

BIBLE BACKGROUND

JOURNEY 9: “Got Salt? Got Light?”

The Sermon on the Mount

KEY PASSAGE:

Matthew 5:13–48

KEY VERSE:

“In the same way, let your light so shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” —Matthew 5:16

KEY WORD:

Light

KEY THOUGHT:

My purpose in life is to bring glory and honor to God.

THE KINGDOM CITIZEN

In the Beatitudes, Jesus described the character traits of those who had been accepted as citizens in the kingdom of God. He went on to explain in His Sermon on the Mount that the power of a kingdom citizen lay in how different he/she was from the rest of the world. He used two powerful images to convey this difference.

- “You are the salt of the earth,” Jesus said (Matthew 5:13). This comparison is significant in several ways. The followers of Jesus have a responsibility to the world in which they live to make a difference by living a pure and moral life. Their character and witness will point others to the truth that only Christ can bring.
 - » Salt is a preservative and has the capacity to keep food from spoiling. The witness of Christians can preserve the Gospel and prevent Satan from diluting its message.
 - » Salt is a flavor enhancer that makes food taste better. The true witness of Christians may make the message of Christ more appealing to others who have rejected it.
 - » Salt makes people thirsty; they want something to quench that thirst. The witness of Christians can cause others to seek out the truth for themselves.

- » Salt is a valuable commodity because of its properties. The witness of Christians will make possible the continuing witness to the next generations.

SAY: “Salt was used often to pay Roman soldiers for their military service, hence the rise of the word *salary* and the expression ‘not worth his salt.’ Jesus knew that people would understand the significance He was attaching to this designation of His followers as ‘the salt of the earth.’”

- “You are the light of the world,” He declared (Matthew 5:14). Those who were listening to Jesus preach understood the significance of lighting one candle in a dark room. No one would dare hide the light under a basket but instead would place it on a lamp stand and set it in the middle of the room so that the light would spread throughout the space.
 - » Jesus called Himself the Light of the world in John 8:12.
 - » Now He was telling His followers that they, too, were the light of the world.
 - » Just as it would be impossible to hide a city set up on a hill, so it will be impossible to hide the light of Jesus’ followers if they obey Him and pass the light to others.

RADICAL IDEAS

Jesus gave a whole new meaning to the Ten Commandments. He said He had not come to destroy the Law but to demonstrate how it could be kept perfectly. His ideas must have seemed radical to the Jews who were listening.

- The Law forbids murder. Jesus said that anger, hostility, and contempt without a cause were like murder (Matthew 5:21–22) committed in one’s own heart.
- The Law forbids adultery. Jesus said that it was wrong to even look at someone with immoral thoughts. If any member of your body is involved in impurity, Jesus said to cut it off (Matthew 5:29).
- The Law demanded that tithes and offerings be given. Jesus was more concerned about settling an unresolved conflict with one’s fellow man (Matthew 5:23–24) before one went to the temple to tithe.
- Jesus warned against using inappropriate language (Matthew 5:37). He cautioned that our speech should be carefully guarded because we were to consider ourselves under an oath to tell the truth always.

THE SECOND MILE

How could Jesus expect the Jews to be kind to the Romans who filled their towns and villages? It was important for Jesus to explain what genuine love looked like.

- He knew that the people to whom He was speaking lived under the harsh treatment of the Roman government in Palestine.
- The Jews understood what the word *enemy* meant. When Jesus spoke about the enemies who cursed them, mistreated them, struck them and stole from them, the Jews would have almost certainly thought about the Roman soldiers.
- It must have been almost incredible to them that this teacher—this man named Jesus—would be telling them to love their oppressors. Obviously, Jesus must not have understood their situation.
- These “enemies” had taxed the people almost into poverty.
- They often conscripted a man or a young boy to carry their equipment for a mile and then dismissed them with rebuke or cursing.
- Now Jesus was telling this assembled group to demonstrate love to their enemies by going a second mile. Such a request was astounding.

THE LAW OF LOVE

Jesus was telling the people to make love a “choice,” an act of their will that resulted in behavior that pleased their God. Jesus was asking them to behave in the same manner as He would demonstrate in His death.

- This command from Jesus runs exactly counter to our nature. When others hurt our feelings, we want to hurt theirs, but this is not what Jesus wants us to do.
- Jesus was setting forth a “law of love” that was to be observed in His kingdom.
- If we are to be part of God’s kingdom, then we must willingly put ourselves under the authority of the King.
- We are to obey His commandments and do as He asks. This is not an option. Obedience is the evidence of a faith that is active and alive and growing.
- Our response to the commands of Christ tells the world what kind of a “kingdom citizen” we really are.
- Our behavior will either draw others to the King or it will cause them to question and doubt that He really is King.
- The law of love, when properly executed, would provide a striking example of Christ’s love for us to show to the world.

