

Will You Just Lighten Up?

Getting to heaven is a simple proposition when you deconstruct it. Believe. More specifically, believe in Jesus (John 6:47). Say yes to the person and work of Jesus, mean it, and BOOM!

You now have your sins forgiven, a purpose for living, and a home in heaven. But now what? Between Earth (now) and my home in heaven (later), you have a “mission” from God only you can fulfill (Eph. 2:10). In fact, there are specific works, or deeds as the Bible calls it, specifically assigned to *you*.

You can go on mission trips, volunteer at the local shelter, usher on weekend services. There are all kinds of ways you can serve. But it's easy to get sidetracked by trying to find the ideal way for you to minister to others. In fact, it *can* become a burden for some as they strive to “work out” God's plan. The good news is that it's much simpler than that. The fact is God brings YOU opportunities, people and situations every day. That's called the opposite of heavy work. So, here's a twist on the light work God asks of you, and it has life-changing, eternal rewards. It's an excellent gauge of where we are in our faith journey.

1. Come into the light. Feeling safe with another person means revealing and exposing all that we are to that person. This is always a risk. Jesus explained that people fear being exposed to the light, because it reveals darkness in their lives.

“Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God” (John 3:19-21).

Many inaccurately perceive Christianity, thinking “if I team

up with Jesus, He's going to shame and judge me." The enemy would much rather have us compartmentalize our faith, giving "private" sin a stranglehold that can eventually suffocate our faith. But God wants all of you into the light, so your life can be "seen plainly" by others.

"God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin" (I John 1:5-7).

The more we come into the light of God's unconditional acceptance, the more light we can bring to others.

2. Be a light. In Matt. 5:14, Jesus compares those who believe and follow God as being "light of the world" and like a "city set on a hill (that) cannot be hidden." The world represents darkness. You don't have to search for a way to serve in a ministry; you just have to be a light. It's like the city on the hill; it doesn't do anything. It just sits there, but it can be seen. Following Christ will transform your heart, thoughts, attitudes and eventually your behaviors. It happens naturally. And, the resulting conduct is its own witness that you are different, a bright light shining in a dark world.

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house ... " (Matt. 5:14).

3. Shine the light. This last step is proactive. After coming into the light, and being a light in the world, God will bring people and situations to you so that you can shine the light. Often, we don't recognize these opportunities right in front of us, stop everything, and do or say something loving. Recognizing someone in need is the first step. Interrupting

your schedule to engage is the second. Jesus called it loving your “neighbor.”

In Luke 10, Jesus answered a man who asked, “Who is my neighbor?” with this parable. A man is brutally beaten and left for dead in a ditch. One priest sees the man and crosses the street to pass by on the other side. A second man, a Levite, saw the man and also passed by without a word of helping hand. A third man, a Samaritan, saw the man, stopped what he was doing, bandaged the injured man and took him to safety, paying for a stay at a hotel. The beaten man represents our “neighbor.” The Samaritan is the shining light.

Shining the light is a simple principle: Feed the hungry. Clothe the naked. Help those in need. Don’t think of ministry as an interruption. Think of it as an opportunity and an honor to shine the light of God’s love.

The apostle Paul explains shining the light like this: “Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, ‘children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.’ Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life” (Phil. 2:14-16).

Every God’s man is a work in progress. Step one may take time. Step two involves personal transformation, and then step three will come naturally. But it does require faith. Faith is the oil the keeps the lamp burning.

“Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and well fed’ but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead” (James 2:15-17).

So, you don’t have to look for ways to be a minister of God’s love. It’s you. You’re the light of the world. Lighten Up!

Kenny Luck, founder of Every Man Ministries, men's pastor at Saddleback Church, and ChristianMingle advisory board member, provides biblically oriented teaching and leadership for men and pastors seeking relevant, timely material that battle cultural, worldly concepts threatening men and God's men. Follow Kenny and Every Man Ministries now on Facebook, Twitter (@everyMM) and YouTube.

For the original article, visit .