

NEWS AND VIEWS
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*“Southern Baptists with the Full
Gospel for the Whole World”*

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By the time you read this you may have already seen a Fourth of July fireworks display. There is something awe inspiring and somewhat comforting about the explosions of light against the backdrop of a darkened night sky, don't you think? Consider the following description of when the Light of men illuminated the earth.

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

In the above mentioned declaration from God's word, we can see God's response to people living in darkness and praying for light. This verse summarizes the theology of the incarnation. The case is stated at the beginning of John's Gospel that Jesus was present at creation and that He was with God and also was God. Jesus is the light that came into a dark world. Jesus is the word of God that came to life as a man. Later in John 1, Jesus is presented as the Lamb of God, born to be a sacrificial substitute for the sin of humanity. Jesus calls His first disciples in this context. To paraphrase the passage: The Word of God became a man and stayed with us long enough so we could see how much better living with the Living God can truly be. Words of LIFE can be so loud.

“Your actions speak louder than your words.” Have you ever found yourself on the receiving end of words like these? If there was any truth in the observation, then you probably lost some credibility with the person that was speaking the truth, at least for a time. What if someone saw that the life you were leading, decisions that you made, and the words that you said, didn't square with the teachings of Christ?

Sometimes, as we live and work in a dark fallen world, infected with sin and infested with rebellion, it is extremely hard to know how we can really make a positive impact for Christ. What do we have to do to make a good impression with our words? Do our words impress the world? Not if our deeds say something different. I would suggest a heavy dose of authenticity is impressive. People need to see that our words match up with our living witness. Transparency is required so Christ can be seen in us. There are times when a watching (*and let me assure you, people are always watching*) world is waiting to see Christians who really act like Christ. If you have ever failed to practice what you preach take heart. There is hope for us living in an increasingly dark place, struggling to be an explosion of light to those bound in the darkness.

I. THE ESSENCE OF GOD'S CREATIVE ACTION IS HIS WORD. When God speaks, it is so. His word says what He has or can do. God's word changes the most fearful environments and creates new situations. God will do something in you if you do His word!

II. THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST TELLS US THAT GOD REALLY LOVES US. He became one of us so we can share His nature and He stayed with us so we can share His presence. Nothing like the presence of Light can flood and overwhelm this present darkness.

III. HE CALLS US TO BE FOLLOWERS. Our problem is living in a material and corrupted world as spiritual and physical creatures. We know up front that God's values and expectations are upside down compared to this world's systems. Our challenge is to gain spiritual understanding of circumstances and events and respond to them seeing the opportunity to be a bearer of the Light. Someone is waiting to see Christ in me. I must immerse myself in the Word so I can know Him better, and therefore show Him better. I must seek to spend time with the One who became flesh and dwelt among us. Then I can be a clean vessel to shine His light the brightest. If you have failed a test lately about the reality of your Christianity, rejoice to know repentance is a cleansing endeavor. To say “I'm sorry, please forgive me,” is a powerful thing to say to God. It's also a powerful thing to say to someone who has just held us accountable to our beliefs. When we seek forgiveness, the ones living in darkness can see the transparency of real Christians. It may be just the spark the Holy Spirit is waiting for to start His spiritual light show!!

Blessings to you,
Pastor Sam