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This morning we are going to be In Exodus Chapter 25 again as this is where God gave the blueprints for the tabernacle and all the furnishings. We continue to refer back to that even though it is very technical. It was very specifically and very grandly designed by God. There are things that I think will be important as we kind of peel back some of the reasons and the symbols behind it as well.

Just as a matter of review let's remember we talked about the tabernacle proper. There was the structure with the big courtyard, there was the Holy Place, and then the Holy of Holies, which were the three parts of the tabernacle. Vision with me a little bit that you are in the middle of the wilderness with hundreds of thousands of people, perhaps even millions of immigrants so to speak, going to a new land. Vision the confusion and chaos of the animals, kids running around, dust and dirt, and right in the middle of the camp is the dwelling place of God, the place where God has basically staked His claim and said, *'Remember who you serve. This is my presence among you.'*

So in this tabernacle you have this great complex that is about the third of the size of a US football field. And you can see the tall seven and a half foot curtains around the outside. Inside would be this large tent, the dwelling place. On the eastern side there is a large gate that is the only way to enter the tabernacle. And the eastern side gate is symbolic of the fact that when Adam and Eve were separated from God they fled to the east of Eden. And now on that same side man can come back to encounter with God, where He reconciles with them after their forgiveness of sin. So that eastern gate to enter the tabernacle was significant.

And then once you enter remember we talked about the large Altar of Sacrifice. It was made of bronze, and animals were taken there where they were tied to the horns of the altar. The person that was bringing the sacrifice would lay their hand on the head of the goat, the lamb or the bullock, and that would symbolize their sins being placed onto the sacrificial animal. The priest would slit the throat of the animal and collect the blood which was then placed on the horns of the altar as evidence of the cost for the forgiveness of sins. The rest of the blood was spilled on the ground like Christ would spill His blood on the cross for us.

Then the animal was burned at the altar. After that the priest would step to that next piece of furniture which was what Pastor Ben talked about last week and that was the bronze laver. The priest could look at his reflection in the bronze laver and see the dust and blood which was the cost of our redemption, and then he could wash away the residue of the sacrifice.

From there they were finished in the courtyard and it was time for the priest to go into the proper part of the tabernacle. And the tabernacle was constructed without windows on any side. Even the roof had four layers of fabric over the top making it

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impenetrable by light. And so as you would walk inside you would walk into a room that had no exterior light, into a room that would be dark except for the illumination that God had designed for there.

And inside there was the Golden Lampstand. Now we choose specifically to put the Lampstand as the first piece of furniture that we are looking at as we go into the tabernacle. Even though in Scripture it actually introduces the Table of Shewbread first, and we are going to get to that next week. But one of the things that I think that you need to know when you went inside is that were it not for the Lampstand you wouldn't be able to see anything else. When you would walk in the first thing you were going to notice was the Lampstand. Now why was that? It was because it was the Lampstand that provided the illumination. It gave you the light.

And we all know that light attracts attention. If all of a sudden someone were to take a photograph with a flash over in some corner of this room, I guarantee that probably ninety percent of you would turn around and look to see what caused the bright light. If all of a sudden the fire alarm went off in this building, I don't know if you know this or not, but above the fire alarms there is a pulsing LED light, and that would show you to the direction you are supposed to go. The light would show you how to get out of an exit because it would illuminate the path that you are to be taking.

Why is that? It is because by our very created nature we are attracted to light. And the Lampstand that is in the tabernacle is begging us to follow the light. Follow the light. Now by the way note this, when you were outside you could see everything that was going on because of the natural light. That natural light was there, there was the sun by day and the moon by night. So it is easy to understand that is natural light. But once you went inside there was a requirement for light, and God had intentionally provided that in the Holy Place. So what was natural on the outside was different than what was intentional on the inside.

