**STEPPING IN THE LIGHT**

Sunday School Lesson 12

*Lessons from the Hymnbook*

1 John 1:4-7

1/1/2023

**Introduction:** After spending the last few weeks studying various Christmas hymns, we are going to turn our attention back to other types of hymns found in our songbook. This morning, we are going to be looking at the hymn “Stepping in the Light.” This hymn was written by Eliza Hewitt in 1890. While probably not as well-known as Fanny Crosby, Ms. Hewitt was a very accomplished hymnwriter in her day. She wrote several hymns that we are familiar with today such as: “More about Jesus,” “My Faith Has Found A Resting Place,” “Sunshine in My Soul,” and “When We All Get to Heaven.” Like Crosby, Ms. Hewitt also had to deal with a health issue. She suffered an injury while performing her job as a schoolteacher. While she was correcting a young man who was misbehaving, the young man struck her in the back with a heavy slate. This resulted in a very severe spinal injury. After being confined to her home and a heavy cast for six months, she was finally able to go outside and take a short walk on a warm spring day. Upon finishing this walk, Ms. Hewitt wrote her first hymn – “Sunshine in My Soul.” Not long after, she penned the words for the song we are studying today. Considering that she did not know whether she would ever be able to step again, I imagine there was extra sentiments of joy placed in this hymn. Let’s see what Biblical truths we can find in this song:

