

# Let there be Light

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Good morning! Please open your Bibles to the book of 1 John ...

-hope you had a great Thanksgiving

-thank you for those who decorated

We've entitled the Christmas series this year "Let there be Light" and we're thinking about what it means that Jesus came as the light of the world. We'll be looking at various passages, but many of them from the apostle John who loved to use this imagery of light and darkness.

## **Read 1 John 1:5-7**

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. **6** If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. **7** But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

## **Intro**

What is or isn't a Christmas movie has been a fun topic to debate in some circles. Maybe you're over that discussion and you've settled in your mind that Die Hard is indeed a Christmas movie. Christmas movies are like the golden goose for Hollywood producers because they make money year after year.

Well, one movie that may not be on your list of Christmas movies is *The Karate Kid*. Did you know they are making a new one set for release in December of next year with Ralph Macchio and Jackie Chan? It seems like they want to make it a Christmas movie.

One of the most memorable scenes for me in the original *Karate Kid* movie was when the fifteen year old kid went to learn Karate from Mr. Miyagi, the old Karate master, played by Pat Morita. But Mr. Miyagi did not immediately teach the boy how to block or hit or kick. Instead, he set him to work doing various chores, sanding the floor like this and waxing his car like this, and painting the fence and the house. And so he had to repeat those movement over and over.

But then, just as Daniel is about to quit after doing these chores all day, Mr. Miyagi shows Daniel how those movements that he had been doing were preparing him for the karate moves that he would need to know. He was being taught how to move his hands to block and counter moves without realizing it. It's a cool scene.

Do you think God ever does that to us? Are there things in life that God set up so that we would know more about who He is and even get a deeper understanding about how He wants us to live?

I believe there are. God wants to reveal something about himself to us. And in God's love, He wants to show us who He is and how He has created us to live. He wants to share his joy with us as His creatures, though we certainly do not deserve it.

And one of the ways that God means to communicate who He is and who we are is through this idea of light and dark. This contrast is near the center of how God speaks about Himself.

I don't know if there is a more powerful symbol in life than that of light and dark. It shows up in movies and literature, in our dreams, in our language. It's present all over the place. The idea of light and darkness is what college literature professors would call an archetype. It's a grand overarching symbol that shows up over and over again in poetry and songs and the stories that we tell.

One of the reasons this symbol is so powerful is that it is wired into our consciousness. This idea of darkness and light has been built into our very bodies. God put it in our programming, so to speak. He designed us to this way. So it's not just deeply meaningful as a symbol, it's a powerful image and we recognize it instinctively, biologically.

What does light stand for? Hope, safety, freedom, joy...  
And what does darkness bring to mind? Danger, evil, despair, fear, anger, hate, suffering

We know this from the time we were kids and were afraid of the dark, and some of us, probably most of us if we're honest, still don't like the dark.

And as true as that is in the physical world, it's even more powerful when we speak of things that are morally dark or we think of spiritual darkness.

God put this concept all over the universe and in our very bodies, I believe, to teach us more about who He is and how He wants us to live in the world. In a much greater way than Mr. Miyagi teaching Daniel about karate, God designed us to recognize and appreciate light and darkness. Because we all understand this idea.

And the Bible taps into this concept throughout its pages. David says, for example, in

**Psalm 27:1**

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?

And we get what he's trying to say. When Peter talk about...

**1 Peter 2:9**

... Him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

We get what he's saying, don't we? And when Paul says in

**Ephesians 5:11**

Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness...

We get that instinctively, don't we? God built it into us so that we would see and understand more about who He is and how He calls us to live. And this idea of light and darkness is linked together with what we celebrate at Christmastime. Listen to this verse I came across this week from John 12...

**John 12:46**

I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.

So one of my goals with this series is to help us understand more deeply and more fully appreciate this imagery of light and dark. What does it mean that Jesus is the light of the world? What is meant by walking in the light?

In the weeks to come we will look at our need for light and the amazing truth that Jesus came into the world as light. We'll see, Lord willing, from Isaiah 9 and a few places in John's gospel, that Jesus is the light of the world.

So I want us to do this morning is simply meditate on and sit in these two truths: that God is light and that He calls us to walk in the light.

## **God is Light**

The first big idea for us this morning is this – God is light. Listen again to how the apostle John puts it... **1 John 1:5**

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

So did you see that? God is light. That's what He is. We get a few of these statements in the Bible: God is love. God is life. But the most comprehensive term, I believe is that God is light. It's how He has revealed Himself to us. So in what way is John saying that God is light?

