



## December 4 & 5: The Light of Hope

### Series Overview

Holiday lights are beautiful, but nothing compares to the light of Christ. In this series, we're exploring the true meaning of Christmas and how we can uncover the light, shine the light and even be light to others.



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### Sermon Highlights

Darkness is the absence of light. It's not what you see; it's what you don't see. When there is no light, you have darkness. Darkness is mentioned 200 times in the Bible. It's used as a way to describe what life is like without God.

Before we talk about light, we need to recognize the darkness that surrounds us. To some extent, our eyes have adjusted to the darkness. We hear of another murder or another missing child, and we lay on the couch, unemotional, because we're used to it. The reason we don't notice the darkness is because we are a part of the darkness.

Darkness is naturally progressive. Darkness grows until it overtakes the light. When Jesus was arrested to be crucified, He said, *"This is your hour—when darkness reigns."* Luke 22:53

Christmas is God's answer to that darkness. We have come to celebrate the fact that God came into this dark world with the light of His Son, Jesus Christ!

#### 1. Jesus gives light.

*John 8:12, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*

Jesus came to shine His light into the darkness. As the sun brings physical life, the Son of God brings spiritual life.

#### 2. People reject the light because they cannot see.

*John 1:4-5* <sup>4</sup>In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Have you ever tried to explain Jesus to people who don't know Him? Sometimes the harder you try to explain, the more they seem to struggle to understand. It is because those in darkness don't understand the light.

#### 3. People reject the light because they like darkness.

*John 3:19, This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.*

We don't like to admit it, but darkness can be fun. There is an appeal that darkness has. I can tell you what to do, but when it's my struggle, I can feel the darkness. So John is saying, "Don't be surprised when people refuse the light because they like the darkness."

#### 4. People who shine the light.

*Matthew 5:14-16, <sup>14</sup>You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup>Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup>In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

Where is the light most needed? In the dark. It's pretty bright in here. But sometimes, when we leave here and go to our homes, schools, communities or jobs, it's like we have a dimmer switch on. Our light is not as bright out there as it is in here.

As you go into darker environments, shine your light even brighter. But remember that this light is not self-generated, it's a light that comes from the light of the world. And when Jesus becomes your Savior, His light starts to shine *through* you.

And the light of Jesus can break *through* the darkness in you!



**Take it home ... Practical Applications**

Between now and Christmas, prayerfully think of some practical ways you can shine the light. Involve your family or your small group. Think of 10 - 12 ways to shine the light of hope this Christmas.



## Take it to the source ... Bible Study

**Introductory question:** Were you one of those people who were afraid of the dark when you were younger? What scared you about darkness?

### Read *John 1:9, 8:12* and *Isaiah 9:2*.

1. What is the first mental picture that comes into your mind when you think about light invading darkness?
2. What aspect of Christ's light has most affected your own life since you began walking with Him? Why?
3. In what ways is the light of Jesus Christ shining today in our society? What part do you play in helping to shine that light?
4. What do you think Jesus means when He talks about *darkness* in *John 8:12*? How would you describe the *light of life* to someone who had never heard about Jesus before?
5. How does Jesus as light practically affect your life?

### Read *John 1:11; 3:18-21; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Proverbs 5:3* and *Psalms 141:4*.

1. What are some of the reasons why anyone would reject the message of Jesus Christ? Why is it more likely to be a spiritual issue rather than an intellectual issue?
2. What are some of the ways *the god of this age* (Satan) clouds the minds of people so that they cannot understand or accept the good news of Jesus?
3. Do you ever find that trying to argue someone into a faith in Christ doesn't work very well? How do these scriptures help you better understand why that might be?
4. The Bible acknowledges that the darkness of sin may be fun (*Proverbs 5:3*) or like a delicious delicacy (*Psalms 141:4*) that can be very seductive, at least at first. What practical things can you do to help shine God's light into the lives of those who are living in darkness in a way that is going to help them see the reality of God and His love?

### Read *Matthew 5:14-16* and *Ephesians 5:8-14*.

1. What are some ways that the church should be light in the darkness of society? What are some ways that you can be light in the various areas of your life?
2. Have you ever been in a situation where your actions made someone recognize their own darkness, without you even saying a word? How did the situation affect you? How did it impact the other person?
3. Do you see yourself as *a city on a hill* or one of the *children of light*? What images does that bring to mind? What kind of responsibility is connected to being a child of light?
4. Jesus says that our good deeds cause people not to look at us, but to praise our Father in heaven. How can you help to ensure that the things you do for others point them to God and not to yourself?
5. What are some things your small group can do this year to be light to those in your community?



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*All Bible references are from the New International Version unless otherwise stated.*

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