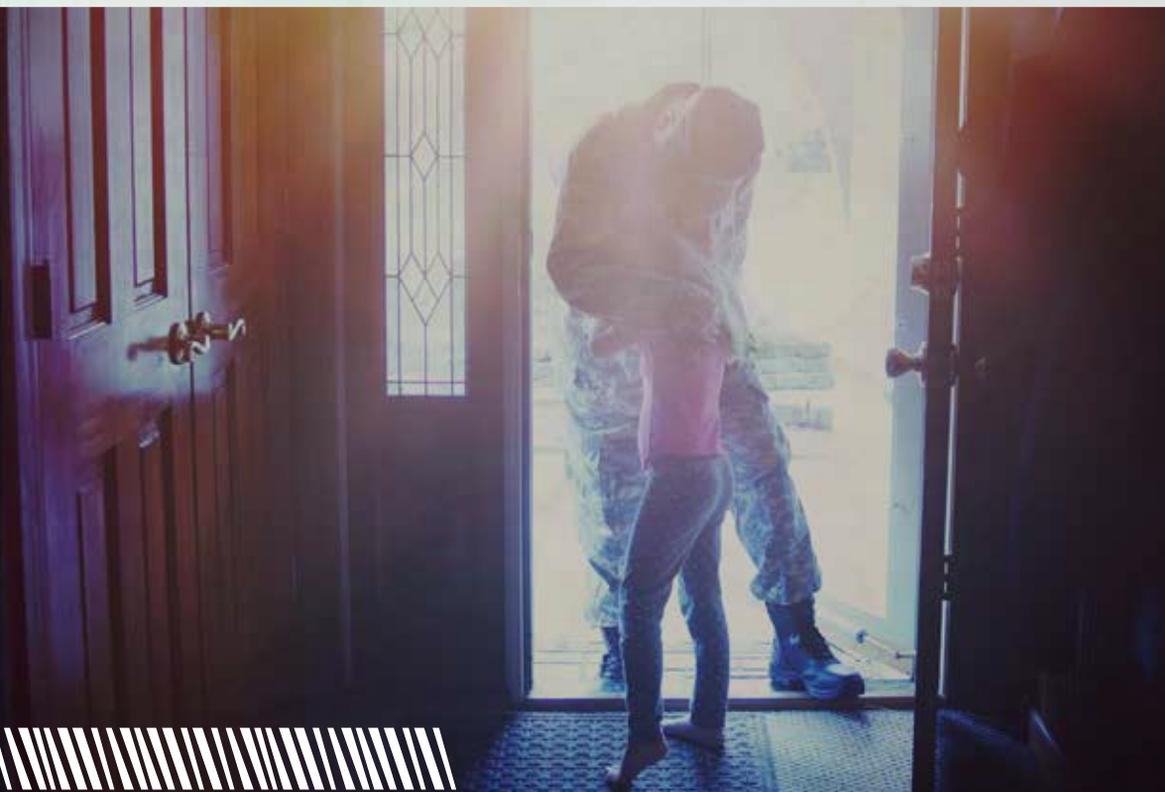


6

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 wonder 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.

Clearly, we're not moths, but we are also attracted to light.

- » We'd rather enter a well-lit room than one that's dark.
- » We'd prefer to walk the dog during the daytime rather 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 have 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 are the light of Christ.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Ephesians 5:8-10 (CSB)

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 men and women 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, somewhere along the way, 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 such as Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, Rosa Parks, and Martin Luther King Jr.—and turned the tides of history.

The children of God, those who follow Jesus Christ, are to act differently as well. Why? Because we *are* different! In this passage, 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 in the light and in the darkness at the same time, and that fact applies to our lives in Christ. We are to "live as children of light" (v. 8).

- » **Live lives full of "all goodness, righteousness, and truth" (v. 9).** These are more than just outward characteristics; a life of goodness, righteousness, and truth begins in 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" (Philippians 4:8).

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

QUESTION 2

- » **Test “what is pleasing to the Lord” (v. 10).** As we fill our minds with the things of God and live in His goodness, righteousness, and truth, we will 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” (Romans 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!

“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” (Matthew 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 had made my reputation at school more important than my relationship with the Lord. I had 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.

