

Discussion Questions

Please note: These questions are intended to be used in any way that is helpful for you. You may use them as a means of personal reflection. Or you may want to use them as a family to further discuss your connection to the light of Christ.

- Can you identify the difference between darkness and light in your life? List some of each and how light has brought life.
- What needs to change in your behavior to bring light to your life?
- Is your life tangled, broken, unplugged or living on the power of God?
- Are you a reflection of the light or a shadow of despair to others?
- Are you a John the Baptist for Jesus, calling attention to the light of Christ?
- Who are the persons who have reflected the light of Christ for you?
- What is keeping you from the light?
- Can you name a person or persons who could use a reflection of the light this Christmas? What would it look like to shine the light of Christ on them?

Additional Readings

Please note: This Sunday continues the season of Advent. This is the traditional season of preparation for Christmas. The following passages are some of the traditional Advent passages as we prepare for the coming of the Christ Child of Bethlehem. The Study Guide readings allow you to dig deeper.

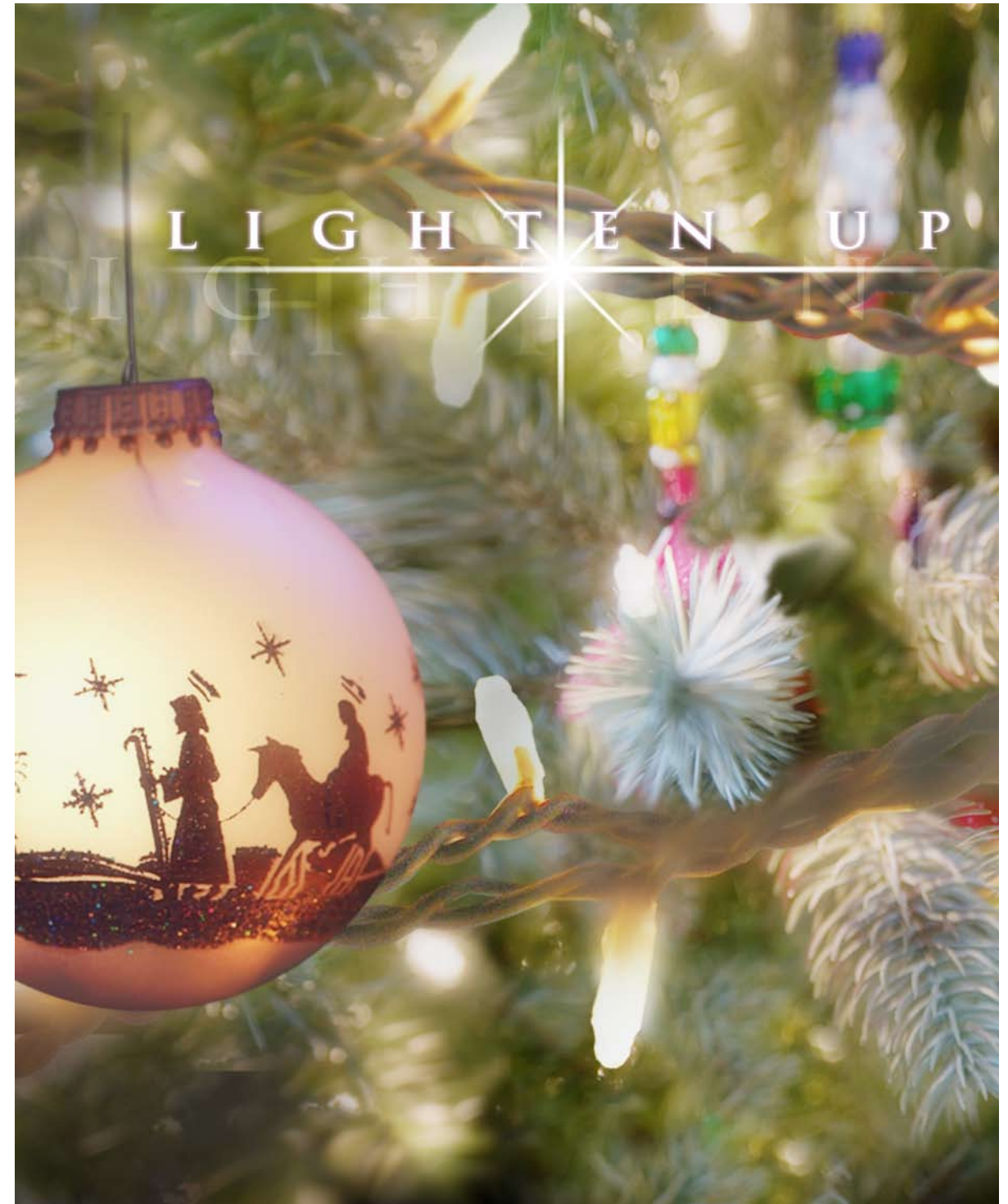
Monday, December 15 – Read *Psalm 126*. This reading starts our week with a Psalm of hope. The poetry of the psalmist uses the language of transformation to describe God. What areas of your life need to be transformed by the presence of the Christ?

