

THE WHISTLE

READ: PSALM 32:8-9; JOHN 10:1-5, 27-28

Where's Molly, Grandpa?" asked Mason. He had come to spend a week with his grandparents, and he loved to play with Molly, their dog.

In response, Grandpa took a whistle from his back pocket, put it to his mouth, and blew.

"Your whistle must be broken," said Mason. "It doesn't make a sound." As he spoke, Molly came running from the woods behind the barn.

Grandpa laughed. "The whistle isn't broken. It emits a high-pitched sound that can't be heard by human ears, but a dog can hear it plainly. Molly's been trained to respond to the sound of the whistle. It gets her attention every time." Grandpa went up on the porch. "You can play with Molly. I'll sit here a bit and watch."

Mason and Molly raced across the yard. Then Mason threw a ball for Molly to fetch. She brought it back and waited eagerly for him to throw it again. Finally, Mason got tired and went to sit beside Grandpa, and Molly lay down at their feet.

Grandpa took a sip of lemonade. "While I was watching you and Molly play, I was thinking of ways God calls us when He wants our attention."

Mason grinned. "He doesn't use a whistle."

Grandpa shook his head. "No, but He communicates with us in several ways. He speaks to us through the Bible. He uses parents, teachers, pastors, and other Christians to guide us and encourage us. And the Holy Spirit speaks quietly to our hearts."

"How do we know when He's talking to us?" Mason asked.

"Well, I remember the first time I heard God's voice was when I felt the urge to trust in Jesus," Grandpa replied. "Now I know that was the Holy Spirit speaking to my heart. Since then, I've learned to recognize His voice when He reminds me of His truth in the Bible or allows other Christians to point out something in my life that needs to change. As God's children, we should always be sensitive and ready to hear what Jesus says. We need to be like sheep who hear their shepherd's voice and follow him."

Mason reached down and scratched the dog's ears. "Just like Molly does when she hears your whistle." ♥ BEVERLY KENNISTON

LISTEN TO GOD'S VOICE

KEY VERSE: MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE, AND I KNOW THEM,
AND THEY FOLLOW ME. JOHN 10:27

Are you listening to God's voice? Has He urged you to turn to Jesus for forgiveness? Has He impressed the truth of His Word, the Bible, on your heart? Has He pricked your conscience through something a parent, teacher, or pastor has said to you? Don't ignore what He's saying to you. Pay attention. Listen to His call and do what He asks. Hear His voice and follow Him.

THE TICKING WATCH

READ: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:42-44, 54-57; REVELATION 21:1-4

Avani threw herself onto her sister Daya's bed. "I miss Daya so much," she sobbed. "I don't see why God let her die after she got hurt in that car accident. He could have healed her!"

Avani's mother wrapped her arms tightly around her daughter. Mom's eyes brimmed with tears. "I miss Daya too," she said, gently wiping the tears from Avani's eyes. "But remember that she was a Christian, so God did heal her when He took her to be with Him. Daya is with Jesus now."

"I know," Avani said, more tears filling her eyes. "But it's hard to picture her in heaven with Jesus. I just keep seeing how she looked in the hospital."

"I want to show you something," said Mom. She left the room. When she came back, she held out a small object. "Do you know what this is?"

Avani took it and nodded. "It's the old locket watch Grandma gave Daya." She pushed the tiny knob on the side, and the cover sprang open. Avani could hear the watch inside ticking softly. "I thought this was smashed in the accident."

"It was," said Mom. "The knob came off and the glass was shattered. The cover wouldn't close, and even the chain was broken. I was going to throw it away, but I could hear ticking, so I knew the clock inside was still working. I took it to a jeweler to see if he could fix it, and he did."

"It looks as good as new," Avani said softly. She smiled a little. "It's like Daya, isn't it, Mom? Her body was broken in the accident and the doctors couldn't fix her, but Daya's soul didn't die. Jesus took her to heaven to be with Him."

"That's right," said Mom. "And one day He will make her like new—just like the jeweler did for the locket. This locket can be broken again, but when God gives Daya her new body, it will be perfect and last forever. When Jesus returns, we'll be given perfect bodies too, and we'll see Daya again." Mom fastened the chain around Avani's neck. "I want you to have this now."

