



SANDCASTLES & CLEAN HEARTS

“This is going to be my biggest and best castle ever!” Justin said. He patted the wall of the castle and checked to make sure there were no cracks. Then Justin stood and stepped carefully around the castle moat to the corner of the sandbox.

He scooped shovelfuls of sand into his bucket. When it was full, Justin lifted the heaping bucket and turned back toward the castle. “This will be my giant tower. I’ll put it right theeere!”

But Justin forgot about the dump truck he had buried in the sand. When he stepped on the wheel of the truck, his foot slipped, and down he went. He tried to hold the bucket up to keep the sand from spilling. But it did spill—all over Justin. Sand flew everywhere as Justin shook his head and climbed to his feet.

He spun around to check on his sandcastle. “Whew! It’s safe!”

Justin worked on his castle all afternoon. His mom came out to check on him just as he placed a leaf on top of the tallest tower.

“Woo-hoo! Look at my super-duper sandcastle! Isn’t it great?” Justin exclaimed.

“It’s wonderful, Justin,” Mom replied. “It has so many towers!”

“It’s a castle for our family. This is your tower with the flower. Dad’s tower has rocks. This one with the stick is mine, and that one with the leaf is Ellie’s!”

“I would love to live there, but it’s time to go inside now. You need a bath!”

“Aww! Really?” Justin stood up, and sand fell from his lap like a waterfall.

Mom laughed. “Oh, yes! You definitely need a bath.”

“But I’m not that dirty. See? The sand wipes off.” Justin slapped his arms and legs, trying to clean the sand off.

“Nice try. But there’s sand even in your hair.” Mom patted his head and watched the sand fly. “A bath is the only way to get you clean.”

A little later, Justin climbed into the tub and sank into the warm water with a sigh.

He placed his toys along the edge of the tub, lining up the colorful boats and fish. Justin swished his hand back and forth in the water. “Tidal wave!” he shouted as a gush of water washed over the toys.

Soon Mom came in. “Time to wash your . . . Justin! Why is there so much water on the floor?”



Justin sank down into the tub. “There was a tidal wave,” he murmured.

“There sure was!” agreed Mom. She scrubbed Justin’s hair with lots of shampoo and rinsed it squeaky clean.

“Hey! I can feel sand under my feet,” Justin said as he stepped out of the bathtub.

Mom wrapped Justin in his favorite shark towel and pulled the plug in the tub.

While Mom sopped up the puddles on the floor with another towel, Justin watched the water spin round and round as it flowed down the drain.

“Hey! Look at the water! It was so clean when I got in. Now it’s gray and dirty!”

“Just think, that gray and dirt was on you,” Mom said.

“I didn’t know I was *that* dirty.” Justin made a face. “Ick!”

