

CAPABLE CREATOR

READ: ROMANS 8:18, 28, 31-39; REVELATION 21:4

Dad, do you know what the biggest rodent in the world is?” Conner asked, looking up from his homework.

“Beavers?” Dad guessed.

“That’s what the beavers want you to think,” Conner joked. “It’s actually capybaras. We’re learning about them at school.”

“Huh! I’ve never heard of them,” said Dad. “Tell me more.”

“Capybaras live in parts of South America and can get up to a hundred and fifty pounds. They are semi-aquatic and can stay underwater for up to five minutes at a time! They are herbivores and live in groups of about ten or more.”

“Wow, those sound like some capable critters!”

“Yeah. It’s awesome that God made so many cool animals with different features they need to survive.” Conner sighed. “But why hasn’t God given you what you need, Dad?”

Dad placed his hand on Conner’s shoulder. “Conner, I know you’re struggling with this diagnosis I just got—we’ll all have to lean hard on God to get through this.”

“But Dad, it’s not fair—your body will just get worse, and you may not even be able to move your arms and legs. I don’t understand how you can think God is capable when He’s let you down.”

“I know it feels like God has let us down, but He hasn’t. God never promised us a life free of pain and struggles—in fact, in John 16:33, Jesus said that in this world we will have trouble. The good news is that in Him we can have peace. As children of God, we don’t have to fear whatever comes, because He is with us to strengthen, help, and comfort us. Remember, this life is not the end, Conner. God has already provided for our biggest need—He sent His Son to die for our sins and then raised Him from the dead so we could live forever with Him. If He’s capable of that, and promises to raise us from the dead one day too, we can trust Him to carry us through anything.”

“In heaven, there’s no more pain and suffering, right, Dad?”

“Not even any tears—except maybe happy ones,” Dad said with a smile.

Conner took a deep breath. “Okay. I know this will be hard, but I’m going to trust that the God who made capybaras is capable of helping us through this too.” ♥

SAVANNAH COLEMAN

GOD IS CAPABLE

KEY VERSE: I CONSIDER THAT OUR PRESENT SUFFERINGS ARE NOT WORTH COMPARING WITH THE GLORY THAT WILL BE REVEALED IN US. ROMANS 8:18 (NIV)

Do you ever doubt that God is capable? When we or those we care about go through hard times, it can seem like God isn’t there, or even that He is against us. But God loves us so much that He gave us His one and only Son, Jesus, so we could be forgiven for our sins and have eternal life. In everything we experience, He promises to be with us. And one day, He will wipe every tear away.

GOD HAS WASHED IT AWAY

READ: PSALM 103:8-12

As Payton helped his mom clean the living room wall, he couldn't stop thinking about the day before. "I'm really sorry for what I did, Mom."

"Payton," Mom said. "It's over. You're sorry. You've asked for God's forgiveness. Once God has taken care of it, it's gone."

Payton frowned as he scrubbed at the wall. His little sister shouldn't have used it as her canvas. "I shouldn't have stolen that gum. I feel so gross. I never stole before. I never even thought of stealing. But...it was so easy."

"You're going to get tempted to do a lot of things like that." Mom smiled sadly. "And you're going to give in a lot. The important thing is that you never turn from God because of your guilt."

"Wouldn't He rather I do that?"

Mom shook her head. "No. Jesus loves you so much that He wants to wash you clean." She dropped her rag into the soapy bucket. "I think we're going to need something different to clean this wall. Let's take a break and go to the store."

A little while later, Mom started scrubbing again with the special sponge she had bought. "Wow! These really do work." She stepped back from the wall. "Can you even see where your sister's drawings were?"

Payton shook his head. It was like magic.

"That's how Jesus wants to clean you—how He did clean you when you asked for His forgiveness," Mom said. "Now, He wants you to move on. We're not going to keep looking at this wall and thinking about what was there. We're going to see it as new and clean."

"Why would God forgive me?" Payton wasn't ready to let go of what he was feeling.

