



Leader Guide — Weekly Gathering

1 Samuel 16:1-13; Ephesians 5:8-14 • for the week before March 18, 2007

by Gary K. Fawver

Opening (5 minutes)

Take time as leaders to welcome people and set a tone of joy and openness in community.

Check-in Time (15 minutes)

What different types of lights have you used (preferably other than the lightbulb kind)? Share some interesting experience from a vacation, emergency, or other life experience. Examples: candles, flash-lights, flares, oil lamps, fires, etc.

Centering Worship (10 minutes)

Let's continue our thoughts about light. As a form of centering, close your eyes and imagine a campfire. You might remember being with your family or perhaps around a campfire at church camp. However, this time it's just Jesus and you. Try to imagine the warmth, security, and light it provides. As you find yourself in this place at this time, ask yourself what hinders your walk with Jesus or your relationship with some other person? Can you give it to Jesus to throw into the fire? Is it a critical thought, a too-busy life, an angry feeling, a secret sin, a worry, a lack of trust in Christ? Get rid of it, give it to Jesus. Let it be an act of confession. See Christ smile and nod his approval.

Sharing (15 minutes)

Questions you might use during this time:

- Where have you experienced God this week?
- What stood out to you as you used the exercises this week?
- What exercise or section of Scripture caught your attention and why?
- Ask group members to look back over their journals and share some things that catch their attention.

Group Listening Practice (40 minutes)

When we say "don't judge a book by its cover," what do we mean? We believe we are always better off gathering as much information as possible and spending as much time as possible in deliberation. When we hear: "You never get a second chance to make a first impression," what does this imply?

Samuel was merely responding as a normal human when he remembered how strong and handsome Saul, the now-rejected king, had been and how "kingly" some of David's older brothers looked. When the Lord said to Samuel in 1 Samuel 16—"The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart," he was highlighting this very important difference between the perceptions of humans and God.

When Jesus taught people, he had the ability to know their thoughts. Luke gives us several examples of this: 9:47—he knew the disciples' thoughts; 6:8—he knew the Pharisees' thoughts. Jesus seemed to have a light that could penetrate people.

In fact Jesus speaks of himself as the light of the world—John 8:12. As with physical light, this spiritual light of Christ dispels darkness, illuminates, cannot be hidden, guides in the darkness and warns

people of the dangers of darkness. Physical light is universally a symbol and expression of goodness, security, health, and growth.

In the Bible, light is a spiritual symbol of holiness. John says of us: "Whoever follows me (Jesus) will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." As followers of Jesus, we are called children of light—Ephesians 5:8.

God's expectation for us, then, is that we will walk in the light and stay away from darkness. First John 1:7—"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." In fact one of the proofs that we are in the spiritual light of Jesus is the way we treat our spiritual brothers and sisters. See 1 John 2:9—"Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble."

Spend 15 minutes in silence by yourself and thoughtfully read 1 John 1:1–2:11. Ask Jesus to turn his spotlight into you and show you both how well you are walking in his light and perhaps where those dark spots of anger, resentment, jealousy, and fear, need to be exposed and taken out. Be honest with Jesus, both about your accomplishments and your shortfalls. Remember, he knows you better than you know yourself. Ask for his help.

Come together again as a group and perhaps several will want to share or even ask for group prayer and support.

Closing (5 minutes)

Go out with God and watch for the light of life this week!