

THE NIGHT-LIGHT

READ: PSALM 119:103-105

Aren't you too old for a night-light?" Brendon's cousin Ollie smirked at the superhero light.

Brendon's face flushed. "My mom said I can keep it as long as I want."

"Are you afraid of the dark?" Ollie asked.

Brendon's mom called them down for supper just then, and he was glad he didn't have to answer. After they ate and played a few video games, his cousin left and it was time for bed.

When Brendon stepped into his room, he looked at the night-light. Maybe it was too babyish for him. Brendon pulled it out. The room was dark without it, so he hurried to his bed and pulled the blankets over his head. When he peeked out from under the blankets, he couldn't even see his toys across the room.

The door creaked open, and Brendon almost jumped. "Mom?"

"Are you okay?" Mom asked. "Your night-light isn't plugged in."

"I took it out." Brendon sat up. "I'm too old for it."

"Oh?"

Brendon nodded. "They're for little kids. I can be in the dark."

"Everyone needs light." Mom sat on the edge of his bed. "Without it, we can't see what's around us. Without it, life can feel scary."

"But you don't have a night-light in your room," Brendon pointed out.

"No," Mom said. "I sleep better without one. But I do have a different kind of light. One that you have too."

"Huh?" Brendon asked.

"I have Jesus's light, and I carry it with me everywhere. It makes the darkness a lot less scary." Mom patted Brendon's chest. "You have Jesus with you always. He conquered sin and death to save you, and He can help you in darkness or whenever you feel afraid."

Brendon took in a breath. "I guess I didn't think about that. I just felt alone with the light off."

"You are never alone." Mom kissed his cheek. "Jesus is always with you." She got up. "So, about your night-light..."

"Will you plug it back in?" Brendon asked. "I know Jesus is my light, but..."

"It's okay if you have a night-light too." Mom plugged the night-light into the outlet, and Brendon relaxed when he saw it glowing and thought of how Jesus was with him too. ♥ BETHANY ACKER

JESUS IS YOUR LIGHT

KEY VERSE: I HAVE COME INTO THE WORLD AS A LIGHT, SO THAT NO ONE WHO BELIEVES IN ME SHOULD STAY IN DARKNESS. JOHN 12:46 (NIV)

Are you afraid of the dark? When it's dark or when you're alone, does it make you feel better to know that Jesus is with you? He promises never to leave you, and you can talk to Him anytime. When you feel afraid, remember that He is with you, even in the dark.

BOUGHT BACK

READ: COLOSSIANS 1:12-16, 19-22; 1 PETER 1:18-19

There's a video game I want, but I don't have enough money," Graham told his friend Tobias. "I wish I could think of a way to make some extra cash."

"Why not sell me the tires from your old bike?" said Tobias. "I told you I wanted to buy them, and my dad said it was okay."

"Oh, that's right! I forgot," said Graham. "My dad okayed it too, so it's a deal!"

Tobias paid Graham for the tires, and Graham bought his video game. For a while, the boys played the game almost every day.

As the weather turned warmer, Graham and Tobias didn't play inside as much. They began to take bike rides around the neighborhood. One day, Graham ran over a broken bottle and slashed his front tire. "Oh no!" he exclaimed. "This whole tire is ruined! Now what am I going to do?" He frowned. "I guess I should have kept those bike tires I sold to you."

"Well, I only used one, so I'll sell the other back to you," Tobias offered. "I don't need it."

"Really?" asked Graham. "Cool!" So the boys got the tire and went to Graham's house to put it on the bike.

"What happened?" asked Graham's dad when he came home and saw the boys at work.

"My tire got ruined, so I bought this one back from Tobias," Graham explained.

Dad smiled. "You redeemed it. That word is used a lot in the Bible, and what you did with the bike tire is a good example of what it means. 'Redeemed' simply means 'bought back.'"

"But...why is that word used in the Bible?" asked Tobias.

"God created people, so they belonged to Him," Dad explained. "But Satan came and tempted them to sin, and they did. They turned away from God and chose evil instead. So all people became sinners, enslaved to Satan and sin. But when Jesus died on the cross for us, He paid the price to buy us back. When we trust in Him, we no longer belong to Satan, but to God."

