

Saint Bakhita of Sudan

Book Title: *Saint Bakhita of Sudan: Forever Free*

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We've all gone through difficult times in our lives. Sometimes we whine about the rotten luck we've had or still have nightmares about terrible moments from our pasts. Many of us strain to see God's plan through the pain and the tears. If you think for even an instant that your life is bad, you'll start thanking God for all the blessings in your life as soon as you read about the life of Saint Bakhita of Sudan. She was kidnapped as a young girl, forced to endure slavery and severe beatings for over a decade, and never learned the fate of her family. Even if one of these terrible things has happened to you, it is highly unlikely that you have experienced all three. And yet Bakhita has the best attitude about all of her hardships. She actually expressed gratitude for her time as a slave, because all of it, even the beatings and the separation from her family, led her to Jesus and religious life.

Reflection Questions

1. How did Bakhita's childhood shape who she was as an adult?
2. Although Bakhita did not know of God's existence for the early part of her life, she did feel grateful for the good things that came her way and she never gave up hope. Have you ever felt grateful for something in your life, even when other things aren't going your way? How do you know that God is watching over you?
3. The name Bakhita means "lucky one" and, although given to Saint Bakhita as a sarcastic joke, it turned out to be quite fitting. Do you or someone you know have a nickname? How was that nickname earned?
4. How does the practice of slavery go against Christianity?
5. As the doorkeeper for her convent, Bakhita became known as a kind woman who gave solid advice. Who do you go to for advice? Why do you trust his or her opinion?

Geography Connection

Sudan

Italy

Literacy Connection

Saint Bakhita's ability to see the bright side of a bad situation is something that many people struggle with. When we read books it is important to try and understand the situation from all perspectives. This can help us to understand the plot better and identify the characters' motivations (4th grade standard).

Read *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* as an introduction to perspective. Make sure the students get the point that there is always more than one side to every story. Next take a story that you have recently read in class (even better, a particular scene from that story) and assign different characters to each table. They should answer the following questions about their character. Afterward, the students can rewrite the story from their character's perspective (this works particularly well if the original story was told in the first person).

Name _____

A Different Perspective

My character is _____

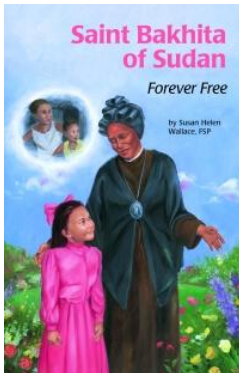
1. What actions does my character take?

2. What are some important things that my character says?

3. What motivates my character to do or say these things?

4. How does my character feel about this situation and why do I think that?

5. Why does the author include my character in this scene?



St. Josephine Bakhita was born in Sudan, Africa, in 1869. When she was a child, she was captured and sold as a slave and suffered harsh treatment. The name "Bakhita," which means "fortunate," was given to her in sarcasm by the people who kidnapped her.

Eventually Bakhita was taken to Italy and put into service as a nanny. She was sent to live with the Canossian Sisters in Venice. From the sisters she learned about God and Christianity. In time, she asked to be baptized, and took the name Josephine. At the age of forty-one, Josephine felt God calling her to become one of the sisters. The Canossian Sisters accepted her into their community.

For twenty-five years, Sister Josephine carried out humble services in the convent. She cooked, sewed, took care of the chapel and answered the door. During World War I, Sister Josephine helped to care for the wounded. She became known for her

kindness and goodness. She was a source of comfort and encouragement to everyone who came to her in need.

She was canonized on October 1, 2000, by Pope John Paul II. St. Josephine is the patron saint of the Christian Sudanese people who still suffer persecution for their faith. Bakhita's story is fascinating particularly because of the story of her slavery and how God was with her every step of the way, writing something beautiful from the sad chapters of her early years as a child. There is still childhood slavery in the world today. Bakhita's story challenges readers to respect the human dignity of all. Ages 8 – 12

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