

The Light

This Little Light of Mine

“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.”

Matthew 5:14-16

If you are anything like me, the children’s song “This Little Light of Mine” was a staple in your household growing up. I learned it in our church’s kid’s program and sang (belted) it every day. The great thing about classic children’s songs from the church is that they never go out of style. Years later, I have three young children who love singing my favorite childhood tunes. Every night, my two oldest ask me to read a Bible story, pray, do our handshake routine, and...sing a song. It thrills this dada’s heart to watch them uncover their finger and yell “No!” when expressing how they won’t hide their light under a bushel. I pray they grow up to never hide it nor let Satan blow it out, but instead, let it shine until Jesus comes.

In Matthew 5, we have the privilege of reading Jesus’ longest and most well-known sermon. Jesus was beginning his earthly ministry after being baptized by John. Both the Lord’s Prayer and the Beatitudes are included in this sermon. His message served as a life-altering wake-up call for people to not simply keep the law but to live their lives completely devoted to their Savior.

The city on a hill and lamp on a stand serve as examples of how to live. We have the world’s best kept secret. Yet, I often keep that to myself. I attend a weekly Bible study, read Scripture, sing worship songs, and serve on Sundays. For many of us, that may be the extent of our witness for Christ. Unless someone sees me in church or could listen to my thoughts, I often might as well not even claim to be a Christian.

Penn Jillette, magician and atheist, once said, “I will never believe in Jesus. But how much do Christians have to hate me to have this amazing news that will save me from hell and not tell me about it?” That struck me. Do I hate my family members, friends, and neighbors who do not yet know Jesus? Do they know I’m a Christian? Worse yet, they know I am, but I don’t share that with them. In my heart, maybe I do hate them, or rather not love them enough to share with them the message of salvation. What other reason makes sense to explain why I am too selfish to have that conversation with them?

Every social media outlet serves to appease our desire for acceptance. At the same time, we want to be special and one-of-a-kind. Allow me to share a secret. **You are unique...just like everyone else.** We might watch the same shows, wear expensive clothes, listen to popular music, and more. But, in our desire to fit in, we lose the incredible opportunity to be different. Being a follower of Christ is different, weird, and abnormal. Verse 5 reminds me to make sure my *“lamp is placed on a stand.”* Light dispels darkness. Why do we try so hard to fit in with a dark world that is lost and without hope? The more we try to fit in, the faster we lose our effective witness.

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This week, be bold and courageous no matter the consequences. Be that friend someone needs. Be that light that boldly screams, "Christ loves you and wants to have a relationship with you!" If you are going through hard times, perhaps that is not a bad thing. God allows us to suffer, in part, to be a light with our words and deeds to others who are also experiencing pain. The person who is truly in trouble is a Christian who, after such a long period of no trials, must ask themselves why Satan no longer views them as a threat to his cause and deserving of his focus. This is why the phrase, 'The safest place you can be is in the center of God's will,' is a lie.

We have the greatest news in history. Have personal goals and desires but shine your light bright for the world to see a better way. I will leave you with a poignant reminder from Nik Ripken who said, "Our greatest fear should not be of failure, but of succeeding at things that don't really matter. Perhaps the question should not be: 'Why are others persecuted?' Perhaps the better question is: 'Why are we not?'"

- 1) When was the last time you directly shared the plan of salvation with someone?**
- 2) Our fears are usually legitimate. What reasons do you have for not being more outspoken about how God can save the lost and heal the hurting?**
- 3) What things are you striving to succeed at that may distract you from being a light to your community?**
- 4) Matthew 5:16 states, "Let your good deeds shine out for all to see." What are some good deeds you could do for others this week to let your light shine?**



Ryan Jeffers serves as the Short-Term Missions Coordinator at CVM. He is responsible for facilitating all new trip opportunities, maintaining current host relationships, and educating volunteers about domestic and international short-term missions. He attended Liberty University where he obtained his M.Div. and Ed.S. degrees. Before joining CVM, Ryan lived and served in East Asia for five years. While there, he helped start and lead an international school. He also has experience managing a non-profit organization as well as leading more than 15 international mission trips. Ryan and his wife, Alyssa, along with their three young children (Lydia, Abel, and Juliana), live in Louisville, KY. He enjoys sports, traveling, running, teaching ESL, and eating anything containing sugar.