

BUILDING UP IN Oak Grove

Kristi Dozier

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by Kristi Dozier

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Introduction

Return to the town of Oak Grove for more stories about children learning to love and obey God as they play with friends, spend time with their families, and learn at Oak Grove Christian School. These 35 short devotional stories teach lessons about integrity, contentment, trust, and many other important character traits.

Building Up in Oak Grove is written to be read to early-elementary students. Each story also includes three unique features to help students build godly character.



Way to Build

A specific trait children can learn to live out their faith



Scripture Reading

A Bible verse that highlights the Way to Build



Character Construction

An application to challenge students to build their personal relationship with God

You can read one story each week throughout the school year or according to whatever schedule works best for your classroom. We pray that these stories direct your students to hear and do all that Scripture commands—just like the wise man who built his house upon a rock (Matt. 7:24).

Puppy Plans



Responsibility



Luke 16:10

Luca picked up the furry, brown puppy. “Oh, Dad! Look at this one,” said Luca, holding the puppy carefully. Luca giggled as the puppy licked his face.

“He is very cute,” agreed Mr. Miller.

“And he really seems to like you,” said Mrs. Stephens, the woman who owned the puppies. “My husband and I have been praying that God would provide just the right homes for these puppies, and this puppy looks like he belongs with you.”

“I think so, too!” said Luca. “Can we keep him, Dad? We can take him home today!”

“Not so fast, son,” said Mr. Miller. “He’s very cute, and he may become our pet one day. But we’re not ready to bring him home today.”

“Why not, Dad?”

“Because we’ve got to prepare for him first.”

Luca’s smile turned into a frown. “I don’t understand,” he said.

“Your dad is right,” said Mrs. Stephens. “Having a puppy is a big responsibility. Before you’re ready to take care of a puppy, you’ve got to get all the things he’ll need. Do you have a place for him to sleep and food for him to eat?”

“Well, he can sleep in *my* bed, and I can share *my* food with him.”

“That’s very kind,” said Mr. Miller. “But this puppy will need his own place to sleep and his own special food because dogs and people don’t eat the same food.”

“A puppy needs a crate to sleep in, bowls for his food and water, and a leash so you can take him on walks. Do you have all those things?” asked Mrs. Stephens.

“Well, no,” said Luca. “Not yet.”

Mrs. Stephens continued, “You’ll also need to get him some toys so that he won’t chew up all your things, and he will need a collar and a tag with his name on it—in case he ever gets lost. Do you have those?”

“No,” Luca sighed. “I guess you’re right. We’re not ready to take him home today.”

Luca hugged the puppy to his chest and petted his soft fur one last time. The puppy whimpered and looked up as Luca set him back on the floor with the other puppies.

“Don’t look so sad,” said Mrs. Stephens to Luca. “Once you and your father have prepared for this little guy, he can still come to live with you. I won’t give him to anyone else—I promise.”

“Really?” Luca’s face lit up with excitement.

“If that’s okay with your dad, of course.”

Luca looked at his dad expectantly. “Is it, Dad?”

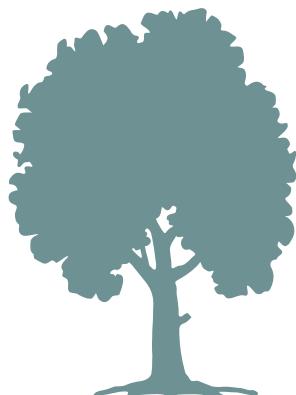
“Yes, you’ve proven yourself to be responsible with Mr. Bubbles.”

“Mr. Bubbles is our fish,” Luca explained to Mrs. Stephens.

“I think you’re ready for the responsibility of a bigger pet, and this puppy is perfect. We just need to have everything ready before we take him home,” Mr. Miller said.

“I can’t wait for Mom and Kinsley to meet him. Can we start getting ready for him today?”

“Yes, I think that’s a good idea. We can stop at the pet store on the way home!”





Character Construction

What responsibilities do you have? God has given us all responsibilities—jobs that He expects us to do with a good attitude. Your responsibilities might seem small, but one day they will build into even bigger responsibilities. The more responsible you are with the small tasks you’re given now, the more you will be trusted with bigger responsibilities in the future.

