

**8:16 "Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lampstand, so that those who come in may see the light."**

Luke 8:16 is a proverb, that at face value, anybody can understand. Nobody lights a lamp just to cover it; people light lamps to illumine the darkness.

In ancient Israel people used terra cotta lamps. These were small shallow bowls filled with oil. They had a wick floating in the oil or one inserted through a hole in the bowl. The lamps often had handles so they could be moved around. They were commonly placed on a lamp stand or a shelf on the wall to elevate the lamp off the ground so it would give light to the entire house. Nobody ever put a container over a lamp because it would hide the light. Nor would anyone put a lamp under a bed. In those days beds were mats that were rolled out to sleep on. Anyone who put a mat over a lamp would smother it.

The proverb in 8:16 is part of a section in Luke that focuses on *how* people hear God's word. This was the main point of the Parable of the Sower in the previous verses as well. Luke 8:12 says, "The seed beside the road *are those who have heard*. . ." Verse 13, "Those on the rocky soil *are those who when they hear*. . ." Verse 14, "And the seed which fell among the thorns; these *are the ones who have heard*. . ." And verse 15, "The seed in the good soil; these are the ones *who have heard the Word in an honest and a good heart*. . ." This is followed by Luke 8:16-18 where Jesus concludes that His disciples need to take care *how they listen*. The section ends by Jesus saying that His real mother and brothers are those *who hear God's Word and do it* (8:21). The proverb of the lamp under the container needs to be considered in this context.

Why did Jesus tell the disciples that no one lights a lamp to hide it?

Jesus had been speaking to a mixed crowd. Many in the crowd were fixed in unbelief. When Jesus spoke to them plainly, they didn't listen. Therefore, He began to teach in parables as a judgment to hide the truth from them. In the parallel passage in Matthew 13:13-15, Jesus said, "This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand." Notice that He spoke to them in parables *because* they couldn't see, hear, or understand. The reason they couldn't hear or understand is explained in the verses that follow: The people's hearts had grown dull and they had closed their eyes. In other words, their inability to receive Jesus' teaching was self-imposed. *They* closed their eyes. Thus, Jesus hid the truth from those who had repeatedly rejected His teaching. However, what was hidden from the crowds was not hidden from the disciples for they had been "granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God" (Lk. 8:10). Thus, by means of parables Jesus both concealed and revealed truth; the parables were part of Jesus' concealing and hardening ministry, as well as part of His revealing and saving ministry.

With this context in mind we come to Luke 8:16. From verse 10 on Jesus was no longer speaking to the crowd at large, but to His disciples. He had just explained the Parable of the Soils to them and then said, "Now, no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container. . ." The point seems to be that Jesus' explanation of the parable uncovered its meaning; He "lit a lamp," so to speak, and revealed what the

parable had hidden. Thus the disciples were to take care that they did not hide what was revealed. In other words, the proverb of the lamp speaks of a fifth way that people hear the word. In the explanation of the parable we learned of four different ways in which the word was heard. (1) Some hear the Word of God with a hard heart. Others hear temporarily and (2) soon wither away or (3) are distracted by the world. (4) Some hear in a way that the Word takes root and produces a hundredfold. But there are also (5) those who hear the Word and hide it.

The unbelieving could *not* receive divine revelation for it was veiled from them by means of a parable. The disciples *could* receive revelation for they had been given the mysteries of the kingdom. But even those who are granted the privilege of receiving light are still in danger of concealing what they hear. God has not given his word to be hidden by our unresponsiveness; it must not be given superficial attention; it must be engaged, pondered, weighed, shared, and applied; what Christ has revealed should not be hidden from others.

***8:17 "For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light."***

Although the Parable of the Soils was hidden from the masses, Jesus' concealing ministry was only temporary; someday even the cryptic language of Jesus' parables would be understood; in time, the true purpose of the light would be achieved. "So (therefore) take care how you listen" (8:18a).

***8:18 "So take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him."***

Repeatedly, the Bible tells people to listen when God speaks. The words, "Hear the Word of the Lord" occur about thirty-five times in the OT and "Hear, O Israel" about six times. God often says to His people, "Listen to Me." Several times the prophets proclaimed, "Today, hear His voice." In Matthew 17:5, at Jesus' transfiguration, God said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; *listen to Him.*"

In 8:18 Jesus gives the reason why it is so important to listen, namely because "whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him" (8:17). In other words, those who respond properly to the word and receive it will be given more, while those who do not receive the word will eventually lose whatever they think they have. Or, to state it differently: those who allow the teaching of Jesus to penetrate their lives will receive a greater capacity to understand and receive more. Those who do not take to heart what He says will lose even what they have (as illustrated in Matt. 25:14-30, especially Matt. 25:26-29).

In sum: Luke 8:16–18 stresses the importance of Jesus' teaching and its authority. Jesus' words provide light, and even the truths veiled in parables will someday be understood. "Therefore care should be given to respond to it, for spiritual gain or loss is at stake . . . The reader is to see that a choice must be made. Either one receives the light, by continually responding to it, so as to open the way for more

spiritual blessing – or one faces the exposure of the light later and loses all that one thought he or she had. The choice is left for self-reflection. As Jesus says, “be careful how you hear” (Bock, 745).

***8:19 And His mother and brothers came to Him, and they were unable to get to Him because of the crowd.***

***8:20 And it was reported to Him, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see You."***

***8:21 But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."***

Both Matthew and Mark locate this event at a later time in Jesus' life. Luke puts it here because it suits his theme about those “who hear the word of God and do it.”

In verse 19 it says that Jesus' mother, Mary, and His brothers came to Him but could not reach Him because of the crowd. The fact that Jesus had brothers makes it clear that Mary was not "a perpetual virgin" as the Catholic Church teaches. Mark 6:3 even names Jesus' brothers and sisters.

The significance of this section is that one's relationship to Jesus is not defined in human terms (by family ties), but is defined by those who hear the word of God and do it.

Jesus' comments must have shocked everyone who heard Him. But that was what Jesus intended. People should never forget what is of most importance to Christ - hearing God's word and putting it into practice. This is found numerous times in Scripture. In Matthew 7:24 Jesus said, “Everyone who *hears these words of Mine and acts on them*, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock.” And in John 14:15, “If you love Me, *you will keep My commandments.*” In John 15:10 Jesus said, “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.” 1 John 2:3-4 says, “By this we know that we have come to know Him, *if we keep His commandments.* The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”