

MOTHER'S VOICE

READ: PROVERBS 6:20-22

As Aurora and her mom walked along a nearby lake one chilly spring day, a wispy mist rose up from the water. “Look, Mom. That lady is feeding the ducks.” Aurora motioned toward a woman seated on a bench. “Let’s go watch them.”

“Okay,” said Mom, so they walked toward the woman. A mob of ducks milled around her, frantically pushing and shoving to get the corn she offered them.

“There’s one with babies!” Aurora laughed as she pointed to a mother duck with several little ones. “They’re so cute and tiny.”

Mom nodded. “Yes, and notice how close they stick to their mother.”

“How do they know which one she is?” asked Aurora. “Ducks all look alike.”

Hearing her, the woman on the bench turned. “To you they do, but not to them. And ducklings know their mother’s voice.”

Aurora noticed two ducklings at the edge of the group, tripping along and peeping at the top of their little voices. “Oh, poor things! They must not have a mother.”

The woman pointed to the duck family. “They belong with the others. They got separated from the brood a minute ago.”

Quacking loudly, the mother duck headed for the water. The five ducklings with her followed. The two other ducklings hesitated, then hurried toward the water too. They fell in line with the others as the mother duck led them far out into the lake.

“Wow! They really do know her voice,” said Aurora. “And they do what she tells them, don’t they?”

The woman nodded. “Kids should listen to their mothers’ voices as well as ducklings do,” she said with a grin.

Mom chuckled. “I agree,” she said as she and Aurora turned to leave.

“I agree too,” Aurora said as they walked along. She laughed when Mom looked at her in surprise. “Okay, I admit I don’t always act like it, but I know mothers really do want what’s best for their kids.”

“I’m glad you know that,” Mom said. “I know I’m not perfect, but I pray every day that Jesus would help me teach you to follow Him. He made me your mother so I can help you hear His voice.”

Aurora reached out and squeezed her mom’s arm. “I’m so thankful He did.” ♥

MARYA DECKER

THANK GOD FOR MOTHERS

KEY VERSE: DO NOT TURN AWAY FROM YOUR MOTHER'S TEACHING.
PROVERBS 1:8 (NLV)

Do you listen to your mother? Do you follow her advice? Even baby animals—like ducklings—listen to their mothers. How about you? Do you hear and obey your mother or other caretaker God provided for you? God puts mothers in children’s lives so they can demonstrate the kind of love Jesus has for us. Mother’s Day is a good time to thank Him for those who love and care for you.

IMMEDIATE HELP

READ: ACTS 17:24, 27-28

Feeling a little nervous about babysitting at the home of a family friend, Anna rang the doorbell. Mrs. King greeted her with a smile. “All ready to work?” she asked. Anna nodded. “Good.” Mrs. King brought her inside and pointed to a list of emergency numbers on a table by the door. “If you need anything, help is only a call away.”

After Mrs. King left, Anna played several games with the two kids in her care. “Your mom said you could have toast and jelly for an afternoon snack,” Anna told them after a while. “Why don’t you pick out another game while I get it for you.” She went to the kitchen, fixed toast for each of the kids, and took it back to the family room. As they began to eat, they were all startled by the loud buzzing of the smoke alarm. *Oh, what do I do now?* Anna thought in a panic. She jumped up. *Lord, please show me what to do.* Right away she knew she needed to get the kids out of the house.

As they hurried to the door, Anna noticed the list of emergency numbers and grabbed it. Once they were safely on the far side of the yard, she took out her cell phone and dialed the number for the fire department.

With the siren blaring, a fire truck soon rounded the corner. Neighbors came to watch as firefighters hurried into the Kings’ house and then came back out, smiling. “Everything’s fine,” they said. “Smoke from a piece of bread caught in the toaster tripped the smoke alarm.” Anna was relieved, but she was also embarrassed because she had called the fire department over burned toast. “You did exactly the right thing,” the firefighters told Anna. “Never take a chance when there could be a fire.”

