

How does understanding the Sermon on the Mount as a parallel to Moses receiving the law on Mount Sinai change your perspective on Jesus's authority and teaching?

In what ways does Jesus fulfill the law not just through what He did, but through who He is, and how does this distinction impact your faith?

What does it mean practically for us to be salt as fertilizer rather than salt as flavor or preservative in our communities and relationships?

How can we live out the Beatitudes in such a way that our lives become as undeniable as a city on a hill or a light in darkness?

If the law was meant to lead us to Christ by showing us our need for a Savior, how should we approach Old Testament commandments today as New Testament believers?

What does it look like to keep the law of Christ by loving God and loving people in the specific circumstances of your daily life?

How do we balance the tension between Jesus saying not one stroke of the law will pass away while also understanding that we are not bound by specific Old Testament requirements?

In what ways might your life currently be hiding your light under a basket, and what practical steps can you take to let it shine more brightly?

How does the image of salt losing its strength or becoming impotent challenge you to examine whether your faith is actively producing growth in the kingdom of God?

What would change in your community if believers truly lived as distinctive kingdom citizens who fulfilled the law by living and loving like Jesus?

Small Group Guide: Salt, Light, and the Law of Christ

Based on Matthew 5:13-19

Opening Prayer

Begin your group time by asking God to open hearts and minds to understand how to live as salt and light in the world.

Ice Breaker

Share a time when someone's distinctly different lifestyle caught your attention and made you curious about what made them different.

Key Takeaways

1. Jesus Fulfills the Law

Jesus didn't come to abolish the Old Testament law but to fulfill it completely through:

- **Obeing it perfectly** - He lived without sin
- **Living it out** - All Scripture pointed to Him
- **Retiring it** - He nailed our debt to the cross

2. The Law of Christ

The Mosaic code is recast in Christ as the law of love:

- Love God completely
- Love others as Christ loved us
- This sets believers apart from the world

3. Salt of the Earth

Salt in the agricultural context meant:

- **Fertilizer for growth** - not just preservation
- **Active agent** - promoting change through the gospel
- **Proactive mission** - fulfilling the Great Commission

4. Light of the World

Believers are meant to be:

- **Undeniable** - like a city on a hill
- **Visible** - not hidden under a basket
- **Compelling** - drawing others to Christ through good works

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Text

1. **Mount Sinai Connection:** How does understanding the parallel between Moses receiving the law on Mount Sinai and Jesus teaching on the mount help you appreciate the Sermon on the Mount differently?
2. **Fulfilling the Law:** Jesus said He came to fulfill the law, not abolish it (v. 17-18). What's the difference between these two concepts? How does this affect how we read the Old Testament today?
3. **Salt Imagery:** The sermon presented salt primarily as fertilizer rather than flavoring or preservative. How does this agricultural understanding change your perspective on what it means to be "salt of the earth"?

Personal Reflection

4. **The Beatitudes Connection:** Review the Beatitudes from last week (poor in spirit, mourning, gentle, hungering for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers). Which of these qualities do you find most challenging to live out? Why?
5. **Losing Saltiness:** Jesus warns about salt losing its taste or strength (v. 13). What are some ways Christians can become "tasteless" or ineffective in the world today?
6. **Hidden Light:** What are some "baskets" that Christians tend to hide their light under? What might be hiding your light right now?

Application

7. **Fertilizer vs. Preservation:** The sermon suggested we should be proactive fertilizers (promoting growth) rather than reactive preservatives (holding the fort). What's the difference in practice? Give examples of each approach.

8. **Standing Out:** The sermon asked, "Does my life stand out?" How would your coworkers, neighbors, or family members answer this question about you? What specific behaviors or attitudes make you distinctive?
 9. **The Law of Christ:** Jesus distilled the law down to "love God and love people." Share a practical example of how you've tried to live this out recently. Where did you succeed? Where did you struggle?
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Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose ONE of the following to practice this week:

Option 1: Be Proactive Salt

- Identify one person in your sphere of influence who needs to hear the gospel
- Pray daily for an opportunity to share Christ with them
- Look for ways to serve them that might open doors for spiritual conversation

Option 2: Shine Your Light

- Identify one "basket" that's been hiding your light
- Take one concrete step to remove that barrier
- Do one visible good work this week and be prepared to give God glory if someone asks about it

Option 3: Live the Law of Love

- Each day, identify one way to tangibly love God and one way to tangibly love another person
- Journal about these experiences
- Share with your group next week what you learned

Accountability Questions

- What specific action will you take this week based on this study?
 - Who in the group can you share this commitment with for accountability?
 - How will you know if you've been successful?
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Memory Verse

Matthew 5:16 - "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer

Share and Pray:

- Who in your life needs the "fertilizer" of the gospel right now?
- Where do you need courage to let your light shine?
- What areas of your life need to better reflect the law of Christ?

