

RISE

MIDDLE SCHOOL SMALL GROUP GUIDE

Session 7

The Parable of Salt and Light

- This week, we are continuing our Parables series that we began in November.
- A parable is a story that is used to help teach a lesson or to help us understand a point. Jesus told many parables to help people understand His teachings. This week for our parable we will be talking about **salt** and **light**, which may seem random now but I promise will make sense later.
- A lot of parables involve Jesus comparing one thing to another. A comparison talks about the way something is similar or different from another thing and why. For example, I might say that a person looks like a cheetah when they run if they are really fast. Obviously, the person isn't actually a cheetah, but like a cheetah, they are able to move quickly compared to those around them.
- There are two comparisons that Jesus makes in our parable today. The first compares us to salt, and the other compares us to light. Before we go any further, let's talk about what salt and light are for. What is salt used for?
- Salt is in so many different things that we eat, even if it's just a little bit. Back in Jesus' time, salt was even more important than it is today. People didn't have refrigerators or freezers to keep their food fresh, so food would go bad very quickly. Salt was and is still used to help preserve food to make it stay fresh longer. This allowed people to

create a better supply of food for when there wasn't as much food around.

- Salt was also used for the same thing we usually think of today... to add flavor to our food. Whether it's french fries, hard boiled eggs, or pretty much any other food, adding a little salt really makes it taste better and brings out the flavors. Now that we've talked about salt, what is light used for?
- Light is used for all sorts of reasons in order to help us see better or notice something. Unlike today, in Jesus' time there wasn't electricity, so they didn't have light bulbs. Light came from candles, lamps, a fireplace, or the sun... and that was it.
- Now that we've taken a look at what salt and light do for us now and for them back then, let's see what Jesus has to say about these two things and how they relate to us.

Read **Matthew 5:13-16**.

"You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father."

- In this parable Jesus says that we, as Christians, are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. This may seem strange, but remember this is a comparison to help us better understand Jesus' point. God made each of us with different skills, gifts, and talents.

- All of those things make you who you are, and God gave them to you as a gift. But you aren't the only one who is supposed to be blessed by these gifts.
- Do you know the story of the Good Samaritan from the Bible? What happened?

Reflect and Discuss: What can we learn from the Good Samaritan?

- We learned that we are supposed to love God with everything that we have. We also learned that we are supposed to love our neighbors and treat them the way we would want to be treated. We clarified through that story that all people are our neighbors.
- God gives us the ability to use our gifts and talents to serve Him and our neighbors. Loving God means taking time to worship, to spend time learning about Him in the Bible, and to talk with Him when we pray. Loving our neighbor means helping them when they need it, showing them forgiveness when they mess up, and most importantly telling them about Jesus.
- **And what's cool is that loving God and loving our neighbors is connected: We love God *by* loving our neighbors.**
- As great as all of that is, we don't always do those things. Our sin keeps us from doing what is right. In the verses we read out loud, Jesus said that salt that loses its taste and effect is useless, just like we are when we lose sight of our purpose.
- Jesus said that no one lights a lamp and then hides it under a basket because that's ridiculous and defeats the purpose of lighting the lamp. But that is exactly what we do when we ignore our neighbors' needs, hide our talents from others, or forget to honor God with how we live our lives.

- God knows that we will continue to sin every single day, and that's why He sent Jesus... to save us from those sins. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection mean that we can have eternal life with Him in Heaven if we trust in Him.
- It also means that each and every day we get to try again to use our gifts, talents, and time to honor Him and love those around us. With this in mind, let's read the parable again.

Read **Matthew 5:13-16** again.

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- Not only are we not supposed to *hide* the light that Jesus gives us, but we are supposed to *put it on display for the world to see!*
- When we turn on a lamp in our house, we don't put it in a closet and shut the door. We keep it out so that its light can help everyone around it. As Christians, we have the job of spreading Jesus' light to everybody around us so that they know how amazing Jesus is and that He loves them very much too.
- We get to use the different things that make us unique to build relationships with others and to help them grow in their relationship with Jesus too. When others see how we live our lives, they will see Jesus working through us and be drawn to Him. God uses each of us to show love to other people in this world. So remember that **you are salt and light to the world!**

- The God of all the universe chose each one of you to play a part in His plan to tell everyone about Him, and that is really amazing!

Reflect and Discuss:

1. How can we be the salt of the earth? What does being salt look like in our day-to-day lives?
2. How do you add "flavor" to everything around you like salt does?
3. How can you be the light to those around you? What does being a light look like in our day-to-day lives?
4. What is challenging about being salt and light?
5. How can we use our gifts and talents for God's glory?
6. What can keep us from using our gifts and talents for God's glory?
7. How does it make you feel knowing that God gave your specific talents and gifts and that you can use them to love your neighbors?
8. What's one way you can share your gifts and talents to help others?
9. How can you share Jesus with others?

Session Challenges

- Matthew 5:16 is our theme verse for this week: "**Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.**"
- Try to memorize the verse this week so you can recite it at the next session to work towards earning a prize!
- Now for our challenge: **This week, use one of your talents to help someone else.**

Brainstorm some ways you can help others, and then write down one thing you will do this week.