

IDOP 2023

SUNDAY SCHOOL SESSION

STANDING STRONG IN FAITH

INTRODUCTION:

This special Sunday School session focuses on building awareness among children about Christian persecution around the world. The resource particularly aims to educate and engage children about the challenges faced by persecuted Christians. Through fun and interactive activities, the sessions will seek encourage empathy, prayer, and a sense of unity among our young learners.

The session comprises four activities. Teachers are encouraged to go through the material and prepare for its delivery beforehand, taking into consideration any time limitation and age groups of the children.

ACTIVITY 1:

MAP JOURNEY

OBJECTIVE: TO UNDERSTAND THE GLOBAL IMPACT OF CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION AND ITS WIDESPREAD PRESENCE.



INSTRUCTIONS

- ★ Provide a world map or a printed outline of various countries.
- ★ Use colored stickers or markers to mark countries where Christians face persecution.
- ★ Discuss with the children the reasons behind the persecution in these regions and how it affects believers' lives. Refer IDOP 2023 Prayer guide for more information on countries with high levels of Christian persecution.
- ★ Encourage the children to pray for Christians in those countries, asking for their safety and strength in faith.



ACTIVITY 3:

SUPPORTIVE ARTWORK

OBJECTIVE: TO EXPRESS EMPATHY AND SUPPORT FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS THROUGH CREATIVE EXPRESSION.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ★ Provide art supplies, including paper, markers, crayons, and colored pencils.
- ★ Invite the children to create artwork that depicts messages of hope and encouragement for persecuted Christians.
- ★ Encourage them to draw images of solidarity, faith, and prayers.
- ★ After completing their artwork, gather the children to share their pieces and discuss the emotions they want to convey.
- ★ Display the artwork in the Sunday School room as a reminder of our commitment to support and pray for those facing persecution.



ACTIVITY 4:

TRUE STORIES OF FAITH

OBJECTIVE: TO INTRODUCE CHILDREN TO THE INSPIRING STORIES OF CHRISTIANS WHO HAVE STOOD STRONG IN THE FACE OF PERSECUTION.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ★ Prepare short age-appropriate accounts of true stories of Christian perseverance and faith in the midst of persecution.
- ★ Share these stories with the children, highlighting the courage and determination of the individuals involved.
- ★ After each story, discuss the children's reactions and what they can learn from these remarkable examples of faith.
- ★ Emphasize the importance of remaining steadfast in their faith, no matter the circumstances.



THE BELOW ARE SOME REAL-LIFE STORIES THAT CAN BE SHARED WITH/NARRATED TO THE STUDENTS. NAMES HAVE BEEN CHANGED.

