Study/Discussion Guide - SALT & LIGHT

11 – 18 – 26 Stewart Farley

Matthew 5:13–16

KEY IDEA

We are called to influence the world around us by living a faith that can be seen, experienced, and connected to God.

Jesus calls His followers both **salt** and **light**. Salt has no impact while it remains in the shaker, and light serves no purpose when it is hidden. Our faith was never intended to remain inside the church or exist only in our words. It should influence the everyday places where God has positioned us.

A QUICK REMINDER FROM LAST WEEK

Last week, we ended with a challenge to take what we discussed and intentionally put it into practice. As we begin tonight, simply remember this:

Growth happens when what God shows us becomes something we actually live.

Keep carrying last week's challenge forward, but tonight we're moving directly into another dimension of what living our faith looks like: **our influence.**

1. YOU ARE AN INFLUENCER

The message makes an important point: **Leadership is influence, and influence is relational, not positional.**

Influence is our ability to positively shape the lives, decisions, and direction of the people around us. That means influence isn't reserved for pastors, leaders, or people holding positions. Every believer carries influence somewhere.

- When you hear the word *influence*, what normally comes to mind?
- Where do you think most of your influence happens right now?
- Why might we underestimate the spiritual impact of ordinary relationships?
- What is the difference between trying to convince someone about God and allowing your life to influence them toward God?

2. GET THE SALT OUT OF THE SHAKER

Jesus says: **"You are the salt of the earth."**

The sermon makes a memorable distinction: **we are not the salt of the shaker.** Salt accomplishes its purpose when it comes into contact with something else.

Salt preserves, adds flavor, and creates thirst. In the same way, our lives should bring a distinctive Kingdom influence into the environments around us. A joyful, purposeful life can even create a spiritual thirst in others.

- What might it look like practically for Christians to stay "in the shaker"?
- How can we intentionally get outside of Christian circles without compromising our faith?
- The sermon says salt creates thirst. **What qualities in a Christian's life might make someone curious or "thirsty" to know more about God?**
- How can bitterness, negativity, or compromise cause our influence to lose some of its "saltiness"?

Does the way we respond to the culture strengthen our influence or sometimes weaken it? Why?

3. TURN THE LIGHT ON

Jesus moves from salt to another picture: **"You are the light of the world."**

The sermon makes the point that a light can still *be* a light while failing to illuminate anything if it isn't shining. Jesus didn't call us to hide our faith. Our lives are meant to openly benefit and illuminate the people around us.

- What does "letting your light shine" mean beyond simply telling someone you are a Christian?
- Why might believers sometimes be tempted to keep their faith private?
- What does it look like to represent Christ **appropriately, sensitively, lovingly, but clearly** in everyday life? Where is it easiest for you to let your light shine? Where is it more difficult?

Think about the places you regularly go: **Home • Work • School • Neighborhood • Community • Social settings - Where could your light shine a little brighter this week?**

4. GOOD THINGS OR GOOD WORKS?

Jesus says people should **see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven.**

The sermon distinguishes between simply doing a **good thing** and doing a **good work**. People who do not follow Christ can still be generous, kind, compassionate, and helpful. The message emphasizes that Christian good works should ultimately point beyond ourselves and toward God. Our faith becomes connected to our actions.

- What do you see as the difference between doing something good and doing a "good work" that brings glory to God?
- How can we point people toward God without making every interaction feel forced or religious?
- Why is it important for people to **see something in our lives**, not merely hear something from us?
- How can our everyday work, kindness, generosity, integrity, or service become a platform for God's influence?

The Bigger Question: **If someone watched your life before they ever listened to your words, what would your life communicate about the God you serve?**

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Salt must **make contact**./Light must **be visible**./Good works must ultimately **point beyond us to God**./That brings us back to the central idea: **Our faith isn't meant simply to be something we believe. It is meant to become an influence through the way we live.**

Jesus' picture in Matthew 5 is outward-facing. Salt enters the earth. Light shines into the world. Good works are seen by others. The goal is not drawing attention to ourselves, but living in such a way that our lives help people recognize and glorify God.

THIS WEEK'S SIMPLE CHALLENGE

Get out of the shaker. Turn on the light.

This week, choose **one person or one environment** where you can become more intentional about your influence.

Don't force anything./Don't preach at anyone.

Simply look for an opportunity to **live your faith visibly through your attitude, kindness, integrity, service, encouragement, or generosity**, and when the opportunity naturally presents itself, don't be afraid to let people know **Who is behind the difference they see in you.**

Be salt. Be light. Let your life point someone toward God.