



# Light & Salt

Ephesians 5:8-12; Matthew 5:13-16

## Bearing Fruit

- ❑ Jesus tells his disciples, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit.” (*John 15:5, NIV*)
- ❑ “Bearing fruit” has different aspects (see Lesson 1). In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul talks about “the fruit of the light” (*Ephesians 5:9*) and he says, “Live as children of light” (*5:8*).

## Living as Children of Light

- ❑ Read Ephesians 5:8-12. Christians must not continue in sinful behavior “for once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light” (*5:8*). Jesus Christ is *the* Light, and we become light as we are united with him through faith. As Jesus said...
  - 📖 “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (*John 8:12*).
- ❑ The “fruit (produce, outcome) of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth” (*Ephesians 5:9*).<sup>1</sup> The Christian is to bear fruit that makes a positive difference in the world.

## Living as Salt & Light

- ❑ In his “sermon on the mount,” Jesus instructs his disciples concerning their responsibilities in the world. Read Matthew 5:13-16.
- ❑ Jesus tells his disciples, “You are the salt of the earth” and “You are the light of the world.” (*Matthew 5:13, 14*)<sup>2</sup> This applies to every Christian, including us today.

### 1. What are the benefits of salt and light?

- Salt – Flavor and preservation. Salt was used for both of these functions in Jesus’ day. Salt was rubbed into meat to slow its decay (as it still is in some places today).
- Light – Dispels darkness, allows sight. Light is a universal symbol in human thought and experience. For example, light can symbolize knowledge, truth, moral goodness, purity, joy, acceptance and hope.<sup>3</sup>



### 2. How do these metaphors apply to the Christian in the world?

<sup>1</sup> This is similar to the ‘fruit of the Spirit’ (*Galatians 5:22-23*), the subject of the next lesson.

<sup>2</sup> Both the ‘earth’ (*gē*) and the ‘world’ (*kosmos*) represent humankind

<sup>3</sup> And darkness can symbolize ignorance, error, moral badness (evil), impurity, sadness, shame, and gloom. The Bible uses ‘light’ and ‘darkness’ in these ways, but presents God as the Source of light. Thus knowledge and truth come from God (via ‘revelation’), and righteousness and morality are rooted in God, who is the Source of life and every good thing. Darkness is usually connected with ‘spiritual darkness’ which involves a broken relationship with God; ignorance, neglect, or denial of the truth of God; and/or opposition to the authority and will of God.

- Salt – The world is subject to decay (*Romans 1:18-31*). It tends to get worse, not better, unless there is restraint. The world needs “salt” – the wisdom of God in a foolish world to slow the decay in truth and morality.
  - Light – The world is a place of darkness (*1 Peter 2:9*). Light symbolizes God’s revelation, truth, and purity. Jesus is God’s ultimate revelation. He is the “light of the world” (*John 8:12*). Jesus exposes evil and reveals truth. He reveals the way of salvation, and the way of life. As his representatives, his disciples are also “light.”
3. What may hinder (prevent or slow) the positive influence of salt and light? (*Matthew 5:13, 14*) In what ways can Christians lose their “saltiness?”<sup>4</sup>
  4. In what ways do Christians conceal their light? In what ways do Christians let their light shine?
  5. What is the main goal of letting our light shine?



- 📖 “that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (*Matt. 5:16*)
- 📖 *Jesus says*, “This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” (*John 15:8, NIV*)

6. Does being “salt” and “light” apply to our academic pursuits, careers and ambitions? If so, how? In what ways should Christians be “salt” and “light” in daily life?

### *Reflection/Application*

- As John wrote, the true Light (Jesus) came into the world, but the world did not recognize him (*John 1:9-10*). Have you recognized him? Have you responded to *the Light*? If not, why?
- As a Christian, are you “salty?” Are you clearly different from your non-Christian friends? How would people know you are a Christian by observing your life?<sup>5</sup>
- As a Christian, is your light shining? What difference are you making in the lives of the people you know, especially in relation to their spiritual needs?<sup>6</sup> Truly submit your life to Jesus and allow Him to shine in and through your life.

<sup>4</sup> Strictly speaking, salt cannot lose its saltiness (sodium chloride is stable). However, in ancient Israel, the salt-containing substance (called ‘salt’) contained many impurities. Since the salt was more soluble, it could leach out, leaving a white powdery substance, which lacked saltiness, and thus became useless as salt. We lose our saltiness by becoming more impure; by conforming more to the world than to Christ; by losing our distinctiveness. The Greek word (*mōranthē*) translated ‘become tasteless’ can also mean ‘become foolish’ (*Romans 1:22*).

<sup>5</sup> Of course, people would expect to see you ‘go to church,’ attend some Bible studies and other Christian activities, read you Bible, and pray at times. But do they see a difference in your values and priorities, moral convictions, behavior, activities, and how you treat other people? Is your character and behavior obviously different?

<sup>6</sup> Of course, it should be emphasized that God is the One who truly makes the difference. We must remember that ‘our light’ is *the Light*, so letting our light shine is letting Jesus shine in and through our lives.