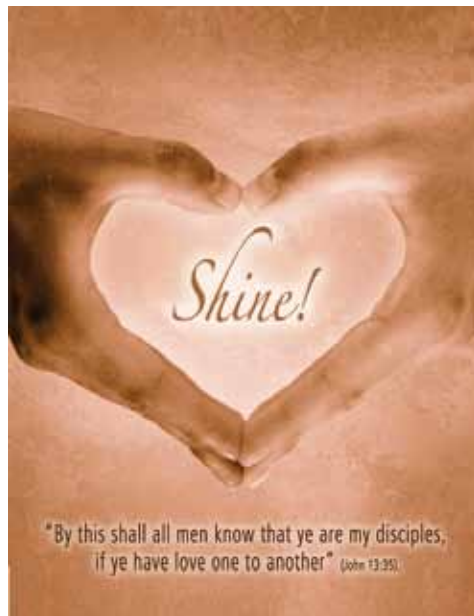


Witness

Shine!

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE
MAY 2011



SHINE IN LOVE

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Shine IN LOVE

*How can we shine as light in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation (world)?
We can live a life of love.*

SHINING GOAL: Living a life of love, we shine as His light in this crooked and perverse world.

SHINING GUIDANCE: Philippians 2:15; Book of 1 John; Revelation 1-3

SHINING GEMS: "...the true light now shineth" (1 John 2:8).

In springtime, young men's thoughts (or women's) turn to love. Not mine. My thoughts turn to tropical isles where coconut trees hang low with their harvest, ocean breezes blow gently, flowers are lush and fragrant, food is light and delicious, and the scenery is a feast to behold. SNAP! Back to real life means laundry, dirty dishes, floors to clean, and homework to help with. Oh, the things that demand my time! I guess I'll content myself with looking at these beautiful places on the computer or in magazines. Or just determine to make plans to go and then do it.

The Isle of Patmos where John, one of Jesus' faithful disciples, was sent was hardly a tropical resort—not even close. It was barren, lonely and for the most part deserted. John was exiled there, alone, as punishment for being a witness, a light where he lived. While there, he had an amazing vision of Heaven, now recorded in the Book of Revelation. Revelation is probably the most controversial, misunderstood, and complicated book of the Bible. Yet, it provides us with glimpses of the future and our future home in Heaven.

We will probably never be exiled for our faith. But if we were put on trial, would there even be enough evidence to convict us? I'm not judging or attempting to make anyone feel badly about her walk with God. It's just that this study or any study of the Bible should prompt all of us to stop and look at our lives with a magnifying glass—examining the imperfections that can remain hidden to anyone looking at us from the outside. The Apostle Paul tells us to examine ourselves and see if we're in the faith. That is important. Before we observe communion at my church, the pastor preaches about being pure in heart and not having hidden sin in our lives. It's of the utmost importance to be what and who we say we are. Our lives are a light to this world. We must constantly shine in love to our families, our friends, our church family, our coworkers and those we meet each day—wherever or whenever we encounter people. We may be the only love some of these folks will encounter along their way.

Ladies, I know you can do it. SHINE in love, truth, and righteousness wherever you are. The Lord will be glorified when you do.

Love From the First

✳ Write the Shining Gems in your journal. It should not be hard to memorize one or all of them.

"...the true light now shineth" (1 John 2:8);

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" 1 John 1:5);

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

✳ Go over all the questions and answers for this section on pp. 15-16.

✳ How did you fill in the blank, p. 15 in the first paragraph? (*Spend just a couple of minutes discussing these responses. I put "Japan's Tsunami".*)



