

I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

We Long for Epiphany and Revelation

LESSON 3

"I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life."

John 8:12



WELCOME

What is something you wish you understood better or knew more about? Why?

BACKGROUND

Most people long for greater knowledge and understanding of the spiritual world, both in this life and for the next. In **John 8:12**, Jesus gives insight and revelation about how to explore those deep questions of the human heart. He says, *"I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life."* In other words, Jesus is available to shed light on the darkness of spiritual confusion and the darkness of immoral, painful or broken life situations.

1. What evidence do you see in our culture that people are confused and searching for spiritual answers?

An epiphany is similar to a revelation; both nouns refer to a moment of sudden insight or discovery. In the spiritual sense, an epiphany or revelation is something revealed by God to humans. Scripture is full of epiphanies and revelations about God to help people know and understand Him.

In the Old Testament there are many epiphanies about God being light. For example, the Old Testament reveals:

- *The LORD is my light and my salvation; why should I be afraid? (Psalm 27:1)*
- *The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine. (Isaiah 9:2)*
- *No longer will you need the sun to shine by day, nor the moon to give its light by night, for the LORD your God will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun will never set; your moon will not go down. For the LORD will be your everlasting light. Your days of mourning will come to an end. (Isaiah 60:19–20)*

Some of the Old Testament references to God as light are prophecies about Jesus, the coming Messiah. Because there are so many references like this, Jesus' declaration, "I am the light of the world" would have had context for the Jewish crowd who listened to Him in **John 8**. When His parents took Him as an infant to the Temple to be dedicated, a righteous and devout man named Simeon was led by Holy Spirit to announce, "He [Jesus] is a light to reveal God to the nations, and He is the glory of your people Israel!" (**Luke 2:32**). Many years later, when Jesus was 30 years old, John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus' ministry years. John had a powerful ministry, but Scripture says, "John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light. The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world." (**John 1:8–9**)



WORD

As you come to the Word, pause and ask God to make it come alive for you.

For this lesson, **John 8:12–59** has been divided into three sections:

- Jesus' revelation: "I am the light of the world" (**8:12–30**)
- Jesus' promise: "Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness" (**8:31–51**)
- Jesus' declaration and revelation of deity: "Before Abraham was, I AM" (**8:51–59**)

Context: When Jesus declared, "I am the light of the world," He was at the Temple in Jerusalem attending the Feast of Shelters, even though He knew the Jewish leaders were trying to find a way to kill him.¹ The

¹ John 7:1–10

feast occurred in October, six months after Passover, and it celebrated God's care for the Israelites as they lived in temporary shelters while wandering in the desert² for decades.³ "At the end of the first day of the celebration, four golden lamps were lit amid great rejoicing. Singing and celebration with music and dancing continued through the nights of the feast, with the light in the Temple illuminating the entire city."⁴ Read what Jesus revealed about Himself at the Feast of Shelters:

Jesus Revelation: John 8:12–30

¹² Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, ***"I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life."***

¹³ *The Pharisees replied, "You are making those claims about yourself! Such testimony is not valid."*

¹⁴ *Jesus told them, "These claims are valid even though I make them about myself. For I know where I came from and where I am going, but you don't know this about me. ¹⁵ You judge me by human standards, but I do not judge anyone. ¹⁶ And if I did, my judgment would be correct in every respect because I am not alone. The Father who sent me is with me. ¹⁷ Your own law says that if two people agree about something, their witness is accepted as fact. (See footnote⁵) ¹⁸ I am one witness, and my Father who sent me is the other."*

¹⁹ *"Where is your father?" they asked.*

Jesus answered, "Since you don't know who I am, you don't know who my Father is. If you knew me, you would also know my Father."²⁰ Jesus made these statements while he was teaching in the section of the Temple known as the Treasury. But he was not arrested, because his time had not yet come.

²¹ *Later Jesus said to them again, "I am going away. You will search for me but will die in your sin. You cannot come where I am going."*

²² *The people asked, "Is he planning to commit suicide? What does he mean, 'You cannot come where I am going'?"*

²³ *Jesus continued, "You are from below; I am from above. You*

² **Leviticus 23:33–43**; *Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, 2007. 1766

³ Wiersbe, Warren W. *Jesus in the Present Tense: The I Am Statements of Christ*. David C Cook, 2011. 49

⁴ Milne, Bruce. *The Message of John*. Inter-Varsity, 1993. 127

⁵ **Deuteronomy 19:15**

belong to this world; I do not. ²⁴ That is why I said that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am who I claim to be, you will die in your sins."

