



A GUIDE TO

SHINE  
BRIGHTLY



I don't wake up to my alarm very well. My poor husband has to listen to it every ten minutes because I struggle waking up enough to realize it's time to get out of bed and keep hitting the snooze instead. One winter's day though, I sprung out of bed, hoping to find a notification on my phone that said school was starting late that day - maybe even cancelled, due to snow storm that rolled through our beautiful North Dakota prairie the night before. I was desperately hoping for a break when it came to clearing the driveway and attempting to get out on the road safely as I took kids to school.

But no. There was no notification. School was on time that day.

I shouldn't have allowed (what I considered to be) this setback to rule my emotions, but I did. I was crabby. Really crabby. My husband was out of town that week, which made me responsible for all the things - snow removal, school, work, parenting - and my emotions TANKED that morning. Despite how I felt, I rolled out of bed and threw on my snowpants and boots because things had to be taken care of! Using the snow blower for the first time in my life, the snow blew wildly in my face, and I even fell on my rear end a few times (ice under the snow makes snow blowing very tricky) before I got the kids up for school. We proceeded to yell at each other about overdue math homework neither of us understood, cried while packing lunches, my middle schoolers complained about having to wear winter gear as we headed out the door, and we zig-zagged our way to school on the ice. Uffda. As my mother would say, I needed an attitude adjustment.

Over the years I had learned the best way to combat a bad attitude was by doing something nice for someone else, so naturally I went to McDonald's to get my co-workers a Coke (and a diet for myself, cuz gosh-darn it - I earned it!). I moaned and complained as I drove there, ordered, and inched my way to the window. *"This better adjust my attitude,"* I kept telling myself. And that's when it happened...

The young man who took my wrinkled \$5 bill kindly asked me, *"How are you feeling about this weather?"* Did I speak to him in good nature and act like a true North Dakotan who makes things sound fine when they're really not? Of course not! I complained - about the weather, about having to move snow by myself, and about the stupid schools being open. He looked at me sweetly and said, *"At least the snow wasn't IN the house, eh?"*

I hung my head and told him he was right. Then, as I held onto that drink tray like it meant my life, I proceeded to cry the rest of my way to work. Why did it take some 19-year-old in a drive-thru to give me the heart check I needed? **Why did I ignore the promptings of the Holy Spirit when he told me to take a chill pill and speak words of encouragement, instead of complaint?**

I don't know if you need to hear this today, or not, but I know I do. In Philippians chapter two, Paul tells us to not complain, but instead shine like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people. Even as a pastor, I struggle shining bright when things are not 'going my way.' Long story short, don't be like me that cold winters day. God is working in you, and He will give you the desire and the power to do what pleases Him - it just takes listening to the Holy Spirit and obeying.

HOW TO

# SHINE BRIGHTLY

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## *Love One Another*



WHEN WE LOVE OTHERS WELL, WE REPRESENT JESUS. EVEN WHEN WE DISAGREE WITH UNBELIEVERS, OR EVEN OTHER CHRISTIANS, WHEN WE LOVE WELL, GOD'S LOVE SHINES THROUGH US.

"Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too." Phil. 2:3-4

## *Be Intentional*



WHAT WE DO IS OFTEN MOST EFFECTIVE WHEN WE ARE INTENTIONAL. OUR WORKS NEED TO HAVE A PURPOSE IN ORDER TO BE INFLUENTIAL.

*"Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear." Phil. 2:12*

## *Speak Life*



WHEN OUR WORDS ARE INFUSED WITH ENCOURAGEMENT, OUR VOICE HAS MORE IMPACT. HARSH WORDS, COMPLAINTS & NAGGING HAVE THE OPPOSITE EFFECT.

"Do everything without complaining and arguing, so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people." Phil. 2:14-15

## *Hold Firm*



GOD'S WORD IS TRUTH, AND WITHOUT IT GUIDING OUR LIFE WE WILL BELIEVE THE LIES OF THE ENEMY. WHEN WE BELIEVE THE LIES, WE ARE NO LONGER CASTING LIGHT INTO THE DARKNESS.

"Hold firmly to the word of life; then, on the day of Christ's return, I will be proud that I did not run the race in vain." Phil. 2:16



# REFLECTION

## QUESTIONS

01 HOW DO I LOVE OTHERS WELL?  
Do I behave selfishly, or do I look at the needs around me?  
Do I care more about people's opinions of me than I do about my character?

02 WHAT DO MY WORDS REFLECT TO OTHERS?  
Am I a voice of encouragement, or am I voice of dissension? Do my words show the world around me the work Jesus is doing inside of me?

03 WHAT'S MY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BIBLE?  
Do I only open it when I am in times of trouble, or is it a consistent part of my life? Have I experienced the life it gives?



*Dear God.*

Help me to shine your light brightly in the world around me. Loving those around me, may I be intentional for the purpose of growing your kingdom. When I struggle with selfishness, remind me to be selfless. When I wrestle with pride, bring me to a place of humility. It's my desire to carry the same attitude Jesus had as I look to the interests of others, and not just my own. I want the world to see proof in my life of my salvation, as I obey you wholeheartedly. When the Holy Spirit reminds me to not complain or argue, help me to heed the reminder. When I read your word, may they not just be words on the page; I want to hold your words close to my heart, firmly planting myself and my convictions in them. May I not run this race in vain! Use me to help others find the same freedom I have found in you.

*Amen*