane recorded in US history.”

The wind shrieked even louder. “Dad? I’m still scared—can we pray?”

Dad nodded, and they bowed their heads. The instant they finished, Robby felt a sense of peace knowing Jesus would be with them no matter what happened.

“Congratulations,” Dad said. “You prayed—which is exactly what the Bible tells us to do when we’re afraid. We’ve done everything we can; it’s in God’s hands now.”

Robby grabbed the emergency kit. “We’re prepared. Let’s join Mom and Kate in the storm shelter.” ♥ MATT SHOEMAKER

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### PRAY IN LIFE'S STORMS

**KEY VERSE:** LET US THEN APPROACH GOD’S THRONE OF GRACE WITH CONFIDENCE, SO THAT WE MAY RECEIVE MERCY AND FIND GRACE TO HELP US IN OUR TIME OF NEED. HEBREWS 4:16 (NIV)

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Are you prepared for storms in your life? Maybe there’s a life-storm you’re going through right now. Jesus promises to be with you in life’s storms. Pray about your problems, and trust Him to help you through them. As you talk to Jesus and listen to what He has to say to you in the Bible, He will help you remember the truth of His promises so you can stay strong when storms come.

## CARA'S CAKE

READ: 1 CHRONICLES 29:10-13

Laughter erupted as the Belford family finished a rowdy game of charades. Melody, a neighbor girl who had joined them in the game, got ready to leave. “I wish my family got along and had fun together like yours does,” she told Cara. “We argue and fight all the time. Why is your family so different?”

Cara shrugged. “I guess we’re just happy people. And maybe we work harder at it than some people do.”

That evening, Mom served a chocolate cake for dessert. “This tastes great, Mom!” said Sawyer, Cara’s brother. “You should make it more often.”

“It’s one of the best cakes I’ve ever tasted,” said Dad.

“Thank you,” said Mom. “I appreciate your compliments.”

“Mom! No fair!” Cara complained. “You know I—”

“Oh, that’s right,” Mom interrupted her. “You made this cake, didn’t you?”

“You did, Cara?” Dad asked. “It’s delicious!”

“I don’t care who made it,” Sawyer mumbled through a full mouth, “as long as I get to eat it.”

After dinner, Cara and her mom folded laundry while Dad and Sawyer cleaned the kitchen. “You know, honey, I have to admit something,” Mom said as she paired socks. “I deliberately accepted the praise and compliments you deserved—but only temporarily and for a purpose.”

“You just wanted to tease me, right?” Cara said. “That’s okay, Mom.”

“Actually, I wanted to make a point,” said Mom. “I heard you and Melody talking earlier, and I wanted to make sure you understood the real reason our family is different. The peace, love, and joy we experience as a family doesn’t come from us working hard to get along. Jesus deserves the credit for that. Because we trust in Him, He’s given us His peace, love, and joy and helps us show it to one another each day.”

Cara bit her lip. “I know, Mom, but I wasn’t sure Melody would understand that.”

“Maybe not,” said Mom, “but I wanted to make sure you understood it. The reason we’re able to love each other the way we do—and forgive each other when we need to—is because of Jesus.”

Cara nodded. “Maybe I can find a way to help Melody understand that so she’ll want to know Him too!” ♥ KAREN E. COGAN

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### GIVE GOD CREDIT FOR ALL HE DOES

**KEY VERSE:** I WILL BLESS THE LORD AT ALL TIMES; HIS PRAISE SHALL CONTINUALLY BE IN MY MOUTH. PSALM 34:1

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Do you remember to give God credit for the blessings He’s given you? If you know Jesus, He helps you show His love in your relationships with others and experience His peace even in difficult times. Don’t be afraid to let others know He is responsible for those good things in your life. Praise Him for all He’s done for you, and look for opportunities to express your thankfulness to others.

## TEMPORARY PERMANENT

READ: JOHN 16:33; 1 JOHN 4:7-10

"I'm home, Mom!" Ty poured a glass of milk and perched on a stool at the kitchen counter, thinking about all the things that had gone wrong that day. His thoughts were interrupted when his mom and great-grandmother came in.

"Hi, Ty," his great-grandma greeted him. "How do you like my new hairdo?" She grinned and turned this way and that, patting her hair.

Ty took a drink of milk. "Looks nice, Grandma."

Mom fixed tea for Grandma and herself. "Grandma got a perm this afternoon."

"Perm," Ty repeated, mulling over the word. "Why do they call it that?"

"It's short for 'permanent,'" said Grandma. "It's a special hairstyle where they change the texture of my hair with chemicals so it stays curly and I don't have to curl it myself every day. But unfortunately, it isn't really permanent. It's only temporary. After a while, it loses its curl."

Ty bit into a cookie. "Why call it a permanent then?"

"Good question! I think it's misnamed," said Grandma. "Although some other things we call permanent don't last long either."

"That's true." Mom sipped her tea. "But some things do last. For instance, the love I have for you, Ty."

"Yes, and even better, God's love for us is really permanent," said Grandma. "It goes on forever."

Ty ran his fingers through his hair. "That's nice to remember after the awful day I've had."

"You had a bad day?" asked Mom. "I'm sorry. What happened?"

"Everything went wrong. I lost my English homework and have to do it over. At recess, I fell and ripped a hole in these new jeans. And to top it off, I don't understand my math problems."

Mom hugged him. "Don't be discouraged, honey. I'll mend your jeans and help with your homework. God wants to help you too."

"That's right," said Grandma. "Even when things go wrong and it seems like God has forgotten you, He really hasn't. His love is there, strong and true."

Mom nodded. "Jesus will help you through this tough day you've had. And don't forget that the troubles we face in life are temporary. One day, when Jesus returns, He'll end all our problems for good."

"And we'll live with Him forever," said Grandma. "Or should I say, *permanently!*" ♥

CAROLYN E. YOST

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### GOD'S LOVE IS PERMANENT

**KEY VERSE:** I HAVE LOVED YOU WITH AN EVERLASTING LOVE. JEREMIAH 31:3

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Do you get upset when things go wrong? When you feel discouraged, remember that Jesus doesn't forget you. He always loves you, whether you feel it or not. His love is everlasting—it is permanent. Trust Him to help you with your problems. Our troubles are temporary, but the love and life we have in Jesus lasts forever!

## DEEPLY ROOTED

READ: COLOSSIANS 2:6-10

**M**om!” cried Maria as she slammed the screen door behind her. “Come look at my rose bush. It’s not growing!”

Grabbing her mother’s hand, Maria led her out to the flower bed and pointed to a limp, wilting rose plant. “Why didn’t my roses grow?” Maria asked. “Yours did.”

