The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John 1:5

IMAGES OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS IN SCRIPTURE
One of the great joys of my life is being called “Grandpa” by our six grandchildren, ages 1 to 6. And now that our own children are fully grown, Cheryl and I have a renewed love for ordinary parenting moments such as tucking little ones into bed.

Sometimes, after we say a prayer and read a bedtime story, they’ll call out to us because they are afraid. In the darkness, they imagine a monster lying in wait. And I get to be the hero of the story, turning on the light switch to show them that no one is under the bed or in the closet. With the room fully illuminated, their fears are put to rest.

Light changes everything, doesn’t it? Is it any wonder that Jesus referred to Himself as the Light of the World? Trapped by sin in spiritual darkness, previously blind to His truth, our path is now clearly illuminated by the Light of God. While sometimes we may be unnerved by the darkness in the world around us, we can rest assured that God’s perfect light casts out fear.

Jesus said to His disciples, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness but will have the Light of life” (John 8:12). Like the sun that illuminates our world, Jesus provides clarity and truth. He is the source of life; through Him we grow and thrive.

If you have ever gone to bed early only to have someone turn on a lamp, you realize it is difficult to partially illuminate a room. Once a light switch is turned on, it cuts through darkness. In the same way, when we accept Christ as our Savior, His light cuts through the darkness of our lives. We can see clearly and understand spiritual things previously hidden from us.

The Bible says, “God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). We, too, are called to be light in this dark world. As we reflect Christ in our lives, we shed His light in the world around us. Proverbs 4:18 says, “But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, that shines brighter and brighter until the full day.”

The next time you turn on a light switch or see the sun rising over the edge of the horizon, remember that we serve the Light of the World, and you and I are called to reflect His light to others. Light changes everything.
God and Sin

Humanity has long wrestled with the question of the origin of sin and evil. As the Creator of all things, did God create evil? Are good and evil equal forces in the universe?

According to Jesus, God alone is good (Mark 10:18; Luke 18:19). Jesus meant more than that God meets a standard, characterized as good. He meant that good does not exist apart from God. God is perfect and is incapable of sin (Matt. 5:48). Since God alone is good, good can only come from God.

Sin and evil were not part of God’s original creation. When God initially assessed all that He had made, He concluded that it was “very good” (Gen. 1:31). Not only was this true of creation which reflected His glory, it was especially true of Adam and Eve, who were expressly made in God’s image (Gen. 1:26). Because Adam and Eve were created good, they were created with the ability to obey. When God placed Adam in the Garden, He commanded him not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16–17). Prior to his sin, Adam had the capacity both to obey and to disobey. What Adam did not yet have was a proclivity for sin. This changed after Adam disobeyed. When Adam fell, his nature changed so that he and all his offspring were guilty of and inclined toward sin.

Sin entered the world through Adam, but it did not begin with him (Rom. 5:12–14). Satan was created prior to Adam and was the first to fall into sin (Luke 10:18). Like Adam, Satan was created with a capacity to either obey or disobey God’s command. Satan fell into sin when he aspired not merely to be like God but to replace Him (Isa. 14:12–15; Matt. 4:9–10). This ambition was reflected in Satan’s appeal to Eve to eat the forbidden fruit in order to “be like God” (Gen. 3:4–5).

Some religions (especially Eastern religions) explain God’s relation to sin as an aspect of God, a counter-balancing facet of His nature. Others who refuse to make God responsible for evil claim that it has always been a factor in creation, making it coexistent with and autonomous from God. The Bible rejects both views. Evil began with Satan’s rebellion and entered into human experience through Adam’s sin. Evil rejected the only One who is the true source of good.

For Further Study
To learn more about God and the origin of evil, read Genesis 1-11: Creation, Sin, and the Nature of God by John MacArthur (Thomas Nelson).
This August, we celebrate the first group of African pastors and church leaders to graduate from the Moody School of the Bible program in Ghana. Dr. Paul Nyquist, president of Moody Global Ministries, traveled to Ghana to congratulate the graduates.

With the assistance of Theovision, Moody Radio translated and recorded classes of Moody’s long-running program *Radio School of the Bible* on solar-powered audio players, providing pastors and church leaders in rural villages with access to theological and biblical education.

Theodore Asare, founder of Theovision, agrees. “*Moody Radio School of the Bible* in the Akan language is one of the best things that has happened in our ministry of reaching Africa’s oral cultures with God’s Word,” he says. “This training is the first of its kind that I know of in Ghana. Already, other language groups are asking for such training to be done in their language.”

*Moody Radio School of the Bible* began in 1926, the first correspondence Bible study program offered by radio in the United States. Today those programs are being repurposed for global use to equip Christian leaders who will impact their communities for Christ.

For this program, Theovision staff members traveled to the Akan- or Twi-speaking areas looking for pastors or church leaders in rural communities who had little or no Bible education. From these applicants, 250 people were selected to participate. The project required transcribing the Moody Radio audio programs and then translating them into Akan, the local language. The resulting programs were recorded on solar-powered audio devices, designed for use in rural areas with limited access to electricity.

One participant, Joshua Afari, said, “This device, with Bible courses in our language, is going to be helpful to everyone, especially to those who cannot read, and in rural villages where there is no electricity. Through this oral *School of the Bible*, Christianity will see a lot of progress in our part of the world.”

The program addresses an urgent need for biblical and theological training in Africa. “Many people have a passion to teach God’s Word, but they lack training,” says Stephen Asare, son of Theovision founder and Moody graduate. “This is helpful as they dive more into God’s Word. It has a lot of meat to it.”
Images of Light and Darkness in Scripture

Light and its reflections help create timeless masterworks of architecture. In the 20th century, American architect Louis I. Kahn transformed architecture and continues to inspire architects today with his use of light to define the building, elevating it from functional to extraordinary.

This month in Today in the Word, as we study images of light in the Bible, we’ll see that Christ is the ultimate Light for the nations, transforming lives and calling us to His truth. We’ll note that His Word gives light, guides, and protects. It elevates the worth of a life. The Bible also warns us that sinners rebel against the light and call it darkness, but we can rejoice that Christ rescued us from the darkness of our sin and brought us into His glorious light. God turns darkness into light!

Thank you for staying with us on our journey through the Bible with Today in the Word. Your prayers and financial support make this ministry possible. We pray this month’s topic will encourage you amid the troubles of this world, reminding you that “the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5). We hope this study will help you walk in the light of Christ and reflect it to others!
"The Bible is enveloped by the imagery of light, both literally and figuratively," the Dictionary of Biblical Imagery says. "At the beginning of the biblical narrative, physical light springs forth as the first created thing (Gen. 1:3–4). At the end of the story the light of God obliterates all traces of darkness: ‘And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light’ (Rev. 22:5). Between these two beacons the imagery of light makes nearly two hundred appearances, with light emerging as one of the Bible’s major and most complex symbols.”

This month we’ll be studying this highly meaningful and complex symbol. In general, we’ll examine the biblical passages to see the “story of light” from creation to the new Jerusalem. We’ve also organized our study to reflect how the image or metaphor of light is used in Scripture to reveal more about God the Father, God the Son, God’s Word, and even us as followers of Christ.

In today’s reading, God Himself spoke about creation. This was His first of two speeches in the dramatic finale of the book of Job. (For a book study of Job, see our June 2015 issue.) After a rather long and stressful conversation among Job and his three friends, God Himself showed up to settle matters and end their debate. The purpose of all the rhetorical questions and sarcasm in this passage is to put these squabbling humans in their place and to underscore for them the immense gulf between human and divine wisdom, authority, goodness, and power. Did they know the way to light’s birthplace? Certainly not!

Job already knew this intellectually, but he needed the spiritual reminder that the best and most fitting response to God is humility and worship.

**Where Were You? The Birth of Light**

**READ JOB 38:1–21**

**What is the way to the abode of light? And where does darkness reside?**

Job 38:19

**TUESDAY AUGUST 1**

**Where Were You? The Birth of Light**

Light and dark are powerful, universal symbols. We suggest that keeping a study journal will help you get more out of this month’s devotions. You’ll be able to track what you learn, identify favorite verses, and see interconnected themes and meanings. Then you’ll be able to easily review and share what you learn!

