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Send the Light

*There's a call comes ringing o'er the restless wave:
Send the light! Send the light!
There are souls to rescue, there are souls to save:
Send the light! Send the light!*

*We have heard the Macedonian call today:
Send the light! Send the light!
And a golden off'ring at the cross we lay:
Send the light! Send the light!*

*Let us pray that grace may ev'rywhere abound:
Send the light! Send the light!
And a Christ-like spirit ev'rywhere be found:
Send the light! Send the light!*

*Let us not grow weary in the work of love:
Send the light! Send the light!
Let us gather jewels for a crown above:
Send the light! Send the light!*

Refrain:

*Send the light! The blessed gospel light;
Let it shine from shore to shore!
Send the light! The blessed gospel light;
Let it shine forevermore.*

WORDS: Charles H. Gabriel (w 1890)
MUSIC: Charles H. Gabriel (w. 1890)

During The Night Paul Had
A Vision Of A Man Of
Macedonia Standing And
Begging Him, "Come Over
To Macedonia And Help
Us."
Acts 16-9
BibleWordings.com

Lighthouse

Can you remember the last time you were invited to someone's home? Perhaps for some of you, it happened quite recently. For others, you might have to think further back. Either way, consider how you felt after the visit. Whether the experience was pleasant or not, chances are you left feeling like you knew more about that person.

Visiting someone's home is an intimate experience in many ways. Our homes are personal, reflecting many aspects of our personalities and lifestyles. Often, you can learn something about your host you had not seen from interacting in public. Usually you can get a glimpse of what they truly value.

As we consider how Christians can influence the world, I'd like to propose bringing back some old fashioned hospitality. We are actually commanded to be hospitable. It's even a qualification for elders! However, I often hear laments about how no one invites people into their homes anymore. And from personal experience, I'd have to say that receiving an invitation into someone's home (that isn't a family member) is a pretty rare occasion. Why is that? I think there are some reasons that might resonate with many.

Perhaps in our extremely image conscious society, it seems frightening to invite others in. Maybe our home sometimes expresses the disorganized side of our personality, or the fact that we don't have a knack for interior design, or our kids are loud or there are half-finished projects scattered about. What if our visitors realize that, despite the image we project in public, we really don't have it all together?

Or perhaps we get caught up in separating ourselves from the world. We huddle in our homes and shut the door to outsiders, afraid of how they might influence our families. We keep porch lights off and doors locked.

Or maybe it seems like so much work to have people over. It's hard enough just to keep up with schedules and housework and feeding everyone as it is. Why should you add extra people and increase the stress?

Everything I've just mentioned, I have felt many times over. I used all of these as reasons that I didn't need to have people in my home. Or when I did invite people in, I was consumed by the worldly concept of hospitality, more commonly known as "entertaining." "Entertaining" involved trying to impress my guests with my fancy dinner or decorations, running myself ragged in order to project a highly curated image of myself, and feeling like a failure if I couldn't orchestrate a perfect experience.

Eventually though, I couldn't ignore the pricking at my conscience that told me I was wrong, that God expected me to have people in my home on a routine basis, and that I was to simply invite them into my imperfect daily life. Verses like Romans 12:9-21, Galatians 6:9-10, and Hebrews 13:16 confronted me. I began to take baby steps into being hospitable, and the more experience I have with it the more I realize that it is a calling. I still have a long way to go in learning to be truly hospitable, but one thing I have learned in my limited experience is this: inviting people into our daily lives is hard sometimes. It's messy. It's tiring. It can be embarrassing, confronting, and awkward. But it is worth it. Genuine Christian hospitality, inspired by the love that spills over in us from our gracious Father, can change lives. It can change the world. The door of redemption has been opened to us, and we must turn around and open our doors to a lonely and hurting world.

Consider the hospitable Christian home a lighthouse, a beacon of hope and joy in a dark world. As you welcome guests into your home, around your table and into your daily life, they will feel the light and warmth of Christian love, a love that can be life-changing. Because a close encounter with God's love, through a relationship with His people, is what brings people to salvation, and it is what knits the church family together.

Christian hospitality is not about impressing our guests. Christian hospitality means inviting people into our homes, and therefore into our lives, to share whatever we have. Sometimes it might be rice and beans, or a pile of laundry on the couch, or crying children, or a stain on the carpet. Daily life is messy and chaotic, and we are called to invite people in, because it's in the daily mess and chaos that relationships grow. Through being open about our lives, strengths, and weaknesses, we will forge

deep bonds with other Christians, and show those who aren't that we don't have it all together just because we attend church. If we are living out our faith in our homes, then they'll also start to see that something is different about us, and through the relationship we build from being hospitable, we can introduce them to the love and hope on which our faith is grounded. The world is crying out for love, for home, for deep fulfillment in an empty and superficial society. And Christians are poised to meet that need with the simple tools of our homes, families, and dinner tables. So, take a deep breath, say a prayer, and reach out to invite someone over today.

