

# THE DARKNESS AND THE LIGHT

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- A Sample of the Student Book
- The The Darkness and the Light Small Group Overviews

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# The Darkness and the Light: Reflecting Jesus in a Dark World

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*“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” - John 1:5*

Have you ever been in a place that’s really and truly dark? A place with absolutely zero sources of light? It’s a little unsettling, isn’t it? We lose context. We become disoriented. And if we’re honest, sometimes we get scared.

There is another kind of darkness that surrounds us. It’s not the absence of light. It’s the absence of good. There is a darkness we encounter all the time in our world. The darkness of depression. The darkness of addiction. The darkness of hopelessness. The darkness of violence. The darkness of oppression. The darkness of lostness. It’s the darkness of a world without good. A world without God. There is darkness.

But there is a light, too. And not just any light. It’s a light that is overwhelming, all-consuming, and perfectly pure . . . a light that refuses to be ignored.

*“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” - John 1:5*

There is a light that drives away darkness. A light that drives out fear. A light that runs off despair. A light that shines for justice. A light that is comforting, and clarifying . . .

A light that saves.

*“Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” - John 8:12*

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## Session 1: Let There Be Light: The God Who Creates

- **What We Want Students to Learn:** That God is real, active, and all powerful.
- **Scripture:** Genesis 1:1-5; 1 John 1:5-7
- **Session Snapshot:** There is a God and we can know Him. The Bible is His story. He is the all-powerful Creator who spoke creation into existence with His word. He spoke into the chaotic void and suddenly the darkness was driven away. But He didn’t stop there. He is actively engaged in our lives. He did not set the world in motion and then step away. He is present, a God of action, one who brings light into every dark corner, even today.

## Session 2: The Light Came into the World: The God Who Cares

- **What We Want Students to Learn:** That Jesus is the light of the world, and what that means for creation and for us.
- **Scripture:** John 1:1-13; John 8:12
- **Session Snapshot:** Jesus is the light of the world. He is God incarnate, sent to bring life and light to all creation. When we come to saving faith in Jesus, His light shines in us. It is the light of the life He purchased for us through His death and resurrection. If we are apart from Jesus, we are separated from God’s light. This session will challenge students to evaluate their relationship with Jesus and ask, “Do I know the true light”?

### Session 3: You Are the Light: The God Who Calls

- **What We Want Students to Learn:** That part of why we have been saved is so that we will shine our light in the SAME WAY Jesus did, with the same purpose, and the same results.
- **Scripture:** Matthew 5:14-16
- **Session Snapshot:** This is a really fun transition from Jesus as light to us as light. It's powerful when you see it in those terms. Jesus was the light of the world, and yet in Matthew 5, He looks at His followers and says YOU are the light. So often, we make the Gospel and salvation to be ALL about the eternity we'll spend with Jesus. That's a big part of it and it's awesome. But part of why we have been saved is so that we will shine light in the SAME WAY Jesus did, with the same purpose and the same results. The light of God in us draws others out of darkness. This is a huge part of our purpose as Christ followers.

### Session 4: Light the Darkness: The God Who Commands

- **What We Want Students to Learn:** That they are called to obey the command to live as children of light.
- **Scripture:** Ephesians 5:6–14
- **Session Snapshot:** This passage is a BIG challenge for students. It's about what taking faith and obedience seriously does for the Kingdom. This passage introduces three commands that form the heart of the message. As children of light, we can't "partner" with darkness. We must walk as children of the light, striving to know and do what God has for us. And we are to expose the darkness!

# THE DARKNESS AND THE LIGHT

## Session 1: Let There Be Light: The God Who Creates

**What We Want Students to Learn:** That God is the Creator who spoke Creation into existence and is still active in our daily lives.

**Scripture:** Genesis 1:1-5; 1 John 1:5-7

**Session Snapshot:** There is a God, and we can know Him. The Bible is His story. He is the all-powerful Creator who spoke Creation into existence with His word. He spoke into the chaotic void, and suddenly the darkness was driven away. But He didn't stop there. He is actively engaged in our lives. He did not set the world in motion and then step away. He is present, a God of action, one who brings light into every dark corner, even today.