Maria’s older brother heard her cries and came to investigate. “Mom told you the roots needed to be put down deep so they would grow strong, remember?” Diego said. “You didn’t plant it deep enough.”

“Judging from the way the plant looks, I think Diego is right,” said Mom.

“Want to plant it deeper now?” Diego asked. He picked up a shovel. “I’ll help you. It will still survive, won’t it, Mom?”

“I think so,” replied Mom.

When the rose bush had been planted deeper, Mom gently patted the soil around it. “Good,” she said. “That should help it grow. And now it’s time for you kids to study your Bible club lessons. Christians need to have deep roots too, you know. We need to be firmly rooted in the Lord.”

Diego grinned. “That’s why you make us study our lessons and learn Bible verses, right?” he asked. “And why we go to church?”

Mom smiled. “You could say that,” she said. “As you spend time in God’s Word and learn more about Jesus and all He has done, you have an opportunity to take in spiritual nourishment and develop stronger, deeper roots in your understanding of Jesus’s love for you.” She gave them each a hug. “I’m so happy to see you both begin to blossom. It’s obvious that the Holy Spirit is working in your lives and helping you grow in your faith. I can tell your roots in the Lord are becoming stronger.”

Wiping her soiled hands on her jeans, Maria twirled in a circle. “I’m a flower!” she declared. “A beautiful flower.” She grinned at her brother. “Are you a flower too, Diego?” she asked.

Diego chuckled. “Whatever type of plant I am, I know my roots are growing deeper in Jesus.” ♥ HAZEL W. MARETT




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### GROW DEEP ROOTS IN CHRIST

**KEY VERSE:** [BE] ROOTED AND BUILT UP IN HIM AND ESTABLISHED IN THE FAITH. COLOSSIANS 2:7

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Did you know that the Holy Spirit helps Christians grow more and more rooted in Jesus? As we study the Bible and pray—by ourselves and with other believers—Jesus nourishes us with His truth and promises. As we dwell on the good news of Jesus and rest in who we are in Him, our lives will be changed and we will grow to be more like our Savior. Take advantage of opportunities to learn more about Jesus and spend time with Him so your roots can grow deeper.

# HEY ZACH!

TOPIC: REST



**Hey, kids!** I'm Zach, host of the *Keys for Kids* radio program! This week I want to talk to you about rest. That's something most of us could probably use more of, isn't it? I'm not just talking about getting enough sleep, although that's important too. Rest is more than just sleeping—it can include leisure activities, spending time with friends and family, and even going to church! Rest allows us to take a break from our busy schedules and spend time focusing on God and enjoying the good things He's given us.

## Three Ways to Rest

Over the next five days, we're going to be reading some stories about rest. Before we begin, let's think some more about the importance of rest in our Christian lives. Here are three ways the Bible tells us to rest. Read through them and then write down what each type of rest might look like in your own life.

### 1) Rest like God

*On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work. (Genesis 2:2, NLT)*

In Genesis 2:2-3, God rested from His work after He created the universe and everything in it. Even though He's all-powerful and never gets tired, He rested so we could follow His example and rest from our work each week like He did. God didn't create us to work all the time. Our minds and bodies need rest in order to function properly. Resting also gives us an opportunity to enjoy the blessings God's given us by spending time with family and friends, doing fun things, and being out in God's creation.

How can you rest from work this week like God did? What are some things you like to do to relax by yourself? With others? How do you feel when you rest?

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Think about the questions you answered as you learn more about rest on the following pages. And be sure to send me a question on our next topic. You'll get a prize for sending in your question, and you may even see it in a future issue of *Keys for Kids!* Go to [KeysForKids.org/HeyZach](https://www.KeysForKids.org/HeyZach)

Listen to Zach on the *Keys for Kids* radio program at [keysforkids.net](https://www.keysforkids.net)

## 2) Rest with God

*Jesus said, "Let's go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile." (Mark 6:31, NLT)*

When He was on earth, Jesus gave us another example of how we should rest. Mark 1:35 tells us that He got up early in the morning to spend time alone with His heavenly Father in prayer. In Mark 6:30-32, Jesus took His disciples away from the crowds so they could spend some time resting together with Him. We need to spend time resting with Jesus too. As we pray, read His words to us in the Bible, and worship Him—both on our own and with other Christians—He refreshes our souls with His love, truth, and peace.

How can you rest with God this week? Do you normally set aside time to pray and read God's Word? Do you go to church regularly? How has Jesus refreshed your soul by reminding you of His truth and love?

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## 3) Rest in God

*Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28, CSB)*

You don't need an armchair to rest in God—this type of rest is one you can do anywhere. In fact, you can do it all the time, even while doing schoolwork or chores! Resting in God means trusting Jesus to save you and give you eternal life. It means knowing there's nothing you can do to earn God's favor—Jesus did it all when He died on the cross for your sins and rose again! It means trusting Him to provide for you and take care of you when life gets hard. It means knowing He will always love you no matter what. When we rest in God, we depend on Him for salvation and trust Him to do what's best in uncertain times. Instead of relying on our own efforts, we can rest in Jesus.

How can you rest in God this week? Are you worried about something? Do you feel like you need to earn God's approval in some way? Share your worries and concerns with Jesus. Then rest in Him as you remember that He already did the work needed to save you and that He promises to work everything in your life for good.

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## THEO'S DAY OF REST

READ: EXODUS 20:8-11



Theo wanted to make the greatest Lego kingdom ever. After several days of building, his masterpiece stretched into almost every room. His eyelids were heavy, but he wasn't done.

"You'd better take a break," Dad said as they sat down for lunch on Sunday.

Theo held in a yawn. "No time. I have work to do."

At Sunday school that morning, Theo's teacher had talked about how God was always working in their lives. God didn't give up on Theo, even though Theo made lots of mistakes. God even sent Jesus to die, taking Theo's punishment for his sins so he could live with Jesus forever. If Jesus had done all that for him, and if God was always working in Theo's life, Theo figured he should work hard too—and today that meant building the greatest Lego kingdom ever.

Dad wiped the pasta sauce off Theo's little sister, Stella, then let her down from her high chair. "Even the best builders need a day of rest," he said.

"I'll stop when I'm done." Theo got up and walked into the playroom. He turned to see Stella crawling toward his tallest tower. "Stella...no!"

Stella tumbled into the Legos. The tower fell. Theo burst into tears. Stella's lip trembled, and she started crying too.

Dad ran in. "What's going on?"

"Stella ruined my tower!"

Dad pulled them both onto his lap. "Ready for a break now?"

Theo rested his head against Dad's shoulder, still crying. "No! I can't give up on my Legos!"

"You know, Theo, when God created the world, that was the biggest construction project ever," Dad said. "God wouldn't have needed to take a break, but He did. After six days of work, He rested. And He tells us to rest too."