As we've mentioned, light is a prevalent theme in the Bible and is used in a few ways:

- Physical light – “Let there be light.” (Genesis 1:3)
- Metaphor for life or salvation – The LORD is my light and salvation. (Psalm 27:1)
- Spiritual life sourced in Jesus – “I am the light of the world.” (John 8:12)
- Ethical and moral purity – God is light. (1 John 1:5)

## **God is pure**

It is this fourth use that John has here. John is saying that God is light because He is pure. God has absolute moral and ethical purity in his righteousness and goodness. He is utterly and wholly good.

The Bible tells us that God dwells in unapproachable light. The glory light of God, the Shekinah glory, emanates from the being of God in such intensity that those who come near it, fall down before it. That glory-light is a visible expression of His intrinsic moral and spiritual goodness and worth.

In him is no darkness at all – He is so utterly and wholly good that in him there is no crevice or shadow of darkness. God has nothing to hide. He has no secret closet. He is whole, honest, and sincere, without darkness, sin, or temptation. He is holy, holy, holy, not almost-holy, almost-holy, almost-holy. Or as John says, [He] is light and in him is no darkness at all.

The contrast is obvious – light is the opposite of darkness.

I don't know if you've seen this but, where light is, darkness isn't. Where there is darkness, light isn't. When one is there, the other one isn't there. When you turn the light on, darkness flees and when light goes away, darkness arrives. They are mutually exclusive in a way that anyone who has tried to find their way through the living room at night knows. Light and darkness, two complete opposites.

So John says, God is light and has no darkness in Him at all. That's the message that He wants to proclaim to us. This is who God is. God is light and there is no darkness in Him at all. But the Scriptures teach us more than that...God is also the source of light

### **God is the source of light**

Think back with me to the very beginning of all things. Genesis chapter one tells us that the earth was void and without form, the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. But then something happens, a voice is heard...

#### **Genesis 1:3**

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

The very first thing that God brings into the world was light.

God creates light *before* the sun or moon, which come on day 4...so you may have wondered to yourself before, or maybe as a kid you saw this and asked yourself – how is it that there was light before the sun and the moon? How does that happen?

Well, this is not a surprise to the biblical authors. They will unpack this truth all through the story of the Bible, that which is only hinted at here in Genesis and that is – God Himself is the source of light.

God doesn't need the sun or the moon to reflect light. He is the source of light Himself. When He says, "Let there be light!" There must be light. God doesn't have to wait to create the sun first. No, He is not dependent on anything in creation. God Himself is the source of light.

And so the Spirit of God repeats this to us all throughout the Bible...

Think about when shepherds were watching their flocks by night, the glory of the Lord shone bring around them – the radiance of God’s glory brought light to the darkness. Or think of Paul on the road to Damascus, and Jesus appears to Him in a blinding light. It was the middle of the day, but the light of God was overwhelming to Him. Or think about Jesus on the mount of transfiguration when His face shone like the sun and his clothes were white like light.

Or we could go to the very last book of the Bible. Near the end of the book of Revelation, we read about the New Heavens and New Earth...

#### **Revelation 22:3-5**

No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. **4** They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. **5** And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

From the beginning of the Bible to the end, we see this idea so often that it is as if God is working it into the muscle memory of our souls, so to speak. It’s wax on, wax off over and over again so that we get it when God says, “This is who I am – I am light.” And that brings us to the second big idea this morning...

#### **God calls us to walk in the light**

God reveals Himself to be light, and how does that affect us? What does that mean for our lives? It means that in order to have fellowship with God, in order to be at peace with Him and have a relationship with Him, then we must be in the light as well.

Listen again to John’s words...

#### **1 John 1:5-7**

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. **6** If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. **7** But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

God is light and without darkness. So if we say we have fellowship with God, who is light, but we are walking in darkness – then we’re lying.

What does it mean to walk in darkness? If the light of God is ethical purity, then darkness is the absence of it. This is moral and ethical darkness; the opposite of God. It is hiding in your sin. John speaks of this elsewhere:

**John 3:19-21**

And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. 21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”

Sinful men love darkness rather than light. When I played basketball in high school, when I was the young one in the locker room as a freshmen or sophomore, I heard a lot of inappropriate junk that other guys would joke about. But as I got older, when I walked in, the other guys wouldn't talk about that kind of stuff. They would just kind of be quiet.

Why is that? I think it's because they felt guilty. They knew I wouldn't talk about it, and when I was there, they felt bad about talking about it. They felt exposed.

That's what light does. It exposes darkness.

Have you ever been out somewhere, in a field or on a hike and you come across a large flat stone? So you look at the stone, and if it's too big to throw, what do you want to do? Turn it over.

