

SESSION 5: JESUS THE LIGHT

5.0 OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

Welcome to this course called *Walking the Good Path*.

In this course we are looking at Jesus, not in a religious or “churchy” way, but as a real person who walked the good path of God the Creator, whom He called Father.

From early times, the people who followed Jesus became known as ***people of the way*** because they lived and acted in the ways that Jesus lived and acted in relation to God and to others. What Jesus taught and how He lived was all about helping people and showing people how to walk the good path of life with God their Creator and Father. He said, *“I am the Great Spirit’s pathway, the truth about who He really is, and the life of beauty and harmony He offers to all. There is no other guide who can take you to the Father. To know Me is to know My Father”* (John 14:6 FNV).

We read about this in the Gospel of John which is in the Bible and contains stories about the life and teachings of Jesus. It is called the Gospel of John because it was written by John, one of the earliest followers of Jesus. The word gospel means good news. For John, the life of Jesus was good news because Jesus showed him how to walk the good path of life. In this course we will be looking at what John discovers about Jesus.

During our previous sessions we discussed John’s description of Jesus as:

1. The Word – Jesus was sent by God the Creator to us. He is the message of God’s love.
2. The Truth – Jesus spoke the truth and is the Truth. He is trustworthy.
3. The Way – Jesus taught and showed us the way of living in God’s love.
4. The Life – Jesus came from God the Creator to offer fullness of life to all people.

5.1 REVIEW SESSION 4

In our previous session we discussed “Jesus the Life” and the trajectory of our own lives. We are all on a path that is taking us to a destination. Different pathways lead

in different directions to different destinations. The way of Jesus leads to the good life that is called eternal life, or fullness of life.

At the close of our last session your assignment was to look through John's Good News to find all the things Jesus says about life.

Discussion:

- *Did you find anything meaningful in what Jesus said about life, or in a life changing encounter someone had with Jesus in the Gospel of John?*
- *What is the one thing Jesus says that strikes you as being most important or relevant for yourself?*
- *What difference does Jesus bring to the lives of people and to our lives?*

5.2 DARKNESS VS LIGHT

John's Good News about Jesus is the good news of light coming into the darkness of the world. John says that Jesus is the Light of the Creator shining on everyone to illuminate the good path of life with God the Creator (John 1:1-13).

People have a problem finding their way to that good path. The problem is darkness. On the one hand, they cannot see the way through all the other things that attract them and distract them from living in harmony with the Creator and other people. On the other hand, people often prefer the darkness to light because darkness provides a good cover, a hiding place where they do not have to face the truth about themselves and where others cannot see the truth about them. Even though light is always stronger than darkness, some people deliberately choose to turn away from the light.

There is no darkness that can extinguish light. Light always breaks through and pushes back the darkness. Even a tiny light or candle in a totally dark room will be seen.

Light vs. Darkness Competition:

We will divide you into two groups and you will have five minutes to make the following lists.

Group 1 – make a list of all the advantages of light compared to darkness.

Group 2 - make a list of all the advantages of darkness compared to light.

Discuss:

- *In comparing the two lists (once completed), would you prefer to be on the Light Path or on the Dark Path?*
- *Why did you choose a particular path or why did you have trouble choosing?*

5.3 THE DIFFICULTIES OF DARKNESS

Let's remember that darkness has no power and no substance of its own. Darkness is the absence of light and light always proves the futility of darkness.

Light is essential for life. Without light, plants and animals cannot survive for any length of time. Plants cannot grow without light, and without plants, animals have no food source and are unable to survive.

Light also allows us to see things that we cannot see in the dark. We need light to find our way around obstacles and through unfamiliar terrain. Of course, there are technologies like x-rays that penetrate darkness and allow things that are obscured by darkness or obstacles to be seen. But it is still light that makes this possible. X-rays, infra-red, ultra-violet, and other technologies make use of light waves that are real but that cannot be seen by the human eye.

Unlike light, darkness has no substance of any kind. Darkness is simply the absence of light. Another way of describing darkness is as nothingness. In the beginning of John's Good News about Jesus, he says that Jesus came from the Creator and that in Him the Creator's life shines in the darkness bringing light to all people (John 1:1-4). Jesus is the light of life. It is impossible for darkness to overcome or extinguish the light of Jesus (John 1:5).

