

## YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Part Two: Reigniting Your Light

### Introduction

1. In the previous lesson, we considered what an unbeliever can expect to see when he observes the conduct of a *sincere* believer that is a shining light in the world (Matthew 5:14; Philippians 2:15; Ephesians 5:8): (i) You look forward to meeting with the saints at every opportunity (Psalms 122:1; Acts 2:42; 20:7; Hebrews 10:23-25), (ii) You have an intense craving for the word of God and you spend much time reading *and* studying (Psalms 119:97; 1 Peter 2:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:14-17), (iii) 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), (iv) You love your brethren, fervently (1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 4:20-21) – you are always looking out for their physical (James 2:14-17; 1 John 3:17-18) and spiritual needs (Galatians 6:1-2), and always looking to provoke them to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24-25), (v) You are involved in many 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), (vi) You take and make opportunities to share the gospel with others (Acts 8:4; 18:25-26; cp. Hebrews 5:12; Jeremiah 20:9), (vii) You are pursuing holiness (2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; Hebrews 12:14) and conforming yourself to the image of Jesus (Romans 8:29).

**THE CHRISTIAN'S INFLUENCE**  
 Things unbelievers ought to observe about us  
 Jesus said, "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). When white light passes through a prism you can see all the individual colors of which it is composed. This chart shows the individual "colors" of which a Christian's light is composed.



2. If we are a shining light in the world, then the word of the Lord to such is "abound more and more". We should not deceive ourselves into believing that we have reached the zenith of spiritual maturity. Note the following passages:

"And this I pray, that your love may **abound still more and more** in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (Philippians 1:9-11).

"And may the Lord make you increase and **abound** in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints" (1 Thessalonians 3:12-13).

"Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should **abound more and more**, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified" (1 Thessalonians 4:1-6).

"But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you **increase more and more**; that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing" (1 Thessalonians 4:9-12).

"But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and **abound**, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:5-8).

3. But what of those whose light is dim?! If you have honestly examined yourself and seen that your light is dim, how did you react?

a. Were you unconcerned? Do you resent having such things being exposed and brought to light? If so, then it simply reveals a deeper layer of evil in the heart. But such exposure is nothing compared to that which Christ will reveal when He returns: “For He will bring our darkest secrets to light and will reveal our private motives” (1 Corinthians 4:5).



b. Were you pricked in your heart; was your conscience struck? Do you desire to be a shining light in the world? If so, then the scriptures will help you to become a light of the world (2 Timothy 3:16-17).



**THE CHRISTIAN'S INFLUENCE**  
What If Your Light Is Dim?

Jesus said, “You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14). Unbelievers ought to see that light shining – they see that we meet with the saints, read and study, devote ourselves to prayer, love our brethren, engage in good works, share the gospel, and pursue holiness. This chart shows what unbelievers see in one whose light is dim.



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**I. BRIGHT LIGHTS AND FLICKERING FLAMES**

A. The scriptures have a word for those whose light is shining brightly and those whose light is flickering and near to extinguishing:

