

# GIMME GOD!

Church Service Packet

Light of the World

John 8:12-18

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Welcome to the Gimme God! Worship Service. We have tried to make these resources as easy to use as possible. The sermons and prayers have been formatted with plenty of space to write in between the lines. Please feel free to make changes that will be most appropriate for your church.

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# Sermon

In our reading for today, Jesus says, “I am the light of the world.” We’re all familiar with this text, but let’s take a few moments to examine it further. What does it mean? Why did Jesus say it?

Interestingly enough, Jesus made this statement immediately after His encounter with the woman caught in adultery. The Pharisees had brought this woman to Jesus, asking if they should stone her. They were intending to trap Jesus, but He knew what they were doing and, instead, told them that whoever was without sin could cast the first stone.

One by one, all the Pharisees slunk away. These men, who were so intent on meting out justice to this adulterous woman, just left without another word. Why? Why would they leave?

They left because the words of Jesus pierced their hearts. They *knew* they were not without sin. Being in His presence and listening to His words illuminated their own sin in their own minds. Jesus never exposed them publicly, but one by one, they dropped their stones and went away.

After Jesus assured the woman that He didn’t condemn her, and after He encouraged her to go and leave her life of sin, He said to the people, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

This has been God’s main objective throughout history—to bring light to our dark world. His light is the only thing that can banish our darkness—the darkness of our sin, the darkness of our fear, the darkness of our isolation. He doesn’t want us to walk in darkness. Instead, He wants us to have the light of life, the light of His life.

## Light in the Bible

The theme of light is written all over the Bible. In fact, the Bible begins and ends with light. In Genesis, chapter 1, God begins His creation by saying, “Let there be light!”<sup>1</sup> And whenever we come into His presence, the first thing God does is seek to lighten our way, to illuminate the dark areas of our life. Coming to Him is like stepping out into the midday sun. We begin to see things more clearly.

The Bible also closes with the imagery of light. In Revelation, chapter 22, Jesus says, “I am the bright Morning star.”<sup>2</sup> Here, He is actually likening Himself to the sun. In fact, the Bible elsewhere calls Jesus the Sun of Righteousness. God’s very existence, His very presence is light.

So, what does that mean—to say that God *Himself* is light? John 3:19-20 gives us an idea:

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.<sup>3</sup>

Here, we see that those who do evil love darkness, because they don’t want to be exposed. They want to be able to carry out their dishonesty—their crime, their lusts—under the cover of darkness. They don’t want people to know who they really are, because they want to be able to take advantage of people, to sucker them.

## God Operates in the Open

But the good news about God is that He is light. This means He is totally open. He operates in the open. He does His work in the light, where everybody can see who He is and what He's doing. He does not hide in the dark like those who don't want to be known. No, God *wants* us to know Him! He wants us to see Him clearly and understand Him.

God does not operate in the dark like those who want to take advantage of others. On the contrary, all of God's actions are laid open in the light before our eyes, so we can see Him and know that He works FOR our advantage, not to take advantage of us.

Because God is open in this way—because He has operated in such a transparent manner—we can see that He is completely steadfast and unchanging. Hebrews 13:8 says, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”<sup>4</sup> From the past to the future, God is a constant. This fits in so nicely with the imagery of light, because . . . did you know that light is the one thing in the universe that is constant?

## The Properties of Light

The properties of space and time can change depending on where you are in the universe, but light is an absolute constant. And the *speed of light* is constant. It never changes. It is the fastest commodity in the universe. In fact, scientists use the speed of light to measure great distances between galaxies.

While I was doing a little research about the speed of light, I came across a quote from the great scientist Stephen Hawking regarding light that I'll paraphrase for you:

Let's say an object is flying through the air. As it gets faster and faster and approaches the speed of light, its mass also increases, so it gets heavier and heavier.

And as it gets heavier, it takes more and more energy to continue to speed it up. For that reason, no object will *ever* reach the speed of light, because in order for it to do so, its mass *would have to be infinite*, and it would take an *infinite amount of energy* to get it to the speed of light.

For this reason, only LIGHT can travel at the speed of light. *Every other object* will forever move at speeds *slower* than the speed of light.

Now, consider that God says, "I am light." Isn't that an incredible thought! The only thing that can travel at the speed of light is light. Whatever travels at such a speed must be infinite. And our God is the *only* infinite thing in the universe! Everything except light must travel slower than the speed of light. That puts light in a category all its own, and the rest of creation in another category. To me, that sounds like the difference between a Creator and His creation.

