

Jesus Teaches about Salt and Light



Scripture Reference: [Matthew 5:13-16](#)

Suggested Emphasis: We should not be ashamed of our faith but we should let our light shine.



Background Study



Story Introduction



Telling the Story



Review Questions



Songs



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Story Overview:

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus told the crowd how to live Godly lives. He explained one part of his lesson by telling the people that they are the “Salt of the Earth” and the “Light of the World”. People need to see Christians living godly lives. Perhaps this is more an example than a parable.

Background Study:

Jesus gives this short parable during the Sermon on the Mount but it is also repeated throughout the gospels in different contexts ([Mark 4:21-22](#) and [Luke 8:16; 11:33](#)).

Rock salt came from underground mines. The Dead Sea produced salt but it was considered inferior. Nevertheless, it was easy to get so it was often used.

Salt was used for flavouring and preserving. Another use for salt was to prevent infection. It was rubbed on the skin of newborn babies for that reason (an example of this being neglected is in [Ezekiel 16:4](#)). Salt was also added to sacrificial offerings ([Ezekiel 43:24](#)).

When Jesus called his disciples the salt of the earth he could have been referring to the preserving quality of salt. Christians bring salvation and eternal life to those around them by sharing the word of God. Their lives are preserved.

Also, salt makes a difference in flavour. Can you imagine a world where there was no Christian influence? Constitutions, laws, benevolence, human rights, love, joy, peace and more are all products of Judeo-Christian influence in the world. Christians, like salt, are to make a difference in the society around them.

In early times lamps were stone bowls filled with melted animal fat, in which floated a wick of twisted plant fibres. Later lamps were small clay saucers with a part of their rims pinched to form a spout. Wicks were placed in the pinched section so they could soak up the oil in the saucer. During the time of Jesus people used small clay lamps that burned olive oil drawn up by a wick. Olive oil gives off less smoke than animal fat. Lamps were placed inside homes in niches in the wall or on stands.

Common lamps used in the first century were small, about the size a hand. They were made from clay and were like shallow, covered dishes with two holes in the top. Olive oil was poured through the larger of the holes and a wick was placed in the smaller. Special care was taken to keep the wick trimmed. If it burned down too low then it would smoke and finally go out.

There are many passages throughout the Bible that talk about light. All good things to do with God are light while sin is often paralleled with darkness. Read these verses for your own study:

- [Psalm 18:28; 27:1; 119:130.](#)
- [Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6.](#)
- [John 1:1-9; 8:12; and 12:44-46.](#)
- [1 Thessalonians 5:4-8](#)
- [1 John 1:5-7](#)

Christians are a reflection of the light of God. When we do not let God work through us then His light does not reach the world. Trying to keep God to ourselves is like hiding a light under a bowl. Do you let your light shine? Is your life a reflection of God's glory?

Children meet people at home, school, church, sports, and more. Help them see how they can be lights for God.



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Way to Introduce the Story:

Ask a volunteer to place a blindfold on their eyes. Now ask them to go to the chalkboard and draw a simple picture. You might have them draw a house with a tree outside. They could add children, clouds, flowers, and any other simple thing you can think of. Have the child remove the blindfold and then draw the same thing.

Discuss how simple things like drawing can be very difficult if we are in the dark. If we were trying to write a

letter in the dark we would have a difficult time of it. We would be so happy if someone turned a light on for us. In today's story we are going to learn about a very important kind of light.

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The Story:

Many, many people wanted to hear Jesus speak. He went to the side of a hill and sat down so that everyone could gather around and listen. Then he began to tell them how they could follow God. He told them about heaven. He told them they should be kind to other people even if other people were not kind to them. He told them that they should help poor people and that they should not judge others.

To help people understand something very important, Jesus told them a parable.

Jesus looked at the people and said, "You are the salt of the earth. But if 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."

What do you think Jesus meant? Do you think he was saying that we are not human but we are salt instead? Of course not. Jesus was saying something very important but he was trying to make it simple to understand. He was using the example of salt.

Do you like salt? What does food taste like when there is no salt in it? (Let the children answer). When salt is added to some foods they taste much better. God put Christians in this world so that we can make the world better. Are you salt? Do you make this world better? Tell me some ways you make your school better? (Let the children answer and then go on to talk about ways they can make home, sports, etc. better by living a Christian life.)