- * Do you keep up with current events and news?
- * Is it important to know what is going on in the world around us?
- * How do you stay connected to the people you love and care about? (*Phone, email, Facebook, letters or visits*)
- * What do you do in your church to show others you care? (*1 Corinthians 12:25-26*)
- * Do you feel that you labor in vain sometimes when you do things for others? (*Be encouraged. In Philippians 2:16, Paul is telling the church people that he doesn't want his labor to be in vain. Can you imagine how small our labors would stack up next to his?*)
- * Are you more anxious to help those you love than others? (*1 Peter 1:22*)
- * Or should we be willing to help anyone needing our help? (*Matthew 5:44-47; 1 John 2:11-12; John 15:12*)
- * If we don't have the means to help financially, what should we do? (*Declare God's love to them—John 17:25-26.*)
- * Think of ones in your church who need some TLC—tender loving care. How can you be a blessing to them?
- * Can you think of people who love everyone without strings attached? Do you enjoy being around these people?
- * Are these people from your workplace, the gym, the park, the supermarket or your church? (*I believe you will answer church.*)
- * Why do Christians love so freely and willingly? (*Because they have the love of the Father in them—Ephesians 3:19; 5:2; 1 John 4:16; 1 Peter 1:8*)
- * Make an entry in your journal. List ways that you can love someone today and be God's light in this person's life. Here's a start: Pray, bake a dessert for someone, invite someone out for lunch, give a small gift, call or send an email...and hug someone today.
- * Close in prayer. Thank God that He loves us and calls us His children.

Love Forged in the Fallen

- * Read the Shining Gems together from your journal or from the study in TWG.
- * Go over the questions and answers from this section on p.17.
- * Do you know people who have been completely transformed by contact with Jesus?
- * Are their testimonies inspiring because of what they were saved from or because of how they live their *new* lives?
- * Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. Anyone can stop doing something that's wrong, but to live a new life because God has made this person a new creature is truly miraculous and something worthy of sharing with others.
- * On the other hand, do you know Christians who seem conformed to the world around them—their outlook and views distorted?
- * Do we then wonder why the world asks what's wrong and questions whether or not there are really true Christians?
- * John gives us the reason for this problem. Read 1 John 1:3. What is the reason? (*Fellowship*)
- * Fellowship is experiencing Christ. Can you have fellowship without relationship? (*No*)
- * Have you ever attended a function where you didn't know anyone (*relationship*)? Did you have communication (*fellowship*) with anyone there? (*You may have been able to talk, but it was just small-talk, I would imagine.*)



* We have a relationship with Christ when we accept Him. We are then in the family of God. (1 John 5:12)

* Read Ephesians 6:10 and explain how this expresses fellowship. (*Fellowship permits the life of the family to shine out through us, when we are strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.*)

* Do you ever pretend to be all right around other Christians even when you are hurting?

* Why? Shouldn't we let them see our pain, our vulnerability, our faults? (*James 5:6*)

* Can you think of a couple in the Bible who pretended to be something other than what they were? (*Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-10*)

* Does this seem harsh to you? What if others around them were following their examples of keeping back from the Lord?

* What had they done that required their deaths? (*They didn't keep their agreement of giving all they had for the Lord's work [Acts 4:32, 34-35] and they lied to the Holy Spirit [Acts 5:3].*)

* Are you walking in darkness or light when you are hiding something? (*Darkness. Christians don't like to admit that anything is going wrong or that our love and faith are being tested. This may not seem like blatant sin, but is it not a deception?*)

* John tells us the answer. "Walk in light." What is your testimony today?

* What comes with walking in the light? (*Cleansing grace of God.*)

* What keeps you walking in the light after this cleansing? (*Faith*)

* The definition of martyr is someone who is willing to die for his or her faith. Would you be willing to die for your faith?

* Read Acts 6:8 and identify who had great faith. (*Stephen*)

* Of what was Stephen guilty? (*The Sanhedrin Court accused him of blasphemy, but he only recounted the history of Israel, the lives of Jacob, and Moses—Acts 7:1-53.*)

* What was Stephen's punishment? (*He was stoned to death—Acts 7:58-59.*)

* What did God give Stephen before he was stoned? (*A vision of God and Heaven—Acts 7:55-56*)

* Dismiss with prayer. Ask God for faith and grace to be open with our lives and allow others to see who we are.

Love Fueled by Faith

* Read the Shining Gems for this month again. Are you understanding why Jesus is "The Light?"

* Go over the questions and answers on p. 18.

* Read 1 Corinthians 13. What does verse 13 tell us is the greatest thing? (*Charity or Love*)

* That verse is linked to Galatians 5:6, which tells us that faith is the reason for love. Do you believe that?

* The age-old question, "What is faith?" needs to be answered and understood. Read Hebrews 11:1, 3.

* How is your faith? Does it need to be strengthened, is it completely gone, or is it strong and unflinching?

