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I AM A LIGHT



*When have you seen someone
light up a room?*

QUESTION #1

#BSFLmore

Shine the light of Christ.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Ever wondered why a moth is attracted to a light? If so, you're not alone. Scientists have long pondered this, but they don't know either. At least, they don't know for sure. They've come up with several hypotheses, but they end up poking holes in each one. So, we'll just keep wondering—while the moths keep flying to the light.

Interestingly, people are also attracted to light. We'd rather enter a well-lit room than one that's dark. We'd rather walk the dog during the daytime than after dark. When we do go out at night, we prefer evenings with a full moon. We even consider it romantic.

Perhaps over the last century, we've gradually taken light for granted. Flip a switch and we have light. Our ever-present smartphones have lights that outshine any flashlight. If we choose to do so, we can be in perpetual light.

People also continue to be drawn to the light of Christ. But how do they see His light? They see His light through His followers. We, the people of God who make up His church, are the light of Christ.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Ephesians 5:8-10

⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light— ⁹ for the fruit of the light consists of all goodness, righteousness, and truth— ¹⁰ testing what is pleasing to the Lord.

What makes a person great? Throughout history, great women and men all have shared a common characteristic: they refused to be molded and shaped by the world around them. Rather than adopting the thinking of their peers, they decided to transform the world in their own way. We can be thankful for the inventors, scientists, and physicians who chose to think outside the box. Others chose to act with great courage and conviction—those like Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, Rosa Parks, and Martin Luther King Jr.—and turned the tides of history.

Those of us who are children of God—those who follow Jesus Christ—are to act differently as well. Why? Because we *are* different! In Ephesians 5, Paul reminded us that we used to be darkness, but because we are in Christ, we are now light. We are not just *in* the light; we *are* light. Basic science teaches us we can't be light and darkness at the same time, and that fact applies to our lives in Christ. We are to "live as children of light."

How do we make that happen? Paul offered several suggestions:

- ▶ **Live lives full "of all goodness, righteousness, and truth."** These are more than just outward characteristics. A life of *goodness, righteousness, and truth* begins with the things we pour into our minds. As Paul told the Philippians: "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy—dwell on these things" (Phil. 4:8).

What are some words that describe your life before you encountered Christ?

QUESTION #2

- **Test “what is pleasing to the Lord.”** As we fill our minds with the things of God and live in His goodness, righteousness, and truth, we’ll come to know more and more what pleases Christ. Paul told the Romans: “Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:2).

We are to live our lives as children of light because that’s what pleases the Lord. Don’t conform to the darkness. Light up the darkness! Jesus Himself gave us that command: “You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:14-16).

As a teenager, I told myself: “It’s impossible to look different, talk different, and live different without being considered some kind of outcast or reject.” So I made it my mission to live as a Christian who was also one of the coolest, most popular, well-liked people in my school. Years later, I realized I’d made my reputation at school more important than my relationship with the Lord. I’d cared more about what people thought about me than what God thought about me. I wanted the best of both worlds. I wanted to be a friend of God, but also a friend to the world. I wasn’t willing to sever myself from the world for the sake of Christ.

James had something to say about my attitude: “You adulterous people! Don’t you know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? So whoever wants to be the friend of the world becomes the enemy of God” (Jas. 4:4).

Sooner or later, all of us have to grow up and make a decision. Will we choose God, or will we choose the world? God doesn’t allow us to straddle the fence on this one. Mediocrity is unacceptable to God. Will we choose to live in the light or will we remain in the darkness?

How do we actively test what is pleasing to the Lord and what is not?

QUESTION #3

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

Choose one of the following statements about the reality of sin and evil in our world. Record how you would respond to that statement during a conversation with a friend or family member.

"There's no such thing as 'right' and 'wrong'; it's all relative."

"I've done a lot more good things than bad things, so I won't have any problem with God when I meet Him."

"You don't have any right to tell me how I should live my life. Stop judging me."

How can you become better prepared to have these kinds of conversations as a representative of Jesus in your community?

"If there is a terror about darkness because we cannot see, there is also a terror about light because we can see!"

— FREDERICK BUECHNER

Ephesians 5:11-14

¹¹ Don't participate in the fruitless works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to mention what is done by them in secret. ¹³ Everything exposed by the light is made visible, ¹⁴ for what makes everything visible is light. Therefore it is said: "Get up, sleeper, and rise up from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

If you feel like the world around you is drifting away from God and what God values, you're not alone. And you're not wrong.

Modern culture is certainly drifting away from biblical principles. Our nation has continually moved away from the light and is pushing toward the darkness. We're now living in a day where immorality has risen to the surface of society. People are living sinful lifestyles without shame, without fear of public disapproval, and without concern for divine consequences. Sadly, we live in a world driven by political correctness and biblical compromise. And the more godless our world becomes, the more we tend to lose our sensitivity to the evil that seeks to engulf us.

