

How to Shine in a Dark World

Hiram Kemp

The world in which we live has always been dark. Since the fall of humanity in Genesis 3, sin has been in the lives of people and destroying those who submit to sin rather than God. Though we may look at our current times as intensely dark and sinful, the things being done today should come as no surprise to the student of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:13). Jesus told His disciples that they were to be different. He wants us to shine our lights in this world so God our Father will receive the glory (Matthew 5:16). The idea of shining our light is normally taken to simply mean Christians should be good examples. Most certainly, Christians should be examples, but in what ways? How can we practically let those around us know that this world is not our home? I believe there are practical ways that we can let our light shine, which will catch the attention of those around us (Philippians 2:14-16). Near the end of 1 Thessalonians, Paul gave several commands that we should take to heart and adopt. When we examine 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22, I think we get a clear picture of how we can shine our light in a world that desperately needs it.

Always Rejoice (1 Thessalonians 5:16)

Paul told the Thessalonians to rejoice evermore (1 Thessalonians 5:16 KJV) or to rejoice always (NKJV). This does not mean that Christians never experience sadness. We do, but our overall disposition should be one of constant joy (Romans 12:15). We can have an abiding joy that is more permanent than momentary happiness because we know that God is in control of the world. We rejoice “in the Lord” at all times (Philippians 4:4). When we consider God reigning in Heaven, we can have joy even when many others think the sky is falling. In a world overrun with bad news, those of us who have the good news should demonstrate it by not being downcast or sullen but instead by rejoicing continually (2 Corinthians 6:10). Many people in our world seek joy through substance abuse, perfect circumstances or material possessions. We should be paving the way to show others that true and lasting joy is tied to our relationship to God, not to things of the world.

Paul previously praised the Thessalonians for being examples to all of those around them because of their conversion (1 Thessalonians 1:8-10). They would continue to be examples if they demonstrated persistent rejoicing in a world of persistent negativity and pessimism. We should sing with joy (James 5:13). Most importantly, we should share the good news of forgiveness with joy in our hearts (Ephesians 1:7). Jesus told us that we could be of good cheer because He overcame the world (John 16:33). If our joy is full, it will spill over into every area of our lives. Our friends, neighbors and relatives will take notice (1 John 1:4). We will be able to point them to Jesus, who is the True Light, when they see the light in us (John 1:4).

Pray Incessantly (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Paul’s command to pray without ceasing is easy to quote and hard to practice. Our light will shine brightly in this dark world if we actually take the Holy Spirit’s words seriously and pray constantly. When we see crisis in our world, we should be those who fall on our knees in prayer before we do anything else. Instead of posting on social media about all that is wrong, we should be praying to the One who can make it right. Rather than pouting about how terrible things in the *(continued page 3)*

world have become, we should be petitioning God to allow us to continue to spread the Word freely, which can change hearts (2 Thessalonians 3:1). The Colossians were told to be steadfast in prayer (Colossians 4:2). The Romans were admonished to be constant in prayer (Romans 12:12). The darker things get, the more we have about which to pray. We should accompany our prayers with action as we have the opportunity to put our faith into operation.

Yet, we should always remember that prayer is in itself an action. When we pray, we involve the God of the universe Who can do the most about our situation. People should hear Christians say, “I’m praying for you.” When people express fear and anxiety about the events in the world, we should be saying, “I’m praying and trusting the Lord.” If we are just as faithless and overwhelmed as unbelievers, we will never draw them closer to God. Prayer must not be regulated to a last resort. Prayer is our first line of defense as we boldly approach the throne of grace and find the help that we need (Hebrews 4:16).

Be Thankful (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

One thing that sets Christians apart from the world is our attitude of thankfulness. We are told to “give thanks always and for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:20). Paul told the Thessalonians that it was the will of God for them in Christ Jesus to give thanks (1 Thessalonians 5:18). In a world of gripes and ungrateful people, we can shine our light if we fail to voice our complaints. The New Testament describes the worldly person as ungrateful (2 Timothy 3:2) and unthankful (Romans 1:21). It is not that we do not see things that enrage us or wish things were different, but we know things could always be worse. Also, we appreciate that God can use anything to His ultimate good (Romans 8:28). Practice gratitude. Do not just feel thankful inside but express it to God and to others. It will be impactful. Gratitude shows that we know we are undeserving of God’s blessings, and we want to thank Him for them. Count your many blessings and name them one by one. It may help someone else count theirs, too.

Love Good And Refrain From Evil (1 Thessalonians 5:19-22)

The last few verses in this section deal with our relationship to the truth of God’s revelation. We should not quench the Spirit or put out His work (1 Thessalonians 5:19). We should not despise prophecy (1 Thessalonians 5:20). We need to test everything and hold to what is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Lastly, we must abstain from evil in every avenue it appears (1 Thessalonians 5:22). One could summarize Paul’s thoughts here by saying we should love the good and refrain from the evil (3 John 11). Paul wanted the Thessalonians to treat the Word of God properly and reject everything that was opposed to it.

