

Study Guide for the Central Church of Christ 10-14-18

To Adult Teachers:

October 14 we will study John 8:12-30. October 21 I will be out of the pulpit. Cameron Bishop will be preaching and sending out teachers' notes. Discussion questions for Oct. 14 are:

1. Ask you class to share a time they got lost because of darkness.
2. What is the connection between these 2 statements in the text:
 - a. "I am the light of the world." (12)
 - b. "...you have no idea where I came from..." (14)
3. People are often puzzled by the Genesis account of light occurring 4 days before the sun is created. The point is that all light ultimately comes from God. How does that confusion about the source of physical light form a good analogy for the confusion about the source spiritual light?
 - a. Where are some places people look for light to find their way through life?
 - b. Can you describe a time in your life when you were "looking for light in all the wrong places"?
4. How does Jesus standing in front of the huge candelabras and declaring, "I am the light of the world." enhance the impact of that statement on the people who were standing there at the time?
 - a. If the candelabras reminded people of the glory cloud, what conclusion might people come to about Jesus' claim to be "the light of the world"?
 - b. If you had to go to court and prove that you regard Jesus as the light of your life, what evidence would you bring?
 - c. What evidence could be brought to counter your claim that Jesus is the light of your life?
5. Which of the following effects of Jesus being the "glory cloud" do you most need to be aware of in your life right now:
 - a. The shade provided by Christ's love and forgiveness?
 - b. The light provided by Christ's leading you on a daily basis.
6. Agree/disagree: "Fellowship means to enjoy communicating with someone and having them communicate with you."
 - a. Which form of communication (fellowship) with Christ do you need to participate in more:
 - (1.) Listening to God (Bible Study)
 - (2.) Talking to God (Prayer)
 - b. If you need to increase your participation in either of those ways would you take a moment right now and resolve to set a time to do that?
7. Can you identify with this statement: "Perhaps the most unique thing about the self-esteem of the Christian is that the more godly you get the less godly you feel."
8. Did you see any analogy between the story of the young man in the dungeon and your life? (Teachers: Don't let your class over analyze the story. Like most parables it is intended to have only one point.)

Sermon: *Looking Through The Hole In The Wall*

John 8:12-30

A few years ago while we were building a new house we moved into a rent house for a few months. It had a very long, very dark hallway. The first night we were there, in the middle of the night, I headed down that hall and not wanting to turn on the light and awaken Judy, I walked down the totally dark hall until I thought I was at the entrance to the bathroom. I made a left through a doorway that I found by dragging my hand along the wall. When I entered that room the light switch wasn't where it was supposed to be. I took a step or two forward, turned around a time or two in search of a wall and quickly became totally disoriented. In my sleepiness I laughed at myself thinking, "Man, I know Judy understands that I have no sense of direction but how will I ever explain to her that I got lost on my way to the bathroom?" What I needed was to find a switch and turn the light on.

Jesus says to all of us, "I can turn the light on for you." He says in vs. 13, "I am from above." In other words, "I come from another world. I come from the source of light." God has been telling us from the very beginning that all light, both physical and spiritual comes from him. Do you remember in the creation story that light was created on the very first day and the sun, moon and stars were created on the fourth day? Almost every time I remind people of that sequence in creation someone objects, "That can't be right. Light comes from the sun." Human beings are as confused about the source of physical light as they are the source of spiritual light. We all know that the moon doesn't produce light, it reflects it. Genesis 1 calls us to understand that the light that comes from the sun also has an origin greater than the sun. Sure the fiery exploding gasses of the sun produce light but what gives those gasses the quality to produce light when they burn? Jesus takes that simple concept, that all light ultimately comes from God, and applies it to spiritual darkness. If your life is confused, disoriented, or directionless you will not find the light of life anywhere other than in Jesus. You won't find light in marrying the right person, getting a better job, or reading better literature. You will find light only in Jesus. Listen to his claim, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

How do we turn on the light? By understanding the teaching in this text today. Let's ask 3 questions of this text:

What does Jesus mean when he says he is the light of the world?

How do we get that light shining on our lives?

Why is Jesus the light?

What does Jesus mean when he says he is the light of the world?

If you've been following along each week in this study you will remember that Jesus is at the Feast of the Tabernacles when he says these words. This is the feast where the Jews remember how God took care of them in the wilderness. During the feast they lived in tents as a reminder of what life was like in the wilderness. Vs. 20 says he spoke these words in the temple area near the place where the offerings were put. Every evening in the place where Jesus was teaching two giant candelabras were lit. They were so brilliant they illuminated the entire section of Jerusalem

where the Temple was. Those candles commemorated the fact that God led them in the wilderness with the glory cloud.

One of the strangest phenomenons about the wilderness wanderings was the glory cloud. In the daytime it shaded them from the oppressive heat. In the nighttime the cloud was fire. The desert is very cold at night and the fiery cloud would have provided both warmth and light. The Bible says that cloud was the physical manifestation of God's presence. "By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night." – Exodus 13:21 Jesus has the audacity to stand right in front of those candles and proclaim, "I am the light of the world." "I am the glory cloud." "I am the shade by day and the fire by night." What does he mean? He means, "I am God himself." He was saying, "You must follow me like you followed that cloud in the wilderness." He is offering to be your shade in the daytime and your light in the nighttime. Some of you need the shade of Jesus to get over the guilt of your past. Remember how he shaded the woman caught in adultery? He said to her, "You have sinned but I do not condemn you because I have taken your guilt on myself. I will bear your guilt for you." Some of you need to experience the shading hand of Christ's love. Some of you need to experience the enlightening hand of Christ's leading. The world is a confusing place. Sometimes it's hard to know what's right and what's wrong. Sometimes even when you know what's right it's hard to do it. That's when you need the enlightenment of Christ's leading hand.

