

Catherine  
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Shine!

StudyNotes

FOR SMALL GROUPS & PERSONAL REFLECTION

## ***INTRODUCTION to the series...***

### ***God's people Shine with the Light of God.***

*During the preaching series that accompanies this guide, we will look at examples of God's people shining with the light of his presence and opportunity in some desperate times.*

**Let Your Light Shine!  
Shine in Our Hearts  
Torches & Trumpets  
Shine & Be Seen!**

**Luke 11:33-36  
2 Corinthians 4:4-10  
Judges 7:9-22  
Esther 4:12 - 5:8 & 7:3-10**

*Taking our key texts from Matthew's Gospel, we are exploring elements of discipleship which are critical to our healthy growth and usefulness as followers of Jesus.*

*One of the themes that is running throughout the series is the importance of our obedience to act on Jesus' command. Obedience is the beginning of discipleship and is the quality that finds the disciple there amongst the 5000 on the mountainside, committed to learning, leaving all behind them to follow Jesus and also stepping out of the boat.*

*A question that begins this series could be 'have you valued your free-will and trusted the irresistibility of God's grace too the extent hat you have lost the habit of obedience?'*

*There has been a resurgence of small groups, especially in the newer and revived churches. These groups give space to safely discuss issues of faith. In our groups, we don't expect that any one person will have the answers and we certainly aren't looking for experts to join them. Rather, we are seeking to find a place for every person to grow in faith among friends.*

*I pray that as we seek to be good disciples, we might know the joy of hearing the call of Jesus and the desire in our hearts to respond with willingness and hope.*

***Enjoy the series!***

Love, Catherine

# Coffee Groups ***Let Your Light Shine!***

## **Make sure that you know everyone in the Group.**

Have some shiny things on the table in front of you.

Let each member of the group introduce themselves by talking, for no more than 30 seconds, about their favourite thing that shines - it doesn't have to be one of the items.

## **Opening Prayer:**

Lord Jesus, Thank you for your love for every person here.

Thank you for this home and for our hosts today.

Be among us as we meet in your Name. Amen

**Luke 11:33-36      The Passion Translation (TPT)**

*33 "No one would think of lighting a lamp and then hiding it in the basement where no one would benefit. A lamp belongs on a lamp stand, where all who enter may see its light. 34 The eyes of your spirit allow revelation-light to enter into your being. When your heart is open the light floods in. When your heart is hard and closed, the light cannot penetrate and darkness takes its place. 35 Open your heart and consider my words. Watch out that you do not mistake your opinions for revelation-light! 36 If your spirit burns with light, fully illuminated with no trace of darkness, you will be a shining lamp, reflecting rays of truth by the way you live."*

## **Talk Together...**

When is the last time you lit a candle?

What was the occasion? Did it make people smile?

Talk about whether there is a difference between 'switching a lamp on' and 'lighting a lamp'.

There is a purpose to our salvation. It is to reveal the truth of the world to us by allowing the light we now see by and inhabit to the place in which we live or work. In consequence, we will reflect the truth that lives within us in every choice we make and in every conversation we have.

Is there a difference between 'artificial light' and 'true light'. If so, what must we be careful of in showing light to the world. (v35)

There can be a tendency towards self-reliance.

How will it help the quality of our faith and witness when we acknowledge that the source of all our light is Jesus?

In my parents' village, there was always under-powered electricity. Sometimes, the draw on it was so great that lights would dim to a pin-prick. One occasion saw a Radio 1 Roadshow at the pub 'use up' all the electricity for a period after it had broadcast 'live to the nation.'

When the source of our light is good, we are able to see more clearly and to shine more brightly. Now, we are able to confidently give God-fuelled opinions and penetrate the darkness with revelatory light. (v34)

**How can you 'tend your light'?**

**How can you encourage one another to ensure that the 'source' of the light for all your opinions and activities (including your politics, shopping & financial decisions) is the beacon of Jesus?**

**What assistance do you need to shine only the light of Jesus?**

On social media, there are 'influencers' who promote trends in fashion, food, shopping habits, music, film and every aspect of lifestyle. They are often 'affiliated' to brands. The light we bear is the influence for Christ in the world. This light should influence politics, society and community at every level. We are influencers.

