

Light Shining Through Darkness

The people who walk in darkness will see a great light - a light that will shine on all who live in the land where death casts its shadow. (Isaiah 9:2 NLT)

We admit it. We've walked in darkness. It's no secret anymore. Life in addiction is filled with activities that are most often conducted down dark alleys or hidden away in darkened rooms. Dark secrets haunt us. When people look into our eyes they see a darkness there. There's a shadow over every part of who we are and it is a shadow of death. Our friends have died. Our hopes are gone. We buried our dreams for a wonderful life so long ago we don't even remember the location of the graveyard.

Into that darkness of anger, pain, and despair, God speaks hope to us, "A light will shine ... on those who walk in darkness" Is there really hope? Is there really a way out of the darkness for us? Is there really an escape for me from this existence that is more death than life? God's says "Yes."

Because of God's tender mercy, the light from heaven is about to break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace. (Luke 1:78-79 NLT)

Our Heavenly Father loves us tenderly and completely. In His tender mercy He sent Jesus to teach, heal, deliver, and even die for us. We are lost and dead on our own. God saw that darkness and sent a light to us. Jesus is our guide to a life of peace. Jesus has demonstrated repeatedly that He has power to heal every sickness in our body, our mind, or our heart. No evil demonic power could stand against a simple command from Jesus to stop torturing an individual and leave them completely. Though sin and hate-filled violence nailed Jesus to a cross, their power could not keep Him dead in a dark grave. Jesus lives today to prove His glorious power to overcome every experience of shame or guilt we've ever known. Jesus lives that testimony of great light in us - people who walked in darkness and in the shadow of death.

For God, who said, "Let there be light in the darkness," has made us understand that this light is the brightness of the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. But this precious treasure - this light and power that now shines within us - is held in perishable containers, that is, in our weak bodies. So everyone can see that our glorious power is from God and is not our own. (2 Corinthians 4:6-7 NLT)

If we hope to live well in recovery by simply getting healthy, working hard and practicing certain principles on a daily basis we will fail. We need more. God clearly tell us that we are very vulnerable in our new life. We live it in perishable containers - our weak bodies. Our bodies are weak. Our will

is even weaker. Our only hope is to welcome the light of Jesus Christ into our lives to give us new life. He is the one who has the power that we need. We do not understand on our own what we need. We have to ask God daily for insight and new information. We have to allow God to show us what is dark in us. It's the work of the Holy Spirit who lives in us to sort out what we think and do and to make two piles - light and darkness. We have lived in the darkness and been deceived by the devil for so long that there are many things that appear to us to be light that are actually darkness. It is only God who can help us and He's given us three tools: The Bible, His Holy Spirit, and mature Christians.

Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right. (Psalm 119:105 and 2 Timothy 3:16 NLT)

If you need wisdom - if you want to know what God wants you to do - ask him, and he will gladly tell you. (James 1:5 NLT)

Obey your spiritual leaders and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they know they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this joyfully and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit. (Hebrews 13:17 NLT)

We will fail in our new life if we ignore any of these three. If the Bible says to live in a way that is different, even radically different, than what we have always known, our only hope is to live the way the Bible says. We need to read and learn and shape our lives around the principles taught there. The Holy Spirit lives in us to guide us. Our conscience needs to be informed by God's Spirit. We need to talk to God throughout the day and invite His Spirit to show us if what we are thinking, saying, or doing is God's way. We need to find and stay with spiritually mature people who can help us sort out, on a daily basis, what is going on in our world and what God's will is for us. We need to do whatever they say.

The exciting truth is that if we do these things, we will no longer be people who walk in darkness and in the shadow of death, but we will become those God uses to bring others to His light.

Let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. (Matt. 5:16 NLT)

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Have I invited Jesus to bring light to my dark life?
2. In what ways am I living my own way rather than learning from God's tools for spiritual light for my path?
3. How do I need to change?