

July 23, 2023

“I AM” – Jesus
“I Am the Light of the World”

One weekend, author Paul Tripp gave his teenage son permission to spend the weekend at a friend's house. But during the weekend Paul received a call from the friend's mother, informing him that Paul's son was not at her home. (Her son had felt guilty about covering for Paul's son and confessed to his mom.) After Paul told his wife about their son's deception, Paul said, "Luella could feel my anger, and she said, 'I think you need to pray.' I said, 'I don't think I can pray for him right now.' She said, 'I didn't mean for you to pray for him; I think you need to pray for you.'"

Paul writes,

I went to my bedroom to pray for God's help, and it hit me that, because of his love, God had already begun a work of rescue in my son's life. God was the one who pressed in on the conscience of my son's friend, causing him to confess to his mom. God was the one who gave her the courage to make that difficult call to me. And God was the one giving me time to get a hold of myself before my son came home. Now, rather than wanting to rip into my son, I wanted to be part of what this God of grace was doing in this moment of rebellion, deception, hurt, and disappointment.

After giving his son a couple of hours to relax upon his return, Paul asked him if they could talk.

"Do you ever think about how much God loves you?" Paul asked his son.

"Sometimes," he answered.

"Do you ever think how much God's grace operates in your life every day?"

His son looked up but didn't speak.

"Do you know how much God's grace was working in your life even this weekend?"

"Who told you?" his son asked.

Paul said:

"You have lived your life in the light. You've made good choices. You've been an easy son to parent, but this weekend you took a step toward the darkness. You can live in the darkness if you want. You can learn to lie and deceive. You can use your friends as your cover ... You can step over God's boundaries. Or you can determine to live in God's light. I'm pleading with you: don't live in the darkness; live in the light."

"As I turned to walk away," Paul wrote, "I heard his voice from behind me saying, 'Dad, don't go.' As I turned around, with tears in his eyes, he said, 'Dad, I want to live in the light, but it's so hard. Will you help me?'"

Paul David Tripp, ***Forever: Why You Can't Live Without It*** (Zondervan, 2011), pp. 151-

I relate to this story as that son. I relate to this story as that dad. I relate to this story as the man I am today AND I still ask my Heavenly Father: “*Will you help me?*”

He has helped me. He does help me and he will help me TURN FROM DARKNESS AND LIVE IN THE LIGHT.

Q: Would you like help living in the light?

John 8:12 (NIV) When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

I. Whoever FOLLOWS me will have the LIGHT ...

John 8:12 (NIV) ... “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

CONTEXT: Jesus said this at the climactic moment at the Feast of Tabernacles (a celebration of how TheLORD God saved them from bondage and made them his nation. At this feast was an elaborate ceremonial lighting of the great lights at the Temple.

Imagine the scene: huge bowls of oil with very large wicks that could only be reached with ladders were ceremonially lit to commemorate God’s presence with their ancestors in the pillar of fire by night and pillar of cloud during their Exodus from bondage and wilderness journey to the promised land.

Then Jesus surprises the huge crowd with this highly controversial claim.

What? He is the light of the world?!

Then consider the use of the word FOLLOW in this context!!! Their ancestors Followed God’s pillar of fire by night, a pillar of smoking cloud by day.

Jesus now claims to be The LIGHT to “FOLLOW” to get to the eternal promised land!

His claim produced two opposite reactions!!

Followers who saw the light and Enemies who didn’t.

The Exodus wilderness cloud also produced the same very ODD phenomenon:

Exodus 14:19–20 (NIV):¹⁹ Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel’s army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in

front and stood behind them, ²⁰ coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought **darkness to the one side and light to the other side**; so neither went near the other all night long.

- Jesus claimed to be THAT LIGHT, the visible manifestation of the presence and glory of God Himself
- He claimed to be LEADING not just Israel but now THE WORLD in a bigger and better Exodus not just to a land but to the eternal promise land!

John 8:30–32 (NIV) Even as he spoke, many believed in him. ³¹ To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³² Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

That’s how you follow the Light!! Hold to Jesus’ teaching (8:31). And just to be clear: “Obey his Word” (8:51) is how you Follow Him!

John 8:51 (NIV) Very truly I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death.”

He leads the way to the eternal promised land!

Those who refuse to follow him see the light as darkness!

I. Whoever FOLLOWS me will have the LIGHT ...

II. REFUSING invites DARKNESS

John 8:13 (NIV) The Pharisees challenged him, “Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid.”

Jesus had already produced a list of witnesses in chapter 5 which they refused to believe.

He doesn’t bother to repeat those credentials, he confronts them instead!

John 8:23–25 (NIV) But he continued, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. ²⁴ I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins.” ²⁵ “Who are you?” they asked. “Just what I have been telling you from the beginning,” Jesus replied.

The debate gets more heated then abruptly comes to a screeching halt with Jesus unmistakable Zinger of all zingers.

Who do you think you Are?

Jesus is going to tell them!

III. Jesus claimed to be THE “I AM”

John 8:56–59 (NIV) Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.” ⁵⁷ “You are not yet fifty years old,” they said to him, “and you have

seen Abraham!”⁵⁸ “Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!”⁵⁹ At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.

Why did they react so violently? Because Jesus made a claim only God can make.

Let’s visit the scene when God identified himself to Moses at the burning bush.

Exodus 3:13–14 (NIV) Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”¹⁴ God said to Moses, “I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I am has sent me to you.’ ”

Q: What did God tell Moses His name was?

A: “I AM”.

Q: Why does God call himself that?

A: God is the eternally, self-existent I AM. Everything else that exists owes its existence to him, because he alone is the self-existent one.

That the Jews rightly understood Jesus’ claim “Before Abraham was, I am” (8:58) as a divine claim, DISAGREED, found this to be blasphemous, and picked up stones to KILL HIM!

Jesus claimed to be one in essence with God! God is Father, Son, and Spirit.

John has already prepared his readers for this Zinger of all zingers:

John 1:1–5 (NIV):¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.² He was with God in the beginning.³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it....

John 1:9-12 (NIV) The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

John 1:14 (NIV) The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:18 (NIV) No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

Let's finish, where we started with Paul Tripp's Question to his son: ***"Have you taken a step toward the darkness?"*** He said to him, *"You can live in the darkness if you want. You can learn to lie and deceive. You can use your friends as your cover ... You can step over God's boundaries. Or you can determine to live in God's light. I'm pleading with you: don't live in the darkness; live in the light."*

Will you turn to your father right now and ask for his help? But please understand this: His help comes through Jesus, his Son who is the Light of the World!

Talk It Over

"I AM" -Jesus (Week 3)
"I Am the Light of the World"

SMALL TALK

1. Share a personal experience where you felt the presence of light in a dark situation.

VIEWPOINT

2. **READ John 8:12-59.** In John 8:12, Jesus declares, "I am the light of the world." What does this statement mean, and how does it relate to the context?
3. The religious leaders challenge Jesus' authority throughout this passage. How does Jesus defend His identity, and what can we learn from His responses?
4. In John 8:58, Jesus says, "Before Abraham was born, I am." Why is this statement significant, and what does it reveal about Jesus' divinity and eternal nature?

GETTING PERSONAL

5. Reflect on your own journey of understanding Jesus' identity. How has knowing Him as the "light of the world" impacted your life and choices?
6. Jesus speaks about the importance of obeying His word (John 8:51). How can you actively apply His teachings in your daily life and relationships, to walk in His light?

MAKING PROGRESS (THIS WEEK)

7. What steps will you take to "follow" Jesus as the light of the world (John 8:12)?