

1John 1:5

God is Light

Open your Bible to...

1John 1:5 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

Pray

Intro

✓ Intro

In the original Indiana Jones movie, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, there's a pivotal moment in the movie where Indy and his friends discover a buried Egyptian Temple that held the secret to the location of the lost Ark of the Covenant!

As Indy and his friends prepare to descend into the dark recesses of the Temple, they drop a flaming torch to light the way...

...the light from the torch revealed that the entire floor of the Temple was swarming with deadly snakes!

As Indy peers down he mutters those famous words...

"Why did it have to be snakes!?"

Why indeed! The point is that the light from the torch revealed the hidden dangers waiting for Indiana Jones so that he could pick a safe path through those poisonous snakes!

✓ God is Light

In a similar, though vastly more important way, God's light is necessary to safely navigate the inherent dangers of this Fallen World in which we live.

Without His light the best a person can do is to use the dim beams of human philosophy and the flickering half-truths of false religion...

...in a vain attempt to illuminate the shades of gray that Satan casts across the path of life all the while hoping like Indy that there isn't a serpent blocking the path that leads to eternal life.

So, in our continuing study of God, we turn now to attribute of His light...

...one of only two attributes that we can perceive with our eyes.

By way of reminder the goal of this series is to know God better. For since it is true that to know Him, is to love Him...

...then to know Him better, is to love Him more!

God is Light ~ a definition

✓ God is Light

When it comes to an accurate definition of God's light, we discover that there is a bit of controversy among both the ancient Church Fathers and modern Christian thinkers.

On the one hand some claim that light is only a metaphor to represent God's goodness, Holiness, and moral perfection.

While other scholars and bible students reject that notion and claim that God's light is a distinct attribute of His being.

I agree with the later—that God's light is much more than simply a metaphor to describe some other attribute of His nature, but it is in fact a unique and wonderful attribute of God's brilliant character!

So, let's spend a little time unpacking the reality of what the Bible means when it declares that God is light!

1. An observation

First of all, please notice in our opening verse that the apostle John tells us that what he is about to share with us came from the lips of God Himself, he writes...

*“This is the message which we have heard from Him
and declare to you...”*
1John 1:5a

That is, John is telling us that at some point during the Lord's earthly ministry he and the other disciples heard Jesus declare this truth...

“God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.”
1John 1:5b

That's an important observation because it communicates to us that this is not John's opinion, nor is it the musings of human philosophers...

...rather, this is what God says is true about Himself!

So, before we even define what the attribute of light is, and how it is an essential character trait of God's Being...

...we need to recognize that God Himself tells us that He is perfect, pure light, with no darkness at all.

Which makes perfect sense because light drives out the darkness.

Therefore, whatever the definition of God's light is it cannot include any darkness or shadow for if it did it would not be pure light.

And whatever God is, He is perfectly and without any blemish, imperfection or shadow.

So, when God says that He is light with no darkness at all He means that there are no dark sides to His Person, no dimness to impugn His character...

...we can therefore confidently trust that His light will always guide us into truth and will always reveal what is false so that we can safely navigate life.

2. A clarification

Secondly, when God tells us that He is light it's important to point out that He means spiritual light.

And, while it is true that He will sometimes make His light visible to the human eye, His light does not have any physical property.

God is pure spirit, and while He did create physical light as recorded in Genesis 1, His light is not what He created...

...He is not a photon, a wavelength, or a frequency, rather God is pure spiritual light an essential and eternal trait of His being that existed before He created anything.

✓ A definition

So, when God declares that He is light we understand Him to mean both the spiritual manifestation of Himself by which He enlightens our minds...

...and the physical manifestation of His spiritual light by which He reveals His presence.

Therefore, we might call Him the Great Illuminator, the Radiant One...

...the one and only Who can enlighten our conscience to the realities of life, our place in the universe, and most importantly to the knowledge of Him.

Ex. God is the ultimate “light bulb” moment

In college I had to take Algebra three times before I finally got it. I would start a class and get to a point where I couldn’t grasp some element of Algebra and would have to drop the class because everything else built on that one mathematical building block and without that knowledge, I wouldn’t be able to fully comprehend algebra.

I distinctly remember getting stuck on “functions”.

I knew the facts, and could accurately describe linear and quadratic functions, I just didn’t understand how to use them what they meant, and why it was important.

The third time I took Algebra the “light went on”! It was that “a ha!” moment when everything came together and made perfect sense!

Suddenly, in a flash of enlightenment I was able to fully comprehend what had been a total mystery to me the day before!

So, it with God. As light He alone is able to illuminate our minds so that we can...

Know what is true from what is false.
What it right, from what is wrong.
What is Holy from what is evil.
What is infinite from what is finite, etc.

And ultimately it is by His light that we are able to know Him, His thoughts, His purpose and His plans for our lives...