## **God is Already There**

No wonder David said, in Psalm 139, "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? No matter where I go, *you are there!*"<sup>5</sup>

Isn't this great news?! Light is *constant*, and the speed of light is *constant*. We cannot travel at the speed of light; we will always travel slower. But God says, "I am light." This means that there is nowhere in the universe we can go where we won't find God already there and waiting for us! No matter where we go, He has gone there before us.

You may have a tough week coming up, but don't fear, God is already there. You may have a meeting at work that you're not looking forward to, but don't fear. God is *already* sitting at the table waiting for you. There is nowhere we can go to flee from His presence! He is truly with us always.

## **You Are the Light**

So, in "light" of this (pun intended), let's close with a glimpse of God's amazing humility. For we have just seen that light is in a special category all its own. It has its own special properties—it can't be changed; it's constant. So if God says, "I am light," we must conclude that *we are not*.

But in Matthew, chapter 5, Jesus said, "*You* are the light of the world."<sup>6</sup> That seems to be a bit of a contradiction, doesn't it? Jesus said, *I am* the light. Jesus said, *You are* the light. Which is it?

Well, let me ask you a question. Which celestial body provides light to the Earth during the day? [*Sun.*] And which celestial body provides light to the Earth during the night? [*Wait for it . . . see if they say the moon.*] The moon? Are you sure? No, the answer is still the sun. The moon doesn't provide any light. It is not self-luminous. It has none of its own light. At night, the "light" we see from

the moon is just a reflection of the sun's light. It has no light of its own, yet at night, it becomes the "light of the world."

It's the same way with us. We have no light of our own. The only way we become the "light of the world" is in our willingness to reflect God, the true Light. The amazing part about this is that God doesn't need any help being light. He could do the shining work all by Himself and gather up all the praise, honor, glory, and accolades. Instead, in His ever-humble way, He graciously offers us the opportunity to be light along with Him. We can't become light, but we can surely shine with His beauty!

Without the sun's light, the moon is a drab and dull hunk of floating rock. But awash in the sun, the moon is a masterpiece of beauty, which has inspired songs and poems and literature throughout the ages. Today, God offers us the same opportunity, the chance to go from a drab and dull life lived in darkness to living as a masterpiece in His glorious light. Which one will you choose?

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1. Genesis 1:3, NIV
  2. Revelation 22:16, NIV
  3. John 3:19-20, NIV
  4. Hebrews 13:8, NIV
  5. See Psalm 139
  6. Matthew 5:14, NIV



# Prayers, Etc.

## **INVOCATION**

God of light, You illuminate the darkness. You shine into every dark and dreary place. Come now and bathe us in Your glorious light, so that we might shine with Your beauty. Amen.

## **CALL TO WORSHIP**

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never been able to put it out. Arise, shine, for your light has come. God is beautiful, and He will pour His beauty on us as we praise Him for His goodness. Come now, let us worship the Lord!

## **PARTICIPATORY PRAYER** *(may be spoken together with the congregation)*

Lord, when we walk in darkness, You are the great light we see. When we can't find the path, You show us the way. Your ways are higher than our ways. Your thoughts are higher than our thoughts. Shine Your light on us, so we can find our way home to You. Amen.

### **ASSURANCE OF GOD'S GRACE** *(may be spoken by pastor after the Participatory Prayer)*

We don't need to fear that we'll be left in the dark. Jesus is the light of the world. No darkness can extinguish His light, and He promises that He will be with us always, even to the very end of the age. Leave the darkness of your guilt behind now and know that your sins are forgiven. Amen.

### **CALL FOR THE OFFERING**

In response to God's glorious light, He gives us the opportunity to touch the world for Him. In Matthew 5, Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth . . . You are the light of the world." May our giving this morning reflect our gratitude for the way God has shined His light into our lives. Today's offering is for . . . *(omit if your offering is not specially designated)*

### **OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Gracious God, Giver of all goodness, Great Light of the World, You alone are worthy of our praise. Accept what we have freely given today. Use it and multiply it, so that Your glory and Your fame may be spread to the farthest corners of our world. Amen.

## CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER

Great God, You spoke light into the darkness. You said, “Let there be light,” and suddenly, the darkness was gone. You saw that the light was good, and so many centuries later, You are still shining Your good light into the darkness of this world, into the darkness of our lives.

Holy Father, You are the light of the world. You are the flame that illuminates every person who comes into the world. Your Spirit burns within us, setting us ablaze with love and life and truth. The beauty of Your light reaches to every corner of the globe. We can’t run fast enough to outrun You. We can’t go far enough to find a place where You don’t exist.