Tobias grinned as he looked at the tire on Graham's bike. "I never thought I'd have something in common with an old bike tire—I've been redeemed!" ♥

LENORA MCWHORTEN

JESUS REDEEMS SINNERS

KEY VERSE: YOU WERE REDEEMED FROM YOUR EMPTY WAY OF LIFE INHERITED FROM YOUR ANCESTORS...WITH THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST. 1 PETER 1:18-19 (CSB)

Have you been redeemed? Jesus said that anyone who has sinned is a slave to sin (John 8:34). He paid a great price to buy you back out of that slavery and free you from the power of sin and Satan. Trust Him as your Savior today, and you will be redeemed and become a child of God.

DOLPHINS DON'T DOUBT

READ: MARK 10:46-52

Destiny and her sister Mazie bounced excitedly at the ticket booth. Mom had been teaching them all month about different sea animals. Now they were taking a field trip to the aquarium to see the animals they had been learning about.

When they entered the aquarium, Destiny pointed to a sign with a dolphin image and an arrow to the right. “Can we please go see the dolphins first?” Destiny begged. Mom laughed. “Sure!”

When they reached the exhibit, Destiny hurried over and pressed her nose to the glass, watching as the dolphins swirled, twisted, and played. Their powerful tails pumped up and down as the dolphins glided smoothly through the blue water.

An aquarium worker noticed them and walked over. “Are you girls dolphin lovers?”

Destiny nodded. “They’re my favorite!”

“Yeah, we’ve been learning about them at school!” Mazie said.

“Oh really?” the worker asked. “What have you learned?”

“Dolphins are smart!” Mazie said. “They like to play and eat fish.”

“Yeah, and they use echolocation to hunt!” Destiny chimed in. “They make clicks that travel through the water as sound waves. When the sound waves hit an object, they bounce back to the dolphin and hit the melon, a part of their forehead that’s made up of fluid and fatty tissue. The melon shows the dolphin clear pictures of what’s up ahead, like sonar in a submarine.”

“It sounds like you know a lot!” the worker said.

On the drive back home, Mom said, “Destiny, why do dolphins need to use echolocation?”

“Sometimes they can’t see what’s up ahead because it’s too dark or murky,” Destiny replied.

“Exactly!” said Mom. “That got me thinking about how faith is like echolocation.”

“How?” Mazie asked.

“Sometimes things ahead are dark or uncertain. But our faith in Jesus means we can still have confidence God will guide us even when it’s hard to see,” Mom said. “We know Jesus is with us no matter what because He saved us and promises to be our light in the darkness. We can trust Him to help us.”

“And dolphins don’t doubt their echolocation,” Destiny said. She grinned. “I’m going to be like my favorite animal and trust my echolocation. I’m going to trust Jesus to guide me.” ♥ OLIVIA SUMMERS

LIVE BY FAITH

KEY VERSE: FOR WE WALK BY FAITH, NOT BY SIGHT. 2 CORINTHIANS 5:7

Do you ever worry about what the future holds? Just like dolphins, we can be confident even if we can’t see what’s ahead. The Bible says our faith should guide us, not our sight. We can trust Jesus to lead us the way we should go. When you face an uncertain situation, seek His help by reading your Bible, praying, or talking with a trusted adult. Then trust that God will make His way clear!

LOG ON THE FIRE

READ: ECCLESIASTES 4:9-12; PHILIPPIANS 2:1-2

I don't think I'm going to church tomorrow," Bryce said. He was lying on the floor in front of the fireplace, watching the flames shoot up toward the chimney. He glanced at his dad to see what his reaction would be.

Dad closed his laptop. "Why is that? We let you stay home last Sunday because you had a sore throat. What is it this time?"

Bryce rolled over on his back. "Dad, I've gone to church all my life. Why do I have to listen to the same things over and over again? It's always the same—sing a bunch of songs and then listen to the sermon." When he saw Dad frown, he quickly added, "I can read my Bible and pray here at home, can't I?"

"Yes, and it's important to do that," said Dad. "But Sunday is a special day to worship with other Christians."

