



242 Guide

Christmas Light

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This guide has been created as a tool to help you study and live what you are learning from the Bible and weekend services here at RiverGlen.

In Acts 2:42 we are told that the people in the first church were living out what they were learning from the apostles' teaching. ***The purpose of this guide is to equip you to put into practice what you learn.***

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Shine the Light

Learn It.

Throughout both the old and new testaments, darkness is used both literally and figuratively to demonstrate the absence of God. Light, both literal and figurative, always comes from God. The first words the Bible quotes God as saying are “Let there be light”.

(Genesis 1:3)

1) Read the following scriptures, and note how darkness is used/ what it signifies:

Genesis 15:12-21

Exodus 10:21

Matthew 27:45

Mark 15:33

Luke 22:53

2) The New Testament reveals that although Jesus' coming brings light, it does not eliminate the darkness from the world. Read John 1:5 and John 3:19-21. How do these verses demonstrate that darkness still exists despite light being present?

3) Read the following verses:

John 12:46

2 Corinthians 4:6

Ephesians 5:8

1 John 1:5-6

1 John 2:8-11

Based on these verses, what should be evident in a person who lives in the light?

Live It.

1) Read Ephesians 5:11. This verse neatly sums up how if we (Christ's followers) are truly living as "the light of the world", then we must make certain we completely separate ourselves from the darkness ("have NOTHING to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness") so that our light can shine on the darkness and reveal it for what it is ("...rather expose them").

Where in your life are you not completely separated from "darkness"? If it is a secret struggle, expose it to the light by sharing it with a trusted Christian friend who can help you overcome it. If it's something you are not directly a part of, but are a witness to and have looked the other way, how can you lovingly shine a light to expose it and bring about change? (Remember Matthew 18:15 and act carefully)

2) Read Matthew 5:14-16. What in your life is shining a light? How can you shine brighter?

Lift It.

Give thanks to God for the “lights” in your life, and for the opportunities He’s given you to be a light to others. Ask for more of those opportunities and for the wisdom to recognize them when they happen. Ask for His help in overcoming any darkness in your life and for wisdom in helping others “come into the light”.

Log It.

Keep a journal of those times when you feel like you’ve been a light to others. It can be inspiring to see how God is using you! Also write down instances where others have been that light to you. If possible, send a note or thank someone in person, so you can inspire them!

Give the Light

Learn It.

If asked to list five things you need to do to prepare for Christmas what would top your list?

Gift giving usually makes most lists and often causes some emotional and financial stress, even in the best of economic times. Holiday ads encourage us to step boldly into the nearest mall to “shop until we drop” while our pocketbook begs us to restrain ourselves. What do we do?

In Matthew 2:11 we read about the Magi’s visit to the infant Jesus, “On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.” They presented Jesus gifts fit for a king, sparing no expense. Sometimes we feel like we need to buy costly gifts for our loved ones so they will know how much we care. But is this necessary? Please don’t take this the wrong way. There is nothing wrong with purchasing nice gifts.

Since Christmas honors the birth of Jesus, we should give gifts that share the light of Jesus Christ. The Magi sacrificed a lot of time to travel great distances to worship the newborn king. One of the best gifts we can give at Christmas is time. The pages of the Bible are filled with accounts that affirm the importance of investing time in people and focusing on relationships. Jesus always gave generously of his time.

Read: Matthew 19:14, Luke 5:29-32, Luke 10:38-41, and Philippians 4:10-20

How can you give generously of your time this Christmas season?

Live It.

Ask a missionary about their journeys to foreign lands.... Was it time well spent?

Ask a volunteer at a senior living center.... Did the residents appreciate the time spent playing cards, making a craft or just chatting?

Ask your children... Did they feel loved when you hugged them, held them and listened to their worries?

Ask you spouse... Did they feel loved when you sat close and shared your faith, hopes, dreams, and fears?

Our time is a precious limited resource that is highly sought after and valued. It's really easy to give generously of our time. It doesn't cost a dime! On the other hand it is very hard to give our time to others. We are selfish by nature and find it challenging to set aside our plans and desires so that we can meet the needs of another person.

1. Make a list of the people, groups, and organizations that you could bless this Christmas with the generous gift of your time.

2. Commit for the next 21 days that you will honor God with the gift of your time. Commit to spending more time meeting the needs of others. Take your list from above and act on it today! Keep a list each day of the people you have blessed with your generous gift of time.

