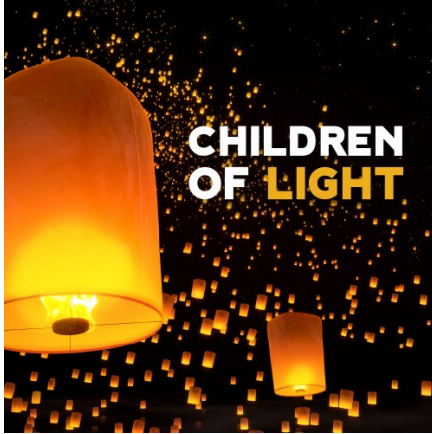


Small Group Questions

Small groups and individuals can use these questions to engage the content of Sunday sermons.

January 1-22, 2023

Children of Light



John 1:1-5 reminds us that after a long season of darkness, Jesus is the long-awaited light for ALL people. Like the Magi, God prompts us to follow the light. Like Jesus, God calls us to be children of light, the promise sealed by the sign of baptism. As children of light, God transforms us into living lights as we spread the light of God's grace in the world.

While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light." – John 12:36.

First Week: January 1, 2023

Follow the Light (Epiphany)

Isaiah 60:1-6

Matthew 2:1-12

Connect:

Have you ever admired someone so much that you wanted to be just like them? Share your experience.

Engage:

Read Isaiah 60:1-6

1. The prophet describes the drawing power of the Messiah. Describe the ideal person you think would have this kind of universal appeal.
2. The writer loads the poems with words related to light. Why do you think light is such a powerful image and invitation to worship?

Read Mathew 2:1-12

3. What do you imagine the Magi expected to find when they went looking for the King of the Jews? What about seeing Jesus prompted them to worship him?
4. When have you followed "signs" in your life? Did the outcome meet your expectations or did the result disappoint? Why?
5. Have there been "signs" that you have followed that relate to your faith? Was it easy or difficult to keep following that light?

Apply

After a long season of darkness, now comes the promise that Jesus is the long-awaited light for ALL people. The magi remind us that all we need to do is recognize and follow that light. They may have expected a magnificent and powerful king, but we know that the true power of this infant king will be shaped by humility, servanthood, and sacrifice. He will show his love for humanity by giving up his life for all people.

As the new year begins, what resolution can you make that we facilitate growth in your spiritual life? How can you more faithfully follow the light?

Pray

Share joys and concerns and pray for one another, the church, and the world.

Small Group Questions

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January 1-22, 2023

Children of Light



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Second Week: January 8, 2023

Marked by the Light (Baptism of our Lord)

Isaiah 43:1-7

Matthew 3:13-17

Connect:

All of us have seen babies, young people, and adults get baptized. Share about a time when a baptism inspired or moved you.

Engage:

Mikvah is the Jewish immersion ritual that brings one into a state of spiritual purity. For this reason, baptism is often seen as the once-and-for-all cleansing of one's sin. It signifies that you now belong wholly and entirely to God's family of mercy and love.

Read Isaiah 43:1-7

1. The passage is ripe with metaphors related to belonging to God. How do these images give comfort? How do they make you uncomfortable?
2. The prophet speaks of God's protective and loving care. How have you experienced this kind of care?

Read Matthew 3:13-17

When Matthew recalls this event, he uses the language of Roman adoption. When a patron or parent officially recognized or "adopted" their heir, they made a public proclamation saying, "This is my son." This privilege could be conveyed anytime in a person's life but most often in young adulthood.

3. Why do you think Jesus needed to be baptized "in order to fulfill all righteousness?"
4. Jesus' baptism has all the mystical signs of a theophany (voice from heaven, dove as sign of God's physical presence). Why did Jesus need such a sign? Why did John? Why do we?
5. What are the signs or rituals of your belonging to God? Why are these signs or rituals important to you?

Apply

Like Jesus, God calls us to be children of light, our identity sealed by the sign of baptism. This sign assures us of God's presence and reminds us that we belong to God. Yes, the one who created and formed you has also redeemed you. After all, we are God's treasured beloved ones.

How can the memories of God's faithfulness to you encourage you with the challenges you are facing?

Pray

Share joys and concerns and pray for one another, the church, and the world.

Small Group Questions

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January 1-22, 2023

Children of Light



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Third Week: January 15, 2023

Living by the Light

Ephesians 5:8-10

Psalm 112

Connect:

What do you find most challenging about following Jesus?

Engage:

Read Ephesians 5:8-10

1. Paul describes the people in Ephesus as darkness. What do you think their lives previously looked like and why does he describe them this way?
2. Paul then goes on to make this amazing assertion – you are light! How would anyone know that Christians are light? How should they stand out?
3. What characteristics of a follower of Jesus are good, right, and true?

Read Psalm 112

4. Based on the psalm, list all the characteristics of those who fear and follow God. How does this list compare with your answer to questions 2 & 3?
5. Of the characteristics discussed, which ones come more easily to you than others? Which characteristics do you struggle with?

Apply

Christ calls us out of the darkness and urges us to live like light-filled people! The Holy Spirit transforms our lives and now we reflect God's light by doing what is good, right, and true.

What is one commitment you could make this week to stop leaning into darkness and instead cultivate the fruit of being a person of light?

Pray

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Small Group Questions

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January 1-22, 2023

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Fourth Week: January 22, 2023

Spread the Light

Isaiah 42:5-8

Luke 11:33-36

Connect:

Sharing your faith is a matter of words and actions. So which is easier for you – verbally sharing your faith or demonstrating your faith in action? Why?

Engage:

Judaism asserts that the Jews are to be a light and an example to the rest of the world. Therefore, through their exemplary faithfulness, the world will come to know God.

Read Isaiah 42:5-8

1. Describe the characteristics and authority of God found in this passage.
2. What are the promises God made to God's chosen people? How do these promises and expectations relate to us as Christians?

Read Luke 11:33-36

3. In what ways do we, as Christians, hide or pollute the light of Christ? Why do you suppose we act this way?
4. What are the ways we can share the light more readily?
5. Brainstorm some practical ways to spread the light of Christ more actively.

Apply

As children of light, we are called to share and spread that light. Our attitudes and actions need to draw people to the light of Christ.

Prayer can help motivate us to share our faith more visibly. What opportunities for "light spreading" will you pray for this week?

Pray

Share joys and concerns and pray for one another, the church, and the world.