²⁵ "Who are you?" they demanded.

Jesus replied, "The one I have always claimed to be. ²⁶ I have much to say about you and much to condemn, but I won't. For I say only what I have heard from the one who sent me, and he is completely truthful." ²⁷ But they still didn't understand that he was talking about his Father.

²⁸ So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man on the cross, then you will understand that I AM he. I do nothing on my own but say only what the Father taught me. ²⁹ And the one who sent me is with me—he has not deserted me. For I always do what pleases him." ³⁰ Then many who heard him say these things believed in him.

2. What is revealed about those in darkness (the Pharisees and the crowd) and about Jesus, the Light, in the following verses:

Verses	About those in darkness:	About Jesus:
John 8:14–18 (Regarding judgment)		
John 8:19–22 (Regarding knowing God)		
John 8:23–24 (Regarding belonging)		

John 8:25–27 (Regarding understanding truth)		
John 8:28–30 (Regarding relating to God)		

a. In what ways do you see common ground between the crowd then and many people today?

b. Based on the statements Jesus made about Himself, what conclusions do you come to about Jesus? What do those conclusions mean to you?

c. Sometimes Jesus' revelations about Himself resulted in more questions. From this passage, do any questions arise for you? If so, what are they?

Jesus' promise: John 8:31–51

³¹ Jesus said to the people who believed in him, “You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. ³² And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

³³ “But we are descendants of Abraham,” they said. “We have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean, ‘You will be set free’?”

³⁴ Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave of sin. ³⁵ A slave is not a permanent member of the family, but a son is part of the family forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free.

³⁷ Yes, I realize that you are descendants of Abraham. And yet some of you are trying to kill me because there’s no room in your hearts for my message. ³⁸ I am telling you what I saw when I was with my Father. But you are following the advice of your father.”

³⁹ “Our father is Abraham!” they declared.

“No,” Jesus replied, “for if you were really the children of Abraham, you would follow his example. ⁴⁰ Instead, you are trying to kill me because I told you the truth, which I heard from God. Abraham never did such a thing. ⁴¹ No, you are imitating your real father.”

They replied, “We aren’t illegitimate children! God himself is our true Father.”

⁴² Jesus told them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, because I have come to you from God. I am not here on my own, but he sent me. ⁴³ Why can’t you understand what I am saying? It’s because you can’t even hear me! ⁴⁴ For you are the children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵ So when I tell the truth, you just naturally don’t believe me! ⁴⁶ Which of you can truthfully accuse me of sin? And since I am telling you the truth, why don’t you believe me? ⁴⁷ Anyone who belongs to God listens gladly to the words of God. But you don’t listen because you don’t belong to God.” ⁴⁸ The people retorted, “You Samaritan devil! Didn’t we say all along that you were possessed by a demon?”

⁴⁹ “No,” Jesus said, “I have no demon in me. For I honor my Father—and you dishonor me. ⁵⁰ And though I have no wish to glorify myself, God is going to glorify me. He is the true judge. ⁵¹ I tell you the truth, anyone who obeys my teaching will never die!”

3. Jesus' words both confused and outraged the crowd. "When Jesus promised the truth would set them free, they thought He was talking about political freedom from slavery, but He was actually talking about spiritual freedom from sin."⁶ They were further outraged when Jesus said they weren't Abraham's children since they didn't follow Abraham's example.⁷ The Jews called Jesus a Samaritan devil⁸ possessed by a demon because Jesus declared their father was Satan. Why do you think He would do that?

In what ways were those in the crowd "walking in darkness"?
(8:39–48)

4. What do the following verses teach about Satan's efforts to hinder revelation and light?

a. **John 8:44**

For you are the children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies.

⁶ Wiersbe, Warren W. *Jesus in the Present Tense: The I Am Statements of Christ*. David C Cook, 2011. 59

⁷ **Hebrews 11:8–19**

⁸ Calling Jesus a Samaritan devil was a very disparaging and abusive term. In **John 4:9** the apostle John wrote, "Jews do not associate with Samaritans." (NIV) This denunciation resulted from historical events. In 722 BC, after the Assyrians conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel and its capital, Samaria (**2 Kings 17:24–41**), they resettled pagan foreigners in the land. Those foreigners mixed their religions with Judaism and even built their own temple on Mt. Gerazim around 400 BC. All the people that lived in this area were known as Samaritans. Jews of Jesus' day hated Samaritans for adulterating Judaism in their part of Israel. Milne, Bruce. *The Message of John*. InterVarsity, 1993. 83.

b. **2 Corinthians 4:4**

Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.

c. **John 10:10**

The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

- d. Keeping these verses in mind, list some examples of when you've observed Satan trying to hinder revelation and light, both in your life and in the world.

