

YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Part One: What A Shinning Light Looks Like

Introduction

1. The Sun sits in the centre of our solar system, minding its own business just being the Sun, and yet it has a profound influence on the Earth, which is about 93 million miles away.

“It is true that from the highest point of view the Sun is only one of a multitude - a single star among millions - thousands of which, most likely, exceed it in brightness, magnitude, and power. It is only a private in the host of heaven. But it alone, among the countless myriads, is near enough to affect terrestrial affairs in any sensible degree; and its influence upon them is such that it is hard to find the word to name it” (Charles Young, 1896).

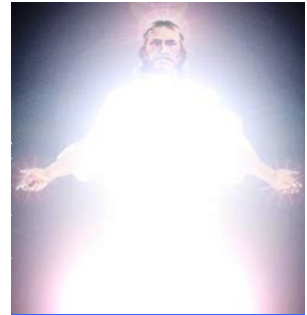


“It is the Sun that supplies the power to maintain all of earth’s processes. The reactions in the Sun continually release vast waves of electromagnetic energy from its surface, radiating out into space. That portion of this radiant energy which reaches the earth’s environs is converted into other forms of energy as needed to power the various processes of earth” (Dr. Henry H. Morris, Dr John D. Morris, The Modern Creation Trilogy).

- a. Young says the Sun is near enough “to affect terrestrial affairs in any sensible degree”; this, of course, is an understatement. The Earth receives only one-half of one-billionth of the Sun's energy output, and yet it is enough to nourish and power the whole planet.
- b. Heat absorbed by the Sun circulates air currents, which influences ocean water evaporation which drives clouds and rain, which then adds to vast rivers that moderates climates. Plant photosynthesis, triggered by the sunlight, produces carbohydrates which, via the food chain, nourishes herbivores¹ and carnivores² and human beings.
- c. Such is the influence of the Sun on the earth that we could continue giving many examples.

2. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12).

“Throughout history, the influence Jesus had on the lives of people has never been surpassed. No other great leader has inspired so many positive changes in the lives of his followers. People who encounter the risen Christ are totally transformed. Their outlook on life is altered forever. Staying true to their faith, they do not hesitate to face hardship, persecution and even death. Many devote their lives to serving others, minimizing their own needs and desires” (www.whoisjesus-really.com/english/impact.htm).



Jesus is the light of the world

- a. “No being who has ever existed upon this earth has so influenced every facet of life, and every culture, as has the meek and lowly Jesus of Nazareth” (Cecil Willis).
- b. The greatest influence Jesus had, and still has, is that in the lives of people of all nations throughout the world.

3. Jesus says to us, “You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14), Paul says that we “shine as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:15) and exhorts us to “walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8).



Every sincere Christian is a shining light in the world.

4. In this lesson we shall consider: (i) The influence we have on people in our circles and, in particular, how people are likely to respond (ii) What living as a shining light looks like. The aim of the lesson is to cause each person to examine himself and ask, “Am I a shining light in the world?”

¹ Eats only plant material.

² Eats other animals.

I. HOW DID PEOPLE RESPOND TO JESUS' INFLUENCE?

A. Jesus lived a perfect and sinless life (**Hebrews 4:15; cp. John 8:46**) and His influence was felt through all of Judea and even Samaria (and, of course, He has influenced the world for over two-thousand years and will do so until the end of time). How did people react to Jesus' influence?

Those who practice evil hate the light and will not go to the light because they do not want their evil deeds to be exposed. Those who practice righteousness love the light and will go to the light (**John 3:19-21**).

1. Some believed on Him (**Matthew 14:22-33; 16:13-16; 21:7-9; John 4:39-42; 7:31**), but not all were prepared to become disciples (**Matthew 19:16-22**).
2. Some followed Jesus for a time, but turned back when He did not live up to their expectations (**John 6:1-66**).
3. Some sought greater proof of His claims (**Matthew 12:38; 16:1-4**).
4. Some criticized Him (**Matthew 9:10-12; 12:1-8; 15:1-2; John 5:1-18**).
5. Some kept testing Him (**Matthew 19:3; 22:15-21, 23-32, 34-40; John 8:1-6**).
6. Some accused Him of being in cahoots with Satan (**Matthew 9:32-34; 12:22-25**).
7. Some rejected Him (**Matthew 8:28-34; 13:54-57; John 7:1-5; 8:48-59; 9:1-34**).
8. Finally, the religious leaders arrested Jesus and had Him crucified (**Matthew 26:3-4, 45-57; 27:1-50**).

