

HOW CAN YOU **SERVE?**

“Be a lamp
or a lifeboat or a ladder.
Help someone’s soul heal.
Walk out of your house
like a shepherd.” — *Rumi*

Be a Lamp

Gift: To Illuminate, Inspire

Qualities: Bright, steady, low maintenance and safe
(not given to the sparks and sputters of drama).

BRIGHT

In what area of your life can you be a shining example? Patience? Courage? Kindness? Light-heartedness?

A person travels many roads throughout their life. You can be a light along the way—right where you are, with who you already are. Your light doesn’t have to light the whole world. Your light doesn’t have to light someone else’s whole journey. But if you doubt or neglect your light, it will be missing on someone’s path – maybe at a crucial crossroads. Your small light in the darkness may help someone find a missing key that will open doors for them. It may help them find their glasses so they can see.

Your small lamp may be the bright spot in someone else’s life. Whether you are a flashlight or a lighthouse, your light can be aimed to be of service.



STEADY

I once lived with a man during a stormy period in both our lives. Next door, a single woman came and went, rode horses, had tea on her deck. Her porch light came on every night at the same time. Even though we never spoke, she was a steadying influence just by being herself, by holding course.

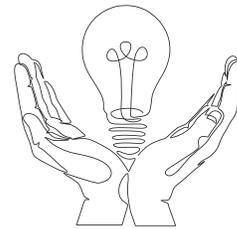
Keeping a regular schedule: You can help create serenity and reduce stress for others by being someone they can count on, by being on time, doing what you say. Be trustworthy. Creating rituals—morning and evening—will put your light on “auto” setting. Without saying a word, your wattage says: All is well.

Low maintenance and safe

Being a lamp requires mindfulness: to check the wiring, fill the oil or recharge the batteries. Ground yourself. Be a stable source that doesn't add havoc. Offer your light freely.

HELPFUL

What is your purpose? How can your light be of service to others?



Ambient

Ambient light is fixed, and therefore adds serenity to a situation. Heading into an awkward, tense situation? Bring a bright smile, a positive attitude. Folks who haven't mastered their light force often shine their bright lights in other's faces, trying to illuminate another's shortcomings. "Can't you see how wrong you are?" their light shrieks. Ambient light says, "Let's look at this situation calmly, without being harsh."

Accent

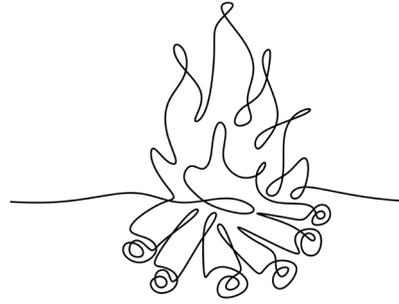
Accent light shines a spotlight on something beautiful or truthful. It pulls focus away from the mundane and highlights that which deserves our attention.

Direct

Directional light is also known as task lighting. If you are going to shine a bright light do it to help others fulfill a specific task. Illuminate a tricky aspect of life for another.

Campfire and constellations

Ancient stories are filled with people traveling, often at night. Sharing your campfire, its warmth and light can be of great comfort to a fellow sojourner. It asks us to be vulnerable (to scammers and thieves) but provides the magic of a soulful intimacy that can only be shared by strangers passing on the road.



Warning lights

If you've seen trouble, volunteer for a shift as lighthouse keeper, warning others of what you yourself have experienced. Offer your light in all directions, without judgment or prejudice. And don't take it personally if someone ventures further, ignoring your sound advice. The point is not to control others, but to illuminate their way, so they can make better choices for themselves.

CHALLENGES

Perfectionism:

The person traveling in the dark doesn't care if your lamp is cracked or slightly askew. It does affect them though, if you've covered it or haven't set it out, waiting until it is perfect. Perfectionism can be a form of self-centeredness. If you were meant to be a chandelier, you'd be hardwired for it. A humble lamp on a dark street can often be a meaningful gift to weary souls.

Set out your lamp, light a candle, create a bonfire on the hill, in the form that comes naturally to you.

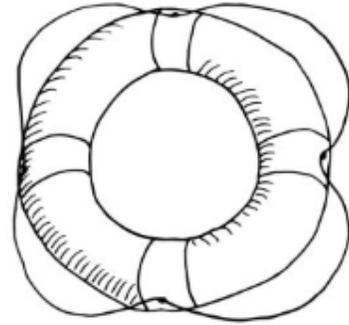
Shadows:

Folks with brilliant light often cast dark shadows: the guru, the priest, celebrity. We're all familiar with the ghoulish face of one who hogs the spotlight only for themselves, pointed at themselves. As any photographer will tell you, having multiple sources of light will soften shadows. A community of common folk each holding a candle creates a glowing ambiance and is not dependent upon any one source of light.

A Lifeboat

Gift: Relief, courage

Qualities: Brave, Responsive, Buoyant, Prepared



BRAVE

Being a lifeboat requires a willingness to accept risk. When folks are in “dire straits,” the waves can be rough, the temperature frigid. Often one must go into the storm to be of service.

RESPONSIVE

You must act swiftly, certain of your role, but not always certain of the outcome.

BUOYANT

Your own vessel must be stable enough to support others. Stamina and perseverance are valuable assets if you are called to this type of work.

PREPARED

Tragedy is a part of life and it often gives us little warning. To offer yourself as a lifeboat means to be “on call.” It may feel as though much of the time you are waiting, idling away the hours, but being prepared is big part of the work. Whether the help you offer is physical, emotional or spiritual, remaining strong in that area is essential.

