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# Reference Point

## January 2015

### ***Far More Influential***

*“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.” Matthew 5:14-15 (ESV)*

I should confess that I’m pretty pragmatic. I tend not to read divine messages into traffic detours, misdialed phone numbers, or unusually bright sunbeams. Perhaps this is a failing of faithful imagination.

I’m married to a similarly down-to-earth person, which makes it especially amusing when my husband jokes that God speaks to him through fortune cookies. He tends to receive fortunes that say things like (actual cookie wording here...) “God is looking out for you especially.” To be clear, neither of us puts much stock in these little notes; still, with such memorable gems, you might imagine that we anticipate messages from the cookie factory with some amusement. Not too long ago, we were just polishing off our sweet and sour shrimp when the server delivered our check, along with cookies for both of us. As usual, we snapped open the cookies and read the messages aloud--just run of the mill fortune cookie phrases that time around, and I tucked the paper into my wallet without thinking much about it.

A few days later, I was sitting at my desk in the library, mostly overwhelmed by my lack of useful expertise in a university-level undertaking with sobering implications. In both status and experience, I was the least accomplished person assigned to this special committee, and I felt a little embarrassed to be included. The more I considered the work that lay before us, the more useless I felt. And then the Lord

directed my attention back to that silly slip of paper with the simple message I hadn’t really absorbed the first time: You are far more influential than you think. Our Lord can be so gracious in using the ordinary things of life to encourage our hearts.

As I think about the notion of influence, Christ’s words from the Sermon on the Mount come to mind: “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.” This isn’t a question or a suggestion; it’s a beautiful depiction of who we are in Christ. In Him, we are the light. In Him, we also spread the light to those around us. In Him, we are people of influence.

I can’t possibly grasp the lasting effects of the activities that fill my days. I don’t know how the Lord might use my efforts to serve my church or my library or my institution. But I do know that faithful believers influence the world around them in life, in work, and in ministry. We are colleagues, teachers, encouragers, family members, and friends; and every interaction we have can be a powerful reflection of Christ’s light.

No doubt you’ve had experiences like mine when you felt painfully out of your depth and unequal to the task at hand. In case you need to be reminded today, you are the light of the world, and you are far more influential than you think.

—Denise Nelson

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