Much of that which people meditate upon today is contrary to the Word of God. The nightly news can keep us informed, but it will not help us to be conformed to the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:17-18). If we love the things that God loves and reject the things He hates, people will know that we are different. Shining our light in this dark world is not about being an example in a general way. There are concrete and specific ways by which we can announce to the world that our citizenship is in Heaven. Study 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22. Go and do likewise.

From Gospel Gazette

NEWS AND NOTES

“I was sick, and ye visited me...” (Matthew 25:36)

Please check the bulletin boards for updates on Prayer Request Lists. Please update us if needed. Also please pray for those directly and indirectly affected by Covid-19, and please keep us updated.

Some may have ended or are near the end of their quarantine period. We do have several that have been affected by this disease. So many in fact that it is difficult to keep up with those that are affected. Basically, if you see someone missing, they either have COVID-19 or are in quarantine.

Although we have sanitized the building twice weekly since June, we had the building professionally sanitized this past Thursday. They also assured us that we are doing correct sanitizing as we have done. We want to take all precautions necessary to keep our membership safe.

In Other News:

Seek The Old Paths for December are on the tables in the foyer.

All of our Bible classes except those in the auditorium have been cancelled for next week. We will review if class cancellation will be extended and advise you when that decision is made.

All activities on the December calendar have been cancelled.

<i>Those Privileged To Serve</i> December 13, 2020		NUMBERS FOR THE WEEK Week Of December 6, 2020
<p>SUNDAY MORNING</p> <p>Song Leader: TBD Opening Prayer: TBD Closing Prayer: TBD Bible Reading: TBD Preacher: J. L. May</p> <p>LORD'S TABLE Presiding: TBD Mitch Mosley Barry Roush David Loggins Reginald Read Stacy Eddleman Ryan Manley</p> <p>ANNOUNCEMENTS Dan Nichols</p>	<p>SUNDAY EVENING</p> <p>Song Leader: TBD Opening Prayer: TBD Closing Prayer: TBD Preacher: J. L. May</p> <p>WEDNESDAY NIGHT December 16, 2020 Song Leader: TBD Opening Prayer: TBD Closing Prayer: TBD</p> <p>DEVOTIONAL SPEAKER December 16, 2020 TBD</p>	<p>Sunday Bible Study 30 Sunday AM Worship 40 Sunday PM Worship 35 Wednesday Bible Study 36 Contribution \$1,509</p>

The Friend of Truth

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“Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?” (Galatians 4:16)

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Keep Notes

Well, if you have not been diagnosed with Covid-19 or have not been quarantined due to “contact tracing” please raise your hand. It would seem to be easier to note everyone who does not have this virus, than to try and list everyone who is affected by it. I have heard similar reports from brethren who have said their doctors have said that before this is over everyone will have had it. Right or wrong, it seems that no one is escaping this virus this year. But for anyone who has not been suffering with this, please stay safe.

Keep everyone in your prayers who has this virus. Losing your independence and relying on others is not always easy to accept. But remember in these times that giving opportunities to help is a blessing to the one receiving, but also to the one who is giving. Be thankful for all the prayers and kindnesses shown. When we are sick or unable to do for ourselves, it offers a brother or sister an opportunity to be a blessing. All of us need to keep our eyes open to neighbors and friends who do not have a Christian family to rely on. Remember that not everyone has a “family” like we do. We are so blessed not to have to suffer alone. Look for opportunities to help another. God may be giving us open doors and we need to find them and use them to His glory.

I am so thankful for everyone who has been able to keep coming and for those who have stepped up and helped in so many ways. For those who are helping in worship and using talents we did not even know you had, thank you. I cannot wait for everyone to be back and serving, but it rejoices the soul to see others using their talents and stretching yourselves to do more. God bless you all!

SHEPHERDS

Dan Nichols

Randy Oden

Jody Pickens

DEACONS

Scottie Blanchard

Jerry Dodson

Mike Felts

Jason Garland

Marshall Lands

Mark Wooten

EVANGELIST

Terry Joe Kee

MISSIONARIES

Michael Hughes

Samrit Kammanee

Arnold Kelley

Guyana, South America

Warren, PA

Micah Robertson, Montana

SERVICES

SUNDAY

Classes 9:00 a.m.

Worship 10:00 a.m.

5:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the Word of God

Romans 10:17

Believe the Word of God

John 8:24

Repent of your sins

Luke 13:3

Confess your faith in Jesus

as the Son of God

Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for the

remission of your sins

Acts 2:38

Live faithfully

Revelation 2:10

“Where there is no vision,
the people perish....”

Proverbs 29:18

God Give Us 2020 Vision
in 2020

Visit Our Website: greensbororoadchurchofchrist.com