



WEEKLY STUDY

Week Six

In week six of the And They Prayed series, Pastor Gary preached through the story of Paul and Silas' prison break. We learned that the real story wasn't their escape from imprisonment, rather it was the freedom that the jailer and his family experienced through Jesus. Their salvation story took place in the dark of night. Sometimes the best redemptive work happens in the darkness.

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional questions at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected to a Providence Small Group visit prov.church/signup and click on Small Groups.

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture. Follow the daily prayer prompt and then pray this or your own prayer.

*O God,
Hear the cries that come in the darkest moments.
Allow me to see you moving even under the surface.
Your love for me does not stop working just because the light is dim.
I trust you God and believe in your power to change hearts—even mine.
Amen*

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: GENESIS 1.1-3

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. ³ And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

- There's a latin phrase that scholars have used to talk about *how* God created. *Ex nihilo* means "out of nothing"—God created out of nothing. But when you read this account of Genesis you'll see that we know something about that nothing. It was dark and chaotic, a void. That's the context out of which God created everything (starting with light itself!). Have you experienced seasons of chaos? How did God show up in them? Did you see God bring redemption?
- *Pray through seasons of emptiness. God can create beauty out of chaos.*

TUESDAY: GENESIS 32.24-28

So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. ²⁵ When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. ²⁶ Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak."

But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

²⁷ *The man asked him, "What is your name?"*

"Jacob," he answered.

²⁸ *Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome."*

- Jacob had a restless night. He struggled with God and eventually came out with a blessing. At daybreak he received a new name—a new identity based on his willingness to stay in the struggle. Have you ever felt that you were wrestling with God late at night? Sometimes the quiet and stillness of night gives us space to "work it out". The next time you have an experience like this, consider what it means about your true identity as you move into the next day. How does your relationship with God define you?
- *Pray for midnight encounters with the God who names you and redeems you in the struggle.*

WEDNESDAY: JOHN 3.1-21(1-2, 19-21 below)

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. ² He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."

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.*

- Nicodemus came to Jesus in the night because he had a growing faith that he was from God. In explaining what it means to be born again, Jesus shared these words about light and dark (19-21). Notice that the conversation took place under the cover of darkness but it pointed Nicodemus to the light!
- *As you pray through the images of light and darkness, thank God for sending Jesus to meet us in the darkness and bring us into the light!*

THURSDAY: JOHN 11.38, 43-44

Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance.

³⁹ *"Take away the stone," he said.*

Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

- Sometimes we find ourselves in darkness in the middle of the day. Lazarus' body had been in the dark, sealed cave for several days. When Jesus called for him to come out, there was no reason to believe that a living man would walk out. Yet he did. What happened in the darkness of that tomb? Was there resuscitation in the dark? It's possible that the events in the cave would be too much for our hearts to hold. Yet Jesus calls upon God the Father to bring him back to life.
- *As you pray, ask God to meet you in places where there seems to be no hope for life.*

FRIDAY: 1 CORINTHIANS 15.20-23

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ²³ But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

- As Pastor Gary shared beautifully in the message, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the pinnacle moment in history where we see new life that starts in darkness. In those days between his death and resurrection, his followers had nothing to do but pray in the darkness. In Christ (who was resurrected in the darkness of a tomb) we can all be made alive!
- *Pray with the heart of the disciples waiting for new life in Christ.*

SATURDAY: PSALM 16.9-11

*Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest secure,
¹⁰ because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,
nor will you let your faithful one see decay.
¹¹ You make known to me the path of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence,
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*

- David often prays in darkness. He has learned that the promises of God can be trusted even when the world seems to have gone dark for a time. God desires to reveal to us the path of life.
- *Thank God for revealing to us the path of life beyond our darkness--even beyond death.*

- See reverse for Small Group Discussion -

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Pastor Gary shared a story of a dark moment in his life when he suffered from a condition that usually leads to death. Upon his rescue from that scare, he and his wife Gwen threw a celebration of life party pointing to the God who saves and redeems us in the darkness. What are some of the darkest moments of your story? How has God shown you a path back to light? How did you and your family/friends respond?