

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

Divorce for Any Cause?

In the society we live in, divorce is a very common occurrence. A long, happy marriage of many years has become an oddity being replaced with a divorced, broken home. Many people, it seems, are seeking a divorce for apparently insignificant reasons. With divorce so common, many are asking, "Can someone get a divorce for any cause?" This same question was asked of Jesus in Matthew 19:3, where we read, "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" Jesus' answers to the questions of the Pharisees in the verses that follow give us important instructions about divorce. Let's examine his answers briefly.

God's rule about divorce: Jesus answers the question of verse 3 in verses 4-6. In verse 6, Jesus concludes his argument by saying, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." In effect, Jesus' answer to the question "Can someone get a divorce for any cause?" is simply "No!" God intends marriage to be for life (Romans 7:2, I Corinthians 7:39). The Scriptures teach that divorce, in general, is simply not an option for two married individuals.

One exception to the rule: In the verse 9, Jesus outlines one exception to God's rule about divorce. Here Jesus instructs, "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." According to this verse, divorce is acceptable to God in the event of fornication. If one's spouse commits fornication, Matthew 19:9 teaches us that this person could obtain a divorce for this cause and remarry without sinning. This, however, is the

only exception to the previously noted rule about divorce provided in the New Testament. Note the order specified in this verse: fornication by one of the marriage partners, the innocent person obtains a divorce for that reason, remarriage allowed for the innocent spouse. This verse does not authorize so-called "mental divorce" in which the order would be: divorce (for some other cause), fornication by one of the marriage partners, a "second putting away" by the innocent spouse, and remarriage.

No other acceptable reasons for divorce: Since no other exceptions to the general rule about divorce are provided, we are left to conclude that divorce for any reason other than fornication is a sin. This conclusion, although denied by many "religious" people today, is unavoidable. As a result, it is clear that divorces for the common reasons of incompatibilities among spouses, "irreconcilable differences", lost love, desire for greater freedom, and others, are unacceptable to God. Divorce for any reason other than fornication is a sin.

Regardless of the practice of many in the world today, God's law forbids divorce for just any cause. Unfortunately, many in the church have allowed the thinking and practices of the world to influence them in this important area. May it never be so with us. We must understand, follow, and teach to others the simple instructions of the Bible about divorce.

- by **Jacob Gwin**

"They" versus "We"

Historian Ken Burns makes an interesting observation about how people referred to our nation before and after the Civil War. Prior to the war, the normal expression was "The United States are ..." But after the war, the more common way to refer to the nation was "The United States is ..." We know that the Civil War was fought largely over the issue of States' rights, and the current usage ("The United States is ...") reflects the outcome of the war and the resultant emphasis on the union of States.

Words mean things, and we see something similar in the way certain people refer to the church. Specifically, we hear some who refer to the local congregation as "they" or "them," and others who speak of it as "we" or "us."

Those who speak of the church as "they" or "them" are showing a certain detachment from the other members. These folks typically like to criticize and complain about what "they" are doing. And, while such complainers are quick to find fault with "them," they are very seldom found helping to resolve the problems. There is much discussion of what "they" did or didn't do, but there is precious little activity on the part of the one doing the criticizing. We think these members would do well to read what Jesus taught about "beams and motes" (Matt. 7:3-5).

We're thankful for those who consistently refer to the local church as "we" or "us." They show that they are a working part of the congregation, and are making a contribution to what is happening. And, while there will always be things that need to be changed and improved about "us," these folks know that it's important that "we" all do our part to accomplish this growth. After all, "we" are a "body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth" (Eph. 4:16).

Take this test: Do you refer to the church as "they/them," or do you speak of "we/us?" The answer to that question will tell a lot about you and your heart.

- by **Greg Gwin**