

## **Week Two: Who Is Jesus and What Does He Offer?**

### **Participant Sheet**

#### **Session 2: Week of February 12, 2023**

#### **I Am the Light of the World**

***John 1:1-14; 8:12-20; 9:1-7***

**Brewster Baptist Church, Brewster MA**

#### **Connecting**

Turn to the pages titled “**Quotes About Light**” and read them silently. Then as have each person say her or his name and then read aloud a quote about light you like or that reflects where you are at the moment or expresses what you believe.

#### **Bible Study**

Key Verse, “Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “**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 (NRSV)*

**Biblical Background** – Take turns reading this aloud:

Connections between light and God’s power and presence are found throughout the Hebrew Bible from the beginning. Here are just a few:

***Genesis 1:3 “Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.”***

***Psalms 27:1 “The Lord is my light and my salvation...”***

***Psalms 36:9 “With you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.”***

Jesus’ statement about being the light of the world is made in the temple in Jerusalem during the festival or Feast of Booths (*John 7:2*) which was a weeklong celebration commemorating the forty years Israel wandered in the desert during the time of Moses. The Hebrew word for “booths” is Succoth. After the Israelites left the land of Egypt, they camped at a place that bore that name. It was there

that God began to accompany them by day in a pillar of cloud and by night in a pillar of fire “to give them light” (*Exodus 12:37; 13:20-22*).<sup>1</sup>

Each evening in the temple during the Feast of Booths, worshipers crowded into the women’s court where four enormous lamp stands were built, each with four large bowls of oil with wicks. Throughout the night, young men from priestly families climbed up ladders to refill the lamps so that the light shone unceasingly. Its rays reflected off the temple’s white stone walls and the bronze gate at the end of the courtyard, where the Levites played their harps, lyres, cymbals and trumpets as men, noted for their piety and good works, sang and danced to the Songs of Ascents (*Psalms 120-134*) with as many as eight flaming torches in their hands. These Psalms help to capture the moods of the festival and note the connections to light, darkness, and night:

*“Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord hear my voice...my soul waits for the Lord **more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning.**”* (*Psalms 130:1, 6*).

*“The Lord swore to David a sure oath...I have prepared **a lamp** for my anointed one”* (*Psalms 132:11, 17*).

*“Come bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, who stand **by night** in the house of the Lord! Lift up your hands to the holy place, and bless the Lord”* (*Psalms 134:1-2*).

The radiance emanating from the temple illumined courtyards throughout the city of Jerusalem until the first shafts of daylight appeared over the Mount of Olives. It is in this setting that John presents Jesus saying, “*I am the light of the world,*” not just the light of Israel. John says Jesus is “*the light,*” not one light among many and that those who reject Jesus remain in darkness. This may make

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<sup>1</sup> For those of you asking for even more homework, you can check out more about this in *Exodus 14:19-20*, *Psalms 78:14 & 105:39*. The pillar of fire is mentioned in the celebration of the Feast of Booths in *Nehemiah 9:12, 19*. See also *Zechariah 14:7-16* about light & the Feast of Booths.

some people uncomfortable, but that is John's perspective. We might say, they have not yet "seen the light."

**Questions for Discussion or Reflection:**

1. What feelings do you associate with darkness? Do you like it or dread it or are you somewhere in between?
2. Do you have any vivid memories of experiencing a truly dark place, for example, during a blackout, while camping or in a tunnel or a cave? Have you ever lived in a place without electricity? If so, what was it like at night?
3. What is appealing to you about Jesus' statement, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."
4. The Fourth Gospel conceives of sin more in terms of a person's response to Jesus rather than simply morality or behavior. How is this understanding displayed in *John 9* and the story of the man born blind? Read *John 9:1-38* and see what happens with him and how his understanding of Jesus grows clearer.
5. Has your ability to perceive who Jesus is grown over time as it did for the man born blind? How has your understanding of Jesus changed?
6. How is following Jesus in your daily life helpful, like following someone with a light through a dark place?
7. How can you share light with others who are in darkness (it may be the darkness of unbelief, or of a crisis or difficulty of some kind)? How can you "let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (*Matthew 5:16*)

**A Closing Prayer to Read in Unison**

**The cross, we will take it.**

**The bread, we will break it.**

**The pain, we will bear it.**

**The joy, we will share it.**

**The Gospel, we will live it.**

**The love, we will give it.**

**The light, we will cherish it.**

**The darkness, God shall perish it.**

**- The Iona Community**

## Quotes about Light

**In faith there is enough light for those who want to believe and enough shadows to blind those who don't. ~Blaise Pascal**

**For light I go directly to the Source of light, not to any of the reflections. ~Peace Pilgrim**

**There is a muscular energy in sunlight corresponding to the spiritual energy of wind. ~Annie Dillard**

**The black moment is the moment when the real message of transformation is going to come. At the darkest moment comes the light. ~Joseph Campbell**

**People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in their true beauty is revealed only if there is light from within. ~Elisabeth Kübler-Ross**

**He that has light within his own clear breast  
May sit i' the centre, and enjoy bright day:  
But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts  
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun;  
Himself his own dungeon.  
~John Milton**

**His high endeavors are an inward light  
That makes the path before him always bright.  
~William Wordsworth**

**The windows of my soul I throw  
Wide open to the sun.  
~John Greenleaf Whittier**

**Light gives of itself freely, filling all available space. It does not seek anything in return; it asks not whether you are friend or foe. It gives of itself and is not thereby diminished. ~Michael Strassfeld**

**We cannot hold a torch to light another's path without brightening our own. ~Ben Sweetland**

**The hero is the one who kindles a great light in the world, who sets up blazing torches in the dark streets of life for men to see by. The saint is the man who walks through the dark paths of the world, himself a light. ~Felix Adler**

**Wherever you go, no matter what the weather, always bring your own sunshine. ~Anthony J. D'Angelo**

**Dare to reach out your hand into the darkness, to pull another hand into the light. ~Norman B. Rice**

**How is one to live a moral and compassionate existence when one finds darkness not only in one's culture but within oneself? There are simply no answers to some of the great pressing questions. You continue to live them out, making your life a worthy expression of leaning into the light. ~Barry Lopez, Arctic Dreams**

**Begin challenging your own assumptions. Your assumptions are your windows on the world. Scrub them off every once in a while, or the light won't come in. ~Alan Alda**

**An age is called "dark," not because the light fails to shine but because people refuse to see it. ~James Michener**

**The sun shines and warms and lights us and we have no curiosity to know why this is so; but we ask the reason of all evil, of pain, and hunger, and mosquitoes and silly people. ~Ralph Waldo Emerson**

**There they stand, the innumerable stars, shining in order like a living hymn, written in light. ~N.P. Willis**

**I will love the light for it shows me the way. Yet I will endure the darkness for it shows me the stars. Og Mandino**

**In the right light, at the right time, everything is extraordinary. ~Aaron Rose**