

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Salt and Light

In Matthew 5:13-16, the Master teaches us our responsibility to the world. We are salt and light. By successfully so acting, we lead the world to glorify God. How can we effectively be salt and light for Christ?

Salt

The function of salt is to preserve meat and to make otherwise unpalatable food tasty (cf. Job 6:6). God rules the world in righteousness (Psalm 9:8; 97:2; Revelation 19:15). Where there are no righteous people, a nation will perish (cf. Genesis 18:16-33). The righteous lives and influence on others of Christians preserve the nation and make society palatable to God.

But to cure or flavor food, salt must be in contact with the food. Christians are to be in the world but not of the world (John 17:14-18). If we are to influence people in the community for good, we must be among them. We need to become friends with them, have them into our homes, and go to innocent functions of mutual interest. Would you go to a feast in the house of a man with a bad reputation in society? Jesus did, for the purpose of saving the souls of sinners (Luke 5:29-32). Are we more righteous than the Lord? If we are too self righteous to mingle socially with sinners of the world, we are Pharisees.

In ancient Palestine, salt was dug from the ground or recovered from salt marshes. If moisture dissolved the sodium chloride (salt) from the compound, a residue would be left. This residue was useless to preserve or flavor but had enough saltiness left to sterilize land on which it was thrown. It was worse than useless; it was a nuisance. It was carefully swept up and thrown on footpaths, where at least it would do no harm (cf. Luke 14:34-35).

Christians who cease to live righteous lives are worse than useless; they hinder the cause of Christ (cf. Romans 2:21-24). They are a discouragement to their brethren and a stumbling block to the lost.

Light

The Master called us "the light of the world."

The physical light of the sun is the basis of and absolutely essential to earthly life. It provides energy, warmth, and visibility. It guides, heals, protects from evil, and exposes things hidden in darkness.

Jesus boldly announced, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). He is the source of spiritual life (John 1:4). The Son is the sun that lightens the world. He shows us God (John 14:7), guides us to Him (John 14:6), protects us from evil (John 10:27-30), and exposes the evil lurking in the darkness of ignorance and sin (John 3:20).

Christians are to reflect to the world in our lives the life Jesus lived upon earth (2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Peter 2:21-22). We are the moon that reflects the light of the sun (2 Corinthians 3:2-3). Our lights thus shine as we live "in all goodness, righteousness, and truth" (Ephesians 5:8-11). As Jesus "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38), so should we (Acts 20:35). Our friends, neighbors and acquaintances will see Jesus in us as we befriend the poor and lowly; live honest, morally upright lives; love each other; do good in return for evil; show mercy to our friends in their troubles and heartaches; try to gently lead them from their sins; speak of things that are pure; and put God first in our lives.

Poor, Jewish homes had the light of a single oil lamp. It would be foolish to light such a lamp and then cover it with a basket. When sin,

selfishness, lack of concern for others, and apathy for the Lord characterize our lives, our light is smothered.

A city built on a hill cannot be concealed from the enemy. Because of the peculiar claims of God's people, we are conspicuous to the world (Hebrews 12:22-23). We must be especially careful to have our "conduct honorable" before a hypercritical world (1 Peter 2:9-12).

Result

The result of such lives is that people of the world "may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." People glorify God by believing and obeying His will (Ephesians 1:12).

How shall we lead our lost friends, neighbors, loved ones, and acquaintances to Christ? We must be the light of the world. If our lives reflect Christ, our words will be effective. If not, no amount of preaching and teaching will hide our misdeeds from the people we are seeking to reach. "Let your light so shine...."

- Keith Sharp

“Am I Ready To Be Baptized?”

It's always a joyful and exciting occasion when a young person obeys the gospel and is baptized. Sometimes we can struggle with the question, "Am I ready to be baptized?" Here are five answers that can help you to know you're ready to be baptized and become a Christian. I need to be baptized when...

I Know Good And Evil

The age when one is baptized is different for everyone. I've known young people who were baptized from 9 to 19 years old. Yet, your age isn't the most important thing. When we reach an

age that we understand “right” and “wrong” we become accountable to God. He doesn’t consider young children to be guilty of sin, *“your little ones ... who today have no knowledge of good and evil”* (Deuteronomy 1:39). Yet, when we reach an age that we know *“good and evil,”* and we do evil or wrong, we are guilty of sin.

I Am A Sinner

When we’re guilty of sin we become a sinner, *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23). Now that I am a sinner, I need to be saved from my sin. The guilt of sin is a very serious matter! My sin separates me from God (Isaiah 59:2), makes my conscience feel guilty (1 Peter 3:21), and it can doom me to eternal punishment. *“For the wages of sin is death”* and *“the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death”* (Romans 6:23; Revelation 21:8).

I Need Salvation

God doesn’t want to condemn anyone to Hell. His great love for us is the reason He sent Jesus Christ to die on the cross for our sins. *“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved”* (John 3:17). Jesus died for your sins! His bloody, cruel, and horrifying death on the cross teaches us how God “sees” the “ugliness” of our sins!! Although we have sinned, God’s wonderful mercy and grace is abundant towards us - and all men! *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him”*

(Romans 5:8-9). Salvation is a free gift we receive when our sins are forgiven by God. *“Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins’”* (Acts 2:38).

I Want To Follow Christ

Wanting the forgiveness of sins is a good reason to be baptized. Another reason to become a Christian is you have decided to follow Jesus. A Christian is a disciple and follower of Christ. *“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me”* (Luke 9:23). Being a disciple means we listen to Jesus, not the world and worldly friends, and let Jesus guide our lives through His word. We strive the best we can to obey Jesus. *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven”* (Matthew 7:21).

I Want To Go To Heaven

When we die, we want to go to Heaven. God, Jesus, angels, and our saved loved ones will be there! The only way to Heaven is by salvation in Jesus Christ. *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 6:23). If you need to be baptized into Christ to be saved, please talk to your elders, preacher, or parents. Now that you know what God wants you to do, why are you waiting?

- Luther Pratt

Guideposts for Defense Against Bullying

The problem of bullying has drawn increasing attention in the past few years. Bullying is an act of aggression by one or more perpetrators who seek to aggravate, intimidate, or coerce some type of service or submission.

The use of electronic devices has made bullying an easy mode to pose threats of varying severity. Bullying has been utilized by many age groups and social circles. Let's consider some guideposts for defense against bullying. The first two and last steps follow God's will whereas numbers 3-4 are good advice:

1. Be humble –Walk away and say nothing (James 4:6)
2. Resist the devil (bully) – No fighting back (James 4:7)
3. Log every encounter with the bully: Date, Time, Location, Who was there, Describe the experience.
4. Whenever you need adult help, take your documentation of the experiences with you, and talk to your guidance counselor and/or administrator.
5. Remember: Your greatest desire is heaven, not the conquest of men.

- Howard Whittlesey

Howard Whittlesey is a retired Choral Music Director having taught 39 years in grades 7-12. He also taught Band for 6 years. His last 32 years were spent at North Miami High School in Denver, Indiana.

➤ "He who restrains his anger overcomes his greatest enemy."

- "If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant; if we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome."
- "The problem is not that there are problems. The problem is expecting otherwise."
- "It is an unforgivable sin to be unforgiving."
- "What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly."
- "I complained I had no shoes till I saw a man that had no feet."

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*Spiritual School Supplies!*" (text: Eph. 4:17-20); Sunday evening: "*JOEL: Locust Ravages In Judah!*"