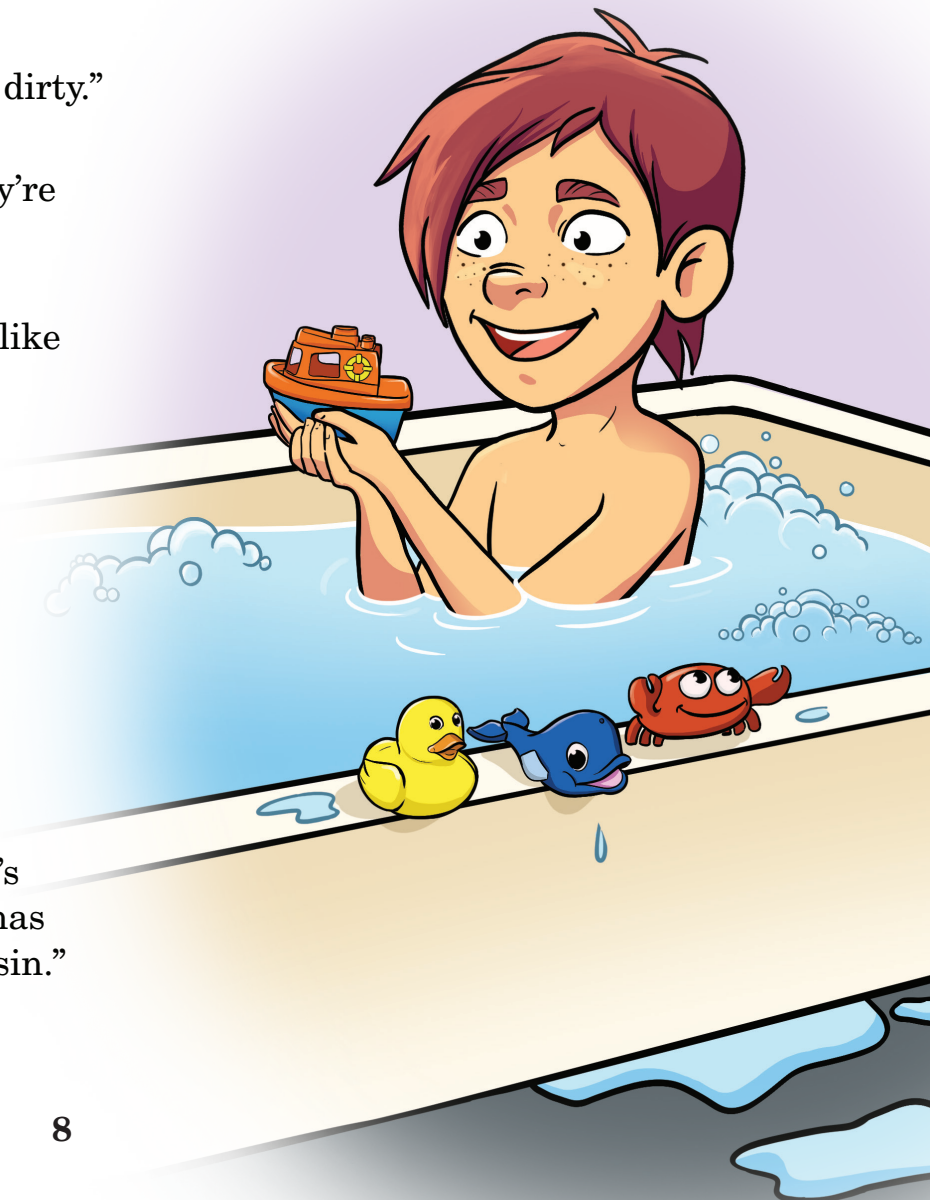
“A lot of people think they’re pretty clean when they’re not really.”

“They’re dirty with sand like me?” Justin asked.

“No, I’m talking about being clean on the inside.”

“Huh?” Justin gave Mom a confused look.

Mom explained, “Inside every person, there is a part that helps us decide what we love, what we hate, and how we choose to act. We call it the heart. And the Bible, God’s Word, tells us that everyone has a sinful heart. It’s dirty with sin.”



“So everyone needs a bath?” Justin asked.

“No, we all need God’s Word to tell us how to have a clean heart,” Mom replied. “The Bible can change us because it tells us about Jesus.”

“We read about Jesus from the Bible,” Justin said.

“Right,” said Mom. “The Bible says when we tell God we’re sorry for our sins and trust in Jesus, he promises to clean our hearts.”

“Jesus makes us clean on the inside?”

Mom nodded. “Yes. Baths clean us on the outside. But Jesus is the only one who can give us a clean heart by forgiving our sins.”

Justin looked at his clean hands. “I want to have a clean heart.”

Mom smiled. “I’m very glad to hear that, Justin.”

“Will you read to me about Jesus?”

“Of course! Let’s go find your Bible.”

LET’S TALK ABOUT IT!

1. Do you remember a time when you were really dirty and needed a bath?
2. What important truth does God’s Word, the Bible, tell us about our hearts?
They are sinful, dirty with sin.
3. God’s Word can change us because it tells us about whom? (See *John 3:16*.)
Jesus, God’s Son.

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