

in all things

PRE-GATHERING BIBLE STUDY #5

GOD ENLIGHTENS THE DARKNESS AND REVEALS HIS WISDOM IN THE STORY OF ALL THINGS

MATERIALS:

- Bibles (participants will be asked to write in their Bibles)
- Pens/Pencils
- Light source, blank wall, and various objects (see game below)
- Poster board paper or other larger writing surface for small groups to write and draw (see discussion about Isaiah 42 below.)
- 1 Participant Guide per student

GOALS:

- This study will show participants how God brings light in the darkness and reveals His wisdom repeatedly in the Bible. (We call repeating big ideas like these, “Biblical Themes.”)
- Through reading and re-reading the Scriptures, this study will help participants see how light is used to reveal who God is and how He interacts with humanity. Ultimately, Jesus is the light, the revelation of God that brings all of God’s promises to fulfillment. Christ continues to shine His light through His church.

LEADER NOTE: In the story of all things, God uses the theme of revealing His wisdom to the world, oftentimes using the image of bringing light in the darkness.

** Before introducing this next study, take some time to recap what you and your group have learned from reading and re-reading the stories from the first Pre-Gathering Bible study. The hope is that all of these Bible studies connect together and help participants start piecing together various parts of the story of all things.**

INTRODUCTION:

Game— Guess the Silhouette

1. Set up the room where the leader is positioned behind the youth. You will need a strong light source and the ability to project on a blank wall. Gather everyday objects but make sure the youth do not see what the items are. Examples: lamp, frying pan, bike helmet, plant, flip flop, sunglasses, colander, scissors, flower vase, coffee mug, etc. Include a number of items that are genuinely difficult because of the basic shape or if it looks like something else such as a wall clock that is just a circle so that it could be a plate or a wall clock that is in the shape of another object such as a cat. These objects are intentionally difficult to guess solely based on the silhouette.



2. Divide into 2 groups facing the blank wall. Turn off the lights so that the single light source is bright in the room.
3. Hold the everyday objects in front of the light so that its silhouette shines on the blank wall. Set a timer for 1 minute and have group #1 try to guess as many objects as possible. They may pass if the whole group decides. After 1 minute, have group #2 go with different objects. The group that guesses the most objects correctly wins!

LEADER NOTE: Which objects were the easiest to figure out? Which objects were the toughest? Why?

Hold up the objects they identify as difficult or the ones that you noticed they struggled to guess.

ASK: Can you think of times when you thought an object was something else in the dark but then turned on the light to see the reality?

If you have a story, either funny or scary, share with the group to give them an idea. An example might be seeing a coat rack with a hat on top and thinking it was a person in the house.

LESSON

SAY: Together, let's look at how light is used in Scripture. From the very first page of the Bible, we see God speak light into the darkness and in this image we see God's presence in His creation.

ASK: Before you begin reading, ask youth to summarize the story of Genesis 32 and what they learned as they read it (this was the call to action from the previous Pre-Gathering Bible study). Encourage a variety of youth to share so that there is a more robust understanding of the story and its demonstration of God dwelling with His people.

SAY: Did you notice that Jacob and God wrestle "until daybreak" and that at that time, Yahweh blesses Jacob by changing his name and giving him a new identity? This image of Jacob walking away in the light of day is a sign of hope that he is made new, that Yahweh has revealed Himself to Jacob and Jacob is changed.

SAY: Our icon for this biblical theme is a lightbulb. As you read these next stories, draw an image of a lightbulb to remind you of how God reveals Himself to His people.



LEADER NOTE: For each of the Pre-Gathering Bible studies, there has been a new icon representing that biblical theme. It is our goal for students to use the different icons throughout their Bible to see these themes in the Story of All Things. By the end of the Gathering, they will have a total of seven icons to help them see the Story of All Things. Hopefully this becomes a fruitful practice that they can utilize throughout their life.

Ask for 3 volunteers to read each of the following passages to the group. Before each story is read, ask youth to listen for how light appears in the story and what it reveals to us.

Read Exodus 34:29-35.

1. Who was present on Mt. Sinai? *Yahweh and Moses*
2. How was it apparent to Israel that Moses met with Yahweh? *Face radiating*
3. How does that connect to the theme of light? *Yahweh revealed Himself to Moses like a light shining.*

Read Matthew 2:1-12.

1. How did the magi know where to go? *Star shone*
2. What did the light of the star reveal about the baby? Notice all of the labels given to Jesus in the passage—*king, Christ, shepherd, ruler*

Read John 9:1-7, 25.

1. What does Jesus do for the blind man? *Heals him.*
2. What does Jesus call himself? *Light of the world*

SAY: Light is used to reveal who God is to humanity and bring His wisdom to the world. Now let's look at a passage in the Old Testament that uses this image of light and see what it shares with us about who God is and the relationship He has with humanity. We'll be looking at a passage in Isaiah. So far in our Bible Studies, we've read the story of the flood, the story of the Exodus and the story of the temple. Isaiah comes after all of those stories when Israel has not been reflecting the Light of God to the world. They have turned away and forgotten about how God cleanses them, brings new life, dwells with them and frees them. It turns out, these people need someone greater than Noah or Moses or David, and Yahweh reveals who that someone is and what he will do.

LEADER NOTE: This would be a great time to split students into their family groups for the Gathering to continue building those relationships with their Adult Leaders. A goal to have for this last Pre-Gathering Bible study is to have students facilitate these conversations in their family groups. If you have not already identified a student leader for the group, take time prior to this Bible Study to encourage and equip them as a leader for their peers.

- Have one person in the group read Isaiah 42:1-17 while the rest of the youth either draw what Isaiah describes or writes down the key words for what Yahweh will do for and through His people.
- After the group reads Isaiah 42, discuss what Yahweh will do. According to the passage, how will it look for God to “bring light to the darkness”? *Jesus is the fulfillment of this promise.*
- Give each group a large poster board size paper. Have each group draw the promises described in Isaiah. Encourage them to include the image of light shining in darkness in some way.
- After 15-20 minutes, bring the groups together and ask them to share how Jesus is the light shining in the darkness.

APPLICATION:

All of these stories show that like light shining in the darkness, God reveals His wisdom and His will to deliver humanity out of darkness. Just like our game at the beginning, it is easiest to tell what something is when it is brought into the light. Jesus is the light that breaks forth in the darkness. He is exactly the gift that Isaiah 42 promised. And He's not done shining!

Read Colossians 1:9-14 to the group.

SAY: See, you have been filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding as He delivered you out of darkness into light.

Read Colossians 2:1-3.

SAY: Christ is the Light and “in Christ are hidden all treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

Read Colossians 4:2-6.

SAY: This Light that is revealed to you now shines through you to others as Christ reveals Himself to the world.

CALL TO ACTION:

Between now and leaving for the Gathering, read the opening chapters of the Bible (Genesis 1-3) and the book of Colossians (chapters 1-4). While you're reading, think about these questions:

- What does this story reveal about God's character?
- What does this story reveal about humanity?
- In your Bible, mark up this story with the Biblical Themes icons we have studied in these Pre-Gathering Bible studies



- *You or your youth may have found these activities to be fruitful and want more, if so, it may be good to encourage them to reread stories from previous Bible studies.*
- What connections do you see between Genesis 1-3 and Colossians?

LEADER NOTE: We will also ask you to read Colossians 1-4 in the “On the road to the Gathering” Bible Study.