But we know that even on the inside there was another division. And in the other division, the Holy of Holies, there was no lampstand. So how did the priest see what he was going to do in there? How did the priest know where the Mercy Seat and the Ark of the Covenant were? They knew because of what was called the Shekinah Glory. And the Shekinah Glory was God's supernatural light. Maybe you wonder if we can see it today. No, we don't see it today because God's natural light lives in us through the Holy Spirit. So He doesn't visit us in the same way that He did in the Old Testament.

But in the Old Testament remember His presence for Israel was the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day. Those were the supernatural evidences that God was directing, guiding, overseeing and protecting His people. And it was also His plan

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for man's reconciliation with Himself. It was God's announcement that He desired an encounter with them for the purpose of reconciliation.

So when the priest went into the Holy of Holies the only light in there was the light that God Himself provided. It was supernatural light. Outside in the courtyard there was natural light. Inside the Holy Place the light was intentional. And inside the Holy of Holies the light was supernatural.

And by the way that is just evidence of God's divine creation. God wants us to experience that supernatural relationship with Him, that spiritual union with Him that He designed when He created us in His image in the Garden of Eden. That ability to encounter Him, to know Him, and to fellowship with Him in an intimacy that none of us even today can experience, because of the vestiges of remnant sin that is yet to be wiped away.

We look forward to that time when in Heaven we will get rid of even those vestiges, but for now there is still that trace of our fallen nature, our marred creation. But we understand this - that God's desire has always been that we be able to experience in Him the fullness of His glory. And that is that Shekinah Glory that gave illumination to the high priest when he would enter the Holy of Holies.

By the way we see God everywhere. In nature you see Him and Scripture tells us that the heavens declare the glory of God. We know these things are true that God Himself wants us to know Him. But beyond that there was an intentional plan so that we can encounter God. And when they would go into the Holy Place of the tabernacle there was an intentional plan that the encounter would draw them to God in the light of His word. And so that is again a symbol of God's divine plan for our reconciliation with Him.

So the purpose of illumination is always to draw us to God. Like a moth toward the flame, like a light helps a lost ship, like a confused hiker who sees the flashlight of a searcher, like the beam from your iPhone when you are crawling around on your hands and knees looking for that missing pill, or that missing button, make no mistake that God is providing the light for you and for me to draw us to what we seek, where we need to go, what we are missing in our lives, and that is Jesus Christ, the light of the world.

And so when we see the Golden Lampstand, we must see Jesus. And to that I call the church today - let us follow the light. Follow the light. So let's look if you will in Exodus Chapter 25, where we will look at these verses about the Golden Lampstand. Now I want to tell you again that this is very technical stuff, these are architectural plans that we are getting ready to talk about. We are going to go back and read some and you will be able to see some amazing symbolism.

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Look in verse 31 where it says: *“You shall make a lampstand of pure gold. The lampstand shall be made of hammered work: its base, its stem, its cups, its calyxes, and its flowers shall be of one piece with it. And there shall be six branches going out of its sides, three branches of the lampstand out of one side of it and three branches of the lampstand out of the other side of it; three cups made like almond blossoms, each with calyx and flower, on one branch, and three cups made like almond blossoms each with calyx and flower, on the other branch.”*

By the way let’s just pause here a minute and talk about the word calyx. If you have an orchard, or if you have dealt with any fruit trees, you know that in the springtime there is a little bud that you will see start popping up as the days lengthen, and there is more sunlight and the temperature rises. There is a little bud, and then there is a flower, and then after the flower you will notice the petals dry up and then fall away. But there is left a kind of leaf like thing that is sometimes called a sepal. And calyx is the Biblical term for that, and it is after the bud and after the flower, but before the fruit.

