

Safe Navigation Through Dark Places

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The origin story of *Star Wars* characters Han Solo and Chewbacca is the focus of the 2018 science fiction film *Solo: A Star Wars Story*. Taking place about ten years before the events of the original *Star Wars* film of 1977, it describes how Han encounters Chewbacca in an Imperial jail, and they work together to escape. They are rescued by a gang of thieves working for a criminal organization called Crimson Dawn, who tasks them with smuggling a shipment of coaxium – fuel needed by starships to travel faster than light – from mines on Kessel, a planet near a cluster of black holes called the Maw.

Borrowing the starship *Millennium Falcon* from another smuggler named Lando Calrissian, Han, Chewbacca, and the rest of the team were able to acquire the coaxium and escape the planet, but at the cost of Lando's valuable droid L3 (which contained precise and specific data for the ship to navigate the Maw), which was fatally damaged as they boarded the ship. An Imperial Star Destroyer, made aware of the theft, exited hyperspace, and dispatched several TIE fighters to pursue, disable, and recover the stolen coaxium.

In one of the most memorable scenes in the movie, Han sought to elude the Imperial ships by escaping through uncharted space away from Kessel through the Maw. To get through this dangerous region of space, the necessary navigation data was hastily salvaged from L3's circuits before the machine finally

“died” and was uploaded into the *Millennium Falcon*’s guidance system.

This data helped Han and Chewbacca pilot the ship to escape the TIE fighters, avoid crashing into large chunks of swirling debris, and guide their flight through the deep, disorienting darkness between the cluster of black holes and their strong gravitational forces threatening to tear the ship apart. Barely making it through the Maw to a stable area of space, the *Millennium Falcon*’s hyperdrive engines were ignited, and Han and the rest of the crew were able to safely continue on their way to deliver their cargo of coaxium.

Though David was not a smuggler on a hazardous mission, he did travel through some dark and dangerous times in his life. Unjustly forced to flee his home by King Saul, who was jealous of his success and popularity, David continually hid in the wilderness and moved about in various places as he was hunted as an outlaw by the king’s army.

Through it all, David sought God and trusted in Him to guide his steps and protect him from capture and death (Psalm 142). The Lord provided the necessary data he needed, even through the words of a prophet (1 Samuel 22:5), to help him know where to go and when, and even in the most dire of circumstances, He delivered him from those who sought his life (1 Samuel 23:19-26).

In gratitude and praise to God, David composed a song thanking the Lord for delivering him from the hands of all his enemies, even Saul who sought his destruction. The song included these words:

“For You light my lamp; the LORD my God illumines my darkness.” (Psalm 18:28)

While I have never been on the run for my life like David, I can relate to being in circumstances where guidance outside myself was needed to get me through a dark and potentially

deadly place.

One year, my wife and I went on a road trip to visit family in Florida. We took Interstate 75 from Michigan through Ohio and Kentucky. By the time we reached Tennessee, the sun had already set. In the wee hours of the morning, we entered a stretch of highway in the mountains between Knoxville and Chattanooga, where the darkness was so great that it felt palpable. The illumination of the car lights seemed to go only a yard or two ahead on the steep, curving, and twisting road. I was very aware that one wrong move or turn could send us off the edge of the highway and end our story on earth.

There was nowhere to stop, and we knew we needed help navigating this dangerous path. I recalled how David remembered God's power to see all, even in the darkest places, and trusted in Him for help:

"If I say, 'Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, and the light around me will be night,' even the darkness is not dark to You, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You." (Psalm 139:11-12)

We prayed to the Lord to guide us safely through the disorienting darkness. God responded by granting us with His calm and peace. He provided me with the data I needed to know the right places and times to turn and brake the car to get us safely through the dark to a better-lit section of the Interstate. The Lord held the car – and us – together, and from there we safely continued our journey to Florida.

As we are drawn further into a period of time filled with increasing economic hardship, sharp divisions in society building to possible civil chaos and conflict, and overseas conflicts that could easily escalate into world war, it is not hard to feel that what is ahead is an unfamiliar, dark, and ominous path.

Those who trust in Jesus Christ not only receive forgiveness

of all their sins and reconciliation with God, but they are also transferred from a dark domain into His kingdom of light (Colossians 1:9-14). No matter what challenging uncertainties or situations we may face, the Lord's faithfulness never changes, and He promises never to leave us lost in the dark (Hebrews 13:5-8). Jesus, the Word of God, provides the data necessary for all who believe in Him to safely navigate the darkest places and make it home.

"I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness." (John 12:46)

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