After Jesus told the people the parable about the salt he told them another parable.

Jesus said, "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."

What do you think Jesus meant when he said: "You are the light of the world"? Did he mean we are not human but that we are light bulbs? Of course not. He was saying a parable to tell the people something very important.

Many people in this world do not know about God. Jesus said that it is like they are in a very dark place. They need someone to give them some light so that they can see. When Christians obey God then it is like a light is shining. People see Christians doing good things and it makes them want to follow God.

If we do good things it is like our light is shining. If people never see us do or say good things then it is like we are putting a big bowl over our light. No one can see a light under a bowl.

Sometimes we get embarrassed or shamed and we don't want people to know that we are Christians. Has that ever happened to you? If we are ashamed to do good things then it is like putting our light under a bowl.

How many of you are going to let your light shine this week?

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[034 - Salt and Light Parable](#) from [GNPI](#) on [Vimeo](#).

A slideshow and set of illustrations for this Bible story can be downloaded directly from [Free Bible Images](#). Be selective. Each teacher is unique so only use the illustrations that best relate to the way YOU are telling the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

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Review Questions:

1. Jesus said that we are the _____ of the earth. Salt
2. Jesus said that we are the _____ of the world. Light
3. If no one sees you do and say good things then that is like putting what over your light? A bowl

Song Suggestions:

- [I am a C-H-R-I-S-T-I-A-N \(Song\)](#)
- [If You're Happy and You Know It Song](#)
- [I'm in the Lord's Army Song](#)
- [This Little Light of Mine](#)
- Choose songs about light from a church hymnal. Examples might be "Send the Light" and "Shine Jesus Shine"
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

Activities:

- Fill a few cups with water or juice. Dissolve salt in one of them. Now mix up the cups and let the children choose a cup each. Who will get the salty drink? Talk about the fact that we can really notice salt. Salt can make a big difference in whatever it is added to.
- It would be great to do this lesson at night or to black out windows with paper. Each child can be given a glow-in-the-dark stick, artificial or even a real candle to hold. If using a real candle you could poke the bottom of the candle through a paper plate or thick cardboard. This will prevent hot wax from dripping. Light your candle and tell today's story. Talk about how we make the world a brighter place when we live a Christian life. Place a large metal bowl over your candle and talk about how no one sees the light if we do not share our faith. Now uncover the candle. As you talk about sharing the gospel you could light a child's candle. That child can light another's candle. Continue until light fills the room. Discuss the difference Christians can make in the world. Of course real candles should only be used with older children and under supervision.
- Fun review question idea sent in by Sherri. She says it works well with 3-4 year olds:
 - Write general answers like "yes" and "no" on papers and place the papers on the table or somewhere in the room. Make sure the words are visible.
 - Partially darken the room and then at least one child should be given a flashlight/torch to hold (or a few could do this at the same time).
 - When you ask a review question the child(ren) shine the light on the correct answer.

- Instead of general answers you could, alternatively, write specific answers to the specific review questions and place those answers on the table or around the room.

Crafts:

- Obtain paraffin and string to make candles. You will probably be able to find directions in a craft shop, in a library book or on the internet.
- Make a first century lamp from using salt-dough. For dough: Mix 2 cups flour, 1 cup salt, and 1 cup water. Roll out on board using more flour if needed. If the shapes that the children make are not too thick then the dough can be baked in a 150°C oven for 40 minutes to harden. When cool it can be painted and sealed with varnish if desired.

Check the [Teaching Ideas](#) page on this website for ideas that are adaptable to any lesson.



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[Click here for "Jesus Teaches about Salt and Light" to print on Letter size paper \(USA\)](#)
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Other Online Resources:

- [Craft: Paper lantern \(sundayschoolcrafts.net\)](#)
- [Craft: Salt painting \(jojoebi.blogspot.co.nz\)](#)
- [Online article with facts about light \(sciencekids.co.nz\)](#)
- [Video: "Understanding the Sermon on the Mount" by Messages of Christ. Youtube video just over 10 minutes in length. One section \(starting at 3.22\) is a good explanation of salt and light.](#)

<https://www.pinterest.com/marynnz/jesus-parables-teachings/>
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