

# What Does It Mean To Be A Christian?

A Christian Is The Light Of The World



Discovering God's Word

Bible Study Series

# A Christian Is The Light Of The World

Learn what it means for the Christian to be the light of the world and how you can let your light shine

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## Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

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**My plea:** It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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## What Does It Mean To Be A Christian?

# A Christian Is The Light Of The World

What does it mean to be a Christian? Being a Christian means a great deal. Fortunately, God has given us all the information we need to know about what being a Christian really means. As we study His saving message, we discover that a Christian is the light of the world.

## *Jesus Was The Light Of This World*

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John opened his gospel record by pointing us to the example of the greatest Light that has ever shone in this world – Jesus Christ! “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world” (John 1:1-9). Later in John’s gospel, Jesus is recorded as saying, “I

am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (John 8:12). Now, as we begin thinking about how Christians are expected to be lights of the world, we would do well to first examine that Light Christians will be trying to reflect – Jesus Christ.

## **Jesus’ life was a bold contrast to the world**

When Jesus Christ came to this earth, His life was so different from the world that the greatest way this can be illustrated is the contrast between light and darkness. For instance, when a room is completely filled with darkness, there is no mistaking the presence of a light that begins to shine. It is clear and distinct – and everyone can notice that it is different from all the rest.

This is exactly how Jesus’ earthly life is described by John. Look back at John 1:1-9. You must understand that Jesus was God when He came to this earth (and He continues to be God today). As God manifested in the flesh (John 1:14; 1 Timothy 3:16), Jesus Christ showed us what God’s perfect holiness looks like in human form.

The Scriptures are clear that God is perfectly holy (separated from everything that is evil). Revelation 4:8 pictures four magnificent living beings proclaiming God as “Holy, holy, holy....” And, particularly notice the language of 1 John 1:5. “This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.” Therefore, because there is no element of sin/darkness that exists in God, verse 6 continues and demonstrates that God cannot be in fellowship with any works of darkness!

As a result of Jesus being completely holy, He could not be involved in any of the ways of darkness. He truly showed a different way of living to the world. 1 John 2:16 identifies that the ways of this world are the ways focused on lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. These ways, John says, are “not of the Father” but are “of the world.” Therefore, Jesus’ life was not about these earthly desires. His life was truly one in which He demonstrated what it means to serve God, exercise self-discipline, glorify His Heavenly Father, and love mankind.

Unfortunately, most did not appreciate or gravitate toward this Light. John 3:19-21 explains. “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”

Darkness hates the light. Light exposes what is going on under the cover of darkness. It exposes darkness for what it really is. In the same way, when Jesus lived on this earth, He exposed the sinful ways of mankind as being sinful. This infuriated those who loved to practice their sin. They did not want to be identified as being involved in wickedness. However, the few who truly had a desire to serve God and be eternally saved, recognized their need to come to Jesus so that their wickedness could be exposed and changed.

### **Jesus was the perfect example of righteous living**

Jesus demonstrated God’s holiness to us in two ways. First, Jesus provided the perfect example of righteous living. There was not a single time during Jesus’ earthly life when He chose to fulfill His own fleshly desires rather than accomplish the will of His Father.

Listen to Hebrews 4:15. “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” On various occasions, Jesus was tempted to live according to His own fleshly desires rather than please His Father. In fact, He was tempted to fulfill His own fleshly desires in the same ways all other people who were living on earth were tempted – and in the same ways we are tempted. Yet, though everyone else has decided to violate God’s law (sin) in order to fulfill their own fleshly desires (Romans 3:23), Jesus did not!

