



## Let Your Light Shine: Glorify the Lamb! Matthew 5:13-16

### Background for the Leader

Find a quiet space to read the scripture. Be sure to have pen and paper in hand. After getting still and comfortable, slowly read the text out loud. If it is familiar to you, try to imagine that it is not. After reading the text, ask God to speak to you through this scripture revealing all that God would have you to hear in it. Take your paper and make a list of words that stand out in your memory from your reading. Read the scripture again and end by thanking God for speaking to you through the Living Word.

Take a moment to pray for the women for whom you will facilitate discussion. Name their names if you know them.

**Notes from Writer** (*Please be sure you have done the above personal study and prayer before reading the following*):

The following personal thoughts of the writer are provided to aid you in leading this Bible study. Please be sure to follow your own personal study to know where the Holy Spirit is guiding you and the group. Use these thoughts, if needed, as further discussion material.

What does it mean to be salt of the earth? With refrigeration so handy to us in the United States, we may have lost sight of the real need for salt as a preservative - the primary use for salt at the time of the writing of this scripture. It is possible to lead an entire study on the idea of acting as a preservative in our world. However, we can also turn the idea around and think of salt in terms of how we use it today, bringing home the idea of being salt of the earth to our Bible study participants. The primary use of salt today is to add flavor to our food. So, what if we think of salt in the way Eugene Peterson interprets this scripture in *The Message*, "You are here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth." It would be interesting to see where a discussion would lead in asking how we can bring out "God-flavors" in our world.

The activities of this particular study will focus more on the image of light in this scripture. What does it mean to be the light of the world? Presumably, the images and interpretations of light have changed very little since the time Jesus spoke those words. Darkness is still darkness and light is light. It is a strong metaphor that is used often in many places. We see these images played out in books, movies, television shows, and in our rituals in church services.

In John 1:9, Jesus is said to be, "The true light, which enlightens everyone." This leads us to assume that Jesus is saying that He shares his light with us. The light that we are able to shine from on top of that hill is the very light of Jesus Christ. It has been given to us freely. All we have to do is accept it and then allow it to shine. The scripture seems to be pointing out how ridiculous it is when we, after being given such an incredible and loving gift, continue to hide the light and refuse to share it with the world.

What does sharing that light with the world really mean? The text tells us clearly that in letting our light shine for others, we will help them to see the glory of God. Glorify the Lamb! We do have to pause and ask ourselves to dig deeper into the metaphor. How do we let our lights shine? Verse 16 states, "so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in

heaven.” Our works do not save us. We know that salvation is a gift of grace; however, we also know that through the love for us by the Light, we will want to respond in love by doing as He commanded. Our works show the world the love that flows between Jesus and ourselves. We will feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and bring into community those who are outcasts. In short, we will do unto the “least of these” as Jesus demanded we do. To Glorify the Lamb, we will reach out in service and through mission. In doing so, each of our tiny little lights grows brighter and stronger and shines from the hilltops in this dark, dark world. Let your light shine! Glorify the Lamb!

### **A Note to the Leader**

Choose from the following activities as time and your desired focus permits. You may have had insights come to you through your personal study (above) which will help in choosing activities or which may even lead you to create new ones. Use your personal study and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in making these decisions and aiding you in facilitating discussion among the group.

As the facilitator, be sure to practice good listening skills, especially during *Searching the Word*. Through your personal study and then listening to the group’s discussion, be prepared to connect the activities back to scripture and focus on the highlights which seem to be coming up again and again.

Materials Needed: A recording of “You are the Light of the World” from the Godspell Soundtrack, index cards, paper, pens, Bibles, a dry erase board or newsprint with markers, a small candle with wax guard for each participant, and matches or lighter.

### **Leading the Bible Study**

As participants arrive have “You are the Light of the World” from the *Godspell* Soundtrack playing on a tape player or CD player. Be sure the space is inviting and materials are prepared for the opening activity.

#### **Activity One: Pictionary!**

Have a dry erase board or newsprint set up in the meeting space with several different color markers from which to choose. Divide the group into two teams and play the following game.

Each team will take turns having one player draw a picture to represent a word or phrase you have shown her. (Be sure to write the words in big, bold letters on index cards prior to the meeting.) Her teammates will try to guess the word/phrase. She will have one minute to complete this task. If her team guesses correctly, that team receives a point. The team with the most points at the end of the game wins. (You may wish to have a small token for the winners, a piece of hard candy, for example.)

You can use the following list of words/phrases and/or build your own list based on your personal study.

- Salt
- Good works

- ☛ Darkness
- ☛ Bushel basket
- ☛ All people
- ☛ Hiding
- ☛ Light
- ☛ Glory

### **Activity Two: Searching the Word**

Divide into groups of three or four. Instruct each group to choose one person to lead them in prayer, one person to read the scripture aloud, and one person to act as scribe, taking notes on what the group says. Once these positions are filled, the prayer leader should lead her group in a prayer asking God to speak through the scripture to each of them.

Next, the reader should slowly read Matthew 5:13-16 aloud. Following the reading of the word, the group should begin sharing words or phrases that jumped out at them. The scribe should compile a list.