PASTOR SAM'S UNWAVERING FAITH

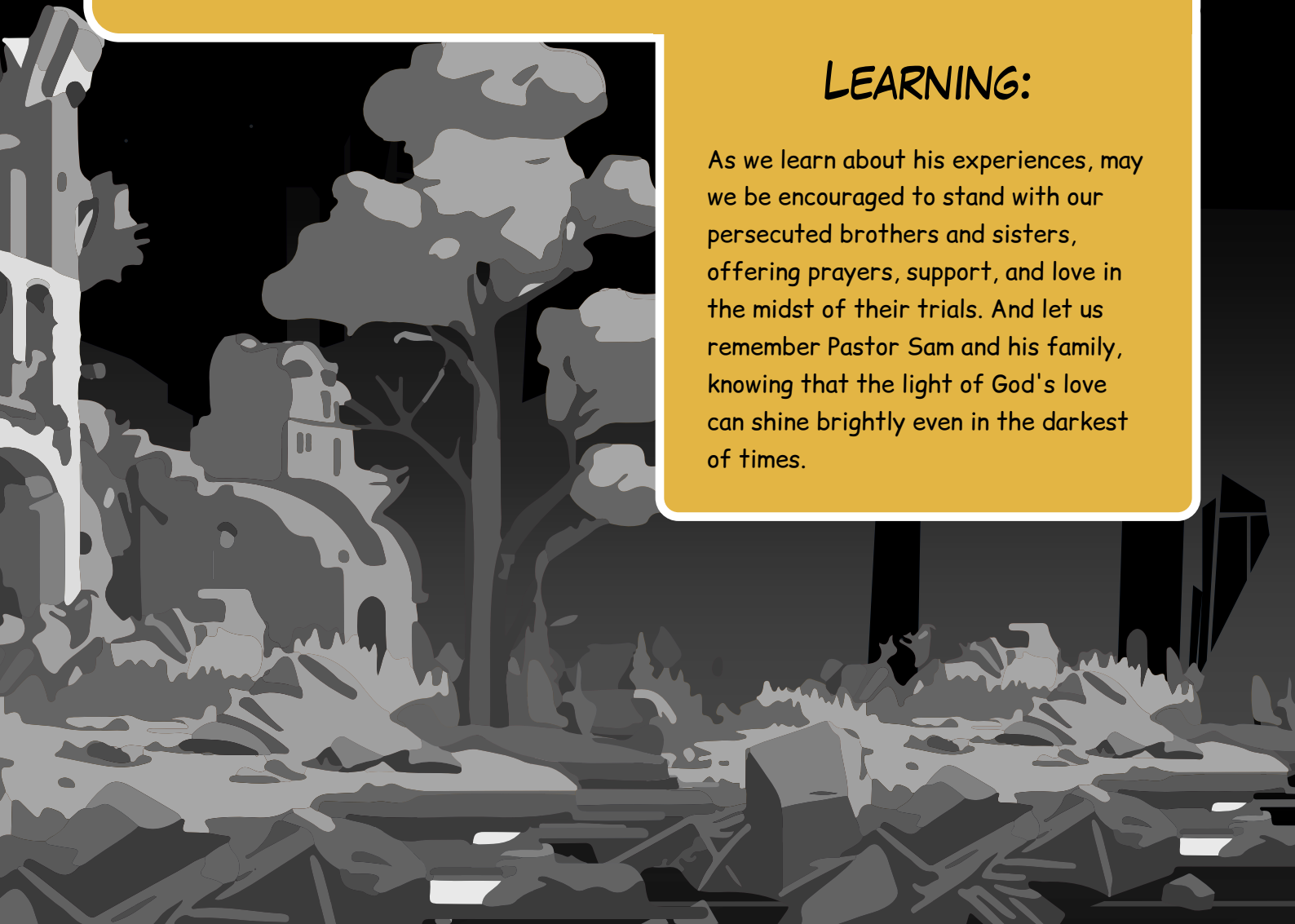
In Burkina Faso, there lived a man named Pastor Sam. He was a devoted Christian, sharing the message of God's love and peace with unwavering faith despite the dangers that surrounded him.

Earlier this year, radical Islamic groups intensified their persecution of Christians in Burkina Faso. Pastor Sam's church fell victim to the extremists' violence, leaving behind ashes and devastation. Despite this heartbreak, Pastor Sam remained resolute, trusting in God's strength and love to guide him through the darkness.

One day, as Pastor Sam was on his way to attend a pastor's meeting, he vanished without a trace. His wife and six children were left in anguish, not knowing what had happened to their beloved husband and father. The entire village rallied around them, offering prayers and support in their time of need. As of July 2023, there is still no news of Pastor Sam.

LEARNING:

As we learn about his experiences, may we be encouraged to stand with our persecuted brothers and sisters, offering prayers, support, and love in the midst of their trials. And let us remember Pastor Sam and his family, knowing that the light of God's love can shine brightly even in the darkest of times.



MIRIAM'S UNSHAKABLE TRUST IN GOD

In Pakistan, there lived a brave woman named Miriam. She was a Christian, and she loved her son, Joseph, very much. They lived in a close-knit community where everyone knew each other.

