

2

See Hope

JOHN 1:1-14



GOAL

By exploring imagery of Jesus Christ as *light*, children are introduced to the abstract practice of *seeing* hope and can begin to recognize the gifts of hope that God gives us in our daily lives.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- C** Conversation
- D** Drama
- F** Food
- G** Game
- M** Music
- NS** Nature/Science
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

Holy God, thank you for the gift of hope you have given us through Jesus Christ. Open our eyes to all the ways we can see hope around us, especially through the children I will guide this day. Amen.

THIS SESSION

This session focuses on the imagery of God's hope and faithfulness through light and through Jesus Christ, God-incarnate. God doesn't just offer us hope through God's promises. God gave us the gift of God-with-us, hope brought to human life and to earth through the life of Jesus Christ.

THE BIBLE STORY

The introduction to the Gospel of John is an ethereal explanation of the nature of Jesus Christ. It certainly doesn't mirror the familiar Christmas stories in Luke and Matthew. Instead, it positions Christ's placement with God from the very beginning, and then this Word became flesh to dwell among humankind. From this Word came light that is life-giving and drowns out all darkness. The Word-made-flesh, Jesus Christ, is our hope come to earth.

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

The idea of *seeing* hope is a challenge for children, as they developmentally shift from concrete thinking to more abstract understanding. Therefore, this session focuses on the easily recognizable physical aspects of light before jumping to the light imagery used to describe Christ in the world. Through this comparison, the children will begin to notice the hope God provides all around them.

SESSION PREPARATION

- Obtain one battery-operated tealight candle for each child to be used throughout the session.
- "Starting in Darkness" (p. 18): Prepare a seating area on the floor with blankets and pillows. Darken the room before children arrive. Have battery-operated tealight candles available to give to any children who would be more comfortable in the dark before the lights are turned on.
- "Hope Is the Rope" (p. 18): Use rope from session 1, long enough that everyone in the group can hold onto it. Save for sessions 3–4.
- "Light and Darkness" (p. 19): Write each of the following words on index cards: *beginning, Word, God, life, light, shines, darkness, flesh, and among us*. Place the index cards around the room and/or tape them to the walls.



GETTING STARTED

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- Blankets
 - Floor pillows
 - Battery-operated tealight candles

STARTING IN DARKNESS

C

Turn off the lights and darken the space.

Greet the children at the door and welcome them to the darkened space. Ask them to find a seat in your prepared circle of blankets and pillows. If some children are hesitant entering the darkened room, give them a battery-operated tealight candle to turn on and hold.

When everyone has arrived, notice how the children acted while they waited in the dark. Did they speak in hushed tones or did they fill up the space with noise? Did they keep to themselves or interact with others?

Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- ✿ How did it feel to be in the dark? Were you excited or nervous?
- ✿ What can you do in darkness?
- ✿ What can you not do?
- ✿ What was it like if the power went out in your home at night? What did you do until the lights came back on?

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- Battery-operated tealight candles
 - Rope

HOPE IS THE ROPE

Keeping the lights off, light one candle (or enough candles to see). Gather the children together and invite everyone to hold onto the rope. Wonder together about the different ways rope can be used to help people.

Lead the litany below and invite the children to respond with the lines in bold. You could cue the children to say “hope is the rope” whenever you hold out a hand.

When we feel lost,
hope is the rope
helping us find our way home.

When things are beyond our control,
hope is the rope
keeping us secure.

In the darkness of the night,
hope is the rope
giving us something to hold on to.

When we feel alone,
hope is the rope,
with strands that bind us together,
helping us comfort and strengthen one another.
Thank God for the gift of hope.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

AM

If the children are comfortable with the darkness, turn off all but one candle; otherwise, give each child a battery-operated tealight candle to hold. If their candles are on, have them put them in their laps so the light is mostly hidden. Ask the children to stay seated, look around, and notice what they can see. Tell them that you have hidden some important words for today's session around the room on index cards. Invite one child to use a candle to find and bring back an index card, keeping the candle uncovered. Then two children together, then three, and so on. Repeat this until all index cards are collected. Notice how much more they can see with additional candles. Wonder together about the difference adding candles made.