For instance, Jesus was tempted three times in Matthew 4:1-11. Satan tempted Jesus to use His Divine nature in order to satisfy His own physical hunger by turning stones into bread and demonstrate

that He truly was the Son of God. Yet, Jesus refused. Satan took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple and told Him to throw Himself down so that God would save Him and demonstrate that He truly was the Son of God. Yet, Jesus refused. And, Satan offered to give Jesus all of the kingdoms of the world without having to suffer in order to establish His kingdom, if He would bow down and worship Satan. Yet, Jesus refused. Though this is just an overview of Jesus’ temptations, you can see how Satan appealed to Jesus’ physical desires. Yet, Jesus consistently and perfectly resisted the temptations. And, He would continue to make the same decision to serve and glorify the Father throughout His earthly life.

This consistent dedication to serving and glorifying the Father is seen through Jesus’ earthly life. Jesus demonstrated what it means to forgive. What it means to show compassion. What it means to love. What it means to exercise self-control. What it means to serve. What it means to be patient when experiencing trials, temptations, and persecutions. What it means to give. Every decision Jesus made and every example He has left is a perfect manifestation of God’s holiness!

### **Jesus’ teachings perfectly pointed people to righteousness**

Jesus did provide a perfect example of righteous living throughout the duration of His earthly life. But, this was not the only way Jesus demonstrated God’s holiness to us. He also was engaged in teaching that perfectly pointing people to God’s standard of righteousness.

There are many examples of Jesus’ teachings that accomplished this purpose. But, there may be none more well-known than Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount” in Matthew 5-7. In this one sermon, Jesus revealed a great contrast in the thinking of this world and the holy ways of God.

For instance, consider the section commonly known as the “Beatitudes” (Matthew 5:3-12). Jesus said that people would only truly be “blessed” (happy) when they are poor in spirit, when they mourn, when they are meek, when they hunger and thirst for righteousness, when they are merciful, when they are pure in heart, when they are

peacemakers, and when they are persecuted for righteousness' sake. To a mind that is only focused on worldly things, this does not make any sense. However, Jesus demonstrates that these are true characteristics of those who would receive spiritual blessings from God!

He continued to challenge the conventional "wisdom" of this world throughout His "sermon." He demonstrated that failing to treat another person in the appropriate way is just as bad to God as murder. He demonstrated that lusting after another is just as serious a sin as actually committing adultery. He identified that God only approves of divorce for one cause (fornication). He demonstrated that God's people must not be vengeful and that they must be willing to love and serve (even those who act in evil ways toward us). He condemned the practices of doing good deeds for others, praying, and fasting in order to be seen of men. He told people to focus on Heavenly treasures (which are eternal) rather than on earthly treasures (which are temporary). He warned people that it is impossible to serve two masters, indicating that those who truly desire to please God must put God completely first in their lives. He condemned the practice of hypocritical judging. He warned people about false religious teachers who would lead them away from the ways of God. He warned that pleasing God is about more than merely professing to follow Him. He demonstrated that God will only be pleased with those who are doers of His word.

Although this does not cover every point of Jesus' teaching, you can see how Jesus' teaching consistently challenges us to move away from the conventional "wisdom" and ways of this world in order to live in a way that is pleasing to God. Throughout the Scriptures, you will find examples of Jesus' teachings and can observe how Jesus *always* was a stark contrast to the ways of this world and never failed to point people to the Father.

## **Jesus called His disciples to be the "light of the world"**

Another part of Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount" challenges all those who desire to follow Jesus Christ to see themselves as the salt of this earth and the lights of the world. First, Jesus said, "You are

the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men" (Matthew 5:13). Salt had a variety of different purposes – and it is somewhat difficult to know if Jesus had only one in His mind or if He was speaking of the overall benefit of salt. For instance, some may have considered salt's quality of preservation – and understood Jesus to have been identifying His followers as having the ability to help preserve people in this world from the corruption of sin by pointing them to the salvation in Jesus Christ. Or, some could have considered salt's seasoning effect on food – and understood Jesus to have been identifying His people as seasoning the world with righteousness. Or, perhaps they would have considered a different benefit of salt.