God didn’t send His Son to die on a cross so we could camouflage ourselves and attempt to look like everyone else in this evil world. Jesus paid the ultimate price and shed His blood so we would live in the light—His light. And when we live in Christ and for Christ, our lives will naturally shine in the darkness.

Sooner or later, we have to make a decision. What’s truly more important to us? Are we going to 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

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

QUESTION 4

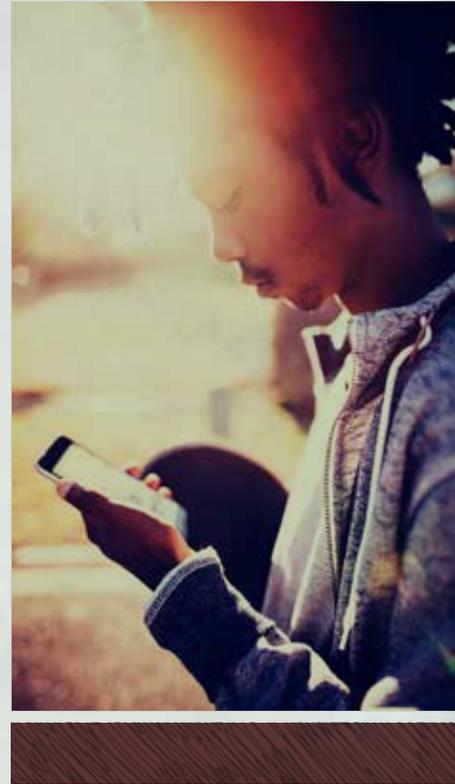
Ephesians 5:11-14 (CSB)

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."

Today, we are drifting from biblical principles. Our nation has continually moved away from the light and drifted toward the darkness. We are now living in a day where gross immorality has risen to the surface of society. People are living sinful lifestyles without shame, fear of public disapproval, or concern of 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 or even gives 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





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

QUESTION 5

His view of sin never have 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" (v. 11). 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."

"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 til Jesus comes. I'm going to let it shine!"

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

"This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light, and there is absolutely no darkness in him."

1 JOHN 1:5

MY LIGHT



What actions or attitudes allow us to shine the light of Christ in our day-to-day lives? Use the acrostic below to identify a few ways we're called to dispel darkness. An example has been given.

S

H

I

N

Extend forgiveness to someone who has wronged you.

LIVE IT OUT

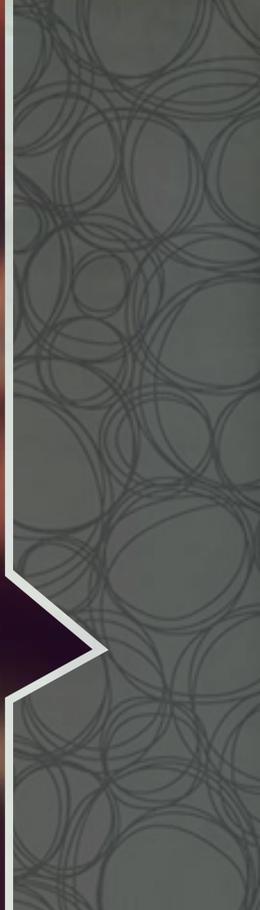
How will you shine the light of Jesus this week?

- » **Pray.** Ask the Lord to expose any darkness in your life. Choose to repent from that darkness and pursue the light of Christ.
- » **Memorize.** Commit 1 John 1:5-7 to memory and thank God for His gracious promise to dispel darkness.
- » **Invite.** The light of Christ is too good to keep to ourselves. Identify someone you know who needs to hear about the life we're offered in Christ. Connect with them this week and invite them to come with you to Bible study next week.

As Christ-followers, we are light in a dark world. We're to live our lives in such a way that reflects Christ's righteousness. **Don't conform to the darkness. Light up the darkness!**



My thoughts



“LIVING STONES”: WHAT DID PETER MEAN?

BY JIMMY DRAPER

When we think of an ancient temple, the temple-palace of Karnak, located 300 miles up the Nile from Cairo, or the Parthenon on the Acropolis in Athens may come to mind. Perhaps we would envision Solomon’s Temple. Essential to each of these massive structures was the cornerstone. Such a stone was structurally significant. In Jesus’ day people selected a cornerstone with care and laid it with great ceremony; the stone itself determined the lines of the architecture of the building. All the building took shape from the cornerstone. Today a cornerstone is merely decorative.

