



Light and Darkness

(based on 1 John 1:5–10)

After Jesus died and sent the Holy Spirit into the world, his disciples told many others about Jesus and God's love. More and more people wanted to follow Jesus' teachings. They were baptized and met with other believers in their town to worship God. Some of the followers of Jesus, who became known as Christians, and then others who learned from them, wrote letters to the believers, encouraging them in faith. One of these letter writers was known as John the Elder. He wrote three letters that are in our Bible. The first letter was like a sermon, teaching the believers about God and Jesus. This sermon letter was passed from town to town as people met for worship.

John the Elder used words that the believers would have been familiar with: God is light, and in God there is no darkness at all. Many might have nodded their heads remembering old words of a long ago prophet who said that the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Others may have remembered that they were told that Jesus said that he is the light of the world, and that he told his followers to let their light shine and reflect God's love. Children may have smiled as they thought about how a candle would light up a dark room or an oil lamp would light the way along a path at night.

The sermon letter went on to remind the believers that following Jesus is like living in the light, reflecting the light and love of Jesus. However, the people were also reminded that everyone makes mistakes sometimes, turning away from following Jesus and God's way of living. This is called *sin*. If someone says they don't ever sin or make mistakes or hurt others or God, then they are fooling themselves and not telling the truth. Sin is like stumbling around in the dark and not using a light to see where to go.

John the Elder assured everyone who heard that sermon letter, and us today, that God loves us and, if we tell God those things we have done wrong—if we confess our sins—God is faithful and loving. God forgives us. We can see God's path, God's way of living, once again.



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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your children—imagine and wonder.
- Take a worship bulletin home and cut out the Prayer of Confession. Pray it together as a family each evening. If you don't have a worship bulletin, go to bit.ly/PrayersOfConfession and choose a prayer from the pdf to use.
- Notice all the places light is found, both in nature and manufactured. Pay attention to when you need light, how you use light, and how light makes you feel. Talk together about your discoveries.



Responding to God's Grace

- Read *The Magic Rabbit* by Annette LeBlanc Cate (Candlewick, 2013) or watch the YouTube video "The Magic Rabbit by Annette LeBlanc Cate" (bit.ly/TheMagicRabbit, 5:14). Talk together about how the rabbit found his way back. Wonder together about times that you feel far from God. What might be the "stars" that God has given you to find your way back to God's light?
- Write a family poem titled "God Is Light." On a sheet of paper, write the following prompts down the left-hand side: "God is light looks like . . ." "God is light sounds like . . ." "God is light smells like . . ." "God is light tastes like . . ." and "God is light feels like . . ." Elicit responses from each family member and have them write or draw their responses on the paper.

Celebrating in Gratitude

- Experiment with light and darkness. Use candles or flashlights. Darken the room. Light one candle or turn on one flashlight. How does it change the darkness? What is still in darkness or shadow? Try reading something. How well can you see? Light more candles or turn on more flashlights. How does that change things? Use a candle at dinner each night. As you light it, say, "Jesus is the light of the world. In him there is no darkness."
- Pray this prayer each day this week:

*God of light, help me recognize when I have turned away from your light and stumble in the darkness. Thank you for forgiving me.
Amen.*

Note: bit.ly web addresses are case sensitive.