

## Women's Bible Study ~ Fall 2011

Who Do You Say I AM? A Study of the Names & Character of Christ

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*He is the Light of the World – John 9:1-3*

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Introduction ---I love “light”---especially the long days of summer!! Bob and I had the privilege and joy of experiencing an Alaskan cruise in mid June. What delight to have the sun still up and shining at 10:30 at night.

Even at midnight it was still quite light. I would wake up at different times at night and I would crawl over the top of the bed so I could pull open the darkening curtains so I could check how light it was and often take pictures. Even at 2 a.m. it was not totally dark and then by 3 and 4 it was getting light again ready for sunrise. I am energized by light so the months of March thru Sept I'm going strong. It's hard for me to totally enjoy the fall season now as the daylight is decreasing and the darkness is increasing. I don't know how the people in Alaska manage in the winter with such short days and so much darkness. I understand in Anchorage they put up their Christmas lights early and cover everything with lights ---even cross country ski trails---and leave them up and burning for months so people can have more light to get around and be outdoors.

### LIGHT ---ESSENTIAL FOR LIFE

Light is essential for life—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Without light plants can't grow. Our growing season in the Midwest is from April through September because of the length of light, and the tilt of the sun's rays. I have noticed when we are in AZ for the months of Jan thru Mar when I plant petunias and pansies ---it seems like spring to me but the plants really don't grow very much until the sun is warmer and the length of daylight increases. In Alaska with the extended hours of daylight the plant life really grows during their summer months. Notice the size of these dandelions----they were 2 feet tall or more. The Alaskans are so hungry for color after the long winter they welcome these weeds and call them “Golden Chrysanthemums” !!!

Physically---our bodies need light. We need vitamin D that we get from sunlight for good health. Many people suffer from SAD---“Seasonal Affective Disorder”---lack of sunlight in shorter days in the fall and winter produces various degrees of depression. Some people use a “light box” that imitates the sun's

rays and light to compensate for the lack of sunlight. In the winter many people who work at the Mayo Clinic and other places go to work early when it is dark and return home in the dark and really never experience the sun during their work week.

Emotionally---Too many cloudy days ---which even increases the shortness of the days in winter--- causes some people to experience some depression in their emotional well-being. They aren't in the SAD group, but nevertheless suffer from lack of daylight. Aren't you encouraged and have a brighter outlook when we have a bright sunny day after several cloudy ones?

Spiritually---the light is important to us in several ways.  
Illus----How many of you have dusted and cleaned your house and had it “standing tall” ready for company and then the sun came out and you looked at the coffee table. Where did all that dust come from?? Or have you cleaned your windows recently--- maybe on a cloudy day when they didn't dry too fast----then the next day the sun came out and what did you see?

The sunlight revealed all the places you had missed and the streaks !!!

In our spiritual lives, the light of God's Word and the Holy Spirit reveal the sin in our lives. Our hearts may look good on the outside, but when the light of Jesus shines through ----the darkness is removed and we see the areas of sin that need to be confessed.

We also need the light of the Holy Spirit to understand the Scriptures and all the promises and blessings God has for us and how to apply them in our lives.

**GOD'S LIGHT GIVES LIFE---PHYSICALLY AND SPIRITUALLY**

## **LIGHT-FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION**

Throughout the Scriptures “light” often is a manifestation of God , and signifies His presence or His work.

In Genesis the first thing to be created was light. **Gen 1:1-2 “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep. Vs 3 “God said, ‘Let there be light’ and there was light.”** God separated the light from the darkness and made day and night, then He continued with the rest of creation.

God spoke to Moses through a burning bush that was not consumed in the desert----to deliver the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. When Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt God's presence was with them.

**Ex 13:21 “By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night.”**

In 1 John 1:5 “...God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.”

The New Jerusalem described in Revelation 21:23-24 says,“ **the city will not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb (Jesus) is its lamp.**”

If you look in your concordance for “light” you will find numerous references to “light” pointing to God, Christ, or the work of the Holy Spirit.