When Anna got home, she told her family about the excitement. “You know what?” she said. “After I called the fire department, it still took a little time for the firefighters to get there. But when I asked God to show me what to do, right away He helped me remember that it’s important to get out fast if there’s a fire.” She grinned. “Mrs. King told me help was only a call away, and she was right. I can call on the Lord for help anytime.” ♥ HAZEL W. MARETT



GOD IS ALWAYS AVAILABLE

KEY VERSE: HE [GOD] IS NOT FAR FROM EACH ONE OF US. ACTS 17:27

Isn't it amazing that the Almighty God who made all things is right there, ready to help you at all times? He wants you to call on Him when you're concerned about the best way to handle all kinds of situations. Talk to Him about anything that troubles you. He's always ready to listen. He hears every prayer and will help you in every situation.

TALKING TONGUES

READ: PROVERBS 15:1-4; JAMES 3:3-6

Mom, guess what! Karl’s got strep throat!” Nico had just recovered from strep throat, and now others were coming down with it. Nico found his mom on the phone in the living room. “Was that Mrs. Burk?” He asked when Mom hung up. “Sounds like they’re going to move to Texas.”

“Oops! I didn’t hear you come in,” said Mom. “Don’t tell anyone they’re moving. Mr. Burk’s boss is on vacation, so he hasn’t had a chance to tell her yet.”

Nico didn’t tell anyone about the Burks—not until Sunday morning, that is. Then it just sort of slipped out when he told his friend Haru they’d soon have a new Sunday school teacher. “But don’t tell anyone,” added Nico quickly. And Haru didn’t—at least not for a few hours. Then he told his sister Ari, who told her best friend Karen. Not knowing it was a secret, Karen passed the news on to her parents, who mentioned it at a committee meeting.

By the end of the week, several more children in Nico’s class had strep throat—and several more people knew the Burks were moving.

“Nico,” said Mom, “I didn’t tell anyone the Burks were moving. Did you?”

“Well...just Haru. But I told him not to tell,” said Nico.

“Mrs. Burk says the news is all over town. They’re afraid Mr. Burk’s boss may hear it before he’s able to tell her,” said Mom. “News spreads fast.”

“Like strep throat?” asked Nico.

“Something like that,” said Mom. “Once you exposed your friends to strep throat, there was nothing you could do to stop it. And when you tell a secret to even one person, the story is almost sure to spread. That’s why we need to control our tongues. Even if we’re not saying anything bad about someone, sharing secrets they don’t want others to know can hurt them, and it shows that we can’t be trusted to keep confidences. Does that sound like Jesus to you?” Nico shook his head, and Mom continued. “Jesus is trustworthy, so we need to depend on Him to help us be trustworthy too.”

Nico sighed. “I’m sorry. Next time I learn something I’m not supposed to tell, I’ll pretend it’s a contagious disease—like strep throat—and be careful not to expose anybody else.” ♥ LINDA WEDDLE

KEEP CONFIDENCES

KEY VERSE: A GOSSIP GOES AROUND TELLING SECRETS, BUT THOSE WHO ARE TRUSTWORTHY CAN KEEP A CONFIDENCE. PROVERBS 11:13 (NLT)

Do you keep secrets? Or do you think it won’t hurt if you tell just one person? Occasionally, you may be told something parents or a trusted adult need to know—like if someone is being abused or is engaged in harmful behavior, for example. Then be sure you do tell. But generally, when you’re taken into someone’s confidence, don’t talk about it to anyone else. Show others that you are trustworthy like Jesus.

JUST LIKE CLOCKWORK

READ: 1 CORINTHIANS 12:14-22

Kaya walked into the living room and slumped onto the couch. Grandpa looked up from his work on the grandfather clock and laid aside a tool. “What’s wrong?” he asked.

Kaya picked at the fuzz on her jacket. “Oh, nothing. It’s just that when the Millers came to church last Sunday, they were talking about all the amazing things they’ve seen God do in Brazil. After the service, I went up to them and explained that I wanted to help them with their missions work.”

“That’s great, Kaya!” Grandpa said. “What’s wrong with that?”

“Well, I thought that maybe I could join them out in the jungle for the summer, but instead they said they needed help with their mailing. I just spent the last hour stuffing envelopes with letter updates for the Millers’ ministry partners. I wish I could do something actually useful for missions work!”

