



Living in Glass Houses

December 28, 2025 - January 3, 2026

MAIN POINT

Our faith in Jesus should not be a private matter.

INTRODUCTION

How strict do you keep your privacy settings on your social media accounts?
What is the main reason you have chosen that level of privacy or publicity?

Internet aside, do you consider yourself a very private person? Why or why not?

Why does our culture teach the lie that we must keep our religious beliefs to ourselves? How have you seen this mindset surface in the media recently?

Our culture has taught us that we can have whatever religious beliefs we want as long as we keep them to ourselves. Many Christians have bought into this lie, but in today's text Jesus was clear: we are to shine our light, not hide it under a basket. Our faith in Jesus should not be a private matter.

UNDERSTANDING

READ [MATTHEW 5:14-17](#).

In your own words, what do you think it means to be the light of Christ?

In what situations do people tend to hide their light "under a basket"?

Jesus used a strong comparison about light to make an important point. Jesus developed His comparison by mentioning two situations where nighttime light was especially welcome in the first century. First, imagine traveling on a cloudy night, longing to reach a city situated on a hill. Such a city cannot be hidden. Second, suppose you were at home at night and had only one olive-oil lamp. You would put it on a lamp stand so it would benefit all who are in the house. You would not put such a light under a basket. Light exists mainly so other things can be seen. Thus the good works of believers shine before men so other persons receive a blessing.

Read the following passages about light in Scripture: [Genesis 1:3-4](#); [Exodus 10:23](#); [Psalm 27:1](#); [John 1:1-5](#); [John 8:12](#); and [1 John 1:5-6](#). What does light signify in each of these passages? What do these verses teach us about our function as lights in the world?

Look more closely at [John 8:12](#). If Jesus is the Light of the world, what does that imply about the world? What does it imply about you?

"You are the light of the world" (v. 14) is an allusion to texts that describe the ministry of the Messiah, Servant of the Lord. Jesus' disciples are to be extensions of His ministry, carrying salvation to the ends of the earth. Such ministry is a key part of true discipleship. A disciple should no more conceal his/her faith than a glowing city should douse its light at night.

In addition to sharing the message of salvation, what other positive effects can

Christians have on the world when they refuse to keep their relationship with Jesus private?

As a believer, you are a witness to who God is. What role do your imperfections and ungodly attitudes play in helping others see God?

One of the most important commands we receive in Scripture is the repeated call to live out our faith in such a way that Christ's light will shine from within us and pierce the darkness in the world. Later on in Matthew's Gospel, we read about a time when Jesus sent out His disciples on mission for Him (Matt. 11). But before they went, He encouraged them and warned them about what their harvest work would entail. These truths remain applicable to us today as we publicly live out the mission God has given us.

READ [MATTHEW 10:24-33](#).

What specific promises do you find in this passage for the disciple? Which one is most important to you right now? Why?

How would you explain the sparrow imagery to someone who has never heard it before ([vv. 29-31](#))?

If God must consent to the fall of sparrows, no disciple can suffer persecution without His consent. The God who has numbered even the hairs of your head has also numbered the days of your life. His plan for His disciples cannot be cut short by persecution.

What kinds of circumstances might cause fear in the life of a disciple in today's culture?

Does this passage mean nothing bad will happen to those who serve Christ? If not, what does it mean?

The implication for the disciple in these verses is twofold. First, we owe a higher allegiance to God because of our desire to obey Him, an allegiance that can help us overcome our fear of sharing the gospel and living for Him. Second, because God is more powerful, we can trust Him to care for us in our work. Hardship and struggles are guarantees for the disciple of Christ. The world rejected Him when He was on earth, and it continues to reject His message today. But in these verses Jesus encourages us that in spite of all the bad things we may endure, not instead of, we are His and can rest secure in that truth.

How do you react to Jesus' statement in [Matthew 10:32-33](#)? What do these verses tell us about His expectations for us?

Why does Jesus care whether or not we make our relationship with Him a public matter?

What do we communicate to God when we choose to keep our relationship with Him to ourselves?

In Matthew 10:24-31, Jesus taught that there is no reason to fear persecution from men. For this reason, believers should have no hesitation in confessing Jesus before others. The person who can adopt the fearless perspective Jesus teaches and who confesses Jesus before men will find a willing advocate in heaven before the Father. But the person who gives into

faithless fear and denies Jesus before men will find a just denial before the Father in heaven.

APPLICATION

In what areas of your life do you seek to hide your lamp by blending into the culture rather than putting it on a stand? How can you actively fight against the tendency to hide your light this week?

How can we remind ourselves daily that we're first and foremost citizens of God's kingdom? What can our group do to help each other remember this truth?

PRAYER

Today's Scripture passage forces us to honestly evaluate whether our lives display God's truth to the world. Close today's group session with a silent time of reflective prayer. Encourage group members to confess to God the things they've been convicted about this week and this morning. Then close by challenging them to make their relationships with Jesus public this week.

COMMENTARY

MATTHEW 5:14-16

In Matthew 5:13-16, before embarking on the body of the sermon, Jesus explained in two word pictures the impact that a truly righteous person will have on his or her world. The entire sermon, including the Beatitudes before and the many teachings after, shows us how to live as "salt and light" in the world as representatives of another kingdom. These word pictures also serve Matthew's purpose—to encourage believers to change their world (Matt. 28:18-20).