1. Bright lights. If you have examined yourself and see that you are shining as a light in the world, then...

- a. Beware of pride! It is all too easy to become inflated with pride – we can deceive ourselves into believing that we have become shining lights through our own strength and efforts; as if the light that shines is being generated from within ourselves. It is through such pride that we become arrogant and begin to despise others (Proverbs 21:24; Luke 18:11-12).
- b. Beware of the “I’m doing enough” attitude. This attitude can arise when we compare ourselves with others. Our attitudes must be shaped by the scriptures, not by comparing ourselves with others, and if we compare ourselves with anyone, it must be Jesus. The scriptures tell us that we must abound more and more (Philippians 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13; 4:1-6; 9-12; 2 Peter 1:5-8). Look at Paul’s attitude: “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore **let us, as many as are mature, have this mind**; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you” (Philippians 3:13-15). If anyone could say, “I’m already doing enough”, it was Paul, and yet his attitude was one of striving to do more and more. Notice that we too must have this same attitude.
- c. Beware of the “bonus points” attitude. You work hard in your job and you do everything that is required of you; you do your share; you do enough. But in order to earn a bigger bonus at the end of the year, you put in more unpaid hours and work all the harder in order to impress your boss; hoping to secure that bigger bonus. In God’s kingdom we are servants of Christ Jesus (1 Corinthians 7:22); slaves of God (Romans 6:22), and no matter how many hours we put in and no matter how hard we work, we are still to say, “We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do” (Luke 17:10).
- d. Beware of the “self-made man” attitude. This is when we deceive ourselves into believing that all we have become, all that we have, and all that we have achieved is through the strength of our own intellect, talent, and will (Daniel 4:29-32). It is God that has ordered our circumstances (1 Corinthians 7:17<sup>1</sup>), given us all that we have (1 Corinthians 4:7; James 1:17), and by Him we continue to draw every breath (Acts 14:17; 17:28).

<sup>1</sup> “The phrase ‘as God hath distributed’ refers to the condition in which people are placed in life, whether as rich or poor, in a state of freedom or servitude, of learning or ignorance, etc. And it implies that God appoints the lot of people, and orders the circumstances of their condition” (Barnes).

2. Flickering flames. If you have examined yourself and see that you are not a shining light, but a flickering flame ready to go out completely, then...
  - a. You should know that faith without works is dead. James spends some time trying to get this point across (**James 2:14-26**): (i) He begins by asking, “What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?” (**James 2:14**). (ii) He then gives an example of the kind of works he has in mind, viz., providing for the physical needs of one’s brethren (**James 2:15-17**). You will remember that loving one’s brethren fervently is one of the things that an unbeliever ought to observe in one that is a genuine believer; one that is a shining light in the world (See Part I, III. B. 4). (iii) There may be some that try to justify their lack of works (i.e., having no light shining – **Matthew 5:16**) by saying, “Well, as long as I believe in God in my heart, I will be saved; even though I do not have works like you”. James shows the foolishness of such thinking by pointing out that all the demons believe in God...are they saved? Of course not! He then sets forth the examples of Abraham and Rahab as those who were justified by showing their faith by their works (**James 2:18-25**). (iv) James’ conclusion is: “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (**James 2:26**). Let us be clear: if we are not shining as a light in the world, if we have no works, then our faith is dead – you are no better off than a demon.
  - b. What you are *not* doing is a sin! (i) We are all aware of the many things we do that are sinful, but we also sin when we fail to do good. James says, “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin” (**James 4:17**). The works that we do to be seen of men are described by Jesus as “good” (**Matthew 5:16**). (ii) Jesus said, “And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes” (**Luke 12:47**). Did you notice that the servant was punished for what he did *not* do?
  - c. You are still influencing others. Yvonne Conte writes, “Sociologists have said that even the most introverted person will influence 10,000 people in his or her lifetime. Some will be a good influence and others will send the wrong message, and have a negative impact.” The average person has an influence on thousands of people in their lifetime. So if we claim to be a Christian and fail to let our light shine, then what kind of an influence are we having on unbelievers?

B. Both the bright lights and the flickering flames ready to die out are subject to the same law:

1. Paul says, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life” (**Galatians 6:7-8**). The point is this, do not deceive yourself into thinking that you can sow one kind of life and reap another – you cannot live the life of the wicked and expect the reward of the righteous.
2. I knew a man that was a shining light, but still had doubts about his salvation. I knew a woman that was a flickering flame ready to extinguish, and yet believed she would reap everlasting life. How we feel is not the basis of our faith; we can know whether we are righteous or not by what we practice. John says, “Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (**1 John 3:7-8**).

