

# Rhode Island: A girl who never heard of God or the Bible

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Growing up in the South, it seemed as if everyone had heard of God and Christianity. That was just the way life was. Even if someone didn't believe, they were well aware of the faith. I had never met someone who had never heard of God. No matter where I had served on mission trips, the people I shared the gospel with knew something about God and the Bible. That all changed on July 13.



Madysen Neathery I am currently serving in Connecticut and Rhode Island with church plants and other organizations through Go Now Missions. This summer has been full of soup kitchens and youth clubs where adults and children shared with me what they knew about God. They all had some kind of understanding of who God is and what the Bible says.

I assumed when we got to Providence, it would be the same: Hang out with kids and share with them the depths of God's love for them. The day had been going well. We were working in a local park and doing various activities with the kids. I had been hanging around the watercolor painting table because I was seeing a trend of little girls painting rainbows. I thought to myself, "What a great opportunity to share with them the true meaning behind a rainbow and not what society has corrupted it to be."

## **Noah and the ark**

I told three girls about Noah and the Ark. They loved the story and were blown away that the rainbow was a promise from God. That's when I saw Leslie, an 8-year-old girl, who was painting a very colorful rainbow. I squared down beside her and asked if she knew the story behind the rainbow. She looked up to me with huge brown eyes and shook her head.

"A long time ago, there was a man named Noah," I said. "He's in the Bible. Do you know what the Bible is?"

She shook her head.

"Oh. Well, the Bible is a way that God can talk to us."

She stared at me blankly

"Do you know who God is?"

She shook her head.

My heart immediately stopped. She had never even heard of God. So I asked, "Do you ever go to church?" She scrunched her face and shook her head, letting me know she didn't have a high opinion of church.

I was speechless. I had always thought of what I would do in a situation like this, but in the moment, I froze. What do you say to an 8-year-old who has never heard of God?

## **God is the Creator**

She was still looking up at me, so I knew I still had her attention. I began to explain to her that God is the Creator of everything she sees and the whole world, even her. I told her God loves her so much, more than anyone else she knows, and that he even knows how many hairs she has in her head.

She was giving me a strange look, so I asked her, “Is that scary?”

She smiled and shook her head. She wanted to know more so I told her about Jesus and how God sent him so we can spend forever in heaven with him—another foreign concept to her.

Leslie captured my heart, and I captured hers through the spirit of God. I spent the rest of our afternoon in the park playing with her, getting our nails painted, and reading a few good books. I wanted so badly to give her a Bible, but I did not have one age-appropriate for her. I did give her a salvation tract for kids that she let me read to her. She clung to that tract the rest of the day.

Leslie taught me an important lesson. She taught me about God’s calling. I was just a stranger in the park bothering her while she painted, but he used me to minister to her.

It’s people like Leslie that make this all worth it. I’m not totally sure what impact I made on her, but I do know that now she knows of God and his love for her. My prayer is that God allows all of us missionaries to have at least one Leslie.

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