

Let There Be Light

Merry Christmas – we're so glad you're here
15 years ago – dream to do more than start a church

Provide a path for people to experience life to the full
God has more than you're currently experiencing – higher heights

Provide place where people could experience God
The presence of God give you hope
Sense His presence – know He's near

That's our hope because there's so much darkness
Our hope for this service – a little light at the end of the tunnel
That's our theme this year – light in darkness

It's amazing what a little light can do

Story – Tammy and I have 5 kids
At bedtime – when the room is dark – afraid
But if there's a night light – not afraid

How many of your kids sleep with a night light?
How many of you sleep with a night light?

I'm 53 years old – still use a night light
It's in the bathroom – which I frequent throughout the night
The joys of being over 50

Darkness is so disorienting – so unsettling
A little bit of light goes a long way

If there is a subject of the Bible – this is it
In fact – can argue that it is the main message of the Bible
First words out of God's mouth

“Let there be light”

(Genesis 1:1-3) In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

When I was in Bible College – law of first mention
Purest teaching of anything is in its first mention in the Bible

God’s first words – “Let there be light”

About 4000 years after these words – Jesus came to the earth
He defines His own mission this way...

(John 12:46 NLT) I have come as a light to shine in this dark world, so that all who put their trust in me will no longer remain in the dark.

There’s a whole lot of darkness in the world today
How about you?

Where is your life a little dark right now?

I have a place right now – tried to do it on my own
The more I learn to trust Him – no longer in the dark

The Christmas Story According to John

You’re probably thinking – now is when he talks about the star
Or the angels – show

Actually – I want to share a part of the Christmas story...
That you’ve probably never heard
I never saw until this year

There are 4 Gospel accounts – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John
4 accounts of the same story

For years I've said – 2 of them tell the Christmas story

Matthew – Luke

Mark and John pick up the story of Jesus as an adult – baptism

That's not true

Never saw this before this year – but there's 3 accounts of Christmas
John's Christmas story...

(John 1:1-3) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all
things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

John doesn't start with the birth narrative

Doesn't begin with camels and shepherds and mangers

He doesn't give the details of Jesus' birth

He gives the significance of Jesus' birth

(John 1:4-5) In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The
light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John focuses on the main message of the Bible

Jesus came to be a light in darkness

Darkness

That's why we celebrate Christmas in the darkest part of the year

Winter Solstice – longest night – December 21

My birthday – Summer Solstice – June 21 – longest day

The first Christmas was marked by darkness

Not just in the natural – night – dark

Political darkness – Romans in charge – uncertainty

Relational darkness – Mary and Joseph
Financial darkness – having a baby in a stable

Christmas is a reminder that Jesus came in the darkest part of life

Question: What's the darkest part of your life right now?

Physical darkness – loss of loved one – loss of job – finances
Emotional darkness
Relational darkness
Spiritual darkness – nothing darker than sin – guilt – shame

One of the more well-known stories in the Bible
Woman caught in adultery
Jesus – “He who has no sin – cast first stone”

John 8:1-11 – most know this story – but the verse that follows

(John 8:12) When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

He came to the darkest situations – to bring light

Story – I experienced this light 38 Christmases ago – 15 years old
Egging the house – in trouble – parents – friends
Invited to church – found a way out
Resisted the light – didn't respond to the light
That night I couldn't take it anymore – let God in

I have a word for you this Christmas
God sees your darkness – wants to bring light
But you've got to go back to the first words God ever said

(Genesis 1:3) “Let there be light,” and there was light.

Webster's – "to permit to enter"

I gave Webster an "amen!" – Come on Webster

So many are resistant

Some just drifted

Bad church experiences

Tragedy – disappointment with God

God's got light for your emotions – spirit – marriage – finances

Relationships – depression – job

But you've got to let there be light – permit to enter

That's what Christmas is all about – let there be light

Lighting a Candle

Easy – but I have to let it burn

It's amazing what a little light can do if you'll let there be light.

Altar Call

I don't know what brought you here to this place

But I know Who brought you to this place – and I know why

So that you could experience Jesus

Know that He's near

Opportunity to let Him light up your life

He brought you here – to change your life

But you've got to let Him – invite Him

Salvation Prayer

Invite our ushers to come take their place

In a moment we will light candles

If you prayed that prayer – let us know

Mark the Connection Card in your Worship Guide

No one visit or call – send you your next steps

Offering – for those who want to give – give you an opportunity

Not an expectation – wanted this service to be our gift

After the white bucket passes – offering connection cards

Black bucket – on right hand side of your row – candles

Offering prayer

Stay seated and sing this song with us – Here I Am to Worship

Receive offering and pass out candles

Candle Lighting

(After offering is taken and candles passed out)

Let's all stand together

Candles – beautiful picture of what God wants to do for you

I'll light the first one

Sing – Silent Night

Closing prayer

Blow candles out

Collect them back from you at the doors

Merry Christmas