

Christmas is all about the greatest gift ever given.

There is real darkness in our world today.

Their minds are full of **darkness**; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him. *Ephesians 4:18*

For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this **dark world**, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. *Ephesians 6:12*

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought **light** to everyone. The **light shines** in the darkness, and the **darkness** can never extinguish it. *John 1:1-5*

The gift of Christmas is the gift of light.

“I am the **light** of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in **darkness**, but will have the **light of life**.” *John 8:12*

The gift of Christmas is the light of joy.

...but the angel reassured them. “Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I bring you good news that will bring **great joy** to all people. The **Savior**—yes, the **Messiah**, the **Lord**—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!” *Luke 2:10-11*

“These **things** I have spoken to you, that my **joy** may be in you, and that your **joy** may be full.” *John 15:11*

What things?

“**Abide** in me, and I in you.” *John 15:4*

“If you want to get warm you must stand near the fire; if you want to be wet you must get into the water. If you want joy, power, peace, eternal life, you must get close to, or even into, the thing that has them.” — C.S. Lewis

“If you abide in me, and my **words** abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” *John 15:7*

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you **keep my commandments**, you will abide in my love...” *John 15:9-10*

Do you recognize the darkness?

One Year New Testament Devotionals

Small group discussion questions related to the weekend message will resume in January 2018 during our next 10-week group cycle. Small group registration opens December 30. Use these One Year New Testament questions to discuss with your small group or answer individually.

Devotional

Love was a central theme of the Apostle John’s ministry and writings. When John wrote about love he was not referring to the kind of casual phrases we throw around today – “I love chocolate!” or “I love my new car.” Instead, he was referring to a God-kind of love. The kind that jumps out of heaven into a mortal body, hangs out with the marginal, teaches the stubborn, spares the annoying, and then is beaten and left to die. We can love like that only because God showed it to us first, and when we show God’s love, those who are far from Him can see Him.

December 3: 1 John 3:7-24

Whose life has been an example to you of what it means to love? Which do you find easier: to love with words or with actions? Why? In what way does love result in life, and hate result in death?

December 4: 1 John 4:1-21

Which do you think is a more powerful motivator: love, fear, or hate? Why? How can we demonstrate our love for God? Based on the motivation for how much God loves you, what specific steps can you take this week to love others?

December 5: 1 John 5:1-21

What chores or tasks do you despise or find burdensome to do? According to verse 3, what unique quality do God’s commands have? Why is this true? When have you thought that God’s commands were burdensome? What will help you change your perspective?

December 6/7: 2 John & 3 John

What gives you the greatest joy in life? If other people were to give a report about you, how would they describe your faithfulness? What kind of reputation do you want to have with others? What do you need to achieve this goal?

December 8: Jude 1:1-25

What is something you have learned from history? How does it help us to recall past events: either from history or our own lives? Which past events are most instructive to you? How can you keep the kinds of past events that teach you to live for God in the front of your thinking this week?

December 9: Revelation 1:1-20

How did you feel the first time you realized that someone was in love with you? What does grace mean to you? In what specific way did God show His love for you by extending His grace? What is one way you can show your gratitude to Christ today for all that He has done for you?