



Just Give Me Jesus

By Anne Graham Lotz

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How did John know that, at the beginning of a new millennium,

our lives would be so busy,

our focus so divided,

our bodies so tired,

our minds so bombarded,

our families so attacked,

our relationships so strained,

our churches so programmed . . .

that we would be desperate for the simplicity and the purity, the freedom and the fulfillment of a life lived in Jesus' name?

John probably didn't know. But God did. That's why He gives us Jesus! And that's why, as Anne Graham Lotz reveals, John's eyewitness account of Jesus' life is unmistakably relevant to your life today. The same Jesus who turned water into wine is the One who provides for your needs at this very moment. Enter into His life and find your soul refreshed with Living Water.

This new edition of *Just Give Me Jesus* contains an in-depth devotional guide to help you explore the words of John in a personal and practical way, either on your own or in a group. You'll find inspiration and revelation as you study the Scripture more closely and record your reflections in space provided at the back of the book.

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Editorial Review

Review

Lotz treats issues ranging from hell to suffering, marriage(including some of her own struggles) to life-threatening illness (including her son's recent diagnosis with cancer). Still, some of Lotz's heart-warming stories are decidedly warmed-over (haven't we heard enough yet about World War II evangelical hero Corrie Ten Boom?). There is very little in this book that hasn't been said many, many times before--even some of the personal anecdotes have a curiously familiar ring to those versed in the stock stories of evangelical preaching.

Lotz is in some ways a thoroughly modern woman, so even as conventional a book as this makes for an interesting comparison to its devotional predecessors of a previous generation. Not only is Lotz pursuing a traditionally male career by preaching and running a growing para-church ministry; her life, and the lives of her assumed readers, betrays a busy sophistication that would have been puzzling to a generation of less "worldly" evangelicals. (Beliefnet, May 2000) -- *From Beliefnet*

About the Author

Anne Graham Lotz, daughter of Billy and Ruth Graham, is the President and Executive Director of AnGeL Ministries, a non-profit organization offering Christian outreach. She is the award-winning author of ten books, including *Just Give Me Jesus*.

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CHAPTER ONE: Jesus Makes God Visible . . .

To Me *John 1:1-9*

Years ago my mother was invited to a very prestigious dinner party in London, England. The glittering affair included members of the royal family as well as other aristocrats and leaders from British society. The dinner, softened by candlelight, with the tinkle of silver and the sparkle of crystal accompanying the sounds of accented conversation, had an ambiance of elegance.

The occasion might have been intimidating for someone unaccustomed to such a setting, but my mother was as at ease as a queen holding court. Dressed in a simple black gown with a triple strand of pearls around her neck, she looked stylish and sophisticated. Heads turned as people whispered their curious inquiries about who she might be.

But my mother was so interested in the other guests at her table she was oblivious to the small stir she had created. Her expression was not the duly bored, arrogant look adopted by many of the socially elite. Nor were her words stilted and self-conscious. Instead, her eyes danced with the joy of life, and her conversation was lively and peppered with questions as she sought to draw the others at her table into a discussion.

As she conversed, Mother discovered that the distinguished-looking older gentleman seated beside her was the former head of Scotland Yard, Great Britain's equivalent of the FBI. Fascinated, she respectfully began to probe him for anecdotes. As he opened up under her genuine interest, he revealed that the departments under his authority had included those for forgery and counterfeiting. When she surmised that he must have spent a lot of time studying counterfeit signatures, he corrected her. "On the contrary, Mrs. Graham. I spent all of my time studying the genuine thing. That way, when I saw a counterfeit, I could immediately detect it."

Today, our world is cluttered with lies, deceit, hypocrisy, and fraud at almost every level. From government

leaders to salesclerks to airline ticket agents to restaurant maître d's to business associates to secretaries to friends to neighbors to advertisers, everyone seems to play loose with the truth.

This "whatever works is right" attitude has even crept into the Christian community. Too often, we focus on methods instead of missions, programs instead of prayer, organization instead of inspiration, pragmatism instead of power. Many preachers preach to be popular, instead of preaching to change lives. Their sermons are 95 percent their own thoughts and 5 percent God's truth. And the average church member *cannot tell the difference* because he or she is biblically illiterate!

