

SEND OUT YOUR LIGHT

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DISCUSSION GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

1. Read Genesis 1:1-2. Discuss all that you notice about darkness and light.
2. Think about critical moments in your life. When did the light break in? Write or call to mind a memory or a time when you could see something clearly that you had not seen before? What was the result or change caused by that light breaking in?
3. Where is God making something new or creating order out of chaos? Where today, or in the last week, have you seen God calling you to walk in his light?
4. On page 9, Sandra writes: "Sometimes in direct proportion to suffering, joy grows." How do you respond to that? Have you ever felt joy at the same time as you felt sorrow? Ask God to help you name an example of this from your life. Notice how he can be with you in both emotions at once.

CHAPTER 1

1. How does Scripture influence your profession or creative expression? Do you ever think of your work Monday through Friday (whether at an office or as a caregiver) as spiritual work?
2. Can you think of a time when you noticed that God has been with you while you are working?
3. Sandra writes that she has found "friendship with Jesus" at the "intersection of songs and Scripture" (see page 24). Where have you found friendship with Jesus?
4. God is a patient teacher. What are the one or two lessons you feel like you've been learning over and over in the last 10 years? In the last 6 months? Do you see the repetition of these lessons as grace or as futility? Why?

CHAPTER 2

1. Discuss the tension between being made for community yet maintaining your identity so that you can contribute your unique individuality to the greater whole.
2. How do you relate to the parrot from Sandra's "Parrot in Portugal" song (see page 36)? How are you like a wild bird that has been transplanted into a new environment? Change can either cause positive growth or it can lead to despair. What habits help you lean in toward growth and flourishing lately?
3. How does God's call to Adam and Eve, "Where are you?" in Genesis 3 encourage you? How is God caring for you in the places where you are most vulnerable?

CHAPTER 3

1. What has been your experience with anger? Do you find it easy to access? What do you do to cope with anger when you witness injustice or when things feel out of control?
2. What are the defining characteristics of righteous anger? What distinguishes it from unrighteous anger? Give a few biblical examples of righteous anger.
3. How are anger and hope intertwined for the Christian? Read Psalm 43. How does the complaint of verses 1-2 give shape to the praise in verses 4-5? Pray Psalm 43:3 in your own words, ask God to send his light and truth into the places where you see a need for justice within and around you.

CHAPTER 4

1. How has hope reframed your reality during a time of struggle or adversity? What is the difference between hope and optimism? Think of a time when you thought things were hanging in the balance. What was God doing in that experience?
2. How have songs and singing shaped you? What songs have met you or carried you in times of uncertainty or loss? How do you see God's light being reflected in you as you sing?
3. Songs can affect the mood of our inner life. They can build up our hope, or they can pull us more deeply into negative thoughts. What are the songs you have gone back to lift your spirits? What are some songs that have had a negative effect on you? Make a playlist that you can go back to give you hope or perseverance.

CHAPTER 5

1. Can you name a few of your unfulfilled longings? In what ways have you tried meeting these longings on your own terms? Has it worked? Name some of those longings and ask God to meet you as you trust him.
2. Why is it important to bring your needs to Jesus and to be transparent about our needs with one another?
3. What good gifts have been passed on to you? How have you passed those same gifts to others? Are there people in your life you might be called to pour into in the same way you've received? Write down the name of someone you could reach out to.

CHAPTER 6

1. Answer the question Sandra writes on page 70: Where do you feel your weakness in your work life or in your relationships?
2. Why is imagination essential to spiritual growth and moving closer to God? Consider the prophetic dreams that John recorded in the book of Revelation 1-2, and imagine God on his throne: Father, Son and Spirit there together. Close your eyes and imagine a conversation with them. What do they each say to you?
3. How do God's words affect the work you do? When have you thought of a word of Scripture in a time of need, at work, or when making major life decisions?