Lift It.

Turn to God in prayer this week asking for His help and encouragement as you shift your time priorities from a “me focus” to a “them focus”. The Lord understands us and our selfish nature but He desires to see us live in Christian fellowship with another in a global society that honors relationships over accomplishing tasks.

“Heavenly Father, I need your love and encouragement this week as I strive to overcome my selfish nature. I cherish the memories of quality time I have enjoyed in the past with family and friends. I want to be more generous with my time. Lord, be near me this week as I concentrate on nurturing relationships and investing time in the people around me. Jesus, you showed us the importance of valuing people, affirming them and raising them up. Lord, lead me in your way.”

Log It.

Grab your calendar. Count 21 days forward from today and circle Day # 22. Take a look at your list of time spent with others. How did you do?

Were you successful?

Were you more generous with your time?

Who did you bless with the gift of time?

How did they respond?

How do you feel now that you have adjusted your time priorities?

What's next? Who will you share time with today? Tomorrow? Next week?

“I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”
(Philippians 4:13)

Reflect the Light

Learn It.

Did you ever think about light?

What is it?

I look out my window and I see trees and cars and grass but I don't see light; however, if there is no light I don't see anything. Looking out my window I don't see where the light comes from, but I still see light; that is I think I see the light; or do I just see what the light lets me see? How does it get through my window when I can't see its source? How does it fill my room when its source is 93,000,000 miles away? Did you ever think about light?

One of the earliest theories about light dates back to the fifth century B.C. Greek philosopher Empedocles who proposed that light was something that came out of the eye. When objects were within the field of the eye's light flow, they interacted with the light and images were transmitted to the mind of the viewer, causing sight.

As science has evolved some physicists say light is a wave and some (such as Sir Isaac Newton) say it is a particle. Albert Einstein came up with the quantum theory of light in the early twentieth century. To this day physicists still debate what theory is correct. You would think that something as common as light would be better understood, but it isn't. God understands it, but who knows if we ever will. I imagine God gets a chuckle out of watching us attempting to understand it.

Start your study with a discussion of light. Think about how common it is and how mysterious it is. Talk about how important it is and what it means to us. Talk about what a great part of creation light is and how we take something so complex for granted.

What was the first command of God (Genesis 1:3-4)? What is the significance that these are the first words from God?

With this in mind, let's think about reflecting the light. As mysterious, powerful and wonderful it is, it is no accident that the Bible often tells us to shine. The light of earthly life shines through the sun and warms our world and the light of eternal life shines through believers and warms our hearts.

Live It.

Turn to Philippians chapter two. If you have the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible you will see a heading "Shining as Stars." Read this section (verses 12-18)

What does Paul mean when he says we should "shine like stars in the universe?" How does he say we do this?

This week we are focusing on reflecting the light of Jesus. How does this idea of reflecting the light of Jesus tie to verses 14-15?

Read Matthew 4:14-16. Who is the light of the world?

The light emitting from a city on a hill makes the city obvious. What does this have to do with you being the light of the world?

What does the Mathew verse say about reflecting the light of Jesus?

What is wrong with this statement: “Let your light shine so others can see your good deeds and assume you are a Christian”?

If people see you as a shining light, how do they know that the source of that light is Jesus?

If you are truly reflecting the light of Jesus, according to Matthew 4:16, what will be the result?

Lift It.

How would you rate yourself as the reflected light of Jesus?
Can you think of someone who has seen the light shine through you and praised God as a result?

Say a prayer asking God for the strength to allow you to reflect the light of Jesus. Pray for opportunities and boldness.

As you pray consider the following:

We are often apprehensive about sharing our faith because we believe we don't know enough about the Bible. We are afraid we will be asked a question and we won't know the answer. But we don't have to know everything about Jesus to reflect his light.

The greatest physicists on earth don't totally understand light, yet they reflect it every day and so do we. The greatest Biblical scholars on earth don't totally understand Jesus, yet they reflect his light every day and so can we.

Log It.

As this next week passes,

- Write down any time this week where you had the opportunity to reflect the light of Jesus. How was it received?
- Write down something you have done this week that reflected the light of Christ and resulted in someone praising God. (This is a hard one. If you can't think of any examples, keep trying.)
- Write down a time this week where you encountered something you don't understand and had to rely on faith and trust.

Notes.



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