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## Bible Background

*The Bible Background is a focused, brief overview of some of the background info for the main passage you will be teaching.*

## Teacher Prep Video

Each Leader's Guide comes with a *Teacher Prep Video*. These are short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your *The Darkness and The Light* Lesson 1 Teacher Prep Video, click on the link below:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lfts98ztiCk>

## The Details

### Genesis

- **Author:** While there's no specific author named within the text, Moses is the accepted author for Genesis, with some editing and additions done after his death (such as the account of his death!).
- **Time frame:** It's difficult to establish with any certainty a date for the completion of the Pentateuch (a name for the first five books of the Bible—including Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—of which Genesis is a part). Most of the material originated from Moses himself, and depending on the date of the Exodus (which is also not known for sure), that would make a date for the writing of Genesis sometime in the 1400s or the 1200s BC.
- **Purpose:** Genesis details the earliest history of our world, including Creation and Adam and Eves' fall. It also focuses on the emergence of Israel, not only as God's people but as the group God would work through to bring redemption to the world.

### 1 John

- **Author:** 1 John was written by John the Apostle. John was one of Jesus' disciples and was referred to as "the beloved disciple." John was probably only a teenager when he spent his three years with Jesus. In addition to 1 John, he authored 2 John, 3 John, the Gospel of John, and Revelation.

- **Timeframe:** 1 John was probably written sometime after the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, but probably no later than 90 AD.
- **Purpose:** John was writing to a population (1<sup>st</sup> Century Christ-followers) who had seen their ranks diminished at the onset of Roman persecution. John was calling his audience to a faith that was doctrinally sound and application-oriented. He reminded his readers of the teachings of Christ and urged them to put them into practice.

### The Main Point

The main point of the Genesis passage is to establish for students that God is the all-powerful Creator of the Universe. He spoke Creation into existence, speaking life out of the void. What once was dark and formless, God made light. He created all things, including us.

The main point of the 1 John passage is to establish that God is light and that light is the light of His goodness. There is no darkness in Him. But, we want to take it a step further and focus on the idea of fellowship, both with God and each other. We can know God. We can be in fellowship with Him.

### The Takeaway

Added together, these two passages show us that God is not only the Creator but that He is STILL actively involved in His Creation, especially us. God is light. And His light impacts our lives each day when we are in relationship with Him. God didn't create the world and then stepped back for it to run without Him. He is actively involved in all aspects of Creation. That is important when we think about nature and history. But it's life-changing when we consider the impacts it has on us as individuals.

## Lesson Plan

The Lesson Plan contains three elements: an introductory activity called *Getting Started*; the Bible study section called *Digging In*; and an application-focused segment called *Wrapping Up*.

### Getting Started

- **Student Book Pages**
  - This lesson will utilize pages 8-12 in *The Darkness and The Light* Student Book.
  - This activity will use pages 8-9.
- **Additional Instructions**
  - None

FIRST, welcome students to their first session. If everyone in the group doesn't already know each other, take a moment to have people introduce themselves. Explain to them that you're going to be hanging out a lot over your time in this study, so you want to do a little more to get to know each other. Have students go around and introduce themselves. If your group already knows each other pretty well, maybe consider having them share a random fact about themselves.

THEN, when you're done, explain that you're going to use the Student Book to facilitate these times of Bible study. Direct their attention to page 9. Before jumping in, ask who in the group considers themselves to be pretty good at making stuff. Dinner, arts and crafts, DIY projects, even making apps or websites . . . anything! Then ask, who is really NOT good at all at making things (i.e., who can't even boil a pot of water to make boxed

mac and cheese). Explain that the good news is that we don't have to be good at making stuff to appreciate other people making stuff for us.

