

Living in the Light

by Alan Martin

This sermon delves into the principle of light as used in Scripture, focusing on Matthew chapter 6, verse 22. It emphasizes the importance of having a single focus on God to be filled with light, contrasting light with darkness as understanding God's truth versus following selfish desires. The sermon highlights the significance of living in the light, reflecting God's goodness, righteousness, and truth in all aspects of life to be a beacon of Christ's love and grace to others.

Scripture: Matthew 6:22, Psalms 119:105, Ephesians 5:8, John 8:12, 1 John 1:7, Proverbs 4:18, Isaiah 42:16, Ephesians 4:17, Romans 13:12

Topics: "Living in the Light", "Focus on God"

Description

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Transcript

Chapter 6, I want to talk about the principle of light and how it's used in Scripture. Matthew chapter 6, let's start in verse 22 if you want to follow. The lamp of the body is the eye.

Let's think about that. Why, what is Jesus saying? The lamp of the body is the eye. What does a lamp do? It gives light.

So Jesus said light is based upon what you are looking at, what you fix your attention on. What you fix your attention on is what's going to determine what light comes into your body. The eye is the lamp of the body.

If your eye is good, that's some translations. Actually, the better word here is if your eye is single. If your eye is single, your whole body will be full of light.

But if your eye is evil, isn't that interesting? Evil. In other words, if what you're looking for is evil, your whole body will be full of darkness. And if the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness? So let's first, before we go too much further, let's make sure we understand what does light represent? Think of what the Scripture says, the Scriptures that refer to light.

That's often what I do when I hear the word light. I think, what Scriptures do I have in my heart? What do I remember that speak about light? What Scriptures come to your mind that have the word light in them? Jesus is the light of the world. Okay, there's one.

Here's what came to mind. Thy word is a lamp to my feet, a light to my path. Psalms 119 says, the entrance of thy word gives light.

And it also as it gives understanding to the simple. So I think what light represents in the Scripture is the ability to see and understand clearly. Light makes things visible so that you can see clearly.

In the Proverbs chapter 4, we read this, that the path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter until the full light of day. And it contrasted with, but the way of the wicked is like deep darkness. They do not know what makes them stumble.

So let's put some thoughts together. If the entrance of thy word is light, then as we continue in the word of God, we get greater and greater light. We see things clearer and clearer.

But if we stray away the path of the wicked, if we turn away from God's word, we turn away from the light and we turn to the darkness. Now, what is the darkness? If light represents what God says and God's truth and understanding, what would the darkness be? Satan. The darkness is ideas and thoughts that come from our own head, that have not come from God.

And so when a person turns away from following God's instructions, and they begin to turn to follow their own thoughts, they have begun to walk in darkness. And the darkness is their understanding. Remember what the prophecy of Isaiah and Micah and several of the prophets said about the Lord Jesus when he came.

It says that the people sitting in darkness have seen a great light. On those sitting in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned. What light dawned upon them? When Jesus came, men for the first time could clearly see what the heavenly Father was like.

Jesus was able to say, I am the light of the world. He who sees me has seen the Father. Jesus brought clarity to who God really is.

The Jewish religious leaders didn't even have that clarity. But when Jesus spoke, it was every word the Father had given him. And when Jesus acted, it was everything the Father had commanded him or instructed him to do.

So Jesus brought light so that people could see what God is really like. Their ideas of God were all over the place. But only one person had actually seen the Father.

And that's what Jesus said. No one has seen the Father but the Son whom the Father has sent. This is why Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the light.

No one comes to the Father but by me. You're not going to know who the Father is except by me. I'm speaking the Father's words.

I'm doing the Father's work. When you see me, you have encountered the Father. This is what walking in the light is.

We have to believe by faith that God has spoken. And because God is light, when he reveals himself and he reveals his will, he's giving us light to see things the way we should. Now, if our eye is single, let's spend a little bit of time there.

What one single thing did Jesus have that made him perfectly light? Never confused. He never sinned. He was tempted like we are, but he never sinned because he had this singleness of eye.