A Special Place to Live



Orderliness



1 Corinthians 14:33

Zander's room looked like a tornado had touched down. Clothes, shoes, toys, books, and balls were everywhere. Zander was only making the mess worse. He was looking for something—something extremely important.

“What is going on in here?” asked Mrs. Wilson, standing in the doorway of Zander’s bedroom. Zander was so caught up in his search that he didn’t hear his mom, at first.

“Zander! What on earth are you looking for?” asked Mrs. Wilson, a little louder this time.

“My new basketball,” said Zander frantically before he dove under his bed.

Mrs. Wilson watched as items began flying out from under Zander’s bed—first, a dirty sock, then a shoe, then a tennis ball, a toy dinosaur, and a yellow gumball. Pretty soon, Zander had completely disappeared under his bed.

“Where was the last place you saw your basketball?” asked Mrs. Wilson. “Maybe I can help you find it.”

Zander tunneled through all the stuff under his bed and popped his head out on the other side. “That’s just it—I don’t remember,” he said, crawling out and standing up.

“Let’s retrace your steps. When was the last time you used your ball?”

“I was playing outside with Dad a couple days ago. When we finished, I came in my room and kicked off my shoes over there by my dirty clothes. I know I set my ball down somewhere, but I just can’t remember where.”

“Maybe it’s in your closet,” suggested Mrs. Wilson. She walked to the closet and grabbed the door handle.

Zander jumped in front of her. “Wait! Be careful—”

But it was too late. Like Zander warned, his closet was overflowing with clothes, shoes, and toys. A container of toy figures on the top shelf toppled over and crashed onto the floor, barely missing Mrs. Wilson’s head. The toy figures were everywhere.

Mrs. Wilson’s eyes grew wide as she looked in Zander’s closet. It was the messiest closet she had ever seen. The Wilsons had recently adopted Zander into their family. He had only lived with them for a few months. *How can Zander’s room and closet look this messy already?* Mrs. Wilson wondered.

Zander bent down and began tossing things out of the closet. “There it is!” he yelled. “I can see it!” He kept digging. “Almost got it!” After one final tug, Zander held up the basketball and smiled.

“Yay! I’m happy you found your basketball!” said Mrs. Wilson. “I think I have a way to help you so that you’ll never lose that ball—or anything else—again.”

“Really?” asked Zander. “How?”

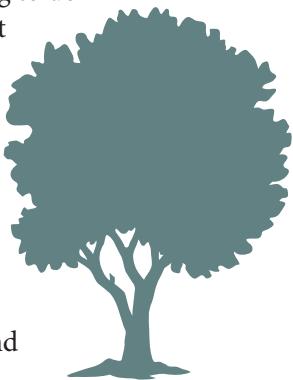
“We’re going to put your room in order,” said Mrs. Wilson.

“In order?” repeated Zander. “You mean clean my room?”

“Yes, we’ll clean it as we go, but we’re going to do more than that. We’re going to make sure that everything in your room has its own special place to live.”

“Its own special place to live?”

“I’ll show you.” Mrs. Wilson scooped up a handful of dirty clothes. “All these dirty clothes can live in the hamper, and all your clean clothes can live in the dresser. You can use this big box for your sports equipment and



this smaller box for all your other toys.” Mrs. Wilson picked up some books off the floor. “These books can live on your bookshelf, and your shoes and nice clothes can live in the closet. See?”

“That does make sense,” said Zander. “If everything has a special place to live, then I’ll always know where everything is.”

“Exactly!” said Mrs. Wilson. “Let’s try it now! We can work on your room together.”

Once all the work was finished, Zander looked around his room with delight. He knew exactly where everything was—including his basketball!

“That’s a neat trick, Mom. Where’d you learn about putting things in order?”

“I learned it from my parents and from God.”

“God?”

“Yes, He’s the expert on orderliness!”

“He is?”

“Of course! Just think about how God put everything in order when He made the world. The birds live in nests in the trees, the fish live in the water, the bugs and worms live in the soil, and the stars live in the sky. He’s made a special place for everything and everyone to live.”

“Even me?”

