

7.A CONSISTENT LIGHT EXPELS DARKNESS

A golden sunset or sunrise scene with silhouettes of birds perched on bare tree branches. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright, warm glow that fills the sky. The trees are dark and leafless, with their intricate branches silhouetted against the light. Several birds are perched on the branches, and a few are in flight, their wings spread. The overall mood is peaceful and hopeful.

*You have to stay close to the
fire to keep warm*

#NCSAMENTALHEALTHDEVOTIONS

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Luke 11:33, 36: "Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is filled with light. But when it is unhealthy, your body is filled with darkness. Make sure that the light you think you have is not actually darkness. If you are filled with light, with no dark corners, then your whole life will be radiant, as though a floodlight was filling you with light."

How does a small light keep shining when it is surrounded by darkness? Who of you enjoyed the night, the darkness, when you were young? Or even now? As adults we are less afraid of the darkness than when we were kids. I remember, having to switch off my room light at night during my younger years, was the single most scary thing for me to do. Many parents, because they know the fear, set up a night light for the children. You know these night lights, right? The reason they do this is because when the little night light is on, the light expels the darkness and therefore also expels the child's fear.

The function of light thus is to expel darkness and a result thereof is the expelling of fear. Many of us long to expel darkness, sadness, heartache, fear and anxiety from our lives, but our candles have long since gone out. We struggle daily to regain this light within our lives. There is a verse that gives us guidance on how to keep the light shining. The verse we've started off with says: *"If your eye is healthy, your body will be healthy."*

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The verse might as well have said: 'If you look at the light with a good eye, you will have less anxiety and as a result, a healthy body.' There is a song we all know very well. It has some of the most powerful and truthful words for the times we live in. This song is the hymn, 'Turn your eyes upon Jesus'. You know the words:

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look **full** in His wonderful face;
and the things of earth will grow **strangely dim** in the **light** of
His glory and grace.*

This song tells us that our anxieties, our fears and the worries of this life, will fade away when we turn our eyes to our Lord and Saviour. What does it mean to turn our eyes to Jesus? It basically means that we have to turn **away from** something. To turn our eyes **onto** something else means our eyes need to be turned away from something that we are looking at. What are we looking at during the COVID-19 time? Are we looking at all the scary, unknown conspiracy theories? Perhaps we are bored and busy watching Netflix and finding ways to entertain ourselves and create a pseudo-joy as a coping mechanism? We need to turn our eyes away from these things.

Yes, it is important to stay up to date with what is happening in the world, but it is so easy for us to be **consumed** by the news and our need to want to know. Not knowing can cause anxiety and fear, so we immerse ourselves into the news.

Or, on the other hand, we ignore everything and keep our minds entertained and busy with things of the world so that we do not have to worry about the news. Sometimes we need to turn our eyes away from those things and focus on the One that transcends all news, the One who brings true, lasting joy.

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Did you get that? We need to turn our eyes away from things that **might** be facts to God's Word that **is** a definite fact.

A lot of questions and conspiracy theories have risen from COVID-19. It is important for us to stay informed. There is no doubt that knowing the facts about this pandemic will keep us safer. We all have smart choices to make and wrong choices to avoid. The facts and the news we hear today, might not be facts tomorrow. There is still a lot to be learnt about this virus. Do not let knowing things consume your time, energy and emotions. Do not let your emotions, your time and your energy be spent on frivolous things either. Turn your eyes away to something that is a fact today, tomorrow and for always. Turn your eyes to God who can offer you true joy amidst the darkness.

In this age of information, we need to realise that the truth of God's Word He gave us thousands of years ago, is still truth. There is a lot we don't know of the days ahead, but God knows and that should be enough. Light represents truth. Truth brings security and therefore security of emotions as well. If you want to **feel** well, if you want to be well in order to live your life, to shine your light, you need to behold God. You need to turn your eyes to Him.

How does a small light shine when it is surrounded by darkness? In other words, how not to allow your mood to go down and anxiety to take control of you? How do you remain lit when the rest of life is dark?