"What about Jesus?" Theo wiped his tears. "He couldn't have had time to rest when He was busy saving the world."

"Actually, Jesus took breaks during His ministry. He took time to be alone and to pray."

"But...I wouldn't have gotten upset if Stella didn't knock down my tower!" Theo said.

"Or maybe you got upset *because* you were tired," Dad said.

Theo frowned. Maybe Dad was right. Maybe one day of rest wouldn't hurt. After all, Jesus stopped to rest, and He saved the world. ♥ BECCA WIERWILLE

## TAKE TIME TO REST

KEY VERSE: REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY. EXODUS 20:8

Have you ever waited so long to take a break that you felt tired or frustrated? How did that affect the way you treated those around you? Sometimes we don't want to take a break. But God created the Sabbath day as a gift for us. If God took time to rest, we can too! We can rest because Jesus has already done the work of saving us. When we stop to rest and remember Jesus, it helps us grow to be more like Him.

## OVERLOADED

READ: MARK 6:30-32



Are we almost there?" Noelle asked. "I can't wait to go swimming!" "There it is!" Cameron shouted as the car rounded a bend and the little cottage came into view. Dad parked by the front door, and Noelle and Cameron helped their parents unpack the car.

"I'm starving!" declared Cameron when they finished their work.

"Me too," said Noelle. "When are we going to eat, Mom?"

"Soon," Mom replied, getting out some sloppy joe meat, chips, and buns. She put the meat in a pan and turned on the burner. Then she plugged in the coffeepot. "How about macaroni and cheese with your sloppy joes?" she asked as she turned on another burner. Immediately, all the lights went off. "Oh no!" exclaimed Mom. "I must have blown a fuse."

Dad got up and went to find the fuse box. "Looks like there are too many things on one of the circuits," he said when he came back. "We'll have to turn off a few lights whenever we want to use the stove."

Soon their lunch was ready, and they sat down to enjoy it together. "This is fun," said Noelle. "It's our first real vacation in ages."

"I know," said Mom. "That overloaded fuse reminds me of our family lately. We've been so busy getting our business started and remodeling the house. Then with piano lessons, soccer practice, and homework, I think we've been overloaded too. We've been so busy that we haven't had much time to spend together."

Dad nodded. "Let's evaluate our activities during this vacation and ask God to show us if there are ones we should cut out of our schedules so we have more time to rest and enjoy each other." He reached into his backpack and pulled out a Bible. "We also need time to enjoy being with Jesus too. One way to do that is to spend time praying and reading His Word so He can remind us of His love for us and refresh our souls. Let's do that as a family right now."

"That's one thing we should always make time for," said Cameron. "That and soccer practice. But we could skip piano lessons," he added with a grin. "And homework."

Dad chuckled. "Sorry," he said. "I don't think that's gonna happen!" ♥

SHERRY L. KUYT

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**DON'T GET TOO BUSY**

**KEY VERSE:** [JESUS] SAID TO THEM, "COME WITH ME BY YOURSELVES TO A QUIET PLACE AND GET SOME REST." MARK 6:31 (NIV)

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Have you been too busy lately? Are there too many activities packed into your schedule? Talk to Jesus about it, and ask Him to show you if some of them can be omitted. Don't allow your schedule to get overloaded. Jesus recognized the need for quiet time, and we need that too. Leave room in your schedule to spend time with Him so He can refresh your soul.

## WILDFLOWERS

READ: MATTHEW 6:25-34



Every afternoon, Molly and her mom would go for a walk on their farm. Molly loved picking the wildflowers that grew along the path as she and Mom talked about their day.

“Look at this pretty flower, Mom,” Molly said one day as she picked a beautiful pink flower with an orange center.

“It’s beautiful,” Mom said.

By the time they finished their walk, Molly had a whole bouquet of wildflowers picked. When they got back to the house, Mom put the flowers in a vase and set it on the kitchen table for everyone to enjoy.

Later that night, Molly overheard her parents talking about their crops. From what Molly could understand, the crops weren’t doing so well.

“I don’t think we’re going to make as much profit as we’d hoped for this season,” Dad said.

“Well, we’ll just have to budget accordingly,” Mom replied.

As Mom tucked Molly into bed that night, she could tell Molly was worried. “What’s bothering you?” Mom asked.

“Are we going to have enough money for everything we need?” Molly asked, almost crying.

Mom took Molly’s Bible off the dresser. “Did you know that God provides flowers with what they need?” she asked. Molly shook her head, and Mom turned to the book of Matthew and began to read. “And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are.” Mom closed the Bible. “You see, Molly, God doesn’t want us to worry, because He already knows what we need. Jesus has provided us with forgiveness from sin and eternal life, and He promises to take care of us. That doesn’t mean we’ll get everything we want, but if God cares about those wildflowers you picked today, He most definitely cares about us and knows what we need. We just have to trust Him. Let’s pray and turn all our worries over to Jesus so we can feel His peace.”

The next afternoon, as Molly picked a bouquet of wildflowers, she danced along and sang, “God cares for the wildflowers, and God cares for me.” ♥ LISA FULLER

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**TRUST GOD TO PROVIDE**

**KEY VERSE:** AND THIS SAME GOD WHO TAKES CARE OF ME WILL SUPPLY ALL YOUR NEEDS FROM HIS GLORIOUS RICHES, WHICH HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO US IN CHRIST JESUS. PHILIPPIANS 4:19 (NLT)

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Do you often find yourself worrying? The Bible tells us to trust God to take care of all our needs. If He feeds the birds and clothes the flowers, think of how much He cares for you! Don’t let yourself be overwhelmed with worries when difficult things happen. Instead, give your worries to Jesus, who gives you salvation and eternal life. Let Him take care of everything.

## A LESSON FROM TOBY

READ: PSALM 46:10; LUKE 10:38-42



**T**oby, Macy's puppy, was always running into everything. He ran so fast and never paid attention to where he was going.

After Toby had run into the sliding glass door for the third time that day, Macy scooped him up in her arms. "Be careful where you're running," she said as she stroked Toby's fur. "You've got to slow down. You're going to hurt yourself!"

"Time for dinner!" Mom called.

Macy set Toby down gently and went into the kitchen.

"Is Toby doing better now?" Mom asked.

"Not really," said Macy with a sigh. "I wish he would slow down a little."

"He will," said Dad. "It's just because he's a puppy."

Just then, they heard Toby cough loudly. "Looks like he's going to have to learn not to gobble his food so quickly too," Mom said.

After dinner, Macy picked up Toby and carried him into the family room for devotions.