“Even you,” said Mrs. Wilson, wrapping her arm around Zander’s shoulder. “God has made a special place for you, too—right here with our family.”



Character Construction

Do you keep your room in order? Do all your clothes and toys have a special place to live? Not only does orderliness help us know where things are, but it also helps us reflect our Creator. Orderliness requires a little extra work at first, but it’s worth it in the end.

The Artist



Creativity



Psalm 19:1

After arriving at the lake house, Kylie and Charlie jumped out of the car with their backpacks. “Where should I put my bag, Mrs. Chu?” asked Charlie.

“You can just leave it beside the car. Mr. Chu will take it inside and put it in the room where you girls will be staying.”

Mr. Chu opened the trunk. “Kylie, why don’t you show Charlie around while we unload the car?” he suggested. “We’ll find you when it’s time for dinner.”

Kylie gave Charlie a quick tour of her grandparents’ lake house—the bedroom with the bunk beds, the big room with a fireplace and floor-to-ceiling bookshelves, and the kitchen with the long wooden table surrounded by chairs.

“That’s a lot of chairs,” said Charlie.

“We have a big family,” replied Kylie.

Charlie looked around for a moment. “Something’s missing—where’s the TV?”

“The TV?” laughed Kylie. “We don’t have one at the lake house, silly!”

“Then what do you do all day?”

“Lots of stuff!” said Kylie. “Like this big table—it’s great for playing games and putting puzzles together. And there’s more! Let me show you my favorite part.”

Kylie led Charlie out the back door onto a wooden deck overlooking the lake. The water sparkled, and Charlie could see fish swimming just beneath the surface. Two ducks paddled by. Then something popped its head above the water. “What is that?” asked Charlie, pointing at the edge of the lake.

“It’s a turtle,” giggled Kylie. “There are lots of things living in the lake—and in the trees.”

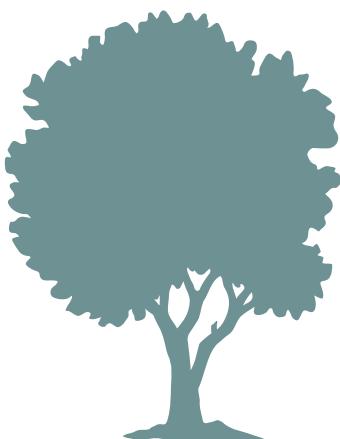
Charlie heard a rustling sound in the trees. When she looked, she saw two squirrels chasing each other and hopping from branch to branch.

The squirrels were fun to watch, but what Charlie noticed was the leaves. “The leaves on these trees are so beautiful. I’ve never seen anything like it!” said Charlie. “The colors are so bright—red and orange and yellow.”

“I know,” said Kylie. “Just wait until you look at them up close! They’re even more beautiful then. Tomorrow morning we’ll collect some that have already fallen off the trees.”

Charlie turned her attention back to the lake. The sky looked like it was on fire as the orange light of the sun reflected off the calm water. Fluffy clouds dotted the pink and orange streaks in the evening sky, and the tree-covered mountains rose high in the distance.

“Wow,” said Charlie. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen a sunset this beautiful. Do you have any colored pencils here? I would love to try to draw this pretty sunset. I’m a pretty good artist.”



“Yes! We have colored pencils and crayons and markers. We might even have some leftover paint from last summer,” Kylie answered. “And if you think the sunset is beautiful, then just wait until you see the sunrise! It’s even better!”

“It is?”

“Yes! And it’s different every single day!”

“Really?” asked Charlie.

“Of course! Mom says that God is an artist—He just paints on the sky instead of paper. She says that He is so creative that He never makes a sunset or sunrise the same way twice. Isn’t that amazing?”

“It really is!” Charlie stared at the sky. “Now I feel kind of silly that I bragged about being a good artist,” she said. “God draws and paints much better than I do.”

“That’s probably true, but you still take after Him.”

“What do you mean?” asked Charlie.

“I mean, you’re creative because He’s creative,” Kylie said.

Charlie smiled. “I’ve never thought about it that way!”



Character Construction

Do you like to draw, paint, or make things? Did you know that every time you use your imagination to create something, you reflect God? He’s the Creator of all things! Only God could imagine shining stars, sparkling oceans, delicate snowflakes, and smelly skunks. And only He could speak it all into existence with His powerful words. What a wonderful and creative God we serve—praise Him today!

