Bonus Activities

All Ages

Enjoy a Bold Snack: Items needed: Seasoned pretzel twists, plates, napkin, water. As children are eating their snack, tell children that Chaplain Nicole Tota lives in South Dakota. (Show the children where South Dakota is on a map if available.) Say that many South Dakota snacks have bold flavors. They have extra crispy potato chips with flavors like spicy ranch and dill pickle, and seasoned pretzels flavored with dill, spicy, and buffalo ranch. Ask children to talk about whether they like bold spicy foods.

Go on a Scavenger Hunt: Items needed: Pictures of a Bible, a cross, a hymnbook, a pulpit, a baptistery, loaf of bread, a cup, water, praying hands, shoes, clothes. Print pictures and hide them around your room. Tell children how many pictures you have hidden (print multiples if needed so that you have at least one per child) and tell children how many they can find. Once children have found all the pictures, gather and ask them to show their picture. Ask children to think about how that picture is related to faith (practicing our faith, sharing our faith, or living out our faith). If needed, provide an example of water: We are baptized with water, It is a symbol of new life. Jesus said that he is living water; sometimes the best way we can help someone (i.e. live out our faith) is by giving them cold water to drink.

Play Twister: Item needed: Twister board game. Encourage children to play Twister. After a few rounds, talk about some of the crazy poses they had. Tell children that sometimes our insides feel like some of those crazy poses. Sometimes bad things happen and we don't know what to do. We can feel all alone and with nowhere to turn. Chaplain Nicole Tota helps veterans (share definition from the prepare section if needed) develop a relationship with God and accept God's forgiveness. She helps them heal and feel better on the inside.

Pathlight

www.cbf.net/pathlight

CBF's *Pathlight* curriculum helps children explore the Good News of Jesus through stories, scripture and activities.

cbf

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Pathlight

Your word is a lamp that gives light wherever I walk. **Psalm 119:105 (CEV)**

Theme Overview

Nicole Tota is a chaplain with the Vet Center at Sioux Falls, South Dakota, who works with a therapist to help veterans work through difficult things. In this program, called Building Spiritual Strength, the therapist is able to help veterans deal with depression and the chaplain (in this case, Nicole) can help them rediscover their faith, accept forgiveness from God and share Scriptures with them that the therapist is not allowed to do. Thanks to this program, veterans receive holistic treatment that helps their minds and their spirits. This session focuses on the theme of chaplaincy.

Bible Verse

Galatians 6:2

You obey the law of Christ when you offer each other a helping hand.

Session Outline

Prepare

- Make copies of the Student Handout.
- Review the Story and Bible Verse.
- Definition: **Veteran**: a person who has served in the military and no longer does. Many times, they have fought in a war (a fight between two or more countries or people groups).

Welcome

- Greet students as they arrive.
- **Ask**: "Who helps you when you feel all alone?"

Engage

- Distribute the Student Handout.
- Read and discuss the Bible Verse.
- Work on the Handout Activity.
- Transition to Story Time.

Share

- Tell the Story, "The Building Spiritual Strength Program."
- Share the photo and caption.
- Discuss the Story and pray.

Conclude

- Lead students in Bonus Activities as time permits.

The Building Spiritual Strength Program

Dear Caroline,
Thanks so much for reaching out to learn more about our Building Spiritual Strength Program. I think this program could be a great fit for your brother. Here's how it works: we have a group of veterans who meet together, along with a chaplain (myself) and a therapist. We talk about the things that they have experienced. We know that many of our veterans have seen some things that are very sad and hard to forget. And some may have done some things that are hard to forget too. Our therapist works with the group to help them talk about these things. And then I share Bible verses with them and talk about God's forgiveness. I help them see that, no matter what they have done or seen, God is still with them, and God still loves them. I remind them that they are not alone. The therapist and I work together to help them heal both mentally and spiritually. Our meetings include prayer and/or meditation exercises, forgiveness, discussions of the problem of evil and even conflict resolution. Many of our veterans find these groups very helpful. And a few have even emailed me later to let me know that they have started talking to God again. It's amazing to see them open up to God as God helps them heal. I would love for you and your brother to come to our center to meet with me and Michael, our therapist. We have a new group that will start in a few weeks. I'd love for your brother to join us!