"Watching Toby tonight reminded me of a Bible story," Dad said. "One day, Jesus visited two of his friends, two sisters named Mary and Martha. Mary sat and listened to Jesus teach, but Martha got caught up in all the preparations for dinner, since making sure guests were happy and well fed was very important in Jesus's day. She was so busy running around making sure everything got done that she forgot to take time to sit with Jesus."

"That sounds like Toby, all right!" said Macy. "He's always running around like crazy."

"We're often like that too," said Dad. "We run around in all directions. It's easy to get caught up in the busyness of our everyday lives, but Jesus calls us to take time to rest—to slow down and spend time with Him in His Word and in prayer. We can rest because, through his death and resurrection, Jesus did the work that needed to be done so we could be saved and have eternal life. When we slow down and let Him remind us of that, we experience His love, strength, and peace."

Mom nodded. "Just like Toby needs to slow down so he won't hurt himself, we need to slow down so we can sit with Jesus and dwell on the precious promises in His Word." ♥ LISA FULLER

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### WE ARE FREE TO REST IN JESUS

**KEY VERSE:** COME CLOSE TO GOD, AND GOD WILL COME CLOSE TO YOU. WASH YOUR HANDS, YOU SINNERS; PURIFY YOUR HEARTS, FOR YOUR LOYALTY IS DIVIDED BETWEEN GOD AND THE WORLD. JAMES 4:8 (NLT)

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Do you often find yourself running in all directions—too busy to rest and hear from God? In our busy world, it's easy to think we need to be working all the time. But Jesus shows us something different. Because He died on the cross, we don't have to hurry around trying to please God or other people. Instead, we can rest in His love for us and enjoy being with Him.

## LITTLE BIRD

READ: PSALM 63:8; JOHN 10:28-30



**B**AM! A little bird flew right into the Neilsons' window. Josiah was sitting at the table doing his schoolwork when it happened.

Josiah jumped up and looked out the window. The little bird was just sitting on the deck. Josiah crept outside, hoping not to scare it. He walked up to the little bird and knelt down. Gently, he picked it up.

The little bird let Josiah stroke its head and cradle it in his hands. It sat there for several minutes before it flew up onto the ledge. Josiah inched back inside and watched it from the window. Before long, the little bird flew away.

"Wow, that was so awesome!" Josiah said. He hurried to tell his mom about it.

"That little bird must have felt safe in your warm, cupped hands," Mom said. "I love your compassion for animals, Josiah. Next time something like that happens, let me know, and we'll figure out the best way to safely handle any creature who needs some love and care."

During dinner that evening, Josiah told his dad all about the little bird. "It just let me pick it up and hold it," Josiah said.

"After flying into the window, the little bird was probably stunned from the impact," said Dad. "It was probably hurting and afraid, but when you picked it up, it felt warm and secure."

After dinner, Josiah helped his mom and dad with the dishes. Then they all went into the living room for devotions.

"Your story of the little bird got me thinking," Dad said as he opened his Bible. "When we're afraid or get hurt, we feel much better when someone helps us and comforts us. And you know what, Josiah? The Bible tells us we are safe in God's hands. John 10 says that when our trust is in Jesus, no one can take us out of His hands. No matter what we face, His love for us is secure. We know that Jesus died and rose again to give us eternal life, and He promises to always be with us."

Mom nodded. "We can rest like the little bird because we are eternally safe in God's hands." ♥ LISA FULLER

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**WE ARE SAFE IN GOD'S HANDS**

**KEY VERSE:** FOR THIS IS HOW GOD LOVED THE WORLD: HE GAVE HIS ONE AND ONLY SON, SO THAT EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT PERISH BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE. JOHN 3:16 (NLT)

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Have you trusted Jesus to be your Savior? It's wonderful to know that our heavenly Father loves us so much that He promises to hold all who put their trust in Jesus. In Him, we find true safety. If you haven't yet trusted in Jesus, do it today so you can feel safe and secure in God's hands. (See "Have You Heard the Good News?" on page 102).



## WHEN GOD CLOSES A DOOR

READ: PROVERBS 3:5-6

The Wong family had just come back from church. The two girls, Mei and Ping, were heartbroken. Pastor John was leaving their church.

“Why does Pastor John have to go?” asked Mei. “Doesn’t he love us? How could he just leave us like that?”

“You should know the answer,” replied Ping. “You were misbehaving during church last week. He must’ve gotten mad at you and decided to leave!”

“What? Are you blaming me?” asked Mei.

“Hold on,” said Dad. “Pastor John has good reasons for leaving—and they have nothing to do with us. He has been praying about this decision for a long time.”

Mom agreed. “I know it’s hard on you girls since you’ve known Pastor John since you were young. But we can trust that God has great plans for him.”

Later that year, the Wong family decided to pay Pastor John a visit. They even brought his favorite dessert—apple pie. Pastor John was delighted to see them.

“How have you been, Pastor John?” asked Dad.

“I’m doing very well! God has led me to serve Him in a new ministry,” replied Pastor John. “You see, I used to be a troubled teen. I got into fights and drugs. It was only after I knew Jesus that my life turned around.”

Pastor John turned to Mei and Ping. “Have you heard the saying, ‘When God closes one door, He opens another?’”

The girls shook their heads.

“After I left the church, God gave me an opportunity to be a counselor and help at-risk youths at a rehab center,” said Pastor John. “I’m able to empathize with them, and I’ve even been able to share my story with some of them. Jesus helped me know He loved me by sending caring people into my life when I was struggling, and now He’s using me to help others.”

“I think I get it,” said Mei. “When you prayed and God led you to step away from the church, it was like God was closing a door?”

Ping jumped in. “And when you became a counselor, it was like God opened another door for you?”

“Exactly!” said Pastor John.

Mom smiled. “We are so happy for you, Pastor John,” she said. “God has great plans for you!” ♥ KELLY CHOY

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### WHEN GOD CLOSES A DOOR, HE OPENS ANOTHER

**KEY VERSE:** AND WE KNOW THAT IN ALL THINGS GOD WORKS FOR THE GOOD OF THOSE WHO LOVE HIM, WHO HAVE BEEN CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE. ROMANS 8:28 (NIV)

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Have you ever experienced a difficult change that made you sad? Change can be hard, and it’s okay to feel sad and express your feelings to God and to trusted adults. When we face challenging times, we can trust God. He is with us through it all, and He is working all things for His good purposes.

## CANDY APPLE

READ: PSALM 121:1-4

Rose excitedly walked her first two-wheeler bicycle from the store to the car. “We’ll put the training wheels on when we get home,” Dad said as he loaded it into the back of the van. “I’ll help you learn to ride it too.”

“I don’t need training wheels! I can ride my bike all by myself,” said Rose. “I’ll name it Candy Apple because it’s red.” She grinned. “Since I can’t have a horse, I’ll pretend my bike is one,” she declared, picturing herself zooming around the block.

