

Keeping God's Light Burning

Preacher: Ron E.

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References: **Exodus 25**, Exodus 25:31-40; Leviticus 24:1-4; Matthew 5:14; John 3:16; Acts 1:8; Philippians 4:13; Zechariah 4:6; 2 Timothy 2:15; Revelation 1:20; Revelation 2:4-5

It's great to be here. You look all so sad after that beautiful singing. I love that laugh song. I hope none of you got a cow, but anyway, I like that. That's different. It's for the kids, and it's wonderful.

It's wonderful to be here. It's wonderful to be part of the family of God, and especially a part of the family of 16th.

Are you ready for the message? I was telling them this morning that I did thirty-five messages on animals, but I put the animals in the barn, and they've all gone to bed, and so I'm not going to touch them anymore. I did it for nine months. Oh, it was wonderful. I had cows, I had foxes, I had scorpions. I had every type of animal and insect you could think of! But now we're going to be talking something about the tabernacle.

The Tabernacle and the Golden Lampstand

Now, I used to preach on this, I would say, about thirty years ago, and I haven't touched it for at least twenty years. But there's so much richness, so much application in regards to the tabernacle. I even had one—I made one. It takes an hour and a half to set up with all the cows and sacrifices. But it takes an hour and a half to set up, and I'm getting kind of old for that.

But we're going to talk. There are seven different instruments, seven different articles in the tabernacle. There's the Ark of the Covenant; that's in the Holy of Holies. That's way in the back of the tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant. There's the mercy seat on top of the Ark of the Covenant. There's a table of showbread with twelve loaves of bread there. Oh man, that is so interesting, so applicable for 2026! Not going to touch that today; maybe later on in the year, we'll see.

Then we have the golden candlestick—that's what we're going to talk about today. But after that, we have the altar of incense, which is very interesting. We have the brazen altar and, of

course, the brazen laver. So many wonderful things! So sit back, relax, and try to drink in everything we're going to try to share with you.

The tabernacle, the golden candlestick—wow, absolutely fantastic! I'm not going to go into all the ins and outs of it, made of gold and the significance of that, and how many branches it has on it. I'm going to look at it more practically: What does this mean to me? Why is this in the Old Testament? Why should I study about the tabernacle? Well, we're going to see that as we go on here.

The candlestick, which we're going to be talking about, or the menorah—it's also called the menorah—and it was a sacred seven-lamp fixture placed on the south side of the Holy Place inside the tabernacle of Biblical times. This is the tabernacle in the desert.

The children of Israel were leaving Egypt. They'd been there for four hundred years. They were slaves. They were under the rule of the Egyptians—slavery. They were making those pyramids. You see some of the pyramids; they're still standing today. And the interesting thing about them is that they made the bricks to make the pyramids. And it was terrible—it was terrible. It was a terrible, terrible time for the children of Israel. But God delivered them. God used Moses and his brother, and helped them also to choose to go to the Promised Land.

I didn't count how many there were; I wasn't around at the time. And they didn't have calculators at the time! But some people say a million and a half. I don't know; I won't even speculate how many there were. But forty years, because of unbelief, forty years they went through the desert. Forty years they went from place to place. And every time they went to a place and they stopped, they would set up this tabernacle, this tent, to show that God was with them. And there was a cloud of smoke coming down to show the presence of God, and a pillar of fire at nighttime. And I've seen many dozens of drawings of what it could have been; we don't really know.

The golden candlestick, or the menorah, in the biblical tabernacle represents divine illumination, the Holy Spirit, and the spiritual light provided through God's presence. This was an illustration of God's presence, an illustration of God's light. And we're going to see biblically how we can apply that to our own life today. The menorah gives us a really good picture in 2026. God did not just have it there just for an illustration, but He wanted people to know that He was present with them.

It wasn't just decoration. It was pretty, it was tall, beautiful gold. It wasn't just a decoration; it was there to give **light**—L-I-G-H-T. And its lamps had to be continually tended to. They had to look after them. Exodus 25:31-40 describes the lampstand, and Leviticus 24:1-4 shows

that the lamps were to be maintained regularly. They had to look after them. And this is so applicable to us.

But we won't get ahead of ourselves: the menorah, keeping God's light burning in 2026, 2027. And I've got three points—I always try to get three points. If you've got your phones out, take a picture when they come up so you can go home and take a look at it. Make sure this is biblical, and I think it is.

