

IN-DEPTH SUMMARY

The Parable of the Lamp on a Stand

The in-depth summary of each bible study differs from the small group bible study laid out before the leader and the students. The in-depth overview is designed to help the leader with comprehensive information, much more than in the text notes at the bottom of every bible page. The small group studies are intended to be interactive, provide a learning atmosphere for students, and have open discussions allowing for interpretations of what the gospels' witnessed. An exhaustive search was completed on each verse to help the leader answer questions that may come up during the study.

The Lamp on a Stand parable can be found in three Synoptic Gospels: Matthew 5:14-16, Mark 4:21-25, and Luke 8:16-18. Understanding this parable requires reading all three Gospels. Mark and Luke convey a similar message, while Matthew includes two crucial verses (14 and 16) that enhance the message. Reading only Matthew would miss essential details from Mark and Luke. In this article, we will explore the parable drawing from all three Gospels. Additionally, we will address a common misinterpretation of the message in Mark and provide a detailed explanation.

You are the light of the world: Matthew 5:14 and John 8:12

This passage contains two parts. The first part states that you are the light of the world, and the second part says that a city on a hill cannot be hidden. This is the only time Jesus directly tells His disciples that they are the light of the world. While there are other verses that imply this idea, Mark and Luke's versions of this parable do not include this specific phrase. Additionally, there are instances where Jesus refers to himself as the "Light of the world" or where the "lamp is the Lamb." John 8:12 serves as an example of this.

(1) You are the light of the world. In the previous verse, Matthew 5:13 (Mark 9:49-50 and Luke 14:34-35), Jesus compared his disciples to salt. Jesus now refers His disciples to light and calls them "the light of the world."

1. Why does Jesus call the disciples the light of the world? Didn't Jesus say He was the light of the world in John 8:12? In John 8:12, Jesus referred to Himself as the "light of the world." In Matthew 5:14, Jesus tells His disciples that they too are to be a representation of His ministry. Jesus informs His disciples that they now carry His light within them and that they are responsible for continuing His work and spreading His message to the rest of the world. As the disciples share the Word of Jesus, they will also

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instruct followers of Christ to be a light to the world. It is the disciple's duty to demonstrate, represent and teach others what the light of the world looks like. Jesus requires His followers to lead a life of obedience, peace, and happiness, ultimately leading them to His heavenly kingdom.

(2) A city on a hill cannot be hidden.

2. What does it mean a city on a hill cannot be hidden? Throughout history, cities have been built on the sides of mountains or hills for various reasons. These reasons include protection, having a strategic advantage, access to irrigation systems, or to create an air of prestige. These cities were often visible from far away, with the glow of candlelight from the city's dwellings being visible for up to a mile at night. During the day, the city on the hill or mountain was highly visible and impossible to conceal.

3. What is the Parable “A city on a hill cannot be hidden?” The Parable of Jesus' light serves as a reminder that his followers must shine brightly. As the light of the world, Jesus' disciples who possess the Holy Spirit should demonstrate that they too are a shining light. This light should not be hidden but rather should be visible, like a city on a hill. Anyone, including believers, non-believers, Jews, Gentiles, Pharisees, and Sadducees, can see the light in those who possess the Holy Spirit. The actions of these individuals should also be visible and not concealed.

Matthew 5:15, Mark 4:21, Luke 8:16

This section is commonly misinterpreted or taught incorrectly. We will demonstrate how this one section in this parable is so vitally important to compare not just to the other gospel's interpretations but also to review and contrast the original Greek text to the King James version.

Here is what is commonly taught:

All three gospels share a similar statement from what they heard from Jesus. In Mark's case, it was in the form of a question **“Also He said to them, “Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand?”** There are two parts to this verse:

(1) The lamp that is lit is not to be covered or put under a basket or a bed.

(2) The lamp is to be set on a lampstand and gives light for all to see in the house.

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During the time of Jesus, streetlights were not common at night. If there were no moonlight, traveling would be challenging due to the darkness. The only source of light during the evening or night were candles, torches, or lamps that used fire. One could only see the stars in the sky.

(1) The lamp that is lit is not to be covered or put under a basket.

4. Why is the lamp not covered or put under a basket? In the first century, lighting a candle or oil lamp was the customary way to provide light after sundown. Most lamps had a wick at one end and a hole in the top center to add oil. When the wick was lit, the oil would be drawn up to keep the fire burning. This lamp provided the only source of light in the house. Jesus described the lamp's purpose as providing light for the entire house, so it would be illogical to cover up the only source of light that was available.

(2) The lamp is to be set on a lampstand

5. Why is the lamp set on a lampstand? To ensure optimal illumination, it is recommended to place the lamp on a stand in a convenient location. Jesus, who is often referred to as the light of the world, likens his teachings to light. He emphasizes the importance of displaying them rather than keeping them hidden. Just like how a lamp is put on display for all to see, showcasing His teachings illuminates and clarifies our path.

6. Who is the lamp? Jesus is the source of light and represents all that is good and truthful. He explained to his disciples that they too are the light of the world and should follow His lead. They are to become the light and represent Jesus through their actions. However, being the light of the world is not an easy task or journey. Many teachers and pastors use the analogy of a lamp in a room as the only source of light to explain this concept. The lamp represents Jesus and should be put on a lampstand so that nothing can be hidden. Some sermons also reference Mark 4:23-25 and Luke 8:18, which talk about those who have ears, let them hear. Additionally, Matthew 5:16 illustrates letting your light shine before men. We will further discuss these sections later in the study.

We will now present and clarify the actual meaning of the parable from the original Greek text, as translated into English in Mark 4:21. This will allow you to understand the interpretation of the scholars who translated and interpreted it between 1603 and 1625, in order to create the King James Version.

