

SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT

VBS SUNDAY. JOHN 8:12.

Peter Foxwell. The Cornerstone Church. June 28, 2026.

Dismiss the Middle School

STUDY GUIDE

As you came in this morning, you should have received a bulletin. Inside, you'll find a simple study guide you can use in a few different ways: to follow along with today's teaching, to reflect on during your personal devotions this week, or to spark conversation in your small group.

More resources are available online. [The link is in your study guide.](#)

Let's get started on today's teaching ...

WELCOME TO ALL OUR VBS FAMILIES

Before we get started on today's teaching, I'd like to take the opportunity to welcome our guests and families joining us after Vacation Bible School.

Thanks for being here today. I hope you and your children had a great time at VBS, and if you're looking for a church home, please consider the Cornerstone.

I also want to take a moment to thank all of our VBS volunteers. You worked so hard and did an excellent job.

And a special thank you and well done to Becky, our excellent VBS director. You deserve a vacation.

JOHN 8:12

Today's teaching is based on the VBS theme verse. So, let's look at it now.

John 8:12 (CSB) 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."

Jesus was teaching about SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT and he made a contrast between darkness and light to illustrate spiritual reality.

So, that's what I'd like us to focus on this morning.

I'll answer three questions:

1. What is the **background** to Jesus's words?
2. What is the **darkness** he spoke about?
3. What is the **light** he spoke about?

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OF JESUS'S WORDS?

Imagine you are in Jerusalem in September or October, 32 AD. You have come from your farm in the low country to the city of God on a pilgrimage with thousands of men to celebrate one of the great Festivals in Judaism.

It's the Festival of Shelters (Leviticus 23:33-43). It lasted seven days, and it had two purposes:

- Gratitude for the fall harvest and ...
- Remembering God's protection and provision during Israel's forty years of wandering in the desert before entering the Land God promised to them.

God was with Israel - present with them in the desert.

There were two big events during the Festival:

- There was a **water** ceremony that commemorated God's provision of water in the desert. We won't get into the details today.
- There was a **light** ceremony. Four massive candelabras, forty feet high, were lit in the temple courts. The light was so bright that it could be seen all over the city.

The lights reminded everyone that God guided the nation through the desert by a cloud during the day and a column of fire during the night. That fire was God's presence with his people; his presence is light.

Jesus went up to Jerusalem during the Festival that year (John 7:14). He was teaching in the same temple courtyard where those massive candles were burning.

At one point, he said: “I am the Light of the world...” (John 8:12).

Just as God was Israel’s light in the desert, so Jesus is the light for the whole world. How can that be? By using a parallel here, Jesus was claiming to be God. He is God with us, present with us; he is our spiritual light.

OK. So, that’s the background, and that helps us understand what Jesus was talking about.

Now, let’s ask our second question: What is the darkness Jesus spoke about?

WHAT IS THE DARKNESS JESUS SPOKE ABOUT?

Jesus was talking about spiritual darkness. And spiritual darkness is the absence of God in our lives.

There are three aspects to spiritual darkness:

1. There is darkness from not knowing enough about God. That's an **information** problem and its solution is to learn about God. Getting involved in our church would help with that.
2. There is darkness from not understanding what we know about God. That's a **comprehension** problem. The solution is ask for help. Again, we can help you with that.
3. There is darkness from rejecting what we know about God. That's an **attitude** problem; that person is walking away from God.

Some of the people in the crowd that day heard Jesus speak and rejected him. Listen to their reactions:

John 7:20 (CSB) "You have a demon!" the crowd responded.

John 8:13 (CSB) So the Pharisees said to him, "You are testifying about yourself. Your testimony is not valid."

There were people in the crowd who wanted to kill Jesus for claiming to be God. They understood what he was saying, but they rejected Jesus. That's the darkness he was talking about - walking away from God.

Now, let's ask the third question: What is the light Jesus spoke about?

WHAT IS THE LIGHT JESUS SPOKE ABOUT?