PURPOSE IN LIFE

Jesus wanted to make sure that His followers understood their true purpose in life. It was and it always will be to bring honor and glory to God the Father by living the kind of life His Son was describing. The Bible assures us of God's love. The proof of God's boundless love is that Christ died for us (Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:9–10). God's love is not just something that makes us feel good. God's love makes it possible for us to respond to others in love.

- Love is *not* optional. We are commanded to love one another (1 John 3:11).
- Love must be *outwardly* demonstrated. Our love for God is shown to the degree that we show love to others (1 John 3:14).
- Love is an *act of our will*. We are commanded to do acts of love. It is a choice to make. We must choose to love others. If we shut our eyes to the needs of others, our love for God is not genuine (1 John 3:17).
- Love must *respond* to the needs of others. We are able to love because we are loved by God. When we see others hurting, our immediate response must be to see how we can help that person. His love motivates us to respond lovingly to others (1 John 4:20–21).

The Bible commands us to let our light shine before men so that they may see our good works and give glory to our Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16). These acts of love push the scarlet thread of salvation into the next generation.

TEACHING PLAN

JOURNEY 9: "Got Salt? Got Light?"

The Sermon on the Mount

KEY PASSAGE: Matthew 5:13–48	KEY WORD: Light
KEY THOUGHT: My purpose in life is to bring honor and glory to God.	KEY VERSE: <i>"In the same way, let your light so shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." —Matthew 5:16</i>



INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES:

CONNECT the Big Room experience with the Bible story by asking the students questions about what they saw.

- "What happened in the Big Room that was a little frightening?"
- "Who fixed the problem?"
- "What did we learn about the absence of light?"

A. "TO SALT OR NOT TO SALT"

BRING to class a sample of popcorn that is very salty and one that has no salt. **ALLOW** the students to taste a little of each one and then discuss the difference the salt makes. **ASK:** "Would you be willing to eat popcorn without salt? Why or why not?"

POUR out a pile of salt on the table in front of you. **PICK** it up with your fingers and **EXPLAIN** how valuable salt was in biblical times. **DESCRIBE** the different purposes for which it was used.

- Ask the students how having Jesus in their lives is like salt.
- What did Jesus say about salt and a Christian?

Transition to the Bible story by explaining how Jesus made a big deal out of salt and light in His Sermon on the Mount. Let's see what He was talking about.



EXPLORING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

HAVE the students find the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, 6 and 7. Direct their attention to verses 1–12 as the Beatitudes. *[Review these quickly if you like.]*

A. ASK the students to turn to Matthew 5:13–16.

- **Verse 13:** Who is the *salt of the earth*? How do we give salt to the world? What if we lose our saltiness? What happens?
- **Verses 14–15:** Who is the *light of the world*? *[Do a demonstration in which you light a tealight candle that represents Jesus' coming into the world. Put a solid color bowl over the candle and ask the kids what good is the candle now.]*
- **Verse 16:** What did Jesus tell His disciples to do with their light? What are we to do with ours? Who gets the praise when we let our light shine?

B. OTHER RADICAL IDEAS JESUS TAUGHT

What other things did Jesus say to His followers in Matthew 5 that seemed so radical?

- **Verses 21–22:** You can commit murder in your heart? How?
- **Verses 23–24:** What does my offering have to do with a problem I have with someone?
- **Verses 33–37:** What about the way we talk?
- **Verses 38–41:** Why is it so hard to turn the other cheek? Be generous? Go the second mile?
- **Verses 43–48:** How can I possibly love my enemies? Why is that so difficult? Read Luke 6:31.

C. THE LAW OF LOVE: *Matthew 5:43–48; 7:12; Luke 6:31–36*

SAY: "Love your enemies' is easy to say and hard to do." Help the children to understand that their feelings should not control their behavior. "Obedience to God must not depend on how we feel but on the commands we have been given. Jesus said: 'Love one another';

therefore, we must choose to love. Often the one who is the most unkind or hurtful to us is the one who is crying out for someone to love them." **ASK** the students these questions.

- Can God trust me to show His love to others?
- Will others see God's love in me as I go about my daily activities?
- Will I be a tool in God's hands to reach out to those who need His love?
- Will I obey the commands of Christ or will I disobey?

READ aloud Luke 6:31–38 aloud and **COMMENT** on the benefits of obeying these commands of Christ.

