

BIBLE STUDY HELPS

TITLE: I am the Light

TEXT: John 8:3-18

TARGET: SESSION IN A SENTENCE

Jesus offers grace and forgiveness to all who repent and believe in Him.

LOOK UP: FOCUSING THE GROUP

Display Option: Collect and display various types and sizes of light bulbs.

Guide:

- Which type of lights do you prefer? Do you prefer a bright or a soft light? Do you prefer LED, Florescent, or regular filament light bulbs?
- There are all types, sizes, and color temperatures of lights. There are warm white light bulbs that produce a yellowish light. There are the cool white lights that produce light similar to a fluorescent. There are daylight lights that produce a blue-white light that is the equivalent of outdoor light. There are the LED, florescent, incandescent, black light, and halogen bulbs. Did you know that LED lighting is the most conventional light source used for open surgery. It reduces the shadows. Thank goodness surgeons use good lighting! There is the light used in forensics to discover blood at a crime scene. Now there is a special light used by many dentists to detect oral cancer. Light is even used to measure blood flow in veins and arteries.
- Who has been in a place that was so dark that you longed for light? What was that like?

Throughout the Scriptures, our sin-broken world is compared to living in darkness. Then, in John 8:12, Jesus tells us that He is *the light of the world*. It's difficult to describe in one study of a single set of passages what it truly means that Jesus is the light of the world. This concept encompasses so much, yet it all has its beginnings in knowing that Jesus is the Son of God who came as The Light to rescue those who are living in darkness.

John 7 focused on Jesus traveling from Galilee to Jerusalem to attend the Festival of Tabernacles. About midway through the festival, Jesus began to teach in the temple complex. The teaching led to confrontations with religious leaders due to Jesus' credentials and the validity of His message. Toward the end of chapter 7, we see the religious leaders sending the temple police to arrest Jesus; yet He continued to teach in the temple complex. After this incident Jesus left the city and went to the Mount of Olives.

By dawn of the next day, Jesus was back in the temple teaching again. Now the scribes and Pharisees are beginning to turn up the heat on Jesus. They have devised what they thought would be a trap for Jesus, but it only led to Jesus revealing what it means the He is the light of the world.

LOOK IN: UNPACKING THE BIBLICAL TEXT

As the Light, Jesus reveals all that is hidden in the darkness – John 8:3-11

³ Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, making her stand in the center. ⁴ "Teacher," they said to him, "this woman was caught in the act of committing adultery. ⁵ In the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" ⁶ They asked this to trap him, in order that they might have evidence to accuse him. Jesus stooped down and started writing on the ground with his finger. ⁷ When they persisted in questioning him, he stood up and said to them, "The one without sin among you should be the first to throw a stone at her." ⁸ Then he stooped down again and continued writing on the ground. ⁹ When they heard this, they left one by one, starting with the older men. Only he was left, with the woman in the center. ¹⁰ When Jesus stood up, he said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" ¹¹ "No one, Lord," she answered. "Neither do I condemn you," said Jesus. "Go, and from now on do not sin anymore."

These religious leaders were using the adulterous woman as a pawn, but Jesus, as The Light, exposes the dark sins that were evident in all who were present in this confrontation.

Identify: What sins did Jesus reveal in the scribes and Pharisees? What hypocrisy did Jesus expose based upon Deuteronomy 22:22? Did Jesus ignore the woman's sin? (No) Did he say it was right for her to continue in sin? Did he justify her sin? Did He teach that forgiveness only comes from Christ?

Ask: Why do you suppose Jesus stooped down to write on the ground with His finger? Why didn't He just confront them face-to-face regarding their own sin?

Consider: How does Jesus expose your sin to you? Have you ever had your finger pointed at others regarding their sin when Jesus reminds you in some way that you, too, are a sinner?

The hypocrisy of their actions is so obvious to all. If they had really been serious about sin, they would have dealt with the man as well, as outlined in Deuteronomy 22:22. But, their actions were not about redemption. This is obvious by the way they used this woman as their pawn. They only desired to discredit Jesus. Instead, Jesus discredits them because of their own hypocrisy.

Then Jesus acts redemptively in how He treats the woman. Jesus, The Light, did not ignore her sin, but He forgave and gave instructions. He told her to *"Go, and from now on do not sin anymore."* This is not the first time Jesus used this phrase. In John 5:1-15, Jesus instructed the invalid by the Pool of Bethesda to do the same. Jesus was not speaking of sinless perfection. He was warning them and all who have experienced His forgiveness to not return to sinful lifestyle choices. His words demonstrated grace and mercy while demanding holiness on the part of the one forgiven. Forgiveness comes with the expectation that we will not continue down the same dark path. If one has truly experienced God's love, one will naturally desire to pursue holy living.

