

LIVING
IT OUT



**DAILY
BIBLE
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

Light of the World - Letters in Red

March 15, 2021

Why am I here? What is my purpose? Is the world a better place because of me?

Everyone asks these questions at some point. The answers hinge on your worldview. Some believe that there is no significant reason that humans exist, that we are a product of chance mutations that became intelligent life. Some believe our purpose is to enjoy life and create an identity of our choosing—we decide what is good and right for us. Still others spend their lives searching for significance, doing good works and constantly improving themselves only to sink into despair when the pain of life leaves them empty. None of these options will answer humanity's deepest need, and none provide hope. As Christ followers, we can learn from the words of Jesus why we are here.

Matthew 5:14-16 NIV

¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

Two thousand years ago, Jesus spoke these words to his disciples; today, he is speaking those same words to anyone who claims the name of Jesus as their salvation. We, as Christ followers, were put on this earth to be a light. We are here to introduce others to a saving faith in Christ. The world is a very dark place where values are being redefined, people are confused, and what is right and wrong is treated as only being relative. But Christ has placed us, his followers, in this dark world. Think of this: You were chosen to be born into the world at this point in history. God placed you here today to make a difference. As in the Old Testament story of Esther, we are here for "such a time as this" ([Esther 4:14](#)).

Dr. Calvin Sweeney's bottom line this past weekend was "God has given the gift of PURPOSE so that you can give the gift of HOPE." Our purpose is a gift from God. He is choosing to use us to reflect his glory and share his grace, to a dark and sinful world. You have the choice to embrace that gift, *that light*, and make a difference, or you can deny it and hide it. Either way, you will leave an impact on the world around you. If you accept his calling to use your light to change the world, God will use you. You will see things happen in ways you never imagined.

“Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Questions:

Why do you think most people struggle to find their purpose?

Do you believe that you can be a light in your world? Are you afraid to let those around you see the light of Christ in your life? Why?

Next Steps:

Make a list of ways you can shine the light of Christ on the path of others in your home, your school, your workplace, and your community. The next time you feel tempted to hide your light, say “I am the light of the world.” Believe it and watch how God uses you to make a difference.

Complete [GrowthTrack](#), an experience designed to help you to begin discovering your purpose. GrowthTrack takes place every weekend at any of our campuses. There is also an online experience available.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for giving me a purpose. Thank you for using me to draw a hurting world toward abundant life in you. Give me the courage to shine my light in the dark places I encounter daily. I pray that others are drawn to you through the ways I live, love, act, and speak. I pray that I will embrace my place on this Earth at this time for your glory. Amen.

Happy Anniversary-NOT! - Letters in Red

March 16, 2021

This week marks an anniversary that most of us would like to forget, but that we will remember for the rest of our lives! It was this time last year when our government began responding to the threat of the coronavirus, COVID-19. In the first weeks, and then months, of uncertainty and confusion, many of the freedoms and comforts we enjoy as citizens of the United States became unavailable. (And I'm not just talking about toilet paper!) It has been a dark and frightening time in so many ways. Where do we find hope? Is the light at the end of the tunnel? If you are a follower of Jesus, you know that **he** is the light.

This past weekend, Lead Pastor of the Tabernacle, Dr. Calvin Sweeney, gave us a great illustration to help us understand two verses about light that might be confusing. In the first verse, Jesus says, "**I am the light**" (John 8:12). But in the second, Jesus tells us, "**you are the light of the world**" (Matthew 5:14). Calvin explained Jesus is the greater light; we are the lesser lights. Jesus is like the Sun; we are like the moon. We don't have the ability to create our own light, but we can reflect the light of Jesus, just as the Moon reflects the radiance of the Sun.

I love the idea that I can be a reflection of Jesus' light and love to a world looking for hope! When I rest in his truth and grace, I can shine his light in dark places where people sometimes find themselves. In bringing hope to these dark places, I have opportunities to share the reason for the hope that I have.

1 Peter 3:15

Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks you about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it.

My job is to make sure the light I shine is in focus, not made fuzzy by the distractions of this world. How do I do that? By maintaining a daily, vibrant, joy-filled relationship with Jesus, my Lord and Savior, through worship, Bible study, prayer, and community with other Christ followers!

Calvin reminded us that there is only one event that prevents the Moon from reflecting the light of the Sun—a solar eclipse—when Earth gets between the Sun and Moon. By maintaining my relationship with Jesus, things that could dim or

diffuse my reflection of his light are much less tempting. His light is not eclipsed by the things of this world! It shines for all the world to see!

Matthew 5:16 NIV

"In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father."