**APPLY THE WORD**

**PRAY WITH US**

As we embark on the Bible and prayer journey with Today in the Word this month, let’s ask God for a humble and teachable heart, open to all the lessons from our theme on light and darkness. And let us praise Jesus Christ, the Light for the nations.
Day One and the Creation of Light

Eric Metaxas argued in a *Wall Street Journal* editorial that science “makes the case for God.” At least 200 factors must occur for a planet to support life. If even one is missing, biological life is impossible. Despite the size of the universe, the odds are against even one planet supporting life, much less intelligent life. These natural odds point to the more reasonable explanation of a supernatural Designer.

God began His improbable work with the creation of light. The only reason we know anything about it is because God revealed it in Scripture. Genesis records that “the earth was formless and empty” (v. 2). “The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters,” according to one study Bible, like an eagle watching over young ones learning to fly.

Into the “darkness [that] was over the surface of the deep” burst God’s command: “Let there be light” (v. 3). Only the Lord Himself could say and do such a thing (see Isa. 45:18)! In fact, the Hebrew verb translated as “create” is used only for divine (not human) activity in Scripture, which highlights His sovereign power.

The creation of light indicates not only God’s power but also a newly created potential for life and order, as seen in His separating light from darkness (v. 4) and naming the time periods “day” and “night” (v. 5). No wonder He called it “good”!

Best of all, the same God who created light also gave us the light of His salvation: “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 God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6).

If you can, why not watch a sunrise this week? As the sun’s rays wing across the sky and light bursts into the darkness, you might also review the biblical story of creation and that awe-inspiring first command, “Let there be light.” The beauty of God’s creation should always spur us to worship, but too often we do not take the time to see.

**PRAY WITH US**

Greg Thornton, senior VP of Media, welcomes your prayers for Moody Radio and Moody Publishers—our media ministries that have been changing lives across the globe. Pray for God’s guidance for Greg in leading these crucial areas.
Day Four and the Creation of Lights

Sweet wormwood has been used in Chinese traditional medicine for more than 2,000 years. Scientists at the University of Washington studied this herb, learning how it worked in order to engineer a better anti-cancer drug. Initial research suggests that the emerging new chemotherapy better targets cancer cells without harming normal cells.

This is another example of creation’s wonderful design! The first three days of creation in the Genesis narrative are about forming or giving structure to the earth, including water, land, and basic vegetation. The last three days are about filling or populating that structure with, for example, trees, animals, and people. So while the first day is the creation of light, its parallel, the fourth day, is the creation of lights—the sun, moon, and stars.

These astronomical bodies might have been created on Day 1, since evening and morning marked the days of creation right from the start. In addition, the verb on Day 4 is not “create” as in verse 1 but “made,” meaning “fashioned” or “worked on” (v. 16). The phrase “vault of the sky” (vv. 14, 15, 17) conveys a sense of the grandeur and vastness of both the earth’s sky and what we call outer space.

Again, light is associated with order, especially the ordering of human life into meaningful periods of time. The sun and moon were to “serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years” (v. 14), described here as “the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night” (v. 16).

In this wonderful account of creation, we see God’s creative and sovereign power (see Isa. 40:26). He spoke the universe into being, ordered its design, and governs all that happens here.

APPLY THE WORD

Psalm 136 is a wonderful psalm for family or small group worship. The leader can read alternate lines, with the group responding, “His love endures forever.” The opening verses focus on God’s work of creation, including the sun, moon, and stars (vv. 7–9). Instead of taking light for granted, we should see it as a prompt to worship!

PRAY WITH US

Moody Publishers is a powerful tool for spreading the truth of God’s Word around the world. Pray for its Acquisitions team—Drew Dyck, Duane Sherman, and Ingrid Beck—that they find authors who write well and share Moody’s kingdom values.
Even the Darkness Is as Light to God

When God revealed Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and its meaning to Daniel, he responded with worship: “He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him. I thank and praise you, God of my ancestors” (Dan. 2:22–23).

Nothing is a mystery to God. Nothing is hidden from Him, or can be, not even an unspoken dream in the mind of a king. All knowledge and power dwell with Him—a truth Daniel dared to declare in the throne room of a hostile empire. And he used the imagery of light and darkness to do it.

David also used the imagery of light and darkness to affirm these truths in Psalm 139. A key thought in today’s reading is that “darkness is as light to you” (vv. 11–12). God is omniscient and omnipresent. This is a reassuring truth for those who love God. There is nowhere anyone can go—high or low, east or west—where He is absent, ignorant, or not in control (vv. 7–10).

But this is also a stern truth for God’s enemies. His presence is inescapable. The human tendency is to see Him in human terms, as if sometimes He’s “far away” and doesn’t know what’s going on. But He sees all, knows all, and His judgment is perfect. “There is no deep shadow, no utter darkness” that can possibly conceal anything or anyone from Him (Job 34:21–23).

This truth extends back into the past and forward into the future. God was intimately involved in our creation (vv. 13–15), and “all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be” (v. 16). He has had a plan for us from the start, and He knows us better than we know ourselves.

God sees each person as someone made in His image with an eternal destiny. Throughout history, we have tended to deny full personhood to those who are disabled or unborn or from particular ethnic backgrounds. Ask the Lord to shape your views of others as made in His image, and advocate for their worth and value.

Continue to encourage in prayer Moody Publishers’ Acquisitions team today: John Hinkley, Judith Dunagan, Kevin Emmert, and Randall Payleitner. May God give them discernment and grace as they reach out to authors and agents.
God Turns Darkness into Light

Writing in *The Pursuit of God*, A. W. Tozer said: “On our part there must be surrender to the Spirit of God, for His work it is to show us the Father and the Son. If we co-operate with Him in loving obedience God will manifest Himself to us, and that manifestation will be the difference between a nominal Christian life and a life radiant with the light of His face.”

The “light of God’s face” is one way of speaking about His favor or blessing. Today’s passage is a powerful reminder that the Lord is on the side of His people! This psalm of praise dates from late in King David’s life and is also recorded in Psalm 18. Reflecting on his life, the king rejoiced in God’s loving faithfulness to him.

Specifically, David exulted that God was his “lamp” (vv. 29–30), meaning that God was his ongoing source of knowledge, wisdom, hope, and blessing. Against all odds, the Lord can turn “darkness into light” or make it possible for a single warrior to “advance against a troop.” As David wrote elsewhere, “The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?” (Ps. 27:1).

The rest of this passage also focuses on God’s character. He is faithful, blameless, pure, and perfect. He loves to save the humble and humble the proud. When the wicked think they are devious enough to outsmart Him, He proves no one can. His Word is flawless. He is our shield, protector, and Rock. As needed, He provides strength, stability, confidence, security, and success. He paves “a broad path for my feet” (v. 37), the righteous, obedient path where we find His guidance and protection.

Hannah’s prayer in 1 Samuel 2 and David’s here form narrative “bookends” for the historical books of 1 and 2 Samuel. Read both passages and notice the similar theological points and key themes. In what ways do these prayers help us understand and interpret all the history in between? How can they shape your own prayers?

Samuel Choy, Chief Marketing Officer, appreciates your prayers for his service at Moody as he leads several teams: Integrated Marketing Communications, Digital Marketing, Moody Radio Marketing, and Event and Guest Services.
God’s Light Guides and Protects

Scripture often represents the glory of God as a brilliant light. When King Solomon dedicated the temple in Jerusalem, for example, the cloud of God’s glory filled the place to such an extent that the priests were unable to serve (1 Kings 8). This cloud of dazzling light signified God’s special presence with His people, and by extension, His covenant love and faithfulness.

This was not only a metaphorical light (as David meant yesterday) but at times a literal, physical light symbolizing God’s presence. During the Exodus from Egypt, He guided and protected the Israelites with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (vv. 21–22). He spoke from these pillars (Ex. 33:9; Ps. 99:7). They were a verifiable, physical reality that could also be seen by Israel’s enemies (Num. 14:14).

These pillars went in front of the people, showing them the way they should go. They provided a reliable and comforting reminder that the God who had freed them from centuries of slavery and the grip of a powerful king was still there and would not abandon them. Therefore, it symbolized not only God’s presence but also His compassion (see Neh. 9:19).

At a practical level, God’s light allowed the people to travel by night as well as by day. He graciously led them the long way around, so that they wouldn’t immediately be forced to fight the Philistines (vv. 17–18). Not only were they unready militarily, they also possessed weak faith.

The presence of Joseph’s body should have been an encouragement in this regard (v. 19). The day had finally arrived when Joseph’s prophecy would be fulfilled (Gen. 50:24–25) and God would take His people to their “promised land.”

