

## *“Hope in the Darkness”*

### *True Riches #6*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

All of us face “dark times” in our lives. You may be in one of those times right now. For the Christian there is hope, even in the deepest darkness. We have the treasure of God’s presence to see us through the dark nights. Whether you are challenged by a struggle with pain and suffering, fear of scarcity and lack, the uncertainty of the future, or anything else, God’s grace is available to you. In this study we examine God’s word to gain an understanding of that hope in the darkness.

#### **Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)**

Have you ever been a place of complete darkness (a cave or closet perhaps)? What emotions did it evoke?

#### **STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)**

##### **Decide Who is Your Lord**

###### **Q1. Read Luke 9:23-25; John 8:12; Psalm 23:1-4**

The Lord of your life is whoever, or whatever you allow to have dominion. All of us have a choice of who or what we will follow. According to Luke 9:23, what does it cost you and what will you gain if you follow Jesus? Why is it that those who follow Jesus will not walk in darkness? (see John 8:12) The shadow referred to in Psalm 23 is a “very thick darkness.” In verse 4 David gives the reason he has no fear of that shadow- because God is close beside him. Share with your group any experienced you’ve had in “the valley of the shadow” and how God’s presence or absence made a difference.

##### **Discern What is Your Idol**

###### **Q2. Read Matthew 6:31-33; 1 Kings 17:12-15**

In Matthew 6:31-33 Jesus warns us about focusing on our need, rather than on who provides for our need. He describes a misplaced priority that leads us away from placing our whole-hearted trust in God. When we trust in anything more than God, we have made it an idol. How does Matthew 6:33 help us bring back the proper perspective? In 1 Kings 17:12-14 the widow of Zarephath had given up hope of surviving – she had given up on God. In 1 Kings 17:14 God what was God’s plan to provide for her? Was there a time in your life that God provided for your daily needs while you waited on Him to reveal his greater plan for your future? If so please share that with your group to encourage those who may now need their faith strengthened that God is faithful to provide now and in the future.

#### **Develop Healthy Spiritual Practices**

##### **Q3. Read Matthew 6:6; 2 Peter 1:19**

God has given us spiritual tools to help us overcome the darkness, including worship, fellowship, the Word of God and prayer. If we are going to overcome the darkness, we must develop healthy spiritual practices, utilizing what God has provided for us. Matthew 6:6 directs us to pray to our Father who is in the secret place. What happens to us in “the secret place” with Jesus? How are we changed to better face the trials and temptations of the dark times? In 2 Peter 1:19-20 we are told to pay attention to the prophetic word of scripture because it is a lamp shining in a dark place. What kind of darkness have you experienced that the light of scripture has illuminated? What spiritual practice has helped you the most in times of darkness: worship, prayer, fellowship or the Word?

#### **WRAP-UP**

No one can totally avoid the dark times of life. But because of Jesus, we are not without hope. If we are following Christ, we have the light of the world to guide us. We will not fear the darkness because He is always close by, shepherding us even through the valley of the shadow of death. We must not lose sight of God as our ultimate provider because turning to anything else instead of God is a kind of idolatry. But if we develop healthy spiritual practices including worship, prayer, fellowship and reading God’s word, we will be strengthened against the dark times and firmly established in God’s light.

#### **Memory Verse**

*Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

*John 8:12 ESV*

#### **PRAYER (20 MIN)**

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: \_\_\_\_\_

Pray for your group members’ needs: (see back for more space) \_\_\_\_\_

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#### *Challenge*

*Spend time this week in the “secret place” alone with God, allowing Him to strengthen you for the challenges ahead.*