Sadly, this also tends to twist our perception of Who Jesus is. While some have softened and sentimentalized Him until He is barely recognizable, others have distorted and doubted Him until He is undesirable.

My mother's dinner partner had unwittingly touched on a very important principle. If you and I want to be able to detect counterfeit Christs and counterfeit truth, we need to immerse ourselves in the real thing. We need to saturate ourselves in the truth of the Word of God. This applies to our faith in general, as well as to our understanding of Jesus.

Who is Jesus? He lived two thousand years ago, in an obscure town, in an obscure country, during a relatively dark period in human history that was dominated by the Roman Empire. Yet He stands unequaled and unparalleled in the phenomenal greatness of His life as well as in the stunning impact He has had on history.

As we turn the corner into a new millennium and gaze back at the last two thousand years, a handful of individuals seem to rise up from our history pages—individuals whose lives or words or accomplishments impacted the entire human race, for good or for bad. Names like Julius Caesar, Martin Luther, Muhammad, Christopher Columbus, Orville and Wilbur Wright, Adolf Hitler, Alexander Graham Bell, Jonas Salk, Joseph Stalin, Mahatma Gandhi, Mao Tse-tung, and David Ben-Gurion come readily to mind. Yet I would heartily agree with Reynolds Price, who in the introduction to his *Time* magazine cover story on Jesus, wrote, "It would require much exotic calculation . . . to deny that the single most powerful figure—not merely in these two millennia but in all human history—has been Jesus of Nazareth." Even today's date is based on the calculation of the date of His birth.

So *Who is Jesus? What is there about Him* that makes Him so *compelling* that a Yugoslavian nun would give her life to comfort the dying in Calcutta for His sake?

. . . some of the greatest architectural achievements in Europe were built for worship of Him?

. . . some of the world's most beautiful art was created to honor Him?

. . . some of the world's most glorious music was written to praise Him?

. . . 167 years after Rome crucified Him, He was acknowledged as the only God in the Roman Empire?

. . . Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, rotting in a Siberian work camp, said the very thought of Him was enough to keep his sanity?

. . . in an outburst of physical pain, frustration, anger, or just disagreement with the officials at a ball game, His Name—not Buddha's or Muhammad's—is used in cursing?

. . . two thousand years after He has been physically removed from the world, people from all walks of life say He has saved them from drugs, illness, suicide, depression, and hopelessness?

. . . in His Name, people forsake personal gain to feed the hungry, house the homeless, clothe the naked, heal the sick? Who is Jesus? How can we know who He *really* is? We know by studying the truth. The only legitimate source of historical information on His life is found in the four New Testament Gospels. This book, *Just Give Me Jesus*, focuses on the fourth Gospel, written by John, who witnessed firsthand the events he recorded. And John's Gospel is the truth.

So *who is Jesus*? Decide the answer for yourself as you read the apostle John's clear, confident, certain, and compelling biography. His stirring account begins by leaving no doubt that Jesus makes God visible to all, because Jesus is God as Man.

Jesus is Bigger Than I Think John's Gospel begins with a verbal trumpet flourish: "In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1). These words immediately take us back to the vastness of eternity before there was anything at all. They also take us back to Genesis, where God began to reveal Himself to all mankind. In Genesis, the Bible itself opens with the exact same phrase, "In the beginning . . .," as it introduces perhaps the most dramatic chapter of the entire Book. As the passage unfolds the mysteries of creation, the phrase "And God said" is repeated no fewer than ten times in the first chapter. The phrase shows God's awesome creative power as He spoke into existence everything that is or ever has been or ever will be. We might assume that the "word" He spoke, the "word" by which He called everything into being, was a *language* of some sort with nouns and verbs and pronouns and adverbs conveying His will to empty space.

Not so! John stuns us in the very first verse of his Gospel, which reveals, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word *was* God. *He* was with God in the beginning" (John 1:1–2; emphasis added). How awesome that the "Word" that was in the beginning, by which and through which God created everything, was—and is— a living Person with a mind, will, emotions, and intellect. He Is Eternal The Gospel of John states this living Person was not *from* the beginning, but that *in* the beginning of time, space, the universe, eternity, and history, He was already there! He is eternal!