The function of light is to make reality or truth visible, thereby giving direction and guidance by what is seen. Jesus used the emphatic "you," and clearly stated that this is already what a believer is, not something he might become. It is the nature of a kingdom servant to be light in the world. Any believer who fails to function as light is going against his nature as God's new creation. The believer has no light inherent in himself. The believer's light is a reflected light. Believers are to make certain that nothing comes between them and their source of light (2 Cor. 3:18; Phil. 2:13-16).

Both a city on a hill (v. 14) and the lamp on its stand (v. 15) fulfill their function by being elevated, so their light can be seen by many people over a broad area. Jesus Himself explained the application of this principle in 5:16. The light represents our good works, which must be done with such integrity that all who see have no choice but to credit our Father in heaven. The Christian's life and influence is to be visible and obvious, not secret or hidden. We must not camouflage our devotion to Christ, but humbly do all we can to allow its truest colors to be seen where we live. The term translated give glory to means "to make manifest or visible." When we shine our light before others by living righteously, we are making visible the character of the Father. It is the Christian's commission to live in such a way as to make God visible in a world that is blind to Him.

MATTHEW 10:24-33

In Matthew 10:16-25, Jesus described the type of persecution and opposition the disciples would encounter. The language anticipates future persecution also when Christians would be handed over to government authorities. In the face of such opposition a Christian can rely on God's care and support (Matt. 10:26-31). Christians have never been promised an easy task, but they are promised the companionship and approval of God.

10:26 Kingdom work can be intimidating. Knowing this, Jesus three times in this passage said, don't be afraid. Therefore hearkens back to the idea in the previous section (Matt. 10:16-25). There Jesus warned that He had been accused of being in league with Satan and His followers could expect no better treatment. However, they could be encouraged knowing they shared this experience with their Lord. Revealed and known have a double implication. First, as an encouragement, these words assure believers their good work will not be overlooked or forgotten. A second possible meaning is those who reject the work of God's people and persecute them will be judged.

10:27 This verse follows the form of parallelism in the previous verse. This literary and rhetorical method is

often found in the Psalms and Proverbs. It involves stating the same truth twice using slightly different, though related, words or symbolism. The central truth of this verse is that believers are to be bold in their proclamation. Persecution may tempt them to silence, but Jesus' assurance should help them overcome their fear and speak in the light and proclaim on the housetops the truth of the gospel.

10:28 There is a fate worse than death, and it involves disobedience to God. However, the tone of this passage seems to indicate Jesus did not intend it as a threat. This verse simply states the fact that God is far more powerful than any human. Another person can only kill the body. God can destroy both soul and body.

10:29 A penny is 1/16th of a day's wage. As inexpensive as two sparrows are, God knows when one of them falls to the ground. Thus He knows each need and struggle we face. One other interesting note, the word for fall may translate an Aramaic word that describes a bird's lighting on the ground. The meaning is that God knows about all the activity of a sparrow, not simply when it falls dead to the ground. This would certainly be of more comfort to an embattled disciple.

10:30 That God is in the details of life is the simple truth of this verse. Jesus set up an argument and applied it in the next verse.

10:31 You are worth more than sparrows is the application of the previous verses. Christians in all situations of life, not just in missionary endeavors, are adept at overlooking the obvious. We all bear God's image and are the focus of His redemptive love. That is a tremendously encouraging thought.

10:32 The Christian message is inherently divisive, and we cannot blunt that reality. Jesus certainly did not; instead, He described His task as bringing a sword that will divide people. This portion of His teaching is harsh, but Jesus ended the mission message with a comforting promise of reward (Matt. 10:40-42). Some interpreters see Paul writing as a believer, but as an Old Testament, or pre-Pentecost, believer who does not have the benefit of the Holy Spirit's presence and power. Still others reject the notion that Paul is writing from the perspective of spiritual regeneration; that 7:14-25 describes the experience of an unregenerate person.

Appealing once again to the plainness of Scripture, it is entirely credible to take Paul's words at face value in describing his present Christian experience (and thus what is likely to be the experience of all believers). The key to understanding Paul's perspective is the ability to hold in tension seemingly conflicting points of view in the present eschatological age in which we live. What is true positionally for the believer may not always be true practically in his or her experience. Seemingly, if we are no longer slaves to sin, we would never sin again; perfectionism would be achieved.

But in all the times when Paul chastised sinning believers such as the Corinthians and the Galatians, he never accused them of not being Christians. He called them weak, immature, childish—but not unregenerate. Paul understood the tension between positional truth and practical expression. Thus, in his own life, he could bemoan the intense realization of the pull of sin and its constant assault on the members of his body and its use of the law to provoke him to sin, while at the same time confess that “in my inner being, I delight in God's law” (v. 22). No unbeliever delights in God's law. According to Paul, unbelievers view God's truth as foolishness, not a source of delight (1 Cor. 1:18-27; 2:14).

Consistent with Jewish thought, Christian eschatology recognizes that the present age is not the age to come; there is a difference between the two (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:21; 1 Tim. 4:8; Titus 2:12). One does not begin when the other ends; rather, they overlap. George E. Ladd's writings on the kingdom of God best illuminate the “tension” in which we now live (see, e.g., his *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 1959, esp. ch. 2). The inclusion of the kingdom of God into the kingdom of Satan vis-a-vis the ministry of Jesus has created conflicting kingdoms for a period of time until the kingdom of God is consummated and fills the earth. It is the conflicting period of time that accounts for the tension between the desire to do right and the temptation to do wrong. We do not achieve on earth the perfection we will enjoy in heaven.