...and it is only by His light that we can answer the universal questions in life that every person wrestles with—questions like...

Where did I come from?
Why am I here?
What's the meaning of life?
Is this all there is, or is there something beyond this life?

When a person comes to know the Light, all confusion is gone, what was dim made clear, no conflict remains, rather with John Newton the person whose mind has been illuminated by God's light shouts with joy...

"I was blind, but now I see!"

Ex. Friends think about your own life

There were things that you and I were involved in prior to our salvation that were sinful, and we didn't even know it!

Nor did we know the depth of our own depravity or the danger of the hellfire that waited for us at the end of life.

It wasn't until the Lord shined the light of the knowledge of His righteousness into our lives that we realized our desperate condition.

Then like Saul of Tarsus, we found ourselves vanquished by the Lord of Light, our sins, of which we were once ignorant now clearly perceived by our enlightened minds!

And like Saul we cried out...

"Who are you, Lord?" ~ Acts 9:5

And with the Philippian jailer...

"...what must I do to be saved?" ~ Acts 16:30

All because God is light, He is the Great Illuminator, the Radiant One, the Revelator of all truth...

...the One Who brightens our darkened minds so that might know Him, the path of life and how to walk it.

The Biblical Foundation that God is Light

✓ God is Light

Our opening text from 1st John is about as clear a statement as anyone could hope where he wrote that...

"God is light" ~ 1John 1:5

However, it's always a good practice to compare scripture with scripture to make sure that we haven't misunderstood the meaning of a single text.

So, let's look at some additional Biblical references that affirm this attribute of God's nature.

We begin with the prophet Isaiah who describes God as...

“The Lord, the Light of Israel, (He) will be a fire; the Holy One will be a flame. He will devour the thorns and briers with fire, burning up the enemy in a single night.” ~ Isaiah 10:17 NLT

Back to the apostle John who tells us that...

“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.”
John 1:6-9

John and Jesus don't leave us to wonder who the light is that the apostle described for just a few chapters later we read that Jesus said...

“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”
John 8:12

And finally, in John's description of the Eternal City where we will live with Jesus forever, we're told that...

“The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it.

The Lamb is its light.”

Revelation 21:23

So, we believe that God is light because the Bible repeatedly tells us that it is the very essence of His Person...

...the light by which we come to know Him Who is the only true God, and to see the light of His presence that we will enjoy throughout eternity!

The Implications that God is Light

√ The implication that God is Light

Building on the biblical testimony that God is light we can draw several logical, and biblically established implications including...

1) He alone is the source of all light

It probably doesn't need to be said to a Christian audience, but nonetheless we need to point out for those who don't know Christ that the Bible tells us that God is...

“Light”—singular

He is not one of many lights, nor is He “a” light, rather He is the Light...

...the One and only illuminator of all truth and the path that leads to eternal life.

Thus, we can and should reject anyone else who claims to be a light, or one of many lights because there exists only one light...

...that is God, Who is the source of all light!

Ex. Satan the great counterfeiter

The Bible warns us that Satan and his followers claim to be light. For example, the apostle Paul tells his friends at Corinth...

“Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works. ~ 2Corinthians 11:14-15

Paul reminds us that God alone is light, and it is by His light that we can distinguish between the true light of God...

...and Satan the great counterfeit by the darkness that always accompanies the false light of the Devil and his followers.

Ex. Betty Eadie’s book *Embraced by the Light*

Mrs. Eadie claims to have had a near death experience during which she says that she was embraced a radiant light that she identified as Jesus.

Many Christians have been excited about her book, recommend it to others, and believed that Eadie had really met Jesus—the divine light.

Ah, but a closer examination of her testimony reveals that the “Jesus” she met is a different person than the Jesus revealed on the pages of scripture.

Her “Jesus” is one of three different gods!

The “Jesus” she met told her that all religions lead to salvation!

Well, none of that square with the Bible and the testimony of Jesus and under further illumination it has been revealed that Betty is a Mormon and that her book is heavily influenced by Mormon false doctrine!

That is, the light that she saw was not the pure light of Christ, but rather a light dimmed by the shades of dark deception!

So, we can identify Satan’s counterfeit light from the true light by comparing all other claims with the light of God’s Word.

If anyone’s claim doesn’t match the testimony of the Bible, then it isn’t true light.

So, in our example we can confidently reject Betty Eadie and everyone like her who claims to have seen the light because their testimony does not reflect the light of God’s Word.

- 2) It is only by His light that people can see and understand spiritual truth

As we have already noted when the Biblical writers describe God as light, they mean that He is spiritual light...

Thus, we could call Him the Great Illuminator...

...the One Who gives light to mankind so that we can know and discern what is true, and most especially what is spiritually true.

We might also call Him the Radiant One because He is the source of all light and the One Who dwells in unapproachable light and glory.

