

I AM

The Light of the World

Leader Guide

¹² Jesus spoke to them again. 'I am the light of the world,' he said. 'People who follow me won't go around in the dark; they'll have the light of life!'

¹³ 'You're giving evidence in your own case!' said the Pharisees. 'Your evidence is false!'

¹⁴ 'Even if I do give evidence about myself,' replied Jesus to them, 'my evidence is true, because I know where I came from and where I'm going to. But you don't know where I come from or where I'm going to. ¹⁵ You are judging in merely human terms; I don't judge anyone. ¹⁶ But even if I do judge, my judgment is true, because I'm not a lone voice; I have on my side the father who sent me. ¹⁷ It is written in your law that the evidence of two people is true. ¹⁸ I'm giving evidence about myself, and the father who sent me is giving evidence about me.'

¹⁹ 'Where is your father?' they said to him.

'You don't know me,' replied Jesus, 'and you don't know my father! If you had known me, you would have known my father as well.'

²⁰ He said all this in the treasury, while he was teaching in the Temple. Nobody arrested him, though, because his time hadn't yet come.

Context

Jesus claims here that he is the light of the world. Why are the Pharisees so rattled by his statement? The reason can be found in the writings of the prophet Isaiah (49.6, 60.1-3), where he describes Israel as God's light to the gentiles, and Israel's promised Messiah as the personification of this light. The Pharisees would have taken Jesus' statement as a claim that he was the true Messiah. What follows is an exchange about the validity of Jesus' claim based on the legal rules set by the law of Moses (Deu. 19.15). While the Pharisees accuse Jesus of not having enough witnesses to confirm his claim, Jesus argues that he actually has two witnesses: God and Himself. This statement would have led the Pharisees to become even

angrier with him, that's why John indicates that they intended to arrest him when the time was appropriate.

1. What does Jesus mean when he says that the Father and Himself provide enough evidence for his claim?

Jesus is referring here to his public ministry, to all the healings and miracles that were seen and experienced by many people, including the Pharisees. This work of salvation and liberation was exactly what the Jewish people expected from their promised Messiah (Luke 4.19-21). Jesus says that he is his own witness because his actions testify by themselves. And even more, he is saying that all these miracles are evidence that God is with him.

2. According to Jesus, why can't the Pharisees see it too? (read vs.19 and John 3.19-20 below).

The Pharisees knew about the signs and wonders performed by Jesus. Why then can't they accept them as evidence of his status? Jesus says that they've forgotten how to recognize God and God's work. They became so concerned with their little laws and rituals that they could not see the work of God being done in front of them. In other words, they were in the dark, a place where they could not tell good from evil anymore. That's why Jesus tells them that they *are judging in merely human terms*, their own terms. It is sad to see how they became so focused on themselves and were not able to recognize how hypocritical and oppressive they have been.

3. How can we interpret this metaphor used by Jesus? What is the main role of light in our lives?

Light in itself is neither good or bad. The presence of light, however, allows us to see things how they really are. That's what Jesus does, he lives in a way that shows us how we are

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suppose to live, full of compassion, love and serving each other. It is in Jesus that we learn to tell good from evil, right from wrong. This is very important. Sometimes we tend to focus only on Jesus' death in the cross for us, and the forgiveness of sins, and we forget that Jesus also has given us a model for how we are to live our daily lives.

4. Do you think that sometimes we act exactly like the Pharisees in the way we live our lives? How can we avoid that?

By Jesus' own definition, when we are not following on his steps, we are walking in darkness. Walking towards the light might be hard at first. The more we understand Jesus' way of life, the more our own fallacies become exposed to us and to others around us. Like John says in chapter 3 below, *people loved darkness rather than light, because what they were doing was evil*. Sometimes changing is hard, painful, and we might prefer to ignore the type of life Jesus is calling us for, in order to remain 'in the dark'. Whenever we do that, we are the same as the Pharisees.

We avoid that by seeing light as an opportunity for change in our lives. Whenever the darkest parts of our character or attitudes get exposed, we should see this as a good thing, although painful. It should give us an opportunity to repent and change our ways.

5. What does it mean for us, as a community of Jesus' followers, to become the light of the world?

People should be able to look at us and see life the way it is supposed to be lived. As we look to Jesus and learn from him, others should be able to see that in us. Bear in mind that being the light of the world does not necessarily mean that we will start pointing out all the flaws and problems in other people's lives, and telling them what to

do. Jesus himself says in verse 15 the he is not judging anyone. He is leading by example, he is taking on himself to produce the change he expects to see in the world.

And this is the condemnation: that light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light, because what they were doing was evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light; people like that don't come to the light, in case their deeds get shown up and reprovved.

John 3:19-20

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you.

Isaiah 60.1-2

A candle loses nothing of its light by lighting another candle.
Fr. James Keller