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FLASHLIGHTS AT THE SUN

POETRY TO HELP SHED SOME SUBJECTS ON THE LIGHT

L. RICHARD DE PRISCO

The poems in *Flashlights at the Sun* are fashioned to illuminate biblical

history, teachings, and characters, often with a modern twist. Author and poet Rick De Prisco offers dry-witted, sobering, and ironic passages on spiritual themes dealing in truth vs. error, light vs. darkness, and eternity vs. time. With scriptural references given for further reflection, it is perfect for adult Sunday school classes or small groups, or as part of the curriculum in a college course in English or Bible study.

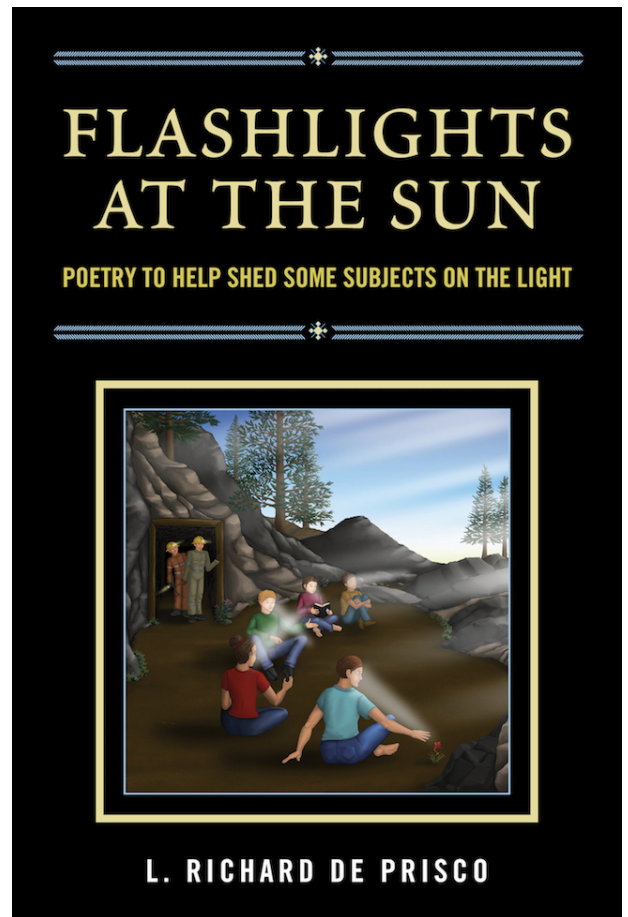
Flashlights at the Sun will stimulate your mind and engage your sense of creativity . . . maybe even tease out a wry smile on occasion.

About the Author

L. Richard De Prisco

Rick De Prisco is Finance Manager for Rim of the World Recreation and Park District. A Cornell grad, he now resides in Twin Peaks, California.

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What Others Are Saying About **Flashlights at the Sun**

“Rick’s verses and phrases color a picture that tells a story that conjures a feeling, awakens an opinion, and draws a conclusion. I recommend *Flashlights at the Sun* to anyone who appreciates the artistry of good poetry.”

—David V. Burdick,
Author of *First Vespers — Spiritual Verses of Hope and Inspiration*
and *Blair’s Gap — Silencing A Multi-Generational Curse*

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Suggested Interview Questions

For L. Richard De Prisco, author of

Flashlights at the Sun

Poetry to Help Shed Some Subjects on the Light

Q: You're a math and science person. How in the world did you get into writing poetry?

A: I was listening to contemporary Christian radio back in 2006 and reflecting to myself on the fact that, despite the consistent quality of the music evidenced in each song, some—not all—were a bit lean on the lyrics side: maybe decent sentimentally but lacking for artistry in what was being sung. So I thought, why don't I try my hand at this? Eventually I had a church youth director and musician in a far-off state compose and record music to one of my creations in his studio. It sounded terrific, but where do you go from there? If you don't have a shovel-ready garage band, you're not likely to get traction, no matter what you are able to do with words. But I was snared by the writing process, so I decided just to write the poetry for its own sake with no thought of putting concoctions to melodies. Once I had written a sizable portfolio and looked over it, I saw many poems had the potential of sparking exceptional interest in them, and ... voilà!

Q: You confess a particular affinity for theology. How does poetry fit into the nuts-and-bolts of doctrine?

A: Hey, the Bible is engorged with it! You might think that God, having decided to winnow down His immense treasury of revelation to one compact book of supreme essentials—remember the Apostle John's comment that it would take more than a world of libraries just to document all that Jesus did on earth—would have dispensed with the art part. But no! Indeed, Jesus Himself spent virtually His whole preaching and teaching ministry relating parables. We look for profundities of spirit-realm disclosure, and instead we get ... stories?! Well, He knows how our minds operate, having engineered them Himself—so He connects with us via that marvelous medium of creative literature. It's unsurpassed!

