



# breakthroughs

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**finding freedom and true  
fulfillment in jesus**

## Lesson 2: Exposing Darkness

As we begin this week's lesson, I would like us to take a few minutes and consider this question, "Am I desperate for Jesus?"

Jesus tells us in Luke 4:18-19 (CSB), "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Who comes to mind as you read that Jesus came for the poor, the captives, the blind and the oppressed? Perhaps you think of a loved one living in bondage or a family living next door to you who does not know Jesus. Perhaps you remember a time in your own life when you felt overwhelmed with grief or felt far from God because of how you were living your life.

It's easier to admit that we are the poor, blind, captive and oppressed when we are going through a trial or suffering from a painful event in our lives. It feels a bit radical to think of ourselves as the poor, blind, captive and oppressed when life is manageable. We don't want to identify ourselves with such desperate and helpless people. Yet, this is exactly how Jesus calls us to live our lives with Him.

Jesus tells us in John 15:5 (CSB), "I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me."

Philippians 4:13 (CSB) is a popular verse and tells us, "I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me."

Psalms 63:1 (CSB) tells us, "God you are my God, I eagerly seek you, I thirst for you; my body faints for you in a land that is dry, desolate, and without water." And in John 7:37, "On the last and most important day of the festival, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. The one who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him."

We could read numerous scriptures that tell us that we desperately need Jesus. We may know this but to what extent do we see ourselves desperate for Jesus on a daily basis? What would our lives be like if we actually admitted each day that we are desperate for Jesus and need Him to heal us and set us free?

You and I have a choice each day. We can believe the lie that we don't desperately need Jesus or we can see ourselves as ones who desperately need Jesus. Apart from Jesus, our hearts are poor, blind, captive and oppressed. The good news is Jesus came to bring us good news, the Gospel. Jesus came to give us sight, to heal our hearts and set us free.

## Lesson 2: Exposing Darkness

This week's lesson is titled "Exposing Darkness" and the purpose is for Jesus to reveal to us the places in our hearts and lives where darkness exists. I pray that as you work through the material in this week's lesson that you remember Jesus came for you and is with you. He is the one pursuing your heart to preach good news to you, to open your eyes, to set you free and to heal your heart.

We learned last week that 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.

Which of the above descriptions of darkness can you relate to the most?

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One of the problems we have with making changes is that we don't recognize how desperately we need to make those changes. We get used to our lives being a certain way and settle for living with pain, hiding from people, and struggling with things that hurt us and hurt the people we love. Not seeing things as they really are is called denial. When we tell ourselves that we are not in pain when we are hurting, then we are denying the truth. When we pretend that things we do don't hurt us and don't hurt others, then we are denying the truth. When we tell ourselves that we don't need help when we do need help, then we are denying the truth. Denying the truth is one of the ways we protect ourselves from facing things that we don't want to face.

Why do you think we try to protect ourselves from things we don't want to face?

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Facing things, we don't want to face is very difficult. It can feel scary to look at things that we've tried to hide from ourselves and from others. It can also be overwhelming to think of making changes in ourselves and in our lives. Giving up things that have given us comfort is

not easy. When we begin weighing the cost of facing what we've worked hard at hiding, then stepping back into darkness feels like a smarter step to take.

Consider your own life. Have you tried to face the pain and struggles in your life before now? If so, what did it feel like when you began to step out of denial?

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We can wake up one day and feel motivated to begin to change ourselves and our lives. We can get a boost of emotional energy, and a dose of hope that encourages us to take a step out of the darkness in our lives. If that is where you are today, then take that as a gift. However, a boost of emotional energy and a dose of hope will not give us what we need to continue taking steps out of darkness. When we begin to face the pain in our lives, we will quickly run out of emotional energy. When the problems in our lives are no longer hidden by the veil of denial, we will quickly give up all hope for lasting change. The truth is that we are set up to fail because we don't have what it takes to change ourselves or our lives.

This is where the Truth steps in, the Truth that has the power to change your life. Please read what God's Word tells us about the darkness in our lives.

***For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the Kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.***

*(Colossians 1:13 NIV)*

As you know, a Kingdom needs a King for it to be considered a Kingdom. The King is the one in charge and makes the decisions for the kingdom and there can only be one king on the throne at a time. If we want our lives to be changed we need to settle an important question. We need to ask ourselves, "Who is on the throne in my life?" Are we trying to run

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our own lives? Are we allowing someone else to run our lives for us? Are we perhaps bowing to the enemy and allowing darkness to rule our lives?

