

Let Your Light Shine Matt. 5:14-16

Introduction:

1. The Christian's work is that of **communicating** the gospel of God's grace to others.
2. It is causing the Christ who dwells in you to come to dwell in others.
3. The only way this can happen is by Christians having **contact** with those who need God's grace. Our light must shine in a way that gives light to all that are in the house.
4. I want to talk with you about some practical ways that you can be effective in doing this. It will require sacrifice. It will require planning. It will require effort.

Discussion:

I. The gospel spreads by way of relationship webs.

- A. How many of you are here today as a result of a friend or relative's influence?
- B. In Scripture the concept is represented by the *oikos* word family.
 1. It is variously translated in the N.T., N.A.S.B.: descendants, families, family, home, homes, house, household, etc.
 2. Primary meaning of house or dwelling, but commonly represents the people associated with a particular household. Neither Heb. nor Gk. has a word for the social unit we call family, so *oikos* is used of the family, the clan or even the tribal unit (e.g., the house of Judah). When Psa. 127:1 says "unless the Lord builds the house they labor in vain who build it," it refers both to the communal lot of those who dwell under one roof, and also to their heirs and descendants.
 3. That the gospel spread through *oikos* webs in the first century is clear.
 - a. The gospel was preached in private homes (Acts 5:42; 20:20).
 - b. Cornelius had assembled his *oikos* to hear the gospel (Acts 11:14; 10:24). By definition of the ancient concept of *oikos* the whole household community was involved--family, friends, and slaves.
 - c. Frequently the N.T. speaks of whole households being baptized (1 Cor. 1:16; Acts 16:15, 31-34; 18:8).
 - d. "House churches" suggest this same emphasis (Philemon 2; 2 Tim. 1:16; 4:19).
- C. The gospel spreads today through relationship webs.
 1. It happens naturally.
 2. You influence the people with whom you are in close contact: friends, relatives, work associates.
 3. We need to recognize and capitalize on these ready made webs of influence.

A research study was done with 14,000 people regarding the influences that brought them to a particular religious organization. Of the following eight reasons given, the percentages indicate the impact of the *oikos* web.

Special need 1-2%

Walk-in	2-3%
Minister	5-6%
Visitation	1-2%
Bible classes	4-5%
Evangelistic meetings	.5%
Program	2-3%
Friend/relative	75-90%

II. The gospel cannot be communicated except there be communion.

- A. The concept of household is applied in Scripture to the church in a special way. From the relationships within the church members are built up.
 1. The church is the household of God (Eph. 2:19).
 2. The house of God is the community of Christians.
 3. Gal. 6:10 reminds Christians of their duty to do good to all, but especially to “those who are of the household of faith.”
 4. As part of the household or family of God we have special duties to each other.
 5. In this communion we are to do what we can to encourage each other’s faith (Heb. 10:21-25).
 6. We cannot fulfill our responsibilities to each other without cultivating our relational communion.
 7. Not until a church learns to mature in its internal relationships will it be able to reach out to persons beyond its boundaries.
- B. From the communion within a congregation there springs the ability to bring others into the communion (Acts 2:43-47).
 1. The spiritual safety and successful relationship within our spiritual family provides the basis for our being able to reach out to others.
 2. If you feel good about what is happening in the church you invite others to participate. You encourage others to participate. You want to share what you have with others.
 3. If Satan wants to attack our effectiveness, if he can get us to thinking negatively about each other he will effectively thwart our evangelistic efforts.
 - a. We will stop being excited about our communion.
 - b. We will stop working together. A congregation’s strength is not in how large it is, but in their ability to agree to work together.

III. What you can do to help communicate the gospel.

- A. Take advantage of relationship webs.
 1. Use what is already there.
 2. Add people to your web--visit, talk, spend time with them.
 3. Build relationships.
- B. Begin in the family of God, while maintaining those relationships, reach out to those who need to come into the family.
- C. Some people meld together better than others.
 1. Let everyone establish friendships along comfortable lines. There will be some

- people that you feel more attached to than others.
2. Cultivate and stimulate relationships with those on the outer edge.
- D. Visit to encourage people's faith. We sometimes speak of withdrawing fellowship. If we have fellowship there will be something to withdraw.
1. Bible studies are created from relationships.
 2. Have people over to your home.
 3. Notice new people to the congregation.
Meet these people.
 4. Notice who is not here. Send card. Call. Visit in their home, etc.
 5. Most of you are already doing these things. Increase sensitivity.
 6. Easy for our lives to be engulfed with other things. Consideration needs to be given to particular periods in people's lives--some have more opportunities to visit than others--young children, etc. changes amount of time available to spend on other things.

Conclusion:

1. Make the work of communicating the gospel a priority in your life.
2. Be sensitive to working on your relationships with others so that you can influence them for the Lord.