



LC STUDY GUIDE

Done in Sync with the "Let There Be ..." Series

The Passage: Isaiah 59 and 60

For Life Community usage the week of 12/1/14

Intro: Welcome to a new Advent series, "Let there be ..." Throughout December, we will look at a few passages focusing on light, hope and the birth of our Savior, Jesus. In this study, we want to explore the contrast between light and darkness through the lens of Isaiah.

Intro questions: Describe a time when you have experienced complete darkness. What were the circumstances? Describe some of your inner monologue and feelings. If you can remember, what was your first thought when you had access to light again?

Today's Big Idea: It's natural for us to describe pain, confusion, and hopelessness as darkness and therefore natural to describe hope, justice, and deliverance as light. The message of Advent is Jesus coming to deliver us from evil and offer us the light of salvation.

Isaiah 59:9-11

9 We look for light, but all is darkness;
for brightness, but we walk in deep shadows.
10 Like the blind we grope along the wall,
feeling our way like people without eyes.
At midday we stumble as if it were twilight;
among the strong, we are like the dead.
11 We all growl like bears;
we moan mournfully like doves.
We look for justice, but find none;
for deliverance, but it is far away.

Isaiah 60:1-3

1 "Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.
2 See, darkness covers the earth
and thick darkness is over the peoples,
but the Lord rises upon you
and his glory appears over you.
3 Nations will come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

O – Identify the phrases that contrast wishful desire with difficult reality (described metaphorically) in 59:9-11. Which ones do you find interesting? Which ones can you relate to?

I – Darkness is a universal metaphor that transcends civilization and time period. From fire-lit torches to the light bulb, there have always been attempts to create solutions to the darkness. What do you think Isaiah is referring to in verses 9 and 10?

(Babylonian conquering, exile, Israelites being treated as second-class citizens, limited opportunities, etc.)

A – How does contemporary Western society describe feeling blind or walking in darkness? ("Driving/Flying blind," "Feeling offline," "No compass," "Can't find north") How do we describe feeling spiritually lost or spiritually abandoned?

O – In the next chapter, Isaiah opens with a joyful proclamation of deliverance. How does this contrast with his previous words/concepts in chapter 59, and how does he use the metaphor of light?

I – Vs. 3 says, "Nations will come to your light...." In the ancient world when travel/citizenship was limited and governments were mainly limited to monarchs and a kingdom's mentality of "Conquer or be conquered," how would Isaiah's light/hope feel new and fresh?

(Conversion and transformation would not be out of forced conquest but instead a response to recognizing God's goodness/justice/love.)

A – How do we in contemporary Western society describe moments of deliverance and liberation? ("I saw the light")

A – During Advent, how can we contextualize this redemptive message of Jesus to our neighbors and to the national cultural conversations?

- a. **Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single meeting.** Take some time and select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your Life Community group.
- b. Certain questions work better for certain groups. You are encouraged to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best.
- c. Complement these questions with "process questions" (what else? what more? what do others think?).
- d. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don't rush people but encourage their participation. And avoid answering your own questions!
- e. Timing/pacing: allocate your time and move forward gently, with a steady pace.
- f. Application: Pace the study to conclude with "difference making" application.
- g. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into "teaching," rather than facilitating. It can cause people to feel distracted or de-powered.