

Children's Program

INTENTION

This program calls all to come closer to God and find rest in God. When we totally trust and have faith in God, our burdens become light, and we find rest. The program was written by a group of ecumenical Christian Nigerian women in response to the theme, *"I Will Give You Rest: Come"* (Matthew 11:28-30). We reflected collectively on this theme from the context of our experiences as Nigerian Christian women. We hope to inspire other women in the world to unite and pray as one people. As we trust God, our Burden Bearer, we become one body in Christ, receiving and bringing rest to the world.

WORDS OF WELCOME

Adult: Good morning, children!

Children: Good morning!

Adult: If you are happy and you know it, say Amen!

Children: Amen!

OPENING PRAYER

Adult: Now let's say a prayer. Repeat after me.

Adult: Dear God,

Children: Dear God,

Adult: Thank you for your love.

Children: Thank you for your love.

Adult: Thank you for your mercy.

Children: Thank you for your mercy.

Adult: Thank you for all the people who love us.

Children: Thank you for all the people who love us.

Adult: Thank you for peace and joy.

Children: Thank you for peace and joy.

Adult: Amen.

Children: Amen.

THEME SONG

Come Unto Me is the theme song, composed by a woman from Nigeria, especially for this World Day of Prayer program. Let's learn the refrain of the song!

Come, come unto me, (2x)

come, you who are weary,

and I will give you rest.

Come, come unto me, (2x)

Come, you who are burdened,

and I will give you rest.

LEARNING ABOUT NIGERIA

Every year, the World Day of Prayer program comes from a different country. This year, the program came from Nigeria. Let's look at a map to figure out where our new friends are from!

[Look at the map of Africa with the children.]

Does anyone know which continent this is?

What are some of the countries around Nigeria?

Now let's do this puzzle together – it's a map of Nigeria that shows the 6 different zones of the country.

[Put the pieces of the puzzle together.]

SCRIPTURE READING

The Bible passage for today comes from the gospel of Matthew, Chapter 11, Verse 28. Jesus is speaking, and he is inviting us to come and find rest.

Repeat after me.

Adult: Come to me,

Children: Come to me,

Adult: all you who are weary,

Children: all you who are weary,

Adult: and all who are carrying heavy burdens,

Children: and all who are carrying heavy burdens,

Adult: and I will give you rest.

Children: and I will give you rest.

Adult: I will give you rest.

Children: I will give you rest.

STORY TIME

Now, let's listen to a story together. This story is about a girl named Chioma. Listen closely!

The school bell rang for break time, and children burst out of their classrooms into the sunny courtyard, laughing and running to play. But one desk wasn't empty. Chioma sat alone, her math book open in front of her, tears dropping onto the numbers that seemed to swim before her eyes. The teacher's words from that morning still echoed in her head: "You're just not good enough." Even worse, all her friends had moved up to the next class, while she was still here in grade 4.

Pause to ask one or several of questions, such as: Have you ever felt like something was too hard for you? How does it feel when you think you're not good enough? What do you do when you feel sad at school?

Let's go back to the story and see what happens to Chioma.

The warm breeze carried the sound of children playing outside, making Chioma feel even more alone. But then she heard familiar footsteps. Her friends Dupe and Godiya appeared in the doorway, their faces filled with concern when they saw her tears.

"Why aren't you at break time?" Godiya asked softly.

"I can't do it," Chioma whispered, pointing to her math homework. "And now my father says if I fail again, I can't come back to school."

But Dupe's face lit up with a gentle smile. She pulled up a chair next to Chioma. "Let me tell you a secret," she said. "In grades 1 and 2, everyone called me the 'slow kid.' I felt just like you do now."

Pause to ask one or several of questions, such as: Have you ever had a friend who was feeling sad? What did you say or do when you noticed your friend was feeling sad.

Let's go back to the story and see what happens next.

Chioma looked up, surprised. "But you're one of the best students now! What changed?"

"My parents prayed for me," Dupe explained, "and my mother taught me how to say a special prayer. Want to learn it?" Chioma nodded.

Dupe took her hands and said: "Every morning before class, I say these words: 'Dear God, I am your child. I am smart. I can learn and grow. Amen.'"

The three friends held hands in a circle, the warm sunlight now streaming through the classroom window. Together they repeated the prayer, their voices growing stronger with each word. 'God, I am your child. I am smart. I can learn and grow. Amen.'

And that was just the beginning! Every Wednesday and Friday during break time, instead of playing, Dupe and Godiya helped Chioma study.

Pause to ask one or several of questions, such as: How did Chioma's friends help her when she was struggling? What do you think helped Chioma most - the prayer, her friends' help, or both? Who or what helps you when things are hard?

Now, let's see how this prayer and the help of her friends lightened Chioma's burden.

Two months later, the head teacher called a special assembly. Chioma's heart was beating fast - but this time, not from worry. "I have wonderful news," the head teacher announced, beaming. "Chioma is now second in her class!"

The whole school erupted in cheers, but no one cheered louder than Dupe and Godiya. As they hugged their friend, they remembered that sad day two months ago, and how a little prayer and a lot of friendship had helped make a heavy burden so much lighter.

You see, sometimes God sends us help through our friends. And when we pray together and help each other, what seems impossible becomes possible.

[Reprise Theme Song]

DRAWING

Invite the children to draw a picture. On one side of the picture, they can draw a picture that shows what it is like to have heavy burdens. And on the other side of the picture, they can draw a picture that shows what it is like to find rest.

LETTING GO OF OUR BURDENS

Give each child something heavy to hold, like a stone. Once each child has an object, invite each child to share something that makes them feel worried or sad or upset. After they share with the group, the child can go and put their heavy object on an altar space that is set up in the room. Each child shares one at a time, and adds their object to the pile on the altar.

[Reprise Theme Song]

CLOSING PRAYER

Adult: Let us pray. Repeat after me.

Adult: Dear God,

Children: Dear God,

Adult: I am your child.

Children: I am your child.

Adult: I give my burdens to you.

Children: I give my burdens to you.

Adult: Thank you for helping me.

Children: Thank you for helping me.

Adult: Help me to help others.

Children: Help me to help others.

Adult: Thank you for the children in Nigeria.

Children: Thank you for the children in Nigeria.

Adult: And thank you for the children all around the world.

Children: And thank you for the children all around the world.

Adult: Amen.

Children: Amen.



NIGERIA

- North East
- North West
- North Central
- South East
- South West
- South South