"Because He loves you. Because Jesus died for your sins so you could be clean." Mom let out a soft laugh. "I'm not going to compare my love of a clean home to His love for you, but I cleaned this wall because I like my home and I like how it looks when it's clean. God loves you, Payton. He cares about you more than anyone ever could. He has forgiven you for your sin, and He wants you to let go of your guilt and shame."

Payton looked at the clean wall. Then he turned to his mom and smiled. ♥

EMILY ACKER

JESUS HAS WASHED YOU CLEAN

KEY VERSE: IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS FAITHFUL AND JUST AND WILL FORGIVE US OUR SINS AND PURIFY US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.

1 JOHN 1:9 (NIV)

Have you ever done something that you shouldn't and then felt really guilty about it? Did the guilt follow you even after you asked God for forgiveness? If you've trusted Jesus as your Savior, He has washed your sins away and made you clean. You'll still do things that are wrong sometimes, and when you do, confess them to Him. Then let go of your guilt, knowing you have been forgiven.

GOD HEARS

READ: PSALM 139:7-12

Grandpa, I have a question.” Reese knew her grandpa always liked to talk about God, and she knew he wouldn’t mind the question she had on prayer. “When does God hear us?”

Her grandpa’s gray eyebrows lifted. “When does God hear us?” He grinned. “When we shout really loud!”

Reese giggled at her grandpa’s booming voice. “But that’s not how you pray.”

“He hears me when I talk like this too.” Grandpa lowered his voice to a whisper. “He also hears me when I’m like this.” He went quiet.

Reese watched him. “You’re praying silently?”

Grandpa nodded. “God hears us all the time. Anywhere we are.” He got up and offered his hand. Reese took it and let him lead her outside.

“If I went out into those woods and got lost, God would hear me.” Grandpa motioned to the large forest in front of them. “If I traveled to India or France or Australia, God would hear me there,” Grandpa said. “He would hear me if I was scared or if I was happy. He would hear me when I was alone or in a crowd of hundreds or thousands of people.”

“So,” Reese said. “Always?”

Grandpa turned to her with a grin. “You’re getting the point.”

“No matter where I am or what I’m doing, I can talk to Him and He’ll listen?” Reese asked. “Even if I’m quiet, He’ll hear me?”

“No matter where you are, how quiet or loud you are, or what you have to say, He’ll listen,” Grandpa said. “He’s never too busy for you.”

“Thanks for answering my question,” Reese said. “You’re always a good listener, Grandpa.”

He wrapped his arm around her. “If you think I’m a good listener, God’s even better. I try to listen when you talk, but I don’t always pay attention to everything you say. God hears every word. He loves you even more than I ever could. He gave us His own Son, Jesus, so we could have a relationship with Him. He cares about everything going on in your life. You can talk to Him anytime.”

Reese leaned into him and smiled. She was grateful that her grandpa listened to her, but even happier with his answer. She was glad to know God would hear her anywhere and anytime. ♥ BETHANY ACKER

GOD ALWAYS HEARS YOU

KEY VERSE: GIVE ALL YOUR WORRIES AND CARES TO GOD,
FOR HE CARES ABOUT YOU. 1 PETER 5:7 (NLT)

When do you talk to God? Do you worry that He won’t hear you when others are being noisy around you or when you’re in your room alone at night? Do you wonder if He’s really listening when you have a lot to say? He loves you and is always listening. He hears your prayers, no matter where you are or what you’re doing. Doesn’t it feel good to know He always hears you anywhere, anytime?

SLOW POPPERS

READ: MATTHEW 20:1-16; 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-4

Marley ran to the door as soon as she heard her mother come in. “Mom! That movie we put on hold at the library finally came in. Can we watch it tonight?”

“Sure,” said Mom. “But let’s have dinner first.”

They whipped up some spaghetti and meatballs and sat down to eat. “Marley, I want you to start going over to the nursing home a couple times a week to read to Grandma,” said Mom. “I wish I could get over there more, but work is just too busy right now. I’ll give you the Bible I’ve been reading to her so you can take over.”

Marley scowled. “The Bible? But she’s not even a Christian! And she’s really old. How could reading the Bible to her make any difference now?”

