

Light



Darkness & Light

□ “Darkness” and “light” are universal symbols in human experience and thought.

	Darkness	Light
<i>Emotional Realm</i>	Sadness, Shame, Gloom	Joy, Acceptance, Hope
<i>Moral/Ethical Realm</i>	Evil, Impurity, Badness	Righteousness, Purity, Goodness
<i>Intellectual/Experiential Realm</i>	Ignorance, Error	Revelation, Knowledge, Truth

1. As you consider the world today, how much “darkness” do you see? What specific kinds of “darkness” are evident? (How much darkness is in *your* life?)

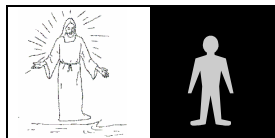
Spiritual Darkness

- The darkness that we all experience in this world is connected with “spiritual darkness.” In general, spiritual darkness involves: 1) alienation from the person of God;¹ 2) ignorance, neglect, or denial of the truth of God; and/or 3) opposition to the authority and will of God.
- Many people do not recognize spiritual darkness. Like the totally blind person does not see physical light, the “spiritually blind” person may not recognize the spiritual light that exposes the darkness. A person’s “spiritual eyes” must be opened to truly discern spiritual darkness.²

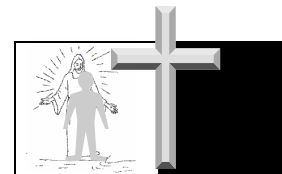
The Light of the World

- 📖 *Jesus said, “I have come into this world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness” (John 12:46, NIV).*³
- 📖 *Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12, NIV).*

Outside Christ



Position “in Christ”



2. In what ways can we benefit from “the light of the world”?⁴ In what ways can the Christian experience the light, even in times of tragedy? Explain.

¹ Spiritual darkness is a condition of this fallen world. Humankind’s rejection of God and His authority has resulted in alienation from God (that is, broken relationship with the Creator, who is the Source of light).

² Spiritual forces actively oppose spiritual sight. “The god of this age (Satan) has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

³ Those who receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are rescued from the dominion of darkness (& sin/death) and brought into the kingdom of light (& life) (Colossians 1:12-13). This is possible because Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead, thus defeating the forces of spiritual darkness. Once in darkness, Christians are now “light in the Lord” (Ephesians 5:8). However, in this present age, we still live in this dark world, and we still struggle with our old darkened nature. Thus we look forward to the age to come, when the kingdom of light is consummated.

⁴ See Jesus’ words, footnote and darkness/light table. In the table, the things in the “light” column go together. True and lasting joy, acceptance, hope, righteousness, purity, and goodness are found only in God’s revelation and truth.

Salt & Light - Christian Responsibility

- ❑ Read Matthew 5:13-16. Salt is used for both flavor and preservation. Salt is rubbed into meat to slow its decay. Like meat, this world is subject to decay (*Romans 1:18-31*). It tends to get worse, not better, unless there is restraint. The world needs “salt” – the wisdom of God in a foolish world to slow the decay in truth and morality.
- ❑ Light dispels darkness and allows sight. This world is a place of darkness (*1 Peter 2:9*). Light symbolizes God’s revelation, truth, and purity. Jesus is God’s ultimate revelation. He reveals the way of salvation, and the way of life. As his representatives, his disciples are also “light.”

3. What may hinder (prevent or slow) the positive influence of salt and light, according to verses 13-15? In what ways can Christians lose their saltiness?⁵

4. In what ways do Christians conceal their light? In what ways do Christians let their light shine?



5. In general, how should Christians be different (distinct) in this world? *Why* should Christians be different?⁶

6. In what specific ways can Christians be “salt” and “light” in our world today? Think of recent events and ongoing needs.

7. Does being “salt” and “light” apply to our academic pursuits, careers and ambitions? If so, how? Be specific.

Reflection/Application

- As John wrote, the True Light (Jesus) came into the world, but the world did not recognize him (*John 1:9-10*). Have you recognized him? Have you responded to the Light? If not, why? Continue to consider Jesus and his claim to be the light of the world. Ask and seek.
- As a Christian, are you “salty?” Are you clearly different from your non-Christian friends? How would people know that you are Christian by observing your life?⁷
- As a Christian, in what specific ways are you making the world a better place? Is your light shining? (Or is it concealed?) What difference do you make in the lives of the people you know, especially in relation to their spiritual needs?

⁵ Strictly speaking, salt cannot lose its saltiness (sodium chloride is stable). However, in ancient Israel, the salt-containing substance (called “salt”) contained many impurities. Since the salt was more soluble, it could leach out, leaving a white powdery substance, which lacked saltiness, and thus became useless as salt. We lose our saltiness by becoming more impure; by conforming more to the world than to Christ; by losing our distinctiveness.

⁶ This question is not limited to motivation, though that is important. According to the Bible, the Christian is a “new creature” indwelt (and empowered) by the Holy Spirit. This should result in noticeable change!

⁷ Of course, people would expect to see you “go to church,” attend some Bible studies and other Christian activities, read you Bible, and pray at times. But do they see a difference in your values, desires, beliefs about what is right and wrong, behavior, activities, and how you treat other people? Is your character and behavior obviously different?