



WEEK 1:

The Darkness did not Overcome

SCRIPTURE

Read John 1:1-5

REFLECTION

John begins his gospel with metaphors of “word” and “light” to describe Jesus. Jesus is the “Word of God” and the “light of all people,” which the darkness cannot overcome. A metaphor describes one thing by comparing it to another. John isn’t saying Jesus is literal light, but he uses light to describe the impact Jesus has. People often thought that meant Jesus banishes the darkness. But actually, the darkness is still present. Jesus works in the midst of them both. Dark and light coexist together.

Long before Jesus was born, the Hebrew prophets also used light as the symbol for God-given hope. The prophet Isaiah says, “The people who walk in darkness shall see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them.” Verses like these use light to mean hope and goodness.

But such verses have led to the belief that darkness is bad, evil, and the cause of some painful and unholy things. Too often, people live with the assumption that people with lighter skin are better than those with darker skin—an untrue and damaging belief. Another misconception is that seeing clearly is equal to understanding, and darkness means not knowing or understanding.

We know, though, God works through all things, and everything God created, both the bright light of day and the darkness of night, are called “good.” All people are equally beloved, equally created for good, and equally made in the image of God. Jesus himself was not light-skinned! And light is not necessary for blind or visually impaired people to understand and know things.

When we assume light is good and darkness is bad, we miss the good gifts of darkness. Think about the beginning of life. It almost always begins in darkness. Life needs that safe, dark, closed space to grow—a baby in the womb, like baby Jesus. A seed buried deep in the ground. This Advent, let’s prepare for Jesus’ coming by seeking out the goodness in light and darkness.

DISCUSSION

As you color the shadow box pages and make your shadow box theater, ponder these questions:

- What do you feel when you think about light? What about darkness?
- What are some good and helpful things about light? What are some good and helpful things about darkness?
- Name some good gifts of darkness.

ACTIVITY

Gather your Advent candles and/or any household candles and light them in a well-lit room, maybe on the kitchen table. What do you see? What do you notice? Do you see any shadows? How much light do the candles add to the room?

Now take a moment and turn off any electric lighting. Darken the room with blinds or curtains. What do you see now? What do you notice about the candlelight? Do you see shadows now? How does the darkness help you appreciate the candles differently? In what ways does the darkness feel pleasant or gentle?

In what ways can darkness help us understand our world better?

PRAYER

Loving God,

Your spirit surrounds us in both light and darkness.

Like sunlight, you help us find our way and explore our world.

Like a dark night sky, you give us rest from all the worries of the day.

May we be light for people who need to see hope in this world.

May we be cozy darkness for those who need a safe place to rest.

Thank you for the season of Advent and for bringing us together.

Amen.