1. Light: Letting Your Light Shine

First of all: light. This is going to show us that you and I have to allow our light to shine. Now, if you haven't got Jesus in your life, you haven't got light yet. And that's part of my message, is that you'll come to know the light. The light of the world is Jesus. I'm not going to sing it, don't get scared! I saw somebody sit back a bit. No, no. But the light of the world is Jesus.

So the first thing this menorah is going to teach us is about light. And this is telling Christians that we are to shine.

The second point: keep the oil flowing. They had to keep putting oil in it. The light would burn oil, burn oil, burn oil, burn oil. And if it ran out of oil, the light wouldn't shine in the menorah.

And the third point: loyalty, keep the fire burning. A priest had to go in and he had to fix the lamp. He had to put oil in it. So it talks about loyalty, and our loyalty about keeping God's light burning in this world. Oh, it's a very applicable, up-to-date message of keeping God's light burning in 2026, 2027.

The Bible connects this with Matthew and Revelation. We don't have time to read them, but when you get home, look it up in Matthew. I'll just put them up here so you can get a picture of this. The main text is Exodus and Leviticus, but also the application is in Matthew.

And God revealed this to John on the Isle of Patmos. Remember John was sent into exile, and he was all alone on the Isle of Patmos? And God revealed this to him. God spoke to him. And we're here to learn from what God spoke to Moses, and to John about Moses and the desert.

The New Testament makes a remarkable connection:

[Revelation 1:20 NKJV]

The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven

golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

This is, in a sense, 16th is one of the lamps shining in this neighborhood. Woo! You are part of that. This morning we talked about the church, but we didn't go the whole way, because this building isn't the church. You're the church. You're the lamp. You've got to go and shine in this neighborhood.

And God bless you all. I phoned up Barbara this week and I said, "How did the children's meetings go? DVBS?" See, because you invited them. You took the invitations and you did it. But we have to do that all the time, not just for "Twilight Hour," as I used to call DVBS.

God is revealing this to us even today. Maybe you haven't looked at it in this way, but God is revealing this to us today. The golden lampstand, the menorah, stood inside the Holy Place of the tabernacle. You go in the courtyard, you find the two elements, then you go into the tent. And in the tent, on one side is the lamp, on the other side is the showbread, then there's an altar of incense, then there's a big curtain. And inside the curtain is another artifact.

Its purpose was simple. The purpose was very simple: it was there to give light. It was there to shine. The lampstand did not exist for itself; it existed to illuminate the people that were there to worship. God wants you to shine in this assembly, in this church, in this tabernacle. God is here. And you and I have a job to do, a ministry to do, a service to do in the local assembly, in the local church. But also, we have the responsibility of the Joneses over there, and the Lees over there, and the Wongs over there. And we are to shine! We are to show forth Christ, and that's what the lampstand taught. The priest had to keep the lamp burning, and that was so important.

And that's what it looked like: you went into the Holy Place, and there was the lamp and the showbread. And then you go into another compartment, the Holiest of Holies. So it's so practical.

God has not called us merely to exist. We're not here just to come on Sunday morning to sit here like this and enjoy fellowship, enjoy the preaching, enjoy the singing. God has called us to **do** something! He doesn't want spectators; He wants players. Pick up the baseball bat! Hit the ball for Jesus! And that is so important. We're not here just to relax, to exist. God calls us to shine. God calls us to serve. God calls us to remain faithful.

Oh, this message is so applicable and so 2026, 2027, and we need to be faithful. Oh, it's tough out there. We're in the world, but we're not of the world. Jesus says:

[Matthew 5:14 NKJV]

"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

That's what He says in the Bible: "You are the light of the world."

Now, I'm going to put a song on here. We hope it's going to work. I hope it's going to work—we practiced beforehand! Now, this is a song that I would have sung many, many times when I was young. Let's see if it works:

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.

Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine.

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.

You've got to let it shine! God wants it to shine. God doesn't want you to just come and sit and warm the pews. And in Revelation, Jesus walks amongst the seven candlesticks, which He identifies as seven churches. Revelation is absolutely phenomenal; it goes very well with the lampstand in Exodus. God's here now; He's watching us. God wants us to do something.

God's people are called to carry the light into the world. I mean, God doesn't need you; He doesn't need me. He could send a thousand angels and evangelize the world, but that's why we're here.

I remember when I was at Vancouver Tech. I was a—I won't say an idiot, but I had the biggest, the blackest King James Version of the Bible on top of my textbooks, walking through the halls as a teenager at Vancouver Tech. I thought that's the way my light was going to shine. They laughed at me. They called me "Pastor." They called me "Reverend." They called me other things which I won't mention here, because then I wouldn't be invited back! I mean, you are the light of the world. How is the world going to know?

