

# I am the Light of the World

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John 8:12

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.'

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

## 1. The Definition of Love

Last Monday through Thursday I attended a convocation held in Los Angeles, CA for Korean UMC pastors and lay leaders. The theme was "Building a Community in the Promised Land." I am so thankful that I attended the gathering and am grateful for your prayers. I had an awakening moment of understanding what the identity of the church is. It happened when we had a Bible study on Paul's letter to the Ephesians. The speaker talked about how to build the community of faith, and he pointed out that the church is God's household, and the way to build up God's household is love.

I have been very focused on trying to love God's people since coming to our church. However, the definition of love can sometimes be hard to define. What is your definition of love? In LA, CA the speaker asked us what the opposite of love is. He said the opposite of love is not hatred, but apathy, or lack of interest. So, if we flip that definition, love is to have interest, care, sympathy, passion, and concern about others. I like the speaker's definition of love. He defined love as "response + ability." When we say that we love someone, it means that we respond to their needs, having interest, and taking care of them and the things that are important to them.

## 2. The Seven "I Am" Statements

1 John 4:8 says, "**God is love,**" and John 15:9 says, "**As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.**" In John's gospel, the term "love" appears 38 times. The writer of the Gospel of John stresses that Jesus came to love us by responding to our needs. The ways of responding to our needs are described in the seven "I am" statements. Jesus says, "**I am the bread of life**" (6:35), "**I am the light of the world**" (8:12), "**I am the door of the sheep**" (10:7), "**I am the good shepherd**" (10:11), "**I am the resurrection and the life**" (11:25), "**I am the way, the truth and the life**"

(14:6), and **“I am the true vine”** (15:1). These seven “I am” statements clearly tell us who Jesus is and how Jesus loved us.

This morning we are going to reflect on one of those statements, **“I am the light of the world.”** Jesus came to love us as the light of the world. This “I am” statement in John 8:12 is Joanie Cahoon’s favorite Bible passage. She says this passage was read to her when she received her first Bible in 1945. She still sees the expression of love in her minister’s eyes as he presented her with her first Bible. Since then, Joanie has tried to follow His light. **“I am the light of the world”** means that in the midst of darkness and dark times, Jesus comes to dispel darkness and to light the path ahead of us and shine his light on us.

### 3. The Lord is My Light

According to Genesis chapter one, God first created light. Verses 3-4 say, **“Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good.”** But in Psalm 27:1 God Himself is introduced as the light. **“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”** It is not clear what **“The Lord is my light”** means, but since the writer talks about salvation and no fear, he seems to say that God protects, helps to win, or gives hope. Isaiah 60:19 also says, **“but the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory.”** Psalm 27 and Isaiah 60 say that God is the true light.

In today’s scripture, Jesus says he is the light of the world. What does Jesus mean when he says that he is **“the light of the world”**? The world is symbolized in darkness, a symbol of ignorance, evil, and sin. Jesus tells us that he is the true light (John 1:9) reflecting God’s light. Similar to the image of the light in the wilderness leading the Israelites out of Egypt, Jesus tells us that he is leading the world out of the darkness of the present state.

### 4. The Light of Life

However, in John 8:12, this statement is added. **“Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness and but will have the light of life.”** What does “the light of life” mean? The answer can be found in the previous passage. It is interesting to notice that right before 8:12, there is an episode about a woman who was caught in adultery. The NIV Bible tells us in brackets that **“the earliest and most reliable manuscripts do not have John 7:53-8:11.”** It seems to be obvious that the passage interrupts the sequence from 7:52-

8:12. Yet, the story of a woman in adultery seems to be a good example for why Jesus was brought to be the light of life.

When some teachers of the law and Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery and asked about her punishment, Jesus says, **“Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her”** (8:7). When they heard this, they all left, one by one because they began to recognize the sin in their hearts and lives. The woman was supposed to be stoned to death. But Jesus was the light in her situation and saved her life.

## 5. Children of Light

As you heard from Cathy, Joanie has stopped counting the operations she’s had after 35 times. I couldn’t believe that Joanie had gone through this kind of experience when Christine and I met her for the first time last year. If I were her, I would complain about my sickness to God. But whenever I see her, she is always full of joy and happiness. Her smile is contagious and shines the light of the Lord to others. Ephesian 5:8 says, **“For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light.”** Joanie is certainly a child of light in the Lord Jesus. As Cathy said earlier, Joanie was told that she had less than a year to live when she was 29. But God has been with her for more than the past 50 years. I am so thankful to God that He has kept her for these many years with us. God has been giving her amazing power to win any sickness.

## 6. I Can Do All Things

This is why Joanie likes Philippians 4:13, **“I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”** What Paul says to the Philippians is that he had learned the lesson of contentment. Changing circumstances did not affect Paul’s inner contentment. Paul experienced both need and plenty. And yet even in the difficult times, Paul explained that he had learned how to handle everything from poverty to abundance through the Lord who was his strength. Joanie has also learned this through both sickness and in health. She has learned to believe in the words of Jesus, trusting in his faithfulness and experiencing God’s grace as she follows after Christ.

## 7. Conclusion & Application

The Book of Philippians was written when Paul was in prison. Even in these circumstances, Paul says to the Philippians, **“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.”** When I think of Joanie and the light that

she brings to our community, I feel like I understand a little bit better what Paul was trying to communicate to the Philippians. Despite difficult times in life, Jesus came into this world to bring light to the darkest of situations. The Lord is the light for Joanie, for the apostle Paul, and for each of us. We can trust in his unfailing love, and the new life that we have in Christ Jesus who sacrificed His life so that we would have a new life where we experience God's shining light in our lives. And we can share that light with the world around us. Praise the Lord who has come to be the light of the world. Amen.