Light is used symbolically in the Bible to describe God's presence and favor. God's holiness is described as "unapproachable light" in 1 Tim 6:16; and his people as "children of light" in Eph 5:8. In John's gospel light refers especially to God's revelation in Christ Jesus---Jesus is the "light of the world".

After the children of Israel escaped from Egypt God gave Moses very detailed instructions to build a tabernacle so that He could make his dwelling among his people. There were specific directions about making the furnishings and a lampstand for the Holy Place to give light.( Ex 25:31-37) The footnote in the NIV says, "the light from the lamps represented the glory of the Lord reflected in the consecrated lives of the Israelites---Israel's glory answering to God's glory in the tabernacle".

The lampstand and what it represented ( God's light and guidance) was a part of the culture and worship of the Jewish people. Later Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 11:1-2 about the Messiah to come---that he would be a "shoot from the root of Jesse and he would be like the lampstand---each of the seven branches described an attribute of Jesus ----"wisdom, understanding, counsel, power, knowledge, the fear of the Lord, and the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him."

Recently I purchased my own replica of the lampstand described in the scriptures. The menorah as it is called continues today in Jewish families in their Sabbath worship---"Shabbat"---as they light candles in remembrance. We will light these candles today to have a visual reminder that JESUS IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

John describes Jesus in the first few verses of chapter one as "the life that was the light of men" and "the light that shines in darkness". So Jesus now, in John 8 and 9 states that he is "the light of the world". Just prior to these statements the Jews have celebrated "The Feast of Tabernacles" (mid-Oct) a 7-day celebration of joyful remembrance of God's guidance and provision in deliverance from slavery. There would be celebrations (The Illumination of the Temple) in the evening around some very tall candlesticks (75 feet high) in the court of the women. The light from these candleabra would have lighted up a great area around the temple. Almost every courtyard in the city was lit up by their brilliance, and there would have been dancing and singing praises. Even though this feast was over it would still be fresh in their minds and would have great meaning when Jesus said he was "the light of the world"----**John 8:12 ---"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."**

When Jesus makes this declaration he is identifying himself with what they knew about God and the prophecies about the Messiah in Isaiah---that he would bring light to the world.

It is very fitting that this miracle of giving sight to the man born blind should follow so closely after the Feast of Tabernacles and Jesus declaration.

The miracle of giving light to blind eyes in the physical world leads to the even greater miracle of enabling this man formerly spiritually blind to see into the spiritual world and see the glory of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

### **LIGHT OF JESUS HEALS BLIND MAN**---John 9:1-38

The healing of the man blind from birth illustrates one of the characteristics of the messiah to come----when “the eyes of the blind will be opened.” (Isaiah 29:18; 35:5;42:7). Through these miracles Jesus was revealing his true identity.

**John 9:1-7** “As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?’ ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned,’ said Jesus, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes. ‘Go’, he told him, ‘wash in the Pool of Siloam’. So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.”

As we notice at the beginning of verse one, Jesus is just walking along when he sees this man blind from birth. Jesus is always alert to the needs of people around him and uses everyday opportunities to meet those needs and fulfill His Father’s will--“As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming when no one can work.” Jesus knew his time on earth was limited and he didn’t want to miss any opportunity His Father had for Him. This is the “daytime” of Jesus’ ministry---night would be coming and his labors would end.

Seeing this blind man stimulated a question from the disciples regarding the relationship between sin and suffering. It was widely held by the Jews that physical suffering was due to sin. They asked if the man sinned or his parents to cause this blindness. Jesus assured them no particular sin had caused this blindness “**but this happened so that the work of God might be revealed in him.**” This man’s blindness provided an opportunity to show the power of God at work. And Jesus Himself had come to reveal that power.

