## Salt of the Earth and Light of the World

**By Narelle Gurney**

Scripture focus: “You are the salt of the earth, you are the light of the world.” Matthew 5:13-16

This bible study outlines the importance of the fact that we are called to be the salt of the earth, and the light of the world. We need to stand up and stand out. We are called to be messengers of the mission.

The intention of this study is to get people talking, discussing, thinking and applying the teaching in a practical way.

**An Obvious Christian**

Ask and Discuss:

An obvious Christian is someone who is easily identified and recognised as a Christian.

1. Are you an **obvious** Christian?
2. What makes you an obvious Christian/why do you think that you are an obvious Christian?

Tell a personal story if possible (or use the following in a way that makes sense for your group):

When I was 15 I went to a school camp. One night a crowd of kids filled a small room and many more were standing outside listening. Martin, a boy in my year was in the room. Everyone knew Martin was a Christian and he was often teased. That night he was talking to other students about God and his faith. There were other Christian kids there, including me, but he was alone against all these cynical students. I hung around outside, listening to kids say nasty things about him, but keeping nervously quiet because I didn’t want to draw attention to myself and become a target. I was chatting to a girl who was criticizing Martin. Eventually I said, almost apologetically, “Well actually, I’m a Christian.” I thought I was so bold, brave! I had just witnessed for Jesus! The other kid said, “Really? Wow, I would never have thought that YOU were a Christian.” I guess it wasn’t **obvious.** She meant what she said as a compliment, like you’re not weird like Martin, but was it a compliment? No - it was a wakeup call.

**Matthew 5:13**

Read Matthew 5:13 - amplified version.

**13**“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has lost its taste (purpose), how can it be made salty? It is no longer good for anything, but to be thrown out and walked on by people. **14**“You are the light **of Christ** to the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; **15**nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. **16**Let your light shine before men **in such a way** that they may see your good deeds and recognize and honor and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

Ask:

1. Who is Jesus speaking to when He said you are the salt of the earth and you are the light of the world? Is He speaking to us? Why do you think He is/is not speaking to us?
2. Ask the group to brainstorm all the uses there are of salt in the day of Jesus and today.
3. What does He mean by “the world”?
4. How far should “the world” extend for us being salt and light in it?
5. Pure salt cannot actually lose its saltiness so what does Jesus mean by verse 13?

*When Jesus says you are the salt of the earth and the light of the world he’s talking to his followers, to us. He doesn’t say this is what you* ***should*** *be, He doesn’t say this is what* ***you will be,*** *He doesn’t say this is what you can* ***be if you want to****. He says this* ***is what you are.*** *No one else is the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Only Christians. There’s no backup plan****, no substitutes.*** *Have a look around at each other. We are it!*

Discuss the statement above. Do you agree or disagree? What does it mean to you personally?

How can you be salt and light in the world locally and in other countries?

**John 8:12**

Read John 8:12.

How can Jesus be the light of the world and say that ***we***are the light of the world?

Explain: On earth, the sun gives us magnificent, strong light. At night the moon also gives light. But the moon doesn’t have light of its own, it just *reflects* the light of the sun. Jesus is like the sun, and we are the moon. He is the true light but as His followers we reflect His light to others. We don’t have light of our own, we have His light in us.

If you put a light under a bowl, it defeats the purpose. That’s not where it belongs.

When the apostle Paul was converted, Jesus said to Him, “I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.” Acts 26:17-18

How does this instruction apply to you today? What can you do to fulfil it?

The salt lesson ends with a warning about losing your saltiness. The light lesson ends with encouragement about what happens when your light shines in the world.

What is the reason for letting people see your good works?

In what manner should your good works be done?

Have you heard the saying “Christians are IN the world but not OF the world?”

What does this saying mean to you?

Salt is no good if it stays in the salt shaker, light is no good if it isn’t seen. So be salt and light.

Where there are arguments, be a peacemaker;

where there is sadness and hurt, be a comforter and encourager,

where there is hatred, show the love of Christ, return good for evil. (Luke 6:35)

**Reflection**

Are **you** an obvious Christian?

Are you a Christian influence where you live, where you work, where you go?

How can you make sure that you are?

**Leader’s Notes**

* Salt cleans, heals, preserves and gives flavour making food attractive to our taste.
* WE act as salt in the world when we attract people to Christ by the way we live our lives. Am I a good neighbour? Do I treat people well? Do I show the fruit of the Holy Spirit in my life? Does my life attract people to Christ?
* Used in Jesus day, to stop decay and rot in food i.e. preservative, seasoning, disinfectant, unit of trade and currency, ceremonial offering, covenants etc.
* Losing your saltiness: not being an influence for Christ.
* The purpose of salt is to ACT AS SALT. If it loses its saltiness, it loses its purpose. It can’t be salt anymore. The purpose of the Church, us, is to act like the church. Jesus is not talking about losing your salvation or relationship with Him, he’s talking about losing your influence. When you make compromises to fit into the world, you’re no longer acting as salt in the world. The world doesn’t need you to be more like the world, it needs you to be more like Jesus. But when we act like everyone else, we lose our saltiness. The church loses its good reputation. We must make sure we’re doing everything we can to hold up a good reputation for Christ in this world.
* When the church loses its reputation it loses its mission (purpose). The passage says, “It’s no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled on”. When you lose your mission you lose the unique purpose God has for you.