

EDGES AND WHISPERS

by Max Lucado

“Indeed these are the mere edges of His ways, and how small a whisper we hear of Him!” (Job 26:14 NKJV)

A few nights ago a peculiar thing happened.

An electrical storm caused a blackout in our neighborhood. When the lights went out, I felt my way through the darkness into the storage closet where we keep the candles for nights like this. Through the glow of a lit match I looked up on the shelf where the candles were stored. There they were, already positioned in their stands, melted to various degrees by previous missions. I took my match and lit four of them.

How they illuminated the storage room! What had been a veil of blackness suddenly radiated with soft, golden light! I could see the freezer I had just bumped with my knee. And I could see my tools that needed to be straightened.

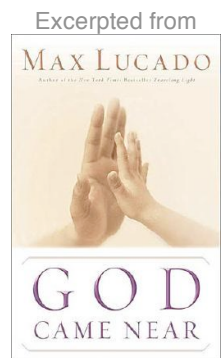
“How great it is to have light!” I said out loud, and then spoke to the candles. “If you do such a good job here in the storage closet, just wait till I get you out where you’re really needed! I’ll put one of you on the table so we can eat. I’ll put one of you on my desk so I can read. I’ll give one of you to Denalyn so she can cross-stitch. And I’ll set you,” I took down the largest one, “in the living room where you can light up the whole area.” (I felt a bit foolish talking to candles—but what do you do when the lights go out?)

I was turning to leave with the large candle in my hand when I heard a voice, “Now, hold it right there.”

I stopped, *Somebody’s in here!* I thought. Then I relaxed. *It’s just Denalyn, teasing me for talking to the candles.*

“Ok, honey, cut the kidding.” I said in the semidarkness. No answer. *Hmm, maybe it was the wind.* I took another step.

“Hold it, I said!” There was that voice. My hands began to sweat.



“Who said that?”

“I did.” The voice was near my hand.

“Who are you? What are you?”

“I’m the candle.” I looked at the candle I was holding. It was burning a strong, golden flame. It was red and sat on a heavy wooden candle holder that had a firm handle.

I looked around once more to see if the voice could be coming from another source. “There’s no one here but you, me, and the rest of us candles,” the voice informed me.

I lifted up the candle to take a closer look. You won’t believe what I saw. There was a tiny face in the wax. (I told you you wouldn’t believe me.) Not just a wax face that someone had carved, but a moving, functioning, fleshlike face full of expression and life.

“Don’t take me out of here!”

“What?”

“I said, don’t take me out of this room.”

“What do you mean? I have to take you out. You’re a candle. Your job is to give light. It’s dark out there. People are stubbing their toes and walking into walls. You have to come out and light up the place!”

“But you can’t take me out. I’m not ready,” the candle explained with pleading eyes. “I need more preparation.”

I couldn’t believe my ears. “More preparation?”

“Yeah, I’ve decided I need to research this job of light-giving so I won’t go out and make a bunch of mistakes. You’d be surprised how distorted the glow of an untrained candle can be. So I’m doing some studying. I just finished a book on wind resistance. I’m in the middle of a great series of tapes on wick build-up and conservation—and I’m reading the new bestseller on flame display. Have you heard of it?”

“No,” I answered.

“You might like it. It’s called *Waxing Eloquently*.”

“That really sounds inter—“ I caught myself. *What am I doing? I’m in here conversing with a candle while my wife and daughters are out there in the darkness!*

“All right then,” I said. “You’re not the only candle on the shelf. I’ll blow you out and take the others!

But just as I got my cheeks full of air, I heard other voices.

“We aren’t going either!”

It was a conspiracy. I turned around and looked at the three other candles, each with flames dancing above a miniature face.

I was beyond feeling awkward about talking to candles. I was getting miffed.

“You are candles and your job is to light dark places!”

“Well, that my be what you think,” said the candle on the far left—a long, thin fellow with a goatee and a British accent, “*You* may think we have to go, but I’m busy.”

“Busy?”

“Yes, I’m meditating.”

“What? A candle that meditates?”

“Yes. I’m meditating on the importance of light. It’s really enlightening.”

I decided to reason with them. “Listen, I appreciate what you guys are doing. I’m all for meditation time. And everyone needs to study and research; but for goodness sake, you guys have been in here for weeks! Haven’t you had enough time to get your wick on straight?”

“And you other two,” I asked, “are you going to stay in here as well?”

A short, fat, purple candle with plump cheeks that reminded me of Santa Claus spoke up. “I’m waiting to get my life together. I’m not stable enough. I lose my temper easily. I guess you could say that I’m a hothead.”

All this was sounding too familiar. “Not your gift? What do you mean?”

“Well, I’m a singer. I sing to other candles to encourage them to burn more brightly.” Without asking my permission, she began a rendition of “This Little Light of Mine.” (I have to admit, she had a good voice.)

The other three joined in, filling the storage room with singing.

“Hey,” I shouted above the music, “I don’t mind if you sing while you work! In fact, we could use a little music out there!”

They didn’t hear me. They were singing too loudly. I yelled louder.

“Come on, you guys. There’s plenty of time for this later. We’ve got a crisis on our hands.”

They wouldn’t stop. I put the big candle on the shelf and took a step back and considered the absurdity of it all. Four perfectly healthy candles singing to each other about light but refusing to come out of the closet. I had all I could take. One by one I blew them out. They kept singing to the end. The last one to flicker was the female. I snuffed her out right in the “puff” part of “Won’t let Satan puff me out.”

I stuck my hands in my pocket and walked back out in the darkness. I bumped my knee on the same freezer. Then I bumped into my wife.

“Where are the candles?” she asked.

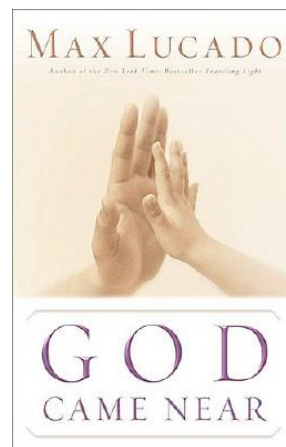
“They don’t . . . they won’t work. Where did you buy those candles anyway?”

“Oh, they’re church candles. Remember the church that closed down across town? I bought them there.”

I understood.¹

*Excerpted from
God Came Near*

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Available for purchase at MaxLucado.com*



¹ Lucado, M. 1987, *God Came Near: Chronicles of the Christ*, Multnomah Press: Portland, OR.