5. Light and darkness are not equal forces. Light will always win. From the verses below, underline ways spiritual darkness can be overcome.

a. **Psalm 119:105**⁹

*Your word is a lamp to guide my feet
and a light for my path.*

b. **John 12:46**

I have come as a light to shine in this dark world, so that all who put their trust in me will no longer remain in the dark.

c. **1 John 1:9**

But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

⁹ When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, even He used Scripture to overcome Satan's temptations. (**Matthew 4:1–11**)

d. **1 Corinthians 2:11–12**

No one can know a person's thoughts except that person's own spirit, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. And we have received God's Spirit (not the world's spirit), so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us.

e. **Ephesians 5:8–11**

For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light! For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true. Carefully determine what pleases the Lord. Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them.

f. **John 8:31–32**

Jesus said to the people who believed in him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

- g. With Holy Spirit's help, how can you practically incorporate into your life what God has revealed to you from these verses?

Jesus' declaration and revelation of deity: John 8:51–59

⁵¹ *I tell you the truth, anyone who obeys my teaching will never die!"*

⁵² *The people said, "Now we know you are possessed by a demon. Even Abraham and the prophets died, but you say, 'Anyone who obeys my teaching will never die!' ⁵³ Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?"*

⁵⁴ *Jesus answered, "If I want glory for myself, it doesn't count. But it is my Father who will glorify me. You say, 'He is our God,' ⁵⁵ but you don't even know him. I know him. If I said otherwise, I would be as great a liar as you! But I do know him and obey him. ⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced as he looked forward to my coming. He saw it and was glad."*

⁵⁷ *The people said, “You aren’t even fifty years old. How can you say you have seen Abraham?”* ⁵⁸ *Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I AM”* ⁵⁹ *At that point they picked up stones to throw at him. But Jesus was hidden from them and left the Temple.*

6. Jesus’ revelations in **John 8:54–59** infuriated the crowd. How does the passage below explain what Jesus meant when He said, “I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I AM”?

¹⁵ *Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation,* ¹⁶ *for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can’t see—such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him.*

¹⁷ *He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together.*

Colossians 1:15–17

7. Light dispelling darkness always provokes a reaction. While some are drawn to the light, others retreat further into the darkness. In **John 8:12–59**, Jesus brings into the light the profound truth that He is in fact God. And yet, despite this clear revelation, the crowd picked up stones to kill Him, retreating into the darkness. Why do you think the light and revelation of Jesus (as God) caused the crowds to retreat further into darkness?

- a. How does **John 3:19–21** help to explain the crowd’s response?

¹⁹ And the judgment is based on this fact: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. ²⁰ All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. ²¹ But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants.”

- b. As you complete this lesson, what is your response to this revelation of Jesus, the light of the world?



WORSHIP

Take a moment to enter into a time of worship—both on your own and with your community—to show praise, adoration and love for God.

During the Feast of Shelters the Jews lit candles and torches. These lights reminded them that God safely led them through the desert with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night for 40 long years. (**Exodus 13:21**)

Light a candle in your home as a reminder that God and His Son Jesus are light.

Reflect on a few experiences from your life when Jesus has been light and overcome the darkness of confusion or sin.

Reflect on where you long to see Jesus' light as a guide in your life now, whether in overcoming sin or leading you through a place of confusion.

Talk to Jesus, the light of the world, about your reflections and release them to Him.

You may even want to start each day this week by lighting a candle and reflecting on these things.



WITNESS

Believers are called to reflect Christ in the world. This section will help you engage with how to be a witness—reflecting Christ—this week.

Matthew 5:15–16 says, “No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.”

Is there someone God has put on your heart during this lesson? How could you share Jesus’ light with that person this week?

Brainstorm possibilities with your group.

CONVERSATION PROMPTS

Consider using one of the conversation prompts this week to begin having a spiritual conversation with someone in your life.