Avani touched the locket. "Whenever I miss Daya, this will remind me that we'll all be together again someday." ♥ MARY ROSE PEARSON

CHRISTIANS WILL HAVE NEW BODIES

KEY VERSE: OUR BODIES ARE BURIED IN BROKENNESS, BUT THEY WILL BE RAISED IN GLORY. 1 CORINTHIANS 15:43 (NLT)

Has death taken away someone you love? It's okay to be sad when you miss those who have died. But for a Christian, death means going to be with Jesus. When He comes again, all Christians will be together forever and will be given new bodies that will never die. Knowing that can help when you're sad and miss the person you love.



BUILDING BLOCKS

READ: JAMES 3:8-14, 17

Liv and her friend Serenity sat down for a snack after school while Liv's little brother Zeke played with his building blocks on the floor.

"Did you see Rachel's new haircut?" Liv asked her friend as her mom set some cookies on the table. "It looks awful!"

"I know!" said Serenity. "She's trying to make her hair look like Bella's, but she can't pull it off. She's always trying to be like Bella. It's so pathetic!"

"Well, she doesn't want to be like Bella when it comes to math," Liv said. "When Miss Potter handed back our quizzes today, I saw Bella's and she got every answer wrong." Liv giggled. "And that quiz was *so easy!*"

Serenity finished her milk. "Yeah. How can Bella flunk math when we have the dumbest math teacher ever?"

Mom frowned and started to say something when a horn sounded outside. "There's my mom," said Serenity. "I gotta go." As she headed for the door, her foot brushed against Zeke's tall block building, knocking it over. "Oops! Sorry," Serenity muttered as she hurried out.

Zeke's eyes filled with tears. "Mommy, Serenity knocked my building down!"

"I know, honey, but it was an accident. Why don't you build it again?" Mom turned to Liv. "I'm afraid Serenity's not the only one who knocked something down. You've just done the same thing."

"Me?" asked Liv. "I didn't touch Zeke's blocks or anything else!"

"I'm talking about the way you girls talked about your classmates and teacher," said Mom, joining Liv at the table. "You certainly weren't building them up, were you?"

Liv bit into a cookie. "I guess not."

"That block building Zeke made was important to him," said Mom, "but not as important as people are to God. None of us is perfect—we all struggle with different things. But Jesus loves us all so much He died for us! And He builds us up by reminding us of His love and grace and being with us in our struggles. We can do the same for others by building them up with our words—both those we say to them and those we say about them."

Liv nodded. "I need to call Serenity. I want to tell her something nice about each person we knocked down today." ♥ VICKI L. REINHARDT

BUILD OTHERS UP

KEY VERSE: LET US PURSUE WHAT PROMOTES PEACE AND WHAT BUILDS UP ONE ANOTHER. ROMANS 14:19 (CSB)

How do you talk about other people? Do you say nice things about them? Or do you point out their weaknesses and imperfections? Guess what—you're not perfect either! But Jesus loves you so much He was willing to die for you. His words to us are always filled with love, grace, and encouragement. Share His love with others by building them up with your words, not tearing them down.

THE JUMPING TEST

READ: LUKE 4:1-14

Adam placed the ladder against the garden shed. As he climbed up it, his dad looked up from weeding the garden and hurried over. “Adam! What are you doing up there?”

“Practicing!” Adam called back. “I have to jump off the shed roof at school tomorrow, so I want to try it at home first.”

Dad grabbed the end of the ladder. “What did you say you’re going to do?”

“I said I have to jump off the roof. It’s to prove my faith.”

“You’ll do no such thing!” said Dad. “You could break a leg. Come down this instant.” Adam descended the ladder and sat beside his dad on the grass. “Now,” said Dad, “what’s this all about?”

Adam hugged his knees. “I was telling some friends at school about Jesus, and they laughed and said it was all baloney. They don’t believe there’s a God. Then Nick dared me to jump off the roof. He says if I can do it without getting hurt, he’ll believe in God! So I’m praying that God will help me jump off the shed safely.”