What was his single purpose? Do the Father's will. And he was convinced that doing the Father's will was the most joyful way to live. How many of you think that if you really surrendered to do God's will, your life would get more dull? How ridiculous.

The prospect of the righteous is joy. And the blessings of the Lord crown the head of the righteous. Jesus said, my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

And if you take my yoke upon you and learn of me, you're going to find rest for your souls. I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly. I've spoken these things to you that my joy may be in you and your joy be full.

He is trying to bring us the way to live and bring it to the light and show us that there is one single purpose. If we discover living for one purpose, life will hit on all cylinders. Our entire body will be full of light.

And I think that single purpose is very similar to what Paul said in several places. Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through him. And I want you to think about singleness of purpose.

Let's put ourselves in some situations that we may have singleness of purpose in. Let's say we are distressed because someone or something has happened to us, very unpleasant. If you had the single purpose that the eyes of the Father are on you, and your first thought is, what should I do that will be pleasing to him? Not what shall I do to get relief, not how can I make this jerk stop, not how can I get the circumstances to change, but the first thought would be, what would be pleasing to God? You'd have light.

You'd see whether to speak or not to speak. You'd see clearly the kind of tone you should speak in. You could see that perhaps the situation is, this person is hurting and they're hurting you because they've got a situation in their life that needs healing.

You see clarity. Your whole body will be full of light because there's only one thing you're seeking. What would be pleasing to the Father in this situation? I mean, can you imagine that everything you start to say, that's the one thought you have.

Is this pleasing to the Father? Is this truth from the Father? Is this grace from the Father? I just recently went through something, a difficult time, you know, difficult decisions, difficult discussions. And in difficult discussions, you don't always come to see the same thing. Sometimes it doesn't seem like the answer is the same.

Someone else feels differently than you do. And so you don't come to the agreement you want. Then what do you do? If your first thought is how you're perceived or the effect on you, that's not going to fill you with clarity.

That's not going to fill your whole body in light. You may act out of defensiveness. But what if your first thought is, Father, you are the God who works all things together for good.

So even though right now it's difficult, and even though right now it doesn't seem to be there'd be perfect oneness, I'm to look to you for you to do what you love to do, which is to work all things together for good for everyone. And that's the only thing I'm to seek your good in everyone in every situation. And I can, I've experienced it.

When you're able to come to that single focus, what you say, how you respond is dynamically guided by the Holy Spirit. But that's a single focus, one purpose. You know, to be conscious, I just asked my sons to live this way.

I don't know that they fully grasp it, but I've asked my sons to live this way. Live in the consciousness that the eyes of the Lord are upon you everywhere, every moment. The eyes of the Lord are upon my private thoughts.

The eyes of the Lord are upon every conversation, whether I'm speaking with my wife, or whether I'm speaking with the deacons, or whether I'm speaking in private. Every thought I have, every word I say is before my Heavenly Father. And when that single focus is there, I see clearly.

I see what not to say. I see what attitude not to take. I see what reaction not to do.

You're full of life. This is that, that's what he's saying if we find that. This is a way of life that Jesus put this way.

He who seeks to save his life will lose it. Because you don't, when you seek to save your life, you're not single. You will not see clearly.

You'll end up making mistakes, saying things, responding in a way that makes a situation worse. It causes consequences that are long-term. If you lost that life, but he says he who loses his life in this world for my sake, he will find life in a new way.

With the kind of clarity the Lord Jesus has. Jesus was tempted just like we all are, but Jesus never sinned because every temptation Jesus looks straight to the Father. What would the Father have me do? What would the Father have me say? It, it's so simple it almost seems impossible.

But it's there. It is simple, that the word actually single really could be translated simple, unfolded, uncomplicated. When we have divided interest, part of it is for ourself.

We're part of it, we're concerned for ourselves, my feelings, my hurt, my will, how I'm viewed. Then what are your thoughts going to be? Your thoughts are going to be along that line. And if you follow those thoughts, you're leading away from light and you're entering into the darkness.