As soon as they got home, Dad unloaded the bike before going into the house. “I’ll be right back,” he said as Rose wheeled the new bike to the front sidewalk. Impatient, she didn’t wait for Dad. She put one foot on a pedal and shoved off. She lifted her other foot, but she started to tip over and quickly put her feet back on the ground. She tried again, but the bike kept tipping over.

Just then Dad arrived and grabbed the tilting handlebars. “Looks like you could use a helping hand with this bucking bronco,” he said. “Whoa, Candy Apple!”

“Daddy, I can’t keep my balance. I guess I need training wheels after all.”

“I think you’re right,” Dad said. “Let’s take the bike to the garage and put them on.”

After Dad attached the training wheels, Rose eagerly got on the bike again. She pedaled slowly at first, then faster and faster. “Look, Daddy!” she called. “I can ride!”

Later, Rose and her dad sat on the front steps and ate crisp apples. “Thanks for helping me with my bike,” said Rose.

“You’re welcome.” Dad smiled at her. “You wanted to start riding all by yourself, but you found out you needed your father’s help. You needed me to put the training wheels on for you. I’m sometimes like that too.”

Rose looked surprised. “You need training wheels?”

“No.” Dad grinned. “But sometimes I get busy trying to work out problems by myself and forget I need help from my heavenly Father. God loves us so much He sent His Son, Jesus, to die for us. That means He cares about everything we go through.” He motioned toward the bike. “Let Candy Apple remind you that your heavenly Father wants to help you with every problem too.” ♥ DEAN A. FOWLER

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### DEPEND ON YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER

**KEY VERSE:** MY HELP COMES FROM THE LORD, WHO MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH.  
PSALM 121:2

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What problem are you trying to handle by yourself? Poor grades? Being picked on? Not getting along with family members? Ask your heavenly Father for help, and then trust Him to show you what to do. Perhaps you need to study harder, be kinder to others, or seek help from an adult. God loves you and cares about your problems. Depend on Him to help you.



## GOLD FEVER

READ: PSALM 19:7-11

The mining cars rattled along the tracks as Parker and his family peered ahead into the dimly lit interior of the old mining shaft. “Do you think we could still find gold down here?” Parker asked excitedly.

The tour guide chuckled. “Got a little gold fever?” he asked.

“Gold fever?” asked Parker’s sister Alexa with a puzzled expression. “What’s that? Do you get sick when you mine for gold?”

“No,” the guide answered. “Gold fever is a term that was used years ago to describe people so eager to find gold that they devoted their entire lives to the search. Those who found a vein of gold became wealthy. When that happened, it often seemed like gold fever was a contagious disease. Others caught it and wanted to become rich too.”

“Cool!” Parker exclaimed. “I wish I could find gold.”

Alexa grinned. “Sounds like you do have gold fever,” she teased.

Dad laughed. “I don’t think Parker would really like mining. These mine shafts were cramped and uncomfortable and often dangerous. Miners had to be persistent and tough. They needed to have a passion to find gold.”

When the tour was done, they came up into the sunshine again. “That was awesome!” said Parker. “Mining would be hard work, but if I found gold, it would be worth it.”

“Yeah! You’d be rich!” said Alexa.

After dinner that evening, Dad reached for his Bible. “It’s time to do some mining!” he announced with a smile. “Who would like to be rich?”

“Me!” Parker raised his hand. “But how would we do mining?”

“Studying the Bible is something like mining for gold,” said Dad. “Searching for the truth and wisdom in God’s Word requires persistence and patience. It can be hard work, but the results are well worth the effort.”

Alexa laughed. “You can be a miner after all, Parker.”

“You both can,” said Dad. “And unlike gold, the Bible’s riches are eternal. It tells us the truth of Jesus and what He did to save us, and it offers us wisdom and encouragement in our walk through life with Him. If you devote your life to finding God’s riches, your reward will be much greater than any gold you could ever find.” ♥

KAREN E. COGAN

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### MINE GOD’S GOLD—THE BIBLE

**KEY VERSE:** THE WORD OF THE LORD IS WORTH MORE THAN GOLD,  
EVEN MORE THAN MUCH FINE GOLD. PSALM 19:10 (NLV)

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Have you done any mining for heavenly gold? No earthly riches can compare with the treasure God offers you in His Word. It tells how you can have eternal life with Jesus, who died to save you from sin. It’s filled with truth, wisdom, and promises. As you take its words to heart, it will help you look to Jesus for joy, peace, and contentment. When you mine the Bible’s treasure, the rewards last forever.

## MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL

READ: 1 SAMUEL 16:1-7; ZEPHANIAH 3:17

**W**hat's wrong, sis?" Hudson asked his little sister, Clara, as she stumbled in the front door.

Clara plopped down on the couch beside her brother. Leaning against him, Clara began to cry.

"Tell me what's going on," Hudson said as he put down his chemistry books and wrapped his arms around Clara.

She tried to catch her breath. "On the way home from the bus stop, I was walking with Nicole. We were almost to our street, but then this boy I don't know yelled at me."

"What did he say?" Hudson asked.

"He screamed out, 'Hey—girl in the blue sweater. You're ugly!'" Clara buried her face in Hudson's chest as tears began leaking from her eyes.

"Oh, Clara," Hudson said. "I'm so sorry that happened. That boy was wrong."

After Clara had let her tears out, Hudson stood up. Then he walked Clara toward the mirror that hung on the living room wall. Pointing, Hudson asked, "See that?"

Clara shrugged.

"That girl looking back at you is a child of God," Hudson said. "You know that, right?"

Clara nodded.

"You've put your trust in Jesus to be your Savior and pay for your sins, right?" Hudson asked. "Well, that means you are a child of God!"

Hudson sounded so enthusiastic Clara couldn't help but smile.

"Wait! There's more!" Hudson grinned. "God created you in His image and then brought you into His kingdom when you put your faith in His Son. And you know what? People may focus on outside things, like clothes or fancy houses or jobs that seem big and important, but Jesus—who made our bodies and promises to raise everyone who knows Him from the dead someday—sees all of us, including our hearts. And you know what that means, right?"

"What?" Clara asked.

"It means Jesus looks at you and likes what He sees. He loves how He created your body, and when He looks at your heart, He rejoices that you know Him as your Savior."

