

# Life Group Lesson

## June 6, 2010

### “SALT OF THE EARTH”

*“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 by men. “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 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. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:13-16*

**ICEBREAKER:** What is the saltiest thing you have ever eaten? (Mine was a strawberry pie my aunt made. Instead of sugar, she accidentally used salt YUCK!)

Is salt the number one “spice” you use to flavor your food?

#### **LESSON:**

There are two basic approaches in shaping values in society. Sometimes, the Christian community may feel like it needs to confront a particular value or decision. Things like homosexuality or abortion are big ones Christians boycott, picket and protest over. But the Christian community is also able to influence values day in, day out through bringing a distinctively Christian approach to the people we come across as we go about our daily lives. This is the best method. This is what we mean by being "salt and light" in the world (Matthew 5:13,14), where by living distinctively Christian lifestyles we seek to influence those around us, and through this the values, decisions and priorities adopted by our communities.

#### **QUESTION:**

Ask your group: “Where are your influencing opportunities to be salt?”

Jesus challenges us to be salt and light - to influence the world, and to be seen to be doing so. You might like to spend some time reflecting on this passage :

#### **YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH**

Jesus told his disciples that they have the calling and the responsibility to be influencers in the world. Salt influences in the following ways:

1. As a seasoning agent, it improves the taste of the food that it comes into contact with, and so as we come into contact with society our Christian values should improve the nature of that society.
2. Salt makes people thirsty - and as Christians we seek to create a thirst in people's lives that can only be satisfied by Jesus, who said : "if anyone is thirsty, let him come to me me and drink" (John 7:37)

3. Salt is used to thaw ice on roads : so it can have the effect of warming hearts that have hardened against the gospel - over time the saltiness of Christians can bring people to know Jesus Christ.
4. As a preservative, salt gives food an improved length of life. Ultimately, with enough salt, those who do know Jesus, and acknowledge Him as Lord and Savior will have eternal life.

### **SALT THAT LOSES ITS FLAVOR IS USELESS**

Jesus' teaching is challenging. There is little room for those who are Christians, but who have lost their saltiness, or their "edge". We must live out what we speak out. People need to see our actions living up to the Christ-like character we claim to possess. We are not to be perfect, but verse 16 says our good deeds influence people "let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

Colossians 4:6 says, "*Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with Salt...*" The word used here for Salt means to be "cautious, careful, and vigilant". Jesus said if we lose our saltiness, we are useless. We lose our flavor and effectiveness. "***But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?***"

There's no way Salt can lose its flavor. 'Sodium chloride' is a stable compound. But the salt in Jesus' time was extracted from Salt marshes rather than by evaporation of Salt water. It contained many impurities. Salt in Jesus' day was not the kind of pure salt we have today. It was mixed with impurities and if it was exposed to moisture for a long time, the salt could leach out, leaving only sand behind—it lost its salty characteristics. When that happened, the "salt" became worthless. It no longer tasted good. It no longer preserved anything. You just threw it out on the ground with the rest of the dust. You've all seen a saltshaker with grains of rice in it to absorb the moisture. Well, picture a saltshaker where all the salt has been shaken out and only rice is left in the shaker. That's the idea here. It's no longer real salt; it's just tasteless trash.

Think about it. Salt is for consumption. If it loses its flavor, it is mere dirt to be walked on. No longer worthy of consumption. What sets it apart from dirt is are its benefits. If it is seen as not to have any benefit then it blends in with other common dirt. As the Church, we must stand out and bring God's flavor to everything we come in contact with. We can cease to have the purifying and enhancing effect on the world that Jesus intends his followers to produce while they are here. If you've ever heard someone say negative things about Christians or Church it may be because they have lost their saltiness and are viewed as ineffective and common.

### **SALT DISPLAYS TRUE TRUTH AND LOVE**

Sodium is an extremely active element found naturally only in combined form; it always links itself to another element. Chlorine, on the other hand, is the poisonous gas that gives bleach its offensive odor. When sodium and chlorine are combined, the result is sodium chloride--common table salt--the substance we use to preserve meat and bring out its flavor. Love and truth can be like sodium and chlorine. Love without truth is flighty, sometimes blind, willing to combine with various doctrines. On the other hand, truth by itself can be offensive, sometimes even poisonous. Spoken without love, it can turn people away from the gospel. When truth and love are combined in an individual or a church, however, then we have what Jesus called "the salt of the earth," and we're able to preserve and bring out the beauty of our faith.

## **SALT IS ONLY GOOD WHEN IT IS USED**

Another point is that salt only becomes useful when it is mixed with something. Who eats salt all by itself? What good is salt in the shaker? We become useful only when we flavor the world with the love of Christ.

### **Questions:**

How are you flavoring (influencing) the world with Christ?

Is your salt still in the shaker?

Have you lost your saltiness?

Was Jesus saying that if we lose our saltiness that we are forever useless?

How do we become salty again?