

SPRING
2013

Families

WEAVE A TAPESTRY OF FAITH

STORY FOR ALL AGES

God Is Like Darkness



In the beginning, when the Power of God took the form of Light, it also took the form of Darkness. Whenever it was Light, it was Darkness, too. The two always went together. At first, however, God's power was too dazzled by its Light to notice its Darkness.

**Sacred Rest:
The Beauty
and Purpose
of the Dark**

The Power of God was so busy making patterns and designs and turning itself into colors, it had not realized no one could see its creations without the Darkness that was always behind and under and around all the brightness of the Light. The Light decided to find out more about being Darkness.



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Years later, a child's parents said, "Time to go to bed."

The child said, "I can't go yet because I need a drink of water." But do you know why that child really didn't want to go to bed?

The child's parents said, "OK, one quick drink, then off to bed." And the parents gave one more hug and turned off the light.

Lying in bed, the child said, "I don't like this darkness. Why can't it always be light? Why is there darkness, anyway?"

The Power of God that was Darkness heard the child, and answered, "Once

upon a time I wondered about that, too, and now I think I understand. I could tell you some of my ideas. But first, tell me what you don't like about my darkness."

"Well," said the child, "I can't see anything."

"Yes, in one way that's true," replied the Great Darkness. "You can't see things like your toys or your bed, but you can see with your inner eye because those other things aren't getting in the way. You can see in your mind and your spirit, the kinds of things we see in our dreams."

"Sometimes the things I see that way are scary."

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The Families pages are adapted from Tapestry of Faith lifespan faith development programs.

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"Yes, sometimes they are. But when we know the things that scare us, we can understand them better, and we aren't so afraid of them. My Darkness gives you a chance to grow stronger and braver in your dreams. And, of course, some dreams are fun or wonderful, too."

"I know," said the child, remembering one very good dream. "But there's another thing I don't like about your Darkness. If I have to get up I might bump into something and hurt myself."

"Well," said the Great Darkness, "nighttime is for resting and not moving. You use up a lot of your power and energy in the daylight. You need the quiet time of the night to create more energy. That's when you grow. You know how bulbs and seeds need to snuggle into the darkness of the earth before they can grow. You know how baby animals grow in the darkness of eggs or their mothers' wombs before they can be born."

"But when I'm in the dark, sometimes I feel all alone," the child said.

"Yes, sometimes we do feel alone, but the people you love are really quite near you, just in the next room," comforted God. "And I am always with you. Darkness is just one of my many forms."

"Well, I guess there is something good about darkness," yawned the child, turning over and curling up like a baby in the dark of its mother's womb. "At least you don't seem too scary when I'm talking to you like this." Then the child's eyes closed and the Darkness that was one of the forms of God wrapped itself very carefully and gently around the child. And within the mystery of that Darkness, something new and wonderful began.

Adapted with permission from a story in Hide and Seek with God by Mary Ann Moore.

EXPLORING TOGETHER

Have you ever felt afraid of the dark? It's natural to feel disoriented, even scared, when you cannot see as you can in daylight. But darkness has its own beauty and purpose. We, and all of nature, need time without light to rest and to grow. In the darkness, we can look inside ourselves and sometimes see ourselves and our world in new ways.

Sacred Rest

Many religions designate times for pure rest. In Jewish tradition, the Sabbath begins at sundown every Friday evening and calls for a complete, 24-hour break from all work. Sunday is the Sabbath for most Christian denominations, Saturday for some. Some say the Sabbath is a time to do whatever you truly feel called to do, and nothing you feel you "should" do.

Have you experienced a Sabbath, or a time like one?

What did you do in your time of rest?

What did you NOT do?

Consider adding a regular time for rest to your schedule.

What would you do—and NOT do—during your resting time?



Help us to be the always hopeful Gardeners of the spirit Who know

Darkness Is for Questions

The stars are always in the sky, but you can only see them clearly when it is dark outside. Go to an outdoor place at night, with stars your only light—someplace like a rocky mountaintop, a vast field, or the shore of an ocean. Try to feel a big, open darkness all around you. Think of the biggest questions you can and let them fill that space. You can even shout them into the air:

How did life begin?

