

The Salt of the Earth

Matthew 5:13

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MAIN IDEA: In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus explains the purpose or mission that God has given to every Christian with regard to the world—to be influencers. Jesus teaches that if we belong to his spiritual kingdom, then he has given us the ability and the responsibility to powerfully influence the people in our lives.

The Four Primary Means of Influence

1. Genetics
2. Proximity
3. Teaching
4. Example

Popular, Bad Ideas about Christian Influence

1. The church can best influence unbelievers by contextualization.
2. The church can best influence the culture through political action.
3. The *main* goal of the believer's influence is to make the planet, our country, and our communities better.
4. We shouldn't care about our influence on the world but just focus on our personal devotion to Jesus.

OUTLINE:

- I. The Picture Jesus Uses (13a)
 - A. Seasoning for Food (Job 6:6)
 - B. Cleanser or Antiseptic (Ezek. 16:4)
 - C. A Preservative
- II. The Point Jesus Makes (13a)
- III. The Peril Jesus Exposes (13b-c)
 - A. The sin in our lives reduces our preserving influence.
 - B. The lack of preserving influence proves we're not Jesus' followers.

How to Be Salt in Your World

1. Be in the world (Jn. 17:15-16, 18, 21b).
2. Be who you are in Jesus Christ (Jn. 17:17).
3. Live out the Beatitudes (Mt. 5:3-9).
4. Live a life of righteousness in obedience to Christ.
5. Don't lose your distinctive character (Mt. 5:13b).
6. Be faithful to speak the truth of God's Word & the gospel (Col. 4:6)

BIBLICAL/THEOLOGICAL QUESTIONS

1. Read Colossians 4:5–6. What do these verses teach us about our Christian conduct before the unbelieving world? Why is it crucial that this kind of conduct be true of us? Discuss.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Why is it crucial that we first make sure the beatitudes are being worked out in our lives before we invest in being the “salt of the earth”? Or should these be simultaneous realities? Discuss.
2. As it relates to being the “salt of the earth,” discuss the balance between being *in* the world and not *of* the world. Why must we be careful to distinguish between those categories in our pursuit of being “salt”? Discuss.
3. What are immediate opportunities you have to be the “salt of the earth”? Discuss and share current life situations.