Still, Jesus' overall point is made clear in the second part of the verse. What if His people stop having a positive effect on the world? What good would it be for someone to claim to be Jesus' follower, but not have this kind of positive influence to promote God's righteousness? There would be two negative results: Those who had claimed to be Jesus' followers would be cast away and the world would be lacking this positive influence for righteousness.

Then, Jesus provides another analogy in verses 14-16. "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

As the Light that came into the world (as demonstrated from John 1), Jesus expects His followers to continue providing that stark contrast between the sinful ways of the world and the righteous ways of God. Having ascended into Heaven, Jesus no longer is the example the world sees living around them. Instead, Jesus left this responsibility with His followers (see Mark 16:15). His followers were expected to reflect Christ's light throughout this world – in every place they would go! They were to reflect His example of righteous living. And, they were to teach His message.

Therefore, even though Jesus would not be on this earth forever, His Light would continue to shine through His people. His people would be like a city that is set up on a hill for all to see. They would be like a light put on a lampstand in order to provide the house with light. There would be no mistaking that His people would be different from the world and that they would always be actively promoting the ways of God's righteousness throughout this world. And, whenever the world would see the good works of Christ's disciples, some would choose also to devote their lives to glorifying the Father in Heaven!

## ***What It Means To Be The Light Of The World***

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Jesus Christ was the greatest Light to ever shine in this world that is full of darkness. As His disciples, Christians must be dedicated to learning Jesus' light-filled ways and following His holy example. Then, as we have seen, His disciples must also be dedicated to reflecting Jesus' light for all who are in the world to see today. But, what does it mean for you (as one of Jesus' disciples) to be the light of the world?

### **You are holy**

We have already seen that God is entirely holy (separated from everything that is evil). Now, as one of Jesus' disciples responsible for shining as a light in this world, you must also be holy. Listen to 1 Peter 1:13-16. "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'"

At one time you lived to fulfill your own physical desires. You have sinned and fallen short of glorying God (Romans 3:23). But, now (as a Christian) you are not to live according to those same sinful ways. You must be dedicated to living

according to the standard of holiness that is seen in God and Jesus Christ. God says, "Be holy, for I am holy"! As a Christian, God calls you a "saint" (see Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1). A "saint" is any person who has been set apart from the sins he/she has committed and is dedicated to living for the ways of God (a most holy person). But, this is not limited to just a few of Jesus' disciples. This is the responsibility of every single person who follows Jesus Christ – as He expects everyone who follows Him to be entirely dedicated to Him (see Matthew 6:24).

In fact, notice the extent to which God expects you to imitate His holiness. Jesus' followers are not permitted to pick and choose areas in which they desire to be holy. Instead, God has instructed you to "be holy in all your conduct." In every aspect of your life, you must be holy according to God's standard of holiness. This includes the thoughts you think, the words you speak, and the deeds you do. Therefore, as the light of this world, God does not permit any aspect of your life to consist of darkness (sin). In fact, Paul wrote that those who are Christians must "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." Rather, they are to expose them (Ephesians 5:11).

Understand. "No fellowship" means no participation in a thing. It does not give any "wiggle room" to negotiate any involvement in sinful things. God wants His people to be entirely separated from everything that is sinful – just as He is separated from everything that is sinful. In fact, recall that 1 John 1:5-6 demonstrated that if you choose to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, you cannot have any fellowship with God (who is entirely light). Therefore, you must choose who/what you most desire to have fellowship with.

### **You stand out from the world**

Just as Jesus stood out from the ways of this world, His people (who are entirely committed to His ways of holiness) will also stand out from this world. They will be as easily identified as being different from the world as an illuminated city on top of a hill is identified as being different from all the darkness that is around it! Consider two passages that will help to see this point more clearly.

First, consider Romans 12:1-2. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

Paul pleaded with those who were Christians by the mercy God had demonstrated for them to give their lives entirely to God. They were to view their earthly lives as being living sacrifices to God that were holy and acceptable to God. Not one element of their physical lives was to be reserved for their own selfish purposes. Everything was to be used in the service of God.

