

A Shining Light

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16).

Jesus wants us to shine our light for God. Jesus describes his disciples as "a city set upon a hill." A city on a hill is noticed. What you do, as His disciple, gets noticed. Everything you do gets noticed by somebody. The words you speak are heard. Your attitude is seen in your every act. Where you go is noticed. It all has influence for good or bad.

Recently one of the younger boys in our congregation asked his mother to get him some ties to wear to church services. He had seen the older boys wearing ties, and he wanted to dress up and be like them. This young boy NOTICED. You are noticed!

Who Notices You?

1. People Who Know You Notice. Nearly every day you see the same people at work, or at school. There is a circle of friends that you hang out with. They notice you. They see whether you pause to thank the Lord before you eat. They see how you drive your car. They see what you wear. They see what you doing during services. They see how you handle difficult situations. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Don't forget your own family. They notice. More than anyone else, they know if your faith is real or not. They know if you are serious about the Lord or not. What do the people who know you see?

2. People Who Don't Know You Notice. Nearly every day there are people we meet that we really don't know. Those that work at gas station, post offices, UPS drivers, those in doctor's offices. They see how we handle inconveniences. They see how patient we are. They see how honest we are. Our attitude is seen in how we respond to various situations. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Christians are positively distinctive from the world (1 Pet 3:15).

3. God Notices. God sees all. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, watching the evil and the good" (Prov 15:3). God "looks upon the heart" (1 Sam 16:7). He cannot be mocked or fooled (Gal 6:7-9). Nobody can play games with God and win! A city set upon a hill cannot be hidden. You are noticed! The closer we get to Jesus, the light of the world, the brighter our light will shine! The Christian has the most important influence in the world, for he or she has the power of the gospel in their own life, which can change the lives of people around them lost in darkness.

- by Roger Shouse

What Makes The Difference?

- If a man has money and is not willing to have it examined, people think it is counterfeit.
- If a man is afraid to take a lie detector test, people think he is guilty of crime.
- If a man conducts a business and is unwilling to let anyone investigate it, folks think he is running a crooked business.

BUT, many preachers teach doctrines that under no circumstances will they test or allow to be tested by the Bible. Yet millions of people will accept them as upright, honest teachers of the truth, and will risk their salvation upon them. What makes the difference? The Bible instructs us to try the teachers (1 John 4:1). The truth never fears investigation!

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Ever Heard of 'Short Leash' Fellowship?

We know of a congregation that knowingly welcomed a man with a well-established reputation for teaching error. Not only was he accepted into their fellowship, but he has also been invited to teach. When one of the elders was questioned about this surprising decision, his

answer was: "We'll keep him on a short leash." A short leash? That's a novel idea - but it certainly didn't come from the New Testament.

We're familiar with another congregation that accepted a prominent false teacher into its fellowship and has even placed him in the teaching rotation. Concerned brethren were assured that he would not be allowed to teach on the subjects where differences existed. Really? Think about that for a minute. If the man believes the doctrines he has been promoting, he has a moral obligation to teach them. If he no longer believes them, then he ought to repent and publicly renounce the error he has spread. Either way, such an arrangement is indefensible. It says something troubling about the congregation - and about the teacher who is willing to accept such restrictions.

Contrast all of this with the apostle Paul. When false teachers threatened the purity of the gospel, he wrote: "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour" (Galatians 2:5). Paul didn't put error on a 'short leash'. He didn't give it a classroom or a pulpit. He opposed it immediately and completely.

The instructions are plain. "Mark them... and avoid them" (Romans 16:17). "Receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed" (2 John 9-11). "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5:11).

False teachers must not be welcomed into positions of influence. Tolerating error has never strengthened a church. Giving a false teacher a place among God's people only lends credibility to his influence and creates confusion among the faithful.

Brethren, the church needs shepherds with conviction, members with discernment, and all of us with enough spiritual backbone to stand for the truth without apology. Love for God, His word, and the souls of men demands nothing less. Think!

- by Greg Gwin