Best Day Ever



Faith



Ephesians 1:5

Ava and Zander dashed to the entrance of the Oak Grove Carnival. Going to the carnival every year was a tradition for the Wilsons. But this was Zander's first carnival.

Zander was amazed by the colorful lights, the yummy smells, and the giant Ferris wheel. Then his eyes were drawn to the games.

"Step right up!" said a man spinning a basketball on his finger. "Who wants to play?"

Zander and Ava raced to see who could make the most baskets in a minute. They were neck and neck until the final second when Zander beat his big sister by 1 point!

"This carnival is so much fun!" Zander said.

"We haven't even ridden any rides yet," said Mr. Wilson.

"We get to ride some of the rides?" asked Zander.

"Of course!" answered Mrs. Wilson. "Which one do you want to ride first?"

Zander looked around at all the different rides. There were swings, a helicopter ride, a tower drop, and a roller coaster.

"That's the one I want to ride first!" he said, pointing to a swinging black and gold pirate ship.

"Good choice!" Mrs. Wilson said, grabbing Zander's hand.

Mr. Wilson gave the carnival worker 4 tickets for the pirate ride. They all buckled in. Then the pirate ship rocked back and forth—swinging higher and higher every time.

“This is amazing!” Zander screamed with his arms in the air while the pirate ship was up high.

After the pirate ride, the Wilsons stopped by a booth to order a funnel cake. Ava broke off a piece of funnel cake and gave it to Zander. Zander’s eyes lit up. It was warm and soft and sweet all at the same time!

The Wilsons rode more rides and played more games. Ava and Zander even won prizes at some of the games.

As the sun was setting, the family rode the Ferris wheel together. The Ferris wheel was always the last thing that they rode before going home.

“Wow! We’re so high! I think I can see our car in the parking lot,” Zander said.

“I think I can see it too!” Ava said.

When the Wilsons got home, Zander flopped down on the couch. “Today was the best day ever!” he said. “Thank you for taking me to the carnival, Mom and Dad.”

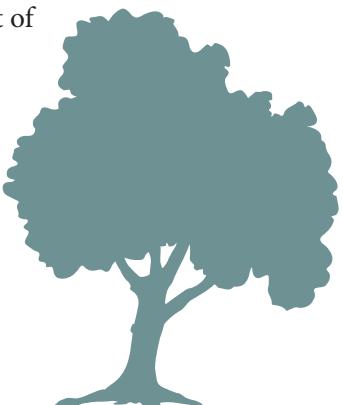
Mr. Wilson sat in his favorite brown leather chair and pulled out his thick black Bible for family devotions. He said, “Tonight we’re going to read a passage from the first chapter of Ephesians.” Mr. Wilson read the first five verses and stopped. “Ava, can you tell us what these verses are about?”

Ava thought about the verses her father read. “They’re about how God wants us to be part of His family,” she said.

“That’s right,” said Mr. Wilson. “These verses are about adoption.”

“I get it—like Zander is adopted!”

“Actually, these verses aren’t just about Zander being adopted—they’re about *all* of us being adopted.”



Ava looked puzzled. “What are you talking about, Dad? I’m not adopted.”

“Yes, you are,” explained Mrs. Wilson sweetly. “I’ve been adopted too.”

“How can we all be adopted?” asked Zander, raising one eyebrow.

“Because God has adopted us into His family,” explained Mr. Wilson. “When God saves us, He makes us His own sons and daughters.”

“So, I’m adopted?” asked Ava.

“Yep,” Mrs. Wilson answered.

“And I’ve been adopted twice?” asked Zander.

“That’s right,” said Mr. Wilson. “When you asked God to forgive your sins the other night, He made you part of His family. So, not only are you part of the Wilson family, but you’re part of God’s family!”

Zander smiled. “This really is the best day ever!”



Character Construction

Have you been adopted as a child of God? Not only is it wonderful to be part of an earthly family, but we should also celebrate being part of God’s family. He wants every boy and girl to be His son or daughter, and He’s made a way for us all to be adopted into His family through His Son, Jesus.