To see the darkness within us and to receive Christ's forgiveness is to experience a heart change. The forgiveness Jesus gives is not cheap, and it does not excuse sin. If we truly understood the cost of that forgiveness, we would no longer choose to continue down the dark path of habitual sin.

Challenge: Consider the darkness Jesus sees in your heart. If you have received his forgiveness and experienced His salvation, then your life will be different. Are you striving to drive out the dark influences of sin that continue to influence you? Or do you walk away as the scribes and Pharisees did?

Jesus overturned the judgment of the religious leaders because they too had sinned. Not one of them could "cast the first stone." It is against this backdrop that Jesus introduces the second of the great "I Am's," "I am the light of the world."

As the Light, Jesus gives life – John 8:12-18

¹² Jesus spoke to them again: "I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life." ¹³ So the Pharisees said to him, "You are testifying about yourself. Your testimony is not valid." ¹⁴ "Even if I testify about myself," Jesus replied, "My testimony is true, because I know where I came from and where I'm going. But you don't know where I come from or where I'm going." ¹⁵ You judge by human standards. I judge no one. ¹⁶ And if I do judge, my judgment is true, because it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. ¹⁷ Even in your law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. ¹⁸ I am the one who testifies about myself, and the Father who sent me testifies about me."

God gives us illustrations in creation regarding light and darkness that should help us understand what Jesus is saying regarding light. Perhaps one of the most notable illustrations comes from the state of Alaska. The northernmost city in Alaska is Barrow. During the winter, residents don't see the sun for 67 days, but they enjoy over 80 days of uninterrupted daylight during the summer. The darkness during the winter does bring challenges to the residents, but when the light is constant, it's very different. Even produce is known to grow larger because of so much light -- Alaska has won world records for their 76-pound rutabaga and 127-pound cabbage. Light gives opportunity for growth that isn't as available when darkness is prevalent.

In addition to taking advantage of the long daylight hours to grow produce, Alaska and other places that experience days of darkness have turned to technology to sustain growth year around. This has led to the use of the LED and fluorescent bulbs to produce full-spectrum light that plants need in order to grow.

Jesus linked Himself to God's identity as the great I AM (Exodus 3:14). In doing so, Jesus claimed equality with God the Father. As the light, His presence exposes sins, such as the hypocrisy of the religious leaders and the immorality of the adulterous woman. On a more positive note, Jesus illuminates the path of *anyone who follows Him*, thus giving them life.

Guide:

- Jesus said that, as the "light of the world," those who followed Him would never walk in darkness but would have the "light of life." How would you explain what Jesus is saying about Himself?
- What justification did Jesus give for His testimony being valid?
(He knew where He came from and where He was going)
- Why were the human standards, by which the Pharisees judged Him (and others), flawed?
(They only looked at the external that was superficial, and showed partiality - I.e., condemning the adulterous woman but not the man in the previous verses; it was tainted by their own sinful/selfish desires; etc.)
- Since man's judgment is flawed, why do we struggle so much with the fact that God judges us?
- How can Jesus say, "I judge no one" and then say, "I and the Father who sent Me judge together"?
(Many have focused on the first statement regarding what Jesus said about not judging anyone using it to justify sinful lifestyle choices and other sins. But Jesus is not saying He doesn't judge sin. The fact is, sin was already judged. Jesus came so that those living under the judgement of sin might be redeemed. We are already judged and found guilty. There is no need for Him to come and judge us. His purpose for coming was explained in John 3:17 - "God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him." But, one day Jesus will judge -- see John 5:22-24.)

LOOK OUT: LIVING OUT THE TARGET

Jesus, as the Light of the world illuminates even the darkest corners of our lives, revealing the sin that is prevalent. This illumination only confirms that we are all sinners in need of a Savior. Because all have sinned, judgment has already been cast. So, as the Light, Jesus gives life to those who follow Him. He promises that we will no longer be condemned to walk in darkness. Forgiven by His grace, we can walk in His light. Yet, one must remember that, for those who refuse to follow Jesus, a day will come when Jesus and the Father will formally judge all who reject Him.

Respond:

- Describe what it means to you as a believer that you are no longer walking in darkness because of Jesus.
- How can you introduce others to the Light of the world so they can follow Him out of darkness?