

**Group Notes 11 December 2011**  
***Coming with light***

**Welcome - Ice Breaker**

Do you bounce out of bed in the morning, singing loudly? Or do you feel your way up slowly, moaning softly? If you are an owl, how do you feel about larks? If you are a lark, how do you feel about owls?

**Word** – 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

This Sunday's talk took us on a journey from darkness to light in four stages:

Stage 1: in the darkness – v. 3, 6

Our passage talks about the darkness as a time when people get drunk or are asleep – this means morally and spiritually asleep. This describes people who are groping in the dark unable to tell if there is any meaning or any point to life. So many people are influenced by the messages of the modern secular world, that we're just animals who arrived by accident in a meaningless world. It's a message that destroys people's moral and spiritual compass, in the same way that physical darkness stops you seeing where you are and what's going on around you. Many feel that there is nothing to live for but the pleasure of the moment even though they know that drink, drugs and meaningless relationships don't solve anything. This complex of negative perceptions often leaves people struggling with problems of poor self image, and no wonder, because a life with no purpose is bad for human beings! We need purpose to survive! The good news is that God does not want to leave you like this. There is more to life!

**Question 1: Do you think we are heading for a new Dark Age?**

Stage 2: seeing the light

This light is in Christ –He is "the true light that gives light to everyone," John 1:9. Jesus says, "I am the light of the world," John 8:12. 2 Corinthians 4:6 promises that "We see the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The Christmas story is that God's light came to shine out to this dark world as a human person. In Jesus the light of God has become incarnate in a human being. That light can shine in us too if we invite Jesus into our lives and let it transform us. That light shining in us is God Himself, because God is light. As 1 John 1:5 says, "God is light, in Him there is no darkness at all."

**Question 2: What does that phrase, "God is light", mean to you? What is John trying to tell us about God?**

Stage 3. seeing *by* the light

C S Lewis said that it is not just that we see light, but also that by the light we see everything else. Apparently (at least according to Stephen Fry on QI) light per se is invisible, just as God is invisible. When we turn the light on in a room, we can certainly see that the light is on but we do so because we can now see everything else in the room. So, once we have seen the light, our next stage is to see everything else afresh. We see ourselves afresh because in the light of God we are His children. We see our relationships afresh because in the light of God others are His children just as much as we are. We see our ethical choices differently through the light of God's love for the world. We see our work differently because of God's calling... and so on.

**Question 3: How has your relationship with God changed your perceptions of yourself? of others?**

Stage 4. spread the light

Verse 8 tells us to put on the armour of light, that is to gird up our loins for action and go out and make a difference! We forget how great the demarcation between night and day used to be before the invention of electric light. People simply could not work after sunset – it was too dark. So in Bible times the morning was the time to get out of bed and get to work during the few hours of daylight you might have available. You could leave rest and play until after sunset. So the fourth stage of our journey from darkness to light is to spread the light in the world. We can do this through the people the spend time with, through our words of witness, through acts of love and kindness, through following God's calling in the world.

**Question 4: Which stage of the journey are you at? How can you move on to the next one?**

### **Worship ideas for groups with no musicians.**

The other week we did a meditation with a candle for worship. This time we are going to give everyone a candle, a little tea light, so make sure you have enough tea lights, matches, a candle, and a suitable surface you don't mind getting wax on. Turn down the room lighting.

- Give everyone a tea light.
- Light the main candle
- remind everyone that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.
- Ask everyone to light their tea lights from the main candle and hold them.
- remind everyone that Jesus is the true light who gives light to everyone
- Ask everyone to lay down their lit candles so they form the shape of a cross.
- remind everyone that Jesus experienced the terrible darkness of the cross – but now He is alive. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."
- Close by giving thanks to Jesus, the light of the world.

### **Works/witness.**

The Advent season reminds us that God is not content to let darkness rule the world forever. One day He will return and will flood the world with light again. Part of being ready for that day is to spread the light around a little! What can you do to spread the light? Who can you spread it to?

Here's some simple ways your group can spread the light this Christmas:

- Come Carol singing on Thursday at 6.00pm in Asda
- join in the flash mob singing at the Bridge on Saturday at 2.00pm
- visit someone who is lonely this Christmas, or invite them to have a mince pie with you
- Invite someone to come with you to one of our Christmas services
- Give out some of our flyers or posters at your place of work etc

Pray about what you might like to do as a group.