

CHRISTMAS – LIGHT SHINING IN MY DARKNESS



We admit it. We've walked in darkness. It's no secret. Life in addiction was filled with activities that were most often conducted down dark alleys or hidden away in darkened rooms. Dark secrets haunted us. When people looked into our eyes they saw darkness there. Our lives clearly showed that a person who walks apart from God has a dark shadow over every area of their being. The Bible calls it "the shadow of death." When we were in addiction, some of our relatives and friends died. Our hopes were dashed. It has been so long since we buried our dreams of a wonderful life that we can't even remember the location of the graveyard.

Into that deep darkness of anger, pain, and despair, God spoke hope to us, and promised us light, “A light will shine ... on those who walk in darkness.” We began to wonder if there really could be hope for us. We longed to know a way out of the darkness, an escape from the kind of existence that seemed more death than life. Although we may not have recognized it as God’s voice, God was tenderly calling out to us and pursuing us with His love. Finally, when we were desperate enough to pay attention, we became aware of the longing in our heart for the life God was offering us. In our brokenness of spirit, we responded to God’s urgings.

The people who walk in darkness will see a great light – a light that will shine on all who live in the land where death casts its shadow. Because of God’s tender mercy, the light from heaven is about to break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace. (Isaiah 9:2, Luke 1:78-79 NLT)

If we find ourselves in the deepest darkest pit, even there, God is with us. Because of God’s unfailing love for mankind, Jesus came into the world as a human baby to live and die for the sins of the whole world. God saw the darkness we were sitting in and sent His light to us. Jesus is the Light of the world. Jesus has been given all power in heaven and on earth. No evil demonic power can withstand Him. For our sake, Jesus endured the sin and hate-

filled violence that nailed Him to the cross. The powers of darkness could not keep Him in death and darkness and Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus lives today and His victorious power over sin is evidence that we also may have the power to overcome any evil that seeks to keep us in bondage. When we believe in the finished work of Jesus to free us from the bondage of sin, people like us who walked in darkness and in the shadow of death, will receive this great power within us. This power is the Holy Spirit of God.

For God, who said, “Let there be light in the darkness,” has made us understand that this light is the brightness of the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. But this precious treasure – this light and power that now shines within us – is held in perishable containers, that is, in our weak bodies. So everyone can see that our glorious power is from God and is not our own. (2 Corinthians 4:6-7 NLT)

If our hope is to live well in recovery by simply getting healthy, working hard, attending meetings, and practicing certain principles on a daily basis, we will fail. We need more. God clearly tells us that we are vulnerable in our life in recovery. Our bodies are weak. Our will is even weaker. Our only hope is to acknowledge the power and light of Jesus Christ in our lives to safely guide us forward. Jesus is the only one with the power we need to overcome the harmful desires and obsessions that we will encounter. We need

to be aware that without God, we do not understand what is necessary to live well. We need to ask God daily for insight and guidance.

We must allow God to reveal what is still dark within us and in need of healing or of being let go. It is the work of the Holy Spirit living within us to help sort our thoughts and actions, and to make two piles – light and darkness. We have lived so long in darkness, and been deceived by the devil, our culture, and our own thinking, that there are many things that appear to us to be light, which are actually darkness.

Let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. (Matthew 5:16 NLT)

It is only God who can help us discern truth and He's given us three tools: The Bible, His Holy Spirit, and mature Christians. We will fail in our new life with God if we ignore any of the following:

1) The Bible When it says we are to live in a way that is radically different from what we have always believed, we need to be obedient to what the Bible teaches. We need to read and learn and shape our lives around the principles taught in the Bible. Successful life is rooted in surrender to God and His ways.

Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to

make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right. (Psalm 119:105 and 2 Timothy 3:16 NLT)

2) Our conscience needs to be guided by God's Holy Spirit. As believers, the Holy Spirit lives within us and will show us the way forward in our new life with God in recovery. We need to talk to God throughout each day and ask Him to give us wisdom in what we are thinking, saying, or doing. We will know joy and peace and blessing as we set aside our own self-centered pleasure-seeking ways and live in relationship with Jesus who inspires us to love and serve others.

If you need wisdom - if you want to know what God wants you to do - ask him, and he will gladly tell you. (James 1:5 NLT)

3) We need to find and allow mature Christian individuals to mentor and help us sort through what is going on in our lives, and what God's will is for us. We need to pay attention to what they say.

Obey your spiritual leaders and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they know they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this joyfully and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit. (Hebrews 13:17 NLT)

The exciting truth is, if we do these things, we will no longer be people who walk in darkness

and in the shadow of death. We will become people of the light, blessed by God, and eager to bring others to His glorious light.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What is my story of God shining light and hope into my heart when I walked in darkness and in the shadow of death?
2. Have I surrendered my life to Jesus and asked Him to shine light into every area of my darkness?
3. How am I allowing God's word, the Holy Spirit, and mature Christians to influence my way of thinking and behaving?
4. How do I need to change as a result of the information I am being given?

Heavenly Father, Thank You for finding me in my darkness and giving me light and hope through Jesus. Your forgiveness and unfailing love have given me light and changed my heart forever. I can't thank you enough. As I journey through this Christmas season, I pray that you will continue to shine your light on anything that would hinder my relationship with You. I ask for healing, and the will to let go of those things that draw me into darkness and bondage. I surrender my will and my life into Your care. Help me to pay attention to Your Word and obey what You reveal to me through Your Holy Spirit. I desire to walk in Your path of peace. Please help me to walk together with You forever in the light of Your presence. AMEN

