



BEYOND THE DARK

CHILDREN + YOUTH RESOURCE

2021 ANNUAL DAY OF PRAYER FOR VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

THEME

Beyond the Dark

Everyone has a story. Sometimes our stories are full of sunshine and rainbows, sometimes our stories have pain or sadness, and sometimes we have stories that are mixtures of all these things. No matter what your story is, where you've come from, or what has happened in your life, we serve a creator who knows us and wants us to live a life full of light and comfort that comes from him. Then, as we walk with Jesus, we get to share those great things with people in our lives who might be hurting too. We get to be someone who has been helped, and someone who gets to be the helper. What a cool place to be in!

SCRIPTURES

- 1 Peter 2:9-10 (*The Message*): 'But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God's instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you – from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted.'

- 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 (*The Message*): 'All praise to the God and Father of our Master, Jesus the Messiah! Father of all mercy! God of all healing counsel! He comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, he brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us. We have plenty of hard times that come from following the Messiah, but no more so than the good times of his healing comfort – we get a full measure of that, too.'

STRUCTURE

We start with a story-style devotion and then have space for activities to work through what that devotion looks like in real life. Reading the Bible is great; living the Bible is even better.

LIFE STORY DEVOTION

Some of us have had stories that seem like they have an unfair share of sad parts. Some of our families haven't always been kind to us, and some people who were supposed to take care of us fell short on their end of the deal. That is part of living in a world where every person has a chance to choose how they will live and how they will treat others.

Some people choose to put themselves first, no matter what. When that is a person's choice, they often hurt other people in the process. Those that are hurt might not know what to do in the hurt. The hurt might even become their name tag, something that they think they earned, or is a punishment. But we know that our world has bits of brokenness all around it. Bits of brokenness that affect us all.

Sometimes we think that our sadness, hurt or bits of brokenness are worse than other peoples', but in reality they just seem like this because we know ours better than anyone else's.

But there is great news! No matter what our bits of brokenness might be, God's Word says that he comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it he brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person, just as God was for us. We have plenty of hard times... but we don't ONLY have hard times, we get the good times of God's healing comfort – we get heaps of that too.

As we are the Body of Christ, we get to do this together. Our hard times don't have to be something we keep secret. We can go to adults we trust, or even our friends from church, to share the things of life that make us feel sad or afraid. When we don't keep the broken things a secret, a new thing comes in – FREEDOM!

With Jesus there is freedom. With the Body of Christ at church and with people who love Jesus there is support and help. We get to dance in that freedom and then, before we know it, we are the ones helping others from darkness to light, from broken bits to beautiful love, from rejected to accepted, from hurting to whole.

Even life walked hand in hand with Jesus still has bumps in the road. We will still have hard times, but we will never be alone again. As we navigate the tough stuff, we will have the Creator of the universe in our corner, along with others who love Jesus. There will be a 'night-and-day' difference. The darkness won't have any hold on us as we dance in the light of Jesus. >>



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WONDERING QUESTIONS

The following questions create space for kids to articulate what this devotion looks like in their lives:

- When did you or a friend feel like you were in a dark place in your life?
- What do you think are good things to do to climb out of a sad situation?
- Who are the people in your life who can help you when your feelings or body get hurt?
- In what ways could you be a helper to someone who is hurting or sad?
- What does freedom in Jesus look like?

ACTIVITIES

Here are some different activities to help integrate the truth of this devotion into the lives of children. Although there are lots of activities, don't feel that each child has to do all of them. Some would be a better fit than others, so let each child and their needs or learning style be the guide.

- 1) Write a fictional story about a person standing up for another person. Bonus points for describing how the one who needs standing up for might be stuck in the darkness and in need of the light.
- 2) Sometimes we feel stuck in sadness because of lies we have heard about ourselves. Make a list of these lies, then a list of why they aren't true, and then a third list of true things that can replace the lies. Then keep the truth in your mind and kick out the lies.
- 3) We can't ignore the things that have hurt us. We have to face the past and the bad things that have happened to us. It is okay to admit they are real and that they hurt. Today, pick something that was sad or full of broken bits. You can write it as a story using words or you can draw it as a picture. You don't have to share it with anyone if you don't want to. Once you've done this, rip it up into the smallest pieces you can then, on another piece of paper, draw a heart. Take the ripped-up pieces and glue or tape them into the heart shape. When you do this, remember that God can always take the broken bits and transform them into something beautiful.

- 4) Draw a picture of something beautiful coming out of something not so beautiful; some examples are a butterfly landing on a skull, a flower growing out of a crack in the pavement, or tears watering a tree. When you draw these things, think about how God makes beautiful things out of tough situations.
- 5) Use clay or play dough to make something that reminds you of being free in Jesus.
- 6) Find a song you love, turn it up loud, and dance – don't worry about how others are dancing or what they might think about your dance, just be free.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Questions to ask to reflect on this experience:

- What was your favorite part of the day?
- How do you think this could make a difference in your tomorrows?
- In what ways might you be a helper to others?
- What makes you feel free?
- What can we do to support each other as we move forward?

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