

Light, I Am

by [Matt Laney](#) | published on Feb 5, 2025

Jesus said, "You are the light of the world. ... No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine." Matthew 5:14-16a (NRSV)

"You are the light" is the core message of Jesus. Everything else he taught was about how best to shine holy light into the world.

That's not necessarily the message of Christianity. The core message of Christianity, according to many, is that Christ died on the cross to save us from our sins and from eternal damnation.

However, Jesus never heard of Christianity. He did not preach that without believing in him people were destined for hell. Not even John 3:16 or 14:6 says that. He did not say, "You *could* be the light" or "You *might* be the light" or "You *will become* the light if you believe the right things and say the right prayer." No.

Jesus said, "You *are* the light of the world" right now, as you are, full stop. Light is your nature, your identity, your being. No one can change that. There is nothing you need to do to become what you already are.

That doesn't mean you don't have work to do. As for me, I routinely block the light with bushels of fear, buckets of resentment, and lampshades of ego. Jesus shows me the way to turn those bushels into lampstands and to let my light shine, like him.

Let's stop reading Jesus through the lens of Christian theology and start reading theology through the lens of Jesus.

Regardless, be what you are. Be the light.

Prayer

I am the Light. I will shine.



About the Author

Matt Laney is co-Pastor of Virginia Highland Church UCC in Atlanta, GA and the author of *Pride Wars*, a fantasy series published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt for Young Readers. The first two books, [*The Spinner Prince*](#) and [*The Four Guardians*](#) are available now.