

8: Salt & Light Living (Matthew 5:13-20)

If we're going to make a difference, there has to *BE* a difference. Discover how Jesus expects & empowers us to be Salt & Light to our desperate world.

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teachingnotes

Jesus has called us NOT to stay home and insulate ourselves but to go out and influence our world. So rather than be on the defense, God calls us to influence the culture as **salt & light** does.

Matthew 5:13-16 (NIV)

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. **You are the light of the world.** A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, **let your light shine before others**, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

In Jesus' day, **salt** was very valuable, primarily used as a preservative for meat, keeping it from spoiling, as well as adding flavor.

- Jesus expects His followers to be a preserving influence in the middle of a rotting culture. Real salt never loses its saltiness, but in the ancient world *salt was mixed with many impure substances¹ or impure substances were never filtered out.*
- Salt from the Dead Sea was easily attainable as water evaporated and the salt was left...along with residue from crystals of gypsum (a mineral that can be mistaken for salt).² It might look good, but it won't taste good. It might LOOK like salt, but it isn't doing what salt is intended to do - **preserve & add flavor to what it touches.**

➡ To **PRESERVE** the culture we must not become **POLLUTED** by the culture. We must remain **PURE**.

- If we're going to make a DIFFERENCE, there's got to be one.
- If we're going to make a difference for people in our culture, we can't distance ourselves from people in our culture. We must be in **proximity** to people.

Pure salt influences what it comes into contact with, but polluted/diluted salt makes no difference, and **is no longer good for anything** except for throwing out to be a part of the pavement.

BIG TRUTH: We influence others to HONOR GOD by our Purity, Proximity, & Passion.

Light to Reveal, Not Conceal

Matthew 5:14-16b (NIV) **You are the light of the world.** A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead **they put it on its stand**, and **it gives light to everyone in the house.** In the same way, **let your light shine before others,**

During the *day*, **a town built on a hill** would not **be hidden** as the sun shone on it. At *night* the multiple oil lamps of homes would cause the surrounding area to glow. Cities lit up at night could not be hidden. So too, Jesus says...**You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.** Jesus also called HIMSELF "the light of the world" (Jn. 8:12). **Jesus is like the sun**, powerful, brilliant, & life-giving; the focus of the New Testament shows that everything revolves around HIM.

¹ Craig Blomberg, vol. 22, *Matthew, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 102.

² Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, vol. 33A, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1993), 99.

Jesus says His disciples are **the light of the world** too, as the *moon* reflects the light of the sun. Followers of Jesus are His representatives, reflecting His light to the world until the Son rises once again.

It is unthinkable to **light a lamp** and then immediately **put it under a bowl**. Our *passion* for Jesus should be visible and obvious, not secret and hidden. Disciples of Jesus are expected to be **the light of the world** - and **let that light shine before others** so they won't have to continue to live in the dark.

BIG TRUTH: We influence others to HONOR GOD by our Purity, Proximity, & Passion.

- **Purity** without Proximity = **NO INFLUENCE**. There must be a DIFFERENCE but we can't stay at a DISTANCE.
- **Proximity** without Purity = **NO INFLUENCE**. If there's no difference in your life, you won't make a difference in others' lives.
- **Proximity & Purity** without Passion = **NO INFLUENCE**. Acting like a Christian shows people *that* you're different, but doesn't tell them *why* you're different. Be **passionate** about sharing the light of the world in our dark culture!

The Influence of Salt & Light

Matthew 5:16 (NIV) In the same way, **let your light shine before others**, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Others see **your good deeds**, and end up glorifying the Father because of your influence!

BIG TRUTH: We influence others to HONOR GOD by our Purity, Proximity, & Passion.

Can you imagine someone saying that they came to Jesus because of *your influence*?

Can you name *one* or *a few* people the Lord has used to be SALT and LIGHT to you?

① Who is the LIGHT God has used in your life to point you to the true LIGHT OF THE WORLD?

② Who is God using *YOU* to INFLUENCE for the KING?

③ Do you HIDE the LIGHT? Or do you SHINE the LIGHT wherever you go? Do your words, actions, & attitudes point to the LIGHT of Jesus...or does it leave people wandering in the dark?

Jesus was different from the "experts in the law" - different in a good way. (Matt. 7:28-29) Many of those "experts" believed that Jesus was twisting the Scriptures, because He didn't fit the mold of their traditions. Many even said that Jesus was breaking God's laws. Jesus now confronts that charge with the most powerful response in history. Imagine someone actually saying the words, "**You don't believe the law or the prophets!**" - as Jesus responds:

The Authority of Jesus & the Scriptures

Matthew 5:17-18 (NIV) Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets [Jesus is talking about what is written in the Scriptures]; **I have not come** to abolish them but **to fulfill them**. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law **until everything is accomplished**.

WHAT?!?!? Can you imagine one of US saying this, "I will **fulfill** what the Scriptures say. I will perfectly LIVE OUT what the Scriptures say." Yeah, right!

Jesus had the highest view of Scripture (Old Testament writings).