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Remember the words of the song: 'As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs after You?' And then specifically the chorus: '*You alone are my strength, my shield; to You alone may my spirit yield.*'

The only One who should have an effect on our mood and our light's brightness, is God. Most of us are generally okay in this area of life. We do shine our lights, we know how to share biblical truths and we mostly feel pretty stable within our emotions. But we are not consistent. We change. Some days we're up and our flames burn brighter. Other days we are down and swallowed up by complete darkness. We need to be consistently burning and living a well lit life, a life that shines for God. God says: "*I have called you out of darkness into My marvelous light.*"

If you are part of God's children, you will realise that the Bible has called you to become part of the priesthood of all believers, like the priests of old. We don't sacrifice animals anymore and I am glad for that. God has called us to give a daily sacrifice. This sacrifice that we give as the priesthood of all believers is a spiritual sacrifice. Symbolically, the command given to the priests in the book of Leviticus is also applicable to us today. It shows us how we are going to keep shining, how we will keep our small light lit wyithin a lot of darkness. It shows us how we will keep shining for God.

In Leviticus chapter 6 we find the principle of how to keep our light shining. In the Old Testament, the priests were told that the fire should not go out within the Tabernacle. There were various fires that burnt in the Tabernacle.

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The one that I will concentrate on today, is the one that is mentioned in Leviticus 6:9: *"... the burnt offering shall be on the altar all night, until morning and the fire on that alter shall be kept burning."*

The burnt offering was the offering where the whole animal was consumed on the altar. All that was left was the ashes.

When Paul then says we should offer ourselves as a living sacrifice, it means that everything must be placed on the altar, like that burnt offering in the Old Testament. He is telling us that as spiritual priests, we need to give ourselves completely to God. Unfortunately we sometimes tell God: "For today Lord, You can have my arms because my feet are going somewhere and doing some stuff. Wait, I will also give you my mouth, I will be saying some things for You, but my eyes ... I need them because there is that show tonight" God calls us symbolically as His priests; not to give Him half-hearted sacrifices, not to just shine sometimes when it is convenient, or on the day of worship, or in the morning when we get up and do a devotion, but to shine our lights completely. When we give ourselves as a living sacrifice to God, it should be everything within us. We need to give ourselves to God completely; body, soul and spirit.

I am reminded of the song we always sing: *'All to Jesus I surrender.'* God cannot use us, God cannot shine His light through us if we do not give ourselves to him completely. If I give you a candle but tell you that you can only have a little bit of the wax and you cannot have the flint which is inside, will the candle be able to shine or to be lit up? God says it is the same for us. He does not want a half-hearted sacrifice, He needs us completely; body, soul and mind.

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Not only must we give all of us (like the song says: *'I look full in His wonderful face'*), but we need to do it continually and consistently. In the story of Leviticus 6, God told Aaron and his sons to not let that fire on the altar go out. There is this ongoing work of giving ourselves that has to take place in our lives as well. It is not a once-off affair, it is a continual, daily, each moment sacrifice that we give. We have to burn for God all the time. The little light must shine all the time. It is not this thing of "Lord, I give myself to You, but just wait a minute God ... You know there's just something that I want to enjoy and do for myself ... You know here and there"

It is clear that we have become lovers of pleasure. We tend to try and omit the darkness in our lives by doing those things which distract our minds. God says to us: "Stop trying to make the darkness go away in that way." The way in which we are going to expel darkness and allow light into our lives, is to allow the true Light to be in our lives, always and consistently. It is an ongoing work to give ourselves to God, never to stop. God really wants us to be with Him continually, to commit to Him continually, so that He can make us perfect, holy shining lights in order for other people to see His light in us.

When we look at Leviticus 6 and they sacrificial system, we see that the priests were told how to discard of the ashes after the whole animal was burnt. Because the ashes was still holy, the priests had to change their clothes. There was a specific place where they had to dispose of these ashes. It should not just be taken to the dump where they took their trash or where they disposed of faeces or everything else in their household. This is symbolic for us as well.

