



SALT & LIGHT

Study Three

Matthew 5:13-16

Introduction

Following the Beatitudes, the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:13-16 are iconic in the Sermon on Mount. Jesus uses the language of salt and light to convey profound spiritual truths to His followers in a strikingly clear and memorable way. By using two everyday elements, Jesus' words are able to transcend cultural and historical boundaries, making them relatable to people across time and space.

For this week, the guide will go deeper into what it means to be salt and light through word studies and other verses in the Bible. Let us study and embrace this passage together as we seek to glorify our Father in heaven.

Group Study

1. Slowly read aloud Matthew 5:13-16 and hear Jesus proclaiming that you are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Dietrich Bonhoeffer in *The Cost of Discipleship* wrote “‘You are the salt.’ Jesus does not say: ‘You must be the salt.’ It is not for the disciple to decide whether they will be the salt of the earth, for they are so whether they like it or not, they have been made salt by the call they received.” What are some initial insights and key questions that come to mind as you read this passage?
2. While salt is common today, it was of greater worth in Jesus' time such that the salary (*salarium* in Latin) that a Roman soldier was paid is derived from the word salt (*sal* in Latin). Salt had many uses, including to enhance flavor, provide nutrition, fertilize soil and preserve food. There is still a saying today that a person is “worth their weight in salt.” As the salt of the earth, how do you see the value of being a disciple of Jesus in today's culture?
3. When Jesus says “...if the salt has become tasteless...” the word translated “tasteless” is *moraino* (verb) in Greek which is related to the word *moros*

(adjective). In the Bible, *moraino* and *moros* are translated foolish and fool everywhere else besides the salt passages. What is Jesus saying in comparing salt with tastelessness/foolishness? What are the implications for his disciples?

4. Read Romans 1:22 and 1Corinthians 1:20 where *moraino* is also used. Read Matthew 7:24 and 7:26 (*moros*). What is the opposite of foolishness? Read James 3:17. How does being the salt of the earth connect with the Beatitudes? How might salt retain its saltiness?
5. Similar to salt, light was of greater worth in Jesus' time than today because something had to be burned/consumed in order to produce the light in the darkness. Imagine total darkness around you – how valuable would light be to you? How would light make you feel?
6. Jesus uses the examples of a city on a hill and a lamp in a home. What is the context of each example? Who would be seeing the light from a city on a hill? Who would be seeing the light from a lamp in a home? How would this connect with you being a light of the world?
7. When Jesus says “let your light shine before others,” what does this mean? What is the light that Jesus is referring to (hint: Matthew 5:16)? What is the ultimate purpose of letting your light shine before others? Jesus also alludes to a tendency to be hidden – how can this be addressed?
8. Read Ephesians 5:1-17. What themes are connected with this salt & light passage?

Personal Reflection

1. Salt in Jesus' time was highly valued and Jesus said that you are the salt of the earth – where in your community can you be like salt?
2. Being the light of the world is not just a theoretical concept – it's a call to action. As followers of Jesus, we have the privilege and responsibility to illuminate the

darkness around us, pointing others to the source of true light which is our God.
In what ways can you be light to those who see you?

3. It can be a balancing act to live in today's society while being a disciple of Jesus. How can you maintain your salt & light distinctiveness while engaging with the dominant culture?

Prayer

