

## Reality & You (Part 1) – Tripping Over Life's Furniture

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**Mark 4:21-23** <sup>21</sup> And He was saying to them, "A lamp is not brought to be put under a peck-measure, is it, or under a bed? Is it not brought to be put on the lampstand? <sup>22</sup> "For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has anything been secret, but that it should come to light. <sup>23</sup> "If any man has ears to hear, let him hear."

**Luke 11:33** No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it away in a cellar, nor under a peck-measure, but on the lampstand, in order that those who enter may see the light.

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The handyman brought along his girlfriend. He started working in the living room, and she went into the dining room to wait for him. I followed her a few minutes later to finish vacuuming up last night's dinner crumbs, and there she was, standing motionless on the rug, staring into space. I started vacuuming.

As I got close to her feet, I expected she'd notice and move out of the way. But no. She just stood there, unaware. I tried a few "move-in" gestures with the vacuum but got no response. The light was on, and she wasn't blind (she'd easily found her way into the dining room). Neither was she deaf (when I finally asked her to move, she moved). Her senses were intact, but she didn't use them. The events inside her head commanded her attention so completely that the world around her faded away into a dark unknown.

Her behavior was extreme, but you shouldn't consider it novel. We act similarly. Maybe not so vividly, but let's not fool ourselves – we're inattentive too.

### Dark Rooms – Dark Lives

Jesus thinks inattentiveness is a bad idea. His lamp stories make that clear. He routinely starts these stories with a joke about foolish uses for the genie-style lamps of the day. Every three old in Galilee knew you don't put a burning lamp under a bed unless you want to start a fire. You might need a lamp in the cellar, but you wouldn't see much that was useful, just junk, dust, and cobwebs. No, Jesus explains, you put lamps on a lampstand. That way they light the room, people walking in can see what's there, and nobody ends up tripping over the furniture.

Lamps reveal reality. A dark room can hold secrets – a burglar could be hiding near the door; one of the kids might be quietly finishing off the rest of the dessert. Ah, but not if the lamp is where it belongs. Then what's hidden is revealed, and a secret act can't stay secret. That's how God works. He makes sure that nothing stays hidden and that secrets come to light. (See Matthew 10:26 Mark 4:22, Luke 8:17, and Luke 12:2.)

Jesus ends His story with a warning, "If any man has ears to hear, let him hear." God has made reality visible. We're to pay attention to what He's lit up. If we don't, we'll miss what God wants us to see, end up in the dark, and keep tripping over life's furniture.

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Jesus has made reality visible.  
He is the light of the world. (See John 8:12)

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### **Living in the Dark**

Though other factors may affect our ability to pay attention – blindness and deafness, brain dysfunction, substance abuse – part of every unawareness includes our preference for darkness rather than light. We are *all* selective about what we perceive; it's a universal. Everybody, at least sometimes, tunes out. (We find the ideas inside our heads more compelling than the reality of our surroundings.) All tuning out contains an element of choice. Jesus warns against this choice. He doesn't want us to live in the dark, so unaware of reality that we keep tripping over life's furniture.

Our motives for tuning out run the gamut from indifference to terror. They differ from person to person and from occasion to occasion. It's important to identify our motives because we can't turn away from something we haven't named.

Take time now to go through the following questions. They'll give you some ideas about what lies behind the times you prefer darkness over light.

### **A Few Questions**

What kinds of things act as *your* personal reality blockers? Several possibilities come to mind:

- Fear and its companions, worry and anxiety (it feels safer not to be aware)
- Indifference (we don't care, perhaps we're bored)
- Self-interest (I take precedence over you)
- Impatience (I want to be doing something else)
- Self-indulgence (my desires take center-stage)
- Shame and guilt (I want to hide - blocking out reality helps me feel invisible)
- Difficulty focusing (causes vary: internal upsets, external demands, simple fatigue or hunger)

Which of these reality blockers do you personally encounter?

Are there others reality blockers you would add to my list?

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