In this troubled world of darkness, Lord, we need Your light. We need the light of Your love in our relationships, with our families, our friends, our co-workers, and especially our enemies. We need the light of Your grace in our hearts, to soothe the guilt and fear we struggle with. We need the light of Your peace in our minds, to help us remember that, because of You, we have nothing to fear in this world. And we need the light of Your life to raise us up above the trials and difficult times we face.

No matter what we encounter, we can stand boldly when we’re awash in Your light. **[insert the specific needs of your congregation here]**

Blaze in our hearts now, Lord, as we continue to rest in Your presence. Amen.

## **BENEDICTION**

And now, may God—the Father of lights, the Sun of Righteousness, and the Bright and morning star—fill up your lives with light until you’re bursting with His glorious brightness. Amen.

# Children's Story

*Method: Conversation*

*Purpose: To help children understand that God is the light and what that means.*

*Suggested Props: Pictures or felts to illustrate the things God created.*

Good morning, boys and girls. Today I want to give you a little pop quiz about creation. Do you remember the creation story? Raise your hands . . .

How many days of creation were there? Six, that's right.

Okay, let's start with day one. Do you remember what God created on day one? *[If necessary, use a hint: it's the difference between daytime and nighttime.]* Light. That's right. He created light on day one. He said, "Let there be . . . light."

Okay, how about day two? Who knows what God created on day two? *[If no answer . . .]* This can be a hard one to remember. There was a big mass of water, and God separated it. He put a lot of air inbetween, and we call that the sky. There was water above the sky, and water below the sky . . . what do we call the water below the sky? The ocean.

You're doing great! Let's go on to day three. What did God create on day three? *[If necessary, use a hint: we walk on it every day.]* The ground . . . that's right! God took the ocean, and He gathered it up, and all of a sudden, the ground appeared.

Okay, let's do just one more. Who knows what God created on day number four? *[If necessary, use a hint: it's what makes us hot in the summer.]* Yes, the sun, moon, and stars. God created all those pretty things we see in the sky on day four.

But wait a minute. What does the sun give us? *[Light.]*

And what do the moon and stars give us? *[Light.]*

Well, now I'm confused. On which day did God create the light? *[Day one.]*

And on which day did God create the sun, moon, and stars? *[Day four.]*

So, if God didn't have the sun, moon, and stars until day four, where did the light on day one come from? Does anybody know?

Hmmm . . . well, if you listen carefully to the Scripture reading today, you're going to hear about the time when Someone said, "I am the light of the world." Do you know who said, "I am the light of the world"? *[Jesus.]*

Yes! Jesus said, "I am the light of the world."

Boys and girls, God was trying to teach us a very important lesson about Himself right from the creation of the Earth. He was trying to teach us that there is no other light but Him. He is the true light.

So, why is it important to know Who the true light is? What does light help us do? *[Take time for kid's answers . . . incorporate the following ones if they are not suggested by the kids.]*

Light helps us see things, doesn't it? Have you ever walked around in a dark room and stubbed your toe on something? Light helps us to see where we're going.

Light also helps us to feel secure, because sometimes we are afraid of the dark.

And light helps us to feel warm and happy. Have you ever walked outside on a bright summer day and just felt good to be out in the sunshine? Yes, light helps us to feel good.

So I want you to remember that since God is the light, He does all those things for us. He helps us to **see where we're going**, so we know how to be kind to others. He helps us to **feel safe and secure** when things happen sometimes that we don't understand. And He helps us to **feel warm and happy**, because He loves to take care of us. Let's help each other remember that Jesus is the light of the world.

This means that God can use each and every one of you. He has given you special gifts, and even if you feel ordinary sometimes, I want you to remember that God makes ordinary things extraordinary. As we let God reach around us, He will make something extraordinary with our lives.

# Responsive Reading

Oh God, You are the light of the world.

**Your light shines in our darkness.**

You are the light of the world.

**The darkness can't overwhelm You.**

You are the light of the world.

**You cannot be hidden.**

You are the light of the world.

**You cannot be overcome.**

You are the light of the world.

**Where can we go to flee from Your Spirit?**

You are the light of the world.

**You are the same yesterday, today, and forever.**

You are the light of the world.

**And we see that You are very good.**

# Hymn

## Immortal, Invisible

sung to the tune of *Immortal, Invisible* (St. Denio)

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,  
In light inaccessible, hid from our eyes.  
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,  
Almighty, victorious, Your great name we praise.

Unresting, unhurried, and silent as light,  
Nor callous, nor worried, but ruling in might.  
Your justice, like mountains, high soaring above;  
Your clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all life, You're giving, to both great and small.  
In all life, You're living the true life of all.  
We blossom and flourish; then, finding it strange,  
We wither and perish, but You never change!