- I will not open myself up to being judged by others. I will love as God loves.
- I will not make it possible for others to condemn my lack of love.
- God's love will flow out of my life.
- I can know forgiveness because I forgive others who sin against me.
- I will be generous to others and God will bless this demonstration of His love because He knows my heart and sees my love for Him.

If God could give His life for us while we are sinners, can we not at least show His love to others through kindness and mercy?



TABLE TALK 1: *Going the Second Mile*

EXPLAIN how Jesus told those who followed Him to love their enemies. This was a radical idea to the Jews because they hated the Romans who occupied their country. The Romans had found every way in the world to levy heavy taxes on the Jews. They also had the authority to force a man or a young boy to carry their heavy equipment for at least a mile. Jesus told His followers to carry it for a second mile. The Jews were shocked. Jesus was trying to teach them His law of love. **HAVE** the TGLs read the following situations to their group and discuss what the second mile might look like in each case.

- Someone asks you to help them study for a math test
- Someone asks you to fix a meal for a family whose mom is in the hospital

- Someone asks you to forgive a friend who had disappointed you greatly
- Someone asks you to lend him/her some lunch money
- Someone asks you to help fix his/her bike
- Someone asks you to borrow a shovel to dig some post holes
- Someone asks you to be more respectful of a teacher you do not like



THE CROSSROADS

LIGHT the candle again and place it on the table with the salt. How do these two seemingly common objects represent God’s eternal truth? What do the two objects have in common? **TURN OFF** the lights in the room. **SHINE** a flashlight in a corner where you have placed the large letter *A*. In another corner **SHINE** the light on a large letter *B* and then in a third area shine the light on the letter *C*. **EXPLAIN** how the light you hold has just pointed the way to a greater light—one that fills a person’s soul and provides eternal peace and life. **ASK** who can explain the *A*, then the *B*, and finally the *C*. *[Close in prayer by sharing the plan of salvation and asking God to help us all to shine the light of God’s love into a dark and dying world.]*



BIBLE LEARNING PROJECT:

Are You a Son-Catcher?

Supplies: Sun-catcher crosses, different colored Sharpies®

- Distribute Sharpies® among the students.
- Provide each student with one cross.
- Instruct the students to color the crosses to create a stained glass appearance.
- Encourage the students to give the cross to a friend who might not know Christ and share with their friend how the light of Christ can shine in them.



SCRIPTURE MEMORY: *Matthew 5:16*

ALLOW the students to spend five to eight minutes memorizing Matthew 5:16. **HAVE** them break up into pairs so they can help each other memorize the verse. Divide the verse into the following word groups:

“In the same way, let your light so shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

ASK the students to make a list of the ways we can become “salt” and “light” this next week in the following areas.

- At home
- At school
- At church
- In my neighborhood



TABLE TALK 2: *Finding the Truth*

HAVE the students gather into their table groups. **PRESENT** each group with a page of verses from the Sermon on the Mount that have been scrambled. Using their Bibles, **CHALLENGE** each team to figure out the correct word order of each verse and then write it out correctly. The team to unscramble all verses correctly wins. Here are the verses.

1. **Matthew 5:9:** Blessed the peacemakers are the they called shall God sons of be for
2. **Matthew 5:13:** Earth you the of salt are the
3. **Matthew 5:14:** World light you the of the are
4. **Matthew 5:16:** Shine light let others your before they good your see may so works Father glory your give and to who that is heaven in
5. **Matthew 5:44:** Enemies pray and those love who your for you persecute



A LOOK AT THE BOOK

HAVE the students locate 1 Corinthians 13. **ASK** them to list 10 different things that love should be. How would you score on this list if someone graded you—a 10, a 2, or a 1?



REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Who is the light of the world? *(Christians)*
2. Who is the salt of the earth? *(Christians)*
3. When did Jesus speak these words? *(during the Sermon on the Mount)*
4. What do we call the attitudes that Jesus described in the Sermon? *(The Beatitudes)*
5. Why was salt valuable during biblical times? *(It could preserve food and it could make it taste better.)*
6. Where does the word *salary* come from? *(The Romans were often paid with salt.)*
7. What does it mean to go the second mile? *(to do more than what is required)*
8. What is my purpose in life? *(to bring honor and glory to God)*
9. What can the good works of a Christian mean to a non-Christian? *(They can cause others to ask questions about our faith. They can see genuine love in action.)*
10. What does following Christ's law of love do for the Christian? *(frees from resentment and anger, enables one to forgive others, prevents criticism, keeps focus on Christ)*

JOURNEY 10:

"Do You Have a Foundation Problem?" The Parable of the House Built on Sand & Rock

