



World Christian Fellowship

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Light of the World

Matthew 5:13-16, *“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavour, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.*

¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Nor 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. ¹⁶Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

What should the church’s relationship with the world look like?

After teaching the Beatitudes, which are character traits of those who are truly part of God’s kingdom, Christ teaches about the relationship his followers will have with the world.

You are to be salt and light.

Is there a difference between the two metaphors?

- Salt is hidden,
- Light is obvious.

- Salt works secretly,
- Light works openly.

- Salt works from within,
- Light from without.

- Salt is more the indirect influence of the gospel,
- Light is more its direct communication.

- Salt works primarily through our living,
- Light works primarily through what we teach and preach.

- Salt is largely negative. It can retard corruption, but it cannot change corruption into incorrupt ion.
- Light is more positive. It not only reveals what is wrong and false but helps produce what is righteous and true.

The metaphor of light being used to describe the disciples would have seemed strange if not ludicrous to the original audience.

Light of the world it must have sounded strangely in the ears of the Scribes and Pharisees to hear that same title, in all

soberness, applied to a few fishermen, who had become disciples of Jesus.

Yet, this metaphor was not just applied to the disciples but to all believers. We are the light of the world.

Believers are light only because Christ is light.

John 8:12, *"I am the light of the world. The one who follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

Christ is the Light, therefore, we reflect the light he gives us.

We are like the moon—only a big ball of dust, not of much value by itself. But in the right place, at the right time, when the sunlight of Christ shines on us magical things happen.

The light of Christ reflects off believers, they light the world. But this light is something more than a reflection since Christ indwells us changing us into his image. We are no longer darkness but are actually lights ourselves.

Ephesians 5:8, *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.*

What ways are we light?

How can we shine brighter?

What does the metaphor of light represent biblically?

In Scripture the figurative use of light has two aspects:

- I. Intellectual.
 - II. Moral.
- Intellectually it represents truth.
 - Morally it represents holiness.

The figure of darkness has the same two aspects.

- Intellectually it represents ignorance and falsehood.
- Morally it connotes evil.

Psalms 119:105, *“Your word is a lamp to walk by, and a light to illumine my path.”*

Here light refers to intellectual truth as seen in God’s Word.

Romans 13:12-14, *The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. ¹³Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. ¹⁴But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts.*

Prophet Isaiah refers to both the intellectual and the moral.

Isaiah 5:20, *Those who call evil good and good evil are as good as dead, who turn darkness into light and light into darkness, who turn bitter into sweet and sweet into bitter.”*

Believers are light because they have been changed intellectually and morally. These changes are significant—making believers like a town on a hill, which illumines the sky for hundreds of miles. The light from believers cannot be hidden.

What ways are believers light and the world darkness?

1. The world is dark because they reject the true God.

Romans 1:21-23, *For although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or give him thanks, but they became futile in their thoughts and their senseless hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for an image resembling mortal human beings or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles.*

The world has a darkened mind. They profess to be wise when they are really fools. They deny the living God by worshipping false gods or themselves or denying God’s existence all together.

Psalm 14:1, *The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, They have done abominable works, There is none who does good.*

The world is dark because they do not know or acknowledge God. But believers are light because they know the Light—they know God.

John 17:3, *And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*

2. The world is dark because they reject revelation.

2 Corinthians 4:4, *whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*

The world is blinded to the light of the gospel.

1 Corinthians 1:18, *"For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."*

To the believer, the gospel is the power of God and the wisdom of God. Believers are light.

Not only are unbelievers blinded to the gospel but Scripture in general.

1 Corinthians 2:14, *But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

While the world rejects Scripture and cannot understand it, it is the believers' daily bread.

Job 23:12, *I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth More than my necessary food.*

Constant meditation.

Psalms 1:2, *But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night.*

God's revelation is the joy.

Psalms 119:24, *Your testimonies also are my delight And my counsellors.*

3. The world is dark because it practices lawlessness.

Romans 13:12-14, *The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us*

put on the armour of light. ¹³*Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.* ¹⁴*But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts.*

Believers are called to put aside the deeds of darkness and to clothe themselves with Christ.

1 John 3:10, *“By this the children of God and the children of the devil are revealed: Everyone who does not practice righteousness—the one who does not love his fellow Christian—is not of God.”*

Children of God are identified by obeying God, and unbelievers are identified by disobedience.

Essentially, to be in darkness is to be ignorant of God and his Word and to rebel against both. The world is darkness, but believers are light. They know the truth about creation, the gospel, and God, and they live in view of these realities. But the world rejects these things.

