

Shining in a Dark World

I. Announce:

- A. Welcome to those watching online 10am.
- B. Slide1-4 AP: VBS Volunteers. Blood Bank. Widows. Pantry. [show Video]
- C. Slide5 Mothers Day can stir many different emotions in a room. For some, it is joyful and full of gratitude. For others, it carries *loss, longing, exhaustion, or memories that ache*. Today we honor not only biological mothers, but also adoptive mothers, foster mothers, spiritual mothers, grandmothers, single mothers, grieving mothers, and women who have *lovingly mothered others* through prayer, sacrifice, encouragement, and faithful presence. Scripture gives us a beautiful glimpse of God's own heart through the language of motherhood ...
1. God is revealed in Scripture as "**Father**". Yet He is not limited by human gender. Both the strength often associated with **fatherhood** and the tenderness often associated with **motherhood** are perfectly found in Him.
- D. In Isaiah 66:13, God says, "*As one whom his mother comforts, SO I will comfort you*" - What an incredible picture! The tenderness of a mother's comfort, the nearness of her care, the steady reassurance of her presence - God Himself uses that imagery to describe His love for His people. Mothers reflect something sacred about the character of God! In countless unseen ways, through *nurturing, protecting, teaching, praying, sacrificing, and persevering*, they become living reminders of grace. And we don't only think of *tender and soft*, but *strong, protecting, and courageous*. - To every Mother who has carried the weight and beauty of caring for others, ThankYou. - Your labor is holy-work. Your influence is deeper than you know. And your love leaves fingerprints on eternity. ThankYou!
- E. Prayer: God show each of the moms with **Your love**. Honor them with **Your words of affirmation**. Wrap each in a blanket of **Your comfort, peace, and joy**.
- F. Slide6 Read Rohingya Update.

II. Slide7,8 Intro: Shining in a Dark World

- A. Thank you to Romulo and Cam for bringing powerful messages while I was away.
- B. BIG IDEA: A faithful life shines brightest in a broken world.
- C. Paul moves from: the humility of Christ (2:1-11) to: the practical living out of that humility. [Living out your faith with obedience and integrity]
- D. Christianity is not merely admired truth. It is lived truth.
- E. Slide9 Illust: Ever see stars during the day? No, Stars Only Shine in Darkness.
 1. Not at noon. Not in bright sunlight. Stars shine brightest when the world around them is dark. Paul is writing to believers living in a crooked, confused, broken culture. And he doesn't tell them: Hide, or Blend in, or Complain about the darkness. - He tells them: Shine!

III. Slide10a 1 WORK OUT WHAT GOD WORKED IN (12-13)

- A. 12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. (Haitian cook serving at the Pastors Conf)
- B. The beautiful tension is that Paul immediately says, For it is God who works in you.
- C. Work out your salvation, Paul doesn't say, work FOR your salvation. Salvation is by grace. [He's addressing Christians (they're already saved). The is future salv (ie. 1:6)
 1. Work out / work on to the finish (LKGNT) / carry out your own salvation (Vincent)
- D. Slide10b Illust: I just passed through Guangzhou airport. They have moving walkways in their airport (Flat escalators. Skywalk. Travelator). You can stand, or walk, or run, but its intent is that you walk on it. You put in the effort, walking, while it helps you move faster & farther. [so it's about the combination of my walking & the walkway itself propelling me]. So spiritually, it's my working w/a greater power that enables me to reach my goal. Working + cooperating.
- E. Illust 2: My shoulder surgery last Sept. Ultimately, my Surgeon did it all. He gave me my diagnosis, did the surgery, recommended the rt meds, & my rehab schedule. After resting 4 weeks, at this point I needed to work it out - w/fear & trembling ;)

I needed to show up for my 6 mo of great Phys Therapy care from “*Lisa at Green PT*”. I needed to follow orders/obedience, & do my exercises.

- F. So our text is saying, Put it into practice. Let your faith become visible. Live it out.
- G. We obey - God empowers. [God’s work **in** you - should become visible **through** you]
- H. Q: Is your faith mostly private... or visible? Where is God calling you to obedience right now?

