



# GREAT LENGTHS

## GREAT LENGTHS, PART 1: COMING OUT OF THE DARK

According to modest estimates there are about 100 billion observable stars. Each of them powerful and potentially life giving in their own right. And yet, for all of their power, might, heat, and light, the only thing that is comparable to the power of a star is its converse...darkness. Darkness is cold and uninviting. Darkness can be dangerous. It is the absence of light. Can you imagine a darkness so powerful that it sucks out even the possibility of light? Can you imagine a darkness so powerful that it leaves people feeling hopeless and helpless? What if you found out that God went to great lengths to keep us out of the dark?

**BIG IDEA:** [Hope and help are found when we follow the light.](#)

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What emotions do you feel the strongest during the Christmas season? Why?
2. Talk about a time when you encountered darkness (physical or spiritual). How did you feel? How did you escape the darkness?
3. With your Bible or Bible App, read Isaiah 9:1-7

*Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali will be humbled, but there will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be filled with glory. 2 [b]The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness,[c] a light will shine. 3 You will enlarge the nation of Israel, and its people will rejoice. They will rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest and like warriors dividing the plunder. 4 For you will break the yoke of their slavery and lift the heavy burden from their shoulders. You will break the oppressor's rod, just as you did when you destroyed the army of Midian. 5 The boots of the warrior and the uniforms bloodstained by war will all be burned. They will be fuel for the fire 6 For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor,[d] Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's Armies will make this happen!*

*Isaiah 9:1-7 (NLT)*

4. What is Isaiah saying about the darkness? What promises are found in this passage? How does this relate hope and help?
5. During the message Carlo mentioned how mental health issues are often compared to darkness. Why do you think people are afraid to talk about their mental health issues in church or small group?
6. How do these promises in Isaiah 9 give hope and help to someone who is struggling with anxiety, depression, anger, or other mental health issues?
7. How does Jesus help us come out of the "dark"?

## MOVING FORWARD

700 years before Jesus was born, God promised us hope in the darkness. He promised us help. He promised us the light. Christmas is all about God answering a cry for help. This week, how will you help spread the help and hope of Christmas to those in your life? How can this group help you come out of the dark?

## WEEKLY READING

This week, spend some time reading and reflecting on *Isaiah 9:1-7, Matthew 1:18-24, and John 1:1-17*

*In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He existed in the beginning with God. 3 God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. 4 The Word gave life to everything that was created,[a] and his life brought light to everyone. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.*

*John 1:1-5*