John's choice of wording in the Greek language makes his opening declaration astounding. His Greek for "Word," which he emphasized by repeating three times in the first verse, is *logos*, the outward expression of the mind and will that rules the universe. Plato, whose writings were popular in John's day, had said he hoped that someday a "logos" might come forth from God that would make everything about life clear. John, who had perhaps read Plato, began his Gospel by stating in Greek that a "logos" *had come* from God. And not just a "logos" but the "*Living Logos*"—an outward revelation of the heart and mind of God expressed perfectly for us in a living Person.

As we meditate on John's words, our sense of awe increases when we realize that "out of the . . . heart, the mouth speaks." So our conclusion is that the Logos who was in the beginning with God is a living Person . . . but He is more. He is the living expression of what is on God's mind. But *He is more*. He is the living expression of what is on God's heart. But He is even more. He is the very heart of the Almighty God of the universe laid bare for all to see!

Do you want to know what is on the mind of God? *Then look at Jesus!* Do you want to know the will of God? Then look at Jesus! Do you want to know what is in the heart of God? Then look at Jesus! Jesus is the exact revelation of what is on the mind and heart and in the will of God!

Jesus makes God visible. But that truth does not make Him somehow less than God. He is equally supreme with God. He Is Equal Each word John used, including the prepositions, becomes weighty with treasured truth: "He was *with* God in the beginning." Because you really can't be *with* yourself, John implies there were two People, two separate supreme Beings Who are equal in power, activity, personality, and intelligence in a face-to-face, eye-to-eye existence. One was not more and One was not less. They were and are equally supreme, sharing the glory and splendor of heaven's throne, because "the Word was *God*."

What a wondrous mystery! Our God is one God, yet at the same time He is more than one. Throughout the ages people have engaged in an intellectual wrestling match with this astounding truth. But those who do so miss the blessing that comes from simply worshiping an infinite God Who is beyond our finite understanding. He Is Enduringly the Same As John continued his trumpet flourish, we learn that Jesus, the Living Logos, is enduringly the same today as He always has been: "The same was in the beginning with

God" (John 1:2 kjv). There was no personality change in this Person from the beginning of time until John's day to our day to the last day of human history on into eternity.

The One Who spoke all things into existence and then transformed Planet Earth from a formless, empty, dark, water-submerged blob dangling in space to a beautiful place that reflected His own image is the same Person Who has power today to transform your life and mine.

The One Who offered all men salvation from the storm of His judgment if they would come into the ark is the same Person today Who offers salvation from His judgment if we would come into Him at the cross.

The One Who called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, promising to fully bless him if he would follow Him in a life of faith is the same Person Who today calls us out of the world and promises to bless us if we follow Him in a life of faith.

The One Who delivered His children from bondage to slavery in Egypt with a titanic display of power is the same Person Who was crucified then rose from the dead to deliver His children today from bondage to sin.

The One Who halted the entire invasion of Canaan by the Israelites while He extended His grace to one Canaanite prostitute is the same Person today Who stops to care for and extend His grace to sinners.

The One Who elevated David from a shepherd boy to a shepherd king is the same Person today Who places His people in positions of leadership, honor, and authority.

The One Who answered Elijah's prayer and sent down the fire to consume the sacrifice on Mount Carmel and then sent down the rain to end the three-year drought in Israel is the same Person today Who hears and answers prayer. *Do you know Him?* If Adam knew Him as a beloved Father,

if Eve knew Him as the original Homemaker,

if Noah knew Him as the Refuge from the storm,

if Abraham knew Him as a Friend,

if Moses knew Him as the Redeemer,

if Rahab knew Him as the gracious Savior,

if David knew Him as his Shepherd,

if Elijah knew Him as the Almighty,

if Daniel knew Him as the Lion Tamer,

if Mary Magdalene knew Him as the Bondage Breaker,

if Martha knew Him as the Promise Keeper,

if Lazarus knew Him as the Resurrection and the Life,

if Bartimaeus knew Him as the Light of the World,

if John knew Him as the glorious King upon the throne,

Surely you and I can know Him too! The living Person Whom John heard and saw and touched was the same in ages past as He will be in years to come. There is not one God for the Old Testament, another God for the New Testament, another God for today, and still another God for the future. He is the *same* yesterday, today, and forever. He is enduringly the same! Praise God! You and I *can* know Him!