On any given day and at any given moment someone is on the throne in our lives. Someone is calling the shots. This does not mean that we are helpless and have no say in the direction of our lives. What it means is that the one who is on the throne in our lives is the one who we are looking to for help and direction with our lives.

Who do you look to help you with your life?

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Who do you look to help you with decisions you need to make in your life?

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Who do you think sits on the throne the most in your life?

- yourself
- God
- Another person or people
- The enemy of our souls (Satan)

Stepping out of the darkness in your life may feel next to impossible. However, it is 100% possible because you are not alone. We are able to take this step out of darkness because God has already rescued us from the power of darkness in our lives. However, God has to be on the throne in our lives for us to be delivered from the power of darkness.

We need to give up control of our lives to God and ask God to help us step out of darkness. We need God's help in our lives and we need Him to guide our steps.

Have you ever asked God to help you with your life? If so, what was that experience like for you? If not, it's okay.

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God's Word tells us that there are two paths in life: one path has a wide gate and one path has a narrow gate. The path with the narrow gate requires help to enter but leads to life. The path with the wide gate does NOT require help but it leads to destruction.

***“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.” (Matthew 7:13-14 ESV)***

The narrow path is where God is King and the path leads to His Kingdom. The wide path is where God is not given the place of King in our lives, and this path leads to destruction. This may sound harsh but consider that God goes to extreme measures to make this truth known to us. God wants us to trust Him with our lives and keep our feet far from a destructive path.

Which of the following statements do you identify with most? Who is the King you are serving?

- 1) I have trusted God with my life, but at some point, I quit following Him.
- 2) I have trusted God with my life, but I never learned how to follow Him.
- 3) I have never trusted God with my life.

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If you have never trusted God with your life and would like to make that decision today, you can read in Appendix 1 that is located in the back of this workbook, how to make that decision.

When you consider giving God control over your life, what kind of thoughts and feelings does that bring up for you?

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Giving control of our lives to God is about surrender. It is about telling ourselves that we don't have what it takes to change ourselves or our lives. It is about admitting that we are weak and need help. This goes against what the world around us teaches. The world around us teaches that we need to be independent and do things with our own strength. This is the wide path that God's Word says leads to destruction. God created us to have a relationship with Him, and to have healthy relationships with other people. He did not create us to live apart from Him or hide from other people. God's plan is for us to trust Him, depend on Him and allow Him to direct our steps. This is the narrow path that is full of life.

What things do you think keep people from walking on the narrow path?

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Why do you think it is difficult for us to trust God with our lives?

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We will look at ways to build our trust in God throughout Breakthroughs. For now, just keep in mind that God is all-knowing. He knows you, and He knows your life. He loves you just the way you are today. However, He also loves you enough to want you to live in His Kingdom and not on a destructive path.

### **Exposing Darkness**

Painful experiences are only one way darkness enters our lives. Darkness can also enter our lives in the way that we think about ourselves, our lives, and other people. We can become blind to what God's Word says about us, about our lives, and about Him by being told lies and then believing those lies. Our minds can become full of darkness because of the types of thoughts we have.

On the following page is a list of common lies from the enemy. Circle the ones you've been told.



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The following is a list of common lies from the enemy. Circle the ones you've been told.

### LIES

I am never going to get better

My life will never change

Nothing I do will really make a difference in my life

God doesn't really love me

I've done too much for God to want to help me

It's too late

I have to do it all on my own

My life isn't really important

If people knew me, they would leave me

The enemy doesn't really exist

I don't need God to change my life

I am stupid

I am fat

I am ugly

Nobody loves me

My life is a failure

I am a failure

I will never be good enough

I will never overcome this addiction

I can't change

## Lesson 2: Exposing Darkness

When I began thinking about the kind of thoughts I had about myself, it was a little shocking. I had a long list of very negative things I would tell myself every day and it went on most of the day without me really knowing what was going on. I just knew I felt bad about myself and about my life. I tried to look okay on the outside, but inside it was not okay. I was ashamed at how bad I felt about myself and kept my feelings a secret. I hid in the dark with a long list of lies that worked effectively to keep me in the dark for many years.

What about you? What do you think about the lies that you've been told about your life? How do you think the lies have impacted your life?

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We are going to look at some other areas of darkness in our lives for this week's lesson. If you need to take a break, then take one. These weekly lessons have a lot of information, which can be emotional and a lot to absorb. Give yourself enough time each week to really receive the truth that God is revealing to you. And by the way... I don't know you, but I am so proud of the work you are doing and I am praying for you every step of the way.

