



gather

FOR FAITH AND ACTION

MAY/JUNE 2024

Devotional:

After certainty

Bible study:

**Compassionate
companions**

When the light goes out

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GOING SNOWMOBILING 750 MILES ABOVE the Arctic Circle—where the temperature is 20 degrees below zero—isn't everybody's idea of fun, but it was ours. My husband Toby and I, our guide, and a few other bold adventurers climbed onto snowmobiles in Kjøllefjord, Norway, and drove into the frozen wilderness. Eventually, the guide had us cut our engines and park at the top of a mountain pass.

Although it was only 4:00 PM, the darkness was so absolute and unforgiving that we couldn't even see our own snowmobiles. It was frightening. After a moment, the guide said, "Welcome to the darkness that we live with 24 hours a day for two solid months in the winter."

I thought about how disorienting, lonely and profoundly sad it could feel to live in a place where there is no guarantee of the sun rising. Then I thought about the 280 million people worldwide who live in the darkness of depression, not knowing if dawn will come.

Let's be clear: Depression is not a fault, a weakness or a sin. I once heard a preacher say, "Feeling depressed doesn't mean you lack faith, any more than being happy means you have it." Depression strikes us indiscriminately. Job, Jonah, Moses, King David and the Apostle Paul experienced bouts of depression and hopelessness. The Psalmist wrote about it too, saying: "The Lord drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog" (Psalm 40: 1-2). You don't write words like that unless you've been there.

The good news is that, despite how isolated

we might feel when we're in that darkness, we are not alone. During the trip, our guide pointed out the lights of a tiny town on the fjord below. He said that years ago, people kept a candle burning in the window during dark winter months to show their neighbors that all was well. If someone fell ill, ran short of food or needed help in any way, they would blow out the candle, signaling that the farm was in crisis and needed aid. For this simple but powerful system to work, two things had to happen: People in crisis had to be willing to ask for help, and neighbors had to keep watch for each other's lights.

Asking for help is an act of power, not weakness. Giving help is our holy duty. We are all God's children, so if one of our neighbors reaches out for help, we must reach back. Maybe that means offering a listening ear or enabling a person to get professional help.

How many people whose light has gone out do we pass every day and not even notice? How many of us are trying desperately to keep a light on when we're in crisis?

Sometimes it may seem as if you are living in an arctic darkness that will never lift, but dawn will come. You are not alone. Help is available. Jeremiah 58:8-10 promises: "Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly...you shall cry for help, and the Lord will say, 'Here I am.'" 🌱

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Hear a sermon on this topic at
<https://tinyurl.com/watch-for-lights>.

