



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

The Hills / Week 1

SERIES OVERVIEW

SERIES SUMMARY

A series about shining the light of Jesus with your life.

SERIES BOTTOM LINE

A series about shining the light of Jesus with your life.

WEEKLY BOTTOM LINES

WEEK 1: God created you to shine.

WEEK 2: God's light in you brings order to chaos.

WEEK 3: God's light in you brings light to others.

SCRIPTURE

... will shine...like stars in the sky (Philippians 2:15 NIV).

God is light; in him there is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5b NIV).

"You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden" (Matthew 5:14 NLT).

"...Let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father" (Matthew 5:16 NLT).

NOTES FOR THIS WEEK

THINK ABOUT THIS

This series is all about the way we can shine the light of Jesus with our lives. As you talk about this concept with high schoolers, be quick to point out that this isn't just some abstract command or call God gives us. Rather, it's part of the way God made us. We were designed to shine. That being said, be sure to remind students this isn't a one-size-fits-all approach. Just as they're uniquely made to be who they are, the way God calls them to shine light into the world will be unique to them. For some, this may mean big platforms, strong voices, and stepping into roles of leadership. But for others, it may mean encouragement offered to a friend, the quiet way they serve others that no one even knows about, or the simple way they care for their family. One isn't better or brighter than the other. It's just part of the distinct way God made each of us to shine.

NOTE TO THE COMMUNICATOR

This is a really interesting part of this week's talk: an ancient city set on a hill would be noticeable in the daylight, and especially at night if it were lit up with fires, candles, and oil lamps. Elevated cities in the first century were used to communicate to other cities. Bonfires would often be set to signal a new month or the

beginning of a religious festival. Scholars aren't 100% sure which particular city Jesus was referring to, but many think Jesus may have been referring to the city of Tzfat or Safed, Israel's highest city at 3,000 feet above sea level. Safed lies north of the Sea of Galilee and is 20 miles northwest of Tiberias, the main town on the lake. So keep that idea in mind during this series.

INTERACTIVE 1: LET IT SHINE

OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll display a poster board that illustrates specific ways students can shine the light of Jesus with their lives.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- One posterboard
- A marker
- A way to display the poster board during your talk (A stand, easel, or chair can work.)

PREP

- Write the word "SHINE" on the top of the poster board prior to your talk.
 - Place the poster board on the stage facing the back. (You'll turn it around to reveal the word "SHINE" during the Application of your talk.)
 - Place the marker on the stage where you can reach it to add to the poster board during the Application of your talk.
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TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

- Did you know that according to science, you are a star?
- Astronomers and scientists have discovered that nearly all the elements in the human body are the very same elements that make stars.
- The Apostle Paul, one of the most highly educated people in the first century who authored a lot of the New Testament, wrote that followers of Jesus "... will shine...like stars in the sky" (*Philippians 2:15 NIV*).
- But what does that mean?

TENSION

- We only have to consider a few examples from the last four years to understand just how desperately our world needs light. [*Give relevant examples.*]
- What Paul was suggesting to first-century Jesus followers in Philippi and to you and me thousands of years later is that God created you to shine.
- Anyone and everyone who follows Jesus should live their lives in such a way that we shine like stars to the people around us.
- You can stand out and shine in all the places and spaces in your world. [*Give relevant examples.*]
- And this happens by how we act toward one another. [*Give relevant examples.*]
- In a world that seems like it is filled with arguing, complaining, and chaos, it's easy to see why people who are cooperative, accepting, helpful, and consistent would stand out and shine like stars in the sky.
- While it's easy to say, it's much harder to do in our everyday lives.

TRUTH

- How do we consistently bring light into any and every space we walk into?
- One of the first followers of Jesus named John said this:
 - *God is light; in him there is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5b NIV).*
- John's implication is that the essence of God is light. Light is who God is.
- The Genesis narrative says that you and I have been created in the image of God. That means God's light is a part of who we are, too.
- This is exactly how Jesus describes us.
 - *"You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden" (Matthew 5:14 NLT).*
- Elevated cities in the first century were used to communicate to other cities.
- You and I are the light of the world—like illuminated cities elevated in the hills for all to see.
- Because God created you to shine.
- Jesus went on to explain how we are lights in the world.
 - *"...Let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father" (Matthew 5:16 NLT).*
- It's our good deeds that bring light into the world. And more than that, when we bring light into the world, we are reflecting the image of God.
- Because God created you to shine.
- If you've ever been camping far away from the lights of the city, then you know that the stars in the sky shine brighter, right? A darker sky means you can see more stars.
- We live in a world that, in many ways, has this same absence of light.
- This is why it's so important for those of us who are followers of Jesus to let our lights shine. Because light shines brightest in the darkest night.

