

LOOK LIKE
light
TASTE LIKE
SALT



Does your life need more salt?

*"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? ... You are the light of the world. ... Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."
(Matthew 5:13, 14, 16)*

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Jesus used two analogies that set the children of God apart from those in the world. Firstly, he called us the 'salt of the earth' and secondly, the 'light of the world'. But how are we to look like light, and taste like salt? It is the Spirit of God shining through our lives and the salt of the word of God which keeps us true, which enables us to be children of the kingdom of light.

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I will never forget the time I was staying with my sister, who at the time lived in Singapore. The air was hot and humid, much like what we've been experiencing recently. Anyway, one morning at about 10 am, I decided to go for a run. Silly me! I quickly learned why Singaporeans run very early in the morning. I returned home dripping with sweat and craving not only a big glass of icy cold water ... but I literally searched my sister's cupboards high and low for a packet of chips! My body was in desperate need of salt! Until I finished that packet of chips, I felt dizzy, weak and had a crashing headache – I learnt the hard way – our body needs salt.

Is it any wonder then, that Jesus used 'salt' to illustrate our important role in the world. You see, salt was a valuable commodity in the ancient world. Roman soldiers were paid in salt and would revolt if they didn't get their ration. In fact, our English word "salary" comes from the Latin *salarium* which means 'salt-money.'

Point 1 | Salt has five primary uses: it seasons food, it preserves, it stings but heals, it gives strength and creates thirst.

Salt has many uses. *First, salt seasoned food.* Isn't it interesting how food which on its own has quite a bland taste, like potatoes or chokos ... come alive when you add a pinch of salt. *But salt also preserves.* Without fridges and freezers, salt was very important in Jesus' day because while it doesn't prevent the process of decay, it substantially slows it down and prevents its spread. Now as I mentioned in my opening illustration, salt also gives strength to the body. When you're low in salt, you feel weak, lethargic and disorientated. But just a little bit salt will quickly restore a sense of strength, well-being and one's equilibrium. *Finally, salt creates thirst.* Just eat those salty potato chips sitting beside you [not right now, of course] and you'll crave something to drink.

I wonder which one of these qualities Jesus had in mind when he called us "the salt of the earth"?

Well, the warning that Jesus gave, alongside his analogy, reveals exactly why he described us as salt. We are to be the salt that flavours a tasteless, bland world. After hanging around us, the world should be craving the refreshing drink of the Holy Spirit. But, Jesus also had in mind the preserving nature of salt. Our salty lives also preserve our decaying, sick world. It is almost as though Jesus was imagining that this world is like a piece of rotten meat, putrefying more and more each day.

In my new role as Police Chaplain, I was discussing with the officers how less and less young people are deciding to become a police officer. Should we be surprised? We live in a world where people do not want to respect authority, nor do they want to be told what is wrong and what is right. And where there is clearly a difference between the two, they don't like the messenger who insists upon it. It is not hard to see that the moral climate of our world grows darker and darker by the day. Our world is like a piece of meat left in a dark, moist cupboard. The decay may be slow at first, but it doesn't take long before the whole thing is rotten and the smell, putrid.

What does it take to arrest or slow the spread of evil? Salt. Being 'salt' in the world means taking a stand for truth even when it isn't popular. But, this is where we get a bit overwhelmed. It is not easy to stand for truth when the dominant opinion says otherwise. But if we just blend in, are we not being rather bland? If no one can tell the difference between us and the world, we need to ask the Spirit of God to add more of God's saltiness to our lives! We need to remember, though, that it doesn't take much salt to do the job. Just a little bit in the right place will do the trick.

According to sociologist Robert Bellah, "The governing values of a whole culture may be changed when 2% of its people have a new vision." All you need is 2%, and you can change an entire culture. That applies to our church, our suburb, or your golfclub, or craft group.

So, it's time for the salt to get out of the shaker and onto the dinner plate! While we may be tempted to stay in the saltshaker, that's not where salt belongs. Salt was made for the dinner plate. As long as the salt stays in the shaker, it can't do any good. But when the salt goes into the meal, it dissolves and changes the character of the whole meal. In the same way a handful of salty Christians can change a neighbourhood. Get ready, salty saints. Out we go, into the world, for the glory of God.

Point 2 | We are the light of the world: Let Jesus light shine through us so that our heart is attractive to others.

But then Jesus goes onto use another analogy.

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 others, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:14-16).

What does light do? It penetrates. It reveals. It exposes. Darkness has a funny way of distorting reality. Everything looks different at night. It is only when you turn on the light that you see things as they really are. That's why Jesus said, "Let your light shine before others." (v16) The key is in the little phrase "before others." If you turn on a light in a room, it will dispel the darkness but no one will see it – for their eyes will be on what is important for them to see.

Likewise you can live the Christian life in secret, but no one is going to be helped. If your light is going to make a difference, it must shine before others. Somebody must see the light before it will do any good. Jesus said two things would happen when you shine your light:

Firstly, others will see your good deeds. The word "good" means attractive or lovely. Jesus is saying people will be attracted by the beauty of your heart and how you treat others. Others will be drawn to Christ by the way you live. When you stop and smile at a friend, that's a good deed.

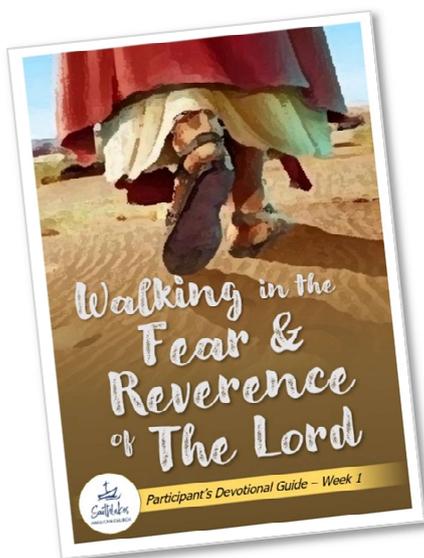
When you send an encouraging text to someone going through a hard time, when you bake a cake and give it to a neighbour, or when you stop by the hospital to check on someone—all of those are good deeds that attract people to Jesus. A second thing happens when you shine your light before others: they give God the credit. Verse 16 says, "They praise your Father who is in heaven."

Application | Being the salt of the earth means we get out of the salt shaker! Being the light of the world means we bravely step out from under the lamp shade and let our light shine.

You're salt. So get out of the shaker and onto the plate! You're light. So crawl out from under that lamp shade and let it shine! We can't be the salt for the whole the world, but we can be a pinch of salt in our neighbourhood. We can't be the light that shines everywhere, but we can bring the light of Jesus Christ to those around us. Let us be salty and shine the light of Christ – so that through our lives God is glorified.

Put it in the diary! Prepare your heart for humbling

During the season of Lent, commencing on Ash Wednesday, we will be looking closely at how to walk in the fear and reverence of the Lord. This journey will involve an important resource.



The first section of the resource is the Lenten Liturgy we'll use at our Lenten Reflection Group which will meet in the church at 3 pm. The second part of the resource will assist us with daily devotionals which aid us to reflect on the message preached on Sunday. We'll discuss the reflection questions at the bottom of each page of the devotional at our Lenten Reflection Group.

While you may choose to work through the Lenten study and devotional on your own, more fruit will be obtained when we share together our experience of deepening our fear of the Lord.

Some may choose to stay on for the 4pm pre-service meeting where we pray and get trained to serve in the 5 pm Experience God's Blessing Service.