

# LIGHTS OUT!

## *Counterculture Christianity*

Isaiah 60:2 (KJV) - For, behold, the **darkness** shall cover the earth, and **gross darkness** the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.

Matthew 5:14-16 (NKJV) - <sup>14</sup> **You are the light of the world.** A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. <sup>16</sup> **Let your light so shine before men,** that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Yesterday and I watched what began to unfold in our nation's parks and streets across America, even around the world, it dawned on me: We as the church don't have a Bible problem, we don't have a building problem, we don't have a Christian problem – We have a representation problem. I thought to myself, how can 1.6% of the population have such influence and representation. Why is it that every ideology can have their day, their week, their month, but it seems that the Church who comprises approximately 60% of the population can't seem to muster enough unity, equity or support to have our day, week or month? To fill the streets with signs and banners, singers and dancers, booths and blowups, sponsors and corporate supporter, lifting up the holy, matchless name of Jesus. That thought was the birthplace of this message today... Let's Pray

In 1858, a little-known candidate for the U.S. Senate named Abraham Lincoln (**Put up Pic of Abraham Lincoln**) scanned the cultural horizon of America and saw a fierce, gathering storm. With great courage, he pointed to that looming conflict even though, in the opinion of historians, doing so handed the election to his opponent, Stephen Douglas. Standing before a thousand delegates and reporters in a sweltering Springfield, Illinois, assembly hall, Lincoln paraphrased the words of Jesus recorded in Matthew 12:25: **"A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other."**

With prophetic clarity, Lincoln saw an imminent "war between the states"—one that would flow directly and unavoidably from the collision of competing visions for our nation; irreconcilable differences in values; and conflicting assumptions about the nature of man and his responsibilities to God. He rightly saw that one of those sets of visions and values must prevail; that... **You cannot steer a ship by two stars or a nation by two moral compasses.**

Lincoln took on the unpleasant task of sounding an alarm and calling like-minded men and women to battle and to sacrifice in a noble cause. When worldviews collide, nations hang in the balance. So today I am pleading with you, I am urging you - my friends, my co-laborers to battle.

Some who will disagree with my point of view will misunderstand me and claim that I am calling for armed conflict. I simply remind you of the words of the apostle Paul in **2 Corinthians 10:4–5: “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal (fleshly) but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ . . .”**

Notice that he emphasized thoughts as being crucial in this conflict.  
This battle is one of ideas, of thoughts, of mindsets, of worldviews - ideologies.

Our nation is engaged in a multi-decade war with herself. The minds and hearts of this generation have become the theater of conflict. **It is a war of competing, mutually exclusive ways of viewing the universe and man’s place in it.** It is a clash of paradigms, of value systems, and of visions of the future. However, there has been a drastic shift in this war in recent years – this shift should be alarming to everyone under the sound of my voice!

**The people at the center of the modern cultural attack are the followers of Jesus Christ!**

When you have talk show media personalities make statements that “the only people that it is still okay to mock in this country is Christian” and it be tolerated, even celebrated by the culture at large; there is a looming problem. Stand-up comics, movies, and satirical sketches on cable television routinely hold America’s believers up to the most withering scorn and mockery - making us the laughingstock of the nation!

Isn’t it ironic that the media and the “so-called” academic elite hold “tolerance” and “diversity” above all virtues, and yet appear unwilling to tolerate anyone who dares to claim a belief in absolute right and wrong, the absolute sanctity of human life, the biblical definition of marriage, or a God who holds men accountable for their actions?

**The question that must be answered in our day: Will we arise, or will we shrink passively into irrelevance and isolation? Will we sit by as idle, unconcerned spectators in the stands of our culture and watch our nation plunge itself into the midnight of post-Christian paganism?**

The great cathedrals of Europe where the Reformation was begun and the great tenets of the Christian faith were defended, have become museums—mere curiosities—relics of an irrelevant part of history. That is what America is starting to look like right now as a post-modern lukewarm church continues to pursue this path—like post-Christian Europe, we will be godless, faithless, rudderless, valueless; and without a seismic return to the discarded values of the past, hopeless.

...And this is exactly what forces of darkness desires! They want to pressure the Church, the body of Christ, the hope of our times, the source of truth, the hospital for the hurting, and the liberator of the bound to...

