

## 2015 – A Year of God’s Light and Love

**“And God said, ‘Let there be light.’ And there was light”** (Genesis 1:3).

In the beginning God said, “Let there be Light; and there was Light.” This is the first thing we are told in the Bible. By this we learn two important things -- God speaks, and what He says happens.

Let’s focus here on what He said: “Let there be light.” What do you suppose that means?



Before you answer, consider this fact. On Day One of Creation, God said, “Let there be light” and there was light. However, He did not create the sun, moon, and stars until Day Four. Therefore, the phrase, “Let there be light”, cannot mean sunshine. What, then, does it mean?

The only way we can know for certain is to let the Bible itself tell us. And we do that by paying attention to what the Bible says about “light” in other places.

We turn to the New Testament and find that John writes, “This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). Then, later in the book, John goes on to say, “God is love” (ch.4:8, and 16).

God is Light; and God is Love. John puts the literal and the figurative side by side. God is Love — that’s *literal*. God is Light — that’s *figurative*. And both mean the same thing. One is a metaphor of the other.

When we see the word "light" in the Bible, and it is not talking specifically about natural light,

we can conclude that it is a figurative reference to the Love of God.

Thus, on Day One when God in the beginning said, “Let there be light!” – He was saying, “Let there be a revelation of My love!”

And there was.

This means that everything that has happened from Day One forward — even unto this present hour — has as its singular purpose the revealing of God’s love to us one way or another!

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### The Bible Summed Up in Four Words

“Let there be light!” These four words sum up the entire Bible. Everything that follows this opening declaration by God serves the purpose of fulfilling it.

His will is that we see a revelation of His love in everything He has made, in everything He says, and in everything He does. His purpose in all of this is that we come to know Him by being loved by Him, love Him in return, and share His love with others all around us.

The Garden in which our First Parents were placed was a revelation of God’s love for them. The bounty of His blessings and the nearness of His presence provided lavish proof of His love.

And when they yielded to the subtle temptation to “be as God” by eating the forbidden fruit – even then, though banished from Paradise, nevertheless God revealed His love by covering them with the skin of an innocent animal, slain on their behalf.

Moreover, He also provided them with protection and natural blessings in abundance as they ventured into a thorn-infested wilderness. Cursed, and yet offered mercy. Expelled, and yet provided protection. Friends, now that’s Love.

But there's more.

As mankind multiplied and increased in the earth, God chose Abraham and his descendants to be a nation set apart so that the whole world could see a revelation of His love displayed in how He cared and provided for His own.

The giving of the Law on Mt Sinai was a revelation of His love, bringing civil order to a wandering people who had known nothing but oppressive slavery.

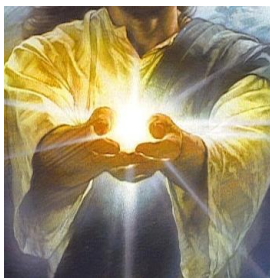
The sending forth of Prophets and Seers, Teachers and Priests, Judges and Kings – all were expressions of His great love for His people, as He raised their standard of living and built them into a beacon for the world to see His great love.

And though they floundered and failed time and time again, He remained faithful in His unfailing love. This shines as a bright beacon for all who struggle through life.

But the brightest Light was yet to come; the greatest revelation of His love for all of us was just around the corner.

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## **"I Am The Light of the World!"**



In the beginning God said "Let there be light!" From that moment it has been His will that all creation serve as a revelation of His love to those He has created.

Paul tells us that God has shown what He is like by everything He has created — "the invisible things of Him are clearly seen in the things that are made" (Rom.1:20).

God is powerful. God is thoughtful. God is awesome. We see all this and more in creation.

But God, in all and above all, is LOVE — that's the one thing He wants us to know above all others.

And, the crowning moment in the unfolding process of that singular revelation happened when Jesus came.

Paul tells us that Jesus was "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). Jesus Himself said, "He that has seen me has seen the Father." On one occasion when speaking to a large crowd gathered in Jerusalem, Jesus said "I am the light of the world." (John 8:12)

We have heard the Old Testament decree – "Let there be Light!" And now we hear the New Testament reply – "I am the Light of the world!" In other words Jesus is saying, "I am the revelation of My Father's love." Indeed, truer words were never spoken.

At last we have a sure and unmistakable display of the one thing God has wanted all along — LIGHT shining in the darkness; God's love triumphing over all evil.

Everything Jesus said and did was a demonstration of the overwhelming power of God's love in every circumstance!

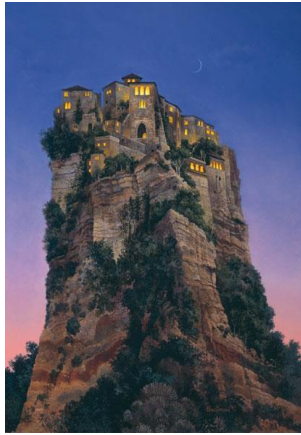
When Jesus healed the sick -- that was God's love in action. When He cast out demons, opened the eyes of the blind, raised the dead, turned water into wine -- that was God's love on display. When He rebuked self-righteousness and confronted those who stood in judgment over others -- that also was a revelation of God's love.

### ***Now, let's make it personal.***

My friend, God loves you. Yet, it is possible that sin may have so wrecked your life that you cannot see God's love for you in the things that are around you in your world. But, if you will only look to Jesus then the scales will fall from

your eyes and you will see clearly the great love of God for YOU!

