

# The Light We Need

by Jim Cymbala

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*Following Jesus and putting our trust in Him means we will not walk in darkness, but will have the light that leads to real life and eternal life.*

**Duration:** 29:39

**Scripture:** Proverbs 3:5-6, Proverbs 16:9, Matthew 6:33, John 8:12, John 14:6, Romans 3:23

**Topics:** "Light"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of following Jesus and trusting in Him to avoid walking in darkness. He relates a personal story from his senior year in high school, where he and his team practiced basketball drills in a gymnasium. The speaker then connects this experience to the concept of light in our lives. He explains that God has a plan for each person and that we find true happiness when we discover and fulfill that plan. The speaker encourages the audience to seek God's guidance in all areas of life, both moral and non-moral decisions, as God will show us the right path to take. He also invites those who have questions or have not yet accepted Christ to come forward and seek the light that Jesus offers. Overall, the sermon emphasizes the importance of following Jesus, trusting in His plan, and walking in His light.

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## Transcript

In the New Testament and the Gospels, Jesus said, I am, a number of times, I think it's like something like seven, and he said, I am the something. Can anybody think of something, the way he said it? I am the good shepherd. I am the way, the truth, and the life.

I am, well, here's one of them. He said a bunch, I'm the resurrection and the life. How about this one, in John 8? When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, I am the what? Light of the world.

Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. Let's look at that again. 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, whatever that is. Seeing my friend here today reminded me of something, because I want to talk about light. In our senior year, we were practicing at the Keeney Gymnasium and Fieldhouse where games were played, and we were running fast break drills where you would go three against two defenders to make sure when that situation come up in the game, you would get a layup out of it.

And I remember, I would usually be in the middle, dribbling the ball as a point guard. I remember, like it was yesterday, coming down the court, coaches on the sideline, guys behind me waiting to do it, coming down the court, stopping toward the top of the key near the foul line, and just as I was about to pass, all the lights went out in the gym. Not only did all the lights go out in the gym, all the lights went out at the University of Rhode Island.

Then we learned later, not only did lights go out at the University of Rhode Island, lights went out all over Rhode Island. Not only did we learn about Rhode Island, lights went out all over New York City, and that was the great blackout. How many remember those good old days? And I remember hearing about a woman stuck in an elevator, the 90th floor somewhere.

I forgot how long it took us to get back lights there, but I know in the city, things got crazy. Riotings happened, people started breaking into stores and looting because there was no light, no lampposts, no nada, nothing. And groping around in the locker room, trying to shower, bumping into things, no light.

And when you don't have light, you have a problem because you don't know where you're going. I remember in the house that I was raised in on Parkside Avenue between Bedford and Flatbush, I remember as a first or second grader going down the basement to get something, but it was dark and I couldn't reach, I was too little to reach the string that pulled the light on, they didn't have a switch for it. And I remember my father had moved his toolbox and I walked right into the toolbox.

How many have ever stubbed your toe like you want to go to another universe, it's an alternate reality? Oh my goodness, why? I could have just seen it and stepped over it, didn't see it, why? It was in the dark. Now what's interesting here is that Jesus said, I am the light of the world. Now that takes a lot of chutzpah for somebody to say that.

He either is somebody very special or he's the biggest deluded fraud that ever walked on the planet. Because he didn't say, I will teach you light. He didn't say, listen to my teaching like a rabbi would and follow what I say, no, Jesus said, I am the light, not just of the town, I am the light of the world.

Well, wait a minute, I thought the sun was the light of the world. When the sun goes down, for thousands of years before electricity, when the sun went down, there was nothing except fire. Did you know that most of the history of this world was lived by fire at night? Light, electricity, this kind of thing, that's relatively new.

Century after century after century after century after century after century, there was nothing once the sun went down but fire. And hopefully a clear sky and the moon. And why fire became so important is that people wanted to know where they were going.

And did you know that's why people most times would go to bed when the sun went down after they ate their last meal and they would wake up when the sun came up? Why, because it was the return of light. Now Jesus said, I am the light of the world. That's an audacious statement.

And what did he mean? Obviously it had nothing to do with physical light. Because we have a sun, and now we have electricity, and we have lights from your cell phone, and we have lights from flashlights. And we have lights from candles, and we have all kinds of light.

But Jesus said, I am the light of the world. He was speaking spiritually. He was saying, until you follow me, until you put your trust in me, you're gonna walk in the dark.

