

Guided by the Light

Overview	Grace in the risen Christ who fulfills the law
Title	Guided by the Light
Metaphor/Image	Airport runway
Treatment	Rather than the judgment of Bible-thumping religion, we can find grace in the risen Christ who fulfills the law.
Human Need	People need guidance and counsel, not a finger-shaking person or religion that condemns.
Experience	To experience a Jesus that is the light of the world, who saves and does not condemn
Word	
Primary Scripture	John 12:44-50
Related Scripture	Psalm 119, Romans 5:18-21, John 8:12-20
Topics	
Primary Topics	Bible, Word, light, grace, judgment, Christ, faith, sin, law, scripture, legalism
Related Topics	Justification, guidance, counsel, comfort

Movie Clip Suggestions

1. *The Apostle* (1998)

Plot: A country preacher named Sonny (Robert Duvall) has a transforming spiritual experience after committing a brutal crime.

Clip: When a man arrives at his church to bulldoze it, the Apostle E.F. (Duvall) helps him find peace in a dramatic conversion scene. The whole scene is too long; watch for the appropriate spot to cut.

Time: (VHS) 1:39:02-1:47:05, (DVD) Chapter 20 0:00-8:03, length 8:03

2. *Apollo 13* (1995)

Plot: The true story of the moon-bound mission that developed severe trouble and the men that rescued it with skill and dedication.

Clip: Jim Lovell (Tom Hanks) tells a reporter of a time when green algae lit his way home at night.

Time: (VHS) 1:44:39-1:46:16, (DVD) Chapter 45 0:00-1:37, length 1:37

Music Suggestions

1. "Heaven Let Your Light Shine Down"—Collective Soul, 90s song excellent for an opener!
2. "Thy Word"—contemporary hymn
3. "In the Light"—DC Talk, contemporary Christian
4. "I Am the Light of World"—John Strathdee, contemporary song in YoungLife songbook.
5. "Be Thou My Vision"—hymn
6. "Beams of Heaven as I Go"—hymn
7. "We are Marching in the Light of God"—South African contemporary
8. "Come O Light"—folk praise song

Lumiclip Description

This short clip puts worshippers in the cockpit, while flying through a dangerous storm. Tension builds as the plane is surrounded by rain and lightning. With the runway lights illuminated the plane is brought to a safe landing. Dramatic.

Running time :29 Volume 3 Clip 2

Integration

Call to Worship

Maybe begin with one of the movie clips, such as Airplane. Sample script:

"Whether you're a pilot or not, trying to land in the dark would be a dangerous thing! Imagine not having any runway lights. You could land in a cornfield, a rural road, a forest, or even water. While runway lights aren't absolutely necessary, with most of the alternatives to landing a plane, you're going to crash!

"Navigating life is a lot like landing a plane. We all need guidance. What sort of runway lights have you tried to land your plane by? Have you tried religion but found that somebody keeps shutting off the lights on you? Maybe you heard a list of shoulds and musts.

"Jesus is the light of the world who brings not condemnation, but guidance. Let's worship together."

Closing Words "Go into the world this week guided by the light. Abide in a Jesus that saves."

Prayer

Start in total darkness (as much as possible). Have people recall an event in which they have felt condemned by religion. After a moment recalling something, offer the words of Jesus in John 12 and in John 8:

"I am the light of the world."

"I come not to judge you but to save you."

"I have come into the world as light."

"Everyone who has faith in me will not remain in darkness."

While speaking these words, turn on the white Christmas lights on the aisles, and then light the candle on the altar. Offer people the opportunity to bring their stories forward.

There are many possibilities related to this idea. Brainstorm your own, which may be used either before the sermon or at the end of the service.

Display

Light is the most important part of this experience. Focus the light of your worship space: use floods to focus on the cross, for example. Have strings of white Christmas lights down the aisles (a newer style of Christmas lights that come in a tube would be perfect). For altar display, use flashlights with cones on them like the airplane runway workers use. Good use of candles of course is appropriate.

Other

Have the ushers and/or greeters direct people using the cone/flashlight things the runway workers use.

Scripture Commentary

Law in its pure form was not judgment, but grace and joy. The Law was provided to the Israelites because they needed loving guidance in the wilderness.

Get rid of the old image of a Bible-thumping preacher who uses the Word of God as a club, wielding law as judge. Jesus says God's Word is a light, a comfort that saves, even to those who ignore it (v. 47).

Since the beginning, God has desired community with Creation. God desires communion, but we have a tendency to screw it up, because to live with ambiguity requires faith. In the absence of faith, we reduce the law to a set of rules. Jesus says, and Paul after him, that living a life by a set of rules will only

result in death. In Jesus, there is only grace and love and not condemnation and judgment (Romans 8).

Keywords

Bible, Word, light, grace, judgment, Christ, faith, sin, law, scripture, legalism, justification, guidance, counsel, comfort, airplane, runway, airport, *The Apostle*, *Apollo 13*