So you see the progression with the bud, flower and the sepals that surround it called calyx, and then fruit. So it is all a progression so that you can enjoy the fruit of the tree. So going back to Exodus Chapter 25 and verse 33 it says: *Three cups made like almond blossoms, each with calyx and flower, on one branch, and three cups made like almond blossoms, each with calyx and flower, on the other branch - so for the six branches going out of the lampstand. And on the lampstand itself there shall be four cups made like almond blossoms, with their calyxes and flowers, and a calyx of one piece with it under each pair of the six branches going out from the lampstand.*

*Their calyxes and their branches shall be of one piece with it, the whole of it a single piece of hammered work of pure gold. You shall make seven lamps for it. And the lamps shall be set up so as to give light on the space in front of it. Its tongs and their trays shall be of pure gold. It shall be made, with all these utensils, out of a talent of pure gold. And see that you make them after the pattern for them, which is being shown you on the mountain.”*

So let’s take a moment if we could, and examine the Golden Lampstand. By the way it is not a candlestick, and there are many times you see it depicted that way. In fact if you use the old King James Version, which is the one I grew up on, it literally calls it a candlestick. But that is not correct. Candles were not invented until hundreds of years ago. Candles are that recent of an invention. This Golden Lampstand was in fact a lampstand. In other words it looked like a candlestick, but instead of where the candles go, there were cups that were fashioned there that held olive oil with wicks in them. And that wick would burn and it provided the light.

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So as we talk about it I think you are going to be able to see a portrayal of it. Again we don't know exactly if this is correct, but it looks very close to it based on what we know from Scripture.



There are several things we know about the Golden Lampstand. First of all it had great value because it was made of pure gold. Now the estimates of what it probably weighed were quite amazing, but it was about a hundred and twenty-five pounds of pure gold. Now gold is very malleable so it was able to be fashioned into this one piece of furniture.

Several years ago I was in Israel and while I was there I visited a place called The Temple Institute. The Temple Institute is an organization that is there that is building all of the furnishings for the temple that they hope to see rebuilt on its original site. It is an amazing place to go. It just so happened that the week that I was there they had completed this piece of the furnishings, the Golden Lampstand, for the new temple. And they had it on display. They told us if we would come back that night we would be able to see them move it down to Temple Square.

Some of you who have been there have seen this in Temple Square. It is in a big Plexiglas box. I was there the night they moved it down to the Square, and it was an amazing thing to see. There were people dancing and they were blowing big rams horns. It looked a little like the Keystone Cops because they put it in the back of a Toyota pickup, for Pete's sake. And as you drive through the old city there are some low arches, so they would drive up to an arch, and the thing was so tall they couldn't get it under the arch, so they would unload it, drive through the arch and then carry the Lampstand through and put it back in the pickup. Then they would drive it about 20 feet until they came to the next arch and repeat the process again.

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I have it on video somewhere of these young rabbis dancing and screaming and they were blowing their rams horns. I tried to find it so I could show you but it must be lost in You Tube somewhere. But it was an amazing thing to see. And when you see this Lampstand you realized it was very heavy. It was a hundred and twenty five pounds of pure gold. And here is another powerful and cool thing that I don't want you to miss. Remember what the furniture on the outside in the courtyard was made out of? It was bronze. There was the Bronze Laver and the bronze covered Altar of Sacrifice. Bronze is a picture of judgment as we see it in Daniel and in Revelations. Anywhere we see bronze in Scripture it is a picture of judgment.

But on the inside of the tabernacle there is no more bronze; it is gold. And gold throughout Scripture is a picture of redemption. You take the gold and you purchase what needs to be redeemed. So moving from the outside of judgment into the inside of redemption is a beautiful picture designed by God and we don't want to miss this.

So we need to understand that this Lampstand was a huge piece of unmolded - only hammered gold. And it is providing the light for the entire room. So it had great value. A hundred and twenty five pounds of gold is worth millions and millions of dollars in today's currency.

The second thing is it had great symbolism. It symbolizes several things. First of all it symbolized living authority. In verse 33 you see the description that we read about. There was the bud, the flower, and then the fruit and notice it is almond. Maybe you wonder what is significant about the almond, a nut, of all things. It is important to understand that when you see almond in Scripture it often references either light or authority. There are many references to this, and I don't have time to give them all, but the clearest example would be when God set up the divine order for the children of Israel.