Oh, you'll see everything, but you won't be seeing what you need to see. About the meaning of life, the purpose of life, the problem of sin, the need for forgiveness and pardon. Because Jesus taught, as the Bible teaches, that everyone here in this building has sinned and violated their conscience.

I know I have 1,000 times. Broken God's word, said things, done things, thought things, and held them in my mind that were not right. So Jesus said, if you follow me and trust me, you won't walk in darkness anymore, but you will have the light that leads to real life, eternal life.

This is a very simple but important concept. That when you follow Jesus, you put your trust in Jesus, the lights go on. Not the lights here, the light in here.

A light goes on, and you start to see things with clarity. You start to understand the meaning of life. You start to know the difference between right and wrong.

Unless you follow Jesus and put your trust in Jesus, you'll think that right and wrong is what you make up, and what you think is right or wrong. And that's how most of the world lives. They decide what's right or wrong.

Well, that's crazy, though, because Hitler thought it was right to kill Jewish people. And the German people greatly supported him, probably in the late 30s, they certainly did. And when Jewish people were disappearing, nobody raised a lot of to-do about it, because they did it in the name of God.

I mean, the Jews were lesser people to them, and they thought that was right. Does that make it right? Well, of course not. Now we look back and say, that's monstrous.

There were slave owners who beat the living daylights out of slaves, and they thought that was right. They went to church on Sunday. They had preachers who preached that that was okay.

Does that make it right? No, you and I can't decide what's right. Only God can decide what's right and wrong. And he does that by shining his light into us and by opening the Bible to us so that we go by what the Bible says is right or wrong.

Sometimes I get emails and somebody says to me, is this true or how do you feel about that? I really, my opinion is worthless. I'm just a frail human being. Religion, Christianity is not about your opinion or my opinion or what you saw growing up or what I saw growing up.

Christianity is about the truth of God. And Jesus said, if you follow me, the person who follows me, you won't walk in darkness, but you'll have the light that will lead to eternal life so that when you die, you will not cease to be or go to a place of punishment. You will live with God forever.

That's the light that he gives. I disagree with that. I don't see it that way.

Well, I mean, is that the way we handle anything else in life? Two and two is four. That's your opinion. I think it's six.

Well, you can think it's six, but two and two is four. There's such a thing called truth. And when we follow Jesus and put our trust in Jesus and let him teach us God's word, we start living in the light, especially this light.

The light that we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God and going to church won't change it. And making promises that you'll be different has nothing to do with that. That will not wash.

The only thing that removes sin and the guilt of sin is to put your faith in Jesus Christ. That 2,000 years ago, he died on a cross. And he died for us.

He bore all that punishment. I was reading last night Isaiah 53, part of the Jewish Hebrew scriptures, which are part of our Bible. How would Isaiah know hundreds of years before how Christ would be massacred? How would he know that? He's talking about the Messiah that the Jewish people were waiting for.

And he said, now when he came, he was like a root out of dry ground. There was nothing about his appearance that anybody would want him. Isn't that amazing? You know, somebody has said, if Jesus appeared on earth now, would anyone recognize him? Because he was not some superhero.

He was not, looked like a Mr. All-America. The Bible says he had nothing about him that would draw us to him. On top of that, he was rejected.

He was mocked. And they beat him so that he was so disfigured, you didn't even know if it was a human being anymore. How would Isaiah know that they would do that to Jesus? I mean, we know it was written hundreds of years before.

Well, that's walking in the light. That's the light of God's truth. But he was wounded for our, he was bruised for our iniquities.

The chastisement that he bore made peace possible for us, and by his stripes, we're healed in every way. We can have a new life, a new beginning, not just body, but more importantly, in your mind and in your soul. So anyone who follows me, Jesus said, won't walk in darkness anymore.

The Bible says very boldly that some people are walking in the light and other people are walking in the darkness. And because they walk in the darkness, they bump into things. And they make wrong decisions because they can't see where they're going.

Is that not the history of the human race? Isn't that the history of all of us in here? Haven't we made some of the most bone-headed decisions? Haven't we done some of the stupidest things that hurt us and our families? Why? We thought it was right or we wouldn't have done it. We were walking in the dark. Now, that's humbling, but it's true.

We were walking in the dark. One of the other things that this light, and light is used here two ways. Light is used for righteousness and darkness is used for the deeds of darkness.

