

# What Do People See In You

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## Key Scripture

Matthew 5:16 (ESV) "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

## Sermon in One Sentence

As followers of Christ, our lives are meant to be a radiant reflection of God's character and grace, prompting observers to glorify Him, not us.

## Introduction

Imagine a spotlight. Not one that shines on you, but one that shines through you. This is the imagery Jesus evokes when He tells His disciples to let their light shine. We live in an age awash in personal branding, social media curation, and the relentless pursuit of outward affirmation. We often ask, "What do people think of me? What impression am I making?" While these are natural human questions, for the believer, there's a deeper, more profound inquiry: "What do people *see* in me, and more importantly, *who* do they attribute it to?" This morning, we're going to turn our attention to Jesus' powerful instruction in the Sermon on the Mount, where He challenges His followers to live lives that clearly point beyond themselves to their Heavenly Father.

The challenge is not merely to *be* good, but to be good in such a way that God receives the glory. It's a call to transparent discipleship, a life lived with open hands and an open heart, demonstrating God's transformative power in a world often shrouded in darkness. Many people today claim to be spiritual, but what does that look like in practice? What visible, tangible evidence reflects the "spirit" they claim to follow? Jesus doesn't leave us guessing; He gives us a clear mandate for how our lives should function as beacons of His divine truth and love.

Our passage from Matthew 5:16 is nestled within a larger discourse on true righteousness and the radical call of the Kingdom of God. It's a mission statement for every Christian, reminding us that our character and conduct are not incidental but instrumental to God's redemptive plan. Let's unpack this verse and discover what it truly means for our lives to be an undeniable testament to the glory of God.

## Historical & Biblical Context

Matthew's Gospel was written primarily to a Jewish audience, demonstrating that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah who fulfilled Old Testament prophecy. The Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5-7) is Jesus' foundational teaching on the ethics and character expected of those who would be citizens of His Kingdom. It's not a set of legalistic rules, but a radical redefinition of righteousness that goes beyond outward observance to inward transformation. Our key verse, Matthew 5:16, immediately follows Jesus'

declarations that His disciples are "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13-14).

Therefore, this instruction is not an isolated command but an essential outgrowth of our identity in Christ. As "light," believers are to illuminate the darkness, revealing truth and goodness. The context emphasizes that this "light" is not to be hidden (like under a basket) but displayed prominently so that its purpose can be fulfilled. The "good works" Jesus mentions are not a means to earn salvation, but rather the natural, Spirit-empowered fruit of a saved life – acts of love, justice, mercy, and faithfulness that reflect God's own character. These are the visible manifestations of an invisible faith, designed to draw attention not to the doer, but to the divine source of all goodness.

## **Main Point I — Your Life: A Visible Testament**

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:16a – "In the same way, let your light shine before others..."

The first truth Jesus lays before us is that our lives are meant to be public displays of God's grace. He doesn't say "if your light shines" or "try to shine your light." He says, "let your light shine." This assumes two profound realities: first, that every believer *has* light within them – the light of Christ, the indwelling Holy Spirit. Second, it implies that there is a natural tendency or temptation to hide this light, either out of fear, self-consciousness, or a misunderstanding of its purpose. Our faith is not meant to be a private whisper but a public declaration, evinced through our daily interactions and choices.

This external shining is not about seeking attention for ourselves; it's about making visible the invisible work of God within us. When people observe our patience in traffic, our integrity in business, our compassion toward the marginalized, or our joy in suffering, they are seeing more than just human effort. They are witnessing the transformative power of God at work. The world is watching, whether we realize it or not, and our lives are constant testimonies. The question is, what is our testimony proclaiming? Is it a dim, flickering bulb, or a steady, brilliant beacon?

## **Main Point II — Your Deeds: Good Works, God's Design**

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:16b – "...so that they may see your good works..."

Jesus is remarkably specific: it's not just our "light," but our "good works" that others will see. In a world often cynical about religious claims, tangible actions speak far louder than mere words. These "good works" are not about demonstrating our own righteousness or superiority; they are acts of love, service, generosity, truthfulness, and mercy that align with the character of God. They are empowered by the Holy Spirit and motivated by genuine love for God and neighbor, not by a desire for human applause.