Because we live in a permissive world, we must be quick to reject everything that is evil—and even those things that give the appearance of evil. If we aren't constantly on guard, we can be molded by our culture and shaped by a society that ignores the principles laid out in God's Word.



The fact that so many ungodly things have become acceptable in our culture doesn't change the unchanging truth. God's Word and His view of sin have never changed—and they never will. He will not allow evil to go unpunished. In His Word, God gave us His wisdom and direction; He defined right and wrong. Therefore, if God says something is wrong but the world says it's OK, we stand with God's Word.

Paul gave us the proper response: "Don't participate in the fruitless works of darkness, but instead expose them." What does it mean to expose things in the darkness? We should see sin the same way God sees it; then we should respond to sin like God responds to it. In other words, if something is sinful or ungodly, we shouldn't laugh at it, watch it, participate in it, or be around it. To expose the darkness means to bear testimony against it.

Light exposes everything in the darkness. The apostle John described believers as those who "walk in the light as he himself is in the light" (1 John 1:7). When we are in the light and walking in relationship with Jesus, we expose darkness by boldly shining the light of Christ.

Our task is not simply to expose the things in the darkness. God calls us to bring people *from* the darkness into the light of Christ. You may be familiar with the old children's song, "This Little Light of Mine." You probably even remember the words:

This little light of mine; I'm going to let it shine.

Hide it under a bushel? No! I'm going to let it shine.

Won't let Satan blow it out! I'm going to let it shine.

Let it shine till Jesus comes; I'm going to let it shine.

We sang these words as children. We should live them as adults. As God's children, let's not conform to the darkness. As light, let's transform the darkness to the glory of God.

***As Christians,
what are the right
motivations and
goals for exposing
darkness in the
world?***

QUESTION #4

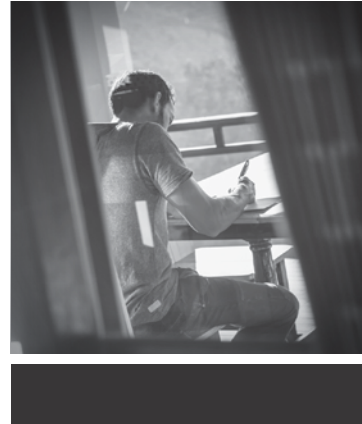
***Where do you see
opportunities to
shine the light
of Christ in your
community?***

QUESTION #5

LIVE IT OUT

How will you shine the light of Jesus this week and in the future? Consider the following suggestions:

- ▶ **Evaluate.** Pray and ask the Lord to expose any darkness in your life. Agree to see sin the same way God sees it. Choose to repent from that darkness and pursue the light of Christ.
- ▶ **Write a note.** Sometimes our circumstances will lead us into dark seasons in life. Think about a person you know who is in a season like that. Write a personal, hand-written note this week, encouraging the person in the Lord Jesus.
- ▶ **Serve.** In every community you can find opportunities to serve and shine the light of Christ in dark corners. Make a commitment to serve in your community this week and ask the Lord to shine His light brightly through you as you respond in obedience.



You're not a moth. But you are rightly attracted to the light of Jesus. Better yet, you are a living testimony of that light in this dark world.

My thoughts

Share with others how you will live out this study: **#BSFLmore**



SEASON TO SOW

BY LORI LOONEY KEENE

I have often been asked by well-meaning women, “How can I share my faith in a natural setting?” Typically, this question arises after we have spoken across a coffee table or discussed a shared prayer request for a lost family member or friend. Once they have prayed about and discussed a scenario concerning someone they know and love, it’s not unusual for someone to say, “I wish I could be more evangelistic toward people I don’t know.” This is when the word “natural” seems to find its way into the conversation. I always laugh because I can’t think of anything more unnatural than sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with someone!

In order to be true to Scripture, the gospel must begin by helping someone realize that he or she is a sinner and in need of a Savior. Therefore, we're more likely to feel unnatural, or even uncomfortable, in this process. Rather than give you a litany of questions, comments, and memorable quotes about how to share your faith, I would like to, instead, share with you some experiences of my own, both positive and negative.

Be Led by God and Not Guilt

As females, we're professionals at acquiring what I like to call "the guilt complex." Just by hearing a mild comment or suggestion, we may begin to feel inadequate as a mother, wife, student, friend, or any other role we fill in life. Evangelism isn't immune to this response. Therefore, I caution you not to share your faith out of guilt. I have fallen prey to such a trap as I would like to share with you.