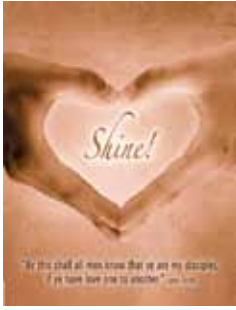
* Read about some heroes of the faith in Hebrews 11:8-11, 23, 24-29, and 29. There are many others. If you have time, read the entire faith chapter.

- * What does Hebrews 11:6 tell us? (*That it's impossible to please God without faith.*)
- * What happened to many of these people because of their extraordinary faith? (*See verses 37-38.*)
- * Why is faith so important?
- * Are Christians who aren't experiencing strong faith or fellowship (*as we discussed last week*) in a sinful state? (*Not necessarily, but they are not living as if they believe God. They're walking in darkness.*)
- * What does this darkness mean? (*Believing there is a God, knowing He exists, but living as if there isn't a God and not exposing ourselves to Him.*)
- * How do we miss the benefits of God's presence in our hearts and life? (*By ignoring the light*)
- * Name ways we do this: (1) Stop going to church—Hebrews 10:25; (2) Stop reading the Bible; and (3) Never examine our lives—2 Corinthians 13:5.
- * What does God expect from us? (Obedience)
- * Make an entry in your journal and list things you can do to strengthen your faith and obedience to God.
- * Dismiss in prayer. Ask God to help you be strong in your faith and commitment to Him.



Love Free of Falsehood

- * If anyone has memorized all the Shining Gems or even just one of them, allow individuals to share them aloud.
- * Go over all the questions and answers on p. 19.
- * Have you ever been lied to?
- * How do you react when you are told untruths?
- * Do you like anything false? Think of some things that are false, and briefly discuss their good and bad points. (*For instance: wigs, dentures, faux purses or shoes, fake fur*)
- * Throughout 1 John, John emphasized qualifications of genuine Christianity. What are they? (*Love, truth, and righteousness*)
- * Did meeting Jesus change John's life and direction? When he first met Jesus, by what nickname was he known? (*Son of Thunder—Matthew 4:21; Mark 3:17*)
- * John was very young, probably a teenager, naturally full of energy and maybe even possessing a tendency to cause trouble. Yet, what did he become? (*The apostle of love who was noted for his gentleness, graciousness and goodness—John 13:23.*)
- * John knew Jesus. Jesus knew John. They had fellowship together. In the Book of John, by what name does John refer to himself? (*the disciple whom Jesus loved—John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20*)
- * Who did Jesus leave in charge of his mother, Mary, when he was on the cross? (*John 19:26-27*)
- * Knowing all of this makes what John has to say very credible, wouldn't you say?
- * First John was written probably to the Christians in the city of Ephesus. What were these people facing? (*Paul lists some of these things in Ephesians 5:3-6: fornication, all uncleanness, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talking, jesting, whoremongers, idolaters, and men who try to exalt themselves with vain word.*)
- * Does this book apply to us today?
- * But John writes to them and calls them "my little children" in order to exhort them to walk



in the light (1 John 1:7) and to give up these ungodly practices (1 John 2:12-13, 1 John 3:7-9).

* What common theme or emphasis do we find in 1 John 1:6; 2:21; 3:18; and 5:20? (*The truth*)

* We see emphasis on love through John's own life and character as well as in Jesus' distinction. John referred to Christian love 25 or more times in his Epistles. (*Read just a few of these verses: 1 John 3:1; 4:7, 10-12; 5:3.*)

* Close in a prayer of praise and thanksgiving for God's perfect love.

In Closing...

I can hardly wait to meet John. I would like to ask him so many things. Did he enjoy taking care of Mary? What were his feelings about the honor of being dearly loved by Jesus? How did he manage to survive submersion in a cauldron of boiling oil? And what about his time on the Isle of Patmos? This should be quite a conversation. According to John, we'll have plenty of time—an eternity—to catch up. We'll be able to spend time with the "Heroes of the Faith" and walk on streets of gold with those who've gone on before. I'm reminded of the song, "Ten Thousand Years." "Ten thousand years, we'll just be started. Ten thousand years and we've just begun. The battle's over, and the victory's been won. Ten thousand years and we've just begun." For those of us who know the Lord, eternity will be a glorious time. And the most amazing thing is that we'll get to spend time with the One...the True Light, the Creator, the All-Sufficient One, our Sovereign Lord, Jesus, who made it all possible. Don't you just get those glory bumps thinking about it? I do. Praise our Heavenly Father's name.