APPLICATION

- If God created you to shine, then how do we make sure we let our light shine?
- The Hebrew word we translate in the Bible as "shine" is "nahar" (נָהַר pronounced "na-har"), which means to beam or to radiate.
- Remember, we have a choice: We can choose to shine or not.
- *[INTERACTIVE: Let It Shine: This is where you'll display a poster board that illustrates specific ways students can shine the light of Jesus with their lives.]*
- Jesus' plan for us is to radiate God's grace and peace into a broken and hurting world, and there are a few ways we can do that:
 - Be compassionate.
 - Encourage others.
 - Pray for others.
 - Serve others.

LANDING

- God created you to shine. The question is *how* will you shine like stars?
- How do you shine like stars?

TEACHING SLIDES

All bolded words and phrases in the Teaching Script are also provided as teaching slides for Premium Tier subscribers.



TEACHING SCRIPT

The Hills / Week 1

BOTTOM LINE

GOD CREATED YOU TO SHINE

INTRODUCTION

1 MINUTE

Did you know that according to science (and your grandmother), you are a star?

In fact, more than that, according to the smartest scientists on the planet, **you are a superstar!**

(Someone just thought, *Finally! Someone really sees me!*)

Seriously, NASA astronomers and planetary scientists have discovered that nearly all the elements in the human body—right down to the carbon, nitrogen, and oxygen atoms—are the very same elements that make stars, these luminous balls of gas in the night's sky that sometimes explode or even go supernova! Scientists also believe that it's very likely that there are a whole bunch of different stars that have contributed to the elements found in every human who has ever lived.

See? Your grandmother was right! You are a superstar!

Now, for those of us who follow Jesus, this is nothing new. The Apostle Paul, one of the most highly educated people in the first century who authored a lot of the New Testament, wrote that followers of Jesus **"... will shine...like stars in the sky" (Philippians 2:15 NIV).**

But what does that even mean?

TENSION

1 1/2V MINUTES

First, think about the contrast of all we are witnessing and experiencing today.

We only have to consider a few examples from the last four years to understand just how desperately our world needs light.

A global pandemic,
Racial and political unrest,
Economic instability,
Scandals inside and outside the church,
Mass shootings.

Not exactly light and breezy, right?

What Paul was suggesting to first-century Jesus followers in Philippi and to you and me thousands of years later is that **God created you to shine**. Anyone and everyone who follows Jesus should live their lives in such a way that we shine like stars to the people around us.

If you've ever had a parent, teacher, or family member tell you that they want you to be on your best behavior when you're out in public, or on your way to visit your grandparents, or going to a friend's house, then you know what I mean. It's not that these people only want you to behave during that specific time; they actually want you to behave all the time! They want you to behave well every day!

You can stand out and shine in your classrooms, in your home, at your job, in the drama department, in the marching band, or on your team by the way you bring light and hope into your world. And this happens by how we act toward one another. It's in the way we speak, the way we encourage, the way we comfort, the way we welcome others, the way we're supportive, and the way we care.

And in a world that seems like it is filled with arguing, complaining, and chaos, it's easy to see why people who are cooperative, accepting, helpful, and consistent would stand out and shine like stars in the sky, right?

But while it's easy to say, it's much harder to do in our everyday lives.

TRUTH

3 1/2 MINUTES

So, **how do we consistently bring light into any and every space we walk into?**

Well, we can start with a little deductive reasoning. Let's just put two and two together.

Let's start here: one of the first followers of Jesus named John said this:

God is light; in him there is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5b NIV).

John's implication is that the essence of God is light. **Light is who God is.**

Next, the Genesis narrative says that you and I have been created in the image of God.¹ That means that, since we are created in the image of God and God is light, then **God's light is a part of who we are, too.**

In fact, this is exactly how Jesus describes us. Take a look:

"You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden" (Matthew 5:14 NLT).