About twenty-five years ago, without a crisis experience but with an unexplainable, intense yearning, I made the decision to seek to know God. Personally. Intimately. Accurately. Experientially. I decided that if each of these Bible characters could know Him then I could too.

If God hasn't changed, if He is enduringly the same, then if they knew Him and I didn't, the fault must lie with me. So I began a pilgrimage to know God, and that pilgrimage continues to this day. I don't know Him today as well as I want or should, but I know Him better today than I did twenty-five years ago. I know Him

better today than I did one year ago. I am growing in my knowledge of God, and I say without hesitation or qualification that knowing God is my joy and reason for living. He is... the Wind beneath my wings, the Treasure that I seek, the Foundation on which I build, the Song in my heart, the Object of my desire, the Breath of my life— *He is my All in all!* Please join with me in this life-changing discovery as, through the Gospel of John, God just gives us Jesus. Although we may have many preconceived ideas of Who Jesus is, John will show us He is actually bigger than we think and greater than we think.

Jesus Is Greater Than I Think The One Who was with God and was God and is the same today as He was in the beginning is the Creator: "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:3). He Is the Source of Life It can be mind boggling to contemplate the vastness of the universe, from the greatest star to the smallest particle. It is so vast that astronomers are now saying that it stretches beyond what we are capable of penetrating, even with sophisticated telescopes like the Hubble. And every bit of it was created by the Living Word of God, Who, even as He hung the stars in space, counted them and called them each by name!

Not only did He create objects of massive size, but He also created such minute, delicate, intricate things as snowflakes, no two of which are the same. He created: atoms and angels and ants, crocodiles and chiggers and clouds, elephants and eagles and electrons, orchids and onions and octopuses, frogs and feathers and sea foam, diamonds and dust and dinosaurs, raindrops and sweat drops, dewdrops and blood drops, and me! And you! The greatness of His power to create and design and form and mold and make and build and arrange defies the limits of our imagination. And since He created everything, there is nothing beyond His power to fix or mend or heal or restore.

Years ago, a man was driving his car down the road when the engine coughed and wheezed and sputtered before stalling. Try as he might, the driver could not restart the engine. Finally, he stood glaring at it, and in frustration, kicked the tire. Just then a long, sleek, polished black limousine pulled up beside him. The chauffeur hastily jumped out and opened the back door from which stepped an elegantly dressed gentleman. The gentleman asked the driver what the problem seemed to be. The exasperated man replied that he had no idea; the car had just quit running. The gentleman asked to have a look for himself under the hood of the car. The man scoffed at the idea of such a finely dressed man having any knowledge of the mechanics of a car's engine, but the gentleman persisted in his offer. Since no one else had stopped to help, the driver skeptically accepted the assistance and threw open the hood.

The gentleman leaned over the engine, twisted a few wires, tapped a few cables, and tightened a few plugs. Then he told the driver to try to start the car once again. This time, the engine responded immediately.

As he closed the hood of the car, the driver turned to the gentleman and thanked him profusely. Then he inquired, "By the way, what's your name?"

The gentleman replied simply, "Henry Ford."

Henry Ford had made the car, so he had known exactly what was wrong with it and how to fix it! Jesus Christ is the One by Whom, for Whom, through Whom everything was made. Therefore, He knows what's wrong in your life and how to fix it.

Is your heart broken? Does your life need mending? Who or what do you know that needs "fixing"? Jesus, as the Creator of life, knows how to make it work. Let Him take charge. Give Him the authority to put it right. Having brought everything into existence that exists, He has never become bored with or distracted from or unconcerned about His creation. The Living Logos personally hovers over all He has created, giving it His

full attention. He Is the Sustainer of Life With His unlimited power, the Living Logos of God not only created all things but even today He still sustains "all things by his powerful word." Who do you know who says he doesn't need God? Think about it for a moment!

Our planet is ninety-three million miles away from the sun. *If* the sun were any closer to earth, we would burn up. *If* it were any farther away from earth, we would freeze.

Our planet tilts exactly 23 degrees on its axis, giving us four sea-sons a year. *If* it tilted at any other angle, we would have massive continents of ice.