- What do you see in the world that feels dark to you?
- Where have you been searching for answers to the darkness in our world? Have you found answers that are satisfying?
- What is something you wish you understood better? Why?
- Where do you go when you have questions or you are looking for answers or illumination?

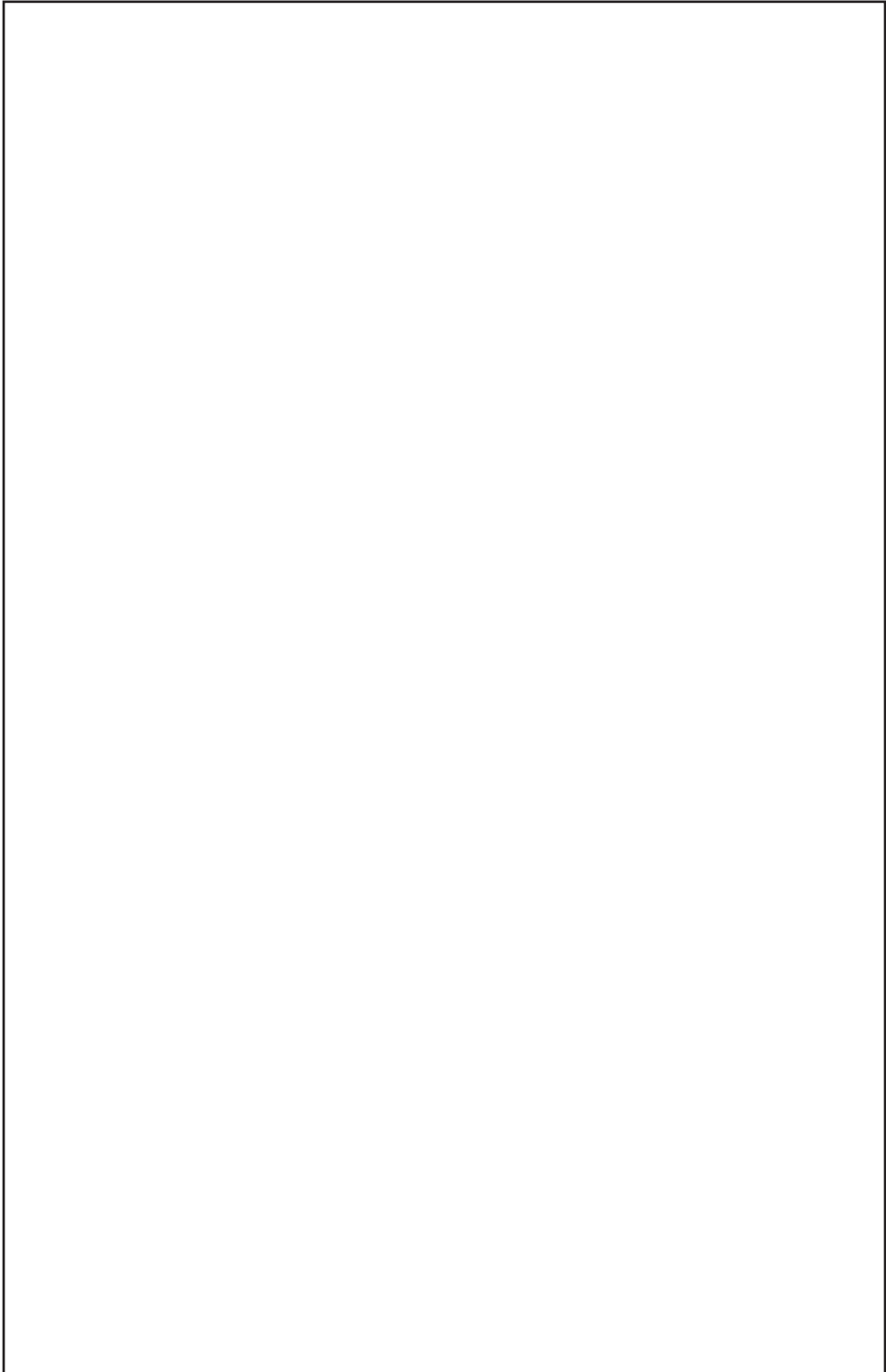
TAKE-AWAY SUMMARY

As you have worked through this lesson and listened to Holy Spirit, what is your one significant take-away?

Write a brief summary of your take-away on page 102.

SERMON NOTES

Lesson 3

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