

A 5-part course exploring what it means to be a Light for Christ and how we might develop a personal Rule of Life.

Shining as Lights

Session 2

RECEIVE the Light



Study Group
80 mins



Individual
45-60 mins



**THE DIOCESE
OF SHEFFIELD**
Renewed | Released | Rejuvenated

Lights for Christ

**“Arise, shine; for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.
For darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the LORD will arise upon you,
and his glory will appear over you.
Nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.
... for the LORD will be your everlasting light,
and your days of mourning shall be ended.”**

— ISAIAH 60:1-3, 19-20 NRSV



SHARE: what is your story?

Looking back to how we ended the last session: did it lead you to adjust your spiritual routine in any way? Did you try praying that prayer of blessing for people in church and your local streets? If so, what was that like? If you are in a group, you might like to share something about this with each other.

Turning our focus to this session's topic: can you think of a time when you've received a gift which made an impact on you? How did that experience impact you? Which do you tend to find easier: giving or receiving?



If you are studying this course in a group. Think aloud about this in pairs, or all together.



HEAR: what does the Bible say?



Read Psalm 27:1-14

The Psalms are a collection of prayers, worship songs and declarations of faith, preserved and used over the centuries. They express a wide range of experiences and feelings. Jesus treasured the psalms, learning from them and praying them himself; we find them on his lips at various times in the gospels (e.g. Matt 4:6; 21:42; 27:46). They brought light to his own life and teaching.

Psalms can express prayer on behalf of a group or an individual. Psalm 27 sounds like the voice of an individual, perhaps giving testimony within a group as well as speaking out to God. This psalm is full of very personal language: notice how many times 'I', 'my' and 'me' occur. The LORD (Yahweh, the God of Israel) is 'my light' and 'my salvation': these gifts that God delights to give bring clarity and security in the uncertainties of daily life. (If you want to explore more the way the Bible connects God with light, see Psalms 4:6 and Psalm 104:1-2; also 1 Timothy 6:16.)

In the second half of the psalm, we also hear the words 'you' and 'your', addressed to the LORD, asking to meet God face-to-face and to hear God's guidance. The psalm gives us a glimpse of an intensely personal relationship with a personal God – an ongoing relationship which makes all the difference to this individual.

Try some of these questions, to help you dig deeper into these verses.

- What kinds of feelings do you sense the writer of Psalm 27 may have been going through? How does the psalmist handle those feelings?
- What does the LORD give the psalmist? See how many gifts from God you can find throughout the psalm. What feelings and responses do those gifts prompt?
- What is the psalmist's experience of prayer and worship? (see particularly these verses Psalm 27:4-8.) What is it that makes regular worship and prayer such an important priority for this person?
- How does the psalmist find hope and confidence for the future, particularly when the present seems uncertain and alarming (see these verses Psalm 27:11-14)?



If you are studying this course in a group. Think aloud about this in pairs, or all together.



INVOLVE: what does this passage say to you?

- God offers us the gift of friendship, a close ongoing relationship with God. How does this make you feel? Is there anything that might prevent you receiving this gift?
- What experiences of prayer and worship do you treasure most? What would be the most nourishing pattern of regular prayer and worship you?
- Do you sometimes sense God instructing and leading you (see this verse Psalm 27:11)? If so, how does that usually happen?
- In the final verse, the encouraging challenge is to 'wait' (meaning 'look forward expectantly, with hope') for the LORD, who gives strength and courage. What does that say to you as an individual and you as a group? How do you respond?



NOURISH: something further to chew on...



Watch the video from Bishop Pete – either online or download.

Transcript...

So in this part of the course we're thinking about what it means to receive the light of Christ and of course in one sense that's something that happens once and for all for every follower of the Lord Jesus. That's why at the service of baptism and again at the service of confirmation, at the end of the service, as a sort of commissioning, the newly baptised and the newly confirmed are given a lit candle and are told 'you have received the light of Christ'. It's done... it's something that is already complete. As we come to Christ, as we receive his spirit, as we are brought into the body of Christ, we have received the light of Christ, we can count on it. But of course that's not the whole story and there's another sense in which there's a responsibility on each one of us who are disciples of our Lord Jesus, day by day to go on again and again and again afresh receiving the light of Christ and I wonder how you ensure that that's happening for you.

I became a Christian at the age of 13 and I'm so grateful to the people who in the early days of my Christian life encouraged me to set aside some dedicated time every day usually at the start of the day to sit in the presence of God to pray, to read my Bible, to seek to receive afresh the word of the Lord to me. To reconnect with my

very best self and my very best self in Christ and that has been for me I guess, over the last 40 years, pretty much consistently a daily pattern and if I had to trace anywhere in my life in which I receive again and again, day by day the light of Christ, it would be in that dedicated prayer time at the start of every day. That may not be possible for you, your life circumstances may not permit you that kind of a convenient routine of daily prayer but I hope as you explore in this course what it means for you to receive the light of Christ you'll be thinking especially about what that means for you, day to day.

Read these words from the Common Worship service of baptism:

In baptism, God calls us out of darkness into his marvellous light.
To follow Christ means dying to sin and rising to new life with him.
Therefore I ask:

Do you reject the devil and all rebellion against God?

I reject them.

Do you renounce the deceit and corruption of evil?

I renounce them.

Do you repent of the sins that separate us from God and neighbour?

I repent of them.

Do you turn to Christ as Saviour?

I turn to Christ.

Do you submit to Christ as Lord?

I submit to Christ.

Do you come to Christ, the way, the truth and the life?

I come to Christ.

Is there anything in these words that you particularly warm to? Is there anything that puzzles you or disturbs you? How could these responses follow from being 'called into God's marvellous light'?



If you are studying this course in a group. Talk about this in pairs.



EXPERIMENT: how will you live this out?

Do you want to adjust your current patterns of prayer, Bible reading and worship in any way? Is there one thing you could try doing differently for the next week or two, as an experiment? For example:

- try some different approaches to reading the Bible? Perhaps one of these might help: The Bible Project or St Peter's College Bible reading notes
- attend a midweek service of Holy Communion?
- plan a retreat or quiet day?
- spend time in silent prayer?
- pray in a less structured way than usual? Or a more structured way than usual?
- pray using a resource such as this one: www.trypraying.co.uk/
- explore the diocesan prayer community and consider joining if you're not already part of it: www.sheffield.anglican.org/renewed

Here is a prayer you could use in the morning, based on the opening verses of the Bible:

Let there be light as I begin this day,
 To draw me from the darkness and the night,
 To bless my flesh, to clear and show my way,
 Let there be light.
 Strong in the depth and shining from the height,
 Evening and morning's interplay,
 Blessing and enabling my sight.
 Lighten my soul and teach me how to pray,
 Lighten my mind and teach me wrong from right,
 In all I do and think and see and say
 Let there be light.

Malcolm Guite, 'Seven Whole Days', from *Parable and Paradox* (Norwich, Canterbury Press: 2016), p.79

Next Session

Session 3: WALK in the Light

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."