

PROMISE

Message Title: *Light in the Darkness*

Message Date: December 28, 2025

CONNECT

1. When was a time you thought about God and it made you smile?
2. Describe a time you experienced hope and possibility.

PRAY TOGETHER

Read Psalm 53, then turn it into a prayer.

Add to this your own words of praise and request.

STUDY AND DISCUSSION

This series is based on the idea that (1) God made a promise, (2) Jesus fulfilled that promise and (3) one day we will experience the complete fulfillment of that promise.

Explore these three aspects by studying the Scriptures below and responding to the questions that follow. Don't rush through this guide. The goal is not to get *right answers* or even answer all the questions, but to have thoughtful discussions that lead to renewed minds and transformed hearts.

Faith is the courage to let God
hold you in the dark.

George MacDonald

THE PROMISE

The people who walk in darkness will see a great light.

Isaiah 9:1-6 (NLT)

Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali will be humbled, but there will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be filled with glory.

²The people who walk in darkness
will see a great light.

For those who live in a land of deep
darkness,
a light will shine.

³You will enlarge the nation of Israel,
and its people will rejoice.

They will rejoice before you
as people rejoice at the harvest
and like warriors dividing the plunder.

⁴For you will break the yoke of their slavery
and lift the heavy burden from their
shoulders.

You will break the oppressor's rod,
just as you did when you destroyed the
army of Midian.

⁵The boots of the warrior
and the uniforms bloodstained by war
will all be burned.
They will be fuel for the fire.

⁶For a child is born to us,
a son is given to us.

The government will rest on his shoulders.

And he will be called:
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

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1. What other words and phrases describe the idea of darkness and despair?
 2. Which of those words and phrases hit closest to home for you?
 3. What kinds of bondage are suggested by *the yoke* and *the rod*?
 4. Why do you think Isaiah used *light* rather than victory, freedom, or peace as the primary image of hope?
 5. Why would verse 5 have been hopeful to the original readers?
 6. Why is the hope of the world centered on the birth of a child rather than a warrior or reformer?

FULFILLMENT OF THE PROMISE IN JESUS' FIRST COMING

Matthew 4:13-16 (NLT)

¹³ He went first to Nazareth, then left there and moved to Capernaum, beside the Sea of Galilee, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. ¹⁴This fulfilled what God said through the prophet Isaiah:

¹⁵ “In the land of Zebulun and of Naphtali,
beside the sea, beyond the Jordan River,
in Galilee where so many Gentiles live,

¹⁶the people who sat in darkness
have seen a great light.

And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow,
a light has shined.”

John 8:12 (NIV)

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

7. How is Jesus the light of the world?

8. Where have you substituted control, certainty, or productivity for following the light?

9. Are you currently walking *toward* the light, *near* the light, or *at a distance* from it?

10. What is one place where you are tired of pretending things are fine?

11. How can you help someone find hope when God feels far away?

12. Have you ever experienced hope coming from an unexpected place? What did that look like?

THE ULTIMATE FULFILLMENT WHEN JESUS RETURNS

Isaiah 60:1-5, 18-20 (NIV)

¹ “Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.

² See, darkness covers the earth
and thick darkness is over the peoples,
but the LORD rises upon you
and his glory appears over you.

³ Nations will come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

⁴ “Lift up your eyes and look about you:
All assemble and come to you;
your sons come from afar,
and your daughters are carried on the hip.

⁵ Then you will look and be radiant,
your heart will throb and swell with joy;

the wealth on the seas will be brought to you,
to you the riches of the nations will come.

¹⁸ No longer will violence be heard in your land,
nor ruin or destruction within your borders,
but you will call your walls Salvation
and your gates Praise.

¹⁹ The sun will no more be your light by day,
nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you,
for the LORD will be your everlasting light,
and your God will be your glory.

²⁰ Your sun will never set again,
and your moon will wane no more;
the LORD will be your everlasting light,
and your days of sorrow will end.

13. Which words or phrases inspire encouragement and hope? Why?

14. What would it look like for you or your group to be a place of light for someone who feels forgotten or has experienced injustice?

15. Where do you most need the light of Christ right now?

THE BIG TAKEAWAY

What’s **one thing** God revealed to you this week that you never want to forget? Pause and ask Him how He feels about you and what He wants you to remember. Allow for a couple of minutes of silence and listen for Him to speak.

MEMORIZE SCRIPTURE

One of the best ways to hear God in your daily life is to have His words rooted in your heart. Memorize this Scripture, trusting God will bring His words to mind at just the right time.

*For those who live in a land of deep darkness,
a light will shine.*

Isaiah 9:2b (NLT)