Victoria Shank, Rolla, MO

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This Little Light of Mine

Look sometime in a concordance for the word "light," and you will quickly discern a theme. You will see verses like Genesis 1:3 (And God said, Let there be light...); Psalm 119:130 (The unfolding of your words gives light...); Isaiah 60:30 (The Lord will be your everlasting light...); I Timothy 6:16 (...who dwells in unapproachable light...); or Revelation 22:5 (...for the Lord God will be their light...). Over and over scripture stresses that God is the source of all light, both literally and figuratively, and His words convey light to those who will turn to Him. Outside of God there is no light.

But then as you go through that string of verses in the concordance, you may come upon this interesting passage which seems to take a different tack: "*You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works....*" Matthew 5:14-16a. These words spoken by Jesus to disciples listening to the Sermon on the Mount reference the common, tiny lamps present

in every Jewish home at that time. Fueled by a small dollop of oil, each lamp was placed on a stand in order to give maximum illumination. If placed low on the floor or under or behind a container, it wouldn't do much good inside a house on a dark, moonless Judean night. It had to be displayed on a stand.

When the members of Jesus' audience went to their homes that night and lit the little lamps in their houses, His words would surely ring in their ears. They would



know His message was not just about tiny clay lamps perched on wooden stands. His message was about lives and influence.

Many centuries later, in the 1920s a songwriter probably had this verse in mind when he wrote the words of a popular children's hymn:

*This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.
Let it shine, all the time, let it shine.*

The verses of the song go on to admonish us to let that little light shine "all around the neighborhood" and "don't let Satan 'whew' it out." And then there's a final verse that we don't often sing today that says:

*Jesus gave it to me, I'm gonna let it shine
Jesus gave it to me, I'm gonna let it shine
Jesus gave it to me, I'm gonna let it shine
Let it shine, all the time, let it shine.*

So, is that little light of mine solely the product of my purity, the result of my resolve, the manifestation of my moral life? Is my little light meant to point to me? Was Jesus teaching something that somehow contradicts what scripture elsewhere teaches about the source of light?

No, whatever light I shine, whatever influence I have in others' choices, whatever impact I make upon another's life is quite simply the result of what Jesus has done in my life. Jesus was a master teacher. Jesus left an example of how to live. Jesus gave His life to make me righteous through faith in Him. And He promised the Holy Spirit to be my comforter and guide.

At the close of verse 16 in Matthew 5, Jesus completed His teaching about letting our lights shine when He said, "... let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." There is no inconsistency here. All light comes from God, and all light that He gives returns to Him in our good works and influence to glorify His name.

Ina McKune, Rolla, MO

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THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE

It is my privilege to live in the Missouri Ozarks in the small city of Rolla. Most of our family members live far away in the Southwest. When we return from a trip to visit them, it is always such a joy to top the hill a few miles out

and see the lights of Rolla on a hill across the way, seeming to say, "Welcome home!"

Jesus talked about Christians being the light of the world and how a city on a hill cannot be hidden. He urged us to let our lights shine so that the world can see our good works, not for our glory, but to glorify our Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:14, 16)

"This Little Light of Mine," is a sweet children's song based on this passage teaching the importance of letting one's light shine in all situations. Children quickly learn to sing about not hiding their lights under a bushel or letting Satan blow them out, but rather, letting their lights shine all around their neighborhood.



How is your light shining? Is your life a shining example of faith and courage for all your associates to see and glorify God? Does it shine brightly, or is it barely flickering?

These are questions each of us needs to ask ourselves. If our light is burning low, perhaps the energy source (fuel supply) is not what it should be. Are we feeding our spirits on the word of God, or are we too busy to spend time letting His word fill our hearts and minds? Feasting daily on His word is vital for our hearts to be in tune with His. Peter tells us to "*desire the pure milk of the word*" that we may grow in our Christian lives.

If your light is flickering and almost out, how is your prayer life doing? Just as lack of nourishment from His word can cause spiritual weakness, so can spending little or no time in prayer to Him. Prayer is time spent with our very best friend. It is the time when we pour out our triumphs and struggles to Him. He is a friend who never betrays us, nor does He let us down in any way.

Are your friendships primarily found among His children? Most of us know and associate with worldly people on the job and in the market place. If our closest friends are also His children, we have a source of renewal and support.