Five years ago, I used to stand in all the SkyTrain stations giving out Bibles. I can't stand long enough now. I can't carry a box of Bibles. But, you know, I went by the train station the other day, and the Muslims were there at Royal Oak. There was no evangelical, Bible-believing, fundamental testimony there. We've got to get out of this!

This week, I looked through the window and I saw two people. So I went over and I grabbed two Gospels of John, put them up. "Hello, good morning! How are you?" Well, they had their

magazine. And I took out the two New Testaments and I gave them each one. And I told them:

[John 3:16 NKJV]

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

And then I said, "Thank you, bye." Well, unfortunately, I went out there two hours later and the New Testament was on the bench outside of my front door. But we're to shine! They can laugh at you. They can call you names. I've been spit upon. I've had the Bible torn up in front of me. People tell me where to go and how to get there in the quickest way possible! But I tell them, "I ain't going to hell. I'm going to heaven because Jesus died for me, and He's in this Book."

Halloween's coming. Oh, boy, that's another subject. I'm not going to judge anybody, but I have a lot of beautiful Christian friends who shut the door and turn all the lights off. "I hate Halloween. I don't like all the little goblins that come to my house. I don't like all the witches and dragons. I don't believe in it." But I leave my light on! Because last year, I think we gave out eighty-one New Testaments with candy on top of it in a plastic bag to that little goblin, to that little dragon, and the mother and dad were there watching. "Hi!" None of them were left behind. That's my conviction. So I'm not judging you if you turn your lights off, but I use it as an opportunity to shine. Whether I'm right or wrong, I don't know, but it's so important.

The message is clear. The first point, of course, is the light: let your light shine. God commands us that the lamps should be arranged so that they will give light. The first lesson of the menorah is that God expects His people to shine. God wants us to shine.

A lamp that never shines is failing to fulfill its purpose. A Christian's life is not simply about what we believe inside the church. I mean, God bless you, you're in the right place! Biblically, you are in the right place. But the place that we have to be also is outside of the four walls. The Christian life is not simply about believing inside the church; it is about the light coming from our lives outside of the church.

So many of my friends are my age—I'm eighty-one. I know I don't look it, and you don't have to keep saying every time I come to 16th, "You don't look eighty-one, you look ninety-one!" No, no, they don't say that. But God is good, isn't He? God is so good.

You know, take Joseph, for instance. Joseph lived in a dark environment. He was betrayed by his brothers, he was sold into slavery, he was falsely accused, and he spent years in prison.

They tried to—what's the right word in English? I'll get it—put out his light. They threw him in a pit. But you know what? The interesting thing about this whole thing is that Joseph continued to live faithfully before God. In spite of everything, he was faithful. His circumstances did not extinguish his light.

When he was in Egypt, he was such a good, godly person that he went up, up, up. He became second in command, just about. Evidently, Pharaoh could see something different in Joseph. Joseph's faithfulness became visible.

Brothers and sisters, you don't have to be a preacher. You don't have to stand on the corner. I used to hug people. We used to have a big circle: free Bibles and free hugs. I was seventy years old, but I gave them a hug. And there was a lot of people who needed a hug, and we could testify. I wanted to be faithful. And I'm not patting myself on the back, please; I'm just giving you examples. I mean, if you do that today, you might go to prison! If you hug somebody on the street, I don't know what the thing is.

But how about the New Testament? How about Paul and Silas? They were beaten half to death, thrown into prison. But at midnight, they sang praises to God. Their circumstances didn't determine their testimony. Their light continued to shine in the darkness. What an example for me!

I've been thrown in prison just about a few times. Police have tried to stop me giving out Bibles at schools. I'm on the corner giving out Bibles to kids at school: "God bless you." And I've had police come and put their hand on my shoulder and say, "You've got to leave." And I said, "I can't. I apologize for not being respectful, but I'm not breaking the law. I'm on a public area, I'm not on school property, and I'm not stopping traffic." And many times, after the fifteen, twenty, thirty-minute rush, I stop and I go to the police and I say, "Hi, I'm Ron. Would you like one?"

We all have different missions. My wife doesn't do that, but with her writing on emails—you should read some of them! She could write an epistle. She's got the gift of writing. I can't write; you can see from my reading and so on. So we all have gifts.

What is the application?

- Does my family see Christ living in me? Do they see a difference in me? My family—very important. The church and the family are the two institutions most important, I believe, in the Bible.
- Do my coworkers see Christ's character in me?
- Do my neighbors know that I belong to Jesus?