APPLY THE WORD

The story of the Exodus tells of many points at which the Israelites wished to return to Egypt, imagining that their lives had been better there. This seems foolish and irrational—yet too often we seem to wish the same. By our words and actions, it sometimes appears we would rather return to slavery to sin than follow Christ to true freedom.

PRAY WITH US

In the next three days, please join us as we pray for the Digital Marketing team that creates and maintains Moody’s online presence. Today, would you pray for Danny Russell, Dave Quigley, David Kyrouac, Dave McKay, and Elizabeth Doogan?
God the Sovereign Creator

In *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, J. I. Packer explained the difference between “God’s will of precept and His will of purpose, the former being His published declaration of what man ought to do, the latter His (largely secret) decision as to what He Himself will do. The distinction is between God’s law and His plan. The former tells man what he should be; the latter settles what he will be. Both aspects of the will of God are facts, though how they are related in the mind of God is inscrutable to us.”

God’s sovereignty is both a comforting and a mysterious doctrine. He is the all-powerful Creator, Lord over both light and darkness, bringer of both prosperity and disaster (vv. 7–8). He is the One who “wraps himself in light as with a garment” (Ps. 104:2). He is the absolute King over every reality in the universe!

Acknowledged or not, He is worthy of worship. He does what He does so that all will know this truth (vv. 5–6). In this passage, He chose to work through Cyrus, king of Persia (vv. 1–4, 13), to send the Jewish exiles home. Even the emperor of the reigning superpower had no choice but to do what God wills. This pagan king would be made into an “anointed” instrument of God’s righteousness to serve His people.

Worship should also include submission and obedience (vv. 9–12). As a child obeys a parent, or as a pot yields to the shaping hand of a potter, it is both fitting and required that we bow before Him. Too often, though, we question, criticize, or talk back. Yet He created all and governs all. He does exactly as He wishes; His plans never fail. All the earth must and will one day see and acknowledge His glorious sovereignty!

**APPLY THE WORD**

The Creator knows the stars by name (Isa. 40:26). He feeds and clothes birds and flowers (Matt. 6:25–34). He even watches over sparrows (Matt. 10:29–31). How much more does He care for us! Choose one of these verses as your own reminder to “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7; Ps. 55:22; Phil 4:6–7).

**PRAY WITH US**

As we pray for Digital Marketing at Moody in Chicago, please add Drew Smith, Emily Alvarado, Jax Gorman, Karsten Smith, and Kiel Russell to your list. May they use their skills well to foster connections with donors through websites and emails.
A King Like the Dawn

According to one source, the deaf composer Ludwig van Beethoven said on his deathbed, “I will hear in heaven.” Blues singer Bessie Smith said, “I’m going, but I’m going in the name of the Lord.” Chemist Michael Faraday said, “I shall be with Christ, and that is enough.” Harriet Tubman’s last words were “Swing low, sweet chariot.”

Today’s reading contains the last words of King David—the final message he wanted to leave with his son Solomon and his nation, Israel. These words were a follow-up to his final psalm of praise (see August 5). Rather than boasting of his own accomplishments, David gave the glory to God. To whatever extent he had been inspired and exalted, it was because of God (v. 1). God had chosen him and gifted him to be the leader of Israel.

God Himself set the standards for what a good king should be (vv. 2–4). A leader should be defined by righteousness, integrity, and fear of the Lord. A leader knows above all that the results of his endeavors are in God’s hands alone.

Light imagery is used here to create a vivid word-picture of such a king (v. 4). He is “like the light of morning at sunrise on a cloudless morning” or “like the brightness after rain that brings grass from the earth.” Both of these similes indicate a qualitative difference from the usual self-centered, corrupt human king. A godly king would instead rely on the Lord and look out for the interests of his people. The contrast would be like sunrise after a dark night or like fresh air after a cleansing rain.

What David wanted to be remembered for most was the covenant God made with his house (v. 5; 2 Sam. 7:16). This was the ultimate proof of being blessed by God!

**APPLY THE WORD**

What do you want your legacy to be? What do you want to be remembered for, or what would you want people to say about you at your funeral? Spend time today pondering and praying seriously over these questions. A godly legacy begins with a focus on who God is and a willingness to give Him the glory for all your accomplishments.

**PRAY WITH US**

In conclusion of our prayers for Digital Marketing, please uphold Lane Anderson, Noelle Bud, Mikhail Filatov, Nia Hendricks, Peter Distler, and Rachel Strull. We are grateful for this team’s service in social media, developing websites, online banners, and ads.
Light, Glory, and the Throne of God

A classic hymn declares: “Immortal, invisible, God only wise, / In light inaccessible hid from our eyes, / Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days, / Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise. . . . Great Father of glory, pure Father of light, / Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight; / All praise we would render; O help us to see / 'Tis only the splendor of light hideth Thee!”

Ezekiel’s description of God’s glory in today’s reading is full of light. This vision reassured the shaken and depressed Jewish exiles that God had not abandoned them. Though they were far from the temple, He was still present with them. Israel and Jerusalem had been conquered—but not God, who remained in sovereign control.

In the vision, God’s throne was attended by “living creatures” or angels (vv. 19–21). Their eyes represent divine omniscience, their wheels-within-wheels divine omnipresence. Ezekiel saw above these angels a crystal “vault” (the same word used in Genesis 1), marking a gap between created beings and Creator (vv. 22–24). The phrase “sparkling like crystal” indicates that this space was bright and beautiful.

Ezekiel heard a voice coming from above this “vault,” then saw a figure “like a man” seated on a jeweled throne (vv. 25–26). The One on the throne is described in terms of light and fire—glowing like metal from a blazing furnace and surrounded by radiant light (v. 27). The overall effect was “like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day.” To see God directly was impossible. As impressive as this vision was, it was only “the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord” (v. 28). The reality is beyond description! No wonder Ezekiel fell down in worship.

APPLY THE WORD

God is all-glorious, loving, faithful, righteous, and just. People take refuge in Him, enjoy His abundant blessings, and delight in Him. Make a list of God’s attributes and how you have experienced them in your own life, recording those times you’ve tasted His goodness or felt His faithfulness.

PRAY WITH US

We invite you to pray today for one more Marketing team on our Chicago campus: Moody Radio's George Economos, Hannah LaMaster, and Michael Chapin. Thank the Lord for their integrity, creativity, professionalism, and commitment to godly standards.
The Brilliance of Christ

Charles Wesley wrote “Morning Hymn”: “Christ, whose glory fills the skies, / Christ, the true, the only light, / Sun of Righteousness, arise, / Triumph o’er the shades of night: / Day-spring from on high, be near: / Day-star, in my heart appear. . . . Visit then this soul of mine, / Pierce the gloom of sin, and grief, / Fill me, Radiancy Divine, / Scatter all my unbelief, / More and more thyself display, / Shining to the perfect day.”

The light and glory of God the Father is displayed as well by God the Son! Today’s reading from Revelation contains echoes from the prophet Ezekiel’s vision that we saw yesterday. We have explored light in the Bible as it relates to the Father; next, we’ll consider passages about light relating to the Son.

The island of Patmos was a Roman penal colony, about 50 miles southwest of Ephesus. John was in exile there, but as with the Jewish exiles in Ezekiel’s day, God remained very present. One Sunday, the Holy Spirit gave John a vision of the risen and exalted Christ.

Light is a key metaphor and visual feature in the description (vv. 12–16). There are seven lampstands and seven stars, representing seven churches and their angels. Christ’s hair is white like snow, indicating wisdom and dignity. His eyes are like blazing fire, meaning He sees all. His feet are like glowing bronze, representing strength. His “face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance” (v. 16), signifying not only glory and power but also love and favor (see Num. 6:24–26).

In the vision’s climax, Christ announced His identity as the Living One, the Alpha and the Omega, and the conqueror of death and hell (vv. 17–18).

Did you know that Christ has over 300 names or titles in Scripture? Two good books on this topic are *Names of Christ*, by T. C. Horton and Charles E. Hurlburt, and *Names of Jesus*, by A. B. Simpson (from a classic nineteenth-century sermon series). Both are available from Moody Publishers and can be found online or at your Christian bookstore.

Join us in prayer for vice president of Moody Radio, Collin Lambert, remembering his leadership before God today. As you pray, also thank the Lord for all the lives that have been touched by Moody’s radio ministry on air and online.
Christ Is the Dawning Light of History

Christian musicians have been singing of the light of God throughout the church’s history. Last year, Josh Garrels released a Christmas album titled *The Light Came Down*. The title track celebrates: “The light came down / Cast the darkness away / He appeared / A helpless child / The light of God came down / There is a light / A new day dawning / Old things pass / All things made new.”

