



God in Politics

Bible Study Part Two

Being 'Light and Salt'

'You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.' **Matthew 5:13-16**

This passage is part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. He teaches about what it means to live in the Kingdom of God, proclaiming His attitude towards the law and explaining the importance of faithful obedience from the heart.

Jesus is clear that being part of the Kingdom of God will have a huge impact on every aspect of our lives - our relationships and behaviour during work and leisure, not just in evangelism. Not everyone is called to take this commission into the political realm, but as the body of Christ, we should be involved throughout society including active participation in our communities.

Light illuminates and reveals. Without the sun, physical light, we cannot live. Nothing grows, nothing flourishes, nothing survives without light. Jesus is *the* Light of the World: He brings spiritual sight to a blind world that is in darkness. With His Spirit in us, we are also 'lights of the world'. We should be prepared to bring spiritual light into dark corners around us by living a life that is pleasing to God and brings Him credit as people watch the way we operate.

Without **salt** as part of our diet we cannot physically survive. It penetrates, cleanses and preserves. A small pinch of **salt** diffuses flavour throughout a whole meal and everything is insipid without it. The same is true for Christians in the world. The Holy Spirit within us makes us spiritually salty, and the world desperately needs this salt in order to make sense of everything.



Discussion and questions

Jesus makes clear that being light and salt is not just the occasional action, but must infuse our lifestyle as a whole. In this way we will demonstrate obedience and be marked out as different from others.

? In what ways can Christians be light and salt in the political world? How could your church be effective light and salt in your local constituency?

Romans 12:4-8 tells us that we are all different parts of the body of Christ, called to different jobs and given different gifts, none of which are any more or less valuable to the Lord than the others. By living and working among those who know only the values of today's culture, we can spread our 'salt and light' and show them that there is another way to live. We need Christians in the world of politics to live this out.

However, we all have to practise ‘the art of living together in community.’ There are many problems for which governments are not responsible for and cannot hope to tackle comprehensively. Rather than blaming those in authority individuals and local organisations need to recognise their own roles in this because the mandate of stewardship has been given to all mankind.

? Can you think of some practical areas where you can exercise stewardship, being ‘light and salt’ in your local community?

In Study One we learned that God created human beings in His image and that this radical concept gives us a unique view of what it means to be human. This theme continues through the Bible, worked out as an expression of God’s hatred of injustice.

Read these passages:

‘Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hands of the wicked.’ **Psalms 82:3,4**

‘This is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people. Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help ... Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon. The LORD will guide you continually, giving you water when you are dry and restoring your strength. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring. Some of you will rebuild the deserted ruins of your cities. Then you will be known as a builder of walls and a restorer of homes.’ **Isaiah 58: 6,7,11-14**

‘Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: “Love your neighbour as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.’ **Matthew 22: 37-40**

‘Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves.’ **Philippians 2:3,4**

The Latin roots of the word ‘compassion’ means ‘to suffer with’. God is all-knowing and all-seeing, which means that He directly observes, and shares in all the suffering in the world. Let that idea sink in. It is this compassion, suffering with the oppressed, which vitalises God’s all-consuming response to justice, and He wants us to share in this response.

? How does God equip us to meet the needs we see around us?

Read Acts 1:8 and 2:17-39 and Romans 8:5-17 and 37-38



Edmund Burke, the eighteenth-century political thinker, said: ‘All it takes for evil to thrive is for good men to do nothing’.

Spend some time praying that the influence of godly men and women in parliament will bring about an increasingly just society and a compassionate people who will be pleasing to God.