As such it is only by His light that people can see and comprehend the truth about God, the spirit realm, the origin, and destiny of Man, and how a person can reach Heaven's shores.

Therefore, it is only through a relationship with the God Who is light that a person can be enlightened to be able to comprehend these spiritual truths that lead to eternal life!

Ex. Saul of Tarsus

Here was man who had a greater apprehension of the Old Testament and the Messianic scriptures than any of us.

Additionally, he had heard the Gospel message from the lips of Stephen and other believers that he had persecuted.

But it wasn't until the light of Christ's glory surrounded him on that dusty road to Damascus that he knew and understood the meaning of the scripture...

...that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the fulfillment of the Old Testament Messianic prophecies, the Lord Saul didn't know until his mind was illuminated by God's light!

3) His presence is manifest by light

Throughout scripture we find that God's very presence is often displayed by a glorious manifestation of His light.

Ex. The Exodus

As the children of Israel made their way out of Egypt, they were led by God Himself whose presence was clearly seen in a shimmering cloud by day and a fire by night.

Ex. God's presence in the Tabernacle and Temple

Later when Moses dedicated the Tabernacle in the Wilderness and Solomon consecrated the Temple in Jerusalem God's presence was manifest by a brilliant light...

...a light the Jewish people call the shekhinah!

Ex. Jesus at the Transfiguration

When Jesus was transfigured before the disciples, they reported that His...

"His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light." ~ Matthew 17:2

4) His light exposes all that is hidden in darkness

Thus, Satan and sinners hate the light, seeking always to avoid or block it, just as Jesus told when He said...

"For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."
John 3:20

Ex. Blocking the light

We recently had an eclipse here in the United States that hundreds of thousands of people traveled to see. They

watched in awe as the moon moved between the earth and sun blocking the light from the sun.

The astrological term for an eclipse is “occultation”, which literally means “to block the light.”

The word “occultation” may sound familiar to you and that’s because in the spiritual realm the word “occult” literally means to block, or to hide the light of God!

Therefore, it’s easy to identify the works of Satan and those opposed to God, because they hate the light of God...

...and are always working to block or to hide from God’s light so that their evil thoughts and deeds will not be exposed.

But those who know God are not afraid of His light, and welcome the illumination of their deeds because...

“...he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.” ~ John 3:21

5) Jesus claimed to be the Light

Finally, it is therefore of great significance that Jesus boldly proclaimed Himself to be...

*“...the light of the world.”
John 8:12a*

Clearly attributing to Himself the divine nature—claiming to be God and therefore the One true light by which people might come to know God and the way of salvation.

✓ God is light

So, God's light is both the means by which He illuminates the conscience of people so that they can know Him, the ultimate reality...

...and the radiance of His Person that we might perceive His presence!

Objections to the doctrine that God is Light

✓ Objections

1) Light is a metaphor for God's holiness

The only real objection raised by a few of the Church Fathers and some contemporary theologians to the idea that light is a distinct attribute of God is the claim that light is just a metaphor for God's goodness, or His moral purity, etc.

But other Bible students including myself reject that on the grounds that the Bible doesn't make that distinction.

For John simply tells us that Jesus said...

"God is light" ~ 1John 1:5

Notice that John did not write...

"God's goodness is like a light."

The point here is that the apostle John was always very clear in his writings when he wanted to communicate that something was to be understood as a type, a symbol, a simile, or a metaphor.

Ex. The Revelation

39 times in the Revelation John used the word “like” to let us know that he was speaking symbolically, for example when he described Jesus in all of His glory, John wrote...

“His eyes like a flame of fire...”
Revelation 1:14b

That is, John did not have the words to describe the reality of what he saw when he gazed upon the glorified Christ...

...so he said that Jesus’ eyes were “like” a flame of fire.

By which he meant that Jesus’ eyes weren’t actual fire, but rather that under the penetrating gaze of Jesus—the God Who is light, that...

Nothing evil can be hidden
No secret sin can be covered
No false motive or thought obscured
No hate or bitterness of heart concealed

Like an x-ray that reveals what our eyes cannot see inside our body...

...so too nothing can be hidden from Him whose eyes are like a flame of fire!

So, we conclude that John was always faithful to let us know when he was using a figure of speech to describe God...

...and in 1John 1:5 where he doesn’t use the word “like”, we understand that light is not a metaphor for some other attribute of God but is in fact a unique attribute of God’s radiant nature!

✓ Not a metaphor

Furthermore, we can demonstrate that light is a unique attribute of God by comparing His light to His other attributes, for example...

God's light can be distinguished from His truth in this way...

...God is truth, but it is by His light that we know what is true.

God's light is distinct from His Holiness in this way...

...God is holy, but it is by His light we know what is holy.

God's light is different than His goodness in this way...

God is good, but it's by His light that we know what is good.

