



## **Glow: Lesson 1**

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Created by Ministry to Youth

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## **Glow**

### **Lesson 1: Light**

**Bible: John 1:8-13, Luke 19:1-10.**

#### **DESCRIPTION:**

The Bible uses a lot of metaphors to describe Jesus. *Light* is one of those metaphors that's inspired dozens of Bible verses and hundreds of songs, but for many of our students, it's a metaphor that doesn't have a ton of meaning.

When we talk about Jesus being light, we're talking about us being lost and trapped in darkness. We don't know which way we're going or which way we *should* be going until the light of Christ is there to illumine and inform our lives, our decisions, and our choices.

## **OPENING GAME: GLOW-IN-THE-DARK HOMERUN DERBY**

#### **Supplies needed**

- 2-3 whiffle balls
- Plastic whiffle bat
- Paper plate
- Glow-in-the-dark paint
- One very dark room
- Chairs

#### **Game description:**

Ahead of time, coat your whiffle balls with 2-3 coats of glow-in-the-dark paint. Give each coat plenty of time to dry. Also paint a paper plate to act as "home plate." If you don't paint a home plate, the pitcher will have trouble knowing where to throw the ball.

Set up the game with a pitcher a batter. The "fielders" will sit in chairs around the room. You can use as many fielders as you have students (no need to follow real baseball rules here).

The pitcher needs to stay on the "mound". The batter needs to stay in the "batter's box." Fielders need to stay in their seats. You're about to be in a very dark room, so you don't want anyone running around for obvious reasons.

Take turns cycling through, giving everyone a chance to hit 3-5 times at a time. A "home run" is any ball that's hit past the pitcher on the fly and not caught by a fielder. Whoever has the most homeruns at the end of the game wins. But this game isn't about winning as much as having a crazy fun time.

## TEACH

I know this is kind of a stupid question, but what would happen if we tried to play whiffle ball in the dark and we didn't have glow-in-the-dark paint or anything?

It would be a disaster, right?

The fielders wouldn't be able to catch the ball because they wouldn't be able to see the ball, which really wouldn't be a problem because the hitter wouldn't be able to hit the ball because he wouldn't be able to see the ball, which wouldn't be a big deal because the pitcher probably wouldn't be able to throw a decent pitch because she wouldn't know where to throw the ball.

Whiffle ball in the dark would be a disaster because we wouldn't know what was happening around us and we wouldn't know what we should be doing.

That's what darkness does to us. It hides things. It obscures things. Darkness takes obvious paths and hides them from us. Darkness takes objects that we would normally see and makes us trip over them.

So, when the Bible talks about Jesus as the light of the world, it's not just a cute metaphor that we can sing songs about and read Bible verses about and write poems about.

The Bible is describing the state of the world before Jesus, and the Bible is describing the state of our lives without Jesus.

God and the word of God and the son of God and the spirit of God are the things that helps us discern right and wrong and safe and unsafe and scary and tame. And if we don't have those things, then the darkness obscures us and the world around us; we just feel lost.

A couple of weeks ago, I was lying in bed, just starting to drift off to sleep, when all of a sudden I heard noises.

There was a THWAP sound that was happening intermittently every few seconds and there was RRRRR sound that was happening just about every minute, or at least that's what it seemed like; and then every now and again there would be a SSSSSS sound.

Now I didn't know what was making these noises, but they were still bugging me. I was lying there, in my bed, in the middle of the night, and all I hear is THWAP, RRRR, SSSSSS, THWAP, SSSSSS, RRRRR, THWAP, THWAP, SSSSSS.

I remember lying in my bed thinking to myself, yeah, I can see why kids believe in monsters that live in the closet or monsters that live under the bed because I am wide awake and for the life of me I cannot figure out what is making all of this noise.

My wife was laying right next to me, and she can – and does – sleep through just about anything. So I was the only one awake. Finally I decided I was going to figure out what is making these crazy sounds.

I don't want to turn the light on because I don't want to wake her up, so I'm stumbling around in the darkness, following these little intermittent noises, and after about 5 minutes of failing to identify *any of them* I wandered over to the light switch and gave it a good flick.

That's when everything started to make sense to me. My confusion fell away. I saw that there was a string tied to a balloon that had gotten stuck in our box fan. So the blades on the fan would spin around and every now and again it would catch that cord just right and THWAP!

I saw that my cell phone battery was dying and that it was buzzing on the table in the other room to try to tell me to plug it in, so every minute it would go RRRRRR!

I saw the toilet flusher had gotten stuck down just a bit, and so every now and again the tank would fill up again: SSSSSS!

Ten minutes ago my house was scary and confusing, and now it was broken but understandable. The flick of a light switch changed my house. Everything now made sense.

That's what light does. Light changes things.