CHAPTER 7

1. Discuss your experience with silence and solitude. Take a few minutes to silence your phone, and just listen to the sounds of your room or the outside. Listen for God to speak to you in the quiet of your heart. Practice extended times like these, starting with a few minutes and adding a little more time each day.
2. How do distractions and "noise" keep you from hearing God's voice? What other voices do you hear competing with God's voice? Can you identify his voice from the other voices?
3. What is the difference between isolation and solitude? Remember, God can be praised in silence. He does not need anything we might bring to him, but loves just being with us.

CHAPTER 8

1. Sandra writes on page 95: "The broken heart of expectations has brought me freedom, though it is often painful at the time. In his mercy, he launches me off the hamster wheel, bringing my stressful strivings to light." How do you respond to this? What hamster wheel have you been running on?
2. What voice has God given you? How is he bringing you out of hiding or off of the sidelines to send out his light?
3. Read John 9. How does Jesus' healing the man born blind reveal his light? How does this story encourage you? Imagine you are the man born blind. What is Jesus inviting you to see that you couldn't see before? What do you want to do now that he has given you this new sight?

CHAPTER 9

1. When has something beautiful, like a sunset, the smile of a loved-one, or the performance of a symphony pointed us back to God? What would happen if we were cut off from seeing beauty?
2. What is the difference between praising what has been created, rather than the Creator? Isaiah 40:3-8 highlights the beauty of the harvest and the flowers of the field, but in and of themselves, they fade. Behind all other beauty, God's own beauty endures. Give a few examples when you have seen God's beauty after other beauty fades.
3. If "all beauty is really God's beauty" (see page 107) then how does beauty bring us out of the darkness and into the light? Give thanks to God for the examples of beauty you have seen even just today.

CHAPTER 10

1. Where do you see chaos in your complicated story? When has God brought order into chaos for you personally?
2. Sandra writes on page 116 about how N.T. Wright says that the Psalms are like holes poked into a closed shoebox, shining light inside. How do you relate to this image? Give an example of one or two Psalms that have illuminated you in times of darkness.
3. What is helpful for you as you desire to live in step with the Spirit and fix your eyes on Jesus? What distracts you from that intention?

CHAPTER 11

1. How have family and community been hard, good, and sanctifying for you? How does the Holy Spirit work through these relationships to bring you closer to Jesus?
2. When has God used your limitations and frustrations to change you? Give an example.
3. How do you respond to this sentence on page 124: "Nostalgia is just a ghost. But love is love, backwards and forwards. You can take it with you, and it is not bound by time"?

CHAPTER 12

1. How do you define lament? Discuss how it is connected to experiencing joy and the fullness of God.
2. Where do you see places in your life or in your broader community that need to be grieved?
3. When have you suffered so much that you feel like bone china—"heated right to the edge of breaking, but not quite" (page 136)? What did God teach you in that experience?

CHAPTER 13

1. Why is the courage to lament important?
2. How do you respond to this quote from page 144: "It takes more strength to sit with our pain than it does to try to fill that hole of sadness within us by way of optimistic distractions. We can medicate with religion or productivity or binging or scrolling. We can make up fictional narratives in our heads to cope with loss or to pretend things are not so bad. But these leave us feeling empty"?
3. What is your "soul-shape" (page 145) from God? How do you offer it to the world?

CHAPTER 14

1. Discuss times when we've felt displaced in your life. What were your transitions from "old" to "new" like?
2. Read Psalm 84 and reflect on how God has directed you from old places to new ones throughout your life. What have you learned about God? What have you learned about yourself?
3. Even as you feel displaced in this life, how can you find rest and a place to call "home"?

CHAPTER 15

1. When has liturgy in worship been a support for you? Give a few examples.
2. How have you experienced God's Spirit overflowing from you into your daily life?
3. Discuss the importance of God's unchanging nature when you consider how you are always changing.

CHAPTER 16

1. Read Isaiah 54. What verses stand out to you as you consider living as God's light-bearer?
2. What assurance do you receive from knowing that God will not abandon you?
3. See Isaiah 54:9-10. How does your experience compare with Noah's? How is it different?

