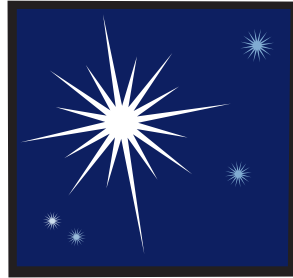




We Were the Light?

Even in prison, Paul did not take his eyes off Jesus and the plan to spread God's kingdom. Paul encouraged his Philippian friends to live in a way that drew others to Jesus. He told them that when they live a godly life among ungodly people, they'll shine like bright lights in a dark universe.



Day #1: Moon Light

Have you ever seen the moon in broad daylight? This Tuesday October 29th, before you head off to school, around 8:00am, you might just be able to spot a slice of the moon high in the sky, to the south.

It may surprise you to know that the moon is "out" during the day about 10 or 11 days each month. But we almost never notice it. Yet we easily see the moon glowing every night. The brightness of the moon does not change from day to night! It's what surrounds the moon that makes the difference. During the day, the sun makes the sky so bright that the moon barely shows up. However, at night when the sky is not lit up by the sun, the moon appears to be much brighter. The moon serves a much greater purpose at night.

† Paul was trying to make this point when he said: *Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people.* - Philippians 2: 15

The crooked and perverse people Paul mentioned are those who don't follow Jesus. They are people who give in to sin because they are in living in spiritual darkness, without the light of Jesus.

Sometimes we dread going to a place where people do not follow Jesus. We'd much rather hang out with our Christian friends. But always hanging out with other believers is kind of like the moon in the daytime. It's not bad; it just doesn't make much difference. The Bible clearly tells us to meet with other believers—to learn together, eat together, pray and praise together (Acts 2: 42). This is good and it energizes us. But there is also a call for us to step out into the world around us. The darker the places we go, the more we will stand out and the more people will be affected by our light.

* Who do you know that lives in spiritual darkness apart from Jesus? Has it occurred to you that you might be the light God wants to shine in their world? Pray for these people and ask God how you can shine His light.

Day #2: Who's Looking?

Our streets have a speed limit. Our lawmakers decide the safest speed and drivers aren't allowed to drive any faster. Do you know what happens when drivers see a police car on the road? Everyone slows down! They know the policeman is the watchman over their actions. He has the power to punish—the power to give them a speeding ticket.

It shows really good character to drive the correct speed when there's no officer in sight! These drivers are driving the right speed because it's the right thing to do. They trust that whoever made the rule was wise and obeying the rule will keep them safe.

A wise man once said, "Character is what you do when no one is looking."

When Paul wrote his letter to his friends in Philippi, he was locked up in country far away from them. The Philippians followed Paul's instructions when they were together, but Paul said that it was even more important to follow his instructions now that they were so far apart.

Paul understood that following God is a matter of the heart. It didn't matter where their teacher, Paul, was (as if he was a watchman overseeing their actions). The people in Philippi should obey God because they trusted God's word and believed that His ways would give them the fullest life.

† *Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Do not depend on your own understanding. In all your ways remember Him. Then He will make your paths smooth and straight.* - Proverbs 3: 5-6

* How are you when no one's looking? Are you kind to your brother or sister, even when your parents aren't around? Do you cheat if no one will catch you? Do you read God's word without being told to? If you act differently in front of those in authority than how you act when they aren't around, there's a problem. It might just be that you need a trust-check. If you trust God fully, you'll want to obey—even when no one is looking!

Day #3: Two Wise Words

14 *Do everything without complaining and arguing,*
15 *so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people.* - Philippians 2: 14-15

Day #3 continued:

Reread the words in verse 14 above. Paul gives us clear instructions on how to shine. Circle the two things he says *not* to do.

If you look up complain in the dictionary you'll find that it means "to express your dissatisfaction." Simply put, that means to *talk about what you don't like*. A few synonyms (words that mean the same thing) are: gripe, grumble, murmur, and whine. Do you like hearing people whine and complain? Grumbling and whining rarely changes anything. It usually just makes everybody miserable.

But the antonym (the opposite) of complain is to rejoice! So, to avoid complaining, why not express the things you are glad about?

+ *Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.* - 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18

There's a reason Paul says to pray all the time. When we pray, we get God's perspective/God's view of the situation. He will show you what there is to be thankful for.

Tomorrow we'll see how to steer clear of arguing.

***** Make a gratitude journal. Each day, write a least 5 things you are thankful for. It will turn your grumbling into joy!

Day #4: Live in Harmony

Yesterday we looked at two things we should avoid if we want to shine brightly in a dark place. Look at the top of yesterday's FIT. What is the second thing we should *not* do? (Argue.)

We all know what it means to argue. Some other words are: disagree, debate, quarrel, oppose, pick a fight. But the opposite of argue is to live in harmony. Harmony is a great thing. It means that even though there are different parts, they all work together. They actually make each other better because they are different.

With your parents permission, watch this video of incredible harmony. One man has been filmed singing different parts of a song that all go together beautifully. (There are no instruments—only his voice.)

<http://www.godtube.com/watch/?v=WWZK7WNX>

+ *Live in harmony with each other... And don't think you know it all!* - Romans 12: 16

Our lives should be like this. No two people agree about everything. But we can ask God to uses our differences to make each other better.

Day #4 continued:

There's a reason that you will stand out if you don't complain and argue: it's that so many people do these things! If you join in the whining and fighting, you'll be like everyone else. You'll be hiding your light, your godliness (Matthew 5: 15). But if you live in harmony and gratitude, you will shine brightly in your neighborhood, your class, and everywhere you go. The great thing is that EVERY believer can live like this, no matter how young or how old!

***** Is there someone you are tempted to argue with often? Ask God to show you how to live in harmony with him or her (1 Corinthians 10: 13). Ask God to how your differences can be used for good.

Day #5: Not Outnumbered

Do you know how many basketball players are allowed on the court during an NBA game? (There are 10 players on the court—5 players per team.) Maybe the most important part is that there are the *same* number on each team. Why is that? Would it be fair for one team to have one player and the other team to have nine? No. The one player wouldn't have a chance against nine. He would be completely outnumbered.

We all agree that teams must be even to have a fair competition. But in spiritual things, the math looks a bit different. Imagine Jesus. He was one man—one BRIGHT light—among thousands of lost people in the spiritual darkness of Galilee. And imagine Paul going to Philippi. He was one man—one light—among thousands of people lost in the spiritual darkness there.

Was Paul "outnumbered" when he arrived in Philippi? Yes. Was Jesus "outnumbered" when he arrived in Galilee? Yes. But neither man was working in their own power! They were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 13: 9, Matthew 3: 16, Luke 4: 1). And no darkness is a match for the Light of God (Ephesians 6: 10-18).

+ *But you belong to God, my dear children. You have already won a victory over those people, because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world.* - 1 John 4: 4

It may seem scary to be in a place where you are not surrounded by other believers. But we cannot discount the amazing power of God that works inside of each of His children to shine in the darkness. In fact, it should give us great courage! Paul said that God is at work in us, giving us the desire and the power to do His work (Philippians 2: 13). We shouldn't be afraid to go where people don't know about Jesus.

***** Is there a place in your life where people don't follow Jesus? If so, ask God to increase your light so that people come to know Him. If you don't know of a place like this, ask God where He would like to send you.