

# Parable Of The Light

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In the Parable of the Light recorded in Matthew 5:14-16 (found also in Mark 4:21; Luke 8:16-17; 11:33-36), Jesus Christ uses two figures of speech to express the responsibility of true Christians to influence the world: "a city . . . on a hill" and "a lamp . . . on a lampstand."

Many Judean cities were founded on the summits or sides of mountains, and travelers could see them from afar. Perhaps Jesus pointed to such a city, telling His disciples that they were like it. The city built on an important location can be seen by many eyes over a wide area, representing a disciple's far-ranging and widespread exposure to others.

Jesus' illustration of a shining lamp illuminating the home suggests a disciple's more intimate influence. By design, a Christian's actions cannot be hidden from the eyes of either our families or the world at large. This being the case, he must live a righteous, holy, humble, and pure life, letting his "light so shine before men [and thus] . . . glorify your Father in heaven."

1. How does "the light of the world" relate to "a city that is set on a hill"? Matthew 5:14; John 11:9; 1:4; 8:12; Revelation 21:23-24.

**Comment:** Light is of a three-fold nature: natural, artificial, and spiritual. The light of the sun is natural; that of a lamp, artificial; that of the Word and its believers, spiritual. The "light of the world" often denotes the sun, which renders objects visible, showing their form, nature, beauty, and sometimes, deformities. The phrase is preeminently applied to Jesus because He is to the moral world what the sun is to the natural world. The apostles, ministers, and all Christians are lights of the world, because they, by their witness, show what God requires, what man's condition is, and what way leads to the Kingdom of God.

2. Why should light not be hidden? Matthew 5:15; Mark 4:21; Luke 8:16; 12:35.

**Comment:** "Lamp" (NKJ) or "candle" (KJV) means any portable light, as a lamp, candle, or lantern. Jesus shows the disciples that He had enlightened them so that others might also see the light and benefit from it. When a person lights a lamp, he does not conceal the light but places it where it may be of use. So it is with God's way of life and those who follow it. God gives His truth to us to benefit others. It should not be concealed but show itself in stark contrast to the wicked world, thereby exposing and instructing it. If a light is concealed, as under a basket, no one benefits from it. However, considerate people place a lamp so that its benefits reach all who are in the house.

3. What should shine in view of others? Matthew 5:16; Proverbs 4:18; Romans 13:11-14; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 5:8-13; I Thessalonians 5:6-8; I John 2:16-17.

**Comment:** A Christian's righteous life, pleasant attitude, and good works, including pure conversation and faithful obedience, should not be hidden but be seen and known. We can give no light until we have received the grace of God and the enlightenment that

comes through the Holy Spirit. Our lives must produce the fruit of the Spirit, reflecting the shining example of Jesus Christ. Humbly, in all communities, in all business, at home and abroad, in prosperity and adversity, it should be clear that we adhere to God's way of life. Letting our examples shine requires that we resist the influence of the world. We cannot have a light that shines and at the same time live as the world does with its lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life.

**4.** What should be our proper motive for letting our light shine? Matthew 6:1-4; Ephesians 2:10; I Timothy 5:25; Titus 2:1-10.

**Comment:** A Christian should not let his light shine to be praised by others, but to bring glory to the Father. The Pharisees acted to be seen of men, but true Christians behave to glorify God, caring little what people may think of them. It is by our conduct, not our pomp and circumstance, that others may be brought to honor God. We should live so that people may see from our good works the proper nature of God's way of life. Good works cannot be hidden because they stand in stark contrast to the ways of this wicked world. These works are required behavior at home and in the outside world.

**5.** How is the Father glorified? John 15:8; I Peter 2:12; 4:11, 14-19.

**Comment:** We glorify the Father by bearing the fruit of the Spirit and doing good works, by correctly praising and honoring Him, and by being led to worship Him properly in obedience. We provide a witness to the world when they see in our lives the excellence of God's way and the power and purity of the truth. We learn five principles in this parable:

1. God's truth cannot be concealed.
2. Where light is not manifest in our lives, we make no witness.
3. Those who profess Christianity yet live like worldly people prove that they are not truly converted.
4. Attempting to hide our Christianity betrays God's trust, injures the cause of goodness, and renders our lives useless.
5. Good actions will be seen, leading people to honor God.

No sincere and humble Christian lives in vain, for at midnight even the feeblest light is of use.