

word
made
flesh

DISCUSSION GUIDE

The True Light

(John 1.4-9)

Week of December 16th, 2018

WELCOME

Talk about your group schedule and format, expectations, how your meetings will go, etc. Especially highlight schedule for the holidays and for Theology Labs in January (see below).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Share the following things coming up in the life of the church:

Winter Theology Labs | Wednesday in January 6-7:30p

Our theology labs are designed to be short-term, focused opportunities for topical study, discussion, and reflection. Meant to supplement and support weekly worship and community groups, this round of theology labs will happen once a week on 4 Wednesdays beginning on January 9th. Labs are \$10, childcare will be provided, and you MUST register by December 31st. Labs: The Question of God: Sigmund Freud and C.S. Lewis Debate God, Love, Sex and the Meaning of Life w/ Paul Boys & Josh Reitano; Prayer: Experiencing Awe & Intimacy with God w/ Dave Dupee & Ryan Zhang; How to Read the Bible w/ Mike Previtera; Understanding Poverty w/ Marianne Chernesky; The Art of Neighboring w/ Brian Ferry.

Redtree Art Show & Music Series | Starting Friday, January 11th

New City is organizing the January-February art show at Redtree as well as a series of live music events on Fridays. We need YOUR help! Please submit artwork (see the City for more info) and join us Friday, January 11th and subsequent Fridays for art, coffee, and live music!

Friday AM Women's Bible Study | Fridays @ 9:15a starting in January

Calling New City women! Come join us Friday mornings 9:15-11:00am as we study the book of Exodus. Childcare provided. We'd love to see you. The registration deadline is December 31st.

OPENING PRAYER

Open your group in prayer. Pray extemporaneously, or use this prayer:

God of power and mercy, open our hearts in welcome. Remove the things that hinder us from receiving Christ with joy, so that we may share his wisdom and grace. Amen.

ICBREAKER

If you had to have one Christmas carol on repeat, what would it be? And why?

STUDY/DISCUSSION

1. READ John 1.1-18.

2. It's been said that "Advent begins in the dark." Why is it that the case? Why is it important to look into the darkness in order to understand Jesus Christ's coming into the world?
3. Read the following passages together: John 3:19-21; John 8:12; John 9:1-7; John 12:44-46; 1 John 2:8-11. How do these other passages help us to understand John's imagery of light and dark in relationship to the work of Jesus?
4. Verse 4 - In what ways is Jesus the light of the world? *NOTE: On Sunday Josh talked about Jesus being the Light of Life (over against death), the Light of Truth (over against falsehood and deceit) and the Light of Goodness/Holiness (over against evil and sin). Feel free to use these categories to guide the discussion.*
5. Verse 5 - Why would this have been a radical claim to John's first readers?
6. How can trusting verse 5 affect the way you live now?
7. Verses 9-12 — What are the various reactions to the light coming into the world? Why do you suppose some people reject the light?
8. Verses 6-8 — What would it look like for you to bear witness to the light among your friends, family and neighbors this year?
9. OPTIONAL: Print copies of the attached HANDOUT and read it together. Discuss what stands out to you as significant, challenging, or confusing.

PRAY

Take some time to pray together. This can be done together as a whole group, or in smaller groups. Exchange prayer requests. Or just pray "conversationally": *praying* your requests and interacting with God and each other (like a conversation) rather than *sharing* them. (And leaders, follow up with a post on the City or as a "Resource" in Planning Center with a list of prayer requests as a reminder to be praying for one another).

HANDOUT — The True Light (John 1:4-9)

Therefore justice is far from us, and righteousness does not overtake us; we hope for light, and behold, darkness, and for brightness, but we walk in gloom. We grope for the wall like the blind; we grope like those who have no eyes; we stumble at noon as in the twilight, among those in full vigor we are like dead men. (the prophet Isaiah, Is. 9.9-10)

Our culture is now in crisis because evil remains an inescapable experience for all of us [and yet we have lost our] language for describing it. (Andrew Delbanco)

Romeo Dalliere was a Canadian senator and general. He was the head of the UN Peacekeeping Force sent in to Rwanda during the genocide. Sometime after his return to Canada, a Canadian priest asked him, "After seeing what you saw, how can you still believe in God?" This is his response: "I answered that I know there is a God because in Rwanda I shook hands with the devil. I have seen him, I have smelled him, and I have touched him. I know the devil exists, and therefore I know there is a God." (Romeo Dalliere, quoted in Sunday's sermon)

We are beginning to see more clearly now that no office, school, or church is truly safe; that the Internet has greatly increased our capacity to share lethal information; that terror is only a click away. Moreover, too many clergy have been arrested for child molestation, too many teachers have been caught sexually abusing students, too many supposedly upstanding citizens have downloaded too much child pornography. There is something ugly lurking in human nature. This is the atmosphere of the Advent season. It's time to put away sentimentality and face up to the Enemy... Advent is not for sissies. (Fleming Rutledge)

Fear is not a Christian state of mind. (Marilynne Robinson)

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (Paul, 2 Cor 4.6)

I believe in Christianity as I believe the sun has risen. Not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else. (C.S. Lewis)