

Let Your Light Shine Before Men



GARY HARGRAVE



Let Your Light Shine!

Normally, when we teach about Christmas, we refer to the Scriptures about the birth of Christ. In this message, I want to do something a little different. I want to read a Scripture that you may not think applies to Christmas, yet it is very applicable to the Christmas season.

“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

Take the Opportunity to Witness

We are to be a testimony of Christ. We are to be out in the world telling people what we are about as Christians. We must take every opportunity to open the door for them to see the Lord. How does the world learn about Christ unless we are expressing Him? We are the light to the world. How will the world know that He lives if we are not the ones proclaiming His life?

So why relate this to Christmas? Isn't witnessing something we should do year-round? Yes, but people are generally more open during the Christmas holidays. They are either open because they are happy or because they are sad. Christmas is one of the greatest times of suicide because of the depression that comes on people due to loneliness or over what they feel they do not have. People need a blessing. They need a touch from the Lord. Even if they appear to be joyous, everyone needs a touch. Everyone needs something of Christ imparted to his or her life.



During the holiday season, you will probably find yourself in more social occasions than usual. This is a tremendous opportunity to touch people. Think how many people you can reach by simply shaking their hands and giving them a blessing. Take the opportunity that this season affords. If it is hard for you to confess the Lord, it is easier during this time because people are more willing to talk. People feel a license to come out of their shells and express themselves freely. Use that openness to make it easier for you to confess the Lord and let people see your light. Whether it is at an office party, school event, or any occasion to get together, use this time to let the Lord shine through you.



Our Reluctance to Witness

We already have so much of Christ in our hearts that is evident to people. Something comes through us on a very natural level that people recognize. There is something about us—and that something is the presence of the Lord. It is Christ in us, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). Therefore, it is difficult to understand why we are not a greater testimony for Christ.

I know that there is a struggle. Everything we face in the world and in our own thinking about ourselves is set to suppress the Christ within us. We are also facing renewed persecution in these days, and persecution makes you want to hide. When people are verbally attacking you, you want to find a cave somewhere and hide from what is being said (1 Kings 19:9-10). We need to get over that because if we are going to worry about critics, we will never get anywhere.

Politicians believe they have a mandate when only 40 percent of the people back them. So how much backing do we need to be witnesses of Christ? People are going to criticize. They will always find things to have problems with. That does not change the fact that we have something in us that the world needs to see. And when they see it, they need to know what it is and where it is coming from. We should not be hiding the anointing of the Lord in us.

Another difficulty many Christians have in letting their light shine is their concept of how witnessing should be done. For example, they would feel uncomfortable knocking on people's doors or handing out pamphlets to strangers on the street. Consequently, they are not out witnessing. I can understand their reluctance. There are some strange ways in which Christians feel they must testify about Christ. They suddenly put on religious airs and change the intonation of their voices whenever they talk about the Lord. It comes across as unnatural and people are turned off by it.



The Humanity of Christ

I think Christianity has tried to isolate itself from being human. Consequently, the behavior of some Christians is religious and artificial. Others, who are not religious, do not want to be associated with that image of Christianity and hide the fact that they are Christians. In reality, when you have Christ in you, you become very human. One of the key elements of Christ was His humanity. That is the main reason we celebrate Christmas as the birth of the Son of Man. He did not come down to earth in a divine form (Philippians 2:5-7). He came to earth as a human baby who had to grow up just like the rest of us. This is something that has confused people throughout Church history. Even if it is not confusing, there is a desire to make Yeshua (Jesus) purely a figure of divinity.

The wonder of Yeshua is that He was human. When He was on the earth, He was God in man, yet He did not isolate Himself from humanity. He was just a regular person. He did not put on airs or walk around in austere garments. He dressed the way the average person dressed. He was criticized as a gluttonous man and a drunkard because He was “a friend of tax collectors and sinners!” (Matthew 11:19). He spent time with those who were looked down on by the social elites of His day (Luke 15:2). If you take away Christ’s humanity, you destroy the miracle that God did when He brought Christ into the earth.

As He comes again in this day, He is coming in a very human way. Christ is in us. “We have this treasure in earthen vessels” (2 Corinthians 4:7). And people will criticize our humanity just as they criticized His. But the world must see Him. We need to stop hiding Him. We cannot hold back because of issues we have about ourselves. We cannot hold back because of issues we see in the world or in Christianity. It is time to confess Christ in us to the people around us. Let your light shine so that people see your good works.



Stop Hiding!

If you could do one thing, simply stop hiding the light within you. Stop hiding because of the persecution. Stop hiding because you do not want to be associated with the things people criticize in Christianity. You cannot use those things as an excuse. You do not need to go around knocking on people's doors. You do not need to change the tone of your voice when you talk about Christ. Just be yourself.

That is why the Christmas season is such a great opportunity. The book of Joshua has a wonderful promise: "Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses" (Joshua 1:3). How about applying that to everyone you bless, everyone you greet, everyone to whom you say, "Merry Christmas"?

