



Session 3: Salt & Light

- OPENING -

Consider using one of the following three questions as an opening activity for your group before moving into a closer look at the passage.

- Take a moment as a group to prayerfully read Matthew 5:13-16.
 - Take turns listing one question about this passage and how to apply it that you would like to discuss during your time together.
 - List something you learned or were challenged by from the sermon on Sunday morning.
 - What do you think is most shocking about these verses? What do you think would have most shocked Jesus' original audience?
- Share about a time when your faith led you to stand out among family or friends who were not believers.
 - What was the situation? What did you do? How did people respond? What was the end result?
- All of us have a level of influence in our lives, although it may vary across the different spheres of our life.
 - Where do you have the greatest sphere of influence?
 - Where does that influence come from?
 - How do you leverage that influence?
 - Towards what goal do you direct that influence?

- DISCUSSION -

Salt of the Earth

1. Salt and light are ordinary and everyday realities, and yet they are also indispensable for our lives today, just as they were in Jesus day.
 - Why do you think Jesus uses such ordinary, yet essential things when he starts talking about the influence Christians ought to have?
 - What are modern parallels to salt and light that capture the idea of being ordinary but also indispensable?

2. The metaphors of salt and light assume that there is a distinction between the world and the church and seem to imply some things about the nature of the world and the purpose of the church.
 - What is implied about the nature of the world by calling Christians salt and light?
 - What is implied about God's desire for the church based on his calling Christians salt and light?
3. Today salt is used primarily as a flavoring agent, but in the 1st century its primary use was as a preservative. Jesus is calling his followers "to arrest corruption and prevent moral decay in their world."¹ But how we do this is profoundly important. John Stott writes, "The influence of Christians in and on society depends on their being distinct, not identical."² Martyn Lloyd-Jones similarly writes, "The glory of the gospel is that when the Church is absolutely different from the world, she invariably attracts it."³
 - In what ways is your life distinct from the world around you?
 - In what ways is our Midland Bible Church community distinct from the world around us, both in Midland and across the world?
4. Salt in the first century would have lost its saltiness by becoming mixed with other compounds that retained the appearance of salt but lacked its preserving power.⁴
 - In what ways is the church today in danger of losing its saltiness?
 - Are there areas for you personally, or for our church communally, where we may be losing our distinctiveness as followers of Christ?
 - If so, what can be done to arrest this process?

Light of the World

5. Light in Scripture is a common metaphor to denote truth. However, in Matthew 5:16 it speaks about people seeing our "good deeds" placing an emphasis on our actions.
 - How can we show our light in both word and deed, and how can we do so consistently?
 - In what ways can our actions be enacted and embodied testimony to the truth?
 - Why might our words in addition to our actions have a place in our good works?
 - Do you tend to find it easier to speak the truth or to live the truth? Why? What can you do to bring your words and your actions into agreement before a watching world?
6. Context is an important part of Scripture, and the section on being salt and light comes immediately after the Beatitudes.
 - What do you think is the connection between the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-12 and the section on being salt and light in Matthew 5:13-16?

¹ Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992): 102.

² John Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount* (Downers Grove, IVP, 1984): 60.

³ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, (Downers Grove: IVP, 1977): 41.

⁴ See Blomberg, 102. Also see Stott, 60, for a more detailed attempt at explaining how chemically this might have happened.

- If we struggle to embody the Beatitudes, what might this say about our Christian witness in the world?
7. Matthew 5:16 points to the result of our being salt and light in the world, and ultimately it is worship being given to God.
- Who do you think the “others” are in Matthew 5:16? How does your answer to that question change the way we think about our mission as believers?
 - Who are the unbelievers in your life before whom you need to live out your calling as salt and light? Start by praying for these people, and for your own life and then ask that God would give you opportunity to be salt and light.

- CLOSING -

- Where do you need to be salt and light? In what relationship do you need to pray for God’s grace and enabling power to live out your identity as salt and light before a watching and waiting world?
- How can your HomeGroup, and by extension our church, live and act as salt and light in Midland?