And so, it goes with all His attributes. It is by His light, and only by His light that we can know God, Who He is and what He is like...

...for it is His light that illuminates our minds to comprehend all the attributes of the Divine Person!

The Blessings & Benefits that God is Light

✓ Blessings & Benefits

Now that we have a foundation by which we can comprehend the nature of God's light we can consider the multifaceted blessings and benefits that His light brings to our lives.

- 1) By His light the path of life is illuminated for us

Because God is Light, we who walk in His light can see and walk on the path that leads to a eternal life.

That's an important point because there are many who claim to possess the truth, or some spiritual enlightenment that leads to eternal life!

However, that Jesus said...

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” ~ Matthew 7:13-14 NIV

Therefore, we need God's light to find that narrow path and gate that leads to eternal life! Because there is only one path that leads to life...

...all others are a highway to hell!

- Ex. World views, religions and philosophies

Today there are no less than 7 competing philosophical world views and an estimated 4,300 different religions, spiritual movements, and faith groups in the world that all claim to be true!

The only way that we can know which path leads to eternal life is by the illumination of God's light!

2) By His light we can discern truth from lies

As we've already pointed out it is Satan's fanatical desire and plan to cloud the light of God's truth from the eyes of men and women through the use of his many dark deceptions including...

The false doctrines taught by demons.
The vain philosophies of man.
Our own unredeemed desires and deceitful hearts.
Satan's lying signs and wonders.
The foolish speculation of men who deny the very existence of God.

All of which are designed to keep people from coming to the knowledge of the truth about God, salvation and eternal life...

...and it is only by God's light that we can differentiate between what is true and what is false.

3) His light protects us from self-deception

Every human heart wrestle's with sinful strongholds hidden in the darkness of the soul—those secret sins that we don't want to admit are part of our life.

But because God is light it is His nature to expose those hidden closets of deceit by shining His brilliant radiance into our heart so that we are forced to deal with the refuse of our old nature.

If we'll then surrender those shades of gray that cloud our minds to His light, He will deliver us from the shadows of shame so that we can enjoy the sunshine of a pure conscience.

Ap. Dark shadows ~ and I don't mean the Soap Opera

The dark shadows of sins hidden in the recesses of our heart will keep us bond up with fear, awake at night worried that our iniquity will be uncovered for the world to see.

But if we'll allow God's light to illuminate those sins we can then humbly surrender them to the Lord where we will find freedom from fear, a cure for insomnia, and the restoration of our joy.

Don't let Satan keep you shackled with the shadowy lie that you'll be free if hide your sin in some unlit cavern in your soul...

...the only power that can bring freedom from sin, true and lasting joy into our lives is God's light.

Our responsibility to shine His light

✓ The Christian duty

No study of God's light would be complete without calling our attention to our duty as Christians to shine His light into the dark world in which we live. Remember that Jesus commanded us...

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

Matthew 5:16

We do that by living, thinking, and interacting with people the way that Jesus did.

That is, to whatever degree we live and act like Jesus—the light of the world, we shine His divine light into the world around us.

And, just as we see in Jesus' life we'll find that some people will be drawn to the light in our lives and some will be repulsed by it.

Ex. "Friends" who no longer want to hang out with you

I distinctly remember that after I was saved there were people who had once been friends of mine who suddenly didn't want anything to do with me!

Even if I didn't say a word the very presence of Christ in my life brought conviction to those old friends of mine who loved their sin.

Conversely, I discovered that other people were drawn to the light of God's presence in my life as they observed the changes that Jesus was working in me.

Even though they too were sinners like my friends who rejected me those who were drawn to the light in my life soon surrendered their lives to Christ.

Reminding us that our job is simply to shine Christ's light into the world...

...the light that brings salvation to those who receive it, and condemnation to those who hide from it.

Ap. Shine your light!

My encouragement is this...

Shine the light of God's presence into the world around you!

Through your daily interactions with others, in your social media posts, and by every opportunity to do good for others.

On the other hand, if we do not shine the light of Christ into the dark world around us, then for all practical purposes we are doing the same thing that Satan and his followers are doing...

...hiding the light from the men, women and children who so desperately need to see the light so that they might be saved!

Close

✓ God is Light

The Bible tells us that God gives light to all people through the...

Testimony of Creation (Ps. 19, Romans 1)

The witness of our conscience (Romans 2:16)

The knowledge of eternity in our heart (Ecc. 3:11)

Each of us is responsible for the light we've been given. To those who respond to that light God gives greater light, the light of...

His Word (Ps. 119:105)

His Son (John 8:12)

...which leads to salvation.

But to those who repeatedly and knowingly reject the light that God has given every man God will...

Give them over to darkness, their sinful desires, vile passions, and a depraved mind (Romans 1:24, 26, & 28).

...all of which leads to eternal destruction and darkness.

Ap. Come to the light, walk in the light