Our emotions and feelings can be difficult to identify. Many of us are not aware of our feelings. Many of us have turned to things to try and block out our feelings because our feelings are painful. Getting in touch with our feelings can be very difficult for a variety of reasons. The place we start this journey is to be willing to let God help you with your feelings. God knows what has caused you pain in life. He knows everything about you. He also knows how you are feeling at this very moment. Remember, He loves you and wants to heal your heart of painful emotions.

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Please circle any feelings that you have today or have had during the past week.

Depression

Loneliness

Helplessness

Hopelessness

Fear

Anxiety

Guilt

Shame

Anger

Discouragement

Rage

Wanting to die

Self-hatred

Feeling rejected

Feeling unloved

Forgotten

Insignificant

Please list any other negative emotions you have felt.

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## Lesson 2: Exposing Darkness

The next area of darkness that we will look at is our actions or behaviors. These are the things we do that cause us pain, lead us down a destructive path, and cause problems in our lives.

Again, it is difficult to face the things that we've worked hard to keep in the dark. Your answers to the questions in this workbook do not need to be shared with others. Give yourself permission to be completely honest as you answer the questions throughout this workbook. Your honesty is essential to your healing and freedom.

Please see the list of actions/behaviors on the next page.

Please circle any behaviors that you struggle with in your life.

**ACTIONS/BEHAVIORS**

Overeating

Gambling

Alcohol

Drugs, including misuse of prescription drugs

Pornography

Sexual Sin

Overworking

Video games

Lying

Gossip

Overspending

Overexercising

Yelling/temper

Controlling behaviors

Isolation

People Pleasing

Please list any other behaviors you struggle with in your life.

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## Lesson 2: Exposing Darkness

It is not easy to look at things in our life and in our hearts that are dark. It takes courage to face our pain and sin. It also takes knowledge of the truth. This is one way the enemy works in our lives. Satan does not want us to know the truth about Christ. He wants us to believe that our pain and sin is bigger than Christ OR that our pain and sin is not that big of a deal. Think about it. If Satan can convince you that your bondage is too big, your secrets too shameful, your pain too great, you will not believe that change is possible. You will give up trying without a fight. On the other hand, if you believe that your pain or bondage is not that big of a deal, then you will never ask for God's help. You will settle for a little darkness in your heart and miss out on experiencing greater freedom.

The enemy knows that if we bring our pain and sin to Christ, we will be healed and set free. So the way the enemy works is to keep us from bringing our hearts to Christ. If we believe the lie that our pain or sin is not a big deal and choose to ignore the darkness in our lives, or believe the lie that our pain and bondage is too great, then the enemy has accomplished his purpose. He has kept us away from the healing power of Christ with his weapon – deception.

Consider your own thoughts and beliefs about the darkness in your life. Do you have any thoughts or beliefs that would discourage you from stepping out of any darkness in your life? You may want to take a moment and ask God to simply speak to your heart. Ask the Lord to expose any lies that the enemy has told you about your life and journey out of darkness. Write down what the Lord places on your heart.

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As we close this week's lesson, we need to put two life-saving truths into action. These two truths will be like water and a nutrition bar on a long and hot trail. These two truths will help us make difficult steps and to even climb the high places.

**Truth #1:** God loves you and will never leave you.

**Truth #2:** Christ defeated the enemy at the Cross.

***For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39 ESV)***

What is God saying to YOU about His love for you?

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***“And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in Him.” (Colossians 2:13-15 ESV)***

God's Word is telling us in Colossians 2:13-15 that we owed God a debt that we could never pay because of the sin in our lives. He is also telling us that Christ defeated the power of sin in our lives at the Cross. The enemy – the darkness in your life was defeated at the Cross.

We can NOT defeat the darkness in our lives. Only Christ has the power to defeat darkness. When Christ died on the Cross, He paid the debt for our sin and defeated darkness. It is







## Connecting with God through Christ

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23 ESV)

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23 ESV)

But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8 ESV)

Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. (Romans 10:9-10 ESV)

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV)

### Prayer of Salvation

**“Jesus, I know that I am a sinner. I need your forgiveness for the things I have done. I believe that you are the Son of God and that you died for me. I know you rose from the dead and have complete victory over death. Come live in my heart and take my life. Cleanse me and make me whole. Thank you for what you have done for me. I love you.**