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Brighten our Corner

"It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness."
Ancient Chinese Proverb

God's word says it this way, "No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it away in a cellar, nor under a peck measure, but on the lamp stand, in order that those who enter may see the light." (Luke 11: 33 *)

Many years ago, the hymn writer had this to say: "Do not wait until some deed of greatness you may do, do not wait to shed your light afar, to the many duties ever near you, now be true, brighten the corner where you are." (Brighten the Corner Where You Are-Ina Duley Ogden)

The hymn writer took time to put her thoughts on paper. Do we ever think why someone would take time to leave their thoughts for us? Perhaps we would have more appreciation for the work, if we knew the person's reason for leaving us the words. We will get to the hymn writer's reason in a moment.



God left an entire user's manual for us. We are told that the Bible has been on the best-seller list for many years. It is published in more languages and versions than any other book ever published.

The Author's reason is to provide the very best to His children. If we are of a mind to take the time to read and think of His word, we will be prepared to "*brighten the corner*" where we are! We can, with God's help, be the light that is needed this day to bring light to a dark place. It is far better to light one candle than join in with cursing the darkness.

While God's will is going to be done in every situation, He knows us better than we know ourselves. God knows our curious nature because he put it in us. He delights in our coming to Him with respect and sincere questions. He said "*Come now, and let us reason together, says the LORD...*" (Isaiah 1:18 *) "*Put Me in remembrance; let us argue our case together...*" (Isaiah 43:26 *) God will hear us as we seek to more fully understand His will for our life. He will help us "*brighten our corner*" with the wonderful light of His word.

Ina Ogdon, the hymn writer, aspired to speak to people on the Sunday school camp circuit. She had just received the invitation to speak when she learned that her father was seriously injured in an accident. She canceled her travel plans so that she could care for him.

In her deep disappointment, she wisely gave the matter over to God. As she thought of her desire to help in her little corner of the world, she sat down and wrote the words to what later became the well-known hymn.

Some time later, her words were put to music. The hymn became the theme song for the Billy Sunday ministry. In that way, the words reached out to millions through the evangelist's campaigns. Her words and actions can guide, as we struggle with wondering why God has us in the little corner that He chose for us.



The Apostle Paul told the people in his day that each of them was important to Almighty God. God left no one out! He included everyone in His great plan for all His creation. We all have the duty to "*brighten our own little corner*", using the gifts that God gave us, "*distributing to each one individually just as He wills.*" (I Corinthians 12:11 *) Paul used, as his example, the various parts of the human body.

“For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ”

*“For the body is not one member, but many, If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body’, it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body’, it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body.” (I Corinthians 12:12, 14-16 *)*

Paul goes on to tell the people, *“But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.”* (I Corinthians 12: 18 *) Note that it is God who determines the placement within the body; it is not a work of man.

God alone decides where, when, and how He will put members in the church. We would do well to remember, *“...But let each man be careful how he builds upon it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”* (I Corinthians 3:10b, 11 *)

As we work to *“brighten our corner”*, Paul helps us understand that we can’t all be the pastor; else, who would hear the sermon? We can’t all play or sing the music, else who would be there to listen and enjoy? We can’t all be the usher; else, who would need seating? We can’t all be sitting in the pews; else, who would proclaim His Word? Who would play and sing the music?

We find the account of Paul’s reasoning at I Corinthians 12:11-31. As we remember the hymn writer, we see that she is reminding us to *“brighten the corner”*, where we are, since it is God Who placed us there. No matter the position we find ourselves in today, whatever part of the church body that He has made us, we need to do the best we can to *“brighten our little corner.”*

We think of other examples in the Bible as we reflect on doing what needs to be done, where we are. They are God’s guidepost to encourage us to *“brighten our own little corner.”*

As we look at the pillars of faith, we see their efforts to, in their own way and in God’s time, *“brighten their corner”* of the world.

The Bible tells of how *“they were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword, they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.”* Hebrews 11:37-38 *)

Few of us can say that we have been made to endure all that they endured. We have a promise from God that, if we keep on working to make things better where we are, then, *“...God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us, they should not be made perfect (complete).”* (Hebrews 11:40 *) (Here is a sacred secret for those with spiritual eyes to see. None of the individuals listed in the pillars of faith will be complete apart from us.)

The LORD would have us, today, right where we are, in our own way, *“brighten our corner”* by bringing to others His light and doing His will. He does not call everyone to be evangelists, pastors, preachers, or to bring forth great sermons. Not all will be great musicians.

He wants us in our way, with the breath that he gives us, to let others know what He has done and is doing in our lives. He will prepare the way and he will prepare the heart of the one with whom we come into contact.

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth, And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.” (Isaiah 55:10-11 *)

Note that we are not responsible for what the Word does; God is. Our responsibility is to open our mouth or use our hands to write and let Him speak through us. Let's do our best to light the one candle when others around us are cursing the darkness! Lord, help us to *“brighten our corner.”*

Comments by Harry Bain

* (New American Standard Bible; i.e., NASB)