1. **STEPPING IN THE LIGHT MEANS FOLLOWING THE STEPS OF THE LORD.**
2. **Notice that the Lord is light. If we follow His leading, it will cause us to walk in that light (1 John 1:4-7).** As we sing about stepping in the light, we must understand that following the Lord is how we step in the light. The Lord is light. If we are following Him, we are naturally going to walk in the light. The Scripture refers to light in this sense as walking in that which is good and right. This is in opposition to walking in darkness. If we walk in darkness, we cannot say that we are following Him. We cannot claim that we have fellowship with Him. This is important for us to remember because mankind in our sinful condition is inclined to do that which is right in our own eyes. Following our own idea of light will not lead us into stepping in the light. It will lead us into the darkness of sin. The Lord is the source of light. There is no light for mankind outside of the light of His goodness. Thus, we must seek to walk in His steps. We must strive to follow our Saviour and King. He wants to lead us and guide us in the light.
3. **Notice that when we step in the light, our lives are shaped by the example of the Lord (1 Peter 2:21-25).** In 1 Peter 2, we see that the Lord has provided us with an example. The Bible instructs us to follow His steps. When we follow the Lord in the light, we are shaped after Him. We are walking the same course that He walked. We will resist sin as He resisted sin (vs. 22a). We will speak the right thing as He spoke the right thing (vs. 22b). We will learn to turn the other cheek and resist rewarding evil with evil (vs. 23a). We will trust that the Father will make all things right and continue to be our faithful Judge (vs. 23b). We must remember that we are as sheep that have gone astray. We have returned to the Shepherd, and we must continue to follow Him and allow Him to shape us into what we need to be. How do we be like Christ? We take one step at a time in the light. We follow Him one step at a time. We submit to His Spirit one decision at a time. If we continue to do this with each step, we will see more and more of the transforming power that the Lord has and wants to display on us. We will see the evidence of Christ more and more in our lives.
4. **STEPPING IN THE LIGHT MEANS STAYING CLOSE TO THE LORD.**
5. **Notice that we need to stay close to the Lord to help us overcome the temptation of darkness (John 8:12; Luke 11:4; 22:40; James 1:12-15; 4:8; 1 Peter 2:9)** Now that we have established that we must follow the Lord to be able to step in the light, we must also understand our need to stay close to the Lord. There is always a temptation or draw of the flesh toward darkness. Many men do not come to the saving light of Jesus Christ because they are lovers of darkness. The darkness of sin does off its pleasures for a season. Knowing this, we must strive to not only follow the Lord, but we must purpose to stay as close to Him as we can get. What better way to overcome the temptation of darkness than to stay as close to the light as you can! Our prayer ought to be that we are not led into temptation. Our flesh is weak. It cannot get victory over the darkness on its own. It needs to have a source of light shining bright on it to remind it of the goodness and joy of that light. Let’s stay as far away from temptation as we can by staying close to Him.
6. **Notice that we must trust in the Lord to shield and defend us from the temptation of darkness (Psalm 7:10; 59:1-2; Matthew 5:13).** It’s not just a closeness to the Lord that helps us to walk in the light and avoid the darkness. It also requires a willingness on our part to trust Him as our defense. Too often, Christians are defeated and walking in darkness simply because they refuse to trust the Lord as their defense. We are guilty of trying to find every other type of defense when we have the defense there available for us. The Lord wants to keep us from the evil way. He wants to direct us in the right path. He wants to be our shield and our buckler. He has given us His Spirit to help guide and instruct us. The Holy Spirit convicts us when that temptation to walk in darkness comes. He has given us His Scriptures to defend us against the darkness. Satan tries to mask the darkness as the light. It’s easy to get drawn into the temptation of darkness when that darkness appears to us as light. That’s why we need the Word to make it plain to us those things that are harmful and wrong for us to do. Let’s be willing to trust the Lord as our defense.
7. **STEPPING IN THE LIGHT MEANS STEPPING WITH PATIENCE.**
8. **Notice that we must forbear others who are stepping in the light with us (Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13).** When we step in the light, we understand that we are not stepping alone. In addition to our Saviour, there are also going to be other believers who are there stepping in the light as well. As believers, we are children of the light. As a church, we are the light of the world. We are a city that is set on a hill. The challenge with this is that we are walking in the light with others who have the same struggles and temptations that we have. I think the easiest way to illustrate this would be to think of the church and the perception that some people have about it. There are those who will avoid going to church because of the people there. They expect the church to be a perfect place, and they fail to realize or remember that the church is filled with imperfect people who are striving to walk in the light of the Lord. Let’s not be guilty of the same. Let’s remember to forbear one another in love and seek to help others to walk in the light of the Lord.
9. **Notice that we must have patience with ourselves as we step in the light (1 Thessalonians 5:14; Luke 8; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18).** I believe the third stanza of the song places an emphasis on being patient with ourselves. As we walk in the light, we expect to see progress. We expect to see that change taking place. We see the light, and it reveals to us what we ought to do and who we ought to be. This makes it harder to be patient and claim grace for ourselves. We want to see the finished product. The disciples walked in the light of the Lord for several years, as they followed Him throughout His earthly ministry. Yet, they were still not a finished product. Peter had his struggles. He knew what he needed to be, but it was much harder to actually be that person. I believe he was especially frustrated and impatient with himself after his denial of the Lord. He wept bitterly, and he returned back to his work that he was doing before he was a disciple. He likely felt that he was inadequate or maybe even incapable of walking in the light. The Lord was not done with him!
10. **STEPPING IN THE LIGHT MEANS FOLLOWING UNTIL THE END OF THE JOURNEY.**
11. **Notice that the steps we take in following the Lord are leading us down a specific way (Matthew 7:13-14; John 14:6).** Stepping in the light and following the Lord does not mean walking around aimlessly in this life. Our steps are leading us down a specific way. We are walking the Lord’s path. We are following where He went and doing what He did. We should recognize some of the destinations along the way. We shouldn’t be surprised when we make a stop by the place of suffering and trials. After all, this is the same way that the Saviour went during His earthly ministry. As mentioned previously, our lives are being shaped by His example. We are to be repeating that which He did during His earthly ministry. We ought to be witnessing to others about the Gospel. That’s the path that the Saviour went down. He spent much time teaching and preaching to the people. Look at the life of Jesus, and you will have a clear idea of where these steps lead.
12. **Notice that the steps we take will eventually lead us directly to the light (Revelation 21:23-24; 22:5).** While we sing of stepping in the light spiritually, we should also remember that stepping in the light will literally take place for the believer. That’s the finality of our journey. That’s where the steps lead us. The Lord ascended up into Heaven, and we will one day ascend up as well. When we are there, we will see the Light of the Heaven. He will be shining bright for all of us to see. We will get to see the King in all of His beauty and majesty. The glory of the Lord will shine brightly. There is a very fitting end to the song: “Happy, how happy, our place at His side!” Let’s keep our place by Him now, and let’s also remember and rejoice that this journey will lead us to the day where we will dwell by the Light!