



The Brave Road Home



When Eli moved to a new town, everything felt like a puzzle with missing pieces. The school hallways were longer, the cafeteria was louder, and the kids already had inside jokes that made Eli feel like he was watching life through a window.

On the first Sunday, Grandma invited him for a walk. Winter wind brushed their cheeks as they followed a path behind the church that led to a small field of dry grass. “This place reminds me of the desert,” Grandma said. “Not because it’s hot, but because it can feel empty.”

Eli kicked a pebble. “I feel empty,” he admitted.

Grandma reached into her coat pocket and placed a gray stone in his palm. Carved into it was a tiny cross. “This is your *prayer-stone*,” she said. “When you feel pulled to do something you know isn’t right, or when you feel alone, hold it and pray. Short prayers are strong prayers.”

Monday came with new challenges. At his desk, Eli realized he didn’t understand a math page. The boy beside him had the answers written down. A thought popped into Eli’s mind like a spark: *Just copy. No one will know.* Eli’s fingers tightened around the stone in his pocket. He whispered, “Jesus, help me choose what’s true.” The spark

faded. Eli raised his hand instead.

At recess, another challenge arrived. A group of kids laughed at a smaller boy who dropped his lunchbox. Eli wanted to laugh too, laughing felt like a ticket into the group. The prayer-stone pressed against his palm. “Jesus, make me brave,” he prayed. Then he walked over, helped pick up the lunchbox, and said, “It happens. Want to play later?”

The kids stared. But the smaller boy smiled, and that smile felt better than fitting in.

That night, Eli told Grandma about the sparks, those quick temptations, and how prayer helped him step away. Grandma nodded. “In the Gospel, Jesus went into the desert and faced temptations too,” she said. “Prayer didn’t erase the hard moments. It gave Him strength to stand firm.”

Eli looked at his stone. “So, prayer is like...a handrail?” he asked.

“Exactly,” Grandma said. “A handrail you can hold when life feels unsteady.” The next day, Eli still felt new. But he didn’t feel alone. In his pocket, the prayer-stone rested like a promise, and in his heart, a prayer was already forming: “Jesus, stay with me on the road home.”

Growing in Prayer with Jesus Series; Inspired by Matthew 4:1-11 — Jesus in the Desert.



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