Obviously, an ancient city set on a hill would be noticeable in the daylight and especially at night if it were lit up with fires, candles, and oil lamps. Elevated cities in the first century were used to communicate to other cities. Bonfires would often be set to signal a new month or the beginning of a religious festival. We're not sure which particular city Jesus was referring to, but some people think He may have been referring to the city of Tzfat or Safed, Israel's highest city at 3,000 feet above sea level. Safed lies north of the Sea of Galilee and is 20 miles northwest of Tiberias, the main town on the lake.

¹ Genesis 1:27

So, keep that idea in mind. You and I are the light of the world—like illuminated cities elevated in the hills for all to see.

We are lights in the hills. Because **God created you to shine.**

But Jesus didn't leave it there. He went on to explain how we are lights in the world. Let's keep reading:

"...Let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father" (Matthew 5:16 NLT).

Don't miss this! It's **our good deeds that bring light into the world.** And more than that, when we bring light into the world, we are reflecting the image of God. Our good deeds also point people to God, which is something we'll unpack a little more later in this series. It's through our words and actions that we are able to shine a light into the darkness of the world, and in the process, we become more like the image of God.

Because **God created you to shine.**

If you've ever been camping far away from the lights of the city, then you know that the stars in the sky shine brighter, right? A darker sky means you can see more stars. One of the best places in the world to see stars is Mauna Kea in Hawaii. Mauna Kea means "white mountain," primarily because its elevation means there is a constant light dusting of snow... in Hawaii! The reason this area is so important to astronomers is not because the stars are unusually bright here or because there are more stars than in other parts of the world. It's because this remote location has no light pollution. That means the sky is darker. There is no light coming from cities or urban centers anywhere near Mauna Kea, which makes this part of the world especially dark. It's darker here because there is an absence of light. In fact, the night sky is so dark here, that it is the home of the Mauna Kea Observatory, the largest research observatory on earth.

We live in a world that, in many ways, has this same absence of light. There is chaos and conflict all around us. There is darkness brought on by stress, anxiety, loneliness, and isolation. And this is why it's so important for those of us who are followers of Jesus to let our lights shine.

Because **light shines brightest in the darkest night.**

APPLICATION

2 1/2 MINUTES

How do we do this on a day-to-day basis? If **God created you to shine**, then how do we make sure we let our light shine?

The Hebrew word we translate in the Bible as "shine" is "**nahar**" (נָהַר pronounced "na-har"), which means **to beam or to radiate**. So, when Jesus said that we should let our good deeds "*shine out for all to see*," the idea is that as Jesus' followers, we would radiate the light, the love, and the heart of God into the world.

Because Jesus told us to let our "*good deeds shine*," there is an implication of choice. In other words, **we can choose to shine or not**. We can cover the light of God in us or keep it hidden from others.

INTERACTIVE: Let It Shine

This is where you'll display a poster board that illustrates specific ways students can shine the light of Jesus with their lives.

Jesus' plan for us is to radiate God's grace and peace into a broken and hurting world. And there are a number of ways we can do that. *[Turn the SHINE board around to face the audience and grab the marker to add to it.]*

1. Be compassionate. *[Write this on the SHINE board.]*

When we show compassion to others, it allows them to feel cared for and valued. This can be one of the simplest but most powerful ways we can shine for God.

2. Encourage others. *[Write this on the SHINE board.]*

You can let your light shine in the world by being an encourager. You can cheer for people, give a genuine compliment, say a kind word, or send a positive text. Another way to encourage someone is to simply listen to them, and be there in their time of need.

3. Pray for others. *[Write this on the SHINE board.]*

When you ask God to open your eyes to people and situations where you can offer prayer, you can bring a lot of hope into the world. Letting someone know that you have been talking to God on their behalf can help them feel valued and seen.

4. Serve others. *[Write this on the SHINE board.]*

A really practical way to let your light shine is by getting involved in your local community. There are plenty of volunteer opportunities in your local community, and it doesn't take much to find a local nonprofit and ask them how you can volunteer your time.

Now, consider these four options. They don't take any money. Some of them don't even take much time. And you can start doing them today! You can do these in person and digitally. You can do this with your family and with your friends. This is what God has created us for!

LANDING

1 MINUTE

The question isn't whether or not we will shine in the darkness of the world. Because **God created you to shine**. The question is *how* will you shine like stars? How will you shine when you interact with friends and family? How will you radiate the light of heaven in the things you post on social media?

As we head to small groups, let me ask you to consider this question: **How do you shine like stars?**



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