**What difficulties or suffering are you experiencing that might be opportunities for God to reveal Himself to others through your life and display His power at work?**

This healing and the words “blind from birth” occur nowhere else in the New Testament and is otherwise referred to as congenital blindness ----an affliction from which one would not expect to be healed. Think for a moment about this blind man who has never known what it was to see with his eyes and because he was born that way, he had no hope of ever seeing. In this miracle Jesus is not “restoring” his sight but “creating” sight—literally giving him new eyes.

It is interesting that Jesus uses dirt or clay and some saliva to make mud and put it on the man's eyes. Using the dirt was symbolic of creation when God "created man out of the dust of the ground". In Jesus' time, the spittle was believed to have curative qualities. It is possible that in order to help this man's faith, Jesus made use of the customs of the day. Jesus varied his healing methods lest people focus on the manner and miss the message. He could have just spoken or He could have just touched his eyes.

Jesus puts the mud on the blind man's eyes and tells him to go and wash off his eyes in the Pool of Siloam. What do you suppose was going through his mind as he hears himself being discussed by some men walking along and then one of them puts mud on his eyes, which may have been irritating and then sends him off to wash. Was there something compelling in the touch of Jesus on his eyes and something in his voice that caused him to trust him and do what he said?

Notice Jesus doesn't tell him that he was healing him and that when he washed he would be able to see. He gave a simple command---"Go wash in the Pool of Siloam". This was a test of obedience and involved a response---to do what Jesus said. The next verse says, "**So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.**" This blind man trusted Jesus and obeyed his command. Obedience is the prerequisite to much of the blessing of God for any believer. Disobedience to the clear command of Jesus would have left the blind man in darkness.

### **BELIEVING AND OBEYING JESUS GIVES BLIND MAN SIGHT**

What blessings have you received because you believed and obeyed God's words? What may you have missed because of disobedience?

What do you think his first thoughts were as he opened his eyes and saw for the very first time in his life? I picture him very happy---jumping up and down---laughing and crying for joy as he has gone from blackness to blinding bright technicolor-----"I CAN SEE, I CAN SEE, I CAN SEE!!!!!" I wonder if he slept that first night---he had so much he wanted to see, he didn't have time to shut his beautiful new eyes !!!!

For those of you who have had a cataract removed, you can somewhat identify with this blind man. When my bandage was removed the next morning---everything was so bright and clear---it was like I had a whole new eyeball !!

In a similar vein, this past week on the news a 29 year old woman, born deaf who had never heard before----received a new hearing device manufactured in MN. She was able to hear for the first time. The experience was overwhelming and she was laughing and crying as she heard her own voice for the first time and the voice of her child. Her life now would take on a whole new dimension as she tells people---"I can hear, I can hear."

### **Reactions to miracle**

This formerly "blind" man had met Jesus and his life was forever changed. The first people to notice, it says in verse 8 were his neighbors and those who had

formerly seen him begging. They began to question if this really was the same man they had seen at the temple all these years begging and blind. Some said this was the man and others said, “No, it can’t be, it just looks like him.” Instead of celebrating this miracle in the life of the blind man, his friends are arguing over his identity. They wanted to know “how” his eyes were opened---and “where” was this man called Jesus who had put the mud on his eyes and told him to wash. He told them simply that he didn’t know where he was. Like many new believers they don’t have an understanding of what has happened to them or who Jesus is. They just tell what has happened to them when they met Jesus. It’s always so refreshing and helps us to see Jesus through “new eyes”.

Has this happened to you when you encountered Jesus in your life? He brought His Light into your life and opened your eyes to newness of life. You can’t explain it---you can only share what Jesus has done for you. Have your neighbors and friends noticed such a change in you that you are like a different person? Do you boldly share how Jesus has made a difference in your life and tell others how they can know Him?

Pharisees Investigation---When the neighbors and acquaintances heard that Jesus was involved in this healing and that it took place on the Sabbath they concluded that an official investigation was warranted. This miracle was one of seven miracles that Jesus performed on the Sabbath---(Matt 12:9; Mark 1:21; Mark 1:29; Luke 13:14; Luke 14:1; John 5:10; John 9:14.)