Have the children read the words, in no particular order, and ask if they sound familiar and what they might be about. Tell the children that they will hear these words in today's Bible story.

- Battery-operated tealight candles
- Index cards with the words: *beginning, Word, God, life, light, shines, darkness, flesh, and among us*



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

REFLECTING AND CONNECTING

C

Set the scene for today's Bible story. Tell the children that the passage is from the beginning of the Gospel of John, one of the books that tells the story of Jesus' life. Explain that John's Gospel does not have a story about Jesus being born like in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Read, or invite a volunteer to read, John 1:1–14 aloud to the group. Discuss any unfamiliar vocabulary or phrases.

Reflect on the passage with the children. Use the following questions to help spur some conversation about the story. Give time for the children to respond to the open-ended questions. Encourage them to wonder by wondering with them.

- Who is the *Word* in these Bible verses? (Re-read verse 14 if needed to draw the connections to Jesus.)
- Where has the *Word* always been? Where is the *Word* now?
- These verses talk a lot about light. Why do you think people compare Jesus to light?
- What do you know about the man, John, whom these verses talk about?
- Why do you think the Gospel of John starts this way instead of at the manger in Bethlehem, as in Luke's Gospel?

- Bibles
- Index cards from "Light and Darkness" above



The *Common English Bible* is a good one to use with children because of its readability; however, you will need to help children read and understand some words and concepts regardless of the Bible you use.



FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

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- Copies of Resource Page 1
 - Pencils
 - Hard surfaces for writing, such as clipboards, books, or magazines

LIGHT SCAVENGER HUNT



Tell the children that the season of Advent is a time that is completely focused on hope. We hope that God's reign will be born in us as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, who will show us God's way to live. As Christians, we are part of a long line of hope. The Advent season (whether you are currently celebrating it or not) has lots of messages of hope.

Explain that, as the days get shorter and darker in the northern hemisphere, one of the signs of hope is light. Candles are lit. Lights often adorn homes and buildings. And, after December 20, the longest night of the year, the time of daylight begins to lengthen day by day. Light is a sign of hope.

Give the children copies of Resource Page 1, pencils, and a hard writing surface. Invite them to write or draw a picture of where they notice light as you take a walk through your church. Encourage them to think about how that light functions and how it helps people. Come back to your space and invite the children to share their findings and thoughts about the lights they noticed. Especially note the prevalence of light (it's everywhere!) and how it was helpful to people.

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- Battery-operated tealight candles

A LAMP AND A LIGHT



Tell the children that light is an image, or picture, of hope throughout the Bible.

Read aloud Psalm 119:105 (CEB), "Your word is a lamp before my feet and a light for my journey." Wonder together how God's Word (note that *Word* is used to refer to the Bible as well as to Jesus) can be a light to us.

Give each child a battery-operated tealight candle and turn the lights off. Lead the group on a path through the room, using your candle to light the way. Notice places that would be tricky to navigate without light. Then invite the children to take turns doing the same.

Discuss together how God's hope can be like light, using the questions below:

- ✦ How did the light from the candle keep us safe?
- ✦ What would have happened without the light?
- ✦ Has there ever been a time that you have felt like you were walking in darkness inside of your mind or your heart?
- ✦ Why do you think the writers of John and the Psalms talk about God's Word and Jesus as light?
- ✦ How can God's Word and Jesus give you hope?



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

SEEING JESUS

D C

Review today's Bible story from John 1:1–14 about the Word becoming flesh and living among us, and the Word's light outshining darkness. Remind the children that Jesus came to be with us here on earth. Suggest that, since Jesus knows what it is like to be a human being, that gives people hope.

Form groups of two or three children and hand out scenarios from copies of Resource Page 2. Assist with reading as necessary. Invite the groups to practice their scenes and then take turns acting out their scene for the whole group. Discuss the scenes and decide where we can *see* Jesus. Encourage the children to think about who is acting as Jesus would act. Also have them consider the feelings of the people in the scenes, remembering that Jesus also felt those same feelings. Wonder together how knowing this about Jesus gives us hope.