You have associations at work and with friends and with others who know you. It is time that they start knowing why you are the wonderful person you are. The world does not have what you have. What you do and how you do it is not normal by human standards. It is only normal in the Kingdom of God. It is only normal in God's family.



Give an Answer to Everyone Who Asks

Open up. Be yourself. Take off the bushel basket. People will say to you, “I’ve known you for so long. But what is it about you? I just can’t put my finger on it, but there’s something about you. What is it?” That is how I first came into this ministry. I walked up to someone and asked, “What is it about you? I see something different in you.” That simple question changed my life. If I had not asked that question, or if the person I asked had been unwilling to open up to me, it would have been a disaster.

But 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 fear.

1 PETER 3:15, KJV

We should be ready to tell people what it is they are seeing in us. And we should keep acting in ways that make them ask because they see our works, our attitude, our smile, and the blessing that is on our lives.



Relate to Other Christians

Christmas is also a wonderful time to connect with fellow Christians. People from different denominations and different opinions about the Bible find it easier to come together at Christmas. I believe that within Christianity there is a yearning for fellowship with other believers. Many desire that Christians would be open with one another and not divided over issues.

There is a hunger in churches for finding the Body of Christ and receiving what is available in other places. It is the time for that to happen. Nothing would be a greater witness for Christ than Christians walking together in love and unity.

“I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.”

JOHN 17:20-21

Let us join with all the Body of Christ and commit ourselves to letting our light shine. Stop hiding it! Collectively, we take off the bushel baskets by faith. We anticipate the ways and opportunities for us to open up and share the hope that is within us. When an opportunity comes, we will be ready because we are not hiding anymore. Instead, we will experience the freedom and joy in being witnesses of the Lord.

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.”

MATTHEW 5:13



Be the Salt of the Earth

The last thing we want is to become tasteless. We do not want to lose what we have. There is a spiritual principle we need to be following. Give, and you will receive (Luke 6:38). Your gift grows and builds as you use it (Galatians 6:8-9). The light that we have will grow as we let it shine forth and let people see it.

Lord, we are going to confess You before men that You might confess us before the Father (Matthew 10:32-33). We simply say, “Lord, something different is going to happen for me. I am going to change. I am going to throw off the restraints, throw off my shyness, and open my heart on another level.” If you are still laboring under a feeling of criticism and persecution, get over it. I believe we are living in a new day when people are open and ready to receive the Lord. This Christmas be a different kind of Santa Claus. Give people what they really want for Christmas. It is not toys. It is not a new car. You have the greatest gift of all. You can give them a walk with God.

All Scripture references are from the New American Standard Bible 1995 (NASB1995).

ABOUT GARY HARGRAVE



GARY HARGRAVE has a passion for leading people into spiritual maturity. Gary effectively ministers the life-changing truth of God's Word through Bible teaching and prophetic revelation that emphasizes the Lordship of Christ.

Gary embraces the teachings and insights of the Hebrew Scriptures as the essential foundation of God's Kingdom and the roots of Christian faith.

By cultivating spiritual maturity in Christians, Gary is deeply committed to teaching and inspiring unity in the Body of Christ and between Christians and the Jewish people.

Throughout decades of ministry, Gary has worked closely with leaders in the Jewish, Catholic and Protestant communities to build relationships based on commonality and understanding. He frequently leads study tours to Israel and the lands of the Bible.

Gary is the host of a weekly podcast entitled *Growing In God*, and is the founder of Shiloh University, an accredited online Bible college and seminary.

Gary and his family reside in Hawaii.

For other insightful resources by Gary Hargrave, including podcasts, books, articles, videos, and other educational materials, please visit: www.HargraveMinistries.org.

ABOUT HARGRAVE MINISTRIES

The calling of the Lord upon this ministry is to lead people into spiritual maturity by revealing biblical truth. **Our passion is to see the Kingdom of God manifest on earth** as the Body of Christ grows in unity, power and love.

Everything we do flows from the revelation of the Jewish roots of our Christian faith. It is our desire and privilege to bless the land and people of Israel. Our Israel outreach includes:

- **Feed the poor and break the cycle of poverty in Israel**
- **Support the orphans and widows of fallen Israeli soldiers**
- Provide physical and emotional care to **child victims of terrorism**
- **Build bridges between Christians and Jews with biblical study and research**
- Support archaeology and preservation of the **biblical City of David**
- Provide 24/7 **care for Holocaust survivors**
- **Help persecuted Jews around the world return to Israel and start new lives**
- Plant trees to **reforest Israel** and help create **"The Gospel Trail"** between Nazareth and Capernaum

Hargrave Ministries is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization supported through the generous contributions of ministry friends and partners. To learn more about the work of Hargrave Ministries or to partner in its outreach to Israel, please visit: www.HargraveMinistries.org