I was watching a show about eagles, and eagles are fascinating animals because they are birds that will eat dogs. And eagles just happen to do their best hunting at night.

If you have the misfortune to be a fox wandering around after the sun's gone down, you could be in some trouble. You might just get pounced on, killed, and eaten by an eagle.

But if the eagle comes during the day, foxes are known to hold their ground, take a swipe, and injure or kill eagles.

That's because light changes things. It changes the way things appear, the direction that trees grow, the balance of nature, and the appearance of our homes.

In John, Chapter 1, we start to learn about the coming of Jesus. Jesus is going to be our savior, teacher, healer, miracle-worker, and so much more, but the first thing that John chooses to tell us about Jesus is that He was...

...light.

John writes that the birth of Jesus represented

## **John 1:9**

**"The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world."**

And what happens when you flood a very dark place with a *lot* of light?

Things become a lot clearer. Messes that could hide in the dark look very dirty in the light.

Words that were difficult to read become completely legible in the light.

You might find money or treasures that you thought you'd lost.

You see people differently, and they see you differently too.

Jesus came to do all of that to the world, and the gospels are full of stories of people who encountered Jesus, had their lives flooded with His light, and suddenly lived their lives differently.

Zacchaeus was the chief tax collector, and he became very wealthy primarily by extorting people who had far less money than he did. The Roman tax system wasn't highly regulated, and it basically became a rip-off game. As chief tax collector, Zacchaeus was responsible for collecting a certain sum of money from the people and giving it to Caesar.

The way that tax collectors like Zacchaeus made their money was simple. If they could trick, swindle, pressure, threaten, or extort more money from the citizens that they actually owed, the tax collector got to keep the rest.

In Luke 19:2, we learn that Zacchaeus was very wealthy, and that just means he was good at his job - good at ripping people off.

So, Zacchaeus wasn't necessarily the best dude, but he was living the life. After all, he was living in darkness. He didn't care about right and wrong. That wasn't what life was all about. Life was about having money, getting nice things, having a sweet chariot, a big house, and a top-of-the-line stone tablet.

Zacchaeus was living in the darkness. He didn't know any better. He thought life was about collecting riches and getting stuff and he was doing a good job of doing that, but then he had an encounter with Jesus. The true light that gives light to every one showed up in his life, and almost immediately Zacchaeus could see his life clearly...

...and he didn't like what he saw.

In a matter of just four Bible verses, Zacchaeus goes from wealthy tax collector to this:

**Read Luke 19:8**

**Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.**

Four times the amount! He's not just going to give them their money back! He's going to double it and double it again.

If you're a ripped-off Roman citizen, you're about to learn that you made an out-of-this-world investment. Zacchaeus is giving out 400% returns. Getting ripped off by Zacchaeus is more profitable than owning stock in Apple.

That's something.

But it's also something bigger for Zacchaeus because the dude is about to be broke. In the course of four - four! - Bible verses, he goes from collecting stuff, getting paper to being broke because he suddenly realized that life wasn't about what he thought it was.

He was touched by the light of the world, and that light changed the way he saw things.

That's what Jesus wants to do in your life, too. He wants to show you a different path than the one the world's tricked you into following. The darkness will let you believe that life is about money or popularity or sex or a hundred other things.

The light tells you that life is about following in Jesus.

The true light that brings light to everyone is for you too.

And it's for me as well.

*[Tell your own story here. Here's mine.]*

As a kid, I had a goal of becoming a millionaire. I didn't have a lot of plans about how I was going to make that happen. I didn't have a million-dollar-idea for sure. But I thought I'd learn about business and go make some dough.

But I became a youth pastor, which if you want to be a millionaire is not the job that's going to get you there.

What happened along the way was that the light of Christ showed me that what I wanted wasn't good enough for my life and it certainly wasn't what God wanted for my life.

It's not that I don't want to be a millionaire anymore. If someone gave me a million bucks, I would take it. But I don't want it bad enough to make my life about getting money.

The only thing I want bad enough is to make my life about serving Jesus.

There's probably something in your life that you're chasing, a lie that you believe, something that the light of Jesus needs to cast out and illumine so that you can see that it's not everything you always thought it would be.

That's what I want us to pray about today...

*[Close in prayer.]*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What's the *darkest* place you've ever been? Tell us about it.
2. What are some of the Bible verses you know off the top-of-your-head that are about light?
3. Read the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19. What do you think made Zacchaeus seek out Jesus?
4. What could Jesus possibly have said to Zacchaeus to make him change \*justlikethat\*?
5. Which of these best describes the way people around you live their lives?
  - "It's all about the Benjamins. Just get paid."
  - "Popularity is all that matters."
  - "Boyfriends/girlfriends are most important."
6. Which one of those is most tempting for you to fall into?
7. If you were truly following Jesus, what would your most important goal be for the next week?