



Shining in the Shadows.

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BIG IDEA – Spirit empowered refreshing resilience in our dark world.

Scripture Focus – 1 John 4:4 NLT “But **you belong to God**, my dear children. **You have already won a victory over those people**, because **the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world.**”

No matter your age, one thing's certain... darkness has always been part of our story. Whether you were a teen in the 1950s (the last century) or you're figuring out life in the 2020s (the new century), the deceiver's playbook hasn't really changed. He just rebrands the same old lies with “new and improved” packaging—convincing people that God isn't enough and is somehow holding out on them.

So how do we live in a culture where truth has been hijacked?

How do we keep shining when the world dims the light?

HIGHJACKED

Who owns our words?

Who controls the concepts behind our words?

Our words are the main way we express ourselves, so it becomes difficult to agree on ideas when they mean very different things in other's minds. (DIG DEEPER: top 20 most volatile words in America)

1. **Truth** – Once assumed objective; now often treated as personal (“my truth”).
2. **Freedom** – Formerly civic and moral duty; now redefined as personal autonomy.
3. **Justice** – Moved from legal fairness to social, identity, or economic framing.
4. **Tolerance** – Used to mean respectful disagreement; now implies full affirmation.
5. **Love** – Formerly action rooted in sacrifice, now often emotional validation.
6. **Faith** – Once God-centered trust; now generalized as optimism or spirituality.
7. **Gender** – Formerly biological; now widely viewed as self-defined identity.
8. **Racism** – Once prejudice by individuals; now often systemic and unconscious bias.

9. **Patriotism** – Once civic virtue; now divisive or politicized loyalty test.
 10. **Science** – Once method of discovery; now treated as authority or belief system. **Our “science” is its own religion!**
 - **Darwinism/Evolution is a RELIGION.**
 - God help us, **we’ve made environmentalism a religion.**
 1. Because of the truth of God’s word in Genesis 1:28 ESV “And God blessed them. And God said to them, “**Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” **Believers should be the best environmentalists on the planet!** Where humans are priority, but not to the point of being greedy & destructive.
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We are talking about **this theme**, this word “**light**,” but I have to remind myself – Jesus declared “**I AM THE LIGHT.**”

“I am the light of the kosmos.” John 8:12 The Greeks believed there was an organized, perfectly ordered universe. Now, we know there are one hundred quadrillion universes! That’s 10 to the power of 16 (10^{16}).

Here I am trying to explain the wonder and beauty of this idea of us **living the light** and **Jesus is telling us – HE IS IT.**

Even something so mind-blowingly profound as the word “truth” as a person, not just a principle!

Who can possibly claim the embodiment of words that we think we understand but really have NO IDEA ABOUT?

JESUS DID.

Jesus ***did not point to truth, life, love, or even light... He embodied truth, life, love, and light.***

Following Jesus is not just trying to adopt His principles but it is to abide in Him.

Scripture gives a clear framework:

1. **Anchor truth in Christ, not consensus.**
 - “***I am the way and the truth and the life.***” (John 14:6)
Truth is not up for negotiation when it’s embodied in Christ’s nature.
2. **Discern through the Spirit, not emotion.**
 - “***When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth.***” (John 16:13)

The Spirit keeps believers from being shaped by the shifting moral tides.

3. **Hold truth and grace together.**

- *"Full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)*

Truth without grace hardens; grace without truth deceives.

4. **Expose falsehood through light, not outrage.**

- *"Everything exposed by the light becomes visible." (Ephesians 5:13)*

The believer's conduct, not argument, reveal truth's power.

5. **Obey what you already know.**

- *"If you hold to my teaching... you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32)*

Truth is eternally bonded to belief and behavior in JESUS CHRIST!

Just as Jesus is and does - we live as light by embodying Jesus AS truth, not debating it.

Luke describes this moment in **Acts 4:13** where the religious leaders were **baffled by Peter and John's ability to boldly discuss the scriptures so fluidly.**

"When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus."

TRANSITION: In this series **Living the Light**, we have explored the powerful Biblical theme of light and darkness.

- Pastor Larry started us off talking about **the battle we all face and the choice each of us has to make.**
- Then we discussed the **lies of darkness and the truth of a living a "grey life" where truth fades and desires rule.**
- Last week we explored the phrase **"Children of Light."**
- Today **we will discover how to be refreshingly resilient in our dark world.**

John's godly advice for shining in the shadows.

1 John 4:1-6 NLT



DO NOT BELIEVE BUT TEST

4:1 Dear friends, **do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them** to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For **there are many false prophets in the world.**

4:2-3 This is how we know if they have the Spirit of God: If a person claiming to be a prophet acknowledges that Jesus Christ came in a real body, that person has the Spirit of God. **But if someone claims to be a prophet and does not acknowledge the truth about Jesus, that person is not from God.** Such a person has the **spirit of the Antichrist**, which you heard is coming into the world and indeed is already here.