Clara wiped the tears from her cheeks and then smiled at her reflection in the mirror. The boy's mean words still stung, but they seemed less important when Clara imagined God smiling over her. ♥ ALLISON WILSON LEE

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### GOD SEES ALL OF YOU

**KEY VERSE:** THE LORD DOES NOT LOOK AT THE THINGS PEOPLE LOOK AT. PEOPLE LOOK AT THE OUTWARD APPEARANCE, BUT THE LORD LOOKS AT THE HEART. 1 SAMUEL 16:7 (NIV)

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Did you know God created you and loves what He made? He loves us so much He came to earth to live among us, die, and rise again so that all who put their trust in Him will one day rise again too—free from sin and brokenness. God sees all of you, from your body to the deepest thoughts of your heart. Even when people say mean things to you, Jesus's love for you never fails.

## WORDS TO THE RESCUE!

READ: EXODUS 20:7; MATTHEW 1:21

The sun was warm while the water was sparkling cold. It was the perfect afternoon at the community pool, and Isabella had her two best friends on either side of her.

Simultaneously, they cannonballed into the water. They came up from beneath the water gasping for air and giggling, their heads bobbing in the waves.

“Let’s pretend we’re in the ocean!” Payton said.

“Yeah! And our ship was destroyed in a storm,” said Bryce. “Look! Let’s swim over to that floaty as our raft.”

Everyone enthusiastically agreed and began fake-crying, saying things like, “Oh no! We’re stranded!” as they swam to the “raft.”

Once everyone was on board, Captain Isabella spoke to the crew. “Now, we must all yell for help as loud as we possibly can!”

“Aye, aye, Captain!” shouted Payton and Bryce.

Isabella counted down. “Three, two, one—”

“HELP!” they all yelled. “Help! Help! Help!”

Suddenly, in a flash of red, a lifeguard lifted all three kids up onto the side of the pool before they knew what was happening. “What’s wrong?” the lifeguard asked.

Dripping, Isabella explained. “I’m sorry if we scared you. We were just playing. We didn’t mean it!”

“Ah,” the lifeguard said. “You know, kids, some words are more powerful than others. *Help* is a word we only use when we’re actually in danger. There could’ve been someone who needed rescue while I was busy with you. That’s a scary thought.” She sat back on her heels. “From now on, do you three promise to be careful with the word *help*?”

The kids nodded solemnly, and the lifeguard directed them back to the pool.

As they got back in the water, Isabella spoke. “This reminds me of what my abuela said about using God’s name. She called it holy, which means it’s very special. She said it’s only to be used for things like giving God praise, talking to Him, or talking to others about Jesus and how He died to save us.”

“You’re right,” said Payton. “*Help* is a special word, and God’s name is the most special word of all.” ♥ DANIELLE J. BROWN

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### GOD’S NAME IS SPECIAL

**KEY VERSE:** WHOEVER CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED.  
ROMANS 10:13

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Did you know that God’s name is a special word? We are saved from our sins when we call on the name of Jesus. It’s important that we use His name with care. As Christians, we have a special relationship with God that allows us to praise Him, talk with Him, and share the good news of His saving love with others. He is our King, so we must respect the power of the holy Name through which we’re saved.

## LOST GRADES

READ: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:18-21

**M**om, guess what happened?” said Adriel as he rushed into the house after school. “Jasper and Weston think it’s funny, but my teacher is so upset!”

“Why?” asked Mom. “What happened?”

Adriel reached for an apple. “Mrs. Cook’s laptop died. It was working fine this morning, but then she left the room for a few minutes while we were outside for recess, and when she came back, it wouldn’t turn on.” Adriel took a bite of his apple. “I wonder if Jasper and Weston had something to do with it, though I don’t know how they could have pulled it off.”

“Why would Jasper and Weston want Mrs. Cook’s computer to break down?” asked Mom.

“Because all our grades were saved on it!” said Adriel. “And now our grades might be lost. Jasper and Weston think it’s funny that if Mrs. Cook’s computer can’t be fixed, they won’t get report cards showing their bad grades.”

“I think Mrs. Cook will manage to come up with grades one way or another,” said Mom.

“Well, I hope she remembers I got an A on my last history test,” Adriel said. “I worked really hard to get that A!”

“I know you did,” said Mom. “But I can see how kids who didn’t do well would like to have their grades canceled or forgotten.” She gave Adriel a thoughtful look. “In fact, I know exactly what that feels like, and I think you do too!”

“Me?” asked Adriel. “I know I’m not a straight-A student, but I’ve always done pretty well in school.”

“Yes, but none of us has lived a perfect life, have we?” said Mom. “The Bible says we’re sinners because of the wrong things we’ve done. We’ve all failed to live up to God’s perfect standard. But guess what? Even though we deserve a failing grade, Jesus lived a perfect life and then died on the cross to take the punishment we deserve so our sin could be canceled! When we trust in Him, He credits us with His goodness so we can enjoy the reward of eternal life with Him.”

“Wow,” said Adriel. “I didn’t think of that. I’m so glad Jesus canceled my sin and gave me the good grade He earned instead!” ♥ HAZEL W. MARETT

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### JESUS CANCELS SIN

**KEY VERSE:** GOD MADE CHRIST, WHO NEVER SINNED, TO BE THE OFFERING FOR OUR SIN, SO THAT WE COULD BE MADE RIGHT WITH GOD THROUGH CHRIST.  
2 CORINTHIANS 5:21 (NLT)

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How would you feel if you could have a bad grade replaced with a good grade? The Bible says you can! We’re all sinners who have failed to live the way we should, but Jesus died so our sin could be replaced with His goodness. You can’t earn a passing grade in the eyes of God on your own—you need Jesus’s perfect score. Trust in Him today, and your sin will be canceled. (See “Have You Heard the Good News?” on page 102.)

## LEAVE YOUR MARK

READ: JOHN 13:33-35

Okay, the last thing we need is a head of cabbage for dinner,” Aiden’s mom said.

Aiden walked over to the side of the produce section. “Hey, Mom, they have purple cabbage. Can we try it?” Mom nodded, so Aiden picked out a head of purple cabbage and added it to the cart.

As they waited in line to check out, Aiden smiled at a baby sitting in the seat of the cart in front of them, kicking his feet. The baby’s mom was busy putting her groceries on the conveyor belt and didn’t notice when the baby kicked his shoe off. Aiden picked up the discarded shoe. “Excuse me—your baby dropped this,” he said, giving her the shoe.

“Oh! Thank you so much,” the mom replied. “This is his only good pair of shoes!”

At home later that evening, Aiden watched as his mom spooned cooked purple cabbage into a bowl. “Mom, look! That cabbage turned the water you boiled it in purple.”

“You’re right—and it’s even turning the bottom of the bowl purple,” Mom said as she placed the bowl of cabbage on the table.

“That’s kind of cool,” Aiden said as he sat down. “The purple cabbage really leaves its mark. It shares its color with everything it comes in contact with.”

Mom nodded. “Speaking of which, I’m very proud of the mark you left at the grocery store today when you picked up that baby’s shoe and gave it to his mother.”