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light:  
You're life's dormitory. In You is no night.  
All praise we would render: O help us to see  
Your beauty, Your splendor, Your love full and free!

*Words by Walter Smith and Kelley Lorencin (arr.)*  
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# Song Suggestions

## Hymns

O Morning Star, how fair and bright (O Morning Star)

*Words and music by Philip Nicolai*

Thou, whose almighty word (Italian Hymn)

*Words and music by John Mariott and Felice de Giardini*

Turn your eyes upon Jesus (Turn Your Eyes)

*Words and music by Helen Lemmel*

## Praise Songs

Here I am to worship

*Words and music by Tim Hughes*

© 2000 Thankyou Music

Nothing can compare

*Words and music by Elton Smith and Rick Founds*

© 2002 Rick Founds Music

Praise the name of Jesus

*Words and music by Rick Founds*

© 1997 Rick Founds Music

Shine Jesus shine

*Words and music by Graham Kendrick*

© 1987 Make Way Music

Thy Word

*Words and music by Amy Grant and Michael W. Smith*

© 1984 Meadowgreen Music Company and Word Music

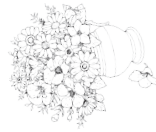
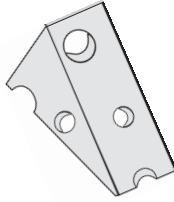
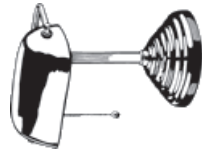
We are marching

*Words and music by Anders Nyberg and Andrew Maries*

© 1991 Sovereign Music UK

Jesus gives light to the whole world.

Look at the pictures below.  
Circle the ones that give light.



# Wee Worship

ages 3 to 6

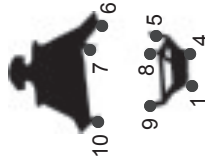
John 8:12-18

The Light of the World

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world."

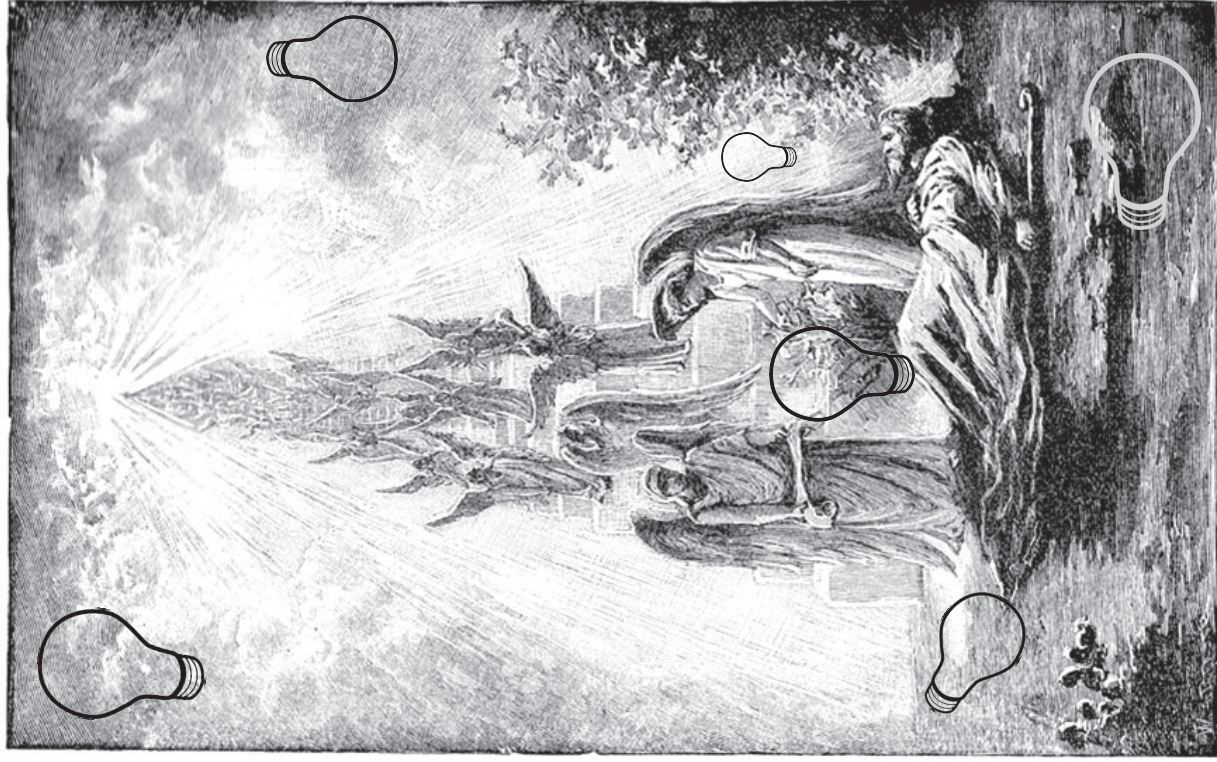
Connect the dots.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



