

Christmas Isn't Sentimental | Isaiah 9 Sermon Discussion Participant Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To come up with practical ideas to celebrate Christmas with Jesus as the hope.

Sermon Refresher: Christmas is not a sentimental message that humans will be able to work out our problems on our own. We should not look to other humans or groups to be the hope to conquer our darkness. Too often we settle for re-arranging darkness. Our only hope in overcoming darkness is to look to Jesus to be our light.

Icebreaker: When is a time that you had to do something in the dark?

Transition: The way the Bible describes life apart from Jesus is darkness. Trying to live in darkness is dangerous, difficult, and despairing. But, the hope of Christmas is that light has come into the darkness.

Discussion:

1. Think about how our culture celebrates Christmas. How do we sentimentalize Christmas by either celebrating or looking to the goodness of humans?
2. Read Isaiah 8:21-22. Isaiah describes how people by rejecting God are given over to darkness. What evidence of darkness do you see in our world today?

Isaiah 8:21-22

²¹ Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will curse their king and their God. ²² Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness.

3. In verse 22, Isaiah describes people looking to the earth to find solutions to the darkness. What are some human solutions we have a tendency to look to in order to solve the darkness?

THE **crossing** **small groups**

4. Keith mentioned that we can't solve our problems by re-arranging the darkness (e.g. solving loneliness problems with sexual immorality, solving money problems by unethical financial gain, the woman who made her career the ultimate thing after having made the dream of a family the ultimate thing). What's helpful about the word picture of re-arranging the darkness?
5. Read Isaiah 9:2,6 and John 8:12. In what ways is Jesus the light of the world?

Isaiah 9:2,6

² The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned...

⁶ For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

John 8:12

¹² When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

6. How can we practically avoid celebrating the sentimental, human-trusting cultural Christmas and instead celebrate Jesus as the light-bringing savior?

Sharing and Prayer:

Consider the following ideas for sharing and prayer and pick one:

- Pray for people in darkness that Christ might be made known to them this Christmas.
- Share what you're afraid of going wrong this Christmas season and pray for each other.