When you lift that large stone up, what do you see? There all these little critters under there. Worms, maggots, and creepy things. In the light of the sun, what are those little critters doing? Trying to hide. Scurrying down into their holes. They've been exposed to the light of day and they search for darkness in which to hide.

Sinners are the same way. The first thing Adam and Eve did after sinning in the garden was to hide themselves. To hide is to find a shadow, a dark place, where our true nature is hidden and we are not exposed for who we truly are by the light.

John points out the confusion of someone who claims to have fellowship with God but who themselves walk in darkness. There is illogical contradiction between their words and the actual ethical character of their life; between their walk and their talk.

John is writing this letter because there were some false teachers who were saying you could be a Christian without any change in your life. “Come. Believe. Have fellowship with God and you don’t have to listen to John about all that repentance and obedience stuff! Just be a Christian and then live however you want!”

John doesn’t mince words. What does he call them? Liars. In spite of what they said, their lives showed they were not “practicing the truth.” They were false converts. False Christians. Christians in name only. They talked the talk, but they didn’t walk the walk.

Was this a problem only in the first century? Do you know how many Americans would identify themselves as Christians? The Pew Report says that in the US, two-thirds of all Americans identify themselves as Christians. It’s on the decline, but it’s still a good majority.

That means if you asked most people in the U.S., “Are you a Christian?”

They would say, “Absolutely, I am a Christian!”

But then if you asked, “Is obeying God a priority in your life?”

They would likely say, “Huh? What do you mean?”

We live in a nation that talks the talk, but do we walk the walk? Maybe I’m talking to someone today and you would fit into that category – you would say you’re a Christian, but God has no place in your day-to-day life. You sin and it doesn’t bother you, you walk in darkness, and you don’t desire to live in the light.

Let me say it clearly, the people John is describing are not genuine Christians. Talk is cheap and is no evidence of genuine salvation.

Well then, what is? What fruit comes from being in Christ?

Look again at verse 7, **1 John 1:7**

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”



Now, if you just read this verse in isolation and pull it out of its context, it might sound like John is saying, “You have to walk in the light in order to be cleansed by Jesus.” But we know from the surrounding verses and that our salvation comes not by our goodness but by faith in Jesus.

John’s purpose here is to combat the false teachers who were claiming that either they had no sin at all or that following Jesus doesn’t have to affect your life in any way. And so John navigates this by instead saying there are three fruits of genuine Christian experience.

But notice that they are *fruits*; they are not salvation itself. We are only saved by faith alone in Christ alone. We are not saved through walking in the light. But if we are saved, then as a result we will walk in the light. But John here points out, as we see many times in the Bible, genuine faith results in real fruit in our lives. What is that fruit?

### **Walking in the Light**

What does it mean to walk in the light? The direction of my life is a general orientation toward God and the habitual desire to please him. The light is God’s moral beauty. I walk in that light when I live consistent with it. I think we all know what this means. It prioritizes obedience. It is doing what I do, to and for God’s glory.

The Bible balances that with the fact that we still are sinners and indwelling sin is with us till we die. So there is no perfection here as verse 8 will make clear. However, in Christ we are new creations; the old is gone, the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17) and the walk of the genuine Christian will increasingly reflect that. Our lives change. Our desires change. We grow. God is in us, and rather than walking toward darkness, we walk toward and in the light.

So let me ask you at this point – are you walking in the light? Are you practicing the truth?

Are there sinful habits that have crept back into your life and you’ve allowed them to linger? Brothers and sisters, as John Owen said, we must be killing sin or it will be killing us. Put away those sins that belong to the old man. Walk in the light, slowly but consistently choose the light over the darkness.

And the reason we walk in the light is that He is in the light. God is light and the source of light. Walking in the light puts us in fellowship with God. Look at the end of verse 3, just prior to our passage,

**1 John 1:3**

...and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

When we walk in the light, obeying the commands of God and turning away from sin and darkness, then we enjoy communion with God and fellowship with Him without shame or guilt.

Remember what Adam and Eve did in the Garden when they sinned and realized what they had done? They put on their fig leaves. They hid out of fear. They went to the shadow to hide from God and one another because their sin had broken their fellowship with God and each other.

But now, Jesus has come! He has overcome the darkness and made it possible for us to have fellowship with God and walk in the light. That's the first fruit of our salvation.

**Fellowship with One Another**

Listen again to verse seven for the second fruit...

**1 John 1:7**

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another..."

This is a little surprising. We would expect it to say that if we walk in the light we have fellowship with God. While that is true as we just discussed, here John goes horizontal. One result of exposing ourselves to the pure light of God and being forgiven is that we don't feel the need to hide or pretend anymore.