Ephesians 5:8, *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.*

We used to be darkness, but now, we are light and commanded to live in accordance with that reality.

what ways have you experienced deliverance from former darkness, and how are you still experiencing it?

The Function of Light

What are typical functions of light and how do these apply to believers in this world?

1. Believers as light expose darkness.

While Christ was on the earth, he exposed the false teaching of the Pharisees and scribes. He exposed the corruption taking place in the temple.

It should be the same with believers.

They shine light on dishonest practices, gossip, corruption amongst leaders, racism, etc.

This often angers people. They are the ethical lights within a friendship, a family, a business, an education system, or a government.

Are you willing to expose the darkness?

We expose darkness indirectly simply by living a moral life, but we also expose it directly by calling sin as it is.

We need to be ethical light when we are in the office, in the classroom, in the shop, and in the Church.

We must be willing to risk being called “negative,” “narrow,” “judgmental,” “puritanical,” or “bigoted.”

If God’s Spirit is calling us to stand up against wrong, it is up to us to be faithful.

2. Believers as light shine their light.

Ephesians 5:13, *But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.*

When light touches something, it becomes light. It is lit up; and, to some degree, the object gives off light itself. It is converted and changed.

In the same way, the light of a believer’s life often changes a work environment, as sin is exposed, and righteousness replaces it. It changes people’s lives, as they repent and give their lives to Christ.

Light by nature is more powerful than darkness. It transforms environments.

1 Peter 2:12, *having your conduct honourable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

Though persecuted and mocked by the world, believers, through their conduct, often change those around them, even if only slowly.

When Christ comes, many will glorify God for the chaste lives of a Christian co-worker, friend, or family member who led them to Christ.

Light makes other things light—it gives off itself.

We will consider several other functions of light which arise from how light gives off light. However, they are worth noting for emphasis.

3. Believers as light help others grow.

Plants can grow in a dark cave as long as light is present. In addition, research tells us that broken bones heal faster when they are soaking up sunlight.

This all should be true of Christians in a dark world. As they shine their lights, friends, family, and co-workers grow.

Are the people around you growing?

Getting to know God more, changing their language, attitudes, and actions?

4. Believers as light awakes the people.

When its springtime, people tend to wake up earlier because of the gradual increase of sunlight into their bedrooms.

It is also true that if you immediately turn on the lights while somebody is sleeping, it will often quickly wake the person up. In the same way, the ethical light of believers who are on fire for Christ will often awaken those who are spiritually lethargic or spiritually sleeping. They stir spiritual zeal in those who are spiritually lazy and help awaken those who are spiritually dead. As light, believers wake people out of slumber.

5. Believers warm those who are cold.

Light not only illuminates, but it also warms.

When people are cold from standing in a shadow, they move to a place with more sunlight to get warm.

When in a home that is cold, people go by the fireplace. Heat is emitted from light. Therefore, when believers are light, they warm people's hearts—provoking them to love God and others.

The impact of their warmth helps others repent of bitterness and anger and instead show acts of kindness. By loving, believers warm up homes, workplaces, and communities.

Often people run to them to find fellowship, comfort, and encouragement.

What are some other functions of light which believers represent in this world?

What makes exposing the darkness in a company, church, or relationship difficult? How can we do this wisely?

Growth as Light

Matthew 5:15-16, *“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Nor 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. ¹⁶Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*

How can we grow as light?

How can we be most effective?

1. Stay close Christ the Light.

Kent Hughes gave this illustration when considering how believers can shine even brighter:

A man returning from a journey brought his wife a matchbox that would glow in the dark. After he gave it to her, she turned

out the light, but it could not be seen. Both thought they had been cheated. Then the wife noticed some French words on the box and asked a friend to translate them. The inscription said: “If you want me to shine in the night, keep me in the light.” So it is with us!

We must expose ourselves to Jesus, delight in his Word, and spend time in prayer soaking up his rays.

2 Corinthians 3:18, *“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”*

As we walk with our Lord and Saviour, we are daily transformed into his image and glory. If we are going to grow as light, we must spend time with the Light!

2. Continually commune with other godly believers.

When you place many burning coals together, the light becomes more intense, hotter, and burns longer.

In fact, the “you” of “you are the light of the world” is plural referring not just to Christians individually but corporately.

We are more effective as lights together. We strengthen our individual light by being around other godly believers who are on fire.

We also increase our light by listening to messages and reading books by great lights in our community. As we do this, our light increases. Similarly, if we continually put ourselves around people who are not walking for Christ, our light and effectiveness will diminish.

