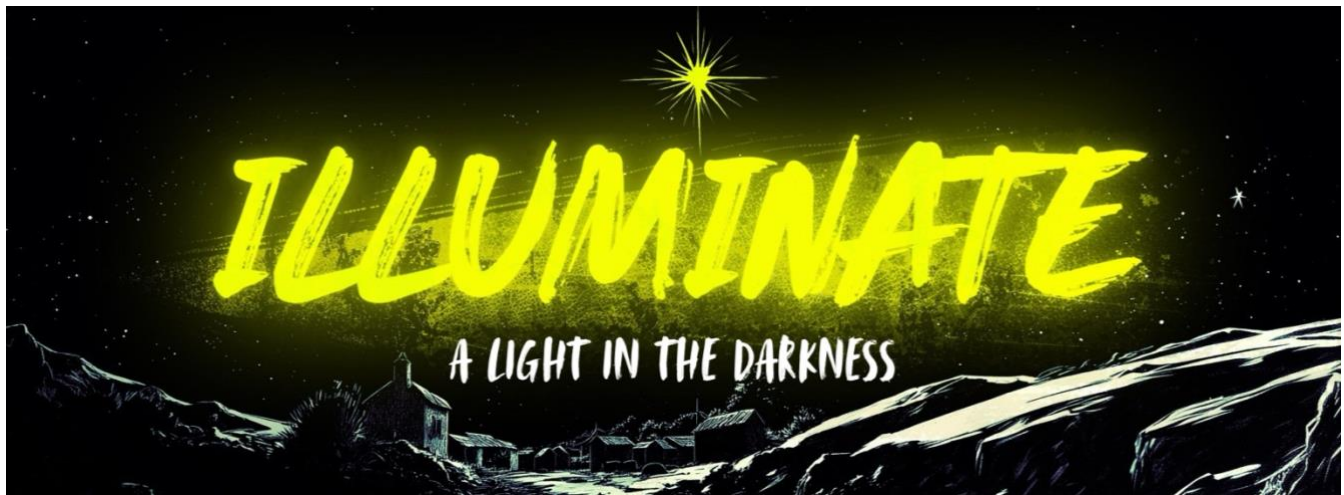




WEEK 1 – THE LIGHT PREDICTED
MIDDLE SCHOOL MINISTRY TEACHING GUIDE

BIG IDEA

Jesus stepped in to meet humanity's most desperate need.

BIBLE

*Isaiah 9:1–7; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18;
John 8:12*

ABOUT THIS WEEK

Centuries before Jesus' birth, Isaiah spoke of a light that would one day pierce the world's darkness. This week explores how Jesus fulfills those ancient prophecies, bringing hope to people walking in despair. God's promise of a Savior reminds us that even in our darkest moments, He is working to bring light and restoration.

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

HOOK – When is the *right* time to put up Christmas lights?

- Okay, serious question: Who here puts up Christmas lights *before* Thanksgiving? And who refuses until *after* Thanksgiving?
- We all have our preferences, right? But no matter when you put them up, Christmas lights always make things feel brighter, warmer — more alive.
- But the very first Christmas wasn't about lights on trees or houses. It was about a light that showed up in the middle of real darkness.
- For the next three weeks, as we lead up to Christmas, we're going to be talking about the light that Jesus brought into the world at the very first Christmas, but before we get there...
- We're going to rewind 700 years earlier to the Prophet and the Book of Isaiah — to a time when God's people were desperate for hope, because it's essential to know **WHY** Jesus coming was such a big deal!

