

I AM THE LIGHT

JOHN 8:2-20

(Prepared by Gene Thompson using LifeWay's ETB Material)

1. What is the darkest place you have ever been?
2. What emotions did you experience?
3. Has anyone ever been to Mammoth Cave in south-central Kentucky? Would you share your experience?

Mammoth Cave is the largest known cave system in the world with some 450 miles mapped out. During guided tours, rangers turn out the lights, and guests get the opportunity to experience complete darkness. The Bible compares our sin-filled world to living in darkness. Just like turning on the lights provides comfort and direction in a cave, Jesus provides light in our world. He brings hope and assurance to anyone who will receive Him.

4. When you have been in complete darkness, how did you feel when you came back into the light?

The context for today's study is the same as last week's lesson. Jesus is in Jerusalem at the Festival of Booths. Part of the festival ceremonies was the lighting of torches at night in the Court of Women. This was symbolic of the fire (representing God's presence) at night during their time in the Wilderness journey from Egypt to Canaan.

In dark places, light provides direction and comfort. It can also expose dangers or obstacles in our path. In this session, Jesus claimed to be the Light of the world, bringing hope and assurance to all of those in darkness.

As we study today pay attention to the differences between righteousness, self-righteousness, and unrighteousness. Consider if there are areas in your life where religion gets in the way of truly following Jesus.

Jesus spent the night on the Mount of Olives, which He did often when in Jerusalem.

TRAPPED! Read John 8:2-6

Sitting was common for the teachers and rabbis as they spoke.

1. Who brought this woman to Jesus? (Scribes and Pharisees. The Scribes copied the Scriptures/laws, and the Pharisees interpreted the law.)
2. Were the Pharisees' actions here righteous or unrighteous?
3. What was their real reason for bringing this woman to Jesus? (They were trying to catch Jesus in a trap where He would be criticized no matter what He did.)

We always wonder where the man is that was with her. Was this a staged incident or did they just let him go or did he escape? We don't know but it doesn't seem right just to have only the woman here.

4. How does self-righteousness get in the way of grace? (Seeing ourselves as being righteous we are using our own standards for judging. We will never see the need for grace for we see ourselves above sin.)

I wish Scripture had recorded what Jesus wrote in the dirt, but God knows best. We can only speculate but it must have been powerful.

5. Is there any indication that the scribes and Pharisees had any compassion for this woman? (The indication is that they had no concern for her whatsoever.)
6. Are we ever self-righteous and show little concern for others?

We are to hate our own sins and love each other.

Jesus recognized the leaders' impure motives. By writing in the dirt, He took control of the situation and set up His response on His own terms—not the terms His opponents were pushing.

FREED! Read John 8:7-11

At first, the ones who brought the woman to Him didn't pay any attention to what He was writing in the dirt. Perhaps they thought it was just a delaying tactic. We don't know what Jesus was writing but it had an impact on the scribes and Pharisees who brought the woman to Him.

From a human standpoint Jesus may have been considering how to respond to them. We might learn a lesson from Him and think before we speak!

1. If you had been in Jesus' shoes, what verdict would you have determined for the woman?
2. What does this encounter show us about Jesus' character? (He responded with truth, justice, mercy, and grace. Jesus didn't overlook what the woman had done but applied mercy and grace along with truth when He said, "Go and sin no more.")
3. How did the religious leaders respond to Jesus' verdict? (Jesus' words condemned them instead of the woman.)

Jesus turned the tables on His opponents by reminding them of their own sin. When we truly recognize our own unrighteousness, we also recognize our need for Jesus more deeply. It's not the same as completely trusting Jesus, but it offers a solid first step. We must recognize our sin, confess our sin and repent while placing our faith in what Jesus did on the cross as payment for our sin.

4. How did Jesus view the woman? (As a person needing redemption. See John 3:17.)

Jesus didn't ignore her sin. Instead, He urged her to turn away from sin. As she did, He was able to forgive her sin.

5. Why is it easier to point out other people's sin rather than deal with our own sin? (We excuse our sin by saying our circumstances are different and it's okay. We let our pride compare ourselves to others rather than to Jesus.)

Those who had tried to use the woman to trap Jesus ended up being trapped by their own sin instead. They left one by one, oldest to youngest.

6. Why do we sometimes find it challenging to feel like God has forgiven us? (Sometimes we are overwhelmed by guilt when we feel the conviction of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Our sin may have hurt our family or friends deeply and we can't let it go, even though God has forgiven us.)

Jesus never expects anyone to live a sinless life because no one can. Yet He wants our experiences with Him to transform our lives and make us new creations in Him—2 Cor. 5:17.

SHINING! Read John 8:12-20

Here again Jesus associated Himself with God by using the phrase "I Am." Notice Jesus said He was the "light of the world." The world is a dark place because of sin. Jesus is light. He is the truth that illuminates everything. 1 John 1:5— "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." Light symbolized God's presence, so Jesus was claiming to be God's presence among humanity. It also included a promise that those who follow Him will not walk in darkness.

1. When you are in a very dark room and someone lights a match, where is your attention drawn? (To the light.)

When Jesus was teaching people were drawn to Him because He is the Light of the world.

2. What does light do to everything that is around it? (It shines on everything and reveals the truth.)
3. Since Jesus is the Light of the world, what did Jesus mean when He said that His disciples are "the light of the world" in Matt. 5:14? (The light of the Holy Spirit shines through us to the world around us.)

People should be drawn to us much like they were drawn to Jesus. We live in a dark world and our light should stand out in the darkness.

4. How did the apostle Paul add to this concept in Philippians 2:15? (We are to be like stars on a dark night. Truth should shine through us.)

John Stott defines a disciple as 'someone who is on the lifetime process of having their character transformed and molded to Jesus' will. It should not be small changes but a radical transformation of our entire lives.

5. How can we shine the light of Christ's gospel on an unbelieving world? (Read 2 Cor. 4:4.)

We must allow Christ to live through us. The light can overcome the darkness. When Christ shines through us God can use it to open their blinded eyes. We must be on our guard. When people are unable to refute the truth, they attack the truth teller.

C. S. Lewis wrote, "I believe in Christ as I believe that the Sun has risen not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else." By claiming to be the light of the world, Jesus is saying, "Only by me can you see and understand everything else. Only by me can you see and understand this world."

Again and again, Jesus associated Himself with the Father.

6. How did Jesus show us how we are to relate to the Father? (He spent much time alone in prayer with the Father. He was confident of the Father's love for Him, even in the most difficult days as He carried out the Father's will.)

Jesus is not just a messenger from God. He is God! He's divine!

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE!

1. How can we as a group function as an agent of God's forgiveness? (Be accepting of others. Show love, grace, compassion, and mercy to those around us.)
2. For what sins or mistakes are you more likely to demand justice? (When children, elderly, poor or down-and-out are taken advantage of deliberately. When someone I love is hurt.)
3. For which faults do you extend grace more easily? (When doing so costs me nothing. Sorry but it's the truth folks.)
4. What can you do this week to extend grace and forgiveness?
5. In what areas do you struggle with forgiving yourself?
6. How can you embrace self-forgiveness?