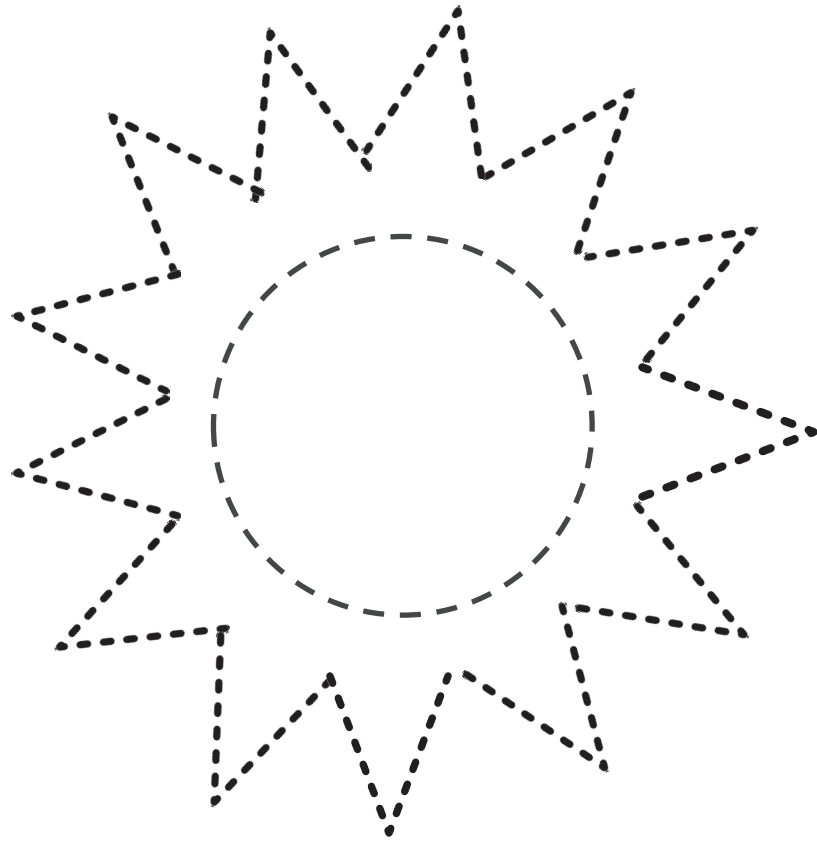
Whoever follows Jesus won't be in darkness.

Jacob once had a dream about light. Circle the six hidden lightbulbs in the picture below.



Jesus is the Sun of Righteousness.

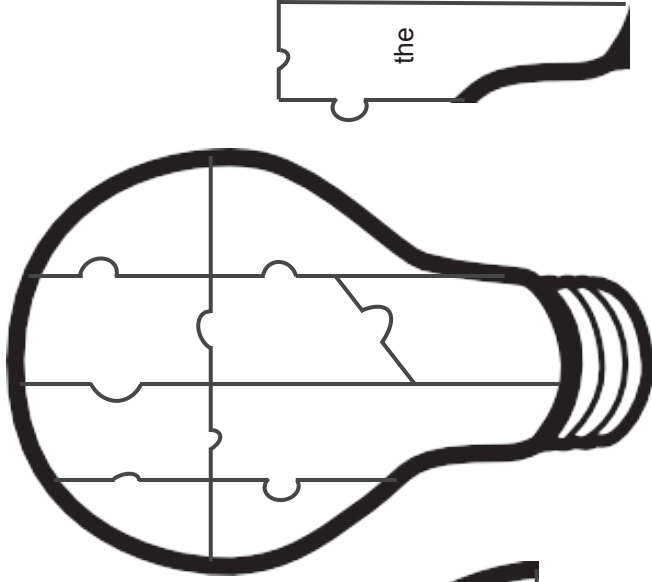
Finish the picture of the sun below.  
Trace it, and then color it.





Jesus is the Light of life.

Fit the puzzle pieces together to complete the Bible verse.



the

will

life.

me

have

light

follows

of

Who-  
ever

# iWorship

ages 7 to 12

John 8:12-18

The Light of the World

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world."

Find and circle the five differences in the second picture below.