## **TURN THE LIGHTS OUT!**

The key to the much-needed resistance lies in America's houses of worship - in the will to rise and fight that seems to lie dormant within the hearts of the believers who fill them—in other words, in the willingness to be culturally incorrect – **We must turn our lights back on!**

In the eighteenth century, a generation fought for America's independence from British rule. In the nineteenth century, a generation fought to preserve the Union from those who would tear it asunder. In the twentieth century, a generation fought to defend democracy from the forces of tyranny and oppression in both Europe and the Pacific. **In the twenty-first century, a generation will fight for the preservation and propagation of a culture based on truth!**

Turning our backs on the culture is a betrayal of our biblical mandate and our own heritage because it denies God's sovereignty over all of life. Nothing could be deadlier for the church or more ill-timed. To abandon the battlefield now is to desert the cause and the belief in the words of our Lord who promised to pour His Spirit out on all flesh in the last days. We cannot give up our hope and our appeal to heaven for God to do what He said he would in our day...

In this day of dreaded darkness covering the earth and gross darkness covering the people (as Isaiah the prophet proclaimed), we must... **Turn the light on!**

- Turn it on starting in the church house
- Turn it on in your house
- Turn it on in our school house
- Turn it on in our White House...

Make no mistake, many on the other side hate us and despise everything we stand for. But regardless, our biblical mandate is to love and bless in return. Challenge them? Yes. Argue for the superiority and accuracy of our worldview? You see, **When worldviews collide, nations hang in the balance!**

If we are truly born again, filled with the precious Holy Spirit then it is not a **light** issue, **it is a representation problem...**

Matthew 5:14-16 (NKJV) - <sup>14</sup> **You are the light of the world.** A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. <sup>16</sup> **Let your light so shine before men,** that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

## HOW DOES A CHRISTIAN TURN THE LIGHT ON – REPRESENT JESUS TO THE WORLD?

### 1. Our worldview must be accurate!

We understand that our world view is radically different than secular society, but I'm not sure that Christians at large really have a grasp on the "Christian Worldview". **Just what are the presuppositions of a thoroughly Christian worldview?**

I could write volumes to answer that question, but the fact is, you can find the entirety of a biblical worldview in the simple, familiar words of **Hebrews 11:6: But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.**

The two bedrock piers that support the foundation of a Christian worldview are found in the last half of that verse. **He [God] is...** and **He is a rewarder** of those who seek Him.

He is a father to the orphan, a husband to the widow, and a friend to the sojourner from a far country. To those that walk in darkness, He is the Bright and Morning Star. To those who pass through the valley of the shadow of death, He is the Lily of the Valley and the Rose of Sharon. He is bread to those who are hungry and water to those who are thirsty. He is honey in the rock, a river in the wilderness and a spring of refreshing in the burning desert. **Best of all, He is, not just was or will be—He is right now!**

In other words:

- **God exists**—He created the physical universe. Though He is present in creation, He is separate from and stands outside of creation.
- **He is knowable**—What He desires and expects from us can be known—primarily through His revealed Word, but secondarily through His creation.

**Evangelical theology dares harbor one and only one presupposition: the living and personal God intelligibly known in His revelation.** All the nonbiblical worldviews categorically reject one or both of these fundamental truths. I need to say it again: **God exists, and He is knowable.**

**The cross is pictorial representation of a three-part grid of truth:**

For example, biblical Christians embrace the simple declaration of Genesis 1:1: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And they concur with the "twenty-four elders" in the book of Revelation who fall down before the throne of God and cry, "You are worthy, O Lord, / To receive glory and honor and power; / For You created all things, / And by Your will they exist and were created" (Revelation 4:11, emphasis added).

1. **Creation** - From beginning to end, **God's Word reveals that we are part of a creation that is the handiwork of a Creator.**
2. **The Fall of Man** - **The Bible's revelation of the fall enables Christians to make sense of the world.** The puzzles of human depravity, universal suffering, and natural calamities are suddenly solved the moment you understand the implications of what God's Word describes in the second and third chapters of Genesis. **The fall of man explains the spiritual hunger that resides in every person!**
3. **The Plan of Redemption** - Third, the Bible's magnificent, front-to-back story of **God's unfolding plan to redeem lost man and a fallen world** gives the Christian an understanding of his place in the cosmos as well as the keys to making things whole and good again.