IV. Slide 11a **2 SHINE BY THE WAY YOU RESPOND (14-16)**

- A. *14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing, 15 that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.*
- B. Do all things without grumbling - always reminds me of **the story** of the man who decided to *join a monastery*. One of the rules of the group was that you were only allowed to speak 2 words every 10 yrs. At the end of 10 yrs he said, **Bad food!** 10 more years went by and he said, **Hard bed!** Finally, on his 30th anniversary with the brothers, he thundered, **I quit!** And the priest in charge responded, *"You might as well. All you do is **complain** anyway."*
- C. Today, **complaining** is normal. **cynicism** is celebrated. **outrage** is constant.
 1. Have you ever heard that, **toxic thinking, leads to noxious talking, that leads to negative behavior.**
 2. Yet Paul says, **faithful believers stand out by *how they respond*.**
- D. The world expects: *anger. division. bitterness. hostility.* But as christians we should seek to display: *steadiness. gratitude. gentleness. hope.*
 1. One of the **brightest lights** in a *dark world* is a **believer who refuses to live in constant complaint.** [note: he knows the world is dark!]
- E. Shine Like Stars!

1. Paul says believers are: *blameless. innocent. lights in the world.*
Not perfect - but definitely distinct.

F. Slide11b Paul *plagiarized* Daniel, *Those who are wise will shine as bright as the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever.* 12:3 nlt

1. Don't expect God to use you as a lighthouse somewhere else, if He can't use you as a candle where you are.

G. Your choice: You can *burn up your energy* grumbling/disputing, or shining as lights!

H.(15) msg, *Carry the light-giving Message into the night.*

1. Lights are intended for guidance. Think flashlight. We are to help those around us who are in the dark.
2. Lights are also used for warning. Think Lighthouse. Signaling those caught in this worlds fog, to see the rocks.

I. The goal is not to curse the darkness more loudly, but to shine more clearly.

J. Would people describe your life as light-giving? Does your response to difficulty look different than the world around you?

V. Slide12 3 FAITHFULNESS IS WORTH THE COST (17-18)

A. 17 *Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. 18 Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.*

B. Paul says: *Even if I am being poured out* - That's sacrificial language.

1. Paul uses this imagery to describe *his sufferings for the Philippians*, including his present imprisonment as an offering to God.
2. So it's his life as a sacrifice, commingled with their sacrifices.

a) And a life poured out for Christ is never wasted. [think alabaster jar]

C. Some of the brightest believers are the ones who quietly pour themselves out for others.

VI. Slide13a 4 REAL-LIFE EXAMPLES: TIMOTHY & EPAPHRODITUS (19-30)

A. Read 19-30.

B. Paul gives two examples: Timothy & Epaphroditus.

1. Neither are flashy. Neither are celebrities. **But both are faithful.**

C. Timothy - I have no one like him. He genuinely cares. He seeks Christ's interests.

D. Epaphroditus - He's a great servant. Messenger. He nearly died serving others.

1. The kingdom is often advanced by ordinary people with extraordinary faithfulness. Slide13b ...

E. God's *brightest lights* are often **not** the most famous, **but** the most faithful.

VII. Slide14a 5 CHRIST CONNECTION

A. **Jesus is** the true light of the world. **But** Jesus also said, **you are the light of the world** (Mt. 5:14). **But** I thought **He** was the light and we were just "*reflecting*" that light. How do we square this?

1. **We** are **not the source** of the light *independently* from Christ.

But because *Christ lives in us*, **we** genuinely become *lights in the world*.

2. We are **not** merely "*holding*" light, **but** becoming **visible light bearers** because **His life** is now **in us**.

a) **So**, Christ is the **source** of the light, **but** His people become **carriers** of that light. We do not **produce** the light apart from Christ, but when Christ fills a life, that life begins to **shine**. His light **in us**, becomes light **through us**.

B. Slide14b Four Reminders:

1. God never intended Christians to merely *survive the darkness*, **but to shine within it**.

2. The **darker** the world becomes, the **more visible** genuine faith becomes.

3. The world does not need: *louder Christians, angrier Christians, or more performative Christians*. The world needs believers who **shine**.

4. Darkness is not defeated by **talking** about light ... **but by shining**.

C. **Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank You for placing Your light within us. Teach us to live with integrity, obedience, and faithfulness in a **dark** world. Guard us from cynicism, complaining, and compromise. Help us reflect Your character in the way we speak, serve, and love others. Make our lives shine, not for our glory, but for **Yours**. And give us courage to faithfully *pour our lives out*, for what matters **eternally!**

D. !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

E. ***End:** Mothers please stop by the table out front as we have a little gift bag for you. Also there is a Photo Opp out front.

F. Keywords: Lights, Shine, dark.

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