And when you walk in the darkness, you can't see the things that make you stumble. You'll stumble over things because you have not looked to the Lord and his word for guidance. That's what happens.

The way of the wicked is like deep darkness. They do not know what makes them stumble. And when the eye is not single, Jesus contrasted not single with evil because, I don't know if you understand this, I'm just going to try to share it with you and I want you to think about it.

Is it wrong for God, the creator of the universe, who made man to have fellowship with himself, who gives you breath to breathe, who provides light, who provides all the natural laws for you, who provides all resources that you use, because everything we use he's created. Is it wrong for him to give all of that so that you will look to him in continual thanksgiving and recognition and honor? It's not wrong at all. That's natural.

That's right and just. What's evil is to use his things that he gives, the life he gives, the air he gives, the resources he gives, to use them selfishly in a way that hurts yourself and others. That's what he considers evil.

And if that's what your eye is looking for, your whole body will be full of darkness. Jesus goes on to say, and this is where in our Bible sometimes it's not good that we have these little divisions and subheadings, because in the original it wouldn't have been there. It would have just been just words would have flowed right through and the next thought after, if your eye is evil, if the light within you is darkness, how great is the darkness? The next statement that Jesus made was, no one can serve two masters.

So you see where we get off track? When we're serving the Lord, we're looking to him. When we're looking to him, we will receive light. Things will be clear to us when we become self-centered, self-focused, concerned for ourself.

We take our eyes off of the source of light and we begin to follow other thoughts. Thoughts, either our own thoughts, thoughts of the evil one, thoughts of evil spirits, and darkness begins to happen because we're divided in our hearts. Paul warned about this, this, this darkness and light.

If you turn with me to Ephesians chapter four, Ephesians four, where Paul makes it clear that where the darkness is, is in the understanding. Ephesians chapter four, I think it's starting in verse 17. It is verse 17.

This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind. That vanity, that word means it's not tied to anything concrete. You know what's not tied to anything concrete? Any thought that God has not said.

It's a fleeting thought. It's created by man. It's not durable.

It won't last. The word of the Lord will outlast heaven and earth. Heaven and earth will pass away, but thy word will never pass away.

So, what the fleeting vanity, the mind of vanity is a mind of its own thoughts. That you do not walk as the rest of the Gentiles in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened. So, what would an understanding darkened be? It would be a way of thought that is not built upon God's word.

You form ideas. You have patterns of thinking, ways of acting, and ways of speaking that you've come up with on your own. You've either learned them from your family or from someone, other influence.

You've let media or culture influence you, and the way you think has not been framed by the word of God. The Gentiles are darkened in the understanding. In other words, now, don't mean that they're not sincere.

Don't think that they're not sincere. Don't they think they're doing what's right? Don't they think that they're good? How many people would say, I'm a good person? They, their ideas are their own, and in their own ideas, they believe that they're good. But it's darkened if it's not, if those ideas have not had God's word

bringing light to the way they think.

Yeah, that's, that's where this is going. Yeah, watch, because it's a progression. They, they, they, they, they're, they're, they had the vanity of their mind.

They're darkened in their understanding, and they're alienated from the life of God, it says, because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. See, they, as they have lost the ability to sense and feel and appreciate, this is God's world. They're breathing his air.

They're walking on his solid, the solid ground he created. Their body is equipped with his divine gifts and ability, the ability to reason, the ability to think, the enjoyment of food, the enjoyment of music. All of these are created by God, and they lose sensitivity to that.

So, they're no longer giving him thanks. They're not looking to him and appreciating what, that, that all of this is from him. So, they become separated from his life because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their heart, and having become callous, they give themselves over.

They give themselves over because you, they lose any idea of what's good and bad. In their own mind, it becomes what satisfies, and when, when you begin to live by what satisfies me or what makes me happy, you just give yourself over to that, whatever it is. It may be sports.