The Incarnation of Christ is the dawning light of history! Without Him, humanity has no hope.

This is what Zechariah realized and prophesied in his song of praise following the birth of his son, John the Baptist. The climactic verses of this prophecy are given in terms of light and darkness: “Because of the tender mercy of our God . . . the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace” (vv. 78–79).

This is all about God’s plan of redemption (v. 68). The “rising sun” is the “horn of salvation” from the line of David (v. 69), the Messiah, Jesus Christ, for whom John the Baptist will prepare the way (v. 76). Sent by God the Father, God the Son will come in order to “give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins” (v. 77). Only then can we have peace with God.

Zechariah spoke as part of a great tradition. Isaiah and Malachi were among those who had looked forward to this day: “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned” (Isa. 9:2). “The sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays” (Mal. 4:2).

**APPLY THE WORD**

Without the light of Christ, we would remain eternally lost in spiritual darkness. Because of our sins we stand condemned, but by trusting in His name we can receive God’s gift of life and salvation. Have you believed on the name of Jesus and stepped into the light? If not, take this important step today!

**PRAY WITH US**

Doug Hastings, Lucrecia Lopez, and Tinakka Johnson help Collin Lambert oversee general administrative tasks and processes at Moody Radio in Chicago. Pray the Lord would encourage them in their day-to-day responsibilities.
Christ Is the Light of the World

In the Transfiguration, Jesus revealed His glory to three of His closest followers. “His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.” Moses and Elijah appeared and spoke with Him. The voice of God declared from a bright cloud, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!” (Matt. 17:1–9).

Peter, James, and John had the privilege of seeing the unveiled glory of Christ. He is indeed the “light of the world,” as He taught in today’s reading. As a result, “Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (v. 12). Just like the Israelites who followed the pillar of cloud and fire, believers who follow the Light are heading in the right direction!

This is one of the most famous “I am” statements in the Gospel of John. By using this formulation, Jesus identified Himself as God, the one true Light. The metaphor of light thus means life, salvation, hope, and faithful love. By contrast, the metaphor of darkness indicates death, condemnation, despair, and self-centered pride. This realm includes sin, the world, and Satan; while God’s domain includes holiness, His kingdom, and Himself. Jesus also said, “I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness” (John 12:46).

When the Pharisees challenged His claim, Jesus called His Father as His second witness (vv. 13–18). These so-called religious leaders illustrated the ignorance and blindness of those who walk in spiritual darkness (vv. 19–20). A clear choice was placed before the audience: Choose light and life in Christ, or choose to reject God and willfully remain in a state of darkness and death.

APPLY THE WORD

Do you sometimes wonder if your life is headed in the right direction? Does the world around you feel dark or confusing? Jesus doesn't promise us an easy path, but He does promise us light, life, freedom, and purpose when we follow Him. Put your focus on Him, and His Word will direct your steps and His Spirit will give you strength to follow.

PRAY WITH US

Jennifer Epperson conducts research, surveys, and data management at Moody Radio. Effie Rolfe oversees the online streaming of the Urban Praise internet station. Thank God today for their expertise and ask for His blessings as they serve Him.
**Christ Is the Light for the Nations**

Creation and salvation are closely connected in Scripture, which is reflected in these lines from a fifth-century hymn: “Creator of the stars of night, / Thy people’s everlasting Light: / O Christ, Redeemer, save us all / And hear Thy servants when they call.”

From the very beginning, the Creator had a plan of redemption. His own Son, the second Person of the Trinity, would become a human being, the perfect sacrifice, to fulfill the promises made to Adam, Abraham, and David. This is seen in many Bible passages, including today’s reading, which is the first “Servant Song” in Isaiah.

Images of light and darkness surround the Servant, whom we now know to be Jesus (see Matt. 12:15–21). God, the Creator of light, chose and called Him as the only One who could accomplish His mission of redemption (v. 5). His purpose was to be “a light for the Gentiles,” showing that God’s plan of salvation was for the whole world (v. 6; 49:6; 51:4). Simeon later rejoiced over the baby Jesus as “a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel” (Luke 2:32). Paul and Barnabas also quoted Isaiah 49:6, which uses the same phrase, to justify preaching the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 13:47–48).

The metaphor of light includes knowledge as opposed to ignorance and freedom as opposed to captivity (v. 7). The Savior came as an agent of God’s mercy and brought spiritual life, truth, and liberation from our state of spiritual death and bondage to sin.

The Servant is also described in this passage as One upheld by God and in whom God delights. He will bring justice and peace. He is a gentle healer, a righteous source of hope, and a fulfillment of the covenant.

**APPLY THE WORD**

The chorus “Song for the Nations,” sometimes known as “May We Be a Shining Light to the Nations,” by Chris Christensen, develops these themes. Song lyrics and music can easily be located on YouTube or other websites. Sing or listen to this song as part of your personal worship time today.

**PRAY WITH US**

Would you include in your prayer our Human Resources department headed by vice president Debbie Zelinski? We ask God to continue to guide them as they hire new employees, oversee employee training and events, and manage employee benefits.
In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

John 1:4

Christ the Eternal Word, Life, and Light

Book 3 of John Milton’s Christian epic poem, *Paradise Lost*, opens with his famous “invocation to light.” Speaking of Christ, the poet wrote: “Hail holy light, offspring of Heav’n first-born . . . God is light, And never but in unapproached light Dwelt from Eternity, dwelt then in thee, Bright effluence of bright essence increate [uncreated].”

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, John the Apostle also wrote poetic, beautiful, and true words to introduce his Gospel. He was stirred to proclaim the truth of Christ with the imagery of light. “In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind” (v. 4).

Light is used here as a metaphor for life and salvation. Without Christ, we would have no hope of either. Although victory is certain, the battle between light and darkness rages on. “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (v. 5).

John the Baptist was sent by God as a herald to the light, that is, as a forerunner and witness, announcing the coming of the light (vv. 6–8). He testified to the light and pointed others to belief in the light.

After 400 years without prophets, John had to say specifically that he was not the light. Humbly and remarkably, he consistently proclaimed this fact rather than yielding to the temptation to seek followers and a more prominent role for himself (John 1:19–34).

Just as “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1), so also “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (v. 1). Only Jesus, the eternally existent and incarnate Son of God, is “the true light that gives light to everyone” (v. 9).

Apply the Word

John the Baptist was willing to sacrifice his own fame and glory to point people to Jesus: “He must become greater; I must become less” (John 3:26–30). Are we willing to sacrifice anything that would block the light of Jesus—our own ambition, agenda, or status? May we be so filled with His light that people see Christ in our lives.

Pray with Us

As the new student orientation starts today on Moody’s Spokane, Wash., campus, please uphold in prayer the staff of Moody Aviation’s Airframe and Power Plant: Brian Writebol, Gregory Heller, Jodi Appleby, Mark McIntire, and Steven Thimsen.
**Ephesians 4:7** says, “But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.” What does this mean?

In the context of the letter to the Ephesians, the grace that Christ gives is the God-given ability and enablement to serve Christ in a specific manner in order to contribute to the overall growth of the body of Christ. The ability to serve the Lord and His people in a specific ministry capacity is itself evidence of the grace of God operating in our lives. The words to “each one of us” remind us that every follower of Christ has a grace gift, a gift that is to be developed and deployed for the glory of God and edification of the church (see also 1 Peter 4:10–11).

Does the phrase in Ephesians 4:7—“as Christ apportioned it”—imply that the Lord gives some Christians more grace and some Christian less grace?

The reference to grace in that verse is not the saving grace granted to us at conversion (see Eph. 2:8–10). Every repentant sinner receives the saving grace of God at conversion, and each redeemed person receives the same saving grace (Acts 11:17; 15:6–11). The grace referred to in this verse is empowering grace for service. The levels of this empowering grace do vary according to what the Lord has called each one of us to do. In His infinite wisdom, the Lord has determined the amount, scope, and extent of the grace gift that you have—but God gives each of us enough empowering grace to serve Him in the way He has called us.

I was taught not to pray for the leaders of the church, only to ask them to pray for me. Since the apostle Paul was a devout Christian and deeply committed to Christ, why did he ask for prayer in Ephesians 6:19?

