



## Frisco First Baptist Church

I AM LIGHT OF THE WORLD JOHN 8:12-20 3/3/2024

### MAIN POINT

The seven-week sermon series will be on the "I AM" statements found in scripture about Jesus. The "I am" statements found in the Gospel of John are the bread of life (6:35), the light of the world (8:12), the door (10:7), the good shepherd (10:11, 14), the resurrection and the life, the true vine, (15:1) the way the truth and the life (14:6) and the resurrection and the life. (11:25).

As always, we try to match the passage and theme, but not always the big idea from Sunday morning. Today's LIFEGroup lesson will be on: Believers, as individuals and as a church, are called to be witnesses of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Have you or someone close to you ever served as a witness in a trial or hearing? What was that experience like for you or your loved one?**

**What pressures might someone experience as a witness to a crime or some contested truth? What impact might such pressures have on our ability to be truthful witnesses?**

Serving as a witness in a court of law can be an intimidating, stressful experience. Even the most confident, truthful witnesses can have their words turned and twisted, made to say something different than what was actually intended. Only absolute confidence that one is speaking truth can give a witness the strength to persevere and overcome challenges to the truth. In John 8, Jesus revealed a crucial truth regarding Himself, and was instantly challenged by the religious leaders of His day. The recorded conversation brings with it many challenges for those who would call themselves "witnesses" for Jesus Christ.

### UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 8:12-13.

When Jesus made this statement and had the pursuant conversation with the Pharisees, He was likely standing in the Court of Women under the vast glow of the great lighting fixtures that lit up not only the great court, but other surrounding areas. It was a light that many could see a great distance from the temple.

**If Jesus is the Light of the world, what does that imply about the world?  
What does it imply about you?**

**What is light's impact on darkness? How does darkness respond to light?**

**Read John 3:19-21. How do John's words in that passage speak into Jesus' teaching in John 8:12?**

If Jesus is the Light of the world, then the world resides in darkness (us included). Anyone that is drawn to Jesus the light comes purely as a gracious gift of God, for evil flees the light.

**According to verse 13, do the Pharisees at least partially understand Jesus' statement? Why or why not?**

**On what basis do the Pharisees assert that Jesus' statement is not true?**

Under Jewish law, when testimony was given in the law court, a suspect could be convicted only on the basis of the testimony of at least two witnesses whose testimony naturally had to agree. In other words, any witness had to have corroboration. Therefore, the Pharisees were discounting Jesus' testimony about Himself on the ground that there was no corroborating witness.

**Do you think the Pharisees felt any trepidation or fear in calling Jesus a liar?  
Why or why not?**

In this and many other places in the gospels, Jesus effectively serves as the first witness to Himself. The word witness in this passage is where the word martyr is also derived. Ironically, the first martyr of the Christian church was Christ Himself, both in terms of His verbal witness and in His death on the cross. Apparently, the Pharisees had no fear in calling Jesus a liar. On this side of history, who among us would stand before Jesus and call

Him and His teaching false? The answer to that question is all of us who don't follow Him. Every unbeliever in this world says to Jesus, "You are a liar."

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 8:14-18.

**How does Jesus' response in verse 14 answer the Pharisees' objections in v. 13?**

**What is wrong with the Pharisees' form of judgment that Jesus, therefore, rejects (verse 14)?**

**How does Jesus' explanation in verses 16-18 further answer the Pharisees' objections regarding His testimony about Himself?**

Jesus' first point is that His testimony is true because it is based on firsthand knowledge of heaven, for He had come from there and was going back there. The Pharisees did not know the simplest fact about Him: His origin. The Pharisees were prideful and presumptive in their knowledge about Him. Jesus' second point is that the Pharisees used a faulty system of judgment to arrive at their conclusions about Jesus. Jesus, however, judges no one in that manner. Jesus judges from the perspective of that place from which He had come—heaven. Finally, Jesus' final point is that He did have a corroborating witness: the Father Himself. Not only did Jesus have a witness, but His witness is the highest authority.

**What can we learn from Jesus in this passage about standing up to questions about our faith and properly responding to them?**

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 8:19-20.

