



Following the Right Leader

Chrisia Marie Bolinas



On a bright Monday morning, the excited fifth graders of Statefields School gathered for their annual camping adventure. Mrs. Encomienda divided the class into small groups, giving each group a clear mission to stay together and follow their chosen leader along the marked trail to the picnic area.



Matty's group eagerly chose Aiden as their leader because he was energetic, popular, and full of confidence. With a bold grin, Aiden declared that he knew a secret shortcut through the woods that would get them to the picnic spot faster than anyone else.



Excited by the mystery, the children giggled and leaped through tall summer grass and hidden overgrown pathways. The trek felt like a fun game at first, far away from the rules and dusty main trail.



Before long, the thick forest trees closed in around them, and the distant chatter of their fellow classmates faded into complete silence. Feeling tired, thirsty, and disoriented, the group looked around and realized with rising worry that they were thoroughly lost.



Aiden's confident smile melted away as he sheepishly admitted he had only been guessing the way. Just as panic began to set in, Mrs. Encomienda's gentle voice called out through the trees, stepping off the marked trail to bring them back to safety.



Reunited with their teacher, the small group walked safely alongside the clearly painted signposts. They soon arrived at the sunny picnic area, where their happy classmates were already sitting together and enjoying lunch.



As the children sat down to rest, Aiden quietly admitted that they had followed the wrong leader. Mrs. Encomienda smiled gently and gathered the class together, using their scary detour to share a meaningful lesson about life and choices.



Pointing toward a beautiful image of Jesus on the nearby chapel wall, Mrs. Encomienda explained that Jesus is like a Good Shepherd who never leads anyone astray. She reminded them that while popular choices or shortcuts might seem fun, Jesus's way always leads to truth, forgiveness, and safety.



Aiden listened thoughtfully, realizing that true guidance requires wisdom and truth rather than just confidence. He decided that whenever he faced tough decisions in the future, he would pause and ask himself what Jesus would want him to do.



In the days that followed, Aiden put his new understanding into practice by standing up for others and telling the truth. By learning to follow the ultimate leader, he grew into a gentler friend, a responsible classmate, and a much happier boy.