The Pharisees were intent on discrediting Jesus in any way they could---His popularity was growing and they were getting more and more frustrated with His actions on the Sabbath. They concluded that Jesus was a “Sabbath breaker and could not, therefore, be from God. The Pharisees had made a long list of “do’s” and “don’t” regarding the Sabbath ----a day of rest and no work could be done or medical attention given except to keep a person from getting worse. Jesus had made mud and healed the blind man which was considered work to them.

The Pharisees questioned the man about how he received his sight and as he told them there was division among them. Some said he could not be from God if he broke the Sabbath while others said, “how can a sinner do such miraculous signs?”

The Pharisees could not believe that this man had been born blind and now could see. They brought in his parents to ask them about his new sight. “Was he really born blind?” His parents were afraid and intimidated by these religious leaders and did not support their son because of fear of being excommunicated. **Vs 22”....for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue.”** To be excommunicated from the synagogue was similar to being ostracized from one’s own community. They said, “We don’t know how he can see now or who opened his eyes---he is of age, he will speak for himself.”

The blind man is summoned a second time by the religious leaders and told “this man is a sinner”---give God glory by telling the truth. He wasn’t going to debate them whether Jesus was a sinner or not but he could give them the truth ----vs 25 **“one thing I do know, I was blind but now I see.”** They continue to question him asking “how did he open your eyes?”

He said, “I told you already, weren’t you listening? Do you want to hear it again so you can become his disciples, too?” This infuriated them and they hurled insults at him as they tried to get him to repudiate Jesus. When they told him they didn’t even know where “this fellow” (Jesus) comes from---he answers **“Now that is remarkable! You don’t know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”** With this criticism of their understanding of scripture, they threw him out of the synagogue.

When Jesus heard what happened to the healed man and how he had been treated, he had compassion for him and sought him out. He never leaves any person alone when he witnesses to Him. **Vs 35-38**

**“when Jesus found him, he said, ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’” “Who is he sir, tell me that I may believe in him.” Jesus said, “You have seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.” Then the man said, “Lord, I believe and he worshiped him.”**

Jesus gave a particular revelation of Himself to this loyal follower not given to many others at that time. Faith and complete assurance replaced the former confusion and questions this man had, and suddenly he realized that God Himself in the Person of His Unique Son was actually talking face to face with him. His response to this revelation was to worship Him---and in that day would have been to fall on his knees. His spiritual eyes had been opened to “see” Jesus and experience the majesty of his person.

Progression of faith---Let’s look for a moment at his progression of faith.

Blind, and begging with no hope

Jesus asks him to believe and obey his command

He receives his sight and tells what Jesus has done

He first calls Jesus a “man” –John 9:11—then prophet 9:17---

then his Lord---John 9:36 (KJV)

Finally recognizing him as Jesus, Son of God, and worshiped Him—

John 9:37

Each declaration of his healing and who Jesus was, were steps of faith for this man and growth in spiritual sight. In our own lives, as we profess faith in Jesus, obey his word, and share with others what He has done for us, our faith grows and matures. **2 Peter 3:18 “... grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”**

Can you reflect on specific times when you obeyed what Jesus told you to do and your eyes were opened to new insights and you saw Jesus more clearly and in ways that deepened your faith?

### **THIS MIRACLE ALSO A PICTURE OF OUR SALVATION**

- As sinners we are blind to the things of God and helpless to save ourselves. Rom 3:23 **“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”**
- Through God’s grace we encounter Jesus—John 14:6 **“I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to Father except through me.”**

Ephesians 2:8-9 **“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God---not by works, so that no one can boast.”**

- We have the opportunity to believe and receive spiritual life---Acts 16:31 **“Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.”**  
John 1:12 **“to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”** John 3:36 **“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life.”**
- We receive spiritual “light” and are a new creation---- 2 Cor 4:6 **“For God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”**  
2 Cor 5:17 **“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come.”**

Like the blind man when we encounter Christ, and believe on his name, by his grace we receive the “light of the knowledge of the glory of God” and we are a new creation in Him. This makes an impact on our lives and changes our thoughts and desires. We now want to please God rather than ourselves.