Aiden looked confused. “How could that leave a mark? I barely did anything!”

“As Christians, we’re called to leave our mark on others,” said Mom. “Just like purple cabbage is known for its deep purple color, Christians are supposed to be known for their love. Our job is to display the love of Jesus to everyone we come in contact with—even in the smallest ways. You did that today by helping someone, even if it didn’t seem like much.” She smiled at Aiden. “It’s your turn to ask the blessing tonight.”

Aiden bowed his head. “Dear Jesus, thank You for this food and the purple cabbage we get to try tonight. Please help us leave Your mark of love on those around us. Amen.” ♥ MELISSA YEAGLE




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### DISPLAY GOD’S LOVE TO OTHERS

**KEY VERSE:** BY THIS ALL WILL KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY DISCIPLES, IF YOU HAVE LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER. JOHN 13:35

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What kind of mark do you leave on others? Do your actions toward others reflect God’s love? Even the smallest kindness can leave a mark and show someone the love of Jesus. He showed us His love by dying for our sins, and as His children, we’re called to show love to others. You can do that by helping and caring for those around you—even in small ways. How can you leave a mark of love today?

**FIRE!**

READ: JAMES 3:3-10

**M**eg watched in horror as fire swept through the wheat field. “We’ve lost the crop, haven’t we, Mom?” she asked in a shaky voice.

Mom nodded. “I’m afraid so. The firefighters believe the fire started in a vacant field. They think some kids were playing with matches. One little match used carelessly can certainly cause a lot of damage.”

“I’m just thankful we were able to keep the fire from spreading any more than it did—to other fields or to the buildings,” Dad said.

Meg clenched her fists. “I hope the police find out who started it and punish them.”

That evening, as Meg’s family discussed the events of the day, her phone rang. It was her friend Hadley, and after Meg told her about the fire, the girls talked about a new girl in their class at school.

When Meg hung up, Mom looked at her thoughtfully. “The fire this afternoon was pretty destructive,” said Mom, “but I’m afraid you may have started—or added to—a fire that could become even worse.”

“What?” Meg was shocked. “What fire?”

“I heard you tell Hadley that a new girl at school cheated on a test,” Mom replied.

“Well, she must have cheated to get such a good grade on our history test,” Meg said. “Other kids said so too.”

“You said very unkind things about a girl you don’t even know. And you’re not at all sure she cheated, are you?”

“Well, no,” Meg said. “I guess not.”

Mom nodded. “The book of James says our tongues are like a fire, Meg. Rumors spread quickly and can ruin reputations. Think of the damage your careless words can do. That’s not how we show Jesus’s love to others. He loves us so much He was willing to suffer the shame of death on a cross so we could be saved. Do you think He would spread rumors about people He died for?”

As Meg looked out the window at the charred wheat field, she remembered her anger over someone’s careless actions. *Their thoughtlessness caused a lot of damage and hurt my family*, she thought. *I don’t want to do the same thing with my words.*

“You’re right, Mom,” Meg said. “I need to call Hadley back and put this fire out.” ♥

BRENDA DECKER

**DON'T SPREAD RUMORS**

**KEY VERSE:** LET THE WORDS OF MY MOUTH...BE ACCEPTABLE  
IN YOUR SIGHT, O LORD. PSALM 19:14

Is your tongue like a fire? Are you aware of how much damage it can do when you use it carelessly? When you say unkind things or spread gossip and rumors, your words hurt other people. That’s not how God wants us to use our words as His children. Instead, trust Him to help you speak in a way that shows others the love of Jesus.

## A BETTER RIDE

READ: ROMANS 12:9-11; PHILIPPIANS 2:3-5

Sebastian and his friend Carter looked around the playground on their first day in second grade. Carter pointed out two empty swings. “Hey! Let’s go swing!”

The boys ran toward the swings, and as they got closer, Sebastian saw that one swing was higher than the other. *I want the high one*, he thought. *It’ll go a lot higher than the low one*. So he ran as fast as he could and grabbed the higher swing.

As the boys pumped themselves higher and higher into the air, Sebastian looked at Carter and frowned. *He’s going higher than I am*, he thought, so he pumped harder. But no matter how hard Sebastian worked, he could see that Carter was getting a better swing ride than he was.

At dinner that evening, Sebastian told his family about his first day at school and the swing ride. “I thought the high swing would go higher than the lower one,” he said. “Why didn’t it?”

“Well, the lower swing has longer chains, so it can swing out farther,” Dad explained. “I don’t think it actually gives you a higher ride, but it does give you a longer one.” He smiled. “It didn’t pay to pick the one you thought was the best, did it?” Sebastian shook his head.

“That reminds me of a verse from the Bible,” Mom said. “It says that when we humble ourselves, the Lord will lift us up. That’s better than being lifted by the swings you and Carter used today.”

“How do we humble ourselves?” asked Sebastian.

“By putting Jesus and other people ahead of our own desires,” Mom explained. “Most people think they’ll be happy with the first, the best, the biggest, or the most things in life. But the Bible doesn’t teach that. It says true satisfaction comes only from Jesus.”

“Right,” said Dad. “And Jesus humbled Himself when He put us first by coming to earth and dying on the cross for us. When we follow His example and put Him and others first, God honors that and blesses us for it.”

“So to humble myself when Carter and I swing, I need to take the low sw—” Sebastian stopped and shook his head. “No. I need to let him have the low one because it works best and gives a better ride.” ♥ SARA L. NELSON

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### PUT OTHERS AHEAD OF YOURSELF

**KEY VERSE:** HUMBLE YOURSELVES IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD,  
AND HE WILL LIFT YOU UP. JAMES 4:10

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Do you put others ahead of yourself? Or do you always grab the biggest cookie, race to be first in line, and insist on playing the game you prefer? That’s not how Jesus acted. He is God, yet He humbled Himself by becoming human and dying for our sins. Be humble like Him. God will lift you up by blessing your life as you put Him and others ahead of yourself.

## GAME NIGHT

READ: PROVERBS 16:24; 18:21; EPHESIANS 4:29

**K**erri and her family sat at the dining room table, playing their favorite word game. It was Kerri's turn to make a word out of the letters she had on her board. She examined her letters carefully, determined to win. Her family was very competitive.

Kerri grinned as she spelled out the word *quotient* with her letters.

"Way to go, sis," Kerri's brother Austin said.

"That was a good group of letters, but I think I can beat that," Dad said as he spelled the word *zoological* with his letters.

The game continued on for nearly an hour until Kerri's mom finally won with the word *flamboyant*.

"Great game!" Dad said as he gave everyone a high-five. "Now let's go into the living room for our devotions."