However, the problem is that some people prefer darkness.

Read John 3:1-21 and pay special attention to verses 19-21 (**NOTE:** It may be helpful to read these verses in the NIV as well as other translations or versions of John's gospel like the Message and the FNV). The FNV puts it in very clear terms saying it like this, ***"...because of their worthless ways people loved the dark path more than the light. When they choose the dark path, they don't want others to see, so they hide in the darkness and hate the light. But the ones who are true and do what is right are***

walking in the daylight so others can clearly see they are walking with the Creator.”

Discussion:

- *Why do some people choose the path of darkness instead of light?*
- *What do you think happens to people walking on a path in the dark?*
- *Can a person really get to a good destination without light to find the way?*

5.4 LIGHT AND INSIGHT

There is more than one kind of darkness. Blindness is the physical inability to see light. Persons who are totally blind are unable to see anything at all. When Jesus speaks of light, He is not speaking primarily of the physical ability to see or not see, but is talking about a person’s openness to seeing, accepting, and understanding the truth about life and God the Creator’s good path.

This is the point Jesus made in the conversation with Nicodemus, who was a religious person but pretty much set in his traditions. He was curious about Jesus but was not really open to trusting Him. He did not understand what Jesus told him about needing to be born again. To see the light, Nicodemus would have to leave his old way of living and looking at life. He would need to trust Jesus and His message of new life—a new start, like being reborn. Jesus gave Nicodemus insight, enlightening him as to what really matters in life.

At the end of the conversation, Jesus told Nicodemus that those who trust Him (believe in Him) will have fullness of life. The only way to find this good path to fullness of life is through trusting and following Jesus (John 3:15).

Exercise:

Insight is a matter of seeing things in a new way, a way that makes sense out of something we may not understand just by looking at it in a normal way. Likewise, without light or insight, we can simply be guessing and stumbling in the dark, unable to find the way. Insight, like light, enables us to see or understand something clearly.

These word puzzles below have a meaning that extends beyond the words themselves. Working in a group or individually, see if you can figure out the meaning that is conveyed in each one. In this example, the answer is the word “Crossroads”.

R
O
ROADS
D
S

INSIGHT: What do the following word puzzles mean?

1. MARY + MARY =

2. HOROBOD

3. Stood
Mis

4. StateStateStateState

5. esgg sgeg gegs gsge

6. Right = Right

7. Give Get
Give Get
Give Get
Give Get

8. M CE
M CE
M CE

9. Good Good
me me me me

10. Stand
I

11. D
N
A
T
S, D

12. GRAVITY



5.5 JESUS GIVES SIGHT TO THE BLIND

Read the story about Jesus giving sight to a man who had been blind all his life (John 9:1-9). This man was blind since the day he was born.

In those days, people did not know how to deal with anybody who had a disability like being blind or unable to walk. They tended to think there was more than something physical wrong with them, that their disability was caused by sin or wrongdoing either by their parents or themselves. So, they treated them like they were unworthy and unclean. They were usually shunned, often by their own parents, and were forced to beg in order to survive.

One day, Jesus was walking along with some of His friends when they came across a blind man begging on the wayside. The man had been blind from birth. Jesus' friends immediately asked these questions: Why was this man born blind? Was it his own fault or was it the wrongdoing of his parents that caused this?

Jesus answered that it was nobody's fault or wrongdoing. What it was, was an opportunity for the Creator's power to give sight and light to a man born in darkness. After Jesus told them this, He said, "I am the light of the world," and then He touched the man's eyes so he could see.

The blind man's life was completely changed, and even some of the people who had known him were not able to recognize him.

