

When the Light Goes Out . . .
2 Corinthians 5:17

- A. In answer to the question, “Did you ever invite Christ to come into your heart and life?” the slightly intoxicated man answered – “Yeah, but I’m not getting much of a kick out of it now!”
1. That suggests a big problem for many people who have made a positive decision for Christ.
 2. What happened back there isn’t making much of a difference in their lives today.
 3. Have you ever had this feeling, that somehow your Christian faith has lost some of its meaning, that the joy of your relationship with Christ has diminished?
 4. The question is an important one: “What distinguishable difference does Christ make in your life today?”
- B. Has God changed? Are his power and resources losing their effectiveness for living?
1. The answer is *absolutely not!* The Bible clearly declares in Heb. 13:8 (niv) that: “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever!*”
 2. The Bible says, in 2 Cor. 5:17 (niv), “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*”
 3. We commonly think of this truth as relating to our initial conversion experience, when we first come to Christ.
 4. And though that *is* true, it is also true that Christ continues to

make us *new* when we continue to live in relationship with him.

- C. So, if your relationship with Christ isn’t making any difference in your life right now, *what steps should you take* to make your relationship with him vibrant and dynamic once more?

Step Number One: Recognize Your Failure.

- A. We woke up one morning in our home, only to discover that the electricity had been off for several hours in the night.
1. During that night, our clocks didn’t run. Their ability to keep time was rendered ineffective.
 2. Our streets were darkened when the street lights were not able to shine in the night hours.
 3. Our household appliances lost their ability to function and supply the purpose for which we purchased them. *They called it a power failure.*
 4. Everything that should work doesn’t work when there is a power failure.
- B. That tells us a lot about our walk with God. Friends, it is possible for you and me to experience a *spiritual power failure!*
1. The lights go out in your heart, and your desire to love Christ and serve others are diminished.
 2. There is a loss of spiritual energy; your spiritual strength is rendered powerless, resulting in a lack of victory in your spiritual life.

3. A kind of spiritual darkness creeps back into your life where the light of Christ and eternal hope had been.

C. Such a *spiritual power failure* often develops while we are unaware it is even happening.

1. It creeps unnoticed into our lives like a rheostat that slowly dims the light until the light goes completely out!

2. The reason we fail to recognize it early is because we haven't changed any of our "church" habits.

- We are still attending our church.
- We are still serving in our ministry.
- We are still tithing faithfully.
- We are still reading our Bible and praying.

3. We may continue to do all the things we did when God was real in our lives and we experienced the joy of Christ.

4. The appearance of godliness is still there, but the essence, the vitality of our experience with God is missing!

D. What can you do when the lights go out in a familiar place? The answer is that you can do many of the same things you used to do in the light.

1. In this case, you could sing. You could recall Bible verses. You could even talk to others beside you about Christ.

2. You could do all of those things, but still be in the dark! But in truth, the darkness would be a distraction to you and them.

3. You could probably get up and leave somewhat safely without falling, because you remember what it looked like in the light.

4. However, if you gathered for worship week after week and had to sit in the dark, the ability to fellowship, to interact with your Christian friends would be hindered.

5. You would lose the benefit of seeing others worship, raise their hands, express the joy of Christ on their faces.

6. You would lose your motivation to keep doing what should be done in the light in the dark.

7. Many would quit attending because the darkness changed everything about the light.

8. For things to be like they were, you must return to the light!

9. Step number one in solving a *spiritual power failure* is to recognize that your faith isn't working as it once did; the joy of the Lord is gone.

Step Number Two: Re-establish the Relationship.

A. It is not a secret as to how you began your spiritual relationship with God in the first place.

1. It began when you established a relationship with Jesus Christ by repentance and faith.

2. Jesus was the Source of your "new life!" He forgave your sins and made you a new creation in him, "the old was gone and the new had come!"

3. Those steps you took when you invited Christ into your life the first time are the same steps you must take to *reestablish your relationship* with him: repentance and faith!

4. Repent again of your spiritual failure, neglect of faith and God, any lack of spiritual concern for the lost, etc.
 5. *Jesus is still the same yesterday, today, and forever!* Having a relationship with him plugs you into his power for your life.
- B. If prayer has become a burden rather than a blessing, if reading his word holds no interest for you, if you have unplugged from the fellowship of the church:
1. Perhaps you should examine your life and take stock of your relationship with Christ.
 2. To overcome a *spiritual power failure* in your life, you must *recognize your spiritual failure* and *re-establish your relationship with Christ*.

Step Number Three: Re-institute the Disciplines.

- A. Most relationships with Christ go wrong at the point of failure to follow the disciplines of the Christian life.
1. I am talking about the discipline of being in the Word, we meet the *Living Word*, Christ, in the *written Word*, the Bible.
 2. I am talking about the discipline of worship with the Christian community, regular attendance in worship.
 3. I am talking about the discipline of sharing your faith with others, telling them what Christ has done in your life, the genuine difference he has made in your life.
 4. I am talking about the discipline of prayer, talking with God and listening to God on a daily basis.
- B. There is only one way to approach the spiritual disciplines and

practices that make us strong in our faith.

1. We must make a *commitment* that our relationship with Christ is so important that *nothing* will keep us from the spiritual habits that keep our relationship with God vibrant and alive!
 2. We must determine that *no price is too great to pay* for a meaningful relationship with him.
- C. John Bunyan, in his book *Pilgrim's Progress*, vividly describes a man with determination looking at the price of life, and saying...
1. "Set my name down, sir. For I have looked this whole thing in the face; and *cost me what it may*, I mean to have Christlikeness and will have it."
 2. That, my friends, is the attitude that will keep your Christian experience meaningful for a lifetime!
- D. Recognize your failure, re-establish your relationship with Christ, re-institute the disciplines of faith.

Step Number Four: Reconsider the Alternatives.

- A. The alternatives to keeping our relationship with Christ alive and well are anything but attractive. That is true of a church, and on a personal level as well.
1. A number of years ago, while on summer vacation, we drove through the small rural communities of Vermont.
 2. Time and time again we saw lovely white framed buildings that once housed a group of God's people, now sitting vacant, or turned into a place of business or a government

building.

3. Churches that have lost their vision and passion for God lose their reason for existence and go out of business, or may as well go out of business.

B. The same is true on a personal level. The alternatives to a vibrant relationship with God are also dismal and frightening.

1. When you experience a *spiritual power failure*, the light goes out of your life, the joy goes out of the relationship.
2. The glow of his presence fades from your face, and your enthusiasm for Christ and the work of ministry diminishes.
3. Until there is *no faith* to share, *no power* on which to live, *no spiritual victories* to report. You have experienced a *spiritual power failure!*

C. God doesn't want you to remain that way! God loves you and wants desperately to reconnect with you and restore you to full relationship with him!

1. Have you ever suffered injury to an important relationship in your life? It hurt. You were disappointed. Things weren't the same. You felt alone.
2. Then, through some wonderful means, the relationship was rebuilt, re-established, and it felt soooo good to have relationship with that loved one again!
3. In a very similar way, God wants you to *recognize* your failure, *reconsider* the alternatives, *re-establish* your relationship with him, and *re-institute* spiritual disciplines in your life! *I dare you* to commit to the disciplines of the spiritual life! You will be so glad you did! *Closing song – "The Heart of Worship."*