

Path Clearer News

April 2016 - part A

A voice of one calling in the desert: "Prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken." A voice says, "Cry out." (Isaiah 40:3-6)

Stealth

I (Tom) have learned, especially over the past decade, about the power inherent in STEALTH in ministry. For instance, Jesus in Matthew 6 admonishes us to pray, to give, and to fast in secret. He stated that our Father who sees in secret will "reward" us when heeding His commandment. There is some truth in the following, *"He gets more glory when I get less."* I'm grateful to our board member, Samuel Sorinmade, who worked alongside of me on this issue out of concern for several years in the early days of Path Clearer. One of my personal weaknesses (and strengths) is the eagerness and ability to communicate openly and freely with strangers. However, wisdom informs us that not everything needs to be shared publicly with anyone or everyone. Some things are best left unsaid.

Although everything "we" Disciples of Christ are doing might not be open to public notice or inspection, the LORD is nonetheless still working on our behalf and on behalf of His Kingdom's purposes. Silence or invisibility does not mean that "nothing is happening". I'm still growing in my awareness of the valuable role of stealth in the Kingdom of God. This lesson has been counter-intuitive to me. Men and women who earnestly desire to be "seen" and "honored" in public for their work may in fact be hindering the Kingdom of God that they believe that they are advocating. A central issue is the person's motive in being seen and honored in public.

[And lest you think this message doesn't apply to you personally, men and women who fear being "seen" and "honored" in public out of insecurity or false humility might in fact be hindering the Kingdom of God, too. Some public recognition of them might do them some good. Honor where honor is due; respect where respect is due.]

Many Scriptures support the "stealth-in-ministry" concept. There are at least three broad categories of encounters between Jesus and others in the Gospel records along this line of thought:

(1) As mentioned above, Jesus commanded in Matthew 6 that **PRAYER, GIVING, and FASTING** should be done in secret. As an example He would withdraw from his disciples to pray alone.

(2) There are multiple examples of Jesus commanding others **TO NOT REVEAL HIS DIVINE IDENTITY**, for instance when addressing his disciples or demons, who spoke via human hosts. Examples include Matt 12:16, 16:20, 17:9, Mark 3:12, and Luke 9:21. One practical and contextual aspect of this was to minimize being noticed by those who were in opposition. If Jesus was intent on building a large follower base, this certainly wasn't the way to go about it. But, Jesus was not seeking a large group of followers, at least at that juncture. In fact, He was more than content with a small group of disciples. And, at times He overtly discouraged people who were not willing to pay the price from following Him.

(3) Jesus performed many supernatural signs and manifestations, and in many of those examples it is recorded that he instructed the individuals who were affected by His divine power to **TELL NO ONE ABOUT THE MIRACLES**. Let's consider four clear examples:

- In Matt 8:4 and Luke 5:14 Jesus healed a leper, then gave the command to tell no one.
- In Matt 10:30 Jesus healed two blind men, then gave the command to tell no one.
- In Mark 7:36 Jesus healed a deaf man, then gave the command to tell no one.

- In Luke 8:56 Jesus raised a dead girl back to life, then gave the command to tell no one.

Thus, Jesus commanded that people tell no one after he had healed or raised from the dead. Once again, one could speculate that it was practical and contextual to avoid unnecessary conflict with those who were in opposition, and prior to the appropriate time of the final entry into Jerusalem at Passover.

Altogether, Jesus' pattern was consistent. He did not want to draw attention to the miraculous manifestations or even to the non-miraculous exercises of faith (e.g., prayer, giving, and fasting). Ironically in most, if not all of those examples the people disobeyed Jesus' command and opened their big mouths in public. We humans are easily impressed by the miraculous and have a hard time with self-control over our tongues.

Jesus' consistent command poses a dilemma for us today; on the one hand we are to be stealthy, and on the other hand we are to give testimonies about what He has accomplished. However, one's motives behind sharing testimonies in public must be weighed. Scriptures enforce why it is good to give testimonies of what Yahweh has done for us (e.g., Rom 15:17-19; Rev 12:11). But, there are two key aspects that we should be aware of: (a) Does the glory (i.e., honor or accolades) for the good report primarily go to our Father in Heaven? Or, is it used to build up someone's ministry resume? And, (b) Is the timing and audience optimal for when the testimony is given? I've found that intentionally delaying a testimony can give us sufficient time to check our motives. At the end of the day, who gets the most honor?

I am reminded of a Path Clearer trip to the Bible College of Wales that was founded by the great intercessor of World War II, Rees Howells. John Manwell and Paul Griffiths escorted our team, and we met with an elderly intercessor and close companion of the Howells family. We asked him, *"What are the best insights he had gleaned from the Howells on effective intercession?"* His response was, *"Don't tell anyone; the power of an intercessory assignment is maximized when one acts alone or with only a few companions being aware of it."* And, secondarily he added, *"Don't pick up an intercession; there are always plenty of 'needs' deserving of prayer, but wait for God to give you that burden as an assignment."* [If you haven't read "Rees Howells Intercessor" by Norman Grubb, please do.]

A professional colleague and friend decades ago used to tell me - "KEEP YOUR POWDER DRY!"

Blessings, Tom Dooley
Founder

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Path Clearer Inc.
7100 Cabin Lane
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