

What if God spoke to you? Just imagine, what would it be like if God appeared to you? What would he look like? How would you react? Would he appear in all his glory or would he appear humbly like Jesus did, as a human like any one of us? What if God appeared to you to give you a very special mission, something he wanted you to accomplish? What would you do?

Today, we are reminded that the words of the Bible are not cleverly devised stories. They are not just people's opinions or interpretations. The Bible is God's very word, recorded for us by people who saw God's glory with their own eyes. God truly has appeared to humanity and we have his words to us just as surely as if he personally appeared to us, in fact better than if he personally appeared to us! As we look to these precious words, today the apostle Peter, writing by inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, encourages us to Remember the Light. When in the Dark, Remember the Light.

Maybe that's not something we need to be reminded of. When we are in a dark place, our eyes naturally look at the light. That's pretty normal. If you are sitting in a dark room and someone turns a light on, no one needs to tell you to about it. You notice it immediately! If you are walking around on a dark night, it's easy to even notice a small light far away. When we are in the dark, our eyes immediately catch the light and latch onto it. But unfortunately, that only seems to be true when we talk about physical light.

But if we talk about spiritual light, that's a different story. What interests us the most? What gets us excited about life? What do we pursue and pour ourselves into? A good story? A coming vacation? A hobby? A way to make money? A relationship? Money, love, happiness, respect, excitement, sometimes just something to pass the time?

People spend everything they are and have on these things. People violate their morals for the sake of these things. And then they are confused when all their efforts for these things fail to bring the happiness, respect, love, excitement they hoped for. Spiritually, they are in dark. They cannot see what is truly right in front of them. They cannot recognize the traps in their path. They cannot see where the path goes.

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Even you and I can fail to notice the light. In the Bible, we have God's very words. The one who made us, who understands us better than we do, God speaks to us. He alone can tell us what it is we are truly looking for. He alone can show us what will finally satisfy us. He alone can tell us what life is supposed to look like.

But even though we have this light right in front of us, how often do we fix our gaze on that light? How often do we get into the Word for ourselves and for our families? How much time do we spend with our family of faith digging into God's Word?

We can find all kinds of energy and drive to pursue those hobbies or more money, but most of us find it so difficult to open up a Bible and read it. We look away from the light, and keep staring into the darkness. And when we do muster the drive to open a Bible or talk about what God is doing, how easily do we divert even those thoughts toward our ideas of what God is and wants rather than actually listening to what he has to tell us?

If God appeared to you and spoke to you, do you think your mind would wander? If God appeared to you in all his majestic glory and spoke to you, would you say, "Oh, I know this already"? If you knew you had an opportunity to sit in God's all-glorious presence and hear him speak, would you be too busy to make it? But when we read from the Bible, from God's very words, how often does that happen?

Spiritually, we are not drawn to the light. Spiritually, we are drawn to the darkness. Spiritually, we would rather waste ourselves on human inventions, human theories, human beliefs, human purposes. And left to ourselves, we would follow that spiritual darkness until there was no light left. We would follow that darkness until we ended up in the utter darkness of hell.

For this reason, Peter, with God's words, encourages us to fix our eyes on the light, to focus ourselves on Jesus. Jesus is the light that breaks through the darkness of our sin. Jesus, by his life, death, and resurrection, is the one light that is bright enough to break us out of our spiritual obsession with darkness.

Peter himself assures us that the words of the Bible are not just cleverly

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devised stories. These are not the ideas and interpretations of just people. Peter wrote as an eyewitness of Jesus' glory. On that mountain, Peter saw Jesus' face shine like the sun, Jesus' clothes bright as the light. Peter heard the voice of God the Father proclaim Jesus to be His very Son, with whom he is pleased. He heard God the Father say, "Listen to him!"

And if that weren't enough proof, Peter had the even more sure words of the Scriptures. He saw from the many different books of the Old Testament, prophecy after prophecy all fulfilled in this one man, Jesus Christ.

We have found the light, shining in the darkness. It is Jesus Christ, our Savior from sin, our Savior from wasting our lives in utter spiritual darkness, our Savior from the ultimate darkness of Hell. We have found the light. Let us focus on it! Let us value it! Let us hear what he says to us and do what he says to us!

As God's people, we learn to treat the Bible for what it is: the Word of God. We learn to show the same excitement, eagerness, and attention to the Bible as if God himself appeared every time we opened its pages, every time we heard it read. We learn the value of reading the Word for ourselves, for studying it with our fellow Christians, for talking about our faith and memorizing God's Word. We have the light, so we focus on the light.

C. S. Lewis, a Christian apologist, recalls a conversation he had with a man about the importance of God's Word, the Bible. The man felt he had no need for joining a church body with all of their technical distinctions. He felt he did not need to even read the Bible.

The man had been a soldier, and as he served out in the desert, looking up at the vast night sky, he experienced God. Fighting for his life and his country and yet feeling the stillness of a billion stars staring down at him, in words that he could never express, he knew that he had felt God. After that experience, what was it to open a book? What was it to sit in a church? What was it to yammer about doctrines and such? How could they possibly compare?

After Lewis' conversation with the man, Lewis realized a similar picture. Consider the difference between looking at the ocean and looking at a map of the ocean. Anyone who looks at the ocean will be far less impressed when they look at a

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map of the same, but what will your experience of seeing waves crash on the shore do for you if you want to go anywhere through the ocean? For that, you need a map. What's more, you have your grand experience of seeing the ocean, but the map is a collection of many other people's experiences all in one place that you can now benefit from.

Sometimes, the Bible may not seem all that glorious. It may seem like there are better things out there or other ways to God. But the Bible was written by people like Peter to whom God appeared. The Bible is not just a collection of books written by people who experienced God, but it is written by people who were carried along by the Holy Spirit so that the words they wrote down were the very words of God. Through their writing, God speaks to us today!

And only by looking to that light of our God can we grow in a relationship with him. Only by hearing Jesus speak to us through his Word can we learn God's ways instead of being stuck in our own ways. Only by looking to Jesus can we escape the darkness that would leave us forever spiritually blind in hell. Jesus has brought light to our lives; the light of salvation, of life, and of forgiveness for our sins.

Dear friends, when you are in the dark, remember that light. When you are feeling lost, remember that God has spoken to you through his word. In the Bible, we have free access to God's very words. We can read from him as though we were sitting at his feet and listening to him. Here we find wisdom and understanding. Here we find strength and the very basis of our faith.

As we go through the season of lent, hearing God's call for our repentance, and seeing Jesus suffer and die, remember the light of Jesus' glory. He did not die as a simple victim to human wickedness. He died by his own choice. Nails could not hold the all-glorious God of all. But Jesus stayed on that cross to pay for our sins, to shine his light into your life.

When your life travels to dark places, when your life seems so mundane, pointless, or useless, when reading the Bible or being in church seems so much less glorious than it should be, remember how Jesus shined like the sun. Remember that true glory is found in Christ, even if that glory is hidden for a time. One day, we will see all of Jesus' glory in the realms of heaven. When you are in the dark, remember the light. Amen.