Then, their lives (being entirely given to God) were not permitted to take the same shape as the world. Paul told them not to be “conformed to this world.” They were not to think the same way the world thinks, speak the same way the world speaks, or act the same way the world acts. Rather than living according to the standards and ways of the world, God’s people are expected to be “transformed.” They are to live in an entirely different way. This transformation, according to Paul, involves a renewal of the mind that is focused on following the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God!

Second, consider 1 Peter 4:3-4. “For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.”

Those who are Jesus’ disciples are expected to have been transformed in the way that was depicted in Romans 12. Therefore, the Christian has determined that he/she has spent enough of his/her lifetime living according to the sinful ways of the world. Though he/she has lived for things like lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries, he/she has changed. There has been a transformation. There has been a dedication of his/her life entirely to the holy

ways of God and a dedication to leave the sinful ways of the world behind.

In light of this great transformation, notice how other people will view you (if you have truly become a follower of Jesus Christ). Those who see this difference will “think it strange” that you are no longer practicing the same things you used to be involved with. Most will not understand the transformation. Most will speak evil of your new life that is committed to the ways of holiness. But, you should observe the basic fact that those who see your new life in Jesus Christ will recognize that you are different and will see that you stand out from the ways of this world!

### **You expose others as being in darkness**

Whenever Jesus lived on this earth, not only could people see that He was living a different kind of life than all the others around Him were living, but Jesus’ holy life exposed the wickedness. Once again, John 3:19-20 demonstrated that those who loved darkness hated the light because the light would expose their wickedness. Jesus’ life certainly did expose the wickedness of the world through His perfect example and through His teaching (as we discussed previously in this study). Now, as the light of the world, you will also be exposing the wickedness of this world through your example and through your teaching.

First, you expose others as being in darkness through your holy example. Whenever you dedicate yourself to exercising the proper degrees of self-control, patience, love, service, humility, meekness, compassion, etc., you are following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. And, in living according to His holy standard for your life on this earth, you will be exposing those who are not living by that same standard. They will be able to see that they are not dedicated to living according to the same ways you are. And, others will be able to see that they are not living according to the same standard of righteousness.

Second, you expose others as being in darkness when you teach Jesus’ law. Jesus expects you to be teaching His holy ways to others – not *just* setting a good example of righteous living. Jesus is

not living on this earth to physically speak to people who are living in sin. So, He expects you to take His message of righteousness to them (see Mark 16:15). In doing so, you will be identifying as sin the same things Jesus identified as sin. And, you will be teaching people to live in the same way Jesus taught people to live. This, too, will expose the ways of darkness as being contrary to the will of God – and will point people to the right ways of God’s holiness.

Consequently, as you shine as a light that is exposing the darkness in the world, many people who are involved in darkness will hate and persecute you. After all, “everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed” (John 3:20). Later, Jesus said, “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (John 15:18-19). Just as the world of darkness hated and mistreated Jesus (eventually putting Him to death), the world will hate and mistreat those who expose their ways of darkness today. Yet, just as Jesus faithfully endured, you also must endure and continue to let your light shine – recognizing that there is great reward for those who are persecuted by this world (see Matthew 5:10-12).

### **You serve as a beacon of light for those living in darkness**

Think about what it is like to wander around in physical darkness. You can’t see where you’re at. You can’t see where you’re going. You can’t see dangers approaching. You can’t see to help other people who are wandering about in the darkness. This adequately describes the spiritual condition of those living according to the ways of the world. They are spiritually lost. They cannot see the great dangers that are rapidly approaching them that they will experience after their earthly lives are over. They cannot see the way out of the darkness. And, they cannot help others who are wandering around in the darkness of sin.

On the other hand, think about what a light accomplishes. When a lamp is lit and placed on a lampstand, there will be one of two possible reactions. First, some will hate the light because they

have no interest in seeing what the light wishes to expose and will try diligently to resist the light. Second, others will have their eyes opened and use the light to make the necessary corrections and guide their future steps.

