



CEO Devotional – July 1, 2013
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What Does It Mean To Be a “City on a Hill”?

Matthew 5:14-16, “*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.*”

When I left Halozyme Therapeutics in December 2010 after nearly 8 years as CEO, I decided to place my career entirely in God’s hands – whatever was next would be for His glory alone. City Hill Ventures (“City Hill”), a health care investment firm named after Matthew 5:14, was launched three weeks later. City Hill has been an incredible blessing in my life, and God has been stretching me in ways I never could have imagined a few years ago.

During the early days after starting the firm, I felt pressure to live up to the “City on a Hill” name. I focused on glorifying God through success – and the success came quickly, with my first investment leading to a rewarding exit within just 18 months – quick validation of the City Hill model. After this public milestone, numerous entrepreneurs were drawn to City Hill, and I became inundated with business plans and meeting requests. God was on the move, and I was doing my best to run after Him to keep up, but I struggled with time management, and viewed the time spent with other people as “opportunity costs” that took my focus away from the portfolio company operations. My instinct was to withdraw from these people, hunker down, and focus on the other companies I was managing.

Time passed, and after much prayer and reflection, God humbled me with the realization that I had lost sight of the true meaning of “City on a Hill.” An actual city on a hill serves two purposes: First, it is a shining beacon that draws travelers into its walls by the light. Metaphorically, the city on a hill serves as a shining example to others by bringing light to an otherwise dark world. I had been busily trying to live as an example to others, but a city’s source of light comes from the electrical grid, or other manmade power source. The metaphorical city on a hill is but a mere reflection of the true glory of God, the original source of light. Much like Jesus calls us to be “light of the world,” we are but mere reflections of the one true light of the world that is Jesus (John 8:12). A city on a hill therefore is a reflection of Jesus’s shining glory, and we as followers must reflect His light. In doing so, there will be no mistaking the source of our good works, which will help draw people to Him.

God also made me realize that there is a second, perhaps even more important, purpose to a city on a hill. Once people are drawn in by the light, the city doesn’t suddenly turn off all the lights and tell them to go home. “Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket” (Matthew 5:15). The city on a hill provides shelter, protection, sustenance, community, and other vital elements to its guests and residents. In this way, demonstrating relational accountability is an important function of the city on a hill. As people of the light, and leaders in our respective areas, we can draw others in with our good works and shining examples. But if we ignore the accountability purpose once we draw them in, and we instead turn off the lights and tell them we don’t have time for them, as I had been doing, then we miss important opportunities to glorify our Father in heaven as Jesus calls us to do (Matthew 5:16).

Once this was revealed to me, there has been a shift in my attitude and behavior towards other people who are drawn to City Hill Ventures. I prayerfully apply a filter to meeting requests and time commitments (e.g., will this demonstrate, through me, God’s good works? Will God be glorified?), but approach meetings, mentoring, public speaking, and other “networking” opportunities as an important part of City Hill’s and, by extension, my own ministry. Rather than viewing how I spend my time with others from a transactional “zero sum” perspective, I view it as an important part of reflecting God’s light to others, and being held accountable to being one of God’s people. God has honored this shift, and I have been blessed by new friendships and relationships.

The “City on a Hill” can draw people in – but once they are guests of the city, it is our actions, behaviors, and relationships that help keep them there, and ultimately welcome them as residents.