

Small Group Study

Out of the Salt Shaker



Icebreakers

Use the questions below to help people open up and to focus your meeting. It is very helpful to go around in a circle with the leader going first. (Remember if you have new members or guests you should take time to introduce everyone.)

1. What is your favorite "salty" dish to eat?
2. Tell us about your favorite Christmas memory.
3. What are your plans this Christmas and New Years?



SCRIPTURE

Have volunteers read the following scriptures:

Matthew 5:13-16

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.

THE USE OF SALT IN THE BIBLE

- Salt was used for seasoning and preserving food. (as today)
- Salt was found in great abundance on the shore of the Dead Sea.

- Salt was used as an antiseptic in medicine. (Ezekiel 16:4)
- Salt was used in offerings of all kinds. Lev 2:13: "Season all your grain offerings with salt. Do not leave the salt of the covenant of your God out of your grain offerings. Add salt to all your offerings." Every sacrifice was offered with salt as a symbol of preservation. Salt in this context symbolizes external preservation. Numbers 18:19: "It has an everlasting covenant of salt before the Lord for both you and your offspring."
- Sometimes a captured city was sowed with salt to insure utter desolation of the place. (Judges 9:45)
- Covenant of Salt: In Palestine and surrounding countries, salt was used to make covenants. To eat of a person's salt is regarded as a token of amity and loyalty, and brings one under his protection. The covenant of salt pictures the everlasting friendship between God and his people (e.g. 2 Chron 13:15, Num 18:19, Lev 2:13).
- And in the New Testament, salt is used to describe wholesome character and speech. Col 4:6 "Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."
- Salt takes on an even broader context when we begin to realize God is redeeming and restoring creation through the Body of Christ (you and I) and through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Christ is working through each of His followers "to bring good news to the poor", "to comfort the brokenhearted", and "to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed". We are "to tell those who mourn that the time of the Lord's favor has come, and with it, the day of God's anger against their enemies." (Isaiah 61:1-3)

QUESTIONS

- 1.** You've probably heard the phrase "live in but not of the world." What does that look like? Leaning too far in one direction can lead to legalism, judgmentalism, and frankly, becoming one of those people Jesus reserved his harshest words for: the Pharisees. But leaning too far in the other direction is not good either. Paul said in Romans 6:1-2: "Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" So what does living in the middle look like?
- 2.** How can we continue to be infused with the life of Jesus? In other words, how can we keep from losing our "saltiness"?
- 3.** As we think about being salt and light in a dark world, that implies two things: that we remain "salty" and that we are out in the world seasoning it with our "saltiness". We just discussed how to do the former (in the previous question.) What are some ways we can do the latter? Fred mentioned a few: developing redemptive relationships, loving and serving with the heart of Jesus, and clearly communicating the hope of Jesus. What are some other ways?
- 4.** How can we "develop redemptive relationships"? What does that look like? What can we learn from Jesus on this matter?
- 5.** Who are some non-Christians in your life that God may be giving you an opportunity to engage more intentionally?
- 6.** As you think about Christians living out the Gospel in our culture, in what area/issue do we have the best opportunity to be different in a way that will have an impact on the people around us?
- 7.** As you consider Jesus' words about being "salty", what's one area in your own life where you'd like to work on being more salty (more distinct from the world, more redemptive, more loving, more merciful, more gracious, etc.)

God bless,

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