ADVENT · REDEMPTION

Light and Life

John 1:9–14

PAUL NYSTEDT

The Big Idea

Jesus is the light of mankind. Through Jesus, light pierces the darkness of our souls and can restore us to true life with God. Without him we would not have hope.

Key Themes

The Problem Darkness	The Good News Light & Life
Forgiveness Grace & Truth	Identity Children of God

SUNDAY · Scripture & Devotion

John 1:9–14

"Good news!" We've all thought it, or yelled it to a friend, spouse, or parent at one time or another. Whatever follows is usually a response

to something hoped for or needed, or something totally unbelievable. What's the best news you've ever heard? While we hopefully all hear good things often, the best news we'll ever hear is found in John 1:9–14, specifically in verse 14. Unlike Star Wars or some Mystic Religion, God is not a distant god or force with whom we must hope or strive to connect with! He became flesh and lived among us as a man. That is the best news.

The Problem (John 1:9–11)

We've sinned against God, and our darkness has both blinded us, and separated us from the living God for eternity. We do not know Him, and mankind is so blind and dead that when Jesus came to His own people, they did not receive Him.

The Good News (John 1:12)

Though we were lost in darkness, "God…even when we were dead in our sins, made us alive together with Christ" (Ephesians 2:4–5). God sent Jesus in the likeness of sinful flesh, and offers Him to everyone. "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). His Light shines into the darkness of our hearts, and raises us from the dead.

Forgiveness (John 1:13–14)

Why does God forgive? God's gracious nature and integrity (truthfulness) are directly related to His forgiveness. Grace and mercy are different sides of the same coin. When we experience one, we are often, if not always, experiencing the other. God forgives because He is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love" (Exodus 34:6). He doesn't want anyone to perish (2 Peter 3:9), but He cannot ignore sin and still remain just (Romans 3:25), and true to His own character.

How does forgiveness work?

God gives us the right to become children of God through Jesus, and the ability to receive Him. But, how?

- **Not through human lineage (13b).** You do not receive God through your bloodline. In fact, your bloodline is sinful, and the only thing you can inherit by nature is death.
- **Not through your works (13c).** Your works cannot pay for your sin against God. Only One can reconcile man to God, and that's Jesus Christ. His substitutionary, atoning sacrifice bridges the gap between man and God.
- **Not by your intelligence, or a convincing speech (13d).** You may ask, "What about my own will?" No, not even your own will can save you. Just like a dead person cannot make

a decision, neither can you unless God draws you (John 6:44), makes you alive (Ephesians 2:5), calls you by name (John 10:3), and gives you the right (John 1:12).

Identity (John 1:12–14)

If someone is an addict they may identify themselves for life by saying, "My name is _____, and I'm an alcoholic." However, if we are in Christ, our past does not define us. Instead, we are new creations, prepared beforehand for good works (Ephesians 2:10). Not only are we new creations, but we're also told not to regard other believers "according to the flesh," but as new creations (2 Corinthians 5:16).

John tells us that if we receive Him, we become His children. We have a new family and a new identity. Regardless of sin, or our past, when we receive Him, Christ defines us. If you believe in Jesus' saving work in your life, you can confidently insert your name into this statement forever:

My name is _____, and I am a new creation—a child of God.



Daily Reflections

MONDAY · Reflection

Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.

Reflect

What does it mean that we are completely lost in spiritual darkness? Why was it necessary for Christ to become sin for us? How might gratitude for this change the way we live?

WEDNESDAY · Reflection

Reflect

How can you incorporate more of God's grace and truth into your life in the upcoming year? How do you think doing so will shape your actions?

THURSDAY · Reflection

Reflect

Discuss with a friend or family member what it means to be a child of God. How does this reality shape your identity? What does being called a "child of God" tell you about your relationship to Him? How can this encourage you in your identity?

SATURDAY · Prayer

Pray for family and friends who are lost in darkness. Ask God to bring them out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9).

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Option 1

Grab some tape and mark a pathway on your floor. Make sure it is a room that can be dark. Grab a flashlight. Ask each person in your family to try to walk along the line in the dark—safely. Ask them to grab one item hidden from one side of the room. Then give them a flashlight and see how they did.

Option 2

Have one person blindfolded or sitting in a dark room. Have another person with a basket sitting across the room. See how many balls or items the blindfolded person can make into the

basket. Now try without the blindfold. How'd you do?

Without Jesus we are completely lost and in the dark. We can't follow the path that leads to abundant life. With him we are given the light for the way, so that we can follow him, complete the mission he has for us, and enjoy life the way he created it to be.