Now Moses was a flawed man but he was more or less the military civic leader of Israel. He was the one who negotiated with Pharaoh, he was the one who led the people across the Red Sea. But there was also a spiritual leader that God designated, and that was Aaron, from the tribe of Levi, and he was the spiritual leader. Aaron was to be the priest for the people. And by the way the document separating church and state is as old as Israel because Moses wasn't allowed into the tabernacle complex and the Holy of Holies. He was the civic leader. That was Aaron's job and the two jobs didn't cross.

Remember David got into trouble when he wanted to go into the temple and the priests told him no. He was the king, but he didn't get to go in where the priests go in. That separation was very, very important. And when you see what is going on here there is Aaron and Moses, brothers, who were leading Israel and then there became a rebellion in the camp. The rebellion was led by a guy named Korah who was the most famous, but he had two co-harts by the name of Dathan and Abiram.

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And Korah, Dathan and Abiram were rising up in rebellion saying, *'Who do you guys think you are? We are all equal before God. All of us should be able to enter the tabernacle. All of us should be able to see the Ark of the Covenant and offer sacrifices.'* So this big rebellion came up, and Moses dealt with them, and dealt with them, and dealt with them, until it came to a climactic conclusion which we can read about in the book of Numbers Chapters 16 and 17. And the rebellion finally reached the point where God said, *'All of you guys who think like Korah come stand over here.'* The group with Korah stood over on one side still ranting and raving. Then God split the earth and the whole group just dropped in, and then He closed the earth back up. *'Any questions?'* You know when God deals with judgment there is never a question about where it comes from. *'Now would anyone else like to complain?'*

Ironically, people kept complaining so there was additional conflict. So God said through Moses, *'I am going to show you something. I want all of the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel to bring their staff over here.'* Their staff would have been what they used to walk with, and it was also kind of symbolic, so all of the heads of the tribes of Israel brought their staffs to the tabernacle. The twelfth one was Aaron's staff of the tribe of Levi. And Moses told them to leave the staffs in there overnight.

In Numbers Chapter 17 you can read that the next morning they came back and all of the staffs were exactly the same, except for one staff which overnight had grown buds, flowers and produced fruit. And that staff was Aaron's staff. And the bud, flowers and fruit that it had produced were almonds. God said for them to take that staff and put it in the Ark of the Covenant and there it would be a symbol that He had spoken declaratively that His man, Aaron, of the tribe of Levi, was in charge. And all the priests were to descend from the tribe of Levi. This was God's plan and He made it very clear to them. And the bud, flowers and fruit that grew on Aaron's staff were almonds because that represented God's authority. And that is why the almond symbols were put on the Golden Lampstand, even though the rebellion had not yet occurred. God knew what would happen in the future.

There is another symbol which is Jesus Christ in the Golden Lampstand. We know that Jesus said in the Scriptures, *"I am the light of the world."* And in the construction of the Golden Lampstand we read about seven lamps in verse 32. There was a center and then there were six branches. Now I am not a numerologist and I don't believe in this excessively, but there are some things in Scripture that are very apparent. Six is the number of man. Remember in Revelations we find '666' which is the number of man. Six is an incomplete number, while seven is for God which is a complete number. Without seven you have incompleteness. How many days did it take to create the heavens and the earth? Seven days. So this is important to God.

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When you have Christ with the six branches you have seven lamps and it is complete. If you only had six branches all you would have is the number of man and man cannot save himself. Apart from the seventh - Christ, who is God as man among us we have no hope for redemption. And yet it is that center lamp, that lamp of Jesus Christ, that completes us so that we can encounter God and be reconciled with Him. So this becomes part of the symbol of the Golden Lampstand.

We also know that if you make a candlestick today you have to make a mold and then you pour the stuff into it, you put it together, and you let it harden. Then you take it out and you trim off all of the edges. But that is not how this was made. This was a single piece that they hammered and hammered it with tiny little intricate tools until they had fashioned every bud, every blossom and every fruit on that just as God had told them to do. It was all one single piece, and it was an amazing piece of art. It took amazing skill to do that. And it was hammered into the perfect state that God had designed it to be.