The moon is the exact distance from earth to give us two ocean tides a day. *If* it were any greater or lesser distance, the earth would be flooded.

The ocean floor is at a depth that gives us oxygen, which sustains human life. *If* the depth were any different, the air we breathe would be poisonous.

The atmosphere is the exact density to keep meteors and space objects from hitting us. *If* it were any thinner, we would be constantly bombarded by objects from outer space.

And *Who* keeps all this in perfect order? *Who* keeps Earth from getting sucked into some gigantic black hole, or planets from spinning out of control, or stars from falling from the sky? *Who* keeps people upright on earth while it turns on its axis? The laws of nature? Gravity? And where did gravity come from? *Who* established the laws of nature? *Who* gives people the very breath they breathe?

The answer is none other than the Living Logos of Almighty God Who was in the beginning with God and Who was God and Who is the same today. He is bigger than we think and greater than we think. Nothing is beyond His ability, whether it's a problem to solve, a marriage to reconcile, a memory to heal, a guilty conscience to cleanse, a sin to forgive, a business to save, a budget to stretch, another mouth to feed, a body to clothe, a boss to please, a job to find, a habit to break, a captive to free, a prodigal to return, an addiction to overcome, or anything else we could name. All are within His power to "fix." If the Living Logos of God has the power to create and sustain the universe, *how can you think His power is insufficient for you?* He is more than able to sustain your marriage and your ministry, your faith and your finances, your hope and your health.

The smallness of our faith is illustrated by the man who walked into a car dealership and picked out a Silver Cloud Rolls Royce. He paid \$250,000 for it and drove it home. He found himself fascinated by the way the car handled. He opened up the hood to look at the gleaming engine, then began to poke around, curious as to the horsepower of such a machine. Search as he did, he could find no indication on the engine or in the owner's manual regarding the horsepower of his car. So he picked up the phone, dialed the car dealership, and inquired about the horsepower of the car he had just purchased. The dealer apologized but said Rolls Royce did not divulge the horsepower of its car engines. For a moment the man was speechless. When he recovered his faculties, he said with astonishment, "You mean I just purchased a car from you for \$250,000, yet you will not tell me the horsepower of its engine?" When the dealer affirmed that was correct, the new owner sputtered, "I demand to know the horsepower of this car!" He continued his tirade until finally the dealer agreed to fax the irate customer's inquiry to the Rolls Royce headquarters in London. The fax read, "My customer, who just bought a Silver Cloud Rolls Royce for \$250,000, demands to know the horsepower of the engine under the hood of his motorcar." In a short time, the fax machine rang, then began to whirl. As a page came slowly through the machine, the logo at the top revealed that it was a reply from the CEO of Rolls Royce. But as the sheet continued to come through the fax, it looked blank. Then a one-word answer appeared: "Adequate."

If you are questioning the sufficiency of God's power to resolve your problems and pressures, your suffering and stress, your crisis and change, His answer is the same. The infinite power of the Living Logos of God is adequate for any need you or I will ever have.

We may intellectually grasp the truth that God's power is adequate, but we can never know that by experience if we stay in our comfort zone. If all you ever attempt is what you know you can do yourself, if all your needs seem to be met through someone or something other than God, if you never have any difficulties that are greater than you can bear—how will you know the awesome greatness and personal availability of His infinite power? It's when the Red Sea is before you, the mountains are on one side of you, the desert is on the other side, and you feel the Egyptian army closing in from behind that you experience His power to open up an escape route. Power to do the supernatural, the unthinkable, the impossible. He Is the Significance of Life As John progressively leads us to fuller understanding of Jesus as the Living Word, He says that in Him is "life," and this "life was the light of men" (John 1:4). In other words, His life is our light—our purpose and meaning and reason for living.

Following creation, Adam and Eve disobeyed God and as a result sin entered the human condition. Since that historic and pivotal tragedy, sin has been passed from one generation to another so thoroughly that everyone who has ever been born has been born with sin. And the sin with which we are born makes us incapable of pleasing God or responding to God or communicating with God. In fact, the Bible tells us that when we were born, we were born physically alive but spiritually dead in our sin. And if we continue in the spiritually dead state in which we were born until we die physically, we will go out into eternity separated from God. We will go to hell.

