

11. Move Closer to the Light

During the early days of trains, a flagman would take his place in the middle of the street - stopping all traffic as a train approached. During the day he would hold up a STOP sign. At night he would wave a lantern. There is an old story about a flagman and his lantern that goes like this.

There was an accident one dark night at a railroad crossing. A lawsuit followed, and during the proceedings the flagman was called to take the witness stand. The prosecuting attorney asked the usual questions. Then followed an important one. He asked, "On the night of the accident, when you saw the car approaching, did you wave the lantern?" The flagman answered, "Yes, I waved the lantern." The attorney for the prosecution continued with other questions, but before long he came to the same one, "Did you wave that lantern?" "Yes," answered the flagman, "I did wave the lantern." The case seemed to hinge on this bit of testimony. The prosecutor realized it, and so once more he thundered, "I ask you again, when you saw the car approaching the crossing, did you wave the lantern?" Once again, the flagman answered, "I did. Yes, I waved the lantern." The railroad company won the case. No damages were allowed. Later, the defense attorney was talking to the flagman. He said, "The prosecuting attorney really had me worried when he kept asking, 'Did you wave the lantern? Did you wave the lantern?' 'Well", said the flagman, "What worried me was that he might ask, **'Was the lantern lit?'**"

There is so much waving of dead lanterns. What about ours? The purpose of lanterns and lamps is to give light - to shine. The Bible has some important things to say about lights and about shining. It speaks of God's own Word as "a LAMP unto our feet and a LIGHT unto our path." *Ps. 119:105*. Our precious Savior refers to Himself as "THE LIGHT", and He says of us, His followers, "You are the LIGHT of the world." As lights, we are not to be like that flagman's dead lantern, but rather, we are to shine - not as a flickering flame, but as a steady light. How did it happen that we, who were once in darkness, the darkness of unbelief and separation from God, are now lights? This is a miracle of God's grace. We are "the light of the world", not because of "any merit or worthiness in us", not because of our shrewdness or our intellectual acumen or our scientific genius, but we have become the "light of the world" only because we have been touched and transformed by Christ. He it is Who has "called us out of darkness into His marvelous light to show forth His praises."

When children are doing home work or working on some project, they invariably sit on the floor in the most dimly lit part of the room. Parents may say, "Move closer to the light." Even so the challenge to each of us is, "Move closer to THE LIGHT!" And this by faithfully, diligently reading, meditating and searching the Word of God. And through the Word of God the Holy Spirit keeps us in direct contact with Him Who is the source of all light, Christ Jesus our Lord. Let us resolve anew to keep close to Christ, the true and only Light.

When we get right down to it, however, we do not possess light in and of ourselves. Rather, we are more like reflectors which do not have light in themselves. Even as the moon reflects the light of the sun, so we are to reflect the light of God's Son, Jesus. Yet, Jesus calls us "lights." "You are the light of the world". *Matt. 5:14*, He says. And as such we are to shine. An unlit lantern is not serving its purpose. Jesus says, "A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house." *Matt. 14:15*. Then He goes on to say, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father Who is in heaven." *Matt. 14:16*.

What is the ultimate purpose of our lives? "To show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light." *1 Peter 2:9*. Not all of us can be chandeliers in important and conspicuous places. Some of us must be satisfied and thankful to be 40-watt bulbs on the back steps somewhere. There, too, we have a singular purpose - to shed forth the glorious gospel light in order to keep people from slipping and falling.

Move Closer to the Light

We Begin

L: We begin in the name of Jesus, the true and only Light.

We Search Scriptures - John 8:12; Matthew 5:14-16

Leader (L) and Group (G)

L: Jesus declared about Himself:

G: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

L: Jesus described us, His followers:

G: "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

We Meditate

Follow this outline as the meditation is presented

- Flagmen at railroad crossings
- What happened when one flagman neglected his job
- Jesus is the Light of the world
- We are the light of the world
- How we "Move closer to THE LIGHT"
- How we reflect the Light of Jesus

We Respond

L: Our world is filled with the darkness of evil .

R: Jesus, we need Your Light to protect us.

L: Our lives are filled with the darkness of our own sin.

R: Jesus, we need Your Light to forgive us.

L: Our lives are filled with the darkness of confusion.

R: Jesus, we need Your Light to protect us.

L: Our lives are worthless without the Light of Light.

R: We praise You, O Jesus, for You have put your Light within us.

We Pray

O Lord, indeed we need Your powerful and loving Light. Keep us from being frightened or overcome by the darkness of evil. Help us to *Move closer to the Light* by turning daily to Your Word, for it is "a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path." Keep Your Light burning bright for us, in us, and through us, to the glory of our Father Who is in heaven. Amen.

