



John on Jesus

Light of the World

Small Group Work Sheet

October 28, 2012

Part 1 - Ice Breaker

What project did you work on for "Serving Sunday?"

serving our



Part 2 - Sermon Review

1. Before this Sunday, what did you think Jesus did in the Old Testament?
2. Read Ephesians 5:8. How does spiritual darkness affect us? (Think of at least two examples not given in the sermon.)
3. Read Exodus 40:36-38. Just as ancient Israel followed the light to the Promised Land, the Gospel of John tells us the Christian life is a journey of following Jesus to our heavenly home. What does it mean to follow Jesus instead of just believing in him?
4. Read 1 John 1:7. How does walking in the light influence our relationships?
5. Read Acts 13:47. How does God shine his light into the world?
6. Read 2 Corinthians 4:4-6. Many people do not see the light of God. Sometimes they actively reject it or persecute it. Why?
7. Read Matthew 5:14. We are Jesus' light in the world. What is one thing we can do to shine our light this week?

Part 3 - Digging Deeper - Light and Darkness in the Bible

The Bible uses light and darkness as a metaphor to describe the world. Light and darkness in the Bible is not just a physical experience we have every 24 hours. There are rich metaphorical connections.

Remember a time when the power went off in your home and you had absolutely no light. What was the problem with darkness?

No sense of orientation. It doesn't take long for us to lose our sense of orientation in the dark. In a dark room, it is hard to tell east from west, north from south.

No way to avoid danger and enjoy beauty. Not only do we lose orientation, but we can't see what is around us. How many of us skinned our shins in the dark because we ran into something we couldn't see? Not only that, without light, we cannot enjoy beauty. Don't give your wife a rose in the dark. She cannot appreciate it.

The world grows cold and dies. Our planet is in the process of tilting away from the sun as we head into winter. We will have less light. Crops will not grow. Iowa will grow cold. Things die without light. We are not made to flourish in cold and darkness. Our planet and our lives are made to flourish in the light. That is why everyone heads south for the winter.

Everything I described about physical light and darkness the Bible parallels with spiritual light and darkness. A life apart from God is lived in spiritual darkness. A life connected with God is lived in the light.

In physical darkness, we cannot tell the difference between east and west. A life in spiritual darkness can't tell the difference between right and wrong. This is why we talk to people who see nothing wrong with abortion or homosexuality. According to Romans 1:26, they live in darkness. They don't have a God-given sense of right and wrong.

A life in physical darkness can't see danger and enjoy beauty. A life in spiritual darkness doesn't have the Word of God to define what is sin and warn about harm. A life apart from God doesn't have the Holy Spirit leading and guiding in that life in paths of righteousness (Psalm 23:3). A life in contact with God has the light of God that enables it to see true beauty, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

A life in physical darkness grows cold, shrivels and eventually dies. A life in spiritual darkness is bitter, wounded, and controlled by sinful desires. It is a life that dies while still living but it is also a life that will eventually die eternally. A life that is brought into the light of God is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). Just as our planet comes alive in the sun, our hearts come alive when we are brought into a relationship with God's Son.

In summary, from Genesis to Revelation spans this overarching metaphor of darkness and light describing a life with and without God. There are literally hundreds of verses that use this metaphor to describe life apart from God as a place of cold, darkness and death. Life with God is described as vitality, warmth and joy.

Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; Psalm 43:3 (ESV)

Apart from God bringing light and truth, we are lost.

The unfolding of your words gives light; Psalm 119:130 (ESV)

We are groping around in darkness until somebody helps us understand God's word. God's Word is how God turns on his light in our life.

...the Lord my God lightens my darkness. Psalm 18:28 (ESV)

Light and darkness is also an especially strong theme in the Gospel of John. There are two reasons God inspired John to use the light and darkness metaphor so extensively in this Gospel. First, it is a mega theme in the Hebrew culture. Second, the light and darkness

theme is also big part of the Greek culture. John is writing to the Greek and Hebrew culture. The light and darkness theme connects with both of them.

In him was life, and the life was the light of men. John 1:4 (ESV)

...The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. John 1:8–9 (ESV)

So the background we need to begin is that the world and everyone lives in utter darkness. God is the only source of light and life. The true light that gives light to the world is coming, it is Jesus. This is the culture context Jesus speaks to when he claims, “I am the light of the world!”