Your question merits much reflection on our part. The apostle Paul was one of the godliest men who ever lived. He was a powerful missionary, church planter, preacher, Bible teacher, and mentor (see Rom. 15:14–21; 1 Cor. 3:10–15; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 2:5–7; 2 Tim. 3:10–11). Under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, he penned the book of Romans, the great doctrinal letter of the New Testament. He wrote 1 and 2 Corinthians. He penned Galatians, a book that some scholars call the Magna Carta of Christianity. Paul wrote Ephesians, a book filled with the mighty mountain ranges of doctrinal truth and practical implications. Paul wrote Philippians, the precious thank-you letter of friendship, with every line throbbing with joy. He wrote Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philemon, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus. Furthermore, half of the book
of Acts is devoted to the missionary journeys of Paul.

Yet this Paul, the great Apostle, asks for prayer for liberty to preach the gospel in the context of his imprisonment. He could not exercise his ministry in his own strength. He stood in need of God’s grace, strength, and power. He understood that one of the principal ways God’s grace and power could be unleashed in his life and ministry was through the prayers of God’s people on his behalf. Paul requested prayer numerous times in his letters (see Rom. 15:30–32; 1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:1). If Paul realized that he needed prayer, we can rest assured that all of us—whether we are church leaders or the people in the pews—stand in the need of the prayers of God’s people. We, therefore, should not hesitate to ask other Christians to pray for us.

Q

In the Gospel according to John, John refers to the miracles of Jesus as signs (John 2:11; 4:54; 20:30–31). Would you please explain why he identifies the Lord’s miracles as signs?

A

Three terms are used for our Lord’s miracles in the New Testament: miracles, signs, and wonders (see Acts 2:22). The word miracle signifies that the miraculous deed or event is an expression of divine power. The identification of a miracle as a wonder underscores the awe the miracle generates in the observers. The word sign highlights the miracle’s meaning as a pointer to draw our attention to some aspect of the Lord’s person.

Q

What is the meaning of the Lord’s miraculous signs in the Gospel of John?

A

From the many sign miracles Jesus performed, John selected and recorded seven of them in his Gospel. His selection was rooted in evangelistic purposes, which he identifies in John 20:31, and each of the seven signs had a particular significance. Jesus changed the water into wine, pointing to His power over quality (John 2:1–11). The Lord’s healing of the nobleman’s son points to His power over distance (John 4:46–54). When the Lord healed the man at the pool of Bethesda, He demonstrated His power over time (John 5:1–9). His feeding of the five thousand demonstrated His power over quantity (John 6:1–13). The Lord’s calming of the sea points to His power over nature (John 6:15–21). Jesus healed the man born blind, pointing to His power over tragedy and misfortune (John 9). And when He raised Lazarus from among the dead, He revealed His power over death (John 11).

What a mighty Savior we know and serve!
God’s Word Gives Light

A 1991 survey conducted for the Library of Congress and Book-of-the-Month Club found that Americans named the Bible as the most influential book in their lives. Yet even back then, this news wasn’t as good as it sounds. After all, number two on the list was Ayn Rand’s *Atlas Shrugged*. In addition, respondents said they spent more time watching television (12 hours per week) than reading books (9 hours).

The Bible, as the revealed and inspired Word of God, reflects His light, that is, His truth, wisdom, and holy commands. The first six verses of Psalm 19 address creation, the “book of nature,” and how it declares God’s glory. Today’s reading, the second half of this psalm, addresses the Bible, the “book of God.”

One of Scripture’s key characteristics is that the “commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes” (v. 8). Bright eyes indicate alertness and energy. When the eyes have “light,” it means they have good health, life, and hope. This verse reminds us that the Lord’s commands are our source of spiritual health, alertness, energy, life, and hope. They should be obeyed, for they show us the best way to live. That is, “This command is a lamp, this teaching is a light, and correction and instruction are the way to life” (Prov. 6:23). In short, “Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path” (Ps. 119:105).

God’s Word is also perfect, eternal, righteous, and trustworthy. It gives wisdom, joy, warning, and discernment. It is pure, precious, rewarding to obey, and sweetly refreshing to the soul. It helps convict us of sin and communicates God’s promise of forgiveness. Thankfully, the light of Scripture helps keep us on the straight and narrow path!

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**APPLY THE WORD**

Here’s a simple object lesson about light. Turn off all the lights and go to the darkest room in the house. Try to do simple tasks such as reading a book or writing your name—in the dark. Then light a candle or turn on a flashlight and try again. What an enormous difference even the smallest source of light can make!

**PRAY WITH US**

Ken Heulitt, chief financial officer, requests your prayers for his teams managing Moody’s finances, as we strive to always follow the principles of godly stewardship. He also would like to thank all Moody’s friends for your faithful support and prayers.
The Gospel Is Light and Truth

Archaeologists recently found evidence for a missing chapter in church history. They unearthed seven Christian gravestones, one dating to A.D. 1162, near Ilyn Balik, Kazakhstan, an ancient city on the Silk Road trade route. This proves that the gospel reached central Asia centuries earlier than had been previously verified. One of the archaeologists said, “This is fundamental to local believers. Kazakhstan had its history suppressed in the Soviet period. After independence, they began to rediscover who they were.”

The gospel is light and truth to all who believe. Following Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus about being “born again” (3:1–15), John explained and summarized the gospel message (vv. 16–18). God loved the world so much that He sent His only Son to pay the just penalty for our sins. Those who respond to this gift in faith receive eternal life instead of the death they deserve. God would have every right to condemn sinners, but instead He sent Christ to save us. Only those who refuse to believe stand condemned.

God sent light, His Son, into our darkness. One would think that would be cause for rejoicing, but in fact different people respond differently. Many are afraid and hate the light, preferring to continue in sin and proudly hoping to hide their evil deeds. Others step forward in faith into the light’s love and truth, living by it “in the sight of God,” that is, with His help or in His strength (vv. 19–21).

To believe simply means to see and choose light. To reject God’s salvation is like closing one’s eyes and trying to shut out the light. The light is not affected by this self-chosen blindness, but darkness will be that person’s eternal destiny.

Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light.
John 3:21

“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 God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6). The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery says, “Here is the link between creation and the new creation . . . between the physical reality and the spiritual symbol.”

APPLY THE WORD

PRAY WITH US

New student orientation begins today on our Chicago campus, a busy time for Residence Life’s Bruce Norquist, David Chizum, and Hannah Cosper. Please focus your prayers on their interaction with students, as they help students settle into campus life.
The Responsibility of Worship

In their song, “Father of Lights,” the popular Christian band Third Day sings: “Father of love, Father of lights / Let your love fall, let it shine bright / You alone deserve the honor and the glory / You alone deserve all our praise / So we worship you and you alone / Great and marvelous are your deeds / O Lord, God Almighty / Just and true are your ways / So we praise you and you alone / Father of truth, Father of grace.”

Having explored the imagery of light as it relates to God the Father, God the Son, and God’s Word, including the gospel, we turn next to how light and darkness are used in Scripture to describe or instruct human beings. In today’s passage, we consider physical light in relation to the responsibility to worship.

Light was an integral part of Israelite worship, as we see in the lampstand in the tabernacle. Keeping the lights continually lit, using clear olive oil, was an important duty for the priests. God Himself gave the pattern—a center stem with three branches on either side, for a total of seven lights, a number possibly symbolizing completeness (Num. 8:1–4). The lampstand’s design was to resemble an almond tree, with “flowerlike cups, buds and blossoms,” perhaps because this tree was the first to bloom in spring in the Near East and thus symbolized life (v. 31). Standing four-and-a-half feet high, it was to be made of pure gold and would have weighed about 100 pounds.

To keep the lights always burning represented both the continuous worship of God’s people and His continuous presence with them. It was also a reminder that Israel was to be a “light to the nations.”

The basic design of the tabernacle lampstand can be seen today in the Hanukkah menorah. Hanukkah is also known as the “Festival of Lights,” and one candle is lit each night during this Jewish holiday. Even if we don’t celebrate this holiday, we can be reminded of God’s light to His people through the menorah or lampstand.

PRAY WITH US

Again, lift up in prayer our Residence Life team, Jeffrey Anderson, Neal Anderson, Sarah Youssef, and Stacey Brogan. Pray that the Lord gives them the resources and strength they need to serve students well.
Sinners Rebel against the Light

Mack Yearwood was wanted on battery charges and several other open warrants, but Florida law enforcement officers had no idea of his whereabouts. Then he uploaded his wanted poster to Facebook, alerting deputies who arrested him a day later. Apparently he didn’t realize that the police can see social media along with everyone else!