Questions:

Where can you reflect the light of Jesus in your life to the world around you? How do you maintain and grow your relationship with your light source, Jesus Christ? Is there someone who needs to hear about the hope that you have in Jesus?

Next Steps:

If you know Jesus as Lord, he will be your light in this dark world. Find someone who has suffered in this pandemic, and be a light to them! Give them your hope and your light to help them out of their darkness. Invite them to come to church with you for an Easter service!

Listen to ["Shine, Jesus Shine"](#) by Graham Kendrick on YouTube!

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for lighting our way. It is never too dark for your light to shine on us, to guide us, and lead us into all the blessings you have for us. We ask that you use us to light up the lives of the people around us. Help us to be beacons of hope and people who point others to you. You are our hope and our light in a world that needs you now more than ever! Let our good deeds, done in your name, bring glory to you! In the bright and beautiful name of your son, Jesus, we pray, amen.

Discover a Need, Do a Deed - Letters in Red

March 17, 2021

Have you ever read the book *Miss Rumphius* by Barbara Cooney? At the beginning, a little girl sits on her grandfather's lap and tells him about what she wants to do in her life—travel the world and then live by the sea. Once she has finished, her grandfather smiles and says, “That is all very well ... but ... you must do something to make the world more beautiful.”

Last weekend, Dr. Calvin Sweeney, lead pastor at The Tabernacle, said, “Discover a need, and do a deed.” Deeds are actions—actions that create good, beautiful things. God has put a light inside all of us that draws us to do great deeds.

Matthew 5:16

“In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.”

There are many problems in the world, issues that make the world appear so dark. But people don't light lamps if the room is full of sunlight. Lamps are used when it is dark, when it is difficult to see. Jesus does not want us to withhold our light until he returns. He wants us to use it now, in the midst of a dark world.

Matthew 5:14

“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden.”

As followers of Christ, when we *do deeds* according to others' needs, we shine our light. We are like the brilliant city on a hilltop, blazing in the darkness for all to see.

At the end of *Miss Rumphius*, the little girl, then an old woman, has done almost everything she set out to do. She traveled the world and found a home by the sea. But even so, something was missing. She went on a bike ride and noticed how drab the nearby town was. So to make the world a little more beautiful, she bought as many flower seeds as she could and tossed them into the grass on the sides of the road. After several months, great bunches of flowers sprung up, and the whole town came alive with their beauty.

In the story, Miss Rumphius let her light shine. She saw the need of the village, how it was ugly and plain, and used her love of plants to make it a little more beautiful. This is what God calls us to do with our lives and actions. The world

can be dark, but it is in darkness that our light shines brightest. God has given all of us many ways to shine our lights.

Discover a need, and do a deed.

Questions:

Where can you shine your light? Are there any needs that you can fill with goodness and beauty? In what areas of your life is God calling you to do a deed?

Next Steps:

Take this week to look around for needs in your family, community, or workplace. Then take some time to create goodness and beauty in those areas. Maybe join a group that picks up litter, passes out groceries, or even plants flowers.

Consider participating in a Second Saturday Serve next month as our church comes together to be a light in our communities.

Prayer:

Father, you are the Light of the World. Thank you for choosing me to help shine light in the darkness. Help me to see the needs around me and the deeds you are calling me to do. I want to bring your beauty, goodness, and light everywhere I go. In Jesus' name, amen.

Shine So Bright - Letters in Red

March 18, 2021

As Christians, we often think about how others perceive us out in the world. It's wise to be mindful of our behavior and interactions because it's a reflection of Christ's light and love to others. But we can't forget about the eyes inside of our walls. During the weekend message, Pastor Calvin Sweeney shared that we need to start letting our light shine in our homes because our children and our family are dependent upon the light that we illuminate.

Matthew 5:15

"Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house."

In addition to Calvin's words and the above verse, I'm reminded of a spoken word that I shared in another LIO post. The speaker, Jason Emmanuel Petty, better known by his stage name "Propaganda", said, "[We should consider our influence because the little ones want to be us.](#)" (Well, they want to be us until they don't.) In other words, our behavior carries much weight, and our words always matter. How can we expect our families to believe the brightness we portray to others if we continuously dim their view of us with our words and behavior at home?

For example, during quarantine last spring, everyone's faith was put to the test. My wife and I had to decide if we could walk our *outside talk* inside our home for our family. So we didn't increase our drinking or ignore each other. Instead, we put in the work to improve our children's faith. They looked forward to our daily family devotionals and our praise and worship times. They can look back to last year and know that our Christianity goes beyond the weekend message.

So be that shining light of Christ both within your family and out in the world, or you may miss a chance to brighten the day of someone in need.

