



## **BIG IDEA**

It's not popular to admit to being afraid of demons, the devil, or a darkness lurking in the shadows. Confessing to keeping the lights on when going to bed and running up the basement stairs when you are the only one home isn't cool. But we all have done these things. And if we're being honest, deep inside, we know something dark exists in this world. We may not know how to explain it, but Jesus and His Word help us make sense of—and not be slaves to—our seemingly unnecessary and embarrassing fears.

## **OPENING**

[**Author Note:** I opened with an edited video clip of mildly scary movie and TV trailers, finishing with a clip from *Stranger Things*. You may want to use a *Stranger Things* clip or another current movie or TV show clip.]

At some point early in this message, mention that believers face opposition on three fronts: the world system (the fallen, broken, corrupted systems and philosophies of this world, because people are fallen and broken and deceived); the flesh (our own fallen, twisted, and broken thoughts, desires, and feelings); and the devil (Satan and his demons—it would be good to explain we are more likely to encounter demons and not Satan himself, since he is not omnipresent. You can note that when you say “the devil” or “Satan” from here on out, you are simply speaking of demonic forces).]

Just watching that video clip gave some of us the creeps. The fear of darkness is real.

Everyone tries to play down their fears. It's not popular to admit to being afraid of demons, the devil, or a darkness lurking in the shadows. Confessing to keeping the lights on when going to bed and running up the basement stairs when you are the only one home isn't cool. But we all have done these things. And if we're being honest, deep inside, we know something dark exists in this world.

All of us desire light, not darkness; love, not hate; peace, not war; life and growth, not death and decay. But things aren't the way they are supposed to be. They seem upside down.

Just a quick look at the news or even at our own neighborhoods and schools can reveal some pretty dark stuff that twists our stomachs:

[**Author Note:** You may want to look for some specific and current examples in the news or around your community.]

- The threat of nuclear war
- Child trafficking
- Child pornography
- Cyber bullying
- Genocide
- Terrorist bombings
- School shootings

This feeling is so universal, it can be found in every form of music, art, and entertainment. It's relatable, because it is real. There is something at work behind the scenes and some may call it The Dark Side of the Force or the Upside Down.

We may not know how to explain it, but Jesus and His Word will help us make sense of what is really going on. With Jesus helping us, we can understand and even overcome our seemingly unnecessary and embarrassing fears.

## **DARKNESS HAS A FACE**

Jesus believed in evil and darkness. In fact, He gave it a face and a name.

### **John 8:43–45 (NLT)**

*43 Why can't you understand what I am saying? It's because you can't even hear me! 44 For you are the children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies. 45 So when I tell the truth, you just naturally don't believe me!*

**The devil has a DESIRE.** In this passage, Jesus is talking to some religious leaders who have allowed their hearts to be deceived and become hard. Instead of loving and serving God and His people, they chose to use

their spiritual positions to serve their own selfish desires. They allowed the Enemy to steer their hearts from their true purpose: caring for and encouraging God’s people instead of making themselves look good. In other words, they allowed themselves to become “*children of your father the devil ...*”

Notice that Jesus calls Satan a “father.” Satan is like a father, and he desires offspring (children)—individuals who live just like he does. He and his demons deceive and lie in order to convince people to follow their lead and live according to their way. An upside-down and perverted way. A way that’s disconnected from God’s plan for humanity. A way of hatred, destruction, murder, abuse, self-promotion, and self-preservation.

Some of you may say, “I don’t even think about the devil. I don’t know him, and I don’t care to be like him.” But you don’t have to know your father in order to be like him; you just need his DNA.

Yes, we are made in the image of God, our true Father. But because of sin, we have a natural desire to resist and rebel against God. We all have a choice: to serve God or to serve ourselves. When we serve ourselves, we are acting just like the devil.

We weren’t created to be Satan’s children, but God’s. That’s why God, our perfect and eternal Father, provides a way for us to be adopted into His family.

### **John 1:12 (NLT)**

*“But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.”*

When you believe God and accept his Son, Jesus, God gives you His DNA and makes you a brand-new creation through the Holy Spirit. He makes you a child of God!

The Enemy not only has a desire; He also has a destination for your life.

### **John 10:10 (NLT)**

*The thief’s purpose (destination) is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.*

**The devil has a DESTINATION.** The devil wants to take you somewhere: on a path (life) of sin and death. And by “death,” we don’t just mean physical death, but the many little deaths in all areas of life: pain, regret, turmoil, addiction, etc., and ultimately, physical death.

[**Author Note:** You may want to interject, based on your audience, that for believers, the ultimate destination isn’t hell anymore. But if we continue to live in sin, the result is missing out on the life that Jesus created for us. For the person who hasn’t chosen to follow Jesus, Satan’s plan is to take them to an eternal separation, away from God and His love and grace, which is called Hell.]

And Satan has a plan. It’s simple: steal, kill, and destroy. He doesn’t do this all at once, he does it sneakily and subtly. He waits for opportunities.

### **1 Peter 5:8**

*“Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.”*

He waits for times when you are tired, angry, disappointed, alone, and hurt. He wants you to give up and blame God. He wants you to think that God owes you and that His plans aren’t for your good.

He also waits for the times when you experience success and accomplishment. He wants you to believe you did it all by yourself and that you really don’t need God, that God didn’t give you that ability—you earned it. You worked hard and did it. Things are good, and prayer and ultimate dependence on God are only for the tough times.

The devil whispers to you and hopes you listen.

He’s waiting for you to blow it. To take your eyes off Jesus and His plans. To pursue your own plans. To reject His words and way and to follow your own. He wants to steal your joy, your peace, and all that Jesus has given you. He wants to kill your dreams in Christ and ultimately destroy you.