Consider the Samaritan in the parable (Luke 10:25-37). His "good work" was not a theological treatise but a lavish act of compassion. When Jesus emphasizes "good works," He's calling us to a practical, demonstrable faith. This means our faith isn't just a sentiment or a set of beliefs stored in our minds; it's a dynamic force that compels us to act in ways that benefit others and reflect divine virtue. Are our daily lives filled with intentional acts of kindness, integrity, and self-sacrifice that stand out in a self-serving world? Do our actions truly echo the heart of God?

## Main Point III — Your Purpose: God's Glory, Not Yours

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:16c – "...and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

Here lies the ultimate purpose, the grand crescendo of Jesus' command: the light and the good works are not for our commendation but for God's glorification. This is the crucial distinction that separates true Christian living from mere moralism or philanthropy. If our good deeds merely draw praise to ourselves ("What a kind person!"), we miss the mark. The goal is that observers, encountering the genuine, Spirit-led "good works," would be compelled to look beyond us to the source of that goodness – our "Father who is in heaven."

This necessitates a humility that deliberately deflects praise away from self and directs it toward God. It means living in such a way that people don't just admire *us*, but they ask *why* we are the way we are, *who* inspires us, and *what* gives us such peace, joy, or resilience. Our lives are meant to be signposts pointing to God, living invitations for others to encounter His love, grace, and truth. This refocuses our motivation: it's not about building our own kingdom but about expanding His, not about boosting our ego but elevating His name. Are our lives living testimonies that naturally lead others to glorify God?

### Illustration

During the tumultuous days of World War II, a young woman named Elisabeth Elliot and her husband, Jim, were called by God to serve as missionaries to Ecuador. Jim, along with four other missionaries, was tragically martyred by the Waorani tribe in 1956. Most people would have packed up and gone home, perhaps nursing bitterness and fear. But Elisabeth Elliot, driven by an unwavering faith and an extraordinary sense of mission, returned to live among the very tribe that had killed her husband. She and her daughter, Valerie, along with Rachel Saint (sister of one of the slain missionaries), lived with the Waorani for years, sharing the Gospel through their daily lives and words. The tribe witnessed not only incredible forgiveness but also consistent love, patience, and integrity from these women. They saw "good works" that transcended human understanding. And miraculously, many of the tribe members, including some who had participated in the killings, came to faith in Christ. Their lives, marked by radical forgiveness and persistent love, clearly pointed to a God who could empower such extraordinary grace. What the Waorani saw in Elisabeth Elliot was not just a remarkable woman, but a profound reflection of her Father in heaven, and they gave glory to Him.

### Practical Application

**1. Reflect and Inventory:** Take time this week to reflect on your daily interactions. In what ways are you intentionally "letting your light shine"? Are there areas where you might be obscuring it due to fear, apathy, or self-centeredness?

**2. Practice Intentional Goodness:** Identify one specific act of "good work" you can do this week for someone. Perhaps it's serving a neighbor, offering a genuine compliment, demonstrating uncommon patience, or extending mercy where you could demand justice. Do it with the conscious prayer that God would receive the glory.

**3. Cultivate Humility:** When you receive praise or acknowledgment for something positive you've done, practice redirecting that praise to God. A simple "Thank you, I'm just trying to live out my faith" or "All glory to God" can make a significant difference in perspective.

**4. Examine Your Motives:** Regularly ask yourself *why* you do what you do. Is your primary motivation to look good to others, or is it to honor God and point others to Him? This inner check-up is crucial for ensuring our "light" genuinely glorifies God.

## Discussion Questions

1. What does Jesus mean by "light" in Matthew 5:16, and how does a believer "let it shine"?
2. Can you think of a specific time when someone else's "good works" clearly pointed you to God? What made that experience so impactful?
3. What are some common temptations or fears that cause believers to hide their light or shy away from "good works"?
4. How can we intentionally ensure that our good deeds draw attention to God and not to ourselves?

## Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the incredible privilege of being called Your children and for entrusting us with the light of Christ. Forgive us for the times we have dimmed our light or sought our own glory. Strengthen us by Your Spirit to live lives that genuinely reflect Your goodness and grace. May our every word and deed bear witness to Your love, drawing others to see and glorify You, our Father who is in heaven. Amen.

## Benediction

Now go forth, beloved of God, and let your light so shine before others, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.