



breakthroughs

**Finding Freedom and True
Fulfillment in Jesus**

Lesson One: Darkness vs. Light

We begin our journey in Breakthroughs by distinguishing the difference between darkness and light. We will soon discover that walking in the light is where we experience the freedom our hearts crave. Darkness is defined as:

1. The state or quality of being dark.
2. Absence or deficiency of light.
3. Wickedness or evil.
4. Obscurity; concealment.
5. Lack of knowledge.

Based on the definition of darkness, how would you describe the life of someone who lives in darkness?

Light is defined as the natural agent that stimulates sight and makes things visible. Darkness and light are polar opposites. We can't see things that are in the dark and we can see things in the light. When we experience pain and loss in life, we also experience darkness. Darkness tries to surround us and cause us to give up hope. If we've made poor choices then we will try to hide in the darkness. We may also try to keep others from seeing our pain and struggles, so we are alone in the darkness. Hiding our pain, our struggles and our selves becomes a way of life.

Breakthroughs is based on what God's Word (*the Bible*) teaches us about life and about Him. You may know very little about the Bible or perhaps you know quite a bit. We will have Bible verses in each of the lessons in our workbook. I am committed to presenting truth to you in this workbook that has the power to heal your heart and set you free from the darkness in your life. The truth that we will be using in each lesson is the only truth that has that kind of power to change your life. It is the truth of God's Word.

Lesson One: Darkness vs. Light

I pray that any negative thought or emotion that you may be experiencing at the mention of looking to God's Word will not keep you from approaching this workbook with an open heart and mind. I have talked to a lot of individuals who have been hurt by things said in the church or by Christians. I've had my share of misunderstandings about who God is and how He feels about me.

How about you? What thoughts and feelings do you have about looking to God's Word for the truth that can change your life?

If we look at the pain in the world and in our own lives, it can be overwhelming. There is darkness around us on any given day. Even a good day is not a perfectly good day. A perfectly good day no longer exists. It has not always been like this and it was not God's first choice for our lives. When God created the first man and woman, they did not have darkness in their lives. They walked with God and with one another with complete healing and freedom. It was a perfect day every day. Until they chose to believe a lie. The enemy of our souls approached them and they exchanged the truth for a lie. They chose to believe what the enemy was telling them instead of what God told them. When they made the decision to believe a lie, darkness entered their lives and put an end to their perfect days. They responded to the darkness by hiding. They chose to hide from God.

God could have abandoned them but instead He looked for them, called them out of their hiding place and helped them face their problems. He helped them recover from the pain and devastation that had entered their lives. This story is found in Genesis 3.

Lesson One: Darkness vs. Light

What are some of things that you need help with in your life?

What does the story in Genesis 3 tell you about God's desire to help you with your life?

Can you relate to hiding when you make a poor choice and do things you regret? If so, what are some ways you hide?

What about hiding from God? Do you think you try to hide from God at times in your life? If so, why do you think you hide?

Just as the first people God created (Adam and Eve) were given a choice to believe God or believe the enemy, we also are given choices. Obviously, some things in life happen that we have no control over, but we are faced with choices every day of our lives. We get to choose how we respond to the pain or losses in our lives. We get to choose how we respond to the good things in our lives as well. We also get to choose how we spend our time, who we spend our time with and even what kind of things we think about. We even get to choose how we respond to God. He doesn't grab us by the hand and force us to follow Him. God invites us to trust Him with our hearts and asks us to follow Him.

When Jesus spoke again to the people, He said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."
(John 8:12 NIV)

According to John 8:12, what will we experience if we follow Christ?

If we experience light when following Christ, then what can we expect to experience if we don't follow Christ?

God's plan for our lives is to follow Him. We follow Him by choosing to believe that He loves us and will help us with our lives. We stop hiding from Him and stop trying to change our lives with our own strength. This sounds simple, but it is not. Remember that we are bent on hiding, and we have an enemy that lies to us and we have darkness in our lives.

The lessons you hear taught each week in Breakthroughs and the work that you do in this workbook will help you learn how to follow God. The more that you follow God, the less darkness you will have in your life. You will know the difference between a lie and the truth and you will have His strength to help you change your life.

Does this give you hope? If not, then take a moment and write out a simple prayer to God. Ask God to help you believe Him and to have hope that He will help you begin to change your life.

Lesson One: Darkness vs. Light

NOTE: *If you need to take a break today in working through this lesson, then you can take a break.* Remember that we have one lesson per week to complete in the workbook. Work at a pace that is comfortable for you so that you have time to really think about and process what you are learning. If you prefer to complete an entire lesson at one time, then come back to review it during the week. Read the material again and your answers. You may have additional insight that you want to add to some of the questions that you answered.

It is easy for us to have black and white thinking when it comes to darkness and light. We can picture that we are either living in darkness or living in the light. However, most of us have some darkness in our life and some light in our life. This can be a bit confusing, so we need to know what God's Word teaches us about darkness and light. We are told in 1 Peter 2:9 that God called us "out of darkness and into His wonderful light." This leads to the question of how we can still have darkness in our lives if we have been called out of it and into God's light.

Recall that the darkness is without light, an inability to see clearly, and it is evil. We may love the beauty of night and enjoy sitting under the moon and stars. This is not what God's Word is referring to when it speaks of darkness. Darkness in God's Word is a spiritual darkness. It is where the enemy lives and where the enemy wants us to live. There is no hope in the dark. There is confusion, deception, fear, anxiety, depression, addiction, sadness and shame. Perhaps you feel like darkness has consumed you and your life, and you don't see any light around you. That is a very scary feeling and I want to say to you that God loves you and He is calling you out of that darkness. One step at a time is all you need to take. Ask Jesus to help you step out of the darkness. He will help you.

I would like to share a personal illustration that will help clarify how we can have both darkness and light in our lives. My heart has been divided over the years as a result of pain and sin in my life. At one point in my life I chose to give God a big part of my heart where pain resided as a result of sexual abuse. God helped me experience healing from the abuse and took away the shame and self-hatred that I felt as a result of the abuse. He helped me forgive the person who had abused me and He set me free from the darkness that entered my life when I was abused. However, I had another part of my heart where fear resided. I was afraid of what people thought of me, I was afraid of failure, afraid of the future and

Lesson One: Darkness vs. Light

To summarize what we've learned this week, please answer the following questions:

What is the difference between darkness and light?

How do we step out of darkness?

The last question is one that we will answer fully in next week's lesson. The short answer is that we step out of darkness by asking for God's help. It can be a very difficult step to take, but one He is passionate for you to take. Remember that He called you out of darkness so that you can walk with Him in the light of His presence. He loves you and wants to set you free from darkness.