And if you will remember Christ was beaten and hammered for us. The world tries to get us to fit into its mold, but the transformative work, as described in Romans Chapter 12 and verse 2, of the gospel of Christ in us is not that we continue to be hammered into the world's mode, but that we be transformed by the very Spirit, nature and hand of God into His likeness. And also remember that the lampstand held oil which came from olives. Do you know how they got the oil out of the olives? They hammered them, they beat them until they gave up their oil which could be used as fuel for the lampstand.

Every part of this Golden Lampstand screams, '*Just like Jesus. Just like Jesus.*' The light reminds us to follow the light of Jesus Christ, and the suffering of the gold when it was hammered is like the suffering of Jesus. And importantly the Lampstand symbolizes our mission as well. As Ben introduced this series back in September remember he talked about how the tabernacle was a declaration of God's plan, but it was also a place of restoration from our sin. It was also a place of transformation to a new life as we are reconciled with God due to that encounter. And then He puts us on mission. We aren't immediately transported to Heaven, we are left here to complete God's plan as His missionaries.

So as we think about the Golden Lampstand we need to be reminded again of our mission before God. We are called to provide light to the world by pointing us to the light of the world. And we give light to by showing people the light of Jesus Christ. Jesus said in Matthew Chapter 5 and verse 14, "***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.***"

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When I was a kid we had this little gospel song that Child Evangelism Fellowship taught us years ago back in the 50s and 60s. I was not born in the 50s though in case you were wondering, but I was born in the 60s and I don't want to talk about it. But the song went like this: *'This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine. This little light of mine I'm going to let it shine. Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.'* Anybody remember it? Then it went on to this: *'Won't let Satan blow it out, I'm going let it shine.'* And another verse was: *'Hide it under a bushel - no, I'm going to let it shine.'*

I can tell that some of you remember that song. And that song is from that passage of Scripture in Matthew. We aren't supposed to have our lights covered up. We aren't supposed to even dim our light, but we are to put it on the hill so that people can see it and know where to go. And that, folks, is our mission.

Earlier this year I saw an incredible story that broke my heart. Do you know that 20,000 people a day in the nation of China are turning their hearts to Christ? It is one of the greatest revivals in the history of mankind. We don't get to hear much about it because the Communists government is suppressing it every chance they get. But last January I believe it was, the Chinese government went roaring into the city of Changsha and here is what happened - they went into this city and they tore that church down. They absolutely levelled it because so many people were being drawn to Christ by the testimony of the people in it that they thought by tearing the church down it would scatter the people so that they could not worship any more.

And by the way do you want to know what the name of that church was? It was the Golden Lampstand Church of Changsha, China. And if the Chinese government thinks that the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ is dependent upon a building that can be torn down with a bulldozer then they are dumber than a box of rocks. It doesn't work that way. *(Amen and applause.)*

Our mission is to take the gospel of Jesus Christ, the living Word of God which is Jesus, and the written Word of God, the Bible, and preach it, teach it, declare it, love it, and live it as an example of what happens when we have an encounter with the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. We are His chosen candlestick to the nations if we will just use His Word in our hearts and lives.

Why do we need to follow the light? I kind of got that phrase because you probably have all seen these corny stories of people supposedly having a death experience and they say something like, *'Embrace the light,'* or *'Follow the light.'* And that can lead into a whole other conversation. But the fact is we are drawn to light. And if you know Christ as your Savior, at some point in your life the Holy Spirit has drawn you to the light of the gospel. It is that Holy Spirit that tells us to follow the light.