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Q: Have you been inspired by the great poets of history?

A: It's not that I'm in any puffed-up position to pronounce on the worthiness of material generated by notables of the past. But as a boy I looked askance at that fanciful stuff (as if boys aren't into fantasy!), or the frilly romantic goo that girls liked. I just assumed there wasn't anything out there that I could connect with. Even today, though I've come around to appreciate the value of this wonderful medium, I'm hardly avid for Ovid, don't pretend to be one who rates the greats like Yeats, and don't like any of them Pound-ed into me. If I were strong-armed to defend poets in the Pantheon, I'd demur on being one of the "hit men for Whitman" (though all are welcome to try, ahem, a "sampler" of his corpus!).

Q: Did any poets manage to inspire you at all?

A: I can't quote anything by him now, but I fondly remember the wit of Ogden Nash in grade school. Maybe he really turned out to be the crowbar that pried open my poetry-averse door. He germinated in my mind the possibility that this literary genre had potential—it got me in the game. I guess curiosity can revive a cat or two as well. Finally, I found my mentor in this field, who took me by surprise: Robert Service. I call him the "Boreal Bard" since he wrote often about the Klondike in the Yukon. That far-off land fascinated me—I've ended up visiting Alaska numerous times—and I was mesmerized by the thrill and wit of his verse. Awe infused the classic "The Spell of the Yukon," and some humor was leaked into "The Shooting of Dan McGrew," but both aspects came together in their pinnacle in my all-time favorite, "The Cremation of Sam McGee." I don't always write in that sort of style, but it's a model I will always look back, and up, to.

Q: The Scriptures seem quite serious, from beginning to end. How do you reconcile some of your poetry to the sober, and sobering, compilations of history, character development (or human failings), and convicting teachings in the Bible?

A: You won't find "ha-ha" humor in the Word of God, because its purpose is to lead you to a personal knowledge of Christ in view of the terrible barrier of an awful sin nature, which was conquered by His death and resurrection. But what

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might lead someone to that very Book itself, to draw him by thirst and hunger to feast on its pages? All manner of methods are "on the table," as long as they don't confound its ultimate purposes. It's actually man's fallen nature that gives rise to humor in the first place, even though sin's consequence is deadly. Folly is represented as something to laugh at, in a mocking way, in the Bible. Abraham and Sarah laughed at the absurdity of having a baby at their advanced age, but God laughed last—and best—and that pair were not deprived of their "bundle of joy" for their bemused reaction.

Q: What are you trying to convey in your poetry?

A: You can boil it down to one word: truth. That very thing by which Jesus dares to name Himself (along with The Way and The Life) would seem to be cut and dried, and it is. You can take a ruler and measure it, length by width by depth, but who would have a ruler long enough? It's by imagery that we grasp the boundless territory of that fixed quality. Jesus was always comparing and contrasting that which is beyond comprehension with the knowable examples of our mundane world. I, too, want to draw down infinity by means of the finite, even when the linkage seems so uncanny.

Q: What technique do you wield in order to convey this truth?

A: Simply: irony! You can't get away from it. You run from it and it gets closer to you; you hide it and it becomes more exposed; you muffle it and it shouts all the louder. Jesus worked it like the skillful Master He was while walking on this earthly sod. He amazed His hearers with notions that seemed so contrary to staid reality, and yet so exactly apt! *Flashlights at the Sun* is my shot at that same technique. You die to live, lose to win, give away to gain ... and maybe get absorbed in my book to become a sponge of delight that, hopefully, gets squeezed out of you to douse deserts in others!

Q: Who do you hope will read this book?

A: I'd most like it to make its way to teens and young adults before they get cynical about poetry. Ironically, I employ my fair share of "godly cynicism" (if I may be permitted to use an oxymoron) to grab their attention. But, clever fellow that I am,

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I'm just luring them into an appreciation of God's deep truths and the marvelous manifestation of Himself, in the teeth of (and perhaps even because of) a race gone wickedly wrong. I think this would best be handled in a Christian school, Christian homeschool, or Christian college classroom. Beyond that, I'd love to see *Flashlights* worm its way into small-group Bible studies, where each poem's "For further reflection" verses provided are bound to spawn enriching discussion on, exploration of, and meditation about God's holy Word. Not to discount solo private enjoyment!

Q: Have you expended all your poetry capital with consummate work of art?

A: By no means! I've got over a thousand poems champing at the bit for their chance to get into other books. The competition among them can get pretty fierce, and not a few proudly sport scars to show for it (hint: author as editor).

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