

## Hidden Things

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The saying goes, “Things aren’t always what they seem to be.” Ad agencies study the facets of human nature: what things attract and what maintains attention. This is because their clients want to make a sale. Often, the consumer is aware of being played but follows through, buying the product. Because marketing analysts are in demand, the tale of their success is told. It is all about presentation. It attracts the eye. Things are displayed to show the advantages, conveniences, and, perhaps most of all – why one should be proud to own or buy into such a thing. What is presented may fall short of what it really is, or it may exceed the purchaser’s expectations. This is the way of commerce.

When it comes to personal behavior, we learn to deflect, to polish, to make a presentation conveying or concealing information. We do these things to share, to teach, to cover guilt, to keep private affairs private, or to protect another’s dignity. We may be an open book on some things. However, there are many occasions in life when we should not be an open book. Unlike the marketplace, we are not commodities, and it is not about making a sale.

Some reasons for concealment are foolish, and some reasons are wise.

*Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later. Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden (1 Timothy 5:24-25).*

The last part of verse twenty-five reveals that some good works will be revealed because God will glorify the things others have not seen. This indicates a particularly high quality of such works. Jesus taught about this, “Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven” (Matthew 6:1). Jesus’s conclusion for this was repeated: once for charitable deeds, once for pouring out our hearts in prayer (“your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly”). Not everything can be understood at face value. What could be better than God giving praise for things that others did not see?

Let us contrast this with something else Jesus taught,

*You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:14-16).*

How can we glorify God when the best of our good works is concealed? Except for personal prayer, there is not much that is absolutely concealed. After all, many good works involve interaction with other people. What matters is the spirit by which our work is carried out. Again, as Jesus said, “Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. . .” Are we out for attention, or is the work done quietly in the meekness of wisdom? This is where we apply the practice of not letting our left hand know what our right hand is doing. We even hide the awareness from ourselves of the good we may be doing. This means no standing before the mirror saying “atta boy!” Rather our spirits should reflect those at the King’s right hand,

*Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, “Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?” (Matthew 25:37-39).*

There are times when hiding things from others is important. Deflection of the truth is not always deceitful. The apostle Paul had a situation in Corinth where he saw the need to conceal his motive for the good of the church. It is shown by this summary: *“But be that as it may, I did not burden you. Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you by cunning!”* (2 Corinthians 12:16). This was Paul’s explanation for rejecting income from the Corinthians. He saw the weakness of some who might use this proffered support as a means of undermining him. Paul, in the beginning, did not reveal his underlying intent in this matter.

*Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel. But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me, for it would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void* (1 Corinthians 9:14-15).

No one could say that he was in it for the money. His “cunning” had the desired outcome of being able to deflect slander.

*Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge? I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you. And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself. As the truth of Christ is in me, no one shall stop me from this boasting in the regions of Achaia. Why? Because I do not love you? God knows! But what I do, I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast* (2 Corinthians 11:7-12).

He set aside receiving financial support from Corinth to offset a potential problem. This type of discretion required temporarily hiding his intention that his sincere effort in the gospel would be effective.

A great work of hiding is to cover sin. *“Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins”* (Proverbs 10:12). When Ham gossiped about his father’s drunken condition, he was stirring up strife. Fortunately, Shem and Japheth showed love to their father, and covered him, not so much a looking at his shame (see Genesis 9:20-23). How shameful it is when we speak to one another about the weakness of a brother or sister’s behavior. Are we providing a biblical narrative or are we showing that we have the inside track?

*Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins* (James 5:19-20).

These are some of the hidden things which give glory to God. The works of meekness, humility, and discretion often deflect attention from self and cover for the sake of others. It is God’s love through which His children glorify Him, and through which He will glorify His beloved.