

Taking a Broader Outlook

We live in a very individualistic society to the point that we think it is **the** way that all people should live. Our society applauds individualism. But at the root of individualism is selfishness. Jesus wants us to take a broader outlook and think about others.

Christians have been blaming the meat (of society) for going rotten when the preserving salt has been taken out of it, and the house for getting darker when the light has been removed.

John Stott, "Issues Facing Christians", Marshall Pickering, 1984

8. What do you think John Stott means by this statement?
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Being Light

We are called to reflect the light of Christ in our lives.

9. Why did Jesus say we should do this? (Matthew 5:16)
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Our light is to be our *good works*. Our good works should shine so clearly before the world that not only will many of their arguments be silenced, they will actually glorify God because of what they see! (Note John 3:21; Romans 13:3; Eph. 2:10; 1Tim. 5:25; Titus 2:14; 3:8; Heb. 10:24).

Our acts of devotion to God should be private (praying, fasting, giving), as Christ taught, but our good works should be evident to all.

Amen.

LIVING DIFFERENTLY

Part One

This study series on the Beatitudes is designed to show us how Christ expects us to live. Nicky Gumble has written on the Beatitudes in his book "Challenging Lifestyles". He refers to them as the most challenging pursuit any person can engage in. He makes mention of the incredibly high standard that they set. As we study these, let's remind ourselves that we can not possibly attain to these standards without God's help (Gal. 2:20).

CALLED TO BE DIFFERENT

Read Matthew 5:13-16

Jesus expects the lives of His people to be an influence on society. While we can not legislate righteousness, we can encourage or discourage it by what we tolerate as acceptable. If the church tolerates wickedness in society, its witness is then nullified. Even worse still, if it tolerates it within its own ranks, it ceases to be ambassadors of the Light.

Being Salt

(Mat 5:13 Living Bible) "You are the world's seasoning, to make it tolerable. If you lose your flavor, what will happen to the world? And you yourselves will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless."

Salt in ancient times was used for several purposes. It was used (i) for preserving meat, (ii) as an antiseptic, (iii) in compost heaps, (iv) in cattle fodder, and (v) to symbolise covenant and sacrifice. The salt in the times of Christ was harvested from the Dead Sea. Unlike our modern salt, the salt from the Dead Sea also contained other minerals. People could simply collect this rock salt from the shores of the Dead Sea. But they would have known that the salt on the outer parts of the shore was less salty than the fresh stuff a little further in. If someone collected the older salt from the outer parts of the shore line, there was a chance that its saltiness had gone altogether.

1. In this case, what was this kind of *unsalty* salt good for, according to Jesus? (Mat. 5:13; Luke 14:34-35)
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Just as the salt on the outer parts of the Sea shore soon lost its saltiness, so to Christians lose their effectiveness when they are cut off from their source of saltiness.

2. Salt also served as a symbol of sacrifice and covenant (Num. 18:19) because *pure* salt never breaks down naturally, and neither should our covenants. When we became a Christian, we were not only joined to the LORD but we were also joined to something/one else. According to Mark 9:50, who or what were we also joined to?
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3. How does being "the salt of the earth" relate to how we relate to each other? (Note John 13:35; 17:22)
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4. What happens to the Church's witness when it is *not* at peace with each other? (Note Ps. 133)
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Becoming Salty

All of the sacrifices and offerings of the Old Testament were required to be seasoned with salt (Lev. 2:13). The salt was to remind the worshiper that they were fulfilling the covenant they had made with God.

5. According to Mark 9:49, what is it that makes us salty? (Note that the NKJV or KJV are not good renderings of this verse)
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Jesus said that His disciples would be salted/seasoned/purified with fire (note Mat. 3:11; Heb. 12:29; 1Peter 1:7). God wants us to be a purified, clean people.

6. What does God expect us to do in Romans 12:1, and how does this relate to becoming salty?
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Jesus said that if any of His disciples were not walking purely, they were not *salty*, and as such they would be trampled upon by the world out of disrespect for their witness.

We are to be as different from the world as salt is different to the meat or vegetables that it seasons.

7. In what ways can we be like salt to the world?
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There is something very wrong with our society. We only have to open our newspapers to see a nation torn apart by strife. There is an increasing level of violence and other criminal activity. We see the breakdown of family life cutting across every background, with all the tragic consequences that follow for parents and children alike. The sanctity of human life is under threat with increasing abortion and the desire for 'mercy-killing'. Traditional bases for morality are no longer accepted...What are we to do? We have a choice. Either we can sit back...Or we can look to 'the broader concerns of humanity'.

(Nicky Gumble, "Challenging Lifestyle", *Kingsway*, pgs 24-25)