Close by praying:

- For boldness to be salt and light
 - For opportunities to share the gospel
 - For hearts that genuinely love like Jesus loved
 - For specific requests shared by group members
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Looking Ahead

Next week, we'll continue in the Sermon on the Mount. Read Matthew 5:20-48 in preparation and consider: What does it mean that our righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees?

Leader Notes

- The agricultural understanding of salt may be new to many group members. Be prepared to explain this further if needed.
- Some may struggle with the tension between the Old Testament law and Christian freedom. Emphasize that Christ fulfilled the law and we now follow the law of love.
- Encourage authentic sharing about where people feel they're NOT shining brightly. Create a safe space for honesty.
- The goal is transformation, not just information. Keep bringing the discussion back to practical application.

5-Day Devotional: Living as Salt and Light

Day 1: The Weight of God's Word

Reading: Exodus 19:16-25; Matthew 5:1-2

Devotional: Just as Moses ascended Mount Sinai to receive God's covenant instructions, Jesus ascended a mountain to deliver the structure of relationship between God and humanity under the new covenant. The thunder and trembling at Sinai revealed God's holiness; Jesus's gentle teaching reveals God's approachability. Both moments carry equal weight—God establishing how His people should live as His treasured possession. Today, consider the privilege you have to approach God's word without fear, yet with reverence. Jesus bridges the gap between terrifying holiness and intimate relationship. As you read Scripture, remember you're receiving authoritative direction for kingdom living. How does understanding the weight of God's word change your approach to reading it daily?

Day 2: Fulfilling the Law Through Love

Reading: Matthew 5:17-19; Matthew 22:34-40; John 13:34-35

Devotional: Jesus didn't abolish God's law—He fulfilled it perfectly and distilled it into one powerful command: love. Every stroke and letter of the law pointed toward Christ, who embodied perfect obedience. Now, the law of Christ calls us to love God completely and love others sacrificially. This isn't a lighter requirement; it's actually more demanding because love requires our whole hearts, not just external compliance. The Mosaic code set Israel apart; the law of Christ sets believers apart in a world tearing itself apart. Today, examine your relationships. Are you keeping rules or genuinely loving? Jesus showed us that authentic kingdom living flows from love, not legalism. Where can you replace obligation with compassion today?

Day 3: Salt That Brings Growth

Reading: Luke 14:34-35; Matthew 5:13; Colossians 4:5-6

Devotional: Jesus calls you salt of the earth—not to preserve decay, but to catalyze growth. Like fertilizer enriching soil, your presence should activate spiritual nutrients in the world around you. Salt in small quantities stimulates growth, releases potential, and prepares ground for harvest. But salt that loses its potency becomes worthless. Your effectiveness as a Christ-follower depends on maintaining your spiritual vitality through connection with Jesus. Tasteless, weakened salt gets trampled; potent salt transforms environments. Consider your workplace, neighborhood, and relationships. Are you actively cultivating growth through the gospel, or have you become passive? The Great Commission calls you to be proactive fertilizer in God's kingdom. What specific action can you take today to help someone grow spiritually?

Day 4: A City That Cannot Be Hidden

Reading: Matthew 5:14-16; Philippians 2:14-16; 1 Peter 2:9-12

Devotional: A gleaming city on a hillside cannot be concealed, nor should it be. When you live out the Beatitudes—showing mercy, pursuing peace, hungering for righteousness—your life becomes audaciously distinctive. The world notices countercultural living. You're not called to blend in but to stand out like brilliant marble reflecting blazing sunlight. This isn't about arrogance; it's about authenticity. When people see your good works, they should be compelled to glorify your Father in heaven. Your transformed life raises questions that create opportunities for gospel conversations. Don't hide your light under comfort or conformity. Let it shine boldly. Reflect today: does your life provoke curiosity about Jesus? What "good works" has God prepared for you to illuminate His glory?

Day 5: Living as Kingdom Citizens

Reading: Matthew 5:1-16; Galatians 5:22-26; Ephesians 2:8-10

Devotional: The Sermon on the Mount paints a comprehensive picture of kingdom citizenship. From the Beatitudes through salt and light imagery to fulfilling the law through love, Jesus defines what it means to belong to God's kingdom. This isn't about earning salvation—that's grace alone. This is about living out your identity as God's workmanship, created for good works prepared in advance. Your life should reflect the radical transformation Christ brings. When you live poor in spirit yet rich in mercy, gentle yet hungry for righteousness, you demonstrate that God's kingdom operates by different values than earthly kingdoms. Today, assess honestly: does your life stand out as distinctively Christian? If not, invite the Holy Spirit to transform you from the inside out, making you salt that fertilizes and light that cannot be hidden.