

## THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Can you finish these statements? "Four score and seven years ago, our forefathers brought forth on this continent a new nation..." "To be or not to be, that is the question..." "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but have eternal life..." We know the first parts of these statements very well, but sometimes it's hard to remember the important words that directly follow. For instance, right after the famous John 3:16, you'll find this: "Indeed, God did not send His son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him." Jesus came to save the world, not judge it. We don't always get that message of love from people who try to communicate the gospel. It's essential to remember that the word gospel means "good news," and it is our job to share that light with others.

Jesus is the brilliance that lights up the world. You know what it's like to be in the dark. In the dark we can't see clearly and often are needlessly afraid. But when the light comes it not only brightens, it exposes. Some people won't run for public office because they don't want the press digging into their lives. They aren't willing to pay the price of having their whole lives, and those of their family, become a public display. It's understandable why some people decline that opportunity. Actually, most of us can relate to the desire of keeping ourselves from being exposed. We don't want every little thing about us to be known...what we've done, what our intentions have been, things we've said, and what our motives are. We would just as soon nobody knew about those things. Light exposes, and we're not real fond of that.

But when the light brightens and exposes, we become stronger. Light helps us see more clearly and realistically. In the light of Christ, we see who we really are, flaws and all. But in THAT light, we are forgiven and accepted. We don't have to be afraid, because the warmth of God's forgiveness in Jesus of Nazareth heals, not hurts. It takes courage to

step into the light. We have to look at ourselves as we really are. It takes courage to face both our abilities and our shortcomings, but that becomes easier in the light of our loving God. The light saves, but not everybody likes the light. Some will decide to stay in the dark. Jesus' death shows that some will even try to kill the light in order to get rid of it, because they would rather stay in the dark and not have their actions be seen. We choose whether to live in the light or stay in the dark. Of course, our choice has consequences. The difference is that the light saves us. Just as a plant can't live healthily in the dark, neither can we. We fill that need when we have the courage to step into the "Light of the World." It brightens our life, makes us look honestly and realistically at ourselves, and heals our lives. Christ challenges us to see ourselves as we really are - without pretending, without hiding - because God forgives us and accepts us, God loves us in our strength and our weakness, when we flourish and when we falter. Step into Christ's light. See the brilliance and bask in the warmth of His light.

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