



WITNESS Sermon Study Guide

Week 3: Salt and Light

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Visit the NewHope Teaching page to watch or listen to the sermon

1. We are in week three of our Witness series. What has been stirring for you as we've delved into this teaching together?
2. Have you seen the Lord open doors and give opportunities to witness? If so, what happened?

Read Matthew 5:13-16

From Sunday School lessons, to Youth Bible studies and church services, you've probably heard a number of sermons and a variety of interpretations on this well-known passage. The images of salt and light are just so rich and multifaceted.

Think about salt. It serves as a preserver, a taste enhancer, and a purifier, and much more. With so many uses, it can be a challenge to discern which aspect Jesus wanted to emphasise. Scholar and theologian, Jonathan Pennington suggests that the key is to link salt with light and look for the intersection of their meanings based on scripture (if you're the type of person who loves a good Venn diagram, why not grab a pen and paper, and do this exercise yourself!) For Pennington, the overlapping theme is *covenant*.¹

1. Have you heard a sermon on Matthew 5:13-16 before? Which aspect of salt was emphasised and how did it help (or hinder) your thinking about witness?
2. Turn back a few pages and read Matthew 4:15-17. This is just one of the many places where the theme of light is used in the Bible. Can you think of other examples and what they tell us about witnessing?
3. When looking at where the metaphors of salt and light intersect, scholar Jonathan Pennington suggests covenant as the key theme (Numbers 18:19; 2 Chronicles 13:5; Isaiah 42:6-7). What does the concept of covenant mean to you?

¹ You can explore some of Jonathan Pennington's sermons by visiting The Human Flourishing Podcast at jonathanpennington.com. To find out more about this particular topic, see his devotional series on The Sermon on the Mount, especially part 3.



The concept of covenant has many beautiful layers to unpack and explore, yet a simple definition could be: 'the relationship agreement between two parties'. This is a commitment like you would make at a wedding. A 'joining together' relationship between God and humanity.

Read Isaiah 42:6-7

God's covenant promise is ultimately ushered in through the blood of Jesus, who brings light to the darkness and hope for the world. Yet, Jesus speaks to his followers and says, "*You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world.*"

For followers of Christ, being salt and light is not a conditional invitation but a definitive statement of our identity in Him. We are representatives of this covenant relationship and our task is to let our light shine, to be visible and impactful in our daily lives, whether at home, work, or in our communities.

1. What does it mean for you to understand 'salt and the light' as a statement of your identity in Christ?
2. Think about a time when you felt like hiding your light. What was the situation, and how can you approach similar situations differently in the future to ensure your light shines brightly?

Being salt and light involves understanding how God has uniquely equipped us to share His love. Some may resonate with apologetics, engaging in thoughtful conversations about faith and reason. Others may focus on creating experiences that allow people to taste and see the goodness of God through community. And, still others may be wired for action and taking practical steps towards justice and mercy in the world. Regardless of our approach, the call is to let our light shine before others, so they may see our good deeds and glorify our Father in heaven.

1. Reflect on your unique gifts and talents. How has God built you to be salt and light in this world? Do the ideas of Apologetics, Experience or Action resonate with you? And, how could you use these approaches to share God's love with others?
2. Hamish shared his experience of witnessing and being involved in Beach Mission over the summer. Have you ever had an experience of being an ambassador for Christ in a focused way like this? For example, going on an overseas mission trip or being involved in a concentrated outreach program? What was this like and how can we bring learnings from these experiences to our everyday lives?



3. What specific actions can you take this week to shine God's light in a situation or relationship that feels particularly dark or challenging?