

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

“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

Small Group Sessions

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!

Large Group Sessions

Session 1

- **Session Purpose:** To see God as one who reveals His goodness, restores His people, and renews all things.
- **Scripture Passages:** Isaiah 42:5–9
- **Session Snapshot:** The world we live in has pockets of darkness, aspects of it that are evil. But all around us, God moves. He shines the light of His goodness and love into the dark places, and transformation happens. In this session, we see three ways God does this and how we can be a part of shining the light of God's goodness into the world around us.

Session 2

- **Session Purpose:** To understand that Jesus came as God's revealing light, to shine the truth of the Gospel in a dark world.
- **Scripture Passages:** Luke 2:22–35
- **Session Snapshot:** Throughout Scripture, we see God's goodness and mercy described as light shining in the world. Never did this light shine brighter than when Jesus' ministry on this earth was in effect. When Jesus spoke, healed, and performed miracles, the light of God's Kingdom broke through the darkness of a broken world. Jesus is God's revealing light. This message will drive home this truth for your students.

Session 3

- **Session Purpose:** To understand that our lives are to be used by God as vessels for spreading the light of the Gospel to the world.
- **Scripture Passages:** 2 Corinthians 4:1–6

- **Session Snapshot:** Paul understood many truths about the Gospel. But he knew one thing for sure. Paul knew that for his life and ministry to be God-honoring, he must live out the Gospel in a pure, honest, OPEN way. His life and his message had to be an authentic representation of the Gospel. Paul's motivation was that the Gospel would be lived in the open, thriving in the light. But Paul knew Satan's motivation was the exact opposite. Paul knew what we know today: Satan wants to keep people in the dark. His mission is to blind people to the truth of God's message of love and redemption. And so, like Paul, our lives must be lived as "conduits" of the Gospel, allowing the light of God's glory to work in us and through us to impact the world.

Session 4

- **Session Purpose:** To understand that there is a day coming when we will be gathered to God and will experience nothing but the light of His presence and glory.
- **Scripture Passages:** Revelation 21:22–27
- **Session Snapshot:** For Christ-followers, there is great hope in the forever-future we have with God. We love to experience the light of God's goodness in our lives. Unfortunately, we also know that alongside that light is the darkness of evil at work, too. But there is a future coming where we will be with God, in person, and the light of His glory will be like the sun, shining on us for all eternity. In this new hope promised to ALL of God's children, there will never be the darkness of evil again. Ever. That is our hope as Christians.