CONTEXT – ISAIAH 9

- Isaiah was a prophet in the Old Testament. At that time, God had appointed prophets to be His mouthpiece. These prophets were the ones who would pass along a message from God to the people of Israel. And in the day of Isaiah, this was a big deal.
 - God's people — the nation of Israel — had turned away from Him. Because of that, they were surrounded by enemies and about to be invaded by the Assyrian Empire — one of the most powerful and terrifying forces in the world at that time.
 - Imagine living in a small town, knowing your enemies are marching toward you, destroying everything in their path. People were afraid. Families were divided. Leaders were corrupt. It felt like darkness was winning.
 - And into that fear and chaos, Isaiah stands up and says, this:
 - *"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned."* **Isaiah 9:2 NIV**
 - This was a big deal because the message was given to the very people walking in darkness. For them, this word from Isaiah was a message of hope. However, that message of hope was probably still a little confusing to them because of who Isaiah said this hope would be.
 - Not an army.
 - Not a powerful king.
 - A **child**.
 - Jump down to **Isaiah 9:6 NIV**
 - *"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."*
 - Imagine you're the Israelites. Everything around you is falling apart and someone says, "Oh! Don't worry! A baby is coming..."
 - *That was a shocking message for people living in terror — that God's plan to save them would come through the birth of a baby.*
 - *And hundreds of years later, it happened. We can read about it in **Matthew 1:18 NIV***
 - *"This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit."*
 - Jesus was the promised light Isaiah was talking about — the one who came to bring hope, peace, and forgiveness to people living in spiritual darkness.
 - So when we celebrate Christmas, we're celebrating the moment God's promise finally came true.
 - Isaiah's prophecy reminds us that God's light shines brightest when life feels darkest.
 - First to the people of Israel... but to us also.
 - When we recognize that they weren't the only ones walking in darkness who needed the Great Light, the Christmas story comes alive for each of us and meets us where we are.
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SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

- Just like the people of Israel, we all experience darkness.
 - Sometimes it's sadness or loneliness.
 - Sometimes it's doubt or fear about the future.
 - Sometimes it's feeling far from God.
- But Isaiah's message — and Jesus' birth — prove that **God never gives up on His people. He keeps His promises.**
- The birth of Jesus and the events surrounding it reveals why Jesus came, but He even claimed to it Himself during His public ministry:
 - *In John 8:12 NIV, Jesus says: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*
- Jesus didn't just bring light for one season; He brought light for every moment of life.
 - And that's what makes Christmas so powerful — it reminds us that God's light still shines, even when life feels heavy.

NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

- **So let me ask you, what darkness are you walking in this Christmas season?**
 - Sure, there may be lights and joy everywhere you go, but for some of you, there's an area of life that just feels dark.
 - Maybe you feel overwhelmed by the busyness of this time of year.
 - Some of you may be dealing with the loss of a loved one during a time where we typically draw close to family.
 - Others may be dealing with struggles in your mental health.
 - Regardless of what that darkness is, I want to let you know that there is a Great Light and His name is Jesus.
 - He walks with us in the darkest of times and offers us true hope.
 - He is the reminder that God keeps His promises, and while you may be in darkness right now, he doesn't leave you there.
 - That doesn't always mean that whatever problem you're will instantly go away — although sometimes it does — but it means that we can all hold onto the hope of a God who loves us and steps into the darkness to pull us into His marvelous light.
 - Sometimes what we need is to remember the hope that Jesus offers so here are a couple of ways you could do that this Christmas season:
 - **Hold onto hope.**
 - When things feel dark, whisper this simple prayer: "Jesus is my hope." A few words that remind you you're never alone. Run to Him in those moments. Maybe it's by going to His word, or going to Him in prayer, or talking to someone full of faith to find someone to pray with you and encourage you. Which brings us to another practice...
 - **Talk about your darkness.**
 - Don't hide it. God didn't make you to handle it alone. Talk to a friend, parent, or leader.
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- This is why we do small groups. We realize that everyone may not have those people, so we want to help you find them.
 - **Shine light through kindness.**
 - Some of you may not have an area of “darkness” in your life right now. If that’s you, PRAISE GOD! But now may be a season for you to help shine the light of Jesus in someone else’s life (we’ll talk about that more in week 3 of this series).
 - Be intentional this week — help a friend, include someone new, or encourage your family. Small lights can make big differences.
 - And as our church heads toward **Christmas Eve services**, that’s a perfect moment to invite someone who needs hope. You could be the one who helps them see the light of Jesus for the first time.
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Gospel Invitation

- Maybe today, you realize you’ve been walking through darkness without Jesus.
 - The good news is — the same light Isaiah promised and that arrived in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago is still shining today.
 - If you want that light in your life, say, “Jesus, I need You. Be my light. Forgive me and lead me.”
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Prayer:

- Lead students in a prayer before dismissing them to Small Groups.
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