



## Session 5: Shine



### Christ followers are called to live distinctly different lives.

The Spirit in us changes us and we become more and more like Jesus in our characters and behaviour if we let him. In the Bible, people who spent time in God's presence were sometimes described as having shining faces. In this session we'll be exploring what it means to shine with God's light.

#### Previous session review

- Recap on your experience of the previous challenge. How did it go? Was it helpful?
- If you weren't able to try the challenge, explore the question: Where and how did you experience God last week?

### Read

Read the passage several times through, slowly and prayerfully. It might help to use your imagination to picture the scene. At the end of the text you will find helpful background information in our 'Setting the Scene' section.

As you read, look out for shockers and blockers.

**Shockers** – a phrase, word, image or something from the text that resonates, stands out or connects with you.

**Blockers** – something from the text that raises questions for you.

#### Setting the scene:

- At the beginning of the passage, Paul is focusing on 'maturity'. Even though he is absent, they as a community will have to take on responsibility to think through what the Gospel means for them where they are.
- Verse 12 is often misunderstood – salvation is God's work, from start to finish. But the Philippians will need to work out what this means in their daily lives in practice.
- Paul may not be around to advise them, they may not see him again – they need to get on with being God's people. They are to shine as lights – as a beacon of hope, as a sign of God's beauty in a dark and twisted world. Paul is alluding to Daniel 12.3 which speaks of 'the wise' (Israelites who were skilled in knowing and applying God's law) – shining to the world around (as Daniel himself did – Dan 2.46-48)
- 'Day when Christ returns' (v.16) refers to the day when God will bring the whole cosmos to justice and peace, through the return of Jesus as Lord. Paul of course, does not know if he will be alive to see this day, but has confidence to know that Jesus will come again.

### Philippians 2.12-18

My dear friends, you always obeyed when I was with you. Now that I am away, you should obey even more. So work with fear and trembling to discover what it really means to be saved. God is working in you to make you willing and able to obey him.

Do everything without grumbling or arguing. Then you will be the pure and innocent children of God. You live among people who are crooked and evil, but you must not do anything that they can say is wrong. Try to shine as lights among the people of this world, as you hold firmly to the message that gives life. Then on the day when Christ returns, I can take pride in you. I can also know that my work and efforts were not useless.

Your faith in the Lord and your service are like a sacrifice offered to him. And my own blood may have to be poured out with the sacrifice. If this happens, I will be glad and rejoice with you. In the same way, you should be glad and rejoice with me.

## Reflect

After you have all had time to read the text, pause and be still to listen to God through the Scriptures.

Begin your reflection time by each naming your shockers and blockers. Listen carefully to each other, share your thoughts and reflect on this passage together.

### You might also like to explore these questions:

**Q1.** In what ways should Christ's followers live differently?

**Q2.** In what ways are you conscious of God's presence with you in daily life?

## Respond

*Shine challenge:* As a group, create a challenge that will help you to be more aware of God and living each day distinctly differently, or choose from the following:

### Challenge ideas:

#### 1. Sleep well

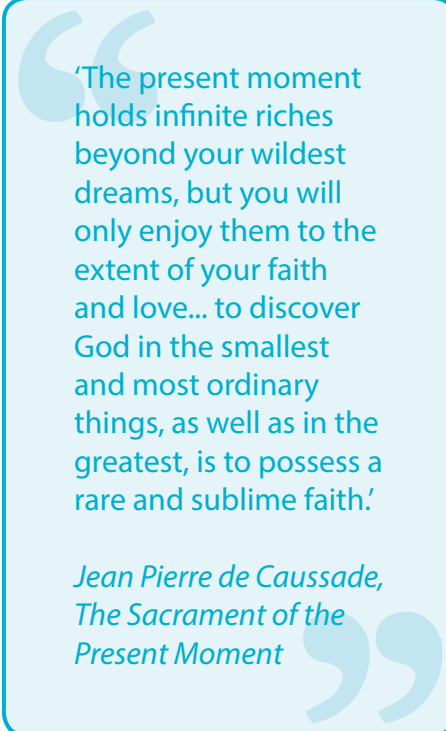
Exhaustion and fatigue affect us all from time to time. In biblical culture, the day begins with sleep. Each night this week, attempt to get a good night's sleep. Avoid late night coffee and TV. Before you turn your light off and settle down for the night, take a few moments to review the day, ask forgiveness where necessary and thank God for blessings.

#### 2. Eating

Food is a gift from God and we are commanded to enjoy it and be thankful. Use your mealtimes this week as prompts to increase gratitude and thank God for everything and everyone that nourishes you as a whole person.

#### 3. Working

Whatever our work – parenting, working in an office, a factory or a shop, at university or in a hospital, we can ask God to partner with us as we work throughout the day. It is helpful to use breaks in the day to act as reminders to be present to God and ask him to fill you with the Spirit. Making coffee, using the stairs or lift or simply looking out the window for a couple of minutes are good opportunities to reconnect with God.



'The present moment holds infinite riches beyond your wildest dreams, but you will only enjoy them to the extent of your faith and love... to discover God in the smallest and most ordinary things, as well as in the greatest, is to possess a rare and sublime faith.'

*Jean Pierre de Caussade,  
The Sacrament of the  
Present Moment*

## Group Prayer

You might like to commit to praying for each person in the group as you look to live distinctly differently this week.