It is fascinating to me to note that **the Bible uses only three pages to describe the creation of the universe and everything in it**, including the life of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and the fall. **The Bible then devotes 1163 pages to the magnificent story of redemption**—getting us back to where we started, in intimate fellowship with God through Christ. What is more, these three pillars of truth—creation, the fall, and redemption—also give biblical Christians a framework for recognizing the fallacies and false assumptions of competing worldviews.

I have a very dear friend in the room today – a brother in the Lord – Dr. Dale Jamison. As a doctor he will concur with this: **a diagnosis identifies the problem. A prognosis predicts what the outcome will be if no effective treatment or cure is forthcoming. And a prescription is a course of action for becoming whole and healthy once more.**

I know the problem and the prognosis, but I want to know a prescription for restoring world-changing faith to the church and moral health to our great nation. Christ is more than just some heavenly pharmacist, sliding a prescription over a counter or through the glass of a drive-through window. He actually comes into our situation and brings the cure He recommends – HE IS HE DOCTOR AND THE CURE!

**The Bible declares that the church is in the world, but not of the world;** however, we are not separated from the problem—**we have been part of the problem.** The Jewish exile Daniel prayed and fasted for his people, torn from their land and carried away to Babylon. The ancient prophet Jeremiah wept over his nation and the city of Jerusalem, and although he did not partake of their errors, he identified with them in their departure from God's ways. Please understand, we don't embrace a biblical worldview so we can feel smug and superior in our correctness. **We do it so we can get down where people are struggling and, from a position of strength, help them to see Jesus in us and want a relationship with Him through faith.**

## What is the cure: **The Next Great Awakening!**

It is time for the church to arise—in love, action, and purpose. It is time for God’s people to lay aside the weights of self-centeredness and comfort-seeking and shake a nation with an ignorable demonstration of love, power, and service. This is our moment. **IT IS TIME TO TURN THE LIGHT ON!** We must declare along with the Twenty-fourth Psalm: “This is the generation of those who seek Him, / Who seek Thy face” (v. 6 NASB).

I believe the Spirit of Jesus Christ has a message for “this generation.” There is a call upon this generation of believers. **It is a call to be on the forefront of a new great awakening in our nation** - an awakening that will exceed in strength and scope the sweeping moves of God that have gone before.

There is a reason our Church’s name is “The Bend” ... In the opening years of the twentieth century, a single, insignificant you man of prayer under a burden in Wales, Evan Roberts, prayed a single prayer for 13 years – “Bend Me”. He became a spark that ignited a fire of prayer and fervency in an expanding circle of believers, until the entire nation was engulfed in what came to be known as the Welsh Revival.

Reports from those who witnessed this move of God testify that the Revival changed every aspect of the life across the nation of Wales. As one account described it:

- There was a dramatic decline in drunkenness, bars were deserted as each night the churches were packed with worshippers.
- The bars were not the only places to be emptied.
- Dance halls, theaters, and football matches all saw a dramatic decline in attendance.
- The courts and jails were deserted and the police found themselves without any work to do.
- Long-standing debts were repaid, church and family feuds were healed and a new unity of purpose was felt across the denominational divides.

Notable among the 150,000 estimated converts of the Revival are George & Stephen Jeffreys who later went on to found the Elim Movement, and David Powell Williams, the founder of the Apostolic Pentecostal church. It is also worth mentioning its effect on Rees Howells, intercessor and founder of the Bible of Wales and David Lloyd George, who later became the British Prime Minister.

This continent witnessed something very similar early in the eighteenth century. In the 1730s a Scots-Irish immigrant, Reverend William Tennent, and his four sons began praying and preaching revival throughout the colonies. Wherever they went, those who had been ambivalent about faith became committed to it, and those who were ignorant of the condition of their heart

became aware of how far away from God they were—and they were prompted to desire a dramatic and life-altering experience of regeneration.

These spiritual pioneers also had the wisdom to invest time and resources in raising up other leaders. By establishing a seminary for training young men in fiery revival preaching, they were able to duplicate themselves many times over. **Their preacher school was originally called the Log College. Today it goes by the name Princeton University.** Perhaps you've heard of it. Soon, preachers like Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and John Wesley were turning whole communities upside down for Christ—leaving in their wake hundreds of thousands of new believers who had felt a remarkable touch by God's Spirit.

