

Expanding Heart & Growing Concern

“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Matthew 5:14-16 (NIV)

We engage in the spiritual practices of stillness, prayer, and reflection not to shed more light on ourselves but to see ourselves in light of who Christ calls us to be and the full life He invites us to experience if we trust Him. Christ's love is abundant and never runs empty, so we are free to give it away.

When we encounter the goodness of God, and it transforms our hearts, the call to goodness isn't a command; it is a gracious invitation to belong, become, and be different. Focusing our attention on Christ always leads toward a life centered on love, service, and the good of others. Because the love Christ offers is different than all the rest, we can't help but look different.

Jesus continually elevated love as the highest call; He saw it as the posture that should define everything about us. Goodness is the fruit that comes when God's love overflows into our lives and then out into the world around us. It forms, shapes, and leads us to love those within our reach. It challenges us to live humbly, love boldly, and serve sacrificially. It urges us to use our time, talents, and resources to speak up for the voiceless, work toward healing in broken places, and carry Christ's message of reconciliation to the world through our words and actions.

Love isn't passive; it's a force that acts on the world profoundly, often disrupting the patterns that protect the status quo. Redemptive love is the expression of goodness that compels us to care, not give up hope, and leverage all that we are and have for God's Kingdom. Giving ourselves away is the most powerful way to live. Our obedience serves as an expression of our dependency.

Take a moment to consider how you can make God's love visible through your actual lived life by reflecting on the following questions:

1. Our hearts shrink or expand to the size of our most significant concerns. Describe your current concerns. What effect are these concerns having on your heart?
2. Where has God granted you influence? Consider how your God-given gifts, talents, and resources could be used to serve others.
3. What opportunities are awaiting your obedience? What could be your first step in bringing God's goodness to these places? What would it look like to make yourself available and leverage these opportunities for good?
4. What would be required of you to become the kind of person for whom goodness is a way of life?

After reflecting on the above questions, write out a prayer asking God to expand the size of your heart for the world around you.