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And now I want to talk briefly about why we ought to follow the light. The first thing we must remember is that the light points us to truth. The light points us to truth. In John Chapter 8 and verse 12 we find these words: ***“Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’”*** In I John Chapter 1 and verse 7 reminds us of this: ***“But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, (and what gives us that fellowship?) the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.”***

The light that Christ provides points us to truth, because we know what He said in John Chapter 14 and verse 6. ***“I am THE way, and THE truth, and THE life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*** Jesus declared Himself the light, He declared Himself the truth, He is both, and we are drawn to Him. Jesus is the light of the world. Jesus is truth. In times of confusion what do we do? We follow the light. In times of darkness what do we do? We follow the light. In times of despair what must we do? We must follow the light. In times of ugliness, when all around us they are walking in the depths of sin and hatred, what do we do? We follow the light. In times of frustration we follow the light. In times of loneliness we follow the light. In times of fear and in times of worry and in times of opposition and in times of oppression and in times of discouragement, what must we do? (*Audience response - ‘Follow the light.’*) That is what we are called to do.

The second thing we need to remember is light exposes sin. In Luke Chapter 12 and verse 2 it says: ***“Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops.”*** We can’t hide from the light of God. It can’t be done. And it is that light that drives out the sin and stain of our fallen nature. That is why we need the light - so we don’t continue in our sins.

Paul asked that question when he said something like this: *‘Is grace the curse so that you can just wallow in your sin? Forbid it, Almighty God. That is not what grace is all about.’* Grace is so that we take that light and shine it on the darkest areas of our heart, we take a scrub brush to it, and we yield it to the Holy Spirit, so that we can be more like Christ.

Years ago I was traveling with a group of high school seniors back when I was a high school teacher. We were on a trip visiting different colleges, and we were right outside of Atlanta where there was a hotel right on the interstate near the airport. It was late at night, and I was weary from trying to push to the next destination. We didn’t have a reservation, but we pulled into this hotel close to the airport which should have been a hint to me. Often when hotels are close to the airport they aren’t real nice places.

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But I went in and secured our rooms. My wife was responsible for the girls and I had the guys, so her room was next to mine. We each opened the doors of our rooms, flipped on the lights, and then I heard my wife let out a blood curdling scream. She jumped back out the door and slammed it shut and said, '*We are not staying here.*' And I asked her what was going on and she said, '*The bedspread just moved when I turned on the light.*' So I turned on the light and the whole bed was covered with roaches. It was like a scene out of a really bad movie. And no, we did not stay there. I may be a tightwad, but I do have a few standards. There was no way we were staying there.

That is what happens when you shine the light onto the nasty vermin of the world. And, ladies and gentlemen, you understand something that part of the very nature of the truth and the holiness of Almighty God is that sin covers before it and hatred runs from it. It is uncomfortable to be viewed under it, but that is part of the purpose of the light. We need to know where to go, we need to know what we need to deal with, we need to have direction and purpose in our lives. And that can be found in the light of the gospel for us. We have to be fully aware that part of Christ's ministry in our lives, and the result of obeying the Word of God is the production of holiness, Christ likeness, removal of sin, and the emergence of Godliness.

And if you and I are not actively doing a search and destroy mission on the sin that is in our lives, then we will eventually be overtaken by it. It may seem like one cockroach, one little smudge, just a little bit of dirt around the edges perhaps, but when the Word of God does His work in our lives we will get an eyeful of the real condition, and it ought to be a call to repentance of our sins. To tolerate a little sin in our lives is to invite a lot of Satan eventually into our lives.

And we don't like to talk about that, right? Sin is the problem other people deal with. That is their problem, not ours, because we are redeemed, reconciled. We are Christ's followers and we are holy. We have bumper stickers on our cars and if you have any mistake about it we will let you know there is only One Way. We look self-righteous and thumb our noses at those who would have the co-exist bumper stickers on the back of their cars, because we know the truth. But sometimes in our self-righteousness we don't turn the lights on full blast, until we study the Word and the light starts shining into the corners and crevices and cracks of our lives. And all of a sudden we see the roaches. And then it is time to do business with God.