Those who do evil put their confidence in darkness to hide them as they rebel against the light (v. 13; John 3:19). This is how Job poetically describes them in today’s passage. From his perspective, this is a reality of both knowledge and action. Evildoers do not know the ways of light, nor do they “stay in its paths.” Murderers think darkness will hide their deeds (v. 14). Adulterers similarly think nighttime will conceal their sexual immorality (v. 15). Thieves also prefer darkness in which to pursue their criminal activities (v. 16). Such people prey shamefully on the poor, needy, and vulnerable (v. 21). Irrationally, they are “friends with the terrors of darkness” (v. 17).

Job called for justice to be served to such sinners (vv. 18–20). Their deeds will not last. They will vanish without a trace, like sea foam or melting snow. He knew that God sees all and that hiding things from Him is impossible. Darkness offers no concealment. Evildoers may feel safe or “established,” but God’s “eyes are on their ways” and He will make sure that “they are cut off like heads of grain” (vv. 21–24).

The Lord accomplishes justice on His timetable, not ours, so at times it might appear that the wicked are prospering. That’s why Job began his speech with this question or complaint: “Why does the Almighty not set times for judgment? Why must those who know Him look in vain for such days?” (v. 1).

**Apply the Word**

Does it seem to you that God’s justice is overdue? That the wicked are doing just fine and getting away with it (Jer. 12:1)? If so, cling to Psalm 27:13–14: “I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.”

**Pray with Us**

Today we invite you uphold in prayer Dr. Junias Venugopal, provost and dean of Education, as he and his staff are getting ready for the new school year. Pray that through their service, the Lord would bless Moody’s ministry of training Christian leaders.
Evangelist Billy Graham once preached: “Humanity has always been dexterous at confusing evil with good. That was Adam and Eve’s problem, and it is our problem today. If evil were not made to appear good, there would be no such thing as temptation. It is in their close similarity that the danger lies. . . . [But] God has not changed. His standards have not been lowered.”

To call evil good is moral and spiritual confusion, not in the sense of being ignorant or bewildered but in the sense of suppressing the truth (see Rom. 1:18–20). Today’s passage gives the final three of six woes pronounced on Israel for breaking their covenant with God. They stood condemned for calling evil good and suppressing the truth.

Those who refuse and deny the truth are like people who call light dark and dark light (v. 20). It seems ridiculous because it’s so clearly wrong! Evil is fundamentally irrational in this sense. To act as if things are that are not, or as if things are not that are, is absurd and to some extent carries its own judgment. It’s as if someone denied that gravity exists and then stepped off a cliff—their self-deception would have immediate consequences! Similarly, those who call light dark and dark light will inevitably suffer the consequences.

Such people are “wise in their own eyes” and thus guilty of pride (v. 21). Pride thinks it knows better than God, and it’s always dead wrong. The certain outcome for those who spurn the Lord and rebel against His Word is death, seen in images of burning, decaying, and blowing away (v. 24). For the nation of Israel, the consequence will be God’s judgment of conquest by a foreign nation, a day of “darkness and distress” (v. 30).

Israel’s sins included corruption and injustice. Jesus condemned the Pharisees of His day for practicing legalism but neglecting “justice and the love of God” (Luke 11:42). What might Isaiah and Jesus say about America and our churches? In what ways do we and should we help seek His justice for the voiceless and the vulnerable?
We Have Been Rescued from Darkness into Light

As Jesus was being crucified and the sins of the world were being laid on Him, physical darkness fell over the land at noon and lasted for three hours (see Luke 23:44–49). His last words were, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit,” a quotation of Psalm 31:5. The supervising centurion was amazed and responded by praising God and saying, “Surely this was a righteous man.”

To rescue us sinners from the death penalty we deserved, Christ descended into darkness, death, and hell. The “story of light” is therefore in essence the gospel story. We’re all sinners, prideful rebels against the light. But thanks be to God, He “rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (vv. 13–14). By His mercy, He has called us “out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

Light and darkness are opposing kingdoms. The kingdom of light belongs to the Son and is a place of salvation, mercy, and life. The kingdom of darkness, on the other hand, is the realm of sin and is a place of condemnation, pride, and death. Citizens of the kingdom of light have a sure inheritance of eternal life with God (v. 12; see 1 Peter 1:3–5). Citizens of the kingdom of darkness, by contrast, also have a sure inheritance, but theirs is eternal death and separation from God. Light is associated with holiness, hope, truth, and life, while darkness is associated with evil, despair, lies, and death. What an amazing rescue!

Paul taught this in the context of an extended prayer request for the Colossians. People of light should live worthy of their calling and strive to please their Rescuer (v. 10)!

The term inheritance in the Old Testament was often linked with God’s covenant with Israel, but Paul and others use it in the New Testament to refer to the church and God’s plan of salvation. With an online Bible study tool, you can search for words such as inheritance or heirs of God to learn more about God’s gracious promise to you.

PRAY WITH US
Today we continue to pray for the faculty of the Educational Ministries department in Chicago, asking for God’s refreshing presence in the lives of Dennis Fledderjohann, Gina Behrens, Mary Martin, and Robert MacRae.
Light, Dark, Sin, and Forgiveness

An eighth-century Christian named Alcuin of York prayed: “Almighty and merciful God, the fountain of all goodness, who knows the thoughts of our hearts, we confess that we have sinned against you, and done what you see as evil. Wash us, we implore you, from the stains of our past sins, and give us grace and power to put away all hurtful things so that, being delivered from the bondage of sin, we may produce the good fruits of repentance.”

Today’s passage frames repentance in terms of three key truths. First, a foundational truth: “God is light; in him there is no darkness at all” (v. 5; see 1 Tim. 6:16). What does this mean? He is holy; in Him there is no evil at all. He is truth; in Him there is no falsehood at all. He is perfect; in Him there is no flaw of any kind.

Second, an applied truth: We must walk in the light (vv. 6–7). Our lives are the evidence of our faith. If we claim to have a relationship with God but do not choose holiness and truth, we prove ourselves liars. Being God’s children means we need and want to be where He is and where fellow believers are. If we claim to have a relationship with God, it will also be seen in our unity and fellowship with one another.

Third, the truth of grace: Confession is an essential spiritual discipline (vv. 8–10). On our earthly pilgrimages, we’re unable to walk in the light perfectly. We still sin, and if we think otherwise we are self-deceived.

Thankfully, when we confess, He forgives, always! He is faithful and never gives up on us. He is just—Christ already paid the price. When we stray, He restores us and brings us back into the light (v. 9).

Are you regularly in the habit of confessing your sins? If yes, give thanks for God’s gift of forgiveness in Christ. If not, begin this spiritual habit. God already knows everything about us. Confessing and accepting His certain forgiveness is about removing all barriers to intimate fellowship with Him and with fellow believers.

Moody’s fall semester classes begin today! Let’s take this opportunity to praise God for our new and returning students and ask for His blessing on their studies and future ministry. Pray for the power of the Holy Spirit to cover their time at Moody.
In her book *What’s in a Phrase? Pausing Where Scripture Gives You Pause*, Marilyn Chandler McEntyre pointed out: “The word ‘kindness,’ related to ‘kin,’ descends directly from the Old English *gecynde*, meaning ‘with the feeling of relatives for each other.’ Kindness extends our impulse to share with and care for others beyond the claims of the family we recognize as kin to those who have only the claim on us of their fellow humanity and their need. Kindness takes seriously that the children of God are in very fact brothers and sisters.”

Walking in the light means showing love for our fellow Christ-followers. Knowledge and obedience must go hand in hand (vv. 3–6). To know God means to keep His commands means to embrace and live by His truth means to love Him means to imitate Christ. The reverse is also true. These sets of meanings are inseparable.

Love is completed by obedience. Or to put it another way, God’s love moves us toward obedience. If this is not the case, then we neither truly know nor love Him. This is not a new idea, since loving God and one’s neighbor was already the greatest commandment.

Yet at the same time it is a new idea, because Christ’s redemptive sacrifice has made possible a depth of love and unity that was not possible before. He is the hinge of history. “The darkness is passing and the true light is already shining” (vv. 7–8).

Love for God also means love for fellow believers (vv. 9–11). If we do not love our brothers and sisters in Christ, then we neither truly know nor love God either. In part, this means we can help one another toward more holiness (not stumbling) and seeing clearly, which is spiritual wisdom.