NEXT, instruct students to look at the prompts on page 9 and take a minute or so to think of their responses, and write them down in the space provided. Then, go around and have students share their answers. Engage them on their responses, having fun with the group as you go. When the discussion has wound down, explain that you're going to come back to this concept in just a few minutes.

FINALLY, have a student volunteer to read the Session Intro on page 8. When they have finished, say something like:

- **There is a really important truth about God that we're going to learn about in this session. It's what we might call a foundational truth. What does that mean? It means that this truth about God is one we can build on, not just for this Bible study session but in our lives as well. Let's jump into our Bible study and take a closer look.**

If there are no more comments or questions, transition to the *Digging In* section of your lesson.

### Digging In

- **Student Book Pages**
  - This activity will utilize pages 10-11 in *The Darkness and The Light* Student Book.
- **Additional Instructions**
  - You'll want to make sure students have something to write with and a Bible or Bible app.

FIRST, begin by having students turn to Genesis 1. Ask if students know who wrote Genesis. Use the Bible Background to summarize the context of the book. Then, explain that you're about to read a very familiar passage, the beginning of the account of God creating the world. Read or have a student read Genesis 1:1-5. When you've finished, lead students in a discussion.

Direct their attention to the prompt at the top of page 10. Give them a moment to answer the question, "Make a list of all the materials God used to create the world." After a long enough pause, engage them in some discussion. Ask:

- **How did you answer this?**
  - Answers will vary. But explain to students that from nothing, God spoke Creation into being.
- **How does vs. 2 describe what existed before God initiated Creation?**
  - *Answer:* There was no form. To be "void" means that there was literally nothing. Emptiness. This emptiness was described as darkness, deep darkness.

Explain that into this dark, formless void, God spoke Creation into existence. Say something like this:

- **Want to learn a fancy word? There is a Latin phrase that is used to describe how God created the world. The phrase is "ex nihilo" (pronounced "ex KNEE-uh-low"). It means "from nothing." There was nothing. And then God spoke. And out of nothing, Creation began. Look back at the thing you want to build from our opening activity. You made a supply list, didn't you? Unlike God, when we build something, we need existing material. Not God.**

Explain to students that this speaks to God's amazing power. But that's not all.

NEXT, direct their attention to verse 3. Ask something like:

- **How did God bring light into the dark, formless void?**
  - *Answer:* He commanded there to be light, and there was light.
- **What does this say about God's ability?**
  - *Answer:* There is a very simple answer that God is powerful. Allow students to expound on this, really making space for them to process their answers.
- **What did God say about the light?**
  - *Answer:* That it was good. Explain that this comparison will be used throughout the Bible. Over and over again, the things of God will be described as light, while the things of the devil will be described as dark. The goodness of God shines in the world, driving out the darkness of evil.

THEN, lead them to go a bit deeper into who God is. Ask this question (that is also printed at the bottom of page 10):

- **What does Genesis 1:1–5 tell us about who God is?**
  - Answers will vary, but we want students to begin to grasp the true greatness of God. To be able to create the Universe out of nothingness, God had to preexist the Universe. In other words, He had to be before all things to create all things. So, yes, God is powerful. But He is also eternal! He has always been and will always be.

Explain that while it is still wondrous and mystifying after centuries and centuries of studying it, we can confidently say that God created our Universe. The actual mechanics behind it are something we may never know. But we know this: God existed before Creation, and He spoke Creation into being. Into chaos, He spoke order. Into the darkness, He spoke light. And it was good. But then say something like this:

- **The fact that God created the Universe is amazing. If it stopped there, it would still be amazing. But it doesn't. You see, God didn't just create the Universe and then step back and let it do its thing. God isn't like that. He is the Creator, sure. But He is also the Sustainer. He takes an active role in the world and our lives. Let's look where we see this.**

Have students look at the top of page 11. If you want, provide some context for the book of 1 John using the Bible Background portion of your lesson plan. Read or have a student read 1 John 1:5–7. When you've finished, lead students in a discussion. Ask:

