



## HOPE IN THE WILDERNESS ISAIAH 40:3-5

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### Intro: Light and Darkness in Scripture

- One of the major biblical themes: **light vs. darkness**.
- Prominent in Advent passages like **Isaiah 9:2, John 1**
- Advent proclaims hope entering a dark world.

### Illustration: True Darkness

- True darkness is rare; even at night light leaks in.
- During a cave tour, headlamps turned off → total darkness; eyes “hallucinate” light out of confusion.
- Turning on the headlamp again shows how dependent we are on light for **orientation, safety, and hope**.
- In darkness we get hurt, lost, disoriented; only **light from outside** can guide us home.

### Biblical Meaning of Darkness

1. Evil - John 3:19 - Darkness hides wrongdoing.
2. Ignorance/Blindness - Prov 4:19 - Darkness obscures reality; we can't see danger or what we're doing.

### Context of Isaiah 9

- King Ahaz rejected God's help and trusted **Assyria** instead.
- Darkness = rejecting God's wisdom, Isaiah 8:19–22 – people seek mediums/spirits; end up in **dark despair**.
- Isaiah 9 - darkness won't last forever.

- Light will arise in **Galilee**—fulfilled in Jesus' ministry.
- Jesus came bringing light to humanity's natural darkness.

### Judah's Question: “What Should I Do?”

- Born out of darkness—fear, confusion, sin, ignorance.
- They turned to mediums; today people turn to friends, Google, AI, social media.
- All may have their place, but **shouldn't people ask God first?**
- Advent reminds us that Jesus brings God's **will, wisdom, and guidance**.

### How Does God Guide Us? (Nicky Gumbel's 5 C's—3 highlighted)

1. *Commanding Scripture*
  - Bible = primary, reliable guidance; a lamp to our feet (Ps. 119:105).
  - Scripture is stable like stars for navigation; worldly wisdom is unstable.
2. *Compelling Spirit*
  - Holy Spirit gives **personal** guidance: promptings, peace, conviction, ideas.
  - Spirit never contradicts Scripture; He is our relational Guide.
3. *Counsel of the Saints*
  - God uses other believers—parents, pastors, mentors, friends.
  - Helps prevent misinterpreting “promptings” or acting unwisely.

### Conclusion: Light Comes to Us

- Light originates in God, not in us.
- As we cannot reach the sun, God's light comes to us in Jesus.
- Jesus guides, leads, restores purpose, provides wisdom.
- John 8:12 – Whoever follows Jesus has **the light of life** and never walks in darkness.

## Connect Group Discussion

### Warm up:

1. Have you ever been somewhere that was completely dark with no possible light sources? I.e. Cave underground. How did that feel? How do you respond to being in the dark?
2. What stood out to you from Sunday's sermon?

### Study & Discussion:

1. Isaiah critiques Judah for seeking wisdom that "contradicts God's word." How do you discern when cultural wisdom is helpful and when it subtly pulls you away from God's way? Can you identify a cultural message that sounds good but leads toward darkness?
2. Darkness in Scripture includes *ignorance*—not knowing what makes us stumble. What are some "stumble points" in your life that you keep tripping over? What hidden assumptions, habits, or wounds might be contributing to that?
3. The sermon emphasizes becoming a person shaped by Scripture rather than just finding "answers." What practices help you allow Scripture to *form* you rather than merely *inform* you? Where do you sense God reshaping your imagination, values, or instincts?
4. The Holy Spirit guides in personal, relational ways—peace, conviction, promptings. How would you describe the ways the Spirit most often gets your attention? What are some barriers that make His voice harder for you to hear?

## Practice of the Week

### 1. Begin Each Morning With a Short Prayer of Orientation

Before checking your phone, say:  
"Jesus, You are the light of the world.  
Guide my thoughts, choices, and steps today."

### 2. Turn Off Noise for 5 Minutes

Take five uninterrupted minutes:

- no phone
- no music
- no screens

Breathe. Let God speak into the quiet.

### 3. Light a Candle at Dinner

A simple Advent ritual:

- Light a candle.
- Say, "Jesus, You are our light in the wilderness."