Do you know what I find in my own life? When I am examining my life in light of the Word of God I find I don't have enough time to worry about the smudges on your mirror, because I have so many smudges on my own. And yet when we polish our mirrors with the holiness of the Word of God, the reflection we see is that of Christ. You see we are reflectors of the light; we are not the light. We are just reflectors and we carry the light, but we are not the light.

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The third thing is light provides direction. In John Chapter 9 and verse 5 it says: ***“As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”*** And that light provides us with direction. Have you ever driven down a country road without street lights? You may end up in the ditch if you are not careful. Have you ever been out on a lake at night? I don't have a boat myself, but I sometimes rent one for the family and at night I know exactly where the cell tower is that has a big light near my marina, so I look for the light on the cell tower and it helps me find my way home.

To the extent that we bear the likeness of Christ, we will be a beacon of direction that should be calling others to an encounter with God. The more we allow sin, Satan, worldliness, selfishness, entitlement, harshness, rebellion, anger, arrogance, pride and all the other demonic weeds to take root in our heart, the more the welcoming signal that every Christian should be transmitting is going to be lost, when that signal should be saying, *‘Come, come have an encounter with God.’* And it is our sin that often obscures that important message of hope and direction for others.

Our testimony for Christ is to be a tool for the Holy Spirit to draw others to Himself. Our testimony, the authenticity of reputation that is attached to our claim as Christ followers will either be a clarifying lighthouse for the potential of the gospel, or it will be a confusing counterfeit of the power of the gospel. But make no mistake our reputations before the light of the world are important to God.

The last thing is this - light produces fruit. Ephesians Chapter 5 and verses 8 and 9 say this: ***“For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true.)”***

Philippians Chapter 2 and verses 14 through 16: ***“Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as light in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.”***

Philippians Chapter 1 and verses 9 through 11: ***“And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”***

You see light is essential for the production of fruit. Without light there is no plant, there is no shrubs or bushes, and no tree will ever bear fruit. Without light it is impossible. Without the light of the living and written Word of God no Christian is ever going to bear fruit as well. We do not bear fruit of our own efforts. We bear fruit out of

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our submission and yielding to the truth of the Word of God. You can work all you want to and it will still not produce one root of righteousness, not one bit of faithfulness, not one fruit of Christlikeness. The fruit you and I bear is because of the transformative work of the gospel in our lives. If you see anything good in Dan Burrell understand it isn't because of me it is because of Jesus Christ.

Now insert your name in there and it will be true for you as well. And as we give ourselves to Christ we empty ourselves of self, we empty ourselves of sin, and we deal with that stuff, so that when people see the light it is a bright light, not a dim light, but it is fully charged. It is fully illuminated. The wick has been trimmed and we are ready to say, '*Jesus saves!*' He is the light. Follow the light and encounter God.

So if we look at our lives and we see no fruit then we need to stop and ask ourselves, '*Is this the reflection of my relationship with the light? Is there something going on?*' Then what do we do? Here is our application. Number one - we need to make sure we are spending time in the light and near the light, in the light through Scripture. Scripture says, "***Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.***"

Can I get personal? And by the way I am going to stomp on my own toes in a major league way right now, and maybe yours too. One of our elders said this this week and it absolutely tore me up. "*If the first thing we do in the morning is check Facebook and not Scripture, then there is something wrong with our walk.*" Ouch! I wish he hadn't said that. The first thing many people do in the morning is check CNN, Fox News, or whatever news outlet they go to look at. It really doesn't matter which one you choose because they are all wrong. If that is the first thing you do in the morning, and you don't check the good news of God's Word, maybe we need to stop and re-evaluate where we are at.

If we spend time in the Word of God we are in the light. And when we spend time on our knees before God seeking Him and asking Him for direction, asking Him to examine our hearts, that is being near the light. Remember the old hymn we used to sing, '*Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer blessed Lord, to the cross where thou hast died.*' And you know when we are reminded of that, when we just shut up and bow before Him, in front of His Word, with open hearts, we are near Him.