And once that happens an astonishing transformation occurs in your life – so much so that Jesus Himself said, “You Are the Light of the World!”



“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.” (Matthew 5:14)

Jesus said many staggering things, and this statement ranks high on the list - “You are the light of the world.”

Here He is passing the torch to His followers. “The works that I do, you will do,” He told His disciples, “and greater than these, for I go to My Father.” (John 14:12)

In other words, “Just as I have shown you My Father’s love, so now you do the same to all those around you. For I am leaving, and now you are the revelation of God’s love to the world!”

No pressure. We are to do the job in the same manner as Jesus.

Luke tells us that God “anointed Jesus of Nazareth, with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him” (Acts 10:38).

As God was with Jesus, and anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and power, so now is He with us. And He is fully committed to our success for the sake of His Son’s honor (see John 13:35, and ch.17:21).

Has it ever occurred to you that today, in somebody’s life, you may be the only opportunity they will ever have to see and experience God’s love? Did you know that even a simple act of kindness by you towards another can be vested with the power of the Holy Spirit and turn darkness to light?

Are you aware that as you stroll through the day in your usual surroundings you are like a torch passing through a cave – bringing light, warmth, and hope everywhere you go?

Don’t laugh. Don’t dismiss this. And don’t count yourself out. Jesus said it, and He meant it – “You are the light of the world.”

What would each day hold in store for us if we walked through every situation looking for opportunities to say or do something that could reveal God’s love to somebody else who really needs it?

Go for it and see what happens!

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## Arise! Shine!

“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.” (Isaiah 60:1)



January 1, 2015 – It is the dawn of a new day, a new year.

What might the Lord have to say to us at this significant moment? What

word might He speak to carry us both forward and upward with a faith unflinching, a hope undying, and a love unending?

What could He say that would lift us above the darkening days of winter, both natural and spiritual, and give us a warming vision that sees beyond our times, so that we may patiently

prevail until the chill thaws and beautiful springtime is once again upon us?

I think I know.

And it's not new; the words have been with us for some time now, like a perpetual torch passed down through the ages to enlighten any darkened day, and buoy any flagging spirit -- "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee." (Isaiah 60:1)

This is a word filled with great powers – the power of light and glory; the power of faith and courage.

This is a word that stirs us to higher things – "Arise!" It is a word that summons us to a nobler outlook – "Shine!"

This word infuses us with a faith to believe and take hold of what we may not be able to actually see or feel – "Your light has come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you!"

And this is a word that dares us to a life of action born of a courageous faith. Notice the specific order of the words, "Arise. Shine." The implication is that if we will do the first part, "Arise!" – Then the Lord will see to it that the second part occurs, "Shine!"

And it's here that faith and courage must respond. We might prefer it to say, "Shine, and then Arise." You know, "Lord, if You will light me up, THEN I will take a stand and serve You."

"No," the Lord courteously replies, "You take a stand and serve Me, and THEN I will light you up!"

In other words, "Arise! Shine!"

This is what I believe the Lord is saying for this new day, and this New Year. This is what the Lord is saying to you....and to me.

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## This Little Light of Mine

"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)



Somewhere back in our childhood most of us at some time or another sang the little chorus, "This little light of mine; I'm gonna let it shine." It's one of those songs we all know. But, though we can sing it – do we know how to actually do it?

How exactly do I let my light shine?

The Apostle Paul tells us how — "Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world." (Philippians 2:14-15).

The Message puts it this way: "Do everything readily and cheerfully – no bickering, no second-guessing allowed! Go out into the world uncorrupted, a breath of fresh air in this squalid and polluted society. Provide people with a glimpse of good living, and of the living God. Carry the light-giving Message into the night."

There's not really much else to say is there? Can you see what a difference it would make in your home if you did everything readily and cheerfully?

And how would things change on the job if you did all things without complaining and disputing? One thing's for sure, rush-hour would most definitely be different!

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## Conclusion

OK, so maybe this is a little unrealistic.....as it pertains to people who do not personally know the love of the Lord. But it is not at all outside the realm of real possibility for you and me. We can do this; we should do this. The fact is – we must do it. For, if not us – then, who? If not now, then when? If not here, then where?

Yep. This little light of mine; I'm gonna let it shine. How about you? Let's go out today and provide people with a glimpse of God's love in how we treat them. Let's carry the light-giving message into the night.

If we will – then indeed 2015 will be a Year of God's Light and Love!

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## PRAYER

Father of Light, You never change. You don't fade in and out like shadows cast when the sun or moon are over head – with You there are no shadows!

Bring us into the Light, and flood our lives with Your love. Let us bring the uplifting, redeeming, life-transforming power of Your presence into our world this Year.

Open our hearts with love and fill our hands with generosity in showing kindness, blessing, forgiveness, healing and deliverance. Let the joyful sound be heard in our land!  
Amen

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## Questions for Discussion Group

Here is a way you can share this truth with others. Print out the **PDF** version of this Devotional; make copies and distribute among a group of friends. Meet together, read the devotional, and then use the following questions to help lead a discussion time.

1. What is the single purpose of everything that happens in your life?

2. In what personal ways has God revealed His love to you??
3. Give a specific example of how the created world shows us something about the Creator?
4. What are some of the ways you can show the love of God to others?
5. What would it be like for you to live one day without complaining?

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