Your light is important to others. Your example may be the only "bible" some people ever read, so it is important to let the love of Christ shine through our hearts and our actions. Don't ever underestimate your influence—be it for good or not so good—on others.

Evelyn Waite, Rolla, MO

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"HEAVENLY SUNLIGHT"

"...I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness..." (John 8.12)

A familiar song which praises Jesus as the light of the world in whom we must walk to please God is, "Heavenly Sunlight," #577 in *Sacred Selections for the Church*. The text was written by Henry J. Zellely, who was born at Mt. Holly, NJ, on March 15, 1859. He was educated in the Mt. Holly public schools, at Pennington Seminary, and at Taylor University where he earned his M.A., Ph.D., and D.D. degrees. He became a Methodist minister in 1882 and became a promoter of the camp meeting movement. The tune for "Heavenly Sunlight" was composed by George Harrison Cook (1864-1946 or 1948).

Little is known about Cook. Converted at age fourteen, he spent his life in the ministry of preaching, composing, and song training. Around 1899 Cook composed the music and brought it to Zellely, asking him to provide words for it. Zellely and Cook sold the song to Henry Lake Gilmour (1836-1920). Gilmour copyrighted it and included it in his 1899 *Gospel Praises*, published by Hall-Mack at Philadelphia, PA, in association with William James Kirkpatrick (1838-1921).

Zellely produced over 1500 poems, hymns, and gospel songs. After working with 19 different churches in the New Jersey Conference over his lifetime, Zellely retired in 1929 and died at Trenton, NJ, on March 16, 1942.

Among hymnbooks published by members of the Lord's church during the twentieth century for use in churches of Christ, this song has been included in just about all of them. It appeared in 1937 in *Great Songs of the Church No. 2* edited by E. L. Jorgenson; the 1935 *Christian Hymns* (No. 1), the 1948 *Christian Hymns No. 2*, and the 1966 *Christian Hymns No. 3* (all edited by L. O. Sanderson); and the 1963 *Christian Hymnal* edited by J. Nelson Slater. Today it is found in the 1971 *Songs of the Church*, the 1990 *Songs of the Church 21st C. Ed.*, and the 1994 *Songs of Faith and Praise* all edited by Alton H. Howard; the 1978/1983 *(Church) Gospel Songs and Hymns* edited by V. E. Howard; the 1986 *Great Songs Revised* edited by Forrest M. McCann; the 1992 *Praise for the Lord* edited by John P. Wiegand; and *Hymns for Worship, Sacred Selections*, and the 2007 *Sacred Songs of the Church* edited by William D. Jeffcoat.

"Heavenly Sunlight" identifies several blessings we have as we walk in Jesus Christ as our light. Stanza 1 talks about the promise of Jesus' divine presence.

"Walking in sunlight all of my journey, Over the mountains, through the deep veil, /Jesus has said, 'I'll never forsake thee,' Promise divine that never can fail."

God wants us to walk in the light (1 Jn. 1:5-7b). As we walk in the light, Christ has promised to be with us wherever we go (Matt. 28:28). This is an exceedingly great and precious promises that the Lord makes us (2 Pet. 1:3-4).

Stanza 2 talks about the guidance that we receive from Jesus as we walk with Him:

"Shadows around me, shadows above me, Never conceal my Savior and Guide. /He is the light; in Him is no darkness. Ever I'm walking close to His side."

One reason that Jesus came to earth was to be our guide through life to heaven (Ps. 48:14). If we follow Him who is the light, we shall never walk in darkness (1 Thess. 5:4-5). We must always remember to walk close to His side, ever drawing nearer to Him (Jas. 4:8).

Stanza 3 talks about the joy that we have from walking in the heavenly sunlight of Jesus.

"In the bright sunlight, ever rejoicing, Pressing my way to mansions above, /Singing His praises, gladly I'm walking, Walking in sunlight, sunlight of love."

Jesus offers great joy to those who follow Him (Jn. 16:20-24). This joy is the result of the fact that we are pressing our way to mansions above (Phil. 3:13-14). The sunlight that brings us this joy is the love of Christ (Eph. 5:1-2).

The chorus expresses joy and praise:

"Heavenly sunlight, heavenly sunlight, Flooding my soul with glory divine; /Hallelujah, I am rejoicing, Singing His praises, Jesus is mine."

Why would anyone choose to walk in the darkness of this sinful world when Jesus Christ is the light of the world? If we wish to have the hope of heaven, we must walk in Christ. Those who walk in Christ will have hearts filled with praise for His "Heavenly Sunlight."

Adapted from hymnstudiesblog.wordpress.com



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