## II. AN UNBELIEVER’S RESPONSE TO A DIM LIGHT

- A. If you claim to be a Christian and an unbeliever sees that (i) meeting with the saints is not important to you (you may not attend every week, you may not attend the mid-week study, you make little or no effort to find somewhere to worship while away on business or on holiday), (ii) you rarely read and study your Bible, (iii) you never seem to spend any time in prayer, (iv) you don’t care very much for your brethren, (v) you don’t have time for good works, (vi) you rarely – if ever – share the gospel with others, (vii) there are no changes taking place in your life (i.e., you are not pursuing holiness), then what kind of an influence do you think you will have on that person?

1. As far as your relationship with that person (whether it's an unbelieving family member, friend, work colleague, etc.), it is likely that you have a good relationship with them and have a lot in common. After all, what differences are there in your lifestyles (cp. **2 Corinthians 6:14-15**)?

2. In regards to the religious element, there is likely to be little or no conflict. (i) they know you're not going to preach at them, (ii) they know you won't talk about spiritual things, (iii) they know, when going on holiday, that you won't spoil things (from their point of view) by insisting on going to worship somewhere, (iv) they know they won't have to worry about being left alone to watch television because you've decided to go to your room to pray or study, (v) they know you will always join in the fun at the office party without condemning the activities, (vi) they know when traveling on public transport together that you won't embarrass them by striking up spiritual conversations with strangers, (vii) they know that you will tolerate their occasional bad language, blasphemy, lewd and uncouth friends, etc.

Two of the aims of a Christian are (i) to be well pleasing to the Lord (**2 Corinthians 5:9**), and, (ii) to be conformed to the image of God's Son (**Romans 8:29**). Do your unbelieving friends or your unbelieving spouse have the same aims? If a Christian is actively seeking to fulfill these aims, then such relationships are likely to change.

3. In regards to your influence on them in bringing them to Christ:

a. If your faith is dead and you are not a shining light in the world, then it is not very likely that they will come to Christ through any influence of yours, is it? It is a Christian's general conduct and good works that *can* win people (**Matthew 5:16; Titus 2:10; 1 Peter 3:1-2**).

b. But let us imagine they are won over by your influence, not because they observed your works, but because you actually shared the gospel with that person...what kind of Christian might they be? Well, if they are influenced by what they have observed in you, then quite possibly the same – a Christian that has a dead faith. In which case, your relationship with that person will remain in tact because you share a dead faith in common. Solomon writes, “Those who accept correction show others how to live. Those who reject correction lead others the wrong way” (**Proverbs 10:17**).

c. Another possibility is that they may be converted, grow to become a shining light, and then you find your relationship changes because you no longer have anything in common (see **1 Corinthians 7:13, 15**).

B. We read earlier that “even the most introverted person will influence 10,000 people in his or her lifetime”. You influence the people in your circles and those same people influence you, too.

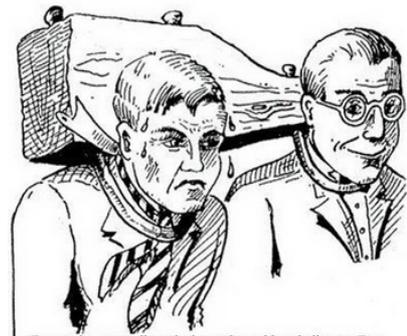
1. The message to those that are shining lights in the world is, “Exercise wisdom in regards with whom you keep company”. Why? Solomon wrote, “The righteous should choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray” (**Proverbs 12:26**), and Paul says, “Evil company corrupts good habits” (**1 Corinthians 15:33; cp. Proverbs 22:24-25**).

Some of the circles in which we function are...



a. Throughout the scriptures we find advice concerning the kind of people and things to avoid (**Proverbs 22:24-25; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Corinthians 6:14-17; 2 Thessalonians 3:14; 2 Timothy 2:23; 3:5; Titus 3:9**). Since we are unable to leave the world, we have to live in it. And so we all have unbelieving friends (**1 Corinthians 10:27**) and associates in our circles.

b. But the differences between us (faith) make it undesirable and impossible to maintain or form such close relationships. The closest relationships we form are with our brethren (**Matthew 12:50; Acts 4:32; Philippians 2:1-2; 1 Peter 3:8; cp. 1 Timothy 5:1-2**).



