

Hope In The Dead Of Winter

Text: Isaiah 9: 2-7

1. There was a _____ crisis in Judah.
2. There was deep _____ among the religious people.

The Plain Truth

Hope shines in the dead of winter if we don't
_____ the _____.

1. Turn from darkness of “ _____ obedience” to _____ obedience.
2. God's light can _____ in you _____ and His government and _____ have no end!
3. _____ sets you _____ (from the things hanging around your neck).

One Year Bible Reading

Nov. 30: Daniel 7:1-28, 1 John 1:1-10, Psalm 119:153-176, Proverbs 28:23-24
December 1: Daniel 8:1-27, 1 John 2:1-17, Psalm 120:1-7, Proverbs 28:25-26
December 2: Daniel 9:1-11:1, 1 John 2:18-3:6, Psalm 121:1-8, Proverbs 28:27-28
December 3: Daniel 11:2-35, 1 John 3:7-24, Psalm 122:1-9, Proverbs 29:1
December 4: Daniel 11:36-12:13, 1 John 4:1-21, Psalm 123:1-4, Proverbs 29:2-4
December 5: Hosea 1:1-3:5, 1 John 5:1-21, Psalm 124:1-8, Proverbs 29:5-8
December 6: Hosea 4:1-5:15, 2 John 1:1-13, Psalm 125:1-5, Proverbs 29:9-11

November 29 & 30, 2014

Hope In The Dead Of Winter

Life Group Lesson • Week of November 30

It's hard to see when you're in the dark. God had given His people His light and love through His instructions and revealed Word, through prophets and their voice of truth—and still the people would not heed the warnings. Isaiah spoke God's truth during a time of deep darkness. The Assyrians had begun to invade the northern kingdom of Israel, and the southern kingdom of Judah was in constant threat and dread of the Assyrians, when these words of Isaiah the prophet were written: "Make the LORD of Heaven's Armies holy in your life. He is the one you should fear. He is the one who should make you tremble" (Isaiah 8:13).

But the people of God didn't fear their one, true King—the LORD of heaven and earth—they feared man, and put their trust in false alliances instead of God. Through His prophet Isaiah, the LORD pleaded with His people to turn from their sin and idolatry and turn to Him. But they wouldn't listen. They chose instead to continue their sinful practices and remain in the dark.

Hope shines in the dead of winter, but understand it is a light that shines from above. We must look up to its Source, the Lord our God. When we close the blinds on the true light, we're closing out the hope that God offers to us through Christ.

Read Isaiah 9:2-7

1. Notice v2: "The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine." What do you learn about people (man, humankind) from this verse?

What do you learn about God from this verse?

Poor leadership among the rulers and deep hypocrisy among the spiritual leaders had led God's people away from the true light. Israel and Judah had become pagan at heart, like all the nations around them.

Read Isaiah 1:10-20

2. According to these verses, what does the Lord have to say about living in sin and attempting to worship Him at the same time?

Think about a time in your life when you practiced selective obedience, as opposed to fully obeying the Lord in every area of your life, and you expected God to somehow "bless your mess." How did that work out for you?

Our words and behavior—that which comes out of our mouth and is fleshed out in our actions—reveals what is already in our hearts. The Lord says: "Wash yourselves and be clean! Get your sins out of my sight. Give up your evil ways. Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows. Come now, let's settle this" (Isaiah 1:16-18a). God says that though our sins are like scarlet, He can make them "as white as snow."

We can have a clean heart if we humble ourselves before the Lord and honestly admit our rebellion. This is called confession. We don't keep dodging the issue. We take time with the Lord to allow Him to point out the dark places in our hearts. As the Holy Spirit gently points out the areas that offend Him, we agree with the Lord that our sin deserves punishment, and then *by faith* allow the blood of Christ to cover every offense. The Lord makes us new on the inside by giving us a new heart and changing the way we think. He helps us see the way we've been hurting or neglecting others, and He opens our eyes to the truth: that at the core, our offense has ultimately been toward Him.

3. Only God can forgive sin. But the good news is He wants to forgive you and give you a clean heart. God does not want you and I living in darkness. How are you beginning to open the blinds to the light of God's hope and love?

What wrongs are you willing to surrender to the Lord in preparation for His Advent?

Jesus fulfilled what God said through Isaiah: "In the land of Zebulun and of Naphtali, beside the sea, beyond the Jordan River, in Galilee where so many Gentiles live, the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow, a light has shined." Jesus preached what we need to hear today, 'Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near'" (see Matthew 4:15-17). Jesus is the One Isaiah spoke of—the child born to us, the Son given. On His shoulders the government will one day rest. His rule and peace will never end. He is King of kings and Lord of lords!

4. How is Jesus your Wonderful Counselor?

How has Jesus proved to be Mighty God for you?

How is Jesus becoming your Everlasting Father?

How is Jesus revealing Himself to be your Prince of Peace?