

Safe Church Sunday 2025
Preaching Resources/Sermon Starter

PLANNING THEME: *Overcoming the Darkness*

Text: John 1:1-5, 14

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was with God in the beginning. **3** Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. **4** In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

5 **The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.**

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

[Suggested] Title: Overcoming the Darkness

SERMON STARTERS

In the beginning...

John brings us back to Creation – when the one true God called all things into being by his powerful word. And declared that it was *very good*.

God created the world in love and in the beginning it was a world of light and life.

Where did the darkness come from?

Us! Collectively, God made human beings the bearers of his authority over all the earth. He entrusted his good world to us. Individually, God gave every human being agency and authority over some part of his creation. In the beginning, we gave into the temptation to remake the world in our image. Daily, we give into the temptation to abuse our authority by serving ourselves instead of others. Whenever people choose self-gratification or self-glorification at the cost of another's security, dignity and flourishing, we choose darkness.

Abuse occurs when:

- Those with power use it to serve a personal need or desire at the expense of the safety, wellbeing, dignity or flourishing of anyone with less power.
- A person inflicts harm on another in an attempt to gain or maintain power.

Abuse persists when:

- Communities fail to hold those with power accountable for how they use it.
- Communities elevate the voices and priorities of those in power at the expense of the needs of the community as a whole.
- Communities ignore the needs and the voices of those with the least power.

- Communities prioritize stability and public image over truth, accountability, and the dignity and flourishing of every member.

In our fallen state, human beings are trapped in self-inflicted darkness. On our own, human beings cannot overcome the darkness.

How does God respond to the darkness?

John says that the Word through whom the world was made – the Word who *is God* – took on flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus, the “Word Made Flesh,” brought the life and light of heaven to earth. His light dispels the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it.

The Word Made Flesh:

Reconciles us to God;

Redeems us as image-bearers of God;

Restores our ability to honor God and serve Creation with our God-given influence and authority.

Jesus displays power the way God uses power: He lifts the humble, protects the vulnerable, and heals the broken. Jesus models what it means for us to reflect God’s image in the world. Jesus invites us out of darkness and into His marvelous light.

What does it look like when we face down the darkness and live in Jesus’ light?

The ministry of Safe Church is about understanding and embracing a God-honoring way of using our authority. It’s recognizing the power we have as individuals and communities. And choosing ways of using power that protect fellow image-bearers and build up the community of believers.

Safe Church Ministry consistently invites Christian communities to embrace the light that dispels the darkness. We choose light over darkness when we:

- Recognize signs of abuse in any form.
- Respond to indications and allegations of abuse no matter how inconvenient or costly.
- Hold one another accountable for the ways that we use – and misuse – the authority and influence we’ve been entrusted with.
- Honor, and support restoration for those who have suffered abuse.
- Create Gospel-centered opportunities for those who have abused to find redemption and reconciliation.

Questions for Reflection:

What can I learn from Jesus about how God-given power works in the world?

Are we a community in which power and influence are used in God-honoring ways?

Are we a community in which those with more power build up, protect, and empower those with less?

Illustrations:

- Examples and stories from Safe Church ministry.
- Other?

Additional Passages and Resources

John 3:19-21

19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. **20** Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. **21** But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

1 John 1:5-10

5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. **6** If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. **7** But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. **8** If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. **10** If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

Our World Belongs to God, Paragraph 39:

The church is a gathering
of forgiven sinners called to be holy.
Saved by the patient grace of God,
we deal patiently with others
and together confess our need
for grace and forgiveness.
Restored in Christ's presence,
shaped by his life,
this new community lives out
the ongoing story of God's reconciling love,
announces the new creation,
and works for a world of justice and peace.