“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?” - **2 Corinthians 6:14-15**

“Those who accept correction show others how to live. Those who reject correction lead others the wrong way”

2. So what if you are a dim flame ready go out? Well, the company you keep will influence you. David Collins says, “We choose the people with whom we will keep company, and we choose to let them influence our thoughts, attitudes, motives, speech, and behavior”, and, “Choosing the wrong companions not only has the potential to corrupt your standards but it also reveals the true motivations and desires of your heart!” (Quotes & Things, Commentary, 1 Corinthians).

You influence the people in your circles and those same people influence you, too.

- a. The very fact that you have chosen to form *close* relationships with unbelievers instead of your brethren indicates that you have more in common with unbelievers than with your brethren. Consider: (i) What do you have in common with your non-Christian family members, friends, and work colleagues - what do you talk about? What tastes in music, movies and television programs, and sports do you share? To what places do you enjoy going together? (ii) What do you have in common with your brethren?
- b. As you continue exposing yourself to negative influences, your heart will become more resistant to repentance (cp. **Hebrews 6:4-6**) and your conscience will become increasingly insensitive to all that is evil (**1 Timothy 4:2**). You grow less spiritually minded and increasingly carnally minded (as did the Corinthians – **1 Corinthians 3:1**). A point is reached when it becomes impossible to understand spiritual things (**1 Corinthians 2:14**).
- c. What inevitably happens to that dim, flickering light is that it goes out completely. In other words, you fall away. The fact that one may continue attending worship is irrelevant; apostasy takes place in the heart (cp. **2 Timothy 4:9-10**).

### III. REKINDLING A DWINDLING FLAME

#### A. Are you one whose flame needs to be rekindled?

1. A Christian ought to be a shining light in the world (**Matthew 5:14**).
2. When we try to visualise that light, all we see is white light and we are not visualising exactly what it is that others are supposed to see. However, if we shine that light through a prism, then we can see all the individual colors. This is what unbelievers ought to see as they observe us: (i) You look forward to meeting with the saints at every opportunity (**Psalms 122:1; Acts 2:42; 20:7; Hebrews 10:23-25**), (ii) You have an intense craving for the word of God and you spend much time reading *and* studying (**Psalms 119:97; 1 Peter 2:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:14-17**), (iii) 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**), (iv) You love your brethren, fervently (**1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 4:20-21**) – you are always looking out for their physical (**James 2:14-17; 1 John 3:17-18**) and spiritual needs (**Galatians 6:1-2**), and always looking to provoke them to love and good works (**Hebrews 10:24-25**), (v) You are involved in many 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**), (vi) You take and make opportunities to share the gospel with others (**Acts 8:4; 18:25-26; cp. Hebrews 5:12**), (vii) You are pursuing holiness (**2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; Hebrews 12:14**) and conforming yourself to the image of Jesus (**Romans 8:29**).
3. If you have examined yourself and seen that your light is dim, how did you respond?

“In everyone's life, at some time, our inner fire goes out. It is then burst into flame by an encounter with another human being. We should all be thankful for those people who rekindle the inner spirit” (Albert Schweitzer).

“Let us search out and examine our ways, and turn back to the Lord” (Lamentations 3:40).

- a. Did you just sneer and think, “I’m not bothered!” This may indicate that you were never converted (even though you were baptized) or that you fell away at some point (even though you continue to attend services). The only hope is to go back to the gospel message, which is God’s power to save (**Romans 1:16**).
- b. Were you pricked in your heart? Was your conscience struck? Do you have a desire to become a shining light in order to influence unbelievers (and be an example to believers)?