However, the wonderful good news of the Gospel was shouted out so clearly by the apostle Paul that it still resounds today: "The wages of sin is death, *but* the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." The wages of sin is physical death and spiritual deadness as well. BUT the gift of God is eternal life, spiritual life, abundant life through faith in Jesus Christ, the Living Word of God.

What did you think you had to add to your existence in order to experience real life? Increasing your investment portfolio? Traveling to more exotic destinations? Possessing the latest car or computer? Achieving public recognition? Reaching your professional goal? Wearing the trendiest fashion? Joining the most coveted club? Establishing a successful career? Marrying the perfect spouse? Raising a model family? I've been to India twice, and both times I met Westerners who had traveled to meet with various gurus, hoping to find spiritual life in a Hindu homily. I visited with a young man who was convinced he would find real spiritual life when he could accurately articulate the difference between the colors red and black. I sat beside another young man on a plane who was traveling to the Adirondacks to seek life by worshipping the mountains. Where have *you* been looking for spiritual life?

The Westerners in India, the two young men, and you and I could save ourselves a lot of trouble by just seizing the truth John imparted: *Spiritual life is found in the Living Word of God!* If you want purpose and meaning and satisfaction and fulfillment and peace and hope and joy and abundant life that lasts forever, *look to Jesus.*

Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth and the life." His life *is* our light!

Now the verbal trumpet flourish that opened John's eyewitness biography of Jesus Christ reaches a crescendo: "The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it" or overcome it (John 1:5). Light is John's symbol for truth and godliness and wisdom. Darkness symbolizes everything that is not light, such as untruth, evil, sin, wrongdoing, injustice, ignorance, and unbelief.

When you and I live lives that reflect Jesus, His light in us reveals the darkness of sin and rebellion and

ignorance in the world around us. This may begin to explain why your old friends have rejected you or your coworkers avoid you or your neighbors shun you. If they are living in darkness, the light in you makes them uncomfortable.

Recently, I went to a movie in a large theater. When I walked from the bright sunlight into the viewing room, I was temporarily blinded. I had to grope my way down the aisle. But after a few minutes, my eyes adjusted to the darkness and I could see the rows of seats and other patrons without difficulty. When the movie concluded, I returned to the brilliant sunlit day. The light actually caused me to wince and my eyes to water as I quickly put on sunglasses. After having spent time in the darkness, the light actually hurt my eyes.

Our world lives in spiritual darkness, separated from God. But people have adjusted and, generally speaking, are comfortable in their "twilight zone." They may not be able to "see" God or others or themselves clearly, but they see well enough to get along in life.

When a person who belongs to Jesus Christ lives a life that reflects: His integrity and morality and purity, His holiness and righteousness and truthfulness, His goodness and godliness and grace, the light of his or her life can cause others to react with spontaneous rejection. The Light reveals the darkness of sin and pride and unbelief and emptiness and meaninglessness. And it "hurts." So the world scurries from the Light or tries to keep it hidden in churches or institutions while "putting it out" in the schools and government and marketplace and even social gatherings. But be encouraged! The Light not only reveals the darkness, it also reigns over it. Light is stronger than darkness—darkness cannot "comprehend" or "overcome" it.

Imagine yourself in a darkened room with no windows and one solid door, sealed shut so that no light penetrates at all. You are surrounded by inky blackness. Then imagine lighting one candle. Just a small one with a tiny flame. While that flame would not give off enough light to illuminate a large room, it would still throw a circle of light around you, enabling you to see your immediate surroundings. And it could be seen from the farthest corners of the room.

Now imagine snuffing out the candle, then taking a paper bag and filling it with the darkness of the room. Open the door and step into a bright room with lamplight and sunshine flooding every nook and cranny. If you opened the bag and let the darkness escape into the lighted room, what would happen? Nothing. Darkness cannot overcome light. Light is stronger and more penetrating than darkness.

The Light cannot be overcome by the darkness, but it can be hidden by us. That's why the Bible says: "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." Your light is the truth of the Gospel message itself as well as your witness as to Who Jesus is and what He has done for you. Don't hide it!

