

# Life Shines in Darkness: A Bible Study

## *John 1:1-14*

Light and life belong together. Chlorophyll converts light into nutrients for quite a wide class of creatures, so that they cannot exist without sunshine. Some others “bioluminesce”—literally “light-making life”—and generate visible radiation via metabolism. (Think fireflies!) Research has witnessed mammalian embryos emitting sparks in the instant the fertilization process brings them into being. And the search for extraterrestrial life starts with stars because habitable planets have to orbit a source of light and heat.

Life doesn’t just constitute a scientific category. Something about life—especially human life—connects directly to Jesus Christ. “I have come that they may have life” (John 10:10), He proclaims. But He also clearly declares both, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12), and, “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:6). Every human life derives worth and purpose from Him, and without this relationship, an entity does not—in a very real sense—have life: “Apart from me, you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Popular definitions of “alive” miss some incredibly important dimensions—and blessings!

The Gospel of John takes light and life as central themes. It gives an affirming assessment of human life’s significance. Light is good, and it makes the things it touches good also. In the same way, we can neither know life nor do life Christ-lessly. But anyone who has this Son of God and Savior also owns every privilege of life you can imagine—as well as all its rights.

- What significant circumstances or atypical occurrences have your parents told you accompanied your birth? What is your earliest memory?
- When did you cease being afraid of the dark? What happened to alleviate your fright? What do you find most troublesome about darkness—bugs, bumping into something unseen, being alone, not being alone, or getting lost?
- What Old Testament episode is John 1:1-5 revisiting? What do you think the author is telling us about Jesus by framing the narrative in these familiar terms? What do you think he’s saying about us?

- What words does Almighty God use in Genesis 1:26-31 to design and declare human beings special? What activities does He undertake in addition to speaking that make the members of our race precious (Genesis 2:7, 21-22; Psalm 139:14-15)?
- When and how did the Eternal Word become flesh (Luke 1:26-39)? What effects does this have on how we regard ourselves and our neighbors (Hebrews 2:14 and 4:15; Matthew 25:40)?
- What are some elements or dynamics that the world uses to measure a person's worth? Which factor matters most to the sanctity of human life (John 1:13)? What constitutes the appropriate response to this (John 1:12)?
- John 1:11 relates that "His own did not receive Him." In what ways might life issues involve one's own not receiving? What other darkneses can accompany or often associate with life issues? Which do you regard as the worst? Why?
- How might one enact or assist "receiving" during a surprise pregnancy? A terminal diagnosis? A disability? Suicidal ideation? Infertility?
- What property of light is your favorite—heating, healing, revealing, celebrating, bridging distance, or giving hope? In what ways can sanctity-of-life courage and care bear witness about the Light? Which of these opportunities excites you most?



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- What significant circumstances or atypical occurrences have your parents told you accompanied your birth? What is your earliest memory?

**Responses may vary. My parents have informed me that I was born two weeks after the due date but still weighed less than six pounds and that I was delivered naturally even though oriented in the true breech position. My earliest memory involves receiving a model train set for a birthday present from grandparents when I was a toddler.**

- When did you cease being afraid of the dark? What happened to alleviate your fright? What do you find most troublesome about darkness – bugs, bumping into something unseen, being alone, not being alone, or getting lost?

**Responses may vary. I had intense fear of abduction in the night until my late teen years. That fear eased as I grew more confident in my ability to defend myself and more comfortable with one’s adult responsibilities for oneself. To this day I find darkness unsettling, but the reason has shifted to the possibility of bumping into something unseen or encountering critters.**

- What Old Testament episode is John 1:1-5 revisiting? What do you think the author is telling us about Jesus by framing the narrative in these familiar terms? What do you think he's saying about us?

**The Evangelist is reciting the creation account from the first chapter of Genesis. He signals this with the words "In the beginning ..." and attention to divine dialogue and the primacy of light. The author is identifying Jesus with the Almighty Maker and the continuity of His message and ministry with the history and Scriptures of Israel. It indicates also that this God intends humankind for fellowship with Himself and that this Jesus makes every human person special in a way that nothing else can improve or impair.**

- What words does Almighty God use in Genesis 1:26-31 to design and declare human beings special? What activities does He undertake in addition to speaking that make the members of our race precious (Genesis 2:7, 21-22; Psalm 139:14-15)?