Dad sighed. “Adam, nothing is impossible for God. But when you ask Him for something, you need to make sure it doesn’t go against what the Bible says. I don’t think jumping off the roof to prove He’s real is in line with His Word.”

“But Dad, if it would make Nick believe, wouldn’t God want me to do it?”

“Last night we read about how Satan tempted Jesus by telling Him to jump down from the highest point of the temple,” Dad reminded Adam. “Do you remember Jesus’s reply?”

“Um...He said, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

Dad nodded. “When your friends dare you to do something foolish, you don’t have the right to test God either. He tells us to share the good news of Jesus with others, but remember that it’s God who changes people’s hearts, not us. Jumping off a roof isn’t going to make Nick believe in God. I think the best way to help him and the others know that God is real is to pray for them and trust Jesus to help them see His love in you as their friend.”

“Okay,” said Adam. “If Jesus wouldn’t jump off a building, I won’t either. I’ll tell the guys the jump is off.” ♥ TANYA FERDINANDUSZ

DON'T TEST GOD; TRUST HIM

KEY VERSE: JESUS ANSWERED...“DO NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.” LUKE 4:12 (NIV)

Have you ever wanted to do something to try to prove God is real? It doesn't work that way. The Bible tells us not to test God the way Satan did when he tempted Jesus and dared Him to prove who He was. Jesus wants people to know He's real, but not through foolish stunts. He shares the truth about who He is in His Word, the Bible. Point others to His truth and love, and trust Him to do the rest.

AN HONEST ANSWER

READ: MATTHEW 5:33-37; 2 CORINTHIANS 1:17-20

Cora grabbed her backpack and lunch box and scurried out the door. Climbing aboard the bus, she thought about the bag of potato chips her mom had packed for her. They were her favorite snack for morning recess.

When math ended, Cora grabbed her chips and traipsed out to the playground. She and her friend Emmalyn found an empty pair of swings, where they sat chatting and laughing.

A moment later, another girl walked up, followed by three boys from their class who always tagged along. With a flounce of her hair, Jenna marched up to Cora. “Give me some chips,” she demanded.

Cora thought about how Jenna normally ignored her unless she had something Jenna wanted. She didn’t like the way Jenna insisted on having some of her snack. “No,” Cora replied firmly.

Jenna pouted. “Meanie!” she yelled, stomping away. The boys followed.

Later that day, Cora mentioned it to Mom while they were washing dishes. “Do you think I did the right thing?” Cora asked. She wondered if she *had* been mean, just as Jenna had accused her of acting.

“Well, we know God wants us to give to others in need. But it doesn’t sound like Jenna was needy. It sounds like she was demanding you give her something she wanted.” Mom handed over a dish towel. “Cora, you know that as God’s children, we should show His love to others.”

“Yes, Mom, I know. But I’m not sure if I did what God wanted today with Jenna.”

“Jesus gives us guidance in the Bible on how we should answer others and keep our word,” said Mom. “He tells us to let our ‘yes’ mean ‘yes’ and our ‘no’ mean ‘no.’”

“So, we should be honest when we answer?” Cora asked.

“Right. God gives us the freedom to say no. When we needed Him to save us from sin, He showed us His love by answering yes and sending us Jesus. But that doesn’t mean Jesus always gives people everything they want, and we don’t have to either. Sometimes giving an honest answer of no is the best thing to do.”

Cora nodded. “Next time I bring chips for recess, I might share with Jenna. But if I say yes, I promise I’ll really mean it.” ♥ ALLISON WILSON LEE

GIVE AN HONEST ANSWER

KEY VERSE: LET YOUR “YES” MEAN “YES,” AND YOUR “NO” MEAN “NO.”
MATTHEW 5:37 (CSB)

Do you ever feel pressured to say yes to a request—just to be nice? The Bible says Jesus is God’s honest answer of yes to us, and He wants us as His children to show His love to others by answering honestly and keeping our word. If we say yes, we should follow through. Sometimes the best option is to respond with a no. Trust God to help you know the right response in each situation so you can give an honest answer.