Are you so intimidated by the majority of darkness that you are hiding your Light under a bowl of fear? Fear of being offensive in a pluralistic society? Fear of failure or rejection? Are you hiding your Light under a bowl of unbelief—doubting that your neighbors and friends and coworkers and family members are going to hell apart from faith in Christ? Do you sincerely doubt that your one little candle flame of testimony, your one little candle flame of a verse of Scripture, will make any real difference in someone else's life?

I live in the southern part of the United States. During the warmer months in particular, if I leave the porch light on at night, all sorts of moths and insects swarm to it. The variety can be fascinating. Everything from large luna moths to beetles to strange green crawly things beat and flutter their way to the light. In fact, I have to be careful when opening an outside door because the little varmints scramble to get inside the house.

I have never stood at the door and called these insects to come or set out bait for them. All I have to do is to turn on the light and they come of their own volition—by the hundreds. Moths, in the midst of the darkness, are not attracted to more darkness. They are attracted to the light. They are hungry for the light. They long to be in the light.

People today, living in the midst of "darkness," are not attracted to more darkness; they are attracted to the Light. So let your Light shine! Lift it high! You don't have to have a clever presentation to your witness or learn evangelistic formulas or take a course on communicating to postmodern man. For heaven's sake, *just turn on the Light!*

One night when Robert Louis Stevenson was a small boy, his nanny called him to come to bed. Oblivious to her summons, he was staring at something outside his nursery window. The nanny walked over, stood at his shoulder, and inquired patiently, "Robert, what are you looking at?" The little boy, without taking his eyes away from the window, exclaimed in wonder as he pointed to the lamplighter who was lighting the streetlamps, "Look, Nanny! That man is putting holes in the darkness!"

You and I may not be able to change the world, but surely each of us can put a hole in the darkness! Turn on the Light! Share what Jesus means to you and give God's Word to someone else!

All through the ages, men and women have done just that! They have turned on the Light so that a living faith in God has been passed from generation to generation. Not everyone has been attracted to the Light, but one by one people have come to Him for truth, wisdom, hope, salvation, and eternal life. One outstanding torchbearer who made the transition from turning on the Light by faith to actually introducing Him to others face to face was "a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light" (John 1:6–8).

The man referred to is not John the Apostle, author of the eyewitness biography of Jesus we know as John's Gospel, but John the Baptist. John the Baptist was the first cousin of Jesus who served as His advance man. He was the last of the fiery Old Testament prophets whose assignment was to prepare God's people to accept and receive God's Messiah. But the light he lifted up, the witness he gave, was so clear and powerful, people thought he was the Light.

John the Baptist overcame the darkness of religious intolerance and public apathy and secular pluralism of his day by boldly proclaiming the truth of God's Word, applying it to the lives of the people around him. And if we want to overcome the darkness of our day, we must do the same.

In a day yet to come, at the very end of human history when the world reels in the chaos of rebellious blasphemy and profanity and obscenity against God and His people, ordinary men and women will faithfully overcome by lifting up the Light. One last time, in a world of almost total spiritual blackout, they will overcome "him [Satan, the prince of darkness] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony."

The world will see friends, neighbors, co-workers, and family members who had been in rebellion against God suddenly changed by the power of the Light! In the midst of worldwide depression and confusion, in the midst of worldwide war and hate, in the midst of worldwide envy and cruelty, these changed people will have joy! When confronted with rudeness, they will be patient. When confronted with meanness, they will be kind. When confronted with hatefulness, they will be loving. When confronted with thoughtlessness, they will be considerate. And when the evidence of their lives demands a verdict by those who observe them, they will have the thrill of pointing others to the Light of truth in Jesus. Today, in a world where the role models are entertainers, athletes, and politicians, many of whom lack morals, integrity, and even common decency . . . in a world where no one seems to stand for anything unless it is to

stand for selfish, self-serving rights . . . in a world where anything is compromised if it impedes success . . . in a world where pleasure takes priority over principles . . . in a world where we care more about public opinion than about what God thinks . . . in a world where there are no absolutes, where what is right is what works or what feels good . . . in a world where character no longer seems to count . . . In such a world, the testimony of *one life* lived for Christ is powerful! *One life* cleansed through faith in the blood of Jesus. *One life* that confesses, "Jesus is Lord." *One life* that has the courage to stand for godly convictions in the midst of moral compromise. *One life* that tells the truth. *One life* that lives the truth. *One life* that lifts high the Light!

