

Life Group Questions

Finding Hope in the Shadows / Pastor Willy / Isaiah 40:1-5 / Dec 5-6, 2020

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light." In Scripture, light is often used as a metaphor, but whether literal or figurative, its source is always in God. God's first words in the Bible are, "let there be light," (Genesis 1:3), and the incarnate Jesus is described as "the true light, which gives light to everyone" (John 1:6). The devil is only able to provide fake lighting, for he "masquerades as an angel of light" (1 Corinthians 11:14). Fittingly, light is a prominent part of Christmas celebration, symbolizing the hope we have through God himself stepping into our darkness.

Reconnect

Come together with this preliminary discussion about darkness:

- If possible, share about experiences you have had in physical darkness (could be as simple as trying to find the bathroom door in the middle of the night). In what ways are these experiences a metaphor for spiritual darkness?

Opening Prayer

Light of the world, you stepped down into darkness; now, open our eyes and let us see. Our Lord God, your Word says that in your light, we will see light. We hear dark news every day, and we confess that this darkness sometimes seeps in our souls. We often find ourselves feeling helpless and hopeless. As we listen to your Word and share together, we ask that your Spirit will enable us to see the light of Christ, and restore to us the joy of your salvation. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Message Recap

Review the message using the questions

1. What stood out to you most in this week's message?
2. What was the most meaningful thing that you heard in the message? Why?
3. What questions are still lingering?

Choose discussion and application questions

Reflect on Isaiah 40:1-5 and the message by discussing the questions.

- 1. The context: Isaiah's prophetic picture of the coming Messiah and Israel's bleak situation**
 - a. Scan through the passages in Isaiah that point to the coming of Jesus: 7:14; 40:3-5; 53:1-12; 60:2-3; 61:1. What stands out to you about how the coming Jesus is portrayed in these verses?
 - b. Read the invitation given to the unfaithful people of Isaiah's day (1:18-20). How does this invitation speak to you?
 - c. For their unfaithfulness, the people of Judah would eventually go into exile in Babylon. Isaiah 40 begins the message of hope to these people. Read 40:27-29. In these words, what hope do you find to personally apply to your life?
- 2. God sees you even when you think he has forgotten you**
 - a. Pastor Willy said, "God takes our sins seriously." How is this a message of hope to you?

- b. Can you think of a time when God disciplined you? What did you learn from that?
 - c. Take a look at Hebrews 12:7-11. What do you see about God's purposes for discipline?
- 3. God comforts us because he is gracious**
- a. Read Romans 2:4. What does it mean that God's kindness leads us to repentance?
 - b. Share with the group some of the specific ways you have experienced God's kindness.
 - c. In what ways can we, through Covid-19, experience more deeply the kindness of God?
- 4. God is inviting us to get ready**
- a. Pastor Willy exhorted us to choose to meet God in the midst of our struggles. How might you personally respond to this exhortation?
 - b. What are some of the "mountains" and "rough places" (Isaiah 40:4) that need to be removed from your life in order to more deeply experience God's presence and goodness?
- 5. Reflection questions**
- Pastor Willy offered 2 reflection questions at the end of his message. Take some time to discuss these together.
- a. What do you need to let go of to enjoy peace in Jesus? Pride? Control? Fear?
 - b. What do you struggle to trust God with? Give that issue to Jesus and ask his forgiveness for not trusting him. Ask him to fill you with his peace as you as you put your trust in him.

Digging Deeper

Read 1 Peter 1:3-9 and then discuss the questions.

1. What does the text say?
2. What is God teaching you through this passage?
3. How is God prompting you to respond?

Choose Your Next Step

What next step will you commit to for the upcoming week (and beyond)?

- Individual**
 - Spend 10 minutes to identify the sources of fear in your life? Be honest with yourself and with God, and identify these sources by name?
 - Think of the ways you have tended to deal with these fears. (E.g. denial, avoidance, confrontation.) Do you have default patterns of dealing with fear?
 - How specifically is God calling you to trust him? In a relationship? A task that seems difficult?
- Christian community**
 - Talk with 1 or 2 others about your fears.
 - Ask for prayer support from brothers and sisters, as you rely on the Spirit's help to trust God more fully.
- The world**
 - In your world, can you find ways to express "God's comfort" to others?

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you that though our sins were crimson, our souls are now white as snow. We thank you for proving your love for us through all kinds of discipline, as a good, kind and all-knowing Father. You have comforted us by sending your Son, adopting us into your family, and gradually forming us into his likeness. To you belong all the honor and glory through Jesus our Lord. Amen.