

## NO GIVING UP!

READ: MARK 1:16-20; 1 CORINTHIANS 15:58

Oh no! A fish got my bait again!” Ryder exclaimed as he pulled his fishing line out of the water. “That’s it. I give up!” Ryder laid his pole on the ground. “Okay if I go check the frog pond?” he asked. Dad nodded, so Ryder wandered off through the well-known woods on Grandpa’s farm, leaving his father to fish alone.

When Ryder returned a half hour later, Dad grinned at him. “Look, Ryder! I believe I’ve hooked something!” Dad tugged on his line and brought a flapping, struggling fish to shore. Ryder was surprised to see that there were also several other fish in his pail.

“How’d you do it, Dad?” asked Ryder.

“Just by keeping at it,” Dad said. “You’ll never catch a fish with your fishing pole on the ground.”

Ryder picked up his pole and baited his hook again. As they continued fishing, he said, “Maybe Callum and Max are like these fish you caught.”

Dad raised his brows. “I don’t think your friends would be very flattered to hear you compare them to fish,” he said. “What do you mean?”

“Well, more than once I’ve tried to tell them about Jesus—I guess I was fishing for people, like Jesus said we’re supposed to do. But they never want to talk about God or come to church or anything.” Ryder paused. “They don’t seem interested at all, so last week I decided I’d just quit. It didn’t seem like it was worth it to keep trying to help them know more about Jesus.”

“And now you’re wondering about that decision?” asked Dad.

Ryder nodded. “Maybe it’s like our fishing today. Maybe I just need to keep at it a little longer.”

“That’s good thinking,” said Dad. “Jesus promises to help us share the good news that He died and rose again to save us with others, but it isn’t something that can always be done quickly or easily. But don’t give up—keep praying for your friends and letting them see what Jesus has done in your life, and trust Him to give you more opportunities to talk to them about Him.”

“Okay, I will.” Suddenly, Ryder felt a tug on his line. “Dad!” he exclaimed. “I think I got one!” ♥ MARY ROSE PEARSON

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### KEEP ON SHARING JESUS

**KEY VERSE:** ALWAYS GIVE YOURSELVES FULLY TO THE WORK OF THE LORD, BECAUSE YOU KNOW THAT YOUR LABOR IN THE LORD IS NOT IN VAIN.  
1 CORINTHIANS 15:58 (NIV)

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Have you tried to get somebody interested in spiritual things and gotten discouraged? Have you stopped trying to talk to someone about Jesus or inviting them to church, thinking it’s just no use? Don’t give up. It’s God’s job to open people’s hearts to the message of the gospel, but He can use you to point them in the right direction. Keep doing what you can to point them toward Jesus and trust Him with the rest.

## LOST

READ: LUKE 15:1-10

Skye slipped out the front door and started down the sidewalk. Mom was busy working on her computer, so Skye had decided she'd go to the park and play for a little while, even though she wasn't allowed to go by herself. *I'll get back before Mom even misses me*, she thought.

After turning a corner, Skye heard a dog barking behind her. She was afraid of dogs and began to run. She dodged through a side yard and came out on the next street. Skye was relieved to find that the dog had not followed. She kept walking down the street for a couple blocks before she realized nothing looked familiar. *Where am I?* she wondered with a feeling of terror.

"Hi there," said a man who was out working in his yard. "Are you lost?"

Skye quickly took off in the opposite direction. She knew she wasn't supposed to talk to strangers. *But where's the park?* she wondered. After turning another corner, she stood still. Now she was definitely lost. Her eyes filled with tears as she sat down on the curb.

After what seemed like a long, long time, a familiar car rounded the corner. It stopped, the door opened, and out jumped Mom. Skye burst into tears, and Mom gathered her into her arms. "I didn't think you'd come," Skye said, sobbing. "I thought you were busy working."

"I was working," said Mom. "But when I realized you were missing, I left everything and came looking for you. Nothing could be more important." She looked at Skye. "I don't think I've ever been so glad to see anyone."

Skye wiped her eyes. "Even though I did something I wasn't supposed to?"

"Even though you did something you weren't supposed to," said Mom.