These same points are true concerning those who are Christians. Christians shine the light of God’s truth and holiness for those who are in darkness to see. It, as we discussed, exposes the darkness and presents individuals with a choice. Either they can choose to fight against God’s light and remain in their sins – or they can choose to allow God’s light to work in their lives so as to use their lives to illuminate the ways of darkness!

Like Jesus, you must choose to show compassion on those who are lost and wandering. Listen to how Jesus viewed the lost in Matthew 9:36. “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion from them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.” Recognize that there are many who are lost and wandering around you. Then, determine that you will do everything within your ability to let your light shine to serve as a beacon of hope to rescue those who are in darkness!

## ***Let Your Light So Shine***

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Now that you are seeing the responsibility you have in serving God as the light of the world, I want you to consider some practical applications of this truth. Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Being a light for Jesus Christ is not about saying you are a light. It is about actually shining the light of God’s holiness in this world that is full of darkness.

### **Through your speech**

You must let your light so shine through your speech. There are standards God has clearly revealed for His people regarding their speech. For instance, Ephesians 4-5 reveals a number of points regarding this standard. You must not lie (4:25). No “corrupt word” is to proceed from your mouth (4:29). All



“evil speaking” is to be put away from your life (4:32). Filthiness, foolish talking, and coarse jesting are all “not fitting” for you (5:3-4). Instead, you must “speak truth” (4:25), speak that which is “good for necessary edification” (4:29), be kind (4:32), and give thanks (5:4). Of course, this is only a sample of what God’s word teaches regarding your speech. As you live among many people who use their words contrary to the purposes of God, you must be dedicated to glorifying God through your speech.

### **Through your worship**

You must let your light so shine through your worship. First, God wants you to let your light shine by being devoted to worshipping Him. He is “seeking” worshipers (John 4:23). But, He is not just seeking for any type of worshipers. God is seeking for “true worshipers” who “will worship the Father in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24). So, as you live among so many worshipers who fail to worship God in spirit and truth, you must dedicate yourself to shine as a light in demonstrating what true worship really is and encourage others to also follow the Bible’s prescription for “true” worship.

### **Through your teaching**

You must let your light so shine through your teaching. As we have already observed in this lesson, God expects those who follow Him to be dedicated to teaching His ways of righteousness (see Mark 16:15). You must demonstrate your true love for the Lord and for your fellow man by being actively involved in helping those who are in darkness to learn about the opportunity of salvation through Jesus Christ. While you live in a world that is full of people who are unconcerned about the well-being of their fellow man (especially their spiritual well-being), you must be a lost-soul-seeker.

### **Through your service**

You must let your light so shine through your service. First and foremost, you must let your light so shine through your service to God. In fact, as we saw from Romans 12:1, your “reasonable service” is to present your entire life to God as a living sacrifice that is holy and acceptable to Him. Then, one of the ways this commitment to serving God will manifest

itself is that you will be devoted to serving others according to your opportunity (imitating Jesus’ example in John 13:1-17). In fact, Galatians 6:10 instructs you to “do good to all” according to your opportunity – especially toward those who are fellow Christians. Although much of this world is living with a focus on pleasing themselves, you must demonstrate an example of sacrificial service – to God and to your fellow man.

### **Through your character**

You must let your light so shine through your character. God’s word of truth prescribes certain characteristics for those who desire to please Him. For instance, Colossians 3:12-17 identifies the characteristics of mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, bearing with others, forgiving others, love, and thankfulness as being part of living the Christian life. Certainly the world (generally) does not possess these characteristics (at least not all of them). Yet, since Jesus Christ possessed all of these characteristics, God’s people also must possess them – and demonstrate them in their daily lives and interactions with others.