Jesus was talking about spiritual light. And spiritual light is the presence of God in our lives.

Jesus is the Light in the sense that he is God. The same God who led Israel through the desert. Living in the Light is the same as embracing God in Jesus.

Therefore, Jesus said, *“Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life.”*

The word **“follows”** is important. It means to follow Jesus as his disciple - committed to him, learning from him, imitating him.

Jesus meant that anyone who commits to Jesus as God to learn and apply his teachings, comes out of spiritual darkness and into spiritual light and life; life from God.

Listen to what Jesus said later:

John 12:46 (CSB) I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me would not remain in darkness.

Jesus is the difference between darkness and light in our lives. The Bible says:

Colossians 1:13 (CSB) God has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.

When we turn to Jesus to follow him, the Bible says that we ... “turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God...” (Acts 26:18, CSB).

WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH JESUS?

That's a lot of information, but it all boils down to this: spiritual enlightenment is found in Jesus. So, what will you do with Jesus?

I hope you won't mind me using myself as an illustration for a moment:

When I was in elementary school, my mom took me to church most Sundays. I heard the Bible, learned the stories, acted in the Nativity play at Christmas, and did not understand anything. I wasn't hostile, I just didn't get it. I was in the dark.

Maybe that's where you're at today. You don't get this Christian stuff. You're not against it, but you feel like you're in the dark.

What's the solution? Find out more about Jesus and the Christian faith? We can help you with that. Please talk to me after the service. I'll be here at the front, and I'd love to point you to resources.

Now to go on with my life story: By the time I was in high school and college...

By the time I was in high school and college, not only did I not understand anything about God, I was actively hostile towards him. I rejected God.

I remember debating a pastor who gave a presentation about Jesus at my high school. I was unfriendly and rude to him, challenging everything he said.

Then, in college, I remember despising Christians and mocking them in the dorm. I thought they were stupid and weak, and I wanted nothing to do with their Jesus.

You know why? Deep down, I wanted to live my life free from restraints; I wanted to do what I wanted to do. I didn't want God interfering in my life.

Until ...

A friend shared a few simple facts about Jesus, and invited me to turn from myself to follow him.

I cannot explain it all, but something happened in my heart. All my hostility towards God evaporated. I wanted to know him. I wanted to follow Jesus. And he brought me out of darkness into the light.

And he will do the same for you, if you will follow him.

I've shared a few simple insights about Jesus today. The rest is up to you. What will you do with Jesus? Ignore him? Reject him? Follow him?

I invite you to step out of the darkness into Jesus who is the light of the world. If that's a step you're ready to take, please come and talk to me. I'd love to guide you.

PERSPECTIVES ON SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT

Written with AI assistance.

The Bible speaks honestly about spiritual darkness—but it celebrates the far greater power of God’s light. Spiritual darkness is not just a bad mood or a rough season. It is a state of separation from God, where minds are blinded to His truth and hearts drift toward self, sin, and idolatry (Ephesians 4:17–18; 2 Corinthians 4:3–4). In darkness, we stumble without true direction, call evil good and good evil, and live alienated from the God who made us (Isaiah 5:20; Colossians 1:21).

But into this darkness, God has shone a decisive, saving light. Jesus Christ stands at the center: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12). God rescues sinners “from the domain of darkness” and transfers them into the kingdom of His beloved Son (Colossians 1:13–14). To come into the light is first to come to Christ Himself—to repent and believe the good news of His death and resurrection (Mark 1:14–15; John 12:35–36).

Practically, stepping into the light means bringing our darkness into the open before God. We stop hiding. We confess our sins and trust His promise that “if we walk in the light... the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7–9). Then, as people who have been “called... out of darkness into his marvelous light,” we learn to walk daily as children of light—shaped by His Word, strengthened by His Spirit, and shining with His goodness in a dark world (1 Peter 2:9; Ephesians 5:8–10).

More Information

For more information about Jesus and spiritual enlightenment, please speak to Pastor Peter or visit our Book Table for resources to guide you.