Grandpa furrowed his brow. “Come here,” he said. Kaya joined him. “Do you see this gear?” Grandpa handed Kaya a small gear about the size of the dime.

Kaya cradled it in her palm. “It’s so small!”

Grandpa gently opened a panel in the back of the clock.

“Oh, wow!” Kaya exclaimed. Inside the grandfather clock was a labyrinth of gears, springs, wheels, and hooks.

“It may not look like much,” Grandpa said, “but this gear is essential to the working of the clock. When the clock didn’t chime this afternoon, I opened it up and noticed this gear was out of place. I was just about to fix it when you walked in.” Grandpa carefully put the gear back in the clock and shut the panel. Moving around to the front, he pushed the minute hand past the twelve, and the clock chimed.

“The body of Christ is the same way. Each person who trusts in Jesus is part of His church, and we work together to help more people know about His love for them and what He did to save them. Even things that may look insignificant on the surface are an integral part of how Jesus uses us to reach others.”

“So even though I may not think stuffing envelopes is that exciting, I’m still serving Jesus?” asked Kaya.

“Exactly!” Grandpa grinned. “Even the small parts make a big difference.” ♥

OLIVIA SUMMERS

YOUR SERVICE IS IMPORTANT

KEY VERSE: THOSE PARTS OF THE BODY THAT SEEM TO BE WEAKER ARE ACTUALLY VERY IMPORTANT. 1 CORINTHIANS 12:22 (ERV)

Do you feel like your service is unimportant? Do you wish you could be making more of a difference? Whether you’re volunteering in the nursery, washing church dishes, or raising money for missionaries, God views your work as important. Sometimes the most unnoticed things are the most foundational. Be faithful with the service opportunities Jesus has given you, knowing you are helping His body of believers share His love with the world.

THE RACE OF LIFE (PART 1)

READ: 1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-25; HEBREWS 12:1-2

Gramps!” Asher called as he burst into his grandpa’s house. “Next month we’re going to have a big race at our school, and I’m going to be in it. I can’t wait! There will be prizes and everything.”

Grandpa chuckled. “You’d better slow down, or you’ll be worn out before the race starts,” he teased. “If you’re serious about running, it would be a good idea to cut down on junk foods. I ran a few races in my college days, and I remember the coach emphasizing the importance of a good diet.”

Asher groaned. “My gym teacher said the same thing, but I love candy and ice cream and potato chips! In fact, I love all the things they say are bad for you. How am I gonna live one whole month without all that good stuff?”

“Well, you can eat it if you want to. It’s up to you,” said Grandpa. “Of course, if you’re really serious about winning, you’ll probably want to cut out anything that would keep you from reaching your goal.”

Asher thought for a moment. “I do want to win, and I’ll do everything I can to come in first—even give up candy and stuff like that. The prize will be worth it.”

Grandpa nodded. “You know, Asher, the Bible compares our Christian lives to a race. Our goal is to run a good race before we cross the finish line and see Jesus face-to-face. To do well in the race of life, we may need to give up some things too.”

“Like what?” asked Asher.

“Well, we might be holding on to sinful habits that are slowing us down—things like lying, gossiping, or a bad temper. Or maybe we’re too focused on our own comfort and enjoyment, and we need to pick up the pace and find more ways to show the love of Jesus to those around us.”

Asher sighed. “That sounds even harder than giving up junk food for the race at school!”

“Maybe, but don’t forget that you’re not running the race of life alone,” said Grandpa. “Jesus is right by your side, and He will help you run a good race. Nothing we give up in this world can compete with the prize He won for us—eternal life with Him.” ♥ SHERRY L. KUYT

RUN A GOOD RACE IN LIFE

KEY VERSE: LET US LAY ASIDE EVERY HINDRANCE AND THE SIN THAT SO EASILY ENSNARES US. LET US RUN WITH ENDURANCE THE RACE THAT LIES BEFORE US. HEBREWS 12:1 (CSB)

Are you running your best race in life? Or are you holding on to things that slow you down? Don’t let anything get in the way of your goal to run a good race. Let Jesus help you keep your eyes on the prize as you trust and follow Him each day. He saved you so you could have eternal life with Him. Nothing you give up can compare with the reward of seeing Him at the finish line.