Kerri and Austin sat on the floor. Snowflake, their white kitten, curled up on Kerri's lap, and Kerri quietly stroked her fur.

"Our devotion tonight just happens to be on words and how we speak to others," Dad said. He opened his Bible and began to read. "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." He looked at Kerri and Austin. "Tell me—how did Mom win the word game we played tonight?"

"She used the letters she got to build words, and her letters and words scored the most points," Austin replied.

"Did she do that all by herself?" Dad asked.

Kerri shook her head. "We all built words off letters that were already on the board, so the letters and words we put down helped her build her own words to win the game."

"Right," said Dad. "That's similar to what this verse is telling us to do in our lives. Our words should build others up so that everyone benefits from them. They should reflect the love of Jesus, who was willing to sacrifice Himself for our benefit." He smiled at the kids. "Both of you used words in a way that benefited others tonight—not just the words you put on the board, but the ones that came out of your mouths too."

Mom nodded. "I'm proud of the way you both played tonight—competitively but with kind words." ♥ LISA FULLER

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### BUILD OTHERS UP WITH YOUR WORDS

**KEY VERSE:** DO NOT LET ANY UNWHOLESOME TALK COME OUT OF YOUR MOUTHS, BUT ONLY WHAT IS HELPFUL FOR BUILDING OTHERS UP ACCORDING TO THEIR NEEDS, THAT IT MAY BENEFIT THOSE WHO LISTEN. EPHESIANS 4:29 (NIV)

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Do the words you say build others up? Are they beneficial and encouraging for those who hear them? Or are they often said out of anger with the intent to hurt someone? As Christians, it's important for the words we say to reflect the love of Jesus. Let your words build others up by conveying the patience, kindness, and forgiveness He shows us.

## BREAKING POINT

READ: 2 PETER 3:3-14

**M**om, do you think Jesus really will come back someday?" Preston asked as he and his little sister Londyn climbed into the car after Bible club. "I mean, it just seems like all my life I've been told He will. Our Bible club lesson was about that today. But it never happens."

"See what I got in Bible club," said Londyn before Mom could respond to Preston. Londyn held up a balloon. "Blow it up for me, Preston."

Preston took the balloon, blew air into it, and returned it to his sister.

"Blow it bigger," said Londyn, handing it back to Preston. He took it and blew more air into it, then paused and looked at Londyn. "Bigger," she told him, so once again Preston blew the balloon bigger.

"There," he said, looking at the balloon. "That's about as big as it will go. Want me to tie it for you?"

"No," said Londyn. "Blow it some more. I want it bigger!"

"It will pop," said Preston, but Londyn insisted. So Preston carefully blew a little more air into the balloon. Each time he stopped, Londyn told him to blow it bigger.

Finally, it happened. The balloon could stretch no further. It popped with a loud bang, and Londyn burst into tears.

"It's too bad it popped, Londyn," Mom said. "But Preston warned you it would break."

When Londyn had quieted down, Mom turned to Preston. "This reminds me of your question," she said. "Jesus hasn't returned yet because He's patient and loving and wants everyone to have an opportunity to be saved. He wants as many people as possible to come to know Him and be rescued from their sins. But just like Londyn's balloon was stretched to the point where it burst, the time of opportunity before Jesus's return will be stretched to the point when He will finally come again. It may not be in our lifetime, but it could also be today."

"I hope it's soon," said Preston.

"Me too," said Mom. "When Jesus comes back, He will right every wrong and make all things new—free from sin and death."

"I can't wait for that!" Preston said. "But I want more people to be saved, so I guess I'll have to be patient like Jesus." ♥HAZEL W. MARETT

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### JESUS IS COMING TO EARTH AGAIN

**KEY VERSE:** THE LORD IS NOT BEING SLOW IN DOING WHAT HE PROMISED...  
GOD IS BEING PATIENT WITH YOU. HE DOESN'T WANT ANYONE TO BE LOST.  
2 PETER 3:9 (ERV)

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Do you believe Jesus is coming to earth again? Does it seem strange that people have been talking about His return for two thousand years? Jesus is patient. He wants to give everyone the opportunity to be saved, but the time will come when He will return as He promised. Trust in Him now so you'll be ready for that day. (See "Have You Heard the Good News?" on page 102).

#### IT'S THE LAST DAY OF WORD WITH ZACH!

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# HAVE YOU HEARD THE GOOD NEWS?

GOD LOVES YOU SO MUCH, HE DID SOMETHING AMAZING FOR YOU! THE BIBLE—GOD'S MESSAGE TO ALL PEOPLE—TELLS THE WHOLE STORY.

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## GOD MADE YOU AND LOVES YOU

 God created everything there is—including you! He loves you more than any person could ever love you. He loves all people and created them to live in a perfect relationship with Him.

### THE BIBLE SAYS:



SO GOD CREATED HUMAN BEINGS IN HIS OWN IMAGE. IN THE IMAGE OF GOD HE CREATED THEM; MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM. (GENESIS 1:27, NLT)

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## THE PROBLEM OF SIN

 The first people God created—Adam and Eve—disobeyed Him. This caused sin to enter the world, breaking the perfect relationship they had with God. We sin by doing things God says are wrong and making ourselves the center of our lives instead of Him. Because Adam and Eve disobeyed, every person is born a sinner. Our sin separates us from God, and because He is perfect, He must punish sin—and the punishment for sin is death. Not just death of the body but separation from God that lasts forever.

### THE BIBLE SAYS:



EVERYONE HAS SINNED; WE ALL FALL SHORT OF GOD'S GLORIOUS STANDARD. (ROMANS 3:23, NLT)

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## GOD'S PERFECT PLAN

 Because every person—including you—has sinned, every person deserves to be punished by death. But God loves us so much He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to take the punishment for our sin. Jesus lived a perfect life on earth and then died on a cross in our place, even though He didn't deserve it. But it didn't end there—God raised Him back to life! Through Jesus's death and resurrection, the punishment for sin was paid so we could be forgiven and have a relationship with God.

### THE BIBLE SAYS:



GOD LOVED THE WORLD SO MUCH THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY SON, SO THAT EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WOULD NOT BE LOST BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE. (JOHN 3:16, ERV)

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## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

 It means you don't have to pay the price of death for your sin—Jesus paid it for you! When you trust in Jesus by believing He died and rose from the dead to save you from sin, God forgives your sin and gives you a new life as His child that lasts forever. Your grateful response to His wonderful gift is making Jesus the center of your life instead of yourself.

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## ARE YOU READY TO TRUST IN JESUS?

Tell Him you know that only He can save you from sin and that you want to begin a wonderful relationship with Him.



Still thinking it through? Answer the Key Questions at [keysforkids.org/goodnews/keyquestions](https://keysforkids.org/goodnews/keyquestions)