

Often on a pleasant afternoon in Portland, Maine, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow could be found walking to the Portland Head Light to visit with his friends, the keepers of the lighthouse. Now, on a plaque nearby, looking out to sea, is the last stanza of his famous poem, *The Lighthouse*.

*Sail on! sail on, ye stately ships!
And with your floating bridge the ocean span.
Be mine to guard this light from all eclipse.
Be yours to bring man nearer unto man.*

On many a dark, foreboding night, ships laden with costly cargo and hundreds of passengers and crew have been ripped apart on the jagged rocks near otherwise safe harbors. The absence of lighthouses made reaching port a treacherous effort. As a result, thousands of unique lighthouses have been constructed around the world.

Lighthouse History

The first lights to guide seafarers were simple bonfires built on hilltops. The first structure was built on Pharos Island at the end of the harbor near Alexandria, Egypt. It was completed in 280 B.C., after 20 years of building. Fires burned atop the 400 foot high Pharos Light, fueled by resinous wood or oil. Metal mirrors reflected the flames and cast a beam that could be seen for 30 miles out to sea. The Pharos Light has been numbered among the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.



The most famous of all lighthouses, Eddystone Rock Light, stands 120 feet high near the harbor of Plymouth, England. Originally constructed in 1696 on a jagged reef in the English Channel, the Eddystone Rock Light has been rebuilt three times, the last time in 1878.



The first American lighthouse was built on Little Brewster Island, providing direction for ships entering Boston Harbor. First lit in 1716, this 89 foot high light is presently visible for 27 miles. It is the last remaining manned light in the United States.



Lighthouse Facts

- There are more than 13,500 lighthouses in the world today.
- The most effective light is made using the complicated Fresnel lens, invented in 1822 by Augustin Fresnel.
- Materials used in the past for making light include wood, sperm whale oil, lard oil, large candles, and vaporized kerosene under pressure.
- The first revolving light was installed at Carlsten, Sweden, in 1781.
- For identification in daylight, lighthouses are painted in distinctive patterns.
- Presently, each lighthouse emits a distinctive pattern of light known as its *characteristic*.

Guide Me to a Safe Harbor!

The fear of uncertain and foreboding seas on a dark night is only relieved by the reassuring beam of a stalwart lighthouse. For centuries seafarers have welcomed the assurance afforded by these great lights, leading them to safe harbors and rest.

Today, like seafarers of the past, countless people find themselves on the very dark and troubled "sea of life," desperately longing and searching for a harbor of safety. Well, today there is good news for all of them. You see, Jesus said, *"I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the*

light of life" (John 8:12). He also tells us in the Bible just how we may come to Him and secure that life in Him, the true Light.

1. Admit that we need the true Light.

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19). "As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10).

2. Realize the penalty for rejecting the Light.

"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5).

3. Believe that Christ, in His death on the cross, made the Light available to you.

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God..." (1 Peter 3:18). "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6).

4. Personally receive the Light.

"But as many as received Him [Jesus the Light], to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name..." (John 1:12). "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13).

Just say this to Him with your whole heart:

Dear God, thank You for sending Your Son to die on the cross for me. I receive Him as my Lord and Savior right now. I put my life and my trust in Him. I confess my sins and ask Your forgiveness. Thank You for being the true Lighthouse that I needed so desperately. Help me to live for You the rest of my life. Amen.

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