Tuesday, December 16 – Read *Isaiah 35:1-10*. Isaiah sites the events of the messiah's coming. The world will be turned upside down. We will see the evidence of God's presence in miraculous events. Can you see the evidence of God's presence in your life? Open your eyes and ears to see and hear the Christ who comes to transform our world.

Wednesday, December 17 – Read *John 3:23-30*. John the Baptist clearly points to Jesus as the messiah. He refers to the greatness and wonders of God that shall be fulfilled, reminding us that in order for Christ to increase we must be willing to decrease. What in our lives needs to decrease in order for Christ to increase?

Thursday, December 4 – Read *Luke 1:47-55*. As Paul begins this letter to the church at Corinth, he reminds us of God's strength – God's strength will be our strength. How have you experienced God's strength in your life this week?

Friday, December 5 – Read *Psalm 146*. Psalm 146 begins the final section of the song book. The writer calls us to praise every circumstance, not because we want to or feel like it, but because of the very character of God. Can you give praise in every circumstance?





TRietsch

Lighten Up

Study Guide for December 14, 2008

John 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

The Word from the New Revised Standard Edition

The Prologue of John's Gospel – verses 1-18

These first five verses are the beginning of a longer hymn of praise (verses 1-18) that celebrates God's revelation of himself to the world. From all eternity God has existed with his **Word**. This **Word** is the mind, purpose and agent of God self-disclosure. When God speaks his **Word** created the world, imparted life to the world's inhabitants and gives light for knowledge.

John states that the **Word** revealed God's glory by becoming himself a man of flesh like other men. In the person of Jesus Christ the character of the eternal and invisible God, in all the fullness of his love and truth, has been made known.

The prologue hymn thus summarizes the themes developed in the gospel of John:
Jesus the Christ

- ***is the agent of a new creation (chapters 1-2)***
- ***is the life of the world (chapters 3-6)***
- ***is the light of the world (chapters 7-9)***
- ***is rejected by his own people (chapters 10-12)***
- ***is acknowledged by all who believe in him (chapters 13-20)***

John 1:1-5

The first five verses of John's gospel say quite a lot about Jesus. It is a grand introduction to the Son of God and the Savior of the world. The rest of the book is a record which was written to demonstrate the thesis of this gospel - ***"that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."*** (John 20:31).

In the first century, a group who called themselves the Gnostics was denying the deity of Christ. They were the philosophers of the age. In many ways, John's gospel is an answer to the questions raised about Jesus by the Gnostics.

John quickly identifies Jesus in the first two verses. First, Jesus was from the beginning with God. The Bible does not say He had a beginning, but that He was already there ***"in the beginning."***

Second, that He was ***"with God."*** Jesus was not secondary to God, but was part of God's expression through the Trinity.

Third, we see that ***"the word was God."*** Jesus possesses all the characteristics of God. While Jesus was also fully human and subjected his body to human limitations during his incarnation (Hebrews 2:17, 18; 4:14-16; Philippians 2:8), he did not become a different person.

"All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing has come into being that

has come into being. In Him was life..." (John 1:3,4a). One of the most used phrases in the Genesis account of creation is, ***"And God said..."*** When God spoke, it became so. In creation, we witness the power, majesty and wisdom of God. The creative force which acted to bring all things into existence was not impersonal, but rather a living being.

The Light (verse 5)

"...and the life was the light of all people. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." (John 1:4b-5). The phrase ***"and the life was the light of all people"*** is in the Greek imperfect tense. The phrase John uses here indicates an affirmation that ***"the life"*** was always ***"the light of all people"*** and continues to be ***"the light"*** now and into the future.

"And the light shines in darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." Darkness is opposed to anything that promotes life. But darkness has no power of its own. It is simply the absence of light. When light appears, darkness disappears.

Reflecting the Light or Creating Shadows

Here is the question for every Christian: In the presence of Christ, do we reflect the light of Christ or do we create a shadow? Are showing other what Jesus looks like in our actions and words or are we creating a hole in creation by focusing only on ourselves?

The truth is we are not the light. Jesus is the light. Only by being connected to the light of all creation will we experience the life that comes from the light of Christ.

Other scripture on Light

- Matthew 5:14-16 — ***light and salt***
- Luke 11:33-36 — ***do not hide your light***
- Luke 9:28-36 — ***transfiguration of Jesus***
- Matthew 17:1-13 — ***transfiguration of Jesus***
- John 3:16-21 — ***light has come into the world***
- John 9:1-12 — ***Jesus said, "I am the light of the world"***
- John 8:12-18 — ***Jesus said, "I am the light of the world"***
- John 12:35-36 — ***do not walk in the darkness***
- Acts 9:1-19 — ***conversion of Paul in blinding light***
- Acts 12:1-19 — ***angel of light***
- Romans 2:17-24 — ***a light to those in darkness***
- I Corinthians 4:1-5 — ***bring to light what is hidden in darkness***
- II Corinthians 4:1-6 — ***light shining in the darkness***
- Ephesians 4:17-32 — ***children of the light***
- I Peter 2:1-10 — ***called out of darkness into his marvelous light***
- I John 1:5-10 — ***walking in the light***
- Revelations 22:1-6 — ***no more darkness***