One evening while in seminary, a friend of mine and I drove to get ice cream. Lisa, my friend, noticed a man walking along the side of the road. She immediately turned to me and said, "We need to pick him up. This may be a chance to help him." I instantly refused. However, after many moments of her pleading, I caved. Naively, I believed we would be safe since there were two of us. We pulled over and the gentlemen slid into our back seat and stated that he was heading to the hospital to visit someone. Having watched far too many crime shows, I became nervous. Then I remembered one of the shows telling viewers that when kidnapped or high-jacked, you have a much higher chance of survival if you talk and build a relationship with the perpetrator.

Needless to say, the conversation began flowing! I asked him everything under the sun, including whether or not he had a relationship with Jesus Christ. When he said no I shared the gospel so fast that I am confident he understood nothing I said. By the time he got out of my car at the hospital, I'm not sure which one of us was scared more. I watched him walk away, obviously more confused than he was upon entering my car. From this experience, I promised myself two things: 1) I will *never* pick up a hitchhiker again, and 2) I will never create a false environment to share my faith out of guilt.



Seek Spiritual Sight

An important aspect of sowing the gospel naturally into the lives of those around us requires that we first acquire spiritual sight. Before I put on my contacts each morning, I fumble around the room using my out-stretched hands as my guides. Without corrective lenses, I would most assuredly bump into things. Just as my physical sight is impeded without the help of appropriate aid, my spiritual sight remains blurred until I access clarity through prayer.

Scripture assures us that God is at work. (See John 5:17.) Daily, God is drawing people to Himself through His Word, circumstances, and other people. However, we will stumble past these works in progress unless our vision has been sharpened through prayer. Taking the time each morning to ask the Lord to show us where He's already at work will help open our eyes to circumstances in which we can share our faith. God is already moving in the lives of people. We simply

have the joy of sharing in the action. This can be as simple as looking around your daily list of activities and noting who normally walks across your path.

For example, let me introduce you to my former neighbor, Laura. When I first moved into my apartment, Laura met me on the staircase with her eyes fixed upon my stereo in a disapproving glance. Her first words were, "I have really enjoyed the quietness around here." After which she looked directly in my eyes to ensure that I understood her meaning. That evening, I baked three dozen cookies and left them at the doorstep of all my new neighbors with a note introducing myself. From that point on, Laura was much friendlier to me.

The Lord kept Laura on my heart over the next several months. On any typical day, I would see Laura jogging around the neighborhood by herself. One afternoon I pulled into the lot and rushed out of my car toward my apartment with a thousand to-do lists swirling around in my head. In the midst of the nagging list, I heard God simply say, *Go talk to her.* Within minutes I heard her call my name and turned to see her walking behind me. As we talked, I realized that she lives alone and carried the weight of the world on her shoulders. She shared some of her fears about being able to financially survive and her loneliness. I asked her if she went to church anywhere. She didn't. I shared with her about my church and invited her to attend with me sometime. This opened the door for several future conversations.

Situations such as this occur regularly, not only in my life, but in the lives of those who simply stop to pray and ask the Lord to grant spiritual sight to see He's at work. The only requirements to share your faith naturally is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and a desire to share Him with others. When we ask God to show us where He's moving, we will begin to see opportunities to sow seeds of the gospel as we go about our daily lives.

Lorie L. Keene has written for LifeWay's *Journey* devotional for women and other Christian publications. Originally from Alabama, Lorie and her husband, Stephen, and their two children, now make their home in Tullahoma, Tenn.



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COMING IN SPRING

God Is...

SUGGESTED FOR
THE WEEK OF

March 4	Session 1	Our Provider	<i>Genesis 22:1-14</i>
March 11	Session 2	Our Healer	<i>Exodus 14:29-31; 15:22-27</i>
March 18	Session 3	Our Banner	<i>Exodus 17:8-16</i>
March 25	Session 4	Our Peace	<i>Judges 6:11-16,22-24</i>
April 8	Session 5	Our Shepherd	<i>Psalms 23:1-6</i>
April 15	Session 6	Our Righteousness	<i>Jeremiah 33:3-8,14-16</i>

Special Focus

April 1		God Is Faithful	<i>Luke 24:1-12</i>
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Stand Up: How to Fight Injustice

April 22	Session 1	Be Ready to Stand	<i>Esther 2:5-10,15-17</i>
April 29	Session 2	Stand with Conviction	<i>Esther 2:21-3:6</i>
May 6	Session 3	Stand Down	<i>Esther 4:1-3,10-16</i>
May 13	Session 4	Stand with Humility	<i>Esther 5:1-14</i>
May 20	Session 5	Stand Up and Speak	<i>Esther 7:1-10</i>
May 27	Session 6	Keep Standing	<i>Esther 8:1-8; 9:20-22</i>