STORY: Tyler Shelley short devotional at the Men's Meetup Friday night.

Tyler talked about **two Old Testament prophets out of 1 Kings 13**, but the author doesn't give us either of their names. **The young prophet was just known as the "man of God," and the other is just known as the "old prophet."** It's a wild story, ask Tyler about it.

But at one point in the story the old prophet lies to the young prophet, and the young prophet disobeys God by following the old prophet back to his house for dinner! See [1 Kings 13:8-9](#)

"But the old prophet answered, **"I am a prophet, too, just as you are. And an angel gave me this command from the Lord: 'Bring him home with you so he can have something to eat and drink.'**" **But the old man was lying to him.** So they went back together, **and the man of God ate and drank at the prophet's home."**
[1 Kings 13:18-19](#) NLT

Do you want to know what happened to both prophets? I'll bet you do now! Read it for yourself in [1 Kings 13](#)

Back to John



JESUS IS GREATER

4:4-5 NIV You, dear children, are **from God** and have **overcome them**, because **the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. They are from the world** and therefore **speak from the viewpoint of the world**, and **the world listens to them.**

Who is "them" or "they?"

"And have overcome **them** - Have triumphed over **their arts and temptations; their endeavors to draw you into error and sin.** The word **them** in this place seems to refer to the **false prophets or teachers who collectively constituted antichrist.**"
[Barnes' Notes on the Bible](#)

There are people who are **actively involved and committed to the spirit of the antichrist.** Their role is to **subvert God, twist truth and capture the hearts of anyone who will believe them** – especially targeting believers who **do not know the Word of God** for themselves and are **not** walking in the light.

“These “spirits” are disembodied, supernatural beings. John taught that a prophet or teacher was the actual mouthpiece for a spirit.” [Got Questions](#).

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy telling him, “Now the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some will turn away from the true faith; they will follow deceptive spirits and teachings that come from demons.” 1 Timothy 4:1 NLT

4:6 But **we belong to God, and those who know God listen to us**. If they do not belong to God, they do not listen to us. That is how we know if someone has the **Spirit of (“alétheia”- reality) truth** or the **spirit of (“plane” – fraudulent) deception**.



PROXIMITY should be our PRIORITY

1 John 5:18-21 NIV

5:18 We know that anyone **born of God does not continue to sin**; the One who was born of God keeps them safe, and the (“**ponéros**”- painfully wicked) evil one cannot harm them.

5:19 We know that we are children of God, and that **the whole world is under the control of the evil one**.

5:20 We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is (“**aléthinos**” – real) true. And we are in him who is true by being in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

5:21 Dear children, **keep yourselves from idols**.

Proximity to God through His Word, walking and talking with Him through prayer and not letting **anything – no disordered desires, no person, no demons, no lies, no fake, false promises** come into our heart and take the place which ought to be filled by God!

Keeping the first commandment helps us **keep all the other commandments!**

Exodus 20:3 NIV “You shall have no other gods before Me.”

Jesus’ prayer for us

John 17:15-16 NIV My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.

Jesus did not ask God to take us out of the world.

Jesus prayed that God would “**téreó**” – **guard** us from the “**ponéros**” – **painfully wicked one**.

As followers of Jesus, we are **a continued physical presence on earth** (“in the world”) while **living the light** that does not **mix with the world’s darkness** (“not of the world”).

In the world but not of it.

APPLICATION

- **Test What You Hear.**
Don’t assume every “spiritual” message is from God. Measure it by His Word and the person of Jesus (1 John 4:1-3).
- **Stay Close to the Source, protect your heart from substitutes.**
Proximity produces clarity. Keep idols out. Anything that takes God’s rightful place—desire, ideology, or distraction—dims your light (1 John 5:21).
- **Live Truth, Don’t Just Argue It.**
Let integrity, humility, and love expose falsehood more powerfully than outrage (Eph 5:13).
- **Remember Who Is Greater, Jesus will protect you.**
Confidence comes from Christ, not cultural approval. “*Greater is He who is in you...*” (1 John 4:4). Jesus prayed for protection, not escape. (John 17:15-16).

SCRIPTURES

John 8:12 NLT

Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, “**I am the light of the world**. If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.

John 14:6 NLT

Jesus told him, “**I am the way, the truth, and the life**. No one can come to the Father except through me.

John 16:13 NLT

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future.

John 1:14 NIV

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, **full of grace and truth**.

Ephesians 5:13 NIV

But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light.