- The Greek word for **smallest letter** written by Matthew is the letter **i** = *iota* (pr. *yōta*).
 - Jesus was likely speaking Aramaic/Hebrew & this word would have been the Hebrew **yod** (pr. *yōd*), (looks like an *apostrophe*), the first letter in *YaHWeH* reading right to left (יהוה).
 - A **stroke** (*keraiā*) literally means "little horn", a small mark that helps distinguish one Hebrew letter from another (an extension of a letter).³
- ✓ What some might think are the most insignificant letters of the Scriptures would not **disappear, until everything** it says **is accomplished**. *Who* could do *that*?

³ John F. MacArthur Jr., Matthew, vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 262.

Influencing Others Obedience/Disobedience

Matthew 5:19 (NIV) Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly **will be called least in the kingdom of heaven**, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Based on the words of Jesus, what do you think He would say to those who imply that God winks at sin? While many in our culture say obeying God's laws is being legalistic, Jesus thinks obedience is all about trust, and He expects His followers to follow what He says.

Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV) Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and **teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you**. And surely **I am with you always**, to the very end of the age."

Jesus doesn't *EXPECT* us to do what He doesn't *EMPOWER* us to do. And He expects and empowers us to OBEY Him and the Scriptures.

What is YOUR view of the Scriptures?

- Just words written by fallible humans *OR* God's Words written *THROUGH* people *TO* people?
- Just words you can take or leave? *OR*...are the Scriptures God's commands to trust and follow?
- If children were to watch your life and follow your example, which would YOU be labeled? - **LEAST** - leading others to disobey God *OR* **GREAT** - **showing others how to obey God through your daily actions?**

Driven to God's Grace

Matthew 5:20 (NIV) For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Were **the Pharisees** and **teachers of the law** the examples of how everyone else should live? Not exactly.

They too, had broken God's laws. Those who recognize they can't keep **the LAWS of GOD** are more likely to seek **the GRACE of GOD** to receive a righteousness that comes from beyond ourselves. We must turn to the One who *IS* righteous, the ONE who CAN fulfill the Scriptures - the Lord Jesus.

✓ Jesus is our salvation who makes us right with God and then empowers us to do what He expects us to do. Stop trying to do it on your own! TRUST Jesus, turn from your sin, ASK Him to forgive you and take over.

☀ **Kent Hughes:** "This takes us right back to ground zero of the first Beatitude. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God' (5:3)... 'Blessed are those who are spiritually bankrupt, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' 'Blessed are those who realize they cannot make it on their own, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'"

With the help of Jesus, **we ARE the SALT of the EARTH, the LIGHT of the WORLD** - taking the message of Jesus others.

We influence others to HONOR GOD by our Purity, Proximity, & Passion.

But our passion & purity comes from the ONE who has lived out the Law, the ONE who can make us righteous by His LIFE, DEATH, & RESURRECTION. This is where our hope is found - in Jesus alone!!! And now it's our privilege to go live it out and tell people about the ONE who has made us RIGHT with God - the ONE worthy of our lives.

If there's ever been a time we need to SHOW IT & SHARE IT, it's now!!!!

☀ **Ed Stetzer** "Saying 'preach the gospel; when necessary, use words' is a lot like saying 'feed the hungry; when necessary, use food.'"

✓ >We are to SHOW and SAY how others find the Lord Jesus.

We influence others to HONOR GOD by our Purity, Proximity, & Passion.

heretoserveyou

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

- * Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Christy** (850-673-9764), **Caleb** (864-315-8015), or another follower of Jesus soon!
- * Or call our **deacons & wives:** Alan & Christy Androski (850-464-1428), Steve & Debbie Bass (850-673-7952), Freddy & Joyce Howard (850-973-0047), Tim & Joni Hughey (850-464-1156), Mark & Dot Mancil (850-253-5405), Boss & Amelia Mulkey (850-464-6717), or Tom & Martha Waddail (850-973-0011).

discussion questions

Take some time to discuss these questions with your family, friends, or group.

1. What challenged or encouraged you most from today's teaching? (You might need to look back in your notes to help explain your answer.)
2. **Read Matthew 5:13-16** and explain how, as salt & light, we can be used to impact our culture.
3. The **BIG TRUTH** from this passage is: **We influence others to HONOR GOD by our Purity, Proximity, & Passion.** Why must the follower of Jesus have each of these characteristics in order to impact others? What happens when one of these characteristics is lacking in our lives?
4. **Read Matthew 5:17-19.** How significant does Jesus think the Scriptures are? What does Jesus say about those who lead others to *discount* and *dilute* the Scriptures versus those who lead others to *appreciate* and *apply* the Scriptures?
5. How did Jesus **fulfill** the Scriptures and what are some examples of how the Old Covenant was accomplished by Jesus and now gives way to the New Covenant? (You might want to spend some time reading Hebrews 8-9.)
6. **Read Matthew 5:20.** How could anyone have a righteousness that surpasses the religious leaders of the day? **Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-21.** How is it that any of us can be considered righteous? What should those who have been made right with God desire for others?
7. Share prayer needs and pray for one another.