Skye burst into tears again. "I'm sorry, Mom."

"It's okay," said Mom. "We'll talk more about it at home. Some of our neighbors are looking for you too, and I need to let them know you've been found."

As Mom drove, Skye felt relieved she wasn't lost anymore. She remembered a story she'd heard at church about a shepherd who had gone to look for a lost sheep, and how that was like Jesus coming to save those lost in sin. *I'm so glad Mom found me*, Skye thought. *And I'm so glad Jesus found me too.* ♥

HAZEL W. MARETT

## JESUS IS SEEKING YOU

**KEY VERSE:** THE SON OF MAN [JESUS] HAS COME TO SEEK AND TO SAVE THE LOST. LUKE 19:10 (CSB)

Have you ever been lost? It's a terrible feeling, isn't it? Did you know that all people were born lost—lost in sin? But you're so important to Jesus that He left heaven and came to earth to find you. Trust Him to save you from sin. Then let others know you've been found!

## BEAUTIFUL

READ: PSALM 139:13-14

Hazel dropped her backpack by the door and trotted out to the garage to find Mom, clad in jeans and an old T-shirt, sitting at her potter's wheel. As she watched, her mom wet her hands, placed her thumbs near the center of the lump of clay, and pressed downward as it spun on the wheel. Before her eyes, the mass of clay became hollow, narrowed, and grew in height.

"How was your day at school?" asked Mom.

Hazel thought a moment before answering. "It was all right, I guess. My classes were fine, but some of my friends teased me because I'm the shortest."

Moving her hands to the outside of the lump of clay, Mom applied a bit of pressure to the sides of her vessel as it spun on the pottery wheel, making the clay elongate dramatically and grow taller. "That wasn't very nice of them."

Hazel sighed. "Yeah, well, I wish I was taller, but there's nothing I can do about it."

Mom continued to gently push the sides of clay inward, making them rise even higher. Suddenly, the hollow column of clay that was forming bent over to the side and collapsed.

"Oh no!" exclaimed Hazel. "Your vase is ruined! It can't hold any flowers now. It's all bent."

To her surprise, Mom replied, "Who said it was a vase?"

Looking confused, Hazel asked, "Well, what is it then? It can't be much good like that."

"No?" asked Mom. "You can't see what I see because you're comparing it to what you think pottery should look like. But I see it in light of the purpose I designed it for, and I say it's perfect. And since I'm the one who created it, my opinion is the only one that counts."

"Okay," said Hazel. "So what is it?"

"It's a metaphor," said Mom. "For my daughter. To show her how God sees her, and that His opinion is the only one that counts."

Hazel rolled her eyes. "Okay, Mom, I get it. Your sculpture is beautiful because you created it, just like I'm beautiful, and the perfect height, because God created me. You don't have to hit me over the head with it."

Mom smiled. "Sometimes I do." ♥ KELSIE INGHAM

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**YOU WERE FORMED BY GOD**

**KEY VERSE:** LORD, YOU ARE OUR FATHER; WE ARE THE CLAY, AND YOU ARE OUR POTTER; WE ALL ARE THE WORK OF YOUR HANDS. ISAIAH 64:8 (CSB)

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Do you ever wish that you looked different? It's easy to compare ourselves to everyone else and feel like we don't measure up. But guess what? Everyone else is usually doing the same thing! Instead, remember that God created you just the way He wanted you. He thinks you're beautiful, and His opinion is the only one that counts.

## THE BEAR FACTS

READ: EPHESIANS 5:8-10, 15-17

**B**righton was excited as she and her father took their places on the tree stand. It was the first time Dad had taken her bow hunting. As Brighton squinted into the low sun, her gaze froze on something large and black among the trees. She nudged her father and whispered, “Dad, look! What’s that? It’s coming this way!”



Just then the animal stood on its hind legs, and they saw that it was a large black bear. It raised its head and sniffed the air. Brighton and Dad quietly watched in amazement; this was a rare sight in that area. Still sniffing, the bear cautiously moved toward the edge of the woods. Sitting on its haunches where it could see the area beyond the woods, it gazed longingly at a field of unharvested corn. After several minutes of checking and smelling, the bear ventured cautiously toward the cornfield. It hesitated when it reached the edge of the field, then turned back to the safety of the woods.

