

MATTHEW 5:13-20

¹³ “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet. ¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. ¹⁷ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:13-20 ESV)

MATTHEW 5:13-20 – *THE MESSAGE*

¹³ “Let me tell you why you are here. You’re here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You’ve lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage.¹⁴⁻¹⁶ “Here’s another way to put it: You’re here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We’re going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don’t think I’m going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I’m putting you on a light stand. Now that I’ve put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you’ll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven. “Don’t suppose for a minute that I have come to demolish the Scriptures—either God’s Law or the Prophets. I’m not here to demolish but to complete. I am going to put it all together, pull it all together in a vast panorama. God’s Law is more real and lasting than the stars in the sky and the ground at your feet. Long after stars burn out and earth wears out, God’s Law will be alive and working.¹⁹⁻²⁰ “Trivialize even the smallest item in God’s Law and you will only have trivialized yourself. But take it seriously, show the way for others, and you will find honor in the kingdom. Unless you do far better than the Pharisees in the matters of right living, you won’t know the first thing about entering the kingdom.¹ (Matthew 5:13-20 *THE MESSAGE*)

¹ Peterson, E. H. (2005). *The Message: the Bible in contemporary language* (Mt 5:13–20). Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. Who has been like a Bible for you, showing in their life what God is like? What did that person say or do that showed God to you?
2. In what ways have Christians had a positive influence on society?
3. Despite the meek nature of Jesus' first century audience at the Sermon on the Mount where the sick, epileptics, paralytics, previously demon possessed, and smelly fishermen have gathered, Jesus tells them they should have an impact on society. What positive qualities of salt and light do you think Jesus had in mind as he spoke these words in verses 13-16?
4. Before refrigeration, salt was used to keep meat from rotting. What then does Jesus' statement "You are the salt of the earth" (v. 13) tell us about society and the church's role in it?
5. What has been in the news lately that indicates society is rotting and decaying?
6. What are some practical ways we can function as salt and light where we live and work?
7. What might cause Christians to lose their saltiness?
8. Why might we be tempted to hide our light (v. 15)?
9. What should be the result, according to Jesus, of people seeing our good deeds (v. 16)? How can we help ensure that God gets the glory and not us?
10. If the Old Testament did not exist what would be missing in our knowledge of God?
11. The Law and the Prophets (the Old Testament) consist of doctrine, prophecy, and ethical precepts. In what sense has Jesus fulfilled each of these (v. 17)?
12. What portions of the Bible have you tended to skip over or neglect? How can you make studying these a higher priority?
13. The Pharisees and teachers of the law were zealous about observing the Law. How can our righteousness possibly surpass theirs (v. 20)?
14. Jesus states that only those who have this surpassing righteousness will enter the Kingdom of Heaven (v. 20). How can this be harmonized with his statement about the poor in spirit (those who admit their spiritual bankruptcy) entering the Kingdom of Heaven (5:3)?
15. Some people claim that Jesus abolished the law for the Christian and that we are only responsible for obeying the "law of love." Respond to this view in light of Jesus' words in this passage.
16. How should we study and apply the Old Testament law today?