

2024

Grade 5

I felt like God was with me when Willow came into our family, in her little car seat, crying her eyes out. Willow was my little foster sister who was 14 months old when we got her. She did not have a very good home life before she came to us. She felt unsafe and scared of what was happening to her.

Willow has made our life more exciting. I like to play around with her. We play basketball together a lot. We really like to swing in her little hammock. She likes to play in the treehouse and go down the slide.

After having Willow for many months, we decided to adopt her. It was awesome going to the courthouse. We each got a turn banging the gavel to make it official. At her adoption party we had so much fun. We messed around with the bean bags from the corn hole boards. She took lots of pictures with all the people there.

Now Willow is officially a (last name). When Willow became a part of our family it was amazing. This is why I felt that God was with me. He let this little baby that needed a family come into ours and we love her so much.

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### **Closer to God**

On August 8, 2023, multiple fires broke out in Maui, causing many casualties and the majority of Lahaina to burn down. Ever since that day, I have felt closer to God. Even before, during, and after I have felt God's presence.

It was a very windy cold morning with no electricity since 3 AM. My mom had to go to work early in the morning. My brothers and I have to stay home with mama and papa. My mom finished early just so she can go get us some warm food from Kahului. My brothers and I smelt smoke while we were playing games, so we went to wake up our grandparents to close the windows because it smells like something is burning. My grandpa and I went downstairs to check what was going on. We saw a big smoke coming from the bypass making its way to our apartment.

We rushingly grabbed whatever was close to our hands not knowing that would be our last time in a place we call home. Me and my brothers were so scared of what was going to happen to us. We were making our way down to the truck. It was so windy that my grandpa had to hold on to my great-uncle. We took the dirt road not knowing where we were going, so we called our aunty if we could come stay at her hotel. After, we called my mom letting her know not to come to Lahaina which was the end of our communication. In the middle of the day the sun was not shining because Lahaina was covered by smoke. We were waiting on the dirt road for almost an hour. There were a lot of people that were waiting but got tired and made a U-turn. But papa had so much courage to stay on the blocked road and that we would make it. My boxing teacher cut the chains with a bolt because he owns the land and so people could get through. Afterwards, we made it to the hotel.

The whole world was dark with no electricity, no phones working, and everybody ran out of gas. Everybody had limited water, food, supplies, and the police stopped people from going in and out. People were sleeping in the park and the roadside. In two days, it would have been my brother's birthday and still no communication with my mom. Not knowing if she is okay breaks my heart. My brothers, grandparents, and I prayed everyday for my mom and aunty to come back. All my brother wanted for his birthday was for my mom and aunty to come. He even asked God and that was all he ever wanted. We cried so much wondering if my mom and aunty were okay. On August 10, 2023, we had a cheesecake to celebrate my brother's birthday. We finally got word from my uncle that my mom was okay. In my heart I felt so heartbroken. The police wouldn't let anybody in Kahului come to Lahaina. So, my mom had courage to take the Kahekili Highway known as a narrow road. My mom and aunty made it to our hotel room at 9 PM. When our aunty let us know they had made it and were downstairs we cried with happy tears. We hugged them so much and there was so much food, water, gadgets, and clothes for us. I had no more fear because my mom was here with me. I felt so happy inside. We quickly prayed to God thanking him for letting my mom be with us. My brother's birthday wish came true from the fire. I learned all the material stuff was not important. What we needed the most was love, family, friends, and God. He answered our prayers and he united us together.