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**APPLY THE WORD**

Though it has been overused, the phrase “what would Jesus do?” remains a very useful way of thinking about the Christian life. To walk in the light means to imitate Jesus (v. 6). What would He do in our situation? If you’re not sure, this is the kind of wisdom God delights to give (James 1:5).

**PRAY WITH US**

Please pray today for Moody’s president, Dr. Paul Nyquist, who leads the Convocation service in Chicago today. As he greets students and their families gathering on campus, we ask for a fruitful and spiritually enriching year for him.
We Are the Light of the World

The well-known musical *Fame* focused on the characters’ desire to achieve success and recognition. As one sang: “Remember my name, fame / I’m gonna live forever / I’m gonna learn how to fly, high / I feel it coming together / People will see me and cry, fame / I’m gonna make it to heaven / Light up the sky like a flame, fame.” Another hoped: “In time, we will all be stars.”

The biblical idea of being “lights” or “stars” is very different! Given all we’ve learned about light in Scripture, it’s rather amazing that in today’s passage Jesus called *us* “the light of the world” (v. 14). He Himself is “the light of the world” (John 9:5), of course, but He has passed on this identity and purpose to His body, the church. We’re to carry on His work in His name!

Light was one of two metaphors Jesus used to identify us here (vv. 14–16). We don’t generate our own light; rather, we reflect God’s light before the world. This is a tremendous privilege and responsibility. “Light” indicates good deeds that bring God glory, as opposed to good deeds done before people to receive their praise (v. 16; Matt. 6:1). To live in any other way makes no sense—it would be like hiding a lamp under a basket.

The other metaphor is salt (v. 13). Salt is a seasoning that adds flavor and is an important preservative. Its most powerful effects are to make food palatable and to make people thirsty.

Christians do all of these things. We can stay flavorful through committed discipleship. We should act as a moral preservative by living holy lives. And we must cause other people to thirst for the Living Water. To lose any of these qualities is to become useless.

**Apply the Word**

People who strive for wisdom and righteousness—people who follow Jesus—will shine like stars (Dan. 12:3). Philippians 2:14–16 tells us how: Don’t grumble. Stop complaining and arguing. If that sounds difficult, try it for one hour, then one day, then one week. Don’t rely on your own strength; instead, pray to do it in God’s strength.

**Pray with Us**

Please pray for Moody Bible Institute Distance Learning headed by vice president, Dr. Bryan O’Neal. Pray for encouragement for the MDL’s staff and instructors as they bring a Moody education to learners across cultures and generations.
Eyes, Light, Passion, and Treasure

Eyes have more than two million working parts. They involve about half the brain in the act of seeing. They are the second most complex organ (after the brain). Eye muscles are the most active in the entire body, as well as the strongest (relative to their size). Specific types of cells enable us to see shapes and colors. And while a fingerprint has 40 unique characteristics, an iris has 256.

Today’s passage begins with the idea of storing up treasure in heaven (vv. 19–21). Earthly treasures are at risk of decay and theft. Heavenly treasures are eternal and cannot be lost or destroyed. We should prioritize and prize the heavenly ones, seeking after them rather than pursuing earthly goods. Good deeds and acts of obedience can make us “rich toward God” (Luke 12:21).

This truth about heavenly treasure can only be seen with clear spiritual eyes or understanding. “Healthy” and “unhealthy” eyes are analogous to “generosity” and “stinginess.”

Just as physical eyes let in the light by which we see material reality, only clear spiritual eyes can see the folly of riches. Just as a blind person lives in the dark physically, so coveting or trusting in wealth is living in the dark spiritually. Just as seeing affects everything else, our attitude to money ripples into many other areas of life: “If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!” (vv. 22–23).

This one point is crucially important. “No one can serve two masters” or have divided loyalties (v. 24). God and money are mutually exclusive in this sense. We live in the most affluent society in history, so we should take this warning to heart!

**APPLY THE WORD**

**Putting our hope in earthly riches is futile** (see Eccl. 5:8–17; Luke 12:13–21). Wealth can be a strong temptation against faith in God (Matt. 19:24). It can also easily lead to greed, pride, abuse of power, and other sins. What is our attitude toward money and finances? Do we see it as an area of stewardship under the Lordship of Christ?

**PRAY WITH US**

Commit to prayer the ministry of Steven Mogck, executive VP and chief operating officer, who oversees our Operations division on the Chicago campus. Would you ask for God’s guidance and wisdom in balancing his numerous management responsibilities?
Remember Your Creator

In her poem, “Let Evening Come,” American writer Jane Kenyon meditated on death: “Let dew collect on the hoe abandoned / in long grass. Let the stars appear / and the moon disclose her silver horn. / Let the fox go back to its sandy den. / Let the wind die down. Let the shed / go black inside. Let evening come. / . . . Let it come, as it will, and don’t / be afraid. God does not leave us / comfortless, so let evening come.”

Until Christ returns, we must all cross the river of death. Aging is inevitable. In today’s reading we’re advised, “Remember your Creator in the days of your youth” (12:1), because the fact is that things get harder as one ages. This piece of advice or basic life truth is also stated in terms of light and darkness (11:7–8). “Light is sweet, and it pleases the eye to see the sun.” This is youth. Getting older is going to happen, but “However many years anyone may live, let them enjoy them all” while they can, because many “days of darkness” are coming. This is old age.

The aging process is described both poetically and candidly. The metaphor of light pictures the sun, moon, and stars growing dark and clouds covering the sky, pointing to our literally fading eyesight as well as to the loss of energy and memory (12:2). From a perspective “under the sun,” then, “youth and vigor are meaningless,”—not something to hope or trust in because they will disappear (11:10).

God’s judgment is a sobering fact (11:9; 12:14), but it does point to an above-the-sun perspective on life’s eternal significance. Therefore, the best response is to “remember” our Creator, meaning to live heedful of and obedient to His commands.

Are you at the point in your life when light is sweet and youth and vigor plentiful? Or is the grasshopper dragging itself along (12:5–6)? In either case, the most important question is this: Are you ready to meet your Maker? Death is not the end. Are you heading for heaven or hell? Remember your Creator!

Today, we’d like to single out for prayer Moody Radio’s Satellite Network Operations staff: Peter Dhuse, Sam Beiruti, David Woodworth, and Eric Hufford. We pray that their ministry will reach many listeners and will continue to bring glory to God.
Live as Children of Light

Our month’s study has revealed a rich, complex, interconnected web of meanings and themes surrounding the imagery of light and dark in Scripture. Light stands for knowledge, wisdom, and truth. It is associated with life, salvation, hope, goodness, righteousness, and spiritual alertness. Darkness, on the other hand, stands for ignorance, foolishness, and falsehood. It is associated with death, condemnation, despair, sin, evil, and spiritual sluggishness or sleep.

So when Paul commanded us to “live as children of light” in today’s passage (v. 8), he was saying a mouthful! Having been rescued from the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of light, we are to live in keeping with our new identity. The “fruit of the light” is goodness, righteousness, and truth, and indeed, anything that pleases God (vv. 9–10).

The only contact we should have with “deeds of darkness” is to expose them (vv. 11–13). By our light-bearing words and actions, we will stand for righteousness and play a convicting role in the lives of others. People living in darkness can be unaware of the consequences or deceive themselves into thinking it’s good, but light by its very nature reveals and undeceives. The dark will not go willingly—it’s a battle for which we must put on the armor of light.

The image of Christ shining in verse 14 may come from an early Christian hymn. It may also be an allusion to Isaiah 60:1: “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.” This is a picture of salvation and new spiritual life. Because of these gifts of God, we are to look for every chance we can to live wisely and by word and deed shine God’s light into a dark world (vv. 15–16).

APPLY THE WORD

One meaning of the biblical metaphor of light is spiritual alertness. People living in spiritual darkness are sluggish, oblivious, or confused. People living in God’s light have life, knowledge, and the power to lead holy lives. Spiritual alertness is essential for our prayer lives: “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful” (Col. 4:2).

PRAY WITH US

Again, please lift up in prayer Satellite Network’s Jose Lemus, Phil Shappard, Rod Simon, Thomas Svoboda, and Tracy Haney. May the programs they help broadcast via satellite bring many Moody Radio listeners closer to Christ.
The Shining Light of God’s Face

One New Year’s Eve tradition in Spain is to eat twelve grapes at the stroke of midnight. That’s one grape for each stroke of the clock and one for each of the months of the year ahead. It is said that if you can eat them in the first twelve seconds, you’ll enjoy good luck throughout the year!

