

Illuminate | Matthew 5:13-16

How can you spread God's light?

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that."

-Dr. Martin Luther King Jr

Lesson Overview

If you look around the world today, it can feel like darkness is all around us. Our world is filled with injustice, brokenness, sin, and evil of every kind. In the midst of this darkness, Jesus calls all believers to be the *salt and light* of the world. The goal of this lesson is to encourage believers to be the light in a world that desperately needs it.

Using Matthew 5:13-16, this lesson explores what it means to be the salt and light and shows practical ways believers can spread God's light wherever they go. As followers of Jesus, we play a vital role in bringing hope, love, and transformation to a dark and broken world.

Lesson Objectives

What: In the midst of a broken world, Jesus calls all believers to be *salt and light*.

Why: We're often tempted to make the *easy* choice, instead of the *right* one, but what Jesus has done for us motivates us to reflect His light with the rest of the world.

How: Your group will play a game that emphasizes just how powerful salt is, which will serve as a good reminder for how they ought to be as they live this lesson out.

Primary Scripture

Matthew 5:13-16: *"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 underfoot. "You are the light of the world. A town built 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 others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."*

Sweet n' Salty (~20 Min)

- Overview:
 - # of Participants: **Any**
 - Where to Play: **Indoors / Outdoors**
 - Age of Participants: **Elementary / Middle / High School**
 - Materials: [Dixie Cups](#), **Salt, Sugar (optional), Water**

This activity is a variation of a game we posted a video for called [Odd Man Out](#), where the goal is to try to keep a straight face while eating something *gross*.

Split your group into two teams, and have one team send two people forward to be the Taste-Testers while the other team sends one person forward to be the Judge. The leader will fill up two opaque cups with water, but secretly add a little sugar to one of the cups, and salt to the other one. Make sure to add enough salt that the drink is gross, but not so much that it's unbearable!

On the count of three, both of the Tasters will drink what's in their cup, while the Judge tries to gauge their facial expressions to figure out who got the unlucky salt water. The person who drank the salt water tries to keep a straight face, but that's much easier said than done...



If the Judge correctly identifies who had the gross food, they have earned a point for their team, but if the Judge is unable to do so, the Tasters earn a point for their team! After this, the Judge returns to their team, sending two Tasters to replace them, and the Tasters return to their team, sending a Judge in their place.

You can play for approximately 20 minutes, and the team that has the most points at the end are the winners!

The Breakdown (7:45pm-8:25pm)

- Overview:
 - # of Participants: **Any**
 - Where to Play: **Indoors**
 - Age of Participants: **Elementary / Middle / High School**
 - Materials: [Whiteboards and Markers](#) or Index Cards / Pens

Ask the following questions:

- **For those of you who ended up with salt in your cup, how quickly did you realize something was off? Did you find it challenging to hide your reaction?**
 - Let your group discuss their experience. Try to focus on the fact that salt stands out immediately. Hopefully your students didn't spit out the gross drink!
- **How about those with water or sugar water in their cup, did anyone try to pretend they had salt? And if so, was it easy for the judge to spot the imposter?**
 - Hopefully, it was easy for the judge to spot who had the salty drink.
 - It's not easy to hide what is truly inside of someone

Say: Salt stands out immediately. Just like you couldn't hide the saltiness in your cup, our lives can't hide what's truly in our hearts. Whether you had salt or sugar water, the difference was obvious. Some of you may have even tried to fake it, but true saltiness can't be hidden or imitated. In the same way, what's really inside of us will always show, and others can tell the difference right away. Jesus uses the imagery of salt during His Sermon on the Mount, let's hear that together...

Have someone from the group read the following scripture:

13 "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 underfoot.

14 "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. **15** 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. **16** In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. **Matthew 5:13-16**



Ask:

- **What is salt, and why do we use it in our food? How can salt change the taste of food?**
 - Salt brings out the flavor in our favorite foods (i.e. steak, eggs, potatoes, etc).
 - Even a little salt can make a big difference in how food tastes.
- **Salt can preserve food and keep it from spoiling. Why do you think that was especially important in Jesus's time?**
 - This was thousands of years before refrigerators! Without salt, valuable resources like meat and fish would quickly spoil becoming worthless.
 - Salt allowed for communities to survive periods of scarcity by preserving food.
- **Based on what we know about salt, why would Jesus call his followers the "salt of the earth"?**
 - **We add flavor:** Our words and actions can make life better for those around us
 - **We preserve goodness:** We stand up for the truth and keep what's right alive in the world
 - **We stand out:** Our lives are noticeably different and set apart from the world. Our acts of faith and love noticeably influence the world.
 - **We have value:** Salt was precious in Jesus's time, showing that God sees each of us as important in his plan.