It may be drugs. It may be sex. It may be whatever satisfies your passion.

What it's doing is it's taking you further and further away from the life of God, and it's callousing whatever sensitivity you had, and you are corrupting the image of God in you further and further. And so, it says that they, they give themselves over to, it, I like what it is, like a lack of restraint is the idea. They, they forget what restraint is, and have you noticed how progression, how sports have progressed? We had, we had regular sports.

It's no longer skateboarding. Like, we had skateboarding when we were growing up, but we weren't hopping on rails at a, at a 45-degree angle and, and leaping 15 feet off a curb and to do a flip and land. You know what they're called now? It's not just sport.

It's extreme, continually going to more extreme, and bungee cords, jumping off a cliff tied to a, a rope so that you can plunge. It, it is a continual lust for satisfaction. It, it's a progression that Paul is warning about, and you see it in our culture, kind of unchecked the way it's going.

And it says what, what it, what it works is it ends up working all uncleanness, because it just, these things only, um, ignite the appetite. They never really satisfy. They, they, that's why even the world knows if you start with the smaller drugs and you use them regularly or the, the lesser drugs, what do they lead to? They, they lead to more because they, the, the effects you get wears off and you seek more.

And it, what does it lead to? Addiction, corruption, destruction of your own body, the loss of your life, the destruction of a home, the loss of a job. I mean, even good careers fall apart from seeking to satisfy a desire. It's a progression.

And, and, and Paul was telling the believers, do not live like this. Beware of living for your desires. You know, they, their understanding is darkened, and he contrasts this in the next chapter, chapter five.

Yes. Yeah, it is. They are divided in their mind.

Yeah. From extremes, they are. Follow with me.

We're just, let's just read Ephesians chapter five, or just listen to it if you don't have your Bible with me. Just read, listen with me. Therefore, be imitators of God as dearly beloved children.

Walk in love as Christ has also loved us and even given himself for us as an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweeter smell, smelling aroma. But fornication and uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you as it's fitting for the saints, neither filthiness, foolish talking, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather the giving of thanks. For this, you know, no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man who is an adulterer has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

And let no one deceive you with empty words, because of such things, the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not be partakers with them. For you were once darkness.

In other words, we at one time live without understanding, didn't we? We really didn't know God. We didn't know what pleased him. We didn't know what, how to live with him, led by his spirit, guided by his word in the fellowship of his saints.

We didn't know we were once darkness, but he says, now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of the light. And this is, listen to these words very carefully.

For the fruit of the light, or some versions say the fruit of the spirit, is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth. So walking in the light means you always do what is good. Now, let's put that on a practical level.

In every situation you face, how sweet would it be that your response is good? If your husband's having a bad day, your response is good to him. If your wife is having a bad day, your response is good. Yeah, brother.

Is this what happened in the garden that Adam and Eve lost that singleness of purpose because the enemy came in and made them. Feel like you're missing out. Yeah, exactly.

Exactly. Yeah, exactly. Yeah, it is.

Goodness, righteousness, and truth. How sweet would it be in every situation we face, every testing, whether it's financial, marital, whether it has to do with your work, whether it has to do with parenting, whether it has to do with your marriage, whatever it is. Your first concern is, what is righteousness here? What is righteousness before God? What would be pleasing to God? Goodness, righteousness, and truth.

Then he were slower to speak. The proverb says that the heart of the wise study to answer. Study.

That means speaking off the top of our head is probably not very wise. That means speaking the impulse thoughts is not very wise. We should weigh it before we say it.

Weigh it. Is it righteous? Is it good? Is it truth? And again, remember, is it righteous and good is deeper than is it accurate? Yes, the person may have done that or they may have said that. But is your thought full of mercy? Is your thought full of grace? Are you loving them like Christ love you? Are you forgiving them like Christ forgave you? You see, light.