### **Through your habits**

You must let your light so shine through your habits. Every person in this world has habits. Some of these habits are pleasing to God and can help you to serve Him. However, there are many habits that are contrary to His will and can result in your committing sin. 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22 instructs you to put everything to the test (using God’s standard of truth), hold fast to what is good, and abstain from everything that is evil. This would certainly apply to your habits. The world around you is full of habits that are displeasing to God – i.e. consuming alcohol, using tobacco products, using drugs, viewing pornography, gluttony, laziness, procrastination, etc. In the midst of all this darkness, you must use your habits to help you glorify God and make sure that the only habits others see in you will point them to Jesus’ holiness.

### **Through your clothing**

You must let your light so shine through your clothing. In fact, the way you clothe yourself will be

one of the first things people will notice about you on a daily basis. In fact, the way you clothe yourself may be the only thing a person learns from you on a given day. Given the Christian's responsibility to clothe himself/herself in a way that will profess godliness with good works (demonstrating modesty, bashfulness, and self-restraint, 1 Timothy 2:9-10), it is important for the Christian to evaluate the message his/her clothing is sharing with the world. The world routinely rejects God's standard for clothing by wearing bathing suits, shorts/skirts that reveal the thigh, tight/form-fitting clothing, clothing that is too low-cut, clothing with inappropriate messages or pictures, etc. Rather than conforming to these worldly standards, the Christian will desire to shine for Christ through his/her clothing.

### **Through your choices**

You must let your light so shine through your choices. The choices you make reveal your priorities. And, other people notice! For instance, the choices you make regarding your entertainment reveals whether you are entirely committed to holiness, purity, and serving God – or whether you are focused on pleasing yourself. The choices you make regarding how often you will assemble with the local church reveals whether you are entirely committed to serving God, keeping His commandments, and fulfilling your role as a member of the local church. Though these are only two examples, the world around you notices the kinds of choices you make. While the world makes choices all of the time that puts themselves first, the world should see the Christian making choices that demonstrate that God comes first in everything (Matthew 6:33).

### **Through your family**

You must let your light so shine through your family. God has given you certain responsibilities with regard to your earthly family. He has structured the home in the way that He has desired and in the way that will cause it to function at its maximum ability. For instance, you can read passages like Ephesians 5:22-6:4 to see some instructions for the relationships between husbands, wives, and children. Furthermore, as demonstrated in Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount," God has only approved of one cause for

divorce (Matthew 5:31-32). Though the world routinely rejects all aspects of God's plan for the family, Christians must be dedicated to fulfilling these responsibilities, thereby demonstrating the kind of family relationships God approves.

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## **Common "Baskets"**

In all areas (not just in the areas I have specifically addressed), you must be devoted to letting your light "so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Unfortunately, there are some who profess to be Jesus' disciples who will live a holy life in secret – but, then will dim their lights when they are around others. Jesus speaks of the foolishness of such in Matthew 5:15. "Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house." If you want to be pleasing to God, you must allow your light to shine at all times – whenever and wherever you have the opportunity to do so, consistently pointing people to Jesus. But, there are some common "baskets" that are used to conceal this light. Let's briefly consider four.

### **Shame**

Many try to hide their lights due to shame. Many people don't like to be different from the world. At least, they don't like to *appear* to be different from the world. They try to blend in to whatever environment they find themselves in. Perhaps they are even ashamed of the holy ways of Jesus Christ because they still inwardly desire to live for the ways of sin. Or, perhaps they are ashamed of taking the kinds of bold stands following Jesus requires.

Yet, regardless of the reasoning, God requires that His followers never be ashamed of Him or of His word. Jesus said, "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:26). Rather than being ashamed of Jesus, God's people must have full confidence in Jesus – knowing that

Jesus Christ loved us enough to give His life for our sins so that we could be eternally saved in Heaven! Like the apostle Paul, you must also declare, “So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Romans 1:15-16). Jesus Christ was willing to die for you, don’t hide your light by being ashamed of Him!

## **Fear**

Many try to hide their lights due to fear. We have already seen that the world will hate those who live according to the holy ways of God rather than the sinful works of darkness (John 15:18-19). Therefore, those who are Christians should expect to be mocked, spoken evil of, and perhaps even physically mistreated. So, rather than choosing to let their lights shine and endure whatever persecution comes, some choose to conceal their lights with the “basket” of fear.

