

15-Aug-2021 | Discussion Questions
Believers' Influence as Salt & Light of the World | Matthew 5:13-16 | Pr. Mark Tan

1. Where do we find our identity? What kinds of activities, communities, or stories form our self-understanding? Why does that matter?

2. How does understanding the Bible's story help form our identity? What are some key passages that help shape our identity? (Hint: Genesis 1:26-28; Exodus 19:4-6; Ephesians 1:3-14; 2:1-10; etc.)

3. What is the story of the Bible (hint: kingdom and covenant)? How do the images of Salt and Light fit into the biblical storyline?
 - a. Read Leviticus 2:13; Numbers 18:19; Mark 9:49-50 . What does the Bible say about salt?

 - b. Read Isaiah 9:1-2 and Isaiah 49:5-8. What do these verses say about light?

4. How should we understand Jesus's words' about Salt and Light? How does knowing the Old Testament background inform our understanding? How does this background help us understand Jesus's Sermon on the Mount?

5. Hows does a church lose its saltiness (cf. Rev 2:5)? What are the most common ways we hide our light? How can we grow in our evangelistic witness?

6. What are good works that our church is currently involved with? What are other good works we should pursue? Or could pursue?

7. Why should we think about good works as a product of the community of faith (i.e., the church) and not just something individuals do? Is there any good work God would have you initiate at our church?

8. What other observations or questions come to mind in reading Jesus words?

¹ The statement *everyone will be salted with fire* is difficult to interpret. It may be a reference to (1) unbelievers who enter hell as punishment for rejection of Jesus, indicating that just as salt preserves so they will be preserved in their punishment in hell forever; (2) Christians who experience suffering in this world because of their attachment to Christ; (3) any person who experiences suffering in a way appropriate to their relationship to Jesus. For believers this means the suffering of purification, and for unbelievers it means hell, i.e., eternal torment.

Salt was used as seasoning or fertilizer, or as a preservative. If salt ceased to be useful, it was thrown away. With this illustration Jesus warned about a disciple who ceased to follow him.

The difficulty of this saying is understanding how *salt* could lose *its saltiness* since its chemical properties cannot change. It is thus often assumed that Jesus was referring to chemically impure salt, perhaps a natural salt which, when exposed to the elements, had all the genuine salt leached out, leaving only the sediment or impurities behind. Others have suggested the background of the saying is the use of salt blocks by Arab bakers to line the floor of their ovens: Under the intense heat these blocks would eventually crystallize and undergo a change in chemical composition, finally being thrown out as unserviceable... Genuine salt can never lose its flavor. In this case the saying by Jesus here may be similar to [Matt 19:24](#), where it is likewise impossible for the camel to go through the eye of a sewing needle.

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