- Do my words bring light or darkness?
- Does my behavior point toward Christ?

These are practical. These aren't theological dissertations; these are practical things. So important, these things!

Your workplace is a mission field. "Oh, Ron, I'm so proud of you. God led you to South America." But before I went to South America, I had to do my Jerusalem. I had to do my Judea. I had to do my Samaria, and then the uttermost parts of the earth. We're not all called to go as foreign missionaries; we're all called to be missionaries at home. Look at the Jehovah's Witnesses, look at the Mormons—they're not shy about talking about what they think the truth is.

Your home is your mission field. Your neighborhood is your mission field. Your church is a place to be equipped; that's why you come here. God bless you. I enjoy your emails. If I was younger and had more energy and lived closer, I would come more often. You have a tremendous program; there's a program for everybody here. And I pray for Barbara and all of you who help with the ESL. That is such a mission field. Daycare: mission field. Taking care of kids: mission field. Baking pies for the neighbor: mission field.

What's the challenge? Every morning pray: Lord, let somebody see Your light through me today. My prayer every morning is, Use me, Lord. But I like this one: Lord, let somebody see Your light through me today. We've got to let our light shine.

2. Keep the Oil Flowing

Second point: keep the oil flowing. Oh, boy! Keep the oil flowing. The lampstand needs oil, and we need oil. And we get oil from the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. And we're going to listen to another song, but let's carry on first. Without oil, the flame cannot continue to burn.

And we used to sing this: "Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning." Remember that one? Whoa, we're going to listen to it just a bit. Leviticus 24 says that the Israelites were to bring pure oil so the lamp could be kept burning continually.

How much are you trying to keep oil in your life? That's my prayer. Keep singing it, sister:

♪ Give me oil in my lamp, I pray ♪
 ♪ Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning ♪
 ♪ Keep me burning 'til the break of day ♪

Amen! I'm sure we can all pray that.

This reminds us that Christian productivity does not come merely from human strength. I can do nothing—nada, rien. I have to depend upon the Lord, but:

[Philippians 4:13 NKJV]

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

I can give this example; I've probably given it here before, but it's a good example. When I went to school, I passed grade two, four, and six by the skin of my teeth. Grade eight I flunked. So I went back to school, took grade eight again, and I flunked. And then I went to summer school at John Oliver, and I passed. I finally graduated.

And then, on my report cards: "Ron's English is poor. Ron's spelling is poor. Ron's reading is poor." I can remember sitting with one of my aunts—I lived in eight different homes. And in one home, I remember her with a rod trying to get me to spell!

And then the Lord—you want a joke?—He called me to Quebec! I couldn't even speak English right. I couldn't even write well in English. I was twenty-one years old, married, and the Lord calls me to Quebec. He wanted me to learn French! Come on, you've got to laugh at that! And excuse me for the personal example, but you've got to praise God for this, because I went to Quebec, and we spent thirteen wonderful years in Quebec telling men and women, boys and girls about Jesus.

Then we came back to Vancouver because a brother asked me if I would work full-time at Cascades. I did for six years. And then you know what the Lord did? He called me to Argentina. Another language, another culture, another way of life! But I come out of all that saying:

[Philippians 4:13 NKJV]

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Don't limit Him! People try to limit that. When I was in an orphanage, they said I was unadoptable. They said I was an imbecile—in writing! I've got it here in writing: "Imbecile. Unadoptable. Should be institutionalized." In other words, they wanted to put this dumb little kid in the back crib and just leave him there. He's unadoptable! After seventy-nine

other countries after that, He's still using me. Even though you noticed me coming up those stairs—you'll have to put a railing here pretty soon! But God knows we're here for His glory.

We need God's power, and He'll give it to you. We need God's power. Zechariah saw another golden lampstand and heard the famous declaration. What did he say?

[Zechariah 4:6 NKJV]

So he answered and said to me: "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," Says the LORD of hosts.

Whoa! That's biblical. Not by my might, not by my power, but by the Spirit of God we can do it! So you've got to keep that oil:

[2 Timothy 2:15 NKJV]

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

The lesson: we can't produce spiritual fruit through human strength alone. You are not alone. God is with you every step of the day. He's with you.

Another great example—I like Old Testament and New Testament examples: Zerubbabel had the enormous task of rebuilding the temple. Impossible! To the people, it was impossible. But God told him: "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit." The work would be accomplished through dependence upon God.

