

## Two Electrification Stories

**1** As a child I lived in an area of southern Missouri where electricity was available only in the form of lightning. But in my senior year of high school the REA (Rural Electrification Administration) extended its lines into the area where we lived, and electrical power became available to households and farms.

When those lines came by our farm, a very different way of living presented itself. Our relationships to fundamental aspects of life – daylight and dark, hot and cold, clean and dirty, work and leisure, preparing food and preserving it – could then be vastly changed for the better. But we still had to believe in the electricity and its arrangements, understand them, and take the practical steps involved in *relying* on it.

You may think the comparison rather crude, and in some respects it is. But it will help us to understand Jesus' basic message about the kingdom of heaven if we pause to reflect on those farmers who, in effect, heard the message: "Repent, for electricity is at hand." Repent, or turn from their kerosene lamps and lanterns, their iceboxes and cellars, their scrub-boards and rug beaters, their woman-powered sewing machines and their radios with dry-cell batteries.

The power that could make their lives far better was right there near them where, by making relatively simple arrangements, they could utilize it. Strangely, a few did not accept it. They did not "enter the kingdom of electricity." Some just didn't want to change. Others could not afford it, or so they thought...

*Dallas Willard, The Divine Conspiracy*

**2** There's a supposedly true story of a farm woman who was the last in the county to get wired for electricity. So she calls the electric company, pays all the fees, and they come out and have the power installed in her home. However, after a couple of months, the electric company noticed she didn't seem to use very much electricity at all.

Thinking there might be a problem with the hookup, they sent a meter reader out to check on the matter. The man came to the door and said, "We've just checked your meter and it doesn't seem that you're using much electricity. Is there a problem?" "Oh no" she said. "We're quite satisfied. We turn on the electric lights every night so we can see to light our lamps, and then we switch them off again."

Now, why didn't this woman make more use of her electricity? She believed in electricity. She believed the promises of the electric company when they told her about it. She went to a great deal of trouble and expense to have her house wired for it. But she never made the most of the power she had access to.

This is how some of us respond when it comes to connecting with God. We believe in God, we believe in His promises, we believe He loves us, yet we neglect to connect with him. We know that He's there, but we doubt that He is there for us.

*Source unknown*

**+** Similarly Jesus directs us to His Kingdom. In these stories something absolutely crucial to Jesus' message is emphasized. There is no suggestion that electricity hasn't happened yet but is about to happen or about to be there... Rather, it has now become available. And, similarly, the Kingdom of God is also right beside us. It is indeed The Kingdom Among Us. You can reach it from your heart with your mouth, through even a shaky and stumbling confidence and confession that Jesus is the death-conquering Master of all (Romans 10:9). To be sure, that Kingdom has been here as long as we humans have been here, and longer. But it has been available to us through simple confidence in Jesus, the Anointed, only from the time He became a public figure. It is a kingdom that, in the person of Jesus, welcomes us just as we are, just where we are, and makes it possible for us to translate our "ordinary" life into an eternal one.

*Dallas Willard, The Divine Conspiracy*