**Especially the declarations "in Our image," "have dominion over," "fill the earth and subdue it," and "I have given you," along with the designation, "very good," invest the human race with sanctity and significance. The narrative continues to highlight this by specifying how the Lord God fashioned the first man and woman with His own hands and imparted His own breath to bring forth human life. The Psalmist understands this to affirm His intimate involvement in the fertilization and gestation of every human being.**

- When and how did the Eternal Word become flesh (Luke 1:26-39)? What effects does this have on how we regard ourselves and our neighbors (Hebrews 2:14 and 4:15; Matthew 25:40)?

**The Word became flesh first at the angel's Annunciation, nine months before His birth on Christmas Day. This sets each person apart as precious even from conception and during pregnancy because the Son of God has put Himself in the very place of unborn children and assumed their condition and experience into His own human—and divine—nature. He purposely and eagerly shares in every dimension of our existence in order to counteract the sinful ways in which we underestimate one another.**

- What are some elements or dynamics that the world uses to measure a person's worth? Which factor matters most to the sanctity of human life (John 1:13)? What constitutes the appropriate response to this (John 1:12)?

**The world assesses the worth of a person by measuring age, appearance, productivity, property, and popularity. This allows the sinful nature to calculate, compare, and compete to establish and ensure one's sense of self on the basis of human works. The Gospel of Jesus Christ reveals that what God does to,**

**in, and through a person—His free, infinite, and universal grace—makes the determinative difference. As it constitutes a gift, it invites and enables a response of receiving and believing, along with repenting and rejoicing.**

- John 1:11 relates that “His own did not receive Him.” In what ways might life issues involve one’s own not receiving? What other darkneses can accompany or often associate with life issues? Which do you regard as the worst? Why?

**A surprise pregnancy can lead to one’s own parents not receiving the life as a gift but rather rejecting it by abortion. A neighbor undergoing a chronic disability or a terminal diagnosis might resist receiving life under such circumstances as God’s gift by pursuing physician-assisted suicide. Other loved ones often pressure toward these measures and thereby refuse to receive those facing them as privileges and responsibilities for sharing life. The devil and his demons intensify the suffering by inflicting abandonment, abuse, anxiety, poverty, pain, depression, or guilt. It seems to me that the isolation, the sense that one either wants to or ought to handle these situations alone, makes them particularly dangerous.**

- How might one enact or assist “receiving” during a surprise pregnancy? A terminal diagnosis? A disability? Suicidal ideation? Infertility?

**We can receive in the context of surprise pregnancy by asking for help, sacrificing certain personal priorities for the baby’s sake, celebrating the present and upcoming blessings of new life, offering assistance, listening to concerns, or expressing affirmation and encouragement. We can receive during a terminal diagnosis by grieving together, preparing to enter eternity in faith, taking advantage of remaining time to confess Christ and witness to the faith, accompanying during healthcare appointments and hospital stays, or visiting and serving amid convalescence. We can receive alongside disability by advocating for persons with impairments, accommodating our community facilities and functions to special needs, and looking for the ways in which neighbors with disabilities mediate the presence and power of God to us. And we can receive in the midst of infertility by acknowledging the losses and griefs it can bring, crying out together to the Lord, opening homes and families to those awaiting children or children awaiting adoption, or seeking medical remedies to disorders that may be interfering with pregnancy.**

- What property of light is your favorite—heating, healing, revealing, celebrating, bridging distance, or giving hope? In what ways can sanctity-of-life courage and care bear witness about the Light? Which of these opportunities excites you most?



Responses may vary. I especially appreciate how light is associated with celebration (like birthday candles, Christmas lights, or fireworks). It reminds that God Himself abides in perpetual rejoicing and desires to share that delight with His creation. Gospel-motivated voices For Life can testify to the Light of Life by identifying, emphasizing and anticipating the manifold blessings that relationships with each other bring and by sharing griefs and gladnesses together.



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