

How to Be an Effective City Set on a Hill

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Every time I look to the sky and see a hawk with its wings spread wide or watch a cotton-tail outrun dogs across the field, I marvel at the God who made them. These animals do what they do best because they don't have all the emotional baggage and conditioning that humans have. They aren't afraid to fly or afraid to run. The hawk's father never told him that he'd never amount to anything. The fellow-bunnies didn't lure the cotton-tail into hanging out at the bar so it would get fat and slow.

With the added opportunities for choice, growth, and education that humans have comes the option of choosing the wrong path or becoming distracted from the best path. It's easy to get confused about who you are, what you're here for, and what you do best. Even after you know your purpose, it's still easy to get distracted and forget your place of joy.

While reading Christ's words in Matthew 5:14-15, I realized this passage has so much to do with living our life purpose: *"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house."*

When we live in harmony with the message and mission God sent us to perform, the Spirit of God works in us and we naturally excel. That may be because we're operating from a place of joy. We love what we're doing and we could no more stop than an eagle could cease flying. This propulsion toward excellence makes us "shine." As we stand out, we're like the soaring hawk or the running rabbit. Perceptive people see the extraordinary and praise the God who created us.

Joseph Campbell said it this way, "If you follow your bliss you put yourself on a kind of track that has been there all the while, waiting for you, and the life that you ought to be living is the one you are living. When you can see that, you begin to meet people who are in your field of bliss, and they open doors to you. I say, follow your bliss and don't be afraid, and doors will open where you didn't know they were going to be."

The danger is that a significant percentage of observers will see your excellence and never connect the dots back to God. They will praise you. Then comes the temptation to believe that it is your own ingenuity, hard work, and resourcefulness that makes you remarkable. Pride cannot coexist with gratitude to God. Always remember the source of your strength. Give glory to Him in your own mind, and at appropriate

times and in appropriate ways give Him the glory in public. You do this by being the city set on a hill.

This city is what it is. It carries the light within it and it spreads forth unrestrained. The city Christ calls to mind isn't one with gaudy neon signs or flashy billboards. It's elegant, pristine, lovely and illuminated. It calls you toward it in a spiritual way, not a worldly way.

There is a tendency for Christians to deceive themselves into believing that they are giving glory to God while still being proud. People sense this and are turned off by it. It's the attitude or impression that, "Yes, I'm so holy and pure, and my connection with God so complete that He's able to do wonderful things through me. Look at me. I'm a wonderful role model." It's the equivalent of using a gaudy neon sign to draw attention to ourselves.

The illuminated city points people to Christ by what it is. It sheds His light to all within its sphere of influence. It's not hiding itself, but it's not calling attention to itself either. It is what it is.

Having said that, there's still a need "to connect the dots" for those who are drawn to the city but aren't sure why they came. As you discover your purpose and live it people will be drawn to you. What do you do when they compliment you and do not understand that it is the Spirit that works in you? You have several options:

- a) You can offer a simple "thank you" and then offer a mental "thank you" to God.
- b) You can make your faith known in ordinary everyday ways that aren't "in your face" but that leave people knowing that you are a Christian and that God is important to you.
- c) You can say something like, "Thank you, God has been good."
- d) In some cases you may feel the need to get bold and say, "It's not me who's amazing, it's the gospel of Jesus Christ. Would you like to know more?"

Each of these options fit in different circumstances and with different people. This is where listening to the Spirit for guidance comes in. As 1 Peter 3:15 says, "*Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and reverence.*"

If someone is asking how you do what you do, connect those dots for them in a way that is appropriate for them. Let the Spirit be your guide, and God will help you know how to give an appropriate answer to each person. And remember timing is everything. A simply thank you may be best today whereas a bold, "It's the gospel of

Jesus Christ. Would you like to know more?" is the answer tomorrow requires for the very same person.

Challenge

I challenge you to discover and live your purpose. Let your light shine so that others will glorify your Father who is in heaven and want to know more about what you enjoy. When they come to you -- for they always will when you're living your purpose -- be prepared to connect the dots in appropriate ways.