



A 7-week Study on Biblical Reconciliation

“Salt and Light” Discussion Guide Session 3

Key Verse: *“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.” (Matthew 5:14)*

Point 1: God’s children are to be both salt and light in the community.

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.” (Matthew 5:13)

In our last study we explored our new identity in Christ and our calling to bless the nations. As we go through this study, remember that God is much more concerned about who we are than what we do. The Christian life is first about a change in identity and only after this change has taken place can we expect a change in behavior. All transformation in the Christian life occurs from the inside out, not based on religious practice or following rules and regulations. Now as we begin to discuss what it means to be “salt”, note that this short verse does not say, “Make your best effort to be salt”. It is talking about a quality of life that will impact those around us, about our identity which results in transformation.

Salt is used for many purposes, it preserves things from decaying, it is used to cleanse and it brings flavor. The presence of salt brings about a change in its surroundings. Remember that this passage, from the “Beatitudes”, is about “blessing”, being a blessing and receiving a blessing. As if Jesus were saying, “You are blessed and you are a blessing if you hunger for righteousness, if you show mercy, if you bring peace... so now go and be who you are... help stop the process of decay, bring healing and cleansing and bring the flavor of Christ.” This is very similar to the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 2:14-15, Christ “...uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.” Or of the Psalmist who says, “Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.” (Psalm 34:8) God wants to use us to change the “flavor and aroma” of the world in which we live, to be agents of healing and reconciliation.

? *Have you experienced a sense that your life is different from your surroundings? What was this like?*

Point 2: When Jesus dwells in His people, they become lights shining in their communities.

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:14-16)

Jesus said, ‘I am the light of the world’ (John 8:12), but in Matthew 5:14-16, He also said, ‘You are the light of the world.’ When Jesus dwells in His people, they become lights shining in their communities (read Philippians 2:14-16). Light is radically different in character from darkness. They cannot co-exist, because light removes darkness. In order to be different from the darkness, we must first be transformed

by the renewing of our minds (read Romans 12:2). Instead of being conformed to the society in which we live, and having the same prejudices, mistrust, hatred, tolerance of injustice, and so on, we have the mind of Christ. We need to be thinking God's thoughts and seeing everything from His perspective. If our thoughts change, so will our behavior. When God cleanses, heals and transforms our thoughts and perspectives, our transformed lives will reflect the light of Christ in our communities, revealing God's intentions and where our societies fall short. Part of being God's chosen people is shining His light. (Read Isaiah 60:1-3)

Our enemy, the Devil, wants to extinguish the Church's light. His aim is to make sure there is no difference between the Church and the surrounding community so that the church does not impact the community. He does this by sowing the same sins, the same prejudice, the same greed, power struggles, etc, in the Church as is in the world. A light bulb is a good illustration. The function of a light bulb is to be connected to the source of electricity and so produce light. On its own it cannot produce light. We may have light bulbs of many different sizes, shapes and colours, and even spend time polishing them, but if they are not plugged into a source of electricity, they are useless. The church is like a light bulb, if we allow ourselves to become disconnected from the life of God we will make no difference in the darkness of our world.

? What should we expect when we let our light shine? Do people always appreciate the light?

Point 3: It's good to remember that we too were "in the dark" before Christ's light came into our lives.

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord. 11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. 13 But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. 14 This is why it is said: "Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." (Ephesians 5:8-14)

To what kind of group did Jesus appear after His resurrection? Was it a victorious group? No, it was a discouraged, fearful group, painfully aware of their failure and who had lost all hope and vision for the future. When Jesus appeared inside the locked doors, He did not rebuke those gathered, saying, 'Oh, I am so disappointed in you! What failures you are! I invested three whole years of my life in you and look at the results!' What He said was, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I also send you' (John 20:21). By this He was saying that God had not changed His plan. He still believed in His Church and His people, and He breathed the Holy Spirit on them. Later, He thoroughly baptised them in the Holy Spirit. This group of unlikely people then proceeded to change the world!

In Ephesians chapters 4 and 5, Paul focuses on the theme of light and darkness. He is really talking about the process of transformation when he says we were "darkened in our understanding" (Ephesians 4:17) but now we are called to walk (or live) as children of light" (Ephesians 5:8). The phrase "wake up, sleeper" was probably an ancient hymn or poem that would have been familiar to Paul's readers at the time, maybe it was one of his favorite hymns :) After reminding his readers of all that God has done for them, he uses the picture of light and darkness to encourage them to live out the work that God has already begun on the inside. Light symbolizes living in the truth of Christ, seeing what needs to change, bringing clarity, revelation and transformation. The command to "wake up, sleeper" is a call to be alert, to live with our eyes open, and of course, a reference to the power of the resurrection life of Jesus, which gives us the power to live the Christian life. Ultimately it is Christ who shines on us and we reflect His glory to others.

Pray for one another, that God will help us to live in the light and better reflect His light in our world.



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