Matthew 5:16 NIV

"In the same way, let your light shine before others..."

When a person is stuck in a season of darkness, they must see the light in others. Don't hide your light and expect them to find you. How selfish of us to choose

who sees such love. Doesn't everyone matter equally? Perhaps we should look at the verse in a different translation.

Matthew 5:16a KJV (emphasis added)

*"Let your light **SO** shine before men ..."*

By definition, "so" means "to such a great extent." Think about the way a lighthouse brings in the navigator from the dark. It's a beacon, so **prominent**, serving to guide one **forward** to **safety**. Let your light **SO** shine. Share your light with the world by example and through testimony—something so powerful as to bring us from death to life.

Questions:

Do you live the same life inside and out? Do you live with the understanding that sharing your Christian walk, or showing a bit of grace each day, can change the trajectory of someone's life?

Next Steps:

Reach out to a neighbor to see if you can help them in any way. Don't be afraid to tell someone that you pray for them. Invite a stranger to church. Tell friends and family how being involved in a [Group](#) has helped with your spiritual growth.

Prayer:

Father God, I'm sorry for the times I fall short in sharing my light with my family and with others. I know there is more I can do. Thank you for loving me and for placing others in my life who shine so bright. May I continue to show grace to others and grow in my spiritual leadership as my introverted nature blossoms outward through faith and community with others. Amen.

What's So Great About That? - Letters in Red

March 19, 2021

Have you ever been around people who are fulfilling their God-given purpose? I have noticed they appear to be joyful and full of peace. They seem to overflow with a passion for life. They're filled with confidence, not in themselves, but in what God can do through them. I am drawn to people like that. I think Dr. Calvin Sweeney, lead pastor of The Tabernacle, explained it perfectly last weekend, "God has given us the gift of purpose so that we can give the gift of hope." I think during these trying times, we could all use a lot more hope!

Philippians 2:13 NIRV

God is working in you. He wants your plans and your acts to fulfill his good purpose.

Calvin said the four benefits of purpose are: personal fulfillment, peace, perseverance, and personhood.

Personal fulfillment occurs when you live out your God-given purpose. Your purpose is what God created you to do. One of my God-given purposes is to let others know how deeply they are loved by Jesus. I have found a simple and unobtrusive way to do this—I give out the book *Jesus Calling* (with Scripture references) to people who are struggling.

Recently, I gave a copy of the book to my dear friend, Carol, whose mom, Betty, is 103. Carol loves the Lord so much, but she didn't know if her Mom was a Christian, which broke her heart. She wanted to find a way to share the love of God with her mom, and I thought *Jesus Calling* would be a great way. Carol started reading it to her mom every day and loves the conversations they have afterward. They both look forward to that time every day.

There is so much **peace** knowing that you are living out your God-given purpose. I knew God was working through me to make a difference in Betty's life. I went to visit her a few months ago to ask if she believed Jesus was her Savior. We talked about *Jesus Calling*, and she told me when her daughter reads her scripture from the book, she remembers hearing and reading it from her Bible as a young girl. She smiled as she told me that the book has helped her realize how much Jesus loves her. I point-blank asked Betty if she believed Jesus was

her Savior, that he died for her sins, and was resurrected from the dead to save her. When she said, “yes,” I was overjoyed and felt so fulfilled. I praised God for showing his great love to her.

Jesus helps us to **persevere** through the difficult things he asks us to do. To be honest, going to talk to Betty was way outside my comfort zone. It took me a long time to work up my courage. COVID-19 was rampant, and I was concerned. I knew if I visited with her, I wouldn't be able to wear a mask because she is very hard of hearing. Even so, I felt God calling me to do this, and I had friends praying for the visit. I am so happy Jesus gave me the courage to step out of my comfort zone. It was so overwhelming to see the smile on Betty's face and the peace that radiated from her as she spoke about Jesus.

Personhood is knowing who you are. We were reminded by Calvin that Jesus told us, “**you are the light of the world.**” We find fulfillment by living out our God-given individual and unique purpose. True joy and peace are found in the freedom to be ourselves—who God made us to be.

Questions:

Which of the four benefits of purpose do you need to grab hold of today? Why? What is your God-given purpose? What are your Spiritual Gifts? How are you using your Spiritual Gifts to glorify God?

Next Steps:

Complete GrowthTrack if you haven't already. Think about what you are passionate about. Pray and ask God what he would like you to do about it. **DO IT!**

Prayer:

Jesus, you are such an amazing God. You love me so much that I was created to be your light in this dark world. Help me to fulfill my God-given purpose. Please, give me the courage and faith to step out of my comfort zone to do your will. I want my life to bring you glory. Amen.