

Annie's Sand Castle

"Everything keeps changing," Annie says, as she lays on the warm sand looking up at the sky. "I see an angel with puffy grey wings, and now it's turning into a big polar bear."

She chuckles out loud and rolls over on her tummy to play in the sand. It's then she notices that her sand castle is changing, too.

"Our sand castle is washing away, hurry mom! Help me build a wall to stop the waves!"

"I'm afraid it's too late, the waves have already done so much damage, Annie," mom says.

Annie begins to pad the castle with handfuls of wet sand, but it doesn't help. The tide is coming in and the castle keeps crumbling no matter how hard she tries.

"Mom, it was the coolest castle I've ever made," Annie whispers.

"Well, Annie, just as the clouds change, so does the ocean. It's God's plan, and we see how He can change our plans. Maybe you should build your next castle in a safer place, like up on that dune," mom says.

Annie watches the waves wash over the sand castle until it's all gone. Mom collects sea shells. The hot afternoon sun heats everything it touches and the water looks inviting. Annie steps into the waves and walks away from the shore. She feels a gust of wind, as a bigger wave picks her up and she falls into deeper water.

"Help, help!" she shouts, as she comes to the surface.

Annie remembers that mom had warned her to stay near the shore because the waves can suddenly be strong. "And you're still little, Annie," she had said. Now mom is busy putting white, shiny seashells into her beach bag.

"Mom, mom, help!"

Mom hurries to the water. She sees Annie's brown curly head and runs through the waves to grab her and pull her to shore.

Resting on the sand, Annie lets the sun warm her as mom strokes her back. "It's okay, Annie, you're safe. I'm with you."

"I was scared, mom, I didn't know if you could hear me. The waves came under me and took me. I'm so glad you saved me! I'm happy God helped us, too," Annie said. "Sorry I didn't listen to you, mom, and went too far. Can you forgive me?"

Annie's mother held her tight and forgave her.

"Next time, I'll build my sand castle farther from the water so it won't be washed away, and I won't be washed away either," Annie says.

"Good idea, Annie, the only thing that we want washed away are our sins. God will drown them there, never to be remembered," mom says.

Peg Glynn

God's Congregation—Our Loving Mother

A loving mother, like Annie's mother in this story, is one of God's greatest blessings. Mothers love us, teach us right from wrong, and try to keep us safe. Mothers encourage us to do the best we can with the gifts God has given us. Even when we do something wrong or disappoint our mother, she still loves us. Believing mothers forgive our sins.

God's kingdom is made up of people like you and me. Of our own, we are sinful. But, when we have our sins forgiven and believe the gospel, we are then part of God's holy congregation. This congregation of believers, God's kingdom, is sometimes called our "mother congregation." Just as mothers love us, teach us, and want to keep us safe, the mother congregation also keeps us safe when we listen to and obey her voice. We want to always hear this voice of the Holy Spirit in the congregation that speaks to us.

God's Word says, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). God is unchanging. The congregation mother, too, is unchanging. As people, we can lose the gift of living faith, but God's Spirit in His congregation is always the same. When we put sin away, we will be carried in the loving arms of God's congregation and will one day get to heaven.

Lori Loukusa

Things to Visit About:

1. What things does your mother teach you?
2. What is the most important teaching from a believing mother?
3. Why do we want to listen to and obey the voice that speaks in God's congregation?
4. What could happen if we don't?