Yet, regardless of what consequences there are for shining the light of God’s holiness in this world, the Christian must be determined never to cower in fear! Listen to the statement Jesus made to His twelve apostles as they prepared to teach God’s message to others and experience persecutions. He said, “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). Ultimately, there is nothing that man can do to us that is worth the eternal consequence of denying Jesus Christ! Don’t allow your light to dim because of fear.

## **Peace**

Many try to hide their lights in order to “keep the peace.” Now, it is certainly true that Christians ought to be “peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9), doing everything within their abilities to live peaceably with others (Romans 12:16). That is, everything short of compromising God’s truth. Unfortunately, there are many who do not let their lights so shine before men (whether in word or example) so that they will not offend anyone else by God’s truth or make anyone else feel bad for living in sin.

Yet, the Scriptures present many examples in which Jesus Christ and His faithful followers were dedicated to standing for what was right even when it meant offending other people. For instance, Jesus taught that the gospel will divide families (implying that not everyone within a family will accept the gospel), in Matthew 10:34-39. Jesus demonstrated His willingness to offend others in order to speak the truth that they needed to hear, in Matthew 15:1-14. And, many of the first century Christians were known by enemies of the gospel as those “who have turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6). Though God wants His people to be peacemakers, He never permits you to hide your light in order to “keep the peace.”

## **Indifference**

Many hide their lights because of indifference. Perhaps they were once zealous for the truth of the gospel of Christ. But, as time has passed, they have developed an attitude of careless indifference toward living for God’s ways of holiness. “If other people want to live for God, great! But, if not, that’s OK.” And, some have become enticed by the ways of sin so as to again fall into Satan’s trap themselves.

Yet, God condemns indifference in those who claim to follow Him. Jesus plainly stated that it is “all or nothing” in discipleship. In Matthew 12:30, He said, “He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.” In Revelation 3:15-16, Jesus identified some who claimed to be Christians who were “neither cold nor hot.” Jesus said He would “vomit” them out of His mouth and called for them to be zealous and repent (verse 19). Given everything God has done for you, God calls you to be on fire for Him (see Titus 2:11-14). He will not accept anything less than a complete dedication to serve Him!

## **Conclusion**

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As a Christian, God expects your life to be used to shine His word of truth and His ways of righteousness throughout this world. You must never

be willing to dim your light for anything or anyone. He wants your light to so shine before men in order that they will see your good works (as you reflect the life and teachings of Jesus) and choose to also glorify your Father in Heaven. But, how will those around you who are mired in darkness be able to know the righteous and holy ways of Jesus and escape the deadly perils of sin if you are not consistently shining as a light in the world?

## ***Study Questions***

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### **1. Jesus Was The Light Of This World**

How was Jesus' life a bold contrast to the world?

How was Jesus a perfect example of righteous living?

How did Jesus' teachings perfectly point people to righteousness?

What did Jesus call His disciples to be, according to Matthew 5:13-16?

### **2. What It Means To Be The Light Of The World**

How will your holiness impact your life as the light of the world?

How will you stand out from the world?

How will you expose others as being in darkness?

How will you serve as a beacon of light for those living in darkness?

### **3. Let Your Light So Shine**

How should your light shine through your speech?

How should your light shine through your worship?

How should your light shine through your teaching?

How should your light shine through your service?

How should your light shine through your character?

How should your light shine through your habits?

How should your light shine through your clothing?

How should your light shine through your choices?

How should your light shine through your family?

#### **4. Common “Baskets”**

How will shame influence people to hide their lights?  
How can you overcome this?

How will fear influence people to hide their lights?  
How can you overcome this?

How will peace influence people to hide their lights?  
How can you overcome this?

How will indifference influence people to hide their lights?  
How can you overcome this?