The practices of sin are called the deeds of darkness. Light is a symbol of purity and God and holiness. But there's another light that God promises us, which is, as I'm saying, the light to see what's going on, like what's going down, to see what's happening all around us in a spiritual way.

Because you could see what's happening around you in a physical way. I go to my job, there's that guy, there's this woman, and all of that. But what's really happening? What are the attacks of Satan on your life? You can't know that unless God's light is shining in on you.

Then you can pick up what's going on really in your life, your daughter or your son. When my oldest girl got away from us and from God and we went through a two and a half year long nightmare, the development of it, I was in the dark. My wife probably picked it up sooner.

I knew something was wrong, but I didn't see it. I didn't have that light to see it. I was so busy that I didn't ask God for light, what's going on in my own house.

Shame on me. Light is used in another way here, the ability to see, for example, like what is God's plan for this young lady? What is God's plan for her life? Why was she created? I know she's the daughter of two parents, but what's the whole plan of her life? You can't see that until God's light begins to shine in on you. Until you begin to trust in Jesus, you won't even know why you're here.

You'll think it's to make a job, go on a vacation, procreate, have a couple kids, and you'll think that's it. But so many people are doing that and they're depressed out of their mind. They're taking drugs to escape, or oxycodone, to just escape the boringness, the emptiness of their life.

And people are doing it who are making millions of dollars a year. Athletes are doing it. Movie stars are doing it.

They have everything, but they have nothing. Why? Because they don't know where they're going. Why? Where did I come from? Where am I gonna end up? What's the reason for I'm alive? There's not even a thought.

Because Jesus said, if you follow me and trust me, you will not walk in darkness. You will know what's going on around you. And you'll understand the plan that I have for your life.

Did you know that God has a plan for every one of us? A plan for your life or my life. And you know when you're the happiest in life? When you found out what God wants you to do and be, and you just do it. Doesn't matter if people applaud you or don't know who you are.

That's irrelevant. It's that you're doing the thing you were created to do. That is made up, ladies and gentlemen, of decisions.

That is made up of coming to forks in the road and knowing whether to go right or left. And all of us here, whether it's for our own lives, financially, our jobs, our children, everybody faces decisions. Nobody can escape that.

If you're involved in music, you have to make musical decisions, career decisions. You know, what to do. And God says, Jesus taught, and the Bible says, that when you put your trust in Christ and you live as a Christian and follow the Lord, that light will shine on you.

And you'll not only have the big picture, but you'll have the little picture, you'll have the micro moves that you have to make to get where God wants you to get. Because life gets really complicated sometimes. Am I right or wrong? It gets complicated.

You don't know, do I go here or do I go there? To live a life and not know what to do because you're walking in the dark and there's no light. You're gonna hit a brick wall. Have we not all hit brick walls? If we saw them coming, we would have avoided them, wouldn't we? But we hit a brick wall.

So what I wanna say to you is when these disciples began to follow Jesus, he not only brought them into the light away from darkness, he began to shine his light on them so they knew what to do, where to go, what to say, what decisions to make. And right now in America and across the world, most Christians who even believe in God and read the Bible, they do not consult that light. They do not consult the Lord about decisions.

They make decisions on their own because it just seems right to them. Like, Mama didn't raise no fool. I know what to do.

I went to college or I got a master's or all of that. And yet they bumble, they fumble, they're empty. They're depressed.

Everything falls apart in their life. There's no peace, there's no joy because they're going by their light rather than his light. And if you're here today, I didn't wanna speak this message to be honest with you, tried to move away from it, but it's like God was impressing me, I believe, that he brought people in here today who really need to hear this.

I got the sense that like, no, speak this because someone's about to make a decision and they're doing it in the dark. And I've made enough of those. I've made enough of those.

They all end up bad because it's not done with God's light helping you to know what to do. Haven't you ever been in a situation in life? Am I the only one? How many ever been in a situation and you had no idea what to do? Just lift your hand. No idea, like, what do I do? I don't know what to do.

I have no idea what to do. And both ways seem right or both ways seem wrong and you don't know what to do. And God promised us that if we'll put our trust in Jesus, he will not only save us from darkness, he will keep us in the light, not only moral light, but he will help us to make the right decisions in life which affect us and our children and so on and so forth.