“Just because she’s old doesn’t mean it’s too late for her to come to Jesus,” said Mom. “We can’t give up on her. When I asked if I could start reading the Bible to her, she said yes, so I’m hopeful that means God is working to bring her to Him.”

Once they cleared the table, Mom got out a big pan and put it on the stove. “How about some popcorn to go with our movie?”

Marley nodded eagerly and watched as Mom heated oil in the pan and added popcorn kernels. Pretty soon the kitchen was full of pops and cracks as the popcorn billowed up in the pan. “I think it’s done,” said Marley after a long string of popping noises came to an end.

“Not quite,” said Mom. She waited another minute before turning off the heat, allowing more kernels to pop. “Some kernels pop right away, but others take longer before they’re ready. You don’t want to give up on them too quickly.” She looked at Marley. “Just like Grandma. The Bible tells us that no matter how young or old someone is, they become a new person when they trust in Jesus, just like these hard little kernels become soft, delicious popcorn. We need to do all we can to share the good news of Jesus with Grandma because she may not have much time left.”

Marley nodded. “Okay, I’ll go read to her. And I’ll pray that hearing God’s Word will help her realize how much Jesus loves her.” ♥ COURTNEY LASATER

IT’S NEVER TOO LATE TO COME TO JESUS

KEY VERSE: THE LORD...IS PATIENT WITH YOU, NOT WANTING ANY TO PERISH BUT ALL TO COME TO REPENTANCE. 2 PETER 3:9 (CSB)

Have you ever thought it was too late for someone to be saved? Some people trust in Jesus as soon as they hear about Him, but others take longer. God wants everyone to be saved, so He’s patient with those who do not yet know Him. We need to be patient too. Keep praying for those you know who aren’t Christians and sharing God’s love with them. No matter how old you are, it’s never too late to trust in Jesus.



COVERED

READ: ROMANS 4:6-8; 5:8-9

What's that, Grandpa?" Rafael pointed to some small cards and pieces of shiny red paper on the kitchen table.

Grandpa smiled. "Grandma found these when she was cleaning the attic the other day. When I was a boy, we used to get these as prizes in cereal boxes—they're something like baseball cards."

"Wow! They're really old!" Rafael was impressed. "What are the shiny red papers for?"

"That's what makes these cards interesting," Grandpa replied. "Look at this one. It's a picture of Babe Ruth." Grandpa showed Rafael the picture of the famous baseball player, then turned the card over. "Now, see this question? It says, 'What was Babe Ruth's real name?' To find the answer, we put this shiny red paper—it's called cellophane—right over the question. Now what do you see?"

"George Herman Ruth," Rafael read. "The question disappeared, and the answer showed up! Cool!"

"Right," said Grandpa. "This cellophane taught me a lesson."

"You mean because you learned Babe Ruth's real name?" Rafael asked.

Grandpa laughed. "Something more important," he said. "When I was young, I knew I was a sinner. I was a bit of a troublemaker, so I was reminded of it often! I'd heard that we all needed to have our sin covered by the blood of Jesus, but I never understood it until my Sunday school teacher brought this very same Babe Ruth card to class one day. 'Someone read the question on the back,' he said as he turned it over. But he had put the red paper over the question, so we told him we could only see the answer. He nodded. 'When the question is covered by the red paper, you can't see it—you just see the answer. And when you trust Jesus as your Savior, your sin is covered by His blood. Then God doesn't see your sin anymore. Instead, He sees you as righteous, or good, and He sees Jesus living in you.' I've never forgotten that."

Rafael nodded thoughtfully. "I'm going to remember it too." ♥

PHYLLIS M. ROBINSON

JESUS'S BLOOD COVERS SIN

KEY VERSE: BLESSED IS THE ONE WHOSE TRANSGRESSIONS ARE FORGIVEN, WHOSE SINS ARE COVERED. PSALM 32:1 (NIV)

What does God see when He looks at you? Does He see your sins, or are they covered by the blood of Jesus so that God now sees you as righteous? If you trust Jesus as your Savior, your transgressions, or sins, are forgiven. They are covered, and God doesn't see them anymore when He looks at you. If you don't yet know Jesus as your Savior, trust in Him today.