- **Vs. 5 is pretty clear. What does John say here?**
  - *Answer:* That God is light (good). In Him, there is no darkness (evil).
- **Vs. 6 drops a bunch of good info on us. Let's look at it for a moment. On its surface, what is it saying?**
  - *Answer:* That our lives have to match what we profess. If we claim to be children of God, we have to act like it.
- **But there is a deeper truth lying in plain sight. It has to do with the word "fellowship." What does that word mean?**
  - *Answer:* To be in fellowship with someone is to be friends with them, to be in relationship with them. There is an implication of peace and warmth. To be in fellowship is to be in a harmonious relationship with someone.
- **So, while this verse commands us not to dishonor our fellowship, it implies a powerful biblical truth that we see echoed everywhere throughout the Bible: we can know and be known by God. We, the created, can know and be known by God, the Creator. Why do we take the amazing truth for granted?**

- Answers will vary. But this truth should rock our worlds and blow our minds daily. We should go around all day long just overwhelmed that the all-powerful, eternal Creator of the Universe knows us and wants us to know Him.
- **Vs. 7 gives us some guidance about what it looks like to live a life that follows God’s expectation for us. Sum up in your own words what you think it means to “walk in the light.”**
  - Answers will vary, but essentially it’s faithfully living out God’s call on us in all areas of our lives.
- **What does it say about what happens when we walk in the light?**
  - *Answer:* We will have fellowship with each other and, through faith in Jesus, fellowship with God.

FINALLY, pull this all together for your students. Say something like:

- **There is a God. He is the Creator. He has always been, and He always will be. There is a light of goodness and truth that flows out of Him to drive away the darkness. And the most amazing thing is that we, regular human beings, can know this Creator God. This truth should drive us to want to know God more and to live our lives according to His standards. Let’s take a look at what exactly that looks like.**

Ask if anyone has any thoughts or questions, then transition to the *Wrapping Up* portion of your lesson.

## Wrapping Up

- **Student Book Pages**
  - This activity will utilize page 12 in *The Darkness and The Light* Student Book.
- **Additional Instructions**
  - Make sure students have something to write with.

FIRST, instruct students to turn to page 12 in their books. Explain that for this activity and each of the four sessions in your study, you're going to give a few minutes to consider HOW we apply what we have learned. Explain that it's vital as Christ-followers that the truth of God's Word shapes our lives. This doesn't happen unless we ponder exactly HOW we live this out.

THEN, direct students’ attention to the verse at the top of the page. Explain that you want to spend a few minutes thinking about what it means to walk in the dark versus walking in the light. Say something like:

- **It’s easy for us to read over this and not stop and think about the practical realities in our lives. But if we’re honest with ourselves, we know that there are still areas in our lives, or in the lives of teenagers in general, where we still walk in the shadows. This could be a sin habit we are struggling to kick, relationships we know aren’t good for us, or attitudes we carry around. Spend a few minutes thinking through what it practically looks like in your life to walk in the darkness.**

Remind students that this is private. They don’t have to write anything down. They can simply think about it. And they don’t have to share, though they certainly can if they want. When you’ve given them a few minutes, ask if anyone wants to share. Again, remind them they certainly don’t have to. Explain that while we will always have sin that we struggle with, if we have a saving faith relationship with Jesus, we are called to walk in the light.

NEXT, encourage students to spend a few minutes thinking about what it practically looks like to walk in the light. Encourage them to write down ways that they, as Christ-followers, can live in such a way that aligns them with God. Challenge them to come up with five or six real, actionable ways they can live as light in a dark world. When they've had time, have students share their responses. Encourage them to take these practices to heart, truly seeking to be people whose lives are an expression of the light of God in them.

FINALLY, ask students if they have any questions or additional comments. Inform students of the *Encounters* devotions located on pages 38-45 in their Student Books. Provide them with a schedule or some structure as to when you would like for them to work through them. (The first devotion is on page 38.)