One day, Joseph was talking and laughing with his cousin, Adiv, about who would win in a pretend fight. They mentioned the name of a famous boxer, Muhammad Ali, while joking around. But unfortunately, a police officer nearby misunderstood their words and thought they were disrespecting a very important person (Prophet Muhammad).

The police officer got very angry and punished Joseph and Adiv, even though they didn't mean any harm. When Miriam heard what happened, she decided to talk to the police officer to explain the misunderstanding. But as she was on her way, she saw police cars heading towards her house.

Miriam rushed back home, worried for Joseph's safety. She quickly hid her son, hoping to keep him safe from whatever was happening outside. But things took a turn for the worse when a group of people gathered in front of her house, demanding that she give them Joseph to be punished even more severely.

"I begged the police officer and the crowd for hours to spare my little boy, but they wouldn't listen," said Miriam, tears streaming down her face.



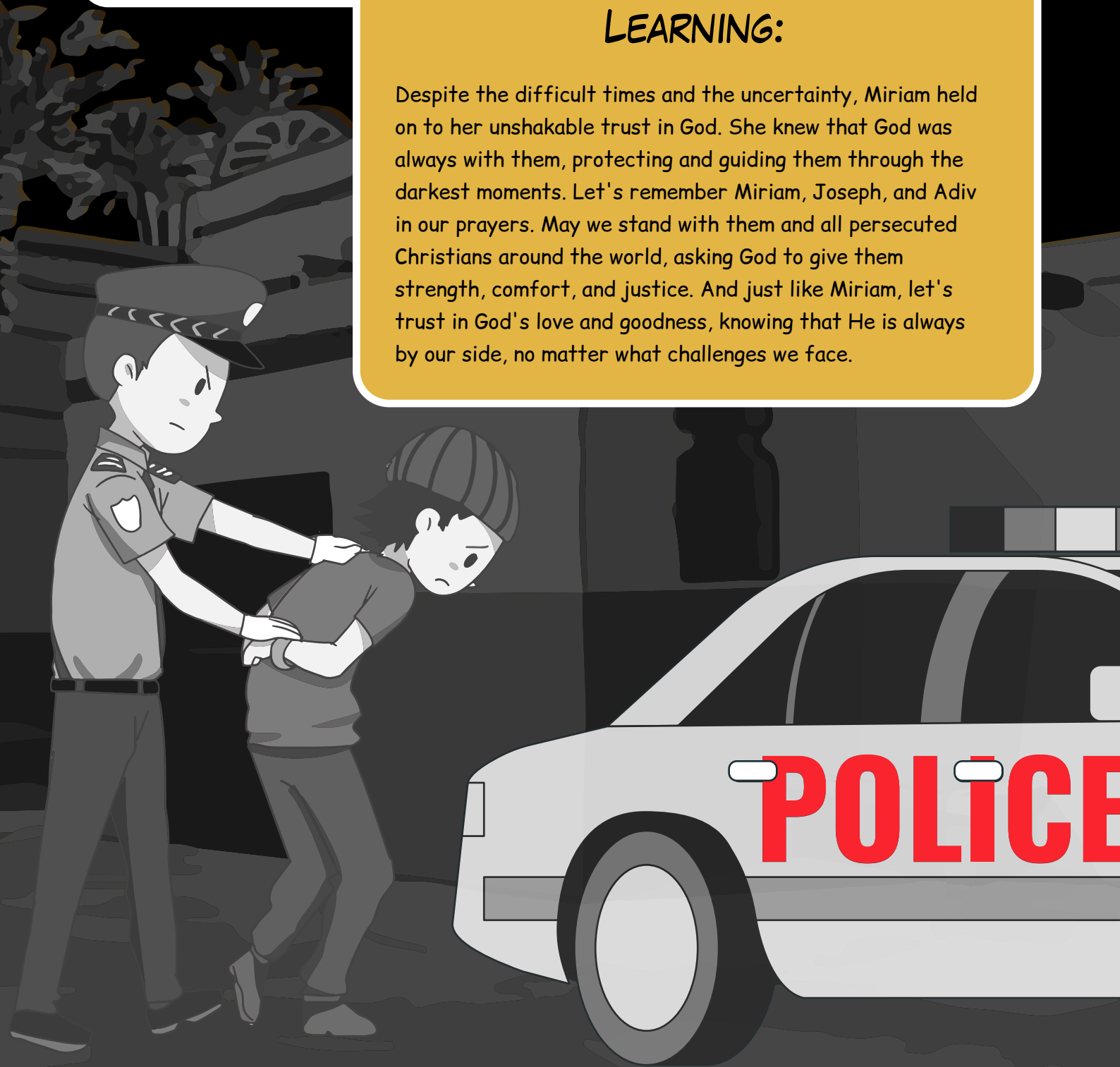
Finally, the police arrested Joseph and Adiv, and they were taken away from their homes. The case against them was about breaking a law called blasphemy, which means showing disrespect to something considered sacred by some people.

