



# The Southeast Sower

Southeast Church of Christ

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## SECRET DISCIPLESHIP

By  
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The concept of one trying to be a “secret disciple” of Christ is nothing new. “After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews...” (Jn. 19:38). Fear was the culprit that led Joseph to be a secret disciple of Jesus. Fear does stifle faith, and can even cause one to not be straightforward about the gospel. Just ask Peter (Gal. 2:11-14). However, fear and cowardice are not the only reasons why some are “Christians” secretly.

Some are simply ashamed to acknowledge that they are Christians. This is sad because God is not ashamed to be called their God. “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days says the Lord. I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Heb. 8:10). Christ is not ashamed to call us brethren. “For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all one, for which reason he is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Heb. 2:11). Christians are admonished not to be ashamed of Christ nor the fact that they are

Christians (2 Tim. 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:16). Jesus knew, however, that some would be ashamed of Him and His words, therefore the warning: “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the Holy angels” (Mk. 8:38).

For others, the desire for popularity keeps them “secret” disciples. They are like the rulers we read about in John 12:42, 43. “Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” I know of no one who does not desire to be liked by his fellowmen. However, the Christian must understand that he cannot compromise truth for the sake of popularity. “Do you know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (Jas. 4:4). If the fact that I am a Christian is distasteful to some, then so be it. Under such circumstances I am to please God and not man (Gal. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:4).

Any attempt at “secret” discipleship is in opposition to biblical teaching. Granted,

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Church of Christ meets at:

35 Walnut Court

Mogadore, OH 44260

Phone: 330.628.7432

## SERVICES:

### Sunday

Bible Study: 10:00 am

Worship: 10:50 am

6:00 pm

### Wednesday

Bible Study: 7:30 pm

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there are some things that I may do secretly, e.g., the giving of alms (Matt. 6:1-4), prayer (Matt. 6:5). Yet, the good deeds may be revealed (Acts 9:36; 10:20), and prayer certainly can be offered in a public manner (Acts 4:23-31). And let us take note that it is the deed and the prayer that are to be kept secret, not the fact of discipleship.

Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth”; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot of men. 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 lamp stand, 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" (Matt. 5:13-16, emphasis added). The Christian should be actively engaged in the works of righteousness. He should let his light "so shine" before men. One cannot do this and hide the fact the he is a Christian. It simply cannot be done.

We are living in dark and perilous times. It is not the time for Christians to go into hiding. May each one marshal the courage to shine as a light in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation (Phil. 2:15).

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#### Proper Perspective On The Past

A few years ago, while walking through the showroom of a local car dealership, I noticed the following "thought for the day" written on a whiteboard. "There is a reason why your car has a big windshield and a small rearview mirror. You are supposed to keep your eyes on where you are going and just occasionally check to see where you have been....Otherwise, you are going to crash. Remember, the past should only be a place of reference, NOT a place of residence. Focus primarily on where you are going."

Surprised at finding such a profound statement of truth in such an unlikely place, I quickly jotted it down, realizing its far-reaching spiritual application.

It reminds us of the proper place the past should have in our lives in relation to where we are now, and where we are going. The past is merely a reference point along our spiritual journey toward something better. The primary object of our focus, our place of residence, should be where we are going. Failing to have the proper perspective with regard to the past will result in the mangled wreckage of ruined lives, both physically and spiritually. The Bible tells us of many who focused on the past (old) instead of the present or the future (new), and we should earnestly heed the lesson.

After being in bondage for over 400 years, Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt (Exo. 12-14). With the Egyptians in hot pursuit and their backs against the wall the people asked Moses why he had brought them out to die in the wilderness, stating that it would have been better to have remained as slaves, serving the Egyptians. In the midst of their very deliverance they lost sight of where they were going, the promised land, instead wanting to make their past captivity in Egypt their place of residence once again. How much better their journey would have been had they only focused on where God was leading them (I Cor. 10:5-11).

In the book of Galatians, the apostle Paul dealt with Judaizing teachers who taught that keeping the works of the old covenant was necessary for salvation even under the new covenant of Christ. They held fast to the old law which Christ had nailed to the cross, bound and determined to

intermingle it with the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the midst of the very redeeming power of the blood of Jesus Christ they lost sight of the grace of the new covenant, instead wanting to make the condemnation of the past old law their place of residence once again. How much better their faith would have been had they only focused on where God was leading them (Gal. 3:23-25).

As Christians we can make the same mistake today. It may be true that we understand that we all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory, and that the wages of our sin is death (Rom. 3:23, 6:23). It may also be true that we have believed in Christ, repented of our sins, and have buried the old man of sin in baptism, being raised to walk in a newness of life, serving sin no more (Rom. 6:3-6). But....in the midst of our very new life in Jesus Christ we lose sight of being raised with Him, instead falling back into the past old life of sin from which we were freed, thereby making it our residence once again. How much better our lives would be if we only focused on where God is leading us (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

May we all live with the apostle Paul's perspective, who saw his own past as a place of reference, NOT a place of residence. "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ." (Phil. 3:13-14). - Jeff Haught