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The priests in the olden days had to be invested at every step when they did the sacrifices. Today we are the spiritual priests at every step of our lives and there is never a time when we can relax and just do things willy-nilly. The priest did not just take the ashes to the communal dump. He changed his clothes and he carried the ashes outside the camp to a clean place (Leviticus 6:11). We want to relax, we just want to go to the communal dump, we want to give God 90%. We do the priestly duties but then we want 10% for ourselves. We want time off from holiness, from the effort that it takes to shine our lives. There is no free pass to suspend holiness, to allow our lights to go out. We don't get time off.

Unfortunately the reality is that we see our lights go out more than often. Our fires do wane and sometimes they even go out completely. Did you ever have a situation where you were going to church regularly, praying, reading your Bible and then life just kind of happened? There are these interruptions in our routine. Maybe a holiday, a road trip or some tragedy or maybe even this pandemic takes us away from the source of our light and heat. We lose our focus. We forget to turn our eyes upon Jesus because these other things are distracting us. These other things become more important and we take time off. We become accustomed to be out of the Light. When things normalise again, it almost seems weird to go back to church, to read our Bibles, or to pray. It almost seems unnecessary because we've already made other ways to deal with the darkness.

You need to guard so that the time of isolation will not affect you in this way. Do not let your eyes adjust to the darkness. Do not let yourself become cold.

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Be careful that this lockdown do not allow you to neglect your normal routine of prayer and Bible study and of going to the Great Light, the True Source of light you need to reflect.

There is a verse in the Bible that says: *“Let your light shine before men.”* This verse is important because it tells us the light that is shining within us, is not just for our own benefit. This light is not only there to expel the darkness and the fear within us, but it is there for the benefit of others as well. We need to become accountable. Jesus said: *“Let your light shine before men”* because He knew not only would it help men, but it would help us as well to be better lights. You are the light of the world.

These daily devotions are proof that it helps me to shine my light. Since I made a commitment, I've been forced to do a lot more studying, to spend more time in the Great Light, in prayer and in reading my Bible. Because of this, I am shining my light to you and my light is glowing brighter for myself. The Bible says we should not neglect the gathering of the saints. *“Don't neglect the gathering of the saints which is the habit of some ... all the more as the day approaches.”* Hebrews 10:25 is speaking about the end of the world that is coming. Do you think the day is fast approaching?

God is warning us not to neglect that which we need to help us to keep our lights shining. We should not neglect God and we should not neglect shining our light for others. Don't let the fire go out. If we leave the fire alone, it will go out. We have to take steps to keep it burning. It will not burn on its own. Even the priests were given instructions to put the wood on the fire, to keep it stoked all night so that it can burn all night long.

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For us, as the day approaches and especially as we face the night and the darkness, we need to stoke this fire. It is going to take effort. Some of us have the ability to stoke the fires on our own, we are well disciplined. Others need to get a little bit more involved with people and be accountable to people. There are people who will never know God except through us. Jesus understood this accountability, that is why He said: *“Let your light shine before men”*, so that we and them can benefit from it. Most people need something to keep them on track, to shine their light. It is so easy for things to cool down. We need to stay close to the fire to keep warm so that we can keep shining.

How are you keeping your light shining during this time of m when things are not going exactly the way you want? Are you still beholding Christ daily or are you struggling to behold Christ daily? If you are struggling, you should perhaps start something that keeps you accountable. Start sharing something with others that gives them hope and that will give you hope in return. The only way we are going to stay warm, is to stay close to the source of light ... completely, consistently and everyday, in all things.

May the following verse come true in your life where people who sat in darkness will say that they saw a great and marvelous light in you and that light expelled the darkness and the fear... : Matthew 4:16 : *“The people who sat in darkness saw a great Light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, Light is sprung up.”* May a light spring up for you. May you renew your faith in God as this time is a very trying time.

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