**What kind of father do the Pharisees think Jesus is referring to?**

**What does Jesus' statement in verse 19 imply about those of other faiths who claim to know God?**

**Are you comfortable with the exclusive claims of Jesus' divinity and of the Christian faith? Why or why not?**

If we know Jesus, we know God. Billions of people practice a myriad of different religions and claim to know God, yet according to Jesus, they are wrong. They know only an idol.

## **Why do you think John intentionally mentioned the location of this conversation in verse 20?**

The treasury was an area in the temple (also in the Court of Women) where there stood thirteen receptacles, each shaped in the form of a shofar, a ram's horn, and each dedicated to a different need or concern. Into these receptacles the worshiping Jews could deposit alms that would be used to alleviate suffering in the community. John shares this detail to communicate a tragic irony: the very place where people brought their gifts to God was the very place God's gift to man was being rejected.

## **APPLICATION**

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**In what ways would you consider yourself an effective witness for Jesus? In what areas can you improve?**

**In what ways is our church an effective witness for Jesus? In what areas can we improve?**

**How should we talk to those of differing faiths? Can a more confrontational stance sometimes be justified?**

## **PRAYER**

Lead your group in prayer, giving thanks to God that Jesus was both the first witness and the first martyr for the one truth faith. Thank Him for calling you to Himself, and pray for the grace and faith to live boldly for the exclusive Good News of Jesus Christ. Pray for the people and ministries of our church to be courageous, truthful, and loving in their evangelism in our community and beyond.

## **COMMENTARY**

| JOHN 8:12-20

8:12. Here we find the second of seven "I Am" passages in John's Gospel. Like water (ch. 4) and bread (ch. 6), light is necessary for life. And the Lord wasted no time in explaining that

spiritual light comes to those who willingly follow Him. Since light is one of John's major themes, several assumptions arise from this verse. One is that the world needs light, something John has already told us in chapter 1. There are conditions for seeing and knowing the light—following Jesus. Finally, walking in the light can be permanent. The light of life can change a person so that he or she need never again walk in darkness.

Chapters five, six and seven of John's Gospel have picked up three major Old Testament wilderness reminders of how God dealt with His people: the comparison between manna and the bread of life in chapter 6; the comparison between water in the desert and the water of the Holy Spirit in chapter 7; and here in chapter 8 a comparison with the pillar of fire which led the people through the wilderness and Jesus, the light of the world.

The Feast of Tabernacles was also known as the Feast of Lights because of the many ceremonies that involved various kinds of lighting. From the earliest verses of the first chapter in this Gospel, John has been fascinated with the link between light and life. Here, however, we do not have a statement about everyone participating in the light, but the exclusion of all who do not follow the true light.

Some interpreters have suggested that Jesus may have drawn His illustration from the great candlestick (Menorah) which cast its light over the room in which He was teaching. Everyone there knew the Menorah would be extinguished after the feast. But Jesus indicated that His light would remain forever.

8:13-14. As we might suspect, Jesus was challenged by the Pharisees. They argued that His own self-defense was not admissible evidence. But of course it was, since He is the omniscient, impartial, and perfect Son of God. They misunderstood and misconstrued everything He told them. When He spoke of heaven, they thought of Nazareth. When he mentioned the Father, they impugned the legitimacy of His birth. When He spoke of home, they concluded He was planning suicide.

8:15-18. Throughout this Gospel, the author emphasized words of Jesus that referred to His own deity. There was no question in John's theology that Jesus is God. This constant reference to the Father both in relationship and authentication forms a uniquely Johannine trait.

8:19-20. Since Jesus had identified the Father as one of the witnesses to His message, the Pharisees asked of His father's location. Notice the absence of the capital letter in their question. Jesus referred to heaven, while they pondered His earthly origin. But since they had rejected His message, they had no understanding of the Father.

All this happened in a public place, at the temple where the offerings were received. But no one assailed Jesus because His hour had not yet come. This important phrase appears seven times in John's Gospel.

At the end of the passage Jesus issued a threat that must be proclaimed to all who reject Christ. In human law a clever attorney can create innocence out of guilt and let murderers and rapists go free. But there is no escape from the law of God, no universalism, no second-chance gospel in the message of the New Testament.