

# Light and Life: Salt and Light

Matthew 5:13-16 (September 10, 2023)



## Begin with Prayer

In silence, invite the Holy Spirit to guide you. Then pray:

*Empowering God, we pray that you will send your Holy Spirit to move us to understanding; to help us to believe the gospel; to give us strength and wisdom to live by it. Amen.* (Worship Sourcebook Q.3.5.8)

## Reconnecting and Debriefing

Take a moment to check in with one another (2 minutes each).

1. *What are you looking forward to (or concerned about) as you begin the fall?*
2. *Who is someone God used (or is using) to bring you to faith in Jesus?*

### Introduction

Whether we gather in person or online, our goal remains the same: to be a people apprenticed to the life of Jesus. His life and teaching is our example and our source of truth. Remember the commitments we make to each other to foster safety and freedom as we pursue spiritual growth together:

- Whenever possible, please listen to the sermon prior to gathering (Sunday or online).
- While we are meeting (even online), commit to focussing rather than multitasking. Be all here.
- Give every person an equal opportunity to share, even if it takes time to form or finish their thoughts.
- Be respectful and non-judgmental.
- Honour sharing boundaries z Honour sharing boundaries (only what you have permission to share, no gossip) and guard confidentiality (what we share here stays here).
- Don't try to fix, problem-solve or rescue; keep pointing one another to the truths of the gospel for our lives.

## Listening to God's Word

Many people today would say that the church has a credibility problem. Megachurches are embroiled in scandal, public figures represent Christianity in obnoxious ways, and churches whose presence in their community is barely noticeable make people wonder if there is anything good about the news the church has to share. On the other hand, a life well lived can open the door for significant and powerful conversations about Jesus. What is the connection between what we say we believe, and what we do? In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives us a beautiful vision of how our very lives can be part of the good news message.

## Small Group Discussion

**Read Matthew 5:13-16.** Then discuss together:

- ***What is your first thought when you read through this/these passage(s)?***

**Note:** The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' long-form explanation of what life under the rule of God is like, and how his disciples will be formed to live in it.

- **Read v 13.** *What are some of the ways salt is used for good in daily life?*
- *What makes a Christian community "salty"? What is the good we offer to the world?*
- In the ancient world, salt "lost its saltiness" because it dissolved, leaving only the impure minerals it had been mixed with. *What are some ways that we might allow our saltiness to be washed away?*

- *Why does losing our essence as a Christian community lead to being "no longer good [Gr. ἰσχύω (iskyō): useful, effective] for anything"?*
- **Read v 14-16.** Assuming you're gathering in the evening, take a moment to imagine your meeting without any electricity. (Maybe turn out the lights!) *What difference would a light make to what you are trying to do?*

*In the book of Isaiah, God says he will make Israel, and later, God's Servant, to be a "light to the Gentiles" who will bring his salvation "to the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 42:6, 49:6). This is a fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham that his family would become a nation who would be a blessing to the whole world. Now Jesus ascribes this same mission to his school of apprentices.*

- *What does Jesus' imagery teach us about the gospel's intended role in a community/neighbourhood?*
- **Read Matthew 6:1.** In 5:16 Jesus highlights our "good deeds" as leading people to glorify God. Yet in this verse, he warns against good deeds performed for others. *How do you discern the difference?*
- *Who is a person you know whose life in their community exhibits the saltiness and light of Jesus' own character?*
- *Describe a time when you saw your "good deeds" (your integrity as Jesus' apprentice) open a door to talk about God.*
- **Read Ephesians 2:8-10.** *How does your own experience of God's grace shape how you are salt and light where you are?*
- *What opportunities to be salt and light in your community do you see before you this week?*
- ***How do you sense the Holy Spirit calling you to respond to or act on what we have read and discussed?***

## **This Week's Practices**

**Prayer Walk:** Walk through your neighbourhood and imagine or pay attention to the needs you encounter (physical, financial, emotional, relational, spiritual, etc.). Offer prayers toward those needs, and ask God to lead you and our church in meeting those needs with the light of the gospel.

**Tactile Prayer Cue:** Every time you use salt or touch a light switch, ask God to work in your life to make you more saltier and brighter for him.

Be prepared to share what you experienced at our next gathering.

## **Caring for One Another**

- *Suggest a prayer request that is related to the topic we've discussed.*
- ***Do you or your family have a need that the Life Group can help meet?***

Using **the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)** as a guide, based on what you've shared together, spend time listening to God and praying for one another.