Some believed that Jesus was a good person and others believed He was a deceiver (**John 7:12**).

B. Jesus came into the world and was the light of the world (**John 8:12**), and in Him was no darkness (**1 John 1:5**). The world beheld the perfect light of the Son of God and we have seen the different responses to His influence.

II. HOW WILL PEOPLE RESPOND TO OUR INFLUENCE?

A. In view of the various responses to the influence of Jesus, what can we expect? Much the same! Let's notice a few things:

1. They called Jesus "Beelzebub" and we can expect no less (**Matthew 10:25**).
2. Some of Jesus' relatives did not believe in Him and so we shouldn't be surprised if friends and relatives become our enemies (**Matthew 10:34-36**).
3. Jesus' enemies criticized Him and found fault with His speech and behavior and we will come across those that do the same with us (**1 Peter 4:3-5**).
4. The influence of Jesus caused some to become His disciples and others to reject Him, and, likewise, our influence may cause some to become His disciples (**cp. 1 Peter 3:1-2**) and others to reject Him (**John 15:20**).

Do not underestimate the influence of a pure and reverent life.

"In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands. Then, even if some refuse to obey the Good News, your godly lives will speak to them without any words. They will be won over by observing your pure and reverent lives" (**1 Peter 3:1-2 NLT**).

B. If we are shining as lights in this world, then we will influence all those within our circles. How people respond to our light or influence is their decision. Some will glorify the Father in heaven (**Matthew 5:16**) and some will hate us (**John 15:18-19**).

III. WHAT DOES LIVING AS A SHINING LIGHT LOOK LIKE?

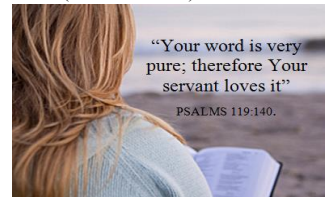
A. If we are letting our light shine and living as lights in the world, then we are influencing everyone in our circles. How people respond to that influence is their responsibility – some will respond negatively, but some may respond positively: Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (**Matthew 5:16**) and Peter says, "Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear" (**1 Peter 3:1-2**).

1. It may be that you have shared the gospel with a spouse, family members, friends, work colleagues, etc., but to no avail. You may have a great desire to see the salvation of others (which is not a bad thing), but casting your pearls before swine or “Bible bashing” is not the answer! In fact, it is forbidden³ (Matthew 7:6).
2. But there is still hope! It may be that they, without a word, may be won by observing your godly conduct (1 Peter 3:1-2). It is not guaranteed, but if they are to be won, then it will require consistency and patience.



B. A beam of white sunlight actually contains an array of colors, but we only see all the individual colors when the light passes through raindrops that act as tiny prisms. Every Christian is to be a shining light in the world and now we shall shine that light through a prism, as it were, and take a look at the individual colors. We shall consider what a shining light looks like, *from the point of view of unbelievers* that observe our words and works. Note: the light that people see will largely depend on their relative position to you: (i) a work colleague may observe that you give thanks before you eat your lunch, but only a family member will observe that you often go to your room to pray, (ii) strangers may see you providing food for a homeless man, but only a sister in Christ may know of your volunteer work with the local homeless shelter, (iii) a close friend may notice how much you read your Bible while traveling around together, but only your spouse will know that you study your Bible for three hours every night. So please bear this in mind as we discuss the following “colors” that people observe. So here are what unbelievers – whether family members, close friends, work colleagues, etc. – will observe⁴:

