



HIGHLIGHT: John 8:12-20

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¹²Then Jesus spoke to them again: “I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows Me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life.”

¹³So the Pharisees said to Him, “You are testifying about Yourself. Your testimony is not valid.”

¹⁴“Even if I testify about Myself,” Jesus replied, “My testimony is valid, because I know where I came from and where I’m going. But you don’t know where I come from or where I’m going. ¹⁵You judge by human standards. I judge no one. ¹⁶And if I do judge, My judgment is true, because I am not alone, but I and the Father who sent Me judge together. ¹⁷Even in your law it is written that the witness of two men is valid. ¹⁸I am the One who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me.”

¹⁹Then they asked Him, “Where is Your Father?”

“You know neither Me nor My Father,” Jesus answered. “If you knew Me, you would also know My Father.” ²⁰He spoke these words by the treasury, while teaching in the temple complex. But no one seized Him, because His hour had not come.

E

EXPLAIN

Leaders: Feel free to use any of the “Explain” materials to guide discussion as it is needed or to expound on a certain area of the text as it comes up during your Life Group time, but the purpose of this section is to deepen your own personal understanding of the Word. Your members have access to all of this material as well.

In Exodus, the third element prescribed for the Tabernacle was the menorah, or lampstand. Walter C. Kaiser wrote of this menorah, “Central to the teaching of the Tabernacle is the One who is the Light of the World. Thus where God dwells, there is light.” In the Tabernacle, the menorah served to remind Israel that God is the Light of the World.

Standing in the Temple during the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus caused quite a stir among the religious elite by making spectacular claims about Himself: namely, that He was the Messiah, the Son of God. In today’s passage, He calls Himself something only the Son of God could have honestly proclaimed: He referenced the significance of the menorah in the Tabernacle and fulfilled it, declaring that He is the Light of the World.



vv.12-20 When we see the word “then,” we must look at what came before it in order to properly place ourselves in the context in which the text takes place. This is tricky in this passage, however, since most Bibles include John 7:53-8:11 in brackets. The reason they do this is because the passage about the adulteress forgiven is either not included in the earliest manuscripts or else appears elsewhere in the gospel. Based on its lack of inclusion in the earliest manuscripts and verbiage that is foreign to the rest of the book of John, it is most likely that “then” refers to the conversation Jesus was just having with the Pharisees in John 7.

This is a crucial piece of information to have, since the setting and audience of Jesus’ words add amazing depth to what He said. According to verse 20, this conversation happens in the Temple’s treasury: a location we can still know today, thanks to its preservation throughout history.

The treasury was located in a portion of the Temple called the Court of Women. It was the farthest point inside the Temple complex that women were allowed to go. The Court of Women was often the most populated place inside the walls of the Temple. Jesus frequented this area on many occasions, like when He watched the widow “outgive” all of the rich people depositing their offerings in the treasury containers.

During the Feast of Tabernacles, the time of year in which this passage takes place, there were four large candelabras that were lit in the Court of Women in a ceremony called “The Illumination.” It was said that the light from this massive lighting ritual could be seen all across Jerusalem once they were lit. The light called back to how God led the Israelites through the desert: with a pillar of clouds by day and a pillar of fire by night.

The contrast between light and darkness is one of the most prevalent themes in all of Scripture, and takes on some of the most nuanced and fascinating meanings of any other biblical imagery. Here are four other passages where light is mentioned:

In Psalm 27:1, darkness represents danger, but light represents rescue from it.

In Isaiah 9:1-2, darkness represents devastation, but light represents the hope of rebuilding.

In Isaiah 49:6, light represents the message of God which is sufficient for all nations, no matter their darkness.

In Ephesians 5:8-14, darkness represents our old natures, and light the new life we have in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 5:13-14 sums the discussion up nicely: “Everything exposed by the light is made clear, for what makes everything clear is light. Therefore it is said, ‘Get up, sleeper, and rise up from the dead, and the Messiah will shine on you.’”



APPLY

*Your Leader Guide will have material that the member guides do not have. The **bolded** material is what the people in your group will have, the other material is only for you to help guide discussion.*

This guide can be as strict a script or as general a resource as the leader needs it to be.

1. **What stuck out to you or challenged you in what you heard in the sermon or read in the text?**
2. When the Israelites looked at the Menorah, they thought back on the pillar of fire that guided them in the wilderness. **What is your “pillar of fire” in the wilderness—what can you look back on to remember how God has worked in your life?**

Every time the Israelites saw elements of the Tabernacle, they were reminded of aspects of God’s provision and presence. As they looked at the Menorah, they would have remembered that even when times seemed desperate, God was there before them guiding their steps. As we follow God’s leading in our lives, we will have the same markers—proof that He is going before us, preparing the way for us to follow Him.

3. Look up and read each of these passages: Psalm 27:1; Isaiah 9:1-2; Isaiah 49:6; Ephesians 5:8-14. **What purpose does light serve in each of these passages? Which of these verses resonates most personally with you and why?**

In the “Explain” section above, a brief outline is provided for how light and dark are used to represent different aspects of the same theme. In Scripture, light always represents the work of God, and darkness the things that run contrary to Him. Take some time to note the different aspects of God that light represents in each of these passages.

4. Light has the ability to fill every corner of a completely dark room; nothing remains in darkness once it’s exposed to the light. **Why is this both frightening and hopeful? What is scary about the light exposing what was once hidden by darkness?**

We can tend to keep parts of ourselves hidden because once they’re exposed, they have to be dealt with. In some cases, we don’t want them to be exposed because they’re things we cling to, even if they’re bad or destructive. We may want to keep them hidden because we’re embarrassed about what it would mean if they were exposed. Jesus is more powerful than both of these things—there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Him, and He is faithful and just to forgive each of us from all unrighteousness. With that kind of power, there is nothing so dark that the Light of the World cannot overcome it.

5. **How has Jesus proven Himself to be the Light that drives darkness away in your life?**



RESPOND

Challenge your group to answer:

- **Take a moment to personally reflect on areas of darkness in your life that you need the Light of the World to shine on. Pray that Jesus would expose that darkness and draw you closer to Him.**

Encourage one another through email, text messages, or coffee dates throughout the week to build up and encourage each other.