Driving home later, Brighton talked excitedly about the bear. “Did you see how much he wanted to get that corn? But he didn’t go get it. I wonder why.”

“He probably sensed danger, and he was too smart to take a chance by going out into the open,” said Dad. “We could learn a lesson from him.”

“We could?” asked Brighton.

Dad nodded. “That bear was wise to avoid going into danger, and we need to be wise too. We need to think about how our actions affect others and avoid putting ourselves in situations where we might be tempted to sin. The Bible tells us to think carefully about the way we live, and we can do that because we trust in Jesus and have His Spirit in our hearts. He gives us wisdom and guides us in how to live so that others can see we belong to Jesus.”

When they got home, Mom asked about their hunting trip. “Don’t make up some big story about hundreds of deer,” she joked. “Just give me the bare facts.”

Dad grinned and winked at Brighton. “All right,” he said. “We’ll give you the *bear facts!*” ♥ LOIS A. TEUFEL

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### LIVE WISELY

**KEY VERSE:** BE CAREFUL HOW YOU LIVE. DON'T LIVE LIKE FOOLS, BUT LIKE THOSE WHO ARE WISE. EPHESIANS 5:15 (NLT)

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Are you careful about the way you live? Do you avoid putting yourself in situations where you might be tempted to do wrong? Do you think about other people’s feelings before you say or do something that might be hurtful? If you know Jesus, you have the ability to turn away from sin and show others His love. Trust Him to help you make wise choices that reflect His light to those around you.

## THE RIGHT WAY

READ: JOHN 14:1-6

As August walked down the hallway at school, he saw a little boy crying up ahead. An older girl August's age was talking to him. "Don't cry, I know how to get to Miss Shelby's classroom," August heard the girl say as he got closer. "You go that way until you get to the gym, then turn right and go three doors down, and that's Miss Shelby's room."



August frowned. Those directions weren't right!

As the girl went on her way, August approached the little boy. "Hey, you're new here, aren't you?" The boy looked at him, wide-eyed, and nodded. "That girl gave you wrong directions," said August. "You have to turn left at the gym, not right." The boy's lip began to tremble, and August patted his shoulder. "Look," he said, "I'll take you there. Okay?" The boy smiled and nodded, and soon August had delivered him to his classroom.

When August got home later that day, he told his mom what had happened. "I'm glad you were there to help," said Mom. "By the way, Milo's mom texted me. Milo wants you to go to Bible club with him tomorrow night. I hope you'll go."

"Okay," said August. "But Mom, I wish you'd quit worrying about whether I'm going to heaven." His mom had recently become a Christian, and she often tried to talk to him about trusting in Jesus too. "I'll be there," August said with a smirk. "Uncle Scott says I'm such a good kid that if anybody makes it to heaven, it'll be me!"

"Well, I agree with Uncle Scott that you're a good kid," said Mom. "But he's wrong about the way to heaven. I'm afraid you're like that little boy at school. He was ready to follow directions from someone who didn't really know the way." Mom paused for a moment. "God tells us how we can be saved and have eternal life. His Word—the Bible—says it's not people's goodness that will get them to heaven. You were that boy's way to his class—you took him there. And Jesus is the only way to heaven. We need Him to save us and make us right with God so we can spend eternity with Him."

August was startled. *Maybe Mom's right*, he thought. *I need to make sure I'm going the right way.* ♥ MARY ROSE PEARSON

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### JESUS IS THE WAY TO HEAVEN

**KEY VERSE:** THERE IS A WAY THAT APPEARS TO BE RIGHT, BUT IN THE END IT LEADS TO DEATH. PROVERBS 14:12 (NIV)

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Are you following the right directions to heaven? God's directions are the only ones that can be trusted, and they're found in His book, the Bible. He says Jesus is the way—the only way—to be saved from sin and have eternal life. Don't be fooled into thinking you can get to heaven any other way. Trust in Jesus today.