

Faith



Life Actually By Kari Kampakis

When life gets dark and we need light

When I worked for an electric utility, we had a joke inside the company that nobody thinks about their electricity until the lights go out.

Only then, when you're stuck in the darkness, do you realize how desperately dependent you are on your power source.

Electricity is easy to take for granted. Most people don't think about all the systems and employees working hard behind the scenes to keep homes and communities running. You don't realize how many conveniences electricity provides until you're suddenly without them.

One minute you're happily engaged in an activity, and then out of the blue ... *bam!*

You hear a snap and your entire house shuts down. Now, you can't do *anything*.

You can't make coffee. Or work on the computer. Or charge your cellphone. Or cook dinner. Or blow-dry your hair.

Or perform a thousand other activities you normally enjoy without a second thought.

Five seconds earlier, you felt so capable. Now, you just feel helpless. All the plans you hoped to accomplish have flown out the window.

Your first move, typically, is to look for light. You find something - a candle, a flashlight, a lantern - to help you make sense of

the darkness. And as you fumble in the darkness, you realize how powerless you are. It comes to your attention that ultimately, you're at the mercy of a force greater than yourself.

This relationship many of us have with electricity reminds of the relationship we have with God. Because when everything is good, and the lights turn on at the flip of a switch, we take God for granted. We forget how He's the power source making our lives smooth and easy.

Every good thing is a gift from God. Eyes that see, legs that walk, lungs that breathe, minds that think, hearts that love and feel - they're all products of grace. Only by His grace do we wake up alive each morning. Only by His work behind the scenes can we enjoy the freedoms and abilities we have.

Nobody likes to be stuck in darkness, but the truth is, that's where we learn to appreciate God. When our hearts are humbled and we're crying out for help, we notice His little gifts. We see His magnificent power. We call on Him to restore us, because He's the only One who can.

Of course, darkness can also bring out our worst. It leaves us irritated and on edge. Just as irate customers call electric utilities to blame

them for the storms that knock down power lines, we often blame God for the hardships and inconveniences we face due to evil forces or sin.

Why would a loving God allow us to suffer? Why would we face a major life power outage when our neighbor across the street is basking in light?

In our dark moments, the *whys* add up. We want answers to His mysteries. And if we believe our situation is hopeless, or God has deserted us, we'll be miserable. We'll sit passively in the darkness, dwelling in self-pity.

But there's a better option, and that is to look for light, to get up and find a flashlight of faith. Flashlights can't illuminate an entire room, but they do project a beam. And that beam is just enough to reveal our next step.

John 16:33 says, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

This verse tells us in advance that hard times and troubles are inevitable. We'll all face times of darkness.

But if we plant our hope in God and accept the light He sends into the darkness through his son Jesus, we can survive. Even if our life gets ripped out of the socket, and we're lost in a once familiar place, Jesus walks with us. He

points our flashlight toward the path of God, directing us to move closer to Him.

It's natural to be scared of the dark. It's understandable why we get disheartened and discouraged by the darkness we witness in real life and on TV.

But the bigger news is, there's hope. There's a breaking story called Christmas. Because the baby born in a manger is the light of the world. He came to conquer darkness and offer eternal life.

It's always a joyful moment when the lights come on after a dark spell. With praise and gratitude, our hearts instinctively sing. This Christmas season, I wish you a similar celebration. I pray you rejoice in the gift of light and feel empowered by the light of Jesus, who will defeat darkness in the end and reminds us in the meantime that when we walk with Him, we can be strong and brave.

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