**Talk about the distinct way that light-bearing Christians can influence:**

- a. local politics
- b. economics
- c. the local community
- d. attitudes and responses to marginalised people
- e. the way that Jesus is understood

**What does this look like in practical terms? Take a look at verse 33 and talk about the challenge it brings to a church that has rather 'lost its voice' over the years.**

*John Stott says; "If the house is dark at night, there is no sense in blaming the house for its darkness. That is what happens when the sun goes down... Jesus told us to be salt and light to society. If therefore darkness and rottenness abound, it is to a large measure our fault, and we must accept the blame." P 143 The Living Church*

## **Pray**

**That we might then move on and sort the issue of bearing light in our own life and as corporate witness to Jesus' light-bringing hope as the local church.**



# **Session 2      Shine in Our Hearts**

## **As you Gather      5-10 minutes**

Talk about the different ways that 'shine' is used positively in our daily language ...

E.g. *"she really shone in her role"*      *"his care was a shining example"*  
*"the windows shone with a welcoming light"*      *"her face shone with delight"*

## **Pray & Worship      10 minutes**

*Sing* a hymn or a song which invites the light of God to shine brightly

*Pray*

1. That you might see the light of Christ.
2. That you might bear witness to the light of Christ.
3. That the community where you live might see the light of God.
4. That you would live under the light of God.
5. For evangelists and missionaries to be raised up in our Church.

## **Read the Word      50 minutes**

**2 Corinthians 4:4-10      NIV**

*4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. 6 For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. 7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. 10 We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.*

The title of this session is a plea and a prayer as well as a commitment to God. In verse 6 above, we see it as a statement of faith-fact by Paul who goes all the way back to the first moments of Creation with his reference to Genesis 1:3. He then brings us up to date with the reference to his own experience of 'new Creation' under the gaze of Jesus Christ who surpassed

all his own understanding of the Law in the meeting on the Road to Damascus.

It is a prayer that God will Create us again, speaking Light into us.  
It is a plea that we will not be left in the darkness of chaos and despair.  
It is a commitment to be God's people, even when darkness is overwhelming and seemingly all-powerful.

**Talk about the importance of the light of God in your darkest moments.**

**What does it mean for you to be able to focus on the light in the face of Christ when darkness presses in?**

Paul was freely acknowledging that his own view of God before seeing the Face of Christ was not accurate and had led him to persecute and kill the Christians. He is convinced that the Crucifixion of Jesus alone has the power for forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God. Without the knowledge of Jesus' light, the people are (v4) '*blinded*' by the '*god of this age*'.

**How do you understand the '*god of this age*'?**

**How is the '*god of this age*' at work in your:**

**Community**

**Church**

**Nation**

Verse 4 acknowledges the persuadability of people to be diverted from God's ways and to be convinced by good arguments of things not godly - not least the truth of the need for Jesus.

Barnett cautions us to mind our minds as he writes;

*It is with the mind that, metaphorically speaking, we see the light of the gospel (verse 4) and the light of the knowledge of the glory of God (verse 6). The Achilles' heel of man [sic] is his mind, since he is so prone to intellectual pride, especially in matters to do with religion. It was with unerring judgment about human vulnerability, therefore, that Satan blinded, not the emotions, or the will, but the mind of men. P 82*

**Consider how you can keep the light of Christ shining brightly when convincing arguments might attempt to divert your mind away from him.**

There is transforming power in the light of God. It begins the Creation, it transforms the ungodly. The ‘god of this age’ is not all-powerful and is a force that is ultimately defeated.

Paul is eager to draw attention to the limit of this power and the unlimited power in the word of God.

The one whom we preach is Jesus (verse 5) and the power belongs only to God (verse 7).

It is in (verse 10) that the source and promise of Light and Life is found.

Talk about the confidence you have in the Gospel.

Mark on the line below how confident you are in the gospel word to transform you completely.

not\_\_\_\_\_some\_\_\_\_\_fairly\_\_\_\_\_reasonably\_\_\_\_\_mostly\_\_\_\_\_absolutely

Now mark on your confidence in its power to transform your Church

And your community

Talk about your reasoning.

Pray for each other.

## ***Reflection & Refreshment***      *25 minutes*

Over refreshments, consider the following words of Barnett:

*Are we intimidated by the aggressive opposition of non-Christians?*

*Do we feel helpless in the face of the ‘god of this age’?*

*We should reflect on the powerful gospel God has placed in our mouths.*

*By means of this message, ordinary people, as ‘God’s fellow-workers’ (6:1), are able to convey the light of God into human hearts and bring about a new creation. P85*

Do you want to shine?

Where do you most want to shine?

How can your group or your own Church help you to shine?

Pray together.

# **Session 3      Torches & Trumpets**

**As you Gather**      *5-10 minutes*

Talk about famous ‘come backs’ in history; when the underdog has claimed the victory against all odds.

**Pray & Worship**      *10 minutes*

*Sing* a hymn or a song which declares the victory of God.