Proverbs 13:20, *“He who associates with the wise grows wise but the companion of fools suffers harm.”*

3. Work against tendencies to hide our light.

Matthew 5:15 is partially repeated in the parallel text of **Mark 4:21**.

Mark 4:21, *Also He said to them, “Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand?”*

Many commentators believe the basket and the bed represent common reasons that people hide their lights. The basket Christ referred to was probably a bushel for collecting grain. This perhaps demonstrates how many hide their light because of work.

Many believers get so busy at work that they hide the light of Christ, or they hide it in fear of it hindering career progression. Our light is not to be hid under the bushel of work.

But secondly, Christians tend to hide their light simply because of laziness, as symbolized by a bed. They are too lazy to go to church, read their Bible, serve on missions, or share the gospel. No wise person puts a lamp under a basket or a bed, and neither should believers, as our light is more important than any lamp in a house.

4. Be in the most strategic positions.

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.*

Christ talked about putting a lamp on a stand. When placing a lamp in a house, people put it in the most advantageous position.

We must consider this when deciding what we will do for work, where we will live and go to church, etc.

How can we most effectively spread our light to others?

Also, we must remove anything that might dim our light or make it ineffective. There are certain environments that could hinder the effectiveness of our light either by not using it or threatening to blow it out by temptation.

Believers must live as light by putting their lights on stands for all to see.

5. Be balanced.

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.*

The text says that the candle gives light to all that are in the house. Some professors give light only to a part of the house.

Some women very good to all but their husbands, and these they nag from night to night, so that they give no light to them.

Some husbands so often out at meetings that they neglect home, and thus their wives miss the light.

Sadly, this is true for many Christians.

We give our best at work and neglect home or give our best at home but neglect being lights at work.

Some of us work hard at a hobby or something we really enjoy but are not very faithful at church, nobody at our church is blessed by our light.

If we are going to grow as lights, we must be balanced, displaying God's light wherever the Lord places us.

6. Do good deeds.

Matthew 5:16, *"let your light shine before people, so that they can see your good deeds and give honour to your Father in heaven."*

This is actually a command, not a suggestion.

The word "good" can also be translated "beautiful."

It focuses not only on the quality of the works but the attractiveness of them as well. Their beauty draws others to God.

Since light refers to truth and moral deeds, we must give ourselves to these works.

Like Christ, we must teach God's Word and share the gospel with others. We also must be given to mercy

ministries—caring for the poor, infirmed, and oppressed. We must give ourselves to beautiful works which draw people to God.

Are you letting your light shine by doing good works to the glory of God?

7. Do good deeds with right motive.

Matthew 5:16, *“let your light shine before people, so that they can see your good deeds and give honour to your Father in heaven.”*

We must notice the motive for shining our light.

It is not so that people can glorify us, but so that they can glorify God.

Most people are living to make a name for themselves instead of God (**Genesis 11**, the tower of Babel).

Without the right motive, our lights will grow dim and ineffective. People often can discern the reasons that we do certain works.

Are we doing good works for our benefit—to be seen and praised by others, to make money, to be promoted, etc.?

If so, our lights will become dim and turn people away from God.

Sadly, this is very common among the religious.

Christ warns about these dark motives throughout the Sermon on the Mount. He challenges his disciples and those listening to not be like the Pharisees and scribes who did their righteous works to be seen by others.

- ✓ He said they had their reward but would not be rewarded by the Father (**Matthew 6:1-8**).
- ✓ He also said we should be consumed with storing up riches in heaven instead of on earth (**Matthew 6:19-21**).

The attitude we should have in our daily activities summed up perfectly.

Psalm 115:1, *“Not to us, O Lord, not to us! But to your name bring honour, for the sake of your loyal love and faithfulness.”*

Lord, let this be true of our hearts.

How is God calling you to grow as a light?

In what ways are you tempted to hide your light?

In what ways do you believe God is calling you to place your light in the most effective position?

How can we protect ourselves from wrong heart motives—like money and fame?

Conclusion

Robert Murray McCheyne, a godly Scottish minister of the last century, had a face that carried such a hallowed expression that people were known to fall on their knees and accept Jesus Christ as Saviour when they looked at him. Others were so attracted by the self-giving beauty and holiness of his life that they found his Master irresistible.

It was also said of the **French pietist Francois Fenelon** that his communion with God was such that his face shined with divine radiance. A religious sceptic who was compelled to spend the night in an inn with **Fenelon**, hurried away the next morning, saying, “If I spend another night with that man, I will be a Christian in spite of myself.”

That is the kind of salt and light God wants His kingdom people to be.

Are you being a light in the world—drawing all to God by your words and actions?

Lord, help this be true of us in Jesus’ name. Amen!