

What Are You Doing in Secret?

In **Acts 17:6**, some of the Thessalonian Jews dragged Jason and some of the brethren before the city magistrates calling them “men who have turned the world upside down” (ESV). I know we love to come to this verse and say that these guys got it all wrong because it was really the Christians who were putting the world right side up. There is some real truth to that. However, I also kind of get why they might say something like this. After all, these were followers of the One who made a habit of turning everything on its head. These men were followers of the One who was not satisfied with status quo but challenged almost everyone He came in contact with right to the very core, pushing them to see that what made absolute sense to them was exactly backwards.

Consider this statement: “But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you” (**Matthew 6:3-4**, ESV).

That statement is exactly backwards from the way most of us normally act. It makes no sense from a natural and worldly perspective. When we hear this kind of thing, we might think it turns the world upside down.

How do most people act? Most people don't keep their good deeds secret. They keep their bad deeds secret. Their lust, lies, immoralities, thefts, drunkenness, hateful thoughts, gossip are done under the cover of darkness. They don't want anyone to know these things, so they hide them. They don't want people to think less of them. And somehow it is almost as if they think not letting anyone else know about their bad deeds means God won't know either.

However, what do they do with good deeds? Proclaim them. Announce them. Highlight them. They want everyone to know all the good deeds they've done. They want people to think highly of them. They want people to see them as the doer of good deeds. They want people to respect them for the good that they do. It's almost as if they think unless they let everyone know what they have done, God won't know.

But Jesus turns this on its head. He turns it upside down. He tells His followers to keep their good deeds secret. How secret? If you do a good deed with your right hand, don't even let your left hand know what it did. That's pretty secret.

However, just like we can't hide our bad deeds from God, we can't hide our good deeds either. God sees what we do in secret whether our good or bad deeds. Don't think that because others don't know what good deeds you've done that God isn't seeing them. We don't have to broadcast them for God to know how we are living. Further, we don't have to worry that God won't reward us. He will. He will reward us openly.

How do we accomplish this? With love and humility.

Love doesn't care who gets the credit; it just cares who gets helped. When we are putting others first, we aren't trying to get accolades for our actions. We just strive to do what will benefit others.

Humility doesn't care what others think about us. Humility doesn't care if everyone thinks we are great or not. Humility empties itself of self-promotion. Humility thinks about others, seeing them as more significant and important. Humility cares more about helping others than being seen by others.

The question for us becomes what are we doing in secret. What is that we are trying to hide? Are we simply trying to hide our bad deeds? Or are we quietly going about doing good without having to make a big deal out of it? What are you doing in secret?

—Edwin L. Crozier