You can be that *one life*! John the Baptist was. He was a powerful witness because the Light he lifted up was "the true light that gives light to every man . . . coming into the world" (John 1:9).

Have you ever felt intimidated by other religious beliefs or even a little guilty for sharing your faith, as though you were presumptuous in thinking yours is *the truth*? Do you feel somewhat smug and self-righteous and insensitive to others, accepting that what you believe is good for you and what they believe is good for them? That their religious beliefs are their business and none of yours? That if you are truly loving, you will tolerate the false and compromise the truth so as not to be offensive? Yet a person who really cares about his or her neighbor, a person who genuinely loves others, is a person who bears witness to the truth. John the Baptist was such a person.

The stunning climax of this introductory passage is that Jesus Christ is the true Light that gives light to every man and woman. *The Truth* for every man and woman! Think about it for a moment. You may be:

Afghan American African Asian Australian Eskimo Ethiopian European Indian or Russian
or Mexican Spanish Swedish South American Saudi Arabian South African Cuban Chinese
Canadian Israeli or Pakistani or Iraqi

You may be Hindu or Hari Krishna, Muslim or Mormon, Jewish or Jehovah's Witness, Roman Catholic or Protestant, Buddhist or Baha'i, Baptist or Anglican, or animist or atheist . . . it makes no difference! Jesus Christ is *the* Light for every man and woman! There is no other light! Other religions and peoples may have some truth, but only Jesus Christ is *the* truth for everyone who has ever been born into the human race, regardless of culture, age, nationality, generation, heri-tage, gender, color, or language. There is not a Light for America and a Light for Africa and a Light for China and a Light for Europe and a Light for India—there is only one Light for the entire world for all time, for every person, and His name is Jesus. That's why John bore witness to the Light. That's why you and I share our faith, present the Gospel, and refuse to be intimidated by a multicultural, pluralistic world.

Who do you know who says we can each have our own religion as long as we're sincere? Does that person put a guilt trip on you for what he or she describes as a dogmatic, narrow-minded, intolerant, and exclusive faith? But the Gospel wasn't our idea, was it? Jesus Himself declared, "I am the way and the truth and the life. *No one* comes to the Father except through me." We must come to God through Him or we don't come at all. The Bible says emphatically that "salvation is found in *no one* else, for there is *no* other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." Just the name Jesus.

And Who is Jesus? He is God Himself made visible to all. Praise God! You and I are not condemned to live in the darkness because He has turned on the Light! Praise God for just giving us Jesus!

A little boy was pestering his father, who was desperately trying to get some paperwork done. The father thought he would distract his small son. He handed him a piece of paper and a pencil and told him to draw a picture of a dog. Two minutes later the little boy proudly handed his busy father the picture—a stick figure of a dog. The father, making an extra effort to be patient, gave his little nuisance another piece of paper with

the instructions to draw an elephant. Two minutes later, the paper was dutifully handed back with another stick figure drawn on it. The father gave the child one piece of paper after another, telling him to draw a lion, a frog, a dinosaur. Each time, his son handed back the paper within a matter of minutes. Finally the father felt he had a stroke of genius. He knew something that should occupy the boy for hours. He dramatically handed his son what he informed him would be the last piece of paper and told him to draw a picture of God. The father smiled smugly to himself, believing he had outwitted the youngster and would now have some uninterrupted work time. To his astonishment, the little boy began busily drawing and within the usual two minutes was prepared to hand back his paper. The father exclaimed in exasperation, "No one knows what God looks like!" to which the little boy replied with the confidence of youth, "Well, they will now."

The little boy's drawing was, of course, a crude rendition of his own idea. But there was another Father Who told His Son to draw a picture of what God looks like, and the Son did. He drew the picture, not with crayons and paper, but with His own flesh and blood. And the picture was drawn so perfectly that it was an exact replica of God's image.

Thank You, dear Son, for drawing the picture so vividly. So accurately. So personally. And thank You, dear Father, for just giving me Jesus!

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Gerri Townsend:

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