

At Christmas there are many lights to admire. They are all along the streets, decorating houses and the like. There are lights on the Christmas Trees. There are candles on the altar and our advent wreaths. Light is all around us.

Light has some fascinating properties. For instance, [Slide 1] when it is refracted by a water droplet or a prism, it splits into a rainbow full of colour. Another thing about light is that it is very fast. In theory, nothing can travel faster than light. [Slide 2] Light travels at a speed of 300,000 km in a second. That's 7.5 laps of earth in a second. It's like going to Perth in one hundredth of a second. It's equivalent to going to the moon in 1.3 seconds. That is fast!

Other electromagnetic waves also travel at the same speed. This includes radio waves, TV signals, mobile phone signals and GPS signals.

Because light is so fast, we use light years to measure and compare distances in outer space. You may have heard of a light year. This is the distance light travels in one year. For example, [Slide 3] our sun is 8.3 light minutes away. That means the sunlight currently streaming in through the window left the sun 8 minutes and 20 seconds ago. It left before we even started singing *Once in Royal David's City*. And the light leaving now, will only arrive at the end of my address.

[Slide 4] In our night sky, the closest star system is 4.3 light years away. Alpha Centauri is the brighter of the two pointers in the Southern Cross. If we suddenly noticed this star disappear, explode or change colour, what we are actually seeing is something that happened over 4 years ago.

Now let's say we wanted to travel to Alpha Centauri. If we left today, travelling at the speed of light, we should arrive just in time for Easter, 2023 – and my 16<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary.

Now of course there are a number of issues with travelling at the speed of light. There is of course the issue of the physical speed,

which is considered theoretically impossible and really unsafe. Another problem with travelling at the speed of light, is that your headlights and rear vision mirrors won't work. – Although if you are the only one travelling at light speed, you probably wouldn't need to use your rear vision mirror anyway.

Talking about looking back, [Slide 5] let's go back to the beginning of Genesis and look at how light was created. Here we see light listed as the first thing God created. What's more, it wasn't something he did with his hands, or in some elaborate factory. Genesis tells us he created it with words. [Slide 6]

God said, "Let there be light, and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. (Genesis 1:3-4, NIV)

The Lord merely spoke,  
and the heavens were created.

He breathed the word,  
and all the stars were born. (Psalm 33:6, NLT)

God created light using his voice. On numerous other occasions, the bible describes God also speaking things into existence. Jesus told the storm to be calm and it was. He told dead people like Lazarus to come out of the tomb or get up and they did. In some cases, he healed people from a distance just by his word.

These are known as speech acts. They are not mere words. They actually do what they say. Our worship services are also filled with speech acts. The pastor doesn't just say the words of forgiveness or blessing. He actually pronounces forgiveness. As he says the words, God actually blesses the people. The words do what they say. God uses speech acts to give light and life to our world.

And yet, there is an even greater miracle than all this. [Slide 7] The miracle of God becoming human. No matter how many light years separated us from God, he was willing to bridge the gap. The sin

within us, means that we are naturally turned against God. We naturally feel as much love for him as an angry, upset teenager towards their disagreeing parent. When things don't go our way, we naturally want to yell angry words at God before slamming the door in his face.

Yet, once an angry child has had time to cool down, the parent might enter their room to try to reconcile and resolve the situation. Likewise, God enters our space. He doesn't simply just leave us in our mess, to stew on our problems. He enters our world to come and make things right between us and him. Jesus is the one who adds light and colour to our world dim, dark world. Jesus loves you so much he came as the light of the world to dispel the gloom, despair and deep darkness that we experience in our lives. As John writes in his opening chapter. **[Slide 8]**

The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it. (John 1:4-5, NLT)

We hear it again half way through the book,

"I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life." (John 8:12, NLT)

Michael W. Smith **[Slide 9]** sings of this miracle:

Light of the World  
You stepped down into darkness  
Open my eyes  
Let me see  
Beauty that made  
This heart adore You  
Hope of a life  
Spent with You

King of all days  
Oh, so highly exalted  
Glorious in Heaven above  
Humbly You came  
To the earth You created  
All for love's sake became poor  
I'll never know how much it cost  
To see my sin upon that cross

We can never be beyond his reach. No matter how distant we feel we are from God, Christmas reminds us that he is always near. He is prepared to do anything to make things right. He is even willing to die for you, so that your sins could be forgiven. When we feel like we are lost in sin, believe the words Jesus spoke from the cross: **[Slide 10]**

“Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.” (Luke 22:34, NLT)

What’s more, **[Slide 11]** as his disciples, we become the light of the world. (Matthew 5:14). As we live in Him and his forgiveness, we bring light, life, hope and colour to those around us.

So if it feels like we are going through life at the speed of light, with no headlights to see where we are going, remember that God is there with you, loving you, forgiving you, and wanting to guide you in His way. When our memory is fading and it feels like our rear vision mirror isn’t working anymore to remind us where we’ve been – do not be afraid, God is still there with you whatever the storm.

**[Slide 12]** This Christmas, remember that no matter your situation, God loves you, and he is there for you. May he open the eyes of our heart to know his presence, and may your heart praise and adore him always, bringing light to the world around you. Amen.