That's what pride is – pretending. Pride has to pretend and will try and hide imperfections at all costs. I can't be real. I can't admit wrong. I can't let anyone know what a fraud I am. My pride won't let me apologize or let anyone look too closely at my life.

The opposite of pride, of course is humility. Humility is a trust word. Humility means I trust you with my junk. I trust you to know my failures, and I trust you to accept me in spite of them.

When I walk in the light of full exposure, now I have fellowship with my fellow Christians because I don't have to hide, you don't have to hide, and we can be real with each other knowing God has accepted both of us. What a difference that makes in our relationships when we don't have to keep up pretenses. When we don't try to go back into the shadows of darkness and secrecy.

Light has some amazing properties. They sell these things, I don't know if they're worth it or not, but they are these little boxes that you can put your phone or other electronics into which will kill all the little bacteria and germs which accumulate on them using ultraviolet light. (I thought for a long-time that ultraviolet was really ultraviolent, as in really violent and ferocious...but that's not what it means. It's ultraviolet as in beyond violet or having a higher frequency than we can see...)

Anyway...ultraviolet light can kill germs when they're exposed to the light. I think there's a similar effect that happens when we confess our sins out loud to a brother or sister in Christ. It has a way of neutralizing them. They don't seem as big and scary in the light as they were in the darkness.

If you're struggling in the fight with sin, and you are trying to get it solved on your own. Brother or sister, get some help. Don't try to do it on your own. And the first step will mean walking out of the shadow into the light. Confess your sins and build true fellowship with your brothers and sisters here.

Do you believe our relationships would deepen here at Cornerstone if we gave up trying to impress each other and were open with failures (which God already knows anyway and has already forgiven in us)?

How would your grow group change if you really opened up and were honest about your sins and shortcomings? The Bible tells us to confess our sins one to another – is there someone in your life to whom you confess your sins?

Men – do you have someone like this? Someone you can talk with about the Christian life? About your marriage? Your job?

Ladies – is there someone with whom you can trust and confide in with your sins and imperfections?

When we walk in the light, we are freed from having to pretend around each other. How would that affect your marriage – if you consistently walked in the light of honesty and transparency and vulnerability with each other? How would that affect your parenting?

The fruit of salvation, John says, is that we will have fellowship with one another as we walk in the light.

### **Ongoing Cleansing from Sin**

And then finally, when we walk in the light where God dwells, then we are cleansed from sin.

#### **1 John 1:7**

“...the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”

Or if you look further down at verse 9, God will, “cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Only He can get rid of that stain of sin. You need the blood of Jesus. Isn't it remarkable that blood cleanses? Blood is hard to get out of things. It's hard to get out of clothes or socks or whatever. So how strange is it that the blood of Jesus cleanses? But what a wonderful truth that it does! Jesus' blood, which is shorthand for his death on the Cross, cleanses us from all sin.

But listen friends, you have to admit that you need it. Look down at verse 9...

#### **1 John 1:9**

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

When we admit our sins to God and ask for forgiveness, God is faithful and He is just – He will cleanse us from all our sin. But you must come to God through faith in Jesus. It's not just a generic belief in God that saves, not just a belief that everything will work out for me when I die. You must confess that you need Jesus' death applied to you personally.

Let me just pause there and ask you – have you done that? Has there been a time in your life where you confessed your sins before a holy God, turned from them in repentance, and asked for his forgiveness? What a great day this would be to do that.

Christian brothers and sisters, let me ask you how you think God would want you to respond? Are there any sins that you need to confess before God today?

The verb John uses here suggests that this isn't a one-time thing. This is to be something that is a lifelong pattern. Don't just think, "I came to Christ twenty years ago and all my sins were forgiven, so I don't need to ask anymore." Friends, that's true in one sense. Your sins were paid in full on the Cross by Christ's death.

But you must day by day confess your sins to maintain your ongoing fellowship with the Father. God wants to set you free from a guilty conscience. He wants you to put your head on your pillow and know that your heavenly Father is faithful and just to forgive you and cleanse you from all unrighteousness. He wants you to stop hiding and come out of the darkness! Jesus said,

**John 12:46**

I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.

This is good news for us this Christmas season. Brothers and sisters, God is light and the source of all light. And through sending His Son Jesus, he now calls us to walk in the light and share this good news with the world.

That's because as we walk in the light, we become light to others. The good news that we can be cleansed from all our sin is a message that we have now been called to proclaim to the world.

So what do you need to do to walk in light this today, this week, in the days ahead? How can you be light to those around you? How can we share the good news that God is light with all the world?

Let's end with these words from Jesus in Matthew 5...

**Matthew 5:14-16**

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. **15** Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. **16** In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.