And a lot of us are not living with that confidence that God loves me and has a plan for my life, but that plan can only be worked out when I walk in the light and make decisions that he wants me to make. There's a promise in the Bible that says when you hit a crossroad, you'll hear a voice behind you saying, this is the way, walk in it. And we need that in life.

We need that in life. Otherwise, you make decisions that seem right and they blow up in your face. And then you go back and say, if I only would have done something different.

How many people are depressed and angry at the end of their life because they look back on a life of wrong decisions because they only consulted themselves, but God says, no, I will lead you. I will direct you. I could give examples from my own life.

You have your examples where the Lord led you to do what he wanted you to do. My mom is here today. She's 98 years old, by the way.

Gonna be 99 in November. Do you realize next year she's gonna be 100? And the other day when I hugged her, I said, how are you feeling? She said, Jim, I'm getting old. Yeah, I would say.

But I made a decision, even though I wasn't trained to be a minister, God's light shone in on me and said I was supposed to go in the ministry. And I was telling a few people this week, that was very, very hard for

me. And I always said, no.

I didn't play basketball. I went to college, cut a lot of classes, but I did graduate. Oh, don't act like you never cut classes, please.

That's a little much. And what am I gonna do in the ministry? But I felt like, no, that's what God wanted me to do. And my mom was not in a good place then.

My dad was drinking heavily, a lot of violence. And my wife will tell you, there was an understanding between us that if my mother ever called me, I would just leave and go to her rescue or go to defend her because something crazy was going on. So to leave my job and to go in the ministry, I remember telling my mother, and she had been beaten down by life a little bit.

She's not where she is now spiritually. This is the best she's ever been in her whole life, more mature spiritually than ever before. But I said, mom, I'm leaving my job and I'm gonna go in the ministry.

And she said, Jim, what are you gonna do that for? I said, well, she said, but you have a degree. You went to college. You graduated from the University of Rhode Island.

What are you gonna do in the ministry? I said, well, I'm just, you know, and I could feel my heart starting to get broken up as she was questioning me. I knew she wasn't happy. And she said, but how are you gonna live? And I said, well, the church has no people, no money, but we're gonna live by faith.

And she said, and what does faith pay? That was a very good question. I never had thought of that in my life. And I remember tears coming out of my eyes and me ending the conversation because I knew she wasn't happy.

But it was God's plan for my life. Sometimes you don't know what to do even though you're trusting in God. Have you ever been in that situation? You want God to lead you, but you come to a spot where you go, que pasa? What's happening here? Like, God, I'm trusting you.

But I don't see any light. I don't hear any illumination. In fact, I'm in the dark right now.

Not in the dark in a moral darkness way, but I'm in the dark like I don't have a clue. Look, Isaiah chapter 50. Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the word of his servant? Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God.

Let the person who is trusting in God, who loves the Lord, who comes to a spot, he doesn't know what to do, and the pressure says, make a decision, make a decision. Let that person who doesn't know what to do say, God, though I don't know what to do, I will trust you that you will lead me, you will guide me, but I'm not gonna rush ahead and go by my IQ. I'm gonna wait for you to show me what to do.

That's how the gospel came to a part of what we call Greece. It went to Philippi. Paul the apostle went there to Philippi, to Corinth.

We have letters in the Bible. Did you know that happened? Paul wanted to go up to what we call Asia, what we call Turkey, and the Bible is called Asia, and the Bible says he wanted to go there with his band of ministers, and it says God forbid him, wouldn't let him go, and he wanted to preach the gospel. He wasn't selling lottery tickets.

He wanted to go and preach the gospel, but God said don't do it. So then he went a little bit heading west, and he tried to go into a place called Bithynia, and the book of Acts says, but the spirit of Jesus forbid him, don't go there. So now he got stuck.

He wants to preach the gospel. He's trying to go to two places, but God says no. That light is leading him, but not to go there.

There's a block. So you know what he does? Nothing. That's what I want to tell you today.

When you don't know what to do, don't let anybody force you into a decision. You stop and you wait, because God, you trust him. He will direct you, but many times it's a test.

It's a test whether we're gonna trust him all the way, or whether we're gonna run and go by our own matchsticks and flashlights and fires that we set up, and as he just waited, the Bible says he had to go. He had a dream at night, and there was a man from Macedonia, northern Greece, who said, yo, come over and help us, and Paul said, now I knew what to do, and they went, and the rest is such success and blessing, because when he didn't know what to do, he waited for God to show him what to do. So you who walk in darkness and don't know what to do, first ask him for his direction, but if it doesn't come right away, don't give up.

