

REFLECTION GUIDE

JOHN 8:12-24 | THE LIGHT WE LONG FOR

KEY TERMS

Light - Light is a very significant concept in the Old Testament. It's one of the first things God creates (Gen 1:2), it's how God manifests his presence in the wilderness (Ex 13:21), Moses shines after being in God's presence (Ex 34:35). Light is also used as a metaphor for God's presence (Psalm 27:1) and God's Word (Psalm 119:105), and is said to be something the Messiah will bring to God's people (Isaiah 42:6-7).

Above / below - During his discussion with the Pharisees, Jesus emphasizes that he is from *above*, and will be going back soon, while the Pharisees are from *below* (vv. 21-23). This sets up a contrast between himself and the Pharisees (and human beings in general).

DID YOU KNOW?

Jesus makes his "light of the world" declaration (v. 12) during the Feast of Booths/Tabernacles, when lampstands were lit at the temple to remember how God led Israel by fire in the wilderness. Jesus is claiming to fulfill what the festival symbolized—God's presence and guidance with and among his people.

SYNOPSIS

John 8:12 begins another section of discourse between Jesus and the religious leaders. It's likely this took place at the end of the Feast of Booths—either in the evening as the festival was wrapping up or, more likely, the day after the festival ended. Just like in chapter 7 when Jesus referenced water, a major symbol during the Feast of Booths, he now references light, another major symbol during the festival. Jesus' claim is *I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life* (v. 12). The theme of "light" has a rich Old Testament background, which Jesus is likely drawing on here. His claim is that he is the embodiment and expression of God's presence and guidance for the world. The Pharisees don't buy it though (v. 13), and return to a discussion about testimony/witness, which Jesus has already had with them (see John 5:30-47). Jesus' point in the ensuing discussion seems to be two-fold: 1) that he is not bearing witness about himself because the Father is also, and 2) even if he was bearing witness about himself he has the authority to do so. Jesus then shifts and says, *"I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin...I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins"* (vv. 21 & 24). Jesus leaves the Pharisees with an invitation: believe that I am he. This is a phrase borrowed from the Old Testament and, in context, seems to invite the Pharisees to believe three distinct things: 1) Jesus is "the light of the world", 2) Jesus is the Messiah, and 3) Jesus is God. Those who believe this about Jesus and *follow* him will have the *light of life*, while those who don't will continue in darkness.

GOING DEEPER

Read Exodus 13:21-22 and Psalm 27:1. In the wilderness, God led his people with a pillar of fire by night, a visible symbol of his presence and guidance. In John 8, Jesus claims to be that same divine presence. How does this deepen your understanding of who Jesus is? What would it look like to trust him as your guide—especially when you're uncertain about what's ahead or are asking life's big questions?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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LEARNING THE WORD

1. Read John 8:12-24. What stands out to you? Make 3-5 observations.
2. Read Isaiah 2:1-5. How does this passage help us understand Jesus' claim "I am the light of the world"?
3. In verses 13-20, the Pharisees challenge Jesus' words. Why do they struggle to take his claims seriously? In what ways do you struggle to believe Jesus' words?
4. In verse 24, Jesus says, "I am he," which is a suggestion that Jesus is not only the Messiah or the light of the world, but that he is God. How does Jesus' divine identity support his "resume" to truly be the light of the world?

LIVING THE WORD

5. What "guides" do people commonly look to in our world for truth, direction, or wisdom? Where do you personally tend to turn when you're "in the dark" about something?
6. Jesus says "Whoever follows me...will have the light of life." How is following Jesus more than just believing the right things about him?
7. In what ways do you need Jesus to guide your path right now? Where do you need clarity, direction, comfort, wisdom, etc.?
8. Jesus is not only a guide who gives us direction for life, he's also God who died for us so that we might live. How does this help you trust Jesus as you seek to navigate life?