If your eye is single, when in every situation you face as a wife, as a husband, as a parent, as a worker, as in any store, when you're driving, there's one thing you're looking for. What is pleasing to God? What is his

goodness to this person look like? Have you thought about that? Regardless of what someone does to you, what if your thought was what good would God have me do to them? That'd be awesome. Wouldn't it be awesome that you stop? You stop being the bad.

You stop wounding. You stop reacting. You stop hurting with your tongue and you sit.

You live to overcome evil with good. You bless. You do good.

You pray. No unwholesome talk ever comes out of your mouth. Only what is good for building others up according to their needs and ministers grace.

It is a life that is possible in the Holy Spirit. And here's the thing, you know, it would make us living this way would make every single one of us a saint. And isn't that the goal? Aren't we to be the saint in everybody's life? That there's Saint Omar, there's Saint Linda.

Your whole family thinks you're a saint. Your whole family thinks you're, that's the, I mean, shouldn't they? The people who know you? Shouldn't they think you're a saint? Shouldn't they like be careful around you? Like you're so holy. You're so pure.

You're so good that they run at the mouth. They're like, oh, I'm sorry. They're uncomfortable cussing around you because you're just, you never do that.

They always see you walking in a way with integrity. That's the goal here. That's what is calling the believers to live in.

Because here's what happens. When we walk in the light in this way, it's not like it's our light, but it was like the moon. The moon has no light of its own, but what is it doing? It's reflecting the light of the sun.

And it's beautiful to look at. It just draws people attention in the midst of the darkness. There it is, this beautiful, gorgeous reflection of light.

And when we walk in the light, guess what we become? We become the light of the world. You are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works.

And what do they do? They glorify your father because they recognize where the goodness comes from. They know, especially when they've known us. See, that's what's really neat.

This is what's so encouraging. Everyone here, if you're not living this way, all that means is that everyone in your life is set up to see the difference when you begin to live this way. That's all it means.

They know you now. Let them see what God can do in you. Let them see the power of Christ guiding you, governing your speech, governing your thoughts, governing your response to where they think, this is a new person.

It's like, this is a new creation. This person has died. I don't even know.

And who receives the honor in that? You see, that is the testimony God deserves. That demonstrates his power to the world. Paul said that to servants, to their masters.

He said, let your conduct be so noble that it adorns the teaching of Christ with beauty. It's like it decorates the word with the beauty of your example as you live it out. That's the goal for us.

That's what it means to walk in the light as he is in the light. This is, we see clearly, but the key to this, the key to this is Jesus gave us the key. Your I has to be single.

You're not going to see if it's, nobody knows the trouble I've seen. When it's more important to you to let everybody know how you've been treated, what they did to you, or what they didn't do, or what your boss did, or what that coworker did, or what your wife did, or what your son did, you know, so they can understand why you're upset, you know, so you get to vent. You get to vent and you get to say those things.

You've lost your focus. You have lost your focus. Your focus has now become you.

You've turned away from the light. You're kind of standing in the shadow. It's not that the light's not there, just not entering.

In Jeremiah, there's a scripture in Jeremiah, some of our English versions that are translated from the Hebrew say that the heart is desperately wicked and beyond cure who can know it, but the Septuagint, the Greek version, uses the term bathos, like a bathysphere, and bathos is deep. When it says that the heart is desperately deep, like a deep well, and when a well is deep, you can't necessarily see what's at the bottom unless you shine a light directly over the top into it. If the light's at an angle, light won't reach the bottom.

To really see ourselves, to really see clearly, you have to come to God and look up and just say, reveal to me. Isn't that what David did? Search me, oh God. Search me, oh God.

Try me and know my thoughts and see, see Lord, if there be any wicked way in me. He's asking for light. He's asking to see himself because you know the person who does not see themselves is deceived.

They're deceived about themselves. That means they see themselves as something that God does not see. When you walk in the light as he is in the light, that will not happen.

That will be, you will do what he says. I love the song, when we walk with the Lord in the light of his word, what a glory he sheds on our way. When we do his good will, he abides with us still and with all who will trust and obey.