For Jesus to be our shade in the heat of the day and our light and heat in the darkness of the night is an exciting concept but how do we connect to that?

How do we get that light shining on our lives?

Having a light does you no good if you don't know how to turn it on. Jesus tells you how to do that in this text. It's in John 8:12 - "I am the light of the world. ***Whoever follows me....***" Most people say that means to emulate Jesus, to follow his teachings, to follow his example. But notice in this passage what Jesus says following him amounts to. In vs. 28 following Jesus means to see him as lifted up. "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be...." Four chapters later Jesus defines "lifted up". He says, "But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die. Do you understand what he is saying? He is saying, "You want proof that I am the light from heaven? Kill me! That will release a light into the world that is undeniable." To follow Jesus is to be so impacted by the sight of him on the cross that nothing will ever be the same again in your life. That's why the Bible emphasizes so often the need to submit to Jesus by being baptized. Because baptism is a way of saying, "I want to be crucified with you. I am so grateful for what you did in laying down your life for me that I want to lay down my life for you." If you are a self-hater who says, "I couldn't ever be a Christian. I just can't live up to the standard.", then you have never seen the cross. You don't get it. You have no concept of why he died that horrible death.

In the physical world life starts with light. Plants have to have light to exist. Through photosynthesis they turn light into nourishment for themselves. And everything we eat depends on plants. It all starts with light. God built us for photosynthesis of the soul. A lot of people are

afraid if they expose themselves to the light of Christ they will wither and die. The truth is you will die unless you are exposed to the light. People who don't get that are afraid of the light and they say things like: "If I become a Christian I won't be able to do anything I want with my money but I will have to use it in a radically generous way." "I won't be able to do anything I want with my sexuality but I will have to give it to somebody exclusively in marriage." "I can't do with my time what I want but I will have to serve people." "I can't do what I want with my tongue but I will have to be honest." "What a drag!" None of that is true. The truth is the only way to really enjoy money or sex, or to use your time productively, or to use your tongue beneficially is to expose all that to the light of Christ. You need the photosynthesis of the soul only Jesus can provide.

To expose yourself to the light of Christ means 4 things:

1. To expose yourself to the light of Christ means to obey him. I John says if you say you walk in the light but don't obey his commandments you are a liar. The most common cause of spiritual illness is disobedience to Christ.
2. To expose yourself to the light of Christ means to have fellowship with him. Let me give you a very simple definition of fellowship: to enjoy communicating with someone and having them communicate with you. That kind of communication with Christ is done through Bible Study and prayer. One-sided communication won't get the job done. If you pray and never read the Bible you are doing all the talking. If you read the Bible and never pray you are not listening when God talks.
3. To expose yourself to the light of Christ is to go through this strange cycle of feeling worse and worse about yourself and feeling better and better about yourself at the same time. Perhaps the most unique thing about the self-esteem of the Christian is that the more godly you get the less godly you feel. The godliest people I know do not think they are any better than the criminal or the fool. But at the same time they are the most deliriously happy people I know because they are absolutely convinced God loves them.
4. To expose yourself to the light of Christ is to discover that things that used to drive you become less and less attractive to you.

Jesus says he is the light of the world because he comes from another world. There is a story about a man who was born and grew up in a dungeon. In the dungeon with him were many other people who had never seen any other thing but their dungeon. One of their common debates was whether or not there was any other world outside the dungeon. The jailers and the wicked warden said, "This is all there is. There is no world outside this dungeon." All the inmates except one young man said, "This is all there is." One day a new prisoner arrived. The inmates were told he had been transferred from another part of the prison. He said, "That's not true. I didn't transfer from another part of the prison. I came from the outside world." He begins scratching on the wall pictures of what the outside world is like. He scratches a picture of a tree for this one young man and he scratches a picture of the sun shining on the tree. He talks about colors. The prison was so dark and dreary the only colors the young man knew were brown, black, and gray. The new prisoner spoke about red and yellow and white. Eventually that

prisoner left and the young man sat around thinking, “I wonder if he was right? I wonder if it is true?” One other thing the prisoner told the young man was there is a prince in the outside world and one day he is going to break into this dungeon and set the prisoners free. One day the young man is sitting in his cell and he hears someone digging from the other side of the stone wall. Suddenly in comes light through a hole the size of a man’s hand. He looks out and there it is – the outside world. He sees a tree, he sees the sun, and he hears the voice of a prince. The prince says, “Now you know that I am real and now you know that the outside world is real. I want you to know I am preparing to come in and take you out for good. Meanwhile, live in the hope of what you see through the hole in the wall. Now the young man’s life is changed. He is still in the dungeon but his life is lived in the light from the outside world. He sees what’s going on out there and he lives in a completely different way. He begins to treat the other prisoners with dignity. He even sees his cell differently. He sees his cell as one little piece of a bigger world.

I think that story is a great parable of what it is like to be a Christian. People all around you are saying, “This world is all there is.” But you have the chance to challenge that despair because you have peeked through the hole in the wall. You know who the hole is? It’s Jesus. Through his life you have had a taste of glory to come. Because of what he taught, you know that you were built for love and laughter and beauty and joy. Because of his reassurances you know that no matter how much despair the world feels over Wall Street or terrorism or global warming, you will never share in that despair because there is another world out there. “Now we see in a mirror darkly, but then face to face.”

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”