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- Scenarios cut from copies of Resource Page 2

SEEING HOPE ART

A QC

Tell the children that they can *see* hope in the words of God's Word, the Bible. Tell the children that you will read the Scripture passage, John 1:1–14, again slowly, and they should choose a word or phrase that jumps out at them. Encourage them to consider a word or phrase that they can *see* like a picture being held up in front of them. Suggest that they may want to close their eyes while they hear the passage read.

Provide art supplies and invite the children to create a picture of the word or phrase they chose. Play instrumental music if you'd like to do so. When the children have finished their pictures, invite them to share what they have made, as they wish. Wonder together how these word pictures, or pictures of God's *Word*, can be reminders of hope for them.

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- Art supplies, such as paper, crayons, markers, pastels, and watercolor paints and painting supplies
 - Music player, instrumental music (optional)



FOLLOWING JESUS

Review the gift of hope that we have through Jesus Christ, God's Word, who became flesh and lived among us. Encourage the children to spend the coming week noticing all the places they can *see* hope.

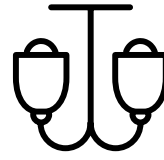
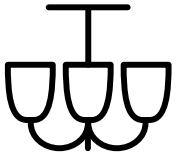
Invite the children to repeat after you as you pray:

God, thank you for giving us hope. /

Jesus, thank you for being our hope. /

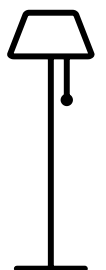
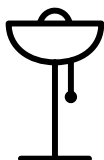
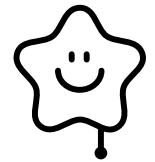
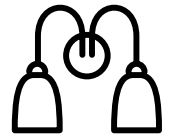
Holy Spirit, thank you for reminding us to have hope. /

Amen. /



Where Did I See Light?

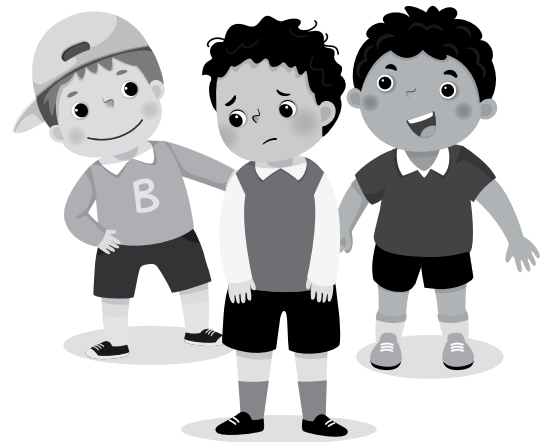
How Did the Light Help?





A group of friends got back their scores on their math test, and everyone decided to compare them. Ana seemed embarrassed, and she didn't want to share her poor grade. She left the group. Her friend, Elaine, followed her to ask what was wrong. Ana told Elaine about her test score, and Elaine comforted her friend.

Ben and Joaquim are playing together on the playground. They notice their friend, Charlie, is playing alone. Usually, Charlie is in the middle of all the games. He loves recess. Ben and Joaquim decide to go over to Charlie and invite him to play with them. Charlie smiles at them and says no thank you but that he appreciates being invited.



David and Mika are siblings. Their family is going through a difficult time. David has heard his parents fighting and talking about getting divorced. Whenever they fight, Mika, his younger sister, gets very sad and cries. While his parents are fighting, David gets Mika's favorite book and goes to read it to her in her room.

Leo's dog died. He came to school today, but his group of friends can see he's been crying. Leo is embarrassed that he's so upset, but he just is. He really loved his dog. One of his friends offers Leo a tissue, another offers him a piece of candy from her lunchbox, and one friend asks Leo if he wants a hug. Leo is still sad, but he is happy that he has such kind friends.