TYPES OF LIFEBOATS:

Peer crisis

When a vessel sinks unexpectedly, whether that's a marriage or a business or a ship, lifeboats offer a path of transition back to solid ground. Sometimes we just find ourselves in a crisis. We have no credentials, no manual to follow, and yet the situation calls for courage and level-headedness, practical smarts and philosophical wisdom.

Search and rescue

As a first responder, the commitment is total. If it is a calling, you actively go where help is needed most. Often working with a team, the help you give can make a dramatic difference in others' lives.

CHALLENGES:

Hero-complex

If our need to be needed overrides our desire to be of service, we might start seeing everyone as victims who need saving. Check in with folks before you rush in. "May I offer some advice/assistance?" "Are you open to suggestions?" "May I help you?" Be careful not to label people as victims to create a false hierarchy. Victim is not a permanent status. They have gifts to give, too. If you don't offer your gifts, they may not be able to offer theirs to others later.



A Ladder

Gift: Uplift, hoist

Qualities: Strong, stable, balanced; step-oriented; firmly on the ground, uplifting.

STRONG, STABLE, BALANCED

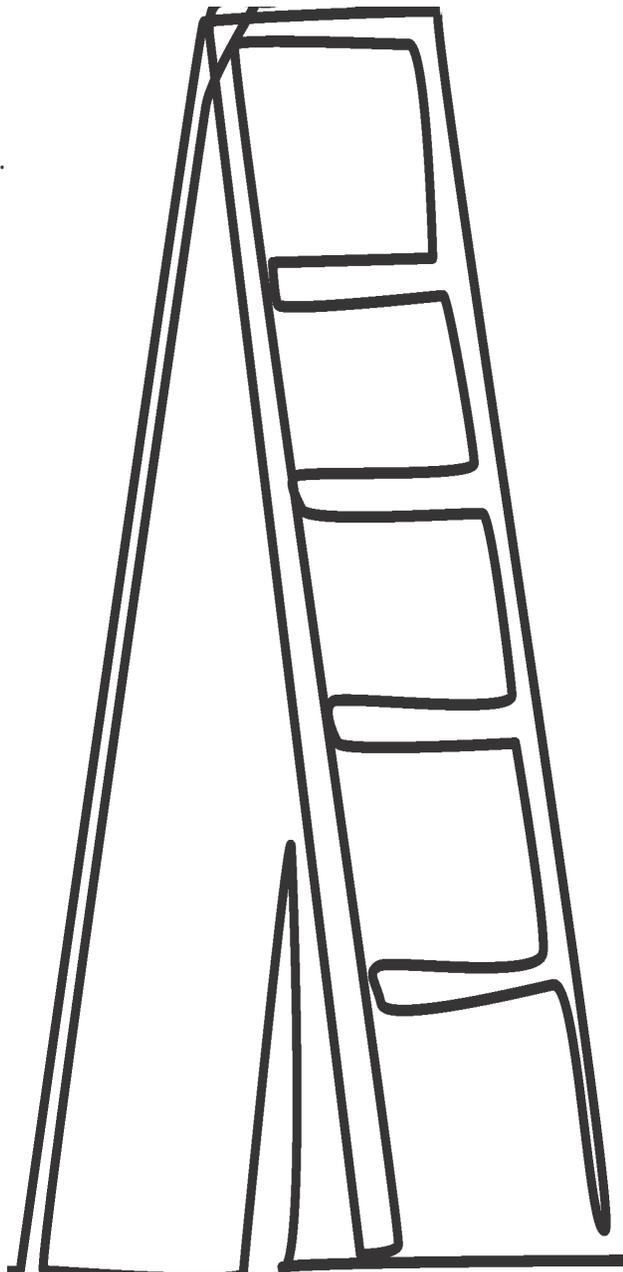
Stability in shifting situations can be a game-changer. A rickety ladder does no one good. Your gift may be to provide stable footing for someone else's growth. That requires being balanced, being accessible (not locked away), being willing to be of service.

STEP-ORIENTED

Step-by-step instructions can be micro-incremental bits of knowledge in the ancient way of mentoring or apprenticing. Instead of "climbing the ladder," needing to always be on top, offer others the experience of rising. Uplift them with encouragement. Bear witness to their growth. "I see you taking the next step."

Ladders give people access to new opportunities and introduces them to higher perspectives.

Look through your life for a struggle you've overcome. It could be step-parenting, managing money, growing vegetables. Break the tasks into baby steps. Walk someone through it.



GROUNDED, BUT UPLIFTING

If you have achieved great heights, you can help someone else with the fear of falling that you once experienced. Offer to spot them as they get out of their comfort zone. Help them rise above their current status.

TYPES OF LADDERS:

Step ladder

Make someone else's life easier in small, everyday ways. Be handy.

Extension ladder

Help people reach new heights. This could be a coaching, teaching or mentoring, that requires you to extend yourself in ways that may stretch you.

Rope ladder

Like the lifeboat, a rope ladder is often used in emergency situations because it's both strong and nimble. Often rope ladders are lowered down to someone else from a more advantageous position or to get them out of a hole.

CHALLENGES:

Ego

Being a ladder for someone else can be tough on the ego if you're not well-supported. You may begin to feel "stepped on," "used," or stuck. Save thank you messages of those you have helped. Create a folder so that when you're feeling depleted or unappreciated, you can recall those whose path you've uplifted.

