



Ignition



Have you ever tried to start a fire and found that the paper lights up at first, but the wood doesn't really catch alight? Maybe the wood is wet. Or the wind is too strong. Or you just haven't perfected the art of lighting fires! The fire is kindled, but it never really ignites like it should.

Life can be a lot like that, can't it. Some good things we hope for never even come close to ignition. Other things seem to start well but fizzle out before they really get going. We all want our life to be like a burning fire that no one can ever put out. But, again and again, something happens to put out our fire, to keep our life dead and darkened.

Actually, that's the story of the whole world. So it's no wonder that it's also the story of each of our lives. **Let me explain.**



Made for light and life

The Bible tells us that there is only one true God, and that he lit the match to start the world. He's the one who made it all, including human beings, including you and me. On the very first page of the Bible we read:

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth ... God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light”

(Genesis 1:1, 3).

From the start, God's plan was for the world to be full of light and life, like a blazing fire on a cold winter's night.

That's why there is so much good in the world around us. People we love. Food we enjoy.

Music that moves us. It's all part of the light and life God designed to fill his world.

Darkness

But the Bible also tells us that from the very beginning human beings have tried to snuff out the flame of life. Our first ancestors turned their backs on God and tried to live life their own way, without him. But it didn't work. Instead of filling the world with light and life, they filled it with darkness and death. And so, the story of the world is the story of a fire that never really caught alight.

That's why there is so much pain and heartache in the world around us. Messed up friendships. Broken families. Devastating sickness. Poverty and wars and natural disasters that wipe out millions. Death that hits us all. It's all part of the problem with a world where people have rejected the God of light and life.

The worst thing is that each of us, in our own way, is part of the problem. We've shut God out of our lives. And every time we lie, or hate, or hurt others, we make things worse. The Bible puts it plainly:

“People loved darkness, instead of light because their deeds were evil”

(John 3:19).

We choose darkness instead of God's light. So it's no wonder that we often feel lost and that we often stumble and fall.

Of course, none of us is as bad as we possibly could be. But if we're honest with ourselves, we know we've added to the darkness, not the light. God is well within his rights to shut us out of the life of his world completely.

Jesus, the light of the world

Here's the good news we need: God loves the world he made, including the people who have shut him out of their lives. So, God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to rekindle the fire - to give light and life. Jesus' life was full of light. He himself said:

"I am the light of the world"

(John 8:12).

He lived life the way God designed it. He loved God his Father, and he loved other people, including even those who hated him. He never shut God out. He never lied, or hated, or hurt others. Jesus was different from the rest of us: he brought light, not darkness.

But the people of Jesus' generation wanted to stay in the darkness. His own people plotted against him to have him killed. And Jesus was crucified – executed by the authorities of the day by being nailed to a wooden cross.

It sounds strange, but this was all part of God's plan to bring new light to the world. On the cross, Jesus took responsibility for all of the world's darkness. All the lies. All the hatred. All the hurt. He took it on himself and suffered the consequences all of us deserve. For us, and in our place, he was shut out of life.

But Jesus was too strong for the darkness. It couldn't overcome him. On the third day after he was crucified, Jesus rose to life again. Speaking about Jesus, the Bible says,

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it"

(John 1:4).

Through his resurrection, Jesus rekindled the fire that God started. Out of darkness and death, he brought light and life to the world.

New light for our lives

Jesus' death and resurrection is good news for us. Great news, in fact! Because Jesus died for us, in our place, taking responsibility for all of our darkness, we can be forgiven. We can make a new start with God. Because Jesus rose to life again, he has defeated death, and opened up the way for us to live with God forever. That's why Jesus had more to say than, "I am the light of the world." He also said,

"Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life"

(John 8:12).

This is a promise that if we come to Jesus with all of our darkness, all of our failures, and all of our mess, he will shine his bright light into our lives and give us a new start. In fact, the Bible says that if we come to Jesus, he will put his Holy Spirit in us, and re-ignite in our lives the brightest of fires, which will never fade out.

The light that is coming

Jesus' death and resurrection are also good news for the whole world. Because Jesus has come to rekindle the fire, to bring light into the darkness, we can be sure that God will finish his good plan for the world.

The Bible says that a day is coming when Jesus will return and set the whole world on fire. He will shine his light on all the darkness, burn away all the evil, and make the world new again.

For people who have been living in the light, waiting for Jesus, that day will be a celebration like the world has never seen. Light and life with God forever. But for people who have been living in the darkness, ignoring the God who made them, that day will be the blackest day yet. God will finally close the door and shut them out of the light and life of his world forever.

So, all of us face a choice: Will we stay in the darkness? Or will we come to Jesus, the light of the world?

Living in the light

If you want to discover more about Jesus, a good place to start is with the Gospel of John. You're holding it in your hands!

You'll also find it helpful to go with a friend to a good church, where people love God and listen to what he says in the Bible.

But if you're ready to come to the light today, you need to talk to God about it. You can pray on your own right now, or you can ask a friend to help you pray and ask God to save you from the darkness. God is ready to listen. Here are some words you could say:

**Father God,
You know I've lived in the darkness.
I'm sorry.
I want to come into your light.
Thank you for Jesus. Thank you that
he died for me. Thank you that he rose
again to bring light and life.
Please forgive me. Please help me to
start living with you in the light.**

Why not say these words to God today?