1. You are faithful in your attendance whenever the saints meet together (Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7; Hebrews 10:23-25). It is not only that they see your faithfulness in attendance, but they are aware of your attitude – they know that you have a strong desire to serve God (cp. Psalms 119:33-35), they know that you will be at services come sunshine or rain, whether at home or away on business or vacation, and despite how far you have to travel. They know that meeting with the saints on every occasion is your joy and that you join with David, saying, “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the Lord’” (Psalms 122:1).
2. You spend many hours reading and studying God’s word (1 Peter 2:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:14-17). They understand that you have a love and an intense craving for the word of God (cp. Psalms 119:97) that you may grow thereby (1 Peter 2:1-3); and they notice that you have set aside a time each day to spend a few hours in Bible study. Whenever visitors come to your home, they notice your open Bible and notebook on the table (evidence of studying), and the number of study tools on your bookshelf (concordance, Greek dictionary, a set of commentaries, etc.).
3. You devote much time to prayer (Matthew 6:6; Romans 12:12; Ephesians 6:17-18; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Luke 18:1-5; cp. 1 Corinthians 7:5). They notice that – whether at home, at work, or in a restaurant – you *always* say a prayer of thanks before eating your meals (1 Timothy 4:5) and that you often go to your room for an hour or so to pray to God (Matthew 6:6).
4. You love your brethren fervently (1 Peter 1:22⁵; 1 John 4:20-21). They see how you look out for the physical (James 2:14-17; 1 John 3:17-18) and spiritual needs (Galatians 6:1-2) of your brethren in the Lord. They also notice that this love is underpinned with certain attitudes (Philippians 2:3; Mark 10:42-45; John 13:3-17; Galatians 5:13; Ephesians 5:21; 1 Peter 5:5).




“This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men” (Titus 3:8).

³ Just as the Jews found a way to ignore the command to honor their parents (Matthew 15:1-6), so there are those that find a way to ignore the command not to cast one’s pearls before swine; they justify it through their own faulty reasoning and by employing scriptures that they have taken out of context.

⁴ A *genuine* believer will also influence other believers. But the list here is purely from the standpoint of an unbeliever’s observations.

⁵ “One of the objects to be attained in being purified is that of loving our brethren, and that fervently” (David Collins).

5. You let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works (**Matthew 5:16; 1 Timothy 5:25; Ephesians 2:10; 1 Timothy 6:17-19; Titus 2:6-7, 14; cp. Acts 9:36**).⁶ They see that you make clothes for the poor, volunteer at the local soup kitchen, raise money for charity, mow your neighbor's lawn while he is on holiday, meet urgent needs (**Titus 3:14**), visit widows and orphans (**James 1:27**), etc.
 6. You share the gospel with people (**Acts 8:4; 18:25-26; cp. Hebrews 5:12**). They see you sharing the gospel with the local shop keeper, striking up conversations with people on the bus and tube, giving tracts to delivery men who call at the house, inviting friends over for a Bible study, etc. **What Does It Mean To Be Holy?**
 - We think differently.
 - We talk differently.
 - We live differently.
 - We love differently.

1 Peter 1:13-2:1
 7. Pursuing holiness (**2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; Hebrews 12:14**). They notice that, over time, you are making changes in your life: (i) where you used to use certain vulgar language, your speech is now graceful and edifying (**Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 4:6**), (ii) where you used to watch certain programs and movies that contain blasphemy and fornication, you no longer set *anything* wicked before your eyes (**Psalms 101:3**), (iii) where you used to go to certain wicked places, you no longer frequent the haunts of the wicked (**Proverbs 4:14-15**⁷). In fact, the more you increase in holiness, the less you have in common with them (**cp. 2 Corinthians 6:14-15**).
- C. In a crooked and perverse generation, a *genuine* believer shines as a light in the world (**Philippians 2:15**), and each radiates an influence that is felt by all those within his circles. Some people will respond negatively to that influence (**John 15:18-19**) and some positively (**Matthew 5:16; 1 Peter 3:1-2**).

Conclusion

1. An unbeliever ought to see the following things in one claiming to be a Christian: that he (i) faithfully attends every meeting of the saints with great joy, (ii) delights in spending time each day reading *and* studying the scriptures, (iii) earnestly devotes himself to prayer, (iv) expresses in word and deed a fervent love for his brethren, (v) carefully maintains good works, (vi) takes every opportunity to share the gospel, (vii) pursues holiness. A sincere believer will radiate this influence and people might respond negatively or positively.
2. If the Lord asked, "Are you a shining light in the world?" How would you answer?
3. In part two of this lesson, we shall answer the following questions:
 - What do the scriptures say to one that claims to be a Christian, but whose light is all but extinguished?
 - How do unbelievers respond to one that claims to be a Christian, but whose light is all but extinguished?
 - What influence will unbelievers have on one that claims to be a Christian, but whose light is all but extinguished?

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⁶ The following are just examples - The good in which one will actually engage is often determined by their circumstances.

⁷ This couplet could be paraphrased, "Don't do as the wicked do, and don't follow the path of evildoers. Avoid their haunts. Avoid the haunts of the wicked".