Sincerely,
Chaplain Nicole Tota

Discussion and Prayer ✱

- **Ask**: How does the Building Spiritual Strength Program help veterans?
- **Ask**: How does talking to God help you?
- **Ask**: How can we help others learn more about God?
- **Say**: The Building Spiritual Strength Program helps veterans talk about and work through the hard things they have seen and done. It helps them learn more about God's forgiveness and reminds them that God is with them and loves them, no matter what. A therapist and a chaplain work together to help veterans heal their minds and their spirits. Talking to God helps us with our worries and fears. God helps us heal from hard things that happen. God is always with us and always loves us, no matter what.
- **Pray**: Dear God, thank you for chaplains like Nicole who work with veterans to help them talk to you again. Help us to share your great love with others, just as Nicole does. Amen.

Nicole Tota

Nicole Tota is a chaplain with the Vet Center at Sioux Falls, South Dakota, who works with a therapist to help veterans work through difficult things.

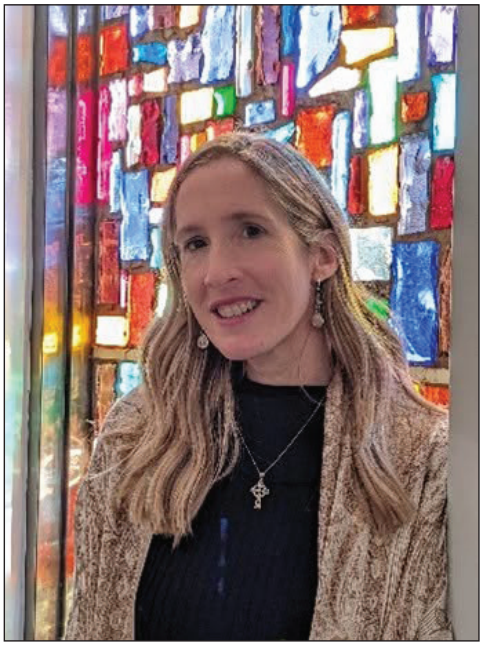
STUDENT HANDOUT
OCTOBER 25, 2026

Pathlight

Your word is a lamp that gives light wherever I walk. Psalm 119:105 (CEV)

Learn About

Nicole Tota is a chaplain with the Vet Center at Sioux Falls, South Dakota, who works with a therapist to help veterans work through difficult things. In this program, called Building Spiritual Strength, the therapist is able to help veterans deal with depression and the chaplain (in this case, Nicole) can help them rediscover their faith, accept forgiveness from God and share Scriptures with them that the therapist is not allowed to do. Thanks to this program, veterans receive holistic treatment that helps their minds and their spirits. This session focuses on the theme of chaplaincy.



Bible Verse

Galatians 6:2

You obey the law of Christ when you offer each other a helping hand.

Word Search

Find the words to learn more about how Chaplain Nicole Tota helps veterans.

Chaplain Nicole Tota

L	G	W	V	W	J	G	X	L	Z	L	B	O	Q	G	V	F	Y
T	M	M	C	O	C	H	A	P	L	A	I	N	U	O	N	A	O
H	O	Z	E	H	G	D	E	P	R	E	S	S	I	O	N	I	B
E	Z	R	J	G	N	F	F	Q	Y	G	E	W	B	A	J	T	H
R	S	O	Y	K	R	G	D	I	L	K	I	U	D	H	L	H	Y
A	P	I	Y	S	C	R	I	P	T	U	R	E	Z	A	H	B	Y
P	I	K	G	V	P	T	C	B	S	G	Z	F	J	D	C	F	X
I	R	M	I	N	D	S	D	K	Z	U	W	Q	E	Q	P	F	V
S	I	F	J	W	H	F	O	R	G	I	V	E	N	E	S	S	G
T	T	X	J	B	D	I	F	F	I	C	U	L	T	S	D	T	O
A	S	J	M	G	D	X	X	E	I	N	H	M	H	E	J	Z	E
R	W	S	C	Z	K	H	R	E	D	I	S	C	O	V	E	R	Q

Find the following words in the puzzle.
Words are hidden → and ↓ and ↘

FAITH
FORGIVENESS
SCRIPTURE
MINDS
SPIRITS
DIFFICULT
REDISCOVER
CHAPLAIN
THERAPIST
DEPRESSION