Simon Peter spoke of Jesus as the Cornerstone. This imagery was not unique. Following the leadership of the Holy Spirit, though, Peter explained how believers are joined with the Cornerstone in both identity and task.

The Cornerstone

Seven hundred years before Christ, Isaiah saw the laying of the stone: "Look, I have laid a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation" (Isaiah 28:16).¹ In his day people understood Isaiah was referring "to the massive stonework of the Temple, symbolizing the Lord's abiding presence among his people, a feature which was firm, unshakeable, [and] reliable."²

In His teaching, Jesus pointed to the reality of this Cornerstone: "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone?'" (Matthew 21:42). Referring to the Israelites during their exodus, Paul spoke of that Stone in a startling statement: "All

drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from a spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4).

Throughout, Scripture speaks of a mysterious, mighty, majestic, moving Stone. That Stone is Christ, and He is the Cornerstone of the church. That was Peter's message; he called that Cornerstone the "living stone" (1 Peter 2:4). The phrase appears to be an oxymoron, as if one were to say, "cool fire" or "bright darkness." We normally speak of someone as "stone dead." Yet the Bible calls the Lord both the Rock and the Life (Psalm 18:2; John 11:25).

This says something about Christ that can be stated no other way. In Him, the living Stone, are



ILLUSTRATOR PHOTO/ BOBSCHATZ (2/7/11)

One of three massive construction stones that were part of the foundation for the Temple of Jupiter in Baalbek, Lebanon. The block, which weighs over 800 tons, measures about 65 feet long and is over 17 feet wide at the top end. Comparing the stone's height to the gentleman standing at the raised end highlights the stone's massive size.

vitality, life, energy, growth, and movement. Only the phrase “living stone” can accurately describe our great Cornerstone.

Peter explained, however, that the Cornerstone is a rejected Stone. In the phrase “rejected by people” (1 Peter 2:4), the Greek term translated “rejected” means to be disallowed after having been inspected.³ Although that Stone was in the eyes of God “choice and precious”—meaning “well-hewn and valuable for building”⁴—people generally rejected and set aside that Stone.

The psalmist foresaw this: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone” (Psalm 118:22). This was Jesus’ prediction of Himself: “It is necessary that the Son of Man suffer many things and be rejected” (Luke 9:22). This was Peter’s passionate proclamation of Him, “This Jesus is ‘the stone rejected by you builders, which has become the cornerstone’ ” (Acts 4:11). But God’s perspective is that Jesus is God’s chosen and precious Cornerstone. From Him the spiritual temple takes its shape.

Living Stones

Peter enlarged the scene. He described Christ building a temple, using believers as “living stones” built into a “spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:5). That great Cornerstone is a magnetic stone. Mysteriously, stones are drawn from all around that Cornerstone and into it. Dead, lifeless stones come into contact and are made alive. “Nowhere else in the New Testament are believers called living stones.”⁵ In Ephesians 2, the apostle Paul

declared, “you were dead in your trespasses and sins.... BUT GOD, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, made us alive with Christ” (Ephesians 2:1,4-5a *emphasis added*).

Peter gave the most magnificent picture in Scripture of the church’s dignity and destiny. He described God building a spiritual temple with believers as the living stones of that edifice.

To the Athenians Paul preached, “God who made the world and everything in it... does not live in shrines made by hands” (Acts 17:24). When Paul said that, he was standing in the shadow of the Acropolis at Athens, with its impressive temples. Years later Paul explained that believers are God’s “temple.”

Believers As Temples

Every believer, although a part of the whole, is a microcosm of the whole. Paul asked, “Don’t you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit?” (1 Corinthians 6:19a). That the Holy Spirit should condescend to indwell humankind is an utter amazement, but this is reality. Every believer is a temple, but every believer-temple becomes a brick in that temple that God is building. Every follower of Christ is a temple—and at the same time is a living stone in the vast, invisible temple of the ages.

As if looking through a kaleidoscope, Peter again described a changing image. The walls of the living temple dissolve and onlookers see inside its sanctuary. Those who a moment ago were living

stones become sacred, holy priests serving in the temple. “You yourselves, as living stones, a spiritual house, are being built to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5).