CHAPTER 17

1. What thresholds have you crossed over in your life? How have you seen God's presence with you through these times?
2. Even if you don't know where God leads you, how does knowing your guide affect you?
3. What is the role of confession in your life? How does it help you to move forward?

CHAPTER 18

1. How do you regard the Bible? When has it been "alive and active" in your life (Hebrews 4:12)?
2. What ways can we come together to bring light, to "set the scene for the good to thrive in our midst" (see page 192)?
3. Why is vulnerability necessary for transformation to occur?

CHAPTER 19

1. How does God call your attention to his careful provision during the most ordinary daily experiences? What about during times of tragedy or disruption?
2. When has God used friends to reveal that which is hidden, moving you closer to healing?
3. Pray audibly through Psalm 139 and discuss the experience. How does God change you through this?

CHAPTER 20

1. Read Psalm 19:1-4. How is creation sending out God's light?
2. Consider each decade of your past, asking the Holy Spirit to bring healing as you remember parts of your story in ten year intervals. Outline it on a blank or lined page. Take a moment to reflect after this exercise and give thanks for how God has been faithful to you.
3. How do you respond to the concepts of light and dark in Revelation 21:23?

CHAPTER 21

1. Read Job 19:25-27. How do you respond to Job's praise after suffering great loss? Name one key loss in your story and reflect on the state of your relationship with God when you were going through times of pain. Did he seem close or distant? Do you see it differently now than you did at the time?
2. Sandra writes on page 216, "The way through pain is praise." Do you agree or disagree? Support your answer with an example. Have you found it hard to praise God when you are in distress?
3. When has singing in worship (or what songs have) helped heal your pain?

CHAPTER 22

1. How does the discussion of the Trinity inform your understanding of who God is? Think of a time when you were invited to a party or to be part of a group that you wanted to be included in. Imagine that God is inviting you, by name, to be in fellowship with them—three in one.
2. Are you woven into community with other people? Who are the 2-3 people who know your daily struggles and celebrations right now? How does living and working in community affect your spiritual growth?
3. How does creation hint at our communal nature? Has your experience of salvation expanded to include not just your personal story, but the salvation of the whole family of God?

CHAPTER 23

1. How do you think of the Holy Spirit? What images come to mind? How and when does the Holy Spirit show up in your life?
2. Describe what distortions of power you've subscribed to. Do you feel helpless to change recurring patterns in your life? What is the truth about the power of the Holy Spirit?
3. What words does Sandra use to describe the Holy Spirit's power? When have you seen these displayed—either in your life or in the life of another believer?

CHAPTER 24

1. Discuss the tension between scarcity and abundance that can be seen in the Psalms and prophetic books of the Old Testament. What resources do you wish you could store up for yourself? (Money? Time? Relationships?)
2. When have you lived with an expectation of scarcity? Or what important resource do you most need to protect?
3. What do you do when you're afraid of not having enough____(fill in the blank)? How is this detrimental to your Christian walk?
4. What is the connection between God's abundance and his justice? Are they connected? Does he withhold things from us that we deserve?

CHAPTER 25

1. What role does hospitality play during your church's worship services? Who makes you feel most welcome on a Sunday morning?
2. Does the singing at your church feel hospitable? Do you feel yourself to be a part of the singing? Why or why not?
3. How is listening while singing in worship a spiritual practice? How can you be a better listener?

CHAPTER 26

1. How are we to live in light of the light that God has "given, strengthened, and sent out into the world" (page 256)? What name has God given you? What is the call that he has placed on your life? What gifts has he given you to answer that call?
2. Discuss a time when you've seen God's mysterious providence and its resolution. What unanswered questions are you carrying? How long have you been carrying these questions? What helps you wait for the Lord when there is not an easy resolution?
3. What signs of hope is God giving you as you wait for him through the ups and downs of your life? Who is walking beside you, or sitting across the table from you, helping to fan the flames of hope? What friendships can you cultivate to encourage others to hope, to see what God is doing, illuminating the darkness that they may not yet see?