Why is each person unique?

How will I know my calling in life?

Then listen. Darkness has a mysterious way of offering special answers.





Photo Challenge

In the daytime, photograph something very, very alive—a flock of birds, a dog fetching a ball, a child running. Then, spend some time with your photograph imagining what happens to all this life in the dark.

Draw your idea of what happens inside a bird, a dog, or a human being, during sleep.

Use science books or the Internet to find out how living things grow and recharge overnight.

How does the body become re-energized in the night?



...w that without darkness Nothing comes to birth As without light Nothing flowers. — May Sarton

Sweet Dreams But What about Nightmares?

Nighttime dreams can be silly, confusing, or realistic. Some play in your head like a long movie with scenes and characters and a complicated plot. If you remember a dream in the morning, it may have a message for you or a solution to a real, daytime problem. Sometimes we vividly recall a dream that seems to have no meaning at all.

Did you ever wake up in the night from a scary dream? Here's what you can do: Take slow, deep breaths until you know you are awake and the dream happened only in your head, not in real life. It helps to turn on a light. Then you can:

Write a story about your dream with a happy ending

Draw a picture of the dream

Tell your dream to a parent or another adult you trust

All that you need for a deep and comforting peace to grow lies within you. Once it is in your heart let it spread into your life, let it pour from your life into the world — and once it is in the world, let it shine upon all beings.

—The Rev. Angela Herrera

Make the Dark Your Friend

Adults, as well as children, become afraid in the dark. The night awakens imagination, which can play with our knowledge of the world's real dangers. A child may be satisfied with a search in closets and under beds to prove no monsters lurk. But an adult may need to face their own "monsters" that come forth in the night.

Embrace the opportunity: If darkness makes you anxious, find a way in. Night's quiet emptiness nurtures self-examination impossible in the bright, busy daytime. Breathe into any worries or regrets you are holding. Acknowledging them may free you to burrow into the rest you need.

While some adults truly fear an unlit bedroom at night, many more fear metaphoric darkness—unlit aspects of our lives that cause us despair or confusion. Indeed, our future is not known, but we need not resist acquaintance with our own unanswerable questions. We can sit with them in the dark.

Night's quiet emptiness nurtures self-examination that is impossible in the bright and busy daytime.

Mark Tyrrell, a therapist who blogs at *uncommonhelp.me*, suggests: "Reframe your idea of darkness." Tyrrell trained a fearful client to wean herself from the light and use relaxation techniques at bedtime. The client found a new relationship with the night: "Now when I think about the dark, it feels like a friend, no longer the prowling enemy. It feels cozy; a wonderful velvety blanket of comforting rest time in which it doesn't matter what I look like, what others think. A time into which I can escape and relish deep privacy."

At night, or in your life, can you make the absence of light your friend?

With lights, we drive the holiness and beauty of night back to the forests and the sea . . . Are modern folk, perhaps, afraid of night? Do they fear that vast serenity, the mystery of infinite space, the austerity of stars?

—Henry Beston



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True darkness is the . . . rebuilding process, by which the universe strengthens itself. It is the time when the hidden forces of nature are busy regrouping. When there is darkness, life force is regaining its integrity, so that at the proper season it will reemerge and produce growth and revival.

—Rabbi Steven Fisdell

FAMILIES: WEAVE A TAPESTRY OF FAITH

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■ Colorful, fun pages on the Sleep for Kids website of the National Sleep Foundation show why we sleep, what happens when we sleep, and how to ensure a good night's sleep. sleepforkids.org

■ Meditative poems by Angela Herrera in *Reaching for the Sun* (Skinner House, 2012) capture the regenerative, hope-building power of darkness.

■ *Planting a Rainbow*, a picture book by Lois Ehlert, shows how bulbs develop in the underground darkness to generate flowers. "Coaxing Flower Bulbs" on the Kids Gardening website (kidsgardening.org) tells how to plant daffodil, amaryllis, and other bulbs indoors and cater to their "underground personalities" so the best possible blooms emerge.

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