Discussion (10 minutes):

1. *Imagine what it would be like to grow up in total darkness, without being able to see other people, know what they look like, or visualize the places you are in.*
2. *Imagine if people treated you as if something was wrong with you as a person, as if your blindness was your own fault or the fault of your family.*
3. *Imagine what it would be like if the only way for you to survive was to beg for help, and you could not even see the people passing by.*

Break into small groups and discuss the following questions and come to agreement on a single answer to each (5 minutes):

1. *If you were the blind person, what is the one thing you would want most of all? Why?*

2. *If Jesus came by and offered to help you, would you accept His help or refuse it?*
3. *If you accepted His help and suddenly the dark world you lived in was full of light and colour and you could see life as you had never been able to - what would you do?*

The story about this blind man who was given sight continues (to the end of John 9), and Jesus made the point that it is not only physical sight that is important in life, but spiritual sight. Many people could not believe that a man born blind was suddenly able to see. Some of the religious leaders (they were Pharisees) were most skeptical. They keep questioning the man about what had happened and insisted that he was a sinner through and through. They did not believe him but insulted him. After all, just like a leopard cannot change his stripes, a blind man cannot get rid of blame or escape judgment for his condition!

Even the man's own parents did not stick up for him or defend him.

In the end, Jesus and the man who had been blind met again, and when he realized that the person who gave him sight was Jesus, he was in awe and believed in Jesus as the one sent by God to bring light to the world. The Pharisees, however, did not believe - they did not see Jesus for who He is. They insisted that they were not blind to what was going on, and they thought they knew the truth. How could they possibly be blind?!

Jesus responded to them by explaining that blindness is not just physical. Some people who claim they can see are even less able to see than physically blind people because they are closed to the truth. They are spiritually blind and cannot see or follow the good path of the Creator.

Discussion:

1. *Considering this story, in what ways is spiritual blindness like physical blindness?*
2. *Based on the response of the Pharisees to the man who had been blind, what are some signs or symptoms of spiritual blindness?*

5.6 THE CHOICE BETWEEN TWO PATHS

The man born blind was judged as being unfit and sinful. People blamed him for his condition. Jesus did not blame him or judge him but opened his eyes to see.

Our society also tends to judge and blame those who do or say something wrong.

Read the story of the woman who was accused of immorality (John 8:2-12).

The circumstances are not clear, but a woman was caught sleeping with a man who was not her husband. This was considered to be immoral as well as illegal. So, the elders of the community arrested her and intended to punish her. During those days, the penalty for what she had done was death. But before executing her (by stoning), the elders dragged her to Jesus to ask Him what He thought should be done. As far as they were concerned, the woman was guilty and deserved to die. The woman was obviously on a dark path that could only end badly.

When the elders brought the accused woman to Jesus, He did not respond the way they thought He should. Instead of agreeing with them, Jesus asked them to take a hard look at their own way of life. He challenged anyone who thought that they had lived a perfect life to throw the first stone. Of course, none of them were perfect, and so one by one they dropped their stones and walked away. After they were gone, Jesus told the woman that He was not going to judge or condemn her. Instead, He told her to turn her back on her broken way of life and walk in a good way.

Jesus does not condemn people who are walking on a dark path. He shows them the path of life. The choice is theirs. From the beginning to the end of John's Good News, Jesus' message and purpose is not one of condemnation but one of bringing light and life to people in darkness and trouble. Jesus' message is one of freedom from ultimate suffering and ruin on the path of darkness.

Read the following scriptures:

John 3:17 NIV

For God did not send His Son (Jesus) into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.

John 12:47 NIV

If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.

John 8:12 NIV

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."

Jesus' response to the woman was amazing. She had reached the end of her dark path and was about to be executed. But instead of condemning her, Jesus forgave her and offered her the opportunity to start a new life by leaving the dark path and walking on the good path of life.

Discussion:

1. *How do you feel about what Jesus did?*
2. *How do you think the elders felt?*
3. *How do you think the woman felt?*
4. *If you were in that woman's place, what path would you choose?*

5.7 WRAP UP AND ASSIGNMENT

By forgiving instead of judging the condemned woman, Jesus gave her life back to her. More than that, Jesus gave her the opportunity to leave the darkness of her past life and follow the good path.

What Jesus said and did sheds light on the good path of living in harmony with the Creator and with people. Try to find some life affirming things that Jesus said and did:

Read through John's Gospel to find as many examples as you can that show how Jesus responds to people, how He brings light into people's lives through His -

1. **Love and Acceptance** of all people, even those on the margins of society who are rejected, neglected, or condemned by others;
2. **Compassion** toward people suffering or in need;
3. **Mercy** (forgiveness) toward wrongdoers;
4. **Help** for needy or suffering people who cannot help themselves.

How do people respond to Jesus' message and care for them? How are they changed?