Trust in the Lord. He's not gonna let you down. He's gonna show you what to do.

How could God give his son to die for us on a cross, and now he's not gonna help me in life? That's crazy, that's not right. That's not right. He will help us, but look at this very solemn warning, and this frightens me when I think of all the people who go to church and say they believe in God, but don't give a hoot about God's direction, don't want his light to lead them and guide them.

They just make their own decisions. Look what follows in verse 11, but now all you who light fires and provide yourselves with flaming torches, go, walk in the light of your fires and of the torches that you have set ablaze. This is what you shall receive from my hand.

You will lie down in torment. You don't want me to lead you? You won't trust me? You won't let me be your guide? You don't think I have your best interests at heart? You're gonna go by your little flashlight, your little brain? You think you know more than I do about what should be done in your life? No, no, you're gonna end up in a bad place. I don't wanna light my own torch.

I want God's light. How many are with me? Say amen. I want God's direction.

I wanna know what God's plan is for my life. I don't wanna go by what my family says or what peer pressure says or what society says. I don't wanna go by what other ministers say.

I don't wanna go by what Pastor Cimbala says. Who's he? I wanna find out for all of you what God wants you to do, what God wants you to say. The decision, listen, please don't make decisions unless you're led by God.

I've made a bunch of those in my life. They blow up in your face. They blow up in your face.

God's way, even when it seems ridiculous, will work out better than the wisest thing that you could think of. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in the eyes of God. Yes, consult with people, pray with somebody, but let God know today, Lord, you're the light of the world.

I give you my life, and I'm gonna follow where you lead me. Would you close your eyes? If you're here today and you're facing a decision, this sermon resonated with you because these verses like, wow, Pastor Cimbala's reading my mail. How could God know that I needed to hear that today? Ah, yes, God knew I needed to hear that today.

Please, if you're here today, you're about to make a decision, especially if it's with an unbelieving man or woman and you're hooking up into some relationship, I plead with you, ask God for his will in your life. I don't care how pretty they look, handsome, God knows what's best for your life. He sent us Jesus, the light of the world, and he said, now walk in that light, and I'll show you the path that you should take.

Not only the biblical path of what's right and wrong, but the path of making decisions that are non-moral. Do I go left or do I go right? Do I leave that job? What do I do now that I'm unemployed? God will show you what to do. God will show you.

If you're here today up in the balcony or downstairs and you say, Pastor, I have questions about what I should do right now. Some area of my life. Just get up out of your seat.

Or if you've never given your life to Christ, you've never become a Christian, oh my goodness, now you're living in the dark. You don't even know where you're going. You come up and stand in the front.

God, thank you that you love us so much that you don't want us to even walk in the dark for 30 seconds. You not only give us salvation when we put our trust in Jesus, you not only forgive us our sins, you not only give us the gift of eternal life, you have promised that you would navigate us through life here on planet Earth. And God, it gets complicated.

It gets painful at times. People break our hearts. We don't know what to do.

We're between a rock and a hard place. We don't know where to turn. Thank you for your light.

Thank you that you said you would never leave me or forsake me. Thank you that you said you would be there when no one else is there for us. You will be there for us.

Though our mother and father turn on us, you will take us in. Help my friends who are up in the front here who have to make decisions, are facing a crossroad, a fork in the road. Show them to go left or to go right or to not even go either one, that there's a new road you're gonna open up, not even one road we understand.

Keep us close to you so that we'll understand what you're saying to us. Keep us every day reading our Bible so that we'll be filled with truth and light. Keep us from deeds of darkness that will cloud our minds.

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Have mercy upon us, oh God, according to the multitude of your tender mercies and your loving kindness. Thank you that you love us more than anyone else in this world.

And you will lead us in the way we should go. And we believe it, and we expect it, and we are happy about it. We are not depressed.

We are happy that you will lead us. Now, Father God, bless us today. Help us to love one another right now.

Make everybody feel welcome, visitors, regular attendees. Let everyone feel the warmth of your love through us, through me. Be with us the rest of this day, we pray in Jesus' name.

And everyone said. Amen. Let's give God an ovation.

Come on, a real mas fuerte.

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