God is blessing you here. Keep up the fight. Keep the light burning! Keep it burning in China, keep it in India, keep the light burning all over the world. Everything I've ever done, you've helped me by prayer and financial support, and you're part of that. You sent me out there to Argentina, and we still go there in January, February, March, and April. People think I'm a snowbird, but it's fifty degrees Celsius! I'm no snowbird, and I don't like the oven either, but God wants us there, so we're there.

The early church: it started with ordinary people like you. I know we have one person here who looks like a lawyer, looks like a president or CEO or something, but we're just ordinary people. That's all—just ordinary people. But Jesus told us:

[Acts 1:8 NKJV]

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

We have that power; we have a powerhouse behind us! Then they began witnessing throughout Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and beyond. Their productivity came from God's power working through them. God chose to work through people.

The challenge: don't try to live a supernatural Christian life with natural strength. I can't do it. You can't become busy without becoming faithful. You can't have progress without power. You can't have activity without spiritual life. You can't have a full calendar and an empty soul. And that's one of my problems; I have to be careful. I want to work: do, do, do, do, do! And sometimes I just get down on my knees: "I can't do it anymore." But I can't sit down and pray because I'm too busy? That's wrong!

Sitting down, kneeling down, praying is just as important as running around like a chicken with your head cut off. Lord, show me what You are doing, and let me join You. So important! Spending time with God—that's where my wife gets her power. Every morning she's at that kitchen table with The Daily Bread, with the Bible. Don't disturb her; she's busy! And probably her backing helps me have a little bit of success in God's work, because I'm not at the table as much as she is, and I should be. Spend time with God if you want to have power.

3. Loyalty: Keep the Fire Burning

Yes, the lamp requires attention. It needs oil, the wick needed care, and the flame had to be maintained. Your relationship with God is so important.

Daniel, for instance—Daniel and the lions' den. Remember that one? We haven't got time to go through it all, but Daniel lived in Babylon, surrounded by a culture that did not honor his God. Daniel remained faithful, and he prayed in spite of danger, in spite of busyness, and God used him. Three times a day! What a fanatic! His government changed, his circumstances changed, his location changed, but his devotion to God did not change. Daniel's lamp was kept burning in Babylon. He didn't let the circumstances drive him away from shining for Jesus. Beautiful example!

In the New Testament, how about the early church? Ephesus had many good qualities. They worked hard, they persevered, and they stood against false teaching. But:

[Revelation 2:4-5 NKJV]

⁴ Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. ⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place--unless you repent.

Maybe they were too busy. Jesus calls to them: Remember, repent, and return. This is one of the strongest warnings connected with the lampstand. Jesus told them that if they refused to repent, their lampstand would be removed. The lampstand was connected with their witness as a local church.

Don't allow your spiritual fire to slowly go out. I have barbecues at least once a week. When I use coals, with the tongs you take a coal out. In the grill it's red hot, but taken out, it goes out. So you've got to take that coal and put it back in the fire, and it gets red again. That's you and me. Together we can do it. When we see a brother or sister falling back, we can help them, we can encourage them.

Yes, sometimes it happens slowly: less prayer, less Bible reading, less worship, less witnessing, less connecting with others, less time with God's people. Finally, the flame becomes weak. Oh, we need each other! We need each other.

The application of all this: ask yourself,

- What needs trimming in my life?
- What needs refilling?
- What needs repentance?
- What has taken the place of my first love?

The answer may not be that you need to do more; maybe you need to return to what you once did. Don't merely maintain your church attendance—maintain your relationship with Jesus!

People say, "Oh, you're so religious." And I look at them and I say, "I ain't religious. I have a relationship with Jesus." And that's the difference. You're in the right place, you're at the right time, but keep the fire burning. And the best way to do that is use it. Like someone says, "I'm running out of steam. I can't walk right, I can't lift up this hand, I can't get higher because of the muscles." But if you work the muscles, work the muscles, you won't get stiff.

Maintain your relationship with Jesus. Don't just keep the appearance of a flame; keep the fire burning! Let your light be what people see. Be a witness. Let your words, your actions, your attitude, and your character show Jesus' worth.

God bless you. I hope this has been a challenge to you. It's a challenge to me as I prepare it. And don't worry, I'm not speaking just to you; I'm speaking to myself. If I point at you, I've got three fingers pointing at me, and I've got this one pointing at God. I'm hoping what I said was under the direction of God.

Closing Prayer

Father God, thank You for each person who came out today. Bless our fellowship downstairs, Father; it is so important. Bless, guide, and direct, and we'll give You all the praise and glory that You deserve. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

God bless you.