The original Greek text is on top, and the English translation of the corresponding word is below and in bold.

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Mark 4:21: Greek to English Translation

Και	λέγω	αὐτός,	Μήτι	ὁ λύχνος	ἔρχομαι	ἵνα	ὑπό
And	He said	to them,	Not (is)	the lamp	to come	that	under
ΤΟΝ	μόδιος	τίθημι	ἢ	ὑπό	κλίνη	οὐχ	ἵνα
the	bushel	it be placed	or	under the couch?	(is it)	not that	on the
λυχνία	ἐπιτίθημι						
lampstand	it be placed?						

King James Version Mark 4:21:

²¹Also He said to them, **“Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand?”**

7. Do you notice any specific word(s) that are different than the King James Version?

The Greek word (ἔρχομαι) “erchomai” is frequently mistranslated into English as “brought.” However, the correct Greek translation of (ἔρχομαι) “erchomai” is “to come,” or more specifically, “I come.” When the Gospels reference “THE LAMP,” they are not referring to an ordinary lamp. It is significant to note that an ordinary lamp cannot enter a room on its own. It must be brought into the room. However, Jesus is not an ordinary lamp. Inanimate objects are brought, while people come. Jesus is “THE LAMP.” To accurately translate this passage, it should be rephrased as follows: “And He asked them, ‘Does a lamp come to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not meant to be placed on a lampstand?’” It is important to note that both Matthew and Luke do not mention the lamp being “brought in” or “coming in.” The translators may have opted for a looser translation of Mark, stating that the lamp was “brought,” instead of using the correct translation where the lamp “comes.” When Jesus is referred to as the Lamp being brought in, as opposed to the lamp “coming in,” it has a completely different connotation. Jesus represents the lamp. He asserts that he did not “come” to be concealed or covered under a basket or bed, or to be hidden away in secrecy. Rather, he came as the lamp to be set on a lampstand, so that his light may shine brightly and be seen by all those who are in darkness.

With this new information, how would you answer this question:

8. How do you look at Jesus being the lamp differently?

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The reason why the lamp is not placed under a bed or basket is that the light of God reveals a world of darkness and sin. This is the very purpose of Jesus as the lamp.

Mark 4:22, Luke 8:17

Both these verses explain their previous verse in Mark 4:21 and Luke 8:16. Fortunately, both parts in each verse can also be separated clearly for better explanation. We will look at each individually and then summarize.

(1) Mark 4:22a, and Luke 8:17a. Nothing is hidden/secret that will not be revealed.

9. Why is something hidden? Is it justifiable to keep things secret? The act of concealing something is often done to gain an advantage, and there are situations where it is necessary, such as in war, sports, or celebrations. Revealing your plans to the opposition can be foolish and lead to failure. However, sometimes people hide things for selfish reasons, such as committing a sin or gaining an unfair advantage. When these secrets are exposed, it can damage relationships, erode trust, and lead to feelings of betrayal and revenge. Despite this, many people believe that as long as the secret remains hidden, no one will be hurt. But God knows everything, both what we do in public and in secret, and what is in our hearts and minds. Jesus made it clear that nothing can remain hidden forever.

10. What was hidden?

(2) Mark 4:22b, and Luke 8:17b. Jesus teaches that anything kept hidden or secret will eventually come to light. This means that everything we do or say will be revealed by the light or the Word of God. When something is hidden in darkness, it's easier to conceal. But with Jesus being the light, the true nature of what's being hidden is exposed. Light cannot be hidden once it's out in the open. To demonstrate, try opening a closed closet door with no lights on. The light will enter the closet. However, if you close the closet door with the light off, the dark won't leave the closet when you open the door from outside in the light. Remember, light always overcomes darkness.

Mark 4:23-25, Luke 8:18

11. What measurement is Jesus talking about? How is it used for those who wish to do evil?

In Matthew 4:23 and Luke 8:16a, Jesus says, "Those who have ears, let them hear." Essentially, he is urging people to pay attention. In the Parable of the Lamp, Jesus uses a

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measure of both good and bad. The basket he mentions is the same one he uses to measure. If someone heeds his words but then covers the lamp with a basket, Jesus will use the same basket to cover their light. The amount of light someone extinguishes or diminishes will be taken away from them.

12. How is the opposite true? The same rule applies in reverse. If someone listens to advice and puts it into action, their efforts will be recognized and rewarded. When it's time for judgement, those who have demonstrated the most will receive the most. This applies to all the time spent on Earth.

The Practical Application. Matthew 5:16

Only Matthew mentions Jesus' practical application of this parable which has two parts. Firstly, Jesus emphasizes to his disciples to "let their light shine before men." Secondly, people will witness their good deeds and it will bring glory to God.

13. What does it mean to let your light shine before men?

(1) Jesus desires for you to live out your faith in all aspects of life, including business, home, and public settings. It is important for the world to recognize that you are genuine Christians. Let your faith be evident to all.

14. How is Jesus looking for you to demonstrate your good works before men so they may praise you?

(2) When you demonstrate good works before men, **are the men supposed to see your good works that glorify God? Or are the good works performed to glorify God, and men see the good works?**

As a Christian, it's important to showcase your good deeds to bring glory to God. However, this doesn't mean you should behave like the Pharisees who sought attention by performing showy acts, praying loudly in public, and making public donations. Instead, Jesus wants you to display your conduct and demeanor in a way that sets a positive example and demonstrates the true essence of being a Christian to others.

15. How should you let your light shine before men?

The main purpose of performing good deeds is to honor God. These acts of kindness are so remarkable that they will be noticeable to others.

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We trust that our comprehensive explanation of the Parable of the Lamp on a Stand has provided you with the knowledge you were seeking.