

GABRIEL'S QUEST

Heights

Lesson Link: God had mercy on Noah and his family and saved them from the Flood. God will take care of us just as He took care of Noah.

"You're afraid of heights?" Gabriel's friend Sean asked at recess one day. The two boys were standing near the big oak tree in the playground.

Gabriel blushed. "Heights make me feel dizzy. I'm afraid I will fall," he said.

"So you can't climb that tree?" Sean asked.

"I could climb on the bottom branch," Gabriel said. Just then a gust of wind blew yellow leaves around his feet. The sky turned a dark gray.

Two boys were kicking a soccer ball nearby. Sean called out to them. "Hey, Max! Hey, Philip! Gabriel is afraid of heights."

Gabriel groaned.

The two boys came closer. "Really?" Philip asked. "What if you stood on the edge of the school roof?"

Gabriel looked at the roof. "I'd get dizzy."

"My mother used to be afraid of caterpillars," said Max. "Then she put one in her hand. Now she's not afraid of them anymore."

Sean said, "You have to fight your fear, Gabriel. That's the only way to get over it."

Gabriel wished they would talk about something else.

"See how high you can climb that tree," said Max.

"We're not allowed," Gabriel said.



"Go on. Start with the lower branch. No one is watching," Sean said. "You have to get over your fear. You don't want to be teased about it, do you?"

"I won't get teased if you stop talking about it," Gabriel snapped.

"Go on! Climb the tree!" Max said.

"Don't be a such a baby," Sean added.

Gabriel didn't like being called names. He didn't like being teased. He went to the big tree. Reaching up, he climbed onto the lowest branch.

"Go higher," Philip said.

Gabriel looked up. The next branch wasn't far. He pulled himself up.

"Are you scared?" asked Max.

"No," Gabriel said.

"Then you have to climb until you are," Max said. "You won't be cured if you don't."

Gabriel climbed from one branch to another. He didn't look down. Then a blast of wind shook the tree. Gabriel looked down and tightened his arms around the bark. He was afraid.

"Wow, that's high," Sean called out.

The school bell rang. Gabriel heard a teacher shout from somewhere, "A storm is coming. Everybody inside!" A whistle blew.

"Come down!" Sean yelled.

"I can't!" Gabriel cried out. He looked down. Sean was so far away! The wind shook the tree again. Gabriel clung to the branch.

Drops of rain flicked at the branches and leaves around him. The three boys below said something Gabriel couldn't hear. Then they ran away.

Gabriel watched the playground empty of his classmates. The rain fell harder. "Help!" he shouted.

The wind and rain were too loud. Gabriel shivered. Then he put his head against the trunk of the tree and began to cry.

Suddenly, the tree gave a jolt. "I'm coming," came a voice from below. It was Mr. Norm, the school handyman. He had put a ladder against the base of the tree. He climbed the ladder as far as he could. Then he climbed a few branches. When he was close to Gabriel, he reached out and said, "Grab my hand."

"I'm scared," Gabriel cried.

"I won't let you fall," Mr. Norm said. "Take my hand."

Gabriel freed one hand. Then he stretched away from the branch. His heart pounded hard.

Mr. Norm took hold of Gabriel's wrist. "Push toward me," he said.

Gabriel closed his eyes and leaned out farther. Mr. Norm's hand inched up to clasp Gabriel's forearm.

"Keep coming," Mr. Norm said.

Gabriel released his other hand from the branch. *Please, God, don't let me fall*, Gabriel prayed.

Mr. Norm's hand came under Gabriel's arm and around his chest. "I've got you," Mr. Norm said. He pulled Gabriel completely off the branch and carried him like a doll to the ground. The rain fell hard on them as they ran to the school.

Sister Mary stood at the door. She thanked Mr. Norm, then asked Gabriel, "Are you all right?"

Gabriel burst into tears. "I was afraid," he said.

"I want you to remember that feeling," Sister Mary said. "You did the wrong thing, Gabriel. But Mr. Norm saved you. Do you know what that's called?" she asked.

Gabriel shook his head.

She put an arm around his shoulder. "Mercy," she said.

Questions:

1. **What should you do or say if someone tries to make you do something you don't want to do?** (Answers may include tell him to stop, tell an adult, and suggest a different activity that you both want to do.)
2. **Can you share a time when you made a bad choice and someone rescued you?** (Answers may vary.)
3. **Gabriel had to trust Mr. Norm to let go of the tree. Have you ever had to trust someone that way?** (Answers may vary.)