

Bringing Light to the World

Thomas Edison's invention of the electric light bulb a century and a half ago was only one component of his larger plan to create a complete power and light distribution system. He declared his intention as, "We will make electricity so cheap that only the rich will burn candles." He succeeded, with electric light becoming so inexpensive that it quickly started replacing gas lamps and candles in major cities; outlying areas followed soon after. Yet there are still parts of the world that have no electricity despite the best efforts of Edison and his successors. Some people are still in the dark.

Jesus also had something to say about bringing light to the world, true light. His light shines even in the poorest places. In fact, that's where Jesus started, among the poor. This week we will explore our own roles in bringing his light to the world as well.

Monday – Salt

"The best smell is bread, the best savor, salt." George Herbert, 17th c. Welsh poet and pastor

1. Please read Matthew 5:13-16 (focusing on verse 13). What does Jesus mean when he calls us the salt of the world?
2. How is God described in Psalm 34:8? What is the connection between finding our refuge in God and being salt to the world?
3. What advice does Paul provide in Colossians 4:2-6 regarding conversation that is savory to those around us?

Making it Personal: How can you put Paul's advice into practice? Ask God to use you as a seasoning for the people around you.

Tuesday – Light

"God, I pray Thee, light these idle sticks of my life that I may burn for Thee. Consume my life, my God, for it is Thine. I seek not a long life, but a full one, like You, Lord Jesus." Jim Elliot, 20th c. missionary and martyr

1. Please read Matthew 5:14. Who is the light of the world? How does this make you feel?
2. Now look at John 1:9, 8:12, 9:5, 12:44-46 and 2 Corinthians 3:12-18, and explain in your own words how Jesus is able to say that his followers are the light of the world.

Making it Personal: Pray that God will use you to reflect Jesus to those around you.

Wednesday – Shine

"Shine, make 'em wonder what you've got; make 'em wish that they were not on the outside lookin' bored."

Shine, lyrics by Steve Taylor

1. Please read Matthew 5:14-15. Why might someone try to hide the light that Jesus has put in their life?

Text Insight: In ancient times, many cities were placed on hilltops in order to provide a better defense from invading armies. A city on a hill is also very visible, though, and in times of peace, travelers and traders could easily see their destination as they drew closer.

2. Read Ecclesiastes 2:13 and Isaiah 5:20-21. How are light and darkness compared to wisdom and foolishness?
3. What is God's plan to rescue us from foolishness and darkness, according to Isaiah 9:2 and 9:6-7?

Making it Personal: Ask God for his wisdom to enlighten your view of those around you, so you can in turn bring light to them through your actions.

Thursday – Faith

"Let it shine before all men, let 'em see good works." Shine

1. Please read James 2:1-12. How had his readers failed to shine their light? When have you seen a modern equivalent to this behavior?

Text Insight: James (the younger brother of Jesus) knew that while Jesus did not exclude the rich from God's blessings, he spent most of his ministry with the poor and outcasts of society.

2. In James 2:14-26, how is a vibrant faith described?
3. In Matthew 5:43-47, how is our light to mimic the sunlight God provides to everyone, good or bad? What can you do for those around you who are difficult to love?

Prayer Focus: Pray for those you find difficult to love and ask God to give you strength to love them as he does. Pray that God's people – here at FBC and around the world – will reflect Jesus' love through the good and wise things they do for others.

Friday – Renown

"And then let 'em glorify the Lord." Shine

1. Please read Matthew 5:16. What is the ultimate reason for living out our faith?
2. In Isaiah 26:7-9, what is the desire of those who love God? How was it that they were able to wait for God and desire him so much (hint: see v. 8)?
3. Describe the close relationship between glorifying God and serving others in 1 Corinthians 10:31-33.

Making it Personal: Do you love God so much that you desire everyone to know how wonderful he is? Spend time in God's word and ask him to grow this desire in you as you grow in his word.

For the Weekend: Re-read Matthew 5:13-16. God has given you light and seasoning for a purpose. Pray for his guidance in knowing how to fulfill that purpose.