If there are no more questions, close in prayer for your group.



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DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

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Have you ever been in a place that's really and truly dark? It's a little scary, isn't it?

There is another kind of darkness that surrounds us. It's not the absence of light but the absence of good. It's the darkness of a world without God. There is darkness.

But there is a light, too. And not just any light. It's a light that is overwhelming, all-consuming, and perfectly pure . . . a light that refuses to be ignored. *"Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).*

It's a light that drives away the darkness. A light that drives out fear. A light that shines for justice, a light that saves. It is God's light, and it cannot be defeated. *"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5).*

## **Have You Prepared For The Journey?**

Ask yourself: Is my heart prepared to be challenged? Am I willing to be changed? If you can't answer "yes" to these questions, this journey might not be nearly as spectacular as it could be. If you need to, take a moment and silently talk to God in prayer. Ask God to radically move in your life.

## **You're Holding Your Map**

This book you're holding is the roadmap for your journey. It will help guide your experiences. Write your name and the date in the front. Hold on to it. You may want to look back and remember this time in your life.

## **Learn. And Teach.**

Keep your eyes and ears open for those valuable moments where God wants to teach you something. But don't miss the chance to teach your friends, and to be taught by them. Your friends are with you in this experience. Be open to what God is doing in and through them and how He might be using them to speak to you. And vice versa.

The light  
**shines**

in the  
**darkness**

& the darkness has not  
**overcome it.**

*John 1:5*

# LARGE GROUP NOTES

These two pages are designed for you to take notes on during Large Group Sessions. The stuff you're learning will build on itself over the next few sessions. So even if you're not much of a note-taker, you might want to at least jot down what you think is important.

**Try writing down:**

- Any specific teaching points
- Verse references for Scripture passages
- Quotes that make you think
- Anything you have a question about

# SESSION 1

## SESSION I

# SMALL GROUP INTRO

Think about the true things in your life that you hold on to when you need to feel joy. Or when you find yourself in a tough spot. Or you need to be reminded that life is pretty good after all. What are those truths? Are they people? Places? Things?

Here's a truth that will never let you down or fail to make you smile:

**There is a God, and you can know Him.**

God exists. The Bible is His story. And the Bible tells us that God is the all-powerful Creator who spoke creation into existence with His word. Into a dark and formless void, God spoke. And suddenly, the darkness was driven away, but He didn't stop there.

God created you, and He is actively engaged in your life. He did not set the world in motion and then step away. He is present, a God of action, one who brings light into every dark corner, even today.

Now that's a truth we can cling to.

# GETTING STARTED

Let's think about the idea of stuff that's homemade or handmade.  
Read the questions below and answer with your group.

**WHAT IS THE BEST THING YOU'VE EVER MADE?**

**WHAT IS THE BEST THING ANYONE HAS MADE YOU?**

**WHAT IS THE ONE THING YOU REALLY WANT TO MAKE?**

**WHAT WOULD YOU NEED IN ORDER TO MAKE IT?**

# Digging In

Read through the following passages and answer the questions with your group.

## **Genesis 1:1-5**

*"(1) In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (2) The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*

*(3) And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. (4) And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. (5) God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day."*

**Make a list of all the materials God used to create the world.**

**How did God bring light into the dark, formless void?**

**What does this say about God's ability?**

**What did God say about the light?**

**What does Genesis 1:1-5 tell us about who God is?**

## **1 John 1:5-7**

*(5) This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. (6) If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. (7) But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.*

**Vs. 5 is pretty clear. What does John say here?**

**Vs. 6 drops a bunch of good info on us. Let's look at it for a moment. On its surface, what is it saying?**

**But there is a deeper truth lying in plain sight. It has to do with the word "fellowship." What does that word mean?**

**We can know and be known by God, the Creator. Why do we take this amazing truth for granted?**

**Sum up in your own words what you think it means to "walk in the light."**

**What does it say about what happens when we walk in the light?**

