

Pass the Salt Please!

Salt is so basic to our existence that it has developed a history and folklore all its own:

- *The word “salary” comes from the Roman times, when soldiers were given an allowance to buy salt.*
- *If the world's oceans evaporated, enough salt would be crystallized to cover Britain to a depth of 50 miles.*
- *At one time, cakes of salt, stamped to show their value, could be used as money in countries as far apart as Tibet and Borneo.*
- *In his painting “The Last Supper,” Leonardo da Vinci put an overturned salt cellar in front of the ill-fated Judas.*
- *It is customary in some countries to greet newlyweds with gifts of salt and bread, instead of throwing rice.*

(Taken from www.saltinfo.com and www.saltsense.co.uk.)

In this week's passage, we will see how Jesus used two basic and indispensable items, salt and light, to illustrate the vital, critical and indispensable role God has for those who follow him.

Monday – Tasty

1. In Matthew 5:13-16, Jesus uses a common but vital commodity (salt) and a daily occurrence (light) to illustrate the role of his followers. Why do you think Jesus used such common items in his teaching?
2. The first thing we usually think of with salt is that it makes food taste good, but you can probably come up with other characteristics/uses of salt. Which characteristics/uses do you think Jesus was alluding to when he said that his followers were the “salt of the earth?” (NIV translation.)
3. In Daniel chapter 1, we see an interesting interplay between food and faith. The king's food served to Daniel and his friends was undoubtedly tasty, but probably did not meet Jewish law. At great personal risk, they approached the official in charge and made what must have seemed an outrageous request. According to verses 19 and 20, what was the result of their determination to obey God? In what ways did Daniel and his friends serve as salt and light?

Making it personal – Are you facing a situation where you are finding it difficult to follow God? Think of Jesus' words and Daniel's example as you pray for his strength to see you through.

Tuesday – Lost its flavor!

“There is nothing more useful than sun and salt.” (A common Roman saying at the time of Christ)

1. What did Jesus say about flavorless salt in Matt. 5:13? What does this tell you about the importance Jesus puts on staying true to his calling?
2. In Revelation 3:14-22, Jesus dictated a letter for the believers in the Church at Laodicea. According to verses 15 and 16, what did Jesus identify as the problem with these believers? According to verse 19, what did Jesus say would correct that problem? What similarity do you see between lukewarm water and salt that has lost its flavor?

Making it personal – What would you say is the temperature of your faith? Boiling, hot, warm, lukewarm, cold? If you find yourself facing the same problem that the believers in Laodicea faced, look at verses 20-21 and ask God to guide you in commitment and repentance (verse 19) on the path to those rewards.

Wednesday – Light

A little light trivia: If the entire electromagnetic spectrum (containing all light waves, radio waves, x-rays, etc.) were like a standard 88-key piano, the visible light portion would occupy only six keys. (www.qsl.net)

1. In Matthew 5:14-15, Jesus moves from talking about salt to talking about light. What point does he make about light? What point do you think he is making about believers by comparing them to light?
2. Please read John 1:1-9. Who is the ultimate light? According to verse 5, where is the light meant to shine? What does this tell you about your role as light in this world?
3. The Holman Christian Standard Bible translates John 1:5 as saying that “the darkness did not overcome” the light. Even though we may not recognize it from our point in time, this means that Jesus has already won the victory in eternity over spiritual darkness. As a child of God, what comfort do you find in knowing that your role as light cannot be overcome?

Thursday – Light

1. Christ calls us to be salt and light to the watching world. Please read John 17:20-25. What does Jesus want to do to let the world know that we are his? Why is this an important part of being salt and light?
2. Read 1 John 1:5-2:11. Our saltiness will wane and our light will dim if we do not walk in the light. What do we learn about walking in the light in these verses?

Putting it into Practice – Which truth about walking in the light challenges you the most? Pray by asking God for help in this area of your life.

Friday – Salt and Light: a Recipe for God's Glory

“How do we talk about Christ's rule over human life in a way that draws the seeker? One way to do this is by showing our friends that God's rule for our lives stems from his love for us and his desire for our best. In fact, following his commands helps us avoid heartache and pain.” Becky Pippert – Out of the Saltshaker

1. Read 1 Samuel chapter 15. Notice the complete reversal in the life of Saul, Israel's first king, in just 35 verses. How do you think the notion of salt losing its saltiness applies to this event in Israel's history?
2. Look closely at verse 24. What prompted Saul to disobey? Does worrying about what other people think ever affect your decision to follow God?
3. Verse 22 is the key in this powerful chapter. Saul failed to obey God fully. In the passage we read yesterday, from 1 John, we learned about the importance of obedience. To obey Christ by following his commands is to live as salt and light to the watching world. Why does the world need to see Christians living in obedience to God? As you grow in Christ, are you finding yourself obeying more often than you used to? Pray, asking God to lead you in obedience.

For the Weekend: Pray through Matthew 5:13-16 and allow God to show you ways you can be salt and light for him, and for his glory.