Second thing is this - let's do our part to reflect the light. Never before in American history do I believe that we have a greater need to be light bearers than we do right now. Our country is horrifically divided. There are things going on in our country that are horrible, from human trafficking to the mess we have in Washington. It is just falling apart. And do you know what we need in this country? We need clarity, and truth provides clarity.

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Maybe you think people will just reject it. It doesn't matter because truth is truth, whether people accept it or not. Truth is truth whether or not it is popular. Truth is truth wherever you live in the country. It doesn't matter if you put a D, or an R, or an I behind your name - truth is truth. And truth always needs to be declared. I hear people say, *'Well, let's speak truth to power.'* How about let's just speak truth. Let's know the Word of God, share it, and live it. Let's bear its fruit.

The third thing is this - make sure that you are positioned and prepared as a light bearer. What are you doing in terms of your walk with God? If you were to just sit down and in a moment of naked honesty ask yourself if you are closer to God today than you were this time last year, what would your answer be? What if you asked yourself if you are closer to God right now than the year after your salvation, what would your answer be? Has your walk with God gotten a little stale, a little cold? Has it become commonplace? Have you evolved into the easy American consumer style of religion practice?

*'Yeah, I drive up to a nice building. I walk in and grab my cup of coffee and then sit down. Oh, I like that song. But the next one is just too loud. I wonder who is preaching today and will I like him? Will his clothes look good or will he have a stain on his shirt again?'* And when we do all that it is no wonder that the world looks at us and says, *'Why do I need that?'*

Do you know where the real gospel light is shined? At a gas station, the ball field, the break room at work, the waiting room, on your neighborhood walk, at the gym, or the airport lounge. That is where we get to shine. So imagine with me if you would walking into the tabernacle, stepping inside, and it is dim except for that lampstand. Let's look at Jesus one more time and let's see Him for who He is, what He has done, and what He is doing in our lives today. And then let's follow the light.

We are at that time in our service right now where we are going to just pause and ask the Holy Spirit to show us things we needed to hear. In a moment we are going to stand and we are going to sing a couple of songs, and there are several things you can do. You can worship and there will also be an opportunity to give during this time. If you are a guest, we have no expectation of you, but if you would please fill out that connect card and drop it in the offering plate we would love to know you are here.

If you want to take communion it is in the front and in the back for those who are Christ followers who are right with Him. And you may want to remember the cost of your salvation by taking a moment and observing communion privately.

You may say, *'Dan, you know what, I don't know what it means to follow Christ. I don't know what it means to follow the light, but I feel called. I want to know Christ, I want to be different.'* I want to urge you that while we are singing you just slip out of

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your seat and go right over here and there will be someone standing right by that table who would love to show you what it means to be a follower of Christ. They will show you the light. There is no pressure. Don't bring a pen and don't bring a check book. This is about where you are with God. And we just want to be your guide, but you make the decision, if the Holy Spirit calls you to reconciliation with Him.

We are going to do something a little different this morning as well. Pastor Ben is here, and he and I are going to stand right over there beneath that cross with the blue light on it. If you have something going on in your heart and your life and you just want to pray with one of us, we are going to be there for you. Okay? We want to pray with you, so you can come on up and share with us what is on your heart. Maybe you have some questions and we will get you with someone right away that can answer those questions. Maybe you have just had a bad week, or maybe you are hurting or confused. Maybe you lost your job and you just want to pray with either Ben or I, so we will be over there and we invite you to come.

These crosses here are great places to pray if you want to pray privately. Or if you have something else going on maybe you want to pray with one of our prayer counsellors over here. Whatever you do, will you follow the light this morning? Let's stand as we pray.

*Father, we love you. Thank you for your Word. I pray that you would give us direction and clarity for your Holy Spirit that we might apply and obey your Word in our life today and in the days to come. With faithfulness before you help us to follow the light. For it is in Christ's name I pray. Amen.*