

**This visionary moment is the first of a series presented as part of the Building Fund Campaign. It is an excerpt from a book "God Came Near – Chronicles of the Christ" by Max Lucado**

Last night we lost electricity. When the lights went out, I felt my way through the dark into the storage room where we keep the candles for nights like this. Through the glow of a match, I found the candles and lit four. How they illuminated the area! What had been blackness suddenly radiated with soft golden light. I could see the freezer I had just bumped with my knee.

"How great it is to have light!" I said out loud. I was so thrilled, I even spoke to the candles saying "If you do such a good job here in the storage room, just wait till I get you out where you are really needed! I'll put one of you on the table so we can eat. I'll put one of you on my desk so I can work. I'll give one of you to my husband so he can read his golf magazine. And I'll set you", I picked up the largest one, "in the living room where you can light up the whole area." (I felt a bit foolish talking to candles—but what do you do when the lights go out?)

I was turning to leave with a candle in my hand when I heard a voice, "Now, Hold it right there." I stopped. Somebody's in here, I thought. Then I relaxed thinking it was just my husband teasing me for talking to the candles. I took another step.

"Hold it, I said" AND it wasn't my husband's voice. My hands began to sweat.

"Who said that?"

"I did." Came the reply close to my hand.

"Who are you? What are you?" I asked.

"I'm a candle" came the reply. I looked at the candle I was holding. It was burning a strong, golden flame. It was white, big and tall. I looked around once more to see if the voice could be coming from another source.

"There's no one here but you, me and rest of the candles," the voice informed me.

I lifted up the candle to take a closer look and it said, "Don't take me out of here!"

"What do you mean? I have to take you out. You're a candle. Your job is to give light. Its dark out there. We're stubbing our toes and walking into walls. You have to come out and light up the place!"

"But you can't take me out. I'm not ready." The candle pleaded. "I need more preparation."

I couldn't believe my ears. "More preparation" I asked.

"Yeah, I decided I need to research this job of light-giving so I won't go out and make a bunch of mistakes. You'd be surprised how distorted the glow of an untrained candle can be. So, I'm doing some studying. I just finished a book on wind resistance. I'm in the middle of a great series of tapes on wick build-up and conservation. I'm reading the new best seller on flame display. Have you heard of it?" the candle asked.

"No" I answered.

"You might like it. It's called Waxing Eloquently," the candle said.

I thought to myself that I must be going nuts. What was I doing? I was here conversing with a candle while my family was out there in the darkness!

"All right then." I said. "You're not the only candle in this store room. I'll blow you out and take one of the other candles!"

But just as I got my cheeks full of air, I heard other voices saying, "We're not going either!"

It was a conspiracy, I turned around and looked at the three other candles; each with flames dancing.

I was beyond feeling awkward about talking to candles, I was getting miffed.

"You are candles and your job is to light dark spaces" I told them.

"Well, that may be what you think." Said the candle on the far left—a thinner blue fellow.

"You may think we have to go, but I'm busy," He said.

"Busy?" I asked.

"Yes, I'm meditating" he replied.

"What? A candle that meditates?"

“Yes, I’m meditating on the importance of light. It’s very enlightening.”

I decided to reason with them. “Listen, I appreciate what you guys are doing. I’m all for meditation time. And everyone needs to study and research; but for goodness sake, you guys have been in here for months. Haven’t you had enough time to get your wick on straight?

And you other two, are you going to stay in here as well?”

A short, fat, candle spoke up, “I’m waiting to get my life together, I’m not stable enough. I lose my temper easily. I guess you could say that I’m a hothead.”

The last candle was a pretty mix of white and blue.. “I’d like to help” she explained, “but lighting the darkness is not my gift. I’m a singer and I sing to other candles to encourage them to burn more brightly”.

And with that--she began to sing “This Little Light of Mine.” The other three joined in, filling the storage room with singing.

“Hey,” I shouted above the music, “I don’t mind if you sing while you work! In fact, we could use a little music out there!”

They didn’t hear me. They were singing too loudly. I yelled louder. “Come on, you guys. There’s plenty of time for this later. We’ve got a crisis on our hands.”

They wouldn’t stop. I put the big candle in the box and took a step back and considered the absurdity of it all. Four perfectly healthy candles singing to each other about light but refusing to come out of the storage room and share their light. Now, I’d had all I could take. One by one I blew them out. They kept singing to the end.

I shook my head and walked back out into the darkness bumping my knee on the same freezer. Then I bumped into my husband.

“Where are the candles?” he asked.

“They don’t....they won’t work. Where did you get them?”

“A friend gave them to me. He picked them up at the auction in a box of other things. He thought they looked like some church candles.”

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Candles that don’t share their light-----What good are they?

What if Christians wouldn’t SEEK---By that I mean, Christians who wouldn’t;

**S**pread the Good News

**E**xpress their faith

**E**quip themselves for ministry

**K**eeP His Spirit moving throughout the community

**How sad would that be?**