

On your marks

If you're looking for a positive alternative to Halloween for the children in your midweek group or at church, here are some ideas to celebrate the light that shines in the darkness, which the darkness has not overcome (see John 1:5). God promises us 'undefeated light' as a gift we can receive through Jesus. The following outline picks up on this theme with suggestions for some games and storytelling, craft and worship for an end-of-October meeting, perhaps during half-term or as part of your Sunday programme.

Get set

You will need:

- kitchen rolls
- A4 paper
- black or dark grey card
- Blu-tack
- stones
- blue card
- modelling clay
- coloured paper and scissors
- candles to 'write' with
- paint
- luminous paper
- dark felt
- tea lights and holders
- ten 1p coins, ten 10p coins, a large bucket, ten pairs of dark glasses, ten items of white clothing (or ask children to bring their own)

Go!

1. To set the theme, decorate your meeting area with as many lamps, sets of lights (such as white Christmas lights) or strings of fancy lighting as possible. The hall or room should be ablaze with light!
2. God's light is stronger than the darkness. This could be illustrated by playing some simple games:
 - Hand out A4 sheets of paper and some Blu-tack to three teams. Beforehand put some black or dark grey splodges made from card all around the area, on walls, doors, floor, chairs and tables. Now one team member at a time can send up a person to go and find just one of these black or grey splodges and cover it up with their white paper. When they return, the next person from that team is released to go and find another one to cover up. One team should look on the tables and chairs; one team on the walls; and the third team on the doors and floor.

There should be ten dark splodges for each team to find and cover.

- Have a large bucket of water for each team and into it drop ten dark and dirty 1p coins. Now each team has an equal pile of bright silver 10p coins to try and drop and cover all the dark coins. Let each team member in turn have a go. Which team can cover the most dark coins with the 10p ones?
- One team should each be given dark glasses to wear. This team should now have to try and escape two chosen catchers from another team, who are wearing something white, within a given area. Whenever anyone is caught they have to sit down and take off their dark glasses. How quickly can each team's catchers take away the darkness from the other teams?

A key verse for these games is: 'God is light; in him there is no darkness at all' (1 John 1:5).

3. For your Bible story, use John's version of the healing of the man who was born blind in John 9. It is a very dramatic story with lots of incidents. Tell the story briefly to the whole group and then divide it up into smaller groups to create [freeze-frames](#) for each part of the story, for example: Jesus tells the man to go and wash in the pool.

The man who can now see tries to explain to the Pharisees what has happened.

The Pharisees talk to his parents, who don't really want to get involved.

The Pharisees talk for a second time to the man who can now see again and try to persuade him that Jesus is not a good influence; but the man is still excited by what Jesus has done.

Jesus meets the man who can now see and who kneels and worships him.

Add in some dialogue and 'interview' the actors as to what they are thinking and feeling about it all.

Jesus calls himself 'the light of the world' (John 8:12). This light helps us to see properly; to see God's love for us in Jesus, to see ourselves in a true light, perhaps for the first time, and to see others as people whom God loves. The people who think they can see, like the Pharisees in the story, are really blind. We all need to come to the light of God in Jesus to be able to see again.

4. Jesus' light brings us rescue from darkness. The following craft activities pick up the rescuing power of light. For example:
 - making a lighthouse on the rocks, using a kitchen roll and some real stones on a blue base
 - modelling a candle holder out of clay
 - making a paper lantern

Also, to show how the light outshines the darkness, write the word LIGHT, using a candle on a piece of card. Now, using watercolours, paint over the card with a dark grey or black paint. The word LIGHT should stand out. It also works if you shade over with a dark crayon.

Finally, as a group activity, you could create a large collage of the night sky, lit up with bright stars and planets. Using luminous paper or lettering, add the verse: 'God put the lights in the huge space of the sky to give light on the earth' (Genesis 1:17, New International Reader's Version).

5. For a time of worship together, first sing some songs/choruses linked to light and then gather



them together in a big circle. Have ready a number of pieces of dark felt. Each of these will represent some of the dark things that threaten our lives such as: death, disease and physical danger; violence, hatred and anger; fear, loneliness and sadness; famine, war and natural disasters.

Ask the children for suggestions of what dark things try and spoil our lives. As each is mentioned, place one piece of dark felt down in the circle and then, after a pause, place on it a tea-light in a holder and light it. As you do this, say the following words together:

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not defeated it. or God is light and in God is no darkness at all.

6. End your time together with some 'light refreshment'! Include perhaps some biscuits baked in a candle shape or some small cakes with traffic-light coloured icing on top.

(Bible quotes are from the NIV unless otherwise stated.)