### **LIGHT OF JESUS IN OUR HEARTS MAKES US A NEW CREATION IN HIM**

**Have you experienced the “light of Jesus” in your heart and are you a “new creation” in him? How has your life changed?**

Often when I teach the Lord gives me an opportunity to experience something from the lesson to better understand what I am talking about. In the past couple of weeks He has given me the privilege and joy of watching a new believer as she experiences God’s direction in her life and sees Jesus with new spiritual eyesight. She is devouring her Bible and is so excited about all the stories. A whole new world has opened to her and she is looking forward to finding His plan for her life and ways that she can serve Him. I can imagine the healed blind man had these same experiences in his new world of physical AND spiritual sight.

## LIGHT-BEARERS TO THE WORLD

Do you wonder what changes the light of Jesus made in the blind man's life? He had to find a new job ----didn't need to be a beggar any more . How do you think his spiritual life progressed? Did he follow Jesus from place to place and was he busy sharing his testimony of what Jesus had done for him?

Jesus says in Matt 5—The Sermon on the Mount---that we are to be “light bearers” for him. Our actions should shine like a light drawing others to praise God.

**Matt 5:14-16 “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 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 the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds, and praise your Father in heaven.”**

Do you remember the song, “This Little Light of Mine”? You probably learned it in Sunday School or sang it with your children.

“This little light of mine---I'm going to let it shine, let it shine, let it shine. Hide it under a bushel, No! I'm going to let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, Don't let Satan blow it out, I'm going to let it shine, Let it shine 'til Jesus comes, let it shine night and day, let it shine , let it shine.” Wonderful words for us to remember.

How do you let your “light shine” for Jesus?? Do you hide behind excuses to not get involved and share what He has done for you? Is it easier to let opportunities slip past you? Or are you eager to “shine for Jesus”? Autumn Ridge Church offers numerous opportunities to volunteer your gifts and talents to serve and “shine”.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

As children of “light” what responsibilities do we have to shine our light in the world around us? What difference should our actions make?

**Ephesians 5:8-14 “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light for the fruit of the light consists of goodness, righteousness and truth and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.”**

**1 Peter 2:9 “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”**

**Acts 13:47 “For this is what the Lord has commanded us: ‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’”**

We are called to live godly lives since we have been brought out of darkness into the light and to bring this light to all that are in our sphere of influence----our family, friends, community, and workplace.

Jesus says in 9:4 **“As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming when no one can work.”**

What do you think represents daylight in your life? What might God be asking you to do that you may not be able to do in 5 years? In 10 years?

In 20 years? How can you take advantage of the “daylight” in the way you spend your time? Your money? Your energy?

Recently I was re-connected with a friend I hadn’t seen for a number of years. She was here in Rochester receiving a stem cell transplant. She is a shining example of a person letting their light shine for Jesus and a real inspiration. Even in pain and not feeling well, she continues to be concerned for others and witnesses to God’s goodness and faithfulness to her. She doesn’t know if her treatment will be successful or how much time she has left but she senses the urgency to take advantage of her “daylight” for His glory!!!

### OPPORTUNITIES

We are living in the “daytime” of our lives and ability to minister to others. Are we alert to the opportunities God puts before us? Maybe in the midst of ordinary days ---or in the midst of very busy, hectic days----God shows us someone who has a need and His spirit nudges us to help in whatever way He shows us. May we not be “blind” to the needs of others right around us and be so caught up in our own activities that we miss a “golden” opportunity to be God’s hands, feet, or mouth to someone He puts in our path who needs encouragement and the “light of Jesus”.

What opportunity do you need to seize “while it is day” in order to make an eternal difference in someone’s life in your sphere of influence?

**2 Cor 6:2 ---“Now is the day of salvation”.**

WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM ?

**IS JESUS THE LIGHT OF YOUR WORLD?  
HOW WILL YOU SHINE FOR HIM?**