John 8:32 NIV

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. **Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.**"

Acts 4:13 NIV

When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

1 John 4:1 NIV

Dear friends, **do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them** to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For **there are many false prophets in the world.**

1 John 4:2-3 NIV

This is how we know if they have the Spirit of God: If a person claiming to be a prophet acknowledges that Jesus Christ came in a real body, that person has the Spirit of God. **But if someone claims to be a prophet and does not acknowledge the truth about Jesus, that person is not from God.** Such a person has the **spirit of the Antichrist**, which you heard is coming into the world and indeed is already here.

1 Kings 13:18-19 NLT

But the old prophet answered, "**I am a prophet, too, just as you are. And an angel gave me this command from the Lord:** 'Bring him home with you so he can have something to eat and drink.'" **But the old man was lying to him.** So they went back together, **and the man of God ate and drank at the prophet's home.**

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1 John 4:6 NIV

But **we belong to God, and those who know God listen to us.** If they do not belong to God, they do not listen to us. That is how we know if someone has the **Spirit of truth** or the **spirit of deception.**

1 Timothy 4:1 NLT ON SCREEN

Now the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some will turn away from the true faith; they will follow deceptive spirits and teachings that come from demons.

1 John 5:18 NIV

We know that anyone **born of God does not continue to sin**; the One who was born of God keeps them safe, and the evil one cannot harm them.

1 John 5:19 NIV

We know that we are children of God, and that **the whole world is under the control of the evil one**.

1 John 5:20 NIV

We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true by being in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

1 John 5:21 NIV Dear children, **keep yourselves from idols**.

Exodus 20:3 NIV ON SCREEN

You shall have no other gods before Me.

John 17:15-16 NIV ON SCREEN

My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.

DIG DEEPER NOTES



The Five "I Wills" of Satan

In **Isaiah 14:13-14**, Satan expresses his rebellious desires through five statements, often referred to as the "Five I Wills." These statements reveal his pride and ambition to usurp God's authority.

Breakdown of the Five "I Wills"

I WILL STATEMENT	MEANING
I will ascend into heaven.	Satan desires to rise to a higher position than he already holds, seeking to usurp God's throne.
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.	He aims to become the supreme authority over angels, wanting to replace Michael as archangel.
I will sit upon the mount of the congregation.	This reflects his ambition to rule over Israel, desiring the messianic position meant for Christ.
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds.	Satan seeks the glory that belongs only to God, wanting to share in divine majesty.

I WILL STATEMENT

I will be like the Most High.

MEANING

This statement reveals his ultimate goal of becoming equal to God, embodying self-worship and pride.

These statements illustrate Satan's rebellion against God and his desire for power and recognition, ultimately leading to his fall from grace.



Top Twenty Controversial Words in American Culture.

Here is a concise list of culturally volatile words in America today—terms whose meanings have shifted or fragmented by generation, ideology, or social context:

1. **Truth** – Once assumed objective; now often treated as personal ("my truth").
2. **Freedom** – Formerly civic and moral duty; now redefined as personal autonomy.
3. **Justice** – Moved from legal fairness to social, identity, or economic framing.
4. **Tolerance** – Used to mean respectful disagreement; now implies full affirmation.
5. **Love** – Formerly action rooted in sacrifice, now often emotional validation.
6. **Faith** – Once God-centered trust; now generalized as optimism or spirituality.
7. **Gender** – Formerly biological; now widely viewed as self-defined identity.
8. **Marriage** – From covenant between man and woman to multiple redefinitions.
9. **Equality** – Once equal opportunity; now often equal outcome or representation.
10. **Diversity** – Shifted from inclusion of difference to enforced ideological conformity.
11. **Tolerance** / Acceptance – Merged into requirement of moral agreement.
12. **Racism** – Once prejudice by individuals; now often systemic and unconscious bias.
13. **Patriotism** – Once civic virtue; now divisive or politicized loyalty test.
14. **Privilege** – From situational advantage to moral guilt marker.
15. **Science** – Once method of discovery; now treated as authority or belief system.
16. **Truthfulness** / Fact-checking – Formerly about evidence; now filtered by ideology.
17. **Man / Woman** – Previously biological categories; now contested social constructs.
18. **Unity** – Once cooperation despite difference; now often conditional agreement.
19. Tolerance of Speech / **Censorship** – Boundaries have reversed: speech once protected, now frequently restricted for perceived harm.
20. **Family** – From nuclear foundation to any chosen relational configuration.



