

SMALL  GROUP

# SMALL GROUP LEADER GUIDE

## Bright Lights, Big City / Week 1

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### BEFORE GROUP

#### BOTTOM LINE

God made you to shine.

#### SCRIPTURE

*This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light; and there is no darkness in him at all (1 John 1:5 NLT).*

*“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. 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 NLT).*

#### GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help students consider the darkness they notice or experience in the world and to encourage them to see how they can shine God’s light into those places and spaces.

#### THINK ABOUT THIS

In this series, we’re pointing middle schoolers toward understanding what it means to shine the light of Jesus with their lives. At first, this can be an abstract concept for students to grasp. They tend to think literally in this phase, so it’s important to take this figurative language and make it more concrete. To do that, talk to students about what light does for us. It helps us see things more clearly, it shows us what’s really there, it brings our attention to certain things, and it just generally makes the world brighter. Well, in this same way, we as followers of Jesus were created to shine a figurative light in this world. We can help others see truth more clearly, we can show the world the way Jesus is working, we can bring attention to God’s goodness and love, and we can help make the world a better, brighter place. As you encourage your students to take hold of this truth for themselves, remind them that this isn’t just a command or call on their lives. It’s part of the way God created them, and that means that, right now as middle schoolers, they already have everything they need to shine.

*This guide is a suggestion, not a formula. Adjust the content as needed, and don’t feel like you need to complete everything listed.*

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### DURING GROUP

#### DISCUSS THIS

1. On a scale from “Totally fine” to “Totally terrified,” how do you feel about being in the dark?
2. What do you think can feel scary about the dark?
3. What are some examples of what may feel like darkness when you’re in middle school? *(For example, wars in the world, fighting at home, failing a class, depression, not making a team, when people say mean things about you, etc.)*
4. How does it make you feel to know God created you to shine light in circumstances or situations like that?

### DO THIS (EXPERIENCE 1)

Hand out the provided worksheet to your students and brainstorm how everyone can shine light to those around them in the different areas listed. Once everyone has completed the worksheet, ask your students to select and commit to doing one of the things they listed this week.

### DO THIS (EXPERIENCE 2)

Get out your Bibles or pull up a Bible app and discover as a group what the Bible says about the light of Jesus. Look up verses together and make a word cloud or sticky note chart of the characteristics of Jesus' light. Lead a conversation in which students identify characteristics they have as well as characteristics they'd like to grow in themselves.

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# SHINING GOD'S *Light*

THIS IS WHERE I CAN  
SHINE GOD'S LIGHT...

IN MY  
COMMUNITY

IN MY  
SMALL GROUP

WITH MY FAMILY

IN MY SCHOOL

ON SOCIAL MEDIA

"YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD—LIKE A CITY ON A HILLTOP THAT CANNOT BE HIDDEN. NO ONE LIGHTS A LAMP AND THEN PUTS IT UNDER A BASKET. INSTEAD, A LAMP IS PLACED ON A STAND, WHERE IT GIVES LIGHT TO EVERYONE IN THE HOUSE. 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 NLT)