**So, what can you and I do to trigger the move of God we so desperately need in this crucial hour?**

The Word of God and history tell us that there are three key ingredients that are precursors to such a spiritual awakening - **A RECIPE FOR AWAKENING!** Just as the American colonies' Great Awakening began in just one family and the mighty Welsh Revival in the broken heart of a single man—so, too, our desperately needed move of God will begin with individuals like you and me.

1. The first element in preparing for a move of God is **INDIVIDUAL MORAL REFORM.**
  - Before our society sees culture-wide revival, we will have experienced private, personal renewal. And personal renewal begins with a reformation of the heart. **The old-fashioned Bible word for it is repentance.**
  - As I have mentioned before, self-denial is entry level Christianity. The cross is not a place of exaltation, it is a place of shame and ridicule. **We want to wear it as a decoration but fail to recognize it is a place of denial. The One who hung there was rejected by everyone, but instead of identifying with Him we insist on being accepted by everyone.**
  - “Let him deny himself . . .” “Whoever loses his life . . .” Those are not messages that win preachers popularity contests.”
2. That's why the second key precursor to a new Great Awakening is becoming **OUTWARDLY FOCUSED RATHER THAN INWARDLY OBSESSED.**
  - According to British theologian John Stott, somewhere along the line today's evangelicals became “more and more associated with self-absorbed individuals preoccupied with finding health and happiness for their own lives and maintaining the status quo in an unstable world. As this concern for the individual increased, concern for society at large correspondingly decreased. A whole generation of believers has largely become **“I” focused**—consuming massive amounts of preaching and teaching on how to be happier, healthier, wealthier, skinnier, prettier, and more fulfilled.”

- Jesus made it clear that selfless servanthood was the primary key to influence and leadership: “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all” (Mark 9:35).
  - I believe it is because of a wholesale neglect of the preaching of the cross. The New Testament’s presentation of the cross describes more than just the place where Jesus effects our redemption. It is a place where the Jesus-follower comes to die to self.
  - **Influence comes through service, but self-absorbed people are incapable of serving!**
3. The third requirement for Awakening is found in the truth that **THE CULTURE-TRANSFORMING REVIVALS OF THE PAST WERE FUELED BY THE WHOLE GOSPEL PREACHED UNAPOLOGETICALLY BY MEN!**
- It was both a spiritual gospel and a social gospel. It pointed men to worship of God and service to others.
4. **THE FINAL AND MOST WIDELY ACKNOWLEDGED PRECURSOR TO CULTURE-SHAKING REVIVAL IS PRAYER!**
- It is widely acknowledged and rarely practiced!
  - Fervent, soul-wrenching intercession for our communities and nation is practically a lost artifact of a previous day—a day in which Christians spent significant seasons of time praying for things other than themselves and their immediate felt needs.

As I mentioned previously, Evan Roberts is credited by history as being the spark that ignited the Welsh Revival. Roberts was neither a high-powered preacher nor a great theologian. He had never been to Bible college or seminary. In fact, he had left school at the age of eleven to help his father in the local coal mine. He was not an eloquent speaker or a philosopher. He was a coal miner. He was, however, one who loved Jesus passionately and who, in prayer, caught hold of Christ’s heart for hurting, hopeless people.

At the age of about fifteen, Roberts began studying the great revivals of history. Not long after, he started praying—often in tears and anguish—to see one in his nation and in his time. At twenty-six, Roberts would write, “For thirteen years I have prayed for revival . . . I could sit up all night to read or talk about revivals.” What Roberts and others began in their prayer closets, the Spirit of God ratified and continued by pouring Himself out on a nation. Hundreds of thousands found peace in this life and a heavenly home in the next—because of prayer.

### Conclusion:

**Psalm 24:6: “This is the generation of those who seek Him, / Who seek Thy face.”**

I believe we are that generation. I believe this is our time. I think the great Bible teacher **R. A. Torrey** had all this in mind when he said: **“I can give a prescription that will bring revival . . . to**



**any church, or community, or any city on earth. First: Let a few Christians get thoroughly right with God. If this is not done, the rest will come to nothing. Second: Let them bind themselves together to pray for revival until God opens the windows of heaven and comes down. Third: Let them put themselves at the disposal of God for His use as He sees fit in winning others to Christ . . . That is all. It cannot fail!"**

Look again at Torrey's third point—putting ourselves “at the disposal of God for His use as He sees fit.” What might that look like? What might a loving Father who sacrificed His own Son for mankind see fit for us to do?