I believe that the Lord would have us walk in this way as soon as we can, by resolution, with the right reason. This is what motivates me. I'm, I'm not doing it to try to earn a way into heaven.

I already, I already know I have a home in heaven. What, what I want is, I want people to encounter genuine grace and spiritual life. I want them to have a chance to see some Christians are real to the bone, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

They're not hypocrites, that we live what we say we believe. I just, because I know that it's that life that is the only authority that really gives any weight to the Bible anymore. I don't know if you understand this, maybe 30 years ago, maybe 20 years ago, we could say the Bible says, or scripture says, and that would almost get people like, listen, anymore? I don't care.

I don't care what it says. That means the key to giving the scripture weight is our walk, how we walk. Isn't that what it says about, about the woman with the meek and quiet spirit? It's such a powerful example.

It says she's able to win her husband without a word. And that means this for us, men and women included, when we live in that kind of meekness and quietness and purity in the Holy Spirit, we will win people around us without a word. Our conduct will do it.

We'll be able to speak as well, but we won't have to speak very much because actions speak louder than words. And they will so see that we're walking in the light. They'll just, they'll be able, things will become clearer.

You know, when you are selfless, giving, considerate, kind, observant, the selfish person is ashamed. The person who's, it's always about them. They see it.

They may not admit it, but they see it because they can see you are so different. The person who's always got to be the center of attention, always talking. And you're, you're the quiet one, just picking up plates, taking out trash, you know, helping, opening the door for someone else.

They're the life of the party. But long after everybody's laughing, who do the people really remember? The servant, the gracious one, the kind one. They do that.

This is being children of the light. This is what we are, living in the light, walking in the light with our, because our whole body is full of light because that's our one purpose. We want to see things the way God sees them.

And we want others to see God at work in us. And that's, that's just hopeful to me. There are people that are not even in my life now that I, I feel like didn't get a chance to see that mature, that finished process that I'm hoping I still have another opportunity with, that I still pray for.

You know, if I have opportunities, I look forward to the day when I can sit down with them and say, listen, I see now. I just didn't really know the meekness of Christ. Like I see it now.

I'm, I didn't understand gentleness. Like I didn't realize how impatient and selfish I was at the time. You see, as we continue to walk in the word, you'll see, we will see clearer and clearer and clearer.

And I think the clearer we see, the less mistakes we'll make. Literally, we will not make the same mistakes. And, and that's what I would hope for us, you know, just to encourage us to pursue this.

And, you know, in, in our studies, whoever's teaching here, whatever purpose it is, whatever different topic it is, let it be this one goal that every one of us would understand the Lord better for one purpose, so that we can walk in a way that's even more, more, more pure, more clear to have a good testimony, you know. And remember, it's not just, not that just because you're a member of University Park Church, not, that's not it. Is it, you have the name of the Lord upon you.

You're calling yourself by the name of Christ. So every action and word that you or I do is associated with the Lord Jesus. Everyone.

So when you walk in the light and manifest the fruit to the spirit, Jesus will be honored in your patience. Jesus will be honored in your kindness. Jesus will be honored in your mercy.

Jesus will be honored in your gentleness. Jesus will be honored in your helpfulness and your thoughtfulness. And the, and the, and the, the reputation of the church will not be tainted or stained by the actions of someone who they know goes there, but is not walking in a way that's honoring Jesus.

Because, listen, whoever it is, me first. If I'm doing something out there and it's uncouth, it's just me. It's not Jesus.

I'm not thinking. I'm thinking about me. I'm in my flesh and I just spout it out.

I can't disassociate myself with who I am here. It does affect all of you. And what you, every one of you says affects all of us.

It does. We are the body of Christ and we need to walk in this kind of light and just encourage one another. No, not to be discouraged.

You know, let's hold one another to the standard to walk this way, you know, to just to bring honor and glory to our Lord Jesus Christ and to the word of God by our lives. That was on my heart this evening. I didn't get a chance to put it in notes, but I hope that it's written on your heart right there.

Okay.

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