

Prayer & Fasting

MAKING ROOM FOR GOD'S PRESENCE

You are the light of the world—like a city on a mountain, glowing in the night for all to see. Don't hide your light under a basket! Instead, put it on a stand and let it shine for all. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. - Matthew 5:14–16

GLOW

By: Jelani Lewis

Growing up, I didn't really like church much. It wasn't because the people weren't nice. As children, my brother and I were often greeted with a loving pinch or kiss on the cheek from mothers and grandmothers wearing fashionable hats the size of sombreros. Nor was it because the only chance a child had for a snack was the bread and Kool-Aid that made up the communion sacraments. Nope. I'm pretty sure the reason I had an aversion to church was because, first of all, it seemed to last forever. I know for a fact there were times when Jesus Himself left to take a nap, and we would still be stuck sitting there. Secondly, for the most part, I didn't have a clue what the pastor was talking about, especially regarding salvation. I'm sure he articulated the gospel wonderfully. But for a child, the whole thought of being separated from God because of my sin and needing to be "born again" (which included inviting the God of the universe to come live inside me) was a bit overwhelming. Consequently, I decided at an early age that I could wait to experience this cosmic connection until around the age of 30. Besides, to my knowledge, I had never seen another young person really receive salvation and unashamedly live for Jesus ... that is, until I met Phillip.

Phillip was the quarterback of my high school football team. He was an exceptional athlete. Intelligent. A born leader. However, I don't remember much about him before he became a Christ-follower. As I recall, he was a pretty normal kid, and then one day, the guy was different. And not just the kind of different that lasted for a week or so. I'm talking about the kind of different where someone's life has been irreversibly ruined in the best way by Jesus Christ. That was Phillip, and day in and day out, I saw him live out what it meant to be a born-again believer and enjoy an authentic relationship with God.

I watched as he preached to youth and prayed for his classmates. I saw him stand up for righteousness and holiness in the locker room. I remember he even once shared a verse the Lord had laid on his heart for me. And after observing Phillip's life, I was given hope—hope that I didn't have to wait until I was 30 to receive Christ.

So I did something simple but life transforming. Drawn by the leading of the Holy Spirit, I made a decision to truly surrender my life to Christ. It wasn't anywhere near as complex as I imagined when I was a child. It was simply a genuine prayer to God declaring my allegiance to Him that led to new life, new priorities and new direction. All because a high school football player lived out his faith.

In this passage, Jesus gives believers a wonderful challenge. He exhorts us not to hide (which we may be inclined to do in this dark world) but to live as light. We are to shine, to illuminate ... to glow. And how do we glow? By our good deeds. Jesus tells us that what we do and the way we live is a bridge to helping others praise, glorify and worship our heavenly Father. Our actions and lifestyle are significant catalysts in moving others towards salvation.

Recently, I made a trip to Bioluminescent Bay in Puerto Rico. People travel from all over the world to see the mystical waters that shine like stars in the sea. I, along with several others, kayaked my way through a dark, eerie canal in search of God's glowing liquid grandeur. To my amazement, as night fell, my paddle propelling through the water caused it to exude a

beautiful blue-green light. In that moment, I was blown away by how awesome our God is.

Once in the middle of the bay, our group convened together and our tour guide began explaining the bioluminescence. He told us there are thousands of dinoflagellates (microscopic plankton) per gallon of water in the bay that, when touched, emit a flash of blue light that creates this wonderful radiance. In essence, a touch triggers the glow.

I wonder if that isn't God's intention for you as well. Could it be that part of the reason why God has so graciously touched your life was so that you would glow? Is it possible you and I were saved, healed and set free so that people from all over the world living in darkness would see His light in our lives and be drawn to Him?

Peter and Paul thought so. Peter suggested that a believing wife could win an unbelieving husband to the Lord through her actions (1 Peter 3:1–2), and Paul told Titus to teach slaves (who functioned in that culture much like our modern-day employees do) the importance of being a shining light so they would make the gospel attractive (Titus 2:9–10). May we then, as a response to His saving touch, glow for the glory of God at home, at work, at school and wherever else our travels take us.

Who knows? Maybe someday with a smile on their face, a person now irreversibly ruined in the best way by Jesus Christ might call you their very own Phillip.

*In the dark, a glimmering light is sufficient for the pilot to find the polar star
and to fix his course.
~ Metastasio*

Memory Verse

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9