## B. Becoming a shining light:

1. What steps can you take toward being a shining light? Note: none of the following lists are comprehensive.
  - a. Motivation. Meditate on the attributes of God – He is Eternal (**Psalm 90:2**), Gracious (**1 John 4:8**), Holy (**Leviticus 19:2**), Immutable (**Malachi 3:6**), Just (**Deuteronomy 32:4**), Merciful (**Psalm 145:9**), Omnipotent (**Genesis 17:1**), Omnipresent (**Jeremiah 23:24**), Omniscient (**John 21:17**) - to inspire worship (e.g., **Psalms 5:7; 7:17; 45:11**), the love of God (**John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 John 3:16; 4:9-10, 19**) to bring about obedience (**John 14:15, 21; 15:10; 1 John 5:2-3**), hope of reward to stir up a desire to cleanse one's self (**2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14; 2 Peter 3:14; 1 John 3:3**).
  - b. Conversation. Speak to God (**1 Thessalonians 5:17**) about your desire to grow spiritually (**Philippians 4:6; 1 Peter 5:7**; e.g., **Ephesians 3:14-19**) and allow Him to speak to you through the scriptures (**Psalms 119:24, 133**).
  - c. Purpose. Focus on the reasons God has called you: (i) to be sons of God (**Romans 9:26**), (ii) to be in the fellowship of God's Son (**1 Corinthians 1:9**), (iii) to love our brethren (**1 Peter 1:22**), (iv) to do good works (**Ephesians 2:10**), (v) to be sanctified (**Romans 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 4:3**), (vi) to be holy (**1 Peter 1:15**), (vii) to receive the promise of an eternal inheritance (**1 Peter 5:10; Hebrews 9:15**).
2. If we motivate ourselves by meditating on the greatness and attributes of God, speak to God in prayer and listen as He speaks to us through His word, and consider the reasons that God called us, then this will generate the light that ought to be seen in us. In other words, if we do these things, then we will have a *strong* desire to meet with the saints at every opportunity, study the scriptures, devote ourselves to prayer, love our brethren, walk in good works, share the gospel with others, and pursue holiness.

## Conclusion

1. If you have examined yourself and can say, “Yes, I am letting my light shine”, then you're doing well. BUT you ought to beware of self-satisfaction and complacency, which usually arises when we compare ourselves with others whose light is not shining as brightly. As we have seen, we must strive to shine ever more brightly.
2. What if you have examined yourself and have come to realize that your light is almost extinguished? What kind of influence do you think you are having on unbelievers?
  - a. If the only difference they see between you as a Christian and themselves as an unbeliever is that you go to services nearly every Sunday, then they probably won't be motivated to investigate Christianity any further.
  - b. If an unbeliever happens to know what he ought to observe in you as a Christian and doesn't, then he will likely see you as a hypocrite, which may just reinforce his belief that “all Christians are hypocrites”.
  - c. In regards to your relationship with an unbeliever, you are likely to get on well together because you have so much in common – neither of you is interested in engaging in any spiritual activities.
  - d. If you did happen to share the gospel with an unbeliever that has been observing you, then they may obey the gospel but believe that nothing more will be expected of them than to attend services once a week, which means that your relationship is likely to remain unaffected. On the other hand, they may grow and become such a shining light that you find you have little in common with them anymore.
3. If you are nothing but a flickering ember ready to die out, then the attitudes, beliefs, speech, and behavior of unbelievers will definitely have a negative influence on you. It is only a matter of time before you fall away completely and stop attending services. You're only hope is to repent (**Lamentations 3:40**).
4. There may be those that now realize they are not shining lights, but they sneer, feel offended, they may even be angry, and say in their hearts, “Pah!<sup>2</sup> I'm not bothered!” There's little that can be done for those that have no desire to serve the Lord. But for those that love God and desire to walk as He walked (**1 John 2:6**) and be as He is in this world (**1 John 4:17**), then there is something you can do – by meditating on the attributes of God, praying and studying, and focusing on your calling, you will generate light. Only then will you be the light in the world that God desires.

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<sup>2</sup> An expression used to express disgust or contempt.