Miriam was heartbroken, but she didn't lose hope. She believed in the power of God, and she trusted that God would bring justice to their situation.

"I have put my hope and trust in the Lord," she said, remembering a special verse from the Bible that gave her strength. "The Bible says, 'But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him.'"

LEARNING:

Despite the difficult times and the uncertainty, Miriam held on to her unshakable trust in God. She knew that God was always with them, protecting and guiding them through the darkest moments. Let's remember Miriam, Joseph, and Adiv in our prayers. May we stand with them and all persecuted Christians around the world, asking God to give them strength, comfort, and justice. And just like Miriam, let's trust in God's love and goodness, knowing that He is always by our side, no matter what challenges we face.



FATHER ANDREW'S UNYIELDING FAITH

In Nigeria, there lived a devoted man named Father Andrew. He was a Christian and served as a priest, bringing God's love and peace to the people around him. Father Andrew had recently been ordained, and his heart was filled with joy and dedication to his calling.

One day, Father Andrew was on his way to a college, where he taught and shared God's teachings with young students. But on that fateful day, something terrible happened. He was suddenly shot in the back by an unknown gunman and tragically lost his life. This heartbreaking event occurred only ten months after his ordination.

The news of Father Andrew's killing shook the community and all who knew him.

Unfortunately, this was not an isolated incident. Priests in Nigeria had been under severe attack for the past three years. In 2022 alone, at least 39 priests lost their lives, 30 were abducted, and a total of 145 priests were assaulted.

As Father Andrew's story reminds us, following Jesus may lead to facing many challenges. However, in Him, we can find peace and strength. Our God is great, and He provides us with joy even in the face of persecution.

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LEARNING:

Let us remember Father Andrew in our prayers, along with all persecuted Christians in Nigeria and around the world. May their faith and courage inspire us to stand with them, supporting and praying for their safety and the protection of their communities. And may we find comfort in knowing that, despite the hardships we may encounter, God's love and peace will always be with us.



CLOSING PRAYER

LET US BOW OUR HEADS AND PRAY FOR OUR FELLOW BELIEVERS WHO FACE PERSECUTION AROUND THE WORLD. MAY GOD GRANT THEM STRENGTH, PROTECTION, AND COURAGE TO STAND STRONG IN THEIR FAITH. WE ALSO PRAY FOR THEIR PERSECUTORS, THAT THEY MAY ENCOUNTER GOD'S LOVE AND FIND TRANSFORMATION IN THEIR HEARTS. THANK YOU, LORD, FOR THIS TIME OF AWARENESS AND EMPATHY. IN JESUS' NAME, WE PRAY. AMEN.

NOTE TO TEACHERS:

Encourage parents to continue the discussion at home and remind children to pray for persecuted Christians during their daily prayers. Emphasize the importance of supporting and standing in solidarity with persecuted Christians.

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ORGANISED BY THE WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE, THE IDOP IS AN ANNUAL, GLOBAL EVENT THAT UNITES CHRISTIANS IN PRAYER FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH.

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INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH | WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

