

Baptist Care SA Month 2020 – Sunday Resources

Glimpses of Light in the Darkness

“The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome” John 1:5

Together we are pleased to bring to you this year’s Baptist Care SA Month church resource.

We value that both Baptist Care SA and Baptist Churches of SA are expressions of who we are as a movement of local churches. **Each is an active demonstration of the Baptist movement's collective commitment** to following Jesus and this resource gives us opportunity to celebrate the ways we truly are better together.

We encourage you to engage daily as a congregation, as families and as individuals with the opportunities to **celebrate, learn, take action and pray with us** this month as we reflect on the various ways God brings light into the darkness through our combined efforts.

We have put this package together in such a way that we hope it provides great flexibility in how it might be shared.

The daily calendar can be used by individuals, families and small groups during the week and then each Sunday we have curated a series of five videos which celebrate stories of "Light in the Darkness" coming out of Baptist Care's programs/experiences during COVID-19 and also our partnerships with two of our Churches.

These videos have been paired with five prayers and suggested Bible passages allowing congregations to choose to share the video and prayers in Sunday morning gatherings and through their social media posts. For churches whose preaching plans have been disrupted by recent events, these bible passages may of course also be used as a springboard to write a message from, or can simply be read with the prayers by the worship leader. Alternatively this resource could be used by Church small groups with groups watching the video, reading the prayer and passage, and reflecting on a couple of simple questions we have written.

We hope that this resource will be a blessing to your congregations and the stories will encourage you with the work that our God has been doing over this period of uncertainty.

WEEK ONE – Sunday 2 August 2020

This week's video is around our partnership with Adelaide restaurant 'Shoboshu'. The video reflects that, while for most of us 2020 has not been what we had anticipated, fortunately our God was not taken by surprise by COVID-19, rather, He is always at work bringing the Light into darkness in highly creative and unexpected ways.

Prayer:

Lord God,

We thank you that you are not a God who is taken by surprise. We thank you that even in distressing circumstances, when what we hold to is taken away, that we can always follow your Spirit's leading to consider what is within our control and how we can use it to serve others.

Lord Bless each and every person, organisation, company and family who, when faced with the uncertainty, change and challenge of recent months, chose to trust in you and to look out for others. Thank you for the acts of care, kindness and generosity to neighbours friends and strangers – for acts big and small.

Thank you for reminding us that we all have a part to play.

Thank you for reminding us that we belong to each other.

May we always remember that, like Abraham and all the people of God through every generation, we are blessed to be a blessing. May the world be blessed through our obedient love in action and may our actions bring your light to the darkness in the world.

Amen

Proposed Bible reading:

Hebrews 13:1-3 "Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those mistreated as if you yourself were suffering."

Questions for reflection:

- Where do we see the Kingdom of God at work in the story?
- What inspired you in the story?
- What challenges us?

WEEK TWO – Sunday 9 August 2020

This week's video is around the story of Kyle - a participant in the Tumbelin program. The video reflects that while all people were made in the image of God, for many, life's circumstances have distorted their capacity to recognise that image and that helping people to see the goodness of God in themselves, others and the world is part of the work of redemption.

Prayer:

Jesus,

We come to you in worship and thanksgiving. Thank you for the safe havens you provide for us when we are hurting, struggling, confused and lost.

Thank you that you are a God of second, third, fourth... countless chances.

Remind us that you revealed yourself in your parables as the Father God who picks up the lengths of your tunic and runs towards your prodigal sons and daughters to embrace us, to welcome us, to offer us life and belonging with you.

May we be those who celebrate the homecomings of others,

May we be communities who encourage those only considering turning home, and make smooth the path before them.

And may we be people on the look-out for those far from home, yet unsure they want to try returning.

May we search with your perseverance for the one, when 99 are safe and sound,

May our kindness and grace be a light that shines the way home for each other.

Amen

Suggested Bible reading:

Luke 14:12-14: "12 Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbours; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Questions for reflection:

- Where do we see the Kingdom of God at work in the story?
- What inspired you in the story?
- What challenges us?

WEEK THREE – Sunday 16 August 2020

This week's video is a message from our CEO around the support our Emergency Relief program has received from churches. This message is bookended with slides that reflect that while COVID-19 restrictions may have kept us apart from our neighbours, your partnership with us has allowed us to continue to BE a neighbour to the most vulnerable.

Prayer:

Father God,

We thank you that even when the world seems darkest,

Your Kingdom continues to break through with promises of light and hope.

And so we pray to you that in times of darkness we may not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief,

knowing that it is You who do the good work and we who are invited to participate.

We are not obligated to complete the work.

But neither are we free to abandon it.

We thank you for the partnerships between Baptist Care SA and the local Baptist Churches of SA.

We ask for your blessing on these partnerships that your Kingdom would be seen in them.

We ask for these partnerships to multiply, so that across our state, Baptist Care SA and local Baptist Churches might be able to join hands together to see, for the benefit of vulnerable people and local communities.

Your Kingdom Come...

Your Will be done...

Amen

Suggested Bible reading:

Matthew 25:37-40 “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”

Questions for reflection:

- Where do we see the Kingdom of God at work in the story?
- What inspired you in the story?
- What challenges us?

WEEK FOUR – Sunday 23 August 2020

This week's video is around our partnership with churches through Collaborative Community Partnerships (CCP) and particularly the story of the difference the mentoring program at Clovercrest Baptist Church has made for their local primary school. In addition to the positive stories of personal change for children in the program, the video reflects that it is in partnership with our churches that Baptist Care SA is able to offer pathways back into community, helping people to fully participate in the fullness of life.

Prayer:

Lord God,

You invite us to know you in community. Friendship, true conversation and presence are gifts of your Kingdom.

Thank you that we can each offer these to each other without needing a degree, a specialist title or special talents.

We praise you for the impact that kindness, time, selflessness and encouragement have in the lives of those we reach out.

Use each of us to bless those around us as we listen to you, listen to each other and provide safe, genuine community.

Thank you for making space for us, may we be known for including and embracing our community and holding onto one another through the ups and downs we each experience in life.

May we walk patiently with others, considering them more important than ourselves, as you did with us.

May you do miracles through our simple offers of friendship, to bring light in the darkness, we pray...

Amen

Suggested Bible reading:

Philippians 2:1-4 "Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."

Questions for reflection:

- Where do we see the Kingdom of God at work in the story?
- What inspired you in the story?
- What challenges us?

WEEK FIVE – Sunday 30 August 2020:

This week's video is around a participant's positive experience of welcome and inclusion at Rostrevor Baptist Church and the way they have not only accepted her disability but celebrated her giftedness.

Prayer:

Holy Spirit,

Thank you that you are always speaking to us,

leading us,

encouraging us,

and inviting us in how we can partner with you in the world.

We thank you for the gifts within us you have revealed to us,

and for those that yet lay hidden.

Holy Spirit please fill each of us with the courage to share our God-given gifts with the World.

Father God please help us to see the hidden gifts in others and call them into being.

Jesus please help us to love our brothers and sisters as ourselves and to be open to all we can learn about you from others.

Trinitarian God, we praise you for the way that we are each fearfully and wonderfully made.

May we celebrate, honour, make room for and welcome each person as we welcome you.

Would you use the offering of our gifts to the world around us to cast bright light into the darkness.

Amen

Suggested Bible reading:

Romans 12:3-8 “³ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgement, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. ⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.”

Questions for reflection:

- Where do we see the Kingdom of God at work in the story?
- What inspired you in the story?
- What challenges us?