Principle vs. Person — The Embodied Reality of Jesus

Principle	Person	Scripture	Key Implication for Living
Truth – knowing what's right	Jesus is Truth – reality revealed in Him	John 14:6	Truth is not a philosophy to defend but a Person to follow.
Life – pursuing vitality or happiness	Jesus is Life – source of eternal and abundant life	John 11:25; 10:10	True life begins by union with Jesus, not by self-improvement.
Light – moral clarity or knowledge	Jesus is Light – revelation that dispels darkness	John 8:12	Walk in His light; don't try to manufacture your own moral glow.
Love – emotion or tolerance	Jesus is Love – sacrificial self-giving nature of God	John 15:13; 1 John 4:8	Love means sacrificial living, not sentimental approval.
Word – information or doctrine	Jesus is the Word made flesh	John 1:14	God's message isn't merely heard; it is encountered in Christ.
Bread – provision or satisfaction	Jesus is the Bread of Life	John 6:35	Only He satisfies the hunger of the soul.
Door – access or opportunity	Jesus is the Door	John 10:9	Salvation and safety come only through Him.
Shepherd – guidance system	Jesus is the Good Shepherd	John 10:11	We don't need better maps—only the right voice to follow.
Vine – productivity principle	Jesus is the True Vine	John 15:1-5	Fruitfulness flows from abiding, not striving.
Way – moral pathway	Jesus is the Way	John 14:6	Christianity is not a route to God—it is relationship with Him.



[What is the spirit of the antichrist?](#)

A predominant worldview when he wrote this letter suggested that diverse spirits were at work in the world. Many [false teachings](#), mystery religions, spiritual experiences, and **variations of Christianity were emerging at the time**. The spiritual atmosphere was not unlike the one present in our world today. **People entertained countless views regarding truth.**

These “spirits” John spoke of were not merely **disembodied, supernatural beings**. John taught that **a prophet or teacher was the actual mouthpiece for a spirit**. Spiritual doctrines are promulgated through human spokespersons. **Teachers of truth are filled with the Spirit of God and thus are agents who speak for God. Teachers of falsehood are spreading the “doctrines of demons”** ([1 Timothy 4:1, NASB](#)).

The Bible teaches that the world will eventually produce a world ruler, called “the beast” in Revelation, who will wield great power and demand worship of himself. He will have “a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies” ([Revelation 13:5](#)) and is empowered by Satan ([Revelation 13:2](#)). He is called “the man of lawlessness . . . the man doomed to destruction” in [2 Thessalonians 2:3](#). This final [Antichrist](#) will be the culmination of the evil workings of Satan throughout the centuries. The Antichrist of the end times will embody all the deception and perversion of truth that the spirit of the antichrist has always promoted. Today, “the secret power of lawlessness is already at work” ([2 Thessalonians 2:7](#)). The same spirit that will empower the Antichrist of the last days is currently operating in the world to bring confusion and deception to the issue of Jesus Christ's person and work. “This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world” ([1 John 4:3](#)).



[The 10 Commandments](#)

Commandment Number	Commandment Description
1	You shall have no other gods before Me.
2	You shall not make for yourselves an idol.
3	You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God.
4	Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.
5	Honor your father and your mother.
6	You shall not murder.
7	You shall not commit adultery.
8	You shall not steal.
9	You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

Commandment Number

Commandment Description

10

You shall not covet.

Purpose and Significance

- The first four commandments focus on our relationship with God, emphasizing worship and reverence.
- The last six commandments address interpersonal relationships, promoting honesty, respect, and integrity.

Framework showing the positive equivalents—what each of the **Ten Commandments calls us toward, not just what it forbids.**

Commandment (Exodus 20)	Negative Command	Positive Equivalent (What God Invites Us To)
1. <i>"You shall have no other gods before Me."</i>	Reject false gods.	Worship the one true God with undivided loyalty. Cultivate awe, dependence, and daily devotion.
2. <i>"You shall not make for yourself an idol."</i>	Don't substitute or shrink God.	Reflect His image faithfully. Let your life, not a statue, represent His character.
3. <i>"You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God."</i>	Don't use His name carelessly.	Honor His name in word and action. Speak and live so that His reputation is lifted.
4. <i>"Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy."</i>	Don't neglect rest or worship.	Delight in God through rest, renewal, and rhythm. Trust Him enough to stop striving.
5. <i>"Honor your father and your mother."</i>	Don't dishonor authority.	Show gratitude and respect to those who gave you life. Build generational blessing.
6. <i>"You shall not murder."</i>	Don't take life.	Protect and value life. Promote peace, reconciliation, and dignity for every person.
7. <i>"You shall not commit adultery."</i>	Don't betray covenant love.	Be faithful in heart and body. Mirror God's steadfast love and purity.
8. <i>"You shall not steal."</i>	Don't take what isn't yours.	Practice generosity and stewardship. Use your hands to give, not grasp.
9. <i>"You shall not bear false witness."</i>	Don't lie or distort truth.	Speak truth in love. Be trustworthy, transparent, and just.

Commandment (Exodus 20)

10. *"You shall not covet."*

Negative Command

Don't crave what others have.

Positive Equivalent (What God Invites Us To)

Live content and grateful. Rejoice in what God has given you and others.

Summary:

The Ten Commandments aren't just prohibitions—they form a portrait of a flourishing life: **worship faithfully, rest trustfully, love purely, give generously, speak truthfully, and live gratefully.**