

W2 | D4

BEND TOWARD THE LIGHT

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I've been told that during and after COVID-19, many of us picked up a variety of hobbies—from sourdough-bread making to new workout routines and regimens, we all tried to find something to help us pass the time. For me, it was plants; what started with a solo pothos plant from Lowe's on an ignored shelf became a burgeoning collection of all manner of plants. Confession: I have killed many a plant in my brief career, but I've come to understand that one absolutely essential element for all plants is good lighting. Light is king in the plant world.

Because of this reality, one of the hardest times for a plant lover like myself is the winter; the days and sunlit hours are shorter, and the nights are long and cold, especially here in the Midwest. A few days ago, I came into my kitchen and saw that several of my plants were looking a bit sad and depressed. Yet a slice of sunshine was coming through the windows that was particularly bright for even this cold day. I'm sure it could have been my imagination, but it seemed that one of the plants was bending toward the light, as if crying out, "I can't take this dreariness forever. I must get to you."

It was a stark reminder that we share some similarities with plants. That shouldn't surprise us at all. Botanical and arboreal themes abound throughout Scripture. Like plants, we humans aren't made for the darkness. We don't thrive there. But, for whatever reason, we often find

ourselves there. Whether by choice or circumstance, every human being experiences dark times and days.

What darkness envelops you today? Perhaps it's the long winter months we find ourselves in, the overwhelming expectations of the holiday season, the pain and heartbreak of broken and estranged relationships—we've all been there. Darkness is defined by the absence of light. In the dark, we can feel abandoned, forgotten, and unloved.

What are we to do, then? Like my plant, we do whatever we can to bend toward the Light. The prophet Jeremiah seems to capture this aching tension of living in the reality of a broken, dark world but also straining for whatever ray of light we can faithfully see: "The Lord will not cast off forever, for, though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; for he does not afflict from his heart or grieve the children of men" (Lam. 3:31–33, ESV).

In times of darkness, my encouragement to my own heart and yours today is to do whatever it takes to bend toward the Light. Bending our hearts toward Jesus is an act of faith, because sometimes the darkness feels so overwhelming to us. But we remind ourselves and others that it's in the light that we truly flourish. As the apostle John records in relation to Christ's first advent, "The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world" (John 1:9). ✨

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