Bryce sighed. "I'll be glad when I'm old enough to do what I want." He pointed to a log sitting next to the fireplace. "There's just one log left, Dad. Should I put it on the fire?"

Dad shook his head. "Just let it burn by itself—over there in the wood carrier."

Bryce stared at him. "Burn in the wood carrier! What are you talking about? That would make a mess! Besides, you know a log won't just start burning by itself." He gave Dad a quizzical look. "I'll add it to the fire, okay?"

Dad chuckled. "Okay. While you do, remember that just like those logs need the heat and flames from the other logs in the fireplace to burn, Christians need the warmth of being with other Christians. God tells us not to neglect getting together with one another. We can grow as we pray and read the Bible on our own, but we also need to spend time with other believers. They need us too—just like those logs that still are burning need reinforcement. As we spend time together worshipping Jesus and learning more about Him, we share the warmth of His love and reinforce one another with His truth."

Bryce reached for the last log. "All right," he said as he added it to the fire. "I'll go to church tomorrow." ♥ BEVERLY KENNISTON



ATTEND CHURCH FAITHFULLY

KEY VERSE: WE MUST NOT QUIT MEETING TOGETHER, AS SOME ARE DOING. NO, WE NEED TO KEEP ON ENCOURAGING EACH OTHER. HEBREWS 10:25 (ERV)

Do you regularly attend church? Do you go willingly? Or do you try to get out of it because you wish you could be doing something else? Just like logs on a fire, you need other believers to shine the light of God's love and truth into your life. When Christians gather together, we can help each other keep growing in our faith. Be thankful for opportunities God gives you to worship and grow with other Christians.

GRANDMA'S GARDEN

READ: 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-27

That's it! I'm never *ever* going back to choir again," Savannah sobbed when Grandpa collected her from church. "It was so embarrassing. I was told off for joking around and distracting everyone with my loud, off-key singing." Savannah sniffed. "But the truth is, I wasn't joking around. Why didn't God give me a good singing voice?"

Grandpa fished out a handkerchief and handed it to her, then gave her a hug. Savannah dabbed her eyes as they strolled back to the cottage where they both lived with Grandma.

Savannah had calmed down by the time they got home, and Grandpa gave her some hot chocolate and one of the brownies he'd baked that afternoon. Grandma was still outside, gardening.

"I'm sorry, Grandpa," Savannah said, munching her brownie. "I haven't really been enjoying choir. Singing has been a struggle."

"Everyone has gifts, you know," Grandpa said thoughtfully. "God has provided us all with talents, and some you won't discover until later on. He created us all differently so we can use our skills in church and in the world to help others and show them the love of Jesus. I love baking. Your grandma loves gardening, and you are fantastic at math—your teacher always mentions that at parent-teacher meetings. You've tried the choir, and it isn't right for your skillset, so find something else you love that you can use to help others. Don't give up. God loves you and cherishes you—not because of anything you do but because He created you and sent His Son to die for you."

Later, Grandpa made a mug of tea for Grandma and he and Savannah went outside. "The garden looks amazing," Savannah said as she looked at all the different types of flowers ranging from crimson roses to yellow sunflowers.

Grandma took off her gardening gloves and beamed as she took a sip of tea. "I love gardening. It's a gift God has given me."

"You see?" Grandpa said. "Look at Grandma's beautiful garden. If all the flowers and plants were the same, it would be boring. Church is the same way. Each of us is different and unique with something to offer."

Savannah smiled, silently thanking God that she didn't have to be the same as everyone else and that God loved her and made her unique. ♥ CINDY LEE

GOD BLESSES US WITH TALENTS

KEY VERSE: ALL OF YOU TOGETHER ARE CHRIST'S BODY,
AND EACH OF YOU IS A PART OF IT. 1 CORINTHIANS 12:27 (NLT)

Are you sometimes jealous of people's talents? Do you wish you had a particular skill they have? God thinks you're amazing. He loves you so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, to repair the broken relationship humans have with Him and give eternal life to all who trust in Him. Our loving Creator made you and blessed you with talents. Rejoice and use your gifts to help others and point them to Jesus.