Instruct the groups to use these words and phrases as beacons pointing them to the truth that the Holy Spirit is shining for them through these particular words. Allow time for discussion. After a few minutes of discussion, ask each group to share the highlights of their discussion with the larger group. *(See Notes from Writer for additional discussion material if needed.)*

### **Activity Three: Connecting to the Theme**

Facilitate a discussion using the following questions:

- ☛ In what ways does this scripture connect to our larger theme of “Be Shepherds of God’s Flock: Glorify the Lamb”?
- ☛ In what ways does this scripture lead us in Mission/Service/Outreach? Allow time for discussion after each question. *(See Notes from Writer for additional discussion material if needed.)*

Lead the group in brainstorming ideas for Mission/Service/Outreach in your local area using Matthew 5:13-16 as your project scripture. Be sure to write these ideas on a dry erase board or newsprint so that everyone can see them.

### **Activity Four: Worship**

Give a small candle to each participant. If possible, be in a space that will be completely dark once the lights are turned off. Gather the group into a circle and ask one of them to be in charge of turning off the lights upon your request. Stand in the center of the circle making sure you also have a candle with matches.

**Say:** *As Shepherds of God’s Flock, we are called to Glorify the Lamb. We see in this Living Word that in order to do that, we must let our light shine in this dark world. (Ask for the lights to be turned off, wait for a few seconds so that the group can feel the darkness, then light your one candle. Holding it in hand, continue . . .) Jesus said that we have indeed been given the light, his light. It is our choice whether we will share that light with the world and Glorify the Lamb by serving his flock. One little light can do a lot. Imagine what all of our lights together will do.*

Light one person's candle in the circle and instruct her to light the next person's and so on. As they send the light around the circle, lead the group in singing *This Little Light of Mine*.

**Activity Five: Closing Prayer**

With candles still lit in the dark room, lead the group in prayer using the following one or one of your own.

*God, giver of light, we stand here full of thanksgiving that you share your light with us even though you know everything about us. We want to be light bearers in this world, but sometimes we hide our light instead. Thank you for continuing to give us the light anyway. Help us as we leave this place to be beacons of light shining to everyone that we meet. Amen.*

**About the Writer**

Tiffany Hall McClung is an ordained Cumberland Presbyterian minister. She is currently focusing on being a full-time mom to son, Ian. She also volunteers with the youth group at First CP of Savannah, TN where her husband, Andy, is pastor. She preaches once a month for a PCUSA congregation in the area and refers to herself as the "roving preacher" available to fill pulpits when needed. Tiffany is a member of the General Assembly Council and a Vision Enabler for Touch the Future. When she isn't changing diapers or preparing sermons, she enjoys creative writing, reading, and travelling just about anywhere.

## **Let Your Light Shine**

### **Matthew 5:13-15**

*A Year with C.S. Lewis* is my morning devotional. The January 29-February 3 devotions are taken from the essay "A Slip of the Tongue" printed in *The Weight of Glory*. In this essay, Lewis speaks about going through the motions of prayers, devotions, receiving communion, all the while listening to an inside voice that urges caution. "It tells me to be careful, to keep my head, not go too far, not to burn my boats. I come into the presence of God with a great fear lest anything should happen to me within that presence which will prove too intolerably inconvenient when I have come out into my 'ordinary' life." Lewis goes on to say, "Our temptation is to look eagerly for the minimum that will be accepted."\*

We ARE the salt of the earth and we ARE the light of the world. Yet Jesus knows it is easy to withhold the salt and hide the light under the basket. He knows it is our nature to look for the minimum. What "minimum" baskets hide our light? I would suggest that guilt and duty are baskets. Guilt and duty encourage us to do "something" but usually the minimum...just enough to get rid of the guilt and sense of duty. Guilt and duty also encourage good intentions. Do I go to the food pantry because I want to be salt and light, or is it to ease that gnawing guilt or fulfill some inner duty? Another "minimum" basket is morality. We rake people over the coals because they are not moral. Just look at what they are doing. Yet, what do we expect of those who do not know Christ? It is easier to want them to behave rather than show them the light that will truly change their lives.

We ARE the salt of the earth and we ARE the light of the world. Yet because we are afraid to be too strong a seasoning or light, we back off all together. We are afraid to be fools for Christ. We minimize the effect the salt and light within us can have on others. We use baskets to cover our lights and hold onto our seasoning so tightly that it loses all its flavor. Jesus said, "Don't hide it under a basket."

We must come to the realization that our lives are not neutral. Either we reflect the light of Christ which positively affects those who see it, or the light is covered and the affect is negative for anyone who is looking. How do we season with the salt of Christ or let His light shine? Take a moment to consider a few questions: Where do I withhold the salt? What baskets cover my light? Where am I doing the minimum...just getting by? These are important questions to contemplate if we are intentionally going to season and shine.

#### **PRAYER:**

*Lord, help me to not be satisfied with the minimum. Help me to be bold and be strong, so I may see the baskets hiding the light and take them off. Help me to not hold onto the salt shaker, but to sprinkle liberally over all I see. Amen.*

JoAnn Shugert  
Missouri River Region

\* *A Year with C.S. Lewis*, ©2003, HarperCollins, pps 32-33.