Believers As Priests

Old Testament priests served for limited times in only one place. Peter envisioned a church in which all followers of Christ, at all times and in all places, serve as priests. A believer is a priest everywhere and always—at home, at work, at church, in the community, alone, or with others. According to Peter’s words, every believer holds a sacred office, a believer-priest within the temple of living stones.

What does a believer-priest do? The Latin word for “priest” is *pontifex*, which comes from two words, one meaning “bridge” and another meaning “to make.”⁶ The priest is one who makes or builds a bridge between God and man. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only one great Priest, yet He has left believers as His under-priests, bridge builders for Him on earth.

Christians speak of the “priesthood of the believer.” The great truth of this doctrine is that Christ’s followers are to serve God as a way of life. Believers are in His living temple and part of His plan for the ages. This concept dignifies every aspect of each believer’s life. No job is so menial or vocation so prestigious that this high calling does not dignify it. Believers are part of what God is doing.

Simon Peter again refined his description as this scene dissolved into another. He had described

believers inside that temple as both the living stones and believer-priests. But what are these priests offering? Each believer-priest is offering up “spiritual sacrifices” (v. 5). Paul explained that Christians are to bring themselves as the spiritual sacrifice: “Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God” (Romans 12:1). To become living stones is not enough. God sets us, His followers, in His temple as “a holy priesthood” offering ourselves as a living sacrifice to Him (1 Peter 2:5). We set ourselves apart for His exclusive use. This is the miracle of living stones!

1. Unless indicated otherwise, all Scripture quotations are from the Christian Standard Bible (CSB®).

2. J. B. Taylor, “Cornerstone” in *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1980), 319.

3. To “reject” (after scrutiny), ‘declare useless’, to regard as unworthy/unfit and therefore to be rejected”; *Apodokimazo* (reject) in Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2000), 110.

4. J. Ramsey Michaels, 1 Peter, vol. 49 in *Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco: Word Books, 1988), 99.

5. Thomas R. Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter, Jude, vol. 37 in *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, B&H, 2003), 105.

6. “Pontifex” in *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2005), 964.]

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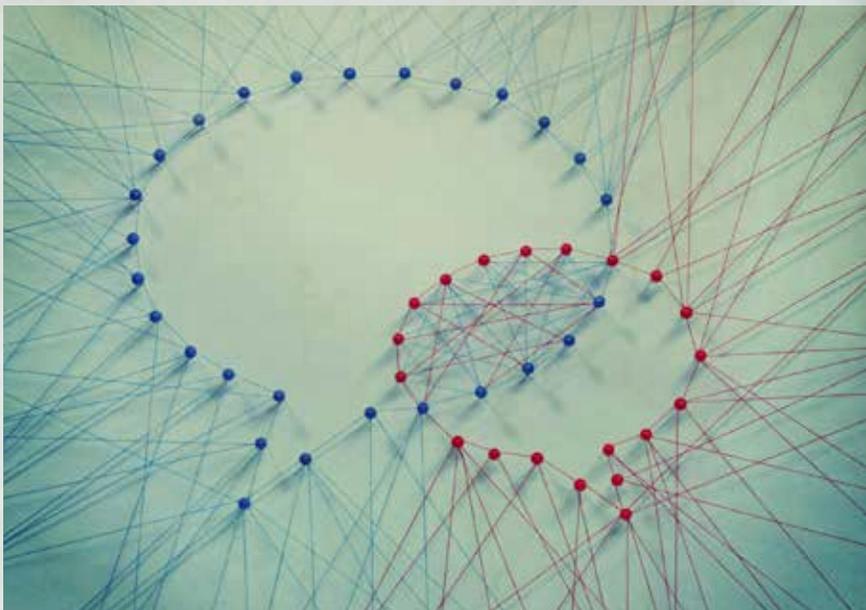
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Endnotes

1 <https://www.samaritanspurse.org/what-we-do/operation-christmas-child/>

2 R. Kent Hughes, *Mark: Jesus, Servant and Savior* (Crossway, 2015).

3 Laura Moss, "The 13 largest oil spills in history," *Mother Nature Network* [online] 16 July 2010 [cited 10 April 2017]. Available from the Internet at: <http://www.mnn.com/earth-matters/wilderness-resources/stories/the-13-largest-oil-spills-in-history>

Coming in Spring

God Is . . .

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

Stand Up: How to Fight Injustice

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