Say: In Jesus's time, salt was more than just a seasoning, it was a valuable and essential part of daily life. People used it to add flavor to food, preserve meat and fish, disinfect wounds, fertilize soil, and even for religious offerings. Salt was so important that Roman soldiers were given a 'salarium', money specifically for buying salt, which is where we get the word 'salary' and the phrase 'a soldier is worth his salt.' Jesus uses this example to show us that, just like salt was precious, our lives have value too. We are called to make a difference in the world by adding flavor to life, preserving what is good, and standing up for the gospel and what is right.



Activity (5 -10 min) - Build your dream home

Before starting, pass out a **whiteboard and marker** or an **index card and pen** to everyone..

Say: Imagine you just won a contest to build the ultimate dream home! There are no budget limits or rules, you can include anything you want. Using the supplies given to you, write what your dream home would look like. Be as creative as you like, add pools, secret rooms, game rooms, slides, or anything else that makes it your dream home! Your home should be a reflection of who you are.

Creative Questions:

- How many rooms would your dream home have?
- Where would it be located (beach, mountains, city, forest, outer space)?
- What crazy or unusual feature would it include (secret passage, indoor trampoline, rooftop garden)?
- Would the backyard have a pool, sports field, giant garden, or amusement park?
- If every room could have a theme, what themes would you choose (jungle, castle, arcade, beach)?
- What food or drink would always be stocked in your dream home's kitchen?
- Would you want pets in your dream home? If so, what kind?
- If you could design the world's coolest game room, what would go in it?
- Who would you invite to come live in or visit your dream home?



Once your group has finished building their dream home, ask a few people to share their design with everyone. Hopefully they have made some very interesting choices.

Then ask the group:

- **Do you feel like your dream home is a good reflection of who you are? If people visited your home, would they be able to tell you what you believe?**
 - Answers will vary, but it's likely few of us made space for God in our homes
 - We're often quick to show off our hobbies and interests, but sometimes we hide the fact that Jesus is part of our lives.

Say: Imagine your life as your home, and Jesus is the master architect. If Jesus has changed your life, wouldn't you want to share it with others? Through every season Jesus has been building you up and working all things together for your good. Think about all he has done for you. Is Jesus worthy of being not just a part of your house, but the very foundation of it?

Ask:

- **So why do we sometimes hide what Jesus has done in our lives? Have you ever held back from letting others know you follow Him? What made you feel that way?**
 - Everyone's answers will be different, but some people might be afraid of standing out, not fitting in, or being laughed at.
 - Others might talk about Jesus often, but still feel discouraged at times.
- **Read Matthew 5:13-16 again. What imagery does Jesus use to describe His followers? Are these things meant to be hidden or do they stand out to be seen?**
 - Jesus describes his followers as 'the light of the world' and a 'town built on a hill', things that are obviously meant to be seen!

Say: Christians are called to stand out as the "light of the world." If you have ever been outside at night or in a dark room, you know how important light is. Light isn't just something we see, it illuminates everything else around it. Light drives out darkness and guides the way. In the same way, Christians are called to display love, reveal truth, and stand up for justice in a lost and broken world. Like a 'city on a hill', our lives should shine as an example for all to see. The good news of what Jesus has done for us should shine through our lives wherever we go.



Ask:

- **What does it look like for you to spread God's light? Considering the people and places God has put in your life, where do you think Jesus is calling you to shine His light this week?**
 - As the leader, consider sharing an area where *you* can be the light in your community, work, friends, family, etc.
 - Help guide your group into seeing that they can make a difference and spread God's light wherever they go.
- **Jesus warns us to not lose our saltiness or hide our light under a bowl. What can we do to stay encouraged and keep shining bright?**
 - Stay close to the source, Jesus, through prayer, worship and His Word
 - Encourage each other and remind one another to keep shining bright

Say: If you are still feeling discouraged about shining your light, remember that all light comes from a powerful source. Just as the sunset draws its light from the sun, or a flashlight needs a strong battery, our ability to shine comes from almighty God. When we rely on Him, His light can shine through us to bring the good news of Jesus to the world around us. John 8:12 "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness but have the light of life."

Closing Prayer

"God, thank you for calling us to be the light of the world. Help us to shine your love, hope, and truth in everything we do. Help us to be the light in our families, with our friends, at school, and in our communities. Remind us that it's not about us, but about letting your light shine through us. Give us courage to stand out, to be kind, to serve, and to point others to you. Help us to do your will and keep our lights bright. In Jesus name, Amen. "

Illuminate (verb) - make something visible or bright by shining light on it

per [Oxford Languages](#)