*Pray*

1. Prayers of acclamation for all God is.
2. Prayers of celebration for all God does.
3. For a bigger faith in God’s power for redemption.
4. For greater confidence.
5. For a church which is obedient to the plans of God.
6. For your minister and church leadership.

**Read the Word**      *50 minutes*

**Judges    NIV**

*9 That night the Lord said to Gideon, “Get up. Go down and attack the camp of the Midianites, because I will give them to you. 10 But if you are afraid to go down, take your servant Purah with you. 11 When you come to the camp of Midian, you will hear what they are saying. Then you will not be afraid to attack the camp.”*

*So Gideon and his servant Purah went down to the edge of the enemy camp. 12 The Midianites, the Amalekites, and all the peoples from the east were camped in that valley. There were so many of them they seemed like locusts. Their camels could not be counted because they were as many as the grains of sand on the seashore! 13 When Gideon came to the enemy camp, he heard a man telling his friend about a dream. He was saying, “I dreamed that a loaf of barley bread rolled into the camp of Midian. It hit the tent so hard that the tent turned over and fell flat!”*

*14 The man’s friend said, “Your dream is about the sword of Gideon son of Joash, a man of Israel. God will hand Midian and the whole army over to him!” 15 When Gideon heard about the dream and what it meant, he worshipped God.*

*Then Gideon went back to the camp of Israel and called out to them, “Get up! The Lord has handed the army of Midian over to you!” 16 Gideon divided the three hundred men into three groups. He gave each man a trumpet and an empty jar with a burning torch inside. 17 Gideon told the men, “Watch me and do what I do. When I get to the edge of the camp, do what I do. 18 Surround the enemy camp. When I and everyone with me blow our trumpets, you blow your trumpets, too. Then shout, ‘For the Lord and for Gideon!’” 19 So Gideon and the one hundred men with him came to the edge of the enemy camp just after they had changed guards. It was during the middle watch of the night. Then Gideon and his men blew*

*their trumpets and smashed their jars. 20 All three groups of Gideon's men blew their trumpets and smashed their jars. They held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands. Then they shouted, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!" 21 Each of Gideon's men stayed in his place around the camp, but the Midianites began shouting and running to escape. 22 When Gideon's three hundred men blew their trumpets, the Lord made all the Midianites fight each other with their swords! The enemy army ran away to the city of Beth Shittah toward Zererah. They ran as far as the border of Abel Meholah, near the city of Tabbath.*

God has reduced the Israelite Army from 32 000 to just 300. They have no earthly hope of success with such numbers. Look at verses 12 & 13 for how their opposition is described.

The Old Testament holds much hope for people.

**When you look at the passage as a whole, what hope is God offering?**

**What message do you see for the church today?**

**What New Testament passages can you refer to which offer a hope in a similar situation. List them below and write a few comments about them.**

It would have been easy for Gideon to claim the victory for his own abilities and prowess as a military commander.

**Using the passages you have looked at as well as Gideon, consider together how God encourages his skilled leaders to trust in God's strength and provision.**

**In situations of strength and weakness, talk about Biblical and personal examples of when weakness is a good thing and why you believe it to be so.**

God offers assurance to Gideon even before the plan is enacted.

In your own Bible, underline the part in the passage where God offers assurance.

**What is the significance of the dream?**

**Have you had significant dreams or have you read biographies of Christians in which dreams figured? Talk about this.**

**Talk about how the doctrine of assurance (the guarantee of salvation) figures in this passage.**

The torches show light and are witnesses to God's purposes being fulfilled. They demonstrate that even in the darkest moments, God is present. Gideon's actions took place in the middle watch of the night when people would be most tired and it would be darkest.

**Look at the moment of success. Can any Israelite claim victory for their skill in battle? Why is this important?**

## ***Reflection & Refreshment***      *25 minutes*

*The torches and trumpets herald the purposes of God. They reduce the Midianites to confusion and chaos erupts in their midst. The trumpets make at the sound of a call to battle and may well remind us of the call to prayer. The lights throughout the Bible remind us of the word of God as well as the living presence of God in our midst.*

*Look up and note some supporting passages on trumpets and lights.*

*Talk about the doctrine of incarnation (God living among us in the person of Jesus) and where the light is in your community. What is the significance of the trumpet sound and the light working together?*

*How is God challenging you and your church to live out a witness to your trust in his power even when you are weakened?*

*Gideon's story begins with him hiding from the Midianites in a winepress - we now see him demonstrating the power of God to save his people.*

*Pray prayers of praise and thanksgiving for God's strategies and power.*

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# Shine like Stars in the Universe

Philippians 2:15

60 Years of Worship in the Heart of Sprowston

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Celebrating the Diamond Anniversary Year of  
Sprowston Methodist Church 1958 to 2018-19