Believers in God look not for luck but for His blessing, often conveyed in the picture of His face shining upon us (v. 1). This was, in fact, the standard Old Testament blessing: “The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace” (Num. 6:24–26). It was also the prayer of the psalmist: “Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love” (Ps. 31:16).

Psalm 67 teaches us to think anew about the concept of blessing. Our natural instinct is to focus on ourselves and material blessings. God is, after all, the “Father of the heavenly lights” and giver of all good gifts (James 1:17). But in this psalm, only verse 6 speaks in those terms. Even then, the blessing is the harvest, basically meaning the provision of daily bread.

Instead, God’s blessing is invoked in two other ways. First, His ways will be known throughout the world and His “salvation among all nations” (v. 2). The purpose of His blessing in our lives is so that His name, love, and redemption will be known and glorified everywhere.

Second, the Lord will be universally praised and worshiped, as ought to be the case (vv. 3–5, 7; Phil. 2:10–11). His authority, justice, and wisdom at work in the world is more than enough reason for gladness, rejoicing, and worship.

This entire psalm is a prayer for God’s name and salvation to be known and glorified throughout all the earth, and for our great King to be universally praised and worshiped. For His face to shine upon us means that we will be part of making this happen! This is a great reason to pray Psalm 67 as part of your daily prayer time today.

Dr. Larry Davidhizar, VP and dean of faculty, will appreciate your prayers for his service to Moody’s faculty in the new academic year. Please pray for God’s guidance and blessing for the programs of faculty development, research, and travel.
Bringing to Light the Worth of a Life

Fredric John Baur, a chemist with Proctor & Gamble, was the inventor of the familiar Pringles can that holds stacked potato chips. When he died, he asked that he be cremated and a portion of his ashes buried in a Pringles can. His children reportedly stopped at a Walgreens on the way to the funeral home to buy the can, choosing the classic original flavor.

At the end of your life, what words and actions do you want to endure? The major metaphor in today’s reading is a building metaphor. Individually and communally, our lives are pictured as construction projects, with the quality of our building materials to be tested and evaluated on Judgment Day. The foundation for this building project is Christ, the one and only basis for our salvation (v. 11).

Are we spending our lives on things of temporal or eternal value? Earthly priorities and activities are merely wood, hay, and straw, while godly values and pursuits are gold, silver, and precious jewels (vv. 12–13). The latter will endure, while the former will be reduced to ashes.

Paul was speaking of believers here, so the difference is not in eternal destiny but in whether a person earns rewards. If we do the good works God has prepared for us to do (Eph. 2:10), with godly motives and for God’s glory, He has promised to reward us.

Alongside the building picture, light is a minor metaphor but it carries a major impact. “The Day will bring it to light” means that on Judgment Day the Lord will reveal the worth of our lives, including hidden motives and outcomes (v. 13; 1 Cor. 4:5). His justice and mercy are perfect and can be trusted both today and on that Day!

Apply the Word

A creative exercise for thinking about today’s passage is to write your own obituary. What legacy do you wish to leave behind? If an obituary sounds too long, write your own gravestone epitaph instead. Then pray over what you’ve written, asking the One who is Lord over life and death to help you live toward His purposes for your life.

Pray with Us

Today your prayers will be an encouragement for Frank Leber, vice president of Information Technology Services. We are grateful for everything his teams do to order, install, and maintain the latest in computer technology for the service of God’s kingdom.
Why do you long for the day of the Lord? That day will be darkness, not light.

Amos 5:18

The Day of the Lord Is Darkness not Light

Michelangelo’s painting The Last Judgment in the Sistine Chapel focuses on Christ. He is the all-powerful Judge. He draws the saved figures, rejoicing, to Himself, and with His other hand directs that the damned be cast into hell. Though prior medieval paintings on this topic showed social class and rank, Michelangelo painted his characters nude to show that their earthly positions meant nothing to God.

The Day of the Lord, Amos preached, is not necessarily a day to look forward to. The NIV Study Bible defines the Day of the Lord as “The time when God will show himself the victor over the world, vindicating his claims to be the Lord over all the earth.” For sinners, it is an occasion of judgment, punishment, wrath, and justice. The phrase is occasionally used with a short-term future in mind, but always with a larger eschatology behind it.

The Israelites thought the Day of the Lord would only be terrible for other nations, not them. But due to their covenant unfaithfulness and sins including idolatry and hypocrisy (vv. 21–27), this Day would be darkness for them as well—“pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness” (vv. 18–20). Other prophets also pictured the Day in terms of this metaphor. To Joel, it would be “a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness” (2:1–2; see Zeph. 1:14–16). Darkness is a metaphor for suffering, confusion, and despair.

Today’s passage is the earliest use of this prophetic phrase and in part refers to the Assyrian conquest of Israel. Amos was calling the Israelites to repent. In the New Testament, Peter used “Day of the Lord” to refer to Christ’s Second Coming and similarly called the church to live holy lives in light of this certain future (2 Peter 3:9–13).

Apply the Word

The Day of the Lord is another reason for us to share our faith. Unsaved sinners all around us are headed for the event pictured in these distressing images. But their fate isn’t inevitable. We’ve been entrusted with good news to share with them! If they call on the name of the Lord, they, too, can be given new life and eternal salvation (Acts 2:21–24).

Pray with Us

Would you include in your prayers Scott Pinnow in Records Management? Thank the Lord today for his diligent work with hundreds of files, so our students could have all the necessary documents and records from the start to graduation.
When God Changes Your Plans

A praise song titled “Children of Light” proclaims: “It’s a new day / Everything changed / When your love came into the darkness / You sent the light of the Son / You sent the light of the Son / Wake up, open your eyes / No longer dead, we are alive / Rise up, children of light / Open the doors, go let it shine . . . Hope for the whole world / Let it shine, let it shine.”

We are “children of the light and children of the day,” Paul exulted (v. 5). “We belong to the day” (v. 8). For this reason, the Day of the Lord, though it will come like a “thief in the night” for some, will not shock us (vv. 1–4). Signs or “labor pains” will precede this time of judgment. More importantly, these events won’t be “darkness” for us but the fulfillment of God’s plan. We’ve been chosen for salvation, and on that Day we will come to “live together with him” (vv. 9–10).

In the meantime, we are to be characterized by spiritual alertness or watchfulness, as well as by sobriety or self-control (vv. 6–8). We’re to put on faith and love as a breastplate and hope as a helmet.

This brief armor metaphor indicates that faith, hope, and love are the best protection for our heads and hearts. For Jewish readers, it would also have evoked the biblical image of God as a divine warrior who comes to our aid (see Isa. 59:17).

At the end of history, Jesus said, “the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt. 13:43). Along the way, “the path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day” (Prov. 4:18).

**APPLY THE WORD**

Today’s reading provides our application: “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing” (v. 11). We’re to encourage others with the truths about the Day of the Lord and Christ’s return. Even for those who have already fallen “asleep” (died), Jesus has conquered the grave and eternal life awaits!

**PRAY WITH US**

Bruce Everhart, VP of Donor Development and Channel Strategy, welcomes your prayers for Moody’s outreach to our donors and fundraising. Please also pray that Bruce’s service would continue to be an encouragement to his teams.
The City of Light and the Glory of God

A recent study by the National Bureau of Economic Research reported that New York City is the most miserable city in America. Pittsburgh and Detroit were among the runners-up. Negative factors included rent increases, cold temperatures, and stress. Richmond and Norfolk, Virginia, on the other hand, along with Washington, D.C., were ranked as the happiest cities with populations of at least one million.

Not even the happiest cities can hold a candle to the Heavenly City in today’s reading. In the midst of darkness and trouble, sin and confusion, the Lord arrives and His glory lights up the earth. The result? “Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn” (v. 3).

This is the end of history, the climax of God’s plan of salvation. Blessings of peace and prosperity will abound (vv. 5–7). The whole world will recognize and bow down before the Lord Almighty (vv. 4, 8–9). Israel will hold the primary place, ahead of nations that had oppressed them (vv. 10–14). Peace will replace violence. These reversals will prove beyond all doubt that God loves and redeems His people (vv. 15–18).

Darkness will be ended—sin and death will be no more. Instead, “the LORD will be your everlasting light” (vv. 19–20). This new Jerusalem, the city of God, will not need the sun or the moon, for “the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp” (Rev. 21:23).

To conclude this month’s study, Paul’s benediction is appropriate: “God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen” (1 Tim. 6:15–16).
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